

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

(CONTINUED.)

THE moment he suggested the thought, he ordered all the servants to be assembled in the hall, but all firmly protesting, that they were innocent, and no proofs of guilt appearing, they were discharged. What confirms this unanimous declaration, and contradicted his former opinion, was the door being locked within, and the height of the chamber from the ground so great, that it appeared to be impossible to approach it from without. Another circumstance happened soon after this unaccountable disappearance, which filled the breast of Monsieur Dupont with alarm, and tended to strengthen the suspicion he had entertained of the Count's being concerned in the transaction. Louis returning one evening from Dijon, meditating on the strange accident which had so deeply afflicted him, rode on before his attendants; but he had not proceeded far, when he was assaulted by six armed ruffians. He defended himself with such dexterity and resolution, that when his servants came to his assistance they found one of the villains lifeless at his feet, the others having fled at their approach. The wounds he received in this encounter confined him in the house for several weeks: and when he was restored to health Monsieur Dupont, sensible that the safety of the son of his deceased friend depended on his removal to another part of the kingdom, privately departed for the chateau of Monsieur Boileau. The family of Dupont, which consisted of himself, his wife and daughter, willingly relinquished the pleasures of society in favour of Louis, for his engaging behaviour had so won their regard, that there was no gratification which they would not yield when put in competition with his safety. His pleasures were here embittered by the recollection of many painful scenes, and his imagination painted in lively colours the happiness he had once enjoyed on this spot, in the society of his father and brother.

Not far distant from their present residence stood an old castle, the seat of Monsieur Boileau's ancestors, now in the possession of the Count de Vauban; this place young Louis had frequently wished to examine when a child, but the dusky appearance of the whole, had prevented the gratification of his curiosity. Monsieur Dupont beheld with concern the melancholy that had taken possession of the mind of

his young ward, and in order to divert his attention, proposed that they should explore together the recesses of the castle. To this Louis readily assented; and they set out early one morning for that purpose, unattended. They intended entering by the gateway, but their passage was obstructed by the stones which had fallen from the battlements, and they were obliged to seek another entrance, which they soon found in a low door leading to the foot of a staircase: this they ascended, and found themselves in the apartments allotted to the servants. Through these they passed into a large gallery, which still contained a number of beautiful pictures. Louis, who was extremely fond of painting, remained to take a narrower view of them, while Monsieur Dupont advanced farther into the castle. He had not proceeded far, before he heard the murmur of voices approaching in an opposite direction to the portrait gallery, where he had left Louis, and he immediately after perceived two men apparently engaged in a very interesting conversation, but the subject of it remained unknown to him, as they descended a flight of steps at some distance before him. Surprised at their appearance, he hastily returned to Louis, and acquainted him with what he had seen, telling him they would come in the afternoon with a few servants armed, in order to penetrate the mystery, as the castle had always been considered as uninhabited. To the chateau they accordingly went, and when they had dined, they loaded their pistols and set out, accompanied by James, Louis's valet, and five others on whom they could depend. They passed into the castle by the same way as before, and entered a narrow winding passage, which seemed to extend along the whole of the building: following this they reached a spiral staircase, that they descended, and on the first floor below they perceived that they were at the junction of the branches of a large entry. Here they hesitated, not knowing which to pursue, when they heard the sound of a distant footstep behind them. They instantly secreted themselves, and immediately perceived a man pass by without noticing them. He was soon met by another, and a dialogue ensued, which was not conducted in so low a key but that they were overheard. "Gerald," said the first, who appeared to have some authority, "the prisoner's fate is now determined, and he must be dispatched as expeditiously as possible." "Why," replied the other, "is this sudden resolution? I thought it was not to have been done."

"No matter," answered the first, "do you see it is done; I am in haste: when it is finished prepare to the grand hall." Upon this they separated, and walked down different avenues. When they had got a considerable distance, it was resolved that Louis, his valet, and another servant, should follow the second, while Monsieur Dupont and the remainder should pursue the first. Louis and his small party proceeded after Gerald with great caution, till he entered a small chamber: They remained within sight of the door for nearly an hour, when finding he did not return, they ventured to look into the room, where they perceived he had passed through an opposite door.

Vexed at being thus disappointed, Louis rushed hastily forward, and had soon advanced considerably before his companions, when he perceived the same man striking a light. As soon as he had succeeded, he proceeded till he reached a stair-case, which he began to descend. Louis, desirous of rescuing the unknown prisoner from the murderous designs of his enemies, continued to follow the man, whom he now saw was armed, till at length he was assured by the dampness of the air and the dim glimmering of the light which Gerald carried in his hand, that he was in the vaults of the castle.

JULIUS.

(To be continued.)