

THE ENGLISH REVIEW

Bevan was startled, and showed it.

"After the siege, sir, she was honourably married to a nobleman," snapped Duguesclin. "Do you think a man of my ancestry will permit a stranger to lift the shadow of an eyebrow against the memory of my great-grandmother?"

The Englishman protested that nothing had been further from his thoughts.

"I suppose so," proceeded the other more quietly. "And the more, perhaps, that I am a convicted murderer."

Bevan was now fairly alarmed.

"I am proud of it," continued Duguesclin. "At the age of twenty-five my blood was more fiery than it is to-day. I married. Four years later I found my wife in the embraces of a neighbour. I slew him. I slew her. I slew our three children, for vipers breed only vipers. I slew the servants; they were accomplices of the adultery, or if not, they should at any rate not witness their master's shame. I slew the gendarmes who came to take me—servile hirelings of a corrupt republic. I set my castle on fire, determined to perish in the ruins. Unfortunately, a piece of masonry, falling, struck me on the arm. My rifle dropped. The accident was seen, and I was rescued by the firemen. I determined to live; it was my duty to my ancestors to continue the family of which I was the sole direct scion. It is in search of a wife that I am travelling in England."

He paused, and gazed proudly on the scenery, with the air of a Selkirk. Bevan suppressed the obvious comment on the surprising termination of the Frenchman's narrative. He only remarked "Then you were not guillotined?"

"I was not, sir!" retorted the other passionately. "At that time capital punishment was never inflicted in France, though not officially abrogated. I may say," he added, with the pride of a legislator, "that my action lent considerable strength to the agitation which led to its re-introduction.

"No, sir, I was not guillotined. I was sentenced to perpetual imprisonment in Devil's Island." He shuddered. "Can you imagine that accursed Isle? Can fancy paint one tith of its horror? Can nightmare itself shadow that inferno, that limbo of the damned? My language is strong,