

barrassment when he began to speak, as produced a corresponding degree of confusion in the Lady Eveline, who nevertheless urged him as before, "to speak without scruple or delay—so that the tenor of his discourse was fitting for her ears."

"Believe me, noble lady," said Amelot, "your commands had been instantly obeyed, but that I fear my master's displeasure if I talk of his affairs without his warrant; nevertheless, on your command, whom I know he honors above all earthly beings, I will speak thus far, that if his life be safe from the wounds he has received, his honor and worship may be in great danger, if it please not Heaven to send a remedy."

"Speak on," said Eveline; "and be assured you will do Sir Damian de Lacy no prejudice by the confidence you may rest in me."

"I well believe it, lady," said the page. "Know, then, if it be not already known to you, that the clowns and rabble who have taken arms against the nobles in the west, pretend to be favored in their insurrection, not only by Randal Lacy, but by my master, Sir Damian."

"They lie that dare charge him with such foul treason to his own blood, as well as to his sovereign," replied Eveline.

"Well do I believe they lie," said Amelot; "but this hinders not their falsehoods from being believed by those who know him less inwardly. More than one runaway from our troop have joined this rabblement, and that gives some credit to the scandal. And then they say—they say—that—in short, that my master longs to possess the lands in his proper right which he occupies as his uncle's administrator; and that if the old Constable—I crave your pardon, madam—should return from Palestine, he should find it difficult to obtain possession of his own again."

"The sordid wretches judge of others by their own base minds, and conceive those temptations too powerful for men of worth, which they are themselves conscious they would be unable to resist. But are the insurgents then so insolent and so powerful? We have heard of their violence, but only as if it had been some popular tumult."

"We had notice last night that they have drawn together in great force, and besieged or blockaded Wild Wenlock with his men-at-arms, in a village about ten miles hence. He hath sent to my master, as his kinsman and companion-at-arms, to come to his assistance. We were on horseback this morning to march to the rescue—when—"

He paused and seemed unwilling to proceed. Eveline caught at the word. "When you heard of my danger?" she said. "I would ye had rather heard of my death!"

"Surely, noble lady," said the page, with his eyes fixed on the ground, "nothing but so strong a cause could have made my master halt his troop, and carry the better part of them to the Welsh mountains, when his countryman's distress, and

the commands of the King's lieutenant, so promptly demanded his presence elsewhere."

"I knew it," she said—"I knew I was born to be his destruction! yet methinks this is worse than I dreamed of, when the worst was in my thoughts. I feared to occasion his death, not his loss of fame. For God's sake, young Amelot, do what thou canst, and that without loss of time! Get thee straightway to horse, and join to thy own men as many as thou canst gather of mine.—Go—ride, my brave youth—show thy master's banner, and let them see that his forces and his heart are with them, though his person be absent. Haste, haste, for the time is precious."

"But the safety of this castle—but your own safety?" said the page. "God knows how willingly I would do ought to save his fame! But I know my master's mood; and were you to suffer by my leaving the Garde Doloureuse, even although I were to save him lands, life, and honor, by my doing so, I should be more like to taste of his dagger, than of his thanks or bounty."

"Go, nevertheless, dear Amelot," said she; "gather what force thou canst make, and begone."

"You spur a willing horse, madam," said the page, springing to his feet; "and in the condition of my master, I see nothing better than that his banner should be displayed against these churls."

"To arms, then," said Eveline, hastily; "to arms, and win thy spurs. Bring me assurance that thy master's honor is safe, and I will myself buckle them on thy heels. Here—take this blessed rosary—bind it on thy crest, and be the thought of the Virgin of the Garde Doloureuse, that never failed a votary, strong with thee in the hour of conflict."

She had scarcely ended, ere Amelot flew from her presence, and summoning together such horse as he could assemble, both of his master's and of those belonging to the castle, there were soon forty cavaliers mounted in the court-yard.

But although the page was thus far readily obeyed, yet when the soldiers heard that they were to go forth on a dangerous expedition, with no more experienced general than a youth of fifteen, they showed a decided reluctance to move from the castle. The old soldiers of De Lacy said, Damian himself was almost too youthful to command them, and had no right to delegate his authority to a mere boy; while the followers of Berenger said, their mistress might be satisfied with her deliverance of the morning, without trying farther dangerous conclusions by diminishing the garrison of her castle—"The times," they said, "were stormy, and it was wisest to keep a stone roof over their heads."

The more the soldiers communicated their ideas and apprehensions to each other, the stronger their disinclination to the undertaking became; and when Amelot, who, page-like, had gone to see that his own horse was accoutred and brought forth, returned to the castle-yard, he

found them standing confusedly together, some mounted, some on foot, all men speaking loud, and all in a state of disorder. Ralph Genvil, a veteran whose face had been seamed with many a scar, and who had long followed the trade of a soldier of fortune, stood apart from the rest, holding his horse's bridle in one hand, and in the other the banner-spear, around which the banner of De Lacy was still folded.

"What means this, Genvil?" said the page, angrily. "Why do you not mount your horse and display the banner? and what occasions all this confusion?"

"Truly, Sir Page," said Genvil, composedly, "I am not in my saddle, because I have some regard for this old silken rag, which I have borne to honor in my time, and I will not willingly carry it where men are unwilling to follow and defend it."

"No march—no sally—no lifting of banner to-day!" cried the soldiers, by way of burden to the banner-man's discourse.

"How, now, cowards! do you mutiny?" said Amelot, laying his hand upon his sword.

"Menace not me, Sir Boy," said Genvil; "nor shake your sword my way. I tell thee, Amelot, were my weapon to cross with yours, never flail sent abroad more chaff than I would make splinters of your hatched and gilded toasting-iron. Look you, there are gray-bearded men here that care not to be led about on any boy's humor. For me, I stand little upon that; and I care not whether one boy or another commands me. But I am the Lacy's man for the time; and I am not sure that, in marching to the aid of this Wild Wenlock, we shall do an errand the Lacy will thank us for. Why led he us not thither in the morning when we were commanded off into the mountains?"

"You well know the cause," said the page.

"Yes, we do know the cause; or if we do not, we can guess it," answered the banner-man, with a horse laugh, which was echoed by several of his companions.

"I will cram the calumny down thy false throat, Genvil!" said the page; and, drawing his sword, threw himself headlong on the banner-man, without considering their great difference of strength.

Genvil was contented to foil his attack by one, and, as it seemed, a slight movement of his gigantic arm, with which he forced the page aside, parrying, at the same time, his blow with the standard-spear.

There was another loud laugh, and Amelot, feeling all his efforts baffled, threw his sword from him, and weeping in pride and indignation, hastened back to tell the Lady Eveline of his bad success. "All," he said, "is lost—the cowardly villains have mutinied, and will not move; and the blame of their sloth and faint-heartedness will be laid on my dear master."

"That shall never be," said Eveline, "should I die to prevent it.—Follow me, Amelot."

She hastily threw a scarlet scarf over her dark garments, and hastened down to the court-yard, followed by Gillian, assuming, as she went, various attitudes and actions, expressing astonishment and pity, and by Rose, carefully suppressing all appearance of the feelings which she really entertained.

Eveline entered the castle-court, with the kindling eye and glowing brow which her ancestors were wont to bear in danger and extremity, when their soul was arming to meet the storm, and displayed in their mien and looks high command and contempt of danger. She seemed at the moment taller than her usual size; and it was with a voice distinct and clearly heard, though not exceeding the delicacy of feminine tone, that the mutineers heard her address them. "How is this, my masters?" she said; and as she spoke, the bulky forms of the armed soldiers seemed to draw closer together, as if to escape her individual censure. It was like a group of heavy water-fowl, when they close to avoid the stoop of the slight and beautiful merlin, dreading the superiority of its nature and breeding over their own inert physical strength.—"How now?" again she demanded of them; "is it a time, think ye, to mutiny, when your lord is absent, and his nephew and lieutenant lies stretched on a bed of sickness?—Is it thus you keep your oaths?—Thus ye merit your leader's bounty?—Shame on ye, craven hounds, that quail and give back the instant you lose sight of the huntsman!"

There was a pause—the soldiers looked on each other, and then again on Eveline, as if ashamed alike to hold out in their mutiny, or to return to their usual discipline.

"I see how it is, my brave friends—ye lack a leader here; but stay not for that—I will guide you myself, and, woman as I am, there need not a man of you fear disgrace where a Berenger commands.—Trap my palfrey with a steel saddle," she said, "and that instantly." She snatched from the ground the page's light head-piece, and threw it over her hair, caught up his drawn sword, and went on. "Here I promise you my countenance and guidance—this gentleman," she pointed to Genvil, "shall supply my lack of military skill. He looks like a man that hath seen many a day of battle, and can well teach a young leader her devoir."

"Certes," said the old soldier, smiling in spite of himself, and shaking his head at the same time, "many a battle have I seen, but never under such a commander."

"Nevertheless," said Eveline, seeing how the eyes of the rest turned on Genvil, "you do not—cannot—will not—refuse to follow me? You do not as a soldier, for my weak voice supplies your captain's orders—you cannot as a gentleman, for a lady, a forlorn and distressed female, asks you a boon—you will not as an Englishman, for your country requires your sword, and your comrades are in danger. Unfur! your banner then, and march."

"I would do so, upon my soul, fair lady," answered Genvil, as if preparing to unfold the banner—"And Amelot might lead us well enough, with advantage of some lessons from me. But I wot not whether you are sending us on the right road."

"Surely, surely," said Eveline earnestly, "it must be the right road which conducts you to the relief of Wenlock and his followers, besieged by the insurgent boors."

"I know not," said Genvil, still hesitating. "Our leader here, Sir Damian de Lacy, protects the commons—men say he befriends them—and I know he quarrelled with Wild Wenlock once for some petty wrong he did to the miller's wife at Twyford. We should be finely off, when our dery young leader is on foot again, if he should find we had been fighting against the side he favored."

"Assure yourself," said the maiden anxiously, "the more he would protect the commons against oppression, the more he would put them down when oppressing others. Mount and ride—save Wenlock and his men—there is life and death in every moment. I will warrant, with my life and lands, that whatsoever you do will be held good service to De Lacy. Come, then, follow me."

"None surely can know Sir Damian's purpose better than you, fair damsel," answered Genvil: "nay, for that matter, you can make him change as ye list.—And so I will march with the men, and we will aid Wenlock, if it is yet time, as I trust it may; for he is a rugged wolf, and when he turns to bay, will cost the boors blood enough ere they sound a mort. But do you remain within the castle, fair lady, and trust to Amelot and me.—Come, Sir Page, assume the command, since so it must be; though, by my faith, it is pity to take the head-piece from that pretty head, and the sword from that pretty hand.—By Saint George! to see them there is a credit to the soldier's profession."

The Lady accordingly surrendered the weapons to Amelot, exhorting him in few words to forget the offence he had received, and do his devoir manfully. Meanwhile Genvil slowly unrolled the pennon—then shook it abroad, and without putting his foot in the stirrup, aided himself a little with resting on the spear, and threw himself into the saddle, heavily armed as he was. "We are ready now, an it like your juvenility," said he to Amelot; and then, while the page was putting the band into order, he whispered to his nearest comrade, "Methinks, instead of this old swallow's tail,* we should muster rarely under a brodered petticoat—a farbelowed petticoat has no fellow in my mind.—Look

* The pennon of a Knight was, in shape, a long streamer, and forked like a swallow's tail: the banner of a Banneret was square, and was formed into the other by cutting the ends from the pennon. It was thus the ceremony was performed on the pennon of John Chandos, by the Black Prince, before the battle of Najara.

you, Stephen Pontoys—I can forgive Damian now for forgetting his uncle and his own credit, about this wench; for, by my faith, she is one I could have doated to death upon *par amour*. Ah! evil luck be the women's portion!—they govern us at every turn, Stephen, and at every age. When they are young, they bribe us with fair looks, and sugared words, sweet kisses and love tokens; and when they are of middle age, they work us to their will by presents and courtesies, red wine and red gold; and when they are old, we are fain to run their errands to get out of sight of their old leathern visages. Well, old De Lacy should have stayed at home and watched his falcon. But it is all one to us, Stephen, and we may make some vantage to-day, for these boors have plundered more than one castle."

"Ay, ay," answered Pontoys, "the boor to the booty, and the banner-man to the boor, a right pithy proverb. But, prithee, canst thou say why his pageship leads us not forward yet?"

"Phaw!" answered Genvil, "the shake I gave him has addled his brains—or perchance he has not swallowed all his tears yet; sloth it is not, for 'tis a forward cockeril for his years, wherever honor is to be won.—See, they now begin to move.—Well, it is a singular thing this gentle blood, Stephen; for here is a child whom I but now baffled like a schoolboy, must lead us graybeards where we may get our heads broken, and that at the command of a light lady."

"I warrant Sir Damian is secretary to my pretty lady," answered Stephen Pontoys, "as this springald Amelot is to Sir Damian; and so we poor men must obey and keep our mouths shut."

"But our eyes open, Stephen Pontoys—forget not that."

They were by this time out of the gates of the castle, and upon the road leading to the village, in which, as they understood by the intelligence of the morning, Wenlock was besieged or blockaded by a greatly superior number of the insurgent commons. Amelot rode at the head of the troop, still embarrassed by the affront which he had received in presence of the soldiers, and lost in meditating how he was to eke out that deficiency of experience, which on former occasions had been supplied by the counsels of the banner-man, with whom he was ashamed to seek a reconciliation. But Genvil was not of a nature absolutely sullen, though an habitual grumbler. He rode up to the page, and having made his obeisance, respectfully asked him whether it were not well that some one or two of their number pricked forward upon good horses to learn how it stood with Wenlock, and whether they should be able to come up in time to his assistance.

"Methinks, banner-man," answered Amelot, "you should take the ruling of the troop, since you know so fittingly what should be done. You may be the fitter to command, because—But I will not upbraid you."

"Because I know so ill how to obey," replied

Genvil; "that is what you would say; and, by my faith, I cannot deny but there may be some truth in it. But is it not peevish in thee to let a fair expedition be unwisely conducted, because of a foolish word or a sudden action?—Come, let it be peace with us."

"With all my heart," answered Amelot; "and I will send out an advanced party upon the adventure, as thou hast advised me."

"Let it be old Stephen Pontoys and two of the Chester spears—he is as wily as an old fox, and neither hope nor fear will draw him a hairbreadth farther than judgment warrants."

Amelot eagerly embraced the hint, and, at his command, Pontoys and two lances started forward to reconnoitre the road before them, and inquire into the condition of those whom they were advancing to succor. "And now that we are on the old terms, Sir Page," said the banner-man, "tell me, if thou canst, doth not yonder fair lady love our handsome knight *par amour*?"

"It is a false calumny," said Amelot, indignantly; "betrothed as she is to his uncle, I am convinced she would rather die than have such a thought, and so would our master. I have noted this heretical belief in thee before now, Genvil, and I have prayed thee to check it. You know the thing cannot be, for you know they have scarce ever met."

"How should I know that," said Genvil, "or thou either? Watch them ever so close—much water slides past the mill that Hob Miller never wots of. They do correspond; that, at least, thou canst not deny?"

"I do deny it," said Amelot, "as I deny all that can touch their honor."

"Then how, in Heaven's name, comes he by such perfect knowledge of her motions, as he has displayed no longer since than the morning?"

"How should I tell?" answered the page; "there be such things, surely, as saints and good angels, and if there be one on earth deserves their protection, it is Dame Eveline Berenger."

"Well said, Master Counsel-keeper," replied Genvil, laughing; "but that will hardly pass on an old trooper.—Saints and angels, quotha? most saintlike doings, I warrant you."

The page was about to continue his angry vindication, when Stephen Pontoys and his followers returned upon the spur. "Wenlock holds out bravely," he exclaimed, "though he is felly girded in with these boors. The large crossbows are doing good service; and I little doubt his making his place good till we come up, if it please you to ride something sharply. They have assailed the barriers, and were close up to them even now, but were driven back with small success."

The party were now put in as rapid motion as might consist with order, and soon reached the top of a small eminence, beneath which lay the village where Wenlock was making his defence. The air rung with the cries and shouts of the insurgents, who, numerous as bees, and possessed

of that dogged spirit of courage so peculiar to the English, thronged like ants to the barriers, and endeavored to break down the palisades, or to climb over them, in despite of the showers of stones and arrows from within, by which they suffered great loss, as well as by the swords and battle-axes of the men-at-arms, whenever they came to hand-blows.

"We are in time, we are in time," said Amelot, dropping the reins of his horse, and joyfully clapping his hands; "shake thy banner abroad, Genvil—give Wenlock and his fellows a fair view of it.—Comrades, halt—breathe your horses for a moment.—Hark hither, Genvil—if we descend by yonder broad pathway into the meadow where the cattle are—"

"Brave, my young falcon!" replied Genvil, whose love of battle, like that of the war-horse of Job, kindled at the sight of the spears, and at the sound of the trumpet; "we shall have then an easy field for a charge on yonder knaves."

"What a thick black cloud the villains make!" said Amelot; "but we will let daylight through it with our lances.—See, Genvil, the defenders hoist a signal to show they have seen us."

"A signal to us!" exclaimed Genvil. "By Heaven, it is a white flag—a signal of surrender."

"Surrender! they cannot dream of it, when we are advancing to their succor," replied Amelot; when two or three melancholy notes from the trumpets of the besieged, with a thundering and tumultuous acclamation from the besiegers, rendered the fact indisputable.

"Down goes Wenlock's pennon," said Genvil, "and the churls enter the barricades on all points.—Here has been cowardice or treachery—what is to be done?"

"Advance on them," said Amelot, "retake the place, and deliver the prisoners."

"Advance, indeed!" answered the banner-man—"not a horse's length by my counsel—we should have every nail in our corselets counted with arrow-shot, before we got down the hill in the face of such a multitude; and the place to storm afterwards—it were mere insanity."

"Yet come a little forward along with me," said the page; "perhaps we may find some path by which we could descend unperceived."

Accordingly they rode forward a little way to reconnoitre the face of the hill, the page still urging the possibility of descending it unperceived amid the confusion, when Genvil answered impatiently, "Unperceived!—you are already perceived—here comes a fellow, pricking towards us as fast as his beast may trot."

As he spoke, the rider came up to them. He was a short thick-set peasant, in an ordinary frieze jacket and hose, with a blue cap on his head, which he had been scarcely able to pull over a shock head of red hair, that seemed in arms to repel the covering. The man's hands were bloody, and he carried at his saddlebow a linen bag, which was also stained with blood. "Ye be of Damian de Lacy's company, be ye

not?" said this rude messenger; and, when they answered in the affirmative, he proceeded with the same blunt courtesy, "Hob Miller of Twyford commends him to Damian Lacy, and, knowing his purpose to amend disorders in the commonwealth, Hob Miller sends him toll of the grist which he hath grinded;" and with that he took from the bag a human head, and tendered it to Amelot.

"It is Wenlock's head," said Genvil—"how his eyes stare!"

"They will stare after no more wenches now," said the boor—"I have cured him of caterwauling."

"Thon!" said Amelot, stepping back in disgust and indignation.

"Yes, I myself," replied the peasant; "I am Grand Justiciary of the Commons, for lack of a better."

"Grand hangman, thou wouldst say," replied Genvil.

"Call it what thou list," replied the peasant. "Truly, it behooves men in state to give good example. I'll bid no man do that I am not ready to do myself. It is as easy to hang a man, as to say hang him; we will have no splitting of offices in this new world, which is happily set up in old England."

"Wretch," said Amelot, "take back thy bloody token to them that sent thee! Hadst thou not come upon assurance, I had pinned thee to the earth with my lance—but, be assured, your cruelty shall be fearfully avenged.—Come, Genvil, let us to our men; there is no farther use in abiding here."

The fellow, who had expected a very different reception, stood staring after them for a few moments, then replaced his bloody trophy in the wallet, and rode back to them who sent him.

"This comes of meddling with men's *amourettes*," said Genvil; "Sir Damian would needs brawl with Wenlock about his dealings with this Miller's daughter, and you see they account him a favorer of their enterprise; it will be well if others do not take up the same opinion.—I wish we were rid of the trouble which such suspicions may bring upon us—ay, were it at the price of my best horse—I am like to lose him at any rate with the day's hard service, and I would it were the worst it is to cost us."

The party returned, wearied and discomfited, to the castle of the Garde Doloureuse, and not without losing several of their number by the way, some straggling owing to the weariness of their horses, and others taking the opportunity of desertion in order to join with the bands of insurgents and plunderers, who had now gathered together in different quarters, and were augmented by recruits from the dissolute soldiery.

Amelot, on his return to the castle, found that the state of his master was still very precarious, and that the Lady Eveline, though much exhausted, had not yet retired to rest, but was

awaiting his return with impatience. He was introduced to her accordingly, and, with a heavy heart, mentioned the ineffectual event of his expedition.

"Now the saints have pity upon us!" said the Lady Eveline; "for it seems as if a plague or pest attached to me, and extended itself to all who interest themselves in my welfare. From the moment they do so, their very virtues become snares to them; and what would, in every other case, recommend them to honor, is turned to destruction to the friends of Eveline Berenger."

"Fear not, fair lady," said Amelot; "there are still men enough in my master's camp to put down these disturbers of the public peace. I will but abide to receive his instructions, and will hence to-morrow, and draw out a force to restore quiet in this part of the country."

"Alas! you know not yet the worst of it," replied Eveline. "Since you went hence, we have received certain notice, that when the soldiers at Sir Damian's camp heard of the accident which he this morning met with, already discontented with the inactive life which they had of late led, and dispirited by the hurts and reported death of their leader, they have altogether broken up and dispersed their forces.—Yet be of good courage, Amelot," she said; "this house is strong enough to bear out a worse tempest than any that is likely to be poured on it; and if all men desert your master in wounds and affliction, it becomes yet more the part of Eveline Berenger to shelter and protect her deliverer."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Let our proud trumpet shake their castle wall,
Menacing death and ruin.

ORWAY.

THE evil news with which the last chapter concluded were necessarily told to Damian de Lacy, as the person whom they chiefly concerned; and Lady Eveline herself undertook the task of communicating them, mingling what she said with tears, and again interrupting those tears to suggest topics of hope and comfort, which carried no consolation to her own bosom.

The wounded knight continued with his face turned towards her, listening to the disastrous tidings, as one who was no otherwise affected by them, than as they regarded her who told the story. When she had done speaking, he continued as in a reverie, with his eyes so intently fixed upon her, that she rose up, with the purpose of withdrawing from looks by which she felt herself embarrassed. He hastened to speak, that he might prevent her departure. "All that you have said, fair lady," he replied, "had been enough, if told by another, to have broken my heart; for it tells me that the power and honor of my house, so solemnly committed to my charge, have been blasted in my misfortune. But when I look upon you, and hear your voice, I forget every thing, saying that you have been

rescued, and are here in honor and safety. Let me therefore pray of your goodness that I may be removed from the castle which holds you, and sent elsewhere. I am in no shape worthy of your farther care, since I have no longer the swords of others at my disposal, and am totally unable for the present to draw my own."

"And if you are generous enough to think of me in your own misfortunes, noble knight," answered Eveline, "can you suppose that I forget wherefore, and in whose rescue, these wounds were incurred? No, Damian, speak not of removal—while there is a turret of the Garde Doloureuse standing, within that turret shall you find shelter and protection. Such, I am well assured, would be the pleasure of your uncle, were he here in person."

It seemed as if a sudden pang of his wound had seized upon Damian; for, repeating the words "my uncle!" he writhed himself round, and averted his face from Eveline; then again composing himself, replied, "Alas! knew my uncle how ill I have obeyed his precepts, instead of sheltering me within this house, he would command me to be flung from the battlements!"

"Fear not his displeasure," said Eveline, again preparing to withdraw; "but endeavor, by the composure of your spirit, to aid the healing of your wounds; when, I doubt not, you will be able again to establish good order in the Constable's jurisdiction, long before his return."

She colored as she pronounced the last words, and hastily left the apartment. When she was in her own chamber, she dismissed her other attendants and retained Rose. "What dost thou think of these things, my wise maiden and mistress?" said she.

"I would," replied Rose, "either that this young knight had never entered this castle—or that, being here, he could presently leave it—or, that he could honorably remain here forever."

"What dost thou mean by remaining here forever?" said Eveline, sharply and hastily.

"Let me answer that question with another—How long has the Constable of Chester been absent from England?"

"Three years come Saint Clement's day," said Eveline; "and what of that?"

"Nay, nothing; but—"

"But what?—I command you to speak out."

"A few weeks will place your hand at your disposal."

"And think you, Rose," said Eveline, rising with dignity, that there are no bonds save those which are drawn by the scribe's pen?—We know little of the Constable's adventures; but we know enough to show that his towering hopes have fallen, and his sword and courage proved too weak to change the fortunes of the Sultan Saladin. Suppose him returning some brief time hence, as we have seen so many crusaders regain their homes, poor and broken in health—suppose that he finds his lands laid waste and his follow-

ers dispersed, by the consequence of their late misfortunes, how would it sound should he also find that his betrothed bride had wedded and endowed with her substance the nephew whom he most trusted? Dost thou think such an engagement is like a Lombard's mortgage, which must be redeemed on the very day, else forfeiture is sure to be awarded?"

"I cannot tell, madam," replied Rose; "but they that keep their covenant to the letter, are, in my country, held bound to no more."

"That is a Flemish fashion, Rose," said her mistress; "but the honor of a Norman is not satisfied with an observance so limited. What! wouldst thou have my honor, my affections, my duty, all that is most valuable to a woman, depend on the same progress of the calendar which an usurer watches for the purpose of seizing on a forfeited pledge!—Am I such a mere commodity, that I must belong to one man if he claims me before Michaelmas, to another if he comes afterwards?—No, Rose; I did not thus interpret my engagement, sanctioned as it was by the special providence of Our Lady of the Garde Doloureuse."

"It is a feeling worthy of you, my dearest lady," answered the attendant; "yet you are so young—so beset with dangers—so much exposed to calumny—that I, at least, looking forward to the time when you may have a legal companion and protector, see it as an extrication from much doubt and danger."

"Do not think of it, Rose," answered Eveline; "do not liken your mistress to those provident dames, who, while one husband yet lives, though in old age or weak health, are prudently engaged in plotting for another."

"Enough, my dearest lady," said Rose;—"yet not so. Permit me one word more. Since you are determined not to avail yourself of your freedom, even when the fatal period of your engagement is expired, why suffer this young man to share our solitude?—He is surely well enough to be removed to some other place of security. Let us resume our former sequestered mode of life, until Providence send us some better or more certain prospects."

Eveline sighed—looked down—then looking upwards, once more had opened her lips to express her willingness to enforce so reasonable an arrangement, but for Damian's recent wounds, and the distracted state of the country, when she was interrupted by the shrill sound of trumpets, blown before the gate of the castle; and Raoul, with anxiety on his brow, came limping to inform his lady, that a knight, attended by a pursuivant-at-arms, in the royal livery, with a strong guard, was in front of the castle, and demanded admittance in the name of the King.

Eveline paused a moment ere she replied, "Not even to the King's order shall the castle of my ancestors be opened, until we are well assured of the person by whom, and the purpose

for which, it is demanded. We will ourselves to the gate, and learn the meaning of this summons. —My veil, Rose: and call my women.—Again that trumpet sounds! Alas! it rings like a signal to death and ruin!

The prophetic apprehensions of Eveline were not false; for scarce had she reached the door of the apartment, when she was met by the page Amelot, in a state of such disordered apprehension as an élève of chivalry was scarce on any occasion permitted to display. "Lady, noble lady," he said, hastily bending his knee to Eveline, "save my dearest master!—You, and you alone, can save him at this extremity."

"I!" said Eveline, in astonishment—"I save him?—And from what danger?—God knows how willingly!"

There she stopped short, as if afraid to trust herself with expressing what rose to her lips.

"Guy Monthermer, lady, is at the gate, with a pursuivant and the royal banner. The hereditary enemy of the House of Lacy, thus accompanied, comes hither for no good—the extent of the evil I know not, but for evil he comes. My master slew his nephew at the field of Malpas, and therefore"—He was here interrupted by another flourish of trumpets, which rung, as if in shrill impatience, through the vaults of the ancient fortress.

The Lady Eveline hastened to the gate, and found that the wardens, and others who attended there, were looking on each other with doubtful and alarmed countenances, which they turned upon her at her arrival, as if to seek from their mistress the comfort and the courage which they could not communicate to each other. Without the gate, mounted, and in complete armor, was an elderly and stately knight, whose raised visor and beaver depressed, showed a beard already grizzled. Beside him appeared the pursuivant on horseback, the royal arms embroidered on his heraldic dress of office, and all the importance of offended consequence on his countenance, which was shaded by his barret-cap and triple plume. They were attended by a body of about fifty soldiers, arranged under the guidon of England.

When the Lady Eveline appeared at the barrier, the knight, after a slight reverence, which seemed more in formal courtesy than in kindness, demanded if he saw the daughter of Raymond Berenger. "And is it," he continued, when he had received an answer in the affirmative, "before the castle of that approved and favored servant of the House of Anjou, that King Henry's trumpets have thrice sounded, without obtaining an entrance for those who are honored with their Sovereign's command?"

"My condition," answered Eveline, "must excuse my caution. I am a lone maiden, residing in a frontier fortress. I may admit no one without inquiring his purpose, and being assured that his entrance consists with the safety of the place, and mine own honor."

"Since you are so punctilious, lady," replied Monthermer, "know, that in the present distracted state of the country, it is his Grace the King's pleasure to place within your walls a body of men-at-arms, sufficient to guard this important castle, both from the insurgent peasants, who burn and slay, and from the Welsh, who, it must be expected, will, according to their wont in time of disturbance, make incursions on the frontiers. Undo your gates, then, Lady of Berenger, and suffer his Grace's forces to enter the castle."

"Sir Knight," answered the lady, "this castle, like every other fortress in England, is the King's by law; but by law also I am the keeper and defender of it; and it is the tenure by which my ancestors held these lands. I have men enough to maintain the Garde Doloureuse in my time, as my father, and my grandfather before him, defended it in theirs. The King is gracious to send me succors, but I need not the aid of hirelings; neither do I think it safe to admit such into my castle, who may, in this lawless time, make themselves masters of it for other than its lawful mistress."

"Lady," replied the old warrior, "his Grace is not ignorant of the motives which produce a contumacy like this. It is not any apprehension for the royal forces which influences you, a royal vassal, in this refractory conduct. I might proceed upon your refusal to proclaim you a traitor to the Crown, but the King remembers the services of your father. Know, then, we are not ignorant that Damian de Lacy, accused of instigating and heading this insurrection, of deserting his duty in the field, and abandoning a noble comrade to the sword of the brutal peasants, has found shelter under this roof, with little credit to your loyalty as a vassal, or your conduct as a high-born maiden. Deliver him up to us, and I will draw off these men-at-arms, and dispense, though I may scarce answer doing so, with the occupation of the castle."

"Guy de Monthermer," answered Eveline, "he that throws a stain on my name, speaks falsely and unworthily; as for Damian de Lacy, he knows how to defend his own fame. The only let me say, that, while he takes his abode in the castle of the betrothed of his kinsman, she delivers him to no one, least of all to his well-known feudal enemy.—Drop the portcullis, wardens, and let it not be raised without my special order."

The portcullis, as she spoke, fell rattling and clanging to the ground, and Monthermer, in baffled spite, remained excluded from the castle. "Unworthy lady"—he began in passion, then checking himself, said calmly to the pursuivant, "Ye are witness that she hath admitted that the traitor is within that castle,—ye are witness that lawfully summoned, this Eveline Berenger refuses to deliver him up. Do your duty, Sir Pursuivant, as is usual in such cases."

The pursuivant then advanced and proclaimed

in the formal and fatal phrase befitting the occasion, that Eveline Berenger, lawfully summoned, refusing to admit the King's forces into her castle, and to deliver up the body of a false traitor, called Damian de Lacy, had herself incurred the penalty of high treason, and had involved within the same doom all who aided, abetted, or maintained her in holding out the said castle against their allegiance to Henry of Anjou. The trumpets, so soon as the voice of the herald had ceased, confirmed the doom he had pronounced, by a long and ominous peal, startling from their nests the owl and the raven, who replied to it by their ill-boding screams.

The defenders of the castle looked on each other with blank and dejected countenances, while Monthermer, raising aloft his lance, exclaimed, as he turned his horse from the castle gate, "When I next approach the Garde Doloureuse, it will be not merely to intimate, but to execute, the mandate of my Sovereign."

As Eveline stood pensively to behold the retreat of Monthermer and his associates, and to consider what was to be done in this emergency, she heard one of the Flemings, in a low tone, ask an Englishman, who stood beside him, what was the meaning of a traitor.

"One who betrayeth a trust reposed—a betrayer," said the interpreter.

The phrase which he used recalled to Eveline's memory her boding vision or dream. "Alas!" she said, "the vengeance of the fiend is about to be accomplished. Widowed wife and wedded maid—these epithets have long been mine. Betrothed! woe's me! it is the keystone of my destiny. Betrayer I am now denounced, though, thank God, I am clear from the guilt! It only follows that I should be betrayed, and the evil prophecy will be fulfilled to the very letter."

CHAPTER XXIX.

Out on ye, owls!—Nothing but songs of death!

RICHARD III.

MORE than three months had elapsed since the event narrated in the last chapter, and it had been the precursor of others of still greater importance, which will evolve themselves in the course of our narrative. But, as we profess to present to the reader not a precise detail of circumstances, according to their order and date, but a series of pictures, endeavoring to present the most striking incidents before the eye or imagination of those whom it may concern, we therefore open a new scene, and bring other actors upon the stage.

Along a wasted tract of country, more than twelve miles distant from the Garde Doloureuse, in the heat of a summer noon, which shed a burning lustre on the silent valley, and the blackened ruins of the cottages with which it had been once graced, two travellers walked slowly, whose palmer cloaks, pilgrims' staves, large slouched hats, with a scallop shell bound on the front of

each, above all, the cross, cut in red cloth upon their shoulders, marked them as pilgrims who had accomplished their vow, and had returned from that fatal bourne, from which, in those days, returned so few of the thousands who visited it, whether in the love of enterprise, or in the ardor of devotion.

The pilgrims had passed, that morning, through a scene of devastation similar to, and scarce surpassed in misery by, those which they had often trod during the wars of the Cross. They had seen hamlets which appeared to have suffered all the fury of military execution, the houses being burned to the ground; and in many cases the carcasses of the miserable inhabitants, or rather relics of such objects, were suspended on temporary gibbets, or on the trees, which had been allowed to remain standing, only, it would seem, to serve the convenience of the executioners. Living creatures they saw none, excepting those wild denizens of nature who seemed silently resuming the now wasted district, from which they might have been formerly expelled by the course of civilization. Their ears were no less disagreeably occupied than their eyes. The pensive travellers might indeed hear the screams of the raven, as if lamenting the decay of the carnage on which he had been gorged; and now and then the plaintive howl of some dog, deprived of his home and master; but no sounds which argued either labor or domestication of any kind.

The sable figures, who, with wearied steps, as it appeared, travelled through these scenes of desolation and ravage, seemed assimilated to them in appearance. They spoke not with each other—they looked not to each other—but one, the shorter of the pair, keeping about half a pace in front of his companion, they moved slowly, as priests returning from a sinner's death-bed, or rather as spectres flitting along the precincts of a churchyard.

At length they reached a grassy mound, on the top of which was placed one of those receptacles for the dead of the ancient British chiefs of distinction, called Kist-vaen, which are composed of upright fragments of granite, so placed as to form a stone coffin, or something bearing that resemblance. The sepulchre had been long violated by the victorious Saxons, either in scorn or in idle curiosity, or because treasures were supposed to be sometimes concealed in such spots. The huge flat stone which had once been the cover of the coffin, if so it might be termed, lay broken in two pieces at some distance from the sepulchre; and, overgrown as the fragments were with grass and lichens, showed plainly that the lid had been removed to its present situation many years before. A stunted and doddered oak still spread its branches over the open and rude mausoleum, as if the Druid's badge and emblem, shattered and storm-broken, was still bending to offer its protection to the last remnants of their worship.

"This, then, is the *Kist-vaen*," said the shorter pilgrim; "and here we must abide tidings of our scout. But what, Philip Guarine, have we to expect as an explanation of the devastation which we have traversed?"

"Some incursion of the Welsh wolves, my lord," replied Guarine; "and by Our Lady, here lies a poor Saxon sheep whom they have snapped up."

The Constable (for he was the pilgrim who had walked foremost) turned as he heard his squire speak, and saw the corpse of a man amongst the long grass; by which, indeed, it was so hidden, that he himself had passed without notice, what the esquire, in less abstracted mood, had not failed to observe. The leathern doublet of the slain bespoke him an English peasant—the body lay on its face, and the arrow which had caused his death still stuck in his back.

Philip Guarine, with the cool indifference of one accustomed to such scenes, drew the shaft from the man's back, as composedly as he would have removed it from the body of a deer. With similar indifference the Constable signed to his esquire to give him the arrow—looked at it with indolent curiosity, and then said, "Thou hast forgotten thy old craft, Guarine, when thou callest that a Welsh shaft. Trust me, it flew from a Norman bow; but why it should be found in the body of that English churl, I can ill guess."

"Some runaway serf, I would warrant—some mongrel cur, who had joined the Welsh pack of hounds," answered the esquire.

"It may be so," said the Constable; "but I rather augur some civil war among the Lords Marchers themselves. The Welsh, indeed, sweep the villages, and leave nothing behind them but blood and ashes, but here even castles seem to have been stormed, and taken. May God send us good news of the Garde Doloureuse!"

"Amen!" replied his squire; "but if Renault Vidal brings it, 'twill be the first time he has proved a bird of good omen."

"Philip," said the Constable, "I have already told thee thou art a jealous-pated fool. How many times has Vidal shown his faith in doubt—his address in difficulty—his courage in battle—his patience under suffering?"

"It may be all very true, my lord," replied Guarine; "yet—but what avails to speak?—I own he has done you sometimes good service; but loath were I that your life or honor were at the mercy of Renault Vidal."

"In the name of all the saints, thou peevish and suspicious fool, what is it thou canst found upon to his prejudice?"

"Nothing, my lord," replied Guarine, "but instinctive suspicion and aversion. The child that, for the first time, sees a snake, knows nothing of its evil properties, yet he will not chase it and take it up as he would a butterfly. Such is my dislike of Vidal—I cannot help it. I could pardon the man his malicious and gloomy

sidelong looks, when he thinks no one observes him; but his sneering laugh I cannot forgive—it is like the beast we heard of in Judea, who laughs, they say, before he tears and destroys."

"Philip," said De Lacy, "I am sorry for thee—sorry, from my soul, to see such a predominating and causeless jealousy occupy the brain of a gallant old soldier. Here, in this last misfortune, to recall no more ancient proofs of his fidelity, could he mean otherwise than well with us, when thrown by shipwreck upon the coast of Wales, we would have been doomed to instant death, had the Cymri recognized in me the Constable of Chester, and in thee his trusty esquire, the executioner of his commands against the Welsh in so many instances?"

"I acknowledge," said Philip Guarine, "death had surely been our fortune, had not that man's ingenuity represented us as pilgrims, and, under that character, acted as our interpreter; and in that character he entirely precluded us from getting information from any one respecting the state of things here, which it behoved your lordship much to know, and which I must needs say looks gloomy and suspicious enough."

"Still art thou a fool, Guarine," said the Constable; "for, look you, had Vidal meant ill by us, why should he not have betrayed us to the Welsh, or suffered us, by showing such knowledge as thou and I may have of their gibberish, to betray ourselves?"

"Well, my lord," said Guarine, "I may be silenced, but not satisfied. All the fair words he can speak—all the fine tunes he can play—Renault Vidal will be to my eyes ever a dark and suspicious man, with features always ready to mould themselves into the fittest form to attract confidence; with a tongue framed to utter the most flattering and agreeable words at one time, and at another to play shrewd plainness or blunt honesty; and an eye which, when he thinks himself unobserved, contradicts every assumed expression of features, every protestation of honesty, and every word of courtesy or cordiality to which his tongue has given utterance. But I speak not more on the subject; only I am an old mastiff, of the true breed—I love my master, but cannot endure some of those whom he favors; and yonder, as I judge, comes Vidal, to give us such an account of our situation as it shall please him."

A horseman was indeed seen advancing in the path towards the *Kist-vaen*, with a hasty pace; and his dress, in which something of the Eastern fashion was manifest, with the fantastic attire usually worn by men of his profession, made the Constable aware that the minstrel, of whom they were speaking, was rapidly approaching them.

Although Hugo de Lacy rendered this attendant no more than what in justice he supposed his services demanded, when he vindicated him from the suspicions thrown out by Guarine, yet at the bottom of his heart he had sometimes

shared those suspicions, and was often angry at himself, as a just and honest man, for censuring, on the slight testimony of looks, and sometimes casual expressions, a fidelity which seemed to be proved by many acts of zeal and integrity.

When Vidal approached and dismounted to make his obeisance, his master hasted to speak to him in words of favor, as if conscious he had been partly sharing Guarine's unjust judgment upon him, by even listening to it. "Welcome, my trusty Vidal," he said; "thou hast been the raven that fed us on the mountains of Wales, be now the dove that brings us good tidings from the Marches.—Thou art silent. What mean these downcast looks—that embarrassed carriage—that cap plucked down o'er thine eyes?—In God's name, man, speak!—Fear not for me—I can bear worse than tongue of man may tell. Thou hast seen me in the wars of Palestine, when my brave followers fell, man by man, around me, and when I was left well-nigh alone—and did I blench then?—Thou hast seen me when the ship's keel lay grating on the rock, and the billows flew in foam over her deck—did I blench then?—No—nor will I now."

"Boast not," said the minstrel, looking fixedly upon the Constable, as the former assumed the port and countenance of one who sets Fortune and her utmost malice at defiance—"boast not, lest thy bands be made strong."

There was a pause of a minute, during which the group formed at this instant a singular picture.

Afraid to ask, yet ashamed to seem to fear the ill tidings which impended, the Constable confronted his messenger with person erect, arms folded, and brow expanded with resolution; while the minstrel, carried beyond his usual and guarded apathy by the interest of the moment, bent on his master a keen fixed glance, as if to observe whether his courage was real or assumed.

Philip Guarine, on the other hand, to whom Heaven, in assigning him a rough exterior, had denied neither sense nor observation, kept his eye in turn firmly fixed on Vidal, as if endeavoring to determine what was the character of that deep interest which gleamed in the minstrel's looks apparently, and was unable to ascertain whether it was that of a faithful domestic sympathetically agitated by the bad news with which he was about to afflict his master, or that of an executioner standing with his knife suspended over his victim, deferring his blow until he should discover where it would be most sensibly felt. In Guarine's mind, prejudiced, perhaps, by the previous opinion he had entertained, the latter sentiment so decidedly predominated, that he longed to raise his staff, and strike down to the earth the servant, who seemed thus to enjoy the protracted sufferings of their common master.

At length a convulsive movement crossed the

brow of the Constable, and Guarine, when he held a sardonic smile begin to curl Vidal's lip, could keep silence no longer. "Vidal," he said, "thou art a—"

"A bearer of bad tidings," said Vidal, interrupting him, "therefore subject to the misconception of every fool who cannot distinguish between the author of harm, and him who unwillingly reports it."

"To what purpose this delay?" said the Constable. "Come, Sir Minstrel, I will spare you a pang—Eveline has forsaken and forgotten me?"

The minstrel assented by a low inclination.

Hugo de Lacy paced a short turn before the stone monument, endeavoring to conquer the deep emotion which he felt. "I forgive her," he said. "Forgive, did I say?—Alas! I have nothing to forgive. She used but the right I left in her hand—yes—our date of engagement was out—she had heard of my losses—my defeats—the destruction of my hopes—the expenditure of my wealth; and has taken the first opportunity which strict law afforded to break off her engagement with one bankrupt in fortune and fame. Many a maiden would have done—perhaps in prudence should have done—this;—but that woman's name should not have been Eveline Berenger."

He leaned on his esquire's arm, and for an instant laid his head on his shoulder with a depth of emotion which Guarine had never before seen him betray, and which, in awkward kindness, he could only attempt to console by bidding his master "be of good courage—he had lost but a woman."

"This is no selfish emotion, Philip," said the Constable, resuming self-command. "I grieve less that she has left me, than that she has misjudged me—that she has treated me as the pawnbroker does his wretched creditor, who arrests the pledge as the very moment elapses within which it might have been relieved. Did she then think that I in my turn would have been a creditor so rigid?—that I, who, since I knew her, scarce deemed myself worthy of her when I had wealth and fame, should insist on her sharing my diminished and degraded fortunes? How little she ever knew me, or how selfish must she have supposed my misfortunes to have made me! But be it so—she is gone, and may she be happy. The thought that she disturbed me shall pass from my mind; and I will think she has done that which I myself, as her best friend, must in honor have advised."

So saying, his countenance, to the surprise of his attendants, resumed its usual firm composure.

"I give you joy," said the esquire, in a whisper to the minstrel; "your evil news have wounded less deeply than, doubtless, you believed was possible."

"Alas!" replied the minstrel, "I have others and worse behind."

This answer was made in an equivocal tone of voice, corresponding to the peculiarity of his manner, and like that seeming emotion of a deep but very doubtful character.

"Eveline Berenger is then married," said the Constable; "and, let me make a wild guess,—she has not abandoned the family, though she has forsaken the individual—she is still a Lacy? ha?—Dolt that thou art, wilt thou not understand me? She is married to Damian de Lacy—to my nephew?"

The effort with which the Constable gave breath to this supposition formed a strange contrast to the constrained smile to which he compelled his features while he uttered it. With such a smile a man about to drink poison might name a health, as he put the fatal beverage to his lips.

"No, my lord—not married," answered the minstrel, with an emphasis on the word, which the Constable knew how to interpret.

"No, no," he replied quickly, "not married, perhaps, but engaged—troth-plighted. Wherefore not? The date of her old affiancement was out, why not enter into a new engagement?"

"The Lady Eveline and Sir Damian de Lacy are not affianced that I know of," answered his attendant.

This reply drove De Lacy's patience to extremity.

"Dog! dost thou trifle with me?" he exclaimed. "Vile wire-pincher, thou torturest me! Speak the worst at once, or I will presently make thee minstrel to the household of Satan."

Calm and collected did the minstrel reply,—
"The Lady Eveline and Sir Damian are neither married nor affianced, my lord. They have loved and lived together—*par amours*."

"Dog, and son of a dog," said De Lacy, "thou liest!" And, seizing the minstrel by the breast, the exasperated baron shook him with his whole strength. But great as that strength was, it was unable to stagger Vidal, a practised wrestler, in the firm posture which he had assumed, any more than his master's wrath could disturb the composure of the minstrel's bearing.

"Confess thou hast lied," said the Constable, releasing him, after having effected by his violence no greater degree of agitation than the exertion of human force produces upon the Rocking Stones of the Druids, which may be shaken, indeed, but not displaced.

"Were a lie to buy my own life, yea, the lives of all my tribe," said the minstrel, "I would not tell one. But truth itself is ever termed falsehood when it counteracts the train of our passions."

"Hear him, Philip Guarine, hear him!" exclaimed the Constable, turning hastily to his squire. "He tells me of my disgrace—of the dishonor of my house—of the depravity of those whom I have loved the best in the world—he tells me of it with a calm look, an eye composed, an

unfaltering tongue.—Is this—can it be nature? Is De Lacy sunk so low, that his dishonor shall be told by a common strolling minstrel, as calmly as if it were a theme for a vain ballad? Perhaps thou wilt make it one, ha!" as he concluded, darting a furious glance at the minstrel.

"Perhaps I might, my lord," replied the minstrel, "were it not that I must record therein the disgrace of Renault Vidal, who served a lord without either patience to bear insults and wrongs, or spirit to revenge them on the authors of his shame."

"Thou art right, thou art right, good fellow," said the Constable, hastily; "it is vengeance now alone which is left us.—And yet upon whom?"

As he spoke he walked shortly, and hastily to and fro; and, becoming suddenly silent, stood still and wrung his hands with deep emotion.

"I told thee," said the minstrel to Guarine, "that my muse would find a tender part at last. Dost thou remember the bull-fight we saw in Spain? A thousand little darts perplexed and annoyed the noble animal, ere he received the last deadly thrust from the lance of the Moorish cavalier."

"Man, or fiend, be which thou wilt," replied Guarine, "that can thus drink in with pleasure, and contemplate at your ease, the misery of another, I bid thee beware of me! Utter thy cold-blooded taunts in some other ear; for if my tongue be blunt, I wear a sword that is sharp enough."

"Thou hast seen me among swords," answered the minstrel, "and knowest how little terror they have for such as I am." Yet as he spoke he drew off from the esquire. He had, in fact, only addressed him in that sort of fulness of heart, which would have vented itself in soliloquy if alone, and now poured itself out on the nearest auditor, without the speaker being entirely conscious of the sentiments which his speech excited.

Few minutes had elapsed before the Constable of Chester had regained the calm external semblance with which, until this last dreadful wound, he had borne all the inflictions of fortune. He turned towards his followers, and addressed the minstrel with his usual calmness: "Thou art right, good fellow," he said, "in what thou saidst to me but now, and I forgive thee the taunt which accompanied thy good counsel. Speak out, in God's name! and speak to one prepared to endure the evil which God hath sent him. Certes, a good night is best known in battle, and a Christian in the time of trouble and adversity."

The tone in which the Constable spoke, seemed to produce a corresponding effect upon the deportment of his followers. The minstrel dropped at once the cynical and audacious tone in which he had hitherto seemed to tamper with the passions of his master; and in language simple and respectful, and which even approached to sympathy, informed him of the evil news which

he had collected during his absence. It was indeed disastrous.

The refusal of the Lady Eveline Berenger to admit Monthermer and his forces into her castle, had of course given circulation and credence to all the calumnies which had been circulated to her prejudice, and that of Damian de Lacy, and there were many who, for various causes, were interested in spreading and supporting these slanders. A large force had been sent into the country to subdue the insurgent peasants; and the knights and nobles dispatched for that purpose, failed not to avenge to the uttermost, upon the wretched plebeians, the noble blood which they had spilled during their temporary triumph.

The followers of the unfortunate Wenlock were infected with the same persuasion. Blamed by many for a hasty and cowardly surrender of a post which might have been defended, they endeavored to vindicate themselves by alleging the hostile demonstrations of De Lacy's cavalry as the sole cause of their premature submission.

These rumors, supported by such interested testimony, spread wide and far through the land; and, joined to the undeniable fact that Damian had sought refuge in the strong castle of Garde Doloureuse, which was now defending itself against the royal arms, animated the numerous enemies of the House of De Lacy, and drove its vassals and friends almost to despair, as men reduced either to disown their feudal allegiance, or renounce that still more sacred fealty which they owed to their sovereign.

At this crisis they received intelligence that the wise and active monarch by whom the sceptre of England was then swayed, was moving towards that part of England, at the head of a large body of soldiers, for the purpose at once of pressing the siege of the Garde Doloureuse, and completing the suppression of the insurrection of the peasantry, which Guy Monthermer had nearly accomplished.

In this emergency, and when the friends and dependants of the House of Lacy scarcely knew which hand to turn to, Randal, the Constable's kinsman, and, after Damian, his heir, suddenly appeared amongst them, with a royal commission to raise and command such followers of the family as might not desire to be involved in the supposed treason of the Constable's delegate. In troublesome times, men's vices are forgotten, provided they display activity, courage, and prudence, the virtues then most required; and the appearance of Randal, who was by no means deficient in any of these attributes, was received as a good omen by the followers of his cousin. They quickly gathered around him, surrendered to the royal mandate such strongholds as they possessed, and, to vindicate themselves from any participation in the alleged crimes of Damian, they distinguished themselves, under Randal's command, against such scattered bodies of peasantry as still kept the field, or lurked in the mountains and passes; and conducted them-

selves with such severity after success, as made the troops even of Monthermer appear gentle and clement in comparison with those of De Lacy. Finally, with the banner of his ancient house displayed, and five hundred good men assembled under it, Randal appeared before the Garde Doloureuse, and joined Henry's camp there.

The castle was already hardly pressed, and the few defenders, disabled by wounds, watching, and privation, had now the additional discouragement to see displayed against their walls the only banner in England, under which they had hoped forces might be mustered for their aid.

The high-spirited entreaties of Eveline, unbent by adversity and want, gradually lost effect on the defenders of the castle; and proposals for surrender were urged and discussed by a tumultuary council, into which not only the inferior officers, but many of the common men, had thrust themselves, as in a period of such general distress as unlooses all the bonds of discipline, and leaves each man at liberty to speak and act for himself. To their surprise, in the midst of their discussions, Damian de Lacy, arisen from the sick-bed to which he had been so long confined, appeared among them, pale and feeble, his cheek tinged with the ghastly look which is left by long illness—he leaned on his page Amelot. "Gentlemen," he said, "and soldiers—yet why should I call you either?—Gentlemen are ever ready to die in behalf of a lady—soldiers hold life in scorn compared to their honor."

"Out upon him! out upon him!" exclaimed some of the soldiers, interrupting him; "he would have us, who are innocent, die the death of traitors, and be hanged in our armor over the walls, rather than part with his leman."

"Peace, irreverent slave!" said Damian in a voice like thunder, "or my last blow shall be a mean one, aimed against such a catiff as thou art.—And you," he continued, addressing the rest,—"you, who are shrinking from the toils of your profession, because if you persist in a course of honor, death may close them a few years sooner than it needs must—you, who are scared like children at the sight of a death's-head, do not suppose that Damian de Lacy would desire to shelter himself at the expense of those lives which you hold so dear. Make your bargain with King Henry. Deliver me up to his justice, or his severity; or, if you like it better, strike my head from my body, and hurl it, as a peace-offering, from the walls of the castle. To God, in his good time, will I trust for the clearance of mine honor. In a word, surrender me, dead or alive, or open the gates and permit me to surrender myself. Only, as ye are men, since I may not say better of ye, care at least for the safety of your mistress, and make such terms as may secure HER safety, and save yourselves from the dishonor of being held cowardly and perjured catiffs in your graves."