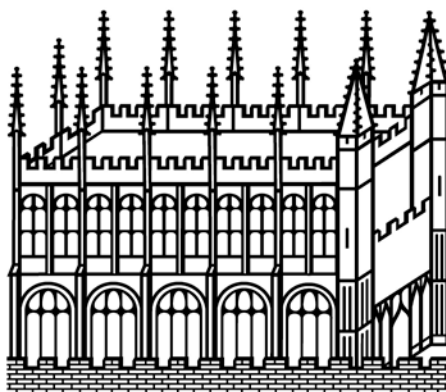




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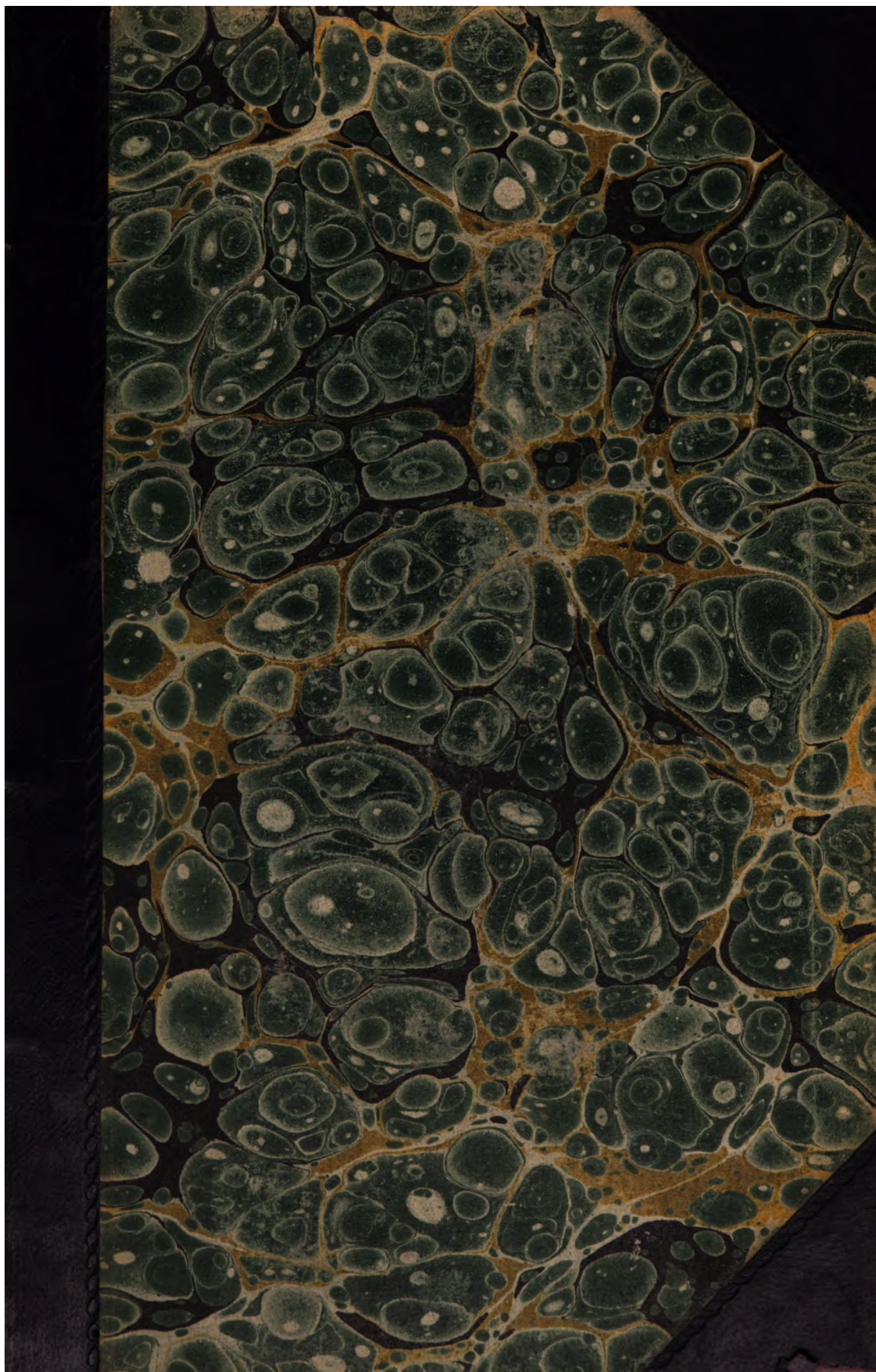
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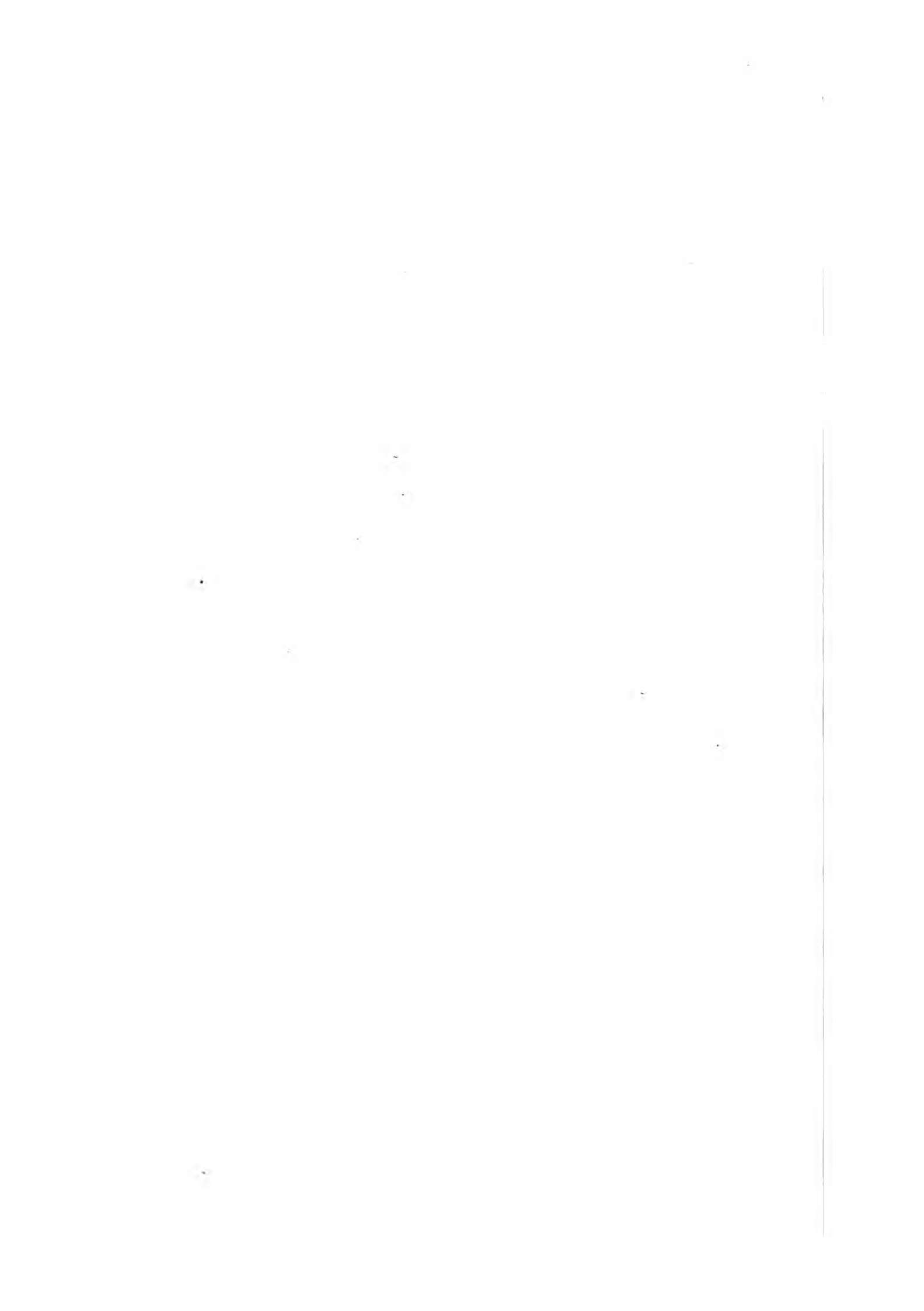


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THE COUNT DE FOIX.



A Tale of the Olden Time.

THE COUNT DE FOIX.

A Tale of the Olden Time.

BY

THOMAS POWELL.



LONDON:

EFFINGHAM WILSON, 18, BISHOPSGATE STREET.

MDCCCXLII.

1042.

LONDON :
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TO

J. G. LOUGH, ESQ.,

THE FIRST OF LIVING SCULPTORS;

THIS POEM IS INSCRIBED,

IN AFFECTIONATE ADMIRATION OF

HIS GENIUS:

BY HIS OBLIGED AND FAITHFUL FRIEND,

THOMAS POWELL.

ON SEEING MR. LOUGH'S STATUE OF OPHELIA.

Never before has sculptured marble brought
Tears to the threshold of my eyes ; but now
I feel a touching wonder has been wrought,
And gaze with tender grief on that sweet brow
Which LOUGH's miraculous hand has made to steal
Tears from those hearts which God hath framed to feel.
Beautiful creature of the truthful soul !
Fair flower ! whose dew was scattered by the hand
Of the unhappy Hamlet,—here I stand
And look intent on guileless eyes, that roll
In that immortal world which lies between
The Memory and Reason,—realm serene,
Made up of joys which formed her life's sweet dream,
And hopes of heaven that in their dawning gleam.

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THE COUNT DE FOIX.



The Introduction.

THE COUNT DE FOIX.

Evening.—Baronial Hall.

SIR JOHN FROISSART *and* SIR ESPAGNE DE LYON.

THE hall was fair and large : a noble blaze
Gladdened the hearth, and sent its cheerful rays
O'er half the floor ; while at mid distance sat
Two noble knights, engaged in pleasant chat
Before a well-stored table, where the wine
And pasties told they were about to dine.
Right sumptuous was the board : here fruit was piled,
And here a haunch,—and there the pastry smiled ;
And as they tossed the draughts of Rhenish wine
Down willing throats, their eyes more cheerly shine,

The speech comes freer, and they grasp each other's
Hands with right cordial pressure, like two brothers !
They tell their boyish freaks, their youthful loves,
When they penned sonnets, called their ladies doves,
And did the foolish things all lovers do ;
And then their manly deeds they both went through,
From the first fleshing of their maiden swords.
Right valorous were they ! generous as lords !
And full of quarrel, yet as virgins modest !
Indeed they said, and did, the very oddest
Things that the youthful do : and then they told
Each other very gravely,—they were old,
And not the knights they were, when at a blow
One took the head and helmet from his foe,
And left the bleeding trunk to fall alone.
And Sir John Froissart, too, had nerve and bone
E'er ready for the battle or the bower !

And now they went to other things. The old
Grey-headed Sir Espagne de Lyon told

The brave Sir John, that on the morrow he
Was going with the youthful Count to see
His mother, and his uncle, proud Navarre !
“ His mother ? what the Countess ? Sure you are
Playing some jest upon me,” Sir John said.
“ His mother ! what the Countess ? Why she’s dead ! ”

“ Well, let me tell you.—Fifteen years ago
The Count de Foix took prisoner his foe,
The Lord d’Albreth, and held him till he paid
His ransom, which, as I have heard it said,
Was fixed at fifty thousand francs : the King
(Who loved bright gold better than any thing)
Offered to pledge him to the Count, if he
Would set the Lord d’Albreth, his prisoner, free.
The Count, who knew the wily King to be
Crafty and faithless, would not take his bond.
This piqued the Countess, carried her beyond
The path of wedded duty, and one day
She said unto the Count de Foix, ‘ Why, pray,

My noble lord, do you suspect the word
Of the good King, my brother ? You afford
Small evidence of love you hold for me,
When openly you scorn my family,
The very noblest in the roll of fame ;
For I can well avouch, the royal name
Of proud Navarre a due regard should claim.'
' Now, by the holy rood ! ' her husband said,
' How can you vouch such folly. By my head,
I would not trust that fox, your brother, though
He be a King, one franc, I'd have you know.'
The Countess, angered, said, ' It is not just
To doubt my brother's honour. If you trust
Him for the fifty thousand francs, you owe
My dowry to him ; and that sum you know
Is fifty thousand francs,—the very same :
You run no risk of payment ! ' said the dame.
' Thou say'st the truth, fair lady,' said De Foix ;
' But if I thought that sly old fox would claw
The ransom, and then hold it as your dower,

The Lord d'Albreth should never leave the tower
Where now he daily groans ; but since you pray
For his release, he's free this very day,
And for your sake I'll trust the faithless King.'
'That is well done,' said she ; ' your praise will ring
In every province. 'Tis a noble thing
To set a captive free.' The Count waxed red :
Then, patting his fair lady on her head,
Replied in playful mood, ' This pretty toy
Shall be the forfeit, gentle Dame de Foix,
If that old fox, the King, should hold my right.'

" The Lord d'Albreth was freed from thrall that night,
And banqueted most royally, then went
Upon his journey home : from whence he sent
His ransom to the King, who never paid
The Count, my master. Two bright summers fade,
And still the sly Navarre the ransom kept.
Well, you can judge how ill Count Gaston slept
Under this wrong ; and one day to his dame
He said, that she should go and urge his claim,

And bring the fifty thousand francs away
When she returned.

“ Upon a luckless day
The Countess went to Pampeluna, where
The King, her brother, held his court ; and there
She urged him to repay the ransom due
Unto her Lord. But the proud monarch grew
More obstinate than ever ; and at last
Swore loud and fiercely he would rather cast
The gold into the sea, than let one franc
Swell her Lord’s coffers. Then, he said, her rank
Demanded greater state, and that the dower
Was justly due,—yea, long before that hour,
And he would keep the ransom for *her* sake.
‘ Nay, my good brother, this will surely make
Discord between us. On my knees I crave
That you will let my Lord the ransom have,
Or else I never dare behold his face.’
The King then said, ‘ I cannot judge your case
So well as you can.’

“ Well, she never came
Back to the Count. Some say the gentle dame
Remembers what he said in sport ; and some
Declare she loves him not, and will not come :
Some say she hoped her lord would send a train
Of gallant knights to woo her back again.
But to this step his pride would never bend ;
For noble though he be, the poor man’s friend,
And generous and wealthy, kind and brave
As the Count is, he is his own pride’s slave.
The young Sir Gaston was just two years old
When his fair mother went ; and I am told
He oft has longed to see the widowed dame,
And bring her home his father’s love to claim.
To-morrow he sets out for Pampelon,
With the first dawning of the golden sun,
To see the Countess, and ’tis rumoured here
She will return with him. ’Tis many a year
Since I have seen her ; yet before me now
She stands in memory’s page ; her open brow

And calm blue eyes, and her dark auburn hair,
Which in two ringlets she was wont to wear
Falling in playful tendrils down her neck :
And then her graceful nose, by Jove 'twould deck
The face of Venus, Helen, or the dame
That wrapt Persepolis in smoke and flame ;
And could I tell in poet's phrase the grace
That kept these blandishments in proper place,
And o'er the lady threw a shield of awe,
Which to the very wildest was a law,
Your knightly tongue would own that she was one
Formed by Dame Nature as a paragon,
To show the marvel she could frame. But I
Must now return and close the history
Of these events, which o'er the noble brow
Of Count de Foix has thrown a shade. And now
Let's pledge the young Count Gaston to the brim :
Fill up the sparkling cup, and drink to him."

"This is a curious story," said Sir John,
And much I mourn for mother and for son,

And for the Count ; for of each gallant knight
That ever yet has met a soldier's sight,
He is the noblest, gracefullest, and best
That ever placed a conquering lance in rest ;
And therefore with my heart I wish him joy.
' Here's to the gallant noble, Count de Foix !'
A larger cup for such a glorious toast,
He truly is a Gascon's proudest boast ;
He dries the orphan's tears, his generous hand
Scatters a plenty o'er this well-ruled land."
" Here's to the valiant Count ! " then roared Sir John,
" The noble Count ! "—another bumper's gone !

Now chimed the midnight, and the gallant knights,
Having exhausted loves, and jokes, and fights,
Broke up their meeting, with a pleasing sense
Of promising to meet a fortnight hence ;
When Sir Espagne, from proud Navarre returning,
Would tell Sir John some gossip well worth learning.



THE COUNT DE FOIX.



The First Banquet.

THE COUNT DE FOIX.

THE BANQUET.

THE morning came : it was a noble sight
To see the squires behind each gallant knight,
Waiting in their degree about the court.
At length the youthful Gaston, with gay port,
Sprang on his horse. His father raised his hand,
And bade the horse be still : at his command
The noble creature stood with bending head.—
“ My son,” said the old Count,—then, waxing red
And pale by turns, he stopped,—“ perchance you’ll see
One who was once a wedded wife to me,
But faithless to her vow.—But that is past.
Tell her I greet her well.” And then in haste

He said, "No ! more than that.—Remember, boy,
She wronged and scorned thy sire, the Count de Foix !
A title you will bear when I am gone.
Bright has that name descended sire to son,—
From me unsullied too that name shall flow,
Grateful to friend, and terrible to foe.
Farewell ! and may the patron Saints that dwell
In the great heavens above, protect you well !"
He turned away ; the youthful Gaston bent
His head, and then upon his journey went.
The castle turrets soon were out of sight ;
The day waned fast, and then the stars of night
Came like a throng of glittering troops, in bright
Celestial armour marching through the blue
Eternal heavens.—But we'll not pursue
The travellers further, and upon their road
We'll leave them, journeying to the King's abode,
And to the Count at Orthes we return.

The midnight came, and at that festive hour
The revel reigned in banquet and in bower :
For at that time the Count was wont to take
His evening meal, and as the barons slake
Their thirst in Rhenish and the Muscadine,
(For in his hall there was no lack of wine,)
The song and jest went round with sprightly glee,
And music threw o'er all her witchery
To steep the senses in a glad delight.
The joy was doubled ; ladies' eyes grew bright,
And brighter—fonder looked ; and each bold knight
Deemed himself loved by some all-peerless dame,
And felt a giant's prowess in his frame,
Soothed by the glance that in a woman's eye
Lives as a star in heaven eternally !
And now the minstrel, gallant Bondinell,
Rose from his seat ; and as the discourse fell
Into a perfect silence, from his side
He took a lute, in careless wise that hung,
And o'er the sleeping chords he gaily flung

His graceful fingers—taper, long, and white,
And having tuned the instrument aright
To his soft voice, he sang a lay of love,
And told how angels from the heights above
Had been drawn down to gaze on woman's eyes,
And that no longer cared they for the skies
And the bright stars, nor for the weary moon
That ever climbs at night's celestial noon
To its cold throne amid the glittering throngs,
That spin for ever to the changing songs
Of seraph harps and cherub minstrelsy ;
And then he sang how like a gorgeous sky
The banquet was when graced by lovely dames,
But that no star was half so fair and bright
As the sweet eyes that lit the hall that night ;
And that no song, though by the seraphs sung,
Could match the music of a woman's tongue ;
And that the heaven which monks and saints had feigned,
Was nought to bowers where love and beauty reigned !
Sir Gaston's brow grew sad and dark with care ;
But soon he flung it off, and with an air

Half jest and earnest, to the minstrel said,
“Come, change the foolish theme of love: I dread
The length to which the praise of beauty leads.
Sing us a song of war and gallant deeds,
When noble knights the tawny Moors o’erthrew;
Or when the Spaniard from the Frenchmen flew
As foam before the blast.”

Then Bondinell

Sung the old song of Roland. As it fell
From the gay minstrel’s lips, the colour came
And went again in many a beauteous dame;
For warlike music stirs sweet woman’s heart,
And sudden glances from their bright eyes start,
Which tell the soul within. Strange marvel this,
That beings, who seemed formed for sigh and kiss,
Should own the magic of a battle strife
Where man to man contends for fame and life,
And the wound’s pang unfelt amid the glow
And glory of a struggle with the foe!

“That is a brave old song,” Sir Gaston cried.
“With such inspiring music I could leap
Into a forest of keen spears, and sweep
The foemen round me like the men who reap
The corn in harvest time. That brave old song
Was sung, they tell us, by the Norman throng,
Who with the conqueror William crossed the sea,
And gained all England at one victory.”

The minstrel put the lute aside and took
His sounding harp, and a bright prelude shook
From quivering chords, which seemed alive with song.
Then, looking round upon the beauteous throng,
Thrice wav'd his hand, and plunged amid the strings.
E'en as a swimmer from a tall rock springs
Into the waves, so he amid the flood
Of music, and he drew the listening crowd
So wrapt in song, they scarcely breathed aloud !
For as a wizard in some secret cell
Moulds thousands to his purpose by a spell,

So do the poet and the minstrel shower
Their spells around them, and with mighty power
Bow to the will the human heart,—now brings
Tears to the eyes, with old rememberings ;
Then stirs the exulting soul to warlike deeds.
But if the minstrel change his hand, the meads
And straying brooks, the embowering trees and birds
Throng round them all ;—such might in poet's words !
Then a romaunt the tuneful minstrel sung ;—
He told of Eglamour, the knight who flung
Himself amid a ruthless band, to save
A dame from foul disgrace and wretched grave !
And how he slew (without or casque or shield)
A Moorish ravisher upon the field
Of proud Grenada, where his tomb now stands,
And that the Spanish maidens' snowy hands
Crown it in spring with flowers ; and when the year
Falls into winter, then they take the sere
And faded flowers away, and from the glade
Bring oak and laurel boughs, which never fade.

And the fond virgins say, " These, viewed aright,
Are touching symbols of the gallant knight.
His mortal life was but a day of flowers ;
His fame's the laurel of eternal bowers ! "

Thus passed the hours. At length the Count arose,
And filled a mighty cup with wine ; then chose
A beauteous dame, to whom the beaker's borne.
She, smiling, sips the brim ; a bugle horn
Sounds forth the token : then each knight gets up,
Bows to some favourite damsel, fills the cup
And bears it to her ;—this the feast completes.
The Count arises from his seat, and greets
With courteous words his guests, and then withdraws ;
They follow him, after a fitting pause.—
Soon are the guests, the light, and music fled,
And the gay banquet hall is silent as the dead.

THE COUNT DE FOIX.



The Arrival at Pampeluna.

THE COUNT DE FOIX.

Morning.—The King of Navarre's Palace.

THE mountain peaks flash in the golden dawn,
And sunrise rears her beautiful bold brow !
The bright dew revels on the glistening lawn,
And every flower unfolds its fragrance now.
The placid shadows on the meadows rest,
And like a winding snake, that moves in light,
The river flows ; while on her gleaming breast,
Rejoicing in the morning fresh and bright,
The stately swans in magic beauty glide,
And with a graceful glory crown the tide.

The Countess rose betimes, for 'twas the day
When she would see her son ; who, since he lay
Sleeping within his cradle, when she took
With a forboding heart her farewell look
Ere she left Orthes, she had never seen,
Although his form in many a dream had been
Looking upon her from eyes bluely cold,—
And now her boy had eighteen summers told.
Oh, these were thoughts to stir a mother's heart !
Now from her eyes a sudden joy would start ;
Sometimes the unbidden tear would gush, and waste
Itself upon her cheek ; and then in haste
She went to the old turret, where she stood
Watching to see him issue from the wood.
The minutes slowly crawled ; they longer were
(How ill impatience counts against despair !)
Than the sad years she had in sorrow past,
Since she beheld the towers of Orthes last.
Then early hopes came o'er her, early dreams
And youthful joys, when first the dawning gleams

Of life's unsteady day, ere, half awake,
A hazy glance on all around we take,
Nor know the sweet and bitter, until driven
To crush the cares of earth by thoughts of heaven,
Evading what we have not strength to bear.
And then she wandered to her wedded care,
Which had like to a vulture gnawed away
The bright side of her heart : her wishes stray
To the old channel, scorning time's decay !

“ Perchance,” said she, “ my husband sends my boy
To woo me back to him ! ” And then a joy
Shot o'er her, like to lightning through the sky ;
And as she felt her pulses wildly fly,
She roamed again the gorgeous woods that grew
Round her lord's castle ; and once more she knew
The music of a lover's voice, and twined
Around her was his arm, her head reclined
Upon his shoulder, as in days gone by.
Full of the rapture, she gave out a sigh

Which scattered the sweet vision ; “ Ah ! ” said she,
“ Perchance this feeling is a *prophecy* ! ”
And then relapsed into the reverie.

So steeped was she in this delicious mood,
That she had ceased to gaze upon the wood,
Or else she had beheld the cavalcade
Forth issue from the quiet of its shade,
Until the horses’ hoofs upon the ground
Broke up the pleasant falsehood. She looked round,
And saw the knightly train,—then cried, “ He’s come !
My boy ! my child ! ”—

And then, with rapture dumb,
Gazed eagerly to single out her son,
And knew him by the armour he had on ;
For ’twas the same his dauntless father wore
When first he battled with the swarthy Moor,
Ere he had grown to manhood’s proud estate.
And now the impatient mother had to wait
Till he had passed the lofty avenue
Of stately trees, that near the palace grew.

When that was passed, he rode so near unto
The turret window, that she saw his face.
It was so like his sire's in colour, grace,
And feature, that she felt her widowed years
Pass as a dream away : no thought for tears,
'Twas gladness all.—Another minute past,
And her child rests within her arms at last !

'Twere vain to tell the rapture and the greeting
That gushed from both their hearts at this blest meeting.
At first they had no tongue for words, but grew
Calm by degrees ; and then they each went through
Their years of memory. Now she besought
Gaston to tell her all he knew ; then brought
Questions to interrupt him,—then was still
As night to listen : now her eyes would fill
With tears of joy, which she would wipe away.
At length she asked him if the Count was gay
Or grave, and what his message was ? If he
Sent her a token of his courtesy ?—
At which poor Gaston felt inclined to lie,

And make the message kinder than was meant.
But stern reflection scornéd to consent
To such a baseness, and with gentle tone
He gave the greeting, word for word. Alone
That heart can tell the disappointed anguish,
Which has been doomed for years to pant, to languish,
For one deep joy; and when 'tis at the lip,
And sweet desire half tastes the promised sip,
A treacherous demon dashes it away!—
So felt the Countess, but she did not say
One word to show the torture of her being.
But Christ, who is the Merciful, All-seeing,
Blots out our crimes with sorrows deep as this :
Earth's sorrow here is heaven's eternal bliss ;
This makes the crooked straight.—But let us pass
From her deserted heart ! (now dead, alas !
To hope or joy,) and to our story go.
The crafty King now came with regal show
And mild hauteur, and greeted with delight
His nephew Gaston ; gave to him a right

Magnificent welcome, splendid banquetings.
High at the feast he sits ! the minstrel sings
His father's valorous deeds, and prophesies
A nobler than his father shall arise,—
That one his son ; flatters with skilful art,
And wins a passage to the guileless heart
Of the young Count.

The day before he went

From Pampelon, the monarch 'gan lament
The unhappy separation of the Count
From his fair bride : the tears began to mount
Fast to the eyes of Gaston. When the King,
Seeing he'd touched upon a tender string,
(The very finest of the human chords,)
With mournful look, and kind and measured words,
Said to his nephew, " Gaston, I rejoice
To find you echo to a brother's voice ;
For it has been a weight of lead to see
Your noble mother pine by slow degree,

Day after day, for one her heart still owns,
Her wedded lord. At times her widowed tones
Have fallen on my ear like solemn knells
Sounding of joys departed. Sorrow dwells
In woman's heart in silence ; but in ours
It rolls like thunder, wasting all its powers
In passion, war, or vengeance ; and therefore
No man has perished yet for love. Go, pore
Over the human history, and see
How little love makes up *man's* misery,
While 'tis the entire of *woman's*. From this learn
How much your noble mother's heart must yearn
For one who had the sweetest offering
Which soul can give to soul : then, Gaston, bring
This blest event to pass, and joy shall wait
For aye on you, and fortunate estate."

"I would," said he, "give up the brightest gem
That glitters in my being's diadem,
To heal the strife that has so long o'er-gloomed
My childhood's home."

“ Right apt and quick I find
Thy filial heart, and to sweet deeds inclined,”
Said the old fox, skilful in every craft,
(And in his spider throat he slily laughed.)
“ This powder must be sprinkled o’er his food,
And such its potence, be it understood,
That it will work the end we have in view.
But it demands a cautious use in you ;
For ’tis a philter of such magic power,
That if your father taste it, from that hour
His youthful love will fire his heart, and he
Will send you on a gallant embassy
To bring your banished mother home.”

The youth

Swore by the very sanctity of truth
To try the philter’s force ; then, having wept
Some tears upon his mother’s neck, he leapt
Upon his horse, and with his gallant train
Set out upon his journey home again.

Loaded with gifts and jewels he departed,
The princely Gaston, young and joyous hearted.

The horses never had such noble paces,
Nor had the peasant girls such smiling faces ;
The woods had greener shades and happier throngs,
And every villager sang jocund songs,
Which told in sweet accord with sky and earth :
It was a feeling gladder far than mirth !
All had a sunny aspect, and he went
To the rapt music of his soul's content.
At length the spires of Orthes rose in sight ;
Then burst he out into a sweet delight,
And to his squire, the courtly Bastinette,
Spoke in his gayest mood : " I never yet
Felt so much pleasure at those tall old spires ;
They glitter bravely in the sunset's fires."
Then, spurring on his steed, he soon regained
The stately castle where his father reigned.

THE COUNT DE FOIX.



The Second Banquet.

THE COUNT DE FOIX.

THE SECOND BANQUET.

THE hour drew nigh ; the starry midnight came,
With it the banquet ; and each knight and dame
Gathered around the festive board, and smiled
Their sweetest smiles, and pleasantly beguiled
The minutes till the noble Count de Foix
Entered the hall,—with him his gallant boy,
His first born, Gaston. He had come in time
To share the feast, the revel, and the rhyme ;
To share the ladies' smiles, and hear the song
Roll its inspiring harmony along

The lofty roof, graced with old armour hung
Around the walls : fit lesson to the young
To win their honours valiantly, and give
An impulse after death to those who live.
As was the custom, the young Gaston bore
One dish unto his sire, who prized that more,
Whate'er it might contain, than all the rest ;
For never son lay closer to the breast
Of father, than did Gaston to the Count.
His tongue was never wearied to recount
His gallant bearing in the tournament ;
And that at some grand archery he bent
The mightiest bow, and shot with aim so true,
He split a slender willow wand in two :
For since the Countess left him, he had known,
No human heart that he could call his own,
Save Gaston, and on him he threw the weight
Of a proud spirit—else, how desolate !
The page brought to the hall the dish, and gave
It unto one who trembled like a slave ;

But full of the intent, he slowly took
The philter from his bosom, and then shook
The powder o'er the meat. This secretly
He thought was done ; but an old Baron's eye
Beheld him do it, marked his anxious air,
And had suspicion that all was not fair,
And that some mischief in that action dwelt.
The young Count trembled in each limb, and felt
The blood mount to his head ; the lights flew round
As stars in magic dances ; and the ground
Heaved to and fro, as though an earthquake rocked
The confined dead, and in the air there mocked
White grinning faces at him ; for a kind
Of dread presentiment still lurked behind
The joyous hope, that once again his sire
Would love his mother with his wonted fire ;
And their long pent up sympathies would start
Forth when they saw each other, and the heart
Cling closer for the absence, and repay
Years of suppression, since that fatal day

When the brave Count to her had bid adieu
Half way to Pampeluna, where he knew
The crafty King was, spider like, on wait
To drag into his web of smiling hate
Aught that could swell his coffers.—

To return

To Gaston. He had now, with tottering feet,
Placed right before his sire the sprinkled meat,
And, thankful that so far his task was o'er,
Called to his face a smile, and gaily wore
A look which trembled with a gathering dread ;
When, as he suddenly turned round his head
To watch his father, saw (with shivering start,
Which curdled all the blood within his heart,)
The Baron, old D'Aiguillon, whispering low
To the old Count, whose looks more grimly grow ;
As though he felt a wolf had grasped his throat,
And sheathed its fangs in flesh. At last he smote
The table with his fist, and cried aloud,
“ The traitor ! can it be ? ”—The courtly crowd

Hush all their buzzing voices. Then again,
“The traitor ! can it be ?” A sudden pain
Shot thro’ young Gaston’s heart. “Here !” the Count cried,
“Here ! here ! my Bull-slayer !” and at his side
A mighty mastiff bounded up, and then
Touched the hall floor, and up in air again
The bold dog sprung. “Here, throw to him some meat ;”
And as he said it, threw down at his feet
Some of the sprinkled dish. The dog with glee
Ate up the savoury morsel speedily ;
But scarcely had he eaten it, before
His eyes began to start, while foam and gore
Oozed from his mouth, and with reproachful look
Of dying agony rolled o’er, and shook
With torturing shiver,—raised once more his head,
Gasped at his master’s feet, and fell there—dead !

A thrill of horror ran through all. The Count
Felt his indignant blood in vengeance mount ;
And drawing forth his dagger, sprang upon,
With maddened violence, his trembling son.

“Traitor and poisoning fiend, you die!” A shriek
Burst from the knights. One dares aloud to speak :
“Count ! be not rash. He is your only heir !
It cannot be *his* deed ; for mercy spare ! ”
The gleaming steel again was raised in air,
When the bold knight, made desperate by despair,
Rushed at and grappled with the Count,—despoiled
Him of his dagger. Baffled thus and foiled,
He madly eyed his son, and smote his breast ;
Then with a stifled voice said to the rest,
“Drag him unto a dungeon ! It were base
To slay so foul a monster in this place,
And with a true knight’s steel. The gibbet’s due
To such a parricide.” And then a few
Of the brave knights, in sorrow and in dread,
And only guessing at the matter, led
The youthful Count away ; but when they heard
The foul offence, no tongue for horror stirred.

The feast broke up in silence and dismay ;
As lightning gone the mirth had passed away.

To his own chamber old Count Gaston went
In studied calmness,—pale despair's content ;
He passed the throng of knights and dames, and bowed
His head in courteous wise, but dared not speak,
For fear his voice should be too strong and loud ;
Or else too low, too trembling, or too weak.
He passed the torturing corridor, and came
To his own chamber : 'twas the very same,
Where he had led his Countess as a bride,
And she for many years had left his side ;
While he, deserted, struggled with his pride
And fought a battle, where the trophies show
Themselves as wrinkles deep, and locks of snow ;
And where the glance fights for its life and death
In the seared eye, and where the uneasy breath
Comes through clenched lips, and when the upraised brow
Says to the forkéd lightning, " Smite me now,
And let me perish ! for I am alone,
Smiling on all around me, while I moan
Through the long night, when on a thorny bed
I lie, but sleep not ; for around my head

A waking vision of a glory gone
Crowns me with fire and madness, both in one ! ”
This was the very chamber where his son,
His fair-haired boy, first saw the light of day :
Here he had whiled the weary hours away,
And watched him as he slept. And now ! and now !—
That son a traitor too !—from his pale brow
The drops of anguish start, and ease his head ;
Then tottering like an infant to his bed,
He flung himself upon it, and a burst
Of tears gushed from him—the last tears, and first.

Now let us from the father to the son,
And see him fastened in his dungeon.
He sat as though he thought it all a dream
Of the foul night, and that it did but *seem*,—
It could not *be* ! Where was his chamber wide,
Hung round with all the pageantry of pride ?
The gorgeous tapestry, so bravely wrought,
Where still his ancestors their battles fought,

And where the triumph and the victory
Of glorious death still fired the youthful eye ?
Now in a dungeon ! 'Twas as dark as night ;
No opening for the air ; the morning's light
Would come, and he not know it ; it would die
Into the night, and he not see the sky.
Here, in a dungeon ! and for what ? Accused
Of poisoning his sire ! His brain, confused
At these conflicting agonies, grew dull,
So that he felt not to the very full
His wretched state ; but stupor-like he sate,
Half mad, half dead,—entirely desolate.
He closed his eyes in a dull drowsy swoon,
And slept an hour or so ; but as the moon
Had risen, it had through the fissure thrown
Its light on features paler than its own.
It woke him,—and he started up. His eyes
Glanced quickly round him in a wild surprise ;
Till, conscious by degrees, he saw the light
Come through his dungeon wall. Until that night

He felt he never had beheld so fair
A thing as moonlight ; but again despair
Came on him like a torrent. Then he thought
Of his sweet bride, and this a solace brought
And tears flowed down : he calmer felt,—he knew
That she would prove him a good son, and true
As steel in battle ; and this thought straightway
Became a blessing till the dawn of day :
When wearied nature triumphed, and a sleep
Fell o'er the wretched Gaston calm and deep.

THE COUNT DE FOIX.



The Dungeon.

THE COUNT DE FOIX.

THE DUNGEON.

ANOTHER sleepless night the old Count passed,
And filled with visions darker than the last ;
But when the dawning fluttered in the east
And lit the hill-tops, and the shadowy mist
Rolled slowly down the valleys, then his eyes
Grew dead and slumberous, and dreary sighs
Stole from his bosom ; overcome, he drew
Breaths long and deep, which longer, deeper grew,
Till he was lapped in sleep's elysian trance.
But the fiend Torture for its victim pants

And bares its arm in slumber, raises o'er
His wearied eyes a vision streaming gore.
His son is guiltless ; but, alas ! this truth
He knows not till his daggers pierced the youth,
Who looks upon him with forgiving eyes,
Blesses his murdering father—smiles and dies.
The anguish wakes him : bolt upright in bed
He starts, and then, with hand supporting head,
Pauses a few short minutes ; then he tries
The balm of sleep again, and shuts his eyes.
Once more he sleeps : once more a figure stands
And draws the curtains with pale ghastly hands,
Demands her son, and cries, “ The boy is true
To sire and mother,—wretched murderer you ! ”
Again the sleeper wakes and starts from bed,
And strives to calm the throbbing of his head
By pacing to and fro his chamber-floor,
But looks with feverish glance towards the door.
Yet never till this moment had he known
Unearthly fear steal o'er him when alone ;

But now he feels he has nor hope nor power
To battle with the terrors of this hour.
At length slow day comes o'er the beacon hills,
And at one burst the sun with glory fills
The amorous lap of earth ; she with delight
Takes on her breast the mighty flood of light.
Worn out and wearied, the unhappy Count
Felt to his eyes the dew of slumber mount,
And, with half-consciousness of woe and pain,
Slumbered and woke,—then dreamed of blood again.
At length his o'ertasked senses felt the weight
Of vigils bear him down ; and having sate
For some few minutes musing on his child,
Fell in the depths of sleep.

Now day had piled
Glory on glory, like a throne on thrones,
When he, awaking from a world of bones,
Shrouds, and dark worms, with aching heart and limb
Rose from his couch ; and taking up the dim
And half-expiring lamp, that sent a glare
Of ineffectual light in sunbright air,

Resolved to visit Gaston. From his room
Descending, quietly he reached the gloom
And silence of the dungeon-looking tomb,
And, drawing near the door with noiseless pace,
Paused for an instant ; then looked round the place,
And listened with hush'd breath. At length he came
Close to the iron door : throughout his frame
An icy horror ran from head to foot,
Like to a jarring discord through a lute.
He put his ear against it, but no sound
Came to him ; and then placing on the ground
His lamp, he listened stealthily again.
All silent was as death.—Was that a chain
That clanked ? No : all is still,—as still as death.
'Tis marvellous, thought the Count : then held his breath,
And pressed his ear against the rusty hole
Where he should place the key. A feeling stole
Over his throbbing heart, which sent a dew
From every pore.—At length the nerves were true
To his proud spirit, and with calm despair,
He turned from off his brow the straggling hair

Wet with his anguish, took a breath, and put
The key within the lock ; then placed his foot
Against the door, while slowly he withdrew
One bolt, and then another : now he grew
Cold as a newt in some o'ershadowed brook ;
But, calling up from time's dark grave a look
Such as he wore in battle, when he smote
A turban'd despot from the crown to throat,
Threw back the lock, open'd the grating door,
And, eyeing with forced look the dungeon floor,
Saw his unhappy Gaston lying there
With gaunt and clasped hands, as though in prayer.
“ How now, thou traitor ! Rise ! Why dost not eat
The food I send thee ?—’tis no *poisoned* meat.
No word, dumb villain ? Speak ! thy father calls.”

But all was silent, save the damp stone walls
Gave a dull echo, like a dying moan.
Thereat the Count de Foix grew fixed as stone,
But by an effort, and with trembling hand,
Touched Gaston's face,—great God ! he scarce could stand,—

For it was cold,—then on his knees the old
Count sank in anguish, felt 'twas clammy cold :
He saw his eye was glassy,—*knew* him dead.
“ My child ! my boy ! It cannot be,” he said ;
“ He cannot, shall not die ! ” Then with a cry,
Brought out by his o’ermastering agony,
Flung himself down beside his child, and threw
His arms around his neck ; kind darkness grew
Over his eye-balls, and, with one faint groan,
The wretched Count laid senseless on the stone.

The attendants heard the cry, and saw the light
Gleam through the passage, and which led them right
Unto the very dungeon, where they saw,
Stretched side by side, the unhappy Count de Foix
And his dead son,—both dead, at first, they thought.
But slowly the old Count revived, and brought
His wonted pride to bear him through this scene ;
And with calm voice and look, pale though serene,
Said unto those around him,—“ He is dead ! ”
And then he looked on the assembled men

That filled the dungeon, and with haughty tone
Bade them retire. When, rising from the stone
On which he laid, he stood erect with pride,
And left the dismal scene with measured stride,
And to his chamber went. And when he came
From thence again, it seemed that o'er his frame
An age of grief had passed and quick decay,
And with it every smile had passed away !

CONCLUSION.



1.

MOURN not for those who taste
Divinest quiet in that sacred rest,—
The invulnerable grave !
Weep for the living slave,
Who with a weary breast
Finds life a cheerless waste,
And drags about from day to day
The burthen of a heavy heart,
Which hangs within his frame a mass of aching clay !

2.

Mourn not for those who lie,
'Neath funeral honours laid,
In the dim solemnity
Of vaulted arches, and of fretted aisle,
Where oriel windows cast a golden shade,
And where the swelling anthems sweep
In mighty voices round the clustering tombs ;
But weep ! oh, weep !
For those who chaunt in dim cathedral glooms
The matin or the vesper song,—
The pale-eyed monks ; whose faces, hid
Beneath the sable cowl, look out
Like souls who dwell in a vast pyramid,
In whose recesses not the shout
Of rabble, nor the arrogant voice of kings,
Can touch ; but, softened by the distance, sound
Like to the solemn sea's deep echoings.

3.

Mourn not for those who sleep
In quiet church-yard, where the fresh grass waves
Above the whispering graves,
Making the sunny calmness still more deep ;
But mourn for those who come
When sunset kisses the expiring day,
Wandering like exiles near the sea,
And standing on the dreary shore,
Looking with wistful eye on waves
That roll on evermore,—
Those waters that divide them from their home !
And deeming they can hear,
Between the pauses of the billowy strife,
Wafted on breezes that have strayed
From that belovéd land,
Some household voice, some childhood melody,
Which makes them feel their exile's weight
Press doubly on a heart, already desolate !



THE STORY
OF
THE COUNT DE FOIX,
AS RELATED BY
SIR JOHN FROISSART.

The Story of the Count de Foix.

ON the morrow we set out, and dined at Montgerbal, when having remounted, and drank a cup at Eracie, we arrived by sunset at Orthes. The knight dismounted at his own house: and I did the same at the hôtel of the Moon, kept by a squire of the Count, called Ernauton du Pin, who received me with much pleasure on account of my being a Frenchman. Sir Espaign du Lyon, who had accompanied me, went to the castle, to speak with the Count on his affairs: he found him in his gallery, for a little before that hour he had dined. It was a custom with the Count, which he had followed from his infancy, to rise at noon* and sup at midnight.

The knight informed him of my arrival, and I was instantly sent for; for he is a lord above all others who delights to see strangers, in order to hear news. On my entering, he received me handsomely, and retained me of his household, where I staid upwards of twelve weeks well entertained, as were my horses. Our acquaintance was strengthened by my having brought with me a book which I had made at the desire of Wincellaus of Bohemia, Duke of Luxembourg and Brabant. In this book, called *Le Meliador*, are contained all the songs, ballads, roundelays, and virelays, which that gentle duke had composed, and of them I had made this collection. Every night after supper I read out to him parts: during which time neither he nor any one else spoke, for he was desirous I should be well heard, and took much delight in it. When any passages were not perfectly clear, he himself discussed them with me, not in his Gascon language, but in very good French.

* "Que il se couchoit et levoit à haute nonne;" that is to say, he took his morning-meal at that hour.

I shall relate to you several things respecting him and his household, for I tarried there as long as I could gain any information. Count Gaston Phœbus de Foix, of whom I am now speaking, was at that time fifty-nine years old; and I must say, that although I have seen very many knights, kings, princes and others, I have never seen any so handsome, either in the form of his limbs and shape, or in countenance, which was fair and ruddy, with grey and amorous eyes, that gave delight whenever he chose to express affection. He was so perfectly formed, one could not praise him too much. He loved earnestly the things he ought to love, and hated those which it was becoming him so to hate. He was a prudent knight, full of enterprise and wisdom. He had never any men of abandoned character with him, reigned prudently, and was constant in his devotions. There were regular nocturnals from the Psalter, prayers from the rituals to the Virgin, to the Holy Ghost, and from the burial service. He had every day distributed as alms, at his gate, five florins in small coin, to all comers. He was liberal and courteous in his gifts; and well knew how to take when it was proper, and to give back where he had confidence. He mightily loved dogs above all other animals; and during the summer and winter amused himself much with hunting. He never liked any foolish works nor ridiculous extravagancies; and would know every month the amount of his expenditure. He chose from his own subjects twelve of the most able to receive and administer his finances: two of them had the management for two months, when they were changed for two others; and from them he selected one as comptroller, in whom he placed his greatest confidence, and to whom all the others rendered their accounts. This comptroller accounted by rolls or written books, which were laid before the Count. He had certain coffers in his apartment, from whence he took money to give to different knights, squires, or gentlemen, when they came to wait on him, for none ever left him without a gift; and these sums he continually increased, in order to be prepared for any event that might happen. He was easy of access to all, and entered very freely into discourse, though laconic in his advice and in his answers. He employed four secretaries to write and copy his letters; and these secretaries

were obliged to be in readiness the moment he came out from his closet. He called them neither John, Walter, nor William, but his good-for-nothings, to whom he gave his letters after he had read them, either to copy, or to do any thing else he might command.

In such manner did the Count de Foix live. When he quitted his chamber at midnight for supper, twelve servants bore each a large lighted torch before him, which were placed near his table and gave a brilliant light to the apartment. The hall was full of knights and squires; and there were plenty of tables laid out for any person who chose to sup. No one spoke to him at his table, unless he first began a conversation. He commonly ate heartily of poultry, but only the wings and thighs, for in the day-time he neither ate nor drank much. He had great pleasure in hearing minstrels, as he himself was a proficient in the science, and made his secretaries sing songs, ballads, and roundelays. He remained at table about two hours; and was pleased when fanciful dishes were served up to him, which having seen, he immediately sent them to the tables of his knights and squires.

In short, every thing considered, though I had before been in several courts of kings, dukes, princes, counts, and noble ladies, I was never at one which pleased me more, nor was I ever more delighted with feats of arms, than at this of the Count de Foix. There were knights and squires to be seen in every chamber, hall, and court, going backwards and forwards, and conversing on arms and amours. Every thing honourable was there to be found. All intelligence from distant countries was there to be learnt; for the gallantry of the Count had brought visitors from all parts of the world. It was there I was informed of the greater part of those events which had happened in Spain, Portugal, Arragon, Navarre, England, Scotland, and on the borders of Languedoc; for I saw, during my residence, knights and squires arrive from every nation. I therefore made inquiries from them, or from the Count himself, who cheerfully conversed with me.

I was very anxious to know, seeing the hôtel of the Count so spacious and so amply supplied, what was become of his son Gaston, and by what accident he had died, for Sir Espaign du Lyon would never satisfy my curiosity. I made so many inquiries,

that at last an old and intelligent squire informed me. He thus began his tale :—

“ It is well known that the Count and Countess de Foix are not on good terms with each other, nor have they been so for a long time. This dissension arose from the King of Navarre, who is the lady’s brother. The King of Navarre had offered to pledge himself for the Lord d’Albreth, whom the Count de Foix held in prison, in the sum of fifty thousand francs. The Count de Foix, knowing the King of Navarre to be crafty and faithless, would not accept his security, which piqued the Countess, and raised her indignation against her husband. She said,—‘ My lord, you show but little confidence in the honour of my brother, the King of Navarre, when you will not trust him for fifty thousand francs : if you never gain more from the Armagnacs and Labrissiens than you have done, you ought to be contented : you know that you are to assign over my dower, which amounts to fifty thousand francs, into the hands of my brother : therefore you cannot run any risk for the repayment.’—‘ Lady, you say truly,’ replied the Count ; ‘ but, if I thought the King of Navarre would stop the payment for that cause, the Lord d’Albreth should never leave Orthes until he had paid me the utmost farthing. Since, however, you entreat it, it shall be done, not out of love to you, but out of affection to my son.’ Upon this, and from the assurance of the King of Navarre, who acknowledged himself debtor to the Count de Foix, the Lord d’Albreth recovered his liberty : he turned to the French interest, and married the sister of the Duke of Bourbon. He paid, at his convenience, to the King of Navarre the sum of fifty thousand francs, according to his obligation ; but that king never repaid them to the Count de Foix.

“ The Count on this said to his wife, ‘ Lady, you must go to your brother in Navarre, and tell him that I am very ill satisfied with him for withholding from me the sum he has received on my account.’ The lady replied, she would cheerfully go thither, and set out from Orthes with her attendants. On her arrival at Pampeluna, her brother the King of Navarre received her with much joy. The lady punctually delivered her message, which when the King had heard, he replied, ‘ My fair sister, the money is yours, as your dower from the Count de Foix ; and, since I

have possession of it, it shall never go out of the kingdom of Navarre.’—‘Ah, my lord,’ replied the lady, ‘you will by this create a great hatred between the Count de Foix and me; and if you persist in this resolution, I shall never dare return, for my lord will put me to death for having deceived him.’—‘I cannot say,’ answered the King, who was unwilling to let such a sum go out of his hands, ‘how you should act, whether to remain or return; but as I have possession of the money, and it is my right to keep it for you, it shall never leave Navarre.’

“The Countess de Foix, not being able to obtain any other answer, remained in Navarre, not daring to return home. The Count de Foix, perceiving the malice of the King of Navarre, began to detest his wife, though she was no way to blame, for not returning after she had delivered his message. In truth, she was afraid; for she knew her husband to be cruel when displeased with any one. Thus things remained. Gaston, the son of my lord, grew up, and became a fine young gentleman. He was married to the daughter of the Count d’Armagnac, sister to the present Count and to Sir Bernard d’Armagnac; and by this union peace was insured between Foix and Armagnac. The youth might be about fifteen or sixteen years old: he was a very handsome figure, and the exact resemblance to his father in his whole form.

“He took it into his head to make a journey into Navarre, to visit his mother and uncle; but it was an unfortunate journey for him and for this country. On his arrival in Navarre, he was splendidly entertained: and he staid some time with his mother. On taking leave, he could not prevail on her, notwithstanding his remonstrances and entreaties, to accompany him back; for, the lady having asked if the Count de Foix his father had ordered him to bring her back, he replied, that when he set out, no such orders had been given, which caused her to fear her trusting herself with him. She therefore remained, and the heir of Foix went to Pampeluna to take leave of his uncle. The King entertained him well, and detained him upwards of ten days: on his departure, he made him handsome presents, and did the same by his attendants. The last gift the King gave him was the cause of his death, and I will tell you how it happened. As the youth

was on the point of setting out, the King took him privately into his chamber, and gave him a bag full of powder, which was of such pernicious quality as would cause the death of any one that ate of it. ‘Gaston, my fair nephew,’ said the King, ‘will you do what I am about to tell you? You see how unjustly the Count de Foix hates your mother, who being my sister, it displeases me as much as it should you. If you wish to reconcile your father to your mother, you must take a small pinch of this powder, and when you see a proper opportunity, strew it over the meat destined for your father’s table; but take care no one sees you. The instant he shall have tasted it, he will be impatient for his wife, your mother, to return to him; and they will love each other henceforward so strongly they will never again be separated. You ought to be anxious to see this accomplished. Do not tell it to any one; for if you do, it will lose its effect.’ The youth, who believed every thing his uncle the King of Navarre had told him, replied, he would cheerfully do as he had said; and on this he departed from Pampeluna, on his return to Orthes. His father the Count de Foix received him with pleasure, and asked what was the news in Navarre, and what presents and jewels had been given him; he replied, ‘Very handsome ones,’ and showed them all, except the bag which contained the powder.

“It was customary, in the hôtel de Foix, for Gaston and his bastard brother Evan to sleep in the same chamber: they mutually loved each other and were dressed alike, for they were nearly of the same size and age. It fell out, that their clothes were once mixed together; and the coat of Gaston being on the bed, Evan, who was malicious enough, noticing the powder in the bag, said to Gaston, ‘What is this that you wear every day on your breast?’ Gaston was not pleased at the question, and replied, ‘Give me back my coat, Evan; you have nothing to do with it.’ Evan flung him his coat, which Gaston put on, but was very pensive the whole day. Three days after, as if God was desirous of saving the life of the Count de Foix, Gaston quarrelled with Evan at tennis, and gave him a box on the ear. The boy was vexed at this, and ran crying to the apartment of the Count, who had just heard mass. The Count, on seeing him in tears, asked him what was the matter. ‘In God’s name, my

lord,' replied Evan, 'Gaston has beaten me; but he deserves beating much more than I do.'—'For what reason?' said the Count, who began to have some suspicions. 'On my faith,' said Evan, 'ever since his return from Navarre, he wears on his breast a bag of powder: I know not what use it can be of, nor what he intends to do with it; except that he has once or twice told me his mother would soon return hither, and be more in your good graces than ever she was.'—'Ho!' said the Count, 'hold thy tongue, and be sure thou dost not mention what thou hast just told me to any man breathing.'—'My lord,' replied the youth, 'I will obey you.' The Count de Foix was very thoughtful on this subject, and remained alone until dinner-time, when he rose up, and seated himself as usual at his table in the hall. His son Gaston always placed the dishes before him, and tasted the meats. As soon as he had served the first dish, and done what was usual, the Count cast his eyes on him, having formed his plan, and saw the strings of the bag hanging from his pourpoint. This sight made his blood boil, and he said, 'Gaston, come hither: I want to whisper you something.' The youth advanced to the table, when the Count, opening his bosom, undid his pourpoint, and with his knife cut away the bag. The young man was thunder-struck, and said not a word, but turned pale with fear, and began to tremble exceedingly, for he was conscious he had done wrong. The Count opened the bag, took some of the powder, which he strewed over a slice of bread, and calling a dog to him, gave it him to eat. The instant the dog had eaten a morsel his eyes rolled round in his head, and he died. The Count on this was very wroth, and indeed had reason: rising from table, he would have struck his son with a knife; but the knights and squires rushed in between them, saying, 'For God's sake, my lord, do not be too hasty, but make further inquiries before you do any ill to your son.' The first words the Count uttered were in Gascon; 'Ho, Gaston, thou traitor! for thee, and to increase thy inheritance which would have come to thee, have I made war, and incurred the hatred of the kings of France, England, Spain, Navarre, and Arragon, and have borne myself gallantly against them, and thou wishest to murder me! Thy disposition must be infamously bad: know therefore thou shalt die with this blow.'

And leaping over the table with a knife in his hand, he would have slain him: but the knights and squires again interfered, and on their knees said to him with tears, 'Ah, ah! my lord, for Heaven's sake do not kill Gaston: you have no other child. Let him be confined, and inquire further into the business. Perhaps he was ignorant what was in the bag, and may therefore be blameless.'—'Well,' replied the Count, 'let him be confined in the dungeon, but so safely guarded that he may be forthcoming.' The youth was therefore confined in this tower. The Count had many of those who served his son arrested, but not all; for several escaped out of the country: in particular the Bishop of Lescar,* who was much suspected, as were several others. He put to death not less than fifteen, after they had suffered the torture; and the reason he gave was, that it was impossible but they must have been acquainted with the secrets of his son, and they ought to have informed him by saying, 'My lord, Gaston wears constantly on his breast a bag of such and such a form.' This they did not do, and suffered a terrible death for it; which was a pity, for there were not in all Gascony such handsome or well-appointed squires. The household of the Count de Foix was always splendidly established.

"This business went to the heart of the Count, as he plainly showed; for he assembled at Orthes all the nobles and prelates of Foix and Béarn, and others the principal persons of the country. When they were met, he informed them of the cause of his calling them together, and told them how culpable he had found Gaston; insomuch that it was his intention he should be put to death, as he thought him deserving of it. They unanimously replied to this speech,—'My lord, saving your grace's favour, we will not that Gaston be put to death: he is your heir and you have none other.' When the Count thus heard his subjects declare their sentiments in favour of his son, he hesitated, and thought he might sufficiently chastise him by two or three months' confinement, when he would send him on his travels for a few years until his ill conduct should be forgotten, and he feel grateful for the lenity of his punishment. He therefore dissolved the meeting; but those of Foix would not quit Orthes until the Count

* A city in Bearn, about one league from Pau.

had assured them Gaston should not be put to death, so great was their affection to him. He complied with their request, but said he would keep him some time in prison. On this promise, those who had been assembled departed, and Gaston remained a prisoner in Orthes. News of this was spread far and near, and reached Pope Gregory XI. who resided at Avignon. He sent instantly the Cardinal of Amiens, as his legate, to Béarn, to accommodate this affair; but he had scarcely travelled as far as Beziers, when he heard he had no need to continue his journey, for that Gaston the son of the Count de Foix was dead. I will tell you the cause of his death, since I have said so much on the subject. The Count de Foix had caused him to be confined in a room of the dungeon where was little light: there he remained for ten days. He scarcely ate or drank any thing of the food which was regularly brought to him, but threw it aside. It is said, that after his death, all the meat was found untouched, so that it is marvellous how he could have lived so long. The Count would not permit any one to remain in the chamber to advise or comfort him: he therefore never put off the clothes he had on when he entered his prison. This made him melancholy and vexed him, for he did not expect so much harshness: he therefore cursed the hour he was born, and lamented that he should come to such an end. On the day of his death, those who brought him food said, 'Gaston, here is meat for you.' He paid not any attention to it, but said, 'Put it down.' The person who served him, looking about, saw all the meat untouched that he had brought thither the last days: then, shutting the door, he went to the Count and said, 'My lord, for God's sake, look to your son: he is starving himself in his prison. I do not believe he has eaten any thing since his confinement; for I see all that I have carried to him lying on one side untouched.' On hearing this the Count was enraged, and without saying a word, left his apartment and went to the prison of his son. In an evil hour he had in his hand a knife, with which he had been paring and cleaning his nails, he held it by the blade so closely that scarcely the thickness of a groat appeared of the point, when, pushing aside the tapestry that covered the entrance of the prison, through ill luck, he hit his son on a vein of his throat, as he

uttered, 'Ha, traitor, why dost not thou eat?' and instantly left the room, without saying or doing any thing more. The youth was much frightened at his father's arrival, and withal exceedingly weak from fasting. The point of the knife, small as it was, cut a vein, which as soon as he felt, he turned himself on one side and died. The Count had barely got back again to his apartment, when the attendants of his son came and said, 'My lord, Gaston is dead.'—'Dead!' cried the Count. 'Yes, God help me! indeed he is, my lord.' The Count would not believe it, and sent one of his knights to see. The knight, on his return, confirmed the news. The Count was now bitterly affected, and cried out, 'Ha, ha, Gaston! what a sorry business has this turned out for thee and me! In an evil hour didst thou go to visit thy mother in Navarre. Never shall I again enjoy the happiness I had formerly.' He then ordered his barber to be sent for, and was shaven quite bare; he clothed himself, as well as his whole household, in black. The body of the youth was borne, with tears and lamentations, to the church of the Augustin friars at Orthes, where it was buried. Thus have I related to you the death of Gaston de Foix: his father killed him indeed, but the King of Navarre was the cause of this sad event."

My heart was much affected at this recital of the squire of Béarn relative to the death of Gaston; and I was truly sorry for the Count his father, whom I found a magnificent, generous, and courteous lord, and also for the country that was discontented for want of an heir.



