

How THEY

KEPT THE FAITH

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. PZ3 Copyright No. _____

Shelf, 2857 Ho
2

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

HOW THEY KEPT THE FAITH.

A TALE OF THE HUGUENOTS OF
LANGUEDOC.

✓ BY

GRACE RAYMOND. *[pseud]*

Annie Raymond Stillman

RICHMOND, VA.:

PRESBYTERIAN COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.

L.

TWO COPIES RECEIVED,

Library of Congress,
Office of the

DEC 16 1900

Register of Copyrights.

P 23
S 857 Ho
2

49900



COPYRIGHTED

BY

JAS. K. HAZEN, *Secretary of Publication,*

1899.

SECOND COPY,

81476

Dec. 16. 99.

TO MY MOTHER.

THE world will read the printed tale
Of olden stress and strife,
Of love made pure in furnace-fires,
And faith more dear than life.

But could thy tender eyes, to-day,
Upon the pages shine,
The hidden tale, to them revealed,
Would glow in every line.

Perchance, e'en now, above the stars,—
Beyond these smiles and tears,—
The story others cannot read,
Thy listening spirit hears.

And sweeter strains, from one glad harp,
In fuller music tell
The lesson, learned in tears below—
"He doeth all things well."

CHARLESTON, S. C.,

April, 1889.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
BY FIRELIGHT, - - - - -	I
CHAPTER II.	
COUNTING THE COST, - - - - -	16
CHAPTER III.	
IN THE SNARE, - - - - -	29
CHAPTER IV.	
AN OPEN DOOR, - - - - -	37
CHAPTER V.	
AN OLD DEBT CANCELLED, - - - - -	54
CHAPTER VI.	
A GAME OF SKILL, - - - - -	69
CHAPTER VII.	
AFTER MANY DAYS, - - - - -	88
CHAPTER VIII.	
CATHEDRAL STEPS, - - - - -	108
CHAPTER IX.	
"DELILAH," - - - - -	125
CHAPTER X.	
"WINGS AS A DOVE," - - - - -	148
CHAPTER XI.	
CROSS OR SWORD? - - - - -	165

	PAGE
CHAPTER XII.	
THE SECOND HOME-COMING, - - - - -	182
CHAPTER XIII.	
UNDER ARMS, - - - - -	195
CHAPTER XIV.	
IN THE CRUCIBLE, - - - - -	211
CHAPTER XV.	
M. RENA U'S REVENGE, - - - - -	237
CHAPTER XVI.	
"OUT OF THE DEPTHS," - - - - -	262
CHAPTER XVII.	
THE COMMUNION IN THE GLEN, - - - - -	286
CHAPTER XVIII.	
A WATCH IN THE NIGHT, - - - - -	305
CHAPTER XIX.	
IN THE MORNING, - - - - -	322
CHAPTER XX.	
"MANY WATERS CANNOT QUENCH LOVE," - - - - -	337
CHAPTER XXI.	
THE LAST TIE, - - - - -	358
CHAPTER XXII.	
WINKLE STREET, SOUTHAMPTON, - - - - -	378

HOW THEY KEPT THE FAITH.

A TALE OF THE HUGUENOTS OF LANGUEDOC.

CHAPTER 1.

BY FIRELIGHT.

“WILL you tell me about my mother to-night, Nannette?”

It was a childish voice, clear and sweet as the tinkle of a brook on the hillside, that asked the question, and the face, upturned in the ruddy glare of the wide hearth, was winsome as a flower.

The middle-aged serving-woman, seated on the broad, oaken settle, glanced up sideways from her knitting.

“I cry you mercy, Mistress Eglantine; you should know the story by this time as well as I.”

Eglantine laughed. She knew what Nannette’s hesitation meant, and how it was sure to end.

“I remember every word, dear old Bonne; but that is not like hearing you tell it. M. La Roche is in the sitting-room with my aunt, and will not go away until my uncle gets back from the consistory meeting, and Rene is doing his lessons. There is no one to talk to me but you, Nannette, and I would not tire if you told me about my mother every night.”

“You mind well there is nothing I like so much to tell,” answered the woman, stopping her work for a moment to pat the child’s cheek with a trembling hand. “But I might well hesitate to burden so young a heart with so sad a tale, if it were not for my lady’s own words,—‘You will go and stay with my little girl when I am gone, Nannette, and you will tell her the story when she is old enough to understand. Madame Chevalier will make her a better mother than ever I could have done, but I would like her to know that I loved her even when I put her away,—that it was because I loved her so much that I did it.’ She spoke but once after that, Mistress Eglantine, and then only to murmur a prayer. Ah! there never was a gentler or a truer heart—nay, nor a braver, though it were that of the great Marshal Turenne himself. You mind how the shops were all dressed in mourning for the great captain, my young lady, the first time you went down to Nismes to see your grandfather, three years ago?”

“I recollect the visit to my grandfather very well, but I have forgotten the shops. Please go on, Nannette, and tell me about my mother. Do I look like her?”

How often she had asked that question, and how often Nannette had looked into her face, and shaken her head, and sighed—as she did now:

“You are no that ill to look upon, little one, as you have found out far too early for your good, but it is the beauty of your father’s house: you have not your mother’s face. Her eyes were blue and soft, like the velvet pansies that she loved, or the summer sky at noon; while yours are dark, and flash like stars on a wintry night. And your hair is black as the raven’s wing, while hers was the ruddy gold the painters love.”

“Was she *very* beautiful?” queried the child wistfully.

She was seated on the settle now, with her warm cheek pressed against the speaker’s sleeve.

“You would have thought so if you could have seen her tripping to church by her father’s side, with the young gallants of Nismes waiting to see her pass. But beauty is vain, Mistress Eglantine: I wish I could write that on your memory with a diamond pen. Fair looks did not save your mother’s eyes from tears, nor her heart from aching. There were more than a score of gentlemen ready to cross swords for a glance from her sunny eyes, but on none of them would she smile, not even on the rich young merchant whom her father had chosen for her husband. For her heart was set on Captain Bertrand, your father, the young officer whom she had met at Marseilles, and though your grandfather refused to hear of the captain’s suit, my young lady would think of none but her lover, night and day. He was of gentler blood than she, and his father had rich estates, and a chateau in Bearn, but he was the younger son, and had no income but his pay, and the master thought more of the fine house M. Baptiste could give his daughter, than of the captain’s long line of ancestors. It was the first time he had crossed my lady in all her life, and it went hard with her to give up her will about the thing she cared for most. I do not excuse what she did, Mistress Eglantine: it is a sore thing for a daughter to go against her father’s will, but the blame was not all hers, and I had no choice when one night she came to my bedside, all dressed for a journey, and told me that she was going to leave her father and be married to Captain Bertrand, that she could never be happy with any other, and then with tears and kisses, and soft arms about

my neck, prayed me to go with her. I would have been false to the promise I gave her mother if I had let her go alone, so I dressed, and went with them, though not without heavy misgivings, I will own, and saw them married at the priest's house—for your father was a Catholic—and was well on the road to Bearn with them the next morning before those behind us had found it out.”

“Was my grandfather very angry?”

“It nearly broke his heart, little one, for he had loved my lady as the apple of his eye, and he would not believe but that Captain Bertrand had cared more for the dowry than for the wife he had won. He sent back every letter my lady wrote him, unopened, until her husband would let her write no more. That was the only shadow on their happiness at first. Thou art like thy father, Mistress Eglantine, with thy sunny temper, and thy hot way of loving. Whatever penalty my lady had afterward to pay for her wilfulness, she was at least not disappointed in him. He thought nothing too good for her, and it was not long before, to please him, she gave up going to her own church, and went to his. From that moment my heart misgave me. Your grandfather had never been much of a church-goer, and he would not let our pastor in Nismes talk much to my young lady about her soul, but he came of staunch Huguenot stock, and my dear mistress, your grandmother, had had the blood of martyrs in her veins, and would have died miserable if she had thought her darling would ever go to mass or the confessional. But my pretty mistress laughed at my scruples. To her, in her happiness, one religion was as good as another, and her husband's people were greatly pleased, and after that talked no more about the mesalliance, but made her one of them. And then

your father was summoned to Flanders, and your little sister was born, and a new look came into my lady's eyes which said life had ceased to be all holiday. The little one was scarce a month old, when one day, as we sat together in her chamber, she looked up at me suddenly, and said :

“‘Nannette, what if my mother's religion was the only true one, after all : have I defrauded my baby—have I endangered her?’

“I could only kiss her hand and weep, for I was not as brave to tell her the truth as I should have been, and she never broached the matter again, but after that I began sometimes to miss my little New Testament, and to guess where it had gone, and when the little one was old enough to lisp a prayer, I marked that my lady taught her, not the Ave Marias of her husband's church, but the words she had learned at her own mother's knee.”

Nannette had evidently forgotten her listener ; her needles were flashing fiercely in the firelight, her eyes were gazing into the glowing coals.

“Try as we might, the matter could not be always kept hid, and it came in time to the ears of Mademoiselle Bertrand, the captain's elder sister, and our little Mignonnette's god-mother. She said nothing, but bided her time, and one day when my lady came back from a ride it was to find that Mademoiselle Bertrand had been to the chateau and taken her little niece away with her. And when our young madame hastened to her and demanded her child, she said, coldly, she had acted for the little one's best good, and dare not return her to a mother who had proved so unfaithful to her trust. For the first time in her life I saw my lady's eyes flash fire, as she said she would write to her husband, and obtain a vindication of her rights.

The letter went off that very night, by the hand of a trusty messenger, but alas! instead of the swift help she looked for, came back the heavy tidings that her lord had fallen in battle, and lay wounded unto death in his tent, praying only to see her face once more. No more thought of little Mademoiselle Mignonnette just then. As fast as post-horses could carry her, my lady travelled in answer to that call—Antoine, the captain's foster-father, and I, going with her, and taking what care we could of her by the way. But all in vain. M. le Capitaine had been dead twelve hours when we reached the camp, and our madame fell to the ground, as though stricken with death herself, at the word.

“For four days she lay upon her couch, neither speaking nor weeping, nor breaking bread; but on the fifth, as I sat watching beside her, she opened her eyes and said quietly: ‘I will live, Nannette, to save my little Mignonnette. Tell Antoine to have the horses ready, we will start for Bearn to-morrow.’ But it was a week later before she was strong enough to undertake the journey, and then, travel with what care we might, we had only reached Beaucaire when you, Mistress Eglantine, were born.”

The nurse paused for a moment to lay a caressing hand on the small head nestling in her arm.

“It was the eve of the great July Fair; lodgings were not to be had in the town for love or money; we thought ourselves fortunate to secure one of the booths erected in the meadows along the river's banks, and your mother counted it a happy circumstance, also, that the people in the tents nearest us were from the Levant, and knew no more of our language than was necessary for the purposes of trade. They could not spy into our concerns, she said. There was no

light in her eyes when she saw you, little one, as there had been when I laid your sister on her breast. Alas! that the coming of so fair a face should bring so little joy. For she had come to a desperate resolve, Mistress Eglantine: you will never fathom its cost until you have held a babe of your own in your arms. 'It is too late to save my little Mignonnette,' whispered my lady, as I watched beside her that summer night. 'Even if they take pity on my distress, and give her back to me, I must train her in her father's faith, or have her taken from me again, for good. But for this innocent little soul there is yet time, Nannette. Do you remember the pretty cottage on the other side of Tarascon, where we took shelter two days ago from the storm? The saintly face of the young pastor, and the tender eyes of the mother as she bent over her little ones, have haunted me ever since. I am sure, for Christ's sake, they would receive even a nameless babe left at their door—all the more, one that was given them to train in the right way. My husband's people shall never know of the little one's existence, and my father could not help me if he would.'

"It was a sad blow to me, Mistress Eglantine, and it took me more than one night to see the right of it, for the touch of thy rose-leaf hand on my cheek had bewildered my conscience, and it seemed a disgrace, too, to cast my lady's babe on the world like that. But my lady's will was adamant, and I saw at last I was endangering the life I cared for most in the world, and yielded—and talked Antoine round too,—no easy matter; but after he was once convinced that our young madame's life hung on the issue, he was as true as steel. So at the end of the week we took our departure from Beaucaire with the pleasure-seekers; but while my lady and I travelled slowly to Anduze,

Antoine turned back over the bridge of boats to Tarascon, and passing through the town, reached the hamlet where the pastor lived, as the summer dusk was falling. We had put a purse of gold with you in the basket, little one, and robed you in folds of finest wool and linen, and my lady pinned a note upon thy breast, saying thou wert of gentle and stainless blood, but giving no name, and praying pastor Chevalier and his wife to bring thee up in the faith which thy unhappy mother dared not teach thee. Thou shouldest think of this sometimes, Mistress Eglantine, when thy aunt tries to teach thee what is right, and the pastor sets thee the long tasks in the catechism, which thou dost think so dull."

"I do think of it, Nannette—only the catechism is so hard to remember. Please go on: tell me how Antoine watched through the hedge until they heard me cry, and came out into the porch, and how Rene was the first to open the basket, and how my aunt took me up in her arms and kissed me, and how uncle Godfrey said God had given me, in place of the little daughter they had lost, and how they called me Eglantine, because the vine was in blossom on the porch."

"You mind that part of the story well enough yourself, Mistress Eglantine: there is more than one can tell you that tale. I thought it was about your mother you wished to hear."

"Indeed it is," peeping round to print a kiss on the averted face. "I will be good, and ask no more questions if you will tell the rest."

But Nannette was gazing into the fire, her usually busy needles motionless in her hands. There was always something awesome to Eglantine when Nannette's hands were still.

“Please go on,” she whispered. “My mother was very ill at Anduze, was she not?”

“Nigh unto death, mademoiselle. The figs had fallen, and the grapes were purple on the hillsides when we reached Bearn, and then it was only to meet sorrow upon sorrow. Mademoiselle Bertrand had placed her little niece in a convent as soon as she heard of M. le Capitaine’s death, and in vain my lady appealed from her to the convent, and from the convent to the cure, and from the cure to the prefect. They either could not, or would not help her. There stood the king’s edict, that permitted even children of tender years to choose the faith in which they would be reared, and this Mademoiselle Bertrand claimed her little niece had done, and though my lady knew a toy might have tempted the baby lip to utter the *ave* which was all that would have been considered necessary, she had no proof, no redress. It had been hard enough to be simply separated from the little one, but to think of her behind convent-bars, fretting her timid heart out among strangers, neglected, perhaps ill-used—it was more than any mother could have heart to bear. For she was such a gentle child, our little mademoiselle, with none of thy dash and sparkle, Mistress Eglantine, but with loving, nestling ways that crept round one’s heart unaware, and an angel-face that was like her mother’s, and yet not like. It seemed to have so little in common with this world of ours.

“When at last the truth dawned on your mother she took to her chamber, and gave way to such comfortless grief, that M. Bertrand at last became uneasy, and sent for the cure. He was an old man, and seemed really touched by my lady’s despair. He told her that it was because of her Huguenot leanings

that the child had been taken from her, but that if she would reassure the Church as to her attachment, he would use his influence to have the little one restored. I think your mother had anticipated this, for she said at once she would do anything, suffer anything that he would dictate. She had been only feeling after the truth, little one, she had not found it, and it was a sore test. In thy case, conscience and mother-love had been on the same side, but now there was a strife between the two, and the human love was the stronger. God is pitiful: I think He will not judge harshly where He had given so little, but from that hour there was a broken-hearted look in my lady's eyes, which told me she felt she had turned her back upon the light, and must henceforth walk in darkness.

“They were heavy days that followed, sweetheart: I like not to dwell upon them. Our young madame was worn to a shadow with prayers and pilgrimages; but when in the early spring she ventured to ask for an interview with Mademoiselle Mignonnette, Father Joseph confessed that the child had been removed to a distant convent, and that it would take time to have her brought back. I think my lady's heart misgave her from that, but she redoubled her penances and fasts, until the year was gone, and the Christmas snows lay white upon the hills, and Father Joseph could no longer conceal the truth, and told her plainly that the bishop had decided to train the little demoiselle for a nun, and her mother must resign all hopes of ever seeing her again. My young madame was borne fainting from the confessional where the fatal word was spoken, and many a time in the sore illness that followed, I hoped God was going to take her out of this troublous world. But He is wiser than we, Mistress Eglantine, though we would often mar His coun-

sels if we had the power. When the winter was ended, and the gentians began to purple in the sheltered places, my lady came forth from her chamber, but though she took her old place in the house, there was a spirit-look in her face, and a noiselessness in her step, which told that some link between her and this life was broken. She showed no anger to those who had so sorely wronged her, but it was only the suffering of the poor and sick in the hamlet that fully roused her. To them she was an angel of mercy—especially, the mothers, who knew her story, loved her, and many an hour would she sit in their lowly cottages, with their little ones on her lap, or round her knee. It was one day that summer, after she had helped a young shepherd's wife to nurse a feeble baby back to life, that I found her weeping bitterly, and the cry on her lips was not for Mademoiselle Mignonnette, but 'My baby! my little, lost, unnamed baby!' A heart may count something of the cost of its gifts beforehand, little one, but it is not until afterward that we wholly tell the price. I think it was not the first time your mother had cried out for the child she had put from her, though she had never let the word escape her until now. And I spoke out square and strong: 'The little one is rosy and well, madame. Antoine saw her this spring when he was in the Cevennes, where pastor Chevalier and his wife are living now. She is the darling of the whole countryside, Antoine heard, and the pastor and his wife love her as their own flesh and blood, and have planned to marry her to their only son, when she is grown; but you have only to speak the word, my lady; you have gold to pay them for their trouble.' But she would let me say no more, Mistress Eglantine. 'My heart shall break before I utter the word,' she said; 'who

am I, Nannette, that I should take an innocent soul to train for God?' And she dried her tears at once, and would never reopen the subject. But that fall there came to the chateau a young priest, with a face like a Saint John. M. Fenelon was his name, and he has since come to be a great preacher, but then he was still at his studies. He was a distant kinsman of your father's, and had heard of my lady's trouble; it was not many days before he had won from her the whole story, for he had a gentle, kindly way about him, little one, which made even the most timid ready to put their trust in him. My lady told him everything, saving what had happened at Beaucaire, and he comforted her like a young brother. He bade her think no more that God had forsaken her, but believe that He was a tender Father, who had only suffered these trials to come upon her that He might draw her nearer to Himself. He told her that it was God himself, not her child, for whom her heart was truly hungering, and that He alone could satisfy her. But he reminded her, too, that the little one was still in the Good Shepherd's keeping, though removed from hers, and that if she would only trust Him, He would give His angels charge concerning the little feet that they should never go astray. And he spoke of the love and sympathy of the Lord Jesus, and the joy of following in the prints of those blessed feet, until his own face glowed like an angel's, and my lady's caught the reflection. Sometimes he added learned words of the perpetuity of the Church, and the sacredness of its ordinances, but to these she only listened absently, though she liked well enough to hear of the holy sisters of Port Royal, and a little book by M. Pascal, which he lent her, she said, read like the words of one who had seen God face to face. But after all, it was

the saintly beauty of M. Fenelon's own life, and the plain tokens of his near walk with God—more than aught he said—that set my lady's heart at rest. It would take a wiser head than mine, Mistress Eglantine, to explain how one so good and pure can remain in the Church of Rome, but no one could live in the house with M. Fenelon, and hear him talk, without seeing that he at least worshipped God in spirit and in truth, and walks with unspotted garments even where Satan's seat is. There would be none of these harsh edicts against the Protestants if he had his way, and I have heard the pastor tell that when he was appointed chief of the mission to St. Etoile, last year, he was bold enough to tell his majesty that he would go only on condition that no force should be used.

“Little wonder that a bruised heart like my lady's surrendered itself to his guidance. ‘If I am doing wrong, God will be pitiful to my weakness and ignorance,’ she said one night, when I was helping her to undress. ‘I have not much longer to live, Nannette, and for those few months I can but wait quietly where I am. God knows my heart: He sees that it is only to Him I look, only in His cross I trust. Once I thought that I could only find God through my mother's Church: now I know the way is not this creed, nor that, but Himself.’

“‘Will madame then send for her youngest daughter, and leave the little one to be reared in the faith in which she herself is content to die?’ I asked. She gave me a strange look, sweetheart. ‘Never, Nannette,’ she answered. ‘I am not strong nor brave like others, but I would be broken upon the wheel before I would bid my little one leave the blessed home in which she has found shelter, for the snares and perils of this.’ And then she put her arms about my neck,

and laid her head upon my breast, as she used to do when she was your age, Mistress Eglantine, and had something to say she would not speak aloud. 'There are not many like M. Fenelon,' she whispered; 'none should know that better than you and I, Nannette. If I have found the light at last, it has been through a weary and winding road, and more than once I have come near missing it altogether. Would you have me take the little feet from the plain path, and the happy daylight of the open Bible, to grope their way through the night that I have known? I can hope for my little Mignonnette, because I gave her the best I had when she was taken from me, but I could not pray for the other, if I put the stumbling-block in her way.' And though she was afterward induced to write to M. Chevalier, and had occasionally secret letters from him and his wife in return, she held firm to her purpose not to look upon thy face, nor let thy father's people suspect thy existence. Bear this in mind, my little one, if thou art ever tempted to part with the pearl purchased for thee with such bitter pain. And who can tell through what straits thou mayest have to keep it, by the time thou art a woman grown—if the edicts grow much harsher. Even now the pastor walks beneath the edge of an avalanche, and the least incautious step or word may bring it down upon his head."

"My grandfather will not let the priests do anything to my uncle; he has promised me that, over and over again," said Eglantine, lifting her head proudly.

"He would promise you the crown diamonds, if you asked him, mademoiselle; he knows not how to say you nay. But that is quite a different matter from getting them. You have far more to hope for from M. Chevalier's prudence, than from your grandfather's interference. M. Laval is no that anxious to be out of

favor with the Jesuits himself; no one need be who has an eye to court favor or public preferment. But dry your eyes, my little lady. Your father's daughter may see a danger, but she should never fear it. It was your mother's wish that you should not be brought up, as she was, in ignorance of the perils about you. She made your grandfather promise that, when at the last she sent for him, and touched by his loneliness and distress, and remorseful for the sorrow she had caused him, she confided to him the secret of your birth, and the names of those who had taken you in. She hoped, she said, that some day you might make up to him for the disappointment she had caused, but she bade him never forget the debt he owed to pastor Chevalier and his wife, and not to take you from them, without their consent. Above all, she made him promise to let no hope of worldly advantage tempt him to betray the secret to her husband's people, or come between you and your marriage with Master Rene, if your heart was set that way, when you were grown. Hark, Mistress Eglantine; is not that the sound of wheels on the road without? Who can be arriving so late this February night?"

The little girl had turned her head, and was listening.

"It is M. Henri's voice," she cried, springing up, and overturning a cricket on her way to the door. The old nurse shook her head, as she folded up her knitting, and prepared to follow. The tears had vanished from the warm young cheek, like rain-drops from an April rose.

CHAPTER II.

COUNTING THE COST.

THE lights were out in the Huguenot temple; the consistory had dispersed, and old Basil, the sexton, stood waiting to lock the door, as the pastor and a solitary companion came out. The face of the minister was irradiated with saintly joy, but the cheek of the young man was flushed, and his slouched hat was drawn far over his brow. Godfrey Chevalier paused a moment beside the white-haired sexton.

"Congratulate Armand," he said gently. "Like Peter, he denied his Master in an hour of sore temptation, but like the great apostle, he, too, has bitterly repented, and been, he hopes, forgiven. The Church has restored him to membership."

"Is it indeed so?" asked the old man, glancing at the averted face. "Then God be praised, my young brother, and may He give you grace to stand steadfast henceforward."

"Pray for me," muttered Armand, clasping the proffered hand, but not lifting his head.

"We have need to pray for each other, if the edicts are to grow much stricter," was the heavy answer. "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

The minister uncovered his head, and lifted a calm, fearless glance to the encircling hills.

"The Lord sitteth King forever," he repeated triumphantly. "Courage, Basil, 'His strength is made

perfect in weakness.' Be of good comfort, my poor Armand; 'To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much.' 'Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation.'"

He replaced his hat, and with a slight gesture of farewell, turned away. The two men stood listening to his footsteps until they died away down the mountain road. Then Basil turned to lock the door, sighing.

"It is not the withered trunk the bolt first smites: it is not for myself I most fear, M. le Pasteur." He glanced up for sympathy to the penitent, but Armand had gone.

There was a light in the window of the pastor's cottage, as he opened the ivy-covered gate, and a woman's dark-robed figure stood waiting in the shadow of the porch. Monique Chevalier's cheek had lost something of its bloom, and her brow been touched by care, since the summer day so long ago, when she had given a nameless stranger shelter in her porch, but there was still the tender light in the dark eyes, and the steadfast sweetness about the grave lips, which had made poor Madame Bertrand's broken heart instinctively flow out to her in trust, and had made Godfrey Chevalier, from the hour when he had first seen her, know her to be more to him than the light of his eyes—more than aught but the love of Christ and the hope of heaven. She had been a wealthy gentleman's daughter, and he only a young licentiate, then; but there had been no faltering in the hand she placed in his, and no hesitation in the feet which had quitted for him the green and pleasant paths to climb the rough and stony slopes of a Huguenot pastor's lot. He loved her with a deep, silent passion, which had become inwrought with every fibre of his nature, but

there was little outward token in the grave kiss he set upon her brow.

“You are later than usual to-night : I could not help feeling anxious,” she faltered, as they went in together to the cosy sitting-room, where a child was asleep on the cushions of the settle.

“Poor little maid. I promised her a story, but the vigil has been too long,” said the father tenderly, as he touched the golden curls of the little sleeper; and then he told the story of Armand, as he hung up his hat and cloak. His wife was setting out a slight repast for him upon the table. He noticed that her hand trembled, and that she did not answer. No musician could be more sensitive to a discord than the grave, scholarly man to any change in the voice or face he loved best.

“What is it, Monique?” he asked, glancing up quickly.

She turned pale, and leaned against the table.

“There has been another edict, Godfrey. Our pastors are forbidden to restore backsliders under heavy penalties.”

“How have you heard?”

“Henri La Roche has just returned from Paris. He stopped to leave a packet of letters for you, and finding his father here, tarried awhile. They would have waited until you came, but it grew so late.”

“Has our young sieur succeeded in obtaining his commission?”

“He has good hopes of receiving it at last. His uncle Renau has the matter in hand, and will send him word next week.”

There was a slight pause while he broke the seal of the packet she handed him.

“His majesty is slow in rewarding the services of so

loyal a subject, but monsieur is not of the king's religion. What are the penalties attached to the new edict, Monique?"

She gave a fearful glance over her shoulder, and drew a step nearer to his chair.

"Hard labor at the galleys—for life," she whispered.

Godfrey Chevalier started. He had not expected this. Instead of answering her, he rose and walked to the window, and stood for several minutes looking out on the moonlit hills. Then he came back slowly to the table.

"The King of kings has commanded, 'Restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.' Whom should we obey, Monique?"

She could not answer; her lip trembled.

"Would you have had me act otherwise to-night, if I had known?"

A moment more of hesitation, and then her dark, tear-filled eyes met his.

"It was your duty to take him back, Godfrey. I cannot wish you had acted differently."

He stretched his hand to her across the table. "Thank you," he said quietly; but the look and the firm, close clasp enriched her more than many words. "We will hope the edict will not be rigidly enforced. Were there aught else, Monique?"

"The singing of psalms has been forbidden in workshops and private dwellings—anywhere beyond the limits of the temple. Oh, Godfrey! I heard you chanting a verse as you came up the hill."

"I will not do it again, Monique. We will make melody in our hearts hereafter. Is that all?"

"The prohibitions against emigration are renewed, and the penalties increased. Our schoolmasters are forbidden to teach anything but reading, writing, and

arithmetic, and our burials must take place after night-fall, or before daybreak. Our young sieur is on fire with indignation."

"Nevertheless we must submit ourselves blameless to every ordinance that does not contravene a higher law. 'The Lord's cause does not languish, Monique. Here is a letter from Charenton. M. Claude has at last yielded to the entreaties of his friends, and is to have a conference with the Bishop of Condom. Eloquent as he is, M. Bossuet will find he has no mean antagonist in the champion of the wilderness church. There will be bold words spoken for the truth. God grant the faith of more than one wavering heart may be established."

"And that our noble kinsman himself suffer no loss for his championship," added the pastor's wife.

She rose as she spoke in answer to a sleepy murmur from the settle. Little Agnes was awake—a grave, fragile-looking child, with eyes in which lay mirrored the fear that had rested on her mother's heart; and delicate features, which looked almost ethereal under the nimbus of golden hair. Monique Chevalier lifted her from the cushions, and led her to her father for his good-night kiss. The pastor gave it tenderly, and looked after them with a moistened glance as they left the room. She was such a gentle flower—this, his youngest and darling—living only in the smiles of those she loved, and trembling at any rude word or look. How would she breast the storm, whose muttered thunders were already shaking strong men's souls? Could that sunny head be always kept safely sheltered? Would that tender hand be able to maintain its hold where the grasp of stronger ones was being wrenched away? "Thou art able to keep that which I have committed unto Thee," he whispered,

glancing upward, and then he broke the seal of the other letter that lay before him. His brow grew stern, as he gathered its purport. For several minutes he sat deeply pondering, then taking a sudden resolution, he rose and went out into the passage. A faint light gleamed from under a door at the farther end. A murmur of children's voices came down the corridor.

"It is well. They are still up and together," he murmured; and noiselessly approaching the door, lifted the latch.

The apartment was the cosy, well-appointed kitchen, in which Nannette had told her story in the earlier part of the evening. The old nurse was gone; the fire had sunk to a few glowing embers. Eglantine sat on a low cricket, drawn well forward on the blue and white tiles, her cheek resting in her hand, her gaze fixed thoughtfully upon the coals. Beside her, leaning against the massive oaken beam that supported the mantel-shelf, was a boy some four years her senior. His figure was in shadow, while hers, by some sweet law of attraction, seemed to gather to itself all the radiance that yet lingered in the room. A large volume, from which they had evidently been reading before the firelight failed, lay on the floor between the two. The little girl was speaking as the pastor entered.

"I would not kneel to the Virgin, nor make the sign of the cross, if the priests should break every bone in my body," she protested warmly, evidently in answer to some appeal from the lad, whose dark, piercing eyes were fixed upon her through the gloom.

"You should not speak so positively," he answered. "No one knows what he would do until he is tried."

"But I do know, Rene. When uncle Godfrey let the blood from my arm last month, did I not hold still

without a whimper ; and did not Antoine say I bore the pain like a martyr ? ”

“ Then you had my mother to sit by and hold your hand, and my father to kiss you and call you a brave little maid when it was over. That was nothing, Eglantine. ”

“ Then why did you turn white at sight of the blood, and let Nannette fetch you a glass of water, like a girl ? I was cool enough to mark that, Master Rene. ”

“ You know very well that was because I could not bear to see you hurt. ” A sudden leap of the dying flames showed a swift leap of scarlet into the olive cheek. “ It is hardly fair to taunt me with that, Eglantine. ”

Godfrey Chevalier, who had been listening unnoticed, laid his hand upon his son’s shoulder. The boy looked up with a quick smile, which spoke volumes for the friendship between them, and Eglantine, with a cry of delight, started from her cricket, and threw her arms about her uncle’s neck.

“ Softly, thou small whirlwind, ” he cried, laughing, but he drew her tenderly to him as he spoke, and taking a seat on the settle, beckoned Rene to a place beside them.

“ I have had a letter to-night which concerns both you and Eglantine, ” he said. “ Hold up your head, little maid, and tell me how old you are ? ”

“ Twelve this mid-summer, uncle Godfrey. ”

“ Full young to be sent out to meet the world, the flesh, and the devil, but your grandfather will have it so. What were you speaking of, my son, when I came in ? ”

“ We had been speaking first, my father, of the new edict, which M. Henri brought us word of to-night, and then I had read to Eglantine the story of sweet Philippa

Lunz, and we were supposing that those old days were to come back again, and we should have to hold the faith as hardly as our forefathers did. And Eglantine was sure she would be as steadfast as the noble martyr herself."

"And you were trying to convince her that it would be no easy task? Right, Rene, if you looked at it from the standpoint of our frail human hearts, but only half right, unless you pointed her, too, to the strength that is made perfect in weakness. Light the candle, my son. I will give you a watchword to-night, little maid, that you shall keep in your heart all the years that are to come." He drew a small volume with silver clasps from his breast, and by the light of the candle which Rene brought, Eglantine read the words pointed out: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth."

"Not from yourself, little one; your own heart and your own hand will fail thee in the day of trial: your best resolutions wither like withes in the furnace of temptation. Put your trust in Him who 'knoweth neither variableness nor shadow of turning'; He alone is able to keep you from falling. He alone is able, with every temptation, to make a way of escape."

"Is my grandfather going to take me away?" asked the child, recalling the words he had spoken when he first came in.

"M. Laval stopped at La Rochelle on his way to Paris, and met an aunt of your mother's, his wife's elder sister. Madame Cartel would have her young kinswoman come to her for a year or two, little one, that you may have proper masters for music and the languages, and be cured of what your grandfather is pleased to call rustic voice and manners."

“But you will not make me go?—you will not send me away from you?” cried Eglantine, starting from her covert in his arms to look anxiously into his face.

He drew her gently back. “I will help you to do what is right and best. Madame Cartel is a member of the Reformed Church, and promises not to neglect that education which I hold most important. But she says, what is very true, that you cannot in these wild hills obtain the advantages which become your mother’s daughter, and it is also true what your grandfather adds, that you should see something of the world before deciding irrevocably upon the home Rene has to offer you.”

Eglantine glanced up with tearful eyes at the quiet figure beside her.

“I will never love anybody better than Rene, if I see the whole world,” she said, warmly. Her uncle smiled, and a strange, soft light transfigured his son’s face.

“I would have to leave you soon, Eglantine, to go to Montauban,” said the boy, gently.

“If you love each other, a few years’ separation will make little difference,” added Godfrey Chevalier. “The shadows thicken about our Reformed Church, and I know not how long my home may be a safe shelter for those I love. It will be a comfort to me, little one, to think of you as protected by powerful friends, until Rene has a home of his own to offer you. You speak of Montauban, my son. You have yet to hear what M. Laval says to you. Take the letter and read. You must decide for yourself.”

The boy took the packet quietly, and going to the table, sat down and began to read. The pastor and his little foster-daughter watched with different emotions the face now clearly illuminated by the candle. Plain, dark, strongly marked, it was already shadowed

with thought beyond his years. Monique Chevalier's son had inherited the strength, if not the beauty, of his mother's face, and the grave, firm lips bespoke a nature that, like hers, would be patient to wait, as well as bold to keep. He returned the letter to his father with a grave smile.

"M. Laval would have me abandon the study of medicine to go into his counting-house. What will you say to him, my father?"

"I shall say nothing to him, Rene. The offer is to you, and you must make the choice."

The boy had risen and come back to the hearth, and now stood gazing thoughtfully down into the coals at his feet. He was tall for his age, and his sun-burnt cheek and well-developed chest and limbs told of much exercise in the open air.

"I have heard you say, my father, that you held the profession of medicine next in usefulness to that of the sacred ministry."

"I hold so still, Rene, next in usefulness and next in danger. You see M. Laval tells us what our young sieur forgot to mention, that the last edict closes the door of your chosen profession to all adherents of the religion."

Godfrey Chevalier's son looked up with a deep, steady fire in his eyes.

"There are Huguenot physicians, however, already in the field, who will gladly open to those who knock. I cannot draw back, my father. If I may not follow your calling, I will at least follow in your steps. I would be unworthy to be called your son if I faltered now. The greater the peril, the fewer there will be who will run the risk, and the fewer, the more need." He stopped suddenly at a low sob from Eglantine. The prospect of her separation from those she loved

best had been growing on her childish heart until the small cup had overflowed.

"I want my aunt Monique. Let me go to my aunt Monique!" she exclaimed in a passion of grief, and breaking from the pastor's arms, fled precipitately from the room.

"Let be. The mother will know how to comfort her," said Godfrey Chevalier. "My son, did you mark no double meaning in what M. Laval said of the dowry he would bestow upon his granddaughter, and the interest he would give you in the business if you would show yourself agreeable to his wishes?"

"It is plain that he likes not the prospect of a hard and perilous life for Eglantine," answered Rene. "I infer we would have little to hope from him in the way of worldly advantage, if I displease him now. But you know I have never looked to the money, my father."

"That were little, if that were all, though a share of this world's goods would help thee over many a rough place in these troublous times. Look again, Rene. Remember that M. Laval loves his granddaughter better than aught else in the world; that he holds the secret of her parentage; and that his attachment to our Church is only nominal. Remember, that though he has never ventured to claim her openly, it is in his power to do so at any moment, and that you may find it difficult some day to press thy suit with the man you have angered and crossed. M. Laval will not lightly break the promise made to the dead, but he warns you plainly to be careful how you decide."

"You surely do not think he would dare to betray the secret of her birth to the Catholic relatives?"

"Read the letter again."

There was no sound but the crackling of the embers upon the hearth, as the lad, who had all at once grown

very pale, obeyed. He did not look up when he had finished, as he had done the first time, and his father laid his hand upon his shoulder.

“ ‘Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to build it, lest haply, after he hath laid the foundations, he is not able to finish.’ Rene, I pray God to give you the desire of your heart, but it is well to ask yourself in the beginning, is there aught dearer to you in the world than Christ, your Lord ?”

The youth struggled with himself for a moment more, but it was evidently only to control his emotion. Then he looked up, his face still pale, but his eyes glowing.

“I cannot draw back, but I cannot give her up,” he cried. “You have taught me all my life to look upon her as a trust to us from God. What He has given into my care, He will surely give me strength to keep. I might hesitate to ask her to share so hard a lot, if I did not feel that she would be safer with me than with any one else, just because I love and understand her, and will watch over her, as no one else ever would. Let M. Laval do his worst, my father ; I will trust God for the future, and go forward and do my duty.”

“You are resolved upon that, Rene ?”

“At any cost. ‘Whoso loveth houses and lands more than Him, is not worthy of Him.’”

“Then I have not been disappointed in you, my son” ; and the Huguenot folded his boy in a close embrace. “Be of good cheer, Rene. It is written : ‘Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.’”

Late that night, as the pastor sat writing at his study-table, he became suddenly conscious of two burning eyes watching him through the pane over

which he had forgotten to draw the curtain. He rose at once, and went to the window. The moon was already on the wane, but there was still sufficient light to make objects discernible. There was no one without. After watching several minutes, he was about to turn away, thinking he had been the victim of some strange hallucination, when a stealthy shadow creeping out from under the garden wall, flitted across the road, and disappeared in the opposite wood.

The slouched hat, and short, ragged cloak were those of Armand, the penitent.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE SNARE.

THERE falls sometimes into Southern Februarys, a day of early warmth, when the winds sleep, and the sapphire skies drop violets, and the hill-sides open veins of crocus gold. We hear the birds sing in the wood, and become conscious all at once of a yellow down on the tips of the naked elms, and a fine unguent scattered in the air. The fears that lay heavy on our hearts loose their hold with the brooks. Hope mounts in the blood, like the melting sap in the wood.

It was such a morning in the Cevennes a few weeks after the return of the young sieur, La Roche, to his father's chateau. The snows had melted from the hills during the night, and the fine, clear air that smote his cheek as he opened his turret window, brought the bleat of lambs from the opposite slope. The view visible from the latticed casement was one calculated to stir the enthusiasm of a heart less ardent than that of Henri La Roche. The chateau stood on one of the natural terraces of the hills, and just below lay the lovely valley of the Vaunage, the fair Canaan of Southern France, carpeted with verdure. Northward the mighty shoulders of Mounts Mazin and Lozere thrust themselves through melting mantles of mist. Far away to the east, touched by the rising sun, flashed the towers and spires of Nismes, while a turquoise gleam

on the edge of the southern horizon told where the fertile meadows of Languedoc met the blue waters of the Mediterranean, two thousand feet below.

With an elastic step and a brighter look than he had worn for many a day, the young sieur entered the stone-paved hall where his father sat at breakfast.

“There is rare sport upon the hills to-day, Jean tells me. With your good-will, my father, we will have the falcons after breakfast, and go a-hunting. I do but eat my heart out waiting here by the fire for the boon that never comes. Since his majesty cannot trust a Huguenot gentleman to lead his troops against the enemy, I must content myself with smaller game. Jean hath gone to bid Rene Chevalier be ready to accompany us.”

Monsieur lifted his fine, impassive face from the pile of letters beside his plate. He was a stately, soldierly-looking old man, and his suit of plain black velvet was devoid of any ornament but a military badge upon the breast. His left sleeve was empty, and a sword hung at his side.

“You will have no reason to complain of the quality of your game another spring,” he said, as his white, wrinkled hand selected a paper from those before him, and extended it to Henri. “Our grand monarch hath indeed been slow in granting the prayer of an old servant, who has begrudged neither blood nor treasure for his throne; but Minister Colbert’s entreaties, joined to those of our cousin Renau, have carried the day. There is your commission, Henri, to a regiment on the Spanish frontier. I would you might have learned the art of war under my old captain, Turenne—so true a gentleman and so pure a knight. But since that may not be, I am glad you are to carve out your fortune on the bodies of bead-telling Spaniards, not

on the stout breasts of fellow-Protestants—Dutchmen though they be.”

The young man had seized the paper, and was devouring the contents with sparkling eyes.

“His majesty shall never regret placing this confidence in me,” he exclaimed proudly. “I have but one regret, my father, that the peace of Nimeguen gives me small opportunity at present to display my loyalty. Minister Colbert will do me another good turn if he ceases his groans over the empty treasury, and permits our king’s native love of glory to give his soldiers an occasion to unsheath their swords. The king’s enemies are mine, be they Papist or Protestant.”

The father lifted his hand.

“Peace, foolish boy. You know as little of the horrors of carnage as of the heavy burdens which his majesty’s glorious wars have laid upon the shoulders of his people and the table of his minister. You will have occasion soon enough, I doubt not, to win your laurels. I wish I were as sure of thy loyalty to the King of kings, Henri, as I am of thy faithfulness to the trust which our earthly sovereign has reposed in thee.”

The young man flushed angrily, but unable to bear the keen glance bent upon him, his eyes fell, and he tried to laugh away the rebuke.

“’Pon my word, my father, that is a sharp speech from thy lips. What has drawn it down upon my head,—the gay attire with which I scandalized the temple-folk last Sabbath, or the laugh over the top of the pew with that dark-eyed little witch at Madame Chevalier’s side? I have atoned for the first with a louis d’or to every old grandsire and grandame I have met this week, and I have submitted to a grave lecture from Madame Chevalier for the second, and promised *La Petite* a rose-colored ribbon the next time I go to

Nismes to make up to her for the disgrace into which I brought her."

The sieur La Roche looked excessively annoyed. "I wish you would be more thoughtful, Henri. The rose-colored ribbon will please Madame Chevalier hardly more than the laugh in church, or the book of fairy-tales you brought the child down from Paris, and for which I hear she often neglects her lessons and better reading. It ill becomes you to set temptation in the path of one so young, and for whom our good pastor and his wife feel such special anxiety."

Henri shrugged his shoulders with a laugh. "I will not buy the ribbon, of course, if you object," he said carelessly; "but Mistress Eglantine needs no teaching from me to make her love everything that is bright and gay and heroic. Her gentle blood shows itself as much in that as in the set of her small head, or the shape of her little hand. Pastor Chevalier and his wife cannot rub the one out of her any more than the other, and unless what I heard of Madame Cartel in Paris was false, my father, the little maid will have all the ribbons and fairy-tales she wants when she is once under that lady's care."

"Then Godfrey Chevalier and his wife shall be told of it," replied monsieur gravely. "Baptiste," to the old butler, who entered the room, "tell Armand, the new groom, to have my horse at the door after breakfast. I have letters from the capital on which I must consult M. Chevalier."

"Armand is not here this morning, my lord. If you please, I will take the order to Jacques instead."

"Do so, then. But stay," catching sight of something in the wrinkled face; "is there aught wrong with that fellow Armand? You—none of you like him, I know that."

“He had a surly way about him, my lord, but the men had your orders, and they knew it was the pastor who bespoke him the place.”

“Then what ails thee to change color at the mention of his name? Out with it, Baptiste.”

The old man went to the door, examined it to make sure it was quite closed, and then came close to his master’s chair.

“The fellow asked leave last night to go down to Beaumont to see his mother; but we have sent to the hamlet this morning, and she hath seen nothing of him. One of the maids is sure she saw him talking two days ago with the cure.”

Monsieur’s usually placid brow darkened.

“Why was I not told of this at once?” he demanded sharply. “Tell Jacques to saddle the horses at once, Baptiste, and then come and let me know if aught more has been heard of the fellow.” He looked anxiously at his son as the serving-man retired.

“Armand has gone over to Lodève to see his sweetheart, and Marie has an attack of jealousy,” laughed Henri, as he took his seat at the table and helped himself to a piece of cold pasty. “I cannot think evil of any one on a day like this, my father. I don’t suppose it is anything worse than a stolen holiday.”

“I hope not.” But Henri La Roche’s father pushed away his plate, and the old stag-hound, who knew every tone of her master’s voice, rose from her couch upon the hearth-rug, and came and looked anxiously into his face. “They are prejudiced against the groom, and quick to believe evil of him, no doubt, yet I have never wholly trusted the man myself, Henri. Hark! was that the sound of shouting in the hamlet?”

“I noticed nothing, sir.”

“Then there must be something wrong with my old ears. I could swear there comes and goes on the breeze a murmur like an angry sea. But I suppose it is only my old heart projecting its fears into the things about me. Ha!”—as Baptiste, with a scared face, re-entered the room—“What ails thee, my man? Is there aught wrong in the village?”

“There is a tumult, my lord. Madame Chevalier hath sent Jean running back to pray you come and speak a quieting word to them.”

The sieur La Loche rose to his feet. “What is the meaning of the uproar, Baptiste, and where is M. Chevalier? Will they not listen to their pastor?”

The old servant burst into tears. “Alas, monsieur! M. Chevalier will not soon be seen in our hills again. The gendarmes surrounded the cottage at daybreak, and arrested him before he could spring from his couch. He is already on his way to prison.”

Monsieur covered his face with his hands. “Apprehended!—and by the king’s officers! God have mercy on our stricken Church.”

But Henri had leaped from the table, with lightning flashing from under suddenly darkened brows.

“How dared they! The pastor was under my father’s protection! What pretext do they make for the indignity? Speak, Jean!” to the valet, who had followed trembling.

“The accusation is heavy enough, my young sieur. They say he has openly defied the king by breaking the last edict, and taking back into his church those who had been converted to the true faith; and that he hath spoken seditious words in the temple, teaching the people to obey their ministers rather than the king. Antoine says M. Chevalier would make no resistance after he had read the warrant; only he com-

plained that the charge was political, and that he was not allowed to suffer in the name of the religion. He would, he said, that he were as innocent of any sin against his God as of any disloyalty to his king."

"Whither have they taken him?"

"To the citadel of St. Esprit. The order was from the Intendant of Nismes."

Henri turned to his father, his glance like an un-sheathed sword.

"Will you submit quietly to this injustice, sir, or will you give me permission to place myself at the head of the tenantry, and attempt a rescue? We could overtake them by a cut through the hills."

The words roused M. La Roche from his stupor of grief. Sternly he tapped the military decoration upon his breast.

"Have you just received a commission in the king's army, and do you speak of resisting the king's orders?" he demanded. "Never let me hear such a word from your lips again, my son. We may recognize the hand that deals this blow, but we dare not forget that it wears the mailed gauntlet of France. Baptiste, see if our horses are ready. We will mount at once." And as the man flew to execute his orders, he went up to his son, who had turned away, flushing scarlet at his reproof. "Thou art the joy of my life, Henri, even when I chide thee," he said tenderly. "Resistance would but seal our friend's doom, and give the strongest possible coloring to the accusation of his enemies. But there are still means which must not be left untried. Take Jean, my son, and ride down at once to Nismes. See M. D'Argoussy in my name, and discover if the payment of any fine will secure our pastor's release or lighten his imprisonment. Obtain speech with him also, if possible, and come back

and bring us tidings. I will to quiet these poor grief-stricken people, and comfort Madame Chevalier, if possible."

The glance of father and son met.

"You have little hope?" said the latter sadly.

"His enemies seek his life. The charge of sedition proves that."

The young man threw his arm around his father's neck. "You questioned my loyalty to the Reformed faith a few moments since, sir. I am not what I should be, and I fear I have too often grieved you and our dear pastor by my jests at our grave dress and manners, but you shall both see, now that the religion is really endangered, none will hold to it more firmly nor defend it more warmly than I."

"God helping thee," was the grave answer. But monsieur's sad face was illuminated by a momentary gleam of joy. How often in the years to come would Henri La Roche remember those words.

He spoke but once more as they descended the broad staircase to the court:

"Armand, the traitor!" he hissed between his set teeth. But the sieur La Roche pointed upward.

"'Vengeance is mine: I will recompense, saith the Lord,'" he repeated solemnly.

CHAPTER IV.

AN OPEN DOOR.

OF the anguish and dread of the days that followed what need to speak? There will be few who will read these pages who will not have known some such night of sorrow. By dying pillows or on stormy shores—watching some battle from afar off or waiting outside some prison-gate—sooner or later to every disciple must come the Master's summons, "Can ye not watch with me one hour?" And sooner or later, over every quivering heart, be cast the same blessed shield, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

The keen frosts of February gave way to the windy bugles and budding boughs of March; March blossomed into April, and April was hovering on the threshold of May, when one morning the secretary of the Intendant of Nismes entered the cabinet of his chief.

"M. Laval," he announced.

"I cannot see him. Admit none of the pastor's friends to-day."

"M. D'Argoussy will hardly obtain the loans Minister Colbert has asked for if he offends the banker."

"I will take the risk of that. I would sooner see the arch-fiend himself than Pierre Laval or the La Roches to-day. Tell him I am out—sick—anything you like."

The subordinate retired slowly to the ante-room, where a stout, gray-haired man in citizen's dress stood waiting.

"The Intendant is closeted with a messenger from Paris, and can see no one to-day. If you will be good enough to call to-morrow——"

The wealthy banker interrupted him with an impatient gesture, and turned sharply on his heel. He had heard M. D'Argoussy's complaining voice through the partition, and divined only too heavily the real cause of his refusal. He retraced his steps down the corridor, and was descending the staircase that led to the street, when at a dark turn he felt a hand laid softly on his arm, and turning, confronted a priest wearing the black robe and cowl of a Dominican. The ecclesiastic laid a warning finger upon his lips, and motioned his companion to follow him through a door, which had opened noiselessly, into a small cabinet, apparently in connection with the Intendant's office, but which the banker had never noticed before. Two clerks sat writing at a table. At a gesture from the priest they retired, and the Dominican motioned the banker to one of the empty seats.

"I beg your pardon for this detention, M. Laval, but I understand you are here in the interests of pastor Chevalier. Doubtless you are a friend or relative, and will be willing to do a slight service for us both."

Considering the man's garb and the character of the times, it is not strange that Pierre Laval changed color and hesitated. He had not been able to refrain from telling Madame Chevalier that if her husband had listened to the advice of his friends, he would never have brought them and himself into so much trouble. But he had labored night and day to save him, all the same, pouring out gold and influence as

freely as M. La Roche himself. Now, for the first time, it flashed upon him that his warm espousal of the pastor's cause might have brought his own person and opinions into unpleasant notoriety. His companion hastened to reassure him.

"I come to crave a boon, not to spy out the land, monsieur. The heretic pastor has been anxious from the beginning of his imprisonment to communicate with his wife ; but as no one knew of her whereabouts, or was willing to appear to know, it has been hitherto impossible. It was with the hope that as a friend or kinsman you might be able to further such a letter on its way, that I ventured to address you. But I see I have made a mistake. I will detain you no further."

"There is no mistake," exclaimed M. Laval impulsively, his fears quite disarmed by this explanation, and his heart swelling at the prospect of carrying back such a cup of comfort to the desolate wife. "I have known pastor Chevalier and his wife for years, and am under great obligations to them both. Entrust the packet to me : I will see that it reaches her in safety."

He extended his hand, and the dark eyes, watching him keenly and stealthily from under the black hood, dilated with a sudden flash. A student of men looking on might have said that the priest had tested and now thoroughly understood his tool, but Pierre Laval saw only a dim smile gleam across the wasted features, and heard no irony in the Dominican's voice as he answered :

"You are in haste, monsieur. M. Chevalier has yet to write the letter, but if you will tell me where it may be sent, I will see that it is placed in your hands before evening."

The banker mentioned the name and number of the street upon which he lived, and the monk rose as if to

indicate that the interview was over. Pierre Laval lingered.

“May I not know the name of the priest who is so bold and humane as to take interest in the wishes of a Huguenot and a prisoner?” Another faint, indefinable smile flitted across the pale lips.

“I am Father Ambrose, the cure of the fortress, and M. Chevalier’s spiritual adviser. Rather a nominal position, the last,” answering the look of surprise in the other’s honest eyes. “But at least I have tormented him less than others of my order might have done, and you may say to Madame Chevalier that her husband has had every alleviation to his condition that it was possible to procure.

“Nay, do not misunderstand me, monsieur,” as Pierre Laval would once more eagerly have interrupted him, “there was little in my power to do for one so fanatical as Godfrey Chevalier, and I am a loyal son of my Church. I would fain have converted him from his heresies, if that had been possible; but since it was not, I have forborne to annoy him more than my conscience absolutely required. I owe to Madame Chevalier an old and yet uncanceled debt, for which any slight kindness I show her husband is but scant return.” He glanced pointedly at the door, but Eg-lantine’s grandfather now held him firmly by the sleeve.

“If you are indeed kindly disposed to either Godfrey Chevalier or his wife, give me some tidings of the trial. My mission here has been fruitless. M. D’Argoussy evades seeing me. When will sentence be passed, and what is it likely to be?”

“Sentence has been already passed, monsieur. The paper lies at this very moment upon the Intendant’s table, awaiting his signature. As soon as that is af-

fixed, his fate will be communicated to the prisoner by the commandant of the fortress, and I must myself be in attendance to render what spiritual consolation is possible under the circumstances."

"But the sentence, M. le Cure! Have you heard what the sentence is?"

Father Ambrose fixed his dark, hollow eyes with an inscrutable expression upon the face of his interlocutor.

"Hard labor at the galleys—for life," he replied slowly.

Every vestige of color forsook M. Laval's naturally rosy face.

"Impossible! His enemies could not descend to such a depth of malice as that!"

"It is the penalty attached to the least of M. Chevalier's offences. He disobeyed the king's edict at his peril."

"But Godfrey Chevalier is gently born, and the galley-ship is the doom of the vilest of the vile. There must be some outlet—some door of escape," the banker gasped, as if the atmosphere of the room had begun to suffocate him. "You appear to have some influence here, Father; obtain for me an interview with M. D'Argoussy. He must not put his name to that paper. I have means to make him listen to me."

"Impossible, monsieur. The Intendant is not unfriendly to the prisoner; but the pressure brought to bear upon him is such that he dare not refuse his signature. There have been but two chances of escape for the pastor from the first, and through neither of them will he stoop to find exit. The first was a recantation of his errors, which would have procured him a full pardon, or at the least an honorable banishment, with permission for his family to accompany

him, but to this he would not listen for a second; and seeing how idle it was, I confess I did not press him much. The other, however, was an appeal to the king's grace, and from this I did at first hope much, supplemented by the interest at court I could bring to bear upon it; but here also M. Chevalier proved insurmountably obstinate, absolutely refusing even to look again at the paper, after he had discovered that it involved an expression of penitence for the past. He regrets nothing, he says, except that he did not labor more earnestly while he was still free. I sincerely pity him, M. Laval, and all who are interested in his fate; but it is impossible to save a man who is resolved to immolate himself."

The color had rushed back to Pierre Laval's face.

"This is madness—fanaticism run to seed," he exclaimed passionately. "A drowning man cannot afford to split hairs. M. le Cure, it still rests with you to save him. Use your influence to get me admitted to the fortress, and give me speech with him for half an hour. I promise you in less than that time to have made him listen to reason. If not for his own sake, then for the sake of his helpless family, he must make the concession."

Father Ambrose considered for a moment, his eyes fixed upon the floor. Then he looked up.

"You shall have your wish, M. Laval. The prisoner has prepared himself, I know, for a sharp and speedy death, but it is barely possible that the prospect of years of ignominy and toil may shake his resolution. You shall have the opportunity to avail yourself of the weakness—if there be any. Neither he nor his shall ever say I left a stone unturned that might have saved him. Nevertheless, I warn you beforehand that I have small hope of your success. The rack has not moved

him a hair's breadth, and as for the mention of his wife, it seems but to add ardor to his obstinacy. Had I not known Monique De Vaux, I would have found it hard to understand. But they are moving overhead. M. D'Argoussy has yielded at last, and they come to summon me. It will not do for you to be found closeted with me. This card will admit you to my private apartments at the fortress. Meet me there an hour hence, and God and the Virgin speed our cause."

He opened the door, and Pierre Laval, thrusting the bit of pasteboard into his breast, hurried down the steps and into the street, barely in time to escape the eyes of an officer, who the moment after descended the stair.

Punctually at the hour named he was at the citadel of St. Esprit, and on presenting Father Ambrose's card, was at once admitted to a small, scantily-furnished apartment on the ground floor. The door closed, and he was left alone. Ten, fifteen minutes passed. Father Ambrose did not appear, neither came there any tidings from him. His visitor sprang up, and began to pace the room restlessly. Once a faint suspicion of the priest's fidelity crossed his mind, but he thrust the thought from him as unworthy. His heart, however, had already begun to misgive him as to the success of his undertaking. With growing uneasiness, he recalled the occasions on which, for one cause or another, he had attempted to make the pastor see things as he saw them--occasions on which he, Pierre Laval, had certainly not come off victorious. But he had put his hand to the plough, and could not turn back; besides, he could never go back to Madame Chevalier with that fatal sentence, without making one more attempt to save her husband. Loudly as he might rail against their fanaticism, he was sincerely attached to

them both, and like many another time-server, in his secret heart admired the heroism he dared not imitate.

At last steps were heard without ; the door opened and the Dominican entered. His dark eyes glittered with excitement, and the hand with which he grasped M. Laval's was icy in its touch.

“Come, monsieur ; now is your opportunity, if ever. He has learned his fate with perfect calmness. There seems no limit to his infatuation. He even thanks God that he is permitted to suffer longer. How much of this may be assumed to blind us, who can say? You are to have an hour with him alone ; make the best use of it you can.”

He led the way from the room, and Pierre Laval followed, more than ever ashamed of his momentary suspicion. Down many a winding corridor and stair they passed, the light of the upper world receding as they went, until the damp breath of the underground vaults smote upon the banker's overwrought senses, and he would have stumbled for very blindness in the gloom, had not Father Ambrose lighted a taper and preceded him the remainder of the way. Before a heavily-barred door at the end of the next passage, the gendarme, who stood on duty, withdrew at a whisper, and the priest, opening the door, pushed Pierre Laval silently forward into what appeared to be a gulf of midnight blackness.

“A light ! I must have a light !” cried the banker, turning hastily back and attempting to stay the closing door.

There was no answer but the settling of the massive portal in its socket, the creaking of the bolts as they were hastily drawn without, and the echo of a faint laugh down the vaulted corridor. Instantly every slumbering doubt flamed up into open conflagration.

“My God, I am a lost man!” he cried; and in his despair was about to precipitate himself down the steps.

“He loseth nothing that loseth not God,” answered a calm voice somewhere within the gloom. Faint and altered as it was, M. Laval at once recognized it; even to the woman that loved it that voice could not have sounded more sweet.

“Godfrey, are you indeed here? Thank heaven! I thought for a moment that I had been entrapped, and the moment seemed an eternity. But tell me how I may find my way to you in this pitchy dark, for I can see no more than an owl at noon.”

There was a second's intense silence, then the pastor cried out:

“Is it you, M. Laval? I did not know you when I first spoke. Then I will hear of Monique and my children before I go. My God, I thank Thee! Thou knowest I did not look for this—that I had prepared myself to drink the cup without one mitigating drop! But Thou art ever better to us than we can ask or think.”

Guided by the voice and the dull clank of a chain, as the prisoner raised himself upon his iron bed, Pierre Laval groped his way down the steps and across the damp floor of the dungeon to the spot whence the sounds proceeded. The pastor stretched out his hand to guide and welcome him; the other clutched it eagerly, and the next moment, with a gush of womanlike emotion, threw himself upon his friend's shoulder.

“Good heavens! they have almost killed you with their fiendish cruelties!” he gasped, shocked to find how wasted and feeble was the frame that had lately been so strong and stalwart.

“The rack is hardly a health-giving couch,” was the faint answer, while with a mighty effort Godfrey

Chevalier concealed the shock that the embrace had given to wrenched muscles and shattered nerves. "But even that hath its soft side if Christ Jesus turn the screw. Nay, shudder not, my friend. They have done their worst, and it is over. God's grace has been once more sufficient for human weakness, and His glory magnified, I trust, in the least of all His saints."

"I would I could see His judgments visited upon the heads of your tormentors," growled M. Laval fiercely. "Out upon that false priest who bade me tell Madame Chevalier he had procured for you all possible alleviations. What more could they have done to you, I wonder?"

"Nay, if you speak of Father Ambrose, he has indeed proved himself a friend to me throughout; though why, is more than I have been able to make out. I should be far weaker than I am, if he had not supplemented my prison-fare with nourishing food from his own table, and tended my hurts ever since I was taken from the rack, with the skill of a leech and the gentleness of a woman."

"But have you lain here all these weeks in this hole in the earth—this pit of darkness? He might have done better for you than that, methinks."

"He has done all for me in his power, I doubt not. I have only been here four days, monsieur, since they have added the charge of treasonable correspondence to my other crimes. God forgive them the falsehood. My first cell was above ground, and had air and light in plenty; neither is this as dark as it seems to you fresh from the outer world. There is a grating in the ceiling which lets in a little light from an upper room, and through it, for one instant every day, a sunbeam flashes in. I call that my little Agnes. When my girl is old enough to understand, bid her mother tell her

that her father named for her the one bright thing that visited him in his dungeon. But I waste these priceless moments talking about myself. You have come to bring me tidings of those I love."

M. Laval moved uneasily. "I was in Paris when I heard of your arrest, Godfrey. I lost no time in coming home, but when I reached the hills the cottage was deserted, and I could get nothing out of the weeping, frightened peasants, but that they had found it so the morning after you were taken. I might have had hard work to discover the whereabouts of my little granddaughter, if I had not met M. La Roche on the street next day, and learned from him that Madame Chevalier and the children were living concealed in the house of M. Rey, the advocate. It seems the young sieur followed you that morning to Nismes, and late in the day, getting a whisper that the Intendant had given an order to take the children into custody, rode back to the hills as for his life. It was midnight when he reached there, but he gave Madame Chevalier the alarm at once, and had them all to the chateau before the first streak of light. They lay hidden there for a day or two until the first search was over, and then the young sieur and his father brought them down by night to Nismes. Your wife would hear of nothing else, Godfrey. She must be near you, she said, and though it was running a great risk, M. La Roche had not the heart to say her nay, especially as M. Rey had offered the protection of his roof, and could be so fully trusted. She has borne up well thus far, but I fear she is buoyed up by false hopes of your escape, and that this terrible sentence, which I have just learned, will smite her to the earth."

"I have not prayed for her in vain," was the faint answer. "What of our little Eglantine?"

“She is at La Rochelle with her grandaunt. I sent her there under Nannette’s care a month ago. You have nobly discharged the trust my poor daughter placed in you, but your wife has now enough to take care of her own. But it was not to speak of any of them that I came to you.” The banker paused. He was painfully conscious that the precious hour was melting away; yet now that the moment had come, he felt strangely reluctant to open the mission he had been so ready to undertake.

“Then what is your errand?” asked the pastor with some coldness in his tone. He understood his companion, and divined what was coming. “Surely not the hope of tempting me to purchase my release by a recantation?”

If M. Laval had had any lurking thought of proposing such a course, he had certainly not the courage to utter it now.

“Nay, not that,” he said hurriedly. “But the appeal to the king’s clemency. Father Ambrose says he can back it with much influence at court, and has great hopes of its success, procuring at least a commutation of your sentence.”

“That will do, my friend. I have told Father Ambrose, and I tell you now, that not to save my life will I dishonor my Master, and stain my soul by professing penitence for a crime of which I am not guilty. It would be a lie to God and man, and Christ helping me, I will never put my hand to it.”

“But that is just where you make a mistake, Godfrey. There is no lie in the matter. You have grown morbid, and no wonder: shut up in this dismal hole, and racked with fiendish tortures. You ought to know as well as I that the phrase is a formal one that deceives no one, and which a thousand men as guiltless

as you have signed without scruple. I am no bigot, as you know, but I do you full honor for your religious fidelity, and would not utter another word if the matter rested there. But this is not a point of conscience, but of common sense, and I pray you for your own sake to reconsider it."

He paused, as if expecting some reply, but the pastor remained silent, and hoping that he had made some impression, he hastened to press his advantage.

"I knew and loved your father, Godfrey. We were boys at school together, and I have always honored you, though our paths have lain in different directions. If you like it better, I will meet you on your own ground, and make it a matter of principle, too. Methinks I have heard you say more than once that a man's life was his most precious trust, after his religion, and that only a coward would voluntarily resign it, and only a blasphemer needlessly endanger it."

"Ay, so have I said, and so say I again ; but a man's life, M. Laval, consisteth not only in the breath in his nostrils and the heart-beats in his breast. It is written : 'To know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent, this is life eternal.' And it is also written of those who, for a few more such breaths and heart-throbs, shall surrender that subtler and finer principle : 'He that saveth his life shall lose it.' I would gladly die, my friend, to make you see : 'His favor is life ; His loving-kindness is better than life.'"

"Then you are resolved to immolate yourself?" asked M. Laval in a broken voice.

"I am resolved to hesitate at no cross that my Master holds out to me. But you seem to forget, my brother, that it is to life, not death, that I am summoned."

“To death in life,” retorted the other passionately. “The galley-ship is a hell upon earth. You do not yet comprehend, Godfrey, the depth of the malice that has allotted to you such a doom. I pass over the toil, the suffering, the exposure, for you have proved yourself superior to all assaults of the flesh, but consider the shame, the degradation, the contact with the offscouring of the vile. Great as the miseries of this dungeon may have been, they are nothing to what awaits you. Here you have been a prisoner; there you will be a slave. Think of it, Godfrey! You, in whose veins runs gentle blood, and who have ever seemed to live on a purer and higher plane than ordinary mortals!—have you reflected what it will be to herd with thieves and murderers, to be chained for years to one of them, exposed like them to a master’s lash, and hearing nothing from morning till night but oaths, and curses, and ribald jests?”

“I have thought of it, my friend; but I have thought, too, of Him who, for our sakes, was numbered with the transgressors, and endured the cross and despised the shame for the joy set before Him—the joy of saving a lost world. And I have rejoiced that He has counted me worthy to suffer for His name’s sake. Have you ever thought, M. Laval, what it was for a soul like His to come in contact with a world like ours? Nay, do not weep. You have faithfully portrayed to yourself the cruel and shameful part of my doom. You fail to see the other and brighter side. Believe me, to live will still be Christ, even in the galley-ship, and I will not suffer long. Malice sometimes overreaches itself, and the rack does not put a man’s muscles in trim for the oar.”

“But your wife—have you forgotten her?” inter-

posed M. Laval tremulously. "You have nerved yourself to bear your own suffering. Can you bear the thought of hers? She has kept up a brave front before us all, not weeping or moaning like other women, but we can see that behind it her heart is slowly breaking, and as yet she does not know the worst."

It was his last shaft. He had not meant to use it if it could possibly be avoided, but he let it fly now in utter desperation. The strong quiver that ran through the frame beside him told that it had struck home. But the man who had spent his life amassing wealth never knew all that went and came in the few heart-beats before Godfrey Chevalier answered him :

"Monique would scorn me if I came back to her a coward and a perjurer," he said, in a faint voice that yet had in it the breath of a trumpet note. "But even were she less noble, monsieur, it is not to her that my first allegiance is due. It is written : 'Whoso loveth wife and children more than Me is not worthy of Me.'"

For many minutes after that there was no sound in that dreary dungeon but the dry, choking sobs with which M. Laval acknowledged his defeat.

Then the door opened, and Father Ambrose, taper in hand, entered.

One glance at the faces of the two men sufficed.

"Well, monsieur, are you satisfied?" he asked the banker with a bitter smile; but the other made no answer. The priest turned to Godfrey Chevalier.

"Your request is granted, M. le Pastor. You have permission to write to your wife. I will return immediately with light and writing materials. There is no time to lose, as you are to leave for Toulouse before daybreak to-morrow." Then glancing once more at Pierre Laval, Father Ambrose added:

"Come, monsieur. Your time is expired, and we will have the commandant down upon us, if his orders are overstepped."

The banker stumbled to his feet.

"Madame Chevalier and the children shall never suffer need while I have aught," he whispered, as he and his friend exchanged their last embrace.

"I am sure of that. God bless you, my friend. Give my love to our little Eglantine, and tell her I often thought of her, and prayed for her in my prison."

In perfect silence the priest and his companion retraced their steps along corridors and winding stairs, back to the fresh air and glory of the upper world. But at the door of his own apartment Father Ambrose paused and invited his visitor to enter and partake of some refreshment.

M. Laval recoiled in horror.

"Any bread broken beneath this roof would have the taste of blood upon it," he protested fiercely.

Father Ambrose drew himself up haughtily.

"You are less than grateful," he retorted; "but you are mortified at your failure, and I pardon you. You see, he closes with his own hand the last door of escape."

"Nay, there is one other that will soon open into life and freedom—the door that all your popish, bead-telling brotherhood cannot keep bolted, when God lays His hand upon the latch."

"And pray what is that, monsieur? Nay," as the other pointed upward, with gloomy triumph in look and gesture. "That portal scarcely opens heavenward for heretics."

"We will see." M. Laval was far too much excited to be discreet. "I would I were as sure of entering those blessed gates as he, and the day may come, M.

le Cure, when even you may be glad to touch even the hem of his garment. You will keep faith about the letter?"

"I keep faith ever," was the proud retort.

They had reached the end of the passage, and the gateway of the castle. The porter silently withdrew the bolts, and Pierre Laval, with a sudden lightening of his heart, passed out from under the ponderous arch into the freedom and sunshine of the street.

The gate had scarcely closed behind him when the priest turned to a soldier lounging in the court.

"Did you mark that gentleman, Narcisse, and can you follow him unnoticed and bring me word where he goes?"

"Without doubt, M. le Cure."

"And keep the word as sacred as the secrets of the confessional?"

"Without doubt again, M. le Cure."

"Then speed you. A louis d'or if you are faithful, but a taste of the pulley if I find you blabbing."

From which it would seem that Father Ambrose had still his little game to play, though it had become somewhat involved with events on which he had not counted.

CHAPTER V.

AN OLD DEBT CANCELLED.

THERE was no hesitation in M. Laval's step, as he threaded his way down the busy boulevard, and turning into a side street, entered the house where Madame Chevalier and her children had found shelter. But the moment he met the wife's desolate eyes he knew that the pain of communicating to her that terrible doom had been spared him.

"M. La Roche has been here. I know all," she said in answer to his startled look, and the blunt man of business forgot the consolations he had meant to utter, and silently took a chair, while she drew her weeping children closer, and her gaze left his to wander out once more through the open window, up to the frowning towers of St. Esprit, black against the spring sky.

People talk sometimes about "being prepared" for a great sorrow, as if a blow were less that had added to it the slow anguish of anticipation. But how few seem to have grasped the deep secret, that the only preparation possible is that glad, unhesitating acquiescence to a higher and holier will, which should be the heart-throb and hand-clasp of every moment of a Christian's life—not merely the convulsive gasp and clutch of his soul when he sinks in deep waters. It did not lighten the darkness of that hour for Monique Chevalier that for years its shadow had been projected into her soul, but it did brighten the gloom

that she knew whom she had believed, and could recognize the sceptre of her King in the wrath of evil men. The quiet grief which awed M. Laval more than a burst of weeping, was not submission to the inevitable, nor the dull patience of a heart grown familiar with its pain, but the blessed speechlessness, which the harp of the psalmist has embalmed for the heart of all time: "I was dumb; I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it."

"If I could only see him once more." The wife turned back at last to her visitor with that wistful cry. "You have done much for us, M. Laval, very much. Could you not obtain for us this one concession? It would mean so little to them; it would be so much to me."

M. Laval shaded his eyes with his hand. "I fear it is impossible," he answered. "And, indeed, it would only distress you to see him as he now is. He bade me tell you not to attempt it for the children's sake."

"He himself? Then you have seen him? Oh, monsieur!" Madame Chevalier's hand carried its cup of bitterness less steadily for the unexpected drop of balm.

"Ay, I have seen him, and had speech with him in his dungeon not a half-hour since. Nay, do not look like that and clutch at me so fiercely. I will tell you all—every look and word. Nay, there was no special message to you but that he is to have the privilege of writing you himself, and that, I trow, will be more to both of you than any message I could bring." He paused, startled, yet relieved to see that the blessed tears, which save life and reason, were at last streaming down her face.

"Do not mind me," she said softly. "It is for joy I weep. Go on and tell me all. First, how you could procure this boon when it was denied to me."

Somewhat shamefacedly, Pierre Laval explained.

“And you dared to go to him with such a proposition as that?” Godfrey Chevalier’s wife did not ask what the result of the mission had been.

“It was for his own sake and yours and the children’s. I incurred no small risk in doing it. If you cannot thank me, it is hardly generous to reproach. He did not.”

The wife was humbled and penitent at once.

“He never did anything that was not noble and kind,” she said warmly. “I am but a child beside him; yet believe me, my friend, I am not ungrateful. Now, once more, tell me all.”

Before M. Laval had quite completed his story he was interrupted by a sharp cry. He had averted his eyes from her face that he might not witness the pain that much of the recital must cause her. Now glancing hurriedly at her, he saw her gaze was riveted, not on him, but on some object in the doorway. Following the look, he beheld to his horror and consternation that the object was no other than his new acquaintance, Father Ambrose. The priest, seeing he was observed, advanced slowly into the apartment, addressing no one, but keeping his gaze fixed upon the pastor’s wife. Monique Chevalier had uttered no second cry, but, motionless in her chair with Agnes folded close to her heart, faced the intruder with eyes that seemed to dare the world. As for Pierre Laval, the suspicions he had thought forever laid to rest, rushed back upon his mind with redoubled strength. He had been the dupe, the tool of this wily priest; but it was for Madame Chevalier and her children, not for himself, that the trap had been laid. He saw it all now only too plainly. Hardly knowing what he did, he threw himself in the way of the advancing monk.

“Traitor! spy!” he hissed. “If you hurt a hair of their heads you shall answer for it to me, Church or no.”

The Dominican paused for a moment, and surveyed his opponent with a look of quiet scorn, but no ill-will, then put him aside with a quiet strength, of which few would have thought the slender frame capable.

“Your tongue will yet get you into trouble, M. Laval, in spite of the elasticity of your religious views. It is well for you that I bear no resentment.” Then turning to Monique Chevalier, he addressed her with grave politeness.

“I am sorry to have alarmed you, madame. Believe me, your alarm is quite unnecessary; my errand is one of peace.”

The Huguenot mother turned a shade paler, but made no answer. Yet her heart had already begun to relax something of its terrible tension. M. Laval’s words had identified their visitor with his new acquaintance of the morning, and she could not forget the kindness shown to her suffering husband. But for her children’s sake she must not give her trust too soon.

Evidently disappointed at her silence, the monk advanced a step nearer, and pushed back the black cowl from his brow.

“Madame Chevalier has a bad memory,” he said harshly. “Has she quite forgotten old friends? Perhaps Mademoiselle de Vaux’s memory may be better.” He turned, so that the light fell full upon his face.

“Leon—Leon di Vincy!” The name fell from Monique Chevalier’s lips like a cry, sharp with sudden recognition and a new fear. A bitter smile curved the thin lips of the man watching her.

“Ay, madame, Leon di Vincy, or at least he who

once bore that name, the man who once loved you with such insane fidelity, who was happy to touch a flower that you had worn, and would have risked his soul to bring one upon which your heart was set, but who was less to Monique de Vaux than the shadow that dogged her steps or the blossom she cast aside. The wealth, the station, he laid at your feet, the fame he might have won with you for his inspiration, were as nothing to you, madame, compared with the hardships, the poverty that another had to offer. Leon di Vincy, the playmate of your childhood, the friend of your youth, the lover of your whole life, was forgotten, cast aside the moment Godfrey Chevalier, the heretic, the fanatic, made his appearance. Madame Chevalier has probably never regretted her decision?"

"Never, monsieur." The color had come back to Monique's face. She drew herself up proudly, and the flash in her eyes warned the questioner that on the shield of her great love and her great sorrow, the lava-torrent and the rapier-thrust had both fallen powerless. "To have been Godfrey Chevalier's wife for even a few short years is to have known all of bliss that earth could give. The memory of it will be to me, even in my desolation, a benediction and an inspiration."

The low, sweet passion of her voice trembled into silence as if borne down by the weight of its own music, but Father Ambrose neither spoke nor moved, and in a gentler voice the Huguenot's wife added:

"But my old friend must have strangely changed if his mission here to-day is to upbraid me in my sorrow. You have reverted, M. le Cure, to circumstances which methinks might better have been left where they have long lain in oblivion; but since you have opened the door, one word I must speak in mine own behalf. You

do me but scant justice, sir, when you complain that I was incapable of appreciating, because unable to accept, the gift you offered me. Only too conscious was I even then, I assure you, of the honor you did me, and my own unworthiness. Your friend, your sister, I would gladly always have remained, had not you yourself rendered that impossible."

A strange light that could scarcely be called a smile, glanced across the white, mask-like face, as the priest lifted his head.

"Ay, madame. I believe you said something of the kind at the time, but I—I was never very gentle or docile, as you doubtless remember, and it only maddened me that you should expect me to feed my hunger upon a stone. But as you have done me the simple grace to understand, my mission here is not to taunt you with your sorrow, nor to reproach you for the past. On the contrary, it is to acknowledge, and if possible, to repay an old and still uncanceled debt. There has been enough of these old reminiscences, you think? Pardon me if I recall one more circumstance to your memory. You have doubtless forgotten, but I shall ever blush to remember, that at the climax of my infatuation, when for one mad hour I dreamed that only the difference in our faith stood between us, I offered to perjure my soul and annihilate the barrier by embracing the errors to which I knew you were irrevocably attached. You should teach me, guide me, make a heretic of me if you liked. Your smile, your love was all the religion that I asked. The offer had, perhaps, for one of your temperament, greater temptation than the idle triumph of holding a lover in fetters at your feet. But however that may have been, you showed no doubt, no hesitation. Young as you were, you had the nobility to reject, and the courage to re-

buke, the blasphemous proposition, the moment that it was uttered. You told me I would forfeit not only your friendship, but your esteem, if for the love of any less than God I should forsake the faith I had learned at my mother's knee. Ay, and you told me also, madame, that the empty profession which was all I proposed—all, indeed, that I had to offer,—would be a stain upon my knighthood and a lie to God and man. It was a sharp and wholesome lesson. I did not thank you for it then, nor for many a month and year that followed, but I have learned to do so now—not, Monique, as I would thank one who had snatched me from the brink of the grave and saved to me this fleeting, miserable existence, but as I would, upon my bended knees, thank one who had interposed between me and a blacker pit, and preserved to me that possession which alone is worth preserving—the life eternal. Madame, three days after you left your father's house a joyous bride, I also bade farewell to the scenes of our childhood and entered upon a religious life, seeking to propitiate my offended God by sacrificing upon His altar the aspirations and affections I had hitherto laid at a human shrine, and endeavoring to efface by a life of self-denial and discipline the blackness of that moment's sin. If in the last great day I shall be found in any measure to have succeeded, it will be to the praise of her who withheld the mad, headstrong boy from that act of awful impiety and restored him to his better self. It is for this that I have permitted myself to retain the remembrance of you, when that remembrance might otherwise have been a trespass against my vows; for this that I have wearied God day and night with my prayers, and racked my body with penances and tortures, that I might lay up treasure on high in your behalf, and win from heaven this boon,

that she, who had saved another from the gulf of eternal death, should not herself prove a cast-away."

The whole appearance of the man had altered as he spoke. His look had become rapt, and his glowing features no longer hid the warm soul within. Monique Chevalier looked up wistfully, large tears standing in her eyes.

"You had ever a generous, noble heart, Leon," she said gently. "But I have often questioned with myself whether on that occasion I did my full duty—if, in rejecting the hollow profession, I did not leave somewhat untried of what I might have accomplished in winning you to true and earnest belief on what I know to be the real ground of safety. Tell me, my old friend, does this religion, which you are so grateful to me for preserving to you, wholly cleanse your conscience and satisfy your heart?"

She had gone too far. Father Ambrose's manner instantly changed, and the hard, vizor-like look closed down once more upon his face.

"There spoke the wife of Godfrey Chevalier, the heretic, the fanatic," he said harshly. "Not my old friend, Mademoiselle de Vaux. Thank God she had no such scruples, and the work wrought that day was too well done ever to be effaced. I am as little likely now, madame, to change my faith as your husband to forsake the heresies he seems to find sweeter than the love of wife and child. But I have already overstayed my time, and my errand is yet undone. It has not been in my power to help or hinder your husband's fate, only to render, for your sake, the few small kindnesses that came within my province. How few and how slight. M. Laval has doubtless already informed you; but I am now able, with your assistance, to add to these services the one earthly consolation he himself

acknowledges that can be ministered to him in his suffering. If you and M. Laval will meet me in the chapel next the fortress after vespers this evening, I will conduct you privately to your husband's cell, and grant you an hour's uninterrupted intercourse with him. What, madame! You hesitate—you refuse?" he asked sharply, as the pastor's wife, after the first joyous start, cast down her eyes and remained silent.

"I am fettered by his command," she faltered.

"Nay, my good woman, that was but spoken of the formal application to the authorities," interposed M. Laval, stepping eagerly forward.

"And he himself knows of this and approves," added Father Ambrose. Then, as she still hesitated, looking at her children, he turned proudly away, the flush that mounted to his brow betraying only too plainly that the blood of the knight still flowed fast and warm in the veins of the priest.

"It is enough—you distrust me! I disdain to convince you of my sincerity. Leon di Vincy offers you no pledge but his word."

"And I am satisfied," answered Monique, detaining him with a tremulous touch upon his arm. "Have patience with me, M. le Cure, and make allowance for the mother's heart. It is for my children that I hesitate. Tell me, will they remain unmolested in my absence, and will I after this hour's interview be allowed to return to them unhindered? If my old friend will assure me of this, I will keep the tryst gratefully and without the shadow of a doubt."

Instead of answering, Father Ambrose turned and gazed intently, and for the first time, upon the two children—on the lad, standing pale but brave-eyed and resolute, with his hand on his mother's shoulder, and little Agnes, cowering frightened in her arms.

“Strange !” he muttered, “but I never thought of this before. Is it a temptation or a revelation ? There are those, madame, who would think me rarely quit of my obligation to you could I set over against my own salvation the eternal safety of the two you hold dearer than life. And yet, I may be criminally weak ; but I cannot find it in my heart to take from you one thread of those golden curls. There is no need to fold her to your breast so closely. Monique de Vaux’s children have naught to fear from me. If I seek to ensnare their young souls for heaven, it shall be with the invisible, but mayhap more potent net of my tears and prayers. But there are others who will be less scrupulous. Take a friend’s warning, and after to-night leave Nismes as soon as possible. I chance to know that your presence in the town is not wholly unsuspected, and that immediately after your husband’s removal, a stricter search will be made for his family. As for to-night, I can but give you my word that I know of no attempt that will be made upon your children in your absence. Let your friends see to it that they are as well guarded as usual, and they are safe enough. As to your own safe return, upon that I **will** pledge my honor as a French gentleman.”

“Then I will keep the tryst,” said Monique Chevalier, holding out her hand. “I well know it is to look upon my husband’s face for the last time, not to bid him farewell, as his enemies imagine, to a long and painful captivity. The galleys, to a frame broken and wrenched asunder by the rack, means sure, though lingering death, and death to Godfrey Chevalier is but another name for freedom, and victory, and eternal life.”

“While there is life there is hope,” said Father Am-

brose huskily. "You overestimate the extent of your husband's doom. Although immediately removed from Nismes, believe me, M. Chevalier will not be placed in the galleys until he has fully recovered from his injuries. In the prison of Tournay I can procure for him many indulgences impossible here, the provost being my near kinsman. And even in the galleys there is always the hope of a pardon or an escape. The king's mind or M. Chevalier's temper may change. But if I tarry here much longer I will draw down upon you the attention you most dread. Adieu, madame; I go to inform M. Chevalier that he may expect you without fail."

He beckoned Pierre Laval to follow him out into the corridor.

"Heed what I have said to Madame Chevalier," he whispered. "The danger is more imminent than I have dared to intimate to her. The sentence that dooms the pastor to the galleys, consigns his wife and children to the convent and the cloister. Farewell; you are warned."

At the head of the stair he turned back once more.

"Monsieur, your interest in the foster-child of the Chevaliers has been marked. Beware how you betray Mademoiselle Bertrand's secret. Nay," as the banker started and turned pale, "I have had superior means of ascertaining all that has passed in the pastor's household; the mystery remains unsolved by others. Only remember that the young girl at La Rochelle will attract more attention than the child in the Cevennes." He waved his hand in token of farewell, and silently as he had come, glided down into the street.

M. Laval re-entered the salon.

"How soon can you be ready to leave Nismes, madame?"

“To-night, if necessary. When I have seen my husband’s face once more, there is nothing to detain us.”

“Then, if that priest’s words mean anything, another sunrise should not find you here. Have you decided upon your place of refuge?”

“We have lived too long upon the sides of a volcano not to have taken thought for that, monsieur, and the sieur La Roche has completed what my husband began. Friends in Montauban await us, Antoine accompanies us, and a hundred hearts and doors upon the way will open to us for Godfrey Chevalier’s sake.”

“Then I will seek Antoine at once, and put that in his purse which will speed you on your way. Nay, this you shall not refuse me; I can be obstinate too. Have I not promised Godfrey to see that you lack for naught, and do I not owe it to you for Eglantine’s sake?”

But though M. Laval uttered the name of his granddaughter with emotion, for some reason best known to himself he made no allusion to Father Ambrose’s second warning.

The bright hours of the spring day wore away, hardly more slowly to the prisoner in his dungeon than to the wife without; but at last twilight fell; the vesper-bells answered each other through the gloom and ceased: the throbbing heart of the city grew still. The Huguenot pastor lay upon his iron bed, and listened with an agony of intentness for any sound in the corridor without. He had no means of precisely ascertaining the hour, but by certain little devices with which he had contrived to portion out his hours of darkness, he knew that the trysting-time had long since passed. The footsteps of the sentinel,

usually on duty outside his cell, had ceased for many minutes, and the silence, like the darkness at the first, began to press heavily upon heart and brain like a thing that might be felt. For the first time his heart began to sicken with a dark and terrible dread. Could it after all be a trap, in spite of the priest's honest look and solemn asseveration? Were Monique and his children to be ensnared in the net of his great love for them? Bitterly he regretted the now irretrievable step, and reproached himself for the selfishness which had made him yield to the temptation. But the fear was short-lived. Swift as a needle to the pole, straight as a hurt child to its mother's breast, his soul sought the covert which had sheltered him from many another "windy storm and tempest," and a great cry went up from the depths of his troubled soul to the God who "remembers His covenant forever, the word that He has spoken to a thousand generations."

"They are Thine: save them. I have entrusted them to Thee. Keep that which I have committed unto Thee. Oh, Lion of the tribe of Judah, let none pluck them out of Thy hand!"

Hark! What was that? Steps, voices? or only the noisy beating of his own heart and the sighing of the wind down the vaulted corridor? The heavily-barred door of the dungeon still stood fast and close, but a faint light began to palpitate against the low, murky walls, and across the black pools of water standing on the dungeon floor. Hurriedly he glanced toward the side from which the light seemed to issue. A narrow door at the farther corner of his cell stood open, and a taper, held by some unseen hand, revealed the stone passage and spiral staircase without. What did it all mean? Could some new torture, some fresh assault upon his constancy await him? Ah, who was that com-

ing toward him with a light in her eyes and a haste in her feet, more beautiful than when she kept the tryst in the days of their first love under the elms at Pau?

“Monique! Monique!”

The glad cry rang out on the silence of that dreary dungeon with something of the strength of his old days of freedom and of health. Godfrey Chevalier did not see the man hovering in the shadow of the doorway, who put down his light and fled precipitately at the sound of that cry. He saw and felt nothing but the woman kneeling beside his bed and raining down upon his fevered brow and fettered hands kisses fresh and sweet as the dew upon the hills he would never tread again. Bright grew the gloom around him with a light “that never shone on land or sea”—the quenchless light of faithful human love—brighter still, with the radiance of that faith which “shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

“God has been better to me than my fears,” faltered the lips that a few short hours before had confounded priest and jailer with their bold and burning eloquence.

“He has given me the one thing that I asked of Him” whispered Monique Chevalier, with her head pillowed on her husband’s breast.

“Surely goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life,” his heart answered back.

It was an hour that had in it the supreme anguish and the sublime consolations of death. Let a reverent curtain veil the joy and pain with which a stranger may not intermeddle. Love hath its Gethsemanes when the soul lies upon its face and the frail goblet trembles beneath the weight poured into it, and the separating sword pierces “even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit”; but it has also its mounts of trans-

figuration, when the world slips away and the night grows glorious, and the hidden splendor flashes out through the earthly vestments and the countenance of our sorrow is changed, and we hear voices from heaven and see our lives in the light of a better world.

When, a little after the hour named, Father Ambrose tapped upon the door and intimated to the pastor's wife that her time had expired, Monique came forth to meet her old friend with a face white and shining, as though she had been kneeling on the threshold of heaven instead of beside an opening grave. To the man—toiling but never achieving,—to whom human love was a sin, and joy a forgotten good, and peace an unattainable height,—the look was a revelation, a new gospel. It may be that that night he saw it only "as it had been the face of an angel," but in after-years he would understand it better as the face of a sorrow God had comforted. No word passed between them as he led her back through the dreary labyrinth of vaults and passages by which they had come to the little chapel confessional, where M. Laval, pale and anxious, awaited their arrival.

"Madame, I have redeemed my pledge," he said, as he laid her hand on the banker's arm, and before she could cast about in her mind for words with which to acknowledge a gift so unspeakable, he had vanished from her sight and from her life as suddenly as he had come.

The spring night wore away; the stars came out and filled the purple spaces of the sky; the city slumbered on. Only the hills that watched afar, and the eyes that never "slumber nor sleep," saw the little band of travellers creep out from under the city walls and hurry northward along the river banks. Long before the first streak of rose showed itself in the eastern sky, the pastor, closely guarded, was on his way to Toulouse, and his wife and children had reached a place of safety.

CHAPTER VI.

A GAME OF SKILL.

IT was near the close of a summer day in the year 1683. In a small, but elegantly-furnished salon overlooking one of the boulevards of the old city of La Rochelle, two gentlemen sat at a gaming-table. One of them wore the black cap and gown of a candidate for priest's orders; the other, the elaborate attire of a French courtier. The former was still young, and his features had a boyish comeliness, though expressive of little more than good living and good temper. The countenance of his companion, though marked by the fine lines of fully twice as many years, was Grecian in contour, and had the soft coloring of a painting on ivory—the impassiveness also, for after one had watched it awhile, it seemed rather a mask behind which the wearer concealed himself, than a part of the man's living personality. Only the eyes, keen, furtive, black as night, seemed alive, and these gleamed with secret triumph, as for the third time that afternoon his delicate jewelled hand swept the contents of the pool toward his side of the table.

“Pardon, my young friend; luck seems to be against you to-day. But you shall have the opportunity to win it all back. It is the game, not the stakes, that I care for. The game amuses me, and to be amused is to live.”

His discomfited antagonist did not answer. He

had evidently some suspicion of sharp dealing, which his native politeness and good-temper prevented him from uttering. Dubiously he had begun to shuffle the cards for a second deal, when the door of an inner apartment opened, and a young man, wearing the uniform of a French officer, sauntered in. His step, though martial in its gait, was languid. He carried his right arm in a sling, and a certain wanness was discernible through the bronzed tint of his cheek. In person he was tall and graceful, with a distinguished air. His eyes were dark and full of slumbering fire, but wore a listless, melancholy expression. His bold, handsome features formed a striking contrast to the feminine beauty of one of the faces turned toward him, and the pink and white freshness of the other.

The young abbe greeted him joyfully.

"Ah, here comes our handsome young captain. Take a hand at the game, monsieur, and assist me to my revenge upon your kinsman. Rumor says you are as invincible at the gaming-table as on the battle-field."

The young officer bowed courteously.

"I must beg M. l'Abbe to excuse me this afternoon," he said coldly.

The newly-fledged graduate of the Sorbonne elevated his eyebrows interrogatively, and then dropped them with a good-humored laugh.

"I see. It is Sunday, and you are still a Huguenot. Pardon; I had no idea M. le Capitaine carried his religious prejudices so far. But take the advice of a well-wisher monsieur. Prejudices are uncomfortable things; sometimes they are dangerous."

"Danger is hardly the cry with which to frighten off a French soldier," retorted the other with a curling lip. "As for the rest, M. l'Abbe, I have not been five years

in the king's service, and seen all my claims to distinction passed by because of my creed, without discovering for myself that the faith of my fathers is a costly heritage."

"Back to the old grievance, Henri? Whatever path you take, you always come home on that."

It was the elderly gentleman in the court-dress who spoke. His voice was like his face, cold and passionless. He had been regarding the young man, from the moment of his entrance, with quiet attention. The object of his scrutiny turned upon him fiercely.

"Can you deny it, sir? Will my cousin undertake to say that if I had been of his majesty's religion, my services to the State would have remained so long unacknowledged?"

"Certainly not: I predicted as much to your father years ago; I have warned you repeatedly since. To remain outside the king's religion is to remain beyond the pale of royal favor."

"Is that just? Is it statesmanlike?"

"A wise man will accommodate himself to the world as he finds it; a loyal subject will not call in question the justice of his sovereign."

The soldier laid his hand upon his sword.

"I did not impugn the justice of the king, and I will suffer no man to call in question my loyalty, not even you, cousin Claude. There are those about the king, who take good care to keep him in ignorance, that they may regulate public patronage to suit themselves. It is a well-understood fact that his majesty is continually deceived, not only as to the disposition of his Protestant subjects, but also as to their suffering under the edicts."

"It is a fact less understood in Paris than in the provinces," returned the courtier sarcastically. "Take

my advice, my kinsman, and do not hug the delusion of the king's ignorance too fondly to your heart. There was one man, who had the hardihood, or the courage,—which you will,—to represent to his majesty the value to France of the heretic vine-dressers and silk-weavers. His remonstrances have perhaps done something to delay the inevitable destruction, but the result to himself will hardly inspire others to emulate his example."

"You refer to our noble kinsman, Minister Colbert?"

"I do. You know the result. He is dead—worn out by fruitless endeavors to prevent the demands of the royal exchequer from increasing the burdens of the people—and buried by night to escape the fury of the mob—unmourned by his sovereign, and bitterly execrated by the people for whom he had sacrificed himself. Small encouragement for his successor to follow in his steps, even were he so disposed. But M. Louvois is cast in a different mould. There is little love lost, it is said, between himself and the widow Scarron, but in one enterprise, at least, you may be sure they will join hands—the extirpation of heresy."

The cheek of the Huguenot flushed darkly, and his hand moved instinctively to a small jewelled ornament suspended by a chain about his throat, and bearing the historic legend of his race—a cluster of roses and pansies set in a circlet of wheat-ears.

"There is a seed which springs the faster the more it is trampled on," he said significantly.

The Parisian shrugged his shoulders.

"Charming, as a figure of speech, my cousin; but worth nothing, you will find, when the royal ploughshare is put to the field. Even were the king himself less resolved upon the conversion of his Huguenot subjects, the widow Scarron gains in influence every day,

and the darling desire of her heart, is—the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.”

“In that she will never succeed. The king is bound to preserve our liberties, bound by his plighted word.”

M. Renau smiled.

“Have you little more than the name of them left now?” he asked.

“Nay,” as the quick scarlet leaped once more into the swarthy cheek. “I meant not to anger you, Henri, only to prove how little the Huguenots of France have to hope for from their king. Hear me a moment. You have not the religious attachments of your father, and theology is not your forte. For the few prayers you will say in the course of a year, why will not one church do you as well as another?”

The officer turned toward the door.

“I have already forbidden that subject,” he said sternly. “I may be a heathen, cousin Claude: I will never be a papist. If I cannot reflect glory upon my father’s name, I will not dishonor it.”

“Silly boy. You will talk heroics when I am dealing with common sense. But it was the cards after all, not creeds, that were under discussion. Come, Henri, and take a hand at the game, and let us hear no more of these scruples about the day, which seem to have come across you suddenly since we crossed the Spanish border. If my memory serves me right, you showed little hesitation last winter in taking a seat at the roulette-table, Sunday, or any other day. Your refusal, too, is a reflection on our friend, the abbe here.”

The good-humored young priest looked around from the window to which he had discreetly retired.

“Having satisfied my own conscience with my morning’s devotions, I am indifferent to the censure of

another," he said smiling. "Captain La Roche is under no obligations to remain for my sake."

Captain La Roche regarded him fixedly, and then, disarmed by the downright kindness of his glance, smiled also.

"Your amiability forces me to a confession, monsieur. It is not so much the day, as a previous engagement, that compels me to decline your invitation. I am at your service any time this evening."

He turned once more to the door, but before he could lay his hand upon the latch, M. Renau asked quietly:

"Whither now, Henri?"

"To the preaching in the Huguenot temple." The young man turned and faced his kinsman with a look which said plainly: "I am not to be laughed out of it."

The elder man threw up his hands with a whimsical gesture of dismay.

"You will be haranguing a *prêche* in the desert next. What new spell is on you, *mon ami*?"

"The spell that controls the actions of most men—a pair of handsome eyes, I fancy," the young abbe interposed, with a roguish twinkle in his eye. "Captain La Roche has probably found out, as I have, that his lovely *inamorata* attends service in the Huguenot temple every Sabbath afternoon."

Captain La Roche would evidently have denied it if he could, but there was no hiding the "light of sudden laughter" that "dimpled in his swarthy cheek."

"You appear to be well acquainted with her movements, M. l'Abbe."

"I use my eyes and ears, as others do, M. le Capitaine."

The soldier laughed merrily.

"Then you are probably also aware that I have no

time to lose if I would not be late for service. Cousin Renau, I see you are reassured since you find that the spell that draws me is of 'the earth, earthy.' Au revoir, gentlemen. I give you good luck at your game."

The door closed behind him, and the two, left alone, looked at each other and smiled.

"Is it the game or the stakes that most interests you now, monsieur?" inquired the priest.

"The game still, though the stakes are certainly worth playing for. It is to my interest to keep the lands of Beaumont free from encumbrance, and to do this Henri must marry wealth. His father has seriously embarrassed his property by the fines which he has incurred through his devotion to the Reformed Church, and mademoiselle, as I understand, will inherit large estates at her marriage."

"So madame has repeatedly whispered to Natalie and myself. She has even gone so far as to intimate to my sister that M. Laval is likely to make his pretty young ward his heir. But that is under the rose. He certainly dotes upon her. But it is not clear to my mind, monsieur, how this golden draught is to be drawn into the net of the Church. Captain La Roche appears devoted to his faith."

"As he would be to a hardly-pressed banner or a losing cause in a fight. It is the reckless chivalry of youth, Louis, not the stubborn fanaticism of his father—a much harder thing to fight, I assure you. My kinsman would never consent to the marriage of his son with a Catholic, and I can but congratulate myself that the fair Huguenot who has enslaved our hitherto invincible soldier, is not one of the psalm-singing, puritanical kind, but a giddy butterfly, eager to wander from flower to flower, for whom the world and its pleasures have endless attractions. Let me

but plunge the two into the whirl and glitter of court life, and bring my cousin under the personal fascination of the king, and we will find these hereditary scruples melt like wax in the fire. Hearts can be taken by stratagem, *mon ami*, that can never be stormed."

"Then your game is already assured, *monsieur*. The young captain gives every evidence of *la grande passion*."

"He is bewitched by a pair of handsome eyes, undoubtedly; but it is on that point I feel most uneasiness. Let Henri discover too soon the identity of his fair unknown with the betrothed of his friend and our scheme miscarries at once."

"But I understand from madame, the aunt, that the betrothal is not a formal one, only a family understanding."

"All the more binding on one of Henri's temperament. His honor is his religion. If he learns the truth before he is thoroughly enslaved, our game is up. Are you sure madame can be depended on?"

"Madame is in raptures at the prospect of such a brilliant alliance for her young kinswoman. She will hold her tongue, I promise you."

"That is well. But how about the old nurse? Is she still laid up? She would prove a sad marplot just now."

"She still keeps her room, *monsieur*, and is likely to do so for some time, from all I can gather. It is madame's own maid who accompanies mademoiselle in her walks."

"Very good once more. Now let us have our game."

There was silence while the cards were dealt, and then the abbe glanced up once more.

"You appear to have overlooked one possibility

monsieur. Suppose the young lady herself proves unmanageable?"

M. Renau compressed his thin lips in a way that was not pleasant to see.

"The young lady has nothing to do with it. She will marry as her elders think best."

"On the contrary, monsieur; there is some prejudice in the family against a marriage de convenance. Madame assures me that the young lady's inclination will be the bar after all that will decide the question."

"Be it so. Is my cousin a man likely to woo unheard?"

"But there may be a previous attachment. Madame admits she had much ado to comfort the little demoiselle for her separation from the Chevaliers at the first, and that her foster-brother's name was on her lips even in her sleep."

"That was five years ago, and they were both children. Madame has done her work ill if the girl hesitates between reigning as the mistress of Beaumont or leading an obscure, perilous existence as the wife of a Huguenot physician. I believe it was to that the boy aspired. You appear to overlook, Louis, that the proffer of my cousin's hand is an honor for which mademoiselle, in her position, could not have looked."

"I do not, monsieur, and that brings me to my last misgiving. The sieur La Roche—how is he likely to regard the match? Will the mysterious hints which madame doles out to us of the young lady's gentle birth and high connections satisfy his aristocratic demands for his only son?"

"I would I were as sure of the cut of my new cloak, mon ami. My kinsman, I happen to know, is as well acquainted with mademoiselle's lineage as madame herself, and a chance word of Henri's years ago be-

trayed to me that the silence was a matter of religious policy. When our pretty little demoiselle is once united to a Huguenot husband able to protect her, I fancy there will be no longer any need for secrecy. But even were it otherwise, I believe it would suffice M. La Roche that the girl is the foster-child of the Chevaliers, whom he seems to think have had a patent of nobility straight from Heaven."

The abbe lifted his eyebrows. "I see you have thought of everything, monsieur. Your position seems impregnable, and I am your most obedient servant henceforth."

They resumed their cards, and silence once more fell upon them.

In a beautiful grove of elms about a quarter of a mile southeast of the old city, stood the large stone structure to which the Huguenots had long been accustomed to resort for public worship.

For many years the Protestants of France had only been suffered by their Catholic rulers to erect their temples outside the corporate limits of a town; but in the present instance, the love and industry of the worshippers had done much to soften the disadvantage. The church itself was built on the slope of a gentle hill, commanding a fine view of the town and a glimpse of the distant sea. The road thither was paved with stones, worn smooth by the going and coming feet of many generations, and bordered on either side by stately chestnut-trees. The edifice, though as scrupulously devoid of ornament as the worship within, was, like it, not without a grand and simple beauty, and the hoary lichens and trailing vines with which time had mantled it, softened the asperity of its rigid outlines. The service was just beginning, when Henri

La Roche, after a hurried walk, mounted the steps, and the stately old beadle, who stood on the threshold holding the ponderous staff of his office, advanced, with as much haste as his dignity would permit, to show the young officer to a place. That young gentleman, however, intimidated by a gesture that he was not yet ready to enter. His quick glance had caught sight of two figures coming up the avenue: one of them, a slender girl dressed in simple white, with her head set daintily on her small throat, like a young queen's, and a step as light and quick as a breeze when it pricks its way across a summer sea. His heart began to tremble like a leaf. He drew back hastily into the shadow of the entrance and waited, smiling at his own folly, yet unable to resist the spell that was on him. Two weeks before, chancing to go out early one morning, and turning a corner hastily, he had jostled against a young girl coming from the opposite direction. The collision sent the basket of roses she had been carrying tumbling to the ground. He had only time to catch sight of a small, rosy mouth, pouted like a bud, as he stooped in confusion to gather them up. In a moment they were replaced in the basket, and the basket in the hand outstretched to receive it—a pretty hand, white as snow and dimpled like a child's.

“A thousand pardons, mademoiselle.”

“A thousand thanks, monsieur.”

The next moment she had passed on her way, followed by her chattering maid. But was it accident or fate, or something sweeter still, that left one of those crimson roses lying on the stones at his feet? He snatched it up and went home with his brain in a whirl. There are natures to which love at first sight is impossible, but his was not one of them. He did not try to analyze his feelings,—introspection was not

one of his characteristics; but all that day those merry eyes looked at him from every book and picture, and at night followed him into his dreams, and made his blood tingle. Other eyes he had seen, bright and sweet—eyes that had graciously smiled upon him and wooed him shyly, and into which he had thought it pleasant to look for an hour, but none that had ever haunted his solitude like these. Early the next morning he was out on the boulevard once more, pacing slowly up and down, with a red rose fastened in his coat. His vigil was soon rewarded. Afar off he saw her coming; his heart already singling her out in the crowd with a sense of passionate proprietorship.

She walked slowly, as if unconscious of his scrutiny, with her pretty head held proudly, and her eyes fixed upon the ground—the tender curves of childhood yet lingering about lip and chin, but the light of a sweeter morning breaking from under the downcast lids. He had time to study the picture for a moment, and then the maid, a sharp-eyed, flashily-dressed woman, whispered in her mistress' ear. The young girl glanced toward him, and catching sight of the flower in his doublet, flushed, and turned away. Every morning since had found him on the boulevard, fully satisfied, if after an hour or two of loitering, that face went by him in the crowd, and irrationally jealous if other eyes than his seemed to see that it was fair. Before a week had gone, the whole twenty-four hours came to turn on the brief bliss of that instant—the light of the day to come and go in the passing of those radiant eyes. Though after that second day she had never looked again in his direction, he liked her none the less for that touch of maidenly dignity. It proved her gentle breeding, as her dress and attendant did her gentle station. And now he stood waiting in the shadow of

the old church, with a flutter at his heart, to see her pass. He had not thought to be himself observed, but as if attracted by the earnest gaze bent on her, the young lady looked up as she mounted the steps. There was no mistaking the warm admiration of his glance, and in some confusion, mademoiselle let slip the little volume she carried in her hand. Before the maid could interpose, Captain La Roche had stepped forward and restored it, with uncovered head. The stranger murmured a word of thanks, and would have passed on, but he glanced again at the steps. A little field-flower which she had plucked by the way had fallen from the leaves of the book, and lay on the stones at her feet. Henri picked it up, but made no offer to return it. A spirit of audacity seized him. His eyes preferred the request his lips dared not utter. The girl hesitated only a moment, and then, with the air of a young princess granting a favor, she smiled, and tripped by into the church, leaving the soldier standing still on the steps, with the fading little marigold in his hand; and from that hour roses and marigolds were to Henri La Roche the flowers most akin to those that blossomed in Paradise.

Like one in a dream he followed her into the church, and took his stand in the shadow of a pillar, where he could watch her without observation. The audience-room, which he had entered in this light and careless mood, was a large one, but quite devoid of furniture, saving the high, steep pulpit at the upper end, and a few old hatchments on the walls. It was the policy of the Catholic authorities, before resorting to actual persecution, to render Protestant worship unpopular by the imposition of petty tyrannies. Accordingly, a royal edict had lately deprived Huguenot temples of the right to furnish seats to their worshippers, compel-

ling the latter to absent themselves from public worship, or to remain standing throughout services which a modern audience would have regarded as interminable. The effort had failed in the present instance, for the large building was crowded to its utmost capacity with both men and women, and there was no sign of weariness or inattention as the venerable, white-haired pastor invoked the blessing of God upon the assembly, and read from the book open before him, a chapter of St. John's Gospel. Then followed the simple liturgy, in which lay crystallized the faith of the reformers and the memory of martyrs.

An awe he had not looked for fell upon the young soldier, as for the first time in many months he listened to the familiar words. His eyes grew moist and his heart tender as he recalled the days of his youth and the voice—long since silent—that at such bitter price to itself had so often in his hearing repeated those solemn and sacred truths. Years had passed since then, but he could still never recall the memory of his martyred pastor without a pang of fierce indignation, and it suited well with his mood, that the psalm lined out to the waiting people—for books were also now forbidden to Protestant worshippers—was one of the battle-songs with which his forefathers had struck hard blows for the truth. The audience took it up as with one voice, and he joined in the strain with all the heartiness of his young, powerful lungs. He had almost forgotten the lovely spell that had drawn him thither, when his ear caught the sound of a silvery voice on the other side of the pillar, peeling up like a skylark's. The face of the stranger was uplifted, and glowing as if with inspiration. So might Miriam have looked, he thought, chanting a pæan over the downfall of the enemies of her people; and after that,

it is to be confessed, he thought quite as much of the singer as of the strain.

The psalm ended, the old pastor reopened the Bible and announced his text, but scarcely had the first sentence fallen from his lips, when he was suddenly interrupted. A trumpet blew sharp and shrill without. A strain of martial music followed. There was a faint cry from the old beadle, and then the temple doors were thrown open, and a band of soldiers, armed to the teeth, marched in. For an instant the congregation stood paralyzed; then seeing that the eyes of the intruders were fixed upon the pulpit, where their aged minister stood calm, but unable to make himself heard amid the uproar, they uttered a hoarse roar of indignation, and endeavored, with the desperation of love, to interpose between him and the threatened danger. In vain. The dragoons pushed steadily forward, forcing the people back at the point of the bayonet, and bearing with stoical indifference the threats and execrations hurled upon them. They gained the pulpit and formed a cordon round it. Two of their number mounted to the reading-desk and secured the person of the pastor, while an officer stood upon the pulpit stairs and read aloud the royal warrant, of which the listeners gathered little more than that for some imaginary cause of offence their pastor was to be arrested and their temple closed. They had hushed their clamor long enough to hear it read, but at its conclusion they burst into another hoarse, indignant roar, which, instead of spending itself, seemed every instant to grow louder and more threatening. The old minister, who had resigned himself unresistingly to his captors, now endeavored with outstretched hands and streaming eyes to induce them to do the same. But his voice was lost in the tumult, and the people misunderstand-

ing the gesture, and thinking he appealed to them for rescue, answered him with fiercer threats and cries. Every moment the uproar became more appalling. At a signal from their captain the soldiers brought their prisoner down and placed him in the centre of the squad. Cool and undismayed they stood with sabres drawn and eyes fixed upon their leader, ready at his word to cut their way out. The incensed Huguenots far outnumbered them, but they were unarmed and without discipline, and the war-worn veterans of Louis XIV. knew well what would be the result of such an unequal contest. Maddened with grief and fear the people, however, would certainly have made the vain effort to stay their progress, and blood must have flowed, had not there appeared upon the scene at this moment an individual destined to turn the tide of events. The captain had turned to his men and was about to give the order for which they waited, when a young man stepped hastily forward from the crowd and addressed him. He wore the plain dress of a citizen, but his frame was tall and powerfully built, his eyes piercing, and his speech had a strong Southern accent.

“If you are Frenchmen, and do not wish to stain your hands with the blood of your countrymen, give me permission to speak one moment to the people without interruption.”

Without waiting a reply, he sprang upon the pulpit steps, and turning his pale, set face toward the surging multitude, with a gesture commanded silence. The very audacity and unexpectedness of the act chained the arms of the dragoons, and startled the people into silence. All eyes turned toward the pulpit. Those of the Huguenots who had been loudest in their threats, began to press toward it. Perhaps here had come the

leader who would organize their resistance and help to rescue their wronged minister. All waited with eagerness to hear what he would say.

The stranger who had succeeded in gaining this momentary foothold, lost not an instant in using it. Before the multitude had time to recover from that second of startled quietness, he was pouring out in a mighty voice that made itself heard to the remotest corner of the building, a rapid passionate appeal for prudence and forbearance.

“Resist, and you give our persecutors the opportunity for which they long; submit, and you deprive them of the voice with which to accuse you. Attempt to rescue your pastor by force, and you not only fail, but rivet his chains. Suffer his arrest patiently, and you do for him all that man can do, by proving how sincere and unswerving is the loyalty he has taught you. It is the delight of our enemies to represent to his majesty that his Huguenot subjects are continually in a state of insubordination and revolt. They love to goad us into acts of which they may afterward accuse us. Disappoint them. Prove to your king the falsity of their charges, by showing him with what humility and patience you can resign your dearest ties at the expression of his royal will.”

Such was the argument on which he rang the changes of his appeal—bold, impetuous, but shrewdly practical. The people listened, disappointed, sullen, wavering, but they listened, and at length the speaker paused, apparently satisfied with the impression he had made. The fire died out of his face, his head dropped low upon his breast; he seemed to feel himself unworthy to utter the words, which he knew well were all the people now needed. Bending low over the pulpit railing, he addressed

the captive pastor in a voice of exceeding reverence and love.

“My father, they will hear you now. Speak to them, and the work is done.”

The spell that was upon the people seemed to have fallen on the dragoons also. Without remonstrance they suffered the aged minister to step forward, and extend his arms in farewell and in blessing toward his smitten flock.

“My children”—the voice, though trembling with emotion, was now distinctly audible in the hushed assembly—“My little children, I address you, not in my own words, but in the words of Him who endured much contradiction of sinners against Himself, and ‘when He was reviled, reviled not again’: ‘Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.’ ‘Love your enemies : bless them which curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. So shall ye be the children of your Father which is in heaven.’”

He ceased speaking, and throughout the vast building, which a few seconds before had echoed to the shouts of a raging mob, was now heard only the sound of sobs and murmured prayers.

The captain of the dragoons saw his advantage, and seized it. A whisper to his men, and they closed once more about their prisoner, and moved toward the door. The people gave way before them, sorrowful but unresisting. At the temple door the officer glanced back.

“Where is the young man who quieted the people?” he demanded. “There was mischief in what he said, and he seemed to have much influence among them.”

But the young man had disappeared as suddenly as he had come.

“Caught up, and smuggled away in the crowd,” muttered the soldier angrily. “Could not one of you have had an eye to him?” But had the truth been known, he would have discovered that the congregation knew no more of the stranger than he.

The pastor crossed the threshold of his temple never to re-enter it; the people poured after him; the great oaken doors were closed, and stamped with the royal seal.

Another shadow had fallen from the night now rapidly closing around the Huguenots of France.

CHAPTER VII.

AFTER MANY DAYS.

CAPTAIN LA ROCHE'S first emotion on the entrance of the soldiers had been one of hot indignation. His instinctive impulse had been to place himself at the head of the people, and organize them into resistance. What he did, however, was only to move hastily forward to where the young lady and her maid stood, and silently take upon himself the charge of their protection. With a keen sense of humiliation had flashed back upon him the memory of the uniform he wore, and the support of the royal authority to which it bound him. But, at least, it raised no barrier between him and the sweeter and lowlier task, and every instinct of manhood and chivalry drew him toward the gentle girl, now trembling amid the surging crowd like a frail flower in the grasp of a hurricane. She was very pale, but quite composed, with her delicate lips folded firmly together, while her attendant wrung her hands and lamented volubly :

“Alas, mademoiselle ! this is what comes of wandering off to these out-of-the-way, forbidden places. Would to God I were safe home ! Alas ! alas ! we will be murdered.”

“For shame, Rosette !” answered a low voice. “It is the old pastor, not we, who is in danger. It is selfish to think about our own safety.”

“Selfish !” shrieked Rosette. “Selfish, mademoi-

selle, when we are about to be shot or trampled to death. Look! the people are about to tear the dragoons in pieces. The soldiers are lowering their muskets. God have mercy!”

“I am ashamed of you, Rosette. You are not a Frenchwoman if you cannot die bravely. I, at least, cannot forget——” But here mademoiselle’s brave words died away in a low cry, as she caught sight of a uniform at her elbow. The next instant, recognizing the earnest eyes fixed upon her, the cry glided into a sigh of relief.

“Mademoiselle knows me: she will trust me?” Captain La Roche said eagerly, but with grave respect. “If she will accept of my protection, I pledge my honor to see her out of the *melée* in safety.”

The crowd surged heavily against them, and he put out his free arm to shield her. She caught hold of his sleeve with the frank confidence of a child.

“Oh, yes, we will trust you, and thank you very much, monsieur. We are alone together, Rosette and I, and she is very much frightened, and I do not know what to do. What ought we to do?”

There was no coquetry now in the beautiful eyes, only tears and soft appealing. The soldier’s heart swelled proudly. He drew her closer, and laid his broad palm on the small hand clinging to his arm, and kept it there. It was one of those crises when the petty conventionalities of life are forgotten.

“There is nothing for us to do but wait quietly where we are for the present,” he said. “Give yourself no alarm, mademoiselle; there shall not a hair of your head be hurt.” He felt the strength of twenty men rise in him as he spoke. He knew his uniform would no longer be a restraint upon him if a sword were lifted against her. He would fight his way

through a host before a rude hand should touch that delicate head.

She did not seem to hear him: she was looking with dilating eyes at the pulpit.

“See! they have seized the poor old minister, and are binding him with cords. Are not the people going to interfere? Will they let him be carried off without resistance? Ah, if I were a man——” She checked herself, blushing. “Pardon me, I am ungrateful.”

“No, mademoiselle, you are noble; you are right,” he said warmly. “It is enough to put fire even in a woman’s soul, and if I had not been tied hand and foot by my uniform, you would have seen that there is one man at least who would not witness the outrage tamely.”

She looked up, her eyes flashing. “Then you are not one of those, monsieur, who think with the preachers that we should bear all insults patiently?”

“I am not, mademoiselle. The only light I have long seen in the darkness that oppresses us is the light that sleeps in the scabbard here, and if there are many more scenes like this, all the preaching of the ministers will not be able to smother the fire that burns in every man’s breast.” He stopped, feeling he had said too much, but her face was upturned and glowing, as when she sung that martial psalm.

“The women and children of France would have less to dread if more thought as you do,” she sighed softly, as she turned away her head. Did she know what seeds of fire her looks and words were sowing?

The tumult was now at its height. The crowd moved heavily to and fro. On every side the people were pushing and trampling down each other. Women screamed, fainted, and were thrown down in the press. The quiet, orderly congregation seemed sud-

denly transformed into a beast, lashed to fury and deprived of reason. Captain La Roche braced himself against the pillar, and exerted all his strength to maintain a standing-place for himself and his companions. But even had not his crippled arm deprived him of half his strength, he might as well have tried to stay the waters of an incoming tide. Step by step he was forced to give way. All that he could do was to keep his charges from being knocked down and trampled on. He had thrown his arm around the young lady to prevent her from being torn from him, and her small hands were clasped upon his sleeve with a tenacity of trust that made him happy even then. She was very white; but still, in the dark, flashing eyes and firmly-folded lips there was no sign of weakness or despair.

“Mademoiselle is brave; she does not fear even now,” he said joyously.

She gave him a quick look.

“I am not afraid—with you,” she said softly.

The words were spoken with the frank confidence of a child. He dared not fancy that she felt, as he did, that it was sweet to be together, even there. Why, then, should the words move him so strangely? Why, at this moment of stress and danger, should a sudden breath from the past sweep over him, and he seem to be galloping along a mountain road in the gloom of a winter night, with a small head resting against his shoulder? Then he knew.

“La Petite,” he whispered, smiling. “That was what the little child said the night I brought them in such hot haste up to the chateau; but why should I have thought of it here and now?”

He came suddenly back to the present. His companion was addressing him in a voice whose intense

quietness made him realize how great was the danger toward which she attracted his attention.

"We are being pressed toward the wall, monsieur. If they force us against it, and the people keep on moving like this, we will be ground to powder."

He glanced over his shoulder and saw that she was right. Slowly but steadily they were being forced toward the side of the church, and the white, despairing faces and agonized shrieks of those who had already reached it, warned him what would be their fate if they too were borne thither. Anxiously the young man looked around him for some chance of escape. For the first time his heart began to fail him. "What can I do, what shall I do?" he asked unconsciously, the cry of his heart rising involuntarily to his lips. A young man forcing his way past them in the crowd, turned and answered, as though the question had been addressed to him.

"The vestry door is but a yard beyond you, monsieur. There is a window there through which the lady may easily reach the ground." He indicated the direction with a gesture, and the next moment was lost to sight in the crowd. But Henri had caught fresh strength and courage from the hint. With all the energy of rekindled hope he set himself to gain the spot pointed out by his unknown friend. Snatching his half-healed arm from the sling, he used it as a wedge with which he made a passage for them through the throng, while with the other he drew after him the helpless women. His strength for the moment was something superhuman. He seemed alike unconscious of pain or exhaustion. In a few moments he had gained the door, and opening it, would have hurried his companions in, but the younger lingered upon the threshold, her eyes fixed upon the pulpit.

“Look,” she exclaimed; “there is the man who spoke to us in the crowd. He is speaking now to the captain of the dragoons; now he has leaped upon the steps. What is he going to do?”

“He can do nothing but immolate himself, mademoiselle. The people are too far gone to listen to reason, and if he attempts to inflame them further, the dragoons will shoot him down without scruple. He is a brave man, but a fanatic. Do not let us linger here.”

She did not heed him. “He is motioning to the people to command silence, and they are actually obeying him. Now he begins to speak. Surely he will urge them to rally to the defense of their old minister.”

“On the contrary, he is urging them to submit and forbear. See how the crowd lower and shake their fists at him. If he does not take care they will tear him in pieces instead of the soldiers. Mademoiselle, I entreat you.”

She turned and followed him, evidently disappointed. The brief glow had faded from her face.

“Submission—forbearance! Am I ever to hear the last of them?” she cried passionately. “Will there never a hero arise who will show our people a quicker and surer way out of their troubles? Patience, long-suffering: do I not know too well where that ends?”

He glanced at her in surprise.

“Surely one so young and beautiful, mademoiselle, cannot have seen anything but the bright side of life.”

She averted her face, and he was startled to hear the sound of a smothered sob.

“You think because I am a girl I have not seen much trouble,” she murmured reproachfully. “But alas, you do not know. I have seen, I have suffered, ah, such dreadful things. It all came back to me when I saw the pastor standing there bound among the soldiers.”

If she had seemed winsome in her gaiety, noble in her peril, now in her softness and her tears she was unspeakably womanly and sweet. Henri La Roche lifted the little white hand to his lips.

“Mademoiselle, your sorrow touches me more nearly than you can imagine ; but we should not linger here. My pledge to see you in safety out of this ill-fated building is still unredeemed, and at any moment the tumult may break forth afresh.”

“You are right, monsieur. Our escape should not be delayed another instant. But how is it to be accomplished?”

“Easily enough, mademoiselle, if you will permit me to make the descent first.”

The young officer sprang from the window, and lifted, first the young lady, and then her attendant, safely to the ground.

With the first touch of her feet upon terra firma, and a consciousness of safety, her native wit returned to the tire-woman. With sly amusement she marked Henri’s anxious glance at their torn and dishevelled dresses.

“Give yourself no uneasiness, monsieur. The cottage of my mother is in the grove of willows yonder, and my young lady and I are accustomed to resort thither every evening after service for some refreshment. We have only to proceed thither as usual, and send one of my brothers into town for madame’s coach and such changes of apparel as these barbarians have rendered necessary.”

Captain La Roche glanced at mademoiselle.

“Is this as you would have it?” he asked in a low voice. “I am at your service now and always.”

She started hastily. “Yes, certainly ; it is all as it should be,” she answered. “Thank you very much,

monsieur, for all that you have done for us, but there is no need for you to give yourself any further concern on our account."

"I shall certainly not leave you until I see you under some roof in safety," Henri answered, a little stiffly, and he turned and walked by her side down the narrow woodland path. Still she was strangely silent. The safety which had restored her attendant to volubility and good humor, had brought back to her the shy, maidenly veil which Henri had detected more than once before. Was she afraid he would presume on the confidence she had manifested during the last trying half-hour? She should find he was better worthy of her trust than that, and Captain La Roche also grew silent, and endeavored to throw into his manner the grave respect he would have thought it necessary to show had one of the princesses of the blood condescended to walk with him through an alley in Versailles. But as they came in sight of the cottage-gate, mademoiselle stopped short with a low cry of dismay.

"My little Testament! I have lost it," she faltered.

"Then it is gone forever," decided Rosette promptly. "It must have been wrested from you in the crowd, mademoiselle, and long since trampled into a thousand fragments."

The young lady turned pale, and tears sprang to her eyes.

"I would rather have lost every louis d'or I had in the world," she exclaimed piteously. "I am sure I had it in the vestry. Oh, do let me go back and look for it. Indeed, I do not mind returning alone at all."

The intangible mist that had been rising between them was gone once more, and her eyes met Henri's frankly now, with a look of childish appeal.

“Impossible,” he answered. “You cannot return to the church, mademoiselle; but if you will permit me to see you to yonder cottage in safety, I will myself go back and make search for your treasure. I am sure I would know it again, and if there is a fragment of it still in existence you shall have it. Will it be enough that I leave it at the cottage here, or will mademoiselle do me the honor to name her residence in town?”

The last remark Captain La Roche considered quite a stroke of strategy, but before mademoiselle could answer, Rosette interposed in a shrill staccato.

“Permit you to return to that howling mob in search of a book, monsieur? It would be folly, criminal folly, to think of such a thing. Mademoiselle, you surely will not permit the young officer to incur such useless risk. The book is already out of existence, I feel sure.”

Mademoiselle brushed away her tears.

“My little Testament was very precious to me as the gift of a dear friend, and I have had it for many years,” she sighed. “But I could not let any one run any risk for it. I have only myself to blame. Alas, monsieur, what is this that I see? You have already endangered yourself more for us than I imagined. Your wound is bleeding.”

Henri glanced down at his injured arm, and saw that the sleeve of his doublet was soaked with crimson. Now he understood the faintness and dizziness which had been creeping over his brain the last few moments. He must have strained the half-healed wound too much in the press, and been losing blood ever since.

“It is only a scratch from a Spanish bayonet that has proved rather slow of healing,” he said, smiling lightly into the troubled girlish eyes. “Nothing to

frighten the roses from your cheek, mademoiselle. As soon as I have seen you within the garden gate, I will go and have it attended to."

"You shall not come a step farther." The pretty little demoiselle drew herself up like a young empress. "You shall go at once and have it bound up. At once! do you hear, monsieur? I command you."

"And I obey," answered Henri. "It is hardly a pleasant sight for a lady's eyes, I admit. Adieu, mademoiselle. If you think of me again at all, let it be to remember that I would gladly suffer thrice as much for the honor of having served you."

She extended her hand to him, trembling.

"You have saved our lives, and I have not even tried to thank you, but I dare not keep you even for that now. Go, I say."

He held the white, slender fingers to his lips for a moment, gave one more look into her eyes, and went. How could he know that before they should meet again she would be as far beyond his reach as the white summer clouds sailing overhead?

Several minutes later a young man, hurrying along the forest path, caught sight of the officer seated by the wayside, his head drooped against the trunk of a tree, and the blood dripping from his sleeve in heavy crimson drops. In a second the stranger was on his knees beside the sufferer, addressing him in a clear, musical voice that made itself understood, even through the stupor of failing senses.

"Monsieur, your wound needs immediate attention, and I am a surgeon. Will you permit me to care for it?"

Taking consent as a matter of course, he tore open the sleeve of the doublet, and began removing the soaked bandages. Henri submitted silently, and

watched the energetic efforts that followed for his relief through half-closed eyes, with the indifference of utter exhaustion. The new-comer did not again address or look at him. With water from the neighboring brook he staunched the flow of blood, and then with quick, skilful fingers, replaced the compress.

With the stay of life's ebbing current, Henri's strength began to return, his brain grew clearer, and he looked earnestly at the grave, kindly face, partially averted from him. There was something in the serious, quick-glancing eyes, and the steadfast lines about the silent lips, that attracted, yet baffled him.

"I think I have met you before," he said feebly. "But I cannot recall your name. Ah, I remember now. You are the young man who spoke to us in the church just now. I am glad to have a chance of thanking you, monsieur. That was a better turn even than this."

The surgeon looked up, without pausing in his work, and smiled.

"Your memory is short. The meeting in the temple was not our first interview, M. Henri."

Was it the old name, or the full glance, or the quiet, well-known smile, that told Henri La Roche the truth? The next moment he had thrown his arms about the stranger's neck, and was sobbing like a child.

"Rene, Rene! I know you now. How could I have been so blind?"

Godfrey Chevalier's son was by far the calmer of the two. He pressed his lips warmly to the hand on his shoulder, and then forced his companion back to his recumbent position.

"For once, I must be allowed to give orders to my young sieur," he said gravely. "M. Henri, if you do

not remain quiet for a few moments, your wound will begin bleeding again, and I may not be able to staunch it."

Henri submitted passively.

"I am happy enough to do anything that you wish, mon ami. By the lilies of France, you have learned your calling well. To think I should not have known you from the first; do you come from the schools, or from the hills?"

"The hills, my young sieur. I received my degree three months ago, and have already begun the practice of my profession in sight of the towers of Beaumont."

"Beaumont: the very name is enough to put cordial into the faintest pulses. I think I see them now, glowing like the battlements of Paradise in the light of the setting sun. Tell me something of my father, Rene. It is long since I have heard from him, and he never writes much about himself."

Rene Chevalier hesitated.

"Monsieur's head is less erect, and his step slower," he said sadly. "The troubles of his people and of the Desert Church press heavily upon him. But his eye has the old fire, and his voice is as strong as ever, when he speaks of his son's exploits on the field, and talks of his long-looked-for coming home."

Tears sprang to Henri's eyes.

"And I have been kept loitering here for a fortnight, waiting the pleasure of that idle kinsman of mine. By the sweetest eyes I know, I will be tied to him no longer; I will start for the Cevennes to-morrow. What, my doctor! you think I will not, if I persist in wearing out my strength like this? Well; do you talk more then, and I will hold my tongue. Tell me of your mother and the little sister. Are they well, and at Beaumont also? The little maid must be well-grown by this."

Agnes Chevalier's brother smiled—not a momentary parting of the grave lips as before, but a sudden full out-shining of the soul within, like the coming out of the sun on a wintry day.

“She hath indeed grown, my young sieur, into something fairer and purer than the whitest lily that was ever blown. The soul of my father is in her eyes, and in her voice—the people say—a note they have not heard since the good pastor went away. The looks of my mother dwell upon her, and your father watches for her coming every day, monsieur, as he watches for the rising of the sun. His sight is not what it used to be, and the little maid is happy to read to him hour after hour, sometimes learned discussions about our faith, but oftenest from the Book they both love best. Monsieur, too, thinks that he detects in her voice the music of one that will never be heard again.”

Henri La Roche stretched out his hand.

“I heard of the end, Rene,” he said huskily. “Shot down, chained to the oar, in a skirmish with a Dutch squadron, a month after he was placed in the galley-ship. Thank God, the release came so soon!”

“Thank God!” echoed the son quietly. “It matters little to him now, monsieur, through what gate he entered in, and we may well pray to have so abundant an entrance ministered unto us. The truth he died for has not languished in the Cevennes. The temple in which he preached was indeed destroyed, but the chateau-chapel has been repaired, and your father sees that it is supplied every Sabbath by young ministers from Nismes, and more than once pastor Brousson has himself filled the pulpit. We may go down in the fight, monsieur, but the banner of our King goes on ‘conquering and to conquer.’”

"I see you are the same old Rene. But what of your mother, my man? You say naught of her."

"The stars do not change, my young sieur."

"Nor the angels in Paradise. You are right, mon ami. But tell me how you manage to pursue your forbidden vocation without interference?"

"Very easily, M. Henri. Through the kindness of monsieur, I have been able to rent a farm adjoining the forests of Beaumont, and in the heart of my father's people. If the authorities inquire, I am only a vine-dresser. If my brethren need me, they know where to send."

"Bravo! You are a match for the Jesuits themselves. But that puts me in mind. What on earth did you mean, Rene, by attempting to lift your voice in the tumult just now, and what means the silence in the temple yonder? I thought the people were about to tear you in pieces when I quitted the building."

"The tumult is over, monsieur. The pastor has been removed, and the people are quietly dispersing."

"The people quietly dispersing! Then it is your doing, Rene. But what spell do you carry under your tongue, O my golden-mouthed Chrysostom? You should have been an orator, not a doctor."

"It was only necessary to induce them to pause and consider. Their own good sense and the words of their pastor did the rest."

"Modest as ever. Well, I will not praise you if you would rather not. I will keep it all until I see the good mother and the little sister. They will prove better listeners. But tell me, mon ami, what can I do for you in return for all your service this afternoon? What! you are so happy and so singular as not to have a wish ungratified?"

“Nay, monsieur; but the debt is on my side. It is I who must thank you.”

“Ah! I do not see how you make that out. You have saved my life twice over in the course of an hour, and though it is not of much value to any one else, I confess I am not eager to part with it just yet.”

“Yet after all, my young sieur, the obligation rests with me. I have saved your life, perhaps. You have served one who is a thousand times dearer to me than my life.”

Henri stared. “I do not understand you,” he said blankly.

“Captain La Roche is then not aware of the name of the young lady whom he rescued just now from the press?”

The soldier’s heart gave a great leap and then stood still.

“How should I be?” he asked defiantly. “I am a stranger in La Rochelle. She was a woman in peril, and I succored her.”

Rene Chevalier smiled.

“I, too, am a stranger in La Rochelle, monsieur, but there is a face I have seen too often in my dreams, not to know it again, though I met it at the ends of the earth, after years of absence—the face of my foster-sister and promised wife. I saw it leaning on your arm, M. Henri, as I passed you in the crowd, and I knew it even then.”

Henri La Roche was sitting very still. When he saw that Rene had paused and was expecting some reply, he made an effort to speak, but instead uttered a low cry, and fell back fainting against the tree. His face was so ashy that the surgeon, in much alarm, ran hastily to the brook near by, and filling a drinking-cup with water, hastened back with it. To his relief he

found Henri partially restored and trying to rise to a sitting posture. He caught eagerly at the cup and drained it, smiling feebly but reassuringly into the anxious face bent over him.

“It was only a twinge from my wound. I am better now. Bah, you will make a poor doctor if you are so easily frightened.”

“You are weaker from the loss of blood than you imagine, monsieur. I must positively insist that you lie quiet where you are, without speaking, for at least five minutes.”

Even had Henri been inclined to rebel he would have known by the firm setting of his friend's lips, that it would be useless; but he was in truth only too thankful for the chance to gather up his strength and conceal the blow. He lay passive as a babe until the softening of Rene's watchful face told that the time had expired, and then he asked lightly:

“So you think the young lady I assisted out of the church is little Mademoiselle Eglantine, whom I used to tease and play with? I am sorry to disappoint you, mon ami, but I am confident you are mistaken. You saw her but a moment. Is it likely that I, who was with her so much longer, would not have recognized her, had it indeed been she?” He spoke stoutly, but in truth, dull conviction had already fastened upon his soul. He recalled the strange spell with which those eyes had haunted him from the first, the sudden reminiscence of the childish plaything of his youth, which had flashed upon him in the crowd; above all, that outburst of grief at sight of the captive pastor.

Once more the young Cevanol smiled.

“It is not to be expected you should recognize her as soon as I, monsieur. I needed but that one look into her eyes! Yet if I desired further proof, it is

given me." He drew a small volume from his breast, and Henri instantly recognized the Testament he had seen mademoiselle carry into church. He reached out his hand for it, and his friend quietly resigned it.

"I gave it to her the day we parted in Nismes, five years ago," said Eglantine's foster-brother.

Captain La Roche turned to the fly-leaf, and read, traced in a beautiful, clerkly hand:

"To my dear son, Rene Chevalier. From his father. June, 1669."

And just below, in hasty boyish writing :

"Read it, Eglantine. I will think of you and pray for you every day."

And yet farther down, printed in the large, painstaking characters of a child, and blotted with a falling tear :

"I do try, Rene. But it is very hard to be good without you and my aunt Monique."

Henri closed the book and gave it back. His lips trembled slightly.

"I congratulate you on the possession of one treasure and the restoration of another, my good doctor. Pretty Mademoiselle Eglantine was very much distressed at the loss of her book. Where did you find it?"

"Under the window, where she must have dropped it in descending. I hastened thither as soon as my work was done, in the hope of overtaking you and being of some assistance. How shall I ever thank you, monsieur, for your noble care of my betrothed?"

"Nonsense, Rene; do not let us go through that parade of gratitude again. I think we understand

each other. What puzzles me is, why you did not come to her assistance yourself when you recognized her. Duty,—I see the word coming on your lips, and I know you of old. But had your foster-sister no stronger claim upon you than that frenzied mob? Is everything to be decided by the cold logic of conscience, and nothing by the warm law of the heart? Is one never to do as he wishes, unless one always wishes as he should?"

"I am sure one would never wish to do anything but what is right, M. Henri. If one could only always be sure what is right. Even a difficult duty becomes easy when one has come to know duty as the voice of God."

Captain La Roche lifted his hand imploringly.

"Spare me. To love one's duty: to wish always what is right? Such heights are too high for me, Rene, though I doubt not you find them easy climbing enough. You were always one of the good sort. I don't suppose you ever longed for the plum in another boy's pie, nor thought somebody's slice better buttered than your own."

"M. Henri gives me credit for a self-denial I had no call to exercise. I recognized him as well as my foster-sister, and I knew well what my young sieur had undertaken to protect he would keep."

Once more Henri threw up his hand with a whimsical gesture of despair.

"A philosopher as well as a Demosthenes. La grande passion will never give you much trouble, Rene. But I hardly know whether mademoiselle is to be congratulated on so self-contained a husband. Have you not even a spark of curiosity as to her whereabouts at present?"

"She is in safety, or I would not have found M. Henri quietly seated by the roadside."

“Still the head, not the heart. La Petite would scarcely feel flattered if she heard you. Let me see if I cannot quicken that sluggish blood of yours. See you the cottage in the grove yonder? She is there at this moment, composing herself after the tumult, and awaiting the arrival of her aunt’s coach from town. What! you do not fly? Are you marble, man? I need you no longer. You are free, I say!”

The surgeon did not move.

“My young sieur does need me,” he said firmly. “I shall not leave you until I have seen you in safety to the door of your hotel. As for Eglantine, it is enough for to-day to be assured of her escape. Tomorrow I will call upon her, as I have her grandfather’s permission to do, at her aunt’s residence. I understand M. Laval’s temper too well to run the risk of offending him by what he might consider a clandestine interview.”

Captain La Roche flung himself away from his companion with a contempt he no longer took pains to conceal.

“Scruples again, Rene? You will die for a scruple yet. I wonder, since your conscience is so tender, that you have been visited with no compunctions as to marrying her at all. Life under a Huguenot physician’s roof will be a very different thing from what mademoiselle has of late been accustomed to, and what her birth and beauty might fairly lead her to expect. But I suppose your conscience has accommodated itself to that difficulty with a casuistry best known to itself. When is the wedding likely to come off? I must make the bride a handsome present, if only in memory of to-day’s adventure.”

He had roused Rene Chevalier at last. Two spots

of vivid color showed themselves through the mountaineer's bronzed skin.

"There is no talk of the wedding yet, monsieur. My choice of a profession displeased M. Laval long ago, and since our return he has looked coldly upon us. Probably he thinks with you, that his granddaughter might look higher, but he is bound by his promise to the dead not to force her inclinations. If Eglantine remains true to her early attachment, he has as good as promised my mother that he will not withhold his consent. If, however, she finds the pleasures of the world more attractive than a life of self-denial for the Master's sake, I have neither the power nor the wish to press my claim."

The listener rose wearily to his feet.

"Spoken right proudly, Rene. But if La Petite keeps the same heart she had five years ago, I fancy you have no need to fear the issue. Parbleu. How the pretty brows used to glower at me if I tried to steal you away for a day's hunting or fishing. I believe she thought me her natural enemy. What are you picking up, my man—the favor? Bah, it is only a bit of ribbon, and I care not for it. But since you will be obstinate and see me back to town, let me have the help of your strong arm, mon ami. I feel strangely shaken."

CHAPTER VIII.

CATHEDRAL STEPS.

THE sun was setting in a bank of splendor as the young men came around from the side of the church, and a stream of crimson light fell across the summer fields and touched the seal upon the door. Rene pointed to it.

“It is as I feared. The truth has been heard within those walls for the last time.”

“Yet you could counsel the people to submit.”

“Because I knew too well the uselessness of resistance—because I have been taught to believe that the ‘weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual.’ Be of good cheer, my young sieur. A shut temple is but a quenched candle. The truth for which we stand is as the sun in heaven.”

“If matters go on as they have done to-day, that sun will soon be blotted out in such a night of tempest as many of us will not care to survive. Yes, I know what you would say, mon ami. The truth is as sure to rise again as the light to come in the east, but what will it matter to us, who have been crushed—trampled out of existence? Would to God the old days were back, when men kept the faith at the point of sword and battle-axe, and died, when die they must, like men, not sheep.”

“There are those in our own day who have made the attempt, monsieur, and proved, alas, the literal fulfillment of one declaration, ‘They that take the sword

shall perish by the sword.' You have heard of the rising in the Vivarais?"

For the moment Henri La Roche forgot even the soft eyes of M. Laval's granddaughter.

"A rising among our people? Nay, Rene. I have heard nothing—absolutely nothing since I came back to France, but the last court-scandal and the newest bon-mots. My cousin Claude cares for nothing else, and my father's letters have strangely miscarried. Quick. Tell me everything."

The Cevanol drew nearer to his friend.

"The attempt was unsuccessful, of course, monsieur. But I must make my story short, for it is scarce a safe theme for a wayside talk. The trouble began last summer, at Toulouse, by the Parliament ordering the demolition of the principal Huguenot temples, on some imaginary ground of offence. The congregations appealed to the king, while the bishop of the diocese put in a request that instead of being destroyed, the temples might be turned over to him, to be converted into churches. In time the answer came, denying both petitions. The total destruction of the Protestant places of worship was to be preferred, his majesty decided, as being more likely to break the spirit of the people. But the city rose en masse against the outrage, and two of the pastors gave notice to the Duc de Noailles that they would hold service the next Sabbath as usual. His answer was to arrest them, and confine them in his own house until after the day named, when he permitted them to leave the place unharmed. The insurrection among the people he put down with an iron hand. You are aware that he believes in strong measures, but I cannot understand, my young sieur, how nothing of all this reached you just across the Spanish border."

“Something of it did reach me, Rene, but so softened down as to appear only a town riot, quickly quelled.”

Rene shook his head.

“The flame only smouldered, and has been secretly spreading ever since. It broke out in the Vivarais with the beginning of warm weather. The duc was incensed, and the troops of St. Ruth were at once ordered into the province. At first, their appearance somewhat intimidated our misguided brethren. A compromise was attempted, but the terms of the amnesty were too severe, and the people once more took up arms. You anticipate the result, M. Henri? They met on a wooded slope, near the little village of Pierre-Gourde. Both were French. There was valor and desperation on one side, and on the other valor and—discipline. Our poor friends fought bravely, but they were completely routed. Through the forest many escaped; many more were slaughtered; thirteen were captured; twelve were hung, and their miserable survivor compelled to act as their executioner. Nor was that all, monsieur. It was not enough that the Huguenots of Languedoc had failed in their attempt to secure for themselves and their children the right to worship God according to their conscience: they must be taught a lesson. Ten of our largest temples have been demolished. The beautiful valley of the Rhone has been desolated. The last of the inhabitants have been hunted down, and hung without the show of a trial. Those who were opposed to the appeal to arms have perished with those who chose the sword. From one end of our sunny province to the other there is death and the shadow of death. Do you wonder that I counselled the people of La Rochelle, for the sake of their wives and little ones, to pause and consider?”

Henri's eyes were flashing.

“What our people want is union, discipline ; leaders who will organize and train them in the arts of war, and pastors who will send them into battle, with the psalms of David, not with the Sermon on the Mount, ringing in their ears. I tell you, Rene, it is the faint-hearted policy of our ministers that weakens the hands of our people. Let them but feel that the vengeance of God is in every blow they strike, and there shall yet be lit on the hills of Languedoc a fire which the iron heel of De Noailles cannot trample out. Let but the Protestants of France stand together as one man, and the conflagration shall sweep on till it reaches the gates of Versailles itself. Then let the Huguenots of to-day dictate terms to their king, as their fathers have done to his fathers more than once.”

“Softly, my young sieur. We are on the public road, and woods have tongues as well as ears. The consolidation you speak of is no longer possible. We are too widely separated, too closely watched, too heavily fettered. Since the last outbreak, even the purchase of firearms has been prohibited to the Protestants of Languedoc.”

Once more the soldier set his teeth hard.

“I shall see that the armory of Beaumont is well supplied, and that the mountaineers know where to find carbines if they need them. Tell me, Rene, has the storm touched our own Cevennes? I vow if one of my father's people has been harmed I will throw up my commission to-morrow. I will no longer wear the uniform of a king who permits my servants to be slaughtered at home while I am fighting his battles abroad.”

“Softly once more, M. Henri, I entreat you. The inhabitants of the southern Cevennes remain faithful to

their king, and have been left unmolested. Even the tiger-like instincts of the Intendant seemed chained, and he has sent missionaries instead of dragoons into our hills."

"It is the crouch of the beast before he springs, Rene."

But they had now reached the bridge leading into the city, and the subject was dropped by tacit consent as they threaded their way through the dark, narrow lanes.

"I would have you in to sup with me," said Henri at the door of his hotel, "but I fear you would find my travelling companions little to your taste. My cousin Claude, and a young abbe, a friend of his, are journeying with me."

His friend gave him a keen but respectful glance.

"M. Renau used not to be so great a favorite with you, my young sieur."

"Nor is he now; but, to be frank with you, Rene, I am indebted to him for some small losses at play, and cannot afford to offend him before my next quarter's pay comes due. So when he and his friend proposed accompanying me down to Beaumont, I had no choice but to say them yea. Well, my mentor, I read disapproval in thine eye. What is it: the cards, or the abbe?"

A spirit of recklessness had seized Captain La Roche. He well knew how the practice of gaming was regarded by the stricter among his sect, and what a serious defection from his early training it would appear in the eyes of Godfrey Chevalier's son. But Rene showed no intention of playing the role assigned him. The hour he had already spent with his noble friend had better prepared him for the revelation than Henri dreamed, and he answered the defiant gaze with

one of such affectionate regret, that Henri was instantly penitent.

“Nay, do not look as if I am altogether a castaway, mon ami; I only spoke of the cards to tease you. I am indebted to my kinsman for much kindness as well. We came to know each other better last winter, when he turned aside on his way from Madrid to spend a few weeks with me in camp; and as soon as he heard of my wound this spring, he sent down his own coach and leech to bring me up to his chateau on the coast, where the sea-air hath done wonders for me, I must admit. How long will you be in La Rochelle, Rene?”

“Until the arrival of the Southampton schooner, monsieur. I have sent over to England for the books and instruments I cannot purchase here.”

“So your business here is not altogether of the heart? I might have known it. Well, Rene, I will see the hills, and the mother, and Agnes before you then, for I propose to start for Beaumont to-morrow. What, you think not, my wise doctor? Well, the next day then, the first morning I can keep a steady hand on the bridle. Leave your address with me, and if I need a surgeon before I leave, I will send for you. Otherwise, I shall not of course encroach on La Petite’s prerogative upon your time.”

He passed on wearily into the house, and Rene turned in the direction of the quiet inn where he had his lodgings. He had not gone more than a couple of rods, when a hand caught his sleeve.

“Pardon, monsieur; but you are the gentleman who spoke to us in the temple, and counselled us to submit.”

By the fading light, Rene saw a shabbily-dressed artisan at his side.

"I am," he said, "but this is not the place to discuss the matter, my friend."

"Come with me a moment, and I will show you an argument on the other side you cannot answer."

"Have you the watchword?"

"'The Lord of Hosts is with us.'"

"'The God of Jacob is our refuge'; I follow, my brother."

The man led the way round the corner, and up four steep flights of stairs, into a miserable attic. The light was brighter there than in the street below, and Rene could see that the only furniture of the room consisted of an empty loom in one corner, and a bed, on which sat an emaciated woman, with an infant on her lap. Two sallow, hollow-eyed children crouched on the hearthstone.

"There," said the man in a harsh, grating voice. "Master Barveau would have no workmen who did not go to mass, and Aimee said I had better give up the work and trust in God, and this is what it has come to. No work for the last six weeks, and the children have not tasted food since the day before yesterday, and the babe is dying because the mother has stinted herself to make the food last as long as it has. Do you tell me a man is to sit calmly down and bear a wrong like that?"

The woman glanced up for a moment. She had a sweet, gentle face, though its expression was unutterably sad.

"I think the little one has brightened up since you went out," she said softly.

Rene stepped to the bed and laid his finger on the tiny wrist. Anything more emaciated than the little creature he had never seen. The skin was drawn tightly over the fleshless brow; the little hands were

like the talons of a bird. It was plainly a case of slow starvation. The pulse was just flickering.

"How long has he been like this?" he asked the mother.

"Only for a fortnight. We had a little put by, and we sold everything before we let the children want."

Rene tore a leaf from his note-book, pencilled a few lines, and handed it to his new friend.

"It is the Sabbath, and we cannot purchase anything; but take it to the Auberge at the foot of the street, and bring quickly what they send."

The man hesitated. "I did not ask alms," he said sullenly.

"Take it in Christ's name. The child may live if you make speed."

"Have we not asked God to help us? Do not let us refuse what He has sent," added the wife imploringly, and the father took the paper and went without another word.

Rene sat down on the edge of the bed. The mother's hollow eyes were fastened upon his face.

"Do you think it is possible to save him even yet?" she asked.

"I hope so. We will do all for him that we can."

The slow tears began to trickle down her face.

"I knew I would not trust my God for nothing," she said brokenly. And Rene knew that the faith had been kept in that dreary attic through as sore a stress as in any dungeon of the Inquisition.

In less than ten minutes the weaver was back with wine and milk and bread. The surgeon bade him satisfy the older children with the latter, while he and the mother forced a few drops of the stimulant between the pinched lips of the babe. In a second the pulse responded.

"He will live," whispered Rene to the mother.

She turned to her husband with shining eyes.

"Did I not tell you God would remember us?" she asked tremulously. It was the strong man's turn to weep.

"It is your faith, not mine, that has drawn the blessing down, Aimee. I have been unbelieving and rebellious. More than once I would have given in and gone to the priest, rather than see you and the children suffer, if you had not held me back."

"Nay, you think so, but you could not really have done it," she answered softly.

They continued to ply the little one with nourishment and stimulant, and at the end of an hour the child had wonderfully revived, and fallen into a healthy sleep. But the young doctor knew that the little life still hovered in the balance, and sat watching with the father and mother until late. By that time he had heard their whole story, persuaded them to accept the money they needed for their immediate necessities, and promised the weaver to try and obtain work for him in Lodève. When he came down into the street he found it flooded with moonlight. The common stones of the pavement had been transmuted into silver; the dark, old houses glowed transfigured, a saintly nimbus was on every roof. How like to the heavenly radiance streaming down into our darkened world, hallowing toil, transmuting care, and touching rough and common ways with beauty.

Rene Chevalier did not turn at once in the direction of his inn, and as he threaded his way slowly through the moonlit streets, his thoughts were busy with the morrow, and his meeting with Eglantine. What changes had these five years wrought in her? For him they had been years of toil, struggle, and achievement,

yet his love seemed to annihilate them as he looked back. She was as near and dear to him now as when they had read together out of one book on the old Cevanol hearthstone. Would he find her still loving, true, and unspoiled? The stiff little letters that had occasionally drifted to him during their separation had done less to bridge the gulf than to make him conscious of it. That momentary glimpse into her face that afternoon had told him only that she was a woman and beautiful. With a wistful pang he recalled the sweet face nestled on his father's breast and the loving eyes looking up at him through a veil of tears. "I will never love anybody better than Rene, though I see the whole world," she had said then. Would she say so now? Would the soul that had looked at him out of those childish eyes look at him from the woman's? Would Eglantine, the woman, choose as Eglantine, the child, would certainly have done, to suffer with him and his mother, rather than to be happy with all the world beside? Lofty consecration, self-denial for its own sake, he did not expect. He well knew her training had been against anything like that, but he could not believe that the little hand which had once clung so confidently to his, would hesitate to renew the old clasp, and with those gay, young feet once committed to walk through the world by his side, to what blessed heights might they not climb together.

He had reached this point in his dream, when he woke to find himself passing the cathedral, where some high church festival had evidently just been celebrated. The music was still pealing, but the worshippers were coming out. He stood aside to let them pass. As he did so, two ladies, apparently mother and daughter, paused on the step near him. Both were veiled, but the matronly fullness of one figure and the

slender grace of the other, led him to this conclusion. Their escort had some difficulty in having their coach brought up in the narrow street, and finally came back to ask madame to walk a few steps down the pavement to where it stood waiting. The elderly lady stepped down and beckoned to her companion to follow her. How it happened Rene could never exactly tell. He thought he saw her trip, and put out his hand to save her. Light as a flower, her finger-tips touched his for an instant. A strange thrill shot through his pulses, the breeze blew aside her veil, and he recognized the tender eyes and mirthful lips of which he had been dreaming.

“Eglantine!”

“Rene!”

She knew him now. Unconscious of the lookers-on, their hands lingered in each other's, and their eyes met in a long, silent gaze. Hers glowed with pleasure; his were clouded with a great fear. Had he come too late to save her, his darling, from the power of the lion? Madame looked around, wondering at the delay.

“Monsieur! Eglantine!” she exclaimed indignantly.

Eglantine looked up hastily.

“It is Rene, aunt Madeline, my foster-brother Rene, of whom you have heard me speak so often, and whom I have not seen for years.”

Madame Cartel threw back her veil. She was a pretty old lady, with bright eyes and dimples in her chin.

“You are making a spectacle of yourself for the street, Eglantine. If this young man is indeed your friend, let him call upon you at your residence in a proper manner.”

Eglantine turned appealingly to Rene.

“I must go now; indeed I must. But you will

come and see me very soon, will you not? And tell me all about my aunt and Agnes?"

He made no answer. His grasp upon her hand had grown painfully tight. His relentless gaze seemed searching her soul. Slowly her lids fell, and a faint pout showed itself on her lips. Eglantine was beginning to be a little piqued that Rene showed no more pleasure at meeting her.

"You hurt me," she said, trying to draw away her hand.

He released it instantly. In total silence the girl found herself escorted to the coach and assisted into it. The door was about to close, when she stole a look into his face. Its ashy pallor smote her to the heart.

"Oh, Rene, do not leave me like that! Do not let us part like this!" she cried, leaning forward with outstretched hands. In a moment he was beside her again, enfolding them in his large, strong ones.

"There spoke my little sister of five years ago," he exclaimed.

"Eglantine, tell me that my eyes deceived me just now when I thought I saw you come out of the cathedral. Tell me that you have not apostatized from the faith of our childhood."

"No, no, Rene! Indeed I have not. We were in the church, it is true, but it was for the first time, and it was only to hear the music. Aunt Madeline says there is no harm in that."

"No harm!" he echoed.

Madame pulled the coach-strap. "Drive on," she called to the coachman, and Rene had barely time to spring out of the way of the starting wheels. He never remembered anything about the walk home. When he came to himself, he was seated by the table in his

chamber at the Auberge, with his face buried in his hands. It had all happened in a few seconds, but he knew that a great epoch in his life had passed. Something had stopped in his heart that would never go on quite the same. He scarcely thought of Madame Cartel. It was against Eglantine herself that his anger burned most hotly. Of the gay, easy-going woman of the world little was to be expected ; but of the child who had lain upon his mother's breast and been taught at his father's knee, he felt he had had a right to look for something better. After her eager denial, it was impossible to doubt that she had acted thoughtlessly. But what right had she to be thoughtless on a matter of such vital importance, he asked sternly. Eglantine, the child, would have known better. Was Eglantine, the woman, to be more easily led astray? Had she forgotten the perpetual blasphemy in the sacrifice of the mass, the idolatrous worship of a woman like herself, embalmed in the music she had gone to hear? Had the incidents of that afternoon made so little impression upon her heart that she could clasp hands so quickly with the persecutors of her faith? Where was Nannette? Had she forgotten her mother, and the cost at which the pure faith of her childhood had been purchased for her? Rene Chevalier's heart grew hard. Granting all that were so, and the suffering of a stranger awoke only passing sympathy, one thought ought yet to have chained her feet upon that threshold—one memory, like an angel in the way, have withstood her. She could not have forgotten his father. Had she learned to condone that cruel death, to think lightly of that good confession to make friends with his murderers? He had reached this point, when he touched the little Testament in his breast. He drew it out and opened it. The leaves were yellow and clung clam-

mily together. The volume was evidently little read. With growing sadness, but less bitterness, he turned to the fly-leaf with its three inscriptions. He had glanced them over that afternoon with a tender smile. Now his eyes grew dim as they rested on the words printed at the bottom of the page :

"I do try, Rene ; but it is very hard to be good without you and my aunt Monique."

With a rush of remorseful tenderness, he lifted the book to his lips. She had tried to be and do all they would have her, but it had been "very hard," alone. He could understand it all now, could imagine just how untoward things had been made for her—how lonely and difficult had looked the strait way, how broad and easy that other road, down which all about her were sauntering. Fool that he had been, to judge and condemn her! Rene Chevalier fell on his knees beside his bed, and cried to God for pardon, and for strength to save her even yet. "Help me, Rene! Be patient with me, Rene!" seemed now to him the language of those outstretched hands, those pleading eyes. Ay, he would help her—God helping him!—with all there was in him of love to give, of strength to hold, of courage to achieve—help her, and already dimly he foresaw the possibility, from herself, in spite of herself. He would go to her early on the morrow. It was his duty to remonstrate plainly with Madame Cartel on the imprudence of attending a Catholic service, under the last ordinance, but he would be very gentle with Eglantine. He would tell her of the scene he had witnessed that evening in the weaver's attic, and of many another case of suffering and constancy he knew; he would remind her tenderly of old days, his mother's love, his father's teachings; he would not

spare either her or himself: he would lay bare before her the story of that dungeon in St. Esprit, of which he felt sure she had never heard. She must listen to him; flattery and indulgence could never have so utterly spoiled a heart naturally true and loving. Whether the blessing would ever be returned into his own bosom, he did not ask; into one deep, passionate desire had been emptied all the other desires of his life.

“Still angry with me, little one? Is it such a crime to have pitied you, ungrateful child? Will I have to take back what I said, and protest he will make you the kindest and best of husbands?”

The glow of the summer morning was softened to a golden shadow in the heart of the luxurious boudoir. Madame Cartel's wrinkled hand was upon her niece's head. Eglantine's flushed face was bent low over her embroidery frame.

“There was no need to say anything about it, aunt Madeline. I will not hear Rene abused, but you know very well that I need not marry him unless I like.”

“Bravo, my pet! Look up, and let us see if we cannot make up this little quarrel. You are angry because I said he would make a tyrant of a husband? Well, my dear, if I am not to look upon him in that light, I doubt not but what I may be able to find something to admire.”

With a hand of soft authority, madame drew the needle from the trembling fingers, and led her niece to a seat on a silken divan. A reluctant smile was beginning to dimple round the girlish mouth. The old lady hailed it with a gay sweet laugh.

“Let me see: what was it I was to concede—some virtue in this old playmate of yours? Well, he is courageous, I will grant you that; I never in my life saw any one more indifferent to the eyes and tongues

of a community ; and self-contained—if he felt any pleasure at seeing you, *ma pauvrette*, he took good pains to conceal it.”

“Now, aunty, that is really too bad. You know he is brave, or he would never have spoken as he did to the people in the temple yesterday, and last night he was troubled because he saw us coming away from mass. He did not understand why we had gone ; I am afraid he would think it very wrong under any circumstances—at least for me.”

“I have not the slightest doubt of it, my dear. I read him through at a glance. He is one of those uncompromising fanatics, who are bringing down all this misery upon our poor France,—people who seem to be in love with martyrdom, and generally end in making martyrs of more than themselves. They have no pity, no tenderness.”

“Then that is not the kind of a man Rene is, I feel sure. He was always gentle with me, and could never bear to see me hurt. You have no idea how good he is.”

“Good ? I have not the least doubt of that either, my dear. But it is a very uncomfortable kind of goodness to live with, I can assure you. I know it all from my experience with my dear lost Albert. There was no reason why we should not have been happy ; we were young, we were rich, and we loved each other, but alas ! Albert could find no happiness in any occupation but psalm-singing. Songs and laughter he considered frivolous ; bright colors were an offense to his soul. He never permitted himself to pay me a compliment ; he appeared to have forgotten how to smile. I fear I should have forgotten too, if the good Lord, who knows what is best for us, had not taken him away to the world for which, I am sure, he was far better fitted than this.”

“All good men are not like that, aunt Madeline. My uncle Godfrey was not, I know.”

If there was any name she dreaded to hear from the lips of her niece, it was that of the martyred pastor. She positively started.

“I have not the least doubt M. Chevalier was a saint, Eglantine. But I cannot have that painful story brought up again. Tell me : if that young man was not a fanatic, why did he look at you last night as stupidly as if he were staring at the ugliest face in La Rochelle. If you are ready to forgive the fault, my beautiful, I am not.”

“Nonsense, aunt Madeline. I don't suppose Rene noticed how I looked. He would love me just the same.”

“Then I protest he does not deserve to win my rose of roses ! Come, sly little one, confess ! Rosette says the young captain who assisted you yesterday was not so blind.”

“Rosette is a silly lady's-maid. I only wish we knew he had not suffered for his kindness to us, aunt Madeline.”

But the girl's face glowed like a rose, as she turned away, for she was thinking how he had bidden her, if she thought of him at all, remember that he would gladly suffer thrice as much for the pleasure of having served her. She would not have been a woman if she had not contrasted the ardent glance which had accompanied the words with the sad, anxious eyes fixed on her a few hours later.

“M. Chevalier—to see madame and mademoiselle,” announced a footman upon the threshold.

The next moment Eglantine's white hand was in Rene's big brown ones, and his tender, sorrowful eyes were once more searching her face.

CHAPTER IX.

“DELILAH.”

IN the same apartment where we saw them twenty-four hours before, playing their double game, M. Renau and his friend sat that afternoon over their wine. Henri, who had kept sedulously indoors all day, had just quitted the table in gloomy silence. The abbe shrugged his shoulders as he glanced toward the closed door.

“There is something wrong with our handsome young captain. He is not himself to-day.”

“He has not been himself since he set out for that Huguenot prêche yesterday. I wish you could find out what ails him, Louis.”

“He complains of his wound, but he will not permit me to examine it.”

“Bah ! Henri is not a woman to mope over a pain. Whatever the hurt is, it is of the mind, not the body—be sure of that.”

“Then perhaps the little demoiselle has turned a cold shoulder upon him. When I ventured to rally him about her this morning, his eyes flashed fire.”

“I fear much more that he has caught an inkling of the truth. If so, our game is up, and we have a tempest on our hands. He has the grand passion in all its sublimity.”

“May it not be that he is incensed at the action of the authorities yesterday, and is brooding over the wrongs of his people ?”

"I might think so if it was not for this sudden impatience to leave La Rochelle. That tells a different story."

"Then I will saunter round to madame's, and see if she can throw any light upon the matter."

The red glow of sunset was on the carved panels of the room when M. l'Abbe returned.

M. Renau gave a keen look into his face, and uttered an exclamation hardly suitable for clerical ears, though the priest bore it with composure.

"Ha! I see I was right. We have been betrayed," said the courtier.

"We have, monsieur. And by no less a person than the Huguenot lover himself. He saw our captain assisting the young lady in the press, and had an interview with him afterward."

"Not a quarrel? I would give a good deal to bring that about, Louis."

"On the contrary, to judge by the Huguenot's report, the rencontre was a most amiable and satisfactory one."

"Then Henri's moodiness is easily explained, and we may as well throw up our cards."

"Madame says not."

"She does not know my kinsman."

"But she does know her niece, and insists that the captain's looks and words have not been without effect. Her wits, moreover, have been invigorated by a little spice of temper. The young man had the imprudence to antagonize her at the outset."

"The clumsy fool! It would not be hard to outwit such a fellow as that. But Henri will be harder managing."

"Nevertheless, madame declares that the matter can be arranged. She has a scheme for putting the Hu-

guenot out of the way, and if we can persuade M. Henri to remain a few days longer, of bringing the young people together unawares. If love and beauty do not carry the day after that, the world has changed, she says, since she was young."

"She is romantic. But let us hear what she proposes. Stay! Tell me first how the fellow contrived to offend her. I thought our old friend's bonhomie was invulnerable."

"It has one assailable point, monsieur. Madame has a fragment of that troublesome commodity, called a conscience, still in her possession, and woe be to the hand that disturbs it. M. Chevalier met them last night coming out of the cathedral, and there has been the mischief to pay. He openly reproached madame, in an interview this morning, with her backsliding, and the risk she had permitted her niece to incur, and poured out upon mademoiselle such a torrent of fanatical appeals and reminders that she is completely subdued, and has promised, sobbing, never to cross the threshold of the cathedral again. Madame is seriously discomposed. She would rather have seen the ghost of her dead husband, I verily believe, than have heard some of the things M. Chevalier said, but she vows all the same he shall not darken her doors again."

M. Renau showed his white teeth in a way that was not pleasant. The grimace was more like the smirk of a wild beast than a smile.

"So that is what comes of your plot to get the young lady to chapel, and tempt my kinsman to follow? Bah, Louis! We will make little progress in her conversion, or Henri's either, till we have made a breach between them and these Chevaliers. It is this I have had most in view in encouraging Henri's passion for his friend's betrothed, and I own I am loth to relinquish

it. How does madame propose to dispose of this fire-brand?"

The priest drew a step nearer his patron.

"The authorities are inquiring for the young man who harangued the mob in the temple yesterday. Neither mademoiselle nor her foster-brother have taken any pains to conceal that he is the individual. Madame has only to lift her finger, and he is out of our way."

"Ha! she means mischief, does she? Has she lodged information against him already?"

"Madame has not the nerve to give information against any one, monsieur, but her plan is perhaps as efficacious. M. Chevalier is to be privately warned of his danger, and advised to quit La Rochelle. He will do so, probably, without attempting to see mademoiselle again. At any rate, madame will take care they do not meet, and that the young lady does not suspect the real cause of his non-appearance. She will be piqued, disappointed. In this state of mind she is to meet M. le Capitaine again. What say you?"

"Madame is clever," smiled the courtier, as he rose leisurely, and took his hat down from a peg. "Was the young man so confiding as to entrust her with his address?"

"He was too cautious for that, monsieur. But I made sure our captain had it, or would find means to obtain it, when he knew his friend was in danger, and I did not err."

"Have you spoken to Henri already?"

"M. le Capitaine is on his way to warn his friend."

M. Renau uttered a contemptuous exclamation, and the round eyes of his companion opened in dismay.

"You surely do not intend to lodge actual information against him?" he inquired anxiously.

His patron's answer was a short, satirical laugh, as he quitted the room.

The sunshine was streaming in through the windows of Madame Cartel's salon the next morning, and Eglantine was bending over the table, filling a bowl with roses, when the door opened to admit a visitor. Expecting Rene, she glanced up quickly, and met, instead, the melancholy gaze of Henri La Roche. There was a second of lovely confusion, and then, letting her flowers slip to the floor, she advanced to meet him.

"Rene told me you had left La Rochelle. I hope you have not suffered for your kindness to us, M. Henri?" She held out her hand shyly.

Captain La Roche bowed low over the tremulous fingers, but did not offer to touch them, as he had done two days before.

"It was my intention to leave for home yesterday, but I was prevented—fortunately, as it has since turned out. I am the bearer to you of a letter from Rene, mademoiselle, which will explain everything, and which he was extremely anxious I should place in your own hands. It will be my pleasure to carry back to him any message you may wish to send."

There was no mistaking the change in his manner, so stately in its courtesy, so distant in its kindness. Eglantine's wondering eyes had been watching him intently as he spoke; Eglantine's quick girlish brain had been coming to an indignant conclusion. "He has repented his attention to me since he has learned who I am. The foster-daughter of pastor Chevalier is very much beneath the notice of the sieur La Roche," she thought hotly. "Oh, do not be afraid, M. le Capitaine, that I will presume on anything you have been so imprudent as to say to me. I am quite as proud as you." And the high-born demoiselles of her father's

house need not have been ashamed of Eglantine, as she took the letter coldly from Henri's hand and walked with it to the window. She did not vouchsafe him a second glance, and Captain La Roche, smitten with unbearable pain by the proud, hurt curves of the soft lips, kept his eyes sedulously turned away. A low cry of dismay soon forced him to look up.

"Rene not come to see me again! Rene in danger!"

The letter had fluttered to Eglantine's feet, her lips were quivering. She gazed at her visitor with startled, tear-filled eyes.

Henri was glad to hide his face for a moment, as he stooped to recover the fallen paper.

"I am very sorry. I would give anything if this had not happened," he said in a low, troubled voice.

She went on without heeding him.

"I must see him again! I cannot let Rene leave me like this, when we have not met in so many years, and we have only begun to talk to each other. Aunt Madeline was by all the time yesterday. Rene made her angry with me. I promised everything he asked, because I thought he would be here to help me, and take care of me if they worried me too much. He said he would come again. Rene always keeps his promises."

Did she know the sting every word held for the man before her? Henri kept his eyes upon the floor. His voice was low and stern as he answered:

"You will scarcely exact the fulfilment of that promise now, mademoiselle. Your affection for him——"

Eglantine caught up a rose from the table, and began with quick, uncertain fingers to tear the ruby leaves from the golden heart.

"It would break my heart if anything should hap-

pen to Rene—my good Rene. But he need not have told me himself that he dared not come again. He might have left it for me to say he should not run the risk. I have been counting the hours till he would come again. Why did he speak to the people at all if it was to come in between him and me? I had more of a claim on him than those strangers."

"You forget that he could not foresee the trouble into which the action would bring him."

She flashed him an indignant look. "As if that would have made any difference with Rene!" she said loftily. "You know as well as I do, M. Henri, that if he thought it his duty, he would have done it all the same. He would go through fire and water to do anything he thought right. He is the best man I ever knew except my uncle Godfrey." Her voice quivered a moment. "Why does he not leave La Rochelle at once if the danger is so great? What is he waiting for?"

Captain La Roche looked embarrassed. There had been a sharp dispute between himself and Rene on that very point the night before.

"What keeps him here if he cannot come to me again?" repeated the girl imperiously.

"He expects a case of books and instruments by the Southampton schooner, mademoiselle. The captain will deliver the package to no one else, and Rene says they are necessary to his work, and he must run whatever risk there is to obtain them."

"And he will endanger himself for that, yet he will not come and see me again?" Eglantine fixed her dark eyes, deep with an inscrutable expression, upon her companion's face.

Henri made no answer. However sharply he might differ with Rene himself, at this bar, his lips were loyally sealed.

“Perhaps he will go, also, and see the weaver’s child of whom he told me yesterday?” Eglantine’s voice trembled once more with indignant pain.

Captain La Roche’s eyes were fixed upon the floor, his lips firmly closed.

“Have the goodness to answer me, monsieur. Will Rene go and see the sick child?”

Henri bit his lip. He began to wish he had let Rene come and make his own excuses.

“It is against my entreaties and expostulations,” he said coldly.

Eglantine gave him a quick, searching look.

“Indeed, monsieur! Perhaps it was your entreaties and expostulations, then, that proved more effectual in my case. Rene was not wont to think first of himself, and then of me.”

She had drawn the bow at a venture, but the color that mounted to his brow owned the truth, and she uttered an indignant cry.

“Nay, it is not generous to blame me for taking thought for his safety,” began Henri in a pained voice; but she motioned him to be silent.

“Oh, I do not blame you, monsieur. It is very easy to understand why his safety seemed of so much consequence in your sight, and my happiness of so little. I am only sorry I have annoyed you with my distress. And—Giles should not have kept you standing here. Aunt Madeline is sick to-day and receives no visitors.”

She was gathering her flowers together, evidently preparing to leave the room. He caught her firmly by the wrist.

“You shall not leave me like this, Eglantine. I have done what seemed to me the best and kindest thing for you in taking thought for Rene. You shall not condemn me unheard. He would indeed have

kept his word to you at any cost. He would at least have made the effort to come to you ; but I proved to him how little likelihood there was of his being able to reach the house in safety, and promised if he would write, to put the letter into your own hands myself. Did I so deeply err, mademoiselle? Would the gratification of seeing him for a few moments have compensated you for the peril he must have incurred? Remember, that he could go anywhere else in La Rochelle more safely than he could come here ; that his interest in you is known, and that there are no doubt spies continually hanging about the house."

She freed herself with a hasty gesture.

"That will do, monsieur ; I do not need to be taught my duty to Rene—by you. It is something to know he would have come if you had not prevented him."

Henri turned, and took up his hat.

"Is that the only message you have to send?" he asked coldly.

The tone frightened Eglantine. It was one thing to make him feel the smart of her resentment ; it was quite another to find herself under the cloud of his anger. But she was too proud to show it.

"I have sent no message," she answered, in a tone as icy as his, and the door closed, and she found herself alone.

Nannette, sewing in the sunny window-seat in the chamber above was startled a moment later, to have the door hastily opened, and her young mistress hurry in, and throw herself weeping into her arms.

"Alas ! alas ! what has gone wrong now?" she asked, dropping her needle, and laying her trembling old hand on the bowed, quivering head.

But Eglantine only sobbed on for some time without speaking. It would have been very hard for her

to tell what emotion touched the deepest fount of tears ; she only knew that she felt very miserable and forsaken, and that under all her alarm and disappointment about Rene, and her anger against Henri, there was a vague sense of loss, a heavy pang which she did not care to analyze.

“I don't believe anybody loves me very much except you, Nannette,” she whispered once, nestling closer to her old nurse's heart, but Nannette only smiled and stroked her head. She had heard such speeches before, and knew the storm would spend itself ere long, and she could wait ; but it is to be feared that she had only a very confused impression of Rene's danger, and Captain La Roche's unkindness, and her darling's unhappiness, when at last the story sobbed itself out. Two attempts at consolation were summarily dismissed.

“I am sure you would not wish Master Rene to run any risk,” and “It was certainly very kind of the young sieur to come and tell you ; I hope you were not rude to him, my young lady”—were speeches which both proved so unpalatable, that the old nurse held her peace, marvelling. But at last, the passionate flow of tears ceased, the girlish head was lifted, and a faint smile glittered through the tears trembling on the long lashes.

“I believe I would feel better for a walk. Can you go with me, Nannette? You said this morning that the sunshine would do you good.”

“I doubt not I could make out to walk a little way, my young lady. But what scheme have you on foot? Not a step will I go till I hear the why and the whereabouts of the expedition.”

“As if I would take you along, if I was going into any mischief, you dear old sober Nannette. It is only to see

the weaver's wife, Rene told us about yesterday. You know he said he hoped we would be friends to her, and go and see her sometimes; he said he thought she could do me good. That was not very complimentary of him, but I forgive him now. And I mean to go there this very afternoon."

"In the hopes of seeing Master Rene himself! It does not need a magnifying-glass to detect that, my young lady."

Eglantine laughed blithely as she rose to her feet.

"And if we did meet him, Nannette, what harm would there be? You know you would be as happy as I. But indeed there is no chance of it, for he has been there already to-day. I only want to send him a letter. M. Henri was so cross, I could think of nothing to say, and you know that was not right, not to send Rene any answer, and this is the only way I can think of to get a message to him."

"Then be sure you tell him not to adventure himself for you, but to leave La Rochelle as quickly as possible; I only wish we were going along with him."

Eglantine did not answer as she passed on into the inner room. A resolute look, which the old woman did not see, had settled down upon her fair face. With tremulous haste she put out her writing materials upon the table. "I must see him again. I will see him again," she was whispering to herself, "in spite of aunt Madeline and the gendarmes and all of them. M. Henri shall see that he cares for me." A letter was always a difficult undertaking to her girlish brain and unused fingers, and this one proved especially hard to write. But it was finished in time.

"Do not leave La Rochelle without seeing me again—if you love me, Rene. I must speak to you. Every Wednesday I go to take an embroidery lesson at the

candy-shop opposite the cathedral. Nannette goes with me. It is her cousin who keeps the shop, and his wife gives me my lesson. They are both Huguenots. There would not be any danger in your coming there, would there? We will be there by 10 o'clock to-morrow. Do not disappoint me, if you can help it. I need you, Rene. How am I to keep my promise, if you do not help me?"

Her heart smote her a little as she penned those last words. Would they not imply to Rene a danger that did not exist? Would not that appeal, "I need you," bring him to her in the teeth of any peril, at any cost? But then it was certain to prove so much more potent with him than that truer one, "I want you," and she let it stand. "I do need him," she argued with herself, as she folded and sealed the little note. "It is always easier to do right after I have been talking with Rene, and he will run no more risk coming there than going to see that weaver's child."

And so, late that night, when Rene slipped around to say good-bye to his friends in the attic, the young mother put the letter into his hand.

"It was such a beautiful young lady as brought it," she said, looking wistfully into the surgeon's startled face. "She said as how she was your sister, monsieur, but that you were not living under the same roof, and she had no other way to get a letter to you. And she brought the children such loads of bon-bons that they took her for a fairy princess, and indeed she did not look unlike one, with her lovely face and her beautiful clothes, and that sunshiny look in her eyes, as though she had never known the meaning of trouble. The little lad seemed to know she was some way akin to you, for he let her hold him in her lap, and stared at her with his round, black eyes, without crying once. And

she was so sweet and gentle with him, and let the others press around her, and said you had told her about us, and the tears actually started to her beautiful eyes, when I told her how hard the struggle had been, and how near we were to the brink when you found us. She said she would remember it if ever she was tempted herself, and she begged us, if you did not come again, to get that letter to you some way to-night, as it was of importance."

Rene did not lie down that night. To do Eglantine justice, she could not know, when she penned those three words, "I need you," the agony of the fear, the energy of the love she would awaken. How could she dream that through the long hours while she slept, a great heart would keep anxious watch for her with ceaseless prayer?

But she felt a little frightened when she woke the next morning, and remembered what she had done. She had not dared to confess to her old *bonne* what she had written. Somehow the reasoning which had proved so satisfactory to her own mind would not, she felt sure, stand the scrutiny of Nannette's reproachful eyes. How would it look to Rene? Would he be very angry with her? Nannette could not understand the haste of her young mistress to be off the next morning, and had much ado to accommodate her feeble steps to the quick, young feet, as they threaded their way through the streets. Eglantine's chatter ceased suddenly when they came in sight of the candy-shop. Michael Bonneau waited them in the doorway, smiling good-humoredly.

"There's a friend of yours in the back parlor," he said to his kinswoman, "a big, strapping fellow from the hills, who says he has an appointment to meet you here. What! you know nothing of it? Well, that's

odd, but the wife had him in as a matter of course, and you can see him for yourself."

Eglantine had not waited to hear more after the first sentence. Much to Michael's amazement, she brushed past him into the shop, flew past Antoinette, open-mouthed in the dark entry, and burst into the little parlor behind the shop. A tall, broad-shouldered peasant, leaning against the mantel-shelf, looked up with a quiet smile as she entered.

"Rene! is it really you?" - She stopped short and surveyed him with doubtful eyes.

He came forward and touched his lips gravely to her brow.

"Does that convince you, Eglantine?"

"It ought. No one else would be so impertinent, sir. Oh! Rene, I am so glad to see you again. I knew you would come to me when I asked you. But how funny you look. Was it really necessary for you to wear that disguise?"

"There was a gendarme in the shop as I passed in. Are you mad?" laying his hand quickly on her lips, as she would have uttered a scream. "There is no need to be frightened, Eglantine. Only for the sake of these good people, as well as my own, I must not be surprised here. Tell me what your letter meant. Have they tried to make you go to mass again?"

"No, no," rather nervously. "Aunt Madeline is very angry, but she has not said anything about it since. How long are you going to be in La Rochelle, Rene?"

"I was ready to leave last night when I got your note. The boat came in last evening. Eglantine, what new sorrow or trouble threatens you? You said you had something to tell me."

Her eyes fell beneath his inexorable gaze.

"I did have a great deal to say to you, Rene, but

you are so cold and unkind, you put it all out of my head. Was it such a sin to want to see you again, and to let M. Henri see you did care for me? I am sure it is not any more dangerous for you to come here than to go and see that weaver's child. How could I know you would be ready to leave before my note reached you?"

The man, whose own words were clear as crystal, who would have scorned to save his life by an equivocation, dropped her hand.

"You have deceived me and worked upon my feelings, to show your power over me." He spoke in a slow, pained voice. "I would not have believed it of you, Eglantine."

She had expected a rebuke, but this deep grief was something terrible. She caught his hand as he was turning away.

"Do not look like that, Rene. Indeed, I did mean everything I wrote in my letter."

"You said you needed me, Eglantine."

"I did need you, Rene. I need you every day."

He shook his head. There was no wiping out the deception, and tender as was the plea, the truth burnt itself, like a seething iron, into his soul, that it was only a selfish affection which could have set his love this test.

They were both relieved when Nannette hurried into the room. A sudden suspicion of the truth had flashed upon the old woman, and she had been busy without, taking anxious precautions with her kinspeople.

"Mademoiselle, I am ashamed of you," she exclaimed, as her young mistress ran laughing to meet her. But Eglantine pretended to misunderstand her.

"It is Rene, Nannette. Do you not know him?"

Our good Rene, who used to save you so many steps, and would never do wrong even when I tempted him—though you often scolded him—you know you did, Nannette, when you ought to have scolded me.”

But Nannette put the coaxing face sternly aside.

“Ay, ay, I mind who it is well enough. Alas, Master Rene, I never thought to say I was sorry to see you. Nay, mademoiselle, there is no use to try and blind me; I know your enticing ways too well. You said something in that letter yesterday to make Master Rene come here. Never a step would I have gone with you, if I had guessed the truth. For shame not to think of Madame Chevalier and the little one, if you were willing to stake your own happiness on the pleasure of a moment. And shame upon you, too, Master Rene, for heeding her. If the child had no better conception of what bolts and fetters mean, I mind you are better informed.”

The sudden reversal of blame from her darling's head to his was so like old times, that the surgeon smiled, in spite of his sadness. He was too generous to give the explanation that would have cleared himself and further implicated Eglantine. The girl recognized the forbearance, and took courage from the momentary unbending of his lips.

“I will not have Rene scolded any more,” she said, laying her soft hand on her nurse's lips. “Of course he would not have come, Nannette, if he had not thought I needed him. He would never think of doing anything just to please himself or me. But he is here now, and I believe he is really glad—though, of course, he is too proud to own it.” She stole a bright, pleading look up at the grave face watching her. “And I am far too happy to be frightened by either his frowns or yours.”

But Nannette once more put her gravely away.

“You must leave the house at once, Master Rene,” she said seriously. “The gendarme you passed in the shop has a sick, old mother, up-stairs, and may be in again any moment. Michael says he looked at you curiously, as you went by, and who knows but he may be one of those looking for you? My cousins are in dread lest you should be found in their house.”

Rene looked at Eglantine. “If there is really nothing I can do for you, I must go,” he said.

A sudden cloud fell upon the fair face. Would he really leave her like this, after all she had done to procure the interview?

“Not already, Rene,” she said reproachfully. “Why, we have scarcely said anything to each other yet.”

He gave her a strange look. “Would you really like me to stay after what Nannette has told us?” he asked in a low voice.

She pouted like a crossed child. “About the gendarme? I did not think you would be so easily frightened, Rene. Nannette is nervous, and Michael Bonneau and his wife are selfish cowards. You are certainly safer here than in the street.”

She was not really indifferent to his safety; but the flippant tone, contrasted with Nannette’s urgent, anxious glance, stung him to the soul.

“You may be right,” he said, turning away coldly; “but I dare not risk my liberty on the supposition, Eglantine.”

“Dare not!”

He wheeled and faced her with a look which made her suddenly remember that his rare passions as a boy had not been pleasant things to encounter.

“Yes, dare not, Eglantine. Thank God, my life is not my own to lay down at the bidding of a woman’s

vanity. There are too many who have claims upon it."

"You take great pains to let me see I am not one of them," was the retort. Eglantine was now far too angry to care what she said or did.

Rene put down his passion with a strong hand, and looked at her searchingly. There was no relenting in her face, and he laid his hand upon the latch.

"If you think that, there is no need of further words between us," he said in a stricken voice.

But the girl was not prepared to let him go like this. She leaned her head against the door to prevent his opening it, and flashed out into tearful upbraiding.

"You would have gone away from La Rochelle without seeing me. You are only here now because you thought there was danger of my going to mass, not because I wanted you. You take more risks for strangers than you are willing to take for me. It is just as aunt Madeline said it would be. You do not care for me. You care for nothing but your religion."

Pain and astonishment had thus far kept Rene silent, but now he found voice.

"Have you permitted Madame Cartel to accuse me to you, Eglantine?"

And at this actual grievance poor Eglantine's passion flamed out again.

"There it is again. That is the way you misunderstand and misjudge me. You think I have listened to aunt Madeline, when I fought for you to the last. It is you yourself who has convinced me that she was right. You have done nothing but blame and find fault with me ever since I met you outside the cathedral the other night. You are angry with me now, you know you are, for sending for you when there was no real necessity, and for being glad and happy

to see you. You would like to make me as solemn and strait-laced as you are yourself. You——"

"I will finish the sentence for you, Eglantine. I have loved you with every beat of my heart as far back as I can remember, as no one else will ever be able to do. I have planned and toiled for you all these years, and watched over you from afar with my prayers, and in return I have this. You feel defrauded because I love God better—because my loyalty to Him forbids me to sacrifice my life to your vanity."

There is no charge that a vain woman so deeply resents as that of vanity. Eglantine had been deeply touched by the appeal, but the last word was the fly in Rene's box of ointment, and she turned coldly away.

"I do not understand a love that is always finding fault and holding up defects, Rene. No one ever blamed me so before. Everybody seemed satisfied enough with me until you came. I would like to believe in your love for me, but you give poor proof of it."

"And yet I do love you," he said very gently.

She glanced up and surprised his deep, patient heart in his eyes. The next moment she was sobbing on his shoulder, and the struggle had ended, as all along he had known it must end.

"Then why do you try to make me think you do not care?" she murmured, and it was so characteristic that her apology should take the form of a reproach, that it did not occur to Rene to resent it. Yet he sighed as he stroked the soft masses of wavy hair.

"If you would only drop this childishness, Eglantine, and show yourself the brave, true woman God meant you to be. We have fallen upon troublous times, when we must keep hardly what we keep at all. How can I

feel safe when I see you carried about by every wind of impulse?"

She shook her head, without looking up. "That is where you misjudge me, Rene. I am not fickle. I have promised you that I will not go to mass again, and you will see that I can keep my word."

"That is but one of the many shoals around you, Eglantine. It is the moored heart, not the dauntless one, that will ride the storm safely through. If I could know you anchored to the truth, it would indeed set my heart at rest."

There was an appeal in his voice, but she did not answer it. Nannette, who had more than once reiterated her anxious entreaties for Rene to depart, now made her voice heard in shrill remonstrance.

"It is you who are yielding to temptation, Master Rene. For God's sake, do not delay any longer."

But even as she spoke there came the tramp of feet and the hum of angry voices from the shop without. Michael's bell rang sharply.

"It is the warning," gasped the old nurse. Her face was as white as her carefully bleached cap. She lifted the tapestry at one end of the room, and pointed to an inner door. Rene had barely time to step across the threshold and draw the bolt after him, when the tapestry fell, and Nannette hastened to answer a loud summons at the outer door. Eglantine was still clinging to him, half paralyzed with fright.

"Do not be afraid," he whispered. "If the worst comes, I can jump from the window, and make my escape; but they may never see the door."

She did not answer. Her dilated eyes were fixed on the wooden panels which alone separated him from his pursuers. On the other side of the door Michael Bonneau's voice, and those of two of the city police, could

be heard in sharp altercation. Rene stepped noiselessly across the room, and placed his companion on a settle beside the hearth.

"You must compose yourself," he said firmly. "If I am compelled to leave you, you must be brave, and do what you can to help me and these good people. It is for them I am most anxious."

She interrupted him with a low, hysterical laugh.

"Delilah," she whispered, and then he saw it was a Scripture scene, the strong man struggling in the grasp of his captors, and the beautiful, evil face of the Philistine looking on.

"It is my picture," moaned Eglantine with chattering teeth. "It is I who tempted you here, Rene. I, who have betrayed you."

He almost forgot his own danger as he stepped between her and the hateful picture, and took her cold hands in his.

"Never let that thought cross your mind, again, Eglantine. You know you would never have had me come if you had dreamed of this. Promise me, if anything happens, that you will not make your life miserable with remorse."

"I cannot," she moaned. "Oh, Rene, if anything happens to you, I will feel as if it was I who murdered you. I will never dare to look aunt Monique or Agnes in the face."

"Hush!" he said gravely. "My life is in God's hands, not yours, Eglantine. If He has more work for me to do, I am as safe here as in the Cevanol glens. Listen! The sounds in the next room are growing fainter. They have searched and found nothing; now they are leaving it. My little sister, I am sorry you should have had such an ordeal as this."

She put her face down on the cushion, and burst

into low, quiet weeping. He knew the tears would do her good, and was standing by, making no effort to check them, when Nannette came in. She looked years older for the strain of the last few moments.

"They have gone, but they are only half satisfied," she said. "Michael is sure they will watch the house, Master Rene. He and Antoinette are fixing you up another disguise, and are going to slip you out the back way. Mademoiselle——"

But Rene's look stayed the reproach on her lips. Eglantine lifted her head.

"There is no need to say anything to me, Nannette. I am punished enough. Rene," as he held out his hand in farewell, "there is something I want to say to you. I did not mean to tell it, for fear you would be vexed, but now I will not keep anything back. My grandfather has been down to Bearn; my father's people are all dead, and the chateau has passed into other hands. He thinks there can be no danger now in my taking my own name. And he wants me to come back to Nismes with aunt Madeline next month, and be known as his granddaughter."

There was no change in the brown, earnest face bent over her.

"You are glad of this, Eglantine?"

"I am glad to have a name," she said simply. "It is not pleasant just to be called mademoiselle, and have people whispering that there is a mystery about you. It did not matter in the old happy days, Rene, when I was a child with you and my aunt Monique; but it has been very hard here lately."

"'In the world, yet not of it.' Yes, I can imagine," he said softly to himself.

She regarded him wistfully.

"Are you angry about it, Rene?"

"I have no right to be," he answered sadly. "Even if they were alive, I do not suppose your Catholic relatives could interfere with you, now you are old enough to choose your faith for yourself. And yet Mademoiselle Bertrand seems farther away from me than my foster-sister Eglantine, and I fear our cottage will look plain to you after your grandfather's house in Nismes."

"No, no, Rene. Do you suppose I could ever forget how you took me in, a nameless baby? Why, my aunt Monique is the only mother I have known, and I could not love you better if you were my own brother. I shall make my grandfather bring me up very soon to the Cevennes, you shall see."

"Thank you, Eglantine. It will be a happy day to my mother when she folds you in her arms again, and Agnes is always talking of you. Now I want you to promise me one thing before I go."

Was she afraid of what he was going to ask? The color came and went in her cheek. His grasp upon her hand grew tighter.

"We can never tell, in these changeful times, what may happen before we meet again. Promise me, if you ever need aid or counsel, you will let me serve you as though I were indeed your own brother,—that if, at any time, your grandfather's house comes to be not a safe or happy home for you, you will come at once to ours, as though my mother were indeed your own mother. Whatever new ties you make, we will always feel that God gave you to us."

Eglantine's smile made a sudden rainbow of her tears. "I think I must have done it, even if you had not made me promise," she whispered.

He took her in his arms for a moment, kissed her solemnly between the bright, wistful eyes, and answered Michael Bonneau's summons from the other room.

CHAPTER X.

“WINGS AS A DOVE.”

IT was “the time of the first ripe grapes” in the Cevanol hills. Every morning, the gatherers went out to the vintage; every evening, they came home laden. All day, the mellow sunshine brooded upon the purpling clusters, making wine. Agnes Chevalier sat on the cushioned window-seat of the old hall at the chateau, with a volume of sermons upon her lap. The quiet afternoon sunshine filled the room. The rusty armor and antlered spoils upon the walls glowed with passing brightness. An aged greyhound slept at her feet. For nearly an hour there had been no sound but the rise and fall of her low voice as she read, and the slow pacing to and fro of monsieur’s feet as he listened. Not once had the young eyes wandered from the page, but now the old man laid his hand tenderly on the bent head.

“Put up the book, and come out upon the terrace, child. Henri says I keep you too much in the shadow of my own serious thoughts, and perhaps he is right. The evening is fair, and we will walk to meet him. Ah!” as she sprang up with a willing smile, “I thought that would console you, little book-worm. My soldier has won your heart by his praises of Rene’s doings at La Rochelle.”

A flush of shy delight suffused the child’s face.

“Rene will not let me talk about it, monsieur, but M. Henri says it was as brave a thing as he ever saw done upon the field.”

“I can well believe it, little one.”

“And my mother is sure it is because the people offered no resistance, that the good old minister has not suffered more.”

“Has Rene learned his sentence?”

“He had a letter before he went away to Anduze this morning. They have banished him from France, but my brother says that is better than being kept in prison, or sent to the galleys.”

“Far better.” There was a slight quiver in monsieur’s old voice. “We have all cause to thank God that our good doctor is safe at home after his adventure. But look you, my child. Dame Martineau says she saw you talking yesterday with that strange, half-crazy fellow who hangs about the ruins of the old temple. I like it not. Why, not one of our maids would go near him.”

“Do you mean Ishmael? Oh, I am not afraid of Ishmael,” answered the child, glancing up quickly. “He used to be afraid of me, and steal away, when I took my knitting to sit in the sunshine on the old steps, but now he will stand and watch me, though he will never touch the food my mother sends him. I do not think he is crazy,” she added thoughtfully, as she and her old friend strolled down the flower-bordered terrace toward the gate. “Only weighed down with some secret sin or trouble. Yesterday, when I found him, he was sitting with his face in his hands, muttering, ‘No forgiveness—no blotting out,’—and when I told him that though our sins were as scarlet, God could make them white as snow, he shook his head and went away. I am sure, though, he would not hurt any one. The other day, when farmer Darcy’s cow came after me, he ran out and helped me.”

Monsieur shook his head.

“Nevertheless, the old temple is but a mournful place for thee to take thy work, and this stranger not a meet companion for thee. Henri shall walk with you this evening to the cottage-gate. Look! there is a cloud of dust down the road now. If my old eyes do not cheat me, it is our horseman back already, and not alone.”

“He brings M. Rey with him, monsieur.”

“What! Rene’s friend, the young pastor from Guienne? That is indeed good tidings. But see, child, they stop at the gate. He is shaking his head, and Henri beckons to thee.”

The child flew like an arrow from a bow, and as he followed more slowly down the steps of the terrace, monsieur saw the young minister stoop from his saddle and place a packet in the child’s hand.

“I would like to stop and see Rene, but I am due at a *prêche* in the northern Cevennes to-morrow, and must ride hard all night,” he was saying, as the old gentleman joined them.

“How speeds your work among those desolate hills?” inquired the *sieur* La Roche.

The face of the pastor saddened, as he turned to grasp the outstretched hand.

“Slowly, monsieur. The persecution has been so severe, that it is with difficulty I can persuade the people to assemble for religious service. I can but speak wherever and whenever I find opportunity, and hope the panic-stricken hearts will finally gain courage. The presses of Paris are not still,” he added, his dark eyes kindling with enthusiasm, as he pointed to the packet in Agnes’ hand.

“You have seen the bishop’s letter to our ministers, demanding recognition of their spiritual rule, and submission to their authority. There is an answer

from Charenton, bold and ardent, yet prudent, which will soon be scattered broadcast throughout France. The pamphlet is entitled 'A Circular Letter to the Clergy,' and is published anonymously. But enemies and friends alike will recognize the hand that has already dealt such fearless blows for the truth."

"M. Claude's? His pen is ever ready to defend the truth. But we have been troubled lately by what we heard of the offer from the University of Groningen."

"He has refused the invitation, monsieur. Flattering as was the offer, it could not tempt him to desert our Church in her affliction."

"That is indeed a gleam of light on this dark and cloudy day. It was but this afternoon the child read to me from his sermons, and I sighed to think we might lose so bold and wise a leader. I will hear this new paper of his before I sleep. Henri," turning to his son, who sat moodily by upon his horse, flicking at the daisies in the grass, "hear you the good news?"

"Ay, my father, the pastor gave it to me as we came along. I wish, monsieur," he added, glancing at the young minister, "you could persuade my father that such grave treatises are not meet studies for a fair young head of thirteen. Agnes knows more theology now than I."

"That is not saying much," interposed the sieur La Roche with a sad smile. "And yet perhaps he is right, Fulcrand. The child is so like her father that I sometimes forget I am talking to her, and not to him."

The minister laid his hand tenderly on the sunny head. It was in his father's house in Nismes that Monique Chevalier and her children had taken refuge in the days of their first sorrow. He was but two years older than Rene, and at once there had

sprung up between them one of those rare spiritual friendships which overlap the ties of blood, and glance forward to the time when the circumstances of birth shall be forgotten, and the bond that binds heart to heart shall be the bond that unites each heart to the Master.

“She has chosen the good part—it shall not be taken from her,” he murmured, as he stooped, and set a solemn kiss on the grave, pure brow. Something in the sweet eyes, lifted to his, had suddenly made her as dear as Rene himself. How could he know she would keep the words in her heart, like a gift—far less divine, that those tender, girlish feet were to outrun him in the race, and that when years hence, his martyr-soul should pass in rejoicing through the gates, Rene Chevalier’s young sister should await him before the throne, palm in hand? Yet, as he rode slowly away, he turned once and looked back, with strange pre-science. The three still stood at the gate—monsieur in his quiet evening-dress, with white uncovered head, the picture of stately rest after labor—the young soldier, seated upon his horse, instinct with life and energy—and between the two, the fair slight girl, with her eyes lifted to the encircling hills, and her golden hair falling like a halo about her face. What was to be their lot? Through what several doors would they enter in,—by what long and toilsome ways would each reach the goal? The question rose involuntarily to his lips, but quick as thought came the answer: “What is that to thee? Follow thou Me.” And the young pastor put spurs to his horse, and sped upon his way.

“Your brow is more overcast than usual,” M. La Roche said to his son, as they walked slowly back to the house. “What has gone wrong with you to-day, Henri?”

"It is enough to make a man look grave to hear the sad tales M. Rey hath been telling upon the road," answered the soldier evasively; but as he and Agnes walked home together in the twilight an hour later, he asked suddenly:

"Whom do you think I saw in Nismes to-day, Agnes? Nay, not our good doctor," as the name nearest her heart rose instinctively to the girl's lips, "and yet some one very near to Rene, too. Mistress Eglantine, or Mademoiselle Bertrand, as they call her now. My cousin Renau sent me word he would reach the city by to-day, and when I went down to meet them, where should I find him and his friend, but at M. Laval's. Mademoiselle and her aunt travelled down in their company, it seems, and Madame Cartel and my kinsman hath struck up a great friendship, and our merry young abbe hath discovered that he and mademoiselle are near of kin. I wonder I never suspected as much, when I knew his name was Bertrand."

The little hand in Henri's trembled suddenly.

"I thought my cousin Eglantine had no relations on her father's side," said Rene Chevalier's young sister.

"So M. Laval was informed, but it seems there were two children of the elder son, who were placed in the cloister at their father's death, of whom his informant had lost sight. Our good-humored abbe was the eldest, and was brought up for the church, but his pretty sister Natalie was married last year to the count, to whom she was betrothed in childhood. Madame Cartel knows her very well, it appears, and mademoiselle has also met her in La Rochelle, and is quite fond of her. But she is uneasy as to how your mother and brother will take the tidings, and I promised to break the news. You must help me, Agnes. You know better than I what words will pain them least."

"I am afraid Rene will be very much distressed. He will be afraid of the priest's influence for my cousin."

"Oh, as to that, do not let him give himself any anxiety. Louis will never make a bigot. He is an idle, good-humored fellow, who likes to be comfortable, and see people comfortable about him. And I fancy the handsome young countess is of the same stamp. Madame says she lives in a whirl of pleasure."

There was silence for several seconds before Agnes asked:

"Did you have much talk with Eglantine to-day?"

"I saw her for a few moments. The house was full of people. M. Laval is very proud of his granddaughter, and Mademoiselle Bertrand seems very happy. She sent her dear love to you all, and said tell Madame Chevalier she would soon be up to make her a visit."

Captain La Roche was glad of the twilight that hid the hot flush upon his cheek. The world had not changed since Madame Cartel was young. Eglantine's manner had been as gracious and sweet to-day as it had been briery and sharp on their last interview in La Rochelle, and his carefully-nursed resentment had gone down before the girlish pity in her eyes, as a bank of snow goes down before a warm sun. For a golden half-hour he had forgotten everything, and then had torn himself desperately away; he had been consumed with remorse and mad longing ever since. It troubled him, even in the darkness, to know that the innocent eyes of Rene's little sister were fixed upon him. Agnes did not ask any more questions. They were now in the shadow of an overhanging cliff; the mountain road had grown steep. Close at hand the child caught the rush of unseen waters, and felt the damp, sweet breath of the green things upon its banks. A vague sense of

trouble, near but intangible, stole upon her. She pressed closer to her friend, and the next moment she and Henri had both stumbled over some object in the road. The soldier uttered a sharp exclamation, and putting the child hastily aside, bent down. It was the body of a man, apparently lifeless. For a second he thought some foul murder had been committed, and the corpse left upon the highway, but a swift recollection of the cliff above, suggested a different story.

“I fear some one has fallen over the cliff, Agnes. I cannot tell whether he lives or not. Would you be afraid to run home for Rene?”

Before she could answer, Rene’s welcome voice hailed them, as he came scrambling down the side of the precipice.

“I am here, monsieur.” The next moment he was bending over the mangled mass, his hand on the man’s heart. “I saw him walk right over the edge of the rock,” he whispered. “I was too far off to stop him. Yes, there is a throb of life in his breast. We must get help, and have him taken at once to the cottage. I do not recognize him, and there is no time to make inquiries.”

But Agnes, who had drawn near once more, interposed, sobbing:

“It is Ishmael, my poor grief-crazed Ishmael, Rene.” And as if in recognition of the name, the bleeding man moved and moaned.

“We must act promptly,” said the surgeon. “Monsieur, if you will go on with Agnes to the cottage, and ask my mother to have a bed made ready, and bring men and a litter, I will watch by him until you come.”

The unfortunate creature was groaning piteously when Captain La Roche returned ten minutes later with the needful assistance. He even tried to resist,

as the four sturdy peasants, at Rene's bidding, lifted him upon the improvised stretcher. But the doctor bade them not heed him, and in fifteen minutes more he was lying on a mattress in Madame Chevalier's only guest-chamber.

Rene shook his head after his professional examination.

"He cannot live more than an hour. We ought to know if he has friends, and if he has made his preparations for another world."

Monique Chevalier wiped the beads of suffering from the cold brow.

"My poor fellow, can you tell me your name? Is it really Ishmael?"

He stared at her stupidly.

She repeated the question in a gentler tone.

"Is your name Ishmael? Have you any other name? Have you made your peace with God?"

He made a hideous grimace of suffering, and turned away.

Rene laid his hand upon his heart.

"You are dying," he said gravely. "If you have anything to settle in this world, or any preparations to make for another, you have no time to lose."

A convulsive shudder shook the form upon the bed.

"Dying!—and after that the judgment!"

"Yes, your moments are numbered, and you stand face to face with the realities of eternity. My brother, if you have any burden upon your soul, let me point you to Him, who is able to save unto the uttermost."

"Ha! you do not know me then?" cried the sufferer with a wild, hysterical laugh. "You call me brother; how the devils must laugh to hear the word."

"Are you not Ishmael, the man who hangs about

the ruins of the old temple, and whom my little sister was interested in?"

Once more the sufferer burst into a hideous insane laugh.

"I am Judas, the betrayer, the murderer!" he hissed. "Will you speak to me now of the mercy of your God, M. Chevalier?"

Godfrey Chevalier's widow and son started. Henri, standing at the foot of the bed, uttered a sharp interjection. A sudden suspicion of the truth had flashed upon them. Henri alone uttered the name between his set teeth.

"Armand, the traitor!—the murderer of our good pastor."

The wretch regarded him contemptuously.

"We meet at last, monsieur! They told me you hunted for me high and low, that my life would not be safe if you found me, but I took good care to keep out of your way. Ha! I had forgotten Him who said: 'I will recompense.' I had forgotten the avenger in my breast from whom I could not flee. It lay down with me at night, and rose up with me in the morning; it walked with me by the way, and sat down with me to meat. Before a year had passed, I would gladly have met your sword, monsieur. The woman I loved had turned from me with loathing; my old mother had died cursing me with her last breath; the good name my father left me was a reproach among our people. Worst of all: one face followed me everywhere, his face, white, patient, suffering, as I had seen it last, the day they took him to the galley-ship. I tried to forget it at the gaming-table; I tried to drown it in the wine-cup; it would not down; it dragged me back at last to haunt the place where he had lived: the temple I had destroyed, and where I had set the

trap that had ensnared him. Would any torture you could have inflicted upon me, monsieur, been equal to this?" He had kept his eyes riveted upon Henri as he spoke; now he sank back white and writhing.

The rare tears were flowing down Madame Chevalier's face.

"He forgave you freely, Armand," she whispered. "His last message to Henri was to bid him take no revenge. He bade me tell you if I ever saw you, that he hoped God would pardon you, as he did."

The dying man motioned her fiercely away.

"Do not speak to me; do not let me see you!" he implored. "Next to his face, that follows me everywhere, your eyes stab me to the heart."

His strength was well-nigh spent. Rene put a glass of cordial to his lips.

"Drink," he said, in a quiet professional tone, to which the sufferer yielded instinctively. "Now," when the draught had been swallowed, "did you mean to kill yourself when you walked over the cliff? I shouted to you, but you would not stop."

"I did not know where I was going," moaned the miserable man. "I always fancy as soon as it gets dark that he is following me, and when I heard some one call it frightened me still more, and I did not care where I went, so I did not have to face him. Not but what I would have died long ago," he added, his voice rising to a shrill scream, "if I had thought I could put death between me and him, but I knew he would pursue me still, and meet me at the judgment-seat, and I dared not die."

It was evident that his reason had been seriously impaired by remorse. If Rene had not long ago forgiven the sin, he felt he must have done so then, kneeling beside that writhing form.

"Armand," he said gravely, "God has saved you from the sin of self-destruction. In His mercy He has given you a few moments to seek His mercy. Do not waste the precious seconds. Christ is mighty to save."

Armand shook his head. "He cannot save me," he whispered. "There is no forgiveness for a sin like mine."

There was a stir at the door, and before Rene could bid her back, Agnes was kneeling beside him. The face of the dying man changed strangely. His glance softened; his lip trembled. "She is like him, yet not him," he whispered. "There is no reproach in her eyes. Her voice does not upbraid me. Yesterday she spoke to me of forgiveness. What was it you said—white as snow? A sin as black as mine?"

Tremulously Agnes repeated: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

The dying man watched her as if fascinated. The others held their breath.

"It is his voice," murmured Armand. "He said those very words to me once, and he looked just as you look now. But you do not know," his voice rising to a scream once more. "It was I who betrayed the good pastor, I who sent him to his death. Now you will not speak any more to me of pardon."

The tears rushed to the girl's eyes. She understood at last.

"Armand," she said in a trembling voice, "my father has been happy in heaven for many years. Put away that thought that he is following you. I am sure nothing hurt him so much that you did not really repent of your sin. I am sure it would make him happy even in heaven, if you would be sorry, and let God

cleansed you. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

The death-chilled fingers closed upon hers.

"Do you believe it, do you believe it?" whispered Armand eagerly. "I will believe anything you tell me. You have been kind to me. Yours is the first face that has smiled upon me. All sin, did you say? Would the Lord Jesus really take in such a sinner as me?"

"Let us ask Him," said Monique Chevalier's sweet voice beside them.

And the three knelt around the low bed, while Rene committed the passing soul to Him who is "plenteous in mercy.

When the prayer was ended Armand's cold hands still clutched Agnes' dress, but the semblance of a smile lay on the frozen lips, and Madame Chevalier drew her child, weeping but rejoicing, from the room.

Before sunrise the next morning Armand had been laid in his grave near the ruins of the old temple, and that evening, as they sat talking in the twilight of him and that other whom his going had brought so near, there came a tap upon the outer door. Rene answered it. A slight figure, wrapped in a large travelling-hood and cloak, stood before him.

"Will you take me again?" asked Eglantine's sweet, tremulous voice.

And before the young man could answer, she had darted past him, and was laughing and crying in his mother's arms.

"I thought we would never find you. I never remembered until after we started that I did not know just where you were living now, and we were afraid to ask any one, Nannette and I. Oh, yes, I have brought Nannette with me, poor old nurse. There she comes, all out of breath, with Antoine helping her.

If we had not met Antoine just as we got out of the diligence, I do not know when we would have got here.'

All this without taking breath, while Madame Chevalier loosened the cloak and hood with trembling hands, and pressed her speechless lips to the girlish brow. But no smile of welcome illuminated Rene's strong, sunburnt face.

"What has happened, Eglantine?" he asked. "Where is M. Laval? Does he know where you are?"

She lifted her bright, moist eyes from his mother's shoulder.

"I did not tell him, Rene, but I daresay he will guess. But I do not mean to go back with him, if he comes after me. You and aunt Monique will not blame me when you hear."

"When we hear what?"

"That he has been to mass and signed the paper the priests brought him, and tried to make me sign it, too. You need not look frightened, Rene. I did not forget what I had promised you, though my grandfather said there was no harm in it, and he was very angry when he found I would not believe him, and he said it was all your doing, and that if I did not take care I would find myself in a convent some day. That frightened me. It is the first time my grandfather has ever been angry with me. I talked to Nannette last night, and told her we would come up here to you and aunt Monique, as you had said, where we would be safe. So when we came out for our walk this morning, we did not go back. You will not send me away, will you, Rene?"

"Send you away!" How gladly would he have hidden her in his heart of hearts, and fought the hard fight for two. But he only pressed her hand gently, and turned to give Nannette a chair.

"It is all too true, Master Rene," gasped the old nurse, as she sank breathless into the seat. "The master has gone over to the Catholics, and tried to make my young lady do the same. Thank God she had the strength to say him nay. But I am sure he never meant his threat of the convent. She is the very light of his eyes, and he would never have pressed her much if it had not been for that wily kinsman of Captain La Roche's, who is staying at our house. He has been talking to the master ever since he has been there, and he has a cunning tongue, which could a'most make you believe black is white."

"I hate him," exclaimed Eglantine passionately. "He is false and cruel. I saw it the first day I met him. I wonder my grandfather could be deceived by him."

"Hush! He is your grandfather, and he loves you very tenderly. We must never forget that," said Madame Chevalier, and then she drew her foster-daughter close to her heart. "Thank God you were enabled to resist the temptation, and are here with us," she whispered.

"Then you will let me stay? My grandfather is sure to suspect where I am, and come after me. You will not let him take me away, aunt Monique?"

"Not if I can help it, Mignonne. We will do everything to shield you—everything that is right."

But long after Eglantine had fallen asleep that night, with Agnes' soft arms about her neck, Monique Chevalier and her son sat in anxious consultation. Their dove had come back to the ark, but how long would she be permitted to fold her wings beneath their roof? M. Laval's recantation was a blow they had long had reason to dread.

"We have no right to keep him in ignorance of her whereabouts," the mother said at last. "I will write to

him to-night, and you will take the letter to Nismes to-morrow."

And Rene answered, gazing into the sweet, steadfast eyes: "You will never give her up to be placed in a convent, my mother?"

"Never! If it comes to that, Rene, I will shield her as I would Agnes herself. God and her mother gave her to me."

It is a necessity of some natures that a great sorrow can never leave them quite the same, that they must be either richer or poorer for it all their lives long. Weaker souls may succumb, lighter hearts be cleft asunder for a moment like the facile waters of a lake, only to meet and smile presently, with no scar to tell where the bolt fell. But to those whose foundations lie strong and deep, a great surrender involves a wrench and convulsion of the whole nature, and the traces of it will remain as ineffaceable as the traces of God's ploughshare among the hills—where, centuries after the cataclysm has passed, gorge and fissure and ravine bear witness to the fury of the storm and the path the lightning took. The soft shadows under the widow's eyes, the early winter that had come to her hair, were not the only changes wrought by that parting in the dungeon of St. Esprit, and the lonely years that had followed. The gentle, white-haired woman who moved to and fro among the mountain people, a very angel of mercy, who had wiped the dews of suffering from Armand's brow two nights before, and folded the motherless girl that night to her heart, had less to hope for, less to lose, than the wife who had listened in the ivy-covered porch for her husband's home-coming step, but she had also unspeakably more to give. For it is true of God's spiritual as well as of His physical kingdom, that in these great storm-up-

heavals there are developed possibilities of fruitfulness and capacities of beauty and strength undreamed of before. The waters gush purest, and the mosses grow greenest, where the rocks have been cleft asunder, and from broken hearts and smitten lives, balm and bounty flow out upon the world. The grace and loveliness that mantle many a life are but a garment of bloom over some rough scar.

CHAPTER XI.

CROSS OR SWORD?

THE day after his walk home with Agnes in the twilight had come to such a tragic conclusion, Captain La Roche and his father had been summoned to Montauban on business relating to the approaching convention at Toulouse, and it was not until the end of the next week that they found themselves once more at the chateau. Henri walked down the same evening to inquire after his friends, and to talk over with Rene the event now of paramount interest in all Huguenot households. As the young sieur had intimated to his kinsman at La Rochelle, there was a deep and wide-spread conviction among the Protestants of the provinces that their king was kept in ignorance of the afflictions under which they labored. Paris and its suburbs were notoriously exempt from the rigid enforcement of the edicts, and it was an equally well-known fact that no tale of suffering or cruelty was permitted to reach the royal ear. It was believed that the courtiers of Louis XIV., while they sought to ingratiate themselves by presenting long lists of converts, took care not to arouse his native kindness of heart by betraying the severities by which they were procured. When, as in the case of the Vivarais, the religionnaires had been stung into actual resistance by the accumulation of their sufferings, the outbreak had been represented as a political rising, and wily tongues had not been wanting to bring it

forward as an evidence of a deep-seated dislike to the king's person and authority. To prepare a petition which should refute these slanders, unveil the true story of their grievances, and make a firm though respectful demand for the rights guaranteed to them in the Edict of Nantes, was the purpose of the coming convention, composed of the noblest and wisest of the Protestant leaders throughout France.

"My father is very sanguine as to the result," Captain La Roche said, as he sat by Madame Chevalier's spinning-wheel, and watched her white hands move to and fro at their work,— "more sanguine than I have ever seen him as to any improvement in our condition. He maintains that his majesty is too sagacious a ruler to treat with impunity the protest of so many of his best subjects. I only hope he is right; but if what I heard in La Rochelle be true, the lifting of Madame Scarron's little finger will outweigh every voice in France. And Madame Scarron hates the religion even more than she hates Minister Louvois."

"And yet it was the faith of the wilderness church she learned at her mother's knee, and for which she made such a noble stand, it is said, when she was placed in the convent, a child of fourteen." The pastor's widow spoke with a tear in her eye. "Alas! Frances d'Aubigne! So noble in impulse, so weak in endurance! It only shows what the best of us would be without God's grace. But I find it hard to believe she can stoop to persecute the religion she once held sacred."

"Yet there seems no question about it, madame. We met gentlemen at Montauban fresh from Paris, and their tidings were such as to make us feel that now or never must we make a stand for our rights. Next to her marriage with the king, which some say

hath already taken place, there is no object so dear to the lady's heart as the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Ay, madame, her desire stops not short of the total extinction of our liberties, and the father of Minister Louvois helps on her plea with every argument in his reach. They have persuaded his majesty that the act will atone for the sins of his youth, and cover him with glory in the sight of God and man. It is Frances Scarron, not Louis XIV., who will decide the destinies of France. Our grand monarch is but a child in her hands."

"Nay, his heart lies in the hands of the King of kings, who can turn it whithersoever He will, and to whom, first of all, we have committed our cause. I would fain hope with your father, Henri, that our king's clemency and justice will now assert themselves, and that the petition will prove the way of escape our God has opened for us."

"May He so order it, madame. I shall fear the disappointment for my father, as well as regret it for France, if it prove otherwise. *Mon ami*," the young soldier glanced up keenly at the tall figure leaning silently against the window-frame: "I do not think I have ever heard your voice upon the matter."

Rene did not answer. His heart had answered to a light step upon the stair, and as he glanced toward the door, Eglantine opened it. The knot of sweetbrier he had brought that evening fastened the snowy kerchief at her throat, and a color lovelier than that of the wild rose was upon her cheek.

"Do I intrude upon some grave discussion?" she asked, stopping short at sight of the three grave faces, and looking from one to the other with laughing uncertainty in her eyes.

Henri had started, almost with an expression of dismay, to his feet.

"You here, mademoiselle? I had no idea—I was not informed of your arrival."

"Eglantine took us by surprise the other evening," Madame Chevalier explained gently.

"Did I not tell you I would be up very soon to see my aunt Monique?" Eglantine held out her hand with a smile.

"Indeed you did, mademoiselle, but I ventured to believe M. Laval would not consent to part with his recovered treasure so soon. I forgot how difficult he would find it to refuse any plea preferred by such eloquent eyes and lips."

She made him a gay courtesy.

"Thank you, M. le Capitaine; that is positively the first compliment I have received since I have been in the Cevennes. Rene does not think praise good for me, or me good enough for it—I am not sure which it is," with a mischievous glance at the tall figure still leaning silently against the lattice. "Perhaps I will shock you, too, when I own I did not wait to prefer my suit, but took the law into my own hands, and ran away. What! you can smile at such naughtiness?"

Once more Madame Chevalier interposed. She alone had noticed that Rene had not spoken since Eglantine's entrance.

"There was more excuse for the step than she gives you to suppose, Henri. But it is a painful topic, and I will not open it now. M. Laval has consented to let his granddaughter remain with us for a few weeks, and we are very happy to have our sweetbrier back again," drawing the girl tenderly to her as she spoke. "I see you have discarded your sling, Henri."

"Ay, madame, and right glad I am to be quit of it.

I begin to dream of camps and battles already, but my father will not hear of them, and, I doubt not, has bribed our good doctor here to say I will not be fit for service for some time to come. Ah, little one," as Agnes stole up with a smile, and laid her hand upon his sleeve. "Thou art the one of all others I wished to see. I have two messages for you: one from Jean, who has a pair of white pigeons he wishes to transfer to your tender care, and will bring down before breakfast; the other is from monsieur, who has brought back some new pamphlets from Montauban, and hopes his little reader will not fail him to-morrow. My father and Agnes are great friends, mademoiselle, and talk over the affairs of Beaumont and the State like a pair of grave old counsellors. I am almost tempted to be jealous of the child, sometimes."

"I do not wonder that any one loves Agnes," answered Eglantine in a low voice, but a shadow had fallen upon her heart, she could not tell from whence, and she crossed the room, and sat down at her embroidery-frame. If she had expected Captain La Roche to follow her, she was mistaken. He seated himself once more by Madame Chevalier's spinning-wheel, and turning to Rene, repeated the question which had been interrupted by her entrance.

"What is your opinion of the petition, mon ami?"

The young surgeon looked up from the sunny head; his little sister leaned against his shoulder.

"I am in favor of it, heart and soul, my young sieur! However slim its chances of success, there is this much to be said in its favor, it is our last resource."

"Not the last resource," corrected Captain La Roche significantly.

Eglantine looked up from her embroidery.

"Will you hold my skein of silk for me, Rene?"

she asked, and as her foster-brother came quietly to her in answer to the summons: "Do you, then, see other light upon the matter, monsieur?"

"I see the light of unsheathed swords and kindled camp-fires, mademoiselle. If our king shall so far forget what is due to himself and to us, as to refuse the rights ratified to us by his own royal oath at his coronation, why should we not appeal to arms, as our fathers have done, again and again?"

"Why not, indeed?" she echoed, and the soft fingers adjusting the golden floss on Rene's outstretched hands, paused for a moment, as Eglantine glanced across the room. "That is just what I have been saying to Rene to-day, M. Henri. But he thinks I am a girl, and cannot understand. I wish you would try and make him see things as you do."

"M. Henri and I have already fully discussed the subject," interposed Rene Chevalier in a pained voice. "He is acquainted with my views, and I know all the arguments he would bring. My young sieur, I entreat you not to renew the discussion. Such words as you uttered just now are seeds of fire, which will yield a lurid harvest."

"Would to God, then, they were so thick sown through France as to set every Huguenot heart aflame!" was the passionate retort. "Sometimes, Rene, you tempt me to believe you have a stone, instead of a man's heart, in your breast. You know as well as I, that if the petition fails, the Protestants of France will have no choice but between extermination and resistance. Would you have us wait patiently to be butchered like sheep?"

"An God so will, we could not die a nobler death. As it is written, 'For Thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.'

I have a man's heart in my breast, my young sieur, though you sometimes doubt it, and there is one truth burnt into it with the ineffaceable cautery of a great sorrow, and a great revelation: 'The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.' Can any man crave greater honor than to tread in the footsteps of Him who was 'led as a lamb to the slaughter'?"

Henri flushed with resentment, but conscious that he had incurred the rebuke, ruled his temper.

"You have tripped me with my own net, Rene. I suppose I can scarce take exception to the sermon, since I furnished you with a text. But you appear to forget there are others for whom we choose the cross when we embrace it for ourselves. A man may indeed choose martyrdom bravely for himself, but he will pause and consider, methinks, before he allots it to those dearer to him than life." His glance instinctively sought Eglantine's drooping head, and then met his friend's eyes with a sparkle of defiance.

Rene had finished holding the skein, but was still sitting beside Eglantine, with his arm around his little sister. He answered the angry look with one of sorrowful comprehension.

"There are some things, monsieur, which a man cannot offer, but which he dare not withhold when God asks—God, who 'spared not His own Son.'"

Captain La Roche sprang to his feet in uncontrollable impatience:

"We have had enough theology, Rene. I have not the grace to desire your resignation, far less the strength to imitate it. The women and children of the Desert Church shall not be surrendered without resistance, to the convents and cowls of Rome. If the appeal to the king's clemency fails, the appeal to the

manhood of France will elicit an answer that shall make the tyrant tremble upon his throne."

"Henri," said Monique Chevalier in gentle rebuke, while Rene glanced toward the open window with a fear which made Eglantine's lip curl.

"My young sieur," he said, going up to Henri, and laying his hand upon his sleeve, "I ask your pardon, if I have said aught your father's vassal should not have said to your father's son; but for his sake, for your own sake, I entreat you to be more guarded in your speech. Remember what I said to you at La Rochelle. We have long ceased to exist as a party in the State. We are scattered, separated, and divided among ourselves. To unite these broken links under the close surveillance to which we are subjected, is impossible. To attempt resistance without it, is suicidal. It will draw down upon the innocent heads the woes you most dread."

Before Henri could answer, Eglantine was confronting them, with eyes and cheeks aflame.

"That is a man's voice, M. La Roche; now hear a woman's. If the women have to suffer, they have a right to be heard, and I, for one, say it will be easier to die—if die we must—after hard blows have been struck and brave deeds done. No, Rene, I will not hush. You may preach down your own heart, but you shall not preach down mine. Remember those mothers in Pons you told me of last night, who had their infants frozen to death upon their breasts last winter while they waited in the snow and ice outside the closed temple doors—closed by the orders of the Church of Rome, you say—and which the fathers standing by had not the manhood to burst open, I add. It is hard to be made a martyr, whether one will or not."

“Eglantine, my child,” exclaimed Madame Chevalier in sorrowful amazement, while even Henri colored at the scarcely-veiled blow at his friend. Rene said nothing.

“Oh, I know I’m wicked,” the girl hurried on recklessly; “that I am not good and patient as I should be. I ought to sit still and hold my peace, and take meekly whatever comes; but I cannot, and I will not. It is not true that I want everything easy and bright about me, that I cannot bear hardships for the religion like others. I can eat my crust with the best if I have a little hope to salt it with, and you shall all see that I can make sacrifices and face danger when the call comes. I am not afraid to die, but it must be out under the open sky, with the tempest beating round me, not sitting still in some underground cave, with the cruel black waters creeping on me inch by inch. You would let my grandfather take me away tomorrow if he came for me,—you know you would, Rene,—and never lift a finger, though I dared so much to come to you.”

Her voice began to tremble, and Rene, who had been watching her carefully, seized the moment to lead her back to her seat.

“You wrong yourself and me by such words” he said gravely, “and you have gone far beyond the subject, Eglantine. No one doubts your courage or ability to endure hardship. My young sieur, shall we not drop this painful subject? Until the appeal to the king’s justice fails, we are surely of one mind. May we not rest our discussion until then?”

“By all means,” was the hearty response, for Henri was thoroughly dismayed by the storm he had raised. “Mademoiselle, I entreat you do not make me miserable with the thought that I am in any way responsible for these tears.”

“What was that little air you sang for my mother last night, and which she said she would like monsieur to hear?” asked Rene. “Dry your eyes, Eglantine, and let M. Henri hear it while he is here. I do not think he has ever heard you sing.”

“Only once, in church, and I have wished ever since to hear more,” stammered Captain La Roche.

Eglantine rose and brought her lute, with the faintest dimple of a smile about her mouth. The air she sang was not the plaintive woodland carol, for which Rene had asked, but a stirring martial ballad. Henri was lavish in his praise, and easily persuaded her to add song to song. The stormy scene of the first part of the evening seemed far away, when he rose, late, to take his leave.

“I have grown very grave and useful since I have been in the Cevennes,” Eglantine was telling him gaily. “You would scarcely know me, M. Henri, for the silly butterfly you saw the other day in Nismes. Nannette is teaching me how to spin, and Antoine lets me help him in the garden, and my aunt takes me with her to see the sick people, and I go with Agnes to gather simples, and sometimes we go into the vineyards and help gather the grapes. The people are all so good to me, monsieur: so many remember the naughty child who was here in the good pastor’s days, and those who have grown up since, have a welcome for me too. Do you think your father would let me come up and see him too? I will promise not to tease poor dame Martineau as I used to do, and I would like to read to monsieur sometimes, as Agnes does.”

“He will be very happy to see you, mademoiselle, and he will like best of all to hear you sing. I will find out to-morrow whether my mother’s harpsichord can be retuned.”

"Then I will come up with Agnes some day," she said, holding out her hand frankly; but as their eyes met, both remembered the words that had been spoken in the earlier part of the interview.

"I have found my hero, monsieur." Mademoiselle Bertrand spoke in a low, cautious tone.

"And I my inspiration, mademoiselle."

Rene, standing in the doorway, saw the light on the two faces, though he did not catch the words. He followed his young sieur out.

"I have a sleeping-draught to leave at a cottage on the other side of the chateau. If you have no objection, monsieur, I will walk with you." And though Henri's assent was tardy in coming, his friend did not withdraw the proffer.

It was past midnight when Eglantine, waking from a troubled sleep, heard the cottage gate close, and Rene enter the house.

"He has been sitting up with that sick boy," she thought fretfully; "he is always doing something to make himself uncomfortable"; and then fell asleep again, to dream that she was once more in the old church of La Rochelle, with a strong arm around her, and a grave voice assuring her, through the roar of the mob, "There shall not a hair of your head be hurt." She woke to find the sunshine streaming in through the window, and Agnes pulling at her hand, trying to rouse her. The roar had changed into the hum of her aunt's spinning-wheel down-stairs. She half expected a reproach for her behavior of the previous evening, when she crept down at last late to breakfast, and found Madame Chevalier alone in the room. But though the widow's manner was grave, it was kinder than usual, and there was no reproach in her eyes, as she refused the girl's offer to accompany

her on a visit to the hamlet, and bade her take her embroidery out into the garden, and sit there instead. Agnes had gone up to the chateau, and Eglantine felt a little lonely, as she sat on the rustic bench in the old arbor, and watched the golden marguerites blossom on the crimson velvet under her hand. Rene had gone out immediately after breakfast, her aunt had said. He was always out, it seemed. She began to nurse a vague feeling of injury until she saw him coming toward her down the garden-path, and then a sudden inclination to fly seized her. She did not feel prepared for a tête-à-tête with Rene, but his quick, unhesitating tread left her no alternative. She would not look up when he stopped in the entrance of the arbor, and his shadow fell across her work. Rene watched the bent, flushed face for a moment, and then laid his hand upon the swift fingers, and made her look up.

“You will never love me well enough to be my wife, Eglantine.” He spoke quietly, as if in statement of a well-accepted fact.

The blood rushed to the girl’s throat and brow.

“Rene !” she cried, with a sharp note of pain in her voice, and then her eyes fell, and her lips were mute.

He sat down by her, and took her hand.

“Have I been too abrupt? Pardon me, Eglantine. I have said the words over so often to myself. Do you remember what you said to me when we parted in La Rochelle? You could not love me better if I were your own brother. I have thought of it often since. I want you to let me talk to you to-day, as I would talk to Agnes. I have never told you the condition on which alone your grandfather would consent to let you make us this visit. It was, that neither my mother nor I should try to induce you, while you were under

our roof, to fulfil our childish compact. He knew I could not refuse, however hard the price, but he need not have been afraid I would interfere with his plans. I had seen already I could never be more to you than a brother,—do not tremble so, Eglantine!—and I had not needed the Abbe Bertrand's hint to tell me that another, better suited to you in name and station, loved you too. Nay, do not turn away from me, my sister. I heard the truth in my young *sieur's* voice the first time he ever uttered your name! He is brave and honorable, but he could not hide the secret from eyes as keen as mine. Ay, I know all you would say: 'He has been true to me in thought and deed.' At first, he did not know who you were, and when he did, his manner changed, and he went away. But he could not fight against God. Why did I not speak sooner, then? I could not give you up of my own accord, Eglantine—not at first. I said to myself: 'It is a passing fancy with him, he will soon see some other face that pleases him; she is my one ewe-lamb—I have loved and hoped for her all my life. She is young; I will wait and be patient; perhaps her heart will turn to me in time. At least, if he wins her from me, it shall be by his own overcoming strength.' But when I saw you together last night, when I saw how his color rose under your eyes as the tides rise under the moon, and your face turn to him as the heliotrope turns to the sun—I said to myself, 'It is His will; He has given me the desires of my heart, though not as I asked for them.' And so I walked home with my young *sieur*, and he could not deny the truth, when I pressed him."

"You have spoken to him, Rene?" Eglantine's face was like a rose, as she lifted it for a moment.

"Why not, my sister? Do not brothers settle such

matters when there is no father there? And Henri's lips were sealed because I was his friend, and he felt you belonged to me; but when I told him I had given up hoping for your love, and would be thankful to know you were in the keeping of hands so strong and true as his, and showed him the letter I had from your grandfather yesterday, — I would not worry you with it, Eglantine, — saying you must be brought home this week, he could no longer hesitate. His honor and his happiness were one. He would have flown back to you at once but for the lateness of the hour."

Rene ceased abruptly. He was remembering how, under the summer stars, he had seen that sudden dawn of joy kindle in his young *sieur's* face—how Henri had thrown his arms about his neck in speechless gratitude, and then, with hand lifted to heaven, had sworn his friend should never repent this hour. "I will keep her as the apple of my eye—as my own soul. She shall never know anything but tender looks and words; my love shall be her covert from trouble, her hiding-place from the storm," he had said solemnly. But Rene could not repeat this to Eglantine. She was weeping quietly, with her face turned from him. In the rapture of this sudden joy there was yet space for remorse.

"And you could do all this for me, when I had been so willful and ungrateful?" she murmured. "Oh, Rene! you know it was to tease you I talked as I did. I even said you would let my grandfather take me away, without lifting a finger. How wicked I was! How good you are!"

She did not add, "How you love me!" She had yet to comprehend an affection which could find it sweeter to serve than to receive, and would measure its gifts

by needs, not deserts. In her secret heart she knew Henri would never have let her go, if he had had so good a claim upon her. "He would have made me love him in spite of myself," she thought. Yet Rene had never seemed so dear.

"I will try to be a better girl—be more serious and womanly, and to care more for the things that you like," she said, holding out her hands to him. Instinct told her it was the one return she could make.

His sad face lighted up instantly.

"Thank you for that promise, Eglantine. It is my earnest hope and prayer that God will lead you both nearer to Himself by this joy, as He does some of the rest of us through our sorrow. But I have not quite finished my story. I went in with Henri last night to see monsieur. He would never have been reconciled to the matter, if he thought I felt wronged in any way, and I wanted myself to tell him how noble and honorable his son had been throughout. He looked happier before I left him at the prospect of having a bright, young face once more about the house, and when I said you were young to take such grave responsibilities, and that if it were not for the peril that threatened you, I would urge a year or two of delay, he smiled and said you were no younger than Henri's mother, when he brought her a bride to the chateau. You will have it in your power to shed much brightness about his last days, Eglantine. He and Henri have gone to Nismes this morning to see your grandfather. Monsieur has old-fashioned ideas of etiquette, and he insisted on this before Henri spoke to you. But there is no doubt of the result. I have reason to believe that M. Laval is expecting them, and that he will be too much gratified at the alliance to stumble at the conditions monsieur will impose for a speedy

marriage, and permission for his son's betrothed to remain, as long as he wishes, under my mother's roof. I thought you would like to be with my mother for a while, Eglantine. She is your mother too, you know, though, of course, we must not be selfish, and keep you altogether from M. Laval, when he is soon to part with you forever. He will make no attempt now to make you change your religion, and you will not refuse to ratify the consent he will give to M. La Roche. Will you, my sister?"

Eglantine looked out of the window, and smiled. There was something she could say to Henri, and to no one else. Rene rose from the rustic bench.

"There is my mother coming up the hill. Let us go up to the house to meet her. You must be very gentle with her," he added, as they passed together through the rows of sweet clove-pinks that bordered the garden-beds. "This has been a great disappointment to her, Eglantine. She has always looked forward to having you for her very own." He did not add that the sharpest pang for his mother had been the consciousness of his disappointment, but Eglantine guessed it.

"Do you mind very much, Rene?" she asked, stopping in the shadow of the sweetbrier over the porch, to look earnestly into his face. "You are so much interested in your work, you will not miss me very much, will you? And you are so much graver and better than I, you deserve a better wife."

For the first time his lip trembled, and he looked straight before him into the misty amethyst of the summer horizon.

"It is my Master's will—that satisfies me," he said in a low voice. "Do not worry about me, Eglantine. He will not leave me comfortless. His favor is life.

Perhaps in the path He has marked out for me He sees I can serve Him best alone."

And then as she still lingered, irresolute beside him, he put her away gently but firmly, and passed on into the house.

Through all the golden, enchanted days that followed, Eglantine could never quite forget the look upon his face.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SECOND HOME-COMING.

IT was March of the next year. The wild winds of a stormy night swept the slopes of the Cevennes, as a coach slowly made its way up the mountain road in the direction of the towers of Beaumont. The snow, which had been falling all day, had ceased, and lay in white, frozen masses along the road, obliterating every landmark. The few stars that endeavored to shine, were only occasionally visible through the murky clouds drifting across the sky. More than once the driver had paused, and descending, examined with a lantern the way before him; but in spite of his care the frequent jolting of the vehicle over unseen obstacles elicited indignant remonstrances from some one within. Finally, there was a sharp call to halt, a window was thrown up, and Captain La Roche's voice demanded impatiently :

"Is it not possible for you to be more careful, Martin? You will kill madame with your rough driving. If it were not for leaving her, I would come out and take the reins myself."

"With all respect, M. le Capitaine, I fear you would not do much better," answered the man sullenly. "It is the sense in our horses' heels, not the hands upon the reins, that will keep us off the precipice to-night."

"Nonsense! If we have the road to Beaumont, and keep the middle of it, there is no danger"; but as

Captain La Roche spoke, he opened the door of the coach, and springing out, came up to the box. "Keep a stiller tongue in your head, if you would not frighten my lady out of her wits," he said in a low, stern voice; then to the valet seated beside Martin: "Jean, you ought to know the country by night as well as day. Cannot you help Martin to keep the road?"

Jean scrambled down, and came round to his master's side.

"I begin to fear we are not on the road to Beaumont at all, monsieur. We ought to have passed the ruins of the old temple before this, but not a familiar landmark have I set eyes on to-night."

"You must have had bat's eyes to recognize your own mother in such darkness as this," retorted the young sieur hastily. "I am sure we took the right turn at the crossroads, and Martin could not have wandered much from the track since then, without my perceiving it. Come, my good fellow, take the lantern, and go before him a little, that he may have light upon his path, and let the thought of your good Lucille, watching for you at Beaumont, be a lode-star to your feet. Eglantine," he added, re-entering the coach, and bending anxiously over the slight figure, wrapped in furs and shawls in the corner, "I fear this hurried journey will make you ill. I wish I had listened to my better judgment, not your siren voice, and insisted upon your stopping overnight at Anduze."

"No, no," answered a faint but cheerful voice. "This is a hundred times better, Henri. I could never have been happy left behind, and I have such a strange presentiment that you are wanted at Beaumont, that I would not have dared to ask you to stay with me."

"Our hurried flight from Paris, and your fear lest a lettre de cachet is at my heels, has not a little to do

with that presentiment, I fancy. My little wife forgets that I am of less consequence in Minister Louvois' eyes than in hers." Henri La Roche put his arm tenderly about the figure beside him, and his young wife leaned her head upon his shoulder, and laughed. They had been married in the golden September weather, and now the march snows were upon the ground, but it was still summer in their love.

"I begin to wish we had never accepted Natalie's invitation, and gone up to Paris," murmured Eglantine, as they moved on slowly once more. "It has all been very wonderful and beautiful, Henri; but I would have been just as happy at Beaumont with you, and I am afraid monsieur has missed us very much."

"I am afraid he has, my beautiful; but you were so eager to see la belle Paris."

"And you could not bear to say me no, Henri. I am afraid I have been selfish, yet not wholly so: M. Renau was so sure it would help to secure your promotion to bring you under the personal notice of the king, and I did so long to have my husband receive the praise and honor he merited. It has all been like a winter's ball-room, when the flowers in the conservatory make one forget that the snow is without, and the feet of the dancers drown the sobbing of the storm."

"Until at last the tempest has burst in through the windows and put out the lights," he returned bitterly. "They thought they could fill your heart with pleasure and flattery, Eglantine, and make me forget everything but your sweet eyes; but they did not know either of us. We are awake, thank God, though it took a thunder-clap to rouse us."

The words were scarcely off his lips when the coach, which had been moving forward with more speed,

came to so sudden a halt that they were almost thrown from their seats. Henri was out in the snow in an instant, and by the faint starlight struggling through the clouds, saw that they had reined up on the very verge of a precipice. The horses were trembling in every limb, and Martin's attention was fully occupied in endeavoring to quiet and reassure them. Jean, with a dismayed face, stood looking over the edge of the cliff, down which his lantern had disappeared in his frantic clutch at life.

"There can be no more doubt about it, monsieur; we have lost the road," he said sorrowfully. "The only thing to be done is for you to keep madame as warm as you can in the coach, while I strike out in search of some shepherd's hut. It would be madness to go on without a guide, even if Martin could induce his horses to attempt it."

There was nothing to do but yield a reluctant assent. Henri did so, and having seen the stout-hearted fellow strike out boldly into the darkness, turned back to the coach. But Eglantine, alarmed by the plunging of the horses, had already alighted, and entreated pitiously not to be compelled to re-enter immediately.

"I am sure I hear the sound of distant singing," she said. "We must be near some dwelling. If Jean could only find it."

"Perhaps we have come upon some midnight gathering of our brethren," answered Henri, "though it is a wild night even for a *prêche*. Hark, my love; Jean has started a sentinel already."

Firm and clear, from the gloom beyond them, came the challenge: "Halt, or give the pass!"

"That is a Cevanol voice," whispered Henri to his wife, and they heard Jean answer sturdily:

"I give no word except that the young sieur needs

help, and asks it. Dost thou not know thine own mother's son, Philippe?"

"Jean!"

There was the sound of a hurried colloquy as the brothers embraced; then a cry, hoarse and fierce, from Jean. Henri cleared the space between them with a bound.

"What is it?" he demanded, laying a heavy hand on his valet's shoulder. "Is aught wrong with your good wife, Jean? Speak!"

But Jean was speechless.

"Philippe! hast thou a tongue in thy head? Tell me! is there aught wrong at the chateau—with my father?"

"You are well come, monsieur," answered the younger brother sadly. "But none too soon. There is no time to be lost if you would not have our old sieur laid in his grave, with you away. They are burying him now, down yonder in the glen."

Henri put his hand to his forehead. He was only dimly aware that his wife stood beside him, her pitying hand upon his arm.

"My father dead!" he said in a muffled voice. Then, rousing himself, "But why this haste, this midnight burial? Why was I not summoned? Go on, Philippe! you are keeping something back."

The mountaineer drew his hand across his eyes.

"We have done the best we could for him, monsieur. If it had not been for Master Chevalier, our old sieur would be lying to-night in a grave he would have thought too foul for a dead hound."

Henri's fingers were upon his throat.

"Take back the word, Philippe, and I will make a rich man of you! Swear to me that I have not heard aright. They have not dared to lay hands on that good gray head?"

Philippe released himself with mournful dignity.

“I speak truth, monsieur. Our old lord has been failing ever since the new year came in, and last week he had a stroke. Master Chevalier sent off a messenger to tell you, and tried to keep his sickness quiet. But somehow the priests got wind of it, and forced their way into his chamber. When they found they could not move him with their arguments, they had drums beat under his window night and day, that he might not have an instant’s rest. They thought to wear out his resolution by wearing out his poor feeble body, but they did not know our old sieur. Master Chevalier thinks he would have rallied from the stroke, and lived to see you again, if it had not been for their doings.”

“That is not all.” Henri La Roche spoke now in a tone of awful quietness. “They had still the deserted tenement upon which to wreak their vengeance. Finish your story, Philippe.”

There was the sound of a stifled sob from Jean, but his brother answered sadly :

“I should be able to speak it, who had to stand by and see it, monsieur. Again and again, as he lay dying, they placed the alternative before him—the public sewer for his grave, if he would not confess to the priest, and as often our lord told them boldly they might do what they pleased to the body he left behind him, his soul would be with God. Not once did he waver.”

“Do you think I doubt that?” retorted the sieur La Roche, and his voice made even the wife, clinging to his arm, tremble. “Do you think I need to be told that that great heart, ever brave and stainless, did not stoop to the vilest of all sins at the last? But what I do want to know, Philippe, is this : was there never a

man among my father's people to silence those murderous drums, and save his white hairs from this outrage? Have his years of ceaseless kindness gone for nothing?"

"Those who did the deed wore the king's livery, my lord, and were armed to the teeth. Yet neither our loyalty, nor the fear of their bayonets, could have held our hands, if it had not been for monsieur's own charge. We were to make no resistance, but to bear all things patiently, he sent word to us by Master Chevalier. It was his last command, and we obeyed, though it broke our hearts."

"And where was Rene Chevalier all this while? Did he, too, stand tamely by, and witness this outrage to his father's friend and his?"

"He was ever beside our old lord's bed, doing what he could to alleviate his sufferings, monsieur, and cheering him with brave, unfaltering words, until the end had come, and they had done their worst. Then, as we sat stricken and helpless in our homes, he came to us and bade us if we had the hearts and hands of men, rise up and help him rescue the head we loved from its foul resting-place, and give it decent burial. There were plenty to answer the summons, my young sieur, but it was Master Chevalier who first thought of it, and has managed the whole affair."

Eglantine looked up wistfully into her husband's face.

"Have you forgotten, Henri, what is going on in the glen yonder? Ought we not to be there?"

He started like one waking from a dream.

"You here, Eglantine? You cannot walk through the snow."

"I will follow, if you do not take me," was her answer.

It was no time for remonstrance. He put his arm about her, and half carrying her over the hard, slippery ground, sped down the hill.

"My father! the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof," she heard him murmur once. It was the only time he spoke.

Jean, who had overtaken them with a stride, gave his master a few directions as to the road. The clouds were breaking overhead, and there was a faint light upon their path. The sweet, mournful chant that still rose from the valley, served also as a guide and an incentive to their feet.

"Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations," was the psalm they sang.

"It is the one he loved best," whispered Eglantine with a sob. "I sang it for him the night before we left Beaumont."

Her husband's answer was to point through an opening in the trees to the scene before them. A little band of men and women stood about a new-made grave, over which the sods were being hastily pressed down. The next moment he was in the midst of the startled, sorrow-stricken group, and would have thrown himself face downward upon the earth but for Rene Chevalier's restraining hand.

"For his sake, monsieur, do not hinder us. Every moment is precious."

Henri looked at him for a moment with wild, blood-shot eyes, then turning away, hid his face in his cloak, and motioned them to proceed. He heard Madame Chevalier's voice rise clear and sweet with her son's, in the psalm that was now resumed, and felt his wife weeping silently upon his shoulder. More than one sob from the faithful vassals about him told him that his grief was theirs, but he neither spoke nor moved

again, until his friend's hand once more touched his arm.

"It is over, my lord. The sooner we disperse, the better."

Then the sieur of Beaumont uncovered his face and looked about him. The grave had been carefully covered with loose branches prepared for the purpose, and was now not distinguishable from the rest of the valley.

"It is safer so," explained Rene, in answer to his questioning glance.

"And is it for this I have served my king?" asked the young nobleman in a deep, hollow voice. "Is it for this I have known cold and hunger and weariness, and shed my blood? Is it thus Louis XIV. rewards the labors of the faithful subject who has risked his life in a hundred battles to preserve his crown, and would have cut off his right hand any time these three-score years, rather than utter a disloyal word? Unhappy monarch! Perjured, ungrateful king! Thank God I, at least, wear his badge no longer." He threw back his cloak, and turning to the awed group about him, showed them the plain dress of a gentleman, not an officer's uniform, beneath. "Ay, my friends," as a murmur ran from lip to lip, "I have resigned my commission. It was laid at his majesty's feet an hour after the rejection of the petition, from which we hoped so much. The last hope of peacefully winning our rights has been wrested from us. If my sword leaves its scabbard again, it shall be in defense of our homes, not in the service of a tyrant and a bigot."

"The petition has been rejected? Our appeal to the king has failed?" burst in horror-stricken accents from his listeners the moment he paused.

“We had not heard of this,” said Rene Chevalier in an agitated voice.

“Then you hear it now, *mon ami* ! If this night of sorrows can bear one sorrow more, I have brought it. The petition has been presented, and rejected, eight days after it was placed in his majesty’s hands by the noble marquis—mark the words, my friends, in his majesty’s own hands ! His majesty’s own lips gave us our answer. He did not deny the statements, made in our appeal. He did not plead ignorance of the infringement of our rights, and the severity of our sufferings. He was fully aware, he said, that his present policy was alienating from him the affection of his Huguenot subjects, and must prove prejudicial to the interests of his kingdom. But he is so persuaded of the righteousness of his undertaking—so convinced that the extirpation of heresy will exalt him in the sight of God and man, that he will cut off his right hand before he will resign it. ‘He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall cover a multitude of sins,’ says the Word. Our monarch stands in need of a cloak of more than ordinary size, and nothing less than the conversion of every Huguenot in France will meet his exigencies. Do you understand, my friends ? Your blood, or your apostasy, must atone for the friendship of La Montespan and La Valliere. Do you quibble—do you hesitate ? The swords that are no longer needed in Flanders can be turned against Frenchmen. A squadron of dragoons has been already ordered into Poitiers.”

A cry, half of fear, half of indignation, burst from his hearers. Rene caught his noble friend by the arm.

“Are you mad, *monsieur* ?” he whispered. “Would you goad these already overtaxed hearts beyond en-

durance? Surely, he who lies there would be the first to bid you forbear."

Henri turned upon him with blazing eyes.

"Still lukewarm?" he asked sarcastically; but melted by the sorrowful compassion of his friend's glance, instantly added:

"You are right, Rene. This is neither the time nor place for such words, and I do but thank you poorly for to-night's work. Disperse, my friends," he added, waving his hand to the group about him. "I grieve to have given you so sad a pillow after your evening's work, but we live in days when one trouble treads close on the heels of another. You will not find me ungrateful for what you have dared for the dead, when your own hour of need comes. Henceforth, I am your brother." Once more he motioned them to disperse, and slowly and sorrowfully they obeyed, many of them pressing close to touch his hand before they went.

The minister who had performed the last rites for the dead had stood apart, thus far, a silent spectator of the scene. Now he drew near and held out his hand to the new lord of Beaumont.

"Be comforted, my brother," he said in a low, sweet voice. "The good man is taken away from the evil to come. The failure of the petition will not distress monsieur in the world to which he has gone. He has fought a good fight, he has kept the faith. The sufferings of this life are not to be compared with the glory to be revealed, either for him or us."

Little as the words suited Henri's mood at the moment, the voice and manner of the speaker strangely attracted him. He looked earnestly into the face under the wide-brimmed hat. It was one not soon to be forgotten, singularly youthful for one of his call-

ing, and with a rare spirituality of expression. The dark eyes were lit with enthusiasm; the firm lips, with all their gravity, were sweet as a child's.

"Methinks we have met before," said the sieur of Beaumont thoughtfully. "Ah! I have it,—M. Rey. There have been sad changes since I parted with you last summer at my father's gate, but I owe you much for this night's work."

"You owe me nothing," was the gentle answer. "My services belong to you as well as to the feeblest of this scattered flock. Madame is gently reared for such scenes as this," he added, glancing at the slight figure, trembling with cold, at Henri's side; and the young husband woke, with a sudden rush of sweetness, to the recollection of the joy still remaining to him.

"Eglantine, I must have you home at once. What would I do if you too were taken from me?"

"Hush!" she said quietly. "There is the coach coming up the glen. Rene sent one of the men to bring it down by a way he knew, and Jean has gone on to tell them to have fire and food for us."

It was not until they had left Madame Chevalier and her son at the cottage gate, and were in sight of the towers of Beaumont, that she let her full heart overflow, with her arms about his neck.

"Then you will not be comfortless while you have me, Henri?"

He strained her to his breast.

"You are my life, ma mie. If I lose you I lose everything."

"And I lose nothing while I have you!" she returned. "Henri, there is but one thing I fear—separation. Promise me you will never leave me."

It was the old story human hearts repeat so often—

hewing out broken cisterns, while the Master stood with the cup, and cried :

“If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.”

As they rolled in under the familiar archway, and the flashing torches revealed the sad faces of the retainers gathered to welcome them, a strong shiver ran through Henri La Roche's frame. Then his muscles grew hard as iron.

“Eglantine,” he said in a low voice, “we have walked side by side through the path of flowers. Do you love me well enough to keep step on the edge of a precipice?”

She looked up with startled eyes, and read the truth in his face.

“My noble, brave husband ; you will find I am not unworthy of your trust.”

And for one moment he held her passionately to his heart.

“I am no longer able to shield you from trouble,” he whispered ; “but at least no harm shall touch you which has not done its worst for me.”

CHAPTER XIII.

UNDER ARMS.

THERE are lulls in the fiercest tempests, intervals of deathlike calm between the wildest sallies of the storm, when the gale seems to pause and gather up its strength for a fresh onset, and its victims fall asleep with a sense of false security. For weeks after monsieur's death, and the failure of the petition, a strange calm closed in about the inhabitants of Beaumont. No hint of the work going on in the distant provinces penetrated the Cevennes. Even the annoyances to which the mountaineers had long been subjected ceased; their enemies appeared to have forgotten the fact of their existence, and more than one heart began to ask itself if they had not been unduly alarmed, and especially among the younger men, as the spring advanced, was there apparent a spirit of hopefulness and courage. Their love for their young sieur, too, grew into a passion.

But there was one in Beaumont who was not deceived by the gloomy calm which had settled down upon Henri, after his first passionate outburst, any more than by the temporary cessation of hostilities on the part of the Jesuits. With sorrowful, clear eyes, Rene Chevalier watched his noble friend, convinced that the sieur of Beaumont, like himself, had only too good reason to believe that the emissaries of Rome were gathering their strength for a longer and deadlier spring—and persuaded, also, that Henri was

not prepared to abide the result of that terrible struggle as passively as his manner might indicate. He had sullenly abandoned his threat of avenging his father's death, upon learning that monsieur's last words had been a charge to him to leave vengeance with the Judge of the whole earth; but there was a lack of openness in his intercourse with Rene, a restlessness under his glance, which convinced the young surgeon that something was being kept from him.

But so distant had Henri's manner become that he would not charge home his suspicions without positive proof. The evidence for which he waited came at last—as the April daisies were starring the emerald valley where monsieur lay in his last sleep.

Entering the cottage of one of his patients without knocking, one afternoon, he saw the man hurriedly conceal a new carbine beneath the bed-clothes.

“That is an ugly plaything for a sick man, Bartholde,” he said bluntly, “and not a safe piece of property for a Huguenot and a good subject. Who did you find so reckless of his own safety, and yours, as to sell you the weapon?”

“One who has a better right to give than you to ask, M. Chevalier,” returned the man sullenly, though in considerable confusion. “If the dragoons ever come to Beaumont, they will find it a harder nut to crack than they imagine.”

Rene took no notice of the impertinence, but, instantly confirmed in his worst fear, set out for the chateau, immediately on leaving the cottage. There could no longer be any doubt that Henri was secretly arming the peasantry, and inciting them to resistance. Incense him—as he probably would—by interference, Godfrey Chevalier's son was resolved to utter one last protest against the error and madness of the step.

He would plead with Henri for his father's sake—he would remind him of his old pastor's teachings; surely their words and wishes would not fall vainly on his ear even now. But Henri was not at home, and Eglantine rose, with a frank smile, from her embroidery-frame, to receive her visitor. The slight embarrassment she had felt in Rene's presence after her marriage, had long since been dissipated by the perfect friendliness of his demeanor toward her.

"I have just sent a message down to the cottage for you," she said, holding out her hand. "Nannette is poorly to-day, and your visits always do her good."

"Then I will go and see her at once," was the quiet answer, "and come back to you, Eglantine. There is something of importance I must talk over with you and Henri."

The old nurse was fast nearing the bourne "where the wicked cease from troubling," and she did not need the lips of her young physician to impart the intelligence.

"I'm a poor, worn-out old woman, Master Rene," she whispered; "too feeble to smooth out my lady's hair any longer, or lay out her gowns, far less to hold up the Lord's banner in the fight that is at hand. Perhaps He sees I would do Him but small credit in the struggle, so He is kind and pitiful enough just to take me out of the way, only giving me these few weary pains, like chips of His cross, to carry. I never was bold and outspoken like many. Do you think He is disappointed in me, that now I am too tired to wish it were otherwise?"

"Does Eglantine love you less because now it is she who waits on you, not you on her?" asked Rene Chevalier with a smile; and catching his meaning,

Nannette smiled too, and was silent a space, looking out of the window at the far blue hills.

“There is one thing on my mind,” she said at last; “it is leaving my young lady. I could go in peace, if I thought she would be safely sheltered from the storm; but how can I creep into the safe haven content, Master Rene, while she is without, who would never let me bear a pain she had power to still?”

“You leave her with the God to whom you go. Is not that enough, Nannette?”

“I suppose it ought to be, Master Rene, but my faith is very weak sometimes. Last night I thought my own dear mistress stood beside my bed. My young madame is dear, but it is not given to any one to love twice in a lifetime as I loved her mother. And my lady held her eldest born by her hand. I take it as a token that Mademoiselle Mignonnette was safely sheltered long ago, and she pierced me through and through with her sweet eyes as she asked, ‘Nannette, where is the other?’ And I seemed to become conscious all at once that though my young madame had made a grand match, and had a brave young husband who loves the very ground upon which she steps, it would all go for little up there if she was not in the right way. And I woke cold and trembling, and my heart has been like lead all day. My young madame has made an idol of her husband, and he of her, and I feel afraid.”

“Yet we have prayed for them, and God is not slack concerning His promises,” was the gentle answer.

“Ay, I mind that, but there is none that I know of that says the Lord will take the thorns out of the wrong way, because we have been so willful as to choose it instead of His. I have searched the Word through, Master Rene, and I do not find that any one,

not even the man after God's own heart, was permitted to escape the punishment of his sin. 'They shall eat the fruit of their doings,' so it runs, and M. La Roche and his wife have taken the wrong way, and I much fear me they are sowing tears and trouble for themselves. Hark you," she added, laying her hand upon his sleeve, and drawing his ear down to her lips, "I am not the one to tell tales of the roof I live under and the hands that smooth my pillow, but if they will not hear my old voice, I must, for their own sakes, put the words into lips to which, perhaps, they may hearken. My young lord is not as calm and guarded in his speech at home, Master Rene, as he is abroad. There are strange sounds in the vaults at night, and other things than silks and laces in the boxes that have come down to my lady from Paris, and better reasons than some of us guess why the young men of Beaumont hold their heads so high and wait so upon the looks of their young sieur."

With a heavy heart, Rene rose to leave.

"I know what you mean, Nannette. It is that brings me here to-day," he said sadly, "but God only knows whether they will listen to my entreaties."

Nannette pressed his hand to her lips in tearful gratitude.

"Speak!" she said eagerly. "Win over my young lady, and you can do what you will with monsieur. It is the fire in her eyes, and in her thoughtless words, that has wrought half the mischief."

Henri was sitting with his wife, when Rene re-entered the pretty turret-room, overlooking the valley, where Eglantine spent most of her time.

"You have something of interest to communicate," he said, when they had exchanged greetings.

"I have a protest to utter, my young sieur. For

your own sake, I hope you will do me the grace to hear me patiently."

"Ha! I catch your drift, I fancy. I have just left Bartholde's cottage. Say no more, Rene. My purpose is fixed."

"I cannot see you perish without at least making one last effort to prevent it," returned Rene Chevalier quietly. "For the sake of our old friendship, M. Henri, hear me once more. Surely, your father's wishes——"

"My father did not live to see the swords of France turned against Frenchmen! Have you heard the news from Poitiers, Rene? No? Well, then, listen, and if you have any manhood in your breast, say no more. The dragoons, ordered into the province, have been quartered solely upon Huguenots. If, upon examination, ten appeared a reasonable allotment to a household, twenty were assigned. Our unhappy brethren have had no alternative but to abjure, or suffer everything it is in the power of a cruel and unbridled soldiery to inflict. The horrors of a siege have been enacted upon every hearthstone. Nothing has been spared, from the gray head tottering to the grave, to the infant an hour old. Every outrage has been permitted to them except murder. Even the dead have not been sacred in their graves. Do you wonder that the last spark of faith in my king has been trampled out—the last link that bound me to him has been snapped? The cup that Poitiers has drained to the dregs, will soon be meted out to Languedoc and every Huguenot home in France. Would you have me stand patiently by and witness such atrocities, Rene?"

"I would implore you not to draw them down upon our heads, monsieur!" Rene Chevalier knelt at his young lord's feet as he spoke. "At the worst, we

can fly to the hills, and hide in the cleft of the rocks, until the storm has passed by. Your present course is certain to draw down upon us all, swift, inevitable destruction. Nay, my dear young master, hear me—for the sake of our old friendship, listen a moment more. It is madness to attempt to stay the king's troops with a few raw recruits, however brave and however desperate. None should know that better than you. If you succeed for one hour, will it not be to be overwhelmed the next? It is worse than madness—it is treason! You start; you frown! It is well to call things by their right names. The subject who takes up arms against his king, puts himself beyond the pale of mercy. He can hope neither for the countenance of man nor the blessing of God. Will you stain your noble name with this foul aspersion? Will you burden your conscience with this sin? The powers that be are ordained of God. No cruelty, no injustice, can absolve us from our allegiance. If we must suffer, let it not be as evil-doers. Let us, in our deepest misery, have the support of a conscience blameless toward God and man. See, monsieur! I entreat you upon my knees; I implore you with tears. Destroy not yourself and your people.”

“Enough, enough!” exclaimed Henri, motioning him to rise. “I have borne from you, Rene, what I would have borne from no other living man. But I can hear no more. There is a voice of God in the soul, as well as in His written Word. There is a right higher than the power of kings to reign—the right of every man to defend his own hearthstone. I have sworn, if needs be, to die in defense of mine—by the honor of my mother, by my father's stainless name; and a hundred brave hearts in Beaumont have sworn it also. A handful, do you say, to the hordes that will

pour down upon us? Ay, but a handful nerved with the energy of despair, and less unskilled than you imagine, in the use of arms. No match for disciplined troops in the open field, but able to cope with them behind these rocky ramparts, which Heaven has raised for our defense. We stand simply on the defensive, unsheathing our swords only in the protection of our homes and altars."

"Alas, monsieur!" exclaimed the young physician sorrowfully, "you are charging a mine beneath your feet, which may at any moment explode, and engulf you, without ever giving your sword time to quit its scabbard. Have you forgotten how argus-eyed are our enemies? What security have you that Bartholde's carelessness may not be repeated, or that some cowardly heart may not purchase its own safety by the betrayal of his brethren?"

"That is our risk," answered the lord of Beaumont with a pale but steady lip. "Do you suppose I have not counted that cost, Rene? My band is true as steel, to the last man, and Bartholde has had a sharp reprimand for his negligence, and is not likely to err again. Only you and Eglantine share our secret, and though you think me wrong, I know I can trust you, as I would my own soul."

"You can, monsieur," answered Rene Chevalier quietly, and then, as a last resource, turned to Eglantine. She had risen from her chair, and stood with her hands clasped upon her husband's arm, looking up at him with an expression of glad and fearless confidence.

"Eglantine! you have heard what I have said to Henri. You know I would not utter a word I did not believe to be true. Will you let him rush on to destruction without uttering a word to restrain

him? He may hear your voice, though he is deaf to mine."

Henri looked down proudly and fondly upon his young wife.

"Answer him, my darling. I am willing to abide by her decision, Rene."

Eglantine lifted his hand to her lips, and then turned proudly to Rene.

"I glory in his courage. I am ready to die with him, or for him, but my tongue shall cleave to the roof of my mouth before I utter one cowardly, one disheartening word."

"Then my errand is done, Eglantine," answered her foster-brother solemnly, "and may the God you forget have mercy and spare you the fulfilment of my fears. My young sieur, I am ready to share your fate, if I cannot avert it." He turned and left the room.

"My brave wife," whispered Henri, drawing Eglantine to his breast; but the light had gone out of her eyes, and with averted face and mute, trembling lips, she listened to Rene's retreating footsteps as to some beat of doom.

The sweet spring days came and went; the last snows melted from the hills; the vineyards grew shady with leaves, and the flowers grew thicker in the valley and carpeted the rough rocks. May had deepened into the warm, rich splendor of June. Nannette had fallen peacefully asleep with her young mistress' hand in hers, and saw her perplexities no longer in the light of moon or sun, but irradiated by that splendor which is the smile of God. Eglantine La Roche sat in her turret-room, and her husband, stretched on a cushion at her feet, read to her from an old romance, a tale of love and glory. Suddenly, a scream, shriller than any

the young wife had ever heard, thrilled out on the calm summer air, and looking out of the window, she saw Lucille Bonneau running to the chateau, fleet as a deer, while two dragoons pressed close at her heels. The same moment Jean burst into the room and threw himself at his master's feet.

"Save yourself, monsieur! The chateau is surrounded, and you are lost if you do not fly."

The sieur of Beaumont had risen to his feet.

"Fly?" he exclaimed proudly. "Am I to think first of my own safety, Jean? Drop the portcullis; sound the alarm. I will show these hirelings of Rome that they have not cowardly peasants to deal with."

"Too late, monsieur," interrupted a harsh voice in the doorway. "The less resistance you make to the king's authority, the better for yourself."

"Sir!" exclaimed the sieur of Beaumont haughtily, recognizing in the grim face that confronted him, the features of a captain of dragoons, with whom he had fought side by side upon the frontier. "Sir, this intrusion into my wife's private apartments is unauthorized."

"I hope you will be able to prove that it is without excuse," was the grim retort, and the officer advanced into the room as he spoke, and presented to his former comrade in arms a warrant, bearing the royal seal. "Monsieur, it is my painful duty to apprehend you in the king's name, for conspiracy and treason. I entreat you," he added, marking his prisoner's quick glance around the room, "not to make my task more unpleasant by offering resistance, or attempting escape. I would have found means to transfer it to other hands but for the opportunity it afforded me of saving you unnecessary indignity. The chateau is surrounded by

my men, and they have orders to secure your person at any hazard."

Henri took the paper and read it through with an unmoved front.

"These are grave charges," he said; "I hope my accusers are prepared to support them, or to abide the consequences of their slander."

"I fear they are better able to prove them than you imagine. We waste time, monsieur."

Henri turned to Eglantine. Her eyes were fixed upon him with a look of agonized appeal, but she did not speak.

"I must go with them," he whispered. "All that I can do is to make good terms for you and my people." He turned back to the officer. "Monsieur, I bespeak your courtesy as a soldier and a gentleman for my lady—and your protection in the name of our common humanity, for my people. There are no charges against them."

The captain of dragoons bowed low to the young wife, so beautiful even in her grief.

"My orders extend only to the seizure of your person and the search of your chateau, monsieur. If you will go with us quietly, I give my word that madame shall receive every courtesy, and your vassals be left unmolested."

Henri unbuckled his sword and tendered it to his captor.

"I have at least the satisfaction of resigning it to a gentleman," he said with mournful dignity. "I trust my word of honor to attempt no escape will be sufficient to spare me the indignity of being bound."

"It will, monsieur. And now, if you are ready, we will not delay. Your clothing can be sent after you."

Once more Henri turned to his wife, and this time

she threw herself upon his breast, and gave way to an agony of weeping.

“Only let me go, and die, with you!” she sobbed, when she was at last able to speak; “dungeons have no terrors for me, Henri, if we are together. I fear nothing but separation. Only take me with you, and I promise never to unnerve you by one weak word or look.”

“You unnerve me now by asking for what I cannot give,” he answered in a trembling voice. “Be brave, my darling. Remember you serve me most and best by taking care of yourself. We may win safely through even yet. Do not make me forget my manhood in the presence of my enemies.”

The quiver in his voice made her strong at once.

“Forgive me!” she murmured, lifting his hand to her lips, and then holding it long and passionately to her breast. “I will try not to be unworthy of you, Henri. Remember all I hope for from you—all I believe you to be, and do not disappoint me. Let the thought of me strengthen your hands. The memory of your love, the endeavor to emulate your example, will be all I shall need to support me in my hour of sorest weakness.”

She let go her clasp of his hand. As if afraid to trust his and her own calmness farther, and unwilling to lay bare to the curious eyes looking on, the sanctity of a last adieu, she turned without another look or word, and walked with a steady step into the inner apartment.

Jean pressed close to his master, as Henri was being led down the stair.

“We have been betrayed, monsieur. They went straight to the vaults, and seized the powder and ammunition. Some one has been false.”

“Bartholde!” muttered Henri; and a lurid gleam broke for a moment the heavy gloom of his face. “He has never been the same since I rebuked him for his carelessness. Give our friends warning,” he added in a lower voice. “Bid them save themselves if they can. See M. Chevalier, and tell him I leave my lady in his care.”

Jean nodded and slipped away, and the sieur of Beaumont looked neither to the right hand nor the left as he passed out into the courtyard through a group of weeping retainers, and mounted the horse assigned him. The last drop had been added to his cup. He had been “wounded in the house of his friends,” by one of the very people he had tried to save. If Jean’s information and his own suspicions were correct, his doom was sealed, and the doom of those who had put their trust in him would not tarry. Rene was right. He had not only failed to save his people: he had hastened their destruction.

There was a slight delay in collecting the troop, some of whom had been amusing themselves, in their captain’s absence, by frightening the maids and plundering the wine-cellar. By the time the squad, with their prisoner in their midst, had reached the gate of the bocage, Jean suddenly reappeared, and gave his master to understand, by a secret sign, that he wished to speak with him. Henri dropped his glove, and the valet darted in under the horses’ heads and caught it up before any one had time to prevent.

“We may yet save you, monsieur,” he whispered, as he pressed the gauntlet into Henri’s hand. “Our friends lie in wait upon the road. All they ask is your permission to fall upon the guard, and rescue or die with you.”

For a moment the love of life and liberty, the re-

membrance of the helpless young wife he was leaving, rose strong in Henri La Roche's breast. But he glanced at the solid phalanx of soldiers about him, and put the temptation generously away. A struggle with these disciplined, thoroughly-equipped troops must cost the lives of many of his brave mountaineers, even if it secured his own freedom.

"Never!" he answered, in a firm but mournful whisper. "I have brought enough trouble upon them already. Bid them disperse, and unsheathe their swords only in defense of their firesides. I command it."

Jean would have remonstrated, but the dragoons, jealous of the whispered colloquy, motioned him away, and forced their horses into a gallop.

Rene Chevalier was standing at his cottage gate as they swept by. There was no time for speech, even had Henri been so reckless of his friend's safety as to implicate him by uttering a word. All he could do, as he caught the physician's eye, was to glance back at the towers of Beaumont in speechless appeal, and Rene, startled and sorrow-struck, had only time to bow his head in silent acceptance of the trust before the troop dashed by; another moment and they were out of sight, and Rene, with long, quick strides, was on his way up the hill. The courtyard of the chateau was still full of weeping, terrified domestics. He pushed hurriedly past them and bounded up the steps. Eglantine stood in the turret-chamber, where she had parted with Henri. The casement was open, and through a break in the intervening trees she was watching the last gleam of the helmets that surrounded him as the troop swept through the valley below. At the sound of Rene's voice she turned. Her eyes, though desolate, were yet defiant.

"You have come to witness the fulfilment of your

prophecy," she said bitterly. "Do not think I repent anything even now, Rene."

If she expected ungenerous reminders at that moment, she had, as often before, underrated the nobility of the heart with which she had to deal.

"Henri has left you in my care," said Rene, gently taking her hand, and leading her to a chair. "Even had he not done so, Eglantine, you know I must have cared for you as a sister. Will you come down to us at the cottage, or would you rather stay here?"

She gave a pitiful, troubled glance around the room.

"Do not ask me to leave the chateau, Rene. I am sure Henri would wish me to stay here."

"Then I will go down at once and bring my mother to you," he answered. "It is my mother who will know how to comfort you, Eglantine. She has tasted the same bitter cup."

He rose from his seat, but now she clung to him, terrified at the memories his words recalled.

"Oh, no, do not leave me yet, Rene. It is not of me, but of Henri, you should think. Is there nothing you can do to save my husband—nothing?"

"We can pray," he answered solemnly. "That is not a little thing, my sister, with such a God as ours."

She snatched away the hands he had taken soothingly in his.

"Pray!" she repeated in a shrill, despairing voice. "Did not my aunt Monique pray for my uncle Godfrey, and did he not die a shameful and cruel death, though there was not a particle of evidence against him? Do you want to drive me crazy, Rene? You know you think Henri has been sinning against God, and has no right to look for His help. Think of something to *do*, I say, or I will go mad."

"You can write to your grandfather," answered her

foster-brother, quietly adapting himself to her mood. "He may be able to do something for your husband. And there is M. Renau, too. I saw him in Nismes yesterday. Incensed as he may feel at Henri's conduct, he cannot refuse to do for him whatever lies in his power."

Rene spoke hesitatingly, feeling as though he were untrue to hold out hopes to her, which he could not himself cherish. But she caught at the proposition eagerly.

"You are right, Rene. I wonder I did not think of them at once. I will write to-night,—no, I will not write. Written words are so cold, so empty. My grandfather will do anything that I ask him, but M. Renau has never forgiven Henri for resigning his commission, and he has always been jealous of my influence over my husband. He might refuse me, if I only wrote a letter; he cannot when I kneel to him, when I entreat him with tears. He has influence at court which he must use. And my cousin, the abbe, and his sister: perhaps they can do something too. I will go down to Nismes to-morrow. Do not contradict me, Rene. I will not be content with seeing M. Renau; I will interview the Intendant—I will besiege his judges. People have never been able to say me nay. They must hear me now, when I plead for my life, my husband. Bid Jean have the coach ready to start the first thing in the morning."

But before another day broke, Henri La Roche's young wife lay, like a broken lily, upon her couch, unconscious alike of the joys and sorrows of earth,—deaf even to the cry of the feeble infant, whose wailing advent added the last pang to that night of sorrows. Before Eglantine awoke to a consciousness of her motherhood, and a remembrance of her grief, her husband's trial had begun, and the Dragonnade, in its full horrors, had burst upon Languedoc.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE CRUCIBLE.

“ I WILL die before I utter an appeal so base,—before I inflict so cruel a stab upon the generous heart that loves me ! ”

Eglantine La Roche sat propped with pillows upon her couch ; two flecks of vivid crimson stained the beautiful pallor of young maternity upon her cheek ; her dark eyes were wide and angry, as they turned indignantly from her grandfather, gray and bent, on one side of the bed, to Louis Bertrand, flushed and discomposed, on the other. A month had passed since that parting in the turret-room, and the sieur of Beaumont lay in a dungeon of the fortress of Nismes, under sentence of death.

“ Do you think I have strengthened and encouraged my husband’s hands all this while, to fail him in his hour of sorest need ? ” went on the young wife, and the words poured hot and fast over the lips that Henri loved, that until now had been so frozen in their grief. “ Do you think Henri would forsake a losing banner, even at my entreaty ? You do not know the man I have loved, nor how I have loved him. ”

M. Laval rose.

“ This is folly, ” he said coldly. “ You have worked yourself into a passion, Eglantine, which endangers your health, and renders you incapable of listening to argument. We will retire until you are calmer. ”

He glanced at his companion, but the young priest laid an entreating touch on the transparent hand on the coverlet.

“Consider what we have said to you,” he pleaded. “A hundred Huguenots in Nismes, as noble and resolute as Henri, have been compelled to sign the recantation in the last few weeks, and your grandfather has pledged you his word to see you safely out of the country. In some calmer and happier land, you and your husband can make a new home, and worship God as best suits your conscience. What harm can there be in making the temporary concession, without which M. Renau dares not appeal to the mercy of the king?”

The wife released herself with gentle coldness.

“You mean kindly, Louis, but you cannot understand. The soldier who deserts his standard in the moment of danger, planning to creep back to her protecting folds, when it no longer needs his assistance, is a coward! No amount of talking can make him anything else. And my love for Henri would turn to loathing, if he could stoop so low.”

“It is idle to say more at present,” repeated Pierre Laval. “Come, monsieur. Eglantine, I am disappointed in you. I certainly had a right to expect that, as a wife and mother, you would show yourself more amenable to reason, than as a rash, headstrong girl. Have you forgotten the scenes that I told you we witnessed this morning—the miserable hunted creatures, who fled past us in the wood; the mother who asked bread for her starving child at the wayside; the shrieks of agony that mingled with the echoes of drunken ribaldry in the homes we passed? The dragoons have not yet reached Beaumont, but a few days at farthest must bring them to your door.

What will these nice notions of honor avail you when a rough hand is laid upon your babe?"

"My heart can break only once," was the quivering answer. "Do not look at aunt Monique; it is not she who gives me strength to speak. It is the thought of Henri. Whatever comes, I must die bravely, as becomes the sharer of his counsels, the mother of his child." She turned and hid her face in her pillow, and the emotion she could no longer restrain, shook her delicate frame.

Madame Chevalier, who had been sitting apart in a window, came forward.

"You had better leave her; her cup is full," she said, looking sadly at M. Laval; but misinterpreting the low, heart-breaking sobs, the banker had drawn back once more to the bed.

The docility with which the Chevaliers had submitted to Eglantine's marriage with Henri, had agreeably disappointed him, and he had of late resumed something of his old friendly manner toward them. But he could never shake off the conviction, that, in their secret hearts, they looked down upon him for his recantation, and in spite of Eglantine's denial, he was jealous of her aunt's influence at this moment.

"Do not cry so, my girl; I did not mean to be cruel," he said, touching the bowed head with a rough caress. "If I spoke plainly, it was only to rouse you to a sense of your situation, and save you from any such ordeals. You are the one joy and hope of my life, Eglantine. If this sorrow and disgrace are permitted to come upon you, I will go down before my time to the grave. Think of me when you decide this question." He paused as if for some reply. She made no answer, but her sobs were growing quieter, and he went on, encouraged. "Listen to me, my girl;

you are making a sacrifice, which your husband, soldier and man of honor as he is, does not demand. Henri is by no means as indifferent to the considerations I have pressed upon you as your romantic pride would lead you to believe. M. Renau is convinced, from his last conversation with him, that he has begun to waver, and he has already obtained a respite of the sentence, and started for Paris."

"And Natalie will add her influence with Madame de Maintenon," added Louis Bertrand, eagerly. "My sister is in high favor with the lady who stands nearest the king; a letter, received to-day, assures me that with M. La Roche's recantation in her hands, she is positive she can have the sentence commuted to that of banishment. Madame de Maintenon has said as much."

But they had overreached their mark. Eglantine started up from her pillows, white and quivering.

"It is false! It is the basest, cruellest of slanders!" she cried. "You have been deceived, both of you; but you should have known better than to repeat the accusation to me. Henri waver, where peasants and children have stood firm! The thought is monstrous! What but the assurance of his fidelity, the endeavor to be worthy of his example, has kept me from going mad with my trouble, and given me strength to live and bear the thought of a life without him?"

Both men had recoiled in dismay. M. Laval was the first to rally.

"It is no slander," he said sturdily. "I saw Henri myself last night. He is by no means as resolute as you persuade yourself. When I left him he was sobbing like a child. Death has no terrors for a soul like his, but the suffering of a helpless wife and babe has

moved the will of more than one strong man ere this. If you will add your entreaties to ours, Eglantine, the work is done. Your husband is already wavering."

An angry light flashed across the white face of Henri La Roche's wife.

"I do not believe it!" she retorted proudly, resisting her aunt's efforts to draw her back upon her pillows. "Why do you never let Rene see him? Why am I never permitted to write to him? If you are so confident of his yielding, why have you made this appeal to me? Ah, I see!" as he dropped his eyes, and did not answer. "You are deceiving me out of mistaken kindness; but if you only knew, it would be less cruel to kill me where I lie. If I could doubt Henri, I would doubt everything. There would be nothing left worth caring for, worth living and suffering for—nothing of which I could feel sure. But you cannot shake my faith in him; you have wrung his noble soul with some ungenerous appeal; you have not moved his will one hair's breadth from its purpose."

Her voice, which had been growing fainter and more unsteady, failed suddenly. Pale as death, and with closed eyes, she sank back into Monique Chevalier's arms.

"Send one of the servants quickly for Rene," commanded the foster-mother, as she bent anxiously over her, and almost as pale as the blanched face upon the bed, M. Laval hurried out of the room.

His worst enemy need have wished him no harsher companions than his own thoughts, for the next hour, as he wandered desolately up and down the large drawing-room, listening to the sounds in the chamber above. He had been so proud to see Eglantine reign as mistress here, and to know it was the fortune

he had gathered for her, which had enabled her to bring so much of luxury and beauty into the stately rooms. But what did it all matter now? What did it profit him that a stroke from his pen could shake the markets of the world, that his vaults yet groaned with treasure, and a hundred sails upon the sea were bearing home to him the spoils of as many successful speculations? He had failed to shield his darling's head from the woe he had most dreaded; he was powerless to win from the pale lips the word that could yet avert the blow; the wealth of the Indies could not quench one bitter tear, nor pluck one thorn from her pillow. The gold, to which he had devoted the best energies of his life, which he had held dearer even than his hopes of heaven, crumbled into nothingness in this hour of need. "He that saveth his life shall lose it," a voice sounded in his ears. A door had opened into the past. Once more he knelt in the murky dungeon beside the martyr's bed. Was this what Godfrey Chevalier had meant, when he uttered that warning? Did he foresee the hour when his friend would stand grasping the empty chalice, with the subtle elixir spilt forever? Hurriedly M. Laval opened a window and stepped out upon the sunny terrace; but he could not leave the thought behind him with the hush and shadows of the splendid room. Louis Bertrand had gone down to the hamlet to see the cure, and there was no voice to drown that of the long-silenced monitor. It was the path of his own choosing that had brought Eglantine to this. Side by side with his pursuit of wealth had gone another purpose, equally determined, though less openly acknowledged—to set his darling safely beyond the reach of these religious differences and persecutions. For this he had broken his solemn promise to the

dead, and separated her from the Chevaliers, and surrounded her with an atmosphere of worldliness and gayety, which had made her turn instinctively from Rene's stern views of life to grasp at the cup Henri La Roche held out to her. With a proud sense of triumphing over circumstances, the banker had laid the girlish hand in that of the young sieur of Beaumont; M. Renau had been so confident that their love for each other, and the gay winter in Paris, would obliterate from the young hearts all early prejudices and silence all doubtful scruples. But how differently it had turned out. Rene Chevalier still walked the earth a free man, and Henri La Roche lay in a dungeon under sentence of death. The crown of thorns M. Laval had vowed should never touch his darling's head, he had himself helped to plait. Bitter resentment against the hand that imposed the doom mingled in his breast with a secret terror of the power that could thus outrun and circumvent his plans.

Had he been successful in everything else, to be a loser here? Fool that he had been to measure his finite skill against the hand that made heaven and earth; to hug to his soul the fond delusion that he could outrun the purpose of God! Too late he saw that he had been, not an antagonist, but an unconscious instrument, and heard—or fancied that he heard—through his crumbling plans the derision of Him who "sitteth in the heavens," the awful laughter of the Most High.

"Eglantine is better," said a low voice at his side; and he started to see that the pastor's widow stood beside him. "I knew you would be anxious, and came as soon as I could leave her." She did not add how long and deathlike had been the swoon brought on by his exciting words, but he read the truth in her face.

“My pretty, laughing girl!” he muttered, turning away with a quivering lip. “It is hard she should be brought down to this when I have toiled all my life to make her happy. Beware how you encourage her to persist in her refusal to the proposition I have made to her. It is the one chance of saving her husband’s life.”

“Beware how you tempt that noble heart in its hour of weakness and suffering, monsieur! ‘He that saveth his life shall lose it.’”

M. Laval shook off her hand. He was white to the lips. “We are not likely to agree on that point; let us drop it,” he said hoarsely. “I see Jean bringing my horse into the court, Monique. There is business waiting for me in Nismes.”

Godfrey Chevalier’s widow was looking at him with sad, compassionate eyes.

“Eglantine would like to say good-bye to you before you go,” was all she answered. “These are not times to part in anger, monsieur.”

He hesitated a moment, and then without a word followed her up the stair. Eglantine was still too much exhausted to speak, and Rene, watching with the old nurse beside her bed, warned M. Laval by a glance to be careful. For one sad, full moment the old man and his grandchild looked into each other’s eyes. Then the young wife’s brimmed with tears, and the banker turned away to hide his writhing lip.

“I will do what I can,” he said in a broken voice, and followed Madame Chevalier from the room. The angel that withstood him in the way was forgotten once more, and the unequal contest was resumed. He must save her from the sorrow that would forever blast her life!

Before he knew what she was doing, Monique Che-

valier had led him into the nursery beyond, and he stood beside the large carved cradle in which the heirs of Beaumont had been rocked for generations.

“You must not go without seeing your granddaughter,” she said softly. “She has been named Gabrielle, after Henri’s mother; Eglantine wished it.”

The infant was asleep. She was a fair, tiny creature, as unlike the rosy, dimpled babyhood of her mother as a snow-drop is unlike an apple-bloom, yet with something in her face which reminded M. Laval of his little granddaughter when he had first come up to see her in these Cevanol hills—a kind of spiritualized likeness, as though her soul had entered into her child—such a look, Rene had once said to his mother, as Eglantine’s angel might wear, looking into “the face of her Father in heaven.” Slowly, as M. Laval gazed, the bitterness vanished from his heart, the vague sense of injury he had cherished against the little intruder melted like icicles in the sun. She at least knew nothing of his sin; nothing of the sharp theological distinctions which were working such havoc in the world around them. Her innocence disarmed him, even while it made him afraid. With a strange sense of unworthiness he touched his lips to the little hand, soft and pink as a rose-petal, lying on the coverlet. When he looked up, Agnes Chevalier, who had been reading in a window near at hand, stood beside him. She was never far away from the cradle.

“Does M. Henri know about his little daughter?” she asked wistfully. She had never been able to call the young sieur by the name by which she had first known his father.

Pierre Laval nodded silently. He could not for worlds have spoken just then. The soft eyes saw the

trouble in his face. Godfrey Chevalier's young daughter laid her hand upon his arm.

"My mother has told me how good you were to us when I was a little child, and my father was in prison. I never forget to pray for you, monsieur."

"Your mother would tell you that was time wasted," he returned shortly, but there was a suspicious tremor in his voice, and he avoided Monique Chevalier's glance, as they went down-stairs.

"I wish you were all safely out of the country," he grumbled, as he stood in the sunny courtyard, with his hand on his horse's neck. "You have been a mother to my girl, Monique, and I would be sorry to have anything happen to you or yours. If you can make up your minds to leave France, you shall have all the help in my power."

"Thank you ; I believe that," she answered gratefully. "But the risk is too great. We have decided to remain where we are, and trust God to take care of us here. I wish your anxiety was for yourself, my friend," she added, with a quick, gentle glance.

But M. Laval uttered an impatient exclamation, and sprang into his saddle. He bent down the next moment, however, to whisper in her ear.

"M. Renau speaks of visiting the chateau in a few weeks ; beware of him ! He will do all he can for Eglantine, but he bears you no good-will. He has discovered Rene's profession, and will not scruple to use the information when it suits his purpose. Remember ! you are warned."

Before the startled mother could reply, he had clapped spurs to his steed, and was gone.

It was several days before Eglantine recovered from the exciting effects of his visit. When she did, it was to convalesce rapidly, and to display a degree of cour-

age and self-control that had hitherto been lacking. She no longer hesitated to utter her husband's name, but spoke of him, even to the domestics that ministered about her couch, in proud, unfaltering tones—encouraging them to strengthen their hearts, as she did hers, with the thought of his heroic example. If she wept, it was when no eye saw; no word passed her lips that could be construed into an accent of doubt or timidity; her dark, tender eyes burned with a quenchless flame. It was evident that her grandfather's appeal had not only failed of its purpose, but stirred all the latent forces of her nature, and welded them into one firm resolve—to show her unshaken confidence in Henri, and her anxiety that no look or words of hers should be interpreted as a weak wish that it were otherwise.

Monique Chevalier watched her with a might of speechless tenderness. Too well she knew the breaking heart would sooner or later feel the need of a more present help in its trouble, than any human love—that the levees of wifely pride could not always keep back the floods of wifely anguish. But when she would have hinted this to Eglantine, and won her to the surer strength of a patient waiting upon God, Henri's wife turned upon her reproachfully.

“Surely, you do not doubt him, aunt Monique—you, who know so well his high sense of honor, and all he has dared and suffered for the religion?”

“If I hope to see him stand faithful to the end, my child, it is because I trust he is leaning on God's grace, not because I think his courage above assault. Be patient with me, Eglantine; the best and bravest have failed without that support. Remember Peter: ‘Though I die, yet will I not deny Thee’—and do not stake your faith on anything less than God himself.”

“I have staked my faith on Henri’s constancy,” was the proud answer, and the young wife turned away with a flush of resentment upon her cheek. “It is disloyal in me to permit it to be called in question, even by you, and I will not. Why do you try to make me think otherwise? It is because I can trust him so utterly that I have strength to live and suffer.”

“It is her only gospel,” said Rene, when the words were repeated to him that night. “Do not let us rob her of it, my mother, until God has shown her her need of something better. We can afford to be patient, if He can. She says truly, it is all that keeps her heart from breaking.”

The conversation took place on the eve of their departure from the chateau. M. Renau was expected at Beaumont the next day, and Pierre Laval, in the letter conveying the information to his granddaughter, had repeated his warning to Rene. Eglantine, who had not before heard of it, insisted feverishly that they should run no risk on her account. She was now able to leave her chamber, and did not need such constant care; M. Renau’s visit would be short, and she could easily send for them in case necessity arose; nothing would so embitter her full cup of sorrow as to have harm come to Rene through her.

The claims of his profession, and care for his mother and sister, left Rene no choice but to comply. His life was not his own to put in needless peril, and the day might come when Eglantine herself would need him more. From M. Renau she had certainly nothing worse to fear than attempts to undermine her faith, and these, the young surgeon felt sure, would prove futile as long as Henri remained steadfast. On the other hand, should the dragoons penetrate to the hills, during the courtier’s visit, the presence of her power-

ful Catholic kinsman would afford Eglantine a protection he would be powerless to supply. Nevertheless, it was a sad parting, and in spite of his clear conviction of right, a heavy foreboding fastened upon Rene's heart, as he closed the bocage gate behind him.

Had this parting, after all, been only for a few days? What would elapse before he would again hold that slender hand in his, and look into the depths of those sweet, mournful eyes? Well was it for him that he could not part the curtains of the future, and knew not what even "a day might bring forth"; well is it for us all that a pitying Father is mute to our questions of the way, and will not suffer us to increase to-day's burden by a glimpse of to-morrow's load!

Eglantine had parted from them very quietly. To her stricken heart the going and coming of other feet made little difference, since one foot would cross the threshold no more. The days of Henri's respite were nearly over. One last boon remained to be wrested from the hard hand of fate, and for this her heart was gathering all its strength. M. Renau could, and must, obtain an interview for her with her husband. He had done all he could to save his young kinsman; he would not refuse them this one grain of comfort, now that his last hope of shaking Henri's constancy had been relinquished. To pillow her head once more upon Henri's heart, to feel his arm for one brief hour enfold her!—it was all she asked; while with words of proud and passionate fondness she would gird up his soul for the last ordeal, and pour into his heart a balsam which would rob even pain of its sting. She grew impatient for M. Renau's arrival, as she dwelt upon the thought. The hours of the summer day seemed endless, as she listened in vain for the sound of his

horse's hoofs upon the road. At last the sun stooped behind the hills, the purple twilight folded down upon the plain. Must she live through another long, lonely night without that certainty upon which to pillow her head? Hark! there was the sound of wheels at last. A coach was coming rapidly up the hill. It rolled in through the bocage gate, up under the avenue of stately elms, into the stone-paved court. She could hear M. Renau's cold, polished tones, and Louis Bertrand's gay, soft laugh. She was glad her cousin had come too: he would add his entreaties to hers. She laid her hand upon the bell; she would send word to them to come to her at once, as soon as they had shaken off the dust of their travel. But listen! One of them had already turned in the direction of the turret-room. Had he tidings to communicate? As if in answer, slow, heavy feet could be heard ascending the stair. Whose were they? Surely there was but one step in all the world to which her heart would answer with that swift, instinctive leap; had her brain given way beneath its weight of trouble? There was still light enough in this upper chamber to see about her; her eyes fastened upon the door. The footsteps hesitated for a moment without, and then, without a knock, the latch was lifted. Pale as death, and haggard as if with years of suffering, Henri La Roche stood before his wife.

Eglantine neither screamed nor fainted. Speech and motion were as impossible to her as to one in the grasp of a horrible nightmare. But the look of shrinking terror in her eyes held Henri's feet.

"Has my wife no welcome for me?"

The low, muffled voice broke the spell that was upon Eglantine. She rose to her feet, with her slender figure drawn to its full height.

“Not unless you have come back the stainless gentleman that went away.”

Henri made no answer. A dusky flush had mounted to his brow.

“Answer me, monsieur. Am I to congratulate you upon making your escape?”

The beautiful young face was as stern as that of a rebuking angel. The sieur of Beaumont fell on his knees before his wife.

“Have mercy, Eglantine! Yours should be the last voice to reproach me. It was for you that I did it—to save you and our helpless babe from the horrors of this Dragonnade. You do not know what it has been to lie there, fettered with irons to my dungeon-floor, and think of you at the mercy of those brutal soldiers. I told you once I loved you better than my conscience and my religion; I am here to-day to prove it.”

She drew her dress from his clinging hold and retreated a step, her eyes flashing.

“You can say that to me! You dare to tell me it was thought of me that unnerved your heart and brought you to this dishonor? Is this my reward for having kept down my woman’s heart and borne my pain bravely that I might show myself worthy of you—you? Is this my return for having trusted you as I did not even trust my God, for having staked my soul upon your steadfastness?”

“Eglantine,” interrupted Henri in a voice of agony, “they told me you were crushed, broken-hearted; that you entreated me to have mercy upon you and our innocent babe; that you claimed the promise I once made you, to protect you at any cost. My God! have I been deceived?”

Her pale face did not soften. “You could believe this of me,” she said in a dull, stunned voice—“you

could believe me capable of weakening your arm at such a moment with such an appeal? Then you have never loved me—never been worthy of the love and trust I gave you. When they told me you were wavering, I would not believe it; when they said one entreaty from my lips would overcome your resolution and save our child, I would not utter it. Take back your ring, Henri La Roche. It was not you I loved, only something I thought you to be. I am widowed as the sword could not have widowed me, and Rene is avenged! He would not have stooped to such an act if I had gone down on my knees to him!”

Henri had already snatched up the golden circlet she had shaken from her finger, and was standing before her, as pale with anger as herself.

“Be careful,” he said in a low, stern voice; “there are limits to what a man will bear, even from the woman he loves. Do you suppose I do not appreciate my own degradation? Why else have I crept back to my father’s house, under cover of the twilight, not daring to look one of my own peasants in the face? I need no words of yours to add stings to my conscience, but you may goad me to desperation and repent it when it is too late. You are justly indignant at the trick that has been perpetrated upon us, but you have no right to upbraid me because I could not divine you had not really sent me that message. What reason did you ever give me to believe that God’s truth would be dearer to you than all other considerations? When did you ever speak of anything but honor and loyalty? A man needs something more than honor to strengthen him in the hours of agony I have endured, and to give him the victory over the tempting devil in his own soul, as well as over outside temptations. Do I look as if the struggle had been

an easy one? Not even for your sake could I lightly resign the religion in which my father died, and which had been the trust and glory of our house for centuries. Faith I had none. I do not know what these weeks of suffering have done for you, Eglantine, but they have taught me that——” Henri La Roche paused for a moment and looked wistfully at his wife. She had thrown herself upon the divan, and her face was buried in her hands. He fancied she was beginning to relent, and went on earnestly.

“I found it out when I was left alone to do battle with my own heart. I had prided myself upon being a Huguenot, but God was a stranger to me. It had been my own glory, not His, that I had thought of; my way, not His, that I had chosen. I had no language in which to speak to Him when I would have cried for help. You may well feel disappointed in me, Eglantine. I am humbled in my own eyes. I have been nothing but a miserable hypocrite all this while, and my defense of the religion has been only a hollow mockery. I wonder God has not swept me off from the face of the earth!”

Eglantine could bear no more.

“I wish I had never been born!” she cried, bursting into an agony of weeping. “I wish my baby and I had died together! There is nothing left worth living for. There is nothing in heaven or earth of which I can feel sure.”

“Because you have put your trust in an arm of flesh, not in God himself,” whispered Henri; and he would have drawn her to his breast, but she repulsed him proudly, and rose, and confronted him once more, holding back her tears.

“Yes, I did trust you,” she said in a low, quivering voice, “as some do not even trust their God; and you

have failed me ! What is the use to say more ? I could have knelt by your scaffold, and smiled in your face to the last, and rejoiced, though with a broken heart, to know you brave and faithful, and stainless to the end. Do not talk to me about religion. You were a soldier, and you had your honor. You might at least have been as true to the faith for which your old father died, as you would have been to the banner of France. Did you forget the eyes that were on you, the hundreds that would be guided by your example ? If the sieur of Beaumont could put his hand to a lie, if Henri La Roche could purchase his liberty by a cowardly concession, what wonder if his servants and vassals falter too ? ”

“Eglantine,” interrupted her husband in a hoarse voice, “do not speak to me like this. You have not a patient, slow-blooded man like Rene Chevalier to deal with, and a few more words like that may make me go away, and never look upon your face again.”

She gave him a strange, intent look. Henri’s glance fell upon the cradle at her side. The fatherhood, which until now he had scarcely realized, stirred in his breast.

“Let me see the babe,” he whispered. “Surely, we should be patient with each other, my wife, with this new bond between us.”

The appeal did not soften her as he expected. With a firm hand, Eglantine drew down the coverlet from the face of the sleeping child, and regarded him coldly, as he bent over the cradle in speechless emotion.

“You think I ought to forgive you for my baby’s sake,” she said in a strange voice. “It is for her sake that I cannot pardon you. You might have done your child the grace to die like a gentleman.”

It was the last drop. White with passion, Henri gripped his wife by the wrists.

“Be careful, Eglantine! My sentence has been commuted to that of banishment, and every arrangement has been made for us to leave France at once, and in perfect safety. But one more word like that, and I put an end to this miserable existence, and leave you to find a protector more to your taste. Think well before you speak. You are dealing with a desperate man.”

Where was her better angel? Did she know what she was doing? Where was the love that had threatened like a lava-torrent to overflow her heart, one short hour before?

“I have thought well,” came in low, distinct tones from the pale lips. “I will suffer any fate rather than accept freedom on such terms; happiness I will never know again. Provide for your own safety, monsieur; your arrangements for leaving France have no concern for me. Perhaps God will be kind to my baby, and let her die soon; I could not bear to have her live to blush to hear her father’s name.”

“Her father at least will not live to see it,” returned Henri, as he loosened his hold upon her hands and cast them violently from him. “You have finished your work, Eglantine. I had hoped in another land we might have begun a new life, and learned together to know and love our God; but you have decided otherwise. You have stood between me and my God ever since I first loved you; you have ruined me now soul and body.” He cast one look of despair and reproach upon her, and rushed from the room.

She made no effort to call him back. She had no idea he would put that rash threat into execution; but it did not seem to matter now what happened to either of them. Wearily she sank into her chair, and let her hands fall listless upon her lap. Was it only

an hour ago that she had sat there in the summer twilight, dreaming of his fond embrace, and flattering her broken heart that the touch of his lips upon her cheek would rob even parting of its pang? The world had come to an end since then. That Henri had ceased to exist; nay, he had never had any being except in her fond imagination. This wretched, haggard man, who talked sternly of the happy past, and humbly of the degraded future, was a stranger to her. His words opened a gulf which parted them as death could not have done. The solid earth had given way beneath her feet; God was blotted out of heaven; on the edge of a black abyss she seemed to stand, unable to go back, not daring to look forward. Why had she ever been born? Why could she not be blotted out of existence?

How long she had sat thus she could not tell, when she heard M. Renau ascending the turret-stairs. A vague inclination to leave the apartment, and avoid the interview, crossed her mind, but she was too much stunned to put the thought into execution. M. Renau tapped once lightly on the door, and receiving no reply, lifted the latch and entered. He had expected that his pretty little kinswoman would make something of a scene on first hearing of her husband's change of faith, and he had delayed his appearance until, as he considered, the affection and good sense of the wife should have had time to assert themselves. That she would do anything eventually but gratefully acquiesce, had never for a moment entered into his calculations, and at sight of the still, solitary figure in the chair beside the cradle, he started with an exclamation of dismay.

“What does this mean, madame? Where is your husband?” he demanded sharply.

Eglantine turned her desolate eyes upon him, but made no answer.

“Speak!” he commanded, grasping her shoulder with a hand of steel. “I am not to be put off with these theatrical airs. Where is Henri, and what fool’s game have you been trying to play?”

At another time she would have cried out with pain, his grasp upon her shoulder was so hard, but she only answered in a dull, dreary voice:

“I told him that I hated and despised him, that I would suffer any death rather than have a share in his dishonor, and he said he would go away and never look upon my face again.”

M. Renau was not the man to be betrayed into a second note of surprise. His fingers closed more firmly on the slender young shoulder, that was all, and he was silent for a full moment before he asked in a voice as quiet as though he had been discussing some change in the weather:

“Where did he say he would go? Did he give you no hint of his intention? He was only here on parole.”

“He said he would go and put an end to his miserable existence,” repeated the young wife in the same dull, passionless tone—“that I had ruined him body and soul, and he would not live to see his child blush to bear his name. But I do not think he will kill himself. Oh, no; he has not manhood enough left for that. He will simply go away into another country, where people do not know him; that is all.”

Henri’s kinsman gazed searchingly into her face, but could read no attempt to deceive him in its sad, hopeless lines.

“You are an ungrateful girl; you will repent your folly when it is too late,” he said, loosening his hold.

“But I have no time to waste on you just now; I must save that unhappy boy, if it is yet possible.”

He stumbled over the cradle as he turned from her, and the babe woke and cried. With a rush of new-born tenderness, Eglantine sank on the floor beside it. Hitherto there had been little room in her heart for the most unselfish of all passions, but now in her desolation it leaped up in her soul with all the force of an unsealed spring.

“My baby! my baby! We are all in all to each other now,” she moaned, and her icy sorrow melted into floods of saving tears.

From the threshold, M. Renau, forgotten, watched the tableau with his own peculiar smile.

A woman who could be moved neither to hope nor despair might have been hard to manage. A mother who could love and weep like that was still within his power.

Lulling her child back to sleep with tender touch and word, Eglantine soon became aware of an unusual commotion in the chateau. Doors opened and shut; feet hurried to and fro; M. Renau's voice could be heard giving sharp, peremptory directions; torches began to gleam in the wood. She knew what it meant. Her husband's dishonor and flight had been made known to his domestics, and the place was being searched. She was glad her attendants were too much occupied, or too terrified, to bring her lights and supper; she was not ready to look any one in the face yet.

Presently the clatter of hoofs in the court and out upon the flinty road told her that the search was being extended. The infant was once more at rest. She rose from her kneeling posture beside the cradle and went to the window. There was a stricture across her

throat which made her feel that she must have air. The lights were still hurrying to and fro in the wood, but the greater number of them were evidently converging to the black, sullen pool that lay at the foot of the hill. Was M. Renau such a fool as to imagine that Henri's own servants would betray him if he was in hiding, or did he attach more importance than she had done to that wild, vague threat? Did he really believe her husband might have been goaded to the crime of self-destruction?

"What does it mean, Marie?" she asked of the old nurse, who came in at the moment with candles. "What are they doing with torches in the wood?"

Marie, who had only gathered up courage to enter her lady's presence after many futile efforts, burst at once into tears.

"Oh, madame, do you not know? Surely you must guess. They said it was to you he said what he was going to do. God have mercy on us all! Our brave young lord was never in his right mind when he gave up his father's faith and talked of taking his own life."

Eglantine turned back to the window and asked no more questions. They knew it all, then. With fascinated eyes she watched the lights move to and fro through the trees. Had Henri really taken his own life, and if so, was it not as much her doing as his? Still there was no repentance in her misery. If it were all to be gone over again, she could not unsay a single word: only, it had been better if they had never been born. Suddenly a loud hail from the foot of the hill made her shudder. There was a hurried focusing of lights in the direction of the pool, then a terrible silence. They had found something. What was it? Surely not the white, frozen horror which she saw already in anticipation! They were coming quietly

back to the house, very silent, but without the even tread of those who bore a burden. Eglantine listened at last to the old nurse's entreaties that she would not expose herself to the air, and came and sat down by the cradle and let Marie close the window.

"Surely you will let me bring you your supper now, my lady," remonstrated the old woman. "It is an hour past your time."

"Not until I have heard what they have found."

Surely they would come and tell her; yes, there was M. Renau's delicate, catlike tread upon the stair once more—she was beginning to know it so well already—and others following him.

"Come in," she said in answer to the light tap upon the door, and her husband's kinsman entered. Jean and several of the chateau servants hung back in the corridor. She caught the sound of a stifled sob from the valet, and glanced anxiously at him, but M. Renau stood between.

"Do you recognize this?" he asked, holding up before her a handkerchief stained with ooze. The La Roche crest, worked by her own hand, was in the corner. She caught at it fiercely.

"Where did you find it?"

"On the edge of the pool at the foot of the chateau-terrace; there were footprints, too, which Jean swears are his master's. You have done your work well, madame."

"Is this true, Jean?" The young wife looked past her kinsman to the corridor. "I hardly know who to believe now, but I do trust you."

Jean came and knelt at her feet.

"It is quite true, madame. I could take my oath to the stamp of my master's foot anywhere, and I saw him take the path to the pool when he left the cha-

teau. I tried to follow him, but he waved me back. If I had only known, I would have dared his anger to save him."

Eglantine turned her eyes upon M. Renau once more.

"Have you searched the pool?" she asked.

The courtier shrugged his shoulders.

"It is useless, they tell me; no one has ever touched bottom. But I will make the attempt to-morrow, of course."

She rose, and confronted him, with the gathered grief of her soul in her eyes.

"It is you who have done it,—you who have murdered him soul and body. He would never have been goaded to despair by what I said, if his conscience had not echoed every word. It was you who tempted him to his ruin, who deceived him, and made him believe that I was weak and cowardly, and entreated him to think first of me. He would never have faltered for his own sake. Until then he had been the bravest knight that ever drew sword. No wonder I trusted him as I did. I would have put my soul in his keeping, without fear. If he had died like that, I could have borne it. I could have gone proudly to the end of my days, and stayed my heart on the memory of what he was. But now! you have made me see him die twice before my eyes; you have made me worse than a widow. Go, and leave me to my misery. I have no power to banish you from the chateau; I know well it is mine no longer; but I will never see your face again. Go!"

"I go," returned M. Renau, his thin lips folded a little more firmly together than usual. "You will repent this passion, my haughty young kinswoman, when it is too late; but you have rejected my help.

Abide by your own decisions." He turned and left the room, with a dull glow in his eyes, which would have warned Eglantine of danger, had she been less occupied with her grief.

To have been reproached and defied would have mattered as little to him as the sighing of the evening wind, had he gained his point. But to be foiled, outwitted, by this slip of a girl, just after the prize was within his reach, for which he had toiled so many years—this was an injury M. Renau could not forgive.

Eglantine had made an enemy, patient, watchful, unscrupulous.

CHAPTER XV.

M. RENAU'S REVENGE.

FOR days after that terrible night the young mother lay prostrate upon her couch, staring blankly at the tapestry on the opposite wall, and taking no notice of what went on about her, except when the babe in the cradle woke and cried. With secret rebellion against the Giver of life and death, she felt the blood mounting stronger in her veins, and knew that sooner or later she would rise and take up the burden of living once more. It would never be anything but a burden after this—the existence that had been so sweet one year ago,—nothing but a dreary rising up and lying down with her grief, a bitter breaking of bread and drawing of breath. She did not reproach herself for what had passed; that would have been to open a black gulf of despair which would have swallowed her up utterly; but she no longer reproached Henri for his share in her misery. The solemn silence of death had extinguished all resentment against him, and the excuses, which the living man had pleaded so vainly, she herself framed for the dead.

He had indeed been sorely tried in his tenderest and holiest affections, and had only yielded after a long and bitter struggle. Why had God tempted him above that he was able to bear? Why had He stood aloof in that terrible contest, and left the breaking heart to meet the enemy alone? Where was the door of escape He had promised to open for them, the

strength He had pledged His word to give in their hour of need? Henri would never have forsaken his faith if his God had not first deserted him! It was God who was to blame; not they. The plea, which would have been to Monique Chevalier the disintegration of all hope and help for the universe, served her foster-daughter as a last barrier against the beating floods, and enabled her to restore Henri to something of his old place in her esteem without too great injury to her pride. The explanation which he had himself given of his fall she refused to entertain, even for a moment. The mournful humility with which he had confessed that it was he who had forsaken God, not God who had forsaken him, she set down as the ravings of an overstrained but naturally generous nature. If Henri had forgotten God, what had she done? The question would thrust itself upon her now and then, but as often she put it firmly by.

M. Renau had respected her wishes, and had not again crossed the threshold of her apartments. Louis Bertrand, who had included medicine in his studies at the Sorbonne, made her a formal visit every morning to inquire after her health, but his manner was so sad and constrained, and he watched her with such troubled eyes that she was always glad when the interview was over. He had always been fond of her, she knew that; and he was very sorry for her now. But what did it all matter? He could not give Henri back to her. Her grandfather, too, lay ill in Nismes with a fever brought on by grief and disappointment, and though she felt a twinge of compunction at the news, she was glad she did not have to look upon his bowed white head just then. But why did not Rene and his mother come to her? It was not like them to think of their own safety before hers, nor to refuse their

help because they could not approve of what she had done. They must long ago have ceased to care for her if their affection had been based on anything so uncertain as her words and actions. What kept them? She had shrunk painfully at first from the thought of meeting their eyes after the failure of her boasted confidence in Henri, but her very dread of that first interview made her impatient at last to have it over with, and the old loving intercourse renewed. She did not care for the words of comfort her aunt might speak, but to lay her head upon its old resting-place, to feel Rene take her hand, to know herself cared for and watched over once more, this would be something even now.

The longing grew so intense at last, as to wake in her the first sign of interest she had taken in anything since Henri went away. She had the curtains of her window drawn back, and herself lifted to a couch near the casement, where she could see the road on the opposite hill. She was too proud to summon them, or to betray to her domestics that she longed for those who appeared to have forgotten her; but, oh! if they only knew how she needed them. Day after day she sat and waited, watching for Rene's tall figure to come up the hill, or her aunt's black gown to flutter through the wood, as a shipwrecked mariner might watch for a passing sail, until her heart grew sick, and resentment changed to dismay. They could not be indifferent to her, and she had learned by a casual inquiry of Cecilie, her maid, that they were all well at the cottage; they could at least have written her a few words of comfort, if it had been impossible to come to her. There could be but one reason for their silence: they held her guilty for Henri's death. She knew what an unspeakable sin self-destruction was in

their eyes ; she recalled their long friendship for her husband, and her heart told her only too plainly, that, deep as was their devotion to the truth, their love and pity for the fallen would have been as abounding as his need. They would never have turned coldly from him in his misery and shame ; they would never have laid one reproach of theirs upon the burden that was already greater than he could bear. Then they must believe with Henri himself that she had been his ruin, soul and body ; no wonder they could not forgive her.

From the moment the conviction forced itself upon Eglantine, she turned her back upon the lovely vista of wood and hills, that lay beneath her window, and seemed to have no interest in life beyond the tiny creature in her arms. Little Gabrielle did not grow fast, though that was not to be wondered at, considering the atmosphere of sorrow and dread that had enclosed her young life from its beginning. Neither did she cry as much as rosier and stronger babes. For hours at a time she would lie quiet upon her young mother's lap, with her dark, wondering eyes fixed upon the sweet face bent above her, as if she would unravel the secret of its sadness,—herself as pale, and frail, and fair, as a flower that has ventured out too soon and felt the touch of frost. Eglantine watched her with the jealousy of a heart over its one treasure, never letting her go out of her sight, seldom out of her arms. All the light of her life had gathered itself up into that tiny face. She wondered how she could have told Henri she hoped God would be good, and let her baby die. What would she do if this last straw of love and hope were reft from her sinking fingers ? She began to take more care of her rest and diet, and to teach her sad lips to smile once more.

The hour Monique Chevalier had foreseen, had

come and passed. The prop on which the wife's heart had leaned had gone down with a crash, but the mother had come up from the floods, clinging with the death-grip of despair to the frail cord of a baby's life and love. The storm had failed to cast her on the rock of God's perfect grace and strength, and the hour for which M. Renau had waited had dawned at last.

The heat of the summer had passed. The sultry weather had given place to cool, sun-steeped days, when it seemed as much a part of life to remember as to breathe. Eglantine sat in the balcony outside her chamber, keeping watch over the terrace below, where old Marie walked with the babe. It was as near the outer world as she ever ventured now, and she would have recoiled from facing even so much of the sunshine to-day—for it was the anniversary of her marriage—had not Louis Bertrand hinted, the day before, that the child was pining for the outer air, and the instinct, which made the young mother unwilling ever to let her out of her sight, made her able to put aside her own pain, while she kept watch over her darling. But she had no power to bar the bitter-sweet memories with which the day was charged, and before long her stern self-control faltered; she bowed her head upon the balustrade before her, and wept.

“Has my kinswoman any fresh trouble?” asked a familiar voice beside her, and she started up to find that M. Renau had stolen upon her unannounced and uninvited.

“Monsieur!” she exclaimed, drawing herself up haughtily. “I thought it was understood that we were not to meet again.”

“I believe you did express such a wish, my fair cousin, a few weeks back, and you will bear me witness

that I have taken pains not to annoy you with my presence. It is something novel, though, for the sieur of Beaumont to be forbidden access to any part of his chateau by a guest."

"A guest!" Eglantine La Roche repeated the words with white, shaking lips, while she laid hold of the balustrade to steady herself.

Her kinsman made her a low, mocking bow.

"I presume you can scarcely be ignorant, madame, that your husband's estates have been forfeited by his treason to the government. As near of kin, and a good Catholic, I preferred a claim which his majesty has been good enough to recognize, in consideration of some past services, and my promise to eradicate the last seed of heresy from these Beaumont hills. Do not look so distressed, my fair kinswoman. I am aware it must cost you some pain to relinquish all hold upon such fair lands; but I assure you, you and your child shall never be grudged a shelter beneath my roof."

"I will write to my grandfather to-morrow to come and take me away," interrupted Eglantine with flashing eyes.

But M. Renau only smiled, and continued:

"I have given orders that your comfort shall be as strictly cared for as when you were mistress of the chateau. You will, of course, be left undisturbed in your present apartments, and your desire for seclusion shall be carefully complied with. I would not, myself, have intruded upon your privacy to-day, but for a communication from the Intendant of Nismes, about which it is imperative I should speak to you. Allow me, madame, to present to you the holy father who has been appointed by M. d'Argoussy spiritual guardian to your child."

"My child!" almost screamed the young mother,

taking no notice of the priest, who stepped out from the shadow of the window with a low obeisance.

“Ay, madame, your child,” repeated the courtier, meeting her frenzied glance with one of perfect calmness. “You must have known that Henri La Roche’s child would eventually be removed from your care to the bosom of that Church to which her father returned an humble penitent before his death, and which is unwilling to let the innocent perish with the guilty. In consideration for your desolate condition, the step has been delayed thus far, but now in justice to the child herself, we can wait no longer.”

“You will kill her if you take her from me now,” answered Eglantine. She had heard him with dilated eyes and frozen lips, but now the seal was broken, and she could speak with the courage of despair. “You cannot deceive me with this talk of the Intendant, monsieur. This is some cruel scheme of your own. The Church had no claim upon my husband after his recantation. He told me himself that his sentence had been commuted to exile, with permission for his family to accompany him.”

“You seem strangely ready to avail yourself of the benefits of that arrangement, madame, considering the scorn with which you rejected it a month ago,” remarked M. Renau sarcastically.

“I know my rights too well to relinquish them,” she retorted, but her lips trembled. Oh, had Henri known this, when he warned her to think well before she spoke?

“Madame appears to be under some strange delusion,” interrupted the harsh voice of the priest. “The fact that M. La Roche did sign the recantation not only gives us the right to rear and protect his child, but lays it upon us as a sacred obligation. It is the

duty of the Church to see that the innocent babe is not robbed of the benefit of its father's act."

"And to prove to you that I have no part in the matter, you have only to cast your eyes over this paper," added M. Renau haughtily. "It is no more in my power to refuse the king's officer, Eglantine, than in yours. Let us end this painful scene."

With a sinking heart the young mother glanced over the document he put into her hands. It was a requisition from the Intendant of Nismes for the person of Gabrielle La Roche, only child of Henri La Roche, late sieur of Beaumont. Father Le Grand was appointed to receive the babe and convey her safely to the convent of St. Veronique, where, it was the decision of the court, she should be reared for a holy vocation, that by a life of piety and self-denial she might atone for the errors of her family.

Eglantine dropped the paper with a cry, and threw herself at her kinsman's feet.

"Spare me, spare me! I know I have been proud and defiant, but if you will only help me to keep my baby, I will be your slave all the rest of my life. I know you can help me if you will. You used to be fond of me once. You meant to be good to Henri, I own it now. Do not let them take my baby from me. It will kill her. She is too frail to bear the separation. Oh, if you are angry at what I have said and done, punish me some other way. Give me pain, torture, imprisonment—anything but this. Do not take away my one comfort, my one anchor." Her voice died away in sobs.

"Eglantine," said her kinsman coldly, "I have already told you that I am as innocent and helpless in this matter as yourself. Rise, and put an end to this miserable spectacle."

But Eglantine knelt on. Where was the pride that had upheld her in other ordeals? Lost, swallowed up in the terror of her outraged motherhood.

“At least promise me some delay,” she pleaded. “It is sheer cruelty to take her from me when she is too young to know one creed from the other. Let me keep her a few years longer, and I will give her up without a word.”

“Give you the opportunity to steal away with her, where we will not hear of either of you again,” interrupted Father Le Grand with a sneer. “We are hardly so simple, madame.”

M. Renau had already turned haughtily to the door.

“But I will promise not to take her away,” pleaded the despairing woman, laying hold of the priest’s robe as a last resource. “I will pledge you my sacred word to stay just here, in this room, if you like, if you will only let me keep my baby.”—“She cannot live long in confinement,” she was thinking to herself, “and I care not what they do to me when she is gone.”

But Father Le Grand had turned away from her, unmoved by the appeal. With a wail of despair she threw herself before him.

“You shall not go until you have promised to let me keep my child,” she gasped. “There must be something that will appease your hate besides this. I have jewels, costly jewels; my grandfather will add gold. Take them all. Only do not separate us.”

“The child’s soul is of more value in the eyes of the Church than the wealth of the Indies,” answered the ecclesiastic sternly.

“But there must be something I can do—something I can give up instead,” sobbed the young mother, hardly knowing what she said. “Is it the torture of

this weak frame, the racking of these delicate limbs? I will bear anything you can inflict."

"There is one condition alone on which the Church could consent to leave the child in your care," replied the priest coldly.

M. Renau, who had reached the threshold, paused to mark the effect of his words.

"And that?" demanded Eglantine breathlessly.

"Is your own recantation, madame. Abjure your errors, and promise to rear your child in the true faith, and there will no longer be any need to carry this painful order into execution."

He had no difficulty now in withdrawing his robe from her shrinking fingers. "Mon Dieu!" was all the unhappy mother said, as she recoiled and hid her face upon the floor. M. Renau and his agent exchanged glances, and turned once more to leave. But at sound of their retiring footsteps Eglantine started up with a look so wild, that her kinsman, thinking her about to throw herself from the balcony to reach the child below, caught her firmly by the arm and dragged her back into her chamber.

"Are you mad?" he demanded. "Father Le Grand remains with us until to-morrow, and you have time to consider the matter. Marie shall bring the babe to you at once, if you desire it."

"Yes, yes, at once," she replied feverishly, and M. Renau departed with the glow of coming triumph in his heart. Even his enmity might have been satisfied, had he been able to appreciate the agony he left behind him.

When Marie entered with the little one, Eglantine caught the child fiercely from her, and paced the floor excitedly, like a caged lioness, pouring out such torrents of maddened grief and tenderness, that the

child shrank from her in terror. "Oh, my baby, don't do that!" she cried piteously. Then, with the heroism that unselfish love teaches to even the most undisciplined natures, she forced back her tears, and reassured the babe with gentle tones and caresses, until it fell asleep. Not until then did she suffer the bitter waters to overflow again, and permit herself to face the full cost of the sacrifice that was asked of her. There is a sweet helplessness about slumber, an abandonment of trust, which appeals peculiarly to our care and tenderness, whether the sleeper we love be the strong man or the little child. Eglantine's heart failed, as she bent above the shut eyelids and unclasped hands, as it had not done while the grave baby-orbs were looking into hers. How fair she was, how frail! Who would notice, and rejoice in her beauty, as she had done? Who would watch over the fragile life, and shelter it, as the mother who bore it? She thought of those to whose care the babe would be consigned—cold, loveless women, who had never known this tenderest and sweetest of all passions, nay, who made it a part of their religion to crush out every germ of earthly tenderness, who would not dare to let the stifled womanhood within them wake at the sound of a baby's cry. Could she resign to them this timid little creature, who felt a cold look like a bruise, and trembled at a touch or tone that was not full of love? She burst into tears, and sobbed until she was too much exhausted to do more than go on thinking again.

That life of gloom and penance which they had planned out for her little daughter, what did it mean? An existence without joy, without love, certainly—perhaps, an existence with sin. There were dark stories told and believed of convent-life in those old

days, and the mother, looking down on her unspotted lily, cried out that her God had no right no demand such a sacrifice. Then her fears took a fresh turn: that was an impossible terror. Little Gabrielle would soon sicken and die, among those strange faces, shut in by those gloomy walls. Fresh agony contracted the mother's heart. How could she bear it? Surely, God would not exact so cruel a surrender. There must be some way of escape: something must happen. She forgot how bitterly of late she had been accusing her Maker, and began repeating to herself all the assurances she could remember of His love and compassion. Surely, He would let her keep her baby; surely, He would send somebody to help them. She started at last to notice that the shadows had begun to lengthen and that two of the allotted hours had passed by. She could not remain inactive, while the moments, precious as her heart's blood, were ebbing away. She would have appealed to Louis Bertrand, but she had seen him leave the chateau that morning, and guessed now he had been sent away purposely. Cecilie had just removed her untasted dinner, and gone down to her own. The sound of the closing door came to Eglantine like an inspiration. Why did she sit mured up here, when her child's safety for both worlds depended on her resolution? The chateau and title might be Claude Renau's; but the hearts of Henri's vassals were still his own. She had never ventured beyond her own apartments since the shock of her husband's death. She had shrunk with equal terror from the memories that would crowd out upon her from every gallery and stair, and the shadow of her own broken trust in the eyes of the servants she must meet. But now these fears vanished like dreams, before the terrible reality that was pressing the life

out of her heart. She would go down at once to the servants' hall, while they were all gathered together at dinner, and appeal to Henri's old retainers to save his child for her father's and grandfather's sake. The domestics of the chateau far outnumbered the lackeys whom M. Renau had brought with him, and would be nerved with a loving desperation that hirelings could not face. She hoped the strangers would be sensible enough of their disadvantage to offer no interference, but if needs be, she was ready even to see blood flow in her child's cause.

"Marie," she said, looking into the inner room, where the old nurse sat crying over her work, "I am going down-stairs to make an appeal to the servants. Come and sit by the baby while I am gone. I dare not take her, lest she should wake and cry."

"Does madame speak of quitting her own apartments?" asked Marie aghast. "Alas, my lady, it is impossible! It is worse than useless to make the attempt."

"I am going," returned Eglantine with dignity.

The old nurse threw herself between her and the door.

"Madame, I entreat, I warn you—nay, you will have the truth: you will be walking right into the lion's den. There is not one among the crew, eating and drinking round the table down there, who would know your voice, much less lend an ear to anything you might say."

"Do you mean that M. Renau has dismissed the old servants and replaced them with minions of his own?" demanded the mistress, trembling.

"Ay, madame, the very day after that awful night you wot of, and a squad of dragoons was added to them only yesterday."

Eglantine said no more, but went and sat down by the cradle. Then the Dragonnade was to begin at Beaumont, and from the very hall whence she and Henri had planned help should flow, the scourge would go out. A horrible darkness seemed gathering about her. She remembered the stories she had read of contracting chambers, where the unhappy victim could see the walls that were to crush him, closing in upon him, inch by inch. Was there no outlet, no remedy? Suddenly through the darkness flashed the thought of Rene. Why had she not thought of him before? She would go to him and ask him to save her baby. Even if he were angry with her, he could not refuse to help her in this extremity. But she began to wonder now that she could ever have thought he was staying away from her voluntarily. She recalled the deep, sweet look she had surprised in his eyes one day during her illness when he had sat watching her without her knowledge. He would be true to Henri in thought and deed, she knew that; but his was not a love to change or forget. How could she ever have doubted him? The very thought of him, after the cruelty, the craft, that had been revealed to her in the last few hours, was like a glimpse of heaven. He must have tried to come to her and been prevented. Perhaps M. Renau had refused to let him see her. She could believe anything of her kinsman now; and Rene had feared to run any needless risk lest he should lose the power to help her when a greater need came. No new bond could ever free him from the claim she had upon him, he had told her once: she was a trust to him from God. She had thought little of the words then: his love had seemed so calm and cold beside Henri's passionate tenderness; but now the memory was like a strong arm under her. Yes,

she would go to him and his mother, and they would take care of her, and hide her and her baby away somewhere, where M. Renau could not find them. She felt almost happy after she had made the resolve. The few rods to be traversed seemed nothing in comparison with the haven that waited her at the end. But she would have to be wary. M. Renau would be on the watch, and she must not imperil her one chance of escape by undue haste. She would wait until it was nearly dark, when she would be less likely to be seen, and the new sieur of Beaumont would be drinking chocolate with his guest in the library on the other side of the chateau.

Without saying anything to Marie, for she did not wish to complicate the old nurse in her flight, she gathered together the few articles of clothing that she and her child would actually need, and then sat down once more and waited, with what patience she could, for twilight. Her distrust of M. Renau and her determination to escape from his clutches received a fresh impulse during the afternoon by hearing Cecilie tell Marie that there had been high words between the abbe and the lord of the chateau the night before; that M. Renau had taken the priest to task for protecting a woman he had found in the grasp of the dragoons, and that M. Bertrand had retorted something about "butcher's work," and shaken off the dust of the place the first thing the next morning.

"Louis never could bear to see any one unhappy," Eglantine thought dully to herself. "Did he know what he was leaving me and my baby to, I wonder?" But there was no space in her heart for reproach.

At last it was dusk—kindly, sheltering dusk. She seized the moment when her maid had gone down for lights, and Marie was in the inner room preparing the

chamber for the night. Wrapping a shawl about the baby, and throwing a mantle over her own head and shoulders, she stole noiselessly out into the corridor, and down the stairs that connected her turret with the main hall of the chateau. Now, if the child would only sleep on, and she could be so fortunate as to meet no one in the wide hall, which she must cross before reaching the outer door. She had gained the door at the foot of the stairway. For a moment she listened in breathless suspense. All without was silent as the grave. She lifted the latch, but the door resisted her efforts. Could it be bolted on the other side? But no, that was too horrible. She was becoming demoralized: a prey to her own fears. She laid the babe down upon the steps, and put her shoulder to the panel,—only a woman's delicate shoulder, but nerved with a mother's love and despair. In vain! Once more she tried. The resistance of some strong barrier on the other side was distinctly perceptible. There could no longer be any doubt. She was a prisoner. The discovery overwhelmed her for a moment, but she had come too near to freedom to relinquish it without one more struggle. One resource yet remained to her—to appeal to the loyalty and affection of her attendants. She had been a kind mistress to them, and though she would rather not have implicated them in her escape, they must dare the consequences for her, if necessary. She hurried back into the chamber where she had left Marie. At sight of her mistress, dressed for a journey, the nurse uttered a shrill cry.

“Alas! my poor lady; what are you dreaming of?”

“I am going to save my baby,” was the firm answer. “Marie, the door at the foot of the staircase is fastened. How long has it been kept bolted? Do you know anything about it?”

“It is M. Renau’s doing, madame,” returned the old woman sorrowfully. “Do not be angry with me. He has ordered the door to be kept closed ever since that terrible night, and it was only by promising on my bended knees to do as he bade me, that I was ever allowed to come near you again.”

“So I have been a prisoner in my own room all this while, and my trusted servants have been my jailers,” said Eglantine bitterly.

Marie cowered beneath her look.

“Pardon, my lady. I had no choice between that and never seeing your face again. How could I leave you in your sorrow to be cared for by strangers, and the precious babe to be handled by ignorant maids, who would never have the heart nor the sense to care fitly for so frail a creature?”

“You love my baby?” cried Eglantine, throwing her arms about the neck of her old retainer. “Then you will help me to save her, Marie—my good Marie! You will not keep us penned up here to have her torn from my arms! You know it will kill her to be parted from me. Marie, you have borne children. You know what it is to have a little head nestle in your breast. You will not let them take away the one comfort that is left to me. You cannot turn away from me as those cruel men have done. Open the door, and help me to save my baby.”

The old nurse sank on the floor at her feet and covered her hand with kisses. But there was no sign of yielding in her face.

“I dare not!” she moaned. “M. Renau has taken good care to bind me with fetters I dare not break. In some way he has discovered that my boy was a member of the young sieur’s band, and he has threatened to give him up to death if I ever let you quit

your room. Do not be angry with me, my lady ; my Baptiste is as dear to me as your baby is to you, and it was monsieur, your husband, who tempted him to the folly."

Pale as death, Henri La Roche's widow started to her feet, and motioned to the unhappy mother to say no more. Her sin could not have come home to her in a more terrible hour. Every instinct of honor and delicacy forbade her to urge Marie further. There was but one resource left. She returned to the outer apartment, and sitting down by the cradle, waited for Cecilie's return. The girl was a Parisian, whom she had brought back from the capital. There was little to be hoped for from her goodness of heart, but she might be open to bribes. In a few moments Eglantine heard her singing a gay light air, as she unbolted the lower door and tripped up the stair. At sight of the muffled figure that rose to meet her as she entered the turret-room, the maid started back with a little shriek of dismay.

"Cecilie," said her mistress in a firm, determined voice, "I heard you lock the door at the foot of the stairs ; you have the key in your pocket. You must go down with me and let me out."

Cecilie hung her head for a moment, and then tossed it defiantly.

"I will not unlock the door until I go down to get my supper," she returned insolently. "There's more than you as gives orders in the chateau now, my lady, and my new master makes it worth my while to obey him."

There was but one argument to use in such a case. Eglantine drew a gold chain from the casket of jewels she was preparing to take with her, and held it up in the candle-light.

“It will be worth a year’s wages to you, if you will go back and open the door,” she said quietly. “I do not ask anything else of you, Cecilie.”

The girl looked covetously at the gold, but hesitated.

“I have promised,” she said doubtfully. “I do not know what he will do to me if I break my word.”

The young mother saw that she must bid higher, and laid a pair of ruby earrings beside the chain.

“A bad promise is better broken than kept,” she said coolly.

The giddy Parisian peeped into the inner room, to make sure that Marie was not a spectator of the transaction, and covered the trinkets with a move of her deft little hand.

“You have been a liberal mistress to me, and I don’t care if I do oblige you this once,” she said carelessly, and turned to the door. Eglantine needed no further hint, and with her babe held tightly to her heart, stole noiselessly after her. A moment more, and she was beyond the hated portal, crossing the wide hall of the chateau, free! Now if God would be good to her, and let her reach the outer air and the gate of the bocage safely! Thank Heaven, the child was still sleeping. She hesitated a moment on the edge of the court, in which the torches were just being lit, then, soft-footed as one of the evening shadows, glided across the square, and gained the wood. She heard voices in the park, but she avoided them by turning into one of the side paths. Was God going to let her escape after all? Yes, there were the iron gates of the bocage, visible in the uncertain light. Until now she had been very calm, but at sight of the freedom within her reach she began to tremble. It was well she would not have far to go; her long con-

finement had made her weaker than she knew. Now she had gained the gate, her hand was on the latch ; another moment, and she will be free.

“ My kinswoman takes a late hour for her ramble,” said M. Renau’s sarcastic voice at her elbow.

She was too terrified to scream ; she could only support her trembling limbs against the gate and regard him with despairing eyes.

“ What ! the little one, too ? ” he went on in the same tone of ironical surprise. “ I am sure you did not consult our old nurse about this undertaking or she would have warned you to be more careful of the child’s health. Permit me, madame, to give you my arm back to the chateau.”

He would have laid her trembling fingers upon his sleeve, but she shrank from him as from a serpent.

“ I will not go back,” she cried in a sudden frenzy of despair. “ You may kill my child and me where we stand, but I will not go back with you.”

“ Where, then, will you go ? ” he asked quietly. “ I suppose you are aware that your heretic friends left for parts unknown weeks ago. The authorities received information of M. Chevalier’s secret profession, but just a little too late. He had contrived to take himself and his belongings out of the way before they called.”

She made him no answer. It did not occur to her to question his statement. With no strength or impulse to resist left in her, she turned and walked back to the house at her kinsman’s side. A terrible fear had fallen upon her that it was God, after all, who was pursuing and hemming her in—the God of whom she had so seldom thought until this sore strait, and to whom she had only turned now because all other help had failed.

“How did you know I had left? Did God or the devil tell you?” she asked, pausing for a moment before entering the hall to look into M. Renau’s face.

“If it was a fiend, it was a pretty one,” answered her captor lightly. “The next time you attempt to bribe one of my servants, madame, I advise you to try one less devoted to my interests, and do not part with your jewels until you are sure of your prize.”

Then Cecilie had betrayed her, with the echo of her mistress’ fervent “God bless you!” still in her ears.

In perfect silence Eglantine suffered herself to be led back to her apartment, and locked in like a captured criminal. There was no sleep for her that night. On her knees beside her child’s cradle she watched the dark hours through with wide open, tearless eyes. Until now she had resolutely refused to consider that other way of escape, the humiliating alternative of recantation; but in the still watches it forced itself upon her, and would not down. The story Nannette had told her long ago in the firelight came too.

“If you are ever tempted to part with the pearl, remember it was purchased for you with a broken heart,” her old nurse had said to her gravely. She could appreciate the cost now as she did not when Nannette had first told her the story, and yet—the truth her mother had bought for her with so costly a price, she had surrendered to save her eldest born. Would God be very angry with her if she, Eglantine La Roche, should hold the clasp of those baby-fingers dearer than words? Did He really care as much about what went on in the world, as some people thought—as her aunt Monique had always taught her to believe? Who could be sure that the Maker of heaven and earth cared anything for the hearts that were struggling and agonizing for His cause down here; that He who sat

upon the circle of the heavens took any interest in this strife about creeds and dogmas? Who could be quite sure about anything? She looked out of her window up at the silent, overhanging peaks, and thought of the word her uncle had chosen for her long ago, and which he had said would be a comfort to her in any time of need :

“My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.” No, He had not helped her, and yet the strength of the hills was His. It would have been as easy for Him to break the bonds that held her, as to stir a leaf in the wood, but she had cried to Him in vain. It could only be that He did not care. Was it for this she had scorned Henri, had goaded his noble heart with reproaches, and sent him out to his death? She remembered how he had stood before her in this very room, and pleaded with her to let him save her and the child. If she had only listened to him, had only been a little less proud and bitter, he might be living now, and they all be safe and happy in another land. As the first gray light streamed into the room, she fell on her knees beside the bed.

“Henri, my husband, you are avenged !” she cried.

The battle was won. Before noon, Father Le Grand was on his way back to Nismes, alone, and Eglantine sat in her turret-room, with a great weight upon her heart, but her baby still clasped safely in her arms.

That evening, as Marie was assisting her to her couch,—for Eglantine had refused passionately to have Cecilie come near her again,—the old nurse slipped a paper into her lady’s hand.

“Do not say I did not do what I could for you, madame ! It is as much as my life is worth to bring you this, but I could not hold out against your white face, and the young gentleman’s entreaties.”

"Marie, of whom are you speaking? Who gave you this?" Eglantine had begun to tremble nervously.

Marie laid her finger upon her lips, and glanced round her warningly.

"Walls have ears, my lady. There are names I dare not breathe even here. A peddler was here this afternoon selling laces and ribbons to the maids downstairs, and he slipped the paper into my hand with a kerchief that I bought. 'Put it yourself into your lady's hand,' he whispered, 'and tell her to hold it to the candle when she reads.' That was all, madame, for one of the girls was plucking at his sleeve; but in spite of the strange face, I knew the voice that spoke such cheer to my poor Baptiste when he was sick last winter, and I did not draw a free breath till I saw him and his peddler's wallet out of the gate."

"You are quite sure he went away safely?"

"Quite sure, madame."

"Then thank you very much, Marie. You can sit in the other room until I call you."

But for several minutes after she was left alone, Eglantine sat with her face buried in her hands. Marie's words left no doubt as to the identity of the peddler, but the thought of Rene was agony to her now. She shrank from reading what he had written as from some impending torture, yet lacked the resolution to destroy the letter unread. Twenty-four hours sooner the consciousness that he was near her, watching over her—would perhaps try to see her—would have been the promise of salvation. Now it terrified her. The step she had taken would wear but one light in Rene's true, sorrowful eyes. Yet she must tell him. He must know that it was useless to try and see her, or run any further risk. She looked to see that the curtains were drawn over her casement, and then held

the paper to the light and watched the hidden characters leap out, each stroke firm and true as Rene himself. The words were not many. He had evidently feared to run any risk until he had ascertained whether this message would reach her safely.

“Let me know how you are, and if you need me. We have written you again and again, but received no reply. I have been in the chateau several times, but could learn nothing of you, except that you never leave your own apartments. Once I reached the door at the foot of your staircase, and found it locked. Let me know if you are in stress or peril of any kind, and I will find means to reach you. We have been forced to seek shelter in the hills, but I am in Beaumont every day, and will be under your balcony to-night as the bell chimes nine. Fasten your answer to a weight, and let it down with a cord, but do not attempt to speak.”

Eglantine read the letter through twice, and then with a firm hand held it to the flame of the candle, and watched it crumble into ashes. Once a slight quiver ran across her lips, but her heart was too full of bitterness to weep. Yesterday these words would have been as sweet to her as the sound of rescuing bugles to a beleaguered town. Now they were less than the trembling cinders into which they turned. She glanced up at the Swiss timepiece over her mantel. It wanted but a few minutes of the appointed hour. From a secret drawer in her dressing-table she drew forth the Testament which Rene had given her long ago, and which for its memories' sake she had withheld that day, when surrendering her other Huguenot books to the priest. She would lower that to him instead of a letter. It would tell him more plainly than words that

the last tie was sundered between them. But no; he might fail to understand, and it was imperative he should be made to realize that he must not come near her or attempt to see her again. She dipped her pen in the ink, and wrote hurriedly on the fly-leaf, just beneath the childish inscription, which she did not dare to read over now:

“Your letter has come too late. I have signed the recantation. I have stooped to the sin for which I scorned Henri, and drove him to his death. I do not deserve that you should have run this risk for me. I only write to tell you you must not come near me or try to see me again. Forget from this day that you ever had a sister. EGLANTINE.”

She had resolved to add no word of explanation, remembering how she had rejected all excuses from Henri; but the longing to tell them how sorely she had been tried, proved too strong, and after a moment's struggle, she added:

“I did it to save my baby. I tried to come to you, but he found me and brought me back. Forgive me if you can. I am very miserable.”

She closed the book, fastened it securely to a cord, and stole out into her balcony, as the chapel in the hamlet tolled for nine. A slight cough from the terrace below told her when the book was received, and blushing to know that Rene's true eyes were lifted to her even in the darkness, she turned in a panic, and fled back into her chamber.

CHAPTER XVI.

“OUT OF THE DEPTHS.”

“YOU are looking pale, madame ; I fear you feel the confinement to your apartments.”

The early service in the chateau chapel was just ended, and M. Renau, cool and bland as the October day without, laid a detaining hand on the slender, black-robed figure, which would have glided past him without a word. Attendance upon matins was one of the new duties imposed upon Eglantine by her confessor, and she was scrupulously exact in the observance of the religious rite ; but unless directly addressed by Henri's kinsman, she always went and came without taking any notice of his presence. M. Renau had enjoyed his triumph to the full, but he began to be somewhat uneasy at the weary face, and broken, spiritless manner of his victim. He had vowed to humble her pride to the dust, and punish her for her rejection of Henri and her destruction of his plans, by forcing her to the concession for which she had despised her husband, but he was not ready to scandalize society, or to incense M. Laval by having her fade like a flower in his grasp. The banker was now convalescent, and growing imperious in his demand for his granddaughter to come down to him at Nismes. It would not be easy to quiet him much longer with the plea that Eglantine herself refused to leave the chateau, and M. Renau might find it hard to carry out the remaining part of his revenge, if M. Laval should take

matters in his own hand, and come up in person to Beaumont.

“I must insist that you spend a couple of hours in the garden every day,” he went on suavely, yet with something in his tone that reminded his listener of the master. “It is necessary for the child’s health as well as yours, that you take more exercise. I will give strict orders that the soldiers and new servants leave you unmolested, and Marie shall always watch over the babe while you are gone.”

The mother lifted her eyes for a moment to his face, and then fixed them once more on the floor. He might safely enough open her prison-doors, and bid her wander to the ends of the earth while he kept the babe in his own grasp: he knew well she would not stray far from that cradle; but the hint in reference to her child’s health touched a secret terror in her heart, and stimulated her to avail herself of the permission thus accorded. And every day after that, the young madame might be seen walking slowly to and fro in one of the avenues of the bocage. Her long seclusion—her youth, beauty, and many sorrows—had excited much interest among the new retainers of the chateau, but M. Renau’s orders were peremptory: madame was not to be spoken to or interfered with in any way; and after it was discovered that she preferred the path leading to the fig and olive plantation on the side of the hill, neither soldiers nor servants ventured into that part of the park during the hour that she took her airing. Eglantine had chosen the path because it commanded a good view of her chamber window, and through every opening in the trees she could look up and see Marie sitting at work beside the child’s cradle. When the view was interrupted by the shrubbery she would walk with her eyes cast upon

the ground, taking no notice of the bright autumn beauty of the woods about her ; sometimes she would be compelled to rest for a few moments on one of the rustic seats placed here and there in the wood, and then she would sit so mute and motionless, with listless hands dropped upon her lap, that the birds hopped about unscared at her feet, and even a timid rabbit would now and then scurry across her path.

It was as she sat thus one day—a little deeper in the shade than usual, for the sun was warm—that she saw a servant coming down the avenue with a basket of grapes on his arm. She had noticed the man once or twice before, dressing the flower-borders on the terrace, and Marie had told her he was one of the new gardeners. But what was he humming, as he strolled carelessly along? The sharp, penetrative voice, with a strong Northern accent, brought the words to her ear, though they were scarcely spoken above his breath :

“I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined His ear unto me, and heard my cry.”

What could it mean? Who could be so mad as to sing one of Clement Marot's psalms under the very walls of the chateau? Was the man a recusant Huguenot—did he know what he was doing? Why had he chosen the words that so peculiarly suited her case? Surely M. Renau would not employ any but staunch Catholics in his service. She cast a frightened, hurried look at the figure approaching her. She had certainly never seen the man before. He had stopped humming the psalm, and was whistling an air, which had been a great favorite among the work-people of La Rochelle ; the sound woke memories which made her tremble, but the gardener was evidently quite unconscious of her proximity. He

seemed absorbed in some object upon the opposite wall ; apparently he would have passed her, without taking any notice of her presence, had not his basket jostled against a low-hanging bough and part of the contents spilled on the ground at her feet. It was a moment's work to gather the fruit up quickly and to hurry on his way, but Eglantine's quick ear had caught a whisper in that second :

“ Be comforted, dear lady ; friends are near.”

Nothing more ; and before she could rally her startled senses, and try to question him, he was out of sight.

The next day she was earlier in the park than usual, and remained longer ; but though she could see Pepin—as Marie had told her the soldiers had nicknamed the gardener, on account of his low stature—working at some distance, he did not come near enough for her to venture to speak to him. The next day and the next she did not see him at all. The momentary excitement kindled by his words flickered out. She had either been the victim of a cruel hoax, or else her brain was beginning to give way, and she had imagined the whole affair. But suddenly, on the fourth morning, as she sat with closed eyes in her accustomed seat in the wood, a bouquet of flowers was laid between her fingers. She opened her eyes instantly ; there was no one near her, but Pepin, at a little distance, was trimming the oleander bushes. As soon as he saw that he was observed, and that she was about to come to him, he shook his head and retreated slowly, looking at the flowers in her hand. Then Eglantine saw a slip of paper, laid in the cup of the white lily in the centre of the bunch. She drew it out with trembling fingers. Pepin smiled and nodded, laid his finger upon his lips, and vanished in the

wood. The note bore no visible characters, but this time Eglantine needed no hint to send her hurrying back to her chamber, and, as soon as the door was securely fastened behind her, to light a candle, and hold the scrap of paper to the flame. As she had alternately hoped and feared, the writing was Rene's; but what did his message mean? All at once a hundred hammers began to beat upon her brain and the world to recede from her grasp.

"Not in the chateau-pool, but in the prison of Toulouse; not faithless, but believing."

That was all; but the next moment Eglantine La Roche, with a transfigured face, was pressing the bit of paper to her breast, and sobbing her husband's name. Then she had not murdered him; if he was dead—and even in her first rush of joy she was not blind to the careful wording of Rene's message—he had not died by his own hands, but suffering for the truth. "Not faithless, but believing." For many minutes she could do nothing but sit quiet and take in the intense relief of the thought. Not until now did she realize how heavy had been the weight of remorse which had been crushing out her very life. He must have gone back to Nismes and withdrawn his recantation, while she lay there dumb with misery, holding herself guilty of his death, and reproaching God. He had witnessed a good confession, had kept the faith, and fought a good fight while she had believed him a reproach among his people, and an out-cast from the mercy of his God. While she had been mourning him as undone, he was perhaps rejoicing before the throne. Did M. Renau know this all this while? It was not possible that Henri could have been cast into prison without his knowledge. Was this the reason why he had kept her there a pris-

oner, had intercepted Rene's letters, and dismissed all the old servants from the place? Had he been afraid that the truth would reach her, and nerve her soul to a resistance which nothing could overcome? Or had it been only to gratify his revenge for her thwarting of his plans, that he had inflicted upon her these slow months of torture? With a dawning consciousness of the cruelty and craft that had been slowly enfolding her with its coils, the unhappy woman buried her face in her hands. As she did so her brow came in contact with the marble crucifix on her dressing-table, and a low cry of despair escaped her lips. For a moment she had forgotten her own fall and the hopelessness of all return for her. But now it rushed back upon her with overwhelming force. The path of restoration, which Henri had trodden with such unfaltering feet, for her was irremediably closed. If it had been too much for her to put those baby-hands away from her a few weeks before, it was a hundred times more impossible now that the small face upon her breast was growing every day more spiritually fair. A terrible conviction had fallen upon her. Ever since her abjuration, little Gabrielle had been slowly failing, and the delicacy, which could easily be accounted for by her own days and nights of grief, had for the conscience-stricken mother but one significance. God had taken notice of her sin after all, and was about to enter into judgment. She had let her child come between them, and He was a very jealous God.

"Henri, Henri! neither in this world or the next will I ever see thy face again!" she cried, despairingly.

But the longing to hear more, to learn exactly what had been his fate, was stronger than her anguish, and

as early the next morning as she could leave the house without exciting suspicion, she was in her old seat in the wood. To her intense relief, she had not been there more than a few moments, when she saw Pepin coming down the avenue. This time he came directly toward her and took off his cap.

“M. Renau left for Nismes this morning, madame, to be gone all day, and the men are making merry over some home-brewed ale. We may speak safely for a few moments.”

Eglantine had risen trembling at his approach.

“Have you brought me further tidings?” she faltered.

Pepin took a ring from his cap, and placed it in her hand.

“M. Chevalier dares not write more, madame. This is his token, that you may ask me what you like.”

The pledge had been her mother's dying gift to Godfrey Chevalier, and had been handed down to his son. As her fingers closed over it, Eglantine's heart told her Rene must have been as sure of this man's fidelity as of his own soul, to have trusted him with it. She no longer feared to utter the question hovering on her lips.

“Is my husband still living?”

Pepin's eyes fell.

“God only knows that, dear lady. M. Chevalier would not feed you with false hopes.”

“But he has no positive assurance of his death?”

“He can be sure of nothing, except that M. La Roche has not again faltered. The doctor is certain his enemies would have published it far and wide if they had been able a second time to move him.”

“Then he did withdraw his abjuration?”

“Publicly, madame, in the great cathedral at Nismes.

I was myself a spectator, and saw him struck down and dragged back to prison, but not before he had uttered words which have gone ringing throughout Languedoc. Is there a timid heart about to forsake the truth, a backslider who fears to return?—it is only necessary to repeat what M. La Roche said of the peace of conscience that is sweeter than life or liberty, and the weak grow strong, and the faint-hearted bold."

Pepin stopped suddenly, for his listener had sunk down upon the bench and covered her face with her hands.

"And all these weeks I have been suffered to believe him dead—goaded to the act by my own words—to think his name was a reproach and a snare among his people. Cruel, cruel!" she moaned. And then she looked up once more, and fixed her mournful eyes upon the messenger. "It was my just punishment. Yes, I know Rene wrote to me, and M. Renau intercepted the letters; but it was God who saw I did not deserve to know any better. It was not anything I said that made him go back and withdraw his recantation. Who was it that saved him? Was it Rene?"

Pepin cast a hurried glance about him, and dropping on his knee, pressed his lips to the hem of her dress.

"Madame, I have something to tell you, if you can bear to hear it. It is written of the Lord our God: 'A bruised reed will He not break.'"

She interrupted him with an impatient gesture.

"I can bear anything after what I have believed for the last six weeks. The moments are passing, Pepin."

"I saw M. La Roche the night he left the chateau. Nay," as she turned suddenly deadly white, "control yourself, dear lady, or you will never be able to hear me through. I had gone up into the hills to seek a

hiding-place for my wife and little ones. It was no longer safe for them at Lodève, and I had promised to stop overnight with M. Chevalier, to let him know what success I had met with. As I rode down the hill, I saw Mistress Agnes gathering cresses at the lake yonder. I thought it was late for her to be out alone, for the twilight was falling, so I left my horse by the road, and went down to carry her basket for her. She had just put in the last bit of green, and was handing it to me, when we heard some one running hard and fast down the terrace, and the next moment a gentleman broke the brushwood, and pulling off his coat and doublet, would have leaped into the water, when he saw Mistress Agnes looking at him."

Pepin paused, and looked uneasily at his auditor. Eglantine had hidden her face once more in her hands, but she made him a hurried signal to proceed, and he obeyed.

"She looked like an angel, madame, standing there in the dim light, with her white dress and golden hair, and the gentleman—I did not know then who he was—stared at her as if she had indeed been a vision from another world. The moment saved his life. The next instant she had laid her hand on his arm.

What were you going to do, M. Henri?' I heard her ask him, and at that a great trembling fell on him. He turned away and leaned against a tree. 'Do not ask me,' he said to her. 'I am mad with trouble; my punishment is greater than I can bear.' I had no right to listen, madame, but I could not go and leave the young lady there alone, and I had a feeling I might be needed presently. She seemed to understand everything at once; she is as grave as a woman, the doctor's young sister. 'You have signed the recantation,' I heard her say to him once more, and

when he groaned, and shrank away from her, she turned very pale, but kept her hand upon his shoulder. ‘Oh, I am so sorry, so very sorry,’ she said, and then she took his hand and raised it to her lips. ‘You did not do it until you were sorely tempted, I am sure of that. Was it not to save my cousin Eglantine and your little daughter?’ And at that he burst into tears, such tears as I hope never to see a strong man shed again. And when I could see through the blur that rose to my own eyes, he was lying on the ground, and she was on her knees beside him.”

An uncontrollable sob broke from Eglantine. Pepin paused at once and looked anxiously at her.

“Madame is not strong enough to hear more,” he said pityingly.

“I deserve all I suffer,” was the choked answer. “Go on; I would hear the rest now, though M. Renau stood at my side.”

“When he grew quiet, he told her that his wife had rebuked him for his weakness, and refused to accept the safety he had purchased for her with his dishonor, and that he would not save himself alone, and he could not live here to see her suffer, and know that his fall was a stumbling-block to his people and a boast among his enemies. ‘I had hoped, in another land, to begin a humbler and a better life, but that is all over now,’ he said to her; ‘I had given God the second place in my heart, and He has punished me.’

“‘Would you decide differently, if it was to be done over again?’ she asked him, and he lifted his head and looked at her.

“‘I would suffer a hundred deaths before I would let go my hold on God’s truth again,’ he answered; ‘I begin to see, Agnes, it was worth more than all else in the world; but it is too late to talk of that now.’

“‘It is not too late for God to forgive, nor for you to go back to Nismes.’ She said it quietly, madame, as though it were the only thing to be done. I trembled as I heard her; I knew better than she the fiery path she was pointing out, and so did M. La Roche. But he started up as though he had heard the voice of an angel. She was right, he said; he would go back to Nismes and withdraw his recantation—he wondered he had not thought of it before. And there was no time to lose, for M. Renau must not suspect his purpose. And then I saw my time had come, and I went and knelt at his feet. He looked thunderstruck for a moment, for until then he had thought himself alone with Mistress Agnes, but I think something in my face told him he need not fear, and when I said my horse was at the roadside, and would he use it for the truth’s sake, he thanked me and said I was God’s messenger, and it was a token for good. Mistress Agnes would have run to fetch her brother, but on that point he was firm. He even made her promise that she would not mention having seen him, until she had heard from Nismes that he had accomplished his purpose. It would be better for the doctor and his mother to be able to say they had neither seen nor heard of him when search was made; no one would think of asking her. He was resolved now, come what might, not to adhere to his recantation, but he wanted, if possible, to withdraw it publicly, and undo something of the harm he had done. And then he made her put her arms about his neck, and promise to pray for him every day. He had learned his own weakness, he said, and could not stand unless God would help him. And then I saw his lip tremble, madame, as he glanced back at the chateau. He had been very angry when he parted

with his wife, he said, and he had spoken words he would give much to recall, but it was impossible to go back now. Mistress Agnes must see her, and tell her so—tell her that he would love her to his dying day, and that she must never reproach herself for what she had done. It was better so; he might never have given God the first place in his heart while he had her, and he would try to meet her in a better world."

"Never." Eglantine started from her seat and confronted her messenger with a frightened look in her eyes. "Do not say that word again. It is impossible for me to go back. Tell M. Chevalier so; tell him that I thank him for his message, but he must not try to communicate with me again. There is a gulf fixed between us."

But Pepin still knelt at her feet.

"Do not send the doctor back a message like that, madame. He will not rest until he gets you out of M. Renau's keeping. Nay, listen to me one moment. I wear the sieur's livery, but I am here only in your service, to watch and wait for the moment when we may attempt to rescue you; the doctor and Jean Bonneau have already devised a scheme——"

But she would hear no more; she was white with terror.

"I forbid it. I will not go if they come for me. Tell Rene so. M. Renau would be sure to find out, and then he would take my baby from me. There are voices in the avenue now. Let me go! for God's sake, let me go!"

The smooth accents of the old priest, who had taken Louis Bertrand's place, were indeed audible a few rods beyond. Pepin let go his hold upon her dress, and Eglantine, shaking in every limb, tottered back to the

house, only to fall fainting on the floor of her chamber as the door closed behind her.

The next day she was better, and in her usual place at the morning service, but to Marie's surprise declined to take her airing in the park. "I am better here," she said, with a glance at the cradle; but from her window she could see Pepin all that day, restlessly haunting the bocage. Toward evening he came and stood under her balcony, but she coldly bade Marie draw the curtains and turned away. She was resolved to give Rene no opportunity to carry out his plan for her escape. She knew better than he the hopelessness of the attempt, and she felt certain that the moment M. Renau should detect any such plot, he would punish her by separating her from her child. The fear was enough to steel her heart, though Rene himself had stood beneath the window. That night little Gabrielle was taken ill, and for several days her anxiety about the child was sufficient to explain Eglantine's reluctance to leave the house, but when at the end of a week she still refused to take her walk in the park, Marie began to expostulate.

"The little one is out of danger now, madame, and your own health is beginning to suffer."

"I will not leave the child again," answered the mother in a tone that forbade further discussion. She thought the old nurse looked at her strangely as she turned away, but she was too much absorbed in thought to give the matter further consideration. Pepin could still be seen at work about the chateau, and as long as he haunted the place she knew Rene had not given up hope, and just so long she was resolved to keep out of reach of his entreaties. The intrepid spirit with which she had once faced danger had forsaken her ever since the night when M. Renau

had surprised her at the gate of the bocage. The bare recollection of that moment was enough to congeal her blood with secret terror. The thought of him made her shudder, even when alone.

That evening as she sat crooning to her babe in the firelight, she heard the door of her apartment open and close. Thinking it was Marie, who had gone out for a pitcher of fresh water, she did not look around, and before she had time to notice that the step was not that of a feeble old woman, a hand was laid on her arm, and Rene's familiar voice said quietly :

"It is I, Eglantine. Do not cry out, and do not tremble so, but listen to me. I have something to say which concerns your safety in this world and the next."

At the first sound of his voice her soul seemed to dissolve with fear, but the last words strengthened her.

"It is too late, Rene." She did not look up from the face on her breast. "I cannot give up my baby. If you have any pity for me, go away at once. Oh, why did you come? Am I to have your blood too upon my soul?"

"I have taken the risk myself, and I alone am responsible for the consequences," was the firm answer. "I will not go until you have heard what I have to say. Every arrangement for your escape has been made for a week, but you would not come into the park, and this was the only way I could speak with you. Do you know that the convent is the home M. Renau has chosen for you and your babe?"

"He has intimated as much."

"And will you actually resign yourself and Henri's daughter to such a fate without resistance? Rouse yourself, Eglantine. M. Renau has persuaded your grandfather that you seek the convent of your own will. If those doors once close upon you, you are beyond my help."

"My baby is dying," was the hopeless answer. "It will make no difference to her, and I do not care what becomes of me when she is gone."

The young surgeon uttered a startled cry, and coming round in front of her, turned the child's face to the light. "She has lived too much in the shadow of your grief," he said after a slight pause. "It is not necessarily a hopeless case. If I had her where I could see her every day, and where we could keep her for hours at a time in the sunshine out of doors, we might save her even now. Think of her, if you will not of yourself."

But there was no need for him to add the last entreaty.

Eglantine had grasped his arm in an agony. "Are you telling me the truth, Rene? I thought God was going to let her die to punish me. Do not deceive me."

His only answer was to look up into her face, but that look was so full of loving reproach that she burst into tears.

"I do not wonder that you distrust me, if you can think such things of God," he said gently.

"I do not distrust you," she answered brokenly. "I would I could trust God as well. Tell me what to do to save my baby. I do not care what happens to me, but I will dare anything for her."

"All you have to do is to be calm and do exactly as I bid you. Mr. Renau is in Nismes, and will not be back until to-morrow evening. You are permitted every day to walk in the park, unwatched, only without your baby; is it not so?"

She assented silently.

"Suppose, when you go out to-morrow, you knew that the little one was safely down the road, in Jean's

arms, and I was waiting for you just outside the gate, would you be afraid to come out to me?"

"Rene!" But the joyous cry changed the next moment to an accent of despair. "It could never be done without discovery, and then they would be certain to take her from me. Marie is afraid to help me."

"Not now. Marie's son has resolved to leave France, but he will not go without his old mother. Marie is as anxious to leave the chateau as you, only she will not go unless her mistress and the babe she loves goes too. You must be strong for her, Eglantine, as well as for yourself. You know the basket of soiled linen that goes down to the hamlet every week. It is Pepin who carries it. Pack it to-morrow with such things as you and your child most need, and just before you take your airing give the little one the sleeping draught I have placed in Marie's hands, lay her in, and fasten the cover securely down. Marie will give the basket to Pepin, and Pepin, instead of going down to the village, will turn up the hill to the place where Jean and I will wait with the covered wagon. As soon as you see the basket safely out of the gate, you can come out for your walk. You will not be missed for at least an hour, and by that time Marie will have joined her son, and we will be far on our way up the mountain. It is only a shepherd's hut I am taking you to, Eglantine, where my mother and Agnes do their own work, and we have to content ourselves with the simplest fare, but at least you will be free, and surrounded by those who love you."

"It is far better than I deserve," she answered through her tears. "I can scarcely believe I am to enter it now. Suppose they should make Pepin open the basket?"

"They have never done so yet. There is risk, of

course, but we must take some. Put your babe in the basket with a prayer, and I believe you will receive her safe again."

"I cannot pray," she answered, turning away her face.

But he took no notice of the interruption. "There will be others praying, too—my mother, and Agnes, and those of Henri's people who are hiding with us in the hills. We are all brothers and sisters now, Eglantine, and share each other's joys and sorrows. All these weeks you have thought yourself forsaken, you have been remembered every night in our evening service, when we pray together for strength to be given to Henri, if still alive, to endure to the end."

It was his first reference to her husband, and he half repented it when he saw how it unnerved her. But she had learned stern lessons in self-control since he had last seen her, and recovered herself instantly, in answer to his earnest response.

"I do not deserve such goodness. It breaks my heart," she faltered. "What about Pepin, Rene? I would not like him to suffer for his service to me."

One of his rare smiles illuminated Rene Chevalier's face. The strength and beauty he had always known lay dormant in her nature, was waking up at last.

"Pepin goes with us," he answered gently. "He has only been here for your sake, Eglantine, doing what neither Jean nor I could do because we were too well known. Have you never guessed his identity, my sister? Do you remember the weaver in La Rochelle, whose wife and children I found on the edge of starvation?"

The color rushed to her face as she comprehended the truth.

"The people whom I reproached you for going to,

when you could not come to me? Oh, Rene! this is too much. To have your goodness returned to me."

"It has been a great joy to them," he answered quietly. "Aimee remembers you vividly, and was as eager for her husband to assist in your rescue as he was himself. They are living in a cave near us, where we too have to take shelter when the pursuit is close. You will have an opportunity to thank her yourself, Eglantine, if all goes well to-morrow, as please God it shall."

He had risen to his feet, and she knew the moment had come to part once more.

"How are you going to get out, Rene? You have not told me how you managed to get here," she said, beginning to tremble once more.

"Pepin and Marie helped me. Do not worry, Eglantine. There are no soldiers in the chateau just now, and the servants are rather the worse for wine." He pressed her hand to his lips. "Adieu until to-morrow. Be of good courage, my sister, and put your trust in the Lord. If He be for us, who can be against us?"

She had told him she dared not pray, but as the door closed after him, the cry rose instinctively to her lips:

"Oh, God, keep him!"

When Marie stole up a few moments later to whisper joyfully that she had seen M. Chevalier beyond the gates, Eglantine felt that she had been answered. There was little sleep for her that night, and early the next morning she was up and dressed. Something of her old courage shone in her eyes, as she helped Marie pack the basket, and array the little one for her journey.

"Madame has a touch of color in her cheeks this morning. She must draw her hood close or the

chateau will see the truth in her face," the old nurse whispered warningly, as her mistress went down to matins, for Eglantine dared not excite attention by absenting herself on this last morning. But the household had grown too much accustomed to the quiet coming and going of the black-robed figure to scrutinize madame very closely. Pepin was in the corridor as Eglantine passed back to her apartments.

"All is ready, dear lady. Fear not," he whispered, as he went by her, and his smile was even more reassuring than his words.

The hardest moment came when she had to lay the sleeping infant in its strange cradle, and let it pass out of her keeping. But the remembrance of what Rene had said of the hearts praying for them up in the hills, and the consciousness that it was her child's one chance of life, strengthened the mother's heart.

"I am not worthy, but, O Christ, have mercy!" she prayed, as she laid a last kiss on the soft cheek, and closed the basket with her own hands. On her knees beside the empty cradle, she heard Marie carefully descend the stairs with her precious burden and Pepin's cheery voice answer at the door: "All right, old mother; I'll take it down at once; don't worry." There was a moment or two of fearful suspense, until she saw him emerge from the court and strike into the park. He carried the basket carelessly on his shoulder, and carolled a gay hunting-song as he went. One of the footmen stopped him and glanced up at the basket. Eglantine almost fainted with terror, but Pepin answered lightly and hurried on his way, and the lackey strolled back to the house with his hands in his pockets. Five minutes later, and a white kerchief, waved from a tree beyond the gate, told her that her darling was safe. From that moment she ceased

to tremble; fear had slipped from her heart like a loosened cloak from her shoulders. Whatever happened now, her baby was safe. Rene and his mother would be good to her, though her own mother never held her again in her arms. There was no time to lose. She had already arrayed herself for her journey, and taking a loving farewell of her faithful old nurse, who was to leave a little later, crept down into the park. The chaplain met her at the head of the avenue and detained her for a few moments. The quiet shining of her eyes perplexed him a little, but her manner excited no suspicion, and after one or two casual remarks he let her pass on. Eglantine glanced back once to make sure that she was not followed, and sped toward the gate. It was usually kept fastened, but Pepin, as one of the gardeners, had a key, and had left it unlocked. It yielded at once to her touch; another moment and a tall figure stepped out from the shadow of a tree and caught her in its arms.

"There is no time to lose; you must let me carry you, Eglantine," whispered Rene, and she was borne rapidly up the hill. A covered wagon stood in a shady grove near the road. Jean, dressed like a farmer, held the reins, but there was no time for greetings. Rene laid his foster-sister down beside her babe in the pile of hay that covered the floor of the vehicle and sprang up beside Jean.

"Cover yourself as much with the straw as possible," he said over his shoulder. The driver had already given the whip to the horses, and they were flying along the road like the wind.

Eglantine obeyed, scarcely able to believe it was not all a happy dream.

"Where is Pepin?" she asked presently

“He has gone on ahead, to give us warning, if there is danger of our meeting any one upon the road. Do not be frightened, Eglantine. There is more than one hiding-place in which we can take refuge, if necessary, and Jean and I can carry you if we are forced to leave the wagon.”

“I am afraid of nothing now,” she answered simply, and after that she asked no more questions.

The ride was long, and grew rougher as they went, but Gabrielle slept on peacefully, and her young mother would not listen to the proposition, made once or twice, to stop, and give her rest.

“I rest better as we go,” she answered, and Jean urged his horses forward.

It was late in the afternoon when they halted on the edge of a wild, lonely ravine. Eglantine could only see a mountain torrent foaming through rent walls of rock, as she lifted her head, but Rene had leaped to the ground, and was standing at the foot of the wagon.

“Give me the baby,” he said, and she thought there was a quiver of triumph in his voice. She obeyed silently. There was no strength left in her but to submit passively. He wrapped the little one in his cloak and disappeared. For five minutes she lay waiting. No sound broke the solemn mountain silence but the roar of the falling water, and the murmur of Jean’s praise to his jaded horses. Then Rene was back again.

“There! it is done, Eglantine. I could not give any one else the pleasure of putting the babe in my mother’s arms. Now you must close your eyes, and not open them until I bid you. I must carry you the rest of the way.”

“But I do not see any way, Rene.”

“I do,” he answered, quietly. “Trust me, my sister, and give yourself no care.”

Did the thought of a higher love come to her, as she shut her eyes, and held out her hands? Rene thought he heard a sob, as he made his way carefully down the steep ascent, and along the narrow pathway of rock veiled by the waterfall, but he had enough to do to look to his footing, and took no notice. Eglantine shuddered afterward when she saw the way by which she had come, but at the moment she had only a blessed sense of security and the utter absence of any care. A minute more, and she was laid gently down on a soft bed of heather.

"Open your eyes now," whispered Rene.

She looked up, to see her aunt's face.

"God has been good to you—and to us," Monique Chevalier said tenderly, and Eglantine hid her face and wept.

It was not long before little Gabrielle began to show the benefit of the change. The infusion of a hardier life—for Lucille Bonneau at once took her to nurse with her own sturdy babe—added to Rene's watchful care, soon told upon the sensitive frame. With speechless gratitude Eglantine saw the wasted limbs grow round and dimpled, and watched a shell-like color open on the cheek, which had lately been so thin and wan. Her baby would not die, after all. Yet the assurance did not fill her heart as full as she had once believed that it would. Her need had deepened. Little Gabrielle's hand could no longer minister the balm for her bruised heart. One day, Rene found her weeping over the little Testament he had given back to her. He sat down at once beside her. Little Gabrielle was laughing and cooing on a sheepskin at their feet.

"Eglantine, you do not doubt His willingness to forgive? He knows your frame; He remembers how sorely you were tempted,"

“It is not that,” she interrupted him, while the tears flowed faster. “Not that only, Rene. What hurts me most is the selfish, sinful years that lie behind, when I did not think of Him at all. I know now what Henri meant by saying that his defense of the faith was a mockery. But it is more true of me, than it was of him.”

“If you have learned that without Him you can do nothing, you are prepared, like Henri, to go up higher, and discover, that through Him you ‘can do all things.’ Your child no longer fills your heart, Eglantine.”

“No,” she answered, still through tears. “It is strange, Rene, but I do not think, even if Henri were given back to me, it would satisfy my heart—unless God forgave me too.”

“Then open the door, and let the Master in,” he said, very softly. “Your want of Him is but the feeble echo of the deep outgoing of His heart to you.” And he went away, and left her.

When they next met, he needed no words to tell him that another life had begun.

“He has made all things new,” she whispered that night, when they stood together for a moment under the star-strewn sky. “And He has put a new song in my mouth: ‘my sins and my iniquities will He remember no more.’ The joy of that thought will never fail me, come what may. Already I seem nearer to Henri than in the days when we cared only for each other, and I can rejoice in my little daughter, as I dared not when she stood between me and God. In giving up everything to Him, I seem to have had everything given back to me afresh.”

“That is God’s way, my sister. ‘Delight thyself also in Him, and He will give thee the desires of thy heart.’”

Something in his voice told her he was speaking to himself, even more than to her. She looked up wistfully into his face. Too well she knew what had drawn those deep lines of sorrow upon his brow in the last few weeks—lines, which even the joy of this moment could not efface.

"I have been a great trouble to you, Rene," she said, remorsefully. "But I would have found God's love harder to understand, if it had not been for yours." And Rene's cup overflowed.

"We have both cried to Him out of the depths," he answered huskily. And then they were silent, thinking of the Master, and in the hush they could hear Agnes, in the hut behind them, singing to Henri's daughter.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE COMMUNION IN THE GLEN.

THE next day, Eglantine brought a casket and put it in her foster-brother's hand.

"Do you think you could dispose of these, Rene? You and Jean will not always be able to find game, and we ought to make some provision for the winter."

The first frosts had already fallen, and she had seen his anxious glance that morning at their one barrel of meal.

Rene's hand trembled as he recognized the set of pearls which had been Henri's wedding-gift.

"You ought not to part with these, Eglantine. They were his mother's; they ought to be kept for his daughter."

"They would be M. Renau's, if it were not for you. Do not refuse me, Rene. Am I not one with you, and have you not given me something beyond price?"

He took a bracelet from the box, and gave the rest back to her.

"You shall have your wish, Eglantine. Pepin goes down to Nismes to-morrow. He shall take the bracelet to a jeweller, a friend of his, who purchased some trinkets of my mother's a few weeks ago. Whatever he gets for it, shall be spent in buying bread for ourselves and our friends."

"And when there is need of more, you must not pain me by refusing to take the rest," she said earnestly. "But where will you get the corn, Rene? Who will sell it to you?"

“There is a miller half-way down the mountain, who will let us have all we want. No, he is not one of us,” answering her inquiring glance, “but he is grateful for what I did for his sick wife last year, and he does not sympathize in the severity of the means used to our people. I have only to slip the money under his mill-door one night, and we will find the meal in the cave near his house, the next.”

She looked up wistfully into his face.

“Rene, how long is this going to last? We cannot live this way forever.”

“I know it,” he answered, sorrowfully. “Yet I see no alternative but that we must spend the winter here. M. Renau has vented his fury at your escape by redoubling the persecutions. It is a rough life for you, Eglantine, but you are safer than you would be in your grandfather’s house in Nismes, as I told him last week. He is relieved to know that you are no longer in M. Renau’s power, but he is miserable at the thought of your privations.”

“And I cannot make him understand that a crust, with the truth, is sweeter than a cake without,” she said, smiling through tender tears. “Rene, I am happier here than I could be anywhere else in the world—unless I could be with Henri in his prison. I cannot believe he is dead. I do not think I would feel moved to intercede for him as I do, if he had no need of my prayers; and oh! I do so long to let him know that I too have found God, and that I am praying for him night and day. It might make it easier for him to endure.”

“Perhaps God sees it is best he should look to Him only for strength. Do not forget, Eglantine, that prison-walls cannot shut out Him, whose presence is ‘fullness of joy,’ either here or there!”

“I see you do not share my conviction,” she said, wiping away her tears. “It is a part of my discipline not to know, Rene, and I will try to bear it bravely. My aunt says you have decided to leave the hut, and take refuge with the Bonneaus and Pepin and his family in the cave.”

“Yes ; it is a gloomy dwelling-place, my sister, but it is safer, and offers greater protection from the weather. You have lifted a great burden from my heart,” he added, taking her hand. “What with the milk of our goats, and the game Jean and I will be able to find, the meal Pepin will buy with your pearls will certainly keep us above actual want. We begin to-day to lay in a store of driftwood in the cave, and if our enemies do not discover the secret of our hiding-place, we ought to pass the winter without suffering.”

“And in the joy that no man can take from us,” she added fervently.

“And from that hour she arose and ministered unto them.” Rene could think of nothing but the beautiful Scripture phrase, as he watched the healed soul lift the burdens, share the cares, and recall the sunshine for those about her. The strained look passed from his mother’s face ; Agnes’ soft laugh was heard once more ; Jean cast off the moodiness that had begun to creep over him ; Pepin consulted her about his disguises, and soon began to rely on her nimble fingers and quick wit to aid him in fresh devices ; Basil, chained to his pallet by rheumatism, forgot his pain when she sang ; the young mothers caught her spirit of cheerful endurance, and the children were happy to play at her feet.

“She is the sunshine of our cavern, yet it never seems to occur to her,” Rene said one night to his

mother, as he sat with little Gabrielle on his knee and watched Eglantine, by the light of the peat-fire, make merry with his sister over a worn garment they were mending.

“I was a wonder unto many, but Thou wert my strong refuge,” Madame Chevalier repeated softly.

Eglantine looked up from her work ; she had caught the look, though the words had been too softly spoken for her ear. “Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased,” she said with a smile. Before Rene could answer, a whistle, clear and shrill as that of an eagle on the wing, came from without.

“That is Fulcrand Rey’s signal,” exclaimed the young surgeon, starting joyfully to his feet, and putting the babe into his mother’s arms, went out.

Eglantine had not seen the young pastor since he had come to the chateau to baptize her child, and remembering all that had come between, she held back a little sadly, as the others pressed forward to greet him. But the minister’s glance at once sought her out.

“Unto whom much is forgiven, the same also loveth much,” he whispered, as he pressed her hand, and as her eyes filled with tears, he looked around the group with a bright smile.

“I have good news for you all. Pastor Brousson has once more ventured back to preach the Word to our persecuted flock, and will meet us to-morrow evening in the old place—to speak of the love and favor of our God, and partake with us of the emblems of our Lord’s dying love. You have longed for this, Rene tells me,” he added, turning once more to Eglantine. “He says you will leave your babe for a few hours to meet the King in His banqueting-house.”

“I have hungered and thirsted for it,” she said simply. “My babe will be safe with Antoine and Pepin’s wife, who is not able just now to travel.”

“Then I will give you a token.”

He drew from his breast a small square of block tin, and showed her on one side the rough device of a shepherd carrying a lamb, and on the other the inscription, “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

“May it be to you an emblem of the white stone and the new name which shall be known only to your Lord and yourself,” he said solemnly, as he placed it in her hand.

Agnes had crept to her mother’s side and whispered in her ear. Monique Chevalier glanced at her son. Rene hesitated only a second. Then he took his sister’s hand and led her up to Fulcrand Rey.

“Agnes has never made a public profession of our faith,” he said quietly. “She is eager to do so now, and kneel with us at the Lord’s table. She is over the prescribed age, and I think fully understands the solemnity of the engagement.”

“I am sure of it.” Fulcrand Rey held out his hand. Agnes, with a face fair and still as a star, laid hers within it.

“I give you joy, my sister,” said the young minister solemnly. “In the world you may have tribulation, but in Him you shall have peace. Are you able to hold fast by Him, even in these stormy times?”

“I will try,” she answered in a low voice. “Has He not promised to help me if I ask?”

A deep, soft light was in the minister’s eyes. “He has indeed, Agnes. You could not set your feet upon a firmer rock. Though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, the

soul that has put its trust in Him cannot be shaken. Rene," glancing past her to his friend, "have you placed your treasure unreservedly in the Master's hands?"

"I have nothing that is not His," was the firm answer.

"Amen!" said Fulcrand Rey.

The mother had not spoken, but the light in her face was as sweet as unspoken prayer, as she helped Eglantine pour out into a trencher the evening meal of potage. The pastor sat down with them, but as soon as the supper was ended, rose to take his leave.

"I have promised to spread the tidings of the *prêche* as far as possible through the hills," he said; "I must resume my journey without delay."

Rene rose too, and threw his cloak over his shoulders.

"I go with you," he said quietly, and they went out together.

The next night proved cold and bleak, with a drizzly rain falling. Every care had been taken to keep the coming service secret from the authorities, but there was always danger of a surprise, and the refugees hailed the inclemency of the weather as a pledge of greater security. The place appointed for the gathering was a ravine on the edge of the hills, several miles nearer Nismes than the Chevaliers' hiding-place, and to reach it by the appointed hour, they were obliged to start as soon as twilight fell. Pepin was to be left behind to take care of his wife and children and old Antoine. Jean Bonneau led the way, his brave little wife tripping at his side, and his baby snug and warm under his cloak. The young parents, anxious to obtain for their son the rite of baptism, were not to be intimidated by the weather. Eglantine, who had

no such excuse for exposing her more delicate child to the cold, had left little Gabrielle asleep in Aimee's lap, and was able to afford her aunt some assistance, while Rene took care of Agnes. A deep, quiet joy filled all their hearts. The communion of saints and the preached word were the two joys left to them, who had given up all else for their religion. They yearned for them, as they did not for the homes they had left. Like David's longing for the sanctuary, it had grown at last to be a hunger and thirst with which heart and flesh failed, and for which they were willing to run any risk and suffer any discomfort.

The rain was falling in torrents, and the wind howling in the tops of the cliffs, when they reached the glen, but several hundred people, men, women, and children, were already assembled. A few lanterns, suspended against the sides of the rocks, threw a weird light upon the scene. At the upper end of the gorge, in earnest conversation with the gray-haired elders gathered about them, stood the two pastors. Claude Brousson was a tall, fine-looking man, still in the prime of life. He wore the rough garb of a peasant, with only the black skull-cap to indicate his calling. There were streaks of silver already upon his temples, and the deep lines in his brow indicated sorrow as well as thought. It was not the first time he had defied his sentence of banishment, and tearing himself from the arms of wife and children, forsaken his home among the quiet Swiss hills, to venture back in secret to break the Word to his persecuted flock. Near him, on a flat stone, which served as a table, the bread and wine were set forth; a coarse mantle alone protected the sacred emblems from the falling rain. Through the centre of the glen flowed a mountain-torrent; on either side of this the congregation were

assembled, all standing, but partially protected from the storm by the overhanging cliffs. The spot was one peculiarly adapted for the present purpose. It had long been a favorite rendezvous of the Huguenots, who had thus far succeeded in keeping their place of meeting secret from the authorities. The only entrance was the narrow defile at the lower end of the gorge; this was always well guarded, while sentinels on the cliffs above kept watch over the country around, and many paths, cut at great labor and expense in the sides of the cliffs, and known only to the Huguenots, afforded means of escape in case of an attack. To-night, however, there was evidently little apprehension of danger. A look of glad, solemn expectation was visible on every countenance, and as he made his way with his friends to a stand near the pulpit, Rene reproached himself for the hesitation with which he had consented to have Agnes, for the first time, attend one of their secret gatherings for worship. The sight of that waiting feast had brought a great calm to his soul. No voice rose more glad and confident than his in the opening psalm. When it was ended the elder pastor led the people in prayer, and then Fulcrand Rey, advancing to the side of the communion-table, drew a Bible from his breast. Two peasants held a cloak above his head, to protect the sacred page from the rain; a third stood near with a lantern, while in tones of thrilling music, as if he would persuade his hearers to be comforted, the young minister read the fourteenth chapter of St. John's evangel. Always mighty to succor and to cheer, with what added sweetness must the words have come home to those who, for the sake of those "many mansions," were dwelling "in dens and caves of the earth," and to win that legacy of peace had let

go their hold of earthly treasures. As he closed the book, Claude Brousson stepped forward, and waving back the attendants who would have sheltered him with their cloak, bared his head to the storm. For a moment he gazed in speechless emotion upon his waiting congregation, and then in a voice that rang through the glen like a trumpet-note, announced his text: "He that endureth to the end shall be saved."

It is difficult, in estimating the effect of such discourses, to decide how much of the preacher's power lay in the words he uttered, and how much in the circumstances under which he spoke. As the banished pastor depicted, in solemn impassioned strains, the woes of those who should deny their Master, and the blessedness of those who should remain faithful to the end, his hearers forgot the fury of the storm and the watchfulness of their foes. As he spoke to them of the apostles and martyrs, and those who had suffered for the truth in their own day, and exhorted them to witness a good confession and win a like crown—women wept, and the faces of men glowed as the faces of soldiers glow when they listen to the words of their leader in sight of the foe. Eglantine's penitent heart was not the only one that renewed its vows in the prayer that followed.

The moment had now come for Agnes to make her public profession. At a sign from Fulcrand Rey, Rene put aside the sheltering cloak and prepared to lead his sister forward. The elder pastor bent an earnest look upon the slender, white-robed figure. Godfrey Chevalier had been the friend of his youth, and the girl's likeness to her father was striking. With a quiver on his lip, Claude Brousson turned to speak to the young minister at his side. The words were never uttered. There was a heavy trampling near

the mouth of the glen, a shrill scream from the cliffs above.

“The dragoons! the dragoons! Save yourselves without delay!”

A discharge of musketry poured in through the mouth of the glen. By the flash of the carbines the terrified Huguenots could see the dreaded dragoons struggling with, and hewing down, the faithful sentinels, who were endeavoring to stay their passage. For a moment they had stood transfixed with fear. Now the lights were dashed out, and all was hurry and confusion.

At the first alarm Rene Chevalier had felt his mother's hand upon his arm.

“Remember your promise!” she said, impressively.

The young man's answer was to lift his sister in his arms and point to the steps in the rock beside them.

“After you, my mother!” he said firmly.

There was no time for remonstrance. Madame Chevalier caught Eglantine's hand and vanished with her into the darkness. Rene bounded after them.

Now, if there was speed in his limbs, and strength in his right arm, let them serve him in his hour of need! Agnes had not uttered a cry, but lay quiet upon his breast, with her arms clasped about his neck. The path grew steeper at every step, but he sprang unhesitatingly from ledge to ledge. What was the physical peril to that other danger which menaced him! A moment before he had felt ready for any sacrifice, but now, at the thought of seeing his gentle sister in the grasp of those ruthless men, his soul recoiled. Anything but that! If God would spare her, how gladly would he drink the bitter cup at some other hour for both! The screams that rose from the glen told him that a fearful massacre was going on. Faster

sped his feet. But suddenly a loud shout of "Chevalier! Chevalier!" told him that he had been recognized. The price M. Renau had set upon his head gave zest to the cry. Instantly a dozen eager feet were in pursuit. It was no longer possible to keep to the path he had pointed out to his mother and Eglantine. With the strength that only comes to a man face to face with death, he turned aside and bounded over the rocks. No less determined than himself, the dragoons leaped after him. It was now only a question of speed, in which the training of the mountaineer gave him the advantage. He could hear his pursuers slipping and scrambling on the wet rocks behind him, while he sped on as if on wings. There was a secret cavern just beyond the next bend in the rocks. If he could gain it without being overtaken they were saved. Rene's heart began to swell with hope. The next moment a second discharge of musketry lit up the cliffs and showed him, just a few steps in front of him, a soldier with a levelled carbine.

The path was too narrow to admit of a struggle, even if he had not been fettered by the burden on his breast. With a sinking heart, the Huguenot brother glanced backward. The dragoons were already in sight, shouting with triumph. To turn back was to fly into their clutches. His eye turned to the wall of rock above him. Neither twig nor crevice afforded him means of scaling it. Beside him, yawned a precipice, into which it was certain death to plunge.

"My God! we are lost!" he cried, leaning heavily against the rock.

The shouts of the dragoons grew louder and more exulting. Another moment, and their rude hands would be on his tenderly-sheltered sister. Rene started up quivering. In that awful moment, when the

beat of his heart and the sight of his eyes seemed failing him, the clear sense of right, which had all his life been as instinctive to him as both, faltered too. Deliberately balancing in his mind, which would be the easiest death for his darling, he glanced at the levelled carbine, and then into the yawning chasm. If she must die, it should be in his arms, with no fierce breath upon her cheek. He took a step nearer the precipice. Another moment, and he would have leaped into the black depths below, but Agnes, conscious of some crisis, at the same instant lifted her head. The first look of those innocent, wondering eyes brought Rene to his senses. Trembling in every limb, he recoiled from the slippery verge, and pressed the young head back to its resting-place.

“Close your eyes, my darling, and see no more than you can help,” he whispered. “I can do no more for you, Agnes. We must pray, as we never prayed before.”

She obeyed him with a low cry, as their pursuers reached his side.

The dragoons could scarcely believe their good fortune, when the young physician, of whose hardihood such wonderful tales had been told, submitted passively to his arrest, and with his sister still in his arms, suffered himself to be led back to the glen. There, he was at once securely bound, and placed with the other prisoners under guard, while Agnes, with her hands tied behind her, was permitted to remain at his side.

Scarcely ten minutes had passed since the first alarm, but the moonlight, which had at last broken through the clouds, revealed a ghastly spectacle. Many of the Huguenots had been wounded by the first discharge; others had been hewn down by the

sabres of the dragoons while endeavoring to effect their escape. Some lay writhing in the last agonies. Old Marie and her son lay dead in each other's arms. Rene looked anxiously about him for his other friends. His mother and Eglantine, he felt sure had succeeded in making their escape. Jean was nowhere to be seen, but a white, upturned face at his feet made the physician start with horror. It was that of Lucille Bonneau, cold in death, as was also the babe, whom she still clasped close to her breast. They had been killed by one bullet. It would be a mercy if Jean too had perished. Instinctively Rene uttered his name, as he glanced once more about him. A low groan from one of his fellow-prisoners answered. He turned and met the husband's glance of tearless misery. For a moment they gazed in silence into each other's eyes, then Rene looked down at the slight figure, trembling at his side.

"It is well with them, Jean," he said hoarsely. "At least you will not have to see them suffer"; and Jean bowed his head. Even in that hour he could acknowledge that a bitterer cup than his own had been placed to the brother's lips.

The bugle of the officer in charge now recalled the soldiers from their pursuit of the fugitives. The prisoners were placed in the centre of a hollow square, and the dreary march to Nismes began. The soldiers, who were well mounted and anxious to get their prisoners under lock and key before daylight, showed no consideration for the weary feet that toiled on at their side, and more than once urged some laggard forward with a touch of their whips.

Rene watched his sister in an agony of suspense, fearful every moment that her strength would give way, and feeling as if his heart would break if he saw

that cruel goad applied to her. But for nearly an hour Agnes marched on bravely at his side, uttering no complaint, even when the rough flints pierced her feet, and always smiling faintly when he spoke to her. Then, without so much as a warning cry, she dropped upon the road. The nearest rider lifted his lash threateningly, but Rene threw himself between them.

"Mercy, monsieur! She is young, and her feet are bleeding."

"We cannot stop for that," returned the man brutally.

"Unbind me, and I will carry her the rest of the way."

"And give you an opportunity to give us the slip? Hardly, M. le Doctor." But the captain interfered.

"The girl is nearly fainting, and we have no time to lose. Loosen his hands, and keep a watch on him, two of you. Shoot the girl if he shows the least attempt to escape."

Even in his bitter grief the brother felt a thrill of joy as he lifted the slight form once more in his arms. Agnes did not speak, but the tenacity with which she clung to him told him that she too apprehended the separation that was about to befall them.

It was near dawn when they reached Nismes. The Huguenots were conveyed to the town hall and left in charge of a guard until daylight, when the authorities were expected to pass sentence.

The soldiers gathered about the fire at one end of the room and made merry, after their cold, wet ride, over a hot supper and foaming bumpers of ale, while the unhappy Huguenots, huddled together in a farther corner, began to hope they were to have a few hours' rest.

Rene had just closed his weary eyes, in hopes of in-

ducing Agnes to do the same, when a heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder.

“Not quite so fast, doctor ; we have a little score to settle with you before you take your nap.”

“And we mean to see that the little one says her prayers to the Blessed Virgin before she sleeps to-night,” said a second voice. “Out with them, you young heretic, if you do not want us to teach you.”

“See how she shrinks from the holy crucifix and clings to him !” added a third. “I say, comrades, that’s too pretty a face to spoil with the irons. Let us put him to the test instead, and we will convert her soon enough.”

Agnes turned an anguished glance upon her brother.

“Rene, if they torture you, I will not be able to bear it ; I know I will not be able to bear it.”

“You must,” he said firmly. “This is no time to falter, Agnes ; remember your vows. Remember that He loved you and gave Himself for you.”

“I do remember,” moaned the girl. “But, oh Rene, strengthen me ! I feel ready to faint.”

For a moment the brother gazed in speechless compassion into the pale, appealing face. Was it possible that she could pass unscathed through the threatened ordeal—his gentle, loving darling—was her hold upon the truth so firm ? He put the doubt firmly by. It was not her hold upon the truth, but Christ’s hold on her, which should give him confidence in this terrible hour—not the strength of a girlish heart to endure, but the power of an infinite God to fulfil His promises.

“Agnes,” he said solemnly, “I have prayed for you that your faith fail not, and I have hope given me to believe that my prayer is answered. Remember the word : ‘When thou passest through the waters, I will

be with thee.' Put your trust in Him who 'made heaven and earth.' These men can only hurt my body. If I see you falter in your allegiance, it will break my heart."

"Take that for trying to strengthen the girl in her obstinacy!" interrupted a fierce voice, and a dragoon smote him so roughly upon the mouth that the blood streamed from his lips. "You will be glad enough to bid her speak before we are through with you."

The Huguenot made no reply as his sister was torn from his grasp, and a second soldier, seizing him by his hair, dragged him roughly across the floor. One glance at the coals upon the hearth, and the stocks placed in front of them, told him what form of suffering awaited him; but his glance did not falter. The real torture of the hour lay in the thought that Agnes would be compelled to witness his suffering; she would have more to endure than he. But he must be strong for them both. With a silent prayer for grace and power to witness to her and their fellow-prisoners of their Lord's sustaining love, he suffered his feet to be bared and thrust into the stocks. The soldier who had torn Agnes from his embrace stood a few paces off, supporting the trembling girl with his arm. She had buried her face in her hands, to shut out the fearful spectacle. No tears flowed through the slender fingers, but the brow quivered with speechless pain. Rene had resolutely closed his lips; no extremity of pain could wring from him one moan that would add to the torture that she was suffering. But the hand of the soldier in a few moments roughly uncovered her eyes.

"Look up, and see what you are doing," he said.

Agnes gave one look at her brother's pale, convulsed face, and uttered a cry. A crucifix was thrust into her hands.

“Kiss it, and you are free,” said her tormentor.

The girl's hand wavered, and then slowly, slowly drew the image to her breast. A moment more and it would have touched her lips, when Rene's voice, broken with suffering, cried :

“Agnes, remember your vows ! If you falter now, you crucify your Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame.”

It was enough. The words were scarcely off his lips, when the idolatrous emblem was hurled into the fire, and Agnes, breaking from the grasp of her persecutors, with one bound reached her brother's side. Neither spoke, save by the silent tightening of their arms about each other. The dragoons, who had stood transfixed with astonishment for the first moment, quickly rallied.

“There is more venom in the young viper than comes to the surface at first,” growled the owner of the crucifix. “I move we give her a taste of the fire, and let her see what she will have to expect in the next world, if she does not forswear her heresies.”

The threat seemed to fall unheeded on the girl's ear, but the brother half started from the floor.

“As you are men, and not fiends, forbear ; torture me, if you will ; I am a man and can bear it, but spare her : she is little more than a child.”

The eyes of the dragoon glittered savagely.

“Oho, master intractable ! Is that the key to your heart ? Very good. Every Achilles has his weak point, and we are fortunate to have discovered yours. I say, lads, take the fellow away, and put the girl in his place, and we will have an abjuration here in a few moments.”

“Mercy, M. le Capitaine !” interposed the Huguenot hoarsely. “You will only kill her, and draw down

upon your heads the vengeance of an offended God. I will never renounce my faith. For the sake of your own mothers and sisters, do not torture her in vain."

"You are an earnest pleader, monsieur; every word you speak convinces me that our plan is a good one."

Rene sank back upon the floor and covered his face. He scarcely felt the pain with which his blistered feet were torn from the stocks. A rough hand was already upon Agnes' shoulder, but the cup he dreaded was not to be put to his lips. There was a stir in the court, the great doors were thrown open, and the provost, followed by a train of monks, entered the hall. With a feeling of joy he would not once have believed possible, the young surgeon heard the order given for the instant removal of the women and children to the neighboring convent, and of the male prisoners to the dungeons of the citadel.

With a muttered curse the dragoon loosened his hold.

"You have escaped us this time, young heretic, but I shall take care the Intendant hears how to tame your brother," and with that threat he sullenly retired.

The brother and sister scarcely heard him. They had but a few seconds left in which to strengthen each other's hearts for the coming parting.

"Agnes! even the frail support of my presence is now to be taken from you. Remember that no bolts and bars can shut out Him who has said: 'I will never leave you, nor forsake you.' My sister, for the last time, let me hear you promise to stand fast in the faith for which our father died, and to witness to the darkened souls about you the exceeding riches of His grace. Remember, the truth you hold is a trust for them as well as yourself."

She was too much overcome with grief to com-

prehend his last words. All she could realize was that he desired some last assurance, and she roused herself to give the one drop of balm to the great heart that only trembled for her.

“God helping me, Rene! As I hope to see you and my mother in a better world, I promise! Do not worry about me, my brother. They have broken my heart to-night! I will not suffer long.”

“Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly!”

There was a tremor in the young man’s voice, for he saw a monk approaching them.

The priest laid his hand, not unkindly, on the shrinking girl. Rene pressed one long kiss upon the speechless lips, and suffered her to be lifted from his breast.

“God deal with you as you deal with her!” he said sternly. “As there is justice in heaven, the mercy you mete out to her shall be the measure of your own.”

The eyes of the priest had been riveted upon his face. Now they dilated with a sudden flash, which the Huguenot could not interpret.

“Heretics have little to do with the mercy of God,” was the chilling response, and something in the cold metallic voice grated unpleasantly on Rene’s recollection. “I accept your challenge, M. Chevalier. The Church is a tender mother. She has nothing to fear, if she shows herself tractable.” And without giving the brother time to reply, the monk turned, and bearing the now insensible girl in his arms, glided away. The next moment Rene Chevalier was himself seized, and hurried off to prison.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A WATCH IN THE NIGHT.

M. LAVAL sat in his library the next evening, gazing absently into a glowing bed of coals. The crimson curtains were drawn across the windows, the soft light of an alabaster lamp filled the room. A pile of unopened letters lay on the table, beside a scarcely-tasted meal. The banker's white head was bowed upon his hand. At the sound of a low tap upon the door, he looked up, and frowned.

"Come in," he said fretfully, and Madame Chevalier entered.

If one of the marble figures shining out from the folds of tapestry had suddenly stepped down from its pedestal, the old man could not have looked more terror-struck.

"Monique! This is, to say the least, very imprudent. Are you—are you aware that you imperil me as well as yourself?"

The widow quietly closed the door.

"I have taken care that I should not be recognized. You need give yourself no uneasiness," she answered. And then she came close to the hearth, and looked into his face with her sad, clear eyes. "I see that you have already heard that my children were among the prisoners taken at the *prêche* last night. Can you give me any tidings? Where have they been confined, what will be their fate?"

M. Laval sank back into his chair and shaded his eyes.

"You should know that as well as I, Monique. The penalties attached to these secret gatherings are no secret. Good heavens! how could you let a child like Agnes run such a risk? I have not known a moment's peace since I heard that she was taken. Yet I can do nothing for her—absolutely nothing!"

There was a frightened protest in the last words. The Huguenot mother looked at him in compassion. Too weak to espouse the right, too kind to sympathize with the wrong—was he not most to be pitied, after all?

"I did not ask you to involve yourself for us," she said gently. "I only asked for tidings, monsieur. You need not be afraid to tell me what you know. I am prepared for the worst."

The old man tapped the floor uneasily.

"I do not understand you, Monique. I never could. Anybody would think you had nerves of iron. There is not much to tell. The women and children have been consigned to the convent of St. Veronique, the men to the vaults of the citadel to await their trial. Agnes is sick with fright and exposure, but received no harm at the hands of the dragoons. Rene, I am sorry to say, had the imprudence to aggravate his captors at the outset. But that is only what might have been expected of him."

The mother's hands were clasped firmly together.

"You forget that if it had not been for Rene, it is Eglantine who would be in the convent," she said in a low voice.

M. Laval started from his chair and came close to his visitor.

"I think you might have comprehended my anxiety,

and mentioned my granddaughter's name sooner," he said fretfully. "Is she well and safe? I live in constant terror lest she should be captured by the dragoons. Surely, you did not permit her to attend that meeting last night?"

"I had certainly not the right to deny her the comfort," was the quiet answer. "But you may set your heart at rest, monsieur. She and her child are both safe and well. There is her own word for it." She drew a letter from the pocket of her gown and handed it to him. She knew that it contained as earnest an appeal for his aid as lay in the power of the warm-hearted, impetuous girl to write. In glowing words, Eglantine reminded her grandfather that it was Rene, who, at the risk of his life, had saved her from a convent-doom, when even he dared not interfere—Rene, who had won her babe back to health—Rene, who had led her own soul to the fountains of living water, that had filled her heart with a joy, even her happy girlhood did not know. She told him, what he had not heard before, that it was Agnes who had saved Henri from self-destruction, and saved her heart from breaking beneath its load of remorse. She bade him remember all she owed to Madame Chevalier from her earliest infancy, and the promise he had made to her mother never to forget that debt.

M. Laval's hand trembled violently as he refolded the sheet.

"I did not know all this; Rene did not tell me half," he said nervously.

"Rene would never boast of what he had done," answered the mother.

The old banker had begun to pace the room.

"Of course I would have done what I could for you, anyway; you might have known that, Monique. I

promised as much to Godfrey years ago. I am not as rich a man as I was then ; these priests are sad leeches ; but I will try what gold can do. Rene has been good to my girl. He shall see that I am not ungrateful."

"And Agnes?"

Pierre Laval was silent.

"Is there no hope there?" asked the mother in a stricken voice.

"None, except submission. You may as well make up your mind to that, Monique. Surely, it can matter little in what form that sweet child worships God."

"I would rather see her dead than know she had denied her father's faith," was the low, passionate reply. "But there is one resource still, monsieur—an appeal to the priests. I will see them, and intercede for my child."

"Impossible!" grasping her quickly by the dress as she turned to go. "Are you mad, Monique? The Jesuits have no conscience where heretics are concerned. You would be seized and dragged before the Intendant before you had uttered a dozen words. Stay ; there is one man. I wonder I did not think of him before. Do you remember Father Ambrose?"

"Can I ever forget him?"

"He is known among his own order as a strict disciplinarian, but I notice he takes little part in these miserable persecutions. Unless he is a harder man than he was six years ago, he may be willing to help you. He certainly has the power, for he is the confessor of the convent."

"I will go to him at once. Leon di Vincy cannot refuse to hear me when I plead for my child. Quick, monsieur ; tell me where he is to be found. Who can tell what my darling is enduring even now,"

“If you will promise to rest satisfied with this attempt, and will give me a line asking him to come to you, I will go for you, Monique. It would never do for you to go to the close, and yet you ought to speak with him yourself. He has scant liking for me, and my presentation of your cause would only injure it.”

The mother slipped a ring from her finger.

“If my old friend has not been altogether absorbed in the priest, that will bring him,” she said in a broken voice.

M. Laval’s answer was to ring the bell for his butler, a trusty servant, who had been in the house ever since Eglantine’s mother was a baby.

“Stand outside the library-door, and admit no one till my return,” he ordered ; and as the old man bowed and retired : “Monique, try and take a little rest and refreshment in my absence ; there is food and drink upon the table.” And with that the door closed after him, and a moment later the anxious mother heard his quick step on the pavement without.

In less than half an hour her quick ear caught the sound of his entering feet ; he was evidently accompanied by some one. She rose tremblingly and turned toward the door. It was opened noiselessly the next moment, and M. Laval, with a perturbed countenance, ushered the object of his errand into the room.

Once more Monique Chevalier and her early friend stood face to face. The years so fruitful both of sorrow and blessedness to her had wrought little change in the cold, clear-cut face of the monk. The eyes had sunk deeper in their sockets, the wrinkles were more deeply graven, but otherwise life and time had left no trace.

He waited a moment, as if expecting her to address him, and then extended the ring.

“I am here, madame, in answer to your summons.”

Something in the harsh voice and cold, glittering eye froze the appeal that had trembled upon the mother's lips. She could only extend her hands in mute entreaty, while her eyes filled with tears.

A strange smile illuminated the face of the priest. He lifted his arm with a commanding gesture.

“Hear me, Monique Chevalier! It is needless to explain or entreat. I fully comprehend the purpose for which you have sent for me, and my will is as fixed as the course of the stars in heaven. Six years ago Providence placed your children in my path. By the lifting of a finger I could have snatched them from the errors in which they had been reared and placed them in the bosom of the Church, which is the one fountain of light and truth. But I was weak. The look in your eyes unmanned me. I weighed the thought of their earthly happiness against the hope of eternal gain, and permitted you to leave Nismes, with them, unmolested. Heaven forgive me, and lay not the sin to their door or mine! From that hour the frown of an offended God rested upon my soul. The scanty peace I had been able to win by prayers and fastings slipped from me. You wonder that I own this to you—a heretic? Wait, madame, and when I am done, you will understand my confession. I had for some years been confessor of the convent of St. Veronique. Among the children under the care of the nuns was one who had been snatched as a brand from the burning. She could not remember her early home, but she was a shy, sensitive little creature, often ailing, and the Sisters did not understand her. They thought her sullen, but I knew better from the first. One day I found her crying at the feet of the great Madonna in the chapel; she wanted her mother, she

said. I contrived to pacify her. She had never been afraid of me like the other children ; from that day she was my unquestioning slave. The Sisters had only to say, ' This will please the holy father,' and she was ready to undertake any task. All that I told her was received as gospel. Ah, how I gloried in eradicating the seeds of error and instilling the blessed doctrines of our ancient faith. Her nature—I had known it from the first—was like crystal : transparent, and without stain. Her mind proved to be one of rare intelligence. The saintly Fenelon, who is some connection of her father's house, wrote to make inquiries about the child, and delighted at what he heard of her unusual promise, would have had her removed to the care of the Ladies of Port Royal, but my pupil clung to her old preceptor, and the matter was not pressed."

" Is it possible that you speak to me of the unfortunate daughter of Madame de Bertrand ?" exclaimed Monique Chevalier.

Father Ambrose regarded her with an inscrutable expression.

" It can matter nothing to sœur Marguerite, or to any one else, what her antecedents were," he answered in a hard, repellent voice. " She has long since taken upon herself the full vows of the sisterhood, and is as dead to earthly ties as though she were on the other side of death. But you interrupt my story, madame. The Church had from the first designed my pupil for a holy vocation ; she was in her novitiate at the time of my misguided kindness toward you. It was then—in my endeavor to allay the remorse that tormented me—that I conceived the idea of atoning for my fault by devoting myself with increased ardor to the attainments of my pupil. I

have succeeded beyond my utmost expectations. Transplanted flowers sometimes exhale richer fragrance than the natives of the soil. You are doubtless aware that the noble lady, who at this moment sways the councils of France, and fans the zeal of the king, was herself a convert from the heresies which now she abhors. Madame, my young Huguenot has blossomed into a devotee, an ascetic; there are no bounds to her enthusiasm; her piety exceeds that of the superior; her zeal often puts me to confusion. Ah! you catch the drift of my story at last. That woman is the guardian, the instructress I have chosen for your child. Whatever of eloquence lies in unfaltering conviction and burning zeal—whatever of power sleeps in a holy and blameless life, *sœur Marguerite* will bring to her task! Ah, *Monique Chevalier*, in spite of the slanders which your blasphemous sect delight to hurl at the institutions of our holy Church—a life as blameless as your own, a soul as stainless as that of a lily unblown. You have no need to fear personal violence. I disdain brute force. My weapons are finer and more invincible. *Sœur Marguerite* already watches beside the sick-bed of your child with a tenderness that disarms her prejudices, allays her fears. When she has wholly won the heart of her charge, she will unfold the doctrines of our holy faith, with a voice and glance so winning, that your daughter will have neither the power nor the inclination to resist. Madame, my hour of atonement and restoration is at hand. In a few weeks, at farthest, I will have the gratification of receiving into the Church the young soul I so deeply wronged years ago, and my lost peace will be re-won.”

Father Ambrose paused, and waited for reply. The mother had listened with her hands clasped firmly to-

gether. There was a slight flush upon her cheek ; her eyes had kindled through their tears.

“ You will be disappointed,” she said in a low, firm voice. “ Leon, you think you have only a girlish will with which to contend, but I warn you that over against your cunning will stand the prayers of her martyred father and the promise of a covenant-keeping God. There is that in that young soul which will confront and baffle you at every turn ; there is that in her heart which you would give your life to win—the peace that passeth understanding ; there will stand by her in every temptation the Lord who made heaven and earth. Beware how you fight against God ! Beware how you offend one of His little ones ! ”

“ That will do, madame ; I am not to be shaken as to the righteousness of my cause, nor my hopes of success. I will find means to let you know your daughter abandons her errors ; perhaps you will then talk differently. Meantime, God judge between us ! ” Father Ambrose drew his hood over his face, and without further word of farewell, strode from the room.

Pierre Laval, who had been uneasily pacing the corridor, hurried in.

“ He swept past me without a word, Monique ; have you made any impression on him ? ”

She told him the result of the interview, and her suspicion that the nun, to whose care Agnes had been specially consigned, was his own lost grandchild.

He rejected the idea with considerable agitation. “ Poor Aimee’s little one must have perished long ago. The fact that M. Fenelon is interested in this young creature is not sufficient to warrant such a supposition, Monique.”

"Perhaps not," she said, sighing. "But the thought came to me like an inspiration. I have at least the comfort of knowing that Agnes will be treated with leniency. Monsieur, I must ask one more favor at your hands. It would take the sharpest sting from her brother's sufferings if he could know this. I am sure you could get a letter to him, if you would."

"I am not so sure of that," returned M. Laval; but the next moment he added in a different tone, "Write what you like, Monique, so it is not long, and I will do what I can."

He motioned her to the pen and ink upon the table, and took his old seat by the fire while she wrote.

"You surely do not think of going back to-night?" he asked, when the letter was finished, and she began to draw her mantle about her.

"Eglantine is anxiously awaiting my return, and we are less likely to meet travellers on the road after dark."

"But you cannot go alone."

"Pepin—one of our friends from the hills—came with me. He is waiting at a shop down the street."

M. Laval bowed his head upon his hands with a bitter sigh.

"It is unbearable—the thought of you and Eglantine living in a cave, while I am here in my comfortable house," he moaned. "Surely you might take shelter under my roof now, Monique. I would do everything in my power to protect you."

"Could you keep the fact a secret from the priests?" she asked, and as he shook his head with a groan, she added gently, "The cave is a hundred times better than the convent, monsieur. Do not worry about Eglantine. We have never yet lacked bread."

"You shall not," starting promptly to his feet.

“Monique, I have the right to provide for your wants after what Rene has done for my girl. There must be some place in the hills where I could send provisions once a week.”

She hesitated a moment and then named the miller of whom Rene had spoken to Eglantine.

“It is he who lent us the horses for this trip. He will see that anything you send him for us reaches us safely. But you must be cautious, monsieur. While search is being made for Eglantine, your movements will be carefully watched. Never attempt to come yourself.”

“I will remember,” he said bitterly; but long after Monique Chevalier had left him, Pierre Laval sat with his head bowed upon his arms. More and more unsatisfying were growing those earthly possessions, for which he had bartered his hopes of heaven.

It was on one of the cold nights in December that the Huguenots had been interrupted in their service in the glen. The new year was a month old, and the snowdrops had begun to tremble in the sheltered crevices of the rocks when the first tidings broke the anxious watch of the hearts in the hills. Then, Eglantine, unpacking the weekly basket of provisions from her grandfather, found a note at the bottom. It contained only a few lines. M. Laval had met Father Ambrose in the street the day before. He would not open his lips about Agnes, but he acknowledged that Rene had been removed to Toulouse soon after his arrest and would be tried there the coming week.

“Then to Toulouse I go down at once,” cried Pepin, striking his staff in the rocky floor, and, good as his word, he set off the same evening, his brave young wife cheerfully consenting to the risk.

It was a full week before he returned. Eglantine,

who had taken the children out to play in the sunshine, was the first to see him and hurry to meet him.

"It is as we feared, madame. He has been sentenced to the galleys," said Pepin, and when her first burst of tears was over, he added: "I could not get admittance to the court-room, but I contrived to see him, when he set out with the other prisoners for Marseilles. They were under a close guard, and yoked two and two with a wooden collar about their necks. M. Chevalier and Jean were together."

"Did he see you—could you tell?" asked Eglantine, lifting her wet cheek from the baby-head on her shoulder.

"Ay, madame! Jean looks as if he had gone mad with his trouble, and stared at me blankly; but the doctor, though he looks years older, has a glance as quick and keen as ever. He knew me at once, and made me a secret sign to ask whether you were all safe in the hills; when I bowed yes, he smiled. Then he glanced down at his fettered hands, and back at the mountains, and up at the blue sky above us, and if ever I saw daring and resolution in a man's glance, I saw it in his. Madame, the doctor has not resigned himself to his fate: he will attempt to escape."

"He can never succeed. He will only increase his sufferings by the attempt," sighed Eglantine; and Monique Chevalier, who had come upon them unnoticed, added sadly:

"Rene spoke of the life that is to come, and the liberty that is beyond the stars."

Pepin did not contradict them, but his own conviction remained unshaken, and three days later, going down into Nismes on an errand, he found the city ringing with the miraculous escape of two galley-slaves. At a little hamlet between Toulouse and Mar-

seilles, by an exercise of almost superhuman strength, they had succeeded in breaking the wooden yoke about their necks, and during the night, while their guards were asleep, gained the shelter of the hills. The gendarmes were already in hot pursuit; the Intendant had set a price upon their heads; the streets blazed with placards, giving particular description of the fugitives, who were announced to be no other than the notorious Huguenots, Chevalier and Bonneau. All loyal subjects were warned, under heavy penalties, to afford them neither food nor shelter.

Pepin's eyes twinkled as he read, and marked the secret exultation of more than one countenance in the crowd about him. "You may offer all the rewards you like, M. D'Argoussy. You will get no Cevanol to betray the good doctor," he thought triumphantly, and he made haste to finish his business that he might carry the glad news back to the hills. As he left the city, a coach, entering the gates, rolled rapidly past him, and he had a momentary glimpse of M. Renau, leaning back in the shadow, wrapped in gloomy thought.

"He has heard the news, and has hurried down to urge on the hounds," thought the whilom gardener, glancing back at the vanishing wheels with a frown and a grimace. "Ah! you are a sharp one, M. Renau, but you cannot fight against God." And whistling a cheery air, he strode on.

The twilight was falling when he reached the foot of the mountains, and made his way along the edge of the gorge where the Huguenots had held their ill-fated service. In the solitude of the hills he was no longer afraid to give his real feelings vent, and the gay ballad he had been singing quickly changed to one of Marot's stirring psalms.

“If God be for us, who can be against us?” he chanted sturdily.

A low moan, that seemed to come from the very rock beneath him, answered.

The hymn died upon the weaver’s lips ; he checked his steps and looked about him. There was no one in sight. Once more the low moan seemed to rise from the earth beneath him ; this time it was followed by words.

“For God’s sake, for Christ’s sake, have pity, and let us out ! We are buried alive in this rock.”

It was a woman’s voice, faint with exhaustion ; she was evidently immured in some cavity in the rock. Anxious as he was to reach the end of his journey, Pepin could not turn a deaf ear to such an appeal. Guided by the groans, which still continued, he made his way to the spot where they seemed loudest. A large boulder blocked the entrance of what was apparently one of the many caverns with which the hills abounded. The weaver saw at a glance that a push of his strong shoulder would dislodge it, but with instinctive caution he placed his mouth first to the crevice in the rock.

“Tell me who you are and whence you come,” he called. “I must know whom I release.”

There was a glad outcry from the other side of the stone.

“It is the voice of Pepin, the weaver. Thank God, we are saved ! Marguerite, do you hear ? I will see my children again.”

“Joan Marc, is it thou ?” cried Pepin, overcome with joy in his turn. “This will indeed be good news for thy poor husband and the weeping little ones. But we thought thee captured with the other friends at the *prêche*, and long since buried in a convent.”

“So I was, but God has set me free.” The speaker was now evidently weeping. “Quick, my friend. I have some one with me, and she has fainted. We have neither of us tasted food for two days.”

The boulder was whirling down the side of the precipice the next moment, and Pepin had sprung into the opening. A touch of his flint upon the rocky wall, and the resin candle he drew from his pocket was quickly lighted. His friend, a middle-aged farmer's wife, whom he had known since his residence in the hills, sat on the ground at a little distance, supporting the head of a young woman upon her lap. One glance at the pale, deathlike features, and the hope that had for a moment leaped up in Pepin's heart went sadly out. The face was that of a girl, at least one-and-twenty, and quite unknown to him. The next moment, he had thrust a half loaf into Joan's hand, and was himself holding a flask of brandy to the lips of the unconscious stranger. The latter was soon able to lift her head, and indicate by a quiet gesture that she could not drink more. Joan broke off part of the bread and gave it to her, and while Pepin watched them both with pitying eyes, she gave her friend a hurried explanation of the plight in which he found them.

“We ran away three nights ago. Never mind just now how we accomplished it; it was Marguerite who helped me. She does not know anything of the country, so I promised to see her to the end of her journey before I went to my own home. We planned to travel by night and lie in hiding during the day. We got on safely enough the first night, only not as fast as we had hoped; Marguerite is not used to walking, and her feet were blistered before we had gone two miles. We were so anxious, though, to reach the end of our

journey, so afraid of being overtaken and dragged back, that we decided to make up our lost time by travelling part of the next day. It was very foolish of us—we saw that when it was too late; but I thought we were not likely to be seen in the hills. We had just passed the mouth of the glen down there when a party of dragoons saw us and gave chase. I think despair must have given us wings, for though they were mounted, we managed not to let them overtake us. Suddenly I remembered this cavern; my husband showed it to me the very night of the *prêche*. I caught hold of Marguerite's hand and dragged her in after me. The soldiers dashed up a moment later, but by the time they could dismount and find the entrance of the cave, we were hidden in the little chamber beyond, and they could not find us.

“‘They must be in league with the devil, and have the art of making themselves invisible,’ I heard one of them grumble, after they had groped about in the dark without finding anything. ‘If I ever saw anything with my two eyes, I saw those women run into this hole. They must be here now.’

“‘Then roll a stone against the mouth, and keep them here until we come this way again,’ the other answered with a laugh. ‘We haven't time to waste on them to-day.’ And the next moment we heard the great rock settle into its place, and knew that we were buried alive. We tried to move the stone when we came out, but it was no use. Then we listened for some passer-by, but no one came. I am afraid my faith would have failed, and I would have thought God had forsaken us, if it had not been for Marguerite. She said it was better to die with the truth than to live without it, and I felt ashamed that one who had just learned the truth, should see that clearer than I,

and I tried to keep up, but it was very hard to be so near my little ones and not see them after all."

The younger woman had meanwhile risen to her feet.

"Had we not better resume our journey, Joan?" she asked. "I am quite strong enough to walk now."

The soft, modulated voice was in marked contrast to the rustic drawl of the farmer's wife. Pepin, who had more than once glanced curiously at the stranger during Joan's story, at once recognized the presence of gentle birth. But he was at a loss to understand what there was in the low tones, soft as the chime of silver bells, which made him feel that he had heard the voice before.

"Has mademoiselle relatives in the hills? Perhaps I can be of some assistance to her in finding them," he said respectfully.

"I have no relatives anywhere," answered the stranger quietly, and her large, deep eyes turned inquiringly upon Joan.

"Master Pepin is a friend of the Chevaliers. You may safely tell him your errand," said the farmer's wife.

"I would die for the doctor, or any one belonging to him," said Pepin.

The stranger held out her hands. "I have a message for Madame Chevalier," she faltered. "If you can take me to her, you will do us both a great service."

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE MORNING.

IT was destined to be a night of surprises. When several hours later Pepin led his new friends into the cave beyond the waterfall, the first object that met his eye was Rene seated beside the fire, with little Gabrielle, as of old, nestling in his breast. Monique Chevalier, with a face of chastened pleasure, was seated beside her son. Eglantine and Aimee, with happy tears on their cheeks, were preparing a meal. The reunion had evidently just taken place, but without pausing to congratulate his friend the weaver led the younger of his companions up to Madame Chevalier.

"She has brought you a message from Mistress Agnes," he said in a low voice.

The mother looked up startled into the dark, pitying eyes fixed upon her.

"Who are you? Whence do you come?" she faltered.

The stranger's answer was to open her hand, and show a small square of tin glimmering in her palm.

"I promised her—if I could ever make my escape—I would come and tell you," she said gently. "She said it would be a comfort to you to know that she was at rest, that she had endured to the end, that she had been very happy even in the convent."

There was a low murmur from the group about her; a fervent "Thank God!" from the man, who had started suddenly to his feet; a burst of tears from

Eglantine. Monique Chevalier was the calmest of them all.

“When?” she asked.

“Ten days ago, as the day was breaking. She had been sick ever since she came to us. I was with her all that night—she did not suffer much.” The messenger’s strength had proved less equal to the rest of her journey than she had imagined. As the last words left her lips, her figure swayed, tottered for a moment, and then fell forward.

It was Rene who caught her and laid her on a pallet near by.

“Have we any wine?” he asked, glancing up for a moment. He spoke like one who had heard tidings of great joy.

It was Eglantine, with tears still raining down her face, who brought him the flask. “You do not think of yourself, Rene,” she whispered.

He met her eyes for an instant.

“The bitterness of death was past when they took her from me,” he said in a low voice. “I have prayed for this, day and night, ever since.”

The stranger had by this time opened her eyes, and was rejecting the cup placed to her lips.

“I do not need it; I will be better presently,” she murmured.

“Drink!” was the firm response. No one ever hesitated when Rene Chevalier spoke in that tone. Without further remonstrance the new-comer swallowed the draught and closed her eyes once more. Eglantine had already loosened her hood and cloak. In a few seconds a faint color began to show itself in her face. Rene let go his hold of her wrist. “You are better now,” he said quietly. “No,” as she seemed about to speak; “you must be still for a while yet.

You shall tell us the rest presently. We have enough to thank God for to-night." He turned to his mother, "She has seen the King in His beauty; in the land that is very far off, none shall make her afraid. Is it not best so, my mother?"

"To depart and be with Christ is far better," answered Monique Chevalier solemnly; and something in her face told Rene that from that hour her hold upon earth was loosened. The Master's presence was better than any life here.

Pepin plucked at his friend's sleeve with a bowl of potage in his hand.

"From what Joan tells me, our new friend needs food as much as she does rest," he whispered. "She is the young nun, M. Chevalier, who had charge of Mistress Agnes in the convent, and she has suffered not a little, Joan says, for her kindness to our young lady. They have kept her on bread and water ever since Mistress Agnes died because she did not give them warning of the end."

With a smothered cry the brother thrust the bowl of potage into the stranger's hands. She had by this time struggled to a sitting posture, and met his eyes with a faint smile.

"What were meat and drink to the truth that she had brought me?" she asked in a low voice, and then she looked past him to his mother. "I had promised her they should not disturb her at the end if I could help it. I kept the truth all that day, though my heart was breaking. I would have died before they should have broken in on the peace of those last hours. No; do not ask me to wait longer," as Rene seemed about to interrupt, "I am more used to fasts than Joan knows; it was only the joy that was too much for me. It will be more than food to talk about

Agnes, better than rest to tell you how she helped me to find the light." She paused for a moment, and looked wistfully about the circle, now hushed and listening.

"You know what it is to love the truth—to love it better than houses, and lands, and friends or life—but you do not know what it is to live without it—to hunger and thirst for it, year after year, and yet never be able to find it. That was what I had done until I knew Agnes Chevalier. I had never known any home but the convent. I had never had any one to love me, that I could remember. All I wanted, all I needed, my confessor told me, I would find in God. Something in my heart, too, told me the same. Of course, I did not expect that God would notice a foolish, ignorant, little child, but I thought when I was old enough to take the veil, He would begin to answer my prayers. Then, I thought, my religion will begin to satisfy me. I will be able to conquer the sin in my heart, and I can be at peace with God. But when my novitiate was ended, and I had fully entered upon my vocation, He was as far off as ever. If I seemed to climb a few steps up to Him one day, I slipped back the next. Nothing I could do, nothing my confessor could say, could take the stain from my conscience, or fill the void in my heart. Only one thing grew clearer and clearer. Through all my years of blind feeling after God, I never doubted that He would satisfy me, if I could only find Him. And Father Ambrose had told me the blessed Saviour himself had said : ' Seek and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' "

"Did it never occur to you that you might not be seeking Him in the right way?" asked Madame Chevalier gently. She was sitting beside the stranger on the pallet, holding her hand. Rene's face was in the shadow.

Marguerite shook her head sadly.

“How could it?” she asked simply. “I had no one to teach me but my confessor, and he did not point out any other way. Do not blame him,” she pleaded, fancying she read disapproval in the other’s glance. “If he did not guide me aright, it was because he too was in the dark. He gave me the best he knew, I am sure of that, and if it had not been for the deep longing for God, which he had nursed in my heart, I might not have known the truth when it came. But I did not mean to make so much of this part of my story,” a slight flush rising to the delicate face; “it was only necessary to tell you something that you might understand what Agnes was to me. One morning last December my confessor sent for me. I had more than once asked him to set me some task, which would satisfy my conscience and gain me favor on high. He said he could now grant my prayer. One of the Huguenots, brought to the convent that morning, was a young girl, in whose family he felt some interest. He had interposed to have her spared the rigorous methods of conversion, to which her companions would be subjected, and, as a special favor to himself, asked of the mother superior that she might be placed under my instruction. It was a great responsibility for one so young, he said, but he had taught me carefully, and he believed I could do more with her than any one else. She was deeply prejudiced against our Church. It was necessary to allay her suspicions. ‘Win her heart, before you attempt to overthrow her heresies,’ he told me, and then he said I would be permitted to show her every kindness, and that if I could convert her from the error of her ways, I would not only save a soul from death, but be able to present to God a gift which must be well-pleasing in His eyes.”

“I wonder he was not afraid to bring a seeking soul and the light so near together,” murmured Rene, looking up for a moment.

“You forget that he did not know it was the light,” she answered sadly. “And you do not know how bigoted and fixed I was in my own faith, though it did not satisfy me. I had been taught that the Huguenots were a wicked, blasphemous sect, forever cut off from God ; I loathed Agnes’ heresies, though my heart went out to her. How shall I tell you what she was to me—you, who have known and loved her always, but have had others to be dear to you ? I had never had any one to care for before. It was well for me that I did not understand what made me hurry through my other tasks to have more time to spend with her, or why I was so happy when her sad face brightened at my coming. I thought it was only zeal for her conversion which made the hours I spent with her so short and her trust and confidence so sweet. One day, when Father Ambrose warned me to let no taint of earthly affection mar the fairness of my offering, I was startled, and I think my surprise allayed his fears. For several weeks Agnes was unable to leave her bed in the infirmary. The fright and exposure had been too much for her, Father Ambrose said. Often and often as I watched beside her, I wondered at the look of peace on her face and the soft light in her eyes. One day I said to her : ‘Agnes, you look very happy for a girl who has been separated from her home and friends.’ Her eyes filled with tears for a moment, and then she smiled sweetly : ‘I am very happy,’ she said ; ‘no one can help being happy, Sister Marguerite, who knows that God loves them.’

“‘God cannot love you until you abandon your errors,’ I returned hastily, but I was afraid to continue

the conversation, and went away. I could have answered arguments, but that tone of loving confidence was something I could not reason with. Was it possible that her religion had done for her, what mine could not do for me? All that night I knelt on the cold floor of my cell, fighting what seemed to me a suggestion of the evil one. The next day I told my confessor I thought it was time to begin to wean Agnes from her heresies, and he gave me a book to read to her. She looked troubled when she saw it. 'I will never change my religion,' she said earnestly; but when I plead with her, if she loved me to listen, she was too gentle to refuse. After that, I read to her every day. She listened so quietly that I was much encouraged. As soon as she was able to leave the infirmary, she was given a cell adjoining mine, and I was permitted to take her occasionally into the convent garden. One morning, by Father Ambrose's direction, I led her without warning into the chapel. But no tears, no entreaties, could persuade her to kneel with me before the image of the Virgin. 'It is written, Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image; thou shalt not bow to them nor serve them,' she whispered in her faint sweet voice, and from that we could not move her. My confessor was bitterly disappointed. He said we had been too lenient with her, and ordered that she should be kept for a week in solitary confinement, to think over her obstinacy. Meanwhile he took good care I should not lack occupation, by assigning me the task of arranging the convent library, long disused. He little guessed the treasure he was placing in my reach, when he did so. The very first day, in moving some old tomes, which looked as if they had not been touched for years, I came across a Latin Gospel of St. John. I cannot think who could have left it

there, but I shall always feel that God meant it for me."

Marguerite paused for a moment, overcome with some deep emotion.

"The seeker and the word had met at last," said Rene Chevalier, looking up with his rare sweet smile.

"Yes," she sighed, "but the seeker was still blind. I read only one verse, and then in terror closed the book and thrust it back into its hiding-place. It was forbidden, and I had committed a terrible sin. Yet some impulse—I could not analyze it then—made me resolve to keep my discovery a secret, and all through that troubled week, wherever I went, the book seemed drawing me, until sometimes even in the night I felt as if I must rise and go to it."

"And the word?" asked Madame Chevalier softly.

"It was the Lord's answer to His disciple. I could not understand it then—'Have I been so long time with thee, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?' Now it seems to me as though I had heard it from his own lips." The nun's eyes filled with tears, and there was a tender silence, which she was the first to break.

"At the end of the week I was permitted to see Agnes once more. She welcomed me with a bright smile. It had been a very happy week to her, she said. I was shocked to see how wasted she had grown in those few days. For the first time I noticed the far-away look in her eyes. The truth flashed upon me: she was dying. And with that truth, flashed another. The heart I had vowed to God alone, I had permitted to entwine about this gentle girl, with a strength it was no longer in my power to break.

"'Agnes,' I asked despairingly, 'do you know you cannot live much longer?'"

"To my surprise, she smiled gently. 'I have known

it for a good while,' she said. 'Father Ambrose told me yesterday that I had only a few more days to prepare.'

" 'And you still persist in your errors—you will break my heart by dying out of the Church!' I cried. Before I could say more, she put her arms about my neck and kissed me.

" 'I know you love me,' she said in her soft, husky voice. 'That has been one of God's tender mercies to me here; but you ought to be glad to let me go. Think of what it will be to be like Him, and to see Him as He is.' And as I burst into tears, she went on to tell me of how near God had been to her, what rest and joy He had given to her, and how she had been praying for me, but had never dared to speak before. I knew I ought not to listen, but I had no power to put away the soft, weak arms about my neck; I could not put her away, as I had done the written Word. Nay, the very words she spoke held me too. Was not this what I had longed for all my life, and never been able to find? Yet what madness to think it could have been hidden from my confessor, and revealed to her! When I stammered something like this she smiled. 'If you want to know whether it is the right way, only try it,' she whispered. 'Oh, Marguerite, if we only had a Bible, it would be so easy to make it plain to you. You could not doubt God's Word.' I remembered the hidden Gospel in the library, and made up my mind to be shut out from it no longer. But Agnes had already had more excitement than was good for her, and I only told her I would think over what she said, but that seemed to content her, and then for the first time she spoke to me about you all." Marguerite glanced around with a soft sigh at the circle of tear-wet, shining faces. "Ah, how different

it all was from the selfish, narrow lives I had known—from what I had been told of the world without ! But I have not time to dwell upon that now. A strange thing happened that evening. I had been to take Agnes her bowl of bread and milk, and as I came out, closing the door behind me, two of the older nuns passed me in the corridor.

“‘If Father Ambrose does not take care, our Saint Marguerite will become too fond of the little heretic,’ I heard one say ; and the other answered :

“‘Yes, blood will tell. I never thought it was safe putting the two together,’ and then she dropped her voice to a whisper. ‘They say her mother’s attachment to the Church was only formal, that it was because she was found teaching tenets to the child that they took her from her.’

“‘Hush ! The holy father would be very angry if that should get to *sœur* Marguerite’s ears,’ warned the first speaker, and then they glided on, little dreaming that they left me behind in the shadow. A few days before the revelation would have overwhelmed, but now a window of hope seemed opened above me. Father Ambrose had always told me that my parents had died within the pale of the Church. Was it possible that in the truth had slept an untruth ? Had my mother really at heart been attached to the religion that Agnes loved ? had she tried to teach it to me, her child ? was it for that I had been separated from her ? Then she must have prayed for me, as Agnes had said her mother was doing for her ! Was it in answer to those prayers that the Gospel had been placed in my path, and Agnes had been sent to me ? Why had my confessor been afraid to tell me ? Did he anticipate the instinct which would demand to see and choose for itself ? I had been assigned to a penance in the

chapel that night. As soon as the convent was asleep, I crept into the library beyond ; I had been entrusted with the key ; while I was dusting and arranging the books, my great fear was that the one I longed for might have been moved, but it was still in its place, and by the aid of the taper I had brought with me I began to read. After that I had only one other fear—of being interrupted before I had finished, and I soon forgot even that. Even you, who love the Word, cannot know all that that hour was to me—any more than we, who have always seen, can imagine what the rapture of sight must have been to the man who ‘was born blind.’ All the years I had been seeking, He had been close beside me, and yet I had ‘not known Him.’” And then for many minutes the nun was silent, gazing with shining eyes into the fire.

“Go on,” pleaded Eglantine at last.

“The word is sweeter to us even than the name of her we love,” added Rene.

She looked up with a smile. “Agnes said it would be so, but I cannot put much in speech. It was midnight when I began to read ; when I closed the book it was daylight in the world, and in my soul. I had ‘seen the Lord.’ I knew now why Agnes felt no need of priestly mediator, or saints to intercede ; why she could not kneel to the Virgin ; why she was not afraid of death. It had all been made clear in Him, and what I was not yet able to bear, He would teach me in time. When I should stand before my confessor there might be some questions—as it had been with the blind man and the rulers of the synagogue—that I might not be able to answer. But of one thing I was certain : He had opened my eyes.

“When I carried Agnes her breakfast she asked no questions.

“‘You were seeking God ; I knew you would find Him,’ she said joyfully. And when I told her it was she who had led me to the light, her cup ran over.

“‘I wish my mother could know ; she would thank God for sending me here,’ she said, and then she asked me what I would do about praying to the saints, and worshipping the mass.

“I had already made up my mind about that : she must not suffer for what she had done for me. ‘It will be only for a few days, Agnes,’ I told her. ‘I am sure God will forgive me, and when you are at rest, I will tell Father Ambrose everything.’

“‘He will be very angry ; what will they do to you?’ she asked.

“I told her that at least they could not separate me from the truth, and that I could never be unhappy with that, but she was not satisfied. ‘They will be very cruel to you,’ she said ; ‘I cannot leave you to suffer, Sister Marguerite. You must try and make your escape. Perhaps you have friends, mourning over you, even now.’

“‘I would not know where to look for them ; I have never heard my mother’s name,’ I told her, but she insisted : ‘You could go to my mother, then. If she could know I had kept the faith, and taught you to love it, she would be very happy, and she has had so much sorrow. Promise me, you will at least make the attempt, before you tell Father Ambrose. If you fail, you will be no worse off than before.’ I had no power to refuse her anything, though I reminded her sadly that, even if I could escape from the convent, I knew nothing of the country and how to find her friends. But that did not seem to worry her. ‘God will help you,’ she said, and I saw she was too near the hour when she would leave all cares behind, to comprehend any

earthly difficulty. I did not dare to be much with her during the day: I was so much afraid they would find out she was going and torment her at the last. But when I crept to her cell that night, she did not seem to have missed me much. 'I have been asleep, and I have had such happy dreams,' she said; 'I thought my mother was here,' and soon she was asleep again, holding my hand." The speaker paused, and stooping, laid her soft cheek against the mother's trembling hands. "I thought of you, through those long hours as I watched. It was you who had the best right to be there, and when she woke, she fancied it was you beside her: she had forgotten the convent, and thought herself up here on her moss pallet in the hills.

"'The cave is very light, and it looks larger than it ever did before,' she whispered. 'The moon must be very bright, my mother, and I hear singing. Where can it be?'

"It was a cloudy night, and the air was as still as death; I could not answer her. Her voice was fainter when she spoke again.

"'The light is growing brighter. Is it morning, my mother?'

"I had lifted her in my arms, that she might breathe more freely.

"'Nearly,' I told her, she would not have much time to wait.

"'Then put me down again,' she murmured, 'and turn my face to the light. I would like to see the day break.' And before I could lay her head upon her pillow, she had seen it—but not here!"

There was a long silence. The ruddy firelight showed tears on strong men's faces, but comfortless grief on none. Marguerite's head was resting on Madame Chevalier's shoulder. At last Rene spoke.

“We have not yet heard how you made your escape.”

Marguerite glanced at Joan.

“Part of it is not to my credit, Master Chevalier,” said the farmer’s wife; “but for that reason, I had best tell it myself. I held out for a month, beaten and starved, in the dungeon where they kept me, and then I gave in. I thought God would forgive me for the weakness of the body, but oh! I had no peace after that, and when I heard that our gentle Mistress Agnes had kept the faith to the last, I was more miserable still. There was a great stir in the convent when it was known she had died without confession, and that sœur Marguerite had been with her, but had given no warning to the sisterhood. She will never tell you about it herself, but she suffered many things, I can testify, for our dear young lady, and my heart went out to her for it, even though I did not know at first that she loved the truth too. One day as she passed by when I was scrubbing the floor, she spoke a kind word to me, and my sore heart overflowed, and I told her about the little ones I had left in the hills. She said nothing more then, but that night she came to me, and told me that she too loved the truth, and wanted to leave the convent, and that, if I would help her to find Madame Chevalier, she would take me with her. You can guess what answer I made to that. She had her plan all ready, and two nights later, we broke a bar in our window, and tying a clothes-rope to the sill, let ourselves down to the road. It was a stormy night, and we met no one on the road; but we might have failed to reach here after all, if it had not been for my friend, Master Pepin, who found us this evening buried in a cave by some miserable dragoons.”

“Tut! say no more about that,” interposed Pepin

cheerily. "And now, friend Joan, I read it in thine eye: thou art longing to be on the road once more. Thou wilt not have much farther to go; Marc and the little ones are in a cave scarce a mile farther up the mountain, and I stand ready to accompany thee. Ah, I thought thou wert wearing thy heart out!" as the mother sprang with a glowing face to her feet. Her farewell of Marguerite, however, was not taken without tears.

"You must let me bring my man and the little ones down to thank you for themselves," she whispered, "and if we ever have a roof over our heads again, mademoiselle, our home is yours."

"Nay, God has given Marguerite to me," interposed Madame Chevalier tenderly, and Marguerite looked up into her face and smiled.

CHAPTER XX.

“MANY WATERS CANNOT QUENCH LOVE.”

EGLANTINE was the first to rise the next morning. She was standing at the entrance of the cave, watching the winter sunrise flame up from behind the misty peaks, when she became aware of Rene standing beside her.

“‘It is a day which the Lord hath made. We will rejoice, and be glad in it,’” he said reverently, and she knew he was thinking of the light that had come to the young nun, and the morning into which Agnes had passed. Her eyes filled with tears. Would any message ever come to her out of the awful darkness into which Henri had passed, and would it be such a message as this?

Rene was looking at her searchingly. “Eglantine,” he said hesitatingly, “I have something to tell you. I do not know whether it will comfort or distress you.” Then, as she looked up quickly: “My mother says you have begun to think that Henri has been released from his sufferings. I have reason to believe that he still lives.”

“Still lives—Oh, Rene!” The glory flaming up into the winter sky was less beautiful than the rush of joy and hope into her face.

“Have you seen him, or heard from him? Tell me quickly. Will I ever look into his face again?”

“Calm yourself, my sister! I have obtained only

the faintest clue, and though it has convinced me that he is yet alive, it affords no hope of anything else."

"But that is much—so much to me," she sobbed. "Oh, Rene, my faith is not as triumphant, my love is not as unselfish as yours. I deceived myself, when I thought it would be a comfort to know that he was at rest. It is like being taken out of a grave myself only to know that he breathes the same air, looks up to the same stars that I do."

Rene drew her hand through his arm, and led her a few steps beyond the cave. "I would have told you last night, if I had known it would be so much to you," he said penitently. "Eglantine, I have neither seen nor heard from your husband, but you shall judge for yourself whether my suspicions are well-founded. In my dungeon at Toulouse I found your name cut over and over in the rocky wall. I told myself it was a coincidence, and that I had no right to build on it; but when I found others, equally well-known: 'Beaumont,' 'Agnes,' 'La Petite Gabrielle,' I could no longer doubt. There was but one hand that could have linked those names together, and left the imprint of its love upon the stone. I said nothing of the inscriptions on the wall, but I tried cautiously to find from my jailers who had been the former occupant of the cell. At first vainly. The chaplain professed ignorance. The turnkey bluntly refused to be interrogated. At last, a simple, lay monk, who waited on me when I was sick, was induced to speak. Henri had won his heart—as he could win every heart that was not utterly bad or callous to the last; however, my friar-friend would never be induced to mention the gentleman's name; but I could not doubt his description. Monsieur, he said, was tall and handsome, with an eye that went straight through

your soul, and a voice that made you long to do him a service. In his delirium he had often talked fondly of his wife and babe, and some one whom he called Agnes. He had never wavered in his faith, though often put to the extremity of the question. The patience with which he bore his injuries was wonderful. He rejoiced that he was counted worthy to suffer, he said. One day, he had a visit from a kinsman, a soft-stepping, soft-speaking gentleman, my old friend said, but it did not seem a happy one. Monsieur looked worn and white after he left, and the kinsman never came again, and from that day monsieur grew weaker and weaker, until at last the leech of the prisoner said he would die, if he did not have change of air and some respite from his sufferings, so they had taken him away, a few days before I came."

"Where?"

"It was not easy to find out. My old friend first said he did not know, then admitted that he dared not tell. It was not until I had received my sentence, and he thought there was no possibility of my ever making use of the information, that he consented to name the tower of constancy—the fortress of Aigues-Mortes."

"The most impregnable fortress in France!" she echoed.

"Yes," with quick comprehension. "I warned you, Eglantine, that there was nothing for you to hope for. Yet I could not rest in my fetters while I had this ray of tidings for you. I think, if it had not been for that, I could never have caught at the freedom I could not share with *her*." His voice broke a little.

She held out her hand to him gratefully.

"Yet you came home to find she was free before you," she whispered. "God was better to you than your fears, Rene."

"He has done for me more than I have ever asked or thought," he answered in a suppressed voice, and turned to walk back with her to the cave.

"You have not told me why you did not bring Jean with you," said Eglantine.

"He could not be induced to return to the place which he left with his wife and child. He broke away from me as soon as we reached the hills. But he will die before he will suffer himself to be taken again."

"I wish I could see him; I believe I could say something to comfort him. Did you tell him about Henri?"

"Yes. It was the only way I could rouse him to help me in my attempt at escape, but the old apathy settled upon him as soon as we were free. He has not been quite right since his sorrow."

Henri's wife did not answer. A vague plan was beginning to form itself in her heart, but Rene had already done too much for her: she would not voice it to him.

"Come and look at Antoine," she said, as they re-entered the cave. "He has never left his pallet since the night of the prêche and the joy of your return, and the tidings from Agnes has been too much for him, I think."

The old servant lay as if asleep, as they approached him, but at the first touch of Eglantine's hand, he opened his eyes.

"Ay, ay, mademoiselle," he said in a tone of feeble alacrity. "The captain has already given the order. The horses will be ready in a few moments."

He made an attempt to rise, and apparently unconscious of his failure, lay back smiling on his pillow.

"It is that way almost all the time now," whispered

Eglantine. "He seems to think himself back in the old castle in Bearn, with my father and his sister."

"He is in sight of home," answered Rene softly, as he laid the withered hand back upon the pallet. "Antoine, my old friend, do you not know me? Are you not glad to see me home again?"

But Antoine did not hear. His eyes were dilated; with a shaking finger he pointed to some object behind them. Rene and Eglantine turned hastily, and saw Marguerite, with little Gabrielle in her arms, a few paces away. The young nun stood where the light, coming through a crevice in the rocks above, fell full upon her face. The soft rings of auburn hair upon her temples gleamed with gold. The tender eyes she lifted from the child's face were blue as the winter sky without.

"My lady! my lady!" cried the old man in sudden rapture, stretching out his hands. "Have they given the little one back to you, or has it all been an evil dream?"

Trembling from head to foot, Eglantine went up to Marguerite.

"He has taken you for my mother, who died years ago. Come, and speak to him," she faltered.

And Marguerite came, and stood beside the bed.

Antoine's gaze was still riveted upon her face; drops of joy glistened upon his cheeks.

"I thought you would not forget the old man in his weakness and pain," he murmured. Then with a sudden change of tone, a swift brightening of the eye: "Give yourself no uneasiness, madame. Nannette and I will attend to everything. You have only to be quiet, and trust to us."

"He has gone back to that sad return from Flanders," whispered Eglantine, and laid her cool hand upon his

brow. "Antoine, you have been dreaming. Have you forgotten that we are in hiding in the hills? This is not my mother, but the nun who brought us the news about Agnes."

A troubled look crossed the wrinkled face.

"Not my lady!" murmured Antoine. "Yet the same hair, the same eyes, the brow like a Madonna—I cannot understand."

"Do not try," interposed Rene gently. "Your mistress shall watch beside you while you sleep, Antoine. When you wake, it will be clearer."

His glance told the two women that the waking would be on the other side of the mystery. But he was mistaken.

Half an hour later, as they still sat watching beside him, a sudden quiver ran across the old face. The dying eyes once more unclosed: this time, with a look solemn and far, as though Antoine had already caught a glimpse of the invisible.

"You are our little Mademoiselle Mignonnette!" he said in a clear voice, looking up at Marguerite. "'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace.'" He reached out for her hand, but before he could raise it to his lips, he had passed, smiling, into the Presence, where there "is neither sorrow, nor sighing, nor any such thing."

"I would like to tell you about my mother, here!" Eglantine whispered an hour later, when she and the nun stood once more looking down on the shut eyes and folded hands. And there, in the old cavern, beside the dead, with little Gabrielle looking up wonderingly into their faces—the story Nannette had told beside the firelit hearth to the happy child, was told once more.

The other members of the refuge household gath-

ered silently about during the recital, and there was a moment's tender uncertainty at its close. Then Marguerite lifted her face from her hands. The color was fluttering in her cheek. Through the great tears that filled her eyes a new soul was astir.

"Have you ever heard anything of—your sister?" she faltered.

Eglantine had risen to her feet, and was holding out her hands.

"I believe I have found her!" she cried joyfully, and the next moment they were in each other's arms.

"If it was my mother who gave me to you, it is God and Agnes who have sent Marguerite," Eglantine said at last, smiling up into her foster-mother's face. "She will be a far better daughter to you than ever I have been, aunt Monique."

But Madame Chevalier shook her head.

"You are my joy and crown, Eglantine!" she said tenderly, yet her lips quivered, as she kissed Marguerite. "I am almost selfish enough to wish I were the only one who had a claim upon you," she murmured. "I fear your grandfather will not be willing to let you stay with me always."

Marguerite's face was still flushing and paling.

"I can scarcely believe it yet," she said tremulously. "Are you sure we are not making a mistake—that we do not build too much on what may be only an accidental resemblance?" But when she heard of Madame Chevalier's interview with Father Ambrose and her confessor's evasion of the direct charge, her doubts vanished.

"I know him so well—he would have denied it at once, if he could," she said, and from that hour accepted her new ties without demur. But when Eglantine would have called her by her childish name, she shook her head.

“I like best the one by which Agnes called me,” she said in a low voice. And, that evening, when Antoine had been laid beneath his winding-sheet of snow, and the circle sat hushed, though not sorrowing, about the cavern-fire, she drew a book from her sleeve.

“It is the Latin Gospel I found in the convent library,” she explained briefly, and then she showed them between the leaves a shining curl. “It was she who brought me the light, who taught me that God was love. You will not blame me if I always love her best?” she pleaded.

Her sister smiled through her tears.

“I can only love you better for loving Agnes,” she answered.

Rene reached out his hand for the book. When he handed it back there was a tear gleaming on the sunny tress. But a moment later, Eglantine saw him whisper with his mother, and rising, go into the little niche, which Agnes had called her chamber. When he came out, he had his sister’s Bible.

“I think she would like you to have it,” he said, putting it into Marguerite’s hand.

Eglantine thought she had never seen a softer light upon his face.

It was their last night in the old cavern—hallowed by the feet of those who would no more go in and out among them.

The next day, instead of the weekly basket of provisions, came a letter from M. Laval to Eglantine.

“I fear your whereabouts in the hills is suspected, and that you are liable to be surprised,” wrote the unhappy banker. “You must at once find another hiding-place, and take greater precautions.

“Monique was right. The nun under whose care Agnes was placed at St. Veronique, proves to be no

other than my unfortunate Aimee's eldest child—whom I long since believed to be in a better world—and she has contrived to make her escape from the convent with one of the Huguenot converts. Father Ambrose no longer attempts to conceal her parentage, but boldly taxes me with having been aware of it ever since his conversation with Madame Chevalier. The matter is kept quiet for the honor of the Church, but he vows he will move heaven and earth but that he will discover the fugitive and bring her back. He is a terrible man, Eglantine. I can extort from him not a syllable about Agnes; the news of Rene's escape has added fuel to his resentment. Nothing could convince him that your hapless sister was not under my roof but a search of the house, and now he is himself organizing and directing the search in the hills. If any of you fall into his clutches, you are lost; he will show no mercy. If your sister has succeeded in reaching you, which I can scarcely believe, hide her in the depths of the earth, and watch your opportunity to escape across the border. It is your only hope. Sometimes I wish we were all in a happier and better world, but I suppose in your opinion, a poor turn-coat has nothing to say about that. I feel certain my motions are watched; I do not dare to send the basket of provisions, but enclose money which you can use instead. If you can make your way over to England, you will find all you need deposited to your credit in the London Bank. Adieu, my poor child, and God have mercy on us all!"

The month that followed was one of peril and hardship. Pierre Laval had not over-estimated the relentless energy with which Father Ambrose would pursue his search. Day after day the dragoons scoured the hills, and the refugees, driven from one hiding-place

to another, soon found themselves too large a household to travel with the secrecy and swiftness that were necessary. Sadly, the friends who had so long shared danger and privation resolved to part. Pepin, who had lately received a letter from a brother artisan who had made his way over into England, turned his face to the western coast. The needs of his young family and the thought of the good wages to be earned in the Manchester looms, had begun to outweigh in his mind the penalties attached to emigration. But Rene was too well aware how closely he would be watched for at every door of egress, to venture for some time, at least, beyond the shelter of the hills, and bidding his friend Godspeed, led his little band southward, from one covert to another, always travelling by night, never venturing to tarry long anywhere, often in danger of being betrayed by timid or false brethren—sometimes so nearly within the reach of their pursuers that they dared not kindle a fire or venture out to purchase food. Once or twice, they even heard the dragoons pass the cave where they lay hidden, and the young mother, in fear, had hushed the laughter of her babe, lest the tender music should bring down sorrow and death upon them all. Little Gabrielle was now a plump, rosy babe of nine months, upon whose sturdy health and sunny spirit the dark homes and strange cradles in which she found herself seemed to leave no shadow.

“She has Henri’s happy temper,” Eglantine whispered one day, when some baby-wile had drawn a smile from them all; but Rene understood why his mother, in answer, only stooped and kissed her. Not once, through all that trying time, had Henri’s wife ever lost heart, or her words of hope been lacking.

With Marguerite, it was different,

She had been very happy at first over Agnes' Bible, but the joy, whose "clear shining" had been so beautiful to them all, had slowly faded. Some indefinable trouble had begun to cloud her tender eyes. She uttered no complaint, but she was evidently ill at ease. In their family councils she sat silent. More than once Eglantine found her weeping over little Gabrielle.

"We must make allowances for her lonely life, and be patient until she gives us her confidence," Rene said to his mother; but he was, in truth, seriously alarmed.

They had now reached a lonely part of the hills, and had ventured for a day or two to take shelter in a shepherd's deserted hut. Marguerite had been sitting silent for some time in the doorway, her eyes fixed, not on the Bible that lay open upon her lap, but on the blue reach of sky visible above the mountain peaks. Suddenly she closed the book, and came and stood before Madame Chevalier.

"I must go back to the convent! Say that I may go back," she pleaded, in an abrupt, trembling voice.

"Marguerite!" exclaimed the mother, horror-struck.

Rene and Eglantine, standing by, could only look on in mute amaze.

"Do not be angry with me! Do not make it harder for me," hurried on the quivering voice. "I would never have come away but to bring you the tidings about Agnes; and now that is done, it is borne in on me that I ought to go back. You have all been very good to me, but you have my sister, you do not really need me, and I have brought you only sorrow and trouble."

"Marguerite!" repeated Monique Chevalier once more, this time in a tone of keen reproach. But she

was relieved of her first fear, that the girl's brain was failing.

A darker dread had, however, laid hold upon Rene.

"Have our privations been too severe for you?" he asked sternly. "Is the truth worth less than it costs, Marguerite?"

She turned and looked at him,—such a look of grave, gentle reproach that Eglantine burst into tears.

"Did I leave a soft couch and a plentiful board to come to you? Will I go back to anything but stripes, and revilings, and imprisonment?" asked the elder sister, and then she sank at Monique Chevalier's feet, and covered the mother's hand with her tears. "Do not think me ungrateful. Do not think I have not been happy with you!" she entreated. "What are these outside discomforts to the love and light I have found with you? Ah! you do not know what it has cost me to make up my mind to go back. But it is burnt into me night and day, that I came away without witnessing for the light, that I turned my back upon the Cross. You have had nothing but sorrow and trouble since I came to you: God will not let us rest until I go back, and give His message to the darkened souls I left behind me."

They understood her at last. With a low cry, Madame Chevalier folded her in her arms, and looked up at her son.

"It is a remnant of her old Romish bondage," he said harshly. "A relic of their superstitious 'will-worship and voluntary humility.' Marguerite! if you are trying to atone for the past, you discredit your Lord's perfect work. If you think to make yourself more pleasing in His sight, you are untrue to the liberty wherewith He has made you free. Voluntary martyrdom is only another form of penance, and pen-

ance is slavery! To go back to St. Veronique, to the death from which He saved you, is to go back to your old yoke, not to His cross nor the honor of His name."

"Softly, Rene!" whispered his mother, for Marguerite was trembling visibly.

"You do not understand," said the nun in a broken voice. "It is not to add to His work, nor to win favor in His sight. I know better than that. It is His love that constrains me. I have done nothing for Him all my life, and there is nothing for me to do out here. I could at least tell them what the light has done for me; if only one heard me before I was silenced, it would be worth dying for. I cannot help feeling that God has left me without the claims of other work, that I might be free to go back and bear my witness." She had lifted her head, and was looking at him deprecatingly, but Rene's cloudy brow did not clear.

"Have we no claims upon you?" he asked reproachfully. "Is it nothing that my mother looks to you, and leans upon you as a daughter—that your love has poured a stream of sunshine upon a path that has known many a sorrow, and your lips speak to her a comfort no others can—nothing that your coming has been to us all like the dawn of a new day, that to look at you, and remember the darkness out of which you have been brought, is to understand the preciousness of the truth, and the power of God's grace, as we never did before? It may look like a lowly vocation to you, in contrast with a martyr's crown, but I cannot think it unnoticed in the sight of Him, who Himself came to 'comfort all that mourn.' To be a light in a dark place, a song in the night to three bruised and bleeding hearts, is that nothing, Marguerite?"

Marguerite's eyes were fastened upon his mother's face.

"Is this so?" she asked.

"It would be the crowning sorrow of my life to give you up," was the answer.

Marguerite burst into tears. "Oh, forgive me, forgive me! I did not think it could matter to any one but me. How could I know I had come to be so much to you—how could I understand?"

Eglantine drew her sister's head to her shoulder. There was a sunny gleam on the dark lashes still glistening with tears.

"There is plenty of work for you," she whispered, "but for one most of all, my darling; I told you that our mother said she hoped I would make up to her father for all he had missed in her, but I have been so full of myself, I knew so little of God, I have never done it. It must be your work, Marguerite; you are so much better than I, you look so much like our mother, he will listen to you as he has never done to any one else. And you can tell him what the truth has done for you. Oh, my dear, I have felt from the first that this was to be your ministry. I believe God will bring you together some day."

"You will not have to be angry with me again," Marguerite said presently, looking up at Rene. But Rene had gone.

That night, as he sat a little apart in the shadow, a timid hand touched his arm.

"You were displeased with me this morning—you thought it was very wicked to wish to go back to the convent?" said Marguerite's low voice.

"I was disappointed," was the grave answer. "I am very jealous for your growth in grace, and I cannot bear that any root of bitterness from the old life

should spring up and trouble you. It pained me too, Marguerite, that you should find your life with us, hard as it has been, so easy to resign."

"Ah, you do not know! I could not let you know then," she interposed quickly. "I have had to struggle with myself for days and days. Every time I thought I had made up my mind, the first touch of little Gabrielle's hand would take all my strength from me. I am ashamed I should have found it so hard to do anything that I felt was right."

"It was because it was not right that you found it so hard. If God had called you to the sacrifice, He would have given you the strength. Marguerite, promise me, once for all, that you will never again think of laying down your life."

"Never, unless God asks for it in a way I cannot mistake," she replied. "Then, even you would not wish to hold me back."

"Then—I will not hold you back," he answered. But something in his face made Eglantine remember the night when he had led Agnes up to Fulcrand Rey.

The next morning he startled them by proposing to make the little chalet their permanent resting-place.

"The search has evidently been abandoned," he said, "and we have all lived too long without the sunshine. The hut is too far removed from the road, too much hidden by the pines, to catch the eye of any passing travellers."

"But provisions—how are we to obtain food?" asked Eglantine.

Rene led her to the doorway and showed her through an opening in the trees the chimneys of a farm-house in the valley below.

"The inmates are brethren who have been forced to abjure, but are still attached to the truth," he explained.

“I was there before daybreak this morning, Eglantine; they loaded me with all I could bring away, and will let us have provisions whenever we need—though they ask no questions for their own sakes.”

“That is well,” she answered joyfully, and when he came in that afternoon with a string of trout he had caught in the neighboring brook, he found a cheery fire blazing on the hearth, the evening meal set out on a rustic table which Eglantine and Marguerite had fashioned with their delicate hands, and little Gabrielle taking her first steps on the boarded floor.

“It is more like a home than anything we have known for a long time,” he said in a low voice.

“Than anything I have ever known,” smiled Marguerite. There were no longer any clouds in her sky. More than once in the quiet days that followed, Madame Chevalier, watching the fair happy face, wondered whether Father Ambrose would recognize his old pupil even if he should meet her. The spring was now well advanced, and the milder weather added not a little to the increased comforts of their condition, but as yet there had come no opportunity of communicating with M. Laval, and the secret hope which Eglantine had nursed through all their wanderings remained ungratified.

At last, one May evening, Rene came to his foster-sister.

“Jean is down at the brook. He has sought you of his own accord, and asks to speak with you alone. I hardly know whether you ought to go, Eglantine; he has a strange look.”

“I have nothing to fear from Henri’s valet,” she answered, starting to her feet. A private interview with Jean was what she herself had hoped and planned for. Rene followed her to the edge of the wood.

"I will be within call if you want me," he whispered. "There is something in the poor fellow's manner which makes me fear for his reason."

She scarcely heeded him as she hurried away, but the gaunt, emaciated figure that came forward to meet her, made her falter for a moment. Could this be Jean—stalwart, comely Jean?

"Madame does not recognize me," said the valet, pushing the gray locks from his brow and fixing his sunken eyes upon her.

With a pitiful cry, Henri's wife extended her hands. Jean raised them to his lips, but prevented the consolation that trembled upon her tongue.

"Do not speak to me of them, madame! Do not allude to my trouble, if you would not have me go mad again! I have come out of my prison with nothing but my religion and love for my master left. Only as my young sieur needs them, is there sense in my brain or strength in my right arm."

"I knew that; I felt sure I could depend on you!" cried Eglantine, laying her hand on his sleeve. "Jean, listen to me. You have loved him longer than I, more unselfishly; you will help me to get a message to him; will you not, Jean? You were always so brave and clever. I want to ask his forgiveness, and to let him know that we are thinking of, and praying for him out here. Can you not think of some way?"

Jean regarded her with an unmoved countenance.

"I have seen him," he said stolidly.

"Seen him—my husband!" Eglantine could scarcely tell whether it was her brain or Jean's that was failing.

"Ay, seen him!" repeated the valet, fixing his eyes on the brook that babbled at their feet. "Master Chevalier said to me: 'Jean, he is alive; he is in the

fortress of Aigues-Mortes. If we could only let him know that his wife and child are with us !' And then I knew what my work was to be."

"Jean !" exclaimed the wife once more, "have you actually obtained entrance to my husband's prison, and had speech with him ?"

But the half-crazed man continued in the same monotonous tone, without taking any notice of the interruption :

"And then I knew what my work was, why my miserable life had been spared. I will go, I said to myself ; I will do the one service that remains for my master, or I will perish in the attempt. My life is nothing that I should fear to lose it, and if I succeed, I will look into his face and hear his voice once more. So I went, and they told me he was not there."

"You asked at the fortress ?" Eglantine was very quiet now. "That was very brave of you, Jean, but it was too great a risk. The police are still looking for you and Rene."

"I had nothing to lose," returned Jean indifferently. "They told me he was not there, so I saw I must wait the Lord's pleasure to open the door, and I hired a boat and turned fisherman, and sold my fish at the fortress, and got acquainted with some of the keepers. I had thought I was going mad before that, but my cunning came back when my sieur needed it. At last I managed to worm out of them that he was indeed in the tower, but allowed to see no one—not even the turnkey, who thrust his food in through a hole in the wall."

A low moan escaped the wrung heart of his listener. Jean paused for a moment, and regarded his master's wife with a look of dumb, dog-like affection ; then once more forgot her in his story.

"I was beginning to feel discouraged, when the little daughter of the head jailer fell into the canal; she would have died if I had not jumped in after her, and the next day her father sent for me, and asked what he could do for me. I had been so steady at the fishing, none of them doubted that was not my real calling, and the cross I wore on my breast had satisfied them about my religion. I told Master Neville I had no ambition, that I did not need money; but I would risk my life over again to see my master, and give him tidings of his friends. He said it was impossible, that his orders were very strict, and he would lose his place if he disobeyed. But when he found I would have nothing else, and I had sworn by all the saints in the calendar that I would not attempt his escape, he gave way. The little one was his only child, and he loved her as his own soul. So the next night, while the commandant was in the town at a supper, he let me in for an hour."

"You saw him? Oh, Jean! if I could only have known, and sent him a message."

Jean dropped his head despondingly. "I beg your pardon, madame. I did not think of that until it was too late."

"Never mind," answered Eglantine, forcing back her tears. "It is more than I deserve to hear from him. Tell me how he looked, and what he said."

"I saw him only in the moonlight, madame. His brow is lined and his hair bleached, as though it had been twenty years since we met. But when he smiled, there was the same look in his eyes, as when we were lads together and I carried his arrows behind him on the hill."

"Then he can smile?"

"Ay, madame, and talk like an angel, of the love of

God, and the home up yonder. The fire in my heart cooled, and I could weep as I listened, as I have not been able to weep since the night I saw them lying there in each other's blood. The only time he broke down was when I told him about Mistress Agnes, and how we had contrived to get you out of the chateau. M. Renau had told him that you were in a convent, and that the little one was dead. He made me tell him the story over and over, snatching at every word, as I have seen the starving wretches in the Flemish towns, after a long siege, snatch at bread. And when I told him that his lady had come to be the joy and strength of us all, and held the truth as dear as any, he embraced me, his poor servant, and bade me tell Master Chevalier that he would bless him for it to his latest breath. He had neither pen nor paper, my lady, but he said I was to tell you he had thought of you and prayed for you night and day, and would love you to his dying hour. He said you were not to reproach yourself for the past, his had been the greater fault, and that you were not to grieve over his sufferings, for there had been One with him in the fire, and his joy no man had been able to take from him. And now they had ceased to torment him. God was very near, and he would soon be at rest, but he would wait your coming in a better world."

There was a long silence. The dusk deepened, the mountain brook sang on. Jean gazed absently down into the stream. At last the wife lifted her face.

"I must see him," she said in a low, steady voice. "If he is dying, it will make him happier to have me smooth his pillow; and if not, it will give him strength and courage to live. Oh, Jean, surely you will help me—for his sake, as well as mine."

The valet recoiled.

"I dare not, my lady! He laid it on me as my last duty, that I should see you did not. 'She will want to come to me, Jean,' he said, 'she will not think of her own safety if she feels there is anything she can do for me, but she must not be allowed to take the risk. Tell her I lay it on her as my last request, my last command, to remain with Madame Chevalier, and, for the sake of our little daughter, if our friends ever decide to leave France, to go with them.'"

It was a sharp test for Eglantine's purer and better love for her husband. The "obedience" that "is better than sacrifice," is sometimes so much harder to render, but after a moment's struggle the wife put herself out of the question.

"Do you go back again, Jean? Will there be any way of finding out when the end comes?"

"I go back certainly, my lady. The jailer has promised to let me know when my master's sufferings cease."

"And meanwhile, if he should not be as sick as he thinks, if there should come some way of serving him, which he could not foresee, when he asked that promise—you will let me know, Jean? I will never disobey him for my own sake, but ever since Rene and Marguerite have been given back to us, I have been trying to plan some way for his escape."

"Escape!" echoed Jean, his eyes glowing suddenly through the dusk. "God forgive me, madame, but I never thought of that before. Ah, that would indeed be to know one moment of happiness again before I die." And without waiting for reply, Jean broke away from his master's wife and disappeared in the wood.

Eglantine watched anxiously for his return, for days after, but the valet came no more.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LAST TIE.

MIDSUMMER brought a letter from Pepin, post-marked Southampton. It had been sent under cover to a trusty friend in Nismes, and had passed through many hands in the hills before reaching its destination. But it brought the joyful tidings that the weaver and his family had eluded the vigilance of the coast-guard and were safe in an English home. Pepin wrote enthusiastically of the fine situation that had been at once offered him, and the joy he and Aimee experienced in waiting upon the unrestricted services of the Word, and teaching the blessed truths to their children without fear or hindrance. The letter concluded with an earnest entreaty to his friends to follow their example.

Rene looked at his mother.

“‘If they persecute you in one city, flee ye to another,’” she answered sadly. “You can no longer practice your profession here, my son. There may be work waiting you among your exiled brethren.”

“And Marguerite?”

Mignonnette de Bertrand laid her soft cheek on Madame Chevalier’s shoulder.

“‘Where thou goest, I will go,’” she said softly.

“Eglantine?”

But the dark eyes of Henri’s wife filled with tears.

“Might we not wait a little longer?” she pleaded.

"I cannot refuse to go with you ; yet, while Henri lives, my heart is in France."

"Then we will let the matter rest for the present," decided Rene. "It is the last resource, and I confess while there is an atom of hope that things may brighten here, my duty is not clear."

But though the subject was dropped, the possibility of such an alternative in the future was now fairly before them all.

The second anniversary of Eglantine's wedding had passed, without bringing any tidings from Aigues-Mortes, and the first frosts of October had touched the woods with gold, when Fulcrand Rey one evening entered the little hut. More than once, in his journeys to and fro, the young minister had found it convenient to tarry a night with his friends, but this time he came charged with a heavy errand. The blow which the Huguenot subjects of Louis XIV. had long had reason to dread had at last fallen. The noble bulwark, which the genius and policy of Henry the Great had raised ninety years before, and against which the fury and craft of Rome had long been beating like a flood, was now swept away with one stroke of a pen. The Edict of Nantes had been revoked, and the Protestants of France had no longer the right to exist.

"The king pierced the dyke on his coronation, when he refused to receive the deputation of our minister," said the Cevanol pastor sorrowfully. "It has been only a question of time ever since, yet while the name of their liberties was left, the Huguenots of France have clung to the delusion of the clemency of their king."

"And now?" asked Monique Chevalier.

"Now, I believe, in spite of the increased penalties

attached to emigration, hundreds will at once leave France. The looms of England and Holland await our artisans, the shores of the new world invite our emigrants. The truth will spring up on other soil, but for us there has come a long night."

"Then you will not leave France?" said Rene.

"I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the Cevennes," was the quiet answer. "For their sakes, I stand 'ready to be offered.'" And when he parted from them the next morning, something told them they would see his face on earth no more.

Eglantine laid her hand on Rene's arm, as he stood gazing sadly after his friend.

"Is your duty clear now, Rene?"

He was silent.

"Our existence has sunk to a mere battle for bread, and it will be worse as the winter comes on. We can no longer worship God even in secret, and the revocation has taken away all hope of remedy. Great as are the risks of emigration, they cannot be greater than the perils that confront us here."

"I will never leave France without you, Eglantine."

"And you will not ask me to go, while my heart says stay; that is like you, Rene, but I am not so selfish as to exact the sacrifice. I will write to my grandfather to-day, and if your friends in the farmhouse will speed the letter on its way, I feel sure he will devise some plan to aid us."

The rare tears stood in Rene's eyes.

"You are doing this for our sake, Eglantine."

"For yours, and my child's; but for Christ's too, Rene. I have no right to entomb here the life He has given back to me, and for which He may yet have use."

"If you see it in that light, I dare not refuse the sacrifice," he answered in a low voice. "Eglantine,

your prayers can reach Henri as well there as here, and you have lifted a sore weight from my heart."

She looked tenderly into his face. "May I speak to you freely, Rene?"

"As freely as to your own soul, my sister."

"You love Marguerite."

A tremor ran through the strong man's frame.

"How could I help it?" he asked. "Has she not been to me like light in darkness, and rest in pain? It is not the joy of my first youth, Eglantine, but the peace of a sorrow God has comforted."

"And that is something deeper and better! Oh, Rene, I have loved Marguerite a hundred times more, since I saw it was in her power to make up to you for all you suffered through me. Yet you have not spoken to her."

"I must not. It would be an unfair advantage for me to take in my position, and her grandfather might well resent it. If we ever reach a happier land, and I have a home of my own to offer her, it will be time enough to speak. Then, she will have learned to appreciate her own social position, and be able intelligently to choose between what her grandfather can do for her, and the most I will be able to offer. These are not days for marrying or giving in marriage."

"Nor are they days in which to keep silence toward each other," urged the younger sister warmly. "Rene, who knows but that at any moment death might come between you? Marguerite might go hungry all her life for the words you might have spoken, or you be left vainly to repent that you did not tell her what she was to you, before it was too late. As to our grandfather, it would ill become him to withhold, what he would never have had, but for you and Agnes."

"Do not tempt me," interposed Rene hurriedly.

“My mother feels that I am right. Even were I free to speak to Marguerite, I would not dare to do it yet. She is sweet and gentle with me, as she is with you all, but I cannot misunderstand her manner. She looks upon life as a child, or an angel, might. I would only pain her, if I spoke to her about love.”

“Marguerite is neither a child nor an angel,” retorted Eglantine, with a sudden gleam of her old archness, fringed with tears. But she was wise enough to say no more. Only from that hour she urged on the preparations for their departure with ardent, self-forgetful zeal.

Her grandfather's reply had been prompt and to the point. He had lately established a branch office in London, and was about to despatch a clerk by a schooner then in port at Agde. If Rene thought he could personate the man—who was about his height, though beyond middle age—Madame Chevalier and Eglantine might take the place of his wife and daughter, for whom passports had been also obtained, and Marguerite pass for their maid. There was no provision for a child, but the little one, M. Laval thought, could be smuggled on board without much difficulty. He would have to keep quiet in the matter himself, for fear of arousing suspicion. It was possible he might not be even able to see them before their departure, but the captain of the schooner was in hearty sympathy, and he had written to his London agent to meet them at Southampton, and provide them with all necessary funds. There was little danger, he thought, of the ruse being detected by the officer who would examine their papers, as the clerk and his family were strangers in Agde. At any rate the plan presented fewer difficulties than an attempt to elude the coast-guard by a secret embarkation.

“It is a far safer one than anything I had been able to think of,” said Rene joyfully, and the day after the letter was read, the little chalet was abandoned, and they were on their way to the coast. Partly on foot and partly in a wagon, furnished by secret friends for the latter part of the journey, the refugees succeeded in reaching a fishing hamlet near Agde three days before the schooner sailed. The host of the little seaside auberge proved to be a Huguenot, who gladly undertook to give the ladies shelter and protection, while the doctor went alone into the city to complete the arrangements for their departure. As it was possible Rene might not have been able to find the English captain at once, Eglantine and her aunt tried not to be anxious when night closed in before his return. But when the long hours of darkness had worn away and another day dawned without his arrival, they could no longer meet each other’s eyes, and by noon Henri La Roche’s wife had whispered a piteous entreaty into their landlord’s ear that he would send into Agde and make inquiries. In two hours the messenger was back with the tidings they most feared. M. Chevalier had been recognized by a party of dragoons on his way home the night before. He had refused to surrender at their summons, and the last seen of them they were in hot pursuit, with levelled carbines, while he was only a few yards ahead. There could be no doubt of the result, though the soldiers had not returned to Agde with their captive. They must either have overtaken him or shot him down. Master Blanc ended his sorrowful story with an earnest entreaty to his friends not to feel themselves forsaken, as he would himself see them on board the schooner the next night, but they scarcely heard him. The blow had come with two-edged sharpness at this

moment, when they were in sight of safety and freedom. Even the mother's courage, trained in so long a school, gave way.

"It is His hand, but it presses me sore," she moaned.

Eglantine threw her arms about her neck.

"Perhaps it is only a rumor. Do not lose heart yet," she whispered; but the hope had no root in her heart, and died in a sob upon her lips.

Marguerite stood aloof, watching them wistfully. Monique Chevalier suddenly remembered her, and held out her hand.

"We do not shut you out of our grief, my child. You have a right to weep with us," she said.

Marguerite caught the outstretched hands to her breast and covered them with kisses, but she did not speak. Through those long hours of waiting she had been strangely quiet; now there was a still joy shining in her eyes, which perplexed Eglantine. Was it possible that she had been mistaken in thinking that her sister's heart had been opening to Rene's deep, though unspoken love? or could it be that Marguerite held the honor of martyrdom so high, that she could rejoice in it even for the man she loved? If so, her convent rearing had indeed unfitted her for the common joys and sorrows of life, and with the first chill that had ever fallen on her warm love for her sister, Eglantine turned back to her aunt and let Marguerite undress little Gabrielle and sing her to sleep.

She wondered at her own blindness the next morning, when she woke to find Marguerite's bed empty, and a note to Madame Chevalier lying on the table.

"Be comforted!" had written the trembling, girlish hand. "God has at last put it into my power to repay what I owe to you for Agnes. By to-night M.

Chevalier will be returned to you. He must not blame me for doing what he would have done for any one, and my grandfather cannot resent the exchange, which gives a protector to you and Eglantine. I go gladly.

MARGUERITE."

"Then she does love him!" exclaimed Eglantine, when she was able to speak.

The paper slipped from the mother's nerveless hand.

"She thinks to purchase his liberty with her own, poor child! But she cannot succeed; she will only ruin herself, and I will lose them both. Quick, Eglantine! my hood and mantle. The sacrifice, even if it could avail, cannot be permitted."

Eglantine laid her hand upon her arm.

"There are steps and voices in the corridor. Can she have returned?" she whispered.

The door opened, and Rene stood before them.

"My son!" exclaimed his mother in a thrilling tone.

"Have you been anxious about me?" he asked, hurrying up to her. "I have had a narrow escape, but I hoped the tidings would not reach you before I did." He stopped abruptly, struck by the expression of her face. "What is wrong—where is Marguerite?" he asked, glancing round.

She could not answer him, but Eglantine, who had picked up the note from the floor, put it into his hand. His quick eye grasped the contents in a second; the next he had turned to the door.

"What road did she take? How long has she been gone?" he asked in a voice hardly recognizable.

"We knew nothing until we found the letter a few moments ago. Oh, Rene, where are you going? What can you do?"

“Do! I will bring her back, or perish in the attempt.” He was gone the next minute.

Master Blanc stopped him in the court.

“You must take my horse, doctor; you will save time by waiting for it.” And as Rene followed him to the stable—“She has taken my eldest lad with her to show her the way to Nismes, and Percy, the little one, says they set out this morning by daybreak. He says he heard mademoiselle tell his brother last night that she could save M. Chevalier, if he would help her and not say anything, and the children are so fond of you, doctor, they never dreamed what the poor young lady had in her head. There’s the nag! I wish she was a faster one, but at least she can travel three times as fast as mademoiselle’s little feet.”

The young surgeon gripped his good friend’s hand.

“If I do not come back, see that my mother and sister leave on the schooner to-night,” he entreated, and leaping into the saddle, galloped away. To his dying day, he never forgot that ride.

The sun was just visible above the horizon, sending ripples of rosy light across the plain; the freshness of early morning was in the air. There were no passers on the road, and the peasants at work in the fields only looked up in dull surprise as he dashed past them. If Marguerite had attempted to make the journey on foot, and his pursuit was not interrupted, he must overtake her before she had gone many miles. But the hope of intercepting the sacrifice could not efface the fact that she had been willing to make it—that she had “gone gladly” to die for him. And a tumult of pain and sweetness filled Rene Chevalier’s breast.

“My darling!” he sobbed once under his breath. It was the only time he spoke.

He had passed the tenth mile-stone, and was in sight

of a blacksmith's forge, where a couple of dragoons had just drawn rein, when he caught sight of two figures under a wide-spreading chestnut-tree just ahead of him. The woman was seated upon the ground, evidently in weariness, while she pleaded earnestly with a lad who stood irresolute before her. The boy's face was toward Rene, who at once recognized his landlord's son. A moment more, and he had leaped from his horse and was standing beside them.

"Marguerite!" he said, laying his hand upon his friend's arm.

She looked up, trembling.

"You—here?" she gasped.

"It was a false report about my arrest; I reached the inn just as my mother and Eglantine found your note. Marguerite, did you think I could accept such a sacrifice?"

"You would not have known—I did not mean you to know—until it was done," she faltered. But the color had rushed to her face, and she did not lift her eyes. The step, which had seemed so simple, so natural, that morning, had suddenly become very difficult of explanation.

Rene turned to the lad.

"Michael, you ought to have known better. The authorities never exchange, and mademoiselle would only have imperilled herself."

"That's just what I was a-telling her just now, sir. She never let me know till a little while ago what her plan was, and I said right away it would be no use, or if it would, I was afeard you would be angry with me, and she was a-begging of me not to be obstinate, when you rode up."

"That is true; Michael is not at all to blame," added Marguerite, rising hurriedly. "I suppose I have been very foolish, though it did not seem so then! Do not

let us say anything more about it—only take me home.” Her voice was stricken with tears.

Rene drew her deeper into the shadow of the tree, while Michael darted after the horse, which had suddenly sprung away.

“Do you suppose I can ever forget that you were willing to lay down your life for me?” asked Agnes Chevalier’s brother in a shaken voice. “Marguerite! if you knew the sweetness that has blended with the anguish of that thought, through all this sorrowful journey, you would not try to take it from me. Do you remember the day when you wanted to go back to the convent—how pained I was, and how I made you promise never to think of it again? Did it never dawn on you why I was more deeply wounded than the rest? Your proposition showed me in a flash what you had grown to be to me. I thought I had put forever out of my life any love like that. I woke to find myself resting in you, rejoicing over you, as I had never done over her whom I first hoped to make my wife. Do not turn away from me now, my love, for from that hour I have felt that God meant us for each other. But I have tried to be patient. I said to myself: ‘She has dwelt like one apart, she has never thought of marriage like other women, she will be frightened if I speak to her of love; I must wait until she has seen more of the world, and the sweetness and blessedness of other lives that God has joined together.’ And yesterday, when I was fleeing from the dragoons, and thought I would never see your face again, I told myself it was well: I had done right not to draw your heart to mine, not to link your young life with one devoted to sorrow and misery. ‘She will be happy with some one else,’ I thought, ‘and when I meet her in heaven I can tell her all.’”

A sudden tremor shook the hand that Rene held.

“I did not know—I did not understand,” faltered Marguerite, and her voice told him she was weeping. “I never thought of such a thing, any more than if I was still in the convent, or we were all in heaven. You were Agnes’ brother, and we both loved the Master. Was not that enough?”

It was Rene’s hand that quivered now. Could he have been mistaken, after all? Had this generous act of devotion been prompted only by simple sisterly affection? He could see nothing of the averted face but a tear-wet cheek, in which the troubled color came and went.

“Marguerite,” he said, and something in his voice made Marguerite forget herself, and look up at him anxiously, “we have dwelt too long together in the shadow of death, we stand too much in jeopardy this very hour, not to be true with each other. When I read your note this morning I could not help believing that God had given me the desire of my heart. ‘Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends’; and you had gone gladly to lay down yours for me. I reproached myself that I had not spoken sooner, that you might have known that to take care of yourself was the truest way to serve me. But if I have made a mistake, do not let my words trouble you. Only tell me so, and I will put the presumptuous hope out of my breast, and you shall be my dear sister as before.”

He paused, and waited. Marguerite’s eyes were once more upon the ground.

“You were in danger, and I thought I could save you,” she said in a low voice. “I could have gone away, and never heard your voice again, if I could have set you free. How could I understand what that meant? I never knew what I had done until——”

"Until when? Oh, my darling! are you afraid to trust me?"

"Until I saw you just now," she answered, a tide of rosy color mounting to her brow, as her grave, sweet eyes at last met his. "No, I am not afraid to trust you, Rene. I can trust you with my whole soul!"

But the next moment, the happy blush had faded, and she was clinging to him, white with terror, as the soldiers, whom he had seen at the forge above, galloped past, with their carbines gleaming in the sun.

"If they had seen you it would have been my fault," she breathed.

"If they had met you this morning it would have been mine," he returned. "Do not tremble, Marguerite. I knew they were there, and that we were safer under the trees until they passed. I will take you at once now to my mother."

A farmer's wagon was creeping by along the road. Rene whispered a word in the ear of the simple-looking country lad who was driving the oxen, lifted Marguerite in among the fresh green vegetables, and sprang in after her.

"You may ride on and tell them we are coming. I will not leave mademoiselle," he said to Michael, who came up, breathless, with the runaway steed, and while the boy trotted off, overjoyed at the permission, he and Marguerite, in the shadow of the old wagon, followed more slowly, talking hand in hand of the way God had led them.

On the brow of a hill, two miles nearer the sea, Rene drew aside the curtains, and showed his companion a dark spot on the eastern horizon.

"It is the tower of Aigues-Mortes," he said under his breath, and, as her soft eyes filled with tears, "I

was there yesterday. Yes ; it was a risk, my darling, but I could not leave France without seeking the last tidings for Eglantine, and giving Henri's faithful servant an opportunity to accompany us. But Jean will not leave the country while his master lives."

"Then he does still live?"

"Yes ; he has been nigh unto death, but has rallied again : his constitution is naturally so hardy. Jean has seen him once more, and says he is still calm and joyful at the prospect of death, and firm in his command for his wife to seize the first opportunity to leave France. The Abbe Bertrand, your cousin and hers, Marguerite, has lately been appointed chaplain of the tower, and shows him many kindnesses, but it would have made it easier for Eglantine if he could have been at rest before we went."

But when he said as much to Eglantine herself an hour later, Henri La Roche's wife shook her head, while her tender lips vibrated with sudden pain.

"I am afraid you will think my faith very weak, or my love very selfish, Rene ; but I cannot see it so. I know all you would say to me about the blessedness of that other life, but still, when I think I may hear that he is dead, my soul seems to dissolve with dread—nothing is so irremediable as that. While I can pray for him, and he for me, it will be easier to live, even at the ends of the earth."

"Thank God you feel so, since he does live," was all Rene could say.

Eglantine brushed away her tears. No drop from her own bitter cup should mar the sweetness that had at last been poured out for him.

"You have spoken to Marguerite, Rene?"

"How could I keep silence—after this morning?"

"And I was right—she will make you happy?"

His grave, shining eyes sought the other side of the room, where Marguerite sat beside his mother.

"She has promised to be my wife ; God has given her to me," he said.

Eglantine drew a letter from her pocket.

"It is from my grandfather," she said, as she put it into his hand. "Ah, I thought you would be surprised, Rene, but we have each had our little secret. I wrote and told him that you cared for Marguerite, and I believed she did for you, but that you would not speak without his permission, and I asked, in return for all you had done for me, that I might have the pleasure of giving my sister to you myself. No, do not thank me. It has been a selfish pleasure after all, and little in comparison with what I owe. There is his answer. He grumbles a little at being asked to resign what he has never been able to enjoy, but I can see he is secretly relieved. He is sensible enough to know he could never have had her with him here, and he will take care that she does not come to you a penniless bride. Oh, I know you do not care for that, Rene. She is a dowry in herself, but it will be a comfort to Marguerite and me, and you cannot refuse to accept it at her hands. My brother, I can ask nothing more for you than that God will give back to you in her, all that you have done for us."

"You have done that a hundred times already, Eglantine. You are yourself my exceeding great reward," he answered warmly, and then as Henri's baby-daughter toddled to them, laughing, across the floor, he lifted his pet in his arms, and bade her mother come and see the basket-cradle, in which the little one was to make her secret journey on board that night.

Ten hours later, when the moon rose round and

golden out of the purple sea, they were on the deck of the English schooner, moorings loosened, sails spread. The last danger was passed. Little Gabrielle slept upon her mother's breast, Marguerite knelt with her head on her sister's shoulder, Madame Chevalier and her son stood hand in hand. All eyes were fixed upon the shore they would never tread again. Thanksgiving for the freedom hardly won mingled in every breast with a prophetic wave of the homesickness that would more than once steal over them in the days to come. The promise of free altars on another shore could not blind their hearts to the fact that the truth, for which they had toiled and suffered, was being banished from the land they loved. No one spoke as the pearly light deepened in the sky, and the silhouettes of the distant hills and the outlines of the receding coast became plainly visible. Thoughts of the ruined temple on the slope of the Cevennes, the turret-room in the old chateau, and the unknown grave in the convent of St. Veronique came and went with visions of the "better country," and glimpses of that love which is the dwelling-place of hunted hearts throughout all generations.

It was Rene who at last broke the silence, laying his hand on the head of Eglantine's sleeping child.

"At least we will be able to teach her the truth, without fear," he said tenderly; "she will never know what we have passed through," and with the words a tender curtain fell upon the past, and a door of hope opened into the future, through which they could gaze without tears.

But when Rene would have persuaded her to go below, with his mother and Marguerite, Henri's wife shook her head.

"While we are in sight of the French coast, I can-

not close my eyes. Be patient with me a little longer," she pleaded.

"I have no heart to say you no," he answered. "But give my mother the child. The night air is cool for her."

She obeyed, and scarcely seemed to notice when he returned, and wrapping a large cloak about her, resumed his watch at her side. The boat was being put about in the stream, opposite a small cove, and there was no little confusion as the great hawsers were dragged to and fro. The loud aye ayes of the English sailors rang out in answer to the sharp, unintelligible commands of the mate.

"We are to anchor here until after the moon sets," explained Rene. "It is a little out of our course, but the captain has promised to wait for a boat-load of refugees, who are trying to elude the coast-guard. When you hear the report of a carbine, Eglantine, the lights will be hung out on the side of the ship; then look out for the boat."

"I wonder if they are leaving as much of their hearts behind them, as I am?" she sighed, but, as he had hoped, the thought of others still in peril proved a partial diversion from her own grief, and he was not surprised when the paling moon had sunk at last into the sea, that her ear was the first to catch the sound of the report.

"There it is, Rene! The lights gleam across the water, and see! some dark object puts out from the shore; it is moving through the water; it is a boat."

"Yes, it is a boat," he answered, rising too, and leaning eagerly over the railing. "And the tide serves, Eglantine; they will not be long in reaching us."

It was a still night, and they could soon hear the plash of oars. The captain's trumpet rang out across

the water ; there was an answering hail from one of the rowers. Then the boat ran alongside, and a rope was thrown out.

Eglantine looked up to speak to Rene, and found herself alone. Whence came the impulse that prompted her, she could never explain. There are some intuitions too fine for sense, too subtle for reason. Without a moment's hesitation, she gathered her cloak about her and hurried forward. All was darkness, save where two swaying lanterns showed a knot of sailors leaning over the gunwale, gesticulating earnestly. She could understand nothing of their strange speech and Rene was nowhere to be seen. She stood by, troubled and uncertain, until the good-natured mate caught sight of her, and contrived in broken French to make her understand that there was a sick man in the boat, whom they would have to draw up with a rope.

As he spoke, there was a call from below :

“Ready now, my men. Steady—pull slowly.”

Was that Rene's voice? Eglantine laid her hand upon her heart, and tried to still its tumultuous beating. Slowly and carefully the mariners drew up their living burden ; there was a glad cheer, as the tall figure, wrapped in a blanket, at last came in sight. Hands were instantly ready to lift the sick man over the railing, and lay him gentle upon a piece of tarpaulin spread upon the deck. The light of the lanterns fell upon a white, ghastly face ; the dark eyes glowing in their sunken sockets alone spoke of life. But with a cry those who heard never forgot, a cry that rang out above the rattling sail and creaking cordage, Eglantine La Roche darted forward and fell on her knees beside the canvas.

“Henri ! Henri !” she sobbed, and laid her head in its old place upon his heart.

A look of unutterable content settled upon the wan face. The sick man feebly moved his hand and laid it upon the drooping head : then lifted his eyes heavenward.

“My God, I thank Thee !” he said in a faint voice that still had in it something of the music that had stirred the child’s heart beside the old Cevanol hearth.

“Amen !” said Rene’s glad voice beside them.

Eglantine looked up, her face positively dazzling with light ; every teardrop turned into a jewel.

“Is this your doing too, Rene ?”

“I knew nothing until I recognized Jean’s voice in the hail just now.”

The wife turned her full eyes upon the gray-haired valet kneeling at his master’s side.

“Then we owe it to you, Jean ?”

“I never thought of it until you put it into my head, madame.”

Henri smiled, and taking the strong hand of his faithful servant, laid it in the soft palm of his wife’s.

“Thank him for me, ma mie ! I had lost all hope of life and freedom here—I thought only of meeting you in a better world ; it was he who roused me from my lethargy, he who told me of your love and sorrow, until the blood leaped once more in my veins, and I was ready to do and dare. Then he made me change clothing with him, and leave the fortress in his place, while at the risk of his life he stayed behind in mine, and only saved himself by a leap from the window that night.”

Madame Chevalier and Marguerite stood beside them. Eglantine took her sleeping child from her sister’s breast and laid the little one in the arms of the childless man.

“From to-night, she is yours as well as ours ; her lips shall thank you,” she said tremulously, and as if in ratification of the tender compact, the baby girl stirred in her sleep and touched Jean’s bronzed cheek with her dimpled hand.

CHAPTER XXII.

WINKLE STREET, SOUTHAMPTON.

ON a pleasant spring morning, in the year 1687, a traveller, who had just landed at the Southampton pier, stopped opposite the old hospital of St. Julian, Winkle Street, and gazed up long and earnestly at the inscription over the doorway of the ancient chapel: "DOMUS DEI."

The building had been originally endowed by Henry III., for the benefit of pilgrims, but at the command of Elizabeth, a century before, the chapel had been set apart as a place of worship for French emigrants driven by persecution from their own land. There, in the heart of a strange people, amid the clash of contending faiths, the exiles had ever since been permitted unmolested to hear the Word of God in their own tongue and according to their own creed.

As the stranger looked wistfully over at the venerable structure, a woman's voice, at a window in the house behind him, suddenly took up Madame Guyon's beautiful hymn:

" Oh, Thou, by long experience **tried**,
Near whom, no grief can long **abide**,
My Lord, how full of sweet content
I pass my years of banishment."

The voice of the singer was silvery and low, but sweeter still to the listener's ear the sound of the French tongue in the English port. The dark-browed chapel and ancient hospital vanished. Before his

eyes, rose a vision of vine-clad hills and soft blue southern skies, and as if in God-sent comfort to the longing that swept his breast, the singer at the window went on :

“ While place we seek, or place we shun,
The soul finds happiness in none :
But with my God to guide my way,
'Tis equal joy to go or stay.

“ All scenes alike engaging prove,
To souls impressed with sacred love :
Where'er they dwell, they dwell in Thee,
In heaven, in earth, or on the sea.”

There was a moment's pause. The exile had drawn back under the shadow of the window ; the “ *Domus Dei* ” swam before his eyes in a mist of tears. The singer spoke to some one at her side, and a man's rich tenor blended with her silvery soprano in the concluding strain :

“ For me remains nor place nor time,
My country is in every clime :
My heart is glad, and free from care,
On any shore, since God is there.”

The stranger stepped forward to lay his hand on the knocker. Before he could do so, the door opened, and a gray-haired man, leading a little child by the hand, came out.

“ Will you take me to see the ships, Jean ? ”

“ If you like, my mademoiselle.”

“ And tell me about your own country, and how you helped to get me out of the chateau when I was a baby ? ”

“ If it pleases you, my heart's-ease ! ”

“ Godfrey isn't old enough to understand yct, is he, Jean ? ”

The man did not answer. He had caught sight of

the figure before him, and was staring, as though he had seen a ghost at midday.

“M. l’Abbe !”

“Nay, I have left that name behind me ;—M. Bertrand, a French gentleman, who wears no longer the livery of a Church stained with blood.”

The Cevanol’s eyes sparkled. “Is it indeed so? Then the day we have long hoped and prayed for has come—as my master has always maintained that it would. Run, little one, and tell thy mother that a friend from France has come. Enter, monsieur. My master and mistress will be more than glad to see you.”

“I need not ask if they are well and happy ; I heard them singing at the window just now.”

“My master will never be a well man again, sir,”—a slight shadow fell upon Jean’s face ; “but he suffers less now than in the cold weather. As for my lady—there is not a lighter foot, or a merrier heart, in all the town than hers. She has never gone to the bottom of the joy of having my lord back again. It seems new to her every morning.”

“And that rosy little Hebe, who has flown to announce my coming, can she be the babe whose hold upon life seemed so frail ?”

“That is my young Mademoiselle Gabrielle, sir—a taut little craft, in spite of the rough weather she has seen. But, thank God ! the baby lad, who came to us this New-Year’s, and is the very light of his mother’s eyes, will not have such seas to stem.”

Jean opened the door of a sunny sitting-room that looked out upon the sea. There was an invalid-chair near the window, with a child’s toy on the floor beside it.

“My master is often kept indoors for weeks at a

time ; he likes to be where he can see the water, and hear the singing in the church over the way," the valet explained.

A cradle stood beside the spinning-wheel, on the other side of the hearth ; there was a bowl of marigolds on the table near an open French Bible ; over the mantel hung a pretty water-colored sketch of the harbor of La Rochelle. Louis Bertrand had a moment in which to take in the sweet, homely details, before the inner door opened, and Henri entered, leaning upon his wife's shoulder.

The erect carriage, the elastic limb of the soldier had gone forever, but in their place had come a nobler strength. An expression of quiet happiness shone from under the serene brow, and the lines of patient suffering about the lips bore witness to that grandest of all achievements—the ruling of one's own spirit, the fight, after all, in which it is not we who win, but "God, that giveth us the victory."

There was all of Henri's old heartiness in his clasp of his kinsman's hand.

"Welcome to our English home, Louis ! Eglantine and I were speaking of you only this morning. How long have you been here, and how did you find us out?"

"I landed an hour ago. I had no idea where to look for you, but as I strolled up the street, the old 'God's house' opposite attracted me, and then I heard Eglantine singing."

Louis Bertrand had taken his kinswoman's hand once more in his, and was looking wistfully into her clear, dark eyes. It was the first time they had met since the days of her sorrowful captivity in the old chateau.

"Can you ever forgive me for my share in that

cruel silence?" he asked. "You do not know what I suffered, seeing your white face day after day, without being able to speak. M. Renau had bound me by my word of honor before he would permit me to approach you, and when I refused to connive any longer at the deception, he dismissed me from the chateau. Yet, if there had been less of the fear of man before my eyes——"

"Say no more," interrupted the young wife, with a tear-dashed smile. "I have had too much myself for which to ask forgiveness to reproach any one—even if your kindness to Henri at Aigues-Mortes had not more than atoned for everything."

She led the invalid to his chair, and Henri beckoned Louis to a seat at his side.

"What business brings you across the Channel this time of year?" he asked.

Seriously the visitor met the kind, keen glance.

"The same that brought you, my cousin."

"The truth?"

"Nothing less."

"Then God be praised. I began to hope, when we parted, that the light was dawning on you, but so long a time has passed that I had nearly lost heart."

"It is not easy to pull against the tide," answered Louis Bertrand sadly.

"But it is harder to keep out sunshine."

"It is indeed, my sweet kinswoman. And your husband had shown me for the first time in my life what true religion was. I could not forget your earnest words, Henri—far less the courage and patience, which preached to me more eloquently than they, and made me ashamed of my own empty profession. But it was left for another to break the bonds that still bound me to my Church."

“And that other——”

“Was Fulcrand Rey, the Huguenot pastor and martyr. He was at Anduze the summer after you left, preaching the Word in secret to all who would come to hear, when I stumbled unexpectedly upon one of his services. You know his burning eloquence; the truth struck home to my heart. While I was still struggling with conviction, the next day, I heard that he was taken—betrayed by one of his own people, a man whom he had greatly benefited, and in whom he fully trusted. I followed him to Nismes, then to Beaucaire, where he met his trial. I was present in that judgment-hall, beside that rack at the foot of those gallows-stairs. I heard him tell M. Baviile, when the bloodthirsty Intendant stopped to plead with him from the judgment-seat, that the only life he asked was the life eternal. I heard him protest to his persecutors—when they had in vain endeavored to extort from him by torture the names of those who had been present at his services—that they had suffered far more than he, that he had scarcely felt any pain at all. I saw him rejoice at the foot of the scaffold, as one who mounted a ladder, the top of which reached even unto heaven. The work his lips had begun, his death sealed. The conviction had long been forcing itself upon me, that there was more of the spirit of Christ in the courage and gentleness of the religionnaires than in the ferocity of their persecutors. I could no longer blind my soul to the truth, that, if I would tread in the footprints of the meek and loving Prince of Peace, it could not be in the pale of my own Church.”

“That was last July,” said Henri gently, when the speaker paused.

“Yes; it has been a long struggle. My heart was

too cowardly at first to face the thought of being branded as a traitor by my old Church, and the ties that bound me to land and kindred, the prospects of worldly advantage and preferment, which others had counted loss for Christ, held me with adamantine bonds. But, thank God! 'to them that have no might, He increases strength.' The fight is over at last, and I am here—free!"

"To learn, as we have done, that those who forsake all and follow Him, do not miss their reward even in this life!" added a deep, moved voice from the shadow of the doorway, and the exile looked up to meet the moistened gaze of Rene Chevalier and his wife, who had entered unnoticed during the recital. "Jean brought us word, and we could not wait a summons to come and welcome you," said the physician, when the first joyful greetings were over. "My mother is watching with Pepin and his wife by the bed of a sick child, but she will be with us this evening. Monsieur, you must permit us to share with Henri and his wife the pleasure of entertaining you. Marguerite can plead the tie of blood as well as Eglantine, but methinks we have even a stronger claim upon you. My mother has always believed that it was to you we owed the secret warning, three years ago, which gave us opportunity to escape to the hills. Ah!" as the sensitive color surged to the other's face, "then she was not mistaken."

"Spare me thanks!" interposed Louis Bertrand hurriedly. "You have generous memories, that recall only my few good impulses. It must indeed have been a callous heart that would not have done what it could to save Agnes Chevalier."

The soft eyes of Marguerite Chevalier filled with tears at the mention of the name. Her husband

looked at her tenderly, and then laid his hand upon her shoulder.

“Can we regret anything for her, who has seen Christ face to face?” he asked in a low voice. “Can we ask anything more for our little daughter, Marguerite, than that she should follow her namesake, as she followed Christ?”

“Nay, you know well I do ask nothing better for her,” she responded quickly, and Rene turned back to Louis.

“Do you bring us any tidings of Beaumont and our brethren there? Does the persecution still rage as fiercely as ever?”

“I hear there has been a comparative respite since M. Renau’s arrest and summons to Paris. What!” as Henri uttered a sharp exclamation, “you had not heard of that, monsieur? Your kinsman and my patron, as you may remember, was fond of games of chance. He undertook to cross Minister Louvois in one of his schemes—secretly, of course,—but the plot miscarried and came to the minister’s ears. M. Renau is at present a prisoner in the Bastille, and it is not likely that the power he has offended will be in any haste to release him. He will have ample opportunity, my fair kinswoman, to taste the bitterness of the portion he meted out to you and yours.”

“But I would not add a finger’s weight to his fetters, if I could,” said Eglantine La Roche sadly.

“Nay, let us only pity the downfall which is so utterly devoid of comfort,” added her husband gravely. “Perhaps in his humiliation and loneliness, repentance and better thoughts may come to him. If so, may God forgive him as freely as I do. I am glad, however, to hear that our persecuted brethren have some rest. Now, Louis, tell us of your plans. Do you propose to enter the Church here?”

"Nay, monsieur; henceforth I am a learner, not a teacher. I must, of course, seek some way of earning a livelihood, but I have scarcely thought of that yet."

"Then cast in your lot with us," pleaded Eglantine, reading the thought in her husband's eyes. "With the first of May, Louis, we will have set sail from England, and be on our way across the sea, to a home in the new world. The lords proprietors offer great inducements to emigrants, and the climate of the Carolinas, Rene says, is like that of our own Languedoc, and will be far better for Henri than these bleak English winters."

"And there are portents of a storm here which I would be glad to avoid," added her husband gravely. "The religious liberties of the people are well defended by their laws, but we know, by sad experience, how little edicts can withstand a tyrant's will. The King of England is devoted to the Romish Church, and has set his heart upon restoring it in his realm. The highest offices in the kingdom have been given to men notoriously corrupt, who will sell the rights of their countrymen without scruple. Already the law, prohibiting Papists from holding office, has been repealed; the Jesuits have been invited back to London, and Romish priests placed in some of the highest benefices of the Church of England—in defiance of the remonstrances of the people. It is true, King James continues to offer an asylum to our persecuted brethren, and shows much kindness to the dissenters; but we cannot be deceived. When he has crushed the State Church it will be easy for him to deal with us."

"Methinks he would do well to pause and consider," answered Louis Bertrand. "Has he forgotten that he trifles with a people who brought his father to the block for a less infringement of their liberties?"

“It would seem so. ‘Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad,’ and King James is deaf, we hear, even to the remonstrances of Catholic advisers against the madness of his course. Already there is a strong opposition to the Government, and the various sects are forgetting their petty discords, and uniting against the common enemy.”

“The English people will not surrender their liberties without a struggle,” added Rene; “but who can tell through what seas of civil war the right may have to fight its way. I, for one, will be glad to place my loved ones in a place of safety before the storm breaks, but even had these events not occurred, M. Bertrand, the thought of founding another Languedoc on the shores of the new world, and of laying the cornerstone of a purer and more enlightened state for those who shall come after us, has been a dream of mine ever since I left my own land. Only M. Laval’s tender claim upon us has kept us here so long, and now that his gray head has been laid to rest, there is nothing to detain us.”

Louis looked at Eglantine.

“I have been in Picardy for the last six months; I had not heard of your grandfather’s death,” he said.

“He passed away the last night of the old year,” she answered, a tender moisture in her eyes. “He had been failing for a year. We saw a great change in him when he came over first, at the time of Rene’s and Marguerite’s marriage, and last autumn, when he made us another visit, he had a fall from a coach, which confined him to his chamber for many weeks. His attachment for Marguerite had been touching from the first; her influence over him now became wonderful.” Eglantine smiled across the hearth into her sister’s soft-shining eyes. “It was just as aunt

Monique had hoped from the first that it would be: he was never happy when she was out of his sight; he would let her read and sing to him by the hour, and loved to hear her talk of Agnes. Even his old dislike to Rene vanished, and he clung to him like a child, and when he was told of the birth of our little son on Christmas day, he sent a special request by aunt Monique, that the little one should bear the name of the best man he had ever known—Godfrey Chevalier. There was no formal change of faith, but when they found him, New-Year's morning, asleep, to wake on earth no more, Marguerite's Bible lay open on the table beside him, and there was a look of peace on the old face, which left no doubt in our hearts that he was satisfied at last."

"After all, it matters little in what church our names are enrolled, if they are written in the Lamb's Book of Life," said Rene.

"That is what the old priest on the Normandy coast told my sister last summer, when her baby died without baptism," Louis Bertrand answered. "Natalie was nearly crazed with grief, but he bade her have more confidence in the mercy of her Heavenly Father, and be comforted. There might be many, unknown to the Church, who would be owned of Him. And then he told her of the great sorrow there had been in his own life—of the young nun who had been to him like a daughter in Christ, and had broken his heart by abandoning her vows and embracing heresy. He would have brought her back, at first, at any cost, he said, believing her to be in danger of eternal death, but she had escaped beyond his reach, and as time had passed, he had come to think of her with less bitterness. The more he read in the Gospels, the more he was becoming convinced that we were to be judged—"

not by our attitude to the Church, but to the Master Himself. From what he knew of his former pupil, he could not doubt that she had been earnestly seeking God. He would not say she had not found Him. Christ might have other sheep, not of this fold. When she went back to Paris, Natalie heard that he was considered too liberal by his order, and was looked upon with suspicion by the Sorbonne, because he discouraged persecution. But she says no one ever comforted her as he did, and that he was idolized by the rough fisher-folk among which he labored. She was looking forward to meeting him again this summer, when the news reached her, after the great gale last winter, that he had lost his life in the endeavor to take some drowning men off a wreck. They found his body on the beach the next day, and on his breast a sealed packet, directed to my sister's care. It contained only this." Louis Bertrand drew a slip of paper from his pocket and put it in Marguerite's hand.

"The priest's name was Pere Ambrose. Natalie thought you would like to keep it," he said reverently.

Marguerite unfolded the paper, and then, with a great light shining through the tender mist in her eyes, held it up for Rene to read.

"Now we see through a glass darkly: but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know, even as also I am known."

THE END.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00023131468

