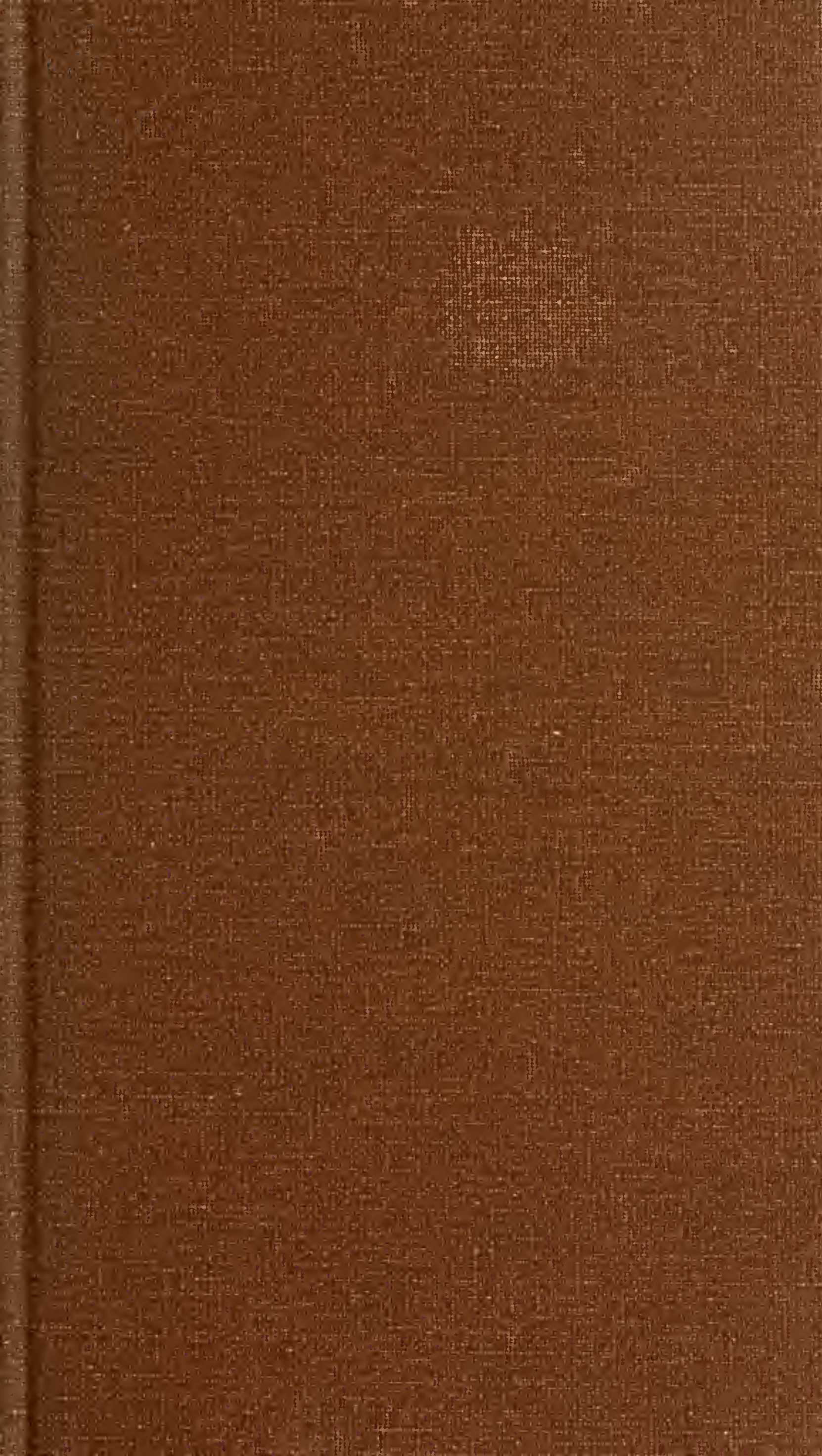

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SECOND TO NONE.

A Military Romance.

BY

JAMES GRANT,

AUTHOR OF
"THE ROMANCE OF WAR," "THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD,"
"THE YELLOW FRIGATE," ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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SECOND TO NONE.

CHAPTER I.

WE TAKE THE FIELD AGAIN.

WHILE we were in quarters at Paderborn, a mixed detachment (composed of men for various corps) arrived to join the army, and with it came Major Shirley, looking quite the same as when I had seen him last, on the morning we marched from Wadhurst—his uniform new and spotless, his aiguilettes glittering, his well-fitting gloves of the whitest kid, above which he wore pearl rings; his hair curled and perfumed, with his handsome

figure, suave and courtly bearing, his sinister and unfathomable smile.

He was one of those lucky fellows who have mysterious interest (feminine probably) at headquarters, and who, whether at home or abroad, are always on the staff, and *never* with their regiments; thus he had been appointed extra aide-de-camp to Lord George Sackville, and thus we chanced to meet on the day of his arrival at an old windmill which did duty as a staff-office for the British headquarters.

"Did you see my cousin, Miss Gauntlet, before leaving England?" I inquired, though in reality caring little whether he had or not.

"Oh yes, frequently—especially when I was last in London; she is the reigning toast at White's and elsewhere."

"She was well, I hope?" said I, dryly.

"Well, and looking beautiful as ever."

"Did she charge you with any message to me?"

"None, Sir Basil. Zounds! none, at least, that I can remember," replied the major, colouring.

"Is there any word of her being married yet?" I asked, having a natural anxiety to know *who* might next be proprietor of my paternal acres. "So handsome a girl, and so rich, too, should certainly not lack offers."

"Nor does she, 'sdeath—nor does she," replied Shirley, as a shade of vexation mingled with his perpetual smile.

"Aha, major," thought I; "an unsuccessful wooer—eh!"—"And so you have no message for me?"

"None; but I have just delivered one of more importance than that of a London belle—one for the army."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; we are to take the field at once, and advance into Hesse."

"Against whom?"

"The Duc de Broglie."

On hearing this, to me familiar name, it was my turn to feel a tinge of vexation.

"Our muster-place is Fulda; there the allies are to be concentrated;" and with his constant smile which showed all his white teeth, with his gold eyeglass in his right eye, and his gilt spurs ringing, our gay staff-officer left me.

As it is my object to confine these pages as much as possible to my own adventures, avoiding anything like a general narrative of the war, the reader may learn briefly, that when summoned to the field, the Scots Greys marched to Hesse, "through roads which—as our records have it—no army had ever tra-

versed before," and encamped at Rothenburg, in a pleasant vale, sheltered by high hills.

In April we moved to Fulda, from whence Prince Ferdinand began to advance at the head of thirty thousand men against the Duc de Broglie, whom we found strongly posted near the village of Bergen, which occupies a wooded eminence between Frankfort and Hanover. This village was defended by earthen works, along which were rows of *corbeilles*, as the French name those large baskets which, on being filled with earth, are placed close to each other, and serve to cover the defenders of a bastion. They are usually eighteen inches high, and are always wider at the top than at the bottom; thus the opening between forms a species of loophole, and through these apertures the red musketry was flash-

ing incessantly as we came within range.

On the 13th of April we attacked the duke.

Early in the morning our corps took post in the line of battle; but it was not till ten a.m. that the columns of attack moved across the plain in front of the French army, whose artillery bowled long and bloody lanes through them.

"Preston," said Major Maitland, as we formed squadrons to attack a body of cavalry; "that column consists of at least fifteen hundred tried men, under the Count de Lusignan, and you have but five hundred——"

"True—but mine are *tried soldiers*," was the old man's proud reply; "soldiers *second to none* in Europe."

These were no vain words, for in less

than two minutes, by one desperate charge, we had routed them.

The grenadiers of all corps had commenced the action, supported by us and other dragoons, but were repulsed. They rallied again, but were again driven back and forced to retire, under cover of several charges made by us and by the Black Hussars of Prussia.

"Well done, my own hussars—and well done the Scots Greys!" cried Prince Ferdinand, as we re-formed after a furious charge, without having a saddle emptied. "Colonel Preston, you ought to be proud of commanding such a regiment."

"*I am* proud," was the quiet reply of our old colonel.

In all this affair, our only loss was a single horse—mine, which was killed under me by a six-pound shot; but Prince Ferdinand was compelled to fall back,

leaving five guns on the field, where the Prince of Ysembourg and two thousand of our soldiers were slain.

By this victory the French army was plentifully supplied with provisions of every kind, while we suffered greatly by the lack of food and forage. By it, also, their armies formed a junction and advanced together under the command of Maréchal de Contades, while Prince Ferdinand, with his British and Hanoverians, had to retire, leaving garrisons in Rothenburg, Munster, and Minden, to cover his retreat.

But vain were these precautions!

Rothenburg was surprised by the Duc de Broglie; his brother the Count de Broglie, and his nephew the Count de Bourgneuf, "with sixteen companies of grenadiers, one thousand four hundred

infantry, the regiments of Schomberg, Nassau and Fischer," took Minden by assault, and found therein ninety-four thousand sacks of grain. Then Munster, though bravely defended by four thousand men, fell after a short but sharp siege. It was severely, I may say savagely, proposed by de Bourgneuf, to put all in Minden to the sword, on the plea that the garrison of a place taken by assault had no right to be received as prisoners of war; "but," as a newspaper informs us, "General Zastrow and his men owed their safety to the noble generosity of the Duke and Count de Broglie."

Considering the conquest of Hanover as certain, the court of Versailles was now occupied mainly by considering *how* that Electorate should be secured to France for the future, when we advanced to have a

trial of strength with their armies on the glorious, and, to us, ever memorable plains of Minden.

Prior to this, my friend Tom Kirkton had been promoted to the rank of cornet and adjutant, for taking prisoner with his own hand, during our first charge at Bergen, the Comte de Lusignan, a Maréchal de Camp.

CHAPTER II.

THE TWO PRESENTIMENTS.

On the night before the action at Minden, while we were bivouacked in a wood near the bank of the Weser, there came under my observation two instances of that remarkable and undefinable emotion or foreboding termed presentiment; and I believe there are few men who have served a campaign without meeting with something of the kind among their comrades, though the dire foreboding may not always have been fulfilled.

One of these instances was the case of Lieutenant Keith of ours; the other was that of the aide-de-camp, Major Shirley.

Under a sheltering tree, and near a large watchfire, a few of our officers, among whom were Captain Douglas, Keith, Tom Kirkton, Dr. Probe, and myself, were making themselves as comfortable as our poor circumstances would admit. We had plenty of wine from the regimental sutler, "whose princely confidence" Kirkton ironically urged us not to abuse; we had plenty of brandy captured from a French caisson; we had water in plenty from a stream hard by; we had ration beef boiled in camp kettles; we had biscuits too; nor was Tom's usual song wanting on the occasion, and he trolled it so lustily that many of our men loitered near to hear him.

We were in high spirits with the expectation of meeting the French in the morning; young Keith alone was sad, melancholy, and silent, and it seemed to

me that he drank deeply, an unusual circumstance with him. Then suddenly he appeared to reflect, and ceasing his potations, resolutely passed alike the wine-jar and the cognac bottle.

"Are you ill, Keith?" asked Douglas, kindly.

"Not a bit of it," interrupted Tom Kirkton; "it is only the Westphalia wine that partially disagrees with him. Is it not so, friend Probe? Try some more brandy. I took it from a French baggage cart; 'tis the spoil of my sword and pistol. Come, Jamie Keith—

> "How stands the glass around?
> For shame, ye take no care, my boys!"

But Keith shook his head and turned away.

"Pshaw, boy! don't imitate any virtue of the Spartans to-night," said Probe, our

surgeon; "who can say that we shall all be together at this hour to-morrow?"

"Ah, who indeed!" muttered young Keith, with an air so melancholy that we all paused to observe him.

"Look at me, Keith," said Captain Douglas, gravely; "there *is* something wrong with you to-night."

"I grant you that there is," replied the young lieutenant, turning his pale and handsome face to the inquirer. "I have in my heart—and I cannot help telling you—a solemn presentiment that I shall not survive the battle of to-morrow. Yet observe me, gentlemen, observe me well and closely all of you, and see if I shall blench before the enemy, or belie the name of my forefathers."

With one voice we endeavoured to ridicule this unfortunate idea, or to wean him from it; but he only replied

by sadly shaking his head. After a pause, he said—

"I trust that you will not laugh at what I am about to tell you; but indeed I care little whether you do so or not. An hour ago, after our halt, I fell asleep in my cloak at the foot of that tree, and while there I dreamed of my home, of my father's house at Inverugie. I saw the Ugie flowing between its banks of yellow broom, I heard the hum of the honeybee among the purple heather bells, while the sweet perfume of the hawthorn passed me on the wind. Then I heard the German Sea chafing on the sandy knowes in the distance, and all the sense of boyhood and of *home* grew strong within me. But when I looked towards our old hall of Inverugie, it was roofless and windowless, the long grass grew on its cold hearthstone, and there the nettle and the

ivy waved in the wind, while the black gleds were building their nests by scores in the holes of the ruined wall; and that dream daunts me still.

"Why—why—what of it?" we asked together.

"Because when one of our family dreams of a gled the hour of death is nigh. I have never known it fail, and so it has been ever since Thomas the Rhymer sat on a block near the castle (to this day called the Tammas stane), and as a vision came before him, he stretched his hands towards the house, saying—

"When the gleds their nests shall build
Where erst the Marischal hung his shield;
Then Inverugie by the sea,
Lordless shall thy lands be."

I am the last of the old line, and there is a conviction in my heart that the prophecy of the Rhymer is about to be fulfilled."

But for the well-known bravery, worth, and high spirit of the young subaltern, and the hereditary valour of the house he represented, we might have laughed at his strong faith in such an extremely old prediction—a faith in which, doubtless, his mother, his nurse, and many an old retainer had reared him; but as it was, we heard him in silence, till after a time, when Douglas endeavoured to reason with him on the folly of surrendering himself to such gloomy impressions, but in vain. His mind was sternly made up that he would fall on the morrow, and that he would die with honour to the attainted house he represented among us—the old lords of Inverugie and Dunotter, the earls marischal of Scotland.

While I was thinking of this—as we deemed it, fantastic idea—a hand was laid on my shoulder. I looked up and saw

Major Shirley, who requested me to accompany him a little way apart. I could perceive by the light of the moon on one hand, and that of our watchfire on the other, that he was remarkably pale and somewhat agitated.

"Gauntlet," said he, with a smile, but with a very sickly one, "I have here a letter for you."

"From whom?"

"Your cousin; a letter which I quite forgot to deliver to you when I joined the army in Paderborn."

"This is somewhat odd—you forgot, eh?"

"Exactly; very awkward, is it not?"

"Rather," said I, somewhat ruffled. "Seven months have elapsed since you came from England, and you only remember it now! Do you recal that you stated she had not sent even a message to me?"

"Zounds! 'tis a fact, however odd," he replied, calmly, and in a very subdued voice. "I only bethought me to-night that the letter was in my dressing-case. We are to be engaged to-morrow; I may be knocked on the head as well as another, and thus have no wish to leave even the most trivial duty unfulfilled. You understand me?"

"Precisely," said I, with some contempt of manner.

"Here is your letter—adieu. I have an order for the Marquis of Granby. Where is his tent?"

"On the extreme right of the Inniskilling Dragoons."

"Good." He mounted and rode hurriedly away. I saw it all: this simpering staff officer was in love with Aurora, and dreaded in me a rival. Thus he had concealed the letter till his presentiment—

shall I call *his* emotion apprehension?—of the coming day, impelled him to deliver it to me.

It was sealed and bordered with black. I tore it open and read hurriedly by the wavering light of our watchfire. The whole tenor of the letter was melancholy, and at such a time and under all the circumstances, it moved me, though one or two sentences were rather galling in their purport.

Aurora informed me that she had lost her mother at Tunbridge Wells on the day after we sailed. Save twice, and under rather cloudy circumstances, I had never seen the good lady, and so I had no tears for the occasion.

"Dear cousin Basil," she continued, "my father is dead; my beloved mother is dead; my poor brother Tony and a little sister whom I loved dearly, are also dead;

so I feel very lonely now. The loss of mamma has been my most severe calamity, for she was the person in whom all my thoughts, feelings, and anxieties centred. You are a soldier, and I know not whether you can feel like me—that each link of the loving chain as it breaks unites us closer, by near, dear, and mysterious ties, to those who are beyond the grave—the beloved ones who are gone, and to be with whom would be life in death. For a time after poor mamma left me I felt more a denizen of the world to come than of this, and I feel that though dead she can still strangely control or inspire my actions, my emotions, and my conduct here.

"Oh yes, Basil, when my poor mamma died I felt eternity *close* to me—I felt that the circumstance of her going *there* before me instituted a strange and endearing tie between me and that mysterious

state of being; that my heart was drawn towards the land of spirits; that it yearned for the other world rather than to linger in this. (The deuce! thought I; is Aurora about to take the veil—or whence this sermon?).

"Excuse me, cousin, if I weary you with my sorrow; but to whom could I write of it, save you? You promised to write to me, but have never done so. How unkind, after all you have said to me! I am at present at Netherwood, where the autumn is charming, and as I write the sun is shining with a lovely golden gleam on the yellow corn-fields and on the blue wavy chain of the Cheviot Hills. We are cutting down a number of the old trees at Netherwood. (Are *we* really! thought I.) Some of these are oaks that King James rode under on his way to Flodden Fleld; and dear old Mr. Nathan Wylie (De-

lightful old man!) recommends that the ruined chapel of St. Basil in the jousting-haugh should be removed as a relic of Popery, which stands in the way of the plough. But as the saint is a namesake of *yours*, it shall remain untouched, with all its ivy and guelder roses.

"When you return and visit us, as I trust in Heaven you shall (for I never omit to pray for your safety), you will find wonderful improvements in the kennels, stableyard, vinery, and copsewood."

It was very pleasant to me, a poor devil of a cornet, half-starved on my pay, especially since the capture of Minden, with its 94,000 sacks of grain, by Messieurs de Broglie and de Bourgneuf, to read how this lovely interloper and her crusty Mentor cut and carved on my lands and woods, kennels and stables.

"You will regret to hear that poor Mr. Wylie is failing fast, poor man! His niece Ruth—a very pretty young woman indeed—has just had twins. Her husband is Bailie Mucklewham, of the neighbouring town—a grave and rigid man, and ruling Elder of the Tabernacle, whatever that may be."

Ruth and her twins, and her husband the demure Elder and Bailie! I could laugh now, at the boyish hour in which I thought seriously of marrying Ruth Wylie.

"Doubtful where to address this letter to you, I have committed it to the care of Major Shirley, who has been hunting in this neighbourhood, and is now proceeding to Germany, to join the staff of my Lord George Sackville.

"P.S.—Write me, dear cousin, and tell me all about this horrible war, and if it

will soon be over. The major is so impatient that I have not time to read over what I have written. Adieu, with a kiss, A. G."

In our comfortless bivouac, by the sinking light of the wavering watchfire, as I read on Aurora's face came before me, so charming, so fair, so blooming, and so English. She was warmhearted, affectionate, and my only relative on earth, so could I think of her in such a time of peril otherwise than kindly?

"Can it be—I asked of myself—that I am forgetting Jacqueline? But wherefore remember her now!"

Shirley had been hunting in the vicinity of Netherwood, so I might be sure that all his time would not have been there devoted to the sports of the field. Aurora prayed for me! It was delightful to have some one at least who thought of me—

whose friendship or regard blessed me, and that my course in life was not unheeded or unmarked amid the perils of war.

Aurora might love me, if I wished; surely there was no vanity in me to think so? But I feared that I could never love her—at least as I had loved Jacqueline—for she was the holder, the usurper of all that should be mine.

I resolved to write to her kindly, affectionately, after the battle, and then I would think of her no more; but somehow Aurora's image was very persisting, and would not be set aside.

I put the letter in my sabretache, and was looking about for a soft place whereon to sleep for an hour or so, when the sharp twang of the trumpet sounding, and the voice of Tom Kirkton shouting "Saddles

and boots! to horse, the Greys!" warned me that day had broken, and that we must stand to arms, for the bloody game of Minden was about to begin.

CHAPTER III.

BATTLE OF MINDEN.

The morning of the 1st of August dawned fair and softly. The sky was a deep blue, and light fleecy clouds were floating across it. It was the opening of a day of battle, a day of doom to many, for who among us were fated to fall, and who to see its close?

A gentle breeze waved the foliage of the green woods, and swayed the ripened corn in yellow billows as it passed over the broad harvest-fields.

Bright, clear, and sparkling amid the blue ether shone the morning star, and lower down rolled a mass of amber-coloured cloud, on the edges of which glittered the rays of the yet unrisen sun.

Phosphor paled, the light gradually became golden, and the last shadows of night grew fainter as they faded away. Then the light breeze died, and there was not a breath to stir the foliage of the dense old forests which cast their shadows on the current of the Weser—that watery barrier which the French were to defend, and we to force at all hazards; hence, as the morning drew on, the air became close, heavy, and hot, and our men—horse, foot, and artillery—while wheeling, deploying, and getting into position among green hedgerows and deep corn, laden as they were in heavy marching order, soon felt their frames relaxed and the bead-drops oozing from under their grenadier caps and heavy cocked hats.

Brightly the sun burst forth from amid his amber clouds, and ere long the embattled walls of Minden, and its Gothic

spires, Catholic and Lutheran, were shining in light.

The allied army formed in order of battle on the plain called Todtenhausen, in front of the town of Minden, which occupies the left bank of the Weser, and in which there was a strong French garrison, whose cannon commanded the famous stone bridge of six hundred yards in length. After capturing the town from General Zastrow, the main body of the army of M. de Contades had encamped near it.

On his left rose a steep hill, in his front lay a deep morass, and in his rear flowed a rugged mountain-stream.

As this position was strong, Prince Ferdinand employed all his strategy to draw the maréchal from it. With this view he had quitted his camp on the Weser, and marched to a place named Hille,

leaving, however, General Wangenheim with a body of troops entrenched on the plain of Todtenhausen. Then detaching his nephew (known among us as the Hereditary Prince of Brunswick) with six thousand men, he gave him orders to make a detour towards the French left, and thus cut off their communication with Paderborn.

Though not ignorant of the compass of these triple dispositions, Contades, the Duc de Broglie, and Prince Xavier of Saxony, leader of the Household Cavalry of France, readily fell into the snare.

"Messeigneurs," said Maréchal Contades, with confidence, "the opportunity which we have so long sought for cutting off Prince Ferdinand's communication with the Weser has been found at last. It is the very consummation of our wishes. Already we may behold those vainglorious

allies divided and separated in three masses without the possibility of a reunion. Let us march, gentlemen, and by the ruin of General Wangenheim, obtain the full command of the Weser!"

"*Vive le Roi!*" cried the whole council of war.

It was with this idea in their minds that we saw the French troops leaving their strong position between the hill, the long and impassable morass, and the rugged stream, and advancing into the open plain —precisely the same fatal error committed about a hundred years before by the Scots at the battle of Dunbar.

The allied army, composed of fifty-nine squadrons of horse and forty-three battalions of infantry, with forty-eight 12-pound field-pieces and four mortars, was formed in three lines.

We, the Scots Greys, were in Elliot's

brigade of Lord Granby's Cavalry Division, and with the 3rd Dragoon Guards (Howard's) and 10th Dragoons (Mordaunt's) were on the extreme right of the second line, when we formed up from open column of squadrons through fields of hemp and flax.

In our front were the Horse Guards (Blue) and Inniskilling Dragoons, who formed the right of the first line.

Over those thousands forming in order of battle the shadow of death was passing; but no thought had we then, save of victory and triumph, and of regilding our lost laurels!

"There will be rough work to-day—Auld Geordie has his buff-coat on," I heard our men muttering.

As the kettledrums beat and the trumpets sounded the usual flourish when swords were drawn, old Preston looked

along our glittering line with a grim smile of satisfaction on his wrinkled visage.

"They have unsheathed as one man!" exclaimed Lord Granby, approvingly.

"'Tis well, my lord," said Colonel Preston, "for those swords have killed as many Frenchmen as any blades in Europe."

As yet all was still—not a shot had stirred the morning air; but we knew that the French were advancing, as from time to time the sky-blue colours, with the golden lilies and the steady gleam of bayonets appeared among the trees, the hedges, and broken ground in front.

James Keith of Inverugie was near me. He was smiling now, and there was a bright flush on his cheek with a feverish restlessness in his eye, for the belief in the old prediction was stronger than ever

in his heart, and I pitied the poor lad, for he was brave as a Bayard or a Du Guesclin.

Ere long a noisy murmur—the hum of expectation—passed along the first line, when eight battalions of French—the vanguard, which was led by the Duc de Broglie (who was mounted on a splendid white horse with housings flashing in the sun), and which had passed the Weser at midnight, after marching on with perfect confidence until they reached the crest of an eminence, halted simultaneously, on finding to their astonishment the whole army of the allies now acting in unison, disposed in excellent order, and formed in three lines, the first of which reached almost to the gates of Minden, and covered the entire plain of Todtenhausen!

A discovery so unexpected filled the

Duke with embarrassment; but it was too late to retreat.

"St. Denis for France!" he exclaimed, waving his baton, and ordered the Cavalry, which had covered his advance, to charge. Thus, in five minutes, the battle began in all its fury about six o'clock, A.M.: a battle in describing which I shall generally confine myself to a few personal episodes.

On the Hanoverian Guards and the six regiments of British Infantry—our brave 12th, 20th, 23rd, 25th, or Edinburgh, 37th, and 51st—fell the chief fury of the action. They were all formed in one division, protected by a brigade of British artillery under Captains Drummond and MacBean; and we writhed in our saddles when we saw them knocked over like nine-pins—their red coats dotting all the green plain in our front; and yet no order was given for us to advance and support them.

After repulsing the French Infantry they were assailed by a column of Swiss, with whom they exchanged several volleys at twenty yards distance.

Shoulder to shoulder they stood, our splendid British Infantry, the rear-ranks filling up the gaps in front, the men never pausing under fire, save to wipe their pans, renew their priming, or change their flints, for none would fall to the rear. In the words of the old ballad—

> "So closing up on every side,
> No slackness there was found,"

amid the fierce roar of musketry and the clouds of smoke which enveloped all the plain. Colonel Kingsley, at the head of a Cavalry regiment on our left, had two officers shot dead by his side, two horses killed under him, and he received a musket ball through his hat.

Now the French brought up several

batardes, as they term their eight-pounders, and the range of these extended to us, the cavalry of the second line.

Almost immediately after these guns opened, I heard a half-stifled scream near me, and turning, saw Keith doubled in two, and falling from his horse mortally wounded and dying. A cannon-ball had torn away his bowels, and my heart was wrung on seeing him gasping beneath my horse's feet, while the memory of the prediction flashed upon me. He died in a few minutes.

The great aim of the French marshals was now to drive in or destroy either flank of the allies. In endeavouring to effect this object, a charge of cavalry was made. The Household Troops of France, most of whom were noblesse, the red, grey, and black mousquetaires, with the carabiniers and gendarmerie, came boldly on. They

were led by Prince Xavier of Saxony, brother of the Queen of France, a brave soldier, distinguished by his bearing, his splendid uniform, which was covered with orders, his sparkling diamond star and piebald charger. Forcing a passage, sword in hand, through the flank of our first line, he was advancing towards us, re-forming his glittering squadrons as they came on, when by order of the Marquis of Granby, we advanced to repel them.

I saw old Preston's withered cheek redden with stern joy, and his sunken eye sparkle brightly, as he rapidly formed us in open column of squadrons at the usual distance of twenty-four feet between each other.

"Forward, my lads! Keep your horses well in hand—no closing—no crowding. March!"

But when we began to move, the ordinary distance from boot-top to boot-top

between the files became closer and denser, till we formed as it were a ponderous mass of men and horses wedged together.

"Trot!" cried the colonel; then followed, "Gallop—CHARGE!"

His voice blended with the trumpet's twang; there was a rush of hoofs, a hard breathing of men and horses, a rustling of standards and rattle of accoutrements, as we rushed with uplifted swords and with a wild hurrah upon the recoiling foe.

We trod them down like the hempfield over which we spurred; and in that dreadful shock, down went mousequetaire, gendarme, cuirassier, and we made a horrid slaughter of the French Household Troops.

The colonel of the Mousquetaires Gris, an old officer, whose breast was covered with stars and medals, was pistolled by

one of our corporals; and Prince Xavier of Saxony, separated from his discomfited column, found himself engaged in a hand-to-hand conflict with Hob Elliot.

Aware of the vast difference between them in strength and stature, worthy Hob Elliot tried to spare and capture the Prince, of whose rank he was ignorant, and who was a very little man; but he resisted bravely, and gave our poor Borderer several severe sword-cuts. Hob at last lost all patience, cut him down, and was about to capture him by the collar, when a stray shot struck the unfortunate Prince, who fell dead from his horse.

This occurred immediately in front of our 51st Foot.

While we waged this conflict on the right, the valour of the Prussian and Hanoverian Dragoons under the Prince of Holstein and others on our left,

repulsed the enemy, and compelled them to seek safety in a flight which soon became general along the whole line, despite every effort of the Duc de Broglie and Maréchal de Contades.

"It was at this instant," says an historian of the war, "that Prince Ferdinand sent orders to Lord George Sackville, who commanded the British and Hanoverian Horse which composed the right wing of the allies, to advance to the charge. If these orders had been cheerfully obeyed, the battle of Minden would have been as decisive as that of Blenheim. The French army would have been utterly destroyed, or totally routed and driven out of Germany. But whatever was the cause, the orders were not sufficiently precise, were misinterpreted, or imperfectly understood."

The cause of the misfortune was this.

We had just re-formed after repelling the Household Cavalry, when Major Shirley, minus his cocked-hat and kid gloves, and what was more, his presence of mind, looking ghastly pale and wild, and so agitated apparently that he could scarcely articulate, rode up to Colonel Preston (who was sitting on his old horse as cool as a cucumber, with the bullets whistling about him), and inquired for Lord George Sackville, whose whereabouts the colonel indicated, by pointing with his sword to a horseman whose aspect was somewhat shadowy amid the eddying smoke.

Shirley's conventional smile had vanished now, and he rode hurriedly on. His instructions were to order the whole line of cavalry to pursue; but this message in his then state of mind he failed to deliver, and hence the omission of an im-

mediate cavalry advance—a miscarriage for which Lord George Sackville, after being victimized by the public press, had to appear before a general court-martial.

Shirley's undisguised panic was, however, unnecessary, as *his* presentiment was not fulfilled, and he escaped untouched amid the horrors of a field whereon lay one thousand three hundred and ninety-four officers and men of our six British infantry regiments *alone*, and I know not how many of our allies.

Two thousand French were hurled at the bayonet's point into the Weser, and five thousand more, with Princes Xavier and De Camille, were left dead upon the plain, with many standards and forty-three pieces of cannon. On some of the latter I saw "25th and 51st Foot" chalked, to indicate that these corps had taken them. The Comte de Lutzelbourg and the

Marquis De Monti, two maréchaux-de-camp, were captured by the Greys.

The passage of the fugitives across the Weser was a scene of horror.

Beside the stone bridge already mentioned, the French engineer, M. Monjoy, had chained across the stream two pontoons, which broke under the weight of the passers; thus many waggons full of wounded officers were swept away by the current, and the flower of the Cavalry, particularly the Carabiniers and Mousquetaires, were destroyed.

Amid the shrieks, the cries, the scattered shots that filled the air, we heard the hoarse hurrahs of the advancing Germans, with the clear ringing cheers of the British, and the shouts of "Forward with the Light Bobs and Buffers—support the Tow-rows!"

The latter was the nickname of the

Grenadiers in those days, and they in turn named the battalion men "buffers," or "mousers" in the militia; while the "Light Bobs" were the pet company of every corps, being always the smartest and most active men.

The town of Minden surrendered with five thousand men, the half of whom were wounded. By sunset the whole of our cavalry were gone in pursuit, save our Light Troop, which, with a few Prussian Hussars, remained on the field to protect the wounded, to patrol after plunderers, and oversee the working parties who interred the dead.

In the activity of that pursuit old Colonel Preston surpassed every other officer. He actually took the Greys *two hundred* miles from the field, and captured a vast number of prisoners.*

* "Regimental Records."

Part of the military chest, with all the equipages of Maréchal de Contades and the Prince of Condé fell into his hands —prizes of no inconsiderable value.

CHAPTER IV.

PRINCE XAVIER OF SAXONY.

The Light Troop had gone more than a mile from the field with the pursuing cavalry before it was ordered to return on the service just stated. When falling back, we passed through a hamlet where the baggage of our brigade was lying, and there we were surrounded by our soldiers' wives, clamorously inquiring for tidings of the past day.

"Oh, please your honour, gude sir," cried one, holding her baby to her bare breast with one hand, while the other clung to my stirrup-leather, her eyes streaming with tears the while; "can

you tell us if the regiment has been engaged, for heavy has the firing been all day ?"

"Have the Greys suffered—have the Greys suffered ?"

"Did you see my puir gudeman—he is in the 1st troop—John Drummond, sir ?"

"Shot—my poor Willie shot !" shrieked another. "Then God help his puir bairns and me in this waefu' country, for we ne'er shall see the bonnie Braes o' Angus again !"

Such were some of the cries I heard on all sides as we hurried through the hamlet at a trot, and returned to the field on which the moonlight had succeeded the long level flush of the set sun.

There lay all the usual amount of death and agony—the sad paraphernalia of war—and the pale dead in every variety of atti-

tude and contortion, so close to each other that in some places one might have stepped from body to body.

Already had many been stripped nude as when they came into the world by those wretches who hover like carrion crows on the skirts of an army; and their pale marble skins gleamed horribly white with their black and gaping wounds in the cold moonlight.

Amid these many horrors—the dying and the dead, legs, arms, blood-gouts and spattered brains—some phlegmatic German infantry were quietly bivouacking and lighting fires to cook their supper. Others lay down weary and worn, their mouths parched with thirst, and their canteens empty, after twelve hours' marching and fighting.

As we rode slowly over the field to scare plunderers and protect the wounded,

I heard, amid a group of officers whom we passed, one laughing loudly, and found him to be Major Shirley. A revulsion of feeling made the flow of this man's spirits extravagant; and here, amid the rows and piles of dead and wounded—amid the expiring on that solemn, harrowing, and moonlighted plain—he was joking and laughing, like a fool or a drunkard—he, the poltroon who could not articulate an order when under a fire at noon!

"*His* weird is no come yet," I heard old Sergeant Duff mutter as we rode on in extended order, our horses sometimes stumbling over what appeared to be a heap of freshly gathered grain or hemp. These had been uprooted by some kind hand, and spread over a dead comrade to protect or conceal his body from plunderers; and everywhere lay fragments of

exploded shells and the half imbedded cannon-shot that had ploughed up the grass or corn in long furrows.

We sought for and interred, separately, in his cloak, the body of poor Keith, our young lieutenant. Elsewhere the dead were rapidly interred; some by lantern-light, and with them, undistinguished among the rank and file, Prince Xavier of Saxony.

One soldier of our 51st got his diamond star, and sold it to a Jew for some hundred pounds, which he spent in six months, keeping the regiment in an uproar while the money lasted; another got his purse, which was filled with louis d'ors; and a third 51st man got his watch, which was studded with brilliants. Some Westphalian boors then stripped the body, which was flung into a pit and interred with about twenty others.

All the churches in Minden and its vicinity were converted into hospitals. The interior of the old Cathedral—whither I rode to inquire after Hob Elliot and some others of ours—presented a very singular scene. It is a dark but stately edifice, said to have been formerly the palace of the Pagan King Wittikind, but was turned by him into a church after his conversion.

Along the high-arched Gothic aisles were rows of wounded soldiers—British, French, and Hanoverian—groaning, praying, cursing, and rustling fretfully among the bloody straw on which they lay. Knapsacks, haversacks, and accoutrements hung on every carved knob, and there was not a saint who did not bear a load of sword-belts, bridles, or canteens slung about his neck or piled within his niche, while, in the Gothic porch, the chapter-

house, and the painted chapel of Our Lady of Minden, stood surgeons' blocks for operations; and there were Dr. Probe and all the medical men of the army busy in their shirt-sleeves with knife and saw, and up to their bared elbows in blood.

There was no time, nor was it then the fashion to reduce fractures; so around each military Æsculapius lay piles of legs, arms, hands, and feet, amputated as fast as their owners could be brought from the field; and these revolting fragments were cast into a corner until they could be carted away to the pits that were being dug by our working parties amid the harvest-fields on the plain of Todtenhausen.

But such is war, and such are its grim concomitants.

On the noon of the day after the battle I was returning from the visit to this hospital, or cathedral, and was proceeding to re-

join the Light Troop which was bivouacked in a hemp-field at some distance from the pits where the dead lay, when two French officers and a trumpeter, all mounted, and accompanied by six dragoons, came suddenly upon me at an angle of the road.

As one bore a white banner on a sergeant's pike, I recognised at once a flag of truce, so we simultaneously reined up and courteously saluted each other. One wore the gorgeous uniform of Colonel of the Regiment de Bretagne; the other was a French Hussar officer, in whom I recognised the Chevalier de Boisguiller.

"*Peste! monsieur,*" said he, "you and I have the luck of meeting in strange places, but seldom under pleasant circumstances. We are in haste, for those we have left behind are not likely to wait for us, pressed as they now are by your cavalry; so, can you direct us to the

quarters of Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick?"

"With pleasure. You are the bearer——"

"Nay, my friend Monsieur le Comte is bearer of a letter from the Maréchal de Contades, our commander-in-chief, to the Prince, inquiring into the fate of Prince Xavier of Saxony."

"His fate?" I repeated, and shook my head.

"*Oui, monsieur,*" said the officer, who bore the rank of count, with great earnestness; "if he is wounded we come to offer a suitable equivalent in exchange for him; if, unhappily, killed, to solicit the restoration of his remains, for he is the brother of her Majesty the Queen of France, and I had the honour to be his particular friend."

While we were speaking, a royal coach

and six, accompanied by a squadron of French Household Troops, preceded by an officer bearing a white flag, and by four trumpeters, wheeled round the angle of the road and joined us.

"Here comes the Prince's carriage, with Monsieur Monjoy to receive him, whether dead or alive," said Boisguiller.

With some reluctance I informed these officers that I had seen the Prince cut down by one of our own troopers, and almost immediately afterwards pierced by a ball in front of the grenadier company of our 51st Foot; and that his body had been buried with others on the field.

This information filled the Frenchman with a sorrow that seemed genuine; and the colonel of the Regiment de Bretagne, a handsome, but stern-looking young man, actually wept aloud.

Prince Ferdinand, to whose quarters I

conducted them, gave orders to open some of the pits in the field; so a working party was detailed, and a search instituted among the naked and mangled dead for the body of the unfortunate Prince.

No less than eighty of these horrid graves were unclosed, and their poor occupants pulled by the legs or arms from among the mould and examined before the discovery of the Prince's piebald charger in one hecatomb gave hope that his late rider's remains might be near; and accordingly, in one that was filled with Mousquetaires Gris et Noires, we found a nude and bloody corpse, which all the French officers at once declared to be Prince Xavier of Saxony, stripped even to his boots.

He had received a bullet in the left temple, which was his mortal wound. His right arm was found to be broken.

This had been done by the sword of Hob Elliot. His fine hair was still neatly dressed, tied by a blue satin ribbon, and powdered with brown *maréchale.*

The poor remains were rolled in a large crimson velvet mantle, bearing a royal star, and placed in the coach, which was driven rapidly off, followed by its escort, to which all our guards, sentinels, and out-pickets presented arms.

CHAPTER V.

THE BRIDGE OF FREYENTHAL.

Severe weather succeeded the battle of Minden, and the Scots Greys, while it continued, were ordered to cantonments in villages near the Lahn.

On a dull wet morning we paraded in our cloaks and bade adieu to the banks of the Weser, and to the fatal plain of the 1st of August. By sound of trumpet we fell into our ranks, and the corporal-major of each troop proceeded to call the muster-roll.

Alas! there was called over on that morning the name of more than one brave fellow who could respond to it no

more, and over whom the autumn grass was sprouting.

Amid the snows of winter we idled away our time in those dreary villages of Prussian Westphalia, till Major Shirley arrived with a message of a peculiar nature for Colonel Preston.

Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, to whose staff the major was now attached (Lord Sackville having been summarily dismissed the service by the king), sent him to inform the colonel that in the district named the Rodhargebirge, a certain baron named Conrad of Freyenthal—whose character would have suited admirably one of Anne Radcliffe's romances—had placed his wife in a dungeon or vault of his residence, and kept her a prisoner therein, while a mistress occupied her place, as the ballads say, "in bower and hall." The orders of his royal high-

ness were, that we should send a party there to free and protect the lady, and also to blow up a bridge of the Lahn close by Freyenthal, which had been partially undermined already by M. Monjoy, an engineer of the French rear-guard already mentioned.

Guided by a peasant, Colonel Preston went with the Light Troop in person on this service, and as it was not likely to be a desperate one, Major Shirley accompanied us, and contrived to play me a trick which I had reason long to remember.

We marched from our cantonment an hour before daybreak, when the sharp crescent moon was waning coldly behind the hills, and the bronze-like conical outlines of the fir-trees cut acute angles against the clear blue sky. After passing through a wooded defile in the mountains, we reached the castle of Freyenthal, a small

square tower, surrounded by a barbican wall, and perched on an insulated mass of rock, at the base of which the Lahn poured over a great cascade, that was then almost a mass of icicles.

Close by this tower the river was spanned by the ancient stone bridge which we had such special orders to blow up.

Before this feudal fortress we sounded a trumpet thrice, but met with no response, and could see no one, nor any sign of life about the place, save the dark smoke that ascended from the chimneys into the clear winter sky. The arched gate of the outer wall was strong, and being securely barred within, defied all our efforts.

While ten of our men dismounted, and under the order of a German engineer officer proceeded to examine and make

use of the old French mine under one of the piers of the bridge, Colonel Preston, whose temper was apt to be chafed by trifles, deliberately blew up the gate of the tower by a petard which he had brought for the express purpose.

Roused from his apathy or his potations by this unexpected explosion, the proprietor of Freyenthal, a stern-looking man, with powdered hair, a hooked nose, and fierce, black, bushy eyebrows, rushed bareheaded and unarmed into the courtyard, accompanied by two or three men-servants of bloated and forbidding appearance.

Then Colonel Preston in a few words acquainted him with the orders of Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, and required the immediate surrender of the baroness—our errand and intention. But, undaunted by the colonel's rank and the aspect of his

troop of horse crowding all the pathway that led to the tower, the baron roughly taunted him with "unwise interference in domestic affairs, and with being an insolent braggart to boot."

On hearing this, the fiery old man leaped from his horse, tossed its bridle to an orderly, and drawing his sword, offered the baron the use of another, as well as of a pistol, saying—

"I scorn to take advantage of any man —we are now on equal terms."

The German uttered a hoarse oath, snatched the pistol, cocked it, and fired straight at the head of Colonel Preston, who would undoubtedly have been shot had I not struck the barrel up with my sword. At the same instant our trumpeter, who was close by the colonel, struck the would-be assassin to the earth by a blow of his trumpet.

The wife of this most irritable Teuton we found exactly in the plight Shirley had described, immured in a vault, a cold and miserable place, the sole furniture of which was a truckle-bed. We put the baron in her place, and sent her by her own request, to the Lutheran Convent at Marburg, while her rival was made to ride the *cheval de bois* for an hour, with a carbine slung at each foot.

While the baron's Westphalian wine and beer were freely brought from his cellar for the use of the troop; while he growled and swore in his vault, and while the bridge of the Lahn was being undermined, Colonel Preston desired me to take ten men with me, and ride a mile or two into the country on the other side of the river, to reconnoitre the district, to see or inquire about the disposition of the enemy, but to avoid all risk.

"Come, Gauntlet," said Shirley, as I tightened my waistbelt and put my foot in the stirrup; "take a parting cup ere you go."

"Excuse me, major," said I, coldly; "I have had wine already—and the hour is not yet noon."

"Toast Miss Gauntlet, man—Zounds! here in Westphalia, so far away from Old England. To your fair cousin's health!" he exclaimed, holding out a silver-rimmed horn of wine.

"To Aurora, then!" said I, and drained the wine, after clinking our horns together in true German fashion, while Shirley's usual smile expanded into a laugh, and when he laughed it always portended mischief.

"Come, my lads," said I, to my chosen ten; "forward—trot!"

"Don't ride too far, Gauntlet," cried

Shirley, still laughing loudly, "for the bridge is quite undermined."

"How that fool laughs at his own folly," thought I, as we crossed the antique bridge at a hard trot, and rode into the frozen country beyond. From the bank of the Lahn the ground sloped gradually upward for miles, though intersected here and there by thickly wooded ravines; thus, as we traversed the snow, when looking back we could distinctly see the old tower of Freyenthal, standing dark and grim with its smoky chimneys above the half-frozen river.

The country seemed partially deserted, and any peasants or woodcutters who saw us, fled at our approach, and concealed themselves. We rode several miles, and by the wayside passed the ruins of many roofless cottages and deserted farms; but now Hob Elliot assured me that in the

clear frosty air he "more than once had heard the rumble of wheels—perhaps of artillery."

As we saw nothing even in the most distant portion of the level and snow-clad landscape, I ridiculed this notion; but Hob was obstinate, and stuck to his fears on the subject.

"Excuse me, sir," said he, "but I know that I may take the liberty of talking to *you*, for when I lay in hospital at Minden, wounded, sick, and dying as I thought, no hand was more ready than yours to help me. Never did my auld mother at hame, when I was a yellow-haired bairn, tread mair lightly by my cradle than you did by my straw pallet, to see that I took those devilish draughts of old Drs. Blackstrap and Probe of ours."

"But what about all that now, Hob?—to the point."

"Well, sir, if I might recommend—I'm an older soldier than you—we should go threes about now, and get back, for the bridge is undermined, and that Major Shirley——"

"Well?" said I, as Hob paused.

"He had a queer twinkle in his eye as we rode off."

"What, Hob—you do not mean—you cannot insinuate——"

"Pardon me, sir," said the big burly trooper, lowering his voice; "but he laughed in the faces of the dead at Minden—faces that in life he was grave enough before, and I dinna like a bane in his body."

"Come, come, Hob, you must not speak in this way to me. The major is esteemed a good officer."

"I know that, sir," replied the trooper, dryly; "but by whom?"

"Well," said I, impatiently, "by whom?"

"The worst men in the army."

"Hum—he is a brave man at all events, Hob."

"Yes, sir—we all saw that when he bungled the orders for Lord George Sackville at Minden, and cost the poor general his commission—he that was there under fire, as brave as a lion, in the old red coat that he had worn at Fontenoy."

"Good or bad, Hob, brave or not, it is perilous work for you to speak thus of an officer."

"Well, sir, I beg your pardon," replied the obstinate trooper, "but I can't help having my own thoughts of him, and they are *unco queer ones*."

Just as he said this we reached the brow of an eminence, over which the road dipped suddenly down into a hollow; and

there just beneath us, we saw a train of some thirty laden waggons, proceeding leisurely under an escort of at least three companies of French troops, the *Volontaires de Clermont.* Thus the rumble of wheels so long heard by Hob, was now completely accounted for!

The French uttered a shout on beholding us, and proceeded to handle their muskets, by priming, loading, and casting about, while we wheeled round our horses and departed without further ceremony to reach the bridge of Lahn.

A hundred or more of the French tossed aside their knapsacks, haversacks and everything that might encumber them, and rushed up the slope to the crest of the eminence. Here they poured a confused volley after us which did no harm, but I could see the bullets ripping up the frozen snow far in front. Then

with a yell the Volontaires dashed after us in pursuit.

A partial thaw, which had been setting in, made portions of the snow-covered road deep and heavy, but we soon left the French infantry far in our rear, though they continued to follow us double quick, determined to have a little shooting if possible, as they had enjoyed none since the day of Minden.

We soon distanced them more than a mile, and ere long saw the tower of Freyenthal dotted with the red coats of our comrades, and with rather anxious eyes I measured the long slope that lay between us and the bridge, where we could see our working party, now that their mining task was over, sitting on the parapets in their shirt sleeves, and conversing. Near them, on horseback, was an officer, in whom, by his kevenhüller

hat and scarlet feather, I had no difficulty in recognising Major Shirley.

As we came on at a hand-gallop, we suddenly saw a commotion among our men at the bridge as they pointed towards the enemy. Then Shirley seemed to gesticulate violently, and order them to fall back, waving a match which he had snatched from one of them, and which was smoking in his hand.

We saw him stoop from his saddle and fire the train!

In a minute after this there was a roar in the still air; amid a cloud of dust and smoke the old bridge of the Lahn rose bodily aloft, almost in a solid mass, and then sank in foam and ruin among the blocks of melting ice that rolled over the cascade below.

"Treachery!" cried Hob Elliot, shaking his clenched and gauntleted hand; "he

has blown up the bridge and cut off our retreat!"

In another moment we all reined up our breathless horses at the edge of the steep rocks, through which the swollen winter stream was roaring and boiling in its mad career towards the Rhine.

"In the name of Heaven," I exclaimed, filled with anger and apprehension, "why has this been done? Rascals, who ordered this?—you have ruined us."

"Major Shirley is alone to blame, sir, not we," replied a sergeant on the other side, saluting me as he spoke; and though the black stream that roared between us was only thirty yards broad, the nature of its banks and its force defied all attempts to cross by swimming.

"It is most unfortunate, my dear Gauntlet," cried Shirley, with a bland and broader smile than usual on his face—

"most unfortunate affair—the more so as the enemy are coming rapidly on."

"But, sirrah, what in the world tempted you to commit this act of folly?" I demanded, furiously.

"My dear fellow—ah, ah! you should remember the old saw—in this world expect everything, and be astonished at nothing. I crave your pardon, as it is not pleasant to have one's promotion stopped, and be a prisoner of war. 'Twas all a mistake—a deuced error in judgment, as the Court said which shot Admiral Byng. But don't attempt to swim the river," he exclaimed, on seeing that in my fury I made my horse rear wildly up; "it is too broad, too deep and rapid. Surrender with a good grace—discretion is the better part of valour. Here come the French Light Troops. Zounds! and they are firing, too!"

And with an ironical smile, which I could see distinctly, he waved his hand with a mock salute, and somewhat hastily entered the tower of Freyenthal, for a few scattered files of the Volontaires de Clermont, when they came up, opened a fire upon our men, who, in bewilderment at the whole affair, were loitering at the other end of the ruined bridge.

"I have swam baith Esk and Liddle in full flood, and damn me if I wont swim this!" exclaimed Hob Elliot, who was about to spur his horse madly into the stream, when I caught his bridle. And thus, in less than five minutes, with my ten troopers, I found myself disarmed, dismounted, and marched off a prisoner of war, in presence of Colonel Preston and the remainder of the Light Troop, through the cowardice or treachery—I knew not which—of Shirley the aide-de-camp.

CHAPTER VI.

LES VOLONTAIRES DE CLERMONT.

My handsome grey trooper was bestrode by a dapper little French sous-lieutenant, who seemed to enjoy the ride amazingly, all the more that I, a *sacré Anglais*, trudged by his side in my boots, secured to the stirrup-leather by a cord.

Fords on the river there were none near; thus, as we were marched off, we knew that all the courage of our comrades, and the skill and energy of Colonel Preston, could avail us nothing. Of all my party I was the most depressed; but big Hob Elliot was the most vituperative, and swore at our bad luck and at our captors, in

terms which fortunately they did not understand.

"The devil!" he muttered; "if they discover 'twas I who encountered their favourite Prince Xavier, and gave him that Lockerbie lick in front of the 51st, they will shoot me off hand like a hoodiecrow."

"Unless we tell them, they can never know; and if they did, your fears are unnecessary, Hob. The French are too brave to resent what was done in fair fight."

"Gude wot, I did all I could to spare the puir body. My father, who was a smith at Cannobie, in Liddesdale, used to say that 'mony a stout trooper has been lost for lack of a nail;' but, by the horns o' auld Clootie, here are ten of us and a cornet lost for lack of a little prudence."

"Prudence—a nail—what the devil are you talking about, Hob?" said I, angrily.

"Weel, sir, for lack of a nail the shoe

was lost, and for lack of the shoe the horse; and for want of his horse the trooper came to grief, being overtaken in his boots and slain by the enemy. And all this came aboot by the lack of a nail in his horse's shoe—sae quoth my faither the smith."

"And thus, Hob, if I understand your parable, you think that for lack of a little prudence you have all lost your liberty, and I my promotion and liberty for years to come?"

"Just so. Had we gone threes about at the time I ventured to hint it, we would have been on the other side of the river wi' auld Geordie Preston just now. But as for years, sir, dinna speak o' years," he exclaimed, clenching a huge bony hand that must often have swung the great hammer in his father's forge, and at the village games: "there is not a prison in

a' France, e'en the *Basteel* itsel', that will haud Hob Elliot gin he wants to win oot."

My anger at Shirley was deep—too deep for me to express to my companions in misfortune. I remembered how he had withheld the letter of Aurora, from the time we were quartered in Alphen, until the morning of Minden; how, on this very day, he had smilingly warned me to remember that the bridge of Freyenthal was undermined; how I had seen him gesticulating with our unwilling men, and had witnessed their most evident hesitation ere he snatched the match from one and sprung the mine!

I saw more clearly than ever that he loved my cousin; that he viewed, or thought he viewed in me a rival, and believed that he had now fully provided for me for some time at least, if not for

ever, as few could tell what might be the dangers and contingencies of a military imprisonment in France.

Then occurred an idea under which I writhed anew. That after enduring perhaps years of captivity—years during which my comrades of the Greys would be playing the great game of war and glory—years that would see my brother subalterns all captains and field-officers, I might be transmitted with others home to find myself a cornet still, and a penniless one too, while, probably, Shirley the poltroon, who had worked me as much evil (just as his brother had done poor Charters) might be the husband of Aurora, and the proprietor of my patrimony—of Netherwood, its hall and fields, wood and wold!

With this chain of thought burning within me I turned fiercely and looked

back to the old tower of Freyenthal. Across the snow-clad landscape it was distinctly visible, with a group of red-coats near it; but I was not permitted to loiter, as a tug of the cord which secured me to my horse warned me that the rider was impatient, and compelled me to trudge on.

We soon reached the train of waggons which were halted in the ravine, and amid the cracking of whips, and much noisy congratulation and laughter, the escort of the Volontaires de Clermont resumed their route, we knew not and cared not whither.

Among the officers who accompanied this party I observed one, a fair-haired young man, of very prepossessing aspect, who checked his horse for a moment, and regarded me attentively.

"Monsieur l'officier," said he, lifting

his hat, "we have surely had the pleasure of meeting before?"

"You were one of those who came with the flag of truce to Minden," said I, responding to his salute.

"Exactly, monsieur—for the body of Prince Xavier—ah, diable! a sad business that was" (at the prince's name Hob Elliot looked about him as if preparing to fight or flee). "I am M. Monjoy, of the French Engineer department."

I bowed, on which he again uncovered his head, with that genuine politeness and grace which were so charming in the French officers of the old school.

"Monsieur le lieutenant," said he, turning sharply to the dapper little subaltern who had assumed a right of property in my person, and saying something — I know not what — rapidly in French. On this, the cord which secured

me to the stirrup-leather of my own saddle was undone, and I was permitted to march at my ease; but the horse itself my captor resolutely refused to give up.

I found the young engineer Monjoy a very pleasant companion. He was grave, earnest, and rational—quite unlike Boisguiller and many other French officers whom I had met. He held out hopes that I should soon be exchanged (so much the worse for *you*, Major Shirley, thought I), as we had so many of King Louis' officers in our hands, among the 5000 prisoners taken in the town of Minden. He said many other cheering things, and insisted on sharing with me the contents of his haversack (German sausage and biscuits) and of his canteen; and I remained by his side, during a long, slow, and bitterly cold day's march,

which brought us to the little town of Ysembourg, whose prince had been slain at the battle of Minden.

His castle, a famous old fortress, crowns the summit of a hill near Corbach. The French standard was flying on it, and there, next morning, we were conducted with several other prisoners, chiefly Black Hussars of the Prussian army, under an escort of the Volontaires de Clermont.

The morning was chilly and depressing; a dense frosty mist covered all the ground; we were without cloaks, without breakfast, cold and miserable; and gloomily we looked at each other as we trod up the snow-clad hill, passing several ancient iron-mines, till we neared the gate of the castle, at which stood two sentinels of the Regiment de Bretagne, muffled in their greatcoats, all whitened by the frost-rime, which seemed to have edged

their three-cocked hats as with silver lace.

While we were ascending, one of our escort suddenly perceived a ring on my right hand. It was the emerald given to me by Jacqueline on that morning when first we met—when I had saved her life near St. Malo; and now the rascal demanded it at once and most peremptorily too.

I declined to comply, on which, with great deliberation, he cocked his piece, drew his thumb-nail across the edge of the flint, to ensure its not missing fire, and deliberately placed the muzzle to my head. Whether or not the fellow would have dared to shoot an officer who was a prisoner of war, I cannot say, but on finding myself so vehemently pressed I drew off the ring, which he at once clutched, and put in his haversack, with

a laugh and an oath, little foreseeing how dear the bauble was to cost him.

At that moment a blow from behind stretched him on the earth. It was dealt by the clenched hand of Hob Elliot, who, poor fellow, ran imminent danger, for a dozen of fixed bayonets were directly levelled at him breast high, and he would have been instantly immolated, had not an officer of rank, accompanied by M. Gervais Monjoy, rushed forward from the castle-gate, by their influence and authority to stop the brawl.

In the officer I recognised the count who had come with Monjoy for Prince Xavier's body, and who had been so deeply moved on beholding his remains exhumed on the field.

To him I was about to prefer a complaint of the robbery, when he hurriedly turned away, having other matters to

attend to, and I was left with the plunderer, who had divined my intention, and tapping the butt of his firelock, gave me a threatening grimace, so much as to say, "Beware!"

Soon after this I was conducted into an ante-room, and thus separated from the rest of the prisoners, who were marched into the interior of the castle.

As the ten men of the Greys left me, each came forward in succession and saluted me as I shook hands with them all, and some said—

"God bless you, sir; I hope we shall soon meet again."

A hope—save in one instance—never realized by these worthy fellows, as nine of them died in French prisons, I know not where or how—probably at Bitsche or Verdun.

The room in which I found myself

appeared to be a kind of ante-chamber. Its windows were barred, and a sentinel with his bayonet fixed paced to and fro monotonously outside. Within were tables littered with letters, order-books, and several orderlies with canes and side-arms were loitering about on forms and benches.

"Who commands here?" I inquired of one.

"Monseigneur le Duc de Broglie," replied the soldier, with a polite bow; "this chateau of the prince of Ysembourg is his head-quarters, and in a few minutes monsieur will have the honour of being brought before him."

At that moment I heard a voice at some distance say, with a tone of authority,

"Monsieur le Comte de Bourgneuf, *bring in your prisoner.*"

At this unpleasant conjunction of

names I felt my heart beat quick, and then I saw the colonel of the Regiment de Bretagne, the stern-looking bearer of the flag of truce, beckoning me follow him.

I did so, and in another moment found myself in the presence of the famous Maréchal Duc de Broglie—the father of Jacqueline !

CHAPTER VII.

THE DUC DE BROGLIE.

There was one other present whom I could very well have spared—the Count de Bourgneuf—the stern young colonel, who eyed me steadily with a glance of a very mingled cast—at least, I thought so, for he was the husband of Jacqueline de Broglie.

The Duke, her father, a venerable and stately soldier, who wore the uniform of a maréchal of France, but of a fashion somewhat old, and who had his hair profusely powdered, received me with a polite salute.

The room in which we met was a

vaulted chamber of the old castle. In a corner thereof stood a *cornette*, a standard peculiar to the French Light Cavalry, and from its pole there still hung the white silk scarf which was usually tied to these cornettes when the dragoons went into action, to render them conspicuous, so that they might be rallied round it; and this scarf had doubtless been there since the duke's own regiment had fled at a gallop from Minden. In a corner were embroidered the initials "J. de B." Had Jacqueline's fair fingers worked that scarf and standard? In another corner stood a pair of kettledrums and a few muskets.

A table, whereon lay some maps of Germany by Herman Moll, several French newspapers—particularly the *Mercure*—the *Gazette de Bruxelles;* bundles of dispatches and writing materials stood near the arched Gothic fireplace. A few an-

tique chairs were round it, and on these were seated two or three field-officers of the Regiment de Bretagne, Monjoy, the engineer, and the Comte de Bourgneuf, all in full uniform, powdered and aiguiletted, with their swords, sashes, and orders on.

All these details I saw at a glance, and again my eyes rested on the benign face of the old Duc de Broglie, in whom, however, I failed to trace any resemblance to his daughter.

At the door of the room stood a sentinel of the Volontaires de Clermont, with his musket "ordered" and bayonet fixed—the same fellow who had so violently possessed himself of my emerald ring.

"Monsieur le prisonnier is an officer?" said the Duke, bowing again.

"I have the honour," said I, while

Bourgneuf eyed me superciliously through his eyeglass.

"In the British service, as I see by your uniform."

"The *Ecossais Gris.*"

"*Bien!*" said the Duke, smiling; "I remember some of them. Your rank?"

"Cornet."

"Ah—it is unfortunate to be taken thus, with a rank so junior; an old fellow like me might wish for a rest; but you—ah monsieur! you may be long a prisoner if this war continues."

My heart sank at this remark, but I said,

"I am not without hope of effecting an exchange."

"You were taken prisoner at the bridge of the Lahn?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Your people blew it up, M. Monjoy

says. How was it that they did so without permitting you to repass it?"

"I know not, monseigneur," said I, for I would not own in that place that a British officer would act so basely as Shirley had done. The Duke repeated his question, but I simply bowed with the same answer.

"What forces are there?" he inquired.

"Only the Light Troop of my regiment—the 2nd Dragoons, or *Ecossais Gris*."

"The rest of the Regiment?"

"Are cantoned further down the river."

"Your strength, monsieur?" continued the Duke, glancing at a paper on the table.

"Six troops."

"That we know," said Count Bourgneuf, brusquely, "there is a troop of your Scottish Grey Horse in each of the six

villages along the Lahn; but what is their numerical strength?"

"I have had no means of knowing since our rapid *pursuit* at Minden," said I, with reserve.

De Bourgneuf eyed me fiercely through his glass; but the Duke smiled, and asked,

"Where are the other regiments of milord Granby's Cavalry division?"

"I beg to be excused giving such information," replied I.

"Then, monsieur," said the Duke, suavely, "have you any idea of when Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick proposes to break up from winter quarters and take the field?"

"Happily I have no means of knowing—being merely a subaltern officer; but," added I, haughtily, "if I *did* know, most assuredly I should decline informing the General of the enemy!"

"*Très bien*—of course," said the old Duke, shrugging his shoulders.

"Beware, sir!" said the Comte de Bourgneuf, with a dark frown on his stern visage; "you would not tell, even if you knew, say you?"

"No, by Heaven!" said I, loftily.

"Monseigneur le Duc, have I your permission to summon a file of the guard with a piece of cord? *Ha, coquin!*" he added, imperiously turning to me, "I have ere now forced a more unwilling tongue to speak, by tying a cord round a prisoner's head, and wrenching it with my pistol-barrel or sword-hilt till half the scalp came off. And this I did in a district named the Morbihan, a part of France with which you once affected to be familiar."

This remark, and the keen, feverish glance which accompanied it, showed me at once that I stood on perilous ground.

"M. le Comte," exclaimed Monjoy, "bethink you of what you say and do. Monsieur is a prisoner of war. *Ma foi!* this will never pass."

"When I have been robbed by a French soldier under arms I need not be surprised by this display of ruffianism in one of his officers," said I, calmly, but while my heart swelled with anger and apprehension. The Count started to his feet; but the Duke raised his hand and voice authoritatively:

"Halt, Bourgneuf. In this matter your zeal goes beyond my wishes. But how say you, monsieur?" he added, turning sharply to me; "you speak of being robbed. Who has robbed you?"

"Men of the regiment of Count de Clermont, deprived me of my cloak, of my haversack—there was little in it, save three days' half-rations; of my purse—

there was little in it, so they were welcome to that too; but this man, who is now sentinel at your door, with the muzzle of his cocked musket at my head, like a common footpad or cutpurse, robbed me of a valuable ring, on which, for the memory of past days, I set a singular value."

Such was my dread of M. de Bourgneuf, that circumstanced as I then was I dared not tell when, or where, or for what service I had received the ring.

"Is this true, fellow?" demanded the Duke, turning sternly to the sentinel, who was too terrified to reply either in the affirmative or the negative.

"You will find it in his haversack," said I.

De Bourgneuf, without ceremony, plunged his hand into the canvas bag which was slung over the poor wretch's

right shoulder, and among his ration biscuits, hair and shoe-brushes, &c., drew forth the ring, which he handed to the Duke. On beholding it the latter started and visibly changed colour.

"Is this your ring, monsieur?" he asked, while surveying me and it alternately.

"Yes, monseigneur."

"*Mon Dieu!*" he exclaimed, with growing perplexity; "this is most singular—most marvellous! Whence had you this ring? for on my honour as peer and maréchal of France, it belonged to my dead wife and was my parting gift to my dear daughter when I left Paris to command the army in Germany."

"I got it, monseigneur, while serving with the first expedition to Brittany," said I, evasively, and to gather time for thought, as the sharp glittering eyes of

Bourgneuf were fixed on me with stern scrutiny.

"May I inquire from whom?"

"From Mademoiselle Jacqueline De Broglie on the morning when I saved her life from a galley-slave, a felon escaped from St. Malo, named Theophile Hautois, whom I afterwards flung into the Black Torrent at St. Aubin du Cormier."

"*Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed the Duke.

"*Très bon!* Marvellous!" added Monjoy, and all present save Bourgneuf, who muttered audibly the offensive epithet, "*Marmiton!*"

"I have heard of some of those things," said the Duke, extending his hands to me, "and so I pray you to keep the ring and accept my sincere gratitude for your brave protection of my child. Comte Guillaume De Boisguiller, our kinsman, who commands at St. Malo, has told me of those

passages. Bourgneuf, have you nothing to say to the protector of Jacqueline—of *your wife?*"

The Count had heard, perhaps, more than I wished, for he merely made a French grimace, and presented two fingers of his hand, and then turned on his heel.

"Monsieur le prisonnier," said the Duke, "you shall dine with me to-day. To-morrow you shall be sent across the Lahn to your regiment free, and you will have no reason to forget your interview with one so old in harness as the Maréchal De Broglie; but meanwhile you shall see how we in France punish the soldier who dishonours his colours, and degrades himself by acts of plunder. Count, make that sentinel a prisoner; assemble a drumhead court-martial, and desire the drummers of the Volontaires de Clermont to beat to arms."

The Count retired. A great bustle reigned for a time in the old castle of Ysembourg. The man who had plundered me was taken into a room adjoining that in which the Duke continued to write his letters and orders, and to take a pinch of rappee from time to time while conversing most affably with me; and I could glean that Madame De Bourgneuf had never informed him of my enacting the part of her niece's soubrette. How the Count knew of it was more than I could learn; but his grim hint about "the Morbihan" sufficed to show that he knew all. The Duke studiously abstained from all reference to military matters, save a few remarks about the new and then famous Prussian discipline and manœuvres. I listened to the old man with pleasure, and looked forward with joy and impatience to

my rejoining the Greys, and to the punishment I meant to inflict upon Major Shirley.

Meanwhile I heard the tread of feet, the clatter of accoutrements, and loud words of command uttered where the Volontaires de Clermont were parading in open column of companies on the plateau before the gate. The trial was soon over, as the sentence had been resolved on even before the drumhead court—a mere formality—had assembled. The battalion formed a hollow square, and then the Duke led me to a window from whence I could see the whole parade and ceremony.

A sergeant of the company, to which the culprit belonged, led him into the centre in heavy marching order, and fully accoutred, but having his arms tied with a rope. The brief proceedings of the court and its sentence were read by the

adjutant, and then the sergeant said in a loud voice,

"Finding thee, Silvain de Pricorbin, unworthy to bear arms, we thus degrade and render thee incapable of carrying them."

He then took the musket from his shoulder backwards, cut away his epaulettes and knapsack, drew off his cross-belts, sword and bayonet, and giving him a most deliberate kick upon the hinder part of his person, repeated,

"Te trouvant indigne de porter les armes, nous t'en dégradons. So thus art thou, Silvain de Pricorbin, degraded—begone!"

The sergeant then withdrew, on which the provost marshal advanced and laid his hand upon the poor pale wretch, whom, to my dismay, I saw hanged upon a tree about fifty yards from the gates, and in presence, it would seem, of a brother.

The drums beat a ruffle; all was over, and the Volontaires de Clermont were dismissed to resume their games of piquet, trictrac, or dominoes, and to smoke and joke in the frosty sunshine, as if nothing so terrible had occurred; and so ended the first episode of my compulsory visit to the old castle of Ysembourg.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN OLD FRIEND ARRIVES.

According to his invitation, I dined with the brave Duc de Broglie, in the hall of the old Schloss, the walls and roof of which still bore all the frescoes, heraldic devices and ornaments with which Count Josias had decorated it many years before. Bourgneuf declined to be present, and I cannot say that I regretted his absence; but we had M. Monjoy and some officers of the Regiments of Clermont and Bretagne, all pleasant, gay and affable men save the engineer, who was somewhat reserved, even sad in manner.

The Duke talked freely of the folly and

loss of life occasioned by our unmeaning expeditions to the coast of France, and dilated particularly on the third (a service which the Greys escaped, by receiving the route for Germany), which ended in the unfortunate battle of St. Cas, where General Durie, Sir John Armitage, and one thousand of our finest troops, particularly of the 1st Foot Guards, were slaughtered on the beach, while four hundred were drowned in their disastrous flight.

Minden, however, he and those present tacitly ignored; the defeat there was too recent to be a pleasant French souvenir.

He spoke frequently and always with praise of my regiment, the *Ecossais Gris*, which he knew well, having often encountered them on service. He knew Colonel Preston too, and laughed at his quaint old buff coat. He had met the corps at Dettingen, and acknowledged that it was

from *his* hand that one of the Greys wrenched away the famous White Standard —the *Cornette Blanche*—of the Gendarmes du Roi, and he perfectly remembered the retort, recorded in our first volume as having been made by Colonel Preston to Louis Philippe Duc d'Orleans, at the review of the Scots Greys in Hyde Park.

"A greater dishonour than the loss of that banner was never suffered by the Household Cavalry of France," continued the Duc de Broglie; "the *Cornette Blanche* is a royal standard, which was substituted for the ancient *Pennon Royal*, and was never unfurled save when the King in person led the army; those who served immediately under it were the princes, nobles, and maréchals of France, with old field-officers who received orders from his Majesty direct; so, messieurs,

you may imagine what I felt on finding myself unhorsed, and seeing it borne through the slaughter in the hands of a Scottish Grey trooper!"

Amid all the topics which we discussed over the wine of the defunct Prince of Ysembourg, with the contents of whose cellars, hewn deep in the old castle rock, Monseigneur le Duc and his epauletted and aiguiletted staff made most free, I could glean nothing about Jacqueline, where she resided, how she had married her cousin, the stern Count, or why, or wherefore; nor did I venture to ask—a natural delicacy, with a difficulty of approaching the subject, together with something of pique, restrained me.

When I looked on the old Duc de Broglie, dispensing the honours of his table with an air so courtly in his powdered hair, with his star and ribbon of

St. Louis, and when I thought of the passionate love I had borne his daughter, and how she had responded to it—how I had sorrowed for her supposed death, and so terribly avenged it—of all that had been and never could be again,—I asked of myself, were not all those days we had spent together at that quaint chateau in Brittany, amid its arbours trained by old Urbain, its rose-gardens and leafy labyrinth, a dream, or was I dreaming *now?*

That she should be the wife of this Count de Bourgneuf—a Frenchman all the more jealous because his mother was a Spanish lady of Alava—who knew more than I wished him to know about those love passages in Brittany, and thus hated me accordingly, seemed strange and difficult to realize; but of that hate I had good proof ere long.

Dinner was nearly over when the Chevalier de Boisguiller, of the Hussars *de la Reine*, was announced, and this gay fellow, all travel-stained and with his face looking very red, after a long ride against a keen, frosty wind, entered with his sabre under his left arm, and carrying his fur cap with plume and scarlet kalpeck, in his right hand.

"Welcome, kinsman Guillaume," said the host, rising and presenting his hand; "what news bring you from the headquarters of M. de Contades?"

"This despatch, monseigneur," replied the hussar, delivering an oblong letter sealed with yellow wax, and making a profound salute.

"When did you leave?"

"This morning, monseigneur."

"*Ma foi!* you must have come at a

good pace to reach Ysembourg by this time."

"I dined early at Helingenstadt, and when I have dined well and drunk good wine, somehow my horse always goes well. The wine communicates itself through the spur-rowels, I think. 'Tis sixty miles and more from Helingenstadt to this, so as the sight of these viands makes me hungry again, I shall join you gentlemen. Thus hunger, a long ride over a snow-covered country—snow—*ouf!* it is six feet deep at Hesse Cassel—with a young appetite, are capital sauce to a meal, and if your cook equals your maître d'hôtel, my dear maréchal—*Grands Dieux!* what have we here? —a ragoût—delightful! — gigot de mouton, with force-meat balls, like grape and canister shot. Monjoy, I shall trouble you for a slice. *Parbleu!* my friends,

where did you pick up all these dainties? I thought those active devils, the Black Hussars of His Prussian Majesty, had swept everything but snow and icicles out of Hesse and Westphalia. Monjoy, *mon cher*, what does that silver jug contain?"

"Champagne-punch, chevalier."

"Made how?"

"One bottle of claret to three of champagne, with some sugar, a little hot water, a squeeze or so of a lemon, and after a few glasses——"

"One may see all the sentinels and outposts double their *usual* number, and the main body quite what M. le Maréchal wishes it to be, before beating up the quarters of Prince Ferdinand, *mon brave;* hand it over here!"

"*Pardieu!*" he exclaimed, setting down the silver jug after a long draught,

"what do I see—Monsieur Gauntlet of the Grey Scots—a prisoner, eh? In the dusk I took you in your red coat for a mousquetaire rouge."

"Monsieur is a prisoner, who, for the service he has done my family, returns free to the allied lines to-morrow," said the Duke, who had been rapidly skimming the despatch, while Boisguiller had been keeping up a running fire of small talk. "I must leave you, messieurs; Monjoy will take my place at the head of the table, as this despatch requires immediate attention. Contades returns to France for a time; the entire command is vested in me, and the army is to be augmented to a hundred thousand men, while thirty thousand more are to be formed upon the Rhine, under the orders of the Comte St. Germain. My brother's regiment of Cuirassiers must ride towards

Wetzler, as the King of Prussia's Death's-head Hussars are marching in that direction. We move from this early——"

Loud cries of "Bravo—Vive le Roi! Vive le Maréchal Duc!" rang round the table.

"And the castles of Marburg and Dillenburg may soon have some powder burnt before them. You see, M. Gauntlet, I have no secrets from you, though you were so reserved with me this morning. Adieu, messieurs — make yourselves at home; I am an old campaigner, but must keep my head clear for the work of the bureau."

And with a smiling bow the stately old Maréchal left us. Then around the table the conversation became more gay, free, and unrestrained; the wine-decanters were circulated with a ra-

pidity that loosened every tongue, and as usual with Frenchmen, they all talked at once without listening much to each other.

CHAPTER IX.

MONJOY.

When most of the officers had withdrawn, Monjoy drew close to me and said,—

"There is more in the Maréchal's dispatch than met our ears—matters not pleasant to the pride of de Broglie."

"How ?" said I.

"You must know, monsieur, that since the time that Prince Ferdinand possessed himself of the castle of Marburg, and indeed ever since Minden, Maréchal de Contades has been very unpopular with our troops. He charged the Duc de Broglie with misconduct. The Duc re-

criminated, and gained credit with the Court at Versailles, when a victim was required to satisfy popular clamour. That victim was M. de Contades, so our camp, like your own, in the case of milord Sackville, has not been without dissensions. But permit me to inquire, did you ever meet the Comte de Bourgneuf before that day when we came for the body of Prince Xavier of Saxony?"

"No—but why do you ask?"

"*Parbleu!*—'tis strange! and you never did him any wrong?" continued Monjoy, earnestly.

"Wrong—I know of none; but wherefore these inquiries?" said I.

"Because during the execution of that Volontaire de Clermont——"

"The poor wretch who appropriated my ring?"

"Yes—well, I overheard him swear,

a low voice, to Armand de Pricorbin, who accompanied his brother Silvain to the gallows, that you should never reach the allied lines alive, and the man gave him a fierce and rapid glance, as much as to say, *we* understand each other. I was not supposed to observe, or to overhear all this, and could neither control nor take the Count, my superior officer, to task for it."

"But I shall—he is not my superior officer. I thank you, M. Monjoy, and shall challenge him for this," said I, wrathfully.

"You would be extremely rash, and if a duel ensued the Duc de Broglie would severely punish the survivor, especially one in your circumstances."

"Then what is to be done, for at this moment a plot for my assassination may be forming?"

"Return as quickly as possible to the

other side of the Lahn," said Boisguiller, who had listened in silence to the foregoing. "I know more of this matter than you, Monjoy, and while disapproving of the sentiments of my kinsman, de Bourgneuf, am most anxious to serve M. Gauntlet, as an old friend who saved and served me when in a desperate and degrading position. *Grands Dieux!* I am not likely to forget that prison-ship, the *Alceste,* for some time to come!"

For a minute or more, I remained in doubt what to do. My first idea suggested a report of the affair to the Duc de Broglie; but that would avail me little unless he gave me an armed escort, to apply for which would argue either guilt or timidity. To take the count bluntly and boldly to task would be, my friends averred, perilous work; and to seek an interview with Jacqueline, his countess,

and beg *her* advice in the matter—even if I knew where she resided—was a measure more perilous still, and one to be dreaded.

"You really think that Bourgneuf is capable of having me waylaid and cut off?" said I.

"Quite," replied Monjoy; "excuse me talking thus of your kinsman, Boisguiller; but his mother was an Espagnole of Alava, and we all know the spirit he is likely to inherit. My advice to you is, monsieur, immediately on receiving the signed passport of the Duc de Broglie, to set out ostensibly for Hesse Cassel—observe this map; it is about seven leagues from here, according to Herman Mall. But go not there; strike off towards Frankenburg, and push on for the Lahn, while Bourgneuf and his people may be searching for you in the direction of the Weser."

"And pray start to-night, and *bon voyage*,

mon ami!" said Boisguiller, draining his glass.

"In my ignorance of the country and the language—on foot, too—I shall never reach the Lahn alone."

"Of course not, *mon camarade*, we never meant you to do so," replied Monjoy. "Boisguiller cannot accompany you, as he returns to Helingenstadt to-morrow; but I shall do so with pleasure, at least a few leagues of the way, for to-morrow at noon, I have to lay before the Duc de Broglie plans of the castles of Marburg and Dillenburg, with the intended approaches and lines of circumvallation."

I was thanking this frank friend in suitable terms, when a gold locket became disengaged from the ribbon by which it was suspended at his neck, and fell at my feet. When handing it across the table to him, I could perceive that it contained

the miniature of a girl, young, lovely, and fairhaired.

"*Morbleu!* Gervais Monjoy," exclaimed Boisguiller; "is it thus, my fine fellow, that you treasure the image of Madame d'Escombas?"

"Madame! is this girl, a child almost, married?" said I, perhaps imprudently.

"Hush, gentlemen—hush, for God's sake and for hers—upon your honour, hush!" said Monjoy, in a husky voice, as he replaced the locket in his breast, and his cheek grew very pale.

"I know your sad story, and hers too," said the chevalier in a whisper; "but are you wise to carry this trinket about with you?"

"'Tis all of her that evil fate has left me!" sighed Monjoy, filling his glass with wine.

"But—but suppose you were killed in

action, and this portrait was found upon you?"

"Well?"

"Would it not compromise the honour of madame?"

"With none who knew our wretched history," replied Monjoy, in a broken voice, and with a tremulous manner; "but let us return to the affair of our friend."

"The Duc de Broglie knows not all the *on dits* of Paris and Versailles," said the chevalier, with an air of annoyance. "The old man thinks only of brigades and squadrons, of advances and retreats, and of pontoon-bridges on the Rhine and Weser; but—a word in your ear, M. Gauntlet: if he knew all that was reported, you might perhaps have not fared quite so well in Ysembourg to-day."

"I do not comprehend," said I, coldly, perhaps haughtily.

"Well, *mon ami*, it was reported in the Chroniques Scandaleuses at Versailles and Paris, that the young countess, then Mademoiselle de Broglie, had a lover disguised as her *soubrette*, and that the fellow actually carried her off. Thus you see how rumour wove you and the outlaw Hautois into one."

"Rumour might have added, that it was revenge for Bourgneuf's abduction of the sister Hautois of and the demolition of his mother's cottage that made this man the wretch we found him," said I, bitterly "But oh! Boisguiller," I added, suddenly and passionately, as the fumes of the wine mounted to my head; "you know the truth and the falsehood of this affair; you must know that I loved Jacqueline purely and honourably, that I loved her to despair, and how I sorrowed for her supposed death!"

"*Ah, mon garçon!* I cheated you nicely at that old *chaumière* in the wood, and all for the best, was it not? But pray don't give way to such outbursts here; *ma foi!* no, they will never do; so be wary and be off, ere worse come to pass. Bourgneuf has some fellows in his Regiment de Bretagne who would skin their own fathers—people from his own estates who would chop you into mincemeat if such were his supreme will and pleasure, and if quietly shooting you down did not suit his purpose quite as well."

I took another glass of wine and snapped my fingers, as a spirit of bravado next possessed me.

"Tell me, is the countess here?" I asked.

"Madame de Bourgneuf, *née* Broglie? well, she is not exactly at Ysembourg, but we shall not say where. Awkward, is it

not?" said the chevalier, playing with the gold tassel of his hussar pelisse.

"Awkward!—what—how!" stammered I.

"*Diable!* without condescending to be more plain, my friend, I think that under all the circumstances, it *is* exceedingly awkward that the countess, and you, a former lover, are, with the knowledge of such a man as Bourgneuf, within a few miles of each other. How do you feel about it?"

"Simply, my dear chevalier," said I, as the wax lights began to multiply strangely, and the room seemed to swim round me, "that my naturally fine appetite is in no way impaired by the circumstance, and I have dined as well as ever I did on that deuced tough ration beef of the Hessians; and as for Monsieur de Bourgneuf——"

"He is at your service, monsieur!" said a harsh voice in my ear, while a hand was laid, almost with a clutch, on my right shoulder. I turned and encountered that which sobered me in a moment; the stern and sallow face, and dark, glittering, almond-shaped, and rather wicked eyes of the Count de Bourgneuf, who had entered unseen, and had overheard, *how much or how little* of the past conversation, we knew not. He delivered to me a paper, saying, "Monsieur, this is your signed pass to the nearest British cantonment; and you can depart when you please, and by any route; so delay is unadvisable," he added, with a keen glance.

"I thank you, Monsieur le Comte," said I.

"By the way of Hesse Cassel, I have advised," said Monjoy hastily.

"The Lahn lies in an *opposite* direction

—but Hesse Cassel be it," said the Count, with a deep smile. "Ah, Boisguiller, thou unconscionable tosspot—art bibbing still? Good evening, monsieur," he added to me, as he bowed and withdrew; "a pleasant and a *safe* journey to you."

"Did you remark his smile?" asked Monjoy in a low voice, while twitching my sleeve.

"Yes," replied I; "and it reminded me of one who never smiled thus save when planning mischief."

I thought of the aide-de-camp, Shirley.

"Boisguiller, assist me in getting a horse for our comrade," said Monjoy, looking at his watch; "it is now eight, and we shall depart from this within an hour."

CHAPTER X.

THE STORY OF MONJOY.

It was long past midnight, however, before we were prepared to leave Ysembourg. To set out with the conviction that every tree, hedge, or thicket might conceal at least one musket, the contents of which were intended for my person, was more exciting than pleasing.

The horse provided for me was one of our grey troopers. It had been wounded by a pistol-ball at Minden, and halted on the off hind leg, thus our progress was slower than we could have wished.

As my purse had been taken by my

captors, Boisguiller gave me a couple of louis d'ors, which sum I was to give in turn to the first French officer whom we took prisoner.

"*Bon voyage!*" cried he, with a loud voice, as we mounted at the arched gateway of the old castle; "which way do you ride?"

"Towards Hesse Cassel," replied Monjoy in the same tone, intended specially for the ears of those who loitered about; and among them was Armand de Pricorbin, who at once withdrew, and entered the castle, no doubt to report our departure to Bourgneuf.

"Hesse Cassel," continued Boisguiller; "ah, I was quartered there for three months before Minden, and added considerably to the debts and general dis comfort of the citizens. Adieu, messieurs!"

"Adieu, M. le Chevalier!" and we rode off.

Though considerably hardened by campaigning and warfare—for had I not seen Lindsay, Charters, Keith, and many others who were dear friends and comrades perish?—I shuddered on passing where the corpse of Silvain de Pricorbin still swung as a warning to pillagers, from the arm of a tree above the pathway; there it swayed mournfully to and fro in the night wind, and I felt some remorse with the conviction, that by an almost heedless complaint, I had procured the death of this man—and for what? Abstracting a ring—a bauble—the gift of a girl who had discarded me for a man who was now perhaps tracking me to destruction.

The stars shone brightly and keenly in a calm sky as we rode down the hill from

Ysembourg, and saw a few lights twinkling dimly in the little town of that name.

By the foraging and skirmishing of the light cavalry, the whole country between the Maine and Lahn had been reduced to a desert; and from Ysembourg to the Weser it was pretty much the same, for, according to their usual system, whatever the French did not require they burned or destroyed.

On our route I committed myself entirely to the guidance of the intelligent and friendly Monjoy—a pleasing young man, whose bearing impressed me with the decided conviction that *something* had happened in his life, which, to him, cast a shadow over the present and the future.

"From what passed between you and the Chevalier de Boisguiller," said he

"am I right in supposing that a deadly rivalry existed between you and Bourgneuf prior to his marriage?"

"No, Monjoy; I repeat to you that I never saw the Count until the day subsequent to Minden, and I did not know him even then, or until yesterday, when we stood together in the presence of Maréchal Broglie."

"*Parbleu!* 'tis most singular!"

"What?"

"How all this hostility on his part came to pass."

"I shall tell you, and the narrative may serve to shorten our journey."

I then related to him the whole story of my adventures in Brittany; my love for Jacqueline, and how strangely we were thrown together in that sequestered château; her abduction, and her supposed death. He seemed much struck by the

recital, and when I concluded he sighed and said—

"I, too, have not been fortunate in the field of Cupid, and could tell you a story, not so stirring as yours certainly, but nevertheless full of most mournful interest to me."

"Ah! I now remember the miniature of that beautiful girl concerning whom Boisguiller rallied and warned you."

"Boisguiller is thoughtless," replied the young Frenchman, "but good-hearted and brave; yet he is not the kind of man to understand the depth of a passion such as mine—a passion all the deeper because its object is lost for ever!"

"Dead?"

"Worse, monsieur, she is married to another, and this little locket is all I possess to remind me of many happy, happy days that can never come again. I shall

be equally confiding with you, monsieur, and will relate how I came to suffer so deeply."

After a little pause, he began thus.

"My aunt is Prioress of the Convent of Les Dames de Notre Dame de Charité, in the Rue St. Jacques, at Paris, where they occupy the ancient house of the Nuns of the Visitation. Her devotees observe the general vows of the four monastic orders, and occupy themselves with the education of young ladies of good family, who are boarded in the convent to acquire accomplishments.

"When a mere youth attending school, I used frequently to visit my aunt, and spent all my holidays at her convent in the Rue St. Jacques, and thus among the boarders I first saw Isabelle du Platel, who was placed there for her education. She was just past girlhood; her family

were old Normans, and hence that exquisite fairness of complexion and golden-tinted hair which you remarked in her miniature.

"We were always playmates and companions in the convent garden; but after a time this was interdicted by my aunt the Prioress, who, foreseeing what might happen, wisely exiled me from the convent, and would only consent to receive me in the parlour, and then on stated days and certain occasions.

"I was in despair at this change in my affairs; but a friend and brother student, Boisguiller, then a sub-lieutenant in the French Guards, enabled me to circumvent to some degree the precautions of my worthy relative, as he possessed an old and unoccupied house in the Rue St. Jacques, the windows of which overlooked the convent garden; and thereat I spent

the hours that were not devoted to the study of fortification, regular, irregular, and defensive, of Coehorn, de Ville, and Vauban, in watching for Isabelle, and exchanging the most passionate little billets by the simple process of lowering them by a string from the windows, which, fortunately perhaps, were too high up and too strongly grated to permit nearer meetings.

"For three years our love affair was conducted thus, and we were happy in the secrecy of our passion, which was all the deeper that (Boisguiller excepted) others knew it not, and could neither by jest or taunt bring the ready blush to our young cheeks; and so time passed, till Isabelle was sixteen and I was three years her senior, with an epaulette on my left shoulder.

"I can painfully recall the last day on which I repaired to the accustomed place,

with a trinket I had brought for Isabelle, and tying it to the cord, waited impatiently, with my eyes fixed on the flowery vista of the garden walk by which she usually approached; but hour after hour passed, and there came no Isabelle to me!

"The next day and the next I met with no better success, and a terror filled my heart. Had we been betrayed or discovered? Isabelle was ill—dying, perhaps! I rushed to the convent gate, and sought an interview with my aunt. The old porteress had special orders to keep me out; but my excitement was too much for the good dame's nerves, and my impetuosity swept all her scruples away. Thus, she admitted me into the parlour and when my aunt came—a woman tall, thin, and stately in bearing, with a severe expression on her brow that boded evil for-

tune to me—I besought her to pardon me, and to say if Mademoiselle du Platel was ill!

"'I am most happy to inform you, my dear Gervais, that she is not—but she has left this——'

"'Left the convent,' I exclaimed; 'and for where?'

"'Her father's house.'

"'In the Rue de Tournon?'

"'Near the palace of the Luxembourg—yes.'

"'And she will return?' I continued, impetuously.

"'No more,' said my aunt, with a sad smile.

"'No more?' I repeated, with perplexity.

"At least, not as Mademoiselle du Platel.'

"'In heaven's name, madame—my dear

aunt, I conjure you to tell me what you mean? See how I am trembling!'

"'Compose yourself, my dear boy; when next we see her, she will be Madame d'Escombas.'

"'Oh, impossible — absurd!' I exclaimed, with a perplexed heart and a flushing cheek; 'do you mean old M. d'Escombas, who also resides in the Rue de Tournon, whose copper-coloured nose is the laughing-stock of all Paris, and whom I have caricatured, with his wig, large buckles, and round shoulders, a dozen of times?'

"'Yes.'

"'But that hideous old man has no son to marry Isabelle?'

"'He is to marry her himself.'

"'Monstrous, madame!' I exclaimed, furiously; 'how can this be?'

"'Because the father of Isabelle is poor,

and M. d'Escombas is rich enough to buy the Luxembourg and all that is in it. Such is the world, my poor Gervais, and such are its ways and vanities!'

"Seeing that my eyes were full of tears, she continued—

"'Gervais, listen to me, my dear boy. M. du Platel, though he has been unable to accumulate riches, for the acquisition of which his desire is a passion very strong, if not stronger than that of love itself—has enough, but barely so, to maintain a numerous family. God has given him a daughter lovely in the extreme—good, amiable, and gentle too. M. d'Escombas is fired by her beauty: he is old and coarse certainly; he has a nose covered with rappee, cheeks that are rouged, and false teeth; but then, he is *so* rich! Ah, *mon Dieu*, my dear boy, how you groan and grind your teeth!'

"I had heard enough, and retired, choking with resentment, indignation, love, jealousy, and pity; and with all the thoughts, fierce, bitter, and stinging, that could madden a young and loving heart, I found myself going I knew not, cared not whither, jostling and staggering like a blind man among the passers in the sunlit Rue St. Jacques. I was full of vague plots and wild plans—full of schemes of bitter vengeance, none of which could take any tangible form, until I met my friend Guillaume de Boisguiller, who had just come off guard at the Louvre, and who advised me to see Isabelle at once—to run off with her. But whither? *Diable!* I had no money—nothing but my silver epaulette. Then he suggested that I should run d'Escombas through the body. That would be simple enough; but I knew that a duel between an old

man and a mere boy was not to be thought of, even in Paris, where all kinds of absurdities are committed every hour; and then he was a near kinsman of the Governor of the Conciergerie du Palais, and the very thought of that grim personage, and his horrid place, made my blood run cold."

(Poor gentle and amiable Monjoy! while speaking to me how little did he foresee that some of his last hours would be spent in that degrading prison!)

"Taking a hint from the plot of a comedy we had seen at the Théâtre Français—then the only one in Paris in which regular tragedies and comedies could be acted, and which had an exclusive right to represent the plays of Corneille, Racine, Molière, and Voltaire—Boisguiller borrowed the gown, hat, and trinket-box of a Jew who was patronized

by the officers of his regiment, and by adopting a false beard, a pair of horn spectacles, and painting a few wrinkles round his eyes, made his disguise complete. He then set out for the residence of M. du Platel in the twilight of an October evening.

"I was too nervous and too excited to have done this in person; so Boisguiller, whose coolness—impudence he was pleased to term it—was invincible, became my ambassador.

"He was not a chevalier then, not having won his cross of St. Louis. He contrived to introduce himself to Isabelle, and while she was looking over the trinkets in his box, to whisper my name in her ear, and to slip into her hand a note from me, to which he begged an answer ere he went away.

"'You are a friend of Gervais,' she whispered; 'and in disguise?'

"His friend and companion—Boisguiller, an officer of the French Guards.'

"'I thank you, monsieur, from my soul! Oh, tell Gervais it is true about this marriage—all too true, too true! Despite my love for him, a love of which I told them in my agony, my parents sell me to that odious and pitiless old man. Sell me,' she continued, while her blue eyes sparkled with grief and anger, and her soft cheek glowed with a feverish red, 'even as a Circassian girl is sold in a Turkish bazaar! I have been taken—torn from my convent, and am kept here till my purchaser arranges his household. Oh, vile system! How my soul revolts at the life, the hopeless future, to which I am doomed!'

"'And you will meet Gervais?'

"'But once, and then all is over, and for ever!'

"'When—where will you meet him?' urged my friend.

"'In the garden of the Luxembourg, near the white marble lions, at noon to-morrow; and failing that, on the next day at the same hour.'

"Exulting in his diplomacy, Bois-guiller hurried back to me, relinquished his disguise and resumed his uniform, talking the while with noisy admiration of the beauty and high spirit of Made-moiselle du Platel. Spirit? *mon Dieu!* he little knew how, by all the appliances of domestic and parental tyranny it had been crushed and broken.

"With a soul inspired by tenderness and anxiety, I repaired at the appointed hour to the place of rendezvous — the avenue to the garden nursery, containing

specimens of every kind of fruit then cultivated in the provinces of France; and there I leaned, so great was my emotion, against the base of one of the white marble lions, and my heart fluttered at the sight of every female figure. But the clocks of Paris struck the hour in vain; it passed away; another hour succeeded, and there came no Isabelle.

"Had they discovered our assignation, those venal parents? Was she ill—what had happened?

"It was, however, merely a visit of that provoking Monsieur d'Escombas which interfered with her arrangements, as he insisted on escorting her, wherever she was going. But next day, when I sought the same place and pressed her to my breast, we retired to a secluded part of the garden, where

we could converse and freely deplore the hard destiny which was about to separate us for ever.

"*Grand Dieu!* Monsieur Gauntlet, why should I weary you with all this, and what interest can it possibly have for you?" exclaimed the Frenchman, suddenly interrupting himself; but I pressed him to continue, for the modulated tones of his voice, a certain pathos in it, and his sorrowful earnestness, gave his story an interest which cannot be imparted to it here.

"I implored Isabelle to elope with me; but she trembled, closed her eyes, and whispered, in a broken voice, that she dared not.

"'You are but sixteen, Isabelle, and they would consign you to a man of sixty —a sweet young girl like you surrendered to the cold arms of one whose heart is but

the dregs and lees of a life spent in Paris! Oh, it is piteous!'

"'And bitterly they taunt me——'

"'Who taunt you?'

"'My father and mother,' said she, shuddering and closing her eyes, 'taunt me with *you*, Gervais. I ask for a husband who will love me as I would wish to be loved, and in reply they lay diamonds, jewels, fans and feathers at my feet. Away with these, I exclaimed, lest I tread upon them!'

"And then the poor young girl wept passionately—

"'My beloved Isabelle,' I exclaimed, 'how shall I survive seeing you consigned to a fate so miserable—to such a hopeless life—to a lord and master whose age, ideas, tastes, and ways are all so unbearable and uncongenial? Whose scorn and cruelty—oh, I know him well—will

make you shrink as the frosty wind withers the early flowers of spring, and whose sordid coldness will crush your little heart! God preserve you, Isabelle, from the fate of many others who are similarly mated and lost in our worthy city of Paris!'

"'I have to thank you for the character you give of me, friend Monjoy, but 'twill avail you little,' said a voice behind us, and we found ourselves in the presence of M. du Platel, and M. d'Escombas who had justspoken, and also of his grim kinsman, the governor of the Conciergerie du Palais.

"Fortunately the latter personage, of whom I had—I know not why—an instinctive horror, was present; for we were in a solitary part of the garden. I had my sword on, and the malevolent smile on the thick lips and coarse dark visage of M. d'Escombas, with the furious scorn and

indignation of M. du Platel, might have prompted me to commit some desperate extravagance.

"'Oh, my father, my father!' implored Isabelle; 'let me go back to my convent. Mother St. Rosalie de Sicile assures me that I have a true vocation!'

"'So it seems,' sneered M. d'Escombas, 'by your coming here to meet a young spark three days before your marriage.'

"'Father, it is better to endure the poverty, the vows, the life-long self-abnegation of all in a convent, than an union without love to a man who is older even than thee.'

"Her voice was most touching—her expression lovely; but the old barbarians heard her unmoved.

"'Child, you know not what you say,' replied M. de Platel, in great wrath. 'I provide a rich marriage, a wealthy hus-

band, who will prove a kind one, too; a splendid house here, close by the Luxembourg; a life of freedom and gaiety; and, *diable!* what more would you have? unless it is this rascal of a student, who would be better inside La Force than here, creating mischief and dispeace.'

"'Oh, why torture me thus?' she replied, faintly, while pressing her hands on her heart.

"'Torture—*bon diable!* she talks of torture, with a suitor here who has ever so many thousand livres per annum,' said M. du Platel, shrugging up his shoulders.

"'*Mon père,*' she demanded, with her little nostrils quivering, and her blue eyes flashing fire; 'for how many thousand purses do the Circassians sell?'

"'*Morbleu!* she is always speaking about Circassians,' growled M. d'Escom-

bas; 'what do we know of them, save that they are pagans who eat horseflesh on Friday, and never sign the cross or keep the month of Mary.'

"'And yet they sell their daughters, M. d'Escombas, just like the subjects of the Most Christian king.'

"'Child, this is treason and blasphemy—and close to the walls of the Luxembourg, too!'

"''Tis truth and despair.'

"'Summon a fiacre, M. d'Escombas—a thousand devils, 'tis time to end this!' exclaimed du Platel, grinding his teeth, and then they bore her away from me.

"In three days after this sorrowful meeting I heard the bells of St. Germain de Prè ringing gaily for the marriage of Isabelle to the wealthy citizen d'Escombas, who was willing to take her without a portion—a circumstance that had quite

sufficient influence with one so sordid and cruel as her father, without considering on the other hand the vast wealth of her suitor.

"After this, I was long ill and tired of life, and believe that but for the unwearying friendship of Guillaume de Boisguiller I should have died—if indeed people ever die for love, which I don't think they do.

"It was about this time that all Paris, and all France, too, rung with the terrible story of the conspiracy, the trial, and execution of Robert Francis Damien; and M. d'Escombas, on hearing that I was ill, affected to pity me, and begged of Boisguiller that he might be permitted to pay me a visit. Then I—urged I know not by what motive or impulse—consented. On hearing this, what think you my fortunate rival did?—for all his

plans we discovered after—*how*, need not be related here.

"He unlocked the secret drawer of an iron strong-box, and taking therefrom a ring, placed it, with a peculiar smile, upon a finger of his right hand. It was a large and antique ring, which his father, who was a dealer in jewellery, had procured in Venice at a sale of the trinkets of the old Doge, Marc Antonio Mocenigo, who became the spouse of the Adriatic in 1701. This gold ornament was what was then termed a *Death Ring*, used when acts of poisoning were common in the seventeenth century. It was of the purest metal; but attached to the outside were two lion's claws, made of the keenest steel, and having in each a cleft that was filled with the most deadly poison.

"In crowds, or balls, or elsewhere, the wearer of such a ring could exercise his

secret revenge by the slightest scratch, in pressing the hand of the doomed person, who would next day be found, perhaps, in bed dead, no one knew why or how. So, armed with this most fatal trinket, M. d'Escombas came with Boisguiller to visit *me*.

"I have but a vague recollection of the interview. He knew how passionately I had loved Isabelle, and I saw the savage gleam that crossed his eyes, when I inquired for her, but as one might inquire for a sister. He assured me in brief and hurried terms that she was well, content, and happy. Then I congratulated him with a tongue that clove to the roof of my mouth.

"He rose, at last, to retire; bade me be of good heart, said his adieux, and pressing my hand, left me, with a dark smile in his eyes, which were small, black,

glittering, and half obscured by their shaggy overhanging brows of grizzly hair, which, in fact, were like mustachios placed over his nose instead of below it.

"Scarcely was he gone before I felt an indescribable sensation pass over all my body; my eyesight grew dim; my brain reeled, and my thoughts became delirious. Then every faculty seemed to become paralysed, and the doctors—in his excitement Boisguiller soon had half the medical faculty of Paris at my bedside—declared that I had been poisoned by some mineral substance. But poisoned by *whom*, and *how?* Ah, *le brigand!* how little did we suspect!

"Strong antidotes were applied, and after a time I recovered, for the poison in the ring had been placed there so many years ago that it had not retained sufficient strength to destroy life; but I leave

you, Monsieur Gauntlet, to imagine the hatred and horror I had of the traitor d'Escombas when I came to know the actual object of his visit.

"I recovered fully, and joined the army under the Marshals Contades and de Broglie, in Germany. So my Isabelle is still the wife of that man; but there is a sweet composure, a sadness of heart and of eye about her, a silence and enduring gentleness under the most insulting jealousy and coarse petty tyranny, which make all who know, pity her, and deplore the fate to which she has been consigned.

"Had she died I should have sorrowed for her long and deeply, and have eventually recovered from the shock; but to know that she lives, and for *another*, is enough to—but, hola! what have we here?"

CHAPTER XI.

A SAD CONCLUSION.

The interruption to the story was caused by Gervais Monjoy observing that before us rose the ivy-covered ruins of an ancient schloss, which seemed to inform him, as he said, that in the interest which he took in his unfortunate love affair he had lost or mistaken the way.

We were on the brow of a high eminence, and far away in distance spread the snowy landscape. In the foreground were some leafless woods and ridges of rock, which like the ruins of the old castle shone in russet and pink, as the yellow and rosy dawn stole across the eastern

quarter of the sky. A star or two still twinkled overhead, and one shone brightly through the gaping windows of the square keep of the old schloss.

"*Morbleu*, my friend! my mind has been so full of Isabelle that I have proved but an indifferent guide. We are on the road to Waldeck. That is the old castle of Count Heinrich, who slew Ferdinand of Brunswick at Fritzlar, in 1400. Let me consider. We are not very far from Zuschen, and a bend of the Lahn lies about two miles distant on our right. Fortunately here is a peasant. Halloa! my friend, who or what are you?" asked Monjoy, in German, as a man attired in an overcoat of some dark stuff trimmed with black wolf's fur, and wearing a cap and boots of deerskin, with a horn-hafted knife in his girdle, a musket in his hand, and attended by a dog, appeared by the

wayside, where he was leisurely lighting his large pipe, and quietly surveying us while doing so.

"I am a woodman," he answered somewhat gruffly.

"You are abroad betimes, friend."

"Those who have their bread to earn in a country swarming with soldiers, who help themselves to the best of everything, have need to be so, Mein Herr."

"Do you know the Lahn?"

"Right well. I am Karl Karsseboom, a forester of the Baron Von Freyenthal. This path to the right will bring you to it straight. Two miles from this is the ford; the water is shallow and frozen; but the King of Prussia's Black Hussars are in a village on the other side, so be wary."

"My friend, we thank you," said Monjoy, as the peasant touched his fur cap respectfully, and, with his musket shoul-

dered, strode off, not in search of game, as we thought then, but to fulfil his duty of scout, by acquainting some followers of Bourgneuf that I was to cross the Lahn at the frozen ford.

"I have seen you some fifteen miles or so on your way," said my companion, gradually reining in his horse, "and further would I go, monsieur, but for those plans of Dillenburg which I must lay before the maréchal, and which our friend Boisguiller must convey to head-quarters. Farewell: I have enjoyed much the few hours we have had of your society; but the best we can wish each other, if this war lasts, is that we may seldom or never meet again, as we shall only do so when bayonets are fixed and bullets are flying."

Monjoy shook my hand, and wheeling round his horse, rode off. I remained for

some minutes watching his retiring figure, the shadow of which was thrown across the snow by the rising sun, in the light of which his silver epaulettes flashed and glittered, and in the clear frosty air the echoes of his horse's hoofs long came distinctly ringing to the ear.

I felt depressed and lonely now, for the suavity of manner and gentleness of expression possessed by this young officer made him a singularly winning and pleasing companion.

How much more would I have been interested in him then, could I have foreseen his terrible future!

Turning, I rode slowly along the path indicated. It was distinctly visible even amid the snow, as day had dawned and the sun was up; and while I traversed it at an easy pace (my horse being indifferently frosted in the shoes, and halting at

every step), with the reader's permission I will give him—may I add, *her*?—the sad sequel to the story of Monjoy, as I afterwards read it in the *Mercure Français*, and the *Gazette de Bruxelles*, in our camp at Warburg in Prussian Westphalia.

Monjoy returned to Paris with Maréchal de Contades, the Marquis de Voyer, the Comte de Luc, and other officers who declined for various admitted reasons to serve under the Duc de Broglie, and he lived there a somewhat secluded life, exerting himself sedulously in the study of his profession. But he could not fail to hear from time to time of her he had lost, and how the neglect, and what was worse, the querulous tyranny, even the *blows*, of M. d'Escombas she endured with meek and silent patience—a patience that galled Monjoy; for as year succeeded year she

had become the mere nurse of a petulant and selfish old man.

"Many a good woman's life is no more cheerful," says a certain writer; "a spring of beauty and sunshine; a bitter disappointment, followed by pangs and frantic tears, and then a long, long and monotonous story of submission."

As yet such had been the tenor of the life of Isabelle, but never did she and Gervais meet, save once in the boxes of the Opera House of the Palais Royal—the same theatre which had been built of old by Cardinal Richelieu, and was burned down four years after Minden.

They were seated very near each other. She seemed wondrously pale and beautiful; she was clad in light blue silk, her delicate neck, her white taper arms, and her golden hair all glittering with diamonds—the badges of her wedded slavery.

Both were deeply agitated, but neither spoke, till Isabelle, unable to restrain her emotion, whispered to Monjoy behind her fan—

"I can read your secret in your eyes, my poor Gervais, and so will others if you do not retire."

"My secret?" he faltered.

"That you love me—love me still, though I am the slave of this Dives. Oh, my God! fly me—leave me to my misery—a misery known to myself and Heaven only!"

Almost suffocated by his emotions—the grief and tenderness the familiar sound of her voice and this pathetic appeal all served to kindle in his breast, he rose abruptly and quitted the theatre, followed by a threatening glance from d'Escombas.

That evening he wandered long about

the streets, but an irresistible fatality always lured him towards the Rue de Tournon, where Isabelle resided.

The night came on, clear and cold; there was no moon, but the stars shone brightly, and he saw all the windows of the street glittering in their pale light, and those also in that noble façade of the palace of the Luxembourg which faces the Rue de Tournon, with its pavilions at each end, and the great cupola which rises above the entrance door.

While wandering here, a person jostled him with great rudeness, and turning with a hand on his sword, he encountered the remarkably forbidding and somewhat grizzled visage of——M. d'Escombas!

"Monsieur will apologize?" said Monjoy in a husky voice, after recovering from his surprise.

"Monsieur will do nothing of the

kind," growled the old man. "What the devil brings you here, Gervais Monjoy? But it matters nothing to me—so you had better walk off, and take your hand from your sword, or *parbleu!* remember that I have the same cane for you that has made Madame d'Escombas wince more than once!"

Maddened by the insult, the man, his words and the inferences to be drawn from them, Monjoy prayed aloud—

"Great source of strength, assist me! Beware! old man," he added, "lest you drive me to despair. Remember that it is neither the sixth nor the seventh commandment in the Decalogue that may prevent me from punishing you as you deserve, and rescuing a poor victim from your tyranny."

M. d'Escombas, who was insanely jealous, grew white and livid with rage at

these words; and, as he did not want for courage, laid his hand on his walking sword, for people still wore such weapons at night in the streets of Paris.

"Dare you say this to me?" he exclaimed.

"*Oui, monsieur le scélérat*, and more if I choose. A selfish father sells his timid daughter to a sordid wretch who buys her for rank. Was it not so, old man?"

"Granted — though she preferred a beggarly student who should have stuck to his Vauban and his Coehorn," said the other, grinding his teeth; "and what then?"

"Coldness and placid endurance of life — perhaps contentment, might have followed; but never happiness."

"But for what, you would say?"

"Your querulous tyranny—your unmanly cruelty, with the story of which

all Paris rings. You have even dared to strike her—to strike her with your clenched hand, and even with your cane. Oh, malediction, my gentle Isabelle! and here, old man, I tell you *you are a coward!*"

"A coward—and *your* Isabelle! ha—we shall see what we shall see," exclaimed d'Escombas, boiling with ungovernable fury, as he swiftly drew his sword, and rushing upon Monjoy before the latter was aware, wounded him severely in the side.

This wastoo much for human endurance. The engineer drew his sword, and locking in, tossed up, or wrenched away the weapon of M. d'Escombas, which glittered in the starlight as the blade went twenty feet into the air. At the same moment the sword of Monjoy pierced the lungs of his adversary, who, as he whirled round

in his agony before falling, received it a second time in his back. He fell on his face and expired without a groan, and Monjoy fled, full of horror, leaving his weapon in the street, behind him.

All that dreadful night he wandered about the streets, the quays, and bridges of Paris, haunted by what seemed a dream, a nightmare, to endure for ever; and when day dawned he repaired straight to a Commissary (an official similar to our justice of the peace) and declared upon oath "that he had slain M. d'Escombas in the Rue de Tournon; but in a fair duel, sword in hand, in self-defence."

The Commissary deplored the circumstance, but accepted the declaration, and perceiving that he was dreadfully agitated, gave him some wine and water.

"And now, dear Isabelle," he muttered

wildly, "you are free—but by my hand—alas, by *my* hand!"

"How, monsieur," exclaimed the Commissary, sharply, looking up from his desk, and surveying the miserable Monjoy through his spectacles—"what's this you say?"

Monjoy remained silent, but grew, if possible, paler.

"Hah! *mon Dieu!*" exclaimed the Commissary, changing colour; "I remember now. Is it true that you were a discarded lover of Madame, when she was Mademoiselle du Platel, and a boarder with les dames de Notre Dame de Charité ou du réfuge de St. Michel, in the Rue de St. Jacques?"

"Yes," moaned Monjoy; "it is too true."

"Detain M. Gervais Monjoy in custody; send for a surgeon; bring the body of

M. d'Escombas here, and let us have it examined," said the other to his officials.

In less than an hour all this was done.

"How is this?" exclaimed the surgeon, the Commissary; and all present; "there is a sword wound *in the back*, and the sword is still remaining there!"

"He has been murdered!" said the Commissary, sternly.

"Dare you say so?" exclaimed Monjoy, with equal fury and indignation.

"In my official capacity, I may say anything," replied the commissary, with a grimace—"to La Force with the prisoner!"

Within another hour Monjoy found himself in that formidable prison—formerly the hotel of the Maréchal Duc de la Force—accused of murder. Maréchal de Contades was in disfavour at court;

Maréchal de Broglie was still in Germany, where the Seven Years' War was raging as fiercely as ever; his aunt the Prioress was dead. Thus Monjoy had no friend in Paris, save *one*, for whom he dare not send; so he remained in his vault, sunk in misery, and careless for the future.

In this prison are detained until the day of trial those who are accused of crimes. It is a spacious edifice, divided into several departments, and having eight courts, all watched and guarded well.

At last, in the extremity of his misery. he sent for Isabelle, that he might, to her at least, absolve himself from the crime of which he was accused. She came clad in deep mourning, and the meeting between them was painful and affecting. But as it was known that they had been lovers in their youth, Paris was ready to believe the worst; and as the sordid M.

du Platel and d'Escombas' kinsman, the Governor of the Conciergerie, cried "fire and sword" against them both, rumour succeeded in having Madame accused of being "art and part" in her husband's death. So she was arrested, and committed to a separate vault in La Force, one of the places named *les Secrets* in that formidable edifice, which is formed entirely of hewn stone and enormous bars of iron, and in the construction of which neither wood nor plaster are employed.

There they languished for many months without a trial, as it happened that just about this time the chief court of justice in France, the *Parlement de Paris*—without the full concurrence of which no criminal can be arraigned—was removed, first to Pontoise and thereafter to Soissons, on account of their severe proceedings against the Archbishop of Paris, who (to

repress the disorderly lives of the people) had issued a pastoral letter "forbidding all priests and curés to administer the sacrament to any one, no matter of what rank, unless they could produce a certificate from their father confessor—a pastoral which gave great offence to the court of the Most Christian king.

To be brief: when the Court ultimately assembled, poor Monjoy was brought to trial, and on being put to torture admitted that he was guilty of the murder in the Rue de Tournon, and consequently was sentenced to be broken alive upon the wheel.

When asked who were his accomplices, amidst torments the most excruciating, he persisted in affirming that he had none; that Madame d'Escombas was guiltless and pure as when she left her convent. Fre ch medical skill was brought to bear

upon his quivering limbs, and then, maddened by agony, he continued deliriously to acknowledge himself guilty of the murder again and again; but on being questioned for the last time concerning Madame d'Escombas, he accused her too!

On this the windlass of the rack was instantly relaxed, and he fainted, with blood pouring from his mouth and nostrils.

When his keener agony was over, on his knees, before my old friend Père Celestine (once curé of St. Solidore, and now coadjutor Bishop of Paris), with tears of blood and agony the unhappy Monjoy retracted all that had been wrung from him under torture; but it was too late.

On *his* accusation and confession she too was tried, and sentenced to death, and then both were committed to the Conciergerie du Palais, and to the care

of that grim governor, the kinsman of d'Escombas—he of whom Monjoy had such an instinctive dread of old.

The entrance to this frightful old prison is by a low and narrow door, over which might well be carved the well-known line from Dante's "Inferno."

Isabelle was conducted to the *greffe* or female prison, by that sombre vestibule which is lighted by lamps even at mid-day; but Monjoy was thrust, bleeding and mangled, perspiring in every limb with recent torture, into one of the old and dark dungeons of the Conciergerie, from whence, after a time, they were both conveyed in a tumbril, and clad in sack-cloth, to the Place de Greve, where she was hanged by the neck, and he, after making a pathetic declaration of her innocence, underwent the dreadful death of being broken alive upon the wheel!

With his last breath he implored the executioner to see that a blue ribbon, some gift of happier years, which he wore round his neck, should be buried with him.

Such was the miserable fate of this young Frenchman who befriended me so much at Ysembourg, and whom I last saw galloping gallantly along the road from the old ruined schloss, with his epaulettes and gay uniform glittering in the morning sunshine.

And now, with a pardon for this digression, I return to my own more matter-of-fact story.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FROZEN FORD.

By a narrow path between leafless woods, I proceeded for two miles in the direction indicated by Monjoy, and then saw before me the Lahn, a stream which rises in the west of Germany, and, as any Gazetteer will inform us, passes by the hill which is crowned by the castle of Marburg, the old Bailiwick of Giessen, the walled town of Wetzlar, and the city of Nassau (in which and in other places along its banks we had garrisons or outposts), until it flows into the famous Rhine near Upper Lahnstein.

That portion of the stream which I

now approached, though broad, was shallow and frozen hard. Its banks were thickly fringed by willow trees, amid which the morning mist was rolling lazily. Here and there some of those great masses of detached copper-coloured rock which stud the scenery of Waldeck overhung the stream, and had their bases crusted with frozen foam.

The region being high and hilly, and the season midwinter, the atmosphere was intensely cold, yet I was dubious of the strength of the ice, and feared that my horse, with its wounded off hind leg, might flounder and fall if its hoofs pierced the covering of the stream. As this idea occurred to me I was about to dismount, and hold the animal by the bridle, when the appearance of a well-bearded human visage regarding me steadily from a cleft in the rocks, made me pause with a hand

on my holster-flap, a motion which made the person instantly vanish.

The mist enveloping the willow-covered bank I had to traverse before reaching the stream was dense, and curling up in the sunshine, and it seemed to me that certain objects which at first resembled stumps of trees suddenly took the form of men, clad in white coats, the uniform of the French line; and, as the event proved, here were six men of the Regiment de Bretagne, a foraging party suborned by Bourgneuf to cut me off, and with them was the identical peasant whom Monjoy and I had met near the ruins of the old schloss—Karl Karsseboom.

I had the marshal's signed passport, but feared to ride forward or deliver it, and for a time remained unchallenged and irresolutely watching those men whose white-clad figures amid the frosty mist

and tossing willows seemed indistinct and wavering, like Banquo's shadowy line of kings, or the weird sisters in "Macbeth."

I waved aloft the paper given me by Bourgneuf, the immediate reply to which was the levelling of four muskets; but three flashed in the pan, the priming having probably become wet over night. The bullet from the fourth, however, knocked my grenadier cap awry.

I then shook a white handkerchief, and demanded a parley; but a fifth and sixth musket flashed redly out of the white mist, making a hundred reverberations amid the river's bed, and another bullet grazed my left ear like a hot searing-iron. I was full of fury now, and while these would-be assassins were casting about and reloading, I heard a voice shout clearly in French, and with a mocking laugh—

"*Peste!* Arnaud de Pricorbin—*il ne sait pas distinguer une femme d'une girouette!*" (He knows not a woman from a weathercock—meaning that he was a bad shot, and could hit neither.)

The brother of the executed Volontaire de Clermont was here, and had preceded me to the ford; thus I was in peculiarly bad hands it would appear. Their six muskets were unserviceable as yet, so, spurring furiously, I rushed sword in hand at the whole group, firing a pistol and hurling it after the shot as I advanced.

Gored by the spurs, the poor old horse forgot his wound, and swept through my adversaries, crashing among the frozen willows, reeds, icicles, and rotten ice. For a moment I saw six fierce, dark-visaged fellows, with white coats, red epaulets, and black crossbelts, with their muskets

clubbed to beat me down. By a back-handed stroke I slashed one across the face; but at the same moment a bayonet pierced my horse in the bowels, and he received a long wound that ripped open his near hind flank; this was from the musket of the German forester, who levelled it deliberately over a fragment of rock.

Maddened by pain and fury, the animal reared wildly back upon its haunches, and then, instead of riding towards the ford, swerved round, and treading some of our assailants under his hoofs, galloped straight along a road which led towards Wildungen, in a direction nearly opposite to that I wished to pursue.

Wild, terrified, and dying, with the bit clenched tightly between his teeth, the horse was for a time quite unmanageable, and I had not power to stop him, even if

inclined to do so, which I certainly was not, until beyond musket range of the discomfited rascals who guarded the frozen ford.

In short, I was borne away by my wounded horse in a manner nearly similar to that which had occurred after one of our skirmishes with the French Hussars in Brittany. I know not why it was, but I felt more excited by this encounter than by the whole day at Minden, and when riding on, seemed still to hear the report of the muskets, and to see them flashing out of the mist before me.

Dropping blood and foam upon the snow with every bound, the poor animal, covered with perspiration and enveloped in a steam induced by the frosty air, carried me a few miles almost at racing speed. This, however, slacked suddenly,

and on coming to a thicket where a spring (the water of which had a warm or peculiar mineral property, as it was quite unfrozen) flowed freely, I rode for nearly a mile up its bed or course, so that if followed by Arnaud de Pricorbin and other faithful Bretons of the Comte de Bourgneuf, the track of blood so visible in the snow would be lost in the running stream.

Perceiving a sequestered cottage upon the slope of a hill, sheltered by some great fir trees, I approached it, and was made welcome by the occupants, who appeared to be only a poor woman and her blind daughter; but they had no fear of me, as my uniform showed them—the former at least—that I was one of those who had come to assist in freeing Westphalia and Waldeck from those unscrupulous invaders, the French.

With some difficulty I made them understand, by a broken jargon, that we had been engaged in a skirmish, and that my horse had been wounded. It was placed in an outhouse or shed, where a cow was munching some chopped straw and frozen turnips. I removed the heavy demi-pique saddle, bridle, and holsters, putting the remaining pistol in my belt. While doing so the poor animal, lying among the straw, with its bowels protruding through the bayonet wound, whinnied and rubbed its nose upon the sleeve of my red coat, as if recognising the *colour;* and in that lonely place I felt as if I had lost my only friend, when the old grey trooper died about two hours after.

I remember partaking with the poor cottager and her blind daughter of a savoury dish of stewed hare, which had

been netted by herself in the adjacent fir thicket. We had also a warm jug of mulled Wildungen beer, making a repast for which I was both grateful and well appetized, after the adventures of so cold a morning. I ate and drank to strengthen me for whatever might follow, as I was still in the land of toil and danger; and for the same end I carefully re-charged, primed, and flinted anew my solitary pistol, and then slept for an hour or so by the peasant's fire of turf, wood, and fir-cones.

By the devious course of the river it would appear that I was still only a few miles from the Lahn; but I knew that if Arnaud de Pricorbin escaped my scuffle with him and his comrades, it would be duly reported to the Count that I was yet on the French side of the stream; thus more ample means would be taken by him to

guard it, and to cut me off at any possible point elsewhere.

In the distance I could see the quaint old city of Wildungen, seated between two snow-clad mountains, with the dun smoke of its winter fires ascending into the clear, cold sky. At one time I thought of venturing there and endeavouring to procure a guide or escort from any French officer who was in command; and either one or other the Duke's passport would certainly have procured me; but *whom* might I meet on the way? was the next idea.

The jealousy of Bourgneuf was so insane, and his whole proceedings were so cruel and unwarrantable, that my heart boiled with rage against him; and in this new cause for anger I forgot even Shirley, whose jealousy in another matter had cast

me into these toils by an effort of cunning and poltroonery which I hoped one day to requite, and amply too.

Resolving to wait until nightfall, and then set forth alone, I passed the day at the cottage of the peasant woman, who urged me to await the return of her husband, who had been absent all day with his gun in search of a deer, and could guide me with certainty.

"What is he?" I inquired, carelessly.

"A forester of the Baron Von Freyenthal."

"Indeed!" said I, becoming suddenly interested. "I met such a person this morning. Does he wear a fur cap and deerskin boots, and has he a large black shaggy wolf dog?"

"Exactly, Mein Herr—you have met my husband Karl Karsseboom and his dog Jager."

"If I meet him again!" thought I, with a hand on my pistol.

After this information, and the discovery of who was my landlord (ah! if the fellow had returned when I was asleep!) I resolved to lose no time in endeavouring to reach the ford of the Lahn at any risk. Whoever was there, the night would favour me, and I was alike forewarned and forearmed.

I studied closely the features of the country from the cottage window, and repeatedly consulted a little pocket map of the principality of Waldeck, which had been given to me by Gervais Monjoy, two means of topographical knowledge that availed me little, when, a few hours after, without encountering the amiable Karl Karsseboom, I found myself on the rugged German highway alone, bewildered, and floundering along in the dar

in my military jack-boots, with a heavy storm of snow drifting in my face, and the stormy and frosty north wind, which was so keen and cold that at times it well-nigh choked me.

CHAPTER XIII.

LAST OF THE EMERALD RING.

The snow-flakes were thick and blinding; the roadway became less and less discernible as the white mantle of winter deepened; buried under it, shrubs, tall weeds, and everything that could mark the borders of the path, a very rough and occasionally steep one, disappeared, and I wandered on wearily and at random without knowing in what direction.

There was no one abroad at such an hour and in such a season, and no house was visible, for the district was wild and desolate, having been severely devastated by the French foragers.

No sound came to the ear but the occasional hiss of the sharp hail that mingled with the falling snow, rendering the winter blast more chilly, choking, and biting, till the lungs became acutely pained, and the heart throbbed wildly.

How far I struggled on inspiring that icy atmosphere I cannot say, but nature was beginning to sink, and in my heart grew the fear of being conquered altogether, and of perishing in the storm, when happily a light that shone down what appeared to be a kind of ravine or trench (I know not which with certainty, as the snow caused all forms and features to blend) filled me with new strength, and manfully I made towards it, keeping in the track or line it cast so brightly towards me.

Ere long I could discover other lights that shone high above me in the air;

then all at once the outline of a great old schloss or castle loomed through the snowy atmosphere, and the light which had been my guide shone apparently from a window in the lower story of the edifice. This suggested ideas of robbers, for who has not heard or read of German robbers and their haunts in ruined castles of the Black Forest, or by the Rhine and Weser? A French outpost perhaps! Well, it mattered not; anything—even a few of the Volontaires de Clermont were better hosts than the snow and Jack Frost in such a night and in such a season.

Suddenly a cry escaped me, when, half-stifled in snow, I sank to the armpits—yea, to the very neck, struggling and floundering like a drowning man. In fact, I had tumbled into the dry ditch of the schloss, which was nearly filled with drifted snow, and across which I scrambled

with great difficulty towards the light. Thrice I nearly surrendered altogether, before, panting, breathless, and chilled to the heart's core, I reached a kind of terrace, approached the window, and peeped in.

Between tapestry hangings and white curtains of Mechlin lace, there could be seen a cosy little room, lined with dark brown wainscot, the varnished panels of which shone in the light of a cheerful fire. Drapery also of Mechlin lace overhung an elegant bed, a handsome mirror, and toilet-table, on which were placed four tall candles in solid stands of mahogany and silver.

There were one or two ebony Dutch cabinets, on which stood rare Japan canisters, quaint Chinese figures, an ormolu clock, and various pretty *bijouterie*, and there reigned within a sense of warmth,

perfume, and comfort, that reached even to my chilly post without the casement.

But now, through the large pattern of the Mechlin lace hangings, I could discern two female figures near the fire-place; they were each kneeling at a carved oak *prie-dieu*, saying their prayers and warming themselves at the same time, thus combining their comfort with their piety. By her dress, and the contour of her head and shoulders, one appeared to be a lady; the other an attendant. Benumbed to agony, I felt dreamy, bewildered, and knew not what to do; sleep seemed to be stealing over my senses.

What if all I saw was an illusion, and these two fair ones were but Lurlies, like those who haunted the Lurliberg? What if the whole affair proved a dream, from which I should waken, if I ever woke at all, to find myself amid the snow-clad

ruins of some old haunted schloss beside the Lahn?—for such is the plot of many a German story.

But when they rose from prayer I was quickly undeceived, and a cry almost escaped me on recognising Jacqueline de Broglie and her pretty attendant, the waggish Angelique!

Some minutes elapsed before I could sufficiently master my emotions to enable me to observe them particularly. Both seemed almost as unchanged as when we were together in the old chateau, especially Madame Tricot, the pretty piquante and black-eyed Bretonne. (Ah, she had soon tired of her M. Jacquot, who perhaps had given himself too many airs on becoming coachman to the coadjutor Bishop of Paris.) And she was here now with her former mistress (and mine too) in Germany, the land of the Seven Years' War.

The soft and charming features, the dark hair and eyes of Jacqueline, her air and manner, were all as I had seen them—not last, when lying, as it would seem, lifeless in the forest, but as they had been in our happier times. She was beautiful as ever; but the slightest symptom of dark down, like a shade, was visible at each corner of her pretty mouth—a symptom not uncommon among Frenchwomen after their twentieth year.

What was I to do now? To advance was to run into the jaws of danger; to retire was to perish amid the drifting snow, and already the very marrow seemed frozen in my bones. As she said something to Angelique, a thrill passed through me at the sound of her voice; something of my old love swelled up in my heart, and then pique repressed it; she seemed so happy and so smiling!

Had she been compelled to marry Bourgneuf? But, save her love, what was there to tie her unto me after I had disappeared from the chateau?

Suddenly the window against which I pressed (till my nose, had it been observed, must have presented a very livid aspect), and which had not been bolted, parted in two leaves that opened inwards, and heavily and awkwardly, with a shower of snow, I fell headlong into the apartment, and almost at the feet of Jacqueline, who, with her attendant, uttered a cry of terror; but both speedily recovered their presence of mind.

"*Mon Dieu!* what is this?—a drunken soldier!" exclaimed the first, with great asperity.

"A mousquetaire rouge—*Grand Dieu!* 'tis an Englishman! We shall all be

murdered. Help! help!" cried Madame Tricot, with new dismay.

"Jacqueline—Jacqueline! for Heaven's sake, hush! Have you quite forgotten me, Basil Gauntlet, and our pleasant days in old Bretagne?" I exclaimed, in an excited and imploring tone.

Terror, surprise, and anything but real pleasure, filled the eyes of Jacqueline as she recognised me. She trembled, and held up her hands as if to shield her averted face and keep me back; but this was needless, as I never approached, but stood near the open window, through which came the drifting snow and the night wind that waved the hangings.

"Oh, Jacqueline!" said I, while an irrepressible emotion of tenderness filled my heart, "how terrible was the time when last I saw you stretched upon the earth

in the forest of St. Aubin de Cornier!—and why do you greet me so coldly now?"

"Monsieur," said Angelique, taking my hands kindly in hers, "she greets you as people of the world greet those whom they are anxious to forget."

"With a fearful and cold welcome, Angelique?"

"True, *mon ami*, it is so."

"Then I pray you to pardon this intrusion," said I, hurriedly; "in seeking the British lines I have lost my way, and my life is beset by other dangers than the winter storm. Tell me where the Lahn lies, and I shall go; but pity me, Jacqueline, for Heaven and my own heart alone know how well I loved you."

There was a gratified smile on her lovely lip; a *smile*—and at such a time—it went a long way to cure me of my folly.

"*O, mon pauvre Basil!* and so it is really you?" said she, regarding me with a certain vague interest sparkling in her fine dark eyes; "but here, at this time of night," she continued with alarm—"and the count—I expect him every moment! You know that I am married, do you not? Get him away—away from here. Oh, Angelique, where are your brains? Aid us, or he is lost, and I too, perhaps!"

"Lost, indeed!" I repeated, bitterly.

"Guillaume de Boisguiller, whom you found in that horrid English prison-ship, told you all about my marriage, did he not?" said Jacqueline, earnestly.

"Yes, madame."

"And you did not die of a broken heart?"

"Not at all, madame; I can assure you that broken hearts are articles quite as rare among us in England as with you in France."

"Ah, indeed!" said she, smiling again.

"'Tis so," said I, with a laugh, which sounded strangely in my own ears, and in which she joined, giving her shoulders the while a little French shrug.

And this was the Jacqueline about whom I had sighed, raved, and wept! So here was an extinction of love, and a great demolition of romance at one fell blow.

"Tell me where the Lahn lies, madame, and I shall not trouble you with my presence for a moment longer. I am in constant danger of my life, for your husband seeks to destroy me, and without a reason."

"*Grands Dieux!*" she exclaimed, with real alarm, "are *you* the fugitive to secure whom Bourgneuf has dispatched men in so many directions?"

"Yes, madame; so permit me to restore to you this emerald ring. It nearly cost

me my life, and yet it won me my liberty yesterday at Ysembourg."

"From whom?" she asked, hurriedly.

"Your gallant old father, the Duc de Broglie."

Then drawing her ring from my finger, I laid it on the toilet-table with the air of Cromwell ordering the removal of "that bauble," the mace.

"He has no less than three parties out to cut you off—one in the direction of Hesse Cassel—one on the road to Wildungen—and a third at the ford near Zuschen, under Arnaud de Pricorbin."

"The bridges——"

"Alas! are all destroyed, and though a plank might aid you in crossing the one at Freyenthal, I heard him say that the Baron Konrad watches all the riverside with his foresters to prevent your passage. *Mon Dieu!* what shall be done?"

"Let me forth into the night again," said I, turning; "anywhere is better than here. Adieu, madame, adieu, and for ever!"

"*Hola! mon bon Monsieur Gauntlet;* so we meet again, do we?" exclaimed a familiar voice; and a cry escaped the women, when I found myself confronted by the Count de Bourgneuf, who shrugged his shoulders in the true French style, till his epaulettes touched his ears, while a fierce, ironical, and almost diabolical smile spread over his visage, and he ground his teeth. "*Aha, mon garcon!*" he continued, making me a series of mock bows, and then I perceived that he had a cocked pistol dangling in each hand: "so I've caught you at last, eh?"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WHISPERED ORDER.

In his rage, Bourgneuf, with each ironical bow, shook from his brigadier wig the white powder which he wore in great profusion.

The danger was imminent; peril menaced me in front and rear; the winter storm without, and an absurdly jealous foe within. I drew the pistol from my belt; but, alas! the pan was open, and the snow, when I fell into the ditch of the schloss, had replaced the priming. It was useless; however, as Bourgneuf was levelling his first weapon at my head, I rushed upon him, struck up the muzzle

with my left hand, so that in exploding the ball pierced the ceiling. With my pistol-butt I struck the weapon from his other hand, and seized him by the throat; but the room was almost immediately filled by soldiers of the Regiment de Bretagne, who beat me down and disarmed me.

The count drew my sword from its scabbard, and contemptously snapped the blade under his foot, saying, "*Ha! pst-sacré coquin-pst!*" as I was dragged into another apartment, and the door of the countess's room was closed and locked upon her and her attendant, whose cries I could hear ringing through the mansion; and as they seemed the prelude to some deed of cruelty and violence, I felt that in hands so unscrupulous I was helpless and completely lost.

However, I did not give in without a

desperate struggle. From Tom Kirkton, who in his wilder days had practised at Marybone and Hockly-in-the-Hole, I had picked up a little of the good old English science of self-defence, so I struck out right and left, and knocked over the crapauds like ninepins, till the butt-end of a musket laid me on the field of battle, and for a time I thought all was over.

I was now rifled. The two louis of kind Boisguiller were speedily appropriated. The pass of the Duc de Broglie and the little laced handkerchief of Aurora, which I still preserved as a souvenir of my only relative, were handed to the count. He laughed at the first, but the sight of the second transported him with a fury only equal to that of the Moor on the loss of that important handkerchief which the Egyptian to his mother gave, and which had "magic in the web of it."

"Count Bourgneuf," I exclaimed, resolutely, on recovering my breath, for timidity, I found, would be of little avail here; "you have in your hand the signed passport of the Duc de Broglie: how dare you thus to violate it?"

"Dare—*parbleu!* from whom did you receive it?"

"From yourself, in presence of M. Monjoy and the Chevalier de Boisguiller."

"Signed, you say?"

"Yes—look at it."

"I *have* looked; but it bears a signature Monseigneur de Broglie would scarcely recognise, and which no French soldier is bound to respect."

"A forgery! Mean you to say that it is a forgery of yours?" I exclaimed, furiously.

"Term it as you please," said he, tear-

ing the paper to pieces; "'tis thus that I respect it."

"The duke released me," I began, with some emotion of alarm—"released me on parole, and complimented me——"

"Because you saved the life of his daughter from an outlaw—or pretend that you did so."

"But you, her husband, M. le Comte——"

"Mean to put you to death as a spy, who remained as such in Bretagne for several weeks, and who now as a prisoner seeks to escape, after lurking behind the French lines, of which the river Lahn is the present boundary."

"Say, rather," said I, with unwise bitterness, "that with a jealous cowardice which has no parallel, you resolve to destroy me as one who loved the countess

before she had the misfortune to become your wife."

Enraged that this remark was made before the listening soldiers who crowded all the room, Bourgneuf said, with an oath and a scornful laugh—

"Ha!—think you so?"

"I both think and say so."

"What an intolerable world it would be if every man said all he thought, as you do; but I will meet you with the sword if you choose."

"I will not fight with a would-be assassin."

"The pistol then," he continued, grinding his teeth.

"I will not fight with an assassin, even though he wear the uniform of a colonel of the French Line," I replied, resolutely, though the soldiers began to mutter

angrily, and beat the floor with the butts of their muskets.

"*Bah—pst! ce pistolet est en arrêt!*" said Bourgneuf, turning on his heel with a sneer on his cruel lip, and this pet phrase of the French soldiers (implying the "white feather") so enraged me, that I could with pleasure have pistolled him on the spot.

Looking round for a man in whom he could trust, he selected a corporal, a most sinister-looking fellow, whose nose was quite awry, and whose shaggy eye-brows met over it in one. To him he gave a *whispered order*, and though my ear was painfully acute at such a time, I could only detect the words, "distance—sound of firing might not disturb—buried in the snow."

The man with the crooked nose and

huge chevrons saluted his colonel, and desired me to follow him, which I did immediately, conceiving that my chances were always better with one man than with a score. As we left the room a gleam of triumphant malice sparkled in the eyes of Bourgneuf, and he gave me an ironical bow.

When *next* I saw his face its expression was very different.

In the vestibule of the schloss, which was full of sleeping soldiers, the corporal summoned a personage, in whom I recognised Karl Kaarseboom, in whose ear he repeated the order of the count, and muttering curses at the trouble I caused them, these two worthies, after carefully loading their muskets, desired me gruffly to follow them, and leaving the schloss by a drawbridge which spanned the snow-filled ditch, we set forth, on what errand I knew not.

The storm of wind and snow was over now. Morning was at hand; the stars shone clear and brilliantly, and so bright was the reflection of the snow that every object could be discerned as distinctly as at noon-day. The silence was profound; even our foot-falls were muffled in the white waste, from amid which the fir-trees stood up like sheeted spectres.

I was weary and chilled, being without any muffling; my head was giddy with the recent blow, and the keen frosty air affected me severely.

I asked the corporal if they were conducting me to the ford of the Lahn.

"Not quite so far," replied he, gruffly.

My unexpected interview with Jacqueline, her coolness, her general bearing, had all bewildered me, and painfully wounded my self-esteem and pride, crushing my old

love, and creating an emotion that wavered between wonder and—shall I term it so?—disgust. She had proved so cold-blooded, so—but enough of Jacqueline; let me to my story, or we shall never make an end.

Again I asked my guides whither they were conveying me, and their object?

"Beelzebub!" muttered the corporal; "how impatient you are. You will find out too soon, perhaps. Karl, are we a mile from the schloss yet?"

"Scarcely," grumbled Kaarseboom, looking back.

I recalled the whispered order of Bourgneuf, and the terrible conviction came upon me that I was to be conducted to the *distance* of a mile or so, where the *sound of firing might not disturb* the countess—to be there shot and *buried in the snow!*

Thus did a keen sense of danger supply the wanting words.

What was I to do—unarmed, weak, weary, and powerless? I could grapple with neither of my guards without the risk of being shot by the other; and to be led out thus—I, an officer on parole, a prisoner of war, protected by the promise of the Duc de Broglie—led out to be butchered by two unscrupulous ruffians, and without a struggle—the thought was too dreadful for contemplation.

But such was the intended sequel to that night's adventures.

Halting close to a thicket about a mile distant from the schloss, the irregular outline of which was clearly defined against the starry sky, the corporal told me to "stand still, or march ten paces forward, and then turn round."

"For what purpose?"

"You will soon see," replied Kaarseboom, as he slapped the butt of his musket

with cool significance, and proceeded to kick, or scoop with his feet, a long trench in the soft snow.

"You do not—you cannot mean to butcher me here?" said I, following them closely.

"*Halte là!* Stand where you are," cried the corporal, "or, *nom d'un Pape!* I will shoot you down with my muzzle at your head. *Ah, sacré!—canaille—Rosbif!*"

A wild beating of the heart; a dryness of the lips, which I strove to moisten with my tongue; a dull sense of stupor and alarm, all soon to end, come over me, when cocking their pieces they retired backward close to the thicket. After carefully examining their priming, they were in the act of raising the butts to their shoulder to take aim, when thinking that all was over with me in this world, I strove to call to memory a prayer, and

something like a solemn invocation of God was forming on my lips, when both muskets exploded *upwards* in the air, and their reports rung far away on the frosty atmosphere, making me give an involuntary and spasmodic leap nearly a yard high.

I looked, and lo! there were my corporal and his Teuton comrade lying prostrate in the snow, while a man of great stature, armed with a large cudgel, was brandishing it above them, and kicking them the while with uncommon vehemence and vigour.

"Lie there, ye loons!" he exclaimed, in a dialect I had little difficulty in recognising even in that exciting moment; "I have gi'en you a Liddesdale cloure, and *you* a Lockerbie lick on the chaffets—ye unco' vermin!" Then he proceeded to twirl his ponderous cudgel—a branch

recently torn from a tree—round his head to dance among the snow and to sing—

> "Wha daur meddle wi' me?
> Wha daur meddle wi' me?
> My name is wee Jock Elliot,
> So wha daur meddle wi' me?"

On advancing, I found to my astonishment that my protector was my comrade, Big Hob Elliot of the Scots Greys!

CHAPTER XV.

THE DEAD HUSSAR.

"'Ods, sir, the hand o' Providence is in this!" exclaimed Hob, capering among the snow with renewed joy, but rather clumsily in his heavy jack boots; "and so you are the puir Redcoat thae devils were gaun to butcher!"

"How came you here, Hob?" I inquired in a somewhat agitated voice.

"How came you here, yourself, sir? But we hae nae time for spiering; we'll tak' their muskets and awa' to some place o' safety."

In a trice Hob tumbled the French corporal, who was just recovering, out of

his crossbelts, and appropriating his cartridge-box, handed me one musket, while arming himself with the other. We then hastened at a smart pace round the thicket, leaving the two scoundrels, French and German, to rouse them as best they could, or to smother amid the snow, for Hob had dealt each a stunning blow on the head.

As we hurried on, he told me briefly and hastily that he and nine other Scots Greys had been confined in a chamber of the outworks of Ysembourg, where they were packed as closely as ever Governor Holwell's unfortunate companions were in the Black Hole at Calcutta; but suffered from extreme cold in place of heat. It occurred to one who had been a stonemason, that the paved floor was hollow underneath, so this suggested the idea of attempting an escape.

Hob had been left with his spurs on

his heels, so with these he proceeded to pick out the lime, and on raising a stone slab a vaulted place was discovered below. They resolved to explore it, and soon found that it was a passage or gallery leading to the dry ditch of the fortress, and lighted by a row of loopholes meant for enfilading by musketry the ditch itself.

Two of these loopholes were rapidly beaten or torn into one by Hob's powerful hands armed with a stone, and then the whole party crawled through into the fosse undiscovered, and just as day was breaking.

The snow, which was falling fast, concealed all noise and kept the sentinels within their boxes, so by expertly using their hands and feet the fugitives crossed the ditch and clambered up the opposite side; but there a wooden stockade of considerable height presented itself, and while searching for an outlet they were

fired on by a sentinel from above, and at the same moment encountered an officer going his rounds with an escort of the inlying picket.

An alarm was immediately given; a scuffle, in which the escort opposed their bayonets to the unarmed men, ensued, and all were retaken save Hob Elliot, whose vast strength and activity enabled him to elude the levelled muskets, beat down two or three of the escort, reach an open wicket, and escape into the obscurity of the snowy morning. He had wandered all the ensuing day without knowing which way to turn, inspired only by the hope of reaching the Lahn, but a skirmish which nad been going on between the Light Dragoons of the allies and the French Hussars had compelled him to lurk in woods an' thickets, as he feared being shot at by both alike; for in his

present plight and after all he had undergone, very little of poor Hob's red coat remained, and of that the colour was somewhat dubious. Besides he was worn out with fatigue, and now nearly dead of cold, though his animal spirits bore bravely up against danger and adversity.

It was during this crisis in his affairs that, while concealed in a clump of trees, he had seen me conducted there by the two hirelings of Bourgneuf, and but for him, at their hands I had assuredly perished by a miserable and unknown death.

We had both narrowly escaped captivity and danger; but I knew that three parties were yet out in pursuit of me, and that the ford was still guarded; so we were still in a horrible dilemma.

Refreshment and a guide were neces-

sary; but where were we to find either? Loading the captured muskets we trod hopefully on, till we reached a cottage or small farmhouse, which to all appearance was deserted, as no smoke ascended from the chimneys, no dog barked or cock crew in the yard, the gate of which lay open or flat upon the ground.

A skirmish between the French Dragoons and the Prussian Black Hussars had evidently taken place close by this farm; for near it several horses, still accoutred were lying dead among the deep snow, and in some instances we saw spurred boots and ghastly white hands sticking up through it.

When we opened the door and entered the lower apartment the reason of the silence within it was at once accounted for, and we saw that which at another time, and to folks less case-hardened than

Hob and I, would have been a very appalling spectacle.

The house had been pillaged and its usual occupants had fled; but on the table of the principal room lay a dead body muffled in a scarlet cloak, all save the feet (from which the boots had been stolen), and stiffly white and cold they protruded beyond the scarlet covering.

In a corner lay a pile of regimental coats, caps, boots, shirts, stockings, waist and shoulder-belts, all spotted, and in some instances soaked with now frozen blood; and there, too, were broken swords, bent bayonets, and wooden canteens piled up by those vile strippers of the dead, who would no doubt return ere long for their plunder, so this was no place for us to linger in.

A Prussian Hussar, in the black uniform laced with white of the King's favourite

regiment, lay in another corner almost without a wound, yet quite dead, and in a pool of his own blood. A sword-point had grazed his left temple, severing the temporal artery, and he had bled to death, thus his blanched aspect was ghastly in the extreme.

"Horrible!" said I, shuddering.

"Maist deevilish!" added my companion, "but I've kenned o' waur."

Urged I knew not by what motive, for on service the emotion of mere *curiosity* soon becomes extinct, I turned down the mantle of the dead body which lay on the table, and then imagine my regret and horror on tracing in the glazed eyes, the relaxed jaw, the livid but handsome face, where the black moustache contrasted with its pallor, the Chevalier de Boisguiller, the gay and heedless Frenchman, who now lay stiff and cold in his rich

Hussar uniform. He had been shot through the heart, and must have died instantly, as there was not much blood about him, but a fearful expression of agony yet distorted his features.

Hob at once recognised him, and said,

"He was a braw cheild, this Boygilly; but he has gane oot o' the world noo, and I daursay the damned world will never miss him."

The poor fellow's sabretache lay by him, together with his braided and tasselled Hussar pelisse and fur cap. I opened the former, and found it contained the two despatches from the Duc de Broglie to Maréchal de Contades, for which he had waited at Ysembourg on the night I left it—despatches now spotted by his own blood. They detailed some future operations that were to take place on the heights of Corbach, and enclosed Monjoy's

diagrams of parallels and approaches before the castles of Marburg and Dillenburg, and all of these I knew would prove of inestimable value to our leader, Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick.

I now conceived the idea of passing myself off for my poor friend, whose character on this side of the Lahn was certainly a safer one than my own. I threw off my red coat, and put on his fur-trimmed pelisse and Hussar cap, together with his belt and sabretache, with its valuable papers.

Grim through this masquerading, Hob Elliot, who had been investigating several cupboards, and overhauling some haversacks, in which he found only a biscuit or two, laughed with stentorian lungs when he saw me attired in French uniform.

Then he presented me with a biscuit, saying,

" 'Ods, sir, we maun e'en feed oursels in this wilderness o' a place, for the ravens are no' likely to do it."

To him I gave the scarlet cloak and a suitable forage cap, and after vainly searching the house for anything it might contain in the shape of more food or spirits, of which we stood much in need, we set out about mid-day with a story framed to suit any French party we might meet in our wanderings.

I knew poor Boisguiller so well that I could if necessary imitate his voice and manner; and as we were much about the same height and complexion, I had no fear of passing myself off successfully for the chevalier. Yet, if discovered, we now ran a terrible risk of being hanged or shot as spies, or prisoners escaping, or it might be for having slain the man whose uniform I wore and whose papers I carried.

We met no one to guide us, while proceeding in what we conceived, by the gradual descent of the road and rivulets, to be the direction of the Lahn, until just as the dusk of the short winter eve was closing in, we saw a party of six French soldiers of the Line, muffled up in their greatcoats, their muskets slung, their three-cornered hats pulled well over their faces, and their hands thrust in their pockets for warmth, coming leisurely towards us.

We had nothing for it now but to advance boldly and meet them, and the reader may conceive that my emotions were far from soothing on finding myself confronted by Arnaud de Pricorbin, and the same men whom I had so recently met at the ford.

CHAPTER XVI.

ARNAUD DE PRICORBIN.

When about twenty paces distant they halted, and as the evening was dusky cast about their muskets. Then Arnaud cried with a loud voice,

"*Qui va là?*"

Hob Elliot very unwisely replied in his native tongue, and bade him go to—it was not Heaven. On this Pricorbin slapped the butt of his musket and challenged again.

"*La France,*" said I, in a very confident tone, and still continuing to advance; "I am the Chevalier de Boisguiller, going towards Freyenthal on special service."

"Boisguiller of the Hussars de la Reine?"

"*Oui, mon camarade*," said I, with a jaunty air.

"*Bon Dieu!* M. le Chevalier on foot?"

"My horse was shot in a skirmish yesterday."

"*Tais-toi, nous serrons entendus, monsieur*," said Arnaud, in a subdued voice, and presenting arms as I came close to him.

"*Pourquoi?*" said I, with affected impatience.

"Because the King of Prussia's Black Hussars are within musket shot of us."

"Where?"

"Among yonder trees," said all the soldiers together in a whisper.

"It matters not to me," said I; "we go under *cartel*."

I now perceived that one of the six soldiers had his head and face tied up with bloodstained handkerchiefs.

"And this big Gendarme?" inquired Arnaud, pointing to Hob Elliot.

"My guide from Ysembourg."

"Had he better not return with us? Monsieur is close to the ford."

Instead of replying to this uncomfortable suggestion, I asked "Have you found him you watched for?"

"The escaped prisoner?"

"*Diable*—yes."

"No, monsieur," he replied, with a malediction, in which the others, especially he of the slashed visage, heartily joined, while stamping their feet and blowing their fingers; "and so, after being half-frozen, we have left the ford in despair."

"Well—in yonder cottage on the slope

of the hill you will find him lying dead, with his red coat beside him."

"*Très bon!*—but I have some brandy here, M. le Chevalier," said Arnaud, presenting his canteen.

"*A votre santé, mon camarade,*" said I, drinking and handing the vessel to Hob, who without the smallest compunction and with a leer in his eye drained it to the last drop. "Diable! 'tis a cold night—I shaved off my moustache to avoid icicles; now, *camarade,* the direct road to the ford?"

"Is this we are on, monsieur—a half-mile further will bring you to it, but beware of the Hussars."

The deception was complete, and away they went double quick to the dreary cottage on the hill.

Amid the darkness which had now set in, we reached the willow bushes and

scattered rocks at the ford, the scene of my late affair with its watchers, and there a hoarse challenge in German rung through the frosty air upon our right. Then issuing from a thicket of pines, we saw a patrol of twenty of those dark and sombre fellows, the King of Prussia's Death's-head Hussars, riding slowly toward us.

They were all mounted (like our own corps) upon grey horses, their uniform was black, trimmed with silver or white braid, and skulls and cross-bones grimly adorned their caps, saddle-cloths and accoutrements. It was commonly said that the Black Hussars neither took nor gave quarter. Of this I know not the truth; but under the gallant and intrepid General Ziethen, they gained a glorious reputation during the Seven Years' War.

I speedily made myself known to the officer in command. He informed me

that my corps, which he knew well by its reputation, and by the grey horses and grenadier caps of their riders, had suddenly left all the villages of the Lahn and marched to Osnaburg (thirty-seven miles from Minden) a town which Hob and I reached, after undergoing no small degree of suffering and privation, about the beginning of January; and happy were we when we saw the union-jack flying above the fortress on the Petersburg, and our sentinels in their familiar red coats at the gates.

Then indeed did we feel at home, and that night in Tom Kirkton's quarters opposite the Dominican monastery, over a smoking rasher of Westphalian bacon and a crown bowl of steaming brandy punch, I had the pleasure of relating to old Colonel Preston and other brother-officers all our adventures after my

fashionable friend Shirley had blown up the bridge of the Lahn.

One of the first persons I inquired for was this gallant major, who, however, was elsewhere with the staff of Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick; but I was determined to settle my little score with him on the first suitable occasion. We had a jovial reunion; many times was the punchbowl replenished. Tom Kirkton gave us his favourite ditty, and then the old Colonel, in a voice somewhat cracked, struck up—

> "Malbrook s'en va t'en guerre, (and)
> *Mironton, Mironton, Mirontaine!*"

chorussed all to the clank of glasses and drinking-horns.

My indignation was great on finding, that not content with betraying me into the hands of the enemy, Shirley, to blacken my professional reputation, had forwarded

to the Marquis of Granby, General of our cavalry, a report to the effect, that "by culpable negligence Cornet Gauntlet had delayed to recross the Lahn, and had *permitted* himself to be taken prisoner, thus *betraying* into the hands of the enemy ten men and ten horses of his Majesty's Scots Grey Dragoons."

The corps were so furious at this aspersion that they cast lots for who should call him out; it fell on a Captain named Cunningham, who sent at once a challenge, which the Major declined on the prudent plea that "he could deal with the principal only," but worthy old Colonel Preston, who had seen the whole affair from the tower of Freyenthal, cleared me of all the imputations of Shirley, whom I would have punished severely by horsewhip and pistol, had he not been mortally wounded in a skirmish on the 10th of

January, when he expired in the hands of two soldiers who were carrying him to the rear in his sash.

On the day after I reached Osnaburg, Tom Kirkton, with a Scotch smirk in his face, handed me a letter addressed in a lady's small Italian hand.

It proved to be a kind one from my cousin Aurora—"the little usurper," as I named her; "the fair pretender," as she was styled by Tom.

Well, thought I, amid the horrors of war and the bitterness of such a wayward passion as that I cherished for the French girl, it *is* something above all price to have a pure English heart to remember, to pray for, and perhaps to love me, as this dear Aurora does at home.

In a postscript she sent her "best duty and kind regards to Major Shirley of the Staff."

"Poor devil!" muttered Tom, who was shaving himself for parade, and using the back of his watch as a mirror.

Having nothing else in the shape of uniform, I had to wear poor Boisguiller's gay Hussar pelisse on parade and on duty for some days, until our quartermaster supplied me with a sergeant's coat (minus its chevrons, of course), a trooper's sword, pistols and accoutrements; and in this motley guise I made my *début* as Lieutenant of the Light Troop (and served in it during the remainder of the campaign), for so valuable were the despatches regarding the projected movements of the French on the heights of Corbach and before the castles of Marburg and Dillenburg, that for procuring them I had been appointed to a Lieutenancy in the 2nd Dragoon Guards by Prince Ferdinand, and then gazetted back into my own

corps—the boys who were *second to none*, and whom I had no desire to leave.

We moved soon after to Schledhausen. There we remained until the month of May, when we marched through a country covered with forests to Fritzlar, a small town which belonged to the Elector of Mentz, where we were brigaded with the 11th Light Dragoons under General Elliot till the month of June, when the army again took the field.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE HEIGHTS OF CORBACH.

The allied British and Germans under Prince Ferdinand, though less numerous than the troops under the Duc de Broglie, were in fine fighting order, yet they prudently acted chiefly on the defensive.

The Duc de Broglie having quarrelled with the Comte de St. Germain who commanded the army of the Rhine, generally failed to act in concert with him, and thus saved the Prince from the, perhaps fatal, hazard of meeting their united strength in another general action. Prior to this quarrel (which ultimately compelled the Count to retire from the service) the French arms had been very successful.

They had overrun the whole Landgraviate of Hesse, with their grand army, leaving troops to blockade the castles of Marburg and Dillenburg, the operations before which were successfully conducted on the plans of Gervais Monjoy, while St. Germain marched through Westphalia to form a junction with the Maréchal Duc, who, by the 10th of July, had encamped on the heights of Corbach.

On hearing that his two castles had fallen into the hands of the French, Prince Ferdinand, whom the papers I had found in the sabretache of Boisguiller had fully informed of the intended movement towards Corbach, commenced a retreat from Fritzlar towards the river Dymel; and sent his son, the Hereditary Prince, with a strong detachment towards Sachsenhausen where he meant to encamp. Some British troops, horse and foot,

accompanied the young Prince on this expedition, and of these our regiment unluckily formed a part.

We continued to advance without opposition until the 30th of the month, when on coming in sight of the heights of Corbach and the distant town of Ysembourg, we found a body of French troops formed in order of battle and barring our march to Sachsenhausen.

Their strength seemed to be about ten battalions and fifteen squadrons, so far as we could judge at first.

"Now who or what the devil may these be?" we asked of each other, when we saw their arms shining in the sun, their colours waving in the wind, and the long line of white coats, three ranks deep, appear on the green mountain slope, where we had no idea of meeting any troops at all.

"Oh," said several, especially the staff officers who were spurring to and fro, in evident excitement; "'tis only the vanguard of the Comte de St. Germain, whom we must drive in."

The order was instantly given for the infantry to attack, the cavalry to support, and now began a brief but sharp, and to us very fatal engagement.

It was the noon of a lovely summer day.

Near us the Itter was rolling a blue flood between the green mountains, its banks fringed by light waving willows and dark wild laurels; beyond an opening or pass in the mountains where some French artillery were in position, we saw a fair and fertile plain, dotted by poplar trees, stretching far away in the sunlight, and the quaint old town of Corbach, with

its ruddy walls and latticed windows that glittered like plates of gold.

Our infantry began the affair with great spirit, and none stood to their colours more bravely than our 51st Foot, Brudenel's old corps, which was led by a gallant soldier, Lieutenant-Colonel Noel Fury.

The young Prince soon found that he had made a reckless mistake, and was engaged with the united strength of the French army, and with no vanguard or detached force, like his own! It was too late to recede, so madly we strove by bayonet and sabre to hew a passage towards Sachsenhausen, but strove in vain, as De Broglie constantly poured forward fresh supports; and although the main body of the allies under old Prince Ferdinand was but a few miles in our rear, such was the nature of the ground that they could yield us no assist-

ance whatever; so about two o'clock in the afternoon the trumpets sounded from right to left a retreat which it became our duty to cover.

As we galloped in sections round the flank of the 51st, and just as that regiment began to fall back from its line of dead and dying, I saw a dreadful episode, caused by the French Artillery.

Thrown from a mortar, a *cartouche* fell amid their ranks, and, by its explosion, in a single moment killed and wounded five officers and sixty rank and file! For the information of the non-military reader, I may state that this deadly missile is a case of wood about three inches thick at the bottom, bound about with marline, holding ten iron balls, each a pound in weight, and four hundred musket-balls. It had been fired from a howitzer on the rocks above the pass, and by one

of this dreadful shower of balls the young Prince was wounded in the shoulder.

When the retreat began, several of the German regiments fell into confusion, and the French were not slow in taking advantage of it. The task of repelling them fell upon the Scots Greys, with the 1st or King's and 3rd Dragoon Guards, and with enthusiastic cheers we followed the young Prince in a succession of brilliant charges, which drove the enemy back, enabling our unfortunate comrades in the Infantry to make an almost undisturbed retreat. I say almost, for the French, who continued the pursuit till evening, brought up their Flying Artillery, and in the dusk we could plainly see the fiery arcs described by the shells, which the field mortars threw nearly at random to the distance of a thousand

yards. So brightly burned the fuses, that we could avoid the falling bombs by scattering, dismounting, and throwing ourselves flat, as their exploding splinters alwaysrise at an angle of several degrees from the earth.

On this service, which saved our Infantry from entire capture, few officers distinguished themselves more than Count Keilmansegge, Colonel Preston, and Major Hill of our 1st Dragoon Guards.

Our corps lost but one man, who, with his horse, was killed by a single cannon shot that passed between Sergeant Duff and me.

By another, the colonel of the 51st was slain. I have elsewhere mentioned two cases of presentiment, one of which was fatally realized at the time, the other afterwards. The leader of the 51st was

inspired by a crushing emotion of this kind on that day at Corbach, and as the anecdote is little known, being related in the long since forgotten memoirs of a Scottish officer who served under him, I may quote it here.

"My old Lieutenant-Colonel, Noel Fury, was one of the slain. It is said by some that individuals may be visited by an undefined presentiment or mental warning of their approaching fate, though such ideas are treated by others as visionary and impossible. I shall not attempt to enter into a discussion which might lead me into the mazes of metaphysical inquiry, but shall content myself with a simple narrative of what I witnessed on the morning of this engagement.

"Colonel Fury was remarkable for the liveliness and gaiety of his disposition, and his spirits, on an occasion like the pre-

sent, when about to enter into action, were uniformly observed to be unusually elevated. His habitual sprightliness and good humour made him a general favourite in the regiment; besides, he was a man of distinguished gallantry and an excellent officer. Among other good qualities, he paid especial attention to the filling of his canteen, and on the morning in question he sat down under a tree, inviting several of his brother officers to breakfast.

"For the *first time* in his life, on the eve of an engagement, he seemed pensive and dull, and on being rallied on the subject by some of the gentlemen present—

"'I don't know how it is,' he answered, 'but I think I shall be killed today.'

"The cannonade having just begun, he mounted his horse, and rode up to the regiment, where he had been but a very

short time when his head was carried off by a cannon shot."

Our *total* loss was five hundred men, and fifteen pieces of cannon.

We rejoined the main body of the allied army full of rage and disgust at our discomfiture, and clamouring for an opportunity to encounter the foe again; nor was it long before that opportunity came.

Among the papers found in the sabretache of Boisguiller, was one which informed Prince Ferdinand of a proposed movement of the French from Corbach towards Ziegenheim, and on this point he fixed his attention.

Not many days after our last affair, tidings came that a body of the French, commanded by Major General Glaubitz and Colonel Count Bourgneuf, had advanced in that direction.

Immediately on hearing this, our leader directed the young hereditary prince, who was eager and burning to wipe out the late disgrace, to drive them back, and on this service he departed, with six battalions of Hussars, the Scots Greys, 11th Light Dragoons, Luckner's Hussars, and two brigades of Chasseurs.

In high spirits and full of ardour we marched on the 16th of July, came suddenly upon the enemy at Emsdorff, attacked them with great fury, slew a great number of all ranks, took the Major-General, all the artillery and baggage, one hundred and twenty-seven officers and two thousand two hundred soldiers prisoners.

Count Bourgneuf, however, contrived to make his escape, after a rough hand-to-hand combat with Captain Cunningham of the Greys.

In this action, our 11th Light Dragoons, popularly known as Elliot's Horse, charged no less than *five* times, and broke through the enemy at every charge; but in these achievements they lost a great number of officers, men, and horses. Here for the first time we found ourselves opposed to a corps of Lancers, whose weapon was then unknown in our army. When Preston led us to the charge against them, their tall lances, with red pennons streaming, were erect; but when we were within three horses' length of them, a trumpet sounded, then they lowered them all breast-high and waved their streamers, so that many of our horses shied wildly; but we broke through them, nevertheless, and the spear-heads once passed, all was over with the Lancers.

On the 22nd of August, when we attacked the French rearguard at Zierenberg,

as it was commanded by Bourgneuf, and consisted of the regiments of Bretagne and Clermont, I hoped for an opportunity of meeting my personal enemy, but was disappointed; for although we burst into the town, which is surrounded by a wall and has three gates, and in columns of troops charged into the heart of the disordered French, cutting them down right and left, I never saw the Count, though, amid the fury and confusion of such a conflict, I must have been more than once within pistol-shot of him.

Here we had five men and nine horses killed, Colonel Preston and twenty men wounded; but now came the affair which was known in the army as the battle of Zierenberg, where I had once again an opportunity of meeting my unscrupulous Frenchman face to face.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A NIGHT ATTACK.

We were encamped at Warburg, when, in September, we received orders to hold ourselves in readiness to move on particular service, and at an hour's notice—a troublesome communication, for we could scarcely unharness by day or by night, and had to keep our horses almost constantly saddled. At last came instructions to march, about nightfall, on a dull and gloomy evening, the 5th of September, when, with two regiments of foot (Maxwell's and the famous old 20th), the Inniskilling, and Bock's Hanoverian Dragoons, Bulow's Jagers, and one hundred and fifty Highlanders, we left the camp with all our tents standing

to make a night attack upon the town of Zierenberg, which had been reinforced, and where Bourgneuf still commanded.

The forces there consisted of the Volontaires de Clermont and the regiments of Dauphiné and Bretagne—in all about three thousand men. Luckily, we were furnished with the password for the 5th September—*Artois*; it had been brought over by a deserter, who proved to be no other than the rascal Arnaud de Pricorbin, who had come into Warburg about noon, and thus betrayed his comrades, who passed their time almost careless of security, and having but slender guards and outposts.

The town, he informed us, was still a place of no strength; and, though surrounded by a dry ditch, that was shallow, and the wall within it was crumbling with age and decay.

Led by Colonel Preston, the Scots Greys were to head the attack.

As we marched, the dark and obscurity of the autumn evening deepened on the scenery. The duty was an exciting one, for the whole French army was encamped at a short distance from the point of attack, and we knew not the moment when we might find ourselves in a snare or ambush; for the story of the deserter, as to the password, the real strength of the force under Bourgneuf, and his dispositions for defence, might all be a lure, though the fellow remained in the hands of our quarter-guard as a hostage for the truth of his statements.

We crossed the river Dymel near the Hanse Town of Warburg, and saw the brown chesnut-groves that border its banks, the clear stars, and the crescent of the waning moon reflected in its current.

Ere long we saw the lights in Zierenberg and the fires of the French, whole companies of whom were bivouacked in the streets of the little town, where they made fuel of the furniture, the rafters, and floors of such houses as shot or shell had previously made too ruinous for occupation.

When within two miles of the place, the grenadiers of Maxwell, the 20th regiment, and the little band of Highlanders, made a detour, taking three separate routes, while we, the cavalry, took a fourth, thus completely surrounding and cutting off those who were cantoned in Zierenberg.

According to Pricorbin's information, which proved to be correct, a regiment of French dragoons were bivouacked outside the town wall and in front of the principal gate; and it was with them *we* had first to deal. We continued to advance in

silence, all orders being passed in whispers, and thus not a sound broke the stillness of the night, but the monotonous tramp of our horses' hoofs, the occasional rattle of our accoutrements, the clatter of a steel scabbard or a chain bridle, till, unluckily, some of our horses began to neigh, and we could distinctly hear some of the French chargers responding, for the air was calm, still, and clear.

"Push on—push on!" was now said by all; "the alarm is given, and we have no time to lose!"

The moon, which occasionally gave out weird gleams of silver light between the masses of dark cloud that floated slowly on the upper currents of air, was now luckily enveloped, and all the scenery was intensely dark. Yet we could distinctly see the lights twinkling in the town, and the glare of the night fires,

which cast flashes of lurid and wavering radiance upon the steep gables, the spire of a church, and the undefined outlines of masses of building. The French could see nothing of us; but the neighing of our nags was sufficient to give them all an *alerte*, consequently, when we came within four hundred yards of the town gate, the whole regiment of horse were in their saddles to receive whatever might be approaching.

We were advancing in close column of troops as the way was broad and open. The Inniskillings were in our rear; the light troop of ours was in front of the whole, with Colonel Preston riding between Douglas and me.

On the roadway, as we approached, we could see the black figure of a single horseman posted.

"When he challenges, Gauntlet, reply

in French," whispered the Colonel; "say something to deceive him."

Preston had scarcely spoken, when the voice of the vidette rung out clearly on the night—

"*Qui vive?*"

"*Artois,*" I replied, while we all pressed forward at a trot.

"*A quel regiment?*" shouted the vidette, in great haste.

"Les Hussards de la Reine," said I, giving the name of Boisguiller's well-known corps, which was in the camp at Corbach.

"*Très bien!*" replied the soldier, but the next moment he could hear Preston's words of command, given sternly and low—

"Prepare to charge—*charge!*"

The Frenchman's carbine flashed redly through the gloom, almost in our faces;

the bullet whistled over our heads to the rear, where a fearful cry told that it had found a fatal billet among the Inniskillings; then wheeling round his horse, he galloped to the rear, where his comrades were formed in column of squadrons.

Ere the echoes of his shot had died away on the night wind, we heard the cheers of the 20th and the sound of the Highland bagpipe mingling with the hoarse hurrah of Bulow's light troop, as the town was assailed on three other points at once. Then the opening musketry flashed redly in various quarters, and the gleam of sudden fires shot upward in the murky air.

Sword in hand we burst, with the weight and fury of a landslip, among the French cavalry, and drove them back, not so much by dint of edge or point, as by the sheer

weight of our men and horses. So sudden was the shock, so irresistible our charge, that they scarcely made any resistance, but were thrust pell-mell into the town, in the narrow streets of which they were so intermingled with our men and the Inniskillings that in many instances neither of us could use our swords. For some minutes, at this crisis, I found myself completely isolated and wedged among the French, some of whom actually laughed at the whole affair.

Captain Cunninghame, of our first troop, in consequence of a blow which had penetrated the back of his grenadier cap, fell backward on his horse's crupper insensible, but could fall no further so dense was the living press around him; and thus he remained until the place surrendered.

Colonel Preston, whose horse was pos-

sessed of great spirit and fire, pressed far beyond any of us; but before he could reach the town-gate, it sprang over the bridge with him into the ditch—where the brave old boy remained up to his thighs in mud, swearing and sputtering, but in safety, until we extricated him about daybreak.

Some of the houses being set on fire lit up by their lurid glare the horrors of the night attack. Taken completely by surprise, many of the French were fighting in their shirts and breeches, and were mingled in wild mêlée with the 20th and Highlanders, using their bayonets and clubbed muskets, without time to load or fire, so closely were they wedged together; but some who were in the houses opened an indiscriminate fusilade on friends and foes. This so greatly exasperated the nimble Highlanders, that in several

instances they stormed these mansions, and with dirk and claymore slew without mercy all within.

Every inch of ground was disputed by death and blood. The yells, cries, and hurrahs of the opposing combatants mingled with the clash of weapons that glittered in the fires around them—fires that reddened all the air; but the shouts of the French grew weaker as the cheers of the British increased.

"Hurrah for the Inniskillings!" cried we.

"Hurrah for the Scots Greys!" cried the Irish.

"Hurrah for Bulow's wild Jagers!" cried both regiments.

A French officer, minus hat, wig, and coat, was dragged roughly out of a house by two furious Celts, who were jabbering and swearing in their native Gaelic, as

if they had not made up their minds whether to kill or capture him, when he clung to my stirrup-leather, and without attempting to use the sword in his hand, breathlessly implored quarter.

I regarded his pale face with sudden and stern interest, for this despairing suppliant was the commandant of the town, the Comte de Bourgneuf.

I lost no time in disarming him, by snapping *his* sword across my saddle-bow, contemptuously as he had snapped mine, and desired the Highlanders to keep him prisoner. He was dragged away, and I never saw him again. It was enough; he had *recognised me!*

His whole force, being completely surrounded and hemmed in, capitulated, but so many had perished in the attack that we brought off only forty officers and four hundred rank and file, with the colours of

the regiments of Dauphiné and Bretagne, one of which I captured in the count's quarters. These trophies we lodged in the camp at Warburg, after losing but few men in the whole affair.

It was on that night's duty that I *last* saw powder burned in the Seven Years' War.

Our infantry were encamped under canvas in the immediate vicinity of Warburg, the quaint old German streets of which presented a lively picture of campaigning life, for every house had been converted into a barrack; soldiers in British or Hanoverian uniforms appeared at all the windows, lounging, laughing, and smoking, or pipeclaying their belts or gaiters. Piles of muskets stood in long rows upon the pavements. Here and there a sentinel trod to and fro upon his post, indicating the quarters of a colonel

or where the colours of a regiment were lodged.

In the church were stalled our horses, and there stable duty and religious service went on together; for, as wounded men died every day in our hands, one seldom passed without a body being laid before the altar muffled in a cloak, greatcoat, or rug, prior to interment in the trench outside the gates.

After our return from the night attack at Zierenberg, I slept profoundly on the bare floor of my billet, which was in an empty house. I think one does generally sleep sound after enduring great excitement or great calamity, for it is the *waking* alone that brings back the sense of grief or danger. Prior to that came dreams, and again I seemed to hear the bayonet and sabre clashing, the shouts and the wild work of last night; but from these

I was roused about mid-day by Tom Kirkton, our adjutant, who as yet was still accoutred.

"Well, Gauntlet, old friend," said he, with a peculiar smile; "so you and I are to part at last?"

"How—what do you mean, Tom?"

"You have been chosen by the commander-in-chief, on Colonel Preston's recommendation (a dear old fellow, isn't he?) to convey to London, and to the king's own hand, his despatches and the colours taken last night; and his orders say, you must start in an hour."

"And I am to proceed—"

"By our rear. See, here is your route; by Arensburg to Wesel, and thence down the Rhine to Nimeguen on the Waal; thence by boat to the mouth of the West Scheldt, where some of our gun-brigs are sure to be lying."

"Zounds! Tom—a long and tiresome journey; alone too! and the money?"

"Old Blount, the Paymaster-General, furnishes that. So come, rouse thee, friend Basil—let us have a parting glass ere you go, my dear boy."

There was an unmistakeable moisture and sad expression in Tom's clear and usually merry eye as he spoke, for we had ever been the best of friends and comrades.

Within an hour after this I had packed my valise, secured the French colours and the Prince's despatches in a large saddle-bag—had bade adieu to our good old colonel,* to Tom Kirkton, Douglas, and others, and departed with sincere regret. Hob Elliot and many of the Greys—brave, good, honest fellows—accompanied me to

* He died at Bath, in 1785, a Lieutenant-General, and still Colonel of the Scots Greys.—*Regimental Record*, p. 127.

the town gate, and the farewell cheer they gave me as I passed through the Infantry camp rings yet in my ear and in my heart, as it did then when I waved my cap, and said "God bless you!"

CHAPTER XIX.

IN LONDON AGAIN.

Before I reached England, some changes had taken place of which we had as yet heard nothing in our camps and cantonments in Germany.

The king had died in October; his grandson had been proclaimed by the title of George III., and already the Court was out of mourning, for the new monarch had succeeded a father who had been hated by the late king, and whom *he* was never known to name or to speak of during the whole of his long life; no one knows *why*, but so it is, that the

memory of Frederick Lewis, Prince of Wales, was speedily committed to oblivion.

After a narrow escape from a French privateer, I was landed by a returned transport at Portsmouth, and travelled post to the English metropolis, halting for a night at the Red Lion at Guildford, where the landlord perfectly remembered the affair of the highwayman in the chimney, and insisted on my sharing with him a crown bowl of punch in the good old fashion, while I fought all my battles over again.

Next evening, without encountering a breakdown of the ricketty vehicle, an overturn on the wretched roads, a masked highwayman, or other adventure, I saw before me mighty London, with the double domes and peristyles of Greenwich shining in the sun, and the old battered

fellows who had fought under Anson, Hawke, and Boscawen enjoying their pipes on the terrace; then the glorious Thames, with its myriad shipping, and the flags of all the world (France excepted) flying over them; the vast façade of St. Paul's—the great square mass of the Tower, which made me think of the jewels, the crown, the chains and dungeons of tyrants long since gone to their account, and of that long line of Norman and English kings whom we may still see there, with their wax faces and dusty armour, ranged rank and file in the Armoury.

Anon I was amid the roar and bustle of Fleet-street and the Strand, and had passed under Temple Bar, whereon were still, white, bleached, and bare, the skulls of those who perished for principle and their king, though the

brothers of some of them led the ranks of our Scottish corps at Minden.

I put up at the King George in Pall Mall, where, for the first night for many, many months, I could take mine ease in mine inn, and where from the windows I could see the flaring links and flambeaux, the sedans and coaches, of those who were proceeding to the theatres, opera, balls, or elsewhere.

I thought of the time when I had been last in London, under such different circumstances—when I had come with the despatch concerning the French spies—I, a simple orderly dragoon—concerning that wretch Hautois, before we sailed from Portsmouth for Brittany, and ages seemed to have elapsed since then.

After all I had seen of war, I agreed to the full with my Lord Clarendon, in all

his views and remarks on the virtues and blessings of peace.

At the George I felt myself apparently amid lavish luxury! Yet even carpets were almost unknown in English bedrooms during the early part of George III.'s reign; but it seemed to me that a comfortable home, a blazing sea-coal fire, soft hearthrugs, warm curtains, a smoking dinner and singing tea-urn, a pretty English wife, with her true domestic love (and a most becoming dress of course), to do the honours of one's house and table, a tranquil life, and all that kind of thing, were a thousand times better than pipeclay and glory, after all; better than turning out by drumbeat or bugle-call in a dark rainy morning, to march fasting, to shoot or be shot at; better than to hear the winter sleet rattling on the wet tent, or to endure it

in the wetter bivouac; and so indeed thought I, Basil Gauntlet, when on that night of December I tucked myself cosily in a warm bed at the George in Pall Mall, and went off to sleep, with the "drowsy hum" of London in my ears.

Next day I presented my credentials at the Horse Guards, obtained six months' leave of absence, and was informed that there would be a royal drawing-room at Kensington Palace in two days after; and the commander-in-chief kindly added that he would arrange for my presentation by his Grace the Duke of Argyle, who was full colonel of my own Regiment, and was then in town. So, for two days I was free to roam about the streets in search of amusement.

Ignorant of London, I stumbled first into the wooden house in Marylebone-

fields, and saw a couple of sword-players slashing each other with rapiers on a platform to the sound of French horns and a tenor drum; then followed a game at quarterstaff, while the boxes and galleries were crowded by men of the first position, betting-book in hand, sword at side, and the hat cocked knowingly over the right eye. From these I rambled to Don Saltero's Museum, to see his stuffed rhinoceroses, tigers, and monsters; thence to an auction in Cornhill, where, among other effects of a bankrupt shipbroker, a young negro woman was put up to sale, and bought by a Newmarket gentleman for 32*l.*

As a soldier I could not resist going to see the home battalions of the Foot Guards exercised at the King's Mews, near Charing Cross. Then I dined at a chocolate-house, summoned a chair, and was swung

off at a trot to the opera, where I heard one of Mr. Handel's performances hissed down, as quite unequal to the "Beggar's Opera."

Next day I found a card waiting me at my hotel. The Duke expected me to dine with him on that day, if not otherwise engaged.

I found his Grace and the Duchess waiting to receive me with great kindness and affability.

He was John Campbell of Mamore, who had lately succeeded to the dukedom, after long service in Flanders and Germany; he was now a Lieutenant-general, Governor of Limerick, and a Scottish representative Peer; she was Mary, daughter of John, Lord Bellenden of Auchinoule, a handsome and stately woman, but now well up in years.

He asked me many questions about the

regiment, and inquired if "auld Geordie Preston still adhered to his buff coat." He also made a few queries, but with reserve, about the Cavalry movements at Minden, and the charges brought against Lord George Sackville. On such matters the gentle Duchess was silent; moreover, she always shrunk from military matters, as she had never recovered the loss of her second son, Lord Henry Campbell, who had been killed at the battle of Lafeldt.

Perceiving how threadbare my fighting-jacket was—(it was the sergeant's coat I had procured at Osnaburg)—I proposed to get a court dress, or a new suit of regimentals for the presentation to-morrow.

"Nay, nay," said the Duke; "come as you are—we shall drive to the Palace in my coach, and believe me, the ladies will like you all the better in your purple coat.

It looks like work—zounds! yes. And, by-the-by, if you want any franks for the North, or to hear a debate in the Upper House, don't forget to command me."

CHAPTER XX.

THE DRAWING-ROOM.

A PRESENTATION at Court may be a very exciting thing to those who are unused to such scenes; but to me, nothing whatever could prove a source of excitement yet, for no man is more self-possessed, less interested in a mere spectacle, or in whom the feeling of curiosity is so dead, for a time at least, as one who has served a campaign or two.

During the reign of the late king and the early part of his successor's, drawing-rooms occurred very frequently, and royalty presented itself to the nobility and gentry at least twice weekly; but

from various circumstances—perhaps the recent mourning, so hastily laid aside—on this occasion the attendance was unusually great, and when the carriage of the Duke, who wore the uniform of Colonel of the Greys, with the star and dark green ribbon of the Thistle, reached Kensington Palace-gate, we found it quite blocked up by brilliant equipages, sedan chairs, and livery servants, having huge cocked hats, long canes, and in some instances bouquets of artificial flowers.

From the portico of the Palace to the presence chamber, the Yeomen of the Guard, under Viscount Torrington, and the Gentlemen Pensioners, under the Lord Berkeley of Stratton, lined all the corridors and guarded the entrances, their showy uniforms contrasting powerfully with my patched and war-worn suit of harness, which, sooth to say, seemed odd

enough, for my silver epaulettes were reduced to mere tufts of black wire; my once crimson sash to dingy fritters, my jack-boots were of no particular tint, and my spurs, like my scabbard, were a mass of rust.

But I carried over my left arm the standards of the regiments of Dauphiné and Bretagne; and they secured me some interest, in the eyes of the ladies at least—the beauty and fashion of the first court in the world—as they thronged past, in hoops and brocades, their fine hair dredged with powder, and their soft cheeks obscured by rouge and patches.

My grandfather had disinherited me; true! I had nothing in the world but my sword and my wretched pay as a sub; I was not the Lord of Netherwood, moor and hill, hall and river; but I was Basil Gauntlet, of Minden and Zierenberg—

and they, at least, were something to be heir to.

As we entered the gallery which leads to the black marble staircase, two gentlemen, one of whom was dressed in scarlet richly embroidered with gold, and who wore a very full perriwig—the other, who was attired in a purple velvet suit corded with silver, and who had on a sword of unusual length, and a bag wig, entered into conversation with the Duke, who presented me to them as an officer of his regiment.

The first was the groom of the stole, the famous Earl of Bute, the future premier, the foe of Wilkes and the London mob; the other was my Lord Huntingdon, Master of the Horse, and both were pleased to say many handsome things concerning our regiment and its services during the war. Moreover, the Lord

Bute was pleased to manifest his friendship for me, by presenting his snuff-box of light-blue sevres china, which he always carried in the flap-pocket of his waistcoat.

The heat and crowd were great; many had already been presented, and some were withdrawing as we passed slowly through several rooms of the old summer palace, the walls of which were hung with rich tapestry and ornamented by many pictures and busts on pedestals. Among others, my Lord Bute and his Grace pointed out to me the Venus of Titian and the Infant Saviour by Rubens, the dark Holbeins, some works of Albert Durer, and the full-lengths of Orange William and Mary Stuart, his queen—the former all nose and white wig, the latter with a mass of frizzled locks and a very bare bosom; and so, by gently pressing onward, we found ourselves in the presence-chamber, amid

all the glitter and splendour of the court.

At the further end, on a chair of state under a rich canopy of crimson velvet, heavily laced, sat a fair-complexioned and smooth-faced young man, of a mild but most undignified and somewhat flabby aspect, who wore the uniform of the Foot Guards, with the magnificent collar and order of the Garter sparkling on his breast, and who had his powdered hair brushed back, queued, and simply tied with a black ribbon.

"'Tis the king!" whispered the Duke of Argyle and my Lord Bute at the same time.

I had never been in a palace or stood in such a presence before, and, until now, had been more occupied by the beauty of the ladies and the splendour of their jewels and dresses; but I felt a strange

thrill in my heart—*blasé* as it was by the excitement of campaigning—when I looked on the mild face of this same young king, who was then in his twenty-third year, who had a threefold ball and treble sceptre to wield, and who had declared it to be his proudest boast that he was the FIRST of his race who had drawn breath on British soil, and that he gloried in it!

Many presentations went forward before it came to my turn. I saw Carolina, Countess of Ancrum, a stately woman, in a dress of white satin, superbly spangled with gold, and drawn up in festoons by cords of gold, to display an under-petticoat of scarlet velvet, studded with seed-pearls, advance towards the throne. Her hair was powdered white as snow, and tied over a cushion about five inches high. With a low courtesy she was presenting

to his majesty, who bowed graciously, a very graceful girl, whose back, unfortunately, was towards us; but I could admire the wonderful fairness of her neck and shoulders, over which some heavy ringlets fell from the high cushion or pad, above which her golden hair, all undisguised by powder, was dressed and tied with knots of scarlet ribbon. Her dress was of scarlet and white striped satin, embroidered with gold on all the seams, and as they withdrew, courtesying backward—

"Gauntlet, 'tis our turn now," said the Duke, while he took me by the left hand and led me forward to the steps of the throne, which were covered with crimson cloth.

"Permit me," said he, "to present to your majesty Sir Basil Gauntlet, of my regiment, the 2nd Dragoons—an officer

who, by his personal bravery, has contributed not a little to maintain their old historic character of being *Second to None.*

"Good!—second to none—good, very good!" said the young king, bowing very pleasantly, and presenting his hand, which I suppose I was expected to kiss; but which, in my ignorance, I shook very cordially, to the amusement of many fine lords and macaronies who stood by. I coloured, but said confidently—

"Commissioned by his Serene Highness Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, General of the allies, I have been sent from our camp at Warburg in Westphalia, to lay at your majesty's feet these trophies, the standards of the regiments of Dauphiné and Bretagne, captured in our late attack on Zierenberg."

From my hands the king took the colours, which were of blue silk, with the

royal crown and cypher of France. One bore the silver fleurs-de-lys; the other the golden dolphin of Dauphiné in a field ermine, and both exhibited the holes where many a bullet had passed. He thanked me in a very handsome manner, while all the brilliant groups which crowded that magnificent apartment drew near to observe and to listen.

Something of my story, perhaps of my early misfortunes, my unmerited wrong, and my enlistment, with a hundred fables tacked thereto, had been buzzed or whispered about; thus I found many bright eyes and well-powdered personages in fashionable pasteboard skirts regarding me with well-bred interest.

"Good!" said the king, whose eloquence seldom overflowed; "this is very good, and your services shall be duly appreciated. Did you serve at Minden?"

"I had the honour."

"In the cavalry?"

"Yes, sire—in the Scots Greys."

At those words, a gentleman in a brigadier wig and suit of grey, corded with silver, turned abruptly and surveyed me with a louring eye. He was no other than my Lord George Sackville, who hated the Scots—as he afterwards did the Americans—because ten of the sixteen generals who found him guilty of misconduct at Minden were born north of the Tweed; and so blindly did he hate that portion of Britain, that for a time he was universally believed to be the author of "Junius' Letters;" thus, at the mention of the Greys, 'tis no wonder that he started as if a wasp had stung him.

The king gave the standards to my Lord Huntingdon, and bowed to us again, as we now withdrew to make way for others.

In retiring, I then perceived near the throne one who had good reason to remember with gratitude and respect the uniform of a Scots Grey, the little Prince Edward Augustus, Duke of York, whom Jack Charters had saved from drowning when the man-o'-war's boat was smashed by a cannon shot near Querqueville Point at Cherbourg.

I was mentioning this episode to the Duke of Argyle, who felt an interest in everything that related to his regiment, when suddenly a charming voice said, "Basil!" in my ear, a hand was laid softly and timidly on my arm, two smiling blue eyes looked calmly into mine, and I found before me the fair girl, she with the golden-hair, the scarlet-striped dress and blue crape petticoat—my cousin, Aurora!

She now presented me to her chaperone, the Countess of Ancrum, who had been

Lady Caroline d'Arcy, only daughter of the Earl of Holderness. She in turn presented me to several ladies, who plied me with the usual simple and silly questions about the war and certain officers who were serving with the army, until Aurora passed her arm through mine and we began to converse about ourselves.

Aurora was indeed very beautiful, and when I looked on her delicate skin and brilliant English complexion, "how," thought I, "could I ever admire a dark Frenchwoman, or any but a blue-eyed girl!"

"I was *so* proud when I saw you led forward to the king!" said Aurora, "and to see you looking so well and gallant, Basil. Do you know that all the ladies here quite envy my cousinship?"

"Aurora, how you flatter! One would

think that you had been among the French and not I."

"And what think you of the young king?"

"I am charmed by his condescension."

"Yet scandal says he is married to a pretty quakeress named Hannah Lightfoot, though about to espouse the Princess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz," whispered Aurora. "What think you of that forsooth?"

"I wish you would not say such things, cousin."

"Your loyalty is shocked, is it? Well, I shall not whisper treason, even in your ear," replied Aurora, who proceeded to point out several persons to me, and to make remarks on them that were witty enough at times.

"Who is that tall man with the blue ribbon?"

"He with the military stride, who seems to go right, left—right, left, head up, and queue straight?"

"Yes," said I, laughing.

"That is the gallant old Earl of Crawford, who led the Scottish Horse Guards in Flanders."

"And that dapper little man in the orange-coloured suit, whom he is now presenting?"

"The Chevalier Chassegras de Lery, the *first* of his Majesty's new Canadian subjects that has appeared in London, where, I can assure you, he is greatly run after. He was wounded in the siege of Quebec, and assisted to bury the Marquis of Montcalm. But look you, cousin, look!" continued Aurora, laughing and blushing behind her large scarlet fan; "do you see that grim-looking old gentlewoman in green brocade?"

"Whom a bishop is presenting—yes."

"The late king died in her arms. She is the Countess of Yarmouth."

"Sophia de Walmoden!"

"Yes. Listen!—she is returning thanks for her pension of 4000*l.* per annum, for services rendered to his Majesty's royal grandfather. For all his victories over the French the brave Sir Edward Hawke gets exactly *half* that sum."

With some interest I surveyed this old personage in paint, patches, and brocade; she who had wrought poor Charters such mischief in his youth when he was about eighteen, and she perhaps six and thirty.

But now the dusk was setting in; I missed his grace of Argyle, or perhaps he thought his duty to me ended at the foot of the throne, and it was an odd coincidence that Aurora also lost her chaperone,

Lady Ancrum ; thus I had to escort her to the Palace-gate.

"You must come to Netherwood for the shooting, Basil," said she, as we traversed the long corridors of the palace; "at the Hall I keep a strange souvenir of you," she continued, laughing—"an old blunderbuss—do you remember it?"

"No."

"You cannot have forgotten that night on Wandsworth Common, and the old blunderbuss which so terrified John Trot?"

"How could I forget the first time I met you, Aurora!—but here is your chair."

Two yeomen of the guard made way for us with their partisans; John Trot was in attendance with cane and link, as I handed Aurora into her sedan, hooped-petticoat, skirt, *toupée* and all.

"While in London, Basil, remember that you make our house in Piccadilly your home."

"*Our!*" thought I in perplexity, as two soft hands held mine during this speech, and two blue eyes looked kindly into mine. I was becoming a timid fellow again, or I know not what privilege of cousinship I might have claimed had we been elsewhere than amid that crowd at Kensington Palace-gate.

"I live in Piccadilly with an old lady-friend, or rather, I should say she lives with me—my companion, an officer's widow. You will lunch with us to-morrow—two is the hour, and we shall expect you. Adieu."

She was borne off at a trot by her chairmen in the Gauntlet livery, while I set out on foot to return to "mine inn," the King George the Third, in Pall Mall.

CHAPTER XXI.

COUSIN AURORA.

I FELT pleased and flattered by the whole events of the day; especially by the beauty, the charming frankness of Aurora, and the decided preference she showed for me; the more so that she was an object of no little attraction to the powdered beaux who crowded the court of the young king. And to think that my poor red coat eclipsed all their finery.

Betimes next day I had my hair dressed by a fashionable perruquier; I took a promenade in Pall Mall, and left a card for a friend at White's Chocolate House. He was a brother of Douglas of ours, and be-

longed to the Scots Foot Guards, but was absent recruiting in Edinburgh. About mid-day, I presented myself at my cousin's mansion, old Sir Basil Gauntlet's town residence, in Piccadilly. It was one of the largest and best style of houses in that fashionable quarter. Master John Trot appeared at the door in answer to my summons, and opened it wide enough and with a sufficiently low bow, as I had exchanged my old, weather-beaten and bloodstained fighting-jacket, for a fashionable suit of French grey velvet, laced with silver.

I found Aurora in the drawing-room, with her companion, a pleasing old gentlewoman in a towering *toupée*, high red-heeled shoes and black lace mittens—Madam Blythe (as she was named in the old Scoto-French fashion) a widow of the captain-lieutenant of Lord Ancrum's dra-

goons, who had been killed in action, so the poor woman's heart warmed towards me as a gentleman of the cloth.

After a few of the ordinary remarks about the weather, followed by a few more about the ceremony of yesterday, luncheon was announced by John Trot, and we descended by a splendid staircase, hung with effigies of departed Gauntlets, depicted by Lely and Kneller, in wigs and corslets, to the dining-room, past a line of servants in livery, aiguiletted and covered with braid, like state trumpeters.

Over the carved marble mantelpiece hung a portrait of an old gentleman, in a square-skirted coat, corded with gold, a voluminous wig and wide riding-boots, in the act of grasping the reins of a roan charger.

"'Tis dear old grandpapa's portrait,

painted by Mr. Joshua Reynolds." (He had not been knighted yet.)

"One of the most rising artists in London," added Madame Blythe, in an explanatory tone.

"'Tis very like you, Basil," said Aurora, laying kindly on my shoulders a plump white hand that glittered with turquoise and diamond rings.

I did not feel flattered, as "dear old grandpapa's" Bardolph's snout was somewhat like an over-ripe peach; but altogether, in his jolly obesity he in no way resembled the old *ursa-major* I had pictured him—perhaps Mr. Reynolds flattered. However, I could scarcely refrain from frowning at it when Aurora did not observe me, and when I thought of the will which he and old Nathan Wylie had concocted between them; and then of the handsome legacy—one shilling

sterling coin of this realm—bequeathed to me when quartered at Portsmouth.

"My brother Tony—poor unfortunate Tony!—hangs opposite in his green hunting dress — another of Mr. Reynolds' efforts," said Aurora.

"Ah, indeed!" said I, attending to my ham and chicken, and turning my back upon the portraiture of Cousin Tony, who looked out of the gilded frame very much as he did on that afternoon when he and his grooms Dick and Tom laid their whips across my shoulders near Netherwood Hall.

"What length of time do you mean to spend in London?" asked Aurora, amid our desultory conversation. "Your health, cousin, and welcome home," she added, as John Trot filled my glass.

"I shall spend my six months' leave. I have no friends to visit, and nowhere

to go, cousin, unless back to my regiment."

"Six months—delightful! Now, Basil, with your figure and pretensions, I am sure we shall find a charming if not a rich wife for you. Shall we not, Madame Blythe?"

"Thanks, Aurora. A rich one I would need, with my poor sub's pay," said I, with a smile.

I glanced involuntarily round me, and the splendour and luxury, the evidence of ample wealth—wealth of which I had cruelly been deprived—galled and fretted me. Furtive though the glance, it was so expressive that Aurora coloured, and but said, smiling—

"What think you of the Lady Louisa Kerr, the Countess of Ancrum's eldest daughter? She spoke much about you, and was at the drawing-room, in blue, flowered with silver."

"Nay, I have no idea of casting my eyes so high."

"Or so *far off*," added Madame Blythe, archly.

"Perhaps you have left your heart in Germany?"

"On the contrary, I have brought it back safe and sound, cousin. More wine—thank you, yes."

"'Tis some of the last of dear old grand-papa's favourite port," said Aurora, making a sign to Mr. Trot.

"But there is time enough yet for me to think of marrying, Aurora."

"Perhaps you agree with Shakespeare, that

"'A young man married, is a man marrèd,'"

"Nay, dear cousin; I am not so un-gallant; but *àpropos* of Shakespeare, shall we go to the play to-night?"

"In that I am your servant; but you

shall dine with us; a drive in the park, and then the play after."

Aurora was charming; and it was impossible not to be guided by her wishes in everything.

At that time I was in excellent funds. I had my pay as lieutenant of dragoons (not that it was much, Heaven knows! to cut a figure upon); but I had a good share of prize-money, and a share in brass guns taken in the affairs of Emsdorff and Zierenberg, with a fair slice of a military chest that found its way quietly, sans report, into the pockets of the Scots Greys, all enabled me to take Aurora and Madame Blythe to Vauxhall, Ranelagh, the tea-gardens, the opera, the play, and always with a fair escort of flambeaux to dine with his Grace of Argyle, or to a drum at my Lady Ancrum's; to turn a card at White's when I felt so disposed, and to

throw vails to those greedy vultures—the servants—a folly at that time in excess.

As we issued from the house to the carriage for our drive in the park, Aurora responded to the profound bow of a gentleman who rode past.

"That is a young Irishman who was known about town as the Penniless Adventurer," said she; "yet he wrote a charming book on 'The Sublime and Beautiful.'"

"Edmund Burke," I exclaimed, looking after him with admiration; "is that the great Edmund Burke?"

"Even so, with his hair all frizzed up. How oddly he wears it," said Aurora, as we seated ourselves, and Mr. Trot, after shutting the door, perched himself on the footboard behind.

At night Drury Lane Theatre presented a scene of brilliance and splendour to

which I had long been unaccustomed. Aurora was exceedingly gay and sparkling with youth, beauty, and jewels—bowing to people of good fashion in almost every box—always happy and with considerable readiness of wit, remarking several turns of the play and peculiarities of personages who were present, and in whom, she thought, I might feel interested.

The first piece, I grieve, my prudish friends, to state was Rowe's tragedy of "The Fair Penitent," which drew tears from all the brocaded dames in the boxes.

Mr. David Garrick, the manager, appeared as Lothario in a full-bottomed perriwig, square-cut blue coat with buttons in size like saucers, white rolled stockings and square toed shoes. Mrs. Pritchard was the frail Lavinia; and sarcastic old Macklin, who hated the Scots so much, made up by pads and paint as a youth,

played the part of Horatio to the great admiration of the pit, and particularly of one group, among whom Aurora pointed out to me a poet named Churchill and Dr. Johnson the great Lexicographer.

Mr. Garrick's laughable farce of the "Lying Valet" followed. A sentinel of the Foot Guards, with bayonet fixed and musket shouldered, stood at the end of the proscenium during the whole performance, at the conclusion of which, the manager and pretty Mrs. Pritchard, were called before the curtain amid a storm of applause.

At the door of the box-lobby we had some confusion; a hundred voices were shouting "Chair! chair!—coach, coach!" at once, and an irritable old gentleman with a very red face, drew his sword to clear the way before his party of ladies.

"Who is this passionate personage?" I inquired.

"'Tis Admiral Forbes," said Madame Blythe, "the only Lord of the Admiralty who *refused* to sign poor Admiral Byng's death warrant."

"A Scotsman, like yourself, Basil," said Aurora smiling.

I escorted the ladies home to Piccadilly, and assisted them to alight from their sedan chairs. As the links were extinguished, and Aurora's cheek was very near mine, I—but as it is wrong to kiss and tell, I shall close this chapter, and with it my third day in London.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LAST.

I FOUND in Aurora an inexpressibly charming friend and companion; thus at times, in my heart, and before my funds waxed low, I completely forgave her for being the holder, the golden-haired usurper of all that was mine by right of inheritance.

But there were other times when the old emotions of pique and anger—the old memories of wrong inflicted, and of mortifications endured by my parents and myself, blazed up within me, and made me resolve to tear myself away from London and from the silken toils that were netting round

me, and vow to rejoin my regiment, which was now at winter quarters at Barentrup, in Germany.

Still I hovered between Pall Mall and Piccadilly, and when we were not at some place of amusement (whither we sometimes ventured *without* the matronage of Madame Blythe), Aurora's drawing-room was my evening resort; for after dining at White's or at the George in the Mall I always dropped in to take "a dish of tea," as the Londoners phrased it, at that little *guéridon*, or tripod table, with its oval teaboard of mahogany, its diminutive cups of eggshell china, filled with that fragrant, and then expensive beverage, the honours of which old Madame Blythe, in her hoop petticoat, black mittens, and toupée, dispensed so gracefully.

So passed the time swiftly in amusements and gaiety. My exchequer I have

said was waxing low. My share in the value of his Most Christian Majesty's brass guns and mortars had all vanished at Vauxhall, Ranelagh, and elsewhere, and my leave of absence was drawing to a close. The latter tidings I communicated to Aurora, and she seemed to be disturbed by them —so much so, that I felt quite pleased and flattered by her affectionate friendship. Had she wept I would have been delighted.

How strange was this tie of cousinship! Here was Aurora, one of the loveliest girls in London (which, my good reader, is saying a good deal), treating me like a friend—a brother; and she was nearer and dearer to me than friend or sister could be, so far as regard and propinquity went; yet withal, she was little more than a recent acquaintance.

It was perilous work, those daily visits

to Piccadilly, and yet so pleasing; and so—and so the reader may begin to perceive the end of all this; but not exactly how it came about.

I own that I fell in love with my beautiful cousin; so had many others—among them Shirley; and I could pardon him now.

I am sure that dear old Madame Blythe, who loved me like a son, for no better reason than that I was a lieutenant of dragoons, as her husband had been in their lover-days, suspected what was going forward. She was discreet—oh, very discreet! She never opened the drawing-room door too suddenly if we were within, but always lingered without and loudly issued an order to the cook, or to John Trot; or dropped something noisily; called to her French poodle, or played nervously with the door-handle, until

Aurora and I laughed at her policy or politeness, which you will. However, when she entered, I was generally to be found on the side of the room opposite to that occupied by Aurora.

When in the dining-room, the sight of Sir Basil's portrait, and Squire Tony's too, always roused my secret anger; thus, when Aurora one day said to me playfully—

"Cousin Basil, what do you think Lady Ancrum tells me gossips say?"

"Don't know, really," replied I, briefly.

"That I am setting my cap at you!"

"Zounds! at a poor devil like me!" I exclaimed, almost gruffly. "Nonsense, Aurora! Besides, you don't wear a cap."

Aurora coloured, and her sweet face became clouded by my brusque manner.

But her remark set me thinking seriously. I had undergone some quiet

quizzing from Madame Blythe, who believed in her heart that we were made for each other, and that no two young people could play a game of picquet, ombre, or chess, or dance a minuet together, without falling straightway in love; so this and my Lady Ancrum's gossip set me, I say, to think angrily, and when in such a mood, Sir Basil's insulting last will and testament, like the handwriting on the wall at Belshazzar's feast, always seemed to flame before me.

I was conscious too that my cousinship and constant appearance in public with Miss Gauntlet had scared away a score of danglers and admirers, who being most of them mere macaronies, or "pretty fellows," were weak enough to leave me entire possession of the field. One or two, indeed, threatened to invite me to breathe the morning air at the back of Montague

House, but somehow never put their war-like threat into execution.

I loved Aurora dearly; but the regard I bore her was quite unlike the wild and romantic passion with which the artful Jacqueline had so suddenly inspired me, for it was based upon friendship and a knowledge of each other—upon strong confidence and thorough esteem. Could more than these four ingredients be wanted to make any marriage happy?

It was not a passion likely to expend itself, and leave rosy little Cupid's wings, bows, arrows and all, insolvent at the end of the first year; yet withal, pride and a sense of injury rankled deeply in my heart.

I had never told Aurora that I loved her, but she knew it well, and that she loved me I was vain enough to believe; still the idea stung me to the soul that

gossips might say that I, the disinherited and penniless cousin married the rich one to regain my lost patrimony.

"I shall not endure it," thought I, "and so shall pack my traps and be off to the regiment!"

One evening I was seated alone by the library fire in Piccadilly, full of loving, of angry, and of doubtful thoughts which tormented me, when Aurora entered gently, and leaning over the back of my chair placed her pretty hands over my forehead and eyes in sport.

"How you stare into the fire, Basil! You will quite spoil your eyes. What do you see there?"

"I am reflecting—thinking——"

"Of the fancied battles you see among the embers—the value of coals, or what? she asked, laughing. "Now tell me, about what were your precious thoughts?"

"They were of *you*, Aurora," said I, in a troubled voice, while taking her dear hands in mine; "my leave of absence——"

"Again, that horrid leave — well, Basil?"

"Is nearly at an end, and I must quit London, rejoin, tear myself from this," I replied, impetuously, and then added, with sudden softness; "I love you, dear Aurora—you know well that I do; but never shall it be said by the world that I married you for your fortune—as——"

"The world!" said she, interrupting me, with an air of extreme annoyance, while casting down her eyes and withdrawing her hands; "but am I then so plain—so unattractive—that no one would marry for anything else, save for this unlucky Netherwood—eh, cousin?" she added, smiling with a charming air of coquetry.

"Oh, Aurora—I wish you could see into my heart!"

"And you love me?" said she, in a low and tremulous voice.

"Dearly—most dearly!"

"Then if I married you, cousin Basil," she resumed, looking smilingly into my eyes, "might not the world say it was for your title?"

"Am I then so plain and unattractive," I was beginning, when she playfully put her hand on my mouth; "Aurora, of the baronetcy I cannot divest myself."

"But I can *divest* myself of Netherwood," she exclaimed, and sprung from my side with flashing eyes. Then with tremulous hands she unlocked an ebony cabinet, and after a rapid search, came to me with a folded document, saying, "Look, Basil, do you know this handwriting?"

"It is that of old Nathan Wylie, our grandfather's solicitor; I should know it well."

"Then read this paper, which he prepared and drew up a few weeks ago, at my especial request."

I perused it with astonishment!

It was what is legally or technically termed a "Disposition," by which Aurora divested herself of Netherwood, lands, estate, and everything, bestowing them upon me during her lifetime, with remainder to me and my heirs at her decease.

I had learned enough of law during my residence with old Nathan Wylie, the framer of this new document, to know how full, ample, and generous it was, and while I rapidly scanned it from the preamble at the beginning to the signature of Aurora at the end, she stood near

me with her cheeks flushing, her eyes full of tears, and her poor little hands trembling.

"Oh, Aurora!" I exclaimed in bewilderment.

"Now cousin, do you believe me—now do you deem me sincere in wishing, at every risk, to soothe your angry pride?" she asked, with a shower of nervous tears. "None can now say that you wedded me to recover a lost patrimony, for yours it was, and is, most justly."

"Dearest Aurora, I would rather owe its restoration in another fashion, but still, my beloved, to you. Behold!" and I put the deed in the fire, where it shrivelled and was consumed in a moment.

I had no more words for the occasion, but pressed Aurora to my breast. I felt that she was indeed my own—all my own; that we should be all the world to each

other, and that our future would be a life of love.

My lips could not express the debt of joy and gratitude I owed to this dear girl; but though silent, friend reader, they were not perhaps idle.

Thus, without any tremendous effort of romance, but in the most ordinary and matter-of-fact way in the world, my marriage came about with cousin Aurora. She was to be my wife, and no Frenchwoman, after all.

* * * * *

And now, leaving Aurora and Madame Blythe deep in all the mystery of paduasoy skirts, calimanco petticoats, satin sacques, solitaires and négligées, head-cushions and red-heeled shoes, furbelows and flounces, bracelets, neckets, étui and appendages, long stomachers, clocked stockings, and other things which I need not enumerate

—in short, arranging the full wardrobe of a wealthy and beautiful bride, while I depart to arrange all about the special licence and extended leave (taking the Horse Guards *en route*), I shall bid my friend, the reader, who has accompanied me to this happy conclusion, for a time, perhaps, a kind adieu.

THE END.

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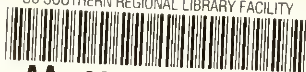
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