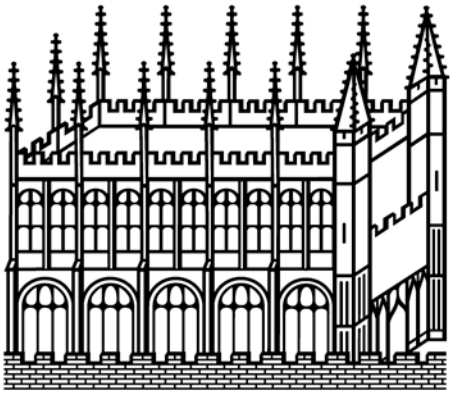
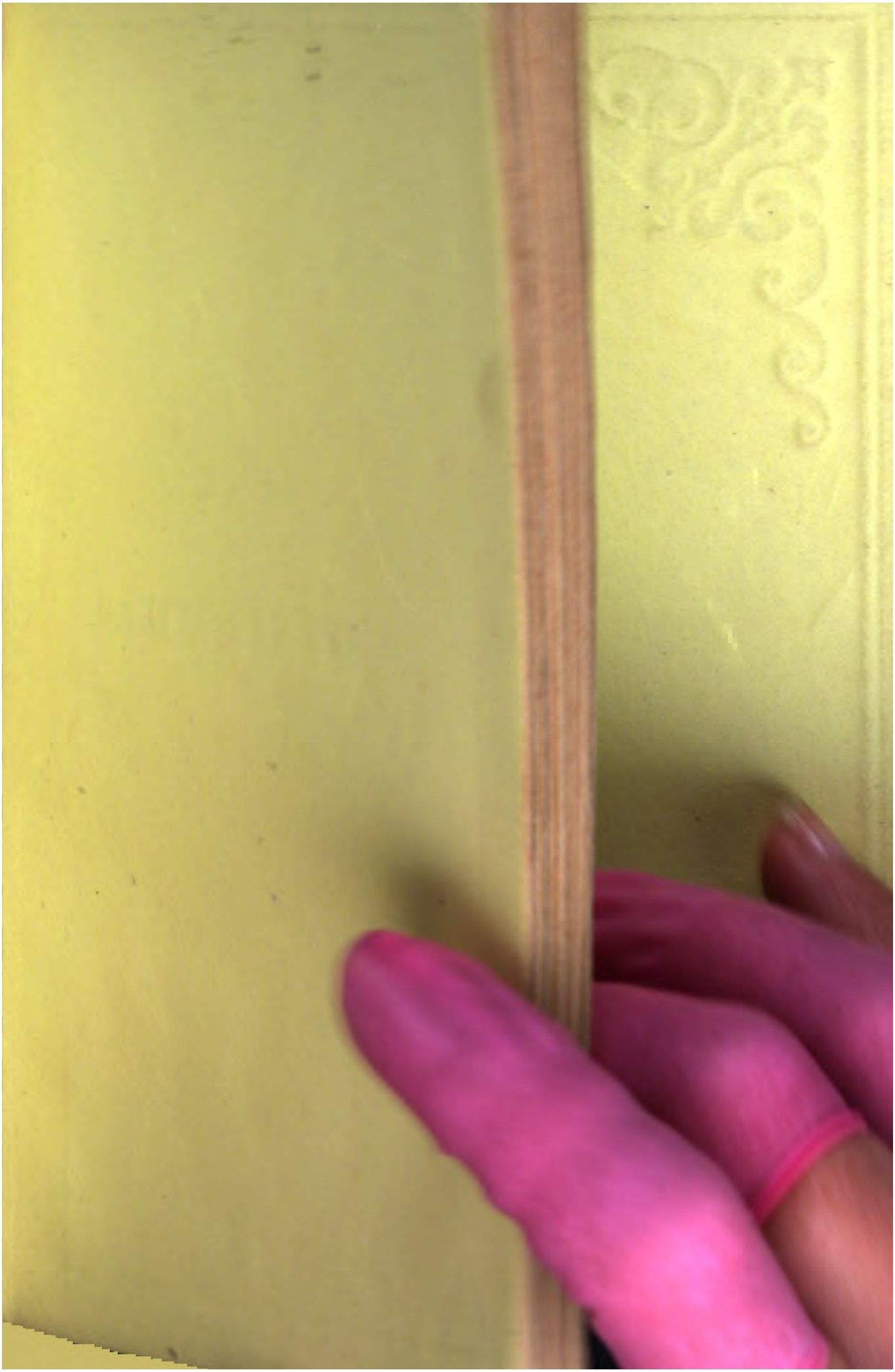
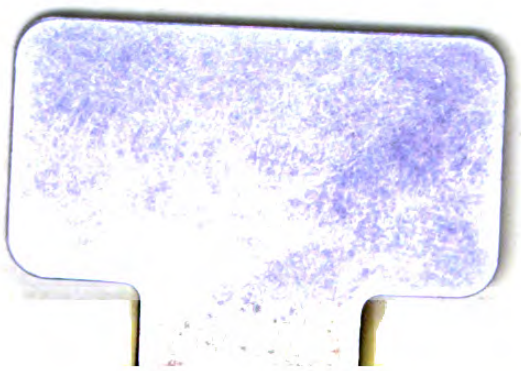
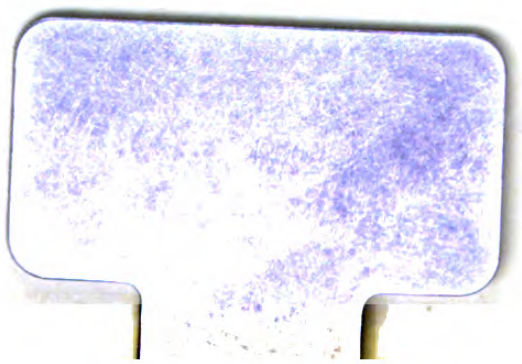


TALES OF DARING AND PERIL







TALES

OF

DARING AND PERIL.

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THE CHALET OF THE ARAU.

LONDON:

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MDCCCLIX.

WM. DAVY AND SON, GILBERT STREET, W.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE present Volume, like its companion ("TALES OF BANDITS," &c.), contains a Selection of agreeable Stories, characterized by that mixture of the marvellous and the terrible which is so universally attractive to popular readers, and which, within due bounds, is fairly allowable, as a means of recreation. Many of the Tales, moreover, are not without their instructive side; and as most of them have been translated expressly for this Collection, the Volume, as a whole, will be new to the English reader.

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THE BRETON WRECKER.

THE BRETON WRECKER;

OR,

The Beacon of S. Gildas.

CHAPTER I.

FRANCE on her western border presents two totally different characters of sea-coast, attributable to obvious and very interesting geological causes. In the north the range of lofty hills and high ground, which traverses the southern part of Normandy, and the centre of Brittany, from east to west, ends in the rocky and dangerous coasts of Finisterre and Morbihan; whilst in the south, from the scarp of the Pyrenees, nearly as far up as the Loire stretches, a succession of flat, sandy, barren wastes, whose only protection from the gales and surf of the Atlantic is a cordon of *dunes* (sand-hills and banks), but for which one would almost expect to see the first storm sweep away the light soil bodily far up into the interior. Whether this part of France was in former ages submerged, and constituted the bottom of an extension of the Bay of Biscay, the basins of the Garonne and the Loire forming huge gulfs, of which those rivers are now the drains, is matter of conjecture; it is far from improbable. Be that as it may, a glance at a good geological map will enable the reader readily

to trace these two great basins both debouching on the Atlantic, and separated from each other by a range of hills, an offshoot from that well defined chain (the Cevennes and the Vosges) which form the back-bone of France. The outlet of the Garonne basin will be observed to be broad, flat, and sandy; that of the Loire partakes in some measure of the two latter characteristics, but from the nearer approach of the hills, which form its boundaries to the north-west and south-west, the outlet is narrower, and the character of the country far bolder than that of the Garonne. On its northern side a branch from the Brittany chain, already mentioned (the Maine hills), ends in the rocky headlands of Le Croisic, Painchâteau, and Chemoulin, the latter the true northern boundary of the embouchure of the Loire; on its southern the chain already mentioned as separating the two basins sinks into the hills of the Bocage, and terminates in the equally bold rocks of Pornic, S. Marie, and S. Gildas, the latter forming the southern extremity of the embouchure. The mouth of the Loire is flanked, like the portal of some baronial château, on either side with these stupendous watch towers; but whilst those on the north (to carry on the simile) are connected with a vast chain of fortifications running north-west, the southern stand out completely isolated, save their connexion with the parent chain—the broad sandy Loire majestically flowing past them to the north, and the wide weary wastes of the Vendée coast to the south. Seaward, as might be expected, islands, rocks, and shoals, stud the ocean, looking not unlike a continuation under water of the two boundary ridges, the islands nearly following the set of those chains.

Ragged, rocky, and perilous as such a coast must be, jutting out sheer into the bosom of the broad Atlantic and breasting the ceaseless lashing of its tremendous surf, that very surf has provided in one

way a shelter from its fury by wearing the coast into deep sheltered bays and creeks.

With the extensive and beautiful harbour of Brest every one is acquainted, either personally, or by description; and though that gulf is of course the most happily adapted of all for a harbour of refuge, as well as for a naval dépôt and commercial port, yet the overtaken mariner may find along that rock-bound coast many another shelter, where in comparative safety his stout ship may tug at the end of her hundred fathoms of chain cable, until the "Nor'-wester" has blown himself out. These remarks, however, only apply to the coast north of Le Croisic.

The approach to the mouth of the Loire is reckoned peculiarly difficult, not only from the number of shoals, but from the circumstance that this lazy river, all sluggishly as he rolls, is liable to sudden and violent risings, which bring down the sand and soil of the upper country in such volumes, and play such fantastic tricks with the existing sand-banks, that they are ever shifting and changing their shape; moreover, the embouchure itself presents no sufficient shelter for storm-caught vessels; even the harbour at S. Nazaire affords them little protection, especially from south-west gales, during which they are obliged to run as best they may for the safer anchorage at Guiberon. It is no wonder, then, that the watch-tower cliffs we have described should have looked upon many a sad scene of shipwreck and disaster, should have witnessed the engulfing of many a brave or gentle form, and echoed to many a despairing cry for the help that none could give; and a story current among the seamen and pilots of the neighbourhood, and connected with the southern headland (that of S. Gildas), is here given as it is generally received on the spot.

This bold promontory is the terror of the pilots of

the country whenever they are obliged to double it in stormy weather, and is not unfrequently the cause of shipwreck to foreign vessels, which, when not provided with an experienced pilot, are soon thrown upon the black rocks of its dangerous coast, through the ignorance of their crews.

The foreland of S.Gildas, however, presents a magnificent prospect. On either side the eye ranges over a vast extent of water, bounded only by the horizon, which appears to unite the ocean with the heavens.

In front rises the Ile de Noermoutiers, enveloped in mist in dull weather, and whose granite cliffs sparkle when the sun shines upon them. Stretching away eastward, rise the enormous rocks of S. Marie and Pornic, half hidden by the sea which dashes against them, encircling their sides with girdles of silvery foam. Northward and westward, the spectator may trace the coast of S. Nazaire, alternately bright and dark, frowning and smiling; all its outlines marked by a tremulous streak of light. The beach of S. Gildas presents a grand though monotonous panorama. Here, a creek sheltered from the wind by a rampart of broken rocks, forms a circular and tranquil lake a few steps only from the raging sea. There, rocks, just rising above the surface of the ocean, resemble so many seals basking in the sun near the sea-shore, their shapeless ridges covered with sea-weed, or bleached by the waves. Further on, an enormous cavern opens its wide mouth to the tide, which, with sullen roar, precipitates itself into the dark abyss only to be thrown foaming back again into the deep. Hidden bays indent the land, worn away by the ocean in its days of fury. In the midst of this wild scenery, upon the very edge of the promontory, there stood, some years ago, a single dwelling, formed of sea-weed and clay kneaded together. In this wretched hut, fit only for Lapland or Kamtschatka, two beings

of equally wretched appearance were sitting together on an autumn evening. One was an old man of sixty, broken down by suffering rather than age; the other a maiden in her seventeenth year, whose extreme beauty shone forth even through the rags and misery which surrounded her.

By a certain similarity of features, one might see that they were father and daughter; but it would have been difficult to find two faces expressing more opposite feelings. Whilst the most candid simplicity lit up the open countenance of the young girl, two thoughts equally mysterious seemed to have taken possession of the mind of the old man: one led him to watch with gloomy uneasiness a rusty iron box fixed in the chimney-corner; the other directed his eyes in a contrary direction towards the door of the hut. Every time that the wind howled the hermit of S. Gildas trembled with a moody joy; and this delight broke forth into a prolonged chuckle, whenever the roaring of the sea was mingled with the howling of the wind.

At such times the maiden grew pale, and looking anxiously at her father, would leave off her household work to address a few soft words to him. . . . Suddenly, as the clock of S. Marie struck nine, a clap of thunder shook the heavens, and the rain fell in torrents. . . .

"Ah, ha! ah, ha!" exclaimed the old man, as he ran to the door. "This will be a famous night!" he added, rubbing his hands together, whilst his hollow eye seemed to reflect back the lightning which was now playing in vivid flashes across the sky.

"Mercy," sighed the young girl, "his fit is coming upon him."

"Come, Martha," said the old man, after assuring himself that the night and the storm were coming on together, "light the horn lantern, and go fetch Petit Noir."

"Petit Noir!" repeated the terrified girl, "are you again going to light up the beacon of S. Gildas?"

"Don't you see how the storm is raging, my darling, and don't you think that there will be ships at sea?"

These words were followed by a grim, strange smile, and a "be quick," which imposed silence upon Martha. She passed through an inner door of the hut, and returned, leading a young bullock after her. This was Petit Noir, thus called from his size and colour; the only companion of the two solitary inhabitants of the promontory of S. Gildas.

"Welcome, Petit Noir, welcome!" said the old man, patting the neck of the animal. "We are going to light up, my boy," he added; "limp cleverly to-night, dost thou hear?"

Leaving his daughter to prepare the lantern, he seized the animal by one of his horns, and led him behind the hut towards the sea; there he fastened him by a long tether to a stake driven into the ground. Then tying up one of his fore-feet with the halter, so as to make him limp very much, he called to Martha, who gave him the lighted lantern, which he fastened like a beacon between the horns of the creature.

Petit Noir, long accustomed to this treatment, submitted without resistance; and when the operation was completed he began to browse round the stake. At every step he took his cramped movements jerked the lantern up and down, and such was the moving and fantastic light that the young girl called it the "Beacon of S. Gildas."

After having combined this effect of light with the halting step of the bullock, the old man cast a satisfied glance over the dark crags of the promontory, and sought his hut, muttering in a bitter tone:

"The English ships may navigate the bay of Pornic, now!"

"Why do you say *English* ships?" said the maiden, struck by these words.

"Because they are the most numerous in these parts, my child, and the beacon of S. Gildas ought to warn them as well as others."

"But does not the beacon of S. Gildas rather lead them into danger, father?" said Martha, looking steadfastly into the old man's face.

"What could put that into your head, child?" he replied.

"The story of Ivan, father," answered the maiden.

This name made the hermit shudder, and drew from him a stifled groan.

"Yes, the story of Ivan," continued Martha; "your joy when the darkness gives promise of shipwreck; the vessels that the beacon of S. Gildas attracts on shore, instead of warning of their danger; your forbidding me to divulge the secret of Petit Noir, and then—then...."

"And what then?" asked the old man, more alarmed at this hesitation than at the remarks that preceded it.

"And then—what they told me this morning, at the village of S. Marie," replied the maiden, with difficulty summoning sufficient courage to proceed.

"What they told you!" cried the old man; "what they said about the beacon of S. Gildas?..."

"Yes, father."

"Well?"

"Well.... It was Eon le Locman" (coasting pilot), "he who loves me, ... and who entreats me to leave you, and become his wife...."

"Go on!"

"He said, as he does every morning, how he loved me, and told me that the reason he cannot marry me unless I leave you, is... that everybody thinks the beacon of S. Gildas is an invention of the devil... to lead ships astray, and:.. that the devil obliges you every evening... to light it with fire from hell! If you had

not made me promise not to speak of Petit Noir, I could soon have undeceived Eon, by telling him that it is I who light the beacon of S. Gildas. But I have been reflecting since, father, that our beacon has not been the means of saving a single ship for these last ten years; and I determined to speak to you about it this evening, because if we are doing evil, my father, God will punish us . . . and I should never marry Le Locman."

"Is that all they told you in the village, child?" asked the old man, feeling relieved by this artless recital.

"That is all, father," replied Martha.

"Well, child," returned the hermit, "you shall be Eon's wife, whenever you like. Only tell him," he added, casting a glance at the iron box in the hearth, "tell him to come and speak to me to-morrow in our hut; and do not trouble yourself about whether the beacon of S. Gildas warns vessels sailing upon this coast of their danger, or leads them to destruction."

As he said this, the old man perceived, through the window of the hut, the light of a vessel beating across the bay. He also assured himself that Petit Noir was acting his part to his satisfaction; and he sent his daughter to bed, whilst he himself remained up, watching by the hearth.

It is now time to relieve the suspense of the reader, as to who the old man and the young girl were, and what both the beacon of S. Gildas and the story of Ivan really meant.

CHAPTER II.

About fifteen years before the events we have described took place, and a short time before the conclusion of the war under the empire with England, a fisherman, named Hervé Pen-Fol, lived with his wife and two children upon the coast near S. Marie. Rich for a man in his situation, thanks to his activity and courage, Hervé Pen-Fol had one great failing balanced by one great redeeming quality; he entertained a great love for his children, and an ardent attachment to his money; the one was as strong as the other. His young son, Ivan le Blond, particularly, and some Spanish doubloons, which he had brought back from a voyage to the West Indies, shared alike his deepest affections and his fondest caresses.

One day, when Pen-Fol was gone to Pornic—his last purchase there had been a cross of S. Ives for his darling boy—to change some new five-franc pieces into napoleons, he found upon his return his wife and daughter bitterly crying over the smoking ruins of his cottage. Some English privateers had made a descent upon the coast during his absence, and the two weeping wretches were all that remained to the fisherman of his family and his wealth.

"Ivan! My money!" cried at once the father and the miser.

His poor wife pointed to the sea as a reply, and Pen-Fol, uttering a loud cry, fell with his face to the earth.* When he had come to himself, he rose up, and taking his wife and daughter by the hand, quitted the scene of desolation. He reached the foreland of

* The privateers of those days were not content with pillaging and burning the houses upon their enemies' coasts, but took away stout lads to bring them up to the sea, and supply the vacancies occasioned by shot or pressgang.

S. Gildas, and there erected the miserable hut we have described. Perhaps when he first determined on this desolate spot, he had no particular fixed idea save that of the seclusion dear to broken hearts; but the situation, and the opportunities it afforded, soon suggested an idea; and with the rapid ingenuity of fierce revenge, he at once conceived and matured a project, which he sternly and steadily proceeded to put in force, unmoved and unsoftened by the death of his poor wife, who very speedily sank a victim to grief and loneliness.

The project consisted in alluring, during stormy nights, strange vessels upon the shoals of S. Gildas. As English merchantmen, more than any others, passed by that part of the coast, Pen-Fol was enabled to gratify at once his thirst for vengeance against the English, and his love of money. And one can now understand the fatal stratagem of the "beacon of S. Gildas." The movement of the lame bullock bearing the lighted lantern, resembling the rolling of a vessel riding at anchor in a heavy sea, attracted the notice of the sailors; who infallibly perished in attempting to gain the anchorage denoted by the deceitful beacon, when driven out of their course in dark tempestuous nights.

The fisherman had carried on this deadly deception for nearly fifteen years, and numberless hapless mariners, and their ships, had fallen victims to his vengeance and avarice. The treasure of the first was stored up in the deep recesses of Hervé's soul, that of the latter in the old iron box in the chimney-corner. The simple people of the neighbourhood were not slow in attributing the beacon of S. Gildas to the agency of Satan; and it was to prevent suspicion and inquiry into the truth of the story, that old Pen-Fol, alarmed by the newly-awakened suspicions of his daughter, had resolved to give her away to her lover,

the boatman, the following day with some louis d'or taken from his iron chest.

After watching through the greater part of the night, the old man, like his daughter, had fallen asleep, when suddenly a noise, as sweet to the one as horrible to the other, startled them both from their slumbers. Cries of despair rose above the din of the tempest and the peals of thunder, while Petit Noir added his piteous bellowings to the dismal concert.

"Another shipwreck!" cried father and daughter in different accents, and at the same moment.

"Let us go and see who they are," muttered Pen-Fol to himself; whilst his daughter gazed upon him with terror, as the flashes of lightning which illumined the hut revealed to her the fearful expression of his face. . . . He threw his fisherman's frock over his shoulders, pulled his hat over his eyes, seized his iron-shod stick, and went out.

It was about three o'clock in the morning. The night was becoming less dark, but the storm raged with unabated fury. The fantastic outlines of the coast, and the foaming billows, were lit up with momentary brilliancy by the vivid flashes of lightning; a ship had struck half-a-mile distant, and lay among the terrible breakers of the promontory. As far as could be discerned from the shore, she was irretrievably wrecked, and the cries of distress uttered by the sailors plainly told that they thought only of saving their lives. By the peculiar accent that Pen-Fol distinguished in the cries, he recognised the sufferers to be English. He allowed his habitual chuckle to escape from his lips, extinguished Petit Noir's lantern, and waited the end in darkness. . . .

At the end of half-an-hour, a fearful noise announced the breaking up of the vessel. In a short time the cries of the few who were struggling in the water reached the ears of the fisherman, as they were borne

in by the waves towards the sharp rocks at the foot of the promontory, where an inevitable death awaited them. One by one the cries ceased, stifled by the waves: then, nothing more was heard on the shore save the howling of the tempest and the dashing of the surf.

With the earliest dawn Hervé Pen-Fol descended to the beach, now left dry by the retreating tide. Amongst the remains of the wreck exposed to his cupidity, he found a body lying with the face buried in the sand. He approached it with feelings of bitter hatred, and seizing the auburn hair, turned the head round; but he was moved with involuntary pity as he gazed upon the features of a young man of about twenty.

"Poor young man!" he sighed; "my son would have been about his age."

Then, suddenly recalled by the sad recollection, he savagely struck the body with his iron-pointed stick, and turned to prosecute his search.

Scarcely had he gone two steps, when he started—stopped, and turned round again with surprise; the man had uttered a faint moan under the blow, and had made an effort to rise.

"He is not dead!" said the old man, throwing himself beside the body. "No! no! he breathes!... he opens his eyes! Martha! Martha! come quickly!" he shouted with all his might.

The recollection of Ivan had this time awakened pity, instead of rage, within his heart; and the desire of saving the young sailor had taken possession of the breast of the old fisherman.

In an instant Martha was at his side, and between them they conveyed the still breathing body to their hut.

"God be praised!" thought the young girl, as she assisted the old man with eagerness. "It is now

clear my father does not desire to lure the unfortunate crews of shipwrecked vessels to destruction; on the contrary, he endeavours to save them, and I will tell Le Locman that the beacon of S. Gildas is not what they say it is in the village."

When the young sailor was laid before the fire in the hut, his consciousness gradually returned. Martha and Hervé replaced his wet clothes by the best that their scanty wardrobe afforded; but as they were engaged in performing this kind office, the old man uttered a cry of horror and dismay.

The unfortunate man had received a deep wound in his side, and Pen-Fol saw at a glance that several of his ribs had been crushed in by being dashed against some sharp point of rock, and it appeared too plainly that he had received a severe injury in a vital part, and was in fact dying of internal injuries.

For the first time Hervé Pen-Fol felt his revenge embittered by remorse. The shipwrecked man told them that he must have fainted when he was thrown upon the crags, and that he had doubtless rolled over on the sand, where the old man found him; then, feeling that his strength was failing, notwithstanding the care of his preservers—

"My friends," said he, "it is beyond your power to save me; but I bless you for having restored me to life, even for a short time, that I may make known to you my last wishes."

Martha and Hervé reverentially approached the young man, and gathered with emotion the following words, as they dropped one by one from his lips.

"I am not an Englishman, my friends, although I have served on board an English vessel. France is my native country, and Brittany the land of my birth."

"Brittany?" said Hervé. "What part of Brittany?"

"I cannot tell; I have played as a child upon a

shore like this. I left it so young, that I have forgotten the name. Brought up by English sailors, I have passed my days on board ship. I made several voyages to America, and then traded for ten years in the Indian seas, where I amassed a little fortune; a portion of which is in gold in the clothes you have just taken off me. I was bringing it to France, to give to my father, if perchance I might have found him: he must be old, and perhaps poor, and this money would have comforted him in his old age."

"What is his name?" asked Pen-Fol, in whose breast this recital had conjured up the most terrible conjectures.

"His name," replied the sailor, "alas, I know not if I ever heard it! . . . I told you I was carried away so young."

"But how?"

"During a fire, as far as I recollect.

"During a fire!" repeated Martha and Hervé, looking at each other.

And the old man fixed his eyes upon the young sailor with an expression of the most intense agony.

"This, my friends," continued the dying man, "this is the only clue I can give you, to enable you to trace my family. But," he added with difficulty, as the old fisherman and the maiden bent over him, "I have always worn round my neck a little leaden cross, which must have been given me by my father."

"A cross of S. Ives!" cried Pen-Fol, who had just found it; "a cross like that I bought for my poor Ivan. . . ."

"Ivan!" said the young man, struck by the name; "they used to call me so a long time ago, Ivan le Blond."

"Ivan le Blond!" cried Martha and Hervé at once. And both threw themselves upon the breast of the sailor, exclaiming, "My brother!" "My son!"

"Gracious heaven!" said the dying man, in an ecstasy of joy. "You, my sister! You, my father!"

"Yes, thy wretched father," replied the old man; "thy father, whom thou mayest well curse; for he is thy destroyer!..."

At the same moment he fell backward, muttering a few incoherent words, but still sufficient to reveal to his son and daughter the terrible vengeance which he now so cruelly expiated.

A quarter of an hour later Ivan and Hervé had ceased to live; and Martha, who had fled for refuge to Eon le Locman, explained to him the mystery of the Beacon of S. Gildas.

In a few weeks the story was well known all over the country, and the pilots never failed to relate it when they doubled the terrible promontory in stormy weather.

THE HANGING ROBBER.

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EARLY one morning, in the month of August, 18—, his worship Gaurila Michailovitch, a retired captain, and district justice in the W——a department in Northern Russia, with his lady, Praskovya Yegorovna, set off for the city in a britschka, to transact several matters of business. Scarcely had they driven from the door, when the servants, according to a not unusual custom, followed their example, and quitted the house for a day's amusement. The butler went to see his cousin in the village; the cook and cookman also went to see their friends; Prochor and Daria went nutting in the wood; Vaska and Nataska strayed to the heath to gather cranberries, &c.; Duna, a young housemaid, alone remained within. Duna was considered the pearl of the whole W——a department: she was fair as a lily, fresh as a rose, graceful as a cedar, a sprightly virtuous damsel, who by her good qualities had become the favourite of all, and especially of Ivan, the governor's valet, to whom indeed she was sincerely attached, and who came to visit her as often as circumstances permitted.

Duna had no sooner carefully fastened the outer doors than she sat down, and quietly waited for her friend Ivan, whom she had given to understand that

her master and mistress were to spend the whole day in the town, and that he might therefore come safely to see her. Duna had not waited long, and was merrily humming a tune in expectation of seeing her friend, when suddenly there was a gentle tap at the door. "That is he!" said she to herself; and like an arrow she flew and opened it to let him in. But her countenance soon fell, "Ah, it is not he!" she exclaimed.

"I am your man," replied a deep husky voice, as there cautiously entered through the open door a big-built fellow in a tattered frieze cloak and faded cap, with a swarthy face, much in want of the barber's office, terrible foxy moustaches, and a dusky red nose, a scarred forehead, blue lips, and bloodthirsty eyes; the very type of the chairman of a city pot-house, or one of those diabolical figures that are to be seen in their perfection in Salvator Rosa's paintings.

The astonished Duna recoiled some steps, and repeated with a sigh from the bottom of her heart, "It is not he!" Meanwhile the stranger had stepped in, and with the utmost coolness closed the door again, locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

"What do you want? Who are you?" cried Duna. "Why do you put the key in your pocket?"

"Don't be alarmed," he said, smiling; "I am come to pay you a visit. The time must hang heavy on your hands all alone here."

"Not at all," replied Duna; "but what do you mean by pocketing the key?"

Instead of answering he went up to her and patted her on the cheek with his coarse dirty hand. The angry Duna retreated into a corner and began to cry.

"Don't cry, my little dear; I won't do you any harm," he said in a softer tone, as he drew near her. Now this softer tone alarmed her even more, and she involuntarily stretched out her arms to keep him off.

"Who are you, I say?" she cried in despair, but with an assumption of courage, which, however, soon melted away. "You shall tell me on the spot who you are."

"Who I am?"

"Yes; who you are—your calling—your name?"

"Well, then, I am a *robber*."

"A robber!" she echoed in a faltering voice, and turning as white as snow.

"Every man to his calling. I had another once: but now, I say, my pretty lass, give me something to eat; I have not put a bit in my mouth these three days. We will have breakfast together, and then—"

"I have no breakfast for you," she interrupted; "there is nothing to eat in the whole house. Go breakfast in the public-house, if you have a mind: indeed, you smell of brandy so much that I dare say you have made a very good breakfast already."

"What, nothing to eat?" he muttered, knitting his brow, and bending a piercing glance on the girl as he put his right hand down towards his boot. "Do you see this?" said he, showing her a broad-bladed knife with small black speckles, traces of recently shed blood he had somewhere hastily wiped off on the grass—"I have no time to joke with you."

Poor Duna stared with open eyes, and seemed petrified by the basilisk glances of the robber.

"Breakfast!" he shouted. "Be quick; I have no time to lose."

"Take whatever you please," said the affrighted girl; "there is some roast-meat in the cupboard, and some brandy."

"Show me into the parlour; put everything you have got on the table: and stir yourself, and be quick with it."

Pale and bewildered, Duna tottered to the cupboard in the antechamber. He stuck the knife in his boot,

and followed her step by step. Bread, salt, butter, cheese, cold roast veal, and brandy, were placed on the same table where the proprietors of the house had recently breakfasted, before setting off for the town. He seated himself, seized Duna's arm, made her sit down beside him, and began his repast, not sparing, especially, the bottle of brandy.

"Excellent liquor this, to be sure," he cried; "is there any more of it?"

"There is another bottle in the cupboard."

"Have the goodness to bring it here."

"There it is."

"Thank you: and now, to let you see that I know something," he went on, after he had gulped down his third glass of brandy, "I will tell you that a clerk brought your master 1,500 roubles yesterday from Ivanovitch F——, whose case was brought last week before the district court. Is not that true?"

"It may be so."

"Well, where does your master keep his money?"

"Really I do not know."

"But I do; we shall soon find it: meantime let us go on with our feast. Come, cannot you be a little sociable?"

Poor Duna was forced to make a show of being at ease. The guest was in the happiest humour; he laughed and joked with her. Duna gradually forgot her terrors, grew bolder, defended herself becomingly, nay, laughed aloud, and endeavoured to disguise her intense anxiety under a show of cheerfulness; whilst in secret she prayed fervently to Heaven that the red-nosed fiend might now eat and drink his fill, and that Ivan might speedily arrive to indemnify her for this fearful torment.

As to Ivan, having got leave of the governor, he had left the town, and hastened with quickening steps, and with a heart brimful of pleasure and hope, to

meet her. But, alas! on his way lay a brandy-shop—there is no road in that country without them! This time, however, he would have flown by it, but within were some of his acquaintances whom he had not seen for a long time. He made a halt to salute them, was invited to sit down, drank with them, and drank again and again — and by and by forgot himself and Duna altogether.

Meanwhile the robber had emptied his sixth glass of brandy. At the seventh he grew pensive, pursed his brows, and bit his lips; a dark shadow passed like a cloud over his countenance, as if he remarked something which he had forgot: suddenly he sprang from his seat, and without intending it, pushed so strongly against his companion, that she almost fell between his feet. He looked round uneasily, took the brandy bottle, the bread, and a piece of meat from the table, put them all into the fathomless pockets of his cloak, and said,—

"Thank you, my pretty maid, for your hospitality; your master Gaurila Michailovitch keeps his money in this secretary, eh? Why don't you speak? You see I am not such a bad fellow as you thought at first, my pretty chick. Now just tell me what sort of death you would like best to die. Shall I cut off your head? or would you rather I should hang you —from that beam, for instance? Don't be afraid; only say what you would like best."

"What pleasure can you take in plaguing me so cruelly?" said Duna, not crediting that he could be in earnest.

"Why don't you answer?" he said, examining the secretary and the lock. "I should be glad to know—whether you—would rather—be hanged, or—Oho! Gaurila Michailovitch keeps his money under two locks, does he? Stay a bit; it is not the first we have coaxed open." So saying, he took an iron

instrument out of his pocket, and immediately began to use it upon the lock. Duna stood as if spell-bound in the middle of the room, trembling in all her frame.

The secretary burst open with a crash.

"Whoo! what a lot of fine things! Bank notes, and ducats, and watches—are these all crumbs of office?" Chatting in this fashion with himself and with Duna, he crammed his pockets with money, watches, and trinkets, and then turned abruptly to the half-dead girl—

"Well, your choice? Waste no time, but tell me, what death will you die?"

"What have I done to you? You have taken whatever you pleased; I did not hinder you."

"That's very true: but do you see, it won't do for me to leave any witnesses behind me: I rid myself of them by all means. With others I don't stand on ceremony; but as you are so good-natured and amiable, I will give you your choice of death. I love politeness: I too have been brought up in St. Petersburg."

Still she would not believe that he was in earnest.

"Now then, let's have it at once; I have no time to lose. Let us put compliments aside. I am extremely sorry, but you must die. I am not going to be such a fool as to let you live, to tell what sort of moustaches, eyes, nose, clothes, &c. I have got—what I did here, and which way I went. Now then, answer quickly."

Every word of her cold-blooded torturer was a dagger-stroke to her: her whole blood curdled back upon her heart; her limbs grew cold, and floods of tears poured over her inanimate face—she tottered and fell to the floor. In her fall she caught the robber's foot, and kissed it.

"Have mercy on me!" she shrieked; "oh, spare my life, I implore you! I swear to you I will not

say a syllable to any one: may I never see heaven if I do! Oh, have compassion upon me! I will pray all my life for you as for my own father—my brother—"

The inexorable miscreant shook her off from his foot. In vain she raised her imploring looks and arms towards him; in vain she sought to touch his stony heart with all that intense despair, and the clinging love for a youthful, joyous existence, could breathe into the words, the voice, and the tears of a helpless being. The villain, whose features grew every moment more savage with rage and impatience, caught her by the hair, forced back her head, drew his knife from his boot, and was about to plunge it in her throat.

"Oh, for the love of Heaven!" sobbed the unfortunate girl, beside herself at the sight of the terrible knife, "hang me! hang me! No bloody death! Mercy! mercy! Hang me rather!"

"Ay, ay," he said, with a hideous grin; "so you can speak at last: why did you not say so at once? I have lost a deal of time already, still I can't refuse you the favour. Don't be afraid, Duna; you shall die in the pleasantest manner. It is an ugly death that of the knife: if I might choose myself, I would rather be hanged than knouted, when my time comes. We will look about for a cord."

The wretched girl, powerless in mind and body through terror, cold as ice, trembling, and almost lifeless, submitted to all his commands. The rope was soon found, and the murderer returned with his victim to the same room where the remains of the breakfast still stood upon the table. He threatened to kill her instantly if she stirred from the spot where she stood, placed a chair on the table, and sprang nimbly upon it. Having fastened the rope round the beam, he cut off the projecting part of the rope, stuck

the knife into the beam, and set about making a double running knot on the rope. Duna stood motionless in the middle of the room; heat and cold rushed alternately through her frame, sparks of fire danced before her eyes; she saw nothing, she did nothing but pray, commend herself to Heaven, and mentally bid farewell to all that was dear to her in life.

"Presently, presently, my precious!" said the murderer, going on with his work; "you shall see how nicely I can do it. I am not a new hand at the job. Do you see now, all is ready, only we must try whether the rope is strong enough: I would not for the world you should fall to the ground and break your ribs; it is for your interest and mine own that —draw the chair away from under my feet."

Duna unconsciously went up to the table, and drew away the chair, whilst the robber held the rope fast in both hands, having slipped it over one arm up the elbow, to convince himself of its strength by swinging on it with the whole weight of his body.

"Push the table aside." Duna did so. "All right, it is a capital rope; it would bear more than you and me together."

He now let go the rope, intending to jump to the ground. Apparently it was his purpose to startle the poor girl by the bold and sudden leap, but the noose intended for her, gliding along his arm, caught him fast by the wrist. Duna's executioner had, in fact, suspended himself by the hand!

Though experiencing the most acute pain, he wished to conceal his critical position from the girl, that she might not avail herself of it to escape. He tried to reach the imprisoned hand with his left, but the weight of his body prevented his bringing his shoulders parallel. Suddenly he began to whirl and fling himself wildly through the air, hoping the rope

would snap: but in vain. If he had but the knife in his boot he might have severed it, or, at the most, cut off his hand, and saved himself by flight. But unluckily for him the knife was sticking in the beam. How was he to get at it?

He thought of one means—a desperate one—the last. He collected all his strength to shake the knife out with a powerful spring. The effort failed.

The weight of his heavy frame dangling in the air by one hand only, his violent efforts, the pressure of the tight-drawn knot, occasioned the villain intense torture: the joints of his arms crackled and began to part; the blood oozed out under the lacerated skin, and trickled into the sleeve of his cloak, while that of the rest of his frame rushed from the extremities to his head. Every moment it seemed as if the hand would be torn off—he even wished that it might. His anxiety lest the people of the house should return, his dread of being taken in this predicament, impatience, rage—he thought of his misdeeds, of his punishment, of his guilty life—all this possessed his tumultuous imagination, and brought his dark soul to despair. Cold sweat broke from his forehead. In spite of his tiger-like endurance, a cry of agony burst at last from his iron bosom.

Duna, petrified, and thinking only of death, had hitherto looked on with an idiotic indifference. For a long time she did not understand what he was doing, and made no attempt to understand it. True, she was still standing upright like a living thing; but living she was not. The involuntary cry of the murderer waked her, however, from the trance. She saw him bleeding, as if it were half a dream: she saw blood on the floor, a hideous gaping mouth with great misshapen teeth, red fiery eyes starting from the sockets; she read his anguish in his ghastly distorted features, and guessed at last what had happened.

Hope animated her; she began to think of deliverance.

"Duna, push the table nearer," said the robber, in altered, but still harsh and commanding accents, that terrified her again, and compelled her, as it were, to strict obedience. Once more she lost her presence of mind, and, as if spell-bound, pushed the corner of the table towards him. The villain reached it with the toes of one foot; he raised himself up a little. It was for him a moment of intense enjoyment. Never in his whole life had he known one like it—not even after the most successful robbery. His agony was less intolerable; he drew breath again; but his left hand, which he tried to use to free his right, was benumbed and powerless. The knot, too, had grown too tight—the reprobate felt that he could do no more without aid.

"Duna, my kind friend! do me this favour; jump upon the table; untie my arm; pray do! I will not kill you; I only meant to frighten you. Oh! how my head swims."

The miscreant's torture touched the kind-hearted girl's soul. The feeling of compassion not unfrequently extinguishes in women the thought of their own danger. In Duna's bosom compassion prevailed over fear, and for the time stifled the voice of self-preservation. She sprang upon the table, and laboured long and hard at the knot; she could not undo it.

"Do me the favour, Duna, fetch a knife, cut the cursed rope—I am dying with pain."

The girl jumped off the table, and ran to the pantry. Poor creature! she little knew the return her guest was prepared to make for her kindness of heart. She found a knife—she hurried back—she was on the threshold of the scene of torture, when the table on which the robber had rested his foot, turned

over with a loud noise. He had upset it in endeavouring to change his feet. Once more he was swinging with all his weight in the air. A piercing yell told the sudden renewal of former tortures. Duna stopped short at the door. His hideously distorted face struck her with involuntary horror; she thought it was Satan's own face she beheld. The sight riveted her to the spot where she stood; she shuddered, and dared not move a step forwards. Presently she recovered her presence of mind, and began to reflect on her real situation: she looked round and saw a window open; in a moment she raised herself to the ledge, dropped from it into the court-yard, and ran with all her might to the gate.

Onward she hurried, till her strength was well-nigh exhausted: no one was in sight. She ran farther—her breath failed, her limbs tottered; she dared not look back, lest she should again see that fearful mouth, lest she should again fall into the hands of her persecutor.

She struggled up a rising ground—

"Ah! there is our butler, and there is Vaska and Prochor. Ah! *he* too is with them."

He, to wit, Ivan, the governor's valet; they were all returning home together, careless and happy, singing songs, and cracking their jokes with each other. Duna ran towards them, pale, with staring eyes, and flying hair; her neck uncovered—her wits bewildered—

"Come along!—quick! quick!" she screamed; "he is hanging! hanging! hanging! the villain is hanging!—faster! faster!"

"Hey, darling!" they all cried to her, with a laugh; "Who is hanging? Where is he hanging?"

"He is hanging, I tell you. Don't laugh. Run to the house; take forks, hatchets, guns—a robber—a murderer, with great moustaches, and a red nose:

he said he would cut my throat—that he would hang me!"

They hastened their steps, armed themselves as well as they could, broke the house-door open, and went into the parlour. The robber had fainted; blood streamed from his mouth and nose; the arm by which he hung had grown a foot longer. They took him down, and bound him. After the return of the master and mistress of the house, he was conveyed that same evening to prison, and delivered into the hands of justice; and Justice could not but own, with astonishment, that never till then had so long an arm come before her.

Duna and Ivan were in due time united; but it may well be supposed that neither ever forgot the fearful adventure of the Hanging Robber.

THE WELSH DROVER.

THE WELSH DROVER.

THERE certainly never was a more hospitable, unaffected, benevolent being than old Morgan Hughes of Gwern y Cynyddion; and although the storms and sunshines of threescore years and ten have whitened his scanty locks and furrowed his open brow, still is he as blithe and as merry,—ay, and more merry too,—than many a more youthful contemporary. His life, I have already intimated, has been one of restless activity and vicissitude: but I should have said the earlier portion of it; for, thrown into the wide world without father, without mother, without even a single friend, and unnoticed even by his own kindred, it was not likely that his youth should glide away in listless indolence or pleasurable recreation. It was, in fact, full of "adventure perilous," of "moving accidents by flood and field;" and it was not till he had arrived far beyond the spring-tide of life, that he found himself the possessor of a comfortable home, the father of a fond and an affectionate family, and the envied inheritor of four hundred per annum. He had experienced enough of the toils and bitterness of existence to render him kind and benevolent to all such as needed succour and relief; and never is the unfor-

tunate beggar known to quit the door of Gwern y Cynyddion unrelieved or unsatisfied.

Nothing delights an old man more than the narration of the feats of his youth; and nobody ever listens with impatience to the stories which Morgan Hughes delights to tell, and his friends are always glad to hear. There is one tale in particular, which has constantly and powerfully interested me, and which, in the hope that it may equally interest others, I will endeavour to relate, as nearly as possible in the very words of my venerable friend.

When I was about five-and-twenty (said he) I was acting as a sort of under-bailiff to Squire Jones of Tal y Gareg, near Welshpool: he was a quiet, indolent, easy man, and troubled himself very little about business, the management of which he left entirely to his steward, Mr. Pearson, under whose immediate care and direction I was placed. For some cause or other,—I never could find out what,—Mr. Pearson took a great dislike to me; and being a surly, morose man, I got nothing from him but abundance of hard work, and no small quantity of spite and ill-will. One winter this gentleman had taken it into his head to speculate a good deal in black cattle; these he fed in the Montgomeryshire pastures, and then sent on to Shrewsbury fair, which is held on every second Monday in each month. It was part of my office to follow those cows and oxen, to sell them, and bring back the money to Mr. Pearson; and my custom was, to let the drovers set off first, which they did at a very early hour, and then follow at my leisure.

When I first went to Tal y Gareg, a neighbouring farmer, for whom I had done some trifling service, gave me a young mastiff dog, the descendant of a famous breed, which had been hitherto uncontami-

nated by any baser species. This dog I named Blâinor; and many a time, when I had retired to my little bedroom in sorrow and despondency, would the fond and faithful affection of the poor dumb animal afford that consolation which was denied me by the reasonable beings of my own species. Blâinor was so attached to me that I could do anything with him; and notwithstanding the fierce character of his kind —for he came of a race notorious for its ferocity—he was, when with me, as gentle and as docile as a lamb; though with strangers that he did not like he was extremely furious and savage. Blâinor was my constant companion. He went with me to the hills, and was of considerable service in gathering together the stray sheep; he went with me to market to Welshpool; and always accompanied me to Shrewsbury fair, where he was as well known as at home. He slept also at the foot of my bed, crouched at my feet at meal times, and, in short, was always with me. He was, indeed, almost the only real friend that I had in the world, and I valued him accordingly.

The winter in which Mr. Pearson began his speculation as a grazier happened to be a very severe one; and among the rugged hills of that part of Montgomeryshire where Tal y Gareg is situated, we felt its severity more sharply than those who dwelt in the lowland districts. On the fair-day in February, Mr. Pearson had marked out twenty head of cattle for market; and although the snow then lay very thick on the ground, he determined to send them to Shrewsbury. The drovers grumbled enough; and one of them stoutly refused to peril his life for the sake of a parcel of brute cattle; saying that if Mr. Pearson wanted to sell them, he might take them himself. He was, however, speedily dismissed, and his place supplied by myself, to Mr. Pearson's great joy, who was very glad of the opportunity of showing his regard,

by exposing me to the toil and dangers of a drover's office in such very untoward and severe weather. It was one great rule of my life never to shrink from any task, and never to evince any unwillingness at the imposition; so, saddling my horse, and whistling to Blâinor, I followed the drove without a murmur, and was soon upon my road. There had been a heavy fall of snow in the night, and the sky still looked very threatening and cheerless; but the wind was high, and so kept the snow from falling. Shrewsbury was distant about sixteen miles; the first four consisting of a very long and dreary mountain road, elevated considerably above the highway, and exposed to every blast that blew. We found ourselves terribly incommoded by the snow-drifts; but after a good deal of difficulty succeeded in getting the cattle into the turnpike road, and there our progress was comparatively easy and unimpeded. We reached Shrewsbury in time for the fair; and I soon succeeded in selling the cattle, for which I got a good price, as the fair was but badly stocked in consequence of the weather. It was my custom, when I had settled my business—which I did sometimes early and sometimes later—to go to a street near St. Clement's Hill, where a damsel of my acquaintance resided. Her mother was a widow, kept a small grocery and haberdasher's shop; and being herself from the other side of the border, looked upon me with the eyes of goodwill and even of affection, so that I was always welcomed with cordiality, particularly by her pretty black-eyed daughter, Mary.

On the present occasion, having secured the money which I had received for the cattle in my iron-clasped pocket-book, I began to think of Mary Evans, and of the comfortable savoury dinner which it was her custom regularly to prepare for me. I thought, moreover, that a good glass of Mrs. E.'s well-flavoured

brandy would be no bad thing on so cold a day; and with these inspiring ideas I crossed over from the market-place, and bent my steps towards St. Clement's Hill. My mind being now rather more at ease, I bethought me of my faithful Blâinor; but to my great astonishment could see nothing of him. I whistled and called him, but he came not: and at last I had a sad foreboding that somebody had stolen him, though how this had been managed was an utter mystery, as his natural ferocity towards strangers who attempted to meddle with him, and his tried attachment to myself, were, I had always thought, complete obstacles to any such accident. He was, however, nowhere to be seen. It struck me that he might have gone either to the inn at which I always put up my horse, or to Mrs. Evans's, the only places I was accustomed to frequent at Shrewsbury; so I turned back to the kitchen of the Rising Sun, and inquired of the landlady; but she had not seen him since my arrival in the morning. A man by the fire, who heard my inquiry, then addressing himself to me, asked if he was a brown mastiff, with a white star on the forehead, that I was seeking. I answered that it was. "Well, then," said he, "I saw a man leading such a dog over the English Bridge about an hour ago. He had him tied round the neck with a thick cord, and seemed to drag him along with difficulty. He is far enough off by this time, I'll answer for it." There was something in the manner of this man which I did not like. Perhaps I was prejudiced by his unfavourable information about Blâinor; but, however that may be, I could not help feeling angry with him; and there was something so forbidding in his appearance, that my attention was engaged rather more than he seemed to relish. He was a perfect stranger to me; and from his dress—which consisted of a large and shaggy greatcoat, buckled round his

waist with a broad leathern belt, thick corded breeches and overalls, with strong and large boots—I concluded that he was an English farmer. Having thanked him for his intelligence, I walked on towards Mrs. Evans's.

I had still a hope that Blâinor might yet be there; and my anxiety was therefore a little quieted by the chance of yet finding him. I tapped at the parlour-window as I passed; and before I had reached the door, Mary, as her custom was, had opened it to receive me. "Well, indeed, Morgan," said she, "who would have thought of seeing you on such a day as this, and so late too? why St. Chad's clock has struck one this half hour, and I have been waiting till I am tired. But come in and warm you, and tell us what has kept you so late." I followed her as she spoke, and soon found myself in Mrs. Evans's snug little room, before a blazing fire, with Mary by my side. Having told them the cause of my delay, both sincerely sympathised with me for the loss of my faithful dog; for he was a great favourite for his master's sake. I speedily forgot—at least for a while —the loss I had sustained; for how could I think of it with Mary Evans sitting by my side? Indeed, she was a very good as well as pretty girl, exceedingly attentive to her widowed mother, and not a little fond of me; so that some of the happiest hours I have ever spent were passed in that little parlour. We were both young then, and we loved each other with all the purity and tenderness of unaffected simplicity. She was my first wife, sir; and we lived many years very happily together, until it pleased God to call her from this world of sorrow and wickedness.

Time will tarry for no one; and so I found, as I sat with Mary till the church-clock tolled four. I had a long and dreary journey to go, and it behoved me to think of setting out, particularly as there was every

symptom of a stormy evening. Mary much wished me to remain in town all night; but this I could not do, as I had some business to transact at Welshpool early the following morning; so go I must.

I hastened to the Rising Sun for my horse, and was just about to mount him when the man who had spoken to me about Blâinor entered the yard. He started when he saw me, and, hastily touching his hat, went into the stable to see after his horse. This was no very marvellous circumstance; but I could not help pondering on it. The fellow certainly was marvellously ill-favoured; and I fancied a thousand things as I rode on my solitary way homewards. It was now that I missed my faithful Blâinor more than ever. I had never before left Shrewsbury without him; and I must confess that I did not feel quite at ease as I thought of the long and lonely road I had to traverse alone. It was not an unusual thing for farmers to be robbed as they returned from the fair; and more than one instance of murder had occurred within my own memory, and in the district through which I was travelling. With my dog by my side I was always safe; but I could not tell what might happen now that I was deprived of his protection. Having ascertained, however, that my pistols were duly loaded, and confiding myself to God's care, I rode on as briskly as the road would permit. I had not ridden far before the tempest, which had been gathering all day, gave unequivocal signs of its approach. The wind was still high; but it had changed its point, and now drove the dark and heavy clouds in quick succession through the air; suffering them occasionally to let fall a few flakes of snow, which were drifted about by the wind in every conceivable direction. This was a sure indication of a snow-storm; and as I had taken a shorter road, which wound among

the Breiddin hills, I was likely to be exposed to all its violence and danger.

I now wished that I had quitted Shrewsbury sooner, for it was momentarily getting darker, and the wildest part of the road was yet before me. I had got only about half-way, when the storm, which had been brooding so long, came down with a fury which was truly terrible. The wind rushed along the mountain ravines with an overwhelming violence, and the snow began to fall thickly and in almost suffocating constancy. I began to feel the great peril of my situation; and, wrapping my riding-cloak close around me, I recommended myself to the Divine protection, and rode on as well as I could. I had just entered a thick wood when my horse fell, and cut his knee too severely to proceed farther. This was a mishap which I had never anticipated, and, as it was now quite dark, added very materially to the danger which surrounded me. I was quite at a loss, too, what to do with him, until at last I recollected a rude shed, which had been formerly erected by some mountain-shepherd, near the spot where I imagined I was; and which, after a long search, I found. Here, then, I lodged my beast; and then proceeded on my journey in the best manner I was able. All this time the storm was raging with the utmost fury; and my only hope was to gain a farmhouse about a mile off, where I could shelter myself till the morning. In this, however, I was disappointed; for upon leaving the hut I mistook my path, and wandered more deeply into the wood. I was not long ignorant of my mistake, when, scrambling on as well as I could, I determined to seek shelter in the first house or shed I came to.

I had not gone far before I perceived a small twinkling light, glimmering at some distance through the trees; and hailing it with pleasure, and eagerly bending my steps towards its beacon-shelter, I soon

reached it; and found that it proceeded from a lonely house, situated on the very brink of a rapid mountain-river. I knocked loudly at the door, and shouted for admission; when the first sound that I heard was the loud and deep barking of Blâinor! I could not be mistaken in the tone—it was too familiar to me; and, before I had time to recover from my surprise, the door opened, and the forbidding form of the stranger I had seen at Shrewsbury met my view! He held a candle in one hand and the door in the other; and ushered me into the house with an awkward alacrity, which was intended to denote a hearty welcome. I looked round for my dog, but he was nowhere to be seen, though his deep-toned bark still rung in my ears, and I was convinced that he was not far distant. My uncouth host placed a seat for me near the fire; and to my inquiry, if he could afford me shelter for the night, answered in the affirmative, adding that a room upstairs, such as it was, was heartily at my service. He was still habited as when we parted, and his large outer coat seemed wet and heavy with the melted snow. He produced some cold meat and bread, and a bottle of whisky, of the latter of which I took one glass; and having warmed myself well by the fire, went upstairs to my chamber. My host followed me with a candle; and after wishing me good night, and hoping I should rest soundly, he left me.

I did not half like my situation; and I had some very dismal forebodings as to the issue of the night's adventure. My first impulse was to take my pistols from my belt, and place them on the small oak table which stood near me. I carefully examined them, and found that the priming had not been at all injured by the wet. I then looked round my room. At one end, and close to the door, was a bed, or at all events what was intended for one; and opposite the foot of it was a closet, the door of which was shut. At the

other end was the window; and the bed, a table, and one chair, constituted the whole contents, so far as I could see, of the apartment. Having made this examination, I sat down on the chair, resting my head on the table, for I was determined not to go to bed; and I had scarcely seated myself before I heard a gentle tapping at the door. I hastened to open it, and was gratified by seeing my faithful dog, who immediately sprang into the room, and, fawning upon me, licked my face and hands, and exhibited every indication of joy at the meeting. I now felt myself secure from harm. Blâinor was lying at my feet, and I set danger at defiance. My faithful quadruped, however, did not long remain quiet; he commenced a sharp scrutiny about the room; and, after smelling for some time at the door of the closet, looked up in my face, as if inviting me to examine its contents. I accordingly took the candle, and, after some trouble, opened the door, when I beheld a sight which made me tremble. On the floor was a quantity of clotted blood, perfectly dry; and in one corner a parcel of bloody clothes, a hat, and a large knife rusted with blood. Blâinor again looked up in my face, and uttered a low fierce growl, as if in deprecation of the foul deed which was too plainly indicated by these signs. He wagged his tail, and, as I patted his back, drew closer to me, as though he would have said, "I will not leave thee again, master."

This discovery decided my conduct. I resolved, at all hazards, to quit this murderous den; and, for this purpose, I went to the window to ascertain whether I could steal out unperceived through it; but it was too well secured to admit of such a clandestine mode of departure. I made one pleasing discovery, however, namely, that the violence of the storm had abated, and that some faint signs of returning serenity were apparent in the west. I opened the room-door

gently, and listened to what was going on below. To my utter consternation I heard the sound of several voices, and, as I listened more intently, speedily ascertained that I was the subject of the conversation. That I was to be robbed was decided upon by all; but there seemed to be some little dispute as to the disposal of my person. More than one—and I thought I could distinguish the voice of my host among the number—were decidedly for murder! "Dead men tell no tales," said a voice, every tone of which thrilled through my heart; "and who will know what has become of his carcass? All will think that he has perished in the storm; so I say, kill him!" "I say so too," growled another. "Kill him!" said a voice which I had not heard before, "and for what? Because he is young and generous and open-hearted? Cannot you be content, you cut-throat villains, with robbing him, but ye must kill him too? I will never be one with you in such a plot; and so I wash my hands of it."

A volley of sneers followed this declaration; and an uproar succeeded, of which I was determined to reap the advantage. I therefore took a pistol in each hand, ready cocked, and each loaded with a brace of bullets; and crept down stairs, followed silently and slowly by Blâinor. To escape, however, it was necessary that I should pass through the kitchen, where these villains were disputing; and, with my courage wound up by desperation, I determined to make one decisive effort for my life and liberty. Blâinor seemed to comprehend my intention, for he kept close by my side, in the utmost silence and submission. I reached the bottom of the stairs unperceived, and stood there a few moments to reconnoitre my opponents. There were four of them, all standing round the fire, with their backs towards the door, and still quarrelling about the expediency of murdering me.

Mine host was active and vehement for my slaughter; and as he was considerably taller than any of the others, I calculated upon lodging at least one of my charges in his body. I did not wait long to consider how to act, but rushing through the kitchen, and crying to my dog, "Seize them, Blâinor!" I fired both my pistols. All that I can recollect of what immediately followed is, that Blâinor sprang like a lion into the midst of them—my landlord fell—and I found myself in the open air, with Blâinor at my side. I did not stay to witness the consequences, but made the best of my way out of the wood, which I was now very well enabled to do, as the storm had ceased and a young moon afforded sufficient light to direct my steps; nor did I once stop till I had reached the farm-house which I originally intended to seek for; where, having arrived, I related my story as coherently as my agitation would permit. The farmer gathered his men together, and a party of eight of us, well armed, returned to the house I had just quitted. We entered without opposition, and found only the wounded landlord, who was lying before the fire, bleeding profusely from wounds in his neck and shoulder. Him we secured; and he subsequently confessed that the clothes which I saw in the closet were those of a pedler whom they had robbed and murdered about a month previous. It was their intention to have performed the same friendly office towards me—having for a long time marked me out for their prey—as I returned some evening from the fair; for which purpose one of the gang had stolen Blâinor, whom they imagined they had sufficiently secured in the cellar. The robber recovered from his wounds, however, was tried at Shrewsbury, and there executed; but although all possible efforts were made for the apprehension of his accomplices, two of whom were dreadfully torn by Blâinor, they were never heard of afterwards.

FRITZ.

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FRITZ.

BEFORE the landslip, which laid waste the greater part of the valley of Arau, in Switzerland, that portion of the country enjoyed a degree of prosperity which nothing could have interrupted but a catastrophe of such a nature. Without possessing the manufacturing industry of the Genevese, the inhabitants of Arau could congratulate themselves on the resources of their labour; and nowhere in Switzerland was there a population to be found more united and harmonious.

This picture, however, was not without its dark side; for among these laborious and peaceful men there were some bold fellows—never alluded to but with a kind of dread—who had oftener to do with rocks and glaciers than with living human beings: indefatigable hunters these men were, and as indefatigable smugglers; always ready to undertake an expedition whenever there was any prospect of getting hold of a purse of money, and quite as well disposed to fire at a custom-house officer as at a chamois or a wild goat. Among these, one of the boldest, certainly, was a young man named Fritz, twenty-five years old, tall in stature, slender in person, with an arm of

muscular strength, a delicate and long moustache, and fine blue eyes full of fire. Five hundred paces from his cabin, whose chief ornaments consisted of bats and screech-owls nailed to the door, arose the large and elegant châlet of M. Marc, a farmer who, besides possessing a good income, had the satisfaction of being able to show to the world two charming daughters, by name Catharine and Jane. The former was about to be united in marriage with Meinherr Pfaff, who kept a well-frequented and lucrative inn, at about a league's distance from Arau. Unfortunately, Pfaff, though rich, was both old and ill-tempered, and Catharine looked forward with anything but pleasure to the prospect of such a settlement in life. Pfaff's riches and position in the world, however, constituted an all-powerful attraction to Master Marc, and he would hear of no opposition to his wishes. The day of the marriage was, in fact, fixed.

Matters were in this state, when, one morning, Fritz passed under the windows of Marc's house. Catharine and her sister were seated on the first-floor, on a wooden balcony, with an open flight of stairs. The handsome smuggler was attired in his light and graceful costume—large hat, round jacket, and high leathern gaiters; his rifle, too, was slung over his shoulder. Fritz lost no time in saluting the two sisters, who returned the greeting with a friendly smile. The young man's eyes, however, were more particularly fixed on Catharine, who, on her part, blushed and looked down. When she looked up, Fritz had disappeared.

Just then were heard the heavy footsteps of Master Marc and his friend Pfaff; and as the young girls advanced to meet their father, he said to them, in a sharp tone:—

"That's right, that's right; go on with your spinning. You would have done better not to have inter-

upted it for the purpose of saluting that worthless fellow who has just passed."

"What did you say?" replied Catharine gently, and in great confusion.

"Yes, yes," replied her father; "my friend and I were a few paces off, and distinctly saw this Fritz make a bow to you, which there was no necessity for you to return. However, as I do not wish to be severe, let it pass for this time; but if such a thing should happen again, you will please to treat this man with the contempt which he deserves."

Jane, who was of a bolder character than her sister, ventured to reply in a joking tone to her father's command.

"Why should we show contempt for him? Is not Fritz polite to the ladies, gay, courteous, brave? I do not believe half the reports we hear of his expeditions in the mountains."

"Enough, enough!" exclaimed Marc, interrupting her, and stamping with his feet; "such remarks are very much out of place."

The two sisters, without saying another word, resumed their spinning, while Master Marc and the innkeeper, in company with a pot of beer, went to draw up some monetary calculations, with a view to the intended marriage.

Next week the village ball took place with rather more than the accustomed preparation and brilliancy, on account of the nomination of the new magistrates. All were decked out in their best. It was a gay sight to see the pretty red petticoats, the white corsages, embroidered with flowers or in velvet, the well-fitting coloured stockings, the silver buckles on the shoes, the lace head-dresses, the bouquets in the bosom, and all the other adornments of the maidens. The young men, on their part, were not a whit behind.

In the morning, the two sisters were engaged in

their usual household duties, drawing water, churning butter, feeding the cattle, and so on; but in the evening they shone resplendent in all the graces and attractions of their toilet. The proud father looked on with paternal satisfaction, while enjoying, at the same time, the fragrance of his favourite pipe. As for Pfaff, he was brimful of happiness.

None of the young men had ventured, out of respect to the connexion between Pfaff and Catharine, to ask the latter to dance with them, and the poor girl had sat alone all the evening, while, nevertheless, longing to join in the inviting waltz.

At last, a young man came boldly up to her, and courteously offered her his arm. Catharine blushed, and spoke not a word; she had neither the courage to refuse nor to accept the invitation.

Pfaff, who stood close to Catharine, growled out some words, which had only the effect of exciting the stranger's wrath, who exclaimed:—

"What is all this? Are you the father, or the brother of the young lady, that you forbid her to dance with me? Take care, as you value your life, how you offer me an insult!" Without saying another word, he then conducted Catharine to the other end of the room. While they were waltzing, the young man whispered into her ear a few words of apology for having asked somewhat rudely for the pleasure of her hand.

"Alas! it is not worth much," replied the maiden. "You do not know——"

"Yes, I know all; your father wishes to marry you to old Pfaff, the thick-headed innkeeper—one who, rich as he is, is quite unworthy of you; but of this you may be sure, you can never have a friend more devoted to you than myself."

On the night which followed the village dance some ominous cracks were heard at the top of the mountain, and those peculiar rolling sounds which are generally the precursors of an Alpine storm. At first some fragments of rock fall with a loud noise: this is nothing; but the snow, the everlasting crown of the mountains, begins to be detached from the steep declivities; it descends slowly in masses, while the weight of its fall every moment accelerates its rapidity. Enormous masses of rocks are torn up and borne along by the avalanche. Vainly rocks of still larger dimensions seem to present a more solid barrier to the snowy torrent—they, too, are hurried onward. At last the level ground is approached—the trees at the entrance of the valley are uprooted in a moment —the avalanche sweeps on. . . .

"Get up, Master Marc! get up, Catharine! Jane! get up instantly! An avalanche! An avalanche! You have not a moment to lose!" shouted a man, accompanying his cries with loud knocks at the door of the châlet. Even all this scarcely aroused the inmates, who, in the heaviness of their first sleep, could with difficulty be made to comprehend the extent of the danger. Again the voice repeats, in still more pressing accents, "For God's sake, my friends, rise! rise! fly for your life! A moment's delay, and you are lost! Hark to the tocsin! In ten minutes your house will be your grave!"

The door was at last opened, and Marc and his two daughters made their appearance, trembling with alarm, and with their clothes hastily thrown about them. Their deliverer pushed, urged, and dragged them along out of the way of destruction, without once allowing them time to ask his name.

After more than a quarter of an hour spent in this manner, he stopped, and said:

"God be thanked! You are now safe!"

"And my house, what has become of it?" inquired the unfortunate farmer.

"It is buried under the avalanche!" And with these words their deliverer disappeared.

The fearful catastrophe which has just been described spread desolation and ruin amongst the inhabitants of the valley: in one brief hour these poor people lost their all; for not only had the houses disappeared, but every vestige of vegetation had vanished also under the thick bed of snow and rocks which covered them.

Unfortunately for Master Marc, his chief resources lay in his property; that house and those lands which were now utterly destroyed. He had not even the means of paying workmen to clear the ground from the snow and rubbish which encumbered it. In this emergency he betook himself to his friend and future son-in-law, the innkeeper, on whom he built all his hopes of assistance. Pfaff heard his lamentable tale, but his manner was cold and embarrassed, and he coolly replied:—

"It is a great misfortune, neighbour; a great misfortune."

"True," replied Marc impatiently, "it is a great misfortune; I know that but too well; but a remedy may be found for the disaster."

"A remedy?" replied Pfaff doubtingly. "I don't see any."

"You are mistaken, my friend; with a little assistance, in the shape of money, I can remove this layer of snow, and——"

"Do you really think so? It would cost an enormously foolish sum; and I think you would act more wisely in removing to some other place, where you can find employment. You are a respectable

man, and a skilful farmer, and will soon be able to meet with some land, or the management of an estate, or——"

"Oh, you advise me to leave, then, do you?" replied the farmer, in an altered tone.

"It is an advice which proceeds from a friend," was the rejoinder.

"What! to go away with my two daughters?"

"Certainly; you do not mean to go without them?"

"Oh, very well, friend Pfaff; I understand you."

"Why, what else can you do? Circumstances necessarily modify our plans, and it is necessary to be guided by maxims of prudence."

"Quite so," replied Marc; "I perceive your meaning clearly. Adieu! Misfortune has already taught me some of its bitter experience."

"At any rate, there is no ill-will between us, I hope, M. Marc?"

Marc looked disdainfully at the innkeeper from head to foot, and replied, as he turned to go away:—

"Ill-will, against *you?* It would be doing you too much honour."

The ex-farmer recounted the details of this scene to his daughters, and was astonished to perceive the indifference with which Catharine received the news of the rupture of the intended marriage.

"What!" he said, "are you not grieved to lose the opportunity of being so well settled in life?"

"Grieved!" replied she, laughing; "no, indeed: instead of that, it repays me richly for the wreck and ruin we have suffered."

To dig up the snow, the trunks of trees, and the stones, was a long and troublesome undertaking. Marc, in despair, had taken a lodging a few miles from his old residence, at the house of a compassionate

relative. He groaned in spirit over the thought that it was not in his power, as many others were doing, to repair his ruined fortunes.

One day some old inhabitants of the valley came running to him, and crying out, "A miracle! a miracle! The site of your old abode is completely freed from the snow and rubbish."

"Impossible!" replied Marc. "I have given no orders to that effect, and have engaged no workmen."

"Nevertheless, our eyes cannot have deceived us," said they.

"You have, indeed, excited my curiosity, at any rate," said Marc; "and I shall go myself and ascertain the truth of what you say."

And, in fact, Master Marc was soon satisfied of the truth of what his neighbours had told him. The ground was indeed cleared, and everything ready for a new building. When he returned to his new abode, he and his daughters were lost in conjectures as to the cause of this sudden revolution of fortune; but no one could throw any light upon the matter. No workmen had been seen, or heard of. The whole looked like magic.

One morning, not long after this, Marc was informed, to his still greater astonishment, that the foundations of a new house had actually been laid on the site of his former châlet. This time he was resolved to fathom the mystery. As soon, therefore, as it was night, he walked quietly towards the valley; and the nearer he drew towards it, the more distinctly he heard the sound of saws, pick-axes, and hammers. Such sounds and activity, at dead of night, had a very extraordinary effect. Could these be some of the supernatural beings he had heard of in the legends of his childhood? Marc was struck with terror; his limbs shook, and a cold sweat crept over him. However, he had gone too far to recede, and

prompted by self-interest, if not by true courage, he resolved not to retreat until he had cleared up the mystery.

Suddenly a gruff voice called out,—

"Who goes there?" and at the same instant a musket-shot almost grazed his head, and he could only utter a cry of fear, and beg for mercy. The stern reply was, "Be off with you."

Marc had no occasion to receive this admonition twice; and it was not long before he reached his lodging. Fear had so magnified everything he had seen, that he affirmed he had beheld at least five hundred demons in the garb of masons, carpenters, and blacksmiths. From this time forward he felt no further desire to trouble the nocturnal workmen.

A month had not passed away, when Master Marc received an invitation to go and take possession of his new châlet; but he paid no attention to the letter, and threw it into the fire.

He then received another letter, which stated that the head workman would pay him a visit. Marc's alarm may easily be conceived; he thought he should see nothing less than a demon, such as appeared to Faust;—a Mephistopheles, with fiery claws, and hair red as the flames of a furnace. The individual he saw was only our friend Fritz, the smuggler, in his own true and good looking person.

"How is this! you again?" cried Marc.

"Yes; I myself, Sir," was the reply.

"Are you then the author of this wonderful work, which . . . ."

"Exactly so; with the assistance of some thirty of my devoted friends of the mountains, or thereabouts, I have rebuilt your cottage."

"My gratitude to you is beyond bounds! What reward—"

"Stop, stop," replied Fritz, "the matter is easily explained: it was love that worked the prodigy."

"How so? explain yourself."

"That is just what I wish to do. I have loved your charming Catharine for a long time, and I have reason to think she is not averse to me; but I saw that all hope was denied me while that innkeeper was in the way with his well-filled purse. The destruction of your property, which had the effect of driving him away from you, only attracted me the more."

"Yes," replied Marc, "and on the frightful night of the avalanche, it was you who saved our lives. Am I not right in my conjecture?"

"Oh, don't think of that any more. I am too happy to have been able to render you some slight services. Listen to me for a moment. I am quite sensible that I am far from deserving your daughter's hand, but henceforward I wish to live as an honest man, and get engaged in some honourable employment. Allow me, therefore, a year's grace, in order to make myself worthy of becoming one of your family."

In fact, a year had not elapsed, when Marc, having received from all quarters the best accounts of Fritz's conduct, voluntarily came forward, and invited the young man to fix the wedding-day.

THE TREASURE ROBBERS.

THE TREASURE ROBBERS.

TOWARDS the middle of the month of March, 1796, after the last struggle of Charette in Lower Poitou, and while a rigorous search was now made for him, the military chiefs received intelligence that he lay concealed, with a handful of faithful adherents, in a deserted church in the midst of the woods near the sea. Upon this, a company of light infantry, commanded by Captain Gobert, an officer of Nantes, was immediately despatched for the purpose of searching the old building.

On the left bank of the Loire, near its mouth, between Bourg-Neuf and Machecoul, in a desert country, may still be seen an enclosure of ruined walls, standing to the height of ten or twelve feet from the ground, overgrown with weeds and flanked by enormous buttresses, of which the lower portions only can be discerned. These walls are the remains of a church once attached to a Benedictine abbey. Upon their crumbling surface may be seen here and there the form of the Gothic windows; the great door may also be traced, which is now, however, little more than a breach, obstructed by brambles and irregular heaps of stones. In the interior the ground is covered over with a wild and tangled vegetation, in which one fears

to tread on account of the toads and adders which everywhere swarm around.

The remains of the Abbey of St. Cyr are regarded in the neighbourhood with reverential awe. The loathsome reptiles which have taken up their abode there are but one object of dread; these popular terrors have their source mainly in the remembrance of the events which form the subject of the following narrative—a legend which dates from an epoch when men prided themselves but little in the belief of miracles, though if we consider the extraordinary nature of the events which then took place, it may be safely affirmed that these were not wanting either in number or magnitude.

Before 1789, the Abbey of St. Cyr stood in the midst of a vast enclosure laid out in gardens. Its domains extended into the country beyond, in meadows, fields, and woods. Next to the church stood the monastery; an irregular building, erected at different periods, in which nearly one hundred religious pursued their tranquil life. The farms, which were occupied by several families of peasants, with the farm-yards, the barns and stables, lay at the extremity of the gardens beyond the enclosure. After the promulgation of the first revolutionary laws against religious communities, the abbey began to be dispeopled. When Charette put himself at the head of the insurrectionary movement in the country, all the peasants took arms; several of the monks also followed the army. The farms were abandoned, and after a time only a few of the oldest religious remained in the monastery, living as they best could on the fruits of the garden, and on what alms they could collect.

The neighbourhood soon became the theatre of a war, which was horrible in the extreme from the reprisals exercised upon each other by both the contending parties. The abbey was surprised one day by

the Blues; the remaining inmates were massacred or put to flight; and the whole building fell a prey to the flames, with the exception of the church, the granite walls of which resisted their power. The close and gardens were laid waste, the houses of the peasants pillaged, and the women, children, and old men, who had been left behind, were cruelly put to death. Such were but too often the traces of the passage of the revolutionary armies in the wars of Poitou and Bretagne.

A young boy, who was saved by a kind of miracle, had witnessed this massacre. He was the son of a gardener of the abbey, who had been killed about five months before in the army of M. Charette, and was called Mathurin Pasquet. Being thus left an orphan with his mother, who was already infirm, the religious had conceived an affection for the child: they had taught him to read and to chant the office; and one of the oldest of the monks, the venerable Father Aloys, had in a manner adopted him. The abbey where he was born, and which he had never quitted, was for this child his home, and the religious held the place of his family. In the morning he assisted at the service in the church; afterwards he worked in the garden, where, young as he was, he exerted himself to fill the place of his deceased parents. On the day of the sudden irruption of the Blues, being surprised in his occupation in the middle of an orchard, he had only time to conceal himself in a heap of herbage, intended for the food of the cattle. There, trembling with fright, he heard the rolling of the drums, the fire of the musketry, the yelling of the soldiers, and the pitiful cries of the victims of their cruelty. He saw the religious flying on all sides—his venerable protector, Father Aloys, fell bayoneted not twenty paces from him—smoke and flames enveloped the humble dwelling of his poor mother—and at

length the barns and great buildings of the abbey were heard falling in with a terrible crash. He was the only human being left alive on the scene of calamity.

The following evening, the peasants of the neighbourhood, who had watched the departure of the company of Blues, came wandering round the abbey. They perceived in the distance, by the last gleams of daylight, the semblance of a spectre walking slowly amidst the ruins. It was Mathurin, pale, emaciated, and haggard. He had eaten nothing for twenty-four hours. At the sight of the people who approached he was seized with a convulsive trembling, and fell fainting into their arms. When he recovered, they proposed to bring him away, but he refused. His eyes were fixed and glaring, his speech incoherent, and his gestures wild. It was evident, in fact, that the fearful spectacles he had witnessed had affected his intellect.

The peasants being thus obliged to leave him in this place of desolation, two worthy countrymen volunteered to pass the night with him, and contrived to form a species of cabin with the fragments of broken furniture. Here the poor youth took up his abode, nor was it possible afterwards to withdraw him from this spot. At first, charitable women supplied him with food; but by degrees he rebuilt his cottage, and set himself to cultivate the kitchen garden, which supplied him with food. He was not exactly a lunatic, but his young mind had experienced a shock which, as it were, arrested it in its progress, and prevented its development. The peasants have a name for this kind of prolonged infancy—they called him "Mathurin the *Innocent*." This kind of moral condition in an individual gives rise, in certain cantons of Brittany, to many superstitious notions, which, from its vicinity, are to be met with also in Lower Poitou.

The singular obstinacy, moreover, of the young Mathurin in remaining in such a place could not fail to kindle the popular imagination. Some mysterious and undefinable ties were supposed to attach him to the ruins of the abbey; and as the church alone remained standing, the idiot became in their eyes a sort of tutelary genius, to whom they attributed the preservation of the place, and especially of a colossal statue of St. George, held in great veneration in the country, and which surmounted the high altar. There was no lack of stories and reports of various descriptions. It was currently reported that every night the "Innocent" paced slowly up and down the close surrounding the church: some had heard him chanting in the choir before daybreak; others asserted that they had seen him by the gleam of the lightning on the top of the steeple, and protecting the spire from the thunder.

It must be admitted that the condition of the ancient abbey gave scope to these village inventions. The painter and the poet could not have chosen a spot better calculated to evoke some frightful scene. The orchards, the gardens, the ruined farms, had left, with the exception of a small portion of the low wall of the enclosure, against which rested the hut of the idiot, a vast space of uncultivated and open ground. The church, isolated from the ruined buildings, its sides blackened by the flames, rose in the midst of this arena, tall, bold, immoveable, and piercing the clouds with its slender spire. In the distance, on all sides, were to be seen only gloomy and voiceless woods. The profound solitude, and the traces of sacrilegious devastation, impressed a certain character of awe and dread upon this edifice. The large windows had been broken, the doors destroyed; the dark porch, always open, seemed a cavern whose gloomy recesses no one dared to penetrate.

Within, ruin and profanation were yet more apparent. The pictures and ornaments had disappeared; the altars were despoiled, along the cold and naked walls ran indignant echoes which died away in portentous rumblings through the darkness of the lofty vault. In the choir there remained only the crumbling work of the stalls; while above the high altar, commanding these long rows of silent seats, stood the statue of St. George of which we have already spoken.

This figure, six feet in height, massive, and rudely cut in stone, seemed to crush with its weight the large altar which served it as a pedestal, and which itself, by its substance and dimensions, recalled the altar, or sacred stone of the Druids. The statue represented an old warrior in complete armour, the head bare, with a thick beard coming down over his chest. It was, in all probability, an ancient protector of the country, some pious baron of a former age, rather than the St. George who trampled on the dragon in the old legend. Tradition reported that a treasure was concealed at the base of this statue; and this opinion had no doubt arisen from the fact that the enormous figure rested on its base in equilibrium, without cement or fixing of any kind. Nothing would have been easier than to verify the fact; but whether from religious respect or contempt of the popular tradition, the Benedictines had never attempted it, and, assuredly, since the sack of the convent in 1793, no one in the country round would have ventured on such an undertaking. The protecting virtue of the "Innocent" was the more strongly credited from this cause, as he was believed to watch over the safety of this secular treasure.

Two years later, when Charette took up arms again, after his treaty of La Jannais, and his pompous entry into Nantes, the war was rekindled in this neighbour-

hood; but Charette's days were numbered. Abandoned by his followers, the republican generals gave him no rest. They tracked him from place to place; detachments, in pursuit of him, traversed the most deserted parts of the country; and a company of the ancient Nantois Legion, acting upon some supposed certain information, now set out from Machecoul for St. Cyr upon the same errand.

The Nantois Legion, which became afterwards a regiment of light infantry, was formed, at the commencement of the Revolution, of all the young men of family in the city of Nantes. But during the three years it had been almost entirely reconstructed: there remained of the old formation only a small number of officers and soldiers, and, by a contrast worthy of the times, whether through carelessness or precaution, they had incorporated with this distinguished corps the remains and refuse of the Marseillaise companies which Santerre had led with him into La Vendée. The company which set out from Machecoul was commanded by two officers, Captain M. Gobert and Lieutenant Geoffrey, both of them belonging to good families of the city of Nantes, and promoted during the war. Though Captain Gobert was free from that Jacobin fury against the Vendéans which did not recoil from any atrocity, he endeavoured so to fulfil his duty as to conceal his lukewarmness, which would of course have been treated as a crime. At heart, he was what would have then been termed *Moderate;* but the certainty of putting an end to the war by the capture of Charette, gave reality to his zeal at this moment. In a word, he cherished encyclopædian and constitutional principles. At the commencement of the Revolution, during those preludes of large cockades, noisy acclamations, and patriotic banquets, he was among that unthinking crowd who coveted the evils they afterwards regretted—who thought to appease

the tiger when he had tasted blood, and who became victims after having been dupes.

On hearing of the march of the detachment, all the inhabitants of the neighbourhood had taken flight, and no one, in the confusion, thought of giving warning to the "Innocent." Captain Gobert, having more than once remarked that the sound of the drum alarmed the peasants, and caused the houses to be deserted, gave orders to march in silence as they approached St. Cyr; and the people whom they surprised, weary of the war, were ready enough to give them information. By this means Captain Gobert learned the precise situation of the abbey, the reports about the statue, and the history of the unfortunate Mathurin. The peasants entered upon this subject, however, with marked reluctance and fear, and not one would act as guide to the troops. The captain was stimulated by a narrative which appealed at once to his courage and incredulity. Besides, he considered that these superstitions, real or pretended, might possibly serve as a protection in this mysterious asylum for General Charette himself, or, at all events, some personage of importance belonging to his party. As for the history of the treasure, it was enough to allure the soldiers. These windfalls were not uncommon during the war, when families, obliged to seek safety in flight, buried their most valuable possessions in the earth. The captain, having resolved to search the ruins of St. Cyr from top to bottom, procured a peasant as a guide, who, after much hesitation, conducted him to the border of the wood, and pointed out to him, in the distance, the spire of the church. It was four o'clock in the afternoon. They advanced silently, one by one, and reached the ruined wall of the enclosure, which they followed close under, so as to conceal the approach of the troops.

The captain and his lieutenant were impressed

by the imposing aspect of the deserted church, in the midst of the profound solitude which reigned around. The former ordered the main body of the company to remain behind the low wall, without grounding their arms; and taking a few men with him, he advanced towards the church, placing sentinels at various spots as he went on.

They stopped at the threshold of the great door, in order to survey the interior of the building. Rays of sunshine, penetrating through the long windows, lighted up the walls and the mossy pavement of the nave; nothing could be more noiseless or more desolate. The captain and his men ventured cautiously, walking step by step, along the walls, searching the corners, trying the ground and the masonry with the butt-ends of their muskets. They saw neither door nor trap, nor the least indication of persons concealed. The massive seats of the choir stalls, which they raised one after the other, fell again with a noise which long resounded through the vaulted roof. They then went round the outside of the church: everywhere the same silence reigned. The captain withdrew the sentinels, and returned, reporting that there was nothing there. Moreover, as his men were fatigued and had provisions with them, he proposed to encamp there till the following day, in case anything new should turn up in the neighbourhood.

As they returned, one of the soldiers noticed a kind of hut standing against the wall among the ruins, and calling some of his companions to him, they entered. In the interior were found a miserable bed, a cross, some earthen pots, and a monk's dress. The captain, hearing the noise, turned his steps thither, but before he could reach them, they had already pierced the bed with their bayonets, overturned the furniture, and seized the earthen pots, which they wanted for their soup.

"Captain," said the corporal, "some one certainly lives here!"

The captain appeared very little pleased with these depredations, which might alarm the owner of the dwelling and spoil their search.

"It is no doubt the 'Innocent,' as they call him," said a soldier.

Each one then called to mind and related what he had heard on the subject.

"The 'Innocent!'" answered the corporal, lifting the monk's frock with the point of his bayonet; "what, then, does he want with these things? This 'Innocent' is as much an *innocent* as you or I, and if we can catch him, it will be worth while to hear him babble."

The captain, making his own reflections on this circumstance, was confirmed in his project of passing the night in the place, intending, if possible, to lay hold of the supposed idiot. On their return, he communicated his intention to the lieutenant. The men proceeded to prepare their soup, while the two officers reposed at a short distance.

The troops had halted at the foot of the wall, exactly behind the hut which they had just rifled, and which they had received orders to guard. The soldiers had been also desired not to make a noise; but it was not possible, after a long march, and at the hour of repast, to maintain absolute silence. They therefore chatted one with the other, but under their voices.

"The captain does not eat," said the drummer.

"No; he is too deep in thought," replied the chief of the mess with a cunning air; "is it not true, Marseillais?"

"I see his game," said the latter. "The nation has its eyes open; if he dispenses with his ration for the time being, he has long since found wherewith to make his pot boil."

"How so? He would have carried off the money-box in question? No, he is a fool. As for you, you are still blinded by your prejudices. Why are we planted along the wall, like a row of fruit trees? I know these tricks. Who does not see that it is the destruction of the rights of man. He don't teach grimaces to an old monkey, still less to a clear-sighted citizen of the republic one and indivisible. When we marched to exterminate the brigands of La Vendée, there were villagers who monopolised the public wealth, citizens, and other conspirators, who concealed their treasures. It was the recompense of the warriors of the nation, rank or no rank, indifferently. But in course of time the chief revived the abuses of tyranny. Understand; they take three or four men for the sake of appearance, and these have a share of the cake,—the remainder they pocket themselves, and this is what our captain has done; he is more of a *Moderate* than you or I, and not weak about trifles. Have you been a long time in La Vendée, Marseillais?"

"Have I not! You are only a chicken. I ought to be now living patriotically on my income, if I had had management; but . . . . . it was the want of that which ruined me. And then the assignats; the plots of traitors; a complication of misfortunes . . . . . You see my tobacco pouch? it was full . . . . more than that . . . Bah! what do I say?—my bag, my cartridge box, the legs of my boots—all full!"——

"Of great pieces of silver money?" interrupted the drummer, rolling out his words with a sort of serious banter.

"May you be hanged for a fool! Yes, real louis, with the portrait of the tyrant on them, engraved to the life. The brigand, he had put it everywhere, so that one could not get rid of it."

"You soon came to the end of it, however."

"Ah! zounds, it was inevitable! We gave a ball

to the ladies of Saumur, with refreshments—everything of the very best; a cask of brandy broached on the occasion—the true stuff! They did not sneeze at it, I can tell you. They were people *comme il faut*, in ribbons and all..... We had to escort them home to their friends."

"We did the same," replied the drummer, "at the taking of Le Mans. We....."

"You! you are a sheep," interrupted the Marseillais; "you have seen nothing! The finest thing was, when we formed the infernal columns under Citizen-General Turreau..... Name of names! that was the right game. We entered the enemy's quarters—arrived regularly and irregularly, with permission to burn, pillage, bayonet, as we pleased. No one had anything to say. Ah! liberty was the order of the day. That was something like real sport!"

The soldiers regarded the Marseillais with wonder mingled with a certain dread. The exterior of the man, and what they knew respecting him, inspired them with a fear which made him, as it were, master in the company. They had manifested great repugnance at the time of his admission, but when enrolled, each one was fain to dissimulate his aversion. He was of colossal stature, having an enormous head deeply sunk between large round shoulders. It was said in the army that he resembled Danton; which might very well be, nor do I know which would have reason to complain. Both had their faces covered with a kind of scrub, marked, as it were, physically, as well as morally, with the mysterious brand of crime. A mouth, always closed upon a filthy pipe, stretched from one end to the other of this hideous face, where twinkled two little squinting eyes, expressive not so much of the energy of a fierce villain, as of the brutal depravity of an animal. This man was called the "Marseillais," because he came from those desperate

bands which the slums of Paris had vomited forth in the evil days, and, notwithstanding his name, he was a native of one of the low suburbs of the capital. In the middle of the year '93 he joined the Marseillais, who, marching under command of General Santerre, fell upon the provinces of the west. These hordes, so celebrated for their massacres and cruelties, having often been dispersed, were almost destroyed. The few who remained of them, and this man among the rest, were draughted into other regiments.

The Marseillais was distinguished for wickedness even amongst his fearful companions; and Captain Gobert had, in truth, received him into his company with great unwillingness. The fellow, who knew this, entertained a strong hatred towards him in consequence, and, emboldened by the disorders which prevailed in the army, as elsewhere, he took no pains to conceal it. He accused him loudly of *Moderatism*, and by his remarks and insinuations succeeded completely in intimidating the captain—a man naturally weak, and who, like many others, lived in terror under a *régime* where a denunciation from the basest often led to the scaffold. As to his comrades, the Marseillais governed them, not only by the effrontery of his wickedness, and his prodigious muscular stength, but also by his declamations, full of pompous phrases and strokes of revolutionary eloquence, picked up from the clubs and the street orators of the capital. These flowers of Jacobin rhetoric gave him, in the eyes of his comrades, a kind of literary reputation; he was the politician of the company, and was called by them the *orator*.

"Did the chiefs say nothing?" replied the corporal, who was a Breton.

"The chiefs! Why, it was they who wished it so, in conformity with the desire of the nation. We were

then with Citizen-General Grignon, a hot *sans-culotte*, and one who was always wide-awake. We arrived at the den of the brigands; they are all *farmers* in that country—that is, they concealed their infamous plots under the pretence of agriculture. They asked—begged for mercy. Good! that was all we wished. They gave up the key of their hoard; we cleared out their hiding-places, and then—Phew!"

The Marseillais accompanied his whistle with a strange and sinister gesture.

"And then?" said the Breton.

"We killed them. Why not? Do you think we wasted cartridge on such sparrows? Ah, the brigands! they always bent my musket, and I have blunted more than ten bayonets upon the skin of these vile conspirators. And then we burned the shops, the houses, the fields, the animals. Here was a truly patriotic illumination!"

"The children—the women also?"

"The women! I always loved amusement—I played some pretty freaks with them. We tied them by the hands and legs—countesses, marchionesses, nuns—not at all particular; and then the dungeon, and the avenging sword of the law. Ah, the wretches of aristocrats!"

"It is curious," said the corporal, with a certain degree of shrinking; "but I could not thus have fallen upon children and helpless beings without distinction."

"And what are you, too, but a shred of an aristocrat? We had our proofs. I entered the country of the brigands with Citizen-General Santerre, and be sure they did not choose one-handed men to be associated with him. I had worked away at the Swiss on the 10th of August, to the satisfaction of the genuine *sans-culottes;* and when the chiefs determined on the death of the people in the prisons, a good

proportion fell by my hands. I had only a pole-axe, but I wielded it well!"

The soldiers suffered an expression of horror to escape them, which the Marseillais took for a token of admiration. Sending forth another puff of tobacco, he resumed—

"And at that time one was better paid than now. The leaders did not wrong the sovereign people—all were, at length, equal; but, you see, privileges are returning. The hydra of tyranny again raises its head, but...."

He uttered a significant grunt, which the auditors applied to the captain.

"Well," said a grenadier, drawing near them, "there is Gravelot returned with them, and he also says that they have found nothing, either in the church or anywhere else."

"Go to," replied the Marseillais, in a brutal tone; "we are, then, come here to be made fools of, are we? Why, then, did the peasants say that there was a treasure in the temple of superstition."

"I tell you they have found nothing. It is in the altar, they say, under the stone;—go you and see. If one could only lay hold of this fellow of the hut! he is the only one who knows. But he is not to be found."

"Curse the rascal!" cried the Marseillais. "I will find him out."

"The poor fool is cracked, and heeds not what is said to him; perhaps he would not say anything."

"Come, come! I know very well what these people are. Let them bring him to me; I'll make him dance a minuet on the turf." He pointed to the camp-fire, and added, "I have found a way to make people speak!"

"You do not understand," replied the Breton; "he is an 'Innocent;' and these creatures, do you see, are

first cousins to the devil. They howl at night in the fields, and whoever meddles with them gets pricked."

"Toad! away with you!" cried the Marseillais. "Is it possible that such infamous superstition is to be found under the cockade of the Republic? But you are enveloped in the darkness of barbarism. Good! I will go myself and ask permission to insert a grenade in the magic lantern of relics; and we shall soon see what there is within it."

"In this church?" said the Breton, with emotion.

"Understand, then, thou scullion of holy water, that I have already been in this sacristy of yours; and that it was I who tore down all the insignia of superstition, with the second company of the first battalion Marseillais. *They* were not bigots, I am proud to say. Go and see if the work was not well done."

The ascendancy of the Marseillais sufficed to intimidate the Breton; but this horrid boast deprived him of the power of speech. He looked round with an air between fear and the shame of letting it be seen. At length he said, in a low voice, "Pray do not utter that *here!*"

The soldiers, following the direction of his glance, perceived, as he had done, that they were in a cemetery. They could see here and there tufts of fennel, and remains of crosses lying among the grass. At this moment they heard along the wall a noise as of rolling stones. Several of the soldiers started, disposed as they already were to fear by the subject of their conversation. They looked about, but saw nothing; while the sentinel stationed at the end of the wall did not move. Each one thought he ought to show his boldness after the involuntary agitation he had experienced. The Breton, having more to conceal than the others, began by addressing himself to the Marseillais, who eyed him with his hideous smile:—

"It is very fine to talk, but if you were once to see

at midnight, in a storm, amidst the thunder and lightning, the 'Innocent' dancing upon the point of the steeple, grinning with his teeth and singing the song of the plague . . . ."

Suddenly the Marseillais grew white with a horrible grimace, and the Breton stopped, with open mouth, uttering only a cry. A head, which one would have said was cut off, showed itself above the walls—the hair dishevelled, the eyes twinkling—and disappeared immediately with a frightful laugh.

After the first moment of stupor, "It is he," cried the sentry, from a distance; "it is the 'Innocent!' Stop!"

The grenadiers rose; the Marseillais seized his musket; four or five soldiers leaped over the wall. They fired several shots at the creature as he fled, but he quickly disappeared from their view.

"He went that way," cried the sentinel, stretching out his arm towards the church.

Another added, "One might swear he had buried himself in the wall."

"Good!" answered the sergeant, striking with the butt-end of his musket the stone of the walls. "Say rather that he is flattened upon them."

They ran immediately to the church, climbed to the top, but saw no one. The soldiers returned to the place of halt: they informed the captain of what had happened, but he did not care to trouble himself farther about the idiot. He was not sorry, in truth, that the poor wretch had escaped their bayonets.

Night fell, the sentinels were relieved, the officers paced up and down smoking at a short distance. The weather was magnificent. The round and brilliant moon shone in a sky spangled over with stars, and her rays, playing among the ruins, brought out their mysterious beauty. The lieutenant, attracted by the spectacle, took his way towards the abbey, musing

as he went. He reached the porch, and, after a moment's hesitation, entered.

Meanwhile the night air freshened, and the captain drew near the fire which the soldiers had lighted, and began to chat familiarly with them, sharing some onions which they were roasting in the ashes, whilst the skells of brandy passed round. Suddenly they saw a shadow advancing swiftly. It was a man, walking with precipitate steps, who, approaching the captain as he was rising, seized his arm convulsively.

"Is it you, lieutenant?" exclaimed the captain.

"Yes, captain, it is I."

"You tremble—you are alarmed!"

"I do not deny it."

Monsieur Gobert saw by the light of the moon that the lieutenant's face was white as marble, and his hair, raised by the wind, seemed to stand erect upon his head.

"What is the matter? what have you seen?"

"Nothing."

"What is there inside?"

"Nothing, I tell you," replied the lieutenant, smiling; "it is a purely nervous affection. I entered the church; I saw nothing, I heard nothing, but yet fear penetrated to the very marrow of my bones."

He placed his icy hand upon the captain's, and continued—

"Fear has but little power over me elsewhere, you know that better than any one, and therefore I do not hesitate in confessing it now."

"I can conceive that perfectly," said Captain Gobert.

"You understand, do you not?" said the lieutenant, with the excitement of his recent emotion still full upon him. "The silence—the darkness—the images called up by the imagination—the terrible visions which pass before the eyes—the monsters,

without form or name, ready to start forth from every glaring corner—the winged dragons which hover on the height of the vault—Ah! what is there more vast and chilling than a deserted church? I recollect when I was a child it was one of my greatest terrors: and I remember especially a certain church of the Cordeliers, where I have often experienced it. These immense buildings made me dizzy. The pillars, the profound vaults, assumed forms—life, it seemed to me as though I were enclosed in some gigantic animal. I was oppressed, crushed, overwhelmed; and I fled, breathless, out of the building. It was precisely this impression of my infancy which returned upon me just now, but with aggravating circumstances—that is to say, at night, in a deserted and, one may say, an enemy's country."

"And then, undoubtedly, what is less explicable but not less true," said the captain, who had assumed an attitude of reflection, "the religious emotion, the involuntary respect—from which no created man can free himself, and myself least of all—in one of these old buildings, formerly consecrated to the worship..."

"Well, that is true," cried the lieutenant. "I also experienced just now something similar. I do not know what thoughts of sacrilege crossed my mind, what indignant spectres arose in the shadow. And, for all that, I am not suspected of superstition. I know what sort of credit to attach to the lies of all kinds which the priests propagated, in order to keep the people in bondage."

"I am of the same mind," said the captain, in his turn. "I am certainly no devotee...."

They began to laugh.

"Nor carried away by religious jugglery; but I am not exempt from feelings of this description. If circumstances had permitted it, I would not have suffered the company to pass the night under shelter of this

church; and, in like manner, though I have seen things of the kind done in the wars of this country, it would be impossible, for example, to extort from me a bravado against the inanimate stones which they call an altar."

"In fact," replied the lieutenant, with a smile, "you would not go and bully that great figure one sees there, which immediately recalled to me the statue of the 'commendatore.'"

"No certainly; nor you."

"Nor I."

"Nor many others, even among those who boast of being freethinkers."

The lieutenant resumed, after a short pause—

"Do you know, that is singular, nevertheless."

"In the first place, bravado," said the captain, "is useless: it is childish."

"That is clear; but, admitting this—we are not now speaking of bravado, but of this repugnance, this respect, this fear—by what mysterious power does this sacred place defend itself unaided? for it does defend itself—it braves you, it defies you, it rises proudly before you, and almost forces you upon your knees."

As it always happened when a difficulty of this kind arose in conversation, the captain, seeking immediately any explanation that might serve for a reply, said, at length,

"It must be that these superstitions were imprinted on our own tender minds while we were yet children."

"Take care," said the lieutenant; "our minds were pretty well filled in our infancy with fairies and evil genii. For my part, I was entertained as much with fairy tales as with the things of religion, and my mind was far more deeply impressed with them; but I do not find that we retain those impressions. Moreover, neither you nor I believe any more in the mysteries

of Christianity than in fairies. Whence, then, this vague fear in regard to one rather than the other? In one word, we should both of us brave the goblins in the heart of this wood, and neither one nor the other cares to go swaggering into this church."

The lieutenant was going too far for the captain, who contented himself with several affirmative nods of the head, as is the manner of many good people when they vaguely comprehend something with which they are unwilling to be embarrassed.

Whilst the officers were chatting thus together without restraint, the soldiers listened in silence, interested in a conversation of which they scarcely understood the drift. The Breton, by his looks of approbation, seemed to be gathering arguments against the previous boastings of the Marseillais. The latter, squatted near them, leaning his elbow on his haversack, endured it with a visible impatience. He grinned with an expression of disdainful brutality as he twisted the stem of his pipe between his lips; and his hideous physiognomy, bristling with long, dirty hair, lighted up from beneath by the glowing reflection of the fire, bore an absolutely infernal appearance.

When the lieutenant had ceased speaking, the Marseillais took the pipe from his mouth with one hand, and commenced speaking with the insolent familiarity which these men had introduced into the camp.

"Without assuming anything, citizen-captain, I have not perhaps your attainments; but, as far as I see, you have what one would call a weakness for what are priestly impostures. Each one has his idea. You were saying that every one is subject to these infirmities; as witness the Breton, whose conscience I will wash for him in the first holy-water stoup I meet with. For the rest, I shall be proud to show to this

heap of stock-fish how the true soldier comforts himself in this den of superstition."

The captain looked at him with a smile, and the lieutenant, who kept the Marseillais at arm's length, cast upon him a glance of profound disgust. The Marseillais resumed, stretching out his arm towards the church, "There is yonder in his niche an ancient, who has had his portrait taken in full length in stone, for fear he should take cold. He is a traitor who has served tyrants and conspired against equality, as may be seen by his being six feet high, and his not sharing in the opinions of the true *sans-culottes*. I speak favourably of him, for he is an old acquaintance of mine; and, ever since I have been here, my hands have been itching to tickle his feet, lest he should keep his gravity too long."

The soldiers began to laugh, whilst the eyes of the lieutenant remained fixed upon the Marseillais, who continued, with a certain malicious and insinuating air—

"All the more, citizen-captain, that it has come to the ears of the company, that the good man of plaster warms his feet upon a money-box, like a true monopolist, as he is, of the people's food. Therefore, if that be the case, captain, with your permission, I will place a plaster, in the shape of a petard, on his feet, and make him caper most patriotically."

These words created a sensation among the soldiers; the Breton heaved a sort of groan, and could not help saying, "Oh! Marseillais, you will not do that."

"And why not?" bellowed the Marseillais, standing upright. "What is there to prevent me, the moment the captain gives permission? Do you defy me, you paper soldier?"

"Yes," replied the Breton, stung to resistance; "I defy you!"

"Captain, you give me leave, do you not, to teach his catechism to this prophet of evil? Shall it be so? I shall have a share in the prize, and he not. Will you play your part, croaker?"

"Yes," said the Breton.

"Captain," resumed the Marseillais, "you agree?"

The Captain nodded his assent.

"Done!" cried the triumphant Marseillais. "Sergeant, you will deliver me a projectile—a good one—for the demolition of an aristocrat in effigy. And those of the company who are curious may see this powder thrust under his spurs."

He rose. As soon as the act was resolved upon, a kind of stupefaction spread itself through the company; all were silent.

The republican detachments, accustomed in this warfare to the destruction of every kind of habitation, never marched without a supply of ammunition. The sergeant rummaged in the baggage, and handed a grenade to the Marseillais.

"Good!" cried he, rising and endeavouring to conceal, under an appearance of coolness, a half-nervous feverishness. "Let the true Jacobins, and those who love me, follow me."

But the icy silence of the troops chilled him a little as to the good success of his enterprise. The soldiers marched after him in disorder; the Captain himself, and the Lieutenant, followed slowly at a distance. Their shadows glided along, lengthened by the light of the moon upon the turf, the Marseillais at their head advancing with a resolute step. The strange character of the scene, in such a place, at such an hour, did not fail to exert upon their minds its gloomy and irresistible influence. They marched in silence, save that the men who surrounded the Marseillais could not refrain from provoking him with soldiers' banter, which restored him to his

former impudence. He replied in the same tone as before, by frightful blasphemies.

They arrived before the deeply-shaded porch, which, to terrified imaginations, might have appeared a gulf ready to devour its victims. The Marseillais turned to them with a pompous air, "Are you all there?" Those who were last pressed forward.

"Sergeant, lend me your steel to light my match.'

An owl, scared by the noise, flew out of a hollow in the sculpture of the porch, uttering a long and melancholy cry.

"Marseillais! do not go in!" cried the Breton, in a voice of emotion.

"Do not weep for me, chicken! Wait a little—are you there? Come, tulip—forward!" and with this he plunged resolutely into the darkness, where he was soon lost to his comrades' sight. Looking intently into the depth of the church, certain rays of light might, however, be perceived. A beam of moonlight glanced through a window of the choir, and fell directly upon the statue of St. George, which stood out amidst the darkness, and seemed illuminated with a supernatural radiance. But the obscurity of the nave was impenetrable: the Marseillais himself was obliged to slacken his pace, and the iron of his heels, resounding slowly upon the sepulchral flagstones, awoke gloomy echoes which rolled angrily through the silent vaults. It seemed as though even the stones of the venerable edifice raised their voice against the audacious intruder. The Marseillais experienced a sensation of fear. When he approached the choir, he might be distinguished walking slowly; but it seemed to the terrified soldiers that it was no more than his shadow. He ascended one after another the steps of the sanctuary. They saw him then stop at the foot of the altar. The light of the moon at that moment fell partially upon him: he was doubtless at

that moment preparing to set fire to his grenade. They saw a spark; the Marseillais extended his arm; but suddenly rays of light burst from all parts—sheaves of fire shot up with a terrible explosion—the sanctuary appeared all in flames. And amid these dazzling lightnings, they saw, to their horror, the formidable statue rise higher, totter on its base, and then precipitate itself upon the profaner with a tremendous noise, which shook the building to its foundations. The whole was sudden as lightning; and amid the frightful uproar might be heard a horrid laugh, which seemed to proceed from the mouth of hell itself. All then relapsed into total darkness and silence. The greater number of the soldiers took to flight; several fell prostrate to the earth. The officers and sergeant entered, followed by some of the others. They stumbled in the gloom against the broken pieces of the statue, but were unable to discover anything more. They retired, petrified with horror.

Next day a fresh search was made in the church, and the soldier was found crushed lengthwise by the mass of granite which had fallen upon him. The stone beard of St. George had forced in his cheek, the brain had spurted out of the skull, and the hideous countenance of the Marseillais hung downwards on the pavement, as though he fled the encounter with his formidable conqueror. Not a man of the company would lend a hand to bury the corpse, which it would have been necessary to disengage from the *debris* of the statue, and it therefore, remained lying upon the spot.

The company of Captain Gobert quitted the Abbey of St. Cyr the following morning.

It is a thousand pities to disenchant our story of its mystery, but truth obliges us to append the follow-

ing extract from a lively discussion on this very event, which took place some forty or fifty years afterwards, in the drawing-room of a fashionable residence in the capital. One of the party, a white-haired old General, confessed that he was Captain Gobert's Lieutenant in the expedition, and witnessed the catastrophe. "No doubt," said the old warrior, "the clumsily constructed petard exploded too soon, but I did not leave the spot without making other discoveries. The young man who has been mentioned under the name of the 'Innocent,' had taken refuge in the church by an opening known only to him. He was concealed on a kind of step contrived behind the high altar for arranging the ornaments and lighting the candles. He remained here until night, squatted behind the statue of the saint, the base of which he could reach. It was he who, working with a lever upon the worn pedestal, shook the figure, and after two or three attempts to cause it to lose its equilibrium, made it fall upon our Marseillais. The youth boasted of it for the rest of his days to all who would listen to him."

TAMAN;

OR,

THE SMUGGLER'S HUT.

TAMAN;

OR,

THE SMUGGLER'S HUT.

I.

TAMAN, where the adventure I am about to recount took place, is beyond contradiction one of the most disagreeable of all the maritime towns of Russia.

I arrived there late. The conductor pulled up the three horses belonging to my *calèche* in the court-yard of an isolated house which stood near the entrance of the town; it was the only stone edifice in the place. The sentinel, a Cossack of the Black Sea, hearing the bell of my carriage, cried out in a loud voice, which nevertheless betrayed a recent nap, "Who goes there?" The inspector and a sergeant made their appearance; whom I gave to understand that I was an officer, and that being engaged in active service on behalf of the crown, I was entitled to a lodging. The sergeant conducted us all about the town. Every inn we stopped at gave us the monotonous intelligence that it was full. The weather was very cold; I had not closed my eyes for three nights, and my fatigue did not tend to sweeten my temper.

"Take me anywhere, for heaven's sake," said I at last impatiently to the man. "I care not where it is, provided I get a bed to lie down upon."

"There is a hut, to be sure," replied he, scratching

his head; "but I fear it will not be good enough for your grace . . . it is such a dirty hole."

I was not disposed to be very particular; so, without waiting for further details, I bid him show me the way to it. After wading through some muddy lanes, with wretched fences on either side, we arrived at the hut in question, which stood by the sea-shore.

The moon, then at its full, was shining brightly upon the thatched roof and white walls of my new abode. The court was enclosed by a rubble wall, and within it was another hut still smaller, and in a yet more ruinous condition than the first. The beach sloped abruptly down to the sea, which came up to the foundations of the miserable hovel, and filled it with the unceasing murmuring of its waves. The moon looked peacefully down upon the element, which though troubled, nevertheless owned her influence; and by the light of her beams I could distinguish two vessels in the distance, whose black rigging stood out sharply against the clear sky, like a spider's web. "These are vessels at anchor," thought I; "to-morrow I shall be able to leave for Ghélentchik."

I had a Cossack of the line for my general servant. I desired him to take down my portmanteau, and to dismiss the coachman. I then began to call out for the master of the hut . . . no answer . . . I knocked—not a sound to be heard. . . . At length, I perceived a boy of about fourteen years of age creeping out of a side-passage.

"Where is the master?"

"There is none."

"How! no master?"

"No."

"And the mistress?"

"She is gone to the village."

"Who will open the door for me then?" cried I, kicking lustily at it. . . .

The door opened of itself; and a damp, chill sensation ran through me. I struck a lucifer-match, and held it under the boy's nose. By this light I was enabled to discover two eyes perfectly white. He was blind. . . . He stood motionless before me, and I began to examine his features attentively; but what could I discern in those features which lacked the power of expression? I had been looking at him for some time with a feeling of pity, when suddenly an almost imperceptible smile played upon his thin lips, which produced a kind of disagreeable impression upon me I cannot well describe. For a moment I felt tempted to doubt the story of his blindness. But then, I thought again, how could he have feigned its external signs, and besides, what motive could he have?

"Are you the son of the house?" said I at length.

"No."

"Who are you, then?"

"A poor orphan."

"Has the mistress any children?"

"No; she had a daughter, but she has gone off beyond the sea with a Tartar from the Crimea, a boatman of Kertch."

I advanced into the hut. The whole furniture consisted only of two benches, a table, and a large chest placed near the stove. There was not a single picture upon the walls . . . a bad sign in this country. The sea-breeze blew into the room through the broken windows. I took a piece of candle out of my portmanteau, and after lighting it, began to put my things in order, placing my gun in a corner, and my pistols upon the table. I then spread my cloak upon one bench, while my Cossack threw his over the other; and in about ten minutes he was snoring. . . . I for my part could not get to sleep. In the midst of the darkness I seemed ever to see the

blind boy, with his white eyes, hovering about me. About an hour passed thus. The moon was shining through the window, and her beams played upon the earthen floor of the hovel. Suddenly a shadow flitted across that part of the room which was lighted up. I arose, and looked out of the window. Some one had just passed close under it, and was hidden I knew not where. I could not suppose the person in question had escaped by the beach, and yet any other way of retreat was impossible. I got up, threw my cloak over my shoulders, girt my dagger about my waist, and with stealthy steps went out of the cabin. The first person I saw was the blind boy. I concealed myself behind the wall, and observed him pass by me with a cautious but steady movement. He carried a kind of parcel under his arm; and turning towards the harbour, began to descend the steep narrow path which led to it. My suspicions were aroused: "To-day," said I to myself, "the dumb will speak, and the blind will see;" and I followed closely in his steps, in order not to lose sight of him.

Presently, however, the moon became clouded, and the thick fog rising from the sea caused the light at the stern of a vessel close by to be scarcely discernible; the beach was white with the foam of the waves which threatened every moment to swallow it up. It was with difficulty I managed to walk down this shelving path, and so I slid to the bottom of the embankment. The boy had stopped for a moment, and had then turned to the right along the shore. He walked so close to the water's edge, that every moment a wave seemed on the point of carrying him away; but this was evidently not his first attempt, if one might judge by the confidence with which he stepped from one rock to another, avoiding every cleft and precipice which lay in his way. At length he stopped, as if he were listening; he sat down upon

the ground, and placed his parcel beside him. I could observe his every movement, hidden as I was by the cliff projecting at this part of the coast. In a few minutes, a white figure emerged from the opposite side, and, approaching, sat down by the side of the blind boy. The direction of the wind enabled me to overhear their conversation.

"What a storm!" said the woman. "Janko will not come."

"Janko is not afraid of the storm," replied the boy.

"The fog thickens," said the woman in a tone of regret.

"But, thanks to the fog, he will be able to pass the coast-guard vessels the more easily."

"And what if he should be drowned?"

"Well, you will not have a new ribbon to go to church with on Sunday—that's all!"

There was a moment's pause: one thing struck me; and that was, that while the blind boy made use of a provincial dialect when he was talking to me, he now spoke pure Russian.

"You see now that I am right," continued he, clapping his hands. "Janko fears neither the sea, nor the wind, nor the fog, nor the coast-guard. . . . Listen! . . . that is not the sound of the water. I am not mistaken; it is the splash of his long oars."

The woman rose up quickly, and looked eagerly into the distance with an expression of anxiety.

"You are dreaming. I see nothing."

And indeed he must have had good eyes who could distinguish anything resembling a boat;—for my own part, I confess all my efforts were fruitless. Ten minutes afterwards, I perceived a black speck on the crest of the highest wave, which alternately appeared and disappeared. This boat, which seemed now suspended on the summit of the waves, and now

pitched violently down their sides, steadily neared the shore. None but a first-rate sailor would have risked his safety on such a night in the midst of those breakers, at a distance of twenty versts, and this Janko must have been impelled by a very powerful motive! What could this be?" Whilst I was making these reflections, I followed with involuntary shuddering every movement of the boat so perilously situated. . . . I saw it plunge down like a bird of the ocean, and then suddenly right itself by the aid of the oars, which appeared like wings, balancing itself above the abyss in the midst of the foaming waves: a moment after I thought it must be dashed to pieces against the shore. . . . At length, however, it ran safe and sound into a little cove.

A man about the middle height stepped out of the boat, wearing a sheepskin bonnet, like those used by the Tartars. He made a sign with his hand, and all three began to unload the boat; but it was impossible to distinguish the appearance of the packages. The cargo was so considerable that I could not understand how with such a load the boat had escaped foundering. They each carried a parcel upon their shoulders, and creeping stealthily along the beach were soon lost to sight.

It was time to return to the hut; but I confess I was so interested by all I had witnessed that I found it difficult to leave.

At last I returned; and, without lying down again, longed impatiently for the day.

My Cossack was much surprised to find me up and dressed when he awoke in the morning. I did not, however, tell him what had happened. I gazed for some time in earnest admiration at the blue sky, over whose surface light fleecy clouds were floating; and at the distant shore of the Crimea, which stretches away like a shining land, and terminates with a steep

rock, upon the summit of which the lighthouse is erected. I then repaired to the fort of Phanagore, to learn if possible from the commander what hour I might hope to leave for Ghélentchik. The commander could say nothing positive on the subject. The vessels at anchor were either employed in the coast-guard service, or were merchant vessels waiting for their cargo. . . . "Perhaps," said he, "the mail-boat may arrive in two or three days; then, we will see."

I returned to my lodging, vexed and dispirited. My Cossack came out to meet me with a downcast air. "This is a bad job, master!" said he, as I went in.

"In truth it is," said I; "who knows when we shall get away from here?"

These words seemed to increase his dismay . . . he came closer to me and said in a low voice: "This is no honest dwelling! I met an inspector to-day who belongs to this part of the country, and who is an acquaintance of mine. When I told him where we were lodging . . . 'My good fellow,' said he, 'that place is suspected . . . They are strange characters there! and, in fact, that blind boy! . . . he goes about everywhere alone, to fetch bread and water . . .' I suppose it is the custom here."

"Well, has the mistress made her appearance yet?"

"To-day, during your absence, an old woman came with her daughter."

"What daughter do you speak of? She has no daughter."

"I know not who she is; . . . but it is very certain that the old woman is now at home."

Upon this I went into the hovel. There was a good fire in the stove, and a more sumptuous repast was being cooked than the condition of my hosts waranted. To all my questions the old woman signified that she was deaf. As nothing was to be got

out of her, I turned to the blind boy, who remained sitting near the stove, which he was feeding with dried twigs.

"And you, you little blind imp," said I, pulling his ears, "can you tell me what you were prowling about for, with a parcel, all last night?"

The boy began to cry and sob.

"I did not go anywhere with a parcel . . . What do you mean?"

This time the old woman heard perfectly well; and she began to mutter: "What an idea! to accuse that poor blind child! What grudge do you owe him? What has he done to you?"

This farce wearied me; and I went out, determined in some way to solve the mystery.

I wrapped myself up in my cloak, and sat down upon a stone behind the wall. Before me stretched the sea, still agitated with the storm of the previous night; and the monotonous roar of its waves, like the drowsy hum of a town which lies hushed in repose, recalled the memories of the past, and transported me in fancy to the north, and to the heart of our frozen metropolis. I was lost in reverie; and I spent an hour or more, perhaps, in this manner. Suddenly the accents of melody fell upon my ear. It was the voice of a woman, and its tones were full of richness and sweetness. But where could she come from? I redoubled my attention. The notes were true, and expressed sentiments of grief and tenderness alternately, with those of gaiety and light-heartedness. I looked around me . . . not a creature was to be seen. I listened again; the voice seemed to come from the sky. At length, on raising my eyes to the roof of the hut, I saw a young girl, dressed in a cloth dress, with her hair falling in long tresses over her shoulders.

Picture to yourself a real sea-nymph, a *roussalka*, of mythological times! With one hand she was

shading her eyes from the dazzling rays of the sun, as she looked fixedly in the distance, now smiling to herself, now taking up her song.

I fancied that I had heard that same voice the night before; but while I was trying to recollect myself, the young girl had disappeared. All at once she bounded along close to me, humming an air, and then, snapping her fingers, she went into the old woman's hut. Some quarrel or other now arose between them. The old woman seemed thoroughly angry, and the young girl went off into fits of laughter. She soon returned, and came frolicking about me, and walking by my side, then she stopped, and looked me full in the face as if surprised at my presence. At length, she turned away abruptly, and advanced with slow steps towards the shore. Nor was this all; during the rest of the day she did nothing but pace up and down before my lodging. Singular being! Her features betokened no sign of insanity; on the contrary, she boldly fixed her piercing eyes upon me, and they seemed to possess some magnetic attraction; for their expression was tantamount to a question. But I had scarcely commenced the conversation, ere she slipped away with a smile full of malice.

My musical nymph did not appear above eighteen. Her elastic figure, her head bent down with a grace peculiar to herself, her long fair hair, her neck and shoulders, slightly sunburnt, her regular nose, everything about her, exercised a strange fascination over me. It is true that I had occasionally observed a kind of fierce suspicious expression in the glance of her eye, and a certain constraint in her smile; but still my prepossessions were, on the whole, in her favour.

At nightfall, having stopped her near the door, I spoke to her in the following terms,—

"Tell me, my beautiful child; what were you doing to-day upon the roof?"

"I was looking to see what quarter the wind blew from."

"And why did you want to know that?"

"Because happiness comes from the same quarter."

"Do you woo happiness by singing?"

"People are generally happy when they sing."

"Who taught you that song, then?"

"Nobody . . . it comes into my head of itself. Those whom I wish to understand, will understand me; others will not."

"What is your name?"

"You must ask my godfather if you wish to know that."

"And who is your godfather?"

"That is a secret that I shall keep to myself."

"You are a pretty fabricator of mysteries! Ah, well, you have not managed to blind me entirely." She did not change countenance, nor move a muscle, nor did her lips quiver even; one would have supposed it to be a matter with which she had no concern . . . "I know that you were out on the beach that night!" And I commenced a detailed account of all that I had witnessed. She was not in the least disconcerted, and laughed immoderately.

"You have seen a great deal, and you know very little . . . and that little I advise you to keep to yourself," said she.

"And what if I were to go and lay it all before the commander?" said I, assuming a serious and even a severe manner. At these words she began to skip and to sing, and then vanished like a scared bird. My last threat was too much; but I had not then any suspicion of the consequences which ensued. I had but too good reason to repent of my rashness later.

II.

It was growing dusk; I had ordered my Cossack to boil some water for tea, had lighted a candle, and was enjoying my usual pipe. I was already taking my second cup of tea when I suddenly heard a noise at the door, and the rustling of a dress greeted my ear; I turned round and started. It was my nymph of the sea! She came, and slowly sat down in front of me, without uttering a word. She fixed her eyes upon me, and her looks seemed full of tenderness. She appeared as if waiting to be questioned; but I remained silent, under the influence of an indefinable agitation. Her face was pale, and it betrayed serious disquietude. Her hand wandered over the table without any apparent object, and I observed that she slightly trembled. Her bosom heaved occasionally, and then she drew in her breath and remained perfectly motionless.

I began to get impatient; and was about to break silence in a very matter-of-fact manner, by offering her a cup of tea; when she suddenly darted towards me, and whispered in my ear: "To-night, when every one is asleep, I will meet you on the beach." She then darted out of the room with the swiftness of an arrow.

At the end of two hours, when all was quiet, I awoke my Cossack: "If you hear me fire a pistol-shot," said I to him, "run down to the beach." He stared at me, and answered mechanically: "Enough, sir." I stuck a pistol in my belt, and went out.

She was waiting for me upon the slope of the beach.

"Walk behind me!" said she, grasping my hand, and we descended the slope. I do not know how I escaped breaking my neck twenty times or more. We turned to the right, and I took the same path that I had followed on the night that I went out to watch the blind boy. The moon had not yet risen; two stars alone, like tutelary lighthouses, shone out upon the dark azure vault of heaven. Heavy waves rolled after each other at regular intervals, and lazily rocked a solitary boat which was fastened to a post on the beach.

"Let us get into this boat," said my companion.

I hesitated. A sentimental expedition upon the sea offered some slight temptation. She jumped into the boat, and I followed her without allowing myself time for reflection. We were already some distance from shore.

"What does all this mean?" said I at last, assuming an angry tone.

"It means that I am in love with you," said she, making me sit down upon a thwart, and throwing her arms about me. At first I could not conceive the meaning of this strange behaviour, but was speedily enlightened. Suddenly something fell heavily into the water, I raised my hand to my waist — my pistol was gone. A terrible suspicion flashed across my mind; the blood rushed into my head. I looked about me; we were many hundred yards from the shore, and I could not swim! I tried to push her from me, but she clung to my clothes like a rat, and a desperate struggle ensued between her and me. Anger added strength to my efforts; but I was not long in discovering that my adversary had considerably the advantage of me.

"What is it you want to do?" cried I, at length succeeding in grasping her tiny hands, and endeavouring to force her down into the bottom of the boat. She still struggled, however, so violently, that I could feel her fingers crack in my grasp, but she uttered no cry. At length she gasped out,—

"You said you would inform!" and as if gathering fresh impulse from the words, she flung herself on me more furiously than before—and with the frenzied strength of a maniac, had forced me backwards almost over the gunwale, when I suddenly felt her grasp relax, and with a heave of the boat she fell over me into the waves. I rose stupefied and panting, and looked about me. It was very dark, but I could make out her head rising twice above the foaming waves—then I saw nothing more.

I found a fragment of a broken oar at the bottom of the boat, and by dint of persevering efforts, I at length managed to reach the shore. As I returned to the hut, I involuntarily noticed the spot where the blind boy had awaited the nocturnal navigator the night before. The moon was shining in the heavens: I thought I saw a white figure seated upon the shore. I was actuated by a strong feeling of curiosity, and concealing myself under the projection of the cliff, I lay stretched upon the turf. Raising my head cautiously, I found that I could see all that passed beneath me. My delight exceeded my surprise in beholding my water-nymph. She was wringing the salt water out of her long hair. Her slight covering soaked with wet, plainly revealed the elegance of her figure. A boat shortly appeared in the distance. The same man whom I had seen the preceding evening got out of it; he wore a Tartar bonnet, but his hair was dressed in the Cossack style, and a long knife hung from his leathern belt.

"Janko!" cried she, "all is lost! We are discovered, and trade is no longer safe: it is time for us to go." They talked together for some time; but in so low a voice that it was impossible to distinguish any part of their conversation.

"Where is the blind boy?" said Janko, raising his voice. "I have sent him..." replied she.

In a few minutes the blind boy arrived, carrying a package upon his back which they placed in the boat.

"Listen, boy," said Janko, "watch that spot carefully... you know! there is much valuable merchandise there... Tell——" (I could not hear the name) "that I am no longer at his service. Things have turned out badly... He will not see me again... the danger is too great at present... I shall seek employment elsewhere... and he will find it very difficult to get a substitute. You may tell him that if he had paid me better, I would not have deserted him.... As for myself, many ways are open to me.... Wherever the wind blows, and the sea roars, Janko is at home!" After a moment's pause, he continued: "She is going away with me; she cannot stay here any longer.... You may tell the old woman that she has bided her time; there is a limit to everything.... We bid her farewell for ever."

"And I?" said the blind boy in a sorrowful tone.

"Become what you like... it matters little to me."

During this dialogue my water-nymph had jumped into the boat: she made a sign with her hand to her companion, who slipped something into the blind boy's hand, saying:

"There is something to buy cakes with."

"Is that all?" said the boy.

"Take this too..." and a piece of money fell upon the beach.

The blind boy did not pick it up. Janko seated himself in the boat; the wind blew from the shore. They hoisted a sail, which rapidly filled, and they were soon far away from the shore. I long watched the white sail which stood out upon the dark waters. The blind boy remained sitting upon the sea-shore; and I suddenly heard the sound of sobbing: the poor child wept for a long time; it wrung my heart to hear him.

I returned to my lodging; the candle which had been flaring away in a wooden porringer was nearly burnt out, and my Cossack, notwithstanding my orders, was fast asleep, holding his gun with both hands. I was unwilling to disturb his repose, and taking the light I advanced into the hut.... Alas! my cash box, my cap ornamented with silver, my dagger from Daghestan, the gift of a friend, all were gone. I now understood what that cursed blind boy was carrying. I awoke my Cossack somewhat roughly; I was enraged; but what could I do? Should I not furnish the commander with the materials for a hearty laugh at my expense, were I to go and tell him that I had been plundered by a blind boy, and that a girl of eighteen had almost drowned me? Happily, the following morning, an opportunity of leaving presented itself, and I quitted Taman. What has become of the old woman and the blind boy? That is just what I do not know. What have the joys and sorrows of humanity in common with the sympathies of an officer travelling in the service of government with a passport from the crown?

It was clear that fortune, by some strange freak, had thrown me among the confederates of a band of smugglers, and that I had unexpectedly and almost innocently been the means of breaking up their retreat. When I thought afterwards of old Janko,

of my poor nymph, and the deserted boy, not to speak of my own losses, I was almost tempted to regret that it had been reserved for me to put an end to their traffic, which but for the difficulty of my finding a lodging on that particular evening, might probably have gone on undisturbed to this very day

FRANCIS DOUVILLE;

OR,

THE WARNING.

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THE WARNING.

THE following adventure was related some time ago by a merchant in the South of France; and the circumstances seem remarkable enough to be recorded:—

It happened in the autumn of the year 17—, that I found myself obliged to make a journey of considerable length, the object of which was to visit several small towns, where I had accounts unpaid, and where I expected to obtain further orders. My physician had of late enjoined me to ride as much as possible, and I took the opportunity to put his advice into practice, by starting on my journey on horseback.

On my route, I could not deny myself the pleasure of visiting my old friend Francis Douville (knowing that I must, at all events, pass near his house), as we had been schoolfellows and playmates in our youth, had been brought up as merchants in the same town, and had commenced business about the same time. His affairs, however, did not seem to prosper like mine; he retired early, and now, it was said, lived on a small estate, which he had saved enough to purchase.—As he never came to town we had not met

for many years, and although I had often thought of visiting him, one occurrence after another had always come in the way, so that I had never been able to fulfil my intentions. The lapse of time had almost made me cease to think of him; but now the impressions of old friendship were renewed, and I was resolved that I would, at all risks, find out his residence. I did so, and Douville received me with the greatest kindness. I was entertained with the best fare which his house afforded, and he insisted that I should not think of travelling further that day. However, I could not decide on remaining with him through the night, this being the second day of my journey, but, at his earnest entreaty, promised that I would make a longer stay on my return homewards.

To say the truth, I had been somewhat disappointed with this visit. I had delighted myself with the thoughts of our meeting, had dreamed of old times, when, with glad hearts, in all the vivacity of youth, we had formed gigantic plans, and our future prospects appeared in the most dazzling colours: I wished to recal to my friend's mind the same pleasing recollections which had taken possession of my own; but I soon found that this was distasteful to him. Whenever I touched on these subjects, Douville instantly broke off the conversation,—inquired particularly, however, as to my present employments and purposes, and affected the most cordial interest in my welfare, though it was but too easy to perceive that all the while his manners were constrained, and there was moreover a certain air of mystery which I was at a loss to comprehend. This could not, I thought, arise from any special dislike to me; I fancied it might be caused by misfortunes of which I was not aware, and that sorrow had brought on him a coldness of heart, which it was not possible for the presence even of a very old and intimate friend to subdue. Indeed his

brow was furrowed by so many wrinkles; his eyes shone with such a dark mysterious fire, and their movements were so strange and wayward, that I could scarce bear to look at him. His wife, who might now be about fifty years of age, kept up a sort of grin on her countenance, which was intended for an expression of good humour, but from its strangely forced character gave her more the appearance of a malevolent sorceress than a kind hostess. She had two sons,—to the younger of whom I had once stood godfather. One was now twenty-three, the other twenty years of age; but, notwithstanding their youth, and decidedly handsome features, both were wanting in that cheerfulness, that expression of candour and confidence, which should naturally have belonged to the spring-time of life.

On inquiring what was to be their future destination I was informed that they intended to settle as agriculturists, preferring this to every other employment. I expressed my surprise at this, and gave it as my opinion, that they would succeed better as merchants, adding even a proposal to take the younger brother as a clerk into my own house. The young man appeared well pleased with my offer; but his father's vexation was so evident, that he could scarcely answer in his usual tone of voice;—"He had," he said, "been himself sufficiently unfortunate in trade, and would never consent to his son's engaging in any such speculations." As the conversation now seemed painful to him, I broke it off abruptly, and, recollecting my own urgent avocations, took my departure, renewing my promise, however, that I would, on no account, forget to visit them on my return, and remain for at least one night.

During this brief interview, I had collected materials enough for after-reflection, and continued to perplex myself on the subject all the way to my next halting-

place. Our moralists and poets describe the pleasures of a country life, and the contentment of the husbandman, in such brilliant colours, that, according to them, it is to be wondered at that any mortal who can leave town should confine himself within its gloomy prison-walls. On the other hand, they assure us, that cheerfulness, tranquillity, and health, are to be found with never-failing certainty among the fields and woods, while the townsman must always be a miserable and careworn animal. How different, on the other hand, appeared to be the reality,—of which my friend's fate was a notable example! In town he had uniformly been active and cheerful; seemed to be quite contented in his domestic circumstances; and was in all respects prosperous and happy. One glance, however, was sufficient to show that he was now thoroughly dissatisfied with his lot; his former cheerfulness had completely declined; nor between him and his wife did there appear to exist any cordial union of spirit. His sons, young as they were, had already acquired their father's gloom and perplexity of aspect; and if this could not be in their case the result of worldly cares, it might have other causes,—perhaps dissipation and sensual indulgence. As to the sloth and inactivity of all the family, this was sufficiently proved by the state of the garden, which was almost a complete wilderness, and by the miserable corn-fields, where the scanty straggling crop showed an utter want of management and attention. The house and farm-offices were half ruinous; the roads almost impassable; besides, the district in which the farm lay was gloomy and repulsive. The lands were flat and sandy, surrounded on every side by dark fir-woods, which shut out every pleasant prospect. No verdant meadows refreshed the wearied eyes; no clear lively streams varied the landscape; only, not far from the dwelling-house, there was a desolate stagnant lake, which

any good husbandman would have drained and got rid of.

I was glad when I came into the woods, which at least afforded me protection from the sun's heat; but the road, with its everlasting sameness of scenery and lonely silence, broken only by the screams of rooks and ravens, became insupportably tiresome, so that I felt again rejoiced on emerging into the open country. The district in which I now found myself seemed at first by no means attractive;—however, when I had ascended a steep eminence, a truly magnificent landscape was once more spread before me. The rich corn-fields gleamed in the golden light of the setting sun. I saw the husbandmen returning from their labours, with their herds and flocks; while in the back ground rose the church-towers of a pleasant town, where I intended to pass the night.

In this town my commercial transactions first began; but unhappily the good spirits with which I had entered its gates were soon put to flight; for I found the utmost difficulty in procuring payment of my accounts.

I had however the more reason to be satisfied that I had undertaken the journey, for I was convinced that only my presence could be a check on their vexatious delays, or prevent serious losses which I should have otherwise incurred. With a good deal of trouble, I was fortunate enough to obtain payment of several heavy accounts, which I insisted on receiving in gold, silver being inconvenient for a traveller; after which I pursued my journey. The same difficulties awaited me in other small towns; yet I was tolerably successful in overcoming these obstacles, and in winding up my affairs within the space of time which I had prescribed to myself at my departure from home.

My transactions being at last concluded, I thought of returning homewards by a new route, which was

equally convenient with the former for a traveller on horseback, and was considerably shorter than the high road. The only thing that troubled me was that I had with me a large sum of money, and as its weight was too obvious to escape notice when the portmanteau was taken from my horse at an inn, it was hardly to be expected that the thoughts of robbery would not enter into the mind of some one or another, and more than probable that attempts would be made to put such plans into execution. I had, besides, to cross long tracts of forest scenery; and now that the autumnal weather had begun to break, I was obliged, for the sake of expedition, to travel a good way in the dark. I consoled myself with the thoughts that my horse was excellent, and that I was provided with a pair of doubly-loaded pistols, by which I trusted I should be able in the hour of need to defend myself and my property.

The first day of my homeward journey I still kept on the high-road, but I had many a long mile betwixt me and the place where I intended to pass the night; so that I stopped for refreshment seldom, and as short a time as possible. My horse shared in my sufferings, and was nearly exhausted from hunger and fatigue, when at last about nightfall we reached the appointed station. But here, what a strange reception awaited me! The host and hostess exhibited visages that were, without exception, the most repulsive I had ever beheld in my life. It is impossible to conceive a more determined concentration of savage wildness, gloom, and malicious discontent, than was betrayed by these people. While they pretended to appear courteous and friendly, the effort which this obviously cost them rendered their aspect only more repulsive. I would willingly have retired to rest, if hunger had not forced me to wait for supper, the preparations for which caused an unusual delay. Meanwhile I amused myself

by entering into conversation with the landlord's daughter, who was a girl of remarkable beauty and good manners. I was surprised at the proofs of education and polish which she displayed, and felt the more interested by an appearance of reserve and melancholy which seemed to have taken deep root in her young and innocent heart. I was afraid to give her pain by rash questions, but prolonged the discourse in hopes of learning the cause of this grief, or being able to guess at her misfortunes, till her mother came and called me to supper. This was speedily despatched, and fatigue and want of sleep soon drove me to my bedroom, which was on the second floor. The frightful rushing of the wind through the neighbouring fir-trees, the beating of the rain on the casements, and the gloomy *tout ensemble* of the whole habitation, brought my mind into a strange mood, which, though I am no coward, was nearly allied to terror. That my host and hostess were not to be numbered among honest people, I was thoroughly persuaded; but whether they were so bad as to rob and murder their guests, was a question which I could not determine. The longer I thought on this subject, the more I was inclined to believe that my life was by no means safe under their care, and many stories crowded on my remembrance of secret murders, from which the best organized police in the world cannot afford protection.

At length I heard the outward doors of the house groaning on their hinges, and violently closed for the night. It seemed to me, thereupon, as if I were quite shut out from all the world, and thrown into a den of murderers. I even went to the window to examine whether, in case of need, I might not venture to leap from it; an expedient however which, on account of the height, I found quite out of the question. All I could do, therefore, was carefully to shut the door, to pile up

some chairs against it, that in the event of any one entering, I might be awakened by their fall; and to lay my loaded pistols within reach so as to be able at once to defend myself. With these precautions, and commending myself to the protection of Heaven, I betook myself to rest.

Weariness soon overpowered all other sensations, and I fell fast asleep. I might have slumbered perhaps about an hour, when I was awoke by a noise which seemed to be in my chamber. I raised myself from the pillow;—but what language can describe my horror, when, by the glimmering starlight, I beheld a figure robed in white,—a phantom as it seemed, wrapt in a shroud,—that stationed itself opposite my bed! My hair now stood on end, my teeth chattered, and for a while I lost all self-possession. At length I summoned up resolution and grasped one of my pistols. The figure, however, did not seem in the slightest degree discomposed or intimidated; but, raising one arm in a threatening attitude, it exclaimed in a hollow tone, "Be not afraid, for I come only to warn you. Go not again to the house of Douville, if you value your existence, for you will never come alive from under his roof." For a few moments the figure stood motionless—then added, "Hast thou understood me?" and when, in a trembling voice, I answered "Yes," it instantly disappeared.

I remained for a long while as if petrified, and stared at the place where the apparition had been, without being able to alter my position;—at last, I rubbed the cold sweat from my forehead, and, by a vehement effort, roused myself from this trance. I was perfectly convinced that what I had witnessed had been no dream! I had never believed in ghosts, nor indeed troubled myself much with speculations as to their existence or non-existence; but now, what was I to think? What living being could be suspected of such

a trick? The innkeeper could never have caused this scene by stratagem, nor would have thought of doing so, for he himself had advised me earnestly to take the road that led through Douville's farm, and to pass the night there. And who but the innkeeper could know anything of my plans, or wish to interfere with them?

What danger, moreover, I could possibly incur at my friend's house, was to me a new riddle; and I kept awake debating this point long after my terror of the apparition had subsided. I firmly resolved, however, to follow its admonitions, by way of at least acting on the safe side. Towards morning I fell fast asleep, and did not awake until a loud knocking at my door disturbed me. This noise was made by the innkeeper, who had been alarmed at my non-appearance, and who inquired whether I were unwell? I started up immediately, dressed myself in great haste, swallowed some breakfast, paid my bill for refreshments, and rode away as fast as I could, to make up for the time that had been lost.

About midday I began to feel hungry, and was fortunate enough to find a pleasant inn on the road-side, where I was supplied with an excellent dinner. As I must, according to the injunctions of my midnight visitor, choose a different route from that with which I was acquainted, I made inquiries of my host, and obtained from him the necessary directions. He was a good-humoured loquacious man, and seemed very willing to enter into conversation on whatever subject I started. I inquired, therefore, whether he was acquainted with my friend Douville, who lived in that neighbourhood? At this question the man's cheerful countenance became immediately clouded—he looked at me suspiciously—was silent a few moments—and then answered drily, that he certainly did know the man of whom I spoke. I wished to hear more, and begged him to say what was his opinion of Douville;

what character he bore in the country, and whether he had been successful in his farming occupations? My host shook his head; assured me that he was quite unprepared to enter into those particulars; and, for a long while, I could not obtain from him any satisfactory reply. At last he said, that, from his own knowledge, he could not vouch for any action good or bad of my friend Douville; however, that his mode of life was considered by almost every one quite inexplicable; for the produce of the fields always turned out so miserable a crop, that it could not pay the farm-servants' labour; yet, notwithstanding this, the man continued to maintain a numerous household, and it was said that they all lived well. For the rest, he did not associate with any person of his own rank, never appeared with his family at church, and the members of his establishment were so reserved and shy, even of the daylight, that scarcely any neighbour could boast of having spoken with one among them. This intelligence was very perplexing to me; it seemed so inconsistent with the former disposition of my friend, who could scarce ever have enough of society! At all events, the change proved nothing in his favour, and I was by this means the more confirmed in my determination of not going to his house. The innkeeper, to whom I mentioned what had been my intentions, approved highly of this caution, and begged urgently that I would adhere to my present resolution, adding, "There are many strange stories of the forests in these parts;" but as to the ground of these allusions, I could not obtain from him any adequate explanation.

I was obliged to hasten onwards, that the night might not overtake me; for on that day I had still a long way to travel. Besides, there were dark clouds on the horizon, and it was easy to foretell that ere long a formidable tempest would come on. I rode, therefore, as hard as it was possible to do, without

absolutely foundering my horse. The recollection of the nocturnal apparition, of the doubtful expressions of my landlord as to the character of Douville, by turns occupied my attention, and beguiled the way, though certainly not in a manner the most agreeable. Meanwhile, the night drew on apace, and it was evident that the darkness, aided by the gathering clouds, would be quite impenetrable. There was a distant rolling of thunder, which reverberated through the forest; pale lightning quivered at intervals through the clouds, and the gloom continued to increase. It seemed as if the woods never would have an end. I made my horse exert himself to the very utmost, in order to reach some place of shelter; but at length I was obliged to pull him up; for the road became gradually more narrow, and the branches of the trees gave me such proofs of the necessity of riding cautiously, that I was obliged to yield to them. My situation was certainly in the utmost degree vexatious,—more especially as I knew not even whether or not I was on the right road. The darkness, which had by this time grown quite dense, obliged me to dismount, and lead my horse by the bridle, in order to avoid the branches, from which I had already received many severe blows. In this manner, my progress was of course very slow, and my hopes of reaching any habitation became always fainter. At last, however, I found myself once more on the clear level ground; I felt then as if I had just escaped from a prison; I could again mount my horse and ride along, without dreading every moment to have my head knocked off my shoulders by a tree.

The thunder clouds, however, had come nearer and nearer; the lightning dazzled me with its quivering flashes; the wind rose through the neighbouring wood in strange fitful blasts, which again were followed by a mysterious stillness, which augmented

still more the terrors of the hour. My hopes were at last revived by a light glimmering in the distance, although, in order to approach it, I durst not spur my horse, for the thunder startled him, and I was obliged to use every precaution to avoid being unseated by a sudden plunge.

I had by degrees come so near the light, that I could discern, by its aid, the building from which it emanated, but, to my great consternation, I perceived that I had gone quite astray, and was now on the property—close to the very threshold of Douville. What was now to be done? Should I enter his house, or not? My horse was tired,—the storm raged unrelentingly,—and I felt myself so much in want of that repose to which the hospitable mansion of an old friend appeared to invite me; while on the other hand were the most alarming, even apparently supernatural warnings that *here*, of all places in the world, I must not risk my personal safety. Perhaps, however, my extreme want of food and rest would have made me decide on braving all dangers, if my horse had not shown a violent disinclination to proceed any further, and even turned sharp round. This trifling circumstance put an end to my debate, and I resolved that I would rather pass the night in the forest than trust myself with a man whose character and mode of life appeared to be so questionable.

Accordingly, I took my way back towards the woods, leaving it to chance to bring me on the high-road; or, if that might not be, I hoped to find some cottage, or other place, where I could at least obtain shelter from the rain, which now began to fall in large drops. I was glad when I reached the trees, which would afford me some protection; but new difficulties awaited me, for, on the outskirts of the forest, I did not think myself sufficiently secure, and the thickets were so dense and entangled, that my horse could not

be led through them. I forced a passage through the branches, however, but at every step these became more closely interwoven, and the ground was more uneven. Several times I had fallen over the roots of trees; my face and hands bled from the scratches I had received, and my strength was nearly exhausted. At last, I heard a rushing noise of water as from a mill-race, whence I concluded that I was near to some habitation, and redoubled my exertions to reach it if possible; but as it was in vain to think of bringing my horse any further, I tied him by the bridle to a tree, took off the portmanteau, which I threw across my shoulders, and fastened by the straps round my neck. My route was now very hazardous. I had to clamber over great trunks of trees and fragments of rock—had to struggle through deep places, where I was often so hemmed in by thickets of brushwood that I could neither get backwards nor forwards. Add to these hindrances the frightful thunderstorm, and the terror that I might be struck down by lightning, attracted by the steel clasps of my portmanteau. My condition was indeed dreadful, and I had nearly lost all courage, but after long and persevering labour, I came at last to the edge of a declivity under which the rivulet rushed. I followed its course, not without imminent danger of tumbling in headlong, and found my conjectures confirmed that there was a mill close by. A gleam of lightning showed me a large building of that description, but the ruinous sluice, over which the water now played idly, proved that it was in disuse; probably, therefore, there were no inhabitants. On further search, I discovered an old tottering bridge, leading across the mill-race; which I passed, and ran towards the building for shelter, while the rain fell in torrents. Suddenly it occurred to me that this place might be the resort of robbers, in which case I should absolutely throw myself into

their hands; but my fatigue was so great that it overbalanced my apprehension. I found the door open—(a sign that no one lived there)—I groped about with great caution in the darkness, and advanced till I touched the platform of the inner mill-wheel. Quite worn out, yet terrified by the thoughts of falling perhaps through a hole in the floor, or stumbling over some murdered victim, I seated myself in a corner, and resolved to wait patiently for daylight.

Scarcely had I composed myself for rest, when a most overpowering sense of horror came over me. What could be the real history of this building, which stood so desolate and forsaken? If robbers, as it seemed probable, haunted the place, would I not certainly be found out and murdered? These, and other harassing thoughts, forced themselves on my mind; and I was the less able to combat them, when, reclining on the floor, I became sensible of a most detestable odour, as if from a charnel-house, which became at last so insupportable, that I would have left my hiding-place, if my fears had not rendered me powerless. After I had remained for about an hour in this state, voices were audible at the door; and as I had no doubt that the new comers were banditti, my death seemed now irrevocably decreed. I could hear that there was some wrangling among them as to the cause of the door being found open, after which four men came in with a lantern, bearing a sack that was filled evidently with some cumbrous and heavy load. They drew near without observing me, lifted up some boards in the flooring, and opened the sack. It contained the dead body of a man, which they threw down under the floor, closing up the aperture as before.

My hair now stood on end. I shook as in an ague fit, and nearly fainted; for, in addition to the other terrors of this scene, I recognised Douville's eldest son among the murderers.

"So much for that fellow!" said he, when they had thrown down the body; "if we had met with G——," (here he mentioned my name,) "and disposed of him in like manner, it would have been better worth our trouble."

"I am afraid," said another, "we have no chance of seeing him to-night."

"Well," answered a third, "if he comes not to-night, he will to-morrow; at all events, he shall not escape us."

Perhaps I had unconsciously made some noise; for one of the ruffians remarked,—

"The door was left open; let us search the house, that we may be sure no one is watching us."

The rest, however, were afraid; they alleged that it was no place to remain in longer than necessity required; and it was impossible that any one would venture to watch there, unless it were some revengeful ghost. This cowardice saved my life; for if, in reality, they had searched the building, I must have been discovered, and my death was certain. At last they quitted this den of murder, and carefully locked the door.

My feelings at that moment baffle every attempt to describe them. How near I had been to destruction! I had just seen one murdered victim secreted, and heard that a like fate was destined for me. Even now I was by no means safe, for if by chance they discovered my horse, this would doubtless excite their suspicions, and they would then come back and make a determined search.

The night passed, however, without anything happening, and as the grey light of morning began to gleam through the broken roof, my hopes revived that I might be able to make my escape. As soon as I could clearly distinguish objects, I went to the door, but it was so strongly secured that all my efforts to

force it open were in vain. In searching through the building for some other outlet, I stumbled on the entrance to the pit-fall, into which the last victim had been thrown; I lifted up the boards, and, with indescribable abhorrence, beheld a number of dead bodies, many of them already in the most frightful stage of corruption; among these I was to have been deposited, and might be so still, if I did not succeed in gaining my liberty. After much trouble I found another door, which yielded to a vehement effort; it led into a room in which there were many bloody dresses hung up against the wall. This apartment was lighted by a small window, of which I instantly broke the casement, and, though at the risk of my neck, leapt out.

Now then I was at liberty; but still I had not my horse; nor, if he were found, did I know in what direction I should ride in order to escape from those assassins. I retraced, as nearly as I could guess at it, my course of the preceding night, and having now the advantage of daylight to guide me through the thickets, discovered my faithful steed sooner than I could have expected. A beaten cart-road also presented itself; I mounted and trotted away with the utmost expedition.

Though the scenes were quite new to me, and I could not tell whither I went, yet Providence favoured my purpose; for, after riding about two miles, I reached a post-station. Here, as soon as I had obtained some refreshment, I took a carriage with extra horses, and drove off as rapidly as possible. I reached home the same day, and, on my arrival, had recourse to the director of police, before whom I made a circumstantial declaration of my adventures, whereupon he ordered a proper legal inquiry to be commenced, and the same evening despatched one of his officers with a band of soldiers to Douville's residence.

My sufferings from that terrible night were not yet complete. I was attacked by a fever, which ended in very serious illness. My strength had been so severely tried by the excitement I had undergone, that extreme weakness and relaxation followed, and I must have perished, but for the constant attention of a skilful physician, under whose management, after being six weeks confined, I felt myself once more in a condition to leave my room.

As soon as my health allowed of any exertion, I made a visit to the prison in which Douville was now secured. Notwithstanding his crimes, and the attack which he would doubtless have made on my life, I could not help looking on him with some degree of compassion, and wished to alleviate his sufferings as far as the law would permit. However, no sooner had I made my appearance, than he began to rave like a madman, and broke out into the most horrible imprecations, as if he were determined to prove how undeserving he was of that interest which I took in his fate. In a few minutes I was obliged to leave him with aversion and disgust, but I begged the gaoler to obtain for me an interview with his younger son, from whom I hoped to extract some information as to his father's crimes. The young man, when he saw me, was moved even to tears, and answered my inquiries with such candour, that, on my return home, I was able to set on paper what here follows, and which corresponds exactly with the records of the criminal court.

Francis Douville, at his commencement in trade, was exceedingly active and prosperous. His income was competent; he lived within it, so that his fortune augmented, slowly indeed, but securely, and his credit rose every year. After a time, however, circumstances altered. He strained his credit to the utmost, and entered into speculations, which brought with

them a tumult and whirl of business, quite beyond his strength to support. In the confusion thus induced, he overlooked the necessary precautions; his reputation for punctuality was impaired, and the fall of his house seemed inevitable.

The thoughts of being reduced to poverty through those very exertions which were intended to make him rich, were to Douville so insupportable, that he took the resolution of ending his sufferings by suicide. With this weight on his mind, he wandered about restlessly for some time, till the very day had arrived which he had fixed on for the execution of his purpose; and he was traversing the fields near a country house which he then rented. Quite absorbed in his own gloom and despondency, he was insensible to all that passed around him, till he felt himself pulled by the sleeve, and saw a boy about sixteen years of age, who inquired of him the way to the house of a merchant, who was said to live in that neighbourhood, and for whom he had a packet of letters. This merchant was no other than Douville himself; and on inquiry, he found that the boy was the son of one of his own country correspondents, who sent not letters only, but a considerable sum of ready money, which was to be appropriated to certain specified purposes. The boy had come with the diligence, but had left it at the last station, in order to enjoy a walk in fine weather through the pleasant gardens that surround the city. Douville, as if the devil had been there present to inspire him, was seized with a horrid and overpowering impulse, which he was the less disposed to combat, as his whole soul had just before been possessed by the idea of self-murder. He led the boy by circuitous paths, where he would escape observation; and said that he was going himself to town, where the merchant then was, with whom he was well acquainted, but must first call at his own country

house. He brought his unsuspecting victim into a retired apartment, without being seen by any mortal;—there put him to death, and thus became possessed of a large sum, partly in paper, but mostly in gold, which the unfortunate lad had carried in a huntsman's leather bag.

He had just completed this atrocious deed, when the door unexpectedly opened, and his wife with her two sons entered the room. At first their astonishment and abhorrence were unbounded; however, when he had explained his desperate circumstances, from which only this crime could have relieved him, their detestation of his guilt was gradually lost in terror of the consequences which might else have awaited him and the whole family. Thus he threw the disastrous load of his own wickedness on the conscience of his wife and of his children; after which disclosure they became gradually more and more accustomed to a life of suspense, misery, and deception. They were obliged to assist him in that first adventure, to conceal the body of his murdered victim, and, in order more effectually to avoid all suspicion, he appeared with his wife and sons at a large party, to which they had been invited for that day. Aided by the money thus obtained, he upheld his sinking credit, but the conscious guilt which weighed on his heart left him not a moment's peace of mind. He could not endure the ordinary restraints of society; by degrees he withdrew himself from trade, and purchased that landed property on which I found him.

Being quite ignorant of husbandry, he soon discovered that it would be impossible for him to live by this farm,—which, even under the best management, would have yielded but a very narrow income,—and was on the point of being reduced to abject poverty; when one stormy night a traveller made his appearance, and begged earnestly for shelter and

ment. The stranger's dress and appearance betokened opulent circumstances; his heavy saddle-bags (for he was on horseback) seemed full of money, so that the demon of avarice was once more roused in the heart of Douville. He received his guest with the most specious courtesy; and within the next hour he had entered into an agreement with his wife and sons that the man should be murdered, and his property seized. The deed soon followed; and, with a view to concealment in this instance, he prepared a deep grave in a thicket of the neighbouring forest, to which, with the help of his eldest son, he carried the body. Here, however, it happened that he was discovered. A passenger, who had watched him occupied in this abominable task, came up boldly and questioned him what was the matter. Douville, in order to screen himself effectually, would instantly have murdered this intruder, but the latter, being well armed, was provided against any such attack. He assured the criminal, nevertheless, that, if allowed to share in the booty, he would henceforth preserve inviolable secrecy as to what he had then witnessed. Douville was, of course, under the necessity of assenting, and the bribed villain soon made it known that he also was by no means disinclined to such exploits, if only the spoils were sufficient to counterbalance the risk and trouble. This person was the landlord of that inn where I had seen the nocturnal apparition. In a short time, the two miscreants were on confidential terms with each other; and not only did the innkeeper assist Douville with servants, who were bound on oath, and on pain of death, to conceal whatever might occur, but came personally on the field when the *corps* of his worthy partner was not sufficiently effective. To prevent discovery, he took special care never to make his own inn the scene of action, but for the most part served as a watchful spy, and gave notice

when travellers were on the road who had with them any large sum of money. The innkeeper's wife was also an accomplice, but his daughter, who had been educated in the family of a worthy and conscientious aunt, was wholly innocent of these atrocities.

It was proved that, in a course of eight or ten years, more than fifty people had been assassinated by these outlaws. The ruinous building in which I spent the night had been possessed and occupied by a certain miller; a man of good character, of whose voluntary connivance at such transactions there was no hope;—he was therefore looked on by this gang as a very troublesome neighbour, and, in order to be rid of him, they contrived, by various stratagems, to make it appear that his house was haunted. The loneliness of its situation favoured this undertaking, and by degrees they terrified the poor man so much, that, being completely tired of this residence, he sold his lease of the mill to Douville for a mere trifle; and the stories of ghosts were henceforth so industriously spread through the neighbourhood, that nobody wondered that the building was left deserted and in disuse.

For my escape from the fate that otherwise awaited me, I was indebted to Douville's younger son. This youth had never taken any active share in his father's crimes, though he had been bound by a solemn oath, like the others, to preserve secrecy. Towards me as his godfather, he cherished, from earliest youth, some feelings of attachment and respect, which were increased by my well-intended offer to take him into my house as a clerk. He had been aware of the plot laid against my life, but could not, without betraying his father, give me any direct information. With the innkeeper's house, however, he was well acquainted; and as there existed an attachment betwixt him and the girl whom I have already mentioned, he

happened to be there at the time of my arrival, and afterwards made use of a private door, which I had not discovered, in order to appear like a ghost, and warn me against trusting again to Douville's hospitality. With the same view, also, he had made use of the opportunity, when I was in the landlord's room, to enter mine, and draw the slugs from my pistols, so that, if I had fired at the intruder, he would not have sustained any injury. Thus he was my protector from otherwise inevitable destruction; and became, in consequence, the cause of his father's guilt being duly punished.

It was impossible that Douville could deny or extenuate the many proofs that were brought against him; and circumstances came to light of a description so horrible, that every one shuddered at the bare idea of such enormities. On account of many additional witnesses, and other instances of persons who had mysteriously disappeared in the forest, the trial was lengthened out, and it was not till a year had passed over, that judgment was finally pronounced. Douville, with his wife and elder son, as well as the innkeeper and his wife and servants, were executed. As for the young girl, she was of course pronounced innocent; but her lover, though by silence only he had rendered himself an accomplice, was awarded ten years' imprisonment, a sentence which, in consideration of his having saved my life, was afterwards changed into two years' confinement.