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Excursions along the banks of the Rhine

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Part IV.

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PART IV.

OF THE DIVERS QUALITIES ESSENTIAL TO DIVERS EMBASSIES.

PECOPIN was a gentleman of fame, degree, wit, and accomplishments. Once installed at the court of the Palsgrave, and established in his new possessions, he pleased the palatine so well, that one day the worthy prince said to him, "Being about, my dear friend, to send a mission to my cousin of Burgundy, I have selected you, on account of your prepossessing appearance, to be my messenger."

Pecopin was forced to obey. Arrived at Dijon, he made so favourable an impression, that the duke said to him one evening, after swallowing three large goblets of Rhine wine, "Sir Pecopin, you are our friend! I am at variance with our Lord the King of France, and the count palatine has granted me permission to send you to him. For know that I have selected you, on account of your lofty lineage, to represent me." Pecopin accordingly proceeded to Paris. The king, who was also charmed with him, one morning took him aside, in a most condescending mood, "By the Holy Rood, sir knight," said he, "since the count palatine lent you to the Burgundian, for the service of Burgundy, he cannot refuse to lend you to France, for the service of Christen-

dom. I want some noble lord to remonstrate stoutly with the Moorish viceroy in Spain, and hereby name you my ambassador."

Now a man may refuse his vote to the emperor, or his wife to the pope, but nothing is to be refused to the King of France.

Away he sped therefore; and at Granada he was invited to the Alhambra, and courteously welcomed by the viceroy. Day after day, fêtes were given in his honour; tilts with the djereed, and hawking parties, in which Pecopin took a prominent part. Like most of the Moors, the chief had most excellent falcons, and finer sport could scarcely be seen.

Still Pecopin was not unmindful of the affairs of the King of France, and having terminated his business with the Miramolin, the knight had his farewell audience.

"I accept your adieus," said the Viceroy; "for I find you must instantly set off for Bagdad."

"For Bagdad?" exclaimed Pecopin.

"Even so, sir knight," replied the Moorish prince, "for I cannot sign the treaty of alliance with the King of France, without the assent of the Caliph, the Commander of the Faithful; I require some person of consideration to send to that mighty sovereign, and cannot lay my hand on a more presentable man than yourself.

Among the Moors, the Moorish will is law. Among the Moors, Christians are infidels and dogs. Pecopin accordingly proceeded to Bagdad. There he had a new adventure!

One day, as he was passing under the walls of the seraglio, the favourite sultana saw him, and

being of a fierce and haughty disposition, became enamoured of his noble deportment, and sent a black slave to him, who communicated with him in a garden of the town, under a fine linden tree, which exists to this very day; making over to him a talisman, and saying, "Lo, and behold, this amulet comes from a princess who adores you, but on whose face you will never look. Keep it as the apple of your eye; for so long as you retain it, will you enjoy perpetual youth. When in peril of your life, touch it, and you have nothing to fear."

Pecopin accepted the talisman, which was a beautiful turquoise, inscribed with hieroglyphics. He attached it at once to his neck-chain.

"And now, my lord," added the slave, on quitting him, "attend to my last words. So long as you wear this turquoise, time will have no power over your frame; but if you lose it, in a single moment you will add to your life all the years you have left behind you. Farewell, beautiful giaour!"

Thus having said, the negress went her way.

The sultan, meanwhile, had seen the slave of his sultana address the knight; and being both jealous and a magician, he invited Pecopin to a feast, after which, night having set in, he conducted him to a high tower.

Pecopin inadvertently advanced towards the parapet, which was low, when the caliph addressed him thus, "Sir knight! the count palatine sent you to the Duke of Burgundy on account of your great fame; the Duke of Burgundy sent you to the King of France, on account of your high descent; the King of France sent you to the Miramolin, on

account of your unheard-of talents; the Miramolin sent you to the Caliph of Bagdad, on account of your prepossessing appearance; and I, on account of your looks, fame, race, and talents, will send you head foremost to the devil!"

As he pronounced the last word, the caliph pushed Pecopin over the battlements, and he was precipitated to the earth.
