once into active exertion, sped with the swiftness of a race-horse to the brink of the moat, and was about to cross it, opposite to the spot where Rose stood at the open casement, urging him to speed by voice and gesture.

"Not here—not here!" she exclaimed, with breathless precipitation, as she saw him make towards her—"the window to the right—scale it, for God's sake, and undo the door of communication."

The soldier seemed to comprehend her—he dashed into the moat without hesitation, securing himself by catching at the boughs of trees as he descended. In one moment he vanished among the underwood; and in another, availing himself of the branches of a dwarf oak, Rose saw him upon her right, and close to the window of the fatal apartment. One fear remained—the casement might be secured against entrance from without—but no! at the thrust of the Norman it yielded, and its clasps or fastenings being worn with time, fell inward with a crash which even Dame Gillian's slumbers were unable to resist.

Echoing scream upon scream, in the usual fashion of fools and cowards, she entered the cabinet from the anteroom, just as the door of Eveline's chamber opened, and the soldier appeared, bearing in his arms the half-undressed and lifeless form of the Norman maiden herself. Without speaking a word, he placed her in Rose's arms, and with the same precipitation with which he had entered, threw himself out of the opened window from which Rose had summoned him.

Gillian, half distracted with fear and wonder, heaped exclamations on questions, and mingled questions with cries for help, till Rose sternly rebuked her in a tone which seemed to recall her scattered senses. She became then composed enough to fetch a lamp which remained lighted in the room she had left, and to render herself at least partly useful in suggesting and applying the usual modes for recalling the suspended sense. In this they at length succeeded, for Eveline fetched a fuller sigh, and opened her eyes; but presently shut them again, and letting her head drop on Rose's bosom, fell into a strong shuddering fit; while her faithful damsel, chafing her hands and her temples alternately with affectionate assiduity, and mingling caresses with these efforts exclaimed aloud, "She lives!—she is recovering!—Praised be God!"

"Praised be God!" was echoed in a solemn tone from the window of the apartment; and turning towards it in terror, Rose beheld the armed and plumed head of the soldier who had come so opportunely to their assistance, and who, supported by his arms, had raised himself so high as to be able to look into the interior of the cabinet.

Rose immediately ran towards him. "Go—go—good friend," she said; "the lady recovers—your reward shall await you another time. Go—begone!—yet stay—keep on your post, and I will call you if there is farther need. Begone—be faithful, and be secret."

The soldier obeyed without answering a word, and she presently saw him descend into the moat. Rose then returned back to her mistress, whom she found supported by Gillian, moaning feebly, and muttering hurried and unintelligible ejaculations, all intimating that she labored under a violent shock sustained from some alarming cause.

Dame Gillian had no sooner recovered some degre eof self-possession, than her curiosity became active in proportion. "What means all this?" she said to Rose; "what has been doing among you?"

"I do not know," replied Rose.

"If you do not," said Gillian, "who should?—Shall I call the other women, and raise the house?"

"Not for your life," said Rose, "till my lady is able to give her own orders; and for this apartment, so help me Heaven, as I will do my best to discover the secrets it contains!—Support my mistress the whilst."

So saying, she took the lamp in her hand, and, crossing her brow, stepped boldly across the mysterious threshold, and, holding up the light, surveyed the apartment.

It was merely an old vaulted chamber, of very moderate dimensions. In one coner was an image of the Virgin, rudely cut, and placed above a Saxon font of curious workmanship. There were two seats and a couch, covered with coarse tapestry, on which it seemed that Eveline had been reposing. The fragments of the shattered casement lay on the floor; but that opening had been only made when the soldier forced it in, and she saw no other access by which a stranger could have entered an apartment, the ordinary access to which was barred and bolted.

Rose felt the influence of those terrors which she had hitherto surmounted; she cast her mantle hastily around her head, as if to shroud her sight from some blighting vision, and tripping back to the cabinet, with more speed and a less firm step than when she left it, she directed Gillian to lend her assistance in conveying Eveline to the next room; and having done so, carefully secured the door of communication, as if to put a barrier betwixt them and the suspected danger.

The Lady Eveline was now so far recovered that she could sit up, and was trying to speak, though but faintly. "Rose," she said at length, "I have seen her—my doom is sealed."

Rose immediately recollected the imprudence of suffering Gillian to hear what her mistress might say at such an awful moment, and hastily adopting the proposal she had before declined, desired her to go and call other two maidens of their mistress's household.

"And where am I to find them in this house," said Dame Gillian, "where strange men run about one chamber at midnight, and devils, for aught I know, frequent the rest of the habitation?"

"Find them where you can," said Rose, sharply; "but begone presently."

Gillian withdrew lingeringly, and muttering at the same time something which could not distinctly be understood. No sooner was she gone, than Rose, giving way to the enthusiastic affection which she felt for her mistress, implored her, in the most tender terms, to open her eyes (for she had again closed them), and speak to Rose, her own Rose, who was ready, if necessary, to die by her mistress's side.

"To-morrow—to-morrow, Rose," murmured Eveline—"I cannot speak at present."

"Only disburden your mind with one word—tell what has thus alarmed you—what danger you apprehend."

"I have seen her," answered Eveline—"I have seen the tenant of yonder chamber—the vision fatal to my race!—Urge me no more—to-morrow you shall know all." *

As Gillian entered with two of the maidens of her mistress's household, they removed the Lady Eveline, by Rose's directions, into a chamber at some distance, which the latter had occupied, and placed her in one of their beds, where Rose, dismissing the others (Gillian excepted) to seek repose where they could find it, continued to watch her mistress. For some time she continued very much disturbed, but, gradually, fatigue, and the influence of some narcotic which Gillian had sense enough to recommend and prepare, seemed to compose her spirits. She fell into a deep slumber, from which she did not awaken until the sun was high over the distant hills.

* The idea of the Bahr-Geist was taken from a passage in the Memoirs of Lady Fanshaw, which have since been given to the public, and received with deserved approbation.

The original runs as follows. Lady Fanshaw, shifting among her friends in Ireland, like other sound loyalists of the period, tells her story thus:—

"From thence we went to the Lady Honor O'Brien's, a lady that went for a maid, but few believed it. She was the youngest daughter of the Earl of Thomond. There we staid three nights—the first of which I was surprised at being laid in a chamber, where, when about one o'clock, I heard a voice that awakened me. I drew the curtain, and in the casement of the window I saw, by the light of the moon, a woman leaning through the casement into the room, in white, with red hair and pale and ghastly complexion. She spoke loud, and in a tone I had never heard, thrice, 'A horse;' and then, with a sigh more like the wind than breath, she vanished, and to me her body looked more like a thick cloud than substance. I was so much frightened, that my hair stood on end, and my night-clothes fell off. I pulled and pinched your father, who never awoke during the disorder I was in, but at last was much surprised to see me in this fright, and more so when I related the story and showed him the window opened. Neither of us slept any more that night; but he entertained me by telling me how much more these apparitions were common in this country than in England; and we concluded the cause to be the great superstition of the Irish, and the want of that knowing faith which should defend them from the power of the devil, which he exercises among them very much. About five o'clock the lady of the house came to see us, saying, she had not been in bed all night, because a cousin O'Brien of hers, whose ancestors had owned that house, had desired her to stay with him in his chamber, and that he died at two o'clock; and she said, I wish you to have had no disturbance, for 'tis the custom of the place, that when any of the family are dying, the shape of a woman appears every night in the window until they be dead. This woman was many ages ago got with child by the owner of this place, who murdered her in his garden, and flung her into the river under the window; but truly I thought not of it when I lodged you here, it being the best room in the house! We made little reply to her speech, but disposed ourselves to be gone suddenly."

CHAPTER XV.

I see a hand you cannot see,
Which beckons me away;
I hear a voice you cannot hear,
Which says I must not stay.
MALLET.

WHEN Eveline first opened her eyes, it seemed to be without any recollection of what had passed on the night preceding. She looked round the apartment, which was coarsely and scantily furnished, as one destined for the use of domestics and menials, and said to Rose with a smile, "Our good kinswoman maintains the ancient Saxon hospitality at a homely rate, so far as lodging is concerned. I could have willingly parted with last night's profuse supper, to have obtained a bed of a softer texture. Methinks my limbs feel as if I had been under all the flails of a Franklin's barn-yard."

"I am glad to see you so pleasant, madam," answered Rose, discreetly avoiding any reference to the events of the night before.

Dame Gillian was not so scrupulous. "Your ladyship last night lay down on a better bed than this," she said, "unless I am much mistaken; and Rose Flammock and yourself know best why you left it."

If a look could have killed, Dame Gillian would have been in deadly peril from that which Rose shot at her, by way of rebuke for this ill-advised communication. It had instantly the effect which was to be apprehended, for Lady Eveline seemed at first surprised and confused; then, as recollections of the past arranged themselves in her memory, she folded her hands, looked on the ground, and wept bitterly, with much agitation.

Rose entreated her to be comforted, and offered to fetch the old Saxon chaplain of the house to administer spiritual consolation, if her grief rejected temporal comfort.

"No—call him not," said Eveline, raising her head and drying her eyes—"I have had enough of Saxon kindness. What a fool was I to expect, in that hard and unfeeling woman, any commiseration for my youth—my late sufferings—my orphan condition! I will not permit her a poor triumph over the Norman blood of Berenger, by letting her see how much I have suffered under her inhuman infliction. But first, Rose, answer me truly, was any inmate of Baldringham witness to my distress last night?"

Rose assured her that she had been tended exclusively by her own retinue, herself and

Gillian, Blanche and Ternotte. She seemed to receive satisfaction from this assurance. "Hear me, both of you," she said, "and observe my words, as you love and as you fear me. Let no syllable be breathed from your lips of what has happened this night. Carry the same charge to my maidens. Lend me thine instant aid, Gillian, and thine, my dearest Rose, to change these disordered garments, and arrange this dishevelled hair. It was a poor vengeance she sought, and all because of my country. I am resolved she shall not see the slightest trace of the sufferings she has inflicted."

As she spoke thus, her eyes flashed with indignation, which seemed to dry up the tears that had before filled them. Rose saw the change of her manner with a mixture of pleasure and concern, being aware that her mistress's predominant failing was incident to her, as a spoiled child, who, accustomed to be treated with kindness, deference, and indulgence, by all around her, was apt to resent warmly whatever resembled neglect or contradiction.

"God knows," said the faithful bower-maiden, "I would hold my hand out to catch drops of molten lead, rather than endure your tears; and yet, my sweet mistress, I would rather at present see you grieved than angry. This ancient lady hath, it would seem, but acted according to some old superstitious rite of her family, which is in part yours. Her name is respectable, both from her conduct and possessions; and, hard pressed as you are by the Normans, with whom your kinswoman, the Prioress, is sure to take part, I was in hope you might have had some shelter and countenance from the Lady of Baldringham."

"Never, Rose, never," answered Eveline; "you know not—you cannot guess what she has made me suffer—exposing me to witchcraft and fiends. Thyself said it, and said it truly—the Saxons are still half Pagans, void of Christianity, as of nurture and kindliness."

"Ay, but," replied Rose, "I spoke then to dissuade you from a danger; now that the danger is passed and over, I may judge of it otherwise."

"Speak not for them, Rose," replied Eveline, angrily; "no innocent victim was ever offered up at the altar of a fiend with more indifference than my father's kinswoman delivered up me—me an orphan, bereaved of my natural and powerful support. I hate her cruelty—I hate her house—I hate the thought of all that has happened here—of all, Rose, except thy matchless faith and fearless attachment. Go, bid our train saddle directly—I will be gone instantly—I will not attire myself," she added, rejecting the assistance she had at first required—"I will have no ceremony—tarry for no leave-taking."

In the hurried and agitated manner of her mistress, Rose recognized with anxiety another mood of the same irritable and excited temperament, which had before discharged itself in tears and fits. But perceiving, at the same time, that remonstrance was in vain, she gave the necessary orders for collecting their company, saddling, and preparing for departure; hoping, that as her mistress removed to a farther distance from the scene where her mind had received so severe a shock, her equanimity might, by degrees, be restored.

Dame Gillian, accordingly, was busied with arranging the packages of her lady, and all the rest of Lady Eveline's retinue in preparing for instant departure, when, preceded by her steward, who acted also as a sort of gentleman-usher, leaning upon her confidential Berwine, and followed by two or three more of the most distinguished of her household, with looks of displeasure on her ancient yet lofty brow, the Lady Ermengarde entered the apartment.

Eveline, with a trembling and hurried hand, a burning cheek, and other signs of agitation, was herself busied about the arrangement of some baggage, when her relation made her appearance. At once, to Rose's great surprise, she exerted a strong command over herself, and, repressing every external appearance of disorder, she advanced to meet her relation, with a calm and haughty stateliness equal to her own.

"I come to give you good-morning, our niece," said Ermengarde, haughtily indeed, yet with more deference than she seemed at first to have intended, so much did the bearing of Eveline impose respect upon her;—"I find that you have been pleased to shift that chamber which was assigned you, in conformity with the ancient custom of this household, and betake yourself to the apartment of a menial."

"Are you surprised at that, lady?" demanded Eveline in her turn; "or are you disappointed that you find me not a corpse, within the limits of the chamber which your hospitality and affection allotted to me?"

"Your sleep, then, has been broken?" said Ermengarde, looking fixedly at the Lady Eveline, as she spoke.

"If I complain not, madam, the evil must be deemed of little consequence. What has happened is over and passed, and it is not my intention to trouble you with the recital."

"She of the ruddy finger," replied Ermengarde, triumphantly, "loves not the blood of the stranger."

"She had less reason, while she walked the earth, to love that of the Saxon," said Eveline, "unless her legend speaks false in that matter; and unless, as I well suspect, your house is haunted, not by the soul of the dead who suffered within its walls, but by evil spirits, such as the descendants of Hengist and Horsa are said still in secret to worship."

"You are pleasant, maiden," replied the old lady, scornfully, "or, if your words are meant in earnest, the shaft of your censure has glanced aside. A house, blessed by the holy Saint Dunstan, and by the royal and holy Confessor, is no abode for evil spirits."

"The house of Baldringham," replied Eveline, "is no abode for those who fear such spirits; and as I will, with all humility avow myself of the number, I shall presently leave it to the custody of Saint Dunstan."

"Not till you have broken your fast, I trust?" said the Lady of Baldringham; "you will not, I hope, do my years and our relationship such foul disgrace?"

"Pardon me, madam," replied the lady Eveline; "those who have experienced your hospitality at night, have little occasion for breakfast in the morning.—Rose, are not those loitering knaves assembled in the court-yard, or are they yet on their couches, making up for the slumber they have lost by midnight disturbances?"

Rose announced that her train was in the court, and mounted; when, with a low reverence, Eveline endeavored to pass her relation, and leave the apartment without farther ceremony. Ermengarde at first confronted her with a grim and furious glance, which seemed to show a soul fraught with more rage than the thin blood and rigid features of extreme old age had the power of expressing, and raised her ebony staff as if about even to proceed to some act of personal violence. But she changed her purpose, and suddenly made way for Eveline, who passed without farther parley; and as she descended the staircase, which conducted from the apartment to the gateway, she heard the voice of her aunt behind her, like that of an aged and offended sibyl, denouncing wrath and woe upon her insolence and presumption.

"Pride," she exclaimed, "goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. She who scorneth the house of her forefathers, a stone from its battlements shall crush her! She who mocks the gray hairs of a parent, never shall one of her own locks be silvered with age! She who weds with a man of war and of blood, her end shall neither be peaceful nor bloodless!"

Hurrying to escape from these and other ominous denunciations, Eveline rushed from the house, mounted her palfrey with the precipitation of a fugitive, and, surrounded by her attendants, who had caught a part of her alarm, though without conjecturing the cause, rode hastily into the forest; old Raoul, who was well acquainted with the country, acting as their guide.

Agitated more than she was willing to confess to herself, by thus leaving the habitation of so near a relation, loaded with maledictions instead of the blessings which are usually bestowed on a departing kinswoman, Eveline hastened forward, until the huge oak-trees with intervening arms had hidden from her view the fatal mansion.

The trampling and galloping of horse was soon after heard, announcing the approach of the patrol left by the Constable for the protection of the mansion, and who now, collecting from their different stations, came prepared to attend the Lady Eveline on her farther road to

Gloucester, great part of which lay through the extensive forest of Deane, then a sylvan region of large extent, though now much denuded of trees for the service of the iron mines. The cavaliers came up to join the retinue of Lady Eveline, with armor glittering in the morning rays, trumpets sounding, horses prancing, neighing, and thrown each by his chivalrous rider, into the attitude best qualified to exhibit the beauty of the steed and dexterity of the horseman; while their lances streaming with long penoncelles were brandished in every manner which could display elation of heart and readiness of hand. The sense of the military character of her countrymen of Normandy gave to Eveline a feeling at once of security and of triumph, which operated towards the dispelling of her gloomy thoughts, and of the feverish disorder which affected her nerves. The rising sun also—the song of the birds among the bowers—the lowing of the cattle as they were driven to pasture—the sight of the hind, who, with her fawn trotting by her side, often crossed some forest glade within view of the travellers,—all contributed to dispel the terror of Eveline's nocturnal visions, and soothe to rest the more angry passions which had agitated her bosom at her departure from Baldringham. She suffered her palfrey to slacken his pace, and, with female attention to propriety, began to adjust her riding-robes, and compose her headdress, disordered in her hasty departure. Rose saw her cheek assume a paler but more settled hue, instead of the angry hectic which had colored it—saw her eye become more steady as she looked with a sort of triumph upon her military attendants, and pardoned (what on other occasions she would probably have made some reply to) her enthusiastic exclamations in praise of her countrymen.

"We journey safe," said Eveline, "under the care of the princely and victorious Normans. Theirs is the noble wrath of the lion, which destroys or is appeased at once—there is no guile in their romantic affection, no sullenness mixed with their generous indignation—they know the duties of the hall as well as those of battle; and were they to be surpassed in the arts of war (which will only be when Plinlimmon is removed from its base), they would still remain superior to every other people in generosity and courtesy."

"If I do not feel all their merits so strongly as if I shared their blood," said Rose, "I am at least glad to see them around us, in woods which are said to abound with dangers of various kinds. And I confess, my heart is the lighter, that I can now no longer observe the least vestige of that ancient mansion, in which we passed so unpleasant a night, and the recollection of which will always be odious to me."

Eveline looked sharply at her. "Confess the truth, Rose; thou wouldst give thy best kirtle to know all of my horrible adventure."

"It is but confessing that I am a woman," an

swered Rose; "and did I say a man, I dare say the difference of sex would imply but a small abatement of curiosity."

"Thou makest no parade of other feelings, which prompt thee to inquire into my fortunes," said Eveline; "but, sweet Rose I give thee not the less credit for them. Believe me, thou shalt know all—but, I think, not now."

"At your pleasure," said Rose; "and yet, methinks, the bearing in your solitary bosom such a fearful secret will only render the weight more intolerable. On my silence you may rely as on that of the Holy Image, which hears us confess what it never reveals. Besides, such things become familiar to the imagination when they have been spoken of, and that which is familiar gradually becomes stripped of its terrors."

"Thou speakest with reason, my prudent Rose; and surely in this gallant troop, borne like a flower on a bush by my good palfrey Yseulte—fresh gales blowing round us, flowers opening and birds singing, and having thee by my bridle-rein, I ought to feel this a fitting time to communicate what thou hast so good a title to know. And—yes!—thou shalt know all!—Thou art not, I presume, ignorant of the qualities of what the Saxons of this land call a *Bahr-geist?*"

"Pardon me, lady," answered Rose, "my father discouraged my listening to such discourses. I might see evil spirits enough, he said, without my imagination being taught to form such as were fantastical. The word Bahr-geist, I have heard used by Gillian and other Saxons; but to me it only conveys some idea of indefinite terror, of which I have never asked nor received an explanation."

"Know, then," said Eveline, "it is a spectre, usually the image of a departed person, who, either for wrong sustained in some particular place during life, or through treasure hidden there, or from some such other cause, haunts the spot from time to time, becomes familiar to those who dwell there, takes an interest in their fate, occasionally for good, in other instances or times for evil. The Bahr-geist is, therefore, sometimes regarded as the good genius, sometimes as the avenging fiend, attached to particular families and classes of men. It is the lot of the family of Baldringham (of no mean note in other respects) to be subject to the visits of such a being."

"May I ask the cause (if it be known) of such visitation?" said Rose, desirous to avail herself to the uttermost of the communicative mood of her young lady, which might not perhaps last very long.

"I know the legend but imperfectly," replied Eveline, proceeding with a degree of calmness, the result of strong exertion over her mental anxiety, "but in general it runs thus:—Baldrick, the Saxon hero who first possessed yonder dwelling, became enamoured of a fair Briton, said to have been descended from those Druids of whom the Welsh speak so much, and deemed not unacquainted with the arts of sorcery which they practised, when they offered up human sacrifices amid those circles of unhewn and living rock, of which thou hast seen so many. After more than two years' wedlock, Baldrick became weary of his wife to such a point, that he formed the cruel resolution of putting her to death. Some say he doubted her fidelity—some that the matter was pressed on him by the church, as she was suspected of heresy—some that he removed her to make way for a more wealthy marriage—but all agree in the result. He sent two of his Cnichts to the house of Baldringham, to put to death the unfortunate Vanda, and commanded them to bring him the ring which had circled her finger on the day of wedlock, in token that his orders were accomplished. The men were ruthless in their office; they strangled Vanda in yonder apartment, and as the hand was so swollen that no effort could draw off the ring, they obtained possession of it by severing the finger. But long before the return of those cruel perpetrators of her death, the shadow of Vanda had appeared before her appalled husband, and holding up to him her bloody hand, made him fearfully sensible how well his savage commands had been obeyed. After haunting him in peace and war, in desert, court, and camp, until he die despairingly on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the Bahr-geist, or ghost of the murdered Vanda, became so terrible in the House of Baldringham, that the succor of Saint Dunstan was itself scarcely sufficient to put bounds to her visitation. Yea, the blessed saint, when he had succeeded in his exorcism, did, in requital of Baldrick's crime, impose a strong and enduring penalty upon every female descendant of the house in the third degree; namely, that once in their lives, and before their twenty-first year, they should each spend a solitary night in the chamber of the murdered Vanda, saying therein certain prayers, as well for her repose, as for the suffering soul of her murderer. During that awful space, it is generally believed that the spirit of the murdered person appears to the female who observes the vigil, and shows some sign of her future good or bad fortune. If favorable, she appears with a smiling aspect, and crosses them with her unblooded hand; but she announces evil fortune by showing the hand from which the finger was severed, with a stern countenance, as if resenting upon the descendant of her husband his inhuman cruelty. Sometimes she is said to speak. These particulars I learned long since from an old Saxon dame, the mother of our Margery, who had been an attendant on my grandmother, and left the house of Baldringham when she made her escape from it with my father's father."

"Did your grandmother ever render this homage," said Rose; "which seems to me—under favor of Saint Dunstan—to bring humanity into too close intercourse with a being of a doubtful nature?"

"My grandfather thought so, and never permitted my grandmother to revisit the House of Baldringham after her marriage; hence disunion betwixt him and his son on the one part, and the members of that family on the other. They laid sundry misfortunes, and particularly the loss of male-heirs which at that time befell them, to my parent's not having done the hereditary homage to the bloody-fingered Bahr-geist."

"And how could you, my dearest lady," said Rose, "knowing that they held among them a usage so hideous, think of accepting the invitation of Lady Ermengarde?"

"I can hardly answer you the question," answered Eveline. "Partly I feared my father's recent calamity, to be slain (as I have heard him say his aunt once prophesied of him) by the enemy he most despised, might be the result of this rite having been neglected; and partly I hoped, that if my mind should be appalled at the danger, when it presented itself closer to my eye, it could not be urged on me in courtesy and humanity. You saw how soon my cruel-hearted relative pounced upon the opportunity, and how impossible it became for me, bearing the name, and I trust the spirit of Berenger, to escape from the net in which I had involved myself."

"No regard for name or rank should have engaged me," replied Rose, "to place myself where apprehension alone, even without the terrors of a real visitation, might have punished my presumption with insanity. But what, in the name of Heaven, did you see at this horrible rendezvous?"

"Ay, there is the question," said Eveline, raising her hand to her brow—"how I could witness that which I distinctly saw, yet be able to retain command of thought and intellect!—I had recited the prescribed devotions for the murderer and his victim, and sitting down on the couch which was assigned me, had laid aside such of my clothes as might impede my rest—I had surmounted, in short, the first shock which I experienced in committing myself to this mysterious chamber, and I hoped to pass the night in slumber as sound as my thoughts were innocent. But I was fearfully disappointed. I cannot judge how long I had slept, when my bosom was oppressed by an unusual weight which seemed at once to stifle my voice, stop the beating of my heart, and prevent me from drawing my breath; and when I looked up to discover the cause of this horrible suffocation, the form of the murdered British matron stood over my couch taller than life, shadowy, and with a countenance where traits of dignity and beauty were mingled with a fierce expression of vengeful exultation. She held over me the hand which bore the bloody marks of her husband's cruelty, and seemed as if she signed the cross, devoting me to destruction; while, with an unearthly tone, she uttered these words:—

'Widow'd wife, and married maid,
Betrothed, betrayer, and betray'd!'

The phantom stooped over me as she spoke, and lowered her gory fingers, as if to touch my face, when, terror giving me the power of which at first it deprived me, I screamed aloud—the casement of the apartment was thrown open with a loud noise,—and—But what signifies my telling all this to thee, Rose, who show so plainly, by the movement of eye and lip, that you consider me as a silly and childish dreamer?"

"Be not angry, my dear lady," said Rose; "I do indeed believe that the witch we call Mara* has been dealing with you; but she, you know, is by leeches considered as no real phantom, but solely the creation of our own imagination, disordered by causes which arise from bodily indisposition."

"Thou art learned, maiden," said Eveline rather peevishly; "but when I assure thee that my better angel came to my assistance in a human form—that at his appearance the fiend vanished—and that he transported me in his arms out of the chamber of terror, I think thou wilt, as a good Christian, put more faith in that which I tell you."

"Indeed, indeed, my sweetest mistress, I cannot," replied Rose. "It is even that circumstance of the guardian angel which makes me consider the whole as a dream. A Norman sentinel, whom I myself called from his post on purpose, did indeed come to your assistance, and, breaking into your apartment, transported you to that where I myself received you from his arms in a lifeless condition."

"A Norman soldier, ha!" said Eveline, coloring extremely; "and to whom, maiden, did you dare give commission to break into my sleeping chamber?"

"Your eyes flash anger, madam, but is it reasonable they should?—Did I not hear your screams of agony, and was I to stand fettered by ceremony at such a moment?—no more than if the castle had been on fire."

"I ask you again, Rose," said her mistress, still with discomposure, though less angrily than at first, "whom you directed to break into my apartment?"

"Indeed, I know not, lady," said Rose; "for beside that he was muffled in his mantle, little chance was there of my knowing his features, even had I seen them fully. But I can soon discover the cavalier; and I will set about it, that I may give him the reward I promised, and warn him to be silent and discreet in this matter."

"Do so," said Eveline; "and if you find him among those soldiers, who attend us, I will indeed lean to thine opinion, and think that fantasy had the chief share in the evils I have endured the last night."

Rose struck her palfrey with the rod, and, accompanied by her mistress, rode up to Philip Guarine, the Constable's squire, who for the present commanded their little escort. "Good Guarine," she said, "I had talk with one of these sentinels last night from my window, and he did

* Ephialtes, or Nightmare.

me some service, for which I promised him recompense—Will you inquire for the man, that I may pay him his guerdon?"

"Truly, I will owe him a guerdon also, pretty maiden," answered the squire; "for if a lance of them approached near enough the house to hold speech from the windows, he transgressed the precise orders of his watch."

"Tush! you must forgive that for my sake,' said Rose. "I warrant, had I called on yourself, stout Guarine, I should have had influence to bring you under my chamber window."

Guarine laughed, and shrugged his shoulders. "True it is," he said, "when women are in place, discipline is in danger."

He then went to make the necessary inquiries among his band, and returned with the assurance, that his soldiers, generally and severally, denied having approached the mansion of the Lady Ermengarde on the preceding night.

"Thou seest, Rose," said Eveline, with a significant look to her attendant.

"The poor rogues are afraid of Guarine's severity," said Rose, "and dare not tell the truth—I shall have some one in private claiming the reward of me."

"I would I had the privilege myself, damsel," said Guarine; "but for these fellows they are not so timorous as you suppose them, being even too ready to avouch their roguery when it hath less excuse—Besides, I promised them impunity.—Have you any thing farther to order?"

"Nothing, good Guarine," said Eveline; "only this small donative to procure wine for thy soldiers, that they may spend the next night more merrily than the last.—And now he is gone,—maiden, thou must, I think, be now well aware, that what thou sawest was no earthly being?"

"I must believe mine own ears and eyes, madam," replied Rose.

"Do—but allow me the same privilege," answered Eveline. "Believe me that my deliverer (for so I must call him) bore the features of one who neither was, nor could be, in the neighborhood of Baldringham. Tell me but one thing—What dost thou think of this extraordinary prediction—

> 'Widow'd wife, and wedded maid,
> Betrothed, betrayer, and betray'd!'

Thou wilt say it is an idle invention of my brain—but think it for a moment the speech of a true diviner, and what wouldst thou say of it?"

"That you may be betrayed, my dearest lady, but never can be a betrayer," answered Rose, with animation.

Eveline reached her hand out to her friend, and as she pressed affectionately that which Rose gave in return, she whispered to her with energy, "I thank thee for the judgment, which my own heart confirms."

A cloud of dust now announced the approach of the Constable of Chester and his retinue, augmented by the attendance of his host Sir William Herbert, and some of his neighbors and kinsmen, who came to pay their respects to the orphan of the Garde Doloureuse, by which appellation Eveline was known upon her passage through their territory.

Eveline remarked, that, at their greeting, De Lacy looked with displeased surprise at the disarrangement of her dress and equipage, which her hasty departure from Baldringham had necessarily occasioned; and she was, on her part, struck with an expression of countenance which seemed to say, "I am not to be treated as an ordinary person, who may be received with negligence, and treated slightly with impunity." For the first time, she thought that, though always deficient in grace and beauty, the Constable's countenance was formed to express the more angry passions with force and vivacity, and that she who shared his rank and name must lay her account with the implicit surrender of her will and wishes to those of an arbitrary lord and master.

But the cloud soon passed from the Constable's brow; and in the conversation which he afterwards maintained with Herbert and the other knights and gentlemen, who from time to time came to greet and accompany them for a little way on their journey, Eveline had occasion to admire his superiority, both of sense and expression, and to remark the attention and deference with which his words were listened to by men too high in rank, and too proud, readily to admit any pre-eminence that was not founded on acknowledged merit. The regard of women is generally much influenced by the estimation which an individual maintains in the opinion of men; and Eveline, when she concluded her journey in the Benedictine nunnery in Gloucester, could not think without respect upon the renowned warrior, and celebrated politician, whose acknowledged abilities appeared to place him above every one whom she had seen approach him. His wife, Eveline thought (and she was not without ambition), if relinquishing some of those qualities in a husband which are in youth most captivating to the female imagination, must be still generally honored and respected, and have contentment, if not romantic felicity, within her reach.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Lady Eveline remained nearly four months with her aunt, the Abbess of the Benedictine nunnery, under whose auspices the Constable of Chester saw his suit advance and prosper as it would probably have done under that of the deceased Raymond Berenger, her brother. It is probable, however, that, but for the supposed vision of the Virgin, and the vow of gratitude which that supposed vision had called forth, the natural dislike of so young a person to a match so unequal in years, might have effectually opposed his success. Indeed Eveline, while honoring the Constable's virtues, doing justice to his high character, and admiring his talents, could never altogether divest herself of a secret fear of him, which, while it prevented her from expressing any direct disapprobation of his addresses, caused her sometimes to shudder, she scarce knew why, at the idea of their becoming successful.

The ominous words, "betraying and betrayed," would then occur to her memory; and when her aunt (the period of the deepest mourning being elapsed) had fixed a period for her betrothal, she looked forward to it with a feeling of terror, for which she was unable to account to herself, and which, as well as the particulars of her dream, she concealed even from Father Aldrovand in the hours of confession. It was not aversion to the Constable—it was far less preference to any other suitor—it was one of those instinctive movements and emotions by which Nature seems to warn us of approaching danger, though furnishing no information respecting its nature, and suggesting no means of escaping from it.

So strong were these intervals of apprehension, that if they had been seconded by the remonstrances of Rose Flammock, as formerly, they might perhaps have led to Eveline's even yet forming some resolution unfavorable to the suit of the Constable. But, still more zealous for her lady's honor than even for her happiness, Rose had strictly forborne every effort which could affect Eveline's purpose, when she had once expressed her approbation of De Lacy's addresses; and whatever she thought or anticipated concerning the proposed marriage, she seemed from that moment, to consider it as an event which must necessarily take place.

De Lacy himself, as he learned more intimately to know the merit of the prize which he was desirous of possessing, looked forward with different feelings towards the union, than those with which he had first proposed the measure to Raymond Berenger. It was then a mere match of interest and convenience, which had occurred to the mind of a proud and politic feudal lord, as the best mode of consolidating the power and perpetuating the line of his family. Nor did even the splendor of Eveline's beauty make that impression upon De Lacy, which it was calculated to do on the fiery and impassioned chivalry of the age. He was past that period of life when the wise are captivated by outward form, and might have said with truth, as well as with discretion, that he could have wished his beautiful bride several years older, and possessed of a more moderate portion of personal charms, in order to have rendered the match more fitted for his own age and disposition. This stoicism, however, vanished, when, on repeated interviews with his destined bride, he found that she was indeed inexperienced in life, but desirous to be guided by superior wisdom; and that, although gifted with high spirit, and a disposition which began to recover its natural elastic gaiety, she was gentle, docile, and, above all, endowed with a firmness of principle, which seemed to give assurance that she would tread uprightly, and without spot, the slippery paths in which youth, rank, and beauty are doomed to move.

As feelings of a warmer and more impassioned kind towards Eveline began to glow in De Lacy's bosom, his engagements as a crusader became more and more burdensome to him. The Benedictine Abbess, the natural guardian of Eveline's happiness, added to these feelings by her reasoning and remonstrances. Although a nun and a devotee, she held in reverence the holy state of matrimony, and comprehended so much of it as to be aware, that its important purposes could not be accomplished while the whole continent of Europe was interposed betwixt the married pair; for as to a hint from the Constable, that his young spouse might accompany him into the dangerous and dissolute precincts of the Crusaders' camp, the good lady crossed herself with horror at the proposal, and never permitted it to be a second time mentioned in her presence.

It was not, however, uncommon for kings, princes, and other persons of high consequence, who had taken upon them the vow to rescue Jerusalem, to obtain delays, and even a total remission of their engagement, by proper application to the Church of Rome. The Constable was sure to possess the full advantage of his sovereign's interest and countenance, in seeking permission to remain in England, for he was the noble to whose valor and policy Henry had chiefly intrusted the defence of the disorderly Welsh Marches; and it was by no means with his goodwill that so useful a subject had ever assumed the cross.

It was settled, therefore, in private betwixt the Abbess and the Constable, that the latter should solicit at Rome, and with the Pope's Legate in England, a remission of his vow for at least two years; a favor which it was thought could scarce be refused to one of his wealth and influence, backed as it was with the most liberal offers of assistance towards the redemption of the Holy Land. His offers were indeed munificent; for he proposed, if his own personal attendance were dispensed with, to send an hundred lances at his own cost, each lance accompanied by two squires, three archers, and a varlet or horse-boy; being double the retinue by which his own person was to have been accompanied. He offered besides to deposit the sum of two thousand bezants to the general expenses of the expedition, to surrender to the use of the Christian armament those equipped vessels which he had provided, and which even now awaited the embarkation of himself and his followers.

Yet, while making these magnificent proffers, the Constable could not help feeling they would be inadequate to the expectations of the rigid prelate Baldwin, who, as he had himself preached

the crusade, and brought the Constable and many others into that holy engagement, must needs see with displeasure the work of his eloquence endangered, by the retreat of so important an associate from his favorite enterprise. To soften, therefore, his disappointment as much as possible, the Constable offered to the Archbishop, that, in the event of his obtaining license to remain in Britain, his forces should be led by his nephew, Damian Lacy, already renowned for his early feats of chivalry, the present hope of his house, and, failing heirs of his own body, its future head and support.

The Constable took the most prudent method of communicating this proposal to the Archbishop Baldwin through a mutual friend, on whose good offices he could depend, and whose interest with the Prelate was regarded as great. But notwithstanding the splendor of the proposal, the Prelate heard it with sullen and obstinate silence, and referred for answer to a personal conference with the Constable at an appointed day, when concerns of the church would call the Archbishop to the city of Gloucester. The report of the mediator was such as induced the Constable to expect a severe struggle with the proud and powerful, churchman; but, himself proud and powerful, and backed by the favor of his sovereign, he did not expect to be foiled in the contest.

The necessity that this point should be previously adjusted, as well as the recent loss of Eveline's father, gave an air of privacy to De Lacy's courtship, and prevented its being signalized by tournaments and feats of military skill, in which he would have been otherwise desirous to display his address in the eyes of his mistress. The rules of the convent prevented his giving entertainments of dancing, music, or other more pacific revels; and although the Constable displayed his affection by the most splendid gifts to his future bride and her attendants, the whole affair, in the opinion of the experienced Dame Gillian, proceeded more with the solemnity of a funeral, than the light pace of an approaching bridal.

The bride herself felt something of this, and thought occasionally it might have been lightened by the visits of young Damian, in whose age, so nearly corresponding to her own, she might have expected some relief from the formal courtship of his graver uncle. But he came not; and from what the Constable said concerning him, she was led to imagine that the relations had, for a time at least, exchanged occupations and character. The elder De Lacy continued, indeed, in nominal observance of his vow, to dwell in a pavilion by the gates of Gloucester; but he seldom donned his armor, substituted costly damask and silk for his war-worn shamois doublet, and affected at his advanced time of life more gaiety of attire than his contemporaries remembered as distinguishing his early youth. His nephew, on the contrary, resided almost constantly on the Marches of Wales, occupied in settling by prudence, or subduing by main force, the various disturbances by which these provinces were continually agitated; and Eveline learned with surprise, that it was with difficulty his uncle had prevailed on him to be present at the ceremony of their being betrothed to each other, or, as the Normans entitled the ceremony, their *fiançailles*. This engagement, which preceded the actual marriage for a space more or less, according to circumstances, was usually celebrated with a solemnity corresponding to the rank of the contracting parties.

The Constable added, with expressions of regret, that Damian gave himself too little rest, considering his early youth, slept too little, and indulged in too restless a disposition—that his health was suffering—and that a learned Jewish leech, whose opinion had been taken, had given his advice that the warmth of a more genial climate was necessary to restore his constitution to its general and natural vigor.

Eveline heard this with much regret, for she remembered Damian as the angel of good tidings, who first brought her news of deliverance from the forces of the Welsh; and the occasions on which they had met, though mournful, brought a sort of pleasure in recollection, so gentle had been the youth's deportment, and so consoling his expressions of sympathy. She wished she could see him, that she might herself judge of the nature of his illness; for, like other damsels of that age, she was not entirely ignorant of the art of healing, and had been taught by Father Aldrovand, himself no mean physician, how to extract healing essences from plants and herbs gathered under planetary hours. She thought it possible that her talents in this art, slight as they were, might perhaps be of service to one already her friend and liberator, and soon about to become her very near relation.

It was therefore with a sensation of pleasure mingled with some confusion (at the idea, doubtless, of assuming the part of medical adviser to so young a patient), that one evening, while the convent was assembled about some business of their chapter, she heard Gillian announce that the kinsman of the Lord Constable desired to speak with her. She snatched up the veil, which she wore in compliance with the customs of the house, and hastily descended to the parlor, commanding the attendance of Gillian, who, nevertheless, did not think proper to obey the signal.

When she entered the apartment, a man whom she had never seen before advanced, kneeled on one knee, and taking up the hem of her veil, saluted it with an air of the most profound respect. She stepped back, surprised and alarmed, although there was nothing in the appearance of the stranger to justify her apprehension. He seemed to be about thirty years of age, tall of stature, and bearing a noble though wasted form, and a countenance on which disease, or perhaps youthful indulgence, had anticipated the traces

of age. His demeanor seemed courteous and respectful, even in a degree which approached to excess. He observed Eveline's surprise, and said, in a tone of pride, mingled with emotion, "I fear that I have been mistaken, and that my visit is regarded as an unwelcome intrusion."

"Arise, sir," answered Eveline, "and let me know your name and business. I was summoned to a kinsman of the Constable of Chester."

"And you expected the stripling Damian," answered the stranger. "But the match with which England rings will connect you with others of the house besides that young person; and amongst these, with the luckless Randal de Lacy. Perhaps," continued he, "the fair Eveline Berenger may not even have heard his name breathed by his more fortunate kinsman—more fortunate in every respect, but *most* fortunate in his present prospects."

This compliment was accompanied by a deep reverence, and Eveline stood much embarrassed how to reply to his civilities; for although she now well remembered to have heard this Randal slightly mentioned by the Constable when speaking of his family, it was in terms which implied that there was no good understanding betwixt them. She therefore only returned his courtesy by general thanks for the honor of his visit, trusting he would then retire; but such was not his purpose.

"I comprehend," he said, "from the coldness with which the Lady Eveline Berenger receives me, that what she has heard of me from my kinsman (if indeed he thought me worthy of being mentioned to her at all) has been, to say the least, unfavorable. And yet my name once stood as high in fields and courts, as that of the Constable; nor is it aught more disgraceful than what is indeed often esteemed the worst of disgraces—poverty, which prevents my still aspiring to places of honor and fame. If my youthful follies have been numerous, I have paid for them by the loss of my fortune, and the degradation of my condition; and therein, my happy kinsman might, if he pleased, do me some aid—I mean not with his purse or estate; for, poor as I am, I would not live on alms extorted from the reluctant hand of an estranged friend; but his countenance would put him to no cost, and, in so far, I might expect some favor."

"In that my Lord Constable," said Eveline, "must judge for himself. I have—as yet, at least—no right to interfere in his family affairs; and if I should ever have such right, it will well become me to be cautious how I use it."

"It is prudently answered," replied Randal; "but what I ask of you is merely, that you, in your gentleness, would please to convey to my cousin a suit, which I find it hard to bring my ruder tongue to utter with sufficient submission. The usurers, whose claims have eaten like a canker into my means, now menace me with a dungeon—a threat which they dared not mutter, far less attempt to execute, were it not that they see me an outcast, unprotected by the natural head of my family, and regard me rather as they would some unfriended vagrant, than as a descendant of the powerful house of Lacy."

"It is a sad necessity," replied Eveline; "but I see not how I can help you in such extremity."

"Easily," replied Randal de Lacy. "The day of your betrothal is fixed, as I hear reported; and it is your right to select what witnesses you please to the solemnity, which may the saints bless! To every one but myself, presence or absence on that occasion is a matter of mere ceremony—to me it is almost life or death. So am I situated, that the marked instance of slight or contempt, implied by my exclusion from this meeting of our family, will be held for the signal of my final expulsion from the House of the De Lacys, and for a thousand bloodhounds to assail me without mercy or forbearance, whom, cowards as they are, even the slightest show of countenance from my powerful kinsman would compel to stand at bay. But why should I occupy your time in talking thus?—Farewell, madam—be happy—and do not think of me the more harshly, that for a few minutes I have broken the tenor of your happy thoughts, by forcing my misfortunes on your notice."

"Stay, sir," said Eveline, affected by the tone and manner of the noble suppliant; "you shall not have it to say that you have told your distress to Eveline Berenger, without receiving such aid as is in her power to give. I will mention your request to the Constable of Chester."

"You must do more, if you really mean to assist me," said Randal de Lacy, "you must make that request your own. You do not know," said he, continuing to bend on her a fixed and expressive look, "how hard it is to change the fixed purpose of a De Lacy—a twelvemonth hence you will probably be better acquainted with the firm texture of our resolutions. But, at present, what can withstand your wish should you deign to express it?"

"Your suit, sir, shall not be lost for want of my advancing it with my good word and good wishes," replied Eveline; "but you must be well aware that its success or failure must rest with the Constable himself."

Randal de Lacy took his leave with the same air of deep reverence which had marked his entrance; only that, as he then saluted the skirt of Eveline's robe, he now rendered the same homage by touching her hand with his lip. She saw him depart with a mixture of emotions, in which compassion was predominant; although in his complaints of the Constable's unkindness to him there was something offensive, and his avowal of follies and excess seemed uttered rather in the spirit of wounded pride, than in that of contrition.

When Eveline next saw the Constable, she told him of the visit of Randal and of his request; and strictly observing his countenance while she spoke, she saw, that at the first mention of his

kinsman's name, a gleam of anger shot along his features. He soon subdued it, however, and, fixing his eyes on the ground, listened to Eveline's detailed account of the visit, and her request "that Randal might be one of the invited witnesses to their *fiançailles*."

The Constable paused for a moment, as if he were considering how to elude the solicitation. At length he replied, "You do not know for whom you ask this, or you would perhaps have forborne your request; neither are you apprized of its full import, though my crafty cousin well knows, that when I do him this grace which he asks, I bind myself, as it were, in the eye of the world once more—and it will be for the third time—to interfere in his affairs, and place them on such a footing as may afford him the means of re-establishing his fallen consequence, and repairing his numerous errors."

"And wherefore not, my lord?" said the generous Eveline. "If he has been ruined only through follies, he is now of an age when these are no longer tempting snares; and if his heart and hand be good, he may yet be an honor to the House of De Lacy."

The Constable shook his head. "He hath indeed," he said, "a heart and hand fit for service, God knoweth, whether in good or evil. But never shall it be said that you, my fair Eveline, made request of Hugh de Lacy, which he was not to his uttermost willing to comply with. Randal shall attend at our *fiançailles;* there is indeed the more cause for his attendance, as I somewhat fear we may lack that of our valued nephew Damian, whose malady rather increases than declines, and, as I hear, with strange symptoms of unwonted disturbance of mind and starts of temper, to which the youth hath not hitherto been subject."

CHAPTER XVII.

Ring out the merry bells, the bride approaches,
The blush upon her cheek has shamed the morning,
For that is dawning palely. Grant, good saints,
These clouds betoken nought of evil omen!

Old Play.

The day of the *fiançailles*, or espousals, was now approaching; and it seems that neither the profession of the Abbess, nor her practice at least, were so rigid as to prevent her selecting the great parlor of the convent for that holy rite, although necessarily introducing many male guests within those vestal precincts, and notwithstanding that the rite itself was the preliminary to a state which the inmates of the cloister had renounced for ever. The Abbess's Norman pride of birth, and the real interest which she took in her niece's advancement, overcame all scruples; and the venerable mother might be seen in unwonted bustle, now giving orders to the gardener for decking the apartment with flowers—now to her cellaress, her precentrix, and the lay-sisters of the kitchen, for preparing a splendid banquet, mingling her commands on these worldly subjects with an occasional ejaculation on their vanity and worthlessness, and every now and then converting the busy and anxious looks which she threw upon her preparations into a solemn turning upward of eyes and folding of hands, as one who sighed over the mere earthly pomp which she took such trouble in superintending. At another time the good lady might have been seen in close consultation with Father Aldrovand, upon the ceremonial civil and religious, which was to accompany a solemnity of such consequence to her family.

Meanwhile the reins of discipline, although relaxed for a season, were not entirely thrown loose. The outer court of the convent was indeed for the time opened for the reception of the male sex; but the younger sisters and novices of the house being carefully secluded in the more inner apartments of the extensive building, under the immediate eye of a grim old nun, or, as the conventual rule designed her, an ancient, sad, and virtuous person, termed Mistress of the Novices, were not permitted to pollute their eyes by looking on waving plumes and rustling mantles. A few sisters, indeed, of the Abbess's own standing, were left at liberty, being such goods as it was thought could not, in shopman's phrase, take harm from the air, and which are therefore left lying loose on the counter. These antiquated dames went mumping about with much affected indifference, and a great deal of real curiosity, endeavoring indirectly to get information concerning names, and dresses, and decorations, without daring to show such interest in these vanities as actual questions on the subject might have implied.

A stout band of the Constable's spearmen guarded the gate of the nunnery, admitting within the hallowed precinct the few only who were to be present at the solemnity, with their principal attendants, and while the former were ushered with all due ceremony into the apartments dressed out for the occasion, the attendants, although detained in the outer court, were liberally supplied with refreshments of the most substantial kind; and had the amusement, so dear to the menial classes, of examining and criticising their masters and mistresses, as they passed into the interior apartments prepared for their reception.

Amongst the domestics who were thus employed were old Raoul the huntsman and his jolly dame;—he gay and glorious, in a new cassock of green velvet, she gracious and comely, in a kirtle of yellow silk, fringed with minivair, and that at no mean cost, were equally busied in beholding the gay spectacle. The most inveterate wars have their occasional terms of truce; the most bitter and boisterous weather its hours of warmth and of calmness; and so it was with the matrimonial horizon of this amiable pair, which, usually cloudy, had now for brief space cleared up. The splendor of their new apparel, the

mirth of the spectacle around them, with the aid, perhaps, of a bowl of muscadine quaffed by Raoul, and a cup of hippocras sipped by his wife, had rendered them rather more agreeable in each other's eyes than was their wont; good cheer being in such cases, as oil is to a rusty lock, the means of making those valves move smoothly and glibly, which otherwise work not together at all, or by shrieks and groans express their reluctance to move in union. The pair had stuck themselves into a kind of niche, three or four steps from the ground, which contained a small stone bench, whence their curious eyes could scrutinize with advantage every guest who entered the court.

Thus placed, and in their present state of temporary concord, Raoul with his frosty visage formed no unapt representative of January, the bitter father of the year; and though Gillian was past the delicate bloom of youthful May, yet the melting fire of a full black eye, and the genial glow of a ripe and crimson cheek, made her a lively type of the fruitful and jovial August. Dame Gillian used to make it her boast, that she could please everybody with her gossip, when she chose it, from Raymond Berenger down to Robin the horse-boy; and like a good housewife, who, to keep her hand in use, will sometimes even condescend to dress a dish for her husband's sole eating, she now thought proper to practise her powers of pleasing on old Raoul, fairly conquering, in her successful sallies of mirth and satire, not only his cynical temperament towards all human kind, but his peculiar and special disposition to be testy with his spouse. Her jokes, such as they were, and the coquetry with which they were enforced, had such an effect on this Timon of the woods, that he curled up his cynical nose, displayed his few straggling teeth like a cur about to bite, broke out into a barking laugh, which was more like the cry of one of his own hounds—stopped short in the explosion, as if he had suddenly recollected that it was out of character; yet, ere he resumed his acrimonious gravity, shot such a glance at Gillian as made his nut-cracker jaws, pinched eyes, and convolved nose, bear no small resemblance to one of those fantastic faces which decorate the upper end of old bass viols.

"Is not this better than laying your dog-leash on your loving wife, as if she were a brach of the kennel?" said August to January.

"In troth is it," answered January, in a frost-bitten tone;—"and so it is also better than doing the brach-tricks which bring the leash into exercise."

"Humph!" said Gillian, in the tone of one who thought her husband's proposition might bear being disputed; but instantly changing the note to that of tender complaint, "Ah! Raoul," she said, "do you not remember how you once beat me because our late lord—Our Lady assoilzié him!—took my crimson breast-knot for a peony rose?"

"Ay, ay," said the huntsman; "I remember our old master would make such mistakes—Our Lady assoilzie him! as you say—the best hound will hunt counter."

"And how could you think, dearest Raoul, to let the wife of thy bosom go so long without a new kirtle?" said his helpmate.

"Why, thou hast got one from our young lady that might serve a Countess," said Raoul, his concord jarred by her touching this chord—"how many kirtles wouldst thou have?"

"Only two, kind Raoul; just that folk may not count their children's age by the date of Dame Gillian's last new gown."

"Well, well—it is hard that a man cannot be in good humor once and away without being made to pay for it. But thou shalt have a new kirtle at Michaelmas, when I sell the bucks' hides for the season. The very antlers should bring a good penny this year."

"Ay, ay," said Gillian; "I ever tell thee, husband, the horns would be worth the hide in a fair market."

Raoul turned briskly round, as if a wasp had stung him, and there is no guessing what his reply might have been to this seemingly innocent observation, had not a gallant horseman at that instant entered the court, and, dismounting like the others, gave his horse to the charge of a squire, or equerry, whose attire blazed with embroidery.

"By Saint Hubert, a proper horseman, and a *destrier* for an earl," said Raoul; "and my Lord Constable's liveries withal—yet I know not the gallant."

"But I do," said Gillian; "it is Randal de Lacy, the Constable's kinsman, and as good a man as ever came of the name!"

"Oh! by Saint Hubert, I have heard of him—men say he is a reveller, and a jangler, and a waster of his goods."

"Men lie now and then," said Gillian, drily.

"And women also," replied Raoul;—"why, methinks he winked on thee just now."

"That right eye of thine saw never true since our good lord—Saint Mary rest him!—flung a cup of wine in thy face, for pressing over boldly into his withdrawing-room.

"I marvel," said Raoul, as if he heard her not, "that yonder ruffler comes hither. I have heard that he is suspected to have attempted the Constable's life, and that they have not spoken together for five years."

"He comes on my young lady's invitation, and that I know full well," said Dame Gillian; "and he is less like to do the Constable wrong than to have wrong at his hand, poor gentleman, as indeed he has had enough of that already."

"And who told thee so?" said Raoul, bitterly.

"No matter, it was one who knew all about it very well," said the dame, who began to fear that, in displaying her triumph of superior information, she had been rather over-communicative.