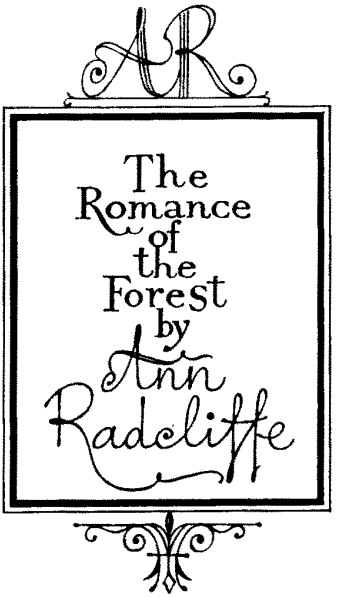
AR
The
Romance
of
the
Forest
by
Ann
Radcliffe

Chapter I.

"When once sordid interest seizes on the heart, it freezes up the source of every warm and liberal feeling; it is an enemy alike to virtue and to taste—*this* it perverts, and *that* it annihilates. The time may come, my friend, when death shall dissolve the sinews of avarice, and justice be permitted to resume her rights."

Such were the words of the Advocate Nemours to Pierre de la Motte, as the latter stept at midnight into the carriage which was to bear him far from Paris, from his creditors and the persecution of the laws. La Motte thanked him for this last instance of his kindness, the assistance he had given him in escape; and when the carriage drove away, uttered a sad adieu! The gloom of the hour and the peculiar emergency of his circumstances sunk him in silent reverie.

Whoever has read Guyot de Pitaval,* the most faithful of those writers who record the proceedings in the Parliamentary Courts of Paris during the seventeenth century, must surely remember the striking story of Pierre de la Motte and the Marquis Philippe de Montalt: let all such, therefore, be informed that the person here introduced to their notice was that individual Pierre de la Motte.

As Madame La Motte leaned from the coach window and gave a last look to the walls of Paris—Paris, the scene of her former happiness, and the residence of many dear friends—the fortitude which had till now supported her, yielded to the force of grief. "Farewell all!" sighed she, "this last look and we are separated for ever!" Tears followed her words, and, sinking back, she resigned herself to the stillness of sorrow. The recollection of former times pressed heavily upon her heart: a few months before and she was surrounded by friends, fortune, and conse-

quence; now she was deprived of all, a miserable exile from her native place, without home, without comfort—almost without hope. It was not the least of her afflictions that she had been obliged to quit Paris without bidding adieu to her only son, who was now on duty with his regiment in Germany*; and such had been the precipitancy of this removal that had she even known where he was stationed, she had no time* to inform him of it, or of the alteration in his father's circumstances.

Pierre de la Motte was a gentleman descended from an ancient house of France. He was a man whose passions often overcame his reason, and for a time silenced his conscience; but though the image of virtue which Nature had impressed upon his heart was sometimes obscured by the passing influence of vice, it was never wholly obliterated. With strength of mind sufficient to have withstood temptation, he would have been a good man; as it was, he was always a weak and sometimes a vicious member of society; yet his mind was active and his imagination vivid, which, co-operating with the force of passion, often dazzled his judgment and subdued principle. Thus he was a man infirm in purpose and visionary in virtue: in a word, his conduct was suggested by feeling rather than principle*; and his virtue, such as it was, could not stand the pressure of occasion.

Early in life he had married Constance Valentia, a beautiful and elegant woman, attached to her family and beloved by them. Her birth was equal, her fortune superior to his; and their nuptials had been celebrated under the auspices of an approving and flattering world. Her heart was devoted to La Motte, and, for some time she found in him an affectionate husband; but, allured by the gaieties of Paris, he was soon devoted to its luxuries, and in a few years his fortune and affection were equally lost in dissipation. A false pride had still operated against his interest, and withheld him from honourable retreat while it was yet in his power. The habits which he had acquired, enchained him to the scene of his former pleasure, and thus he had continued an expensive style of life till the means of prolonging it were exhausted. He at length awoke from this lethargy of security; but it was only to plunge into new error, and to attempt schemes for the reparation of his fortune, which served to sink him deeper in destruction. The consequence of a transaction in which he thus engaged, now drove him with the small wreck of his property into dangerous and ignominious exile.

It was his design to pass into one of the southern provinces, and there seek near the borders of the kingdom an asylum in some obscure

village. His family consisted of his wife and two faithful domestics, a man and woman, who followed the fortunes of their master.

The night was dark and tempestuous, and at about the distance of three leagues from Paris, Peter, who now acted as postillion,* having driven for some time over a wild heath where many ways crossed, stopped and acquainted La Motte with his perplexity. The sudden stopping of the carriage roused the latter from his reverie and filled the whole party with the terror of pursuit. He was unable to supply the necessary direction, and the extreme darkness made it dangerous to proceed without one. During this period of distress a light was perceived at some distance, and after much doubt and hesitation, La Motte, in the hope of obtaining assistance, alighted and advanced towards it; he proceeded slowly, from the fear of unknown pits. The light issued from the window of a small and ancient house, which stood alone on the heath at the distance of half a mile.

Having reached the door, he stopped for some moments, listening in apprehensive anxiety—no sound was heard but that of the wind, which swept in hollow gusts over the waste. At length he ventured to knock, and having waited some time, during which he indistinctly heard several voices in conversation, some one within inquired what he wanted? La Motte answered that he was a traveller who had lost his way, and desired to be directed to the nearest town. "That," said the person, "is seven miles off, and the road bad enough, even if you could see it. If you only want a bed, you may have it here, and had better stay."

The "pitiless pelting" of the storm,* which at this time beat with increasing fury upon La Motte, inclined him to give up the attempt of proceeding farther till day-light, but, desirous of seeing the person with whom he conversed, before he ventured to expose his family by calling up the carriage, he asked to be admitted. The door was now opened by a tall figure with a light, who invited La Motte to enter. He followed the man through a passage into a room almost unfurnished, in one corner of which a bed was spread upon the floor. The forlorn and desolate aspect of this apartment made La Motte shrink involuntarily, and he was turning to go out when the man suddenly pushed him back, and he heard the door locked upon him. His heart failed, yet he made a desperate, though vain, effort to force the door and called loudly for release. No answer was returned, but he distinguished the voices of men in the room above, and not doubting but their intention was to rob and murder him, his agitation at first overcame his reason. By the light of some almost expiring embers, he perceived a window, but the hope

which this discovery revived was quickly lost when he found the aperture guarded by strong iron bars. Such preparation for security surprised him, and confirmed his worst apprehensions. Alone, unarmed—beyond the chance of assistance, he saw himself in the power of people whose trade was apparently rapine!—murder their means! After revolving every possibility of escape, he endeavoured to await the event with fortitude, but La Motte could boast of no such virtue.

The voices had ceased, and all remained still for a quarter of an hour, when between the pauses of the wind he thought he distinguished the sobs and moaning of a female. He listened attentively and became confirmed in his conjecture; it was too evidently the accent of distress. At this conviction, the remains of his courage forsook him, and a terrible surmise darted with the rapidity of lightning across his brain. It was probable that his carriage had been discovered by the people of the house, who with a design of plunder had secured her servant and brought hither Madame La Motte. He was the more inclined to believe this by the stillness which had for some time reigned in the house previous to the sounds he now heard. Or it was possible that the inhabitants were not robbers, but persons to whom he had been betrayed by his friend or servant, and who were appointed to deliver him into the hands of justice. Yet he hardly dared to doubt the integrity of his friend, who had been intrusted with the secret of his flight and the plan of his route, and had procured him the carriage in which he had escaped. "Such depravity," exclaimed La Motte, "cannot surely exist in human nature; much less in the heart of Nemours!"

This ejaculation was interrupted by a noise in the passage leading to the room. It approached—the door was unlocked—and the man who had admitted La Motte into the house entered, leading, or rather forcibly dragging along, a beautiful girl, who appeared to be about eighteen. Her features were bathed in tears, and she seemed to suffer the utmost distress. The man fastened the lock and put the key in his pocket. He then advanced to La Motte, who had before observed other persons in the passage, and pointing a pistol to his breast, "You are wholly in our power," said he, "no assistance can reach you. If you wish to save your life, swear that you will convey this girl where I may never see her more; or rather consent to take her with you, for your oath I would not believe, and I can take care you shall not find me again.—Answer quickly, you have no time to lose."

He now seized the trembling hand of the girl, who shrunk aghast

with terror, and hurried her towards La Motte, whom surprise still kept silent. She sunk at his feet, and with supplicating eyes that streamed with tears implored him to have pity on her. Notwithstanding his present agitation, he found it impossible to contemplate the beauty and distress of the object before him with indifference. Her youth, her apparent innocence, the artless energy* of her manner, forcibly assailed his heart, and he was going to speak, when the ruffian, who mistook the silence of astonishment for that of hesitation, prevented him. "I have a horse ready to take you from hence," said he, "and I will direct you over the heath. If you return within an hour, you die; after then, you are at liberty to come here when you please."

La Motte, without answering, raised the lovely girl from the floor, and was so much relieved from his own apprehensions that he had leisure to attempt dissipating hers. "Let us be gone," said the ruffian, "and have no more of this nonsense; you may think yourself well off it's no worse. I'll go and get the horse ready."

The last words roused La Motte, and perplexed him with new fears. He dreaded to discover his carriage lest its appearance might tempt the banditti to plunder, and to depart on horseback with this man might produce a consequence yet more to be dreaded. Madame La Motte, wearied with apprehension, would probably send for her husband to the house, when all the former danger would be incurred, with the additional evil of being separated from his family and the chance of being detected by the emissaries of justice in endeavouring to recover them. As these reflections passed over his mind in tumultuous rapidity, a noise was again heard in the passage, an uproar and scuffle ensured, and in the same moment he could distinguish the voice of his servant, who had been sent by Madame La Motte in search of him. Being now determined to disclose what could not long be concealed, he exclaimed aloud that a horse was unnecessary, that he had a carriage at some distance which would convey them from the heath, the man who was seized being his servant.

The ruffian, speaking through the door, bade him be patient a while and he should hear more from him. La Motte now turned his eyes upon his unfortunate companion, who, pale and exhausted, leaned for support against the wall. Her features, which were delicately beautiful, had gained from distress an expression of captivating sweetness: she had

> An eye
> As when the blue sky trembles thro' a cloud
> Of purest white.

A habit of grey camlet, with short slashed sleeves, shewed, but did not adorn, her figure. It was thrown open at the bosom, upon which part of her hair had fallen in disorder, while the light veil hastily thrown on, had in her confusion been suffered to fall back. Every moment of farther observation heightened the surprise of La Motte, and interested him more warmly in her favour. Such elegance and apparent refinement, contrasted with the desolation of the house and the savage manners of its inhabitants, seemed to him like a romance of imagination rather than an occurrence of real life. He endeavoured to comfort her, and his sense of compassion was too sincere to be misunderstood. Her terror gradually subsided into gratitude and grief. "Ah, sir," said she, "heaven has sent you to my relief, and will surely reward you for your protection: I have no friend in the world if I do not find one in you."

La Motte assured her of his kindness, when he was interrupted by the entrance of the ruffian. He desired to be conducted to his family. "All in good time," replied the latter; "I have taken care of one of them, and will you, please St. Peter; so be comforted." These *comfortable* words renewed the terror of La Motte, who now earnestly begged to know if his family were safe. "O! as for that matter, they are safe enough, and you will be with them presently; but don't stand *parlying* here all night. Do you choose to go or stay? You know the conditions." They now bound the eyes of La Motte and of the young lady, whom terror had hitherto kept silent, and then placing them on two horses, a man mounted behind each and they immediately galloped off. They had proceeded in this way near half an hour when La Motte entreated to know whither he was going? "You will know that by and by," said the ruffian, "so be at peace." Finding interrogatories useless, La Motte resumed silence till the horses stopped. His conductor then hallooed, and being answered by voices at some distance, in a few moments the sound of carriage wheels was heard, and presently after, the words of a man directing Peter which way to drive. As the carriage approached, La Motte called, and, to his inexpressible joy, was answered by his wife.

"You are now beyond the borders of the heath, and may go which way you will," said the ruffian, "if you return within an hour, you will be welcomed by a brace of bullets." This was a very unnecessary caution to La Motte, whom they now released. The young stranger sighed deeply, as she entered the carriage, and the ruffian, having bestowed upon Peter some directions and more threats, waited to see him drive off. They did not wait long.

La Motte immediately gave a short relation of what had passed at the house, including an account of the manner in which the young stranger had been introduced to him. During this narrative her deep convulsive sighs frequently drew the attention of Madame La Motte, whose compassion became gradually interested in her behalf, and who now endeavoured to tranquillize her spirits. The unhappy girl answered her kindness in artless and simple expressions, and then relapsed into tears and silence. Madame forbore for the present to ask any questions that might lead to a discovery of her connections or seem to require an explanation of the late adventure, which now furnishing her with a new subject of reflection, the sense of her own misfortunes pressed less heavily upon her mind. The distress of La Motte was even for a while suspended; he ruminated on the late scene, and it appeared like a vision, or one of those improbable fictions that sometimes are exhibited in a romance. He could reduce it to no principles of probability, nor render it comprehensible by any endeavour to analyze it. The present charge, and the chance of future trouble brought upon him by this adventure, occasioned some dissatisfaction, but the beauty and seeming innocence of Adeline united with the pleadings of humanity in her favour, and he determined to protect her.

The tumult of emotions which had passed in the bosom of Adeline began now to subside; terror was softened into anxiety, and despair into grief. The sympathy so evident in the manners of her companions, particularly in those of Madame La Motte, soothed her heart and encouraged her to hope for better days.

Dismally and silently the night passed on, for the minds of the travellers were too much occupied by their several sufferings to admit of conversation. The dawn, so anxiously watched for, at length appeared, and introduced the strangers more fully to each other. Adeline derived comfort from the looks of Madame La Motte, who gazed frequently and attentively at her, and thought she had seldom seen a countenance so interesting or a form so striking. The languor of sorrow threw a melancholy grace* upon her features that appealed immediately to the heart; and there was a penetrating sweetness in her blue eyes which indicated an intelligent and amiable mind.

La Motte now looked anxiously from the coach window, that he might judge of their situation and observe whether he was followed. The obscurity of the dawn confined his views, but no person appeared. The sun at length tinted the eastern clouds and the tops of the highest hills, and soon after burst in full splendour on the scene. The terrors of La

Motte began to subside, and the griefs of Adeline to soften. They entered upon a lane confined by high banks overarched by trees, on whose branches appeared the first green buds of spring glittering with dews. The fresh breeze of the morning animated the spirits of Adeline, whose mind was delicately sensible to the beauties of nature. As she viewed the flowery luxuriance of the turf, and the tender green of the trees, or caught between the opening banks a glimpse of the varied landscape, rich with wood, and fading into blue and distant mountains, her heart expanded in momentary joy.* With Adeline the charms of external nature were heightened by those of novelty; she had seldom seen the grandeur of an extensive prospect, or the magnificence of a wide horizon—and not often the picturesque beauties of more confined scenery. Her mind had not lost by long oppression that elastic energy which resists calamity; else, however susceptible might have been her original taste, the beauties of nature would no longer have charmed her thus easily even to temporary repose.

The road, at length, wound down the side of a hill, and La Motte, again looking anxiously from the window, saw before him an open champaign country, through which the road, wholly unsheltered from observation, extended almost in a direct line. The danger of these circumstances alarmed him, for his flight might without difficulty be traced for many leagues from the hills he was now descending. Of the first peasant that passed, he inquired for a road among the hills, but heard of none. La Motte now sunk into his former terrors. Madame, notwithstanding her own apprehensions, endeavoured to reassure him, but finding her efforts ineffectual, she also retired to the contemplation of her misfortunes. Often, as they went on, did La Motte look back upon the country they had passed, and often did imagination suggest to him the sounds of distant pursuit.

The travellers stopped to breakfast in a village where the road was at length obscured by woods, and La Motte's spirits again revived. Adeline appeared more tranquil than she had yet been, and La Motte now asked for an explanation of the scene he had witnessed on the preceding night. The inquiry renewed all her distress, and with tears she entreated for the present to be spared on the subject. La Motte pressed it no farther, but he observed that for the greater part of the day she seemed to remember it in melancholy and dejection. They now travelled among the hills, and were therefore in less danger of observation; but La Motte avoided the great towns, and stopped in obscure ones no longer than to refresh the horses. About two hours after noon the road

wound into a deep valley, watered by a rivulet and overhung with wood. La Motte called to Peter, and ordered him to drive to a thickly embowered spot that appeared on the left. Here he alighted with his family, and Peter having spread the provisions on the turf, they seated themselves and partook of a repast which in other circumstances would have been thought delicious. Adeline endeavoured to smile, but the languor of grief was now heightened by indisposition. The violent agitation of mind and fatigue of body which she had suffered for the last twenty-four hours* had overpowered her strength, and when La Motte led her back to the carriage, her whole frame trembled with illness. But she uttered no complaint, and having long observed the dejection of her companions, she made a feeble effort to enliven them.

They continued to travel throughout the day without any accident or interruption, and, about three hours after sunset, arrived at Monville, a small town where La Motte determined to pass the night. Repose was, indeed, necessary to the whole party, whose pale and haggard looks, as they alighted from the carriage, were but too obvious to pass unobserved by the people of the inn. As soon as beds could be prepared, Adeline withdrew to her chamber, accompanied by Madame La Motte, whose concern for the fair stranger made her exert every effort to soothe and console her. Adeline wept in silence, and taking the hand of Madame, pressed it to her bosom. These were not merely tears of grief—they were mingled with those which flow from the grateful heart when unexpectedly it meets with sympathy. Madame La Motte understood them. After some momentary silence she renewed her assurances of kindness, and entreated Adeline to confide in her friendship; but she carefully avoided any mention of the subject which had before so much affected her. Adeline at length found words to express her sense of this goodness, which she did in a manner so natural and sincere, that Madame, finding herself much affected, took leave of her for the night.

In the morning, La Motte rose at an early hour, impatient to be gone. Everything was prepared for his departure, and the breakfast had been waiting some time, but Adeline did not appear. Madame La Motte went to her chamber, and found her sunk in a disturbed slumber. Her breathing was short and irregular—she frequently started or sighed, and sometimes she muttered an incoherent sentence. While Madame gazed with concern upon her languid countenance, she awoke, and, looking up, gave her hand to Madame La Motte, who found it burning with fever. She had passed a restless night, and as she now attempted to rise,

her head, which beat with intense pain, grew giddy, her strength failed, and she sunk back.

Madame was much alarmed, being at once convinced that it was impossible she could travel, and that a delay might prove fatal to her husband. She went to inform him of the truth, and his distress may be more easily imagined than described. He saw all the inconvenience and danger of delay, yet he could not so far divest himself of humanity as to abandon Adeline to the care, or rather to the neglect, of strangers. He sent immediately for a physician, who pronounced her to be in a high fever, and said a removal in her present state must be fatal. La Motte now determined to wait the event, and endeavoured to calm the transports of terror which at times assailed him. In the meanwhile, he took such precautions as his situation admitted of, passing the greater part of the day out of the village, in a spot from whence he had a view of the road for some distance; yet to be exposed to destruction by the illness of a girl whom he did not know, and who had actually been forced upon him, was a misfortune to which La Motte had not philosophy enough to submit with composure.

Adeline's fever continued to increase during the whole day, and at night, when the physician took his leave, he told La Motte the event would very soon be decided. La Motte received this intelligence with real concern. The beauty and innocence of Adeline had overcome the disadvantageous circumstances under which she had been introduced to him, and he now gave less consideration to the inconvenience she might hereafter occasion him than to the hope of her recovery.

Madame La Motte watched over her with tender anxiety, and observed with admiration her patient sweetness and mild resignation. Adeline amply repaid her, though she thought she could not.—"Young as I am," she would say, "and deserted by those upon whom I have a claim for protection, I can remember no connection to make me regret life so much as that I hoped to form with you. If I live, my conduct will best express my sense of your goodness;—words are but feeble testimonies."

The sweetness of her manners so much attracted Madame La Motte that she watched the crisis of her disorder with a solicitude which precluded every other interest. Adeline passed a very disturbed night, and when the physician appeared in the morning, he gave orders that she should be indulged with whatever she liked, and answered the inquiries of La Motte with a frankness that left him nothing to hope.

In the meantime his patient, after drinking profusely of some mild

liquids, fell asleep, in which she continued for several hours, and so profound was her repose that her breath alone gave sign of existence. She awoke free from fever, and with no other disorder than weakness, which in a few days she overcame so well as to be able to set out with La Motte for B ——, a village out of the great road, which he thought it prudent to quit. There they passed the following night, and early the next morning commenced their journey upon a wild and woody tract of country. They stopped about noon at a solitary village, where they took refreshments and obtained directions for passing the vast forest of Fontanville, upon the borders of which they now were. La Motte wished at first to take a guide, but he apprehended more evil from the discovery he might make of his route, than he hoped for benefit from assistance in the wilds of this uncultivated tract.

La Motte now designed to pass on to Lyons, where he could either seek concealment in its neighbourhood, or embark on the Rhone for Geneva, should the emergency of his circumstances hereafter require him to leave France. It was about twelve o'clock at noon, and he was desirous to hasten forward, that he might pass the forest of Fontanville and reach the town on its opposite borders, before night-fall. Having deposited a fresh stock of provisions in the carriage, and received such directions as were necessary concerning the roads, they again set forward, and in a short time entered upon the forest. It was now the latter end of April, and the weather was remarkably temperate and fine. The balmy freshness of the air, which breathed the first pure essence of vegetation, and the gentle warmth of the sun, whose beams vivified every hue of nature and opened every floweret of spring, revived Adeline and inspired her with life and health. As she inhaled the breeze, her strength seemed to return, and as her eyes wandered through the romantic glades that opened into the forest, her heart was gladdened with complacent delight: but when from these objects she turned her regard upon Monsieur and Madame La Motte, to whose tender attention she owned her life, and in whose looks she now read esteem and kindness, her bosom glowed with sweet affections, and she experienced a force of gratitude which might be called sublime.

For the remainder of the day they continued to travel without seeing a hut or meeting a human being. It was now near sunset, and the prospect being closed on all sides by the forest, La Motte began to have apprehensions that his servant had mistaken the way. The road, if a road it could be called which afforded only a slight track upon the grass, was sometimes overrun by luxuriant vegetation, and sometimes

obscured by the deep shades, and Peter at length stopped, uncertain of the way. La Motte, who dreaded being benighted in a scene so wild and solitary as this forest, and whose apprehensions of banditti were very sanguine,* ordered him to proceed at any rate, and if he found no track, to endeavour to gain a more open part of the forest. With these orders, Peter again set forwards, but having proceeded some way, and his views being still confined by woody glades and forest walks, he began to despair of extricating himself, and stopped for further orders. The sun was now set, but as La Motte looked anxiously from the window, he observed upon the vivid glow of the western horizon some dark towers rising from among the trees at a little distance, and ordered Peter to drive towards them.—"If they belong to a monastery," said he, "we may probably gain admittance for the night."

The carriage drove along under the shade of "melancholy boughs,"* through which the evening twilight, which yet coloured the air, diffused a solemnity that vibrated in thrilling sensations upon the hearts of the travellers. Expectation kept them silent. The present scene recalled to Adeline a remembrance of the late terrific circumstances, and her mind responded but too easily to the apprehension of new misfortunes. La Motte alighted at the foot of a green knoll, where the trees again opening to light, permitted a nearer though imperfect view of the edifice.

Chapter II

He approached, and perceived the Gothic remains of an abbey.* It stood on a kind of rude* lawn, overshadowed by high and spreading trees which seemed coeval with the building and diffused a romantic gloom around. The greater part of the pile appeared to be sinking into ruins,* and that which had withstood the ravages of time showed the remaining features of the fabric more awful in decay. The lofty battlements, thickly enwreathed* with ivy, were half demolished, and become the residence of birds of prey. Huge fragments of the eastern tower, which was almost demolished, lay scattered amid the high grass that waved slowly to the breeze. "The thistle shook its lonely head; the moss whistled to the wind." A Gothic gate richly ornamented with fret work,

which opened into the main body of the edifice, but which was now obstructed with brush-wood, remained entire. Above the vast and magnificent portal of this gate arose a window of the same order, whose pointed arches still exhibited fragments of stained glass, once the pride of monkish devotion. La Motte, thinking it possible it might yet shelter some human being, advanced to the gate and lifted a massy knocker. The hollow sounds rung through the emptiness of the place. After waiting a few minutes, he forced back the gate, which was heavy with iron-work and creaked harshly on its hinges.

He entered what appeared to have been the chapel of the abbey, where the hymn of devotion had once been raised and the tear of penitence had once been shed: sounds which could now only be recalled by imagination—tears of penitence which had been long since fixed in fate. La Motte paused a moment, for he felt a sensation of sublimity rising into terror—a suspension of mingled astonishment and awe! He surveyed the vastness of the place,* and as he contemplated its ruins, fancy bore him back to past ages.—"And these walls," said he, "where once superstition lurked and austerity anticipated an earthly purgatory, now tremble over the mortal remains of the beings who reared them!"

The deepening gloom now reminded La Motte that he had no time to lose, but curiosity prompted him to explore farther, and he obeyed the impulse. As he walked over the broken pavement, the sound of his steps ran in echoes through the place, and seemed like the mysterious accents of the dead, reproving the sacrilegious mortal who thus dared to disturb their precincts.

From this chapel he passed into the nave of the great church, of which one window, more perfect than the rest, opened upon a long vista of the forest, through which was seen the rich colouring of evening, melting by imperceptible gradations into the solemn grey of upper air Dark hills, whose outline appeared distinct upon the vivid glow of the horizon, closed the perspective. Several of the pillars which had once supported the roof remained the proud effigies of sinking greatness, and seemed to nod at every murmur of the blast over the fragments of those that had fallen a little before them. La Motte sighed. The comparison between himself and the gradation of decay which these columns exhibited was but too obvious and affecting. "A few years," said he, "and I shall become like the mortals on whose reliques I now gaze,* and, like them too, I may be the subject of meditation to a succeeding generation, which shall totter but a little while over the object they contemplate. ere they also sink into the dust."

Retiring from this scene, he walked through the cloisters, till a door which communicated with the lofty part of the building attracted his curiosity. He opened this and perceived across the foot of the staircase, another door;—but now, partly checked by fear, and partly by the recollection of the surprise his family might feel in his absence, he returned with hasty steps to his carriage, having wasted some of the precious moments of twilight and gained no information.

Some slight answer to Madame La Motte's inquiries, and a general direction to Peter to drive carefully on and look for a road, was all that his anxiety would permit him to utter. The night shade fell thick around, which deepened by the gloom of the forest soon rendered it dangerous to proceed. Peter stopped, but La Motte, persisting in his first determination, ordered him to go on. Peter ventured to remonstrate, Madame La Motte entreated, but La Motte reproved—commanded, and at length repented; for the hind wheel rising upon the stump of an old tree, which the darkness had prevented Peter from observing, the carriage was in an instant overturned.

The party, as may be supposed, were much terrified, but no one was materially hurt, and having disengaged themselves from their perilous situation, La Motte and Peter endeavoured to raise the carriage. The extent of this misfortune was now discovered, for they perceived that the wheel was broke. Their distress was reasonably great, for not only was the coach disabled from proceeding, but it could not even afford a shelter from the cold dews of the night, it being impossible to preserve it in an upright situation. After a few moments' silence, La Motte proposed that they should return to the ruins which they just quitted, which lay at a very short distance, and pass the night in the most habitable part of them; that when morning downed Peter should take one of the coach horses and endeavour to find a road, and a town from whence assistance could be procured for repairing the carriage. This proposal was opposed by Madame La Motte, who shuddered at the idea of passing so many hours of darkness in a place so forlorn as the monastery. Terrors which she neither endeavoured to examine or combat, overcame her, and she told La Motte she had rather remain exposed to the unwholesome dews of night than encounter the desolation of the ruins. La Motte had at first felt an equal reluctance to return to this spot, but having subdued his own feelings, he resolved not to yield to those of his wife.

The horses being now disengaged from the carriage, the party moved towards the edifice. As they proceeded, Peter, who followed