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Portrait of Victor Hugo.

Etched by Léon Boisson.—From drawing by Devéria.

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HANS OF ICELAND

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

BY

VICTOR HUGO



Centenary Edition

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{2}

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INTRODUCTION.

“HANS of Iceland” is the work of a young man,—a very young man.

As we read it, we see clearly that the eighteen-year old boy who wrote “Hans of Iceland” during a fever fit in 1821 had no experience of men or things, no experience of ideas, and that he was striving to divine all this.

Every intellectual effort, be it drama, poem, or romance, must contain three ingredients,—what the author has felt, what he has observed, and what he has divined.

In a romance particularly, if it is to be a good one, there must be plenty of feeling and plenty of observation; and those things which are divined must be derived logically, simply, and with no solution of continuity, from those things which are observed and felt.

If we apply this law to “Hans of Iceland,” we shall readily grasp the chief defect of the book.

There is but one thing felt in “Hans of Iceland,” the young man’s love; but one thing observed, the young girl’s love. All the rest is a matter of divination,—that is, of invention; for youth, having neither facts nor experience nor models behind it, can only divine by means of its imagination. “Hans of Iceland,” therefore, admitting that it deserves classification, is hardly more than a fanciful romance.

When a man’s prime is past, when his head is bowed, when he feels compelled to write something more than {6} strange stories to frighten old women and children, when all the rough edges of youth are worn away by the friction of life, he realizes that every invention, every creation, every artistic divination, must be based upon study, observation, meditation, science, measure, comparison, serious reflection, attentive and constant imitation of Nature, conscientious self-criticism; and the inspiration evolved from these new conditions, far from losing anything, gains broader influence and greater strength. The poet then realizes his true aim. All the vague reverie of his earlier years is crystallized, as it were, and converted into thought. This second period of life is usually that of an artist’s greatest works. Still young, and yet mature,—this is the precious phase, the intermediate and culminating point, the warm and radiant hour of noon, the moment when there is the least possible shade, and the most light. There are supreme artists who maintain this height all their lives, despite declining years. These are the sovereign geniuses. Shakespeare and Michael Angelo left the impress of youth upon some of their works, the traces of age on none.

To return to the story of which a new edition is now to be published: Such as it is, with its abrupt and breathless action, its characters all of a piece, its barbarous and bungling mannerism, its supercilious and awkward form, its undisguised moods of revery, its varied hues thrown together haphazard with no thought of pleasing the eye, its crude, harsh, and shocking style, utterly destitute of skill or shading, with the countless excesses of every kind committed almost unwittingly throughout, this book represents with tolerable accuracy the period of life at which it was written, and the particular condition of the soul, the imagination, and the heart of a youth in love for the first time, when the commonplace and ordinary obstacles of life are converted into imposing and poetic impediments, when his head is full of heroic fancies which glorify him in his own{7} estimation, when he is already a man in two or three directions, and still a child in a score of others, when he has read Ducray-Duminil at eleven years of age, Auguste la Fontaine at thirteen, Shakespeare at sixteen,—a strange and rapid scale, which leads abruptly, in the matter of literary taste, from the silly to the sentimental, from the sentimental to the sublime.

We give this book back to the world in 1833 as it was written in 1821, because we feel that the work, ingenuous, if nothing else, gives a tolerably faithful picture of the age that produced it.

Moreover, the author, small as may be his place in literature, having undergone the common fate of every writer, great or small, and seen his first works exalted at the expense of the latest, and having heard it declared that he was far from having fulfilled the promise of his youth, deems it his duty, not to oppose to a criticism, perhaps wise and just, objections which might seem suspicious from his lips, but to reprint his first works simply and literally as he wrote them, that his readers may decide, so far as he is concerned, whether it be a step forward or backward that divides “Hans of Iceland” from “Nôtre-Dame de Paris.”

Paris, May, 1833.

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE author of this work, from the day he wrote its first page to the day when he placed the happy word “End” at the bottom of the last page, was a prey to the most absurd illusion. Fancying that a composition in four parts deserved some consideration, he wasted his time in seeking a fundamental idea, in working it out, well or ill, according to a plan good or bad, as the case may be, in arranging scenes, combining effects,

studying manners and customs as best he might,—in a word, he took his work seriously.

It is only now, when, as it is the wont of authors to end where the reader begins, he was about to elaborate a long preface, which should be the shield of his work, and contain, together with a statement of the moral and literary principles upon which his conception rests, a more or less hasty sketch of the various historical events which it embraces, and a more or less clear picture of the country in which the scene is laid,—it is only now, I say, that he perceives his error; that he recognizes all the insignificance and all the frivolity of the species of work in behalf of which he has so solemnly spoiled so much paper, and that he feels how strangely he was misled when he persuaded himself that this romance was indeed, up to a certain point, a literary production, and that these four fragments formed a book.

He therefore sagely resolved, after making a proper apology, to say nothing at all in this so-called preface,{10} which the publisher will consequently be careful to print in large letters. He will not tell the reader his name or surname, whether he be old or young, married or a bachelor; whether he has written elegies or fables, odes or satires; whether he means to write tragedies, dramas, or comedies; whether he be the patrician member of some great literary association, or whether he holds a position upon some newspaper,—all things, however, which it would be very interesting to know. He confines himself to stating that the picturesque part of his story has been the object of his especial care; that K's, Y's, H's, and W's abound in it, although he uses these romantic letters with extreme temperance, witness the historic name of Guldenlew, which some chroniclers write Guldenloewe,—a liberty which he has not ventured to allow himself; that there will also be found numerous diphthongs varied with much taste and elegance; and finally, that each chapter is preceded by a strange and mysterious motto, which adds singularly to the interest and gives more expressiveness to each part of the composition.

January, 1823.{11}

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE author has been informed that a brief preface or introduction to this second edition of his book is absolutely essential. In vain he declared that the four or five paragraphs which escorted the first edition, and with which the publisher persisted in disfiguring it, had already drawn down upon his head the anathemas of one of the most distinguished and honorable of French writers,[\[1\]](#) who accused him of assuming the sour tones of the illustrious Jedediah Cleishbotham, schoolmaster and sexton of the parish of Gandercleugh; in vain he alleged that this brilliant and sensible critic,

from dealing severely with an error, would doubtless become merciless, upon a repetition of the same mistake,—in a word, he presented countless equally good reasons for declining to fall into the trap; but better ones must have been brought to bear against them, since he is now writing a second preface, after so bitterly repenting that he wrote the first. While executing this bold resolve, his first thought was to open the second edition with those general and particular views on the subject of romance-writing with which he dared not burden the first. Lost in meditations on this literary and didactic treatise, he was still a prey to that strange intoxication of composition, that brief instant when the author, feeling that he is about to grasp an ideal perfection which, alas, he can never reach, is thrilled with delight at his task; he was, we say, enjoying that period of^{12} mental ecstasy when labor is a delight, when the secret possession of the muse seems sweeter than the dazzling pursuit of fame, when one of his wisest friends waked him suddenly from his dream, his ecstasy, his intoxication, by assuring him that several very great, popular, and influential men of letters considered the dissertation which he was preparing utterly flat, insipid, and unnecessary; that the painful apostleship of criticism with which they were charged in various public pages, imposing upon them the mournful duty of pitilessly hunting down the monster of “romanticism” and bad taste, they were even then busily preparing for certain enlightened and impartial journals a conscientious, analytical, and spicy criticism of the aforesaid forthcoming dissertation. Upon hearing this terrible news, the poor author *obstupuit; steteruntque comæ, et vox faucibus hæsit*,—that is to say, nothing remained but to leave in the limbo whence he was about to rescue it the essay, “virgin and yet unborn,” as Jean Jacques Rousseau has it, of which such just and such severe critics had fallen foul. His friend advised him to replace it by a few simple preliminary remarks from the publishers, as he could very properly put into those gentlemen’s mouths all the sweet nothings which so delicately tickle an author’s ear; nay, he even offered him certain models, taken from highly successful works, some beginning with the words, “The immense popular success of this book,” etc.; others thus, “The European fame which this work has won,” etc.; or, “It is now superfluous to praise this book, since popular opinion declares that no praise can equal its merit,” etc. Although these various formulæ, according to the discreet adviser, were not without their attested virtues, the author did not feel sufficient humility and paternal indifference to expose his work to the disappointment or the demands of the reader who should peruse these magnificent apologies, nor sufficient effrontery to imitate those rustic mountebanks who attract the curious pub^{13}lic by displaying a painted crocodile upon a curtain, behind which, on paying their fee, they find nothing but a lizard. He therefore rejected the idea of sounding his own praises through the obliging lips of his publishers. His friend then suggested that he should

put into the mouth of his villanous Icelandic outlaw, by way of a passport, phrases suited to popularize him and render him congenial with the age,—such as delicate jests directed against the nobility, bitter sarcasms upon the clergy, ingenious invectives against nuns, monks, and other monsters of the social order. The author asked nothing better; but it scarcely seemed to him that nobles and monks had any very direct connection with the work in hand. He might, it is true, have borrowed other colors from the same palette, and thrown together a few highly philanthropic pages, in which—always keeping at a prudent distance from the dangerous shoals hidden under the waters of philosophy, and known as the shoals of the Court of Misdemeanors—he might have advanced certain of those truths discovered by the wise for the glory of mankind and the consolation of the dying; namely, that man is but a brute, that the soul is a gas of greater or less density, and that God is nothing; but he thought these incontestable truths very trivial and very hackneyed, and he could scarcely add a drop to the deluge of reasonable morality, atheistic religion, maxims, doctrines, and principles with which we have been flooded for our good for thirty years, in so monstrous a fashion that we might, if it be not irreverent, apply Regnier's verses on a shower,—

“From out the clouds the rains in such vast torrents pour,
That thirsty dogs can drink and not their foreheads lower.”

Moreover, these lofty themes had no very visible connection with the subject of his story, and he might have been puzzled to find any bond of union leading up to it, although the art of transitions has been singularly{14} simplified, since so many great men have discovered the secret of passing from a stable to a palace direct, and of exchanging without incongruity the policeman's cap for the civic crown.

Recognizing, therefore, that neither his talent nor his learning, “neither his wings nor his beak,” as the ingenious Arab poet has it, could furnish him with a preface which would interest his readers, the author resolved merely to offer them a serious and frank account of the improvements introduced in this second edition.

He must first inform them that the words “second edition” are incorrect, and that the term “first edition” should really be applied to this reprint, inasmuch as the four variously sized bundles of grayish paper blotted with black and white, which the indulgent public has hitherto kindly consented to consider as the four volumes of “Hans of Iceland,” were so disfigured with typographic errors by a barbarous printer that the wretched author, on looking over his own production, altered as it was beyond all recognition, was perpetually subjected to the torments of a father whose child returns to him mutilated and tattooed by the hand of an Iroquois from Lake Ontario.

For instance, the type turned a “lion’s” voice into a “line,” robbed the Dovrefield Mountains of their “peaks” and bestowed upon them “feet,” and when the Norse fishers hoped to moor their boat in various “creeks,” the printer drove them upon “bricks.” Not to weary the reader, the author will pass by in silence all the outrages of this kind which his wounded memory recalls,—

“Manet alto in pectore vulnus.”

Suffice it to say that there is no grotesque image, no strange meaning, no absurd idea, no confused figure, no burlesque hieroglyph, which the sedulously stupid ignorance of this enigmatical proof-reader did not make him utter. Alas!{15} every one who ever printed a dozen lines, were it only an invitation to a wedding or a funeral, will feel the deep bitterness of such a sorrow!

The proofs of this reprint have accordingly been read with sedulous care; and the author now ventures to hope, in which he is sustained by one or two close friends, that this romance *redivivus* is worthy to figure among those splendid writings before which “the eleven stars bow low,’ as before the sun and moon.”[2]

Should journalists accuse him of making no corrections, he will take the liberty of sending them the proof-sheets of this regenerate work, blackened by minute scrutiny; for it is averred that there is more than one doubting Thomas among them.

The kindly reader will also observe that several dates have been corrected, historical notes added, one or two chapters enriched with new mottoes,—in a word, he will find on every page changes whose extreme importance is to be measured only by that of the entire book.

An impertinent adviser desired a translation in foot-notes of all the Latin phrases with which the learned Spiagudry sprinkles the book, “for the comprehension,” adds this personage, “of those masons, tinkers, or hairdressers who edit certain journals wherein ‘Hans of Iceland’ may chance to be reviewed.” The author’s anger at such insidious counsel may be imagined. He instantly begged to inform the would-be joker that all journalists, without distinction, are mirrors of courtesy, wisdom, and good faith, and requested him not to insult him by believing him to be one of those ungrateful citizens who are ever ready to address those dictators of taste and genius in this poor verse of an old poet,—

“Keep your own skins, my friends, nor other folk condemn,”

{16}

for he is far from thinking that the lion's skin is not the true skin of those popular gentlemen.

Still another friend implored him—for he must conceal nothing from his readers—to put his name on the titlepage of this story, hitherto the neglected child of an unknown father. It must be owned that beyond the pleasure of seeing the half-dozen capital letters which spell out one's name printed in fine black characters upon smooth white paper, there is also a certain charm in displaying it in solitary grandeur upon the back of the cover, as if the work which it adorns, far from being the only monument of the author's genius, were but one of the columns in the imposing temple wherein his genius is some day to spread its wings, but a slight specimen of his hidden talent and his unpublished glory. It proves that at least he hopes to be a noted and admired writer some day. To triumph over this fresh temptation, the author was forced to muster all his fears lest he should never break through the crowd of scribblers who, even though they waive their anonymity, must ever remain unknown.

As for the hint thrown out by certain amateurs with very delicate ears regarding the uncouth harshness of his Norwegian names, he considers it well founded. He therefore proposes, so soon as he shall be made a member of the Royal Society at Stockholm or the Bergen Academy, to invite the Norwegians to change their language, inasmuch as the hideous jargon which they are whimsical enough to employ wounds the ears of Parisian ladies, and their outlandish names, as rugged as their rocks, produce the same effect upon the sensitive tongue that utters them, as their bear's grease and bark bread would probably have upon the delicate nervous filaments of our palate.

It only remains for him to thank the few persons who have been good enough to read his book through, as is proved by the really tremendous success which it has won;{17} he also expresses his gratitude to those of his fair readers who, he is assured, have formed a certain ideal of the author of "Hans of Iceland" from his book; he is vastly flattered that they should attribute to him red hair, a shaggy beard, and fierce eyes; he is overcome with confusion that they should condescend to do him the honor to suppose that he never cuts his nails; but he entreats them on his knees to rest assured that he never carries his ferocity so far as to devour little children alive; moreover, all these facts will become fixed when his renown has reached the level of that of the authors of "Lolotte and Fanfan" or of "Monsieur Botte,"—men of transcendent genius, twins alike in talent and in taste, *arcades ambo*; and when his portrait, *terribiles visu formæ*, and his biography, *domestica facta*, are prefixed to his works.

He was about to close this long epistle, when his publisher, on the point of sending the book to the reviews, requested that he would add a few complimentary notices of his own work, adding, to remove all the author's scruples, that "his writing should not be the means of compromising him, as he would copy these articles himself." This last remark struck the author as extremely touching. Since it seems that in this most luminous age every man considers it his duty to enlighten his neighbor as to his own qualities and personal perfections, concerning which none can be so well informed as their possessor, as, moreover, this last temptation is a strong one, the author thinks it his duty, in case he should yield to it, to warn the public not to believe more than half of what the press may say of his work.

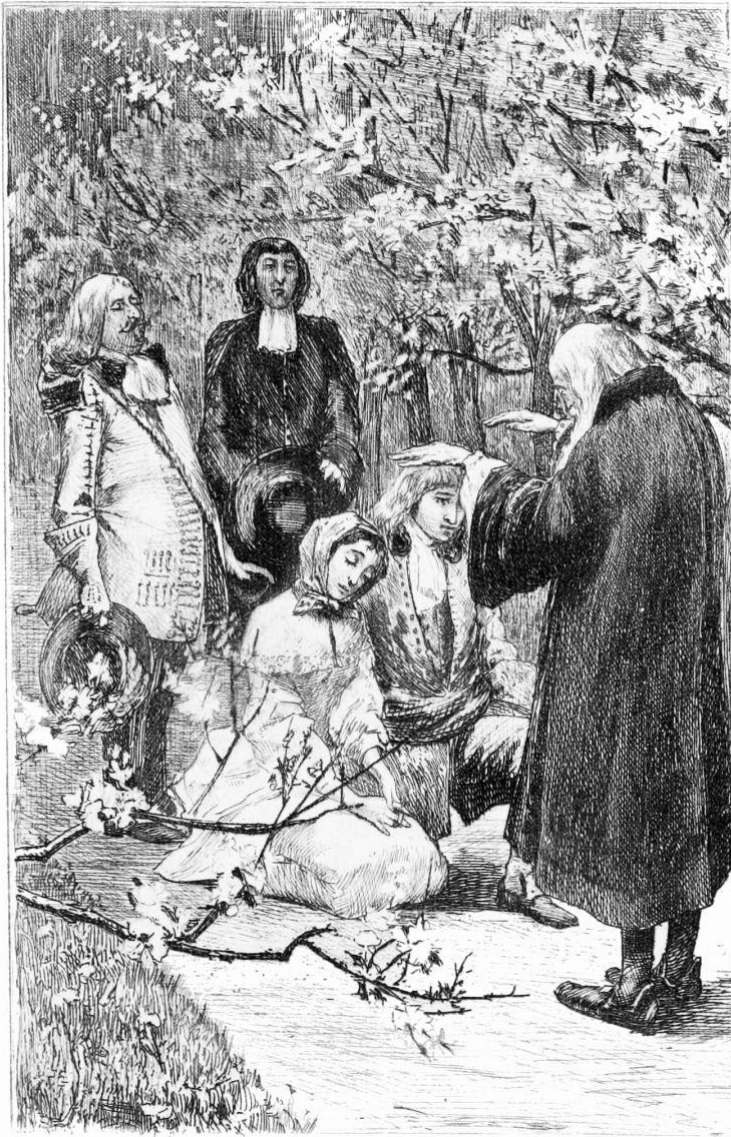
April, 1828.{19}{18}

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HANS OF ICELAND

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Schumacker blessing the Young Couple.

Etching by W. H. W. Bicknell.

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HANS OF ICELAND.

I.

Did you see it? did you see it? did you see it? Oh! did you see it?—Who saw it? Who did see it? For mercy's sake, who saw it?

Sterne: *Tristram Shandy*.

“THAT’S what comes of falling in love, Neighbor Niels. Poor Guth Stersen would not be stretched out yonder on that great black slab, like a starfish forgotten by the tide, if she had kept her mind on mending her father’s boat and patching his nets. Saint Usuph, the fisher, console our old friend in his affliction!”

“And her lover,” added a shrill, tremulous voice, “Gill Stadt, that fine young man beside her, would not be there now, if instead of making love to Guth and seeking his^{24} luck in those accursed Roeraas mines, he had stayed at home and rocked his little brother’s cradle, under the smoky cross-beams of his mother’s hut.”

Neighbor Niels, whom the first speaker addressed, interrupted: “Your memory is growing old along with yourself, Mother Olly. Gill never had a brother, and that makes poor Widow Stadt’s grief all the harder to bear, for her home is now left utterly desolate; if she looks up to heaven for consolation, she sees nought but her old roof, where still hangs the cradle of her son, grown to be a tall young man, and dead.”

“Poor mother!” replied old Olly, “it was the young man’s own fault. Why should he go to Roeraas to be a miner?”

“I do believe,” said Niels, “that those infernal mines rob us of a man for every escalin’s^[3] worth of copper which we get out of them. What do you think, Father Braal?”

“Miners are fools,” replied the fisherman. “If he would live, the fish should not leave the water. Man should not enter the bowels of the earth.”

“But,” asked a young man in the crowd, “how if Gill Stadt had to work in the mines to win his sweetheart?”

“A man should never risk his life,” interrupted Olly, “for affections which are far from being worth a life, or filling it. A pretty wedding-bed Gill earned for his Guth!”

“So then that young woman,” inquired a curious bystander, “drowned herself in despair at the death of this young man?^{25}”

“Who says so?” loudly exclaimed a soldier, pushing his way through the crowd. “That young girl, whom I knew well, was indeed engaged to marry a young miner who was lately crushed by falling rocks in the underground tunnels of Storwaadsgrube, near Roeraas; but she was also the sweetheart of one of my mates, and as she was going to Munkholm secretly, day before yesterday, to celebrate with her lover the death of her betrothed, her boat capsized on a reef, and she was drowned.”

A confused sound of voices arose: "Impossible, master soldier," cried the old women. The young ones were silent; and Neighbor Niels maliciously reminded fisher Braal of his serious statement: "That's what comes of falling in love!"

The soldier was about to lose his temper with his opponents; he had already called them "old witches from the cave of Quiragoth," and they were not disposed to bear so grave an insult patiently, when a sharp and imperious voice, crying "Silence, silence, you old fools!" put an end to the dispute. All was still, as when the sudden crow of a cock is heard amid the cackling of the hens.

Before relating the rest of the scene, it may be well to describe the spot where it occurred. It was—as the reader has doubtless guessed—one of those gloomy structures which public pity and social forethought devote to unknown corpses, the last asylum of the dead, whose lives were usually sad ones; where the careless spectator, the surly or kindly observer gather, and friends often meet tearful relatives, whom long and unendurable anxiety has robbed of all but one sad hope. At the period now{26} remote, and in the uncivilized region to which I have carried my reader, there had as yet been no attempt, as in our cities of gold and mud, to make these resting-places into ingeniously forbidding or elegantly funereal edifices. Daylight did not fall through tomb-shaped openings, into artistically sculptured vaults, upon beds which seem as if the guardian of the place were anxious to leave the dead some of the conveniences of life, and the pillow seems arranged for sleep. If the keeper's door were left ajar, the eye, wearied with gazing upon hideous, naked corpses, had not as now the pleasure of resting upon elegant furniture and happy children. Death was there in all its deformity, in all its horror; and there was no attempt to deck its fleshless skeleton with ribbons and gewgaws.

The room in which our actors stood was spacious and dark, which made it seem still larger; it was lighted only by a broad, low door opening upon the port of Thronhjem, and a rough hole in the ceiling, through which a dull, white light fell, mingled with rain, hail, or snow, according to the weather, upon the corpses lying directly under it. The room was divided by an iron railing, breast-high, running across it from side to side. The public entered the outer portion through the low door; in the inner part were six long black granite slabs, arranged abreast and parallel to each other. A small side door served to admit the keeper and his assistant to either section, their rooms occupying the rear of the building, close to the water. The miner and his betrothed occupied two granite beds; decomposition had already begun its work upon the young woman's body, showing itself in large blue and purple spots running along{27} her limbs on the line of the blood-vessels. Gill's features were stern and set; but his body

was so horribly mutilated that it was impossible to judge whether his beauty were really so great as old Olly declared.

It was before these disfigured remains, in the midst of the mute crowd, that the conversation which we have faithfully interpreted, began.

A tall, withered old man, sitting with folded arms and bent head upon a broken stool in the darkest corner of the room, had apparently paid no heed until the moment when he rose suddenly, exclaiming, "Silence, silence, you old fools!" and seized the soldier by the arm.

All were hushed; the soldier turned and broke into a burst of laughter at the sight of his strange interrupter, whose pale face, thin greasy locks, long fingers, and complete costume of reindeer leather amply justified this mirthful reception. But a clamor arose from the crowd of women, for a moment confounded: "It is the keeper of the Spladgest!^[4]—That infernal doorkeeper to the dead!—That diabolical Spiagudry!—That accursed sorcerer!"

"Silence, you old fools, silence! If this be the witches' Sabbath, hasten away and find your broomsticks; if you don't, they'll fly off without you. Let this worthy descendant of the god Thor alone."

Then Spiagudry, striving to assume a gracious expression, addressed the soldier: "You say, my good fellow, that this wretched woman—"

"Old rascal!" muttered Olly; "yes, we are all 'wretched women,' to him, because our bodies, if they fall into his^{28} claws, only bring him thirty escalins' reward, while he gets forty for the paltry carcass of a man."

"Silence, old women!" repeated Spiagudry. "In truth, these daughters of the Devil are like their kettles; when they wax warm, they must needs sing. Tell me, my valiant king of the sword, your comrade, this Guth's lover, will doubtless kill himself in despair at her loss, won't he?"

Here burst forth the long-repressed storm. "Do you hear the miscreant,—the old Pagan!" cried twenty shrill, discordant voices. "He would fain see one less man living, for the sake of the forty escalins that a dead body brings him."

"And what if I would?" replied the keeper of the Spladgest. "Doesn't our gracious king and master, Christian V.,—may Saint Hospitius bless him!—declare himself the natural guardian of all miners, so that when they die he may enrich his royal treasury with their paltry leavings?"

“You honor the king,” answered fisher Braal, “by comparing the royal treasury to the strong-box of your charnel-house, and him to yourself, Neighbor Spiagudry.”

“Neighbor, indeed!” said the keeper, shocked by such familiarity. “Your neighbor! say rather your host! since it may easily chance some day, my dear boat-dweller, that I shall have to lend you one of my six stone beds for a week. Besides,” he added, with a laugh, “if I spoke of that soldier’s death, it was merely from a desire to see the perpetuation of the custom of suicide for the sake of those great and tragic passions which ladies are wont to inspire.{29}”

“Well, you tall corpse and keeper of corpses,” said the soldier, “what are you after, with your amiable grimace, which looks so much like the last smile of a man who has been hanged?”

“Capital, my valiant fellow!” replied Spiagudry. “I always felt that there was more wit beneath the helmet of Constable Thurn, who conquered the Devil with his sword and his tongue, than under the mitre of Bishop Isleif, who wrote the history of Iceland, or the square cap of Professor Shoening, who described our cathedral.”

“In that case, if you will take my advice, my old bag of leather, you will give up the revenues of the charnel-house, and go and sell yourself to the viceroy’s museum of curiosities at Bergen. I swear to you, by Belphegor, that they pay their weight in gold there for rare beasts; but say, what do you want with me?”

“When the bodies brought here are found in the water, we have to give half the reward to the fisherman. I was going to ask you, therefore, illustrious heir to Constable Thurn, if you would persuade your unfortunate comrade not to drown himself, but to choose some other mode of death; it can’t matter much to him, and he would not wish to wrong the unhappy Christian who must entertain his corpse, if the loss of Guth should really drive him to that act of despair.”

“You are quite mistaken, my charitable and hospitable friend. My comrade will not have the pleasure of occupying an apartment in your tempting tavern with its six beds. Don’t you suppose he has already consoled himself{30} with another Valkyria for the death of that girl? He had long been tired of your Guth, by my beard!”

At these words, the storm, which Spiagudry had for a moment drawn upon his own head, again burst more furiously than ever upon the luckless soldier.

“What, miserable scamp!” shrieked the old women; “is that the way you forget us? And yet we love such good-for-nothings!”

The young girls still kept silence. Some of them even thought—greatly against their will, of course—that this graceless fellow was very good-looking.

“Oh, ho!” said the soldier; “has the witches’ Sabbath come round again? Beelzebub’s punishment is frightful indeed if he be condemned to hear such choruses once a week!”

No one can say how this fresh squall would have ended, if general attention had not at this moment been utterly absorbed by a noise from without. The uproar increased steadily, and presently a swarm of little ragged boys entered the Spladgest, tumultuously shouting and crowding about a covered bier carried by two men.

“Where does that come from?” the keeper asked the bearers.

“From Urchtal Sands.”

“Oglypiglap!” shouted Spiagudry.

One of the side doors opened, a little man of Lappish race, dressed in leather, entered, and signed to the bearers to follow him. Spiagudry accompanied them, and the door closed before the curious crowd had time to guess, by the length of the body on the bier, whether it were a man or a woman.

This subject still occupied all their thoughts, when Spiagudry and his assistant reappeared in the second compartment, carrying the corpse of a man, which they placed upon one of the granite couches.

“It’s a long time since I’ve handled such handsome clothes,” said Oglypiglap; then, shaking his head and standing on tiptoe, he hung above the dead man the elegant uniform of a captain in the army. The corpse’s head was disfigured, and his limbs were covered with blood; the keeper sprinkled the body several times from an old broken pail.

“By Saint Beelzebub!” cried the soldier, “it is an officer of my regiment. Let me see; can it be Captain Bollar,—from grief at his uncle’s death? Bah! he is the heir. Baron Randmer? He lost his estate at cards yesterday, but he will win it back to-morrow, with his adversary’s castle. Can it be Captain Lory, whose dog was drowned, or Paymaster Stunck, whose wife was unfaithful to him? But, really, I don’t see why he should blow out his brains for that!”

The crowd steadily increased. Just at this instant, a young man who was crossing the wharf, seeing the mob of people, dismounted from his horse, handed the bridle to the servant behind him, and entered the Spladgest. He wore a simple travelling dress, was

armed with a sword, and wrapped in a large green cloak; a black plume, fastened to his hat by a diamond buckle, fell over his noble face and waved to and fro upon his lofty brow, shaded by chestnut hair; his boots and spurs, soiled with mud, showed that he had come a long distance.

As he entered, a short, thick-set man, also wrapped in a cloak and hiding his hands in huge gloves, replied to the soldier.

“And who told you that he killed himself? That man no more committed suicide, I’ll be bound, than the roof of your cathedral set itself on fire.”

As the double-edged sword makes two wounds, this phrase gave birth to two answers.

“Our cathedral!” said Niels; “it is covered with copper now. It was that miserable Hans who set it on fire to make work for the miners, one of whom was his favorite Gill Stadt, whom you see lying yonder.”

“What the devil!” cried the soldier, in his turn; “do you dare tell me, the second musketeer in the Munkholm garrison, that that man did not blow out his brains!”

“He was murdered,” coldly replied the little fellow.

“Just listen to the oracle! Go along with you. Your little gray eyes can see no better than your hands do under the big gloves with which you cover them in the middle of the summer.”

The little man’s eyes flashed.

“Soldier, pray to your patron saint that these hands may never leave their mark upon your face!”

“Oh!—enough of this!” cried the soldier, in a rage. Then, pausing suddenly, he said: “No, there must be no word of a duel before dead men.”

The little man growled a few words in a foreign tongue, and vanished.

A voice cried out: “He was found on Urchtal Sands.”

“On Urchtal Sands?” said the soldier; “Captain Dispolsen was to land there this morning, from Copenhagen.”

“Captain Dispolsen has not yet reached Munkholm,” said another voice.

“They say that Hans of Iceland haunts those sands just now,” added a fourth.

“Then it is possible that this may be the captain,” said the soldier, “if Hans was the murderer; for we all know that the Icelander murders in so devilish a fashion that his victims often seem to be suicides.”

“What sort of man is this Hans?” asked some one.

“He is a giant,” said one.

“He is a dwarf,” said another.

“Has nobody seen him, then?” put in a voice.

“Those who see him for the first time, see him for the last time also.”

“Hush!” said old Olly; “they say there are but three persons who ever exchanged human speech with him,—that reprobate of a Spiagudry, Widow Stadt, and—but he had a sad life and a sad death—that poor Gill, who lies yonder. Hush!”

“Hush!” was repeated on all sides.

“Now,” suddenly exclaimed the soldier, “I am sure that this is indeed Captain Dispolsen. I recognize the steel chain which our prisoner, old Schumacker, gave him when he went away.”

The young man with the black plume broke the silence abruptly: “Are you sure it is Captain Dispolsen?^{34}”

“Sure, by the merits of Saint Beelzebub!” said the soldier.

The young man left the room hurriedly.

“Get me a boat for Munkholm,” he said to his servant.

“But, the general, sir?”

“Take the horses to him. I will follow to-morrow. Am I my own master, or not? Come, night is falling, and I am in haste. A boat!”

The servant obeyed, and for some time stood watching his young master as he moved away from the shore.^{35}

II.

I will sit by you while you tell me some pleasant tale to pass away the time.—

Maturin: *Bertram*.

THE reader is already aware that we are at Thronhjøm, one of the four chief cities in Norway, although not the residence of the viceroy. At the date of this story (1699) the kingdom of Norway was still united to Denmark, and governed by a viceroy whose seat was in Bergen, a larger, handsomer, and more southerly town than Thronhjøm, in spite of the disagreeable nickname attached to it by the famous Admiral Tromp.

Thronhjøm offers a pleasant prospect as you approach it by the fjord to which the city gives its name. The harbor is quite large, although it cannot be entered easily in all weathers. At this time it resembled nothing so much as a long canal, lined on the right by Danish and Norwegian{36} ships, and on the left by foreign vessels, as prescribed by law. In the background lay the town, situated on a well-cultivated plain, and crowned by the lofty spires of the cathedral. This church—one of the finest pieces of Gothic architecture, as we may judge from Professor Shoening's book, so learnedly quoted by Spiagudry, which describes it as it was before repeated fires had laid it waste—bore upon its highest pinnacle the episcopal cross, the distinctive sign that it was the cathedral of the Lutheran bishop of Thronhjøm. Beyond the town, in the blue distance, were the slender white peaks of the Kiölen Mountains, like the sharp-pointed ornaments on an antique crown.

In the middle of the harbor, within cannon-shot of the shore, upon a mass of rocks lashed by the waves, rose the lonely fortress of Munkholm, a gloomy prison which then held a prisoner celebrated for the splendor of his long prosperity and for his sudden disgrace.

Schumacker, born in an obscure station, was loaded with favors by his master, then hurled from the chair of the Lord High Chancellor of Denmark and Norway to the traitor's bench, dragged to the scaffold, and thence by royal clemency cast into a lonely dungeon at the extreme end of the two kingdoms. His creatures had overthrown him, but gave him no right to inveigh against their ingratitude. How could he complain if the steps gave way beneath him, which he had built so high for his own aggrandizement only?

The founder of the Danish nobility, from the depth of his exile, saw the grandees whom he had created share{37} his own dignities between them. Count d'Ahlefeld, his mortal enemy, succeeded him as chancellor; General Arensdorf, as earl-marshal, distributed military titles, and Bishop Spollyson took the position of inspector of universities. The only one of his foes who did not owe his rise to him was Count Ulric Frederic Guldenlew, natural son of King Frederic III, and now viceroy of Norway. He was the most generous of all.

Toward the sombre rock of Munkholm the boat of the youth with the black plume now slowly moved. The sun sank rapidly behind the lonely fortress, whose walls cut off its last beams, already so horizontal that the peasant on the distant eastern hills of Larsynn might see beside him on the heather the faint shadow of the sentinel keeping his watch on Munkholm's highest tower.{38}

III.

Ah! my heart could receive no more painful wound!... A young man destitute of morals.... He dared gaze at her! His glance soiled her purity. Claudia! The mere thought drives me mad.—Lessing.

“ANDREW, go and order them to ring the curfew bell in half an hour. Let Sorsyll relieve Duckness at the portcullis, and Malvidius keep watch on the platform of the great tower. Let a careful lookout be kept in the direction of the Lion of Schleswig donjon. Do not forget to fire the cannon at seven o'clock, as a signal to lift the harbor chain. But no, we must wait a little for Captain Dispolsen; better light the signals instead, and see if the Walderhog beacon is lighted, as I ordered to-day. Be sure to keep refreshments ready for the captain. And, I forgot,—give Toric-Belfast, the second musketeer of the regiment, two days' arrest; he has been absent all day.”

So said the sergeant-at-arms beneath the black and smoky roof of the Munkholm guard-house, in the low tower over the outer castle gate.

The soldiers addressed left their cards or bed to carry out his orders; then silence was restored. At this moment the measured beat of oars was heard outside.

“That must be Captain Dispolsen at last!” said the sergeant, opening the tiny grated window which looked out upon the gulf.{39}

A boat was just landing at the foot of the iron gate.

“Who goes there?” cried the sergeant in hoarse tones.

“Open!” was the answer; “peace and safety.”

“There is no admittance here. Have you a passport?”

“Yes.”

“I must make sure of that. If you lie, by the merits of my patron saint, you shall taste the waters of the gulf!” Then, closing the lattice and turning away, he added: “It is not the captain yet.”

A light shone behind the iron gate. The rusty bolts creaked, the grating rose, the gate opened, and the sergeant examined a parchment handed him by the new-comer.

“Pass in,” said he. “But stay,” he added hastily, “leave your hat-buckle outside. No one is allowed to enter the prisons of the State wearing jewels. The order declares that ‘the king and the members of the royal family, the viceroy and members of the vice-regal family, the bishop, and the officers of the garrison, are alone excepted.’ You come under none of these heads, do you?”

The young man, without reply, removed the forbidden ornament, and flung it to the fisherman who brought him thither, in payment of his services; the latter, fearing lest he might repent his generosity, made haste to put a broad expanse of sea between the benefactor and his benefit.

While the sergeant, grumbling at the chancellor’s imprudence in being so prodigal with his passes, replaced the clumsy bars, and while the lingering sound of his heavy boots still echoed on the stairs leading to the guard-house,{40} the young man, throwing his mantle over his shoulder, hurriedly crossed the dark vault of the low tower, the long parade-ground, and the ordnance-room, where lay a few old dismantled culverins, still to be seen in the Copenhagen museum, all nearer approach to which was forbidden by the warning cry of a sentinel. He reached the great portcullis, which was raised on sight of his parchment. Thence, followed by a soldier, he crossed diagonally, without hesitation, and like one familiar with the place, one of the four square courts which skirt the great circular yard, in whose midst rose the huge round rock upon which stood the donjon, called the castle of the Lion of Schleswig, from the forced sojourn there of Jotham the Lion, Duke of Schleswig, held captive by his brother, Rolf the Dwarf.

It is not our purpose to give a description of Munkholm keep, the more so that the reader, confined in a State prison, might fear that he could not escape through the garden. He would be mistaken; for the castle of the Lion of Schleswig, meant for prisoners of distinction only, among other conveniences affords them the pleasure of a walk in a sort of wild garden of considerable extent, where clumps of holly, a few ancient yews, and some dark pines grow among the rocks around the lofty prison, inside an enclosure of thick walls and huge towers.

Reaching the foot of the round rock, the young man climbed the rude winding steps which lead to the foot of one of the towers of the enclosure, having a postern below, which served as the entrance to the keep. Here he blew a loud blast on a copper horn handed to him by the warder of the great portcullis. “Come in, come in!” eagerly



“He blew a loud blast on a horn.”

Photo-Etching.—From drawing by Démarest.

{41}

exclaimed a voice from within; “it must be that confounded captain!”

As the postern swung open, the new-comer saw, in a dimly lighted Gothic apartment, a young officer stretched carelessly upon a pile of cloaks and reindeer-skins, beside one of the three-beaked lamps which our ancestors used to hang from the rose-work of their ceilings, and which at this moment stood upon the ground. The elegance and indeed excessive luxury of his dress was in strong contrast with the bare walls and rude furniture; he held a book, and turned slightly toward the new-comer.

“Is it you, Captain? How are you, Captain? You little suspected that you were keeping a man waiting who has not the pleasure of your acquaintance; but our acquaintance will soon be made, will it not? Begin by receiving my commiseration upon your return to this venerable castle. Short as my stay here may be, I shall soon be about as gay as the owl nailed at donjon doors to serve as scarecrow, and when I return to Copenhagen, to my sister’s wedding feast, the deuce take me if four women out of a hundred will know me! Tell me, are the knots of pink ribbon at the hem of my doublet still in fashion? Has any one translated a new novel by that Frenchwoman, Mademoiselle Scudéry? I have ‘Clelia;’ I suppose people are still reading it in Copenhagen. It is my code of gallantry, now that I am forced to sigh remote from so

many bright eyes; for, bright as they are, the eyes of our young prisoner—you know who I mean—have never a message for me. Ah! were it not for my father's orders!... I must tell you in confidence, Captain, that my father,—but do^{42}n't mention it,—charged me to—you understand me—Schumacker's daughter. But I have my labor for my pains; that pretty statue is not a woman; she weeps all day long and never looks at me.”

The young man, unable thus far to interrupt the officer's extreme volubility, uttered an exclamation of surprise:—

“What! What did you say? Charged you to seduce the daughter of that unfortunate Schumacker!”

“Seduce? Well, so be it, if that is the name you give it now in Copenhagen; but I defy the Devil himself to succeed. Day before yesterday, being on duty, I put on for her express benefit a superb French ruff sent direct from Paris. Would you believe that she never even raised her eyes to look at me, although I passed through her room three or four times clinking my new spurs, whose rowels are no bigger than a Lombardy ducat? That's the newest fashion, is n't it?”

“Heavens! Heavens!” said the young man, striking his forehead; “but this confounds me!”

“I thought it would!” rejoined the officer, mistaking the meaning of the remark. “Not to take the least notice of me! It is incredible, and yet it is true.”

The young man strode up and down the room in violent excitement.

“Won't you take some refreshment, Captain Dispolsen?” cried the officer.

The young man started.

“I am not Captain Dispolsen.”

“What!” said the officer angrily, sitting up as he spoke;^{43} “and pray who are you, then, that venture to introduce yourself here at this hour?”

The young man displayed his papers.

“I wish to see Count Griffenfeld,—I would say, your prisoner.”

“The Count! the Count!” muttered the officer in some displeasure. “But, to be sure, this paper is in order; here is the signature of Vice-Chancellor Grummond de Knud. ‘Admit the bearer to visit all the royal prisons at any hour and at any time.’ Grummond de Knud is brother to old General Levin de Knud, who is in command at Thronhjelm,

and you must know that this old general had the bringing up of my future brother-in-law.”

“Thanks for these family details, Lieutenant. Don’t you think you have told me enough of them?”

“The impertinent fellow is right,” said the lieutenant, biting his lips. “Hullo, there, officer, officer of the tower! Escort this stranger to Schumacker, and do not scold if I have taken down your lamp with three beaks and but one wick. I was curious to examine an article which is doubtless the work of Sciold the Pagan or Havar the giant-killer; and besides it is no longer the fashion to hang anything but crystal chandeliers from the ceiling.”

With these words, as the young man and his escort crossed the deserted donjon garden, the martyr to fashion resumed the thread of the love adventures of the Amazonian Clelia and Horatius the One-eyed.{44}

IV.

Benvolio. Where the devil should this Romeo be? Came he not home to-night?

Mercutio. Not to his father’s; I spoke with his man.
Shakespeare: *Romeo and Juliet*.

AMAN and two horses entered the courtyard of the palace of the governor of Throndhjem. The horseman dismounted, shaking his head with a discontented air. He was about to lead the two animals to the stable, when his arm was seized, and a voice cried: “How! You here alone, Poël! And your master,—where is your master?”

It was old General Levin de Knud, who, seeing from his window the young man’s servant and the empty saddle, descended quickly, and fastened upon the groom a gaze which betrayed even more alarm than his question.

“Your Excellency,” said Poël, with a low bow, “my master has left Throndhjem.”

“What! has he been here, and gone again without seeing his general, without greeting his old friend! And how long since?”

“He arrived this evening and left this evening.”

“This evening,—this very evening! But where did he stay? Where has he gone?”

“He stopped at the Spladgest, and has embarked for Munkholm.{45}”

“Ah! I supposed he was at the antipodes. But what is his business at that castle? What took him to the Spladgest? Just like my knight-errant. After all, I am rather to blame, for why did I give him such a bringing up? I wanted him to be free in spite of his rank.”

“Therefore he is no slave to etiquette,” said Poël.

“No; but he is to his own caprice. Well, he will doubtless return. Rest and refresh yourself, Poël. Tell me,” and the general’s face took on an expression of solicitude, “tell me, Poël, have you been doing much running up and down?”

“General, we came here direct from Bergen. My master was melancholy.”

“Melancholy! Why, what can have occurred between him and his father? Is he averse to this marriage?”

“I do not know. But they say that his Serene Highness insists upon it.”

“Insists! You say, Poël, that the viceroy insists upon this match! But why should he insist unless Ordener refused?”

“I don’t know, your Excellency. He seems sad.”

“Sad! Do you know how his father received him?”

“The first time, it was at the camp, near Bergen. His Serene Highness said, ‘I seldom see you, my son.’ ‘So much the better for me, my lord and father,’ replied my master, ‘if you take note of it.’ Then he gave his Grace certain details about his travels in the North, and his Grace said: ‘It is well.’ Next day my master came back from the palace and said: ‘They want me to marry; but I must consult my second{46} father, General Levin.’ I saddled the horses, and here we are.”

“Really, my good Poël,” said the general, in trembling tones, “did he really call me his second father?”

“Yes, your Excellency.”

“Woe to me if this marriage distresses him, for I will sooner incur the king’s displeasure than lend myself to it. And yet, the daughter of the Lord High Chancellor of both kingdoms—By the way, Poël, does Ordener know that his future mother-in-law, Countess d’Ahlefeld, has been here incognito since yesterday, and that the count is expected?”

“I don’t know, General.”

“Oh, yes,” thought the old governor, “he knows it; for why else should he beat a retreat the instant that he arrived?”

Upon this, the general, with a friendly wave of the hand to Poël, and a salute to the sentinel who presented arms to him, returned in anxious mood to the quarters which he had left in anxious mood.{47}

V.

It seemed as if every emotion had stirred his heart, and had also deserted it; nothing remained but the mournful, piercing gaze of a man thoroughly familiar with men, who saw, at a glance, the aim and object of all things.—Schiller: *The Visions*.

WHEN, after leading the stranger along the winding stairs and lofty halls of the donjon of the Lion of Schleswig, the officer finally threw open the door of the room occupied by the man he sought, the first words that fell upon his ear were once more these: “Has Captain Dispolsen come at last?”

The speaker was an old man, seated with his back to the door, his elbows on a writing-table, his head buried in his hands. He wore a black woollen gown, and above a bed at one end of the room hung a broken escutcheon, around which were grouped the broken collars of the orders of the Elephant and the Dannebrog; a count’s coronet, reversed, was fastened under the shield, and two fragments of a hand of Justice, tied crosswise, completed the strange ornamentation. The old man was Schumacker.

“No, my Lord,” replied the officer; then he said to the stranger, “This is the prisoner;” and leaving them together, he closed the door, without heeding the shrill voice of the old man, who exclaimed: “If it is not the captain, I will see no one.”

At these words the stranger remained by the door; and the prisoner, thinking himself alone,—for he had turned away,—fell back into his silent revery. Suddenly he exclaimed: “The captain has assuredly forsaken and betrayed me! Men,—men are like the icicle which an Arab took for a diamond; he hid it carefully in his wallet, and when he looked for it again he found not even a drop of water.”

“I am no such man,” said the stranger.

Schumacker rose quickly. “Who is here? Who overhears me? Is it some miserable tool of that Guldenlew?”

“Speak no evil of the viceroy, my lord Count.”

“Lord Count! Do you address me thus to flatter me? You have your labor for your pains; I am powerful no longer.”

“He who speaks to you never knew you in your day of power, and is none the less your friend.”

“Because he still hopes to gain something from me; those memories of the unhappy which linger in the minds of men are to be measured by the hopes of future gain.”

“I am the one who should complain, noble Count; for^{49} I remember you, and you have forgotten me. I am Ordener.”

A flash of joy lit up the old man’s sad eyes, and a smile which he could not repress parted his white beard, as when a sunbeam breaks through a cloud.

“Ordener! Welcome, traveller Ordener! A thousand prayers for the happiness of the traveller who remembers the prisoner!”

“But,” inquired Ordener, “had you really forgotten me?”

“I had forgotten you,” said Schumacker, resuming his sombre mood, “as we forget the breeze which refreshes us and passes by; we are fortunate if it does not become a whirlwind to destroy us.”

“Count Griffenfeld,” rejoined the young man, “did you not count upon my return?”

“Old Schumacker did not count upon it; but there is a maiden here, who reminded me this very day that it was a year on the 8th of last May, since you went away.”

Ordener started.

“Heavens! Can it be your Ethel, noble Count?”

“Who else?”

“Your daughter, my Lord, has deigned to count the months of my absence! Oh, how many dreary days I have passed! I have traversed Norway from Christiania to Wardhus; but my journeyings always tended back toward Thronhjelm.”

“Use your freedom, young man, while you may. But tell me who you are. I would like, Ordener, to know you by some other name. The son of one of my mortal foes is called Ordener.^{50}”

“Perhaps, my lord Count, this mortal foe feels greater kindness for you than you for him.”

“You evade my question; but keep your secret. I might learn that the fruit which quenches my thirst is a poison which will destroy me.”

“Count!” cried Ordener, angrily; “Count!” he repeated, in tones of pity and reproach.

“Why should I trust you,” replied Schumacker,—“you who to my very face defend the merciless Guldenlew?”

“The viceroy,” gravely interrupted the young man, “has just ordered that for the future you shall be free and unguarded within the entire precinct of the Lion of Schleswig keep. This news I learned at Bergen, and you will doubtless soon hear it from headquarters.”

“This is a favor for which I dared not hope, and I thought you were the only person to whom I had mentioned my wish. So they lessen the weight of my chains as that of my years increases; and when old age renders me helpless, they will probably tell me, ‘You are free.’”

So saying, the old man smiled bitterly, and added: “And you, young man, do you still cling to your foolish ideas of independence?”

“If I had not those same foolish ideas, I should not be here.”

“How did you come to Thronhjøm?”

“Why, on horseback.”

“How did you reach Munkholm?”

“By boat.”

“Poor fool! You think yourself free, and yet you only leave a horse for a boat. It is not your own limbs that carry out your wishes; it is a brute beast, it is material matter; and you call that free will!”

“I force animate beings to obey me.”

“To assume a right to the obedience of certain beings is to give others a right to command you. Independence exists only in isolation.”

“You do not love mankind, noble Count?”

The old man laughed sadly. “I weep that I am a man, and I laugh at him who would console me. You will yet learn, if you do not already know, that misfortune creates suspicion as prosperity does ingratitude. Tell me, since you come from Bergen, what favoring winds blow upon Captain Dispølsen. Some good fortune must have befallen him, that he forgets me.”

Ordener looked grave and embarrassed.

“Dispolsen, my lord Count? I come here to-day to talk to you of him. I know that he possessed your entire confidence.”

“You know?” broke in the prisoner, uneasily. “You are mistaken. No one on earth has my confidence. Dispolsen has, it is true, my papers, and very important papers too. He went to Copenhagen, to the king, for me. I may even confess that I reckoned more surely upon him than upon any one else, for in the days of my prosperity I never did him a service.”

“Well, noble Count, I saw him to-day—”

“Your distress tells me the rest; he is a traitor.”

“He is dead.”

“Dead!”

The prisoner folded his arms and bent his head, then looking up at the young man, said: “I told you some good fortune must have befallen him!”

His eye turned to the wall, where the signs of his former grandeur hung, and he waved his hand, as if to dismiss the witness of a grief which he strove to conquer.

“I do not pity him; 'tis but one man the less. Nor do I pity myself; what have I to lose? But my daughter,—my unfortunate daughter! I shall be the victim of this infernal plot; and what is to become of her, if her father is taken from her?”

He turned quickly to Ordener. “How did he die? Where did you see him?”

“I saw him at the Spladgest. No one knows whether he died by suicide or by the hand of an assassin.”

“That is now all-important. If he was murdered, I know who dealt the blow. Then all is lost. He bore proofs of the conspiracy against me. Those proofs might have saved me and ruined them! Unhappy Ethel!”

“My lord Count,” said Ordener, bowing, “to-morrow I will tell you whether he was murdered.”

Schumacker, without answering, cast on Ordener, as he left the room, a look of quiet despair more terrible than the calm of death.

Ordener found himself in the prisoner's empty antechamber, not knowing which way to turn. Night was far advanced and the room was dark. He opened a door at haphazard and entered a vast corridor lighted only by the moon, which moved rapidly

through pale clouds. Its misty beams fell now and again upon the long, narrow glass windows, and painted on the opposite wall what^{53} seemed a procession of ghosts, appearing and disappearing simultaneously in the depths of the passage. The young man slowly crossed himself, and walked toward a light which shone faintly at the end of the corridor.

A door stood ajar; a young girl knelt in a Gothic oratory, at the foot of a bare altar, reciting in low tones litanies to the Virgin,—simple and sublime aspirations, in which the soul that rises toward the Mother of Seven Sorrows asks nothing but her prayers.

The young girl was dressed in black crape and white gauze, as if to show at a glance that her days had hitherto been passed in grief and innocence. Even in this modest attitude she bore the impress of a strange nature. Her eyes and her long hair were black (a very rare beauty in the North); her eyes, raised to heaven, seemed kindled with rapture rather than dimmed by meditation. She seemed a virgin from the shores of Cyprus or the banks of the Tiber, clad in the fanciful disguise of one of Ossian's characters and prostrate before the wooden cross and stone altar of Christ Jesus.

Ordener started and almost fell, for he recognized the devotee.

She was praying for her father, for the mighty who had fallen, for the old and desolate prisoner; and she recited aloud the psalm of the deliverance out of Egypt. She prayed for another as well, but Ordener did not hear his name. He did not hear it, for she did not utter it; she merely recited the canticle of the Sulamite, the bride who awaits her bridegroom and the return of her beloved.

Ordener stepped back into the gallery; he respected^{54} the maiden holding converse with the sky. Prayer is a great mystery, and his heart was involuntarily filled with unknown but profane ecstasy.

The door of the oratory was gently closed. Soon a light borne by a white figure moved toward him through the darkness. He stood still, for he felt one of the strongest emotions of his life; he leaned against the gloomy wall; his body was weak, and his limbs trembled beneath him. In the silence of his entire being the beating of his heart was plainly audible to his own ear.

As the young girl passed, she heard the rustle of a garment, and a quick, sudden gasp, and cried out in terror.

Ordener rushed forward. With one arm he supported her, with the other he vainly tried to grasp the lamp which she had dropped, and which went out.

"It is I," he said softly.

“It is Ordener!” said the girl; for the last echo of that voice, which she had not heard for a year, still rang in her ear.

And the moon, passing by, revealed the joy of her fair face. Then she repeated, in timid confusion, freeing herself from the young man’s arms, “It is my lord Ordener.”

“Himself, Countess Ethel.”

“Why do you call me countess?”

“Why do you call me my lord?”

The young girl smiled, and was silent. The young man was silent, and sighed. She was first to break the silence.

“How came you here?”

“Pardon me, if my presence disturbs you. I came to see the count, your father.{55}”

“Then,” said Ethel, in a changed tone, “you only came for my father’s sake.”

The young man bent his head, for these words seemed to him unjust.

“I suppose you have been in Throndhjem a long time,” she continued reproachfully, “I suppose you have been here a long time already? Your absence from this castle cannot have seemed long to you.”

Ordener, deeply wounded, made no reply.

“You are right,” said the prisoner, in a voice which trembled with anger and distress; “but,” she added, in a haughty tone, “I hope, my lord Ordener, that you did not overhear my prayers?”

“Countess,” reluctantly replied the young man, “I did hear you.”

“Ah! my lord Ordener, it was far from courteous to listen.”

“I did not listen, noble Countess,” said Ordener in a low voice; “I overheard you accidentally.”

“I prayed for my father,” rejoined the girl, looking steadily at him, as if expecting an answer to this very simple statement.

Ordener was silent.

“I also prayed,” she continued uneasily, and apparently anxious as to the effect which her words might produce upon him, “I also prayed for some one who bears your name,

for the son of the viceroy, Count Guldenlew. For we should pray for every one, even our persecutors.”

And she blushed, for she thought she was lying; but she was offended with the young man, and she fancied that{56} she had mentioned him in her prayer; she had only named him in her heart.

“Ordener Guldenlew is very unfortunate, noble lady, if you reckon him among the number of your persecutors; and yet he is very fortunate to possess a place in your prayers.”

“Oh, no,” said Ethel, troubled and alarmed by his cold manner, “no, I did not pray for him. I do not know what I did, nor what I do. As for the viceroy’s son, I detest him; I do not know him. Do not look at me so sternly; have I offended you? Can you not forgive a poor prisoner,—you who spend your days in the society of some fair and noble lady, free and happy like yourself?”

“I, Countess!” exclaimed Ordener.

Ethel burst into tears; the young man flung himself at her feet.

“Did you not tell me,” she continued, smiling through her tears, “that your absence seemed to you short?”

“Who, I, Countess?”

“Do not call me countess,” said she, gently; “I am no longer a countess to any one, and far less to you.”

The young man sprang up, and could not help clasping her to his heart in convulsive delight.

“Oh, my adored Ethel, call me your own Ordener! Tell me,”—and his ardent glances rested on her eyes wet with tears,—“tell me, do you love me still?”

The young girl’s answer went unheard, for Ordener, carried away by his emotions, snatched from her lips with her reply that first favor, that sacred kiss, which in the sight of God suffices to make two lovers man and wife.{57}

Both were speechless, because the moment was one of those solemn ones, so rare and so brief in this world, when the soul seems to feel something of celestial bliss. These instants when two souls thus converse in a language understood by no other are not to be described; then all that is human is hushed, and the two immaterial beings become mysteriously united for life in this world and eternity in the next.

Ethel slowly withdrew from Ordener's arms, and by the light of the moon each gazed into the other's face with ecstasy; only, the young man's eye of fire flashed with masculine pride and leonine courage, while the maiden's downcast face was marked by that modesty and angelic shame which in a virgin beauty are always blended with all the joys of love.

"Were you trying to avoid me just now," she said at last, "here in this corridor, my Ordener?"

"Not to avoid you. I was like the unfortunate blind man who is restored to sight after the lapse of long years, and who turns away from the light's first radiance."

"Your comparison is more applicable to me, for during your absence my only pleasure has been the presence of a wretched man, my father. I spent my weary days in trying to comfort him, and," she added, looking down, "in hoping for your coming. I read the fables of the Edda to my father, and when he doubted all men, I read him the Gospel, that at least he might not doubt Heaven; then I talked to him of you, and he was silent, which shows that he loves you. But when I had spent my evenings in vainly watching the arrival of travellers by various roads,{58} and the ships which anchored in the harbor, he shook his head with a bitter smile, and I wept. This prison, where my whole past life has been spent, grew hateful to me; and yet my father, who until you came was all-sufficient for my wants, was still here; but you were not here, and I longed for that liberty which I had never known."

There was a charm which no tongue can express, in the maiden's eyes, in the simplicity of her love, and the sweet hesitation of her confession. Ordener listened with the dreamy delight of a being who has been removed from the world of reality to enjoy an ideal world.

"And I," said he, "no longer desire that liberty which you do not share!"

"What, Ordener!" quickly exclaimed Ethel, "will you leave us no more?"

These words recalled the young man to all that he had forgotten.

"My Ethel, I must leave you this very night. I will see you again to-morrow, and to-morrow I must leave you again, to remain until I may return never more to leave you."

"Alas!" mournfully broke in the girl, "must you leave me again?"

"I repeat, my beloved Ethel, that I will come back soon to wrest you from this prison or bury myself in it with you."

“A prisoner with him!” she said softly. “Ah! do not deceive me. Must I only hope for such happiness?”

“What oath do you require? What would you have me do?” cried Ordener; “tell me, Ethel, are you not my{59} wife?” And in a transport of affection he pressed her to his heart.

“I am yours,” she whispered.

The two pure and noble hearts throbbed rapturously together, and were but purer and nobler for the embrace.

At this moment a violent burst of laughter was heard close by. A man wrapped in a cloak opened a dark lantern which he had concealed, and the light suddenly revealed Ethel’s alarmed, confused face and Ordener’s proud but astonished features.

“Courage, my pretty pair! Courage! It strikes me that after so short a walk in the regions of Romance you can scarcely have followed all the windings of the stream of Sentiment, but that you must have taken a short-cut to reach the village of Kisses so quickly.”

Our readers have doubtless recognized the lieutenant, who so cordially admired Mademoiselle de Scudéry. Roused from his reading of “Clelia” by the midnight bell, which the two lovers had failed to hear, he started on his nightly rounds. As he passed the end of the eastern corridor, he caught a few words, and saw what seemed two ghosts moving in the gallery by the light of the moon. Being naturally bold and curious, he hid his lantern under his cloak, and advanced on tiptoe to the two phantoms, so disagreeably awakened from their ecstasy by his sudden burst of laughter.

Ethel made a movement to escape from Ordener; then, returning to his side as if instinctively, and to ask his protection, she hid her burning blushes on her lover’s breast.

He raised his head with all the dignity of a king.{60}

“Woe,” said he, “woe to him who has frightened and distressed you, Ethel!”

“Yes, indeed,” said the lieutenant; “woe befall me if I am so unfortunate as to alarm so sensitive a lady!”

“Sir Lieutenant,” haughtily exclaimed Ordener, “I command you to be silent!”

“Sir Insolent,” replied the officer, “I command you to be silent!”

“Do you hear me?” returned Ordener in tones of thunder. “Buy pardon by your silence.”

“*Tibi tua*,” responded the lieutenant; “take your own advice,—buy pardon by your silence!”

“Silence!” cried Ordener in a voice which made the windows shake; and seating the trembling girl in one of the old arm-chairs in the corridor, he grasped the officer rudely by the arm.

“Oh, clown!” said the lieutenant, half laughing, half angry; “don’t you see that the doublet which you are so mercilessly crushing is made of the finest Abingdon velvet?”

Ordener looked him full in the face.

“Lieutenant, my patience is not so long as my sword.”

“I understand you, my fine fellow,” said the lieutenant with a sardonic smile. “You want me to do you the honor to fight with you. But do you know who I am? No, no, if you please! ‘Prince with prince; clown with clown,’ as the fair Leander has it.”

“If he had added, ‘Coward with coward,’” Ordener replied, “I should assuredly never have the distinguished honor of measuring weapons with you.{61}”

“I would not hesitate, most worthy shepherd, if you did but wear a uniform.”

“I have neither lace nor fringes, Lieutenant; but I wear a sword.”

The proud youth, flinging back his cloak, set his cap firmly on his head and grasped his sword-hilt, when Ethel, roused by such imminent danger, seized his arm and clasped his neck, with an exclamation of terror and entreaty.

“You are wise, my pretty mistress, if you do not want your young coxcomb punished for his temerity,” said the lieutenant, who at Ordener’s threats had put himself upon his guard without any show of emotion; “for Cyrus was about to quarrel with Cambyses,—if it be not too great an honor to compare this rustic to Cambyses.”

“For Heaven’s sake, Lord Ordener,” said Ethel, “do not make me the cause and witness of such a misfortune!” Then lifting her lovely eyes to his, she added, “Ordener, I implore you!”

Ordener slowly replaced his half-drawn blade in its scabbard, and the lieutenant exclaimed,—

“By my faith, Sir Knight,—I do not know whether you be a knight, but I give you the title because you seem to deserve it,—let us act according to the laws of valor, if not of gallantry. The lady is right. Engagements like that which I believe you worthy to enter upon with me should not be witnessed by ladies, although—begging this charming damsel’s pardon—they may be caused by them. We can therefore only properly discuss the *duellum remotum* here and now, and as the offended party if you will{62} fix the time, place, and weapons, my fine Toledo blade on my Merida dagger shall be at the service of your chopping-knife from the Ashkreuth forges or your hunting-knife tempered in Lake Sparbo.”

The “duel adjourned,” which the officer suggested was usual in the North, where scholars aver that the custom of duelling originated.

The most valiant gentlemen offered and accepted a *duellum remotum*. It was sometimes deferred for several months, or even years, and during that space of time the foes must not allude by word or deed to the matter which caused the challenge. Thus in love both rivals forbore to see their sweetheart, so that things might remain unchanged. All confidence was put in the loyalty of a knight upon such a point; as in the ancient tournament, if the judges, deeming the laws of courtesy violated, cast their truncheon into the arena, instantly every combatant stayed his hand; but until the doubt was cleared up, the throat of the conquered man must remain at the selfsame distance from his victor’s sword.

“Very well, Chevalier,” replied Ordener, after a brief reflection; “a messenger shall inform you of the place.”

“Good!” answered the lieutenant; “so much the better. That will give me time to go to my sister’s wedding; for you must know that you are to have the honor of fighting with the future brother-in-law of a great lord, the son of the viceroy of Norway, Baron Ordener Guldenlew, who upon the occasion of this ‘auspicious union,’ as Artamenes has it, will be made Count Daneskiold, a colonel, and a knight of the Order of the Elephant; and I myself, who{63} am a son of the lord high chancellor of both kingdoms, shall undoubtedly be made a captain.”

“Very good, very good, Lieutenant d’Ahlefeld,” impatiently exclaimed Ordener, “you are not a captain yet, nor is the son of the viceroy a colonel; and swords are always swords.”

“And clowns always clowns, in spite of every effort to lift them to our own level,” muttered the soldier.

“Chevalier,” added Ordener, “you know the laws of duelling. You are not to enter this donjon again, and you are not to speak of this affair.”

“Trust me to be silent; I shall be as dumb as Mutius Scævola when he held his hand on the burning coals. I will not enter the donjon again, nor permit any Argus of the garrison to do so; for I have just received orders to allow Schumacker to go unguarded in future, which order I was directed to convey to him to-night,—as I should have done had I not spent most of the evening in trying on some new boots from Cracow. The order, between you and me, is a very rash one. Would you like to have me show you my boots?”

During this conversation Ethel, seeing that their anger was appeased, and not knowing the meaning of a *duellum remotum*, had disappeared, first softly whispering in Ordener’s ear, “To-morrow.”

“I wish, Lieutenant d’Ahlefeld, that you would help me out of the fortress.”

“Gladly,” said the officer, “although it is somewhat late, or rather very early. But how will you find a boat?”

“That is my affair,” said Ordener.

Then, chatting pleasantly, they crossed the garden, the circular courtyard, and the square court, Ordener escorted by the officer of the guard, meeting with no obstacle; they passed through the great gate, the ordnance-room, the parade-ground, and reached the low tower, whose iron doors opened at the lieutenant’s order.

“Good-by, Lieutenant d’Ahlefeld,” said Ordener.

“Good-by,” replied the officer. “I declare that you are a brave champion, although I do not know who you are or whether those of your peers whom you may bring to our meeting will be entitled to assume the position of seconds, and ought not rather confine themselves to the modest part of witnesses.”

They shook hands, the iron grating was closed, and the lieutenant went back, humming an air by Lully, to enjoy his Polish boots and French novel.

Ordener, left alone upon the threshold, took off his clothes, which he wrapped in his cloak and fastened upon his head with his sword-belt; then, putting into practice Schumacker’s principles of independence, he sprang into the still, cold waters of the fjord, and swam through the darkness towards the shore, in the direction of the Spladgest,—a point which he was almost sure to reach, dead or alive.

The fatigues of the day had exhausted him, so that it was only with great difficulty that he landed. He dressed himself hastily, and walked towards the Spladgest, which reared its black bulk before him, the moon having been for some time completely veiled.{65}

As he approached the building he heard the sound of voices; a faint light shone from the opening in the roof. Amazed, he knocked loudly at the square door. The noise ceased; the light disappeared. He knocked again. The light reappeared, and he saw a black figure climb out of the hole in the roof and vanish. Ordener knocked for the third time with the hilt of his sword, and shouted: "Open, in the name of his Majesty the King! Open, in the name of his Serene Highness the Viceroy!"

The door opened slowly, and Ordener found himself face to face with the pale features and tall, thin figure of Spiagudry, who, his clothes in disorder, his eyes fixed, his hair standing erect, his hands covered with blood, held a lamp, whose flame trembled less visibly than his long and lanky figure.{66}

VI.

Pirro. Never!

Angelo. What! I believe you would try to play the virtuous man. Wretch! If you utter a single word—

Pirro. But, Angelo, I beseech you, for the love of God—

Angelo. Do not meddle with what you cannot prevent.

Pirro. Ah! When the Devil holds one by a single hair, as well yield him the entire head. Unhappy that I am!

Emilia Galotti.

AN hour after the young traveller with the black plume left the Spladgest, night fell, and the crowd dispersed. Oglypiglap closed the outer door of the funereal structure, while his master, Spiagudry, gave the bodies deposited within a final sprinkling. Then both withdrew to their scantily furnished abode, and while Oglypiglap slept upon his wretched pallet, like one of the corpses intrusted to his care, the venerable Spiagudry, seated at a stone table covered with old books, dried{67} plants, and fleshless bones, was buried in grave studies which, although really very harmless, had done no little to give him a reputation among the people, for sorcery and witchcraft,—the disagreeable consequence of science at this period.

He had been absorbed in his meditations for some hours, and, ready at last to exchange his books for his bed, he paused at this mournful passage from Thormodr Torfesen: "When a man lights his lamp, death is beside him ere it be extinguished."

"With the learned doctor's leave," he muttered, "he shall not be beside me to-night."

And he took up his lamp to blow it out.

"Spiagudry!" cried a voice from the room where the corpses lay.

The old man shook from head to foot. Not that he believed, as another might have done in his place, that the gloomy guests of the Spladgest had risen in revolt against their master. He was enough of a scholar to be proof against such imaginary terrors; and his alarm was genuine, because he knew the voice which called him only too well.

"Spiagudry!" angrily repeated the voice, "must I come and pull off your ears before I can make you hear me?"

"Saint Hospitius have mercy, not on my soul, but on my body!" said the terrified old man; and with a step both hastened and delayed by fear, he moved towards the second side door, which he opened. Our readers have not forgotten that this door led into the mortuary.{68}

His lamp lit up a strange and hideous scene,—on the one hand, the thin, tall, stooping figure of Spiagudry; on the other, a short, stout man, dressed from head to foot in the skins of wild beasts, still stained with dried blood, standing at the feet of Gill Stadt's corpse, which, with the dead bodies of the young girl and the captain, occupied the background. These three mute witnesses, buried in shadow, were the only ones who could behold, without flying in horror, the two living beings who now entered into conversation.

The features of the little man, thrown into vivid relief by the light, were singularly wild and fierce. His beard was red and bushy, and his forehead, hidden under an elkskin cap, seemed bristling with hair of the same color; his mouth was large, his lips thick, his teeth white, sharp, and far apart, his nose hooked like an eagle's beak; and his grayish-blue eyes, which were extremely quick, flashed a side glance at Spiagudry, in which the ferocity of a tiger was only tempered by the malice of a monkey. This singular character was armed with a broadsword, an unsheathed dagger, and a stone axe, upon whose long handle he leaned; his hands were covered with thick gloves made of a blue fox-skin.

"That old ghost keeps me waiting a long time," said he, as if talking to himself; and he uttered a sound like the roar of a wild beast.

Spiagudry would certainly have turned pale with fright, had he been capable of turning paler than he was.

“Do you know,” continued the little man, addressing him directly, “that I come from Urchtal Sands? Do you



Hans of Iceland finding the Body of his Son, Gill Stadt.

Photo-Etching.—From drawing by François Flameng.

want to change your straw bed for one of these beds of stone, that you keep me waiting thus?"

Spiagudry trembled more than ever; the two solitary teeth left to him chattered in his head.

"Excuse me, master," said he, bending his long back to a level with the little man; "I was asleep."

"Do you want me to make you acquainted with a far sounder sleep than that?"

Spiagudry's face assumed an expression of terror, the only thing which could be more comic than his expression of mirth.

"Well! what is it?" continued the little man. "What ails you? Is my presence disagreeable to you?"

"Oh, my lord and master!" replied the old keeper, "there can surely be no greater happiness for me than to see your Excellence."

And the effort which he made to twist his frightened face into a smile would have unbent the brow of any but the dead.

"Tailless old fox, my Excellence commands you to hand over the clothes of Gill Stadt."

As he uttered this name, the little man's fierce, mocking features grew dark and sad.

"Oh, master, pardon me, but I no longer have them!" said Spiagudry. "Your Grace knows that we are obliged to turn over the property of all workers in the mine to the Crown, the king inheriting by right of their being his wards."

The little man turned to the corpse, folded his arms, and said in a hollow voice: "He is right. These miserable{70} miners are like the eider duck;[\[5\]](#) their nests are made for them, but their down is plucked from them."

Then raising the corpse in his arms and hugging it to his heart, he began to utter wild yells of love and grief, like the howls of a bear caressing her young. With these inarticulate sounds were blended, at intervals, a few words in a strange lingo, which Spiagudry did not understand.

He let the corpse drop back upon the stone, and turned towards the guardian.

"Do you know, accursed sorcerer, the name of the ill-fated soldier who was so unlucky as to be preferred by that girl to Gill?"

And he kicked the cold remains of Guth Stersen.

Spiagudry shook his head.

“Well! by the axe of Ingulf, the first of my race, I will exterminate every wearer of that uniform!” and he pointed to the officer’s dress. “He on whom I must be avenged will surely be of the number. I will burn down the entire forest to consume the poisonous shrub that it contains. I swore it on the day that Gill died, and I have already given him a companion that will delight his corpse. Oh, Gill! so there you lie, lifeless and powerless,—you who outswam the seal, outran the deer; you who outwrestled the bear in the mountains of Kiölen. There you lie motionless,—you who traversed the province of Thronhjøm, from the Orkel to the Lake of Miösen, in a single day; you who climbed the peaks of the Dovrefjeld as the squirrel climbs the oak. There you lie mute and{71} dumb, Gill,—you who on the stormy summits of Kongsberg sang louder than the thunder’s roar. Oh, Gill! so it is in vain that for your sake I filled up the Färöe mines; in vain for your sake I burned the Thronhjøm cathedral. All my labor is in vain, and I shall never see the race of the children of Iceland, the descendants of Ingulf the Destroyer, perpetuated in you; you will never inherit my stone axe; but you leave me the legacy of your skull, from which I may henceforth drink sea-water and the blood of men.”

With these words he seized the corpse by the head, exclaiming: “Help me, Spiagudry!” And pulling off his gloves, he displayed his broad hands, armed with long, hard, crooked nails, like the claws of a wild beast.

Spiagudry, seeing him about to hew off the corpse’s head with his sword, cried out with unconcealed horror, “Good heavens! master! A dead man!”

“Well,” calmly responded the little man, “would you rather have me sharpen my blade upon a living one?”

“Oh, let me entreat your Grace—How can your Excellency commit such profanation? Your Worship—Sir, your Serenity would not—”

“Are you done? Do I require all these titles, living skeleton, to believe in your deep respect for my sabre?”

“By Saint Waldemar! By Saint Usuph! In the name of Saint Hospitius, spare the dead!”

“Help me, and do not talk of saints to the devil!”

“My lord,” continued the suppliant Spiagudry, “by your illustrious ancestor, Saint Ingulf—”

“Ingulf the Destroyer was an outlaw like myself.{72}”

“In the name of Heaven,” said the old man, falling on his knees, “whose anger I would spare you!”

Impatience overcame the little man. His dull gray eyes flashed like a couple of live coals.

“Help me!” he repeated, flourishing his sword.

These words were uttered in the voice which might beseem a lion, could he speak. The keeper, shuddering and half dead with fright, sat down upon the black stone slab, and held Gill’s cold, damp head in his hands, while the little man, by means of sword and dagger, removed the crown with rare skill.

When his task was done, he gazed at the bloody skull for some time, muttering strange words; then he handed it over to Spiagudry, to be cleaned and prepared, saying with a sort of howl,—

“And I, when I die, shall not have the comfort of thinking that an heir to the soul of Ingulf will drink sea-water and the blood of men from out my skull.”

After a mournful pause, he added,—

“The hurricane is followed by a hurricane, each avalanche brings down another avalanche, but I shall be the last of my race. Why did not Gill hate every human face even as I do? What demon foe to the demon of Ingulf urged him into those fatal mines in search of a handful of gold?”

Spiagudry, who now returned with Gill’s skull, interrupted him: “Your Excellency is right; even gold, as Snorri Sturleson says, may often be bought at too high a price.”

“You remind me,” said the little man, “of a commission^{73} I have for you; here is an iron casket which I found upon yonder officer, all of whose property, as you see, did not fall into your possession; it is so firmly fastened, that it must contain gold,—the only thing precious in the eyes of men. You will give it to widow Stadt, in Thoctree village, to pay her for her son.”

He drew a small iron box from his reindeer-skin knapsack. Spiagudry received it with a low bow.

“Obey my orders faithfully,” said the little man, with a piercing glance; “remember that nothing can prevent two demons from meeting; I think you are even more of a coward than a miser, and you will answer to me for that box.”

“Oh, master, with my soul!”

“Not at all. With your flesh and bones.”

At this moment the outer door of the Spladgest echoed with a loud knock. The little man was amazed; Spiagudry tottered, and shaded his lamp with his hand.

“Who is there?” growled the little man. “And you, old villain, how you will shake when you hear the last trump sound, if you shiver so now!”

A second and louder knock was heard.

“It is some dead man in haste to enter,” said the little man.

“No, master,” muttered Spiagudry, “no corpses are brought here after midnight.”

“Living or dead, he drives me hence. You, Spiagudry, be faithful and be dumb. I swear to you, by the spirit of Ingulf and the skull of Gill, that you shall see the dead bodies of the entire regiment of Munkholm pass through your hostelry in review.{74}”

And the little man, binding Gill’s skull to his belt, and drawing on his gloves, hurried, with the nimbleness of a goat, and by the help of Spiagudry’s shoulders, through the opening in the roof, where he vanished.

A third knock shook the whole Spladgest, and a voice outside commanded him to open in the name of the king and viceroy. Then the keeper, moved alike by two different terrors,—one of which might be called the terror of memory, and the other of hope,—hurried toward the low door, and opened it.{75}

VII.

In the pursuit of such pleasure as may be found in temporal felicity, she wore herself out, on rough and painful paths, without ever attaining her object.—*Confessions of Saint Augustine.*

RETURNING to his closet after leaving Poël, the governor of Thronhjem ensconced himself in a big easy-chair, and to distract his thoughts directed one of his secretaries to read over the petitions presented to the government.

Bowing low, the secretary began:—

“1. The Rev. Dr. Anglyvius prays that a substitute may be provided for the Rev. Dr. Foxtipp, the head of the Episcopal library, on account of his incompetency. The petitioner does not know who should take the place of the said incompetent doctor; he would merely state that he, Dr. Anglyvius, has for a long time exercised the functions of librari{76}—”

“Send the rascal to the bishop,” interrupted the general.

“2. Athanasius Munder, priest and chaplain to the prisons, asks pardon for twelve penitent convicts on the occasion of the glorious marriage of his Grace, Ordener Guldenlew, Baron Thorwick, Knight of the Dannebrog, son of the viceroy, and the noble lady Ulrica d’Ahlefeld, daughter of his Grace the lord high chancellor of the two kingdoms.”

“Lay it on the table,” said the general. “I pity convicts.”

“3. Faustus-Prudens Destrombidès, Norwegian subject and Latin poet, asks leave to write the epithalamium for the said noble pair.”

“Ah, ha! The worthy man must be growing old, for he is the same man who wrote an epithalamium in 1674, for the marriage planned between Schumacker, then Count of Griffenfeld, and Princess Louisa Charlotte of Holstein-Augustenburg,—a marriage which never took place. I fear,” muttered the governor, “that Faustus-Prudens is destined to be the poet of broken matches. Lay his petition on the table, and go on. Inquire, on behalf of the said poet, if there be not a vacant bed at the Throndhjem hospital.”

“4. The miners of Guldbrandsdal, the Färöe Islands, Sund-Moer, Hubfallo, Roeraas, and Kongsberg, petition to be released from the costs of the royal protectorate.”

“These miners are restless. I hear that they are even beginning to grumble at our long delay in answering their petition. Let it be laid aside for mature consideration.{77}”

“5. Braal, fisherman, declares, in virtue of the Odelsrecht,[\[6\]](#) that he persists in his intention of buying back his patrimony.

“6. The magistrates of Nøes, Loevig, Indal, Skongen, Stod, Sparbo, and other towns and villages of Northern Throndhjem, pray that a price may be set upon the head of the assassin, thief, and incendiary, Hans, said to be a native of Klipstadur, in Iceland. Nychol Orugix, executioner for the province of Throndhjem, who claims that Hans is his property, opposes the petition. Benignus Spiagudry, keeper of the Spladgest, to whom the corpse should belong, supports the petition.”

“That robber is a very dangerous fellow,” said the general, “particularly now that we are threatened with trouble among the miners. Issue a proclamation offering a thousand crowns reward for his head.”

“7. Benignus Spiagudry, doctor, antiquary, sculptor, mineralogist, naturalist, botanist, lawyer, chemist, mechanic, physicist, astronomer, theologian, grammarian—”

“Why,” broke in the general, “is not this the same Spiagudry who keeps the Spladgest?”

“Yes, to be sure, your Excellency,” replied the secretary,—“keeper, for his Majesty, of the institution of the Spladgest, in the royal city of Throndhjem, sets forth that he, Benignus Spiagudry, discovered that the stars called fixed are not lighted by the star called the sun; *item*, that^{78} the real name of Odin is Frigg, son of Fridulf; *item*, that the marine lobworm feeds on sand; *item*, that the noise of the inhabitants drives the fish away from the coast of Norway, so that the means of subsistence are growing less in proportion to the increase of the population; *item*, that the fjord known as Otte-Sund was formerly known as Limfjord, and only took the name of Otte-Sund after Otho the Red cast his spear into it; *item*, he sets forth that it was by his advice and under his direction that an old statue of Freya was changed into the statue of Justice, which now adorns the market-place in Throndhjem, and that the lion found at the feet of the idol has been turned into a devil, symbolizing crime; *item*—”

“Oh, spare me the rest of his eminent services! Let me see,—what does he want?”

The secretary turned over several pages, and went on:

“Your most humble petitioner feels that he may justly petition your Excellency, in return for so many useful labors in the domain of science and literature, to increase the reward to ten escalins for every corpse, male or female, which cannot but be gratifying to the dead, as proving the value set upon their bodies.”

Here the door opened, and the usher in a loud voice announced, “The noble lady, Countess d’Ahlefeld.”

At the same time a tall woman, wearing the small coronet of a countess, richly dressed in scarlet satin trimmed with gold fringe and ermine, entered, and accepting the hand which the general offered her, seated herself beside him.^{79}

The countess was perhaps fifty years old. Age had added little to the furrows with which pride and ambition had long since marked her face. She looked at the old governor haughtily, and with an artificial smile.

“Well, General, your ward delays. He should have been here before sunset.”

“He would have been here, my lady Countess, if he had not gone to Munkholm upon his arrival.”

“To Munkholm! I hope it was not to see Schumacker?”

“That may be.”

“Could Baron Thorwick’s first visit be to Schumacker!”

“Why not, Countess? Schumacker is unfortunate and unhappy.”

“What, General! Is the viceroy’s son on familiar terms with a prisoner of state?”

“When Frederic Guldenlew confided his son to my care, he begged me, noble lady, to bring him up as if he were my own. I thought that an acquaintance with Schumacker might be useful to Ordener, who is destined some day to wield such power; consequently, with the viceroy’s permission, I obtained from my brother, Grummond de Knud, a permit to enter all the prisons, which I gave to Ordener. He often uses it.”

“And how long, noble General, has Baron Ordener had the pleasure of this useful acquaintance?”

“Rather more than a year, Countess. It seems that Schumacker’s society pleased him, for it kept him at Thronhjem for a long time; and it was only reluctantly, and by my express request, that he left the city last year to visit Norway.{80}”

“And does Schumacker know that his comforter is the son of one of his greatest enemies?”

“He knows that he is a friend, and that is enough for him, as for us.”

“But you, General,” said the countess, with a searching look, “when you tolerated—nay, encouraged—this connection, did you know that Schumacker had a daughter?”

“I knew it, noble Countess.”

“And this fact seemed to you of no importance to your pupil?”

“The pupil of Levin de Knud, the son of Frederic Guldenlew, is an honest man. Ordener knows the barrier which separates him from Schumacker’s daughter; he is incapable of winning the affection, unless his purpose was upright, of any girl, above all the daughter of an unfortunate man.”

The noble Countess d’Ahlefeld blushed and paled. She turned away her head to avoid the calm gaze of the old man, as if it were that of an accuser.

“But,” she stammered, “this connection strikes me, General,—let me speak my mind,—as strange and imprudent. It is said that the miners and tribes of the North are threatening to revolt, and that the name of Schumacker is mixed up with the affair.”

“Noble lady, you surprise me!” exclaimed the governor. “Schumacker has hitherto borne his misfortunes calmly. The report is doubtless ill-founded.”

At this moment the door opened, and the usher announced that a messenger from his Grace the lord high chancellor wished to speak with the noble countess.{81}

The lady rose hurriedly, took leave of the governor, and while he continued his inspection of the petitions she hastened to her apartments in a wing of the palace, directing that the messenger should follow her.

She had been seated on a rich sofa in the midst of her women for a few instants only, when the messenger entered. The countess on seeing him made a slight gesture of aversion, which she hid at once by a friendly smile.

And yet the messenger's appearance was not at all repulsive. He was a man of somewhat diminutive stature, whose plumpness suggested anything else rather than a messenger. Still, a close study of his face showed it to be frank to the point of impudence, and his look of good-humor had a spice of deviltry and malice. He bowed low to the countess, and offered her a package sealed with silk thread.

"Noble lady," said he, "deign to permit me to venture to lay at your feet a precious message from his Grace your illustrious husband, my revered master."

"Is he not coming himself? And why did he choose you as his messenger?" inquired the countess.

"Important business delays the coming of his Grace, as this letter will inform you, Madam. For myself, I am by the orders of my noble master to enjoy the distinguished honor of a private interview with you."

The countess turned pale, and exclaimed in a trembling voice, "With me,—me, Musdæmon?"

"If it distresses the noble lady in the slightest degree, her unworthy servant will be reduced to despair."

"Distress me! No, of course not," returned the coun{82}tess, trying to smile. "But is this conversation so essential?"

The messenger bowed down to the ground.

"Absolutely essential. The letter which the illustrious countess has deigned to receive from my hands probably contains a formal order to that effect."

It was strange to see the proud Countess d'Ahlefeld tremble and turn pale before a servant who paid her such profound respect. She slowly opened the package and read

its contents. After a second reading she turned to her women, and said in a faint voice: "Go; leave us alone."

"I hope the noble lady," said the messenger, bending his knee, "will deign to pardon the liberty which I venture to take and the trouble which I seem to cause her."

"On the contrary," replied the countess, with a forced smile, "I assure you that I am very happy to see you."

The women withdrew.

"Elphega, have you forgotten that there was a time when you were not averse to being alone with me?"

It was the messenger who addressed the noble countess, and the words were accompanied by a laugh like that uttered by the Devil, at the instant that his compact expires and he seizes the soul which sold itself to him.

The great lady bowed her humbled head.

"Would that I had indeed forgotten it!" she murmured.

"Poor fool! Why should you blush for things which no human eye ever saw?"

"God sees what men do not see.{83}"

"God, weak woman! You are not worthy to deceive your husband, for he is less credulous than you."

"Your insults to my remorse are scarcely generous, Musdæmon."

"Well, if you feel remorse, Elphega, why insult it yourself by daily committing fresh crimes?"

The Countess d'Ahlefeld hid her face in her hands; the messenger continued: "Elphega, you must choose: remorse and more crimes, or crime and no more remorse. Do as I do: choose the second course; it is better—at least it is more cheerful."

"Heaven grant," said the countess, in low tones, "that those words may not be counted against you in eternity."

"Come, my dear, a truce to jest."

Then Musdœmon, seating himself behind the countess, and putting his arm about her neck, added: “Elphega, try to be, at least in imagination, what you were twenty years ago.”

The unfortunate countess, the slave of her accomplice, strove to respond to his loathsome caresses. There was something too revolting, even for these degraded souls, in this adulterous embrace of two beings who scorned and despised each other. The illegal caresses which had once delighted them, and which some horrible and unknown expediency compelled them still to lavish upon each other, now tortured them. Strange but just change of guilty affections! Their crime had become their punishment.

The countess, to cut short this guilty torment, at last asked her odious lover, tearing herself from his arms, with what verbal message her husband had charged him.^{84}

“D’Ahlefeld,” said Musdœmon, “just as he was about to see his power confirmed by the marriage of Ordener Guldenlew to our daughter—”

“Our daughter!” exclaimed the haughty countess; and she fixed her eye on Musdœmon with a look of pride and contempt.

“Well,” coldly continued the messenger, “I think that Ulrica is at least as much mine as his. I was saying that the match would not be wholly satisfactory to your husband unless Schumacker could at the same time be destroyed. In his remote prison the old favorite is yet almost as much to be dreaded as in his palace. He has obscure but powerful friends at court,—powerful because they are obscure; and the king, learning a month since that the chancellor’s negotiations with the Duke of Holstein-Ploen were at a standstill, cried out impatiently: ‘Griffenfeld knew more than all of them put together.’ A schemer named Dispolsen, come from Munkholm to Copenhagen, had several secret interviews with him, after which the king sent to the chancellor’s office for Schumacker’s patents of nobility and title-deeds. No one knows the object of Schumacker’s ambition; but if he desire nothing but his liberty, for a prisoner of state that is the same as to desire power! He must therefore die, and must die by authority of justice; we are now striving to invent a crime for him. Your husband, Elphega, on the plea of inspecting the northern provinces incognito, will assure himself of the result of our underhand dealings among the miners, whom we hope to incite to rebel, in Schumacker’s name, which revolt we can easily put^{85} down later. What troubles us is the loss of certain important papers relating to this plot, and which we have every reason to believe have fallen into the hands of Dispolsen. Knowing that he had set out to return to Munkholm, carrying to Schumacker his parchments, his diplomas, and possibly these documents which might ruin, or at least compromise us, we posted

certain faithful men in the gorges of Kiölen, directing them to rid us of him, after robbing him of his papers. But if, as we are assured, Dispolsen left Bergen by water, our efforts in that quarter are in vain. However, as I came along I gathered vague reports of the murder of a captain by the name of Dispolsen. We shall see. Meantime we are searching for a famous bandit, Hans, called Hans of Iceland, whom we wish to put at the head of the revolt in the mines. And you, my dear,—what news have you for me here? Has the pretty bird at Munkholm been caught in her cage? Has the old minister's daughter finally fallen a prey to our *falco fulvus*, our son Frederic?"

The countess, recovering her pride, again exclaimed: "Our son!"

"I' faith, how old may he be? Twenty-four. We have known each other some twenty-six years, Elphega."

"God knows," cried the countess, "my Frederic is the chancellor's lawful heir."

"If God knows it," laughingly replied the messenger, "the Devil does not. Moreover, your Frederic is but a presumptuous youngster, quite unworthy of me, and it is not worth our while to quarrel for such a trifle. He is only fit to make love to a girl. Has he at least succeeded?"

"Not yet, so far as I know."

"Oh, Elphega, do try to play a less passive part in our affairs. The count and myself, as you see, are tolerably active. I return to your husband to-morrow. For mercy's sake, do not confine yourself to praying for our sins, like the Madonna whom the Italians invoke when about to commit a murder! D'Ahlefeld, too, must see to rewarding me a little more munificently than he has hitherto done. My fortune is closely connected with yours; but I am tired of being the husband's servant when I am the wife's lover, and of being only the tutor, the teacher, the pedagogue, when I am almost the father."

At this instant midnight struck, and one of the women entered, reminding the countess that by the palace regulations all lights must be put out at that hour.

The countess, glad to end a painful interview, recalled her attendants.

"Permit me, gracious Countess," said Musdæmon, as he withdrew, "to retain a hope of seeing you to-morrow, and to lay at your feet my homage and sincere respect."

VIII.

It cannot be but thou hast murdered him;
So should a murderer look; so dead, so grim!
Shakespeare: *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

“UPON my honor, old man,” said Ordener to Spiagudry, “I began to think that the corpses who lodge in this building would have to open the door.”

“Excuse me, sir,” replied the keeper, in whose ears the names of king and viceroy still rang, as he repeated his trite excuse, “I was—I was sound asleep.”

“Then I suppose your dead men do not sleep, and it was probably they whom I heard talking just now.”

Spiagudry was confused.

“You—stranger,—you—heard?”

“Oh, yes! but what does it matter? I did not come here to meddle with your affairs, but to interest you in mine. Let us go inside.{88}”

Spiagudry was by no means anxious to allow the new-comer to see Gill’s body, but these last words comforted him considerably; and besides, how could he prevent his entrance?

He accordingly allowed the young man to pass, and closing the door, said: “Benignus Spiagudry is at your service in all that relates to human science; yet if, as your unseasonable visit seems to show, you suppose that you are dealing with a sorcerer, you are wrong; *ne famam credas*; I am only a learned man. Enter my laboratory, stranger.”

“Not at all,” said Ordener; “my errand is with these corpses.”

“These corpses!” said Spiagudry, beginning to tremble again. “But, sir, you cannot see them.”

“What! I cannot see bodies which are placed here for the sole purpose of being seen! I repeat, that I wish to question you concerning one of them; it is your duty to answer. Obey cheerfully, old man, or you will be forced to obey.”

Spiagudry had a sincere respect for swords, and he saw the flash of steel at Ordener’s side.

“*Nihil non arrogat armis*,” he muttered; and fumbling with his bunch of keys, he opened the grating, and admitted the stranger into the second section of the hall.

“Show me the captain’s clothes,” said the latter.

At this instant a ray from the lamp fell upon Gill Stadt’s bloody head.

“Good God!” exclaimed Ordener, “what abominable sacrilege!{89}”

“Great Saint Hospitius, pity me!” sighed the poor keeper.

“Old man,” continued Ordener, in threatening tones, “are you so remote from the tomb that you can safely violate the respect which is its due? And do you not fear, wretched fellow, that the living will teach you what you owe to the dead?”

“Oh,” cried the poor keeper, “mercy! It was not!! If you only knew—” And he stopped; for he remembered the little man’s words: “Be faithful, be dumb.” “Did you see any one escape through that aperture?” he asked faintly.

“Yes; was it your accomplice?”

“No; it was the guilty man, the only guilty man! I swear it by all the torments of hell, by all the blessings of heaven, by this same body so infamously profaned!” and he fell upon the pavement before Ordener.

Hideous as Spiagudry was, there was yet an accent of truth in his despair and protestations, which convinced the young man.

“Old man,” said he, “rise; and if you did not outrage death, do not degrade age.”

The keeper rose. Ordener continued: “Who is the culprit?”

“Oh, silence, noble youth! You know not of whom you speak. Silence!”

And Spiagudry mentally repeated: “Be faithful, be dumb.”

Ordener answered coldly: “Who is the culprit? I must know!{90}”

“In Heaven’s name, sir, do not say so! Be silent, for fear—”

“Fear will not silence me, but shall make you speak.”

“Excuse me; forgive me, young master!” said the agonized Spiagudry. “I cannot.”

“You can, for I insist. Tell me the profaner’s name!”

Spiagudry still strove to evade.

“Well, noble master, the profaner of this corpse is the assassin of that officer.”

“Then that officer was murdered?” asked Ordener, reminded, by this abrupt transition, of the object of his search.

“Yes, undoubtedly, sir.”

“And by whom,—by whom?”

“In the name of the saint on whom your mother called when she gave you birth, do not seek to know his name, young master; do not force me to reveal it.”

“If my desire to know it required any spur, you would add it, old man, in the shape of curiosity. I command you to name the murderer.”

“Well, then,” said Spiagudry, “see these deep wounds, made by long, sharp nails on the body of this unfortunate man. They will name the assassin.”

And the old man showed Ordener a number of ugly scratches on the naked, freshly washed corpse.

“What!” said Ordener, “was it some wild beast?”

“No, my young lord.”

“But unless it was the Devil—”

“Hush! Beware, lest your guesses come too close to the mark. Did you never hear,” added the keeper in a low voice, “of a man or a monster with human face, whose nails are as long as those of Ashtaroth who ruined us all, or of Antichrist who will yet destroy us?”

“Speak more plainly.”

“‘Woe unto you!’ says the Apocalypse—”

“I demand the assassin’s name!”

“The assassin—his name? My lord, have pity on me; have pity on yourself!”

“The second of those prayers would destroy the first, even if serious reasons did not compel me to tear that name from your lips. Abuse my patience no longer.”

“So be it, if you insist, young man,” said Spiagudry, raising himself, and in a loud voice.

“The murderer, the profaner, is Hans of Iceland.”

This terrible name was not unknown to Ordener.

“What!” he cried, “Hans! that execrable bandit!”

“Do not call him a bandit, for he has no followers.”

“Then, wretch, how do you know him? What common crimes have brought you together?”

“Oh, noble master, do not stoop to believe in appearances. Is the oak-tree poisonous because the serpent finds shelter within its trunk?”

“No idle words! A scoundrel has no friend who is not an accomplice.”

“I am not his friend, and still less his accomplice; and if all my oaths fail to convince you, sir, let me implore you to observe that this monstrous sacrilege exposes me, twenty-four hours hence, when Gill Stadt’s body is to be removed, to the torture allotted to those guilty of profanation, and thus casts me into the most fearful state of anxiety ever endured by innocent man.”

These considerations of personal interest moved Ordener more than the suppliant voice of the poor keeper, much of whose pathetic though useless resistance to the little man’s sacrilegious act they had doubtless inspired. Ordener reflected a moment, while Spiagudry tried to read in his face whether this pause meant peace or boded a storm.

At last he said, in a severe though quiet tone: “Old man, speak the truth! Did you find any papers upon that officer?”

“None, upon my honor.”

“Do you know if Hans of Iceland found any?”

“I swear by Saint Hospitius that I do not know.”

“You do not know? Do you know where this Hans of Iceland hides?”

“He never hides; he roams about perpetually.”

“Perhaps; but where is his den?”

“That pagan,” whispered the old man, “has as many dens as the island of Hitteren has reefs, or the dog-star rays.”

“I order you again,” broke in Ordener, “to speak in plain terms. Let me set you an example; hearken. You are mysteriously allied with a brigand, whose accomplice you still declare that you are not. If you know him, you must know where he has gone. Do not interrupt me. If you are not his accomplice, you will not hesitate to lead me in search of him!”

Spiagudry could not contain his fright.{93}

“*You*, noble lord! *you*,—great God! full of youth and life,—*you* would provoke, seek out that demon! When four-armed Ingiald fought the giant Nyctolm, at least, he had four arms!”

“Well,” said Ordener, with a smile, “if four arms are a requisite, will you not be my guide?”

“! your guide! How can you jest with an old man who almost needs a guide himself?”

“Listen,” replied Ordener; “do not try to jest with me. If this profanation, of which I would fain believe you innocent, exposes you to be punished for sacrilege, you cannot stay here. You must fly. I offer you my protection, but on condition that you lead me to the brigand’s lair. Be my guide, I will be your saviour. Nay, more: if I catch Hans of Iceland, I shall bring him here, dead or alive. You can then prove your innocence, and I promise to restore your office. Stay; meantime, here are more coins than your place brings you in a year.”

Ordener, by keeping his purse until the last, had observed that gradation in his arguments required by the wholesome laws of logic. They were strong enough in themselves to make Spiagudry consider. He began by taking the money.

“Noble master, you are right,” said he; and his eye, hitherto vague and uncertain, was fixed upon Ordener. “If I follow you, I incur the future vengeance of the terrible Hans. If I stay, I fall to-morrow into the hands of Orugix the hangman. What is the penalty of sacrilege? Never mind. In either case, my poor life is in danger; but as, according to the wise remark of Saemond-Sigfusson, other{94}wise called the Sage, *inter duo pericula æqualia, minus imminens eligendum est*, I will follow you. Yes, sir, I will be your guide. Pray do not forget, however, that I have done all I could to dissuade you from your daring scheme.”

“Very good,” said Ordener. “Then you will be my guide. Old man,” he added, with a meaning glance, “I count upon your fidelity.”

“Oh, master!” replied the keeper, “Spiagudry’s faith is as pure as the gold which you so graciously gave me.”

“Let it remain so, or I will show you that the steel which I bear about me is as sterling as my gold. Where do you think Hans of Iceland is?”

“Why, as the southern part of the province of Throndhjem is full of troops sent thither on some errand of the lord chancellor, Hans must have gone in the direction of Walderhog cave, or toward Lake Miösen. Our road lies through Skongen.”

“When can you start?”

“At the close of the day now dawning, when night falls and the Spladgest is closed, your poor servant will begin his duties as your guide, for which he must deprive the dead of his care. We will try to hide the mutilation of the miner from the eyes of the people for this one day.”

“Where shall I meet you to-night?”

“In the market-place, if it please my master, near the statue of Justice, which was formerly Freya, and which will doubtless protect me with her shadow, in gratitude for the fine devil which I had carved at her feet.”

Spiagudry would probably have repeated the terms of his petition to the governor, had not Ordener interrupted him.

“Enough, old man; it is a bargain.”

“A bargain,” repeated the keeper.

He had scarcely uttered these words, when a low growl was heard above their heads. The keeper shuddered.

“What is that?” he said.

“Is there not,” asked Ordener, equally surprised, “any other living being dwelling here besides yourself?”

“You remind me of my assistant, Oglypiglap,” replied Spiagudry, reassured by the thought. “It was probably his snores which we heard. A sleeping Lapp, Bishop Arngrimmsson says, makes as much noise as a waking woman.”

As they talked, they approached the door of the Spladgest. Spiagudry opened it softly.

“Good-by, young sir,” he said to Ordener; “may Heaven keep you merry. Good-by until to-night. If your road lead you by the cross of Saint Hospitius, deign to utter a prayer for your wretched servant, Benignus Spiagudry.”

Then hastily closing the door, as much through fear of being seen as to guard his lamp from the early morning breezes, he returned to Gill’s corpse, and did his best so to arrange it that the wound might not be perceived.

Many reasons combined to persuade the timid keeper to accept the stranger’s perilous offer. The motives for his bold resolve may be ranked as follows: (1) fear of Ordener here and now; (2) dread of Orugix the hangman; (3) an ancient grudge against

Hans of Iceland,—a grudge{96} which he scarcely dared acknowledge even to himself, so strong was the power of fear; (4) a love of science, which would benefit largely by his journey; (5) confidence in his own cunning, which would enable him to evade Hans; (6) a wholly speculative attraction for certain metal contained in the young adventurer's purse, and probably also in the iron casket stolen from the captain and intended for Widow Stadt, a message which now ran a great risk of never leaving the messenger's hands.

Still another and a final reason was the well or ill founded hope of returning sooner or later to the post which he was about to desert. Besides, what did it matter to him whether the robber killed the traveller, or the traveller the robber? At this point in his meditations he could not help saying aloud: "It will be one more corpse for me, anyhow."

Another growl was heard, and the unhappy keeper shivered.

"Indeed, that is not Oglypiglap's snore," said he; "that noise comes from without."

Then, after a moment's thought, he added: "How silly I am to be so frightened! The dog on the wharf probably waked and barked."

Then he finished his arrangement of Gill's disfigured remains, and closing all the doors, threw himself upon his mattress to sleep off the fatigue of the past night and gain strength for the coming one.



Schumacker and his Daughter in the Prison Garden.

Photo-Etching.—From drawing by Démarest.

{97}

IX.

Juliet. Oh, think'st thou we shall ever meet again?

Romeo. I doubt it not: and all these woes shall serve
For sweet discourses in our time to come.

Shakespeare: *Romeo and Juliet.*

THE signal-light at Munkholm castle had just been extinguished, and in its place the sailor entering Thronhjem fjord saw the helmet of the soldier on guard gleam from afar in the beams of the rising sun like a planet moving in its orbit, when Schumacker, leaning on his daughter's arm, came down as usual into the garden which surrounded his prison. Both had spent a restless night,—the old man unable to sleep, the maiden kept awake by happy thoughts. They walked in silence for a time; then the aged prisoner said, fixing a sad and serious gaze upon the lovely girl:—

“You blush and smile at your own thoughts, Ethel; you are happy, for you have no cause to blush for the past, and you smile at the future.”

Ethel blushed still deeper, and her smile faded.

“My lord and father,” she stammered in confusion, “I brought the volume containing the Edda.”

“Very well; read, my daughter,” said Schumacker; and he resumed his meditations.

Then the melancholy captive, seated on a black rock shaded by a dark fir, listened to his daughter's sweet voice{98} without heeding the words which she read, as a thirsty traveller delights in the murmur of the stream that quenches his fever.

Ethel read him the story of the shepherdess Allanga, who refused a king until he proved himself a warrior. Prince Ragnar-Lodbrok could not win the maid until he returned triumphant over the robber of Klipstadur, Ingulf the Destroyer.

Suddenly a sound of footsteps and the rustling of the foliage interrupted the reading and roused Schumacker from his reverie. Lieutenant d'Ahlefeld appeared from behind the rock upon which they sat. Ethel's head drooped as she recognized their tormentor, and the officer exclaimed:—

“I’ faith, fair lady, your lovely lips just uttered the name of Ingulf the Destroyer. I heard you, and I presume that you were talking of his grandson, Hans of Iceland, and that reminded you of him. Ladies love to talk of robbers. By the way, there are tales of Ingulf and his descendants which are both fearful and interesting. Ingulf the Destroyer had but one son, born of the witch Thoarka; that son also had but one son, whose mother was likewise a witch. For four centuries the race has been perpetuated thus for the desolation of Iceland, there being always a single scion, who never produces more than one offshoot. By this series of solitary heirs the infernal spirit of Ingulf has been handed down to the present day, and flourishes in the famous Hans of Iceland, who was doubtless so happy as to occupy your virgin thoughts just now.”

The officer paused for an instant. Ethel was silent from{99} embarrassment, Schumacker from vexation. Delighted to find them willing, if not to answer, at least to listen, he added,—“The Klipstadur outlaw’s one passion is a hatred of the human race, his one thought to harm them.”

“He is wise,” abruptly remarked the old man.

“He always lives alone,” resumed the lieutenant.

“He is fortunate,” said Schumacker.

The lieutenant was charmed by this double interruption, which seemed to seal a compact for conversation.

“May the god Mithra preserve us,” he cried, “from such wise men and such fortunate men! Accursed be the evil-minded zephyr which brought the last demon of Iceland to Norway. I was wrong to say evil-minded, for they say it was a bishop to whom we owe the pleasure of possessing Hans of Klipstadur. If we may believe the story, certain Iceland peasants, having captured little Hans among the Bessestad mountains in his infancy, were about to kill him, as Astyages slew the Bactrian lion’s whelp; but the bishop of Sealholt interfered, and took the cub under his own protection, hoping to make a Christian of the devil. The good bishop tried in a thousand ways to develop his infernal intellect, forgetting that the hemlock cannot be changed into a lily even in the hot-houses of Babylon. So when the young devil grew up, he repaid all this care by escaping one fine night upon the trunk of a tree, across the seas, lighting his flight by setting the bishop’s house on fire. That’s the old women’s account of the way this Iclander came to Norway, and now, thanks to his education, he affords us a perfect type of the monster.{100} Since then the destruction of the Färöe mines, the death of three hundred men crushed beneath the ruins, the overthrow of the hanging rock at Golyn at midnight upon the village below, the fall of Half-Broer bridge from the rocks

upon the high-road, the burning of Throndhjem cathedral, the extinction of beacon-lights upon the coast on stormy nights, and countless crimes and murders hidden in Lakes Sparbo or Miösen, or concealed in the caves of Walderhog and Ryllass, and in the gorges of the Dovrefjeld, bear witness to the presence of this Ahriman [7] incarnate in the province of Throndhjem. The old women declare that a new hair grows in his beard with every fresh crime; in that case his beard must be as luxuriant as that of the most venerable Assyrian magi. Yet you must have heard, fair lady, how often the governor has tried to stop the extraordinary growth of that beard.”

Schumacker again broke the silence.

“And has every effort to capture this fellow,” he asked with a look of triumph and an ironical smile, “been unsuccessful? I congratulate the chancellor.”

The officer did not understand the ex-chancellor’s sarcasm.

“Hans has hitherto proved as invincible as Horatius Cocles. Old soldiers, young militiamen, country boors, mountaineers, all fly or die before him. He is a demon who can neither be avoided nor caught; the best luck that can befall those who go in search of him is not to find him. You may be surprised, gracious lady,” he went on, seating himself familiarly beside Ethel, who drew nearer to her father, “at all my curious anecdotes concerning this supernatural being. It was not without a purpose that I collected these strange traditions. It seems to me—and I shall be pleased if you, fair lady, share my opinion—that the adventures of Hans would make a delicious romance, after the style of Mademoiselle de Scudéry’s sublime stories, ‘Artamenes,’ or ‘Clelia,’ only six volumes of which latter I have yet read, but it is none the less a masterpiece in my eyes. Of course we should have to soften our climate, dress up our traditions, and modify our barbarous names. For instance, Throndhjem, which I should call ‘Durtinianum,’ should see its forests converted, by a touch of my magic wand, into delightful groves watered by a thousand streamlets far more poetic than our hideous torrents. Our dark, deep caves should give place to charming grottos carpeted with gilded pebbles and azure shells. In one of these grottos should live a famous magician, Hannus of Thule. For you must own that the name Hans of Iceland is by no means agreeable. This giant,—you must feel that it would be absurd not to make the hero of such a work a giant,—this giant should descend in a direct line from the god Mars (Ingulf the Destroyer affords no food for imagination) and the enchantress Theona,—don’t you think I have made a happy change in the name Thoarka?—daughter of the Cumean sibyl. Hannus, after being educated by the great Magian of Thule, should finally escape from the pontiff’s palace in a car drawn by two dragons,—it would be very narrow-minded to cling to the shabby old legend of the

trunk of a tree. Reaching the land of Durtinianum, and ravished by that enchanting{102} region, he should choose it as the place of his abode and the scene of his crimes. It would be no easy matter to draw an agreeable picture of the robberies of Hans. However, we might soften their horror by an ingeniously planned love-affair. The shepherdess Alcyppe, walking one day with her lamb in a grove of myrtles and olives, should be noticed by the giant, who should suddenly yield to the magic of her eyes. But Alcyppe should love the handsome Lycidas, an officer of the militia, garrisoned in her village. The giant should be annoyed by the centurion's happiness, and the centurion by the giant's attentions. You can fancy, dear lady, how charming such imaginative powers might make the adventures of Hannus. I will wager my Polish boots against a pair of slippers that such a subject, treated by Mademoiselle de Scudéry, would set all the women in Copenhagen wild with delight."

The last words roused Schumacker from the melancholy thoughts in which he had been buried during the lieutenant's fruitless display of brains.

"Copenhagen!" he exclaimed. "What news is there from Copenhagen, sir officer?"

"None, i' faith, that I know of," replied the lieutenant, "save that the king has given his consent to the great marriage which is just now occupying the thoughts of both kingdoms."

"What!" rejoined Schumacker; "what marriage?"

The appearance of a fourth speaker arrested the words on the lieutenant's lips.

All three looked up. The prisoner's moody features brightened, the lieutenant's frivolous face grew grave, and{103} Ethel's sweet countenance, which had been pale and confused during the officer's long soliloquy, again beamed with life and joy. She sighed heavily, as if her heart were eased of an intolerable weight, and her sad smile rested upon the new-comer. It was Ordener.

The old man, the girl, and the officer were placed in a singular position toward Ordener; they had each a secret in common with him, therefore each felt embarrassed by the presence of the other. Ordener's return to the donjon was no surprise to Schumacker or Ethel, who were expecting him; but it amazed the lieutenant as much as the sight of the lieutenant astonished Ordener, who might have feared some indiscretion on the part of the officer in regard to the scene of the previous night, if the silence ordained by the etiquette of duelling had not reassured him. He could therefore only be surprised at seeing him quietly seated between his two prisoners.

These four persons could say nothing while together, for the very reason that they would have had much to say had they been alone. Therefore, aside from glances of intelligence and embarrassment, Ordener met with an absolutely silent reception.

The lieutenant burst out laughing.

“By the train of the royal mantle, my dear new-comer, here’s a silence by no means unlike that of the senators of Gaul when Brennus the Roman—Upon my honor, I have forgotten which were the Romans and which the Gauls,—the senators or the general. Never mind. Since you are here, help me to enlighten this worthy old gentleman as to the news. I was just about to tell him,{104} when you made your sudden entry on the stage, about the famous marriage which is now absorbing both Medes and Persians.”

“What marriage?” asked Ordener and Schumacker with a single voice.

“By the cut of your clothes, sir stranger,” cried the lieutenant, clapping his hands, “I guessed that you came from some other world. Your present question turns my doubt to certainty. You must have landed only yesterday on the banks of the Nidder in a fairy-car drawn by two winged dragons; for you could not have travelled through Norway without hearing of the wonderful marriage of the viceroy’s son and the lord chancellor’s daughter.”

Schumacker turned to the lieutenant.

“What! Is Ordener Guldenlew to marry Ulrica d’Ahlefeld?”

“As you say,” replied the officer; “and it will all be settled before the fashion of French farthingales reaches Copenhagen.”

“Frederic’s son must be about twenty-two years old, for I had been in Copenhagen fortress a year when the news of his birth reached me. Let him marry young,” added Schumacker with a bitter smile. “When disgrace comes upon him, at least no one can accuse him of having aspired to a cardinal’s hat.”

The old favorite alluded to one of his own misfortunes, of which the lieutenant knew nothing.

“No, indeed,” said he, laughing heartily. “Baron Ordener will receive the title of count, the collar of the Order{105} of the Elephant, and a colonel’s epaulettes, which would scarcely match with the cardinal’s hat.”

“So much the better,” answered Schumacker. Then after a pause he added, shaking his head as if he saw his revenge before him, “Some day they may make an iron collar

of his fine order; they may break his count's coronet over his head; they may strike him in the face with his colonel's epaulettes."

Ordener seized the old man's hand.

"For the sake of your hatred, sir, do not curse an enemy's good fortune before you know whether it be good fortune in his eyes."

"Pooh!" said the lieutenant. "What are the old fellow's railings to Baron Thorwick?"

"Lieutenant," cried Ordener, "they may be more to him than you think. And," he added, after a brief silence, "your grand marriage is not so certain as you suppose."

"*Fiat quod vis,*" rejoined the lieutenant, with an ironical bow; "the king, the viceroy, and the chancellor have, it is true, made every arrangement for the wedding; but if it displeases you, Sir Stranger, what matter the lord chancellor, the viceroy, and the king!"

"You may be right," said Ordener, seriously.

"Oh, by my faith!"—and the lieutenant threw himself back in a fit of laughter,—“this is too good! How I wish Baron Thorwick could hear a fortune-teller so well instructed in regard to the things of this world decide his fate. Believe me, my learned prophet, your beard is not long enough for a good sorcerer.”

"Sir Lieutenant," coldly answered Ordener, "I do not think that Ordener Guldenlew will ever marry a woman whom he does not love."

"Ha, ha! here we have the Book of Proverbs. And who tells you, Sir Greenmantle, that the baron does not love Ulrica d'Ahlefeld?"

"And, if it please you, in your turn, who tells you that he does?"

Here the lieutenant, as often happens, was led by the heat of the conversation into stating a fact of which he was by no means certain.

"Who tells me that he loves her? The question is absurd. I am sorry for your powers of divination; but everybody knows that this match is no less a marriage of inclination than of convenience."

"At least, everybody but me," said Ordener, gravely.

"Except you? So be it. But what difference does that make? You cannot prevent the viceroy's son from being in love with the chancellor's daughter."

"In love?"

“Madly in love!”

“He must indeed be mad to be in love with her.”

“Hullo! don’t forget of whom and to whom you speak. Would not one say that the son of the viceroy could not take a fancy to a lady without consulting this clown?”

As he spoke, the officer rose. Ethel, who saw Ordener’s face flush, hurried toward him.

“Oh!” said she, “pray be calm; do not heed these insults. What does it matter to us whether the viceroy’s son loves the chancellor’s daughter or not?”

The gentle hand laid on the young man’s heart stilled the tempest raging within. He cast an enraptured glance at his Ethel, and did not hear the lieutenant, who, recovering his good-humor, exclaimed: “The lady acts with infinite grace the part of the Sabine woman interceding between her father and her husband. My words were rather heedless; I forgot,” he added, turning to Ordener, “that there is a bond of brotherhood between us, and that we can no longer provoke each other. Chevalier, give me your hand. Confess, you too forgot that you were speaking of the viceroy’s son to his future brother-in-law, Lieutenant d’Ahlefeld.”

At this name Schumacker, who had hitherto looked on with an indifferent or merely an impatient eye, sprang from his stone seat with a terrible cry: “D’Ahlefeld! A D’Ahlefeld here! Serpent! How could I fail to recognize the abominable father in his son? Leave me in peace in my cell! I was not condemned to the punishment of seeing you. It only needs, as he desired just now, that the son of Guldenlew should join the son of d’Ahlefeld! Traitors! cowards! why do they not come themselves to enjoy my tears of madness and rage? Abhorred, abhorred race! Son of d’Ahlefeld, leave me!”

The officer, at first bewildered by the sharpness of these invectives, soon lost his temper and found his speech.

“Silence, lunatic! Cease your devilish litanies!”

“Leave me! leave me!” repeated the old man; “and take my curse, my curse upon you and the miserable race of Guldenlew, which is to be allied to you!”

“By Heaven!” exclaimed the enraged officer, “you insult me doubly!”

Ordener restrained the lieutenant, who was beside himself with passion.

“Respect an old man, even if he be your enemy, Lieutenant; we have already one question to settle together, and I will answer to you for the prisoner’s offences.”

“So be it,” said the lieutenant; “you contract a double debt. The fight will be to the death, for I have both my brother-in-law and myself to avenge. Think that with my gauntlet you pick up that of Ordener Guldenlew.”

“Lieutenant d’Ahlefeld,” replied Ordener, “you espouse the cause of the absent with a warmth which proves your generosity. Would there not be as much in showing pity for an unfortunate old man to whom adversity gives some right to be unjust?”

D’Ahlefeld was one of those souls in whom virtue is kindled by praise. He pressed Ordener’s hand, and approached Schumacker, who, exhausted by his emotion, had sunk back upon the rock, in the tearful Ethel’s arms.

“Lord Schumacker,” said the officer, “you abused the privileges of your age, and I might have abused the privileges of my youth, if you had not found a champion. I enter your prison this morning for the last time, for I come to tell you that you may henceforth remain, by special order of the viceroy, free and unguarded in this donjon. Receive this good news from the lips of an enemy.”

“Go!” said the old prisoner, in a hollow voice.

The lieutenant bowed and obeyed, inwardly pleased that he had won the approving glance of Ordener.

Schumacker sat for some time with folded arms and bent head, buried in thought. Suddenly he looked up at Ordener, who stood before him in silence.

“Well?” said he.

“My lord Count, Dispolsen was murdered.”

The old man’s head again drooped upon his breast. Ordener went on: “His assassin is a noted robber,—Hans of Iceland.”

“Hans of Iceland!” said Schumacker.

“Hans of Iceland!” repeated Ethel.

“He robbed the captain,” added Ordener.

“And so,” said the old man, “you heard nothing of an iron casket, sealed with the arms of Griffenfeld?”

“No, my lord.”

Schumacker hid his face in his hands.

“I will restore it to you, my lord Count; trust me. The murder was committed yesterday morning. Hans fled toward the north. I have a guide who knows all his haunts. I have often roamed through the mountains of Thronhjem. I shall overtake the thief.”

Ethel turned pale. Schumacker rose; his expression was almost joyful, as if he believed that virtue still existed in men.

“Noble Ordener,” he said, “farewell.” And raising his hand to heaven, he disappeared among the bushes.

As Ordener turned, he saw Ethel upon the moss-grown rock, pale as an alabaster image on a black pedestal.

“Good God, Ethel!” he cried, rushing to her and supporting her in his arms, “what is the matter?”

“Oh!” replied the trembling girl in scarcely audible tones. “Oh, if you have, I do not say a spark of love, but of pity for me, sir, if you did not speak yesterday only to deceive me, if it be not to cause my death that you have deigned to enter this prison, Lord Ordener, my Ordener, give up, in Heaven’s name, in the name of all the angels,—give up your mad scheme! Ordener, my beloved Ordener!” she continued,—and her tears flowed freely, her head rested on the young man’s breast,—“make this sacrifice for me. Do not follow this robber, this frightful demon, with whom you would fight. In whose interest do you go, Ordener? Tell me, what interest can be dearer to you than that of the wretched woman whom but yesterday you called your beloved wife?”

She stopped, choked by sobs. Both arms were thrown around Ordener’s neck, and her pleading eyes were fixed upon his.

“My adored Ethel, you are needlessly alarmed. God helps the righteous cause, and the interest in which I expose myself is no other than your own. That iron casket contains—”

Ethel interrupted him: “My interest! Have I any other interest than your life? Ordener, what will become of me?”

“Why do you think that I shall die, Ethel?”

“Ah! Then you do not know this Hans,—this infernal thief? Do you know what a monster you pursue? Do you know that he is lord of all the powers of darkness; that he overthrows mountains upon towns; that subterranean caverns crumble beneath his tread; that his breath extinguishes the beacons on every rocky coast? And how can

you suppose, Ordener, that you can resist{111} this giant aided by the demon, with your white arms and feeble sword?"

"And your prayers, Ethel, and the thought that I am fighting for you? Be assured, Ethel, the bandit's strength and power have been greatly exaggerated. He is a man like ourselves, who deals out death until he himself be slain."

"Then you will not heed me? My words are nothing to you? Tell me, what is to become of me if you go; if you roam from danger to danger, exposing—for I know not what earthly interest—your life, which is mine, by yielding it to a monster?"

Here the lieutenant's tales recurred anew to Ethel's fancy, exaggerated by her love and terror. She went on in a voice broken by sobs: "I assure you, dear Ordener, they deceived you who told you that he was only a man. You should believe me rather than others, Ordener; you know that I would not mislead you. Thousands have tried to do battle with him; he has destroyed whole regiments. I only wish others would tell you the same; you might believe them and not go."

Poor Ethel's prayers would doubtless have shaken Ordener's bold resolve, if he had not gone so far. The words uttered by Schumacker in his despair on the previous evening came back to him and strengthened him in his purpose.

"I might, my dear Ethel, tell you that I would not go, and yet carry out my plan; but I will never deceive you, even to console you. I ought not, I repeat, to hesitate between your tears and your true interests. Your fortune,{112} your happiness, perhaps your life,—your very life, my Ethel,—are at stake." And he clasped her affectionately in his arms.

"And what do I care?" she returned, weeping. "My friend, my Ordener, my delight,—for you know that you are my sole delight,—do not give me a fearful and certain misery in exchange for a slight and doubtful misfortune. What is fortune or life to me?"

"Your father's life, Ethel, is also at stake."

She tore herself from his arms.

"My father's life?" she repeated in a low voice, turning pale.

"Yes, Ethel. This brigand, doubtless bribed by Count Griffenfeld's enemies, has in his possession papers whose loss imperils the life of your father, already the object of so many attacks. I would die to win back those papers."

Ethel was pale and dumb for some moments. Her tears were dried, her heaving breast labored painfully; she looked on the ground with a dull and indifferent gaze,—the gaze of the condemned man as the axe is lifted over his head.

“My father’s life!” she sighed.

Then she slowly turned her eyes toward Ordener.

“What you do is useless; but do it.”

Ordener pressed her to his bosom. “Oh, noble girl, let me feel your heart beat against mine! Generous friend! I will soon return. Nay, you shall soon be mine; I would save your father, that I may better deserve to be his son. My Ethel, my beloved Ethel!”



Ordener bidding Ethel farewell.

Photo-Etching.—From drawing by Démarest.

{113}

Who can describe the emotions of a true heart which feels that it is appreciated by another noble heart? And if the love uniting these two similar souls be an indissoluble bond, who can paint their indescribable raptures? It seems as if they must feel, crowded into one brief instant, all the joy and all the glory of life, embellished by the charm of generous sacrifice.

“Oh, my Ordener, go; and if you never return, grief will kill me. I shall have that tardy consolation.”

Both rose, and Ordener placed Ethel’s arm within his own, and took that adored hand in his. They silently traversed the winding alleys of the gloomy garden, and reluctantly reached the gate which led into the world. There, Ethel, drawing a pair of tiny gold scissors from her bosom, cut off a curl of her beautiful black hair.

“Take it, Ordener; let it go with you; let it be happier than I am.”

Ordener devotedly pressed to his lips this gift from his beloved.

She added: “Ordener, think of me; I will pray for you. My prayers may be as potent with God as your arms with the demon.”

Ordener bowed before this angel. His soul was too full for words. They remained clasped in each other’s arms for some time. As they were about to part, perhaps forever, Ordener, with a sad thrill, enjoyed the happiness of holding Ethel to his heart once more. At last, placing a long, pure kiss upon the sweet girl’s clouded brow, he rushed violently down the winding stairs, which a moment later echoed with the sweet and painful word, “Farewell!{114}”