THE EXILE'S TRUST

AND OTHER

STORIES


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&
OTHER STORIES.

I B Russell
A Present from His daughter
Emily Olive Russell

THE SOLEMN PROMISE.

1869

THE EXILE'S TRUST,

A Tale of the French Revolution,

AND

OTHER STORIES.

By FRANCES BROWNE,

AUTHOR OF "THE FOUNDLING OF THE FELL," ETC.

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THE EXILE'S TRUST:

A TALE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

CHAPTER I.

THE HOUSES OF ST. RENNE AND DEVIGNE.

IT was a soft, clear night of early spring, a season in which the Norman peasants say both man and beast sleep soundest. The full moon was shining on the old village of St. Renne like a second day, lighting up the cornfields round it, and bringing out in dark relief the woods that lay beyond them. But not a sound of life or motion was heard in all the land. The very watch-dog slept; for it was midnight. No living thing was to be seen, except where the moonlight turned to silver the spire of the grey and gothic church, whitened over the low green graves and ancient monuments in the churchyard, and showed distinctly two men who at that silent hour stood together and conversed earnestly.

Had any villager been abroad, another tale of superstitious terror might have been added to the many that frightened their winter firesides; but the two who met in that village of the dead were living men, with the distinctions of mortal life and its

conditions about them, for the one was attired like a gentleman of the period, and the other wore the costume of the Norman peasantry. Both were in the prime of manhood, robust country-bred men, and true Normans, with the fair complexion, grave look, and prominent features which yet distinguish their people from the rest of France, and tell of their northern ancestry. If the man of rank had a more stately carriage, and somewhat of the pride of birth and station in his bearing, the peasant had an air of sturdy independence and respectability in his own position; and they talked together there as old and trusted friends.

"I must go, Jules," said the man of gentle blood; "there is no safety for me here—no safety for any honest man in France now if he chance to be well born. There's that Count St. Renne—Citizen Renne as he calls himself, to suit the new notions, and get power with the people. He will hunt me to the guillotine if he can, for the sake of my estate, though he is my far-out cousin. There was a lawsuit between his family and mine about it when Louis XIV. began his reign; it lasted for eleven years, and then the Parliament of Rouen decided in our favour. The St. Rennes never forgave us that winning, and always kept a covetous eye on the château and land. A hard, cold-blooded race they were, from father to son, with small regard for honour, right, or justice, if it did not serve their interest; and the present Count Leon is the worst of them, in my opinion. I must go, Jules, for I have committed myself by speaking against the doings of those villains in Paris, and the Count is waiting his opportunity to denounce me. There is scarce one of my own tenants or servants who would stand by me. I have not been a bad master to them, but the new notions have got into all their heads; and those who might wish me well for old times' sake are too much afraid of the men we have to do with to take my part or keep my secret. There is nobody I can trust but you and Ninette. She nursed me,

and she has nursed my son, and been in our family ever since she came from the south with my mother, full forty years ago. She was all the comfort I had when my angel wife was taken from me; and a more upright, wise, and pious woman I never knew. You will let her stay with you, Jules, and be kind to her for my sake. You could not get a better housekeeper, nor your little daughter a better guide, since she is motherless and you alone, like myself. Ninette knows all my plan; I told her last night, and she advised me to it with a text out of her Bible. She was brought up a Huguenot, you see, and holds by the Book; and, Jules, I wish I had the comfort and the courage that it seems to give her in these evil times.

"But, to come back to the matter I asked you to meet me here for, knowing it was a place where we could not be overheard or spied upon, now that all the people of the village are as quiet as those that lie below the ground. Jules, you will take my estate, my château, furniture, and everything as it stands; I will make over to you the title-deeds, as if you had paid the full price for them; you will give me what money you have, for I can raise none, having lived well and with a free hand, as all my forefathers did, and I will try to save myself and my little son by getting over to England as quickly as I can."

"Monsieur," said Jules, "I have but three thousand francs in the world. Careful and hard-working as you know I have been, they are all I could save out of my morsel of land, and they are at your service, every franc. I should say so if you were never to trust me with the estate and château of Devigne. But, since you will trust me, I promise to take good care of them and everything that belongs to you; and when you get safe to England, as by God's help I hope you will, and I have made some money out of the crops, I will send you as much as I can if a safe hand can be found; if not, I will carry it over the sea myself, till

something like peace and justice comes back to France. Then you can return and be our honoured Sieur once more, as all your fathers were. But, monsieur, had you not better take my bond for this?—'words go with the wind, but pens hold them fast,' as the proverb says."

"No, Jules, no; I will take no written paper: it might fall into bad hands, and bring you to the guillotine instead of me, for helping an aristocrat to leave the land and save his life. But, as we stand here between the graves of your parents and mine"—and the Sieur Devigne pointed to a family tomb, with crest and escutcheon sculptured on it, and then to a green mound, marked with a wooden cross—"here, with the Eye that never sleeps upon us, you will give your solemn promise that, if ever these days of blood should come to an end in your time, and I or my son come back to claim the house and lands of our fathers, you will restore them like a true and trusty man, and keep for yourself the profits of the whole estate till then."

"I promise it, monsieur, before God, and in the midst of the graves we have both wept over," said Jules, extending his right hand, which the Sieur clasped in his, saying, "He that hears the promise bless you, my brave and faithful friend, for I know you will perform it if ever man kept an oath."

"With God's help I will; and, as I deal with you, may I be dealt with!" and Jules's honest, sober face looked fine and noble in the moonlight. "But, monsieur," he continued, "since you can trust me with your house and land, why not trust me with your son too? The child is young to venture on such a journey as you must make, and that cold and cloudy climate of England, where they say there is little daylight, and nobody looks civil."

"No matter; it is safe, Jules, and I will take my boy with me. Not that I could not trust him in your keeping, but better risk the perils of sea and land than Leon St. Renne's designs on the heir

of the estate he covets. I cannot, I will not leave my boy behind. You will have enough to do to protect yourself from the men these evil times have put in power. He is all that is left me now of fortune, friends, and country; and, come what will, we shall not part. But the day is coming," said Devigne, "yonder is the moon setting behind the woodlands that surround my own château; some early shepherd may soon pass this way: it is time to separate and get home before we are noticed. Good night, my brave Jules. I will go off quietly about the fall of evening, making believe to sup with my friend Delaine. Ninette will bring the boy to me in the wood; and when we are gone you will slip into possession without giving a hint of the fact till the tenants find it out for themselves. Good night."

"Good night, my noble Sieur," said Jules, the tears rushing into his eyes; "a hard and woeful case it is that you must leave your house and land to a man of my condition, and go far away among the cold, uncivil strangers. But you will come back safe and soon; the bad days cannot last."

"God grant it!" said Devigne; and, with a hearty Norman shake of the hand, the two friends parted at the churchyard gate, each taking his homeward way, as the dawn of another morning began to dapple the eastern sky.

The village of St. Renne stood in a broad and open dell in the forest land of Lower Normandy. The industry of many a generation had won that dell from the woods, and covered it with meadows, cornfields, and orchards, yet the land retained its sylvan character. Rows of tall trees, planted on banks of earth which years had made moss-grown or grassy, divided the farms from each other and formed the fences of orchard and garden. The thick walls and low-thatched roofs of the village houses were clothed with vine, woodbine, or ivy, and past the village and through the farms flowed

a small but beautiful river called La Brice, with green sloping banks, and a current so clear that it gave back every shadow of passing cloud or bending tree, and reflected every light cast on it from the sky.

The inhabitants of St. Renne were all tillers of the ground. They followed that earliest calling of man with tools of a primitive fashion, but the soil they cultivated was good, and the Lord of the harvest was bountiful to them, as he is to the sowers and reapers of all lands. The frequent famines and the grinding taxation which pressed so grievously on the French people throughout the greater part of the eighteenth century were scarcely felt there. The worthless kings, oppressive nobles, and rapacious clergy, who cumbered the ground and burdened the nation so long, were scarcely heard of in the forest village. The lords of the soil were natives of it too, and feudal privileges, though they did exist, had never been exercised with a high hand in St. Renne. The villagers, doubtless, owed part of their immunity to the fact that the lordship was divided almost equally between two families, branches of one old Norman tree whose trunk stretched up to the crusading times. The elders styled themselves counts of the place, the younger claimed no higher title than that of sieur or gentleman. The one inhabited a feudal castle on the eastern side of the dell, the other an ancient manor-house on its western border; and the village children were accustomed to say that the sun rose behind Château St. Renne, and set behind Château Devigne. The dell's people regarded both houses with equal reverence. It was known to them that the counts possessed the greatest extent of forest-land and the largest share of the seigneurial rights, while the sieurs owned the richest pasturage and the most fertile farms; and the proverb went that the St. Rennes were good for themselves, and the Devignes good for the country.

These family characteristics were most distinctly marked in the

latest representatives of the two houses. The Count de St. Renne had gained a great repute for wisdom in the forest by speaking in favour of everything that was likely to succeed, and a great popularity with the peasants by the interest he appeared to take in them and their affairs; but the interest ended in words: nobody could speak of him as a benefactor, and the most intimately acquainted knew him to be covetous and over-reaching. The Sieur Devigne, on the contrary, was thought a rather imprudent man, ready to speak his mind on all occasions, apt to take the losing side, and forget the risk he was running; but strict in honour, and generous of heart and hand. The travelling gentleman and the benighted peasant were equally welcome to his manor-house. It was open to all comers at the New Year and May-day, at cider time, the vintage of Normandy, and harvest-home, the greatest feast in the forest-land. The widow or the orphan never applied to him for help in vain.

The Count was approaching middle life, but had never married; the village gossips said because, with his poor lands and gloomy, time-worn castle, he could not find a spouse sufficiently wealthy. The Sieur was an early widower, with an only son, still in childhood, on whom his affections rested, and his pride was set as the rising branch of his line and the heir of his ancestral estate. It was believed that he had hopes of his boy succeeding to the lands and château of St. Renne also, and uniting once more the ancient honours and possessions of the family. If the Count left no heirs, the Sieur and his son after him were the next of kin; and human expectation is apt to build on those uncertainties of time.

Had the good wishes of honest and grateful hearts been sufficient to bring about the fulfilment of Devigne's hopes, they were not wanting among his tenants and dependants, in memory of bounties given and dues remitted in hard times. The Sieur was kind and liberal to them all, and friendly with his peasants in the hearty

fashion of the forest; but the one who owed him most, and with whom he was most familiar, was Jules Dubois. Thirty years before, when Devigne himself was a child, and his father was Sieur, Jules had been brought to the village by Father Bernard, the worthy old curé of the parish, who found him in one of his journeys through the forest in search of the sick and poor, an orphan boy with no relations; for his parents had been strangers in the land, having come there from Upper Normandy, and with no dependence but the charity of the peasants. Father Bernard brought him up, and the villagers called him the priest's boy; but Father Bernard received too little from his flock and gave away too much in charity, to have any means of providing for his adopted son. Fortunately for Jules, the young Sieur took an early liking to him; the orphan boy and the heir of Château Devigne played together. Such companionship was not so strange in the forest dell as it might have seemed in Paris or Versailles. Their friendship increased with their years, and when Devigne succeeded to his patrimonial estate, he made Jules a free gift of a house and land, situated in a pleasant spot on the banks of La Brice, and midway between the church and the château. To that house and farm, Jules brought home his bride, a beautiful village girl, who preferred him to many wealthier suitors, on the same day in which the Sieur brought home a lady of high Norman blood, fair face, and loving heart.

A life of domestic happiness seemed in store for Devigne and his humble friend, but both had to learn how frail are the reeds on which human affections lean. Within two years after that happy home-bringing, there was sorrow and desolation alike in the château and the farm-house, and nothing left to either lord or tenant but a young and motherless child. The village gossips long remembered that their wedding feasts had been celebrated and their children born on the same days; and as the Sieur Devigne's son

and Jules Dubois's daughter advanced from stage to stage of opening life and intelligence, it was a pleasure to the widowed fathers to compare their growth and decide which had made most progress. "Jules," the Sieur would say, "our children keep good pace with each other; when they come to man and woman's estate, and your daughter chooses a husband and my son finds a wife, we will have their weddings on the same day, like our own. They will live in our houses after us, and be as we have been." And Jules would answer, "With God's grace, master, they will."

Such was the state of things in St. Renne when the current of its quiet life was changed and troubled by the upheavings of the great revolution, which, like a general earthquake, spread to the remotest corners and wilds of France. First there was wondrous news brought by passing travellers and peasants, whom business had led to the nearest towns, of good days coming for the people. The wise and learned men of the land were telling the nobles that their seigneurial rights over land and labour were tyrannous customs come down from barbarous times, and ought to be abolished; telling the priests that their power was built on superstition and ignorance, and that the wealth of their churches and monasteries was the nation's property, acquired by fraud and soon to be restored again. Then it was said that the king had called together the States-General to repeal all the old oppressive laws and make new and good ones. Every kind of justice was to be done. Some said there would be no more taxes, some said there would be no more nobles; but the general belief was that lands and houses, and all the riches of town and country, would be divided equally among the people, and every one would be made comfortable and well-to-do. That was the peasants' version of those brilliant but impracticable theories promulgated by the philosophers and so-called reformers of the time.

The new ideas took possession of the forest villagers as they did

of the Paris mob; and Count de St. Renne's wisdom gained a still higher repute among them when he declared himself in favour of the new opinions, absolved his peasants from all feudal service, dues, and customs, and took the name of Citizen Renne. His popularity knew no bounds after these demonstrations in the people's cause. They contrasted strongly with the conduct of the Sieur Devigne, who held fast by the old ideas and practices. Though friendly and considerate to all his dependants, the pride of rank and birth had a high place in his mind. He was a man of the old school by nature, and clung to the ancient institutions, manners, and modes of thought; like his land and his privileges, they had come down to him from his ancestors, and he could not give up one of them. That conservative attachment made him forget or overlook the crying evils and abuses which had come down with them, and the real necessity of a speedy and ample reform. The Sieur scorned and scoffed at the new doctrines, prophesied the total discomfiture of all their authors and abettors, and in his zeal against them, stood more firmly on his lordly rights, and insisted on his dues of homage and service as he had never done before. In consequence, Devigne became unpopular even among his own tenants. He had done none of them injustice or wrong of any kind, and many were indebted to his kindness; but he opposed the people's liberty, and took part with the oppressors. His good and liberal deeds were forgotten, his harsh and haughty words were remembered, and the then dangerous title "aristocrat" was fixed upon him throughout the forest.

The Count was elected to represent the forest people in the States-General, and distinguished himself by popular motions and speeches; while Devigne was rejected and remained at home, getting into continual quarrels with his peasants about unpaid respects and withheld dues. These quarrels embittered his temper, and deepened the dislike with which the whole neighbourhood regarded him. As the strife of parties increased, and the evil passions of men were stirred up in town and country, the Sieur found himself deserted by the oldest servants of his family, hated by the tenants who lived on his land, and without a friend except Jules Dubois.

Jules was as conservative in his way as his lord, though not on the same grounds. A priest of the old school, Father Bernard, had brought him up. Whatever errors were in his creed, from him he had learned to reverence the church, to be loyal to the throne, and to respect law and order. A kindly man of rank had been his patron and friend, and all the titled orders shared in the honour and regard he owed to the Sieur Devigne. Moreover, Jules was too domestic in his habits to take much interest in public affairs, and too prudent to commit himself on any subject that seemed dangerous. If his own home and family were safe and comfortable, if his farm work and his honest thrift prospered and were not interfered with, it would not have concerned him what party was uppermost, or what ideas prevailed. But Jules was much concerned regarding his friend in the château, as time wore on, and the political storm gathered strength. When the good things hoped for, and the justice that was to be done, changed to terrible tidings of slaughter in the streets of Paris and in the palace of Versailles; when every day brought news of the murder of priests and nobles, the burning of castles, and the plundering of churches; when civil war raged in the west and south, and armed bands of strangers heard of invading villages by night, and doing what they called justice on the aristocrats; when men of rank and fortune were flying from their homes and from their country in all directions—it was with a sort of relief that he heard the Sieur unfold his plan of immediate flight to England, and accepted the trust proposed to him among the silent tombs and under the midnight sky.

The dappled dawn had seen the close of that earnest conference,

and the falling night found Jules seated by the low bed to which age and sickness had confined Father Bernard. The good curé's long and useful life was drawing to a close amidst strange and terrible times; their events appalled his honest heart, but did not shake his faith, which was not built on the traditions and authorities of his church, but on the word of God. "The Master whom I have served these eighty years," he said, "is Lord of the tempest as well as of the calm. He will overrule the designs of evil men and save the land by the means that may seem good to him; but now his judgments are abroad in it, for its sins have been great and grievous." These and similar remarks were all that fell from Father Bernard on the wide-spread and bitter strife around him. From his sick bed he sent to all his flock exhortations to peace and charity with all men; and such was the weight of a good and pious example, that peasants the most puffed up with the new opinions, and most ready to rail against church and clergy, would hear his message with respect and say, "Had the priests been all like our good curé, things would never have come to this pass in France." In his house there was quiet and safety: there was not one of the forest men that would not have armed and stood on its defence; and Father Bernard, having his trust not on the strength of man, kept his doors open night and day, that all who wished might come to him with their troubles and perplexities in that trying time.

There was no likelihood of visitors at that quiet hour, and Jules, his adopted son, sat by the good priest's bed relating what had passed between himself and the Sieur Devigne in the churchyard over-night, and showing the assignment of lands and château to him as their purchaser, while their rightful lord, in the disguise of a peasant, and accompanied only by his little son, was on his way to Grande Ville, the nearest port, from whence he hoped to reach the English isle of Jersey.

"Our Lord aid and direct him," said Father Bernard, raising himself in his bed, and looking earnestly at Jules through the gathering twilight. "Our Lord aid thee also, my son, to keep thy trust truly, for it is a weighty one, and in danger of many temptations."

"Do you think the Count will bring me into trouble, father, or try to get the estate from me?" said the cautious Jules.

"He may, my son; but it is not he thou hast to fear chiefly: Jules, it is thyself;" and the curé's voice took a sad and warning tone.

"Myself, father! you would not suspect me; you would not suppose that I could forget my duty to the Sieur, after all his kindness and friendship with me ever since you brought me home a poor orphan boy from the forest; my solemn promise given at the grave where they laid my father and mother—how green the grass grows over them—though they were strangers; that I could forget right, justice, and honour so far as to break Devigne's trust?" said Jules, with great vehemence.

"I do not suspect thee, but I suspect the weakness and sinfulness of the human heart," said Father Bernard. "It is a weighty trust for a man of thy condition to have a fair estate and a noble manor-house given into his hand without pledge or bond of restoration. Time and circumstances work strangely on men's minds; the troubles of this land will not soon be over, so that the exiles may return in peace, and temptations thou knowest not now may assail thy faith and honesty. Thou didst well to accept the charge which the noble Sieur could confide to no other; but, Jules, my own adopted son, depend for keeping it truly not on thine own honour, thy justice, or thy gratitude, for all these have failed with other men, but on the grace of God, which alone can keep us faithful and firm against all tempters without and within."

Jules promised to follow that wise and pious counsel, received

the good father's blessing, and went home to make arrangements for taking possession of the château with as little observation as possible. He found it an easy matter in the first instance; the hostile feeling against the Sieur had become so strong before his departure that not a servant remained in his house but the old nurse Ninette, whom he had recommended so warmly to his successor's care and confidence, and a poor youth named Claude Lemette, one of the very few cretins to be found in Normandy, whom Devigne had kept out of charity. The nurse was acquainted with her master's plan; poor Claude expected him back every day, and was sure that Jules had come with his family merely to take care of the house till the Sieur's return. Jules had but a small household to remove; it consisted of his little daughter Lucelle, a child in her tenth year, Jean Closnet, his robust maid-of-all-work, and her equally robust brother Jean, who had helped him to till his farm. The Closnets had lived with him as relations rather than servants, being, like himself, respectable peasants. The kindly association of years had bound them to his interests; and, while knowing nothing of the secret and unwritten contract between him and the Sieur, they rejoiced at his good fortune in getting such a bargain of the estate, and saw the necessity of keeping the demonstrations of their joy within very narrow bounds, for fear of the envy they might stir up among old neighbours and equals.

So Jules took possession unostentatiously enough, in the middle of a quiet afternoon, and gave the Closnets' widowed mother and her young children leave to live in his forsaken farm-house. He was a cautious man, and had, fortunately for himself, no taste for grandeur or display; and his first act, as master of the château, was to shut up all the superior and handsomely-furnished rooms, reserving only the kitchen and some equally humble apartments for the use of himself and his now increased family.

Scarcely had this been done, when a great weight was taken off his anxious mind. A travelling merchant, to whom the Sieur had been a profitable customer, brought him one day from Grande Ville an ivory snuff-box, saying he had been charged with it by a Jersey fisherman as a present to Jules Dubois; and Jules recognised it with joy and thankfulness as the token of Devigne's safe arrival on English ground, as agreed upon at parting.

CHAPTER II.

ARREST OF JULES DUBOIS.

WEEKS and months wore away, and nothing more was heard of the Sieur and his young son; but in that time Jules Dubois lost another and an earlier friend. Father Bernard departed in peace from a troubled world and an evil time. Jules mourned and missed him sore, as the guide of his youth and the counsellor of his riper years, and laid him beside his own poor parents in the churchyard, hard by the spot where the Sieur and himself had held their midnight meeting. It had been the curé's last request, when he forbade all display or ceremony at his funeral: "Lay me beside your father and mother, Jules," he said; "they were strangers in the forest, and I have been a stranger on the earth." His flock mourned him too, much as their minds had been drawn aside from his teaching by the wild opinions and fierce agitations of the times; they could not but remember his charity, which suffered long and was kind, his patience, gentleness, and good works among them; and the whole forest agreed, in the fashion of those revolutionary days, that, since the last of the good priests was gone, it was no great matter what became of the rest.

They also missed Father Bernard in a most unhappy sense: for his sake, and from his example some respect for religion remained

among the peasantry of St. Renne, when a general contempt and hatred of its ancient church and clergy overspread the land, as much through their own unworthiness as through the reckless and impious doctrines so widely disseminated by tongue and pen. When the old curé was gone, there was none to fill his place; few priests dared venture to show themselves in strange villages. There was no more service in the old church where the forest people had come to worship, and in whose shadow the forest dead had been laid from the time when the first Plantagenet had become Duke of Normandy and King of England. It stood neglected and forsaken, except when some poor old woman, not able or willing to forget the faith and practice of her youth, stole in to pray at the vesper hour, with as much circumspection and care to avoid the notice of her neighbours as if the act had been something mean or blameworthy. The men of the village had no one to give or send them exhortations to peace and goodwill, to which early and kindly recollections had made them listen with respect. They had never been oppressed or aggrieved by nobles or clergy, like the greater part of the French people, and therefore they did not go to such fearful lengths in retaliation when the time of outbreak came. But they learned the wild temper and lawless habits of the period, organised a political club, which met under the oak on the village green, where the young used to dance, and the aged sit and talk together in old, quiet days, to hear harangues against tyrants, to sing songs about liberty and equality, and to discuss the terrible events which marked the progress of the Revolution. Under that evergreen oak the sins, the follies, and the heroism of the times were exemplified, as well as in the streets of the capital. They rejoiced over the Republic proclaimed and royalty for ever abolished in France; they gloried in the trial and execution of Louis XVI., as a warning to crowned heads and enemies of the people; and they chose from among themselves—

every one vying for the perilous honour—the men who were to join Dumourier's army, for the defence of the northern frontier.

It was well for Jules Dubois that nature had made him quiet and cautious, and zealous for nothing that did not touch upon his private interests or his home affections. He managed his occupancy of the château so judiciously that a considerable time elapsed before the peasants became fully aware of the absence of the aristocrat, as they called Devigne, and his own instalment in his stead.

"Where's the helper of tyrants gone, Jules?" they said; and Jules answered, "Neighbours, I cannot say."

"Has he left thee in charge, then, to keep his house and till his land, which no honest citizen would do for a hater of the people's rights?"

"No, neighbours; I bought the house and land, and I keep the one and till the other for myself."

"Bought the house and land, Jules? Where hadst thou so much money?"

"I had not much, neighbours; it was only my savings off the farm; but the Sieur—I mean the Citizen Vigne—was willing to take it, being in want of silver."

"So may all his kind be!" said the most spiteful of the peasants; and they all went away, muttering threats against the absent, which Jules did not choose to hear.

"God be thanked," he said to himself, "that they cannot reach my noble master in England! What a safe and quiet country that must be for a man to live in, if one only had one's house and farm there, and it did not rain all the year round, as everybody says it does! The rain is better than the bloodshed and the terror." And then Jules looked about to see that there was no one within hearing or sight of him.

In the midst of that dear-bought and much-vaunted liberty, no

prudent man would dare to whisper a dissenting thought; and Jules was prudent as man could be. The peasants saw him working in his fields, attired like themselves, or rather plainer; they knew that he lived in the kitchen of the château, and had nothing but common fare on his table; they were aware that he had walked a long way to get a certificate of good citizenship from the mayor of the commune, and had come forward as readily as any of them to take his chance of being chosen for the army of the North. The poor of St. Renne found Jules as good a friend as his master had been: and all these considerations, together with his having been the adopted son of the yet unforgotten Father Bernard, weighed so heavily in his favour, that, instead of envying or finding fault with him, his neighbours agreed that it was well he had got so good a bargain from the aristocrat; honest men ought to get the good places which tyrants had kept so long. But Jules was not to occupy his good place much longer in peace.

It was the summer of St. Martin, as the French peasants call that return of genial weather which comes to their country about the Martinmas time, as if to brighten up the dying year, and cheer the hearts of men against the coming winter. The mellow light of soft and breezeless days lay on the forest, now bright with the varied tints of its fading foliage; the birds were singing the last of their summer songs in all its bowers and dingles; it was a time for quiet thought and gentle recollections: but the calm of the season did not rest on the homes and hearts of the forest people. Throughout their land the news had gone like a trumpet-blast that an Austrian and a Prussian army had passed the frontiers, and were carrying war and devastation into the heart of France. The St. Renne club had gathered under the evergreen oak to discuss that news, on a lovely afternoon, and most of the villagers had gathered round them; every eye was flashing, and

every tongue was uttering threats and denunciations against the aristocrats at home and abroad, but chiefly the former, who were believed to be the instigators of the foreign enemy. The general indignation ran so high that there were very few listeners; and nobody observed, till he was fairly in the midst of them, a man in a peasant's dress, but with hands that had never used the spade or sickle, and hair cropped close in what was called the republican fashion. With him came some score of men, all strangers to the villagers, and dressed half in town and half in country clothes, but every one wearing the red cap of liberty, and well armed with sword and pistol. Their leader at once stepped into the centre of the club, pulled off his red cap, waved it in the air, and exclaimed, "Long live the sons of freedom in the forest!" and the whole assembly recognised, and welcomed with a shout, the patriot-citizen formerly known to them as Count de St. Renne.

Since he was elected a member of the States-General, the Count had remained in Paris, helping, as he said, in the regeneration of the land; in reality serving every party that chanced to get uppermost in that time of changeful confusion, and taking part in every popular movement by which he could advance his interests, or ensure his safety. Having neither principle nor scruple to impede his progress, the Count succeeded in keeping his popularity through all the variations of the public mind, and made himself so serviceable to the latest leaders of the Convention, that he was appointed Chief of the Commission to search out and bring to justice—otherwise to the guillotine—all the secret friends and favourers of the old *régime* in Lower Normandy. The terrible tribunal had worse instruments in its command and pay; for never was the wickedness of man greater on the earth. Citizen Renne did not do more than the average amount of evil work, but he had his selfish ends to serve, and they brought him to the village club that day.

"Citizens," he said, after shaking hands with half the assembled peasants, and embracing the President, a furious demagogue, who had been his wood-cutter—"citizens, your noble wrath is worthy of the men of the forest-land, and your wisdom has discovered the true cause of all our country's troubles: the foreigner has been urged to cross our frontiers by those emigrants, haters of freedom and friends of tyranny, who left the land for that very purpose. But have they not left their tools and their helpers behind them? Are these not among us, still taking care of their interests and working out their plans? Where is that bad citizen Vigne, and where is his confidant, Jules Dubois, this day?"

"Jules is an honest man and a good citizen. He bought the land with his own savings," cried two or three peasants; but they were the least influential men in the club. The rest said nothing, but looked at the Count as if he had hit upon something which must be true, while the President shrugged his shoulders and said, "Where, indeed?"

"I hope he is an honest citizen, my friends," said Renne. "Honest men and good citizens are the strength and the glory of their country; but you will allow that Jules Dubois buying an estate and living in a château belonging to such a known aristocrat, is rather suspicious, and ought to be inquired into by the constituted authorities. Neither open enemies nor secret traitors should be permitted to uproot the tree of liberty which the people have planted. Jules Dubois is not here, I see."

"He never comes to the club," said one.

"He is always working to make up his savings," said another.

"He is a nobody, and has got no spirit," said a third.

"Well, I am glad you have no worse opinion of him, friend; you speak out of the charity the priests used to talk about, I suppose," replied Renne.

The Count and his commission were secret agents of the Convention, unrecognised, and even unknown to the provincial authorities, as most of such agents were. It was not his intention to let the forest men know the business on which he and his company were bound; but his knowledge of their high spirit and neighbourly feeling to Jules Dubois showed him the necessity of preparing their minds for it. He went on in the same vague, but accusing, strain for some minutes, then volunteered an account of his own services to freedom and France, and finally requested the villagers to join with him in singing the Marseillaise, after which the assembly broke up; for night was falling, and, through the change of their oldest institutions and opinions, the forest men still kept the early hours of their fathers. Renne said he would go home to the old crow's nest—a name he chose to give his ancestral castle, by way of showing that he took no pride in it—and entertain his friends, the men in the red caps. He had introduced them to the villagers as good citizens, insinuating besides that they were volunteers bound for the northern army. They had fraternised with the forest men, and the latter had remarked that they spoke with the accent of the southern provinces, but guessed nothing of the errand to St. Renne.

Jules Dubois guessed nothing of it either; he had been working all day in the fields with his faithful assistant, Jean Closnet, and poor Claude Lemette. They had to labour hard to do the land any justice, for Jules could not venture on so lordly a step as the hiring of additional hands. But now the toil of the day was over, so was the evening meal, and the whole household had gathered round the evening fire in the kitchen of the Château Devigne. It was a Norman manor-house of some antiquity and considerable strength, having stood a siege in the wars of the League. Its battlemented roof, stone-sashed windows and the track of its moat bore witness to the fact; but centuries

of peace had made that channel dry and grass-grown, and brought to luxuriant and fruitful growth a noble garden and an extensive orchard, which stretched away up the rising ground in the rear of the château till the apple-trees met the oaks of the forest. The same long years of rest and quiet had covered its lawn, which sloped down to the pebbly margin of La Brice, with a mossy and velvet-like sward, and brought the laurels planted there by old improving Sieurs almost to the height of forest trees. A fair and pleasant dwelling-place it had been for its rural lords, who lived there in rustic ease and plenty, far from the crowds of cities and the cares and sins of courts; but into what earthly house cannot trouble enter? The last descendants of the Devigne line were exiles in a strange land, and all their stately house stood in silence and darkness, except where a broad gleam of red firelight shone from one of the lower windows and played on the deep green ivy which wreathed so thickly round it. That firelight shone from the great kitchen—a large apartment with a vaulted ceiling of stone, and a chimney that projected almost to its centre, a hearth to match, paved with red and white Flemish tiles, and andirons, such as may yet be seen in some old English houses, piled high with logs of forest timber, which sent forth a broad and cheerful blaze, and left no shadow except in the distant corners. Within the ample chimney all the inhabitants of the house were seated: Jules tranquilly smoking on the Norman settle—he would not occupy the arm-chair of carved oak, set in the warmest corner and considered the seat of honour, which used to be reserved for the Sieur, when, according to good old forest custom, he sat to smoke and chat with his servants and humbler neighbours at the close of the day and its works. The prudent peasant kept his station strictly, even at home; and close by him sat Jean Closnet, diligently mending the harness of one of the farm oxen, while poor Claude did his best to help him. Jean's sister, Joan, sat knitting

on the other side, her broad, rosy face shining in the firelight, like the very mirror of health and contentment; and in the corner opposite to the Sieur's empty chair sat spinning on an old-fashioned wheel, the Sieur's trusty nurse, Ninette. She was the oldest inhabitant of the château; her jet-black hair was deeply seamed with grey, but her more slender frame, darker complexion, and features of finer mould, proved that Ninette had been born far south of the people among whom she dwelt, for her early home had been in the olive-bearing lands of Provence. On a low seat by her side sat Jules Dubois's only child, Lucelle, a beautiful girl, with yellow hair and deep blue eyes, who looked at once gentle and thoughtful, and was called by the villagers La Rose de Mai.

She was reading in a low tone, and with much hesitation, her evening lesson, in a large and well-worn volume. Many a look did the nurse cast from her wheel, and the fine thread that passed through her fingers, down on the broad and darkly printed page, and many a glance did the child cast up to her mild, intelligent face. Ninette was the only individual in that household familiar with the art of reading. Jules had been taught to spell out a little by Father Bernard, in his youth; but, as the honest man was wont to remark, he was never bright in learning, and it all slipped away from his memory in years of ploughing and sowing. There never had been a school in the forest village, and Ninette was the only teacher Lucelle ever had. The large volume on the child's knee was the only book Ninette possessed: her Genevan Bible, which had been an heirloom in her Huguenot family for more than a hundred years, and was prized, not only for itself, as the descendants of the southern Calvinists were wont to prize their Bibles, but for the memories of her far-off home and youth, and the household traditions of old persecuting times which twined around it.

Lucelle was reading slowly, but with evident interest, for her lesson was the history of Joseph, when the house rang and the family were startled by a thundering knock at the outer door, and a shout of rough voices crying, "Open, in the name of the Republic!" Jules sprang to his feet, and made a rush to the corner where he kept a gun, but dropped the weapon as he recollected how useless it would be to attempt resistance with the little help he had, stopped Jean Closnet, who had caught up a convenient wood axe, took a brand from the fire, and hastened to the door, as a still louder knock and a fiercer summons sounded from without.

With all his caution, Jules did not lack courage. The household held their breath as they heard him withdraw the ponderous bars which had made that massive door strong against the men of the League; but the robust Joan turned whiter than her own apron, and Ninette thrust Lucelle's book away behind her wheel, and threw her thin arm round the child, as a band of men, with red caps and brandished swords rushed in exclaiming, "Jules Dubois, we arrest you by order of the Convention."

"For what?" said Jules, growing ghastly pale, for he knew that arrest by order of the Convention meant a brief trial and a speedy execution.

"Oh, you don't know, innocent babe!" said the fiercest-looking and leader of the band; "the tools of the aristocrat are all uncommonly simple; but you'll be enlightened in Paris, I suspect. Come along; we have no time to lose."

"Let me get my papers to show that I have bought this house and land honestly, and the certificate I got from the mayor of the commune, as a good citizen, and I will go with you quietly," said Jules.

"Oh, we know," said the leader; "you want a chance of escaping into the woods; it is a common trick of such honest men as you, but it won't serve your purpose this time. Here, Joseph and Antoine," he continued, addressing two of his band, who looked, if possible, worse than himself, "you know how to make this gentleman's hands safe!" The two men directly rushed upon Jules, seized both his arms, and proceeded to bind them with a strong cord, while he vainly entreated to be allowed to get his papers, and all his household joined in the request as earnestly as their fears would let them.

"Silence, you simpletons!" cried the leader; "we will find his papers for him. Don't you know he has become a great Sieur now, the owner of a grand château, and must be attended?"

Stung by that cruel sneer, Jules forgot his habitual prudence, and made a desperate effort to free himself from the two men. So powerful were the Norman peasant's muscles, that he succeeded in flinging them and their cord off to the opposite wall. Instantly a dozen swords were pointed at him, as with fearful threats and imprecations the band of ruffians closed on the solitary man, while the faithful Jean Closnet caught up his axe once more, and stood bravely by his master's side. Another moment and the blood of both would have stained the hearth; but young Lucelle, breaking from Ninette's sheltering arm, ran to the leader and threw herself at his feet, crying, in the simplicity of her terror, "Oh, monsieur! have pity on my father and on me, and do not take him away, for indeed he has done no harm." The man was a wicked instrument of men still more wicked, his hands were stained with blood, and his heart with sin; but in that hard heart there was yet a chord which answered to the pleading voice and look of the fair child.

"Stop!" he cried to the band, "we did not come here to execute, but to arrest. Get your papers as quickly as you can,

Citizen Dubois; I hope they will be of use to you in Paris. Joseph and Antoine, don't you lose sight of him. Get up, my child," he continued, raising Lucelle with both hands. "Are you Dubois's daughter?"

"Yes; monsieur, he has no child but me; and my mother is dead. Do not take him from me, and God will bless you, for the Book says, 'Blessed are the merciful,'" and the young girl clasped her hands once more, and looked him in the face through her tears.

"Does it?" said the man; "what book?" And before she had time to answer, he added to one of the nearest of his band, "How like she is to my poor Louise, whose dead hair I have carried about with me these ten years and more! Child," and he turned again to Lucelle, "we will do your father no harm; he must go with us now, but he will soon come back to you."

"Do let him stay, for pity's sake, monsieur," she pleaded, holding by his rough coat, while Ninette earnestly seconded her petition.

"Listen," said the man, laying his hand upon her yellow curls, "I cannot let your father stay; but if you be a good girl and let him go quietly, I swear to you that he shall come back safe and well—if I can manage it," he added to himself in a lower tone. Lucelle tried hard to keep back her tears as her father came out of the inner room with his papers. The minds of the whole band were softened by the pleading of his child, and words of their leader: they allowed him to pack up a few necessaries for his journey to Paris, and to take leave of his family. A sad and terrified leave-taking it was, but Jules bore up bravely; a tear or two fell from his eyes as he unloosed Lucelle's arms from his neck.

"Take care of my daughter," he said to Ninette, "whatever becomes of me; that is my last request. Remember it for all

the years in which we have been good neighbours; and pray for me, Ninette, for there is nobody in this place that prays now but you."

"I will take care of your child to the utmost of my power; and I will pray for you, too," said Ninette. "But, Jules" (he had never allowed her to call him master), "pray for yourself: our Lord can hear the petitions sent up from the prison, or the hall of judgment, as well as those that rise from the altar or the hearth. Put your trust in him, and fear not the wrath of man."

"I have not faith enough for that," said poor Jules. "If Father Bernard were but living now—but this would grieve him sore. Farewell, Jean Closnet; you have been a faithful man to me for many a year, and a true friend this night. Farewell, Joan; you have kept my house honestly and kindly. Farewell, Claude; you were always a good boy. Farewell, Ninette; farewell, my own Lucelle." And the band hurried him out of the house, and slammed the door behind them.

CHAPTER III.

A STRONG TEMPTATION.

THE night was glorious with stars, and sweet with the lingering scents and latest flowers of summer; but Jules Dubois saw not its beauty as he was marched away by the red-capped band. The simple, honest, home-loving man felt that he was going to execution in the far-off city which he had never seen, and had heard of in latter days only as the high place of the Convention and the guillotine. The conviction seemed to stupefy him. After taking leave of his family, he never looked up till they had gone some

way along the grassy banks of La Brice, where, at a bend of the river overhung by tall trees, a boat with two rowers lay in readiness to take the whole party. As he stepped in at the leader's command, Jules cast a farewell glance on the turrets of the old château, where they rose above grove and orchard; on the spire of the ancient church, keeping watch between the graves and the sky; on the low roofs of the sleeping village; and he sat down in the belief that he would never see them more.

The boat went rapidly down the stream; for La Brice had a strong current, and bore them away from the forest country with little exertion of the rowers' strength or skill, till its waters met and mingled with those of the Seine, some leagues below Rouen. Most of the Norman "suspects," as people presumedly disaffected to the Republic were called, were brought to trial in that famous capital of their province; but Jules was a more important offender in the eyes of the powerful Citizen Renne, and it suited the latter's purpose to send him to Paris. Accordingly, he was transferred to a large and lumbering river barge, which went up the Seine in the manner of our canal boats, and came down again with its current, which was thought good river navigation at the time. But only three of the band went with him, by way of guard, and the leader was one of them. He had taken a sort of fancy to his prisoner, for keeping quiet and giving him no trouble; and these were strong recommendations to his favour; for the man's days were divided between the service of his evil employers and the juice of the grape. His pocket was never without a flask, and the flask was no sooner filled than it was emptied. At every town or village in the slow vessel's route, which showed the smallest appearance of a wine-shop, he landed to obtain another supply, and was liberal enough to share the wine with his companions and with Jules, but in rather small proportions to his own consumption. Under its influence he was still more liberal of

conversation, which at one stage of his drinking was devoted to the great things he would do if placed at the head of the Mountain—the most violent and lawless of all the revolutionary parties; and at a more advanced stage occupied with fond recollections of his daughter Louise, who had died in her childhood twenty years before. He had found a remarkable likeness between her picture in his memory and the face of Lucelle Dubois, and almost respected Jules for being the girl's father. Moreover, Jules was an excellent listener, and did not require too much of his wine for the service, as his two subordinates were apt to do; so he discoursed chiefly to the prisoner on those chosen themes of his: but never a word escaped him of his own doings before the revolution time, of his early home, or of the child's mother; and the only glimpse of his history Jules got was, that the subordinates called him Citizen Chamone, and when the wine ran high among them, the Monk.

Being a prudent man, Jules asked no questions, though he might have ventured on some inquiry, from the friendly footing on which he and his capturer had got; but his own affairs and his own danger occupied the Norman peasant's mind, and on that subject Citizen Chamone was friendly and encouraging too.

"The case is against you, Dubois," he would say, "though I'll warrant you're a good citizen and no helper of aristocrats; but honest men get suspected in certain situations. You bought the lands and the château with your own money; I am sure you did; and great saving it must have been to get the like out of your Norman farm; but I doubt it will be harder work to make the Convention believe your story, except you get some man of influence to support you; and nobody can do that like the Citizen Renne. He is of your own forest country, and must know what character you bear among the people. He is hand-in-glove with Robespierre, Danton, and all the leading men. Take my advice, and put yourself into his hands. He'll undertake anything for a

man from his native place; so, be advised, if you want to keep your head on your shoulders, friend. Heads are apt to slip away from their owners at a wonderful rate in these times."

"They do," thought Jules, getting enlightened on the real cause of his arrest by the talk of the agent; "and mine will slip away with the help of Citizen Renne. My noble Sieur, now safe in England—for which Providence be praised—said the Citizen Renne would hunt him to the guillotine for the sake of his estate, and now he means to hunt me in the Sieur's room."

But not a word of those bitter thoughts did the prudent Jules utter. He said the Citizen Renne was doubtless a man of great influence. He had heard as much in the forest country, and would be thankful for his good word; but he had brought papers with him which would prove that he had bought the lands and château of Devigne by fair bargain, without any underhand design of helping the enemies of the Republic. He had a certificate of good citizenship also; and if there were justice in the Convention, his head was safe enough.

"I hope it is, friend," said Chamone; "but papers and certificates don't always make justice sure. Take my advice, and apply to Renne as soon as you can. I speak to you as a sensible fellow, and the father of that fair-haired child I promised to send you back to safe and well, for the sake of my lost Louise; and, if you have a mind that I should fulfil that promise, let me go and tell Renne you want his help the moment we get to Paris—for he will be there before us."

Jules tacitly agreed to this friendly proposal, though he well knew its drift was to place him and the Devigne estate in Citizen Renne's power; and that his trust and his life should go together was the man's fixed resolution. Every league of that noble river, every town or village on its banks which the slow barge lumbered by, seemed to bring him nearer to death and doom; yet, such is

the effect of steadily contemplating the most terrible prospect, that Jules reached the Norman quay, which was then near enough to the Place-de-Grève to let the chop of the guillotine be heard in quiet mornings, with a mind made strong by the courage of despair.

Once, in Jules Dubois's day, before the time of his arrest, a journey to Paris would have been an idea too grand and glorious for him to entertain. His travels had never extended beyond the two small and ancient towns of Alençon and Domfront, the only market-places in his forest country. Had such a journey taken place in the quiet times of his youth, what a man of knowledge and of wonder it would have made him in his native village—one who had seen and could tell of the great and famous capital, where the wealth and power of the land were gathered together, and kings and nobles dwelt! But all that was changed. Paris, for him, contained only the Convention and the guillotine; and in the after years which Jules lived to see, the chief city of his nation was a name and a memory of terror, on which the most ingenious of his neighbours could not get him to enlarge. No warrant of commitment was required under the rule of the Convention. His guards at once conducted Jules to the Abbaye. He had heard of that prison in his far-away village, as the one from which most people went to execution; and the sound of its massive gate closing upon him sent a chill to his heart; but Chamone said in a whisper, "Keep your spirits up. I think you'll get out safe if you do as Renne bids you;" and, turning to the hard-looking man who locked the gate like one who rather preferred that business, he said, familiarly, "Brutus, this is a friend of mine, not used to prison life. He comes from the forest country of Lower Normandy, and knows nothing of Paris tricks. I promise you he'll give you no trouble trying to escape; and you'll be civil to him, Brutus, for all the wine we have had together."

The hard-looking man gave a sort of assenting nod, beckoned to one very like himself—there were some dozen of them lounging about the courtyard—and bade him take Jules to the first ward. "Good-bye," said Chamone, seating himself on a stone bench and commencing a friendly conversation with the prison-keepers, among whom he seemed quite at home; and the first piece of news they told him, and the last of their talk that Jules heard was, that twenty-two Girondists had gone to the guillotine the preceding day, and they thought there were some more going to-morrow. With that intelligence ringing in his ears, and wondering who the Girondists were, and what they had done—for the fame of that luckless party had never reached the forest—Jules was conducted into a sort of office, where an old man in a white blouse and a red cap demanded his name, his age, his calling, and the place of his birth, and wrote down his replies in a large black book, while the turnkey stood by humming to himself a song of the day, the refrain of which was, "Death to the people's enemies." That turnkey was a zealous servant of the Republic, and a wit in his own estimation. When the entries concerning Jules were duly made, he led him through a long stone passage, with massive doors and mighty locks, and bars on them at either end, the last opening on a large room with high grated windows, through which the November day shone like a dreary twilight. It had no furniture but one long table, some bare benches, and a heap of straw in every corner; but on the benches and on the straw men were sitting in many a listless attitude; and pushing Jules in with "Gentlemen, an addition to your company," the witty turnkey banged the heavy door, and made fast both bolt and lock.

It is a strange experience to hear a prison door bolted and locked on a man for the first time: it was an overwhelming one to Jules Dubois; he walked mechanically to the nearest bench and sat down, but it was some minutes before he could collect his senses

IN THE PRISON OF THE ABBAYE.

sufficiently to observe the scene and the people around him. The occupants of that cheerless prison-room, which a better antiquary than Jules would have known to be the refectory of the ancient Abbey, were some forty in number. Men of all ages and of all ranks they seemed; there were mere youths, and heads that time had completely silvered; some that looked like nobles of the land, some that looked like artizans; there were priests and soldiers, merchants and peasants. Some sat in groups conversing, and some sat solitary; two or three were looking over written papers, two or three were writing on boards placed on their knees, and one group at the foot of the long table were entertaining themselves with a game of cards. The entrance of a new prisoner attracted very little attention: they were accustomed to the thing; and when Jules had found his eyes and ears again, it surprised him to see how little appearance of trouble or anxiety there was among them. There was no hope in their faces, but there was no fear; the terrible time had this result with men in every position, that danger, and even death, in a manner, lost his terrors; but the ease and courtesy of the national manners remained. One group invited Jules to share their bench, which was more comfortable than his own; another made room for him on their heap of straw; and one old peasant, hearing his northern accent, inquired if he knew the neighbourhood of St. Malo, in Brittany, or could tell him any news of the wife and children he had left in his cottage there seven months ago. Seven months was a long time to be in prison; but Jules found out that some of his present companions had been over a year in the Abbey; some had been only a few days, but all seemed to have become equally accustomed to the situation; and it was astonishing with what composure they talked of those who had been brought before the Convention one day, and the next carried away in the tumbrel to the Place-de-Grève. "Will that be my fate?" thought Jules. None of his fellow-

prisoners could give him hopes that it would not, when, for want of better counsellors, he laid his case before them. Most of them had evidence quite as satisfactory of their own innocence, yet not one appeared to expect an acquittal. The name of Citizen Renne was known to them all, and they united in assuring Jules that he had influence enough to save or destroy him, according as it might serve his interest; for nobody suspected Renne of any other motive.

"He has got the patronage of Marat for the help he gave in ruining the Girondists, and that will enable him to do any mischief," said a man whose black hair was silvered, though he seemed in the prime of life, and whose dress told of rank and fashion, though it was worn threadbare. He had been a member of the National Assembly, and was now thirteen months in the Abbey. Limited as Jules's own education was, he judged, from the deference with which his opinions were listened to, that this man must be well acquainted with public affairs; and his account of Renne was anything but encouraging to the poor Norman peasant. In his forest village Jules had heard of the name and doings of Marat, as most people in France had at the time, and as history has kept the blackness of his memory—one of those few and evil men who took advantage of the national confusion to establish their own power by the destruction of all who opposed them or their creatures, and ruled one after another through those three years of bloodshed known as the Reign of Terror.

"If Renne has set his mind on the Devigne lands, my time is come," said Jules.

"Give them up to him, friend, and retire to your old cottage, if he will let you," said the man with the whitening hair; "better live in peace as a poor peasant than hold by lands and château which you must die for;" and Jules made no reply, for the adviser knew nothing of the contract between him and the absent Sieur.

The day passed and the night came. How long that first day and night of imprisonment seemed to the forest man! but days and nights succeeded each other, and he was still in that great dreary room with high grated windows and fast-locked door. His companions were still the same in number; but almost every day some of the old faces went and as many new ones came. He saw the latter turned in at all hours, exactly as himself had been; he heard the former called by some turnkey, two or three in a morning; they went out at the guarded door, and some of them never came back; but others did, to take leave of their prison friends—few seemed to have any besides—to be called out next morning; and then Jules heard the roar of an excited mob, and the heavy roll of the tumbrel. Day after day he waited in terrible suspense, expecting to hear his own name called at the dreadful door; but no summons came for him. Jules did not get reconciled to the place, but he grew accustomed; and as the Convention did not seem in a hurry to try him, his quiet, hopeful nature began to take heart again. He inspected his papers with great care and some satisfaction; he prepared elaborate defences for himself, though repeatedly told that suspected men seldom got a hearing; and lastly, Jules, like other men in the worst of their fortunes, took to the best resource, because other help failed him; for he said his prayers at the heap of straw in the corner of the prison-room, more earnestly and devoutly than ever he had done by his own safe and quiet bed in St. Renne. There were none of the prisoners that said prayers but himself and the old man from Brittany. Like Jules, he was the only provincial there, and had left his home near St. Malo, and journeyed all the way to Paris to inquire after his only brother, who had joined the Vendeans; and for that inquiry the simple peasant had been sent to the Abbey. A sort of friendship grew up between Jules and the old man. Their Norman and Breton dialects differed somewhat, but they could

understand each other, and their minds and modes of thinking came still nearer. They had both fields and families far away to talk of and grieve for; they were both poor men, arrested on suspicion of concern in matters they knew nothing about. All the rest of the prisoners belonged to Paris or its vicinity, and also to one or other of the political parties which divided their land: they were of all shades of opinion—Royalists and Republicans, Communists and Jacobins; most of them had plans for the regeneration of France, if not for that of the world; and some had taken an active part in the great movements of the Revolution. Yet a common misfortune seemed to have taught them all the virtue of moderation, unknown as it was beyond the prison walls; they had much argument and much speculation, but no strife among them; men who had denounced each other in public exchanged civilities in the Abbey, and probably there was more peace and toleration in her prisons at the period than in all the rest of France. Jules and his Breton friend were the only men in the ward who prayed, at least openly—such was the unhappy turn and temper of the times; yet nobody called them superstitious, as they would have done outside; indeed, nobody appeared to notice the prayers of the poor peasants, except a young soldier, who used to look up at them from the bench where he generally slept, and say, "Gentlemen, do remember me; my mother used to pray for me, but she is gone, and there is nobody to do it now." Jules had not moral courage enough to advise the young man to pray for himself. Over-caution keeps many a one from doing his duty; but he thought how wisely the Sieur's old nurse, Ninette, would have spoken to him, and quoted texts from her Huguenot Bible; and then he fell asleep on the prison straw, to dream of her spinning by the old fireside and teaching his little Lucelle.

From that dream Jules was suddenly awoke by a heavy hand laid on his shoulder, and a hoarse voice saying in his ear, "Jules

Dubois, rise and follow me." He looked up, and saw, by the faint light of a dark lantern, the gaoler to whom Chamone had in a manner introduced him at the prison gate, and spoken so familiarly by the name of Brutus. It was an affectation of the Jacobin party, in the fulness of their fanaticism, to adopt the name of the Roman hero who struck down the first Cæsar, by way of showing their love of liberty and hatred of kings; and Citizen Brutus Lenoir had followed the popular fashion, as became the chief gaoler of the Abbey. He must have turned the lock, and drawn the bolts which made fast that ponderous door with surprisingly little noise, for none of the prisoners seemed to be disturbed. Jules thought there was not one awake but himself; and for what was he summoned to follow the gaoler at dead of night? but follow he must, and follow he did, trying hard to bless himself, but not a word of blessing or prayer could the unlucky man remember. His knees knocked together as he saw the gaoler lock and bar the door, and then conduct him through the long stone passage and across the courtyard, to a small side-door, in what part of the building he knew not; but it opened on a steep stair, at the top of which Jules was led into a small room with a low ceiling and a bright wood fire, and seated by the cheerful blaze was his old acquaintance Chamone.

"There he is for you," said the gaoler; "and I'll come back in an hour. Remember to finish your conference by that time, for I must get to bed; there is not a man in France, below the chiefs of the Republic, I would have left my hot brandy for at this hour but yourself;" and Citizen Lenoir closed the room door and locked it outside.

"Jules, my friend, how do you do?" said Chamone, shaking hands with Dubois, and looking really glad to see him. "You stand the Abbey wonderfully, I must say, for a man fetched from the forest; but you must be tired enough of it by this time. Sit down and let us talk; I have been at St. Renne, and seen all your people."

"Are they well?" said Jules, as another fear crept over him, not for himself, but for those he had left at home.

"They are; I saw them every one only a week ago: the two Closnets, the poor nobody—I don't know his name—the old woman, and your own little one."

"God bless you for bringing me such good news of them; and can you tell me, have they got the wheat well covered, and the sheep brought in for the winter?" After his family, Jules prudently thought of his worldly affairs.

"I'll warrant they have; but I forgot to inquire, not being in the farming line myself. But, Jules, wouldn't you like to get safe out of this prison, and back to the old place, to see your old neighbours, and sit with your own people by your own fireside, where the light would fall on the light-brown curls and the rosy face of your little one? Isn't her name Lucelle? You should have called her Louise; I always will. She asked me, oh! so earnestly, where I had left her father, and I told her you were in Paris, lodged in a great house twice as large and grand as the château. That was the handsome side of the truth, wasn't it, Jules? but it cheered up the little one, and she promised to do anything for me if I would bring you back;" and Chamone looked him keenly in the face, as if to see what effect his words had produced.

"My poor child!" said Jules; and the forest man found it hard work to keep the tears out of his eyes, as fond recollections of his home and all he had left there rushed upon his mind.

"She would dance for joy to see you; and you would be in the dancing line too, my friend, now I have found a way for you to get safe back. I haven't been idle all this time, you see; and you ought to think yourself the luckiest man in the world," said Chamone. "Citizen Renne will take up your cause. Remember, he is the man that can do it or anything else just now. He serves Marat, and Marat will serve him. Of all the chiefs, he

stands best by his own, and Renne is sure of moving the Convention that way. You couldn't escape without his help, Jules. Every man in authority suspects you of being in league with Devigne, and he is known to be one of the emigrants who went to stir up England against the Republic. Those papers of yours would be worth nothing before the Convention. You would be condemned without a hearing, as many a less suspected man was; but Renne will stand your friend on what I think very liberal conditions. He proposes to relieve you from all risk and responsibility by buying Devigne's lands and château off your hands. He will give you five per cent. above the money you paid for them—half down and half secured upon his bond—and engage to get you clear off from the Convention and my friend Brutus Lenoir, and send you home a free man, with money in your purse to stock your old farm as it was never stocked before, and a friend in high quarters in case any one should offend you in the forest."

Jules had been listening with an ear that drank in every word, and a mind that took in its full meaning. The offer of freedom and safety was a strong temptation, and of Renne's power he had heard too much to doubt; but his faith to that covenant made among the graves at midnight triumphed before Chamone had well finished, and looking straight into the fire, he said, in his own slow, determined manner, "I will not sell the lands or the château."

"Jules Dubois, what lunatic asylum do you mean to end your days in? for surely nothing but madness could prompt a man in your position to talk of not selling. Why, man, 'tis the only way to save your life," cried Chamone; "and very generous it is of Citizen Renne to take such cost and trouble on himself for the purpose of saving you. Some people are ungrateful."

"No doubt it is generous of him!" and Jules continued to look

into the fire; "but I cannot and I will not part with my property."

"And what good will your property do you when you are lying headless under the quicklime in the pits of St. Denis? That's the sort of funeral the tools of the aristocrats get. And what good will it do your child? A word from Renne—and you can't expect him to be over-partial to you and yours, after refusing his liberal offer—would send a company of Carrier's men to burn the château, with all it contains, some night, as they did many a better house in Normandy. See what a fine prospect you are making ready for yourself and your family," said Chamone, with a ferocious sneer.

Jules had got but a peasant's schooling, yet he was not deficient in understanding, and at once perceived that Citizen Renne's ambassador intended to frighten him. The sense and courage of his Norman race rose against such imposition, and, turning from the fire to Chamone, he said, "Stop, friend! Carrier's men have never ventured to do their night-work in the forest; if they did, I have no doubt that my old neighbours, the brave peasants of St. Renne, would stand by me and mine. For myself, I am here with good evidence of my honest purchase and goodwill to the Republic, and I will take my chance of acquittal or condemnation, as God wills it; but with his help, I will never sell the house and lands of Devigne."

"My dear fellow," said Chamone, assuming an easy, scornful tone, "you show the imperfection of your forest education. Nobody talks of God now, but old women and priests going to the guillotine."

"All the worse for the land. That is why wicked men are allowed to rule in it!" cried Jules, his spirit rising above his habitual caution. "But I believe in the Almighty, as I was taught in my youth, and I know that he can set me free in spite of Renne and all the men of the Convention."

"I told you nothing could be made of that fellow," said a voice behind him; and there stood Citizen Brutus in the open door.

"Since that is your resolution, farewell, unfortunate man!" said Chamone, making believe to wipe his eyes, though there was no sign of tears in them. "I am sorry for you. I would have saved you if I could; but the Fates will have their way. I suppose I may tell the people at home that you died like a Christian? It will please the old woman. All her sort are superstitious; but how will the child take it?"

"How she chooses," cried Citizen Brutus; "but I must take this man, and send you about your business."

The hot brandy had evidently submerged his dignity and loosened his tongue. He led Jules back to the prison-room, with a continuous whisper about the gratitude which he and Chamone owed to him for letting them meet at all; but his practised hand opened the well-fastened door with uncommon quietness, thrust Jules in without light, except that which struggled through the grated windows from the street-lamps or the sky, secured bolt and lock again, and retired as quietly as he came.

CHAPTER IV.

CHARLOTTE CORDAY.

BY the faint light, and his knowledge of the place, Jules found his own corner, and sat down upon the straw. He heard some of his fellow-prisoners move as if disturbed, and one say, "What can that be?" but in a minute or two all was still again, and he was left to his own meditations. They were dreary enough. The brave spirit in which he had answered Chamone, and almost defied his employer, ebbed away in the darkness and silence of the prison-

room. He knew that Chamone had been talking to frighten him; but how much of that talk might prove true the poor forest peasant could not tell. One thing was clear: Renne was determined to get the lands and the château of Devigne, and, whether as count or citizen, Renne had never been known to give up anything he had in view. For a moment it seemed to Jules the best and wisest course to accept his offer; for, notwithstanding Chamone's farewell, he had a notion that it would be repeated. The prospect of going back to his old farm in the forest country, safe and free from the dreary prison and the dread of the Convention, to work in his own fields and sit by his own fireside once more, with his little daughter and his kindly household, was too fair to be resisted, and Jules almost made up his mind to request another interview with Chamone, and give his full consent to Renne's proposed bargain. But then came recollections of the absent Sieur, his good lord, his early friend, whose house and land he would be selling away from him and his to their hereditary enemy, never to be reclaimed or bought back when the good, quiet times should come again, and all things be as they were in his youth—that was Jules's idea of the regeneration of the land, which so much occupied his fellow-prisoners as well as the men of the Convention. He thought of the far-off days when himself and Devigne played together on the green banks of La Brice; of the brides they had brought home, so young and fair; of the dead they had laid down in the old churchyard; and of the solemn trust that had been confided to him among the tombs. Then Father Bernard's face, so wan and yet so full of peace and wisdom, seemed to rise out of the darkness with the warning words he had spoken when Jules sat by his bedside in that soft evening of spring. The good nurse, Ninette, who had stepped into the priest's vacant place as Jules's counsellor, who knew the secret compact between him and the Sieur, what would she think or say when he went home after

concluding such a bargain, and what would she advise him to do if they could but talk together? And up to his memory rose her farewell words, "Put your trust in God, and fear not the wrath of man." Jules had been fighting a fierce battle with fortune and temptation on that heap of straw; but many a moral victory has been gained in as poor a field; and the day was won by that last resolve of his, "I will trust, and I will not fear." He said to himself, "Let them take my life, but they shall not get Devigne's possessions from me. Providence will protect my child, and when the good times come back, and Lucelle has grown a woman, it will be her pride among our forest people that her father died rather than betray his trust."

With that brave resolution Jules looked up, and saw the grey light of the winter morning creep in through the grated windows, and wondered how many more mornings he had to see. But the day passed without a summons to trial for him. Another and another came and went and his prison life went on as heretofore. When names were called at the door, he listened for his own, but never heard it, and at length got tired of listening. Had Jules known the true state of his own case, or the men he had to deal with, he would not have listened at all; the Disposer of events, to whom he was looking for help, had provided for his safety in a way he knew not.

On the night when he was taken from his home and family, the small household remained for some minutes overwhelmed with grief and consternation. Then Jean Clouet once more seized his trusty axe and rushed to the door, saying he would rouse the men of St. Renne to rescue their good neighbour from those wolves of strangers.

"There is not one of them would strike a blow against the messengers of the Convention," said Ninette, as she held little Lucelle in her arms, and the child sobbed as if her heart would

break; "they would be quite sure that Jules had done something against the Republic, or he could not be arrested, and the band would turn and shoot you for attempting to rouse the people against them. But I'll tell you what to do, Jean—follow them as quietly as you can, and keep well out of sight till you see how and where they take him; then go and tell all our neighbours what has happened; for all the kindness Jules showed to many of them in sickness and hard times, may be they will help us to watch against the still more wicked bands who might come to burn his house and slay his family, as they have done in other places with no greater cause. If none of them will help, we have still a Providence to trust in. Don't cry, Lucelle; your father will come back safe; I don't think they have a case against him; but pray to your Father above, my child, to protect both him and us."

Jean was accustomed to mind what the Sieur's nurse said: he went out accordingly, axe in hand, and followed the company of red-caps, keeping well in the shade, till he saw them embark in the boat on the river; and then Jean roused every house in the forest village with his cry, "Your good neighbour, Jules Dubois, has been arrested, though he has done no wrong, and we know not who may come against his house." The men of the village turned out, all with torches and some with weapons; but, as Ninette predicted, not one of them would attempt a rescue.

"If Jules Dubois be an honest man, as we believe him," they said, "and no tool of the people's enemy, Devigne, he will be honourably acquitted, and sent home by the Convention. We will protect his house against all robbers, and tell Citizen Renne to see justice done to him in Paris, for Jules has been a good neighbour to us all."

They chose a patrol from among themselves, to watch over the château. The family slept little that night, but the place remained undisturbed.

Next morning they went in a body to their favourite citizen in his "crow's nest," acquainted him with what had happened, and conjured him to see justice done to their good neighbour, at the same time declaring their determination to guard the house and land, which they believed Jules had honestly bought, till the contrary was proved before the Convention, and he was found guilty of being Devigne's agent. Citizen Renne was much astonished at the intelligence, he said; though some doubt had crept into his mind regarding the possession of the château, which, they would all allow, was a circumstance suspicious enough to arrest the attention of such a devoted servant of the Republic as himself, yet, on their testimony, he now believed Jules Dubois to be a loyal citizen, and should certainly make it his business to seek out the good man's accuser, and confront him before the supreme tribunal in Paris. He also applauded to the skies their neighbourly resolution to watch over Dubois' house and land; such respect for right and justice was worthy of the forest men. They went home applauding Citizen Renne with no less vehemence, but not aware that the said resolution was the only part of the business that surprised and annoyed him too; for it made an attempt to take forcible possession of the château a very unsafe step, and Citizen Renne had meditated something of the kind. The first French Revolution, amid all its excesses and crimes, had this redeeming feature—that its fanatical leaders and ferocious mobs alike despised and hated the covetous heart and hand. People might commit any sin but that which brought them gain. Most of the men who filled France with bloodshed and terror lived and died poor; and Danton, after dividing the supreme power and wickedness with Robespierre, came to the guillotine through nothing but his attempts to enrich himself.

This contempt of worldly acquisition, at once so noble and so rare in any age, still casts a fitful gleam on that fearful time; but

it stood sadly in the way of Citizen Renne's designs on the house and lands of Devigne. It barred his path in Paris, as well as in the forest country. On learning from his instrument Chamone what clear evidence of honest purchase Jules had to show, he felt that an acquittal would be the most likely result of his appearance before the Convention. Nobody had an interest in accusing the Norman peasant but himself; and even a *protégé* of Marat could not run the risk of accusing a man whose estate he was known to covet. But Citizen Renne had other means at his disposal. There was no difficulty in shutting up the simple, peaceable man of the forest among the prisoners in the Abbey. Its classically-named gaoler knew better than to make himself an enemy in the Marat faction, to which he owed his post, by appearing too scrupulous in the case of a friendless peasant; and Renne trusted to the dreary walls and grated windows for making Jules willing to sell house and land to him on his own terms. Among the weary inhabitants of the Abbey there were doubtless those who owed their prolonged imprisonment to similar causes. But Jules never guessed why he was not summoned to trial after Chamone's embassy had failed. Renne still trusted to the prison walls and bars for tiring out the patience and breaking down the spirit of the Norman forester. So weeks and months were allowed to pass away without a variation as regarded Jules, except that at long intervals Chamone reappeared at the prison door or in the outer passage, and he was summoned, as Citizen Brutus said, to see the best friend he had in the world but him. Then Chamone would say, "Jules, that flower of citizens once more makes you his most generous offer. Are you prepared to accept it with delight?" And Jules would answer quietly, "I will not sell my house and land;" upon which Chamone would repeat his affecting farewell and go his way, but only to return with the same formula some weeks after.

Jules was always glad to see him; for, besides the generous offer

and the affecting farewell, he brought news of the home and family far away in St. Renne. According to his own account, Chamone had either been there or seen somebody from the forest country; and the news was always good: all the household were well, all the village was flourishing; but Chamone generally added how particularly promising the fields of Dubois' old farm appeared, and how much his little Lucelle fretted and pined for her absent father. The truth was, that the forest men did not forget their honest and kindly neighbour. The family he had left in the château kept Jules in their remembrance. There was nobody in all the village who could write; and, even if they had reached him, letters would have been of no great use to Jules; but the peasants who went to market at Alençon or Domfront carried tokens of affection for the absent man, or messages regarding him to be transmitted to Citizen Renne by any obliging traveller bound for Paris. Most travellers were obliging enough to take charge of the like for a man so high in favour with the dominant and dreaded faction; and Renne took care to send back suitable responses through his own agents. The family were always hearing from Jules; he was safe and well, and likely to get home soon; but sometimes one form of law, and sometimes another, had to be gone through, and hindered his immediate return.

Most of those legal obstacles had long ago been swept away by the Revolution, and some of them never existed; but they served to keep the simple household and the forest men quiet, and every message wound up with the praises of his good friend Citizen Renne, and the reliance which not only his family but the entire village ought to place in him. "He and his have been always more friendly to the house and lands of Devigne than ever they were to their owners," Ninette would say, when they talked over these messages at the home fireside; "but it may be that He in whose hands are the hearts of men will make him of service to our good

Jules." But the nurse never ventured on such remarks beyond the walls of the château. The men of the village firmly believed in Renne's kindness and care of their old neighbour, who had got into trouble through buying the aristocrat's land, and the citizen's popularity rose higher than ever among them.

Poor Jules! it was well for the peace of his honest and much-tried mind that he knew nothing of the use made of his name, and the deceit practised on his people. His burden was heavy enough without it, as the long weary months rolled away unvaried, except by the visits of Chamone with those scraps of intelligence from home, too well made up to impose on the shrewd peasant, by the going of old prisoners and the coming of new ones, till himself and his Breton friend were all that remained of the first company. He saw the days lengthen through those high grated windows; he knew that spring had come to the forest; and his dreams went back to the tall trees breaking into leaf, to the violets springing up by thousands at their mossy roots, and the birds singing in their branches. In the dull light and heavy air of the prison, he thought of the sunshine flashing through the woods and glancing on the river; of the breeze that blew over his own orchard, now in a flush of blossoms, or came laden with the scents of wild flowers from the meadows. Was his little Lucelle gathering those wild flowers now, as she used to do, and did she run to meet Jean Clouet coming home from the fields as she used to meet her father in the evenings of other springs? And Jules' thrifty mind would turn to the crops of wheat, barley, and peas that ought to be in process of cultivation on the land he had run such risk for, and wonder how Jean and the rest of his people were managing them in his absence. But the spring went and the summer came, and he was still in the Abbey; Paris grew hot and dry under its flood of sunshine, which caught no shadow from the sins and sorrows below; the prison room grew close and stifling; the Breton peasant talked in his

sleep of the sea that washed the white sands of St. Malo, and the streams that flowed down to it through his growing corn; and Jules Dubois was getting so tired of the stone walls, and so changed by his stay within them, that he was preparing to curse the Convention and shout for Louis XVII. some day, in hopes of a release, though it should be by the guillotine.

The fable of the old man and death was illustrated in his case, however, when, one morning earlier than the usual hour of such summonses, Jules heard his own name called by Citizen Brutus at the prison door. With a vague feeling of fear, he rose and followed the gaoler, who, after securing the door, led him out into the court-yard; nobody seemed astir about the Abbey, and the prison watchers were pacing the last of their rounds, but on the stone bench hard by the massive gate sat Chamone, looking sober and thoughtful.

"Have you got your papers, friend?" he said, after bidding Jules good morning in his old familiar way.

"I always keep them about me," said Jules.

"That's well, and will save time. Citizen Renne wishes to see them and you at his own house before the hours of public business, with which he is so much occupied. So come along; a walk through the fresh morning air will be something new, and not disagreeable to you now, I suspect. Open the gate for us, Citizen Brutus; you are losing one lamb of your flock a little before the time."

The gaoler smiled cynically as he opened and locked again, and Jules found himself marching along the streets with Chamone, who had taken and kept a fast hold of his arm. The precaution was unnecessary: Jules would as soon have thought of attempting to take wing as of making his escape; he could have found his way anywhere in the forest country, but in the great town he was at sea without a compass. What direction they took he knew not;

the streets were all strange to him, and still more strange seemed the manner of his conductor. Chamone, generally so talkative and self-important, walked on without uttering a word, or even looking up, till, as they passed a house at the gate of which several persons appeared to be waiting and talking to the porter, he said abruptly, "There is the residence of Renne's friend, Citizen Marat. You see how many people are waiting at his gate with petitions or reports. I dare say before the rest of Paris have got their eyes open he will be making his toilet for the Convention—it meets early to-day—and thinking how many heads he should call for. That's the man to have for a friend in these times; and Renne can count upon him for anything he wants done, you understand."

"Do you think that Citizen Renne is going to take up my cause now?" inquired Jules, taking the first advantage of his communicative turn.

"I don't know," said Chamone, looking to the ground again; "that matter must rest between him and you. I have done all I can, and I mean to wash my hands of you both."

"Indeed!" said Jules; but as he spoke a female voice behind him said, "Pardon me, sir; can you direct me to the house of Citizen Marat?" The accent made Jules turn quickly round, for it was of his native province; and the speaker was a young woman in the Norman costume, tall and handsome, but with a look of settled sadness in her fair face, and a paper in her hand, which he guessed to be a petition to the man of power for the life of a friend, perhaps of a husband.

"There's the house," said Jules, pointing out the one Chamone had pointed out to him; for, except the people at its gate, there was nobody in all the quiet street but themselves. "Are you of Normandy?" he added; but the young woman was too intent on her own affairs to hear or answer him; she walked quickly away, and he saw her go in at the gate, while Chamone hurried on, muttering,

"The girl might save herself the trouble of petitioning in that quarter." His walk became more rapid every minute; he turned up one street and down another, then back again and into a narrow lane, such as abounded in old Paris, and formed short cuts between the different parts of the town. There Chamone stood stock still, looked up and down the lane to see that nobody was coming, and said:—

"Jules, I don't know what to do with you. I can't take you into the wolf's den; I know Renne means no good this morning, by having you brought to that out-of-the-way old house where he meets his friends; those honest people who stir up the Faubourg St. Antoine, set on the rag-gatherers to call for heads, and do any little business that can't be done by the guillotine. Jules, I don't know what things are coming to in France;" and he leaned against the wall, and looked round him once more. "No life is safe with these men; not the man who has done his best or worst to serve them, like myself. Renne threatened me last night for not bringing you to terms, and now he means to dispose of you first and me secondly."

"If we could both get back to the forest country, and tell them the truth, the forest men would stand by us," said Jules.

"May be they would; but how are we to get back, you Norman goose? His agents would have us before we had got a league on the northern road. If you had sold that cursed land of Devigne's in time——"

"I could not," stammered Jules.

"No! you could not;" and Chamone's voice sank to a whisper, "because you hold it in trust for him. I know you do, Jules Dubois. Nobody told me, but I know it, and man will never hear it from me. I respect you from my heart for being faithful and true. Had I been so myself, I should have never come to the evil doings that have made me what I am. But, Jules, I'll get you

safe home, if I should die for it; and when you get back to St. Renne, be sure you tell the child that I kept my promise; and the nurse Ninette, be sure to tell her too. But come along; I have made up my mind to break faith with Renne; I know what he means to do with me. If we can only get the length of Peronet's house, and find him at home, I'll tell him the whole story; and for the hatred he bears to Renne, I have no doubt he will take your cause in hand."

"Who is Peronet?" said Jules, growing dizzy with the feeling that his secret was known to such a man.

"Another of the same kind," said Chamone, hurrying him along; "he and Renne started on the race for power together; they were both Norman deputies to the States-General. I think he comes from Beauvais; but Renne has got nearest to the winning-post, so Peronet hates him. We must cross here. What can this be about?" he continued, as the lane suddenly opened on a wide street, into which a crowd was rushing from all sides with a clamour of wild cries and faces of fierce excitement, while a company of gendarmes, with a woman in their custody, opened a passage with drawn sabres through the furious mob.

"Keep close to me, and say nothing to anybody," said Chamone, as he dashed across the street, and Jules was following him, when his eye was caught by the Norman cap which the arrested woman wore, and another glance showed him that she was the very same he had directed to the house of Citizen Marat. He heard the crowd cry "murderess" at her; and the poor forest man's look of amazed recognition was too marked to escape their eyes. Jules felt a dozen hands laid upon him; he made one wild effort to break away and follow Chamone, but Chamone was no longer to be seen. Some cried "To the lantern!" and some "To the river!" with him; others shouted "Bring the accomplice before the Convention!" and, seized by arms, collar, and hair, Jules was dragged

along, half strangled and nearly unconscious; and when he could either breathe or see, he was in a guard-room, surrounded by gendarmes, two of whom were diligently searching his person. They took from him all the appliances he had carried so far and relied on so long—his forest-knife, his snuff-box of deer's horn, his crimson leather purse with thirty livres and five sous good money of Louis XV.'s coinage in it; and the goat's-skin pocket-book made by his own hands and containing his valued papers. Jules thought all was lost to him and his, when he saw that pocket-book eagerly seized by a man who stood by, and appeared to be in authority. He opened it, pulled out the papers, glanced over them, and demanded his name, his age, his native place, and why he came to Paris.

Jules was answering the last of these questions, to the great man's evident bewilderment. "In the Abbey since November! And where were you going when the people arrested you?" said he.

But at that moment the tumult, which still continued outside, was increased by shouts for the brave Citizen Peronet; and a tall man, with close-cropped hair and a shabby blue coat, but whom Jules judged by his look to be a Norman gentleman, stepped in, saying, "Citizen Prefect, as a member of the Convention and the Committee of Inquiry, I take upon myself to examine this man. Being of Normandy, I know how to get the truth out of Normans."

The members of the Convention were not to be gainsaid by any civic authority; the prefect at once put the papers into Citizen Peronet's hands, and the latter, making a sign to a clerk who sat at a desk in a corner, to bring Jules with him, stepped into an inner office, where there was nobody but the three, seated himself, and said, "Now, my good fellow, tell me your story, and for the sake of old Normandy I will assist you out of this scrape; that is," he added, looking at the clerk, who sat with book and pen ready, "if you can prove yourself to be an honest citizen." The judicial

practice of France has always differed from that of England, in permitting private examinations of the accused before his public trial; and this custom, having survived both law and government, allowed Citizen Peronet to improve the occasion for his own purposes. But Jules had heard his name shouted by the people outside, and recognised in him the man who, according to Chamone's report, would take his case in hand because he hated Renne. So Jules related from point to point the whole history of his being arrested on a false accusation, brought to Paris, and kept in the Abbey; how Chamone had come time after time with offers from Renne to buy his land, and threats because he refused to sell; how he had been brought out of prison that morning because Renne wanted to see him and his papers; how the house of Citizen Marat had been pointed out to him; how the Norman woman came behind him inquiring for it; how he had directed her to the house, knowing only that she was a stranger, and from his native province; and how much he had been astonished at seeing her so soon after in the hands of the gendarmes, when he lost sight of Chamone, and the people seized upon him, for what he could not tell.

"Ah, my good fellow, it is not as safe to show one's surprise in the streets of Paris as in the by-ways of your forest country," said Peronet, "nor to direct strangers either. It was Chamone who gave the direction, of course;" and he glanced at the clerk, who directly tore a page out of the book and wrote another; "you are an innocent man, and have been made the victim of oppression by one of those selfish men who disgrace the Republic; but I will see justice done you, and if you are prudent you will get safe home; but remember, say nothing about yourself speaking to the Norman woman—it is a trifle, but it might compromise your life just at present." Jules promised to abide by that counsel, and poured out his thanks for the citizen's kindness; but he also remembered

to say nothing about the conversation between himself and Chamone regarding the citizen's motives; and the latter, after a few more questions, to make the case clear, walked out, with the clerk, the book, and the papers, committing him to the care of two gendarmes in the guard-room, with orders not to lose sight of or let any one speak to the prisoner. Determined to preserve a safe silence on his own part, Jules sat down in a corner. He heard the crowd outside again shout for Citizen Peronet, and cry death to somebody whose name he could not catch, as they moved away like a passing storm; but, though his guards looked easy and civil, he did not venture to ask the smallest explanation of the strange doings in which he had got involved, and sat there almost motionless, he knew not how long, till some one at the door said, "Jules Dubois," and the men told him he was going before the Convention.

It was but a step from the guard-room, which, indeed, formed part of the same building, to the hall where that powerful and dreaded assembly held its sittings. In a minute or two Jules stood, with other prisoners and their guards, in a space appropriated for those who were awaiting their turn for trial and sentence. He could see the high seats of the Mountain, as the fiercest men of the Revolution were called, from occupying them, the tribunal from which people were denounced, and the bar at which the king, the queen, and the noblest blood of France had stood and been condemned. There was one standing at it as he looked up, and Jules did not venture a second look, for he recognised once more the tall handsome woman, with the fair sad face and Norman accent. Poor prudent Jules had a strong desire to get back to his quiet village, his home, and his household, and little sympathy with the heroic in thought or action; yet in long after years he recollected, and was accustomed to relate with something like emotion, how the Norman maid stood unmoved at the dreadful

bar, and calmly avowed that, for the sake of the brave blood he had shed, she had stabbed Citizen Marat in his house that morning; that she had left her Norman home for the purpose; that she had no accomplices, and would die cheerfully, having rid her country of one of its worst tyrants; and Jules remembered, as all time will, that the name of that Norman maid was Charlotte Corday.

CHAPTER V.

BEFORE THE COURT OF THE CONVENTION.

IT was with fear and trembling that the forest man heard the sentence of death pronounced by the unanimous vote which settled all cases in that court, on her whose name has become a word of praise and pride in his province, and saw her led away to prison and the guillotine. Brief trial and speedy execution were the fashions of these days; and Jules thought of the trifle which, according to Citizen Peronet, might compromise his own life. In another minute his name was called, and he was at the bar, in the very spot occupied so lately by his heroic countrywoman. Jules had the same Norman blood, though it did not rise so high, and he kept a brave, calm face before his judges; but it was some time before he could see or hear distinctly, and then a little man, with a precise look and a jaundiced complexion, was asking him questions from the President's chair. Luckily for his composure, Jules did not know that the little man was Joseph Isidore Robespierre, whom his flatterers called the Incorruptible, and most men since have called the Infamous. The questions were much the same that Jules had answered to Citizen Peronet; and at every reply the precise and ruthless President glanced at a copy of the private examination with which he had been furnished. Poor

Jules had nothing but the truth to tell, so his answers tallied; and Robespierre happening to be in better temper than usual that day—it was believed through getting rid of his friend Marat—gave Peronet leave to speak, as the latter rushed to the tribunal and loudly demanded a hearing for the defence of innocence and the unmasking of treason.

Citizen Peronet's oration was considered by his friends a masterpiece of eloquence and an effective stroke of political business. The death-dealing Convention had eyes and ears for these things, as keen as those of our modern Parliaments. He began by denouncing Citizen Renne as a selfish abuser of the power with which the Republic had intrusted him, and an accomplice in the murder of that incomparable patriot whose loss filled France with mourning and her enemies with triumph. In proof of those heavy charges, he related the history of Dubois' arrest, imprisonment, and temptations to sell his land; proved from the papers which Jules had brought with him that the man was innocent of all complicity in the flight or doings of the aristocrat Devigne; and called the attention of the Assembly to the fact that one of Renne's employés, while conducting Dubois to his house for some treacherous purpose regarding the coveted land, had directed the murderess to the residence of Citizen Marat, and fled as soon as the crime was discovered, leaving the simple peasant overwhelmed with astonishment and horror, which the people in the street mistook for conscious guilt. Jules knew that was not a correct version of the business, but it was a saving one for him. He had some fears when the orator wound up with—"Where is Citizen Renne to-day, when the blood of his matchless chief and generous patron is to be expiated by our justice and our tears; and where is the instrument of his treason, whom they call Chamone?"

The whole assembly murmured "Where?" and the word swelled into a cry among the fiercest of the Jacobin mob, who thronged

the entrance of the hall and the street beyond. The President immediately signed an order for the arrest of the two, and a company of gendarmes were sent to execute it; but, to Jules' great relief, they came back with a report that neither Renne nor Chamone was to be found. His honest mind would have been more at ease had he known that, at the same moment, Chamone was safely hidden in a closet in the house of Citizen Peronet, to whom he had made himself a sort of prize by showing the way to ruin his rival through the case of poor Dubois; and that Renne having seen, from his window in the street where it took place, the arrest of his unmanageable peasant, and knowing that Jules' declaration must compromise him, had prudently retired by a back way to the cellar of a wine-shop kept by one of his humble friends, who lived long after to boast that some of the proudest men in France had saved their heads by the help of his barrels.

The pair were not to be discovered at that time; but the trial proceeded without them. Judgment going by default was a common thing in the court of the Convention. At Peronet's instance, Citizen Brutus Lenoir was summoned as a witness; he testified to Jules' long imprisonment, to the visits of Chamone, to having heard the Norman say to him, "I will not sell my land," and to Chamone's taking the Norman away with him early that morning. Of course, the honest man knew nothing about the cause of those comings and goings; he was the servant of the Republic, and acted upon orders received from its accredited agents. At Jules' request, the old Breton peasant was also summoned; he had seen Chamone, and heard the talk between him and Jules about the land which Citizen Renne wanted to buy. In short, Peronet's charges against the ex-Count and his man of business were accepted as proven; less conclusive evidence would have satisfied the Assembly, for Renne belonged to the faction they were determined to get rid of, now that its head was gone. Moreover, there was

a great press of business that day, and more scrupulous courts let matters pass in their haste; so the charge of complicity in the Norman woman's crime, as they called it, was accepted against Renne and Chamone too, with the usual sentence of death as soon as they could be arrested. The next vote of the court acquitted Jules Dubois, declared him to be an innocent and an injured man; and, on the motion of the President, who, for all the blood he shed in Paris, wished to stand well with the remote peasantry—it was said because a peasant woman had nursed him—Jules was solemnly confirmed in his possession of the house and lands of Devigne, and a note to that effect added to his title-deed, which was immediately restored to him, with the rest of his well-kept papers, and a certificate of good citizenship signed by the President's own hand. His friend the old Breton also profited by the occasion. On inquiry regarding his offence, it was discovered that the brother on whose account he had been suspected was released from prison six months before, on his volunteering to join the southern army, and had since distinguished himself among the soldiers of the Republic. The Breton was therefore acquitted with nearly as much *éclat* as the Norman, and each made his best speech of thanks to the Convention, and to Citizen Peronet. The latter accompanied them out of the hall, to let the people see him in his new character of the peasants' protector; told them, in a high tone, that all good citizens might rely on the justice of the Republic and its President, and, in a very low one, to get back to their own homes as soon as they could. Of course, Citizen Peronet became the man of the hour, was cheered in the streets, applauded in the clubs, and allowed more hearings in the Convention than ever Renne had; but he never did as much mischief, for his time was shorter, and, being content with ruining his rival, he made no endeavours to search out the latter's place of concealment; and thus Renne escaped, to act his part in our story, many a year after

Peronet had been shot down in one of the street battles in the famous days of Thermidor.

To return to Jules and his Breton friend. They made considerable haste to take Citizen Peronet's advice, though delayed by the people congratulating and shaking hands with them. Some wanted them to stay and see Charlotte Corday's execution; some advised them to remain for the public funeral in the Pantheon, which the Convention were then voting to Marat; but when the one spoke of his little daughter, and the other of his wife and children, left so long and so far away, they escorted them in a body to one of the barges going down the Seine to Rouen, and cheered and waved handkerchiefs till it was out of sight.

Down the great river, and out of the great city, never were men more joyful to leave a town behind them; yet neither ventured to speak his gladness, but sat on the deck of the barge watching the spires of Paris as one by one they faded in the distance. Then came the broad plains; the far-extending and fenceless cornfields of northern France; the vineyards stretching up every sunny slope; the solitary farm-houses; the pastoral villages; and here and there the turrets of some old château or monastery rising above its sheltering woodlands. The long-imprisoned men felt themselves free at that sight of the open country. It was not their own, but nature everywhere resembles herself; yet the evil passions and evil doings of men had left their traces on the landscape as well as in the city. The cornfields had neither the tillage nor the promise of more peaceful years; there were ruined villages and farm-houses burnt down; and a nearer approach showed in many an instance that the grey turrets and blackened walls were all that remained of ancient abbey or lordly château. Jules and his Breton friend saw those scathing footmarks of the great Revolution, but scarcely heeded them; for their hearts flew homeward faster than the Seine on its seaward track could bear the barge to

Rouen. At last they reached the capital of Normandy, and were questioned by gendarmes the moment they landed, as suspects flying from Paris; but Jules' certificate, signed by the President, proved a sure passport; and, leaving Rouen behind as joyfully as they had left Paris, the hardy peasants crossed the country, keeping clear of towns—had they not all prisons and men of authority with questions and snares for poor travellers? They held on their course till some way inland from Harfleur, where the old roads to Brittany and Lower Normandy met on a wild moor. There they shook hands heartily, prayed God to bless each other, knowing that there was none but Him to hear them, and parted, each taking his homeward way, but never more to meet in this world. Neither ever forgot his prison friend; they talked of one another in long after days, but it was by distant fields and firesides. They exchanged kindly messages and tokens of friendship by means of the country traders who came and went between their provinces, and often they spoke of meeting once again; but their homes were far apart, and neither cared for travelling: that journey to Paris was sufficient to serve them for the rest of their lives, and the old Breton was gathered to his fathers before Jules met with his second and sharpest trial on account of the Exile's Trust.

The small household in the Château Devigne had missed and mourned their head for many a weary month; but they had held firmly together, and helped to take care of his interests at home and abroad. The old nurse Ninette, having been the exiled Sieur's only housekeeper, filled the same office under Jules, and when he was taken from his house and home, the good woman in a manner took his place, looked after everything without and within doors, advised Jean Closnet in all his difficulties and cares, and kept her master's cause from losing ground with the neighbours. Everybody in St. Renne respected Ninette; what she said was known to be truth; what she did was sure to be honest; her ability to

read, and the wisdom she learned by it from that only book of hers, gave her opinions weight with the village people. The men who were ready to go all lengths for the Republic and the new ideas, allowed that she had too much sense to have ever served an aristocrat, and those who secretly clung to the old beliefs and ways said she could advise one nearly as well as Father Bernard. So the household accepted her as their director, and the neighbours as their counsellor regarding Jules Dubois and his affairs. Under her management a system of signals was established, by which the village men could be apprised if any danger threatened the solitary château and its few inhabitants; though the rustic telegraph consisted of little more than a light in a particular window, and some powerful blasts on a bull's horn. The best farm-men were induced to assist Jean Closnet in the ploughing and sowing of the land, as they had never assisted Jules, and the interest of the whole village in the cause of their arrested neighbour was kept alive by the continual messages to and from Paris, to which Dubois owed part of his escape, and much of his comfort in the long prison time. The day's work was well done, and at the fall of night every door and window was made fast and the means of signal got ready. Then the simple household, safe in their own walls from the fear of being laughed at for superstition, or suspected of leanings to the old régime, would gather round the hearth, while Ninette read to them a chapter of her Huguenot Bible, and prayed in her Huguenot fashion for them and for their absent Jules, and little Lucelle, kneeling by her side, repeated word for word the petition in behalf of her own dear father.

Thus the winter had passed, keen but brief as it is in Normandy; the spring had come, with its leaves to the woods and its labours in house and field; the summer had filled the meadows with bloom, and tinged the corn with gold. All St. Renne were engaged—some with the haymaking and some with the first of the harvest;

but none of them were busier than the people on the lands of Devigne. The corn, which Jules had not sown for the first year since he became a farmer, had ripened earlier than it was ever known to do before, and Jean Closnet could get no help that season; volunteering in the different armies which France raised to defend her frontiers, and requisitions for the same, had thinned the numbers of the forest men, and every hand was wanted on their own farms. But Ninette said, "Come, children, we will not let God's good gift fall and perish for want of hands to gather it in. Jean will be chief reaper; Claude will come after him; Joan can use a sickle as well as a broom; I will bind the sheaves, as I did long ago in the wheat-fields of Languedoc, and Lucelle will help me—a small hand can help if it be only willing, as I know Lucelle's hand is."

The proposal was agreed to, and the whole household turned out to cut down and save the corn. It was a glorious morning in the end of July, warm, but not sultry; for with the cloudless sky and the brilliant sunshine there came up a fresh breeze, such as fans the forest country all the summer, blowing over the hills of Brittany from the sea. In all the fields about St. Renne, men, women, and children were at work so earnestly to get a good stroke done before the heat of the day came on, that none of them observed a solitary traveller coming down the forest road at a rapid pace, and straining his eyes in the direction of Château Devigne. As the traveller passed a thicket on his right, dark with leaves and sweet with wild roses, two boys, the only idle ones to be seen about the village that day, came out of it in great triumph over a thrush which they had caught in a snare.

"Let the poor bird go, my lads," he said; "all creatures love their liberty; I know that, for I have been in prison."

"And you are come back at last!" cried the eldest of the boys, his brown face lighting up with joyful recognition; and he turned

to his companion with, "Louis, it is Jules Dubois, who was so kind when our father and mother were sick in the hard winter. We'll let the thrush go in his honour, and then run and let the village know."

Up went the lid of the imprisoning basket, away flew the thrush, and off went the boys, shouting at the top of their voices, "Jules Dubois is come back!"

The announcement roused all St. Renne like a peal of joy-bells; the housewives and old people came to the doors of their cottages to ask if it were true; the haymakers and the reapers in the fields left their work and ran to meet and welcome home their long-absent neighbour. Jules' misfortunes had created an interest which his prosperity never did. They embraced, they surrounded him, they carried him in triumph along the road to his own château.

"What can the noise mean?" said Lucelle, pausing over the half-bound sheaf and wiping her brow, as the shouts came faintly up to the high and sunny slope where the corn was ripest and the family were at work.

"I don't know," said Ninette; "God grant that none of those wicked bands from the upper country have come down upon our village." She held her breath to listen, and so did the three reapers, as another shout came on the wind; but Lucelle caught her father's name, and crying, "He is come back—my own father is come back!" she sped down the fields like a young roe, followed by the household, just as Jules and his escort entered the lawn in front of the château.

"Ninette always said that God would send you back to us safe and well," said the child, while she sobbed with joy in her father's arms; and, looking round upon his kindly neighbours and his faithful family, his fair home and his fruitful fields, the tears streamed down Jules Dubois' honest face, and, in the faith and fashion of his youth, he knelt upon the grass with his little

Lucelle, and devoutly thanked the Preserver of men for this happy and unhoped-for return. The spirit of their better and more peaceful days seemed to have come back to his neighbours also. Many of them responded to Jules' thanksgiving, and the most zealous against old ways and superstitions found no fault. By common consent the hay and the corn were left to themselves for that day; a village fête was organised in honour of Dubois' home-coming. The hero of the day, though generally prudent, had both heart and hand open for the time, and insisted on a feast being spread in the wide meadow-like lawn. Thanks to Ninette's management, there was no want of provisions in the château; and, as no housewife came empty-handed, the supply was not allowed to fail. With many to help, the festival was soon furnished forth. They sat there on the green grass under the tall laurels, old and young doing justice to the fare like people who had come from harvest fields, drinking Jules' health, and gazing with awe and wonder on his certificate, signed by the most dreaded men in the Republic, and on the note added to his title-deed, by order of the Convention, confirming him and his heirs for ever in the possession of the lands and château of Devigne. Ninette, as the most qualified person, read those documents aloud to the assembly; and loud were the cheers and warm the congratulations poured upon Jules from all sides.

"Was it Citizen Renne who did all that for thee, neighbour? Tell us, and we will drink his health, and send our thanks all the way to Paris," they said.

"No, neighbours," answered the prudent Jules, who had given them but scanty details of his trial day, "it was not he, but Providence. You will excuse me; I am a man of the old belief. I quarrel with nobody's opinion, but that is my notion."

"Thou hast a right to it, Jules, since we know that thou art not a helper of aristocrats and haters of the people," said the village

men, willing to forget the strifes of their time, and let the fête go on as fêtes went once among them. When the feast was done, the village fiddler brought out his instrument, he said for the first time since the volunteering and requisition days began, and all St. Renne danced on the green as their fathers had danced before a Republic was thought of in the land, and their descendants have danced under many a succeeding form of government. The great Revolution, with all its horrors, might check, but could not quell the social and joyous spirit which nature bestowed upon the race. They kept up the festivities till the close of the summer day, and retired to their homes rather more exhausted than they would have been with the labours of the field, leaving Jules and his family seated in the château porch together, as they used to sit in other summer evenings, willing to rest, and exceedingly thankful.

Thus the uncertainty of human fears, as well as of human hopes, was made manifest in the case of Jules Dubois. The man who had taken farewell of his household, and given himself up for lost at Martinmas, returned in safety and honour at midsummer, to reap his own fields and dwell among his own people, with the possessions for which his life had been put in peril made as secure to him as anything could be in that troubled and changeful time. Jules' neighbours had welcomed him home as a man wrongfully accused and triumphantly acquitted; but they never knew the heaviest of his trials, the brave heart with which he had held out against long and sore temptation, and the noble faith he had kept to his exiled master. Those details could not be safely given to the public ear of St. Renne; the Closnets were too simple, and his daughter was too young to be trusted with the secret they involved; but Jules was blest with one confidant—a great blessing to a man of his homely and domestic mind. On the second evening after his home-coming, while Ninette sat mending his harvest blouse by a country candle, and all the rest of the family had retired for the night, he unburdened his memory, and told the faithful nurse all that had happened to him from the night of his arrest, the hand that Renne had in the business, and the singular chain of circumstances through which he came to liberty and home.

"Jules," said Ninette, quietly stitching away, as she had done throughout his tale, "thou wast right in saying it was Providence that wrought out thy deliverance; and surely it was grace that enabled thee to stand so fast. Signs and wonders are wrought among men in these evil days of ours, though they see them not because of the darkness: but it will pass away; and doubtless thy escape from the hands of wicked men, and the breach of sacred trust, is a sign to us that our noble master shall yet return and possess his own in peace, and that better days shall come to this ill-guided land. But, Jules, with what sins will men burden themselves for those worldly things which at best they must leave in a few years, and take only the sins with them! See that Count—it is well there are none but ourselves here; my old head will never get into the new way of naming people—well, that Citizen Renne, how deceitfully he acted to you and to us! and what further wickedness he intended, who can tell? Our Lord pardon me, for I know it was a sin; but the teaching of the old serpent rose up within me as you spoke, and I almost wished that the Convention's men had found him and kept him from troubling honest people again."

"He can do us no harm now," said Jules, content with his own safety, and neither revengeful nor far-sighted.

"It is hard to say what opportunities of harm-doing a false and selfish man may find in time to come; but the same Providence is always near, and that was a sinful wish of mine. To speak of something better, Jules, the man Chamone proved himself a true friend to you, though he came here as an enemy, and I had the worst opinion of him: so little can one poor mortal read another's

mind;" and Ninette sighed deeply, but stitched away. "I had," she continued, "because he came here stealing about the house one day in the midst of the winter; well for him it was not night, or our signals might have brought the forest men upon him. But he saw Lucelle at the window, coaxed her to open it, told her you were well, inquired how all the family were, and went away before I could get in from helping Jean Closnet in the cow-house. Then remember how he would not do Renne's bidding, but perilled his own life to save yours at the last; and they have a sentence of death against him. Jules, we will pray for that man every evening at our own fireside; it is all the church we have, and so it was often with my Huguenot fathers. The Closnets agreed to it when you were away, and you will agree to it, I know, though our creeds are different. We can worship together, at least till the madness of this time passes from men's minds, and the churches are opened again. We will always remember Chamone in our prayers, for the good that was found in him, though in an evil employment. Maybe our Lord will have mercy upon him, and turn his heart from sin and folly to himself."

"We will," said simple, honest Jules, "and pray, too, that he may be kept safely hidden from the Convention's men till the better times come. Ninette, I believe in them now; and if Chamone comes my way then, whatever old doings may be called up against him, I'll stand by him as surely as he stood by me."

CHAPTER VI.

A DISCOVERY.

THE life of the château returned to its former channel, and flowed in the same quiet current it had flowed in before Jules' arrest, except that he and all his family felt themselves more secure from the dangers and troubles of their time. They still kept their system of signals ready, and made fast their doors and windows at nightfall; took their turns with the St. Renne people in keeping watch against the noyades of Carrier and Lebon, when such dark doings were heard of on the borders of the forest; and when a requisition came, as it did often enough in those days, Jules, in the safety of his own four walls, gave thanks that he had no son, and was past the age himself, and then devoutly prayed that his good Jean Closnet might not be taken from him to serve in some of the armies. But the revolutionary bands never came near St. Renne, and Jean never drew the marching number. Within less than a year after Jules' return home, they heard of the overthrow and death of the dreaded President who signed his certificate of good citizenship, and Jules solemnly burned that document in the presence of his trusty Ninette, and was never again heard to mention it. The Black Terror, as they called the reign of Robespierre and the Jacobins, was over; but the White Terror succeeded it. Men rose in all directions to avenge the death of friends and relations on the deposed faction, and did nearly as much evil under those pretexts as the Jacobins themselves. Another year passed, and the White Terror was over too; all parties were exhausted; the land was coming back to its senses, and something like order was growing out of the chaos. Nobody spoke of the Convention but to curse it. Jules put away his title-deed, with the added note he had been so proud of, in his most

hidden drawer. "We won't cut it off," he said to Ninette. "Who knows but the Convention might turn up again?" And she responded, "Our Lord forbid." Then they heard of a council of five hundred sitting in Paris; next, that the government was a Directory; and at last nothing was talked of but the exploits and victories of a young general, whom every old soldier thought too rash and inexperienced to be trusted with any command, but who won battles quicker than the journals could report them, and swept the enemies of France before him like chaff before the wind.

"I'll drink his health in my new cider," said Jules, when his neighbours came to tell him how the Austrians had been beaten in Italy. "He is the man we want; he will make all enemies glad to make peace with us, and then we shall have no more requisitions." Jules did not know that the conscription, and years of far more wasteful war, were coming; but his neighbours believed the promising prediction, for his opinions had weight with them now. His prosperity had taken root, as it were, in the house and lands of Devigne. The simple habits, the few wants, and the steady industry of himself and family had made him a substantial man—the owner of crops and cattle, which none of his neighbours could boast, not to speak of a hoard in all the coins and assignats of his time hidden away to make a dowry for Lucelle. He still wore the peasant's garb, worked in his own fields beside Jean Closnet, and occupied only the humblest rooms in the château; but he was known to be the richest man in St. Renne; and, as the ferment of the Revolution passed away, and things returned to their natural level, that fact gave him influence and importance in the village. He was not their Sieur, and there were never to be any more aristocrats in France, but he held the Sieur's place; and as every community must have its leading man, Jules became, by degrees imperceptible to himself, a sort of president and patron to his neighbours. One would say, "Neighbour Jules, my brother-in-law

and I cannot agree about our landmarks, and nobody knows what the law is now. Will you be our umpire, and we will abide by your decision?" Another would say, "Neighbour Jules, I have drawn the bad number, and must march for the army of Italy. Will you look after my old father and mother, and see that Pierre Leblanc marries my young sister honestly, according to his contract?" Jules was always ready to accept those charges; not that he cared for a hand in other people's business, being given to mind his own, but partly because a refusal might have brought him ill-will, which he dreaded above all things, and partly because his honest pride was flattered by the trust and confidence of his people. Prudent and kindly by nature, the peasant proprietor discharged the duties to which he was thus freely elected in a manner which satisfied all parties; so the whole village learned to look to him as their general arbitrator in all disputes, the guardian of all who required to be taken care of, and the trusty hand to whose safe keeping their most precious deposits might be confided. Careful parents intrusted to him their daughters' dowries, as the best and surest banker they knew; aged people the money they had saved up to defray the expense of their own funerals, after an ancient custom of the Norman peasantry; and one poor youth who had drawn the soldier's lot, and had nothing to leave behind but his faithful dog, brought Sentinelle, as he called him, to the château, and solemnly committed him to the care and protection of Jules Dubois. The dog was taken charge of as cheerfully as the dowries and the funeral moneys; indeed he was the most welcome deposit of the three, for Sentinelle was a noble creature—a wolf-dog of the best Norman breed; his courage and intelligence made him invaluable to a man who had so much to take care of as Jules, in a country only just settling down. Sentinelle was well treated, and soon became attached to his new master. The bond between them remained unbroken, for the soldier never returned to claim

his canine friend; but Sentinelle proved himself worthy of his name, for a better watcher against wolf or man no house ever had; and an instance of his sagacity, which occurred in the following winter, was long the wonder of St. Renne.

The season was an unusually severe one in the forest country. The deep snow which had fallen in the beginning of December was succeeded by a frost so rigorous that the cider was found frozen in the cellars, and the hardiest of the Norman hunters gave up for the time their winter fashions—the chase of the boar and wolf, and stayed at home to carry on courtships among the spinning maidens, and tell old tales beside the blazing fires. Jules and his household were sitting round their hearth one evening, as they sat on that Martinmas one when the thundering knock was heard at the outer door, and the band of red-caps rushed in. The grey had thickened in Jules' black hair since then; Ninette's had nearly approached the snow. Lucelle was not sitting at her feet, but spinning by her side now; the fair child had become a beautiful girl, whom village gossips discussed and village youths looked after; and they were talking, not of the sweet summer of St. Martin, but of the hard frost, wondering if it would spare the peach-trees in the orchard, and when the sheep would get out to pasture. All at once they paused, for Sentinelle began to bark furiously in his kennel outside. Jules listened for a few minutes, and then cautiously opened a narrow window in a thick wall which commanded the approach to the house, but would give entrance to no dangerous intruder. The night was still, but so dark that he could see nothing; there was nothing to be heard; the dog had ceased barking, and the cold was intense. "He smells a wolf somewhere," said Jules. "This hard frost is sure to bring them about the village; but Sentinelle will keep them off our ground;" and, with a shout of praise and encouragement to the watchful dog, he shut the window, and resumed his place by the fire. The conversation had

recommenced, and Jean Closset was relating a tale he had heard from his grandfather, about a great snow-storm through which one of the Counts of St. Renne brought home his bride, when they heard the dog again; and this time he did not bark, but whined and moaned as if something grievous had happened to him.

"May be poor Sentinelle is cold, father," said Lucelle; "the night is bitter. Shall we bring him in?"

"May be he is," said Jules; "but I never knew Sentinelle to value the frost before. Come, Jean, get the lantern, and you and I will see what disturbs the dog."

They went out, lantern in hand, each taking the precaution to arm himself with a stout staff. There was nothing to be seen near the house or in the lawn; but Sentinelle ran before them, whining and moaning to the gate. There was something lying there, at which the dog sniffed, and howled still more piteously.

"It is a dead man," said Jean, as the light of his lantern fell on a poor traveller stretched at the gate, with the hoarfrost white upon his clothes and hair. Jules ran to raise him up; but a strong exclamation of astonishment burst from the discreet man, for the wan, fixed face he saw was that of his former captor Chamone.

They carried him into the house, and laid him in Jules' own bed; Ninette bent over him, laid her hand upon his breast for a minute or so, and said, "Our Lord be thanked, his spirit is not gone." Then she put forth all her skill; and, though born in the south, her many winters in the forest country had given Ninette some experience in the recovery of frozen travellers. Every hand in the house assisted; and, between hot brandy within and hot flannel without, the deadly cold was driven from Chamone's heart; his numbed senses returned to wonted action; he looked on the household standing round his bed with a look which had been

seldom seen in his face, for it was one of unfeigned thankfulness, and said faintly, "Is it true that I am in the house of Jules Dubois?"

"That thou art, and right welcome too," said Jules, coming forward, and taking him by the hand. "Never will I forget thy doings for me in Paris; and sorry I am to see thee in this plight. How did it happen, friend?"

"How it always happens," said Chamone, "with a poor man who can get neither work nor help, because he was heard of in the Terror-time, and charged with greater men's doings. That is my case. I crossed the country to-day from Alençon, thinking you would give me shelter till the worst of this hard winter was over; but, not knowing the forest ways, I took the longest one. The night fell on me leagues away from St. Renne; and when I reached your gate the cold and darkness so stupefied me that I did not know it, and was afraid to knock lest the people of the house might be no friends of mine. So, thinking all was over with me, and being able to walk no farther, I lay down in the snow; and, but for your noble dog, I should have been frozen to death, or eaten by some of the forest wolves before morning. God bless you, my generous Jules, for taking me in so kindly."

"What else should I do?" cried Jules. "A Christian man would take in any traveller in such a night; and was it not owing to thee, under Providence, that ever I got back to my house and land? Thou art welcome to stay with us till better times come, and thou canst find some honest employment; we will all do what we can for thee. Take a good supper and a good night's rest, and my word for it thou wilt be better in the morning."

Next day Chamone was better, and soon recovered from the immediate effects of his exposure to the frost; but when he rose and sat among the household, it was evident to Jules that his old acquaintance was a sadly altered man. The two years which had

passed since they parted in that crowded street of Paris seemed to have added twenty to Chamone's age. His face had grown lean and sallow, his hair thin and grey; he had a stoop of the shoulders, a contraction of the chest, and that hard, hollow cough which the Norman peasants say comes from the churchyard, and takes people home with it. Chamone was altered in other respects. His old recklessness and self-importance were gone; he had grown quiet, sober, and humble, like one who knew he had many things to reckon for in this world and the next. Of his own doings and adventures he was particularly chary of speaking. The public indignation against all who had served the Terrorists was too deep and general to make it safe even in St. Renne; and the friendless, worn-out man had no pleasure in the recollections of his ill-spent life.

He stayed at the château; there was plenty of room there, and all the family took kindly to him, especially Ninette and young Lucelle. He liked best to sit beside their spinning-wheels in the long cold evenings, saying very little and basking in the blaze of the bright wood fire. The long evenings wore away, and so did the frost and snow; the forest people came abroad again, labours of the field and sports of the wood went on, gossip circulated, and the village men found out that a stranger of ill repute, from the time of the Black Terror, was staying with Jules Dubois. "Is it true, Jules," they said, "that thou hast such an one under the roof with the honest Closnets, the good nurse and thy young daughter?"

And Jules responded, "Neighbours it is well to let by-gones be by-gones; the man was guilty of nothing that I know of, and proved a good friend to me in my time of trouble; he is welcome to my house and family, and I will be surety that he means no harm."

The village men asked no more questions; but they saw little of

Chamone to stir up their memories. As the spring approached and buds broke forth on orchard and forest tree, the cough grew harder and his strength declined; the man whom the simple household had prayed for so often and earnestly by their only chaplain Ninette, had come at last to join their fireside circle, but come only to die. Early irregularities and later hardships had broken down his once vigorous constitution, and day by day he drew nearer to the valley of the shadow.

Chamone seemed sensible of his own condition, and singularly well inclined to prepare for meeting the last enemy, considering what his course of life had been. It surprised Jules to see one whose ways he had known to be so different, join devoutly in the family worship which still hallowed his fireside, the only church then open for service in St. Renne, where they still prayed for the absent Sieur as they had prayed for Chamone himself; and the coming of the one among them, unexpected as it was, insured to their simple hearts the happy return of the other. It surprised him to see the man who had told him in the Abbey that nobody spoke of God now but old women and priests going to the guillotine, coax Lucelle to borrow Ninette's Bible for him, and sit reading it in some quiet corner when all the house was busy with the work of the day. Chamone could read well, and, far as his practice had been from its precepts, appeared to be no stranger to the sacred page. He was always welcome to Ninette's book, as they called it, after it became clear that he took a real interest in the precious volume. "It is the book of life," she said, "and they that draw near to the gates of death know best its value. May thou and I know it, friend, for the greyness of the evening fall is already on our heads!"

"It's true, Ninette," said Chamone; "but the grey came upon thine in honest ways, and on mine in evil ones."

"And what says the book about the wicked man forsaking his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts?" said the nurse. "Thou knowest the text, Master Chamone? I think thou hadst some knowledge of the Huguenot Bible before thy coming to Château Devigne. Am I right or wrong in that thought?"

They were sitting in the porch; it was an afternoon of early spring time, sunny and soft with the promise of the bright and blooming months to come; the blue of the sky was checkered by light fleecy clouds, the smell of bursting buds was in the forest air, and the redbreast's song was heard from every tree. Ninette was turning her spinning-wheel as usual in quiet hours; Jules was smoking his afternoon pipe; all the rest of the family were in the fields, engaged in the varied work of the seed-time; and Chamone sat in the most sheltered corner, with his old cloak about him and the open Bible on his knees. He was silent for a minute after the nurse had spoken, and then, without looking up, said, "Ninette, hadn't you once a brother Philippe?—Philippe Lejune they called him in your old village in Languedoc, because his father and grandfather had been Philippes before him. You don't speak of him, Ninette; you haven't for years, because he was no credit to your honest family. The only boy, and the last of six children, may be his parents thought too much of him and over-indulged his early follies; may be the fault was altogether in himself; but he grew up idle and wild, in spite of a good example at home, a family Bible, a faithful Huguenot pastor, and an upright pious community whose fathers had suffered and died for the truth that made them free. There is no use in reminding you how he went on from folly to sin—you will remember it too well; and when his sins brought rebukes from parents and pastor, and reproach from the virtuous villagers, how he wandered away to the great towns and seaports, met with worse company, and learned more evil ways. You will remember how often he came back, and at times reformed himself for the sake of the child whose mother he

had not the grace to marry; and how, when that fair child was taken away from an evil world and his worse example, Philippe came back no more and was never heard of in his native village. Ninette, it is many a year since then; the old village is altered, like everything in the land; father, mother, and sisters are lying side by side in the green churchyard; the old home is inhabited by strangers; and of that once flourishing family only the eldest and the youngest now remain on earth, and one has not long to stay."

Ninette had been sitting with the thread in her fingers at her motionless wheel while he spoke; but now she rose and threw her arms about the man, where he sat with head still bowed over the Bible, exclaiming, "Philippe! my brother Philippe! the prayers of our good mother have been answered at last by Him to whom a thousand years are as one day; and thou hast returned from the bitter husks, like him that arose and went unto his father. Philippe, my brother, thou wilt be welcome there, and thou art welcome to me after so many years of separation, when all the household are dead and gone but ourselves; but we shall go to them, Philippe. Strange that I knew thee not in all this weary time, and yet there was a familiar look in thy face."

"But I knew thee, Ninette, from the very first, long as we had lost sight of each other, my own good sister, the best friend I ever had—better than I deserve to have now;" and, leaning his grey head on his sister's breast, the once hardened and heedless Chamone wept like a child.

"He is welcome I say too," said Jules, whose pipe had dropped as his mouth and eyes opened in one wide gape of astonishment. "He is welcome for your sake, Ninette, and for his own; but who could have thought it? This is a wonderful world. Cheer up, Chamone!—Philippe, I mean. I see where the good that was in you in your worst time came from. One never forgets the fireside

learning; but cheer up! thou shalt live with thy good sister and us all."

"I will die with you, my kindly Jules, for I know my days are numbered; and if I can but find peace with God, I am willing to go; but, sister and good friend, call me no more by the name of my bad times. I am not Chamone, but Philippe. Ninette, I don't mean to be a shame to you among the people of St. Renne. They look black enough at me as they pass, knowing what work I had a hand in, and blaming me with more. I don't want you to own me for your brother, but call me Philippe for the old time's sake;" and he bowed his head over the Bible once more.

"I would own thee before the king," cried Ninette; "but where are my wits going? We have no king now. Thou art my brother, and so I will call thee. Let the St. Renne people look black at us both if they please. Our Lord will not, neither will our good Jules, nor my own Lucelle. Here she comes," continued the nurse, as the fair girl, in all the freshness of her early youth tripped in between the sad and sober three. The thoughtful and gentle spirit which had made her childhood so wise and winning still lent a charm beyond all outward beauty to Lucelle; her elders found wisdom, and placed confidence in her. She sat among them in the porch, and heard with great amazement that the man from whom she had once begged her father's life was Ninette's long-wandering brother.

Lucelle broke the news to the Closets and poor Claude, and they broke it to the village. The St. Renne people first took the opportunity to curse the Terrorists, both black and white, and then agreed that nobody could help the turning out of their relations. But the villagers saw as little of the new-found Philippe as they had seen of Chamone. From the day he revealed himself to his sister and friend, Philippe's prediction that he had come to die with them was rapidly fulfilled; but Philippe found the peace

he had learned to seek at last. While his sister conversed kindly and piously, as was her wont, or read the Bible she had brought from the old home with him, the faith of his childhood, simple and sincere, seemed to return to his weary and troubled spirit, as if all the wild and wayward years between, and all the bitter fruits they had brought him—the cankering rust and ruin of the soul—had gone away, out of reckoning and memory, and left him only the fond recollections and the bitter teaching of that early and unblotted time. He talked of the doings and the dwellers in their old southern village long ago; its Huguenot church and pastor; its pleasant fields and vineyards; his parents, in the vigour of their days; his young sisters; his boyish playmates, as if he had parted from them but yesterday. In the light of his early faith and happier memories, Philippe's days and nights waned away as the spring flowers came to the meadows and the leaves to the forest trees; but his sister and his friend cheered his failing hours, and ministered to his comfort.

One night he had grown so weak that Ninette sat up with him, and in the early morning twilight Jules rose to relieve her watch. All the world but themselves seemed yet asleep, and Philippe also. They were speaking of his state, in a low whisper, when Sentinelle began to bark outside, and Jules went out to quiet the dog; but there was a man standing at the gate, who spoke in a whisper too, and by his voice rather than his face, in the dim and dewy light, Jules recognised the travelling merchant in whom the Sieur had confided, and who had brought to him the snuff-box in token of Devigne's safe arrival in England.

"Open the gate, my good Jules; I have a letter for thee," he said.

Jules opened directly, led him in, and welcomed him heartily, though in a low tone, not to disturb the sleeping sick; but his second word was, "What news of my noble Sieur?"

"Ill news, ill news," said the merchant. "You cannot think what straits the brave Devigne has been brought to, Jules. I saw him in London, that great, dirty town the English are so proud of, though it never sees a holiday, and very seldom the sun."

"They have no guillotiné there, I believe; but how fared the noble Sieur?" said Jules.

"He was teaching boys in a school the emigrants have set up there. He had little for his trouble; and, what was far worse, his son had left both him and the good legitimate cause. They say the boy was handsomer than most of the Devignes, and manly beyond his years, which are not many yet; but he took to reading the liberal newspapers, and turned entirely from his father's principles. There was no peace between them, and at last the boy went off one day. How he got to France, through the blockade, I cannot tell; but the Sieur heard somehow that he had got the length of the army in Italy, and I had to stop his father from cursing him outright. I think it is his boy's doings that have made the Sieur think of going to America. But, Jules, I am forgetting that here is a letter for thee."

"Come to the inner room," said Jules, "and Ninette will read it, if she can; there is nobody there but herself and a dying man."

The merchant followed him; Ninette took the letter, and tried to read it, but her skill in written characters had never been great, and her sight was failing with years.

"Let me read it, sister," said Philippe, raising himself in the bed, with a strength no one could have expected; "dying men betray nobody's secrets but their own, and Jules, my friend, I guessed out yours when we stood together in the narrow lane in Paris."

He took the letter with a firm hand, broke the seal, and read—

"MY BRAVE AND HONEST JULES,—The bearer will tell you what has happened to me and mine. I think it was the doings of

that young general in Italy that turned my son's head, and I hope the Austrians will catch and hang him some day; but I can't stand the disgrace of it among our true-hearted emigrants, so I am going to America. Shame counts for nothing there, they say; and I'll be able to earn an honest living. But, Jules, I can't go without money, and I can get none here. Can you spare a thousand livres or so, for old times' sake? If they were put into the hands of the bearer, they would be sure to reach mine, and he would bring you back my signet-ring for a token—it is old and worn now, like its owner; but try and spare the money to a poor exile, and your old friend, "GASTON DEVIGNE."

"That I will," cried Jules; "and glad I am that there is that bit of silver I laid by against Lucelle's wedding; but she won't be thinking of a ring just yet, and it will serve the noble Sieur. How like himself he writes!—a true Norman and a gallant gentleman still; but a trifle stiff in his old opinions, and, I think, getting worse. But who would have thought of young Gaston going off to the army in Italy, against his father's mind? I don't like that; but Gaston was a brave boy, and will make a brave soldier."

"He was a good boy," said Ninette, wiping her eyes, "truthful, kindly, and clever as ever boy was, and like one who would remember his Creator in the days of his youth. How the young grow up and disappoint us! I never thought to hear that Gaston had disobeyed and left his loving father, for the sake of those woeful politics and parties that so divide families and friends in our land."

"True, Ninette," said Philippe; "and they are not worth dividing or striving for—dirty bubbles, with blood below the froth, red upon men's hands, and heavy on men's consciences; young Gaston will know that one day, as I do. Our Lord be merciful to him and to me!"

And Philippe lay down, turned his face to the wall, and seemed to fall asleep. Ninette crept softly away to get some rest; Jules

was occupied in talking with the merchant, and counting out the silver from his own peculiar strong-box, a bag of wolf-skin, closed with a strong strap, and kept at the bottom of his family chest; and Lucelle slipped in with a nosegay she had gathered in the garden, laid it on Philippe's pillow, and sat down to watch by his bed.

The morning meal was over, the merchant was gone, Jules and his assistants were in the fields, and all the house was quiet, but still Philippe slept on.

"Was it my mother or was it Louise that brought them?" he said, all at once opening his eyes and fixing them on the flowers. "I saw them both coming down the steep, steep path, that leads up to the blue. Come, Lucelle, we will go up and meet them: the flowers don't wither there."

He took her hand and clasped it between his own; they were very cold, and a chill of fear fell on Lucelle. She rose and called Ninette, and the kindly sister came. Had Philippe fallen asleep again? His face was half hidden by the flowers; but Ninette saw the seal of the Peace-giver on it, and said, with a smothered cry, "My only brother is dead!"

Long and sore she wept over the departure of him whose wayward wanderings had troubled her and all his honest kindred; but when the first wild storm of grief was over, the wise and pious woman knelt down by the low bed to give thanks that he had died in peace. Peace was indeed on the brow, where a hard and profitless life had made such deep and early furrows; the eyes had closed without a human hand; and the thin grey hair had mingled with the blossoms of the spring. The household left their work in the fields to mourn for the man who had come so strangely among them, and Jules said in the midst of his sorrow, "Thank God that he found his way to my house in that bitter night of the snow. If he did go wrong, like us all, I know he repented, and I will lay

him down beside my parents, my wife, and Father Bernard. How many of them are laid there before me!"

They made a grave in the quiet village churchyard for him who had shared in many a stormy and terrible scene of the great Revolution. The whole village overlooked his evil fame—for death is a great reconciler—and turned out to honour his funeral for the sake of their neighbour Dubois and the much respected nurse who called him brother. Jules pronounced his funeral oration in the very words he had spoken over his deathbed. Ninette gave thanks for the dead who rested, and prayed for the living who stood around, planted a young willow over his grave, and said, "I shall sleep beside thee, my brother, before its branches spread wide enough to cover us both."

CHAPTER VII.

CHANGES IN THE CHÂTEAU DEVIGNE.

ON the same day in which they laid the green turf over him who had been called Chamone, and done the behests of Citizen Renne, the nearest neighbours observed smoke rising from a chimney in the habitable part of the "Crow's Nest," and in a short time it was known that the once popular Citizen had returned home. But Renne's popularity had passed away with the state of things in which it rose. All trace of him was lost alike to friends and enemies, from the day of Jules' trial and acquittal; the forest people wondered what had become of him for some time; but, as the fierceness of the great Revolution subsided, and the public mind began to cool, Renne's memory cooled also—had he not been one of the Terror men?—and at length, as people everywhere are apt to do by the long absent, they partly forgot his existence; but Renne did not forget his own.

His retirement into private life, in the cellar of the wine-shop, was of considerable duration. Peronet did not pursue the search for him; but it was continued long and briskly by a host of minor enemies he had made in the days of his power. They did not find him, however; and Renne at length contrived to leave the cellar and Paris, in the disguise of a pedlar, and thus equipped he travelled about the country for many a month more. When the Black Terrorists went down, and the White Terrorists got up, Renne found himself still more in danger; and, moving away eastward, he at length got into Switzerland, and assumed the character of a noble Royalist. Under that shelter he remained safe till the White Terror was over, and then Citizen Renne moved back to Paris, to look for place and power under the Directory. But his name was too well known in the Robespierre days: none of the governing men would compromise themselves by giving him employment; and after being attacked by the fishwomen, and chased for his life by a band of rag-gatherers, Renne bethought himself of the peace and safety that were to be found in his own half-ruined château in the forest country. There he had done no harm, as far as was known, and therefore he might live at ease among the forest people; but Citizen Renne had sunk into obscurity, which his slender resources, his barren land, and his half-ruined château did not permit him to emerge from. He had still his nobility to fall back on; the old respect for rank was creeping back to the minds of the forest people, as the land became more settled under a steady government, and things returned to something like their ancient places. He first dropped the title of Citizen and assumed that of Monsieur; next he resumed the distinguishing *de*, and lastly the complete style of Count de St. Renne.

It was the ancient designation of his line, under which they had

ruled and been reverenced through many a feudal age; it still sounded high and grand in the ears of the old peasants, or the young who clung to old-world ways; but, with the title, Renne could not recall the numerous retinue, the liberal housekeeping, and the pompous goings forth in a coach-and-six, which were the wont of his ancestors on occasions of ceremony. The high-born Count was poor; but when from the upper and broken windows of his own château he looked westward over the dell, his eye rested on the fertile fields, the laden orchard, and the warm, well-kept manor-house of Devigne. There dwelt a man increasing in riches and honour, who had foiled his deep-laid designs, and been the instrument of his fall from power and importance into the wine-shop cellar; yet the Count took every opportunity to show his respect for Jules Dubois, and sounded his praises to all the neighbours who were known to be ready repeaters. Jules heard of those tokens of good-will, and, though not a vain man, was not insensible to the honour and glory they gave him among his people; but Jules also had a recollection of the Abbey in Paris, and that last day in the streets with poor Chamone. He wished to keep clear of the Count's attentions, and succeeded for some time. But Renne was not the man to be kept at a distance; he made a point of bowing familiarly to Jules, whenever the latter came in sight; he waylaid the Closnets and Claude Lemette, to make the kindest inquiries regarding him and his family, and sent trusty messengers to ask his advice touching the management of cattle and the cultivation of crops.

Jules was flattered, in spite of the Abbey and its reminiscences. As the summer wore away in the out-door life and labours of the Norman peasantry, many civilities were exchanged between him and the Count, and by the beginning of harvest they were on speaking terms.

It was a bright breezy day in that busy season; Jules' corn had been early gathered in, and he was standing by his threshing-floor

—a primitive and picturesque, but by no means economical institution, which dates from Scripture times in the East, and was common then in Normandy as it is in Brittany yet, consisting of a broad platform of hard and solid earth, formed in the most advantageous situation for sun and wind, between the farm-houses and the fields, where the corn might be threshed from the straw as soon as it was dry, winnowed, and carried clean into the granary. Well, Jules was standing there, superintending the operations of Jean Closnet and Claude Lemette, with their old-fashioned flails, and winnowing his own corn in an equally old-fashioned sieve, with the help of Jean Closnet and his daughter Lucelle, when Count de St. Renne, in a coat which had belonged to his grandfather, and had still some remnants of silver lace upon it, carrying a silver-headed cane, and followed by a tall greyhound, came sauntering up the meadow.

"Good morning, Monsieur Dubois," he said, in his most polite tone. "Let me hope that I have the happiness of seeing you and all your people well. But why should I inquire? Health blooms on every cheek! This must be a most salubrious situation of yours. And what magnificent corn! it ought to command three francs a sack above any in Alençon market."

"It's fine corn; thanks to the Giver!" said Jules.

"It's well winnowed," replied the Count, surveying the heap of clean grain, and bestowing a glance of astonished admiration on young Lucelle, who stood by it. "I never saw corn so clear of chaff;" and he stepped closer up to Jules, in spite of the cloud which flails and sieves were sending right into his face, and whispered, "Can you tell me who is that charming girl?"

"My daughter," said Jules, pausing in his work, while a glow of paternal pride lit up his honest eyes.

"Your daughter!" said the Count; "oh, happy father! No wonder they call her the Rose of May! And her look assures me that she is as good as she is beautiful."

"That she is," said Jules, fairly flattered out of his caution; "as good a daughter as man ever had. Come here, Lucelle; the Count thinks you are not the plainest girl in the village, nor the worst one; and for that I think you should bring him a cup of good cider, out of the cask we keep under the hedge, to be at hand in this hot weather; and bring me a cup too, child. You see it is an excuse for myself I want, Count; but I hope you will taste our cider, and drink Lucelle's health."

"With all my heart!" said Renne, still gazing on the girl, whose bright curls streamed on the summer wind, as she came at her father's call, dropped him a Norman curtsy, and tripped away to fill two tall drinking-horns with sparkling cider out of the cask kept at hand, and returned with them to him and Jules. "Your health, Mademoiselle Dubois; health, happiness, and a good husband to you;" and the Count drained his horn with an air of perfect enthusiasm.

"I am sure Lucelle is obliged, and so am I, for your good wishes," said the delighted Jules. "We are but plain people, and cannot express ourselves fittingly to your lordship; but we are grateful."

"I like plain people; I am a plain man myself, as all St. Renne knows, and only speak as I think. Your daughter is a girl any father might be proud of. You have no other child, I believe? But she is enough; you will be able to give her a handsome dowry, I dare say; and I hope, my dear Dubois"—here the Count's voice sunk to a confidential whisper—"you will raise your family to the position I may say they deserve, by marrying your heiress to a man of worth and rank."

"You are very good," said Jules; "but I hope to find an honest man for Lucelle; and, being but peasants, we can pretend no higher."

"What matter how people are born? Your own good fortune, not to speak of your merits and your daughter's beauty, should

command a noble match; anything less would be throwing her away. But it is your dinner-hour, my friend—I see the flails laid down. I wish I were as near my own house as you are; for the sun is positively burning. Good-bye!" and the Count slowly turned away.

"Come and take dinner with us, my lord, if it is not making too bold to ask you," said Jules. "You will find shelter from the sun, and good fare in our house, though we pretend to no finery."

"That's just what I like; and it is a real charity to give a man shelter in such a day, not to speak of a dinner," said Renne, as he joined the party from the threshing-floor, and walked into the Château Devigne for the first time in his life.

Ninette had spread the table with her accustomed care, and great was her surprise to see the unexpected guest. But the old nurse was a prudent woman; she bade the Count good day, with a low curtsy, which he graciously acknowledged; and then sat down with the entire household, who, after the old and homely fashion, all dined at one table. Lucelle's place was always at her father's right hand; but that day the Count sat between them, and nobody could make himself more at home than Renne. He conformed at once to the rustic customs of his company, knowing that different ways keep one a stranger; praised everything he saw or tasted; listened to Jules, and ingeniously drew him out on his favourite themes of crops, cattle, and sheep, deep ploughing and early sowing, the overreaching habits of corn merchants, and the many tricks of millers. The Count heard all with eager interest; told his own experiences of the kind, and also the news of the surrounding country; showed deference to Ninette as the presiding matron; patronised the Closnets and poor Claude, and paid innumerable polite and delicate attentions to Lucelle. The girl was neither shy nor awkward; from infancy she had lived free and fearless among kindly neighbours and fresh, open fields; all the men she

had seen were forest peasants, whose rustic gallantry or admiration, however sincere, had not the point and polish of Count de St. Renne's manner; yet, such is the instinct of honest natures, Lucelle shrank from his acquaintance, was uncharmed by his flatteries, and would have escaped his attentions if she could. On her father, however, the Count made a different impression; Jules was not accustomed to be made so much of; he had never been the great man in his native village, or even in his own house. The Count set him, as it were, before himself, in a grander light; and it told on his simple mind like new wine. Besides, was it not the nobly-born and highly-descended Leon de St. Renne, the representative of one of the oldest families in the forest country, who actually sat at his table, and talked with him as a friend? Jules felt himself elevated several degrees above his neighbours by such familiarity with rank and seigneurial rights, which no revolution could level to him; the Count, in his grandfather's old coat, still bore the title and boasted the blood of the St. Rennes; and the richest farmer or the most successful trader, compared with him, was but a peasant and a clown. The mid-day meal, which, except when crops were in danger, was generally sat over for two or three hours in the hot harvest time, to let the fierce sun slack his rein, was prolonged far beyond its wont, to exchange healths and opinions with the Count, and give his lordship a pleasant walk home in the cool of the day.

The Closnets and Claude had gone back to work on the threshing-floor; Ninette sat spinning in the porch, and Lucelle sat knitting beside her. Both were silent and thoughtful; the old woman's and the young girl's thoughts were different, but their subject was the same—the Count de St. Renne; and so was their conclusion, for neither of them liked the visitor. At length they saw Jules come out escorting his noble guest, and looking the hotter for the strong cider he had consumed.

"Permit me to pay my parting compliments to Mademoiselle Dubois," said the Count.

"Oh, certainly," said Jules; "Lucelle, my girl, come here and bid this noble gentleman good evening."

"Good evening, noble seigneur," said Lucelle, dropping her lowest curtsy.

"Good evening, Mademoiselle; permit me to salute your fair hand;" and the Count attempted to take it; but Lucelle sprang back as if something had bitten her, and never stopped till she reached the farthest corner of the ample porch. "Ah! I see I am no favourite," said the Count terribly disconcerted, but endeavouring to look easy; "we will be better acquainted yet. Adieu." And he walked rapidly away.

"Fie, Lucelle!" cried Jules, as soon as his guest was out of sight; "where were thy manners, that thou couldst behave so to a grand seigneur like the Count de St. Renne, when he condescended to take such notice of thee?"

"I could not help it, father," said poor Lucelle; "he is a very grand seigneur, but I hope he won't come here again."

"Thou art a foolish child. What harm has the Count done to thee, that thou shouldst show such disrespect to my guest? Fie, Lucelle!" and Jules looked more angry than ever he had been seen to look before at his daughter, who, grieved and ashamed at his rebuke, though feeling she had done no wrong, stole away into the orchard, and took to gathering apples under the laden trees, but with tears in her eyes.

"Jules," said Ninette, stopping her wheel and looking him steady in the face, when the girl was out of hearing, "for all the years we have been together in this goodly house, I pray thee think if it be wise or well to chide thine only child for failing in respect to one who proved himself no friend to her father."

"By-gones ought to be by-gones, Ninette. Where is the use of

keeping old offences in one's memory? Does not thine own Bible say we should forgive our enemies?" said Jules.

"That it does; but forgiving our enemies is one thing, and taking them into our houses is another. Listen to me, Jules," and the nurse's tone grew sad and solemn; "thou hast this day brought to thy table and into thy family an agent of the old serpent, who will do his work with thee and thine, I greatly fear, if our Lord prevent it not."

"Old women are always fearing something," said Jules, getting up in great scorn and anger, as people will do who know themselves to be in the wrong, yet cannot give up the course; "but I have a right to bring whom I please into my own house, I should think;" and with a stamp of resolution he marched away to the threshing-floor. Ninette cast after him a long foreboding look, as if she felt that there was further trouble in store for him and his; but then the pious woman looked up to the bright blue sky, on which the first soft shades of evening were beginning to steal, and said, "Thou that didst overcome the tempter in the wilderness, foil him in this house and in this man's heart."

From that day Count de St. Renne was a constant visitor at the château. There was no end of the apologies he had for coming; sometimes it was advice he wanted, sometimes he had news to tell, and sometimes he came out of mere friendship. Every day seemed to make him more welcome to Jules, and every visit of his seemed to produce some change in the homely ways of the family. First, Jules found out that it was not fitting to entertain such a grand seigneur in the kitchen, which had hitherto served them as a sitting-room; the oak salle or parlour was opened, scoured out, and made habitable, as it was in the Sieur's time, and dinners and suppers had to be served there for the Count, himself, and his daughter. Then Jules had to learn some games to make the time pass: his pipe was not genteel enough before such a noble guest, and the

Count did not smoke; but he undertook to teach Jules to play billiards; so the billiard-room was opened, and one after another the superior and handsomely-furnished apartments, which Jules had shut up on his first coming to the château, were put in requisition. Such a change of ménage required an increase of retinue; two maid-servants were hired to assist Ninette and Joan Closnet in household affairs, and two useful men, besides a varying number of labourers, were retained for the field work. Those changes were known to be at the Count's suggestion; but the time was past when putting up above his neighbours would have been dangerous to Jules; and late as it was in life, he had got a sudden taste for gentility. The peasant's garb was too mean for him now, even on week days; he bought two suits of the newest fashion in Alençon, and brought home more dresses and millinery for Lucelle than had ever been seen in St. Renne since the Sieur lost his lady. Jules was becoming a sort of Sieur himself; he got the title of Monsieur from the Count and his neighbours were advised through poor Claude, whom nobody would find fault with, that he expected it from them. Some of them gave it with a good will—Jules had done much good and no evil among them; some gave it with a smile of recollection; and all made remarks and comments at their own firesides.

The Count had wrought that domestic revolution, and the Count was never absent a whole day from the château. His friendship to Jules Dubois was wonderful, all the neighbours said, if it had been only shown in the old time of trouble; but by-and-by it became clear to all St. Renne that the Count's chief attraction to the château was Lucelle. Jules thought her a child yet—and Lucelle was little more—but the men of the village had begun to admire, and the women to criticise her. She was not the village belle, nor promised to be so. Modest, sensible, and frank, with the frankness of truth and innocence, Lucelle had none of the thousand airs, tricks, and artifices by which the coquette in court or country

hamlet acquires and keeps her sway. But Lucelle was already the village beauty; her sweet face and finely-moulded figure were unequalled in all the forest country. She had got no schooling but the honest, pious teaching of Ninette, from that one treasured volume; but it had made the motherless girl wise beyond her years, and good beyond most people of any age. She had seen nothing of what is called society, and never got a lesson in deportment; but native sense and native grace lent a charm to her manner which no artificial polish could impart; and the stiffest-necked peasant in St. Renne would pardon the rebellious ox or the apple-stealing boy at the intercession of Dubois' winning daughter.

Moreover, Lucelle was believed to be heiress of the château and lands of Devigne. Had not her father bought them from the Sieur with his own savings? had not his right held good in law even in the Terror time? and was not she his only child? The village gossips had been speculating for some time on the match Jules ought to expect for his daughter. The peasant-girls of Normandy marry early; and when the whisper rose regarding the Count's intentions, it was accepted as a very probable case. True, the Count was fully fifty years old—the contemporary of Lucelle's father; but, in spite of all his vicissitudes and risks, Leon de St. Renne was a well-preserved man; on his spare figure and sallow complexion time could make little change; the fashion of the period left no beard to grow grey, and his thin, straight hair had kept its blackness. Besides, such a disparity of years was never rare among the wedded pairs of France, and there was the Count's noble blood and high connections, which were rising every day nearer to their ancient level in the esteem of the forest people. Some said it would certainly be a match. Some said Jules Dubois would be wiser to keep to his own station; and some said it would be a pity to lose such a girl with Leon de St. Renne.

If Lucelle did not think so too—being neither vain nor yet

occupied about her match-making—she had her own thoughts of the Count, and they were not in his favour. Too young and inexperienced to weigh accurately the man's character and motives, and altogether unacquainted with the part he had played in her father's by-gone troubles, she was yet warned against him by those true and honest instincts which come before the knowledge or the wisdom of the world, and are the surest safeguards of innocence and youth. Lucelle did not like the Count, though she could not say why. The attentions which would have pleased a proud girl, and turned a vain one's head, were thrown away upon her. Too sensible and good to show aversion or disrespect to her father's guest, she made no demonstrations, but avoided his noble company when it was at all convenient to do so, and took the earliest opportunity to get out of doors when he visited the château.

If Jules had been making a clean breast of it—which was not his way, being of the still-water kind—he would have acknowledged that this was the only part of his daughter's conduct of which he did not approve. What the Count was and had been Jules knew better than any man in St. Renne; but sober and plodding people can be the best imposed on by those who take them properly in hand. Renne had listened to and flattered him till he half forgot, and half was inclined to gloss over, his old doings by the agency of poor Chamone, which, indeed, he never fully comprehended. Moreover, Jules had his own share of human pride and vanity, though they had lain dormant in the honest cares and labours of his peasant life; Renne had given him the first taste of grandeur, the first impulse to greatness as he knew it. The honour and glory of living in a château and owning an estate had never fairly dawned on him before; and then, to have a nobleman for his familiar guest and companion, and see him pay such marked attentions to his only daughter, the child of his love and the hope

of his age, was sufficient to cover all the past, and make the Count a true friend in his eyes. True, the château and the estate were none of his; but nobody knew that, and he might as well have the use and the honour of them. The Sieur had said that if he or his son never came back they would be his own, and who knew that either of them would ever return? The son had joined the army in Italy, the father had sailed for America long ago; for the travelling merchant, on his autumn rounds, had brought him Devigne's signet ring, and there were the sea and the war both in his favour. Jules tried to put that thought from him as an unworthy and an evil one, but it came back, overleaping all the remembrance of early friendship and the bond of pledged faith. He would not have owned to himself that he wished the Sieur and his son never to return; but, if they never did, then all would be his, and Jules' thoughts began to run upon that *if*.

It always came up clearest when he sat and talked with the Count, the latter went so strongly on his ownership of land and château; and one day it recurred with mighty force, when, in the midst of teaching him to play billiards, Renne suddenly paused, and said, as if with a great effort, "Monsieur Dubois, I set out for Paris to-morrow on important business. I may say, between ourselves, it regards a legacy to which I am entitled by the will of a distant relation, just discovered by my lawyer. It will enable me to put my family château in repair, and live suitably to my rank; but, Monsieur Dubois, I cannot leave St. Renne and you without making known the wishes of my heart. Your charming daughter—nature intended her to be a countess—may I hope to offer her the title and the name of De St. Renne?"

"You are very good," said Jules, scattering the billiard-balls in his surprise and delight; "but you are far too grand a seigneur for us, Monsieur le Comte: Lucelle is but a peasant's daughter."

"Her father might call himself the Sieur Dubois, or the Sieur Devigne, if he pleased," said the Count, with a sly smile; "but that is not my consideration. It is the girl I love for herself alone; it is you whom I respect and wish to be connected with. My friend, shall we not become relations?" And he took Jules' hard-working hand and clasped it between his own smooth and white ones.

"Lucelle is too young to think of marrying yet, and I don't wish to part with my daughter, though it is a handsome offer you have made; but I would not force her to marry a prince against her own liking, and I am not sure that she likes you," stammered out Jules.

"Girls at her age never know their own minds, my friend; I can wait a little, though love is impatient. Let the marriage be an understood matter, and all will come right in time. Is it a bargain?" And the Count clasped the peasant's hand still more affectionately.

"Well, yes," said Jules, "if Lucelle and you can agree, I don't say against it in a year or two."

"Thanks, my dear Dubois; you have overwhelmed me with happiness," cried the Count. "But I'll leave you to be my advocate with your lovely daughter; for here comes my servant to tell me that a man of business whom I expected is waiting, and I shall not have the pleasure of seeing you again till my return from Paris. Adieu, my friend, adieu; my heart remains with you in the Château Devigne." And Renne hurried out to meet his servant on the lawn.

"If he knew that not a foot of the land or the château belonged to me or mine, would he ask my daughter in marriage?" thought Jules, as he watched the Count from the window, talking earnestly with his servant for a few minutes, and then walking hastily away; "but he says he loves her for herself alone. I have heard

of great noblemen marrying poor peasant-girls in the good old times, and I am sure my Lucelle is fitter to be a countess than any of them."

CHAPTER VIII.

ROMANE LE NORMAN.

THE idea of his daughter being made a countess took possession of Jules from that day. He brooded over the prospect, and, after his own fashion, took measures to ensure it. Lucelle was forbidden to do any house or field work that might soil her hands, which were to be kept white and smooth, as became a lady; her father insisted upon her sitting in the best rooms of the château, engaged a village dame skilled in such matters to teach her fine needlework, and thought of engaging a country musician to instruct her in playing either the dulcimer or the harpsichord; which antiquated instruments happened to be found among the Devigne furniture. He said there was no use in employing a dancing master, for nobody could dance better than his Lucelle; but he commanded her, on pain of his displeasure, to wear her new dresses every day; and having corn to sell in the next market, took her with him to Domfront to get fitted with morocco shoes, and have her hair cut in the newest fashion. Lucelle was glad enough to go to Domfront; the little old place contained all the sights and wonders of a great town for her, familiar only with the forest village. She had no objections to getting morocco shoes and wearing new dresses, as what girl would? but her father's reasons for those extraordinary changes she could not make out, and began to fear he was going out of his mind, till the matter was made clear to her on their homeward way.

It was that season of the year when the winter approaches the spring; the days were lengthening, but the nights still trenched upon them; the rigorous frosts were gone, and the earliest flowers were peeping out in sheltered places, but the sheep were still kept in the warm folds, and the howl of the hungry wolf was heard by night about the forest farms. Jules had gone to market with daughter, servants, corn, and all in his own substantial waggon, drawn by four great Norman oxen, to get over the ruts and sloughs of the forest road. His corn had been sold to advantage; the requisites for home consumption had been bought; the shoemaker had fitted Lucelle with his best morocco, declaring all the time there was not such a foot in the province; the barber had cut her hair in a style which he said was worn by all the great ladies of Paris, and would not go out of fashion for twenty years, but the honest man forgot to say that he had taken as much off the long and glossy locks as would make a set of false curls for one of his richest customers. So much business made the party late in returning; the night came down upon them calm and cool; but the full moon, which rose almost as the sun set, lit up the forest country like a second day. It was slow but cheerful travelling; and at a spot about two leagues from St. Renne, where the road wound steep and narrow up a wooded hill, Jules and his daughter alighted for a brisk walk in the moonlight, leaving Jean Closnet and Claude Lemette to bring up the waggon and oxen.

"What a glorious night, father!" said Lucelle, looking up to the clear sky and round upon the ancient trees, which seemed bathed in liquid silver. "Ninette says this was the sort of night our first parents had in Eden."

"May be they were," said Jules; "but in my youth they said that in such nights the *fées* used to meet late travellers and tell them their fortunes. We never see or hear of one of them now;

but I wish they would meet us and tell thy fortune, Lucelle, for I think it will be good and great. Tell me now, my daughter, wouldst thou not like to be a great lady, to ride in a coach-and-six, to wear silks and satins, to have a score of servants, and live in a grand château?"

"We live in a château, father," said Lucelle.

"Yes, my child; as it happens, we do. But I am only a peasant, and thou art a peasant's daughter. How much finer it would be to be called Madame la Comtesse, and get honour and reverence wherever you turned your head! Lucelle, if I heard and saw that, I would die in peace; and it is like to happen yet. Listen, my girl, and I'll tell you a secret." And Jules drew his daughter nearer to himself. "A great nobleman, no less than the Count de St. Renne, has set his heart on you, and asked you from me in marriage."

"Father!" said Lucelle; but there she stopped short, and looked him in the face with mingled surprise and terror.

"What, my child! Are you not willing to be made a great lady?" said Jules, much astonished too.

"You said the Count did not do as much for you as he might have done in the Terror time."

"The Terror time is over, my child—by God's blessing never to come back."

"He is old and I am young, father."

"So much the better; the older a man gets he grows the wiser; and young men never make steady husbands. You won't be a foolish girl, Lucelle; you won't vex your father, and throw away your own good luck. Ask Ninette, and she will tell you out of her Bible—though for that matter you can read it yourself—that no child ever got a blessing who did not obey her parents. I am the only parent you have, Lucelle; and you are my only child. It is all for your good I am striving; it is you that I think

of day and night; and you won't disobey me, but marry the Count and get my blessing."

"I will never disobey you, father"—and Lucelle's eyes filled with tears—"I will never disobey you: but don't send me away from you and Ninette; let me stay with you. I don't want to marry—I am far too young."

"Nonsense, girl! But what can that be?" said Jules, as a rustling sound came through the thick underwood which now skirted their path. "I'll wager it's a stag caught by his horns. I have my hunting-knife about me—wait for me, Lucelle; we shall take venison home," and he dashed into the thicket.

Lucelle stood for a minute looking after him till his figure disappeared among the bushes and brambles; then she caught a gleam of fiery eyes, and out of the self-same thicket darted a large grey wolf. The forest girl knew that her only chance for life was to climb up a tree; she flew to the nearest and tried to scale its gnarled trunk, uttering wild cries for help; but the wolf was upon her, she felt it seize her flowing mantle, and her senses forsook her; but at the same instant a young soldier burst through the wood sword in hand, passed his weapon with the speed of lightning through the ravenous animal, and laid it dead at her feet.

"My daughter!" cried Jules, breaking from the thicket just in time to see the stranger supporting Lucelle in his arms and the great wolf stretched before them.

"I am not hurt, father!" were the girl's first feeble words as she opened her eyes and looked thanks that no words could speak to her deliverer.

"Thank God!" said Jules, and he could say no more; but he heard the young soldier repeat the words in a tone as low and earnest as his own. A minute more and they had all recovered themselves; Lucelle slipped away from the stranger's arm and

leant on her father's breast, and Jules poured out his thanks and blessings on the gallant man who had come so timely to her rescue.

"I deserve no thanks, monsieur," said the young soldier; "my sword was never so fortunate before," and he wiped the bloody steel on the grass and returned it to its scabbard. "Thank Heaven I was in time; and there was none to spare, you see," he continued, pointing to some shreds of Lucelle's mantle which still hung from the wolf's teeth. "But the night is cold; allow me the pleasure of assisting mademoiselle to her home."

"You will come home with us, my brave soldier; it is not two leagues off, and our waggon is coming up. We live at the Château Devigne, on the banks of La Brice; you will know it if you are not a stranger in the forest country; my name is Jules Dubois, and this is my only child whose life you have saved. Ask him to come home with us, Lucelle: a French soldier can never refuse a request from a petticoat;" and Jules laughed outright at his own jest, for joy had made the sober man boyish again.

Lucelle did ask in her low sweet voice.

The soldier said she did him too much honour, but he would be happy to go home with them, and his look said the same.

"I am a stranger in the forest country," he said, in answer to Jules, "but my father and mother were natives of it; they are both dead, and I have no relations in the land; but my regiment happens to be recruiting at Falaise, and I got leave of absence to see some old places that have a hold on my memory, and was marching on St. Renne by moonlight, when I was lucky enough to hear mademoiselle's call. My name is Romane le Norman."

"It is a good name," said Jules; "my father and mother knew people of it in Upper Normandy; perhaps they were not yours, but I am sure you have a right to your name, being a true Norman, as you have proved yourself this night, and a handsome one too, my lad, as any eye may see."

The soldier bowed and smiled faintly, but Jules' rustic compliment was not unmerited; even by the moonlight his fine athletic frame, and face of the best Norman type, were striking for their manly beauty, and the noble frankness of his look and manner marked him out as one to be esteemed and trusted above common men.

The waggon had come up by this time, and great was the astonishment of Jean and Claude to see the slain wolf and hear the terrible adventure. The two honest peasants first devoutly gave thanks to the Preserver of all for the escape of their young mistress—they had begun to call her so on account of Jules' increased gentility; then they praised the soldier to the skies, and said they knew he would do brave things against the enemies of France, and be made a captain at least. Lastly they skinned the wolf with their hunting-knives, to take home its hide for a trophy, and advised Jules to lose no time in getting forward, for there were wolves and boars abroad; they had heard them rustling in the woods all the way, and there was not a gun among the party. Jules lost no time accordingly. Lucelle got into the waggon; he and the soldier marched on before it; and, the worst part of the road being now passed, another hour brought them to Château Devigne.

Romane le Norman's gallant exploit was soon made known to those at home, and he got honour and praise from them all, especially from the old nurse, who thanked God first, and him secondly, for saving the life of the dear and only child, as the whole household called and thought Lucelle. Independently of that great service which made him doubly welcomed to the château, the soldier would have created no small interest in any house in St. Renne. The men of the rank and file have, at least in modern times, a

social status among the French people far above that allowed them in England. The more military character of the nation, and the conscription, which brings all classes of men into the army, have doubtless contributed to this state of things, and at the time of our story the soldiers of France were at once her strength and her pride. They had not only cleared the land of the invaders who had burst into it on all sides to crush the great Revolution, but carried their victorious arms far into the hostile territories, and spread their conquests from the Tiber to the Elbe. Romane le Norman had been a sharer in those great battles and famous victories with which all Europe was ringing: his uniform was that of the Norman Chasseurs, who had played such a brilliant part in the Italian campaign; and on his breast he wore two medals, the one inscribed "Lodi," and the other "Arcole." It was glorious for the forest family to hear him tell of those hard-won fields; even prudent Jules and pious Ninette listened with breathless interest. Many causes made military enthusiasm run high in France at the time, and, in the dazzled eyes of multitudes, it was never less blame-worthy, for the land seemed to be winning not only its own freedom, but that of Europe too, and the tyrannies of ages were falling before its armies.

Romane told them many a thrilling tale by their fireside that evening. The neighbours were duly informed of his exploit in the saving of Lucelle's life and his visit to the château, and they crowded in to congratulate the family and do honour to the brave soldier. It was old and homely times once more in Jules Dubois' dwelling. Under the influence of the time and the absence of the Count, he forgot his lately-assumed rank. The whole family assembled in the great warm kitchen. There the neighbours were received, and the talk went on in the yet long evenings, with the soldier seated in the place of honour by Jules' own side, and a cup of good cider or better wine from Domfront for all comers. The

neighbours made festivities in turn for the family and their guest; at every house in the village, and every farm around it, entertainments were given in their honour, and Romane le Norman became the hero of St. Renne. His graphic power of describing the scenes through which he had passed, his patriotic devotion to his country and the young chief who then led her hosts to victory and fame, would have been sufficient to make him the most popular man in all the forest, and there were the additional recommendations of untiring good nature, manly frankness, and that unassuming modesty which generally accompanies and always sets off real merit. At one thing about him all the St. Renne people were surprised, and some of them disappointed. The light heart and gay manner so commonly characteristic of the French soldier were wanting in Romane: his speech was generally calm and serious; when silent, his look was apt to be grave and sad, and his most lively hours were dashed as if by the memory of some great sorrow.

"He has met with some sad and strange dispensation, of which he cares not to speak," said Ninette, in her confidential talk with Jules concerning their guest. Like everything in the house, they had got back to their old familiar footing. "It is a pity that such a burden should have fallen on one so young, and seemingly so good and brave; but may be it was sent to teach and temper his youth, which indeed is a hot and headlong season with the best and wisest."

It was that opinion of the young soldier and his uncommon gravity that made Ninette some days after, as they gathered round the hearth in the falling twilight, with a fire on which the piled-up wood had not yet begun to blaze, and for once no neighbours present, say to him, "Monsieur le Norman, in all your travels and battles in Italy, did you ever meet or hear of a young man called Gaston Devigne?"

"I know him well," said Romane; "he belongs to my regiment. What of him, Madame Ninette?"

"He was the son of the Sieur who owned this château before Master Jules there bought it; I nursed him in his infancy, and sore grieved was I to hear that he had left his father, who is one of the emigrants and attached to the old cause, to take up the new opinions and serve under your young general."

"Many a man has done the same. Sons cannot always be of their fathers' mind: the old and the young have differed since the world was new." And Romane leant back in the shadowy corner where he was seated.

"Ah, but no young man can expect a blessing who goes against his father," cried Jules; "neither man nor woman, boy nor girl, can expect it, I say." He knew that Lucelle was seated in the opposite corner, and the opportunity was a good one for setting forth the virtue of obedience. "Monsieur le Norman, I suppose you soldiers set little store by old folks and their judgment; but I tell you that young Devigne will never come to good, in this world or the next, except he repents and goes back to his honourable father."

"His father is dead!" said Romane, in a tone so deep and hollow that it startled them all.

"Dead!" said Jules. "How know you that, young man?"

"Gaston Devigne had sure intelligence of it when we were before Mantua, six months ago. The Sieur sailed from the port of London in the 'Fleur de Lis,' bound for Quebec; the owners had changed her name from the 'Polly Ann,' because she was to carry out French emigrants to our old colony in Lower Canada, but," and Romane's voice sunk to a hoarse whisper, "the ship went to pieces in a storm on one of the Newfoundland sandbanks, and every soul on board perished."

There was a general uprising and rush to the other side of the

room, for Ninette dropped from her seat as if struck down, and for some minutes they thought her spirit was gone; but the nurse came back to consciousness and sorrow. None had ever seen her so moved before. "My master, my noble master!" she cried. "To die in his exile, and by the stormy sea! Oh that I had died before I heard such news!" The young soldier had slipped away in the confusion; and when the poor heart-stricken nurse retired to her own room, admitting no comforter but Lucelle, Jules followed him out in the clear cold night; but it was to ask questions and ascertain beyond a doubt that his information was true. The idea of owning the estate and making Lucelle heiress of it had overcome early friendship and grateful memory; and the news, that would have grieved him as sore as it did Ninette but one year before, called forth only keen inquiries, some commonplace expressions of regret, and a strong declaration that it was all the fault of young Gaston, and he would never come to good.

Romane stood leaning against one of the tall lime-trees that helped to fence the orchard. He answered Jules' questions calmly, but he had nothing more to tell. The shock his intelligence had given to Ninette evidently troubled him, and it required some persuasion to make him return within doors. He did return, however, at Jules' earnest request; and as the sound sense and Christian faith of the good nurse at length restored her composure, she rejoined the family circle. Jules felt half displeased at her grief, though he could not say so—the man was conscious that it reflected on himself. Ninette revolted at the little care he showed for the death of his early friend, and half guessed the cause; but Ninette was prudent, and, though she did not forget, she allowed the subject to rest. It was not mentioned to the neighbours; the Sieur had passed out of their recollection in the lapse of years, except when some old people, who remembered his early and better days,

would speak of him with kindly regret as one of the many lost in the storm of the Revolution.

Lucelle remembered him only as the great man of whom her childhood stood in awe. The news of his death did not grieve her, but the sorrow of her good nurse did. Having no knowledge of the secret compact, she could not understand how that news affected her father and told on his schemes, but, in the simplicity of her affection for him, thought it was well that the death of the man he had talked of and prayed for so often concerned him now so little. But Lucelle had a concern of her own of which she thought more, and spoke not at all. A new interest had arisen in her young life; a new world had opened before her, made up of dreams and fancies indeed, but not the less real to the heart and hope of youth. The brave and handsome young soldier who had saved her from the ravenous wolf, and become the familiar guest of her family, had impressed the heart and mind of Jules Dubois' heiress as the accomplished Count de St. Renne never could do, with all his worldly wiles and studied graces. Lucelle did not steal away to knit in the porch or sew in some of the upper rooms; when Romane sat talking with the family or relating his adventures, she was always there, an eager and delighted listener, wrapped up in the talk or tale till the young soldier's gaze would turn with unfeigned admiration to her beautiful face, lighted up with intelligence and enthusiasm, and then the rose on her cheek would take a deeper tinge, and her soft eyes droop to the ground. Romane le Norman had become the hero of St. Renne for the time; and he was more than all the heroes of the world to her—the greatest man she had seen or heard of—the best, the noblest. There is no glory like that which the young and loving heart bestows on its first conqueror; and, wise and good girl though she was, Lucelle felt proud of his admiration, and flattered by his attentions. They were not like those of the Count, prepared,

pointed, and intrusive, but manifestly the dictates of an honest heart and a modest but manly nature. On that account, perhaps, they escaped the notice of the nurse and the father. Ninette was prudent, and Jules was cautious; but the sorrow of the one and the schemes of the other, not to speak of the blunting power which years seem to exercise on the perceptions of most people in matters of the kind, prevented them from seeing how the case went between Romane and Lucelle.

The girl scarcely saw it herself, till, one day, when the young soldier's visit was near its end, he had told the family that his leave of absence would expire in the following week, and he must join his regiment, which was to form part of the secret expedition then being prepared in the southern ports of France, much wondered at, much speculated on, and ultimately known as the campaign of Egypt. There was in the large old-fashioned garden of the château a plot of ground enclosed by a low box hedge on all sides except the north, where it was sheltered by a very high and ancient one of laurel and holly, which divided the garden from the orchard, and almost hid the end of a narrow by-path which led through the fruit-trees and the corn-fields beyond, and made a short cut to the village. That plot was planted with many flowers not then common in Normandy, but natives of the south, for the spot was warm and sunny. In the centre was a small arbour of trellis-work covered with jasmine, and hard by it a fountain flowing from the beak of a marble swan into a basin bordered with moss and planted with water-lilies. Tradition said it had been made for one of the daughters of the Devigne family, who died young and much lamented, in a long-past generation; but ever since Jules came to the château the plot had been called his daughter's garden, and Lucelle was accustomed to dress and keep it with the help of Jean Closnet and Claude Lemette, the only gardeners in her father's establishment. Latterly Jules had not considered

gardening genteel enough employment for her, but, as his notions on that subject had somewhat relaxed of late, she took the opportunity of a sunny forenoon to hoe and trim the flowers, now waking from their winter sleep; and, Jean and Claude being both at work in the fields, the young soldier volunteered to help her.

"I am no gardener, mademoiselle," he said, "though I once had a spot of my own something like this: but it is long ago; the flowers have forgotten me, and I have forgotten how to deal with them, in learning sword-exercise and military discipline: but I will do what you direct with all my might and main."

"You are very good," said Lucelle. They were standing among the budding shrubs and rising flowers alone.

"I wish I were, for then perhaps you would think more of me, mademoiselle; I am but a poor soldier," and Romane looked her in the face with such an honest loving look—"I have nothing but my sword and my heart to lay at your feet; but I have won two medals, you see, and our general has promised me the first lieutenancy vacant in my regiment. I will distinguish myself in the expedition, mademoiselle; I will, if you only promise to think of me. Every French soldier carries a field-marshal's bâton in his knapsack, they say; and when I return at the head of a battalion, your father might consent if you would be my bride."

"My father wishes me to marry the Count de St. Renne, and I cannot disobey him," said the simple true-hearted girl, while her head drooped and her eyes filled with tears. She had never felt the full misery of the expected sacrifice till now.

"No, Lucelle," said Romane, taking her hand—the emotion of the moment made him familiar—"you cannot and you should not disobey your father; that is the sin Gaston Devigne has to repent of, and you know what is said and thought of him. But surely he will not press you to marry the Count, a man of fifty years, as I am told, and of no good repute for his doings in the Terror time?

Your father loves you too well to force you into such a marriage. Besides, you are very young; there is time enough; and I may come back a better match than the Count, Lucelle! My own Lucelle, will you promise to think of me?"

"I will always think of you and pray for you," she said, the large tears now streaming down her cheeks and dropping on the flowers; "but I cannot disobey my father. Oh, why did the Count ever come here?"

"You are not married to him yet, Lucelle; let us trust in Providence you never will be. Something may happen to set the old fellow aside: if he had either shame or grace, he couldn't think of forcing himself and his gray hairs on a young beauty like you. There are some men in my regiment who would make short work with him. But these are evil courses, Lucelle: I do not ask you to disobey your father—God forbid I should; but, when I am far away, sometimes think kindly of the poor young soldier who will live and die without love or marriage if he cannot win you for his bride."

Lucelle looked up, and was about to speak, when they were both startled by a step behind the high evergreen hedge. Romane caught up a hoe and set to work with it not very skilfully; Lucelle wiped her eyes in great haste and fell to pruning a myrtle; and in at the wicket gate, which led from the orchard path to the garden, walked Count de St. Renne.

CHAPTER IX.

UNEXPECTEDLY HOME FROM PARIS.

THE Count did not appear to see the pair of gardeners, for the arbour partially hid them from his view, but walked straight into the house by the back way, the familiar footing on which he stood with the family making such a mode of entrance by no means out of rule.

"He has come back from Paris sooner than my father expected," said Lucelle, looking very much frightened. "I wonder if he heard what you were saying, Romane."

"Not except he played the eaves-dropper, which I hope no Norman gentleman would do."

Here the young soldier was interrupted by the arrival of two village boys with a basket of roots, flowers of the forest, rare and sweet, which they had sought on sunny banks and in sheltered hollows, and dug up for Lucelle's garden.

Meantime the Count had stepped into the great kitchen, and found Jules, in his old peasant clothes, engaged in the unaristocratic employment of splitting up a log of wood for the fire. A school-boy caught in the act of playing truant could not have looked more abashed than the owner of the château did, such sway had his intended and noble son-in-law acquired over his simple mind. Renne took care to let him see that he was disagreeably surprised, but his words were courteous as usual. He had got his business regarding the legacy settled more easily than one could have imagined, and, of course, his first visit was paid to his dear friend Dubois; "but," the Count added, in a lower tone, "I have something of importance to tell you—let us go to the billiard-room."

He led the way, and Jules followed, looking more like the

caught school-boy than ever, for the gravity of Renne's face almost terrified him; but the Count knew how to improve the impression of the moment. He shut the door of the billiard-room with great caution, and then, confronting Jules, said, in his most solemn manner, "My excellent friend, have you gone out of your judgment?"

"Not as far as I know," stammered Jules.

"I think you must, my friend, when you permit a soldier to make love to your daughter."

"To my daughter?" and Jules rushed to the door.

"Stop, stop, my friend, we must have no scenes here: you are not fully acquainted with the customs of good society," said his wily manager. "Tell me, how did the young man whom I saw with Lucelle in the garden get into your house?"

"Ah! yes; I should have told you that before;" and Jules, having now time to think coolly, at once related the circumstances which brought the young soldier into his family, winding up with his belief that Romane le Norman was an honest, trustworthy young man, whom no father might be afraid to leave with his child, and his humble opinion that the Count must have made a mistake in the matter of the love-making.

"I made no mistake at all, my dear Dubois; I never do such a thing," said Renne. "The soldier was at the tricks of his class. I know Lucelle is a good girl, and above suspicion, or I should not have thought of making her my countess; but are you aware of the risk you run in admitting one of those men—soldiers of the Republic, as they call themselves—into the bosom of your family—men given up to the new opinions of liberty and license, without law, without religion, without regard for the authority of parents and the honour of families? As to the honesty and trustworthiness, I can understand how all that is put on. He saved your daughter's life, no doubt being a good swordsman—how I regret the oppor-

tunity was not mine!—but then the thanks and blessings of a father's heart were sufficient reward for him; you had no occasion to invite him home."

"It was a cold night, and he was a stranger in the forest," said poor Jules.

"Cold nights are nothing to soldiers, and they are strangers nowhere. You should not have endangered your daughter's honour, or, at least, her peace of mind. Perhaps the villain has poisoned that already; he appeared to be proposing an elopement as I stood behind the hedge. It was Providence directed me to come through the orchard, you see; but stay, my good Jules," and the Count caught the arm of his listener as the latter made another rush to the door. "This business must be managed prudently. Your hand is in the lion's mouth, I may say; it is unwise to provoke one of those fellows, especially for you and me, who belong to the old legitimist party," said the former *employé* of Marat; "but take an early opportunity to let him know that your daughter is promised, contracted you might say, to a distinguished nobleman; and just hint that you have noticed his attentions to the girl, and consider his presence in your house no longer advisable. You could appeal to his honour—you know these fellows pretend to have such a thing—to relieve a father's anxiety, and spare the peace of an innocent heart; but, Jules, remember it will never do to mention me in the affair—there is nothing sets on those young fire-eaters like the notion of a jealous rival, and I would not for the world have my noble name, the best and oldest in the forest country, mixed up with that of a Republican soldier."

Leon de St. Renne had it all his own way at this time with Jules Dubois, from whom all his endeavours with prison walls and threats of the guillotine had once failed to wring the sale of the Devigne lands. Jules promised to do as he was told; and, after a little more frightening and schooling, the Count took his leave,

saying, as he went down stairs, loud enough for most of the household to hear, "Then, my dear Dubois, you will buy those carriage horses for me at the next fair of Alençon."

Never was a man more perplexed how to begin the task set before him than Renne's intended *beau-père*, as the French call father-in-law. With all the Count's assertions, he could not believe in the villainy of Romane le Norman, and the debt of gratitude he owed him for saving his daughter's life balanced every consideration of prudence or precaution. Those considerations, however, pressed heavily on Jules' mind. No father could have greater confidence in the good sense and good inclinations of his child; but Lucelle had shown some unwillingness to marry the Count and his fifty years. The soldier was brave, young, and handsome, the very thing to catch a young girl's heart; he had seen the world in its most stirring scenes, and was clever enough to charm everybody with his adventures, and why might he not also charm a serious, sensible girl like Lucelle?

The young man must be got rid of; but how was it to be done? Jules thought over that question all the rest of the day; and, when the evening came, his practical and peasant mind could hit upon but one expedient. Lucelle had, in the preceding winter, knitted, as a birthday present for her father, a long purse of crimson silk, seamed with silver thread, and finished with gay tassels. Jules was extremely proud of that specimen of his daughter's industrial abilities and regard for himself; he had made a grand exhibition of it to all the neighbours, and a special display to Count de St. Renne. By the last light of the day Jules counted over and carefully placed in the two divisions of that purse a hundred livres, out of the hoard from which the poor lost Sieur had been supplied with money for his fatal voyage; and, putting it thus filled in his coat pocket, he waited till the family were retiring for the night, and then whispered to the young soldier,

"Stay with me a little, and let us have a talk at the fireside by ourselves."

Romano assented; and, when all the rest were gone, Jules heaped new wood on the hearth, gave three distinct "Hems," and said, "You have done me a great service, Monsieur le Norman."

"No service at all; it was the rarest piece of good fortune I ever met with, or ever will meet," said Romano.

"Ah! but it was a great service, and I want to reward you;" and Jules' hand went into his pocket.

"Do you?" said the young soldier, and his handsome face lighted up with the boundless hope of youth; "then, Monsieur Dubois, grant me the wish of my heart—permission to love your matchless daughter, and win a position that may be worthy of her to share."

"No, young man," said Jules, drawing himself up with all the pride of his new-found greatness; "my only child, the heiress of the lands and château of Devigne, must not think of marrying a mere soldier. Of course it is impossible that she could think of the like, being already contracted in a manner to the noble Count de St. Renne: but I do want to reward the great service. I know you are not rich, and I hope this will be of use to you. Lucelle knitted it for myself only last winter." And he held out the crimson purse.

A dark flush of pride and anger rose to the young soldier's brow, but he spoke calmly. "Monsieur Dubois, you owe me nothing; and if you think you do, your own sense must tell you that such things are not to be paid for with the money which hires a horse, or bribes a scrivener. I look for no reward, and I deserve none; but I love your daughter with all my heart; and though I am now but a poor soldier, I may be a general of division yet. Joubert and Berthier were but soldiers once. At any rate, I am promised a lieutenancy; and, monsieur, for the sake of your own

youth and the woman you loved then—for your duty as a father, and the love you bear your child—consider, is it right or wise to marry her, so young, so beautiful, so good, to a man above your own age, known to be selfish, and hard-hearted, and said to have served the worst of the Terrorists?"

"Young man," said Jules, getting angry, "have you come into an honest house to fill a girl's head with fine notions about yourself being made a general, when you may be shot in the first trench you are stationed in, and coax and wheedle her to disobey her father, and bring his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, as your comrade Gaston Devigne did to my old friend the Sieur?"

"Say no more, Monsieur Dubois!" said Romano, rising, but he was deadly pale; "I am sorry I ever entered your house, but to-morrow I will leave it, and never see or speak to Lucelle more. Good night." And he hurried to his room.

Jules sat down by the fire; he could not have wished the case to take a more conclusive turn; but an uncomfortable feeling that he had been too harsh and hasty with the young soldier, who had done such a service to him and his, crept over him as his anger subsided. But Jules was a slow, cool-blooded man; and saying to himself, "We shall both be in a better temper in the morning, and have a friendly parting," he quietly retired to rest.

When the family met next day, there was no appearance of the soldier. Jules went to his room by way of making inquiry and showing kindness; but no soldier was there. The doors of the château were but lightly secured now that peaceable times had come again to the forest; and Jean Closnet, who had been early astir looking after young lambs, which he said were in his head all night, reported that he had seen a man, whom he believed to be Romano le Norman, walking rapidly away through the fields nearly an hour before sunrise. The soldier was gone, to the astonishment of everybody except Jules, and it was somewhat to

his chagrin. The honest man felt heartily ashamed of his own conduct over night; but then it had served a prudent purpose, and would meet the Count's approbation; moreover, nobody knew it but Romane and himself, and Jules could keep his own secret. When Ninette remarked that it was strange such a brave and courteous youth should have stolen away like a fox without a word of leave-taking, he said soldiers had always strange ways, and were not to be depended on; perhaps the young man had been too long with a sober family, and was in haste to get back to his wild comrades and doings. He said the same to all the neighbours; but everybody wondered at Romane's abrupt departure, and nobody wondered more than Lucelle, though she was the only one in St. Renne who did not express surprise. She found a bunch of wild flowers and forget-me-nots on the outside sill of her window, and that was all the farewell or sign of remembrance he had made after his vows and professions in the garden. "He could not have spoken truly, or he would not have left me in that careless manner," thought poor Lucelle. She had heard in village tale and song of the false ways and flattering tongues of young and handsome soldiers—how they could sigh and vow to every girl they met, and then march away and forget them at the sight of a new face. It was hard to think that Romane was one of those false-hearted men; yet why did he go with so little respect to her and to her family? And then the good girl feared that her own behaviour had been somewhat foolish, and that she should not have listened to Romane at all.

Lucelle had no confidante in her perplexity: more serious and thoughtful than the rest of the village girls, she had found no familiar friend among them; and, for all Ninette's wisdom and goodness, the difference of their years was too great to admit of free communion on such a subject. Few of the old, however wise or worthy, retain a recollection of their own youth vivid and real

enough to make them fully sympathise with and understand the young. The practical lessons of after life have put the spring-time dreams and visions out of sight and out of mind with them, and thus it is that the rising and the passing generation rarely comprehend each other and often disagree. On any other topic Lucelle could have spoken freely to the good nurse, and would have been sure of her helpful judgment and advice; but of Romane, and her own thoughts of him, the young girl could not speak to the grey-haired woman. What would Ninette say but that she should have remembered her father's purpose to marry her to Count de St. Renne? The disposal of young people in marriage has always been more completely a matter of parental arrangement in France than in England, and the wisest and best minds are apt to be bounded by national custom. Lucelle could not think the same way, though she tried to do so, believing it was right; yet the more she thought of Romane's departure, the more it seemed clear to her that Count St. Renne had something to do with it, and the young soldier was not altogether to blame.

The Count was duly informed of all that had taken place by Jules in their next privy council in the billiard-room; and while the frank forest man was expressing his regret for giving way to such angry words at his own fireside, he interrupted him with—"Jules, you acted like a man and a father, and I am glad that the fellow saw the necessity of quitting your house before he did any more mischief. Had he remained I should certainly have called him to account, notwithstanding the unsuitableness of reckoning with such a person, to a man of my rank; but, Jules, are you quite sure he will not come back to skulk about your house and garden, and wile away your daughter? Ah! my friend, my regard for you and yours makes me fear the very worst, and there is but one sure and certain way to foil the designing wretch; settle your estate upon Lucelle, and let us be contracted immediately."

"Settle my estate!" said Jules, for the words had startled his conscience. He had talked of the Devigne lands and château as his own, and acquiesced in the Sieur's untimely fate as the removal of the chief obstacle to Lucelle's inheriting them; but he was not prepared to over-step and ignore the right of Devigne's son, and put the property beyond his own power to restore.

"Why not?" said the Count. "Lucelle is your only and undoubted heiress; I suppose you don't mean to marry again at your age?" Renne was the elder of the two by a couple of years. "Besides, my dear Dubois, you should consider that you bought the place very cheap, and under peculiar circumstances. You tell me the old man is dead, that is well—I mean it is the will of Providence—but his son, a graceless spendthrift, I dare say, is in the army, and the soldiers are likely to have their own way under this plebeian government." Renne spoke with great contempt of the powers that would not employ him. "Who knows what claim might be set up, or what troublesome law-suits you might get into? Be advised, my friend, place both your estate and your daughter under the protection of a man of acknowledged position and influence, as I am, and both shall be equally safe."

The Count's lecture went on to a considerable length, but it was all to the same purpose. Jules had no answering arguments, for he would not state the true one, having an inward certainty that it would not avail with the Count, and being also ashamed of the light in which it would show himself; but, fortunately recollecting that his presence was required in the madder-field, he staved off the subject by saying he would think of it. Count de St. Renne took care he should think of and not forget it. His visits to the château became more frequent than ever, and under their influence all the grandeur and gentility from which the family had been allowed to fall away in Romane's time were restored with double rigour. Lucelle had to wear her best clothes

and sit in the best rooms once more; the decrees were renewed against work unbefitting a lady; what was worse, the poor girl had now to keep the Count in company, and as that gentleman made immense exertions to fascinate her youthful imagination, she had no easy task. Her father's will was law, and she did her best to conform to it, from a sincere affection and a pious sense of duty; but the restraints of ladyship as Jules understood it, the prospect of marrying Renne, whom she feared more and did not dislike less than formerly, and the sad and weary thoughts of Romane le Norman, and his careless going away, began to tell upon the health and spirits of the beautiful forest girl.

Ninette was the first to perceive the change: she had learned to love Lucelle as her own daughter, and now that the Sieur was gone, and her foster-son had turned out so graceless, that love was the only tie she had to this world. Her marriage to the Count was an arrangement which Ninette dreaded to think of, and would have reasoned against with Jules; but the man had gone beyond her reasoning and influence in his new thirst for rank and grandeur. The old familiar converse and counsel between them was over; Jules was seldom present at the reading of her Huguenot Bible or her evening prayer now; he was occupied with the Count, with his market profits, or the most genteel of his neighbours, and, knowing well that the nurse would neither approve nor assist, he told her nothing of his plans. But Ninette guessed them all, particularly after observing the manner in which he took the news of the Sieur's death. Her heart and strength were gradually failing under the burden of years, and that intelligence had been a heavy blow; she felt herself no longer fit to strive with the devices of a wicked man, and the folly of a simple one; but the faith of her youth was the help and comfort of her age. "I have placed my care concerning this family, with whom I have lived so long and hope to die, in the hand of my Lord," she said, "and doubtless

He is able to keep them from falling: why should I be troubled with fears of that which may never happen?" Still, when Ninette saw the rose on Lucelle's young cheek fading day by day, in the midst of the summer, and when she noticed the girl's languid step and weary look, she was troubled with fears indeed.

One sweet summer evening Lucelle had stolen away from the Count and her father, to her own little garden; the nightingales had begun their songs in the deepest shades of the orchard; the rosy light yet lingered on sky and summit bright, but fading as the dreams of young romance, and she stood in the very spot where last she had stood with Romane le Norman. The wild flowers and forget-me-nots he had laid on her window-sill were withered long ago, but Lucelle had not forgotten; she stood there among the first of the roses, lost in pensive thought, till a kindly hand was laid on her fair drooping head, and a kindly voice said in her ear, "What is the matter, Lucelle?"

"Oh! nothing, nothing at all, Ninette," said the girl hastily, turning to the good nurse, who had followed her unperceived. "I was looking at the flowers; how well they grow here."

"The flowers grow well and look well, but you do not, Lucelle, my own child. Tell me what is the matter—what troubles you," and Ninette threw her arms round the girl.

For a minute they were both silent, and then Lucelle said, in a whisper, "My father will have me to marry the Count, and Romane le Norman said he loved me."

There was the secret and burden of her young life told all at once, and followed by a gush of tears, as Lucelle leant her head upon that aged but gentle breast, and wept long and sore.

"Alas! my child," said Ninette, "youth has its trials as well as age, for the one has loves and the other has losses."

That was spoken out of the memory of her own girlish days, far off and faintly recollected as they were; but the prudent and pious

woman had better comfort and better counsel to give. First, she brought to bear upon Lucelle the arguments always employed by the old generation against the rising one, and always to some extent true—that children were bound to obey their parents; that her father knew what was for her good better than she did herself; that wise girls never minded what young men said, for vows and professions were easily made, and as easily forgotten. But the girl's tears went to Ninette's heart, and she said at last, "Stay, Lucelle; do you forget that there is a Providence that rules over all things, and whose designs we know not? This marriage, which you dread so much, may never take place: your father may change his mind; time may bring him cause to do so, and, as you are very young, I will try to persuade him to wait for another year. By that time it may be that nothing in all the world would please my girl so well as the prospect of being a countess."

"I am sure it never will please me," said poor Lucelle, wiping her eyes. "You have often said that grand titles and châteaux did not make people happier or better."

"I say so still," said Ninette. "The most coveted of worldly things are but poor foundations to build on, for they leave us or we leave them. There is but one sure ground for our hopes, one good that is worth our seeking, and that is the grace and love of our Father in heaven. Trust in Him, Lucelle, and follow His commandments in the love of His Son, and He will make the crooked way straight, and the rough place smooth before you."

Her unshaken trust in the Disposer of all events not only gave strength and courage to Ninette's own mind, but enabled her in some degree to impart them to the minds of others. Lucelle went to sleep that night less troubled in spirit than she had felt for many a day, but the good nurse also saw the duty that lay before herself. She waited quietly till the Count was gone, till the rest

of the family had retired, and Jules sat in the porch taking a last smoke of his pipe in the warm summer night.

"Is it you, Ninette?" he said, somewhat surprised, as she glided in and took a seat close by him, in the friendly fashion of their by-gone and better days.

"Yes, Jules; I could not go to sleep this night without speaking to you in private; you won't take it amiss from me; I have been long with you, and did my best for your service when things were not so prosperous as they are now. That was only my duty; but, Jules, I am an old woman, and must soon go the way of all flesh; I have laid my younger brother, the last of all my kindred, in the churchyard yonder; I have heard of my noble master perishing in the stormy sea, and the boy I nursed has forgotten my grey hairs, as he forgot his father's. Jules, I have nobody in this world but yourself and Lucelle, and you won't take it amiss if I speak to you on her account," said Ninette, in her gentle, serious way.

"Certainly not; why should I take anything amiss from you, Ninette? You never said or did wrong to mortal; you are the best friend I have in the world, and always were. But what about Lucelle?" said Jules, eagerly.

"She is troubled, Jules—troubled and vexed more than a young heart should be. We that are accustomed to the burdens and experiences of life should remember that the young sapling is more easily bowed and injured than the tough old tree. You wish to marry her to the Count de St. Renne; there I think you are wrong: but we will not speak of that, since you have set your mind upon it; our Lord direct you to what is right; but the girl dislikes the man, and dreads the marriage, and, were it a seven times better one, she is too young to take such a bond upon her and enter into the cares and duties of the world. Wait for one year, Jules; give her time to know her own mind, or get reconciled to the match you have chosen for her."

"Stop, Ninette," cried Jules; "it is all very well to talk about waiting a year; but the Count won't wait, I can tell you; he insists on having the business done without delay."

"If he knew the Devigne land and château were not yours to leave Lucelle, he would not be in such haste, Jules."

"And why are they not mine? and why should I not leave them to my daughter, if she marry according to my wish, Ninette? The Sieur is gone, and I have the deed of purchase regularly signed and sealed."

"But the Sieur's son is living, Jules."

"May be he is, which one can't be very sure of, when a soldier is in question, just now; but what of that? Should I let the property go to a graceless prodigal who turned against the good old cause and broke his father's heart? I know the Sieur would never allow such a thing if he could hear of it; and what would it be but defrauding my own daughter, whom I am bound to provide for and set forward in the world as far as I can? Ah, Ninette, if you would talk to the girl and make her understand what I am doing for her. It is all on her account that I have worked and saved, thinking to have a dowry laid by for her when the Sieur came back; and now, when there is no chance of that, I am doing my best with what fortune leaves in my way to make her a great lady, may be to be ashamed of me and my peasant doings hereafter; but I don't care if it happens so, for never father loved a daughter better than I love my Lucelle."

"Ay, Jules, and the poverty of human love might be learned from your manner of showing it, for in your zeal to make her a great lady you are blighting her youth and breaking her heart. Listen to me: the girl is not what she used to be; she goes about sad and silent; she grows thin and pale, and there are times when her look reminds me of her mother's, when she first fell sick."

Ninette made that remark in all sincerity and almost by acci-

dent, but no argument within the range of her wisdom or her piety could have told on Jules with such irresistible power.

The wife of his youth, so early taken from him, had never lost her place in his memory or his dreams till Lucelle grew up to fill it: he loved the girl for her mother's sake and for her own; his pride, his hope, his heart was set upon her, and for her alone he was ready to break the sacred covenant between him and his exiled friend, and keep the estate which of right belonged to Dorigne's son. But a terrible fear had arisen like a threat of judgment. What if the flower of his life should fade and die, as her mother had done? what if her dread of the Count were really telling on his daughter's health? Ninette was a keen observer, and she never magnified matters.

That terror overcame all the pleas he had got up for himself to meet the Count's wishes, his fear of the young soldier, which he was ashamed to mention on account of their last interview, and his haste to see Lucelle a countess. He dropped his pipe, picked it up in fragments from the stones, and said, as calmly as he could, "Perhaps you are right; we had better wait for another year. In fact, you may say to Lucelle that I have made up my mind to do so."

"It is a wise resolution, and one which you will never repent," said Ninette; and she added mentally, "Our Lord be praised, and grant that some way of escape may be found for the child and for you before the year is passed."

CHAPTER X.

STRANGE REPORTS ABOUT THE CASTLE.

COUNT DE ST. RENNE took occasion to press his suit the very next day, and great was his astonishment when Jules informed him that, on account of his daughter's extreme youth, he had made up his mind to postpone the marriage for another year. The Count was angry, and disappointed too; but he was far too clever a manœuvrer to show it.

"Another year, my dear Dubois! Do you mean to drive me to despair? Do you take no account of the impatience of a lover!" and he made a gesture symbolical of tearing his hair.

"Well, you see," said Jules, not so much deceived as flattered by the ardent display, "my girl is but young yet. I don't like to part with her, and she does not like to leave her home and me."

"Perhaps she expects the young soldier to come back;" and Renne looked more spiteful than he intended

"No, Count, I am sure she does not. I can trust my daughter," said Jules, proudly, and that pride was true and honest. It prevented Renne from saying what such a man would have said on the subject; he saw that Jules had made up his mind, and he knew from past experience the forest peasant could keep a resolution when once he had come to it. An outbreak of scorn or anger at that moment might have put an end to the acquaintance and intended alliance; but Renne was determined they should not end so. He merely said, "You are a lucky man, Dubois, to have such a girl," made some attempts—knowing them to be ineffectual all the while—to persuade Jules against the year of delay, then beat about the bush to see if there was a hidden scheme or lurking rival; and at length, being satisfied that there was neither to fear, re-

signed himself to what he called his unhappy fate, inwardly resolving to keep the family well in hand, and let neither bride nor estate slip through his fingers.

The Count kept that resolution by visiting as frequently and paying as much attention as ever to Jules, his daughter, and his entire household. Excepting their head, none of the family were quite pleased with the grand seigneur. His coming had broken up their old homely ways and primitive habits; yet all but Ninette were proud of the prospect of Lucelle becoming a countess, and by her father's wish, as well as their own, took care to circulate in the neighbourhood that the marriage was postponed for a year, on account of the girl's youth, but should certainly take place, and be celebrated with a splendour equal to that of the most memorable wedding in the ancient house of Devigne. While the village gossips were yet engaged with that intelligence, a new theme presented itself in the unusual doings of the bridegroom elect. A sudden influx of wealth seemed to have come to the hitherto poor representative of the St. Rennes. Handsome furniture and rich hangings were brought to his ancient castle, it was said from Paris; repairers and decorators from Rouen were set to work upon walls, windows, and floors, and a large retinue of servants, wearing the family livery, which had not been seen since Renne became Citizen, full ten years before, all at once appeared, and with them a chariot of the newest fashion and the gayest equipments, drawn by splendid Norman horses and generally preceded by outriders. Jules had the earliest explanation of these wonders. The Count had gone to Paris just before the coming of Romaine le Norman, to look after a legacy which his lawyer had discovered for him in the will of a long deceased relative; and when he returned, in time to interrupt the converse between the young soldier and Lucelle, he had informed Jules that his expedition had been highly satisfactory.

"The money has come into your hands, I suppose, Count?" the

intended father-in-law ventured to say, on the first surprising display of Renne's riches.

"Of course it has; the gentlemen of the law could keep it from me no longer, though they tried it hard. The upstart creatures of this plebeian government of ours always do what they can against the scions of ancient nobility; but I have got my legacy," said the Count, "and I mean to enjoy it; but, my dear Dubois, my chief delight in it is, that it will enable me to show my sincere affection for your inestimable daughter, by presenting her with a home and an equipage suitable to the best born countess whose family arms were ever quartered with those of my line."

Gold had always an alluring glitter for Jules Dubois, and, like most men, he knew its value better the older he grew. Renne's accession to wealth was an unexpected glory; it would raise his Lucelle still higher in the eyes of the forest people, and make it manifest that the noble Count courted her only for herself, and not for the estate of which she was reckoned the heiress.

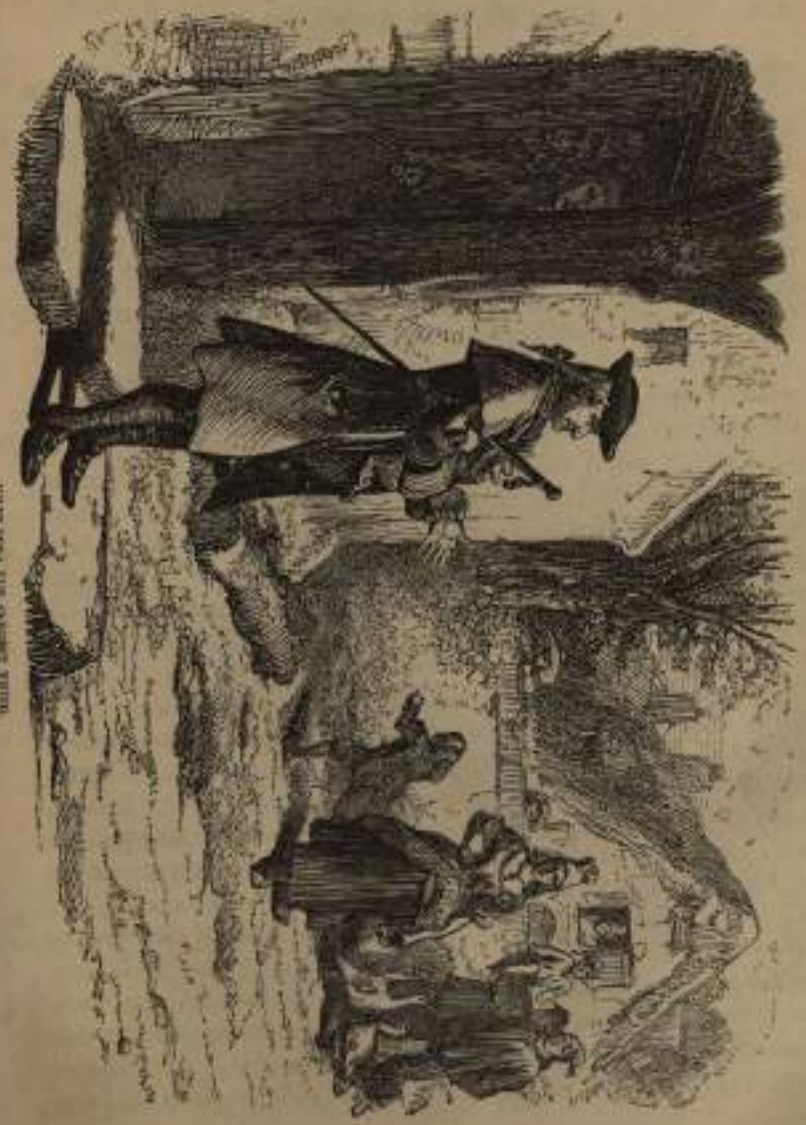
Jules had never heard the amount of the legacy, and he could not venture a direct question on the subject—it would appear so mercenary; but the Count had given him to understand it was a million of livres at least, and talked confidentially of reclaiming the wide wastes of his forest land, and rebuilding his ancestral castle in a more elegant and commodious style.

"With all that wealth, he will not insist on my settling the estate upon Lucelle," thought Jules, and the thought was a relief to his conscience; for the right of young Gaston Devigne troubled the man in possession, and sometimes he caught himself hoping that the wayward boy was laid somewhere under the Italian olives.

The change in the Count's fortunes had certainly made no change in his attachment to the Dubois family; his visits were indeed curtailed, particularly in the evenings, which he accounted for by the large retinue he had now to govern at home; and Jules

thought the reason a very prudent one. But he brought Lucelle many presents from the towns to which he was always going in search of workmen or furnishings for his castle—expensive trifles which the simple girl did not know the value of, and scarcely cared for; and he often insisted on taking her and her father out for a drive in his new chariot. The quiet exultation of Jules on such occasions was something to see and to remember; but they were trying times with him too; he had to sit with his best clothes and best behaviour on, watching Lucelle with a lynx eye, lest the modest, graceful peasant girl should say or do anything beneath her future rank.

As the months wore away, however, whispers which troubled him greatly began to circulate among the forest people regarding the Count. None of them liked the looks of his servants; they had all hard sinister faces; they could use strange oaths, and language not current in respectable houses; and one or two observing peasants had seen some of them behave in a very cavalier manner to their noble master. There were strange reports about his castle also; it stood farther from the village than the Château Devigne, in a more solitary situation, and though of great extent, with wings and towers, only the central keep was habitable; but belated travellers, and shepherds in search of stray lambs before the break of day, had seen lights, sometimes stationary and sometimes moving, in its long-forsaken chambers, and men with masked faces and heavy knapsacks on their backs issuing from the long-closed gates in its rear. Jules and his family were the last to hear these rumours; but Jean Closnet, in his walks and talks about the neighbourhood, got a knowledge of them, and the honest fellow thought it his duty to communicate what he had heard to his master. Jules at first said they must be all nonsense, and with accustomed caution warned Jean to let the women of his house hear nothing about them. But the women heard and talked about them



too, very soon after, and Jules himself got what seemed to him an evidence that some of the reports were true.

The Count had frequently pressed him to come over the dell, and see how comfortable he had made the keep of his old castle. "It wants but one thing to make it a happy home, till I build a better one," he said, "and that is the light of a fair young face; but, my dear Dubois, I positively insist on your staying to dine with me;" and Jules, after what he considered a proper amount of pressing and hesitation, agreed to see the castle and stay to dinner on the following Wednesday. That Wednesday was a great day with Dubois; he studied manners all the preceding evening, with the help of Ninette, who, having served a noble family, was expected to understand etiquette. Lucelle plaited his ruffles and tied his hair in a queue, as the Sieur used to wear it, which Jules thought must be the correct thing for a gentleman; Jean Closnet polished his silver shoe-buckles till they looked as good as new; and the whole village turned out to see him go to the castle. The Count received him, as he said, like a lord, and showed him over the improved part of his mansion. An eye more accustomed to the elegances of life would have perceived that the Parisian additions consorted ill with the massive and antiquated furniture of the Count's ancestors, and that decay and dilapidation had been covered and concealed rather than repaired; but to Jules all was equally grand, and the dinner-table, spread with china, crystal, and plate, was the most magnificent exhibition he had ever seen.

The dinner was over and the dessert served; the Count and he sat opposite to each other. Renne had been unremitting in his attentions, and particularly pressing with his wine; he had also drawn the conversation to the approaching marriage and the settlement of the estate, when the Count discovered that the wine was running low. "My dear Dubois," he said, "you must really taste my old sillery: the butler will bring us a few bottles in a

moment;" and Renne rang the bell. It was answered by a man in his livery, who did not appear to walk perfectly straight; he came close up behind Jules' chair, and his face, plainly reflected in the opposite mirror, was one which Jules remembered but too well, for it was that of Citizen Brutus, the gaoler of the Abbey. Never had the forest man's cool blood and quiet ways stood him in better stead than at that minute; he neither exclaimed nor started from his chair, and Renne was too much occupied with his own vexation to see that his servant had been recognised. In the same mirror Jules saw him make an angry sign to Lenoir to leave the room, and the latter reply with a gesture of coarse contempt, as he staggered out, slamming the door behind him.

"That fellow has been trying the sillery himself, I suspect; did you see him?" said Renne.

"Was he drunk?" said Jules, avoiding the question as skilfully as he could; but the Count had already added, "Excuse me for a moment," and followed his servant out of the room. Jules heard a sound of altercation somewhere in the castle; one seemed a suppressed, and one a high-pitched voice, and the latter belonged to Citizen Brutus Lenoir. In a few minutes the sounds ceased, and the Count returned, all smiles and apologies for being obliged to look after his unruly servant.

"These fellows forget themselves at times, because I am not strict enough with them—one of the faults of a bachelor's life, my dear Dubois; but with your help it will soon be amended;" and he took his seat with an easy, friendly air, while another servant came in with an ample supply of wine. The Count insisted on replenishing the glasses, and the sillery was excellent; but that sight had made Jules chary of drinking, and anxious to get home; yet his caution did not forsake him: he praised the wine above all he had ever tasted, but could not be induced to take more than the first glass, assuring Renne that it was far too good to agree with him,

who had been accustomed to light wines and cider; and he pleaded the early hours of his family for cutting the evening short. The Count, with all his ease and smiles, had evidently reasons of his own for allowing him to go without much pressing, and Jules left the castle with a quiet manner and a rather confused mind. The sight of Lenoir in such an unexpected position brought back all the impressions of former times regarding Renne, before the Count's flatteries and his own ambition had glossed and gilded over the man's character and doings to him. The gaoler had doubtless lost his office with the fall of the Terrorists; but what brought him to the castle and clothed him in Renne's livery? and if actually a servant, why did he stand in so little fear of his master? All the reports Jean Closnet had brought in, all the queer appearances his neighbours had hinted at, and all Ninette's wise and honest warnings against the Count occurred to Jules, as he pondered over the subject on his homeward way.

But Jules was not wise enough to make known his discovery to the good nurse; he still clung to his high-flown scheme of securing rank and title for Lucelle. Would not the circumstance he had to relate furnish Ninette with still stronger arguments against the match? It had greatly strengthened the doubts and fears which haunted him at intervals ever since that business was broached; and now the little wisdom he had left warned him that there were unknown evils and dangers before his child if she became the bride of Count de St. Renne. But unuttered impressions are apt to dissolve and fade before long-cherished plans and inclinations. By thinking over the matter, Jules found means to gloss it over also. Perhaps Renne employed the man, when out of place and out of pocket, in mere charity; and his incorrigible habits might have been the only cause of the Count's perturbation. He thought of inquiring of Renne; but the relation in which they stood, and the unacknowledged power which the Count had gained

over him, made it impossible for Jules to refer to his own days of imprisonment in the Abbey. So Renne visited, and flattered, and brought presents, took Jules and his daughter out for drives, and directed the entire family; and the stipulated year, which had been far spent at the time of the disturbed dinner, drew rapidly to its close.

All the village were in expectation of the grand wedding; though the elder and wiser shook their heads, and wished that Jules Dubois had found some other match for his good and handsome daughter. But Jules had got so much above his neighbours of late, that most of them thought only of the show and the festival. Jules' daughter was not in expectation of the wedding; but she had grown partially reconciled to the prospect. No tidings had come from Romano le Norman; it was evident that what Ninette said of him was true—the young soldier could easily pledge himself and easily forget: it was not a wise girl's part to think of a man who did not think of her. It was her father's wish that she should marry the Count, and he had shown every sign of partiality and affection for her: it was clearly her duty to think of no one else; and Lucelle always closed that review of her position and obligations with a sigh.

Ninette sighed over the prospect too; but it was for Lucelle's sake and for her father's. The way of escape which she had prayed for did not seem to be found for them; yet the nurse hoped against hope as the year approached its end. That year had wrought a remarkable change in the state of their common country: the Directory had been swept away like a house built on sand; people talked only of the First Consul and the Senate; the young general whom France delighted to honour had become her political chief; and under his vigorous government, party strifes and party terrors died out. There were hopes of peace at home and abroad: time did not fulfil the promise; but within its own borders the

nation became safe and united once more—French soldiers were coming home from Egypt, French emigrants were crowding back from every coast of Europe; and there was talk of the old estates reverting to old families again. "My noble master cannot return to his own; but I have hope that he has reached a better inheritance," thought Ninette; "and who knows but his son may turn from his own wild ways, and think of his father's house and lands, and that some of the old friends of the Devigne family may come back with good will and good purses enough to help in buying them again from Jules Dubois?"

The good nurse's hope was Count de St. Renne's fear: soldiers and emigrants were coming home; affairs were getting settled—it was not safe to let his business hang any longer in the balance, lest it might be too well weighed. Jules found him waiting for himself in their council chamber—the billiard-room—one morning, with an uncommon serious look.

"My dear Dubois," said he, "I have come to tell you that I can bear the suspense no longer: it is undermining my health—I may say, my reason. The death-blow given at once to my fondest wishes would be preferable; the year of my probation has all but expired: I call upon you as a friend, as a man of honour, to let the contract between your incomparable daughter and me be drawn and signed without delay."

"Well, I have no objections," said the much flattered Jules.

"That is worthy of yourself, my dear friend," said Renne; "and as I believe you have no man of business, I have arranged with a notary, a very honest fellow, whom I happen to know in Alençon, to come here; shall we say the day after to-morrow?"

"Isn't it very soon?" said Jules; "hardly time enough to prepare Lucelle."

"Lucelle is always prepared to do her duty, I know that, and so do you, my friend; besides, the sooner the better: and I may as

well mention that I have arranged with the notary regarding the settlement of the estate on your daughter: it shall be all her own, as sure as law can make it; I want no dowry but that which nature has given her;" and Renne endeavoured to look magnanimous.

"Oh, I am not just ready for that; Lucelle will have it at my death, of course; but—but, I can't put the property quite out of my own hand; I am not so old a man, and——" Jules' wits went off in search of another reason; for this time the Count had taken him by surprise.

"You are not putting it out of your hand at all, my friend; you are rather making it more secure to yourself and your daughter. I insist upon the settlement, not only on that account, but because of a sacred duty which I owe to my noble line. The château and estate were wrested from my ancestors by the Devignes, with the help of corrupt judges and false witnesses. It is clearly my duty to bring them back to the family and friend of my heart. Believe me, had I to deal with a man who would refuse to aid me in that sacred task, I would endure the disappointment of my fondest wishes, rather than be connected with one who could so far contemn the claims and memory of my ancestors. But, Jules Dubois, you are not that man;" and the Count grasped his hand in a sudden fervour of friendship and admiration. The hand was cold, and so was Jules' heart for the moment; through the high-sounding speech and grandly-assumed motives of his intended son-in-law, the plain fact had flashed upon him, that without the estate Renne did not mean to marry Lucelle. What, then, was to become of all his proud hopes of seeing his daughter a countess? how would his neighbours, who had heard such magnificent accounts of her marriage festivities, laugh at and despise him? In short, the rock on which many a man's sense and principle have been shipwrecked—"What will the world say?"—rose up before him like a barrier not to be overstepped, and Jules shook the

Count's hand and said, with the best grace he could, "By all means let the notary come, and we will settle the estate, and sign the contract the day after to-morrow."

"As I expected," said Renne, with a delighted look, which for once was genuine; and after a good deal of praise bestowed upon Jules, his daughter, and his whole family, the now successful schemer took his way home.

The contract, or *contrât de mariage*, is to French lovers what the betrothal is to those of Germany, and the hand-fasting was to the Scotch of former times, a solemn ceremony recognised by the law, and generally celebrated by a gathering of friends and relations. Jules had no kindred to assist at the contracting of his daughter, and he determined neither to invite nor apprise his neighbours; there were none of them his equals now—at least Jules thought so; the time for preparation was short, and like every man conscious of doing a wrong thing, he wished to get it over as quickly and quietly as possible. The moment the Count was gone, he walked into the porch where Ninette was spinning and Lucelle knitting beside her, and said to the latter, with quite an easy air—Renne himself could not have put it on better—

"Lucelle, my girl, there is a notary coming from Alençon to contract you and Count de St. Renne the day after to-morrow."

"Is the year expired yet, father?" said Lucelle, turning white as the fabric she was knitting.

"Not quite; but it will be before you are married, and the Count won't wait any longer; he is afraid that somebody will carry off my Lucelle from him and me, or that she will grow too proud to have him. I don't mean to have any of the gossiping neighbours here; but get your best clothes ready: a girl should look well on the day of the contract, shouldn't she, Ninette?" and with that small piece of gaiety Jules turned out of the porch and walked away to his fields. Ninette said nothing, but her wheel

turned slowly and her face was sad and sober. Lucelle rose in silence and went to her own room; there the girl sat down and wept till the shock wore off; then she wiped her eyes, looked out at her own little garden, now full of spring flowers, and at last began to get ready her best clothes.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRUST RESTORED.

ALL that day Jules stayed in the fields. In the evening he despatched his supper quickly, and retired early; but they could hear him walking about in his room long after the rest of the family were in bed. Next day he busied himself about the best room for the ceremony to take place in, and fixed upon the grand saloon of the château, which had to be swept, dusted, and decorated with flowers, under his own inspection; but Jules took special care to avoid any chance of private conversation with Ninette.

The saloon was decorated, and the day was done. Jean Closnet and his assistants had finished their work in the fields and come in to supper; but the master of house and land was standing alone at the window of his grand saloon, looking out upon the gathering twilight, and trying to think he was doing well. Suddenly a thin hand was laid on his arm, and he started as if from a serpent, though it was only the good old nurse.

"Jules," she said, "I know you don't want me to speak, but I must do it for the sake of the family I served so long and for your own soul's sake. If you put this place out of your own power to restore to its rightful owners by settling it on Count de St. Renne's wife, as I fear you intend doing to-morrow, I warn you that the sin of perjury and broken trust will cling to you and yours, with all its

fearful consequences; and, for the sake of those who loved you best, the good Father Bernard and the noble Sieur, for the peace of your latter years, and for your hope in the world to come, I pray you not to stain your conscience with it."

Jules could not tell that wise and faithful friend the truth, which rose to his lips as she spoke, that the Count would not marry his daughter without the estate; so he gave his shoulders an angry shrug, said old women were always meddling with what they did not understand, darted from the room and rushed out of the house. Lucelle was standing on the lawn alone in the twilight too, with her own burden of sad thoughts; but all that day and all the day before, the girl had observed that something he would not speak of troubled her father's mind, and troubled Ninette's also. The good nurse could not tell the daughter of the father's intended perfidy; but Lucelle's perceptions were keen and clear, notwithstanding her youth and innocence, and from chance words and hints dropped in her hearing, she guessed that the trouble had to do with her marriage settlement and her father's estate. When she saw Jules rush out in that strange fashion, a sudden impulse to comfort and counsel him as best she could came upon her, and running up to him, she threw her arms about his neck, and said—

"Dear father, I will marry the Count to please you. I would do anything in the world for that; but, if there is anything about my dowry that troubles you, or might be wrong, dear father, don't do it, for my sake and for your own."

"My own Lucelle!" cried Jules, clasping her to his heart; but the next moment he loosened his hold, and sped away down the meadows and along the river's side. His mind had not been half so tempest-tossed in that night long ago, when Chamone and his band of red-caps marched him along these same green banks of La Brice, with nothing but the guillotine closing his mental prospect. Then there was fear, indeed, but neither sin nor self-reproach;

and now what was he about to do? To break the covenant made with his earliest friend, and give his own loving daughter, so beautiful, so gentle, and so good, to a man who had been a Terrorist, and a terror to him; who was still the confederate of Citizen Brutus in some dark business about which the country people whispered and surmised, and who would manifestly marry her only for the house and lands of Devigne. It was not too late to break off the match yet; but his foolish ambition, and his more foolish dread of the neighbours' laughter, still returned to prevent that one saving step. In his conflict of thought Jules had turned from the river, and walked, without thinking of his way, till he found himself at the gate of the old churchyard. It was open, and he walked in. The storms of life will rob death of his terrors for a time, even to men who have little hope beyond. "How quietly they sleep there!" thought Jules, as he passed by the green graves in the churchyard; his honest father and mother, the good curé, and poor Philippe Lejune, were at rest beneath the grass, to which spring had given its brightest green; and Jules remembered with a shudder that it was the same season of the year in which he had made in that very spot the compact, which he should break to-morrow in the grand saloon of the château. The twilight had deepened into night by this time, the full moon was rising above the churchyard trees, and his last thought made Jules turn hastily away; but a rustling sound made him look back. There was a figure that rose slowly from behind the family tomb of the Devignes, and, as the moonlight fell upon its face, Jules saw it was that of the long-exiled and missing Sieur. He stood for a minute speechless and paralysed by that most terrible of all emotions—the dread of the supernatural. The spectre was looking straight at him: but for all the wealth in Normandy the strong man could not have moved a step nor uttered a word till at last he found breath to gasp out, "Is it Sieur Devigne, or what are you?"

"A poor, troubled, sinful mortal, like yourself," said the well-remembered voice of the Sieur, and Jules knew it was the voice of a living man. "Don't be frightened. I did not sail in the luckless 'Fleur-de-lis,' and therefore was not lost with her hundred and fifty French emigrants on the Newfoundland sands. My passage was taken and my berth secured; but I stayed with a friend over night, and, to my great disappointment, the ship sailed with the ebb tide, two hours before her specified time, and left me in London. I got a passage next day in the 'Pearl,' belonging to the same owners, and she reached Quebec in safety; for Providence designed that I should come back to my country. Jules, I have returned empty-handed as I left it, and more so, for my son has gone from me; but life in strange lands, and my own providential preservation, have taught me that we all go wrong in our turns, and very seldom right by our own direction. As I made no fortune abroad, and heard that emigrants might return, I returned too, and the first news I heard in the forest country was concerning you and yours; but I pushed on, reached the old churchyard this evening, and sat down behind my family tomb, which seemed all that was left me, to think what I should do. Jules, the Hand which prevented my sailing in the 'Fleur-de-lis' sent you here this night, that we might meet face to face in the spot where our covenant was made so many years ago. You hold my house and lands by a title which no man can dispute: will you keep that covenant with me, and give them back to me and my son!"

"My noble Sieur, come and take your own again," cried Jules, breaking through the snares which the tempter had set for his feet, in the strength of his better convictions; "come home to the house and lands of your fathers: I give them back to you and yours freely, and with all my heart. Much sin and great sorrow has the Providence which brought us together this night spared an unworthy man; and yet, Sieur, it was not till I thought you dead."

"Say no more, my first, my last friend," cried Devigne, rushing to him; and the two friends, so long parted and so sorely tried, embraced each other, and wept like children, in the clear moonlight and over the green graves.

"Come home with me," said Jules, when they had in some degree recovered their composure: "there is one sitting by the fireside yonder, who, for all her age and wisdom, would dance for joy to see you."

"Is my faithful Ninette still among the living?" said the Sieur.

"Thank God, she is! and thanks to her for all the good advices which I had not grace to take, and for all the good teaching she gave my daughter Lucelle, Sieur. There is not a better nor a handsomer girl in the whole forest; yet I was going to give her to your enemy, a wicked man, if ever there was one: I know it now as I never did before. And, ah! my Sieur, I sinned against the child too!" Jules' heart was opened, and poured forth all its secrets. "There was a brave young soldier who saved her life from a ravening wolf. He loved my daughter, and I doubt she loved him; but for the sake of that Count I spoke such harsh words to the young man as made him quit my house without a word of leave-taking, and before the break of day. His name was Romane le Norman. Have you ever heard of him in all your travels?"

"Never," said the Sieur; "but I know little of soldiers."

"And yet he knew your son, and told us how he had got news of your being lost in the 'Fleur-de-lis.' Ninette has never been the same since she heard it," said Jules.

"That news must have grieved my poor boy too," said the Sieur. "I know not where he is or what has become of him since we parted in anger. Shame on me for being so hasty with him, because he could not take my views of politics—as if the young

ever took the views of the old; but I have engaged a friend, who knows something of military life, to inquire after him, and circulate the intelligence of my escape from shipwreck and return to my country, in hopes that it may reach his ears."

By this time they had arrived at the château. All the family were yet astir, and Lucelle stood at the open door, looking out for her father.

"Come here, my child," said Jules, "and pay your respects to this gentleman, the best friend I ever had, and never a better than he has proved this night. Wait for me," he continued, in a whisper to the Sieur, "till I break the news to Ninette; her old age is not fit for such a surprise."

Lucelle dropped a low curtsey; but the Sieur took her by the hand, saying, "I know you are Dubois' daughter, even by the moonlight, for you have got your mother's face, and there was none fairer in all the forest country but that of my own lost Philippine."

In the meantime Jules had stepped in among the household, as usual assembled in the great kitchen. Ninette sat close by the hearth with her open Bible on her knees; but as he came forward she saw, and so did all the rest, that something uncommon had happened, and every eye said, What is it? Jules endeavoured to look composed, and then said he had got very joyful news.

"Is young Gaston Devigne coming home from the war?" inquired Ninette, eagerly.

"Oh yes, he is, and better than that: there is a stranger outside who says he thinks the Sieur was not lost in the 'Fleur-de-lis.'"

"Jules, tell me plainly," said "Ninette, "is my noble master yet alive? May I say, as Jacob said of his son Joseph, 'It is enough; I shall see him before I die'?"

"That you shall," said Jules, no longer able to play the news-

breaker, "for he is just at the door. Come in, my noble Sieur, if it so please you, and welcome back a thousand times, to your own house and lands, which I have kept for you this many a year."

Before he had well spoken, Devigne entered, leading Lucelle by the hand; and a wild tumult of joyful welcome filled the great kitchen, for most of the household remembered and recognised the Sieur. Ninette could utter nothing for some minutes; but she embraced her long-lost and well-beloved master, and the tears of joy ran down her face like rain; and at last her full heart found utterance in the words of the Psalmist: "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

"Amen, my faithful nurse!" said the Sieur. "Praise and thanks to Him who brought me through so many perils by sea and land, back to my country and to the house of my fathers, and, better than all, preserved for me such friends as you and Jules Dubois."

Jules looked down at the ground when these last words were spoken; but by-and-by, when all their minds became more composed—when they had spread a supper for the Sieur, who was tired and hungry, and would sit with the family by the blazing hearth, while Lucelle took on herself the office of waiter—Jules said he hoped the master would excuse him, for he had a little business to settle; and, taking his stout staff in his hand, the forest man set forth without further explanation. He walked at a rapid pace through the village and across the dell, till he reached the gate of Count de St. Renne's castle. Jules had a little business to settle there. The notary was coming from Alençon next day to draw up the contract between the Count and Lucelle, and settle the Devigne estate on Dubois' daughter. But half-an-hour in the village churchyard had changed the whole aspect of affairs; and Jules, prudent to the last, determined to avoid the unpleasant exposure of a transaction he sincerely repented by telling the

Count how the case now stood, which he knew would alter Renne's mind regarding the marriage.

He was about to knock at the gate with his staff, but to his surprise, found it had not been locked. There was nobody about the courtyard, and neither light nor sound of life in the front part of the castle; but the building was large, and Jules' errand a private one. So he walked on, without ringing the porter's bell or making any other sign of his presence, across the inner court, and through an unfastened door, which admitted him to the half-ruinous chapel. The Count had made no repairs in that part of his mansion; the night breeze blew through its broken windows; strips of green moss ran up the altar steps, and over the tombs of the St. Renne family. Jules could see everything distinctly by the clear moonlight, and in the deep silence his ear caught sounds of voices somewhere within. As he listened, they grew more distinct, and at length guided him to a narrow door behind a richly-carved stall. It had been once covered with tapestry, but only rags remained, and under them a rusty iron latch, which yielded to Jules' pressure, and he stepped into a narrow passage so dimly lighted by loopholes above that he could only see it was not long, and closed at the farther end by what seemed a solid wall. But a solid wall it was not—Jules could plainly hear the ring of glasses, the clatter of knives and forks, and the conversation of a company in the room beyond. The Count was holding high festival in some apartment of the forsaken wings. All the rumours Jules had heard of nightly doings at the castle rushed on his mind, and tempted him to listen. The voices seemed at his very side, and the first that spoke was a well-remembered one—that of Citizen Brutus.

"So, Renne," said the ex-gaoler—and all the rest seemed to keep silence for him—"you mean to marry the daughter of that stupid peasant I kept so long in the Abbey for you?"

"Yes," said the Count. "The Devigne estate comes with the girl; the settlement and the contract are to be signed to-morrow. Fill your glasses, my friends, and drink the bride's health."

"Good," said Lencir, in a tone of fierce derision; "dispose of us to-night, and get contracted to-morrow. That is doing business. But take that, you traitor!"

There was a long, loud shriek from Renne, followed by another and another, with a mingled sound of blows and imprecations from many hands and mouths, a crash of glasses, an upsetting of furniture, and then a heavy fall. Jules feared that murder had been done on the other side of that thin partition, and with as little noise as possible, he made good his retreat from the castle, and ran at full speed to the village. There were lights in many of the houses yet, and he lost no time in giving the alarm; but such was the general misgiving, on account of the strange reports, that not a man would arm and accompany him to see what had become of Count de St. Renne. While Jules was endeavouring to persuade them, however, a body of gendarmes, from Falaise, marched quietly into the village, and he directly made his report to their officer.

"We are going to the castle," said the man of authority. "Honest men of St. Renne, if you mean to maintain public safety and a good government, arm yourselves and come along with us. In that castle a band of coiners have carried on their nefarious trade for almost a year, with the connivance of Count de St. Renne; but either through fear of discovery, or because the business was not sufficiently profitable to himself he betrayed his companions in crime, and agreed with us on a plan of surprising them this night. It is probable that, by some means or other, they found out his intentions, and have taken vengeance; but make haste, and we will secure the company."

Some of the village men hastily armed themselves, and taking

Jules for their leader, followed the gendarmes to the castle. The latter had keys for every gate and door, and were well instructed in the ways that led to a private apartment behind the chapel, which tradition said had once been occupied by the family confessor, and from its retired situation was thought most suitable for the business and the revels of the coiners. But every gate and every door stood open; and when they reached the room, there lay beside the overturned table, the corpse of Count de St. Renne, stabbed in many places, and within a few feet of a doorway to the passage in which Jules had stood, covered and filled up with painted canvas.

They searched the castle from turret to vault, but not a living man was to be found; and after vainly scouring the surrounding forest, the officer of the gendarmes shut up the room of death, placed his seal upon the door, secured the outer gates until an inquiry could be held according to law, and returned to Falaise to make his report to the Prefect, while the men of the village went back to their homes to talk over the dark business till far into the night. Jules returned to the château to tell the Sieur and his own family what fate the enemy of their peace had found, almost within the hour which brought back Gaston Devigne to the house of his fathers.

Nobody in all the land lamented Renne, for to none had he been a friend, a benefactor, or a comforter; but all were shocked to hear that a man of his birth and lineage had come to such an end in the ancient castle of his ancestors. That was all that his nearest acquaintances, his intended father-in-law, and his intended bride, could think or say of him. To the latter his death was a positive release; and Lucelle had never learned the social hypocrisy which obliges people to assume what is thought proper for their position, so she made no greater show of sorrow than the rest. While they sat round the fire, talking over the events of the

night, almost with open doors—for the neighbours were dropping in, one after another, to inquire if it were really true that the Sieur Devigne had come back again, all St. Renne being too much excited to think of going to rest—Sentinelle began to bark vigorously.

"It is a stranger," said Jean Closnet: "that sensible dog never barks at one of the neighbours. I'll see who it is," and he sallied out.

The conversation paused, and they heard a voice at the outer door say, in hurried accents, "Good evening Jean. Is Mademoiselle Dubois married yet?"

"No; nor like to be," said honest Jean; and they heard no more.

Lucelle turned first redder than any rose, and then paler than any lily, while Jules rushed out, crying, "Monsieur le Norman, I should know your voice among a thousand; and I want your pardon for my hasty words the last night you were here. Come in and make friends with me again, like a brave soldier and a good Christian."

Jules said something more, which they could not catch, and the stranger's reply was in a still lower tone; but in another minute Romane le Norman had stepped in, and the Sieur had sprung from his place beside the fire. The one exclaimed, "My son! my own Gaston!" the other cried, "My dear father!" and the long-separated parent and child rushed into each other's arms.

It was some time before they could explain, or the family and neighbours comprehend, that Romane le Norman, the young soldier who had saved Lucelle's life, and who now wore the uniform of a captain of Chasseurs, was none other than Gaston Devigne, the Sieur's son and heir.

"I changed my name," he said, "to spare my father the disgrace, as he and his emigrant friends thought it, of my serving in the Republican army. After the false news of his death reached

me, I determined never to reclaim my family name or title, but came here in the midst of my great sorrow, to see how the old place looked before I sailed with my regiment for Egypt. On my way through the forest I had the good fortune to get acquainted with the Dubois family. They know how I came to the château, and Jules Dubois knows how and why I left it."

"I always thought he did," said Ninette, weeping for joy as much to see the son and the father reconciled as she had done for the Sieur's return; "and my heart always warmed to the boy I nursed, though my old eyes could not know him through the change of years and the soldier's trim. Our Lord be praised that I have lived to see him come back to his father's heart and home."

"I am sure if I had known I should never have been so stiff with you, Master Gaston;" and Jules was getting rather confused in his apology, when the Sieur stopped him with—

"Never mind, my good Jules. If we had all known many things, we would have acted differently; and that should teach us to overlook each other's mistakes. But we will talk of the matter between you and my son in the morning."

They had no time to talk, the family being unusually late in meeting at the breakfast-table next morning. The neighbours were still dropping in to make out the wondrous news of Devigne's return, and among them came a small, spare man, mounted on a mule, and dressed in a suit which seemed to have been made before the Revolution.

"Is this the house of Jules Dubois?" he said, stopping at the door, but making no attempt to alight. "My name is Foquette. I am a notary from Alençon, and was engaged to draw up a contract of marriage here; but I understand something extraordinary has happened."

"That there has," said Jules; "something extraordinary indeed; and I am sorry you should have have come so far for nothing."

"Monsieur le Notary has not come for nothing," cried the Sieur. "Jules, my good friend, there are two young people waiting to be contracted here; if they get your consent they shall have mine. Why should not this worthy notary draw up a contract between my Gaston and your Lucelle?"

"It is more than I deserve," stammered Jules; "but she is a good daughter, and she will make a good wife—that is all I can say."

The contract was drawn up accordingly, by the notary engaged by Count de St. Renne, and signed by willing hands, for their hearts went with them.

On the same day the Juge de Paix and his assessants held an inquiry regarding the death of the Count, but could discover nothing more than that he had been probably murdered by the coiners, who, in the disguise of servants, had lived and carried on their business in his castle. They made out the *procès verbal* accordingly, and one of the returned emigrants, an old abbé, and a distant relation of his mother, laid Leon de St. Renne in his family vault below the half-ruined chapel. He was the last of his line, and his honours and possessions, such as they were, devolved on the Devigne family. They never assumed the title to which its last bearer had done so little credit; but they were henceforth reckoned the most influential proprietors in the forest country.

The contract between Gaston and Lucelle was in due time followed by a wedding, with festivities as fine as ever the neighbours expected from Jules Dubois. Before they were finished the Sieur had regained his early popularity with the forest people. His long exile had wiped out the resentments of the Revolution time, and taught himself the folly of holding too fast by old and decayed institutions; and his choice of a peasant's daughter for his son's bride assured the peasantry that he had come back no aristocrat. Young Gaston, having learned that there were better things in

life than a soldier's laurels or a leader's fame, retired from military service to the care of his paternal estate and the blessings of domestic peace. Jules also retired; but it was from the château to his own old farmhouse, with his faithful Closnets and Claude Lemette. The highest of his earthly hopes had been fulfilled. Lucelle was a lady of the land; and it was allowed by better judges than her father, that the good sense and amiable disposition of Madame Devigne well made up for the want of early opportunities. She never forgot her obligations to Ninette; and the good nurse spent her last years in great comfort at the château. The Dubcises and the Devignes lived like one family, though they occupied separate houses. It was a common custom of the old heads, as the villagers called the Sieur, Jules, and Ninette, to meet at each other's firesides, and talk over the past. On those occasions Jules was in the habit of winding up his reflections by asserting that it was much harder work to be a gentleman than a peasant, and by thanking Providence for bringing him with clean hands out of the trials and temptations of the Exile's Trust.

Herman's Alarum.

CHAPTER I.

A PEEP INTO A MORAVIAN STREET.

THE name of Moravia, and perhaps its map, will be familiar to most readers, from that country having had the misfortune to be so often the battle-field of Europe. This sad fate has attended it for many an age. In all the wars of Germany Moravia has had its full share of trampled harvests and ruined towns, and from its position probably will have, till that promised time when the nations shall learn war no more.

But that is not the only noticeable thing about the land. Though long a province of the Austrian empire, it was once a powerful kingdom, including all the States between the Danube and the Oder. Though lying in the heart of eastern Germany, it has comparatively few German inhabitants, the mass of the population being Sclavonic tribes, a race akin to the Russians, Slawaks and Hannaks who came from the north, and took possession of the country in the old unsettled times when modern nations were founded.

In Moravia the earliest preachers of the Reformation laboured to diffuse gospel light long before Martin Luther was born, and there also, in later days, arose the sect of United Brethren, known

in all countries as Moravians from the land of their origin, and justly esteemed in all Christian churches, for the zeal which has sent their missionaries forth to strive against heathen darkness, alike amid the snows of Greenland and under the sun of Africa. Strange as it may seem, this earnest and pious, though peculiar sect, are not numerous in their native land. Their homes and congregations are to be found chiefly in the German districts which lie to the north and border on the Prussian territory, and in the old city of Brunn, still the Moravian capital. There, as everywhere else, the United Brethren are marked out from the world around them by their honest, sober lives and untiring industry; and some of their families have been famous for skill in the arts of watch and clock-making, and such-like curious mechanism, for several generations.

About the middle of the last century one of those skilful families was represented and distinguished too by a worthy man, named Christian Rothland. He was a mechanist of uncommon ability, living and working in the midst of his people in an old street of Brunn, inhabited only by the Brethren, and named in honour of them Brüder Strasse, or, as one might say in English, Brothers' Street, or Street of the Brethren. The townspeople of a long-passed generation had given it that name; the ancestors of its inhabitants had followed their honest callings and offered up their simple worship there, a hundred years before Count Zinzendorff established the far-famed congregation of Herrnhutt on his Lusatian lands. It was a narrow street, but the cleanest in old Brunn. The police knew it to be the only one in which their presence was unnecessary by night or day. The timber houses of which it was composed looked quaint and curious to modern eyes, with their high-pitched roofs, narrow windows, and first floors overhanging the street. Few of them had been built within two centuries, but all were in good repair as if kept by well-doing hands, and over

every door there was cut in old German characters some Scripture text, with which the first householder had chosen as it were to consecrate his dwelling. All day the passer-by could hear from within the sounds of active industry and friendly voices; all night unbroken quiet reigned, except when the solitary watchman proclaimed the passing hour, and sang the appointed verse of an ancient hymn, warning men of the flight of time and the nearness of eternity. Summer and winter the peaceful rest of the sabbath was undisturbed in that street by work or play, and morning and evening the sweet and solemn strains of old German psalmody or Moravian hymns went up from every house, as its dwellers united to begin or close the day with praise and prayer.

In the midst of a changing world and a busy town, for Brunn is a sort of emporium for the trade and manufactures of eastern Germany, the Brethren had kept unaltered and unimpaired the simple faith, the helpful union, and the pious practice of their fathers. There was little wealth but no want among them; vanity and ambition did not trouble their peace; all were usefully employed, and ready to help each other if need were; and most of them took an honest pride in Christian Rothland. He was at the time of our story in middle life, a man of large frame and sturdy German face, being like most of the Brethren a true son of Fatherland, but the one had become spare and the other uncommonly sober, even for the Brüder Strasse, through over application to the mechanical arts by which he had gained such celebrity. He and his good wife, a German dame both fair and ruddy, occupied a timber house midway in the street, and no finer than the rest. Providence, as he used to say, had sent them neither son nor daughter, on which account they could spare more to poor neighbours or strangers, but Christian's musical clocks and repeating watches were prized by all the mechanicians of Germany, and might be seen even in the palaces of dukes and princes.

Christian did not make his fortune; he worked conscientiously, and therefore slowly; it was a saying of his that nothing could be done well that was done in a hurry. Cheap and common clocks he left to less skilled and ingenious workmen. Some of his clocks had cost him years of thought and labour; the simplest timepiece that left his workshop had been in hand for months; there were some important movements which Christian could never execute in haste. The German mind if sure is somewhat tardy, and he was like his people. Christian did not make money fast—perhaps he did not care to make it in the common sense of the word. The Moravian craftsman had learned better than to set his heart on the riches that might take to themselves wings and fly away; but he gained enough to keep his home comfortable, and to spare to those that had need; he earned an honest distinction among neighbours and strangers, and he found pleasure and pastime in the exercise of his skill.

Clocks and watches were Rothland's profession, but in his studies over their construction he had discovered another branch of business, which made his name and workshop still more popular, for by common consent he was voted the fabricator of the best and most efficient alarums that could be got to wake up the sluggards of that generation. Brunn was then, as now, a manufacturing town; its cloth-workers and linen-weavers were counted by thousands; a large proportion of its working classes were of Sclavonic origin—a race, according to German accounts, remarkably gifted in the over-sleeping line. Alarums were therefore in great request, and as none could be found equal to Christian Rothland's, the demands for them soon became general.

There were three grades of awaking power in his machines—the small alarum, the large alarum, and the grand alarum. The first was considered sufficient for any ordinary sleeper, either German or Sclave; the second was resorted to by masters who had

a large number of the latter to get out of bed; but the third was allowed to be wanted only when the town was on fire or an enemy at its gates.

Christian might have had many apprentices, and thus increased his profits by the fees they brought and the work they could execute; but he could never be induced to take more than one at once, saying he could not do his duty to a second; one youth was enough for a master to guide for seven years, and teach his craft to as it should be taught, besides looking after his moral and religious training. Everybody agreed that Christian had done his duty to his one apprentice, and the first he ever had, Herman Staller. The youth had come from Hussenheim, in English, Goose-house, which happened to be the name of a small thriving town on the Silesian frontier. His father was a German, and an old acquaintance of Rothland's, his mother was a Sclave of the Hannak tribe, for which origin Herman Staller would have been looked down upon by many Germans but for the United Brethren, accustomed as they were to remember Him who hath made of one blood all the nations of the earth. In other respects Herman was not a youth to be looked down on; tall, strong, and handsome, with a fair face, thick-growing yellow hair, and good nature and intelligence beaming from his bright blue eyes. Most people liked Herman at first sight, nobody disliked him on after acquaintance; he was given to neither vice nor folly in the common acceptation of those terms; his teaching at home had been good, the precepts and examples he had in the Brüder Strasse were still better, and Herman had profited by both; he was honest, kindly and industrious, had serious impressions and a general inclination to well-doing. But Herman was also inclined to be over easy and indolent, and that inclination proved the misfortune of his life.

CHAPTER II.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS.

THE rising sun of a midsummer-day was gilding the high-pitched roofs and quaint chimneys of the Brüder Strasse, and waking up its active and industrious inhabitants to their daily works and duties. The watchman had sung the last verse of his hymn, extinguished the single oil-lamp deemed sufficient for that unfrequented street, and was going home to rest, but paused to bid a friendly good-morrow to Christian Rothland and Herman Staller, who stood together at the door of Christian's workshop. The master was in his every-day trim, the long brown buttonless coat of his people, and girt round the waist with a leather strap and apron, the distinguishing badge of all workers in metal at the period in most German towns. The apprentice was, on the contrary, equipped for travel, with cap and cloak, staff and knapsack. His seven years' apprenticeship had expired three days before; Christian Rothland had delivered up his indentures in the presence of the elders, with a declaration that he had served honestly, learned diligently, and was now a competent craftsman. Christian's good wife, dame Gretchen, had made a farewell supper for him and his young associates in the Brüder Strasse. The kindly neighbours had given him many a keepsake and more good wishes; he had lived seven years among them, but was now going away, first to see his parents and friends in Hussenheim, and then to set forth on that sort of working tour through the principal towns and workshops of his country, which is usual with young German artisans.

It might be long till he should be seen again in the Brüder Strasse of Brunn. He had taken leave of its friendly inhabitants the evening before. The neighbours said that dame Gretchen always rose with the sun, but she had that morning risen earlier

than was her wont, to give Herman his last breakfast and her parting blessing. She had done a mother's part by the youth for seven long years, and she felt as if a son was leaving her. Dame Gretchen's farewell had been taken; the good woman had wiped the tears from her eyes, and gone about her household duties, and Christian was left alone with his first apprentice. A kindly and pains-taking master had he been to Herman Staller. Having no son of his own to teach, the heart of the honest clock-maker had been drawn to the diligent and docile youth, who shared and sympathised in his devotion to the craft in which he had acquired such skill and celebrity, and now at the door of the workshop where they had laboured so long and conversed so familiarly, Christian stood to say a parting word of friendly and faithful admonition, in the quiet of that early morning.

"Thou art going to see strange towns and faces, Herman," he said, "and doubtless thou wilt make a fair figure among the craftsmen of north or south; but, Herman, thou hast a besetting sin, which as thine own friend and thy father's friend, I would counsel thee to guard against. Beware of indolence in temporal or spiritual things. In the first it hinders business, brings down the repute and value of a man as one in whom no weighty trust can be placed, and of whom little good will be expected. In the second and far more essential part, it leads to careless walking, to the neglect of Christian duties and privileges, and leaves an open door for many sins and follies. We know Him who has said, 'Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation;' Herman, thou hast a skilful hand, and I think, an honest heart, but see that thou keep the gates of thy life fast shut against that enemy."

"That I will, master," said Herman, "and strive to do your good teaching credit among the craftsmen of distant towns. I promise that you will hear a good report of me from your friend

THE PARTING OF MASTER AND APPRENTICE.

master Crantz, of Prague, in whose workshop I mean to try my hand and fortune first, with the help of Providence and your kind commendations."

"Providence help and direct thee," said Christian, folding the young man to his breast in hearty German fashion; "go thy way, and the blessing of our Lord go with thee, and bring thee back in credit to tell of thy works and travels to me and my good Gretchen."

With a light heart and a brave resolution to do well and wisely, Herman went his way through the quiet streets of the still sleeping town, over the ancient bridge which spans the Morava, and out at the northern gate, where he took the road to Hussenheim, pausing but once to take a last look at the spires of old Brunn, standing sharply out against the morning sky, and the river rippling in the early sunlight. On he went across the hills and dales which vary the surface of Moravia as it approaches the Silesian border. It was pleasant travelling for an active youth in that bright midsummer time; the land is a pastoral one, and rich in flocks and herds. Herman found rest now in a wayside inn, and now in a shepherd's cot, and reached Hussenheim at the fall of a soft and rosy twilight.

The place was little better than a village, situated in the midst of moorland pastures. Besides one solitary church, its public buildings consisted of a schoolhouse, a water-mill, and a blacksmith's forge, and its great institution was the goose market, from the antiquity of which, according to local tradition, the town had derived its name. Moravian geese are still in great request throughout Germany and Holland, and the rearing of these substantial fowls forms a considerable branch of business in the country. The hilly districts on the north and east are chiefly occupied by goose farmers, who live as well by their feathered flocks, as the sheep farmers in similar parts of our own land do by

their woolly ones. The place had no other distinction to boast; the blacksmith was burgomaster, the schoolmaster was notary-public, and these, together with the miller, the brewer, and the baker, formed the town-council, presided over and advised in all affairs of moment by their Lutheran pastor. Hussenheim was nevertheless a town of great consideration in the eyes of its inhabitants. They spoke of it in conjunction with the capitals of surrounding states. Prague or Breslau, Berlin or Vienna, were held but fair comparisons to their notable city; and as they were never visited by anybody but goose dealers, and none of their travels extended beyond the surrounding moors, that satisfactory impression continued to possess the public mind.

It was a place of great consideration to Herman Staller also, long as he had lived in the Moravian capital with all its trade and business. Hussenheim was his birth-place; it was a joyful sight to see, from the hill above, the old familiar church spire, the rustic houses and trim gardens of the little town nestling in a green dell among the moorlands. There was little change there since he left it, except that the young had grown, like himself, to man's estate, and the old had become bowed and grey, like his father and mother, whom he found seated by their evening fire in the well-remembered home. It was a joyful sight to the aged pair to see their only son come back from his apprenticeship with so fair a promise of health and strength, and such good commendations from their ancient and now famous friend, Christian Rothland.

Their kinsfolk and friends were quickly summoned to assist in his welcome home. Half the inhabitants of Hussenheim were reckoned to be Stallers, and Herman was soon surrounded by uncles, aunts, and cousins, in various degrees of admiration and astonishment at the improvement in his appearance, manners, and prospects, but all rejoicing to see him at home once more, and in

high hopes of the great honour he would do them after serving such an apprenticeship, and getting such praise from the noted clock-maker of Bruna. The rest of the townspeople came in their turn to welcome the long-absent boy, as they still called him, and hear Herman's accounts of the wonders his master and himself had done in the Brüder Strasse. It was but natural that the young man should take a fair share of credit among the friends and neighbours of his childhood; his good master had sent with him letters of recommendation to the most reputed craftsmen in all the German towns, and to his parents such a report of his conduct, skill, and industry, as made the hearts of the old couple sing for joy. They feasted their friends and neighbours on the great occasion, and they did not forget to give thanks to the Giver of all good, whose providence had been so gracious to them and theirs, for the Stallers were pious though simple people. Herman was made much of on every side, his stay in Hussenheim was a sort of a jubilee; the townspeople had such expectations of the figure he should make in distant cities, and his return with a reputation rivalling that of Christian Rothland, to establish himself and clock-making in the best house of their main street, and thus give the town something to be proud of besides the goose market, that they kept all the festivals of that year, their own birthdays included, in the few weeks of his sojourn among them.

He could not forget in these pleasant days the parting blessing of his good old master; but did he also remember his words of faithful warning, "Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation?"

CHAPTER III.

HERMAN GETS THE SILVER LUCK'S PENNY.

THE few weeks drew to an end; the customs of the period did not admit of a promising young artisan remaining long at home when his apprenticeship was only finished, and customs were always strict in the old-fashioned corners of Germany. The great things expected of him in his native town gave spurs to Herman's resolution to gain distinction as a craftsman. His parents, though sorry to part with him so soon, would not stand in the way of his success, and when the scanty moorland harvest was gathered and the geese making merry in the stubble fields, he left Hussenheim, with many a prayer and blessing on his way from the elders of the town, and an escort of all its youth for nearly a German mile.

His first journey was a long one,—all the way to Prague, the capital of Bohemia. Herman had resolved to make his first essay in undirected clock-making in the workshop of Ludwig Crantz, a special friend of Christian Rothland, and believed to make the nearest approach to his skill. It was more than a hundred and fifty English miles. Herman travelled in the same manner as he had journeyed home; it was the customary mode of making the working tour, and he reached Prague on the eighth day from Hussenheim.

The house of Ludwig Crantz was situated in the most flourishing part of the town, called the New City to this day, though few of its buildings date later than the end of the sixteenth century. It stood in a narrow street, behind the long-deserted palace which Wallenstein, a great but unscrupulous leader in the Thirty-Years' War, built for himself and left no heirs to inherit. Ludwig's house of honest industry had a great deal more interest for the town's-people at the time of our story. He was the only clockmaker of repute in Prague, considered the best in all Bohemia, and as a

mechanician esteemed second only to his friend Christian Rothland of Brunn. But his business was on a far more extensive scale than that to which Herman had been accustomed in the small quiet workshop of the Brüder Strasse. Ludwig's journeymen and apprentices formed a considerable company; his workshop occupied the ground floor of a large and substantial house; customers were always coming and going, wagons were every day bringing materials and taking away finished goods; and strangers were accustomed to visit the establishment as one of the sights of Prague. Ludwig was in consequence a leading man among the city guilds; he was a just man, too, in all his dealings, conscientious to customers, and kind to his dependents; but particularly strict and punctual to word and to time himself, he would tolerate no laxity in those he employed, and the fact had become so proverbial in the town, that people of careless ways were ironically recommended to go and apprentice themselves to Ludwig Crantz.

The letter of recommendation which Herman brought from Christian Rothland secured him a friendly reception. He was immediately received into workshop and household. Ludwig was a master of the old school, all his men lived as well as worked with him, and at the time of Herman's coming a new hand was welcome, particularly if a skilful one, for the business was more than usually pressing, and the foreman, who had served Ludwig from his youth, had gone away with his savings to establish himself in his native Bohemian village, as Herman hoped to do in Hussenheim. The young stranger was well received and well considered. Ludwig Crantz was a man of few words, but he took an early opportunity of proving his new workman's skill. Herman, on his part, was anxious to show that he had not served an apprenticeship under Christian Rothland for nothing, and by the end of the second week it was whispered in the workshop that they were likely to have a foreman from Moravia.

The whisper was not without reason; but the master of that house did nothing in haste. "Herman Staller," he said one day, when the young man had executed a difficult piece of clockwork to his entire satisfaction, "thou hadst a rare teacher in my good friend Christian Rothland, and thou hast learned his lessons well. Young as thou art I would not ask a better foreman in the place of my honest Antin; but trust is not to be thrown to passing birds and strangers, as the proverb says. Stay with me twelve months as a journeyman, and thou shalt be set over the workshop, if we know each other for good by the end of that time."

Herman agreed to this prudent arrangement; the prospect of being foreman in the notable house of Ludwig Crantz was worth waiting and working a twelvemonth for. All his friends were duly informed on the subject: it was a joy to the hearts of his old parents in Hussenheim, and served their neighbours for a topic till the coming on of the great goose-market in the week before Christmas. It was a joy to Christian Rothland and his good Gretchen too; they had got another apprentice, one chosen out of seven who were waiting for the place when Herman left them, but their old friend's son who had been with them in house and workshop for seven years, was still affectionately remembered in their home and in their prayers, and the good people gave thanks for the kindly Providence that had given him in his outset in life so good a master and so fair an opportunity of doing well. Herman received their letters of congratulation with some pride, and many strong resolutions to acquit himself creditably and win the promised promotion.

The life of a journeyman in that house was not a hard one. They managed matters, as we have said, in the old school fashion; all the men and boys in Crantz's employment lived on his premises, their master worked among them, besides doing foreman's duty for the prescribed twelve months; their domestic concerns and comforts were looked after by his maiden sister, Fräulein Gunhild, who presided over the household affairs, for Ludwig was unmarried; and master and man, mistress and maid, sat down to meals at the same long table, with no distinction of places but that ancient one of the superiors sitting above the salt, and the inferiors below it. There was no stint of good homely fare, no want of household management; the scrubbing and scouring, baking and brewing, went on as actively as the clockmaking. Housekeepers made everything for themselves in old Prague, and Fräulein Gunhild, though somewhat precise and formal, as maiden ladies are said to be, was kindly and careful of the well-being of all in her brother's employment.

But things in the clockmaker's house went on like clockwork too; strict regularity was the order of the day with brother and sister. They had lived together from their youth, and both were growing grey. Their minds and manners were remarkably similar; both were actively industrious for this world, but not forgetful of their eternal interests; proud of the rules of their old-fashioned house and strict in maintaining them, but so strongly inclined to peace and quiet, that for a serious fault no second remonstrance was ever made with one in their establishment. A silver penny, the luck's penny, as the Germans of those days called a small and ancient coin, long out of currency, dropped into the offender's beer mug at the next morning's breakfast, was a signal of dismissal alike to journeyman and apprentice, and a perfectly understood matter to all who served or dealt with Ludwig Crantz. Herman was made aware of this custom at an early period of his sojourn; he was also informed that, excepting open vice, no fault was regarded as more serious than want of punctuality to the hours, which were early, even for a German house, and for some time he made a manful stand against his besetting indolence and habit of over-sleeping. But Herman had been used to the small quiet house of Christian

Rothland and his good wife, to their constant companionship and almost parental care which would let him neither forget nor slide out of any duty. Ludwig Crantz and the Fräulein Gunhild were conscientious and kindly to their dependants, but with such a number and so much business, it was impossible to pay the same degree of attention to each one's individual ways and doings, moreover the punctual brother and precise sister, had not the warm hearts and charitable thinking of the pair in the Brüder Strasse. Ludwig said grace at every meal, read prayers every evening, and required that his people should attend church regularly on Sundays, but the Sunday evenings and holidays were their own free time, which most of them spent with relations or friends they had in the town and its neighbourhood; and if their weekday conduct was good no notice was taken or questions asked.

Herman had neither friends nor relations within his reach, and being naturally social he found the large silent house in which the Crantzs sat and read good books to themselves after church time, rather dull,—so were his solitary walks in town and country. The men of the establishment were too old for companions, the boys were too young and none of them took a fancy to him, he had not the company or the example of the Rothlands; and for want of both he took to frequenting a certain club or society of young men who called themselves Social Neighbours, and met every Sunday evening in the large room of a noted beerhouse. He knew well that the careless conversation, jokes and songs which circulated there, would have grieved and shocked his sabbath-keeping parents and his friends in the Brüder Strasse; but the indolence in spiritual things against which Christian Rothland had warned him at their parting was already working evil to his soul. Neglecting watchfulness and prayer, sin easily obtained dominion over him. Sabbath-breaking was, as it usually is, a mark of departure from God.

Being good-humoured, as indolent people often are, he found himself welcome at the club. In a short time everybody there was Herman's friend. Most of the young men were in better circumstances or worked with less punctual masters. Their custom was to sit long and late; Herman was always pressed to stay for another hour or so, and as habit lulled his principles, it lulled his prudence too. He sat as late as the rest, and in consequence soon began to rise late on Monday morning: the lateness of the one day, by degrees extended to the rest of the week. Herman devised several excuses and sundry cunning contrivances to ward off the observation of his master and the Fräulein, and thought himself perfectly successful with these undemonstrative people, till one Monday morning when as he entered the workshop at a worse hour than usual, Ludwig looked up from a half finished dial-plate and said, quietly, "Herman Staller, thou art often late; it is a bad example, and contrary to the rules of the house."

Herman promised, and resolved to amend his ways; he could not give up the Social Neighbours, but he exerted himself to rise early for almost a week. By Saturday, however, his fright had worn off; the club was more than usually entertaining on Sunday evening, and he sat later than ever; on Monday he could not get out of bed in time, but nobody seemed to notice the fact; and before the end of that week, Herman had slid back to his former sleeping level. He got no more rebukes nor even notice from Ludwig, and as one week followed another in this fashion, Herman felt quite secure in the strength of his contrivances and excuses. He had found out a good many new ones by that time, and might have discovered a good many more, but coming to breakfast one morning when all the rest were leaving the table, he saw his pewter beer mug clean scoured and bright as usual, and in it the silver luck's penny.

"For me?" said Herman, scarcely believing his eyes, as the Fräulein desired him to help himself.

"Yes," she answered, calmly, "I am sorry for it, and so is my brother; but we cannot see the rules of the house disregarded. Any man but Christian Rothland's apprentice should have had his luck's penny and his dismissal long ago."

CHAPTER IV.

OFF TO MUNICH.

HERMAN was thunderstruck. Was the prospect of being Ludwig's foreman, which he had felt so sure of and taken such pride in—were the hopes of his parents and the expectations of his friends—all to be dashed and broken down by what seemed to him such a trifling matter? But Herman knew that from the luck's penny there was no appeal. In the house of Ludwig Crantz nobody got a second trial, there was nothing for him but to pack up, take his wages, and go. He did so with the best grace he could assume. Like most people who have but themselves to blame, he found great fault with his master and the Fräulein Gunhild. It was not possible for a young man to live comfortably with such rigid people; they were as hard as flint and as cold as steel; if they had not been Christian Rothland's friends he would not have stayed so long with them. A skilled workman like him could find as good employment anywhere.

So Herman said, and so he endeavoured to think, but his acquaintances in Prague would neither say nor think the same. The men who had envied his skill and his chance of being foreman, and such are found in every community, spread the tale of how and why he had got the luck's penny, with spiteful comments and additions of their own. Herman found himself pointed at by those he had expected to oversee and direct, and laughed at by

the club of Social Neighbours, for whose company and his own folly he had sacrificed so fair a prospect. "I will go to Munich," he said to himself; "it is far enough from Prague for one to escape these people's gossip, and a famous town for clock-making. Christian Rothland had some dealings with one Werner, a good master there. I will get employment in his house, and send to my old master for one of his alarums to wake me up in the morning. Nobody shall again say, 'Herman Staller, thou art late.'"

He put that plan into execution at once, sent posthaste to his old master for an alarum, with a very brief and, it must be owned, a varnished statement of the causes that made him require it. He got the alarum by the next carrier; it was one of the small order, which Herman thought quite sufficient to wake him. With it came a letter of wise and kindly advice, such as might be expected from a kind and God-fearing friend, for honest Christian guessed the true state of the case better than his apprentice imagined. He enclosed also a letter of recommendation to Johann Werner, a notable clockmaker in Munich.

Herman set out for that city as he had set out for Prague, and his success in the Bavarian capital almost equalled that which he had first met with in the Bohemian one. Johann Werner, though not intimately acquainted with his old master, had sufficient knowledge of, and respect for Christian Rothland, to receive the young man on his recommendation, though he was at the time in no want of hands. Herman saw that, and endeavoured to make himself generally useful, took early opportunities of giving proofs of his skill in clockmaking, and soon made his footing sure in the new workshop.

The house and the master were a complete contrast to those he had served in Prague. Johann Werner's establishment was a showy place, where everything was done on the newest pattern and in the most modern style. They made time-pieces with ornamental cases, but with works hardly to be trusted. It was Johann's

boast that his clocks looked as fine as if they had come from France. His workshop and showroom occupied the ground floor of a house in the great square; he locked them up every evening after business hours and retired to his country-house. His workmen and apprentices got lodged and provided for as best they could, and he was particular only in the matter of their coming to work early and getting it quickly done. For some time Herman contrived to suit him in both respects so well that he got praise from the master and credit with the men. Johann's praise was far more ready and abundant than that of Ludwig Crantz, for he was a bustling, sanguine little man, with a hot look in his red face, and red hair, and rather a hasty temper, clever in his way of business, and intent on succeeding in this world, but with no higher principle or more serious aim to direct his conduct.

Herman contrived to suit him, and to get, as he thought, well lodged with a respectable widow who had three grown-up sons all in the musical profession,—a rather extensive one in any German town, where no festival, public or private, can be celebrated without music, vocal and instrumental. The widow's eldest son played the violin, the second the flute, and the third the cornet; they could all sing a variety of songs; they were always engaged professionally at balls or parties, not to speak of the public and private concerts so frequent in Munich. Like musicians in general, they were attached to their business, and delighted in its practice irrespective of its profits, but they never thought of employing the tuneful art on its highest and noblest mission, those glorious themes to which angel harps are strung. The grand and solemn psalmody, the beautiful hymns, anthems, and chants, in which no country is more rich than theirs, were neglected and forgotten by this musical family. Abroad and at home they played airs from operas, they sang fashionable songs, Sunday or week-day made no difference in their entertainment. Their mother was of the same mind, and

very proud of their musical performance. Herman pleased her from the first by admiring it, he pleased the young men also and they took to him wonderfully. Being the only lodger they had, he was always welcome in their family room,—it was a pleasant place to spend his unemployed time in. His pious father and mother and his good master, far away in Moravia, would not have approved of the manner in which all that time was spent, but they knew nothing about it, and Herman had grown easy on such subjects now. When the Spirit of God is grieved, the careless soul is likely to lose the warnings and the restraints of his grace. The family kept late hours and he could never leave them early; but what of that? Christian's small alarum would wake him up in the morning. And for some time it did. Herman gave entire satisfaction to Johann Werner; he was early at the workshop and a good and ready workman; Johann sounded his praises and began to talk of raising his wages, when his old enemy stole a march on him once more.

Herman could not account for it; he regularly wound up the alarum, and it went well, as all Christian's machines did; but by degrees it only half woke him; then he could sleep through the loudest of its sounding, and in consequence, Herman was remarkably late in getting to the workshop. The fact did not escape his master's notice; Johann remonstrated in a friendly way, for he liked the clever young workman. Herman promised amendment, and would have fulfilled his promise, but the alarum did not wake him, and so things went on; till one morning, when he entered the workshop three hours beyond time, in the midst of a busy season, and Werner in the worst of humours, the hasty master called him sharply to account. Herman was imprudent enough to make an angry answer; and as neither of them had the wisdom which enables men to rule the spirit and bridle the tongue, an exchange of hot words ensued, which ended in Johann's dismissing

his workman with a declaration that he would never more have anything to do with one from Moravia, and Herman's renouncing his employment with an equal resolution against all Bavarians.

Herman flew home to the widow's house to get sympathy for his wrath and wrongs. All the family condoled with him, but every one hinted that it was a pity he could not contrive to rise earlier, as that alarum of his was sufficient to rouse the whole street; they should not have tolerated it in the house but on his account, and the friendship they had for him. They also hinted that he would find it difficult to get other employment in Munich, all the masters set their faces against late men, and Johann Werner would not be likely to keep the matter a secret. "It was all through associating with those musical young men," thought Herman, when he grew cool enough to consider that he was once more out of a situation, and for the same discreditable cause. After the example of our first father, the man was ready to lay the burden of his fault on any shoulders but his own. Munich was distasteful to him now as Prague had been; he would not attempt to look for employment there, but go at once to the old city of Nuremberg in Franconia, where clock-making had been established for centuries before his time, and its artisans formed one of the ancient guilds of the town. There he would break off his indolent habits, associate no more with idle young men, and get one of Christian Rothland's large alarums. "It will be sure to wake me up," he thought; but the blush of shame burned on Herman's cheek, as with that thought came the idea of what his good old master and all his early friends must think of him, when they heard of his second dismissal. Well would it have been, if he had also felt his sinfulness in the sight of God, and remembered the parting counsel of his pious friends at Brunn.

He set out for Nuremberg without letting them know, determined to find another situation by his own unaided skill, before he

sent for the large alarum, or made known the little advantage he had by the small one. It was another long journey; the city lies seventy-five miles north-west of Munich, in the heart of the Franconian country, where the dialect differs from that which Herman was accustomed to, as the speech of North Britain differs from that of the south. He arrived in safety, took some time to see the curious old town and inquire after its leading men in his craft; but the decline into which every branch of Nuremberg trade had fallen had told on clock-making too; the masters had become few and limited in business, most of them had as many hands as they could employ or pay, and had, like the rest of Franconia, a strong prejudice against the southern people. Herman was going home to his inn after a fruitless day's search, when passing the ancient church of St. Laurence, he almost ran against a tall thin grey-haired man, who stood stock still in front of it, looking up at its curious clock from which the great cuckoo had just come out to proclaim the hour. He courteously accepted Herman's excuses, and made some remarks on the mechanism of the church clock, which showed the young man that he understood such matters. Herman showed his knowledge of the craft in turn, which seemed to interest the elder stranger; they happened to be going the same way, and got into familiar conversation, in the course of which Herman mentioned his having lately arrived in Nuremberg, and his fruitless search for employment. "I am glad we met then," said the old man; "for my nephew, Fritz Hammerman, wants a skilled hand; he lives in Laurence Strasse, just behind the church there, a good mechanician as the world goes, and not a bad master, though just a little stiff; go to him to-morrow, but don't say I sent you, my nephew and I have not been on speaking terms for some time."

Herman thanked him; but the old man said, "It is nothing; I would do more than that for an honest lad who understands

mechanics as well as you do. Come to my lodgings to-morrow evening; I live at the end of this lane," and he pointed down a dark and narrow one; "you will tell me how you get on with my nephew, and I will show you some machines you have not seen the like of before."

Herman promised to come, and they parted in the most friendly manner.

Next morning the young man was at the house of Fritz Hammerman in good time, having paid the waiter to call him up early. The master was in his workshop, a sturdy, plain-spoken Franconian; he received Herman with blunt civility, told him he did want a skilled workman, but should not prefer a southern—in his opinion they were mostly idle and lazy: however, if Herman liked to try his service, he had no objections to employ him; he gave as good wages as any man in Nuremberg, and his house had but two rules, first, that all his men should board and lodge with his mother-in-law, who lived at the end of the street, and second, that after six in the morning his workshop door was shut, and all late comers must consider themselves dismissed. Herman agreed to the conditions, though they seemed rather strict; he was out of work, and a stranger in the city. Fritz Hammerman at once engaged him, told his men they must behave civilly to the stranger, though he had come from the south, and Herman, as usual, endeavoured to make himself at home among them, and gain the good-will of his master.

The house was not large, but did a steady and profitable business; the journeymen and apprentices seemed to be kept in remarkably good order by Fritz and his mother-in-law; the one governed them in the workshop, the other in their lodgings, and both had but one aim—to promote their own worldly interests as far as possible, consistent with legal justice, which neither of them ever forgot. Strict weight and close measure was their unvarying

custom; everybody got their lawful dues, and they took care to get their own, but beyond that, Fritz and his mother-in law had no concern. It was an honest, but a hard and cold service in which Herman found himself engaged in the old city of Nuremberg, but he lost no time in sending for one of Christian Rothland's large alarums, with as handsome a statement of his reasons for requiring it, and for leaving Munich, as he could well get up. He received the alarum in due time, but his old master's letter though kind as ever, had a tone of warning and admonition, which showed him that particulars had found their way to Brunn. They had found their way to Hussenheim too. His father and mother wrote to remind him that a rolling stone gathered no moss, and that if he did not keep steady, and get on well, they could not hope to see him set up the clock-making business in his native town. Herman had forgotten, as most backsliding men do, that the birds of the air carry tidings, and what is done in the closet may be told on the house-top; but he put his confidence in the large alarum for keeping all right this time. The sound of it was so tremendous, that Hammerman's mother-in-law would have refused to give the machine house room, but the journeymen and apprentices insisted that it would be of service to them all in keeping early hours, and both they and their master had a sort of respect for Herman, when they heard he had learned his craft from Christian Rothland.

In the evening after he got the situation, Herman, according to promise, went to see the old man who had so kindly told him of it. Like his nephew, he was called Fritz Hammerman, but commonly known as Old Fritz, and in his character and habits unlike him as man could be. While the nephew was entirely given to increasing his profits and his business by steady work and strict economy, the uncle had lost time, trade, and money, in attempts to solve mechanical problems of the most difficult kind, and work

out inventions far more curious than useful. Herman found him in the attic of an old house, with little furniture in it except the models of machines on which he had been working and experimenting for years. Wings for men to fly with, a figure that would speak by springs, and a clock of perpetual motion were the principal of them. They were unfinished, of course; nobody would advance him money to carry on his inventions, that was his chief regret. He lived on a slender annuity secured for him by his more prudent relations, with all of whom he had quarrelled on account of some machine or other; and his only occupation was to look after all the new inventions he heard of, or to sit in a dense cloud of tobacco smoke, contemplating what he might have achieved if the funds had been at his command.

Herman's knowledge of mechanics enabled him to take an interest in the projects of Old Fritz. The latter had not many listeners and still fewer admirers; the civil speeches of the young man from the south pleased him so well, that Herman was invited to come and see him often in his attic, and having no better place to go to, Herman came. Old Fritz was a pleasant companion for one of a mechanical turn; he had seen much, having travelled the whole continent on account of his inventions before Herman was born, and could tell a good deal of foreign scenes and old-world ways. But his speech was not always to edification; though an aged man, he had no thought of the eternity to which he was hastening, no serious reflection on his own experiences or seeings of life, in short, no regard for anything but mechanics. Herman might have observed that he had no real regard for him, though in a short time Fritz became as familiar and friendly with him as the Social Neighbours or the widow's musical sons had been, called him a promising lad, prophesied that he would be an honour to the clock-making craft, and accepted his presents of strong beer and tobacco. But when Herman rose to go, knowing that he

must be in Hammerman's workshop before six in the morning, Old Fritz, whose time was entirely at his own disposal, had always another invention to explain, or another tale to tell, could not believe it was so late, was sure an active young man like him did not require so much sleep, and would wake up at the proper time with that alarum, for which it must be allowed Christian Rothland deserved credit, though it was nothing to the machine he would have made if anybody had advanced money enough for his experiments. The old man's persuasions, together with his own indolence, overcame Herman's resolutions; evening after evening he stayed late, and would have risen late next morning, but the large alarum did its duty, and he dragged himself out of bed. This went on for some time, but one morning Herman did not wake till the alarum had almost done sounding, and in consequence got in without the German's first breakfast, just before the workshop door was closed. For two or three mornings he had the same hurry out of bed and in to work; then he happened to stay an hour or two later with Old Fritz in the evening, and on the following day woke without hearing the alarum at all, just as the cuckoo on St. Lawrence clock was singing nine. He looked out only to see the workshop door fast shut, and to know that he was out of a situation once more.

If any reader thinks that after all this was a venial fault, let him consider that it was but the outward sign of inward declension. He that is faithful or faithless in little things, will be also faithful or faithless in great things.

CHAPTER V.

THE GRAND ALARUM FAILS.

HERMAN had grown hardened, as people do by habit, to the loss of a situation now, yet his old master's letter, as well as that of his father and mother, recurred to his memory, till he almost saw their kindly faces made sorrowful and ashamed for him. As usual he blamed Fritz Hammerman,—his mother-in-law,—Old Fritz,—in short everybody but himself. Then he thought the alarum must be in fault, it did not sound loud enough, or it must have woke him. "I will get the grand one," thought Herman, "no man can sleep through the noise it makes, but I must get another situation first; Old Fritz told me of his nephew, perhaps he can tell me of somebody else who wants a skilled workman." And to Old Fritz accordingly Herman went.

"I am sorry," said the man of many inventions, when he had heard his tale, expressed great sympathy, and bestowed a good deal of abuse on Hammerman for a stiff, money-grub,—"I am sorry that I know nobody at present but one from your own Moravia, called Klaken; I have no great opinion of him, he is but a poor clockmaker, and not rich in money; my nephew had him for an apprentice; I don't know what brought his family here; but his father has left him a very small fortune, and he wants to go and set himself up as a first-rate clockmaker in Olmutz. He has relations there, and expects great custom, because there are few clockmakers in the town, and the Archduke of Austria has taken a fancy for visiting it. I know Klaken would be glad to take you with him; it was but yesterday he asked me if I could recommend a skilled hand, who would be his foreman, and help him to make a business of it."

It was rather a descent for Herman, after learning his craft under such a famous master, and serving in old established workshops, to be employed by a mere adventurer in the trade, whom Old Fritz described as a poor clockmaker, and not rich in money. But a man shut out of Fritz Hammerman's house had no chance in Nuremberg; he would try his fortune in another town, and by the old man's direction he repaired to the Eastern Coffee House, in search of Klaken. The intended master was seated there at his ease, with a pipe and a newspaper—a man about Herman's own age, with the high features and dark complexion of the Sclavonian race, a plausible manner, and cunning-looking eyes. He received Herman with great civility, said a skilled workman was the very thing he wanted; his own knowledge of clockmaking was so perfect, and the business he meant to establish in Olmutz would be on such a superior scale, that nobody else would be of use to him. Then, observing Herman's southern accent, he enquired minutely regarding his birth-place, parentage, and education; found out that his own ancestors had come from the neighbourhood of Hussenheim, and being Hannaks, there was very likely some relationship between himself and Herman's mother; but when the young man mentioned that he had served his apprenticeship with Christian Rothland, Klaken fairly got up and shook hands with him, saying, "That is enough, you are the craftsman for me; it was a lucky hour that brought us together expressly to make each other's fortune." He made Herman sit down by his side, gave him a full account of the influential connections he had, and the extensive business he intended to set up in Olmutz, promised to make him foreman if he answered his expectations, wages was no object to him, but they would not speak of that till they reached their destination.

It was finally arranged that Herman and his new master should set out together in the beginning of the following week. The young man went back delighted to thank Old Fritz, who said as usual it was nothing; but he added, "I hope Klaken and you will

always agree as well." Then Herman wrote off to Christian Rothland to have one of his grand alarums forwarded to Olmutz; he had grown bold and hardened on the over-sleeping business, and the consequent loss of situations by this time; and was he not going to be made foreman of a superior establishment; and were not Klaken and he about to make each other's fortune? The note to his old master was therefore brief and somewhat grand. He set out with his new employer at the appointed time, and on his arrival at Olmutz, found a grand alarum, of the best construction, awaiting him at the carrier's house, but not a line from Christian Rothland, except on the machine itself, where there was written in the master's strong, clear hand, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

Herman was more displeased than admonished by that wise and faithful warning; it was evident that his brilliant prospects had made no impression on the quiet and skilful clockmaker of Brunn, and very soon after his coming to the new scene of business, they began to change and fade from his own view. Instead of the superior premises which Klaken was to have, there appeared a small workshop in an old and narrow street, with a room over it for Herman and another for his master; the extensive establishment consisted of themselves and a poor boy, who was called an apprentice, but he did all the errands and was kept busy, besides waiting on Klaken. The latter belonged to that order of men found in all countries, who take no trouble or responsibility which they can shift upon another, and allow no hand to profit by the work but their own. He was, as Old Fritz had said, a poor clockmaker, and the connections he boasted of proved to be a few very distant relations. The little work he got by them and his own endeavours, Herman was left to execute entirely; the wages which were no object to him, turned out to be a pittance on which the young man could scarcely live in the most careful manner, while all Klaken's

time was spent in the coffee houses and card-rooms of the town. Still his plausible talk went on and carried his workman's mind with it. The business would increase if they only gave it time, he had wonderful expectations from his intimacy with two grooms and a page belonging to the Archduke's chamberlain. His serene highness would come to Olmutz next autumn; who knew what might happen then? And when he had the best house, and the best business in the city, Herman should be his foreman, perhaps his partner.

The brilliant prospects had changed and faded, but no better situation could Herman get for the time. There were not many clockmakers in Olmutz, which is a place of military strength rather than of trade; a small town, but from its position as the key of Moravia, famous in every German war, strongly fortified and always well garrisoned. Moreover, he half believed in Klaken's fine promises, and though he had all the work to do, there was no punctuality to time or tide in the small workshop. That was of no consequence for some time, he set up the grand alarum in his room, resolving that come what would he should learn to keep good hours in future. The machine did its duty nobly, waking up not only Herman but the whole street. As they were mostly working people who lived there, the grand alarum was valued as an insurance of early rising; and as no machine of its power had been ever known in the town before, Klaken's premises got many visitors and some business on its account. Klaken would fain have made the townspeople believe that the grand alarum had been fabricated by himself, but Herman stood out for the honour of his old master, if not for the love of truth, which he had not yet lost; and partly to emulate the fame of Christian Rothland, partly in hopes of obtaining the Archduke's patronage, Klaken at length determined on fabricating a musical-clock which should act as an alarum also, and proclaim the hours with a flourish of trumpets. Such time-keepers

were in great request and fashion at the period, and some of them are still to be found in the old palaces and mansions of Germany; the Archduke was known to be particularly partial to clocks of the kind, and Klaken made it clear to his only workman, that if they could but execute a piece of machinery to the satisfaction of his serene highness, their fortunes would be made, and their partnership secured.

The clock was commenced accordingly, but not by Klaken, he was not craftsman enough, and far too idle. Herman, as usual, got the work to do. He had the skill and he shared his master's hopes; so did every one who saw the machine in progress. Visitors to the workshop increased, Herman's credit rose among the craftsmen of the town, and he seemed in a fair way of winning back a reputation worthy of Christian Rothland's apprentice. But while Herman worked at the musical-clock, the officers of the garrison took to patronising the only theatre in the town. A new company with new attractions of costume and scenery were brought from Vienna, the townspeople began to throng the place, and Herman was tempted to go too. Seats are cheap in German theatres, but German plays are apt to be long, and the patronising officers chose to select the longest. Herman could not leave till the last scene was finished: and going one evening induced him to go another. The theatre took hold on his indolence exactly as the Social Neighbours, the musical family, and Old Fritz had done; doubtless it had additional attractions for his eye and ear. The habit of late sitting was thus returned to in spite of his prudent resolutions; and without reflecting how much better his time might be spent. Herman trusted to the grand alarum for waking him up in the mornings. It did wake him up, but by degrees as the plays grew longer and he sat later, Herman allowed it to sound on without rising, and fell asleep again when the noise came to an end; he could do his work so much quicker in the course of the day; Klaken was

seldom at home to know at what hour he opened the workshop, and the musical-clock could be quite ready before the Archduke came.

In the latter part of his reckoning Herman was not correct; the late sittings and late risings told on his work, and he was anxious to make the machine as perfect as possible. So the summer wore away, the autumn came, and with it the Archduke, while the clock, though in a forward state, was far from being finished. Klaken exhorted him to diligence, and made some show of helping in the work; but what suited the master much better, was to hang about the castle and make interest with every servant, dependant, or poor relation of the courtiers he could come at, to move his serene highness in favour of the unfinished clock. By dint of perseverance in those endeavours, Klaken at length obtained a promise that the Archduke would certainly inspect the machine before he left Olmutz, and Herman worked hard to make up for lost time. But royal people are apt to move sooner than they are expected. One day when both master and man were in high hopes that the clock would be finished before his serene highness thought of going, they received a message from the castle commanding them in courtly phrase to bring it for inspection at seven o'clock on the following morning, as by eight the Archduke would be on his way to Vienna. "Well, Herman, it is a great opportunity for us, I know our fortunes are in a fair way to be made now," said Klaken. "I am to sup with the merchant Speiler at his country house this evening, and can't get back to town, it will be so late when supper is over, but I will meet you at the castle gate by seven o'clock tomorrow morning; you will bring the clock, and we will go in together. I know the Archduke will order it the moment he sees it, and I am determined to ask a good price."

Matters being thus arranged, Herman put the clock in the best exhibiting order, and then as his principal went to supper at the merchant Speiler's country-house, he thought it would be no harm

for him to go to the theatre. The play was longer than usual, and Herman was later in getting home; but the alarum would rouse him in good time. He went to bed careless and thoughtless, as was now his custom, and it need scarcely be added, prayerless too, with the glare and the glitter of the stage still in his eyes and brain. He woke next morning without hearing the alarum, his watch had run down over-night, but the look of things outside made him conclude it must be near seven o'clock. He got himself and his clock ready in all haste, and hurried to the castle. The guards were marshalled at the gate, and out of it drove a long line of carriages, with postilions and footmen in the Archduke's livery; a rapidly gathering crowd gazed and shouted as they swept down the principal street, for there was his serene highness on his return to Vienna, and the great clock of the castle was just striking eight. Herman stood aghast; but out of the court-yard there rushed a man in a state of frantic excitement, and actually tearing his hair —it was Klaken; he had overslept at the merchant's country-house, but flew to the castle expecting to find Herman and the clock there; on the contrary, he arrived some minutes before his workman, and just in time to see the Archduke step into his carriage. Klaken's wrath at the disappointment of all his grand expectations knew no bounds, and overcame at once his civility and his prudence; though equally blameable himself, he fell upon Herman with every term of abuse, from sluggard downward, declaring that he had been waiting for him above an hour, and the ruin of his business and prospects, which was now certain, would be all owing to him. Herman tried to defend himself, but not with the soft answer which turneth away wrath; he was angry and disappointed too, and wanted to charge his fault upon something or somebody, when the fiercer Klaken snatched the clock from him with a shout of "Go about your business, you lazy sluggard, you shall never enter my workshop more; four masters have had to

send you adrift for your slothful ways, and now the best thing you can do is to go back to Hussenheim, and set up in the goose-market."

Herman turned away, for a crowd had gathered round them laughing and jeering, and the officer of the castle guard ordered them to move on, and not collect a mob there. It was in a vexed and mortified state of mind that he gathered together his small effects, small and worn they had become through his frequent and unprofitable flittings, and left Klaken's premises. To look for another situation in Olmutz was out of the question; Klaken had made all he knew to his disadvantage public; after losing so many places by over-sleeping, nobody cared to employ him, and the general opinion of the craftsmen was that he was fit for nowhere but Hussenheim. "I will go to my old master," said Herman to himself, after thinking over his unhappy case in the corner of a poor and quiet coffee-room. "I have been in fault sometimes, but nobody was ever so unlucky; to think of his grand alarum not awakening me when it rouses all the street? I will go and lay my case before him, and ask his opinion of it. Christian Rothland is a good and wise man, I wish I had followed his advice better; but he was never a hard judge, and will tell me if anybody can, how to manage this business of the alarum and get myself up in time."

With that resolution Herman left Olmutz, and made his way back to Brunn—a sadder, if not a wiser man than when he left it. The Brüder Strasse was settling down in its evening quiet, the sound of hammer and loom had ceased, the single lamp was lighted, and the watchman was singing the first verse of his hymn, when Herman knocked at Christian Rothland's door. "Come in," said the voice of the good master; and raising the latch, Herman stepped into the old familiar room, which looked exactly as it did when he saw it last, except that besides Christian and Gretchen, there sat in his own accustomed seat at the supper-table a mild serious

youth, whom he knew to be a neighbour's son. Travel-worn and but ill-provided, Herman's appearance by this time proclaimed his fortunes, but the honest pair though much surprised to see him, welcomed their former apprentice as kindly and as joyfully as if he had come on his way to set up the long-promised establishment in Hussenheim. Christian made him take the best seat beside the stove, for the autumn night was chill; Gretchen brought good things out of her store to make him better fare, the new apprentice paid him great respect as an older member of the household, and when the first diffidence natural to returning in such a plight wore off, Herman found himself at home again with them all. But he wished to speak in private with his old master to explain matters that looked so much against him, and ask Christian's advice for the future; so when the supper was over, when Gretchen had gone to wind up her household affairs for the night, and the apprentice to shut up the workshop, he told his tale as plainly as he could, for some of it went hard against the young man's pride to tell.

"My boy," said Christian, speaking in his old kindly manner, "thou hast been unfortunate because thou hast been careless, and I fear prayerless. My parting advice must have been forgotten by thee, 'Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation.' Outward means are of little avail without watchfulness and prayer for God's grace. The small alarum would have served thee well if thou hadst only attended to its warnings, and prepared thyself for them; without that attention and care, the grand alarum at last failed to rouse thee. The human ear, like the human mind, can get accustomed and callous to anything; no contrivance can help the man who is not determined to help himself. But, Herman, have not other and far more important alarums sounded in thine ears in vain? has not thy conscience slept through the preaching of the gospel, and the warning dispensations of Providence—a sleep which has grown deeper every day, till the garden of thy heart, like that of the

sluggard, is getting overgrown with thorns and briars? My boy, this careless dependence upon helps and means, this readiness to forget our own watch and work, are the besetting sins of men in Christian lands and churches. Cast them from thee, Herman, and with them cast away the follies and fashions of the world, which have come between thee and thy better life. Since thou hast not prospered in thy travels abroad, stay with thine old master; thou wilt help me to work and to train my new apprentice; we will help each other, I trust, to walk in the narrow way, and thou mayest do better in the Brüder Strasse than in the busiest street of the greatest city. The year is drawing to a close and another is coming on, a time which should remind us of the close of this life, and the coming of the eternal one. If it be our Master's will that we should enter upon that new year, let us resolve, in the strength of his grace, to be more watchful, and attentive to our great concerns; and thus, Herman, thou and I, and all our brethren, may truly profit by what some will call the unexampled failure of Christian's alarums."

The Bible of Val du Berger.

CHAPTER I.

A SPY VISITS THE VALLEY.

IT was midsummer time in the Val du Berger, a mountain dell lying deep and green among the Cottian Alps, which divide France from Piedmont, and within the frontier of the latter country. The forest which sheltered it on the north and east, and grew up the mountain sides so high and far, looked darkly grand in the fulness of its summer foliage; the upland pastures which stretched away for many a mile on the south and west, were clothed with the summer grass and sweet with the Alpine flowers; and the mountain-peaks that rose on all sides above forest and pasture lands were robed in the purple haze which summer lends to those cold and lonely summits. The Val du Berger had a right to its name—meaning The Shepherd's Valley—for all its inhabitants were shepherds or herdsmen, and had been such from one generation to another—time immemorial. Their ancient village stood in the midst of the dell. There was neither church nor market there, and little distinction of size or shape in its steep-roofed and vine-covered cottages. The cornfields around were small, and promised but a scanty harvest. The soil was fitted for pasture rather than tillage: but in every sheltered spot sheds for cattle and folds for sheep showed that there was neither want nor idleness in the Val du Berger. The evils and the vices which want and idleness bring with them were not to be found among its hardy and industrious population. The forests and the mountains which shut them in from the world shut out from them the world's pomps and vanities, and kept the current of their lives at once peaceful and free. A poor and rustic, but honest and contented people, were the dwellers in that small and solitary village; with primitive manners, few arts, and little learning among them; they were, nevertheless, enlightened in the best and highest sense. The villagers of Du Berger belonged to the ancient church of the Vaudois—"they who kept the faith so pure of old, when all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones," in the words of the poet of "Paradise Lost"—and for many an age had enjoyed the privilege and distinction most prized among the Vaudois valleys—that of possessing a complete copy of the Bible in the vernacular tongue, a dialect of the old Provençal which stands between French and Italian.

In that possession the villagers rejoiced as their chief riches, more valued than their flocks and herds, their valley farms or their mountain pastures. The courage and constancy of their fathers had kept it safe from the hands of priestly inquisitors and military plunderers in the fiercest and hottest of the persecuting times. It had come down to them with their ancient faith and Christian liberty, which owned no human director, and sought no help from man. In it their aged had found comfort, and their young instruction. Parents had taught their children to read its pages, and practise its precepts, with no school but the cottage fireside, and no church but one in a distant valley, to gain which forest and mountain must be crossed by a path so perilous that only the strong and active could venture on it in the best of the summer days; and the old pastor had not been able to visit the people of Du Berger for years. But with their patrimonial Bible

at home, and the free hills around them, they lived honest, wise, and pious lives, looking for the city that hath foundations, doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with their God. In all the valleys between theirs and Susa—an old fortress town, and the first in Piedmont on the French side, and nearly ten leagues off—there was not a Bible in those days. Inquiring men made long journeys to Du Berger, to consult the sacred volume; and the heads of villages occasionally borrowed it, giving bond for its safe keeping and sure return. Besides the fact that the Bible was theirs by right of descent and inheritance, all the valleys agreed that nowhere could it be more safely kept than in the Val du Berger; the remoteness of the situation, as well as the high spirit and active habits of the shepherd-villagers, made the prying friar or the deputed spy hesitate to venture so far in search of heretical books. The period of our story is about a hundred years ago—a time when the advance of knowledge and civilization was sufficient to make Catholic princes ashamed of openly persecuting their subjects for conscience sake; and the ruler of Piedmont, an ancestor of the present king of Italy, was willing to let the Vaudois live in peace. But the ancient laws against their faith and worship were still unrepealed; the Catholic people of the plains retained their ancient prejudices against them; and the Catholic clergy had the old despotic right of invading their homes, and inquiring into their private lives and religious practices. On these accounts the Du Berger Bible was secretly kept, and as anxiously guarded; but no attempt had been made on it within the memory of that generation. The peace of the lonely valley had been disturbed by no clerical visitor or agent; and when the midsummer time came, all the inhabitants who were fit for such business left their cottages, and went up to the highest of the mountain pastures—the men to shear the sheep and take care of the cattle, and the women to make butter and cheese in the

châlets built for that purpose and standing there from year to year.

The village was almost deserted; nobody remained at home but a few aged people and young children, with two or three of the steadiest girls to manage domestic affairs; but that was nothing new in the Shepherd's Valley. The emigration to the mountain pastures was a necessary and profitable arrangement in its rural life, and took place as surely as the midsummer time came round, the villagers remaining absent for a month or more, the home coming being regulated by the ripening of the corn, which they always returned in time to reap. Every week or so messengers were sent up from the valley or down from the mountains with intelligence of how things went, in either direction. The hardy shepherd-people had courage and strength of mind at all ages. The old grandames, the steady girls, and the little children, did not fear to be left by themselves in that secluded dell; the solitude of the hills gave them safety, and He who set fast the hills was their trust. Robbers or brigands had never been heard of in Du Berger; it was too far out of the way of traffic and travel, and the humble cottages contained no wealth to tempt such evil hands. All the village property, consisting of rustic tools, home-made furniture, and homespun clothes, was left, without precaution, to those feeble guardians, in houses with no security but a wooden latch or bar; and chief of all, there was left the much-prized and long-treasured Bible. In former times the shepherds had been accustomed to take it with them to the mountains, lest some inquisitive priest or prowling friar might take advantage of their absence to rob the village of its precious volume; but the years of rest from such intruders which the valley had enjoyed, and the general reliance on the care and prudence of Jasperine Colbert, made them agree to leave the Bible in its accustomed place of deposit—her ancient oaken chest.

Jasperine Colbert was the oldest woman in the village, being then in her ninety-first year; but a frugal, temperate life, and the pure mountain air, had preserved her faculties, and left scarce a token of that great age about her except the bowed figure and the snow white hair. In her family the guardianship of the village Bible had been vested ever since one of her ancestors, a pastor in the Vaudois church, renowned for his learning and his travels, brought it with him from the university of Lyons, where it was said to have been printed by the first press ever known in the city. The Colberts had kept their trust faithfully, and at a heavy cost: in five generations they counted as many martyrs to the safe keeping of the Bible, Jasperine's father being of the number; and she was accustomed to tell her own and her old neighbour's grand-children, as they sat round her by the winter fireside, the terrible tale of her midnight flight through the forest and over the mountains to Dauphiny, at the time of the last great persecution, which happened in her youth. Mother Jasperine, as the villagers affectionately called her, was one of the few then living who remembered the evil times of sword and fire, and had suffered for the faith by fearful hardships on the wintry Alps. The sincere and simple people paid her no small respect on account of these memories and sufferings, and also on account of her pious life and remarkable prudence. To her the multitude of days had taught wisdom, and the hoary head was a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness. The village Bible was safe in her keeping, as it had been in the keeping of her fathers, and the precious charge would descend to her eldest son after her. Jasperine had but two children; she called them so still, though both were middle-aged men, with families of their own, and lived in two old, but well-kept cottages, standing side by side in one of the most sheltered corners of the valley, under a great sycamore tree. From their doors could be seen on one side the upward slope of

the mountain pastures, and on the other the skirts of the dark pine forest, and the narrow road, winding through its shades and over hill and valley, to the fortress town of Susa.

The active industry and household life which filled those two cottages at other seasons, had dwindled down in that midsummer time to Mother Jasperine knitting in the porch of the one, with her two youngest grandsons, Louis and Henrie, both under seven years, playing about her, and Greta, her steady granddaughter, a fair but thoughtful girl of thirteen, nursing an infant brother at the next door. All the rest of both families were gone to the mountains, and the silence of the sultry afternoon reigned in the village and the valley round it; the chirp of the grasshopper and the hum of the bee were the only sounds to be heard. The little boys were getting tired of play; and on their promise of good behaviour, their grandmother agreed to bring out her treasured Bible, and read to them the history of Jacob and his sons.

"Let me hear it too, grandmother," said Greta, coming out with her infant charge. "I wish I could read the Bible as well as you."

"Thou wilt learn in time, my child, and I hope read it with understanding; learning is slow work with us, having no schools among us, as I am told they have in the towns beyond our mountains. But this is a quiet hour,—we will have a lesson together to cheer our hearts now that we are left alone."

And, stepping into the cottage, Mother Jasperine brought out of the chest which stood by her own bed, as a miser might have kept his treasure, a large volume with brazen clasps and a cover of chamois skin. No modern household would have thought that book ornamental; it had received no embellishment from the binder or engraver's art, but its pages of coarse dark vellum contained the word of life, which through Europe's darkest ages

had been the light of the Alpine valleys, and the wellspring of many a martyr's faith. They also contained all the literature those simple cottagers knew or dreamt of, and were interesting alike to the old and young. Mother Jasperine sat down in her accustomed place; Greta seated herself by her grandmother's side with little Denis half asleep on her lap; the two boys sat down at her feet but looked up with fixed attention, while the woman of ninety years proceeded at once to teach her granddaughter, and read to them the wonderful story of the father of Israel. The early morning and the latest evening of life had met in the little group that sat in the vine covered porch of their paternal cottage, reading of the patriarch who, like their own people, had been a shepherd and a sojourner by hill and valley.

So earnestly were their minds engaged with the history and their grandmother's explanations,—for though small in other books, Mother Jasperine's learning was large in the Bible,—that none of them saw, till a movement of little Denis made Greta look round, a stranger who was rapidly approaching the cottage from the forest road. Besides the fact that few strangers were seen in the Val du Berger, his appearance was sufficiently unlike that of the shepherd people to arrest their attention. He was a tall, thin man, clad in a long grey gown of coarse serge girt round his waist with a hempen cord; his feet were bare; on one side he carried a capacious wallet, on the other a string of wooden beads terminating with a wooden cross; his beard was long, his face and hands not over-clean; on his head he wore a sort of hood, and as the wind blew it back they could see that his crown was shaven. Greta and the boys had never seen his like in all their lives, and looked at him with unfeigned astonishment, but the young girl observed that his pace which had been so rapid, slackened as he caught their gaze, and he approached the porch leaning on his stout staff with every appearance of weariness and fatigue.

"Good-day to you, my children," he said, in the mountain dialect, but with the accent of the plains. "Will you give a poor man leave to rest from the heat of the day, and a drink to cool his parched lips? I have lost my way coming over the hills to Val de Marie, and I am like to die with heat and thirst."

"You are a long way from Val de Marie, sir," said Greta, taking upon herself to speak, as she perceived with some surprise that her grandmother had slipped into the cottage; but hospitality was regarded as one of the first duties among the mountain people, and Greta added, "You are welcome to rest here and to anything we have." So saying she led the way into the family room, a rustic apartment with white walls, a tile floor, and homely furniture made of the forest timber. She set down little Denis in a safe corner, and made haste to get a barley loaf, a piece of cheese, and a pitcher of goat's milk for the stranger. He gave her far more thanks than Greta thought she deserved, fell to the viands, and also fell to praising the house, the two boys, little Denis, and herself.

"He cannot be one of our people, or he would ask a blessing on his food first," thought Greta. "I will tell my grandmother." And just then she heard him say to Louis, who being a curious child had crept near to look to him, "Where are your father and mother, my dear?"

"They are gone to the high pastures with all the rest of our village," said the boy.

"Are they all gone up there, and nobody left in the valley but old folks and children?" inquired the stranger in a low tone.

"Not one," replied Louis with accustomed frankness; and as he spoke Mother Jasperine came out of the inner room. She welcomed the stranger with her usual civility and composure; but Greta observed that her grandmother had laid by the Bible and

was somehow troubled in her mind, though she gave little outward sign of it, but sat down to her knitting. The stranger repeated his thanks and praises of everything about him; repeated his tale of losing his way to Val de Marie, and the heat and thirst he had suffered; but he asked Louis no more questions, and when Mother Jasperine had given him clear directions for regaining his path, and he had made a hearty meal, he rose at once, though pressed to stay and rest himself, saying the day was far spent and he would have little enough time to reach his journey's end before nightfall. They bid him good speed, and the stranger went his way at a surprising pace for a man so much fatigued. Mother Jasperine followed him with her eyes from the nearest window, and when she turned Greta saw that she looked troubled indeed.

"Have I done anything to offend you, grandmother?" said the good and gentle girl. "Was it not right to ask the stranger in?"

"It was right, my child. Thou hast done nothing to offend me."

"But, grandmother, what troubles you?"

"I can't exactly tell, Greta; old folks will have troubled thoughts at times: they are afraid of that which is high, and fear is in the way, as Solomon says. But, Greta, you have nimbler feet than mine; will you take a message from me to André du Roche? He is cutting wood to-day at La Reste; it is not a league off, and you will be back before sunset. Say that Mother Jasperine will be thankful to see him as soon as he can come."

"Shall I leave you and the children alone?—are you afraid of anything, grandmother?" said Greta as she drew on her mountain buskins, for a league through the forest was nothing to the shepherd girl.

"He that is above all is with us; why should we fear?" said Mother Jasperine, the troubled look passing away from her calm

and kindly face. "But go and bring André to me, and I will take care of little Denis."

In another minute Greta was speeding up the forest road to La Reste, an open knoll or rising ground on the outskirts of the wood, and notable among the people of Val du Berger because, from a wooden pillar erected on its highest point, the signal of a red cloth used to be displayed to warn the men up in the mountain pastures that some danger threatened their village, and they should hasten home. The signal was seldom wanted of late years, but kept safe in the hollow of an old tree hard by, and André du Roche was its guardian, an honest and hardy woodcutter, whose pride was that his great-grandfather, a woodcutter also, had saved the valley from the Duke of Savoy's soldiers by that same red cloth; and he could make it be seen, if need were, up to the glaciers which summer never thawed. Greta found him there, hewing away at a fallen pine, and told her grandmother's message.

"Good!" said André. "I would leave the best tree I ever felled, to oblige Mother Jasperine." And dropping his axe, he hastened back with her to the valley.

Mother Jasperine was sitting in the porch, and seemed right glad to see him; but she reminded Greta that the goats were to be milked, and the sun was wearing low. The children were already in bed, and when the dutiful girl went about her accustomed office, Mother Jasperine and the woodcutter were left alone.

"I have sent for you, André," said the woman, who had seen the last great persecution in the valleys, "because I have fears—may be foolish ones. There came a barefooted friar to our house this day. Thank the Preserver of men I have not seen one of the kind these thirty years; but, André, there were friars coming in the very same fashion before the priests and the soldiers fell on us in my youth. They say times are changed, and I hope they are;

but I heard him ask the child Louis if our men were all gone up the mountains, and I doubt he got a glimpse of the Bible in my hand before my old eyes caught sight of him. I put it in the very bottom of the chest before I could come out to speak to him at all. May be it shows the weakness of my faith, André, but I want you to keep a sure watch on the road to Susa, and hoist the signal if you see anything like priests or soldiers coming."

"I'll do it, mother," said the woodcutter; "not a squirrel shall pass the Susa road that I won't see. But the wisest people say that the persecuting times are all over, never to come again; and I hear that on the other side of the mountains there is a pastor who has been in England, where every one has a Bible and may read it without fear, and he says the like liberty will be found in our valley yet."

"The Giver of all good grant it, and make the people of those better days worthy of their privileges!" said Mother Jasperine. "But, André, my mind misgives me about this friar. You will keep the watch and hoist the signal if you see cause; and let the matter be between ourselves, not to frighten the poor women and children left in the village, which would be worse than useless."

"That I will, mother," said André; "but the shadows are growing long; my sons will be coming in from their work in the forest, and wondering where I am."

"Good night, then; and He that neither slumbers nor sleeps keep you and us!" said Mother Jasperine, as he left the cottage and sped home to his dwelling among the pines.

CHAPTER II.

THE ENEMIES OF THE FAITH FOILED.

ALL the time she was milking the goats, Greta wondered what had troubled her grandmother that day, and why she had sent for André du Roche; but, as among the Vaudois, young people were taught to reverence their elders, the girl could venture on no inquiry when she returned to the cottage and found André gone. Mother Jasperine had recovered her usual cheerfulness; but in the evening prayer with which their day was always closed, she prayed earnestly that they might be kept from the designs of evil men, and that the book of life might be allowed to remain among the people of Du Berger. A vague terror fell upon Greta's mind, daughter of the mountains though she was. She said her own prayers earnestly that night, and could not help wishing, as she fell asleep, that her father, her uncle, and her two grown-up brothers were somewhere nearer than the mountain pastures. But the light of the summer morning, the breeze that came soft and sweet from the southern hills, and the singing of birds in the last of the forest trees, banished that dreary impression, for such things go quickly from the young. Greta went about her accustomed duties, and the little life that was left in the village went on,—the children played, the old people sat at their cottage doors: so did Greta's grandmother, but she often looked cautiously up the forest road, and could not be induced to bring out the Bible and give another lesson that day.

The heat increased as the day wore on; though the sun shone brightly, there was a heaviness in the air which generally foretells the coming of a thunder-storm to the people of the Alps.

"It may be some hours off," said Mother Jasperine; "but the look of the sky will keep people at home in the plain country. Greta, my good girl, I am weary, as old folks like me are apt to grow in the long summer days. I will lie down and take a sleep: and if any stranger should come this way, like the man who came yesterday, be sure to come and wake me."

"I will, grandmother. Do you expect that stranger to come back?" said Greta.

"No, my child; but strangers, neither expected nor wished for, have come to these valleys, and I should like to know of anybody's coming now that our men are away;" and Mother Jasperine stepped in to take the rest her old age needed. All the village seemed to follow her example; the children gradually gave up their play and retired within doors; the old people left their seats in the porches. The hot and heavy air brought on a general drowsiness. Henrie and Louis laid themselves down on the dry grass at the root of the sycamore tree, and fell fast asleep; little Denis slept in his cradle; and in the two cottages there was nobody awake but Greta.

Left thus alone in the silence of the sultry afternoon, her thoughts turned on the history of Jacob, which her grandmother had been reading, and teaching her to read on the preceding day, when they were interrupted by the coming of the stranger. "I am sure I could read it to myself now that there is plenty of time, and they are all asleep," thought Greta. "Grandmother would not object to let me have the Bible, she knows I would take care of it; but I ought not to wake her for that, she is very old and gets up very early. I am sure it would be no harm to take it out of the chest quietly, and not disturb grandmother." On that thought Greta acted directly. Mother Jasperine's home was the cottage of her eldest son, whose children Henrie and Louis were. Greta was the daughter of her youngest; but all the Colberts

lived as one family. Their cottages, as we have said, stood side by side, a little way removed from the rest of the village. Greta had only to step into the next door, steal noiselessly into her grandmother's room, and take the Bible from its place in the oaken chest. She had some difficulty in finding it at first, the precious volume was so concealed and covered with Mother Jasperine's best things; but Greta got it out so quietly that the good old woman's slumbers remained unbroken, and in a few minutes more she was seated in her father's cottage, close by the cradle of her infant brother, and in a corner where the light from the open window fell full upon her book while both she and it remained in deep shadow. As Mother Jasperine had remarked, learning was slow work among the people of the valleys; the children had no teachers but their parents or elder relations, and their time was much occupied in the works of house and field. But Greta had profited by her grandmother's lessons, and great was the girl's delight, in that silent and solitary hour, to spell out the history of the patriarch, and the events of the old and early time.

Completely wrapped up in what she read with such difficulty, Greta did not look up—though she partly heard a sound like that of passing and stealthy feet—till startled by a strange, gruff voice in the next cottage saying, "It is of no use, old woman; we have come for the book, and we will have it. Where is your heretical Bible?" The words made Greta's blood run cold. The Vaudois girl knew too well how often the book, so prized by her people, had been sought out and carried away from other villages; and a glance through the window showed her some half-dozen men, clad like the stranger of the day before, with himself acting as their leader, and making straight for the cottage. They would find the Bible, and take it away from her and her people for ever; and the fault would be hers for taking it out of the chest where her grandmother had hidden it so well. There was no place of concealment

within her reach. If she passed across the window the men must see her and the book; but suddenly it occurred to her to raise the blanket which covered little Denis, and drop the Bible into the cradle beside the child. It was scarcely done when the men rushed in, but Greta, though pale as a sheet, was quietly rocking her infant brother.

How changed was the tone and manner of the man who had been their guest but the day before, as he and his company ransacked every corner, and turned over every article in the cottage! There was neither lock nor bolt to stay their search, and it was soon over. They had displaced and rooted out everything the poor family possessed, but they never thought of looking in the cradle.

"It is not here," cried the leader; "we are only losing our time; they have hidden it in some of their houses, but we shall find it." And from cottage to cottage he and his band went, searching in every chest and cupboard, hole and corner, while the terrified old people and children durst not refuse them entrance or remonstrate against the upturning of their homes. Greta could not speak to her grandmother, for one of the company stood sentinel over the two cottages, to prevent communication, and she continued diligently rocking, as the noise and confusion made little Denis cry, while Hearie and Louis, frightened out of their sleep, crouched in the darkest corner behind her.

The poor children's terror increased as they saw the friars return. Their fruitless search had put them in the worst of tempers: the band were angry at being brought so far over the rough mountain sides for nothing, and vented their disappointment in sneers at their leader's grand discovery, which exasperated him almost to frenzy, and made him resort to one of the worst expedients of the old and evil times. Mother Jasperine had come to her cottage door to see how it fared with her neighbours, and seizing the aged woman by the arm, he roughly drew her into the

room where her grandchildren stood. "Look at this," he cried, pulling a long sharp hunting-knife from under his beads, and flourishing it in the faces of the helpless group; "I know that heretical book is here, and if you don't tell me where it is hidden, I'll kill your grandmother." Poor Greta gasped for breath: the book was there, within two paces of him, in the cradle which she rocked. Nobody knew it but herself, but would she let him kill her good old grandmother? The friar repeated his threat, and flourished his hunting-knife once more; and her lips were opening to reveal the hiding-place when Mother Jasperine stopped her with—

"Greta, my child, keep silence. Neither the laws of God, nor those of his country, permit this man to shed my blood for such a cause. I charge you to keep silence, by the duty which you owe to me, as well as to your absent father and mother."

"Do you, indeed?" cried the furious friar. "Old heretic, I'll kill you and your granddaughter too, if you don't tell me within five minutes where you have hidden the book."

"I am willing to die for our Bible, as my father and my grandfather did, if the Lord, whom I have served for more than ninety years, so wills," said Mother Jasperine; "but bethink you, man, that you must answer for this day's work to Him and to the judges of the land."

"I'll kill you!" And the friar made a rush upon her, knife in hand.

"Oh, grandmother, let me tell him!" cried Greta, in her despair. But as she spoke, a long loud blast of the shepherd's horn came down the valley, and a cry arose without, "The men of Du Berger are coming!"

That cry was a signal of terror to the friar and his band. They knew in what odour the shepherd men held them, from the doings of their order among the valleys in other times, and dreading the

reckoning they might meet with for their present transaction, some fled one way and some another, the leader being the first to drop his hunting-knife and scour away. But neither he nor his company were in time to escape the notice of the shepherds, who came rushing down the steep mountain side, led by Mother Jasperine's eldest son, and Greta's own good father. The young and fiery men of the valley pursued the friars in every direction, and some of the barefooted brethren got warnings against coming back to Du Berger which were not to be forgotten; but the elder and more thoughtful of the shepherds hastened to look after their homes and the helpless children and aged parents they had left in them.

The two Colberts were the first to rush in where Mother Jasperine and her grandchildren still stood, scarcely knowing if they were saved or not.

"Have they taken away our Bible, mother?" cried both at once. But before Mother Jasperine could answer, Greta staggered forward, lifted the cradle blanket, and showed them the precious volume lying safe and untouched beside little Denis.

"All my careful putting away could not have kept our Bible from the hands of those evil men so surely as that hasty hiding of thine," said Mother Jasperine, when her granddaughter at last found breath to explain how the thing had happened. "The word of life has been preserved to us in the keeping of an infant, even as the pure and ancient faith was preserved to our valleys in the huts of shepherd men, when the wise and the great of the world had forgotten it; and so it may be that truth will ever dwell with simplicity."

The ransacked village was soon put to rights again; the women came down the hills to see what had happened; and all the valley rejoiced over the safety of their Bible. André du Roche got great praise for hoisting the red signal of danger, which brought the men down from the mountain pastures in good time. Greta Colbert got still greater praise for her ready wit in devising such a hiding-

place; and, chief of all, they gave thanks to Him whose providence they believed to have directed the girl. A providence indeed it was, for that was the last search which priest or friar ventured to make in the valley. The Colberts kept their Bible without fear or disturbance ever after. The child in whose cradle it was hidden lived to be its guardian, and transmitted it as an heirloom to his descendants, who have no occasion to conceal it now that days of light and liberty are come even to Piedmont. But the children of English homes, with whom the Scripture is a household book, may read with interest, if not with profit, of the value that was set a hundred years ago on the Bible of Val Du Berger.

The Græmes of Glenmavis.

A TALE OF THE JACOBITE TIMES.

CHAPTER I.

THE DOINGS OF THE RED CAIRD.

IN the Scottish county of Linlithgow, and not far from the little town of Bathgate, lies a green wooded dell called Glenmavis, known to the lovers of country walks for flowery banks and bowery dingles, and notable over all Scotland for a distillery of whiskey, which takes its name from the glen. That distillery is said to occupy the site, if not the foundations, of an ancient haw or mansion, which in the year 1750, and for many an age before, was the residence of a family known as the Græmes of Glenmavis. They were, in Scottish parlance, lairds of the surrounding lands, and had been a numerous and powerful connection in the preceding century. But time and change had told upon the clan, its branches had died out, its possessions had been diminished, till at the time of our story, five years after the last Jacobite rebellion, the Græmes consisted of the old laird, who owned and occupied his ancestral mansion, the young laird, who had been, as the phrase went, out in the Forty-five, and was consequently an exile on the continent, Gilbert, an orphan lad and next of kin, his uncle Archie, somewhat further removed, and

a dame who claimed cousinship with them all, and was known as Luckie Sybil.

The old laird was a widower, and without son or daughter excepting him that had turned out for Prince Charlie, much against his father's will, it was said. The old gentleman had been out in the Fifteen, escaped the scaffold rather narrowly, and had a still stronger chance of losing his lairdship. But the intercession of friends in high places had saved the house and part of the surrounding acres from utter forfeiture, and the laird, though known to be an ardent Jacobite (always in hopes that the king would get his own again, and particularly devoted to drinking the health of his Majesty over the water, time and place being convenient), was, like Charles II., determined not to be sent once more on his travels. He had discountenanced and almost disowned his son for following the young Chevalier, and even in his exile seldom mentioned him without such titles as that "daft ne'er do weel," though the young man was given out to be making his way to fame and fortune as an officer in one of the Austrian regiments which the Empress-Queen Maria Theresa had sent to carry on her Italian war. The old laird had news of his exploits for the Jacobite cronies and nonjuring clergymen who occasionally cheered his solitude and shared his loyal potations at the haw. He was believed to be proud of the young master of Glenmavis, as friendly neighbours continued to call the exile, and to entertain some hopes of his son's ultimate restoration to family honours and inheritance, which failing him must pass to the orphan lad, young Gilbert, and his uncle Archie, whom the old laird hated with all his heart.

The feud had its source in a bygone generation. Archie's father and Gilbert's grandfather had abandoned prelacy and the Stuarts for presbyterianism and the Prince of Orange in the Revolution time. Their successors had held fast by their choice in church and state, though it brought them no prosperity. Loss and reduction

had pursued those offshoots of the Græmes, even more than the chief branches of the family tree. The old laird reckoned it a special judgment on their Whiggery, forgetting that many a Scottish house was then flourishing fair on the same confession. But his dislike of the uncle Archie was on nearer and more personal grounds. The relatives had no communication. Jacobites and Whigs could not come together with any chance of peace in those days, yet the sober practice and presbyterian principles of the humbler relation had a rebuking effect in that rustic locality of old neighbours and gossips; moreover, Archie had been from his youth upward in the habit of reflecting severely on what he called the unchristian liberty of the laird's life and conversation, and in later days on the uncommendable courses of his son. The young master of Glenmavis had been a wild youth before he went out in the Forty-five, and the partial uncle took occasion at times to contrast his conduct with the hopeful doings of his own better brought-up nephew, and remarked that if it were according to the designs of Providence, the latter would make a more creditable laird and set a better example to the country side.

Gilbert was acknowledged to be a guid lad by all parties. The laird included him in his denunciation of Whiggish hypocrites and degenerate Græmes, merely because he lived with his uncle who had brought him up; for Gilbert was early left to his care a penniless orphan, and the good man had no children of his own. They would have been far-out cousins but for Archie's marriage, which made him Gilbert's uncle on the maternal side, but the lad's father had been Archie's friend as well as his relation, and in a manner bequeathed Gilbert to him as the only legacy he had to leave, for the boy was motherless. Archie accepted the solemn trust; and not even the old laird could say that he had not fulfilled it, in spite of many a hard reverse and crushing disappointment, which had fallen on his honest and untiring efforts to retrieve his family's position

and maintain the dignity and gentle blood of the Græmes. The last acre of their hereditary lands had been sold in Archie's youth. He had commenced life as a tenant farmer, but his crops had been destroyed and his stock carried off in the rebellion of 1715, his farm happening to lie in the way of the rebel army, and his cousin the laird affording him anything but protection. After that Archie attempted brewing in the neighbourhood of Linlithgow town, but his premises were burned and his business ruined by an accidental fire. Lastly he took to the linen manufacture—a paying one in those days, cotton being yet unknown in the north, and but little south of Tweed. It was easily established too: the yarn was spun by guid wives and lassies, in surrounding farmhouses, the weaving was done by hand-looms, and a slender capital borrowed from a friendly farmer in the west country, who, being an old-light Presbyterian, would take no interest, as that would be putting his coin to usury, but strictly covenanted for repayment at Falkirk Tryst on the following Martinmas, together with the present of seven Scotch ells of guid holland fit for Sabbath wear. This loan enabled Archie to purchase three looms and engage as many skilful weavers, to rent an old but substantial house in the Palace Wynd, then reckoned a respectable street of Linlithgow, and running close by the ruined dower-house of the Queens of Scotland. There Archie established himself and his family, the latter consisting of his faithful industrious wife Marian, his nephew Gilbert as aforesaid, and an attached servant-maid named Meg, who had been in the household for many a year, and was still willing to take her share of its good or evil fortune.

Their neighbours' account of that family was, that they never wasted a minute nor spent half a farthing if they could help it. Steady work and strict economy were the rules of the house. Yet nobody called Archie Græme and his wife skinflints. The spinners who sold their yarn to him in Linlithgow market testified to

getting fair prices, though it might be after a hard bargain. The weavers in his employment agreed that their wages were just and duly paid. No pressure of work, no prospect of profit ever prevented the household from giving time to their family worship, after a good old Presbyterian fashion, and the Sabbath rest was strictly observed throughout the four-and-twenty hours. Meg the maid had no complaints of the domestic supplies, though she sometimes hinted that weel-descended folk could live on little. Weel-descended the Grœmes were known to be, and their hard and honest struggle to retrieve their family position was sincerely respected by their Scottish neighbours. Yet it was not for themselves that Archie and his good wife Marian were striving so much as for Gilbert, "our Gilbert," as the kindly pair were accustomed to call the boy they had brought up as their own son. In spite of reverses and failure in farm and brewery, they had contrived to give him an education befitting his gentle blood, and also to get him articled to Willy Wotherspoon, the most notable writer, that is to say, lawyer, in Linlithgow. Archie would take a turn on the loom himself, and carry the strictly measured webs on a pack-horse to the Lawn Market in Edinburgh; but no earthly consideration could induce him or his Marian to permit Gilbert's having a hand in matters so far beneath his lineage. "Our day is nearly done," they would say, "and his no right risen. Gilbert may come to the lairdship of Glenmavis, or may be to be a law-laird; and no gossippin' wife shall say she e'er saw him measurin' webs, or castin' the shuttle."

Gilbert, being, as we have said, a good lad, did his best to repay their care and kindness by walking according to their precepts and example, minding his school lessons in boyhood, minding his business now that he was grown to man's estate and hoped to be a Writer to the Signet. There were some brighter lads in Linlithgow, many more given to the finery and fashions of their day, but

none that led a more blameless life, or laboured more conscientiously to fulfil the hopes and wishes of his seniors.

There would have been none more likely to shine in ladies' eyes either—for Gilbert was a handsome, graceful youth, worthy to be a descendant of the gallant Grœmes—but for an over-serious, anxious look, arising from inward fears which pressed upon Gilbert's days and nights, first, that nature had never intended him for shining in the law, or making the money Willy Wotherspoon had done; and secondly, that without the last-mentioned requisite he would have no chance of acceptance with Willy Wotherspoon's only daughter and heiress, Miss Grizzy, the belle of Linlithgow, and known to have rejected suitors from every quarter of the Lothians. These were Gilbert's private concerns, not to be mentioned to the old people, of course, though Marian Grœme partly guessed them with a woman's wit, and was not pleased that her adopted son should so far undervalue his own merits and chances in the world. But there was a subject of more public interest to the whole family, if not to the whole town, seldom discussed, and much against the Grœmes' liking, and that was their cousin Sybil. Miss Sybil she had been called in her youthful days, when, as an Edinburgh advocate's daughter, with some pretensions to fashion and more to beauty, she danced at the assemblies, and was toasted in the taverns. But those days were long passed. Sybil Grœme had eloped with an officer of a Highland regiment, accompanied him to Flanders, gone through nobody knew what scenes of life on the Continent, and returned, after forty years of wandering, a tall, thin, withered woman; poor, friendless, and without relations, excepting the Laird of Glenmavis and the Grœmes of Palace Wynd.

Under neither of the roofs would Sybil seek for shelter; and in truth neither was anxious for her company, though willing to contribute, the laird after a grudging, and Archie after a rebuking fashion, to the maintenance of the last and not most creditable

lady of their house; for she was still a Grœme. Sybil received their help with little ceremony and less thanks at first; but by-and-by either the grudge and the rebuke became too much for her patience—Sybil had never been remarkable for that virtue—or her own powers of fine spinning were sufficient for the old woman's support. She plainly told her cousins to keep both their charities and their tongues at home, and refused to hold the smallest intercourse with the family of laird or weaver, as it was her pleasure to term them, excepting Gilbert, who, having never reproved or slighted the antiquated belle, continued to stand high in her favour.

To stand well with Sybil Grœme was something in the estimation of Linlithgow; for scarcely had the poor and wrinkled dame taken up her abode in a half-ruined cottage in the utmost outskirts of the town, and close by the Moor kirk-yard, an ancient cemetery attached to a roofless church, when she became a power and a dread throughout the neighbourhood. In short, it was bruited that Sybil was a witch. Whether she had learned the Black Art in her distant travels, or been initiated into it by dames of dark repute known to her youth in Edinburgh, the townspeople were not agreed. But that she was seen at all manner of uncanny hours and in uncanny places, the roofless church and the ruined palace not excepted, could be testified by young and old; it was equally certain that the future was revealed to her. Had she not prophesied that the palace would be "na the better" of the English dragoons quartered there in the rebellion time, and had she not advised the young master of Glenmavis to have no hand in Prince Charlie's business, for the Chevalier would be uncommon glad to get back to France? Moreover, her wrath had shown itself terrible to niggardly wives and scornful lassies, ill-mannered lads and unmindful men: matches had been broken off, crops blighted, and cattle killed, domestic and trading operations grievously athwarted

by her occult powers, and accident, sickness, and death had been the consequences of her anger.

Fortunately for Sybil, witches were no longer tried and condemned by the High Court of Justiciary, but the Kirk took cognisance of all such culprits. Before the Kirk Session she was cited on sundry flagrant charges, but Sybil defended herself with such spirit and skill that none of them could be proved against her, and threatened the chief of her accusers with actions for defamement, slander, and leasing. Nevertheless, the conviction of her witchcraft remained in the mind of Linlithgow, and a heavy concern it was to the Grœmes in Palace Wynd. The laird took no trouble on the subject except to swear at it; but to Archie, a serious, sober man, an elder in the very Kirk Session before which she had been cited, to his good wife Marian, and to his genteel nephew Gilbert, the black reputation of their cousin Sybil was a more than ordinary trial. Like most men of his time and education, Archie was somewhat uncertain in the matter of witchcraft. Presbyterians and synods of the period were divided in opinion between wicked imposture and a distinct bargain with the enemy. The seniors of the community had seen witches burned, and therefore believed. The young generation took to the new light, and laughed at old-world tales. The Grœmes, including Gilbert, halted in a manner between the two camps; their cousin Sybil had escaped public condemnation and penance, at the kirk door or elsewhere, and they were satisfied to have escaped the family disgrace, but the evidence against her was so strong that every mind in the household was made up on the extreme desirableness of her quitting Linlithgow.

Sybil, however, was in no hurry to quit. To her cousin's remonstrances and friendly offers to forward her removal and distant settlement as far as funds would allow, she answered resolutely, "I'll stay till I like to gang, guid men," and further reply or

explanation was not to be had. But the attention of the townspeople, and even that of the Grames was about this time turned to another subject.

Through all the dwellings of Linlithgow, through all the farms and villages in its neighbourhood, there went a mighty report of the spoliations done by a robber gang that had suddenly appeared on moor and highway to the great loss of travelling traders, and the peril of solitary houses. There was no end to their depredations, and no discovering of their haunts or hiding-places; pursued in one direction by the town guard or by soldiers from the nearest garrison, they were heard of in full action in the opposite quarter. The Edinburgh mail had been stopped and robbed by them, a collector of excise travelling with a mounted servant and holster pistols had been made to deliver up his charge of Government money, and a captain of dragoons on his way to the west country had been plundered within half a mile of Falkirk. What made the accounts still more startling was that they all agreed on the leader being a woman, tall and powerful beyond the wont of the sex, but always attired in female habiliments, the most conspicuous of which was a long red cloak and hood covering the entire face, except a pair of fierce glittering eyes which looked out through a couple of slits in it. The commands of this chieftainess were delivered in a hollow screeching voice which those who heard never forgot, so unearthly was its tone, but they were implicitly obeyed by her followers, and the style and title the band pleased to adopt was the Red Caird and her men.

The term Caird had come down from the Highlands, and originally signified "tinker." But the unscrupulous habits of those wandering artisans gave it a general application to sturdy beggars and bold thieves. The land had been troubled with the like in preceding years; outlawed Highlanders, and disbanded soldiers, and the dregs of the late rebellion had levied contributions

from outlying farms and solitary travellers, but none of their well-remembered doings equalled in skill and audacity those of the Red Caird and her men. The latter seemed to know by instinct where prey was to be had, and how it could be pounced on. The farmer coming home from market after a fortunate sale of corn or cattle was set upon and robbed, while his less lucky neighbours passed the same way, without seeing Caird or man. The house to which money had come, however privately, was sure of a visit on the following night, and at length the town of Linlithgow was alarmed by the news that one of its most respected merchants, who had got large accounts paid in, was robbed and almost murdered in his own house at the foot of the High Street, while his family were absent at the Sabbath evening sermon.

This state of things was not to be borne. The town bailies and the county magistrates held meetings and took measures. The surrounding gentry instituted search and inquiry after the Caird and her accomplices in their respective neighbourhoods. Even the Laird of Glenmavis, who had hitherto kept aloof from public affairs from fear of coming in contact with Whigs, came out of his retirement and showed extraordinary zeal against the common enemy. The public did not wonder, for the laird's house was a lonely one, and, notwithstanding the fines and forfeitures for the Fifteen, seemed to be getting rich of late, if neighbours might judge from what was spent and spared about it. Doubtless he had reason to dread the Caird's coming that way, and the old man took Jacobite occasion to reflect on the reigning powers. Country sides were not harried in that way in the days of rightful kings; and if his son were at home taking care of Glenmavis instead of serving the Empress-Queen, there would be fewer cairds troubling honest people. Nobody else placed such confidence in the absent heir, though, as if in hopes of interesting the country in his favour, the laird's accounts of his exploits in the Italian war were both full and

brilliant at the occasional dinners and convivialities to which the business of the day gave rise among the county gentry. But, except for such social purposes, their meetings and measures were all in vain. No trace of the Caird's haunts or hiding-places could be discovered, no intelligence of whence she came or who were her followers. Travellers who had the misfortune to make their acquaintance averred they had never seen such men before in that part of the country, and the robberies went on by night and day in spite of every precaution.

CHAPTER II.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

SUCH was the state of things in Archie Grœme's neighbourhood when Martinmas approached, and with it the Falkirk Tryst, at which he was to repay the west-country farmer's loan. But a year of hard work and saving had not been sufficient to scrape up the sum out of a newly-established business. Archie was under the necessity of making it out with small borrowings from friendly and well-to-do townspeople. There was nobody in Linlithgow that would not have trusted the Grœmes to any extent; and the honest man's hope was that, having redeemed his pledged word by presenting the whole sum and the stipulated half web of holland, the west-country farmer might be induced, for old friendship's sake and some additional linen, to let him have it for another year.

With this hope Archie rose three hours before daylight, buttoned up the pocket-book containing the silver in the breast of his doublet, loaded his trusty horse-pistol,—being a sturdy Presbyterian of the old school, he was accustomed to maintain the

lawfulness of carrying arms, in self-defence at least,—mounted his good grey mare, took leave of his kindly wife, and joined a party of discreet neighbours, bound like himself for the Tryst, and determined to travel in company as a measure of defence against the Red Caird. The house in Palace Wynd was left to the two solitary women, for on the previous day Gilbert had been despatched by Willy Wotherspoon with some law papers, which one of his advocate patrons required for an important case about to be tried in the Court of Session. There was no mode of transmitting the like in those days except by the hand of a confidential messenger; and Gilbert had sundry commissions to execute besides, including, doubtless to his great delight, the carriage of a handbox full of the weapons with which beauty then made her conquests, from a certain milliner's shop in the High Street to the fair hands of Miss Grizzy. The journeys of both uncle and nephew, which would now seem such trifling matters, were events and undertakings at that period when the roads leading from one Scottish burgh to another were little better than bridle-paths winding over marsh and moor, and such gentry as the Red Caird and her men might be met with at any turn. But the travellers were expected home the same night, for the following day was that of the fast, appointed by the Kirk, in preparation for its half-yearly communion, when Archie, being an elder, neither should nor would be absent, and Gilbert, being a serious lad, would be looked for in his pew.

Archie and his neighbours reached the Stenhousemuir, or wild common on which the Tryst is still held, without risk or impediment, except what arose from the rough and miry road. The west-country farmer was there, right glad to see his old friend and punctual debtor, ready and willing to adjourn with him to the "Muir Inn," get paid his money, receive the tribute of holland, and stand a glass over which to warm friendship and discuss the

views of the country. The whole business was done in so satisfactory a manner by Archie, that his west-country friend consented to let him carry back the loan, and retain it for another year, merely stipulating that the linen to be presented next Martinmas should measure an ell or twa mair. The negotiations requisite to bring about this treaty occupied a considerable time. Archie was a prudent man, and the west-country farmer was not to be dealt with in a hurry. By the time the pocket-book was fairly buttoned up again in the breast of his doublet, his acknowledgments made, and his leave taken with proper ceremony, Archie found that the autumn night was falling fast, and, still more to his dismay, that his discreet neighbours had settled themselves fast in the comfortable best parlour of the inn, with guid Scotch ale, and a rousing fire, and made up their minds not to move for some hours. In vain Archie reminded them that the road was deep and narrow, that the new-moon, which was already looking faintly through the evening mist, would set early, and the darkness favoured ill-meaning folk. The ale was strong, and they were resolute to stay; some even suggested that, Caird and all considered, it might be the wiser course to remain till daylight came again; and when the elder warned them that next day was the fast, the fact made so little impression on their somewhat bewildered minds that Archie lost his temper, or rather his prudence, and in pure desperation, though not without hopes of setting a good example, mounted his mare and set forth alone. The night came down cold and dreary, with a keen breeze from the north-east, and masses of drifting clouds, which now covered the sky with blackness, and then allowed the moon and stars to shine out. Archie was well acquainted with the rough and narrow road which led over the moors to Linlithgow. His mare knew it also; for many a time had she come and gone. Yet a less resolute man would have repented his solitary journey; the early travellers had gone home,

the late ones had remained in the inns of Falkirk, or the Tryst Muir, and in all the wide wastes there seemed nobody abroad but himself. It was a dreary feeling, but Archie pushed gallantly on, and now half the journey was accomplished; for a clearing of the cloud-drift let him see the tangled trees and underwood which grew on the site of an old farmhouse, and its orchard, known as Haddie's Was, lying some five miles from Linlithgow, and within half a mile of Glenmavis. It was a ruined overgrown spot, separated from the high-road only by a narrow, hollow, or dry ditch, half hidden with brambles and wild holly; but the sight of it cheered Archie's heart with the knowledge that he was nearing home.

Suddenly the black clouds again shut out moon and stars; the sagacious mare moved more slowly in the total darkness; the wind came sighing through the tangled trees; but, mingled with it, Archie caught the sound of a suppressed laugh in the dry ditch by his side. The solitary traveller's hair bristled up; but with instinctive courage and caution, he quietly drew his pistol from the holster, took a firm seat, laid his finger on the trigger, and tried to urge his mare forward. The next moment her head was caught by a stronger hand than his, a glance of starlight fell on a tall figure in a red cloak, and a hollow screeching voice shouted, "You're in a muckle hurry, Archie Græme, but stand and deliver to the Red Caird."

The sight of the figure had left Archie no time to think of anything but the west-country farmer's siller, and the chances that hung upon it for him and his; and as the last words rang in his ears, he raised his weapon, pulled the trigger, and mingled with the report of the large horse-pistol came a deep groan and a heavy fall, while the mare, at once liberated and terror-stricken, bounded away in a wild gallop.

Archie urged her on with whip and spur, knowing well that he rode for his life; there were sounds on the moor behind him—it

seemed of steps and voices, but by degrees they died away, and when the mare, at length exhausted by her speed and fear, paused for a breathing space, all was silent, and he was close by an old thorn which marked two miles from the town. "I have shot the robber," thought Archie: "would that he had fallen by some other hand; yet the deed was lawful and necessary, and doubtless a special dispensation of Providence." Then with a brief thanksgiving for his preservation, and a prayer to be forgiven if he had done amiss in that strait, the brave and pious man urged his faithful mare to the road once more. But this time it was with encouraging words which the intelligent creature seemed to understand, as she tried to hasten on, when, to Archie's great discomfort, he discovered she had met with an accident in some rough rut or stone in that headlong gallop and was lame in one of her feet. There was no chance but to dismount and lead the mare home as quickly as he could. The clouds had cleared away now, the stars were shining brightly, and the spires of the town would soon be visible. Archie sped on, cheering his poor mare to follow with every accustomed phrase, from "bouny lady" upward, when once again his ear caught sounds from the moor; it was horsemen coming at full speed, the Caird's men in pursuit of him, no doubt. Archie dropped the bridle, and was starting to run for his life, but a shout of "Wha's there?" made him stand and turn, for he recognised the voice of his neighbour Jamie Johnson, better known as the town flesher. The sturdy butcher had gone to the 'Tryst with his two apprentice lads, and the three being armed with the weapons of their peculiar calling, and refreshed with strong ale, made no difficulty of travelling home by night. Archie was glad to see them, he said, as ever he had been to see the sun; but when they came near enough to exchange greetings, it was manifest that the flesher and his apprentice lads had got a considerable fright.

"Archie Greme," cried the master, as soon as he recognised him, "can a man o' guid kin and an elder of the Kirk like you tak nae order wi' that uncanny woman that calls herself your cousin?"—and he proceeded to relate in still stronger terms how he and his lads in trotting past Haddie's Was had heard something moaning in the dry ditch, stopped to see what could be there, and saw Sybil Graeme shaking her head and fist at them through the brambles, but the face and the fist were both spattered with blood. Such a sight and at such an hour, together with Sybil's evil fame, were sufficient to make them ride on as fast as whip and spur could urge their horses, and the flesher and his lads had never slacked their speed till they caught sight of Archie on the road before them. Their tale sent a thrill of horror to his heart,—was it his cousin he had seen and shot?—but Archie was a prudent man, and determined to keep his own counsel till the matter was properly investigated. His nephew was either at home or on the way, and they could go back under cover of the night to Haddie's Was, see what was to be seen in the dry ditch, and take measures to keep the family out of trouble and town's talk. Having therefore expressed his astonishment and indignation at Sybil's ongoings, and regret that it was not in his power to amend her ways, kinsman and elder though he was, Archie accompanied the flesher and his apprentices to the town, parted with them at his own door, and was joyfully welcomed by Marian and Meg, who had been thinking of nothing but cairds and robbers since his departure.

Gilbert had not yet returned; but Archie had a trust in the sense and discretion of his good wife; they had been proved in many an emergency of a less perplexing kind; and now, while the maid was out of hearing on preparations for supper, he took Marian into his full confidence, told her what had happened to himself at Haddie's Was, what the flesher and his apprentices had seen, and

his intention of going back as soon as Gilbert arrived. It was a strange and serious business, and kept the honest pair in deep consultation for a considerable time.

While they were still discussing it, and wishing for Gilbert's return, their nephew had parted with his fellow-travellers in the Edinburgh and Glasgow coach at the opening of a byway, which led across the country to Linlithgow, and was passing the Moor kirkyard with rather hasty steps. The wall of the old cemetery was broken down in many places; and as Gilbert passed one of those breaches, wondering if his uncle had got safe home from the Tryst, and taking care of the precious box committed to his charge, out into the clear starlight stepped Sybil Græme.

"Ah, Gilbert, lad," she said, in a shrill whisper, "you are afoot noo, but you'll ride the high horse soon, I tell ye; for this night has made you master of Glenmavis, and you'll be laird I am thinking before the swallows come back to their nests in yon auld kirk."

"What do you mean, woman?" said Gilbert, more frightened than he would have been willing to own.

"What I say, lad; but gang your ways," said Sybil, retreating into the churchyard; and with a feeling of dread which he couldn't master, Gilbert started off, and never stopped running till he reached his uncle's door. Miss Grizzy's box fortunately escaped all casualties, and the old couple lost no time in telling him the strange story of the night. But Gilbert's own adventure at the Moor kirkyard convinced them that Sybil had not suffered by the encounter, and the whole matter seemed so dark and mysterious, that uncle, aunt, and nephew could not help believing there was something unearthly in it, and agreed to suspend all investigations till after the Kirk's fast, as it was not fitting their minds should be distracted from the duties of that solemn occasion.

When they were over, and the inquiry was resumed, no trace of Sybil was to be found. Her cottage was empty, and she was gone, nobody knew where; her spinning-wheel was left as if she had risen from it; her scanty furnishings all in their places; but the quiet search which the Græmes made throughout the country, and the more public one instituted by the Kirk Session on the report of the flesher and his apprentices, failed to discover Sybil's retreat. The dry ditch at Haddie's Was gave no evidence of Archie's encounter with the Red Caird, except that the brambles and shrubs were broken, and the soil trampled and moist, though no rain had fallen. The Red Caird had disappeared, however, as well as Sybil; from that night solitary travellers and lonely farmhouses saw no more of the dreaded gang; and as the country was glad enough to get quit of them without inquiring too deeply into the cause, Archie Græme kept his adventure and his family concern in it to himself. It was often discussed between uncle, aunt, and nephew. They could arrive at no conclusion but that Sybil was involved in the mystery, and that the repute the country had given her was more than merited. Their convictions on this subject were powerfully strengthened about a fortnight after her disappearance, when David Dempster, an old and confidential servant of the Laird of Glenmavis, called to say that the young master had died in Italy; and, as Gilbert was the next heir, the laird expected him and the rest of the Græmes to put on suitable mourning. David was circumstantial in his account of the young master's death, which took place at Beccia by sudden illness; but the date struck Gilbert and the family with something more than astonishment; for the most exact reckoning proved it was on the night of Falkirk Tryst. The news had come by a courier express from Italy; and the laird was in such sore sorrow for the loss of his son that he would see nobody, not even his ancient friends, saying that Glenmavis must fall to Whigs as well as the three kingdoms. The old man's prediction was very soon fulfilled. He pined away in his solitary grief, and died in the early spring-time; and, true

to Sybil's prophecy, Gilbert Græme was laird in his stead before the swallows built in the old kirk.

The days of uncle Archie's difficulties were over, for Gilbert proved a liberal as well as a dutiful nephew, and the elder Grœmes, with his help, not only paid their liabilities, but maintained one of the most flourishing manufactories of linen in Linlithgow. Moreover, Willy Wotherspoon found out that his pupil, who had given up the law for lairdship, was an eligible match for his only daughter; and Miss Grizzy abandoned her many suitors to despair, by consenting to become Lady Glenmavis. The good example to the country side which his uncle had promised for him so long ago was never wanting in Gilbert Græme. The old Jacobites and non-juring clergy, while they missed the socialities of his predecessor, were obliged to admit the fact. The guid lad proved a guid laird; but the stricter part of the community thought his charity was going beyond reasonable bounds, when, about three years after his settlement in Glenmavis, Sybil Græme reappeared one day in Linlithgow, took possession of her ancient cottage, which nobody had cared to inhabit, and sent to her cousin at the haw for some help against the winter, as it happened to be Martinmas. Gilbert sent her the required assistance, called to see how she was getting on, and showed the old and ill-reputed woman a good deal of cousinly kindness. The ill-repute was of course remembered against Sybil, but the days of her deserving it were over. She had evidently turned from her uncanny ways in that three years of absence; for never again was she seen out of place or time. Sybil kept quietly at home, minding her spinning-wheel, attending the kirk sometimes, and rather avoiding her neighbours. The elder Grœmes followed Gilbert's example in helping her; for, either through the failure of her spinning, or the peculiar craft with which she had been credited, Sybil seemed much poorer than formerly; but no endeavour of old or young, however judiciously made, could induce

her to enter on or give the slightest explanation of her adventures on the night of the Falkirk Tryst.

They had long given up all attempts on the subject, when Sybil's lengthened and singular life at last drew to a close. The old woman was on her death-bed—the town doctor said so; and she herself affirmed she should never rise. Gilbert Græme had called to see her, it might be for the last time, and the serious-minded young laird thought it his duty to remind her that she had more than common sins to repent of.

"What! is it the clavers of the country you would ha' me mind?" said Sybil.

"No," said Gilbert; "but what about the Red Caird, and how did you get the news you gave me beside the Moor kirkyard?"

"Weel, listen," said Sybil. "The Red Caird was the young master of Glenmavis that was said to be in Italy, but had come back with a set of outlawed lads, and lived at high jinks in the haw. I did some work and watchin' for him, being a cousin, and gettin' a sma' share of the winnins; but he would catch your uncle's bridle on the night of the Falkirk Tryst, when we were hidden in Haddie's Was. Archie Græme shot him dead on the spot; and that is how I got the news to tell you beside the Moor kirkyard. There is many a wife has got the name of a witch for doings that had na witchcraft in them as weel as me," added the dying woman; "but just let them claver, and keep the truth to yoursel, Gilbert lad; it would na be to the credit of the Grœmes of Glenmavis."

The Ashberrys' Uncle.

CHAPTER I.

WHO HE WAS.

THE Ashberrys were a successful family. We all thought so in the little town of Penzance, where their grandfather had come from some place north, and settled many a year before my time. He was the first root of them, as far as I know, and his children were a dozen strong, all married and settled, with families and businesses of their own. They were so many, people said the Ashberrys had got all the trades among them: grocers and tailors, drapers and builders, stationers, fishmongers, and I don't remember what else they were; but every one was driving on and up, enlarging shops, increasing business, and extending connections, till "getting on like the Ashberrys" became a sort of proverb in Penzance. They were qualified for getting on, and I suppose they deserved it. The Ashberrys were, every one, that sort of people that begin with twopence halfpenny and die aldermen. If a penny could be turned in any direction, they were the people to turn it. If an advantage could be got—mind, I mean in an honest, lawful

way—they were the people to take it. Economical houses, well-stocked shops, punctual attendance on business, regularly paid accounts, and safe speculations; in short, industry, prudence, and a keen eye to the main chance, made the Ashberrys what they were, and would likely take them to the top of the tree. Such families are the bone and sinew of every thriving country that gets rich by work and trade; but there are faults attendant on the character, and the Ashberrys had their full share of them. They were so worldly-wise that nothing but getting and keeping had any interest for them; less prosperous people had tales of over-reaching which law and justice could not reach; their workmen and dependants had grievances, in the shape of stinted wages and lengthened hours, which could not be published with safety, but were often discussed in private; and it was generally allowed that what the apostle calls "the root of all evil" had sent its fibres deep and far into the hearts of the Ashberrys. As with the love of money generally comes the pride of it, they had their share of that too. The town charities were believed to profit by the fact: giving in secret was a business of which nobody accused them; every rise in funds, or in prospects, was made the very best of, and more; and as they increased in grandeur there were goings to the sea-side, magnificent appearances in public, and parties given twice a year or so, which made old folks talk as they remembered the time their grandfather sold herrings and pilchards from door to door.

It is a rare flock that has not one stray or ill-doing sheep, and there was one among the Ashberrys. Uncle Sampson he was called, when they did speak of him, which was as seldom as the honest people could, for uncle Sampson was the disgrace, that is to say, the poor man of the family. I do not know that he ever went astray, in the common acceptation of that term: strong drink had no uncommon attractions for him, and the one weakness which brought such

ill fate to his mighty namesake of old did not trouble uncle Sampson's days or keep his purse empty. Yet empty it was, or nearly so, from his youth up. Whether it was that he was naturally deficient in the worldly wisdom so liberally bestowed on all the Ashberrys, or that fortune had selected him as scapegoat for the entire race and name, we all knew that uncle Sampson had tried a thousand ways of getting forward, but never one with success. Failure and disappointment met him at every turn. If he tried business, something was sure to go wrong in the neighbourhood and send him out of it. If he got a situation, his employer would die, or become bankrupt. In short, bad luck attended the man without any sufficient cause that one could see; for he was an honest, sober, industrious creature, with little pushing and less upsetting power, which probably helped to keep him in the background, and more good-humour, patience, and kindliness than all the rest of the Ashberrys put together.

Uncle Sampson had, of course, married in his day: I never knew an unlucky man that did not. His wife had been an honest, good-natured, hard-working being like himself. They had lived in great harmony, but their wedded life was short, for she died early, leaving him two sons, who turned out regular Ashberrys of the true on-getting type, and had by no means a high opinion of their father. The death of his wife, and the failure of one of his many shops, which happened about the same time, had made him give up housekeeping while the boys were yet young, and his brothers and sisters kept them, in a manner, from house to house, till, after looking for situations till he was tired and desperate, Sampson went on board a herring-smack bound for London, could get nothing to do there, and at last turned sailor, going out and coming in with merchant-ships to and from all quarters of the world; sometimes trying little speculations by favour of captains and stewards—for Sampson was popular wherever

he went—but never finding one of them successful; occasionally getting shipwrecked, getting robbed, getting into accidents, and stealing back to see his boys, or ask for help sometimes at the most private of the Ashberry's back doors.

Things had gone in that fashion with uncle Sampson for more than twenty years. His sons had grown up, got on, and married. The one was a well-to-do tailor; the other kept a draper's shop of some repute and size. I believe the Ashberrys thought they had a right to their constant gratitude for putting them in ways of getting their own living; and the young men had an equally strong conviction that their uncles and cousins had got every penny they advanced out of them. There was no love lost on either side; they were too busy and too prudent people to quarrel openly, but the whole town knew what they, and their respective wives in particular, had to say of each other; yet on one point the Ashberry tribe, young and old, married and single, were unanimous, and that was in being ashamed and tired of uncle Sampson. The poor man sneaked to the back doors of his own children, as he did to those of his brothers and nephews. He got lectures from them, every one, in the down-stair rooms; they gave him as little else as they could with any conscience; and nobody was ever allowed to know of his being in Penzance if they could help it—a fact of which spiteful neighbours, who wanted to take the Ashberrys down, were apt to avail themselves, by watching for, and making public mention of uncle Sampson's appearance. The lectures increased, and the help diminished in consequence. The Ashberrys were sure it was all his own fault: he was a scapegrace, a black sheep, a never-do-well, and he should not be encouraged to come about respectable families.

Uncle Sampson had come and gone, it was supposed for the last time, one winter about Christmas. The season was unusually cold and stormy. The old man had been shaken by an attack of

yellow fever at Barbadoes, had lost part of his wages and got out of employment by a dispute between the owners, and the ship going into Chancery, and he was particularly willing to stop and rest in some quiet corner among his old friends and kinsfolk on shore. But none of the prudent Ashberrys would hear of such a thing: they all had their own families to keep, their respectability to maintain, and their censorious neighbours to keep out of news. He should go to London, he should go to sea, since he was fit for no better: a sober man could always get something to do. In short, they would not have him in Penzance; and under the lectures, the snubbing, and the grudgedly-given help, the old man's patient spirit at length gave way: he turned from their doors with bitter words to sons and brothers, and vowed he would never come back except with money enough to buy them all out of house and home. That vow was registered at the "Pipe and Tankard," a small, quiet inn situated in Back Lane, and kept by an ancient but active and honest couple, who had entertained poor travellers there for nearly sixty years, and were reckoned among the oldest inhabitants of the town. The Floods had been acquainted with Sampson's father in the herring and pilchard days, and continued in the same friendship with his one unprosperous son. Sampson had not grown too rich and proud for their society: many a friendly chat, not to speak of more substantial comforts, had he shared with them. There were kindly welcomes at the "Pipe and Tankard," when children and kinsmen looked coldly on the returned, but still poor sailor, and could not have him in their respectable houses by reason of better company. There were delighted listeners to the rather lengthy yarns which, in common with all travellers, Sampson delighted to spin. His adventures on sea and shore had realised no money: they were, therefore, of no account in the ears and eyes of the Ashberrys; but the Floods were sufficiently astonished at them, ready to

applaud the traveller's daring, to believe in all the importance he assumed. Sampson could do that as well as other men, though it was only permitted at the "Pipe and Tankard;" and, what was more, they believed, as the old man himself did—unlucky men have generally faith in extraordinary hauls—that he would one day come back rich and great, to the confusion of all his scorners and the lifting up of his faithful friends. So Sampson confided to them the woeful tale of his family's harshness. They had heard many of the kind, and sympathized with him: it was all the poor old people could do, besides giving him a night's lodging and a good breakfast before setting forth in search of another berth before the mast; and they also highly approved of and made public Sampson's determination not to come back without his fortune made. His friends and kindred naturally considered the resolution, provided it were kept, a sentence of perpetual banishment from Penzance. Nobody ever imagined that Sampson had any fortune to make, much less the Ashberrys, who were believed to be congratulating themselves on the probability of its being his final exit from the scene of their respectability.

CHAPTER II.

HIS VOW, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

THREE years passed, and, much to the family's satisfaction nothing was seen or heard of uncle Sampson; but, about the close of the third, his eldest son, who was the reading man of the Ashberrys, found out from a London paper that the ship in which he had been known to sail had saved the valuable cargo of a French vessel, bound from Havre to New York, and driven on a sand-bank near the American coast, where it became a total wreck. Sampson's ship had saved the cargo and got a liberal salvage from the owners; but of course Sampson was not on board then: he could not be so much in the way of good luck. So his friends, and so his kinsmen concluded; but in less than a month after the old people of the "Pipe and Tankard" had another tale to tell. Penzance, being a seafaring place, is largely frequented by sailors in and out of employment; and one of the latter, who had been Sampson's messmate, was an acknowledged scapegrace, and owed the Ashberrys' despised uncle many a small kindness and many an unpaid loan, arrived one evening at the quiet inn with intelligence for the Floods, to be imparted only under the sevenfold seal of secrecy, which was promised most readily by the old woman. After the consumption of two mugs of strong ale, a deal of head-shaking, and long-winded stories about treasure-troves hidden by old pirates in the American sand-banks, the believing couple were informed that Sampson was coming home, and would bring with him something to astonish the Ashberrys: his best friends might expect a profit by his will, for of course Sampson couldn't live for ever, and spending what he had to bring home was out of the question. The

Floods published that news also: it was said the old dame in particular could not go to bed comfortably till it was off her mind; but not a soul in all Penzance believed it till towards the end of the following week, when Sampson himself arrived by the London coach, dressed in a style nobody ever remembered to have seen him in—it was not fine, but positively respectable—pulling out a long purse, through the network of which gold and notes were visible, and bringing with him, by way of luggage, a trunk of decent apparel and a large sea-chest bound with iron and secured with an immense padlock. "It will take three or four of you to bring that down," said the traveller, with a look of pride and importance unknown to his former days, as he stood in front of the coach-office overseeing the efforts of two porters, who were vainly endeavouring to remove his ponderous chest from the over-loaded mail. Before they and two additional hands could get it fairly under weigh to the "Pipe and Tankard," where Sampson announced his determination to put up, because the old folks had stood by him in his shabby time, the intelligence of the great arrival had spread through all Penzance. The most believing acquaintances hurried to the coach-office to shake hands with Sampson and welcome him home; the less convincible, including all the Ashberrys, stayed in their shops and houses, and wondered if it could be true. But true it was soon proved to be. Sampson's trunk and chest were deposited in the Floods' parlour. The porters were sure the latter could contain nothing but gold and silver, from its wondrous weight and the chinking sounds that came with every motion. A treasure-trove had been found in that sand-bank, and Sampson had got share, perhaps the whole of it: the sailor had insinuated that he was the discoverer. It was true the newspapers had said nothing about it, but the Penzance people knew that many a thing happened which was not in the newspapers. Uncle Sampson had vowed to come back with his fortune made, and he had done it;

that was plain, from his own respectable attire, from the silver he distributed among the porters, from the superior entertainment ordered at the "Pipe and Tankard," and, above all, from the heavy and chinking chest. The Ashberrys now went to welcome home their uncle, not exactly in possession, but something very like it; for every branch of that wide-spreading tree felt that its particular share of the chest was in danger. Sampson could not live for ever, as the sailor had remarked, and to spend what he had brought home was manifestly out of the question. Sons, brothers, nephews, nieces, and nieces-in-law, not to speak of cousins beyond counting, hurried to the "Pipe and Tankard." "And why should their dear uncle stay there? couldn't he come to some of their houses, where he would have every comfort? they should all be delighted to have him among them, to do everything for him, and listen to his delightful adventures." His sons and their wives were particularly anxious on this point, and might have come to open war, as the ladies were mutually determined on keeping each other down; but Sampson put an end to the rising strife. "He was much obliged for their kind offers, but he would stay with his old friends the Floods. Thank Providence, he could now afford to pay at the best inn in England; but he didn't want finery, he wasn't used to the like, as they all knew, and at the 'Pipe and Tankard' he and his chest would stay till he got a house of his own."

The Ashberrys had therefore to be content with paying visits and sending presents, which, being numerous and well-to-do, they performed to some purpose. Old Mrs. Flood set her parlour apart for their special accommodation, receiving no inferior company during Sampson's sojourn; and the good woman declared that so many fat fowls, home-made cakes, and pots of preserves had never come to the house within her memory. Of course Sampson got attentions from all sides, and far beyond the bounds of his kindred, wide as they were: all who could get up the smallest apology crowded to

see the man so lucky at last. Cunning people tried to worm out of him the particulars of the treasure-trove, and the editors of local papers wanted to report it in full. But on that subject Sampson was resolute to keep close. "He didn't want to get trouble from America; one didn't know whose descendants might be living there; and little said was soon mended." "No doubt he has reasons for keeping quiet," thought the neighbours; but they soon discovered that Sampson, like all sailors, was eccentric; for not only did he stay at the humble inn, in spite of the kind solicitations and anxieties of his relatives, but insisted on taking for himself a small but comfortable cottage, which was then to be let hard by, in the same Back Lane, got it plainly furnished, and established in its front window a species of business, beginning with stationery, and ending with fishing-tackle.

"It will keep my hand out of an ill turn, and my head from running to gin, or worse," he said, when remonstrated with by his friends and relations, anxious for his respectability, and all the fairer portion determined on keeping house for him. "I can't get into genteel ways, being so long unused to them. I want to live beside my old friends the Floods, and chat over old times. Where is the use in my spending money on finery and fashions? Looking at my chest pleases me better, and those that behave best to me will get the best share of its contents."

The Ashberrys settled down on the last of his declarations. Uncle Sampson was eccentric, and would never be genteel; but what of that? he was rich; everybody in Penzance knew it; and riches were always respectable, though the old man might choose to live in Back Lane, and sell fish-hooks for his amusement. Moreover, the less that was spent out of the chest, there would be the more to divide, or be scrambled for. Sampson could not live for ever; and every one exerted him or herself to secure the largest space in his testament. Such dutiful sons, such affectionate

brothers, such model nephews, never were seen in Cornwall. Their kindness and care in all that concerned the old man were exceeded only by the ladies of the family: nieces, sisters, and daughters-in-law vied with each other in looking after his comforts, and gave him daily accounts of each other's faults and misdoings. As for the Floods, the height to which their pride and grandeur rose was such as to bring upon them the animadversions of Back Lane, and the disgust of some ancient customers, who did not like people blown up beyond reason; but the chink in the chest, and its weight the day she and her old man tried to move it, the sailor's story, and the private liberality of uncle Sampson, made up all her losses to the dame; and, having lived so long, the ancient couple agreed that they had a very good chance of benefiting by his will.

Cared for, looked up to, and consulted on all the Ashberrys did or thought of doing, uncle Sampson lived comfortably in, but not by his shop: his last business was not more successful than former attempts had been. Little boys came at times for hooks to catch sticklebacks and strings to fly kites with, but salt could never have been provided out of his sales, much less out of his profits. It was also thought by his most intimate friends, the Floods included, that long poverty had made Sampson turn somewhat of a miser over his great find. He certainly did not spend as people expected: the beer did not run in rivers, or the gin play in fountains about his house. The honest washerwoman who managed his domestic concerns averred that he looked at a shilling as long as most men before laying it out; but, thanks to the considerate care and forethought of the Ashberrys, his table never wanted a fowl, a cake, or a pie; and, widower though he was, no man's shirts were ever better supplied with buttons, or stockings more studiously darned. At all their houses Sampson was welcome as the flowers of May indeed, the various families instituted festivals in his honour, kept his birthday and his home-coming as mirthful anniversaries, and

sent gifts on these occasions which indeed rather embarrassed the ex-sailor. His sons played the most dutiful part, as became them; and it was partly requisite, for the more distant relatives were never done reminding Sampson of how ill John and Thomas had behaved to him; but, with his accustomed good-nature, which even prosperity could not banish, the old man bid them let by-gones be by-gones: John and Thomas were always his sons, though they once seemed to forget that he was their father, and, for his part, he was glad to see them in a better mind now. Yet neither John and Thomas, nor all the Ashberrys put together, could induce Sampson to open his chest, or give them one sight of the contents. They had all informed him how unsafe it was for an old man living alone in that outskirt of the town to keep so much wealth in his house, and volunteered to assist in depositing the money in the bank with which they dealt; but Sampson would hear of nothing of the kind. "He had got quite enough of banks in his time. Hadn't he lost two situations and three shops by their breaking? Had not the only savings he ever made gone with the 'Equitable and Permanent Joint Stock Bank,' that failed thirty years ago and cheated everybody? No; he would keep his property safe in his chest: he had trouble enough to get it, and Providence, who had preserved him through so many dangers by sea and land, would keep the thieves of Penzance from him and his." Attempts to borrow were equally unsuccessful. His sons demonstrated beyond a doubt that they could carry on a roaring trade and come to be members of parliament if he would only advance them a few hundreds; his brothers and nephews had speculations of which they were equally sure; but vain were all their efforts after a loan, though backed by promises of enormous interest. "No," said Sampson, "I will neither lend nor borrow: neither of the two ever turned out well with me. You all got on very well when I had no chest: now that I have you can get on just as well without taking

it into account at all. Let it stand there, locked and full as it is, till I am gone; then you can divide the contents among you according to my will, which you will find at the bottom of the chest, and I promise you there will be enough for all: in short, my dear children and friends, I don't believe that any of you can ever want money after getting your shares of that chestful."

With that answer the Ashberrys had to be content, for Sampson would give no other. They talked, they speculated, they dreamt, they quarrelled among themselves over the probable amount of the said chestful and their respective claims upon it; but the talk and speculations, dreams and quarrels, had to be kept from coming to Sampson's ears: rich and miserly old men were known to be touchy subjects, and every one had his own interests at stake. So Sampson lived on in his little cottage and sinecure of a shop, taking care of his chest: it was said he examined the lock every night, and dusted the lid every morning, having friendly chats and friendly glasses with the Floods, being well looked after, well supplied, and well entertained by the Ashberrys. But Sampson's life had been a hard one; and, though a good constitution kept him hale and active almost to the last, the man was not destined to see old age. About five years after his magnificent home-coming he caught something like a cold one winter; it fixed on his lungs, and he died of a rapid decline, watched over and attended by his sons and relations, and giving them good advice not to set their hearts on the things of the world, which they must leave as well as he. Such counsels were of no account in view of the padlocked chest, which kept its place by Sampson's bed. The Ashberrys got through the time between death and funeral by sitting up to watch each other in the cottage. But at length their suspense was over; the old man was laid with becoming tokens of respect in his native churchyard: the family united in the business, and did it handsomely. They had ordered a tombstone,

with all his virtues inscribed on it, and provided their mourning on a grand scale, before the chest was opened solemnly by the eldest son, to whom Sampson had committed the key as a last trust, and in presence of the gathered kin. When the lid was raised they saw first a piece of coarse canvas, then a shining heap which almost filled the chest. It was not composed of ancient gold and silver coin, however, but of coffin-plates of every variety and decoration, wreathed with *immortelles* surrounded by laurel-leaves, some plated with silver, some gilt; very fine, very artistic things of the kind, in short; but down to the bottom they went, and nothing but coffin-plates, no coin, no jewels, and beneath the pile a large sheet of foolscap neatly folded and addressed in Sampson's own handwriting to his dear children and friends. The eldest son also read it, and they said he never cared for reading MS. after, though Sampson's testament was not a lengthy paper.

"My dear friends and children," it said, "you have been kind and affectionate towards me ever since I came home with this chest. I give you many thanks, though I wish your kindness had sprung from a better motive; but, since it was so, I leave all I have among you; that is to say, the very little money left from my share of the salvage, which the French owners doubled to me because I saved the ship-papers at the risk of my life, and also this chestful of coffin-plates, which I got out of the same wreck. They were fashionable ones, sent out from Paris to a great undertaker in New York, and I gathered them thinking to make a speculation; but afterwards I changed my mind and kept the chestful. A good chest it has been to me, and you will never miss what I got by it, though you would never have given it to my need. So I leave it all among you, with my blessing: it is the last of this world's goods that any man can want, and may keep you in mind to set your hearts less on them."

It never was known what the Ashberrys said or did in their first amazement, but there was no keeping the story of the chestful from Penzance: among so many it had come out, though only piecemeal. The townspeople got the complete tale at last: there was great laughter, great talk, and great triumph over the prosperous family whom nobody liked. As their hopes had been high, so was their disappointment deep: they recovered from it, however, sufficiently to go on with their industry, prudence, and gathering ways, and also to assure their neighbours that they knew it was all a *ruse*, and had expected nothing from the old man. They found listeners, of course, but no believers; and it has since become a proverb in Penzance, when great reports come from abroad of one who did not do well at home, to say, "He will come back rich, like the Ashberrys' uncle."

Widow Simpson's Spoons.

CHAPTER I.

THEIR HISTORY.

THE parish of Bathgate, in Linlithgowshire, ought to be reckoned among the classic spots of Scotland, inasmuch as it formed part of the dowry which Robert the Bruce bestowed on his eldest daughter Margery, when she married Walter, the High Steward of Scotland, and thus became progenetrix of the royal and unlucky line of Stuart. Lying midway between Edinburgh and Glasgow, those rival queens of the east and west, but out of the common track of traffic and travel, it has been for ages a pastoral parish, of small and rather backward farms. Of late years coal has been found there; and steam and trade, which bid fair to leave the world no rustic corner, are rapidly turning it into a mining district; which nobody thought of about the time of the general peace, when Bathgate lived on its own oats and barley, wore its own hodden-grey, and had but two subjects of interest, the corn-market and the kirk session. Among its peaceable and industrious population there was one dame who, though neither the wealthiest nor the best born, stood, in her own esteem, above all but the laird and the

minister; and her style and title was Widow Simpson. This lady valued herself, not on the farm left her by the good man who had departed this life some seven years before the commencement of our story, for its acres were few, and they consisted of half-reclaimed moorland; not on her grown-up son Robin, though he was counted a likely and sensible lad; not on her own thrifty housekeeping, though it was known to be on the tight-screw principle; but on the possession of a dozen silver teaspoons. Her account of them was that they had belonged to the young chevalier, and had been bestowed upon her grandfather in return for entertaining that claimant to the British crown on his march from Culloden—in proof of which she was accustomed to point out a half-obliterated crest and the initials C. S., with which they were marked. The widow's neighbours, however, had a different tale regarding their coming into the family. It was to the effect that her grandfather, who kept a small inn somewhere in Fife, had bought them from an ill-doing laird for three gallons of Highland whisky, and bestowed them on his grand-daughter as the one of his family most likely to hold fast such an important acquisition.

Whether derived from the Fife laird or the young chevalier, the spoons were likely to be well taken care of. Mrs. Simpson's powers of hard holding were famous throughout the parish. The shopkeepers of its little town knew her as a driver of stiff bargains for the few articles she purchased. The labourers occasionally employed on her farm testified to her partiality for low wages. Her house was known to be kept on the lowest scale of economy, and the wandering poor avoided it as one where no contributions were to be expected. Yet, as sometimes happens to griping hands, the widow was not a successful gatherer. Nothing but Robin's muscles, and those of his plough horses, would she expend on the moorland farm; the soil, consequently, grew poorer year by year, and yielded

but meagre crops. In order to secure the highest penny when prices were rising, her cow, corn, or flax, was kept unsold till the tide turned and the market fell. The savings pinched out of house and field were from time to time wheedled from her by knavish neighbours, with the lure of exorbitant interest, which, together with the principal, was never paid; but no power of man could wheedle Widow Simpson out of her spoons.

They were her pride and treasure. She counted them every night before going to rest, to see that none of the dozen were missing. She kept them in the chief of her drawers, laid up in a worsted stocking knitted by her own hands, and never worn by any foot. Out of that unique plate-chest they were taken only on occasions of the highest solemnity, and those who had the privilege of using them were assured that "they were made o' the purest siller, and weighed twa ounces every ane."

Plate was not plentiful with the people of her class in Bathgate. The widow's spoons were certainly larger and handsomer than common; and among the small farm-houses, the distinction of possessing them was doubtless as much envied as the marshal's baton or the ducal coronet in camps or courts; but in Mrs. Simpson's opinion her own household were not sufficiently sensible of the family honour.

Besides her son Robin, the family consisted of Nancy Campbell, a girl about nineteen, blessed with good health, good temper, and good looks; who, being a distant relation and an orphan, lived at the farm-house in quality of what the Americans call "a help." Robin was heir to the entire dozen of spoons, and also the lease of house and land. Nancy had no portion but the above-mentioned blessing; yet, as everybody but herself expected, the widow found out one day that they had actually taken a fancy to each other, and were thinking of getting married some time. The idea of her son throwing himself away, spoons and all, on a girl without a

penny, was not to be entertained on any terms. Mrs. Simpson felt persuaded that, with the stocking full of plate and his own qualifications, Robin was a match for any lady in the land; and there might have been an explosion of the whole establishment, but Robin, besides being steady and sensible, had been well disciplined, and would not dispute with his mother, even on a matter so near his heart. Nancy never complained of heavy work or light porridge; nowhere could a cheaper or more trusty maid be found; and under these considerations the widow suspended hostilities, in hopes that her son would know his own value in time.

While her mind reposed on that hope, Bathgate lost its own minister and got a new one. All who have resided for any length of time in Scotland know what great events these are in a country parish. The sayings and doings of the new pastor were the universal topic in farm-house, field, and highway. His predecessor had laboured under the infirmities of age before death found him, and necessarily allowed things to go as they would or stand still; but he was an energetic, active young man, zealous for the spiritual and temporal improvement of his flock; and his sermons, visits, and examinations so stirred them up, that a great appearance of moral and religious progress prevailed throughout the parish.

CHAPTER II.

THEIR MYSTERY.

MRS. SIMPSON, in common with not a few worldly-minded people had always made a large profession of piety. She knew it was respectable, as it still continues to be in her country; but since the young minister's instalment, her pretensions to this distinction became much more demonstrative, for it was a great point to stand well with him. Nobody attended church with greater regularity in all weathers, or criticised the sermons of strangers who happened to officiate there more severely. She was a great discoverer of flaws in doctrine; had an immense amount of talk about the good his sermons did her whenever the young pastor came in her way; kept a large Bible ostentatiously displayed on a high shelf in her kitchen, which, according to old farm-house custom, was the principal and most public room; and was so anxious for visits, catechising, and prayer meetings at her house, that the worthy minister, out of his own sincerity, believed and held her up as a bright example to the farmers' wives in her neighbourhood. The widow was in the height of her professions about the hay-making time. Moreover, a distant and comparatively rich relation was expected to call and take tea that evening on his way from Linlithgow. It was not often that this superior relative honoured her house with a visit, and Mrs. Simpson, determined that nothing should be wanting to his entertainment, brought out the treasured spoons early in the forenoon, with many injunctions to Nancy touching the care she should take in brightening them up.

While this operation was being conducted in the kitchen, in the midst of one of those uncertain days which vary the northern June,

a sudden darkening of the sky announced the approach of heavy rain. The hay was dry and ready for housing. Robin and two farm men were busy gathering it in; but the great drops began to fall while a considerable portion yet remained in the field, and, with the instinct of crop preservation, forth rushed the widow, followed by Nancy, leaving the spoons half-scoured on the kitchen table. In her rapid exit the girl had forgotten to latch the door. The weasel and the kite were the only depredators known about the moorland farm; but while they were all occupied in the hayfield, who should come that way but Geordy Wilson.

Geordy belonged to that class known in Scotland as "daft." He had wandered the country from his youth, a kind of sturdy but not unwelcome beggar; for Geordy, though deficient in the mental faculties which fit men for the ordinary duties of life, had a remarkably retentive memory for all he heard or saw, a keen observation of character, and an amount of humorous cunning, many an instance of which is still related in the district. Born among them, known to be daft, and possessed of many amusing qualifications, besides an ability for gathering news and carrying messages, nobody disputed Geordy's claims to public support. Rich and poor cast their contributions into his meal-bag or penny-pouch, gave him a seat beside the fire in the stormy days of winter, and shelter for the night when his wanderings brought him to their doors at its fall. Widow Simpson could not refuse her share of the common tribute, but she paid it with a good deal of grumbling. Geordy asserted to his particular friends that he had got bad pennies and worse meal at that house; and though he did not daze to question publicly the widow's high-sounding professions, the daft man had been heard to wonder whether she read her Bible or counted her spoons most frequently.

Well, the kitchen-door was open, and Geordy stepped in. He banged the settle with his staff, he coughed, he hemmed, he saluted the cat, which sat purring on the window-seat, and at length discovered there was nobody within.

Neither meal nor penny was to be expected that day; the rain was growing heavier; some of the hay must be wet, and Mrs. Simpson would return in bad humour. But two objects powerfully arrested Geordy's attention; one was the broth-pot boiling on the fire, and the other the silver spoons scattered on the table. Bending over the former, Geordy took a considerable sniff, gave the ingredients a stir with the pot-stick, and muttered, "Vary thin."

His proceedings with regard to the latter must remain unmentioned; but half an hour after, when he was safely ensconced in a farm-house a mile off, the family were driven within doors by the increasing storm: they found everything as it had been left—the broth on the fire, the cat on the window-seat, the whiting and flannel on the table, but not a spoon was there.

"Whar's the spoons?" cried Mrs. Simpson to the entire family, now crowding round the fire to dry their wet garments. Nobody could tell. Nancy had left them on the table when she ran to the hay. No one had been in the house they were certain, for nothing was disturbed. The drawer was pulled out, and the empty stocking exhibited. Every shelf, every corner was searched, but to no purpose; the spoons had disappeared, and the state of the farm-house may be imagined. The widow ran through it like one distracted, questioning, scolding, and searching. Robin, Nancy, and the farm-men were despatched in different directions as soon as the rain abated, to advertise the neighbours, under the supposition that some strolling beggar or gipsy might have carried off the treasure, and would attempt to dispose of it in the parish. Nobody thought of Geordy Wilson; he had not been spied from the hayfield; his circuits were wide, his visits to any house were not frequent, and if he eschewed Widow Simpson's from the day of her loss, it was

believed Geordy knew that neither her temper nor her liberality would be improved by that circumstance. Lost the spoons were, beyond a doubt, and the widow bade fair to lose her senses. The rich relation came at his appointed time, and had such a tea that he vowed never again to trust himself in the house of his entertainer. But the search went on; rabbits' holes were looked into for the missing silver, and active boys were bribed to turn out magpies' nests. Wells and barns in the neighbourhood were explored. The criers of the three nearest parishes were employed to proclaim the loss: it was regularly advertised at Kirkgate and market-place; and Mrs. Simpson began to talk of getting a search warrant for the beggar's meal-pouch. Bathgate was alarmed through all its borders concerning the spoons; but when almost a month were away, and nothing could be heard of them, the widow's suspicions turned from beggars, barns, and magpies, to light on poor Nancy. She had been scouring the spoons, and left the house last; silver could not leave the table without hands. It was true that Nancy had always borne an unquestioned character; but such spoons were not to be met with every day, and Mrs. Simpson was determined to have them back in her stocking. After sundry hints of increasing breadth to Robin, who could not help thinking his mother was losing her judgment, she one day plumped the charge, to the utter astonishment and dismay of the poor girl, whose anxiety in the search had been inferior only to her own. Though poor and an orphan, Nancy had some honest pride: she immediately turned out the whole contents of her kist (box), unstrung her pocket in Mrs. Simpson's presence, and ran with tears in her eyes to tell the minister.

As was then common in the country parishes of Scotland, difficulties and disputes which might have employed the writers and puzzled the magistrates were referred to his arbitration, and thus lawsuits or scandal prevented. The minister had heard, as who in

Bathgate had not, of Mrs. Simpson's loss; like the rest of the parish, he thought it rather inexplicable: but Nancy Campbell was one of the most serious and exemplary girls in his congregation; he could not believe that the charge preferred against her was true; yet the peculiarities of the case demanded investigation. With some difficulty the minister persuaded Nancy to return to her mistress, bearing a message to the effect that he and two of his elders who happened to reside in the neighbourhood would come over in the following evening, hear what could be said on both sides, and, if possible, clear up the mystery. The widow was well pleased at the minister and his elders coming to inquire after her spoons. She put on her best *mutch*—that is to say, cap—prepared her best speeches, and enlisted some of the most serious and reliable of her neighbours to assist in the investigation.

Early in the evening of the following day—when the summer sun was wearing low and the field-work was over—they were all assembled in the clean-scoured kitchen, the minister, elders, and neighbours, soberly listening to Mrs. Simpson's testimony touching her lost silver, Nancy, Robin, and the farm-men sitting by till their turn came; when the door, which had been left half-open to admit the breeze—for the evening was sultry—was quietly pushed aside, and in slid Geordy Wilson, with his usual accompaniments of staff and wallet.

"There's na room for ye here, Geordy," said the widow; "we're on weighty business."

"Weel, mem," said Geordy, turning to depart, "it's of na consequence. I only came to speak about your spoons."

"Hae ye heard o' them?" cried Mrs. Simpson, bouncing from her seat.

"I could na miss becan blessed wi' the precious gift o' hearin; and, what's better, I saw 'em," said Geordy.

"Saw them, Geordy! Whar are they, and here's a whole shillen

for ye;" and Mrs. Simpson's purse, or rather an old glove used for that purpose, was instantly produced.

"Weel," said Geordy, "I slipped in ae day, and seean the siller unguarded, I thought some ill-guided body might covet it, and jist laid it by, I may say, amang the leaves o' that Bible, thinkin' you would be sure to see the spoons when you went to read."

Before Geordy had finished his revelation, Nancy Campbell had brought down the proudly-displayed but never-opened Bible, and interspersed between its leaves lay the dozen of long-sought spoons.

The minister of Bathgate could scarcely command his gravity while admonishing Geordy on the trouble and vexation his trick had caused. The assembled neighbours laughed outright when the daft man, pocketing the widow's shilling, which he had clutched in the early part of his discourse, assured them all that he kenned Mrs. Simpson read her Bible as often the spoons would be certain to turn up. Geordy got many a basin of broth and many a luncheon of bread and cheese on account of that transaction, with which he amused all the firesides of the parish. Mrs. Simpson was struck dumb, even from scolding. The discovery put an end to her ostentatious professions, and, it may be hoped, turned her attention more to practice. By way of making amends for her unjust imputations on Nancy Campbell, she consented to receive her as a daughter-in-law within the same year; and it is said there was peace ever after in the farm-house; but the good people of Bathgate, when discussing a character of more pretence than performance, still refer proverbially to Widow Simpson's spoons.

The Loan of a Legacy.

CHAPTER I.

THE TIN CANISTER.

SOME thirty years ago, Adam Joyce carried on business as a retail grocer in Thomas Street, Dublin. He was a Quaker of the old school, immoveable in his adhesion to thee and thou, uncompromising in his drab coat and broad brim; but those who might have sneered at such peculiarities of speech and costume were ready to overlook, if not to honour them, on account of the sterling worth of the man. Behind his counter and at his scales, Adam was a shining example of those qualities which have secured the Society of Friends so much popular respect in Ireland, where, though the smallest sect as regards numbers, there is none that stands higher in public esteem. His neighbours—Protestant, Catholic, and Jew—would have taken Adam's word in lieu of anybody's oath. The housewives throughout many a street and lane, knew that his goods might be depended on, and had no dread of an overcharge or a light weight. The poor thought their small deposits more secure in his hands than in any savings bank, and the will of which Adam Joyce was executor, was considered the best arrangement a man could make for his family. Adam's name

did not stand high in lists of subscription to public charities: the honest man had not made his fortune—perhaps few honest men do. Neither was his benevolence in repute among street beggars; but his poor neighbours were sure of advice and assistance from him, in all times of difficulty or distress; the family or financial troubles of many a customer, kept secret from the friends who shared his Christmas dinner or birthday feast, were confided to Adam Joyce, and from the lanes and alleys in the good grocer's vicinity, he might have raised a considerable following of small tradesmen and poor hard-working widows, who looked to him as the encourager of their industry and the chief of their well-doing.

In the latter class of Adam's clients, there was none that sounded his praise louder, nor was believed to have profited more by his help and counsel, than Molly Martin. Molly's husband, a poor cobbler, with no property but his stall and skill in repairing old shoes, which was somewhat notable in his locality, had died almost twenty years before the time of our story, leaving her a widow without friends or relations—for they had come strangers to Dublin from one of the northern counties—and three little boys, the eldest of whom was in his seventh year. The family had been among Adam's humblest customers, and, knowing their honest character, he had taken an interest in the widow and her orphans, encouraged poor Molly to set up as a laundress, lent her money to purchase the necessary apparatus, found light work and errands for her little boys, saw that they went regularly to the church and the Sunday school, and banked the family savings with more than legal interest. Being so helped, the Martins also helped themselves. A visitation of the typhus fever, indeed, made the household smaller, by taking the two youngest boys from the cares and troubles of this world, but the eldest had grown up a steady industrious young man, had adopted his father's trade, and was

now engaged in repairing old shoes, to the great satisfaction of all his neighbours in Meath Street. The family prosperity did not end at this point. Molly had washed, clear-starched, and ironed to such good purpose, that not only was the grocer's loan repaid long ago, but she was known to be in possession of more money than any laundress in the Liberties.

These good things did not come without heavy drawbacks. In the long years of working and saving, the same thing had happened to Molly Martin, which has occurred to many a larger winner; the love of getting and gathering had got into her heart, the economy which had once been a necessity became a habit and a desire, and the farthings which had been hoarded when there was no other capital, were now added to the hidden treasure, which, unwilling to trust even in the hands of her best friend, Molly kept in a tin canister carefully concealed at the bottom of an old chest. All her gatherings were to be left to her son Jack; but, steady and industrious as he was, and partly aware of the intended heritage, the young cobbler contrived to forfeit it, like many a man of higher pretensions, for the sake of a pretty girl. Rose Connor and he got acquainted somehow, at a neighbour's wedding. Mrs. Martin did not like Rose, chiefly because she wore a very brilliant print, and was believed to spend all her wages—for Rose was a servant maid—between dressing herself and assisting a married sister with a very large family. Rose, on her side, found out that Molly was a skinflint, and made a salt herring serve for a week; she was also guilty of laughing at the widow's patched cap and more than threadbare gown. These were the first causes of quarrel; but as the young people continued to keep company in spite of all the tales to Rose's disadvantage which Mrs. Martin could collect, the war became fiercer every day, and when at last they ran away and got married, Molly made a solemn vow never to receive or acknowledge her son more; in consequence

of which the elder and younger branches of the family occupied separate dwellings, but unfortunately in the same street, which enabled the two women to renew the long-drawn battle at intervals, and prevented any chance of reconciliation between Jack and his mother. Their common friend, Adam Joyce, in vain advised and exhorted them to make peace. On either side offences had been given and taken. Each had a recital of wrongs ready at every admonition. A yearly increasing number of grandchildren was not sufficient to bring the mother-in-law to terms; Rose stood high on the right of a wife to be agreed with under all circumstances, and between hard work, poverty, and the stormy encounters of his spouse and mother, Jack's neighbours had reason to wonder at the cheerful spirit and contented look with which he plied last and awl, discussed the news with his customers, or hummed an old song to himself.

Things had continued in this state for years. The breach between the young people and the old woman could not be made wider. The latter had gone on adding to the contents of her tin canister, and doing her laundress duties with a vigour and activity which showed no signs of failure till she was upwards of seventy. Then the hardy constitution suddenly gave way, under the pressure of a severe winter and her penurious habits. When carrying home the linen to her various employers one bitter evening, Molly caught cold. In the progress of her illness she would neither send for a doctor nor afford herself necessary comforts, till the cold turned to inflammation of the lungs, and the medical man, to whom she applied at last, had no hope of her recovery. Molly Martin was about to close her account on earth, and leave all her gatherings behind. The treasured canister must now descend to her disobedient son, and become the prey of her hated daughter-in-law. The bitterness of female quarrels has been celebrated in song and story, and not without reason. Even the approach of the king of

terrors was not sufficient to reconcile Molly to the last-named condition. She said she was content to die, if that was the Lord's will; notwithstanding her love of money, she fancied herself religious: but to think of Rose Connor spending her hard earnings in folly and finery, Molly averred she could not rest in her grave with such goings on above ground, and took a fixed resolution to prevent their occurrence.

As the only man on whom she could depend to carry out her last wishes, if he could only be induced to promise it, the old woman in her extremity sent for Adam Joyce, and, having taken due precaution to send out the poor girl engaged to wait upon her, revealed to him the existence of the tin canister, the place of its concealment, and the fact that on her last reckoning it contained one hundred and twenty-five pounds, fifteen shillings and fivepence three farthings.

"It's a long job to count it, sir," said Molly. "There's notes and gold, silver of all sizes, and a good deal of copper, just as I got it. It's all honestly earned and carefully saved; it might be useful to Jack if he had sense to take care of it, and was not married to that woman; but Mr. Joyce, he's a little bit fond of company and sight-seeing; if he gets so much money into his hands he'll think there'll never be an end to it: it will take him off his business, may be send him astray entirely. And think of Rose Connor, that behaved so badly to me, buying muslin gowns and fine bonnets with the money I washed and scrubbed for. Mr. Joyce, I can't bear the thought of it, and I won't die in peace, except you bury the canister in the coffin with me, or take it, every farthing, with my blessing to yourself."

Against this extraordinary arrangement of her worldly affairs, the honest Quaker reasoned with all his powers, assuring Molly that he did not want her money; that, to bury in the grave with her what might be useful to the living, and could not serve the

dead, would be foolish as well as sinful; that her son, whatever were his own or his wife's faults, had a family to provide for, and was the natural heir of all she had to leave. To these arguments the old woman would scarcely listen. When she did, it was only to return with renewed zeal to the excellent use Mr. Joyce would make of her legacy, the temptations it would cast in her son's way, and, above all, the terrible idea of Rose Connor spending what she had earned and saved. That thought was the chief terror of Mrs. Martin's death-bed. In an evil hour for both parties, Rose had proved the unruly membership of the tongue, by expressing her hopes on the subject to some of her neighbours, who in their turn allowed the fact to come to Molly's ears; and now it weighed on her failing mind, to the exclusion of every other consideration. The parish clergyman, who happened to visit her at the same time —for Molly was a Protestant—in vain exhorted her to think of her eternal interests; to nothing spiritual or temporal would the old woman attend, till Adam Joyce promised to fulfil her last request touching the canister.

Adam was a man who never dreaded misconstruction, nor feared to overstep rule and custom when the occasion demanded it. His acquaintance with the family had shown him that Molly's suspicions of the legacy proving too much for her son's sense, were not ill-founded. Though honest and industrious, the young couple were not remarkable for prudence, and it was his duty to relieve the dying woman's mind.

"Molly Martin," said he, "since I cannot serve thee otherwise in this matter, I promise thee that neither Rose Connor nor thy son shall spend thy money foolishly if I can prevent it."

CHAPTER II.

HOW ADAM JOYCE KEPT HIS PROMISE.

PERFECTLY satisfied that Adam would keep his pledged word to the letter, the old woman bestowed upon him a shower of good wishes and blessings, acknowledged his kindness to her and hers, and once more requested him to take the money; but Adam, telling her that her earthly affairs being now settled, she should attend to those which concerned her soul, went his way; and it is to be hoped the poor woman profited by that parting advice, for within the same week the neighbours who had known and respected Molly Martin, notwithstanding her penurious ways followed her to a humble grave.

Molly's son was among the mourners; he had sought and obtained reconciliation with his mother almost at her last hour, and he was aware of the fact, which was the topic of the day in Meath Street, namely, that the tin canister, which used to be the receptacle of all Molly's gatherings, had been put into her coffin just before it was screwed down, by Adam Joyce in fulfilment of her solemn request. The grave is peculiarly sacred in the eyes of Irish peasants, or Molly's resting-place would not have remained undisturbed after the circulation of that tale, with all additional estimates and conjectures regarding the amount of treasure buried there. Rose was deeply disappointed, and, it must be confessed, did not speak in honour of her mother-in-law's memory; but honest Jack said the old woman had a right to take her own with her if that was her will, and he knew Mr. Joyce would not have put money past a poor family if he could have helped it. The poor cobbler and the well-to-do grocer were therefore as friendly

as ever. Jack went with his small custom to the shop; Adam took quiet opportunities to inquire after the welfare of his family and the prosperity of his business; and, on one of those occasions learned that Jack had advanced a step in trade by actually making a pair of those rough shoes known in Ireland as brogues, for a certain carman of his acquaintance, who had pronounced them the best he ever wore.

"Then, Jack, I advise thee to make some more in thy leisure hours; thou mightst sell them in thy stall and make a better trade," said Adam.

"I would try it, sir, but leather's so dear; they charge me as much for bits and scraps in Back Lane as swallows the profit entirely."

"Thou shouldst buy a hide or so at wholesale price."

"There's no buying without money, sir, and that's uncommon scarce in our house."

"Suppose I lend thee five pounds, Jack," said his kindly counsellor; "thou canst pay it back as the brogues are sold, and nobody need be the wiser."

Jack accepted the offer with great joy and gratitude. The leather was bought, the brogues were made, and, with the help of the carman's testimony, were sold well and rapidly. Before the summer ended, Adam was repaid his five pounds, and Jack Martin had got a nice business established. On their next conference he happened to mention to the grocer a successful attempt to make shoes of a finer quality.

"Why dost thou not buy some better leather? I know it is dearer, but finer shoes would bring thee larger profits; thou hast paid me the five: suppose I lend thee ten pounds more?" said Adam.

Jack's thanks and blessings had to be cut short that night, with the assurance that the money was only for turning, and his friend

expected to be paid. Another supply of leather was purchased; Jack succeeded in the manufacture of ladies' boots and slippers, to the admiration of all Meath Street, and the boundless pride of Rose. She knew that Mr. Joyce had lent the money, and, as it had to be repaid, there was no finery wanted; she mended the children's clothes, kept the house on the smallest outlay, and, in short, did everything in her power to help Jack out of debt and into business. When the ten pounds were repaid, Adam advised him to take a small shop, and lent him a capital of twenty pounds to begin with. Jack ventured on the speculation at first with some fear, but he had the grocer's counsel as well as his loan, and success followed him.

Time went on; loan after loan had been borrowed and repaid; the cobbler's stall, and two little rooms by way of dwelling, had given place to a respectable house in Thomas Street, where the family lived and kept a shoe-shop, with a particularly high repute for cheap and durable goods. It was just seven years since Molly Martin died, and, as Rose was accustomed to remark, took her money with her to the grave; but Adam Joyce had lent them the largest sum they ever borrowed, in the preceding year, and now they were able to repay it with interest—the honest couple insisted on that—and he had come to take tea with them in a friendly way, and be paid in the back parlour. Rose was there in the clean cap and brown stuff gown she kept for Sundays, brilliant prints having been found unprofitable and troublesome long ago. The seven children were there also—Adam knew them all, for they passed his shop to school. Tea was over, with all its accompanying good things, and the solemnity of the evening commenced by honest Jack, his face radiant with the grandeur of the occasion, bringing out of his strong-box an equally substantial pocket-book, and carefully counting before Mr. Joyce one hundred and twenty-five pounds in Bank of Ireland notes.

"That's your money, sir; take it with my blessing, and the blessing of all my family; under Providence, you have been the making of us; and here's six pounds and five shillings of interest, which we can pay very well;" and Jack deposited that also on the table.

"Well, friend, I am glad thou canst pay it," said Adam Joyce, without touching the notes, "particularly as this money happens to be thine own. There are fifteen shillings and fivepence three farthings," he continued, taking out of his pocket the coin wrapped in paper, and counting it out beside the notes, "which makes up the whole contents of that tin canister I emptied into the pocket of my great-coat when nobody was by, and afterwards put into thy mother's coffin. The use thou wouldst make of the money sorely troubled her mind till I made her that promise, which has been kept, to my thinking, in the best manner. Take up thy notes again, honest Jack; thou and thy family have served an apprenticeship to prosperity, and will not be overbalanced by it now, as might have happened had it come suddenly into thy hands seven years ago. Let me tell thee, friend, it would have been better for many a man of greater riches if, instead of inheriting, he had in the same manner got the loan of a legacy."

Frances Browne.

[*From Chambers' Cyclopædia of English Literature.*]

THIS lady, blind from infancy, is a more remarkable instance of the poetical faculty existing apart, as it were, from the outer world, than that of Blacklock himself. Daughter of the postmaster of Stranorlar, a village in the county of Donegal, she was born in 1816. When only eighteen months old, she lost her eyesight from small-pox, yet she soon became distinguished for her thirst for knowledge. She learned something from hearing her brothers and sisters reading over their tasks. Her friends and relatives read to her such books as the remote village afforded. In 1841 she sent some short poems to the Athenæum. The Editor, Mr. T. K. Hervey, introduced her to public notice; her pieces were greatly admired, and in 1844 a volume of poems was published, followed, in 1847, by another volume of Lyrics and Miscellaneous Pieces.

Miss Browne's contributions to periodical works have been numerous. The following specimens are from the "Leisure Hour," and from the "Sunday at Home."

"Arise, He calleth thee."

They spake to him of old who sat
  In darkness by the way,
But heard the Saviour's passing feet,
  And cried to Him for day;
They spake to scorn, they spake to chide,—
  But o'er that living sea
His cry went up, till it was said,
  "Arise, He calleth thee."

The suppliant rose, and saw his Lord
  With new unclouded sight,
Bestowed by His almighty word
  Who said, Let there be light.
And thou, that in thy dark estate
  Hast the same Lord to see,
Why sitt'st thou by the wayside yet?—
  "Arise, He calleth thee."

Child, in thy budding years, to whom
  The world is strange and new,
He bids the little children come—
  There is no love so true:
No arm so strong as His spread forth,
  With welcome warm and free,
To gather in his lambs from earth—
  "Arise, He calleth thee."

Youth, mounting up the slippery steep,
  With hope so high and strong,
Give Him thy heart to save and keep,
  From all that wreck and wrong.

His grace shall guide thine onward path,
  His love thy light shall be:
From sin, from sorrow, and from death,
  "Arise, He calleth thee."

Man of the busy days, immersed
  In countless cares, and schemes
For place or gold to have or hold,—
  Hast thou no loftier aims?
  there no glorious heaven to gain?
  No wrath to fear and flee?
Up from the coil of mammon's chain,
  "Arise, He calleth thee."

Thou of the weary head and grey,
  Whose many years have passed
In learning all is vanity,
  Come to thy Lord at last.
In lovingkindness still He waits,
  Thy late return to see;—
Come, ere the shutting of the gate;
  "Arise, He calleth thee."

Up from the shifting sands of time!
  Their glory is but dross;
Up from its thousand griefs, and climb
  Above them by his cross!
Whate'er thou art, whate'er thy part
  In this poor world may be,
Come to the Way, the Truth, the Life;
  "Arise, He calleth thee."

Absent Children.

They were simple of speech and mind,
Peasant mothers and neighbours kind,
Met in the shade of a leafy lime,
At the sweet midsummer's twilight time,
When labour rests and memories wake,
And hearts grow sad for the absent's sake.
Thus of their absent ones they spake:

One said, "My child is far at sea;
He loved the wild waves more than me—
More than his native vale and cot—
And chose the roving sailor's lot.
Some, but they might have feigned, foretold
That he was born for a captain bold,
And would come back with fame and gold.

"But many a day and many a year,
Is the sound of the deep sea in mine ear;
And many a stormy winter's night
I wake with a strange and sore affright:
For the drowning cries of shipwrecked men
Seem mingling with the tempest then;
And my poor heart cannot rest again."

Another said, "My child this day
Dwells in a city far away:
Lightly the young bird leaves the nest,
Though it holds the hearts that love him best.
For sights to see and for wealth to win,
Early he went from kith and kin,—
'Tis said they prosper who thus begin.

"But still as the seasons come and go,
His thoughts more strange and distant grow;
From us and from all our village ways,
The city hath swallowed up his days.
And oft of the sin and of the snare
That lie in wait for his footsteps there,
I think with trembling and a prayer."

"My child," said the third, "hath voyaged o'er
A deeper sea to a farther shore;
A home and a welcome he hath found
In a fairer, mightier city's bound.
Early the songs of its happier bowers,
Won him away from us and ours,
Yet my tears are dry that fell in showers.

"Cold hath the love of the living grown,
But I know that his is still my own;
My fears grow dark and my hopes grow dim
For the children with me, but not for him.
Safe to the Ark hath flown my dove;
No change for youth and no chill for love,
Is found in our Father's house above."

Who is thy Friend?

Who is thy friend? The man that shares thy pleasures
In banquet hall or beauty's witching bowers;
He that will dance with thee to folly's measures,
And make no reckoning of the squandered hours—
To whom the revel and the game is all?—
These are the friends that help men to their fall.

Who is thy friend? The man that shares thy pride,
  Thine hour of glory, or thy day of gain;
Who stands in every triumph by thy side,
  And never finds that triumph false or vain,
But shapes his doctrine as thy humour goes?—
These are the friends misfortune turns to foes.

Who is thy friend? The man that for his winning
  To power or place hath need of thine or thee;
Who will not fear thy risk, or blame thy sinning,
  So it but speed his fortune's growing tree;
Whose praise is large, whose promise larger yet?—
These are the friends that fail us and forget.

Who is thy friend? The man of truth and trust,
  In gladness near, in sorrow nearer still;
To thy faults generous, to thy merits just,
  Thy help to every good from every ill,
Whose love for the world's hate might make amends?—
Alas for it! this life hath few such friends.

Who is thy friend? The best, the least regarded,
  In faith unfailing, and in love unchanged
Through all thy changeful years, though ill rewarded,—
  Give Him thy heart, so long and far estranged;
And from the broken reeds of earth ascend,
To seek in heaven thine everlasting Friend.

The Fox and the Crow.

Men deemed, in the world's early time,
That wisdom sounded best in rhyme;
Then let an humble hand rehearse
An ancient tale in modern verse.

'Twas in that age to poets known,
When mankind did not talk alone,
But beasts of earth and fowls of air
In conversation took their share—

A crow that from the nest had ventured
And on the world of ravens entered,
Just as the summer's deepening green
Was tinged with autumn's golden sheen—

Forth flying in the early grey,
By a lone farm-house took her way,
And found—oh! wondrous chance and rare
The dairy window open there.

Nor here had fortune's favour stayed,
For on the sill within was laid
A noble slice of new-cut cheese:
One moment served to see and seize.

How sped the crow I scarce can tell,
O'er house and farm and neighbouring fell,
Escaping, with unbroken bones,
Both scolding maids and flying stones.

At last within a woodland free
She rested on a tall oak tree,
To feast at leisure and make merry
On better fare than corn or berry.

A sleeping fox beneath the oak
Beheld her coming as he woke,
And thought, since hens began to fail,
That cheese might make a morning meal.

"Oh! what a beauteous bird!" he cries,
Like one who speaks from sheer surprise,
With look amazed and sudden start,
And paw pressed upward on his heart.

"That lovely bill! that glossy wing!
Could such a charming creature sing,
No dweller in the forest wide
Before her could have cause for pride."

The flatterer's voice was far below,
Yet reached the heart of Madame Crow;
For ne'er had one so well defined
Her place among the feathered kind.

She shook her wing, she tossed her head,
The feathers on her tail she spread,
And thought it did not well become
Her rank that he should think her dumb.

But ere his ears could catch her caw,
Her cheese was in the fox's maw,
And Reynard, laughing, scoured away,
Through the deep thicket with his prey.

My youthful friends, the years before you
May need the moral of the story:
For life is full of snares and labours,
And gain and loss are oft near neighbours.

The cunning flattery which allures
With praise for gifts which are not yours,
Whatever vanity it please,
Is but the fox that wants the cheese.

Flowers in the Sick Room.

Fair in their sunny beds they grew,
Or hung on the trellised bowers,
Nor lost their scent, nor paled their hue,
As a nosegay of gathered flowers:
But fairer still, and yet more sweet,
With the summer's breath and bloom,
They seemed in that narrow crowded street,
And that feeble sufferer's room.

Alone, but not companionless,
Had her silent hours gone by:
From the dreary sick room's narrow space
There were paths that reached the sky.
The page that tells of life through death
Had brightened her anxious thought;
And the summer flowers to the eye of faith
The good land nearer brought.

Thus breaks the bloom of a better hope
On the dimness and the strife,—
The dusty aims and the narrow scope
Of this poor and passing life:
And thus through nature's works and ways,
Such helps to faith are given,
That the flowers of earth may lift our gaze
To the fadeless flowers of heaven.

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