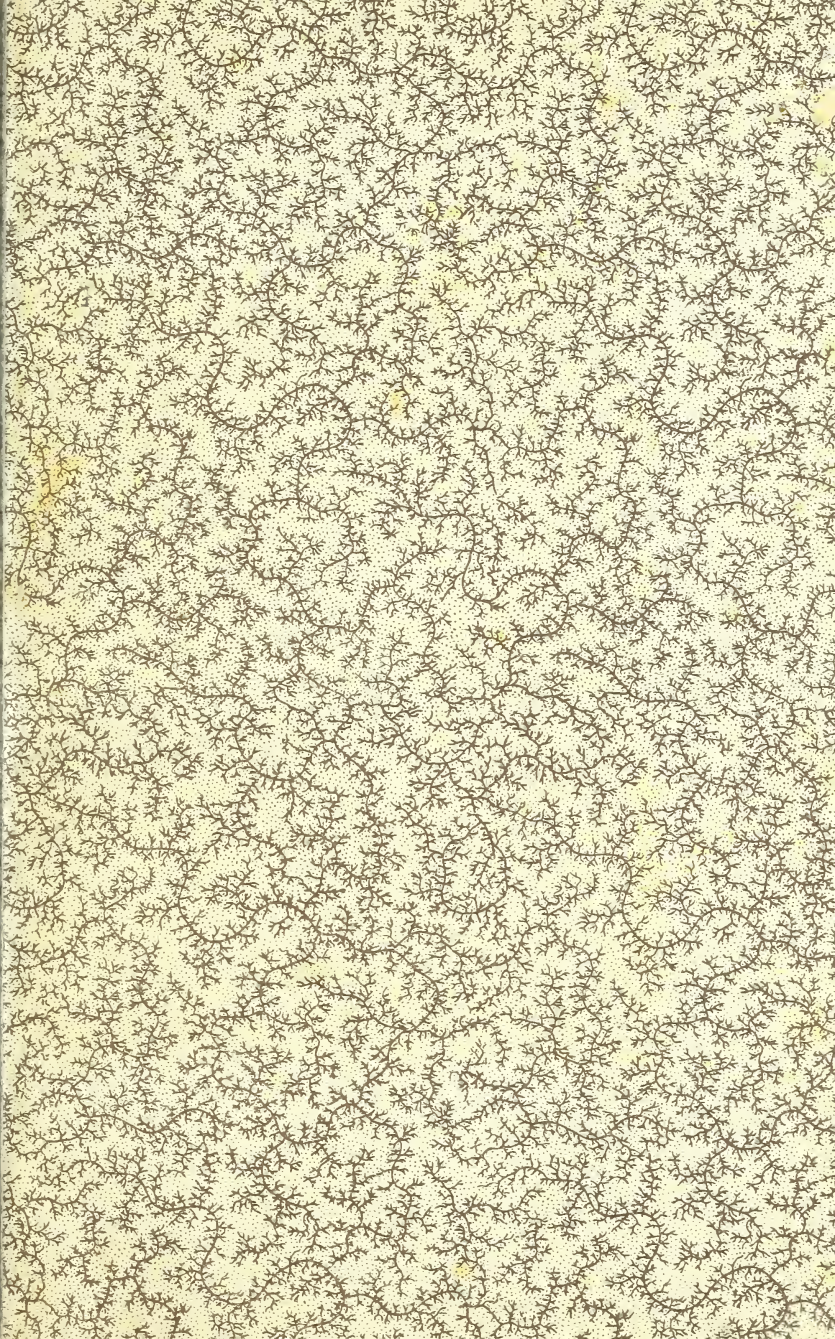




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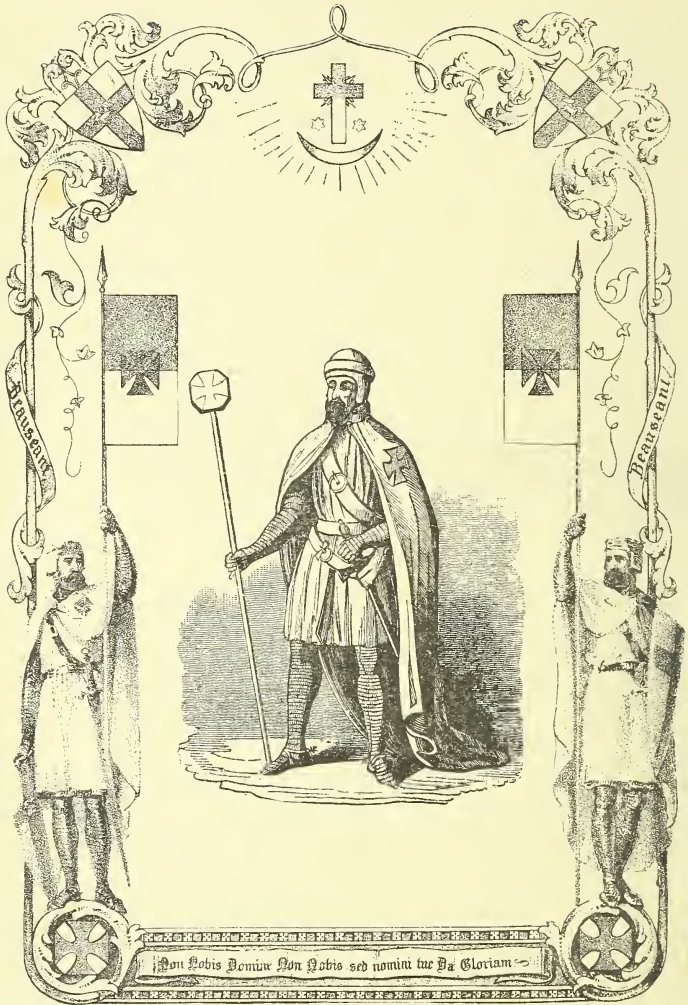




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Non Nobis Domine Non Nobis sed nomini tuo Da Gloriam

DE MOLAI:

THE

*LAST OF THE MILITARY GRAND MASTERS
OF THE ORDER OF TEMPLAR KNIGHTS.*

A ROMANCE OF HISTORY.

BY EDMUND FLAGG

AUTHOR OF "THE PRIME MINISTER," "THE FAR WEST," "FRANCES OF VALOIS,"
"THE HOWARD QUEEN," "VENICE: THE CITY BY THE SEA," ETC.

"DE MOLAI: THE LAST OF THE MILITARY GRAND MASTERS OF THE ORDER OF TEMPLAR KNIGHTS," dealing with the persecution and final suppression of the Order of Knights Templar, is a powerful and intensely interesting historical romance of the Fourteenth Century, the action mainly taking place at the court of Philip the Fourth of France. The novel will be especially prized by the Masonic Brotherhood, as it gives the history of the Knights Templar from the foundation of the Order to its overthrow. There is an abundance of picturesque description. Jacques de Molai, the noble Grand Master of the Templar Knights; Philip the Fourth and Blanche of Artois are the leading characters, but Adrian de Marigni, Marie Morfontaine and Pope Clement fill important roles. Marie's love for Adrian and the mad interposition of the Countess of Marche form the underplot of the novel and furnish the emotional element. The intrigues and corruption of the French court are fully set forth, and the reader is shown a royal bridal fête. The romance is strikingly dramatic, and many of the scenes are highly impressive. "DE MOLAI" will be read with vast interest and enjoyment alike by all Templar Knights, the whole Masonic Fraternity, scholars and the public.

PHILADELPHIA:
T. B. PETERSON & BROTHERS;
306 CHESTNUT STREET.

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1888.

"De Molai: the Last of the Military Grand Masters of the Order of Templar Knights," is a historical romance of the reign of Philip the Fourth of France. It gives a graphic picture of the court of that unscrupulous and ambitious monarch, with its political intrigues, its flirtations, its brilliant fêtes and its flagrant injustice. Paris in the Fourteenth Century is vividly sketched, and there are numerous descriptions of the palaces, castles, abbeys, cathedrals and prisons of that turbulent time, all of which have the element of picturesqueness. The strong plot deals mainly with the efforts made by the King of France, aided by Pope Clement the Fifth and Blanche of Artois, Countess of Marche, for the suppression of the powerful and wealthy Order of Templar Knights and the success which ultimately crowned those efforts. The main and most impressive figure in the romance is by all odds Jacques de Molai, the aged and self-sacrificing Grand Master of the Order, and the lofty virtues of his noble character stand out boldly amid the general corruption of the age. A full and reliable, as well as very readable history of the Templar Knights is given, which will make the book highly interesting and valuable to members of the Masonic Brotherhood everywhere. The rivalry of Blanche of Artois and Marie Morfontaine for the love of Adrian de Marigni forms the subplot and adds vastly to the absorbing interest of the skilfully constructed novel. Many of the scenes are intensely dramatic, and an exceedingly thrilling incident is the compact between the king and Bertrand de Goth in the Abbey of St. Jean d'Angély, while a thunderstorm is in progress. But the entire romance is worthy of more than ordinary attention, and that it will score a brilliant success seems almost certain.

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TO
DE MOLAY MOUNTED COMMANDERY,
OF
THE CITY OF WASHINGTON,
THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED,
IN MEMORY OF
THE LAST OF THE MILITARY GRAND MASTERS
OF THE TEMPLE,
BY WHOSE ILLUSTRIOUS NAME
THAT COMMANDERY AND THIS VOLUME
ARE HONORED.

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P R E F A C E .

THE following pages are designed to illustrate a remarkable era in the annals of France and of Europe, and to recite events and portray personages that rendered it thus remarkable.

With the single exception of the Templar episode in "Ivanhoe," the writer recalls no attempt in English fiction to depict the character, much less to outline the history and career, or to detail the fearful fate of that wonderful Brotherhood of Warrior-Monks, of the Order of Templar Knights, whose fame for two centuries resounded throughout Christendom; and which, as a peaceful Affiliation, has existed to this day.

The writer in these pages has endeavored to convey as much of information relative to the Order of the Temple as could be gathered by faithful examination and careful collation of most

authentic records, consistently with that exciting incident and rapid action indispensable to the dramatic interest of even an historical novel. Facts and dates may, therefore, he trusts, be relied on as correct; while the reader may indulge the reflection, also, that each one of the many names that occur in this dark chronicle of strange crimes is that of an individual who actually had existence in the age and country specified, and whose character and career were actually those therein ascribed to him. The writer has but taken him down for a time from his niche in the Historic Fane; breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; placed in his head a human brain and into his breast a human heart and set them in motion; and then suffered him to act agreeably to the dictates of the one and the impulses of the other, in order to work out, as best he might, the destiny History has assigned him.

HIGHLAND VIEW, VIRGINIA,
September, 1888.

NOTE TO ILLUSTRATED TITLE.

THE Illustrated Title Page presents the Grand Master of Templar Knights, in the mantle of his Order, bearing the *Abacus*, or baton of his office, which in the peaceful Affiliation of to-day is the same it was more than six centuries ago. There is, and can be, but one such sceptre of authority in the Grand Encampment of the United States; and that now in use was presented by Most Eminent Grand Master Hubbard on retiring from office nearly thirty years ago, accompanied by the statement that "the mystic characters, and the mottoes, and the general appearance are in strict accordance with the baton used by our Martyr Grand Master, James De Molay."

The mantle prescribed by the Rule of St. Bernard, as part of the Templar garb in Priory, was required to be white, in order that, in the words of the Saint of Clairvaux, "those who have cast behind them a dark life may be reminded, that they are thenceforth to commend themselves to

their Creator by a pure and white life." Some years later, a red eight-pointed cross, the Templar Cross, on the left shoulder of the mantle, was prescribed by Pope Eugenius, as a symbol of martyrdom.

On each side of the Grand Master stands a Knight Templar in similar garb, bearing the battle-banner of the Temple, the terrible *Beauseant*, alike the war-cry of the Templar and the name of his ensign—half black, half white—"which means," says the old chronicler, Jacques De Vitry, "in the Gallic tongue *Bien-seant* (well-becoming), because the Knights are fair and favorable to friends of Christ, but black and menacing to his foes."

There is another ensign associated with the Temple—the red Passion Cross on a white field, with the legend of Constantine, "*In hoc signo vinces.*"

Very different from the Templar's garb of the cloister, as a monk, though with light mail on his limbs, and spurs at his heels, and sword at his side, was his full panoply of war as a Knight, when, clad in steel from head to foot, with the beaver of his helmet up and visor down, he bestrode a powerful steed, steel-protected, like himself—with heavy cross-hilted sword on thigh,

and ponderous battle-axe at saddle-bow, he grasped with one mailed hand his chain bridle, and with the other a lance "like a weaver's beam."

At the upper corners of the Title Page is the Templar shield; and the feet of the supporting Knights rest on the Templar Cross of the *Beauseant* and mystic *Abacus*. Above all is seen the Passion Cross of the Templar's faith, triumphant over the Saracen Crescent; while below, sustaining all, are beheld those grand words of the Hebrew monarch which open the 115th Psalm: "*Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory*"—which was the triumph-hymn of the Temple, as it was, and is, also, the magnificent anthem of their church, and was raised by the victorious warrior-priests on many a bloody field; for, "always, and on every field," says Addison, "was borne the Templar Altar for Mass, in special charge of the Guardian of the Chapel." Strange association of religion with slaughter! On a field burthened with the slain and drenched with their blood, mailed forms, at a signal, sink meekly down; and, kneeling on human corpses, raise mailed hands incarnadined with gore, and give the glory of their fearful acts to the great Creator of, alike, victor and vanquished!

But thus has it ever been, even from that earliest of triumphal hymns—that of Miriam, four thousand years ago, praising the Lord who had “triumphed gloriously,” down through the centuries, to the latest bulletin of victory, “by the grace of God,” from the latest field of the dead!

As a peaceful Affiliation, the power of the Temple, as regards membership, far exceeds, at this date, that of the palmiest day of its military pride. In the United States alone it numbers, by official returns, more than 70,000 Knights, in nearly 800 commanderies; while in Europe, and elsewhere, the aggregate, though less, is very large. The dying words of the martyred De Molai, six centuries ago, are strangely verified: “I, indeed, perish, but my beloved Order will live!” And now, in distant Iowa, then a wilderness in an undiscovered land, there are more than 50 commanderies, and nearly 4,000 Templar Knights! The aggregate of Royal Arch and Master Masons, subordinate to the Temple, approximates 800,000 in the United States.

DE MOLAI:

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*LAST OF THE MILITARY GRAND MASTERS
OF THE ORDER OF TEMPLAR KNIGHTS.*



CHAPTER I.

THE ABBEY OF ST. JEAN D'ANGÈLY.

“**T**HE traveller wants his horse!”

“Wants what?”

“Wants his horse.”

“Holy St. Benedict!—his horse at this time of the night, and such a night!”

“He wants his horse,” reiterated the slipshod servant-maid, standing pertinaciously at the door half-ajar.

“Get you gone, you brainless baggage!—to bed with you!” shouted the old man.

The girl disappeared and the door closed.

“His horse, indeed, on a night like this!” soliloquized the host of the Bois St. Jean d’Angèly, resuming his seat by the blazing fire of wood, which roared up the vast throat of the stone chimney. “That foolish Gascon girl

is getting more and more foolish every day. Just as everybody is going to bed, lo! in she rushes, half-asleep, and shouts—'The traveller wants his horse!' Out on the fool!"

The old clock that stood in the corner struck the half hour after ten. The wind howled down the chimney and wailed in the crannies, and shrieked through the key-holes, and raved around the corners of the old stone mansion and absolutely roared, like a huge organ-pipe, along the vast forest of St. Jean d'Angély, on the skirts of which it stood.

It was the night of the 5th day of August, 1305. St. Jean d'Angély was a small village of France, in Gascony, in the ancient province of Saintonge, in the department of the Lower Charente and the diocese of the Saintes. It stood on the outskirts of an extensive forest, known as the forest of St. Jean d'Angély, nearly midway between Poitiers and Bordeaux.

It was a wild night,—as dark as Erebus; and the wind howled, and shrieked, and raved, and roared, and wailed, and whistled; and, from time to time, the rain dashed furiously against the casements, and the thunder rumbled in the distance.

"Man and boy, I've lived on this spot full five and seventy years," muttered the old man, cowering over the fire, "and never have I known a night like this. My, it's almost as cold as winter, and this is only August!" he added, stretching his withered hands over the genial blaze. "*Wants his horse*, a night like this!" he continued, after a pause, with a faint laugh. "Wonder who

he is? He comes from the North,—perhaps from Poitiers,—perhaps from Paris, and seems to be a traveller on a journey. Well—well, he can't leave before morning, nor then, either, unless the storm abates; and it will go hard if I don't discover who he may be. So I'll e'en to bed. Everybody sleeps."

The old man rose, and having taken heed to the safety of the fire, took up his lamp, and was about tottering from the room, when he was arrested by the noise of a heavy tread in the apartment above, which, descending the creaking staircase, evidently drew nigh. The next moment the door was flung wide, and, upon the threshold, the traveller of whom he had spoken appeared.

He was a man of apparently forty,—tall, large, and powerfully built. His eyes were dark and penetrating, his hair black and closely cut, and on his lip was a thick moustache. His air was lofty, and his bearing that of one accustomed to command. Energy, enterprise and indomitable will were traced on his thin, compressed lips, and in the lines upon his broad and swarthy brow. And, yet, with all the pride and decision of his aspect, and all else that might be deemed repulsive, there was that about him which warranted the judgment that pronounced him "the handsomest man in Europe." His garb was a close travelling dress of dark cloth, confined by a broad leathern belt around his waist, from which hung a heavy sword. Over this was a cloak of scarlet, lined with fur, and bearing a huge cape, which, like a second cloak, descended half-way to the heels. The cloak was secured by a golden clasp on the right shoulder,

in a manner to leave the arm at liberty to handle the sword, while, on the left side, it was tucked up above the sword, and behind hung loosely in heavy folds nearly to the ground. A velvet cap ornamented with lace, over which was a kind of hood with a broad cushion on the top, called a *chaperon*, and a tail hanging down behind, protected the head. On his feet were boots with pointed toes. The lace upon the cap and the fur upon the cloak of scarlet cloth, as well as the length of the toes of the boots and the size of the *chaperon*, indicated the wearer to be a person of distinction.

At this formidable apparition on the threshold, the old landlord had started, and had well nigh dropped his lamp. Recovering himself, however, he bowed before his unexpected guest and humbly asked his will.

“My horse, sir!” was the stern reply. “How often must a traveller order his horse in your ruinous old *cabaret* before being obeyed?”

“But, your highness,” began the old man in earnest expostulation.

“No words, sir!—the horse!” was the imperative rejoinder.

“It is a dreadful night,” again ventured the host, as he slunk towards the door; “and your highness had better”—

“The horse!” thundered the deep voice of the traveller.

And, without further word, the landlord fled precipitately from the apartment, holding up his hands in dismay.

“No wonder the old fellow is amazed,” soliloquized

the traveller with a smile, as the host disappeared. "It is, indeed, a fearful night. Not a star!" he continued, going to the casement and looking forth. "Very well. So much the better. I wonder if he will be there?" he added, after a pause, slowly pacing the floor, which creaked beneath his heavy tread, with folded arms and eyes fixed thoughtfully on the ground. "Be there? Hell itself couldn't keep him from such a rendezvous, or Heaven either, as to that, after the inducements that he has received! - Oh, he'll be there, and at the appointed hour, although, if this old fool detains me much longer, I may not."

Luckily for the landlord, the traveller caught the sound of horses' hoofs at this moment on the stone pavement, in the yard of the hotel, and immediately hurried to the principal entrance. Opening the door, he was nearly thrown backward by the furious blast that rushed in. In front stood the old host, holding fast with both hands to the bridle of the terrified horse. The traveller closed the door and advanced. The horse with head thrown up, and eyes starting from their sockets, and mane streaming in the blast, at once recognized his master as he approached, and rubbed his head against his arm in token of recognition. The traveller placed a piece of gold in the hand of the host, and leaped upon his horse.

"Holy St. Benedict!" cried the host, "whither do you go on a night like this?"

"To the Abbey of St. Jean d'Angély," was the brief reply; and wheeling his horse the traveller dashed into a road which plunged into the depths of the forest.

"May all the saints preserve him!" ejaculated the old man, as he returned to his hotel and found that the piece of gold repaid him ten times over the traveller's fare.

The midnight tempest roared through the forest, and the giant trees bowed before the blast, as the adventurous traveller urged on his steed.

On—on,—mile after mile, fled the terrified animal through the impenetrable gloom of the midnight forest; and on, still on, he was urged by his rider. At first, the path was broad and open; but soon it became winding and intricate, and, at length, the darkness was so intense that further progress seemed impossible.

Dismounting from his sweating horse, the traveller led him by the bridle, and endeavored to trace the path. But this was impossible, and, after repeatedly wandering from his route, he remounted the saddle and resolved to trust rather to the instinct of the noble animal than to his own less acute senses.

For several miles the horse slowly advanced. At length, suddenly stopping, he threw up his head and loudly snorted. The next moment a voice was heard in the darkness.

"Bordeaux!"

"Rome!" was the quick response of the traveller, who at once dismounted.

A figure advanced and the traveller's hand was closely grasped.

"Are you alone?" asked the horseman.

"I am," was the reply.

"Swear!" was the imperious order.

"Sire, I swear."

"Then, on to the Abbey, for, by St. Louis, it is so infernally dark in this old forest that it is impossible to distinguish a tree from a tower."

"Permit me to lead," replied the first voice. "The Abbey is but a few yards to the right."

"You received my summons?"

"Sire, I did."

"No one accompanied you to the Abbey, or knows of your coming?"

"No one, Sire. I left Bordeaux alone."

"And reached the Abbey alone?"

"About two hours since."

"And no one knows of your arrival?"

"Sire, the inmates of the Abbey have been asleep for hours. I have the key to a low postern, which leads to a secret turret. Besides, the night favors us;—who on such a night would brave the tempest or suspect others of braving it—"

"Aye, who but Philip of France, or Bertrand de Goth, Archbishop of Bordeaux?"

"Sire—Sire, if it please you, not quite so loud!" cried the trembling ecclesiastic. "We are at the Abbey."

At this moment, the forest path emerged upon a broad and closely shaven area, beyond which rose in irregular masses, against the midnight sky, the towers of the ancient Abbey of St. Jean d'Angély.

"This way, Sire!"

And the priest conducted his companion to the left of the main entrance, through thickets of tangled under-

brush, and through the old woods until they reached the foot of a tower, against which the enormous trees swept their heavy branches.

Applying a key to a low iron door, at the base of the tower, it opened. The horse was secured to a tree, and, grasping his companion by the hand, the priest led the way up a narrow and winding stair, practised in the depth of the massive wall, until their progress was arrested by a second door, likewise of iron. This door flew open before the priest, apparently by means of some secret spring which he touched, for he used no key, and the two men were the next moment in a small turret chamber, heavily hung with tapestry of black velvet, with but one window, which was also heavily draped. At the extremity of the apartment stood an altar surmounted by the crucifix, and lighted by twelve waxen tapers, and decorated as for solemn mass.

The two men, revealed to each other by the light of these sacred tapers, presented a contrast well worthy of a moment's pause.

Philip the Fourth, of France, if not absolutely "the *handsomest* man in Europe," as the distinction which history has given him,—Philip *le Bel*,—would imply, had, at least, very few rivals; and, among these rivals, certainly was *not* Bertrand de Goth, the Primate of Bordeaux. Philip was tall in person and kingly in bearing; Bertrand was short and corpulent. The front of the king was bold, frank, open; that of the priest was sinister, suspicious, cautious. The former was the lion,—the latter the serpent; yet the aspect of each indicated

power and ability,—a power and an ability, as well as an ambition, of which, even after the lapse of more than five centuries, the marks can be distinctly traced on the era and upon the nations in which they lived.

As the King entered the turret chamber, his hand rested on his sword, and his dark, penetrating eye glanced hastily around, sweeping the narrow limits of the apartment from its arched roof to its stony pavement.

Two heavy chairs and a table of oak, on which were candles and materials for writing, constituted, with the altar, the entire furniture of the room.

“Will your Majesty be seated?” humbly asked the ecclesiastic, presenting one of the chairs.

The King returned no reply, but continued his examination of the chamber.

Raising the tapestry he sounded the walls with the hilt of his sword, and the floor with his armed heel, to detect, if possible, concealed apertures, if such there were. He even examined the altar itself, that he might be sure it concealed no listener; and, at an age when poison was actually administered in the holy wafer, it was not strange that a traitor might be suspected to lurk beneath the altar of God.

“Will your Majesty be seated?” again asked the priest.

“Are we alone?” sternly demanded the King.

“Sire, we are!” was the trembling reply.

“Swear!”

“I swear!” said the priest, laying his hand on the Gospels, which were spread open on the altar.

"It is well," said the King, placing his drawn sword upon the table, and taking one of the chairs.

The priest remained standing.

"Be seated, Sir!" said the King.

The Archbishop obeyed.

For some moments Philip sat silent, his searching eyes fixed steadfastly on the trembling priest.

"Bertrand de Goth," he, at length, said, in deep and impressive tones, "you are my deadliest foe!"

The priest sprang to his feet, and his hand sought the bosom of his cassock, while beneath that garment glittered the links of a shirt of mail, as well as the blade of a dagger.

A contemptuous smile passed over the calm face of the King, as he quietly waved to his startled companion to resume his chair.

The priest reluctantly complied, but still kept the wakeful vigil of his serpent eye on the powerful form before him.

"I say, Sir Priest," repeated the King, "that, since the deserved and dreadful doom of Benedict Gaëtan, Pope Boniface Eighth, you, Bertrand de Goth, who now aspire to his vacant chair, are my deadliest foe."

The Archbishop, pale as death, and wondering to what this strange charge might lead, retained his seat in silence. A personal struggle with a man of Philip's powers he knew could only prove fatal to himself; while in craft and subtlety he thought he might prove a match even for the King. This, indeed, was his only hope.

"I repeat, Sir, and you dare not deny," resumed the King, "that all the censures, interdicts and excommunications launched so freely on myself and my realm for nearly ten years by Benedict Gaëtan were counseled by you, and sustained by you, and that as a reward for that support and countenance, you were first advanced by your master to the See of Cominges and finally to the splendid Archbishopric of Bordeaux."

"But Benedict Gaëtan lives no more," was the reply.

"Aye, he lives no more!" cried the King, the bitter smile of gratified vengeance lighting his quivering lip and the fires of exultation flashing in his eye. "Benedict Gaëtan lives no more. And how did he die? Even as the dog dies, so died he; and thus perish all the foes of France!"

The Archbishop shuddered and became even more livid than before.

"Shall I tell you how he died?" continued the King. "Abandoning the Vatican, he sought safety in his native village of Anagni from my vengeance on his crimes. There De Nogaret, with Sciarra Colonna and his soldiers, seized him. In his rage he blasphemed God, abjured Christ, and cursed the King of France to the fourth generation. Next delirium came on him, and in paroxysms of madness he gnawed his own flesh in agony; and he died! And then was recalled the prophecy of his victim-predecessor, the unhappy Peter de Mouron, Pope Celestin Fifth,—'Curses on thee, Benedict Gaëtan! Thou hast mounted the throne like a fox, thou wilt reign like a lion and die like a dog!' And so it was!"

Silence for some moments succeeded this wrathful outburst of the King.

“And was it to repeat to me the fearful doom of Boniface,” at length the priest ventured to say, “that your Majesty summoned me hither?”

“It was!” quickly and sternly answered the King.

“Amen!” ejaculated the Archbishop. “But, Sire, to what end?”

“To this end—to make my fiercest foe my fastest friend!”

The priest raised his eyes in amazement, but they met the fixed gaze of Philip and again sought the ground.

“Bertrand de Goth,” said the King, “you know me;” then, after a pause, he added: “And I, Sir, know you!”

The Archbishop bowed.

“I know you for the most daring and unscrupulous prelate in Christendom.”

The priest again bowed.

“I know that you fear not Heaven nor Hell, and regard not God nor man.”

Again the primate bowed.

“I know you as the faithful neophyte of Boniface Eighth,—and *he* was my foe!”

The priest started.

“And, since that man’s deserved and dreadful doom, I know no primate in Europe, who can be a more dangerous foe, or a more efficient friend, to me and to my cause, than you can.”

“Sire—Sire!” exclaimed the astonished priest, rising to throw himself at the King’s feet.

“Nay—nay—not yet!” replied Philip, with a gesture of repulse. “Be seated, Sir; you have heard not all.”

The primate resumed his chair, and, folding his arms upon his breast, fixed his eyes humbly on the ground.

“Bertrand de Goth,” said the King, “you are of an ancient race;—your father was a Knight of Villandran, and your uncle Bishop of Agen. From your infancy you have been destined to the church, and, in ecclesiastical knowledge, you have no rival.”

The prelate bowed and murmured a faint acknowledgment.

“You are a man of influence, ability, scholarship, accomplishment—”

“Sire—Sire!” interrupted the astonished Archbishop.

“And you are a man of vice, cruelty, hypocrisy and guilt.”

The priest was silent.

“But, above all, for my purpose, you are a man of ambition,—measureless—fathomless ambition. To win the rewards of ambition, there is no depth of guilt into which you would not descend,—there is no principle however sacred which you would not sacrifice. Am I right?”

The priest returned no reply.

“Am I right, I ask!” sternly repeated the King.

The prelate bowed.

“Very well. It is but fit that two men such as we are,—such as you know me to be, and as I know you to be, should understand each other, before we make a compact.”

"A compact, Sire?" exclaimed the Archbishop.

"Aye, a compact. You have heard of compacts with the fiend himself, have you not? The theme I had supposed a favorite one with you churchmen!"

"A compact of friendship, Sire?" inquired De Goth.

"Friendship! What friendship can ever exist between two men who have hated each other as we have, and still do hate each other as we do? Friendship, indeed! No, Sir—oh, no! A compact of interest!"

"And what interest of your Majesty can the poor primate of Bordeaux advance?"

"Ask rather that which is uppermost in your mind, what interest of the primate of Bordeaux can Philip of France advance? But we waste time. To the point. When Philip the Hardy, my father, died, he bequeathed to my fulfillment three schemes which he had in vain striven himself to fulfill: the first was to seat on the throne of Arragon my brother, Charles of Valois, on whom Pope Martin Fourth bestowed the sceptre of an excommunicated king:—second, to establish the children of Blanche de la Cerda on the throne of Castile; and, third, to reduce the rebels of Sicily, and avenge the thirty thousand Frenchmen who perished in the slaughter of the Sicilian Vespers."

"And are these *your* schemes, Sire?" asked De Goth.

"No, indeed," replied the King with a laugh; "oh, no! Besides, if they were, what aid could *you* render in their accomplishment?"

"Sire, I despair of rendering aid in any of your schemes."

“How humble your Excellency has become! Oh, no. My schemes are not the schemes of my father. They called him Philip the Hardy, and me they call Philip the Handsome, and yet by the bones of my worthy grandfather Louis, of whom Boniface made a Saint to atone in anticipation somewhat, I suppose, for the wrongs he was about to inflict on his descendant,—I say, notwithstanding my father was the Hardy Philip, and I am the Handsome Philip, I have had a more turbulent reign than he had;—what with wars with the English, and the Flemish, and Pope Boniface Eighth of cursed memory. My schemes, Sir priest, lie within my own realm for their fulfillment; and to me it is enough that you can advance them, your modesty to the contrary nevertheless,—you can advance them I say, if I think proper to advance you!”

“To advance me, your Majesty?”

“To be sure—to advance you. Of what service can you now be to me? But a moment since you were yourself in despair of aiding me in any of my schemes.”

“And still am so, Sire,” was the meek answer.

“Come—come—you are too humble by half,” said the King. “Such abasement flatters some weak souls, but it is loathsome to me. Let us talk of Mother Church. What news from Rome? What of the new Pope?”

“Nicholas of Treviso has not yet been long enough in the papal chair to accomplish anything of moment, Sire; but he has been there long enough to incur the hate of his whole college of cardinals, I learn. This, indeed, is the latest news from Rome.”

“And why do they hate the good Benedict, my worthy Bertrand?”

The Archbishop shook his head.

“Shall I tell you? It is because he has not obeyed the injunction of Boniface when he elevated the man, who, from a preaching friar, was promoted to the post of sub-prior, then prior, then provincial, and finally general of his order,—to the Cardinalate and Archbishopric of Ostia.”

“And that injunction, Sire?”

“Was this—‘Be less pious, or be more hated!’”

“His piety then has excited the hate of his cardinals, your Majesty would say?”

“How quick you are, my good Bertrand! France has a right to claim a few cardinals’ hats, has she not?”

“The French clergy has been neglected, Sire.”

“And Pope Benedict Eleventh could send a red hat to cover the pious pate of the right-reverend Bertrand de Goth, Archbishop of Bordeaux, might he not?”

“The Holy Father has the power, Sire.”

“But has not the will, you were about to add, my pious Bertrand?”

“I have no hopes of advancement, Sire, at the hands of Pope Benedict. I opposed his elevation.”

“And had you favored it?”

“Still, I should have no hope.”

“Pope Benedict is not immortal, my good Bertrand. Pope Boniface was not, you know.”

A faint, but significant smile played on the lip of the crafty prelate.

"Besides," continued the King, "you said but now that his cardinals hated him."

"I did, Sire."

"And you said, too, that this was your latest intelligence from Rome, was it not so?"

"It was, Sire."

"Then I have news from Rome later than yours. Your courier says the cardinals hate the Pope—my courier says the cardinals have poisoned the Pope!"

"Sire—Sire!" exclaimed the astonished Archbishop, springing to his feet. "Can this be so?"

"Oh, be seated—be seated, my good Bertrand," quietly replied Philip. "It not only can be so, but it actually is so. Let me see—this is the sixth day of August?"

"It is Sire—the Feast of the Transfiguration."

"How well you remember the Feast-days, my good Bertrand," said the King, surveying the sleek and rufous face, the portly and well-fed sides of his priestly companion. "Do you remember the Fast-days as well?"

The Archbishop smiled.

"To-day, then, is the Feast of the Transfiguration," resumed Philip. "What Feast was there at Rome some two weeks ago,—on the twentieth day of July?"

"The Feast of St. James."

"Very well. On the day of this grand festival, the good Pope gave a grand dinner to his whole college of cardinals,—those cardinals who so hated him, you know. While at table, a nun of the monastery of St.

Peterville,—so goes the tale,—presented herself, and, in the name of the Lady Abbess, who was one of his penitents, offered to the good Benedict some freshly-culled figs, upon a silver salver. The Holy Father could not and did not refuse them. He ate two, and offered the others to his guests. They, of course, could not think of depriving his Holiness of a rarity, which he loved so well, and, at their urgent solicitation, he ate the rest. That night he was seized with intestinal pains, and, before morning, the papal chair was vacant. Such is the tale, the moral of which seems to be this, that freshly-culled figs do not agree with a pious Pope,—especially, as subsequently came to light, when presented by a cardinal who hates him, disguised as a nun of St. Peterville!” *

“And the successor to the Papal See?”

“Is not as yet elected.”

“And the cause, Sire?”

“The cause seems to be this: From the first day of the assemblage of the conclave at Perouse, the cardinals were divided into two parties, each of them too weak to overthrow, and too strong to be overthrown by the other. The Guelphs, led by Francis Gaëtan, the brother of the departed Benedict, demand an Italian cardinal, a friend of Boniface; the Ghibelines, led by the Cardinal de Prato”—

“The Cardinal de Prato, Sire!”

“Yes, the Cardinal de Prato, my friend and your foe

* William de Nogaret and Sciarra Colonna are charged by historians with the poisoning of Benedict XI. Ferreus Vicentinus accuses Philip himself,—these men being his agents.

I say, the Ghibelines led by De Prato demand a French cardinal, a friend of Philip."

"And is the conclave still in session at Perouse, Sire?"

"No. De Prato found that there was but a single point on which they agreed, and that was to make no more Popes out of mendicant friars, whom Boniface had exhorted in vain to be less pious; and also that neither party would concede anything to the other. On his motion, therefore, the conclave adjourned, thus affording the good Cardinal opportunity to communicate by swift couriers with his dear and powerful friend, the King of France,—although, of course, the act should be to the very great scandal of the cause, and the inconsolable grief, no doubt, of numerous pious souls. For what saith the constitution of Gregory Tenth, decreed by the general council, convened in the city of Lyons in 1273, for the relief of the Holy Land, and for the reformation of warriors? Saith it not even thus,—that immediately on the Sovereign Pontiff's death, the Cardinals shall all assemble in one chamber, and in that chamber be securely locked with a key—*con clavis*—no one being suffered to enter and no one to leave, and, if, within three days, they have not agreed upon a successor, then, for the five following days, they shall have but one dish for each meal; and, at the expiration of those five days, they shall be fed frugally on bread and water, until a Pontiff is elected?—I say, good Bertrand, saith it not so?"

"Even so, Sire, it saith," was the reply. "But what saith the worthy Cardinal De Prato?" meekly added the

Archbishop, who was evidently writhing under the torments of excited curiosity—torments which the crafty King could not but perceive, whatever the efforts to conceal them, and which it seemed his policy to excite, rather than to allay.

“The *worthy* Cardinal De Prato, said ye? Ah, true—I had forgotten he was one of your special friends, good Bertrand.”

The Archbishop bit his lip with vexation, and then smiled and bowed.

“The worthy Cardinal says this, good Bertrand,” continued the King. “Here is his letter,” he added, producing a paper from his vest, “let it speak for itself. It reached me at Poitiers by an express courier, to whom I gave one hundred marks of silver, only four days ago; and to-morrow,—nay, this very night, even, that courier must start back to Prouse with my reply. Immediately on receipt of the letter, I despatched a courier to you, appointing this rendezvous, in order to consult you on the wise De Prato’s dispatch.”

“May I read the letter, Sire?” asked the Archbishop, eagerly extending his hand.

“Softly—softly,” replied Philip. “All in good time. You may listen to the letter first, and, afterwards you may read what is written—perhaps.”

The prelate bowed assent, and, resuming his chair, crossed his arms upon his breast, and, fixing his eyes upon the floor, prepared to listen.

“The wise Cardinal first sets forth in brief the position of the conclave, at the time of its scandalous

adjournment. This," continued the King, "we have already discussed. He next proceeds to develop his scheme. To elect a French Cardinal friendly to Philip and a foe to Boniface is, of course, impossible; but a French Cardinal and a foe to Philip is preferable to an Italian.

"This, then, the wise Cardinal proposed:—that the Guelphs—the cismontane—the Italian Cardinals—should nominate three Ghibelines;—ultramontane or French Cardinals, and, of these three, the Ghibelines should select that one least obnoxious to them."

"And have the Guelphs made their nomination?"

"You shall hear. The proposition was eagerly accepted—the bait was greedily swallowed, and three ecclesiastics of this realm were nominated, who, of all others, have ever manifested themselves the most virulent and uncompromising enemies of Philip of France, and the most open, avowed, and devoted slaves of Benedict Gaëtan."

It was impossible for the agitated primate to remain longer upon his chair. Rising to his feet, he hurried across the narrow limits of the chamber in a frenzy of excitement, and then returning resumed his seat.

"The names, Sire—I implore you, the names!" earnestly exclaimed the ambitious Gascon.

"Three names," calmly continued the King, reading from the paper, "and the names of three of your deadliest foes in France were selected. It only remains for you to select which of these three men shall wear the triple crown of St. Peter!"

“Sire—Sire,” ejaculated the excited prelate, dropping upon his knees — “I implore you, the names!”

“These names,” calmly continued the King “are all of them, as stated, those of my deadly foes. But, there is one name here that belongs to a man who has even conspired against my crown and my life!”

The Archbishop became livid, ghastly in his pallor, at these words, and attempted to rise, but his limbs refused their office.

“That man,” said the King, in stern tones, rising from his chair, and laying his hand upon the hilt of his sword, “is Bertrand de Goth, Archbishop of Bordeaux!”

At that instant a vivid flash of lightning streamed through the black drapery that shrouded the only window of the chamber, succeeded by a peal of thunder, which broke over the lofty tower and shook it to its foundation. The tempest, which, all of the night, had been brooding, now burst in terrible grandeur over the Abbey and woods of St. Jean d'Angély.

The Archbishop leaped to his feet, and, for an instant, the two men gazed upon each other in awe-struck, almost superstitious stillness.

“I say,” was heard the calm voice of the King, as the thunder rumbled away in the distance, and the big drops began to patter upon the dense foliage without, “I say that man is Bertrand de Goth, and that man is he whom Philip of France may now with a word place on the papal throne!”

De Goth, overwhelmed, dropped at the feet of the King and clasped his hands.

"Sire," he murmured, "I am yours! Command—I obey. From this moment the past is even as if it had never been. Friends—kindred—schemes—purposes—principles—my very existence I sacrifice to your will."

"Rise, Sir—rise," said the King, extending his hand, which the prelate eagerly grasped. "The past is forgotten—but let us not forget the future."

Then leading the Archbishop, whose hand he still firmly grasped, they both advanced and stood before the altar, decorated, as has been said, as if for the celebration of midnight mass.

The King then placed in the hands of the primate the dispatch of the Cardinal de Prato, and, while it was perused, closely watched the changes of his agitated countenance.

"Sire, command—I obey!" faintly murmured De Goth, when he had concluded and returned the letter.

"You are now assured," said the King, "that, with a word, I can place you on the Papal throne, or one of two other men, each of whom is your bitter foe, and, who, as See of Rome, would, doubtless, rejoice to degrade you from the station you now hold—are you not?"

"Sire, I am."

"And you are equally assured, knowing me, as long and as well as you have, that it is from no peculiar regard for your wishes that I have selected you as the recipient of my favor; but because you can and will extend me that aid, as Sovereign Pontiff, which my

interests demand, more effectually than can either of your competitors? ”

“Sire, ask what you will. Your wishes are mine.”

Turning to the altar, the King glanced over it, and at the objects which were placed upon it.

“Have you here,” he said “the articles named in my letter?”

“They are here, Sire.”

“The consecrated host? ”

“Is in this golden pix.”

“And the relics of the Saints? ”

“The most revered relics of my diocese, together with a portion of the true cross, are in that casket.”

“And the Holy Evangelists? ”

“Sire, the volume is here,” said the priest, placing his hand upon its open pages, as the book lay spread upon the altar.

“Bertrand de Goth,” said the King, in solemn tones, “upon these Evangelists, and these relics, and this consecrated host, swear to me the fulfillment of six articles of covenant, which I shall now propose; and, upon these awful symbols do *I* swear to place on your brow the tiara of Rome!”

“Sire, I swear!” firmly rejoined De Goth.

“Swear to me, that so soon as you are seated on the Papal throne, you will revoke all excommunications, suspensions of privilege, interdicts, depositions, and all and every ecclesiastical censure, done or ordered to be done, by Benedict Gaëtan, Pope Boniface Eighth, against France, the King of France, and the Princes, his

brothers and sons; also against his barons, prelates and other lords of his realm, because of their denunciations, appeals, and demands for a general council, and because of alleged outrages, blasphemies, invasions, robberies or pillage of the treasures of the Church, and that all taint of calumny, and all note of infamy against the name of those who have sustained the King of France in this contest shall be abolished; and, finally, that the originals of the sentences pronounced by the Court of Rome against the King of France and his adherents shall be torn from the register of the Church and publicly burned—you swear?"

"I swear!" was the solemn reply.

"Swear to me, that you will proclaim to the whole world that Benedict Gaëtan, Pope Boniface Eighth, by reason of his evil deeds in the flesh, merits the eternal damnation of hell, and that his acts and his memory are alike detestable and infamous—you swear?"

"I swear!"

"Swear to me that your consecration as Sovereign Pontiff shall be celebrated within the realm of France and that the Papal See shall be removed to Avignon from Rome—you swear?"

"I swear!"

"Swear to me that you will elevate to the Cardinalate, or to any other dignity of the Church, any and all such ecclesiastics as may be designated by the King of France—you swear?"

"I swear!"

"Swear to me that you will restore to France all her privileges, titles, dignities and estates, and will preserve

to her all her franchises, sovereignties, imposts and powers, she recognizing upon earth no other master of her temporal goods save only Philip, her King, and that, for the space of five years, all tithes of her clergy shall be paid only to him—you swear ? ”

“ I swear ! ”

“ There is yet one other article of covenant,” said the King, “ to complete the number of six, to which you are pledged, which I am not now prepared to propound. This article, whatsoever it may be, and whensoever propounded, swear to me that you will also fulfill.”

“ I swear ! ” was the deep answer.

“ And the pledges to this fulfillment ? ”

“ My two brothers, Gaillard and Edmund de Goth, at the Court of France.”

“ The compact is completed—the covenant is made ! ” cried Philip, drawing forth a parchment covered with writing, which he spread upon the altar. “ It needs but the manual signature of Bertrand de Goth, and the impress of the Episcopal signet-ring of the Archbishop of Bordeaux.”

In turn, the primate drew back. Upon that parchment, in the Latin language, was fairly engrossed the six articles, to the fulfillment of which he had just now so solemnly sworn, together with the oath itself upon the host, the relics and the gospels, which no Catholic, do what else he might, could, once recorded, disregard, under penalty, as he believed, of undying infamy in this world and unending misery in another.

Well might the primate draw back and tremble at the

sight of this terrible record of an oath, which, unwitnessed and secret, he had fondly trusted might be evaded.

“Ha! do you hesitate? do you refuse?” cried the fiery king. “Yet, be it so—be it so,” seizing the parchment, which he was proceeding to replace in his bosom.

“Sire!” exclaimed De Goth, “give me the parchment!”

The parchment was again produced. A pen was seized from the table,—the name of Bertrand de Goth was affixed to the record; beside it was placed a mass of melted wax, and on it was impressed the signet-ring of the Archbishop of Bordeaux.

“It is done!” exultingly cried the King.

“It is done!” faintly responded the priest.

At that moment, the last low burst of the retreating tempest, which had spent its fury on the old Abbey of St. Jean d'Angély and its ancient woods, muttered sullenly in the distance.

Silently—quickly, the tall tapers were extinguished,—the sacred symbols were secured by the primate,—the King seized his parchment and sword,—the door of the secret chamber was opened,—the narrow stairway, winding steeply down through the massive turret, was descended; and, when the King and the prelate emerged from the gloom, the bright stars were looking down as peacefully from their far, happy homes, as if the tempest had never burst, and the lightning had never scathed, and man had never sinned.

An hour later, the morning broke; and on—on,—for life—for death, sped a fleet courier on the route to Perouse!

CHAPTER II.

PARIS IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

66 **T**HE palace of the Louvre is, assuredly, of all the monuments of Paris, that which most merits a visit."

Thus writes a Parisian of the nineteenth century; yet, a marvel and a mystery, as this mighty and magnificent structure now is, not less mighty and magnificent, and marvelous, seems it to have been five hundred years ago, to the Parisian age of the reign of Philip *le Bel*.

The old Louvre of Philip Augustus, "that immense building, whose great tower rallied around it twenty-three other towers, without reckoning turrets—that hydra of towers, the giant guardian of Paris, with its twenty-four heads, ever erect, with its monstrous ridges, cased in lead, or scaled with slate, and glistening all over with the reflection of metals"—such was the Louvre, at the opening of the fourteenth century.

Twelve hundred years ago, when that splendid old Sultan, Dagobert, was King, the whole of the present *Ville de Paris*,—the whole northern bank of the Seine was covered with dense forest to the water's edge. Yet, on the very spot where now stands the palace stood then a citadel and a church. It was a vast parallelogram of structures, the stone walls pierced with loop-holes, and surrounded by a deep ditch fed by the neighboring Seine.

In the year of grace, 1204, being the 23d of the reign of the great Philip Augustus, in the centre of this vast quadrangle of old Dagobert rose a mighty tower, and it was christened "the Tower of the Louvre," although for what earthly reason, no one seems to know. Other towers were added, to the number of more than a score, and the old structure, greatly enlarged, and strengthened, and beautified, assumed a shape and aspect, which it retained for a hundred and fifty years, until the reign of Charles the Fifth.

The Louvre of Philip Augustus was, therefore, the Louvre of Philip *le Bel*. Although in 1305, it was, of course, just a hundred years older than when completed, in 1205; yet, at both periods, it stood as a sort of outpost, like the *bastilles* of Louis Philippe, just without the walls of Paris.

Thus much for the *chronology* of the palace of the Louvre. The tower of the Louvre, or the Tower Philipine, or the Tower Neuve, as by historians it is indifferently called, seems to have been one of the most famous structures of the middle ages. Its form was circular, and a broad *fosse*, in which ran the waters of the Seine, bathed its foundation. Its connection with the paved quadrangle of the Court was by means of a ponderous drawbridge, and with the surrounding fortifications by means of a bridge of stone, with a gallery above. Its walls are said to have been thirteen feet in depth, and its altitude was about seventy. But then, like all the other churches, palaces, and prisons of the feudal times, it stood "up to its middle in the ground;"

there was as much of it below the ground as there was above: nay, its depth below the surface was, probably, far greater than was its height above; for one of its fearful *oubliettes* is said to have been a hundred feet deep! It was a tree with roots more extended than its branches. It was a prison, palace, church, sepulchre and, also, a treasury, with two stories below the ground and one above.

Dreadful, no doubt, were the scenes which those mysterious caverns witnessed, and dreadful, certainly, was the fame with which that dark old tower was cursed. As was said of the *Piombi* of Venice, or Dante's Hell, the man who entered those dreary depths might well "leave hope behind." For more than a hundred years, those vaults were the prison-house of criminals of the State; and the horrible tales of which they were the scene yet live on the chronicler's page. At length the horror arising from these tales of blood and cruelty caused the tower to be razed to the ground. Above the dungeons and *oubliettes* were numerous apartments, among which are mentioned a chapel, an oratory and a chamber for the royal treasures.

The walls and structures which surrounded the central tower of the Louvre, and formed the sides of the quadrangle, are said to have been surmounted by a perfect colonnade of turrets and towers, of all shapes, sizes and altitudes, each rejoicing in some distinctive appellation, indicative of the use it subserved, such as the tower of the Clock, the tower of the Floodgate, the tower of the Library, of the Falconry, of the Armory, of

the Grand and Little Chapels, of the Grand and Little Privy-Council Chambers. Each tower, also, had a captain, who was no less a personage than some high and most mighty seigneur of the court. The main structures of the quadrangle are said to have contained several vast and magnificent apartments, amongst which were the Grand Hall of St. Louis, the Grand Chamber of the Council, the Hall of the King, the Hall of the Queen, as well as many others. It was, probably, the first named of these apartments, in which, nearly a hundred years subsequent to the period of which I write, Charles the Fifth spread that splendid banquet, which closed the festivities attending the triumphal entry into Paris of Isabelle of Baviere,—a banquet spread, as old Froissart tells us, upon that marvellous slab of marble, which “nearly filled one end of the Hall,” and which for length, breadth and thickness was then supposed to be, and in good sooth, not without cause, it should seem—“the vastest marble slab in all the world,”—a slab of marble, which, for two hundred years, subserved almost every variety of purpose, from a platform on which attorney’s clerks performed their mummeries, to a banquet-board at which only emperors, kings, and princes of the blood royal might sit; a slab of marble, which, alas, and alack, exists no longer!—the great fire of 1618 having very quickly converted the aforesaid slab, by fervent heat, into a mass of vulgar quick-lime!

The minor apartments of the palace of the Louvre, the chambers, galleries, libraries, oratories, refectories, laboratories, kitchens, cellars and servants’ offices would seem

to have been literally numberless; to say nothing of stables and gardens, piscaries, aviaries and menageries.

The entrance to the Louvre was by means of massive gateways, four in number, one in the middle of each wall of the quadrangle, each overhung by a turret; and with portcullis ever down, and drawbridge ever up, they frowned sullen defiance on all who might approach.

The view of Paris from the belfry of the grand central tower of the old Louvre, of a fine summer morning, in the time of the reign of Philip *le Bel*, must have been extremely fine. From the west comes sweeping on "the genial and abounding Seine," and, passing through its beloved Paris, pours along its waters at your feet, and winds off with two prodigious bends, and is lost among the hills in the west. On its northern bank is the *Ville* of Paris; on the island in its middle is the *Cité*, and on the southern bank is the *Université*; all three connected by two long and continuous streets from north to south, at right angles with the Seine, which they cross by two bridges of stone,—a massive castle standing at the extremity of each bridge, and each extremity of each street being terminated by a massive gate in the city walls. For, then as now, though not one-half its present extent, Paris was environed with its wall; and without that wall, at its base, was a broad, deep ditch, through which poured the waters of the Seine; and in that wall were ponderous gates; and at night those gates were closed, and huge chains were suspended across the Seine above the city and below, from bank to bank, and the lonely watchman walked his rounds, and sang—

“Sleep on, good people of Paris! sleep on! All is well! all is well!”

As you look down from your lofty site, towards the east, directly in front of you rises the sharp Gothic roof and pointed spires of the ancient church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, with its stupendous rose-window and its tall arched doorways, beneath which, for many centuries, went the kings of France, so long as the Louvre was their dwelling, to confess their many sins. Pursuing the river bank, in the same direction, your eye is next arrested by the grim battlements of that stern old fortalice, the Grand Chatelet, for centuries a tribunal and a prison, standing like a giant guardian at the head of the Pont au Change, the sole connecting link at that time between the *Cité* and the *Ville*. From the Grand Chatelet, the eye would naturally glance up the long street of the Temple, towards the north, until it encountered the square tower, flanked by four turrets of that massive structure, which, nearly two centuries before, had been reared by the Order of the Templar Knights. Turning back to the *Cité*, seated upon its island in the Seine, the attention is first arrested by the huge Palace of Justice, with its cluster of round-pointed towers, where old Hugh Capet fixed his residence eight hundred years ago, and which, for three centuries, was the palace and the prison of the kings of France. It had well nigh, also, become a church; for in 1242, St. Louis, in his pious zeal, reared in its very midst *La Sainte Chapelle du Palais*, and made it the repository of whole cartloads of holy relics—limbs of saints and

martyrs, and portions of the true Cross, bequeathed him by his pious grandsire, the emperor Baudoin. In 1313, the entire structure was rebuilt by his own grandson, Philip *le Bel*.

Glancing up the Island of the *Cité*, the eye next rests, as it passes, on the venerable Hotel Dieu, founded by the pious St. Landry, three centuries before; but it instantly comes to a full stop before the massive twin towers, more than two hundred feet high, of the marvellous Cathedral church of Notre Dame, which, even then, reared as it was, on the foundation of old St. Stephen, its predecessor, was nearly eight hundred years old.

Crossing the Seine on the Petit Pont with its three stone arches, and through the cavernous gateway of the Petit Chatelet, the sole connecting link between the city and the southern bank, the eye sweeps over the abbeys, churches and colleges, with which, even then, the *Université* was filled, and which gave it a name, but rests chiefly on the graceful towers of the Mathurines, the Bernardines, the Augustines, the Benedictines and the Cordeliers, and those of the ancient abbey of St. Germain des Pres. It pauses, too, upon the old gothic turrets of the Hotel de Cluny, and the romantic arches of the Palace des Thermes,—a Roman palace in the days of Julian, but in the fourteenth century serving only, with its deserted gardens, and desolate chambers, and dim, mysterious aisles, to afford to the ladies of the Court a safe and quiet rendezvous, (according to St. Foix,) lovers they dared not meet at their own homes.

Still descending the river bank, you pause for a

moment to look at the washer women along the quay, when your attention is finally arrested by the tall round tower of the Hotel de Nesle, directly before you on the north, the base of which is bathed by the rushing waters of the Seine, here crossed in the fourteenth century by the ferry of the Nesle, but in the nineteenth by the Pont des Arts; while on the islet between is a garden of the Louvre.

Such were the prominent points in the Paris of the fourteenth century—the Louvre, the church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, the Temple, the Petit Pont and the Pont au Change with the Grand and Petit Chatelets, the Palace of Justice, the Hotel Dieu, Notre Dame and the Tower of Nesle; and such, strange to tell, after a lapse of more than five hundred years, even at the present day, they still remain. The very names of the streets, as well as of the structures of Paris, are, to a great extent, the same they were centuries ago. And these names of streets and structures, as well as their several relative localities, the reader may do well to remember, inasmuch as they will be subject to reference more than once in the pages which succeed.

CHAPTER III.

THE BRIDAL FÊTE.

WHOEVER would revel in the recital of the splendid deeds of a chivalric age—the tilts and the tournaments, the sieges and the marches, the amours and the wassailings, the bridals and the burials, the glory and the guilt of feudal times—let him peruse the illumined chronicles of Sir John Froissart.

“Did you ever read Froissart?” said Claverhouse, in Walter Scott’s “Old Mortality.”

“No!” was Morton’s answer.

“I have half a mind,” returned Claverhouse, “to contrive you should have six months’ imprisonment, in order to procure you that pleasure.”

Tuesday, the 26th day of August, in the year of grace one thousand three hundred and five, was ushered in for the citizens of Paris by a grand peal from the twin towers of Notre Dame, in the *Cité*, to which the palaces of the *Ville*, on the north, and the Abbeys of the *Université*, on the south, sent back an exulting answer.

It was the bridal day of Philip, Count of Poitiers, surnamed the Long, second son of Philip *le Bel*, King of France, and Jane, youngest daughter of Othon Fourth, Count Palatine of Burgundy, and sister to Blanche, the wife of Charles *le Bel*, Count of Marche, the youngest son of the King.

In the year 1294, Jane, when but two years of age, had been affianced, at Vincennes, to her destined husband, and he to her, agreeably to the custom of the times; and she was, accordingly, but fourteen when the bridal ceremony was celebrated.

Of the splendid procession of lords and ladies on that marriage morn, from the old Louvre across the Pont au Change, to Notre Dame—of the costly costume of the bride, and the gorgeous litter in which she was conveyed—of the solemn service of matrimony then and there read, by William Imbert, the King's Confessor, and the still more solemn mass, with the ceremonies thereto pertaining, which ensued—of the magnificent pageant of the return to the palace, and the marvellous music of the trumpeters, and the glittering array of lords and ladies, and princes and damsels; and of the sumptuous dinner then served up by counts and barons on the vast marble slab of the Hall of St. Louis;—of all this, would it not seem presumptuous for us to essay description, when so many scenes of the self-same similitude are so vividly portrayed by the glowing pen of the Canon of Chimay? *

The fete of that night, with which the events of the day were terminated, in the grand hall of the Louvre, was the most magnificent even of that magnificent era. All the beauty, and all the chivalry, and all the nobility of France were there assembled. The windows streamed forth the blaze of flambeaux, and the whole atmosphere

* Froissart was priest, canon and treasurer of the collegiate church of Chimay.

breathed a burthen of sweet sounds ; and all were merry, and joyous, and gay—all, save she who should have been most so—she, the young and the beautiful bride !

Jane of Burgundy was very young ; but, like most of her cotemporaries, her knowledge of the world far exceeded her years. Her union with the Count of Poitiers was not of her seeking ; neither was it of his. It was simply an act of the ambitious and unscrupulous Philip of France to augment his power ; and little cared he whether the instruments which conduced to his purposes loved each other or hated each other.

Jane of Burgundy was a beautiful blonde. Her eyes, her hair, her complexion, were all light, and her form was full. And yet, in her clear eye, and on her red lip was exhibited a degree of decision which her other features would never have betrayed.

One after the other all the guests of that splendid fête approached the bride and expressed their homage and congratulation. The *devoir* of each was courteously, yet coldly received, and the eye of the young girl glanced restlessly and excitedly around, as if in search of one who had not yet appeared.

At length, suddenly, at her feet, upon one knee, as was the manner of all, bowed a young man, in the garb of the court. His figure was faultless, his movements graceful, his dress rich and his face eminently handsome, though ghastly pale.

The cheek of the bride was instantly as livid as his own ; but, as he knelt, a flush mounted to her brow, and she glanced uneasily around.

"You here, Walter!" she at length exclaimed, looking down with all of woman's fondness at the graceful form at her feet. "Rise! rise!" she added, extending her white and ungloved hand, which the young man warmly grasped and pressed in silence to his lips. "Why, oh, why have you come?" she hurriedly continued.

"To see you for the last time," was the hollow answer.

"The *last* time!" anxiously returned the bride.

"Are you not happy?" was the quick rejoinder.

"*Happy*, Walter! Look at me and then ask, if you can, 'Are you happy?'"

The young man raised his eyes, hitherto fixed on the earth, at this imploring request, and the utter wretchedness depicted on that pale but beautiful face, and in those large blue eyes, made him start.

"Ah, you are as miserable as I am!" he murmured, and again fixed his gaze despairingly on the ground.

"And you love me yet?" asked the bride.

"Love thee!—more dearly than my life!"

"And you will be true to me, happen what may?"

"And you?"

"Have you not my vow?" was the quick answer.

"That vow shall be observed, though my life prove the forfeit."

"Impossible!" murmured Walter, shaking his head with a mournful smile.

"Nothing is impossible to a woman resolved. Besides, Philip loves me no more than I love him, and what is

better, he does love another as dearly, perhaps, as I do you. Stay! look! see you not in the shadow of yon alcove two figures—a man and a woman? The man is my husband—the woman is the Countess of Soissons, and she is as wretched as you are, and for the same cause, and his vow to her is the same as mine to you.”

The young man looked as he was directed, but made no reply.

“I tell thee, Walter,” earnestly added the bride, “that this marriage is entirely an act of the King for the furtherance of his own ends, and that to resist his will would have proven utterly futile, either for Philip or myself, however much such might be the wish of both. But go, go! we are observed! The King approaches! We go to Vincennes in three days. You will be there,” she added hurriedly. “Now go!”

The young man passed on and was lost in the throng.

“You are pale, my fair daughter,” said the King, in a low tone, with his peculiar smile, as he approached. Then in a still lower tone he added, “Be more cautious, Jane. The face often reveals what no torture could wring from the lips.”

The warning was not without its effect. The significance of the royal words was too plain to be misunderstood. Reassured, self-possessed—smiles which had long ceased to be seen now lighted up that beautiful face.

“Poor thing!” muttered Philip, as he passed away from the bride. “It is plain she loves Walter de Launai, the handsome Equerry of Charles. Well, well—be it

so," he added, with a thoughtful smile. "What care I? The bride loves the bridegroom as dearly as the bridegroom loves the bride, I've no doubt. But they must both be discreet. I'll have no scandal in the Louvre. Ah, there are De Nogaret and De Marigni, methinks. Let us discover of what they commune so earnestly."

Of the two men to whom the King alluded, and whom he now approached, one was William de Nogaret, Chancellor of the realm, and the other Enguerrand de Marigni, the King's Prime Minister. The former was large in stature—the latter small; the garb of both was black.

"When the Minister and the Chancellor of France are observed in such close converse amid a scene like this," remarked the King to the nobles, after the usual salutations, "one may well infer that the topic of which they treat is one of some moment."

The two dignitaries looked on each other with ill-dissembled solicitude.

"Sire, a courier has just arrived from Perouse," said De Marigni.

"Ha!" cried the King. "And the Pope—who has been chosen?"

"Sire, the bitterest of your foes."

"And who, pray, may *he* be?" asked the King.

"Bertrand de Goth, Archbishop of Bordeaux."

"Indeed! indeed!" rejoined the King, with well-simulated anxiety. "Then we must prepare for a new conflict with Rome, I suppose; for the Holy Father is not only the most deadly of my foes, but he was the most

devoted of friends to Boniface Eighth, of cursed memory. When does the consecration take place?" continued Philip, after a pause.

"On the 15th day of November next, Sire, in the church of St. Just, at Lyons," replied De Nogaret.

"At Lyons, say you?"

"At Lyons, Sire; and your Majesty, together with the King of England, and an immense concourse of princes, lords and ecclesiastics, is to be bidden to be present."

"Well done, Bertrand de Goth!" cried the King. "Why, he bears his honors bravely! And the Cardinals—have they been summoned to cross the mountains to assist at the coronation?"

"Sire, they have. Immediately on receipt of the decree of his election, the Archbishop, as if only awaiting intelligence of the event, at once entered on the exercise of Papal power. Leaving his diocese, he made triumphant progress through the cities of southern France, and repaired to Montpellier to receive the oath of *liege* homage from James of Arragon, who placed Corsica and Sardinia under the protection of the Holy See."

"Why, that, methinks, is somewhat in derogation of the rights of our brother Charles of Valois, who received the sceptre of that realm from Pope Martin Fourth, when Don Pedro was laid under the ban of excommunication. Is it not so, gentlemen?"

"Sire, it is," was the reply.

The King looked thoughtfully on the ground for a moment in silence.

"The Privy Council will meet in the morning to

confer on this event," said the King. "I will detain you, gentlemen, no longer from the fête."

"All goes well," murmured Philip, as he passed on and mingled with the throng.

A degree of license now pervaded the fête, as the night advanced, which had not at first been witnessed. The fair bride, having received the formal congratulations of the court, left her chair of state upon the elevated *dais* at the upper extremity of the apartment, beneath a canopy of sky-blue velvet bespangled with stars, and retired with her ladies from the hall. She shortly reappeared, however, divested of her bridal toilette—the tall head dress ascending to a point, from which descended a white veil to her feet—the full mantle of rose velvet, with its hanging sleeves, and the white robe, with its endless train,—and, simply attired in shot pink taffetty, with no other ornament to her head than the luxuriant masses of her beautiful hair, and no other ornament to her person than a zone of beaten gold, which cinctured her delicate waist.

The reappearance of the bride was the signal to the guests to indulge without restraint in any of the modes of entertainment at that era in vogue at the French court. The night being excessively hot, the doors leading to the royal gardens were thrown open, and the long avenues and shady alcoves were soon filled with promenaders enjoying the refreshing influences of the open air, or listening to the delightful strains of the martial bands, or the still more delightful melody of the notes of love. Dancing, though sometimes indulged in, was rather an

amusement of the servants' hall and village green than of royal gardens and courtly saloons. In those days, unlike the present, ladies were more skilful with their tongues than with their toes, and the promenade presented them an opportunity of listening to a lover's vows and declarations, and of exchanging for them their own, which the dance could never afford. And, even to this day, all over Europe, the dance is eminently the amusement of the peasant, and has never in courtly circles superseded conversation, intrigue, music and the promenade. The savages of the Archipelago of the Pacific seas, and those of the North American forests, know nothing of amusement at their festivals but to feast and to dance; and in one, at least, of the nations of Christendom, in modern times, imitators have not been wanting.

The court of the Louvre, at the commencement of the fourteenth century, was far-famed for its brilliant and beautiful women; and among these, Margaret of Burgundy and Blanche of Artois bore deservedly the palm.

The former of these ladies was the wife of Louis *le Hutin*, eldest son of the King, and daughter of Robert Second, Duke of Burgundy, and Agnes, the pious daughter of St. Louis. She was, also, Queen of Navarre, that crown having descended to Louis by the decease of his mother, Jane of Navarre, who died at the château of Vincennes, on the second day of April, 1305, a few months previous. Indeed, the robes of sable velvet yet worn by the young Queen, and which so well became her, although upon an occasion of bridal festivity,

indicated the recent occurrence of this sad event. Her figure was tall and graceful, and, notwithstanding her youth, exhibited all the full and rounded contour of a matured woman. Her eyes were large, dark, and full of fire—her hair, which was loosely wound around a symmetrical head in heavy masses, was as black as midnight, and her complexion, in accordance with the hue of her hair and eyes, was that of a decided brunette. Hers was a beauty to command love—not to win it; and, as unmistakably were imperious pride and insatiate passion depicted upon that voluptuous lip, as was a strong and active intellect exhibited in that capacious and masculine brow.

Very different from the proud Queen of Navarre was Blanche of Artois, wife of Charles *le Bel*, the lovely Countess of Marche. She, too, like Margaret, was very young—neither of the ladies having yet attained their twentieth year. She was the eldest daughter of the Count of Burgundy and Maude of Artois, and sister to Jane, heiress of Burgundy, the fair bride. Only one year before she had herself become a bride, and just the twelvemonth prior to *that* event, had been witnessed the nuptials of Margaret and Louis in the Cathedral Church of Notre Dame, as well as the subsequent fête in the same hall of the Louvre.

There was between Blanche of Artois and her sister Jane that indescribable resemblance which is often observed between persons bearing to each other the relation of sister, when it is impossible to point out in what that resemblance actually consists, and when their style

of face and figure is entirely unlike. The form of Blanche, as it was exhibited by her white robe confined at the waist by a cordeliere of gold, and embroidered with thread of the same material, had all that full and rounded outline which gave such fascination to that of her younger sister; but in the movement of the former was observed a grace, and a dignity, and a maturity of elegance which the latter had not. The hair of Blanche shared that rich and abounding luxuriance which characterized her sister's; but, though not black, it was many shades darker than Jane's. Her eyes were a deep azure, large, brilliant, shaded by long lashes, and full of most eloquent but mournful meaning. Her sister's eyes were blue and sparkling. The faces of both were oval; but while the expression of Jane's countenance was arch and mischievous, that of Blanche's was sad and contemplative. Indeed, the characteristic trait of Blanche of Artois' face you would say was melancholy thought; and you would ask of yourselves and others the cause of that profound and changeless sadness, which forever rested on that beautiful face. That large azure eye, when it beamed most brightly beneath her broad and snowy brow, seemed steeped in gloom; that soft lip, when it smiled most sweetly, seemed imbued with sadness; that exquisite form, when it moved most gracefully, betrayed the languor of grief. Her voice, when she spoke, had the mournful music of a broken heart. Why was it that the most beautiful woman of the whole court of France, and the envied wife of "the most accomplished man"—as historians seem to delight to term Charles *le Bel*—should

thus wear her loveliness forever shrouded in gloom? What had *she*, the loved and worshipped of all in that splendid court, to disturb her peace? Was she not too young to have proven already the worthlessness of earthly things—the utter vanity of all worldly pursuits—the falseness of all human vows—the deceitfulness of all human hopes? Had she so early in life contracted that fearful indifference to everything, whether sad or joyous, which sometimes descends on the human heart? Alas! the mournful truth is as old as man's history, that maturity of years is not indispensable to maturity of thought, and that youthfulness and suffering are not incompatible.

“Sad, as usual, Blanche!” gayly exclaimed the Queen of Navarre, approaching her sister, who, half-concealed in the drapery of the window, was gazing, almost unseen, upon the gay groups with which the hall and gardens were thronged.

“Ah, Margaret, is it you?” said Blanche, starting at the sudden exclamation.

“Yes, it is I, Margaret of Burgundy, Queen of Navarre—to be sure it is; and I've been seeking you, through bower and hall, the whole half hour last past, at least. I will honestly confess, however, that had I not been blessed with an agreeable escort in my self-imposed pilgrimage, I should have given over the pursuit long ago.”

The escort to whom the Queen thus referred was none other than a tall, handsome man in a military garb, whose resemblance to Walter de Launai was so striking

that it demanded no peculiar powers of perspicacity to determine the fact that they were brothers. The only observable difference between the two seemed this—that Walter de Launai was some years his brother's junior, and that Philip de Launai was as gay and *debonnaire* as his brother was sad and pensive. They were Norman gentlemen, of ancient family, who had recently come to court to seek their fortune; and fortune seemed to have met them at least half-way; for, although six months had hardly elapsed since they entered Paris with all their worldly goods upon their horses' backs and their own, yet now one was Equerry to Philip, and the other to Charles, princes of the blood, and, what was more, one was a favorite of Margaret of Burgundy, and the other the secret and most unhappy lover of her sister Jane, the bride. The matchless skill of these young men in horsemanship and the use of arms doubtless conduced as much to their success with the princes as did their remarkable good looks with their noble mistresses. They were alike then in good fortune and good looks. One thing more they were also alike in: they were both Knights Companions of the Holy Order of the Temple. But this was a secret of which their noble masters were not aware, nor their noble mistresses. Yet, young as they were, both had bravely fought on a foreign soil for the recovery of the sepulchre from infidel hands, and both were warrior-monks.

“Have you seen Charles to-night?” asked Blanche of the joyous Queen.

“I caught a glimpse of Madame d' Aumale in one of

the alcoves of the gardens as we came in, and Charles cannot be far from the same spot."

Blanche became deathly pale. She compressed her lips, but otherwise manifested no emotion, and, remaining silent, the Queen thoughtlessly continued.

"Why don't you speak, Blanche?" she impatiently exclaimed. "Upon my word as a Queen, you are the strangest woman I ever knew! Young, lovely, brilliant—worshipped by the men, envied by the women, the boasted beauty of the whole court—you might as well be the Lady Abbess of Maubuisson itself, as what you are, for all the enjoyment you seem to experience amid the gayest scenes, and all the gayety you manifest. You never dance, you never sing, you never intrigue—you do nothing under the heavens that other women do; while upon your face, and seemingly around your form, you wear an everlasting shroud. In Heaven's name, Blanche, smile!—do smile once, in order that I may be able to say that I once did see the Countess of Marche smile, when I am again asked the question, as I often have been. Oh, no—not in that mournful way," she added, as the Countess strove to obey. "Be gay! be joyous! get a lover! It isn't possible you heed Charles' amours. It's the men's privilege, I suppose. They assume it, at any rate. I was jealous of Louis for about three months after our marriage, and at length saw the folly of the thing. Since then he intrigues as he chuses, for all I care, and I take the same liberty. But *you*, Blanche—you are a perfect miracle of constancy—I had almost said of folly."

The Countess of Marche changed color repeatedly while the thoughtless Queen of Navarre thus heedlessly hurried on, and more than once a slight shudder ran over her frame. But further than this she exhibited not the slightest agitation. Her marble brow remained as calm, her cheek as pale, her lip as motionless as ever, and her large bright eyes were fixed with the same melancholy gaze on the gay and moving scene.

Suddenly, as the Queen ceased to speak, she grasped her arm, and, with more of interest than she would have been deemed capable of exhibiting for anything, she exclaimed.

“Margarèt, Margaret, who is that?” at the same time pointing at some person in the crowded hall.

“Who is who, and where is he?” returned the Queen. “On my word, Blanche, you are a curiosity! Here have I, a crowned Queen, been proclaiming to you, a simple Countess, a whole sermon of good advice, which would put to the blush one of old Father Maillard’s best discourses, with which we are regaled every Sunday at St. Germain, and you have bestowed upon it just about as much notice as I usually bestow on those of the old Dominican—actually sleeping, or seeming to sleep, throughout the whole! And then, all at once, at its conclusion, you almost deafen me with the exclamation of a sentry at his post, “Who goes there?” But Heaven and all the saints be glorified that you are not dead! Now, then, if you can condescend to speak once more, where is the individual who has been so fortunate as to elicit from you an inquiry?”

"There! there!" eagerly exclaimed Blanche, whose eyes had followed the object of her curiosity while the Queen had been speaking. "There—near the door leading into the gardens!"

"Do you mean that pale young man in the colors of our uncle Charles of Valois, who is walking with one of my ladies?"

"Yes, yes; I have seen him repeatedly to-night, and always with the same lady; Marie Morfontaine, is it not?" replied the Countess, with heightened color.

"Yes, it is my sweet Marie," rejoined Margaret, "and that young man is her lover. He has just arrived with despatches from Charles' camp."

"Ah!" returned the Countess, in a tone which was almost a sigh, while her countenance fell.

"It is young De Marigni, is it not, Philip?" asked the Queen, addressing for the first time the young man at her side, on whose arm she had not ceased to lean since they had appeared.

"It is De Marigni, your Majesty—Adrian de Marigni," replied the young man. "He is the only son of the Prime Minister. He is from Normandy, like myself, and our boyhood was passed together. We have, also, served in the same troop in Flanders, under Count Charles of Valois. He was at Brussels and at Courtray, and also at Mons-en-Puelle, where twenty-five thousands Flemings were cut in pieces. He is a perfect lion on the battle-field, modest and inoffensive as he seems now."

"Why is he so pale?" asked Blanche.

“He was severely wounded at Mons, madame. He was left for dead, indeed, upon the field; but the cold dews of the night revived him, and he managed to disencumber himself from the heaps of Flemings who had fallen by his hand around him, and creep into the camp.”

“And what was his reward for such gallantry?” inquired Blanche.

“He was the next day knighted, madame, on the very spot drenched with his blood, by the *acolade* of Prince Charles himself and with the title of Count Le Portier.”

“A family name is it not?” asked the Countess.

“It is the name of a noble and ancient Norman family, madame, which Adrian’s grandsire, Hugh Le Portier, Lord of Rosey and Lyons, resigned on his marriage with the heiress of the Count de Marigni—at least so far as his children were concerned, who bore their mother’s name.”

“And one of these children was the Enguerrand de Marigni, the Minister?” continued the Countess.

“Oh, to be sure it was!” said Margaret. “How tedious you are with your questions about this young Count. If he inspires the same interest in the King that he seems to have roused in you, he bids fair to rise as rapidly as his father did before him.”

“And how rapidly was that, Margaret?” asked the Countess.

“What! does your curiosity extend to the father as well as the son?” said the Queen, laughing. “Tell her all about the dear De Marignis, if you can, Philip. I

don't burthen my memory with such stupid matters, of course."

"I know nothing of the *Sieur de Marigni*, madame," replied the young Norman, "save what came to us by common rumor in my native village, where deep interest was felt in the fortunes of one who had gone forth from our midst, and also what I have since heard at the court. I've heard my father say, and also *Adrian*, when we were boys, that the moment the young *Enguerrand* appeared at court, the graces of his person, the elegance of his manners and the brilliancy of his talents arrested attention. This was many years ago. At length his political knowledge attracted the notice of his Majesty, who appointed him, first, a member of his council, then gave him the post of Chamberlain, next created him Count of *Longueville*, and finally has made him Governor of the *Louvre*, Master of the Household, and last of all Prime Minister of the realm."

"For all which accumulation of favors he has accumulated the envy and hostility of the whole court, in exact proportion," said the Queen. "But come, come—let us go. These *De Marignis* will be the death of me if we tarry longer. Besides, the bride has gone to her chamber, and the guests are going to their homes. I must go to mine."

"Stay with me to-night at the *Louvre*, *Margaret*," said *Blanche*.

"No," was the quick answer, "oh no. I must cross the *Seine*. You would not have me recreant to my trust, would you? While *Louis* is ruling our little

realm of Navarre, at Pampeluna, and the Constable of Nesle is in camp in Flanders, the hotel is entrusted entirely to the governance of the young Countess and myself; and we dare not desert our post even for a single night. So adieu to you, Blanche, and happy dreams."

"Shall I attend your Majesty to the barge?" asked Philip de Launai.

"Shall you? Why to be sŭre you shall!" was the abrupt answer. "You didn't think I was to pass the sentries and cross the drawbridge alone? Come!"

And putting her arm through that of her companion, the young Queen of Navarre turned to depart.

At the entrance to the hall, the couple were detained a few moments by the crowd; and, as the sad Countess of Marche passed them, unobserved, on her way to her own apartments in the Louvre, these words, from Margaret to the Equerry, in low tones, caught her ear:

"The half-hour after midnight—at the Tower of Nesle!"

CHAPTER IV

THE HALF HOUR AFTER MIDNIGHT.

THE heavy bell of St. Germain l'Auxerrois had tolled midnight. The last reveller had departed. All within the Louvre had retired to their rest. The lights were extinguished,—the music had ceased,—the garden, the quay, the courts were deserted. No sound fell on the ear, save the measured tread of the sentry upon the battlements, and, at intervals, the distant cry of the guardians of Paris, as they walked their lonely rounds:

“Sleep—sleep on, good people of Paris! All is well!”

The apartments of the princes of the blood royal, at that era, were situated in that front of the quadrangle of the Louvre which faced the Seine.

At a window in one of these apartments, which commanded a view of all Paris by reason of its elevation, sat Blanche of Artois, the wife of Charles *le Bel*.

Alone and unattended, she had sought the way to her chamber from the festal hall, and, having dismissed her women, had seated herself by the casement which looked out on the gliding water.

From the quiet skies looked down the bright stars as peacefully and as calmly as, for thousands of years, they had looked before; while, here and there, from the dark mass of irregular structures, which then constituted Paris, beamed out a single light of some lonely watcher.

One bright spot which gleamed from the surrounding gloom was a cell at the summit of one of the towers of Notre Dame, which to this day bears the name of Hugo of Besançon's cell, where the learned prelate is said to have practised his black and mystic art. Beyond this, on the south bank of the Seine, beamed forth another solitary light, from a tower granted by Saint Louis, more than fifty years before, to Robert of Sorbonne for a college, in which should be pursued the study of theology; and there some lonely student now continued his night-long vigil and toil. One other lamp, like a star, shone forth from the mass of gloom, and that was in the tall tower of the Hôtel de Nesle, which directly fronted the southern apartments of the Louvre, on the opposite bank of the Seine.

Upon this last and lonely light lingered the eye of Blanche, as with cheek resting on her hand, her own lamp extinguished, she sat at her window, and looked forth with melancholy gaze on the silent scene. The soft breeze of a summer night, cooled by its play upon the surface of the gliding waters, came up to the casement with refreshing breath to her fevered brow.

At length, the half hour after midnight pealed forth from the tower of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, and, taken up by the ponderous bell of Notre Dame, and the lesser bells of St. Germain des Pres, and the Holy Chapel of the Palace of Justice, died away in the distant echoes of the great clock of the Temple.

As the last vibrations ceased, a small boat shot out from beneath the shadows of the Louvre, containing a

single passenger, and crossing the Seine was again lost in the shadows of the Tower of Nesle. The lamp above which had served as a signal and a guide was instantly extinguished, and Blanche saw no more.

For a few moments she seemed lost in melancholy thought, as she gazed on that dark and gloomy pile. Then her eye glanced to the heavens and roved from star to star, as if with agonizing search for the truths which at that era they were confidently believed to reveal.

“Oh, if ye are,” she, at length, murmured, “if, bright orbs, ye are, indeed, the intelligences which foretell to man his fate,—if, indeed, on the blue firmament, ye unite the destinies of nations and of men, ye should often beam less brightly from your quiet homes than ye now do! If ye write the fates of all, as wise men tell us, there is mine written on your gloomy page. Yet, alas! what is it? This lonely chamber is eloquent of all that ye could blazon,—of all that the lip could express, or the heart could conceive. A wife without a husband;—a heart formed by its Maker to love, and to require love, and yet without its mate! Oh, God, how I did worship that man! Never, never again will he be loved as I once loved him! Heart, soul, thought, being, breath, my very existence, all—all were his! But *now*,” she continued, after a pause, “now—I love him *not*! I deplore only my own desertion,—not his loss. I love him not. The time has passed. My very heart is changed in my bosom. It seems strange, even to myself, that I can be so utterly indifferent to one whom I once so dearly loved. It

seems strange to me that I should care actually nothing at all for the fact that he who should now be with me,—my husband,—is in the arms of another. Once it was not so; and, oh, the agony I then endured! Thank God—thank God, that period hath passed!”

A pause of some moments ensued.

“The heart—the human heart,” she, at length, exclaimed, in tones of mournful sadness, “*must* have something to love! Rightly or wrongly, it must love something! Margaret—*she* loves—guiltily—darkly—desperately; yet, she loves! Jane,—my sweet young sister,—she who, a child, wandered with me on the great banks of the Loire, in our pleasant home, Burgundy, and as little dreamed as did I of our miserable womanhood to come—she loves and is beloved; yet, though a bride, she loves not her husband, and he—loves not her! Alas! what a strange and wretched world it is! Those whom by man’s law we should love often love not us, and the great law of Nature often forbids us to love them: and those whom by man’s law we should not love, alas! by Nature’s law, love us and we love them!”

Again there was a pause of longer duration than before, and as at length the unhappy woman raised her eyes to the peaceful stars, those eyes were full of tears.

“Oh, my God!” she exclaimed, “what is to be my fate? I—I love, too! At last this heart, which so long has slumbered, awakes and reasserts its claims. But can that love be returned? Alas! which misery excuses the other, that of the consciousness of a love which is crime, or that of the fear that this guilty love may not be

returned? But it must be returned,—it shall be,—it will be! A heart such as mine will brook no denial! I care not that he now loves, or seems to love, another. He shall resign that love,—he shall love me,—or shall love not at all! What knows she,—a weak-hearted, simple-minded girl, of love! For long months of loneliness, he is the only being who has roused in this withered heart the first pulse of passion; and shall all be sacrificed to the fickle fancy of a silly child? My love for him exceeds hers by ten thousand fold, and so does my power to gratify all his wishes. Is he ambitious?—the proudest station beneath the throne shall be his. Is he covetous of wealth?—he shall revel in gold. Pleasure, power, pomp,—does he long for these?—they shall be his more fully than his imagination ever conceived. My influence with the King, though seldom tested, has always proved omnipotent when exercised. More than once he has consulted me on matters of the most momentous import to the welfare of his realm, when he has consulted none besides, and it must go hardly if he refuse to me the aid which I render him: Yes—yes—” she exclaimed with renewed vehemence, “he shall love me, even as I love him,—or both of us will die!”

Dropping on her knees before a crucifix, she raised her streaming eyes to Heaven and exclaimed:

“Hear me, God! To this object do I devote the rest of my life!—to his happiness and my own!”

For an hour this unhappy woman, whose very nature seemed changed by misery in a single night, paced the limits of her apartment in the most fearful agitation.

The golden band which had circled her waist had been removed, and her rich dress hung in disordered folds around her beautiful form. The heavy tresses of her dark hair were disheveled and, strained back from her livid brow and face, hung in tangled masses nearly to her feet, while her large azure eye blazed like that of a maniac.

At length she became more calm. The tempest lulled—the billows sank—the quietude of exhaustion,—as in God's providence it ever does,—succeeded.

Seating herself again at the window, she took her harp, and, in low tones of touching sadness, accompanied it with the following song :

When the visions of life, evanescent and vain,
 With the hopes of our youth, like a vapor depart,
 Oh, what shall relume those glad visions again,—
 Oh, how shall those hopes be reborn in the heart

When fading—still fading, like stars of the morn,
 The Pleiads of gladness go out in our sky,
 And, like lamps from the damps of the sepulchre born,
 They only illumine our pathway to die :—

When the flowers of enjoyment are scentless and dead,
 And the chords of life's harmony silent and crushed,
 Oh, what shall restore those ephemerals fled,—
 Those stars so illusive,—those harp-strings so hushed?

They are gone—they are gone,—they can never return,—
 Those rainbow-phantasma, deceptive and vain,
 And hope's vivid visions may brilliantly burn,
 Yet never more visit that bosom again.

CHAPTER V.

THE LOVERS.

TILTS and tournaments, pageants and processions, balls and banquets, feasts and festivals, succeeded each other in uninterrupted and close succession for several days after the marriage fête. The whole Court participated in the entertainments of the Louvre, and all Paris assembled at those more public—especially at the tournaments which were held in St. Catharine's square.

The King mingled but little in these gayeties. His mind seemed profoundly preoccupied with matters demanding thought.

He was often closeted with De Marigni, De Nogaret and William Imbert, generally known as William of Paris, his confessor—his confidential advisers in all affairs of state; and, on the morning of the third day after the bridal, William du Plessis, a Dominican monk, was despatched to Avignon, ostensibly to present the congratulations of the King of France upon the accession of the Archbishop of Bordeaux to the Papal See, but actually to maintain a system of sleepless espionage on all the movements and all the proceedings of the Sovereign Pontiff elect, prior to the event of his coronation. Nearly at the same time arrived at Paris, Gaillard and Edmond de Goth in magnificent array, with a splendid retinue, ostensibly as legates from their brother,

the newly-elected Pope, to announce his elevation to Philip,—but really, though unknown even to themselves, as pledges for the fulfillment by Bertrand of the compact which had caused his election; and still more really, and known to themselves and their brother, though unknown to all others, yet not suspected by the King,—as emissaries and spies of the Papal See at the Court of France. These brothers of the Sovereign Pontiff were young, chivalric and dashing; and, eminently skilled, as they were, in all the martial feats, as well as the more peaceful sports of the day, and intimately familiar with all the newest fashions of dress and inventions in amusement, they could but prove an immense acquisition at the French Court to the brilliant pageantry then going on.

In all these magnificent fêtes the young Queen of Navarre was the acknowledged leader—the cynosure of a splendid Court, the star to which all eyes were turned, the observed and the admired of all beholders, and the Queen of Love and Beauty at every tournament. And even at her side is the handsome Equerry Philip de Launai; and nightly from the dark Tower of Nesle gleams out the love-lighted lamp; and nightly, when the half hour after twelve tolls forth from the church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, the solitary boatman crosses the Seine and the solitary lamp is extinguished; and the sleepless watchman, as he walks his rounds in the distant streets, is heard to shout:

*“ Bons Parisiens! tout est tranquille!
Dormez! dormez! il est minuit!”*

The gallant bridegroom and the fair bride were, of course, participants in all the festivities of the occasion; and never seemed bride and bridegroom more joyous than they, although, as the etiquette of that era and Court prescribed, they were seldom seen together, and although the gay Count of Poitiers devoted himself more exclusively than ever to the lovely Clemence of Soissons, and the fair Jane detained always at her side her favorite, Walter de Launai. All of the young people seemed to have arrived in some mysterious manner at an excellent understanding with each other; and faces, which on the night of the bridal fête seemed shrouded in gloom, were now all sunshine. Even the mournful beauty of Blanche of Artois seemed illumined with a strange joy; and so far from manifesting the slightest emotion of feeling at the open and undisguised devotion of her gay husband to the dashing Madame d'Aumale, it seemed, on the contrary, to afford her secret gratification. More than ever before did she mingle now in the splendors and festivities of the gay Court, and she seemed to have taken under her own special *chaperonage* the young Marie Morfontaine, maid of honor of the Queen of Navarre, who had been gladly entrusted to her care. To the fair Marie, as well as to her distinguished lover, the brave De Marigni, this arrangement was peculiarly delightful. In the apartments of the Countess of Marche was afforded them abundant and most undisturbed facility for the tender process of love-making; and it was, indeed, a high and most distinguished honor to any young lady of the

Court, or to any young gentleman, though even the son of the Prime Minister himself, to be under the protection of such a woman as Blanche of Artois—a woman who, though yet not twenty years of age, was versed in all of the personal and intellectual accomplishments of the times—who could discuss theology with William de Nangis, write poetry with John de Meun*, canvass points of law with William Duranti, and dispute points of doctrine even with “the subtle doctor” John Duns Scotus himself. Nor is it strange that a man like Philip the Fourth, who, dead to all of the softer emotions of the breast seemed alive only to ambition, should have prized a woman like Blanche, differing, as she did, from all the ladies of his Court; nor that, inasmuch as he often availed himself of her erudition and sound judgment in difficult crises, she should have acquired over him an influence all the more resistless from the fact that it was seldom exerted. Indeed, it had become almost a proverb at the Court of Philip the Fourth that no one could divert him from a purpose once formed, or substitute for it another, save his accomplished daughter, Blanche of Artois.

To the young De Marigni the attentions of the Countess of Marche, both to himself and the lady of his love, were peculiarly grateful—grateful not only because of that gratification experienced by every young man in the notice of an accomplished woman of himself and his destined bride—but because she seemed

* Famous for his continuation of the celebrated poem entitled “*The Romance of the Rose*,” which was begun forty years before by William de Lorris.

to one whose whole life had been passed in the camp as the very incarnation of all that was lovely, and all that was brilliant, and all that was good. A gallant soldier and thoroughly versed in the arts and arms of war, he was as simple-hearted and as unsophisticated as a child in the ways of woman and the world. To him the bright and beautiful Countess of Marche seemed of a different species from himself and his little ladye-love, and, indeed, from every other woman he had ever seen. It is very true he had not seen very many, for from his boyhood he had been in the field; but he had never even dreamed that there were such beings as the sweet and intellectual woman under whose favor he now found himself.

There was another thing, also, for which the young De Marigni was grateful to his noble protectress. His orders, when he left the camp of Charles of Valois, then at Courtray, with despatches of the utmost importance for the King, were to tarry but twelve hours at the Louvre, and then, with all speed, to hasten back with the answer. But a word to Philip from his favorite Blanche had despatched another courier on the perilous route, and detained the young Count at the side of the lady of his love, and in the midst of the most brilliant festivities Paris had ever beheld.

Adrian de Marigni was about twenty-five years of age, yet already had he achieved renown for gallantry in the field of which even a Marshal of France might have been proud. Early thrown upon his own resources,—with a strong mind, a sound education and a vigorous constitu-

tion, he had inured his body to hardship and fatigue, and accustomed his mind to prompt and energetic action, under every circumstance of emergency or need into which he might be cast. Destined from his boyhood to the profession of war, and familiarized by daily practice to all the arms and armor of the age, he had acquired a skill in their use which left him without a rival or even a competitor. Above all, he possessed that quality which, in a soldier, can be second to none other: he was thoroughly brave. Like all men, indeed, who are conscious of power, he seemed utterly unconscious of fear. And yet, with all his accomplishments and all his abilities, and all his distinctions, there was not among all the officers of Prince Charles' camp a young man more mild, or more modest, or more retiring, or more amiable in his demeanor, than was Adrian de Marigni; and surely there was not one more universally beloved. In person he was tall and slightly framed, and his hands and his feet were remarkably small. His hair was brown, his eyes a dark hazel, his cheek oval and bronzed by exposure, although his forehead, where protected by his military cap, was as white as snow: The prevailing expression of his countenance was sad. Indeed, in the earnest, almost mournful gaze of his large eye, and the unchanging quietude of his lip, the stranger might think he read the traces of profound thought, or of deep-seated sorrow, strangely enough contrasted by his fresh and youthful face. Strange enough, too, was the contrast between the appearance of that delicate, almost effeminate form when in the camp or court and when on the field of battle. In

the former all was mildness and quietude ; but when the war-horn rang, a new spirit—a spirit from the very realms of the damned—seemed breathed into his fragile form ; and, with dilated eye and set teeth, and livid cheek, the fearful phantom, like an incarnate fiend, swept over the field, and rivers of human blood followed the fiery flash of that terrible falchion ! It seemed strange, unnatural, dreadful, that one so fair, and seemingly so frail, should possess energies so terrible : and the iron grip of those soft and small and snowy fingers might remind the one they grasped of that slight and delicate hand—that woman-hand—that hand of steel clothed in a glove of softest velvet, which once, by infernal skill and matchless mechanism, constituted one of the most exquisite tortures of the Inquisition.

Very different from this young soldier was the lady of his love. She, too, was one of an ancient and respectable family ; but early left an orphan, her immense estates fell under the control and she under the guardianship of the Chancellor ; and thus came she to Court and into the train of the Queen of Navarre. Marie Morfontaine and Adrian de Marigni had been children together, and their attachment bore an early date. But Adrian had gone to the camp and Marie had gone to the Court, and years had passed since they parted. Their love was, of course, trustful, truthful, undoubting, unexacting—with but little of sentiment and still less of passion. It was not very strange that the young soldier loved his little playmate, for she had loved him and never had loved another ; besides, she was almost the only woman he had ever

known. She was beautiful, too; at least, she was so, if an exquisite little figure, joyous blue eyes, brown ringlets, mischievous dimples, and teeth as white as pearls, lips as red as coral and forever parted by a smile, can constitute beauty in a young girl of sixteen. And then she had the very littlest foot in the world! Her love for Adrian was that of a child—almost that of a sister for a brother. When he caressed her she caressed him again. When he fixed his earnest and mournful gaze upon her fair young face, and seemed looking down into the very depths of her soul, enwrapped in mute thought and speechless feeling, she wondered—the simple-hearted girl—that he was so silent and so sad. “Why don’t you talk to me, Adrian?” she would, at such times, often ask. “Why do you look so sad?” And then her lover would gaze upon her more sadly still; and while a mournful smile played upon his lip as he pressed it to her forehead, he would shake his head, but speak not a word. Alas! he felt, though he could comprehend it not, that her simple and child-like nature understood not and sympathized not with his. And yet Marie loved him dearly—*she* thought she loved him better than all the world beside; she *did* love him as well as she could love any one—as well as one like her could love one like him; she was proud of him as her lover; she wondered at his achievements, and she thought it strange, very strange, that her little playmate should have done such wondrous deeds. Sometimes, indeed, she would question him of his battles and his camp life; but almost instantly she would turn pale

and shudder, and cover her eyes with her hands, and beseech him to cease, and cling trembling to his breast as if for protection against the fearful shapes of her own fancy, which his words had conjured into being. Sometimes she would examine his hands with childlike simplicity and wonder that such small and white and delicate hands could ever have worn an iron glove and grasped a blade or a lance, and have become—oh, horror!—incarnadined with human gore!

Sometimes Adrian would smile when she thus talked to him, and sometimes he would sigh. Sometimes he would clasp her fairy form to his bosom as he would that of a child, and press his warm lips to hers; and sometimes, and oftener of late than at first, he would quietly kiss her hand, and making some excuse to leave her would pass into the apartments of the Countess of Marche, which were ever open to him, and where he was always received with smiles; and there, hour after hour, would he sit at her feet as if entranced, gazing upon her face as that of a lovely vision, and listening to the thrilling tones of her harp or the still more thrilling notes of her sad yet most eloquent tongue.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ROYAL HUNT.

ONE morning, about a week after the bridal fête, the paved court of the Louvre was all alive, long before the dawn, with horses, and hounds, and huntsmen, and hostlers, assembled and making ready for a hunt in the forest of St. Germain, each man and beast making, also, to all appearance, just as much uproar, and as uselessly, as he possibly could.

This expedition was at the suggestion of the Countess of Marche, and the whole Court were enlisted to participate in the amusement.

The good people of Paris were earlier risers in 1305 than they are at the present day; and long before the early summer sun had shown his red face through the mists of the Seine, above the forest of Vincennes, the whole magnificent *cortége* was mounted and in motion.

As Blanche of Artois had descended from her chamber, accompanied by Marie Morfontaine, who was now retained constantly near her, and was entering the court-yard preparatory to mounting her horse, she encountered Edmond de Goth, the gallant envoy from the Pope. At the same moment, Adrian de Marigni approached to offer his services as usual to Marie. Blanche, however, immediately advanced and

took his arm. Then, turning to De Goth, she quietly remarked, with one of her sweetest smiles :

“You will take good care of Mademoiselle Morfontaine, if you please, Sir Count. She is of the utmost value to the Count le Portier, and hardly less to me.”

This remark, simple as it was, of course destined the unfortunate Marie to the gallantries of the envoy, instead of her lover, for the day, and at the same time destined De Marigni to the Countess Blanche. As for Marie, she was as uncivil and as unamiable as one of her gentle nature could be to her gallant escort, for the full one-half of one full hour, because of her disappointment, he being the innocent instrument thereof. But then her gay and girlish heart got the better even of herself, and before the hour had actually fairly elapsed, she had come to the conclusion that Count Edmond de Goth was really a very gallant and agreeable cavalier—her bitter disappointment to the contrary nevertheless.

As for the Countess of Marche, she was mounted on a high-bred barb, of small size, delicate limbs, fleet as a roe and black as a raven. And surely, thought Adrian, as he threw himself, without touching the stirrup, lightly into his saddle, never had he beheld a more enchanting vision than was she on that soft summer morn. Her luxuriant dark hair hung in glossy ringlets from beneath a cap of black velvet, shaped much in the fashion of the riding cap of the present day—far down her shoulders. In front of the cap itself was a glittering brooch of rubies, which

confined to it a single ostrich plume of snowy whiteness, streaming in the morning breeze. Her habit of black velvet, cut low and opening in front, betrayed a most exquisite bust; and a crimson *cordelière* around the waist, defined the delicate contour of its outline. No wonder that the young soldier, fresh from the camp, and all unused to visions like this, gazed on as if entranced.

As for the other members of the cavalcade, there were the King himself and his Minister, De Marigni, who was, of course, charmed with the distinction bestowed upon his beloved son by the brilliant Countess of Marche. Then there were Charles *le Bel* and Madame d'Aumale, and the Queen of Navarre and her handsome Equerry, and the Count of Poitiers and his fair Clemence of Soissons, and the lovely bride and her devoted Walter, and many, many another fair lady and gallant gentleman, of whom history telleth much, but of whom, as not being essential to this chronicle, we must say nothing.

Oh, it was a gay and gorgeous cavalcade that swept out from the northern gate of the Louvre, and up the Rue St. Honoré, and through the gate, of the same name, of the city wall, and that, finally, as the summer sun rose up in the eastern horizon, paused to look back from the heights of Montmartre on the spires and roofs of Paris, now glittering in the golden rays!

And a magnificent panorama, indeed, was that which opened to the eye. The old Louvre, with its forests of turrets and its giant keep in the midst, the dark

Tower of Nesle rising beyond, the Gothic spires of St. Germain l'Auxerrois and its wondrous rose-window, the ponderous twin towers of Notre Dame, rising in massive squareness to the clouds, the glittering Seine gliding like a silver thread on a dark ground through its green valley, and, far away on the left, the dusky pile of the Temple uprearing its huge shape, in ominous gloom, amidst its embattled walls—such, such was the scene presented to the gallant cavalcade, as, for an instant, it paused to look back, that sweet summer morning, at the rising of the sun, on the retreating city.

The cavalcade was followed by a large and noisy company of attendants—hostlers and hunters, and piquers and rangers; and, what with the incessant braying of horns, neighing of horses and yelping of a whole army of hounds, a Babel of discordant sounds was created, which might have roused old King Dagobert himself from his last resting-place in the neighboring Abbey of St. Denis.

Behind this motley group followed more slowly a train of falconers, each bearing on his fist a hooded hawk, in order that the sports of the day might be diversified as opportunity might present. St. Germain is about four leagues from the Louvre, and as the Seine was twice crossed by the route, it was more than probable that a flight of herons might be raised from the dense mallows of its low and sedgy banks.

For some miles the splendid company galloped gayly on, until it descended the river bank at Neuilly. Here,

at this time and for some centuries after, existed only a ferry. At length, in 1603, Henry the Fourth and his Queen having been soused into the Seine by the horses attached to their carriage taking fright, the ferry was supplanted by a wooden bridge, which wooden bridge has itself, in our own time, been supplanted by a more durable and more elegant structure of stone.

The river had been safely crossed, and the party was ascending the western bank, when, suddenly, with a shrill and plaintive cry, a large white heron rose from the neighboring reeds, and, stretching its long legs and broad wings, directed its heavy flight down the river. Instantly all was uproar among the hounds and their keepers, and half a dozen hawks were at once unhooded and let off by the falconers at the unhappy bird. Several of the horses, terrified at this sudden outcry, became restive, and the beautiful barb of the Countess of Marche, violently plunging and rearing, at length seized the bit between her teeth, and was off like an arrow down the precipitous path.

Blanche of Artois was an accomplished equestrian, as well as a woman of dauntless nerve; and had the route been unobstructed, she would, doubtless, not only have retained her seat, but have reduced her refractory steed very shortly to submission. But such was not the fact; and, swerving from the main road, the horse turned to the right into a narrow bridle path which lay along the heights which overhung the river. The peril was imminent that the terrified animal should leap down the steep and dash herself and her fair rider in pieces.

A cry of horror rose from the royal cortege as they beheld the danger, and several of the gentlemen were about putting spurs to their horses in pursuit, when they were abruptly desired to draw up by Adrian de Marigni. Fortunately the young Count, who was as skilled in horsemanship as in arms, was mounted on his own steed, which had borne him through an hundred battles, and on which, in any emergency, he knew he could rely. Plunging his rowels into the flanks of the noble animal, and at the same time shouting into his ears his well-known war-cry, in an instant horse and rider were flying like the light on the path of the fugitives.

It was at once evident that De Marigni gained in the pursuit, and must shortly come up; but the peril was more imminent now than ever that the terrified barb, hearing the tramp of pursuing hoofs, might suddenly swerve to the right into the underwood, and make the fatal plunge before his headlong course could be arrested. Nor was this apprehension vain, for the moment the flying steed perceived another horse upon her left flank, she suddenly wheeled into the undergrowth which fringed the precipitous bank on the right. Two bounds and the animal was on the brink! Until this fearful moment the Countess had retained her self-possession, but now her fate seemed fixed, and, dropping the reins, she clasped her hands and closed her eyes for the dreadful plunge.

At that instant—even at the instant that the flying barb, frantic with terror, beholding its peril, for a

moment seemed striving to turn, and then dashed head-long down the height—even at that instant a long and iron arm wound itself around the lady's delicate waist; and when she again opened her eyes she was clasped in safety to the bosom of Adrian de Marigni!

“Ah, Adrian, I knew it must be you!” she murmured, clinging to his breast. The next instant her grasp relaxed. She had fainted.

In a few minutes the King and the Count of Marche came galloping up, followed shortly by the whole cavalcade, at full speed. Throwing themselves from their horses, they at once gathered around the Countess, who, reclining upon a mossy bank on the arm of her preserver, was beginning to revive.

“Is she harmed?—is she harmed?” shouted the King, in tones of utmost anxiety.

“Not in the least, sire,” calmly replied the young man; “she has but fainted.”

“Heaven be praised!” cried Philip. “Why! I would as soon lose my crown as my daughter Blanche!”

The Count of Marche, without uttering a word, but ghastly pale, had leaped from his horse, and, kneeling at the side of his fainting wife, received her insensible form from her preserver's arms. At the same moment Blanche slowly opened her eyes. They met the anxious gaze of her husband. Shuddering, she again closed them, and the ladies of the party now coming up, she was resigned at once to their superior skill and knowledge in matters of the kind, and was very soon restored.

The acknowledgments and congratulations which now descended upon the young soldier from all quarters were numberless, and were received with his characteristic modesty.

The King himself warmly grasped his hand and presented his formal acknowledgments.

The Prime Minister was in an ecstasy of delight at the bravery and good fortune of his intrepid son; and Marie—she did all she could, poor little girl!—she shed tears as freely as a watering pot does water!

All idea of pursuing the original design of a hunt at St. Germain was now abandoned, and it was resolved that a portion of the party should accompany the Countess to the Abbey of Maubuisson, near the village of Pontoise, which was but a few miles distant, while those who chose the sport should join in a hawking party along the banks of the Seine—it being understood that the entire cortege should assemble at the ringing of the Abbey bell, at that place for dinner: after which, such as official duties called back to Paris should return—the residue passing the night at Pontoise.

As for Blanche of Artois, who had now entirely recovered, she insisted upon mounting the horse of one of her women, and also insisted that Charles should return to the deserted Madame d'Aumale, and her own gallant preserver should be restored to her. "And it was so."

CHAPTER VII.

THE ABBEY OF MAUBUISSON.

THE Abbey of Maubuisson, situated near the village of Pontoise, some two or three leagues from Paris, was founded by St. Louis in the year of grace 1270, a few months only before his decease. This was one among the numerous religious houses established and endowed by this "pious" monarch, both at the capital and in the provinces. Of the others may be named the Abbeys of Royaumont, Longchamp, and Lis, and the monasteries of the Jacobins and the Cordeliers at Paris, and of the Mathurins at Fontainebleau. St. Louis also furnished the Carmelites, Carthusians, Celestins and Augustins with houses and churches, and in the provinces established several convents of nuns called Beguines, from their founder, Lambert le Begue, or, from the Beguine veil which formed part of their habit: and even the Abbey of Maubuisson became, at a later period, one of their retreats, though originally a convent of Cistercians. He also furnished Father Robert Sorbonne with an edifice for the university bearing his name, since so noted. Last, though by no means the least, of the priest-monarch's pious performances, the holy St. Louis introduced a branch of the Inquisition into France,

by and with the advice and consent of his equally pious consort, Blanche of Castile!*

Some days had elapsed since the occurrence of the events last recited. The hunting party had returned to Paris, with the exception of the Countess Blanche and her ladies, Marie Morfontaine and her lover, and Edmond de Goth, the brother of the Pope. The Queen of Navarre and her handsome Equerry also remained. The ostensible cause of Blanche of Artois' retirement from Court was the observance of devotional duties, and that of the Queen was to keep her company, while the gentlemen remained because the ladies did. But the real causes of this seclusion were very different.

In the apartments appropriated to the use of the Countess of Marche, Adrian de Marigni was a frequent and ever welcome visitor. It is said that we are far more inclined to love an object we have protected, than one to which we have been indebted for protection. If this aphorism be true, it will go far to explain the novel and undefined emotions which had possessed the heart of the young de Marigni since his late preservation of Blanche of Artois. His thoughts by day were of her, and so, too, were his dreams at night. How often! oh, how often! did the young soldier, in the silent night-watches, awake from the visions of his lonely pillow, and almost fancy

* In 1134, the Council at Verona gave bishops power to inquire into heresies and punish the suspected. In 1198, Pope Innocent Third sent two Cistercian monks into southern France, to convert, or to kill certain Manichean heretics. Thus originated the institution, and such legates were subsequently called Inquisitors. In Spain, Italy and Portugal this tribunal flourished from the first, but was never established in France until the latter part of the thirteenth century, by Louis the Ninth, as stated.

that he clasped once more the phantom of that exquisite form to his breast, and gazed once more into the dark and mournful beauty of those grateful eyes! Awake or asleep, those glorious eyes forever haunted him; and before him like a spirit wherever he might be—whether in his solitary walks on the river bank, or in the depths of the forest—by night or by day—glided ever that beautiful form—gleamed ever that eloquent eye. He had been always sad, but now he was more sad than ever; he had been always thoughtful, but a subject of reflection had now arisen in his mind, and a train of feelings and sensations had now awakened in his breast, of which he had never conceived before.

To Marie Morfontaine he had always been a strange being, but now he seemed stranger than ever. She had never been able to fathom or to comprehend very well either his feelings, or his thoughts; and now they were utterly beyond her comprehension. At first she used to accompany him in his long and solitary walks, but she got tired of his everlasting silence, and she fancied he had got tired of her everlasting prattle,—though he had never told her so by word, or by look, or by sign; and so it came about that the melancholy Adrian walked by himself, and the gay Marie whiled away her leisure moments with the gallant Edmond de Goth, who was at all times and in all places, and under every variety of circumstance, her most devoted, humble servant, and who could talk forever and laugh as long as he could talk; and in both laughing and talking could fairly compete with herself.

But Adrian's walks were not all of them lonely. More than once had the fair Countess desired, to his undisguised joy, to be his companion, and more than once had this desire been gratified.

It was during these long and summer evening rambles through the deep woods of Maubuisson that Adrian detailed to Blanche, at her earnest petition, all the incidents of his brief yet most eventful career. He told her of his battles and sieges, his encampments and marches, and of the novel scenes he had witnessed, and the strange persons with whom he had met in his long campaigns on a foreign soil. To these recitals Blanche would listen for hours in silence, her dark eyes fixed earnestly on his eloquent face; and when his voice ceased, she would sigh, and would feel that gladly could she listen thus forever.

At length, one evening, when he had been reciting his adventures as usual, and they had turned their steps homeward to the Abbey, as the dews were beginning to fall, she remarked :

"But you never tell me, Count, of any of your love matters."

The young man smiled and slightly colored, but remained silent.

"Have you had no affairs of the heart among all the adventures of your exciting career?" she continued.

"None, madame," was the quiet answer.

"Perhaps you were protected by a prior preference?" rejoined the Countess.

"I have never loved but one," said De Marigni.

Blanche of Artois was silent for a moment, then hurriedly added :

“And that one?”

“Is Marie Morfontaine.”

“You were children together, were you not?” asked the Countess, with difficulty, after a pause.”

“We were, madame.”

“And you have loved from childhood?”

“We have.”

“*We?* Then you infer that Marie loves you as well as you love her?”

“I *know* Marie loves me, madame.”

Again the Countess was silent, and for some time they both walked on without exchanging a word.

“Have you ever asked Marie to become your wife?” asked Blanche.

“No, madame,” replied the young man with a smile.

“Ah!” returned the Countess quickly.

“She has always understood, I suppose, that when she became a wife, she would be mine. *I* have always understood so, and I think she has; and yet I have never asked her to be mine.”

“When is your union to take place?” asked the Countess, after a pause.

“I do not know, madame. It may be years hence. But she is young, and so am I, and we can wait.”

“Do you know, Count,” asked the Countess softly, “that you might marry any lady in Paris?”

“I do not, madame,” was the quiet reply.

"You have no ambitious aspirations then, in the regard of a matrimonial connection?"

"None, madame—none whatever," replied the young soldier quickly, with a slight curl of the lip. "My field of ambition is the camp—not the *ludoir*. I am no carpet-knight. Whatever I am—and that's not much, to be sure—I owe to no one but myself. I wish it always thus."

For some moments the Countess walked on in silence. At length she continued:

"Marie would be yours *now*, if you wished it, would she not?"

"I suppose, madame, she would. But my parents, especially my mother, are opposed to my marriage for some years yet. They say I am too young to marry," added the young man with a smile. "Do you agree with them, Countess?"

"There must be some reason besides that!" said the Countess, laughing. Then, thoughtfully, she added: "May it not be that they are opposed rather to the bride than the bridal?"

Adrian started, and, in a lower tone, replied:

"Possibly it is so, madame."

"A father is often more aspiring for his son than the son is for himself."

"But it is my mother, madame."

"A mother always loses a child when her son becomes a husband," interrupted the Countess. "He is no more all hers, and he *is* all another's. But suppose, Count, that your parents seriously opposed your union with Marie Morfontaine—what then?"

"Then, madame, that union would never take place," was the decided answer.

"You would obey your parents at all hazards?"

"Most assuredly, madame. They gave me life."

"It seems then, on the whole," said the Countess, "an exceedingly uncertain thing when you will become Marie's husband, if you ever do—is it not so?"

"Years will pass first—but we shall marry in the end," confidently replied the young man.

"Even if your parents forbid?"

Adrian was silent.

"But do you not wrong Marie," persisted the Countess, "in thus retaining her troth, under an uncertainty so great? Do you, indeed, manifest true love for her—a disinterested desire for her happiness, by holding her to a pledge like this? Adrian, most women are wives at Marie's age. I am myself but little her senior. Is it altogether fair to keep her for years in her present dependent condition as a ward of the crown, when a change might prove so much more preferable; and that dependence kept up too on such an uncertainty? For years hence, your parents may not consent any more than they now do. Besides, you are constantly in the field, and your life—"

The Countess shuddered, and stopped, and became pale.

"Madame, madame, I will make *any* sacrifice for Marie's happiness!" said Adrian with energy.

Blanche of Artois sadly smiled. She perceived she had touched the right chord.

“Are you really anxious for this marriage to take place?” she resumed in low tones, after a pause.

The young man was silent for a moment, and then replied:

“I am less anxious, I believe, than I once was, madame?”

“And why?”

“I do not know, madame.”

“Do you think Marie understands you well—I mean do you think she can comprehend and sympathize with all your thoughts and emotions?”

“No, madame; oh, no!” replied De Marigni, sadly, shaking his head.

“And yet you love her?”

“Does she not love me?”

“Well, Count, I suppose she does,” replied the Countess; “at least *you* think so, and she thinks so, too, no doubt. She loves you as well as she can, perhaps—as well as one person can love another whom she cannot comprehend, and with whose peculiar feelings she cannot sympathize.”

“But that is not *her* fault, madame,” warmly rejoined Adrian. “Her nature is different from mine. It is rather my fault, if the fault of any one. She is always gay—I am always sad. She is always laughing and chatting—I laugh but little and say less. Nothing troubles her—everything troubles me. She—happy and innocent girl—*never* thinks, I do verily believe; while I—I am forever in a brown study, as she herself says!”

“And, knowing this, do you believe her fitted to be

your life-long companion, or you to be hers?" asked the Countess gently.

De Marigni made no reply.

"It may not be—it assuredly *is* not, as you so warmly assert—her *fault* that you are not more alike; but, if she is to be your wife, may it not prove your *misfortune*, as well as her own?"

De Marigni was still silent.

"Suppose, Count," continued the lady, "suppose that your feelings for Marie were to change—suppose you were to love her no longer—"

"That cannot be, madame!" interrupted Adrian.

"But suppose," resumed the Countess, with some irritation of feeling and tone, and with heightened color—"suppose you were to love another."

"Well, madame?" said Adrian softly.

"Would you then make Marie Morfontaine your wife?"

"Madame, I would—I would if—"

The young man paused.

"If what?"

"If she wished it."

"And would you *thus* consult her happiness—to say nothing of your own? Ah, Adrian," continued the Countess, pressing her snowy fingers upon the arm on which she leaned, "the human heart cannot love two objects supremely at once. Think you that Marie could be happy as your wife, loving you, and knowing—for such knowledge quickly comes to woman—that you loved not her? And do you think you could be

happy as the husband of one woman and the lover of another?"

The low, sweet tones of Blanche of Artois trembled—her dark eyes were suffused with emotion—her white hand rested more heavily on Adrian's arm—her form almost leaned upon his for support.

De Marigni, more agitated than even his companion, dared not trust his voice in reply; but he laid his hand, scarcely less snowy than that which rested on his arm, gently beside it. The touch, so light as to be hardly perceptible, thrilled to his very soul; and it thrilled to hers.

"Adrian," said Blanche of Artois, in tones of low and melancholy sweetness, after a pause of considerable duration, "whatever you do in this matter, oh, be not hasty! It is a terrible thing to marry and not to love! It is a terrible thing to marry and to outlive love—either your own love or another's! But more terrible than all is it—terrible to your companion, and yet more terrible to yourself—to wed for life and fondly to love—yet not to love the being to whom you are wed!"

During this conversation the pair had slowly approached the Abbey, and were now in the shrubbery of the garden, and the shades of evening had deepened almost into night.

As the Countess uttered, as if with an effort, the last syllables recited, she suddenly stopped, and her forehead sank on the shoulder of her companion. At the same moment a cold tear dropped upon his hand.

"You are unhappy!—oh, you are unhappy!" he

exclaimed, in uncontrollable agitation, all the generous emotions of his soul being at once roused, at the same time clasping her unresisting form to his heart. "Oh, be my sister, Blanche!—let me be your brother!—tell me all—tell me—"

Blanche of Artois gently disengaged herself from the arms of Adrian, and, pressing his hand to her lips, glided into the Abbey and at once to her chamber.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LETTER.

SEVERAL days passed. Blanche of Artois confined herself to her own apartments, on plea of indisposition; and a sentiment of undefined delicacy prevented Adrian from seeking an interview.

Long and deeply, during his lonely walks, did he ponder every tone, look and syllable of that strange conversation. There were some things,—many things, which to him were quite incomprehensible;—and there were some that, unfortunately for poor Marie, he could comprehend but too well. The concluding incident of the interview seemed to him like a dream,—a confused and indistinct vision, on the remembrance of which he dared hardly linger. It was true, many wild dreams had visited him of late; but this he felt was *no* dream. He longed once more to meet Blanche. His heart bled for her. He would have risked his life to make her happy, as he had already risked it to secure her safety. Yet, notwithstanding, such was the inconsistency and perplexity of his feelings that sooner than have entered her chamber he would have charged a whole city of Flemings, with Peter le Roi, the weaver, and John Breyel, the butcher of Bruges, at their head!

As for Marie, she perceived nothing unusual in her lover. He was always so silent and so sad that she had

ceased to wonder at the cause, if he happened to be a little more so, or a little less so, on any one day than on the day before. True, she would, once in a while, glide up to him, as he sat in reverie, at an open window, and gazed sadly on the distant forests, or the blue hill-tops, or the summer clouds, or the rushing river, and, dropping on her knees at his side, throw her white arms around his neck, saying: "Adrian, what ails you? Are you ill?"

And then her lover would part the luxuriant ringlets upon her white forehead, and press to it his lips, tell her he was never better in his life; and she—happy and unthinking child! would trip away to amuse herself with Edmond de Goth and laugh at his courtly speeches.

One day, the Prime Minister came out from the capital, and, having held a long and secret conference with his son, departed. But, from the subsequent manner of Adrian, Marie could gather nothing of the purport of his visit:—to be sure she did not try very hard,—and her lover with a smile declined satisfying her childlike curiosity. He left the Abbey shortly after, however, and did not return until all its inmates had retired for the night. Repairing to his apartment, he was about throwing himself on his couch, when a piece of pink vellum, delicately folded, and perfumed, and secured with a tress of bright black hair, instead of the floss commonly used for that purpose, arrested his attention. Finding the note bore his own address, he quickly yet carefully cut the tress of hair with his keen dagger, and, unfolding the vellum, read the following lines traced in letters of exquisite form:

TO ADRIAN.

Thou dost not love me! As the warm wind sighing
Along the leaves of summer's quiet grove,
An instant swelling,—lingering,—then dying,—
Thus in thy bosom wakes the breath of love.

Thou dost not love me! I have watched the beaming
Of that calm eye,—the quiet of thy brow,
And sadly turned me from that placid seeming
Only to sigh,—“He loves me not!”—as now.

Thou dost not love me! Well,—I'm not imploring
A single throb, or thought, of thy young heart:
Nay, I would not my own heart's deep adoring
Should to thy breast one sorrowing sigh impart.

But I shall love *thee*! Vainly comes all warning
Unto a breast where passion hath her throne,
Upon whose heart,—an altar,—night and morning
Riseth an incense-cloud to love alone.

I do not say *Adieu!*—'t were idly spoken,—
For we shall meet,—shall meet as we have met:
Thine eye will glance as coldly,—but no token
Shall tell to thee that I can e'er forget!

With strange and conflicting feelings, again and again Adrian de Marigni read these impassioned and despairing verses. Then gazing at the bright tress of dark hair, and folding it within the vellum, he pressed the treasure repeatedly and fervently to his lips, and, placing it beneath his vest upon his throbbing heart, he held it there and threw himself upon his couch. He threw himself upon his couch, but it was not to sleep.

CHAPTER IX.

THE VISION.

HOUR after hour passed away, and still Adrian de Marigni slept not. The old Abbey clock tolled regularly the hours in drowsy numbers, from ten o'clock till two, and was regularly answered by the ponderous bells of Paris.

To attempt to describe the young soldier's feelings or thoughts, during these silent night-watches, were idle. He could not have described them himself.

Towards morning he fell from mere exhaustion into a troubled slumber. He dreamed. He was on the wide, wild ocean. The winds raved—the billows tossed around him. He was wrecked. Destruction was inevitable. Suddenly the black clouds parted. A beautiful face looked down upon him—a white hand was extended—he was saved! That hand! that face!—it was Blanche of Artois.

The scene changed. He was on the scaffold. The headsman's axe gleamed over him. For the last time, he opened his eyes to the bright world of nature. A guardian angel was beside him. It was Blanche of Artois!

He stood at the altar. The hand of his little playmate, Marie Morfontaine, was in his. The priest, in

snowy stole and alb, was before them. The irrevocable vow was about to be spoken. Suddenly between himself and the altar rose a sweet, pale face. It was the face of Blanche of Artois!

Once more the scene changed. He was on the battle-field. Plumes tossed, banners waved, steel clashed, blood gushed—death in all its most fearful forms was around him; yet, through all, calm, cold, senseless—like a demon of ruin he swept. Before his flaming falchion full many a mailed form, full many a plumed crest, went down. At length, weary with the slaughter, as the fight closed, his battle-axe descended with crushing might on a form that had haunted him throughout all the conflict. That form fell. For an instant he glanced on his victim. The vizor of the helmet fell back. Amid the blood-mists of battle gleamed up a sad and beautiful face. Oh, God! it was Blanche of Artois!

Again the scene changed. Horror!—he was at the stake! An awful death awaited him. The red flames rose and roared, and the black smoke swept and eddied in stifling clouds around him! They parted—those clouds of flame and smoke: before him rose the face of an angel, with the eyes of a fiend! That face!—those eyes!—it was Blanche of Artois!

Horror-struck, the slumberer awoke.

The early summer sun was pouring its first red rays into the chamber. From the court-yard of the Abbey rose the rattle of iron hoofs upon the pavement, and the cries of attendants. By his couch stood a servant to say that in one hour the whole party would start for Paris.

Bewildered and perplexed, Adrian de Marigni descended to the court. During his absence, on the evening previous, he learned that an invitation, or rather an order, had arrived from the Louvre, for all of its accustomed inmates to be present at the reception of the legates of the Sovereign Pontiff elect, the Archbishop of Bordeaux, who brought to the King of France, with all his clergy, his chivalry and his Court, a bidding to be present at the city of Lyons on the fourteenth day of November next ensuing, at the Papal consecration.

Adrian found the whole party already in motion, and, after a hasty repast, it was mounted and on the route to the capital.

Never had Blanche of Artois seemed to De Marigni so beautiful, and never had he beheld her so gay and so cheerful as on that morning. Her brief illness gone, she seemed another being. Her face was all smiles. Her dark eyes were filled with joy. Wit sparkled, jest leaped, repartee and rejoinder flowed from her lips. Was it possible this was the woman he last beheld?

“Do you design escorting me to Paris, young gentleman?” she gayly cried to De Marigni, as he stood bewildered at the scene. “If you do, ride up—ride up! Why, one would suppose you had seen a spectre last night, instead of sleeping as soundly as a soldier always sleeps until sunrise this morning, you look so pale and haggard! Come on, come on, or we shall be left!”

And away she galloped, followed by the Count.

As the party passed the scene of the late peril of the

Countess, many congratulations were addressed her upon the happy result, and many compliments to De Marigni.

“I suppose I am under everlasting obligations to you, Sir Count, for saving my life—am I not?” remarked Blanche of Artois to her companion.

“By no means, madame,” was the calm answer. “I should have done the little I did for any woman.”

Blanche bit her lip, and urged on her steed without reply.

Crossing the Seine at the Ferry of Neuilly, the troop slowly ascended the opposite hill.

“I am told,” carelessly remarked the Countess to De Marigni, as he rode beside her, “that you received a visit from the Minister last evening.”

“I did, madame,” was the respectful reply.

“And the purport—is it a secret?” continued Blanche.

“To you, madame, it is not.”

“Well?”

“My father bids me return to camp.”

“And you obey, of course?”

“Of course, madame.”

“He wishes to remove you from the corrupting influence of the Louvre, I suppose!” rejoined the Countess, with a laugh.

“I think rather he wishes to remove me from the influence of Marie Morfontaine,” replied De Marigni, sadly.

“How?” exclaimed the Countess, with well-feigned astonishment.

“In fact, madame, he takes the same view of my connection with Marie that yourself condescended to do.”

The Countess bowed, and slightly colored.

“He believes that years must elapse before Marie can become my wife; and, inasmuch as Edmond de Goth has asked her hand of the Chancellor, he thinks I ought to resign it.”

“Edmond de Goth?” returned the Countess, thoughtfully; “that is a proud alliance for a maid of honor of the Queen of Navarre.”

“But you forget, madame, that Marie is high-born and beautiful, and the heiress of immense estates,” returned the Count with warmth.

“Yes, yes—but *you*, Count, forget that Edmond de Goth is the brother of the Pope. And so you return to Flanders?” added the Countess.

“Yes, madame, yes,” was the sad reply.

“You once told me—I forgot when—but you told me once, I think, that the sphere of your ambition was the tented field, and that alone—did you not?”

“I did, madame,” said De Marigni. “It has ever been so, and hereafter will be so more than ever.”

“How then does it happen that you have never united yourself with the noble Order of the Temple, or that of the Hospitalers?” asked the Countess.

“There have been several reasons,” rejoined De Marigni. “First, my contemplated union with Marie—for a Templar is a priest. Second, the terrible secrets and infamous vices which are attributed to that powerful order; and third, even had I wished to become a

Knight-Companion of either order, it would have been no easy matter for me to accomplish my wish. The Templars are mostly in Cyprus, or in their priories. We have none in the camp of Charles of Valois."

"There are a few in Paris, are there not?" asked Blanche.

"A few old knights—such as William of Montmorency, John of Beaufremont, Pierre of Villars, Fulk of Trece, Gillon of Chevreuse, and others, who are disabled for the field by reason of age and wounds—abide at the Palace of the Temple."

"Hugh de Peralde is the Grand Prior, or the Visitor of the Priory of France?" asked the Countess.

"I have so understood, madame."

"It is a noble order!" exclaimed the Countess, with enthusiasm, after a pause. "Were I a man I would be a Templar! What wonderful beings they are!"

"But their vices—" began De Marigni.

"Are the vices of individuals, not of a fraternity," was the quick answer. "Besides, one can pardon in a member of that glorious brotherhood what would be condemned in other men. How strange it seems to me, Count, that *you* are not a Templar!"

"My connection with Marie——" began De Marigni.

"But that has now ceased!" interrupted Blanche.

"The terrible secrets and vices of the order," again began the Count.

"But the order itself is a *religious* order. How can one like you be otherwise than a Knight of the Cross? I am told you are a model of piety in the camp, Count."

“Madame,” returned the young man, gravely, “I am a model of nothing. My mother taught me never to neglect my religious duties, even in camp, as the best safeguard against vices.”

“And you have obeyed her?”

“I have tried to do so, madame.”

“Why then do you not become ‘A Poor Fellow-soldier of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon?’”

“Because——”

“Since you have resigned all wish to sacrifice the happiness of Marie Morfontaine to your selfishness?” added the Countess.

“Then, madame, because—and this is a sufficient reason—I have no influence to gain me admission into that august order,” was the reply.

“Ah!” returned the Countess—“is *that* all?”

The cortege had now reached the brow of the heights of Montmartre, overlooking Paris, and, galloping down the Rue St. Honoré, it entered the northern gate of the Louvre.

CHAPTER X.

THE MISSIVE.

THE fête at the Louvre, on the occasion of the reception of the Papal messengers, on the night of September 16th, 1305, was one of the most splendid that ancient pile—even then ancient—had ever beheld.

And of all this gorgeous scene, the idol, the ornament, the boast, the queen, was Blanche of Artois.

Her very nature seemed changed. No one who had attended the bridal fête of her sister Jane, but a few weeks before, could have recognized in the splendid and most fascinating Countess of Marche, glittering with gems and radiant with smiles, the centre of all that was joyous and all that was brilliant in that proud hall—the sad, retiring, melancholy, deserted woman who had then been hardly seen.

The universal admiration she excited communicated itself even to her unfaithful husband, Charles *le Bel*, and he was proud that the star of that brilliant scene was his own lovely wife. He even approached her with a courtly compliment on his lips to her transcendent charms, but before it was half-uttered he was dismissed, with a significant smile, to Madame d'Aumale!

"Blanche has asserted herself at last!" said the gay Queen of Navarre to her devoted Equerry. "Her fright the other day seems to have worked a miracle."

As for Adrian de Marigni, he was indulged with scarce a smile or a word from the lovely Countess; and, having wandered like a Carmelite through the lighted saloons, pale and silent, and sad, for a few hours, he at length resigned Marie Morfontaine to her avowed admirer, though not yet avowed lover, Edmond de Goth, and retired at an early hour to his chamber; although, in the language of old Froissart, describing a similar fête, "the feasting and the dancing lasted until sunrise."

Several days ensued, which were occupied with a succession of festivities, at all of which Blanche of Artois was present, and in all of which she seemed fully to participate. Occasionally she was encountered by De Marigni, and occasionally he was admitted to her apartments; but, although she conversed freely and kindly as a sister might commune with a brother, relative to his plans of life, or schemes of ambition, not a syllable was uttered on the topics of their late exciting interview or of his union with Marie Morfontaine, or with the Templar Knights.

Meanwhile the order for his return to camp had been suspended.

One morning, about a week after his return to the Louvre, he was in his chamber, when Philip de Launai was announced.

"Are we alone, Count?" asked De Launai, as the door was closed.

"We are," returned De Marigni, with some surprise.

"Swear to me that what now ensues shall be secret!"

"I swear," was the reply of Adrian after a pause.

The young Templar said no more, but, drawing a slip of white parchment from his vest, placed it silently in his companion's hands.

Adrian took the parchment and read the following message traced thereon in ancient characters, and in the Latin tongue :

Adrian de Marigni, Count le Portier, is elected a Fellow Companion of the Holy Order of the Temple of Zion in the province of France. In regard of former feats of arms and a pure life, the novitiate enjoined by the canons is dispensed with. The initiatory ceremony of his reception will commence in the grand chapel of the Palace of the Temple, at the hour of nine, on the night of the twentieth day of September, in the year of Grace, 1305, and of the Holy Order, one hundred and eighty-seven.

HUGH DE PERALDE,
Grand Visitor of the Temple,
In the Priory of France.

To this missive was attached the huge seal of the order, being an octagon star, charged with a Latin cross, entwined by a serpent, and bearing the motto, "*In hoc signo vinces.*"*

"Your answer," said De Launai gravely, when Adrian had perused the parchment.

"I will be at the Temple at the appointed hour," was the firm reply.

* The device of the seal of the Temple seems to have been not always the same. At one time it represented two knights mounted on one horse, indicative of the poverty of its founders, Godfrey of St. Omer and Hugh de Payens having but one war-horse between them. At one time, it bore the head of a man crowned with thorns, representing, perhaps, the Saviour.

“Write then upon the reverse of this parchment the words ‘*I will come,*’ and subscribe to them your name and title,” continued De Launai.

Adrian did as he was directed, and the Templar replaced the scroll in his bosom. He then grasped Adrian cordially by the hand and clasped him to his heart.

“To-night, at nine, will commence the initiation,” added the Templar. “At eight I will be here to guide you to the Temple. Be firm, be bold!—constancy, courage!”

And without more words De Launai left the chamber.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PALACE OF THE TEMPLE.

THERE are some structures in the capital of France which are interesting, not for what they are, but for what they have been:—not for the embellishments of art, nor the decorations of luxury, nor the splendors of architecture, nor the perfection of execution or design, nor for magnitude of extent, nor even for antiquity of origin, but interesting, even to *enthralment*, though destitute of all these attractions, for the scenes which they have witnessed and the events which they have chronicled; for the catastrophes they have beheld and the associations they awaken; for the wild and thrilling emotions they excite and the mournful memories they suggest.

One of these spots is the Palace of the Temple.

Ascending the interior boulevards of Paris and passing the triumphal arches of St. Denis and St. Martin, the third or fourth street on your right is the Rue du Temple. Descending this street, ancient, narrow, and tortuous, and overhung by lofty and time-stained dwellings, you shortly reach a spacious area, in which stands a low structure of immense extent, surrounded by four galleries and composed entirely of shops and stalls, about two thousand in number, in which are offered for sale old coats and old hats, old shoes and old shirts,

old boots, books, bonnets, and breeches, old tools, old iron, old furniture—indeed, everything *old* that can be imagined is here to be found on sale. The salesmen themselves are old, very old—old men and old women, principally Israelites, while the *place* itself is called *Le Marché du Bieux Linge*, or “The Market of Old Linen,” indicative of one at least of the objects of its destination. This market is quite a modern concern, having been instituted less than half a century since, and attached to it and bounding it upon the east is a spacious structure erected for the accommodation of debtors when this place was their sanctuary. On the south of this spacious area stands an ancient structure of stone, and this single structure, old and time-stained, is all that now survives of that massive and magnificent edifice once known as the Palace of the Grand Prior of the Order of the Templar Knights in France.

As early as the latter part of the twelfth century, the Templars had fixed on this spot, then embracing several acres and lying without the walls of Paris, for their palace, and here, in 1222, was completed that vast structure, of which, after a lapse of more than six centuries, a remnant is yet beheld.*

Two centuries passed away. The Order of the Temple was abolished, but the huge central tower still contained the archives of the brotherhood, as well as those of the

* The first chapter of the Templars in the city of Paris, which subsequently became the chief seat of the order in Europe, seems to have been convened in the year 1147, in a structure long afterwards known as the “Old Temple,” standing near the Place St. Gervais, and to have numbered one hundred and thirty knights. In the year 1182, the order had located itself, as described, on a spot long known as “*La Ville Neuve du Temple*.”

Knights of Malta, and was still the chief seat of the blended fraternity in Europe. It was, also, the treasure house of the monarchs of France for four hundred years. Next, it became a prison—this black old tower—and its damp walls absorbed the sighs and tears of the unhappy Louis and his devoted queen for months ere they were led to the scaffold. Here, too, were imprisoned, at different periods, among its celebrated inmates, Pichegru, Sir Sydney Smith, and the black Prince of Hayti, Toussaint Louverture. At length, and within the present century, this vast tower was demolished, and all that now remains to tell the tale of the grandeur of the temple is the Palace of the Grand Prior, constructed some three centuries since by Jacques de Souvré, who then held that high office. Philippe Egalité, the Duke of Orleans, father of Louis Philippe, was Grand Master in 1721, and caused the palace to be embellished and enlarged, as did also the Duke of Angoulême, his successor. In 1812, Napoleon designed it for one of the departments of government; in 1814, it became a convent of Benedictine nuns, which it still continues, and for the convenience of which a new chapel was erected thirty years ago.

Such is the eventful history of this spot, and such are some of the scenes it recalls. But there are other circumstances associated with this ancient place more interesting than even these. Here was the chief seat of that wonderful brotherhood of warrior-monks, whose name, for more than two centuries, was the glory and the terror of Christendom, and which, as a peaceful affiliation, still exists.

The original edifice of the Temple is described as "a grim, tall cluster of gloomy towers, standing in the centre of a vast embattled enclosure." It seems, also, like all edifices of the kind, to have had its moats and its draw-bridge, its portcullis and its donjon-keep. It certainly had the huge square tower, already mentioned, rising above its walls, flanked by four lesser towers, and which, if chroniclers are to receive the credence they claim, like the great Tower of the Louvre, stood half-way up to its middle in the ground; and of whose dungeons and *oubliettes*, and wells and *in paces*, and racks and question-chambers, as many terrible tales were told. Indeed, the Tower of the Temple was viewed by the good citizens of Paris and its environs, for many a mile around, with even more of horror than was that of the Louvre. A cloud of midnight mystery, inspiring awe and dread, hung around the stern and inky turrets of the former which existed not with regard to those of the latter. The Tower of the Louvre stood upon the banks of the Seine in the midst of life, and light, and action, and it was daily passed, and it was daily looked at, and might, perchance, be daily entered by almost any one. But the dark turrets of the Temple rose without the walls of the city, upon a solitary and unfrequented spot; and within its dusky walls trod never a step save that of a Templar Knight. Upon its grim battlements no sentinel's helm, or spear-point flashed back the rays of the setting sun; and no *oriflamme* rolled out its snowy folds upon the evening breeze. But there, at twilight, might be caught the outline of strange and ghastly

shapes, dimly defined against a northern sky, of dark warders walking their lonely rounds; while, above them, the vast standard sheet of the order—the terrible *Beauseant*—half black, half white—flapped with raven-omen its huge folds against the staff.

And its dark and fearful history, too!—its racks and its tortures, its dungeons, its unheard of cruelties! And the midnight conclaves, the fiendish orgies, the blasphemous rites, the awful vows, the unnatural crimes, the idolatrous worship, the lust, the guilt, the inconceivable enormities of which the pale-faced peasant took horrible delight in making these mysterious chambers the scene!—all of these circumstances tended to inspire an undefined horror of this immense structure—half palace and half fortalice, half temple and half prison—which, in the reign of Philip *le Bel*, early in the 14th century, had reached its height. Sooner than walk beneath its baleful shadows, the tired traveler would perform a circuit of half the walls of Paris. The very birds of the air were said to avoid its turrets; while all unfortunate fowls that did chance to pass over it, in their flight, fell dead within its walls! At night, the spot was as lonely as a grave-yard—as the ancient burial-vault of St. Denis—and when, from the tall and lanceolated windows of its Gothic Chapel, at the dead hour when spectres walk and the departed return, blazed forth red and lurid flames, and strange sounds, as of the roar of organ-pipes, wildly commingled with groans of human anguish, and strange shouts and solemn songs rose on the blast—the late passer in the silent and deserted street would cross him-

self and hurry on; and, with trembling and superstitious whispers, bless himself and say, "Hell is empty! The devils are on earth! The Templar Knights hold their Sabbath!"

Such being the dread and abhorrence in which the very name of Templar was held by the masses of the people in the 14th century, it will not be thought singular that, although there were actually several hundred knights at that era in Paris, who had secretly the vows upon them, yet but few were generally known as belonging to the order, and the inmates of the Palace of the Temple at this time consisted only of the Grand Prior and a few superannuated serving brethren. The great body of the brotherhood, which then numbered not less than fifteen thousand Knights, was at Limisso, in the Island of Cyprus, its last stronghold in the Levant; while vast numbers were stationed in the Pories of every nation in Europe—not one excepted.

* * * * *

Adrian de Marigni and Philip de Launai both dwelt in the Louvre. It was, therefore, an easy thing for them privately to meet in the former's chamber, preparatory to their secret expedition at the hour appointed.

Philip was enveloped in a huge, dark mantle, which concealed his form, and at his side he bore a sword. Adrian, at his suggestion, was soon similarly garbed and accoutred, and the two young men went forth.

Winding through the dark galleries of the Louvre, to reach the southern gate leading out upon the quay, they

passed the apartments of Blanche of Artois. Philip was some steps in advance of his companion, and Adrian could not resist the inclination to check his pace as he passed that door, through which he had so often and so eagerly entered. At that moment, the door, which had stood somewhat ajar, suddenly opened—a small white hand and a snowy arm were extended, and a soft and well-known voice whispered the mystic syllables, “Constancy—courage!” into his ear. Catching the white hand, he pressed it fervently to his lips. It was instantly withdrawn, the door closed, and Adrian hurried on to regain his guide, who awaited him at the foot of the stairs.

Of this incident, De Marigni, of course, said nothing to his companion, and the two young men, having given their names to the sentinel, and received the word of the night, passed through the wickets and across the moat upon a single plank, and were on the quay. Proceeding a few steps up the river, they stopped at a small *cabaret*, where were found two horses ready saddled and apparently awaiting their coming. Mounting at once, they passed rapidly on up the Rue St. Martin, then the chief, and, with the Rue St. Denis, the only, great artery of the *Ville*, and arrived, without interruption, at the gate. Through this they readily gained egress, when De Launai had whispered the secret pass-word into the warder's ear. Emerging upon the open fields, the young men put their steeds to a gallop, and directing their route towards a huge mass of structure, looming darkly up on their right, from some portions of which bright lights were

gleaming forth on the gloom without, they found themselves, after traversing a seemingly endless avenue, beneath the shadow of an equally endless wall, at the grand entrance, on the west side of the Palace of the Temple.

* * * * *

The morning dawn was diffusing its white light over the towers and roofs of Paris, when Adrian de Marigni, pale and exhausted, emerged with his companion from beneath the massive gateway of the Palace of the Temple and directed his steps to the Louvre.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PRINCE, THE PONTIFF AND THE KNIGHT.

THE consecration of Bertrand de Goth, under the name of Pope Clement Fifth, in the city of Lyons, on the fourteenth day of November, 1305,* must have been a very splendid spectacle. Three months before, invitations to this grand ceremonial had been dispatched to the royal heads of all the kingdoms of Christendom, bidding them, with their Courts and their clergies, to be present. And a more brilliant concourse of Bishops and Archbishops, of priests and princes, of kings and cardinals, of lords and ladies, seems rarely to have been assembled, than that which witnessed the imposition of the Papal crown, by the hands of Matthew Ursini, on the brow of the two hundredth successor of St. Peter.

The coronation ceremony having been performed, history informs us that the Sovereign Pontiff returned to his palace, the tiara upon his head and the pontifical robes and regalia upon his person—his white horse led alternately by the Kings of France and Avignon upon either side, succeeded by Charles of Valois and Louis d'Evreux, the brothers of Philip. History also informs us that, when the procession had arrived at the base of the hill on which stands the church of St. Just, an old structure suddenly fell upon the throng, by which the

* Some authorities say Dec. 17, 1305.

King of France and the Count of Valois were badly wounded, the Holy Father thrown from his horse, and his brother Gaillard de Goth, together with the Duke of Brittany and a large number of nobles and monks, instantly killed; and, likewise, that, at a grand festival given a few days subsequently, on the occasion of the celebration of the first pontifical mass, a sudden fray arose, in which a second brother of the Pope was slain before his eyes.

The first acts of Clement Fifth were to revoke all the ecclesiastical censures of his predecessor, Boniface Eighth, against the King of France, his kingdom and his friends; to remove the Papal See from Rome to Avignon, to elevate to the cardinalate twelve French bishops who were nominated by the King, and also James and Peter Colonna, and to restore to France all the franchises and powers claimed by her sovereign.

Thus were, at once, accomplished four of the articles of the compact of St. Jean d'Angély. A fifth was more difficult of fulfillment. This was the decree of infamy against the acts and memory of Boniface Eighth, which was sternly demanded by the King and strongly opposed by the Cardinal de Prato as perilous and impolitic. Overcome by this persistency, the Pontiff at length promised compliance, and commenced the process by the conflagration, in the public square of Avignon, of divers acts put forth in his predecessor's defence; but further proceedings were instantly checked by the college of cardinals with threats of the Pontiff's immediate removal by force to Rome, if the acts were repeated.

Convinced of the impossibility of the fulfillment of this article of the compact, it was reluctantly resigned by the King some months after, and in its place he demanded the elevation to the throne of Germany, made vacant by the assassination of the Emperor Albert by his own nephew, John, Duke of Suabia, his brother Charles of Valois. The Pontiff, alarmed at the idea of concentrating so much power in a single family, immediately dispatched couriers, by advice of the Cardinal de Prato, to the German Electors, who, at this urgency, in a single week assembled in Diet and proclaimed Henry of Luxembourg,—one of the ablest and most renowned men of that era in Europe,—Emperor of Germany and King of the Romans.

Furious at this double disappointment, Philip instantly left Paris, and on the evening of June 12th, 1306, arrived at Poitiers, where the Sovereign Pontiff then lay confined to his bed by sickness, which sickness caused by his vices lasted for nearly a year.

“*Pax Vobiscum!*” said the feeble voice of Clement, as the King of France entered the darkened chamber.

Philip returned no reply, but, with indignant silence, seated himself beside the sick couch of the Pontiff.

“*Benedicite*, my son,” said Clement again, saluting his guest and turning upon him an inquiring gaze. “Very greatly am I beholden to thy piety for thy present visit.”

“To my *piety*, Holy Father!” exclaimed Philip, with a sneer. “Oh, not all! It was not regard for thee, nor even regard for the welfare of my own soul, that

brought me from Paris to Poitiers, at a season like this, be sure."

"What then, my son?" asked Clement, in trembling tones.

"By St. Louis, *this!*" exclaimed Philip, with angry vehemence. "To learn from your own lips whether you design, or do not design, to fulfill the articles of your solemn compact with me at the Abbey of St. Jean d'Angély!"

"My son—my son!" expostulated the sick Pontiff. "Is this the mode to address God's Vicar upon earth—the head of the Holy Church?"

Philip replied only with a sneer.

"Of what do you complain, my son?" continued Clement, mildly. "In what have I failed in the fulfillment of my covenant?"

"The decree of infamy against that arch-fiend, Boniface Eighth!" was the quick and angry answer.

"That was commenced," said the Pontiff, "but, had it been completed, the Papal See would now have been retranslated to Rome."

"The threats of the cardinals are said to have originated with the Holy Father himself," was the sullen rejoinder.

"Who says that?" asked Clement, quickly.

There was no reply.

"Yet, if you choose the alternative, my son, it is not yet too late. The decree is prepared," he added.

"Your Holiness is fully aware that I have resigned that article of the compact," replied the King, with some

confusion. "In its place I requested that my brother, the Count of Valois, might be elevated to the imperial throne of Germany."

"And was that station in *my* gift, my son?" humbly asked Clement.

"It was filled by your Holiness with Henry of Luxembourg," said Philip, sternly,—“if report speaks true!”

"And who says *that*?" asked Clement.

The King was again silent.

"Henry of Luxembourg was lawfully chosen to fill the imperial throne, by a full Diet of German Electors, to whom that right of choice legitimately and solely belonged," continued the Pope. "Had the convention of the Diet, or its action, been less precipitate, I concede you the influence of the Papal See might have been felt in favor of Count Charles of Valois, the brave soldier and pious prince. But, as events, by the Providence of God, *did* transpire, how could the Sovereign Pontiff have foreseen, or prevented, the event that occurred?"

Flushed and excited, Clement closed his eyes and fell back upon his pillow, and Philip forebore to press a matter from which he could plainly perceive he had nothing to gain, or to anticipate.

At that moment one of the attendants of the Holy Father announced the presence in the Palace of the Grand Master of the order of Knights Hospitalers of St. John, who had just arrived from the island of Cyprus, and craved audience on matters of high import.

“Let him approach,” said the Pontiff, secretly rejoiced at an occurrence which interrupted a conference which had begun to grow embarrassing.

The attendant withdrew, and, immediately after the door again opened, and Fulk de Villaret, who had recently been exalted on the decease of his brother, William de Villaret, to the high station of Grand Master of the Hospitalers, stood on the threshold.

He was a large and majestic man, some forty years of age, and attired in the full costume of chief of his order. This costume was a scarlet cassock, or surcoat, with a broad octagonal cross of white linen sewed upon the breast, and a similar cross upon the back. Over this surcoat hung the full black mantle of the order, with the same cross sewed upon the left shoulder. His only weapon was a long straight sword at his side, with a crucifix hilt.

“Approach, son, and receive our blessing,” said the Pontiff, in feeble tones.

The knight strode at once to the bedside, and, kneeling, the Holy Father laid one hand upon his bowed head and pronounced the customary *Benedicite*.

The Grand Master then arose, and, having saluted the King of France, stood silent.

“Your mission, son?—Speak!” said the Pontiff.

“My mission, Holy Father, is threefold,” returned the knight. “First, to announce the decease of William de Villaret, late Grand Master of the Knights of St. John, my lamented brother, whose soul may God rest!”

“Amen!” responded the Pontiff.

“Second, to announce to your Holiness the election of your unworthy servant, Fulk de Villaret, as his successor.”

“Amen!” again ejaculated Clement.

“And, third,” continued De Villaret, “to fulfill my deceased Master’s dying injunction to repair at once to your Holiness, so soon as his last obsequies were celebrated, and, at your feet, beseech sanction and aid to accomplish the enterprise he had most at heart—the conquest of the Island of Rhodes and the permanent location there of the throne of the order, that, this fulfilled, his soul might rest.”

Clement glanced at the King, and a gleam of joy shot from beneath the Pontiff’s shaggy brows.

“But is not the Island of Cyprus already the retreat of your noble order, Sir Knight?” asked the Holy Father.

“In common with the Knights of the Red Cross, we have there our seat,” was the reply; “but, in common with them, we deem it an insecure, undignified and unworthy station, in which both orders are subjected to most degrading exactions from the King of the Island. Besides, it is well known to your Holiness that the Knights of the White Cross and those of the Red love not each other——”

“Too well—too well we know it, Sir Knight!” interrupted the Pope, with some severity. “The conflicts of these rival brotherhoods have long been a scandal to Christendom and the Church, and have mainly conduced to the recovery by Infidels of the Sepulchre of

our Lord. To unite these orders into one* methinks might heal this perpetual feud and most disgraceful schism."

And the Holy Father again glanced slyly at the King.

"Now, may your Holiness and our patron saint, most excellent St. John, forbid!" began the Grand Master in alarm. "We do beseech——"

"Well, well, Sir Knight," interrupted Clement, "we will confer on this matter at some other time. What advantage to Mother Church is to inure from this mad expedition, to which you now solicit our sanction and aid? Be brief."

"First, your Holiness," replied the Grand Master, "Rhodes is nearer than Cyprus to Palestine."

"Well," said the Pontiff.

"Second, it is more impregnable."

"And, therefore, will be less easy of capture," added the Pope. "But, go on."

"Third, it has a more commodious harbor."

"And may, therefore, be more easily retaken," said Clement.

"Fourth, its position, wealth, commerce and maritime power render it a worthy seat of an ancient order."

"And, fifth," said Clement, "its conquest, while affording a brilliant expedition to one order of knights, would effectually prevent them, meanwhile, from trying their long swords on the steel caps of another!"

"Besides, the advantage to all Christendom and the Church,"—began De Villaret with renewed enthusiasm.

* Pope Gregory X. and St. Louis, at the Council of Lyons, strove, in vain, to effect this. The efforts of Boniface VIII. and Clement V. to the same end proved equally ineffectual.

“No more—no more, Sir Knight!” said Clement, impatiently, raising his hand. “You forget that you are not on the deck of your own war-galley, and that our ears are unused even to *tones* of command. Within two days you will have our answer. You can go, Sir Knight. *Pax vobiscum!*”

And, with a profound obeisance to the Sovereign Pontiff, and one only less profound to the sovereign of France, this great chief of a powerful order left the chamber.

“What think you, my son?” asked Clement, after a pause, during which each potentate awaited speech of the other.

“Of what, your Holiness?” responded Philip, starting as if from a dream.

“Of the conquest of Rhodes?”

“That it would prove one of the most brilliant events that could lend lustre to any Pontificate,” was the answer.

“We agree, my son—for once we agree!” joyfully exclaimed Clement.

Philip smiled significantly, but said nothing.

“But the means, my son—the Grand Master asks our aid, as well as our sanction.”

“Your Holiness can readily advance a hundred thousand florins for such an enterprise.”

Clement shook his head, then said:

“Well, granted. But the army?”

“Another crusade,” suggested Philip, smiling.

The Holy Father seemed absorbed in thought.

“That might do,” he, at length, said, “if skilfully managed, and the true object of the expedition only proclaimed when the fleet was at Lycia, ready to descend on Rhodes.”

“Your Holiness alluded but now, with the Grand Master, to an union of the two orders of soldier-monks,” observed Philip.

“Several of my predecessors have entertained that purpose,” was the answer.

“Popes Gregory Tenth, Nicholas Fourth and Boniface Eighth favored the union, I think?” coldly continued the King.

“Yet, each was induced to resign the scheme as impolitic,” said Clement.

“Does your Holiness remark any contrast between the chivalric ambition of the Knights of St. John and the vicious indolence of the Knights of the Temple in their voluptuous retreats?” asked Philip, dryly.

Clement started and then quietly replied.

“It is true, son, that the Templar Knights possess some of the richest portions of Europe.”

“Some of the richest portions of France they certainly call their own,” replied Philip. “Is your Holiness aware that the income of this overgrown order is estimated at ten millions of florins annually?”

“Holy St. Peter!—is that possible?” exclaimed Clement, thrown for once off his guard by mention of a sum so enormous at that time. Recovering his propriety, however, he coldly added: “There is some bruit of vice in this order, is there not, my son?”

“Your Holiness cannot be unaware,” returned Philip, “that, as an order, the Knights of the Temple are currently charged, all over Christendom, with the commission of most incredible and abominable crimes, to which the violations of all the vows of their order and all the edicts of the decalogue itself are as innocence.”

“But these charges are not sooth, my son—they cannot be sooth!” exclaimed Clement.

“How should *I* know, your Holiness?” was the cool answer. “Am I a Templar?”

“It had reached me,” said Clement, “that the Templars were accused of indolence, luxury, pride and other like vices. Indeed, I do remember me that, so long ago as the year 1208, the great Innocent III., the most ambitious of Pontiffs and warmest of friends of the Temple, severely censured the order, in an epistle to its Grand Master, charging them with bearing the cross ostentatiously on the breast but not in the heart. But never hath reached me report of the crimes of the which you speak.”

“Hath it ever reached your Holiness,” asked the King with intense bitterness, “that these ‘Poor Fellow-soldiers of Jesus Christ and the temple of Solomon,’ as they meekly style themselves, once secretly pledged their swords to Pope Boniface Eighth, in event he should deem it discreet to take the field against the King of France, although openly they professed themselves that monarch’s friends?”

“My son—my son—what would you?” asked Clement in dismay.

He knew not how shortly he might be forced to call upon that same powerful arm for protection against that same powerful foe, and he now began to suspect a dreadful design on part of the King.

“Hath it reached your Holiness,” continued Philip in the same sarcastic tone, “that some of the most eminent of these friar-knights have spurned our authority, insulted our person, ridiculed our power, defied our vengeance, tampered with our enemies as well as our rebellious subjects, and, finally, have even conspired against our crown?”

“My son—my son—what would you?” again exclaimed the Sovereign Pontiff, in extreme agitation.

“The accomplishment of the Sixth Article of the Covenant of St. Jean d’Angély!”

“And that?” gasped Clement, raising himself in bed, and gazing with open lips, and dilated eyes, and face as livid as death, upon his tormentor.

“And that,” rejoined the King, in a low whisper of bitter hate, “is the utter destruction of the Order of the Templar Knights!”

Clement uttered a faint cry, and, closing his eyes, fell back upon his pillow.

“The Holy Father takes it hard!” said Philip to himself, gazing with a grim smile upon the unhappy Pontiff. “No wonder! The Templars, he well knows, are his only protection in his need, as truly as they were of Boniface. Has he actually fainted? That *would* be strange! No,” he added, after a pause. “He revives! He speaks! Now!”

"My son," feebly murmured the Pontiff.

"Holy Father," meekly returned Philip.

"This cannot be!" sighed Clement.

"The Abbey of St. Jean d'Angély—the parchment—the oath on the reliques and the cross!" quietly rejoined the King. "This *must* be!"

"But, upon what charge shall this great thing be done?" asked the distressed Pontiff.

"On the charge of heresy to the Church," was the answer. "Heresy—of course, heresy."

"Holy Mother!" ejaculated Clement.

Philip sneered.

"But how shall it be proved, my son?" continued the Pontiff.

"Has my pious grandsire, Saint Louis, of blessed memory, with his pious consort, Blanche of Castile, planted a branch of the Holy Office in the capital of France for naught?" asked the King, with a meaning smile.

"But this is a perilous scheme, my son. Think of the vast—the incalculable power of this ancient and mighty order!"

"For that very reason it must be crushed!"

"But we must proceed slowly, and surely, and secretly, my son; or, like Samson of old, we shall pull down this ponderous Temple of the Philistines on our own heads."

"Most true, Holy Father."

"We must first patiently and diligently elicit and investigate the charges against this ancient and power-

ful brotherhood, to the end that we may have, at least, a *semblance* of justice in their destruction."

"Most true, Holy Father."

Clement now breathed more freely. Could he but gain time, he had little apprehension of the ultimate result.

Philip smiled. He divined what passed in the mind of the Pope.

"What, then, shall be the first step in this great enterprise, my son?"

"Your Holiness, as the spiritual head of the Templars, will order Jacques de Molai, Grand Master of that order, who is now at Cyprus, at once to embark for France, and then from Avignon repair to Paris."

"But, upon what pretense?" asked Clement.

"In order that he may consult with the Sovereign Pontiff, and the sovereign of France, as touching the propriety of the new crusade, which your Holiness just suggested in regard of the conquest of Rhodes."

"Aye, my son, that will do," said the Pope quickly.

"Bid him come speedily, with the utmost secrecy, and with a small retinue of knights, and to bring with him all the treasure he can collect, with the view to arm and equip a large army for the Holy War now contemplated," continued Philip.

"It shall be done, my son—it shall be instantly done!" eagerly cried Clement, who now felt quite sure that he could contrive to avert the doom of the devoted order, on whose safety his own so vitally hung.

"Many thanks, Holy Father," meekly replied Philip,

rising. "And, now, I crave to take my leave. It behooves me to wait upon the Countess of Perigord, daughter of the Count of Foix,* and see with mine own eyes, ere I depart for Paris, whether the lady is, indeed, as transcendantly lovely as universal fame asserts. Your Holiness will pardon reference to such vanities. Besides, the agitation of the past hour must have proved very exhausting to an invalid. Your blessing, Holy Father!" added Philip meekly.

"You have it, son!" was the equally meek reply.

Philip left the chamber.

"Does he think to elude *me*, the simpleton!" muttered the King, as the door closed behind him. "Ah, Bertrand de Goth!—Bertrand de Goth! Once place the Grand Master of this hated order † within the walls of Paris, and——"

Concluding the sentence with a low and bitter laugh, more significant than even the menace, he passed on.

Clement Fifth listened to the retreating footsteps of the King along the corridor. The instant their last echoes ceased, he threw himself from his couch, and, drawing around him an ermined mantle, began rapidly

*Villani ascribes the removal of the Papal See from Rome to Avignon to Clement's attachment to this lady. It remained at Avignon 70 years.

† The causes of Philip's hostility to the Temple were various. The Templars had ever been staunch partisans of Papal power, which Philip had ever striven to diminish; and, in his conflict with Boniface VIII, they had openly sided against him and with their spiritual supreme. They had loudly denounced the Royal and repeated debasement of coin of the realm, by which their order had greatly suffered. They were urgent for the repayment of vast sums at different periods loaned the King, which he was utterly unable to repay. Their wrath and power were great; so were their arrogance and pride; and equally so was their unpopularity with the masses. They possessed the richest estates in France and were connected with the noblest families, and now, having returned finally from the East, they presented a most imposing bulwark to the power of the Crown, which every day was becoming more despotic.

pacing the apartment. The cutting irony of Philip's last words had pierced him to the quick.

“By Heaven! I think that man mocks me!” he exclaimed, livid with rage. “And is it for this I am Sovereign Pontiff of the Church of Rome? Benedict Gaëtan!” he faintly ejaculated, raising his trembling hands and his eyes to Heaven—“Benedict Gaëtan! my early and my only friend!—pardon the frailty which hath made me the unnatural associate of thy deadliest foe, as well as mine. Thy unavenged spirit hovers over me now; and here, from this hour, do I devote all my powers of mind, body, or station to visit, under thy guidance, thy wrongs and my own upon Philip of France!”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TEMPLARS IN PARIS.

PARIS, in the early part of the Fourteenth Century, had four great thoroughfares, on which as a framework, all the lesser streets and lanes at that time were woven, and since that time have been woven.

These four grand avenues crossed each other at right angles, and extended east and west, north and south, from wall to wall.

From north to south,—from the gate of St. Martin to the gate of St. Jacques, straight through the three districts of *Ville*, *Cité*, and *Université*, ran one of these thoroughfares, and parallel to this, and from the gate of St. Denis to the gate of St. Michael, ran another. There were, however, but two bridges, massive structures of stone,—instead of four across the two arms of the Seine,—the Petit Pont and the Pont au Change.

From east to west, the two thoroughfares ran from the gate of St. Antoine to the gate of St. Honoré, in the *Ville*, and from the gate of St. Victor to the gate of St. Germain, in the *Université*. In the *Cité*, there was not then, nor is there now, nor ever has been, so far as may be inferred from maps and charts, any one grand artery extending from one end of the island to the other—from east to west.

Early on the morning of April 5th, 1307, the good

citizens of Paris who dwelt near the gate of St. Jacques, were roused from their slumbers by the most melodious and thrilling strains of trumpet-music they had ever heard.

It was a sweet morning,—calm, cool, clear, and the whole eastern horizon beyond the wood of Vincennes, and the seven rectangular towers of its massive keep, was suffused with those mellow and iris tints which anticipate the dawn.

The wild and unearthly music ceased. It was a summons to the warder of the gate of St. Jacques, and was instantly obeyed. The drawbridge descended,—the portcullis rose and then, within the walls of Paris entered a calvacade, such as till that morning it had never witnessed before, and such as since that morning it has never witnessed again.

First, in that strange procession, came a man of large frame, and tall and erect stature, upon a war-horse of similar dimensions and form. The horse was black as night, and his breast, and front and flanks were protected by plates of steel. As for the rider, his armor was chain-mail, from top to toe, while a round steel cap covered his head, and a neck guard, also of chain called the *camail*, fell over his shoulders. His arms were a broad-bladed and heavy sword, called a *falchion*, hanging on his left thigh, and a broad dagger, called the *ancelace*, tapering to a point exceedingly minute, upon his right breast. At the bow of his war-saddle swung a ponderous *mace-at-arms* on one side, balanced by a battle-axe, equally ponderous, on the other. Upon his

left arm was a small triangular shield, on his heels were spurs of gold, and on his hands gauntlets of chain-mail, reaching to the elbow, and meeting the *hauber* which protected the neck and breast. Over the mail and descending as low as the knee, was a crimson surcoat, like a *blouse* of the present day. Over this from the right shoulder, crossing the breast to the left thigh, was seen a broad leathern belt, which, with another around the waist, assisted by a third, sustained the ponderous falchion. Over the whole figure, thus armed and accoutred, hung a full and heavy mantle, or cloak, of Burrel cloth, white as snow, fastened by a clasp closely around the neck, clinging with equal closeness to the shoulders, and descending in voluminous folds to the heels. On the white ground of the mantle, and upon the left shoulder, was cut a broad cross with crimson velvet. This device was the only one which anywhere appeared, and its singularity was the more remarkable from the fact, that, at that era, the knight wore his armorial bearings fully emblazoned on pennon and shield, surcoat and crest, and even on the frontlet, breast-plate and housings of his steed. In his right hand he bore a long rod of ebony, called *abatuc*,—a baton of office, surmounted by an octangular plate of metal, on which was graven the same device.

The man, whose armor, arms, costume and device are thus delineated, was, apparently, some sixty years of age. His form and features were large,—his complexion very dark,—his eye black and piercing,—his beard, which swept his breast, was white as snow, while a

thick moustache rested on his upper lip. The expression of his countenance was severe, solemn, commanding, bold,—indicating a will of iron power and of iron tenacity. The whole man, indeed, form, face, and aspect, seemed of iron,—dark, unbending, indomitable, terrible; and the effect of those deep-set and piercing eyes, which gleamed beneath his steel cap and contrasted with his snowy hair and beard, was that of a lamp blazing in a sepulchre. At the same time, a broad scar, spanning his left cheek, added to the sternness of his aspect.

This man was Jacques de Molai, Grand Master of the Order of Templar Knights.

Behind this majestic and imperial form followed an array of sixty men, each so identically the same in arms and armor, steed and costume with his leader, that, saving the peculiarities of face and form, and the mystic *abacus* of rank, which was supplied by the spear, and the awe and respect, with which he seemed regarded, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to have distinguished one man from another. All the horses were black, and all had the same accoutrement; all the riders were men of stately stature and adamantine frame; all bore the self-same arms and armor, as their great leader; on the head of each gleamed the round steel cap, without crest or plume, and from the shoulders of each depended the full and flowing mantle of white, with its crimson device. But all were not identical in age or aspect. Some were old,—the veterans of an hundred battles beneath a blazing sun,—upon the sands of a

foreign soil—against a merciless foe; but the lapse of years, and the perils and hardships endured, seemed only to have indurated—petrified their hardy frames; while their swarthy faces covered all over with scars, and their flaming eyes, offered a marked contrast to their snowy beards and mantles. And some were comparatively young,—some in the very prime of life; and their stately and symmetrical forms,—their black and luxuriant beards—their fierce and brilliant eyes, and their handsome faces, harmonized well with the striking costume of themselves and their steeds.

Such was the little band of Templar Knights, only sixty in number, which, on the morning of April 5th, 1307, entered the southeastern gate of Paris.

Obedient to the mission of the Sovereign Pontiff, Clement Fifth, their spiritual supreme, they had, at once, in unquestioning obedience to the will of their Grand Master, embarked from Cyprus,—landed at Marseilles, —repaired to the Holy Father at Avignon, and thence, at his order, marched to Paris. They were but sixty men, but they were sixty Templars; and that number sixty times told would have dared not offer themselves their match in open field!

Having crossed the drawbridge and entered the city, the troop immediately assumed its prior order of march. That order was an oblong, hollow square, in the centre of which moved a train of twelve beasts of burthen, heavily laden, and conducted by a body of serving brothers of the order, some two hundred in number, garbed in black. Here, also, rode the trumpeters of the

band; and from the centre rose the vast *Beauseant*—the banner of the Temple. In front of this impressive cavalcade, at a distance of several yards, advanced Jacques de Molai, as slowly as his trained steed could step,—his keen eye fixed sternly forward, regardless of all objects on his way, on the right or on the left, and his baton of rank grasped firmly and perpendicularly in his hand. In the self-same manner advanced each Templar, grasping his lance.

It was a dark, and solemn, and terrible band! It was a thunder-cloud, skirted with silver and flashing with steel! It was a slumbering tornado, which had only to be roused to bless or to ban! It was a troop of iron men on iron steeds,—dark spectres of the fancy,—until, roused by one magic word from the bronze lips of the majestic shape that led them, instantly each man became a giant of power and of might! It was a band of those wonderful men, who, for two hundred years, were the dread and the admiration of the whole world. With their terrible name, like that of Richard, the Saracen mother had hushed her unquiet babe to its slumber, and the Saracen rider had quelled his refractory barb; while, throughout all Europe, its boast and its dismay were alike those soldier-monks.

These men were not as other men. They lived not as other men. They had not, they *seemed* not to have like passions with other men. Clouds and darkness were around them. Human steel seemed to harm them not,—human power seemed idle against them! To them, the will of one man, old, perchance, and infirm, was

the will of God; and, in obedience to that will, there was no doom they would not brave,—no torture they would not endure! The loftiest rank, the most resistless power, the most countless wealth was theirs; yet, in the stern severity of their order, they seemed to scorn it all. One old man's will seemed more to them than the will of all other men together—than even the will of God himself!—more than all the blandishments of woman—more than all the seductions of passion—more than all the splendors of wealth,—more than all the untold glories of ambitious conception! On the battle-field they were fiends; before the altar saints,—in the conclave slaves to one man's will! To all men save one they were stern, scornful, despotic. To him, they were meek, yielding,—obedient beyond all conception and all credence.

Such was a band of these wonderful men, now led by their Grand Master within the walls of Paris; and their blind obedience to that one old man,—their unity of purpose,—their concentration of will, was, perhaps, the chief element of their strength.

Passing through the gate of St. Jacques, as has been said, and entering the head of the street of the same name, the close cohort of spears had no sooner resumed its form of march, than, at an imperceptible signal from the mystic *abacus* of their leader, all the trumpets of the band at once burst forth into an air so wild, so shrill, so sweet, and yet so solemn, that the whole *Université* was instantly awake, and its doors, and windows, and streets were thronged with curious gazers. But not a man of that formidable band looked to the right nor the

left. On went their leader midway down the street of St. Jacques, through the yawning arch of the Petit Chatelet, and the Petit Pont, and right on followed his knights.

By the time that the cavalcade had crossed the bridge, and had again resumed its order, and was advancing down the northern quay of the *Cité*, having passed the twin giants of Notre Dame unnoticed, on their right, and the grim old Palace of Justice, then in the course of reconstruction, on their left, all Paris had gathered to witness the scene; and as the *Pont au Change* was crossed, and the Grand Chatelet passed, and the priestly band emerged from its gloomy gateway on the street of St. Denis, so slow was the movement, that the whole quay of the Louvre was black with swarming masses.

But, all unmindful, the dark battalion of warrior-monks moved solemnly on, and the sweet notes of the oriental march thrilled upon the air; and, steadily and sternly on, moved the tall form of Jacques de Molai; and still his eye turned not to the right hand, nor to the left:—not to the right hand, where frowned the black towers of that sombre pile, whose dungeon-walls were, ere long, to echo his unavailing groans;—not to the left hand, where, on the green islet of the *Passeur aux Vaches*, smiled those royal gardens, which, ere many years had fled, were to witness his unspeakable torture!

Steadily and sternly that iron band moved on to its own unearthly music—and alas! to its own dreadful doom! Its own sweet trumpet-music was its own funeral march! Silently—mysteriously—unushered—unknown—unan-

nounced—unexpected—unproclaimed—without pageant or pomp—without ceremony—or show or observance,—without the pealing of bells or the welcoming shouts of the populace,—secretly, at the dawn of day, had that dark band entered the capital, and advanced into its very heart, and there had itself heralded its presence, with its own wild music, before its coming had been suspected!

. All this struck strangely on the minds of men, and, with a superstitious stillness, and pale faces, and mute lips, they gazed on these world-renowned priest-soldiers —“these men,” in the language of St. Bernard, “with aspect steady and austere, with visage embrowned by the sun, attired in steel and covered with dust,”—who had suddenly appeared, from a foreign soil, and like spectre warriors on spectre steeds moved silently and sternly on!

As the cavalcade marched up the street of St. Denis, the mass of spectators, constantly augmenting, had become countless. But, unlike popular throngs upon other occasions, they pressed not on the troop, and no shout or sound went up from the moving mass. At a distance, respectfully and silently, the multitudes followed on; and, when the band had gone out of the gate of St. Denis, and turned off to the right in the direction of the Palace of the Temple, the mass of people, also, went and poured itself over the broad plains beyond.

Arrived at the embattled walls of the gloomy pile, the drawbridge fell—the portcullis rose,—the ponderous gates rolled back, as if by magic, upon their hinges: the glittering spear-points and flowing mantles disappeared beneath the deep barbican of the Temple.

And, then, the gates again closed, as they had opened, and the spectral band was gone; and, like a vision, when it hath departed, so seemed to those awe-struck beholders the strange apparition of that dark array and its strange disappearance.

And, silently and thoughtfully, the citizens of Paris went back to their homes. But the scenes of that memorable morning passed not lightly from their minds. Nay, tenfold more deeply now than ever were they impressed with awe and dread of that terrible order,—an awe and dread, from which, years afterwards, emanated most bitter fruits.

But there was one man, who, from the tall tower of the Louvre, gazed more anxiously and more earnestly on this mystic procession than all others beside; and into whose mind more deeply than into the mind of any other beholder sank its impression.

That man was Philip Fourth of France; and, years afterwards, bitter, indeed, were the fruits, which that impression conduced to germinate and to bring forth!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WARRIOR-MONKS.

ON the evening of the fifteenth day of July, 1099, Count Godfrey of Bouillon planted the standard of the First Crusade on the walls of the Holy City, after a Moslem bondage of 460 years.

Twenty years passed away. A soldier of the cross still sat upon the throne of Jerusalem, and thousands of way-worn and penniless pilgrims dragged themselves over the burning sands of Palestine, to look upon the holy sepulchre of the Lord and to die. Multitudes perished on the route of famine, disease and destitution; and their bleaching skeletons, for many a year, whitened the desert; but still greater multitudes perished by the scimitar of the Saracen, who thus alone could wreak an atrocious vengeance on an execrated foe.

To protect these pious palmers from the atrocities of the Paynim, and to furnish an appropriate escort to a perpetual pilgrimage, nine of the noblest and most valiant knights of the Count of Bouillon, in the year 1117, united themselves by a vow to that end; and, "In honor of the sweet Mother of God*," they associated the duties of a monk with those of a knight in the obligations they assumed.

Of these nine noble knights, the names of but two

* *La douce Mère de Dieu.*

have come down to us; they are Geoffrey Adelman of St. Omer and Hugh des Payens, the first Grand Master.

In 1118, Baldwin Second, King of Jerusalem, vouchsafed the new order a retreat within the Holy Temple, and gave to them the name of Templar Knights. But *they* called themselves "Poor Fellow-soldiers of Christ and the Temple of Solomon." The valiant Hugh des Payens was chosen their leader, bearing the title, "Master of the Temple;" and, in 1120, Fulk, Count of Anjou, one of the most renowned warriors of the age, who had plunged into the crusades that he might drown his anguish for the loss of a beloved wife, was among the earliest companions of the order.

In 1128, by command of Pope Honorius Second, the famous St. Bernard of Clairvaux drew up a system of monastic discipline for the governance of the new brotherhood, which was subsequently confirmed by the Council of Troyes.

The bases of this Holy Rule were the canonical obligations of chastity, poverty and obedience. Each Templar was enjoined to hear the Holy Office throughout, every day, or, to repeat thirteen Pater Nosters for Matins and nine for Vespers: also, to abstain from milk, meat and eggs on Friday, and from flesh-meats four days of each week; while water was prescribed as their only drink. They were, also, forbidden to wear a crest upon their helmets, or a blazon on their arms or armor:—they were forbidden to hunt with hawk or hound,—to shave the beard on the chin,—to read works of poetry or romance,—to possess more than three horses, or to be

attended by more than one Esquire; while it was enjoined on them to crush heresy,—to protect pilgrims,—to defend the cross, and to combat evermore for the glory of the Lord Supreme.

By the primitive Templars these rigid injunctions are said to have been observed with most punctillious and painful exactitude,—especially that embodied in the 46th Capital entitled—“*De osculis fugiendis.*” So scrupulously, indeed, was it observed, that many of the warrior-monks shunned the kiss of their own mothers even; while some were so impressed with the capital entitled—“*De oblectione Carnis,*” that they deemed it an unpardonable tempting of Providence to look a fair woman in the face! Indeed, it is related of “the gentle Saint of Clairvaux,” himself, who was the author of these ordinances, that, on one occasion, chancing to fix his eyes on a woman, he instantly took to his heels and plunged up to his neck in ice-cold water! This penance, it may be added, well-nigh cost the worthy saint his life!

In the year 1162, Pope Alexander III. issued the celebrated Bull *Omne Datum Optimum*, conferring privileges and powers which the Temple had long desired, and which completed the union of priest and warrior,—a union omnipotent in a superstitious and warlike age. The order was, also, exempt from the terrible effects of *Interdict*; and thousands sought affiliation as serving brothers and sisters, and also as *Donates* and *Oblates*, that they might occasionally hear mass and receive the sacrament, and, should they die, the rites of Christian sepulture, while the formidable interdict of Pope or Prelate

might overshadow the land. Pope Innocent III. declared himself an affiliated brother of the order; and among the *Oblates* were priests and princes, and among the sisterhood some of the purest and brightest names of the age.*

The Master of the Temple had rather the power of a Venitian Doge, or a Spartan Prince, than a Benedictine Prior. He was allowed four horses and an Esquire of noble birth. He had, also, a chaplain and two secretaries,—one to manage his Latin correspondence and the other his Saracenic. He had, also, a farrier, a cook, two footmen, a Turcopole, or guard, and a Turcoman, or guide,—the two last, as their names intimate, being Turks. The Statutes declare the Master to be in the place of God, and that his commands are to be obeyed like those of God. Yet the Master was not absolute in his rule, but was governed by the majority of the Chapter. General Chapters always met at Jerusalem, but were very rarely convened.

The canonical costume prescribed to the Templars by the Rule of St. Bernard was a long white mantle, symbolic of the purity of their life, which was enjoined to be worn over their knightly harness. Twenty years afterwards a red cross, the symbol of that martyrdom to which the knights were constantly exposed, was added to the attire by Pope Eugene Third, and was worn, either emblazoned on the left breast, or cut in red cloth on the left shoulder of the mantle. The great standard prescribed to the order was composed of linen,

* "Secret Societies of Middle Ages."

—partly white and partly black in hue, bearing on its centre the cross, and called *Beauseant*, which word was, also, their war-cry. On the eve of battle, the marshal unfurled the *Beauseant* in the name of God, and nominated ten Templars to guard it,—one of whom bore a second banner furled, which he was to display if the first went down. On pain of expulsion, a Templar could never quit the field so long as the banner of his order waved. And, when the *red* cross fell, he was to rally to the *white*; and, when that was gone, he was to join any Christian banner yet to be seen on the field; and, when all had disappeared, he might then slowly retreat,—if so ordered by his superior.

The 20th Capital of the Holy Rule, prescribing the banner, assigns the significance of its colors and appellation to be this:—“Because the poor companions shall be fair and favorable to Christ’s friends, and black and terrible to his foes.” It bore as a device the cross of the order, with the inscription—“*Non nobis, Domine, non nobis, sed tuo nomine da gloriam.*” It was, also, enjoined that wheresoever the Templars should go a portable chapel should accompany them, and that their religious worship should, in no event be pretermitted. So strictly was this ordinance observed, that it is related of them that every night, during all the crusades, when they repaired to their camps, at a stated moment, when the sun went down, the heralds thrice shouted—“Save the Holy Sepulchre!”—and instantly each mailed form sank down on the spot where it had stood,—even though the soil were polluted with human gore, and though it

was yet warm and reeking on their hands, and though the earth was burthened with human carcasses themselves had slain, and meekly, yet fervently, invoked on their enterprise the smile of Heaven!

The peculiar tie which wedded the Templar so strongly to his order is not now, nor has it ever been, completely ascertained. Of this much, however, there seems little reason to doubt,—that no one but a knight according to the laws of chivalry could become a candidate for membership; and that the initiation vow enjoined an obligation to obey, during life, the Grand Master of the order,—to defend the holy city of Jerusalem,—to observe inviolate chastity of person,—to yield strict and cheerful compliance with all usages of the order,—never to demit from the institution save with the consent of the Grand Master and a full chapter of knights, and never, under any provocation, or possibility of circumstance, to injure a Templar, or to suffer him to be injured while there was power to prevent. The candidate seems, also, to have sworn to devote his discourse, his arms, his faculties and his life to the defence of the Church and the order; and, at all times, when commanded by his superior, to cross seas to combat infidels; and, should he singly be attacked by not more than three infidel foes, at one time, never to turn his back, but to fight on to the death. In return for these obligations, the candidate was assured of “bread and water all his life, the poor clothing of the order, and labor and toil enow;” and, should he be captured in battle with the infidel, his ransom was limited to his *capuce* and his girdle.

Such, without doubt, were a few of the obligations assumed by the Templar Knights as a military order; and it is equally undoubted that there existed other bonds of unity more solemn and more irrefragible than even these. That the Templars possessed the mysteries, performed the ceremonies, and inculcated the duties of that high Masonic order of the present day which bears their name is not certainly known, although it is more than probable. The best writers on Masoury both concede and claim the fact.*

But be this as it may, never did a community increase more rapidly in power, in numbers and in celebrity, than did that of the chevaliers of the Temple, during the first century of its existence. In the enthusiastic language of a chronicler of the times,—“All Christendom resounded with the chivalric deeds of the Soldiers of the Cross. Princes supplicated to be buried in the habit and harness of these warrior-monks, and kings were proud to be enrolled under their triumphant standard.”

Distinction awaited the Templar everywhere, and all were eager to do him reverence. Godfrey of St. Omer presented the order with all his possessions, and many Flemish gentlemen imitated his example. Henry First of England made the order many splendid presents, and the Emperor Lothaire, in 1130, bestowed upon it a large

* Lawrie says:—“We know that the Knight Templars not only possessed the mysteries, but performed the ceremonies, and inculcated the duties, of Free Masons.” The dissolution of the order he attributes, in part, to the discovery of this fact, and traces the reception of the Masonic mysteries to the Syriac fraternity of the Druses, which, at the era of the Crusades, and long after, held their seat on Mount Libanus, and there initiated the early Templars while in Palestine. We also learn that, in the reign of Henry Second of England, the Masonic lodges in that realm were under superintendance of the Grand Chapter of Templar Knights: and that, in the year 1155, it employed them in the erection of the Temple, in Fleet Street, London.

part of his patrimony of Supplinburg. Raymond Berenger, the aged Count of Provence, entered the Temple House of Barcelona; and, resigning his government, sent the richest proceeds of his estates to his brethren in the Holy Land. Alphonse of Aragon and Navarre, the hero of thirty battles against the Moors, bequeathed to the order his throne, and Lion-hearted Richard of England, when about returning to Europe from the East, assumed the Templar-garb for safety from his foes, among whom, it is said, were numbered Templar Knights themselves; while his brother John was ever a warm patron of the order, and, like other monarchs of the age, committed all his treasures to the safe-keeping of the Temple House in London,—a trust never known in any instance to have been betrayed.

From the period of the commencement of the Second Crusade to the close of the Ninth,—a space of more than one hundred years,—the career of the Knights Templar has no rival for brilliancy in the annals of Europe. During all that terrible conflict between the crescent and the cross, this order was ever in the van of the fight. Beneath the walls of Ascalon and Tyre,—of Ptolemais and Jerusalem; on the plains of Tiberias; on the barren sea-coast of Gaza upon that fatal eve of St. Luke, when, out of thousands of Templars engaged, but thirty survived;—on the sacred banks of the Jordan when its stream ran blood, and a captive Grand Master chose death rather than ransom; at Cæsarea, and Jaffa and Damietta, and Tripoli; before the castle of Eichhorn where a Grand Prior with 1700 men lay slain when

night closed the conflict; at the brook Kishon, where 140 knights encountered 7,000 Moslems, and refusing all quarter were cut off to a man,—the Marshal of the Temple, the heroic De Maily, falling last; at the fatal fight of Hittin, where 30,000 Christians fell, and the Latin power in the East was broken forever, and where, to a man, the Templar captives refused their lives to Saladin at the price of their faith, and only Gerard de Ridefort, their Master, was spared; at the storming of Massoura, where but three Templars survived from a host; at the Tower of Saphad, where thousands were massacred rather than renounce their faith; and, finally, in the fortalice of Acre, when three hundred knights—a whole Chapter! with their Master at their head—were slaughtered in a hopeless defence of female virtue against Paynim treachery and lust,—everywhere these noble and heroic men were champions of chivalry and the cross.

At length the Christian war-cry ceased to be heard on the shores of Palestine. The conflict of two centuries terminated in blood, and a mournful silence reigned along that coast, which, for years, had resounded with the clash of arms.*

The few surviving Templars retired, at first, to Limisso, in the Island of Cyprus, but shortly after returned to Europe, and sought an asylum in the rich and numerous Commanderies, Priors, or Preceptories of the order, which existed in every kingdom on the continent, as well as in England, Ireland and Scotland.

* Fuller.

In all Europe, indeed, was the order established, and everywhere had it "churches, chapels, tithes, farms, villages, mills, rights of pasturage, of fishing, of venery, and of wood; and, in many places, the right, also, of holding and of receiving tolls at annual fairs. The number of their preceptories was, at the least, 9,000, and their annual income about six millions of pounds sterling! In the early part of the Thirteenth Century, notwithstanding their losses in the East from the conquests of Saladin, their estates in Western Europe were some seven or eight thousand in number. Lords of immense estates and countless revenues,—descendants of the noblest houses in Christendom,—uniting the most honored of secular and ecclesiastical characters,—viewed as the chosen champions of Christ and the flower of knighthood,—what wonder that, in the darkest centuries of an age of darkness, they fell into luxury and pride, and became the object of jealousy to both laity and priesthood, and of cupidity and dread to an avaricious and perfidious monarch. Instances of that pride of power exhibited by the Templars are not few. When Henry III. of England, in 1252, threatened to recall the privileges so profusely and rashly given the order, the Grand Prior made the memorable reply,—“Do justice, oh, King, and thou wilt reign! Infringe it and thou art no more a King!”

By the union with the order of such multitudes of nobles and princes, whose vast possessions passed, by their death on the battle-field, or elsewhere, into the common fund, the wealth of these preceptories had

become, in the long lapse of two hundred years, incredible and almost incalculable. And, with the possession of these untold riches, no wonder that luxury and corruption also crept in; and that the battle-scarred heroes, who, on the plains of Palestine, had, with religious severity, remembered every vow, should, for a season, amid the opulence and security of peace and pleasure, have forgotten them all;—all vows save one,—OBEDIENCE;—obedience to the mandate of their Master, wherever heard, however received, and whatsoever its import! “They go and come,” wrote the Abbot of Clairvaux, “at a sign from their Master. There is with them no respect of persons. The best, not the noblest, are most highly regarded. They are mostly to be seen with disordered hair and covered with dust, brown from their corselets and the heat of the sun. They go to war armed within with faith, and without with iron, but never adorned with gold, wishing rather to excite fear than desire for booty. Hence, one of them has often put a thousand, and two of them ten thousand, to flight. They are gentler than lambs and grimmer than lions; they have the mildness of monks and the valour of the knight. It is the Lord’s doing, and it is wonderful in our eyes!”

“They are the first to advance,” writes the Cardinal of Vitry, in the early part of the 13th Century, “and the last to retreat. They ask not *how many* is the foe, but *where* is he. Lions in war,—lambs at home: rugged warriors on the field,—monks and eremites in the church.”

“To narrate the exploits of the Temple,” says a modern writer, “would be to chronicle the crusades; for never was there a conflict with the Infidel in which the chivalry of that order bore not a conspicuous part. Their war-cry ever rose in the thickest of the fray, and never did *Beauseant* waver or retreat.”* Never, too, did the Templar abjure his faith, whatever might be the irregularities of his life; and Robert of St. Albans is the only name on record of apostacy from the order, or of alliance with the infidel foe.

It was in 1298,—four years after the final retreat from the shores of Asia,—that Jacques de Molai, a member of a noble family of Burgundy, a native of Besançon in the Franche Comté, and who, for more than thirty years a Templar, had been among the most renowned of the heroes of the order in Palestine, was unanimously chosen chief, while still absent from Cyprus on a hostile shore; and it was nearly ten years after this event that, in unquestioning obedience to the mandate of his Spiritual Supreme, he entered Paris.† It was, probably, his purpose to make the capital of France the future seat of the order; for, agreeably to the suggestion of the Pontiff, he not only bore thither vast sums of money in his train, amounting to 150,000 Florins in gold, and a quantity of silver coin perfectly countless,—certainly uncounted, but, also, all the standards, trophies, records, regalia, reliques, furniture and paraphernalia of the order.

* “Secret Societies of the Middle Ages.”

† De Molai, when last in Paris, in 1297, held at the baptismal font Robert IV., a son of Philip, who died August, 1308.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DUNGEON OF THE GRAND CHATELET.

IN the Dark Ages, large edifices were built with great solidity, and were, sometimes, whole centuries in course of erection. But, then, they lasted whole centuries,—whole centuries even after their builders were dust, and they all of them served a two or threefold purpose, at least. A cathedral was, also, a cemetery,—a convent was a castle,—a palace, a prison,—a tower, a tribunal: and sometimes all were united within the same massive walls of stone.

There were many such structures in the Paris of the Fourteenth Century. The Louvre was a palace and a prison;—Notre Dame a cathedral and a cemetery;—the Temple a convent and a castle;—the Palace of Justice a tribunal and a donjon-keep;—while the Grand and Petit Chatelets, the citadel of Vincennes, and the Monastery of the Temple itself, as well as the Abbeys, and Churches, and all the other great structures, had their dungeons and cells. The Tournells, the Bastille, the Hôtel de Ville,—all of them of subsequent construction,—were each supplied with the same *conveniences*; to say nothing of the Hôtels of Pol, and Cluny, and Nesle, or the *Logis* of Nevers, or Rome, or Rheims.

On the morning of the fifth day of April, 1307, two men who were buried in the dungeons of the Grand

Chatelet were roused from their slumbers by the wild and piercing notes of the trumpet-music of the Templars.

One of these men was somewhat advanced in years, and, for a long series of heinous offences having been condemned by the Provost of Paris to die, now awaited a most merited doom. His name was Squin de Florian,* and, by birth, he was a native of the village of Beziers, in the Department of Herault, in the ancient Province of Languedoc.

The other prisoner, who was doomed to the same fate, for similar enormities, was a much younger man in years, though hardly less matured in villainy than his companion. His name was Noffo Dei,† and by birth he was an Italian of the city of Florence.

Each of these men bore upon his countenance the marks of crime as ineffaceably and as unmistakably as in the record of his career; and that, too, without one solitary line, or feature, or trait, to redeem it. Yet, strange to say, these brutal men clung to that life which each had so lightly regarded in others, and had each a thousand times justly forfeited in the sight of Heaven and of man, with all the terrible tenacity of that species of reptile existence, which, though the body is cut into a dozen sections, in each section is said to retain all its original vitality.

“Ha! Noffo!” exclaimed De Florian, whom the trumpets of the Templars, as they were crossing the *Pont au Changeurs*, together with the tramp of hoofs,

*Or, Squin de Flexian.

†“A man,” says Villani, “full of iniquity.”

upon the bridge, had first aroused—"What sounds are those?"

"No—no! unhand me!" cried the slumbering villain, struggling in his troubled sleep. "I tell you the hour hasn't come! I *won't* die!—I won't die!"

And with an imprecation which might have shaken the massive dungeon walls to their centre, he sprang to his feet in an attitude of defiance.

"There—there—don't be a fool, my boy!" said De Florian, scornfully. "I'm not the Provost, thank God! Your hour hasn't quite come; it is two days off, at least. Do you hear that strange music?"

The Florentine pressed his hand to his damp forehead and listened.

"Well—do you hear the trumpets?" asked De Florian again, after a prolonged silence.

"I do," was the low answer as the young man still listened with absorbed attention.

"It is a strange air they play," said the other. "Did you ever hear that air before?"

"Often," was the quick answer.

"And what is it?"

"The battle-step of the Templars."

"The Templars!" cried De Florian. "It is a little singular that an order so distrusted by the King of France as that of the Templar Knights should enter his capital with a battle-march!"

"It is," said the Italian, after a pause.

"I wish I knew the secrets of these Templars," returned De Florian, sinking listlessly on his heap of dirty straw and yawning.

“And why?”

“Why? Because I would reveal them to the King, and save myself from the gibbet.”

The Florentine shuddered, but was silent, and still listened to the music of the Templars as it died away.

“In two days we shall be dancing on nothing in the Place-St. Jean-en-Grêve, unless a miracle is vouchsafed to save us,” continued the old man. “And I hardly think it will be.”

“Do you know that I—that I am a Templar!” suddenly faltered the Florentine.

“*You*, a Templar!” laughed the old man, scornfully.

“Yes, a Templar,” was the answer.

“And if you are a Templar, how came you here, pray?” “And why do you remain here?”

“*I was* a Templar,” replied the other, humbly.

“Really?”

“Really!”

“*Was?* And why are you not now?”

The Florentine was silent.

“I say, if you were once a Templar, why are you not *now* a Templar?” asked De Florian, contemptuously.

“I was expelled from the order, and doomed to perpetual imprisonment, but escaped.”

“Ha!” cried the other, rising partially to his feet.

And, for some moments, both men continued silent as if buried in thought.

“My young friend,” at length said De Florian, gravely, breaking the deep stillness of the dungeon, “do you know that our fate is inevitable?”

The Italian nodded, but spake not.

“Have you no wish to confess your sins before you die?”

“No confessor will be granted us,” replied the Florentine, bitterly.

“Most true. But may we not confess to each other?”

“We may,” said the young man, after a pause, while a strange smile passed over his corpse-like countenance.

“And I, being the younger, must begin, I suppose.”

“Proceed, then,” said De Florian, with the same significant smile as his companion.

“Let me see,” said the other, thoughtfully. “In the year 1282, at Florence, I robbed my father of sixty bezants, all he had, old fellow, to comfort his declining years,—and then I fled. At Mantua, in 1284, I stabbed a rival in love, and again fled, and, on my route to Brescia, met a traveller the same night, and killed him for his gold. At Brescia, I ravished a nun of the Convent of St. Agnes, and then dashed her brains out. At Rome, in,—let me see,—yes, it was in 1288, I poisoned three cardinals for the Pope, at fifty florins each,—and cheap enough it was! I have received as much for a simple friar!”

“But the Templars?” interrupted De Florian.

“Oh, I’m coming to the Templars. Don’t hurry me. I must make a clean bosom of it, you know. In 1290, I betook me to the siege of St. Jean d’Acre, and fought so like a devil, beneath its walls, that I was made a knight, by the *accolade* of Peter de Beaujeu, Grand Master of the Templars, himself. I was in the Tower of the Temple,

when it fell, burying three hundred of the order under its ruins, together with Moslems, numberless. Afterwards I was in the Convent of St. Clare, where, as you have heard, the nuns cut off their noses and gashed their cheeks to render themselves revolting to their Infidel invaders. Well, they succeeded. Their outrageous virtue was rewarded by instant martyrdom at the hands of their captors."

And the villain laughed loudly, highly amused at the reminiscence, for some moments.

"But the Templars?" again asked De Florian.

"Oh, the Templars. Well, after the fall of Acre, the whole order,—a small remnant only it was—repaired to Cyprus, and there, in 1294, I became a member."

"And then was expelled?"

"In 1295. Well, there was another nun in the case."

"And the secrets—the mysteries of the order?"

"Oh, that's quite a different thing. Old man, were I to whisper to you the mysteries of the Temple, even in the depths of this dark old dungeon, it would cost me my life by torture!"

"Your life!" laughed De Florian. "It could hardly cost you that; your life is bought and sold already, if I mistake not. The price is paid and in forty-eight hours the purchase will be delivered!"

Noffo Dei folded his arms on his breast, and paced the narrow limits of the dark dungeon in silence.

"Come—come—finish your confession!" at length exclaimed De Florian. "Our time is short. I want to begin mine. Tell me all about the Templars:—you

certainly owe them no love anyhow, after their treatment of you, nor allegiance either. And, as to any such revelation costing you your life, I am thinking it would be much more likely to save it—and mine, too!”

“Ha!” cried the apostate Templar, with a start. “You are right,” he added, slowly.

“Well, then, let me act the ghostly father, and do you answer the questions I shall propose, truly and faithfully, on your soul’s salvation. Such a sinner as you have been needs to be catechised, in order to refresh his memory, and to draw his numberless villainies out of him. It can’t be expected he should confess the half of his enormities otherwise. Do you understand?”

“Proceed,” replied the young man, with a sinister smile.

“Is it true, then, the horrible crimes with which the Temple is charged?”

“It is!” said the apostate.

“Is it true that the Novice of that order is compelled, when initiated, to spit upon the crucifix three times, and then to trample on it, and to renounce Christ?”

“It is!” replied the apostate.

“Suppose he refuse?”

“The Templars have racks!” was the brief answer.

“But in what did this custom originate?”

“In this: One of the early Grand Masters being condemned to death could obtain his release only by promising the Saracen to introduce this custom into his order.”

“And what do the knights do at their midnight meetings?”

“Many things too horrible to think of, much less to speak of!”

“Do they worship idols?”

“They do. There is a brazen head, like that of a man, covered with human skin, and called *Baphumet*, which is the chief idol; and to this image apostates are immolated*.”

“And does the Devil ever appear at these meetings?”

“Always!”

“In what shape?”

“In the shape of a big black tom-cat, to which the knights all kneel and pay homage.”

De Florian could but smile at this part of the apostate's confession, but continued:

“And is it true, that, when the chaplains of the order celebrate mass, they omit the words of consecration?”

“It is.”

“And that the Templars are in truth disciples of the false prophet, and have sold Jerusalem to the Paynim?”

“It is.”

“Their professed vows are obedience, poverty and chastity,—do they observe these vows?”

“They would obey the Grand Master if he bade them slay their own mothers, or even themselves,” was the earnest answer.

“And as to poverty?”

“The ‘Poor Soldiers of Christ’ are no longer *poor*, whatever else they may be,” laughed the apostate.

*Absurd as is this charge and all these charges, they were actually preferred; and incredible as it may seem, upon them the Templars, history asserts, were actually arraigned.

“And chastity?”

“Oh, they are very chaste!—they never marry!” replied the Florentine, with a smile.

“Of course not. To be a husband and to be a Templar is impossible. But is it true, as is asserted, that scenes too abominable for imagination to conceive are sometimes perpetrated within the secrecy of their monastic houses?”

“Often. Those houses are the abode of every damnable and abominable sin and brutality,” replied the apostate.

“Is it true that, if a Templar ever becomes a father, the infant is brought into a full chapter of knights, and is then tossed about from one to another ranged in a circle, until it expires?”

“It is: and, moreover, the carcass is then roasted, and the Templars anoint their beards with the fat that issues from it.”

“And when a Templar dies, his body is burnt, and his ashes are mingled with wine, and drunk by the knights, to make them more faithful and intrepid, is it not so?” asked the other villain.

“This custom, like many others of the order, was derived from the infidels,” was the reply. “In 1174, they drank the ashes of Jacques de Maille, in order to imbibe his unequalled courage.”

“And,” continued the inquisitor, “one of the Grand Masters cemented an alliance with an infidel prince, thus,—each permitting the blood of an artery to flow into the same bowl; and then the sanguine stream being

mingled with wine, each drank of it in sacred libation to the other. Was it not so?"

"So it is said," asserted the apostate. "This was in 1248 at the opening of the Eighth Crusade. Saladin was the Sultan, and William de Sonnac the Grand Master. At all events, vows are thus sealed between Templars, whatever the origin. The blood spouts from an arm of each into a skull, and is then mingled with wine, and drunk while yet warm and reeking! It is called 'the Fifth Libation,' and is the most inviolable pledge of a Templar."

"Suppose this pledge broken?"

"That is utterly impossible!" solemnly replied the apostate.

"Suppose a Templar, shocked at the depravity of the order, seeks to withdraw?"

"He is first torn limb from limb by the rack, and then sacrificed to the brazen idol, *Hashbaz*—his entrails being reduced to ashes before his face."

"And apostate Templars,—those who betray the mysteries of the order?" asked De Florian, with a malignant smile.

"*Their* fate would be too awful for description," replied the Florentine. "In 1169, Melier, an Armenian Prince, apostatized and went over to the Infidels; and every Templar that fell into his hands he tortured first, and then cut his throat."

"And what was his own fate?"

"Oh, the Templars caught him at last, and tortured him, and then burned him over a slow fire a whole week,

and finally sprinkled his ashes into the waters of the Jordan."

"And have you no dread of a similar doom," asked De Florian, with a hideous smile, after a protracted pause.

"I?" exclaimed the Florentine, with a start.

"You!" said De Florian.

"I—why I dread nothing, just at present," was the apostate's answer, partially recovering his hardihood, "save only the gibbet of the Place St. Jean-en-Grève! Do yo?"

"No," was the reply.

In this and like horrible converse, again and again repeated, until, at length, each of these infamous wretches was fully possessed of all the foul suggestions which the depraved imagination of the other could conceive, and all the silly tales of the times each had ever heard, and had given them his assent,—passed the day in that murky dungeon.

That night William Imbert, a monk of St. Dominic, Confessor of the King of France and General of the Holy Office at Paris, was in the condemned dungeons of the Grand Chatelet.

The next morning, Philip *le Bel*, the King, Enguerrand de Marigni, the Minister, William de Nogaret, the Chancellor, Hugh de Chatillon, the Constable, and William of Paris, the Grand Inquisitor, sat in solemn conclave, in the privy council-chamber of the Louvre.

The door opened. Squin De Florian and Noffo Dei, the apostate Templar, weighed down with fetters, were

brought in by Henry Capetal, Provost of Paris and Governor of the Grand Chatelet, escorted by a file of halberdiers.

The Governor and the guard withdrew. One hour afterwards they were recalled.

The manacles were knocked from the limbs of the convicts; and, at sunrise the next morning, instead of mounting the gibbet of the Place St. Jean-en-Grêve, they were free and loaded with gold, and beyond the walls of Paris.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE KING AND THE GRAND MASTER.

DURING each of three successive years—and nearly on the same day of the same month of each year—there was a royal marriage at the Palace of the Louvre. Chance what chance might—whether war or pestilence, or insurrection—there was no postponement of these important events. Although Philip *le Bel* was in the very prime of life, and was esteemed “the handsomest man in Europe,” and although his Queen had now been dead for two years, he manifested not the slightest design or inclination himself to marry again; and yet he seemed resolved that all around him should wed—happily or unhappily, he cared not a rush:—but wed they should. It was in this way only that he could make them, especially the ladies of his Court, subserve his own ruling lust—Ambition. Thus he had first married his eldest son, Louis, to Margaret of Burgundy; the next year, he married his son Charles to Blanche of Artois; and, on the third, his son Philip to her sister Jane. In neither of these unions, the second only excepted, had the wishes of the parties most interested been consulted; and not one of them had proved happy. But what cared the King? Did he make the matches to make them happy?

A fourth bridal now took place, which gave promise,

at first, indeed, of some little nuptial bliss; but very shortly proved a little more miserable, if possible, than either of its predecessors. This was the marriage of the Princess Isabella with Edward of England, the second sovereign of that name, in that realm.

In the year 1299, eight years before, when Edward was but thirteen and Isabella but six years of age, the future union of these children was made an item in a treaty between their royal sires. Four years afterwards, an act of solemn betrothment, by proxy, ensued; and, four years after this, when the bride was but thirteen, and the bridegroom but twenty, the young victims were led to the altar, and there yoked for life!

The dying injunction of Edward the First to his son was to marry the daughter of Philip. Froissart tells us of another injunction of the old monarch, which was this—that, so soon as the breath had left his body, the said body should be boiled in a cauldron, until the bones were denuded of flesh, and then, ever after, when the hated Scots rebelled, and an army was led against them, his skeleton should be borne in the van of the fight!*

This vow seems not to have been so agreeable to the taste of the young King as the former, though attested by all the Saints and by all the Barons, for it was never fulfilled; but, no sooner had his father's corpse, bones, flesh, and all, been safely deposited in its crypt in Westminster Abbey, than the young monarch crossed the channel to meet his promised bride, although his eager

*The celebrated Bruce, of Scottish renown, is recorded to have said, that he dreaded more even the bones of Edward the First, than Edward the Second with all his hosts!

infatuation is said by chroniclers to have cost him no less a price than the kingdom of Scotland.

Never had the vast hall of the Louvre witnessed a fête more imposing than that on the occasion of this apparently auspicious union. Edward was, certainly, a very handsome man, unless his portraits greatly belie him; and Isabella, (whose precocious charms had already gained her the name of *la belle*, so common in her family, so remarkable for personal beauty,) is distinguished by Froissart as one of the most beautiful women in the world.*

“Who,” says a chronicler of that splendid bridal fête, “who of all the royal and gallant company, witnesses of these espousals, could have believed their fatal termination, or deemed that the epithet, ‘She-Wolf of France,’ could ever have been deserved by such a bride?”

Yet, so it was; and that very husband was eventually the victim of that very bride and Roger Mortimer, her desperate paramour!

History states that four sovereigns, and as many Queens, graced that bridal with their presence, and the largest array of Princes and nobility ever assembled on such an occasion was there.

Of this brilliant and high-born throng, nearly all the personages of our story were members; and, although a full twelvemonth had passed away since that hall of St. Louis was the scene of a similar fête, and it had, in the meantime, witnessed not a few festal events of surpassing splendor, none had surpassed this.

* “*Une des plus belles dames du monde.*”

Philip de Launai was still the devoted worshipper of the Queen of Navarre; and nightly still the solitary lamp in the tall Tower of Nesle guided the solitary boatman across the Seine. Her husband, Louis, was still in the little kingdom, which had been his, since his mother's death and his coronation at Pampeluna.

And Jane, of Burgundy, that fair young being, who, two years before, in that very hall, had been a most unhappy bride, was now the gayest of the gay—for Walter de Launai was ever at her side!

As for Philip of Poitiers and Charles *le Bel*, it is true they were no longer devoted to the Countess of Soissons, or to Madame d'Aumale; but they were each quite as devoted to some other lady of the Court, equally lovely and equally kind.

It is not a very easy thing, perhaps, especially in the history of France, to decidedly stigmatize any one era, or any one reign, as more dissolute than any other, however often we may be tempted to make that decision. But, surely, a mere chronicle of the events of the Court of France, in the reign of Philip the Fourth, demonstrates an extent of corruption that is appalling. Friar Maillard, the Rector of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, the chapel of the Louvre, rebukes the dissoluteness of the Court in a sermon which has reached even the present day, in terms of severity and coarseness, which one would hardly suppose any degree of corruption could warrant. The indignant friar winds up his discourse with the vociferation—“*Allez à tous les diables!*” * Another

* Go to the Devil!

worthy man urges upon the ladies of the Court the manifest impropriety of running when they go to mass, and of exposing their bosoms or arms so freely as they did; and exhorts them neither to swear, nor to drink too much, and to give up the habit of lying altogether; likewise, to partake of the holy sacrament without laughing, and not to soil their fingers too much by greedy eating,—the last injunction being somewhat to the purpose, inasmuch as *forks* were the invention of a subsequent era!

But, to return:—The star of that brilliant assemblage, not even excepting the young and lovely bride, was the beautiful Countess of Marche. Radiant with health and happiness—fresh as a soft May morning in her most voluptuous charms—animated with joy—sparkling with wit—beaming with smiles—her transparent eyes suffused with the light of love—her glossy hair descending in bright masses to a bosom white as alabaster, and fluttering with the beatings of its own happy heart—her rounded and perfect shape, attired with that elegant simplicity which ever best sets forth those charms which are the gift of nature—Blanche of Artois was the idol of every beholder—the adored of all adorers—the beautiful star in that bright galaxy, which every eye singled out and worshipped, even as the old Chaldeans worshipped the orbs of heaven. And who, to have gazed upon her then—that bright young being—would, for an instant, have recognized in her the sad, and despairing, and deserted wife she first appeared?

And Adrian de Marigni, who would have recalled in

his illuminated features the ceaseless melancholy they had once exhibited. Adrian was still a dweller of the Louvre. Immediately upon his return from the Abbey of Maubuisson, and his union with the Order of the Temple, he had received an intimation that he would not rejoin the army until further orders; an intimation with which he not unwillingly complied. Ambition, it was true, was strong within him; but there was a passion now burning at his heart to which all others must succumb.

The fair Countess and the young soldier had a casual word or a significant smile for each other as they chanced to meet in those lighted halls; but they courted not each other's notice by act, or phrase, or glance; and little could any one have dreamed, in all that splendid throng, that she was now all the world to him and he was now all the world to her!

Yet, alas! alas! it was even so!

And Marie—the sweet heiress of Morfontaine—she, too, was the centre of a gay circle of admirers, conspicuous among whom was her most faithful and loving servant, Edmond de Goth. She was still, as ever, surpassingly lovely; but there was a feverish lustre in her eye, and a changeless pallor on her cheek, and each betrayed a heart ill at ease. When Adrian approached her, as he often did, she turned upon him her large blue eyes with a mournful, almost reproachful gaze, and replied to his salutation, or compliment, with tones of sadness, which her merry voice had never known before.

At a late hour in the festival, the King entered the

hall, accompanied by Jacques de Molai, the Grand Master of the Temple, in earnest converse. Behind them, and in attendance, walked Hugh de Peralde, the Grand Prior of France, and Pierre de Laigneville, with several other noted Templars, accompanied by the Grand Constable, the Chancellor, and the Minister of the Realm.

The Templars had exchanged their chain-mail for tunics of crimson satin, which, closely girded around the waist by a belt of steel, fell in full folds to the knees; and, over these, in snowy whiteness, descended the flowing mantle of the order, bearing the broad red cross on the shoulder. Here and there among the throng, in the saloons or the gardens, could be caught, likewise, the passing glimpse of some Templar's mantle, who, mindless or thoughtless of the capital of good St. Bernard of Clairvaux—" *Ut fratres non conversantur cum mulieribus,*" was whispering words of burning significance into some not unwilling ear. And surely, it is not very wonderful that young and ardent men, who, for years had dwelt on the tented field of Palestine, or within the solitary walls of Linisso, should have dreamed themselves in heaven itself, when, breathing the seductive atmosphere of the Louvre, they moved among its lovely shapes. Nor is it very wonderful that they should have forgotten for a season, as many, doubtless, did, all their vows of earth, or hopes of heaven; nor that their blushing companions should have listened with delight, scarce less than their own, to words of worship from the lips of those dark-browed and dark-bearded men, with whose wondrous deeds all Christendom had rung.

Immediately upon entering the hall, the King advanced with his train to the canopied *dais*, where the bride and bridegroom held their Court and received their guests, and presented to the royal pair the heroic Grand Master of the Temple. His reception by the King of England was flattering in the extreme. He even left his seat beside the bride, and, descending the steps of the *dais*, stood upon the same floor with the warrior-monk while they conversed.* To the Grand Master's inquiries respecting his old fellow-soldier, William de la Moore, now Grand Prior of England, Edward replied with enthusiasm; and, at length, when the Templar was about retiring from the royal presence, the King grasped him warmly by the hand, and said:

"By the rule of your noble order, Grand Master, Kings cannot be Templars; yet, could the King of England resign his crown and his robe, he would crave the Templar's cloak and cap in preference to all other earthly dignity. Grand Master, Edward of England is the friend of the Templar!"

To these emphatic and significant words, De Molai bowed very low, and then, with brief rejoinder and radiant brow, passed on. The King of France bowed also, and passed on with his companion, but *his* brow was black and his lips compressed.

"It hath pleased you, sire," said De Molai, after a pause of some continuance, in which both proceeded in silence—"it hath pleased you to transmit to me two

* All monarchs conceded princely rank and place to the Master of the Temple; and, in councils, he took precedence of ambassadors and sat beside the prelates.

documents, desiring counsel as to the propriety of uniting the Order of the Temple with that of the Hospital, and, also, as touching the feasibility of again attempting the conquest of the Holy Land."

"And that counsel, Grand Master?"

"Will to-morrow, sire, be placed in your hands," was the reply.

"As chief of the Templar Knights, your feelings concur with your judgment, I suppose, in counselling a tenth crusade?" said the King.

De Molai shook his head.

"Sire, sire!" he exclaimed with some emphasis, "the combined armies of the Cross in all Christendom can alone tear the crescent from the minarets of Jerusalem!"

"You feel assured of this?" asked Philip.

"Sire, I am certain of this! The holy city might be taken, but it could not be retained."

"And do you think the opinion of Pope Nicholas Fourth at all correct in ascribing the recapture of Palestine to the incessant feuds of the rival orders?"

"Ah, sire, how often hath our glorious *Beauseant* waved fraternally with the standard of the White Cross, on the self-same bloody field!" exclaimed the old Templar, with mournful vehemence. "On the barren sea coast of Gaza, upon the fatal eve of St. Luke, a Grand Master of the Temple and a Grand Master of the Hospital lay side by side in death, while but thirty-three Templars and but sixteen White Cross Knights survived to tell the tale. Beneath the walls of Massoura, a Grand

Master of St. John was made captive, and a Grand Master of the Temple was slain by a thousand wounds after the loss of both eyes, while but four Knights of the Hospital and four of the Red Cross survived. At the siege of Acre each order lost a Master; and while four hundred Knights of St. John lay dead on the field, but ten Templars escaped with life. At the capture of Saphoury not a Templar survived; and the castle of Assur* was defended by ninety Knights of St. John, and the Mamelukes of Bendocar entered the citadel over the corpses of every one!"

"And when, beneath the walls of that same fortress of Azotus, the rival orders *themselves* met in deadly feud, how many knights then survived?"

The old soldier was silent. The blood mounted redly in his swarthy cheek, and contrasted strongly with his snowy beard. Philip referred to one of the most terrific and bloody conflicts that the annals of warfare have recorded. Long, and doubtful, and deadly was the fight. At last victory declared for the White Cross Knights; but they gave no quarter, as their rivals asked none, and not a Templar survived the combat!

"Sire," said the old knight meekly, "the knights are but men. Rivalry of rank hath often arrayed in bloody feud a brother's hand against a brother's life. But when, amid their deadliest conflicts, hath there appeared a Paynim foe, though exceeding thrice their number, when their lances have not been harmoniously united for his destruction?"

* Azotus.

“Of the valor of the knights of both orders there can exist no doubt,” remarked Philip. “Would that they were as scrupulous in the observance of their other vows!”

“Sire, I am well aware,” returned De Molai quickly, “that an evil report hath gone abroad of the soldiers of the Temple. I know it hath been asserted, and it hath even reached mine own ears, that since they have been relieved from the toils and perils of the field, they have but too freely indulged themselves in the pleasures afforded by comfortable Priories, to which they have so long been unused.”

“Would that were all, Grand Master—would that were all!” said Philip, sternly.

“I know well, sire, that it hath been asserted that the Templar interprets his first vow to mean a blind *obedience* only to his chief, his second only *poverty* of living while in camp, and his third to mean only *chastity* of body as set forth in the capital, “*Ut fratres non conversantur EXTRANEIS mulieribus*”^{*}—thereby excusing themselves and each other for intrigues and amours with the noblest dames and damsels in the land. Of all of this, sire, I say, the uncertain bruit hath reached mine ear; but I *know* it not—I believe it not—It *can* not be!”

“Grand Master, it *is*!” exclaimed the King with fierce, yet with apparently suppressed, vehemence.

The effect of this was terrible. That old soldier-monk, who a thousand times had braved the blood-billows of battle, even as the cliff braves the waves of the ocean,

* Courtesan.

was terrified at a charge like this against his beloved order, especially when emanating from such a source.

“Holy St. Bernard!” he murmured, raising his eyes to heaven. “Can such things be!”

“Such things unquestionably *are*,” coldly rejoined Philip. “The name of Templar in France, if not throughout all Europe, hath become identical with debauchery, rapine, lust, luxury and every form of crime. “*Boire comme un Templier** is a proverb. Nor is this all. Of late there hath come to us knowledge of guilt, so dark and desperate, within the Houses of thy community, that we must perforce crave of you early interview at a place more fitting than this, when all may be laid bare.”

“Be it so, be it so!” said De Molai, grasping the cold hand of the King. “Let me know all—all—all! And if,—oh—if,” he added, after a pause, clasping his thin and sinewy hands, which seemed composed only of whipcord and bone, and raising his flashing eyes to heaven—“if what thou sayest, oh, King, prove sooth; if the crimes thou layest at the door of our order have been committed—if the foul stain of which thou speakest be indeed eating like an ulcer into our heart—be sure, oh, be thou sure, that the guilty shall not escape! Holy St. Bernard, the lion *shall* be crushed! Though he were a right hand or a right eye—though he were the brother of the same womb,—though he were the noblest of our nobles—the wisest of our counsellors—the bravest of our Paladins—the most beloved of our friends—the most

* To drink like a Templar.

powerful of our magnates, he shall feel, he shall feel the weight of our righteous wrath! We are no powerless ruler, oh, King of France! We, too, Grand Master of the Temple, have the power of life and death! We, too, have a jurisdiction, within whose boarue but one power* can seize from us our victim! We, too, have our laws, and our penalties, and our dungeons, and *oubliettes*, and racks and tortures! But no—no—no—” continued the really kind-hearted old man—“this *can* not be! Our children *would* not thus forget their vows, and abuse our goodness! If they do not love their God—as, alas! may indeed be!—they love their noble order too dearly thus to disgrace her—they love their Master, who so loves them, too devotedly to rend his heart by such misbehavior! Good King, let me go, let me go! To the altar! to the altar!” he exclaimed, extending for a single instant both of his arms, crossing his right foot over his left, and inclining his venerable head to the right.

Instantly every Templar in that hall was around him, with evident marks of alarm, and followed him from the apartment as he rapidly retreated.

The King gazed on in mute astonishment. At length he exclaimed:

“What is my power to his?” And slowly, and silently, and sadly he left the hall.

* * * * *

The last guest had departed. The music had ceased.

* The Pope. Within the limits of his domain the Grand Master was supreme.

The last light had been extinguished. The great clock of Notre Dame had long since tolled the hour after midnight, and had received as tribute the sullen echoes of all the lesser clocks of the capital. The last lone lamp had gone out in the Tower of Nesle. The last solitary boatman had crossed the Seine. All Paris was asleep save her guardians of the night. The Louvre was still. Its inmates had retired. Perchance all slept.

Not *all!* The poor orphan, Marie Morfontaine, silent, sad, wretched, had retreated to her lonely pillow, but not to sleep. Alas! she was too—too miserable. She thought of Adrian—she thought of the past, and of the present; and she thought that his hate, his anger, his scorn—*anything* would be preferred by her to his indifference. Yet that—that, alas! alone seemed hers!

The white light of dawn was breaking over the towers and forests of Vincennes. The chamber of the poor heiress of Morfontaine adjoined that of the lovely Countess of Marche. Often at night, when ill or sad, she had repaired to the chamber of her best friend, the Countess; and the Countess had often repaired to hers. One seemed always as much alone as the other, though one was a wife and the other a maiden.

Restless, wretched, Marie Morfontaine rose from her sleepless couch, and with noiseless steps she repaired to the chamber of her friend for consolation. As she crossed the gallery the pale, silvery moonbeams lighted her way.

Raising the curtain which hung before the entrance, she crossed the threshold. All was silent. Not a sound

—not even a breathing could be heard. Suddenly a low rustling rose near the couch of the Countess. She stopped, she listened, she hid herself behind the tapestry. It was repeated, and the next moment a figure glided past her. For an instant the moon poured forth her pure rays in floods through the grated casement. She saw a form!—she saw a face! Oh, God! it was Adrian de Marigni!

CHAPTER XVII.

THE REFORM.

THE people of Europe, five hundred years ago, seemed fonder of amusements, and had many more of them, than now, many though they now may have. There was a feast of the Church almost every day of the year; and every coronation, and every royal marriage, and every national victory, was succeeded by days, and sometimes by weeks of general banqueting and jubilee. Hunting parties and hawking parties were, also, of common occurrence, as were, also, jousts and tournaments; though these last-named amusements seemed the peculiar prerogative of the nobility.

For nearly a fortnight after the brilliant espousals of Edward and Isabella, the halls of the Louvre resounded with uninterrupted rout and revel; and the royal Tilt yard, in St. Catharine's Square, was in almost daily requisition.

The white mantle of the Templar was repeatedly seen in the lists, and the honor of the Red Cross was nobly sustained. But there was one of the combatants who seemed victorious over all comers whomsoever,—whether Templar, Hospitaller, or simple knight. His plate armor was azure in hue; his shield bore no device, and his helm no badge, save a scarf of pink and blue—the colors of the Countess of Marche.

This knight proved to be none other than Adrian de Marigni, when, upon the last day of the jousts, he was compelled to remove his helmet; and, with bended knee, received upon his brow the laurel garland of glory from the white hands of the fair Queen of Beauty and Love,—Blanche of Artois, the Countess of Marche.

At length, the royal party took leave for their own realm, attended by two of the bride's uncles, Charles of Valois and Louis of Clermont, brothers of Philip *le Bel*, and a large array of nobles, as guests at the coronation, which shortly after was celebrated with extraordinary pomp in Westminster Hall.

Some days elapsed after the departure of the royal cortege, and the Louvre had begun to assume its usual aspect, when the Grand Master of the Templars craved and obtained an interview with the King. At this interview, all the horrible charges against the order were fully and formally revealed,—the name of the apostate Templar alone being suppressed.

Shocked,—terrified,—overwhelmed, the heroic old man instantly wrote to the Sovereign Pontiff at Avignon, as the spiritual head of the order, praying the earliest and most searching investigation of the specified charges.* The King, also, wrote to Clement, and despatched as the courier of his missive Hexian de Beziars, the Prior of Montfaucon, who, as a Templar, had once been sen-

* Cardinal Cantilupo, the Pope's Chamberlain, who had long been a Chaplain of the Temple, is said to have made some disclosures prejudicial to the order, to his master, about the same time.

tenced by the Grand Master to perpetual imprisonment for heresy and for leading a life scandalous to the order.

As for Jacques de Molai, he commenced, at once, most vigorous investigation of all charges against Templars which reached him; and enjoined a most severe reformation of all irregularities which had insinuated themselves into the order. The Rule of St. Bernard was most rigidly enforced. Establishments were reduced,—indulgences curtailed,—equipage and costume shorn of their ornaments,—penance inflicted on the refractory,—the discipline of the Holy Office administered,—the mode of life, diet, habit, and requisitions of the Capitals strictly enjoined, and the whole order, under pain of the severest penalties for disobedience, brought back to its primitive state of ascetic monasticism; while several of the members, against whom charges of irregularity had been preferred and sustained, were, by the arbitrary will of the Grand Master, who was sole lord of life and limb within the bourne of his own domain, with the assent of the chapter, immured in the “penitential cell” of the Temple.

It was in vain that remonstrances to the severity of this reform and warm protests arose from some of the elder companions of the order, who themselves were, and ever had been, unexceptionable patterns of Templar virtue and Templar valor. In vain was it urged that the Rule of St. Bernard applied rather to the discipline of the order in the Camp than in the Priory, and that the battle-scarred soldier merited some little relaxation and indulgence, when no longer in the field against a

Paynim foe. De Molai's sole reply to each and all these representations was the single phrase:

"It *shall* be so!—*Jubeo!* Obey!"

There was, also, instituted another reform in the order, which armed against it foes whose vengeance was long felt. This was enforced by a statute providing that none but actual knights of the order, who had served in its ranks, should be entitled to its franchises, distinctions, and immunities; or to wear the costume or insignia of the Temple. Even those who had really done battle against the Moslem under the glorious *Beauseant*, but were not knights, yet, since their return to Europe, had continued to wear the mantle and the cross of the order, were enjoined never again to assume that sacred badge, save only when in actual service in the field. To these inferior brethren was assigned a garb and cloak of black, and they were designated *Auxillaries*, or "Serving Brothers of the Temple."

The effect of an ordinance like this on that fierce and haughty militia, who, having fought an hundred battles on the sands of Palestine, and, all covered with scars, and blackened by a foreign sun, and, emaciated almost to skeletons by incredible toils, had, at last, few in number, and worn with fatigue, come home to enjoy their hard-won glory, and pass the remnant of their lives in peace,—may perhaps be conceived, but cannot be described. Aloud, on their lives, they *dared* not murmur! But their curses were deep—deep: and the day was unhappily drawing nearer than ever they could have dreamed, when those curses were to meet a dreadful fulfillment;

and a cup of vengeance, fuller than even their fevered and burning hearts could have craved, was to be proffered in mantling fullness of their lips!

* * * * *

The dread discovery of Marie Morfontaine, on the night of the bridal fête at the Louvre, was, as yet, a secret within her agouized bosom; and of that discovery, the guilty parties themselves knew no more than all others.

Horror-struck, terrified,—almost petrified at the scene she beheld, she had leaned against the cold wall of stone beneath the tapestry for support, and had pressed her hand upon her heart to still its throbbings. At length, she recovered strength to retreat,—to retreat, more stealthily even than she had come, back to her own apartment; but not, alas! until her terrible apprehensions had been confirmed beyond the possibility—beyond the *hope* of a doubt!

The first emotions of Marie Morfontaine, when she again found herself upon her lonely couch, were those of grief—grief irrepressible,—unspeakable,—overwhelming. The terror inspired by the scene she had witnessed was gone; but, oh, the agony of tears that succeeded! That he—he, her first, her last, her only love,—he, whom more than even her Maker she had worshipped,—he, who, for long years, from her earliest girlhood, had been the idol of her imagination,—the object of her thoughts by day, and of her dreams by night,—whose dear image she so often conjured up in her fancy, when he was far away amid peril and blood, when bowing at the altar of her faith; and for whom she had so often—

so fervently prayed;—that he, for whom alone, of all living men, her pure bosom had ever indulged one throb of passion, and on whom, as the husband of that bosom, she had so fondly dreamed,—that he——

And then her thoughts reverted to that lovely, guilty being who had *seemed* her friend; and her heart grew as hard as steel, and as cold as ice. Gradually, involuntarily, almost unconsciously, a dreadful purpose sprang up in her frenzied heart, and began to assume shape and proportion. She was no longer a simple, timid, feeble girl. She was a woman,—a matured woman, with all a woman's passions and all a woman's powers. A single hour, a single event, a single thought, had wrought the vast change. Sooner—sooner than he should be clasped in love in the arms of another, she would see that once-idolized form dead—dead at her feet!

The events, which have been detailed, as succeeding the departure of Edward and his bride from Paris, served to develop and mature the secret purpose of Marie Morfontaine, originally vague and undefined, and to give it force and aim. She had discovered that Adrian de Marigni was a fellow companion of the Order of the Temple, and she had learned that, by her terrible secret, his liberty, if not his life, was forfeit. This was enough, and, as one no longer a girl,—as a matured and injured woman,—the power to conceal, and to dissemble, and to revenge, had suddenly, even to her own amazement and dismay, become hers!

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FAREWELL.

IT was a soft night in June. The full moon was beaming high in Heaven, and pouring her mellow radiance through the grated casements of the Louvre. The warm and perfumed breath of summer stole up from the royal gardens of the Seine, and danced along the gilded rippings of its waters.

Alone, in her chamber, sat Blanche of Artois. She was pale—very pale; but in her large eye burned a gloomy, yet feverish fire, and her lips were compressed as if with pain. Her beautiful hair was strained back from her forehead, and lay in loose masses on her snowy shoulders. Her dress was a robe of flowing white, confined at the waist by a crimson *cordelière*. The sleeves were full and, falling away, disclosing an arm of ivory whiteness and exquisite symmetry, surpassed only in perfection by a full and voluptuous bosom. Her foot was encased in a slipper of black velvet, and seemed in proportion hardly that of a child. And yet the figure was a woman's, with all the indescribable charms of matured development.

“Why does he not come?” at length she murmured, as the clock of St. Germain l’Auxerrois tolled forth the hour of ten. “For one whole month we have not met! It was not so once! How changed he is! Of late he

has even seemed to avoid me. And, then, he looks so pale, and so sad, and so wretched. What—what can have caused this change? To-night I will know all. But will he come? He promised—but so sadly—so reluctantly!”

The unhappy woman fell back on the couch, and clasping her hands across her forehead, and closing her eyes, seemed, for some time, a prey to bitter thoughts. Again and again the clock of the Louvre chimed the quarters as they passed; but she still remained motionless, extended like a lifeless thing upon the couch.

Suddenly, at length, she started from her recumbent posture, and, sustaining herself with one hand, pressed the other wildly to her temple, and strained back the long hair. For an instant, she thus sat; her head bent forward in the attitude of listening—her lips apart—her eyes intently fixed upon the door. The next, she had sprung, with a low cry of joy, to her feet, and thrown herself into the arms of Adrian de Marigni, who softly entered.

“Ah, Adrian, I knew, I knew it was you,” she murmured in tones of tenderest devotion; and again and again she clasped her lover passionately to her heart. Fondly, yet sadly, the embrace was returned.

“Come!—come!—come!” she at length added. And grasping his hand, she drew him to the couch, on which, in rich floods of effulgence, the full moon was now streaming, while all other portions of the apartment were in deepest shade.

Seating him on the side of the low couch where the

moonlight was brightest, and its rays poured full on his form, she threw herself on her knees at his feet, and, pressing back his dark hair from his forehead, gazed with intense solicitude into his face.

Instantly, with dismay and terror, she started! And well might she be shocked—affrighted at the dreadful change she there beheld! For a month these unhappy beings had hardly met, and then but casually, for a moment; and now, in the pale moonbeams, the alteration his aspect and features had, during that interval, undergone, filled her with dismay.

“Adrian—Adrian!” she exclaimed in alarm, “why do you gaze on me so strangely? Why do you not speak to me? Why are you so pale, and so thin, and so haggard? Oh, you are ill, you are ill, and I have not known it!”

And earnestly and anxiously she pressed her lips to his forehead.

“Why do you not speak to me, Adrian?” she softly added, again resuming her examination of his countenance. There was something in its sad expression which filled her with undefined terror and apprehension. Silently—fondly—his dark eyes rested with mournful significance on her pale and beautiful face, and on those glorious orbs which, suffused with all a woman’s tenderness, were now lighted up by the mild moon of a summer’s night. And the soft night-breeze, cooled by careering over the Seine, stole gently in at the barred casement, and fanned her fevered brow.

Adrian de Marigni answered not. He returned not

the warm caress—nor the ardent gaze—nor the soft pressure of those burning lips. Like some marble image of cathedral aisle—inanimate—motionless—almost expressionless, his eye retained the same fixed and changeless gaze, and his face the same colorless hue.

“Adrian,” said the Countess, sadly, shaking her head, “you do not love me as you did!”

The young man raised his eyes to Heaven. “Would to God it were so!” he mournfully ejaculated.

“Are you ill, Adrian?” asked the Countess, anxiously.

He shook his head.

“Has anything occurred to trouble you?” she continued.

De Marigni shuddered, but was silent.

“I have not displeased you, Adrian?” she tenderly asked.

“You!” was the emphatic and quick response, as if something were suggested, which, in its very nature, was impossible.

“Then why—why do you look on me so strangely—so coldly?” she asked, throwing her white arms around his neck, and pressing her soft cheek to his.

She started. That cheek—those lips were ice. The lips—the cheek of a corpse could not have been more impassive.

“Oh, Adrian—Adrian!” she exclaimed in uncontrollable terror, starting to her feet, “why is this? Why is it that, for the whole month past, you have not sought this chamber, as you did before? Why is it that you

have constantly striven to avoid me, and so repeatedly declined to meet me when I have urged? Why the terrible change that has come over you, not more in manner than in person? Why are you so sad, and so silent, and so pale? Why—oh, why do you look so wretched? You never seek me now as you once did. Either you love me no more, or,”—and, for an instant, her dark eyes sparkled with fury, and her voice sank almost to a whisper—“you love another!”

A sad, almost reproachful, smile on the lips of her companion was the only answer.

“Forgive—forgive me, Adrian,” she quickly exclaimed, again dropping at his feet. “Oh, how could I doubt you? But tell me—tell me, dearest,” she continued in fond and imploring accents; “tell me, why do you not come to see me—your Blanche—your wife—as you did? Tell me why, so often, at night, you repair to the Palace of the Temple alone?”

The young man gave a slight start.

“Ah, you see, I know all your movements,” she added, with a smile that died instantly on her lips. “Would you believe it, Adrian—now you won’t be offended with me, will you?—would you believe that the proud Countess of Marche had nightly followed your steps for whole weeks past, in the garb of a Templar?”

De Marigni again started. And well might he. He had, indeed, never dreamed of such devotedness.

Blanche of Artois continued:

“That she had traced you from street to street to the gate of St. Denis, or of St. Martin, and thence to the

grim walls of that hated Temple, into which, in company with others, you mysteriously disappeared; and that then, all night, even until the gray morning's dawn, she had watched its gloomy towers, and the lights which flitted past its casements, and listened to the strange sounds that issued from its portals, when they chanced to unfold. And then, at dawn, when you again appeared from beneath those dark battlements, pale and haggard, and exhausted, she had regained the Louvre before you, and seen you enter your apartment—only to issue again at night, again to repeat your lonely visit? ”

The young man still continued silent.

“Adrian—Adrian de Marigni!” suddenly, with startling earnestness, exclaimed the Countess, “tell me—tell me—for I will know what do you at night in that awful pile!”

De Marigni was still unmoved. It seemed as though no earthly feeling could ever move him more. He was stone—ice.

“Aye, but I *will* know!” vehemently repeated the Countess, now thoroughly roused. “Dark tales are abroad!—tales which never would have sought me, had I not sought them, so terrible are they!—dreadful tales of more dreadful deeds, by that fearful order, in that awful pile!—that order,—oh, fool! fool!—of which, at my desire, and through my influence, you became a companion!”

De Marigni shuddered, but spoke not.

“You will *not* tell me?” cried Blanche. “Be it so. But be sure—be very sure—I will know all—all—though

the rack should tear the guilty secret from the bosoms of these human fiends! What!—what!—do they think they can wreck the earthly peace of Blanche of Artois with impunity? Do they think they can tear from her heart the only being on earth she ever truly loved, and the deed go unavenged? Adrian de Marigni, you do not know *me!* I sometimes think,” she mournfully added, pressing her white hand to her forehead, “that I do not know myself. To you, Adrian—to you, I have been a weak—a fond—perhaps a guilty woman; yet, am I—and to you, now, for the first time, do I avow it—the real Queen of this realm! Not one act does Philip of France on which the will and the judgment of Blanche of Artois are not first asked. This is no vain boasting, Adrian; *you* do not think it so; you know it is not so. And now, by this power, do I here swear the destruction of that hated——”

“Blanche!” exclaimed De Marigni, with mournful earnestness.

“And why not?—why not?” she rejoined in tones of wildest excitement. “Oh, God! has not that hated order destroyed me?—peace—love—happiness—forever! Everything—everything seems plain to me now. How strange I saw it not before! Whither go you, Adrian de Marigni, at the hour you once sought my bosom? Why, now, to me is your heart stone and your lip ice? Why is that eye, which once returned the glance of mine with kindred and sympathizing flame, now cold and meaningless in its gaze as the eye of the dead? Why are those arms, which once clasped me in rapture

to your breast, now lifeless and leaden, and that breast itself as hard and as chill as the bronze of a monument? And more—infinately more than all else beside—why, oh, why, are you, my own beloved Adrian, the haggard and wretched being you are? Why is this?”

Alas! there was no answer.

“I will tell you why it is,” continued Blanche of Artois. “My dreadful suspicions have this night become certainties!—my horrible imaginings more horrible realities! There are scenes that transpire within yonder gloomy walls of the Templar Knights—scenes too fearful even for the fancy to depict—scenes of terrible, abominable, unnatural crime—orgies of fiends! orisons of the damned! revellings of the lost! And you—you, Adrian de Marigni, alas! alas!—through my own most fatal agency—through the agency of one, who—oh, God knows!—would gladly yield the last drop of her blood for you!—you have become the victim of that fraternity of fiends! And shall I not dash asunder those manacles that bind? Shall I not break into atoms those fetters—dissolve that dreadful charm—send back those demons to the Hell whence they were evoked, and level with the dust those black chambers which have witnessed their cruelties and their crimes? Shall I not be avenged? Shall I not? Why shall I not? Why shall I not, since mine is the power, sweep that detested order from this realm—from the earth itself? Why shall I not swear to destroy——”

“Blanche,” murmured De Marigni, in tones of melancholy sweetness, “would you destroy *me*?”

“Thee!”

“Am not I a Templar, also?”

“And are you not a victim, Adrian?” asked the Countess, mournfully.

De Marigni answered not.

“Are you *not*, Adrian?” she solemnly repeated.
“And am not I?”

“Yet, for my sake, Blanche,” said the young man, “for the sake of one who, for his wild love of you, has resigned everything else in the world, and who now, for the last time——”

“What! what say you?” cried Blanche, in terror.

“Ah, is it not the last time?” he sadly continued.
“Blanche—Blanche—my love—my wife—my own beloved Blanche—I have to say to thee farewell—farewell forever!”

The Countess gazed a moment into the pale face of her companion, as if stupefied. Then, bursting into a wild incredulous laugh, she exclaimed:

“Oh, no!—no!—no!—not quite so bad as *that*, Adrian. That—why, *that's* impossible! God permits his creatures, sometimes, to become very wretched, because, doubtless, of their sins; but he never would permit such misery on the earth as *that*.”

“And, yet—and yet, my own Blanche,” returned Adrian, in tones of heart-rending sorrow, clasping her exquisite form to his bosom, as a parent might clasp a child—“and yet it *must* be even so! A power mightier than my own tears me from you! Blanche—Blanche—could all your menaces have full accomplishment on the

order you so hate, *I* should not be free. No earthly power can dissolve the unseen bonds that bind me. Alas! not God himself can free the Templar from his fetters!"

But Blanche answered not. Like an infant hushed to its slumber, while the big tear yet stands undimmed upon its cheek, and sobs yet shake its innocent bosom, the beautiful victim clung to the form of him whom more than all the world she loved. Whatever the past had been—whatever the future might be—she was now with him, she was in his arms; and the poor wretch was, for a moment, happy.

Again the young Templar spoke.

"I had hoped—oh, I had believed, that never again could I be moved by human joy, or human grief; by passion, or by hope; by love, or by hate. I had hoped that my heart had, indeed, become stone, as you have said, and my lips had become ice. But, alas! it *is* not so. We part, Blanche, we part. I came only to say farewell. For that only could I have come at all; and for your sake I trusted in that calmness, that calmness of despair into which I believed my own heart was petrified. Alas, I knew not my weakness! But do not let us grieve—do not let us grieve! Our parting, Blanche, will, at the longest, be but brief. There is another and better world than this," continued the unhappy man, raising, resignedly, his dark eyes to the bright heavens; "and to this world we are surely neither of us so wedded, my Blanche, as to lament that we leave it. In this world, the love we have felt and shared, however *we* may have viewed it, is called *guilt*. Well, well, I

suppose that it is so. But in that brighter and better world—there, Blanche, there, where the morning star now beams so softly, and looks down so quietly, as if in sympathy with the sorrows of this dark earth—in that world our deep love will be no crime—will violate no vow! Until then, my Blanche until then, farewell! farewell! farewell!”

* * * * *

Oh, it was a wild and terrible parting!

* * * * *

The day was dawning. Adrian de Marigni laid that lifeless and lovely form on the couch, and, for the last time, pressed his lips to that cold and pallid brow.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PRINCESS AND THE HEIRESS.

IT was in the month of May, 1307, that the King of France transmitted to Pope Clement Fifth, at Avignon, by the hands of Hexian, Prior of Montfaucon, as already intimated, a detailed account of the revelations of Squin de Florian and the apostate Templar, Noffo Dei. At the same time, De Molai, Grand Master of the order, addressed the Sovereign Pontiff, as has also been said, on the same subject, demanding strictest scrutiny of the charges preferred, and submitting the Fraternity to the severest penalties, should they be sustained: but, demanding, likewise, the infliction of punishment equally severe upon their calumniators, should their specifications prove false.

Three months passed away, during which the events last related had transpired. At length, a Papal Bull, bearing date the 24th day of August of the same year, appeared, in which Clement declared that the crimes ascribed to the Templars seemed to him not only improbable, but impossible; yet, for the satisfaction of his "dear son of France," he had resolved on a judicial investigation of the charges preferred, and he required the King to forward him, at once, all evidence tending to establish, and the Grand Master all evidence tending to controvert the grave accusations.

The rage of Philip at what he deemed palpable indication on the part of his Holiness to evade the sixth article of the secret compact which had raised him to the Papal chair, and, at a movement which, by all, was deemed a manifestation of favorable feeling towards the proscribed and persecuted order, knew no bounds. His private counsellors, consisting of Enguerrand de Marigni, Prime Minister, William de Nogaret, Chancellor, Hugh de Chatillon, Grand Constable, William Imbert, or William of Paris, Grand Inquisitor and Confessor of the King, William du Plessis, a Dominican priest, and Hexian, Prior of Montfaucon, the disgraced Templar, each one and all of them avowed and irreconcilable foes of the order, were, at once, assembled, and, upon full and patient consideration of the subject, it was resolved, for the present, to simulate entire compliance with the papal mandate, and to await the issue of events preliminary to more active movements, meanwhile, as if in obedience to the Bull of his Holiness, making use of every effort to accumulate proof in substantiation of the charges already preferred.

But Philip had another counsellor, on whose judgment he relied, and whose suggestions he followed far more implicitly than those of any one, or, indeed, of all the others named. That counsellor was the strong-minded Blanche, Countess of Marche; and of her counsellings the effect ere long became painfully manifest.

Ever since that terrible night in June, Adrian de Marigni had disappeared from all eyes. At first, his sudden absence gave rise to no little comment at the

Louvre. But this was shortly stopped by the rumor that he had returned to the camp of Charles of Valois,—a rumor which was sustained by the authority of the Minister himself, who had received from his son a note, giving notice that he should, for some time, be absent from Court, and desiring that all inquiry respecting him might be discountenanced.

But, however satisfactory all this might prove to every one else,—even to a father and a mother who doated on a son,—there were two inmates of the Louvre to whom it was far—far otherwise. Alas! *they* knew of that son and his fate far more than even those who had given him being!

Blanche of Artois, for some days after the farewell visit of her lover, closely kept her apartments on plea of illness, a plea—unlike most pleas of ladies under similar circumstances—anything but untrue.

At first, when recovering from the swoon in which she had been left, she found herself, indeed, deserted, the recollection of the past night pierced like an arrow through her breast. Crushed, overwhelmed, despairing, wretched, she wished only to die, and regretted only that ever again her eyes had opened on a now abhorred existence.

But this did not last. With minds possessed of strength and elasticity such as hers, despair rarely endures. As the softer and gentler emotions of love and of sorrow subsided, a deeper and darker passion arose in her heart, and took unresisted possession of all her powers. Hour after hour, day after day, and night after night, through all its still and sleepless watches, alone

in her solitary chamber, did she brood over her fancied wrongs and her real sorrows. And in that lonely chamber was conceived and matured a scheme of vengeance, the mere recital of which, for full five centuries has struck the world with awe!

During this seclusion, Blanche received but one guest—the King—except, indeed, her husband, the gay and handsome Count of Marche, who dashed in, for an instant, early one morning, before she had risen from her couch—or, rather, just as she was dropping to sleep—to inquire if she were really ill, as he had heard it rumored—all equipped for a hawking party, falcon on fist, along the Seine; and then dashed out again, and the next moment was galloping out of the gate of the Louvre, at the side of one of the fairest ladies of the Court.

But what cared Blanche of Artois for this? The time had long gone by when her heart had a single throb for Charles *le Bel*. Long ago had he forfeited all claim to her affection, and he knew it. And now he might love her, he might hate her, he might despise her, he might pity her, it was all one to her. For him she felt—*nothing at all*: unless, perchance, an *indifference* so utter and so profound as was hers may be dignified by the name of a *feeling*. She neither desired him to visit her, nor to avoid her. She desired nothing whatever, with reference to him. If he were happy, she cared not; were he wretched, it is probable she would have cared as little; had he been ill, she would quite likely have visited him; but, if he had died, she was hardly the woman to have condescended to the mockery of a tear.

— Why should she ?

There was but one thing with reference to Charles of late, since his unblushing and notorious infidelity to his marriage vow, and, especially, since her own mad passion for Adrian de Marigni, which seemed at all to interest her, and that, strangely enough, was his gallantry to ladies of the Court. It seemed to afford her more satisfaction than even himself; nay, her azure eyes would sparkle with absolute gladness when she observed his undisguised assiduity to—*any* woman but herself! Perhaps she laid the sweet unction to her soul that the unfaithfulness of Charles to her not only palliated, but authorized her own to him; and, perhaps, she was secretly pleased with anything, or with any person, who could divert the attention of her legal, yet most inconstant lord from her own love and lover, and her own fair and inconstant self!

But all this was a thing of the past. It was all over now, and forever! A darker and deadlier passion than love now possessed a heart, which had once been all—all tenderness. She alone, of all the Court, made no inquiry respecting the mysterious disappearance of Adrian de Marigni, who, since that summer night, had been seen no more. She, alone, had nothing to inquire about. Everything was *known* to her! Everything? Not quite *everything*; and it was to complete that knowledge—it was to make certainty more certain, that, on the evening of the fourth day of her seclusion, she sent for her fair young maid of honor, Marie Morfontaine, the boy-love and betrothed bride of the young soldier, Adrian de Marigni, Count Le Portier and son of the Premier of

France—prior to his passion for Blanche, and, through her influence, his initiation, also, into the illustrious and ancient Order of Templar Knights.

The message of the Countess found poor Marie very much in the situation of the Countess herself. She, too, was a recluse. She, too, was quite as ill—and quite as miserable,—at least, and no doubt *she* thought she was—as her noble friend. But then she was not a Princess, she was only the orphan heiress of immense estates; and what right had she to have feelings, or to shut herself up to indulge them?

No, no; the proud Countess of Marche demanded the presence of her maid of honor, and the poor maid of honor, although it was hardly less than death for her to obey, dared not send back refusal or apology.

And, so, Marie Morfontaine, pale and spiritless, at once repaired to the private apartments of the Countess of Marche.

The Countess was reclining on a couch, garbed in a white *robe de chambre*, her head sustained by pillows. The rich effulgence of a summer sunset was streaming in horizontal rays through the western casements, and threw a gloom of more than human beauty on her pallid cheek. Her dark hair lay neglected in loose and glossy masses on the pillow, and her large azure eye flashed with unearthly brilliancy—the limpid and pellucid brilliancy of a beautiful gem.

“Ah,” sighed poor Marie, as she timidly glanced at that lovely face, and that faultless form, “no wonder—no wonder he was false to me!”

But she had little leisure, poor girl, for sighing, or for soliloquy. Blanche was evidently awaiting the visit.

“Be seated, Marie,” said the Countess in those soft, kind tones she had ever used to the orphan. “Not there, dear,” she added, as the young lady was retreating to a distant chair. “Here, come here; sit close beside me on the couch, and turn your face to the light, so that I can see you. Heavens, how pale you are! You seem ill, Marie; are you ill?”

“Yes, madame,” was the trembling answer.

“And this is why you have not visited me of late, is it not, Marie?” asked the Countess, kindly. “You should let me know when you are ill, or—or—unhappy, and not desert me; *I*, too, am ill.”

The orphan replied not, but her evident agitation could not escape the keen eye of Blanche, who was watching every variation of light, or of shadow, on that colorless face.

It would have been a group not unworthy the study of a master—of a Cimabue, for example, had he not died some seven years before—that sweet young heiress and that splendid princess, as they sat side by side on that couch, illuminated by that crimson light; the one a Muse, the other a Grace; one a Minerva, the other a Venus; one a Melpomene, the other a Euphrosyne; both beautiful, both mournful.

“Tell me, Marie,” said the Countess, after a pause, during which her searching eye was fixed on the shrinking girl, “tell me the gossip of the Court, tell me of your affair with Edmond de Goth.”

“What affair, madame?” coldly asked the orphan.

“Oh, there is no necessity for such excessive coyness, if you are a maiden, Marie. Your love-affair, to be sure, of which every one knows, and every one talks!”

“If there is, or has been, any love between Count Edmond de Goth and myself, madame, it must be, or have been, all on his side,” was the sharp answer.

“And why do you not love him, Marie?” asked the Countess. “He loves you.”

“Because, madame——”

“Well?”

“Because, I *hate* him, madame!” was the reply.

And the young lady, with heightened color and sparkling eye, certainly looked all she said.

“*Hate* him!” rejoined the Countess with a smile; “well, that is, doubtless, a good reason for not loving him! But *hate*—it is a harsh word for lips so soft as yours, Marie! Yet, why do you hate the gallant Edmond? Any lady at Court might be proud of his preference.”

“He has been the cause to me—at least *one* cause—of great unhappiness, madame,” replied Marie, sadly.

“And how so?”

“There was another I loved, madame; and he loved me, once,” faltered the poor girl.

“And he?” asked the Countess.

There was no answer.

“Was Adrian de Marigni, was he not?”

“He was.”

“But you were children, Marie, when he loved you. Has he loved you since?”

"I—I have *hoped* so, madame," faltered poor Marie.

It was now the Countess who was excited.

"And does he love you now?" she quickly asked,—herself partaking, for a moment, of the agitation of her companion.

"No, madame, no!" was the sad but decided answer.

The Countess breathed more freely.

"And why not?" she asked.

"Because, madame——"

"Well, well?" said the princess, impatiently.

"Because he loves another, madame."

"And how know you that?" was the quick question.

"I saw—I saw him in her chamber, madame."

"But that proves nothing," returned the Countess, anxiously, after a pause.

"I saw him in her chamber after midnight, madame!" exclaimed the girl, with an effort.

"Ah, that is different," replied Blanche.

Her voice was low, her tones suppressed, her lips livid.

"And who *is* this rival?" she asked, after a pause, in tones yet lower.

Both women seemed to feel themselves on the verge of a dreadful development, yet neither had power to resist the weird fascination which drew them to the precipice.

"My rival, madame?" sighed Marie. "Oh, she is one far, far my superior."

"In rank?"

"Infinitely above me."

“In beauty?”

“Oh, madame”—and the poor girl stole a glance at the lovely face and matchless form beside her—“I have no charm of mind, or of person, to compare with hers. Indeed, I do not wonder he loved her in preference to me, and I do not blame him *now*.”

“Marie Morfontaine,” cried the Countess, rising from her pillow and grasping the arm of her trembling companion, “who *is* this rival?”

The young girl was silent.

“On your allegiance, I charge you, Marie Morfontaine, tell me: who is this rival?” repeated the Countess—in wild, harsh tones.

“Madame—madame—*I dare not*——” began the terrified girl.

“Aye, but you shall tell me!” was the quick answer.

“Madame, she is—she is——”

“Well,—well,—well?”

“The Countess of Marche!”

Blanche dropped the arm of Marie, and sank back upon her pillow; but, instantly rising, she said in low but emphatic tones, again grasping the arm of the unresisting girl, and gazing steadily into her eyes:

“And do you tell me, Marie Morfontaine, that you have seen Adrian de Marigni in the chamber of the Countess of Marche after midnight?”

“Madame, I do!” was the stern answer.

For an instant, indignation asserted ascendancy.

A silence of some moments followed.

“Marie,” at length said the Countess in low tones, “do

you know that the words you have just spoken to me, if spoken elsewhere, would lay your head on the block—or mine?”

There was a shudder, but no answer.

“Tell me, Marie,” continued the Princess, after extreme agitation, “tell me, honestly, when did you see your lover—in my chamber—at night? Tell me—tell me all!”

“On the night of the bridal fête of the King of England and Isabella——”

“Well, well?”

“I saw Adrian de Marigni leave the spot where you now lie and glide quickly to that door!”

With a low groan, the Countess sank back and covered her face with her hands.

The young girl was like a corpse—as colorless—as cold.

“Marie,” said the Princess, softly, after a pause, again rising and grasping the arm of her companion, “have you ever named what—what you that night saw,—to—to—another?”

“To one person, madame, I have,” replied the orphan.

“And but *one*?”

“But one.”

Blanche shuddered.

“And that one?”

“Was Jacques de Molai——”

“Grand Master of the Temple!” added the Countess. Could Marie Morfontaine have foreseen the effect of

her words, roused almost to delirium though she herself was, she would probably, have paused, ere they left her lips.

“Fiend! fiend!” shrieked the Countess of Marche, springing with fury from the couch on which she lay, and dragging thence the terrified girl by the arm, which she grasped until her fingers met in the discolored flesh. “To you, then—to you, wretch! do I owe the ruin of all most dear to me in life! To you do I owe almost the anguish of the damned!”

And quickly producing, from the folds of her white dress, a stiletto of most minute and delicate proportions, she flung its golden sheath from it upon the floor, and raised the glittering and needle-like blade above the prostrate girl!

This sudden movement laid partially bare her snowy and swelling breast. A strange resting-place, that soft, warm bosom, for that flashing and fatal steel!

For an instant the gleaming weapon hung suspended, as by a hair, quivering as if with life over the heart of the unresisting, the fainting, the terrified girl! A change passed over the livid face of the infuriated Princess; the burning glance of her eye lost its murderous, concentrated, snake-like venom; she flung the keen blue blade from her hand.

“Why should I pollute myself with her blood?” she faintly murmured. “She knew not what she did. Besides, her terrible secret dies not with *her*, it is no longer her own. No, no, my vengeance seeks loftier victims than a love-lorn girl. And it shall be a vengeance—oh,

it shall be a vengeance, at which, ages hence, men shall grow pale! Rise!" she exclaimed, at the same time relinquishing her grasp and spurning her companion with scorn.

Almost dead with terror, the fainting girl did as she was commanded, and stood cowering before her infuriated mistress.

For a moment Blanche of Artois gazed on her with black and menacing brow. Then her countenance gradually softened, and, in tones of touching sorrow, she exclaimed, clasping her hands, while tears started to her eyes :

"Why, oh, why, have you done this, Marie?"

The poor orphan did not reply.

"Have I not been your friend, Marie?" continued the Countess, sadly; "have I not protected and loved you? Have I *ever* harmed you? How have I provoked this resentment? How, oh, how, have I deserved such a dreadful recompense?"

"*I* loved him, too," faltered Marie, bursting into an agony of tears.

"*You*—you loved *him!*" exclaimed the Countess. "Why, girl, Adrian de Marigni was not a being for *you* to love! As well might the lark seek to mate with the eagle, as your spirit with his! As well might the glow-worm aspire to the star, as you to him!"

"And yet—and yet—I *loved* him, madame; and—and he loved *me*, once," sobbed the orphan.

"When you were children," sharply replied the Countess; "you forget *he* is no longer a child, if *you*

are. You should have forgotten your girlish fancy for a boy playmate. He has forgotten his."

"I know it, madame," faltered the girl. "He loves me no more. Yet I love him—I love him dearly, despite——"

"*Love* him! and what has been your love, compared with mine? You, a weak, silly, simple child,—I, a *woman!*" cried the Countess.

Blanche of Artois was but a few years the senior of Marie Morfontaine; but now she seemed an elder sister—almost a mother. Such are the effects, on the person, of mind and passion.

"You say you loved him," continued the Princess. "Well, the test of love is the sacrifice it will make for its object. What sacrifice would *you* have made to your love?"

"I would have sacrificed——" began Marie.

"Your honor, girl?"

"I would have yielded him my life, had he asked it," replied Marie, meekly.

"Your *life!*—*your* life!" exclaimed the Countess, scornfully. "And yet," she instantly added, clasping her hands, and raising her flashing eyes in agony to Heaven, "oh, God! oh, God! you have sacrificed *his!*"

"Madame—madame!" cried the affrighted girl, grasping the Countess in her turn by the arm; "what do you say?"

"What do I say? I say that you, wretch, have consigned the noble victim of your pitiful passion to the dungeon—to the torture—oh, God, perchance, to a dread-

ful death! Know you not the Templar rule? Know you not the Templar vow? Know you not the merciless severity of that terrible man, to whom you revealed your more terrible secret? Girl, girl, Adrian de Marigni was a Templar Knight! On your accusation, he will be stretched on the rack! Confess, he never will; and he will die in a dungeon!”

“A dungeon!—torture—death! Oh, I dreamed not *that*—I dreamed not that!” cried the frantic girl. “I meant only to part him from you!”

“Well, be satisfied—you have succeeded!” was the bitter, yet sad reply. “We *are* parted!”

A pause of considerable duration ensued, in which neither of the women spake. Both seemed buried in thought. The Countess paced the room with hasty steps. Marie Morfontaine had sunk upon the couch.

“Oh, madame,” at length exclaimed Marie, “can *nothing* be done to save him?”

“Nothing!” was the gloomy answer.

“What, then, remains for us?”

The Countess stopped in her walk, and replied:

“Vengeance!”

“And for me?”

“To aid—perhaps.”

“Oh, madame, I would *die* for revenge!” earnestly exclaimed Marie, springing to her feet, with flashing eyes and clasped hands.

“Then *live* for it. Go, I would be alone!”

And Blanche of Artois sank on the couch.

And Marie Morfontaine slunk from the chamber.

CHAPTER XX.

THE ARREST.

THE Feast of St. Denis, in the year 1307, fell upon Monday, the ninth day of October.

On the night of that day the King of France was in close conclave until a late hour with his privy counsellors.

On the three succeeding days, Philip was in constant consultation with Blanche of Artois: and couriers, with sealed orders addressed to officers of the crown in all parts of the realm, were hourly leaving the Louvre. On the night of Thursday, the twelfth, especially, couriers were constantly thundering at full speed over the draw-bridge of the palacé and through the gates of the city, in all directions, bearing the last sealed orders to points nearest the capital; and some were not despatched even until after the morning dawn of the succeeding day.

Friday, the thirteenth of October, was as sweet an autumnal day as ever smiled, frostily but cheerily, on the gliding waters of the Seine.

By an understanding, prior and privy, between the Grand Master of the Templars and Philip of France, at the instance of the latter, that day had been fixed on for a visit of the King, accompanied by his high officers and all the nobles of his Court, to the Palace of the Temple,

that the absurd and abominable charges against the order might be abundantly disproved. Late on the previous evening orders had been issued by Hugh de Chatillon, Grand Constable of France, that all of the gentlemen of the Court, as well as all the guard of the palace, and the Provost's guard of Paris, should be under arms at an early hour of the following day, in the court of the Louvre. This order had been obeyed, and at the hour of noon the King, with his Minister, Chancellor and Confessor, descended to the court, and placing himself at the head of a most formidable troop of horse there assembled, marshalled by the Grand Constable, issued from the Eastern gate of the Louvre, and ascending the street of St. Denis, and emerging into the plains by the city gate of the same name, approached the gloomy walls of the Temple.

As the cavalcade drew nigh to that dark pile, from the square and massive central tower of which streamed out in heavy folds the fearful *Beauseant*, the drawbridge fell, the portcullis rose, the ponderous leaves of the embattled gateway swung on their hinges, and the whole body of Templars in their white cloaks appeared drawn up to receive their royal guest with the venerable Grand Master at their head, bearing in his hand the mystic *abacus*. This was the only symbol of authority which was to be witnessed. Sword nor dagger, arms nor armor, were to be seen in all that peaceful array; although every individual in the extended train of the King was armed to the teeth—a circumstance of which the Templars in their blind confidence seemed to take no note.

Having entered the gateway into a paved and extensive court, on all sides environed by massive structures, the drawbridge again rose—the portcullis fell, and the ponderous gates returned on their groaning hinges. Descending from their steeds and delivering them to the serving brothers of the order, who, in black costume, stood ready to conduct them to the stables, the wondering cavalcade, not one of whom save the King and his council knew the purport of the visit, with awe followed in the footsteps of the Templars into the vast and magnificent chapel.

A dim, religious light stealing through the tall and lancolated casements pervaded the spacious sanctuary. The altar draped in black was lighted by twelve immense candles, and was decorated for high mass; and at its foot kneeled priests in cope and stole and deacons in alb and dalmatica. At that moment, at a signal from the venerable Master, the Chaplain raised the magnificent psalm, "*Gloria in excelsis*," in which the whole company of Templars, some hundreds in number, solemnly joined. The effect of this imposing chant, raised by the deep voices of this vast choir of soldier-priests, accompanied by the organ and echoed from the groined and sculptured roof of that splendid pile, was grand beyond description.

The chant ceased, and, at that instant, Hugh de Chatillon, Grand Constable of France, strode up the aisle, and, drawing his sword, and laying his hand on the shoulder of the Grand Master of the Temple, exclaimed:

“Gentlemen of France, Guards of Paris—in the name of your King, I arrest Jacques de Molai, and all his order here assembled, for high crimes and misdemeanors! To the rescue! to the rescue! France! France!”

Had a thunderbolt descended into the aisle of that consecrated fane, the effect could not have been more startling.

Instantly the sword of Philip flashed in his hand! Instantly the swords of all his followers flashed also. And instantly rose in that vast hall the awful shout: “*Beauseant—Beauseant!* For the Temple! for the Temple!”

But, alas! alas! that terrific battle-cry, which, on an hundred bloody fields, had struck panic into a turbaned foe, was powerless now—had lost its spell! In vain did the scarred and war-worn veterans strike their unmailed hands upon their unarmed sides: they were weaponless! In vain did the heroic De Molai, before God and man, solemnly protest against this unheard-of perfidy, and appeal to the Templars’ sole tribunal, the See of Rome!

Unarmed, against twice their number armed to the utmost, the struggle of these valiant men, who, with their faithful battle-blades in their grasp, would have swept ten times the foe now arrayed against them from their path, as the chaff on the threshing-floor is swept before the wind, was brief and unavailing. Overpowered by multitudes, yet to the last unyielding, all were arrested, loaded with manacles, and plunged into the deepest dungeons of their own sacred house. And bitter-

est of all, as they passed through the court, their glorious *Beauseant* no longer floated from its tower; but, in its place, rolled out the snowy folds of the *Oriflamme* of France on the autumnal breeze!

The arrest at the Temple was complete.* That grim structure, which all the force of Philip of France would have in vain openly assailed, fell in a single hour before his fraud. And at that same hour, of that same day, throughout all France, every soldier of the Temple, wherever found, or however engaged, was in like manner arrested.

Immediately upon the arrest of the Templars, the Minister proclaimed the Temple to be henceforth a palace of the King, and depository of the royal treasures; and all of the possessions of the order to be under royal seizure and attachment.

The King, at the head of his council and troops, then set out for Paris, and crossing the *Pont au Change*, at once advanced to the Cathedral of Notre Dame, where all of its canons and all of the doctors of the University, who had been assembled by a mandate they knew not whence, for a purpose they knew not what, were sitting in solemn conclave, in their sable robes. To this grave body, the act of the King in the arrest of the Templars and his motives therefor were communicated in detail by the

* One hundred and forty Knights, and several hundred serving brethren and priests, were arrested with De Molai at the Temple. Some authorities assert that sealed letters were despatched to the royal officers throughout the realm as early as September 12th, with orders to be in arms on the 12th day of the succeeding month; and, in the night of that day to open the letters, and act as they commanded. The command was the arrest of the Templars. To disarm suspicion, De Molai, on the very eve of the arrest, was selected by Philip as one of the four pall-bearers, at the obsequies of the Princess Catharine, wife of the Count of Valois.

Grand Inquisitor and his Dominican assistants, William du Plessis, and that infamous apostate, the Prior of Montfauçon. The royal act and the royal motives for that act were, of course, both approved; and a proclamation was sent out from that old church through all Paris, summoning all true believers, whether of laity or clergy, on pain of penance, to assemble in the gardens of the Louvre at the sound of the trumpet, on the second day ensuing, to hear detailed "the awful crimes of the iniquitous order."

The assemblage, at the time and place designated, was, of course, immense. Scaffolds had been erected for speakers, and from these Imbert, Du Plessis, and the apostate Prior, with their accomplices, read to the credulous populace a list of one hundred and twenty-seven charges of crime against the persecuted Templars, all of them as absurd and impossible as they were abominable and infamous; yet each and all sustained by the most violent and inflammatory denunciation, and echoed by the shouts of the ignorant and superstitious throng.*

Fortified by this "verdict of the people," as he complacently styled it, Philip would have brought the imprisoned Templars instantly before his own corrupt

* The order of the Temple was charged, among other things, with having been founded on the plan of the Ismailites, or, Assassins, a secret society of the East,—from a pretended identity of costume and secret doctrine. The Ismailites wore a white robe with a red girdle, and the Templars wore a white cloak with a red cross, and both societies were secret! And here, it is probable, "all likeness ends between the pair." It is asserted, indeed, that in 1228, the Templars betrayed the Emperor Frederick II. to the Egyptian Sultan; but, if so, the Moslem taught them a bitter lesson of faith by refusing to avail himself of their perfidy; and, if so, no wonder that the indignant Emperor wrote of them, about the same, "The haughty religion of the Temple waxes wanton."—"We have the failings of men," said Almeric de Villiers, "but to have been guilty of the crimes imputed to us we must have been fiends."

tribunals for final judgment and doom; but he was warned by the canons and doctors that no secular court could take ultimate cognizance of the crime of heresy, of which the soldiers of the Temple were accused; that the Templars, as a religious-military order, confirmed by the Holy See, were exempt from all civil jurisdiction; and that, as for their possessions, they could only be appropriated to the benefit of the Church, and the purposes of their original donation.

This decision, as may be inferred, was not very welcome to the King, who had felicitated himself on the spoils of the fated order, as well as on the contemplated gratification of a deadly revenge; but he immediately issued an edict for the interrogation of the prisoners by William of Paris, and his familiars in presence of the high officers of the crown.

And thus were the Templar Knights of France committed to the tender mercies of the Inquisition!

“The fiat of Philip,” says the historian, “had gone forth at that season of the year, when the cell of the captive is rendered doubly dreadful by the rigor of the winter. The sufferers were deprived of the habit of their order, and of the rites and comforts of the Church; only the barest necessaries of life were allowed them: and those who refused to plead guilty were subjected to every species of torture.”* Shrieks and groans resounded in all the prisons of France: their tormentors noted down not only their words, but even their tears

* Raynouard—*Monumens Historique Relatifs à la Condamnation des Chevaliers du Temple et l'abolition de leur Order.*

and sighs, and the spirit of many a knight, whom the terrors of Paynim war had failed to subdue, quailed at the stake and on the rack. Yet that number was but small, and the large proportion endured the Question with as much martyr-heroism as they had ever braved a nobler doom on the ensanguined field.

In Paris the dungeons and *oubliettes* and *in paces* of the Louvre, the two Chatelets, the Palace of Justice, and of the Temple itself were all in special requisition to afford imprisonment to the persecuted Templars, among whom arrested at the Temple were the Norman brothers, Walter and Philip de Launai.

As for Jacques de Molai, the aged Grand Master, he was committed, together with Hugh de Peralde, Grand Prior of France, Pierre de Villars, Grand Prior of Aquitaine, (Philip's Minister of Finance,) and Guy, Grand Prior of Normandy, brother to the Dauphin of Auvergne and Viennois, Sovereign Prince of Dauphiny, and some other dignitaries of the fated order, to the dungeons of Chinon.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CASTLE OF CHINON.

ON the right bank of the Vienne, near its confluence with the sparkling waters of the Loire, in the ancient Province of Limousin,* once stood a castle, which, by its ruins, still existing, is proven to have been one of the most perfect of all the masterpieces of feudal architecture.

Its site was a lofty crag, overlooking the neighboring country for many a mile around, which, for a thousand years it held in awe: and, at its base, was a small hamlet sheltered by surrounding hills. Like other structures of the age, the Castle of Chinon had its dungeons and its *oubliettes*,—its fathomless wells descending like tunnels, section of horror below section,—zone below zone,—into the very bowels of the earth.

It had, also, its winding stairways, practised through the depths of the massive masonry, and its secret passages, and its subterranean galleries. One of these latter is said to have gone down through the walls of the castle, down through the solid crag on which the castle sat, down below the level of the bed of the Vienne. Thence, beneath the bed of that stream, it continued to the opposite bank, and, pursuing its midnight course, finally emerged within the walls of a convent in sight of the castle, when

* Now *Touraine* in the Department of *Indre et Loire*.

descending into the bowels of the earth, it pursued its tenebrous and tortuous route to the Castle of Saumur, a dozen miles distant.

Another subterranean passage is said to have united the Tower of Argenton with the Maison Roberdieu,—the residence of the lovely Agnes Sorrel, when Chinon was a palace of Charles the Seventh.

This castle is called the French Windsor of the Norman Kings, as the Abbey of Fontevraud, some seven miles distant on the south, was their Westminster. It was a favorite spot with Henry the Second of England, and witnessed his loves with the beautiful Rosàmond Clifford. It witnessed, also, his fearful death in 1189, when he expired with a curse on his quivering lips against his unnatural sons; and it witnessed the death of the heir to his crown, Richard *Cœur de Lion*, ten years afterwards, when the form of the valorous son was laid at the feet of the father in the old aisle of Fontevraud.

Chinon witnessed, also, the loves of Francis the First of France and the fair "*Ferrière*," as well as those of Charles the Seventh and Agnes Sorrel, as intimated. And here it was that the chivalric Maid of Orleans, introduced into that Prince's presence, selected him from among all his Nobles as the true King, notwithstanding his disguise, and announced to him her holy mission.

Chinon, too, was a favorite residence of Louis the Eleventh of France; and it was here he proposed to the Count of Chabannes, the Minister of his father, that parent's assassination, though only that the unnatural

design might to that parent's horror be revealed. The fearful *oubliettes*, of which remains yet exist, are said to have been sunk immediately beneath that monarch's chosen apartments.

The view from the battlements of the lofty towers of the Castle of Chinon is described as most extensive and beautiful,—embracing an immense extent of country, through which flow the bright waters of the Loire and Vienne, with the white walls of convents and châteaux rising among the forests on their banks.

Such was the proud Castle of Chinon, when it became the prison of the Grand Officers of the Temple in France.

Into the dungeons of this fearful fortilace were these veterans of the cross, who had so often done bloody battle for Christendom upon a foreign shore, now plunged, and loaded with chains.

It was on the night of the sixth day of his imprisonment in the dungeons of Chinon, that Jacques de Molai was aroused from a troubled slumber, by the pressure of a hand upon his shoulder, and the glare of a lamp in his face. Starting from his recumbent position, as well as his manacles would permit, he fixed his searching eye upon the intruder. But the light of the lantern was so managed that, while its beams were thrown in full gush upon his own features, those of the person who held it remained completely in shadow. Of the shape he could only define the irregular outline of a human figure, robed in the black gown of a monk of St. Dominic, with the ample cowl drawn closely over the

head; and, of the face, he could perceive only two blazing orbs, which gleamed forth in the darkness like flame from perforations in a fiery furnace.

For some moments the silence was unbroken. A horrible thought flashed through the brain of the prisoner. He beheld before him his executioner! Such midnight murders were of constant occurrence in the Dark Ages, when a foe was too powerful, or too popular, or too innocent for the public scaffold; and dungeon walls were deep enough to absorb every dying groan, and *oubliettes* were no misnomers,—they were, indeed, “chambers of *oblivion!*”

For an instant the prisoner's heart sank within him. To die by the assassin's dagger at midnight, in the depths of a dungeon, loaded with fetters, his fate forever unknown, yet innocent of even a thought of crime—horrible! horrible! Oh, for the wild, wide, scorching desert, once more, on his war-horse, with his battle-brand in his hand, and clouds of Paynim foes before him, like their own clouds of locusts! But this was a mad thought. It was but a moment indulged, and then that brave old man was as a bronze effigy, on some marble tomb.

“Methinks, my friend,” said de Molai, calmly, “that you have chosen a somewhat unusual hour to visit the inmate of a dungeon. It is true, night and day are very much the same down here, but I have not yet been an occupant of the place long enough not to know that it is now after midnight. What do you here at this hour?” asked the old man, mildly, after pausing for a reply.

There was no answer, but the burning orbs like flickering flames still rested on his face.

“If you are an officer of the castle—the Governor, or one of the warders,” continued de Molai, calmly, “it is strange you are here at an hour like this; and it is still more strange that I heard not the clash of chains, and the thunder of bolts, which invariably herald one’s approach. I must have slumbered very soundly. I slept not thus in Palestine.”

There was still no answer.

“Oh, it’s all very well,” continued the old Templar, carelessly. “If you do not choose to announce your errand, Sir Warder, I am, of course, quite unable to compel you. But I can address myself to sleep again, which, methinks, may prove somewhat more profitable than addressing myself to you.”

And the old knight seemed disposing himself again in a sleeping posture, upon his heap of straw.

“I am *no* warder, Jacques de Molai!”

“Ha! a *woman’s* voice!” cried the Grand Master in astonishment. “A woman *here*?”

“Aye, sir—a woman *here*!”

“And why?”

“To save you,—if you will be saved.”

The old man shook his head and smiled.

“No woman’s will can save Jacques de Molai!”

There was a low laugh beneath the hood.

“And if you were told that a woman’s will had filled the dungeons of all France with your order, and committed you, their chief, to this?”

"I should say it was a lie!" was the quick, stern answer.

"And yet, it is even so!" proudly rejoined the unknown.

De Molai gazed with angry incredulousness on one he deemed a false and presumptuous boaster.

"But I am not here to satisfy doubts, nor to overcome them with arguments," she continued. "My purpose is other, higher. Jacques de Molai, do you know that your doom is sealed?"

"I had hoped, madame——"

"Do you know that your order is to be swept from the earth?"

"Holy St. Bernard!" ejaculated the old man, clasping his ironed hands.

"Do you know that each Templar in France is to be stretched upon the rack, with you, their chief, at their head; and, if they confess the horrible guilt of which they are accused, they are, in mercy, to be burned at the stake; and, if not, they are to perish by extremest torture of the Question Chamber? Do you know this?"

The old man sank back upon his heap of straw, and covered his face with his hands, while a low groan mingled with the sullen clank of his fetters.

For himself he could endure torture—the stake; he was old, and must soon die at the best; but his beloved order—his beloved sons, as he called its companions—for them his heart agonized and bled.

For some moments the Grand Master remained silent, as if in thought, during which his unwelcome visitor fixed upon him, in equal silence, her burning regard.

"But, no—no—no—this cannot be," he at length exclaimed. "They *will* not do *that!* They *dare* not!" he added in tones of menace. "We have appealed to Rome! Let our persecutors beware of Rome's thunder! Madame, madame!" cried De Molai, "who are you? Why are you here? If you think to trifle with the natural tremors of an aged man, laden with irons and immured in a dungeon, you mistake that man! Who are you, madame?"

There was no reply, but the unknown drew slowly from her delicate hand a massive signet ring, and held it up in the light of the lantern before the prisoner's eyes.

"The royal seal of France!" despairingly murmured the old man. "What would *you*, madame?" he asked.

"Grand Master of the Templars, what would *you?*" was the rejoinder.

"The salvation of my beloved order!" fervently ejaculated the old chieftain, raising his eyes with his clasped hands to Heaven.

"I am here to save that order," said the other.

"Ha!" cried de Molai.

"I am here to deliver you, and, with you, all your knights, from the dungeon and the rack, and to reinstate you in all your ancient affluence, rank, immunities, and powers; and to add to them, if possible, ten-fold."

"A dream!" exclaimed the old Templar, pressing his broad palm to his brow.

"No, Jacques de Molai, this is no dream!" was the reply. "The great seal of France should assure you that my words are not idle fancies."

“And the condition of this salvation?” asked he.

“Know you Adrian de Marigni, Count Le Portier?” asked the unknown.

The old man was silent.

“Know you Blanche of Artois, Countess of Marche?” repeated the lady.

The old man was still silent.

“Behold her here!” exclaimed the unknown, throwing back the hood of her priestly robe, and revealing a face whose pale loveliness, as lighted up by the full gleam of the lantern, now turned towards it, contrasted strangely with the damp dungeon walls around.

With a groan of despair Jacques de Molai sank back on the straw of his pallet, and covered his face with his hands. In an instant he comprehended all! *All—alas,* for him!—was revealed.

“Jacques de Molai,” resumed the Princess, in tones of intense solemnity, “hear me! When first you heard a woman’s voice, at midnight in your dungeon, you were amazed. But, when you learn that woman is the Countess of Marche, you are amazed no more. Why? Because, Jacques de Molai, you happen to know of that proud and powerful, yet most unhappy woman, a dreadful secret! Because you, chief of the Templars, chance to know that this woman’s lover is a companion of your order, and, therefore, amenable to its powerful Rule. Chief of the Templars, Blanche of Artois is here to crave of you the life and liberty of that lover, and, in exchange, to give you your own, and those of all your knights!”

But de Molai spake not.

“Doubt not that all I have promised shall be fulfilled,” she continued. “My influence with the King of France is never exerted vainly; and his power over Clement Fifth,—in *this* matter at least,—is resistless.”

Do Molai uttered a groan. His last hope failed! Rome deserted the Temple!

“Unknown and unsuspected have I escaped from the Louvre, from Paris, and sped to this distant fortress. Unknown and unsuspected by all within these walls am I here; unknown and unsuspected, when my mission is accomplished, I am without these walls, and again am found within the Palace of the Louvre, or, rather within the Palace of the Temple, for even there now doth Philip hold his Court!”

Again the old man groaned.

Alas! for the desecrated sanctuary! Alas! for that holy and ancient house!

“Jacques de Molai,” continued the Countess, after a pause, “I am here to demand my lover, Adrian de Marigni. I do not *ask* if you know where he is: I *know* you do, though *I*, alas! do not! Vainly, in secret and alone, have I searched every dungeon, and *oubliette*, and cell of that awful pile, which, through my influence, for that very end, was captured, and its very *penetrabilia* laid open to the eye. I do not ask if my lover be in your power; of that, too, am I sure—if, indeed, he yet remains in the power of man. But I ask you if he lives? I ask of you the name of his dungeon! I ask of you his liberty and his life!”

De Molai spake not a word, but covered his face with his hands.

“Oh, sir, I entreat—I implore you, answer me!” wildly ejaculated the Countess, sinking on her knees upon the damp dungeon floor beside that stern and manacled man, and raising her clasped and snowy hands and streaming eyes before him. “In the name of all that is most dear to you—in the name of your beloved order—in the name of the holy St. Bernard, its patron saint—in the name of Godfrey Adelman, its pious founder—in the name of the Holy Sepulchre, for the defence of which it was instituted, and for which, like water, it has, for two centuries, poured out its blood—in the name of her who bore you, or of her you once loved—I beseech you, hear me! Give me back my Adrian! restore me my lover! spare his life! forgive his offence! and, oh, by the Holy Mother, I here swear to you, never—never shall he thus offend again! I ask him not for myself! I ask only his life and his liberty, forever to be consecrated to your noble order! I yield his love—his person—his presence—all—all most precious to me! I know—I know his crime against the pure Rule of your order has been terrible! But *he* was not in fault! indeed it was not *he*! I—I alone am guilty for the violation of that vow—of *his* vow as well as my own!” The pale face of the Countess suddenly flushed, and she covered it with her hands. “He sought not me, it was I that sought him! It was I, too, who made him a companion of your order! Alas! I knew not what I did! I meant only to prevent his marriage to another. And

yet, having imposed on him those terrible vows, it was I, wretch! who tempted him to their violation! Oh, if there must be a sacrifice to your insulted Rule, accept me! If there must needs be penalty for crime, on me—on me let it fall! *He* is innocent! I only am guilty! Oh, sir, be merciful—be merciful! Give me back my lover!”

Breathless, the Countess paused. The chief of the Templars spake not.

“It must, I know, seem a strange thing to you,” resumed Blanche, with a wild, sad smile, “that the proud Countess of Marche should thus be kneeling beside you—a doomed and manacled man,—on the mouldy straw of a damp dungeon, at midnight, alone, pouring out a confession which has never left her lips before, no, not even to her God; and which, if only whispered beyond these rugged walls, would consign her head to the block, and her name to infamy! *It is strange—it is strange!* And all this should assure you how mad and desperate this wretched heart of mine must be, if not”—and she pressed her white hand to her forehead—“if not my brain, also. But men never know, and will not believe, all a woman will dare for one she loves. And yet, were not all this even so, I would entrust to *you*, terrible man, a secret which I would not entrust to the dread vows of the confessional itself! Your vows are more dread than those—your obligations are more awful! But Adrian—Adrian, tell me,” and she pressed her delicate fingers earnestly on the iron hand of the Templar, knitted together of bone, and sinew, and muscle, and denuded of

all flesh, "tell, oh, tell me," she wildly implored, "where—where—where is my Adrian?"

The soldier-monk answered to this touching, heart-broken entreaty not a word.

"Tell me—is he yet in Paris? in France? in Europe? in a Christian land?"

Still there was no answer.

"Is he imprisoned, or is he free?"

There was no reply. The Templar lay with his hands over his face like the marble effigies on some crusader's tomb.

"Tell me!—tell me!—tell me!" almost shrieked the frantic Princess; "does Adrian de Marigni yet live?"

The wild words fell back from the damp and dreary walls like lead upon the ear. There were no echoes there to awaken.

For some moments Blanche of Artois remained on her knees, the image of supplication, beside the prostrate and motionless Templar. Then slowly upon her mind seemed to creep a dreadful suspicion—a fearful thought; and, as that wild presentiment passed her brain, the soft expression of entreaty faded away from her beautiful face; and, in its stead, there gathered a blackness on the brow, an intense fierceness on the compressed lip, and in the eye concentrated a lustre like the glare of a maniac.

Slowly, sternly, firmly, she arose to her feet, and drawing around her the coarse serge, which, in her agitation, had fallen from her snowy shoulders, and drawing over her face the Dominican hood, she took up the lantern and quietly turned to depart.

Retreating into the shadows at the extremity of the dungeon, her form was lost in gloom. Then raising the lantern and suffering its full beams to pour upon her livid, yet lovely face, and her blazing eyes, she said in low and solemn tones:

“Jacques de Molai, farewell! Thou hast sealed thine own doom! In the dungeon—on the rack—at the stake—amid the ruins of thine order and all most dear to thee, thou wilt remember Blanche of Artois!”

The voice ceased—the light went out—a sudden blast of fresh air, as from a subterranean passage, rushed into the cell—a rumbling like thunder shook the vault! Jacques de Molai was alone!

CHAPTER XXII.

THE COMPROMISE.

THE arrest of the Knights Templar by Philip of France sent a thrill of horror throughout all Christendom!

In the first burst of passion, the Sovereign Pontiff despatched, as his Legates, from Avignon to Paris, Cardinals De Prato and Gentil de Montesioré, with ample powers, at once to remove William of Paris, Inquisitor-General from office, and to inhibit the Prelates of France from all cognizance or authority in the affairs of the Templars. The proceedings already had, he declared a guilty encroachment on the rights of the Papal See. To the King, also, he addressed a mandate, condemning in severe terms the presumption of arresting the members of an order, whose only *Supreme* was the Pope; and bidding him, at once, surrender into the jurisdiction of his Legates, the persons and the effects of his children, the Templar Knights.

Prior to the arrest of the Templars in France, Philip, at the instance of the Countess of Marche, had sent a priest named Bernard Peletus, bearing letters addressed to Edward of England, stimulating him to make the same arrest, on the same day, of all members of the order found within his realm. Letters were also addressed, by the same advice, at the same time and to

the same end, to Ferdinand of Aragon, and Henry of Luxembourg, Emperor of Germany; likewise to the sovereigns of Castile, Portugal and Sicily.

Before the Court and Council of England, the charges against the Templars were at once laid; and, while the utmost astonishment was expressed, investigation was furnished. Edward, however, immediately wrote to the Kings of Portugal, Castile, Aragon, and Sicily, and, also, to the Emperor and the Pope, imploring them to lend no credence to the malicious and infamous calumnies against the Knights of the Red Cross, who had been the steadfast allies of his throne, and the friends of the liberties of his people, before the day, and since the day as well as on the day, when Almeric of St. Maur, Grand Prior of England, had stood on the field of Runny Mead, and demanded of King John the Magna Charta—Almeric, that illustrious knight, who passed his last hours in the Grand Temple of his order in London; and, with all the pomp and prestige of the period was laid to his rest by Templar hands, with Templar rites, in the Temple church.*

But, subsequently to this, the fickle Edward issued an order dated on the Feast of Epiphany, December 15, 1308, for the summoning of all his sheriffs throughout the realm, to assemble on a certain day, at certain places; and, on that day, at those places, the sheriffs thus assembled, were sworn, suddenly to execute a certain sealed order, then and there to be delivered, so soon as opened.

* "The Templars," says Addison, "were always buried in the habit of their order, a long white mantle with a red cross over the left breast; and thus are they represented in the marble effigies on their tombs."

This order was the arrest of the Templars; and, at the same hour, on the same day, throughout England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, all members of that order were thrown into prison on charge of apostacy to the altar, and treason to the throne; and their vast estates were attached! For months they remained in durance in various castles and towers. At length, October, 1309, by mandate of the Archbishop of Canterbury, forty-seven of the noblest of the order were brought from the Tower before Ecclesiastical Courts at London, York and Lincoln, over which presided the Bishop of London and the Envoys of the Pope. Against their bold plea of innocence nothing was proven; on the contrary, most irrefutable evidence of their irreproachable character and conduct was adduced from the lips of clergy, as well as laity. But they were not released, and, shortly after, came from the Court of France suggestions of *Torture*, to elicit confession! But, when the Archbishop of York dared to ask his Chapter whether torture,—hitherto unheard of on the soil of England,—might be used against the Templars, inquiring if a Machine might be sent for from abroad, as there was not one in the land,—he received a reply which silenced the demand!

After three years of close incarceration, however, most of the Templars made a vague renunciation of heresy and erroneous opinions, and were sent to various monasteries, with a pittance from their immense revenues for their support; and, finally, their estates were yielded to the Knights of St. John.* But, no menaces, no promises,

* In 1323.

no dungeons, no sufferings, could move William de la Moore, the Grand Prior of England; and he, with three other heroic men, boldly and loudly proclaimed their innocency, and that of their order to the very last.

The whole number of Templars arrested by Edward seems to have been but two hundred and fifty. Of these, thirty were seized in Ireland, and but two in Scotland. In England, the order had some seven or eight Preceptories, of which the celebrated Temple at London was chief. The estates of the Templars in England were, however, immense in every county, and far exceeded those of the Hospitalers; while the Prior of London was first baron of the realm in the House of Lords.

The King of Aragon, James the Second, was earnestly pressed by the Court of France to follow in the steps of Philip. But his unchanging answer was this. "First convince me of the guilt of the Templars,—then, I will provide a penalty." Forced by the violence of the people, the Templars retired for safety to the fortresses erected by themselves to defend the country against the Moors. Thence they petitioned the Holy Father to protect his children against the infamous charges falsely preferred against them, insisting on the purity of their faith, in defence of which they had so often shed their best blood; that multitudes of Templars were even then captive to the Moors, who, on abjuration of their faith, would, at once, be liberated; and thus the same men were consigned to torture by Infidels as Christians, and by Christians as Infidels; and, finally, they entreated either the protection of Rome, or, to be permitted to

protect themselves, as they ever had done, and, in fair field to make good their cause, with their own right hands. To all this Clement replied not; but the King of Aragon, having received at his first summons one of their fortresses in his realm, and being desired only to afford them a just trial, took the order in his kingdom under his royal protection. He, also, forbade all insult or injury to the Templars, under severe penalty,—announcing to all comers his readiness to receive charges against the order; but, warning them that if those charges were not sustained, the accusers themselves should suffer the tortures they invoked.

But James of Aragon was not, in the end, proof against the omnipotent influence that emanated from the Louvre any more than was Edward of England; and despite all his protestations and covenants, he, at length, arrested the knights of the persecuted order wherever they could be found, and, having detained them in various castles they had themselves erected against his foes, in long imprisonment, at last resigned them for trial by the Bishop of Valencia, upon which trial they shared the sentence of their brethren in England and France.

In Germany, when the mandate for abolishing the order was about to be read by the Archbishop of Metey to his assembled Chapter, suddenly into that priestly conclave strode Wallgruffer, Count Sauvage, Grand Prior of the Temple of the Empire, followed by twenty knights; in full costume of the order, and, like himself, fully armed,—who, in stern tones, appealed from

all mandates whatsoever, whether of Pope or potentate, to the General Council announced to be holden at Vienne. The appeal was recorded, and, after long and tedious examination, the Templars of that province were ultimately pronounced innocent of the charges preferred.* But their estates were never restored them, and their order was finally blended with those of the Knights of Malta and the Teutonic Knights,—the white costume of the Soldiers of the Temple being exchanged for the black habit of those of St. John.

Thus was the influence of the Louvre felt by Henry of Luxembourg, hero though he was, not less than by every other sovereign of Europe!

In a similar manner were the charges preferred by the King of France entertained by the sovereigns of Portugal, Castile and Sicily,—at first, with amazement, incredulity, and indignation; but, at last, through that potent influence which none seemed able to resist, in each of these kingdoms, as in England, Aragon and Germany, the doomed and dreaded order was suppressed. In Portugal the persecution was less severe than in any other kingdom of the Continent; but there, for the title "Soldiers of the Temple," was substituted "Soldiers of Christ," under which name the order now exists.

As may be inferred, the stern and indignant mandate of Clement, arresting the arbitrary proceedings against the Templars in France, was not very quietly received by a man like Philip the Fourth. At first, he utterly refused

* At Mentz the order was pronounced innocent. The Wildgraf Frederic, Preceptor on the Rhine, offered to undergo the ordeal of red-hot iron!

to receive the Apostolic Legates; but, after a long and close consultation with the Countess of Marche, he vouchsafed them an audience, in which he communicated a message for immediate transmission to their master and his.

In this communication, Philip boldly declared that he had done nothing in the matter of the Templars but at the bidding of an officer of the Papal Court,—William Imbert, Grand Inquisitor at Paris, and that the suspension of that monk from his powers, because of his zeal for the church, tended dangerously to fortify the corrupt and impious order he had assailed. As for the Prelates of France, who had received their power in direct succession from St. Peter, and who, in conjunction with the Bishop of Rome, were commissioned to shield God's Church from heresy, they, he declared, viewed the inhibition of the Holy Father of the discharge of their assumed functions as an undisguised infringement upon their spiritual franchise, and betrayed an evident disposition to disregard the mandate. For himself, his coronation oath to God had record in Heaven, and no earthly power could force him to disregard it. That the Templar Knights were guilty of the corrupt and flagitious practices of the which they were charged, was, he said, by many of them, confessed;—that God detested those who were neither hot nor cold, was a tenet of Catholic faith; that not to punish crime promptly was partially to approve it;—and, that this was not the first time France had been in conflict with Rome, because the Pontiff usurped the powers of the Prince, though it

might be the last, and the issue of the contest with Clement Fifth might prove not unlike to that with Boniface Eighth. Finally, in unmistakeable proof of the piety and purity of his own motives, as well as of a disposition in all things to obey his Holy Father, the King announced his surrender to the Papal ministers of the persons and property of the Templars, provided always, that they should still remain under the control of his own Provosts and Police, and in the dungeons of his own prisons!

Immediately on the despatch of this missive, Philip issued writs convening the States of his Kingdom, at the city of Tours, on the Loire, in the Orleanois, to confer on matters of vast moment to the realm, on the ensuing Tenth of May.

To Philip the Fourth did France owe the institution of Parliament and the more frequent convention of States General than had ever before been known. To him, also, despite all his own despotic acts, does Paris owe the establishment of her most efficacious tribunals for the administration of justice, and the formation of her most respectable body of magistrates. By the 62nd Article of an edict of March 18th, 1303, he gave Parliaments to France, one of which was prescribed to be holden in Paris twice every year. At first, the officers and members were of his own nomination. They were removed by him at pleasure, and from him they received the remuneration for their services; while they embodied all the lords spiritual and temporal of the realm.

Subsequently clerks and counsellors learned in the law were admitted.*

At Tours, the assemblage of delegates was unusually large. The King presided in person, and William de Nogaret, the Lord Chancellor, detailed, at length, all the charges preferred against the Templars, and the proofs collected in their support. The result was, of course, inevitable,—unqualified approval of the past, and equally unqualified warrant for the future, of all royal acts.

Sustained by this triumph, Philip repaired at once from the city of Tours, with all his ministry, to the city of Poitiers, where now was abiding the Apostolic See.

The interview between Clement Fifth and Philip Fourth, which immediately ensued, was of a character tempestuous in the extreme. But both men were too worldly-wise to sacrifice interest to feeling. Passion soon, therefore, yielded to policy, and the Templar Knights were, of course, the sacrifice to the compromise. Each party, alike, and equally, dreaded a contest, such as had convulsed Europe during the variance between the King of France and Boniface Eighth, and so greatly shaken the power of both. Clement was warned by the dreadful doom of Boniface, and Philip remembered the terrible significance of Papal anathema,—that “thunderbolt which shook thrones and affrighted nations,”—which stripped the altar of its reliques, and the churches of their bells,—which interdicted all sacra-

* In other parts of Europe, human rights seem to have been somewhat acknowledged, at this era, as well as in France. The Swiss Republics date from 1307.

ments, save that of baptism to the infant, and the viaticum to the dying;—which proclaimed perpetual Lent,—denied all indulgence, forbade all the formalities and all the consolations of religious faith, and commanded, on pain of eternal perdition, the disobedience of all the laws of the banned monarch, by all Christian souls within his realm that hoped for Heaven!

The result of the interview between the Pontiff and the Prince was this,—a *compromise* to the effect that the Templar Knights should remain in the custody of Philip, in the name of the Papal See, the Prelates of France, and the Holy Catholic Church: that, in event of final confirmation of the charges, and the consequent abolition of the order, its immense estates should be devoted to the recovery of the Holy Land,—meanwhile being consigned to agents of the Papal See; and, finally, that William Imbert and the Inquisitor of Paris should again resume those functions in the examination of the Templars, which had been so abruptly suspended.

To the unhappy captives this compromise brought no relief. Their persons remained under the custody and control of Philip, while their property was committed by the Pope to the charge of William Pidoue and René Bourdon, two of the officers of the Louvre Household.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE GAUNTLET.

WEARILY—wearily whiled away the wintry months in the gloomy dungeons of Chinon. Since the strange visit of Blanche of Artois, the venerable Grand Master of the Templars was, indeed, convinced that his own doom, as well as the doom of his beloved order, was sealed. He was convinced, too, that his doom would be inflicted through the agency and by the influence of the powerful and beautiful woman, who had so mysteriously come to him at midnight, and so mysteriously disappeared. He was convinced, during his long hours of meditation,—and he had many such, and ample space for many more,—that Blanche of Artois could, indeed, accomplish all she promised—but the *conditions* of that promise!—not for a single instant could they be entertained. His life—liberty—all most prized—gladly—gladly would that noble old man have yielded, as a propitiatory sacrifice for his beloved order; but there were upon him vows more sacred than life, or even the salvation of that order itself! True, he was the depository of a fearful secret, a secret, which, once divulged, even in the depths of his dungeon, or on the rack of the Question Chamber of Chinon, would, as inevitably as instantly, crush the guilty woman whose insatiate vengeance, like a sleuth-hound tracked him up; and even

give back, perhaps, to himself and his knights their liberties. But, alas! that secret was too closely wedded to those vows for them to be parted. The one rendered inviolate the other. The insurance was mutual, and sure.

To different dungeons in the Castle of Chinon were consigned the different officers of the Temple,—the Grand Master of the Order and the Grand Priors of France, Normandy and Aquitaine. But De Molai shortly discovered that the warder assigned to his dungeon had been a serving brother of the Temple, and through his aid, he shortly established a connection with his fellow sufferers, by the “omnific cipher” of the order,—thus communicating and receiving intelligence and opinion, as touching the welfare of their cause.

Winter had passed away and been succeeded by the spring; this, too, had passed, and been followed by the soft summer; and, still, the rigorous captivity of the Templar chiefs in the dungeons of Chinon continued, without hope of alleviation or close.

At length, on the morning of the seventh day of August, 1308, a crumpled fragment of linen, covered with mystic characters, was placed by the Templar turnkey into the hands of Jacques de Molai, the significance of which made him start. The meaning of those characters was this:

“Clement deserts us!—Imbert tortures!—thirty-six Templars have expired on the rack!—to-morrow the Grand Inquisitor will be in the Question Chamber of Chinon! What shall we do? INRI!”*

* The signal-word of the order.

Instantly the old man traced on that portion of the fragment of linen, yet unused, a single cipher, conveying this significant sentence :

“The good Templar follows his chief!”

“Thirty-six Templars have expired on the rack,” thought Jacques de Molai. “The extinction of the entire order by torture, is, doubtless, designed. That guilty woman’s threat is in fulfillment! This must cease! And, then, once more—once more free, and on our good war-steeds, battle-brand in hand, we may defy a world!”

The intelligence conveyed by the mystic cipher was true. The next day,—being the eighth day of August, William of Paris with two cardinal Legates, accompanied by De Nogaret, De Marigni, De Chatillon, Hexian de Beziere, the Prior of Montfauçon, and the sworn Tormentor of the Inquisition with all his dark familiars, arrived at Chinon, and, that very night, the Grand Master of the Templars was brought before the infamous, yet most imposing conclave.*

Chinon, like all other castles of the age, was not without its Chamber of Torture, amply furnished with all the fearful inventions of the period for the production of human anguish.

To this apartment Jacques de Molai was now con-

* William of Paris, or William Imbert, was a monk of St. Dominic, and with his whole order, fresh from the bloody scenes of Languedoc and deeply versed in all inquisitorial arts and practices, was devoted, with all his soul, to the destruction of the Templars. De Nogaret was the murderer of Boniface; and Du Plessis, or William Plasian, his present coadjutor, had assisted in that sacrilege, and, afterwards, before all the peers and prelates of France, had borne oath that their victim was an atheist and a sorcerer and had a familiar demon!

ducted by the ministers of the Inquisition. It was a large quadrangular chamber, situated in the centre of the ponderous pile, and surrounded by walls of most massive thickness, with not a single aperture, save the low-browed entrance with its iron door. In the centre was a heavy table of oak, around which, in the order of a council, or a judicial tribunal, sat the Inquisitor with his spiritual and secular satellites. On the table were parchments and materials for writing, and the Prior of Montfauçon seemed to act as greffier, or clerk, to record the proceedings.

The apartment was but dimly lighted by a lamp of iron, which swung directly over the table by a rusty chain from the arched roof of ponderous masonry, dripping with damps, and threw its sinister and uncertain glare on the dark conclave below. Each of the members of that gloomy tribunal, whether priest or layman, was arrayed in the full costume of his office and order.

The chamber itself seemed separated into two apartments, by a heavy curtain of sable serge; and, notwithstanding it was now the depth of summer, a coal fire threw its blood-red glare from a grated furnace in the depths of the wall, and strove, but vainly strove, to dispel the sepulchral damps, as well as to aid in giving the dungeon light, or, rather, in rendering its darkness more visible.

Loaded with chains, Jacques de Molai, Grand Master of the Templars, strode into the presence of this fearful tribunal, with arms folded on his broad breast, and with a brow as serene, and a step as firm and majestic, and

form as erect, and glance as bold, as he had ever trod the floor of his own Chapter-chamber, or the field of Paynim conflict.

A brief delay occurred, when he was thus addressed by the Inquisitor :

“ Jacques de Molai, Grand Master of the Order of Knights of the Temple, otherwise known as Chevaliers of the Temple, otherwise known as Knights of the Red Cross, and, by themselves, presumptuously and blasphemously, entitled ‘ Poor Fellow Companions of Jesus Christ and Soldier-monks of the Temple of Solomon, ’—Jacques de Molai, hear and understand ! You are charged, as chief of this order, and, in your person, this order is charged, with apostacy to God, treason to man, heresy to the Church, denial of Christ, compact with the Infidel, idolatry of Satan, and with many other iniquities too horrible to declare and too numerous now to recite. To this arraignment of yourself and of the order you rule,—Jacques de Molai, what say you ? Are you guilty, or are you not guilty ? ”

The majestic old man clasped his manacled hands, and, raising his eyes to Heaven, in firm and steady tones responded :

“ Before God, for my beloved order and for myself, I answer,—Not guilty ! ”

The Inquisitor-General gave three raps upon the table with a small gavel of ebony, and, instantly, the curtain of black serge at the extremity of the apartment in front of the council rose.

The spectacle it revealed might well cause the firmest

nerves to tremble. The first object which arrested the eye was a low leathern mattress, spread on a frame, in the centre of the apartment thus revealed; while, from the vaulted and cavern-like arch above, descended a stout pulley, to the extremity of which, and reposing on the leathern bed, was a broad belt for the waist, with a copper buckle, and two straps of similar breadth and similarly furnished for the shoulders. This, in the poetical parlance of the age, was a "Bed of *Justice*." Beside this mattress was a frame of somewhat similar structure, but furnished at both ends with a sort of windlass, evidently worked by the ropes and levers attached.

Upon the Bed of Justice sat a fearful figure in garments of black slashed with crimson, and with muscular arms bare to the elbow; while, beside him, sat two assistants similarly garbed.

At a table, at the further extremity of the compartment, in a huge arm-chair of oak, sat another man, garbed in robes of black velvet. Before him was an array of restoratives, and elixirs, and cordials, and pungent aromas, and a few of the rude surgical instruments of the day,—scalpels and lancets, and tourniquets, and knives. This man was the surgeon of the Torture-chamber; for, by hellish humanity, the victim was suffered to perish by nothing but torture; and the utmost assiduity and all the skill of science of the day were exercised to prevent syncope, collapse, or a too speedy death. Beside the rack ever stood the surgeon, with vigilant finger on the victim's pulse; and the torments

were increased or diminished, exactly as the strength of the subject seemed to permit,—exactly as the fluttering, or fevered pulse might indicate the discretion of their appliance!

Upon the floor, or hanging against the walls, was a confused and fearful array of strange-shaped and nameless implements of torture. Bucklers and bracelets,—helmets and corselets,—screws for the thumb and collars for the throat,—buskins of iron and gauntlets of steel,—hooks, and chains, and saws, and pulleys,—wedges and beetles of every size—such was the hideous paraphernalia of this vestibule of hell, while, in a blazing furnace in the solid wall, like that already described in the other apartment, gleamed pincers, and tongs, and bands, and ploughshares, in fiery menace. Against the wall leaned an iron wheel, and beside it stood a massive mace of the same material, wherewith to crush the limbs of the victim reclining on its spokes,—his head bound to the hub and his feet braced against the felloe!

As the black curtain ascended, being apparently drawn up, on either side, by unseen cords, the sworn Tormentor with his assistants at once arose, and approached the venerable victim, who, with folded arms and erect form, calm and unmoved, still stood before that infamous council.

“The gauntlet!” said Imbert; and, immediately, one of the assistants brought forward with difficulty a massive glove of steel, which he laid heavily on the table of council. At the same time, the other satellite, in company with his chief, approached the Grand Master,

and they laid their huge hands rudely upon his shoulders. The next instant both men were prostrate on the stone pavement, on either side, at the distance of several feet from the Templar chief, while the fire of indignation and insulted pride flamed from the deep sockets of his sunken eyes. Then, striding firmly to the table, he thrust his powerful hand and arm, half-way up to the elbow, into the gauntlet of steel.

“Begin!” cried the Inquisitor, with malice almost fiend-like in his tones.

The assistant tormentor at once commenced turning a screw situated upon the back of the ponderous gauntlet, through which, by most exquisite skill and contrivance,—a skill and contrivance worthy of exertion in a better cause,—the whole internal apparatus began immediately to contract, embracing every knuckle, and muscle, and nail,—such was the mechanical ingenuity of its construction,—so perfectly and so slowly grasping the whole hand in its velvet lining, with such equable pressure, that, for some moments, no disagreeable sensation whatever could be perceived, but rather the reverse. The first perceptible effect experienced by the victim was arrest of circulation and slowly increasing paralysis of the parts. Next, sharp and cutting pangs shot up the nerves into the arm and body; then, sharp semi-circles of steel began to sink into the quick at the roots of the nails,—rough knobs began to crush the knuckles, while sinews of adamant adapted themselves with infernal precision and annihilating effect to the sinews and muscles and tendons of the living mechanism of God!

The torture elicited by such a contrivance may, possibly, in some small degree, be conceived. Describe it, of course, cannot be. It can, however, be readily imagined that of all the skilful inventions of a Dark Age to produce human agony, there were few that could assume precedence of the gauntlet for their infernal triumph.

And to this hellish instrument was the hand of the heroic old man, which had so often, for the glory of the Church and the cross,—that same church and cross for heresy to which he now, by blasphemous perversion of terms, was doomed to suffer,—was the hand of the noble Templar chief, which had so often for the Church grasped the battle-brand, now subjected!

It was the Templar's right hand which was embraced by the ponderous gauntlet, as it lay on the table before the Inquisitors. The broad palm of his left hand was pressed closely over his heart;—his posture was firm—stern—erect—majestic;—his head was turned aside over his left shoulder, and slightly thrown back; while, with lips apart, and eyes and face devoutly raised to Heaven, as if in prayer, he awaited the torments, which, slowly yet most surely, were approaching.

For some moments, as the tormentor noiselessly and ceaselessly turned the well-oiled screw, the Inquisitors, whose eyes were fastened with curiosity and awe upon the majestic face of their victim, could perceive no change. At length, the broad brow slowly corrugated,—the lips curled with anguish so as to lay bare the white teeth,—the eyelids fell,—the hand dropped like

lead from the heart,—the pallor of death diffused itself over the countenance,—a groan of more than human anguish burst from the heaving bosom, and, the tottering, the venerable sufferer would have fallen, had he not been sustained by the ponderous gauntlet by which his hand was grasped.

“Hold!” shouted Imbert, springing to his feet. The whole council, at the same instant, and seemingly through the same impulse, had also risen. “Reverse!” he cried to the demon of the screw.

The slave obeyed, and the gauntlet began to relax its crushing clasp. At the same time, the man in black hurried forward with a small silver basin half-filled with a freshly-poured fluid, the pungent and acrid aroma of which instantly loaded the atmosphere of the chamber. In his hand he bore a sponge. Saturating the sponge with the fluid, and throwing his arm around the victim's drooping form to give it support, he began, with ready skill, application of the soft and porous mass to the nostrils, lips, cheeks and pallid brow of the exhausted sufferer, who showed immediate symptoms of reviving energy. He was, however, too feeble to stand, and was borne by the dark familiars, with most solicitous assiduity, to the low leathern mattress, worn thin by use, of the Bed of Justice. The wretches were solicitous lest their victim should too soon escape them,—lest he should evade additional torments held in reserve. The head of the Templar rested on the bosom of the physician, who sat at one extremity of the mattress, while the tormentor and his assistants, with prompt ingenuity, aided

to sustain his almost gigantic form, by means of the broad leathern belt suspended by pulleys attached to the arched roof over the bed of torment, with which they encircled his waist.

The physician still continued unremittingly to bathe the pale face of the sufferer; and his assiduities were, at length, rewarded by success. A deep sigh heaved the patient's breast,—his eyes languidly opened,—his lips moved.

"The flesh is, indeed, weak," he murmured. "Oh, God! how very feeble thy creatures are!"

"What says the prisoner?" asked Imbert, who, with the other members of the council, had regained his seat.

"He says the flesh is weak," echoed the physician.

"Greffier," cried Imbert, "write down that the accused says, 'The flesh is weak.'"

The secretary, who had already recorded the groan, the swoon, and the sigh, instantly, with prompt and punctilious officiousness, obeyed.

"Jacquis de Molai," again cried the President of the council, after a pause, "do you confess the guilt of the which you here stand charged?"

A silence of some moments succeeded.

"For the second time, Jacques de Molai,—do you confess your guilt?" asked Imbert.

Again there was no answer, and again there was silence.

"Jacques de Molai, for the last time,—do you confess your guilt?" repeated the monk.

"I do!" was the feeble response.

Had the arched roof of that dark chamber fallen, the Inquisitors could hardly have manifested more wonder than at this unexpected confession. They gazed on each other in bewildered surprise with which was not unmingled an expression of bitter disappointment. It was plain they had never dreamed, after beholding thirty-six inferior knights of the order expire on the rack, without the utterance of a syllable of acknowledgement or contrition, that their heroic chieftain would be the first to falter; and it was plain, too, that this miracle was no more agreeable to them,—inveterate foes to the order as each one individually was from private and personal hostilities without number,—than intelligence thereof would, probably, prove to its most devoted friends,—though, of course, for very different reasons.

"Greffier," said Imbert, after a brief pause, recovering somewhat from his amazement, "write down that the prisoner says, 'I do,' in confession of his guilt."

The clerk obeyed, and read aloud what he had written.

The Inquisitor then resumed his interrogatories.

"Jacques de Molai, you confess yourself guilty of heresy?"

"Yes," was the response of the old man, in meaningless and mechanical tones.

He seemed in a stupor, as with eyes closed, and his head resting on the breast of the physician, who still applied the restorative, he reclined on the low leathern bed.

But his brain was busy,—his thoughts were far away; he was sacrificing himself to the salvation, as he hoped,

of his beloved order, and he knew it, he meant it. He had but one answer to make to every question, be it what it might, and that answer was brief, and required no reflection.

“You confess yourself guilty of sortilege and magic?” continued Imbert.

“Yes.”

“And of converse and commerce with the devil, in the form of a big black tom-cat?”

“Yes.”

“And of having worshipped said devil, in the shape of said big black tom-cat?”

“Yes.”

“And, likewise, of having worshipped a big brass head, with goggle eyes, and a long black beard, said beard being greased with the fat fried out of a Templar’s child, which child, aforesaid, you and your knights roasted before a slow fire on the points of your swords?”*

“Yes.”

“And of having sold the Holy Sepulchre to the Infidel?”

*As regards the *head* the Templars were said to worship, accounts vary. Some say it was that of an old man with a long white beard; and others that it was the head of a young woman, and one of the 11,000 virgins of Cologne! Another account is this: A Templar loving a maiden, she slew herself rather than yield to him. After her interment, he opened her grave, and cut off the head, and, while thus doing, he heard issuing from the pale lips these words—“Whoever looks on me shall be destroyed!” Enclosing this Medusa-like head in a box, he took it to Palestine, and, wherever he uncovered the head, walls of cities and whole armies fell: At length he embarked to destroy Constantinople; but, on the voyage, a woman, out of curiosity, opened the fatal box:—a tempest arose!—the ship was wrecked!—every one perished, but the knight, and the very fishes deserted that sea! And, ever after, in tempests, that beautiful head rose to the surface, and rode, gracefully the waves with streaming hair, and every ship went down before it! How the Templars got possession of this terrible head tradition telleth not!

“Yes.”

“And denied Christ?”

“Yes.”

“And trampled on the cross, and spit on the consecrated host, and mutilated the solemn Mass?”

“Yes.”

“And that you have drunk human blood, mingled with Cyprus wine, out of skulls, with wizards and witches, and sorcerers, and demons, at their feasts and Sabbaths, and likewise, then and there, and at such time and place, have hopped about on one foot around a big cauldron, in which cauldron was boiling the flesh of infants, which aforesaid flesh, you did, then and there, afterwards, with the aforesaid devils and other evil persons, partake of and devour, with much gloss and glamour and magical practices, likewise, with vigils, and periapts, and cabalistic and symbolic signs and mysteries?”

The Templar was silent.

“Yes, or no?—Jacques de Molai—answer!” cried Imbert in tones, which, had that dark old chamber possessed echoes, would have roused them all.

They certainly roused the poor victim from his reverie, for he quickly and eagerly answered:

“Yes!—yes!”

“And you do likewise confess that you have pledged the libation of blood, as a seal of your compact with the Infidel,—your blood and his blood being commingled in the same skull, and drunk up warm and steaming?”

“Yes.”

The Grand Inquisitor paused to take breath: also, to

give the unhappy Greffier, whose pen the righteous enthusiasm of the monk's pregnant and rapid interrogatories had kept in furious requisition, a chance to catch up; likewise to wipe his forehead.

But there was another reason why the pious monk of St. Dominic paused, and of far more import, with himself, at least, than either of the others;—he had nothing more to say! Of common crimes, such as robbery, rapine, ravishment, murder, adultery, and the like, though the charge against the doomed order embodied each and every one in the Hebrew Decalogue, or in the code of Draco,—the wise, and merciful, and learned William of Paris condescended to question not a word! Not he! Such crimes were in the comparison, trifling, in the wise appreciation of the holy father,—aye! and in the infallible judgment of the Holy Church, too, it would seem; for she would sell the privilege of perpetrating any or either of the same for a trifling consideration! Such crimes were a mere *bagatelle* compared with the heinous offences of worshipping Beelzebub in the shape of a big black tom-cat,—of bowing down to a brazen head with goggle eyes,—of greasing the beard of the aforesaid head with the fat of Templar babies,—of drinking Paynim blood out of Paynim skulls,—of dancing at wizards' feasts and witches' Sabbaths, and the like, as has been herein rehearsed!*

* If the reader deems it incredible, that, on charges like these and absolutely and literally these, the Templars were arraigned, tortured, and burnt, let him consult the works of Dupuy, Raynouard, Vertot, and Villani, in French; and those of all modern historians, whether Catholic or Protestant, in English!

“The Holy Office has closed its interrogatories,” was the pompous promulgation of the Inquisitor-General, otherwise William of Paris, otherwise plain William Imbert, a friar of St. Dominic,—when he had gone to the length of his intellectual tether, and had asked as touching every crime of which the polluted annals of the aforesaid Holy Office then had record,—so far as his memory, after due refreshment and reflection and consultation with the Cardinals, at the moment served him. “The Holy Office has closed its interrogatories. After the spiritual comes the civil authority.”

This was understood to mean that De Nogaret, De Marigni, or De Chatillon, the Chancellor, Minister, and Constable of France, had now permission to propound questions. The Papal Legates were mere spectators and counsellors.

“Jacques de Molai,” cried the first, “you confess the commission of adultery, fornication, and most horrible, abominable, unmentionable, damnable, and bestial crimes, and unpardonable sins against God and Nature?”

“Yes,” replied the Grand Master, who was roused by his friend, the leech, in time to pronounce the significant and saving monosyllable, without exciting wrath, or suspicion by any “heretical and obstinate delay.”

Poor old man! He charged himself with crimes of which he could not have been guilty, if he would! The only passion he had ever felt,—or indulged, in all his life, was military ambition; and, for twenty years, the blood in his veins had been ice to all “fleshly lusts that war against the soul.”

“Jacques de Molai,” cried the second, and he was the Prime Minister,—“you confess yourself guilty of treason to the crown of France?”

“Yes,” was the automatic answer.

“Jacques de Molai,” cried the third, and he was the Constable,—“you confess that you have drawn your sword, and levied war, and treasonably conspired, and meditated and suborned others to conspire and to meditate treason, against the peace and dignity of the realm of France, and her rightful King, Philip the Fourth, the grandson of St. Louis?”

“Yes,” was the careless answer.

Had they asked the old man if he had made the world,—that act being construed a criminal one—or had led on the Titans to scale Olympus and dethrone Jove,—or, instigated the rebel angels to dethrone the Diety, his answer would have been the same!

But, as none of these interrogations chanced to occur to these most astute and learned lords spiritual and temporal, they were not, of course, propounded. Besides, these offences would, in all probability, have been deemed but minor ones as compared with sortilege and sodomy and magic and idolatry.*

A pause of some considerable length succeeded, during which silence nothing was heard save the reed pen of the perspiring Greffier, who toiled away to complete his record of the wonderful revelations of that midnight conclave.

* Nearly every charge against the Templars had previously been made against the martyred Albigeuses.

At length, he ceased to write, and, with a relieved, satisfied, and self-complaisant air, contemplated the work of his hands. This was the signal for the Grand Inquisitor again to break silence.

“Greffier,” cried the monk, with most magisterial solemnity, “you will now rehearse the record of the proceedings of this our sitting!”

The Greffier instantly stood up, and began reading, in that melodious tone styled the nasal, which was quite as characteristic of clerks more than five centuries ago, as it is said to be now.

“Amen—amen—amen! Be it known, to all and singular, to whom come these writings, that, on the night of the eighth day of August, in the year of the world’s salvation, one thousand three hundred and eight, we, the undersigned,—to wit:—William Imbert, Inquisitor-General, Cardinals de Prato and De Montesioré, Legates of the Papal See, William de Nogaret, Chancellor of France, Enguerrand de Marigni, Prime Minister, and Hugh de Chatillon, Grand Constable of the realm, and likewise, etc., etc., appointed to examine, as touching their crimes, the Grand Master of the Templars, and the Grand Priors of France, and of Normandy, and of Aquitaine, by ordinary and extraordinary torture, did meet and assemble in the Question Chamber of the Castle of Chinon, in the Province of Limousin, and then and there did proceed to work. Jacques de Molai, Grand Master of the Templars, being produced and arraigned, pleaded not guilty to the charges preferred against him and his order, whereupon, being subjected to the *gauntlet*, he

groaned, and then nearly swooned, and then, when he revived, sighed, and said—‘The flesh is weak;’ and being asked, if he would confess—said, ‘Yes;’ and being asked if he was guilty of heresy, said, ‘Yes;’ and being asked if he was guilty of sortilege and magic, said, ‘Yes;’ and, being asked if he had worshipped the devil in the shape of a big black tom-cat, said, ‘Yes;’ and being asked,” etc., etc.

And thus ran on this most edifying and truthful record, to the very end of the chapter already detailed!

When the sweet and nasal tones of the Greffier ceased to be heard, the Inquisitor and his coadjutors rose together solemnly from their chairs.

“Jacques de Molai,” cried the Inquisitor, “you have heard read the record of your examination by ordinary and extraordinary torture.”

The old man had heard not a syllable. His thoughts were elsewhere, and on matters of far different import.

“Is that record true, or is it false?”

“Yes,” replied the Templar chief.

His friend of the sponge and basin, who seemed to have a complete, and adequate, and most intelligent appreciation and comprehension of the whole scene, with all its merits, and also its demerits, if it had any,—arising from long familiarity with the like, had given him a seasonable punch in the side.

“Is it true, or false!” thundered Imbert, elevating his eyebrows, and affecting to regard the simple and innocent monosyllable as a suspicious indication of contumacy.

"True—true!" whispered the man in black.

"True—true!" eagerly echoed the victim.

The wrath of the Inquisitor seemed partially appeased, and, in tones less terrible, he continued:

"And you confess, in the presence of these witnesses, that you are guilty of all these manifold iniquities, and, also, that the whole order, of which you are chief, is likewise guilty—"

"Hold!" cried the Grand Master of the Temple, struggling to regain his feet.

A flash of lightning could hardly have electrified every man in that apartment more completely than did that shout.

The old hero had been viewed as little better than dead, but the very name of his beloved order had recalled him to life.

"Hear me and bear witness, all you who are here present!" he exclaimed, in stern, strong tones. "Against myself I confess *everything*:—against the Temple *nothing*!"

And the victim sank back again into his seeming stupor, as if exhausted.

The members of the council looked on each other in solicitude and doubt.

But the night was now far advanced, and the sagacious Imbert put a summary close to all embarrassment, by exclaiming:

"Jacques de Molai will be borne to his dungeon. On the morrow, Hugh de Peralde will be examined by ordinary and extraordinary torture, as touching his crimes,

and after him the Grand Priors of Normandy and Aquitaine, in succession. And God save the Holy Church!"

"God save the Holy Church!" echoed all in the dungeon, crossing their breasts.

And even so it was.

And the council dispersed.

And Jacques de Molai was borne to his dungeon.

And the next day the Grand Priors of France, and Normandy, and Aquitaine were examined by ordinary and extraordinary torture, as touching the preferred charges.

But the faithful Templar turnkey had placed in their hands the cipher from the chief of their beloved order, which meant:

"The good Templar follows his leader."

And likewise the Templar watch-word of Chinon, which was this:

"Yes!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FIELD OF ST. ANTOINE.

THE examination of the Grand Priors of France, Normandy and Aquitaine which ensued, as appointed, on the night succeeding that of the examination of the Grand Master of the order, in the Question Chamber of the Castle of Chinon, was, in all respects, in character and in results, the same as that detailed in the last chapter. The mode of torture only was varied, and the confessions varied, also, in unimportant details; while less time was wasted upon all three of the Priors together than had been devoted to the chief magnate of the order alone.

On the morning succeeding the examination of the Grand Priors, being that of the tenth day of August, 1308, the whole council deputed to the service left Chinon for Paris, with all the records of their proceedings, in order themselves to be the couriers of the unlooked-for result of their mission, and to afford their royal master the aid of their suggestions, as touching the somewhat embarrassing position, in which they were aware he would be placed by the event they were to announce.

Nor had they misjudged. Philip was filled with rage and disappointment at being thus foiled in a purpose, which De Molai seems rightly to have divined, of annihilating

the whole order upon the rack, save only those who would renounce their vows and aid in his design! Of these latter were not a few of those who had assumed the title of Templar and its costume, without the right to either, and had been degraded by the Grand Master, in his stringent efforts at reform, on his first arrival at Paris. There were others from whom the Templar mantle had been torn as a mark of degradation, for vice or for crime, or who had been subjected to penance or imprisonment for violation of their vows, who were rejoiced at the opportunity now afforded them, not only of charging the order from which they were apostates of most horrid guilt, but thereby obtaining honors and rewards. Others there were whom menace had intimidated, torture vanquished, or bribery corrupted. But, until now, the number of these was comparatively small, as is evidenced by the large proportion of the victims who expired from the extremity of their tortures.

But, now, as the astute Philip had foreseen it would be, it was very different. The example of the Grand Officers of the order seemed irresistible. At once, not only in all the dungeons of Paris and all over France, but in England and Provence, at Ravenna, Pisa and Florence,* and, indeed, all over Europe, every charge, however hideous, and impossible, and absurd, was no sooner preferred than confessed.

Dismayed, disappointed, embarrassed, the enemies of the persecuted order were at a loss what next to do. The effect of the Grand Master's example surpassed their

utmost apprehensions, and excited even their astonishment. That amazement would, probably, have been less, had they been aware that, in the train of the Inquisitor of Chinon, rode one who entered Paris with themselves, and who bore an order in cipher from De Molai to the imprisoned Templars, bidding them imitate their Master. "The good Templar follows his leader," said a single cipher of the soldier-monk; and this cipher explained all. They asked not for motives, nor for designs. It was the order of the Grand Master, and they obeyed.

But if Philip and his Ministers evinced surprise and disappointment at the unexpected and embarrassing phase now assumed by the affairs of the Templars, there was one whose wrath at that event far exceeded their own, even as her prior enthusiasm exhibited in the cause had put their own to the blush. That person—strange to tell!—was the once mild, gentle, amiable, and still most lovely Blanche of Artois, the Countess of Marche! From the midnight dungeons of Chinon, she seems to have emerged a fiend of cruelty and crime!

It has been asserted that the heart of woman, once thoroughly depraved, can find no equal in the breast of man, however corrupt; that it knows no compunction, is utterly unforgiving, and can devise and calmly inflict torments, at which the sterner sex would shudder. If this *be* so, never was a more striking example of the principle exhibited than in Blanche of Artois. Never had woman loved, worshipped, idolized, more deeply, desperately, devotedly, than had she. The first gushings

of her passionate heart had been checked and chilled at their very fountain by the faithfulness of their unworthy object; and, having turned elsewhere for consolation and sympathy in an ill-fated hour, it had centered on one who seemed the very vision that had haunted all her girlhood dreams—the very ideal of all her maturer longings. Oh, how had that fond and fervid bosom palpitated with passion in the embrace of that beloved being: and, oh, the agony by which it had been wrung when bereft of its idol! To win back that idol—to clasp that beloved object once more to her heart, although the embrace were death, she would gladly sacrifice all most dear to her as a princess, or a woman. Alas! what *had* she not sacrificed! She, the proud, the pure, the peerless—the bride of a prince, the idol of a palace, the star of a court, the boast of a kingdom, the counsellor of a king, the beloved and admired of all who knew her—to whose sweet face all eyes looked up with respectful love, and for whom one guilty throb would have been crushed in the heart as sacrilege—alas!—alas!—what was she now? The insane slave of a horrible and unheard-of vengeance, begotten in a heart now a hell—once a heaven by a passion yet more deliriously mad, more rapturously guilty! Ah! what had not that wild passion cost her! Doubt, dread, delirium, terror, suspense, remorse! And the dreadful vengeance that followed! Every pang she inflicted she felt; and the rack in the dungeons of her own dark heart worked on as ceaselessly as in the dread dungeons of her innocent victims!

And then the humiliation, the abject and pitiful

entreaty, the beseeching supplication, to which she had bowed herself, because of that same wild love! The youthful, beautiful, powerful Countess of Marche, at midnight, in the damp dungeons of Chinon, gained only by a long and toilsome route, through subterranean passage—at the foot of a manacled old man, imploring, entreating, supplicating, by all things most sacred and most dear—only to be haughtily and scornfully spurned!

“Ah, let him writhe—let him writhe on!” would she wildly and exultingly exclaim, as with rapid steps and flashing eyes, and pallid cheek, and disheveled hair, like a lost spirit, she would pace at midnight her lonely chamber. “Oh, God! what but the rapture of revenge is left me before I die! Aye, let him writhe, agonize—that dark old man, even as I do now! But, alas! he cannot suffer with me! Ah, had I but his naked heart within my grasp, that I might crush it, even as he has crushed mine! But the end is not yet—the end is not yet! Adrian, Adrian, Adrian!” she would ejaculate, in tones of touching sorrow, bursting into an agony of tears, and dropping beside the couch on which he had so often received her caresses, and burying her face in her hands—“Would to God we were both of us dead!”

And scenes like this were witnessed by that deserted chamber of Blanche of Artois, not once, nor twice, nor thrice, nor many times; but every night, when, after a whole day of toil in the accomplishment of her fierce and terrible vengeance, she retired to her lonely pillow, such fearful scenes, accompanied by prayers, and vows, and ejaculations, and awful maledictions, occurred!

It is not wonderful, therefore, that when that revenge, so fiercely sought, seemed, even for a moment, foiled or balked, the avenging spirit in Blanche of Artois should have been proportionally roused.

As for Philip, he was too deep a student—too profound an inquisitor of the human heart not to perceive that his fair daughter-in-law, despite all concealments and disguises, was actuated by some intenser emotion than the wish to gratify him, in her pertinacious pursuit of the Templars. What that impulse might be he could not divine; and, in sooth, absorbed as he was in his own grasping and avaricious schemes with reference to the same end, he did not very zealously seek. His curiosity, it is true, was somewhat piqued to know the influence that could have changed so gentle a being, as had always been, until lately, Blanche of Artois, into the stern, fierce, resentful woman he now knew her. But her revenge had the same object as his own avarice. Whatever its cause, of this he was sure; and he did not know—nay, he did not care to know, and, surely, never asked, whence it originated.

Adrian de Marigni had not been seen in Paris since his mysterious disappearance. Blanche had fondly hoped that he might be found in the dungeons of the Temple; but when, at her instance, and for this sole purpose, it had been seized and converted into a palace, although she had personally, at midnight, torch in hand, searched every vault, and well, and *oubliette* and *in pace*, and dungeon, of that black old pile, and though she had found many victims, she found not, alas!—him she sought.

And the Queen of Navarre and Philip de Launai, her Norman lover—the single star yet gleamed nightly from the tall tower of the Hôtel of Nesle, and nightly the solitary boatman crossed the Seine when the clock of St. Germain l'Auxerrois tolled the half hour after twelve.

Jane of Burgundy had given birth to a daughter (who in after years was Isabella, Dauphine of Viennois) at the Abbey of Maubuisson. But this event did not part her from her handsome Equerry, her beloved Walter.

Walter and Philip were both Templars—as has been said—but the guardian care of the ladies of their love saved them from the dungeon and the rack.

Louis *le Hutin* passed most of his time at the city of Pampeluna, the capital of Upper Navarre, governing his little realm a little, and making love to a lovely Navarre lady a good deal.

As for Charles *le Bel* and Philip *le Long*, the other two sons of the King, (who, each of them, in turn, after their elder brother Louis, became sovereign of France), they lived in the Louvre, and were not Templar Knights, and cared very little who were, so long as they were permitted undisturbed to prosecute their amours and intrigues.

Charles of Valois, disappointed in his aspirations for the imperial diadem, was in camp at Courtray; but long since he had replied to the anxious inquiries of the Minister that his son had not joined his regiment, nor been heard of since sent to Paris with despatches, nearly three years before.

And Marie Morfontaine, the poor and friendless

orphan heiress—but no—*friendless* she was not—for, by one of those strange revulsions of the human heart, which are sometimes witnessed, the Countess of Marche now had the young girl—pale, thin, miserable, as she was—forever at her side! She seemed now the only being that Blanche of Artois loved! She would sometimes clasp her to her heart, and for hours these two women would mingle their tears.

And Marie Morfontaine loved Blanche, despite all the irreparable harm she had done her! And, despite all the irreparable harm each had done the other—and perhaps for that very reason—who knows?—they seemed now to cling to each other with a stronger grasp—with the grasp of death itself. Alas! they were each to the other the sole remembrancer of the only man each had ever truly loved! They loved each other—bereaved and wretched as they were—for the very reason that each had loved him—lost,—lost now forever to them both! And as their love had the same object, so had their revenge!

Edmond de Goth still remained at the French Court, the most patient and the most devoted lover of the age! True, his love did not seem to pale his cheek much, nor to dim his eye, nor to diminish his bulk. Not at all, indeed. His sorrowing and sighing—if, peradventure, the worthy man knew what it was to sorrow or to sigh—seemed to have had the same effect on his form as they had on that of Shakspeare's Sir John of Windsor—they "puffed it up like a bladder:"—and for this reason, and for no other, indeed, might he say, "A

plague on it!" Yet why should he sorrow or sigh? True, Marie Morfontaine did not love him. She had told him so an hundred times. But then she had also said on the self-same hundred times that she did not love anybody else. And what could a reasonable lover require more, forsooth? Besides, to tell the truth, he had to confess, even to himself, that Le was not, after all, actually, very deplorably and wretchedly in love with the young heiress. It would have been a fierce flame, indeed, and perfectly vestal in its immortality, if in nothing else, to have blazed up against the almost daily quenclings she poured upon it. Finally, though Marie Morfontaine did not love him, and was every day fading, fading and losing her beauty of face and form, yet it was some consolation—(to one who hoped against hope, that in very despair, and actually to get rid of him, she might possibly, at some distant day, perchance, take him for her lord)—that her immense estates in Normandy were every day becoming more and more valuable! Why *should* he grieve? He ate, slept, drank, dressed and flirted as usual:—why pity *him*? Pshaw! Why waste so many words on him?

Thus passed away the summer, and the autumn and winter of 1309, at the Court of France. The Templar Knights, although they freely admitted themselves guilty of every crime they were asked to admit, whether possible or impossible, were still retained in their dungeons. It was plain that the scheme of the Grand Master did not result as he had hoped. That scheme the penetrating mind of Blanche of Artois had, from the first, thor-

oughly detected and seen through. She had now waited the prescribed time, and she had resolved that it should avail no more—that the hated order should *not* be saved. In her heart its doom had already long been sealed.

Jacques de Molai, Hugh de Peralde, Guy of Normandy, and the Grand Prior of Aquitaine were brought from Chinon to the Temple.

Again, despite the confessions of the victims, the rack was at work in every dungeon in Paris.

The result was exactly that which this deep-plotting woman had anticipated. To the utter astonishment of every one but herself, almost every Templar, who before, without compulsion and torture, had confessed himself guilty of all possible and impossible crime, now, when stretched upon the rack, answered not a word! The secret cipher, the royal arch cipher was again at work! “The good Templar follows his leader.” The Grand Master had recanted!

Were not all this *fact*, reader—historical fact—the testimony of hundreds of foes as well as of hundreds of friends of the Temple—it would be too strange even for the purposes of fiction.

Philip had been embarrassed by the confession of the Templars: he was now more embarrassed by their recantation. Not so Blanche of Artois. “*Relapsed Heretics*” she called them; and as such were they condemned; and as such on the morning of Tuesday, the 12th of May, 1310, were fifty-nine knights of the fated order—among whom was one of the King’s own chaplains—consumed at the stake by slow fire, in a field behind the Abbey of

St. Antoine, on a spot then in the suburbs of Paris, now in its heart, and their ashes scattered to the winds! On the same day many provinces of France witnessed a like spectacle.

Over this horrible massacre presided the Archbishop of Sens, brother of Enguerrand de Marigni, the Minister, and uncle of Adrian. Each one of the victims died asserting steadfastly the innocence of all and the honor of the order with his last breath. History relates that, after they had reached the spot, life and freedom were freely proffered, if they would repeat their former confession; but the imploring prayers of friends and the awful terrors of the stake, the torches of which already blazed before their eyes, could not shake the purpose of these iron men. They were chained to the fatal tree—smoke and flame, like fiery scorpions, wreathed their suffering frames; but, so long as their voices could be heard, through that wild whirlwind of conflagration, only the prayers and hymns of their beloved order, and their protestations to Heaven of their innocence could be distinguished.

This was awful! Even the citizens of Paris—poisoned as were their prejudices against what they were taught to believe an infamous fraternity, could but express admiration for the God-like firmness with which the martyred Templars met their end, and endured their torments; and express commiseration for their fate, and indignant wrath against their murderers!

But there was one—a pale and lovely woman—who, from the tall central tower of the Louvre, looked away

to the west, and viewed those flames until they had ceased to gleam against the darkening horizon; and *she* pitied not! Alas! alas! she even exulted in her fiendish and horrible work.

But a dreadful reckoning was at hand—close at hand! As she descended from that tower and entered her chamber, it was night; and in her hand a swift courier placed a paper; and she opened that paper quickly and read; and she dropped like a corpse upon the ground!

That paper contained the last farewell of Adrian de Marigni, who that day, by virtue of a general order inspired by the Countess of Marche, had perished at the stake, consumed by slow fire, as a Knight Templar who would not confess, before the priory of Vosges, in the province of Lorraine!*

* At Senlis nine Templars perished at the stake and four others shared their fate a few months later. At Pont-de-l'Arche and Carcassone several knights were burnt. Thibault, Duke of Lorraine, a friend of Philip, put a large number to death, and seized the goods of their Preceptory. In the church of Gayarnie, a hamlet of the Pyrenees, on the route to Spain, are shown twelve skulls, said to be those of Templars beheaded at that place. At Nîmes, Troyes, Caen, Bigorre, Cahors, Poitiers, Bayeux, Metz, Toul, Verdun and numerous other places, the order was subjected to the torture. In Spain and Italy the rack was also applied to wring confession.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE GRAND MASTER IN NOTRE DAME.

HAPPY had it been for Blanche of Artois had she from that deep and death-like slumber never awakened!

But the miserable do not die! They who court death seldom win it. There is in wretchedness a power of embalment, which seems to confer on its victim the fearful boon of earthly immortality! Like that line in mathematical science which ever approaches, yet never attains the point at which it aims,—like the Hebrew wanderer who forever sought death, amid the scenes of its wildest ravages; yet never found it,—thus would it seem that the miserable are forever forced to live; while the poor, shuddering, terrified, trembling wretch, to whom life is dear, and who, with terrible tenacity, clings to it, is torn bleeding away and hurried from the earth!

The ways of Providence are, indeed, mysterious! In her grand and majestic march, how little heeds she those who are crushed beneath her tread!

Happy had it been for Blanche of Artois could she then have died!

Marie Morfontaine chanced to be in the apartment of the Countess when she entered, and instantly rendered that aid which all of Eve's suffering daughters know so

well how to administer to each other's ills. Through her active attention, Blanche soon evinced symptoms of returning life; and, having opened her eyes, gazed wildly around.

At length her gaze fell upon the young orphan, and clinging to her frail form, as if for succor, she murmured:

“What,—what is it, Marie?”

“You have been ill, madame,” was the soft reply.

“Ill?” muttered the Countess, after a pause. “Am I not always ill?” Then suddenly throwing her hand to her forehead, she added, “Tell me, what has happened?”

“I only know, madame,” replied the orphan, “that I heard a fall, and hastened out, and found you at your door in a swoon. I also found lying beside you this paper,” she continued, presenting the fatal note.

Instantly the whole subject flashed back on the mind of the Countess, and for some moments she seemed again about to pass into her former unconscious state.

But Blanche of Artois had a masculine mind, in a frame of iron inherited from a long line of heroic ancestors; and that mind gradually assumed its ascendancy over that frame.

“Give me that paper!” she exclaimed.

She was obeyed, and with a shudder it was thrust into her bosom.

“Now, Marie, put me to bed,” she added more calmly; “I am weary—very weary.”

“Shall I call your women, madame?” asked Marie.

“No, no, no! call no one!—assist me to the couch,” was the low reply.

The orphan obeyed.

“ Shall I remain ? ” she asked.

“ Yes, oh, yes,” said the Countess ; “ and if you become weary, lie beside me.”

Hour after hour—hour after hour, through the long and silent night watches, did Marie Morfontaine sit beside that unhappy woman, and gaze on that pale and lovely face, faintly lighted by the rays of the distant lamp ; and hour after hour heard she the iron tongue of Time record its lapse. And, oh, the many miserable thoughts which passed through her mind—the many agonizing feelings that filled her breast ! But the pale slumberer—*she* moved not—scarcely seemed to breathe ; and at length Marie Morfontaine obeyed her injunction, and laid herself beside her on the couch, and, shortly, soundly slept.

But Blanche of Artois slept not—she woke not—dreamed not ; her mind and her senses seemed steeped in stupor.

And thus was it even until the morning dawn.

One would have supposed, after all Blanche of Artois had endured, she could hardly have experienced a new torture, either of body or of mind.

But the heart, after all, is but a portion of the physical being. Agony may be elicited by the application of torture to one of its parts, which to the sufferer may seem to embrace all of suffering which humanity can endure ; yet, let a different species of torment be applied to the same spot, or, let the same species of torment be applied to another, and the victim writhes in anguish, as

if he had never writhed before, nor thought that art had exhausted her tortures.

Even thus was it with Blanche of Artois. She had suffered—she *thought* she had suffered *all* that the human heart *could* suffer. But, alas! she found it was not so when the conviction came home to her that her own order had consigned to death, by most awful and lingering torments, him, whom more than all earthly beings—whom more than her own soul, whom more than her God Himself, she had loved!

Amid all her sufferings, hitherto, had still existed hope—the hope, however faint, that she might yet, before she died, clasp her idol to her heart. Hope now was dead. In its place was born despair, and from the incestuous union of despair and hate was begotten a new existence—a terrible revenge!

She could not perceive—poor woman, blinded as she was by intolerable anguish—that she had herself doomed her lover to an awful death—first by her wild love, and afterwards by her wilder vengeance. As for the unhappy orphan, she pitied her, loved her—even despised her, too thoroughly to blame her for any part she might have acted in this fatal tragedy. But there was one being on whom now all the intense and concentrated and virulent rancor of her strong soul centred—him whom, from the first, she had viewed as the author of all her ruin. That man was Jacques de Molai, Grand Master of the Templar Knights, and on his devoted head she resolved to wreak all the fearful vengeance of her fancied wrongs and her terrible tortures.

In this office of revenge, she was aided by another, who too late discovered that he had been exercising cruelty against the Templars, only to destroy his own dearest object in life, and as it were, too, with his own hands. That man was Enguerrand de Marigni; for, shortly after the communication to Blanche of Artois of the sacrifice of Adrian, his only son, as a Templar, in a remote section of the realm, the same dreadful intelligence came to himself. The Minister had always been an uncompromising foe of the Templars; but never, amid his wildest visions, had he dreamed that he was exerting all his energies for the destruction of an order of which his beloved son was a member; and that, directly through those efforts, that son would be consigned to a dreadful death! On the first intelligence, he was overwhelmed with grief and dismay. But the lapse of time, which heals all wounds, healed even this, the most deep in a parental breast; and into that breast, as into that of Blanche of Artois, entered—not the pure spirit of forgiveness, but the fell spirit of revenge.

To commit Jacques de Molai and his Grand Officers to the stake—to sweep from existence that order, by them more dearly loved than life itself, and to confiscate its immense estates in France to the crown—such were now the three several purposes of three individuals: Blanche of Artois, Enguerrand de Marigni and Philip *le Bel*.

To the death of Jacques de Molai were devoted all the energies of the Countess for the loss of her lover; nothing less than the utter annihilation of the hated order could appease the vengeance of the Minister for the loss

of his son; and the rapacious spirit of the King had, from the first, regarded the vast revenues of the Templars as the only means by which to sustain his power, and to relieve his realm from the impending financial ruin, brought on by his protracted wars with England, Flanders, and Boniface Eighth.

But in the final decision of the fate of the Temple and its Grand Officers, Pope Clement Fifth claimed,—and rightfully claimed,—to be the lord paramount; while it had already been decided, as he understood, by the compact of May, 1308, between the King and himself, that, in event of the abolition of the order, its vast wealth should revert to the Papal See, for the defence of the Holy Land.

Bertrand de Goth had never forgotten nor forgiven the insults of Philip, at the Abbey of St. Jean d'Angély, nor those at the subsequent interview at Poitiers. Nor had he forgotten that the Roman Pontiff was the appellate chief of the Templars, and that, for two centuries, these mailed monks had been the unfaltering supporters of the successors of St. Peter, even against the King of France himself. But Bertrand de Goth was neither a great man nor a good man, and he long since had learned that he had to deal with a man as unscrupulous as he was powerful;—a man who had made *him* all that he was, and who, as he had planted him on a throne which he had vacated by the removal of two of his predecessors,* might also, if it so seemed good to him, remove himself

* Boniface VIII. and Benedict XI. are both supposed to have owed their death to Philip *le Bel*, indirectly if not directly.

to make room for a more pliant tool,—a more subservient and submissive slave. To preserve the lives of a large number of Templars who had perished, he had found to exceed his power. He had himself been compelled to preside over the examination of seventy-two of the order, at Avignon, who had confessed every charge of which they were accused. It might exceed his power, or his will to exercise that power, to preserve the Grand Master and his companions from the stake, or to prevent the abolition of the order. But on one point he was resolute: rather than suffer the vast revenues and immense estates of the Temple to revert to the coffers of Philip of France, he was determined that, not only his pontifical power, but his life itself should be the sacrifice.

This Philip understood and comported himself accordingly, and, in compliance with the demand of Clement, and in pursuance of his appointment, on the 7th of August, 1310, several months after the martyrdom of the Templars in the field of St. Antoine, there convened a Papal Commission of eight Ecclesiastics in the Cathedral Church of Notre Dame, who cited the whole Order of the Templars to appear before them.*

* Authorities conflict as to the chronology of the chief incidents of the persecution of the Temple. Some historians state that a Papal Commission, in August, 1309, cited the Templars to Paris to defend their order:—that, in March, 1310, there were 900 knights in Paris, and that 546 came before the Commission sitting in the Bishop's garden in the rear of Notre Dame and selected 75 of their number as champions:—that, in April 21 witnesses were produced, and 13 examined:—that Philip de Marigni, Bishop of Cambrai, was there made Archbishop of Sens by the King, and at once convened a provincial council of his diocese at Paris; and that, May 12th, three days afterward, 54 of the Templars who had been chosen to defend the order were, upon sentence of this council, burned, in the field of St. Antoine, notwithstanding the most vehement remonstrance of the Papal Commission at perfidy so infamous. Those who confessed and retracted and persisted in that retraction were burnt as "*relapsed heretics*;" those who did not confess were imprisoned as "*unreconciled Templars*;" and those who persisted in their confession were set at liberty as "*reconciled Templars*."

On the 26th day of November ensuing, the Commission again assembled in the same place, thronged with the citizens of Paris, and Jacques de Molai was brought before it loaded with chains, and pale and emaciated by long imprisonment. On his being arraigned, the President of the Council, Cardinal de Prato, demanded in a loud voice:

“Jacques de Molai, Grand Master of the Order of the Temple, you stand before a council of Prelates commissioned by His Holiness, the Sovereign Pontiff, to examine you, as touching many high heinous crimes, of the which you and your order are credibly accused. To these charges what say you?”

“These accusations are not new, Lord Cardinal,” replied the prisoner, firmly. “I have already pleaded to this indictment in the behalf of myself and my order. And, yet, methinks that the Holy Church proceeds with unwonted precipitancy in this cause, when it is recalled that the sentence relative to the Emperor Frederic was suspended for more than thirty years.”

“Jacques de Molai,” rejoined the Cardinal, sternly, “what have you to say why a decree of abolition should not be recorded by this Commission against the order of which you are chief?”

The Grand Master started. It was plain he was unprepared for a proposition so summary. But, quickly recovering, he replied with his usual firmness:

“And is this council of noblest Prelates assembled in this ancient edifice, by authority of His Holiness, the Sovereign Pontiff, to deliberate on the abolition of an

order, founded by pious knights, to defend the Temple, and confirmed by the Apostolic See itself, and, which, for two hundred years, in the presence of all Christendom and Heathenese, has poured forth its blood like water, for the cause of the Mother Church?"

"Not for the good deeds of this order," replied the Cardinal, "but for its manifold evil deeds, do we now deliberate, by command of the Holy Father, on the question of its final extinction, and for this do we now demand of you, Jacques de Molai, its chief, what have you to say why such decree should not be recorded?"

"Primates of the Church," said De Molai, stretching forth his manacled hands, "you are rightly informed that I am the Grand Master of a persecuted order; and, for the honor thus bestowed upon me, wretch, indeed, should I be, did I not raise my voice in its behalf, and in defence of its noble sons so foully calumniated. But, Primates, I am a soldier,—not a scholar. These hands have been more familiar with the hilt of a battle-sword than with a pen. I am unlearned, also, both in civil and ecclesiastical law, utterly unused to forensic debate, or the subtilty of dialectics. Indeed, I know not even the *forms* of courts, nor their modes of procedure, and should prove as utterly unequal to cope with my scholastic accusers before this council, as, perchance, they might prove unequal to compete with the humblest of my knights in open lists. Oh," he exclaimed, raising his clasped and fettered hands with his eyes to Heaven,—“oh, for one fair field, with our brave battle-steeds beneath us, and our good battle-brands in our mailed grasp, and a whole world of armed-

foes before us! But, alas! alas!" the old man sadly added, while his manacled hands fell with a crash at his sides, and the proud exultation of his bearing was succeeded by the gloom of depression—"we are lions snared in a net!"

A murmur of admiration and sympathy ran through the multitude.

"Jacques de Molai," cried the Cardinal, after a pause of considerable duration, "for the third and the last time, I ask, do you defend the order of which you are chief?"

"I do—I do!" eagerly answered De Molai. "But I am unlearned in the law,—I am very illiterate,—I can hardly read or write,—I have only one servant,—I am very poor,—they have taken all my money except four deniers;—I demand counsel for the Temple, to be paid from those treasures of the Temple, brought by myself into this city, to aid me in this defence."*

"In a charge of heresy the accused is entitled to no counsel," replied De Prato.

"Then, as chief of the Templars, I declare myself the champion of the order!" cried the soldier-priest in tones that reverberated like thunder through those Cathedral aisles and along those Gothic arches: "and here I take my stand, and throw my gage, and demand my trial by *battel*, and pledge myself to fight, until the death, all and any ten knights, in succession, who may come against

* Henry Capetal, Governor of the Grand Chatelet, confessed that he arrested seven persons, who were denounced as being Templars in a lay habit, who had come to Paris, with money, in order to procure advocates for the accused—and had put them to the torture! And yet they came in accordance with the citation of the Papal Commission!

me, in fair field chosen, and appearing in behalf of our accusers. And, if I fail to prove each one and all of those ten champions false, then let me be consigned to the rack and the stake, and my name to infamy, and my beloved and holy order to oblivion!"

Again the people expressed their admiration in suppressed murmurs.

"The Church of God wars not with carnal weapons!" coldly replied De Prato, who, despite himself was moved by the chivalric and noble bearing of that bold old man. "And, oh, bethink thee, knight, before thou dost embark in this desperate enterprise, how poorly thou art prepared, even were counsel allotted thee, to defend an order, which thou hast, thyself, accused of horrible crimes!"

"Which I—*I*, Jacques de Molai, chief of the Templars, have accused?" fiercely interrupted the old soldier.

"Thou, Jacques de Molai, chief of the Templars," was the reply.

"When?—where?" he furiously demanded.

"On the night of the eighth day of August, 1308, in the Question Chamber of the Castle of Chinon," said De Prato.

"'Tis false—false as hell!" shouted de Molai. "That night I remember well. I have some reason to remember it well," he added, with a bitter and significant smile, shaking his head. "For reasons which I then deemed wise and right, every charge against myself I admitted true, whatever that charge might be. If in

so doing I did unwisely,—as often since I have feared,—then, the good God forgive me! But that I then or there, or at any time or anywhere, admitted any charge whatsoever against my beloved order—why, that is *impossible*,” he added, with a bitter laugh, at the same time lowering his tone. “But you can easily test that on the spot. Bring forth your instruments of torture and try me where I stand!”

“There is an easier mode by which to prove thee false, prisoner,” said the Cardinal. “Let the record of the confession of Jacques de Molai at the Castle of Chinon be read!”

The clerk immediately rose and began reading the record. Every crime there confessed by De Molai against himself was so interpolated and falsified as to have become an admission of charges against the whole order, and against all its members!

Overwhelmed with indignation and wonder, De Molai remained silent while the reading was going on, but repeatedly crossed himself and raised his eyes to Heaven.

“Jacques de Molai,” said the Cardinal, when the document had been completed, together with the names of the Grand Inquisitor and his two assistants, by whom it was subscribed—“to this—your confession, what say you?”

“Were I free, and were the men whose names are subscribed to that paper anything but priests,” replied the knight in low tones, “I should *say* nothing, I should *act*!”

“Do you deny the truth of this record?”

“Most unquestionably I do; and most unqualifiedly I do, also, here declare those men to be liars and forgers, and richly meriting the fate inflicted on such criminals by Tartars and Saracens,—whose hearts they tear out, and whose heads they strike off!”

At these words the multitude burst into admiring and indignant shouts.

“The session is adjourned!” cried De Prato, rising in alarm with the whole council. “Guards, look to your prisoner!”

* * * * *

And the noble old warrior was conducted to his dungeon, and his cowardly assailants repaired to the Palace of the Temple to confer with the King.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE POLITIC PRINCE AND THE POLITIC PRELATE.

PHILIP the Fourth of France was a bold, energetic and despotic prince; but he was, also, a wise and politic one.

He knew his people well. He knew well what they would endure, and he knew well what they would not endure. He had reason to know. His wisdom had been bought by a somewhat dear experience.

By the death of his father, Philip the Third, or, *the Hardy*, in 1285, he ascended the throne of France, being then only in his seventeenth year; and, from that hour to the hour of his death, never was royal prerogative more sternly sustained than by him. It was to sustain the prerogatives of a Sovereign of France that he did battle, for five full years, with Edward the First of England; to sustain those same prerogatives, he waged a bloody war, for eight years longer, with Guy, Count of Flanders; and, again, to maintain those prerogatives, even against the spiritual supreme of Christendom, he braved all the thunders of the Vatican, for seven full years, in a contest which only ceased with the terrible death of his foe.—or, more properly, his victim.

But this incessant warfare, though invariably successful, was expensive, and involved the enterprising monarch in extreme financial embarrassment. To relieve

this, he had recourse to the usual resort of princes at that era, in such emergencies:—he debased the coin of his realm, and, at the same time, enhanced its nominal value. To such “shameful and ridiculous excess” was this debasement and enhancement carried, that one denier of the stamp of 1300 was worth three deniers of the stamp of 1306; and, yet, under severest penalties, he commanded all men to receive the base coin at the same value as the true! But there was a scarcity of precious metal as well as of coin. To obviate this, he forced all his subjects, the barons and prelates only excepted, to bear one-half of all their silver plate to the mint! The exportation of gold and the hoarding of specie were declared capital crimes! Imposts were enormous, and the direct tax on each individual was one-fifth part of all his revenue; while five hundred livres of income paid twenty-five livres tax!

The unhappy Hebrews presented to Philip, as to every other Prince of Europe of that age, another, and a most fruitful source of plunder, of which he scrupled not to avail himself; and, at length, in the year 1305, came the grand blow upon this injured people. An ordinance—(like that subsequently against the Templars)—was issued upon special permission of Clement Fifth, by which every Jew in the realm was arrested, at the hour of noon, on the festival of St. Madelaine, when all were on their knees in their synagogues: and every man was banished the kingdom,—forbidden to return under penalty of immediate execution,—and suffered to take with him no more of his effects than would defray his expenses

to the frontiers. Many of the poor wretches perished by the way; some few loved their gold better than their lives and some loved their lives better than their religion, and received the baptismal sign; but all were reduced to abject poverty, and, of course, as their sole recompense, every Hebrew of them all cursed Philip the Fourth of France by Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the patriarchs and prophets of the old Testament, to their very soul's content! And it is quite probable that there did not come a single curse amiss!*

But the Jews were not the only people in France who cursed Philip *le Bel*. His own subjects,—Frenchmen,—descendants of the stern old Gauls, and but a few centuries removed,—cursed him for his extortions and cruelties. At length came an *emeute*—an insurrection,—“a three-days”—a Revolution, exactly as is always the case, at a moment it was least apprehended! The Palace of the Louvre was, of course, as in more modern revolutions,—the first place assailed, and Philip, like his descendants of the same name of more recent date,—was besieged and exposed to every insult and indignity. But, unlike the Philip of the Nineteenth Century, Philip *le Bel* sallied out from his stronghold with his men-at-arms clad in steel, at his back, and he swept the streets at once of the poor varlets that had rebelled; and, hanged twenty-eight of the first he could catch, as high as Haman, at the city gates, as a terror to the rest! And

* The history of the Hebrews in France, in the Fourteenth Century, is full of horrible interest. The persecutions to which they were subjected are almost incredible.

so efficient was this terror, that all of the residue slunk away into their work-shops, and betook themselves to their toil, as if nothing had happened, and never after dared whisper a syllable about extortion, however extortionate it might prove!

But Philip was a politic prince, and a wise one. He knew it would not be always thus, and he immediately assembled the States General to relieve the grievances of which his people complained, and because of which they had revolted.

The same course he pursued in the provinces as in Paris. Normandy revolted because of an oppressive tax. He quelled the revolt, and hung up a dozen or two of the rebels, and then—repealed the tax!

As for the Templar-Knights, whatever Philip's motive for their unjust and iniquitous persecution,—whether avarice,—apprehension, or revenge,—he certainly had done all in his power to make his people believe them guilty of all the crimes of which they were accused: and, quite as certainly, he had, to a deplorable extent, been successful.

The death of thirty-six Templars on the rack, in the dungeons of Paris, affected the citizens but little. That scene they had not witnessed. But they had witnessed the execution of fifty-nine Templars, at the stake, in the field of St. Antoine, and they had murmured. And now Philip was informed that murmurs loud and deep had been heard at the Cathedral of Notre Dame, during the examination of Jacques de Molai, by the Papal Commission. It was plain the populace sympathized with

that chivalric old warrior. Like themselves, he was unlearned in laws and unskilled in letters; and, from their very hearts, notwithstanding all their prejudices, they longed to see him on his war-horse,—as he himself prayed, with his mail on his majestic form, and his dreadful falchion in his hand, mowing down all assailants, right or wrong.

What was Philip to do? Resign his purpose he would not,—pursue it just then he dared not. He resolved to temporize. The Papal Commission met the next day and adjourned for five whole months.

On that same day issued from the Palace of the Temple letters-patent to the Templars, throughout all France, who desired to defend their order, to convene at Paris during the month of March ensuing.

In accordance with this summons, large numbers of the knights, who had been imprisoned in the provinces, repaired to Paris; and, on Monday, April 11th, 1310, nine hundred of the Templars being assembled, they selected seventy-five to superintend their defense, at the head of whom were Raynaud of Orleans and John de Boulogne, the Attorney General of the order—the Grand Master not being suffered to be present.

The trial now formally commenced in the Cathedral Church of Notre Dame, in the presence of immense multitudes of spectators, by the publication of the commission of the Sovereign Pontiff, under which the council sat, and the articles of inquiry, on which the accused were to be interrogated. Examination of witnesses immediately commenced, and up to the evening of May

11th, just one month from that commencement, only fourteen had been examined. But sufficient had transpired during this month to convince the accused that, from this commission, they could expect no justice. On the morning of the 12th, therefore, John de Boulogne, in the name and behalf of the order, presented a memorial, in which was declared—That the charges preferred against the order were infamous, detestable, abominable, and horribly false,—fabricated by apostates, liars and forgers, who were avowedly their foes; that the religion of the Temple was pure and unpolluted, and utterly exempt from all the abominations with which it had been charged, and that they who dared maintain the reverse were worse than heretics and infidels; that it could not, for an instant, be supposed that any man would remain connected with an order, which ensured the loss of his soul, and that order was composed of gentlemen of the most illustrious families in Europe, who would, surely, never have continued members, or even have continued silent,—had they known, seen, heard-of, or suspected the infamous abominations with which it had been charged. Finally, the bold and eloquent Knight-Advocate declared that he and his followers were resolved to maintain the honor of their beloved order at the sacrifice of life;—that they appealed from all provincial synods, or papal commissions, to the Sovereign Pontiff,* and demanded liberty to attend a General Council, to the end that they might, in the

* Dupuy.

presence of the Holy Father himself, their spiritual supreme, maintain their innocence.

When the Attorney General of the order had concluded, Tonsard de Gisi, one of the most intrepid and chivalric men of that or of any age, stepped forward.

"Tonsard de Gisi, do you defend this order?" asked the Cardinal.

"I do," sternly replied De Gisi. "I defend it in mine own name, and in the name of all my companions;—I defend it against every charge adduced by its enemies, and I demand the assistance of counsel in this defense, and a sufficiency from the coffers of the Temple to meet the expense, which that defense may involve."

"Tonsard de Gisi, have you not confessed yourself guilty of infamous crimes?" demanded the Cardinal.

"By command of our Grand Master, whom next to God we revere and obey, I have, in common with him and with all the best and purest knights of our order, confessed myself guilty of crimes,—impossible crimes—of which he, and they, and myself, are equally and utterly innocent."*

The Cardinal started at this bold declaration but continued.

"Were you put to the torture?" he asked.

"Not only myself, but all with me in the dungeons of the Louvre were subjected to every torture which those fiends, William Imbert, Inquisitor General, William du Plessis, a monk of St. Dominic, and Hexian de Beziers,

* Americ de Villiers had confessed on the rack his personal presence and participation in the crucifixion of the Saviour!"—*Villani*.

Prior of Montfauçon,—an apostate Templar, who, long ago, had his cloak stripped from his back by our Grand Master, and was condemned to perpetual imprisonment for infamous crimes,—all the tortures, I say, which those fiends could invent, or inflict. Thirty-six noble and intrepid knights died in their hands, in the prisons of Paris; and multitudes, besides, expired on their racks in all of the provinces.”

The people looked on each other in terror and dismay.

“Remove the prisoner, guards,” cried De Prato, “and bring forward the next.”

The Cardinal was promptly obeyed, and Bernard de Vado, another distinguished knight of the order, who had recanted his confession, was produced. The tenor of his demands and declarations, and of his answers to interrogatories was much that rehearsed in the examination of his immediate predecessor; but, when the question was asked—“Were you put to the torture?”—he thrust his manacled hand with difficulty into his bosom, and, producing a handful of small white bones, he advanced with halting steps to the table, and laid them rattling before the council.

“Behold the proof,” he exclaimed, with flashing eyes. “The flesh of my feet was consumed by slow fire, and those fragments fell off.”

At this fearful sight a groan arose from the vast assemblage. Even the Cardinals were shocked, and they quailed before the fierce glance of that injured and innocent man; while murmurs of indignation ran

through the immense multitudes that thronged the Cathedral.

“The council is adjourned!” cried De Prato instantly, rising from his chair.

* * * * *

Philip *le Bel* was a politic prince, and Cardinal de Prato was a no less politic prelate!

* * * * *

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE COUNCIL OF VIENNE.

TO detail all the proceedings of the Papal Commission appointed to examine the Templar Knights, in the Cathedral Church at Paris,—their numberless adjournments and re-assemblings—their iniquitous connivance with Philip and his Ministers for the destruction of the fated and hated order, and the active exertions of Blanche of Artois, who, throughout the whole, continued the very soul of the persecution; as well as the vacillation and yielding of the Pontiff, during a period of several months comprising all the winter of 1310, and a portion of the spring of the following year, would prove as needless as it would be tedious.

Suffice it to say that, between the date of the first meeting of the Commission, on the 7th day of August, 1310, until its final adjournment, on the 26th day of May, 1311, no less than two hundred and twenty-one depositions, as touching the charges against the order, had been filed, of which one hundred and fifty were those of Templars. The large proportion of the latter asserted their innocence; many of the most intrepid expired in their dungeons, from the effects of the tortures to which they had been subjected and a protracted confinement in a poisonous atmosphere; while those

with whom it was deemed dangerous to heal, chief among whom were Tonsard de Gisi and Bernard de Vado,—were not suffered to appear and bear witness for their order at all.

The great mass of testimony against the order was taken from the lips of most infamous apostates, whose vile characters, apart entirely from the numberless contradictions in their absurd and abominable statements, should have divested them of the slightest credence. Such now, indeed, was the *only* evidence, inasmuch as every knight at all recognized as a companion had fully recanted all confessions of crime, and asserted his innocence. Among the witnesses whose testimony was deemed of weight was that of Raoul de Presle, an advocate of the King's court, whose deposition alone, of all those taken, is still of record and extant; yet that simply details a conversation with a Templar, who told deponent that he would sooner lose his head than reveal the strange occurrences which transpired in the nocturnal conclaves of the order; and that, in the Grand Chapter, there was one secret so sacred, that were any person, not a member, by any chance to become acquainted therewith, the Templars would surely put him to death!*

At the close of the Papal Commission two copies of the entire record of their proceedings embodying all the depositions were engrossed on parchment, one of which was deposited in the treasury of the Cathedral of Notre Dame, the other forwarded to the Sovereign Pontiff.†

* Dupuy.

† Vertot; also Fleuri.

To decide justly on the fate of the order upon the facts set forth in this record,—absurd and contradictory as they were,—Clement found impossible, even had he been so disposed. But he was not so disposed; he was not disposed, indeed, to decide the question at all, and he had no idea of relieving his hated coadjutator from the responsibility he had voluntarily assumed, or to permit to be forced upon himself a decree involving the abolition of an order, the persecution of which, from the very first, against all his efforts, with extreme reluctance, he had been compelled, by Philip of France, to countenance.

In this painful emergency, Clement consulted his friend, the Cardinal de Prato, who, anticipating this embarrassment from the commencement, had taken his measures accordingly. Turning over the leaves of the record of the Commission, he pointed to the appeal of John de Boulogne to the Pope, and his demand, in the name of the order, for a General Council of all the Prelates of the Church at which his Holiness himself should preside. Upon this appeal and demand, the council had purposely taken no action. It was, therefore, an open question, and both appeal and demand might now be granted, thereby relieving the Papal See of the responsibility so much dreaded, yet so insiduously and pertinaciously forced upon it by the King of France.

Gladly and gratefully did Clement avail himself of this suggestion, and immediately issued a bull, convening a General Council at Vienne, in Dauphiny, near Lyons, on the 13th day of October next ensuing: and, inasmuch as

the Templars had appealed to such council and to the Pope, all knights who designed defending their order were solemnly cited then and there to be present ; while throughout all Christendom was proclaimed the safeguard of the Church to all Templars lying in concealment, who might desire to defend their order on that occasion,—assuring them of entire freedom to come, to stay, to plead,—and to return, without let or hindrance, and that no infringement whatsoever on their liberties, or lives, should be perpetrated or permitted.

In obedience to his proclamation, all the prelates of Europe, with the Sovereign Pontiff, hastened to Vienne, as well as immense numbers of the nobility, inferior clergy and people, whom the interest and novelty of the occasion drew to the spot.*

On the morning of Friday, the 13th day of October, 1311,—the anniversary of the arrest of the Templars four years before—the council assembled in the old Cathedral Church of Vienne, and proclamation was three times made by the heralds, with blast of trumpet, that all who would defend the Order of the Templars should then and there appear.

At the third proclamation and sound of trumpet, the multitudes around the Cathedral-porch parted their ranks, and nine chevaliers of the Temple, in the full costume and armor of the order, galloped up. Dismounting, they at once entered the church, and, remov-

* Not less than three hundred Bishops constituted this Council, exclusive of Cardinals. The Patriarchs of Alexandria and of Antioch and the Abbés, and Priors, were, also, present. Briand de Lagnieu was then Archbishop of Vienne.

ing their steel caps from their heads, and bending one knee before that venerable and imposing assemblage of all the Primates of the Church, with the Sovereign Pontiff at their head, arrayed in the gorgeous vestments of the Catholic priesthood and flashing with gems,—they announced the purpose of their coming. That purpose was to defend the Order of the Temple against any and all assailants, in any manner that the Council might deem fit; and they came under the safe-guard of the Church, in behalf of two thousand Templar-Knights, who now, for a period of four years, since the general arrest of October, 1307, had been wanderers among the cliffs and caves of the Cevennes, in the mountain province of Lyonnais.

The effect of the sudden appearance of this armed deputation so unexpected, from a body of knights so large, and of whose very existence the foes of the order had never dreamed, may be imagined.

Their reception by the Pope was respectful but guarded. He suggested to them the propriety of laying aside their arms and armor, and presenting themselves, at a future day, of which they would receive due notification, in their white robes of peace. The council, having then been formally opened, adjourned, with the notice that their next session would be devoted to a consideration of the general interests of the Church.

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That night a swift courier left Vienne for Paris, with a dispatch from the Pope to the King, detailing the

events of the day, and the important facts it had disclosed.

The object of Clement in deferring the cause of the Templars for consideration of the general interests of the Church was, doubtless, to gain time for consultation with Philip on the new phase that cause had assumed.

But, if it were so, very little occasion had he to felicitate himself upon the alternative he had selected; for, at the very next session of the council, memorials concerning the vices and irregularities of the clergy were presented by two aged prelates of France, which struck horror even into the soul of the Sovereign Pontiff himself. These memorials set forth, that the grossest ignorance and depravity existed among all orders of the clergy; that the arch-deacons inflicted the sentence of excommunication for offenses the most trivial, and from motives the most corrupt, and that in a single parish not less than seven hundred were under that awful ban; that the canons were guilty of most unpriestly demeanor in celebration of the service; that monks quitted their cloisters to attend fairs and markets, at which they were themselves hucksters, and mingled in all the vices of the throng; that nuns wore silks and furs, and dressed their hair in the style of the Court, and frequented balls, concerts, tournaments and all public places, and walked the streets even at night; that the Papal See itself was the seat of despotism, cupidity and licentiousness, where money alone could ensure preferment, whence ignorant and depraved men obtained the highest stations, and dishonored religion by the irregularity of their lives; that

incontinence was so universal that brothels existed beside the very walls of churches, and beneath even those of the Papal Palace, and finally—horror of horrors!—that the Holy Father himself had notoriously intrigued with a lady of rank, who was another's wife!*

The consternation,—terror,—amazement,—wrath of the Council of Prelates may be imagined upon the presentation and reading of charges like these. Even those against the persecuted Templars could with these maintain favorable comparison. To arrest the reading of the memorials when the clerks had once commenced was, of course, impossible, even had his Holiness so desired, which he did not, until the last terrible sentence had left their lips. He then instantly arose and adjourned the council; and, when it was again convened, which was not until the 11th of November, Clement was glad to avail himself of the exciting cause of the Templars, or any other cause, to engross the minds of the council, and divert attention from the late disgraceful developments. He was willing to rush upon any Charybdis, however threatening, to escape the Scylla upon whose rocks he was so near being wrecked. But the purpose of his delay had been accomplished,—he had received letters from Philip of France.

The first step in the consideration of the cause of the Templars was the reading of the entire record of the proceedings of the Papal Commission at Paris. This

* This is of record. Those who doubt can consult Fleury's Ecclesiastical History, in which the Memorials are set forth at length; or, a quotation therefrom in Gifford's France. The Countess of Perigord, daughter to the Count of Foix, a lady of high rank and exquisite fascinations, is said to have enslaved Clement.

having been completed, the Pope proposed individually, to the council, consisting of more than three hundred mitred priests from all the nations of Europe, the question—"Whether an order charged with such enormous crimes, sustained by the testimony of two thousand witnesses, should not cease to exist?"* And, to this interrogatory, each one of the prelates, and each one of the doctors of law, of all that vast council, replied that, previous to a decree which abolished a most illustrious order, established by pious men, confirmed by the Papal See and a General Council, and which, for two hundred years, had been the champion of the Church, it was demanded by justice and religion that the chiefs of the Templars should be heard in its defence,—each one of that vast assemblage of pious and learned men said this,—each prelate of France, and Italy, and Spain, and Germany, and Denmark, and England, and Scotland, and Ireland,—each one, save only a single bishop from Italy; and from France the Archbishops of Rouen, and Rheims, and Sens,—the last named being Philip de Marigni, the brother of Enguerrand de Marigni, who had received his elevation to a prelacy from the King expressly to persecute the Temple, and who had committed fifty-nine of the fated order to the flames in the field of St. Antoine as already stated.

By these four men it was contended that ample opportunity had already been afforded the Templars for their defence, and no new fact could be elicited by the most protracted examination.

* Life of Clement V.

The next question proposed by the Pope to the council was this—"Shall the Deputies of the Templars who have presented themselves be heard?" The decision was similar to the former, with the same number of dissenting votes,—“They shall!”

Instantly upon this decision, Clement declared the session closed; and the council adjourned until the third day of April, 1312; and that same night, by his order, the deputation of the Templars, in defiance of every principle of faith, humanity and justice, were seized, loaded with chains and thrown into prison,—a more atrocious and unheard-of act of perfidy than which the annals of history have no record, and which, to the honor of the Council of Vienne, was, by the pious prelates who composed it, most loudly, justly and indignantly denounced!

But Clement Fifth had received letters of advice from “his dear son, the King of France!” And on the 22nd day of February, suddenly, without prior announcement, appeared at Vienne, Philip *le Bel*, accompanied by his brother, the Count of Valois, his sons, the King of Navarre, the Counts of Marche and Poitiers, with all his Ministry, Clergy, and Court and a strong body of troops. And one of this splendid suite was Blanche of Artois.

One month from the date of that sudden arrival, being Good Friday, Clement assembled a select number of prelates in secret consistory, and there, in the plentitude of Papal power, which he declared should supply all defects of form, he pronounced a decree of abolition against the Order of the Temple.

On the 3rd of April, pursuant to adjournment, the council sat. On the right hand of Clement appeared Philip of France,—on his left Charles of Valois,—before him the King of Navarre and the Counts of Marche and Poitiers, with the whole French Court, Clergy and Ministry, and all around a powerful array of royal troops.

Clement then rose and read the decree of annulment with a firm voice, and thus concluded:

“We do, therefore, by virtue of Apostolic power to us, as God’s vicegerent, entrusted, pronounce the Order of Templar Knights provisionally suppressed and abolished,* reserving to the Holy See, and to the Church of Rome, the ultimate disposal of the persons and possessions of its members. Amen! And this council is dissolved.”

And the council *was* dissolved: and, without a word or sign, in ominous silence, each man went his way!

*The Order of the Templars was annulled 154 years after its confirmation by the Council of Troyes, in 1128.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE PEOPLE OF PARIS.

BERTRAND de Goth, Pope Clement Fifth, was a weak man.

Philip *le Bel*, fourth sovereign of that name in France, was *not* a weak man.

Both were bad men.

But the strong man had obtained, by means of the weak one, as is ever the case, in the long run, all that he originally designed; while the weak man had, in reality, accomplished none of his purposes, nor prevented the accomplishment of any of those of his rival, however much they had clashed with his own, or however strongly he had vowed, or desperately striven against them.

Philip of France had sworn the abolition of the hated Order of the Red-Cross Knights. His oath was fulfilled.

Clement Fifth had decreed,—had been forced to decree,—the abolition of this order, but he had done it with the salvo that with himself should rest the ultimate disposal of the persons and possessions of its members. But the persons of four of its Grand Officers were in the dungeons of Philip, and all of their immense estates in France were in his hands. And thus was it to the end. “Philip declined,” says history, “to part with the Temple effects, until he should have reim-

bursed himself for the vast expenditure he had incurred in suppressing the order ;” and that period never came ! Of course, it never came !

In Spain and Aragon, the Templar estates were given the order of Our Lady of Montesa, founded in 1317, and were appropriated chiefly to the extirpation of the Moors, who still held Granada. In Castile, they became a royal appanage. In Portugal, good King Denis left the Templars in quiet possession under their new name,—“Knights of Christ.” In Sicily, Charles the Second grasped the real estate, and resigned the personal property of the victims to his Holiness. In Germany, the Teutonic Knights shared the spoils of their persecuted brothers with the Knights of the Hospital. In England, alone, was the final decree of Clement at all observed, and the revenues of the martyred Templars secured to the White-Cross Knights,—or the Knights of *Rhodes*, as they now were called ; for, on the 15th day of August, 1310, while the unhappy Grand Master of the Templars was before the Papal Commission at Paris, the more fortunate Fulk de Villaret, Grand Master of the Hospitalers, with his war-galleys was capturing the Island of Rhodes !*

It is a pleasant reflection, after all, then, one which may be safely indulged, that Clement never actually

* The Knights of the Hospital, or the White-cross Knights, in 1310 took the title Knights of Rhodes ; and subsequently, when the Island of Malta became the seat of the order,—Knights of Malta. When the estates of the Templars were given to the Hospitalers, one order seems to have become merged into the other ; and the white mantle and red-cross became a black mantle and white-cross. At the present day, the degrees of Templar Knight and Knight of Malta are conferred in succession, and at the same time. The Templar costume is lost, but the name remains, and the degree takes precedence of its ancient rival and conqueror.

enjoyed the bribe for which he had sold his infamous decree; and that the Knights of the White-Cross profited comparatively but little by the unjust destruction of their rival brothers of the Red, although immense sums of money and vast estates once belonging to the Temple fell into their hands. In 1316, the Bishop of Limisso, in Cyprus, transferred to the Hospitalers, by order of the Pope, 26,000 bezants of coined gold, found in the Preceptory, and silver plate to the value of 1,500 marks,—all of which enormous wealth must have accumulated within a period of ten years; for, in 1307, as we have seen, De Molai, by order of Clement, had borne all the treasure of the order to Paris.

And Blanche of Artois,—she had, indeed, exulted at the abolition of the hated order; but, Jacques de Molai yet lived, and her vengeance was but half-appeased. The pale shade of her beloved Adrian still pursued her, go she whither she might. The vengeance of the King was satiated by the abolition of an order which he abhorred;—the avarice of the Pope was satisfied by revenues and estates which he *thought* already in his grasp, and each and both were now most anxious to justify in the eyes of indignant Christendom the persecution they had so long and so implacably pursued.

The fate of the Grand Officers of the abolished order was reserved to the Papal See; and Clement and Philip agreed in the resolution that, provided those men adhered to the confession extorted at Chinon, and thus justified all their own acts of persecution before the indignant nations, that their punishment should be commuted from

the stake to perpetual imprisonment. But the rigor of this imprisonment was now greatly mollified. The accused were no longer immured in the *dungeons* of the Temple, but confined in its *Towers*; and not only were they permitted to share each other's captivity, but to receive the visits of distinguished knights of their abolished order from distant cities. Among their visitors was the chief of the Templars at Cyprus,—John Mark Amienius—who, for a month, shared their imprisonment.

The object of this decided amelioration was plain. The order being now abolished, it was indispensable to Philip that he might remove the odium he had incurred by its persecution, that the Grand Officers should confess its enormities. This done, he cared not for their fate,—nay, he would, gladly even, commute a sentence of death at the stake to mild imprisonment, if not to complete and speedy enlargement. For his soul, he began to feel, was charged with too much of their blood already!

But with Blanche of Artois it was not so. All that was gentle,—all that was amiable,—all that was mild and loving in her bosom, was extinct. Hate—revenge—reigned there and ruled supreme. Oh, how different was she now from that fair—young—lovely—tender being, which but a few years ago we first saw her! Her very nature seemed changed. She was no more what she had been. Then, she was an angel of gentleness and love,—now, alas! she was a fury of vengeance and hate! To her insatiate soul it was not enough that the hated Order of the Temple was no more; the still more hated Grand Master of the Temple must share its fate.

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On the morning of Monday, the 18th day of March, 1314, there stood in the Place du Parvis, in front of the porch of the Cathedral Church of Notre Dame of Paris, a lofty scaffold. In front was erected a huge pile of fagots around a stake, and, in all the court, swarmed the people of Paris. At one extremity of the scaffold sat Philip de Marigni, Archbishop of Sens, while, on his right hand and his left, sat a Cardinal Legate of the Sovereign Pontiff, with the Bishop of Alba, deputed to assist at the ceremony now to proceed.

Before this council and this assemblage, after some delay, were brought,—surrounded by a powerful force, the Grand Master of the Temple and the three Grand Priors, who, for a period of six years, had been immured in the dungeons of Paris. The confessions of Chinon were then read by the Bishop of Alba, and a long and elaborate sermon was delivered to the multitude, in which the enormities there admitted were dwelt on with peculiar force. In conclusion, the Legate called upon the Grand Officers there to renew those confessions and be pardoned, or to refuse:—and before them stood the stake fully prepared for the sacrifice.

Intimidated by the menaces of the Legate, the Grand Priors of France and Aquitaine complied with the condition proposed.

But not so,—oh, not so, was it with that noble old man, Jacques de Molai, or his worthy companion, Guy, Prior of Normandy. Resolutely and calmly they retained their seats, while their fellow-sufferers renewed their

confessions. This done, and the two Grand Templars yet remaining motionless, the Archbishop of Sens cried in a loud voice :

“ Jacques de Molai, in the name of the Holy Church, and on pain of your immediate execution, at yonder stake, I call upon you, before this cloud of witnesses, to renew your recanted confession at Chinon,—I call on you to proclaim your shame and crime, and thereby to merit the clemency of your royal master ; and thereby to prove, also, beyond a doubt, to all the world, the justice of your punishment and that of your iniquitous fraternity ! ”

Firmly and calmly, De Molai rose from his seat, and slightly bowing to the Archbishop and the Legates, as he passed them, he advanced, with lofty bearing and majestic step, to the edge of the platform.

Every eye in that vast assemblage was fixed with awe, yet compassion, on that venerable man ; and, in hushed and breathless silence they listened for the first syllables of that confession of guilt which was to save him from the awful doom now full before him : and they thought that never—never had they looked upon a more grand and imposing form.

Raising his manacled arms, and spreading out his hands over the heads of that countless multitude, as if bestowing upon them his patriarchal benediction, for some moments he stood silent.

“ People of France !—citizens of Paris ! ” he, at length, exclaimed, in those deep and thunder-tones, which had so often been heard above the horn and the

cymbal—the atabal and the trumpet,—above all the clash of barbaric music, and the clang of steel, and the roar of Paynim battle,—“People of France!—citizens of Paris!—hear me, and understand! Through you, to all Europe,—to all Christendom,—to all the world,—to unborn ages, I speak! Hear and record my words.* I am commanded to confess my guilt and to condemn my order. Most humbly,—most penitently,—with sorrow and with shame,—in the presence of God and of man,—to my own undying ignominy, do I confess that I have been guilty of the blackest of all crimes!”

The old man paused. The prelates looked at each other with evident satisfaction, and the great mass of the people seemed,—also, gratified,—they seemed relieved from the apprehension of the fearful doom which impended over the Templar’s refusal to confess. There were, however, some few who turned away with disappointment and discontent. They had not expected *this*.

“Yes, people of Paris,” continued the Grand Master, elevating his sonorous voice, so as to be heard in the remotest corner of that spacious square, “I confess myself guilty of the blackest of crimes, by my confession of crime in the Castle of Chinon of which I was never guilty!”

Had a thunderbolt fallen from the blue sky of that wintry day into the midst of that vast assemblage, a

* And they *did* record his words! It is a noticeable fact that Vertot, Villani, Dupuy, Fleury, and all other historians, whether Protestant or Catholic, ascribe the same sentiments to this speech of De Molai, and almost the same words; and, now, agreeably to his wish, more than five centuries after they were uttered, they justify his memory, and the character of an order which more than his life he loved!

greater shock could hardly have been experienced. The prelates seemed stunned with amazement.

“The blackest of crimes!” reiterated the Templar; “because, by that confession of my own ignominy, I, Grand Master of the Temple, thereby entailed disgrace on my pure, and holy, and most beloved order! God forgive! God forgive! For, oh,—it was to *save* that order, and, with the vain hope of redeeming my persecuted sons from the same agonies of torture I then endured, that the confession of guilt was made. But now—now,” he shouted in loud, distinct, yet rapid tones,—“now—in this last moment of my life, and with the full knowledge that this avowal consigns my body to immediate flames,—to all Paris, to all Christendom, to all the world of man and before my God do I pronounce that confession utterly and absolutely false! I pronounce all the charges against the pure and hallowed Order of the Temple base, and monstrous and infamous calumnies! I pronounce Philip of France a traitor to his people and his race, and Clement of Rome a traitor to his God!”

“Treason! treason!” shouted the Archbishop of Sens, leaping to his feet.

“Brave De Molai!—brave De Molai!” screamed the people.

“Heresy!—heresy!”—cried the Bishop of Alba. “Seize him—stop his mouth!”

The guards sprang forward to obey, but before they could reach the Templar, his venerable companion, Guy, Prior of Normandy, his gray hair streaming to the

winter blast and the chains upon his raised arms rattling as he moved, rushed forward and exclaiming: "It is God's truth!—It is God's truth!"—threw himself into the arms of his beloved chief.

Supporting his aged companion on one arm while the other was still extended over the vast multitude, the lion-tones of that brave old Grand Master still continued to be heard, until both victims, locked in each other's manacled embrace, were dragged down from the scaffold and hurried into the church.

Oh, it was a sublime spectacle,—these aged and illustrious Templars, thus, with their latest breath, proclaiming the purity of their order, and, for that avowal, resigning their lives!

But the prelates lied when they menaced their victims with instant conflagration at the stake before them, if they refused to confess. They had never designed it; and, if they had, they would have dared not attempt it, amid the tempest of indignation which now pervaded the vast concourse around.

The prelates retired precipitately into the Cathedral as a retreat they were glad to gain.

The populace, thinking the Templar chiefs in the sanctuary, and for the present, at least, safe from violence, slowly dispersed to their homes; and, in a few hours, the angry surges of popular rage had ceased to welter, and roar, and mutter, and dash, around that dark old pile. The aged prisoners were then committed to the Provost of Paris, who, conducting them through secret passages, conveyed them across the Seine to the dungeons of the

Petit Chatelet, while the frightened priests escaped by the same route, and, seeking the lower extremity of the Isle of the *Cité*, crossed the other arm of the Seine to the palace.

From the summit of the tall central tower of the Louvre, Blanche of Artois, overlooking the intervening roofs, had distinctly beheld all that had transpired in the Place du Parvis of Notre Dame. She had watched the vast crowd, which, from the dawn of day, had poured in one unbroken stream over the two bridges connecting the *Cité* with the *Université* and the *Ville*, and which, disgoring itself through the various narrow streets and thoroughfares into the vast quadrangle, and up to the scaffold in front of the grand entrance of the Cathedral, and beneath the shadow of its ponderous and beetling towers, rushed and roared around the temporary structure. She had beheld, at an early hour, the priestly Triumvirate ascend the platform in their ecclesiastical robes, girt by the dark cloud of their monkish servitors, and immediately followed by the fettered Templars, surrounded by glittering spears. The ceremonies which succeeded, she had, also, witnessed, and well comprehended their significance, although, of course, not a syllable, at that distance, could reach her ear. With intense solicitude she continued to gaze, that she might witness the result, until, at length, the thunder-tones of the people shouting, "Brave De Molai!—brave De Molai!" sweeping on the blast told her that her fears were vain,—that her hopes—her confident expectations were fulfilled!

"He will perish!" she muttered, while a fiend-like exultation gleamed in her dark eye. "Beloved Adrian, thy shade will, at last, be avenged!"

She was turning to descend, thinking all was over, when the wild and hurried scenes that succeeded caught her glance and arrested her attention.

"Ha! the people!" she exclaimed. "They declare for the Templars! It is time then for *me* to act! No more delays!"

And, hurrying down, she found Philip with his Ministers, De Marigni, De Nogaret, De Chatillon, and the Inquisitor already in close council on the events of which they had just been informed. They were shortly joined by the Archbishop and the Legates, in a state of excessive alarm, which they did not fail to communicate to their associates.

Philip of France feared not foreign foes. His equestrian statue in Notre Dame commemorated their invariable defeat. He feared not the Sovereign Pontiff. Of this he had given abundant proof in three successive pontificates. He feared not—he had never feared his own nobility or clergy. He feared not now the once mighty power of the Temple. He seemed hardly to fear God Himself; and he surely disregarded man. Yet, there was one *thing*,—an animate,—active,—powerful,—passionate,—ungovernable,—hydra-headed thing, that he did fear. That thing was—the PEOPLE!

Philip the Fourth of France was a brave and wise prince; and when all the details of the scene which that evening had transpired in the Parvis of Notre Dame

were laid before him, he paused and reflected, and asked his counsellors for counsel.

This counsel was given, and by almost unanimous assent, the voice of De Marigni, who still bewailed the loss of a son which he considered as one more wrong, and the deepest from the hated order, alone dissenting. This counsel was the immediate announcement that the penalty of the contumacy of the Templar chiefs should be perpetual imprisonment. The certainty that the prisoners were not to be consigned to the flames, it was hoped, would allay the popular excitement. This decision was strenuously opposed by De Marigni, who urged the infliction of the awful alternative with which the Templars had been menaced in event of recusancy, and he was still speaking when the door of the council-chamber opened, and, to the amazement of all, Blanche of Artois entered.

Pale as death,—her long black hair hanging loosely around her face, and her large azure eyes filled with significant fire, the Countess of Marche, unannounced and uninvited, entered the secret council-chamber of the King of France. The Minister stopped short in his harangue, and all present gazed on this strange apparition with surprise.

“You are astonished at this intrusion, Sire,” said Blanche, bowing low to the King; “and it would, indeed, be an astonishing—an unheard-of thing, that even a princess of the blood should obtrude herself upon the private councils of the sovereign of France, did not extreme emergency, involving his dearest interests,—

perhaps his crown,—perhaps his life,—demand, if not warrant it!”

“Ha!” cried Philip, springing to his feet.

The counsellors looked at each other with doubt and dismay.

“Go on, Blanche, go on!” continued the King, more calmly, at the same time resuming his seat. “I have always deemed you my wisest counsellor. The event will prove me right, as a thousand times events have proven. Sit beside me and go on!”

“With your permission, Sire,” rejoined the Countess, “I will proceed with the few words I have to say, and, with your permission, will remain standing. You know, Sire, your counsellors know, all Paris knows the events of this day, and especially of the past few hours in the Parvis of Notre Dame.”

“The people are excited, my daughter,” said Philip, calmly. “But it will pass away.”

“The agitation of the good people of Paris, Sire,” rejoined Blanche, “and the sympathy they manifest in the behalf of the convicted Templars is known to all: but the immediate consequence of that excitement and sympathy,—and the ultimate most probable result,—if measures are not at once adopted to prevent, all do not know.”

“Well, Blanche, go on,” said the King.

“There are many Templars in Paris, Sire, who have never been arrested, or even suspected,” continued the Countess.

“So I have always feared,” rejoined Philip.

"These men have this day been active among the people."

"Ah, is it so?" said the King.

"I have just received positive proof of what I advance, Sire," continued the Countess, "and, to declare it, I have obtruded upon your privacy."

"This excitement must be quieted," rejoined the King, earnestly. "De Marigni, you are wrong."

"If the Templars again appear in public, they will be freed by a revolt of the people!" exclaimed the Countess.

"To-morrow the commutation of their sentence from the stake to temporary imprisonment shall be proclaimed throughout Paris," responded the King, with energy.

"That will not *be*, Sire," calmly replied the Countess, repressing with difficulty the agitation this announcement inspired.

"Indeed, Blanche!" exclaimed the King, with some surprise. "And why not?"

"Because, to-morrow the Templars will not be in your Majesty's power,—will not be in Paris," was the quiet response.

"Will not be in Paris?" cried Philip.

"To-night, the Chatelet will be stormed, and the prisoners released, and before the dawn they will be far on their flight, with their deliverers, to the border," said Blanche.

"You are sure that the Chatelet will be assailed to-night, Blanche?" asked the King.

"I am sure," was the brief answer.

"Then the Chatelet must be invested with troops without delay," continued Philip.

"And then your Majesty will again be in collision with your people,—will you not?" asked Blanche. "And many will be slain, as well as many of the troops, and months may elapse, or years even, before quiet is restored, if it ever is!"

"True,—most true," was the moody response. "It was so before. And all because of two old dotards, who will not adhere to a confession!"

"That, doubtless, is the cause," replied the Countess, "and were these old Templars removed, all would be well. It is to release these chiefs that their knights secretly plot and agitate. And, so long as they live, and are imprisoned, so long will there be intrigues and plots, and revolts for their release. Were they free all this would cease."

"No doubt, but to free them is clearly impossible. Besides, their power is still vast. Not a nation in Europe could, probably, even now withstand the united assault of these cowed warriors, with their Grand Officers at their head. The order is only nominally abolished as yet. No—no—to free them is impossible!"

"Were they *dead*, the result would be the same," coolly rejoined the Countess. "The agitation would cease."

"Ha! dead!" cried the King, starting. "It would be so. But *that*, too, is now impossible to bring to pass,—at least at present."

"The alternative presented to the Templars to-day in

the Parvis of Notre Dame was this,—to confess or to be burned,—was it not?” asked Blanche.

The prelates bowed.

“Well,—two of these men did *not* confess; and now, if they be not burned, the royal authority and that of the Sovereign Pontiff will fall into contempt,—will it not!”

“But, if they *are* burned, there will be a revolt of Paris!” cried the King, with evident vexation. “Indeed, were but an attempt made to-morrow to burn these men, they would be released by the people, as you say.”

“To-morrow, doubtless,” quietly replied Blanche; “or, a week, or a month, or a year hence: but not—*to-night!*”

“To-night!” cried Philip. “Burn the Templars to-night?”

The Councillors exchanged looks of astonishment.

“To-night, or never,” was the calm answer.

“But the people will release them!”

“The people have gone home.”

“They will re-assemble.”

“Yes, around the Chatelet, at midnight.”

The King sprang to his feet and paced the chamber in great perplexity.

“Surely,” he exclaimed, “the people would at once reassemble were there an attempt to carry this sentence into execution, especially if the leaders of the people are on the watch, and have prepared them to assail the Chatelet at midnight!”

“The people would hardly gather in great numbers

an hour hence, to witness an execution, quietly conducted, and of which, after the exciting events of the day, they did not even dream," said Blanche; "and if they would, they could not, if that execution took place upon the uninhabited island of the *Passeur aux vaches*, in the middle of the Seine!"

"Ha!" cried the King with joy. "Blanche is right, methinks! Blanche is right! What is your scheme, my daughter?"

"Briefly this, Sire: You wish France free of the Templars. Yet were the Grand Officers *free*, France would be endangered. Efforts to free these men by agitating your people will not cease while they live. This very night such an effort is contemplated, which can only be quelled, if quelled at all it can be, by the sacrifice of many of the citizens of Paris, and the agitation of all. If not quelled, and the attempt succeed, the worst consequences may be apprehended. The doom of these men by the solemn declaration of this day is death; if it be not executed, it will bring contempt on those who declared it. If an attempt is made to execute it tomorrow, or a month, or a year, hence, it will be successfully resisted. At this moment, such an event is not apprehended, and there can be no organization to prevent it."

"What then is your counsel, Blanche?" asked Philip.

"This, Sire: One hour hence it will be dark. Let the two Templar chiefs who are sentenced be then secretly taken from their dungeons, by the water-gate of

the Chatelet, and in boats be transported to the islet of the Seine. Let that island be secretly invested with a strong guard. Let preparations for the execution be made at once. At the stake let full pardon and liberty be proclaimed to the Templars, if they will confess. They will *not* confess. Their sentence will be executed. There can be no rescue. The royal authority will be sustained and continue to be respected. Agitation among the people will cease. The Order of the Templars will then, and not till then, be truly extinct. And you, Sire, will then, and not till then, be truly King of France!"

"But, will not survivors of the order seek revenge for the execution of their chief?" asked the King.

"And if they did, where could they find it?" returned the Countess. "Agitation of your own people, Sire, is all you have to dread, and these Templars, once dead, that agitation would cease. Besides, the agitators seek the release of their chief,—not a fruitless, and barren, and impossible vengeance. Were he free and their head, their vengeance might well be dreaded; but cut off that head, and the monster is powerless!"

"Blanche—Blanche—you are right!" cried the King. "Blanche is always right! Gentlemen and prelates, we have decided. The Council is dissolved. You, De Châtillon, Lord Constable of France, will preside over the execution of the Master of the Templars and the Prior of Normandy, on the isle of the Seine, west of the *Cité* in one hour from this time. The Council is dismissed."

The Tower-clock tolled six. Blanche glided from the apartment. Her purpose was accomplished.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE MARTYRDOM.

THE SEINE, as it flowed through Paris, in the early part of the Fourteenth Century, embraced six islands—three above, or east of the *Cité*, and two west, or below. It has now but two, the three above being united into one, and that one being connected with the eastern extremity of the *Cité* by a bridge of stone—both bridge and islands being covered with houses; while those at the foot of the *Cité* have been united to its western extremity and are also covered with houses.

But in 1314 the only one of the six islands—or more properly of the three islands and three islets—at all inhabited was *L'Île de la Cité*; which then constituted perhaps the most considerable of the three districts—*Université*, *Cité* and *Ville*—of which Paris was and is composed.

On the evening of the eighteenth of March, 1314, one hour after sunset, a strange and memorable spectacle was witnessed on the most eastern of these uninhabited islands—then used as a garden for the Louvre—on a spot where now stands the equestrian statue of Henry the Fourth*—that square area which projects eastwardly from the platform of the Pont Neuf, at the junction of its

* Erected by Louis XVIII., in 1818—the original bronze statue by Mary de Medicis, Queen Dowager of Henry II., erected in 1669, having been destroyed in 1792. Napoleon designed a granite obelisk for this spot, 200 feet high.

northern and southern branches; and which, by-the-bye, can be quite as plainly defined on a map as from the bridge itself, if not more so.

A strange and memorable spectacle!

The counsel of Blanche of Artois was observed.

The decree of the Pope was pronounced.

The orders of the King were obeyed.

The Grand Officers of the Temple were doomed.

In the centre of that solitary islet of the Seine two stakes were planted, furnished with fetters and chains; and fagots were heaped in circles around, while the islet itself was invested by troops.

From the deep dungeons of the Chatelet, at the head of the Petit Pont, on the south bank of the Seine, through a low portal which opened on the stream beneath the abutment of the bridge, the noble victims were brought forth, and in darkness and silence conveyed in barges to the place of execution.

De Chatillon, the Constable; De Nogaret, the Chancellor; De Marigni, the Minister; and the infamous William Imbert, Grand Inquisitor, all in their robes of office, were already there.

“Jacques de Molai,” said Imbert, “at this last moment, will you renew your confession of Chinon and save your life?”

“Never!” was the prompt response.

“Guy of Normandy, at this last moment, will you renew your confession and save your life?”

The same stern answer was given.

“Constable of France,” cried Imbert, “the Holy

Church resigns the heretics to secular power for punishment."

Instantly a circle of dark figures, in black vizards, environed the victims and hurried each to one of the spots of execution.

"For the last time, will you confess?" cried the Inquisitor.

"Never!" was the simultaneous and immediate reply.

"Constable of France,—your duty!" rejoined the monk.

And at once dark forms swarmed around the heaped-up fagots, and applied to the combustible materials their blazing torches. At that moment, from the tower of Notre Dame, tolled seven.

Then, for the first time, was the foul scene, hitherto wrapt in profoundest gloom, revealed—the dark forms of the executioners, appropriately garbed in sable robes, which strongly contrasted their livid and terror-struck faces—the serene and placid countenances of the venerable victims, who, with hands clasped meekly on their bosoms, and lips moving in prayer, looked trustfully up to those quiet skies with the bright stars above them, whither their pure souls were so soon to wend their way.

As the red glare of the funeral pyres mounted and spread, fanned into fury by the night-blast of winter, the whole surrounding scenery became illumed by the lurid light. The outlines of the islet itself, hemmed in by a fringe of glittering spears, stood out in strong relief, while the rushing waters of the swollen Seine all around

seemed like liquid flame in the fiery reflection. On the left the Convent of the Augustines and, below, the tall, dark Tower of Nesle gleamed redly in the glare. On the right, rose the Church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, with its stupendous rose-window, and, beyond, the multitudinous towers of the Louvre; while, in the rear, the vast mass of the Palace of Justice and, more distantly, the huge front of Notre Dame loomed up in giant shapes against the bleak eastern sky.

Along the quays, too, on either side, and over the bridges, began to be viewed numerous figures hurrying wildly along as the flames increased, demanding in vain their cause. From either bank, also, put out innumerable river craft to that lonely islet. For a moment they were seen glancing across the broad stream of blood-red rushing water, and then they disappeared beneath the shadows of the high banks and were seen no more. But above the shadows of the bank, in the flashing flames, still gleamed the glittering spear-points of the palace guard.

Upon all this strange and memorable scene gazed more than one from the casements of the Louvre, with intense solicitude and interest. But one was there, who, alone—alone on the highest summit of the tower nearest to the scene, gazed on with excitement almost delirious with excess. That one was a woman, and that woman was Blanche of Artois!

From the council-chamber of the King she had repaired to her own apartment, and, having enveloped her form in the folds of an ample cloak, was shortly after winding

her way up the spiral stair of the central tower of the Louvre. For nearly an hour she waited and watched,—patiently; most patiently, despite the keen and cutting blasts, which, in her elevated position, swept with wintry fierceness around her delicate form. But *she* felt them not—she felt them no more than she would have felt those devouring flames for which she now watched. There was a flame within, which defied all flames without, and rendered to her all the sensations of humanity alike!

Breathless she listened; but she heard not a word. Her counsel and the King's commands were well obeyed. All was still—still as the grave.

At length the clock beneath her struck the hour of seven, and the whole tower trembled with the vibrations of the heavy bell. At that moment two spiral flames shot up from the solitary islet, on which her eyes had been so long and so anxiously fastened, and the whole scene became instantly illumed, as described.

So brilliant were the flames that, even from the distant and elevated spot on which she stood, she could almost distinguish the forms and faces of her victims; and they were reflected back by the exulting and vengeful flames of her own dark eyes.

Higher and higher mounted the flames—fiercer and fiercer glowed the fire—brighter and brighter became the illumination, until all Paris, and the gliding Seine, and the towers, and massive churches, and palaces, and prisons, and even the very welkin itself seemed suffused in the blood-red glare!

But the victims moved not, spake not, shrieked not, as had been the wont of other victims before them. Like their great Grand Master, Christ, when on the cross, they uttered not a word! On their broad breasts were still folded their hands—to the starry heavens were still raised their eyes—in prayer still moved their lips.*

And, verily, that prayer seemed granted! Verily from those aged and innocent sufferers did the pangs of mortality seem to pass! It would, verily, seem that they suffered not at all; else, how, how, amid those awful tortures with which, as with a garment, they were wrapt, could those venerable faces have retained the calm serenity they bore! It would, verily, seem that, by a miracle vouchsafed them, the extremest tortures of frail humanity had over them no power!

The flames—they roared and raved, and rushed, and raged: exultingly they leaped up like lions around their prey; they advanced and retreated—they fell and rose again—they danced and played, and murmured and menaced, and sent forth their mad music in defiance on the blast. Purple and silver, and blue and pink, and yellow and bloody red, they flung forth their irised hues on all things, animate or inanimate, around; and when for a single instant, the pitiless monster paused in its purpose, and its ravening seemed to subside, the dark shades of ready fiends again hovered around, and fresh fagots were flung from a distance—so fierce was the fervor—and again the flames flashed wildly up and brightly sparkled in ascending showers, as if to defy the

* Velly.

pure heavens, whose many stars looked sorrowfully down on that scene of man's madness: and then they swept and whirled as wildly, and roared and raved as fiercely, and danced and leaped as merrily, as ever before.

This could not last. Long since had the flames reached their victims. Slowly the extremities consumed, and in blackened fragments dropped off. Sinews shriveled, bones crackled, tendons snapped, arteries burst, flesh fell away into ashes! But, wonderful to recite, the venerable victims offered no sign or sound of anguish!

Once more the triumphant element sprang madly upward—then—all was veiled in cloud and flame. And then, from the midst of that cloud and flame, which in fury rioted around the great Templars, came forth a voice as of Sinai itself. And it was heard by the dark ministers of pain who presided over the torture, and the darker ministers of fate who had bidden it; and by all Paris, now assembled, with pale and horror-struck faces, along the illuminated banks; and by the prelates and princes at the Louvre; and by Philip of France, in his council-chamber; and by Blanche of Artois in her tower; and in tones of thunder it said:

“Clement, thou unjust judge, I summon thee, within forty days, to the judgment seat of God!”

And all was still, and all was terror!

Again that fearful voice was heard:

“Philip of France, within one year and one day, I summon thee to meet me!”*

* Seretti of Vicenza asserts that De Molai cited Clement within forty days, and Philip within a year and a day, to meet him before the judgment seat of God.

At that instant the flames whirled and swept anew. The stake fell! A cloud of sparks leaped and eddied upward. All was over!

And then, from that tall palace-tower, was heard a woman's shriek of joy:

“Ha! ha! ha! It is done! Adrian, Adrian, thou art avenged!”

* * * * *

Midnight pealed over Paris. The flames had burned out:—the multitude had dispersed:—in terror and dismay, and in grief and rage, the people had gone to their homes:—the Inquisitors with their vile familiars had returned to the Louvre: they were surrounded by guards; and well were it for them it was so: they would otherwise have been torn into fragments by an infuriate people.

The last light had gone out in the palace,—the last sound had ceased. All was still,—dark and still, save the everlasting murmur of the rushing Seine, as its waves swept on, and eddied around the shores of that lonely isle, so lately the scene of a spectacle so horrid, now lonelier than ever, and evermore thus doomed; accursed—accursed forever! And the solitary boatman of the Tower of Nesle as, this night, even as on all nights before, for nine long years, in storm or in calm, in darkness or in moonlight,—he glided past that deserted spot, shuddered and turned pale, and over him crept a dark presentiment of his own approaching and dreadful doom!

And, when the gray dawn was breaking,—and the icy breath of winter was sweeping down the Seine,—

and the lonely boatman, hurrying back to the Louvre, was passing that unhallowed islet on his way from an unhallowed couch,—strange shapes were hovering around the fatal spot,—and the long white mantle of the Temple was caught gleaming faintly in the ashy dawn; and mystic rites and solemn ceremonies seemed celebrated there.

And when the morning broke, and sorrowing, yet indignant multitudes crossed over the water to rake up the cold ashes of the martyred men, to give them consecrated burial, or to hand them down in reliquaries to their children's children,—lo! those ashes were already gone! and the keen northern blast swept a naked spot! And each said to the other that the winds of Heaven had given them burial—had taken them to their rest!

But not so said Philip de Launai. He said nothing. He, too, was a Templar:—but, alas! he was an apostate! He had sacrificed all things most sacred to a guilty love!

* * * * * *

Thus perished the last of the Military Templars,—the last of the Soldier-monks. But thus perished not the Order of the Temple, though thus, by its foes, was it designed, and hoped, and believed.

Prescient of his approaching doom, with prophetic ken, a whole year before his death, Jacques de Molai had sent the mystic cipher to John Mark Lamienius of Jerusalem, then presiding at Limisso, in the Island of Cyprus, bidding him, at once, to his chamber, in the Temple at Paris. Instantly the knight obeyed. Had he

been bidden by the same sign and cipher to the stake, he would have obeyed none the less willingly nor quickly!

On this distinguished Templar, who, for months, as has been said, was the companion of De Molai's confinement, the old knight secretly, and without the knowledge even of his fellow prisoners, conferred by nomination the degree of Grand Master of the Order, which he then himself resigned; and, having, in due form, initiated him into the mysteries of that degree, with all ancient rites and ceremonies, and having presented to him his own sword, together with his baton of office, the mystic abacus, he communicated the word, and grip, and sign of Master, even as they had been committed to him by Theobald Gaudinius, his predecessor, and which by him alone in all the world were known, and, uncommunicated, would have perished with him from the earth.

But they perished not, and, now, nearly six centuries afterwards, they exist in all their efficacy, having been handed down through twenty or thirty successors, embracing among them some of the most remarkable men who have ever lived.*

Subsequently to the death of De Molai, his successor made known to the order his nomination to the rank thus vacated, to the dismay and amazement of all its foes; and, thus nominated, Lamienius was, of course,

* The great Bertrand du Guesclin was Grand Master of the Templars for more than twenty years,—from 1357 to July 13. 1380, when he died, at the age of sixty-six, while besieging the English in the Castle of Randon, in Guienne. In 1333, Sir Sidney Smith was Grand Master, being the 51st from Hugh des Payens in 1118, and the 26th from Jacques de Molai in 1298. Several of the Montmorencies held this illustrious rank and during the last century it was filled by Princes of the House of Bourbon, among whom was Philip Egalité, Duke of Orleans. Some years since the Grand Master was Bernard Raymond Fabré Palprat.

elected, in accordance with due and ancient forms. A grand chapter secretly assembled at Cyprus,—an Electing Prior and his assistant were chosen,—all night in the chapel they prayed,—in the morning they selected two other Priors, and the four two more, and the six two more, until the number of twelve,—that of the Apostles,—was completed. These twelve selected a chaplain, and the thirteen then in retirement elected a Grand Master of the order. And then the Grand Prior, entering the chapter at the head of the twelve Electors, in stately procession, exclaimed :

“John Mark Lamienius, in the name of God the Father, and of God the Son, and of God the Holy Ghost, thou art our Master! Brothers, give thanks!—behold your Master!—advance and receive his orders!”

Then the whole chapter gathered around the successor of De Molai, and vowed to obey him, in all things, all their lives.

And ever since, from age to age, and from generation to generation, have the same election rites and mysteries been observed. The Order of the Templars still exists in all the chief cities of Europe and the world; and though no more a military, or an ecclesiastical brotherhood, its rites and forms, its ceremonies and mysteries, its obligations and ties of unity as a secret affiliation, are the self-same they were eight hundred years ago. This the archives of the order preserved in that portion of the Palace of the Temple which yet remains, going back to the date of its foundation, abundantly demonstrate. Among these ancient and ponderous tomes is a Greek

manuscript of the Twelfth Century, containing the original record of the institution of the order; also, St. Bernard's Rule, and the confirmation of the Pontiff, and the Golden Table or the catalogue of Grand Masters, from period of its date down to the present day. Here, too, are the ancient seals, and standards, and reliques and regalia of the Temple, and the massive falchion of Jacques de Molai, together with a few fragments of charred bone which were gathered up with his ashes, and sacredly preserved, enveloped in an ancient napkin.

For six centuries, the Temple at Paris has been the seat of the order; and here, every year, from all Europe, on the eighteenth day of March, assemble representatives of that ancient fraternity, to commemorate the martyrdom of its great Master, Jacques de Molai. And in solemn procession, thence proceed they to the spot now indicated by the statue of Henri Quatre, at the Pont Neuf, and, after many a mystic rite and impressive ceremony, they march around the memorable place, and, as they came, return.*

* On the 18th of March, 1848, notwithstanding the convulsed condition of Paris, then in revolution, this procession was witnessed. It consisted of only forty-eight persons; but of these, two were members of the most illustrious families in France, one was a prince of the blood royal of Spain, one a Greek Boyard, three noblemen of Great Britain, and all of them men of influence and celebrity. Their costume was black; and, on the left lappel of the long frock coat was embroidered a scarlet crucifix, which, the coat being buttoned, would escape observation. An American writing from Paris under date of March, 1851, says:—The Order of Knights Templar, which is still existing in Europe, celebrated, on Tuesday last, the anniversary of the death of Jaques Molai, who was burnt five hundred and thirty-eight years ago, under the accusation of felony, sorcery and high treason. This execution took place on the same spot where now stands the bronze horse of Henry the IVth, on the Pont Neuf. The Templars, who have never ceased to exist, held their annual meeting in their lodge, Rue Notre Dame des Victoires, and many new knights were received as members on that occasion. The ceremony was imposing and created a deep impression upon the small number of persons who were admitted in the tribunes."

In England, the encampment at Bristol founded by Templars, who, in 1194, returned with Richard from Palestine, is still in vigorous existence, as are, also, the original encampments at Bath and York.

In Portugal, the cross of the "Knights of Christ" is one of the most distinguished badges of honor conferred by the crown; while, in every capital of Christendom, many of the most influential men are Templar Knights.

Truly, then,—most truly spake the venerable Jacques de Molai, when, with prophetic prescience, he declared that, though *he* might perish, his beloved order would survive. It has survived; and so long as purity and piety are respected upon the earth,—so long as Faith, and Hope, and Charity continue to be recognized, so long will it continue to exist!

"Truth crushed to earth will rise again,
Th' eternal years of God are hers!"

CHAPTER XXX.

THE RETRIBUTION.

HOW strikingly is exemplified a retributive Providence in the destinies of men and of nations!

When Jacques de Molai died, he summoned Pope Clement Fifth, within forty days, to the judgment seat of God.

And so it was. Brief and terrible was Clement's life, after that summons was delivered him. A strange conviction seized his mind,—a strange malady seized his frame. His physicians told him he could find relief only by inhaling the atmosphere of his native place; and, in a litter, he started for Bordeaux. But all was vain. His hour came before he reached his home. On the evening of April 20th, 1314, he was compelled to stop at the little village of Roquemare, on the Rhone, in the diocese of Nismes, and there, in despair and anguish, in a few short hours, he breathed his last.

And Philip of France:—immediately after the execution of the Templars, in order to divert the thoughts of the People of Paris from that awful event, he took occasion to confer the distinction of knighthood on his three sons, a ceremony signalized by a succession of public fêtes, which continued several days. In the midst of these festivities came intelligence that Guy, Count of Flanders, was in arms, and swept his border

with fire and sword. Philip was at once in the war-saddle. But his star was in rapid decadence. Only defeat awaited him. Bruges, Ghent, Courtraye, one after the other, were retaken; and he, who, a victor, had ever before prescribed whatsoever articles of treaty might seem good to him, was now forced to sign such as it might seem good to his once-vanquished foes to prescribe.

His own kingdom, too,—and this touched him more nearly,—was in avowed revolt! Picardy, Champagne, Artois, Burgundy, Forez, openly conspired to resist the imposts, taxes, and debasement of coin, instituted to meet the expenses of an unsuccessful conflict; and they laid down their arms only when all they asked was conceded.

From England, also, came evil tidings. His royal son-in-law, Edward, was at war with Scotland,* and had sustained overwhelming reverses; and of his only daughter enough may be inferred from the single sentence of the historian—“Since the days of the fair and false Elfrida, of Saxon celebrity, no Queen of England has left so dark a stain on the annals of female royalty as the consort of Edward Second, Isabella of France.”

But a more fearful blow than this awaited him. Pollution was on his own threshold—infamy was in his own household! Suddenly, from the confessional, it is said, came forth a dreadful charge—a charge of adultery against Margaret of Burgundy, Queen of Navarre, and Jane of Burgundy, Countess of Poitiers, immediately suc-

* The defeat of Edward, by the Scots, under Bruce, at Bannockburn, occurred June 24th, 1314, with the loss of 25,000 men, of whom many were nobles. Of the Scots, only 8,000 fell.

ceeded by a similar accusation,—horror of horrors!—against the only idol of his dark bosom—Blanche of Artois, the Countess of Marche!

Had the massive tower of the Louvre itself fallen upon the guilty head of Philip of France, he could not have been more crushed than he was now. The ignominy of his daughters, Jane and Margaret, terrible as it would have been, he might have endured. But, Blanche,—his own Blanche,—the being whom, more than all others,—whom alone of all others, he had loved,—his pure, perfect, brilliant, beautiful Blanche,—his able counsellor in all perplexities,—his fond and faithful consoler in all sorrows:

“Oh, God!” he exclaimed, “the Templar’s curse is on me now!”

But grief was vain—regret was vain. The guilt was proved beyond a doubt—beyond a peradventure—a guilt on the part of the two sisters Margaret and Jane of nearly nine years’ duration.

Philip and Walter de Launai were tried by special commission at Pontoise and condemned. Then their bodies were flayed and mutilated, and dragged through stubble-fields and drawn, and the entrails burned before their eyes and, finally, they were beheaded and suspended on public gibbets there to rot for the vulture’s maw.

Hexian de Beziens, the infamous Prior of Montfauçon, and William du Plessis, the monk of St. Dominic, who, with infernal zeal had presided with Imbert over the torture of the Templars, shared, also, with the Inquisitor, the fate of the paramours, as confidants of their guilty loves.

The long-continued and unblushing criminality of the Queen of Navarre was so clearly proved, and by so many witnesses, that not a doubt of *her* guilt remained. Her beautiful hair was shorn from her head, and Château-Gaillard, an impregnable castle, erected by Richard Cœur-de-Lion on the edge of a precipice overhanging the Seine, near the village of Andely, was the place appointed for her imprisonment. But that imprisonment was brief. In a few months she was secretly strangled in her dungeon, by order of her husband, Louis, with her own shroud; and her body was deposited in the church of the Cordeliers of Vernon.*

The charge against the Countess of Poitiers was investigated by the Parliament in the presence of her uncle, Charles of Valois. But Philip, her husband, was more politic, or less jealous than his brother. He cared too little for his wife, and too much for another, to be very regardful of her affections, or her favors: and, as to his honor, he thought, and very wisely, perhaps—that the worst mode of sustaining that was to prove himself dishonored! So he affected to believe the fair Countess an innocent and injured woman; and the accommodating Parliament, having no wish to disoblige so amiable a prince, thought the same, so, therefore, Jane's accusers were all executed instead of herself; and she lived, for some seven years, a most discreet life till Philip died. "But," says the historian, "her widowhood is stained by crimes of the most revolting nature, and the scenes which

*After the assassination of Margaret, Louis married Clemence of Hungary, a Neapolitan princess, daughter of Charles, surnamed *Martel*, the *Hammer*.

took place at the Abbey of Maubuisson were enacted at her residence, the Hôtel de Nesle, with double depravity. The towers of that dark edifice were bathed by the waters of the Seine, and all those who had the misfortune to attract Jane's criminal regards were invited to the château, and were afterward precipitated from the heights into the water, to prevent a recital of her infamy."

And Blanche of Artois :—for a time she was a willing prisoner in the Castle of Gauray, near Coutances. But she was never brought to trial, as the evidence against her was exceedingly vague, although among other charges she was accused of having secretly given birth to a child at the Abbey of Maubuisson. For herself, she admitted nothing, and she denied nothing. Of the enormity of the offences of which she was accused she seemed to entertain not the slightest appreciation. Indeed, for both accusations and accusers alike she manifested only profound indifference. She readily united with her husband in a petition to the Pope for a divorce, and it was granted.* She then retired to the Abbey of Maubuisson, the early scene of her guilty love. With her went her now inseparable companion, Marie Morfontaine; and, after brief penance and novitiate, the Countess took the veil.

Broken down in spirit by these repeated and heavy reverses and many others† and consumed by the cease-

* The divorce of Charles and Blanche was pronounced by John XXII. on plea that Matilda, Countess of Artois, her mother, had been his godmother! The kindred was close, indeed!

† Bussey says, that Jane, Queen of Philip, not long married, was poisoned shortly after the execution of De Molai! Jane of Navarre, his first wife, died at the Château of Vincennes, April 2, 1305.

less gnawings of remorse, Philip of France soon became as shattered in body and mind, as he already was in heart. The summons of the dying Templar to follow him within the year seemed forever to hang over and oppress his mind, especially since the remarkable death of Clement; while the loss of his favorite Blanche deprived him of his sole consolation when it was needed most. Pale, emaciated, sad, broken-spirited, who could imagine in him the brave, impetuous, chivalric Philip *le Bel* as we have known him at the Abbey of St. Jean d'Angély, and of his better and happier days, as he now tottered feebly about the Louvre, amid the scenes of his former splendor?

At length the physicians of the King said to Philip what the physicians of the Pope had said to Clement—"You must breathe your native air, or, you must die"—the last advice of physicians then, as now, when that, as well as all else, is vain. The King was accordingly conveyed to his birth-spot,—Fontainebleau, some fifteen leagues from Paris, on the Lyons route. But not the flowery shades, nor the perfumed airs, nor the leafy groves of Araby the blest can minister health to a "mind diseased"—a spirit crushed—a conscience haunted by inexpiable crime. Daily and hourly Philip sank. His malady was *called* consumption. It was so. Consumption of the heart. He felt that he must die,—that he was doomed; and he sent for Louis, his eldest son and successor, and gave him his last, and most salutary advice, respecting the governance of the realm whose throne he was about to mount. His own errors he most freely

and fully confessed and sorrowed over; and he bade his son take warning by his fate. All the edicts of his reign, by which he had oppressed his people, he revoked; and, after conjuring his successor to avoid his own errors, and to provide a remedy for their injurious effects, especially toward the injured Templars, he died. And with princely pomp and regal obsequy, his body was conveyed to St. Denis and his heart to the Abbey of Poissy erected by his father.*

Philip of France died on the 29th day of November, 1314: and then was remembered the dying summons of Jacques de Molai, just seven months before—"Within this year I summon thee to the judgment of God!"

On the decease of Philip, all his Ministers, who by their active zeal in executing his iniquitous schemes had secured his favor and the hatred of all others, experienced the severest reverses. Upon them, of course, was charged all the embarrassments of the government, and all the oppression and disaffection of the people which had their origin under their administration of the government. But upon Enguerrand de Marigni, who, after the arrest as a Templar of the Grand Prior of Aquitaine who had been Minister of Finance, had himself assumed the regulation of that department, descended the heaviest blow. Charged by Charles of Valois, his ancient and inveterate foe, with peculation upon the public treasures, he was arrested, at the door of the Hôtel of the Fosses St. Germain, loaded with chains and plunged into the dungeons of the

* Philip's end is said by some writers to have been hastened by a fall from his horse, through debility, while hunting the wild boar in the forests of Fontainebleau.

Temple,—those very dungeons, into which himself had plunged the victim knights! Then, arose against him another charge, more dreadful in that age than all others, as had been proven by the fate of the unhappy Templars; and, in this, with himself, was associated his wife, Alips de Mons, and his sister, the Lady of Canteleu, and their alleged familiar, Jacques Delor. That charge was *sorcery*,—the very charge himself had instituted against the Templar Knights! Nothing could save him! From the dungeon he was conveyed to the rack,—from the rack to the wood of Vincennes where he was sentenced, and thence, in the habit of a convict, bearing in his hand a taper of yellow wax, to the gibbet of Montfauçon, which himself had just erected. And there, at break of day, just one year* after the summons of De Molai, he was hanged, and his body was suspended in chains.

Raoul de Presle, the Advocate-General of the King, who had deposed against the Templars, was arrested with De Marigni, of whom he was the intimate friend, on charge of having conspired against the life of the late King. All his lands and effects were at once confiscated,—his body was consigned to the dungeons of St. Genevieve and to the rack; and, though, subsequently, he was acquitted, his property was never restored. Happily for William de Nogaret, he preceded to the grave the master he had served so wickedly and so well.

Henry Capetal, Provost of Paris, under whose charge,

* April, 30, 1315. The wife and sister of De Marigni were immured in dungeons for life! Delor hanged himself in his cell, and his wife was burned alive!

in the dungeons of the Chatelet, the unhappy Templars had been so rigorously imprisoned and so heavily fettered, and led thence to the stake, was accused of having substituted, on the gibbet, in place of a rich assassin, justly doomed, a friendless citizen, incarcerated for theft, in consideration of an enormous bribe. The crime was proven, and the Provost and the prisoner both swung on the same gibbet which had borne their victim.

The apostate Templar, Noffo Dei, was hanged for robbery; and Squin de Florian was slain in a drunken quarrel.

In view of these events, well may we exclaim—"If this be chance, it is wonderful!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE CONCLUSION.

BUT Blanche of Artois,—she died not. The miserable seldom die as others do. Not that she was really now as miserable as she had been. She was only hopeless,—senseless. Earth and earth's objects were to her—*nothing!* A wild revenge had succeeded in her bosom a wilder love; and, between them, her heart had been consumed to ashes. That heart, once inhabited by the angel, Love, became the dwelling of the fiend, Vengeance. That fiend had accomplished its purpose, and had departed; and the heart was a tenantless sepulchre.

It is impossible to conceive a *vacuum* more complete than was now the heart of Blanche of Artois, or an indifference more utter than that felt and manifested by her for all earthly objects, and interests, and individuals.

What to her were accusations of infamy? True, those charges were vague, and undefined, and there had been little effort on her part to render them less so; but, once, a breath only of suspicion on her fair fame would have roused her to frenzy. To her now it was a thing of entire unconcern whether she was, or was not, deemed pure. She cared for no one—she cared for nothing. If the world respected not her, it could hardly have less respect for her than she had for it, or for its laws, or for

its penalties. She was as regardless of its love as of its hate,—of its worship as of its contumely; and she cared too little for either to indulge for them—even *contempt*.

Her heart was a tomb without a tenant. All passions, and all emotions, and all sympathies,—almost all sensations were dead in her. Her veins were as cold as those of a bronze statue, and the blood that coursed them as gelid as are the ice-lakes of the Alps. Over her reigned an everlasting stupor.

And, yet, she lived, and moved, and breathed,—she slept, she ate, she drank, even as others do. Her bodily health seemed never better,—her frame was never stronger,—never more capable of endurance. Disease, that laid low others, touched not her;—the black wing of pestilence shadowed not her brow, though it swept others away with its pall; the angel of death circled her with corpses, and then passed on; his deadly spear-point touched *her* not; she *could* not die! Nor did she care to die; no more, at least, than she cared to live; to life or to death, she seemed alike, equally, and most inconceivably indifferent.

In all the penance and all the prayers, and all the countless devotions of the cloister whither she had sought rest, no saint could have been more severely observant than was she. Yet her worship was not of the soul. Her heart had nothing to do with it. She had no heart, indeed, for anything,—not even for the service of her God,—not even for her God Himself! Night after night, in the depths of winter, she kneeled until the dawn before the altar, on the rough stones of

the damp, chill cloister chapel. But she felt not. Her bosom glowed not with that piety, which renders humanity unconscious of its weaknesses and indifferent to the severity of the elements; nor was her body a sufferer for the sins of the soul. She suffered not as a mortal, she repented not as a saint. Severest penance was no penance to her. Mechanically—uniformly—unvaryingly—unfeelingly—most exemplarily—she went through all the exactest requisitions of the Beguine Rule. But she *felt* nothing. How could she? All penitential ceremonies and inflictions she unflinchingly observed; but of true repentance she knew nothing.

Of what should she repent? Of her mad love? Alas! that now to her was the dearest—the only dear thing in existence! Repent of her love for Adrian! Impossible! If there had been one pure, one sacred, one hallowed impulse in the history of her whole life, her wild love seemed to her that one. If that love had been guilt, then, alas! was she most guilty; for to her it had been the most sacred emotion of her life. How could she repent of that for the brief indulgence of which,—so bitterly recompensed,—she could realize no crime? Had not Adrian, in the sight of God, and in her own heart, been her husband?—her only true and actual husband? Had not he for one whole year slumbered on her bosom?—was he not the father of her child? And whose rights, or whose love, or whose covenant,—(broken as all covenants had been broken by him whom man called her husband)—*whose* transcended Adrian's? Who had ever loved her as he had? Whom had she ever loved

as she had loved him? And now to *repent* of that love—the dearest—purest thing in all her life! She could *suffer* for it;—suffering she cared not for. Nay, gladly would she have braved all, and endured all, had all been before her again to brave, and to endure. Oh! how cheaply, by years of suffering, would she have purchased a single hour of the past!

How then could she repent of that which she regarded thus? She felt,—she knew,—that were she on her dying-bed, and about going in spirit before her God, her last ejaculation would be her lover's name, and her last memory of earth, and her brightest hope of Heaven, her ill-starred love.

If *that* were guilt, then gladly would she go a guilty being into eternity. She felt that any world with Adrian would be Heaven,—that any world without him would be—Hell!

And her wild—mad—awful vengeance—could she repent of *that*? Alas! on that side her heart was iron. To her, the sufferings of others were nothing. What tortures could equal hers? Who had suffered,—could suffer, as she had? Whose wrongs had been like her own? What retribution could exceed their just recompense?

But all these *thoughts* had passed away now. She thought of nothing, and felt nothing, even as she cared for nothing. She was a being of cold, calm intellect. Feeling had in her no part. Man and woman, all animate and all inanimate things—were alike to her. Mechanically—as a Beguine Nun, she was charitable;

nay, more, she was profuse—extravagant in her charities. All her vast revenues were thus expended; and on her descended unnumbered blessings of the wretched and the destitute. But for *that* she cared not. Her benevolence, her penance and her conventual observance were all one. She was a mere automaton, self-moved and acting in itself, and for itself.

There was but one being in the whole world for whom Blanche of Artois seemed to manifest the most distant approach to human sympathy. That being was the poor orphan, Marie Morfontaine.

The feelings of Blanche towards the young girl she had so deeply injured were strange—undefined—undefinable. She loved to have the orphan near her,—to clasp her to her heart at night,—to be beside her by day, and to minister to her necessities at all times, especially when ill; and never did mother sacrifice her own comfort to an only child, as did Blanche of Artois to Marie Morfontaine at times like these. Indeed, her own comfort or wishes she would, at any time, cheerfully yield to the merest caprice of her beloved charge. Marie could have not a wish that Blanche did not anticipate and provide for,—not an apprehension that Blanche did not foresee and forefend. Why was this?

Marie Morfontaine was to Blanche of Artois the last and the sole memorial of the only being she had ever truly loved. Had her child survived, on that, doubtless, would her wealth of woman-tenderness have been expended. But it died,—Adrian died;—Marie, his first, boy-love—his school-playmate,—alone remained, and

she was the only living link that connected her with him.

Why wonder, then, that on Marie Morfontaine alone the rock thus smitten poured forth its floods,—cold, indeed, though those floods might be?

Thus passed away day after day—month after month—year after year. But to Blanche of Artois what were the changes of Time—of Dynasties, or of Kings? What cared she that the race of Hugh Capet was no longer on the throne of France, and that the branch of Valois had overshadowed and succeeded. What cared she that Philip *le Long* had succeeded Louis *le Hutin* to the crown, and that her own former husband, Charles *le Bel*, having married Mary of Luxembourg, daughter of the Emperor, had become the King of France? What cared she that Isabella of England was in Paris with her paramour, Roger Mortimer, an exile from her own throne and realm?* What cared she for all or for any of the mighty events that were now agitating the world—she, secluded in the quiet shades of the Abbey of Maubuisson, hovering by day like a charmed bird around the scenes of her once passionate love, and dreaming by night of their events? The little grave of her child, of which no one in all the wide world knew save herself,—the spots which had witnessed the early interviews and ripening passion of her ill-starred love,—oh, how strangely dear were they all to her!

And yet she exhibited not one pulse of emotion,—

* Charles *le Bel* repudiated his wife for the very offence he countenanced in his sister!

no, not even to Marie Morfontaine herself! In her heart all was hushed,—still,—sacred,—hallowed. To no human eye could that heart be laid bare. Alas! not even to herself, or to her God, did she reveal its dreadful secrets!

This stupor was terrible,—more terrible than even death itself!

It is a fearful thing—which those only who have witnessed can appreciate—to behold a human being, or even to imagine one, who breathes the same air, and walks the same earth, and wears the same form, that we all do, who is, yet, to all external objects,—to all thoughts, and all sympathies,—to all the world of living things,—only a statue of adamant; and who is more truly dead, than if the heavy tomb-tablet had, indeed, closed over him. To part with the dead is hard. Alas! is it less so than to part thus with the living?

Yet thus was it with the once brilliant and beautiful Blanche of Artois. There is another insanity,—another fatuity than that of the brain. It is a monomania—a mono-paralysis of the heart; and that was hers.

With the unhappy orphan, Marie Morfontaine, it was not so. She was a different being from Blanche. She was the pensile willow—not the stern oak. The bolt that scathed or shattered the one only bowed the other to the earth.

She faded—faded, that gentle girl, even as the autumnal flowers fade before the winter's breath. She had no perceptible disease,—she never spoke of pain; and uncomplainingly,—meekly,—mildly,—piously, she passed

through all severest exaction of the iron rule to which she had resigned herself—

“With not a word of murmur,—not,
A sigh o’er her untimely lot,
With all the while a cheek, whose bloom
Was as a mockery of the tomb.”

Every impulse of resentment or revenge had long since ceased to swell her gentle bosom. Bitterly, in the dust and ashes of a penitential woe had she bewailed that mad infatuation, which had consigned the only being she had ever loved to an untimely and dreadful doom. Everything which had once seemed to her incomprehensible in his conduct was now revealed. She knew now that of which before she had never dreamed, that his parents, influenced by the unhappy Countess of Marche, had forbidden his suit for her hand; and her own heart confessed that to have resisted, in his despair, the consolation held out by the overwhelming love—the indescribable seductions, and the almost angelic loveliness of the most accomplished woman of the age, he must have been more, or less than man. But, while, with all her soul, she forgave her lover and her friend, to forgive herself seemed impossible. Could she have sacrificed her life in atonement for her fault, how gladly would not the offering have been made! The world with all its aspirations, and all its splendors, and all its honors, had no charm for her. Hope, the enchantress of youth, had for her youth no sorcery. Of love she never thought, nor even dreamed; and, long before her

retirement to the shades of Maubuisson, Edmond de Goth and his proposals had been dismissed forever. Devoted to most severe observance of the Beguine Rule,—though she had not as yet deemed herself worthy to assume its vow and its veil,—her days were employed in the distribution of her vast wealth for the relief of destitution and the advancement of her holy faith, and her nights in penitential prayer; with no thought of earth—no passion of human frailty, save the sad memory of that buried love, which partook more of the Heaven to which she looked forward for its renewal than of the world in which it originated. As the young wife mourns the loss of that husband in whose grave is entombed her heart, so mourned Marie Morfontaine for her beloved Adrian; and, unconsciously and imperceptibly, each day, as it elapsed, seemed to hasten, even more rapidly than Time itself, to re-unite her to her loved and lost.

The devotedness of the young orphan to the observances of her faith was only exceeded at Maubuisson by that of Blanche of Artois; and *hers* was a devotion, which was ere long to canonize as a saint one, who, as a woman, had, like Mary of old, deeply loved and deeply sinned. Often, in the stillness of the night-time, when sleep weighed every eyelid of that vast convent save her own, she would rise from the hard couch of her solitary cell, and, pacing the dim aisles and chill corridors of the cloister, repair to the altar, and, on the damp pavement of the chapel, kneel in prayer until the dawn; and here she was often joined by her youthful friend.

At length, one morning, during the season of Lent,

just as the gray light was beginning to steal through the tall Gothic casements of the church, a pious penitent of the convent crept noiselessly up the aisle to bend before the shrine. That spot was already filled. There kneeled a form garbed in the black serge of the order; and, as the penitent paused and looked more closely, she recognized by the increasing light the still matchless shape of Blanche of Artois. On the cold pavement she kneeled; her transparent hands were meekly folded on her bosom; her brow rested on the altar of her God.

Long did the pious penitent forbear to disturb the seeming devotion of her yet more penitent sister. At length, approaching, she kneeled beside that form, that their petitions might together ascend to Heaven. But that form moved not—seemed not conscious of the approach. Startled, the Beguine pressed the kneeling figure with a gentle touch. Still it moved not—gave no sign. She spoke—there was no answer!

Blanche of Artois was dead!

Amid the dread solitudes of that consecrated pile,—alone with her God,—in the deep stillness of night when sleep falleth on man and shades of the departed come back to those they love;—in loneliness and in darkness, that proud, stern spirit—once gentle—once impassioned—had passed to its rest; to a world where earth's evil troubleth not,—where human ties can no more cause human misery,—there to join, as she hoped, and from him never again to be parted, that being so wildly, so guiltily, so fatally loved!

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Some months had passed away, since, with sorrowing heart and streaming eyes, the orphan heiress, Marie Morfontaine, had beheld her only friend entombed in the consecrated ground of the cloister. It was now leafy June, and the woods and meadows of Maubuisson were emerald with verdure. One evening, at a late hour, a solitary horseman stopped at the lodge of the convent, and craved entertainment for the night. Agreeably to the hospitality of the age, the boon was granted; and yielding his weary steed to an attendant, the stranger strode into the public hall. He was a man some thirty or forty years of age,—with an erect and military bearing,—his cheek and brow bronzed by exposure, and his garments soiled by travel. His face was sad but handsome, and a mournful brilliancy burned in his large dark eye. In reply to the friendly inquiries of the aged porter, he stated, briefly, that he was on his way to Paris, and that he was no stranger to the hospitality of Maubuisson. He then mentioned the name of the Countess of Marche, and when informed of her decease he buried his face in his hands, and bowing his head, his form, for an hour, was convulsed, with suppressed agitation.

“And Marie Morfontaine?” asked the traveller, sadly,—at length raising his head.

“She is a guest in this convent,” replied the old man. “Would you speak with her?”

A gleam of joy for a moment lighted up the woe-worn features of the stranger, stained with the trace of tears.

“Most thankfully,” was the agitated reply; “and at once, good father, if it be possible.”

The old man retired, and soon returned, conducting the orphan heiress, whose pale, sweet face was strongly contrasted by the dark robe of a Beguine. The tall form of the stranger rose as she approached; but it was enveloped in the heavy folds of a cloak, and his features were shaded by a pilgrim's hat.

"What would you with me, Sir Traveller?" asked the sad and silvery tones of the orphan.

The stranger trembled, and seemed too agitated to reply until the question was repeated.

"Know you, lady, Adrian de Marigni?" he asked, in tones suppressed by emotion.

"Alas, sir," was the mournful reply, "the tomb alone has long known him!"

"Yet, should I say," murmured the stranger, after a pause, "that Adrian de Marigni yet lives—"

"Impossible!" interrupted the lady sadly, shaking her head.

"Marie!" exclaimed the stranger, throwing aside his hat and cloak, and extending his arms.

For an instant the orphan gazed bewildered on those loved and long-lost features. Then remembrance flashed on her mind. That face—that voice!

"Adrian!" she exclaimed: and, springing forward with a low cry, her fainting form was clasped to the broad breast of her lover.

Yes, it was, indeed, Adrian! Almost by miracle had he escaped the awful doom to which he had been consigned, on the very eve of its execution, and, with two companions, fled to the Cevennes, in the mountain prov-

ince of Lyonnais. There, with a large number of other knights, he remained concealed among the cliffs and caves, until the final abolition of the order. Then, leaving his retreat, he became a wanderer in other lands, until he could safely return to his own.

Need we add that, before a twelve-month had elapsed, Adrian de Marigni and Marie Morfontaine were united by Holy Church never to part? For, though one had been a companion of the abolished Order of the Temple, and the other had been the inmate of a Beguine convent, neither of them had assumed vows forbidding their union, from which they could not be and were not absolved.

Forsaking the scenes which to both recalled so much of pain, they retired to the extensive and beautiful estates of the heiress in their own native Normandy; and from their union sprang one of the most illustrious families in the realm.

THE END.



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