

*Adventures in a Castle.**An Original Story.*

(CONTINUED.)

HE commenced his relation when himself and Henry were separated from M. Dupont and entered the recess. He recounted the insults he received upon his being found, and, together with his brother, being closely confined in irons. His daily pittance was brought him by a ruffian, whose countenance indicated villainy of the deepest dye; to all his requests to know by whose authority, and for what reason he was kept a prisoner, no answer was returned, nor could all his entreaties procure him information of the fate of Henry. All was incertitude, and his imagination conjured up the form of Henry, receiving his death-wound from the hand of an assassin, who would next plunge the weapon, perhaps yet reeking in his brother's gore, into his own bosom. A few days only had elapsed, when his keeper entered the prison, accompanied by two others, and he was led out, (the two men following him with drawn swords,) and conveyed through the subterranean apartments to a remote place, where he naturally concluded his life was to be terminated. But he was mistaken, for he had soon the pleasure of seeing Henry conducted into the same apartment, which was filled with armed men, and found that their removal was on account of a body of troops under M. Dupont, approaching to breach the castle. They distinctly heard them at a distance in the building, and the hopes of the prisoners began to revive; but after a few hours had elapsed, they had the mortification of hearing them depart, and all the fond visions of liberty, which fancy had created, vanished, and gloomy despair usurped their place.—No embrace was permitted them, nor were they allowed to speak to each other, and they were conducted back to their cells without enjoying any satisfaction from the interview, but what Louis derived from seeing the youth of his brother, bearing up against the ill effects of confinement, and his recovering his health notwithstanding all his misfortunes. But his own countenance could convey no such satisfaction to his brother, for it bore the stamp of melancholy, and when a smile illuminated his pallid features upon the appearance of Henry, like the gleam of a meteor in a watery atmosphere, it quickly disappeared. The same dull routine occupied the time of his imprisonment, without any material occurrence, when one even-

ing after the guard had seen him for the last time that night, as he was pacing with "heavy steps and slow" the floor of his prison, a dismal long-drawn groan, reached his ear. His chains had been taken off some time, as his keepers supposed the door secured with massy bars and bolts, sufficient. The idea that this horrid sound might be the last groan of his brother, roused into exertion all his dormant faculties, which had sunk through inactivity into nerveless indolence. He examined the door, and to his inexpressible surprise he found it had been left unfastened through the negligence of his keeper; taking advantage of this lucky occurrence, he issued from his prison, and passed hastily along the passage; a door half open arrested his progress, and an irresistible impulse urged him to inspect the room. A lamp suspended from the ceiling, in the same manner as in the cell where he had been confined, afforded its glimmering light, and presented to his view a scene replete with horror. It was the body of his brother Henry, laying in his gore, who thus in the spring of life, ere he had tasted its pleasures, had bidden them adieu for ever. Driven to distraction by the horrid appearance, he rushed out of the room, and flew along the passage with such rapidity, that he would have been mistaken for an aerial being, the sound of whose footsteps were not perceptible to mortal ear. Not knowing whither it led, he pursued the avenue till it terminated in a postern gate, which was open, and where two centinels were stationed. With the velocity of lightning he flew past them, and, unconscious of the action, quitted the hated walls which had been productive of so much misery to himself, and his loved Henry, leaving the centinels stupified with surprise and terror. But ere Louis could proceed far from the castle they recalled their scattered faculties, and discharged their musquets in the direction he had taken, and with too much success, for the contents of one of them was lodged in his arm, and felled him to the earth. Animated with almost supernatural strength, he arose and resumed his progress towards the chateau, which he just reached when all his strength failed him, and he sunk into a state of total insensibility, as has been mentioned before.

When Louis had finished his relation, a consultation was held upon the most probable means to evade any future attacks which might be made on his person. To relate the conversation young Boileau had overheard the preceding night, would give the Duke of Alencon too severe a shock, he therefore deferred speaking of it

till he could have a private interview with M. Dupont, & as the suspicions of the whole party attached to the Count, it was resolved that they should return the same day to the chateau; the Duke intended to take the first opportunity to dismiss the Count, and destroy all his hopes of an alliance with his daughter. Agreeable to the plan they had adopted, M. Dupont and Louis returned to the chateau, and the same afternoon the Count de Vauban, in a private conference with the Duke of Alencon, avowed his attachment to Mademoiselle de Lantz, and demanded her hand in marriage. The proposal was rejected in the most civil terms to the great surprize, and mortification of de Vauban, who, after a secret interview with the Marquis, departed from the castle.

Arrived at such an advanced period of our history, let us take a review of the life of de Vauban, as far as concerns his nephews. Possessing a perfect knowledge of his brother's wealth, he no sooner received the intelligence of his death, than he conceived the nefarious design of removing his nephews by force, and enjoying the uninterrupted possession of the estate. The execution of his purpose would however be attended with difficulty, but he was not to be discouraged, and he conceived his plan with precision, determined by perseverance to surmount every obstacle. His dependents were numerous, and he well knew would execute any thing he could wish. For the purpose of securing his nephews, he stationed a number of the villains under his protection in the castle, some parts of which, were in a ruinous situation, and when M. Dupont retired with his wards to his country seat, de Vauban, who frequently visited them, diligently explored every part of the building, and found the ruined wing communicated by narrow passages with that in which the family resided. Ever on the watch for an opportunity to reduce his plans to practice he discovered in the apartment assigned to Henry, a private door, which was entirely unknown to any of the family. Through this he gave admission in the night to some of his ruffian attendants, who conveyed Henry to the castle, where he was confined in a damp prison and fettered. No ray of light illuminated the obscurity of the dungeon, nor served to cheer his melancholy situation, save what one glimmering taper afforded. A superstitious fear prevented de Vauban's immediately ordering the assassination of Henry, but he left him a prey to torturing sensations, and the pestiferous atmosphere of his prison. But

when he learned the arrival of M. Dupont's family in the neighbourhood, the fear of being discovered induced him to order Henry's death, and insure his own safety : but this unfortunate termination of his life, was prevented by the timely interposition of Louis, in the vaults of the castle, when Gerald paid the forfeit of his crimes. Louis for a considerable time eluded the vigilance of his uncle, till the unfortunate adventure of exploring the castle, when he fell a victim to his temerity. The Count carefully kept his abused nephews in uncertainty respecting the author of their misfortunes, lest any unavoidable accident, which his guilty and mistrustful conscience could not foresee or guard against, should give them their liberty, and raise an incontrovertible evidence of his guilt. Being disappointed in his expectations of immediate possession of M. Boileau's estate, he obtained an introduction to the family of Alencon, through the medium of the Marquis, whom he had often met at the gaming table : hoping to recruit his disordered and almost exhausted finances, by a marriage with Antoniette. Fearful of his anger, his dependents forbore to mention to him the escape of Louis, and he had no reason to suppose he had eluded his villainous intentions, till he met him at the Duke of Alencon's castle. The surprize the sight of him occasioned, roused in his bosom the dormant spark of shame, and kindled the confusion which shone in his countenance. When his nephew had departed to the chateau, and he met with the unexpected rejection of his proposals, on the part of the duke, his enmity to Louis, who he supposed had influenced the decision of the Duke, was redoubled, and he vowed the most sanguinary revenge. He departed sullen and mortified, for his castle, which he had previously put in a state of defence, as his capacious mind had prepared against the evils of adversity, and admitted the possibility of his experiencing the frowns of fortune, and being obliged to recur to his predatory system for support. Here, with his band of ruffians, he resided, and spread terror and devastation throughout the vicinity. The Marquis being himself restricted by his father, in his pecuniary affairs, could afford him no assistance, and tired with his frequent importunities, broke the bonds of intimacy which had united them. Had not the Marquis been of a timid disposition, had he been endowed with the daring courage of de Vauban, he would have been a paricide, for he had a heart sufficiently corrupted to harbour the atrocious design.

*(To be continued.)*