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SECOND TO NONE.

A Military Romance.

BY

JAMES GRANT,

AUTHOR OF

“THE ROMANCE OF WAR,” “THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD,”
“THE YELLOW FRIGATE,” ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CONTENTS

OF

THE SECOND VOLUME.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. MARCH TO DOL	1
II. A SKIRMISH	14
III. HUSSARS AGAIN	23
IV. MY NURSE	34
V. NEWS OF THE ARMY	44
VI. BOURGNEUF	58
VII. LOVE AND ILLUSION	70
VIII. I BECOME A SOUBRETTE	80
IX. HAUTOIS	94
X. THE BOUDOIR	110
XI. STORY OF NINON DE L'ENCLOS	120
XII. DISCOVERED	152
XIII. SUSPENSE	164

206613

CHAP.	PAGE
XIV. THE BLOODHOUND	176
XV. THE FOREST OF ST. AUBIN DU CORMIER	192
XVI. THE STRUGGLE	202
XVII. THE CHAUMIÈRE	210
XVIII. THE LIGHT TROOP	220
XIX. CHARTERS' VOW	226
XX. THE SACK OF CHERBOURG	244
XXI. WHAT THE GAZETTE CONTAINED	251
XXII. THE PRISON SHIP	262
XXIII. "TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN FICTION" .	275
XXIV. WADHURST	285
XXV. SAIL FOR GERMANY	304

SECOND TO NONE.

CHAPTER I.

MARCH TO DOIL.

THE city of St. Malo was now more closely reconnoitred by the commander-in-chief, as well as by General Elliot, the quartermaster-general, and other officers, who were unanimously of opinion that, from its vast strength, a long time—a month at least—must elapse before it could be reduced ; and as the heavy cannon and mortars requisite for such a siege were yet on board the fleet, the idea of any assault

upon the place should be relinquished, more especially as French troops were advancing against us from Normandy, Maine, and Anjou.

The approach by land to the small isle of Aaron on which it is situated is by a mole or causeway, three-quarters of a mile in length, by fifty-four feet in breadth, and this was daily covered by the tide with slimy weeds.

The approach by sea was narrow, well defended by batteries, and was otherwise dangerous to vessels venturing within gunshot. On the north St. Malo was quite inaccessible, in consequence of the height of the rocks and strength of the fortifications which crown them. The city was crowded with fugitives from the adjacent country, from which they had retired by order of the noblesse, magistrates, and echevins, to whom the Duke

of Marlborough* sent a notice, that if the peasantry did not return peaceably to their houses, he “would set fire to them without delay.”

He also published a manifesto making known “to all the inhabitants of Brittany, that the descent on their coast with the powerful army under our command, and our formidable armament by sea, was not made with the intention of making war on the inhabitants, except such as should be found in arms, or should otherwise oppose the just war which we were waging against His Majesty the most Christian King.

“Be it known, therefore,” continues the manifesto, “to all who will remain in peaceable possession of their habitations

* His Grace was Charles Spencer, fifth Earl of Sunderland, who succeeded to the honours of his illustrious grandfather, John Churchill, the great captain of Queen Anne's wars.

and effects, that they may stay in their respective dwellings, and follow their usual occupations; and that, excepting the customs and taxes which they pay to the King, nothing will be required of them in money or merchandise but what is absolutely necessary for the subsistence of the army, and that for all the provisions they bring in ready money shall be paid, &c. Given from our headquarters at Paramé, June 7."

While the British general threatened destruction unless the peasantry returned, the French authorities, on the other hand, threatened to hang all who obeyed, so between them the poor Bretons were likely to have a fine time of it.

Our troop was now ordered to accompany a regiment of foot which was detached to Dol, a long march by steep

old roads that went straight up one hill and down another.

The day which succeeded that night of destruction at St. Servand and St. Solidore was beautiful. The sun of June was warm and glowing, and brightly it shone on the bluff rocks and embattled walls of St. Malo, on the masses of charred wreck that floated by the isle of Aaron; on the dense old forests in the foreground, the blue hills whose wavy outline towered in the distance, and on the blue sea that stretched away towards the shores of England; on the quaint old chateaux of the noblesse perched on rocks that overhung the mountain torrents, and on the picturesque hovels of their vassals that nestled under their protection, for vassalage yet lingered in primitive Brittany.

These poor cottages, built of rough and

anhewn stone, and plastered with mud, we generally found to be abandoned by the inhabitants at our approach. In some places we passed stacks of slowly-burning wood smouldering by the wayside; but the poor charcoal-burners had fled when our drums woke the echoes of the mountain road.

“It is certainly not pleasant to find oneself in the character of an invader!” said Charters, as we rode leisurely on.

When we proceeded further, we found the farms abandoned, the villas deserted and stripped of all that was most valuable. Goats no longer grazed on the heathy mountain slopes, or cattle in the verdant meadows; all had been driven off to forest recesses, to conceal them from us; yet never was there less mischief done to private property by an invading force than by us on this occasion.

During a halt near an ancient church, Jack Charters, observing the earth at the root of a tree to have been recently disturbed, thrust his sword into it, and about eighteen inches below the surface found all the sacred vessels of the altar, tied up in a tablecloth. There were three elaborately chased gold chalices, a patine, and several silver salvers and cruets. Our troops were making merry on the discovery of this plunder, when Charters, who never forgot his forfeited position, and felt himself still a gentleman, restored the whole to the curé of the church, who came to beg it of us.

Soon after, an officer of one of our foot regiments found near a chateau a quantity of silver plate, worth several hundred pounds, concealed in the same manner. This officer sent the plate to the chateau, from which the proprietor was absent

(for indeed he was no other than Captain the Chevalier de Boisguiller, who was making himself so active against us), together with a letter, purporting that he had restored the treasure, as we came not to war on the people,' but the government of France. In proof of this, in many instances our men shared their scanty rations with the poor and needy whom they found by the wayside, and who trusted us.

Rumour of such acts as these having preceded us, we were kindly, even warmly received by the people of Dol, which is an ancient episcopal city surrounded by time-worn fortifications, and situated in the midst of what was then a marshy plain. Its mediæval streets are quaint and narrow, with picturesque gables and carved gablets that almost meet from either side of the way.

We entered it without opposition, after a fourteen miles' march, and to our surprise the bells of the cathedral rung a merry peal in our honour. A contribution was levied on the city exchequer, and there we passed the night after posting guards at all the gates and outpickets beyond. The duty apportioned to the light troop of the Scots Greys was solely to furnish patrols on the various roads leading to Dol, to prevent a surprise, for as yet we knew not exactly what troops were in Brittany.

About daybreak on the following morning, I formed one of a party that patrolled the highway in the direction of St. Aubin du Cormier. Cornet Keith commanded, and Sergeant Duff and Corporal Charters were with us. Each officer and man carried oats for his horse in a bag, and a bundle of hay trussed up in a

net behind the saddle. We were only *eleven* in all.

Keith was a brave but inexperienced young officer, who had joined our corps from Richmond's Foot in consequence of an incident which made some noise in the service at the time.

Richmond's regiment enjoyed the unfortunate reputation of being a duelling one. Indeed, there was scarcely an officer in it who had not, at some time or other, paraded, and killed or wounded his man; thus Keith, soon after joining it as a raw ensign, was informed by the captain of the Grenadiers, "a fire-eater," that another officer had treated him in a manner deserving severe notice, and that "after *what* had taken place"—the usual dubious, but constant phrase on such occasions—he of the Grenadiers would gladly act as his friend; *but* that if Keith omitted to

parade the insulter duly by daybreak on the morrow, it would be noticed by the whole corps, and hopeless "Coventry" would be the result.

Keith was unable to perceive that he had been in the least insulted; but knew in a moment that his would-be friend had no other object in view than to test his courage and arrange a duel, a little luxury the corps had not enjoyed for two months past. He perceived also, that to maintain his own reputation, the fatal pistol *must* be resorted to; but as he had no intention of fighting an innocent man who had never offended him, he threw his leather glove in the face of the Grenadier, called him out, and shot him through the lungs as a lesson for the future, and soon after obtained a transfer to the Greys, when we were cantoned among the villages of the Sussex Coast, hunting for smugglers.

We were riding leisurely in file, through a narrow lane, about two miles from Dol. It was bordered by wild vines, and shaded by chestnut trees. The grey daylight was just breaking; the pale mist was rolling in masses along the mountain slopes, and the sweet odour of the bay myrtle and of the wild flowers came on the morning breeze from the marshes that lay between us and the city.

Save the tinkling of some chapel bell for matins among the mountains all was still, and we heard only the hoofs of our horses and the clatter of their chain bridles; but judge of our astonishment when wheeling out of the narrow lane upon the highway that led direct to Dol—the path by which we could alone return—we found in our front a party of French Light Horse, forty at least of the same Hussars we had encountered in the night near

St. Solidore ; and the moment we came in sight they began to brandish their sabres, and to whoop and yell in that manner peculiar to the French before engaging, while many shouted loudly—

“ *Vive le Roi ! à bas les Anglais !* ”

CHAPTER II.

A SKIRMISH.

OUR young Cornet Keith never for an instant lost his presence of mind, for he came of a brave stock, the old Keiths of Inverugie; thus he was a near kinsman of Marshal Keith, who fell at the head of the Prussian army on the plain of Hochkirchen.

“We must charge and break through those fellows,” said he, coolly and rapidly, “or we shall all be taken and cut to pieces.”

“I fear, sir, it is impossible to break through,” said Sergeant Duff, as he cocked his holster pistol.

“Nothing of this kind is impossible to the Scots Greys!” replied the young officer, proudly.

“Lead on, sir; and we shall never flinch,” said Charters, with a flushing cheek.

“Keep your horses well in hand, my lads,” cried Keith. “We may not *all* be killed—so prepare to charge! spur at them—fire your pistols right into their teeth, and then fall on with the sword. Forward—charge—hurrah and strike home!”

We received a confused discharge of pistols from those French Hussars. One of our horses fell and crushed his hapless rider. In the next moment we were right among them—firing our pistols by the bridle hand, and hewing right and left, or fiercely giving point to the front, with our long straight broadswords,

beneath the weight of which their short crooked sabres were as children's toys. Here Big Hob Elliot cut a Hussar's sword arm clean off, by a single stroke, above the elbow.

Still they were too many for us. There was a brief and most unequal hand to hand conflict amid the smoke of our pistols, and red sparks sprang high as the steel blades met and rung. Cornet Keith clove one Hussar to the eyes, ran a second through the breast, and being well mounted on a magnificent grey horse, broke through the press of men and chargers, and effected a retreat or flight—which you will—to Dol.

Six others, of whom Jack Charters and Hob Elliot were two—succeeded in following him; but three perished under the reiterated blows of more than twenty sabres, while I, separated from the rest,

had my horse thrust half into a beech hedge by the pressure and numbers of the enemy, whose leader, a brilliantly attired hussar officer, with a white scarf across his shoulder, and golden grand cross of St. Louis dangling from its crimson ribbon at his breast, attacked me with great vigour.

Finding that I was quite his equal with the sword, he drew a pistol from his saddle-bow and fired it straight at my head. By a smart use of the spurs and bit, I made my horse rear up; thus the bullet entered his neck and saved me. Then in its agony the poor animal made a wild plunge, and bursting through the mob of hussars who pressed about me, rushed along the road with such speed that I was soon safe, even from their carbines, and found myself alone and free, without a scratch or scar.

On, on flew the maddened horse, I knew

not whither. There was a gurgling sound in his throat, and with every bound the red blood welled up and poured from the bullet-wound over his grey skin, which was drenched with the flowing torrent.

I lost my grenadier cap as he flew on, past cottages of mud and thatch, and chateaux with turrets, vanes, and moats; past wayside wells and votive crosses, and past those tall grey monoliths and cromlechs that stud so thickly all the land of Brittany; past fields of yellowing buckwheat and thickets of pale green vines, till, at a sudden turn of the road, near an ancient and ruinous bridge that spanned a deep and brawling torrent, he sank suddenly beneath me, and fell heavily on the ground.

Disengaging myself from the saddle and stirrups, I proceeded to examine the horse's wound. His large eyes, once so bright,

were covered now with film, and his long red tongue was lolling out upon the dusty road. My gallant grey was in his death agony, and thrice drew his sinewy legs up under his belly and thrust them forth with convulsive energy. At the third spasm, when I was stooping to examine the wound, his off fore hoof struck me like a shot on the right temple, inflicting a most severe and stunning wound, and I sank senseless and bleeding beside him.

Half-an-hour probably elapsed before perfect consciousness returned. Then I found my face so plastered by the blood which had flowed from my wound, that my eyes were almost sealed up by it, and my hair, which was curled (as we wore it so, and *not* queued, like the troops of other corps), was thickly clotted also.

In the *mêlée*, or race, I cannot remember which, I had lost my sword and pistols,

so concealment was my first thought ; my second, anxiety to reach Dol or the camp at Paramé. How either was to be achieved in a country where my red uniform marked me as a mortal foe and invader, to be shot down—destroyed by any man, or by any means—was a point not easy to solve. Moreover, I knew not the language of Brittany, in only some districts of which French is spoken.

I left my dead grey—poor Bob, for so he was named—with a bitter sigh ; for daily, since I became a soldier, had the noble horse fed from my hand, and he knew my voice as well as the trumpet call for “corn” or “water.”

I walked along the road unsteadily, giddy, faint, and ill. After proceeding about a quarter of a mile, I came upon a four-wheeled wain laden with straw, and standing neglected, apparently, by the

wayside. No horses were harnessed to it, and no driver or other person was near. It seemed to offer, until nightfall, a comfortable place of concealment. I clambered up, and, nestling down among the straw, tied my handkerchief round my contused head to stop further bleeding, and in a few minutes after, overcome by the sleepless patrolling of the past night, the excitement and peril of the recent conflict, the long and mad race run by my dying horse—a race perhaps of twenty or thirty miles, for I knew not the distance—the pain of the wound his hoof had given me, and the consequent loss of blood, I fell into a deep and dreamless stupor, for I cannot call it sleep.

While I was in this state, it would seem that the proprietor of the wain had come hither, yoked thereto a pair of horses, and, all unconscious that there was anything

else there than straw, forage for the cavalry of the most Christian King—least of all a “*sacré-Anglais*”—in the wain, drove leisurely and quietly off, I knew not whither, as I neither stirred nor woke.

CHAPTER III.

HUSSARS AGAIN.

EVENING had come on before I was awake, and, on looking upward, saw above me the green leafy branches of some great trees. Then, on peeping from my nest amid the straw, I found, to my very great astonishment, that the wain was *not* in the same place where I had entered it, but that it was now at the end of a long and stately avenue, and close to an embattled wall, in which there opened an arched gateway surmounted by a coat of arms carved in stone.

I was about to investigate this circumstance further, when the sound of voices

near me, or apparently immediately under the huge wain, made me shrink down and lie still and breathless to listen.

“Come, come, *mon ami*, don't lose your temper, for I assure you that you have none to spare,” said a female voice.

“Bah! you always laugh when I kiss you, Angelique,” replied a man, reproachfully; “why is this?”

“Because, Jacquot, your moustaches tickle me.”

“You are always rather too ticklish between the nose and chin,” retorted the other.

“Perhaps so, when Monsieur de Boisguiller and his hussars are here.”

“*Pardieu*, if this be the case, then I shall go back to St. Malo, to dine with the fat eits and dance with their pretty daughters.”

“You 3 Ha! ha!”

“ Laugh as you may, mademoiselle ; the coachman of Monsieur le Curé of St. Solidore, who holds the consciences of half the province in his keeping, is not without some importance at St. Malo, be assured.”

“ *Que vous êtes bon !* (what a simpleton you are !) Kiss me and say nothing more.”

A certain remarkable sound followed ; then the lovers, apparently reconciled, passed through the archway, and I could perceive that the man was no other than Jacquot Tricot, who had driven the *dés-obligeant* of the old Curé of St. Solidore, and that his companion was a pretty and piquant young Bretonne, with fine features and coal-black eyes, and having her dark hair dressed back *à la marquise*, under a tall white cap of spotless linen.

She wore a tight red bodice, with its armholes so large that at the back only an inch or two of the stuff remained

between the shoulders ; but under this she had a pretty habit-shirt, which fully displayed the swelling form of her fine bust and shoulders. Her ample but short black skirt, embroidered with silver, announced, after the Breton custom, that she was not altogether dowerless, and by her high instep, smart ankle, and taper leg, no one could doubt that Angelique was a charming dancer.

I am thus particular in describing this girl, who was a piquante little country beauty, full of queer Breton exclamations, because our acquaintance did not end here.

My wound was very painful. I felt weak and light-headed ; but the consciousness that other concealment was necessary made me look about for a new lurking-place.

On one side of the avenue there opened a spacious lawn ; on the other lay a lake,

and above the embattled wall and gateway the turrets of a chateau were visible in the sunshine. In the middle of the lawn grew a thicket of shrubs or dwarf trees. My course was soon determined on—to reach the thicket and remain there concealed till nightfall, and trust the rest to Providence.

I dropped from the summit of the straw-laden wain, and, passing quickly through the line of lofty trees, was about to hurry across the lawn, when I heard a shout uttered by many voices, and found myself within fifty paces of a strong party of French Hussars, who had picketed their horses near the avenue, and were quietly enjoying, *al fresco*, a meal which had no doubt been sent to them from the chateau. It was quite a military picnic, as they were all lounging on the grass, around cold pies, fowls, tarts, and bottles of wine,

with their jackets open, their belts and pelisses off.

So busy had they been with their jaws, that their tongues had been silent hitherto, and thus I knew nothing of a vicinity so dangerous, until it was too late to retreat.

Being defenceless, my first thought was to advance confidently and surrender myself as a prisoner of war; but, on seeing that while some rushed to their holsters to procure pistols, others snatched up their sabres, with cries of—

“Down with the Englishman! *Sacre Dieu!*”

“Shoot him down!”

“*A bas les Anglais!*”

“*Tuez! Tuez!* Cut him to pieces!” and so forth, I turned and fled towards the chateau, followed by the whole party, some twenty in number, on foot.

Several shots were fired, but I escaped

them all. I passed the wain, dashed through the gateway within which Angelique and Jacquot were still tenderly cooing and billing, and crossed the gravelled courtyard, closely pursued by the hussars, who would no doubt have immolated me there, had not a young lady who was standing on the steps of the entrance-door in conversation with a brilliant-looking cavalry officer, rushed forward and courageously and humanely interposed between them and me, with her arms outspread.

“*Pardieu!* where did you come from, *Coquin?* Cut the fellow down!” exclaimed the officer, who was the Chevalier Guillaume de Boisguiller, and in whom I recognised my antagonist of the morning—he of the white scarf, crimson ribbon, and grand cross of St. Louis.

“*Ah, je vous prie, monsieur le Chevalier*

—Messieurs les soldats, don't harm him, pray," cried the young lady; and then she added—"Nay, hold, I command you!"

"What! you intercede for him, do you?" said the officer, with haughty surprise.

"Yes—I do, monsieur."

"Although he is one of those pestilent English who have been playing the devil at Cancalle and St. Malo?"

"I care not—I am Jacqueline de Broglie."

It was she indeed—she whom I had rescued, and who gave me the emerald ring by the wayside well; but she was now so richly attired, and had her fine hair so perfectly dressed, that I did not at first, and in such a terrible crisis, recognise her.

"*Parbleu*, 'tis very well. Fall back, comrades, sheath your sabres, and finish your luncheon, for we march at sunset,"

said the captain, twisting his short moustache; "but what am I to understand by all this, mademoiselle?"

"That he saved my life—my honour—scarcely four-and-twenty hours ago," said she, emphatically.

"*Sacré!* he nearly took both my life and honour this morning," said the chevalier, with a grimace.

"And he is wounded—severely, too—the poor fellow!" she added, in a voice of tender commiseration.

"What! is this the soldier of whom you were just speaking—he who saved you from that rascal Hautois, on the night St. Solidore was cannonaded and destroyed?" asked the hussar, with surprise.

"The same, Monsieur de Boisguiller, and I demand that here, on my own threshold, his life shall be respected."

“So be it, mademoiselle; for your sake, I would spare the lives of the whole British army, if such were your wish—assuredly it should not be *mine*,” said the captain, bowing low, with a tender glance in his eye.

“I thank you, M. le Chevalier,” replied the lady, laughing.

“And I congratulate you, M. le soldat, on having such an intercessor,” said the Frenchman, making a merit of necessity, and with somewhat of apparent frankness presenting his hand to me.

At that moment the whole place, the chateau with its turrets, the chevalier and the lady, appeared to whirl round me; the light went from my eyes, and darkness seemed to descend in its place; I made a wild clutch at a railing to prevent myself from falling, but failed; and, sinking on the steps that led to the en-

trance, remember no more of that interview.

For several days after this, all was confusion or all oblivion to me.

I was delirious and in a burning fever.

CHAPTER IV.

MY NURSE.

WHERE was I?

My next recollection, as the world came slowly back to me, or I to it, was the circumstance of finding myself in a small octagonal chamber, which was hung with pretty, but rather gaudy pictures of saints, in long scarlet or blue garments; there were St. Peter with his keys, St. Andrew with his cross, St. Catherine with her wheel, and St. Malo with something else. There were also a crucifix and little font of Delft ware hung on the wall near me.

I was in a bed that was prettily draped

by snow-white curtains, which hung from a ring in the ceiling, and formed a complete bell-tent around me, but were festooned back on one side. The soft pillows were edged with narrow lace.

The sun of the summer noon shone through the vine and ivy shaded lattice, which was open, and the hum of the honey bee, with the sweet perfume of summer flowers, came in together on the soft and ambient air.

Close at hand stood a *guéridon*, as the French name those little round tables which have three feet and one stem; and thereon were some phials, a vase of flowers, and a silver cup, which suggested to me, somehow, an idea of medicine.

I passed a hand across my brow; it was painful to the touch, and throbbed. My eyes were hot and heavy; my hand looked pale, thin, and white—quite unlike

what it usually was ; hence I must have been long ill—but *where?*

I strove to rise, that I might look forth from the window ; but the effort was too much for me yet, and I sank back on my pillow.

I seemed to have had strange dreams of late—dreams of my brief soldiering ; of the burning of the shipping ; the faces and voices of Charters, Kirkton, and others had come distinctly—especially poor Tom's (the “ stickit minister,” as the Greys named him), and the words of his song lingered in my ear :—

“ Why, soldiers, why,
Should we be melancholy, boys,
Whose business 'tis to die ?”

I had strange recollections of a warlike encounter with old Nathan Wylie in a wood in Brittany, and shooting him there, to save my cousin Aurora, whom he

was tying to a tree. Then my wound from the charger's hoof, and the events subsequent thereto, gradually and coherently unfolded themselves before me. But *where* was I, and to whom indebted?

Some one moved near me; I was certain there was the fall of a gentle foot—of one who stepped on tiptoe.

“Who is there?” I asked in English, and then repeated the question in French.

“Ah, you are awake—awake at last!” said a soft voice, in the latter tongue.

“Who speaks?”

“*C'est moi*—'tis only me,” replied a girl whose face was familiar to me, as she drew back the curtain.

“Angelique?” said I, with an effort.

“Yes, Angelique; how droll—you know my name, monsieur!

It was the pretty Bretonne, with her scanty bodice and spotlessly white habit-

shirt; her black eyes beaming with kindness and pleasure; her dark hair surmounted by her high linen coif of a fashion old as the days of Charles VIII.

“You know me—you are sensible at last,” she continued; “ah, how happy mademoiselle will be to hear of this?”

“Who is she?”

“Ah, good heavens—is it possible—don’t you know—Mademoiselle de Broglie, your protectress?”

“And you?”

“I have the honour to be her *soubrette*—her friend almost, for we are foster children. Every morning and every night I made a sign of the cross on your forehead with the holy water from my font, and I knew that it would cure you, even if everything else failed.”

“Cure me—I have, then, been ill?”

“*O! mon Dieu—so ill!*” shrugging

her white shoulders and clasping her little hands.

“But say, Mademoiselle Angelique, pray where am I?”

“In my room.”

“Yours?”

“Oui, monsieur—there is nothing wonderful in that, is there?”

“And this bed?”

“It is *mine*,” said she, smiling.

“You quite bewilder me,” said I, with a sigh.

Her dark eyes and white teeth shone, as she burst into a fit of laughter, and said :

“*Ah, mon Dieu*, what would Jacquot—the jealous Jacquot—think, if he knew that a strange man had occupied my bed for two weeks?”

“Have I been here so long?”

“Yes, monsieur—you have been very ill.”

“ And you—you——”

“ I have been occupying the apartments of Mademoiselle de Broglie; ah, good heaven, what were you thinking of?” said the *soubrette*, with another merry laugh. “ You occupy my room in the Chateau of Bourgneuf, belonging to the Countess Ninon, mother of the young count, who now is fighting under Maréchal de Broglie in Germany.”

“ Would Boisguillers’ Hussars really have killed me, alone and defenceless as I was?”

“ Killed you, my poor child? of course they would.”

“ Are they still here?” I asked, with natural anxiety.

“ *Ma foi!* no—they have long since been gone in pursuit of the English, who are flying in all directions towards the sea. These Hussars are very ferocious. Some

of them are contributions from the *Fours* of Paris, and valuable contributions to the army *they* are, as every one knows."

"*Fours*—I know not what you mean."

"Indeed!"

"No, I assure you," said I, laying my hand by chance upon hers.

"*Ma foi!* it is quite true what Père Celestine says—nothing is taught in England but heresy. The *Fours* in Paris are places of confinement, formed by a Monsieur d'Argenson, wherein all wanderers and vagabonds found in the streets are shut up, till the best are drafted off to the army, and several of these choice recruits fell to the lot of M. de Boisguiller. So you had an escape, my poor boy; they would positively have eaten you!"

"You are very patronising, Angelique," said I, amused by the girl's manner; "pardon me, but how old are you?"

“One year older than my mistress.”

“And she will be——”

“Nineteen by the next feast of St. Malo; but hush, you must not talk any more. You are looking quite flushed already; now taste this.”

In perfect innocence she put her plump white arm round my neck, raised my head upon her pretty shoulder, took the silver cup from the *guéridon*, and poured between my lips some of the cooling liquid it contained.

“You are kind to me as a sister,” said I.

“And I have nursed you so long, that I quite feel like one.”

Her large dark eyes looked kindly into mine, and I could see my face reflected in them.

“So long?” I murmured.

“Yes; fourteen days and fourteen nights.”

“ Ah, how can I ever repay all this ?”

“ By trying to sleep, and sleep you must,” said she ; then laying my head gently on the pillow, she withdrew her arm, and closing my eyelids playfully with her fingers, said again in my ear, “ Sleep ;” and adding, “ Père Celestine tells us that St. Paul said ‘ all kisses were not holy,’ but there can be no harm in *these*.” And touching each eyelid with her cherry lip, she patted me on the cheek and glided away.

But the tumult of thought banished sleep, and indeed she left me very much awake.

CHAPTER V.

NEWS OF THE ARMY.

FOR two days that succeeded, the kindness and attention of my little French nurse were undiminished, and on the third a soft dressing-gown was brought to me, and I found myself seated in an easy-chair at the open window, with a view of the distant hills, and in a fair way to convalescence.

Was the pretty *soubrette* in love with me, or was her peculiar manner merely the impulsive nature of the Breton, together with genuine pity for a helpless fellow-creature—a poor young soldier—whom she had nursed? Of course it was,

for otherwise she would not have spoken so frankly or so frequently of her lover, Jacquot Tricot.

Notwithstanding the favours then heaped on me by fortune, such is the perversity of human nature, that instead of being grateful for them, at times, as I lay there, helpless, wounded, weary and alone, thinking of the past, of what I was, and what I should have been, something of the sullenness of despair stole into my heart, and I actually longed for death to rid me of all further trouble, or care for the future. But to die there unknown, and so far, far away from the sequestered churchyard, where in a pastoral glen upon the Scottish Border, my father and mother lay side by side, with the green mounds that covered them within sound of the silver Tweed, was not the end I had so long anticipated.

Though a soldier, I was but a boy; and amid my loneliness in that foreign land, I wept for the mother of whom I had known so little, and hoped that from her place in heaven she was watching over me, and perhaps could see me there.

Thought, reflection, and memory more frequently rendered me fierce than sad, and then I closed my eyes, as if to shut out the light and the world itself.

During one of these dreamy paroxysms of bitterness, a soft hand was laid gently on my flushed forehead. I looked up, and saw a lady—a lovely young girl—with the soubrette beside me.

She was Jacqueline de Broglie! I strove to rise and make some due obeisance, but by an unmistakable gesture she excused or rather restrained me.

When I had first seen this noble-

looking girl, her hair was dishevelled, her dress was torn and disordered, her face was pale and distorted by fear, and her eyes red and swollen by weeping. Now I beheld her perfectly calm, self-possessed, and richly-apparelled, for her dress was of orange-coloured satin trimmed with black Maltese lace, and it well became the purity of her complexion and the intense darkness of her eyes and hair, every tress of which bore evidence of the skilful hands of Angelique. At first I thought her stately in bearing and very pretty in feature, but as we conversed, she rapidly became beautiful, and dangerously so, as her expressive face lit up with animation.

Her smile was lovely, winning, and childlike; it was the true gift of nature, but there was a singular combination of boldness and extreme delicacy in the contour of her features. Her forehead was

broad rather than high; the curve of her nostril was noble; her mouth and chin full of sweetness and decision. Add to these, a wonderful mass of rich dark hair, in all the luxuriance of girlhood, and you see Jacqueline.

She drew in a chair and seated herself near me, while Angelique stood behind. She expressed her satisfaction to find that I was recovering, but added that the observance of the greatest secrecy was necessary; that to save me from the rough peasantry, who were infuriated by our wanton irruption into Brittany, she had kept me concealed in a wing of the chateau—a portion appropriated by herself and Angelique. She mentioned that to deceive alike the servants of the family, the neighbouring peasantry, and the Hussars of the Chevalier de Boisguiller, it had been given out that I was con-

veyed away in M. le Curé's *désobligeant* to Dol; while in fact, by the exertions of the curé and Angelique, I had been supported to my present room when in a state of insensibility, and had remained there in secrecy to the great risk of my own life, and of the honour of my protectresses if discovered. This was the plain and unvarnished story, though Jacqueline worded it in a more delicate and gentle manner.

“I am most grateful to you, mademoiselle,” said I, “for your kindness, your charity to me.”

“Kindness—charity! Why such cold words? *Mon Dieu!* monsieur, do not talk thus. Could I do less than, at every hazard to save and protect one who saved and protected me?” she exclaimed, bending her dark and beautiful eyes on mine with an expression of half-reproach and

inquiry which made my heart throb almost painfully, for I was still weak and faint.

“And I have trespassed, intruded on your hospitality for so many days. In that time what may have been the fortune of war with my comrades? And madame your aunt; did she escape that night at St. Solidore?”

“Yes; fortunately she reached St. Malo by a boat, and has not yet returned; so at present I am lady supreme here—*châtelaine* of Bourgneuf.”

“I have been ill—very ill, and must have lost much blood,” said I, as the room seemed to whirl round me; “who has been my doctor?”

“Angelique, with my assistance. There are no doctors nearer than Rennes, the nuns of St. Gildas excepted, and they could not be taken into our confidence, though good Père Celestine was. So what was

to be done, but to seclude you here at the top of the house and trust to Heaven and your youth for recovery."

"Dear Mademoiselle de Broglie, all this was more than I had any reason to expect of you—more than human kindness! Had I died here, what would you have done?"

"Prayed for you," was the reply; "but ah, don't speak of such a thing!"

"How the child talks!" said Angelique; "Monsieur de Boisguiller's Hussars are playful lambs when compared to our Breton peasants—our woodcutters and charcoal-burners. They would have torn you limb from limb had they caught you. *Ma foi!* yes—and they would storm the chateau, perhaps, if they knew you were in it, as one would crack a' nutshell to get at the kernel."

"How far are we from the hills of Paramé?"

“About fifteen leagues,” replied Mademoiselle de Broglie; “but why do you ask?”

“Because our camp was there, mademoiselle.”

“My poor friend, you are not aware of what has taken place since fortune cast you almost dying at our door.”

“A battle has been fought!”

“No; for the Duke of Marlborough, who lacks the skill of his great namesake, on hearing that certain forces were marching against him, under Monseigneur le Duc d’Aiguillon, Governor of Brittany, withdrew his troops from Dol and Paramé, and retreating with all speed to the bay of Cancele, embarked his whole forces there on the 12th of this month, and sailed for England.”

“Are all gone?” I inquired, with irrepressible agitation.

“All—save the dead and you.”

“And I am left here!” I exclaimed, overcome with consternation.

“With *us*,” replied the lady with a pouting smile.

“True, mademoiselle; my exclamation is alike ungrateful and ungallant; what matter is one poor trooper more or less.”

“However, monsieur may soon see his friends again,” continued Mademoiselle de Broglie, “for they still menace our poor province of Brittany. So stormy has been the weather, that it was not until the 21st of this month the fleet got clear of the coast of France. On the 25th it was visible off Hâvre de Grace, which M. Marlborough bravely enough reconnoitred in an open cutter; but Heaven favoured us with another tempest, and the British were blown out to sea. On the 27th——”

“Yesterday!”

“Only yesterday, as the Chevalier de

Boisguiller informed me this morning, they came to anchor within two miles of Cherbourg, and hoisted out some flat-bottomed boats with the English guards to attack the forts of Quêrqueville and L'Hommet; but again kind Heaven——”

“With St. Malo and St. Suliac,” interposed the soubrette.

“Sent a storm, so the attempt was abandoned, and Monsieur Howe stood off to sea, where many of his transports were dashed to pieces.”

“Many must have perished, and among them may be some of my dear friends!” said I, sadly.

“I hope not, monsieur. But your people should not have landed in Brittany, which has ever been the best bulwark of France—‘La Bretagne, Brettonnante,’ as we say. When the wild Norseman menaced our shores, in the days of King Dagobert,

it was here they met with the most bloody resistance. Here Bertrand de Guesclin routed the English in the days of Charles VI., and here, too, were they defeated in the days of Charles VII. by Arthur Count of Richemont, who was Constable of France and Duke of Bretagne; while in the last century your fleets were swept from our shores by those of Du Guay Trouin. So excuse me saying, *mon ami*, that you were most unwise to attack our old Celtic province of Brittany."

I could scarcely conceal a smile at this little bit of gasconade, when I remembered how much mischief we had done to government property, the ships and stores we had destroyed, unopposed by any armed force save a few hussars; but the loveliness of the lips that spoke repressed the rising spirit of retort.

“ However,” she added, smiling, “ I am a Parisienne—*not* a Bretonne.”

“ And why—why——”

“ What, monsieur le soldat ?”

“ Why banished to this wild province ?”

“ I am not banished, as you unpleasantly term it,” said she, colouring ; “ but while my father is at the head of an army in Germany, he prefers that I should reside here, with my aunt, Madame de Bourgneuf. But we have talked too long, and I must have wearied you.”

“ You, mademoiselle !” I was beginning, when she rose and said—

“ Another day I will visit you, so, for the present, adieu.”

I was no longer the bashful boy who had so timidly confessed his love to little Ruth Wylie. A few months of soldiering had rubbed the rust completely off me. Thus, when this French girl, with all her

imposing presence, her long train, and her hair *à la marquise*, presented her hand to me, I pressed it to my lips with an air so tender and withal so perfectly confident, that she withdrew it rather hastily and retired.

I was again alone.

Strange and mysterious was the power that lurked in those lovely eyes—in the slow droop of the fringed lids, and their upward sweep when they flashed in smiles upon me.

I lay back in my easy-chair and closed my eyes, but they still seemed to see the face and form of Jacqueline de Broglie.

CHAPTER VI.

BOURGNEUF.

THE chateau of Bourgneuf, within which I so singularly found myself an inhabitant, stands* on the north slope of a hill, about a mile from the old highway that leads from Dol to Rennes, the capital of Brittany, where *bourg* signifies especially a village or residence.

It was a fabric of striking aspect, but of large and irregular proportions, having been built in the days of local war and turbulence, when the lords of Bourgneuf kept constantly a numerous body of

* We may now say *stood*, as it was demolished in the wars subsequent to the Revolution.

armed men about them. As the household consisted now only of the widowed countess (then at St. Malo), her niece, Mademoiselle de Broglie, and a few servants, for the young count was serving with his regiment, but a small portion of this great mansion was inhabited, and thus a melancholy stillness reigned in its long, shady galleries, great suites of apartments, and round towers, the bases of which were washed by the waters of a lake.

It had at least twenty steep conical roofs on its towers and turrets, and each of these was surmounted by a grotesque iron girouette, as the French name those vanes which were exclusively placed on the houses of their ancient nobility.

In this chateau had Isabelle of Scotland, daughter of James I., passed two nights when proceeding to Rennes, where, in

1442, she was married to Francis I., Duke of Bretagne ; where the peasants yet sing of her beauty, and the luxuriance of her golden hair.

The edifice resembled in style several of our old Scottish baronial dwellings, such as Glamis or Castle Huntly, and I afterwards learnt that it had been engrafted on an older fortress of the Counts of Brittany, in which died Alain with the Strong Beard, in the tenth century ; and like all ancient castles in France, it had its legends of blood and sorrow.

It was approached from the Rennes road through two rows of ancient yews, of vast size, towering, solemn, and sombre. Between each of these stood an orange-tree in a green tub ; and in the garden were long walks covered with closely cut grass, and a labyrinth of trim beech hedges of great height, amid the dense

leaves of which the lark and yellow-hammer built their nests undisturbed.

I remember the spacious entrance-hall, with its floor of tessellated marble, its tall cabinets of ebony and *marqueterie*, piled with rare china and Indian pagodas ; its trophies of arms, a barred helmet or dented corslet forming the centre of each ; its vast dining-hall, with deeply-recessed windows, tapestry curtains, and chairs covered with rose-coloured brocaded silk ; and in that hall, Francis II., last Duke of Brittany, had been feasted in 1459 by Roderique, Count of Bourgneuf, who was slain by a Burgundian knight six years after at the battle of Montleheri.

The long disused moat of the old mansion was overgrown by wild brambles, and masses of clematis and ivy shrouded the cannon, carriages and all, on the bastion at the outer gate. Old pieces

they were—old perhaps as the days of the League; and above the gate they had once defended, were carved the three besants of Bourgneuf, impaled with the saltire of Broglie.

Such was the old chateau in Brittany, wherein the fortune of war had so strangely cast me.

On the window of my bedroom I one day discovered the name of the author of "Gil Blas," Alain René le Sage (who was a Breton), written with a diamond, for he had once visited the chateau; this window overlooked the lake, which was covered by water-lilies, and bordered by long reedy grass, where the snipe lay concealed, and the tall heron waded in search of the gold-sealed barbel.

Beyond this lake rose some steep and rugged rocks, nearly covered by the yellow bells of the wild gorse; and on the highest

stood a haunted Druid stone, around which the fairies and the *poulpicous* (their husbands) danced on certain nights. This stone, as Angelique assured me, bore a deep mark, the cut of Excalibur, the sword of King Arthur, who is peculiarly the national hero of the Bretons.

How was I to get away from this secluded place?

By sea every port and harbour were watched and guarded. If discovered, the jealous military authorities would certainly put me to death without much inquiry, as a spy; the peasantry as an invader; the local magistrates or lords, would be sure to dispose of me as *both*.

This was a tormenting question which even my kind little nurse Angelique could in no way answer. Indeed, she detailed so many difficulties to be overcome, and so many dangers to be dared, that

there seemed a probability of my spending the term of my natural life at the chateau of Bourgneuf, unless Commodore Howe with his fleet, and His Grace of Marlborough with at least ten thousand men, paid again a special visit to Brittany, the chance of which was very slender; and a conversation, a portion of which I was compelled to overhear, between Angelique and her lover Jacquot, served still more to increase my anxiety to be gone.

He had come to announce the return of the countess in a few days, after a certain pilgrimage, in which she was to accompany Père Celestine and a train of devotees to the Hole of the Serpent, and see the silver cross of St. Suliac dipped three times in the lonely cave of La Guivre, a famous religious superstition of the Bretons.

What I overheard took place on the fourth day of my convalescence.

“So you are sulky and in a pet, Monsieur Jacquot?” said the soubrette, pouting, with her hands in the pockets of her little apron.

“Perchance I have reason to be so, Mademoiselle Angelique,” replied the other, with his hands thrust into his breeches pockets.

“You think yourself very clever, no doubt!”

“*Parbleu!* what if I do?”

“I have heard that when at school——”

“Bah! don’t talk of our days at school. All clever men are dunces there.”

“A clever boy *you* must have been!”

“*Morbleu!*” growled Jacquot; “a lover does not like to be laughed at.”

“In such a humour, Monsieur Jacquot,

what in the name of goodness brings you to me?"

"Say rather *badness*, mademoiselle, and it may better suit your disposition."

"Indeed! are you jealous of anyone again? Monsieur de Boisguiller and his hussars are now gone to Rennes."

"Yes; but the spark who walks with you on the north terrace in the twilight——"

"*O ciel!* what are you saying?"

"Yes, and whom I have caught so often lurking among the shrubbery and in the avenue at night; he, at least, is *not* gone to Rennes. An ugly fellow he is too, with a mark like a bullet-hole in each cheek. Eh, Mademoiselle Angelique, what say you to this?"

I did not hear the girl's reply, and they moved away from the room adjoining mine; but I had heard enough to cause me intense alarm. I had been twice on

the north terrace in the evening with Angelique ; but *who* was the lurker detected by Jacquot in the shrubbery and avenue ?

“ An ugly fellow with a mark like a bullet-hole in each cheek ! ” My heart foreboded in a moment that he must be the ruffian Hautois.

If he had traced me to the chateau, I was lost indeed !

No sooner was Jacquot gone, than Angelique came to me, and repeated all that I had previously heard, adding that some disguise was necessary now ; but we knew not what kind to adopt. In the meantime, my uniform—my poor red coat, which I had first donned with such pride at Rothbury—was concealed or destroyed, and she brought me a hunting-suit of green cloth from the wardrobe of the absent count.

Still complete seclusion was necessary,

and I could only take the air in the evening, on a secluded terrace or upper bartizan of the chateau, where Mademoiselle de Broglie and her attendant frequently sat in a kind of bower formed by the projection of a turret and a mass of wild roses, and where they read, chatted, or worked.

I had the pleasure of spending several evenings with Mademoiselle de Broglie there, and with each of these lovely summer evenings, when the purple shadow of the chateau fell far across the weedy lake, whose waters rippled in opal tints, and when the Druid monolith on the opposite rocks shone like a pillar of flame in the crimson light of the setting sun, it seemed to me that I was becoming less and less anxious about my escape from Bourgneuf, my flight from Brittany, and my return to the army.

Why was this? I asked my heart, and could only look for an answer in the quiet deep eyes of Jacqueline.

Her emerald ring was still on my finger, and as I looked at it again and again, and then on the lovely donor, the words of Charters, when I first showed him the ring on that morning near our camp at Paramé, came back to my memory like a prediction about to be verified.

CHAPTER VII.

LOVE AND ILLUSION.

ON one of those evenings when Angelique was seated on a tabourette, working with her pretty nimble fingers a piece of lace, and when Jacqueline had tired of reading aloud the travels of the Comte de Caylus, which were then in the zenith of their fame, and had permitted the volume to drop listlessly from her hand, we began to converse on the usual topics, dread of the countess's sudden return, of her discovering me, and the means by which to escape from any Breton seaport to England. Mistrusting her discretion, it was evident that the curé of St. Solidore had not

informed her of *his* share in my concealment, or of the circumstance at all, so madam was yet in ignorance.

“Were I once clear of your cruisers from Brest and St. Malo in any boat, however small, I might reach England, or be picked up,” said I, heedless that the distance from Portsmouth to Cherbourg alone was seventy-five miles; “most loth am I to trespass further on your kindness.”

“Think of what I owe you, my life!” said Mademoiselle de Broglie, and as our hands chanced to touch each other, we both trembled without knowing why.

“I have met with so little kindness in the world, mademoiselle, that there is no chance of my stock of gratitude becoming exhausted. My birthright is that of the disinherited — obscurity, poverty, and mortification,” said I, sadly.

“Ah! What is this you tell me?”

she exclaimed, turning her fine eyes full upon me.

“ My family have made me, as it were, an Ishmael—an outcast from amid them ; but they shall find——” I clenched my teeth and paused in the act of saying something bitter, for somehow my cousin Aurora’s kind face came to memory. “ Ah ! Mademoiselle de Broglie, if there was a being in the world to whom I would lay open my whole heart—to whom I would reveal the sad story of my past life, it is to you—you to whom I owe so much.”

“ Your sad story, do you say ?”

“ Yes.”

“ At your years !” she exclaimed, while Angelique relinquished her netting, and her dark eyes dilated as she listened.

“ Yes, mademoiselle.”

“ *Ah, mon Dieu !* this is terrible !”

I paused again, for I scarcely knew what to say. Aware that all the armies of Europe had long been teeming with desperate soldiers of Fortune, the exiles of Scotland and Ireland, among whom were the claimants of many attained titles, from dukedoms and marquisates, down to simple knighthood, I felt almost ashamed to reveal my real rank, lest she might disbelieve me, and I should thus lose her esteem. I deemed it better to remain as she deemed me, the poor gentleman, the "*simple soldat*."

"Orphaned in my youth, the victim of unmerited wrong and unjust malevolence in manhood, there is not a human being save my comrades, now I hope in England, far away, to whom my heart clings—not one who cares for me, or for whom I can care——".

"Except me, I pray you, monsieur,

except me," said she, smiling, and with growing colour.

"And *me*," added Angelique.

I kissed the hand of each, and was replying,

"Gratitude for the service I rendered makes you kind, Mademoiselle de Broglie——"

"Gratitude? Well, be it so," said she, with her dark French eyes so full of expression, that my heart beat quick and wildly.

At such times, was it not strange that Aurora's image with her soft, bright English beauty always came to memory? Yet, what was Aurora Gauntlet to me, or I to her? So I thrust the obtrusive idea—the little romance of the lace handkerchief—aside, and gradually my whole heart became filled with a deep and desperate love for Jacqueline, a love I dared scarcely acknowledge to myself.

Instead of replying to her last remark, I again lifted her hand and bent my lip over it; then she immediately rose and left me, followed by Angelique.

Had I exhibited too much eagerness—had I offended her? My heart sank at the idea.

Anticipating with hope and fear the morrow, dreaming sadly or tenderly over yesterday, ever communing with himself when alone, and abstracted when with all save one, what a miserable dog is your young lover! When one grows older, and becomes a veteran in the service of King Cupid, one learns to take these matters more quietly, like an old soldier under fire.

“Hope makes us live,” says a writer; it is the secret spirit that lures us toward the future, to some mysterious time beyond the present. “Hope and sleep,”

says a proverb, "are the foes of care;" but hope follows the impulses of imagination rather than the convictions of reason, and so hope is the lover's grand ally.

I remained alone on the terrace till the red sun declined beyond the dun, dark mountains, while the breeze of evening rippled the bosom of the reedy lake, and waved the white water-lilies that floated there; nor did I retire to my lurking-place—the pretty room which Angelique had relinquished to me—until the pale crescent moon shone sharply out, from amid the deep blue of the south-western sky, and two great ravens, whose eyry was in the rocks, had winged their way across the water, from the girouettes of the chateau, where they were wont to sit and croak for hours.

I have more than once seen Angelique sign herself with the cross, on seeing

those two ravens, which she assured me were no other than the doomed souls of King Grallon and his daughter—for all the land of Brittany teems with legends of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table.

Did Jacqueline suspect the passion that now preyed upon me? By her knowing smiles, Angelique certainly *did*, and would no doubt inform her of it; then if she deemed me presumptuous, or felt the passion distasteful, would she not at least shun, if she did not expel me from the chateau?

But Jacqueline did *neither*, so day after day stole on, until my love for her became a part of my existence, for without her, life seemed *so* valueless! My passion was tender and true—so tender that I could have worshipped her, and in my secret soul I did so. The most simple

words spoken by Jacqueline—the most casual smile on her lip, dwelt long in my memory, and sank deep in my heart.

Fancies I have had for others ; but this was the passion that seemed to satisfy *every illusion*—to be the love of all loves that a poor human heart could desire ; at least I thought so *then*.

And so, amid the wild and gloomy scenery around that old and secluded chateau in Bretagne our companionship ripened from esteem and friendship into love—but oh what a hopeless passion for both !

Her image came ever, unbidden, when she was absent ; it pursued me and became a part of myself ; and where she was not, what pleasure had I ? and as my mind became filled with this new idol, my country, my duty as a loyal subject,

my honour as a soldier—liberty, all were forgotten in worshipping Jacqueline.

Alas! I was not yet twenty!

Years have come and gone since then, but never shall I forget the joy of the time, when she first sunk on my breast, and whispered in my ear, while her tears fell hot and fast—

“Yes, I love you, Basil—oh, I *do* love you! But in what can our passion end, but destruction and despair?”

CHAPTER VIII.

I BECOME A SOUBRETTE.

AMID all this, we were somewhat flurried, when, one morning in August, Madame de Bourgneuf unexpectedly drove up the long avenue to the gate of the chateau, in her old-fashioned carriage, which resembled a huge game-pic, or an antique tea-caddy on wheels, and brought tidings that the coast, from the Isle d'Ouessant to Ostend, was more than ever closely watched, as another descent of those insolent heretics, the English, was expected, for the express and envious purpose of demolishing the elegant fortifications erected by Marshal Vauban at

Cherbourg, and burning his Most Christian Majesty's fleet, then ignobly blocked up in Brest by the squadrons of Lord Anson, Sir Edward Hawke, and Commodore Howe, who, as an additional insult to France, carried brooms at their mast-heads, in token that they swept the sea!

From the Governor of Brittany she had obtained all this intelligence at St. Malo, and I immediately received it from Angelique, who, being somewhat addicted to waggery and mischief, informed me in a whisper, that "although madame, our aunt, had resided so long at St. Malo, ostensibly to pay her devotions at the famous shrine of the cathedral, it was more probably because the Duc d'Aiguillon had appointed as Governor and Commandant of St. Malo, the old Comte de Boisguiller—father of the chevalier—who, thirty years before, had been

madame's most devoted though unsuccessful lover : and now as both were free, she was not without hope of kindling his passion again—hence the old lady's devotion to the blessed bones of St. Malo ; but (added the soubrette, in the words of Jean Jacques Rousseau) who ever heard of a pair of grey-haired lovers sighing for each other ?”

Now, what the deuce was to be done with *me* ?

Madame was very strict about her domestics, and had rather austere views on the subject of men in general and lovers in particular (M. le Commandant excepted), yet, added Angelique, she always prefers as a spiritual adviser the handsome young Abbé St. Servand to old Père Celestine, of St. Solidore.

Terrified by the prospect of immediate discovery, of my ignominious expulsion,

perhaps punishment, poor Jacqueline became quite paralysed, but her spirited abigail rose superior to the occasion, and resolved that a more complete disguise, and an entirely new plan of operations were at once necessary; so she insisted that I should become, like herself, a soubrette in the household.

Her clever little fingers—for she was neat and ready handed as all French-women are—soon prepared a dress of her own for me, by letting out a tuck or two in the skirts, altering the body and so forth. Then she proceeded at once to have me attired, a feat I could never have performed for myself.

She laced me up in a pair of her own stays, a merciless process, which nearly suffocated me, and certainly caused a determination of blood to the head; “but it was absolutely necessary,” as she stated,

“that I should have a figure;” adding, as she fastened the lace, “in time I shall make you quite pretty, monsieur, and then, if Boisguiller’s hussars come this way we shall be rivals for the handsome sub-brigadier.”

“Angelique, how you talk!”

“But the hussars——”

“Don’t talk of them, pray. The thought of meeting hussars in this absurd dress makes my blood run cold.”

“Then, think of mademoiselle. *Ma foi!* a Parisian girl like her required some one to interest, to excite her, amid the gloom of this old chateau, with its big rats and terrible legends, so you came just in time to prevent her dying of *ennui*. But for Jacquot I should have fallen in love with you myself.”

She took great pains with me; a few false curls adroitly pinned on, and one of

her own tall, coif-like Breton caps, of spotless white linen, completed my head gear. She patted my chin, and thanked Heaven I wore neither beard nor moustache; then I joined her in a hearty fit of laughter, on surveying myself in a mirror.

“What would Jack Charters, Tom Kirkton, or other fellows of ours, say if they could see me thus!” was my first thought.

Angelique taught me how to seat myself, and how to hold myself when seated; how to spread or gather my skirts when ascending or descending stairs; and she burst again and again into ringing fits of laughter at the length of ankle I exhibited. At last, after being well drilled, I was taken to the drawing-room, and with a heart that certainly palpitated, and a cheek that blushed truly with shame and

ridicule, I was presented to madame, as the new attendant of mademoiselle—a girl from the wild marshes of the Morbihan.

My costume was perfect, even to the black velvet necklet, which no Breton girl is ever without.

Jacqueline grew very pale, but a smile twinkled in her tearful dark eyes, when she retired behind the chair of her aunt, who bowed politely, and surveyed me through her eyeglass, as I advanced, courtseying at every second step, my hands folded meekly across my breast, and my eyes cast modestly down, in a manner taught me by that pretty rogue, Angelique.

The idea occurred to me that a candid confession of who I was, and the weight of the mutual service Jacqueline and I had rendered each other, would have been better than the adoption of this ab-

surd and most dangerous disguise, which could only serve to complicate the perils of my present position ; but there was no resource—I was in for it now !

“ Approach, girl,” said the countess, “ come nearer me. You have a very fair skin for a girl from the Morbihan.”

“ My mother, madame, was an English woman,” said I, courtseying lower ; to have said a *Scots woman* would have served my purpose better in France, for the countess said, sharply—

“ So much the worse—so much the worse, girl ! You have, however, I hope, been well instructed in all religious duties, and never omit mass or confession.”

“ Mon Père Celestine will answer for me,” said I, confident that the good priest would protect me, whatever came to pass.

“ *Très bien !* I expect him to visit us in a few days, together with the Comte de

Boisguiller, Commandant of St. Malo.” (This reply, like a double-headed shot, was not very restoring), “but why do you require a *second* attendant, Jacqueline—is not Angelique enough for you? What is your name?”

“Basile, madame, so please you.”

“Basile what?”

(The deuce take it! I had not thought of a name.)

“Basile Gantelet,” said Angelique, replying for me.

“Your parents and family?——”

“Were poor fisher people, all carried off by the English fleet, and are now in some horrid prison.”

“The English, as Comte de Boisguiller says, it is always those pestilent English, we can neither move for them by land or sea. *Très bien!* my good girl, I am pleased with mademoiselle’s choice, and

like your modest appearance so much, that I think I shall retain you about my own person. If you please [me, I shall have your ears pierced, and present you with a pair of my own earrings at the next feast of St. Malo."

"Oh, madame, how happy I shall be to attend so dear, so delightful, so handsome a lady!" said I, courtseying thrice, but feeling, nevertheless, in no way delighted by the prospect of the ear-piercing process.

"Adieu, my child," replied the countess, with a gratified smile. "Angelique will instruct you in your new duties; and, as you are from the melancholy district of the Morbihan—the land of salt marshes, and the Montagnes Noires, of old feuds, solemn pilgrimages, and ruined castles, I shall expect you to entertain us with some droll legends of especially those wicked

little fiends the Courils and Torrigans, who infest the roads at nightfall, and make travellers dance till they die of fatigue."

Angelique hurried me away ; our interview had been most successful ! Madame de Bourgneuf was now in her sixtieth year. Few women, even in blooming England, are charming at that age ; but in France they are frequently horrible ! She could never have been beautiful at any time, and though her hazel eyes were large and bright, her shrivelled skin had the hue of an old drumhead, that had undergone the rain and marches of three campaigns ; yet, strange to say, she bore a resemblance to her beautiful niece, which made me ask tremulously in my heart, would Jacqueline ever become so plain, even if she lived to the years of old Parr ?

The countess had a profusion of real and false hair, all of snowy whiteness, always dressed *à la Marquise*, and by her ornaments, and general style of attire, it was evident that she knew not the art of growing gracefully old; but was resolved to be young, and to keep her colours flying to the last. With all this, she was a perfect repertory of old stories of the court of France, legends of the saints, and historic memories of Brittany.

I soon found that my new attire entailed upon me many annoyances. I strove to avoid all the domestics of the chateau; but the jealousy and curiosity of the women to see and to converse with the new comer—this wonderful *paysanne* of the Morbihan, who was constantly with their young mistress, who could sketch in her album, and knew *when* to turn over the leaves of her music when she played—

together with the delicate attentions paid to me by Urbain the gardener, Bertrand the porter, the valets and the coachman, became so alarming that I could scarcely quit Jacqueline's suite of apartments, or leave the chateau alone for a moment.

To all, I was a puzzle! Some said I was a clumsy Norman—a phlegmatic Fleming—a Navarrese; the men declared my bearing odd; the women, my accent to be more so; but the gardener, with his bouquets, was an admirer so devoted, that I dared never venture into the garden, or into the avenue, when he was clipping the yews, or tending his orange tubs.

Then judge of my alarm, when one day the mischievous Angelique, with her black eyebrows arched to the roots of her hair, her large eyes dilated with mock dismay, and a smile of drollery on her rosy mouth, began thus—

“Oh, Mademoiselle Basile—oh, how unfortunate you are!”

“What has happened?” I exclaimed.

“Madame has conceived a greater fancy for you than ever!”

“Indeed!” said I, drily, while smoothing my front hair, before a glass; “then I suppose she is going to have my ears pierced at last?”

“*Ma foi!* what do you think? as she is too much afraid of ghosts to repose alone, you must take the place of mademoiselle and me.”

“What! ridiculous—I shall sell out—resign—desert from the chateau!” I exclaimed, while ready to sink with alarm and anger, until the wicked wag who had invented the whole story, burst out into a fit of laughter, at the dreary expression of my face.

CHAPTER IX.

HAUTOIS.

THE absurdity and annoyance entailed by my new character, together with the study and trouble it cost me to play such a part, would have been intolerable but for the facilities it afforded me for enjoying with perfect freedom the society of Jacqueline. Thus, together we could ramble for hours, in the shady walks of the garden, and the green leafy turnings of the labyrinth, or sit in the bowers of fragrant roses, which were trained, trimmed, and cultured by my admirer, the gardener, whose name I shall long remember, was Urbain.

In the labyrinth we lost ourselves so

often that the countess one day, somewhat to the confusion of poor Jacqueline, named it the *Val sans retour*, after that in the Breton forest of Brocéliande—a mysterious path, out of which no false or fickle lover can ever return, for there the fairies raise up an impenetrable and impassable barrier. In that forest, too, say the legends, lies the tomb of Myrddyna, beneath a fatal and enchanted stone.

If the curé of St. Solidore actually paid madame the visit she spoke of, discovery was certain. I did not fear the good man much, save a severe rebuke for conduct that was unseemly; but then there was that devil of a commandant coming also from St. Malo, and already in anticipation, I felt myself a prisoner in its dreary casemates that overhung the sea!

This idea filled Jacqueline with terror.

“Give me up and leave me,” said she,

with hands clasped upon her forehead, while her tears fell fast, "to what end do we love each other, Basil?"

"True, Jacqueline—to what end indeed! But to give you up is impossible. To love you has become a part of my nature, my existence—myself; and being with you daily, has made that which was a passion, a confirmed habit."

"In mercy do not speak thus, I love you—love you dearly; yet our marriage is impossible, and I can see no future but despair."

"I know it," said I, gloomily and with clenched teeth. "Cursed be the fate that threw us together—the folly that kept me lingering here."

"Better would it have been that we had never met."

"That I had never rescued you, do you mean?"

“Or I you?” she would exclaim with a sad smile; and then a long, long kiss would close these interviews of mingled passion, joy, and pain.

One evening, after escorting Jacqueline to the door of the chateau, instead of entering with her I returned to the garden, for the purpose of dreaming over all that had passed between us, and also considering seriously the future, and what could be the end of a love so rash and desperate as ours. Twilight had set in, and from the garden I issued to the long avenue that led to the Rennes-road. It was dark and gloomy, and the clipped yews assumed all kinds of quaint and terrible forms. While loitering there, I became conscious that a man was observing me from behind one of the orange-tubs, one of which, I have said, stood between each of the yews. Having no desire to meet any one, I was

turning off hastily towards the chateau, when suddenly the lurker stepped before me, saying—

“*Pardieu*, my pretty one, it seems that he you wait for is not likly to come. Permit *me* to offer you my arm.”

He was a tall, swinging fellow of a repulsive aspect, with a long knife in his belt and a broad hat slouched over his gloomy eyes.

“Stand back, monsieur,” said I, firmly; “back, or it may be the worse for you. I am one of the household of Madame la Comtesse de Bourgneuf.”

“I know that well enough; but don’t be alarmed, my fair one—I am only a sportsman.”

“Then permit me to pass.”

“*Oui*—but I am a sportsman who looks for better game than a clumsy soubrette,” said the fellow, whom I now perceived to be tipsy.

“Indeed, monsieur.”

“*Vraiment*—perhaps Mademoiselle de Broglie herself. Does she often promenade here in the evening?”

Gathering my skirts up to my knees, as they sorely impeded me, I was running quickly away, encumbered by my stays and the paddings with which Angelique in her zeal had furnished them, when this man, who was both strong and active, overtook and confronted me again.

“Stop—speak!” he thundered out with a strange oath which I had somewhere heard before. “*Pardieu*, my saucy one, I shall teach you that I have not dragged a chain in the casemates of St. Malo, and at the aqueducts of Dol, for nothing.”

“You are——” said I, gasping.

“Theophile Hautois,” said he, closing the question.

I was thunderstruck, and the memory

of Captain Brook, of the outrage he had contemplated with regard to Jacqueline, and my own narrow escape from his deadly *couteau de chasse*, flashed at once upon my memory. I was unarmed, defenceless, and sadly encumbered by my new costume, though at the same time it effectually disguised me.

I paused for a moment to recover my breath, and then concentrating all my strength and fury in one decisive blow, dealt fairly between the eyes, I knocked the ponderous ruffian down like a nine-pin, and, darting off towards the chateau, reached the vestibule in a state so breathless and excited, that any one who saw me would have deemed me a most timid and gentle woman in reality.

What Master Hautois thought, on receiving such a knock on the head from a fair hand, it may be difficult to conceive ;

but I saw no more of him for some time, nor could he be found, though the whole of the grounds were immediately and rigorously searched by Urbain and a party of armed men.

That this daring outlaw should prowl so near the chateau filled Jacqueline and her maid with the greatest alarm; and for myself, I took the precaution to carry about with me a small pistol, the charge of which I frequently renewed.

In the boudoir of the countess (a charming little circular chamber which opened off the drawing-room, and was entirely hung with rose-coloured silk, and had long windows which overlooked the garden and labyrinth), I was detailing to her my adventure in the avenue, and was also employed in the manly occupation of winding a skein of silk for some piece of work which her niece and Angelique were manu-

facturing for the cathedral of St. Malo, when the countess said to me—

“Basile, my child, you look very sad.”

“Do I seem so, madame?”

“Yes,” she continued, surveying me through her glass—a process which always made me wince; “I can read a sad expression in your eyes.”

“It may be so, madame, there are few hearts without some hidden sorrow—some veiled secret.”

“But you are so young! Ah, I see, you are in love!”

“It may be so,” said I again, with a furtive glance at Jacqueline, near whom I was kneeling, and who grew pale as her aunt spoke.

“With some one far away?”

“Do not press me, madame; suffice that it is a mad and almost hopeless love—hopeless as regards its future,” said

I, bitterly, while Jacqueline gave me a secret and imploring glance. "I love, madam, how dearly and how deeply, is known only to Heaven and myself. There—that is my secret—that my hidden sorrow and joy—joy for the delight it gives me, and sorrow for its future."

The face of Jacqueline beamed with pleasure, and her eyes sparkled as she bent her flushed face over her needlework.

"I would that M. Jacquot would speak thus of me," said Angelique, "I shall pull his ears some day, till he does so."

The old lady politely asked pardon of me for her curiosity, and was proceeding to detail some of her own early experiences and to rehearse the number of Counts, Abbés, Chevaliers, and Grand Crosses of St. Louis, who had sighed and died for her, when a servant suddenly announced the Chevalier de Boisguiller;" then we

heard the clank of a sabre with the jingle of spurs, and that gay hussar in his brilliant uniform, all gold braid and bell buttons, with his fur cap in one hand, and the other caressing his dearly cherished moustache, entered, bowing and smiling to us all.

He was *en route*, he said, with his troop, from Rennes to the coast, and as he would pass near St. Malo, he had galloped on in front to pay his respects at the chateau, and obtain the honour of conveying any message for his father, the commandant, from the Countess Ninon—one who far excelled the Ninon of the preceding age.

There was mischief lurking in the handsome fellow's eyes as he said all this. He soon detected an impudent smile on the lips of Angelique, and, ere long, I found him eyeing me sharply through

his glass, and I felt a horrible dread lest *he* should recognise me, or discover my sex.

I was certain the crisis had come, when the hussar captain said—

“By-the-by, my dear mademoiselle, what did you make of the Englishman, whose life you saved from my fellows, when we were last here?”

“The young man who saved my life from Hautois?” asked Jacqueline, slowly.

“Yes, ’twas turn about, it would seem.”

“Monsieur le Chevalier, he was taken to St. Malo,” said Angelique, who came to the rescue of her mistress.

“And since then, my girl?”

“We have heard no more of him.”

“’Tis well,” said the chevalier, who, as his eye chanced again to fall on me, caused my heart to swell alternately with alarm and anger. “Those English folks are about to pay us a visit again.”

“Again—*O mon Dieu!*” we all exclaimed together.

“More shipping and troops are being concentrated at their rendezvous of both Portsmouth and Plymouth,” said he, while playing with the gold tassels of the cord which held the furred pelisse on his left shoulder; “but my father is ready for them at St. Malo, and Brest and Cherbourg are in excellent hands.”

Though reflection or thought evidently but seldom troubled our hussar, he now proceeded to make some remarks with which I, mentally, coincided.

“*Parbleu!* what did the King of Great Britain propose to gain by invading France with a force of about twelve thousand men? He takes a town or so, which he cannot keep—he effects a landing under great difficulties on our most dangerous coast, and lands only to embark again.”

“The British did not invade France with the hope of conquest,” said Jacqueline; “but to harass us and destroy our arsenals it would appear.”

“Well, fair cousin, it may be so; but as the Duc de Marlborough is not like his namesake who fought against the Grand Monarque, I don’t believe our courtiers at Paris or Versailles were very much alarmed by this recent landing of a handful of British at Cuncalle Bay. At Versailles, they quite laughed at the idea of John Bull’s vast armament to burn some fifteen or twenty old crazy hulks at St. Solidore.”

“Fifteen or twenty, monsieur,” said I, with unwise pique; “I thought the British destroyed eighty-six vessels of all kinds, and sank or destroyed two hundred and thirty-four pieces of cannon.”

“*Peste!* you are well informed, my fair

soubrette," said the captain, fixing his glass in his eye, and giving me a steady stare, while Jacqueline looked at me imploringly, and with intense alarm.

"Peace, Basile," said the countess, severely.

"But so many troops are now entering Brittany from all points," resumed the chevalier, "to strengthen the hands of the Duc d'Aiguillon, that I don't think our island neighbours will be so rash as to visit us again."

Kettledrums were now heard in the distance. I felt my cheek flush—my ears tingle at the sound; and when I looked up from my skein of silk, the keen eyes of Boisguiller were still regarding me.

"Already I must tear myself away, countess," said he, rising; "my troop will be here immediately."

"Why not halt for a time?"

“Nay, madame, a hundred men and horses are too many to trespass on your generosity, as our advanced party did before. Adieu, mademoiselle!” said he, kissing the hand of Jacqueline with a tenderness that certainly was *not* bestowed upon the yellow fingers of the Aunt Ninon; “adieu, pretty Angelique—and you, what is your name, mademoiselle?”

“Basile.”

“Have you any tender messages for the Queen’s Own Hussars? Believe me, girls, you are both too pretty to become the helpmates of charcoal-burners, and Breton woodcutters; so think of *us* sometimes.”

Then with a low bow the chevalier pirouetted out of the room, and my heart beat more freely when I heard his horse galloping down the avenue.

CHAPTER X.

THE BOUDOIR.

FROM a window I saw the hussars defiling by threes, past the end of the long and stately avenue of yews—along the road that led from Rennes. I heard the patter of the kettledrums, and saw the glittering sabres, the rich uniforms, the waving plumes, the braided pelisses, the gaudy housings of the horses, the sky-blue standard with the three *fleurs de lys*, that waved in the centre of the troop; and my heart swelled with proud and regretful emotions, as I thought of my present absurd and dangerous position, of my absent comrades—the lads who boasted

themselves "second to none," and with whom I had twice ridden sword in hand, through the ranks of Boisguiller's Hussars.

That the chevalier was an ardent admirer of Jacqueline I perceived but too plainly; yet I did not dread him much as a rival, especially as the Catholic Church will not—unless in very particular instances—permit the marriage of cousins, and they were both within the forbidden degrees. But I dreaded his discovering me—his probable revenge for the insult implied by my residence so near his cousin; and yet this chevalier was a handsome, brave, and gallant fellow.

I was roused from my reverie by a soft hand that was laid caressingly on mine. I turned, and met the pretty face and dark eyes of Angelique.

“Twice, monsieur,” said she, “I thought our rogue of a chevalier had discovered you ; what eyes he has !”

“Tell me, Angelique : this chevalier, who was so anxious to have me knocked on the head when I first came here, does he—does he——”

“What, kiss me occasionally ? Of course, every one does so sometimes—that is, except you.”

“I can soon make amends for this unpardonable omission.”

“That will do ; *one* is enough, in that dress especially. Well ?”

“Does he love your mistress ?”

“He is her cousin. Of course he loves her.”

“The devil !”

“But every one does.”

“Does she love him ?”

“Can *you* ask me that ?” said the

Breton girl, turning on me with her black eyes flashing.

I was silent, for I now knew that the prudent Angelique was completely the mistress of our dangerous secret.

“Well has propinquity done its work!” thought I.

I found the Countess Ninon very amusing (though fond of recurring with sorrowful recollections to her first love, a Scottish captain in the Irish Dragoons of Lord Clare, who had fallen in battle somewhere); and notwithstanding the little vanities incident to her years, sex, and country, her conversation was instructive. Thus, while attending her and her niece in their walks, &c., I listened with pleasure to her anecdotes of the court of Louis XIV., and even of that of Louis XIII., which she had gleaned from her mother.

At night, when the perfumed wax-candles were lighted in her boudoir, and I was busy with my skeins of silk, while she and Angelique plied their needles on the embroidery for that Right Reverend Father, the Bishop of St. Malo, she would tell us many a strange old story of the Breton wars between Guy of Thouars and Philip Augustus; of the enchanted sea-ducks that were neither fish nor flesh, but grew between the planks of ships that sailed in Breton waters; of the toad-stones that were found in the mountains, and proved a sovereign remedy for all manner of poisons; of the terrors of the Black Forest of Hunandaye; of the buried cities of Is and Douarnenez; of the ghosts that shrieked in the ancient vaults that lie between Rieux and Redon, and the subterranean torrent of St. Aubyn du Cormier.

She knew also many strange and wild legends of the great stones that stud all the land so thickly from Lorient to Quiberon—rising out of lonely heaths that are covered with holly and thistles, like that great block which marks, near Morlaix, where a peasant was devoured by the Moon, for blaspheming her. She told of the dreadful shipwrecks the Point of Raz had witnessed; of the Bay of the Dead, and the island of Sein, a melancholy sandholm, whereon neither grass nor trees will grow, and which was, of old, the abode of Celtic witches, who sold fair winds or foul to the Breton mariners.

I remember being particularly struck with a strange story which she related of the famous Ninon de L'Enclos, who is said to have preserved her beauty until she numbered ninety years.

We were seated in her boudoir. It

was the fourth evening of my obnoxious masquerading. The eternal piece of embroidery for the bishop was finished at last, and Angelique was busy with the soft, silky, and luxuriant black hair of Jacqueline, which she had unloosed, and was pinning up for the night, before a large mirror, while I sat on a *tabourette* at some distance, contemplating with secret joy and admiration the beauty of one I loved so much, and envying her *soubrette*, a service which I could neither imitate nor perform.

It would seem as if the beautiful girl felt some coquettish joy in the contemplation of herself, for after a pause she said to her aunt—

“Tell me honestly, my dear aunt, am I as pretty as you could wish?”

“Quite so, Jacqueline.”

“And *you*, Basile?”

I could only clasp my hands in silence.

“Yet,” resumed Madame, “you are not half so pretty as I was at the same age.”

“When Milord Clare’s Irish dragoons lay at Versailles?” said Jacqueline, quickly adding, “of course not, dear aunt; I could not hope to excel you. The old Comte de Boisguiller is always polite enough to tell me so.”

“Does he indeed? Dear M. le Comte!” said Madame, applying a gold vinaigrette to her nose to conceal a gratified smile. “You are charming, Jacqueline. But remember that faces which are pretty in youth often become hideous in age.”

“You were beautiful, aunt?”

“Like yourself, Jacqueline. When Lord Clare’s——”

“I do not care; I shall marry when young and lovely, and when old and hideous my husband cannot put me away.”

“But he may love some one else.”

Jacqueline glanced at me coquettishly between the masses that overhung her face, and her smile made my heart beat lightly and joyously.

“Oh, to be like Ninon de l’Enclos,” said she; “always lovely!”

“Always?”

“Yes, dear aunt.”

“Do you know the true, the terrible story of the reckless woman you speak of?” asked the countess, gravely.

“No; does it convey a moral?”

“A most severe one; shall I tell it you?”

“If you please, dear aunt, and if it is not too dreadful,” replied Jacqueline, as she ran her slender white fingers through the masses of dark hair that overhung her shoulders.

Then without further preamble, the

garrulous old countess commenced the following narrative, which, to say truth, I thought a very strange one; but the subject of it was the bosom-friend of Madame de Maintenon, of the Marquise de Sévigné, and moved in the best society of the very singular Paris of her day.

CHAPTER XI.

STORY OF NINON DE L'ENCLOS.

NINON, I have said, had lovers when verging on her ninetieth year! Whence came this mystery? Like Poppæa Sabina, the second wife of Nero, Ninon is averred to have preserved her wondrous beauty unimpaired to extreme old age, by using baths of asses' milk; but it was neither these, nor the famous cosmetic, so long known among our Parisian belles as *Crème de l'Enclos*, the component parts of which are milk, lemon-juice and brandy, which preserved the dazzling complexion and delicate skin of Ninon for so many years untouched by Time; but a spell

wrought upon her by the great master of evil, whom she served throughout a long and wasted life.

It would seem as if Time, the destroyer of all things, failed to impair the charms of Ninon, at least entirely, for he could not deprive her of her marvellous power to win and seduce; thus, at her age of ninety, does not the Abbé Chaulieu say? "that Cupid had retreated even into the lines of her forehead." Hence in age she was worshipped for her beauty, by the *grandsons* of those who had loved her in the bloom of her youth!

Ninon was born at Paris in May, 1616, during the reign of Louis XIII. Her father was a gallant, but dissipated gentleman of Touraine, who had fought in the battles of Henry the Great. Her mother was Mademoiselle de Raconis, a lady of Orleans, from whom she inherited

her beauty and gaiety of disposition. Monsieur de l'Enclos was passionately fond of music, and inspired his daughter with the same taste, so that in girlhood she became mistress of the lute, the harp and guitar; but Madame de l'Enclos, who destined her for a convent, was averse to such accomplishments as frivolities, and was careful to take her daughter to Notre Dame twice daily—that is, to morning mass and to evening vespers; but little Ninon always substituted for her missal some little volume of poetry, or a romance which she read under her veil, as she knelt before the altar, thus her responses were often very odd ones.

Before she was ten years of age she had all Charron and Montaigne by heart, and spoke with fluency the Spanish and Italian languages.

In her fifteenth year, the death of her

parents left Ninon the mistress of her own actions, with a fortune of ten thousand livres per annum.

Her loveliness was then divine! Her form was finely proportioned, her complexion singularly delicate; her face was a fine oval, and long dark lashes with drooping lids gave a charming softness to her sparkling hazel eyes. Her hair was a rich golden brown, and fell about her neck in wavy profusion. Her little nostrils, her rosy mouth and chin were perfect!

In temper she was at times violent and imperious, and her disposition had this peculiarity, that while even eager and lively about trifles that affected herself, she was too often carelessly cold and selfishly indifferent about all that concerned others.

She was born to be a coquette, and the

spirit of gallantry, with the desire to charm, win and enslave, pervaded her whole existence. She was the centre of Parisian fashion ; lovers she had in plenty, and if she desired to marry, some of the proudest titles in France were at her disposal ; but Ninon, whom her mother had destined for the service of God, preferred a life of perfect freedom—such freedom as the days of Louis “the Just” permitted, with independence and intrigue—to live, not for others, but for herself alone.

We shall see how all this ended.

One night in the year 1633, she was seated alone in a room of her house in the Rue de Parlement, behind the Palais-Royal. Her lovers, the Counts de Coligné and Jersey, and her favourite friends, the Comtesse de la Suze, D’Olonne, and the Duchesse de Bouillon—Mancini, the cripple Abbé Scarron, M. de Sévigné, and

others, had all retired and departed in their carriages or sedans, and Ninon was now seated before a mirror in that famous boudoir, the walls of which, as history tells us, were decorated with frescoes, that illustrated the story of Cupid and Psyche.

Ninon was now only in her seventeenth year. She observed that she was very pale, that her round cheeks were colourless, and some remarks made by the Abbé Scarron on the decay of youth, the fading of beauty, the gradual advance of years, made the young girl thoughtful; and she was too intelligent and too well-read to be without reflection, so she thought of the *future* with forebodings, for already had late hours and gaiety robbed her of her roses.

Arrayed for conquest, who at that time could have competed with Ninon? Round her slender neck she wore the *collet-monti*,

or standing collar, which disappeared with Louis XIV. ; her fine hair was delicately sprinkled with perfumed maréchal powder; a kissing-patch, like a tiny star, was in one of the dimples at the corner of her rosy mouth, and her robe of silver gauze was looped in ample festoons, to display the petticoat of crimson brocade beneath.

Would a time ever come when she would be covered with wrinkles, like the Comtesse de la Suze, or when her most passionate lover, the gay young English Count of Jersey* would weary of her? Oh, *mon Dieu!* it was not to be thought of with patience.

At that moment Guillot, her valet, tapped at the door of her boudoir.

“Who is there?” she asked, impatiently.

* William Villiers, Viscount Grandison, then known in France by that title.

“A stranger, who would speak with you, mademoiselle,” replied Guillot.

“A stranger, and at this hour! What is his name?”

“He declines to give it.”

“Ridiculous! Is he armed?”

“No, mademoiselle.”

“Is he young or handsome?”

“No, mademoiselle; he is very old and shabbily dressed.”

“Then say I am ill, weary, busy, engaged with company, or what you please, Guillot; only do not trouble me with him.”

The valet bowed and retired, but soon returned.

“He says, mademoiselle, that he knows you are alone, that you are neither ill nor weary, nor busy, for which reason he has chosen to visit you at present. That he has come from a long distance, and has a

secret of vast importance to communicate to you."

"A pertinacious old fool!" muttered Ninon; "but admit him."

The stranger entered, and with a cunning leer in his eyes surveyed the chamber, particularly the frescoes of Cupid and Pysche, and then they rested on Ninon, who for a moment, she knew not why, felt the young blood curdle in her heart beneath his sparkling glance.

Her visitor was a little, decrepit old man with shrunken limbs. His coat and breeches, "a world too wide," were of black serge, and large black japanned buckles covered three-fourths of his shoes. He wore a high conical hat with a very narrow brim. This he removed on entering, but still retained on his head an old-fashioned calotte cap of black velvet,

the lappets of which hung down by his withered cheeks.

His appearance betokened extreme old age, but one that was healthy and vigorous withal; for his eyes, which glittered and sometimes *glared* through his black horn spectacles, were wondrously large, keen, and bright; and his hair, instead of being grey or thin, was stuffed in masses, coal-black and coarse, under the calotte cap.

“Good evening, my dear Mademoiselle de L’Enclos,” said this singular little personage, with a blunt and familiar, but smiling nod.

“It is almost morning, monsieur,” replied Ninon, with petulance; “the clock of the Palais Royal has just struck midnight, so pray what is your business with me at such an hour?”

“That you shall learn, mademoiselle, when your valet retires, but not till

then," replied the little man, with a withering glance at Guillot.

Ninon was somewhat alarmed on hearing this; but being impelled by an irresistible power, she made a sign to the wondering valet, who withdrew and closed the door. Then the quaint old man immediately opened it, and on finding that Guillot lingered with an ear at the keyhole, he gave him a glance so piercing, that he retired with considerable precipitation.

"Now, monsieur, your business?" said Ninon.

"Were I young and handsome, like the Count de Jersey, perchance you would be less impatient," replied the impudent old man, with a horrible grin, while applying the forefinger of his right hand to the side of his hooked nose, and winking one of his wicked eyes; "yet confess, my

beauty, that your heart sinks when you look on me?"

"It does," murmured Ninon, who felt, she knew not why, on the verge of fainting, and fascinated by the dark stranger's glittering eyes.

"Be not alarmed," he resumed, blandly, and with an expression in those serpent-like orbs that was *not* a smile; "you have nothing to fear from me—as yet."

"As yet!" repeated Ninon, breathlessly.

"Listen, mademoiselle," said he, striking his long silver-headed cane on the floor; "you see before you one whom all mankind—yea, and womankind, too—obey and fear; one whom Nature hath endowed with the rare power of dispensing wondrous gifts. I was present at your birth——"

"You?"

“ I ; and from that hour I have watched your career, sedulously, and with satisfaction, though unseen.”

“ This is folly or raving !” exclaimed Ninon, gathering courage, and stretching out her beautiful hand towards a bell ; but a sharp, fierce glance from the old man’s great goggle eyes restrained her, and she said, gently, “ What is your object ?”

“ To inquire what lot you wish for yourself in life.”

“ My present one is brilliant enough. I have an income of ten thousand livres, a house here in Paris, another at the Cordeliers, a circle of delightful friends, and lovers in plenty.”

“ Friends change and lovers too ; beauty fades, youth becomes age, and age becomes wearisome and hideous.”

“ True ; but I am only seventeen—for

seventeen years more, at least, I shall be beautiful.”

“You will then be four-and-thirty, mademoiselle, when beauty begins to fade and the ripe bloom of youth is past. Then old age *will* come, and that is what my friend De la Rochefoucault terms ‘the *hell* of women.’ ”

“Your object, I repeat, monsieur?” asked Ninon, glancing at the clock and yawning without disguise.

“I come to give you the choice of three gifts; firstly, the highest honours in France; secondly, splendid wealth; and thirdly, eternal beauty. The world does not possess another being who could make you the same offers as I.”

“You are either a quack or a fool,” said Ninon, imperiously, as she laid her hand on the bell to summon Guillot; but

again the great eyes of the quaint old man daunted her.

“Choose,” said he, emphatically; “I have no time for trifling; rank, wealth, or a beauty that shall endure without change for four score years at least.”

“Then give me the latter -- eternal beauty, that I may have lovers and adorers for ever,” said Ninon, laughing; “but pray, my dear old man, how is such a gift to be acquired?”

“By yourself, mademoiselle; it is very simple. Write your name with your own lovely hand, in this book; swear to me secrecy for life, and the thing is done.”

He bowed, and advancing, laid before her a very handsome pocket-book, bound in scarlet, and richly gilt.

Ninon, heedless of the matter, and neither believing in, nor caring for his assumed powers, laughingly gave the

promise he required, and wrote her name in his tablets, which he instantly closed, and consigned to his deep breeches pocket.

“Now, mademoiselle,” said the little man, with a chuckle and a grimace, as he waved his hands towards her, “receive the power of possessing eternal beauty, the power of controlling every heart, and being beloved for long, long years, after all who know and love you now are consigned to the silent tomb.”

“*All?*” said Ninon, almost sadly, as she thought of the Count de Jersey, while a strange thrill passed over all her body, and a sensation like the pricking of needles. Recovering herself, however, she said, with a pouting lip, “Monsieur, you jest.”

“That is not my habit,” responded the old man, with a wicked grin; “but when I *do* jest, few laugh at me, even in Paris, which I can remember when celebrated

for the extreme gravity of its inhabitants.”

“When was this?”

“In the days of my friend Julian the apostate, who says, in his amusing book, the ‘Misopognon,’ that he loves our dear Parisians on account of their *gravity*.”

“Who are you that say such things, and pretend to so much power?” asked Ninon, with displeasure.

“I am one who has known this lower world, its heartlessness and trickery, its crooked ways and its wickedness, for exactly six thousand years, six months, fourteen days, eleven hours, and fifty-five minutes—the clock of the Palais Royal is ten minutes fast, mademoiselle. Adieu; I shall keep faith with you. Your beauty shall last as I have said, and we shall meet *twice* again.”

“When?”

“Once at your house of the Cordeliers, and again in Paris, during the next century.”

“The *next* century!” repeated Ninon, with a laugh; “and this is but 1633.”

“Exactly—adieu, mademoiselle,” and placing his conical hat jauntily on one side of his moplike head of coarse black hair, the old man put his cane under his arm and bowed himself out.

How the enchanting Ninon slept that night we have no means of knowing. In the morning she would have deemed the whole affair a dream, but for the solemn and reiterated assertions of her valet, who had ushered in the nocturnal visitor; and a dream she might ultimately have thought it, had she not found that, beyond all doubt, as years rolled on, as her young companions became old, faded, and withered, and were gathered to the tomb,

she still remained youthful, blooming, full of health and spirit, and the possessor of unimpaired loveliness.

The Count de Jersey joined King Charles I., and died in 1643 of a wound received at the siege of Bristol. But the heartless Ninon soon forgot him, and others supplied his place.

Louis XIII. and Cardinal Richelieu were taken to their last home; Louis XIV. succeeded—the Augustan age of France—the age which gave her such soldiers as Turenne and Condé, such literati as Racine, Corneille, and Molière, such orators as Massillon, Bossuet, and Lamothe Fénelon, and which saw the exiled Stuarts repining at St. Germain; but still Ninon was young and lovely. She sedulously cultivated the fashions of each age, and wore the extreme of the mode—from the starched ruff of Louis

the Thirteenth's time, to the *coiffure à la giraffe*—the towering head-dresses of the early part of the eighteenth century.

As Le Sage says of Donna Inesilla (under which name he introduces Ninon in his novel of "Gil Blas") "she had been idolized by the noblemen of the old court, and saw herself adored by those of the new. Time, that spares not even beauty, had exerted itself upon hers in vain; he could not deprive her of the power to please, and a noble air, an enchanting wit, and graces that were peculiar to her, made her inspire men with passion, even in her old age."

So was it with Ninon, save that her beauty never decayed.

In her fifty-sixth year she was residing in her little country villa at the Cordeliers. It was delightfully situated, and was surrounded by a beautiful landscape, and

there she usually spent the months of summer. During this year she had also spent the autumn there, to avoid a young cavalier, who had followed her constantly about the streets and public places of Paris, and whose attentions thus had caused her serious annoyance—all the more, perhaps, that the young man seemed somewhat poor, though very handsome and extremely well-bred.

One evening Ninon was alone. She was reading "Les Amours du Grand Alcandre," under which name her father's comrade, the gay Maréchal Duc de Bassompierre, narrated some of the love affairs of Henri Quatre, when her page, the grandson of Guillot, announced that a gentleman in black, who would not give his name, desired to speak with her.

She instantly thought of the mysterious visitor of 1633, and tremblingly said that

he might be admitted. Contrary to her expectation, there entered a very handsome young man, about four-and-twenty years of age, dressed in a black velvet suit, slashed with white satin, and wearing a steel-hilted rapier slung in a white silk scarf. He knelt before her, and the volume of Bassompierre fell from her hand when she recognised the unknown lover who had followed her like her shadow about the streets of Paris.

“Monsieur,” said she, “you weary me! What is the object of your visit—and what is your name?”

“Mademoiselle,” said he, in trembling accents, and with a flushing cheek, “I am the Chevalier Guillaume de Villiers.”

At this name Ninon started and grew deadly pale.

“A lieutenant in the regiment of Artois?” she asked.

“The same, madame; but how know you that?”

“It matters not how; but proceed.”

“I was severely wounded when Turenne forced the Spanish lines at Arras, and again on our retreat from Valenciennes, by the ball of an arquebuss. The viscount sent me on leave to Paris. There I saw you, mademoiselle, and have dared to—to love you in secret—to love you passionately!”

Ninon, who had been regarding the speaker with mournful interest, now arose and sprang back in dismay; for this Chevalier de Villiers—this handsome young man, so pale, so sad, and gentle-eyed, was no other than her own son, whom since his birth she had secluded in the provinces; who never knew either his mother, or his father—the Count de Jersey; and who now by a strange fatality,

in ignorance of their relationship, had fallen madly in love with her!

Then followed that terrible episode which is so powerfully reproduced in "Gil Blas."

Perceiving her confusion, and being dazzled by her marvellous beauty, the young officer took her hands in his, and covered them with kisses; but Ninon started back, and exclaimed—

"Beware, rash boy, and listen to me!" Then pointing to the clock on the mantel-piece, she added, "Look there! at this very hour, four-and-twenty years ago, I was secretly delivered of you, Guillaume de Villiers, in this very chamber. *I am your mother!*"*

Abashed and terrified, filled with morti-

* This episode is mentioned in the "Memoirs of Ninon de l'Enclos," 2 vols. ; published in 1776. The story of her compact with Satan is an old legend of Paris.

fication and shame—after a terrible pause—the young man drew his long rapier; and ere Ninon could conceive or arrest his purpose, he placed the hilt on the floor, and sprung upon the blade, which passed through his heart, and killed him on the spot.

Inspired with horror by this sudden catastrophe, Ninon clung to the mantel-piece; but a loud chuckling laugh made her look up,—and lo!

At one of the open windows of her chamber there stood a little old man clad in sad coloured garments of an antique fashion; his shock-head of black hair was surmounted by a conical hat, which he waggishly wore very much on one side, and he was sucking the silver knob of his cane. Through his round horn spectacles his eyes glared on Ninon with a malignant smile she had no difficulty in remem-

bering. He made her a low ironical bow, and hobbled away with another chuckling laugh which made her blood curdle.

Her lively nature survived even this shock! She returned to her house near the Palais Royal, and amid the gaieties of Paris, and her circle of friends and admirers, among whom were some of the greatest wits in Paris, such as Rochefoucault, St. Evremond, La Bruyere, and others — a circle that was ever being renewed, she soon forgot the doubly horrid episode of her house at the Cordeliers.

Christina, Queen of Sweden, became one of her friends when at Paris, and was so charmed by her conversation, that at parting she declared to the whole court that she had “never met with any woman in France to compare with the illustrious Ninon.” The latter was in her sixty-fifth

year when the famous General Sir John Banier (the comrade of Gustavus Adolphus), who fought at Magdeburg and Leipzig, threw himself at her feet, as the poor Chevalier de Villiers and many more had done ; but Ninon only laughed, and said—

“ My dear general, you will find that it requires more genius to make love than to make war.”

So time passed on, and, as I have said, at the age of fourscore Ninon was still to all appearance young, and so charming, that the Abbé Gedoine, a youth of twenty, who had fluttered about her house in the Rue de Parlement, became madly in love with her ; but Ninon was tiring now of lovers, and even of life itself.

“ Ah, Ninon,” said the abbé, “ love has too long been alike your amusement and your occupation.”

“My dear abbé,” she replied, “the most brief follies are the best. I perceive now, when it is somewhat too late, that it was an absurd step in me to accept of you as an admirer. Let us carry the frolic no farther, but fairly quit each other this instant; and for the term of our natural lives.”

Thus, after inspiring a youth of twenty with a real passion for her, was Ninon, in her eightieth year, the first to break off from him. In short, from her first boy-lover, the Count de Coligni, when she was only seventeen, to the advent of the Abbé Gedeoine, her long life had been a succession of conquests.

In the first days of October, 1706, an illness of a kind so peculiar that it baffled the best physicians in Paris—a languor, wasting and helplessness fell upon Ninon, but amid it she looked lovelier than ever,

though she was then ninety years and five months old!

In succession had the doctors come and gone, surprised and bewildered by a malady for which they had neither a name nor a remedy. At last there came *one* whom no one knew, and who requested to see Ninon alone.

He was a decrepit, but hale little man, very old apparently, though his hair was coal-black. He wore a dark suit, an absurd conical hat, and large horn spectacles, and leaned on a silver-headed cane, which at every pace he planted firmly on the pavement, as if he had a very good opinion of himself. In his left hand he carried a pocket-book of scarlet morocco, richly gilt—doubtless his book of pharmacy.

Propped upon a pillow, the dying Ninon—for she *was* dying now—regarded

him with an awful expression in her hollow eyes.

“Do you remember *me*, madame?” he was heard to say, by those who loitered or listened without.

“But too well,” moaned the patient.

“Yet fair ladies have often brief memories.”

“And I have been your dupe! Begone, fiend—you are powerless, and I defy you!”

The old man uttered his chuckling laugh.

“Begone, I say, to that hell from hence you have come.”

“Then I go not alone!” was the strange response, and there rung through the chamber a shriek of agony, and with it mingled the strange demoniac laughter of the little man in black. The listeners heard also the stamping of his feet, and

exclamations of rage; then all became still—terribly *still*.

When the door, which had hitherto defied their efforts to force it, was opened, the stranger could nowhere be found; he had disappeared, hat, stick, spectacles and all; but they found Ninon, and she was no more.

The coverlet and other clothes were disordered, the silk hangings torn; the bed bore evidence that a fierce struggle had taken place; but great was the astonishment of all on beholding the rapid change that came over her remains, even while they gazed on them.

They were no longer those of the seeming young and lovely beauty they had known so long, but were turning fast into those of an extremely aged person. The oval face became haggard; the smooth forehead a mass of wrinkles;

the pearly teeth disappeared; the lovely tresses of silky brown turned into a few white straggling hairs, and the plump pretty hands became shrivelled and yellow.

Thus within one minute the remains of the once enchanting Ninon turned into those of an old—hideously old—woman, who had died of strangulation, for on her withered neck remained several^d marks, made by the ferocious clutch of that black stranger, who could never more be traced.

This was on the evening of the 17th of October, 1706.

CHAPTER XII.

DISCOVERED.

I HAD been disguised as a *soubrette* for five days when those terrible events, by which I lost my love, and nearly my life, and had to leave the chateau, occurred in rapid succession.

On the evening after we had listened to the story of Ninon, I was seated with Jacqueline in a secluded bower of the garden. The atmosphere was oppressively warm, and I had removed alike the large linen cap and the false curls with which Angelique had supplied me; thus, unfortunately, no one who saw me could for a moment have doubted the sex of Basile, the sham paysanne from the Morbihan.

Jacqueline reclined with her head upon my shoulder, and while seated hand in hand, I was speaking of the apparent hopelessness of our future, when she interrupted me by saying,

“Remember, Basil, that at our age nothing is hopeless either in fortune or in love.”

“True,” I repeated, tremulously, while gazing tenderly into her clear and beautiful eyes; “yet, ere I saw you, love Jacqueline, at times I was already sick of life.”

“Sick of life! Your world in England must be a horrid place, if people weary of it so soon.”

“You mistake me. Every heart, as I said to your aunt the other night, has some secret sorrow, and I have mine—a lost position. Bravely did I bear the cross till I was taken prisoner——”

“Do you deem yourself such?”

“I mean till I was left here, abandoned in hostile France, thus crushing all the brilliant schemes I had formed for the future.”

“Enter the service of France. I have vast interest through my father, through my cousin Bourgneuf, and the Comte de Boisguiller. Who can say how high you may rise? We have still our Irish Brigade and the regiment of Royal Scots, and to be a Scotsman is still a passport to royal favour in France.”

“Was, Jacqueline; you should say it *was*. But that day has gone for ever, nor would such views suit me if it remained. I thank you, my beloved, but this can never be.”

A sound as of steps among the shrubbery close by made us pause, and then Jacqueline, after looking hastily round, asked—

“Is the chateau becoming so terrible to you?”

“Ah! do not ask me that, at least in such a tone of pique. With you I should indeed be happy anywhere.”

“Should be—are you not?”

“I *am* happy.”

“Then whence this repining, Basil?” she asked, softly, perhaps reproachfully.

“Understand me; it is the ever present question, where will the love I bear you—a love so deep and desperate—end? Would it not have been better that we had never known and never loved each other so?”

“Why, Basil, why?”

“You are the daughter of a peer of France, the Maréchal de Broglie; I—oh, Heaven! you know me but as an unfortunate gentleman—a poor private dra-

goon. I have not even an epaulette to boast of!"

"Then I shall give you *two*," said Jacqueline, putting a white hand on each of my shoulders, and kissing me playfully on the cheek.

"*Mon Dieu*, it is *too* much!" exclaimed a piercing voice; the hands of Jacqueline were torn away, and Madame de Bourgneuf, in all the rage of offended virtue, dignity, and nobility, stood with pallid face and flashing eyes before us. "So, so, this is Basile, the paysanne from the Morbihan! A man, a heretic, a foreigner, a soldier in the arms of my niece, of Mademoiselle de Broglie! Oh, what horror is this!" she almost screamed aloud.

The rustling in the shrubbery is quite accounted for now, thought I. But I was wrong, for keener eyes might have

detected the figure of a man—of Theophile Hautois—lurking like a panther near us.

Jacqueline covered her eyes with one hand, and clung by the other to the side of the arbour. Indeed, had I not supported her she would have fallen, and now there ensued a long and most painful pause, during which I prayed the earth to open and swallow me.

I was thunderstruck, and poor Jacqueline, overwhelmed by dismay and shame, cowered upon the seat with her sweet face hidden by her hands. Presence of mind alone could save us now. I waited until the first paroxysm of anger was past, and then addressed the too justly offended countess.

Heaven only knows what I said then, but love for poor Jacqueline and the desperation of my own plight lent me eloquence; thus rapidly and briefly I

related all my story since the morning on which I had saved her life in the mulberry wood near the well by the wayside that led to our camp at Paramé, down to the present hour. Madame acknowledged that she had overheard enough to convince her that I loved her niece with respect and tenderness, but added almost fiercely that the vast gulf opened by our difference of position rendered that love a madness and a crime.

I acknowledged all this, and in terms that I cannot now recal, urged for the preservation of her family honour and her own high name, the policy of preserving secrecy in the affair ; and she evidently felt the force of my argument, as it was a circumstance which would seriously embroil her with her brother the Maréchal, her son the Count de Bourgneuf, and perhaps with French society in general :

though as a Frenchwoman she felt that she could almost forgive anything that had love for an excuse. After a time, I begged her to remember that I was an *Ecossais*, and besought her by the memory of the olden time, and her own early predilections, to pardon Jacqueline, if not me, for all that had passed.

This was assailing madame's weak point, and a hectic flush crossed the pale cheek of Jacqueline, as, no doubt, she thought of "the handsome Scottish Captain of milord Clare's Dragoons," of whom we heard so much every evening.

"*Très bien, monsieur*; am I then to understand that you are Scottish?" said she, in a gentler tone.

"I am, madame. Let your favour for one whom you have so often said was dear to you—a soldier of fortune—plead for me now."

“’Tis well that this *malheur* has occurred here at my sequestered house, and not at the Hotel de Broglie in the Rue St. Dominique at Paris: but let that pass. We Bretons love the Scots as the friends of our forefathers in the olden time, and we all know that it was to the love of a young Scottish girl our brave Du Guay Trouin owed his escape from an English prison, and that in her arms he died in 1736.* But this painful matter must be ended, and a convent may cure mademoiselle of an infatuation which degrades her. To drive *you*, monsieur, from the chateau—”

“The fate I own, with all humility, I deserve.”

“Would be to ensure your death: but

* A love for the Scots and dislike for their fellow-subjects still exist in Brittany. See “Wanderings” there, published by Bentley, 1860, &c.

mademoiselle my niece has acted most unwisely—even culpably—in not confiding in me; and now you must be separated, and for ever.”

“Alas, madame!——”

“This absurd disguise, monsieur, must be relinquished, and to have you sent at once from hence in safety, if it can be accomplished, shall now be my task.”

“I submit to your decision, madame,” said I, with a sinking heart. “Deep affection causes deep submission, and to love so fondly as I do, often causes more sorrow than joy. Dear, dear Jacqueline!”

“Enough of this!” interrupted Madame de Bourgneuf, loftily and severely. “Retire to your room, monsieur. When next I see you, let it be in the attire of your sex, and dearly shall that minx

Angelique pay for her share in this deplorable—this most unfortunate affair.”

I bowed and retired, feeling in my heart that Madame de Bourgneuf treated me with great leniency, and such as I did not deserve; for she might have summoned her servants, and had me hanged on the nearest tree, had such been her will and pleasure.

I paused at the end of the garden-walk, and looked back to the rose-covered bower. The countess was regarding me with a fixed and stern expression; but Jacqueline, unseen by her, waved her hand to me sadly in adieu. My soul was wrung—if I may use such an expression—wrung with agony for the unmerited shame thus brought on one who loved me so well, who was so tender and so true; and I cursed my own selfishness.

I bowed in return, and hurried towards the chateau. Alas! that farewell glance was the last we were doomed to see of each other as lovers.

CHAPTER XIII.

SUSPENSE.

I HAVE but little courage to write of what followed this upbraiding interview and degrading discovery ; for one episode of horror followed another.

I resumed the green hunting suit of the absent count, and Angelique was filled with dismay when she saw me clad in it, as she dreaded the punishment that would be awarded for her connivance in the recent masquerading ; and moreover she loved her young mistress dearly. Then she wept when she found it was ordained that I was to depart secretly that night on horseback, and that it was to be given

out that Basile the paysanne from the Morbihan, had eloped or run away.

I was to be the bearer of a special letter from madame to the Comte de Boisguiller, Governor of St. Malo, charging him by his old allegiance to her, and his present friendship, to have me despatched on board the first British ship that came in sight of the city, or sent by an especial boat to the Isle of Jersey : in short, to get me out of the province at all hazards, and quietly too.

It occurred to me that the count might neither seek a ship nor send a boat, but instead of obeying his venerable inamorata, might cast me into a vault at St. Malo as a prisoner ; however, I felt so crushed, so crestfallen and miserable by the sudden, though not unexpected turn the matter had taken, that for a long time after these events I cared very little what became of me.

The evening drew on, and twilight deepened into night. Then Madame de Bourgneuf, on inquiring for her niece, found that she was not within the chateau; on this she had the great bell rung repeatedly to summon her from the garden or grounds; but it rang in vain, for there was no appearance of our Jacqueline. After this the countess sent for me, and addressing me sternly, said—

“Monsieur, my letter for M. le Comte de Boisguiller is here, ready written and sealed, the horse which is to bear you to St. Malo is ready in the stable, saddled and bridled, but you shall not pass the gate of Bourgneuf until mademoiselle returns to her apartment. Do you understand me?”

“I beseech you, madame——”

“Beseech me not!” she interrupted, sharply. “There is some other trick—

some vile plot in this prolonged absence at an hour so unusual, and on the eve of your departure, too; so I shall keep you as a hostage for her."

But as the first hours of this anxious night drew on, the surprise of the countess and her household took the new phase of alarm and fear, a feeling that was quickened by my repeated assurances of ignorance, and my too evident deep anxiety. The avenue of yew and orange-trees, the lawn and its shrubbery, the borders of the lake, the garden, the labyrinth, and every room, turret, and corner of the chateau, were rigidly searched without success, for no trace of the missing one was found, till Urbain the gardener picked up, near the door of the bower in which we had been seated when madame discovered us, a small kid glove and a gold bracelet, which we knew belonged to Jacqueline.

Near these, on a bush, were some fragments of lace torn from her dress ; and when inspected by lantern light the garden-walk and border bore evidence of a struggle ; the flowers were crushed and bushes torn, and in the earth were the deep footmarks of a man who wore sabots.

About ten yards from the bower we found a small axe, which had been lost or cast away. It was such as woodmen generally used, and cut upon the handle, appeared the name of T. HAUTOIS !

The deductions we drew from these traces and indications filled my soul with the keenest alarm and horror !

* * * * *

That Jacqueline had been violently assaulted, carried off, and perhaps killed ruthlessly by this outlaw, who had so long vowed vengeance on her family, and whom Jacquot and I had both seen lurk-

ing in the grounds during the past week, seemed beyond all doubt. Of his extreme cunning, ingenuity, and of the length his daring and brutality could carry him, I had already had ample proof, and my heart sickened as imagination pictured the gentle, soft, and delicately nurtured Jacqueline, writhing and helpless in his felon hands.

The lamentations of Angelique and the female domestics were mingled with the oaths and maledictions of the men, who proceeded at once to arm themselves with muskets and pistols; and now it was that Madame de Bourgneuf, in her despair, was disposed to rely on me.

She pressed my hand in hers, and said, in a broken voice—

“Monsieur, if you ever loved my niece, as you say you do, aid in her rescue from this demon!”

I returned the pressure in silence, and was making preparation to scour the roads and thickets which covered all the district, when, amid our consternation, the tramp of horses was heard, and the Chevalier de Boisguiller, accompanied by twelve hussars, rode hurriedly up to the gate.

The countess was standing on the front door-steps of the chateau, pale, trembling, and her eyes red with weeping. Some ten men, including Urbain, the valets, gardeners, and grooms, stood around her, loading their arms, fixing and snapping their flints and lighting torches and lanterns, for darkness had long since set completely in.

The Chevalier dismounted, threw his bridle-reins to a hussar, and advancing to the countess, said, with a smiling bow—

“*Peste!* but I seem to have come at a critical time, madame. Has the lake been

poached—the hen-roost robbed, or what, that you are preparing to take the field like a chatelaine of old?”

“Oh, chevalier, you have indeed come at a most critical time. Heaven itself must have sent you!”

“Not at all,” replied the heedless hussar. “I am such a sad dog that I fear Heaven has long since given me up as incorrigible, but I have been sent here by order of the count, my father, with a sergeant and twelve troopers. You must learn, that on the day I had last the honour to visit you, a letter came to the commandant of St. Malo—a private letter, oddly spelled, on a very crumpled piece of paper, and bearing the feigned signature of Theophile Damien, but bringing information that an English spy was secreted *here*. So, as duty compelled the count to see into the matter, and friend-

ship urged that he should spare you an affront, he despatched me to make the necessary inquiries. Now I remember me of a soubrette of my cousin's——”

“Monsieur le Chevalier,” said the poor countess, speaking rapidly amid a torrent of tears, “the person of whom you speak is no spy—for that you have my word of honour.”

The chevalier bowed low, with his right hand on his heart, accepting the pledge for me.

“He is no spy, and must be protected. He it was who saved the life of Jacqueline, and will peril his life with you to save her once again, if indeed it be not too late already.”

“Again—too late—what *do* you mean?”

“She means, chevalier,” said I, “that Mademoiselle Jacqueline has been torn from us by a ruffian of the most daring

and unscrupulous character—by Hautois, the galley-slave.”

“Hautois !” repeated the chevalier, with indescribable alarm.

“By Hautois, and thus your arrival is most opportune. I am the person referred to in your orders ; but for Heaven’s sake—for the sake of Mademoiselle Jacqueline, waste no time or thought on me. I will assist you, aid you with my life to save, to rescue her, and after that is achieved, deal with me as you will.”

For a full minute the Frenchman seemed to lose his invincible self-possession on hearing all this, but in a few words I acquainted him with what had occurred, and urged the necessity of immediate action. On hearing the name of Hautois, with whose story he was familiar, the chevalier changed colour, and appeared much disturbed and alarmed.

“If ’tis he, we have indeed no time to lose,” said he, through his clenched teeth; “but the pursuit must be on horseback—the servants can beat the woods, while my hussars shall scour the roads. You ride, monsieur, I presume?”

Under other circumstances I might have smiled at the question, but then I simply replied in the affirmative.

“*Bon!* then get a horse from the stables, and let us begone.”

In a few minutes our plan was detailed, and we all separated, inspired by anxiety and excitement. Three hussars took the road towards Dinan; three towards St. Paul le Plenguen; three on that which led to Montford, and other three on that which led towards Rennes. The armed servants under Urbain the gardener and the porter, who had been once a soldier, proceeded to search the woods and forests,

while the chevalier and I departed at a gallop towards St. Aubin du Cormier, stopping for inquiry every person we met on the road.

The chateau was to be our point of rendezvous.

“Save her—bring her home in safety,” were the parting words of the countess, “and I vow to God to hang a silver lamp worth a thousand livres on the altar at Roscoff!”

This was a little chapel near Leon in Brittany, built by Mary Queen of Scots, in memory of her landing there during a storm when on her voyage from Scotland to France.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BLOODHOUND.

“WHEN nothing remains of an adventure,” writes some one, “it is always possible to consider it a dream.” As yet I could not realize this, though frequently asking of myself, Is all this sudden calamity a truth?—for I thought, spoke, and acted as one who dreamed.

But three hours—they seemed so many ages—but three hours ago, I had been seated in yonder garden-bower with Jacqueline, listening to her voice, while her cheek reclined upon my shoulder, fearing nothing save the shadowy future, thinking of ourselves and of our love alone.

Now how all was changed !

I had been discovered, and all but expelled from the chateau, while she had been abducted, and by such an abductor ! Now I was riding side by side with a French officer—his comrade for the time—and he was that Chevalier de Boisguiller, who had been so long my *bête noire*.

At the very moment I was thinking of all these things, what might be the peril, the suffering, the desperate extremity of Jacqueline ! Where was she, and how circumstanced in the power of a brutal galley-slave ? Might we not be riding in the wrong direction, and thus, perhaps, abandoning her to the very fate from which we sought to save her ? The stars that looked so brightly down on us looked also down on her ; but where was she ? Every thought and fear was maddening !

When contrasted with my own keen

anxiety, the *sang-froid* of the French officer piqued and annoyed me. It was well for me, however, that he was ignorant of the relation that existed between his cousin and me, as, apart from any fancy he might himself have had for her, in the extreme ideas of difference of rank, religion, and so forth, cherished by the French *noblesse*, he would have thought no more of quietly pistolling me, on the score of presumption, than of shooting a weasel. Thus my ill-concealed emotions he put down in his own mind as the result of humanity and gratitude.

“*Mon ami*, I rather like you,” said he, as we rode on together; “I can see that you are courageous, and that is better than to be merely brave.”

“Merely brave—what do you mean, chevalier?”

“We French make a distinction in

this matter. A soldier may be very brave, and yet on some occasions may not have courage to manifest his bravery."

"I confess that this paradox is too subtle for me, especially at such a time. But tell me, chevalier, was this wretch of whom we are in pursuit ever in the French service?"

"I regret to say that he was, until discharged with a *cartouche jaune* as an incorrigible rogue."

He referred to the discharge printed on yellow paper and given to those men of the French army who were dismissed under sentence of degradation.

For a few miles we diverged into every cross path, but always returned to the main road; and we questioned closely the few persons, chiefly charcoal-burners, whom in that sequestered region we met

abroad at such an hour, but questioned them in vain.

Thus the short night of August was soon spent. The clear stars still shone brightly in the blue sky; but already there were indications of the dawn that was at hand, for a warm flush was stealing over the east when we found ourselves at Fougères, a little town situated on the river Nanson, having some leather manufactories and a strong old castle wherein the lords of that *Seigneurie* resided.

There we turned our horses without prosecuting our inquiries, as it was by no means likely that those of whom we were in search would be found in a busy town.

So the night had passed away—a night without tidings of Jacqueline!

Broader and deeper grew the light of

morning, and clouds of sombre grey or purple that overhung the mountains and seemed to roll along their distant ridges, became lighted up and edged with saffron and gold.

We were returning at a canter along the highway to Bourgneuf, in the hope that on reaching that place we might find that some of our searchers had returned with happy tidings and better success than ourselves ; but we had scarcely proceeded two miles when we met Urbain the gardener and Bertrand the porter, each armed with a musket. They were accompanied by an old peasant, whose head was bound about with a cloth to conceal a wound, which seemed to have bled profusely.

They had been scouting in the woodlands which bordered the highway, and had there met this peasant, who was a

woodcutter, and who informed them that he had seen a man dragging a woman towards the forest of St. Aubin du Cormier, and that when attempting to interfere when she claimed his succour and protection, her captor struck him down with the butt of a heavy pistol. This rencontre occurred about three miles from the place where we were then speaking.

“*Pardieu!* this is valuable intelligence,” exclaimed Boisguiller; “but how shall we track them through these dense thickets?”

“Monsieur, you cannot do it on horseback,” replied the peasant; “but as my hut is close by, you may leave your horses there, and then, as I should like to repay that cowardly rascal for the tap he gave me on the head, I shall give you sure means of tracking him, for I have in keeping a Spanish bloodhound belonging

to Monseigneur the Count of Fougères, and it is completely at your service.”

“I thank you for this great aid, *mon ami*,” said my companion; “the count knows me well—I am the Chevalier de Boisguiller, son of the Governor of St. Malo.”

On hearing this the peasant made a succession of low bows, scraping the turf with his sabots at each.

The reader may imagine the haste and satisfaction with which we availed ourselves of the offer of the old woodman, and as we proceeded to his humble hut, which was situated close to a bend of the Nanson, I questioned him closely and anxiously about the appearance of the persons he had seen. The tall, powerful man in a common blouse and fur cap, with a girdle and *couteau de chasse*, was as certainly Theophile Hautois as the poor pale

girl with torn dress and dishevelled hair, whose hands he had tied with a cord, and whose mouth he had gagged with a handkerchief, was certainly our Jacqueline.

His description made me tremble with anguish and rage, and Boisguiller to gnaw the ends of his moustaches. We quitted our saddles, stuck our pistols in our girdles, and had the bloodhound brought forth.

“Messieurs,” said the woodman, as he led forward the dog by a strong steel chain, “there is not in France, and certainly not in Bretagne or Normandy, a *limier* with a finer nose than this ; and set him but once upon the track of those we seek—let the distance between us be ever so great, and let it be through the thickest woods and by the most covert paths—ay, *pardieu*, by the Blackwater of St. Aubin du Cormier, this dog will trace them.”

“To the proof, without delay !” ex-

claimed the chevalier, while I examined attentively the ferocious brute on whose instincts our hopes depended.

Its back was about thirty inches high, its limbs exhibited vast muscle, and its chaps were long, pendulous, and frothy. It was of a deep dark-brown hue, and was of that breed which the Spaniards once used with such terrible effect on the continent and adjacent isles of South America.

Leaving our horses at the hut, we retraced our steps, and entering the wild forest, which more or less covers all that part of the country, an hour's walk brought us to the place where the woodman had encountered Hautois and his victim about seven hours before—at midnight, in fact, and he assured us of the place by showing on the grass traces of the blood which had flowed from the

wound inflicted by the outlaw's pistol-butt.

The fierce hound inserted his square muzzle among the grass and sniffed up blood, on which the peasant gave him a kick, saying,

“*Voilà, mon ami!*—come, come, 'tis not my blood we wish you to sniff at so pleasantly, but the blood of another.”

“True,” said Boisguiller, “but how are we to give him the scent of Hautois, or of the lady?”

“*Morbleu!*” grumbled the woodman; “I did not think of that.”

“Had we but a piece of mademoiselle's dress!” said Urbain.

“Here are what we require,” said I, in a voice all but breathless with emotion, while drawing from my breast the kid glove and fragment of lace which we had found near the garden-bower. The

chevalier gave me a keen glance, and snatching the relics almost abruptly from my hand, pressed them against the black nostrils of the dog, patting him soothingly the while. The glove was perfumed fortunately, and thus, in a minute or less, the dog, after sniffing and snorting about among the grass, with his head bent low and ears drooping, began to run rapidly through the forest, straining on his collar and chain, and dragging after him the peasant who grasped the other end of it.

“*Parbleu, messieurs!* he is on the track now! See how he follows the scent!” exclaimed the old man, who was compelled to run fast to keep up with the dog and with us. “Oh! by St. Malo! See, here are the footsteps, the crushed leaves, the broken twigs! ’Tis this way they have passed, messieurs. *Ah! sacré coquin!*”

That tap on the head shall cost thee dear. Look to your pistols, monsieur le chevalier, for *he* has a pair, and I know not the moment we may come upon him."

Thus surely guided by the searching instinct and unflinching pertinacity of the hound, we hastened through the forest in silence, and with hearts full of intense anxiety and hope.

The dog was sometimes at fault when runnels of water crossed our path, but the peasant, who was an acute old fellow, with a face of the true Breton type—eyes that were deeply set and thoughtful, a high nose and square forehead—soon set him right again.

What must poor Jacqueline, so delicate and so tenderly nurtured, have suffered while forced to pursue such paths as these? We were now at least eight miles distant from Bourgneuf, and for her to

have been dragged through a forest at midnight, and by such hands !

The idea was too dreadful to embody in fancy, so let me hasten over what follows.

At a part of the forest which was so dense that the intertwined branches of the trees almost excluded the light of the sun, the dog stopped at the root of a large elm, and began to bay loudly over some tufts of grass, leaves, and branches that were freshly heaped up there. He snorted, growled savagely, and then proceeded to tear up the little mound with his nose and forepaws.

“The scent ends here,” said the peasant, looking somewhat bewildered and alarmed.

“There must be some mistake,” said the chevalier, with annoyance in his tone ; “we have been in pursuit of the wrong

person. But some mystery may be concealed here. Urbain, Bertrand, scrape aside this heap, and let us see what the dog's nose has discovered."

They readily plied their musket-butts, and then their hands, while I stood by, feeling more dead than alive, for the horror of anticipation overcame me.

A bit of an orange silk dress appeared. Let me endeavour to write briefly and calmly of what followed.

In a hollow, a hasty grave, half dug and half heaped up, about three feet deep in all, we found the body of Jacqueline, covered by leaves, branches, and tufts of grass.

She lay upon her back; her right hand, so small and beautiful, clutched a tuft of grass; the teeth were clenched—there was no relaxation of the jaw—clenched as if with agony, and foam was plainly

discernible on the white and parted lips ; yet she was lovely like a dead angel, and all the divine serenity of innocence was there.

Standing aloof like one transfixed or petrified, I saw them raise her up, and saw her head drooping pendulously backward with its long dishevelled hair clotted with blood, the bare bosom and the tattered dress.

Then I heard Boisguiller exclaim in accents of horror,

“She is dead now ; but that mere wound could never have killed her—*she has been stunned and buried alive!* Poor Jacqueline ! What she has endured ere death released her, her lips can never tell us now.”

CHAPTER XV.

THE FOREST OF ST. AUBIN DU CORMIER.

WHEN my thoughts took some coherence again, evening had come on, and I found myself alone and still in a forest—alone with the bloodhound, whose steel chain I grasped with an unyielding hand.

I heard the rising wind shaking the tops of the lofty oaks. I remembered now, like one who, after a long and deep slumber, recalls the passages of a dream, that near the tree beneath which we found *her*, Urbain the gardener had picked up a fur cap, which I had no difficulty in recognising as one that had been worn by Hautois.

This furnished the dog with a scent, put us on his track, and the livelong day we had followed it, like Indians on the trail of an enemy.

One by one, Guillaume de Boisguiller, Urbain the gardener, Bertrand, the old porter, the peasant, and others, had dropped behind in weariness; but I, taking the dog in hand, inspired and endued by revenge with thrice my natural strength, had urged the pursuit alone, through wild thickets, up rough ravines, and across streams and torrents, while a pale face, in awful repose, with eyes glazed and half open, and a mouth the lips of which were two blue lines, seemed to lead me on—and on I went, unflinchingly and unswervingly.

Gradually there came a horrid calmness to my mind—the calmness that follows a shock—a grief too great to last; and there was something soothing in the con-

viction that Hautois could not escape me; that so surely as if I held an enchanted clue or magic wand I could track him now, if I husbanded my strength, and I could have kissed the ferocious dog that led me on his devious and secret track.

What had she suffered—my poor Jacqueline!—how much endured ere death came to her release!

It may seem strange, but I had a grim satisfaction in the knowledge that her sufferings were all over now—that she was at rest, at peace, and that she would see how fearfully I would avenge her.

But how, was the startling question or thought which occurred to me; for in the rapidity of my pursuit through the thickets of briars and matted shrubs in which I had to make my way, up the rocks which I had to climb, or down which I had to leap

the pistols had dropped from my girdle, when or where I knew not, and thus I was—defenceless!

Yet I heeded not even this terrible conviction; my only desire was to reach, to meet and to grapple with Hautois—w weary though I was, to grapple with him bare-handed, and trust the rest to youth and strength, to justice and to God.

When twilight was setting in I found myself in a very wild place. The dog was conducting me up a ravine the sides of which were covered with vast blocks of basalt, the *débris* of some earthquake. In rank luxuriance the weeds and wild flowers covered them in many places. On both sides of this wilderness of rocks grew a dense forest, the timber of which was of several kinds; but the underwood seemed to consist of wild apple-trees. Great mountains of rock bordered this

forest on one side; on the other it stretched away into the gloom of evening and the obscurity of distance.

Although I knew it not, I was then in the forest of St. Aubin du Cormier, so named from the prevalence of the *cormier*, or sorb-apple tree—that forest through which flows the subterranean torrent which forms one of the natural wonders of the province.

On reaching the head of the ravine, the dog led me through a mass of brushwood, by a path so narrow that it seemed to be such a track as the feet of wild rabbits might form, and then I found myself before a large hut, or *chaumière*, of dilapidated aspect.

It was built of stone blocks, and heavily thatched with heather and straw. The door, which was opened by a wooden latch of primitive construction, was old and

worm-eaten, but seemed to have been once strong and well made. I afterwards found that a bar of oak secured it transversely on the inside.

Arming myself with a stone, I boldly entered this hut, and found it deserted. On the hearth there smouldered a fire of wood, turf, and fir-cones, showing that it had been recently occupied; and by the light of this, and the last flush of the set sun which stole through the little window, I could observe the squalor and wretchedness of the place. A few pots of brown ware, a couple of ricketty stools, an old chest, a hunting-belt that hung on a nail, and a few sheepskins that lay in a corner, as if to form a bed, were all the furniture of this cheerless abode.

As I surveyed it, the bloodhound licked my hand with his hot, steaming tongue, and whined, rubbed himself against

me, and scented about, as if with satisfaction; then he lay down at my feet, lashing the floor with his thick, heavy tail, as if to inform me that we were in the lair of Hautois—of this human panther!

But would this man return to it after the deed he had perpetrated?

I could scarcely doubt it; the *chaumière* was in an utter wilderness, and while lurking there he must have committed many a crime ere this.

Would he return alone?—if not, I had perhaps only tracked him hither to find my own doom sealed; for I was defenceless.

Resolving to possess a weapon if it could be found, I searched the whole hut, which consisted of only two apartments, but sought in vain. Nor stick nor bludgeon were there; so I armed myself with one of the stools, which was certainly better than nothing.

The window of the inner room faced the north-west, where a red light that overspread the sky attracted my attention; for if not some natural phenomenon, it assuredly proceeded from the flames of a vast conflagration.

I secured the door by its bar, lest I should be taken by surprise, and seated myself on a stool in a corner, with the dog crouching at my feet. But to rest was impossible, amid the whirl of thought, the mingled rage and grief that oppressed me. I felt as one in a burning fever.

There seemed to be under and about me the ceaseless rush of water. Was it fancy? The sound was too real for that; and it seemed to proceed from a torrent or waterfall at the back of the *chaumière*. I again entered the inner apartment, through the dirty and broken lattice of which the moon shone clearly and brightly upon the

discoloured and ill-jointed boarding of the floor. No fall of water was visible without, but the sound of it was louder now than before.

A trap-door about three feet square arrested my attention; and on raising it by an iron ring in its centre, I felt my flesh creep, when far down below, in darkness and obscurity, I heard the distant rushing of a vast torrent of water that flowed unseen down the mountain side; and I now knew that this trap-door—the concealment of many a crime—was merely an opening to the subterranean stream of St. Aubin du Cormier, and that this half-ruined *chaumière* had been built immediately over one of the open chasms—without a doubt for purposes dark and nefarious.

I had scarcely let the trap-door drop from my hand, when the bloodhound

started up with a snort, and uttered a low growl. Then I felt a wild fierce glow in my heart, and a prickly sensation pass over every limb, when, on looking from the window, I beheld him for whom I longed with a hate so intense and deadly ; he whom I had tracked thus far — he who had on his hands the blood of Jacqueline—he who had her sufferings and death to atone for—was now plainly visible as he passed through the screen of wild bushes, and approached the hut !

The moonlight fell full upon his pale and hideous visage—his black and matted hair. He was bareheaded, and had a pair of long pistols and a knife in his belt, while I was weaponless and weary ; but as I grasped one of the stools I felt, in imagination, the strength of three men pass into my poor right arm.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE STRUGGLE.

THE excitement, the ferocious joy of anticipated vengeance, nearly suffocated me, as, softly drawing back the bolt of the door, I retired into a dark corner, from whence I meant to spring upon him.

The latch was lifted, and he entered. At that moment, as if stirred by an invisible hand, the embers of the dying fire shot into a flame that shed a red light over all the squalid apartment, and thus the wretch detected me in an instant.

“*Sangbleu!*” he exclaimed, and started back, more in wonder than fear. “Who are you? hah!” he added, as he recognised

me, and drawing forth a pistol, fired it straight at my head; but happily the ball struck the hard, thick wood of the stool which I used as a shield, and remained there. The force of the shot, however, made me reel; and as I was rushing forward, he drew forth another, but it flashed in the pan. Then, to prevent the use of his knife, I hurled the stool at his head. It struck him on the right temple with such force as to stun him for an instant, and deluged his face with blood.

He was grasping vaguely at his girdle for the haft of the knife which dangled there, when I closed with him, seizing his right arm; and then a deadly struggle for life on one hand, and for life and retribution on the other, ensued between us.

To know that I had in my grasp the

hand that had destroyed Jacqueline, endowed me with such savage energy that for a time I was quite a match for the Herculean ruffian with whom I fought. I was lithe, active, and young, and my dragoon drill with sword and club, had developed every muscle to the utmost.

The aspect of Hautois was frightful! His face was deathly pale, and streaked with the blood that poured from the wound on his temple; his thick black hair was matted and in elf-locks; and his yellow, bloodshot eyes glared into mine, like those of a wolf, from beneath their bushy brows, which met as one above his nose.

We never spoke as we swayed to and fro, panting hoarsely, grasping each other's wrists with a tiger-clutch, and each making futile efforts to reach the other's throat. We heard only our deep

breathing, the ceaseless rush of the stream, like a mill-race beneath the floor, and the growling of the bloodhound, which, by some means, had shut itself into the inner apartment.

In this struggle, where each man grasped the other with the fierce compression of a smith's vice, it was evident that whoever got the victory would yield neither mercy nor quarter to the vanquished.

Suddenly a pang of terror chilled my heart; for I found the muscular Frenchman becoming stronger than myself, either because he had husbanded his powers, or that mine (so wearied by past emotion, by grief, and the toil of the preceding night) had departed; but he bent me backward till I fell heavily prostrate on the floor, with him above me, and in an instant both his knees were on my chest.

As yet, his right hand had never reached my throat, for my left was on his wrist, and I held it from me at arm's length.

Relinquishing the hold his left hand had of me, he sought for the knife at his girdle, but most fortunately, in our struggle, our wrestling, writhing, and swaying to and fro, it had dropped from its sheath, and lay on the floor beyond his reach, some yards off, else perhaps these adventures had never been committed to paper.

On discovering this, he uttered a horrible malediction, and instantly plunged his left hand on my throat. Then a red light seemed to flash from my eyes; I felt as if the crown of my head was flying off—there was a hissing and tingling in my ears, and for some moments I endured all the horror of strangulation,

till suddenly changing his mind, he exclaimed—

“*Sangbleu!* the trap-door—you shall take a cold bath in the black Torrent du Cormier, my fine fellow!” And with a yelling laugh he proceeded to drag me across the floor of the room while yet breathless and incapable of resistance.

He dashed open the door of the inner apartment with his foot, and then with a growl of long-suppressed fury the blood-hound sprang upon him; rendered fiercer by the blood which still flowed from the wound in the head of Hautois, it grasped him by the throat, snarling, worrying and tearing, till dog and man fell down together—the dog above, the man below.

Trembling with weakness and the overstrained exertion of my recent struggle, I rose and looked with stern exultation on this new conflict, at this new and unex-

pected ally, against whom the human brute fought apparently in vain, for with all his strength he failed to wrench or tear the dog's sharp fangs from his already lacerated throat.

At last, by the terror of approaching death endued with twice his natural strength, while uttering convulsive sobs of agony, he rose to his full height, and reeled about the apartment with the great dog hanging at his throat and the chain rattling at its collar; and what a face was his, when for a moment a ray of moonlight fell on it through the broken casement!

Hautois was reeling about close to the trap-door, when an idea seized me. I threw it open, and gave him a push with all my strength; and through the black aperture, with a shriek and a growl the man and dog vanished together.

I stood alone—alone, with no sound in

my ears save the rush of the subterranean stream—the torrent of St. Aubin du Cormier; how deep, how far down below, coming from *whence* and flowing to *where*, no man knew; but my teeth chattered, and a shudder passed over me.

I let the trap-door drop to shut out the horrid sound, and reeled giddily into the outer apartment.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CHAUMIÈRE.

It was not until some minutes had elapsed that I became fully conscious the fierce struggle was over, and that Jacqueline was avenged; but there lay on the floor the pistols, the knife, and the blood of him whose body was now whirling along the chasms and amid the eddies of that subterranean stream whose source and outlet are alike unknown.

Tossing a stool upon the fire to feed the sinking flame, and heedless of the danger of being found in what was doubtless the haunt, the abode of an outlaw and robber, perhaps the rendez-

vous of his partners in crime, I sank upon the floor, to reflect and to rest. It was only then that I felt how weak, how weary I was in body, how sick and ill at heart.

I was trembling from head to foot, and bathed in a cold perspiration; so much had I undergone within the last four-and-twenty hours that a kind of stupor came upon me.

And Jacqueline—my soul was full of her! Her voice seemed ever in my ear—her name upon my tongue—her image before me. The contour of her head, with every soft feature and familiar expression of eye; glances that were filled with affection and susceptibility; her smiling lip. Ah, the pale mask which lay at the foot of yonder tree in the forest—could it be the face of her I loved so well?

If I am to live, thought I, oh for the whirl and excitement of war—a storm, siege, wreck, battle, anything that will lure me from myself and from thoughts that are maddening. To have loved her and have lost her thus! Every pulsation was a pang, for I endured all the keen misery of knowing that I had been loved tenderly, truly, and deeply in return, and yet had lost her.

The images I drew of her endurance and death, they indeed were too much to think of long, so happily crushed by my own reflections, overcome by toil, and lulled by the ceaseless murmur of the subterranean stream that poured beneath the *chaumière* I fell asleep at last on the hard floor where I lay.

I must have lain thus for some hours when voices roused me, and I started up

to find that day had broken and several men were about me.

I had a "splitting headache" (as Charters used to say), a burning thirst, and bloodshot eyes, the result of all I had undergone; but on staggering up, I recognised the Chevalier de Boisguiller, Urbain the gardener, and Bertrand, with several others, who followed the track I had pursued, and who thus succeeded in discovering the wretched chaumière which had formed the lair of Hautois, whom they clamorously inquired if I had seen.

"Yes," said I; "and moreover I have seen the last of him."

"How—what has happened?" they asked together, while the chevalier added—

"These pistols and this knife lying here—the blood on the floor, and the

broken stool, bear evidence of a conflict. What has taken place?"

I briefly related all, and Boisguiller on lifting the trap-door, gazed with a shrinking aspect on the black torrent that rushed far down below; and it would appear that for dark purposes the chaumière certainly had been built immediately over one of the few open chasms in the rocks, through which this torrent of water traverses the forest of St. Aubin du Cormier.

"Your vengeance has indeed been ample—only perhaps too sudden," said he, after a pause; "and now let us return, but first, Urbain, we shall set fire to this den, lest it find an occupant similar to the last. Then, monsieur, what are we to do with you?"

"It matters little," said I, wearily, and sick at heart.

“You are probably unaware that the British have landed again, and set fire to Cherbourg?”

“Indeed, chevalier!” I exclaimed, interested in spite of myself, and remembering that the blaze I had seen in the sky to the north-west was now accounted for.

“Yes; a strong force, we know not how many, have disembarked at Bay des Maries.”

“Under the Duke of Marlborough?”

“No; the commander is a general named Bligh.”

“*Pardi! cet officier est un homme d'expédition!*” muttered the old grenadier, Bertrand; “he has already fired all the coast.”

“Yes, and he is a man of courage and daring too,” added the chevalier. “*Peste!* he shall not stay long in France, for all

that. But we have no time to lose ; our sorrowful chase has come to an end, and I must rejoin my troop, as all our forces are closing towards Cherbourg to succour the Comte de Raymond. I repeat but the words of my friend Madame de Bourgneuf, when I say, monsieur, that I wish you every success in life, now when bidding you, it may be, farewell for ever. But horses are here, and Bertrand the porter, who has been an old soldier, shall accompany you within sight of your outposts at Cherbourg ; so let us at once be gone."

Perceiving that I was so faint that I could scarcely reply, the chevalier kindly said that if I wished to rejoin my countrymen it was necessary to repair my strength, so he insisted upon me imbibing the contents of his flask, which were pure cognac, and Urbain gave me from his

pouch a *galette* or pancake, made of buckwheat and butter.

We separated soon after, and on looking back from the road that led to Avranches, old Bertrand and I saw a column of smoke ascending into the clear blue sky from the forest of St. Aubin du Cormier. It was from the burning hut wherein I had passed a night so terrible.

Riding at a quick pace we travelled together the whole day, frequently passing for miles through dense forests and apple-orchards; but after leaving Coutances behind, old Bertrand began to gnaw his wiry moustache, to make grimaces and mutter "*Sacré Dieu!*" "*Morbleu!*" and so forth; for now the roads became covered by people hastening inland with their children and valuables, and by waggons laden with furniture, sick and aged; the panic being great in that corner of Nor-

mandy; where the strength, object, and ultimate end of the new British expedition were quite unknown.

At last, after the sun had set, and the moon arisen in splendour, we saw from the heights, about seven miles off, the town and fortifications of Cherbourg, with the stately fleet of Commodore Howe riding quietly at anchor in the bay, which shone like a vast but rippling sheet of silver, from Fort Querqueville on the west, to the Isle Pelee on the east.

The way was clear before me now. I bade a kind farewell to Bertrand, dismounted, and handing to him the bridle of the chevalier's horse, walked hastily in one direction, while he rode off in the other. Scarcely had we separated, when a mounted patrol of ten dragoons in scarlet cloaks, riding slowly, each with carbine on thigh, came past.

“Who goes there?” challenged the leader, in English.

“A friend!” I replied, mechanically.

“English, by Jove!” exclaimed the officer in command, as the whole patrol simultaneously checked their horses to listen; “who or what are you, my man?”

“One of the Light Troop of the Scots Greys, left wounded in the rear, after the army abandoned Paramé,” said I, stepping forward and saluting.

“Zounds! and you have been in France all this time?”

“Yes, sir, since the beginning of June.”

“All right,” replied the officer, shortening his reins; “remain with us. We are a party of the 11th Light Dragoons, and shall pass you on to headquarters.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LIGHT TROOP.

I WAS welcomed back by the gallant Captain Lindsay, by Lieutenant Douglas, and Cornet Keith (the three officers of the light troop), by old Sergeant Duff, big Hob Elliot, and other comrades, with a warmth that was very flattering; but by none more than by Jack Charters and honest Tom Kirkton, and among them all, on the night of my return, rejoining, or "resuscitation" as they phrased it, there was held quite an ovation.

For two months my name had remained on the muster-roll as "missing;" but no doubt existed that I had been sabred

or shot in our affair with the French hussars near Dol.

We had a jovial meeting, and the pantries of the good wives of the adjacent village supplied us amply with the means of having a plentiful supper. With ham, bread, fowls, wine, and cognac we regaled ourselves while lounging on the grass, with the silver moon wading through snowy clouds for a lamp and the star-studded sky for a canopy.

In some instances, however, the indiscriminate pillage of government stores and abandoned dwelling-houses caused several scenes of riot, disorder, and debauchery, which neither patrols, the picket, or guard of the Provost Marshal could repress.

I was now in the best place to teach me to forget the past. The merry and familiar voices, the gay uniforms, the

noble grey chargers picketed at their breast ropes close by our bivouac, and the *tout ensemble* of the latter, weaned me from thoughts that were oppressive, and the ardour of the service glowed anew within me.

A narrative of my adventures in Brittany was necessary, but I took care to relate only such portions as I cared to let those heedless fellows know; and when I concluded, my green hunting suit, with its Parisian cut and fashion, afforded a subject for much merriment, and for many empty jokes of that small kind which will go a long way in the barrack and guardroom.

I found Charters and Kirkton rather more soured and reckless than when I last saw them. Both had expected promotion to follow our first expedition to France, and both still enjoyed their

respective ranks of full corporal and full private; thus when we betook us to rectifying the acidity of the Norman wine by pure cognac they began to moralize in their old fashion.

“The devil!” said Charters; “ten years have I worn a red coat, and I am tiring now even of it. But every day that passes into night is one march further forward to the land of the leal where we shall all meet at last; so pass the bottle and let us be jolly while we may. How, Gauntlet, you shake your head? What the deuce has come over the boy! France does not seem to have improved him a bit.”

“Nay, Charters,” said I, “but remember that the troop parades an hour before daybreak to-morrow, so no more brandy. Have we not had enough?”

“One bottle more, say I!”

“Zounds, Jack!” urged Kirkton, “if you were not a very sponge you would have been drowned in wine long ago.”

“Come, Tom,” said Charters, who was rather tipsy, “don’t be mutinous—I have an idea——”

“What! after all this wine and brandy you have actually an idea? It must be worth uncounted gold.”

“It may be worth the king’s commission, Tom, or such a coffin as the pioneer’s shovel gives us,” replied Charters, little knowing how prophetically he spoke. “We are to attack St. Vallon to-morrow, and if the French have a standard in the field, I will take it sword in hand—I, John Charters of Amisfield—or die in the attempt!”

And tipsy though he was, this unfortunate fellow made the boast with a lofty dignity that repressed the smile which

spread on Kirkton's face. And now drums beating and trumpets sounding in varying cadence the tattoo, announced that sleep, or at least silence, should reign in camp and bivouac, till the commodore's ship in the bay should fire the morning gun upon the eventful morrow.

CHAPTER XIX.

CHARTERS' VOW.

SICK, ill, without a horse or accoutrements, I was now little better than a non-effective, and thus happily, was only a spectator of the destruction of Cherbourg. I say happily, for France was the land of Jacqueline, and I had not heart for the work of pillage and destruction that ensued around me.

Lieutenant-General Bligh, an old and experienced officer, having succeeded to the command of the troops, the squadron had sailed from St. Helen's as before, under the pennant of Commodore Howe, who had on board the *Essex* his Royal

Highness Prince Edward (afterwards Duke of York and Albany) who was serving as a midshipman to learn the rudiments of the sea-service for which he was destined, and in which he died at an early age, with the rank of Rear Admiral.

On the 7th August, the squadron, consisting of five line-of-battle ships, nine frigates, and ninety-eight transports, with other craft, came to anchor in the bay of Cherbourg, which is one of the five great *ports militaires* of France, as the general had special orders to destroy the whole place.

By this time a body of French troops of the line, in bright blue uniforms, with some companies of the Irish Brigade clad in scarlet, had intrenched themselves in a line which extended for four miles along the coast, from Fort Eœœurdeville to two miles beyond Cherbourg, and these hasty

defences they strengthened by redoubts mounted with cannon, most of which were twenty-four pounders.

In rear of this line were some corps of cavalry.

While Commodore Howe sent a bomb-ketch to anchor close off the town, with orders to pitch a few shells into it from time to time, and thus amuse or decoy the officer in command there, the British forces landed three miles westward of Querqueville, the most western fort of the bay. During the disembarkation several other bomb-ketches shelled the line of intrenchments not only with explosives of the usual kind, but from mortars loaded with musket balls, thus making great slaughter with little or no risk to us.

As on the former occasion the flat-bottomed boats were hoisted out, and the three regiments of guards, with the grena-

dier company of every battalion on board the fleet, were first rowed ashore, and formed in line upon a portion of the beach that was flat and open. Each boat contained eighteen seamen and fifty grenadiers, and had a red flag displayed at its stern.

Beyond the landing place opened a grassy hollow, with a pretty village that crowned a steep eminence on the right flank; on the left were thick green hedges enclosing orchards laden with fruit of the most brilliant yellow and crimson colours, and amid these were seen the serried files and glittering bayonets of the enemy.

This was a beautiful evening, when the summer sun of Normandy covered all the fertile land and rippling sea with warm light, and bathed in purple tints the undulating ridges of the Mont-du-Roule and

of the Roc-au-chat, while the waves that washed the sloping bastions of Cherbourg, of Fort Royal, and those on the Isle Pelée, or those that broke in foam on the rocks of St. Anne, seemed billows of liquid gold.

Puff—puff—puff—came the white smoke out from the green hedgerows and glowing orchards, as the foe opened a running fire of musketry, under which our grenadiers and Guards formed line, and rushing forward with fixed bayonets and a hearty hurrah, drove in the French out-pickets and stormed a breast-work that lay across the hollow way beyond the beach.

So rapid was the advance, that in this encounter there were only three privates killed and seventeen wounded; while *three hundred* of the enemy were killed or wounded, and among the former was a Captain Macartney of the Irish Brigade,

in whose pocket Hob Elliot of ours, "found a letter," as the newspapers stated, "from a lady in London, dated on the 30th ultimo, assuring him that we were about to pay France a visit, and giving a particular account of our strength."

General Bligh took possession of the village of Erville, where several Irish deserters came in to him with assurances that a great force was coming against the British; but he declared that "if twenty thousand came he would not retire until Cherbourg was in ruins!" Having thus succeeded in turning the western flank of this famous port, he encamped under canvas his whole force, which consisted only of three battalions of the Guards, the 5th, 30th, 33rd, 34th, 56th, 67th and 68th regiments of Foot with those of Richmond and Cornwallis; the Light Troop of the Greys and of five other corps,

making, with the artillery, in all about ten thousand men.

The night at Erville was lovely, the air serene and soft. Groves of the wild mulberry bordered the camp, and others of orange and apple trees loaded the night wind with perfume. The stars shone clear in heaven, and the sky was blue and bright from its zenith to the far horizon ; but amid that calm scene there lay many a stiffened corpse and gaping wound in the hollow way through which the foe had been routed.

Lord Clare's Irish regiment, 700 strong, occupied Cherbourg, and the Count de Raymond, a *Maréchal de Camp*, who commanded in chief, had also under his orders Count Horions' new Regiment de Liege, with the old battalions of Lorraine, Languedoc and Guienne ; in all, with militia, a force of about fourteen thousand

men, was close at hand, so a bloody resistance was anticipated by our troops upon the morrow.

The morrow came, and before daybreak the whole army was under arms, and advancing, with the light dragoons in front, towards Cherbourg, with drums beating and colours flying.

Some daring French artillerymen, who had been left in the solitary fort of Querqueville, now opened a dangerous fire from a few pieces of cannon as our troops advanced. This seemed to serve as a signal to their comrades, who immediately abandoned Cherbourg *en masse*, and without exchanging a shot retired to a place named St. Vallon, nine miles distant.

The guns in Querqueville were still firing briskly, when a boat from the Commodore's ship was seen pulling inshore to the westward of the battery.

A dragoon being required to bear an order to the officer in charge of this boat, a volunteer was requested for the duty, which was one of great risk, as the grape from Querqueville was sweeping all the open plateau to be traversed by the messenger.

On this, Charters immediately rode forward, "recovered" his sword and presented himself.

"Why have *you* volunteered for this?" asked Captain Lindsay, in a tone of reproof.

"Why, sir?" repeated Charters, almost haughtily.

"Yes."

"Because, as the player says—

‘I am a man

So weary with disaster, tugged by fortune,
That I would set my life on any chance,
To mend it or be rid on't.’

Captain Lindsay, life is no longer a prism to me."

"Ride fast!" said the captain, briefly.

Charters shortened his reins, gave his grey the spurs, and departed at once. As he proceeded towards Querqueville Point, the French cannoniers redoubled their efforts to bring him down. He frequently waved his sword as if in defiance, and escaped as if by a miracle. Then on his descending to the beach, where some rocks protected him, the battery turned its round shot and grape on the advancing boat.

Suddenly there rose from the sea and pierced the sky, the mingled yell of many voices. A twenty-four pound shot had dashed the boat to pieces, and twelve seamen and a little midshipman were seen struggling and sinking amid the débris of oars, thwarts and planks, while the French

sent dose after dose of grape to kill the drowning men.

The middy struggled bravely; being light, the waves bore him towards the rocks, but Charters saw that unless succoured, the poor lad would certainly perish amid the surf that boiled over the ridge.

He sheathed his sword, shook his gloved hand fiercely at the battery, and urging his horse into the sea, even while the hissing grape sowed it thick with tiny waterspouts around him, succeeded in grasping the sinking lad by the collar, and turning the head of his gallant grey toward the shore, he bravely battled with the surf, the long waves of which, reddened by the sunshine, seemed to boil in fiery foam upon the beach, and rolled over his shoulders, so that at times the nostrils of his charger were only visible, yet he

succeeded in landing the half-drowned midshipman, and rode twice afterwards into the sea to succour the seamen, but succeeded in saving only one.

This was done in the presence of the whole left wing of the army, which gave him three tremendous cheers, and a few minutes afterwards the grenadiers of Richmond's corps with the light troop of the Greys made a dash at the fort, which immediately surrendered.

As the troops advanced into Cherbourg the French flag was pulled down, and the Union Jack hoisted on the ramparts by the people in token of capitulation, and ere long, the magistrates in their robes and insignia of office came forth from the gates towards the land side to meet General Bligh, who promised that save government stores which he had special orders to destroy, all property should be

respected. Thus, by three in the afternoon our troops had peaceable possession of the town and forts of boasted Cherbourg.

In the evening, the Greys, a troop of the 11th and a body of grenadiers were pushed on towards St. Vallon, from whence a party of French Horse, the hussars of Boisguiller, with the heavy dragoons of Languedoc *checquered*, had advanced to reconnoitre or to skirmish.

As our light dragoons moved off, the aide-de-camp of the commander-in-chief rode up to the troop of ours and addressing Charters, said—

“You did three acts of great bravery to-day under the fire of Fort Querqueville, but chiefly in saving the life of that midshipman.”

“Sir,” replied Jack, nonchalantly, “I only did the duty dictated by common

humanity; and I hope the little mid has dried his jacket by this time.”

“Do you know the name of him you saved?”

“Not I—never thought of such a thing.”

“Well—that little middy was his Royal Highness Prince Edward, the second son of the king; and I have it in command from Lieutenant-General Bligh to compliment you, Corporal Charters, and to say that you shall have the *first* pair of colours that become vacant in the force now under his orders.”

The nut-brown cheek of Charters flushed, as he replied in voice rendered husky by emotion—

“It is well, sir, and I thank the general. I have saved the lives of men ere now; but they were merely private soldiers, *not* royal highnesses, so my humanity or bravery went for little.

“Charters, this bitterness and pride are your ruin,” said the aide-de-camp, who knew well the story of our comrade.

“Not so; tell General Bligh that I am not ungrateful, and that I shall thank him from my soul, if, before I die, he replace upon my shoulders those epaulettes of which they should never have been deprived!”

“He will, Charters, and I shall be one of the first to welcome you and to wet the new commission,” replied the frank staff officer. “Captain Lindsay, you had better form the two troops in squadron, and make a dash at those advancing cavalry, as the ground is open here.”

Indeed, while this conversation had been proceeding, the French hussars and heavy dragoons, about one hundred and eighty in all, had debouched from some hedgerows upon a piece of open moorland,

with a swallow-tailed banner of light blue silk flying in their centre.

Charters pointed to it with his sword, and said to Kirkton—

“You see yonder standard, Tom? Well—I shall fulfil my vow of last night, or my horse shall go home with an empty saddle!”

Quietly and orderly as if upon parade in Hyde Park, the two troops formed squadron; Captain Lindsay equalized them, appointed the troop leaders and the serrefiles; he then took post half a horse's length in front of the standard, which was borne by troop sergeant-major Duff, and which was of scarlet silk embroidered with the thistle and St. Andrew, the regimental motto, and the national one, *Nemo me impune lacessit*.

I shall not attempt to describe the fury of the encounter that took place, as I was

not present. It was long, desperate, and hand to hand. Charters unhorsed the cornet and captured the standard which belonged to the Languedoc dragoons, who made a desperate rally to recover it, and cut him off. For some minutes he and big Hob Elliot were fairly surrounded by the enemy, but Captain Lindsay made a gallant charge to save him, as he was a prime favourite with the corps. In that charge the captain perished, but the French were repulsed.*

The squadron was brought out of the field by Lieutenant Douglas of ours, and it was with a sad heart I saw them enter Cherbourg, bearing across their saddles the wounded and the dead.

* "Several skirmishes were fought by the out-parties of each army, in one of which, Captain Lindsay, a gallant officer (of the Greys), who had been very instrumental in training the Light Horse, perished." Smollet, *Hist. of Eng.*, vol. vi.

Among the latter was my poor friend Charters, slain by three pistol-shots and eight sabre wounds, yet still grasping with a deadly clutch the standard of the dragoons of Languedoc.

Hob Elliot carried his body out of the field.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SACK OF CHERBOURG.

DURING the reign of Louis XIV. plans had been proposed by the celebrated Marshal Vauban, for the fortification of Cherbourg; these were then only partially carried into effect, but a noble and spacious harbour had subsequently been formed. Two piers, one a thousand, the other five hundred, feet in length, had been built, and outer and inner basins were made large enough to contain ships of the line; these basins were closed by gates each forty-two feet wide.

To destroy these, General Bligh had fifteen hundred soldiers at work making blasts, and so well did they prosecute the

art of destruction, that the labour of thirty years, and the expense of one million two hundred thousand pounds (English) perished in a few days. In short, the noble harbour of Cherbourg was utterly ruined, and the shipping it contained was given to the flames.

We took twenty-four tons of gunpowder out of the French magazines, and blew up or threw down all the bastions and batteries along the shore, from Fort Querqueville to the Isle Pelee, and dismantled, or flung into the sea, one hundred and sixty-three pieces of cannon and three mortars, with a vast quantity of shot and shell. Two mortars and twenty-two beautiful guns, all of polished brass, together with several colours (among them, of course, the standard taken by poor Jack Charters), were put on board the commodore's ship.

On the side of one of the great sluice-

gates I saw an inscription in French to the following effect :—

“Louis and Fleury trust to Asfield’s care,
Amid the waves to raise this mighty pier,
Propitious to our prayers the fabric stood,
Curbed the fierce tide, and tamed the threatening
flood,
Hence wealth and safety flow—hence just renown,
The king, the statesman, and the hero crown !

This work, by command of Louis XV.
The advice of Cardinal Fleury, and direction of
Count Asfield,
Shall endure for ever !”

Scarcely had I finished reading this, than an officer of our regiment called to me—

“Hallo ! look out ! stand back there !”

He had a match in his hand, which he applied to a train, and in one minute the whole fabric, with a tremendous concussion, rent, split, rose into the air amid a cloud of smoke, and vanished as it sank into the surf that boiled over it.

Two armed ships which lay in the inner

basin we despatched to England, and eighteen others we burned or sunk filled with stones. On the people of Cherbourg a contribution of forty-four thousand livres was levied by beat of drum ; and so rapidly did our miners and devastators do their work, that the whole place was a scene of melancholy ruin and desolation before the Count de Raymond could muster forces of the line sufficient to dislodge us, for France had then two armies in Germany.

Thus, all our troops were on board, and the whole armament ready for sea by the 17th of August ; our total loss, after having destroyed, what was styled in the prints of the day, “ that most galling thorn in the side of British commerce,” being only Captain Lindsay of the Scots Greys, and twenty-four others killed, some thirty wounded, and ten horses.

The whole army re-embarked without

molestation at Fort Galette, about three o'clock in the morning.

The commodore, who had now, by the death of his brother, who fell at the head of the 55th Regiment in the disastrous affair of Ticonderoga, succeeded to the title of Viscount Howe, gave the signal for sea, and we sailed on the evening of the 17th for England. I was again on board his ship with the light troop of my regiment.

The destruction I had witnessed, and the distress and alarm of the poor unoffending people, sickened me of war for a time, and I felt happy when we bore up the Channel, though still haunted by memories of the land of Brittany, on which I should never look again—a land of stern and dreary mountains, of dark primæval forests, of rocky bluffs, of ruined castles and giant monoliths—the land

where I loved so tenderly and endured so terribly.

On the 19th I saw Old England again, and the whole fleet came to anchor in Portland Roads.

The colours and brass guns taken at Cherbourg, after being exhibited to gaping multitudes in Hyde Park, were drawn in triumph through all the principal streets of London, as the spoil of conquered France, amid a noisy pomp that brought ridicule on the ministry. After this they were lodged in the Tower,

Instead of being sent home to Scotland, as we had fondly speculated, the light troop of the Scots Greys now marched through Dorsetshire and Hampshire into Sussex, where we reached the head-quarters of the regiment, then under orders to join the army in Germany.

Our fine old colonel—"auld Geordie

Buffcoat," as the corps named him—complimented the troop for its uniform good conduct during the two expeditions to the coast of France, and hoped that when on the Rhine we should still prove ourselves "to be his own brave lads, who were *second to none!*"

CHAPTER XXI.

WHAT THE GAZETTE CONTAINED.

I HAD now served one campaign, though a short one; had seen the conclusion of another, ending in the total destruction of Cherbourg, and was on the eve of commencing a third, and yet found myself, despite all my day-dreams and lofty aspirations, unnoticed and unknown. I was grayer now than before. It seemed to me that I had seen much of the world, and assuredly I had suffered much in the time that had elapsed between our landing at Cancalle Bay and the re-embarkation at Fort Galette.

We were now at Wadhurst, a secluded

place in Sussex. On the morning after we joined, Colonel Preston sent for me to the orderly-room, where there ensued a conversation which caused some speculation in the regiment, where my *incognito* was still preserved. The secret of who I was, or what I should have been, was now known to Kirkton only, for poor Jack Charters, as I have already said, was in his soldier's grave among the ruins of Cherbourg, and the only relic I possessed of him was a pair of sleeve-links.

The bluff old colonel was standing with his spurred heels planted firmly on the hearthrug, and his hands behind his back, which was opposed to the fireplace, in the true orderly-room fashion, and he gave me a friendly nod as I entered.

"You are aware, of course, Gauntlet," said he, "that money to purchase a cornetcy has been lodged for you."

“With whom, sir?” I asked, in astonishment.

“The regimental agents, Messrs. Cox and Mair, of Craig’s Court, London.”

“By whom, colonel?”

“Your friends—you should know best.”

“I have no friends—never had any,” said I, bitterly.

“It was lodged two months since,” resumed the colonel, “and gazetted you would have been ere this, but for our doubt about your fate, poor Captain Lindsay having sent your name to the War Office as *missing*.”

I stood looking at the grave, kind, and soldierly old man with a stupified air.

My cousin Aurora must have done this—I was certain of it—for no one else in all the world knew of me, or cared for me; but I was too proud to accept of this donation even from her—from the

usurper of my patrimony, for such I deemed her—and urged the colonel to write at once to the regimental agents, desiring them to return the money to the depositor thereof, whoever he or she might be.

I said this so haughtily, so bitterly, and peremptorily, and with such a flush on my cheek, that the adjutant and orderly-room clerks, who were fussing among docquets of papers and returns, looked up with surprise, and the old colonel, after carefully wiping a great pair of spectacles, put them on his copper-coloured nose, and surveyed me from head to foot with extreme coolness and curiosity.

“Zounds! Gauntlet,” said he, “you are a very extraordinary fellow—very! Have you no wish to rise in the service?”

“By my own merit, sir, I have every wish, but not by the money—(of others, I

was about to say, but added)—the money that should have been mine.”

“Should—hum.”

“I shall go to Germany with you, Colonel Preston, as a private trooper, and I care little if I never come back again.”

“And you positively refuse this commission?”

“From an unknown donor, yes, colonel.”

“Well, ’tis puzzling, but you know your own affairs best. I have the reputation of being the most eccentric old fellow in the service; henceforth you shall enjoy the reputation of being the most eccentric young one.”

Old Preston gave me a kind of nod, as if to intimate that the interview was over, and resumed a conference with the farrier-sergeant concerning the re-shoeing of all the horses prior to embarkation, while I

strolled forth into the barrack-yard to ponder over what had passed.

The news of this interview rapidly spread, and I was speedily joined by Tom Kirkton.

“By Jove!” he exclaimed, “I like your spirit, Gauntlet; yet this seems to me—and it would have seemed to poor Jack, had he been here—the very acme of petulance and folly.”

Selfishness and ambition struggled with pride. I was silent, for it seemed to me that never again might such a chance of being raised to my proper position occur to me, and already I half repented having scorned or refused the proffered gift, without inquiry. It was not too late to retract! I made one pace towards the orderly-room, but pride resumed its power, and I turned away.

“It must be the act of my cousin,

Aurora Gauntlet," said I, "for I have not a relative on earth that I know of, Tom, but her."

"Does it not occur to you, most sapient sir, that your cousin might find it easier and more convenient to forget you—to ignore rather than to remember you, and do her utmost to be your friend?"

"True, Tom, but you cannot feel as I feel in this matter."

"And then, of course, it is not every dragoon who carries in his valise a diploma of baronetcy."

"These last words of yours, Kirkton, have cured me even of regret," said I, bitterly.

"Then I am sorry that they passed my lips. 'Oons man, why not make love to her?—there are worse matches in this world than a young and handsome cousin."

These words provoked only an angry

smile, and the trumpet sounding for stable duty cut short the interview by hurrying us to look after the wants of our respective steeds.

So, according to my desire, Colonel Preston wrote to the agents, and the money was returned; but in the next War Office Gazette how great was the surprise of my comrades and myself when we read the following announcement—

“*Scots Greys, Light Troop.*—Lieut. Sholto Douglas to be captain, *vice* Lindsay, killed in action; Cornet James Keith to be Lieut., *vice* Douglas, promoted; Sir Basil Gauntlet, Bart., to be cornet, *vice* Keith.”

“Sir Basil Gauntlet, *Baronet!*”

Had a loaded bomb of the greatest size exploded in the centre of the mess-room table it could scarcely have created so

much speculation as this remarkable gazette did among the officers of his Majesty's Second Dragoons, of whom I thus found myself one.

Could I doubt that Aurora had done this? Could I be less than grateful that she—the only being who inherited the same name and blood, was determined not to forget me? Thus, finding that in my stubborn pride I declined the cornetcy by purchase, without further consultation she had resolved to drag me into my place by a commission without it.

As yet I knew not all this with certainty, and was too proud to write to Netherwood Hall; moreover, I knew not whether Aurora was there, though had I considered, the celerity with which the whole affair had been transacted should have convinced me that she was in the metropolis.

And thus I was an officer, an officer at last, and without having performed even the smallest of those superhuman acts of heroism of which I had drawn such dashing pictures in my day-dreams; without capturing standards sword-in-hand, without leading on furious charges, or disastrous forlorn hopes; made an officer simply through a note, written by a pretty girl's hand to some official source.

Thus was I promoted; my comrades congratulated me, and I felt a joyous certainty that their emotions were sincere, even those of the old grumblers and the "knowing ones," who at the outset of his career had fleeced poor Basil the recruit of his bounty at the Canteen and tavern.

The day of embarkation for Germany had not been named, but it was known to be drawing near: thus, with the extremely limited means at my disposal I had little

else to think of than providing myself with a horse in addition to my trooper uniform and other *et cetera* befitting my rank. Those friendly and fatherly gentlemen of the race of Judah who hang about all barracks as the carrion crow and vulture in mid-air overhang a battle-field, were at hand to aid me for a "moderate consideration" in the way of thirty or forty per cent. interest, and the whole affair was soon done—all the sooner that old Colonel Preston was my friend.

In a *week* after my appointment (the rules of the service were not then what they were afterwards) I found myself on duty as an officer, and oddly enough it was that of a *marine* on board a frigate.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE PRISON SHIP.

A THIRTY-SIX gun frigate, the *Alceste*, crowded with French prisoners, had for some reason, I know not what, come into the old harbour of Rye, which was then becoming rapidly choked up with sand, and unfortunately she became, as the sailors term it, *neaped*, which means being left so far aground by the neap-tide, which there rises to the height of seventeen feet, that there was no chance of her floating even at high-water, until the spring-tide flowed again.

In this state she lay imbedded in the sand, and careened over to port, much to the discomfort of those on board.

Several brawls having ensued among the prisoners, as the marine guard had been withdrawn (to partake in a third, and, as it proved in the sequel, most disastrous expedition to the coast of France), the officer in command applied for a guard of dismounted dragoons, the Greys being the nearest troops at hand; and thus with twenty men of the light troop I found myself doing marine duty on board H.M. ship *Alceste*.

In her commander I recognised one of the junior officers of Lord Howe's ship, a young lieutenant, for the frigate had all her guns out save two, and was simply degraded to the rank of a floating prison. He welcomed me all the more warmly that he was a countryman of mine, and one who spoke his native dialect in all its Doric breadth and native purity. He was afterwards that Captain I—— who com-

manded the *Belliqueux*, 64, at Camperdown, and who in the beginning of the action, on failing to make out Lord Duncan's signals amid the smoke, after various attempts flung the signal book on deck, and shouted from the poop—

“Up wi' yer helm, damme, and gang doon into the middle o't!” Then running in between two of the enemy's ships he shortened sail, and engaged his guns on both sides at once.

Now lest the reader may never have seen a hulk crowded with French prisoners, I shall sketch briefly a little of what we saw on board of the *Alceste*.

A few seamen and petty officers composed her crew, and she had on board, and under their care, four hundred desperadoes, as she was the condemned ship of the larger hulks which lay moored in Portsmouth harbour and elsewhere, being the

receptacle for those prisoners whose misconduct, desperate character, or violent disposition rendered them obnoxious to rule and to the rest of their comrades.

Each of these prisoners when brought on board was provided with a suit of yellow uniform, this colour being deemed sufficiently remarkable to ensure notice and recapture in case of escape being effected. Each had also a hammock and bedding. To cook their rations certain men were elected by themselves, and the sole duty imposed upon the general body was the simple task of keeping themselves clean, the space they occupied between decks neat and tidy, and of bringing up their hammocks daily to air in the nettings.

Soldiers or seamen with loaded muskets were posted at various parts of the vessel, and in the poop cabins were two twenty-

four pounders kept loaded; and these, in case of revolt or disturbance could be run through ports in the bulkhead, to sweep the decks with grape and canister shot.

On the main deck was a railed space named the *pound*, wherein the prisoners were allowed to walk and amuse themselves during the day; and there they were at liberty to expose for sale those boxes of dominoes, toy ships, buttons, bodkins, and other trifles, which, with the native ingenuity of their country, French prisoners were wont to manufacture from their ration bones and pieces of wood given to them by the ship carpenter.

But from the character of our prisoners—the refuse of the other prison hulks—I found few such traces of industry on board the *Alceste*.

In consequence of the absence of the

marines, the discomfort of the ship while lying careened to port, and her vicinity to the land, Lieutenant I—— soon found the prisoners in a furious state of discontent, and beginning to encourage hopes of breaking loose by cutting a hole in the ship's side with a knife.

The ringleaders he had punished according to his printed regulations; but ten days in the black hole, among rats and bilge-water, extra deck-cleaning duty, and short allowance of hard biscuits and stale "swipes," utterly failed to repress their turbulence and insubordination.

There were sailors, soldiers, privateersmen, merchant-seamen, civilians, and even officers who had broken their parole, crammed together in wretchedness and filth, some of them being almost in a state of nudity, with nothing more than a piece of old sail tied round them, not-

withstanding all the excellent regulations of the Transport Board, and the exertions of the officers and slender crew of the *Alceste*, for most of these Frenchmen were now so desperate and degraded that they cared less for death than life. Thus, never shall I forget the impression made upon me when I looked along the far vista of the lower deck, when the flakes of yellow sunlight were streaming across it through the barred gratings of the triced-up ports, and saw the tattered figures, the scrubby beards, the scarred forms—scarred less in battle than by prison brawls (for some who were obnoxious to the rest were horribly mutilated)—the shock heads of black, uncombed hair, the unwashed visages and bloodshot eyes of those prisoners—the dull apathy of some, the ferocious hate exhibited by others; and when I heard the yells,

screams, obscenity and mockery with which they greeted us as new comers, and chiefly when my guard, as a hint, deliberately loaded their carbines with ball-cartridge before them.

“From what do all these miseries and disorders arise?” I asked, as we retired and entered the great cabin, the windows of which faced to the coast of Kent.

“You may well inquire,” replied Lieutenant I——; “they have their origin in an inordinate passion for gambling.”

“Gambling?”

“Yes; you would be astonished,” continued the lieutenant, whose dialect I render in English, “if you knew how these incorrigible wretches persevere in a vice that ends in the death of many and the misery of all. Their clothes, their beds, their rations, the hair of their heads, and their very teeth, they convert into

objects on which to hazard the turn of a card or a cast of the dice. For months in advance many of them have lost all their food to more fortunate or more knavish gamblers; and so hard of heart have some of these become, that they will see their victims perish of hunger before their eyes without bestowing a morsel to alleviate their sufferings. Many have died on the lower deck, naked, of cold in the winter, and others of sheer starvation. In the stomachs of two, who were thus found dead in the cable-tier yesterday, our surgeon found only a little water. I have had small-arm men posted over the mess-tables with loaded pistols, to force each man to eat his own rations, whether gambled away or not; and all night long we have to watch every portion of the ship, as they are for ever cutting holes in her sheathing with knives they have

secreted—holes for the purpose of escaping or of scuttling her with all on board. So, sir," he added, with an oath, "you are likely to find yourself in pleasant company."

It would seem that on finding the ship stranded in Rye Harbour, and so near the shore, a privateersman, notorious as a ringleader in every disorder, cut, with the help of a knife—the edge of which he had serrated as a saw—one of those holes to which my friend referred, on the starboard side and just amidships.

This had been discovered in time, and in accordance with standing orders every prisoner in that part of the ship had been put upon half-rations to defray the expense of the repair, which the carpenter stated at twenty-five pounds sterling.

A dreadful uproar ensued when this information was communicated to the

Frenchmen. Wet swabs, holystones, belaying-pins, pieces of wood torn from the hatchway-combings and deck-gratings, mops, brooms, and everything available as a weapon, were in immediate requisition; and the prisoners broke into open revolt on the third day after we were on board.

The drum beat to arms, the crew drove below all who were in the pound, battened down the hatches, and promptly ran the two twenty-four pounders through the bulkhead aft to sweep the deck forward if necessary; but so much was the vessel careened over in the sand that the guns failed to work well. Thus my twenty dismounted Greys, with their carbines loaded, were formed in line across the deck, ready for whatever might ensue; Lieutenant I—— having of course command of the whole.

As the disorder was at its height, and

several missiles had been flung at us, I gave the orders—

“Ready—present!” but on finding that the din was instantly hushed, I added, “*Advance arms!*”

Stepping forward a few paces, and taking advantage of the lull, I was proceeding to address the prisoners in the most conciliatory terms, when the privateersman—a tall, strong, and swarthy fellow from Martinique—with silver rings in his ears, and naked to the waist, rushed upon me with a knife, in eluding which I stumbled and fell.

On seeing this, believing me to be stabbed, Tom Kirkton cried—

“Let us shoot them down—fire!”

Then a volley of carbines was poured in. This shot the privateersman and another dead, and severely wounded ten more. A terrible scene then took place

at the hatchways, as the fugitives scrambled, tumbled, and rolled over each other—falling through in heaps in their haste to escape to the lower hold, cockpit, cable-tier, or anywhere; all save those who lay on the deck, and one, a many in tattered uniform, who stood calmly with arms folded, and with his back to the mainmast, eyeing us with steady disdain, as if waiting for the next platoon.

With my sword drawn, I stepped forward to question this rash man, and then judge my emotion on recognising in him the—Chevalier de Boisguiller!

CHAPTER XXIII.

“TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN FICTION.”

“FIRE—kill me !” exclaimed the chevalier, proudly and fiercely ; “ I have no desire to live after the degradation to which you have subjected me—I, an officer of the Queen’s Hussars, and a chevalier of the order. *Ah, sacré!* perfidious English—you know not how to make war.”

“Monsieur de Boisguiller, have you already forgot me—and our meetings in the chateau of Bourgneuf, and the forest of St. Aubin du Cormier ?”

His expression changed on recognising me ; but perceiving my epaulettes, gorget, and sash—

“*Pardieu!*” he exclaimed, with a grimace on his lip, and fire flashing in his eyes; “we seem to have changed places with a vengeance, Monsieur l’Ecos-sais!”

He said something more, but his voice was rendered incoherent by the shame and passion, pride and mortification, which almost made him weep.

I turned to Lieutenant I——, of the *Alceste*, and inquired how it came to pass that the chevalier, whom I knew to be a brave and honourable French officer, should be found in a plight so deplorable, and thrust among such associates.

“He was sent on board here for attempting to kill the captain of one of our privateers,” replied the naval officer briefly, and with a contemptuous glance at the Frenchman.

“I shall tell you how it came to pass,

monsieur ; *you* will believe me ?” said the chevalier, turning to me earnestly.

“ Assuredly, monsieur.”

“ Our fleet is still shut up in Brest by yours ; so a large privateer of Bristol made a dash into the harbour of Cherbourg last week, to pick up anything milord Howe had left behind him. Among other things they unluckily picked up *me*, when on my way to Erville to keep an appointment with a little *paysanne*, who, like the rest, preferred a Parisian hussar to a Breton woodcutter. The privateer put to sea ; I was refused my parole of honour, and placed on board this floating pandemonium three days before she was stranded in Rye Harbour, because in resenting some insolence of the privateer captain, I knocked him down and jumped overboard. He jumped after me, and we fought in the water till a boat’s-crew

picked us up. *Pardieu* that is all, *mon camarade.*”

I begged the officer in command of the *Alceste* to accept the parole of the chevalier, to which he at once agreed, and removed him to one of the after cabins, where he was supplied with clothes to replace his hussar uniform, which was now in rags, the ruffians of the prison-ship having torn every shred of lace from it, to exchange for grog with bumboat women who paddled about the frigate.

We had a bottle of wine together, and under its influence the Frenchman's natural gaiety soon resumed its wonted sway, his annoyance and anger disappeared, and as we conversed his voice brought back, as in a mental panorama, the old chateau on the road to Rennes, with its reedy lake and flower-enamelled lawn—the woods, the hills, and rockbound shores

of Brittany, with softer thoughts of a time that would never come again—thoughts, however, that he was singularly fated to dispel.

“The story of your encounter with Hautois, and your casting him into the Black Torrent, where doubtless he has thrown many an unfortunate devil, will form one of the best legends in Brittany,” said he, laughing.

“The old Countess Ninon?”

“Is well—though less blooming than her namesake, De l’Enclos.”

“And Urbain—and old Bertrand?”

“All well, when I saw them last, about ten days ago. *Peste!* what a number of things have happened to me since then.”

“And pretty Angelique?”

“Is now the happy wife of Jacquot Triquot, coachman to M. le Curé of St. Solidore. The countess punished her thus

for her remarkable trick of turning you into a soubrette, my friend, which might have been a very serious joke !

I smiled mournfully and muttered—

“ Poor—poor Jacqueline !”

“ *Parbleu !* how is it that you do not ask for her ?”

“ Ask for *her* ?” I repeated, with sorrowful surprise ; “ ask for one who is dead and buried ?”

“ Who *was* half dead and half buried, you mean. She was only stunned by a blow, and half-smothered among leaves and grass. She is alive and well, *Dieu merci !* and by this time will be in Paris with her cousin, Comte Bourgneuf.”

I remained for some moments in doubt of my senses on hearing this ; but there was an imperturbable smile on Boisguiller’s face, as he sat twirling each moustache alternately.

“Chevalier, you assure me of this on your honour,” said I, hoarsely.

“On my honour as an officer wearing the cross of St. Louis. It was a mere case of suspended animation—nothing more. You would have seen this yourself had you not left us with the bloodhound in such a devil of a hurry to follow the track of Hautois. In fact, she spoke to us all quite rationally in about half an hour after you disappeared.”

“Chevalier, you saw how I suffered,” said I, with grave reproach, “and yet you permitted me to leave the province in the belief that Jacqueline de Broglie was indeed dead. Was this fair of you?”

“In love as in war, my dear fellow, all things are fair, so far as strategy will go. Had I told you that she was merely in a swoon—*lethargique*—you might have been prompted to commit some new extrava-

gance ; thus we all thought that the sooner you were comfortably out of France the better. She is now in Paris, and—" he added rather spitefully, for my manner piqued him, "and will soon be married—most suitably married."

"Married to whom?" I asked fiercely. But he still smiled complacently, and continued to curl his confounded moustache. "In Paris—ah, there she may soon forget *me*," I added, sadly.

"Forget you! *Ouf, mon camarade!* what would you have? You don't know my cousin Jacqueline. In that huge old barrack, the lonely chateau, you were a brother, a companion, a little bit of romance such as we may find in Marivaux—nothing more. In Paris, the memory of all that will soon be effaced. Monsieur, she cannot come here—you cannot go there—so this is the end of the

matter." And he burst out into a fit of laughter.

As a sequel to this conversation, my mind became oppressed by emotions of a very mingled cast indeed, and so little desire had I for the stinging communications of my friend the chevalier, that my whole wish was to get rid of him handsomely as soon as possible.

I wrote to Captain Douglas and to Lieutenant Keith to inform them how and where I had found the brave officer who had commanded in the redoubt at Cancalle Bay, and had led those hussars whom we had met hand to hand and bridle to bridle in Brittany.

They used their influence with old Colonel Preston, and through him the chevalier in a short time effected an exchange with an officer of equal rank, and was sent home to France by cartel.

Prior to this, a subdivision of marines having been placed on board the *Alceste*, my party gladly marched back to headquarters at Wadhurst, about twenty-five miles from Rye.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WADHURST.

JACQUELINE *not* dead, but in Paris! It terrified and bewildered me. Was Hautois drowned at last? might he too reappear as he had done before, like a vampire, whom there was no destroying? Jacqueline not dead, but in Paris with her cousin, the handsome Comte de Bourgneuf, to whom she was soon to be married. This idea—this sequel to her story, whether false or *true*, was ever before me, kindling my jealousy, wounding my self-esteem, filling my heart with bitter sorrow, and I longed for active service to wean me from myself; and right glad was I when the “Route” arrived for Germany.

Wadhurst is five miles from Tunbridge Wells. That famous Spa was then little more than a village, but many fashionables who were there to drink the waters, to kill time, to catch an heir or an heiress, came over to see the corps inspected by the general of the district on the day before we marched for the coast.

The regiment paraded in complete marching order, with valises packed, and pouches filled with ammunition. In addition to the usual accoutrements for horse and man, every officer and trooper had strapped to his saddle a nosebag, watering bridle and log, with mane and curry-combs, sponge, horsepicker, scissors, and spare shoe, all in a canvas cover, and a net for forage.

We received the general, John La-fausille (who ^{or}_a four years after died when on his way home from the Havannah), in

review order, with our trumpets sounding "Britons, strike home." And I can remember well the stately appearance of the old soldier, with his hair powdered and queued, as he rode to the front of the staff, and raised his Kevenhüller hat in salute, while the veteran Preston, erect, grim, and stiff, in his buff coat, a relic of a past age retained by his eccentricity, lowered his heavy broadsword in return till the blade touched the toe of his right jackboot. The muscular strength and stature of our men, nearly all of whom were natives of Ayrshire, with the beauty and high condition of our horses, excited great admiration.

A brilliant staff now passed along the line, and it was so numerous, that to admit its passage, our rear rank went about by threes, retired to double distance, then fronted and dressed by the pivots. Many

ladies on horseback accompanied the staff.

Among them was one in a pale blue riding-habit, with a broad hat and white plume, who was mounted on a dashing grey pad, and rode beside an aide-de-camp, of whom she was asking many questions; and she seemed to be eagerly scrutinizing the corps, the officers thereof especially.

Her companion I knew by sight to be a Major Shirley—rather a gay and dissipated man, and a brother of that Cornet Frederick Shirley who had wrought my friend Charters such evil when in the Dragoon Guards.

“Have you found him?” asked the major, laughing.

“No,” I heard the lady reply.

“Look among the cornets.”

“But how shall I know them?”

“By their cake and pudding appearance.

Besides, each carries the standard of his troop."

They were now close to me, and I carried the standard of the Light Troop, with the staff resting on the toe of my right boot, so the young lady, a handsome girl with fair, almost golden hair, a delicate complexion, and dark blue eyes, turned and looked fully at me.

She was my cousin Aurora!

Though it was for me she had been looking, she coloured deeply, bowed and smiled, and then grew pale—so pale that her friend the staff major observed it, and said, drily :

"So, Miss Gauntlet, you have found him, then?"

"Yes—oh yes, and knew him immediately."

"Then I hope you are pleased," said the major, biting his nether-lip and adroitly

catching the bridle of her horse, which reared at a sudden crash of the trumpets that drowned her reply as the cavalcade passed on.

The ranks were now closed.

“Dress the line by the standards, Major Maitland,” cried Colonel Preston. “Who is that fool yonder throwing the whole line out?” he added, as a sergeant’s horse became restive and reared on its hind legs.

“A fool, but for whom, Colonel, you would have been years ago in your grave at Stapledyke,” replied the sergeant, quietly.

“Egad you are right, Duff, for you saved my life there—forgive my anger, comrade,” said the kind old officer.

“I would forgive you anything, Colonel,” replied the old sergeant in the same undertone, while his eyes filled; “for you and

I are the last left of the Greys who rode in the charge on the bloody day in South Beveland.”

The review was soon over; we passed the general in open column of troops, charged in squadrons and in line, amid whirlwinds of dust—went through sword and carbine exercise, were complimented by the general and harangued by the colonel; then the men were dismissed to their quarters, while the officers joined the staff and the ladies at luncheon, in a large marquee which had been erected on a pleasant lawn for the purpose.

A stranger amid that gay throng, and caring little on the eve of embarkation whether or not I made new acquaintances, I was attending to one or two stout and elderly mammas, who being neither handsome nor blooming, had been somewhat neglected; and while doing the honours

with our cold fowl, pink cream and champagne, a voice close by me said :

“ And so, Basil, you are going to the seat of war ? ”

I looked around, and found Aurora Gauntlet's blue eyes bent on me with something of sad earnestness.

“ You will shake hands with me, Basil—wont you ? ”

I coloured and trembled with pride, perplexity, and even annoyance ; but pressed her hand in mine, though the wrongs I had suffered at the behest of our grandfather swelled up bitterly in my heart.

“ So, Basil, ” she resumed, smiling, “ I have brought your military escapade to a creditable—to a pleasant termination ; have I not ? ”

“ I felt quite certain, Miss Gauntlet, that it was to you I owed my epaulettes, and I pray you to accept of my gratitude for

your friendship and memory. My military escapade ! Is it thus you term the resource of stern necessity ? Would it have been an escapade had I turned highwayman, or joined some desperate privateer ? Few resources are left to a penniless gentleman, so I chose the most honourable."

"I deplore your bitterness of spirit, cousin Basil," said she, "and I pity you ; but what could—what *can* I do ?"

"I ask no pity, Miss Gauntlet," I replied, somewhat ruffled ; "but permit me to lead you from this—here we cannot converse with freedom." And taking her hand, we went forth into the sunny lawn, Aurora holding her riding-habit gathered in her left hand, her ostrich feather drooping over her right shoulder, and very lovely and graceful she looked in the bloom of her youth and beauty.

"Forgive me," said she, almost with

tears in her eyes, and a quiver on her pouting lip, for she knew in what a hostile aspect I viewed her; "but I think your conduct to me, as a kinswoman who seeks to befriend you, most unkind and ungracious! Think of what is before you, and that we may never see or meet each other again."

I laughed and replied,

"We have not seen much of each other hitherto, Miss Gauntlet."

"Call me Aurora!" said she, grasping her switch with an impulse that was not all playfulness.

"But then, when I am such a scape-grace—outcast if you will—what the devil does it matter what is before me, or how soon I am shot? Thanks to you, however, my dear cousin, I shall die in the position of a gentleman."

"I would have sent you a few hundred guineas on your promotion, Basil; but

mamma reminded me of your dangerous pride, your haughty and resentful spirit, so I tore up the cheque after signing it."

"You judged rightly, my dear cousin; but I thank you, though I would not have accepted the money. The commission you have thrust upon me——"

"Thrust—oh fie, Basil! It was simply managed," said she, smiling, "by a note from mamma to Mr. Pitt, the great commoner, who was once himself a cornet of cavalry; in the Blues, I think, was he not?"

"That commission I hoped to have won otherwise. However——" I paused, as there was a tearful and angry expression in Aurora's eyes, and very beautiful eyes they were, with lashes thick, dark, and long, which imparted to them a charming softness. Then cousinship is such a strange affinity—something like a

sister and more like a sweetheart, that I committed some very ungracious speech to silence, for I now began to perceive that from her mother Aurora inherited a true English girl's face, in expression the sweetest, in features the softest, perhaps, in the world.

“And you march——” she began, to change the subject.

“To-morrow, at eight in the morning.”

“So early! Yet I shall ride over from Tunbridge Wells to see you off.”

“Thank you, Aurora; but at such an hour——”

“Oh, I shall not want for an escort, believe me. Major Shirley and a dozen others will only be too happy. And now that we are to be friends from henceforward, confess that you have been wrong, cousin Basil, and that I have been right!”

“Perhaps—it is the privilege of all

handsome girls to be right, whatever view they take."

"Did you learn this in France?" she asked, with a steady glance.

"Ah!" said I, and with the thought of Jacqueline, my heart seemed to die within me; "in France I preserved your handkerchief (you remember our race on Banstead Heath), and it saved my life from a bullet at St. Malo."

Her soft, peachlike cheek flushed with honest pleasure when I said this, but ere she could reply, Major Shirley—a privileged man evidently was this devil of a major, and a very handsome one to boot—came forward, saying—

"Miss Gauntlet, I beg pardon, but I have been looking for you everywhere."

"Why?" asked Aurora, raising her eyebrows.

"You are forgetting the hour, and that

I promised your mamma to see you safely back to Tunbridge Wells betimes."

"Adieu, Basil!"

"Till to-morrow," I added.

She kissed her gloved hand to me, and the smiling major led her away with all haste.

I was happier after this interview than I had been for many a day. The kindness that the warmhearted and impulsive Aurora seemed to cherish for me gave her another and a nearer interest in my mind. Animosity died within me, and I began to think it was charming to have at least one relation who loved me for myself, and I thought of our old Scottish proverb, which says that "Blood is thicker than water." Moreover, how could she help the tenor of my crusty grandfather's odious will, or that fatality by which my cousin Tony broke his valuable neck and made her an heiress?

We paraded duly for the march next day. The several troops were formed, their rolls called, and as the clock of the old market-place struck eight, the whole regiment moved off amid the cheers of the populace and the lamentations of those soldiers' wives who were left behind with their poor little ones, their treasured marriage lines, and a "begging pass" to their own parish wherever it might be—too often the usual and cruel wind-up of military matrimony.

At that moment Aurora Gauntlet, mounted on her dashing grey—a pad she rode in compliment to *us*—her cheeks flushed by a long ride in the pure morning air, her skirt and plume and golden hair floating behind her, cantered up to the column, accompanied by Major Shirley in his staff uniform, and by John Trot, the valiant hero of Wandsworth Common,

in very gay livery, and like the staff officer, well mounted.

“I’m just in time, I find,” said she, as I drew aside from my troop (which being the Light one was in the rear, as the corps was marched with the right in front) and reined up beside her.

“I was looking for you anxiously, Aurora. Will you keep this document for me, cousin? for if I am killed in Germany, I have no desire that it should be used by some boor to light his pipe with or wrap his butter in.”

It was the diploma of the Netherwood baronetcy, running in the name of “CAROLUS, DEI GRATIA, REX SCOTIÆ ET ANGLIÆ, &c. &c., *nostro Johanni Gauntleti de Netherwood, ejusque hæredibus masculis de corpore, &c., titulum gradum et dignitatem militis Baronetti in hac antiqua parte Regni Nostri Scotiæ,*” and so forth.

“ You shall be the custodier of this choice piece of archæology, for with my sword, Aurora, it is all my inheritance now. In my haversack or valise I have borne it ever since old Nathan Wylie, Sir Basil’s evil mentor, sent it to me as a taunt amid my misfortunes.”

“ You would still reproach me ?” said she, in a low voice.

“ Nay, Aurora, on my soul I do not.”

“ I thank you,” she replied, with her eyes brimful of tears ; for in addition to the peculiar position in which we stood, nothing melts a woman’s heart so much as the aspect of a fine regiment departing for foreign service in time of war. “ My mother has become feeble and ailing—I shall soon be alone in the world, so think kindly of me, Basil, when you are far away, even as we shall think kindly of you, for we are the last of our family—

the last of the old Gauntlets of Netherwood."

"I am, rather than you," said I, smiling.

"How?"

"Some one, of course, will marry you, so I must be the last."

She blushed painfully, and her glance wandered to Shirley, but his *eyes*, at least, appeared to be intent upon the marching column.

"I am going to Germany now, perhaps never to return; for news I have heard (here I referred to the strange tidings of Boisguiller) have made me, even in youth, somewhat reckless of life."

"Oh, Basil, Basil! you must not speak thus."

"Sir, Colonel Preston is looking back for *you*," said Major Shirley, with a slight tone of impatience and authority in his voice. "And there sounds a trumpet."

“Then we do part friends at last?” said Aurora, with a sad smile.

“Yes, dear cousin, the best of friends.”

She held up her cheek to be kissed by me; but somehow her rosy lip came in its place.

I saw Shirley's face darken, but heeded it little, as I put spurs to my grey and dashed after the regiment, which was now trotting along the highway which led towards Brighton.

CHAPTER XXV.

SAIL FOR GERMANY.

WE had been very comfortable in our quiet country quarters in Sussex, and being so near London, our officers led a gay life, for at least one-half of them were always in town "between returns;" but now Ranelagh and Vauxhall, with their fire-works and lighted promenades, their belles, beaux, music, and gaiety; the *ridotti*, the opera, the theatres, and entertainments *al fresco* in the beautiful West-end parks, or by barges up the Thames to Richmond or to Hampton Court, were all to be exchanged for the long dusty march by day or the dark and weary one by night—the

tented camp, the wet bivouac, and the perils of the German war.

The regiment was embarked on board of two frigates—the *Venus* and *Thames*. The Light Troop was in the latter, under Major Maitland.

Owing to the circumstances of the expedition, and that the frigates, after landing us, were to run down the Channel and join the Brest blockading fleet, under Anson and Howe, discipline was somewhat relaxed, and the seamen and marines were permitted the privilege of having their wives, sweethearts, and friends on board. So there were enough, and to spare, of singing and weeping, swearing, smoking, and even fighting between decks.

To most of us the atmosphere, especially below, was rendered insupportable by the mingled odours of bilge, coarse tobacco, purser's gin, and new paint,

while the language heard on every side was neither classical nor poetical; and this continued until the Blue Peter appeared fluttering from the frigate's foremasthead, and the boom of one of her bow-chasers announced that all shore-people must leave.

Then began the howling of women and the grumbling of the seamen, many of whom, to express their discontent, roared in chorus a song then popular among taverns and crimping-houses, a portion of which ran thus:—

“Ere Hawke did bang Mounseer Conflan,
We had plenty of beef and beer;
Now Mounseer's beat, we've little to eat,
And d——n the drop of gin so neat,
Since John Bull's nought to fear.”

After having most severe weather at sea, we were landed at the quaint, old, and Dutch-like town of Embden, about the middle of September.

There we remained two days, giving our horses gentle exercise after the cramps of the sea voyage, riding them by the long canals which intersect the city, and by the sluices of which the whole surrounding country can be inundated in time of war. The officers received a banquet from the burgomaster and Count of Embden in the old feudal castle of the latter, and then we marched to join the allied British and Hanoverians, who were now commanded by Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick.

I shall never forget that route, which occupied ten days. The rain poured incessantly, and we had to traverse a low, marshy country, few portions of which were less than fetlock deep in water. Many of the towns we passed through had been destroyed; the inhabitants of others declined to be incommoded. Thus we frequently bivouacked amid the wet, being

quite without tents; but old Colonel Preston always cheered us on. Sometimes he would say, as some of us nodded over our holsters, when riding wearily on in the grey dawn that heralded another day of toil and travel:

“You are weary, my gude lads; we shall halt in an hour; but there can be no sleep even then, unless with the sword in the hand and the foot in the stirrup.”

On one of those wretched marches I had command of the regimental baggage-guard, and was hourly annoyed by the master waggoner, an East Frieslander, who was never sober, as he drank constantly from a keg of Schiedam which hung at the back of his wain, and his companions assured me that he had never been sober for a year—others averred that he had been born drunk, so great a toper was he. I was riding a little way in rear of the escort,

which was traversing a fetid swamp from whence a pestilential evening mist was rising white as milk, when amid that gloomy vapour there suddenly rose in front a lambent light of a pale hue. Then a cry of dismay from Hob Elliot and others of my men, made me trot up to the spot, where I beheld a very appalling spectacle.

The Friesland waggoner was lying on his back, and literally on fire—flames were issuing from his crackling nostrils, mouth, and ears, and even, while we gazed on him, his whole face and hair were burned away, while the fire seemed to pass over his whole body, scorching his clothes to powder.

Dr. Lancelot Probe, our surgeon, came speedily back from the front, but the Frieslander was already beyond his skill, having expired in agony. It was a case of spontaneous combustion. Probe

naturally conjectured that a spark from his pipe—which he yet firmly grasped—had ignited the fumes of the spirit within him, and the subtle gases issuing from every pore and orifice, had kindled at once to fire, on reaching the external air.

Be it as it may, the terrible episode of the Frieslander had the effect of keeping some of our most tipsy fellows sober for many a week after.

Our mode of passing the night was generally thus.

A ridge would be selected; we dismounted and cloaked, throwing a portion over the saddle and holsters, each man standing by his horse, and holding on by the stirrup leather to steady himself if sleeping, as he was pretty sure to be. Despite the danger of lying down among the horses' hoofs, some did so in utter weariness, but were soon forced to get up

again, lest their own chargers should tread on them.

Moreover, a dragoon accoutred cannot lie on his back for the spurs that are on his heels, and the cartridge-box between his shoulders, nor on his right side for his haversack, nor on his left for his canteen and sword-hilt; thus, when harnessed, he has no resource but to sleep on his face with his nose and toes in the turf!

So the dreary night would pass—the trumpet pour its melancholy twang through the mist at daybreak, and amid the pestilential swamp we would groom our horses or imagine that we did so; pour the water out of our boots; partake of a ration biscuit soaked by the night rain to pulp, if nothing better could be had; denounce the Hanoverians for whom we, H. M. Scots Greys, endured all this discomfort, and then again resume the

march, which ended on the 31st of September, when we joined Prince Ferdinand at Coesveldt, a small but fortified town in Westphalia.

On those long marches, Tom Kirkton—he had now attained the rank of troop-sergeant—and I had many a confab as of old, for on service rank makes little difference, if discipline be retained. He frequently and bluntly urged that I should “lay siege,” as he phrased it, “to my pretty cousin, and marry her, and so quit this miserable work. Lay siege!” he added, on one occasion; “you don’t require to do that, for I have no doubt she is anxious enough to hook you for the mere sake of being Lady Gauntlet.”

“This is most flattering, Tom; and so you would have me pander to a spirit so mercenary. Nay, nay; I cannot judge of her thus; and by this time perhaps she

is the wife of Major Shirley, whom I left in possession of the field.”

But Tom’s advice, though heedlessly given, always rankled long and bitterly in my mind.

And now, lest the reader may naturally inquire what object we had in making a tour of Germany, I may briefly state that his Britannic Majesty’s native and well-beloved Electorate of Hanover had been overrun by a French army, to expel whom, Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick had put himself at the head of the German troops, and to reinforce these, six regiments of British infantry and some cavalry had joined him, and were now under the command of Lord George Sackville. Since the accession of the house of Guelph to the throne, the whole taxes and energies of the British people had been systematically devoted to the defence

of Hanover and the pauper princelings of Germany; just as in the preceding age they had been wasted in defence of King William's dearly-beloved Dutch; and it was not until the peace of Paris that, as an historian says, the nation "would no longer suffer the public treasure to be squandered on poor foreign princes under the name of subsidies, to enable them to fight their own battles, nor the blood of British soldiers to be spilt to water the forests and fertilize the plains of Germany."

However, these are after-thoughts; of such we took little heed then, and cared less whom we fought, or where, remembering only a soldier's first duty—implicit obedience.

I shall briefly state that we skirmished through all Westphalia; that during these

operations I received a slight pistol wound in the bridle hand; Colonel Preston had a horse shot under him, and Tom Kirkton a standard pole broken by a grape-shot, and so forth, until the month of November, when we retired to winter quarters at the little city of Alphen, in the Bishopric of Paderborn, where we remained quietly recruiting our energies for a new struggle in the early part of the ensuing year.

The allies, 34,000 strong, were led, as I have stated, by Ferdinand of Brunswick, one of the most celebrated generals of the age; but opposed to him were two *maréchals* of France, one, whose name found an echo in my heart, the Duc de Broglie, and the other M. de Contades, with 60,000 troops, the flower of the French line—men at whose hands the

British and Hanoverians had suffered a series of reverses which made us long for spring, that the contest might be renewed and ended for ever.

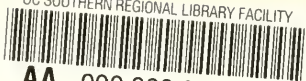
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