

Literature, &c.

The British Magazines.

From Douglas Jerrold's Illuminated Magazine.
THE HALL OF BLOOD.

BY MISS PARDOE.

SCARCELY a thousand paces eastward of the little town of Guens, famous for the lion like defence of Turissit against the great Suleyman in 1522, is situated a lovely valley nestled beneath one of the frontier mountains of the stupendous chain which divides the province of Eisenberg from Austria. Rich meadows and stretches of orchard interspersed with clumps of forest trees make the whole valley seem like one vast garden; while the clear and sparkling stream of the Guens, which gives its name to the town, meanders in many a wavy line amid the dense vegetation, swelling onward in fantastic curves through the pleasant greenery, catching the sunlight in its course, and drawing with every pebble in its shallow bed. Wild flowers enamel its banks and water fowl build their nests amid its sheltering sedges; nor would any dream during the summer months, when in several spots a strong man may clear it at a bound, that gathering force and volume as the winter pours its icy breath over the valley and fed by the torrents which sweep down the neighbouring declivities, it overflows its channel and spreads ruin and desolation over the surrounding country; whence it is called by the peasantry of the province "the wicked Guens."

By following the course of this capricious stream for about a league—an easy and pleasant task to the lovers of fine scenery—the pilgrim arrives at the foot of a lofty and almost perpendicular rock, inaccessible upon three of its sides and crowned by the ruins of an extensive and stately castle, the remains of the fortress of Lockenhaus, formerly a strong hold of the Nadassy family, and now a possession of Prince Esterhazy. So perfectly is its outline preserved that even from a short distance it has all the appearance of being habitable: but it is in reality almost entirely deserted from its state of utter dilapidation, affording shelter only to a few laborers who contrive to make it questionable accommodation subservient to their own penury, and who prefer the sheltered nooks afforded by the angles of its substantial stone work to the less secure huts of mud or timber which would be their alternative.

Even in this state of decay, however, the castle of Lockenhaus is well worthy of a visit, for its extraordinary vaults cannot fail to arrest the attention of the traveller. One of these which was formerly the sepulchre of the Nadassy family, is built of ponderous square stones and vaulted in round arches boldly proportioned, which rest on columns of prodigious girth. It is of considerable length, being in fact a subterranean gallery lighted only by one circular aperture, which was closed by a stone after the manner of the tombs of the patriarchs as described in holy writ. A second, situated under the suite of rooms once appropriated to the lord of the castle, and dug deep into the solid rock, is divided into two distinct compartments by a long line of stunted pillars upon which the rounded arches descend low and heavily; and the whole subterranean has been elaborately ornamented with statues carved in wood, of which some fragments still remain. This singular vault is gained through a vast hall lighted very imperfectly by two narrow arched windows, having in the right hand corner windows a well dug fifty fathoms deep into the rock and surrounded by a blood red stain in a broad and ghastly circle, whence this dreary subterranean is called the Hall of Blood.

Fifty was it named; for pure and noble and innocent blood was indeed poured forth like water where that stain exists—shed at midnight—when the world without was hushed in sleep and peace brooded over earth and sky only to be scarred away by the foul deeds of men! Blood, of which the crimson trace shall be found at Blackenhaus so long as one stone of the old grim pile shall be left upon another.

In times long gone by ere yet the Nadassys themselves were lords of the fortress, it was the property and one of the many strong holds of the Templars. In calm retirement and strict adherence to the rules of the order—righting the wronged, sustaining the feeble, and avenging the oppressed, the knights found a worthy equivalent for the deprivation of the mere worldly honors and ephemeral triumphs to which most of them were entitled by their high blood and exalted position: and they wore the red cross with proud humility, and passed their tranquil days amid the affection of the retainers, without one suspicion of the storm which was about to burst above their devoted heads. Deep as was their regret at the discontent and opposition which had manifested itself against them in France, they never for a moment contemplated the possibility of the frightful consequences which ensued; and it was constantly with a consternation for which language has no words that they learnt the execution of the grand master; and the sentence of extermination which has been pronounced against their order by the council of Vienna. Henceforward none of them ventured to leave the walls of the castle lest they should lose their lives; and it having been a part of their policy to keep the fortress at all times well provisioned in the event of any hostile demonstration, they resigned themselves to their adverse fortune with what patience they might, although not without a gloomy presentiment of future ill.

The obedience of the count king, Robert of Anjou, to the will of the Pope, by whom the destruction of the Templars had been vowed, they could not for a moment doubt, as he was

indebted to the pontiff for his crown and kingdom of Hungary; and thus it was with more misgiving than surprise that after the lapse of a few months, the warder one day announced the approach of a royal herald who demanded admission to the castle and speech of the venerable knight who held the keys of the fortress.

The gates were immediately opened, and the herald ushered into the great hall where the Templars were ranged about their chief who occupied a high backed chair on the dais, beneath a canopy bearing the insignia of the red flanked by half a dozen infidel banners. Nothing could be more venerable than his appearance as he sat there with a calm brow and a steady eye, like one beyond fear of king or kaiser, who owned no allegiance save to the head of his order; his ample robes falling about him in large folds; his ball head glistened like marble in the light which fell from the high mullioned window at his back, and his long snowy beard which fell to his girdle. His sword lay on a cushion by his side, together with his spurs and an illuminated missel, in that age beyond all price; and as the herald approached he rose and made a courteous obeisance, after which he assumed an attitude and expression of quiet attention—Far different, however, were the look and bearing of many of those about him. Upon the brow of some might be read a stern and proud defiance while the features of others bore an expression of anxiety which they sought in vain to disguise under a semblance of impatient haughtiness.

The herald, however, wasted no time in commenting either upon the dignity of the chief or the passionate demonstrations of the assembled Templars; but at once opened his mission by exclaiming in a tone of rude defiance.

"Ye well know, knights and nobles, wherefore I am here; for ye have not now to learn the edict of the Council of Vienna, by which your order has been abolished: neither need I dilate upon the crimes which have been expiated by several of your brethren by a death of fire. Ye are all alike guilty; and yet, lest it should be that some one among you may be able to exculpate himself from the charges wherewith ye all stand charged, the King of Hungary, your lord and mine, unwilling that the innocent should suffer, hath convoked a high court of justice, before which ye will be free to offer such defence as ye can bring to the royal mandate, to summon you to the trial."

A deep and indignant silence succeeded to this address; and every gaze was turned upon the venerable chief who occupied the chair of state; but for a moment he did not answer the appeal. Suddenly, however, a light burned in his eye which had been for years extinguished; and he rose slowly and proudly, with all the firm grace and self-possession of unbowed manhood; and waving his arm haughtily in the direction of the herald he replied in a voice as sonorous and as fearless as his own.

"You say well, Sir Herald; we are indeed acquainted with the edict of extermination which hath been fulminated against us. We are not ignorant of the martyrdom of some of our best and bravest—of the sainted death of our holy and pious knight commander, the head and bulwark of our order. We need no teaching to comprehend of what crimes both they and we are held to be guilty; nor do we, in the consciousness of our innocence, fear to submit our lives or our actions to the cognizance of justice. We cannot, however, forget that our brethren now in heaven were illegally murdered; and the remembrance does not tend to induce us willingly to place ourselves in the same ruthless hands without a full assurance that, until our guilt be proved, we shall not be condemned to die the death of the felon and the traitor. We therefore demand that the royal word be pledged for our safety until we be pronounced worthy of death by the laws of our country; and without this surety not one of these brave knights, my followers and children, will set foot beyond the ramparts. To prove to you that I speak not without assurance of this fact, I call upon each Templar who is minded to submit in this to my authority and to redeem my word, to lay his hand upon his sword."

In an instant the gauntlet palm of every knight there present was struck heavily upon the hilt of his weapon, and the clash and clangour of the smitten metal awoke the greedy echoes of the hall so startlingly, that the herald involuntarily stepped back a pace, and half drew his own sword, ere he remembered that the character in which he came was sacred, and that his emotion was an insult to those about him, and a deep shame to his own chivalry. The hot blood mounted to his cheek, and he withdrew his fingers hurriedly from their clasp, as he exclaimed—

"Your treasons be on your own heads, knights and warriors; I will do your bidding to the King, though little do I deem that it will avail you in this strait;" and as he ceased speaking, he turned to leave the hall.

"Bear him company to the gates, my brothers, said the chief; and shew him all courtesy; nor suffer your vow of hospitality to the stranger and the wayfarer to fail you in the case, although his errand may have proved vain as well as offensive."

He was obeyed; the herald strode forth after a slight and abrupt salutation, and was followed by all present except the chief himself. Beside his stirrup stood an attendant with a goblet of rich wine, which he tendered in silence to the departing guest, who put it aside carelessly with his hand, and then walking to a fountain in the court yard, filled his palms with water and swallowed it hurriedly; after which he emptied a second handfull upon the pavement, as if to intimate that he had accepted only that which was valueless from the brotherhood; and in the

next instant he was in the saddle and galloping under the gateway, followed by his two armed attendants.

A few days only had elapsed, when the same messenger re-appeared before the fortress of Lockenhaus, but on this occasion he did not seek for entrance. The blast of his bugle summoned the whole body of Templars to the ramparts, whence they heard themselves proclaimed as traitors and outlaws, who had by opposition to the royal will, and a refusal to submit to the authority of the tribunal convened to pass sentence upon them, tacitly confessed their guilt; and thus they found themselves suddenly and utterly dependant upon their own exertions and resources.

These were not long suffered to remain untried, for ere a week passed by, the castle was beleaguered on all sides by the royal troops, who commenced their offensive operations like men certain of success; but the well-provisioned and equally well-prepared condition of the garrison, rendered the capture of the fortress a measure alike of difficulty and danger; for the Templars were at once experienced and desperate. It was as they well knew, the last hazard of the die; and they met the danger like men who felt that there was no alternative save a death of honor in that unequal resistance, or a life of ignominy in the event of failure. So bravely did they bear themselves in the emergency that a disheartening doubt of ultimate success began to pervade the beleaguering soldiery; and the royalist general with which he had on his arrival affected to look on the varmin who had been hunted to their holes, only to be driven thence, and run to death by his own troops, and to comprehend, however slowly and reluctantly, that even caged as they were within four walls, and cut off from all hope of external aid, the enemies whom he came to crush were no contemptible and craven foes, to be scared by threats, or subdued by the vision of a King's frown, turned on them in furtherance of his own ambition, and not called up by their own demerits.

Thus were things circumstanced when one vile traitor, haunted by the fear of ultimate failure on the part of his companions, to whose fortunes he was bound by a solemn vow, made his escape from Lockenhaus under cover of the darkness, and sped to the camp of the enemy. He was welcomed with the false and hollow welcome of the renegade; and like Judas, he sold his soul, not indeed for thirty pieces of silver, but for a yet meaner price—the safety of his own worthless life. He remained an hour in the tent of the general, where he waffled with praise and promises, and encouraged by pledges too magnificent even to be redeemed; and then, intoxicated by wine and hope, he crawled back through the silent midnight, like some base reptile polluting the bountiful and tranquil bosom of nature by its foul passage, and returned again to his watch upon the walls.

All had been carefully arranged between the traitor and his new ally; the position of the secret door through which the royal troops were to gain access to the interior of the fortress, had been ascertained; the hour of the attempt fixed for the following midnight; and the certainty of a speedy and complete triumph gave new energy to the tents of the besiegers, while it induced them throughout the day to relax their operations against the fortress, like men who began to be weary of an apparently hopeless hostility.

Prudent as they were, the apparent supineness of their enemies infused fresh hope throughout the gallant little garrison; and when the night-watch had been set, the whole body of the Templars collected in the subterranean hall to discuss their future measures, for on their present security they entertained no doubt—strong in the consciousness of their own courage, and amply supplied with provisions, water and fuel, they were well aware that the fortress was invulnerable save by treachery, and who could be a traitor beneath the banner of the red cross! Thus, then, it was with high hearts and hopeful brows that they followed their venerated chief to the hall of council, where the moonlight which streamed through the narrow windows lay clear and cold upon the tessellated pavement; and the effigies of these buried brethren seemed to mingle in their delineations. Without the hall the gallant Templar Servient held his watch, and as he passed to and fro, blotted out at intervals the narrow stream of light which contrasted its silvery beauty with the ruddy glare of the torches which burnt in iron sockets along the walls.

Suddenly a deep groan, a heavy fall, and the tramp of armed men broke upon the ears of the assembled knights, and in an instant, every hand grasped a weapon, and a simultaneous rush was made towards the entrance of the hall. Across the threshold lay the body of Servient with a dagger in his heart, but they had no time to raise it from the earth, for as the door fell back the enemy were already upon them. Fearful was the carnage that ensued. The Templars fought with all the maddened energy of desperation; and each, as he struck his foe, pressed back the aged chief, who sought to force himself a passage through the thickest ranks of his brethren, as though in the wild hope that he at least might be saved. Fierce was the conflict, and as brief as fierce. Overpowered by numbers, the betrayed knights fell thick and fast before the weapons of their still increasing enemies, until at length the gray haired chief stood alone amidst a host of enemies.

For an instant there was a pause; it might be that a passing belief in the superior value of a living prisoner to that of a dead foe crossed the minds of the royalist soldiery; it might even be that the venerable aspect of the Templar touched the hearts of a few among them, but the impulse what it might, the effect endured not long; for, in the next moment, an

herculean arm was raised in air, and as it descended, the hoary head of the veteran knight was cleft in twain, and he fell heavily upon the heap of dead. Five centuries have elapsed since the perpetration of that fearful tragedy and still the gory belt surrounds the well beside which the Templars were massacred. Tradition tells that numerous efforts have been made without effect to wash away the ghastly stain—and the more credulous of the peasantry talk of sheeted specters haunting at midnight the unholy spot, and renewing the vestiges which the hand of man has removed during the day from the Hall of Blood.

From Bentley's Miscellany.

A FLEET MARRIAGE.

BY AN IRISHMAN.

LADY C was a beautiful woman, but Lady C. was an extravagant woman. She was still single, though rather passed extreme youth. Like most pretty females, she had looked too high, had estimated her own loveliness too dearly, and now she refused to believe that she was not as charming as ever. So no wonder she still remained unmarried.

Lady C. had about five thousand pounds in the world. She owed about forty thousand pounds; so, with all her wit and beauty, she got into the Fleet Prison, and was likely to remain there.

Now, in the time I speak of every lady had her head dressed by a barber; and the barber of the Fleet was the handsomest barber in the city of London. Pat Philan was a great admirer of the fair sex; and where's the wonder? Sure Pat was an Irishman. It was one very fine morning, when Philan was dressing her captivating head, that her ladyship took it into her mind to talk to him, and Pat was well pleased, for Lady C.'s teeth were the whitest, and her smile the brightest in all the world.

"So you are not married, Pat Philan," says she.

"Divil an inch, your honor's ladyship," says he.

"And wouldn't you like to be married?" again asks she.

"Would a duck swim?"

"Is there any one you'd prefer?"

"Maybe, madam," says he, "you niver heard of Kathleen O'Reilly, down beyant Doneraile? Her father's cousin to O'Donoghew, who's own steward to Mr. Murphy, the under agent to my Lord Kingstown, and—"

"Hush," said she, "sure I don't want to know who she is. But would she have you if you asked her?"

"Ah, this, I'd only wish I'd be aither trying that same."

"And why dont you?"

"Sure I'm too poor." And Philan heaved a prodigious sigh.

"Would you like to be rich?"

"Does a dog bark?"

"If I make you rich, will ye do as I tell ye?"

"Mille murthers, your honor, don't be tantalizing a poor boy."

"Indeed I'm not," said Lady C. "So let ten. How would you like to marry me, Philan?"

"Ah, this, my lady, I believe the King of Russia himself would be proud to do that same, have alone a poor devil like Pat Philan."

"Well, Philan, if you'll marry me to-morrow, I'll give a thousand pounds."

"Oh, whilabulos, sure I'm mad, or enchanted by the good people," roared Pat, dancing round the room.

"But there are conditions," says Lady C.

"After the first day of our nuptials you must never see me again, nor claim me for your wife."

"I don't like that," says Pat, for he had been ogling her ladyship most desperately.

"But, remember Kathleen O'Reilly. With the money I give you, you may go and marry her."

"That's true," says he. "But then the bigamy."

"Ill never appear against you," says she.

"Only remember you must take an oath never to call me your wife after to-morrow, and never to go telling all the story."

"Divil a word I'll ever say."

"Well then," says she, "there's ten pounds. Go and buy a licence, and leave the rest to me," and then she explained to him where he was to go, and when he was to come, and all that.

The next day Pat was true to his appointment, and found two gentlemen already with her ladyship.

"Have you got the license," says her ladyship.

"Here it is, my lady," says he; and he gave it to her. She handed it to one of the gentlemen, who viewed it attentively. Then, calling in her two servants, she turned to the gentleman who was reading.

"Perform the ceremony," says she.

And sure enough in ten minutes Pat Philan was the husband, the legal husband, of the lovely Lady C.

"That will do," says she to her new husband, as he gave her a hearty kiss; "that will do. Now sir, give me my marriage certificate." The old gentleman did so, and bowed respectfully to the five pound note she gave him, he retired with his clerk; for sure enough I forgot to tell you he was a parson.

"Go and bring me the warden," says my lady to one of her servants.

"Yes my lady," says she: and presently the warden appeared.

"Will you be good enough," says Lady C., in a voice that would call a bird off a tree,

"will you be good enough to send and fetch me a hackney coach I wish to leave this prison immediately."

"Your ladyship forgets," replied he, "that