

ВАЛЬТЕР СКОТТ

QUENTIN
DURWARD

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Walter Scott

Quentin Durward

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

The scene of this romance is laid in the fifteenth century, when the feudal system, which had been the sinews and nerves of national defence, and the spirit of chivalry, by which, as by a vivifying soul, that system was animated, began to be innovated upon and abandoned by those grosser characters who centred their sum of happiness in procuring the personal objects on which they had fixed their own exclusive attachment. The same egotism had indeed displayed itself even in more primitive ages; but it was now for the first time openly avowed as a professed principle of action. The spirit of chivalry had in it this point of excellence, that, however overstrained and fantastic many of its doctrines may appear to us, they were all founded on generosity and self denial, of which, if the earth were deprived, it would be difficult to conceive the existence of virtue among the human race.

Among those who were the first to ridicule and abandon the self denying principles in which the young knight was instructed and to which he was so carefully trained up, Louis XI of France was the chief. That sovereign was of a character so purely selfish – so guiltless of entertaining any purpose unconnected with his ambition, covetousness, and desire of selfish enjoyment – that he almost seems an incarnation of the devil himself, permitted to do his utmost to corrupt our ideas of honour in its very source. Nor is it to be forgotten that Louis possessed to a great extent that caustic wit which can turn into ridicule all that a man does for any other person's advantage but his own, and was, therefore, peculiarly qualified to play the part of a cold hearted and sneering fiend.

The cruelties, the perjuries, the suspicions of this prince, were rendered more detestable, rather than amended, by the gross and debasing superstition which he constantly practised. The devotion to the heavenly saints, of which he made such a parade, was upon the miserable principle of some petty deputy in office, who endeavours to hide or atone for the malversations of which he is conscious by liberal gifts to those whose duty it is to observe his conduct, and endeavours to support a system of fraud by an attempt to corrupt the incorruptible. In no other light can we regard his creating the Virgin Mary a countess and colonel of his guards, or the cunning that admitted to one or two peculiar forms of oath the force of a binding obligation which he denied to all other, strictly preserving the secret, which mode of swearing he really accounted obligatory, as one of the most valuable of state mysteries.

To a total want of scruple, or, it would appear, of any sense whatever of moral obligation, Louis XI added great natural firmness and sagacity of character, with a system of policy so highly refined, considering the times he lived in, that he sometimes overreached himself by giving way to its dictates.

Probably there is no portrait so dark as to be without its softer shades. He understood the interests of France, and faithfully pursued them so long as he could identify them with his own. He carried the country safe through the dangerous crisis of the war termed “for the public good;” in thus disuniting and dispersing this grand and dangerous alliance of the great crown vassals of France against the Sovereign, a king of a less cautious and temporizing character, and of a more bold and less crafty disposition than Louis XI, would, in all probability, have failed. Louis had also some personal accomplishments not inconsistent with his public character. He was cheerful and witty in society; and none was better able to sustain and extol the superiority of the coarse and selfish reasons by which he endeavoured to supply those nobler motives for exertion which his predecessors had derived from the high spirit of chivalry.

In fact, that system was now becoming ancient, and had, even while in its perfection, something so overstrained and fantastic in its principles, as rendered it peculiarly the object of ridicule, whenever, like other old fashions, it began to fall out of repute; and the weapons of raillery could be employed

against it, without exciting the disgust and horror with which they would have been rejected at an early period, as a species of blasphemy. The principles of chivalry were cast aside, and their aid supplied by baser stimulants. Instead of the high spirit which pressed every man forward in the defence of his country, Louis XI substituted the exertions of the ever ready mercenary soldier, and persuaded his subjects, among whom the mercantile class began to make a figure, that it was better to leave to mercenaries the risks and labours of war, and to supply the Crown with the means of paying them, than to peril themselves in defence of their own substance. The merchants were easily persuaded by this reasoning. The hour did not arrive in the days of Louis XI when the landed gentry and nobles could be in like manner excluded from the ranks of war; but the wily monarch commenced that system, which, acted upon by his successors, at length threw the whole military defence of the state into the hands of the Crown.

He was equally forward in altering the principles which were wont to regulate the intercourse of the sexes. The doctrines of chivalry had established, in theory at least, a system in which Beauty was the governing and remunerating divinity – Valour, her slave, who caught his courage from her eye and gave his life for her slightest service. It is true, the system here, as in other branches, was stretched to fantastic extravagance, and cases of scandal not unfrequently arose. Still, they were generally such as those mentioned by Burke, where frailty was deprived of half its guilt, by being purified from all its grossness. In Louis XI's practice, it was far otherwise. He was a low voluptuary, seeking pleasure without sentiment, and despising the sex from whom he desired to obtain it... By selecting his favourites and ministers from among the dregs of the people, Louis showed the slight regard which he paid to eminent station and high birth; and although this might be not only excusable but meritorious, where the monarch's fiat promoted obscure talent, or called forth modest worth, it was very different when the King made his favourite associates of such men as the chief of his police, Tristan l'Hermite..

Nor were Louis's sayings and actions in private or public of a kind which could redeem such gross offences against the character of a man of honour. His word, generally accounted the most sacred test of a man's character, and the least impeachment of which is a capital offence by the code of honour, was forfeited without scruple on the slightest occasion, and often accompanied by the perpetration of the most enormous crimes... It is more than probable that, in thus renouncing almost openly the ties of religion, honour, and morality, by which mankind at large feel themselves influenced, Louis sought to obtain great advantages in his negotiations with parties who might esteem themselves bound, while he himself enjoyed liberty. He started from the goal, he might suppose, like the racer who has got rid of the weights with which his competitors are still encumbered, and expects to succeed of course. But Providence seems always to unite the existence of peculiar danger with some circumstance which may put those exposed to the peril upon their guard. The constant suspicion attached to any public person who becomes badly eminent for breach of faith is to him what the rattle is to the poisonous serpent: and men come at last to calculate not so much on what their antagonist says as upon that which he is likely to do; a degree of mistrust which tends to counteract the intrigues of such a character, more than his freedom from the scruples of conscientious men can afford him advantage..

Indeed, although the reign of Louis had been as successful in a political point of view as he himself could have desired, the spectacle of his deathbed might of itself be a warning piece against the seduction of his example. Jealous of every one, but chiefly of his own son, he immured himself in his Castle of Plessis, intrusting his person exclusively to the doubtful faith of his Scottish mercenaries. He never stirred from his chamber; he admitted no one into it, and wearied heaven and every saint with prayers, not for forgiveness of his sins, but for the prolongation of his life. With a poverty of spirit totally inconsistent with his shrewd worldly sagacity, he importuned his physicians until they insulted as well as plundered him..

It was not the least singular circumstance of this course, that bodily health and terrestrial felicity seemed to be his only object. Making any mention of his sins when talking on the state of his health, was strictly prohibited; and when at his command a priest recited a prayer to Saint Eutropius in which he recommended the King's welfare both in body and soul, Louis caused the two last words to be omitted, saying it was not prudent to importune the blessed saint by too many requests at once. Perhaps he thought by being silent on his crimes he might suffer them to pass out of the recollection of the celestial patrons, whose aid he invoked for his body.

So great were the well merited tortures of this tyrant's deathbed, that Philip de Comines enters into a regular comparison between them and the numerous cruelties inflicted on others by his order; and considering both, comes to express an opinion that the worldly pangs and agony suffered by Louis were such as might compensate the crimes he had committed, and that, after a reasonable quarantine in purgatory, he might in mercy be found duly qualified for the superior regions... The instructive but appalling scene of this tyrant's sufferings was at length closed by death, 30th August, 1483.

The selection of this remarkable person as the principal character in the romance – for it will be easily comprehended that the little love intrigue of Quentin is only employed as the means of bringing out the story – afforded considerable facilities to the author. In Louis XI's time, extraordinary commotions existed throughout all Europe. England's Civil Wars were ended, rather in appearance than reality, by the short lived ascendancy of the House of York. Switzerland was asserting that freedom which was afterwards so bravely defended. In the Empire and in France, the great vassals of the crown were endeavouring to emancipate themselves from its control, while Charles of Burgundy by main force, and Louis more artfully by indirect means, laboured to subject them to subservience to their respective sovereignties. Louis, while with one hand he circumvented and subdued his own rebellious vassals, laboured secretly with the other to aid and encourage the large trading towns of Flanders to rebel against the Duke of Burgundy, to which their wealth and irritability naturally disposed them. In the more woodland districts of Flanders, the Duke of Gueldres, and William de la Marck, called from his ferocity the Wild Boar of Ardennes, were throwing off the habits of knights and gentlemen to practise the violences and brutalities of common bandits.

[Chapter I gives a further account of the conditions of the period which Quentin Durward portrays.]

A hundred secret combinations existed in the different provinces of France and Flanders; numerous private emissaries of the restless Louis, Bohemians, pilgrims, beggars, or agents disguised as such, were everywhere spreading the discontent which it was his policy to maintain in the dominions of Burgundy.

Amidst so great an abundance of materials, it was difficult to select such as should be most intelligible and interesting to the reader: and the author had to regret, that though he made liberal use of the power of departing from the reality of history, he felt by no means confident of having brought his story into a pleasing, compact, and sufficiently intelligible form. The mainspring of the plot is that which all who know the least of the feudal system can easily understand, though the facts are absolutely fictitious. The right of a feudal superior was in nothing more universally acknowledged than in his power to interfere in the marriage of a female vassal. This may appear to exist as a contradiction both of the civil and canon laws, which declare that marriage shall be free, while the feudal or municipal jurisprudence, in case of a fief passing to a female, acknowledges an interest in the superior of the fief to dictate the choice of her companion in marriage. This is accounted for on the principle that the superior was, by his bounty, the original granter of the fief, and is still interested that the marriage of the vassal shall place no one there who may be inimical to his liege lord. On the other hand, it might be reasonably pleaded that this right of dictating to the vassal to a certain extent in the choice of a husband, is only competent to the superior from whom the fief is originally derived. There is therefore no violent improbability in a vassal of Burgundy flying to the protection of the King of France, to whom the Duke of Burgundy himself was vassal; not is it a great stretch of

probability to affirm that Louis, unscrupulous as he was, should have formed the design of betraying the fugitive into some alliance which might prove inconvenient, if not dangerous, to his formidable kinsman and vassal of Burgundy.

[Some of these departures from historical accuracy, as when the death of the Bishop of Liege is antedated, are duly set forth in the notes. It should be mentioned that Mr. J. F. Kirk, in his elaborate History of Charles the Bold, claims that in some points injustice has been done to the Duke in this romance. He says: "The faults of Charles were sufficiently glaring, and scarcely admitted of exaggeration; but his breeding had been that of a prince, his education had been better than that of other princes of his time, his tastes and habits were more, not less, refined than theirs, and the restraint he imposed upon his sensual appetites was as conspicuous a trait as his sternness and violence."]

Abbotsford, 1830.

Quentin Durward was published in June, 1823, and was Scott's first venture on foreign ground. While well received at home, the sensation it created in Paris was comparable to that caused by the appearance of Waverley in Edinburgh and Ivanhoe in London. In Germany also, where the author was already popular, the new novel had a specially enthusiastic welcome. The scene of the romance was partly suggested by a journal kept by Sir Walter's dear friend, Mr. James Skene of Rubislaw, during a French tour, the diary being illustrated by a vast number of clever drawings. The author, in telling this tale laid in unfamiliar scenes, encountered difficulties of a kind quite new to him, as it necessitated much study of maps, gazetteers, and books of travel. For the history, he naturally found above all else the Memoirs of Philip de Comines "the very key of the period," though it need not be said that the lesser chroniclers received due attention. It is interesting to note that in writing to his friend, Daniel Terry, the actor and manager, Scott says, "I have no idea my present labours will be dramatic in situation; as to character, that of Louis XI, the sagacious, perfidious, superstitious, jocular, politic tyrant, would be, for a historical chronicle containing his life and death, one of the most powerful ever brought on the stage." So thought the poet, Casimir Delavigne – writing when Scott's influence was marked upon French literature – whose powerful drama, Louis XI, was a great Parisian success. Later Charles Kean and Henry Irving made an English version of it well known in England and America.

CHAPTER I: THE CONTRAST

*Look here upon this picture, and on this,
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.*

HAMLET

The latter part of the fifteenth century prepared a train of future events that ended by raising France to that state of formidable power which has ever since been from time to time the principal object of jealousy to the other European nations. Before that period she had to struggle for her very existence with the English already possessed of her fairest provinces while the utmost exertions of her King, and the gallantry of her people, could scarcely protect the remainder from a foreign yoke. Nor was this her sole danger. The princes who possessed the grand fiefs of the crown, and, in particular, the Dukes of Burgundy and Bretagne, had come to wear their feudal bonds so lightly that they had no scruple in lifting the standard against their liege and sovereign lord, the King of France, on the slightest pretence. When at peace, they reigned as absolute princes in their own provinces; and the House of Burgundy, possessed of the district so called, together with the fairest and richest part of Flanders, was itself so wealthy, and so powerful, as to yield nothing to the crown, either in splendour or in strength.

In imitation of the grand feudatories, each inferior vassal of the crown assumed as much independence as his distance from the sovereign power, the extent of his fief, or the strength of his chateau enabled him to maintain; and these petty tyrants, no longer amenable to the exercise of the law, perpetrated with impunity the wildest excesses of fantastic oppression and cruelty. In Auvergne alone, a report was made of more than three hundred of these independent nobles, to whom incest, murder, and rapine were the most ordinary and familiar actions.

Besides these evils, another, springing out of the long continued wars betwixt the French and English, added no small misery to this distracted kingdom. Numerous bodies of soldiers, collected into bands, under officers chosen by themselves, from among the bravest and most successful adventurers, had been formed in various parts of France out of the refuse of all other countries. These hireling combatants sold their swords for a time to the best bidder; and, when such service was not to be had, they made war on their own account, seizing castles and towers, which they used as the places of their retreat, making prisoners, and ransoming them, exacting tribute from the open villages and the country around them – and acquiring, by every species of rapine, the appropriate epithets of Tondeurs and Ecorcheurs, that is, Clippers and Flayers.

In the midst of the horrors and miseries arising from so distracted a state of public affairs, reckless and profuse expense distinguished the courts of the lesser nobles, as well as of the superior princes; and their dependents, in imitation, expended in rude but magnificent display the wealth which they extorted from the people. A tone of romantic and chivalrous gallantry (which, however, was often disgraced by unbounded license) characterized the intercourse between the sexes; and the language of knight errantry was yet used, and its observances followed, though the pure spirit of honourable love and benevolent enterprise which it inculcates had ceased to qualify and atone for its extravagances. The jousts and tournaments, the entertainments and revels, which each petty court displayed, invited to France every wandering adventurer; and it was seldom that, when arrived there, he failed to employ his rash courage, and headlong spirit of enterprise, in actions for which his happier native country afforded no free stage.

At this period, and as if to save this fair realm from the various woes with which it was menaced, the tottering throne was ascended by Louis XI, whose character, evil as it was in itself, met, combated,

and in a great degree neutralized the mischiefs of the time – as poisons of opposing qualities are said, in ancient books of medicine, to have the power of counteracting each other.

Brave enough for every useful and political purpose, Louis had not a spark of that romantic valour, or of the pride generally associated with it, which fought on for the point of honour, when the point of utility had been long gained. Calm, crafty, and profoundly attentive to his own interest, he made every sacrifice, both of pride and passion, which could interfere with it. He was careful in disguising his real sentiments and purposes from all who approached him, and frequently used the expressions, “that the king knew not how to reign, who knew not how to dissemble; and that, for himself, if he thought his very cap knew his secrets, he would throw it into the fire.” No man of his own, or of any other time, better understood how to avail himself of the frailties of others, and when to avoid giving any advantage by the untimely indulgence of his own.

He was by nature vindictive and cruel, even to the extent of finding pleasure in the frequent executions which he commanded. But, as no touch of mercy ever induced him to spare, when he could with safety condemn, so no sentiment of vengeance ever stimulated him to a premature violence. He seldom sprang on his prey till it was fairly within his grasp, and till all hope of rescue was vain; and his movements were so studiously disguised, that his success was generally what first announced to the world the object he had been manoeuvring to attain.

In like manner, the avarice of Louis gave way to apparent profusion, when it was necessary to bribe the favourite or minister of a rival prince for averting any impending attack, or to break up any alliance confederated against him. He was fond of license and pleasure; but neither beauty nor the chase, though both were ruling passions, ever withdrew him from the most regular attendance to public business and the affairs of his kingdom. His knowledge of mankind was profound, and he had sought it in the private walks of life, in which he often personally mingled; and, though naturally proud and haughty, he hesitated not, with an inattention to the arbitrary divisions of society which was then thought something portentously unnatural, to raise from the lowest rank men whom he employed on the most important duties, and knew so well how to choose them, that he was rarely disappointed in their qualities. Yet there were contradictions in the character of this artful and able monarch; for human nature is rarely uniform. Himself the most false and insincere of mankind, some of the greatest errors of his life arose from too rash a confidence in the honour and integrity of others. When these errors took place, they seem to have arisen from an over refined system of policy, which induced Louis to assume the appearance of undoubting confidence in those whom it was his object to overreach; for, in his general conduct, he was as jealous and suspicious as any tyrant who ever breathed.

Two other points may be noticed to complete the sketch of this formidable character, by which he rose among the rude, chivalrous sovereigns of the period to the rank of a keeper among wild beasts, who, by superior wisdom and policy, by distribution of food, and some discipline by blows, comes finally to predominate over those who, if unsubjected by his arts, would by main strength have torn him to pieces.

The first of these attributes was Louis's excessive superstition, a plague with which Heaven often afflicts those who refuse to listen to the dictates of religion. The remorse arising from his evil actions Louis never endeavoured to appease by any relaxation in his Machiavellian stratagems [on account of the alleged political immorality of Machiavelli, an illustrious Italian of the sixteenth century, this expression has come to mean “destitute of political morality; habitually using duplicity and bad faith.” Cent. Dict.], but laboured in vain to soothe and silence that painful feeling by superstitious observances, severe penance, and profuse gifts to the ecclesiastics. The second property, with which the first is sometimes found strangely united, was a disposition to low pleasures and obscure debauchery. The wisest, or at least the most crafty sovereign of his time, he was fond of low life, and, being himself a man of wit, enjoyed the jests and repartees of social conversation more than could have been expected from other points of his character. He even mingled in the comic

adventures of obscure intrigue, with a freedom little consistent with the habitual and guarded jealousy of his character, and he was so fond of this species of humble gallantry, that he caused a number of its gay and licentious anecdotes to be enrolled in a collection well known to book collectors, in whose eyes (and the work is unfit for any other) the right edition is very precious.

[This editio princeps, which, when in good preservation, is much sought after by connoisseurs, is entitled *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, contenant Cent Histoires Nouveaux, qui sont moult plaisans a raconter en toutes bonnes compagnies par maniere de joyeuxete*. Paris, Antoine Verard. Sans date d'annee d'impression; en folio gotique. See De Bure. S]

By means of this monarch's powerful and prudent, though most unamiable character, it pleased Heaven, who works by the tempest as well as by the soft, small rain, to restore to the great French nation the benefits of civil government, which, at the time of his accession, they had nearly lost.

Ere he succeeded to the crown, Louis had given evidence of his vices rather than of his talents. His first wife, Margaret of Scotland, was "done to death by slanderous tongues" in her husband's court, where, but for the encouragement of Louis himself, not a word would have been breathed against that amiable and injured princess. He had been an ungrateful and a rebellious son, at one time conspiring to seize his father's person, and at another levying open war against him. For the first offence, he was banished to his appanage of Dauphine, which he governed with much sagacity; for the second he was driven into absolute exile, and forced to throw himself on the mercy, and almost on the charity, of the Duke of Burgundy and his son; where he enjoyed hospitality, afterwards indifferently requited, until the death of his father in 1461.

In the very outset of his reign, Louis was almost overpowered by a league formed against him by the great vassals of France, with the Duke of Burgundy, or rather his son, the Count de Charalois, at its head. They levied a powerful army, blockaded Paris, fought a battle of doubtful issue under its very walls, and placed the French monarchy on the brink of actual destruction. It usually happens in such cases, that the more sagacious general of the two gains the real fruit, though perhaps not the martial fame, of the disputed field. Louis, who had shown great personal bravery during the battle of Montlhery, was able, by his prudence, to avail himself of its undecided character, as if it had been a victory on his side. He temporized until the enemy had broken up their leaguer, and showed so much dexterity in sowing jealousies among those great powers, that their alliance "for the public weal," as they termed it, but in reality for the overthrow of all but the external appearance of the French monarchy, dissolved itself, and was never again renewed in a manner so formidable. From this period, Louis, relieved of all danger from England by the Civil Wars of York and Lancaster, was engaged for several years, like an unfeeling but able physician, in curing the wounds of the body politic, or rather in stopping, now by gentle remedies, now by the use of fire and steel, the progress of those mortal gangrenes with which it was then infected. The brigandage of the Free Companies [troops that acknowledged no authority except that of their leaders, and who hired themselves out at will], and the unpunished oppression of the nobility, he laboured to lessen, since he could not actually stop them; and, by dint of unrelaxed attention, he gradually gained some addition to his own regal authority, or effected some diminution of those by whom it was counterbalanced.

Still the King of France was surrounded by doubt and danger. The members of the league "for the public weal," though not in unison, were in existence, and, like a scotched snake [see *Macbeth*. III, ii, 13, "We have scotch'd the snake, not kill'd it."], might reunite and become dangerous again. But a worse danger was the increasing power of the Duke of Burgundy, then one of the greatest princes of Europe, and little diminished in rank by the very slight dependence of his duchy upon the crown of France.

Charles, surnamed the Bold, or rather, the Audacious, for his courage was allied to rashness and frenzy, then wore the ducal coronet of Burgundy, which he burned to convert into a royal and independent regal crown. The character of this Duke was in every respect the direct contrast to that of Louis XI.

The latter was calm, deliberate, and crafty, never prosecuting a desperate enterprise, and never abandoning one likely to be successful, however distant the prospect. The genius of the Duke was entirely different. He rushed on danger because he loved it, and on difficulties because he despised them. As Louis never sacrificed his interest to his passion, so Charles, on the other hand, never sacrificed his passion, or even his humour, to any other consideration. Notwithstanding the near relationship that existed between them, and the support which the Duke and his father had afforded to Louis in his exile when Dauphin, there was mutual contempt and hatred betwixt them. The Duke of Burgundy despised the cautious policy of the King, and imputed to the faintness of his courage that he sought by leagues, purchases, and other indirect means those advantages which, in his place, the Duke would have snatched with an armed hand. He likewise hated the King, not only for the ingratitude he had manifested for former kindnesses, and for personal injuries and imputations which the ambassadors of Louis had cast upon him, when his father was yet alive, but also, and especially, because of the support which he afforded in secret to the discontented citizens of Ghent, Liege, and other great towns in Flanders. These turbulent cities, jealous of their privileges, and proud of their wealth, were frequently in a state of insurrection against their liege lords, the Dukes of Burgundy, and never failed to find underhand countenance at the court of Louis, who embraced every opportunity of fomenting disturbance within the dominions of his overgrown vassal.

The contempt and hatred of the Duke were retaliated by Louis with equal energy, though he used a thicker veil to conceal his sentiments. It was impossible for a man of his profound sagacity not to despise the stubborn obstinacy which never resigned its purpose, however fatal perseverance might prove, and the headlong impetuosity which commenced its career without allowing a moment's consideration for the obstacles to be encountered. Yet the King hated Charles even more than he contemned him, and his scorn and hatred were the more intense, that they were mingled with fear; for he knew that the onset of the mad bull, to whom he likened the Duke of Burgundy, must ever be formidable, though the animal makes it with shut eyes. It was not alone the wealth of the Burgundian provinces, the discipline of the warlike inhabitants, and the mass of their crowded population, which the King dreaded, for the personal qualities of their leader had also much in them that was dangerous. The very soul of bravery, which he pushed to the verge of rashness, and beyond it – profuse in expenditure – splendid in his court, his person, and his retinue, in all which he displayed the hereditary magnificence of the house of Burgundy, Charles the Bold drew into his service almost all the fiery spirits of the age whose tempers were congenial; and Louis saw too clearly what might be attempted and executed by such a train of resolute adventurers, following a leader of a character as ungovernable as their own.

There was yet another circumstance which increased the animosity of Louis towards his overgrown vassal; he owed him favours which he never meant to repay, and was under the frequent necessity of temporizing with him, and even of enduring bursts of petulant insolence, injurious to the regal dignity, without being able to treat him otherwise than as his “fair cousin of Burgundy.”

It was about the year 1468, when their feuds were at the highest, though a dubious and hollow truce, as frequently happened, existed for the time betwixt them, that the present narrative opens. The person first introduced on the stage will be found indeed to be of a rank and condition, the illustration of whose character scarcely called for a dissertation on the relative position of two great princes; but the passions of the great, their quarrels, and their reconciliations involve the fortunes of all who approach them; and it will be found, on proceeding farther in our story, that this preliminary chapter is necessary for comprehending the history of the individual whose adventures we are about to relate.

CHAPTER II: THE WANDERER

Why then the world's mine oyster, which I with sword will open.
ANCIENT PISTOL

It was upon a delicious summer morning, before the sun had assumed its scorching power, and while the dews yet cooled and perfumed the air, that a youth, coming from the northeastward approached the ford of a small river, or rather a large brook, tributary to the Cher, near to the royal Castle of Plessis les Tours, whose dark and multiplied battlements rose in the background over the extensive forest with which they were surrounded. These woodlands comprised a noble chase, or royal park, fenced by an enclosure, termed, in the Latin of the middle ages, *Plexitium*, which gives the name of Plessis to so many villages in France. The castle and village of which we particularly speak, was called Plessis les Tours, to distinguish it from others, and was built about two miles to the southward of the fair town of that name, the capital of ancient Touraine, whose rich plain has been termed the Garden of France.

On the bank of the above mentioned brook, opposite to that which the traveller was approaching, two men, who appeared in deep conversation, seemed, from time to time, to watch his motions; for, as their station was much more elevated, they could remark him at considerable distance.

The age of the young traveller might be about nineteen, or betwixt that and twenty; and his face and person, which were very prepossessing, did not, however, belong to the country in which he was now a sojourner. His short gray cloak and hose were rather of Flemish than of French fashion, while the smart blue bonnet, with a single sprig of holly and an eagle's feather, was already recognized as the Scottish head gear. His dress was very neat, and arranged with the precision of a youth conscious of possessing a fine person. He had at his back a satchel, which seemed to contain a few necessaries, a hawking gauntlet on his left hand, though he carried no bird, and in his right a stout hunter's pole. Over his left shoulder hung an embroidered scarf which sustained a small pouch of scarlet velvet, such as was then used by fowlers of distinction to carry their hawks' food, and other matters belonging to that much admired sport. This was crossed by another shoulder belt, to which was hung a hunting knife, or *couteau de chasse*. Instead of the boots of the period, he wore buskins of half dressed deer's skin.

Although his form had not yet attained its full strength, he was tall and active, and the lightness of the step with which he advanced, showed that his pedestrian mode of travelling was pleasure rather than pain to him. His complexion was fair, in spite of a general shade of darker hue, with which the foreign sun, or perhaps constant exposure to the atmosphere in his own country, had, in some degree, embrowned it.

His features, without being quite regular, were frank, open, and pleasing. A half smile, which seemed to arise from a happy exuberance of animal spirits, showed now and then that his teeth were well set, and as pure as ivory; whilst his bright blue eye, with a corresponding gaiety, had an appropriate glance for every object which it encountered, expressing good humour, lightness of heart, and determined resolution.

He received and returned the salutation of the few travellers who frequented the road in those dangerous times with the action which suited each. The strolling spearman, half soldier, half brigand, measured the youth with his eye, as if balancing the prospect of booty with the chance of desperate resistance; and read such indications of the latter in the fearless glance of the passenger, that he changed his ruffian purpose for a surly "Good morrow, comrade," which the young Scot answered with as martial, though a less sullen tone. The wandering pilgrim, or the begging friar, answered his reverent greeting with a paternal benedicite [equivalent to the English expression, "Bless you."]; and the dark eyed peasant girl looked after him for many a step after they had passed each other, and interchanged a laughing good morrow. In short, there was an attraction about his whole appearance

not easily escaping attention, and which was derived from the combination of fearless frankness and good humour, with sprightly looks and a handsome face and person. It seemed, too, as if his whole demeanour bespoke one who was entering on life with no apprehension of the evils with which it is beset, and small means for struggling with its hardships, except a lively spirit and a courageous disposition; and it is with such tempers that youth most readily sympathizes, and for whom chiefly age and experience feel affectionate and pitying interest.

The youth whom we have described had been long visible to the two persons who loitered on the opposite side of the small river which divided him from the park and the castle; but as he descended the rugged bank to the water's edge, with the light step of a roe which visits the fountain, the younger of the two said to the other, "It is our man – it is the Bohemian! If he attempts to cross the ford, he is a lost man – the water is up, and the ford impassable."

"Let him make that discovery himself, gossip [an intimate friend or companion (obsolete)]," said the elder personage; "it may, perchance, save a rope and break a proverb [refers to the old saw, 'Who is born to be hanged will never be drowned.']."

"I judge him by the blue cap," said the other, "for I cannot see his face. Hark, sir; he hallooos to know whether the water be deep."

"Nothing like experience in this world," answered the other, "let him try."

The young man, in the meanwhile, receiving no hint to the contrary, and taking the silence of those to whom he applied as an encouragement to proceed, entered the stream without farther hesitation than the delay necessary to take off his buskins. The elder person, at the same moment, hallooed to him to beware, adding, in a lower tone, to his companion, "Mortdieu – gossip – you have made another mistake – this is not the Bohemian chatterer."

But the intimation to the youth came too late. He either did not hear or could not profit by it, being already in the deep stream. To one less alert and practised in the exercise of swimming, death had been certain, for the brook was both deep and strong.

"By Saint Anne! but he is a proper youth," said the elder man. "Run, gossip, and help your blunder, by giving him aid, if thou canst. He belongs to thine own troop – if old saws speak truth, water will not drown him."

Indeed, the young traveller swam so strongly, and buffeted the waves so well, that, notwithstanding the strength of the current, he was carried but a little way down from the ordinary landing place.

By this time the younger of the two strangers was hurrying down to the shore to render assistance, while the other followed him at a graver pace, saying to himself as he approached, "I knew water would never drown that young fellow. – By my halidome [originally something regarded as sacred, as a relic; formerly much used in solemn oaths], he is ashore, and grasps his pole! – If I make not the more haste, he will beat my gossip for the only charitable action which I ever saw him perform, or attempt to perform, in the whole course of his life."

There was some reason to augur such a conclusion of the adventure, for the bonny Scot had already accosted the younger Samaritan, who was hastening to his assistance, with these ireful words: "Discourteous dog! why did you not answer when I called to know if the passage was fit to be attempted? May the foul fiend catch me, but I will teach you the respect due to strangers on the next occasion."

This was accompanied with that significant flourish with his pole which is called *le moulinet*, because the artist, holding it in the middle, brandishes the two ends in every direction like the sails of a windmill in motion. His opponent, seeing himself thus menaced, laid hand upon his sword, for he was one of those who on all occasions are more ready for action than for speech; but his more considerate comrade, who came up, commanded him to forbear, and, turning to the young man, accused him in turn of precipitation in plunging into the swollen ford, and of intemperate violence in quarrelling with a man who was hastening to his assistance.

The young man, on hearing himself thus reproved by a man of advanced age and respectable appearance, immediately lowered his weapon, and said he would be sorry if he had done them injustice; but, in reality, it appeared to him as if they had suffered him to put his life in peril for want of a word of timely warning, which could be the part neither of honest men nor of good Christians, far less of respectable burgesses, such as they seemed to be.

“Fair son,” said the elder person, “you seem, from your accent and complexion, a stranger; and you should recollect your dialect is not so easily comprehended by us; as perhaps it may be uttered by you.”

“Well, father,” answered the youth, “I do not care much about the ducking I have had, and I will readily forgive your being partly the cause, provided you will direct me to some place where I can have my clothes dried; for it is my only suit, and I must keep it somewhat decent.”

“For whom do you take us, fair son?” said the elder stranger, in answer to this question.

“For substantial burgesses, unquestionably,” said the youth; “or – hold; you, master, may be a money broker, or a corn merchant; and this man a butcher, or grazier.”

“You have hit our capacities rarely,” said the elder, smiling. “My business is indeed to trade in as much money as I can and my gossip’s dealings are somewhat of kin to the butcher’s. As to your accommodation we will try to serve you; but I must first know who you are, and whither you are going, for, in these times, the roads are filled with travellers on foot and horseback, who have anything in their head but honesty and the fear of God.”

The young man cast another keen and penetrating glance on him who spoke, and on his silent companion, as if doubtful whether they, on their part, merited the confidence they demanded; and the result of his observation was as follows.

The eldest and most remarkable of these men in dress and appearance, resembled the merchant or shopkeeper of the period. His jerkin, hose, and cloak were of a dark uniform colour, but worn so threadbare that the acute young Scot conceived that the wearer must be either very rich or very poor, probably the former. The fashion of the dress was close and short, a kind of garment which was not then held decorous among gentry, or even the superior class of citizens, who generally wore loose gowns which descended below the middle of the leg.

The expression of this man’s countenance was partly attractive and partly forbidding. His strong features, sunk cheeks, and hollow eyes had, nevertheless, an expression of shrewdness and humour congenial to the character of the young adventurer. But then, those same sunken eyes, from under the shroud of thick black eyebrows, had something in them that was at once commanding and sinister. Perhaps this effect was increased by the low fur cap, much depressed on the forehead, and adding to the shade from under which those eyes peered out; but it is certain that the young stranger had some difficulty to reconcile his looks with the meanness of his appearance in other respects. His cap, in particular, in which all men of any quality displayed either a brooch of gold or of silver, was ornamented with a paltry image of the Virgin, in lead, such as the poorer sort of pilgrims bring from Loretto [a city in Italy, containing the sanctuary of the Virgin Mary called the Santa Casa, reputed to have been brought there by angels.].

His comrade was a stout formed, middle sized man, more than ten years younger than his companion, with a down looking visage and a very ominous smile, when by chance he gave way to that impulse, which was never, except in reply to certain secret signs that seemed to pass between him and the elder stranger. This man was armed with a sword and dagger; and underneath his plain habit the Scotsman observed that he concealed a jazeran, or flexible shirt of linked mail, which, as being often worn by those, even of peaceful professions, who were called upon at that perilous period to be frequently abroad, confirmed the young man in his conjecture that the wearer was by profession a butcher, grazier, or something of that description, called upon to be much abroad. The young stranger, comprehending in one glance the result of the observation which has taken us some time to express, answered, after a moment’s pause, “I am ignorant whom I may have the honour to

address,” making a slight reverence at the same time, “but I am indifferent who knows that I am a cadet of Scotland; and that I come to seek my fortune in France, or elsewhere, after the custom of my countrymen.”

“Pasques dieu! and a gallant custom it is,” said the elder stranger. “You seem a fine young springald, and at the right age to prosper, whether among men or women. What say you? I am a merchant, and want a lad to assist in my traffic; I suppose you are too much a gentleman to assist in such mechanical drudgery?”

“Fair sir,” said the youth, “if your offer be seriously made – of which I have my doubts – I am bound to thank you for it, and I thank you accordingly; but I fear I should be altogether unfit for your service.”

“What!” said the senior, “I warrant thou knowest better how to draw the bow, than how to draw a bill of charges – canst handle a broadsword better than a pen – ha!”

“I am, master,” answered the young Scot, “a braeman, and therefore, as we say, a bowman. But besides that, I have been in a convent, where the good fathers taught me to read and write, and even to cipher.”

“Pasques dieu! that is too magnificent,” said the merchant. “By our Lady of Embrun [a town in France containing a cathedral in which was a wooden statue of the Virgin Mary, said to have been sculptured by St. Luke], thou art a prodigy, man!”

“Rest you merry, fair master,” said the youth, who was not much pleased with his new acquaintance’s jocularities, “I must go dry myself, instead of standing dripping here, answering questions.”

The merchant only laughed louder as he spoke, and answered, “Pasques dieu! the proverb never fails – fier comme un Ecossois [proud or haughty as a Scotchman] – but come, youngster, you are of a country I have a regard for, having traded in Scotland in my time – an honest poor set of folks they are; and, if you will come with us to the village, I will bestow on you a cup of burnt sack and a warm breakfast, to atone for your drenching. – But tete bleu! what do you with a hunting glove on your hand? Know you not there is no hawking permitted in a royal chase?”

“I was taught that lesson,” answered the youth, “by a rascally forester of the Duke of Burgundy. I did but fly the falcon I had brought with me from Scotland, and that I reckoned on for bringing me into some note, at a heron near Peronne, and the rascally schelm [rogue, rascal (obsolete or Scotch)] shot my bird with an arrow.”

“What did you do?” said the merchant.

“Beat him,” said the youngster, brandishing his staff, “as near to death as one Christian man should belabour another – I wanted not to have his blood to answer for.”

“Know you,” said the burgess, “that had you fallen into the Duke of Burgundy’s hands, he would have hung you up like a chestnut?”

“Ay, I am told he is as prompt as the King of France for that sort of work. But, as this happened near Peronne, I made a leap over the frontiers, and laughed at him. If he had not been so hasty, I might, perhaps, have taken service with him.”

“He will have a heavy miss of such a paladin as you are, if the truce should break off,” said the merchant, and threw a look at his own companion, who answered him with one of the downcast lowering smiles which gleamed along his countenance, enlivening it as a passing meteor enlivens a winter sky.

The young Scot suddenly stopped, pulled his bonnet over his right eyebrow, as one that would not be ridiculed, and said firmly, “My masters, and especially you, sir, the elder, and who should be the wiser, you will find, I presume, no sound or safe jesting at my expense. I do not altogether like the tone of your conversation. I can take a jest with any man, and a rebuke, too, from my elder, and say thank you, sir, if I know it to be deserved; but I do not like being borne in hand as if I were a child, when, God wot, I find myself man enough to belabour you both, if you provoke me too far.”

The eldest man seemed like to choke with laughter at the lad's demeanour – his companion's hand stole to his sword hilt, which the youth observing, dealt him a blow across the wrist, which made him incapable of grasping it, while his companion's mirth was only increased by the incident.

"Hold, hold," he cried, "most doughty Scot, even for thine own dear country's sake, and you, gossip, forbear your menacing look. Pasques-dieu! let us be just traders, and set off the wetting against the knock on the wrist, which was given with so much grace and alacrity. – And hark ye, my young friend," he said to the young man, with a grave sternness which, in spite of all the youth could do, damped and overawed him, "no more violence. I am no fit object for it, and my gossip, as you may see, has had enough of it. Let me know your name."

"I can answer a civil question civilly," said the youth; "and will pay fitting respect to your age, if you do not urge my patience with mockery. Since I have been here in France and Flanders, men have called me, in their fantasy, the Varlet with the Velvet Pouch, because of this hawk purse which I carry by my side; but my true name, when at home, is Quentin Durward."

"Durward!" said the querist; "is it a gentleman's name?"

"By fifteen descents in our family," said the young man; "and that makes me reluctant to follow any other trade than arms."

"A true Scot! Plenty of blood, plenty of pride, and right great scarcity of ducats, I warrant thee. – Well, gossip," he said to his companion, "go before us, and tell them to have some breakfast ready yonder at the Mulberry grove; for this youth will do as much honour to it as a starved mouse to a housewife's cheese. And for the Bohemian – hark in thy ear."

His comrade answered by a gloomy but intelligent smile, and set forward at a round pace, while the elder man continued, addressing young Durward, "You and I will walk leisurely forward together, and we may take a mass at Saint Hubert's Chapel in our way through the forest; for it is not good to think of our fleshly before our spiritual wants."

[This silvan saint... was passionately fond of the chase, and used to neglect attendance on divine worship for this amusement. While he was once engaged in this pastime, a stag appeared before him, having a crucifix bound betwixt his horns, and he heard a voice which menaced him with eternal punishment if he did not repent of his sins. He retired from the world and took orders... Hubert afterwards became Bishop of Maestrecht and Liege. S.]

Durward, as a good Catholic, had nothing to object against this proposal, although he might probably have been desirous, in the first place; to have dried his clothes and refreshed himself. Meanwhile, they soon lost sight of their downward looking companion, but continued to follow the same path which he had taken, until it led them into a wood of tall trees, mixed with thickets and brushwood, traversed by long avenues, through which were seen, as through a vista, the deer trotting in little herds with a degree of security which argued their consciousness of being completely protected.

"You asked me if I were a good bowman," said the young Scot. "Give me a bow and a brace of shafts, and you shall have a piece of venison in a moment."

"Pasques dieu! my young friend," said his companion, "take care of that; my gossip yonder hath a special eye to the deer; they are under his charge, and he is a strict keeper."

"He hath more the air of a butcher than of a gay forester," answered Durward. "I cannot think yon hang dog look of his belongs to any one who knows the gentle rules of woodcraft."

"Ah, my young friend," answered his companion, "my gossip hath somewhat an ugly favour to look upon at the first; but those who become acquainted with him never are known to complain of him."

Quentin Durward found something singularly and disagreeably significant in the tone with which this was spoken; and, looking suddenly at the speaker, thought he saw in his countenance, in the slight smile that curled his upper lip, and the accompanying twinkle of his keen dark eye, something to justify his unpleasing surprise. "I have heard of robbers," he thought to himself, "and of wily cheats

and cutthroats – what if yonder fellow be a murderer, and this old rascal his decoy duck! I will be on my guard – they will get little by me but good Scottish knocks.”

While he was thus reflecting, they came to a glade, where the large forest trees were more widely separated from each other, and where the ground beneath, cleared of underwood and bushes, was clothed with a carpet of the softest and most lovely verdure, which, screened from the scorching heat of the sun, was here more beautifully tender than it is usually to be seen in France. The trees in this secluded spot were chiefly beeches and elms of huge magnitude, which rose like great hills of leaves into the air. Amidst these magnificent sons of the earth there peeped out, in the most open spot of the glade, a lowly chapel, near which trickled a small rivulet. Its architecture was of the rudest and most simple kind; and there was a very small lodge beside it, for the accommodation of a hermit or solitary priest, who remained there for regularly discharging the duty of the altar. In a small niche over the arched doorway stood a stone image of Saint Hubert, with the bugle horn around his neck, and a leash of greyhounds at his feet. The situation of the chapel in the midst of a park or chase, so richly stocked with game, made the dedication to the Sainted Huntsman peculiarly appropriate.

Towards this little devotional structure the old man directed his steps, followed by young Durward; and, as they approached, the priest, dressed in his sacerdotal garments, made his appearance in the act of proceeding from his cell to the chapel, for the discharge, doubtless, of his holy office. Durward bowed his body reverently to the priest, as the respect due to his sacred office demanded; whilst his companion, with an appearance of still more deep devotion, kneeled on one knee to receive the holy man's blessing, and then followed him into church, with a step and manner expressive of the most heartfelt contrition and humility.

The inside of the chapel was adorned in a manner adapted to the occupation of the patron saint while on earth. The richest furs of such animals as are made the objects of the chase in different countries supplied the place of tapestry and hangings around the altar and elsewhere, and the characteristic emblazonments of bugles, bows, quivers, and other emblems of hunting, surrounded the walls, and were mingled with the heads of deer, wolves, and other animals considered beasts of sport. The whole adornments took an appropriate and silvan character; and the mass itself, being considerably shortened, proved to be of that sort which is called a hunting mass, because in use before the noble and powerful, who, while assisting at the solemnity, are usually impatient to commence their favourite sport.

Yet, during this brief ceremony, Durward's companion seemed to pay the most rigid and scrupulous attention; while Durward, not quite so much occupied with religious thoughts, could not forbear blaming himself in his own mind for having entertained suspicions derogatory to the character of so good and so humble a man. Far from now holding him as a companion and accomplice of robbers, he had much to do to forbear regarding him as a saint-like personage.

When mass was ended, they retired together from the chapel, and the elder said to his young comrade, “It is but a short walk from hence to the village – you may now break your fast with an unprejudiced conscience – follow me.”

Turning to the right, and proceeding along a path which seemed gradually to ascend, he recommended to his companion by no means to quit the track, but, on the contrary, to keep the middle of it as nearly as he could. Durward could not help asking the cause of this precaution.

“You are now near the Court, young man,” answered his guide; “and, Pasques-dieu! there is some difference betwixt walking in this region and on your own heathy hills. Every yard of this ground, excepting the path which we now occupy, is rendered dangerous, and well nigh impracticable, by snares and traps, armed with scythe blades, which shred off the unwary passenger's limb as sheerly as a hedge bill lops a hawthorn sprig – and calthrops that would pierce your foot through, and pitfalls deep enough to bury you in them for ever; for you are now within the precincts of the royal demesne, and we shall presently see the front of the Chateau.”

“Were I the King of France,” said the young man, “I would not take so much trouble with traps and gins, but would try instead to govern so well that no man should dare to come near my dwelling with a bad intent; and for those who came there in peace and goodwill, why, the more of them the merrier we should be.”

His companion looked round affecting an alarmed gaze, and said, “Hush, hush, Sir Varlet with the Velvet Pouch! for I forgot to tell you, that one great danger of these precincts is, that the very leaves of the trees are like so many ears, which carry all which is spoken to the King’s own cabinet.”

“I care little for that,” answered Quentin Durward; “I bear a Scottish tongue in my head, bold enough to speak my mind to King Louis’s face, God bless him – and for the ears you talk of, if I could see them growing on a human head, I would crop them out of it with my wood knife.”

CHAPTER III: THE CASTLE

*Full in the midst a mighty pile arose,
Where iron grated gates their strength oppose
To each invading step – and strong and steep,
The battled walls arose, the fosse sunk deep.
Slow round the fortress roll'd the sluggish stream,
And high in middle air the warder's turrets gleam.*

ANONYMOUS

While Durward and his acquaintance thus spoke, they came in sight of the whole front of the Castle of Plessis les Tours, which, even in those dangerous times, when the great found themselves obliged to reside within places of fortified strength, was distinguished for the extreme and jealous care with which it was watched and defended.

From the verge of the wood where young Durward halted with his companion, in order to take a view of this royal residence, extended, or rather arose, though by a very gentle elevation, an open esplanade, devoid of trees and bushes of every description, excepting one gigantic and half withered old oak. This space was left open, according to the rules of fortification in all ages, in order that an enemy might not approach the walls under cover, or unobserved from the battlements, and beyond it arose the Castle itself.

There were three external walls, battlemented and turreted from space to space and at each angle, the second enclosure rising higher than the first, and being built so as to command the exterior defence in case it was won by the enemy; and being again, in the same manner, itself commanded by the third and innermost barrier.

Around the external wall, as the Frenchman informed his young companion (for as they stood lower than the foundation of the wall, he could not see it), was sunk a ditch of about twenty feet in depth, supplied with water by a dam head on the river Cher; or rather on one of its tributary branches. In front of the second enclosure, he said, there ran another fosse, and a third, both of the same unusual dimensions, was led between the second and the innermost inclosure. The verge, both of the outer and inner circuit of this triple moat was strongly fenced with palisades of iron, serving the purpose of what are called chevaux de frise in modern fortification, the top of each pale being divided into a cluster of sharp spikes, which seemed to render any attempt to climb over an act of self destruction.

From within the innermost enclosure arose the Castle itself, containing buildings of all periods, crowded around, and united with the ancient and grim looking donjon keep, which was older than any of them, and which rose, like a black Ethiopian giant, high into the air, while the absence of any windows larger than shot holes, irregularly disposed for defence, gave the spectator the same unpleasant feeling which we experience on looking at a blind man. The other buildings seemed scarcely better adapted for the purposes of comfort, for the windows opened to an inner and enclosed courtyard; so that the whole external front looked much more like that of a prison than a palace. The reigning King had even increased this effect; for, desirous that the additions which he himself had made to the fortifications should be of a character not easily distinguished from the original building (for, like many jealous persons, he loved not that his suspicions should be observed), the darkest coloured brick and freestone were employed, and soot mingled with the lime, so as to give the whole Castle the same uniform tinge of extreme and rude antiquity.

This formidable place had but one entrance – at least Durward saw none along the spacious front, except where, in the centre of the first and outward boundary, arose two strong towers, the usual defences of a gateway; and he could observe their ordinary accompaniments, portcullis and

drawbridge – of which the first was lowered, and the last raised. Similar entrance towers were visible on the second and third bounding wall, but not in the same line with those on the outward circuit; because the passage did not cut right through the whole three enclosures at the same point, but, on the contrary, those who entered had to proceed nearly thirty yards betwixt the first and second wall, exposed, if their purpose were hostile, to missiles from both; and again, when the second boundary was passed, they must make a similar digression from the straight line, in order to attain the portal of the third and innermost enclosure; so that before gaining the outer court, which ran along the front of the building, two narrow and dangerous defiles were to be traversed under a flanking discharge of artillery, and three gates, defended in the strongest manner known to the age, were to be successively forced.

Coming from a country alike desolated by foreign war and internal feuds – a country, too, whose unequal and mountainous surface, abounding in precipices and torrents, affords so many situations of strength, young Durward was sufficiently acquainted with all the various contrivances by which men, in that stern age, endeavoured to secure their dwellings; but he frankly owned to his companion, that he did not think it had been in the power of art to do so much for defence, where nature had done so little; for the situation, as we have hinted, was merely the summit of a gentle elevation ascending upwards from the place where they were standing.

To enhance his surprise, his companion told him that the environs of the Castle, except the single winding path by which the portal might be safely approached, were, like the thickets through which they had passed, surrounded with every species of hidden pitfall, snare, and gin, to entrap the wretch who should venture thither without a guide; that upon the walls were constructed certain cradles of iron, called swallows' nests, from which the sentinels, who were regularly posted there, could without being exposed to any risk, take deliberate aim at any who should attempt to enter without the proper signal or password of the day; and that the Archers of the Royal Guard performed that duty day and night, for which they received high pay, rich clothing, and much honour and profit at the hands of King Louis. "And now tell me, young man," he continued, "did you ever see so strong a fortress, and do you think there are men bold enough to storm it?"

The young man looked long and fixedly on the place, the sight of which interested him so much that he had forgotten, in the eagerness of youthful curiosity, the wetness of his dress. His eye glanced, and his colour mounted to his cheek like that of a daring man who meditates an honourable action, as he replied, "It is a strong castle, and strongly guarded; but there is no impossibility to brave men."

"Are there any in your country who could do such a feat?" said the elder, rather scornfully.

"I will not affirm that," answered the youth; "but there are thousands that, in a good cause, would attempt as bold a deed."

"Umph!" said the senior, "perhaps you are yourself such a gallant!"

"I should sin if I were to boast where there is no danger," answered young Durward; "but my father has done as bold an act, and I trust I am no bastard."

"Well," said his companion, smiling, "you might meet your match, and your kindred withal in the attempt; for the Scottish Archers of King Louis's Life Guards stand sentinels on yonder walls – three hundred gentlemen of the best blood in your country."

"And were I King Louis," said the youth, in reply, "I would trust my safety to the faith of the three hundred Scottish gentlemen, throw down my bounding walls to fill up the moat; call in my noble peers and paladins, and live as became me, amid breaking of lances in gallant tournaments, and feasting of days with nobles, and dancing of nights with ladies, and have no more fear of a foe than I have of a fly."

His companion again smiled, and turning his back on the Castle, which, he observed, they had approached a little too nearly, he led the way again into the wood by a more broad and beaten path than they had yet trodden. "This," he said, "leads us to the village of Plessis, as it is called, where you, as a stranger, will find reasonable and honest accommodation. About two miles onward lies the

fine city of Tours, which gives name to this rich and beautiful earldom. But the village of Plessis, or Plessis of the Park as it is sometimes called, from its vicinity to the royal residence, and the chase with which it is encircled, will yield you nearer and as convenient hospitality.”

“I thank you, kind master, for your information,” said the Scot; “but my stay will be so short here, that, if I fail not in a morsel of meat, and a drink of something better than water, my necessities in Plessis, be it of the park or the pool, will be amply satisfied.”

“Nay,” answered his companion, “I thought you had some friend to see in this quarter.”

“And so I have – my mother’s own brother,” answered Durward; “and as pretty a man, before he left the braes of Angus [hills and moors of Angus in Forfarshire, Scotland.], as ever planted brogue on heather.”

“What is his name?” said the senior. “We will inquire him out for you; for it is not safe for you to go up to the Castle, where you might be taken for a spy.”

“Now, by my father’s hand!” said the youth, “I taken for a spy! – By Heaven, he shall brook cold iron that brands me with such a charge! – But for my uncle’s name, I care not who knows it – it is Lesly. Lesly – an honest and noble name.”

“And so it is, I doubt not,” said the old man; “but there are three of the name in the Scottish Guard.”

“My uncle’s name is Ludovic Lesly,” said the young man.

“Of the three Leslys,” answered the merchant, “two are called Ludovic.”

“They call my kinsman Ludovic with the Scar,” said Quentin. “Our family names are so common in a Scottish house, that, where there is no land in the case, we always give a to-name [surname].”

“A nom de guerre [the war name; formerly taken by French soldiers on entering the service. Hence a fictitious name assumed for other purposes.], I suppose you to mean,” answered his companion; “and the man you speak of, we, I think, call Le Balafre, from that scar on his face – a proper man, and a good soldier. I wish I may be able to help you to an interview with him, for he belongs to a set of gentlemen whose duty is strict, and who do not often come out of garrison, unless in the immediate attendance on the King’s person. – And now, young man, answer me one question. I will wager you are desirous to take service with your uncle in the Scottish Guard. It is a great thing, if you propose so; especially as you are very young, and some years’ experience is necessary for the high office which you aim at.”

“Perhaps I may have thought on some such thing,” said Durward, carelessly; “but if I did, the fancy is off.”

“How so, young man?” said the Frenchman, something sternly, “Do you speak thus of a charge which the most noble of your countrymen feel themselves emulous to be admitted to?”

“I wish them joy of it,” said Quentin, composedly. “To speak plain, I should have liked the service of the French King full well; only, dress me as fine and feed me as high as you will, I love the open air better than being shut up in a cage or a swallow’s nest yonder, as you call these same grated pepper boxes. Besides,” he added, in a lower voice, “to speak truth, I love not the Castle when the covin tree bears such acorns as I see yonder.”

[The large tree in front of a Scottish castle was sometimes called so. It is difficult to trace the derivation; but at that distance from the castle the laird received guests of rank, and thither he conveyed them on their departure. S.]

“I guess what you mean,” said the Frenchman; “but speak yet more plainly.”

“To speak more plainly, then,” said the youth, “there grows a fair oak some flight shot or so from yonder Castle – and on that oak hangs a man in a gray jerkin, such as this which I wear.”

“Ay and indeed!” said the man of France – “Pasques dieu! see what it is to have youthful eyes! Why, I did see something, but only took it for a raven among the branches. But the sight is no ways strange, young man; when the summer fades into autumn, and moonlight nights are long,

and roads become unsafe, you will see a cluster of ten, ay of twenty such acorns, hanging on that old doddered oak. – But what then? – they are so many banners displayed to scare knaves; and for each rogue that hangs there, an honest man may reckon that there is a thief, a traitor, a robber on the highway, a pilleur and oppressor of the people the fewer in France. These, young man, are signs of our Sovereign's justice."

"I would have hung them farther from my palace, though, were I King Louis," said the youth. "In my country, we hang up dead corbies where living corbies haunt, but not in our gardens or pigeon houses. The very scent of the carrion – faugh – reached my nostrils at the distance where we stood."

"If you live to be an honest and loyal servant of your Prince, my good youth," answered the Frenchman, "you will know there is no perfume to match the scent of a dead traitor."

"I shall never wish to live till I lose the scent of my nostrils or the sight of my eyes," said the Scot. "Show me a living traitor, and here are my hand and my weapon; but when life is out, hatred should not live longer. – But here, I fancy, we come upon the village, where I hope to show you that neither ducking nor disgust have spoiled mine appetite for my breakfast. So my good friend, to the hostelrie, with all the speed you may. – Yet, ere I accept of your hospitality, let me know by what name to call you."

"Men call me Maitre Pierre," answered his companion. "I deal in no titles. A plain man, that can live on mine own good – that is my designation."

"So be it, Maitre Pierre," said Quentin, "and I am happy my good chance has thrown us together; for I want a word of seasonable advice, and can be thankful for it."

While they spoke thus, the tower of the church and a tall wooden crucifix, rising above the trees, showed that they were at the entrance of the village.

But Maitre Pierre, deflecting a little from the road, which had now joined an open and public causeway, said to his companion that the inn to which he intended to introduce him stood somewhat secluded, and received only the better sort of travellers.

"If you mean those who travel with the better filled purses," answered the Scot, "I am none of the number, and will rather stand my chance of your flayers on the highway, than of your flayers in the hostelrie."

"Pasques dieu!" said his guide, "how cautious your countrymen of Scotland are! An Englishman, now, throws himself headlong into a tavern, eats and drinks of the best, and never thinks of the reckoning till his belly is full. But you forget, Master Quentin, since Quentin is your name, you forget I owe you a breakfast for the wetting which my mistake procured you. – It is the penance of my offence towards you."

"In truth," said the light hearted young man, "I had forgot wetting, offence, and penance, and all. I have walked my clothes dry, or nearly so, but I will not refuse your offer in kindness; for my dinner yesterday was a light one, and supper I had none. You seem an old and respectable burgess, and I see no reason why I should not accept your courtesy."

The Frenchman smiled aside, for he saw plainly that the youth, while he was probably half famished, had yet some difficulty to reconcile himself to the thoughts of feeding at a stranger's cost, and was endeavouring to subdue his inward pride by the reflection, that, in such slight obligations, the acceptor performed as complaisant a part as he by whom the courtesy was offered.

In the meanwhile, they descended a narrow lane, overshadowed by tall elms, at the bottom of which a gateway admitted them into the courtyard of an inn of unusual magnitude, calculated for the accommodation of the nobles and suitors who had business at the neighbouring Castle, where very seldom, and only when such hospitality was altogether unavoidable, did Louis XI permit any of his court to have apartments. A scutcheon, bearing the fleur de lys, hung over the principal door of the large irregular building; but there was about the yard and the offices little or none of the bustle which in those days, when attendants were maintained both in public and in private houses, marked that business was alive, and custom plenty. It seemed as if the stern and unsocial character of the royal

mansion in the neighbourhood had communicated a portion of its solemn and terrific gloom even to a place designed according to universal custom elsewhere, for the temple of social indulgence, merry society, and good cheer.

Maitre Pierre, without calling any one, and even without approaching the principal entrance, lifted the latch of a side door, and led the way into a large room, where a faggot was blazing on the hearth, and arrangements made for a substantial breakfast.

“My gossip has been careful,” said the Frenchman to the Scot. “You must be cold, and I have commanded a fire; you must be hungry, and you shall have breakfast presently.”

He whistled and the landlord entered – answered Maitre Pierre’s bon jour with a reverence – but in no respect showed any part of the prating humour properly belonging to a French publican of all ages.

“I expected a gentleman,” said Maitre Pierre, “to order breakfast – hath he done so?”

In answer the landlord only bowed; and while he continued to bring, and arrange upon the table, the various articles of a comfortable meal, omitted to extol their merits by a single word. And yet the breakfast merited such eulogiums as French hosts are wont to confer upon their regales, as the reader will be informed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV: THE DEJEUNER

Sacred heaven! what masticators! what bread!
YORICK'S TRAVELS

We left our young stranger in France situated more comfortably than he had found himself since entering the territories of the ancient Gauls. The breakfast, as we hinted in the conclusion of the last chapter, was admirable. There was a pate de Perigord, over which a gastronome would have wished to live and die, like Homer's lotus eaters [see the Odyssey, chap. ix, where Odysseus arrives at the land of the Lotus eaters: "whosoever of them ate the lotus's honeyed fruit resolved to bring tidings back no more and never to leave the place, but with the Lotus eaters there desired to stay, to feed on lotus and forget his going home." Palmer's Translation.], forgetful of kin, native country, and all social obligations whatever. Its vast walls of magnificent crust seemed raised like the bulwarks of some rich metropolitan city, an emblem of the wealth which they are designed to protect. There was a delicate ragout, with just that petit point de l'ail [a little flavor of garlic. The French is ungrammatical.] which Gascons love, and Scottishmen do not hate. There was, besides, a delicate ham, which had once supported a noble wild boar in the neighbouring wood of Mountrichart. There was the most exquisite white bread, made into little round loaves called boules (whence the bakers took their French name of boulangers), of which the crust was so inviting, that, even with water alone, it would have been a delicacy. But the water was not alone, for there was a flask of leather called bottrine, which contained about a quart of exquisite Vin de Beaulne. So many good things might have created appetite under the ribs of death. What effect, then, must they have produced upon a youngster of scarce twenty, who (for the truth must be told) had eaten little for the two last days, save the scarcely ripe fruit which chance afforded him an opportunity of plucking, and a very moderate portion of barley bread? He threw himself upon the ragout, and the plate was presently vacant – he attacked the mighty pasty, marched deep into the bowels of the land, and seasoning his enormous meal with an occasional cup of wine, returned to the charge again and again, to the astonishment of mine host, and the amusement of Maitre Pierre.

The latter indeed, probably because he found himself the author of a kinder action than he had thought of, seemed delighted with the appetite of the young Scot; and when, at length, he observed that his exertions began to languish, endeavoured to stimulate him to new efforts by ordering confections, darioles [cream cakes], and any other light dainties he could think of, to entice the youth to continue his meal. While thus engaged, Maitre Pierre's countenance expressed a kind of good humour almost amounting to benevolence, which appeared remote from its ordinary sharp, caustic, and severe character. The aged almost always sympathize with the enjoyments of youth and with its exertions of every kind, when the mind of the spectator rests on its natural poise and is not disturbed by inward envy or idle emulation.

Quentin Durward also, while thus agreeably employed, could do no otherwise than discover that the countenance of his entertainer, which he had at first found so unprepossessing, mended when it was seen under the influence of the Vin de Beaulne, and there was kindness in the tone with which he reproached Maitre Pierre, that he amused himself with laughing at his appetite, without eating anything himself.

"I am doing penance," said Maitre Pierre, "and may not eat anything before noon, save some comfiture and a cup of water. – Bid yonder lady," he added, turning to the innkeeper, "bring them hither to me."

The innkeeper left the room, and Maitre Pierre proceeded, "Well, have I kept faith with you concerning the breakfast I promised you?"

"The best meal I have eaten," said the youth, "since I left Glen Houlakin."

“Glen – what?” demanded Maitre Pierre. “Are you going to raise the devil, that you use such long tailed words?”

“Glen Houlakin,” answered Quentin good humouredly, “which is to say the Glen of the Midges, is the name of our ancient patrimony, my good sir. You have bought the right to laugh at the sound, if you please.”

“I have not the least intention to offend,” said the old man; “but I was about to say, since you like your present meal so well, that the Scottish Archers of the guard eat as good a one, or a better, every day.”

“No wonder,” said Durward; “for if they be shut up in the swallows’ nests all night, they must needs have a curious appetite in the morning.”

“And plenty to gratify it upon,” said Maitre Pierre. “They need not, like the Burgundians, choose a bare back, that they may have a full belly – they dress like counts, and feast like abbots.”

“It is well for them,” said Durward.

“And wherefore will you not take service here, young man? Your uncle might, I dare say, have you placed on the file when there should a vacancy occur. And, hark in your ear, I myself have some little interest, and might be of some use to you. You can ride, I presume, as well as draw the bow?”

“Our race are as good horsemen as ever put a plated shoe into a steel stirrup; and I know not but I might accept of your kind offer. Yet, look you, food and raiment are needful things, but, in my case, men think of honour, and advancement, and brave deeds of arms. Your King Louis – God bless him, for he is a friend and ally of Scotland – but he lies here in this castle, or only rides about from one fortified town to another; and gains cities and provinces by politic embassies, and not in fair fighting. Now, for me, I am of the Douglasses’ mind, who always kept the fields, because they loved better to hear the lark sing than the mouse squeak.”

“Young man,” said Maitre Pierre, “do not judge too rashly of the actions of sovereigns. Louis seeks to spare the blood of his subjects, and cares not for his own. He showed himself a man of courage at Montl’hery.”

“Ay, but that was some dozen years ago or more,” answered the youth – “I should like to follow a master that would keep his honour as bright as his shield, and always venture foremost in the very throng of the battle.”

“Why did you not tarry at Brussels, then, with the Duke of Burgundy? He would put you in the way to have your bones broken every day; and, rather than fail, would do the job for you himself – especially if he heard that you had beaten his forester.”

“Very true,” said Quentin; “my unhappy chance has shut that door against me.”

“Nay, there are plenty of daredevils abroad, with whom mad youngsters may find service,” said his adviser. “What think you, for example, of William de la Marck?”

“What!” exclaimed Durward, “serve Him with the Beard – serve the Wild Boar of Ardennes – a captain of pillagers and murderers, who would take a man’s life for the value of his gaberdine, and who slays priests and pilgrims as if they were so many lance knights and men at arms? It would be a blot on my father’s scutcheon for ever.”

“Well, my young hot blood,” replied Maitre Pierre, “if you hold the Sanglier [Wild Boar] too unscrupulous, wherefore not follow the young Duke of Gueldres?”

[Adolphus, son of Arnold and of Catherine de Bourbon... He made war against his father; in which unnatural strife he made the old man prisoner, and used him with the most brutal violence, proceeding, it is said, even to the length of striking him with his hand. Arnold, in resentment of this usage, disinherited the unprincipled wretch, and sold to Charles of Burgundy whatever rights he had over the duchy of Gueldres and earldom of Zutphen... S.]

“Follow the foul fiend as soon,” said Quentin. “Hark in your ear – he is a burden too heavy for earth to carry – hell gapes for him! Men say that he keeps his own father imprisoned, and that he has even struck him – can you believe it?”

Maitre Pierre seemed somewhat disconcerted with the naive horror with which the young Scotsman spoke of filial ingratitude, and he answered, "You know not, young man, how short a while the relations of blood subsist amongst those of elevated rank;" then changed the tone of feeling in which he had begun to speak, and added, gaily, "besides, if the Duke has beaten his father, I warrant you his father hath beaten him of old, so it is but a clearing of scores."

"I marvel to hear you speak thus," said the Scot, colouring with indignation; "gray hairs such as yours ought to have fitter subjects for jesting. If the old Duke did beat his son in childhood, he beat him not enough; for better he had died under the rod, than have lived to make the Christian world ashamed that such a monster had ever been baptized."

"At this rate," said Maitre Pierre, "as you weigh the characters of each prince and leader, I think you had better become a captain yourself; for where will one so wise find a chieftain fit to command him?"

"You laugh at me, Maitre Pierre," said the youth, good humouredly, "and perhaps you are right; but you have not named a man who is a gallant leader, and keeps a brave party up here, under whom a man might seek service well enough."

"I cannot guess whom you mean."

"Why, he that hangs like Mahomet's coffin [there is a tradition that Mahomet's coffin is suspended in mid air Without any support, the most generally accepted explanation being that the coffin is of iron and is placed between two magnets] (a curse be upon Mahomet!) between the two loadstones – he that no man can call either French or Burgundian, but who knows to hold the balance between them both, and makes both of them fear and serve him, for as great princes as they be."

"I cannot guess whom you mean," said Maitre Pierre, thoughtfully.

"Why, whom should I mean but the noble Louis de Luxembourg, Count of Saint Paul, the High Constable of France? Yonder he makes his place good with his gallant little army, holding his head as high as either King Louis or Duke Charles, and balancing between them like the boy who stands on the midst of a plank, while two others are swinging on the opposite ends."

[This part of Louis XI's reign was much embarrassed by the intrigues of the Constable Saint Paul, who affected independence, and carried on intrigues with England, France, and Burgundy at the same time. According to the usual fate of such variable politicians, the Constable ended by drawing upon himself the animosity of all the powerful neighbours whom he had in their turn amused and deceived. He was delivered up by the Duke of Burgundy to the King of France, tried, and hastily executed for treason, A. D. 1475. S.]

"He is in danger of the worst fall of the three," said Maitre Pierre. "And hark ye, my young friend, you who hold pillaging such a crime, do you know that your politic Count of Saint Paul was the first who set the example of burning the country during the time of war? and that before the shameful devastation which he committed, open towns and villages, which made no resistance, were spared on all sides?"

"Nay, faith," said Durward, "if that be the case, I shall begin to think no one of these great men is much better than another, and that a choice among them is but like choosing a tree to be hung upon. But this Count de Saint Paul, this Constable, hath possessed himself by clean conveyance of the town which takes its name from my honoured saint and patron, Saint Quentin" [it was by his possession of this town of Saint Quentin that the Constable was able to carry on those political intrigues which finally cost him so dear. S.] (here he crossed himself), "and methinks were I dwelling there, my holy patron would keep some look out for me – he has not so many named after him as your more popular saints – and yet he must have forgotten me, poor Quentin Durward, his spiritual godson, since he lets me go one day without food, and leaves me the next morning to the harbourage of Saint Julian, and the chance courtesy of a stranger, purchased by a ducking in the renowned river Cher, or one of its tributaries."

“Blaspheme not the saints, my young friend,” said Maitre Pierre. “Saint Julian is the faithful patron of travellers; and, peradventure, the blessed Saint Quentin hath done more and better for thee than thou art aware of.”

As he spoke, the door opened, and a girl rather above than under fifteen years old, entered with a platter, covered with damask, on which was placed a small saucer of the dried plums which have always added to the reputation of Tours, and a cup of the curiously chased plate which the goldsmiths of that city were anciently famous for executing with a delicacy of workmanship that distinguished them from the other cities of France, and even excelled the skill of the metropolis. The form of the goblet was so elegant that Durward thought not of observing closely whether the material was of silver, or like what had been placed before himself, of a baser metal, but so well burnished as to resemble the richer ore.

But the sight of the young person by whom this service was executed attracted Durward’s attention far more than the petty minutiae of the duty which she performed.

He speedily made the discovery that a quantity of long black tresses, which, in the maiden fashion of his own country, were unadorned by any ornament, except a single chaplet lightly woven out of ivy leaves, formed a veil around a countenance which, in its regular features, dark eyes, and pensive expression, resembled that of Melpomene [the Muse of tragedy], though there was a faint glow on the cheek, and an intelligence on the lips and in the eye, which made it seem that gaiety was not foreign to a countenance so expressive, although it might not be its most habitual expression. Quentin even thought he could discern that depressing circumstances were the cause why a countenance so young and so lovely was graver than belongs to early beauty; and as the romantic imagination of youth is rapid in drawing conclusions from slight premises, he was pleased to infer, from what follows, that the fate of this beautiful vision was wrapped in silence and mystery.

“How now, Jacqueline?” said Maitre Pierre, when she entered the apartment. “Wherefore this? Did I not desire that Dame Perette should bring what I wanted? – Pasques dieu! – Is she, or does she think herself, too good to serve me?”

“My kinswoman is ill at ease,” answered Jacqueline, in a hurried yet a humble tone, – “ill at ease, and keeps her chamber.”

“She keeps it alone, I hope!” replied Maitre Pierre, with some emphasis; “I am vieux routier [one who is experienced in the ways of the world], and none of those upon whom feigned disorders pass for apologies.”

Jacqueline turned pale, and even tottered at the answer of Maitre Pierre; for it must be owned that his voice and looks, at all times harsh, caustic, and unpleasing, had, when he expressed anger or suspicion, an effect both sinister and alarming.

The mountain chivalry of Quentin Durward was instantly awakened, and he hastened to approach Jacqueline and relieve her of the burden she bore, and which she passively resigned to him, while, with a timid and anxious look, she watched the countenance of the angry burgess. It was not in nature to resist the piercing and pity craving expression of her looks, and Maitre Pierre proceeded, not merely with an air of diminished displeasure, but with as much gentleness as he could assume in countenance and manner, “I blame not thee, Jacqueline, and thou art too young to be, what it is pity to think thou must be one day – a false and treacherous thing, like the rest of thy giddy sex. No man ever lived to man’s estate, but he had the opportunity to know you all [he (Louis) entertained great contempt for the understanding, and not less for the character, of the fair sex. S.]. Here is a Scottish cavalier will tell you the same.”

Jacqueline looked for an instant on the young stranger, as if to obey Maitre Pierre, but the glance, momentary as it was, appeared to Durward a pathetic appeal to him for support and sympathy; and with the promptitude dictated by the feelings of youth, and the romantic veneration for the female sex inspired by his education, he answered hastily that he would throw down his gage to any antagonist,

of equal rank and equal age, who should presume to say such a countenance as that which he now looked upon, could be animated by other than the purest and the truest mind.

The young woman grew deadly pale, and cast an apprehensive glance upon Maitre Pierre, in whom the bravado of the young gallant seemed only to excite laughter, more scornful than applause. Quentin, whose second thoughts generally corrected the first, though sometimes after they had found utterance, blushed deeply at having uttered what might be construed into an empty boast in presence of an old man of a peaceful profession; and as a sort of just and appropriate penance, resolved patiently to submit to the ridicule which he had incurred. He offered the cup and trencher to Maitre Pierre with a blush in his cheek, and a humiliation of countenance which endeavoured to disguise itself under an embarrassed smile.

“You are a foolish young man,” said Maitre Pierre, “and know as little of women as of princes, – whose hearts,” he said, crossing himself devoutly, “God keeps in his right hand.”

“And who keeps those of the women, then?” said Quentin, resolved, if he could help it, not to be borne down by the assumed superiority of this extraordinary old man, whose lofty and careless manner possessed an influence over him of which he felt ashamed.

“I am afraid you must ask of them in another quarter,” said Maitre Pierre, composedly.

Quentin was again rebuffed, but not utterly disconcerted. “Surely,” he said to himself, “I do not pay this same burgess of Tours all the deference which I yield him, on account of the miserable obligation of a breakfast, though it was a right good and substantial meal. Dogs and hawks are attached by feeding only – man must have kindness, if you would bind him with the cords of affection and obligation. But he is an extraordinary person; and that beautiful emanation that is even now vanishing – surely a thing so fair belongs not to this mean place, belongs not even to the money gathering merchant himself, though he seems to exert authority over her, as doubtless he does over all whom chance brings within his little circle. It is wonderful what ideas of consequence these Flemings and Frenchmen attach to wealth – so much more than wealth deserves, that I suppose this old merchant thinks the civility I pay to his age is given to his money. I a Scottish gentleman of blood and coat armour, and he a mechanic of Tours!”

Such were the thoughts which hastily traversed the mind of young Durward; while Maitre Pierre said with a smile, and at the same time patting Jacqueline’s heed, from which hung down her long tresses, “This young man will serve me, Jacqueline, thou mayst withdraw. I will tell thy negligent kinswoman she does ill to expose thee to be gazed on unnecessarily.”

“It was only to wait on you,” said the maiden. “I trust you will not be displeased with my kinswoman, since” —

“Pasques dieu!” said the merchant, interrupting her, but not harshly, “do you bandy words with me, you brat, or stay you to gaze upon the youngster here? – Begone – he is noble, and his services will suffice me.”

Jacqueline vanished; and so much was Quentin Durward interested in her sudden disappearance that it broke his previous thread of reflection, and he complied mechanically when Maitre Pierre said, in the tone of one accustomed to be obeyed, as he threw himself carelessly upon a large easy chair, “Place that tray beside me.”

The merchant then let his dark eyebrows sink over his keen eyes so that the last became scarce visible, or but shot forth occasionally a quick and vivid ray, like those of the sun setting behind a dark cloud, through which its beams are occasionally darted, but singly and for an instant.

“That is a beautiful creature,” said the old man at last, raising his head, and looking steadily and firmly at Quentin, when he put the question, – “a lovely girl to be the servant of an auberge [an inn]? She might grace the board of an honest burgess; but ‘tis a vile education, a base origin.”

It sometimes happens that a chance shot will demolish a noble castle in the air, and the architect on such occasions entertains little goodwill towards him who fires it, although the damage on the offender’s part may be wholly unintentional. Quentin was disconcerted, and was disposed to be angry

– he himself knew not why – with this old man, for acquainting him that this beautiful creature was neither more nor less than what her occupation announced; the servant of the auberge – an upper servant, indeed, and probably a niece of the landlord, or such like; but still a domestic, and obliged to comply with the humour of the customers, and particularly of Maitre Pierre, who probably had sufficiency of whims, and was rich enough to ensure their being attended to.

The thought, the lingering thought, again returned on him, that he ought to make the old gentleman understand the difference betwixt their conditions, and call on him to mark, that, how rich soever he might be, his wealth put him on no level with a Durward of Glen Houlakin. Yet, whenever he looked on Maitre Pierre's countenance with such a purpose, there was, notwithstanding the downcast look, pinched features, and mean and miserly dress, something which prevented the young man from asserting the superiority over the merchant which he conceived himself to possess. On the contrary, the oftener and more fixedly Quentin looked at him, the stronger became his curiosity to know who or what this man actually was; and he set him down internally for at least a Syndic or high magistrate of Tours, or one who was, in some way or other, in the full habit of exacting and receiving deference. Meantime, the merchant seemed again sunk into a reverie, from which he raised himself only to make the sign of the cross devoutly, and to eat some of the dried fruit, with a morsel of biscuit. He then signed to Quentin to give him the cup, adding, however, by way of question, as he presented it, "You are noble, you say?"

"I surely am," replied the Scot, "if fifteen descents can make me so – so I told you before. But do not constrain yourself on that account, Maitre Pierre – I have always been taught it is the duty of the young to assist the more aged."

"An excellent maxim," said the merchant, availing himself of the youth's assistance in handing the cup, and filling it from a ewer which seemed of the same materials with the goblet, without any of those scruples in point of propriety which, perhaps, Quentin had expected to excite.

"The devil take the ease and familiarity of this old mechanical burgher!" said Durward once more to himself. "He uses the attendance of a noble Scottish gentleman with as little ceremony as I would that of a gillie from Glen Isla."

The merchant, in the meanwhile, having finished his cup of water, said to his companion, "From the zeal with which you seem to relish the Vin de Beaulne, I fancy you would not care much to pledge me in this elemental liquor. But I have an elixir about me which can convert even the rock water into the richest wines of France."

As he spoke, he took a large purse from his bosom, made of the fur of the sea otter, and streamed a shower of small silver pieces into the goblet, until the cup, which was but a small one, was more than half full.

"You have reason to be more thankful, young man," said Maitre Pierre, "both to your patron Saint Quentin and to Saint Julian, than you seemed to be but now. I would advise you to bestow alms in their name. Remain in this hostelry until you see your kinsman, Le Balafre, who will be relieved from guard in the afternoon. I will cause him to be acquainted that he may find you here, for I have business in the Castle."

Quentin Durward would have said something to have excused himself from accepting the profuse liberality of his new friend; but Maitre Pierre, bending his dark brows, and erecting his stooping figure into an attitude of more dignity than he had yet seen him assume, said in a tone of authority, "No reply, young man, but do what you are commanded."

With these words he left the apartment, making a sign, as he departed, that Quentin must not follow him.

The young Scotsman stood astounded, and knew not what to think of the matter. His first most natural, though perhaps not most dignified impulse, drove him to peer into the silver goblet, which assuredly was more than half full of silver pieces to the number of several scores, of which perhaps Quentin had never called twenty his own at one time during the course of his whole life. But could he

reconcile it to his dignity as a gentleman, to accept the money of this wealthy plebeian? – This was a trying question; for, though he had secured a good breakfast, it was no great reserve upon which to travel either back to Dijon, in case he chose to hazard the wrath and enter the service of the Duke of Burgundy, or to Saint Quentin, if he fixed on that of the Constable Saint Paul; for to one of those powers, if not to the king of France, he was determined to offer his services. He perhaps took the wisest resolution in the circumstances, in resolving to be guided by the advice of his uncle; and, in the meantime, he put the money into his velvet hawking pouch, and called for the landlord of the house, in order to restore the silver cup – resolving, at the same time, to ask him some questions about this liberal and authoritative merchant.

The man of the house appeared presently; and, if not more communicative, was at least more loquacious, than he had been formerly. He positively declined to take back the silver cup. It was none of his, he said, but Maitre Pierre's, who had bestowed it on his guest. He had, indeed, four silver hanaps of his own, which had been left him by his grandmother, of happy memory, but no more like the beautiful carving of that in his guest's hand, than a peach was like a turnip – that was one of the famous cups of Tours, wrought by Martin Dominique, an artist who might brag all Paris.

"And, pray, who is this Maitre Pierre," said Durward, interrupting him, "who confers such valuable gifts on strangers?"

"Who is Maitre Pierre?" said the host, dropping the words as slowly from his mouth as if he had been distilling them.

"Ay," said Durward, hastily and peremptorily, "who is this Maitre Pierre, and why does he throw about his bounties in this fashion? And who is the butcherly looking fellow whom he sent forward to order breakfast?"

"Why, fair sir, as to who Maitre Pierre is, you should have asked the question of himself; and for the gentleman who ordered breakfast to be made ready, may God keep us from his closer acquaintance!"

"There is something mysterious in all this," said the young Scot. "This Maitre Pierre tells me he is a merchant."

"And if he told you so," said the innkeeper, "surely he is a merchant."

"What commodities does he deal in?"

"Oh, many a fair matter of traffic," said the host; "and especially he has set up silk manufactories here which match those rich bales that the Venetians bring from India and Cathay. You might see the rows of mulberry trees as you came hither, all planted by Maitre Pierre's command, to feed the silk worms."

"And that young person who brought in the confections, who is she, my good friend?" said the guest.

"My lodger, sir, with her guardian, some sort of aunt or kinswoman, as I think," replied the innkeeper.

"And do you usually employ your guests in waiting on each other?" said Durward; "for I observed that Maitre Pierre would take nothing from your hand, or that of your attendant."

"Rich men may have their fancies, for they can pay for them," said the landlord; "this is not the first time Maitre Pierre has found the true way to make gentlefolks serve at his beck."

The young Scotsman felt somewhat offended at the insinuation; but, disguising his resentment, he asked whether he could be accommodated with an apartment at this place for a day, and perhaps longer.

"Certainly," the innkeeper replied; "for whatever time he was pleased to command it."

"Could he be permitted," he asked, "to pay his respects to the ladies, whose fellow lodger he was about to become?"

The innkeeper was uncertain. "They went not abroad," he said, "and received no one at home."

"With the exception, I presume, of Maitre Pierre?" said Durward.

“I am not at liberty to name any exceptions,” answered the man, firmly but respectfully.

Quentin, who carried the notions of his own importance pretty high, considering how destitute he was of means to support them, being somewhat mortified by the innkeeper’s reply, did not hesitate to avail himself of a practice common enough in that age. “Carry to the ladies,” he said, “a flask of vernat, with my humble duty; and say that Quentin Durward, of the house of Glen Houlakin, a Scottish cavalier of honour, and now their fellow lodger, desires the permission to dedicate his homage to them in a personal interview.”

The messenger departed, and returned, almost instantly, with the thanks of the ladies, who declined the proffered refreshment, and, with their acknowledgments to the Scottish cavalier, regretted that, residing there in privacy, they could not receive his visit.

Quentin bit his lip, took a cup of the rejected vernat, which the host had placed on the table. “By the mass, but this is a strange country,” said he to himself, “where merchants and mechanics exercise the manners and munificence of nobles, and little travelling damsels, who hold their court in a cabaret [a public house], keep their state like disguised princesses! I will see that black browed maiden again, or it will go hard, however;” and having formed this prudent resolution, he demanded to be conducted to the apartment which he was to call his own.

The landlord presently ushered him up a turret staircase, and from thence along a gallery, with many doors opening from it, like those of cells in a convent; a resemblance which our young hero, who recollected, with much ennui, an early specimen of a monastic life, was far from admiring. The host paused at the very end of the gallery, selected a key from the large bunch which he carried at his girdle, opened the door, and showed his guest the interior of a turret chamber; small, indeed, but which, being clean and solitary, and having the pallet bed and the few articles of furniture, in unusually good order, seemed, on the whole, a little palace.

“I hope you will find your dwelling agreeable here, fair sir,” said the landlord. “I am bound to pleasure every friend of Maitre Pierre.”

“Oh, happy ducking!” exclaimed Quentin Durward, cutting a caper on the floor, so soon as his host had retired: “Never came good luck in a better or a wetter form. I have been fairly deluged by my good fortune.”

As he spoke thus, he stepped towards the little window, which, as the turret projected considerably from the principal line of the building, not only commanded a very pretty garden of some extent, belonging to the inn, but overlooked, beyond its boundary, a pleasant grove of those very mulberry trees which Maitre Pierre was said to have planted for the support of the silk worm. Besides, turning the eye from these more remote objects, and looking straight along the wall, the turret of Quentin was opposite to another turret, and the little window at which he stood commanded a similar little window in a corresponding projection of the building. Now, it would be difficult for a man twenty years older than Quentin to say why this locality interested him more than either the pleasant garden or the grove of mulberry trees; for, alas! eyes which have been used for forty years and upwards, look with indifference on little turret windows, though the lattice be half open to admit the air, while the shutter is half closed to exclude the sun, or perhaps a too curious eye – nay, even though there hang on the one side of the casement a lute, partly mantled by a light veil of sea green silk. But, at Durward’s happy age, such accidents, as a painter would call them, form sufficient foundation for a hundred airy visions and mysterious conjectures, at recollection of which the full grown man smiles while he sighs, and sighs while he smiles.

As it may be supposed that our friend Quentin wished to learn a little more of his fair neighbour, the owner of the lute and veil – as it may be supposed he was at least interested to know whether she might not prove the same whom he had seen in humble attendance on Maitre Pierre, it must of course be understood that he did not produce a broad staring visage and person in full front of his own casement. Durward knew better the art of bird catching; and it was to his keeping his person skilfully withdrawn on one side of his window; while he peeped through the lattice, that he owed

the pleasure of seeing a white, round, beautiful arm take down the instrument, and that his ears had presently after their share in the reward of his dexterous management.

The maid of the little turret, of the veil, and of the lute sang exactly such an air as we are accustomed to suppose flowed from the lips of the high born dames of chivalry, when knights and troubadours listened and languished. The words had neither so much sense, wit, or fancy as to withdraw the attention from the music, nor the music so much of art as to drown all feeling of the words. The one seemed fitted to the other; and if the song had been recited without the notes, or the air played without the words, neither would have been worth noting. It is; therefore, scarcely fair to put upon record lines intended not to be said or read, but only to be sung. But such scraps of old poetry have always had a sort of fascination for us; and as the tune is lost for ever unless Bishop [Sir Henry Rowley, an English composer and professor of music at Oxford in 1848. Among his most popular operas are *Guy Mannering* and *The Knight of Snowdon*] happens to find the notes, or some lark teaches Stephens [Catherine (1794-1882): a vocalist and actress who created Susanna in the *Marriage of Figaro*, and various parts in adaptation of Scott.] to warble the air – we will risk our credit, and the taste of the Lady of the Lute, by preserving the verses, simple and even rude as they are:

Ah! County Guy, the hour is nigh,
The sun has left the lea,
The orange flower perfumes the bower,
The breeze is on the sea.
The lark, his lay who thrill'd all day,
Sits hush'd his partner nigh;
Breeze, bird, and flower confess the hour,
But where is County Guy?

The village maid steals through the shade,
Her shepherd's suit to hear;
To beauty shy, by lattice high,
Sings high born Cavalier.
The star of Love, all stars above,
Now reigns o'er earth and sky;
And high and low the influence know
– But where is County Guy?

Whatever the reader may think of this simple ditty, it had a powerful effect on Quentin, when married to heavenly airs, and sung by a sweet and melting voice, the notes mingling with the gentle breezes which wafted perfumes from the garden, and the figure of the songstress being so partially and obscurely visible as threw a veil of mysterious fascination over the whole.

At the close of the air, the listener could not help showing himself more boldly than he had yet done, in a rash attempt to see more than he had yet been able to discover. The music instantly ceased – the casement was closed, and a dark curtain, dropped on the inside, put a stop to all farther observation on the part of the neighbour in the next turret.

Durward was mortified and surprised at the consequence of his precipitance, but comforted himself with the hope that the Lady of the Lute could neither easily forego the practice of an instrument which seemed so familiar to her, nor cruelly resolve to renounce the pleasures of fresh air and an open window for the churlish purpose of preserving for her own exclusive ear the sweet sounds which she created. There came, perhaps, a little feeling of personal vanity to mingle with these consolatory reflections. If, as he shrewdly suspected, there was a beautiful dark tressed damsel inhabitant of the one turret, he could not but be conscious that a handsome, young, roving, bright

locked gallant, a cavalier of fortune, was the tenant of the other; and romances, those prudent instructors, had taught his youth that if damsels were shy, they were yet neither void of interest nor of curiosity in their neighbours' affairs.

Whilst Quentin was engaged in these sage reflections, a sort of attendant or chamberlain of the inn informed him that a cavalier desired to speak with him below.

CHAPTER V: THE MAN AT ARMS

*Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth.*

AS YOU LIKE IT

The cavalier who awaited Quentin Durward's descent into the apartment where he had breakfasted, was one of those of whom Louis XI had long since said that they held in their hands the fortune of France, as to them were intrusted the direct custody and protection of the royal person.

Charles the Sixth had instituted this celebrated body, the Archers, as they were called, of the Scottish Bodyguard, with better reason than can generally be alleged for establishing round the throne a guard of foreign and mercenary troops. The divisions which tore from his side more than half of France, together with the wavering and uncertain faith of the nobility who yet acknowledged his cause, rendered it impolitic and unsafe to commit his personal safety to their keeping. The Scottish nation was the hereditary enemy of the English, and the ancient, and, as it seemed, the natural allies of France. They were poor, courageous, faithful; their ranks were sure to be supplied from the superabundant population of their own country, than which none in Europe sent forth more or bolder adventurers. Their high claims of descent, too, gave them a good title to approach the person of a monarch more closely than other troops, while the comparative smallness of their numbers prevented the possibility of their mutinying, and becoming masters where they ought to be servants.

On the other hand, the French monarchs made it their policy to conciliate the affections of this select band of foreigners, by allowing them honorary privileges and ample pay, which last most of them disposed of with military profusion in supporting their supposed rank. Each of them ranked as a gentleman in place and honour; and their near approach to the King's person gave them dignity in their own eyes, as well as importance in those of the nation of France. They were sumptuously armed, equipped, and mounted; and each was entitled to allowance for a squire, a valet, a page; and two yeomen, one of whom was termed coutelier, from the large knife which he wore to dispatch those whom in the melee his master had thrown to the ground. With these followers, and a corresponding equipage, an Archer of the Scottish Guard was a person of quality and importance; and vacancies being generally filled up by those who had been trained in the service as pages or valets, the cadets of the best Scottish families were often sent to serve under some friend and relation in those capacities, until a chance of preferment should occur.

The coutelier and his companion, not being noble or capable of this promotion, were recruited from persons of inferior quality; but as their pay and appointments were excellent, their masters were easily able to select from among their wandering countrymen the strongest and most courageous to wait upon them in these capacities.

Ludovic Lesly, or as we shall more frequently call him, Le Balafre, by which name he was generally known in France, was upwards of six feet high, robust, strongly compacted in person, and hard favoured in countenance, which latter attribute was much increased by a large and ghastly scar, which, beginning on his forehead, and narrowly missing his right eye, had laid bare the cheek bone, and descended from thence almost to the tip of his ear, exhibiting a deep seam, which was sometimes scarlet, sometimes purple, sometimes blue, and sometimes approaching to black; but always hideous, because at variance with the complexion of the face in whatever state it chanced to be, whether agitated or still, flushed with unusual passion, or in its ordinary state of weather-beaten and sunburnt swarthinness.

His dress and arms were splendid. He wore his national bonnet, crested with a tuft of feathers, and with a Virgin Mary of massive silver for a brooch. These brooches had been presented to the Scottish Guard, in consequence of the King, in one of his fits of superstitious piety, having devoted the swords of his guard to the service of the Holy Virgin, and, as some say, carried the matter so far as to draw out a commission to Our Lady as their Captain General. The Archer's gorget, arm pieces, and gauntlets, were of the finest steel, curiously inlaid with silver, and his hauberk, or shirt of mail, was as clear and bright as the frostwork of a winter morning upon fern or brier. He wore a loose surcoat or cassock of rich blue velvet, open at the sides like that of a herald, with a large white St. Andrew's cross of embroidered silver bisecting it both before and behind; his knees and legs were protected by hose of mail and shoes of steel; a broad, strong poniard (called the Mercy of God), hung by his right side; the baldric for his two handed sword, richly embroidered, hung upon his left shoulder; but for convenience he at present carried in his hand that unwieldy weapon which the rules of his service forbade him to lay aside.

[St. Andrew was the first called to apostleship. He made many converts to Christianity and was finally crucified on a cross of peculiar form, which has since been called the St. Andrew's cross. Certain of his relics were brought to Scotland in the fourth century, and he has since that time been honoured as the patron saint of that country. He is also the patron saint of the Burgundian Order, the Golden Fleece.]

Quentin Durward – though, like the Scottish youth of the period, he had been early taught to look upon arms and war – thought he had never seen a more martial looking, or more completely equipped and accomplished man at arms than now saluted him in the person of his mother's brother, called Ludovic with the Scar, or Le Balafre; yet he could not but shrink a little from the grim expression of his countenance, while, with its rough moustaches, he brushed first the one and then the other cheek of his kinsman, welcomed his nephew to France, and, in the same breath, asked what news from Scotland.

"Little good tidings, dear uncle," replied young Durward; "but I am glad that you know me so readily."

"I would have known thee, boy, in the landes of Bourdeaux, had I met thee marching there like a crane on a pair of stilts [the crutches or stilts which in Scotland are used to pass rivers. They are employed by the peasantry of the country near Bordeaux to traverse those deserts of loose sand called Landes. S]. But sit thee down – sit thee down – if there is sorrow to hear of, we will have wine to make us bear it. – Ho! old Pinch Measure, our good host, bring us of thy best, and that in an instant."

The well known sound of the Scottish French was as familiar in the taverns near Plessis as that of the Swiss French in the modern guinguettes [common inns] of Paris; and promptly – ay, with the promptitude of fear and precipitation, was it heard and obeyed. A flagon of champagne stood before them, of which the elder took a draught, while the nephew helped himself only to a moderate sip to acknowledge his uncle's courtesy, saying, in excuse, that he had already drunk wine that morning.

"That had been a rare good apology in the mouth of thy sister, fair nephew," said Le Balafre; "you must fear the wine pot less, if you would wear beard on your face, and write yourself soldier. But, come – come – unbuckle your Scottish mail bag – give us the news of Glen Houlakin – How doth my sister?"

"Dead, fair uncle," answered Quentin, sorrowfully.

"Dead!" echoed his uncle, with a tone rather marked by wonder than sympathy, – "why, she was five years younger than I, and I was never better in my life. Dead! the thing is impossible. I have never had so much as a headache, unless after revelling out of my two or three days' furlough with the brethren of the joyous science – and my poor sister is dead – And your father, fair nephew, hath he married again?"

And, ere the youth could reply, he read the answer in his surprise at the question, and said, "What! no – I would have sworn that Allan Durward was no man to live without a wife. He loved to

have his house in order – loved to look on a pretty woman too; and was somewhat strict in life withal – matrimony did all this for him. Now, I care little about these comforts, and I can look on a pretty woman without thinking on the sacrament of wedlock – I am scarce holy enough for that.”

“Alas! dear uncle, my mother was left a widow a year since, when Glen Houlakin was harried by the Ogilvies. My father, and my two uncles, and my two elder brothers, and seven of my kinsmen, and the harper, and the tasker, and some six more of our people, were killed in defending the castle, and there is not a burning hearth or a standing stone in all Glen Houlakin.”

“Cross of Saint Andrew!” said Le Balafre; “that is what I call an onslaught! Ay, these Ogilvies were ever but sorry neighbours to Glen Houlakin – an evil chance it was; but fate of war – fate of war. – When did this mishap befall, fair nephew?” With that he took a deep draught of wine, and shook his head with much solemnity, when his kinsman replied that his family had been destroyed upon the festival of Saint Jude [October 28] last bypast.

“Look ye there,” said the soldier; “I said it was all chance – on that very day I and twenty of my comrades carried the Castle of Roche Noir by storm, from Amaury Bras de fer, a captain of free lances, whom you must have heard of. I killed him on his own threshold, and gained as much gold as made this fair chain, which was once twice as long as it now is – and that minds me to send part of it on an holy errand. – Here, Andrew – Andrew!”

Andrew, his yeoman, entered, dressed like the Archer himself in the general equipment, but without the armour for the limbs – that of the body more coarsely manufactured – his cap without a plume, and his cassock made of serge, or ordinary cloth, instead of rich velvet. Untwining his gold chain from his neck, Balafre twisted off, with his firm and strong set teeth, about four inches from the one end of it, and said to his attendant, “Here, Andrew, carry this to my gossip, jolly Father Boniface, the monk of St. Martin’s; greet him well from me, by the same token that he could not say God save ye when we last parted at midnight. – Tell my gossip that my brother and sister, and some others of my house, are all dead and gone, and I pray him to say masses for their souls as far as the value of these links will carry him, and to do on trust what else may be necessary to free them from Purgatory. And hark ye, as they were just living people, and free from all heresy, it may be that they are well nigh out of limbo already, so that a little matter may have them free of the fetlocks; and in that case, look ye, ye will say I desire to take out the balance of the gold in curses upon a generation called the Ogilvies of Angus Shire, in what way soever the church may best come at them. You understand all this, Andrew?”

The coutelier nodded.

“Then look that none of the links find their way to the wine house ere the monk touches them; for if it so chance, thou shalt taste of saddle girth and stirrup leather till thou art as raw as Saint Bartholomew [he was flayed alive. In Michael Angelo’s Last Judgment he is represented as holding his skin in his hand] – Yet hold, I see thy eye has fixed on the wine measure, and thou shalt not go without tasting.”

So saying, he filled him a brimful cup, which the coutelier drank off, and retired to do his patron’s commission.

“And now, fair nephew, let us hear what was your own fortune in this unhappy matter.”

“I fought it out among those who were older and stouter than I was, till we were all brought down,” said Durward, “and I received a cruel wound.”

“Not a worse slash than I received ten years since myself,” said Le Balafre. “Look at this, now, my fair nephew,” tracing the dark crimson gash which was imprinted on his face. – “An Ogilvy’s sword never ploughed so deep a furrow.”

“They ploughed deep enough,” answered Quentin, sadly, “but they were tired at last, and my mother’s entreaties procured mercy for me, when I was found to retain some spark of life; but although a learned monk of Aberbrothik, who chanced to be our guest at the fatal time, and narrowly escaped

being killed in the fray, was permitted to bind my wounds, and finally to remove me to a place of safety, it was only on promise, given both by my mother and him, that I should become a monk.”

“A monk!” exclaimed the uncle. “Holy Saint Andrew! that is what never befell me. No one, from my childhood upwards, ever so much as dreamed of making me a monk. And yet I wonder when I think of it; for you will allow that, bating the reading and writing, which I could never learn, and the psalmody, which I could never endure, and the dress, which is that of a mad beggar – Our Lady forgive me! [here he crossed himself] and their fasts, which do not suit my appetite, I would have made every whit as good a monk as my little gossip at St. Martin’s yonder. But I know not why, none ever proposed the station to me. – Oh, so, fair nephew, you were to be a monk, then – and wherefore, I pray you?”

“That my father’s house might be ended, either in the cloister or in the tomb,” answered Quentin, with deep feeling.

“I see,” answered his uncle – “I comprehend. Cunning rogues – very cunning! They might have been cheated, though; for, look ye, fair nephew, I myself remember the canon Robersart who had taken the vows and afterwards broke out of cloister, and became a captain of Free Companions. He had a mistress, the prettiest wench I ever saw, and three as beautiful children. – There is no trusting monks, fair nephew – no trusting them – they may become soldiers and fathers when you least expect it – but on with your tale.”

“I have little more to tell,” said Durward, “except that, considering my poor mother to be in some degree a pledge for me, I was induced to take upon me the dress of a novice, and conformed to the cloister rules, and even learned to read and write.”

“To read and write!” exclaimed Le Balafre, who was one of that sort of people who think all knowledge is miraculous which chances to exceed their own. “To write, say’st thou, and to read! I cannot believe it – never Durward could write his name that ever I heard of, nor Lesly either. I can answer for one of them – I can no more write than I can fly. Now, in Saint Louis’s name, how did they teach it you?”

“It was troublesome at first,” said Durward, “but became more easy by use; and I was weak with my wounds, and loss of blood, and desirous to gratify my preserver, Father Peter, and so I was the more easily kept to my task. But after several months’ languishing, my good, kind mother died, and as my health was now fully restored, I communicated to my benefactor, who was also Sub Prior of the convent, my reluctance to take the vows; and it was agreed between us, since my vocation lay not to the cloister, that I should be sent out into the world to seek my fortune, and that to save the Sub Prior from the anger of the Ogilvies, my departure should have the appearance of flight; and to colour it I brought off the Abbot’s hawk with me. But I was regularly dismissed, as will appear from the hand and seal of the Abbot himself.”

“That is right, that is well,” said his uncle. “Our King cares little what other theft thou mayst have made, but hath a horror at anything like a breach of the cloister. And I warrant thee, thou hadst no great treasure to bear thy charges?”

“Only a few pieces of silver,” said the youth; “for to you, fair uncle, I must make a free confession.”

“Alas!” replied Le Balafre, “that is hard. Now, though I am never a hoarder of my pay, because it doth ill to bear a charge about one in these perilous times, yet I always have (and I would advise you to follow my example) some odd gold chain, or bracelet, or carcanet, that serves for the ornament of my person, and can at need spare a superfluous link or two, or it may be a superfluous stone for sale, that can answer any immediate purpose. But you may ask, fair kinsman, how you are to come by such toys as this.” (He shook his chain with complacent triumph.) “They hang not on every bush – they grow not in the fields like the daffodils, with whose stalks children make knights’ collars. What then? – you may get such where I got this, in the service of the good King of France, where there is always wealth to be found, if a man has but the heart to seek it at the risk of a little life or so.”

“I understood,” said Quentin, evading a decision to which he felt himself as yet scarcely competent, “that the Duke of Burgundy keeps a more noble state than the King of France, and that there is more honour to be won under his banners – that good blows are struck there, and deeds of arms done; while the most Christian King, they say, gains his victories by his ambassadors’ tongues.”

“You speak like a foolish boy, fair nephew,” answered he with the scar; “and yet, I bethink me, when I came hither I was nearly as simple: I could never think of a King but what I supposed him either sitting under the high deas, and feasting amid his high vassals and Paladins, eating blanc mange, with a great gold crown upon his head, or else charging at the head of his troops like Charlemagne in the romaunts, or like Robert Bruce or William Wallace in our own true histories, such as Barbour and the Minstrel. Hark in thine ear, man – it is all moonshine in the water. Policy – policy does it all. But what is policy, you will say? It is an art this French King of ours has found out, to fight with other men’s swords, and to wage his soldiers out of other men’s purses. Ah! it is the wisest prince that ever put purple on his back – and yet he weareth not much of that neither – I see him often go plainer than I would think befitted me to do.”

[Charlemagne (742? -814): King of the Franks and crowned Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in 800. His kingdom included Germany and France, the greater part of Italy, and Spain as far as the Ebro. As Emperor of the West he bore the title Caesar Augustus. He established churches and monasteries, and encouraged arts and learning. He figures largely in mediaeval minstrelsy, where the achievements of his knights, or paladins, rival those of Arthur’s court.]

[Robert Bruce: the grandson of Robert Bruce, the competitor with John Baliol for the Scottish throne. He defeated the English forces at Bannockburn in 1314, and thus secured the independence of Scotland, an independence which lasted until the two kingdoms were united under one crown in 1707.]

[William Wallace: another brave Scottish leader in the war for independence against Edward I of England. Wallace was betrayed in 1305 and carried to London, where he was cruelly executed as a traitor.]

[Barbour: an eminent Scottish poet contemporary with Chaucer. His principal work, *The Bruce*, records the life and deeds of Robert Bruce.]

[Harry the Minstrel or “Blind Harry” was the author of a poem on the life and deeds of Wallace which was held in peculiar reverence by the Scotch people.]

“But you meet not my exception, fair uncle,” answered young Durward; “I would serve, since serve I must in a foreign land, somewhere where a brave deed, were it my hap to do one, might work me a name.”

“I understand you, my fair nephew,” said the royal man at arms, “I understand you passing well; but you are unripe in these matters. The Duke of Burgundy is a hot brained, impetuous, pudding headed, iron ribbed dare all. He charges at the head of his nobles and native knights, his liegemen of Artois and Hainault; think you, if you were there, or if I were there myself, that we could be much farther forward than the Duke and all his brave nobles of his own land? If we were not up with them, we had a chance to be turned on the Provost Marshal’s hands for being slow in making to; if we were abreast of them, all would be called well and we might be thought to have deserved our pay; and grant that I was a spear’s length or so in the front, which is both difficult and dangerous in such a melee where all do their best, why, my lord Duke says in his Flemish tongue, when he sees a good blow struck, ‘Ha! gut getroffen [well struck]! a good lance – a brave Scot – give him a florin to drink our health;’ but neither rank, nor lands, nor treasures come to the stranger in such a service – all goes to the children of the soil.”

“And where should it go, in Heaven’s name, fair uncle?” demanded young Durward.

“To him that protects the children of the soil,” said Balafre, drawing up his gigantic height. “Thus says King Louis ‘My good French peasant – mine honest Jacques Bonhomme, get you to your tools, your plough and your harrow, your pruning knife and your hoe – here is my gallant Scot that

will fight for you, and you shall only have the trouble to pay him. And you, my most serene duke, my illustrious count, and my most mighty marquis, e'en rein up your fiery courage till it is wanted, for it is apt to start out of the course, and to hurt its master; here are my companies of ordnance – here are my French Guards – here are, above all, my Scottish Archers, and mine honest Ludovic with the Scar, who will fight, as well or better than you, will fight with all that undisciplined valour which, in your father's time, lost Cressy and Azincour [two famous victories in the Hundred Years' War gained over the French by the English, near the towns of Crecy and Agincourt, in 1346 and 1415. See Shakespeare's *Henry V* for a description of the latter.]. Now, see you not in which of these states a cavalier of fortune holds the highest rank, and must come to the highest honour?"

"I think I understand you, fair uncle," answered the nephew; "but, in my mind, honour cannot be won where there is no risk. Sure, this is – I pray pardon me – an easy and almost slothful life, to mount guard round an elderly man whom no one thinks of harming, to spend summer day and winter night up in yonder battlements, and shut up all the while in iron cages, for fear you should desert your posts – uncle, uncle, it is but a hawk upon his perch, who is never carried out to the fields!"

"Now, by Saint Martin of Tours, the boy has some spirit! a right touch of the Lesly in him; much like myself, though always with a little more folly in it. Hark ye, youth – Long live the King of France! – scarce a day but there is some commission in hand, by which some of his followers may win both coin and credit. Think not that the bravest and most dangerous deeds are done by daylight. I could tell you of some, as scaling castles, making prisoners, and the like, where one who shall be nameless hath run higher risk and gained greater favour than any desperado in the train of desperate Charles of Burgundy. And if it please his Majesty to remain behind, and in the background, while such things are doing, he hath the more leisure of spirit to admire, and the more liberality of hand to reward the adventurers, whose dangers, perhaps, and whose feats of arms, he can better judge of than if he had personally shared them. Oh, 't is a sagacious and most politic monarch!"

His nephew paused, and then said, in a low but impressive tone of voice, "the good Father Peter used often to teach me there might be much danger in deeds by which little glory was acquired. I need not say to you, fair uncle, that I do in course suppose that these secret commissions must needs be honourable."

"For whom or for what take you me, fair nephew," said Balafre, somewhat sternly; "I have not been trained, indeed, in the cloister, neither can I write or read. But I am your mother's brother; I am a loyal Lesly. Think you that I am like to recommend to you anything unworthy? The best knight in France, Du Guesclin himself, if he were alive again, might be proud to number my deeds among his achievements."

"I cannot doubt your warranty, fair uncle," said the youth; "you are the only adviser my mishap has left me. But is it true, as fame says, that this King keeps a meagre Court here at his Castle of Plessis? No repair of nobles or courtiers, none of his grand feudatories in attendance, none of the high officers of the crown; half solitary sports, shared only with the menials of his household; secret councils, to which only low and obscure men are invited; rank and nobility depressed, and men raised from the lowest origin to the kingly favour – all this seems unregulated, resembles not the manners of his father, the noble Charles, who tore from the fangs of the English lion this more than half conquered kingdom of France."

"You speak like a giddy child," said Le Balafre, "and even as a child, you harp over the same notes on a new string. Look you: if the King employs Oliver Dain, his barber, to do what Oliver can do better than any peer of them all, is not the kingdom the gainer? If he bids his stout Provost Marshal, Tristan, arrest such or such a seditious burgher, take off such or such a turbulent noble, the deed is done, and no more of it; when, were the commission given to a duke or peer of France, he might perchance send the King back a defiance in exchange. If, again, the King pleases to give to plain Ludovic le Balafre a commission which he will execute, instead of employing the High Constable, who would perhaps betray it, doth it not show wisdom? Above all, doth not a monarch

of such conditions best suit cavaliers of fortune, who must go where their services are most highly prized, and most frequently in demand? – No, no, child, I tell thee Louis knows how to choose his confidants, and what to charge them with; suiting, as they say, the burden to each man's back. He is not like the King of Castile, who choked with thirst, because the great butler was not beside to hand his cup. – But hark to the bell of St. Martin's! I must hasten, back to the Castle – Farewell – make much of yourself, and at eight tomorrow morning present yourself before the drawbridge, and ask the sentinel for me. Take heed you step not off the straight and beaten path in approaching the portal! There are such traps and snap haunches as may cost you a limb, which you will sorely miss. You shall see the King, and learn to judge him for yourself – farewell.”

So saying, Balafre hastily departed, forgetting, in his hurry, to pay for the wine he had called for, a shortness of memory incidental to persons of his description, and which his host, overawed perhaps by the nodding bonnet and ponderous two handed sword, did not presume to use any efforts for correcting. It might have been expected that, when left alone, Durward would have again betaken himself to his turret, in order to watch for the repetition of those delicious sounds which had soothed his morning reverie. But that was a chapter of romance, and his uncle's conversation had opened to him a page of the real history of life. It was no pleasing one, and for the present the recollections and reflections which it excited were qualified to overpower other thoughts, and especially all of a light and soothing nature.

Quentin resorted to a solitary walk along the banks of the rapid Cher, having previously inquired of his landlord for one which he might traverse without fear of disagreeable interruption from snares and pitfalls, and there endeavoured to compose his turmoiled and scattered thoughts, and consider his future motions, upon which his meeting with his uncle had thrown some dubiety.

CHAPTER VI: THE BOHEMIANS

*Sae rantingly, sae wantingly,
Sae dantingly gaed he,
He play'd a spring and danced a round
Beneath the gallows tree!*

OLD SONG

[The Bohemians: In... Guy Mannering the reader will find some remarks on the gipsies as they are found in Scotland. Their first appearance in Europe took place in the beginning of the fifteenth century. The account given by these singular people was, that it was appointed to them, as a penance, to travel for a certain number of years. Their appearance, however, and manners, strongly contradicted the allegation that they travelled from any religious motive. Their dress and accoutrements were at once showy and squalid; those who acted as captains and leaders of any horde... were arrayed in dresses of the most showy colours, such as scarlet or light green; were well mounted; assumed the title of dukes and counts, and affected considerable consequence. The rest of the tribe were most miserable in their diet and apparel, fed without hesitation on animals which had died of disease, and were clad in filthy and scanty rags... Their complexion was positively Eastern, approaching to that of the Hindoos. Their manners were as depraved as their appearance was poor and beggarly. The men were in general thieves, and the women of the most abandoned character. The few arts which they studied with success were of a slight and idle, though ingenious description. They practised working in iron, but never upon any great scale. Many were good sportsmen, good musicians... But their ingenuity never ascended into industry... Their pretensions to read fortunes, by palmistry and by astrology, acquired them sometimes respect, but oftener drew them under suspicion as sorcerers; the universal accusation that they augmented their horde by stealing children, subjected them to doubt and execration... The pretension set up by these wanderers, of being pilgrims in the act of penance, although it... in many instances obtained them protection from the governments of the countries through which they travelled, was afterwards totally disbelieved, and they were considered as incorrigible rogues and vagrants... A curious and accurate account of their arrival in France is quoted by Pasquier "On August 27th, 1427, came to Paris twelve penitents... viz. a duke, an earl, and ten men, all on horseback, and calling themselves good Christians. They were of Lower Egypt, and gave out that, not long before, the Christians had subdued their country, and obliged them to embrace Christianity on pain of being put to death. Those who were baptized were great lords in their own country, and had a king and queen there. Soon after their conversion, the Saracens overran the country, and obliged them to renounce Christianity. When the Emperor of Germany, the King of Poland, and other Christian princes heard of this, they fell upon them, and obliged the whole of them, both great and small, to quit the country, and go to the Pope at Rome, who enjoined them seven years' penance to wander over the world, without lying in a bed. They had been wandering five years when they came to Paris first... Nearly all of them had their ears bored, and wore two silver rings in each... The men were black, their hair curled; the women remarkably black, their only clothes a large old duffle garment, tied over the shoulders with a cloth or cord, and under it a miserable rocket;... notwithstanding their poverty, there were among them women who, by looking into people's hands, told their fortunes, and what was worse, they picked people's pockets of their money, and got it into their own, by telling these things through airy magic, et cetera." Pasquier remarks upon this singular journal that however the story of a penance savours of a trick, these people wandered up and down France, under the eye, and with the knowledge, of the magistrates, for more than a hundred years;

and it was not till 1561, that a sentence of banishment was passed against them in that kingdom. The arrival of the Egyptians (as these singular people were called) in various parts of Europe, corresponds with the period in which Timur or Tamerlane invaded Hindostan, affording its natives the choice between the Koran and death. There can be little doubt that these wanderers consisted originally of the Hindostanee tribes, who, displaced, and flying from the sabres of the Mohammedans, undertook this species of wandering life, without well knowing whither they were going. When they are in closest contact with the ordinary peasants around them, they still keep their language a mystery. There is little doubt, however, that it is a dialect of the Hindostanee, from the specimens produced by Grellman, Hoyland, and others, who have written on the subject. S.]

The manner in which Quentin Durward had been educated was not of a kind to soften the heart, or perhaps to improve the moral feeling. He, with the rest of his family, had been trained to the chase as an amusement, and taught to consider war as their only serious occupation, and that it was the great duty of their lives stubbornly to endure, and fiercely to retaliate, the attacks of their feudal enemies, by whom their race had been at last almost annihilated. And yet there mixed with these feuds a spirit of rude chivalry, and even courtesy, which softened their rigour; so that revenge, their only justice, was still prosecuted with some regard to humanity and generosity. The lessons of the worthy old monk, better attended to, perhaps, during a long illness and adversity, than they might have been in health and success, had given young Durward still farther insight into the duties of humanity towards others; and considering the ignorance of the period, the general prejudices entertained in favour of a military life, and the manner in which he himself had been bred, the youth was disposed to feel more accurately the moral duties incumbent on his station than was usual at the time.

He reflected on his interview with his uncle with a sense of embarrassment and disappointment. His hopes had been high; for although intercourse by letters was out of the question, yet a pilgrim, or an adventurous trafficker, or a crippled soldier sometimes brought Lesly's name to Glen Houlakin, and all united in praising his undaunted courage, and his success in many petty enterprises which his master had intrusted to him. Quentin's imagination had filled up the sketch in his own way, and assimilated his successful and adventurous uncle (whose exploits probably lost nothing in the telling) to some of the champions and knights errant of whom minstrels sung and who won crowns and kings' daughters by dint of sword and lance. He was now compelled to rank his kinsman greatly lower in the scale of chivalry; but, blinded by the high respect paid to parents and those who approach that character – moved by every early prejudice in his favour – inexperienced besides, and passionately attached to his mother's memory, he saw not, in the only brother of that dear relation, the character he truly held, which was that of an ordinary mercenary soldier, neither much worse nor greatly better than many of the same profession whose presence added to the distracted state of France.

Without being wantonly cruel, Le Balafre was, from habit, indifferent to human life and human suffering; he was profoundly ignorant, greedy of booty, unscrupulous how he acquired it, and profuse in expending it on the gratification of his passions. The habit of attending exclusively to his own wants and interests had converted him into one of the most selfish animals in the world; so that he was seldom able, as the reader may have remarked, to proceed far in any subject without considering how it applied to himself, or, as it is called, making the case his own, though not upon feelings connected with the golden rule, but such as were very different. To this must be added that the narrow round of his duties and his pleasures had gradually circumscribed his thoughts, hopes, and wishes, and quenched in a great measure the wild spirit of honour, and desire of distinction in arms, by which his youth had been once animated.

Balafre was, in short, a keen soldier, hardened, selfish, and narrow minded; active and bold in the discharge of his duty, but acknowledging few objects beyond it, except the formal observance of a careless devotion, relieved by an occasional debauch with brother Boniface, his comrade and confessor. Had his genius been of a more extended character, he would probably have been promoted to some important command, for the King, who knew every soldier of his bodyguard personally,

reposed much confidence in Balafre's courage and fidelity; and besides, the Scot had either wisdom or cunning enough perfectly to understand, and ably to humour, the peculiarities of that sovereign. Still, however, his capacity was too much limited to admit of his rising to higher rank, and though smiled on and favoured by Louis on many occasions, Balafre continued a mere Life Guardsman, or Scottish Archer.

Without seeing the full scope of his uncle's character, Quentin felt shocked at his indifference to the disastrous extirpation of his brother in law's whole family, and could not help being surprised, moreover, that so near a relative had not offered him the assistance of his purse, which, but for the generosity of Maitre Pierre, he would have been under the necessity of directly craving from him. He wronged his uncle, however, in supposing that this want of attention to his probable necessities was owing to avarice. Not precisely needing money himself at that moment, it had not occurred to Balafre that his nephew might be in exigencies; otherwise, he held a near kinsman so much a part of himself, that he would have provided for the weal of the living nephew, as he endeavoured to do for that of his deceased sister and her husband. But whatever was the motive, the neglect was very unsatisfactory to young Durward, and he wished more than once he had taken service with the Duke of Burgundy before he quarrelled with his forester. "Whatever had then become of me," he thought to himself, "I should always have been able to keep up my spirits with the reflection that I had, in case of the worst, a stout back friend in this uncle of mine. But now I have seen him, and, woe worth him, there has been more help in a mere mechanical stranger, than I have found in my own mother's brother, my countryman and a cavalier! One would think the slash, that has carved all comeliness out of his face, had let at the same time every drop of gentle blood out of his body."

Durward now regretted he had not had an opportunity to mention Maitre Pierre to Le Balafre, in the hope of obtaining some farther account of that personage; but his uncle's questions had followed fast on each other, and the summons of the great bell of Saint Martin of Tours had broken off their conference rather suddenly. That old man, he thought to himself, was crabbed and dogged in appearance, sharp and scornful in language, but generous and liberal in his actions; and such a stranger is worth a cold kinsman.

"What says our old Scottish proverb? – 'Better kind fremit, than fremit kindred.' ['Better kind strangers than estranged kindred.' The motto is engraved on a dirk, belonging to a person who had but too much reason to choose such a device. It was left by him to my father. The weapon is now in my possession. S.] I will find out that man, which, methinks, should be no difficult task, since he is so wealthy as mine host bespeaks him. He will give me good advice for my governance, at least; and if he goes to strange countries, as many such do, I know not but his may be as adventurous a service as that of those Guards of Louis."

As Quentin framed this thought, a whisper from those recesses of the heart in which lies much that the owner does not know of, or will not acknowledge willingly, suggested that, perchance, the lady of the turret, she of the veil and lute, might share that adventurous journey. As the Scottish youth made these reflections, he met two grave looking men, apparently citizens of Tours, whom, doffing his cap with the reverence due from youth to age, he respectfully asked to direct him to the house of Maitre Pierre.

"The house of whom, my fair son?" said one of the passengers.

"Of Maitre Pierre, the great silk merchant, who planted all the mulberry trees in the park yonder," said Durward.

"Young man," said one of them who was nearest to him, "you have taken up an idle trade a little too early."

"And have chosen wrong subjects to practise your fooleries upon," said the farther one, still more gruffly. "The Syndic of Tours is not accustomed to be thus talked to by strolling jesters from foreign parts."

Quentin was so much surprised at the causeless offence which these two decent looking persons had taken at a very simple and civil question, that he forgot to be angry at the rudeness of their reply, and stood staring after them as they walked on with amended pace, often looking back at him, as if they were desirous to get as soon as possible out of his reach.

He next met a party of vine dressers, and addressed to them the same question; and in reply, they demanded to know whether he wanted Maitre Pierre, the schoolmaster? or Maitre Pierre, the carpenter? or Maitre Pierre, the beadle? or half a dozen of Maitre Pierres besides. When none of these corresponded with the description of the person after whom he inquired, the peasants accused him of jesting with them impertinently, and threatened to fall upon him and beat him, in guerdon of his raillery. The oldest amongst them, who had some influence over the rest, prevailed on them to desist from violence.

“You see by his speech and his fool’s cap,” said he, “that he is one of the foreign mountebanks who are come into the country, and whom some call magicians and soothsayers, and some jugglers, and the like, and there is no knowing what tricks they have amongst them. I have heard of such a one’s paying a liard [a small copper coin worth a quarter of a cent, current in France in the fifteenth century.] to eat his bellyfull of grapes in a poor man’s vineyard; and he ate as many as would have loaded a wain, and never undid a button of his jerkin – and so let him pass quietly, and keep his way, as we will keep ours. – And you, friend, if you would shun worse, walk quietly on, in the name of God, our Lady of Marmoutier, and Saint Martin of Tours, and trouble us no more about your Maitre Pierre, which may be another name for the devil, for aught we know.”

The Scot finding himself much the weaker party, judged it his Wisest course to walk on without reply; but the peasants, who at first shrunk from him in horror, at his supposed talents for sorcery and grape devouring, took heart of grace as he got to a distance, and having uttered a few cries and curses, finally gave them emphasis with a shower of stones, although at such a distance as to do little or no harm to the object of their displeasure. Quentin, as he pursued his walk, began to think, in his turn, either that he himself lay under a spell, or that the people of Touraine were the most stupid, brutal, and inhospitable of the French peasants. The next incident which came under his observation did not tend to diminish this opinion.

On a slight eminence, rising above the rapid and beautiful Cher, in the direct line of his path, two or three large chestnut trees were so happily placed as to form a distinguished and remarkable group; and beside them stood three or four peasants, motionless, with their eyes turned upwards, and fixed, apparently, upon some object amongst the branches of the tree next to them. The meditations of youth are seldom so profound as not to yield to the slightest, impulse of curiosity, as easily as the lightest pebble, dropped casually from the hand, breaks the surface of a limpid pool. Quentin hastened his pace, and ran lightly up the rising ground, in time enough to witness the ghastly spectacle which attracted the notice of these gazers – which was nothing less than the body of a man, convulsed by the last agony, suspended on one of the branches.

“Why do you not cut him down?” said the young Scot, whose hand was as ready to assist affliction, as to maintain his own honour when he deemed it assailed.

One of the peasants, turning on him an eye from which fear had banished all expression but its own, and a face as pale as clay, pointed to a mark cut upon the bark of the tree, having the same rude resemblance to a fleur de lys which certain talismanic scratches, well known to our revenue officers, bear to a broad arrow. Neither understanding nor heeding the import of this symbol, young Durward sprung lightly as the ounce up into the tree, drew from his pouch that most necessary implement of a Highlander or woodsman, the trusty skene dhu [black knife; a species of knife without clasp or hinge formerly much used by the Highlanders, who seldom travelled without such an ugly weapon, though it is now rarely used. S.], and, calling to those below to receive the body on their hands, cut the rope asunder in less than a minute after he had perceived the exigency.

But his humanity was ill seconded by the bystanders. So far from rendering Durward any assistance, they seemed terrified at the audacity of his action, and took to flight with one consent, as if they feared their merely looking on might have been construed into accession to his daring deed. The body, unsupported from beneath, fell heavily to earth in such a manner that Quentin, who presently afterwards jumped down, had the mortification to see that the last sparks of life were extinguished. He gave not up his charitable purpose, however, without farther efforts. He freed the wretched man's neck from the fatal noose, undid the doublet, threw water on the face, and practised the other ordinary remedies resorted to for recalling suspended animation.

While he was thus humanely engaged, a wild clamour of tongues, speaking a language which he knew not, arose around him; and he had scarcely time to observe that he was surrounded by several men and women of a singular and foreign appearance, when he found himself roughly seized by both arms, while a naked knife, at the same moment, was offered to his throat.

"Pale slave of Eblis!" [in Mohammedan religion the name of the chief of the fallen angels] said a man, in imperfect French, "are you robbing him you have murdered? – But we have you – and you shall abuy it."

There were knives drawn on every side of him, as these words were spoken, and the grim and distorted countenances which glared on him were like those of wolves rushing on their prey.

Still the young Scot's courage and presence of mind bore him out. "What mean ye, my masters?" he said; "if that be your friend's body, I have just now cut him down, in pure charity, and you will do better to try to recover his life, than to misuse an innocent stranger to whom he owes his chance of escape."

The women had by this time taken possession of the dead body, and continued the attempts to recover animation which Durward had been making use of, though with the like bad success; so that, desisting from their fruitless efforts, they seemed to abandon themselves to all the Oriental expressions of grief; the women making a piteous wailing, and tearing their long black hair, while the men seemed to rend their garments, and to sprinkle dust upon their heads. They gradually became so much engaged in their mourning rites, that they bestowed no longer any attention on Durward, of whose innocence they were probably satisfied from circumstances. It would certainly have been his wisest plan to have left these wild people to their own courses, but he had been bred in almost reckless contempt of danger, and felt all the eagerness of youthful curiosity.

The singular assemblage, both male and female, wore turbans and caps, more similar in general appearance to his own bonnet than to the hats commonly worn in France. Several of the men had curled black beards, and the complexion of all was nearly as dark as that of Africans. One or two who seemed their chiefs, had some tawdry ornaments of silver about their necks and in their ears, and wore showy scarfs of yellow, or scarlet, or light green; but their legs and arms were bare, and the whole troop seemed wretched and squalid in appearance. There were no weapons among them that Durward saw, except the long knives with which they had lately menaced him, and one short, crooked sabre, or Moorish sword, which was worn by an active looking young man, who often laid his hand upon the hilt, while he surpassed the rest of the party in his extravagant expressions of grief, and seemed to mingle with them threats of vengeance.

The disordered and yelling group were so different in appearance from any beings whom Quentin had yet seen, that he was on the point of concluding them to be a party of Saracens, of those "heathen hounds," who were the opponents of gentle knights and Christian monarchs in all the romances which he had heard or read, and was about to withdraw himself from a neighbourhood so perilous, when a galloping of horse was heard, and the supposed Saracens, who had raised by this time the body of their comrade upon their shoulders, were at once charged by a party of French soldiers.

This sudden apparition changed the measured wailing of the mourners into irregular shrieks of terror. The body was thrown to the ground in an instant, and those who were around it showed the utmost and most dexterous activity in escaping under the bellies as it were of the horses, from

the point of the lances which were levelled at them, with exclamations of “Down with the accursed heathen thieves – take and kill – bind them like beasts – spear them like wolves!”

These cries were accompanied with corresponding acts of violence; but such was the alertness of the fugitives, the ground being rendered unfavourable to the horsemen by thickets and bushes, that only two were struck down and made prisoners, one of whom was the young fellow with the sword, who had previously offered some resistance. Quentin, whom fortune seemed at this period to have chosen for the butt of her shafts, was at the same time seized by the soldiers, and his arms, in spite of his remonstrances, bound down with a cord; those who apprehended him showing a readiness and dispatch in the operation, which proved them to be no novices in matters of police.

Looking anxiously to the leader of the horsemen, from whom he hoped to obtain liberty, Quentin knew not exactly whether to be pleased or alarmed upon recognising in him the down looking and silent companion of Maitre Pierre. True, whatever crime these strangers might be accused of, this officer might know, from the history of the morning, that he, Durward, had no connection with them whatever; but it was a more difficult question, whether this sullen man would be either a favourable judge or a willing witness in his behalf, and he felt doubtful whether he would mend his condition by making any direct application to him.

But there was little leisure for hesitation. “Trois Eschelles and Petit Andre,” said the down looking officer to two of his band, “These same trees stand here quite convenient. I will teach these misbelieving, thieving sorcerers to interfere with the King’s justice, when it has visited any of their accursed race. Dismount, my children, and do your office briskly.”

Trois Eschelles and Petit Andre were in an instant on foot, and Quentin observed that they had each, at the crupper and pommel of his saddle, a coil or two of ropes, which they hastily undid, and showed that, in fact, each coil formed a halter, with the fatal noose adjusted, ready for execution. The blood ran cold in Quentin’s veins, when he saw three cords selected, and perceived that it was proposed to put one around his own neck. He called on the officer loudly, reminded him of their meeting that morning, claimed the right of a free born Scotsman in a friendly and allied country, and denied any knowledge of the persons along with whom he was seized, or of their misdeed.

The officer whom Durward thus addressed, scarce deigned to look at him while he was speaking, and took no notice whatever of the claim he preferred to prior acquaintance. He barely turned to one or two of the peasants who were now come forward, either to volunteer their evidence against the prisoners, or out of curiosity, and said gruffly, “Was yonder young fellow with the vagabonds?”

“That he was, sir, and it please your noble Provostship,” answered one of the clowns; “he was the very first blasphemously to cut down the rascal whom his Majesty’s justice most deservedly hung up, as we told your worship.”

“I’ll swear by God, and Saint Martin of Tours, to have seen him with their gang,” said another, “when they pillaged our metairie [a small farm].”

“Nay, but,” said a boy, “yonder heathen was black, and this youth is fair; yonder one had short curled hair, and this hath long fair locks.”

“Ay, child,” said the peasant, “and perhaps you will say yonder one had a green coat and this a gray jerkin. But his worship, the Provost, knows that they can change their complexions as easily as their jerkins, so that I am still minded he was the same.”

“It is enough that you have seen him intermeddle with the course of the King’s justice, by attempting to recover an executed traitor,” said the officer. – “Trois Eschelles and Petit Andre, dispatch.”

“Stay, signior officer!” exclaimed the youth in mortal agony; “hear me speak – let me not die guiltlessly – my blood will be required of you by my countrymen in this world, and by Heaven’s justice in that which is to follow.”

“I will answer for my actions in both,” said the Provost, coldly, and made a sign with his left hand to the executioners; then, with a smile of triumphant malice, touched with his forefinger his right arm, which hung suspended in a scarf, disabled probably by the blow which Durward had dealt him that morning.

“Miserable, vindictive wretch!” answered Quentin, persuaded by that action that private revenge was the sole motive of this man’s rigour, and that no mercy whatever was to be expected from him.

“The poor youth raves,” said the functionary: “speak a word of comfort to him ere he make his transit, Trois Eschelles; thou art a comfortable man in such cases when a confessor is not to be had. Give him one minute of ghostly advice, and dispatch matters in the next. I must proceed on the rounds. – Soldiers, follow me!”

The Provost rode on, followed by his guard, excepting two or three, who were left to assist in the execution. The unhappy youth cast after him an eye almost darkened by despair, and thought he heard in every tramp of his horse’s retreating hoofs the last slight chance of his safety vanish. He looked around him in agony, and was surprised, even in that moment, to see the stoical indifference of his fellow prisoners. They had previously testified every sign of fear, and made every effort of escape; but now, when secured and destined apparently to inevitable death, they awaited its arrival with the utmost composure. The scene of fate before them gave, perhaps, a more yellow tinge to their swarthy cheeks; but it neither agitated their features, nor quenched the stubborn haughtiness of their eye. They seemed like foxes, which, after all their wiles and artful attempts at escape are exhausted, die with a silent and sullen fortitude which wolves and bears, the fiercer objects of the chase, do not exhibit. They were undaunted by the conduct of the fatal executioners, who went about their work with more deliberation than their master had recommended, and which probably arose from their having acquired by habit a sort of pleasure in the discharge of their horrid office. We pause an instant to describe them, because, under a tyranny, whether despotic or popular, the character of the hangman becomes a subject of grave importance.

These functionaries were essentially different in their appearance and manners. Louis used to call them Democritus and Heraclitus, and their master, the Provost, termed them Jean qui pleure and Jean qui rit.

[Democritus and Heraclitus: two Greek philosophers of the fifth century; the former because of his propensity to laugh at the follies of men was called the “laughing philosopher;” the latter, according to a current notion, probably unfounded, habitually wept over the follies of mankind]

[Jean qui pleure, and Jean qui rit: John who weeps and John who laughs. One of these two persons... might with more accuracy have been called Petit Jean, than Petit Andre. This was actually the name of the son of Henry de Cousin, master executioner of the High Court of Justice. S.]

Trois Eschelles was a tall, thin, ghastly man, with a peculiar gravity of visage, and a large rosary round his neck, the use of which he was accustomed piously to offer to those sufferers on whom he did his duty. He had one or two Latin texts continually in his mouth on the nothingness and vanity of human life; and, had it been regular to have enjoyed such a plurality, he might have held the office of confessor to the jail in commendam with that of executioner. Petit Andre, on the contrary, was a joyous looking, round, active, little fellow, who rolled about in execution of his duty as if it were the most diverting occupation in the world. He seemed to have a sort of fond affection for his victims, and always spoke of them in kindly and affectionate terms. They were his poor honest fellows, his pretty dears, his gossips, his good old fathers, as their age or sex might be; and as Trois Eschelles endeavoured to inspire them with a philosophical or religious regard to futurity, Petit Andre seldom failed to refresh them with a jest or two, as if to induce them to pass from life as something that was ludicrous, contemptible, and not worthy of serious consideration.

I cannot tell why or wherefore it was, but these two excellent persons, notwithstanding the variety of their talents, and the rare occurrence of such among persons of their profession, were both more utterly detested than perhaps any creatures of their kind, whether before or since; and the only

doubt of those who knew aught of them was, whether the grave and pathetic Trois Eschelles or the frisky, comic, alert Petit Andre was the object of the greatest fear, or of the deepest execration. It is certain they bore the palm in both particulars over every hangman in France, unless it were perhaps their master Tristan l'Hermite, the renowned Provost Marshal, or his master, Louis XI.

It must not be supposed that these reflections were of Quentin Durward's making. Life, death, time, and eternity were swimming before his eyes – a stunning and overwhelming prospect, from which human nature recoiled in its weakness, though human pride would fain have borne up. He addressed himself to the God of his fathers; and when he did so, the little rude and unroofed chapel, which now held almost all his race but himself, rushed on his recollection.

"Our feudal enemies gave my kindred graves in our own land," he thought, "but I must feed the ravens and kites of a foreign land, like an excommunicated felon!"

The tears gushed involuntarily from his eyes. Trois Eschelles, touching one shoulder, gravely congratulated him on his heavenly disposition for death, and pathetically exclaiming, *Beati qui in Domino moriuntur* [blessed are they who die in the Lord], remarked, the soul was happy that left the body while the tear was in the eye. Petit Andre, slapping the other shoulder, called out, "Courage, my fair son! since you must begin the dance, let the ball open gaily, for all the rebecs are in tune," twitching the halter at the same time, to give point to his joke. As the youth turned his dismayed looks, first on one and then on the other, they made their meaning plainer by gently urging him forward to the fatal tree, and bidding him be of good courage, for it would be over in a moment.

In this fatal predicament, the youth cast a distracted look around him. "Is there any good Christian who hears me," he said, "that will tell Ludovic Lesly of the Scottish Guard, called in this country *Le Balafre*, that his nephew is here basely murdered?" The words were spoken in good time, for an Archer of the Scottish Guard, attracted by the preparations for the execution, was standing by, with one or two other chance passengers, to witness what was passing.

"Take heed what you do," he said to the executioners, "if this young man be of Scottish birth, I will not permit him to have foul play."

"Heaven forbid, Sir Cavalier," said Trois Eschelles; "but we must obey our orders," drawing Durward forward by one arm. "The shortest play is ever the fairest," said Petit Andre, pulling him onward by the other.

But Quentin had heard words of comfort, and, exerting his strength, he suddenly shook off both the finishers of the law, and, with his arms still bound, ran to the Scottish Archer. "Stand by me, countryman," he said, in his own language, "for the love of Scotland and Saint Andrew! I am innocent – I am your own native landsman. Stand by me, as you shall answer at the last day."

"By Saint Andrew! they shall make at you through me!" said the Archer, and unsheathed his sword.

"Cut my bonds, countryman," said Quentin, "and I will do something for myself."

This was done with a touch of the Archer's weapon, and the liberated captive, springing suddenly on one of the Provost's guard, wrested from him a halbert with which he was armed. "And now" he said, "come on, if you dare."

The two officers whispered together.

"Ride thou after the Provost Marshal," said Trois Eschelles, "and I will detain them here, if I can. Soldiers of the Provost's guard, stand to your arms."

Petit Andre mounted his horse, and left the field, and the other Marshals men in attendance drew together so hastily at the command of Trois Eschelles, that they suffered the other two prisoners to make their escape during the confusion. Perhaps they were not very anxious to detain them; for they had of late been sated with the blood of such wretches, and, like other ferocious animals, were, through long slaughter, become tired of carnage. But the pretext was, that they thought themselves immediately called upon to attend to the safety of Trois Eschelles; for there was a jealousy, which

occasionally led to open quarrels, betwixt the Scottish Archers and the Marshal guards, who executed the orders of their Provost.

“We are strong enough to beat the proud Scots twice over, if it be your pleasure,” said one of these soldiers to Trois Eschelles.

But that cautious official made a sign to him to remain quiet, and addressed the Scottish Archer with great civility. “Surely, sir, this is a great insult to the Provost Marshal, that you should presume to interfere with the course of the King’s justice, duly and lawfully committed to his charge; and it is no act of justice to me, who am in lawful possession of my criminal. Neither is it a well meant kindness to the youth himself, seeing that fifty opportunities of hanging him may occur, without his being found in so happy a state of preparation as he was before your ill advised interference.”

“If my young countryman,” said the Scot, smiling, “be of opinion I have done him an injury, I will return him to your charge without a word more dispute.”

“No, no! – for the love of Heaven, no!” exclaimed Quentin. “I would rather you swept my head off with your long sword – it would better become my birth, than to die by the hands of such a foul churl.”

“Hear how he revileth,” said the finisher of the law. “Alas! how soon our best resolutions pass away! – he was in a blessed frame for departure but now, and in two minutes he has become a contemner of authorities.”

“Tell me at once,” said the Archer, “what has this young man done.”

“Interfered,” answered Trois Eschelles, with some earnestness, “to take down the dead body of a criminal, when the fleur de lys was marked on the tree where he was hung with my own proper hand.”

“How is this, young man?” said the Archer; “how came you to have committed such an offence?”

“As I desire your protection,” answered Durward, “I will tell you the truth as if I were at confession. I saw a man struggling on the tree, and I went to cut him down out of mere humanity. I thought neither of fleur de lys nor of clove gilliflower, and had no more idea of offending the King of France than our Father the Pope.”

“What a murrain had you to do with the dead body, then?” said the Archer. “You ‘ll see them hanging, in the rear of this gentleman, like grapes on every tree, and you will have enough to do in this country if you go a-gleaning after the hangman. However, I will not quit a countryman’s cause if I can help it. – Hark ye, Master Marshals man, you see this is entirely a mistake. You should have some compassion on so young a traveller. In our country at home he has not been accustomed to see such active proceedings as yours and your master’s.”

“Not for want of need of them, Signior Archer,” said Petit Andre, who returned at this moment. “Stand fast, Trois Eschelles, for here comes the Provost Marshal; we shall presently see how he will relish having his work taken out of his hand before it is finished.”

“And in good time,” said the Archer, “here come some of my comrades.”

Accordingly, as the Provost Tristan rode up with his patrol on one side of the little bill which was the scene of the altercation, four or five Scottish Archers came as hastily up on the other, and at their head the Balafre himself.

Upon this urgency, Lesly showed none of that indifference towards his nephew of which Quentin had in his heart accused him; for he no sooner saw his comrade and Durward standing upon their defence, than he exclaimed, “Cunningham, I thank thee. – Gentlemen – comrades, lend me your aid. – It is a young Scottish gentleman – my nephew – Lindesay – Guthrie – Tyrie, draw, and strike in!”

There was now every prospect of a desperate scuffle between the parties, who were not so disproportioned in numbers but that the better arms of the Scottish cavaliers gave them an equal chance of victory. But the Provost Marshal, either doubting the issue of the conflict, or aware that it would be disagreeable to the King, made a sign to his followers to forbear from violence, while he

demanding of Balafre, who now put himself forward as the head of the other party, what he, a cavalier of the King's Bodyguard, purposed by opposing the execution of a criminal.

"I deny that I do so," answered the Balafre. "Saint Martin! [patron saint of Tours, Lucca, and of penitent drunkards. He was greatly honoured in the Middle Ages.] there is, I think, some difference between the execution of a criminal and a slaughter of my own nephew!"

"Your nephew may be a criminal as well as another," said the Provost Marshal; "and every stranger in France is amenable to the laws of France."

"Yes, but we have privileges, we Scottish Archers," said Balafre, "have we not, comrades?"

"Yes, yes," they all exclaimed together. "Privileges – privileges! Long live King Louis – long live the bold Balafre – long live the Scottish Guard – and death to all who would infringe our privileges!"

"Take reason with you, gentlemen cavaliers," said the Provost Marshal; "consider my commission."

"We will have no reason at your hand," said Cunningham; "our own officers shall do us reason. We will be judged by the King's grace, or by our own Captain, now that the Lord High Constable is not in presence."

"And we will be hanged by none," said Lindesay, "but Sandie Wilson, the auld Marshals man of our ain body."

"It would be a positive cheating of Sandie, who is as honest a man as ever tied noose upon hemp, did we give way to any other proceeding," said the Balafre. "Were I to be hanged myself, no other should tie tippet about my craig."

"But hear ye," said the Provost Marshal, "this young fellow belongs not to you, and cannot share what you call your privileges."

"What we call our privileges, all shall admit to be such," said Cunningham.

"We will not hear them questioned!" was the universal cry of the Archers.

"Ye are mad, my masters," said Tristan l'Hermite. "No one disputes your privileges; but this youth is not one of you."

"He is my nephew," said the Balafre, with a triumphant air.

"But no Archer of the Guard, I think," retorted Tristan l'Hermite.

The Archers looked on each other in some uncertainty.

"Stand to it yet, comrade," whispered Cunningham to Balafre. "Say he is engaged with us."

"Saint Martin! you say well, fair countryman," answered Lesly; and raising his voice, swore that he had that day enrolled his kinsman as one of his own retinue. This declaration was a decisive argument.

"It is well, gentlemen," said the Provost Tristan, who was aware of the King's nervous apprehension of disaffection creeping in among his Guards. "You know, as you say, your privileges, and it is not my duty to have brawls with the King's Guards, if it is to be avoided. But I will report this matter for the King's own decision; and I would have you to be aware, that, in doing so, I act more mildly than perhaps my duty warrants."

So saying, he put his troop into motion, while the Archers, remaining on the spot, held a hasty consultation what was next to be done. "We must report the matter to Lord Crawford, our Captain, in the first place, and have the young fellow's name put on the roll."

"But, gentlemen, and my worthy friends and preservers," said Quentin, with some hesitation, "I have not yet determined whether to take service with you or no."

"Then settle in your own mind," said his uncle, "whether you choose to do so, or be hanged – for I promise you, that, nephew of mine as you are, I see no other chance of your 'scaping the gallows."

This was an unanswerable argument, and reduced Quentin at once to acquiesce in what he might have otherwise considered as no very agreeable proposal; but the recent escape from the halter, which had been actually around his neck, would probably have reconciled him to a worse alternative than was proposed.

“He must go home with us to our caserne,” said Cunningham; “there is no safety for him out of our bounds, whilst these man hunters are prowling.”

“May I not then abide for this night at the hostelry where I breakfasted, fair uncle?” said the youth – thinking, perhaps, like many a new recruit, that even a single night of freedom was something gained.

“Yes, fair nephew,” answered his uncle, ironically, “that we may have the pleasure of fishing you out of some canal or moat, or perhaps out of a loop of the Loire, knit up in a sack for the greater convenience of swimming – for that is like to be the end on’t. The Provost Marshal smiled on us when we parted,” continued he, addressing Cunningham, “and that is a sign his thoughts were dangerous.”

“I care not for his danger,” said Cunningham; “such game as we are beyond his bird bolts. But I would have thee tell the whole to the Devil’s Oliver [Oliver Dain: Oliver’s name, or nickname, was Le Diable, which was bestowed on him by public hatred, in exchange for Le Daim, or Le Dain. He was originally the King’s barber, but afterwards a favourite counsellor. S.], who is always a good friend to the Scottish Guard, and will see Father Louis before the Provost can, for he is to shave him tomorrow.”

“But hark you,” said Balafre, “it is ill going to Oliver empty handed, and I am as bare as the birch in December.”

“So are we all,” said Cunningham. “Oliver must not scruple to take our Scottish words for once. We will make up something handsome among us against the next payday; and if he expects to share, let me tell you, the payday will come about all the sooner.”

“And now for the Chateau,” said Balafre; “and my nephew shall tell us by the way how he brought the Provost Marshal on his shoulders, that we may know how to frame our report both to Crawford and Oliver.”

CHAPTER VII: THE ENROLMENT

Justice of Peace. —

Here, hand me down the statute – read the articles —

Swear, kiss the book – subscribe, and be a hero;

Drawing a portion from the public stock

For deeds of valour to be done hereafter —

Sixpence per day, subsistence and arrears.

THE RECRUITING OFFICER

An attendant upon the Archers having been dismounted, Quentin Durward was accommodated with his horse, and, in company of his martial countrymen, rode at a round pace towards the Castle of Plessis, about to become, although on his own part involuntarily, an inhabitant of that gloomy fortress, the outside of which had, that morning, struck him with so much surprise.

In the meanwhile, in answer to his uncle's repeated interrogations, he gave him an exact account of the accident which had that morning brought him into so much danger. Although he himself saw nothing in his narrative save what was affecting, he found it was received with much laughter by his escort.

"And yet it is no good jest either," said his uncle, "for what, in the devil's name, could lead the senseless boy to meddle with the body of a cursed misbelieving Jewish Moorish pagan?"

"Had he quarrelled with the Marshals men about a pretty wench, as Michael of Moffat did, there had been more sense in it," said Cunningham.

"But I think it touches our honour that Tristan and his people pretend to confound our Scottish bonnets with these pilfering vagabonds – torques and turbands, as they call them," said Lindesay. "If they have not eyes to see the difference they must be taught by rule of hand. But it's my belief, Tristan but pretends to mistake, that he may snap up the kindly Scots that come over to see their kinsfolks."

"May I ask, kinsman," said Quentin, "what sort of people these are of whom you speak?"

"In troth you may ask," said his uncle, "but I know not, fair nephew, who is able to answer you. Not I, I am sure, although I know, it may be, as much as other people; but they appeared in this land within a year or two, just as a flight of locusts might do."

"Ay," said Lindesay, "and Jacques Bonhomme (that is our name for the peasant, young man – you will learn our way of talk in time) – honest Jacques, I say, cares little what wind either brings them or the locusts, so he but knows any gale that would carry them away again."

"Do they do so much evil?" asked the young man.

"Evil? why, boy, they are heathens, or Jews, or Mahommedans at the least, and neither worship Our Lady, nor the Saints" (crossing himself) "and steal what they can lay hands on, and sing, and tell fortunes," added Cunningham.

"And they say there are some goodly wenches amongst these," said Guthrie; "but Cunningham knows that best."

"How, brother!" said Cunningham. "I trust ye mean me no reproach?"

"I am sure I said ye none," answered Guthrie.

"I will be judged by the company," said Cunningham. "Ye said as much as that I, a Scottish gentleman, and living within pale of holy church, had a fair friend among these off scourings of Heathenese."

"Nay, nay," said Balafre, "he did but jest. We will have no quarrels among comrades."

"We must have no such jesting then," said Cunningham, murmuring, as if he had been speaking to his own beard.

“Be there such vagabonds in other lands than France?” said Lindesay.

“Ay, in good sooth, are there – tribes of them have appeared in Germany, and in Spain, and in England,” answered Balafre. “By the blessing of good Saint Andrew, Scotland is free of them yet.”

“Scotland,” said Cunningham, “is too cold, a country for locusts, and too poor a country for thieves.”

“Or perhaps John Highlander will suffer no thieves to thrive there but his own,” said Guthrie.

“I let you all know,” said Balafre, “that I come from the Braes of Angus, and have gentle Highland kin in Glen Isla and I will not have the Highlanders slandered.”

“You will not deny that they are cattle lifters?” said Guthrie.

“To drive a spreagh [to plunder] or so, is no thievery,” said Balafre, “and that I will maintain when and how you dare.”

“For shame, comrade!” said Cunningham, “who quarrels now? The young man should not see such mad misconstruction – Come, here we are at the Chateau. I will bestow a runlet of wine to have a rouse in friendship, and drink to Scotland, Highland and Lowland both, if you will meet me at dinner at my quarters.”

“Agreed – agreed,” said Balafre; “and I will bestow another to wash away unkindness, and to drink a health to my nephew on his first entrance to our corps.”

At their approach, the wicket was opened, and the drawbridge fell. One by one they entered; but when Quentin appeared, the sentinels crossed their pikes, and commanded him to stand, while bows were bent, and harquebusses aimed at him from the walls, a rigour of vigilance used, notwithstanding that the young stranger came in company of a party of the garrison, nay, of the very body which furnished the sentinels who were then upon duty.

Le Balafre, who had remained by his nephew’s side on purpose, gave the necessary explanations, and, after some considerable hesitation and delay, the youth was conveyed under a strong guard to the Lord Crawford’s apartment.

This Scottish nobleman was one of the last relics of the gallant band of Scottish lords and knights who had so long and so truly served Charles VI in those bloody wars which decided the independence of the French crown, and the expulsion of the English. He had fought, when a boy, abreast with Douglas and with Buchan, had ridden beneath the banner of the Maid of Arc, and was perhaps one of the last of those associates of Scottish chivalry who had so willingly drawn their swords for the fleur de lys, against their “auld enemies of England.” Changes which had taken place in the Scottish kingdom, and perhaps his having become habituated to French climate and manners, had induced the old Baron to resign all thoughts of returning to his native country, the rather that the high office which he held in the household of Louis and his own frank and loyal character had gained a considerable ascendancy over the King, who, though in general no ready believer in human virtue or honour, trusted and confided in those of the Lord Crawford, and allowed him the greater influence, because he was never known to interfere excepting in matters which concerned his charge.

[Douglas: fourth earl of Douglas. He was created Duke of Touraine in 1423 by Charles VII of France.]

[Buchan: Regent of Scotland and grandson of Robert II. He entered the service of Charles VII in 1420, and was appointed Constable of France.]

[Maid of Arc (1412-1431): Joan of Arc. She believed that God had called her to liberate France from the curse of the English who were besieging Orleans. In person she led the French troops from victory to victory until she saw the Dauphin crowned as Charles VII at Rheims. She was then betrayed by her people into the hands of the English, who, in 1431, sentenced her to the flames.]

Balafre and Cunningham followed Durward and the guard to the apartment of their officer, by whose dignified appearance, as well as with the respect paid to him by these proud soldiers, who seemed to respect no one else, the young man was much and strongly impressed.

Lord Crawford was tall, and through advanced age had become gaunt and thin; yet retaining in his sinews the strength, at least, if not the elasticity, of youth, he was able to endure the weight of his armour during a march as well as the youngest man who rode in his band. He was hard favoured, with a scarred and weather-beaten countenance, and an eye that had looked upon death as his playfellow in thirty pitched battles, but which nevertheless expressed a calm contempt of danger, rather than the ferocious courage of a mercenary soldier. His tall, erect figure was at present wrapped in a loose chamber gown, secured around him by his buff belt, in which was suspended his richly hilted poniard. He had round his neck the collar and badge of the order of Saint Michael [a patron saint of France. In 1469, a military order was instituted in his honour by Louis XI]. He sat upon a couch covered with deer's hide, and with spectacles on his nose (then a recent invention) was labouring to read a huge manuscript called the *Rosier de la Guerre*, a code of military and civil policy which Louis had compiled for the benefit of his son the Dauphin, and upon which he was desirous to have the opinion of the experienced Scottish warrior.

Lord Crawford laid his book somewhat peevishly aside upon the entrance of these unexpected visitors, and demanded, in his broad national dialect, what, in the foul fiend's name, they lacked now.

Le Balafre, with more respect than perhaps he would have shown to Louis himself, stated at full length the circumstances in which his nephew was placed, and humbly requested his Lordship's protection. Lord Crawford listened very attentively. He could not but smile at the simplicity with which the youth had interfered in behalf of the hanged criminal, but he shook his head at the account which he received of the ruffle betwixt the Scottish Archers and the Provost Marshal's guard.

[Such disputes between the Scots Guards and the other constituted authorities of the ordinary military corps often occurred. In 1474, two Scotsmen had been concerned in robbing... a fishmonger of a large sum of money. They were accordingly apprehended by Philip du Four, Provost, with some of his followers. But ere they could lodge one of them... in the prison of the Chastellet, they were attacked by two Archers of the King's Scottish Guard, who rescued the prisoner... S.]

"How often," he said, "will you bring me such ill winded pirms to ravel out? How often must I tell you, and especially both you, Ludovic Lesly, and you, Archie Cunningham, that the foreign soldier should bear himself modestly and decorously towards the people of the country if you would not have the whole dogs of the town at your heels? However, if you must have a bargain [a quarrel, videlicet. S.], I would rather it were with that loon of a Provost than any one else; and I blame you less for this onslaught than for other frays that you have made, Ludovic, for it was but natural and kind-like to help your young kinsman. This simple bairn must come to no skaith [same as scathe] neither; so give me the roll of the company yonder down from the shelf, and we will even add his name to the troop, that he may enjoy the privileges."

"May it please your Lordship" said Durward.

"Is the lad crazed?" exclaimed his uncle. "Would you speak to his Lordship without a question asked?"

"Patience, Ludovic," said Lord Crawford, "and let us hear what the bairn has to say."

"Only this, if it may please your Lordship," replied Quentin, "that I told my uncle formerly I had some doubts about entering this service. I have now to say that they are entirely removed, since I have seen the noble and experienced commander under whom I am to serve; for there is authority in your look."

"Weel said, my bairn," said the old Lord, not insensible to the compliment; "we have had some experience, had God sent us grace to improve by it, both in service and in command. There you stand, Quentin, in our honourable corps of Scottish Bodyguards, as esquire to your uncle, and serving under his lance. I trust you will do well, for you should be a right man at arms, if all be good that is upcome [that is, if your courage corresponds with your personal appearance. S.], and you are come of a gentle kindred. – Ludovic, you will see that your kinsman follow his exercise diligently, for we will have spears breaking one of these days."

“By my hilts, and I am glad of it, my Lord – this peace makes cowards of us all. I myself feel a sort of decay of spirit, closed up in this cursed dungeon of a Castle.”

“Well, a bird whistled in my ear,” continued Lord Crawford, “that the old banner will be soon dancing in the field again.”

“I will drink a cup the deeper this evening to that very tune,” said Balafre.

“Thou wilt drink to any tune,” said Lord Crawford; “and I fear me, Ludovic, you will drink a bitter browst [as much liquor as is brewed at one time] of your own brewing one day.”

Lesly, a little abashed, replied that it had not been his wont for many a day; but that his Lordship knew the use of the company, to have a carouse to the health of a new comrade.

“True,” said the old leader, “I had forgot the occasion. I will send a few stoups of wine to assist your carouse; but let it be over by sunset. And, hark ye – let the soldiers for duty be carefully pricked off; and see that none of them be more or less partakers of your debauch.”

“Your Lordship shall be lawfully obeyed,” said Ludovic, “and your health duly remembered.”

“Perhaps,” said Lord Crawford, “I may look in myself upon your mirth – just to see that all is carried decently.”

“Your Lordship shall be most dearly welcome;” said Ludovic; and the whole party retreated in high spirits to prepare for their military banquet, to which Lesly invited about a score of his comrades, who were pretty much in the habit of making their mess together.

A soldier’s festival is generally a very extempore affair, providing there is enough of meat and drink to be had; but on the present occasion, Ludovic bustled about to procure some better wine than ordinary; observing that the old Lord was the surest gear in their aught, and that, while he preached sobriety to them, he himself, after drinking at the royal table as much wine as he could honestly come by, never omitted any creditable opportunity to fill up the evening over the wine pot.

“So you must prepare, comrades,” he said, “to hear the old histories of the battles of Vernuil and Beauge [in both these battles the Scottish auxiliaries of France, under Stewart, Earl of Buchan, were distinguished... S.]”

The Gothic apartment in which they generally met was, therefore, hastily put into the best order; their grooms were dispatched to collect green rushes to spread upon the floor; and banners, under which the Scottish Guard had marched to battle, or which they had taken from the enemies’ ranks, were displayed, by way of tapestry, over the table and around the walls of the chamber.

The next point was, to invest the young recruit as hastily as possible with the dress and appropriate arms of the Guard, that he might appear in every respect the sharer of its important privileges, in virtue of which, and by the support of his countrymen, he might freely brave the power and the displeasure of the Provost Marshal – although the one was known to be as formidable as the other was unrelenting.

The banquet was joyous in the highest degree; and the guests gave vent to the whole current of their national partiality on receiving into their ranks a recruit from their beloved fatherland. Old Scottish songs were sung, old tales of Scottish heroes told – the achievements of their fathers, and the scenes in which they were wrought, were recalled to mind; and, for a time, the rich plains of Touraine seemed converted into the mountainous and sterile regions of Caledonia.

When their enthusiasm was at high flood, and each was endeavouring to say something to enhance the dear remembrance of Scotland, it received a new impulse from the arrival of Lord Crawford, who, as Le Balafre had well prophesied, sat as it were on thorns at the royal board, until an opportunity occurred of making his escape to the revelry of his own countrymen. A chair of state had been reserved for him at the upper end of the table; for, according to the manners of the age and the constitution of that body, although their leader and commander under the King and High Constable, the members of the corps (as we should now say, the privates) being all ranked as noble by birth, their captain sat with them at the same table without impropriety, and might mingle when he chose in their festivity, without derogation from his dignity as commander.

At present, however, Lord Crawford declined occupying the seat prepared for him, and bidding them “hold themselves merry,” stood looking on the revel with a countenance which seemed greatly to enjoy it.

“Let him alone,” whispered Cunningham to Lindesay, as the latter offered the wine to their noble captain, “let him alone – hurry no man’s cattle – let him take it of his own accord.”

In fact, the old Lord, who at first smiled, shook his head, and placed the untasted winecup before him, began presently, as if it were in absence of mind, to sip a little of the contents, and in doing so, fortunately recollected that it would be ill luck did he not drink a draught to the health of the gallant lad who had joined them this day. The pledge was filled, and answered, as may well be supposed, with many a joyous shout, when the old leader proceeded to acquaint them that he had possessed Master Oliver with an account of what had passed that day.

“And as,” he said, “the scraper of chins hath no great love for the stretcher of throats, he has joined me in obtaining from the King an order, commanding the Provost to suspend all proceedings, under whatever pretence, against Quentin Durward; and to respect, on all occasions, the privileges of the Scottish guard.”

Another shout broke forth, the cups were again filled till the wine sparkled on the brim, and there was an acclaim to the health of the noble Lord Crawford, the brave conservator of the privileges and rights of his countrymen. The good old Lord could not but in courtesy do reason to this pledge also, and gliding into the ready chair; as it were, without reflecting what he was doing, he caused Quentin to come up beside him, and assailed him with many more questions concerning the state of Scotland, and the great families there, than he was well able to answer, while ever and anon, in the course of his queries, the good Lord kissed the wine cup by way of parenthesis, remarking that sociality became Scottish gentlemen, but that young men, like Quentin, ought to practise it cautiously, lest it might degenerate into excess; upon which occasion he uttered many excellent things, until his own tongue, although employed in the praises of temperance, began to articulate something thicker than usual. It was now that, while the military ardour of the company augmented with each flagon which they emptied, Cunningham called on them to drink the speedy hoisting of the Oriflamme, the royal banner of France.

“And a breeze of Burgundy to fan it!” echoed Lindesay.

“With all the soul that is left in this worn body do I accept the pledge, bairns,” echoed Lord Crawford; “and as old as I am, I trust I may see it flutter yet. Hark ye, my mates,” (for wine had made him something communicative), “ye are all true servants to the French crown, and wherefore should ye not know there is an envoy come from Duke Charles of Burgundy, with a message of an angry favour?”

“I saw the Count of Crevecoeur’s equipage, horses, and retinue,” said another of the guests, “down at the inn yonder at the Mulberry Grove. They say the King will not admit him into the Castle.”

“Now, Heaven send him an ungracious answer!” said Guthrie; “but what is it he complains of?”

“A world of grievances upon the frontier,” said Lord Crawford; “and latterly, that the King hath received under his protection a lady of his land, a young Countess, who hath fled from Dijon, because, being a ward of the Duke, he would have her marry his favourite, Campobasso.”

“And hath she actually come hither alone, my lord?” said Lindesay.

“Nay, not altogether alone, but with the old Countess, her kinswoman, who hath yielded to her cousin’s wishes in this matter.”

“And will the King,” said Cunningham, “he being the Duke’s feudal sovereign, interfere between the Duke and his ward, over whom Charles hath the same right, which, were he himself dead, the King would have over the heiress of Burgundy?”

“The King will be ruled as he is wont, by rules of policy, and you know,” continued Crawford, “that he hath not publicly received these ladies, nor placed them under the protection of his daughters, the Lady of Beaujeu, or the Princess Joan, so, doubtless, he will be guided by circumstances. He is

our Master – but it is no treason to say, he will chase with the hounds, and run with the hare, with any prince in Christendom.”

“But the Duke of Burgundy understands no such doubling;” said Cunningham.

“No,” answered the old Lord; “and, therefore, it is likely to make work between them.”

“Well – Saint Andrew further the fray!” said Le Balafre. “I had it foretold me ten, ay, twenty years since, that I was to make the fortune of my house by marriage. Who knows what may happen, if once we come to fight for honour and ladies’ love, as they do in the old romaunts.”

“Thou name ladies’ love, with such a trench in thy visage!” said Guthrie.

“As well not love at all, as love a Bohemian woman of Heathenesse,” retorted Le Balafre.

“Hold there, comrades,” said Lord Crawford; “no tilting with sharp weapons, no jesting with keen scoffs – friends all. And for the lady, she is too wealthy to fall to a poor Scottish lord, or I would put in my own claim, fourscore years and all, or not very far from it. But here is her health, nevertheless, for they say she is a lamp of beauty.”

“I think I saw her,” said another soldier, “when I was upon guard this morning at the inner barrier; but she was more like a dark lantern than a lamp, for she and another were brought into the Chateau in close litters.”

“Shame! shame! Arnot!” said Lord Crawford; “a soldier on duty should say naught of what he sees. Besides,” he added after a pause, his own curiosity prevailing over the show of discipline which he had thought it necessary to exert, “why should these litters contain this very same Countess Isabelle de Croye?”

“Nay, my Lord,” replied Arnot, “I know nothing of it save this, that my coutelier was airing my horses in the road to the village, and fell in with Doguin the muleteer, who brought back the litters to the inn, for they belong to the fellow of the Mulberry Grove yonder – he of the Fleur de Lys, I mean – and so Doguin asked Saunders Steed to take a cup of wine, as they were acquainted, which he was no doubt willing enough to do.”

“No doubt – no doubt,” said the old Lord; “it is a thing I wish were corrected among you, gentlemen; but all your grooms, and couteliers, and jackmen as we should call them in Scotland, are but too ready to take a cup of wine with any one. – It is a thing perilous in war, and must be amended. But, Andrew Arnot, this is a long tale of yours, and we will cut it with a drink; as the Highlander says, Skeoch doch nan skial [‘Cut a tale with a drink;’ an expression used when a man preaches over his liquor, as *bons vivants* say in England. S.]; and that ‘s good Gaelic. – Here is to the Countess Isabelle of Croye, and a better husband to her than Campobasso, who is a base Italian cullion! – And now, Andrew Arnot, what said the muleteer to this yeoman of thine?”

“Why, he told him in secrecy, if it please your Lordship,” continued Arnot, “that these two ladies whom he had presently before convoyed up to the Castle in the close litters, were great ladies, who had been living in secret at his house for some days, and that the King had visited them more than once very privately, and had done them great honour; and that they had fled up to the Castle, as he believed, for fear of the Count de Crevecoeur, the Duke of Burgundy’s ambassador, whose approach was just announced by an advanced courier.”

“Ay, Andrew, come you there to me?” said Guthrie. “Then I will be sworn it was the Countess whose voice I heard singing to the lute, as I came even now through the inner court – the sound came from the bay windows of the Dauphin’s Tower; and such melody was there as no one ever heard before in the Castle of Plessis of the Park. By my faith, I thought it was the music of the Fairy Melusina’s making. There I stood – though I knew your board was covered, and that you were all impatient – there I stood like – ”

[The Fairy Melusina: a water fay who married a mortal on condition that she should be allowed to spend her Saturdays in deep seclusion. This promise, after many years, was broken, and Melusina, half serpent, half woman, was discovered swimming in a bath. For this breach of faith on the part of her husband, Melusina was compelled to leave her home. She regularly returned, however, before the

death of any of the lords of her family, and by her wailings foretold that event. Her history is closely interwoven with the legends of the Banshee and Mermaid.]

“ – Like an ass, Johnny Guthrie,” said his commander; “thy long nose smelling the dinner, thy long ears hearing the music, and thy short discretion not enabling thee to decide which of them thou didst prefer. – Hark! is that not the Cathedral bell tolling to vespers? – Sure it cannot be that time yet? The mad old sexton has toll’d evensong an hour too soon.”

“In faith, the bell rings but too justly the hour,” said Cunningham; “yonder the sun is sinking on the west side of the fair plain.”

“Ay,” said the Lord Crawford, “is it even so? – Well, lads, we must live within compass. – Fair and soft goes far – slow fire makes sweet malt – to be merry and wise is a sound proverb. – One other rouse to the weal of old Scotland, and then each man to his duty.”

The parting cup was emptied, and the guests dismissed – the stately old Baron taking the Balafre’s arm, under pretence of giving him some instructions concerning his nephew, but, perhaps, in reality, lest his own lofty pace should seem in the public eye less steady than became his rank and high command. A serious countenance did he bear as he passed through the two courts which separated his lodging from the festal chamber, and solemn as the gravity of a hogshead was the farewell caution with which he prayed Ludovic to attend his nephew’s motions, especially in the matters of wenches and wine cups.

Meanwhile, not a word that was spoken concerning the beautiful Countess Isabelle had escaped the young Durward, who, conducted into a small cabin, which he was to share with his uncle’s page, made his new and lowly abode the scene of much high musing. The reader will easily imagine that the young soldier should build a fine romance on such a foundation as the supposed, or rather the assumed, identification of the Maiden of the Turret, to whose lay he had listened with so much interest, and the fair cup bearer of Maitre Pierre, with a fugitive Countess of rank and wealth, flying from the pursuit of a hated lover, the favourite of an oppressive guardian, who abused his feudal power. There was an interlude in Quentin’s vision concerning Maitre Pierre, who seemed to exercise such authority even over the formidable officer from whose hands he had that day, with much difficulty, made his escape. At length the youth’s reveries, which had been respected by little Will Harper, the companion of his cell, were broken in upon by the return of his uncle, who commanded Quentin to bed, that he might arise betimes in the morning, and attend him to his Majesty’s antechamber, to which he was called by his hour of duty, along with five of his comrades.

CHAPTER VIII: THE ENVOY

*Be thou as lightning in the eyes of France;
For ere thou canst report I will be there.
The thunder of my cannon shall be heard —
So, hence! be thou the trumpet of our wrath.*

KING JOHN

Had sloth been a temptation by which Durward was easily beset, the noise with which the caserne of the guards resounded after the first toll of primes, had certainly banished the siren from his couch; but the discipline of his father's tower, and of the convent of Aberbrothick, had taught him to start with the dawn; and he did on his clothes gaily, amid the sounding of bugles and the clash of armour, which announced the change of the vigilant guards – some of whom were returning to barracks after their nightly duty, whilst some were marching out to that of the morning – and others, again, amongst whom was his uncle, were arming for immediate attendance upon the person of Louis. Quentin Durward soon put on, with the feelings of so young a man on such an occasion, the splendid dress and arms appertaining to his new situation; and his uncle, who looked with great accuracy and interest to see that he was completely fitted out in every respect, did not conceal his satisfaction at the improvement which had been thus made in his nephew's appearance.

"If thou dost prove as faithful and bold as thou art well favoured, I shall have in thee one of the handsomest and best esquires in the Guard, which cannot but be an honour to thy mother's family. Follow me to the presence chamber; and see thou keep close at my shoulder."

So saying, he took up a partisan, large, weighty, and beautifully inlaid and ornamented, and directing his nephew to assume a lighter weapon of a similar description, they proceeded to the inner court of the palace, where their comrades, who were to form the guard of the interior apartments, were already drawn up and under arms – the squires each standing behind their masters, to whom they thus formed a second rank. Here were also in attendance many yeomen prickers, with gallant horses and noble dogs, on which Quentin looked with such inquisitive delight that his uncle was obliged more than once to remind him that the animals were not there for his private amusement, but for the King's, who had a strong passion for the chase, one of the few inclinations which he indulged even when coming in competition with his course of policy; being so strict a protector of the game in the royal forests that it was currently said you might kill a man with greater impunity than a stag.

On a signal given, the Guards were put into motion by the command of Le Balafre, who acted as officer upon the occasion; and, after some minutiae of word and signal, which all served to show the extreme and punctilious jealousy with which their duty was performed, they marched into the hall of audience where the King was immediately expected.

New as Quentin was to scenes of splendour, the effect of that which was now before him rather disappointed the expectations which he had formed of the brilliancy of a court. There were household officers, indeed, richly attired; there were guards gallantly armed, and there were domestics of various degrees. But he saw none of the ancient counsellors of the kingdom, none of the high officers of the crown, heard none of the names which in those days sounded an alarum to chivalry; saw none either of those generals or leaders, who, possessed of the full prime of manhood, were the strength of France, or of the more youthful and fiery nobles, those early aspirants after honour, who were her pride. The jealous habits, the reserved manners, the deep and artful policy of the King, had estranged this splendid circle from the throne, and they were only called around it upon certain stated and formal

occasions, when they went reluctantly, and returned joyfully, as the animals in the fable are supposed to have approached and left the den of the lion.

The very few persons who seemed to be there in the character of counsellors were mean looking men, whose countenances sometimes expressed sagacity, but whose manners showed they were called into a sphere for which their previous education and habits had qualified them but indifferently. One or two persons, however, did appear to Durward to possess a more noble mien, and the strictness of the present duty was not such as to prevent his uncle's communicating the names of those whom he thus distinguished.

With the Lord Crawford, who was in attendance, dressed in the rich habit of his office, and holding a leading staff of silver in his hand, Quentin, as well as the reader, was already acquainted. Among others, who seemed of quality, the most remarkable was the Count de Dunois, the son of that celebrated Dunois, known by the name of the Bastard of Orleans, who, fighting under the banner of Jeanne d'Arc, acted such a distinguished part in liberating France from the English yoke. His son well supported the high renown which had descended to him from such an honoured source; and, notwithstanding his connexion with the royal family, and his hereditary popularity both with the nobles and the people, Dunois had, upon all occasions, manifested such an open, frank loyalty of character that he seemed to have escaped all suspicion, even on the part of the jealous Louis, who loved to see him near his person, and sometimes even called him to his councils. Although accounted complete in all the exercises of chivalry, and possessed of much of the character of what was then termed a perfect knight, the person of the Count was far from being a model of romantic beauty. He was under the common size, though very strongly built, and his legs rather curved outwards, into that make which is more convenient for horseback, than elegant in a pedestrian. His shoulders were broad, his hair black, his complexion swarthy, his arms remarkably long and nervous. The features of his countenance were irregular, even to ugliness; yet, after all, there was an air of conscious worth and nobility about the Count de Dunois, which stamped, at the first glance, the character of the high born nobleman and the undaunted soldier. His mien was bold and upright, his step free and manly, and the harshness of his countenance was dignified by a glance like an eagle, and a frown like a lion. His dress was a hunting suit, rather sumptuous than gay, and he acted on most occasions as Grand Huntsman, though we are not inclined to believe that he actually held the office.

Upon the arm of his relation Dunois, walking with a step so slow and melancholy that he seemed to rest on his kinsman and supporter, came Louis Duke of Orleans, the first prince of the Blood Royal (afterwards King, by the name of Louis XII), and to whom the guards and attendants rendered their homage as such. The jealously watched object of Louis's suspicions, this Prince, who, failing the King's offspring, was heir to the kingdom, was not suffered to absent himself from Court, and, while residing there, was alike denied employment and countenance. The dejection which his degraded and almost captive state naturally impressed on the deportment of this unfortunate Prince, was at this moment greatly increased by his consciousness that the King meditated, with respect to him, one of the most cruel and unjust actions which a tyrant could commit, by compelling him to give his hand to the Princess Joan of France, the younger daughter of Louis, to whom he had been contracted in infancy, but whose deformed person rendered the insisting upon such an agreement an act of abominable rigour.

The exterior of this unhappy Prince was in no respect distinguished by personal advantages; and in mind, he was of a gentle, mild and beneficent disposition, qualities which were visible even through the veil of extreme dejection with which his natural character was at present obscured. Quentin observed that the Duke studiously avoided even looking at the Royal Guards, and when he returned their salute, that he kept his eyes bent on the ground, as if he feared the King's jealousy might have construed the gesture of ordinary courtesy as arising from the purpose of establishing a separate and personal interest among them.

Very different was the conduct of the proud Cardinal and Prelate, John of Balue, the favourite minister of Louis for the time, whose rise and character bore as close a resemblance to that of Wolsey, as the difference betwixt the crafty and politic Louis and the headlong and rash Henry VIII of England would permit. The former had raised his minister from the lowest rank, to the dignity, or at least to the emoluments, of Grand Almoner of France, loaded him with benefices, and obtained for him the hat of a cardinal; and although he was too cautious to repose in the ambitious Balue the unbounded power and trust which Henry placed in Wolsey, yet he was more influenced by him than by any other of his avowed counsellors. The Cardinal, accordingly, had not escaped the error incidental to those who are suddenly raised to power from an obscure situation, for he entertained a strong persuasion, dazzled doubtlessly by the suddenness of his elevation, that his capacity was equal to intermeddling with affairs of every kind, even those most foreign to his profession and studies. Tall and ungainly in his person, he affected gallantry and admiration of the fair sex, although his manners rendered his pretensions absurd, and his profession marked them as indecorous. Some male or female flatterer had, in evil hour, possessed him with the idea that there was much beauty of contour in a pair of huge, substantial legs, which he had derived from his father, a car man of Limoges – or, according to other authorities, a miller of Verdun, and with this idea he had become so infatuated that he always had his cardinal's robes a little looped up on one side, that the sturdy proportion of his limbs might not escape observation. As he swept through the stately apartment in his crimson dress and rich cope, he stopped repeatedly to look at the arms and appointments of the cavaliers on guard, asked them several questions in an authoritative tone, and took upon him to censure some of them for what he termed irregularities of discipline, in language to which these experienced soldiers dared no reply, although it was plain they listened to it with impatience and with contempt.

[Wolsey (1471-1530): at one time the chief favourite of Henry VIII. He was raised from obscurity by that sovereign to be Archbishop of York, Lord Chancellor of England, and Cardinal. As legate of the Pope, he gained the ill will of Henry by his failure to secure that king's divorce. He was deprived of his offices, his property was confiscated to the crown, and in 1530 he was arrested for high treason, but died on his way to trial.]

"Is the King aware," said Dunois to the Cardinal, "that the Burgundian Envoy is peremptory in demanding an audience?"

"He is," answered the Cardinal; "and here, as I think, comes the all sufficient Oliver Dain, to let us know the royal pleasure."

As he spoke, a remarkable person, who then divided the favour of Louis with the proud Cardinal himself, entered from the inner apartment, but without any of that important and consequential demeanour which marked the full blown dignity of the churchman. On the contrary, this was a little, pale, meagre man, whose black silk jerkin and hose, without either coat, cloak, or cassock, formed a dress ill qualified to set off to advantage a very ordinary person. He carried a silver basin in his hand, and a napkin flung over his arm indicated his menial capacity. His visage was penetrating and quick, although he endeavoured to banish such expression from his features by keeping his eyes fixed on the ground, while, with the stealthy and quiet pace of a cat, he seemed modestly rather to glide than to walk through the apartment. But though modesty may easily obscure worth, it cannot hide court favour; and all attempts to steal unperceived through the presence chamber were vain, on the part of one known to have such possession of the King's ear as had been attained by his celebrated barber and groom of the chamber, Oliver le Dain, called sometimes Oliver le Mauvais, and sometimes Oliver le Diable, epithets derived from the unscrupulous cunning with which he assisted in the execution of the schemes of his master's tortuous policy. At present he spoke earnestly for a few moments with the Count de Dunois, who instantly left the chamber, while the tonsor glided quietly back towards the royal apartment whence he had issued, every one giving place to him; which civility he only acknowledged by the most humble inclination of the body, excepting in a very few instances, where he made one or two persons the subject of envy to all the other courtiers, by whispering a single word

in their ear; and at the same time muttering something of the duties of his place, he escaped from their replies as well as from the eager solicitations of those who wished to attract his notice. Ludovic Lesly had the good fortune to be one of the individuals who, on the present occasion, was favoured by Oliver with a single word, to assure him that his matter was fortunately terminated.

Presently afterwards he had another proof of the same agreeable tidings; for Quentin's old acquaintance, Tristan l'Hermite, the Provost Marshal of the royal household, entered the apartment, and came straight to the place where Balafre was posted. This formidable officer's uniform, which was very rich, had only the effect of making his sinister countenance and bad mien more strikingly remarkable, and the tone, which he meant for conciliatory, was like nothing so much as the growling of a bear. The import of his words, however, was more amicable than the voice in which they were pronounced. He regretted the mistake which had fallen between them on the preceding day, and observed it was owing to the *Sieur Le Balafre's* nephew's not wearing the uniform of his corps, or announcing himself as belonging to it, which had led him into the error for which he now asked forgiveness.

Ludovic Lesly made the necessary reply, and as soon as Tristan had turned away, observed to his nephew that they had now the distinction of having a mortal enemy from henceforward in the person of this dreaded officer.

"But we are above his volée [brood, rank, class] – a soldier," said he, "who does his duty, may laugh at the Provost Marshal."

Quentin could not help being of his uncle's opinion, for, as Tristan parted from them, it was with the look of angry defiance which the bear casts upon the hunter whose spear has wounded him. Indeed, even when less strongly moved, the sullen eye of this official expressed a malevolence of purpose which made men shudder to meet his glance; and the thrill of the young Scot was the deeper and more abhorrent, that he seemed to himself still to feel on his shoulders the grasp of the two death doing functionaries of this fatal officer.

Meanwhile, Oliver, after he had prowled around the room in the stealthy manner which we have endeavoured to describe – all, even the highest officers making way for him, and loading him with their ceremonious attentions, which his modesty seemed desirous to avoid – again entered the inner apartment, the doors of which were presently thrown open, and King Louis entered the presence chamber.

Quentin, like all others, turned his eyes upon him; and started so suddenly that he almost dropped his weapon, when he recognised in the King of France that silk merchant, *Maitre Pierre*, who had been the companion of his morning walk. Singular suspicions respecting the real rank of this person had at different times crossed his thoughts; but this, the proved reality, was wilder than his wildest conjecture.

The stern look of his uncle, offended at this breach of the decorum of his office, recalled him to himself; but not a little was he astonished when the King, whose quick eye had at once discovered him, walked straight to the place where he was posted, without taking notice of any one else.

"So," he said, "young man, I am told you have been brawling on your first arrival in Touraine; but I pardon you, as it was chiefly the fault of a foolish old merchant, who thought your Caledonian blood required to be heated in the morning with *Vin de Beaulne*. If I can find him, I will make him an example to those who debauch my Guards. – *Balafre*," he added, speaking to Lesly, "your kinsman is a fair youth, though a fiery. We love to cherish such spirits, and mean to make more than ever we did of the brave men who are around us. Let the year, day, hour, and minute of your nephew's birth be written down and given to Oliver Dain."

Le Balafre bowed to the ground, and re-assumed his erect military position, as one who would show by his demeanour his promptitude to act in the King's quarrel or defence. Quentin, in the meantime, recovered from his first surprise, studied the King's appearance more attentively, and was

surprised to find how differently he now construed his deportment and features than he had done at their first interview.

These were not much changed in exterior, for Louis, always a scorner of outward show, wore, on the present occasion, an old dark blue hunting dress, not much better than the plain burgher suit of the preceding day, and garnished with a huge rosary of ebony which had been sent to him by no less a personage than the Grand Seigneur, with an attestation that it had been used by a Coptic hermit on Mount Lebanon, a personage of profound sanctity. And instead of his cap with a single image, he now wore a hat, the band of which was garnished with at least a dozen of little paltry figures of saints stamped in lead. But those eyes, which, according to Quentin's former impression, only twinkled with the love of gain, had, now that they were known to be the property of an able and powerful monarch, a piercing and majestic glance; and those wrinkles on the brow, which he had supposed were formed during a long series of petty schemes of commerce, seemed now the furrows which sagacity had worn while toiling in meditation upon the fate of nations.

Presently after the King's appearance, the Princesses of France, with the ladies of their suite, entered the apartment. With the eldest, afterwards married to Peter of Bourbon, and known in French history by the name of the Lady of Beaujeu, our story has but little to do. She was tall, and rather handsome, possessed eloquence, talent, and much of her father's sagacity, who reposed great confidence in her, and loved her as well perhaps as he loved any one.

The younger sister, the unfortunate Joan, the destined bride of the Duke of Orleans, advanced timidly by the side of her sister, conscious of a total want of those external qualities which women are most desirous of possessing, or being thought to possess. She was pale, thin, and sickly in her complexion; her shape visibly bent to one side, and her gait was so unequal that she might be called lame. A fine set of teeth, and eyes which were expressive of melancholy, softness, and resignation, with a quantity of light brown locks, were the only redeeming points which flattery itself could have dared to number, to counteract the general homeliness of her face and figure. To complete the picture, it was easy to remark, from the Princess's negligence in dress and the timidity of her manner, that she had an unusual and distressing consciousness of her own plainness of appearance, and did not dare to make any of those attempts to mend by manners or by art what nature had left amiss, or in any other way to exert a power of pleasing. The King (who loved her not) stepped hastily to her as she entered.

"How now," he said, "our world contemning daughter – Are you robed for a hunting party, or for the convent, this morning? Speak – answer."

"For which your highness pleases, sire," said the Princess, scarce raising her voice above her breath.

"Ay, doubtless, you would persuade me it is your desire to quit the Court, Joan, and renounce the world and its vanities. – Ha! maiden, wouldst thou have it thought that we, the first born of Holy Church, would refuse our daughter to Heaven? – Our Lady and Saint Martin forbid we should refuse the offering, were it worthy of the altar, or were thy vocation in truth thitherward!"

So saying, the King crossed himself devoutly, looking in the meantime, as appeared to Quentin, very like a cunning vassal, who was depreciating the merit of something which he was desirous to keep to himself, in order that he might stand excused for not offering it to his chief or superior.

"Dares he thus play the hypocrite with Heaven," thought Durward, "and sport with God and the Saints, as he may safely do with men, who dare not search his nature too closely?"

Louis meantime resumed, after a moment's mental devotion, "No, fair daughter, I and another know your real mind better. Ha! fair cousin of Orleans, do we not? Approach, fair sir, and lead this devoted vestal of ours to her horse."

Orleans started when the King spoke and hastened to obey him; but with such precipitation of step, and confusion, that Louis called out, "Nay, cousin, rein your gallantry, and look before you. Why, what a headlong matter a gallant's haste is on some occasions! You had well nigh taken Anne's hand instead of her sister's. – Sir, must I give Joan's to you myself?"

The unhappy Prince looked up, and shuddered like a child, when forced to touch something at which it has instinctive horror – then making an effort, took the hand which the Princess neither gave nor yet withheld. As they stood, her cold, damp fingers enclosed in his trembling hand, with their eyes looking on the ground, it would have been difficult to say which of these two youthful beings was rendered more utterly miserable – the Duke, who felt himself fettered to the object of his aversion by bonds which he durst not tear asunder, or the unfortunate young woman, who too plainly saw that she was an object of abhorrence to him, to gain whose kindness she would willingly have died.

“And now to horse, gentlemen and ladies – we will ourselves lead forth our daughter of Beaujeu,” said the King; “and God’s blessing and Saint Hubert’s be on our morning’s sport!”

“I am, I fear, doomed to interrupt it, Sire,” said the Comte de Dunois; “the Burgundian Envoy is before the gates of the Castle and demands an audience.”

“Demands an audience, Dunois?” replied the King. “Did you not answer him, as we sent you word by Oliver, that we were not at leisure to see him today, – and that tomorrow was the festival of Saint Martin, which, please Heaven, we would disturb by no earthly thoughts – and that on the succeeding day we were designed for Amboise – but that we would not fail to appoint him as early an audience, when we returned, as our pressing affairs would permit.”

“All this I said,” answered Dunois, “but yet, Sire – ”

“Pasques dieu! man, what is it that thus sticks in thy throat?” said the King. “This Burgundian’s terms must have been hard of digestion.”

“Had not my duty, your Grace’s commands, and his character as an envoy, restrained me,” said Dunois, “he should have tried to digest them himself; for, by our Lady of Orleans, I had more mind to have made him eat his own words, than to have brought them to your Majesty.”

“Body of me,” said the King, “it is strange that thou, one of the most impatient fellows alive, should have so little sympathy with the like infirmity in our blunt and fiery cousin, Charles of Burgundy. Why, man, I mind his blustering messages no more than the towers of this Castle regard the whistling of the northeast wind, which comes from Flanders, as well as this brawling Envoy.”

“Know then, Sire,” replied Dunois, “that the Count of Crevecoeur tarries below, with his retinue of pursuivants and trumpets, and says, that since your Majesty refuses him the audience which his master has instructed him to demand, upon matters of most pressing concern, he will remain there till midnight, and accost your Majesty at whatever hour you are pleased to issue from your Castle, whether for business, exercise, or devotion; and that no consideration, except the use of absolute force, shall compel him to desist from this.”

“He is a fool,” said the King, with much composure. “Does the hot headed Hainaulter think it any penance for a man of sense to remain for twenty-four hours quiet within the walls of his Castle, when he hath the affairs of a kingdom to occupy him? These impatient coxcombs think that all men, like themselves, are miserable, save when in saddle and stirrup. Let the dogs be put up, and well looked to, gentle Dunois. – We will hold council today, instead of hunting.”

“My Liege,” answered Dunois, “you will not thus rid yourself of Crevecoeur; for his master’s instructions are, that if he hath not this audience which he demands, he shall nail his gauntlet to the palisade before the Castle in token of mortal defiance on the part of his master, shall renounce the Duke’s fealty to France, and declare instant war.”

“Ay,” said Louis without any perceptible alteration of voice, but frowning until his piercing dark eyes became almost invisible under his shaggy eyebrows, “is it even so? will our ancient vassal prove so masterful – our dear cousin treat us thus unkindly? – Nay, then, Dunois, we must unfold the Oriflamme, and cry Dennis Montjoye!”

[Montjoie St. Denis, a former war cry of the French soldiers. Saint Denis was a patron saint of France who suffered martyrdom in the third century. Montjoie (mont and joie) may be the name of the hill where the saint met his death; or it may signify that any such place is a “hill of joy.”]

“Marry and amen, and in a most happy hour!” said the martial Dunois; and the guards in the hall, unable to resist the same impulse, stirred each upon his post, so as to produce a low but distinct sound of clashing arms. The King cast his eye proudly round, and, for a moment, thought and looked like his heroic father.

But the excitement of the moment presently gave way to the host of political considerations, which, at that conjuncture, rendered an open breach with Burgundy so peculiarly perilous. Edward IV, a brave and victorious king, who had in his own person fought thirty battles, was now established on the throne of England, was brother to the Duchess of Burgundy, and, it might well be supposed, waited but a rupture between his near connexion and Louis, to carry into France, through the ever open gate of Calais, those arms which had been triumphant in the English civil wars, and to obliterate the recollection of internal dissensions by that most popular of all occupations amongst the English, an invasion of France. To this consideration was added the uncertain faith of the Duke of Bretagne, and other weighty subjects of reflection. So that, after a deep pause, when Louis again spoke, although in the same tone, it was with an altered spirit. “But God forbid,” he said, “that aught less than necessity should make us, the Most Christian’ King, give cause to the effusion of Christian blood, if anything short of dishonour may avert such a calamity. We tender our subjects’ safety dearer than the ruffle which our own dignity may receive from the rude breath of a malapert ambassador, who hath perhaps exceeded the errand with which he was charged. – Admit the Envoy of Burgundy to our presence.”

“Beati pacifici, [blessed are the peace makers]” said the Cardinal Balue.

“True; and your Eminence knoweth that they who humble themselves shall be exalted,” added the King.

The Cardinal spoke an Amen, to which few assented, for even the pale cheek of Orleans kindled with shame, and Balafre suppressed his feelings so little, as to let the butt end of his partisan fall heavily on the floor – a movement of impatience for which he underwent a bitter reproof from the Cardinal, with a lecture on the mode of handling his arms when in presence of the Sovereign. The King himself seemed unusually embarrassed at the silence around him.

“You are pensive, Dunois,” he said. “You disapprove of our giving way to this hot headed Envoy.”

“By no means,” said Dunois; “I meddle not with matters beyond my sphere. I was thinking of asking a boon of your Majesty.”

“A boon, Dunois – what is it? You are an unfrequent suitor, and may count on our favour.”

“I would, then, your Majesty would send me to Evreux to regulate the clergy,” said Dunois, with military frankness.

“That were indeed beyond thy sphere,” replied the King, smiling.

“I might order priests as well,” replied the Count, “as my Lord Bishop of Evreux, or my Lord Cardinal, if he likes the title better, can exercise the soldiers of your Majesty’s guard.”

The King smiled again, and more mysteriously, while he whispered Dunois, “The time may come when you and I will regulate the priests together. – But this is for the present a good conceited animal of a Bishop. Ah, Dunois! Rome, Rome puts him and other burdens upon us. – But patience, cousin, and shuffle the cards, till our hand is a stronger one.”

[Dr. Dryasdust here remarks that cards, said to have been invented in a preceding reign, for the amusement of Charles V during the intervals of his mental disorder, seem speedily to have become common among the courtiers... The alleged origin of the invention of cards produced one of the shrewdest replies I have ever heard given in evidence. It was made by the late Dr. Gregory of Edinburgh to a counsel of great eminence at the Scottish bar. The Doctor’s testimony went to prove the insanity of the party whose mental capacity was the point at issue. On a cross interrogation, he admitted that the person in question played admirably at whist. “And do you seriously say, doctor,” said the learned counsel, “that a person having a superior capacity for a game so difficult, and which requires in a preeminent degree, memory, judgment, and combination, can be at the same time

deranged in his understanding?” – “I am no card player,” said the doctor, with great address, “but I have read in history that cards were invented for the amusement of an insane king.” The consequences of this reply were decisive. S.]

The flourish of trumpets in the courtyard now announced the arrival of the Burgundian nobleman. All in the presence chamber made haste to arrange themselves according to their proper places of precedence, the King and his daughters remaining in the centre of the assembly.

The Count of Crevecoeur, a renowned and undaunted warrior, entered the apartment; and, contrary to the usage among the envoys of friendly powers, he appeared all armed, excepting his head, in a gorgeous suit of the most superb Milan armour, made of steel, inlaid and embossed with gold, which was wrought into the fantastic taste called the Arabesque. Around his neck and over his polished cuirass, hung his master's order of the Golden Fleece, one of the most honoured associations of chivalry then known in Christendom. A handsome page bore his helmet behind him, a herald preceded him, bearing his letters of credence which he offered on his knee to the King; while the ambassador himself paused in the midst of the hall, as if to give all present time to admire his lofty look, commanding stature, and undaunted composure of countenance and manner. The rest of his attendants waited in the antechamber, or courtyard.

[The military order of the Golden Fleece was instituted by Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, in the year 1429, the King of Spain being grand master of the order, as Duke of Burgundy.]

“Approach, Seigneur Count de Crevecoeur,” said Louis, after a moment's glance at his commission; “we need not our cousin's letters of credence, either to introduce to us a warrior so well known, or to assure us of your highly deserved credit with your master. We trust that your fair partner, who shares some of our ancestral blood, is in good health. Had you brought her in your hand, Seigneur Count, we might have thought you wore your armour, on this unwonted occasion, to maintain the superiority of her charms against the amorous chivalry of France. As it is, we cannot guess the reason of this complete panoply.”

“Sire,” replied the ambassador, “the Count of Crevecoeur must lament his misfortune, and entreat your forgiveness, that he cannot, on this occasion, reply with such humble deference as is due to the royal courtesy with which your Majesty has honoured him. But, although it is only the voice of Philip Crevecoeur de Cordes which speaks, the words which he utters must be those of his gracious Lord and Sovereign, the Duke of Burgundy.”

“And what has Crevecoeur to say in the words of Burgundy?” said Louis, with an assumption of sufficient dignity. “Yet hold – remember, that in this presence, Philip Crevecoeur de Cordes speaks to him who is his Sovereign's Sovereign.”

Crevecoeur bowed, and then spoke aloud: “King of France, the mighty Duke of Burgundy once more sends you a written schedule of the wrongs and oppressions committed on his frontiers by your Majesty's garrisons and officers; and the first point of inquiry is, whether it is your Majesty's purpose to make him amends for these injuries?”

The King, looking slightly at the memorial which the herald delivered to him upon his knee, said, “These matters have been already long before our Council. Of the injuries complained of, some are in requital of those sustained by my subjects, some are affirmed without any proof, some have been retaliated by the Duke's garrisons and soldiers; and if there remain any which fall under none of those predicaments, we are not, as a Christian prince, averse to make satisfaction for wrongs actually sustained by our neighbour, though committed not only without our countenance, but against our express order.”

“I will convey your Majesty's answer,” said the ambassador, “to my most gracious master; yet, let me say, that, as it is in no degree different from the evasive replies which have already been returned to his just complaints, I cannot hope that it will afford the means of re-establishing peace and friendship betwixt France and Burgundy.”

“Be that at God’s pleasure,” said the King. “It is not for dread of thy master’s arms, but for the sake of peace only, that I return so temperate an answer to his injurious reproaches. Proceed with thine errand.”

“My master’s next demand,” said the ambassador, “is that your Majesty will cease your secret and underhand dealings with his towns of Ghent, Liege, and Malines. He requests that your Majesty will recall the secret agents by whose means the discontents of his good citizens of Flanders are inflamed; and dismiss from your Majesty’s dominions, or rather deliver up to the condign punishment of their liege lord, those traitorous fugitives, who, having fled from the scene of their machinations, have found too ready a refuge in Paris, Orleans, Tours, and other French cities.”

“Say to the Duke of Burgundy,” replied the King, “that I know of no such indirect practices as those with which he injuriously charges me; that many subjects of France have frequent intercourse with the good cities of Flanders, for the purpose of mutual benefit by free traffic, which it would be as much contrary to the Duke’s interest as mine to interrupt; and that many Flemings have residence in my kingdom, and enjoy the protection of my laws, for the same purpose; but none, to our knowledge, for those of treason or mutiny against the Duke. Proceed with your message – you have heard my answer.”

“As formerly, Sire, with pain,” replied the Count of Crevecoeur; “it not being of that direct or explicit nature which the Duke, my master, will accept, in atonement for a long train of secret machinations, not the less certain, though now disavowed by your Majesty. But I proceed with my message. The Duke of Burgundy farther requires the King of France to send back to his dominions without delay, and under a secure safeguard, the persons of Isabelle Countess of Croye, and of her relation and guardian the Countess Hameline, of the same family, in respect the said Countess Isabelle, being, by the law of the country and the feudal tenure of her estates, the ward of the said Duke of Burgundy, hath fled from his dominions, and from the charge which he, as a careful guardian, was willing to extend over her, and is here maintained in secret by the King of France and by him fortified in her contumacy to the Duke, her natural lord and guardian, contrary to the laws of God and man, as they ever have been acknowledged in civilized Europe. – Once more I pause for your Majesty’s reply.”

“You did well, Count de Crevecoeur,” said Louis, scornfully, “to begin your embassy at an early hour; for if it be your purpose to call on me to account for the flight of every vassal whom your master’s heady passion may have driven from his dominions, the head roll may last till sunset. Who can affirm that these ladies are in my dominions? who can presume to say, if it be so, that I have either countenanced their flight hither, or have received them with offers of protection? Nay, who is it will assert, that, if they are in France, their place of retirement is within my knowledge?”

“Sire,” said Crevecoeur, “may it please your Majesty, I was provided with a witness on this subject – one who beheld these fugitive ladies in the inn called the Fleur de Lys, not far from this Castle – one who saw your Majesty in their company, though under the unworthy disguise of a burgess of Tours – one who received from them, in your royal presence, messages and letters to their friends in Flanders – all which he conveyed to the hand and ear of the Duke of Burgundy.”

“Bring them forward,” said the King; “place the man before my face who dares maintain these palpable falsehoods.”

“You speak in triumph, my lord, for you are well aware that this witness no longer exists. When he lived, he was called Zamet Magraubin, by birth one of those Bohemian wanderers. He was yesterday – as I have learned – executed by a party of your Majesty’s Provost Marshal, to prevent, doubtless, his standing here to verify what he said of this matter to the Duke of Burgundy, in presence of his Council, and of me, Philip Crevecoeur de Cordes.”

“Now, by Our Lady of Embrun,” said the King, “so gross are these accusations, and so free of consciousness am I of aught that approaches them, that, by the honour of a King, I laugh, rather than am wroth at them. My Provost guard daily put to death, as is their duty, thieves and vagabonds; and is

my crown to be slandered with whatever these thieves and vagabonds may have said to our hot cousin of Burgundy and his wise counsellors? I pray you, tell my kind cousin, if he loves such companions, he had best keep them in his own estates; for here they are like to meet short shrift and a tight cord.”

“My master needs no such subjects, Sir King,” answered the Count, in a tone more disrespectful than he had yet permitted himself to make use of; “for the noble Duke uses not to inquire of witches, wandering Egyptians, or others, upon the destiny and fate of his neighbours and allies.”

“We have had patience enough, and to spare,” said the King, interrupting him; “and since thy sole errand here seems to be for the purpose of insult, we will send some one in our name to the Duke of Burgundy – convinced, in thus demeaning thyself towards us, thou hast exceeded thy commission, whatever that may have been.”

“On the contrary,” said Crevecoeur, “I have not yet acquitted myself of it – Hearken, Louis of Valois, King of France – Hearken, nobles and gentlemen, who may be present. – Hearken, all good and true men. – And thou, Toison d’Or,” addressing the herald, “make proclamation after me. – I, Philip Crevecoeur of Cordes, Count of the Empire, and Knight of the honourable and princely Order of the Golden Fleece, in the name of the most puissant Lord and Prince, Charles, by the grace of God, Duke of Burgundy and Lotharingia, of Brabant and Limbourg, of Luxembourg and of Gueldres; Earl of Flanders and of Artois; Count Palatine of Hainault, of Holland, Zealand, Namur, and Zutphen; Marquis of the Holy Empire; Lord of Friezeland, Salines, and Malines, do give you, Louis, King of France, openly to know, that you, having refused to remedy the various griefs, wrongs, and offences, done and wrought by you, or by and through your aid, suggestion, and instigation, against the said Duke and his loving subjects, he, by my mouth, renounces all allegiance and fealty towards your crown and dignity – pronounces you false and faithless; and defies you as a Prince, and as a man. There lies my gage, in evidence of what I have said.”

So saying, he plucked the gauntlet off his right hand, and flung it down on the floor of the hall.

Until this last climax of audacity, there had been a deep silence in the royal apartment during the extraordinary scene; but no sooner had the clash of the gauntlet, when cast down, been echoed by the deep voice of Toison d’Or, the Burgundian herald, with the ejaculation, “Vive Bourgogne!” than there was a general tumult. While Dunois, Orleans, old Lord Crawford, and one or two others, whose rank authorized their interference, contended which should lift up the gauntlet, the others in the hall exclaimed, “Strike him down! Cut him to pieces! Comes he here to insult the King of France in his own palace?”

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