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MYSTERIOUS CAVERN.

THE

# Mysterious Cavern,

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE

OF THE

FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

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“ This is a sight, that, like the Gorgon’s head,  
“ Runs through my limbs, and stiffens me to stone!  
“ My soul is wrapp’d in dreadful expectation,  
“ And listens to thee, as if Fate were speaking.”

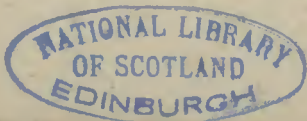
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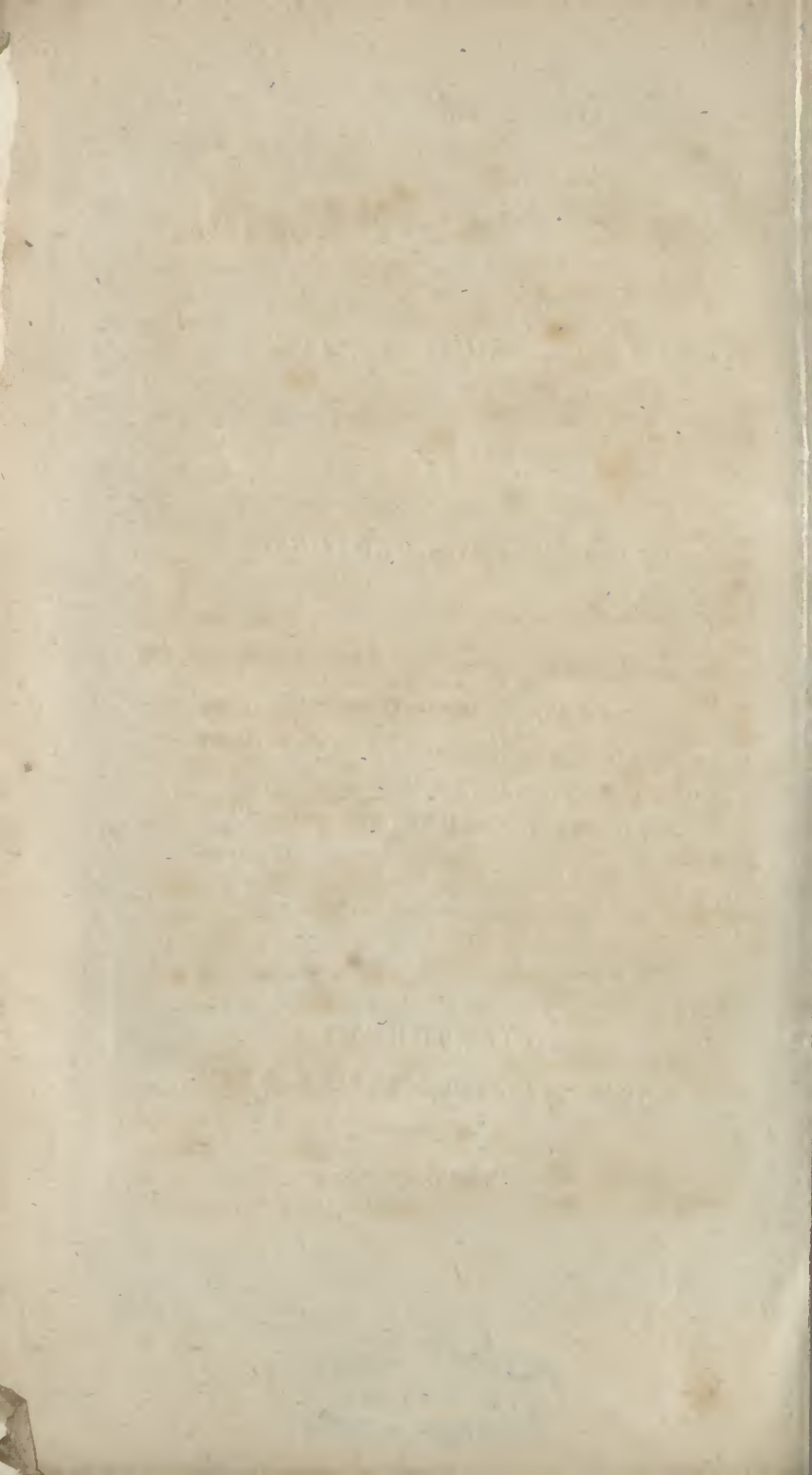
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THE  
MYSTERIOUS CAVERN.

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THE battle of Poitiers had thrown all France into mourning; the king was taken captive by the English, and Charles de Valois, Duke of Normandy (who had just taken the title of Dauphin), was declared Regent. The character of Charles was by no means calculated to please the nation, and the comparisons that were made, between him and his happy and brilliant rival, Edward III. greatly sunk him in its esteem.

Charles D'Evreux, King of Navarre, was the enemy whom the nation had the greatest reason to dread. His quality, as Prince of the blood, ought to have made him the supporter of the throne; but fate had destined him to be its scourge.

The Count de Nevers and the Seur de Joinville, were irreproachable for their principles and conduct. Although the Regent was not particularly attached to any nobleman, yet he always distinguished these two young lords, whose loyalty and courage recalled to mind, in times of corruption



and cowardice, the character of their ancient heroes; whilst, uniting the past with the present, they equalled the most polished courtiers in the elegance of their accomplishments, and the gracefulness of their manners.

The Count de Nevers had hardly known his parents. They died during his infancy. The mother of the Seur de Joinville had educated him, with her son and daughter, at one of the principal estates, whither she had retired after the death of her husband, who was killed at the naval battle of Ecluse. The Count de Nevers was the only son of Madame de Joinville's brother. The tender friendship, which, from their infancy, had united the Count de Nevers and the Seur de Joinville, made them desire to resemble each other, though nature had formed a very great contrast in their minds; yet thinking the conformity of their virtues was of no less use to them than the opposition of their characters. The Count de Nevers was born with that extreme sensibility, which is always the cause of much uneasiness to its possessor. The Seur de Joinville's mind, though naturally just, was austere and thoughtful, and was one of those, who, thinking themselves incapable of error, have no indulgence for the failings of another: for the heart is rendered callous by this too great strictness, which extinguishes sensibility, and repulses confidence.

On their entrance into the world, to the united advantages of illustrious birth, a large fortune, and handsome persons, they added all the qualities to make them useful and amiable members of society.

The war soon afforded them an opportunity of distinguishing themselves. After numberless actions of valour, they were taken prisoners with

King John at the battle of Poitiers; and every day the young Regent regretted more and more their absence, at a time when, surrounded by so many traitors, their fidelity would have been useful to him. Thinking to gain the affection of the public, by drawing together the different ranks of society, he rendered his access easier than had formerly been known under the best kings of France. Instead of that commanding *etiquette*, supposed to be so necessary to sovereign majesty, he substituted social familiarity; and the citizens as well as the nobility, were invited to the brilliant *fetes* given at his palace. This mixture of society increased the dangerous popularity of the King of Navarre.

He knew it, and appeared at one of those *fetes* unadorned, and with the sole advantages he derived from nature. His elegant, yet simple and unaffected manners, were suited to every station; and his melancholy appearance formed a striking contrast with the gaiety of the court, and made him more remarkable and interesting in the eyes of those he wished to corrupt. One of the most beautiful ladies of the court asked him, *en passant*, if he would not dance:—instead of answering this kind of invitation, he pretended not to hear her, and sat down next Marcel, the provost of the merchants, and flattered for some time his selfish pride and turbulent spirit. Marcel remarked, that he was surprised his highness could refuse so much beauty, and since so noble a lady was denied, surely no other in the room would be able to prevail on his highness to dance. The King of Navarre replied: It is thus he loved to humble the proud female, who presumed to solicit the honour of his hand; but if the provost had any relation here, it would be with her he would wish to dance. Marcel informed his highness that he had a niece in

the room, and he immediately bade Alice approach, and take off her mask.

Alice took off her mask, and the King of Navarre was amazed. His astonishment and admiration were so evident, that Alice instantly perceived the impression she had made upon him; but this young person did not seem to be the least proud of her brilliant conquest, whilst the factious prince gave himself up to a sentiment so sudden and extreme, that, forgetting all the projects which had brought him to the *fete*, he only thought of seducing the beautiful and engaging Alice. With a smile he led her forth to dance. He expected that Alice would be very much confused; he therefore paid her the most flattering attentions, not only before the whole court, but likewise in the sight of all the citizens who were in the room.

But his hopes were baffled—Alice danced with a prince of the blood, with a king, without being the least disconcerted!—and she did not appear to be flattered by the praises which he bestowed on her beauty, and on the majestic and graceful air with which she danced.

He was as much delighted with the sense as with the beauty of Alice, and was persuaded that he should at last succeed, when a bustle in the room drew her attention. She appeared struck with astonishment, on perceiving two young noblemen by the side of the Regent, to whom that prince listened with the greatest attention. A deep blush overspread her face, her eyes fixed on the object of her attention, and so absorbed was she by her emotions, that she no longer attended to what the King of Navarre said to her, and answered only by monosyllables. Drawing from her bosom a case, she opened it, and looking at a miniature it contained, suddenly shut it, and spoke as if to her-



self, "It is he! I am sure it is he!" Entirely engaged with Alice, the King had not before perceived the entrance of the young lords; but the strange agitation of Alice, and the words—"It is he!" which she repeated with redoubled emotion, having made him cast his eyes towards the place where her's were stedfastly fixed. He appeared, in his turn, struck with the greatest astonishment, and turning to Alice, he said, with a severe and enquiring look—"What is the cause of the extraordinary agitation which the unexpected arrival of the Count de Nevers and the Seur de Joinville has caused in you?"—"Which of the two is the Count de Nevers?" said Alice, in a trembling voice. The prince looked attentively at her without answering. "Speak," resumed she, "answer me—my life depends upon it—tell me which is he?" Charles told her, that he whom the Regent held by the arm was the Count de Nevers.

Scarcely had he said this, when a deadly paleness overspread her face, and not a trace was left of the brilliant colour that had animated her countenance. "Unfortunate," said she, with an accent of horror, "wretched girl, is it then true—can it be the Count de Nevers?" The King, astonished, eagerly asked her to inform him of the cause of her agitation. Alice, without speaking, put on her mask, went to her uncle, and said she wished to leave the ball. The questions of Marcel were as unsuccessful as the King of Navarre's. Alice went to the door of the palace, and her uncle conducted her home, without having obtained any reason why she left, so abruptly, a place where she experienced such flattering approbation, and received pleasure.

Struck with astonishment, and burning with love and jealousy, the first care of the King of

Navarre, after the departure of Alice, was to endeavour to obtain some information, as to the cause of the unexpected return of the Count de Nevers and the Seur de Joinville to the court of France, at the moment he supposed them at Bourdeaux, prisoners to the Prince of Wales. He learned, they were just arrived at court on their parole, loaded with the favours of the Prince of Wales. This information only served to increase his agitation.

The attractive Alice, and the jealousy with which the Count de Nevers had inspired him, only caused a part of his agitation; his intriguing spirit made him apprehend some interruption to his diabolical schemes against the Regent, as also to see, with fury all that he promised himself from the beauty, spirit, and character of Alice, transferred to another person, and that person the one from whom he feared an overthrow of his political views. Determined to employ every possible means that was in his power to satisfy his love, and to calm his ambitious fears, he instantly assumed a disguise which had often been used by his emissaries when sent on secret enterprises; and wrapping his head in a hood (then in use with the lower class of people), he went alone to Marcel's, where, in the secretary of this seditious magistrate, he had a creature devoted to his interests. This man was accustomed to receive, in the middle of the night, emissaries from the King of Navarre in this very disguise; but what was his astonishment, when he saw the prince's head under the hood!—"You, sir!" cried he: "Ah, is it possible! have you been so happy as to destroy Charles de Valois!—and must I go and stir up the city to rebellion?"—"No," said the King of Navarre, "I have not destroyed the Regent—I

have lost a night :—he is still safe, and at this moment conspires against the happiness of the people.” He then mentioned to them, that the Count de Nevers and the Seur de Joinville, these two young and steady supporters of tyranny—these enthusiastic adorers of the prerogatives of the crown—were just arrived on their parole ; of the joy Charles de Valois displayed on their arrival, and that he had abruptly quitted the ball, and was now shut up with them. The King of Navarre concluded by saying, “ This is not all, Vaudois ; I have not destroyed the Regent, but it is Alice we must destroy.” Vaudois started, and grew pale. Turning to the King of Navarre, he enquired—“ Could no other method be adopted ?—Must the niece of Marcel also bleed ?” The King of Navarre shuddered. After a pause, he proposed, as the only remedy for this danger, to prevent any intercourse between Alice and the Count de Nevers ; and the only way he could devise this was, to convey her to one of his estates, where she should be treated with the respect due to the niece of Marcel. Vaudois objected to this scheme. Marcel would never consent to such a measure ; he would sooner separate from his party than sacrifice her. The King of Navarre, wishing to know her story, asked Vaudois to give him a detail of her family.

Vaudois told the King of Navarre, “ that Alice was the daughter of a sister of Marcel’s, who was married at Venice ;—that her mother died in giving Alice birth, and she lost her father before she attained the age of fifteen, who left her the sole possessor of immense riches he had acquired in the East India trade. Immediately after the death of her father, she arrived in Paris, accompanied by an Italian lady, who had brought her up.—

It is said that this woman has an independent fortune, and that Alice's father gave her an authority over his daughter, at least equal to that of Marcel. Her large fortune, her superior understanding, her placid and firm temper, causes Marcel to submit in every thing to her so implicitly—that he appears more like a principal domestic, than her relation and guardian. Mareel extends his unaccountable deference even to Donna Vittoria, her governess, who resides with her, and was never known to dispute with her the authority which she holds over her pupil. The extreme attention he pays her, is the more extraordinary, as there is nothing prepossessing in this woman; she is still rather handsome, but silent, reserved, and observing. Donna Vittoria possesses the entire confidence of Alice, directs her in every thing, and encourages her haughtiness and caprice. The eccentricity of Alice has been greatly increased by two years residence at the convent of Fontevraux, where she finished her education. Since her return, she will scarcely deign to speak to any one; and it was with extreme difficulty, that Marcel prevailed on her to accompany him to the *fete*; where you saw her.”

Scarcely had Vaudois ceased speaking, when a sudden noise was heard. They listened; it was a violent knocking at the provost's outer gate, and in the midst of the confusion of a thousand tumultuous voices, the cry of “Marcel! Mareel!” could be distinguished; and the name of the King of Navarre was as often repeated. Astonished at this commotion of the populace, which was not of his creating, and fearing to lose the fruits of it if he were not present to direct,—yet not chusing that Mareel should surprise him, in the middle of the night, shut up disguised in his secretary's chamber,



the King of Navarre sent Vaudois, to see if he could leave the house without being perceived by the mob, who filled the court of the provost.

Vaudois, on his return, said it was impossible to pass through the court without being seen by the populace, but bade him follow him through a private door which led to the street. As soon as Vaudois had conveyed the King of Navarre out, he hastened to join the provost, whom he found surrounded by an enraged mob, the leader of which had just informed him, that the King of Navarre had been carried off during the *fete*, which the Regent had given to render it more easily effected; and insisted on Marcel instantly putting himself at their head, and, in the name of the Parisians, demanding the release of their beloved prince, and the punishment of those infamous courtiers, who had dared to commit such an outrage against the sacred person of the protector of the people. Marcel was going to speak, when the King of Navarre suddenly appeared in the midst of the crowd, accompanied by the Count de Nevers.

The unexpected sight of the prince struck the people with astonishment and joy. A profound silence succeeded, however, to their first emotions. "My friends," said he, "how shall I repay you? What respect ought not I to feel for your energetic attachment to those who defend your rights?" A thousand cries rent the air with "Long live the King of Navarre—long live the protector of the people."

During their intoxication, the King of Navarre drew the Count de Nevers aside. "You have saved my life," said he to him; "and I can make that courageous action of great consequence in the eyes of a generous people, over whom you have just seen my influence; I can also reward you by



making you a partaker of my popularity——”  
 “You do not owe me any thing,” replied the count; “and I request your highness to forget it, and to limit the reward to the mere observance of the promise you gave me: disperse this seditious mob, and treat them with the rigour such an infamous set deserve.” Scarcely had the King of Navarre patience to attend to him. He cast on him a look of indignation and disdain. “Rash young man, dare you insult me?” These few words, which he pronounced with vehemence, drew the fury of the crowd upon the Count de Nevers. The hand, with which he attempted to draw his sword, was held by twenty arms, which deprived him of the use of it; and he would in an instant have been cut to pieces, if the King of Navarre had not cried out—“My friends, he has saved my life, and I demand his, to render it useful to you.” Taking the Count by the arm, he conducted him through the submissive crowd, into a retired walk in Marcel’s garden, which was feebly enlightened by the moon. The King of Navarre told him they were now equal, as he had returned him the obligation he owed him—life for life; he must instantly decide, whether he would be his friend or victim. The Count boldly told him, he never would become a traitor to his king or country. The King of Navarre bade him reflect, that his life was in his power, as he had only to say the word, and death was his doom. The Count made no reply, but contemplated the Prince with a look of defiance. “It is well——” exclaimed the enraged King of Navarre; but “remember, boy, I saved you from the fury of the people at the moment you insulted me. I shall have vengeance, and I will shew to the populace, now assembled, this poniard, which I will declare I wrested from your hand at the instant

you were going to plunge it into my heart; you will be punished as the assassin of the King of Navarre, and every one will declare that you merited your fate."

He drew the poniard, and was walking towards the door that led from the garden, when a tall and majestic woman, dressed in a long white robe, and her face covered with a veil, came from between the trees. Seizing the arm of the King of Navarre,—“Dare not touch the life of the Count de Nevers,” said she, “I stand in need of him; and I think the fear of his revealing the secrets of this night will not appear equal to the danger of opposing my commands.” The King of Navarre, in a submissive tone of voice, replied,—“Never, madam, had I any idea of disobeying you. I will preserve his life, and instantly convey him to a place of safety.”——“That care be mine,” said the lady: “Return quietly to the crowd, whom you can disperse by a word; but remember, let circumstances be what they may, that the life of the Count de Nevers must be saved. I have occasion for his services—let that be sufficient.” The King of Navarre departed without replying; and the lady approaching De Nevers, who stood immovable with astonishment and curiosity,—“Follow me,” said she, “and rely implicitly on her who has just saved your life.” The Count bowed in silent wonder. His protectress then conducted him into the ruins of a grotto, which terminated the garden of Marcel. It was perfectly dark; but the lady took hold of his hand, and, by continual turnings, contrived to make him avoid the stones and fragments, which were scattered about, and heaped up in different places.

At last they arrived at the end of the grotto. She stopped at a passage, so low that they were

obliged to stoop, and almost creep along for some time. The stranger knocked three times:—a door was opened, and shut as suddenly after they passed through it.

The feeble light which struck the eyes of the Count, did not permit him to distinguish objects at first; but after he had taken a few steps, he perceived they were preceded by a Negress, who carried a vaze of dazzling whiteness, which, without letting any thing be seen clearly, spread a mild light, something resembling that of the moon. After having proceeded a considerable way, they arrived at another door, which the stranger opened and shut herself; and the Count found himself in a kind of chapel, the strange decorations of which might have appalled him, had he not been on his guard, from an expectation of seeing something extraordinary.

A golden lamp was suspended in the middle of the dome of this edifice, or rather natural cavern. Its gloomy and bluish light threw a deadly paleness upon every object within his sight. A large glass placed opposite the door, led him to suppose that the lamp cast this livid hue, by observing that his own countenance had a ghastly appearance. At the foot of this glass was an altar of antique form, at the back of which was placed the figure of Aaron's serpent, wound round a pedestal made of skulls and human bones. This strange divinity was surrounded by four torches of black wax, extinguished and turned down: a poinard, and an anchor placed across, and two silver cups, one of which was filled with honey, the other with a black liquor, occupied the middle of the altar;—before it was a little figure of white wax;—opposite the altar was a throne elevated by three steps, covered with a black carpet;—in the space between the

altar and the throne was a tripod, resembling that of Pythia, in the temple of Delphi, which was placed opposite to a golden vase, filled with burning coals, upon which the Count de Nevers read the name of *Nicholas Flamcl*.

After having attentively observed all these strange objects, he demanded to what place he was led, and for what purpose? "*To the temple of death or immortality!*" replied the lady in a solemn tone. Fixing upon this woman a look of indignation more than astonishment—"I am in your power," said the Count; "whatever your designs may be, my enquiries, I suppose, would be useless; but I——" "Your questions are indeed useless; the time for answering them is not yet come," interrupted the lady; "make yourself easy, the poinard of the assassin cannot reach you here—you are sheltered from all danger;" and opening a secret door, she made him enter a chamber where he found a bed: two wax lights, which had not any thing magical about them, were set on the table, on which the Negress also placed a cup full of liquor, that diffused the most delicious perfume. After bidding him drink of this restorative, she told him she had much to do elsewhere, and assuring him he had nothing to fear from her who had saved his life, waving her hand, she departed, followed by the Negress, leaving De Nevers in an astonishment which increased every moment. However, after some minutes reflection upon all the circumstances of this strange adventure, he was so convinced by the conduct of the lady, that there could be no reason to fear the person who had really saved him, that he determined to make use of her last gift to assuage the thirst which tormented him. Carrying the crystal cup to his lips, he found the taste more delicious than the perfume it



exhaled; when feeling himself refreshed and reanimated, he threw himself on the bed, and soon sunk into a profound sleep.

After some hours of quiet repose, a slight noise awakened him. The first object that struck him was the unknown lady, whose veil being thrown back, permitted him to see her features. She approached him smiling, and said, "The Count de Nevers is worthy of his father: no kind of danger can deprive you of his fortitude, and you are not insensible to the chain of virtue. That empty cup and your tranquil slumbers prove it. You have not disappointed my hopes—you will always fulfil them; you will esteem me for myself, and whilst I reign over fools and villains by the terror of superstition, I shall owe the service which I expect from you, to the noble confidence of honour and valour."

Whilst she spoke, her action was both persuasive and noble. He examined her countenance attentively. Her features were noble and regular; melancholy was strongly imprinted on her countenance, which even a smile did not entirely remove, though it rendered her more interesting, and gave to her face a mild and sensible expression; for never did black eyes join to the vivacity so natural to them, an expression of sensibility more striking.

At last, having recovered the power of utterance, he returned her his grateful acknowledgements for having delivered him from the power of the King of Navarre, and assured her, that she only had to say how he was to serve her, and, be the peril ever so dangerous, it would be encountered by him without delay. Smiling, she said, she would not put his prowess at present to the test; but only wished him to remain eight days in the asylum where she had placed.—"My life, madam, is in



your power; but I must leave this place instantly."—The lady, starting, exclaimed, "Leave this place instantly!"—"Yes, madam," replied the Count, "but I will return, after having fulfilled a duty not less sacred than that of gratitude. I have a friend, a fellow-soldier; all our dangers, all our pleasures, have been the same from our infancy. The King of Navarre owes his life to him as well as to me: you know how Charles D'Evreux has recompensed this service to me—the same return may attend my friend; it is to him, madam, I go, who may be in danger of being murdered by assassins." The lady, after complimenting him on his noble principles, told him she granted him liberty to leave the cavern, provided he pledged his word of honour, that, in eight days, at the close of the evening, he would, with his friend, repair under the archway of the palace de Tournelles, and that both would follow the person who will produce a ring resembling the one she would give him. The Count de Nevers without hesitation pledged his word of honour.

Drawing then a ring from her finger, she bade him take it, and observe that the name of Adelaide was engraved on it. It was the same as the one that would be shewn to him; and after bidding him remember his promise, she left the room. On her departure, the Negress entered, and desired him to follow her. He was led through a long obscure passage terminating in a door, which opened from the passage into an obscure dirty street. The Negress bade him farewell, and then shut the door. The Count, hurrying through the street, soon arrived at his hotel, which his friend also occupied. As soon as he got to the apartment of the Seur de Joinville, all the agitation and distress of the night were forgotten, in the joy which the friends experienced in again meeting.

When the *Seur de Joinville* heard of the treachery of the King of Navarre, he was struck with horror and astonishment. "What!" exclaimed he, "did we save him from the poniards of three assassins who had disarmed him, that he might, in return, attempt your life?" The *Count de Nevers* said, the manner in which he was saved was more incomprehensible, more astonishing; and he then described the lady, with the most brilliant colouring of sensibility and gratitude which the vivacity of his mind could paint. The two friends soon after separated. In a few hours afterwards they met again, and had just recommenced their conversation, which want of repose had obliged them to interrupt, when the *President de Montcal* was announced to the *Count de Nevers*. The *President* was a distinguished magistrate, who had been his guardian, and the most intimate friend of his father, and to whom he had entrusted the care of his estates, without ever giving himself the least trouble about them. The *Count de Nevers* ran to meet the *President*, and embraced him. The *President* informed him he had gained his lawsuit, by which he had more than doubled his fortune; and besides, that he had triumphed over the most beautiful lady in France. The *Count*, sighing, asked if it had really ruined the most beautiful woman in the kingdom. The *President* with a smile, replied, that she had still a larger portion than was necessary with the name of *Dammartin*, for, with her heavenly figure, she had a soul still more celestial.

The two friends listened to the *President* with equal attention, but without interrupting him, or asking one question respecting *Mademoiselle de Dammartin*. The *President*, after embracing the *Count*, and pleading business of importance, bade

him farewell, saying, "When you have seen the divine Adelaide, you cannot doubt but that her blood is as pure as her beauty." At the name of Adelaide, the Count de Nevers changed colour. Scarcely had the President left the room, when he took the ring off his finger, which the lady of the cavern had given him, and examined it with extreme attention. The Seur de Joinville during this kept a profound silence, and seemed so much occupied by his own reflections, that he started when the Count broke it, by asking him if he did not find something very extraordinary in what Monsieur de Montcal had said to him.

The Seur de Joinville answered not, but sighed; while the Count, in a voice scarcely audible with emotion, asked his friend, whether, since he had deprived the most amiable and lovely girl in France of so much wealth, he ought not to marry her? The Seur de Joinville with a smile said, he was certain his beloved friend would never marry for convenience; and sighing deeply, he sunk into a deep reverie. On hearing him sigh, the Count started, and taking the Seur de Joinville by the hand, conjured him, as he valued his peace of mind, to tell him why he sighed. The Seur de Joinville, starting from his reverie, said, "You are dreaming, I am not conscious of having sighed." And soon after the friends separated.

The new-born jealousy of the Count de Nevers had not deceived him; the eulogium on Mademoiselle de Dammartin had really affected the Seur de Joinville with the most violent emotion, and reanimated a sentiment, which, for three years, he had been endeavouring to stifle. It was at the convent of Fontevraux, that he had seen one whom he supposed must have been the handsomest woman in France; and this appellation, which Mon-

sieur de Montcal had given to Mademoiselle de Dammartin, persuaded him that the charming Adelaide must be the person for whom he had conceived such an unconquerable affection. He had only seen her for an instant, when on a visit to his sister, who was for a short time in that convent: he had often requested her to tell him her name, but she as constantly refused to comply with his request.

The sudden and capricious attachment of the Count for Mademoiselle de Dammartin, whom he had never seen, far from weakening the affection which the Seur de Joinville had conceived for her, seemed to render it more lively, by the numerous obstacles which appeared to oppose it; but the moment he caught a glimpse of happiness, it was interrupted by a contest between jealousy and generosity.

He passed the night in dreadful agitation. The delusive hopes, which sometimes stole into his heart, were stifled by reflections on the duties of friendship, which he determined to fulfil, however arduous and painful the task might be; and he took the firm resolution of sacrificing his love at the shrine of his friend's happiness.

The King of Navarre was a prey to all the horrors of the most dreadful apprehension; and the advantage he had given the Count de Nevers over him, was not the least cause of it. The unexpected appearance of the lady of the cavern had snatched away his victim from him, and left him to regret his not having satisfied his vengeance.

Not daring to attempt the life of the Count after what had passed, the King was more fully determined than ever to make himself master, if possible, of the person of Alice. Marcel's secreta-



ry, upon whose assistance he so much depended for the accomplishment of his plans, when he spoke to him on this subject, started difficulties which he was far from foreseeing. To his urgent entreaties to have her conveyed to one of his estates he peremptorily refused, or to be the means of putting Alice under his protection. He did not contend with his Highness on the necessity of shielding her from the seducing arts of the Count de Nevers; yet he would not assist him in counteracting them, but under the express condition, that Alice should be immediately conducted to the Abbey of Fontevraux, and that only if the abbess of that convent consented, to conceal her in that sacred asylum until they could, without endangering the state, restore her to liberty, and the King of Navarre at last consented to this plan, and in a few hours after he set out to Fontevraux, to prevail on the abbess, from political motives, to take charge of Alice. But his visit to the abbess proved unpropitious to his hopes, for the abbess refused to receive Alice into the convent. Chagrined at the failure of his design, the King of Navarre returned to Paris, and informed Vaudois of the result of his journey to Fontevraux. Vaudois then said, since she refused to receive Alice, he could do no more. So saying, Vaudois hastily bade the King of Navarre adieu, and hurried away. The King of Navarre, in the height of his fury, cursed Vaudois for a trembling slave; for, had he only consented to his proposals, the lovely Alice would have been in his power. The thoughts of his having been defeated in this scheme almost drove him to madness.

The day, on which the Count de Nevers was to pass under the arch-way of the Palace des Tournelles, at last arrived. Accompanied by the Seur de Joinville, he proceeded to the place of rendez-



vous, where a woman, covered with a hood, stepped before the Count de Nevers, and lifting it, displayed, by the light of a dark lantern which she opened, the figure of the Negress. She presented him with a ring like that on his finger, saying,—“Will you follow me?”—“Without doubt,” replied the Count. She then walked before them to one of the gates of the city, where they found a carriage with four horses. “Get in,” said the Negress; “that carriage will convey you to the place where you are expected.” In silence they entered the carriage.

The evening was closed, the moon did not appear, the most profound darkness hid from the friends every object, and the presence of the Negress (who was crouching at their feet) prevented them from communicating their thoughts. Some few questions, and vague enquiries, which they made, and which the Negress laconically, and very little to their satisfaction, answered, were not calculated to shorten a journey, which the travellers supposed must have been of several leagues, when on a sudden the carriage stopped. The Negress opened her lantern, and they saw themselves in the midst of a forest; the horses were changed, and after travelling some time longer, and going, as they thought, at a great rate, the carriage stopped at a small door in the middle of a high wall. “We must now alight,” said the Negress, “for we are at the end of our journey.” They descended, and the carriage drove away directly. The door then opened, and shut immediately after them; their conductress preceded them down a long avenue of firs, planted very thickly, and of a great height.

The silver rays of the moon, which had now risen, sometimes pierced through the dark foliage of these melancholy trees, instead of dis-

persing the obscurity, increased it. The two friends, walking arm in arm, only saw before them a darkness without end, when a door belonging to a house, which they had not before perceived, suddenly opened, and discovered to them a hall and marble staircase, feebly lighted by a lamp, like that which the Count de Nevers had seen in the mysterious cavern; when the Negress taking the lamp, turned to them on the first step of the stairs, and desired them to follow her.

After having walked through a long corridor, they entered a large saloon. The Negress put her lamp on a table which was near the door, and without speaking retired, shutting it after her.

The two friends having advanced to the middle of this large room—"This prison is at least magnificent, as far as I can judge," said the Scur de Joinville, feeling the furniture, "for the feeble light of the lamp will not allow me to see:—it is all velvet, with gold or silver fringes!" As he said this, a crystal chandelier, filled with perfumed lights, descended from the middle of the ceiling, and illuminated the room.

The door opened, and the lady, or rather a figure of dazzling beauty and majestic appearance, entered the saloon: she had the features of the lady of the mysterious cavern, but the most lively and beautiful colour had succeeded to the extreme paleness of her complexion, which made her appear ten years younger. Her tall and slender figure was heightened by a long robe of white gauze, which fell in graceful folds upon the floor, fastened by a girdle of pearls and precious stones; a bandeau of purple velvet, ornamented with diamonds in the form of a crown, encircled her head; and a black Spanish cloak, covered with unknown characters, completed her dress, and rendered it as extraordinary as it was magnificent. She held in

one hand a gold wand, and in the other a black book studded with stars.—“Count de Nevers—Seur de Joinville,” said she, addressing them in a solemn tone, “I charge you to assist me in defending from the attacks of an abandoned monster, *France—Charles de Valois—and Adelaide de Dammartin!*” —“Heavens!” exclaimed the Count, drawing his sword; “*Adelaide, my Prince, and the State!* Dispose of this sword and my life.” The lady, smiling, said,—“That sword was never dipped in infamous blood; a perfidious assassin, a cowardly dastard, in the dead of the night, means to fall upon innocent doves; but he must be prevented.” She then informed them, that the twelfth hour of the ninth day of the moon was at hand; at that hour precisely, the King of Navarre would resort to a dreadful place, where he was desirous of invoking departed spirits, to interrogate them on future events. The lady concluded, by asking the two friends if they would have the courage to be witnesses of the humiliation and confession of the vile King of Navarre. They bowed. Opening then on ebony press, inlaid with gold, ivory, and mother-of-pearl, she told them they would find there two suits of armour, which she desired them to put on; and, after bidding them make haste, left the saloon.

The two friends, with equal agitation, put on the armour. The lady returned, followed by the Negress, who carried two shining helmets, shaded with black and carnation feathers, which she put on the table that stood before the canopy. The lady then lifting off a carpet of cloth and gold, displayed a casket of ebony, which was upon the table; and opening it, took out a vial filled with a clear red liquor. She then took successively the two helmets, and poured into each a few drops of the red liquor which was in the vial: the chande-

lier was then drawn up through the ceiling, and the saloon was again enlivened only by the feeble rays of the lamp.

The lady bade them approach, that she might fasten on their helmets; the two friends then knelt before her, and she placed them on their heads. Then rising, and taking her golden wand and black book—"Follow me!" said she; and advancing a few paces in the saloon, she struck the inlaid floor with her wand, which opened at their feet, and discovered a staircase, by which they descended, preceded by the Negress, who carried the lamp. After having descended about ten steps, they arrived at an iron door; the lady having touched it with her wand, it opened, and to his extreme astonishment, the Count de Nevers found himself in the subterraneous cavern. It was feebly illumined by that pale light, which cast the same ghastly appearance on all around as before, when it so forcibly struck him. The altar and glass were covered with a dark veil. Two figures, one of which represented Time, the other Truth, held the corners of this veil in one of their hands, and seemed just going to lift it; whilst in the other, Time bore a dial, the finger of which marked the hour of midnight, and Truth held a mirror. Below the veil they saw in luminous characters, traced on an iron plate—"Lasciate agni speranza."

The lady then sat down on a throne, shining with gold and precious stones, which was before the altar, and made the two friends place themselves on each side of her, their visors lowered, and their hands upon their swords. "You will lift the visors of your helmets," said she, "at the moment I call upon you to *bear witness*; but make no other motion, and keep the strictest silence." Having made a sign with her wand, the Negress struck with a hammer upon a bell placed at the



foot of the throne. This single blow was repeated by an echo, which they heard die away at a distance: at the twelfth sound the door opened, and the King of Navarre entered the temple.

The King of Navarre was unarmed—his head and breast bare. He was dressed in a long black satin night-gown, and held in his left hand a branch of versain; a golden plate, covered with hieroglyphic characters, was placed upon his heart; and his right arm, bare to the shoulder, was bound with a bandage of the colour of fire.

“Charles D’Evreux,” said the lady to him, “sit down on that sacred tripod.” The tone of her voice, when she pronounced these words, was very different from the charming one which had penetrated the heart of the Count de Nevers; it was like the voice of an imperious and revengeful deity, whom terror would make every one obey.

The King of Navarre made no resistance, but sat down as she had desired him. Scarcely was he seated upon the tripod, when bluish flames spread around him, and rose up to the dome above his head, about a foot from him, but without touching him.

The lady demanded, if he did not acknowledge her power over the element that surrounded him? He bowed his head. She then directed the sacred fire upon the object she was striving to intimidate; then, with a word, she arrested its progress, and recalled it to the place where she would have it rest; then again, while she spoke, the flames insensibly divided, and suddenly extinguished, leaving no other vestige than a transparent cloud, which, without concealing the King of Navarre from any one, seemed to environ him in a magical atmosphere, and diffused through the whole temple a delicious perfume.

The lady, in a tone of command, told him time

was on the wing, and his projects could not stop its progress: she bade him look upon the dial: the hand pointed to the twelfth hour! He was arrived at the fatal moment of the ninth moon: he had seen it increase and decrease, since, pursued by the vengeful shade of the murdered Constable la Cerda, he came to implore her protection. Raising then the book she held in her hand, "You see," said she, "*the book of truth!* A hand, which no power can alter the sacred characters of, writes therein the virtuous and criminal actions of every human being, the balance of which decides the destiny of every one. All your crimes are here registered." The King of Navarre turned pale, and in a trembling voice, said—"I confess, madam, I had the Constable assassinated; and I also confess——"—"Those crimes are known," interrupted the lady; "you are to confess those which you intend to commit." The King of Navarre remained silent. "Ah! you do not answer me.—Infamous destroyer of all the sacred ties of society! Look at this altar—and tremble at the impotency of the wicked."

The King of Navarre cast a look of mingled terror and indignation upon the altar. The veil was lifted up, and through a glass was seen two celestial figures, resembling the shades of blessed spirits rather than living creatures, dressed in white, and holding each other by the hand. Their slightest motion could be perceived, and yet it appeared like a beautiful picture. The charming vision continued but an instant, for a genius, encompassed with dazzling rays of light, appeared in the glass, in one hand holding a vulture and a fox chained together—in the other a shield, with which it covered the two beauties; then suddenly all was obscured in darkness, which flashes of lightning at intervals rendered more striking and awful.

The magic picture had the same effect on the King of Navarre, as if it had been the head of Medusa. Immoveable, his arms extended towards the altar, he appeared to be petrified; soon his eyes fell, his head reclined, and a lethargic sleep seemed to deprive him of his senses.

“ Charles D’Evreux,” said the lady, “ does your memory retain any traces of the happiness of being innocent ?”—“ *Innocent !*” repeated the unfortunate man, in a weak and broken voice; “ *Innocent !*” while a few tears escaped from his half-closed eyes, and a conclusive shuddering seemed to shake his whole frame.

The lady said, she hoped the remembrance of those days, and the salutary remorse he now displayed, would make him renounce the criminal projects he had formed. “ The Regent shall die !” said the monster, while his face regained its ferocious impression; “ he shall die ! The poison has been proved—the hand is sure:—he shall die !—and Nevers—the hated Nevers, whose life I dare not attempt, shall feel my deadly revenge—nor shall any thing stop my vengeance ! I shall make my country bleed in——” He stopped, as if exhausted by his fury and revenge.

During the time that the King was speaking, the lady drew from her bosom a phial filled with bright red liquor, and gave it to the Negeress, who rubbed the temples of the King of Navarre with it; after which he sat as if transfixed to the tripod. Suddenly the most doleful cries and groans were heard. Starting, as from a sleep, “ Where am I,” cried he: Great God protect me !” The cries then died away by degrees, as if to a distance.

After a long silence, the lady told him he had nothing to fear from the infernal spirits, whom that sacred name had put to flight. The genius

of France had prevented his attempt against the life of the heir to the throne from being successful: "Go yourself," said the lady, "fight and subdue those bands of rebels, that your intrigues and desire of vengeance have assembled. You have troops near Mante; go, put yourself at their head, and disperse those poor deluded men: it is the only way to escape divine vengeance."—"I am betrayed," cried the King, rising impetuously from the magical tripod, and advancing towards the throne: when the lady, waving her wand, "Profane and audacious wretch!" exclaimed she, "you dare to doubt my power!—Approach, ye shades of vengeance! shew yourselves!" The two friends immediately raised the visers of their helmets. "What do I see!—Great God! *La Cerda!*—*D'Harcourt!*" cried the King of Navarre in a trembling and broken voice. "Deliver me, madam, from this horrible vision, and direct the future actions of my life." "Lower your visors!" said she; and the friends obeyed. Then addressing herself to the King,—“Reflect, that the victims you have sacrificed are the witnesses, the securities, of the engagements you are going to enter into, to save those whose destruction you had determined on. Swear then to fight against and disperse the armed peasants, and to endeavour to bring them back to their duty.” “I do swear, madam,” replied Charles, approaching the altar, on which he laid his hand; I solemnly swear, and may the——”—"No imprecations!" interrupted the lady; "they profane an oath. Look at the dial—the hand points to the first hour! Begone from this place, and let not the sun, in the middle of his course, find you in Paris!"

Charles advanced towards the door with faltering steps, and his eyes cast down: it opened, and shut after him. The Negress struck the bell once,



the sound of which was prolonged without being repeated.

The astonishment of the friends equalled the terror of the King of Navarre. After the sound of the bell had sunk away to a great distance, the lady went up to them, and loosing their helmets; bade them look at their visors; and they saw that they were double, and that, when they thought to have raised them entirely, they only discovered the inner part, which represented, in a most astonishing manner, a perfect resemblance of the Constable la Cerda and the Count D'Harcourt.

The lady bade the two friends take off their armour, and leave them at the foot of the altar; and begged of them never to betray the confidence she had placed in them, until she explained to them the causes of it, and the object she had in view. As the lady departed, the Negress entered with a lantern in her hand, and bade them follow her. Having made them pass through a door which the throne had hid from their sight, they found themselves, after going a few steps, at the end of the wall, where the little door was by which they had entered into this strange habitation. The same carriage was waiting, which soon conveyed them to the arch-way of the Palace des Tournelles. On leaving the carriage they returned to their hotel.

A few days after, the President de Montcal entered the Count de Nevers' apartment, and informed him, that he wished the Count would accompany him to the hotel of the Countess de Dammartin; to which with reluctance he consented. On their arrival at the hotel, they found the Countess de Dammartin alone, who received them with politeness. The door of the saloon soon opened, and presented to his enraptured sight a beautiful and noble lady, whom the Countess introduced to

him as Adelaide de Dammartin. The joy of seeing her was soon overcast, and the thoughts of the injury he was doing his friend he felt with such insupportable anguish, that before he could speak, he sunk senseless at the feet of Adelaide, who screamed out, "The Count de Nevers is dying." A piercing cry from an adjoining room answered that of Adelaide; and as the President and Madame de Dammartin were assisting the Count, a young lady entered with a distracted air, and ran up to the insensible young man. After having looked attentively at him, whilst they were placing him on a sofa; "How happy I am," she exclaimed, and instantly left the saloon. When the Count recovered; he heard with astonishment from Madame de Dammartin, that it was not Adelaide the *Seur de Joinville* loved, but her cousin *Adelgonde de Montfort*, who much resembled Adelaide; and the President had mentioned his regret, that the two noble friends were both unhappy by loving Adelaide; therefore she thought it her duty to discover the mistake.

While she was speaking, a domestic of the hotel entered, out of breath, to say, that a number of disorderly armed peasants, had burned the *Chateau du Vidame de Melun*, and killed that nobleman, his wife, children, with all their domestics. This intelligence chilled every heart with horror. The President de Montcal, anxious to make enquiries concerning this awful intelligence, accompanied by the Count, hastily bade the Countess adieu. On his way to the hotel he interrogated every one from whom he thought it possible to gain any information; but all the information he could procure was only a repetition of the horrible cruelties committed by those peasants. He returned with the Count to the hotel De Nevers.

Some days passed in the greatest agitation and

uncertainty, when the Count learned, with the utmost surprise, that the King of Navarre had put himself at the head of the troops he had assembled in the environs of Mante, marched against the revolted peasants, and entirely defeated them near Clermont, in Beauvaisis; that 3000 of them had been left dead on the field of battle, and their leader had been given up to the severity of the laws by the King himself; that the remainder of those ferocious bands were dispersed, and flying in every quarter, still pursued by his troops. This conduct of Charles, incomprehensible to all the rest of the world, was not so to the Count: he called to mind all the circumstances which had passed in the subterraneous cavern, and saw it was owing to the influence of the unknown lady, or rather the result of his superstitious fear of her supernatural power.

In the evening he accompanied the President De Montcal to the hotel of Dammartin, where, to his surprise, he beheld the Seur de Joinville seated beside the Countess de Dammartin and the lady of the mysterious cavern. The Countess took the unknown lady by the hand as soon as they entered the saloon, and introduced her to the Count, as Madame Valentia de Montfort, who had saved her country and her prince. It was her hand that dashed the empoisoned cup from the mouth of the Regent; it was her who, by her uncle's instructions, had made such progress in those sciences which are known to so few; it was that knowledge which enabled her, by means the most simple, to take advantage of the superstition of a monster, whose ignorance made him suppose her possessed of supernatural powers; while, by her vigilance, she overturned all his plans of rebellion.

The Count de Nevers and Seur de Joinville heard this discovery with wonder and pleasure.—Madame Valentia de Montfort was married at an

early age to the Count of that name, who died three months after their marriage. The old Count de Nevers, two years after, saw Valentia, and, struck with her beauty, offered her marriage; she refused to enter again into matrimony, but accepted of him as a lover. Soon after this connexion she found herself pregnant, and before she had an opportunity to make known her situation to the Count de Nevers, he was obliged to go to the south of France, where he soon after died. On his death, Valentia hastily quitted France, accompanied by Nicholas Flamel, her uncle, to England, where he took a feigned name, and under the character of a rich merchant, he passed for her husband till after the birth of her child; when they left England, they proceeded to Venice, and again he changed his name. Her daughter Adalgonde's education was superintended by herself, and all her care was exerted, to implant those seeds of virtue in her breast, which had never been sown in her own. Nicholas Flamel's benevolent heart often led him to the haunts of poverty and distress, and one of the objects of misery he relieved was Marcel's sister. A thought struck him, at the time he wished to counteract the designs of the King of Navarre and Marcel, to introduce her into the family of this factious magistrate, by pretending that Adalgonde was the daughter of his sister.

Madame de Montfort's zeal to be useful made her willingly adopt the plan. They went to Marcel's—Adalgonde as Alice, the daughter of his deceased sister, just come from Venice, and Madame de Montfort as Fittoria. The energetic character of her daughter, contributed as much to their success, as the treasures and other means devised by her uncle. Adalgonde, by accident, discovered a miniature, which she was informed was her brother; but the instinct of love made her doubt this assertion; and without daring to examine this



dreadful mystery, she hoped every thing: but when she saw him at Fountevraux, though it was only for a few minutes, she thought she had inspired him with affection. When she heard Adelaide exclaim, "The Count de Nevers is dying," she flew into the saloon, and immediately knew the Count's features: her joy was great to find he was not the Seur de Joinville, but her brother. The temple of death and immortality was not far from the hotel de Dammartin, and the garden of Marcel was only a few yards from it; therefore, with so many local advantages, a very little art, faithful friends, and a great deal of gold, the niece of Nicolas Flamel, aided by some knowledge of natural philosophy, was, without any supernatural aid, Marcel's Donna Fittoria, and a magician to the King of Navarre.

This cavern was the retreat of Nicholas Flamel, when obliged to escape from the persecutions raised against him, for his wonderful knowledge and talents, by a set of illiterate people, who imputed to magic every thing beyond the conception of their narrow understandings. It was to this cavern he retired with his immense treasures, which had long been the scene of his chemical experiments, and where his niece was initiated into all the mysteries of his art. At his death he bequeathed all his wealth to his beloved niece.

The happy Count de Nevers, and the Seur de Joinville, led their beautiful brides to the altar. When the ceremony was over, they returned to the hotel de Dammartin, where an elegant banquet was prepared. If the marriage banquet was not animated by glittering magnificence and noisy mirth, it afforded the more pleasing spectacle of virtuous love, approving and approved, looking with complacency around, and reading in the sweet maternal smile, the joy their happiness diffused.

FINIS.