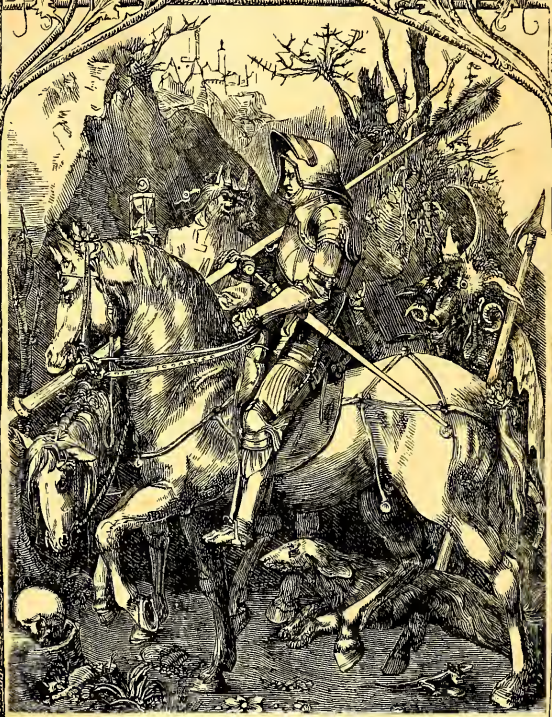
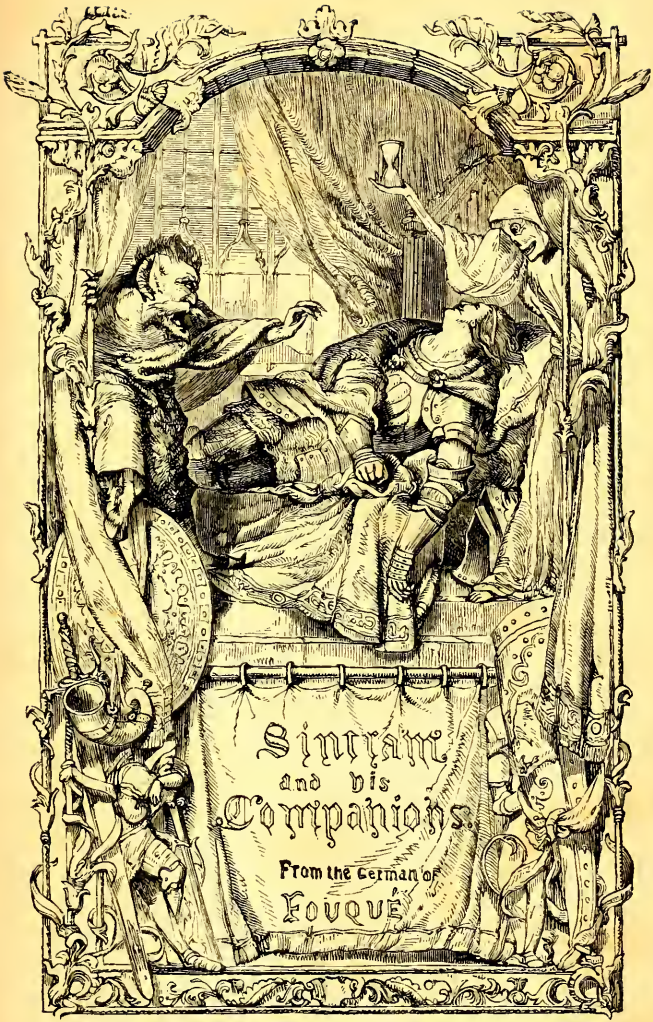
CABINET

SERIES.



The Knight,
Death and Satan.

from ALBT DURER.



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SINTRAM

AND HIS COMPANIONS.

FROM THE GERMAN

OF

DE LA MOTTE FOUQUÉ.

New Edition, with Illustrations.

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1870.

NOTICE OF SINTRAM.

(FROM THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO HIS SELECTED WORKS.)

"FOLKO of Montfauçon was and is peculiarly endeared to my heart as a true type of that old French chivalric glory which now only emerges in individual appearances,—for instance, beautifully in the Vendéan wars, which, though failing in victory, were rich in honors. With these feelings, the poet could not forbear from arraying him in the colors of his own escutcheon, and assigning to him the emblems of the same, and even in some measure denoting him by his own ancestral name; for Foulqué we were called in old times, which was probably derived, according to our Norman descent, from the Northlandish name Folko, or Fulko; and a castle 'Montfauçon' was among our ancient possessions. But here that only properly concerns the noble pair, Folko and Gabrielle, as interwoven in the tale of 'Sintram.' The tale

itself is the offspring of my own fantasy, immediately suggested by Albrecht Durer's admirable wood-cut of 'The Knight, Death, and Satan,' the birthday gift of a former friend, with the happy proposal that I should frame from it a romance or a ballad. It became more than this; and the present tale shows it to be so, being supported by divers traditions, in part derived to me orally, of the Germanic northern customs in war and festivity, and in many other relationships besides. The legend indicated at the conclusion of the information respecting Sintram, of the terrific stories of the north, transformed into southern splendor and mirthful dreams, would really then have been executed, and arose more clearly from the fantastic tones of a congenial harpsichord-player, who accidentally met the poet. Partly, however, other avocations, partly interruptions from without, have hitherto driven the project into the background. But it still lives within me; and now again, from the powerful, and yet child-like harmonies of the Northman Ole Bull, seems to stir more vigorously and brightly than before. Who knows what yet may happen? Meanwhile here gushes from me a song of saluta-

tion to one who, honored by me as master, is not less dear to me as a man :—

Profoundly dreamt a youth on Norland waste;
But no—it is not waste where fairy rings
Reflect the past as well as future things,
When love and woe in boding tones are drest.

They greeted him, they kissed him, and retreated!
They left for him an instrument of sound,
Whose forceful strings with highest deeds could bound,
And yet with childish frolics he entreated.

He wakes—the gift he seizes, comprehending
Its sweet mysterious pleasure how to prove,
And pours it forth in pure harmonious blending.

O mayst thou, ever victor, joyful move,
Thou Northland sailor, on life's voyage wending,
Conscious of God within thee and above."

FOUQUÉ.

Sintram and his Companions.

CHAPTER I.

IN the Castle of Drontheim there were many knights assembled to hold council on the affairs of the kingdom; and after their debate, they remained till past midnight carousing together around the huge stone table in the vaulted hall. A rising storm drove the snow wildly against the rattling windows, all the thick oak doors groaned, the massive locks shook, the castle clock slowly and heavily struck the hour of one.

At that instant a boy, pale as death, with disordered hair and closed eyes, rushed into the hall, uttering a wild scream of terror. He stopped behind the richly-carved seat of the mighty Biorn, clung to the knight with both his hands, and shrieked in a piercing voice, "My knightly father! Death and another are closely pursuing me."

An awful stillness reigned suddenly in the whole assembly, broken only by the agonized shrieks of the boy. But one of Biorn's numerous retainers, an old esquire, known by the name of Rolf the Good, advanced towards the terrified child, took him in his arms, and half chanted this prayer: "Oh, Father! help Thy servant! I believe, and yet I cannot believe." The boy, as if in a dream, at once loosened his hold of the knight; and the good Rolf bore him from the hall unresisting, yet still shedding hot tears, and murmuring confused sounds.

The lords and knights looked at one another in mute amazement, until the mighty Biorn said, in a fierce but scornfully-deriding tone, "Do not suffer yourselves to be disturbed by the appearance of that strange being. He is my only son; and has been in this state since he was five years old: he is now twelve. I am, therefore, accustomed to see him so, though, at the first, I too was disquieted by it. The attack comes upon him only once in the year, and always at this same time. But forgive me for having spent so many words on my poor Sintram, and let us pass on to some worthier subject for our discourse."

Again there was silence during some minutes. Then a solitary voice began here and there to attempt renewing their former conversation, but without success. Two of the youngest and most joyous spirits began a drinking song; but the storm howled and raged so wildly without, that their mirth was soon checked. And now they all sat silent and motionless in the lofty hall; the lamp flickered under the vaulted roof; while the whole party of knights looked like pale, lifeless images, dressed up in gigantic armor.

Then arose the chaplain of the castle of Drontheim, the only priest among the knightly throng, and said, "Sir Biorn, our eyes and thoughts have all been directed to you and your son in a wonderful manner; but so it has been ordered by the providence of God. You perceive that we cannot withdraw them, and you would do well to tell us exactly what you know concerning the fearful state in which we have seen your boy. Perchance, such a solemn narration, as I look forward to, might be of much use to our disturbed minds."

Biorn cast a look of displeasure on the priest, and answered, "You are more con-

cerned in the history, than either you or I could desire. Excuse me, if I am unwilling to trouble these light-hearted warriors with such a rueful tale."

But the chaplain approached nearer to the knight, and said, in a firm yet very mild tone, "Sir knight, up to this moment it rested with you to relate, or not to relate it: but now that you have so strangely hinted at the share which I have had in your son's calamity, I must positively request that you will repeat word for word how every thing came to pass. My honor demands such an explanation, and that will weigh with you as much as with me."

In stern compliance, Biorn bowed his haughty head, and began the following narration:—"This time seven years, I was keeping the Christmas-feast with my assembled followers. We have many venerable old customs which have descended to us by inheritance from our forefathers; as, for instance, that of placing a gilded boar's head on the table, and making thereon knightly vows of daring and wondrous deeds. Our chaplain there, who in those days used frequently to visit me, was never a friend to keeping up such traditions of the ancient

heathen world. Men of his sort were not much in favor in those olden times."

"My excellent predecessors," interrupted the chaplain, "were infinitely more concerned in obtaining the favor of God, than that of the world, and they were not unsuccessful in their aim. By that means they converted your ancestors; and if I can in like manner be of service to you, even your jeering will not vex me."

With looks yet darker, and an involuntary shudder, the knight resumed: "Yes, yes; I know all your promises and threats concerning an invisible Power; and how they are meant to persuade us to part more readily with whatever of this world's goods we may possess. There was a time when such belonged to me! Occasionally a strange fancy seizes me, and I feel as if ages had passed over since then, and as if I were alone the survivor, so fearfully is everything changed. But now I recall to my mind, that the greater part of this noble company knew me in my days of happiness, and have seen my wife, my lovely Verena."

He pressed his hands on his eyes, and many thought that he wept. The tempest was now lulled; the soft light of the moon

shone through the windows, and her beams played on his wild features. Suddenly he started up, so that his heavy armor rattled with a fearful sound, and he cried out in a thundering voice, "Shall I turn monk, because she has become a nun? No, crafty priest; your webs are too thin to catch flies of my sort."

"I have nothing to do with webs," said the chaplain. "In all openness and sincerity have I put heaven and hell before you during the space of six years; and you gave full consent to the step which the holy Verena took. But what all that has to do with your son's sufferings I have yet to learn; and I wait for your further narration."

"You may wait long enough for that," said Biorn, with a sneer. "Sooner shall —"

"Swear not!" said the chaplain in a loud commanding tone; and his eyes flashed almost fearfully.

"Hurra!" cried Biorn in wild affright; "Hurra! Death and his companions are let loose!" and he dashed madly out of the chamber, and down the steps. The loud wild notes of his horn were heard summoning his retainers, and presently afterwards

the clatter of horses' feet on the frozen court-yard gave token of their departure.

The knights retired, silent and shuddering; while the chaplain remained alone at the huge stone table, engaged in earnest prayer.

CHAPTER II.

AFTER some time had elapsed, the good Rolf returned with slow and soft steps, and started with surprise at finding the hall deserted. The chamber where he had been occupied in quieting and soothing the unhappy child, was in so distant a part of the castle that he had heard nothing of the knight's hasty departure. The chaplain related to him all that had passed, and then said: "But my good Rolf, I much wish to ask you concerning those strange words, with which you seemed to lull poor Sintram to rest. They sounded like sacred words, and no doubt they are, but I could not understand them. 'I believe, and yet I cannot believe.'"

"Reverend Sir," answered Rolf, "I remember that from my earliest years no history in the Gospels has taken such hold of me, as that of the child possessed with a devil, which the disciples were not able to cast out; but when our Saviour came down from the mountain where he had been trans-

figured, He broke the bonds wherewith the evil spirit had held the miserable child bound. I always felt as if I must have known and loved that boy, and been his playfellow in his happy days: and when I grew older, then the distress of the father on account of his lunatic son laid heavy at my heart. It must surely have all been a foreboding of the wretched state of our young lord, whom I love as if he were my own child; and now the words of the weeping father in the Gospel often come into my mind, 'I believe, Lord, help Thou mine unbelief;' and something of the sort I may very likely have repeated to-day, as a chant or a prayer. Reverend Father, when I reflect how one dreadful imprecation of the father has kept its withering hold on the son, all seems dark before me; but, God be praised! faith and hope again bring light into my mind."

"Good Rolf," said the priest, "I cannot clearly understand what you say about the unhappy Sintram; for I do not know when and how this affliction came upon him. If no oath or solemn promise binds you to secresy, will you make known to me all that is connected with it."

"Most willingly," replied Rolf. "I have long desired to have an opportunity of so doing; but you have been almost always separated from us. I dare not now leave the sleeping boy any longer alone, and to-morrow, at the earliest dawn, I must take him to his father. Will you come with me to our poor Sintram's room?"

The chaplain at once took up the small lamp which Rolf had brought with him, and they set off together along the vaulted passage. When they reached the distant chamber, they found the suffering child fast asleep. As the light of the lamp fell upon his countenance, it showed his ashy paleness. The chaplain stood gazing at him for some time, and at length said:

"Certainly from his birth his features were always sharp and strongly-marked, but now they are almost fearfully so for such a child. And yet, in spite of the strange expression they give, I cannot help having a kindly feeling towards him, whether I will or not."

"Most true, dear Sir," answered Rolf. And it was evident how his whole heart rejoiced at any words which betokened affection or compassion for his beloved young

lord. He proceeded to place the lamp where its light could not disturb the sleeping child, and seating himself close by the priest, he began to speak in the following terms :

"During that Christmas-feast of which my lord was talking to you, he and his followers discoursed much concerning the German merchants, and the best means of keeping down the increasing pride and power of the larger trading-towns. At length Biorn laid his impious hand on the golden boar's head, and swore to put to death without mercy every German trader whom fate, in what way soever, might bring alive into his power. The gentle Verena turned pale, and would have interposed—but it was too late, the fearful word was uttered. And immediately afterwards, as though the great Enemy of souls were determined at once to secure with fresh bonds the wretched being who was thus devoted to him, a warder came into the hall to announce that two citizens of a trading-town in Germany, an old man and his son, had been shipwrecked on this coast, and were now without the gates, asking hospitality of the lord of the castle. The knight could not refrain from shudder-

ing; but he thought himself bound by his rash vow, and by that accursed remnant of heathenism. We, his retainers, were commanded to assemble in the castle-yard, armed with sharp spears, which were to be hurled at the defenceless strangers at the first signal made to us. For the first, and I trust the last time in my life, I refused to obey the commands of my lord; my refusal was uttered in a loud voice, and with the firmest determination. The Almighty, who alone knows whom He will accept, and whom He will reject, gave me at that moment the strength and resolution I needed. And Biorn might perceive whence the refusal of his faithful old servant arose, and that it was worthy of respect. He said to me, half in anger and half in scorn: 'Go up to my wife's apartments: her attendants are running to and fro, perhaps she is ill. Go up, Rolf the Good, and remain with the women, who seem the fittest company for you.' I thought to myself, 'Jest on;' but I went silently the way he had pointed out to me. On the stairs I was met by two strange and awful-looking beings, whom I had never seen before; and I am still at a loss to think how they got into the castle. One of them

was a great, tall man, frightfully pallid and thin; the other was a dwarf-like man, with a most hideous countenance and features. Indeed, when I collected my thoughts and looked carefully at him, it appeared to me ——"

Low moanings, and convulsive movements of the boy, here interrupted the narrative. Rolf and the chaplain hastened to his bedside, and perceived that his countenance wore an expression of fearful agony, and that he was struggling in vain to open his eyes. The priest made the sign of the Cross over him, and immediately peace seemed to be restored, and his sleep again became calm and quiet: they both returned softly to their seats.

"You see," said Rolf, "that it will not do to attempt a more precise description of those two awful beings. Suffice it to say, that they went down into the court-yard, and that I proceeded to my lady's apartments. I found the gentle Verena almost fainting with terror and overwhelming anxiety, and I hastened to restore her with some of those remedies which the knowledge God has given me of the healing virtues of many herbs and minerals enabled me to apply.

But scarcely had she recovered her senses, when, with that air of calm resolve which you know belongs to her, she desired me to conduct her down to the court-yard, saying that she must either put a stop to the fearful doings of this night, or herself fall a sacrifice. Our way took us by the little bed of the sleeping Sintram. Alas! I cannot keep from tears when I think how evenly his gentle breath then came and went, and how sweetly he smiled in his peaceful slumbers."

The old man put his hands to his eyes, and wept bitterly; but soon he resumed his sad story. "As we approached the lowest window of the staircase, we could hear distinctly the voice of the elder merchant, and on looking out, the light of the torches showed me his noble features, as well as the bright youthful countenance of his son. 'I take Almighty God to witness,' cried he, 'that I had no evil thought against this house! But surely I must have fallen unawares amongst heathens; it cannot be that I am in a Christian knight's castle: and if you are indeed heathens, then kill us at once. And you, my beloved son, be patient and of good courage; in heaven we shall learn why

it was ordained that we should meet our fate here without one chance of escape.' I thought I could see those two fearful ones amidst the throng of armed retainers. The pale one had a huge curved sword in his hand, the little one held a spear notched in a strange fashion. Verena tore open the window, and the silvery tones of her voice were heard above the storm of that wild night, as she cried out—'My dearest lord and husband, for the sake of your only child, have pity on those harmless men! Save them from a bloody death, and resist the temptation of the Evil Spirit.' The knight answered in his fierce wrath—but I cannot repeat his words. He staked his child on the desperate cast; he called death and the devil to see that he kept his word:—but, hush! the boy is again moaning. Let me bring the dark tale quickly to a close. Biorn commanded his followers to strike, casting on them those fierce looks which have gained him the title of Biorn of the Fiery Eyes; while at the same time the two frightful strangers seemed to bestir themselves in the crowd with more activity than before. Then Verena called out, in the extremity of her anguish, 'Help, O God, my Saviour!'

Those two dreadful figures disappeared, and the knight and his retainers, as if seized with blindness, rushed wildly one against the other, but without doing injury to themselves, or yet succeeding in striking the merchants, who had so nearly fallen victims to Biorn's savage cruelty. They bowed reverently towards Verena, and with calm thanksgivings departed through the castle gates, which at that moment had been burst open by a violent gust of wind, and now gave a free passage to any who would go forth. The lady and I were yet standing bewildered on the stairs, when I fancied I saw the two fearful forms glide close by me, but there was such a cloudy unreal look about them, that I doubted, till Verena called to me: 'Rolf, did you see a tall pale man, and a little hideous one with him, pass just now up the staircase?' I flew after them; but, alas! when I reached the poor boy's room, I found him already in the same state in which you saw him a few hours ago. Ever since, the attack has come on him regularly at this time, and he is in all respects fearfully changed. The lady of the castle did not fail to discern the avenging hand of Heaven in this calamity; and as the knight,

her husband, instead of showing signs of repentance, added each day to the number of his violent deeds, she resolved to take refuge in a cloister; and there, by unremitting prayer, to obtain mercy in time and eternity for herself and her unhappy child."

Rolf was silent; and the chaplain said, after some moments' reflection: "I now understand why, six years ago, Biorn confessed his guilt to me in general terms, and consented that his wife should take the veil. Some faint compunction must then have stirred within him, and perhaps the traces of it may yet exist. Anyhow it was impossible that so tender a flower as Verena could remain longer in such rough keeping. But who is there now to watch over and protect our poor Sintram?"

"The prayers of his mother are his safeguard," answered Rolf. "Reverend Sir, when the first dawn of day appears, as it does now, and when the morning breeze plays lightly around, they always bring to my mind the soft-beaming eyes of my lady, and I again seem to hear the sweet tones of her voice. The holy Verena is, next to God, our chief aid."

"And let us add our devout supplications

to the Lord," said the chaplain: and he and Rolf knelt in silent and earnest prayer by the bed of the pale sufferer, who soon began to smile as he lay still dreaming.

CHAPTER III.

THE rays of the sun shining brightly into the room, awoke Sintram, and raising himself up, he looked angrily at the chaplain, and said: "So there is a priest in the castle! And yet that accursed dream continues to torment me even in his very presence! A pretty sort of priest he must be!"

"My child," answered the chaplain in the mildest tone, "I have prayed for you most fervently, and I shall never cease doing so—but God alone is Almighty."

"You speak very impertinently to the son of the great knight, Biorn," cried Sintram. "'My child!' indeed! If those horrible dreams had not been again haunting me, you would make me laugh heartily."

"My young lord," said the chaplain, "I am by no means surprised that you should not recognize me, for in truth neither should I know you again." And his eyes filled with tears as he spoke.

The good Rolf looked sorrowfully in the

boy's face, saying, "Ah! my dear young master, you are so much better than you would make people believe. Why did you speak in that way? Your memory is so good, that you must surely recollect your kind old friend the chaplain, who used formerly to be constantly at the castle, and to bring you so many presents — bright-colored pictures of saints, and beautiful songs?"

"I know all that very well," replied Sintram, thoughtfully. "My blessed mother was alive in those days."

"Our gracious lady is still living, God be praised!" said the good Rolf.

"But she does not live for us, poor sick creatures that we are!" cried Sintram. "And why will you not call her blessed? Surely she knows nothing about my dreams?"

"Yes, she does know of them," said the chaplain, "and she prays to God on your behalf. But take heed, and restrain that wild, haughty temper of yours. It might, indeed, come to pass that she no longer knew any thing about your dreams, and that would be if you were to die; and then the holy angels would also cease to know any thing of you."

Sintram fell back on his bed as if thunder-

struck; and Rolf said with a gentle sigh, "You should not speak so severely to my poor sick child, reverend sir."

The boy again sat up, and with streaming eyes he turned towards the chaplain, saying in a kind and gentle tone: "Let him do as he pleases, you good tender-hearted Rolf; he knows very well what he is about. Would you reprove him if I were slipping down a rocky precipice, and he were to catch me roughly by the hair of my head in order to save me?"

The priest looked at him with emotion, and was about to give utterance to some kind expression, when Sintram suddenly sprang off the bed and asked after his father. As soon as he heard of the knight's departure, he would not remain another hour in the castle; and when both the chaplain and the old esquire expressed their fears lest a rapid journey should be hurtful to him before he had shaken off the effects of his late attack, he said to them: "Believe me, reverend sir, and good old Rolf, if I were not subject to these hideous dreams, there would not be a bolder youth in the whole world; and even as it is, I am not so far behind the very best. Besides, till another year has passed,

there is no fear of my dreams again troubling me."

Rolf obeyed a somewhat imperious sign from his young master, and went to prepare the horses. No sooner were they brought out, than the boy threw himself into his saddle, and taking a courteous leave of the chaplain, he dashed along the frozen valley that lay between the snow-clad mountains. He had not ridden far, in company with his old attendant, when he heard a strange indistinct sound proceeding from a neighboring cleft in the rock; it was partly like the clapper of a small mill, but mingled with that were hollow groans, and other tones of distress. They directed their horses towards the place whence the sounds came, and a wonderful sight presented itself before them.

A tall man, deadly pale, in a pilgrim's garb, was striving with violent though unsuccessful efforts, to work his way out of the snow, and to get up the mountain; and at each exertion which he made, a quantity of bones, which were hanging loosely all about his garments, rattled one against the other, and caused the mysterious sound already mentioned. Rolf, much terrified, crossed himself, while the bold Sintram called out

to the stranger, "What art thou doing there? Give an account of thy solitary labors."

"I live in death," replied that other one with a fearful grin.

"Whose are those bones which hang about thee?"

"They are relics, young sir."

"Art thou a pilgrim?"

"I have no rest, no quiet; I go up and down the land."

"Thou must not perish here in the snow before my eyes."

"That I will not."

"Thou must come up and sit on my horse."

"That I will do."

And all at once he started up out of the snow with surprising strength and agility, and sprang on the horse behind Sintram, clasping him tight in his long arms. The animal, startled by the rattling of the bones, and as if seized with madness, rushed away through the most trackless passes. The boy soon found himself alone with his strange companion; for Rolf, breathless with fear, spurred on his horse in vain, and remained far behind them. After slipping down the

steep mountain side, which was entirely covered with snow, into a narrow defile, the horse seemed somewhat to slacken his pace, but yet continued to snort and foam as before, and could not be controlled. Still, his headlong course being now changed into a rough irregular trot, Sintram was able to breathe more freely, and to begin the following discourse with his unknown companion.

"Draw thy garment closer round thee, thou pale man: the bones will then rattle less, and I shall be able to curb my horse."

"It would be of no avail, boy; it would be of no avail. The bones must rattle."

"Do not clasp me so tight with thy long arms, they are so cold."

"It cannot be helped, boy; it cannot be helped. Be content. For my long cold arms are not pressing yet on thy heart."

"Do not breathe on me so with thy icy breath. All my strength is departing."

"I must breathe, boy; I must breathe. But do not complain. I am not blowing thee away."

The strange dialogue here came to an end; for to Sintram's surprise, he found himself on an open plain, over which the sun was shining brightly, and at no great distance

before him he descried his father's castle. While he was doubting as to whether he might invite the unearthly pilgrim to rest there, this one put an end to his hesitation by throwing himself suddenly off the horse, whose wild course was checked by the shock. Raising his fore-finger, he said to the boy:

"I know old Biorn of the Fiery Eyes well: perhaps but too well. Commend me to him. It will not need to tell him my name; he will recognize me by the description you can give of me." So saying, the ghastly stranger turned aside into a thick firwood, and disappeared amongst the tangled branches.

Slowly and thoughtfully Sintram rode on towards his father's castle, his horse being now again quiet and almost exhausted. He scarcely knew how much he ought to relate of his wonderful adventure, and he also felt oppressed with anxiety for the good Rolf, who had remained so far behind. He found himself at the castle-gate sooner than he had expected; the drawbridge was lowered, the doors were thrown open; an attendant led the youth into the great hall, where Biorn was sitting all alone at a huge table, with many flagons and glasses before him, and

suits of armor ranged on either side of him. It was his daily custom, by way of company, to have the armor of his ancestors, with closed vizors, placed all round the table at which he sat. The father and son began conversing as follows:

"Where is Rolf?"

"I do not know, father: I lost sight of him in the mountains."

"I will have Rolf shot, if he cannot take better care than that of my only child."

"Then, father, you will have your only child shot at the same time, for without Rolf I cannot live; and if even one single dart is aimed at him, I will be there to receive it, and to shield his true and faithful heart."

"Is it so?—Then Rolf shall not be shot, but he shall be driven from the castle."

"In that case, father, you will see me go away also; and I will give myself up to serve him in forests, in mountains, in caves."

"Is it so?—Well, then, Rolf must remain here."

"That is just what I think, father."

"Were you riding quite alone?"

"No, father; but with a strange pilgrim: he said that he knew you very well—perhaps, too well." And thereupon Sintram began

to relate and to describe all that had passed with the pale man.

"I know him also very well," said Biorn. "He is half-crazed and half-wise, as we sometimes are astonished at seeing that people can be. But do you, my boy, go to rest after your wild journey. I give you my word that Rolf shall be kindly received if he arrives here; and that if he does not come soon, he shall be sought for in the mountains."

"I trust to your word, father," said Sintram, with a mixture of pride and humility in his tone; and he proceeded to obey the command of the grim lord of the castle."

CHAPTER IV.

IT was getting towards evening when Sintram awoke. He saw the good Rolf sitting at his bedside, and looked up in the old man's kind face with a smile of unusual innocent brightness. But soon again his dark brows were knit, and he asked: "How did my father receive you Rolf? Did he say a harsh word to you?"

"No, my dear young lord, he did not—indeed, he did not speak to me at all. At first he looked very wrathful; but he controlled himself, and ordered a servant to bring me food and wine to refresh me, and afterwards take me to your room."

"He might have kept his word better. But he is my father, and I must not judge him too severely. I will now go down to the evening meal." So saying, he sprang up and threw on his furred mantle. But Rolf stopped him, and said in a tone of entreaty: "My dear young master, you would do better to take your meal to-day alone here in your own apartment. For there is a

guest with your father, in whose company I should be very sorry to see you. If you will remain here I will entertain you with pleasant tales and songs."

"There is nothing in the world which I should like better, dear Rolf," answered Sintram, "but it does not befit me to shun the company of any man. Tell me, whom should I find with my father?"

"Alas!" said the old man, "you have already found him in the mountain. Formerly, when I used to ride about the country with Biorn, we often met with him, but I was forbidden to tell you any thing about him; and this is the first time that he has ever come to the castle."

"Oh; the crazy pilgrim!" replied Sintram; and he stood some moments buried in thought, and apparently weighing the whole matter in his mind. At last rousing himself he said: "Dear old friend, I would most willingly stay here with you this evening and listen to your stories and songs, and all the pilgrims in the world should not make me leave this quiet room. But one thing must be considered. I feel a kind of dread of that pale, tall man, and by such fears no true knight's son can ever suffer himself to

be overcome. So do not be angry, dear Rolf, if I determine to go and look that strange Palmer in the face." And he shut the door of the chamber behind him, and with firm and echoing steps proceeded to the hall.

The pilgrim and the knight were sitting opposite to each other at the great table, on which many lights were burning; and it was fearful, amongst all the lifeless armor, to see those two tall grim men move and eat and drink. As the pilgrim looked up on the boy's entrance, Biorn said, "You know him already; he is my only child and your fellow-traveller this morning." The Palmer fixed an earnest look on Sintram, and answered, shaking his head, "I do not know what you mean." Then the boy burst forth impatiently, "It must be confessed that you deal very unfairly by us! You say that you know my father but too well, and now it appears that you do not know me at all. Who allowed you to ride on his horse, and in return had his good steed driven almost wild? Answer, if you can!"

Biorn put on a somewhat displeased look, but was in truth delighted at any such outbreak of his son's unruly temper; while the pilgrim shuddered, as if terrified and over-

come by some secret and irresistible power. At length, with a trembling voice, he said these words: "Yes, yes, my dear young lord, you are surely quite right; you are perfectly right in everything which you may please to assert."

Then the lord of the castle laughed aloud, and said, "Why, you strange pilgrim, what is become of all your wonderfully fine speeches and warnings now? Has the boy all at once struck you dumb and powerless? Beware, you prophet messenger, beware!" But the Palmer cast a fearful look on Biorn, which seemed to quench the light of his fiery eyes, and said in thundering accents, "Between me and thee, old man, the case stands quite otherwise. We have nothing to reproach each other with. And now suffer me to sing a song to you on the lute." He stretched out his hand and took down from the wall an old worn-out lute which was hanging there, and having, with surprising skill and rapidity, put it in a state fit to be used, he struck some chords, and the low melancholy tones of the instrument seemed well adapted to the words he began to sing—

"The flow'ret was mine own, mine own,
But I have lost its fragrance rare,

And knightly name and freedom fair,
Thro' sin, thro' sin alone.

The flow'ret was thine own, thine own,
Why cast away what thou didst win?
Thou knight no more, but slave of sin,
Thou'rt fearfully alone!"

"Have a care!" shouted he at the close in a pealing voice, as he pulled the strings with such tremendous force that they all broke, and a cloud of dust rose from the instrument, which spread round him like a mist. Sintram had been watching him narrowly whilst he was singing, and more and more did he feel convinced that it was impossible that this man and his fellow-traveller of the morning could be one and the same person. Every doubt was removed when the stranger again looked round at him with the same timid, anxious air, and with many excuses and low reverences replaced the lute in its former position, and then ran out of the hall as if bewildered with terror; his manner forming a strange contrast with the proud and stately deportment which he had assumed towards Biorn.

The eyes of the boy were now directed to his father, and he perceived that he had sunk back senseless in his seat, as though he had

been struck by a sudden blow. Sintram's cries summoned Rolf and other attendants, but it was only by their united exertions that they succeeded in restoring their lord to animation; his looks were still wild and disordered, but he suffered himself to be taken to rest without making any opposition.

CHAPTER V.

A LONG illness followed this sudden attack, and during the course of it, the stout old knight, in the midst of his delirious ravings, did not cease to affirm confidently that he must and should recover at last. He would laugh proudly when his fever fits came on, and rebuke them for daring to attack him so needlessly. Then he would murmur to himself, "That was not the right one yet; there must still be another one out in the cold mountains."

At such expressions Sintram involuntarily shuddered; they seemed to confirm his idea that the being who had ridden with him, and he who sat at table in the castle, were two quite distinct persons; and he knew not why, but this thought was an inexpressibly awful one to him.

Biorn recovered, and appeared to have entirely forgotten his adventure with the Palmer. He hunted in the mountains, he carried on his usual wild warfare with his neighbors, and Sintram became his almost

constant companion; whereby each year the youth acquired a fearful increase of strength of body, with an equal fierceness of spirit. Every one trembled at the sight of his sharp, pallid features, his dark rolling eyes, his tall, muscular, and somewhat lean form—and yet no one hated him, not even those whom he distressed or injured to gratify his wildest humors. This might arise in part out of regard to old Rolf, who seldom left him for long, and who always held a softening influence over him; but also many of those who had known the Lady Verena before she retired from the world, affirmed that a faint reflection of the heavenly expression which had lighted up her features, could often be traced in those of her son, however unlike they might be in form—and that by this their hearts were won.

Once, just at the beginning of spring, Biorn and his son were hunting in the neighborhood of the sea coast, over a tract of country which did not belong to them; drawn thither less by the love of sport than by the wish of bidding defiance to a chieftain whom they detested, and thus exciting a feud. At that season of the year, when his winter dreams had just passed off, Sintram

was always unusually fierce, and disposed for warlike adventures, and this day he was enraged at the chieftain for not coming forth from his castle to attack the intruders with armed force, and he cursed the cowardly patience and love of peace which kept his enemy thus quiet. Just then, one of his wild companions rushed towards him, shouting joyfully, "Be content, my dear young lord! I will wager that all is coming about as we and you wish; for, as I was pursuing a wounded deer down to the sea-shore, I perceived a sail in sight, and a vessel filled with armed men making for the shore. Doubtless your enemy is intending to take you by surprise by coming in this way."

Sintram, full of joy at the news, called his followers together as secretly as possible, being resolved this time to take on himself alone the whole direction of the engagement which was likely to follow; and then to rejoin his father, and astonish him with the sight of captured foes, and other tokens of victory.

The hunters, thoroughly acquainted with every cliff and rock, concealed themselves near the landing-place, and soon the strange vessel was seen approaching nearer and

nearer, till at length it came to anchor, and its crew began to disembark in unsuspicious security. At the head of them appeared a knight of high degree, in polished steel armor richly inlaid with gold. His head was bare, for he carried his golden helmet in his left hand, and as he looked around him with the air of one accustomed to command, none could fail to admire his noble countenance shaded by dark brown locks, and animated by the bright smile which played around his well-shaped mouth.

A feeling came across Sintram that he must have seen this knight somewhere in by-gone times, and he stood motionless for a few moments. But suddenly he raised his hand to make the preconcerted signal of attack. In vain did the good Rolf, who had just succeeded in getting up to him, whisper in his ear that these could not be the foes whom he had taken them for, but that they were entire strangers, and evidently of no mean race. "Let them be who they may," replied the wild youth, "they have been the cause of my coming here, and they shall pay dearly for having so deceived me. Say not another word, if you value your life." And immediately he gave the signal; a thick

shower of javelins followed, and the Norwegian warriors rushed forth with flashing swords. They soon found that they had to do with adversaries as brave, or braver, than they could have desired. More fell on the side of those who made than of those who received the assault, and the strangers appeared to have a surprising knowledge of the mode of fighting which belonged to those northern regions. The knight clad in steel armor had not time to put on his helmet, but it seemed as if he in no-wise needed such protection, for his good sword afforded him sufficient defence even against the spears and darts which were incessantly hurled at him, as with rapid skill he received them on the shining blade, and dashed them far away shivered into fragments.

Sintram could not at the first onset penetrate to where this valiant chief was standing, as all his followers, eager after such a noble prey, thronged closely round him; but now the way was cleared enough for him to spring towards the brave stranger, shouting a war-cry, and brandishing his sword above his head. "Gabrielle!" cried the knight, as he dexterously parried the heavy blow which was descending, and with one powerful

sword-thrust he laid his youthful antagonist prostrate on the ground, then placing his knee on Sintram's breast, he drew forth a dagger and held it at his throat. The men-at-arms ranged themselves around—Sintram felt that no hope remained for him. He determined to die as it became a bold warrior, and, without giving one sign of emotion, he looked on the fatal weapon with a steady gaze.

As he lay with his eyes cast upwards, he fancied that he saw an apparition of a lovely female form in a bright attire of blue and gold. "Our ancestors told truly of the Valkyrias," murmured he. "Strike, then, thou unknown conqueror."

But with this the knight did not comply, neither was it a Valkyria who had so suddenly appeared, but the beautiful wife of the stranger, who having advanced to the edge of the vessel, had thus met the upraised look of Sintram. "Folko," cried she in the softest tone, "thou knight without reproach! I know that thou wilt spare a vanquished foe." The knight sprang up, and with courtly grace assisted the youth to rise, saying, "You owe your life and liberty to the noble lady of Montfauçon. But if you are so far

lost to all sense of honor as to wish to resume the combat, here am I—let it be yours to begin."

Sintram sank on his knees overwhelmed with shame and remorse; for he had often heard speak of the high renown of the French knight, Folko of Montfauçon, who was distantly allied to his father's house, and of the grace and beauty of his gentle lady, Gabrielle.

CHAPTER VI.

THE lord of Montfançon looked with astonishment at his strange adversary; and as he gazed on him, recollections arose in his mind of that northern race from whom he was descended, and with whom he had always maintained friendly relations. His eye fell on a golden bear's claw, with which Sintram's cloak was fastened, and the sight of that made all clear to him.

"Have you not," said he, "a valiant and far-famed kinsman called the Sea-king Arinbiorn, whose helmet is adorned with golden vulture wings? And is not your father the knight Biorn? For surely the bear's claw on your mantle must be the cognizance of your house." Sintram gave a sign of assent, but his deep sense of shame and humiliation did not allow him to speak.

The knight of Montfançon raised him from the ground, and said gravely, yet gently: "We are then of kin the one to the other; but I could never have believed that any one of your noble house would attack a

peaceful man without provocation, nay, even lie in wait to surprise him."

"Slay me at once," answered Sintram, "if indeed I am worthy to die by the hand of so renowned a knight—I can no longer endure the light of day." "Because you have been overcome?" asked Montfauçon. Sintram shook his head. "Or is it rather because you have committed an unknightly action?"

The glow of shame that overspread the youth's countenance answered this question. "But you should not on that account wish to die," resumed Montfauçon. "You should rather wish to live that you may prove your repentance, and make your name illustrious by many noble deeds. For you are endowed with a bold spirit and with strength of limb, and also with the quick eye of one fitted to command. I should have made you a knight this very hour, if you had borne yourself as bravely in a good cause as you have just now done in a most unworthy one. See to it, that there may not be much delay in your receiving that high honor. I trust to your fulfilling the promise of good which is discernible in you."

A joyous sound of music interrupted his discourse. The Lady Gabrielle, bright as

the morning, had now come down from the ship, surrounded by her maidens; and having been informed by Folko in a few words who his late adversary was, she spoke of the combat as if it had only been a fair and honorable passage of arms, saying, "You mus not be cast down, noble youth, because my wedded lord has won the prize; for be it known to you that in the whole world there is but one knight who can boast of not having been overcome by the baron of Montfauçon. And who can say," continued she, sportively," whether even that would have happened had he not set himself to win back the magic ring from me, from me his lady-love, destined to him, as well by the choice of my own heart as by the will of Heaven."

Folko bent his head smiling over the snow-white hand of his lady, and then desired the youth to conduct them to his father's castle. Rolf undertook to superintend the disembarking of the horses and valuables of the strangers, filled with joy at the thought that an angel in woman's form had appeared to exercise a softening influence over his beloved young master, and perhaps even to free him from that curse under which he had so long suffered.

Sintram sent messengers all around to seek for his father, and to announce to him the arrival of his noble guests. They therefore found the old knight in his castle, with every thing prepared for their reception. Gabrielle could not enter the vast, dark-looking building without a slight shudder, which was increased when she saw the rolling fiery eyes of its lord; even the pale dark-haired Sintram seemed to her to assume a more fearful appearance, and she sighed to herself: "Oh! what an awful abode have you brought me to visit, my own true knight! Oh! that we were once again in my sunny Gascony, or in your knightly Normandy!"

But the grave yet courteous reception they met with, the deep respect paid to her grace and beauty, and to the high fame of Folko, helped to reassure her; and ere long her buoyant spirit took pleasure in observing all the strange novelties by which she was surrounded. And besides, it could only be for a passing moment that any womanly fears found a place in her breast when her lord was near at hand—for well did she know what effectual protection that brave baron was ever ready to afford to all those

who were near to him, or any way committed to his charge.

Soon afterwards Rolf passed through the great hall in which Biorn and his guests were seated, conducting their attendants, who had charge of the baggage, to the apartments allotted to strangers—and Gabrielle, catching sight of her favorite lute, desired it might be brought to her, in order that she might see if the precious instrument had suffered any damage. As she bent over it with earnest attention, and her taper fingers ran up and down the strings, a smile, bright as the summer's dawn, lighted up the countenances of Biorn and his son, and both said with an involuntary sigh: "Ah! if you would but play on that lute, and sing to it! It would be too enchanting!" The lady looked up at them well pleased, and smiling her assent, she began this song:

"Songs and flowers are returning
And radiant skies of May,
Earth her choicest gifts is yielding,
But one is past away.

The spring that clothes with tend'rest green,
Each grove and sunny plain,
Shines not for my forsaken heart,
Brings not my joys again.

Warble not so, thou nightingale,
Upon thy blooming spray,
Thy sweetness now will burst my heart,
I cannot bear thy lay.

For flowers and birds are come again,
And breezes mild of May,
But treasured hopes and golden hours
Are lost to me for aye!"

The two Norwegians sat plunged in melancholy thought; but gradually Sintram's eyes began to brighten with a milder expression, his cheeks glowed, every feature relaxed, till those who looked at him could have fancied they saw a glorified spirit. The good Rolf who had stood listening to the song, rejoiced from his heart as he gazed at him, and devoutly raised his hands in pious gratitude to heaven. But Gabrielle's astonishment did not suffer her to take her eyes off Sintram. At last she said to him: "I should much like to know what it is that has so struck you in that little song. It is merely a simple lay of the spring, full of the images which that sweet season never fails to call up in the minds of my countrymen."

"But is your home really so lovely, so wondrously full of poetry and its delights?"

cried the enraptured Sintram. "Then I am no longer surprised at your heavenly beauty, at the empire you have already gained over my hard, wayward heart! For from such a paradise angelic messengers would surely be sent to comfort and enlighten the dark desolate world without." And so saying he fell on his knees before the lady in an attitude of deep humility. Folko looked on all the while with an approving smile, whilst Gabrielle, in much embarrassment, seemed hardly to know how she should treat the half-wild, yet courteous young stranger. After a little hesitation, however, she extended her fair hand to him, and said as she gently raised him: "Any one who listens with such delight to music, must surely know how to awaken its strains himself. Take my lute, and let us hear one of your spirit-stirring songs."

But Sintram drew back, and would not take the instrument, and he said: "Heaven forbid that my rough untutored hand should touch those delicate strings! For even were I to begin with some soft strains, yet before long the wild spirit which dwells in me would break out, and the beautiful instrument would assuredly be injured or

destroyed. No, no, suffer me rather to fetch my own huge harp, strung with bears' sinews set in brass, for in truth I do feel myself inspired to play and sing."

Gabrielle murmured a half-frightened assent, and Sintram having brought his harp, began to strike it loudly, and to sing these words with a voice no less powerful:

"Sir Knight, Sir Knight, oh! whither away
With thy snow-white sail on the foaming spray?"
Sing heigh, sing ho, for the land of flowers!

"Too long have I trod upon ice and snow,
I seek the bowers where roses blow."
Sing heigh, sing ho, for the land of flowers!

He steered on his course by night and day,
Till he cast his anchor in Naples Bay.
Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers!

There wandered a lady upon the strand,
Her fair hair bound with a golden band.
Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers!

"Hail to thee! hail to thee! Lady bright,
Mine own shalt thou be ere morning light."
Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers!

"Not so, Sir Knight," the Lady replied,
"For you speak to the Margrave's chosen bride."
Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers!

"Your lover may come with his shield and spear,
And the victor shall win thee, Lady dear!"
Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers!

"Nay, seek for another bride, I pray,
Most fair are the maidens of Naples Bay."
Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers!

"No, Lady, for thee my heart doth burn,
And the world cannot now my purpose turn."
Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers!

Then came the young Margrave, bold and brave,
But low was he laid in a grassy grave.
Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers!

And then the fierce Northman joyous cried,
"Now shall I possess lands, castle and Bride!"
Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers!

Sintram's song was ended, but his eyes glared wildly, and the vibrations of the harp-strings still resounded in a marvellous manner. Biorn's attitude was again erect, he stroked his long beard and rattled his sword as if in great delight at what he had just heard. The wild song and the strange aspect of the father and son made Gabrielle tremble more than ever, but a glance towards the lord of Montfauçon again quieted her fears, for there he sat with a calm smile on his lips, as composed in the midst of all the noise as though it had only been caused by a passing autumnal storm.

CHAPTER VII.

SOME weeks had passed since this, when one day, as the shadows of evening were beginning to fall, Sintram entered the garden of the castle in a very disturbed state of mind. Although the presence of Gabrielle never failed to sooth and calm him, yet if she left the apartment for even a few instants, the fearful wildness of his spirit seemed to return with renewed strength. On this occasion, after having in the kindest manner read legends of the olden times to his father Biorn during great part of the day, she had retired to her own chamber. The sweet tones of her lute could be distinctly heard in the garden below, but the sounds only drove the agitated youth further and further into the deep shades of the ancient trees which surrounded the garden. Stooping suddenly to avoid some overhanging branches, he started at finding himself close to something which he had not perceived before, and which at first sight he took for a small bear standing

on its hind legs, with a wonderfully long and crooked horn on its head. He drew back in surprise and fear, a shrill voice addressed these words to him: "Well, my brave young knight, whence do you come? whither are you going? and wherefore are you so terrified?" And then he became aware that what he saw was a little old man so wrapped up in a rough garment of fur, that scarcely one of his features was visible, and wearing in his cap a strange-looking long feather. "But whence do *you* come? and whither are *you* going?" returned the angry Sintram. "For you are the person to whom such questions should be addressed. What business have you in our domains, you hideous little being?"

"Well, well," sneered the other one, "I am thinking that I am quite big enough as I am. And as to the rest, why should you object to my being here hunting for snails? Snails can not surely be included in the game which your high mightinesses consider that you alone have a right to pursue? Now it happens that I know how to prepare from them an excellent, high-flavored beverage; and I have taken a sufficient number for to-day, marvellous fat little animals, with wise

faces like a man's, and long twisted horns on their heads. Would you like to see them? Look here!"

And then he began to unfasten and fumble about his fur garment, till Sintram, filled with disgust and horror, said: "Psha! I detest such animals! Be quiet, and tell me at once who and what you yourself are."

"Are you so bent upon knowing my name?" replied the little man. "Let it content you to hear that I am Master of all secret knowledge, and well versed in the most intricate depths of ancient history. Ah! my young sir, if you would only hear some of the things I have to tell! But you are too much afraid!"

"Afraid of you!" cried Sintram, with a wild laugh.

"Many a better man than you has been so before now," muttered the Little Master, "but they did not like being told of it any more than you do."

"To prove that you are mistaken," said Sintram, "I will remain here with you till the moon has risen high in the heavens. But you must relate to me one of your stories the while."

The little man nodded his head with a

look of much satisfaction, and as they paced together up and down a retired walk, shaded by lofty elm-trees, he began discoursing as follows:

"Many hundred years ago a young knight called Paris of Troy lived in that sunny land of the south where are found the sweetest songs, the brightest flowers, and the most beautiful ladies. You know a song that tells of that fair land, do you not, young sir? 'Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers.'" Sintram gave a sign of assent, and sighed deeply. "Now," resumed the Little Master, "it happened that Paris led that kind of life which is not uncommon in those countries, and of which their poets often sing —he would pass whole months together in the garb of a peasant, making the woods and mountains resound to the tones of his lute, and watching the flocks which he led to pasture. Here one day three beautiful goddesses appeared to him, who were disputing about a golden apple—and they appealed to him to decide which of them was the most beautiful, as to her the golden prize was to be adjudged. The first had power to give thrones and sceptres and crowns to whom she would —the second could give wisdom and knowl-

edge—and the third knew how to prepare love-charms which could not fail of securing the affections of the fairest of women. Each one in turn proffered her choicest gifts to the young shepherd, in order that, tempted by them, he might give the prize to her. But as beauty charmed him more than any thing else in the world, he decided that the third goddess should win the golden apple—her name was Venus. The two others departed in great displeasure, but Venus bid him put on his knightly armor, and his helmet adorned with waving feathers, and then she conducted him to a famous city called Sparta, where ruled the noble king Menelaus. His young wife Helen was the loveliest woman on earth, and the goddess offered her to Paris in return for the golden apple. He was most ready to have her, and wished for nothing better; but he asked how he was to gain possession of her."

"Paris can have been but a sorry knight," interrupted Sintram. "Such things are easily settled. The husband is challenged to a single combat, and he that is victorious, carries off the wife."

"But King Menelaus was exercising hos-

pitality towards the young knight," said the narrator.

"Listen to me, Little Master," cried Sintram, "he might have asked the goddess for some other beautiful woman, and then have mounted his horse, or weighed anchor, and departed in search of her."

"Yes, yes, it is very easy to say so," replied the old man. "But if you only knew how bewitchingly lovely this Queen Helen was. After seeing her, no admiration was left for any one else." And then he began a glowing description of the charms of this wondrously beautiful princess, giving to her every one of Gabrielle's features with such exactness, that Sintram, overcome with emotion, was obliged to lean against a tree to support himself. The Little Master stood opposite to him, grinning, and he asked, "Well, now, could you have advised that poor knight Paris to fly from her?"

"Tell me at once what happened next," stammered Sintram.

"The goddess acted honorably towards Paris," continued the old man. "She declared to him that if he would carry away the lovely princess to his own city, Troy, he

might do so, and thus cause the ruin of his whole house and of his country; but that during ten years he would be able to defend Troy against his enemies and live happy in the love of his fair lady."

"And he took her on those terms, unless he was a fool!" cried the youth.

"To be sure he accepted them," whispered the Little Master. "I would have done so in his place! And do you know, young sir, it once fell out that the appearance of things was exactly like what we now see. The newly risen moon, partly veiled by clouds, was shining dimly through the thick branches of the trees in the silence of the evening. Leaning against a tree, as you are now doing, there stood the young enamoured knight Paris, and at his side the enchantress Venus, but so disguised and transformed, that she did not look much more attractive than I do. And by the silvery light of the moon, the form of the beautiful beloved one was seen sweeping by amidst the whispering boughs." He was silent, and, as if to realize his deluding words, Gabrielle just then appeared, musing as she walked alone down the alley of elms. "Awful being, by what name shall I call

you? What is it that you would drive me to?" muttered the trembling Sintram.

"Do not you remember your father's strong fortress on the Rocks of the Moon?" replied the old man. "The castellan and the garrison are entirely devoted to you. It could well stand a ten years' siege, and the postern gate which leads to it is open, as was that of the royal citadel of Sparta for the happy Paris." The youth looked, and perceived in fact that a gate in the garden-wall, which was usually closed, had now been left open, and that the distant mountains lighted up by the moon might be clearly seen through it. "And if he did not accept, he was a fool," said the Little Master, with a grin, echoing Sintram's former words. At that moment, Gabrielle drew near to him. She was within reach of his grasp, had he made the least movement; and the moon, as it shone on her heavenly countenance, gave new charms to it. The youth had already bent forwards.

"My Lord and God, I pray
Turn from his heart away
This world's turmoil.
And call him to Thy light,
Be it through sorrow's night,
Through pain or toil."

These words were sung by old Rolf at that very time, as he lingered on the banks of the lake by the castle, seeking a relief to his anxious thoughts concerning Sintram in the fervent supplications he addressed to the Almighty. The sounds reached Sintram's ear; he stood as if spell-bound, and made the sign of the Cross. Immediately the Little Master fled away, jumping uncouthly on one leg through the gates and shutting them after him with a loud noise.

Sintram approached the terrified Gabrielle, and said, as he offered his arm to support her: "Suffer me to lead you back to the castle. The nights in these northern regions are often wild and fearful."

CHAPTER VIII.

THEY found the two knights within sitting together, after their evening repast. Folko was relating stories in his usual mild and cheerful manner, and Biorn was listening with a moody air, but yet as if against his will the dark cloud might pass away under the influence of his companion's bright and gentle courtesy. Gabrielle saluted the baron with a smile, and signed to him to continue his discourse, as she took her place next to Biorn, with the watchful kindness which ever marked her bearing towards him. Sintram the while stood by the hearth, abstracted and melancholy, and the embers, as he stirred them, cast an unnatural gleam over his pallid features.

"And of all the German trading towns," continued Montfauçon, "the largest and richest is Hamburgh. In Normandy the merchants of this city are always received with a hearty welcome, and those excellent people never fail to prove themselves our friends when we seek their advice and assis-

tance. When I first visited Hamburgh, every honor and respect was paid me. I found its inhabitants engaged in a war with a neighboring prince, and immediately I devoted my sword to their service, and that not without success."

"Your sword! your knightly sword!" interrupted Biorn, and more than the wonted fire flashed from his eyes. "You turned it against a knight, and on behalf of shopkeepers!"

"Sir knight," replied Folko calmly, "the barons of Montfauçon have ever been used to take the side which they esteemed the right one in combats, without consulting indifferent bystanders, and as I have received this good custom from my forefathers, so do I wish to hand it on to my remotest descendants. If you do not esteem this a wise practice, you are at liberty to speak your opinion freely. But I cannot suffer you to say any thing against the people of Hamburgh after I have declared them to be my friends and allies."

Biorn cast down his fierce eyes to the ground, and their wild expression seemed to fade away. He said in a subdued tone: "Proceed, noble baron. You are right, and

I am wrong." Then Folko stretched out his hand to him across the table, and resumed his narration: "Amongst all my beloved Hamburghers the dearest to me are two very remarkable men—a father and son. What have they not seen and done in the remotest corners of the earth! and how has every talent been devoted to the good of their native town! My life has by the blessing of God been not unfruitful in deeds of renown, but in comparison with the wise Gotthard Lenz and his stout-hearted son Rudlieb, I look upon myself as nothing but an esquire, who has perhaps some few times attended knights to tourneys, and besides that has never gone out of his own forests. They have carried the light of religion, and with it happiness and peace, to savage nations whose very names are unknown to me; and the wealth which they have brought back from those distant climes has all been given to promote the common welfare as unhesitatingly as if no other use could possibly be devised for it. On their return from their long and perilous sea voyages, they hasten to an hospital which has been founded by them, and of which they undertake the entire charge. Then they proceed to select

the most fitting spots whereon to erect new towers and fortresses for the defence of their beloved country. Next they repair to the houses where strangers and travelers receive hospitality at their cost—and then they return to their own abode, where guests are entertained with a splendor worthy of a king's palace, and yet with the unassuming simplicity of manners which is thought only to belong to the shepherd's cot. Many a tale of their wondrous adventures serves to enliven these sumptuous feasts. Amongst others, I remember to have heard my friends relate one at the thought of which I still shudder. Possibly I may gain some more complete information on the subject from you. It appears that several years ago, just about the time of the Christmas festival, Gotthard and Rudlieb were shipwrecked on the coast of Norway, during a violent winter's tempest; they could never exactly ascertain the situation of the rocks on which their vessel stranded; but so much is certain, that very near the sea-shore stood a huge castle, to which the father and son betook themselves, seeking for that assistance and shelter which Christian people are ever willing to afford each other in case of need.

They went alone, leaving their followers to watch the ship. The castle gates were thrown open, and they thought all was well. But on a sudden the court-yard was filled with armed men, who with one accord aimed their sharp iron-pointed spears at the defenceless strangers, whose dignified remonstrances and mild entreaties were only heard in sullen silence or with scornful jeerings. After a while a knight came down the stairs, his eyes, so to speak, flashing fire, they hardly knew whether to think they saw some fearful apparition or a wild heathen—he gave a signal, and the fatal spears closed around them. At that instant the soft tones of a woman's voice fell on their ear; she was calling on the Saviour's holy name for aid; at the sound, the wild figures in the court-yard rushed madly one against the other, the gates burst open, and Gotthard and Rudlieb fled away, catching a glimpse as they went of an angelic face which appeared at one of the windows of the castle. They made every exertion to get their ship again afloat, preferring to trust themselves to the treacherous sea rather than to remain on that barbarous coast; and at last they landed in Denmark, after encountering many perils

and dangers. They have always said that it must have been a heathen's castle in which they were so cruelly treated, but I am rather disposed to think it was some ruined fortress, long deserted by men, in which evil spirits were wont to hold their nightly assemblies, for is it possible to imagine that even a heathen could be found with so much of a demon's temper as to meet strangers, asking for hospitality, with deadly weapons, instead of the refreshment and shelter they needed?"

Biorn gazed fixedly on the ground, as though he were turned into stone—but Sintram came towards the table, and said: "Father, let us seek out this wicked abode, and let us level it to the ground. I cannot tell how, but I feel quite sure that the accursed deed we have just heard of is alone the cause of my frightful dreams." Enraged at his son's words, Biorn rose up, and would perhaps again have uttered some dreadful imprecation, but Heaven decreed otherwise, for just at that moment the pealing notes of a trumpet were heard, which drowned the angry tones of his voice; the great doors opened slowly, and a herald entered the hall. He bowed reverently, and then said: "I am sent by Jarl Eric the aged. He re-

turned two days ago from his expedition to the Grecian seas. His wish had been to take vengeance on the island which is called Chios, where fifty years ago his father was slain by the soldiers of the emperor. But your kinsman, the sea-king Arinbiorn, who was lying there at anchor, tried to pacify him and turn him from his purpose—to this Jarl Eric would not listen—so the sea-king said next that he would never suffer Chios to be laid waste, because it was an island where the lays of an old Greek bard, called Homer, were excellently sung, and where moreover a very choice wine was made. Words proving of no avail, a combat ensued, in which Arinbiorn had so much the advantage that Jarl Eric lost two of his ships, and only with difficulty escaped in one which had already sustained great damage. Eric the aged has now resolved to take revenge on some of the sea-king's race, since Arinbiorn himself is rarely to be found. Will you, Biorn of the Fiery Eyes, at once pay as large a penalty in cattle and goods of whatever description, as it may please the Jarl to demand? Or will you prepare to meet him with an armed force at Niflung's Heath seven days hence?"

Biorn bowed his head quietly, and replied in a mild tone: "Seven days hence at Niflung's Heath." He then offered to the herald a golden goblet full of rich wine, and added: "Drink that, and then carry off with thee the cup which thou hast emptied."

"The baron of Montfauçon likewise sends greeting to thy chieftain Jarl Eric," interposed Folko, "and engages to be also at Niflung's Heath, as the hereditary friend of the sea-king's house, and also as being the kinsman and guest of Biorn of the Fiery Eyes."

The herald was seen to tremble at the name of Montfauçon, he bowed very low, cast an anxious, reverential look at the baron, and left the hall. Gabrielle looked on her knight with a smile that spoke of entire trust in his valor, when she heard him pledge himself to appear in the field, and she only asked, "Where shall I remain whilst you go forth to battle, Folko?" "I had hoped," answered Biorn, "that you would be well contented to stay in this castle, lovely lady; I leave my son to guard you and attend on you." Gabrielle hesitated an instant, and Sintram, who had resumed his position near the fire, muttered to him-

self as he fixed his eyes on the bright flames which were flashing up: "Yes, yes, so it will probably happen. I can fancy the king Menelaus had just left Sparta on some warlike expedition when the young knight Paris met the lovely Helen that evening in the garden." But Gabrielle, shuddering, although she knew not why, said quickly: "Remain here without you, Folko? And how could I bear to forego the joy of seeing you win fresh laurels? or the honor of tending you, should you chance to receive a wound?" Folko bent his head in acknowledgment of his lady's anxious tenderness, and replied: "Come with your own true knight, since such is your pleasure, and be to him a bright guiding star. It is a good old northern custom that ladies should be present at knightly combats, and no true warrior of the north will fail to respect the place whence beams the light of their eyes. Unless, indeed," continued he, with an inquiring look at Biorn, "unless Jarl Eric has degenerated from his valiant forefathers?"

"His honor may be relied on," said Biorn confidently.

"Then array yourself, my fairest love," said the delighted Folko, "array yourself,

and come forth with us to the battle-field, to behold and judge our knightly deeds."

"Come forth with us to the battle-field," echoed Sintram, in a sudden transport of joy.

And they all dispersed; Sintram betaking himself again to the wood, while the others retired to rest.

CHAPTER IX.

IT was a wild, dreary tract of country that which bore the name of Niflung's Heath. According to tradition, the young Niflung, son of Hogni, the last of his race, had there ended in sadness and obscurity a life which no warlike deeds had rendered illustrious. Many ancient monuments of the dead were still standing round about, and in the few oak-trees scattered here and there over the plain, huge eagles had built their nests—the beating of their heavy wings as they fought together, and their wild screams, were heard far off in regions more thickly peopled by man, and at the sound children would tremble in their cradles, and old men quake with fear as they sat over the blazing hearth.

As the seventh night, the last before the day of combat, was just beginning, two large armies were seen descending from the hills in opposite directions: that which came from the west was commanded by Eric the aged, that from the east by Biorn of the Fiery

Eyes. They appeared thus early in compliance with the custom which required that adversaries should always present themselves at the appointed field of battle before the time named, in order to prove that they rather sought than dreaded the hour of trial. Folko immediately chose out the most convenient spot for the tent of blue and gold to be pitched, which was to shelter his gentle lady; whilst Sintram, in the character of herald, rode over to Jarl Eric to announce to him that the beauteous Gabrielle of Montfaucon was there, guarded by his father's warriors, and would the next morning be present as a judge of the combat.

Jarl Eric bowed low on receiving this intelligence, and ordered his bards to strike up a lay, the words of which ran as follows:—

"Warriors bold of Eric's band,
Gird your glittering armor on,
Stand beneath to-morrow's sun,
In your might.

Fairest dame that ever gladdened
Our wild shores with beauty's vision,
May thy bright eyes o'er our combat
Judge the right.

Tidings of yon noble stranger
Long ago have reached our ears,
Wafted upon southern breezes,
O'er the wave.

Now midst yonder hostile ranks,
In his warlike pride he meets us,
Folko comes! Fight, men of Eric,
True and brave!"

These wondrous tones floated over the plain, and reached the tent of Gabrielle. It was no new thing to hear her knight's fame celebrated on all sides, but now that she listened to his praises bursting forth in the stillness of night from the mouths of his enemies, she could scarcely refrain from kneeling at the feet of the mighty chieftain. But he, with courteous tenderness, prevented her from sinking into that lowly posture, and pressing his lips fervently on her snow-white hand, he said, "My deeds, oh lovely lady, belong to thee, and not to me!"

No sooner had the darkness of night passed away, and the red streaks in the east announced the arrival of the appointed morning, than the whole plain seemed alive with preparations for the combat; knights put on their rattling armor, war-horses began to neigh impatiently, the morning-draught went round in gold and silver goblets, while war-songs and the harps of the bards resounded far and near. A joyous march was heard in Biorn's camp, as Montfauçon, with his troops

and retainers, all clad in bright steel armor, conducted their lady up to a neighboring hill, where she would be safe from the spears which would soon be flying in all directions, and whence she could command a complete view of the battle-field. The morning sun lighted up her lovely features, adding radiance to her surpassing beauty, and as she came in view of the camp of Jarl Eric, his soldiers lowered their weapons, whilst the chieftains bent their proud heads which were covered with huge helmets. Two of Montfauçon's pages remained in attendance on the lady Gabrielle, well content to exchange their hopes of gaining renown in the battle-field for the far greater honor of being chosen to fulfil this office. Both armies passed in front of her, saluting her as they went; they then placed themselves in array, and the fight began.

The spears flew from the hands of the stout northern warriors, rattling against the broad shields under which they sheltered themselves, or sometimes clattering as they met in the air; at intervals, on one side or the other, a man was struck, and fell bathed in his blood. After a short pause, the knight of Montfauçon advanced with his troop of

Norman horsemen—even as he dashed past he did not fail to lower his shining sword to salute Gabrielle, and then, with a loud exulting war-cry, which burst from the lips of all, they charged the left wing of the enemy. Eric's foot-soldiers, kneeling firmly in close ranks, received them with fixed javelins—many a noble horse fell wounded to death, and in falling brought his rider with him to the ground—others again crushed their foes under them as they writhed in mortal agonies. In the midst of the confusion and bloodshed, Folko and his war-steed escaped unhurt, and followed by a small band of chosen men, he dashed through the hostile ranks. Already were they falling into disorder, already were Biorn's warriors giving shouts of victory, when a troop of horse headed by Jarl Eric himself, advanced against the valiant baron of Montfauçon; and whilst his Normans, hastily assembling round their leader, assisted him in repelling this unexpected attack, the enemy's infantry were gradually forming themselves into a thick impenetrable mass, which rolled on in formidable strength. All these movements seemed to be directed by a warrior in the centre, whose loud piercing shout was heard at every instant. And

scarcely were the troops formed into this close array, when suddenly they spread themselves out on all sides, carrying every thing before them with the irresistible force of the burning torrent from a volcano.

Biorn's soldiers, who had thought themselves on the point of inclosing their enemies, lost courage and gave way at once before this wondrous onset. The knight himself in vain attempted to stem the tide of fugitives, and with difficulty escaped being carried away by it.

Sintram stood looking on this scene of confusion with mute indignation; friends and foes passed by him, all equally avoiding him, and dreading to come in contact with one whose aspect was so fearful, nay almost unearthly, in his motionless rage. He aimed no blow either to right or left, his powerful battle-axe hung idly at his side. But his eye flashed fire, and seemed to be piercing the enemy's ranks through and through, in the endeavor to find out who it was that had conjured up this sudden warlike spirit. At length he discovered the object of his search. A small man clothed in strange-looking armor, with large golden horns in his helmet, and a long visor, advancing in front of

it, was leaning on a two-edged curved spear, and seemed to be looking with derision at the hasty flight of Biorn's troops as they were pursued by their victorious foes. "That is he," cried Sintram, "he who would bring me to disgrace before the eyes of Gabrielle!" And with the swiftness of an arrow he flew towards him, uttering a wild shout of defiance. The combat was fierce, but not of long duration. To the wondrous dexterity of his adversary, Sintram opposed his far superior strength and height, and he dealt such a tremendous blow on the horned helmet that a stream of blood rushed forth, the small man fell as if stunned, and, after some frightful convulsive movements, his limbs appeared to stiffen in death.

His overthrow gave the signal for that of all Eric's army. Even those who had not seen him fall, suddenly lost their courage, and again retreated in confusion, or ran in wild affright on the very spears of their enemies. At the same time Montfauçon was dispersing Jarl Eric's cavalry, after a desperate conflict, and had taken their chief prisoner with his own hand. Biorn of the Fiery Eyes stood victorious in the middle of the field of battle. The day was won.

CHAPTER X.

IN full view of both armies, with glowing cheeks and looks of modest humility, Sintram was conducted by the brave baron of Montfauçon up the hill where Gabrielle stood in all the lustre of her beauty. Both warriors bent the knee before her, and Folko said with much solemnity: "Lady, this valiant youth of a noble race has borne away the palm of victory to-day. I pray you to let him receive from your fair hand the reward to which he is so justly entitled."

Gabrielle bowed courteously, took off her scarf of blue and gold, and fastened to it a bright sword which a page brought to her on a cushion of a cloth of silver. She then with a smile presented her precious gift to Sintram, who was bending forward to receive it, when suddenly Gabrielle drew back, and turning to Folko, she said: "Noble baron, should not he on whom I bestow a scarf and sword be first admitted into the order of knighthood?" Folko sprang up, and bowing low before his lady, gave the

youth the accolade with solemn earnestness. Then Gabrielle buckled on his sword, saying: "Take this for the honor of God and the service of noble ladies, young knight. I saw you fight, I saw you conquer, and my fervent prayers were offered up for you. Fight and conquer often again as you have done this day, that the fame of your deeds may be wafted even to my far distant country." And at a sign from Folko, she offered her cheek for the new knight to kiss. Thrilling all over, and full of a holy joy, Sintram arose in deep silence, and tears streamed down his cheeks, whilst the shout of the assembled troops greeted the enraptured youth with stunning applause. Old Rolf stood silently on one side, and as he saw the mild beaming expression in his beloved pupil's countenance, he calmly and piously returned thanks. "The strife is now at an end—rich blessings are showered down—the evil foe is slain."

Biorn and Jarl Eric had the while been talking together with eagerness, but not with animosity. The conqueror now led his vanquished enemy up the hill, and presented him to the baron and Gabrielle, saying: "Instead of two enemies, you now see two

sworn allies; and I request you, my beloved guests and kinsfolk, to receive him graciously as one who, from henceforward, belongs to us." "He was ever one with you in heart," added Eric, smiling; "I have indeed sought for revenge of former wrongs, but I have now had enough of defeats both by sea and land. Yet I thank Heaven that neither in the Grecian seas nor on Niflung's Heath have I shown myself wanting in valor." The lord of Montfauçon assented cordially, and the terms of peace were agreed on with entire good will. Jarl Eric then addressed Gabrielle in so courtly a manner that she could not refrain from looking on the gigantic old warrior with a smile of astonishment, and she gave him her hand to kiss.

Meanwhile Sintram was standing apart, speaking earnestly to his good Rolf, and at length he was heard to say: "But before all, be sure that you bury that wonderfully brave knight whom my battle-axe laid low. Choose out the greenest hill for his resting-place, and the loftiest oak to shade his grave. Also I wish you to open his visor and to examine his countenance carefully, lest the blow should only have deprived him of motion, not of life; and moreover, that you may

be able to give me an exact description of him to whom I owe the noblest, most precious prize ever adjudged to man."

Rolf departed to execute his orders. "Our young knight is speaking there of one amongst the slain, of whom I should like to hear more," said Folko, turning to Jarl Eric. "Who was that wonderful chieftain who rallied your troops in so masterly a manner, and who at last fell under Sintram's powerful weapon?"

"You ask me more than I know how to answer," replied Jarl Eric. "About three nights ago, this stranger made his appearance amongst us. I was sitting with my chieftains and warriors round the hearth, forging our armor, and singing the while. Suddenly, above the din of our hammering and our singing, we heard so loud a noise that it silenced us in a moment, and we sat motionless as if we had been turned into stone. The sound continued equally stunning, and at last we made out that it must be caused by some person blowing a huge horn outside the castle, in order to obtain admittance. I went down myself to the gate, and as I passed through the court-yard I perceived that all my dogs were so terrified

by the extraordinary noise as to be howling and crouching in their kennels, instead of barking at the intruders. I scolded them, and called to them, but even the fiercest would not follow me. 'Then,' thought I to myself, 'I must show you the way to set to work;' so I grasped my sword firmly, I set my torch on the ground close beside me, and I let the gates fly open without further delay. For I well knew that it would be no easy matter for any one to effect an entrance against my will. A loud laugh greeted me, and I heard these words: 'Well, well, what mighty preparations are these before one small man is allowed to find the shelter he seeks!' And in truth I did feel myself redden with shame when I saw the small stranger standing opposite to me, quite alone. I called to him to come in at once, and offered my hand to him; but he still showed some displeasure, and would not give me his in return. As he went up, however, he became more friendly; he showed me the golden horn on which he sounded that blast, and which he carried screwed on his helmet, as well as another exactly like it. When he was sitting with us in the hall, he behaved in a very strange manner—sometimes he was

merry, sometimes cross, by turns courteous and rude in his demeanor, without any one being able to see a motive for such constant changes. I longed to know where he came from, but how could I ask my guest such a question? He told us as much as this, that he was starved with cold in our country, and that his own was much warmer. Also he appeared well acquainted with the city of Constantinople, and related fearful stories of how brothers, uncles and nephews, nay even fathers and sons, had been known there to drive each other from the throne, and to exercise such cruelties as putting out eyes, and cutting out tongues, when they stopped short of murdering their opponents. At length he said his own name; it sounded harmonious, like a Greek name, but none of us could remember it. Before long, he displayed his skill as an armorer. He understood marvellously well how to handle the red-hot iron, and how to form it into weapons of a more murderous nature than any I had ever before seen. I would not suffer him to go on making them, for I was resolved to meet you in the field with such arms only as you would yourselves bear, and as we are all used to in our northern coun-

tries. Then he laughed, and said he thought it would be quite possible to be victorious without their aid, provided address and dexterity were not wanting, and so forth; if only I would intrust the command of my infantry to him, I might depend upon success. It occurred to me that he who was so skilled in forging arms must also wield them well—yet I required some proof of his powers. Sir knight, he came off victorious in trials of strength, more surprising than any you could imagine—and although the fame of young Sintram as a bold and brave warrior is spread far and wide, yet I can scarce believe that he really succeeded in slaying such an one as my Greek ally showed himself to be."

He would have continued speaking, but the good Rolf here made his appearance hastening towards them, followed by a few attendants, the whole party looking so ghastly pale that all eyes were involuntarily fixed on them, and every one waited anxiously to hear what tidings they brought. Rolf stood still, silent and trembling.

"Take courage, my old friend!" cried Sintram. "Whatever you may have to tell will come forth clear and true from your honest lips." "My dear master," began the

old man, "be not angry, but as to burying that strange warrior whom you slew, it is a thing impossible. Would that we had never opened that wide, hideous visor! For so horrible a countenance grinned at us from underneath it, so distorted by death, and with such a fiendish expression, that we hardly kept our senses. We could not by any possibility have touched him. I would rather be sent to kill wolves and bears in the desert, and look on whilst fierce birds of prey feast on their carcasses."

All present shuddered, and were silent—till Sintram nerved himself to say: "Dear good old man, why use such wild words as I never till now heard you utter? But tell me, Jarl Eric, did your ally present such an awful appearance while he was yet alive?"

"I do not call it to mind," answered Jarl Eric, looking inquiringly at his companions who were standing around. They said the same thing as their lord; but on further questioning, it appeared that neither the chieftain, nor the knights, nor the soldiers, could say exactly what the stranger was like.

"We must then find it out for ourselves, and bury the corpse," said Sintram; and he

signed to the assembled party to follow him. All did so, except the lord of Montfauçon, whom the whispered entreaty of Gabrielle kept at her side. He lost nothing by remaining behind: for though Niflung's Heath was searched from one end to the other many times, yet the body of the unknown warrior was never again discovered.

CHAPTER XI.

THE joy and serenity which came over Sintram's soul on this day appeared to be much more than a passing gleam. If still an occasional thought of the knight Paris and the fair Helen would for a moment make his heart beat wildly, it needed but one look at his scarf and sword to restore calmness within. "What can any man wish for more than has been already bestowed on me?" would he say to himself at such times, in deep emotion. And thus it went on for a long while.

The autumn, so beautiful in those northern climes, had already begun to redden the leaves of the old oaks and elms round the castle, when one day it chanced that Sintram found himself seated in company with Folko and Gabrielle, in almost the very same spot in the garden where he had before met that mysterious being whom without knowing why, he had named the Little Master. But on this day in what a different light did every thing appear! The sun was sinking

slowly over the sea,—the mist of an autumnal evening was rising from the fields, and wreathing itself round the hill on which stood the huge castle. Gabrielle, placing her lute in Sintram's hands, said to him: "Dear youth, I no longer fear intrusting my delicate favorite to you, now that you are become so mild and gentle. Let me again hear you sing that lay of the land of flowers, for I am sure that it will now sound much sweeter than when you accompanied it with the vibrations of your fearful harp."

The young knight bowed as he prepared to obey the lady's commands. With a grace and softness hitherto strangers to him, the wild strains flowed from his lips, and appeared to lose their former character, and to change into harmony to which angels might have listened. Tears stood in Gabrielle's eyes; and Sintram, as he gazed on the bright pearly drops, poured forth tones of yet richer sweetness. When the last notes were sounded, Gabrielle's angelic voice was heard to echo them, and as she repeated

"Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers,"

Sintram put down the lute, and raised his thankful eyes towards the stars, which were

now stealing out and studding the whole face of the sky. Then Gabrielle, turning towards her lord, murmured these words: "Oh, how long have we been wandering far away from our own sunny hills and bright gardens! Oh! for that land of the sweetest flowers!"

Sintram could scarcely believe that he heard aright, so suddenly did he feel himself as if shut out from paradise. But his faint hopes of being mistaken were crushed by the assurance of Folko, that he would endeavor to fulfil his lady's wishes with all possible speed, and that their ship was lying off the shore ready to put to sea. She thanked him with a kiss imprinted softly on his forehead; and leaning on his arm she bent her steps towards the castle.

The wretched Sintram, neglected and forgotten, remained behind, motionless as if he had been turned to stone. At length, when the darkness of night had spread itself over the whole sky, he started up wildly, ran up and down the garden as if all his former madness had taken possession of him, and then rushed out, and wandered upon the hills in the pale moonlight. There he dashed his sword against the trees and bushes, so that all around was heard a sound of crash-

ing and falling, the birds of night flew about him screeching in wild alarm, and the deer, startled by the noise, sprung away to take refuge in the thickest coverts.

On a sudden old Rolf appeared, returning home from a visit to the chaplain of Drontheim, to whom he had been relating with tears of joy, how Sintram was subdued by Gabrielle's mild influence, and how they might venture to hope that his evil dreams would never again disturb his mind. And now the sword of the furious youth had well-nigh wounded the old man in some of its fearful thrusts to right and left. He stopped short, and, clasping his hands, he said with a deep sigh: "Alas, my beloved Sintram, my foster-child! what madness has seized you, and made you thus wild and frantic?"

The youth stood awhile as if spell-bound, he looked in his old friend's face with a fixed and melancholy gaze, and his eyes became dim, like expiring watch-fires seen through a thick cloud of mist. At length he sighed forth these words, almost inaudibly: "Good Rolf, good Rolf, depart from me! I have been cast out of your garden of delight: and if sometimes a light breese blows open its golden gates, so that I can look in and see

the sunny spot where heavenly inhabitants wander to and fro, then immediately a cruel cutting wind arises, which shuts to the gates, and I remain without, to pass a never-ending winter in cheerless desolation."

"Beloved young knight, oh! listen to me; listen to the voice of the good Spirit within you! Do you not bear in your hand that very sword which the bright lady you serve girded you with? Does not her scarf wave over your wildly beating heart? Do you not recollect how you used to say that no mortal could wish for more than had been bestowed on yourself?"

"Yes, Rolf, I have said that," replied Sintram, sinking on the mossy turf, drowned in bitter tears. The old man wept also. Before long the youth stood again erect, his tears ceased to flow, his countenance assumed a cold terrible expression, and he said: "You see, Rolf, I have passed such blessed peaceful days, and I thought within myself that the powers of evil would never again have dominion over me. So, perchance, it might have been, just as much as daylight would always last were the sun never to go below the horizon. But ask the poor benighted earth, wherefore she looks so dull

and dark! Bid her again smile as she was wont to do! Old man, she cannot smile;—and now that the gentle compassionate moon has disappeared behind the clouds with her sadly-soothing funeral veil, she cannot even weep. And in this hour of darkness, all that is wild and awful wakes up into life! So do not stop me, I tell thee, do not stop me! Hurrah! I am rushing behind the pale moon!" His voice changed to a hoarse murmur at these last words. He tore away from the trembling old man, and rushed through the forest. Rolf knelt down, and prayed and wept silently.

CHAPTER XII.

WHERE the sea-beach was wildest, and the cliffs most steep and rugged, and close by the remains of three shattered oaks, which probably marked a place where, in darker times, human victims had been sacrificed, now stood Sintram, leaning, as if exhausted, on his drawn sword, and gazing intently on the dancing waves. The moon had again shone forth, and as her pale beams fell on his motionless figure through the quivering branches of the trees, he might have been taken for some fearful idol image. Suddenly some one, hitherto unnoticed by him, half-raised himself out of the withered grass, uttered a faint groan, and again lay down. This marvellous conversation then arose between the two:

"Thou that movest thyself so strangely amid the grass, dost thou belong to the living or to the dead?"

"That is as you may choose to take it. I am dead to heaven and joy—I live for hell and anguish."

"I could fancy that I had already heard thee speak."

"Oh, yes, thou surely hast."

"Art thou a troubled spirit? and was thy life-blood poured out here in ancient times?"

"I am a troubled spirit;—but no man ever has, or ever can shed my blood. I have been cast down—oh! into a frightful abyss!"

"And wert thou killed by the fall?"

"I am living now,—and I shall live longer than thou."

"I could almost fancy that thou wert the crazy pilgrim with the dead men's bones hanging about him."

"I am not he, although we often consort together,—and, indeed, in the most friendly manner. But, to let you into a secret, he considers me to be mad. If I sometimes urge him, and say to him, 'Take!'—then he hesitates, and points upwards towards the stars. And, again, if I say, 'Take not!'—then, to a certainty, he seizes on it in some awkward manner, and so he spoils my best joys and pleasures. But, in spite of all this, we remain as before, bound by a close alliance, and even by a degree of relationship."

"Give me thy hand, and let me help thee up."

"Ho, ho, my active young sir, that might bring you no good. Yet, in fact, you have already helped to raise me. Give heed to what is going on around."

The movements of Sintram's unknown companion seemed to become stranger each minute; thick clouds swept wildly over the moon and the stars, and Sintram's thoughts grew no less wild and stormy, while far and near an awful howling could be heard amidst the trees and the grass. At length the mysterious being arose from the ground. As if to gratify a fearful curiosity, the moon looked out from behind a cloud, and the sudden gleam of light showed the horror-stricken Sintram that his companion was none other than the Little Master.

"Avaunt!" cried he, "I will listen no more to your evil stories about the knight Paris. They would end by driving me quite mad."

"My stories about Paris are not needed for that!" grinned the Little Master. "It is enough that the Helen of your affections should be journeying towards Montfauçon. Believe me, madness has already taken pos-

session of every part of you. But what should you say were she to remain? For that, however, you must show me more courtesy than you have of late." Therewith he raised his voice towards the sea, as if fiercely rebuking it, so that Sintram could not keep from shuddering and trembling before the hideous dwarf. But he checked himself, and grasping his sword-hilt with both hands, he said contemptuously, "You and Gabrielle! what acquaintance do you pretend to have with Gabrielle?"

"Not much," was the reply. And the Little Master might be seen to quake with fear and rage, as he continued, "I cannot well bear to hear the name of your Helen; do not din it in my ears ten times in a breath. But, if the tempest should increase —if the foaming waves should swell, and roll on till they form an impenetrable barrier round the whole coast of Norway? The voyage to Montfauçon must, in that case, be altogether given up, and your Helen would remain here at least through the long, long, dark winter!"

"If! if!" replied Sintram, with scorn. "Is the sea your bond-slave? Are tempests obedient to you?"

"They are rebels, accursed rebels," muttered the Little Master. "You must lend me your aid, Sir Knight, if I am to subdue them; but you have not the heart for such a service."

"Boaster, evil boaster!" answered the youth. "What is it that you require of me?"

"It is not much, Sir Knight, nothing at all for one who has strength and ardor of soul. You need only look at the sea steadily for one half-hour, without ever ceasing to wish intensely that it should foam and rage and swell, and never again become quiet until winter has laid its icy hold upon your mountains. Then king Menelaus will be effectually prevented from undertaking a voyage to Montfauçon. And now give me a lock of your black hair, which is blowing so wildly about your head, looking like ravens' or vultures' wings."

The youth drew his sharp dagger, madly cut off a lock of his hair, threw it to the strange being, and, according to his directions, began gazing on the sea, and wishing ardently that a storm should arise. And soon the water began to be slightly agitated with a motion almost as imperceptible as

the murmuring of one disturbed by uneasy dreams, who would gladly be at rest and yet cannot. Sintram was on the point of giving up, when the moonbeams fell on the white sails of a ship which was going rapidly in a southerly direction. A pang shot through his heart, as he was thus forcibly reminded of Gabrielle's departure; he wished again with all his power, and fixed his eyes intently on the watery expanse. "Sintram," a voice might have said to him, "ah! Sintram, can you be indeed the very same who but so lately was gazing in deep emotion on the tearful eyes of Gabrielle?"

And now the waves were seen to heave and swell, and the howling tempest swept over the ocean; the breakers, white with foam, became visible in the moonlight. Then the Little Master threw the lock of Sintram's hair up towards the clouds, and as it was blown to and fro by the blast of wind, the storm burst in all its fury, so that sea and sky were covered with one thick cloud, and far off might be heard the cries of distress from many a sinking vessel.

Just then the crazy pilgrim with the dead-men's bones rose up in the midst of the waves, close to the shore; his height ap-

peared gigantic as he rocked to and fro in a fearful manner; the boat in which he was standing was entirely hid from sight by the raging waves which rose all around it.

"You must save him, Little Master, you must anyhow save him," cried Sintram, his voice rising in a tone of angry entreaty above the roaring of the winds and waves—but the dwarf replied with a laugh: "Be quite at ease on his account, he will be able to save himself. The waves can do him no harm. Do you see? They are only begging of him, and therefore they jump up so boldly round him. And he gives them bountiful alms; very bountiful, that I can assure you."

Accordingly the pilgrim was seen to throw some bones in the sea, and to pass on his way without suffering damage. Sintram felt his blood run cold with horror, and he rushed wildly towards the castle. His companion had either fled or vanished away.

CHAPTER XIII.

BIORN and Gabrielle and Folko of Montfaucon were sitting round the great stone table, from which, since the arrival of his noble guests, the lord of the castle had caused those suits of armor to be removed that formerly had been his companions—they were placed all together in a heap in one of the adjoining apartments. At this time, while the storm was beating so furiously against doors and windows, it seemed as if the ancient armor were also stirring in the next room, and Gabrielle several times half rose from her seat in great alarm, fixing her eyes on the small iron door, as though she expected to see an armed spectre issue therefrom, bending down his plumed helmet as he passed underneath the low vaulted door-way. The knight Biorn smiled grimly and said, as if reading her thoughts: "Oh! he will never again come out thence, I have put an end to that forever." His guests looked at him inquiringly, as if anxious to understand his meaning; and with a strange

air of unconcern, as though the storm had awakened all the fierceness of his soul, he began the following history:

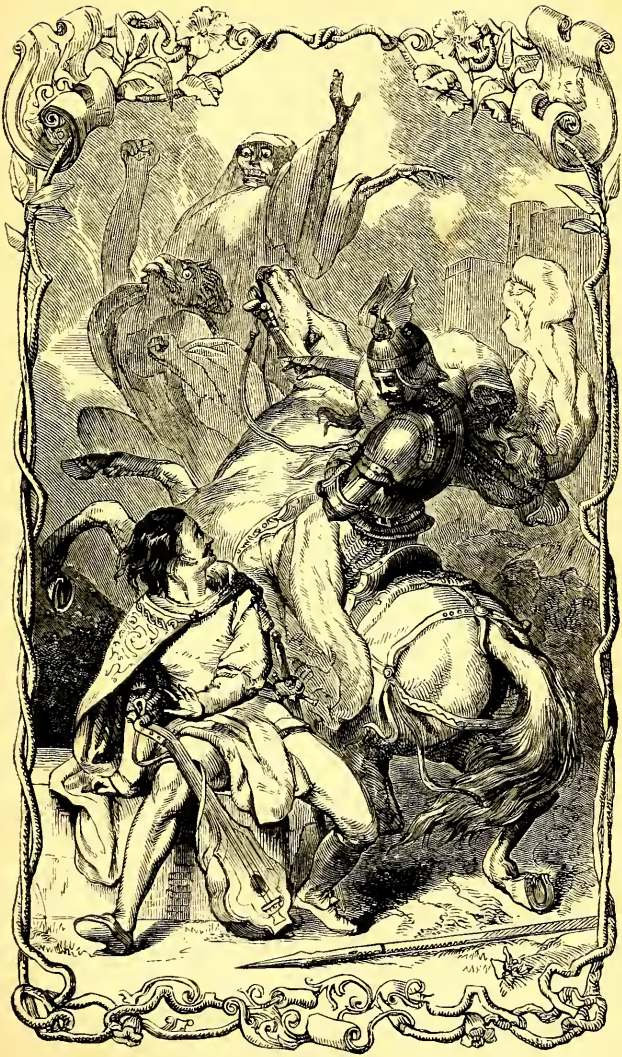
"I was once a happy man myself; I could smile, as you do—and I could rejoice in the clear morning air, as you do; that was before the hypocritical chaplain had so worked on the pious scruples of my lovely wife, as to induce her to shut herself up in her cloister, and leave me alone with my ungovernable child. That was not fair usage on the part of the fair Verena. Well, so it was, that in the first days of her dawning beauty, before I knew her, many knights sought her hand, amongst whom was Sir Weigand the Slender; and towards him the gentle maiden showed herself the most favorably inclined. Her parents were well aware that Weigand's rank and station were little below their own, and that his fame as a warrior without reproach promised to stand high; so that before long it was generally known that Verena and he were betrothed to each other.

It happened one day that they were walking together in the garden of her father's castle, at the time when a shepherd was driving his flock up the mountain beyond. The

maiden took a fancy to a little snow-white lamb which she saw frolicking about, and wished to have it. Weigand flew out of the garden, overtook the shepherd, and offered him two pieces of gold for the lamb. But the shepherd would not part with it, and scarcely listened to the knight, going quietly the while up the mountain side. Weigand persevered, but failing in his attempts he lost patience, and at last uttered some threat. The shepherd, who was not wanting in the pride and stubbornness of all our northern peasants, threatened in return. Suddenly Weigand's sword glittered above his head—the stroke should have fallen lightly—but who can control a fiery horse, or an angry warrior's arm? The shepherd's head seemed cleft asunder by the blow; he rolled bathed in blood down to the very bottom of the precipice—his terrified flock dispersed on the mountains. The little lamb alone took refuge in the garden, and, all sprinkled with its master's blood, it laid itself down at Verena's feet, as if asking for protection. She took it up in her arms, and from that moment never suffered Weigand to appear again in her presence. She continued to cherish the little lamb, and seemed to take

pleasure in nothing else in the world, while she became each day more and more pale, like the lilies, and her every thought was devoted to Heaven. She would soon have taken the veil, but just then I came to aid her father in a war in which he was engaged, and saved him from his too powerful enemies. As a reward of my services, he prevailed on his daughter to give me her fair hand. The overwhelming weight of his affliction would not suffer the unhappy Weigand to remain in his own country; he went as a pilgrim to Asia, whence our forefathers came; and there he performed wondrous deeds of valor, not omitting acts of humiliation and penitence. I could not hear him spoken of in those days without my heart being strangely moved with compassion. Years rolled by, and he returned, meaning to erect a church or monastery on that mountain, towards the west, whence the walls of my castle are distinctly seen. It was said that he wished to become a priest there, but it fell out otherwise. For some pirates having sailed from the southern seas towards our coasts, and having heard mention made of this monastery which was in progress, their chief hoped to find much gold in the

possession of those who were building it, or to get a large ransom for them, if he should succeed in surprising them and carrying them off. He could not have known much about the valor of northern warriors! However, he soon arrived, and having landed in the creek under the black rocks, he led his men through a by-path up to the building, surrounded it, and thought in himself that the game was now in his hands. Ha! then out rushed Weigand and his builders, and fell upon them with swords, and hatchets, and hammers. The heathens fled away to their ships, closely pursued by Weigand. In passing by our castle he caught a sight of Verena on the terrace, and, for the first time during so many years, she bestowed a courteous and kind salutation on the victorious warrior. At that moment a dagger, hurled by one of the pirates in the midst of his hasty flight, struck Weigand's uncovered head, and he fell to the ground bleeding and insensible. We completed the rout of the heathens; then I directed the wounded knight to be brought into the castle; and my Verena's pale cheeks glowed as lilies do in the light of the morning sun, and Weigand opened his eyes with a smile when he was



brought near her. He refused to be taken into any room but the small one close to this, where the armor is now placed; for he said that he felt as if it were a cell like that which he hoped soon to inhabit in the quiet cloister he was erecting. All was done conformably to his desire; my sweet Verena nursed him, and he appeared at first to be advancing favorably towards recovery, but his head continued weak, and liable to be confused by the slightest emotion—his steps were faltering, and his cheeks colorless. We would not suffer him to depart. When we were sitting here together in the evening, he used always to come tottering into the hall through the lower doorway; and my heart was sad, and wrathful too, when the soft eyes of Verena beamed so sweetly on him, and a glow like that of the evening sky lighted up her pale countenance. But I bore it, and I could have borne it to the end of our lives—when, alas! Verena shut herself up in a cloister!"

His head fell so heavily on his folded hands that the stone table groaned under it, and he remained a long while motionless as a corpse. When he again raised himself up, his eyes glared as he looked round the hall,

and he said to Folko, "Your beloved Hamburghers, Gotthard Lentz, and Rudlieb his son, they have much to answer for! Who bid them come and be shipwrecked so close to my castle?"

Folko cast a piercing look on him, and a fearful inquiry was on the point of escaping his lips, but another look at the trembling Gabrielle caused him to refrain, at least for the present moment, and the knight Biorn continued his narrative—

"Verena was with her nuns, I was left alone, and my despair had driven me to the mountains and the forest during the whole day. Towards evening I returned to my deserted castle, and scarcely was I in the hall, when the little door creaked on its hinges, and Weigand, who had slept through all, crept towards me and asked, 'Where can Verena be?' Then I became like one out of his senses, and I shouted, 'She is gone mad, and so am I, and you also, and now we are all mad!' Merciful Heaven! the wound on his head burst open, and a dark red stream flowed over his face—alas! how different from the redness which overspread it when Verena met him at the castle gate—and he rushed forth, raving mad, into the wilder-

ness without, and ever since has wandered all around, as a crazy pilgrim."

He was silent, and so were Folko and Gabrielle—all three pale and cold, like images of the dead. At length the fearful narrator added in a low voice, and as if he were quite exhausted, "He has visited me since that time, but he will never again come through the low door-way. Have I not established peace and order in my castle?"

CHAPTER XIV.

SINTRAM had not returned home, when the inhabitants of the castle betook themselves to rest in great disturbance of mind. No one thought of him, for every heart was filled with strange forebodings of evil, and with undefined anxiety. Even the firm heroic spirit of the knight of Montfauçon did not escape the general agitation.

Old Rolf still remained without, weeping in the forest, heedless of the storm which beat on his unprotected head, while he waited for his young master. But he had gone a very different way; and when the morning dawned, he entered the castle from the opposite side.

Gabrielle's slumbers had been but too sweet during the whole night. It had seemed to her that angels with golden wings had blown away the wild histories she had listened to the evening before, and had wafted to her the bright flowers, the sparkling sea, and the green hills of her own home.

She smiled, and drew her breath calmly and softly, whilst the supernatural tempest raged and howled through the forests, and kept up a fearful conflict with the troubled sea. But, in truth, when she awoke in the morning, and heard the crashing of the storm still continuing, and saw the clouds still hiding the face of the heavens, she could have wept for anxiety and sadness, especially when she heard from her maidens that Folko had already left their apartment clad in full armor as if prepared for a combat. At the same time she could distinguish the sound of the heavy tread of armed men in the echoing halls, and, on inquiring, found that the knight of Montfaucon had assembled all his retainers to be in readiness to protect their lady.

Wrapped in a cloak of ermine, she stood trembling like a tender flower which has just sprung up out of the snow, and is exposed to the rude blasts of a winter's storm. At that moment Sir Folko entered the room, arrayed in his brilliant armor, and in peaceful guise carrying his golden helmet, with the long shadowy plumes, in his hand. He saluted Gabrielle with an air of cheerful serenity, and, at a sign from him, his attendants re-

tired—the men-at-arms without were heard quietly dispersing.

"Lady," said he, as he took his seat beside her on a couch to which he led her, already re-assured by his presence; "Lady, will you forgive your knight for having left you to endure some moments of anxiety, whilst he was obeying the call of honor and the stern voice of duty. Now all is set in order, quietly and peacefully; dismiss your fears and every thought that has troubled you, as things that have no longer any existence."

"But you and Biorn?" asked Gabrielle.

"On the word of a knight," replied he, "all is as it should be." And thereupon he began to talk over indifferent subjects with his usual ease and vivacity; but Gabrielle, bending towards him, said, with deep emotion:

"Oh, Folko, my knight, the guiding star of my life, my protector, and my dearest hope on earth, tell me all, if you may. If you are bound by a promise to keep any thing secret, I ask no more. You know that I am of the race of Portamour, and I would ask nothing from my knight which could cast even a breath of suspicion on his spotless shield."

Folko thought gravely for one instant, then looking at her with a bright smile, he said: "It is not that, Gabrielle, but can you bear what I have to disclose? Will you not sink down at the tidings, as a slender fir gives way under a mass of snow?"

She raised herself with a somewhat proud air, and said: "I have already reminded you of the name of my father's house. Let me now add that I am the wedded wife of the baron of Montfauçon."

"Then so let it be," replied Folko solemnly; "and if that must come forth openly which should ever have remained hidden in the darkness which belongs to such deeds of wickedness, at least the horror of longer expectation shall not be added to it. Know then, Gabrielle, that the wicked knight who attempted the destruction of my friends Gotthard and Rudlieb, is none other than our kinsman and host, Biorn of the Fiery Eyes."

Gabrielle shuddered and covered her eyes with her fair hands; but at the end of a moment she looked up with a bewildered air, and said: "I have heard wrong surely, although it is true that yesterday evening such a thought flashed across my mind. For

did you not say awhile ago that all was settled and at peace between you and Biorn? Between the brave baron and such a man after such a crime?"

"You heard aright," answered Folko, looking with fond delight on the delicate, yet noble spirited being beside him. "This morning with the earliest dawn I went to him and challenged him to mortal combat in the neighboring valley, if he were the man to whose cruelty Gotthard and Rudlieb had so well nigh fallen victims. He was already completely armed, and merely saying, 'I am he,' he led the way towards the forest. But when he stood alone at the place of combat, he flung away his shield down a giddy precipice, then his sword was hurled after it, and next with gigantic strength he tore off his coat of mail, and said: 'Now fall on, thou minister of vengeance, for I am a man laden with guilt, and I dare not fight with thee.' How could I then attack him? A strange kind of truce was agreed on between us,—he is to be my vassal to a certain extent, and yet I solemnly forgave him in my own name and in that of my friends. He was contrite, and yet no tear was in his eye, no word of penitence on his lips. He is only

kept under by the power with which I am endued by having right on my side, and it is on that tenure that Biorn is my vassal. I know not, lady, whether you can bear to see us together on these terms; if not, I will ask for hospitality in some other castle—there are none in Norway which would not receive us joyfully and honorably, and this wild autumnal storm may put off our voyage for many a day. Only I feel persuaded of this, that if we depart directly and in such a manner, the heart of this savage man will break."

"Where my noble lord remains, there am I content to remain also under his protection," replied Gabrielle, and again her heart glowed with rapture at the greatness of her knight.

CHAPTER XV.

THE noble lady had just unbuckled her knight's armor with her own fair hands, —for it was only on the field of battle that pages or esquires were permitted to perform that office for Montfauçon,—and now she was throwing over his shoulders his mantle of blue velvet embroidered with gold, when the door opened gently, and Sintram, entering the room, saluted them with an air of deep humility. Gabrielle received him kindly as she was wont, but, suddenly turning pale, she looked away and said: "Oh, Sintram, what has happened to you? And how can one single night have so fearfully altered you?"

Sintram stood still, thunderstruck, and feeling as if he himself did not know what had befallen him. Then Folko took him by the hand, led him towards a bright polished shield, and said very earnestly: "Look here at yourself, young knight!"

No sooner had Sintram cast a glance in the mirror than he drew back with horror.

He fancied that he saw the Little Master before him with that single upright feather sticking out of his cap; but he at length perceived that the mirror was only showing him his own image and none other, and that it was owing to the lock of hair cut off by his own dagger that his whole appearance had become so strange, nay, even unearthly, as he was obliged to confess himself.

"Who has done that to you?" asked Folko in a tone yet more grave and solemn. "And why does your disordered hair stand on end?"

Sintram knew not what to answer. He felt as if he were standing to be judged, and as if his sentence could be none other than a shameful degradation from his knightly rank. Suddenly Folko drew him away from the shield, and taking him towards the window against which the storm was beating, he asked: "Whence comes this tempest?"

Still Sintram kept silence. His limbs began to tremble under him, and Gabrielle, pale and terrified, whispered: "Oh! Folko, my knight, what has happened? Oh! tell me; are we come into an evil, enchanted castle?"

"The land of our Northern ancestors," replied Folko with solemnity, "is full of mys-

terious knowledge. But we may not, for all that, call its people enchanters; still this youth has good cause to watch himself narrowly; he whom the Evil One has touched by so much as one hair of his head—"

Sintram heard no more; with a deep groan he staggered out of the room. As he left it, he met old Rolf, still almost benumbed by his exposure to the cold and storms of the night. Now in his joy at again seeing his young master, he did not remark his altered appearance; but as he accompanied him to his sleeping room, he said: "Witches and spirits of the tempest must have taken up their abode on the sea-shore. I am certain that such wild storms never arise without some magical arts."

Sintram fell into a fainting-fit, from which Rolf could with difficulty recover him sufficiently to appear in the great hall at the mid-day repast. But before he went down, he caused a mirror to be brought, and having again surveyed himself therein with grief and horror, he cut close round all the rest of his long black hair, so that he made himself look almost like a monk, and thus he joined the party already assembled round the table. They all looked at him with surprise, but

old Biorn rose up and said fiercely: "Are you going to betake yourself to a cloister as well as the fair lady, your mother?"

A commanding look from the baron of Montfaucon checked any further outbreak, and, as if in apology, Biorn added with a forced smile: "I was only thinking if any accident had befallen him, like Absalom's, and if he had been obliged to save himself from being strangled by parting with all his hair."

"You should not jest on sacred subjects," answered the baron, severely, and all were silent. No sooner was the repast ended than Folko and Gabrielle, with grave and courteous salutation, retired to their own apartments.

CHAPTER XVI.

AFTER this time a great change took place in the mode of living of the inhabitants of the castle. Those two bright beings, Folko and Gabrielle, spent most of the day in their apartments; and when they appeared below, their intercourse with Biorn and Sintram was marked by a grave, dignified reserve on their part, and by humility mixed with fear on that of their hosts. Nevertheless, Biorn could not endure the thought of his guests seeking shelter in any other knight's abode. Once that Folko said a word on the subject, something like a tear stood in the wild man's eye—his head sank, and he said in a scarcely audible voice: "It must be as you please; but I feel that if you go, I shall fly to the caves and rocks in despair."

And thus they all remained together; for the storm continued to rage with such increasing fury over the sea, that no thought of embarking could be entertained, and the oldest man in Norway could not call to mind

having witnessed such an autumn. The priests examined all the Runic books, the bards looked through their store of lays and tales, and yet they could find no record of the like. Biorn and Sintram braved the tempest; but during the few hours in which Folko and Gabrielle showed themselves, the father and son were always in the castle, in respectful attendance upon them; the rest of the day—nay, even frequently the whole night long—they rushed through the forests and over the rocks in pursuit of bears. Folko, the while, summoned to his aid all the brightness of his fancy, all the courtly grace he was endowed with, in order to make Gabrielle forget that she was living in this wild castle, and that the long hard northern winter was setting in, which would keep her there an ice-bound prisoner for many a month. Sometimes he would relate tales of deep interest; then he would play the liveliest airs to induce Gabrielle to tread a measure with her attendants; then, again, handing his lute to one of the women, he would himself take a part in the dance, never failing to express by his gestures his homage and devotion to his lady. Another time he would have the spacious halls of the castle

prepared for his armed retainers to go through their warlike exercises and trials of strength, and Gabrielle always adjudged the reward to the conqueror. Folko often joined the circle of combatants; but always took care to deprive no one of the prize, by confining his efforts merely to parrying the blows aimed at him. The Norwegians, who stood around as spectators, used to compare him to the demigod Baldur, one of the heroes of their old traditions, who was wont to let the darts of his companions be all hurled against him, conscious that he was invulnerable, and trusting in his own inherent strength.

At the close of one of these martial exercises, old Rolf advanced towards Folko, and beckoning him with a humble look, he said softly: "They call you Baldur the brave, the good—and they are right. But even the good and brave Baldur did not escape death. Take heed to yourself." Folko looked at him with surprise. "Not that I know of any treacherous design against you," continued the old man; "or that I can even foresee the likelihood of any being formed. God forbid that a Norwegian should feel such a fear. But when you stand before me

in all the brightness of your glory, the fleetingness of everything earthly is brought strongly to my mind, and I cannot refrain from saying, 'Take heed, noble baron! oh, take heed! There is nothing, however great, which does not come to an end.'"

"Those are wise and pious thoughts," replied Folko, calmly, "and I will treasure them in my inmost heart."

The good Rolf spent frequently some time with Folko and Gabrielle, and seemed to form a connecting link between the two widely-differing parties in the castle. For how could he have ever forsaken his own Sintram! It was only in their wild hunting expeditions, when they had no regard to the storms and tempests which were raging, that he no longer was able to follow his young lord.

At length the icy reign of winter began in all its glory. The season was sufficient of itself to prevent a return to Normandy being thought of, and therefore the storm which had been raised by magical art, was lulled. The hills and valleys shone brilliantly in their white attire of snow, and Folko used sometimes, with skates on his feet, to draw

his lady in a light sledge over the glittering frozen lakes and streams. On the other hand, the bear-hunts of the lord of the castle and his son assumed a still more desperate and to them enjoyable aspect.

About this time,—when Christmas was drawing near, and Sintram was seeking to overpower his apprehensions of the fearful dreams which were wont to trouble him then, by the most daring expeditions,—about this time, Folko and Gabrielle chanced to be standing together on one of the terraces of the castle. The evening was mild; the snow-clad fields were glowing in the red light of the setting sun; from below there were heard men's voices singing songs of ancient heroic times, while they worked in the armorer's forge. At last the songs died away, the beating of hammers ceased, and without the speakers being visible, or there being any possibility of distinguishing them by their voices, the following discourse was distinctly heard:—

"Who is the bravest amongst all those whose race derives its origin from our renowned land?"

"It is Folko of Montfauçon."

"Rightly said; but, tell me, is there any

danger from which even this bold baron draws back?"

"In truth there is one thing,—and we who have never left Norway, face it quite willingly and joyfully."

"And that is?"

"A bear-hunt in winter, over trackless plains of snow, down frightful ice-covered precipices."

"Truly thou answerest aright, my comrade. He who knows not how to fasten our skates on his feet, how to turn in them to the right or left at a moment's warning, he may be a valiant knight in other respects, but he had better keep away from our hunting parties, and remain with his timid wife in her apartments." At which the speakers were heard to laugh as if well pleased, and then to betake themselves again to their armorers' work.

Folko stood long buried in thought. A glow beyond that of the evening sky reddened his cheek. Gabrielle also remained silent, revolving in her mind that for which she was unable to find words. At last she took courage, and embracing her beloved, she said: "To-morrow you will go forth to hunt the bear, will you not? and you will

bring the spoils of the chase to your lady?"

The knight gave a joyful sign of assent; and the rest of the evening was spent in dances and music.

CHAPTER XVII.

'SEE, my noble Lord," said Sintram the next morning, when Folko had expressed his wish of going out with him, "these skates of ours give such wings to our course that we go down the mountain side more swiftly than the wind, and even in going up again we are too quick for any one to be able to pursue us, and on the plains no horse can keep up with us, and yet they can only be worn with safety by those who are well practised. It seems as though some strange spirit dwelt in them, which is fearfully dangerous to any that have not learnt the management of them in their childhood."

Folko answered somewhat proudly: "Do you suppose that this is the first time that I have been amongst your mountains? Years ago I have joined in this sport, and, thank Heaven! there is no knightly exercise which does not speedily become familiar to me."

Sintram did not venture to make any fur-

ther objections, and still less did old Biorn. They both felt relieved when they saw with what skill and ease Folko buckled the skates on his feet, without suffering any one to assist him. This day they hunted up the mountain, in pursuit of a fierce bear which had often before escaped from them. Before long it was necessary that they should separate into different parties, and Sintram offered himself as companion to Folko, who, touched by the humble manner of the youth, and his devotion to him, forgot all that had disturbed him latterly in the pale, altered being before him, and agreed heartily to his proposal. As now they continued to climb higher and higher up the mountain, and saw from many a giddy height the rocks and crags below them looking like a vast expanse of sea suddenly turned into ice whilst tossed by a violent tempest, the noble Montfauçon drew his breath more freely. He poured forth war-songs and love-songs in the clear mountain air, and the startled echoes repeated from rock to rock the lays of his southern home. He sprang lightly from one precipice to another, making use skilfully of the staff with which he was furnished for support, and turning now to the right, now

to the left, as the fancy seized him, so that Sintram was fain to exchange his former anxiety for a wondering admiration, and the hunters, whose eyes had never been taken off the baron, burst forth with loud applause, proclaiming far and wide this fresh proof of his prowess.

The good fortune which usually accompanied Folko's deeds of arms, seemed still unwilling to leave him. After a short search, he and Sintram found distinct traces of the savage animal they were pursuing, and with beating hearts they followed the track so swiftly, that even a winged enemy would have been unable to escape from them. But the creature whom they sought did not attempt a flight—he lay sulkily ensconsced in a cavern near the top of a steep precipitous rock, infuriated by the shouts of the hunters, and only waiting in his lazy fury for some one to be bold enough to climb up to his retreat, that he might tear him to pieces. Folko and Sintram had now reached the foot of this rock, the rest of the hunters being dispersed over the far-extending plain. The track led the two companions up the rock, and they set about climbing on the opposite sides of it, that

they might be the more sure of not missing their prey. Folko reached the lonely topmost point first, and cast his eyes around. A wide, boundless tract of country, covered with untrodden snow, was spread before him, melting in the distance into the lowering clouds of the gloomy evening sky. He almost thought that he must have missed the traces of the fearful animal; when close beside him, from a cleft in the rock, issued a long growl, and a huge black bear appeared on the snow, standing on its hind legs, and with glaring eyes it advanced towards the baron. Sintram the while was struggling in vain to make his way up the rock against the masses of snow which were continually slipping down upon him.

Rejoicing in an adventure, such as he had not encountered for years, and which now appeared new to him, Folko of Montfauçon levelled his hunting spear, and awaited the attack of the wild beast. He suffered it to approach so near that its fearful claws were almost upon him; then he made a thrust, and the spear was buried deep in the bear's breast. But the furious beast still pressed on with a fierce growl, kept up on its hind legs by the cross iron of the spear, and the

knight was forced to use all his strength not to lose his footing and to resist the savage assault; and the whole time there was the grim face of the bear all covered with blood, close before him, and sounding in his ear was its deep savage growl, which told of its thirst for blood, even in the midst of its death-struggles. At length the bear's resistance grew weaker, and the dark blood streamed upon the snow; one powerful thrust hurled him backwards over the edge of the precipice. At the same instant, Sintram stood by the baron of Montfauçon. Folko said, drawing a deep breath: "But I have not yet the prize in my hands, and have it I must, since fortune has given me a claim to it. Look, one of my skates seems to be out of order. Do you think, Sintram, that it is in such a state as not to hinder me in sliding down to the foot of the precipice?"

"Let me go instead," said Sintram. "I will bring you the head and the claws of the bear."

"A true knight," replied Folko, with some displeasure, "never leaves his work to be finished by another. What I ask is, whether my skate is still fit for use?"

As Sintram bent down to look, and was

on the point of saying "No!" he suddenly heard a voice close to him, saying: "Why, yes! to be sure; there is no doubt about it."

Folko thought that Sintram had spoken, and darted off with the swiftness of an arrow, whilst his companion looked up in great surprise. The abhorred features of the Little Master met his eyes. As he was going to address him with angry words, he heard the sound of the baron's fearful fall down the precipice, and he stood still in silent horror. There was a breathless silence also in the abyss below.

"Now, why do you delay?" said the Little Master, after a pause. "He is dashed to pieces. Go back to the castle, and take the fair Helen to yourself."

Sintram shuddered. Then his detestable companion began to extol Gabrielle's charms in such glowing, deceiving words, that the heart of the youth swelled with a torrent of emotions he had never before known. He only thought of him who was now lying at the foot of the rock as of an obstacle removed from his way to Paradise; he turned towards the castle.

But a cry was heard below—"Help! help!

my comrade! I am yet alive but I am sorely wounded."

Sintram's will was changed, and he called to the baron, "I am coming."

But the Little Master said, "Nothing can be done to help king Menelaus; and the fair Helen knows it already. She is only waiting for knight Paris to comfort her." And with detestable craft he wove in that tale with what was actually happening, bringing in the most highly wrought praises of the lovely Gabrielle; and, alas! the blinded youth harkened to him, and fled away! Again he heard far off the baron's voice calling to him, "Knight Sintram! knight Sintram! you on whom I bestowed that noble order, haste to me and help me! The she-bear and her whelps will be upon me, and I cannot use my right arm! Knight Sintram! knight Sintram! haste to help me!"

His cries were overpowered by the furious speed with which the two were carried along on their skates, and by the evil words of the Little Master, who was mocking at the late proud bearing of king Menelaus towards the miserable Sintram. At last he shouted, "Good luck to you, she-bear! good luck to your whelps! There is a glorious meal for

you! Now you will destroy the fear of Heathendom, him at whose name the Moorish women weep, the mighty baron of Montfauçon. Never again, oh! dainty knight, will you shout at the head of your troops, 'Mountjoy St. Denys!'" But scarce had this holy name name passed the lips of the Little Master, than he set up a howl of anguish, writhing himself with horrible contortions, and wringing his hands, and he ended by disappearing in a storm of snow which then arose.

Sintram planted his staff firmly in the ground, and stopped. How strangely did the wide expanse of snow, the distant mountains rising above it, and the dark green fir woods—how strangely did they all look at him in cold reproachful silence! He felt as if he must sink under the weight of his sorrow and his guilt. The bell of a distant hermitage came floating sadly over the plain. With a burst of tears he exclaimed, as the darkness grew thicker around him, "My mother! my mother! I had once a beloved tender mother, and she said I was a good child!" A ray of comfort came to him as if brought on an angel's wing; perhaps Montfauçon was not yet dead! and he flew like

lightning along the path which led back to the steep rock. When he got to the fearful place, he stooped and looked anxiously down the precipice. The moon which had just risen in full majesty helped him with her light. The knight of Montfauçon, pale and covered with blood, was supporting himself on one knee, and leaning against the rock —his right arm, which had been crushed in his fall, hung powerless at his side; it was plain that he had not been able to draw his good sword out of the scabbard. But, nevertheless, he was keeping the bear and her young ones at bay by his bold threatening looks, so that they only crept round him, growling angrily; every moment ready for a fierce attack, but as often driven back affrighted at the majestic air by which he conquered even when defenceless.

"Oh! what a knight would here have perished!" groaned Sintram, "and through whose guilt?" At that instant his spear flew with so true an aim that the bear fell weltering in her blood; the young ones ran away howling.

The baron looked up with surprise. His countenance beamed, as the light of the moon fell upon it, with a grave and stern yet mild

expression, like some angelic vision. He made a sign to Sintram to come to him, and the youth slid down the side of the precipice full of anxious haste. He was going to attend to the wounded knight, but Folko said, "First cut off the head and claws of the bear which I slew. I promised to bring the spoils of the chase to my lovely Gabrielle. Then come to me, and bind up my wounds. My right arm is broken." Sintram obeyed the baron's commands. When the tokens of victory had been secured, and the broken arm bound up, Folko desired the youth to help him back to the castle.

"Oh Heavens!" said Sintram in a low voice, "if I dared to look in your face! or only knew how to come near you!"

"You were indeed going on in an evil course," said Montfauçon, gravely; "but how could we, any of us, stand before God, did we not bring repentance with us! Anyhow you have now saved my life, and let that thought cheer your heart."

The youth with tenderness and strength supported the baron's left arm, and they both went their way silently in the moonlight.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SOUNDS of wailing were heard from the castle as they approached, the chapel was solemnly lighted up; within it knelt Gabrielle, lamenting for the death of the knight of Montfauçon.

But how quickly was the scene changed, when the noble baron, pale indeed, and wounded, yet having escaped the dangers that beset his life, stood smiling at the entrance of the holy building, and said in a low, gentle voice, "Look up, Gabrielle, and be not affrighted; for by the honor of my race your knight still lives." Oh! with what joy did Gabrielle's eyes sparkle, as she turned to her knight and then raised them again to heaven; the tears which still streamed from them having now their source in the deep joy of thankfulness! With the help of two pages, Folko knelt down beside her, and they both offered up a silent prayer of thanksgiving for their present happiness.

When they all left the chapel, the wounded knight being tenderly supported by his

lady, Sintram was standing without in the darkness, himself as gloomy as the night, and like a bird of the night shunning the sight of man. Yet he came trembling forward into the torch-light, laid the bear's head and claws at the feet of Gabrielle, and said: "The noble Folko of Montfaucon presents the spoils of to-day's chase to his lady."

The Norwegians burst forth with shouts of joyful surprise at the stranger knight, who in the very first hunting expediton had slain the most fearful and dangerous beast of their mountains.

Then Folko looked around with a smile as he said: "And now none of you must jeer at me, if I stay at home for a short time with my timid wife."

Those who the day before had talked together in the armorer's forge, came out from the crowd, and bowing low, they replied: "Noble baron, who could have thought that there was no knightly exercise in the whole world, in which you would not show yourself far above all other men?"

"The pupil of old Sir Hugh may be somewhat trusted," answered Folko kindly. "But now, you bold northern warriors, bestow some praises also on my deliverer, who saved me

from the claws of the she-bear, when I was lying under the rock wounded by my fall."

He pointed to Sintram, and the general shout was again raised, and old Rolf, his eyes dim with tears of joy, bent his head over his foster-son's hand. But Sintram drew back shuddering.

"Did you but know," he said, "whom you see before you, all your spears would be aimed at my heart; and perhaps that would be the best thing that could befall me. But I spare the honor of my father and of his race, and for this time I will not make a confession. Only this much must you hear, noble warriors."

"Young man," interrupted Folko, with a reproving look, "already again so wild and fierce? I desire that you will hold your peace about your dreaming fancies."

Sintram was silent for a moment, but hardly had Folko begun to move towards the steps of the castle, than he cried out: "Oh no, no, noble wounded knight, stay yet awhile; I will serve you in every thing that your heart can desire; but this once I cannot obey you. Brave warriors, you must and shall know so much as this: I am no longer worthy to live under the same roof

with the noble baron of Montfauçon and his angelic lady Gabrielle. And you, my aged father, farewell: take no further heed of me. I intend to live in the stone fortress on the Rocks of the Moon, until a change of some kind comes over me."

There was that in his way of speaking against which no one dared to urge any opposition, not even Folko himself.

The wild Biorn bowed his head humbly, and said: "Do according to your pleasure, my poor son; for I much fear that you are right."

Then Sintram walked solemnly and silently through the castle gate, followed by the good Rolf. Gabrielle led her exhausted lord up to their apartments.

CHAPTER XIX.

THAT was a mournful journey on which the youth and his aged foster-father went towards the Rocks of the Moon, through the wild tangled paths of the snow-covered valleys. Rolf from time to time sang some verses of hymns, in which comfort and peace were promised to the penitent sinner, and Sintram thanked him for them with looks of grateful sadness. Otherwise neither of them spoke a word.

At length, when the dawn of day was approaching, Sintram broke silence by saying: "Who are those two, sitting yonder by the frozen stream? A tall man, and a little one. Their own wild hearts must have driven them also forth into the wilderness. Rolf, do you know them? The sight of them makes me shudder."

"Sir," answered the old man, "your disturbed mind deceives you. Where you are looking, there stands a lofty fir-tree, and the old weather-beaten stump of an oak, half-covered with snow, which gives them a

somewhat strange appearance. There are no men sitting yonder."

"But, Rolf, look there! Look again carefully! Now they move, they whisper together."

"Sir, the morning breeze moves the branches, and whistles in the sharp pine-leaves, and in the yellow oak-leaves, and rustles the crisp snow."

"Rolf, now they are both coming towards us. Now they are standing before us; they are quite close."

"Sir, it is we who get nearer to them as we walk on, and the setting moon throws such long giant-like shadows over the plain."

"Good evening!" said a hollow voice, and Sintram knew it was the crazy pilgrim, near to whom stood the malignant dwarf, looking more hideous than ever.

"You are right, sir knight," whispered Rolf, as he drew back behind Sintram, and made the sign of the Cross on his breast and forehead.

The bewildered youth, however, advanced towards the two figures, and said: "You have always taken wonderful pleasure in being my companions. What do you expect will come of it? And do you choose to

go now with me to the stone fortress? There I will tend you, poor pale pilgrim; and as to you, frightful Master, most evil dwarf, I will make you shorter by the head, to reward you for your deeds yesterday."

"That would be a fine thing," sneered the Little Master; "and perhaps you imagine that you would be doing a great service to the whole world?" And indeed who knows? Something might be gained by it! Only, poor wretch, you cannot do it."

The pilgrim meantime was waving his pale head to and fro thoughtfully, saying: "I believe truly that you would willingly have me, and I would go to you willingly, but I may not yet. Have patience awhile; you will yet surely see me come, but at a distant time; and, first, we must again visit your father together, and then also you will learn to call me by my right name, my poor friend."

"Beware of disappointing me again!" said Little Master to the pilgrim in a threatening voice; but he, pointing with his long, shrivelled hand towards the sun, which was just now rising, said: "Stop either that sun or me, if you can!"

Then the first rays fell on the snow, and

Little Master ran down a precipice, scolding as he went; but the pilgrim walked on in the bright beams, calmly and with great solemnity, towards a neighboring castle on the mountain. It was not long before its chapel bell was heard tolling for the dead.

"For Heaven's sake," whispered the good Rolf to his knight, "for Heaven's sake, Sir Sintram, what kind of companions have you here? One of them cannot bear the light of God's blessed sun, and the other has no sooner set a foot in a dwelling than the passing-bell is heard from thence. Could he have been a murderer?"

"I do not think that," said Sintram. "He seemed to me the best of the two. But it is a strange wilfulness of his not to come with me. Did I not invite him kindly? I believe that he can sing well, and he should have sung to me some gentle lullaby. Since my mother has lived in a cloister, no one sings lullabies to me any more."

At this tender recollection his eyes were bedewed with tears. But he did not himself know what he had said besides, for there was wildness and confusion in his spirit. They arrived at the Rocks of the Moon,

they mounted up to the stone fortress. The castellan, an old, gloomy man, who was all the more devoted to the young knight from his dark melancholy and wild deeds, hastened to lower the drawbridge. Greetings were exchanged in silence, and in silence did Sintram enter, and those joyless gates closed with a crash behind the future recluse.

CHAPTER XX.

YES, truly, a recluse, or at least something like it, did poor Sintram now become! For towards the time of the approaching Christmas Festival his fearful dreams came over him, and seized him so fiercely, that all the esquires and servants fled with shrieks out of the castle, and would never venture back again. No one remained with him except Rolf and the old castellan. After awhile, indeed, Sintram became calm, but he went about looking so pallid and subdued, that he might have been taken for a wandering corpse. No comforting of the good Rolf, no devout soothing lays, were of any avail; and the castellan, with his fierce, scarred features, his head almost entirely bald from a huge sword-cut, his stubborn silence, seemed like a yet darker shadow of the miserable knight. Rolf often thought of going to summon the holy chaplain of Drontheim, but how could he have left his lord alone with the gloomy castellan, a man who at all times raised in

him a secret horror. Biorn had long had this wild strange warrior in his service, and honored him on account of his unshaken fidelity and his fearless courage, without the knight or any one else knowing whence the castellan came, or indeed exactly who he was. Very few people knew by what name to call him, but that was the more needless since he never entered into discourse with any one. He was the castellan of the stone fortress on the Rocks of the Moon, and nothing more.

Rolf committed his deep heartfelt cares to the merciful God, trusting that he would soon come to his aid, and the merciful God did not fail him. For on Christmas eve the bell at the drawbridge sounded, and Rolf, looking over the battlements, saw the chaplain of Drontheim standing there, with a companion indeed that surprised him,—for close beside him appeared the crazy pilgrim, and the dead men's bones on his dark mantle shone very strangely in the glimmering starlight; but the sight of the chaplain filled the good Rolf too full of joy to leave room for any doubt in his mind—for, thought he, whoever comes with *him*, cannot but be welcome! And so he let them

both in with respectful haste, and ushered them up to the hall where Sintram, pale and with a fixed look, was sitting under the light of one flickering lamp. Rolf was obliged to support and assist the crazy pilgrim up the stairs, for he was quite benumbed with cold.

"I bring you a greeting from your mother," said the chaplain, as he came in, and immediately a sweet smile passed over the young knight's countenance, and its deadly pallidness gave place to a bright, soft glow.

"Oh Heaven!" murmured he, "does then my mother yet live, and does she care to know any thing about me?"

"She is endowed with wonderful presentiment of the future," replied the chaplain, "and all that you ought either to do or to leave undone is pictured in various ways in her mind, during a half-waking trance, but with most faithful exactness. Now she knows of your deep sorrow, and she sends me, the Father Confessor of her convent, to comfort you, but at the same time to warn you, for, as she affirms, and as I am also inclined to think, many strange and heavy trials lie before you."

Sintram bowed himself towards the chaplain with his arms crossed over his breast,

and said with a gentle smile: "Much have I been favored, more, a thousand times more, than I could have dared to hope in my best hours, by this greeting from my mother, and your visit, reverend sir; and all after falling more fearfully low than I had ever fallen before. The mercy of the Lord is great, and how heavy soever may be the weight and punishment which he may send, I trust with His grace to be able to bear it."

Just then the door opened, and the castellan came in with a torch in his hand, the red glare of which made his face look the color of blood. He cast a terrified glance at the crazy pilgrim, who had just sunk back in a swoon, and was supported on his seat and tended by Rolf; then he stared with astonishment at the chaplain, and at last murmured: "A strange meeting! I believe that the hour for confession and reconciliation is now arrived."

"I believe so, too," replied the priest, who had heard his low whisper; "this seems to be truly a day rich in grace and peace. That poor man yonder, whom I found half frozen by the way, would make a full confession to me at once, before he followed me to a place of shelter. Do as he has done, my dark-

browed warrior, and delay not your good purpose for one instant."

Thereupon he left the room with the castellan, who gave a sign of compliance, but he turned back to say: "Sir knight, and your esquire! take good care the while of my sick charge."

Sintram and Rolf did according to the chaplain's desire, and when at length their cordials made the pilgrim open his eyes once again, the young knight said to him with a friendly smile: "Do you see? you are come to visit me after all. Why did you refuse me when a few nights ago I asked you so earnestly to come? Perhaps I may have spoken wildly and hastily. Did that scare you away?"

A sudden expression of fear came over the pilgrim's countenance, but soon he again looked up at Sintram with an air of gentle humility, saying: "Oh my dear lord, I am most entirely devoted to you—only never speak to me of former passages between you and me. I am terrified whenever you do it. For, my lord, either I am mad and have forgotten all that is past, or that being has met you in the wood, whom I look upon as my all-powerful twin-brother."

Sintram laid his hand gently on the pilgrim's mouth, as he answered: "Say nothing more about that matter. I most willingly promise to be silent."

Neither he nor Rolf could understand what appeared to them so awful in the whole matter; but both shuddered.

After a short pause, the pilgrim said: "I would rather sing you a song, a soft, comforting song. Have you not a lute here?"

Rolf fetched one, and the pilgrim, half-raising himself on the couch, sang the following words:

"When death is coming near,
When thy heart shrinks in fear,
And thy limbs fail,
Then raise thy hands and pray
To him who smooths thy way
Through the dark vale.

Seest thou the eastern dawn,
Hear'st thou in the red morn
The angel's song?
O lift thy drooping head,
Thou who in gloom and dread
Hast lain so long.

Death comes to set thee free,
O meet him cheerily
As thy true friend,

And all thy fears shall cease,
And in eternal peace
Thy penance end."

"Amen," said Sintram and Rolf, folding their hands; and whilst the last chords of the lute still resounded, the chaplain and the castellan came slowly and gently into the room. "I bring a precious Christmas gift," said the priest. "After many sad years, hope of reconciliation and peace of conscience are returning to a noble, but long disturbed mind. This concerns you, beloved pilgrim; and do you, my Sintram, with a joyful trust in God, take encouragement and example from it."

"More than twenty years ago," began the castellan, at a sign from the chaplain, "more than twenty years ago I was a stout and active herdsman, and I drove my flock up the mountains. A young knight followed me, whom they called Weigand the Slender. He wanted to buy of me my favorite little lamb for his fair bride, and offered me much red gold for it. I sturdily refused. The over-boldness of youth carried us both away. A stroke of his sword hurled me senseless down the precipice."

"Not killed?" asked the pilgrim, in a scarcely audible voice.

"I am no ghost," replied the castellan, somewhat morosely; and then, after an earnest look from the priest, he continued, more humbly: "I recovered slowly and in solitude, with the help of remedies which were easily found by me, a herdsman, in our productive valleys. When I came back into the world, no man knew me with my scarred face, and my head which had become bald. I heard a report going through the country, that, on account of this deed of his, Sir Weigand the Slender had been rejected by his fair betrothed Verena, and how he had pined away, and she had wished to retire into a convent, but her father had persuaded her to marry the great knight Biorn. Then there came a fearful thirst for vengeance into my heart, and I disowned my name and my kindred, and my home, and entered the service of the mighty Biorn as a strange wild man, in order that Weigand the Slender should always be deemed a murderer, and that I might feed on his anguish. So have I fed upon it for all these long years. I have reveled frightfully in his self-imposed banishment, in his cheerless return home, in

his madness. But to-day"—and hot tears gushed from his eyes—"but to-day God has broken the hardness of my heart; and dear Sir Weigand, look upon yourself no more as a murderer, and say that you will forgive me, and pray for him who has done you so fearful an injury, and"—sobs choked his words. He fell at the feet of the pilgrim, who with tears of joy pressed him to his heart, in token of forgiveness.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE joy of the hour passed from its first overpowering brightness, to the calm, thoughtful aspect of daily life, and Weigand, now restored to health, laid aside the mantle with dead men's bones, saying: "I had chosen for my penance to carry these fearful remains about me, in the idea that perhaps some of them might have belonged to him whom I have murdered. Therefore I used to search for them round about in the deep beds of the mountain torrents, and in the high nests of the eagles and vultures. And while I was searching, I sometimes—could it have been only an illusion?—I seemed to meet a being who was very like myself, but far, far more powerful, and yet still paler and more haggard."—An imploring look from Sintram stopped the flow of his words. With a gentle smile, Weigand bowed towards him, and said: "You know now all the deep, unutterably deep sorrow which prayed upon me. My fear of you, and my yearning love

for you, are no longer without explanation to your kind heart. For, dear youth, though you may be like your fearful father, you have also the kind gentle heart of your mother, and its reflection brightens your pallid, stern features, like the glow of a morning sky which lights up ice-covered mountains and valleys. But alas! how long have you lived alone even amidst your fellow-creatures! And how long is it since you have seen your mother, my dearly-loved Sintram?"

"I feel, too, as though a spring were gushing up in the barren wilderness of my heart," replied the youth; "and I should perchance be altogether restored, could I but keep you long with me, and weep with you, dear friend. But I have that within me which says that you will very soon be taken from me."

"I believe, indeed," said the pilgrim, "that my song the other day was very nearly my last, and that it contained a prediction full soon to be accomplished in me. But, as the soul of man is always like the thirsty ground, the more blessings God has bestowed on us, the more earnestly do we look out for new ones, so would I crave for one more ere my life closes, as I would fain hope, in happi-

ness. Yet indeed it cannot be granted me," added he with a faltering voice, "for I feel myself too utterly unworthy of such high grace."

"But it will be granted!" said the chaplain joyfully. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and I fear not to take him who is now cleared from the stain of murder, to receive a farewell from the holy and forgiving countenance of Verena."

The pilgrim stretched both his hands up towards Heaven, and an unspoken thanksgiving seemed to pour from his beaming eyes, and to brighten the smile that played on his lips.

Sintram looked sorrowfully on the ground, and sighed gently to himself: "Alas! happy he who dared go also!"

"My poor, good Sintram," said the chaplain in a tone of the softest kindness, "I understand you well, but the time is not yet come. The powers of Evil will again raise up their wrathful heads within you, and Verena must check both her own and your longing desires, until all is pure in your spirit as in hers. Comfort yourself with the thought that God looks mercifully upon you, and that

the joy so earnestly sought for, will not fail to come—if not here, most assuredly beyond the grave."

But the pilgrim, as though awaking out of a trance, rose with energy from his seat, and said: "Do you please to come forth with me, reverend chaplain? Before the sun appears in the heavens, we could reach the convent-gates, and I should not be far from Heaven."

In vain did the chaplain and Rolf remind him of his weakness: he smiled, and said that there could be no question about it, and he girded himself, and tuned the lute which he had asked leave to take with him. His decided manner overcame all opposition, almost without words: and the chaplain had already prepared himself for the journey, when the pilgrim looked with much emotion at Sintram, who, oppressed with a strange weariness, had sunk half asleep on a couch, and he said: "Wait a moment. I know that he wants me to give him a soft lullaby." The pleased smile of the youth seemed to say yes, and the pilgrim, touching the strings with a light hand, sang these words:—

"Sleep peacefully, dear boy,
Thy mother sends the song
That whispers round thy couch,
To lull thee all night long.
In silence and afar,
For thee she ever prays,
And longs once more in fondness
Upon thy face to gaze.

And when thy waking cometh,
Then in thy every deed,
In all that may betide thee,
Unto her words give heed.
O listen for her voice,
If it be yea or nay,
And though temptation meet thee,
Thou shalt not miss the way.

If thou canst listen rightly,
And nobly onward go,
Then pure and gentle breezes
Around thy cheeks shall blow.
Then on thy peaceful journey
Her blessing thou shalt feel,
And though from thee divided,
Her presence o'er thee steal.

O safest, sweetest comfort!
O blest and living light!
That strong in Heaven's power
All terrors put to flight!
Rest quietly, sweet child,
And may the gentle numbers
Thy mother sends to thee
Waft peace unto thy slumbers."

Sintram fell into a deep sleep, smiling and breathing softly. Rolf and the castellan remained by his bed, whilst the two travellers pursued their way in the quiet starlight.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE dawn had almost appeared, when Rolf, who had been asleep, was awoke by low singing; and as he looked round, he perceived with surprise that the sounds came from the lips of the castellan, who said, as if in explanation: "So does Sir Weigand sing at the convent-gates, and they are kindly opened to him." Upon which old Rolf fell asleep again, uncertain whether what had passed had been a dream or a reality. After awhile the bright sunshine awoke him again, and when he rose up he saw the countenance of the castellan wonderfully illuminated by the red light of the morning sun, and altogether those features, once so fearful, were shining with a soft, nay, almost child-like mildness of expression. The mysterious man seemed to be the while listening to the motionless air, as if he were hearing a most pleasant discourse; and as Rolf was about to speak he made him a sign of entreaty to remain quiet, and he continued in his eager, listening attitude.

At length he sank slowly and contentedly back in his seat, whispering: "God be praised! She has granted his last prayer; he will be laid in the burial-ground of the convent, and now he has forgiven me from the bottom of his heart. I can assure you that he is having a peaceful end."

Rolf did not dare ask a question, or awake his lord; he felt as if one already departed had spoken to him.

The castellan remained still for a long space of time, always with a bright smile on his face. At last he raised himself up a little, again listened, and said: "It is over. The sound of the bells is very sweet. We have overcome. Oh! how soft and easy does the good God make it to us!" And so it came to pass. He stretched himself back as if weary, and his soul was freed from his care-worn body.

Rolf now gently awoke his young knight, and pointed to the smiling face of the dead. And Sintram smiled too; he and his good esquire fell on their knees and prayed to God for the departed spirit. Then they rose up, and bore the cold body to the vaulted hall, and watched by it with holy candles until the return of the chaplain. That the pilgrim

would not come back again, they very well knew.

Towards mid-day, accordingly, the chaplain returned alone. He could scarcely do more than confirm what was already known to them. He only added a comforting and hopeful greeting from Sintram's mother to her son, and told that the blissful Weigand had fallen asleep like a tired child, whilst Verena with calm tenderness held a crucifix before him.

"And in eternal peace our penance end!"

sang Sintram gently to himself, and they prepared a last resting-place for the now so peaceful castellan, and laid him therein with all the due solemn rites.

The chaplain was obliged soon afterwards to depart, but when bidding Sintram farewell, he again said kindly to him, "Your dear mother knows assuredly how gentle and calm and good you are now become!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN the castle of Sir Biorn of the Fiery Eyes, Christmas eve had not passed so brightly and happily, but yet there too all had gone visibly according to God's will.

Folko, at the entreaty of the lord of the castle, had allowed Gabrielle to support him into the hall, and the three now sat at the round stone-table whereon a sumptuous meal was laid. On either side, there were long tables, at which sat the retainers of both knights, in full armor, according to the custom of the north. Torches and lamps lighted the lofty hall with an almost dazzling brightness.

The deepest shades of night had now gathered around, and Gabrielle softly reminded her wounded knight to withdraw. Biorn heard her and said, "You are right, fair lady, our knight needs rest. Only let us first keep up one more old honorable custom."

And at his sign four attendants brought in with pomp a great boar's head, which looked

as if cut out of solid gold, and placed it in the middle of the stone-table. Biorn's retainers rose with reverence, and took off their helmets; Biorn himself did the same.

"What means this?" asked Folko very gravely.

"What your forefathers and mine have done on every Yule Feast," answered Biorn. "We are going to make vows on the boar's head, and then pass the goblet round to their fulfilment."

"We no longer keep what our ancestors called the Yule Feast," said Folko; "we are good Christians, and we keep holy Christmas-tide."

"We may observe the one without leaving off the other," answered Biorn. "I hold my ancestors too dear to forget their knightly customs. Those who think otherwise may act according to their wisdom, but that shall not hinder me. I swear by the golden boar's-head"——And he stretched out his hand towards it.

But Folko called out, "In the Name of our Holy Saviour, forbear. Where I am, and still have breath and will, none celebrate the rites of the wild heathens."

Biorn of the Fiery Eyes glared angrily at

him. The men of the two barons separated from each other, with a hollow sound of rattling armor, and ranged themselves in two bodies on either side of the hall, each behind its leader. Already here and there helmets were fastened and visors closed.

"Bethink thee yet what thou art doing," said Biorn. "I was about to vow an eternal union with the house of Montfauçon, nay, even to bind myself to do it grateful homage, but if thou disturbest me in the customs which have come to me from my forefathers, look to thy safety, and the safety of all that is dear to thee. My wrath no longer knows any bounds."

Folko made a sign to the pale Gabrielle to retire behind his followers, saying to her: "Be of good cheer, my noble wife, weaker Christians have borne, for the sake of God and of His holy Church, greater dangers than now seem to threaten us. Believe me, the lord of Montfauçon is not so easily overcome."

Gabrielle obeyed, something comforted by Folko's fearless smile, but this smile inflamed yet more the fury of Biorn. He again stretched out his hand towards the boar's head, as if about to make some dreadful

vow, when Folko snatched a gauntlet of Biorn's off the table, with which he, with his unwounded left arm, struck such a powerful blow on the gilt idol that it fell crashing to the ground, shivered to pieces. Biorn and his followers stood as if turned to stone But soon swords were grasped by armed hands, shields were taken down from the walls, and an angry threatening murmur sounded through the hall.

At a sign from Folko, one of his faithful retainers brought him a battle-axe; he swung it high in the air with his powerful left hand, and he stood looking like an avenging angel as he spoke these words through the tumult with awful calmness: "What seek ye, O ye deluded Northmen? What wouldst thou, sinful lord? You are indeed become heathens, and I hope to show you that it is not in my right arm alone that God has put strength for victory. But if you can yet hear, listen to my words. Biorn, on this same accursed, and now, by God's help, shivered boar's head, thou didst lay thy hand when thou didst swear to sacrifice any inhabitants of the German towns that should fall into thy power. And Gotthard Lenz came, and Rudlieb came, driven on these

shores by the storm. What didst thou then do, savage Biorn? What did you do at his bidding you who were keeping the Yule-feast with him? Try your fortune on me. The Lord will be with me as he was with those holy men. To arms! and—(he turned to his warriors)—let our battle-cry be Gotthard and Rudlieb!"

Then Biorn let drop his drawn sword; then his followers paused, and none among the Norwegians dared lift his eyes from the ground. By degrees they one by one began to disappear from the hall; and at last Biorn stood quite alone opposite to the baron and his followers. He seemed hardly aware that he had been deserted, but he fell on his knees, stretched out his shining sword, pointed to the broken boar's head, and said, "Do with me as you have done with that; I deserve no better. I ask but one favor, only one; do not disgrace me, noble baron, by seeking shelter in another castle while you remain in Norway."

"I do not fear you," answered Folko, after some thought, "and as far as may be, I freely forgive you." Then he drew the sign of the Cross over the wild form of Biorn, and left the hall with Gabrielle. The retainers of the

house of Montfauçon followed him proudly and silently.

The high spirit of the fierce lord of the castle was now quite broken, and he watched with increased humility every look of Folko and Gabrielle. But they withdrew more and more into the happy solitude of their own apartments, where they enjoyed in the midst of the sharp winter a bright springtide of love and happiness. The wounded condition of Folko did not hinder the evening delights of songs and music and poetry—but rather a new charm was added to them when the tall, handsome knight leant on the arm of his delicate lady, and they thus, changing as it were their deportment and duties, walked slowly through the torch-lit halls, scattering their kindly greetings like flowers among the crowds of men and women.

All this time little or nothing was heard of poor Sintram. The last wild outbreak of his father had increased the terror with which Gabrielle remembered the self-accusations of the youth; and the more resolutely Folko kept silence, the more did she fear that some dreadful mystery lay beneath. Indeed a secret shudder came over the knight when he thought on the pale, dark-haired youth.

Sintram's repentance had bordered on settled despair; no one knew even what he was doing in the fortress of Evil-Report on the Rocks of the Moon. Strange rumors were brought by the retainers who had fled from it, that the Evil Spirit had obtained complete power over Sintram, that no man could stay with him, and that the fidelity of the dark and mysterious castellan had cost him his life.

Folko could hardly drive away the fearful imagination that the lonely young knight was become a wicked magician.

And perhaps indeed evil spirits did flit about the banished Sintram, but it was without his calling them up. In his dreams he often saw the wicked enchantress Venus, in her golden chariot drawn by winged cats, pass over the battlements of the stone fortress, and heard her say, mocking him: "Foolish Sintram, foolish Sintram, hadst thou but listened to the Little Master's words! Thou wouldst now be in Helen's arms, and the Rocks of the Moon would be called the Rocks of Love, and the stone fortress would be the garden of roses. Thou wouldst have lost thy pale face and black tangled hair,—for thou art only enchanted, dear youth,—

and thine eyes would have beamed more softly, and thy cheeks bloomed more freshly, and thy hair would have been more golden than that of prince Paris, when men wondered at his beauty. Oh! how Helen would have loved thee!" Then she showed him, in a mirror, his own figure kneeling before Gabrielle, who sank into his arms blushing as the morning. When he awoke from such dreams, he would seize in eager haste the sword and scarf which his lady had given him, as a shipwrecked man seizes the plank which is to save him, and while the hot tears fell upon it, he would murmur to himself: "There was indeed one hour in my sad life when I was happy, and deserved it."

Once he sprang up at midnight, after one of these dreams, only this time with a more thrilling horror than usual; for it had seemed to him that the features of the Enchantress Venus had changed towards the end of her speech, as she looked down upon him with marvelous scorn, and she appeared to him almost to assume those of the hideous Little Master. The youth had no better means of calming his distracted mind than to throw the sword and scarf of Gabrielle over his shoulders, and to hasten forth under the sol-

emn starry canopy of the wintry sky. He walked in deep thought backwards and forwards under the leafless oaks, and the snow-laden firs, which grew on the high ramparts.

Then he heard a sorrowful cry of distress sound from the moat; it was as if some one were attempting to sing, but was stopped by excess of grief. Sintram exclaimed, "Who's there?" and all was still. When he was silent and again began his walk, the frightful groanings and moanings were heard afresh, as if they came from a dying person. Sintram overcame the horror which seemed to hold him back, and began in silence to climb down into the deep dry moat, which was cut in the rock. He was soon so low down that he could no longer see the stars shining; he saw a shrouded form move beneath him,—and sliding rapidly down the remainder of the steep descent, he stood near the groaning figure; it ceased its lamentations, and began to laugh like a maniac from beneath its long folded female garments.

"Oh, ho, my comrade! Oh, ho, my comrade! You are now going a little too fast: well, well, it is all right: and see now, you stand no higher than I, my pious valiant

youth! Take it patiently,—take it patiently!"

"What do you want with me? Why do you laugh? why do you weep?" asked Sintram impatiently.

"I might ask you the same question," answered the dark figure, "and you would be less able to answer me, than I to answer you. Why do you laugh? why do you weep?—Poor creature! But I will show you a remarkable thing in your fortress, of which you know nothing. Give heed!"

And the shrouded figure began to scratch and scrape at the stones till a little iron door opened, and showed a long passage which led into the deep darkness.

"Will you come with me?" whispered the strange being: "it is the shortest way to your father's castle. In half an hour we shall come out of this passage, and we shall be in your beauteous lady's apartment. King Menelaus shall lie in a magic sleep,—leave that to me,—and then you will take the slight delicate form in your arms, and you will bring her to the Rocks of the Moon; so you will recover all that you lost by your former wavering."

Then Sintram might have been seen to

stagger. He was shaken to and fro by the fever of passion and the stings of conscience; but at last pressing the sword and scarf to his heart, he cried out: "Oh! that fairest most glorious hour of my life! If I lose all other joys, I will hold fast that brightest hour!"

"A bright, glorious hour!" said the figure from under its veil, like an evil echo. "Do you know whom you then conquered? A good old friend, who only showed himself so sturdy in order to give you the glory of overcoming him. Will you convince yourself? Will you look?"

The dark garments of the little figure flew open, and Sintram saw the dwarf warrior in strange armor with the gold horn on his helmet, and the curved spear in his hand; the very same whom Sintram thought he had slain on Niflung's Heath, now stood before him, and grinned as he said: "You see, my friend, everything in the wide world is made up of dreams and froth; wherefore hold fast the dream which delights you, and sip up the froth which refreshes you? Hasten to that underground passage, it leads up to your angel Helen. Or would you first know your friend yet better?"

His visor opened, and the hateful face of the Little Master glared upon the knight. Sintram asked, as if in a dream: "Art thou also that wicked enchantress Venus?"

"Something like her," answered the Little Master, laughing, "or rather she is something like me. And if you will only get disenchanted, and recover the beauty of prince Paris,—then, O prince Paris," and his voice changed to an alluring song, "then, O prince Paris, I shall be fair like you!"

At this moment the good Rolf appeared above on the rampart; a consecrated taper in his lantern shone down into the moat, as he sought for the young knight. "In God's name, Sir Sintram," he called out, "what have you to do there with the spectre of him whom you slew on Niflung's Heath, and whom I never could bury?"

"Do you see? do you hear?" whispered the Little Master, and drew back into the darkness of the underground passage. "The wise man up there knows me well. You see your heroic feat came to nothing. Come, take the joys of life while you may!"

But Sintram sprang back with a strong effort into the circle of light made by the shining of the taper from above, and cried

out: "Depart from me, unquiet spirit! I know well that I bear a name on me, in which thou canst have no part."

Little Master rushed, in fear and rage, into the passage, and, yelling, shut the iron door behind him. It seemed as if he could be still heard groaning and roaring.

Sintram climbed up the wall of the moat, and made a sign to his foster-father not to speak to him—he only said: "One of my best joys, yes, the very best, has been taken from me—but by God's help, I am not yet wholly lost."

In the earliest light of the following morning he and Rolf stopped up the entrance to the perilous passage with huge blocks of stone.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE long northern winter was at last ended; the fresh, green leaves rustled merrily in the woods, patches of soft moss appeared amongst the rocks, the valleys were clothed with grass, the brooks sparkled, the snow melted from all but the highest mountain-tops, and the bark which was ready to carry away Folko and Gabrielle danced on the sunny waves. The baron, who was now quite recovered, and strong and fresh as though his health had sustained no injury, stood one morning on the shore with his fair lady, and, full of glee at the prospect of returning to their home, the noble pair looked on with satisfaction at their attendants, who were busied in the ship with preparations for the voyage.

Then said one of them, in the midst of a confused sound of talking: "But what has appeared to me the most fearful and the most strange thing in this northern land, is the stone fortress on the Rocks of the Moon: I have never indeed been inside it, but when

I used to see it in our huntings, towering above the tall fir-trees, there came a tightness over my breast, as if some unearthly beings were dwelling in it. And a few weeks ago, when the snow was yet lying hard in the valleys, I came unawares quite close upon the strange building. The young knight Sintram was walking alone on the ramparts as the shades of twilight stole on, like the spirit of a departed knight, and he drew from the lute which he carried such soft melancholy tones, and he sighed so deeply and sorrowfully—"

The voice of the speaker was drowned in the noise of the crowd, and as he also just then reached the ship with his package, which had been hastily fastened up, Folko and Gabrielle could not hear the rest of his speech. But the fair lady looked on her knight with eyes dim with tears, and sighed: "Is it not behind those mountains that the Rocks of the Moon lie? The unhappy Sintram makes me sad at heart."

"I understand you, sweet gracious lady, and the pure compassion which fills your heart," replied Folko, and instantly ordered his swift-footed steed to be brought. He placed his noble lady under the charge of

his retainers, and leaping into the saddle, he pursued his way, followed by the grateful smiles of Gabrielle, along the valley which led towards the stone fortress.

Sintram was seated near the drawbridge touching the strings of the lute, and shed ding some tears on the golden chords, almost exactly as Montfaucon's esquires had described him. Suddenly a cloudy shadow passed over him, and he looked up, expecting to see a flight of cranes in the air; but the sky was clear and blue. While the young knight was still wondering, a long bright spear fell at his feet from a battlement of the armory turret. "Take it up,—make good use of it! your foe is near at hand! Near also is the downfall of your cherished hopes of happiness!" Thus he heard it distinctly whispered in his ear; and it seemed to him that he saw the shadow of the Little Master glide close by him to a neighboring cleft in the rock. But at the same time, also, a tall, gigantic, haggard figure passed along the valley, in some measure like the departed pilgrim, only much, very much larger; and he raised his long, bony arm with an awfully threatening air, then disappeared in an ancient tomb.

At the very same instant Sir Folko of Montfauçon came swiftly as the wind up the Rocks of the Moon, and he must have seen something of those strange apparitions; for, as he stopped close behind Sintram, he looked rather pale, and he asked low and earnestly: "Sir knight, who are those two with whom you were just now holding converse here?"

"The good God knows," answered Sintram. "I know them not."

"If the good God does but know!" cried Montfauçon. "But I fear me that he knows you not, nor your deeds."

"You speak strangely harsh words," said Sintram. "Yet ever since that evening of misery—alas! and even long before—I have no right to complain of any thing you may say or do. Dear sir, you may believe me, I know not those fearful companions; I call them not; and I know not what terrible curse it is which binds them to my footsteps. The merciful God, as I would hope, is mindful of me the while, as a faithful shepherd does not forget even the worst and most widely-strayed of his flock, but calls after it with an anxious voice in the gloomy wilderness."

Then the anger of the baron was quite melted. The tears stood in his eyes, and he said: "No, assuredly, God has not forgotten you; only do you not forget your gracious God. I did not come to rebuke you—I came to bless you in Gabrielle's name and in my own. The Lord preserve you, the Lord guide you, the Lord lift you up. And, Sintram, on the far-off shores of Normandy I shall bear you in mind, and I shall hear how you struggle against the curse which darkens your unhappy life; and if you ever obtain the victory over it, and overcome in the evil day, then you shall receive from me a token of love and reward, more precious than either you or I can understand at this moment."

The words flowed prophetically from the baron's lips; he himself was only half-conscious of what he said. With a kind salutation he turned his noble steed, and again flew down the valley towards the sea shore.

"Fool, fool, thrice a fool!" whispered the angry voice of the Little Master in Sintram's ear; but old Rolf was singing his morning hymn in clear tones within the castle, and the last lines were these:

"Whom worldlings scorn,
Who lives forlorn,
On God's own word doth rest;
With heavenly light
His path is bright,
His lot among the blest."

Then a holy joy took possession of Sintram's heart; and he looked around him yet more gladly than in the hour when Gabrielle gave him the scarf and sword, and Folko dubbed him knight.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE baron and his lovely lady were sailing across the broad sea with favoring gales of spring,—nay, the coast of Normandy had already appeared above the waves,—but still was Biorn of the Fiery Eyes sitting gloomy and speechless in his castle. He had taken no leave of his guests. There was more of proud fear of Montfauçon, than of reverential love for him in his soul, especially since the adventure with the boar's head; and the thought was bitter to his haughty spirit, that the great baron, the flower and glory of their whole race, should have come in peace to visit him, and should now be departing in displeasure, in stern reproachful displeasure. He had constantly before his mind, and it never failed to bring fresh pangs, the remembrance of how all had come to pass, and how all might have gone otherwise; and he was always fancying he could hear the songs in which after-generations would recount this voyage of the great Folko, and the worthlessness of the savage Biorn.

At length, full of fierce anger, he cast away the fetters of his troubled spirit, he burst out of the castle with his horsemen, and began to carry on a warfare more fearful and more lawless than any in which he had yet been engaged.

Sintram heard the sound of his father's war-horn, and committing the stone fortress to old Rolf, he sprang forth ready armed for the combat. But the flames of the cottages and farms on the mountains rose up before him, and showed him, written as if in characters of fire, what kind of war his father was waging. Yet he went on towards the spot where the army was mustered, but only to offer his mediation, affirming that he would not lay hand on his good sword in so abhorred a service, even though the stone fortress, and his father's castle besides, should fall before the vengeance of their enemies. Biorn hurled the spear which he held in his hand against his son with mad fury. The deadly weapon whizzed past him. Sintram remained standing with his visor raised, he did not move one limb in his defence, when he said: "Father! do what you will; but I join not in your godless warfare."

Biorn of the Fiery Eyes laughed scorn-

fully: "It seems that I am always to have a spy over me here; my son succeeds to the dainty French knight!" But nevertheless he came to himself, he accepted Sintram's mediation, made amends for the injuries he had done, and returned gloomily to his castle. Sintram went back to the Rocks of the Moon.

Such occurrences were frequent after that time. It went so far that Sintram came to be looked upon as the protector of all those whom his father pursued with relentless fury; but nevertheless, sometimes his own wildness would carry the young knight away to accompany his fierce father in his fearful deeds. Then Biorn used to laugh with horrible pleasure, and to say: "See there, my son, how the flames we have lighted blaze up from the villages, as the blood spouts up from the wounds our swords have made! It is plain to me, however much you may pretend to the contrary, that you are, and that you will ever remain, my true and beloved heir!"

After such terrible wanderings, Sintram could find no comfort but in hastening to the chaplain of Drontheim, and confessing to him his misery and his sins. The chap-

lain would freely absolve him after due penance had been performed, and again raise up the broken-hearted and repenting youth; but he would often say: "Oh! how nearly had you reached your last trial and gained the victory, and looked on Verena's countenance, and atoned for all! Now you have thrown yourself back for years. Think, my son, on the shortness of man's life; if you are always falling back anew, how will you ever reach the summit on this side the grave?"

Years came and went, and Biorn's hair was white as snow, and the youth Sintram had reached the middle age; old Rolf was now scarcely able to leave the stone fortress; and sometimes he said: "I feel it a burden that my life should yet be prolonged, but also there is much comfort in it, for I shall think that the good God has in store for me here below some great happiness; and it must be something in which you are concerned, my beloved Sir Sintram, for what else in the whole world could rejoice my heart?"

But, nevertheless, everything remained as it was, only Sintram's fearful dreams at Christmas time each year rather increased

than diminished in horror. Again, the holy season was drawing near, and the mind of the sorely afflicted knight was more troubled than ever before. Sometimes, if he had been reckoning up the nights which were yet to elapse before it, a cold sweat would stand on his forehead, while he said: "Mark my words, dear old foster-father, this time something most awfully decisive lies before me."

One evening he felt an overwhelming anxiety about his father. It seemed to him that the Prince of Darkness was going up to Biorn's castle; and in vain did Rolf remind him that the snow was lying deep in the valleys, in vain did he suggest that the knight might be overtaken by his frightful dreams in the lonely mountains during the night-time. "Nothing can be worse to me than remaining here would be," replied Sintram.

He took his horse from the stable, and rode forth in the gathering darkness. The noble steed slipped and stumbled, and fell in the trackless ways, but his rider always raised him up and urged him only more swiftly and eagerly towards the object which he longed and yet dreaded to reach. Nevertheless, he might never have arrived at it, had not his faithful hound Skovmark kept with

him. The dog sought out the lost track for his beloved master, and invited him into it with joyous barkings, and warned him by his howls against hidden precipices and treacherous ice under the snow. Thus they arrived about midnight at Biorn's castle. The windows of the hall shone opposite to them with a brilliant light, as though some great feast were being kept there,—and confused sounds, as of singing, met their ears. Sintram gave his horse hastily to some retainers in the courtyard, and ran up the steps, whilst Skovmark stayed by the well-known horse.

A good esquire came towards Sintram within the castle, and said: "God be praised, my dear master, that you are come,—for surely nothing good is going on above. But take heed to yourself, also, and be not deluded. Your father has a guest with him,—and, as I think, a very evil one."

Sintram shuddered as he threw open the doors. A little man in the dress of a miner was sitting with his back towards him; the armor had been for some time past again ranged round the stone table, so that only two places were ever left empty. The seat opposite the door had been taken by Biorn of the Fiery Eyes; and the dazzling light of

the torches fell upon his features with such a red glare, that he most fully established his right to that fearful surname.

"Father, whom have you here with you?" cried Sintram; and his suspicions rose to certainty as the miner turned round, and the detestable face of the Little Master grinned from under the dark hood he wore.

"Yes, just see, my fair son," said the wild Biorn; "you have not been here for a long while,—and so to-night this jolly comrade has paid me a visit, and your place has been taken. But throw one of the suits of armor out of the way, and put a seat for yourself instead of it,—and come and drink with us, and be merry."

"Yes, do so, Sir Sintram," said the Little Master, with a laugh. "Nothing worse could come of it than that the broken pieces of armor might clatter somewhat strangely one against the other; or, at most, that the disturbed spirit of him to whom the suit belonged, might look over your shoulder; but he would not drink up any of our wine—ghosts have nothing to do with that. So now fall to!"

Biorn joined in the laughter of the hideous stranger with wild mirth; and while

Sintram was mustering up his whole strength not to lose his senses at such terrible words, and was fixing a calm steady look on the Little Master's face,—the old man cried out:

"Why do you look at him so? Is it that you fancy there is a mirror before you? Now that you are together I do not see it so much; but a while ago I thought that you were like enough to each other to be mistaken."

"God forbid!" said Sintram; and he walked up close to the fearful apparition, saying, "I command you, detestable stranger, to depart from this castle, in right of my authority as my father's heir, as a consecrated knight, and as a Christian man!"

Biorn seemed as if he wished to oppose himself to this command with all his savage might. The Little Master muttered to himself, "You are not by any means the master in this house, pious knight; you have never lighted a fire on this hearth."

Then Sintram drew the sword which Gabrielle had given him, held the cross formed by the hilt before the eyes of his evil guest, and said calmly, but with a powerful voice, "Worship, or fly!"

And he fled! the frightful stranger—he

fled with such lightning speed that it could scarcely be seen whether he had sprung through the window or the door. But in going he overthrew some of the armor—the tapers went out—and it seemed that the pale blue flame which lighted up the hall in a marvellous manner, gave a fulfilment to the Little Master's former words; and that the spirits of those to whom the armor had belonged were leaning over the table grinning fearfully.

Both the father and the son were filled with horror, but each chose an opposite way to save himself. Biorn wished to have his hateful guest back again; and the power of his will was seen when the Little Master's step resounded anew on the stairs, and his hard brown hand shook the lock of the door. On the other hand, Sintram ceased not to say within himself, "We are lost, if he comes back! We are lost to all eternity, if he comes back!" And he fell on his knees, and prayed fervently from the depth of his troubled heart to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then the Little Master left the door; and again Biorn willed him to return, and again Sintram's prayers drove him away. So went on this strife of wills throughout the

long night; and fierce whirlwinds raged the while around the castle, till all the household thought the end of the world was come. At length the dawn of morning appeared through the windows of the hall—the fury of the storm was lulled—Biorn sank back powerless in slumber on his seat—peace and hope were restored to the inmates of the castle—and Sintram, pale and exhausted, went out to breathe the dewy air of the mild winter's morning before the castle-gates.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE faithful Skovmark followed his master, caressing him; and when Sintram fell asleep on a stone seat in the wall, he lay at his feet, keeping watchful guard. Suddenly he pricked up his ears, looked round with delight, and bounded joyfully down the mountain. Just afterwards the chaplain of Drontheim appeared amongst the rocks, and the good beast went up to him as if to greet him, and then again ran back to the knight to announce a welcome visitor.

Sintram opened his eyes, to feel the pleasure of a child whose Christmas-gifts have been placed at his bedside to surprise him. For the chaplain smiled at him as he had never yet seen him smile. There was in it a token of victory and blessing, or at least of the near approach of both. "You have accomplished much yesterday, very much," said the holy priest, and his hands were joined and his eyes full of bright tears. "I thank God on your behalf, my noble knight. Verena knows all, and she too blesses God.

I do indeed now dare hope that the time will soon come when you may appear before her. But Sintram, Sir Sintram, there is need of haste—for the old man above requires speedy aid, and you have still a heavy—as I hope the last—yet a most heavy trial to undergo for his sake. Arm yourself, my knight, arm yourself even with temporal weapons. In truth, this time only spiritual armor is needed; but it always befits a knight as well as a monk to wear, in the decisive moments of his life, the entire solemn garb of his station. If it so please you, we will go directly to Drontheim together. You must return thence to-night. Such is the tenor of the hidden decree, which has been dimly unfolded to Verena's foresight. Here there is yet much that is wild and distracting, and you have great need to-day of calm preparation."

With humble joy Sintram bowed his assent, and called for his horse and for a suit of armor. "Only," added he, "let not any of that armor be brought which was last night overthrown in the hall."

His orders were quickly obeyed. The arms which were fetched, adorned with fine engraved work, the simple helmet, formed rather like that of an esquire than a knight,

the lance of almost gigantic size, which belonged to the suit,—on all these the chaplain gazed in deep thought, and with melancholy emotion. At last, when Sintram, with the help of his esquires, was well-nigh equipped, the holy priest spoke: "Wonderful are the ways of God's providence! See, dear Sintram, this armor and this spear were formerly those of Sir Weigand the Slender, and with them he did many mighty deeds. When he was tended by your mother in the castle, and when even your father still showed himself kind and courteous, he asked, as a favor, that his armor and his lance should be allowed to hang in Biorn's armory—Weigand himself, as you well know, intended to build a cloister and to live there as a monk,—and he put his old esquire's helmet with it, instead of another, because he was yet wearing that one when he first saw the fair Verena's angelic face. How wondrously does it now come to pass, that these very arms which have so long been laid aside, should have been brought to you for the decisive hour of your life! To me, as far as my short-sighted human wisdom can tell, to me it seems truly a very solemn token, but one that is full of high and glorious promise."

Sintram stood now in complete array, composed and stately; and from his tall slender figure might have been supposed still in early youth, had not the deep lines of care which furrowed his countenance shown him to be advanced in years.

"Who has placed boughs on the head of my war-horse?" asked Sintram of the esquires with displeasure. "I am not a conqueror, nor a wedding-guest. And besides, there are no boughs now, but these red and yellow crackling leaves of the oak, dull and dead like the season itself."

"Sir knight, I know not myself," answered an esquire, "but it seemed to me that I could not do otherwise."

"Let it be," said the chaplain. "I feel that this is also sent as a token full of meaning from the right source."

Then the knight threw himself into his saddle; the priest went beside him; and they both rode slowly and silently towards Drontheim. The faithful dog followed his master. When the lofty castle of Drontheim appeared in sight, a gentle smile spread itself over Sintram's countenance, like a gleam of sunshine on a wintry valley. "God has done great things for me," said he. "I

once rushed from here, a fearfully wild boy; I now come back, a penitent man. I trust that good is yet in store for my poor troubled life."

The chaplain assented kindly, and soon afterwards the travellers passed under the echoing vaulted gateway into the castle-yard. At a sign from the priest, the retainers approached with respectful haste, and took charge of the horses; then he and Sintram went through long winding passages, and up many steps, to the remote chamber which the chaplain had chosen for his own—far away from the noise of men, and near to the clouds and the stars. There the two passed a quiet day in devout prayer, and earnest reading of Holy Scripture.

When the evening began to close in, the chaplain arose and said: "And now, my knight, get ready your horse, and mount and ride back again to your father's castle. A toilsome way lies before you, and I dare not go with you. But I can, and I will call upon the Lord for you, all through the long, fearful night. Oh, beloved instrument of the Most High, you will yet not be lost!"

Thrilling with strange forebodings, but nevertheless strong and vigorous in spirit,

Sintram did according to the holy man's desire. The sun set as the knight approached a long valley, strangely shut in by rocks, through which lay the road to his father's castle.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BEFORE entering the rocky pass, the knight, with a prayer and thanksgiving, looked back once more at the castle of Drontheim. There it was, so vast and quiet and peaceful, the bright windows of the chaplain's high chamber yet lighted up by the last gleam of the sun, which had already disappeared. In front of Sintram was the gloomy valley, looking as if prepared to be his grave.

Then there came towards him some one riding on a small horse, and Skovmark, who had gone up to the stranger as if to find out who he was, now ran back with his tail between his legs and his ears put back, howling and whining, and he crept terrified under his master's war-horse. But even the noble steed appeared to have forgotten his once so fearless and warlike ardor. He trembled violently, and when the knight would have turned him towards the stranger, he reared and snorted and plunged, and began to throw himself backwards. It was

only with difficulty that Sintram's strength and horsemanship got the better of him, and he was all white with foam when Sintram came up to the unknown traveller.

"You have cowardly animals with you," said the latter, in a low smothered voice.

Sintram was unable, in the ever-increasing darkness, rightly to distinguish what kind of being he saw before him; only a very pallid face, which at first he had thought was covered with freshly fallen snow, met his eyes from amidst the long hanging garments in which the figure was clothed. It seemed that the stranger carried a small box, wrapped up; his little horse, as if wearied out, bent his head down towards the ground, whereby a bell, which hung from the wretched torn bridle under his neck, was made to give a strange sound. After a short silence, Sintram replied: "Noble steeds avoid those of a worse race, because they are ashamed of them; and the boldest dogs are attacked by a secret terror at sight of forms to which they are not accustomed. I have no cowardly animals with me."

"Good, sir knight, then ride with me through the valley."

"I am going through the valley, but I want no companions."

"But perhaps I want one. Do you not see that I am unarmed? And at this season, at this hour, there are frightful, unearthly beasts about."

Just then, as if to confirm the awful words of the stranger, a thing swung itself down from one of the nearest trees covered with hoar-frost—no one could say if it were a snake or a lizard—it curled and twisted itself, and appeared to be going to slide down upon the knight or his companion. Sintram levelled his spear, and pierced the creature through. But with the most hideous contortions it fixed itself firmly on the spear-head, and in vain did the knight endeavor to rub it off against the rocks or the trees. Then he let his spear rest upon his right shoulder, with the point behind him, so that the horrible beast no longer met his sight, and he said with good courage to the stranger, "It does seem indeed that I could help you, and I am not forbidden to have an unknown stranger in my company; so let us push on bravely into the valley!"

"Help!" so resounded the solemn answer. "Not help. I, perhaps, may help thee. But

God have mercy upon thee, if the time should ever come when I could no longer help thee. Then thou wouldst be lost, and I should become very frightful to thee. But we will go through the valley, I have thy knightly word for it. Come!"

They rode forward, Sintram's horse still showing signs of fear, the faithful dog still whining, but both obedient to their master's will. The knight was calm and steadfast. The snow had slipped down from the smooth rocks, and by the light of the rising moon could be seen various strange twisted shapes on their sides, some looking like snakes, and some like human faces; but they were only formed by the veins in the rock, and the half bare roots of trees which had planted themselves in that desert place with capricious firmness. High above, and at a great distance, the castle of Drontheim, as if to take leave, appeared again through an opening in the rocks. The knight then looked keenly at his companion, and he almost felt as if Weigand the Slender were riding beside him. "In God's name," cried he, "art thou not the shade of that departed knight who suffered and died for Verena?"

"I have not suffered, I have not died, but

ye suffer and ye die, poor mortals!" murmured the stranger. "I am not Weigand. I am that other one, who was so like him, and whom thou hast also met before now in the wood."

Sintram strove to free himself from th terror which came over him at these words. He looked at his horse; it appeared to him entirely altered. The dry, many-colored oak-leaves on its head were waving like the flames around a sacrifice, in the uncertain moonlight. He looked down again to see after his faithful Skovmark. Fear had likewise most wondrously changed him. On the ground in the middle of the road were lying dead men's bones, and hideous lizards were crawling about, and, in defiance of the wintry season, poisonous mushrooms were growing up all around.

"Can this be still my horse on which I am riding," said the knight to himself in a low voice; "and can that trembling beast which runs at my side be my own dog?"

Then some one called after him, in a yelling voice, "Stop! stop! Take me also with you!"

Looking round, Sintram perceived a small frightful figure, with horns, and a face partly

like a wild-boar and partly like a bear, walking along on its hind legs, which were those of a horse, and in its hand was a strange hideous weapon shaped like a hook or a sickle. It was the being who had been wont to trouble him in his dreams, and alas! it was also the wretched Little Master himself, who, laughing wildly, stretched out a long claw towards the knight.

The bewildered Sintram murmured: "I must have fallen asleep! and now my dreams are coming over me!"

"You are awake," replied the rider of the little horse, "but you know me also in your dreams. For behold! I am Death." And his garments fell from him, and there appeared a mouldering skeleton, its ghastly head crowned with serpents; that which he had kept hidden under his mantle was an hour-glass, with the sand almost run out. Death held it towards the knight, in his fleshless hand. The bell at the neck of the little horse gave forth a solemn sound. It was a passing-bell.

"Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit!" prayed Sintram; and full of earnest devotion he rode after Death, who beckoned him on.

"He has not got you yet! He has not got you yet!" screamed the fearful fiend. "Give yourself up to me rather. In one instant,—for swift are your thoughts, swift is my might,—in one instant you shall be in Normandy. Helen yet blooms in beauty as when she departed hence, and this very night she would be yours." And once again he began his unholy praises of Gabrielle's loveliness, and Sintram's heart glowed like wildfire in his weak breast.

Death said nothing more, but raised the hourglass in his right hand yet higher and higher, and as the sand now ran out more quickly, a soft light streamed from the glass over Sintram's countenance, and then it seemed to him as if eternity in all its calm majesty were rising before him, and a world of confusion dragging him back with a deadly grasp.

"I command thee, wild form that followest me," cried he, "I command thee, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to cease from thy seducing words, and to call thyself by that name by which thou art recorded in Holy Writ!" A name, which sounded more fearful than a thunder-clap, burst despairingly from the lips of the Tempter, and he disappeared.

"He will return no more," said Death, in a kindly tone.

"And now I am become wholly thine, my stern companion?"

"Not yet, my Sintram. I shall not come to thee till many, many years are past. But thou must not forget me the while."

"I will keep the thought of thee steadily before my soul, thou fearful yet wholesome monitor, thou awful yet loving guide!"

"Oh! I can truly appear very gentle." And so it proved indeed. His form became more softly defined in the increasing gleam of light which shone from the hour-glass, the features which had been awful in their sternness wore a gentle smile, the crown of serpents became a bright palm-wreath, instead of the horse appeared a white misty cloud on which the moonbeams played, and the bell gave forth sounds as of sweet lullabies. Sintram thought he could hear these words amidst them:

"The world and Satan are o'ercome,
Before thee gleams eternal light.
Warrior, who hast won the strife,
Save from darkest shades of night
Him before whose aged eyes
All my terrors soon shall rise."

The knight well knew that his father was meant, and he urged on his noble steed, who now obeyed his master willingly and gladly, and the faithful dog also again ran beside him fearlessly. Death had disappeared, but in front of Sintram there floated a bright morning cloud, which continued visible after the sun had risen in the clear winter sky, to cheer and warm the earth.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"HE is dead! the horrors of that fearful night of storm and tempest have killed him!" Thus said, about this time, some of Biorn's retainers, who had not been able to bring him back to his senses since the morning of the day before; they had made a couch of wolf and bear skins for him in the great hall, in the midst of the armor which still lay scattered around. One of the esquires said with a low sigh: "The Lord have mercy on his poor wild soul."

Just then the warder blew his horn from his tower, and a trooper came into the room with a look of surprise. "A knight is coming towards here," said he; "a wonderful knight. I could have taken him for our lord Sintram—but a bright, bright morning-cloud floats so close before him, and throws over him such clear light, that one could fancy red flowers were showered down upon him. Besides, his horse has a reddish wreath of flowers on his head, which was never a custom of the son of our dead lord."

"It was exactly such a one," replied another, "that I wove for him yesterday. He was not pleased with it at first, but afterwards he let it remain."

"But why did you do that?"

"It seemed to me as if I heard a voice singing again and again in my ear: 'Victory! victory! the noblest victory! The knight rides forth to victory!' And then I saw a branch of our oldest oak tree stretched towards me, which had kept on almost all its red and yellow leaves in spite of the snow. So I did according to what I had heard sung; and I plucked some of the leaves, and wove a triumphal wreath for the noble war-horse. At the same time Skovmark,—you know that the faithful beast had always a great dislike to Biorn, and therefore had gone to the stable with the horse,—Skovmark jumped upon me, fawning and seeming pleased, as if he wanted to thank me for my work; and such noble animals understand well about good prognostics."

They heard the sound of Sintram's spurs on the stone steps and Skovmark's joyous bark. At that instant the supposed corpse of old Biorn sat up,—looked around with rolling, staring eyes,—and asked of the terrified

retainers in a hollow voice: "Who comes there, ye people? who comes there? I know it is my son. But who comes with him? On the answer to that hangs the decision of my fate. For see, good people, Gotthard and Rudlieb have prayed much for me: yet if the Little Master comes with him, I am lost in spite of them!"

"You are not lost, my beloved father!" Sintram's kind voice was heard to say, as he softly opened the door, and the bright red morning-cloud floated in with him.

Biorn joined his hands, cast a look of thankfulness up to Heaven, and said, smiling: "Yes, praised be God! it is the right companion! It is sweet gentle Death!" And then he made a sign to his son to approach, saying: "Come here, my deliverer; come, blessed of the Lord, that I may relate to you all that has passed within me."

As Sintram now sat close by his father's couch, all who were in the room perceived a remarkable and striking change. For old Biorn, whose whole countenance, and not his eyes alone, had been wont to have a fiery aspect,—was now quite pale, almost like white marble: while, on the other hand, the cheeks of the once deadly-pale Sintram glow-

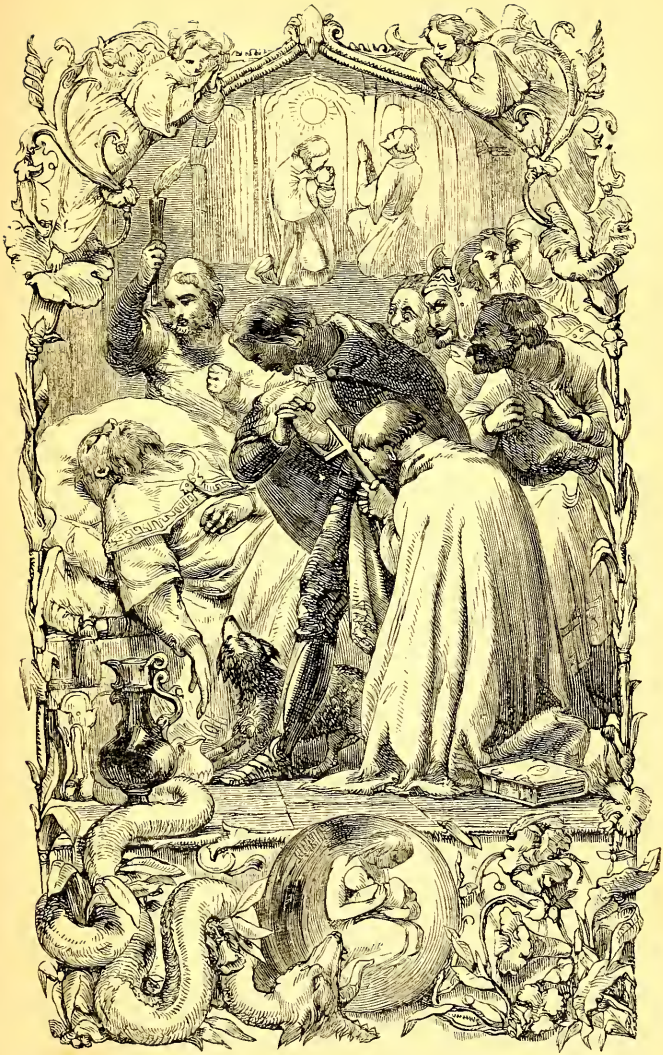
ed with a bright bloom like that of early youth. It was caused by the morning-cloud which still shone upon him, and the presence of which in the room was rather felt than seen; but it produced a gentle thrill in every heart.

"See, my son," began the old man, softly and mildly, "I have lain for a long time in a death-like sleep, and have known nothing of what was going on around me; but within,—ah! within, I have had but too entire consciousness! I thought that my soul would be destroyed by the eternal anguish; and yet again I felt with much greater horror, that my soul was undying like that anguish. Beloved son, your cheeks that glowed so brightly are beginning to grow pale at my words. I refrain from more. But let me relate to you something more cheering: far, far away, I could see a bright, lofty church, where Gotthard and Rudlieb Lenz were kneeling and praying for me. Gotthard had grown very old, and looked like one of our mountains covered with snow, on which the evening sun is shining; and Rudlieb was also an elderly man, but very vigorous and very strong; and they both, with all their strength and vigor, were calling upon

God to aid me, their enemy. Then I heard a voice like that of an angel, saying: 'His son does the most for him! He must this night wrestle with Death and with the Fallen One! His victory will be victory,—and his defeat will be defeat, for the old man as well as for himself.' Thereupon I awoke; and I knew that all depended upon whom you would bring with you. You have conquered. Next to God, the praise be to you!"

"Gotthard and Rudlieb have helped much," replied Sintram; "and, beloved father, so have the fervent prayers of the chaplain of Drontheim. I felt, in the midst of temptation and deadly fear, how the heaven-directed prayers of good men floated round me and aided me."

"I am most willing to believe that, my noble son, and everything you say to me," answered the old man: and at the same moment the chaplain also coming in, Biorn stretched out his hand towards him with a smile of peace and joy. And now all seemed to be surrounded with a bright circle of unity and blessedness. "But see," said old Biorn, "how the faithful Skovmark jumps upon me now, and tries to caress me. It is



not long since he used always to howl with terror when he saw me."

"My dear lord," said the chaplain, "there is a spirit dwelling in good beasts, although they are unconscious of it."

As the day wore on, the stillness in the hall increased. The last hour of the aged knight was drawing near, but he met it calmly and fearlessly. The chaplain and Sintram prayed beside his couch. The retainers knelt devoutly around. At length the dying man said: "Is that the vesper-bell in Verena's cloister?" and Sintram made a sign to express his undoubting belief that it was, while warm tears fell on the colorless cheeks of his father. A gleam shone in the old man's eyes,—the morning-cloud stood close over him, and then the gleam, the morning-cloud, and life with them departed from him.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A FEW days afterwards Sintram stood in the parlor of the convent, and waited with a beating heart for his mother to appear. He had seen her for the last time, when, a slumbering child, he had been awoke by her tender, farewell kisses, and then had fallen asleep again to wonder in his dreams what his mother had wanted with him, and to seek her in vain the next morning in the castle and in the garden. The chaplain was now at his side, rejoicing in the chastened rapture of the knight, whose fierce spirit had been overcome, on whose cheeks a soft reflection of that solemn morning-cloud yet lingered.

The inner doors opened.—In her white veil, stately and noble, the lady Verena came forward, and with a heavenly smile she beckoned her son to approach the grating. There could be no thought here of any passionate outbreak, whether of sorrow or of joy.* The holy peace which had its abode

* "In whose sweet presence sorrow dares not lower,
Nor expectation rise,
Too high for earth." *Christian Year.*

within these walls, would have found its way to a heart less tried and less purified than that which beats in Sintram's bosom. Shedding some placid tears, the son knelt before his mother, kissed her flowing garments through the grating, and felt as if he were in Paradise,—where every wish and every care is hushed. "Beloved mother," said he, "let me become a recluse like you. Then I will betake myself to the cloister yonder; and perhaps I might one day be deemed worthy to be your confessor, if illness or the weekness of old age should keep the good chaplain within the castle of Drontheim."

"That would be a sweet, quietly-happy life, my good child," replied the lady Verena; "but such is not your vocation. You must continue to be a bold, powerful knight, and you must spend the long life which is almost always granted to us, children of the north, in succoring the weak, in keeping down the lawless, and in yet another more bright and honorable employment which I now rather dimly foresee, than clearly know."

"God's will be done!" said the knight, and he rose up full of self-devotion and firmness.

"That is my good son," said the lady Verena. "Ah! how many sweet calm joys spring up for us! See, already is our longing desire of meeting again satisfied, and you will never more be so entirely estranged from me. Every week on this day you will come back to me, and you will relate what glorious deeds you have done, and take back with you my advice and my blessing."

"Am I not once more a good and happy child!" cried Sintram joyously; "only that the merciful God has given me in addition the strength of a man in body and spirit. Oh! how blessed is that son to whom it is allowed to gladden his mother's heart with the blossoms and the fruit of his life!"

Thus he left the quiet cloister's shade, joyful in spirit and richly laden with blessings, to enter on his noble career. He was not content with going about wherever there might be a rightful cause to defend, or evil to be averted; the gates of the now hospitable castle stood always open also to receive and shelter every stranger,—and old Rolf, who was almost grown young again at sight of his lord's excellence, was established as seneschal. The winter of Sintram's life set in bright and glorious, and it was only at

times that he would sigh within himself and say: "Ah! Montfauçon, ah! Gabrielle, if I could dare to hope that you have quite forgiven me!"

CHAPTER XXX.

THE spring had come in its brightness to that northern land, when one morning Sintram turned his horse homewards after a successful encounter with one of the most formidable disturbers of the peace of his neighborhood. His horsemen rode after him, singing as they went. As they drew near the castle they heard the sound of joyous notes wound on the horn. "Some welcome visitor must have arrived," said the knight, and he spurred his horse to a quicker pace over the dewy meadow. While still at some distance, they descried old Rolf busily engaged in preparing a table for the morning meal, under the trees in front of the castle gates. From all the turrets and battlements floated banners and flags in the fresh morning breeze. Esquires were running to and fro in their gayest apparel. As soon as the good Rolf saw his master, he clapped his hands joyfully over his gray head, and hastened into the castle. Immediately the wide gates were thrown open,

and Sintram, as he entered, was met by Rolf, whose eyes were filled with tears of joy as he pointed towards three noble forms that were following him.

Two men of high stature,—one in extreme old age, the other gray-headed, and both remarkably alike,—were leading between them a fair young boy, in a page's dress of blue velvet, richly embroidered with gold. The two old men wore the dark velvet dress of German burghers, and had massive gold chains and large shining medals hanging round their necks.

Sintram had never before seen his honored guests, and yet he felt as if they were well known and valued friends. The very aged man reminded him of his dying father's words about the snow-covered mountains lighted up by the evening sun; and then he remembered, he could scarcely tell how, that he had heard Folko say that one of the highest mountains of that sort in his southern land was called the St. Gotthard. And at the same time he knew that the old but yet vigorous man on the other side was named Rudlieb. But the boy who stood between them,—ah! Sintram's humility dare scarcely form a hope as to who he might be, however

much his features, so noble and soft, called up two highly honored images before his mind.

Then the aged Gotthard Lenz, the prince of old men, advanced with a solemn step, and said: "This is the noble boy Engeltram of Montfauçon, the only son of the great baron; and his father and mother send him to you, Sir Sintram, knowing well your holy and glorious knightly career, that you may bring him up to all the honorable and valiant deeds of this northern land, and may make of him a Christian knight, like yourself."

Sintram threw himself from his horse. Engeltram of Montfauçon held the stirrup gracefully for him, checking the retainers, who pressed forward, with these words: "I am the noblest born esquire of this knight, and the service nearest to his person belongs to me."

Sintram knelt on the turf to offer a silent prayer; then lifting up the image of Folko and Gabrielle in his arms, towards the rising sun, he cried: "With the help of God, my Engeltram, you will become glorious as that sun, and your course will be like his!"

And Rolf said, as he wept for joy, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace."

Gotthard Lenz and Rudlieb were pressed to Sintram's heart; the chaplain of Dron theim, who just then came from Verena's cloister, to bring a joyful greeting to her brave son, stretched out his hands to bless them all.

THE END.

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