THE

ASTROLOGER'S DAUGHTER.

AN HISTORICAL NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY ROSE ELLEN HENDRIKS.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
T. C. NEWBY, 72, MORTIMER STREET.

1845.

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TO

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE DUCHESS OF CAMBRIDGE,

THIS WORK

IS, BY PERMISSION,

Respectfully and Gratefully Dedicated,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

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TO

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE DUCHESS OF CAMBRIDGE.

Duchess, whose name brings peace and joy,
  Whose smiles are genius' store;
How sweet seclusion's hours t'employ
  In study, books, and lore.
Perchance, 'tis small—the gift I keep—
  'Tis here, but not the whole;
Mine is the heart to never sleep,
  And mine the burning soul.

Oh! think upon the hours of youth;
  Start not, if I should fail
Portraying scenes too sad in truth,
  Whilst youthful joys I hail.
Forgive all faults—kind Duchess, look
  And read, but not to blame;
Happy indeed should this, my book,
With *thy* wish, bring me *Fame!*

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THE

ASTROLOGER'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

"You are very severe this morning," said Catherine de Médicis, to her confessor, the Cardinal de Lorraine; "you are very severe, and methinks I omit no part of my duty; yet, I confess it, there are moments when I dare not allow myself to range in thought. There are silent hours in the night: others, perhaps, are enjoying their rest—I cannot slumber; and then, my Lord Cardinal, how think you my ideas range?"

"I cannot tell!" replied the Cardinal, with

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a suppressed smile; "but I hope, daughter of a Royal race, Mother of a Royal boy, first protector of this realm, I hope your thoughts are centred in the right channel; that you are seriously considering what is best to be done, in order to suppress the increasing power and number of the Huguenots?"

"I am ever considering this topic," replied Catherine; "but it is one which, like in a well-constructed labyrinth, it is extremely difficult to find an exit when once its intricacies are deeply penetrated. It would, indeed, methinks be an extraordinary *coup-de-force,* or *d'adresse,* to extirpate these Huguenots; they branch forth in all directions. Queen Mary of England's reign was the fit time for a bold stroke; the Huguenots would then have left one lion's den to be plunged into another; but now the tale is changed, and we must dissemble. Nay, frown not, my Lord Cardinal, Catherine de Médicis knows not what it is to fear, yet nevertheless, she must *feign;* she must wait until

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her plans are ripe for execution. What think you of the King of Narvarre going over to England? I like not the idea; there are seeds of a masterly disposition in the character of his son, the Prince of Béarn, and I have strong reasons to be apparently lenient towards the Protestants until my son is older. Think what a Court I shall assemble by my policy! my Lord Cardinal, you will smile at the assemblage! I can but compare it to a menagerie. The Prince de Condé, the Duc de Guise, Montmorency, Admiral de Coligny, the young Prince de Béarn, the Queen of Narvarre his Mother, *parole de Reine*;—my Lord Cardinal, what think you of my Court?"

"I perceive, my daughter, that you are, in fact, preparing a scheme to rid the country of these unbelievers. Remember, there are some crimes justifiable in the sight of Heaven, and there is such a thing as absolution, a rite ordained to save penitent sinners as well as those who have sinned in order to obtain some motive

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which has religion for its ground work—a rite ordained, my daughter, to save those who believe in its efficacy from falling into the pain of regrets and useless remorse."

"I understand you, my Lord Cardinal," replied the Queen-Mother of France, a slight degree of sarcasm mixing in the tone of her commanding voice; "there may arrive a time when I shall require the full leniency of this rite, but not yet—not yet."

"I leave you now, daughter;" said the Cardinal, "God, and the Holy Virgin preserve you."

He devoutly crossed himself, and left the apartment, folding his rich ermine-bordered cloak around him. Catherine de Médicis sat down, and cast her eyes pensively on the embers of the fire.

"I know not how it is," she exclaimed, stamping her small foot on the rich carpet; "I like not any control, but least of all the control of these imperious churchmen. When they are silenced as far as regards temporal matters,

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they shield themselves under the garb of religion. What said the King of Narvarre? 'Give me an Anchorite, or, at least an abstemious man, as a sample of clergy, but talk not to me of my Lord Lorraine; a grappling, sordid miser,' the King of Narvarre called him—God forgive him his sins."

Catherine ceased talking aloud, for she possessed a great share of superstition, and was afraid to speak disparagingly of one so high in the clergy as the Cardinal de Lorraine. As, however, our present generation have no such scruples, it will not be ill-placed to talk of the wealth and power of the Popish Churchmen at that period.

The Cardinal de Lorraine not only swayed the Court by his influence over the all-powerful Catherine de Médicis, but he had spies constantly communicating intelligence between Rome and France. The Pope had bestowed the highest honours on his favourite. Possessing an enormous fortune, his clerical

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benefices stretched forth in various directions. He was archbishop of Rheims, Bishop of Mety, Abbot of St. Denis, Cluni, Féchamp, de Marmontier, de Moustrier, besides possessing ten other livings nearly equal to the above named.

The clergy who subscribed to the Reformation looked with keen and jealous eyes at the increasing wealth of their clerical opponents; and the Cardinal de Lorraine, on his part, was vehemently opposed to the Reformers; he mixed private hatred with his religious opinions, for Theodore de Beye, Calvin's most devoted disciple, was at personal enmity with the wealthy Cardinal.

The Queen-Mother and Lorraine were frequently closeted together; their voices were vehement—their impetuous gestures showed how much both their minds were directed to the same channel, the extirpation of the Huguenots. Lorraine was hasty, Catherine firm, crafty, keen and politic. Their thoughts

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centered on the same channel, but both parties were bitterly disappointed when, notwithstanding all their endeavours to prevent an open discussion of the Reformers against the adherents of Popery, a conference actually took place—a debate of sufficient consequence to alarm the Pope, who immediately despatched a legate, headed by Father Lainey, second General of the Jesuits, and first Governor of their institution.

Lainey, possessed of the most eloquent oration, spoke in terms of undisguised vehemence, and the crafty Queen-Mother of France felt indignant and hurt when she beheld the Pope sending so furious an antagonist against the Huguenots, whilst, for reasons of her own, she was apparently conciliating them. The Cardinal de Lorraine had watched the angry spot growing darker and darker on the Queen-Mother's brow. He knew her temper; he felt assured that, sooner than be controlled, even by the Pope, she would enter into a decided treaty

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with Henry of Narvarre, and finally tolerate his party. Now the Cardinal perceived the aim of Catherine's policy, and he used all his influence to quell her rising indignation. Her first impulse was, to order the whole body of Jesuits to depart from the kingdom. Lainey interposed; the Cardinal de Lorraine used his influence; an act was passed; the Jesuits formed a College, but renounced their chosen appellation of "Society of Jesus," being besides compelled to submit to the parochial Bishop. Trifling as were the privileges, small as was the power of the Jesuits, this agreement in the year 1561 was the foundation, or rather the establishment, of a body of men, who spread quickly through the kingdom, and soon became as powerful as celebrated. Rome had indeed chosen a proper channel to intimidate the persecuted Huguenots. The King of Narvarre had hitherto leant to the Huguenot side, but the Pope's legate dexterously hinted that his lost kingdom might possibly be restored to him

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This hope, however remote, acted powerfully on a most undecided character; the King openly embraced the Romish faith, united himself to the Duc de Guise and the connétable Montmorency. Maréchal d'Albon de Saint André joined the party, and they were henceforth called the "Triumvirate." The King of Narvarre's union with these powerful men was in fact instigated by the ready eloquence of the Pope's legate; but the Cardinal de Lorraine had persuaded the Queen-Mother to tolerate their presence in the realm. He was, therefore, the real instigator of the union so powerful to the Romish cause, and Catherine de Médicis felt it. Proud she was, sternly—innately proud—but towards the Cardinal her pride was ever quelled; piety in her disposition was so united to superstition, that the Cardinal knew how to turn that mind so full of lofty ideas and trifling weakness. That great Medicis who swayed a kingdom, whose name has been, and will still be, handed down to posterity as the most consummate poli-

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tician, was weak enough to believe implicitly in astrology, as influencing judicial movements. She had her astrologer, and listened with curious avidity to his necromantic lore. Dark and vicious, too often, were his councils; impiety, ignorance, and Italian revenge, were the characteristic marks of the astrologer; but Catherine's benighted imagination clothed his vices in the garb of virtue; and listening to advice, crafty as it was wicked, Catherine steeled her heart against all that was feminine, all that was good.

It must be easily supposed that to have any influence over the untractable Catherine de Médicis, the person in possession of that influence must have a decided position, both in a worldly and clerical point of view. This was the case with regard to Cardinal Lorraine. No doubt there are documents which speak of a man so important in the sixteenth century, but finding a very accurate account of the real power and rank of Cardinals in general, I

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have resolved to insert it, trusting it will not be unprofitable or unwelcome to my readers. A most important point is, that Cardinals have a voice in the Conclave at the election of a Pope. Cardinals compose the Pope's Council, and it was formerly believed that, as the Pope represented Moses, so the Cardinals represented the Seventy Elders, who, under the Pontifical authority, decide private and particular differences. Cardinals, in their first institution, were only the principal priests of the parish of Rome. In the primitive Church, the chief priest of a parish, who immediately followed the bishop, was called *Presbyter Cardinalis*, to distinguish him from the other petty priests, who had no church nor preferment. The name of Cardinal was first applied to them in the year 150, others say in the year 300. These cardinal priests were alone allowed to baptize and administer the Eucharist. Under Pope Gregory, cardinal priests and cardinal deacons were only such priests who had a church or chapel under their

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particular care; and this was the original *use* of the word.

The Cardinals continued on this footing till the eleventh century; but as the grandeur and state of his Holiness became then exceedingly augmented, he would have his councils of cardinals make a better figure than the ancient priest had done. It is true, they still preserved their ancient title, but the thing expressed by it was no more.

It was some time, however, before they obtained the precedence over bishops, or had the election of the Pope in their own hands; but when they were once possessed of those privileges, they soon wore the red hat and purple; and growing still in authority, they became at length superior to the bishops, by the sole reason that they *were Cardinals*. It was not only at Rome that priests bore the title of Cardinals, for there were cardinal priests in France; the title was there given to somebishops, namely, to those of Bourges, who in ancient

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writings were called Cardinal: the Abbot of Vendome also styled himself *Cardinalis Natus*. The Cardinals were divided into three classes or orders, containing six bishops, fifty priests, and fourteen deacons, making altogether seventy; this constituted what was called the *sacred college*. Till the year 1125, the college only consisted of fifty-two or fifty-three, the council of Constance reduced them to twenty-four; but Sixtus IV., without any regard to that restriction, raised them again to fifty-three; and Leo to sixty-five. As for the cardinal *deacons*, they were originally no more than seven for the fourteen quarters of Rome, but they were afterwards increased to nineteen. Then their number again diminished. Some ancient authors affirm that the election of the Pope rested on the Cardinals exclusively of the other clergy.

Having now shown how great was the power these high churchmen possessed, it will be interesting to give a short account of the ceremony of their creation.

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The Pope performs the ceremony of opening and shutting his mouth, which is done in a private consistory. Shutting the mouth implies the depriving the Cardinal of the liberty of giving his opinion in congregations; and opening the mouth, which is performed fifteen days afterwards, signifies taking off this restraint.

However, if the Pope happens to die during the time a cardinal's mouth is shut, he can neither give his voice in the election of a new Pope, nor be himself advanced to that dignity.

The dress of a Cardinal is, a red soutanne, a rochet, a short purple mantle, and a red hat. The Cardinals began to wear the red hat at the Council of Lyons, in 1243.

In the year 1630, Pope Urban VIII. issued a decree ordering that the Cardinals should be addressed by the title of *Eminence*; until that period they had been called *Illustrissimi.*

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There are long accounts of Cardinals to be found in scientific books; this is merely a little sketch *en passant*:—and now return we to Catherine de Médicis.

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CHAPTER II.

MANIFOLD and very absorbing Catherine's thoughts appeared to be, for she lingered even when she arose to leave the apartment. The large clock struck, and struck again, and the Queen was still there. Whilst surrounded by the busy throng of the world the human heart may be forgiven if it sometimes errs; it may find an excuse if it has not leisure to contemplate the right path of duty; but when we are alone, palpably wicked must that heart be, which can literally commune with bad ideas, which can foster with avidity the seeds of evil, and

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refuse to lean on the side of goodness, however small may be its existence in that benighted heart. Often, as we peruse the pages of history, so chequered with the evil passions of our nature; often must the reflection spring to our minds—can the perpetrators of such evil deeds have communed alone?—can they ever have listened to the still small voice of conscience?—can they ever have whispered to the troubled breast—"Cease; man is not placed on earth to injure his fellow-men." Catherine de Médicis *did* commune alone, in that beautiful tapestried chamber in which she sat—alone did I say? No, no, she ranged amidst a host of furious passions; she indulged sentiments as repugnant to a woman, as disgraceful to a Christian. Her pearly teeth were sometimes clenched, and her imperous eye clouded with an expression unfathomable; her commanding figure was drawn to its utmost height, as with slow and measured steps she paced the apartment, twisting at the same time the links of a

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thick golden chain, which encircled a most beautifully-formed throat. Suddenly she rang a little silver bell, which lay on a table before the couch on which she had been reclining. A young and rather pretty female answered the summons. How true it is, that the bent of the mind working within, so greatly influences the outward form of the face, or at least imparts expression to the countenance. The young girl who now entered the apartment would have been very much more than *rather* pretty, were not her features contracted by an impenetrable sternness, which seemed to bid inquirers to seek for information elsewhere, nor ever hope to hear her speak with the candid frankness of youth. True, the maiden had teeth of dazzling whiteness, but her mouth, which seldom parted in a smile, forbid the beholder to look again; her eyes were large and dark, but they were overshadowed with an expression too unsubdued to call sadness—stern determination, and keen observation are better appella-

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tions; the clear olive complexion, the slight, yet full bust, proclaimed that the girl was a native of southern climes, and her foreign accent confirmed the supposition.

"I heard the tones of the silver bell," she said, not ungraciously, but without the slightest smile or change of countenance. "Pray, what may your Majesty require of me?"

Catherine seemed accustomed to the maiden's manners; for she replied, in rather a conciliating voice—"Loretta, I will go to Doctor Andrea Pettura, this evening."

"And your Majesty wishes me to accompany you?"

"Exactly so; and no babbling, no talking of my plans, do you hear?"

"Your Majesty knows I never babble. I have had a strong lesson of the danger of that practice;" and the maiden looked down sadly upon her mourning garments, whilst a tear trembled in her dark eye.

"Aye, true, true," exclaimed Catherine, in

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her hasty voice. "I had forgotten; *ma foi!* it requires some prodigious power of memory to recollect affairs of state, and *l'affaire de cœur* of my confidential follower."

"I did not ask your Majesty to remember my troubles," muttered Loretta, dashing away the tear, and looking proudly at Catherine's equally proud, queenly, but not more majestic countenance. The words were murmured between the maiden's teeth; but the Queen-Mother caught every syllable.

"Thou art saucy, pretty maid," she exclaimed, "and heed well thy career, thou art in possession of my secrets: there are many more, who *have* been; mark my words—who *have* been."

"And they *are no more*," continued the girl, still looking fixedly at Catherine. "Well your Majesty, when the stiletto, or the poisoned cup, are to be my fate, all the harm I shall wish your Majesty will be, that you may feel the want of your faithful Loretta. My Antonio

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met such a fate, and I care not when I rejoin him."

"Antonio betrayed the Pope's secrets," said Catherine moodily.

"True," answered Loretta, with a heavy sigh; "and you took me from my native land, to be your follower; I have lost my betrothed, and the world to me is a miserable blank. I will never betray your confidence, but I cannot alter my disposition: as the sun scorches the lustrous fruit of the vine, so is my heart dried by the hand of sorrow; tears seldom come to my relief, and I am no Court-born lady, who can smile amidst a load of sorrow."

"I am over hasty," said the Queen, involuntarily touched by the maiden's mixed sternness, and the softness of her voice, contrasting so forcibly with her sad and hopeless words. "You will be ready at ten o'clock—bring the cloak and hood to my room. I retire at ten; I am indisposed—do you understand?"

"I do," answered Loretta, "and I will be

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punctual." The maiden said no more; her countenance resumed its usual collected expression; and noiselessly treading a long corridor, she opened the door of a suite of apartments, reached a small bed, and, leaning against it, she wept long and bitterly.

* * * * * * * *

Evening had drawn her mantle over the face of the earth; the rooms in the palace were splendidly lighted—the flower of the French Nobility were assembled in that gay court, where Catherine de Médicis congregated together persons she wished to conciliate—those whose principles she wished to sound, those whose presence in foreign Courts she dreaded, and those to whom she was drawn by bonds of affection. Catherine had forbidden all political subjects of conversation in these evening assemblies; her never-pausing wit, her sparkling observations, her grace, her beauty, rendered her the bright centre, round which the whole court moved: in her lofty bearing—in her full

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majestic figure, it seemed as if the grace of the whole family De Médicis had chosen her for their representative.

The evening in question, the young King of France, Charles the Ninth, then in his eleventh year, was playing at draughts with his brother, the Duc d'Anjou, one year his junior.

Montmorency, and the Duc de Guise were engaged in a conversation together; the Queen of England formed their subject, and the gallant Duc de Guise was wondering how long Elizabeth would retain her determination of keeping single.

The beautiful Princess Marguerite de France, whose youthful beauty was already conspicuous, was leaning over her brother, the Duc d'Anjous' chair; now encouraging him, now archly showing the young king a move, which was likely to favour his game.

"Away, away, treacherous adviser," said the Duc d'Anjou, patting her ckeek. "We

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do not want your advice; and if we did, perhaps you would not give it us?"

"Do not pull my hair," said the fair little Princess, for the Duc was unmercifully twining her long silken ringlets round his fingers. "If you are so rough, I will tell Charles where to move that king—the Prince de Béarn told me exactly how to play under such circumstance."

"You always quote Henri of Béarn," said the little King of France, archly. "You would not be standing here so idly, if his Highness were here."

"Tais toi, tais toi," replied Marguerite, stopping her brother's mouth, whilst the colour mantled her young brow.

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed the king, and the Duc d'Anjou echoed the laugh; the draught-table was overturned; the Princess joined in a noisy game, until an attendant summoned the young Royalty of France to their mother's presence. Catherine put down the book she had

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been perusing, and seated the little princess on her knees.

"My brothers have been very troublesome," said the little lady," looking triumphantly at them.

"What have they been doing?" said Catherine.

"We told her she always thought the Prince de Béarn was better than any one else; and see, mother, see how she is blushing."

Catherine disguised her mirth; she kissed the little princess: "Ay! Margaret, dost thou like the Prince de Béarn?"

"Yes, I do; he is so kind," said the young girl, artlessly; whilst blushing still more deeply, she hid her pretty face in her mother's bosom.

"Now, now, go to bed," said Catherine, kindly kissing the princess.

Her attendants were summoned, and the Queen-Mother was left with her sons.

"My son, this is not right of you," said Catherine, addressing the young King of France;

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"Margaret is too young to be spoken to on the subject of the Prince de Béarn."

"But it is true you intend betrothing them?"

"I have it in contemplation at present," said the Queen.

"Oh! it is rare sport to see her blush," exclaimed the Duc d'Anjou; "if you had seen her last night, mother!"

"Ah! premature in her judgment, like her mother," said Catherine, musingly. "Well, my sons, *nous verrons! nous verrons!* Tell me, now, what are you doing below?"

"Regretting your absence and indisposition," said the young king, affectionately; "but you do not look ill?"

"I am always well when I see my children," answered the Queen, evasively: and she turned away from the searching gaze of the young King.

"Return to the drawing room;" she continued after a pause; "but retire early; you must not lose your bloom by keeping late hours. I will invite Henry of Navarre, and the Prince

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de Béarn, then we shall have festivities; until then, we are sober as—Reformers.

The Princes saluted their mother, and she was once more alone.

Catherine de Médicis indulged in long visions of the future. Not more than thirty-nine or forty years of age, she foresaw brilliant prospects strewing her path. Hers was not a character to stoop and cull thorns from a bouquet, unless she *felt* the pressure of the unwelcome sting; then she extricated the thorn without injuring her flowers. Her nature so political, so sanguine; her temperament constantly buoyant, allowed her to contemplate every event in life, and to clothe it in the garb her own imagination pictured at the moment. Fortune, beauty, intellect and rank, all had conspired to spoil this daughter of Italia; and she indulged herself even more than she had been indulged by her own friends in infancy, by allowing herself to believe that nothing could be impossible, if she wished to accomplish any undertaking.

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Catherine had swayed the government in the reign of her son, Francis the Second; she was now possessed of the highest power in the realm; she had apparently conciliated the Guises, and her daughter, Margaret de Valois, seemed to fall, without an effort on her part, into the very channel upon which her thoughts were centred. It is not to be wondered that the young King of France and his brothers were premature both in their judgment and conversation; Catherine de Médicis had the straight road to their hearts and understanding, and with that observation conjecture need go no further. Henri, Prince de Béarn, afterwards the great Henri Quatre, was then a boy, not more than ten years of age, the beautiful little princess, only eight; and it was between those two juvenile members of the Royal Family of France, that Catherine's policy determined to cement the bonds of early affection, afterwards to be sealed by the fiat of matrimony. Catherine, however, never allowed a second person to

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discover the rise, the growing impulse, and the matured reason of her plans. Henri of Béarn was the chief branch of Bourbon—Vendôme, descended from Robert, Count of Clermont, fifth son of Louis, surnamed the Saint, he was so distantly connected with the reigning monarch of France, that his biographers term him Charles the Ninth's cousin twenty-three degrees removed. Notwithstanding it never occurred to any one that the young Prince de Béarn was destined to reign on the throne of France, the Queen-Mother had, nevertheless, a true presentiment that she was securing a good alliance for her daughter; but even the searching Catherine de Médicis could not forsee the future fate of the neglected and unhappy wife of the great Henri Quatre, nor presage the blameable conduct of Marguerite de Valois.

The Queen-Mother now summoned the young king's preceptor to her presence.

Amiot, the learned translator of Plutarch, answered the summons.

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"How does my son proceed in his studies?" asked Catherine.

"Passably well," replied Amiot, "but he too frequently indulges with his brothers in field sports. Such amusements leave a lassitude on the mind from the fatigue experienced by the body."

"Natural to his age to seek amusement," interrupted the indulgent mother. "I speak now of his disposition; how would you describe it? speak impartially."

Amiot paused, for he was a man of truth, and he knew that the proud Médicis could not always brook even the words she requested should be spoken. After a short silence, he began, and described Charles the Ninth's disposition. Thus, though darker it has been handed down to posterity:—

"The young king," said Mariot, "has many estimable qualities; his wit is extraordinary for his age, his judgment clear, and he possesses great courage and activity, both bodily and

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mentally. Listen to me, Queen-Mother of that young king: Charles the Ninth will either be a very bad or a very good King—he knows no medium. It is a difficult task to direct that impetuous mind to the right channel, from whence true happiness springs."

"This is all very excellent and moral," said Catherine, "but I have now something of importance to speak about. Pray what thinks my son of the young Prince of Béarn?"

"He no doubt appreciates his amiable temper," said Mariot, "but their characters would not assimilate."

"Humph!" said Catherine, musingly; "now tell me, Monsieur Amiot, does my son talk of his sister Marguerite's marriage with the Prince?"

"The Princess Marguerite!" said Amiot, with a start of unfeigned surprise; she is a mere child: who could entertain such ideas, who could spoil childhood's bright and sunny days by harrassing the mind with thoughts it cannot com-

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prehend. A doll for the Princess Marguerite, and a top and whip for the King; for, believe me, Royal Queen, youth soon passes, and with it the loveliest hours of life. Who could talk of love or marriage to those children?"

"I can, if I judge it necessary," said Catherine, drawing up her commanding figure; "I do as I please, and none dare say me nay. I wish you good night, Monsieur Mariot: good night —good night."

Monsieur Mariot, whose politeness was not diminished, not even by this unceremonious dismissal, bowed low and politely to the proud Queen-Mother of France, and repaired to his own apartments.

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CHAPTER III.

The evening was dark and tempestuous, the clouds swept past, driven by the eddy, and appeared as if diving gloomily on the bosom of the Heavens. A few solitary stars were shining brightly; the other twinkling luminaries seemed sullenly retreating, as if veiled purposely from the human sight. It was on this dark night, that two females, wrapped in large black cloaks, proceeded at a rapid pace through the almost deserted streets. I need not say, that those closely-veiled women, were Catherine de Médicis, and her pretty attendant, Loretta.

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"Methinks the road is very long," said Catherine, leaning heavily on her attendant's arm; "I would that Doctor Andréa Pettura lived somewhat nearer."

"Such learned persons love not the contagion of the city, and shun its baneful bustle," replied Loretta.

"Thinkest thou, then, that wickedness reigns only in busy cities?"

"Ah! no, your Majesty," replied Loretta;" "the world is a mass of folly: those who are gay and smiling, feel not so acutely the atmosphere of sin; but those who are lonely and broken-hearted, feel the air of folly which wafts by, and echoes a sigh in the lone bosom. Andréa Pettura, methinks, is no better than other persons; but has studied men, and can talk until he causes his hearer's hair to stand erect."

"Talk not against Andréa Pettura," said Catherine, with a movement approaching a shudder, and looking at the same time fearfully

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round, as if the melancholy wind, playing around her, could waft back the tale to Pettura's ears."

Loretta did not attempt to interrupt the silence which followed: at last, the Queen-Mother said, in a low, tremulous voice, "Loretta, if thou doubtest the Doctor's lore, how would'st thou be able to talk as he does?"

"I should not speak in his high-flown language," said Loretta, "for my education would not allow it; thus, however, would I talk: Beware of men's treachery—heed not their promises—listen not to their flattery—agree not with their folly—shun their vicious haunts—sacrifice not at the shrine of deceit—trust not in their sympathy—bury grief in thy own bosom—and commune with higher things than Earth's dull mould. To the broken-hearted, this my tale—Weep, until the tears no longer flow—sigh, until sighs refuse to echo again—go, think then if happiness be nearer. To the gay—Smile, until bright smiles hover no more

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round the mouth—laugh, until the laugh dies away in the bosom—and see then, if thou wilt ever again be so blithe and gay."

"And what would'st thou say to those who sought thy advice from motives of religion, and for the welfare of a nation?"

"I would bid them seek advice from higher powers—I would bid them turn their earnest gaze towards that invisible world, from whence good counsel comes—I would tell them not to heed the voice of a mortal like themselves, who was speaking from the depth of an experienced heart, learned in the past, but ignorant of the future."

"Thou speakest far above thy station, Loretta."

"Ah! that is my misfortune," replied the girl; "too much thought is a heavy load to bear, it chases away light feeling, and when joined to sorrow, sears the lone heart. Oh, oft, very oft, I wake in the midnight hour, the gloom of the night like the darkness of my bosom then

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comes a solitary luminary, throwing a small but steady light over my benighted path; that luminary is Hope, shedding its mild rays around. Ah, Queen, it were better had I not been so well educated, but my early life was prosperous and gay; I lived with a lady who was related to the Pope; I performed no menial service, but lulled her to repose, by singing to my little guitar, or reading in my infantine voice. Thus fleeted by the hours of my childhood—those sunny hours no more return. My girlhood's first dawn was as happily passed. Methinks the air of Italia is fecund with treasured lore; I grasped learning, and filled my mind until it was compelled to disburden itself by loving! loving a bright and intellectual being, whose very thoughts were twined round mine—whose dark orbs rested on my face, not in an amorous, but all-appreciating gaze. He loved not with that passionate, momentary fire, which hopes, and dares, and then forgets; but he loved me with that subdued and hallowed love, which

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is all mental: and now—now. But Lady, I shall weep—what more? You know the rest."

* * * * *

Our pedestrians were now at their journey's end; they had left the town, and were in the suburbs of Paris. Several watchmen had cast keen glances on them; but even surrounded by a large and rather coarse cloak, Catherine's commanding figure was conspicuous through her disguise; and those who observed her once with suspicion, looked not again.

At length they turned into a lonely lane; a few leafless trees grew on either side; the last lone leaf had shivered in the gale, and the trunks stood conspicuously towering in the coldness of the night. Loretta knocked at an arched door which projected from a building of great antiquity. The frowning wings towered high, and little attention had been given to display any beauty of architecture in the ill-shapen mass of red bricks. The door was opened by a dark-complexioned servant, attired in a gorgeously

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gay livery; tassels of silver-gilt descended from his shoulders, his shoes were pointed and ornamented with huge silver buckles, whilst his dark curling hair surrounded a face on which shrewd cunning was engraven on every line. Loretta now drew back at a respectful distance from her Royal mistress, and the servant bowing very low, took up a silver lamp, and Catherine followed him up a large staircase covered with crimson cloth. Silver lamps were burning at equal distances, and cast a beautiful reflection on the crimson-covered steps. Catherine paused when she reached a small ante-room on the second landing. This chamber was fitted up with particular care, and on a large table were ranged every article then in use for a lady's toilette: costly perfumes, cosmetics, rare smelling soaps; all were disposed with precision.

Loretta drew near and disrobed her Royal mistress; the coarse cloak was thrown aside, and Catherine looked again the all-beautiful

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Queen. She wore a crimson velvet dress, the stomacher of which was splendidly covered with diamonds; her arms were surrounded with the same costly jewels, and Loretta, drawing a casket from her pocket, proceeded to place a tiara of large diamonds amidst her rich and flowing hair. She did not follow her royal mistress, but remained in the ante-room. She summoned the attendant, who was waiting outside, and Catherine, casting one more look at the mirror, followed the servant with slow and majestic steps.

At length she reached a splendid apartment, and the blaze of a candelabra reflected its many lights on her splendid costume, whilst her beautifully clear complexion and liquid Italian eyes, were perfectly dazzling in their midnight splendour. A very keen observer might have detected a slight quivering of the parted lips, and a scarcely visible pallidness on the brow; but the firm voice in which she greeted Andréa Pettura, would have bid conjecture cease, if

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the observer wished to know Catherine's feelings.

Andréa Pettura, was certainly both in appearance and manners, calculated to follow the stern and dark path in which he trod. His figure was very tall and majestic; his dark complexion, his raven and glossy hair, and the not-to-be-mistaken liquid eye, proclaimed his Italian birth. He might have numbered fifty years, but at the age of thirty he could not have been more strikingly handsome. His fine figure was partly concealed in the folds of a flowing cloak, which descended to the ground. He was entirely clad in black.

Besides the large candelabra, several wax lights in silver sconces threw their rays over the richly-tapestried room. The walls represented the Siege of Troy, the heroes were riding in their splendid cars, and the beautiful Helen appeared in the back-ground, as if animating them to the action.

It appeared that Catherine wished her beauty to be felt even by one whose profession seemed

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to say he was above human desire and vanities; or what prompted her splendid toilette? Perhaps the early seeds of vanity, which had taken so deep a root in her nature, that no time, place or design, could bury its never slumbering voice. She begged Andrea would not stand; and those strikingly handsome beings sat together in the midnight hour, their thoughts searching into futurity, grasping as it were beyond the reach of time; whilst death, by one sure shaft might strike with cold mortality those glowing frames.

"Must I still continue so cautiously my course?" said Catherine, in her well-toned voice. "My Lord of Lorraine hardly thinks me zealous enough!"

"The Lord of Lorraine holds not nightly communion with the stars; he may speak as a Churchman, but not as a prophet."

"True, very true!" said Catherine; "then I am right, quite right; and my hand is not erring in grasping a heretic in friendly pressure.

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Could I only see a picture of the future, I should be passing happy."

"How would you show your gratitude?" said the Doctor, with a smile of power round his lips.

"Oh! ask me not;" exclaimed Catherine with unfeigned delight. "Oh! ask it not; or rather, tell me how I can be grateful?"

"You shall know before you quit this house!" replied the Astrologer. "Now follow me, and question not my power. Queen-Mother of France, utter not one syllable; for when you do, the scene will vanish."

Catherine turned slightly pale; for although she had frequently consulted the Doctor, she had never witnessed any scene, portraying the future.

Pettura now placed his finger on a bolt, and a small door flew open. The Queen endeavoured to steady her faltering steps and she soon found herself in a spacious apartment hung with black.

A large table was placed at the furthest end of the room, also covered with black. One

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single dim lamp illuminated the scene, and Pettura advancing towards it, placed his long finger on his lips to intimate silence, and then extinguished the light.

Catherine turned deadly pale; a faintness stole over her heart; she gasped for breath, but she suppressed the scream which hovered round her lips. The Astrologer now muttered words in a strange language and appeared to be on his knees, for suddenly he rose, and the rustling of his thick silk cloak was the only sound which disturbed his orations. Catherine's earnest gaze endeavoured to pierce the gloom of the chamber, and at length the dim lamp shone again, and a mirror, extending the whole length of the room, was seen at the back of the table. The Astrologer was looking intently at it, and pointing his finger to the top, he beckoned to Catherine, who, approaching with trembling steps, read in distinct characters, these words:—

"*The year* 1572; *Massacre of the Huguenots.*"

A smile of triumph played round Catherine's

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pale face: suddenly the mirror became covered with figures as large as life; the Queen gazed earnestly. Coligny was lying on the ground weltering in his blood; her son was holding a levelled gun, and his aim reached a party of flying Huguenots. Further in the distance, she, the all-powerful Médicis, saw her own commanding figure. The King of Narvarre, on bended knee, was kissing the cross, and his son, the Prince de Béarn, was playfully parting the flowing curls from Margaret de Valois' brow.

Every wish of Catherine's heart there was realized. She could not control her joy; she uttered one sound, and the picture vanished.

Leaving the lugubre scene, she again sat in the beautifully tapestried chamber; her hand was clasped in the Astrologer's, not by a coquettish movement, but to express the joy of her heart. Her large eyes, flushed with pleasure, were fixed with earnest gratitude on his; her lovely face was tinged with that rich glow which excitement brings to the cheek. In all the regal pomp

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of a Court, never had Catherine looked so beautiful.

Pettura poured some wine from a silver flask —for a moment Catherine hesitated; might not the goblet be filled with some mystic beverage? The Astrologer read her thoughts, and immediately filled a cup for himself with the same liquor.

Catherine felt ashamed of her distrust, and muttering "I am a Médici, and know not fear," she emptied the goblet at one draught.

"Tell me now," said Catherine, "how can I show my gratitude?"

"I will tell you," replied the Astrologer.

"I have long since informed your Majesty, that I married a young English lady, who died a few weeks after the birth of her only child; that child, now grown up to girlhood's spring, inhabits the same roof where I nightly hold communion with stars and spirits, and search deep, deep in lore. When I pass the sweet girl's chamber, as I journey forth to my lonely

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turret, which her light form has never darkened by her presence, I feel my heart fainting within me, for I am not like the father of that gentle creature, whose soul is pure as the sweet cherubs hovering round her nightly slumbers. Sometimes, my Clementina twines her white arms round my neck; she bids me be gay, she kisses away the dark spot which clouds my brow; she lulls my turbulent spirit to sleep, she reads to me in that soft plaintive voice, which she has acquired from solitude; and, Royal lady, I feel too dark, too—too—I hardly know how to term it—not pure enough to watch over that innocent and lovely creature. She never wanders further than the gardens belonging to our house, for she has no other arm to lean on, save the Astrologer's, whom some revile, some fear, but towards whom all look up with awe. Must that young creature's life fade in this solitary abode..must age creep upon her, and her green spring give place to keen winter, without the gradual medium of

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the autumn of life. When spring has passed, summer has bloomed its last joyous tints; pleasures, joys, the pride of the eye, and the lust of life, are not so keenly felt; then autumn comes as a warning voice, as a beneficent hand, marshalling us to our cold wintry days; but here, in this solitary spot, away from all the world, my child's life will fleet, and she will walk towards the tomb. Spring, summer, autumn and winter, all merging into one chaos—all going together, into Eternity."

"Enough, enough," said Catherine, waving her jewelled hand majestically; "my curiosity, my interest, and my gratitude, are awakened: lead the way, my impatient steps are longing to follow your path; come, where is your daughter—I will show her life."

"Stay," said Pettura, the feelings of a parent overbalancing the pleasure his pride caused him to conceal; "stay, Queen Catherine de Médicis, I have a few words to say. My daughter is not of noble birth; no regal blood

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flows in her veins; but she has been tenderly nursed, well-educated, brought up in retirement; still princely elegance surrounds her, and she will not be treated as a menial in your Court, will she, lady?"

"Most certainly not," replied Catherine; "I pledge my queenly word."

The Astrologer bowed his graceful figure, and kissed that Royal hand which was graciously extended to him; then taking up a silver lamp, he marshalled the way, the Queen telling him to wave all ceremony, and she would follow him.

Passing several rooms, Pettura at length paused before a large door, from whence a sweet and melodious voice was heard singing to the accompaniment of a well-toned lyre.

"Your daughter keeps late hours?" said the Queen, inquiringly.

"I bid her good night at the hour of twelve, and although I have passed the time, she would

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not retire without my blessing and parting kiss," replied Pettura.

"Let us listen to the song," said Catherine, pausing at the threshold of the door.

THE ASTROLOGER'S DAUGHTER'S SONG.

"They tell me that the world is fair,
Whilst all to me is dark;
Oh, would my steps but linger'd where
Bright is the joyous spark.
I'm weary of my own lone heart—
I'm weary of my life;
And would that I could bear a part
In the world's joy or strife.

"They tell me that the world is fair,
That beauty, grace and wit—
All that is bright—still lingers there,
Whilst here alone I sit.
Oh, must my life fleet as a dream,
Without one ray of light?
And must I never one spark glean
Of all that world so bright?

"Like some lone bird, without a mate,
From morn to morn I sing;
And then I bow me to my fate,
A drear and lonely thing!

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"Oh, for one glimmer of sunshine,
One ray to cheer my path;
One hour of mirth I could call mine,
But once to hear me laugh!

"Still, still, my heart; be still, be still,
And waft thee to thy rest;
Perchance, life's dream might bring thee ill,
And solitude is best.
But oh, for once at least to fly,
Where voices laugh and greet;
And then to turn me back and die,
When joy no more I meet!"

The words of that song spoke forcibly of the dreariness which reigned within the young girl's breast. Catherine lingered even when the last notes had died away, for she too was dreaming of life—not, like Clementina, of its rays of sunshine, but of its storms and tempests.

"Poor caged bird!" thought Catherine, "waft thee," as the song says, to thy rest. Oh, life is a delusive dream, and not all kind the hand which leads thee forth to dare its ocean of strife, its seas of jealousy, its malice, its wretchedness. At length Catherine started from her

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reverie, and, unable to speak, she pointed to the door; Pettura opened it without delay.

Clementina threw aside the lyre upon which her fingers were still straying, and was on the point of throwing her arms round her father's neck, but encountering the earnest gaze of Catherine de Médicis, she drew away with considerable bashfulness, whilst her fair brow was suffused with the richest and purest tide.

"So, pretty one, thou art tired of thy solitude, and art

'Like some lone bird, without a mate.'

I will show thee life if thou wilt; but thinkest thou it is all bright, and smiling, and joyous?"

"I fain would judge for myself, lady. Look at those heaps of books; I glean my information from them; and when I read a page on which sorrow has stamped its tale, I turn to another, where the heart is exuberant in its native joyousness—oh, lady, I fain would see the world."

The young girl had blushed deeper and

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deeper, although her voice was firm, and her words spoke of a high-souled spirit, willing to launch in all boldness in the midst of the strife of life.

"Well, thou art too fair a blossom to wither in solitude," said Catherine, half aloud; "and," she added, raising her queenly voice, "would'st thou like to dwell in the Courts of princes, suck the honey of flattery from courtiers' lips, drink the chalice of pleasure's delights? Poor timorous bird! art thou not better in thy elegant solitude?" here Catherine cast a keen glance round the most beautifully furnished apartment, thinking at the same time she had never seen so perfect, so animated, so graceful a being.

There was a moment's pause; but at length Clementina said, with less pleasure in her expressive countenance, "I do very, very much, wish to see the world; but, *is* it, oh, tell me truly, *is* it wicked?"

Catherine felt the warm blood rushing to her

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cheeks; she remembered that, in every sense of the word, she lived in *the world* in the midst of its vanities, its gaieties, its folly; and, as a mother advocates the cause of her child, so she now fostered the delusive belief in that innocent girl's mind, that life was not wicked, not even in a palace, where the proud and vindictive, but beautiful and all-engrossing, Médicis reigned.

"The sweetest goblet of rarest wine, if analyzed, is composed of ingredients not all equally palatable," said the crafty Catherine; "and those who drain the chalice of delight, must not be faint-hearted, if they encounter a bitter taste as they draw deeper from the fountain of pleasure. Lizards and snakes will crawl amidst the most lovely gardens in creation; and if the gardener forsake the gay flowers which require attention, it is his own fault if the fear of a sting he may never feel hinder him from paying the necessary attention to the boasted pride of his gay parterre. Young girl, if you

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wish to see life, you must weather its storms as well as bask in its sunshine. Look to me as the anchor ready to steer thee when thou art in peril: look up with confidence, unawed by gratitude, to 'Catherine de Médicis, the Queen-Mother of France.'"

The young girl bowed her beautiful figure, and kissing her Royal protector's hand, a shower of sunny ringlets fell over it, and the Queen passed her fingers through them, exclaiming, involuntarily — "How beautiful." Clementina was a most lovely creature; and as she stood there, in the midnight-hour, so young, so beautiful, so graceful, with the blush of youth, health, and excitement upon her cheek, the mind instantly compared her to the "pink, pink rose," waving its head in the summer sunshine. The native elegance of a high mind shone on the elegant figure, which was so tastefully and richly attired, that Catherine de Médicis might have thought the Astrologer had prepared his lovely daughter for the

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interview, were it not for the artless and unfeigned surprise which stole over the young girl's countenance, as she bowed low and reverentially, when the haughty De Médicis had introduced herself. Her neck and arms were encircled with the most costly ornaments; her robe of pale-blue silk floated round her figure, and the open bodice showed a white satin inner dress, which sat close to the body, and displayed to advantage her slight, but well-formed bust, leaving the throat bare, which was of dazzling whiteness. Inheriting her English mother's fair beauty, Clementina had also that deep expressive tone of eye, which shone so conspicuously in the handsome countenance of the astrologer; her eyes were of the purest shade of blue, surrounded by lashes of a fringy length, of the same golden colour as her hair, which fell, without the restraint of comb or riband, in rich ringlets around her face.

Catherine continued gazing at the fair young creature, lost in a dream of admiration and

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amaze. Her own queenly beauty and high-bearing, equally lovely, though very different to the young girl's, brought this comparison to the Astrologer's mind—"The young tree of the forest growing at the stem of the oak, looking up to its towering branches for shelter and support."

"Go thee now to thy slumbers, and may gentle dreams of life haunt thy pillow, young maiden." So saying, Catherine extended her hand to Clementina, who, kissing it again with fervour and gratitude, stole a glance of deep pleasure towards her father. She paused, but the next moment, unheedful of the Queen's presence, she rushed into his arms, and exclaimed, "Oh, father! what a happy, happy night."

The Astrologer clasped his lovely child to his heart; he encircled her with his long and powerful arms, and his rich black cloak falling round the slight blue drapery, left only to the

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gaze that beautiful head, round which hung long and spiral-like ringlets. A few minutes longer, and Clementina had sought her pillow. Soft dreams lulled her to repose—sweet voices hovered round her slumbers; and pillowing her head on that soft couch, she dreamed of happiness, of joy, and of the world!

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CHAPTER IV.

THE Protestants were now enjoying greater liberty than they had hitherto done. A calm hung over the horizon of their destiny; and although many foresaw that a deadly storm would, sooner or later, disturb the apparently serene surface of the heavens, still we all live in the expectation of a storm; and the Protestants—or Huguenots as they were called at that period—made hay whilst the sun shone on their fields.

Perhaps some of my readers do not know the origin of the word Huguenot. According to

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some writers, the appellation was given to the Reformers from a German word, which signifies "bound by an oath." But l'Abbé Garnier says the word is derived from a gate called "Hugon," which tradition reported to have been erected in the reign of Charlemagne, and further adds, that the Reformers assembled themselves nightly before this gate. The Court was journeying towards the town, and struck by its name, they invented the appellation *Huganon*, or *Huguenots*, and from that time it was in general use.

The Queen-Mother of France had chosen for her most political method of government, "*That to reign well, there must always exist a division.*" Catherine believed that it was better to let the Protestants and Papists stand upon a distinct footing, as long as they were on neutral ground. Both parties were at secret enmity, but so carefully disguised, that foes and friends met together in friendly grasp, hardly knowing whether the pressure were false or real.

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An edict was now published, granting liberty of conscience to the Reformers, on condition that they should meet in the suburbs of the town, but not in the town itself.

The crafty Queen was now enabled to judge exactly how strong the number of the Huguenots really was, for many persons threw off the mask, and joined the Reformers' band. The convents and cathedrals were deserted, and the Papists were as much insulted and neglected as the Huguenots had formerly been. The fickle populace are ever fond of change, but the French are generally allowed to be most particularly so. Although the Huguenots had obtained their long wished for liberty of conscience, a storm was at hand, ready to break forth in all its pent-up fury.

The King of Navarre was now at Court, summoned thither by Catherine, who was not, in fact, the only Regent of the kingdom during the French King's minority. The King of Navarre had the principal command of the

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kingdom. This Prince was very different to the high-minded but crafty Catherine. His character was weak and wavering; now he leant on one side, now on the other. His redeeming points, however, were great bravery, and kindness of disposition. Historians, speaking of this Prince, exclaim—"He only deserves to be placed on the pages of history for being the father of the great Henri Quatre."

The King of Navarre mistrusted Catherine's protestations of friendship; and when her Majesty, one evening, warmly pressed him to bring his wife and the Prince de Béarn to Court, the King had great difficulty in concealing the peculiar expression which stole over his features, seeming as it were to say, "What new plot is in store?"

Jeanne d'Albret, Queen of Navarre, openly professed the Protestant faith; and historians say of her, "That she was as zealous in her Protestant faith, as the King her husband was wavering in his Romish tenets."

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In the beginning of the young King's reign, Antoine de Bourbon, assisted by the triumvirate, wished to oblige her to attend mass. She answered in the fervent language of fanaticism, "that if she held the whole kingdom, as well as the education of the young Prince her son, at her own free disposal, she would rather throw both into the sea, than attend mass."

Subsequently, when Protestants and Romanists were at open defiance, then Jeanne d'Albret became warmer than many of the other zealous party spirits. She even caused a medal to be struck, with this device :—

"PAS CERTA, VICTORIA INTEGRA, MORS HONESTA."

(CERTAIN PEACE, ENTIRE VICTORY, GLORIOUS DEATH.)

One sunny November morning, a gay cavalcade of chevaliers, attended by a numerous retinue of valets, and other attendants, wended their way through the plains of Vassi en Champagne. There is something peculiarly exhilirating to the spirits in a fine November morning. Towards twelve o'clock, the sun gilds the few

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yellow leaves which still tip the trees, defying the searing hand of autumnal gales. The hoar-frost shines forth its silvery gloss upon the green sward, and the sun illumines each pearly head with the brightness of a gem. The industrious woodman plies his axe, and many a noble tree, such as bold Robin Hood must have extolled, falls, pierced by most mighty strokes.

The cavalcade in question continued their way through picturesque woods, covered with lofty pines. Now, a babbling stream lay at their feet; now, beautiful hills raised their heads; and many a scared hare fled with swift and timorous steps, disturbed by the distant tread of horses' hoofs, on the crisp and frosty path.

"What a charming spot," exclaimed the Duc de Guise, turning to the Cardinal de Lorraine, who rode by his side.

"Charming indeed!" replied the Cardinal; "no wonder your Grace involuntarily admires

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it. A hunter's cot, and a hunter's sport, his free life, and his heart apart from care, methinks might suit your Grace."

"Not at this moment," said the Duke; "I should abandon the chase, fearing each deer was a concealed Reformer. But how mortifying to me is the increasing power of these fanatics."

"And to me also," said the Cardinal. "It is the Queen-Mother's own fault, and Coligny has had his finger in that edict of free toleration."

"Coligny's party may yet sigh over a lost cause," said the Duke, placing his hand furtively on his sword. "What a canting hypocrite he is: the King of Navarre is awed by his shadow; but can the Queen fear him?"

"The Queen, fear!" exclaimed the Cardinal, with a bitter smile. "Go, ask that tree whether it feels any real pain when the axe is at its root; ask the sun if it will obey your word—the moon, if she will shine at your bidding,

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and the stars, if they are ruled by your voice; but never think, Catherine de Médicis knows the meaning of the word 'fear.'"

"Well, then, perhaps, it were better if the Queen did fear," said the Duke. "When a nation is ruled by a self-willed woman, there is much to apprehend. "You will say, I owe her Majesty gratitude: very true; she took me out of the prison, in which I had languished during Francis the Second's reign, and she restored me to her Courtly favour; but Catherine knows not how to confer an obligation—her proud smile, the haughty gaze of her dark eye, and that rich voice which silences me in the council-room; all remind me that there is such a word as 'obligation.' Methought, when I was in prison, life had lost all interest in my breast; that I could walk through the wide world, without caring for its pleasures or heeding its strife; but what a strange wavering thing is the human heart. I feel, now again, all worldly, all

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covetous, all aspiring, all ambitious. Would you have believed it, holy father?"

"Oh certainly," replied the Cardinal; "man is never able to judge of own feelings; but my son, why so harsh? I, too, am engaged in the strife which is approaching; my hand shall be raised against the Huguenots, and my loudest voice shall annul their edict of free conscience; yet would you call me worldly, covetous, aspiring, and ambitious?"

The Duke did *not* tell the Cardinal he was either; but perhaps he thought he was possessed of all those qualities, and the churchman might probably have taken home the trite old maxim, "Silence gives consent," for he paused, and the two principal persons in the calvacade proceeded on in silence, the merry voices of their followers occasionally reaching the train of their thoughts.

"Hark!" exclaimed one of the squires to his fellow-horsemen. "Didst ever hear such a strange noise?"

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"*Non, par ma foi!*" retorted the person so addressed. "It resembles a hive of bees, settling on a myrtle tree, driven from their home by some hostile party."

"In truth, then," said the first speaker, "you would have your bees possessed of strong lungs. A hive of bees, indeed! say rather a hive of Huguenots, holding a discourse—feeding on the honey of their own heretical principles. Now will I hie to the Lord of Lorraine, and tell him what I hear."

But the party now approached a lonely grange, and the Cardinal, as well as the Duke, were perfectly aware of the fact, that they had fallen upon a party of Huguenots, holding one of their meetings. The Duc de Guise had partaken that morning more freely than usual of the juice of the vine; and, drawing his sword, he advanced rapidly towards the place of meeting, exclaiming, "*Mort aux Huguenots.*"

"*Mort aux Huguenots,*" reiterated the whole calvacade, drawing their swords, in imitation

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of their master. In the midst of the cry, Lorraine raised his loud and clear voice; he waved his hand, and there was an instantaneous silence.

"Countrymen, desist," said the churchman; "the time is not yet ripe for your vengeance to fall. You know not even the strength of your opponents; you have not the Queen-Mother's orders to draw the sword."

"You can give it us," exclaimed many voices.

"But I will not do it," said Lorraine, as the image of the incensed Médicis crossed his mind. "Not only do I refuse to give my sanction to this fight, but I instantly order my own followers to abide by my will. My Lord de Guise, you are free agent of your actions, my servants are not. *A moi les miens!*" So saying, he bowed to the Duc de Guise, and retraced his steps, leaving the latter as infuriated as he was astonished.

"Base, crafty churchman; crafty as the Mé-

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dicis he serves," muttered the Duke, between his closed teeth.

"*Mort aux Huguenots* is still my cry, and uttering it would I enter the portals of death. *A moi les miens les Guises, et les Catholiques!*" So saying, the Duke rushed into the grange.

Now began the terrible massacre, known in history as the "Massacre de Vassi." The door was burst open, and then what a sight met the eyes of men, thirsting for blood—Christians kneeling before the throne of Grace, with uplifted eyes, and clasped hands, all eagerly directing their gaze towards life eternal, whilst pale death, as a lurking enemy, was at their door. Trembling thus between life and death, the aged preacher was standing on the temporary pulpit which had been erected for him; the winter-wind, eddying through the open door, whirled about the silvery locks which had weathered many long years of life. The Duke's fury was abated; he now saw all the rashness of which he had been guilty, and summoned his

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followers to his side. But the Reformers were also armed, and had now drawn their swords: their preacher called to them, the Duke shouted to his own; alas! it was too late—the deadly struggle had begun. The Huguenots appeared ready to take advantage of the insult they had received; they dealt their blows without mercy: the grange, lately the scene of prayer, was now strewn with the dead and the dying. The followers of the Duke fled in all directions; the Huguenots pursued them. The Duke himself was stunned by a blow he received from a heavy stone; and he lay neglected and fainting, amidst a heap of slain.

The shades of evening cast their shadows on the bloody scene; the moon's pale light tipped with a silvery tint the beautiful pines of the forest; her shadowy rays danced fantastically on the mimic rivulets; every bird of the air had sought its mate, each and every animated occupier of the forest was still; the deer had found its haunt, and the wood-pigeon its roost; but

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the Duc de Guise still lay partly stunned amidst the heap of slain.

Suddenly, he felt himself lifted up with a powerful grasp; a goblet of wine was held to his lips, and his brow was chafed with refreshing water. He opened his eyes, and exclaimed in a faint, but audible voice—"Oh, those cursed Huguenots, they have nearly killed me; but, when I recover, they shall feel all the power of a Guise. Are you a Protestant?" he cried to his preserver.

"I am."

"Well, then, help me to rise, and give me my sword, we shall fight, and he who falls shall go to the spirits of the defeated side, and tell them to weave no more spells around their followers."

"Think you, youth knows not its strength, that you would have me take advantage of a wounded and old man? No, as I have before said, I will give you no wine; but I remember that our religion bids us assist our enemies, and

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all, save holding the goblet to your lips, I will do to save you."

"Who are you, generous youth?"

"My name is Poltrot de Méré."

"That name is French; you are then a French Protestant?"

"No, I am not; I am English by birth," replied the young man proudly; "but I inherit a French estate, and bear a French name. Come, you will grow faint again; we will tarry no longer; I will assist you now, my Lord Duke: but remember, when you are once again in Paris, we are mortal enemies!"

The Duke could not reply, for he had received a severe blow, and he felt very faint again.

Poltrot de Méré took him to a well-furnished house, and summoned medical aid; then, not waiting to be thanked, he left the Duke without giving him any parting salute.

"A good and generous youth," exclaimed the Duke, when he awoke from the deep slum-

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ber into which he had fallen, after taking the composing draught his medical adviser had thought fit to administer. "A good and generous youth; and if I meet him in peace or war, I must e'en show him the gratitude of a Guise."

A few days more, and the Duke returned to Paris. There the story of the Massacre of Vassi had spread, with due attention to the marvellous exaggeration ever given to such tales. Some parties raised their voices in eulogisms of the Duke; preachers on one side extolled his virtues in the pulpit, and lauded his character. They compared him to Moses—saying, "He also spilled the blood of unbelievers — had rendered the deed holy, and avenged the wrongs of the Lord." Others called the Duke a wicked murderer, an enemy of the State, an unworthy tyrant. So much for party feeling.

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CHAPTER V.

THE Court was very turbulent at the time when the lovely Clementina made her first *dèbût.* The Queen-Mother loaded her with presents, and seemed to take a particular delight in showering kindnesses on her *protégée,* thinking she thereby showed her gratitude to Pettura, for in the darkness of her bigotry Catherine almost fancied the crafty man could survey her actions even when he was not apparently present.

The Court had withdrawn to Fontainbleau, but the King of Navarre and the triumvirate with

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whom he was colleagued thought it necessary the King should be seen in the capital. The Queen-Mother had long sought an opportunity to throw off the King of Navarre's power, and his attempt to have the control of the French King gave a pretext to her motives; she now called the Prince de Condé to her aid, and a civil war broke out.

The Prince de Condé had watched the King of Navarre's power, and had long been desirous of showing his discontent: he knew the Médici's deep policy; he was well aware that her hatred to the Huguenot party, of which he was the head, would, sooner or later, break the bond of union which apparently existed between them; but he was sensible that Catherine's call upon him would colour his rebellion against the triumvirate.

Condé assembled a large army, for the Reformers flocked most willingly to his standard, and he was unanimously declared their chief supporter. His first step was to take

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Orleans, where he took up his quarters. When Condé had established his power, he issued a proclamation, declaring his readiness to lay down arms, provided the triumvirate would leave the Court. He declared his high indignation of the treatment the Huguenots had received. He said it was dreadful to contemplate the murderous havoc which the Protestants had sustained. "It is not inanimate marble statues you are killing," he continued, "but living images of God."

All these negotiations availed nothing; but as Condé was too weak to oppose the Royalists, he delivered up Havre to the British Queen, in order to purchase her assistance. It is very dreadful to contemplate the consequences of civil war—not one nation marching in a body to defend themselves from the encroaching power or flagrant ambition of a hostile foe; not linked heart to heart, brother to brother, but fighting in the same country, banishing ties of kindred from the breast: this is a civil war!

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Condé now fought against his own brother, whom he had vainly persuaded to leave the Court, and forsake the triumvirate. On the other hand, the Guises raised their powerful voice: they placed Antoine de Bourbon at their head; and this cruel and vindictive man is known in history as the Huguenots' most dreadful enemy.

Catherine, the crafty Catherine, smothered her indignation; but her heart was full of wrath. True, she wished to exterminate the Huguenots, but it was her hand which would fain strike the blow; it was her voice she wished to hear giving the word of command—to slaughter, to slay, to torture. "Ah well," she exclaimed, pacing up and down the large room, as was her wont when she was angry; "Ah well, they shall have their own way; and yet my son shall not be seen at the head of either party. The Guises hate me, but not more than Condé; they all pretend to fight for my son's rights, but they are, in fact,

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avenging their own quarrels. Well, well, thus goes the world—both sides overreaching each other; but I stand as a neutral arm between Condés and Guises; and clever must be that hand which is more sure in its aim, and deep must be the heart more clear-sighted than Catherine de Médici's."

It was in the dusk of the evening, that Catherine held this soliloquy. She was, as before described, pacing up and down the apartment, when her foot suddenly slipped, for she had fallen against a ball, her son the young King had left there. Those who have never sprained their ankle may doubt the agony of the shock, but those who have, will not wonder that Catherine uttered a cry of pain; the cry was not loud, but the Queen's voice was clear and distinct. Loretta's ears were ever open to the smallest sound, and she now rushed into the apartment, first providing herself with a light. She was greatly astonished to find her Royal mistress on the ground, evidently in great pain.

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She lost no time in raising her; the Queen was taken to her own apartments, the sprained limb duly bandaged; and then Catherine declared her intention of retiring to bed—first ordering her attendants to leave her alone with Loretta.

"This is very provoking," exclaimed Catherine, as soon as her handmaidens had retired. "I fully intended visiting the Maestro this evening. He can always calm my mind, and lighten the burden of reigning by his timely advice. I have much to consult him upon, and many weary days may pass, before this sprain is cured."

"Could not your Majesty ride to-morrow night?" said Loretta.

"How, now, girl!" exclaimed the Queen, writhing with mixed pain and anger; "think you, then, slight agony would compel Catherine de Médici to cry out, and lie her down? This sprain will bring on fever; even now the spot of pain glows warmly on my cheek; be-

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sides, Pettura does not wish that any equipage should be seen near his door, mine especially; it would draw down the vengeance of the Guises."

"Forgive me for giving you pain," said Loretta; "your Majesty knows my wish is but to serve; can I take a letter to the Maestro?"

"No, no, no," exclaimed the Queen-Mother, with all her wonted pride; "no, no, the Maestro is haughty, and I would not send him one of my maidens."

"Is he, then, so proud?" said Loretta, coldly and satirically; "that is the reason, then, that his pretty daughter knows so well how to toss her head, whilst the ringlets fall about like the drops from a rose-bush after a storm. I but offered the young lady a little advice, knowing the world, and seeing her placed in a Court so full of chevaliers. Oh, if your Majesty had seen the tragedy-look she gave me, far more haughty than the Princess de France will ever be; the high tone in which she exclaimed—

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"Clementina Pettura, heeds not the voice of a waiting-woman!"

"Did she say so?" said Catherine, rather amused at the idea of the proud Loretta having a little rebuke, and secretly pleased to think her *protégée* had some part of the hauteur which flowed so naturally in her own veins.

After a pause, during which time Loretta's eye flashed quickly, whilst her bosom swelled with wounded pride, the Queen-Mother had sunk into a reverie; and at length, rousing herself, she bade Loretta summon the young Clementina to her presence.

The pretty maiden lost no time in obeying the call, and bounded into the room with all the willingness of youth, ready to show how much it was her wish to serve her Royal mistress.

"Are you ill?" said the young girl, bending with solicitude over the couch.

"Did not Loretta tell you I had sprained my ankle?"

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"I did not speak to Mademoiselle Clementina," replied Loretta; "she does not like to hear my voice."

"Oh, Loretta!" said Clementina, with ardour, "do not speak thus; I only silenced you once, and that was when you alarmed me by talking of evils which, methinks, will blow past me, without even fanning my brow."

"You were quite right," exclaimed the Queen, patting the young girl's glowing cheek. "What, fear life at sixteen? No, surely not. Age alone will bring thoughts of care, and youth's sunny hours fly with too swift wings to borrow the plumes of wisdom and experience; so, Loretta, no more of thy sage wisdom: I will myself bring up Clementina in the paths of resolution, courage, and fortitude. Wilt take a message from me to thy father, pretty one?"

"Oh yes, your Majesty, with all pleasure and speed."

"Well, hie thee away, and equip thyself for

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thy walk; meanwhile, I will write the letter. Loretta will be ready to accompany thee."

The young girl tripped lightly out of the room, pleased, beyond measure, at being able to show her alacrity in serving the Queen. The world was all new to Clementina, and those who were kind to her found at once the passport to her heart. Catherine could sometimes bow her haughty spirit to the purest friendship, and she had hitherto been unexceptionably kind to her young *protégée*. Then the young girl invested the Queen with virtues she did not possess; she admired her chivalric courage, her skill in managing the Court; her beauty, her wit, and all her grace, made an indelible impression on a young heart alive to kindness and sensibility, fond of all that was graceful and beautiful in nature.

When Clementina returned, all equipped for her walk, the Queen-Mother had finished her epistle. "Come here," said she to the young girl; "ah, thou hast the never-dying

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vanity of thy sex; see how dexterously every ringlet is disposed so as to heighten thy beauty. Not so, not so; there, now I have coifed thee; 'tis well enough for this occasion; draw down thy veil, and should any chevalier from the regiment look at thee too boldly, heed him not, but go thy way. Now seek Loretta, and place the answer to my note under my pillow; this calming potion will make me sleep, and thou need'st not wake me on thy return."

Clementina sought Loretta, and as she approached her room, she heard the maid soliloquizing, thus:—"I was not born to wait upon the Astrologer's daughter, and will keep her waiting my pleasure, ere I go out at night to accompany her."

Clementina blushed with anger, and the wounded pride of an only child, brought up in the pomp of Italian luxury, caused her voice to tremble, as she exclaimed, "Loretta, make all speed; I am waiting."

"The moon shines brightly, and a few

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minutes can make no difference," said Loretta, sullenly.

"It makes much difference, when I would speed me to serve her Majesty," continued the young girl; "and if thou wilt not make haste, I will hie me away by myself."

Loretta concealed a faint laugh.

"I hear thee laugh," cried the young Italian beauty; "well, nowI go, and thou shalt answer to the Queen for this."

Before Loretta had time to reply, Clementina was already in the open air; and her light footsteps trod the crisp and frosty ground.

The young girl had not one care to vex her heart; she had lost her mother, before reason had dawned to make her feel her bereavement; love had not tormented her with its delusive hope and keen despair; coldness had not reached her. Her darling wish was gratified; she had entered the world all bright and blithe and trusting; no wonder, then, she tripped so lightly, and felt no fear at finding herself alone

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in the moonlight, for she knew not what alarm could assail her. Presently, she heard footsteps behind her, and looking up, she saw a young man advancing rapidly towards her.

"'Tis not a very proper hour for a young maiden to be abroad," exclaimed the chevalier, in a kind, rather than curious tone of voice; "are you compelled to go out so late, or are you enjoying the quiet hour when human beings generally court in-doors recreation?"

"You are very curious, methinks," said the young maiden, endeavouring to conceal her alarm under feigned lightness; "what, if I answer not your questions, but bid you go on your way, and leave me alone."

"Then I must obey you," replied the chevalier, gallantly: "for woman's voice is law, more particularly when the words are so arbitrarily uttered; yet pardon me, if I say you are too young, to walk thus unattended."

"And why so? youth be then be my protection;" so saying, the maiden rushed past the

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chevalier, turned into an alley, and was soon out of sight.

The chevalier was taken by surprise: at first he merely laughed at the end of his night's gallantry; but presently, the image of that fair young face, the recollection of the graceful form, flashed before his memory; and he turned down the same road the maiden had taken, hoping to be able to trace her footsteps, and ascertain the cause of her lonely wandering. Meanwhile, poor Clementina had met with another, and a far worse adventure; she encountered an elderly gentleman, who was enveloped in a large military cloak.

"*Qui vive!*" he exclaimed, as Clementina was passing a gate.

"*Seulemont une jeune demoiselle!*" replied the maiden, with simplicity.

"Ha! ha! ha!" cried the Duc de Guise, for it was him; "ha! ha! ha! let me see if it be true." He advanced towards Clementina, and drew aside her veil. The moon shone brightly upon

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her fair and pale face; and the curls which the Queen-Mother had brushed aside, now fell back in their place, and crowded round her brow.

"Ah! there is the object of thy nightly excursion," exclaimed the Duke, endeavouring to take possession of a note, which Clementina held in her clasped hand.

"Give me thy billet-doux, pretty maiden."

"Ah, no, no," exclaimed Clementina, in a voice of agony; "anything, rather than that; the note is not mine—nay, you shall not have it!" The Duke endeavoured to take it by force, for his suspicions were awakened; the poor girl resisted as long as she was able; then fell to the ground, uttering a loud and piercing cry. Suddenly she felt herself lifted up with care, and looking up, she saw the young chevalier, who had met her at the beginning of her expedition. There was something reassuring in the kindly expression with which he regarded her, and forgetting all

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timidity, all, save the fright and agony of the moment, she clung to him, exclaiming, "Oh! protect me, protect me. I have been insulted, and, oh God, what will become of me? I have lost my billet."

"Was it then of such importance," exclaimed the chevalier, struck with pity at the maiden's unfeigned distress.

"Oh, yes," continued Clementina, her brain reeling with terror—"it was from the Queen-Mother of France, to my father."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the chevalier, "and it has fallen into the hands of the Duc de Guise; poor maiden! thou hast but one fate —thou must fly."

"Never, oh never," exclaimed Clementina, the colour for a moment returning to her brow; "oh, never; I will fall at Catherine's feet—I will tell her my adventure. See! see! here is the attendant the Queen intended should accompany me."

"Oh, forgive me, forgive me," exclaimed

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Loretta, in breathless haste. "Why did you turn from the straight path? I should have found you long, ere this. Good heavens! how pale you are; has any one insulted you? Who is this chevalier?

"Patience, Loretta," replied the poor girl, with a sickly smile; "I cannot answer all your questions at once."

Then she related, in a tremulous whisper, her sad and dismal adventure, with all its prognostic fears.

When she finished speaking, Loretta turned as pale as the speaker herself, and leaned against the rails for support. At length she said, in a trembling voice:—

"Was the letter addressed to the Maestro?"

"There was no direction at all."

"And was it signed?"

"Do you suppose I opened it to look?" exclaimed Clementina, indignantly.

"Well, pardon me, lady, I hardly know what I say," replied poor Loretta; but she

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added, after a pause, "I do not believe the Queen would sign her note; and you say it was not directed? On, on, then, to Signor Pettura; on, on, with all speed, and he will find some means of assisting you."

"Forgive my listening to your conversation," said the chevalier, advancing towards Clementina, and kindly taking her hand.

"Do not apologize; I have much to thank you for," replied the young girl, returning the kindly pressure.

"Oh, no, no, no; I frightened you at first," cried the young man, "and you turned in a lonely alley, and encountered your sad adventure; but if such a thing is to be had as vengeance, you shall receive it in part *now*, and you shall hear again of Poltrot de Méré."

"He will overtake the Duke yet," exclaimed Loretta, as she watched the chevalier's receding form. "Poltrot de Méré! I know the name well; his sister used to be much about the Court, but she is a zealous Huguenot, and her

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brother has sent her to England; he is a handsome and noble chevalier, and now we will hope, and continue our way."

But, alas! the words had hardly passed the Italian girl's lips, when a body of armed soldiers advanced, and presently the Duke of Guise rode up to the party, and exclaimed—"These are your prisoners."

Resistance was very vain; the fair Clementina was placed on a horse, and the Duke rode by her side, whilst Loretta followed amidst the soldiery. Once or twice she cast her furtive glance down the silent streets, intending to call for assistance, but it was nearly midnight; all was as silent as the grave, and the sound of the horses' hoofs alone disturbed the unbroken silence which reigned through the whole party, as they rapidly left Paris and approached the suburbs, where the Duke alighted before a spacious house, surrounded by military men; and gallantly assisting Clementina to alight, he held out his arm to assist her up the steps of the mansion.

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Clementina refused to lean upon him, although her trembling steps faltered, and she was unable to decline his offer save by an inclination of the head.

"I will not harm you," whispered the Duke; "answer me only a few questions, and you shall return unmolested to the French Court."

"I will never betray a secret," replied Clementina; "but, fortunately, I know none. You have taken away my note, and that alone can speak what I truly know not."

"But that dark-eyed attendant knows more," said the Duke, and they had now reached a very beautiful apartment. Loretta sprang forward, and assisted poor Clementina to undraw her cloak, for she had fallen on a sofa in a death-like swoon.

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CHAPTER VI.

The astonishment and consternation which seized the Queen-Mother when her emissaries did not return, may be better imagined than described. She would not allow herself to believe any danger or harm had overtaken her pretty *protégée* and her faithful Loretta; but she could not, on the other hand, credit the thought, that they had intentionally lingered. The irritability of her nerves increasing the pain she experienced from her sprain, brought on a severe fever; bulletins were issued, and the Queen-Mother was declared to be in a pre-

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carious state of health. At length, the skill of her physicians triumphed over her illness, and Catherine was enabled to rise from her couch and retire to an adjacent room; here, she was informed by one of her pages, that a gentleman wished to speak to her.

Catherine breathed a prayer that the person might be a messenger, bringing some tidings of poor Clementina, and gave her ready consent to receive her guest.

"Monsieur de Méré," cried the servant-in-waiting, throwing wide the door; and the Queen-Mother cast a scrutinizing glance on the young man.

Poltrot de Méré had a most winning appearance; his figure was tall and commanding, and although very slightly moulded, the fine proportion of every limb indicated a power of muscle which could not be mistaken. His complexion would have been too fair for masculine beauty, were it not relieved by a pair of dark-hazel eyes, and a profusion of clustering

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brown hair, which curled naturally around a high brow, on which sat more thought than is usually seen on youth. Bending gracefully to the Queen, Poltrot expressed his sorrow for her illness, and his unwillingness to intrude, were not his visit of consequence. Catherine ordered her attendants to retire, and asked abruptly if he had any news of her absent maidens? Then Poltrot de Méré related his adventure with the fair Clementina; he blamed himself much, for having accosted her, and declared his willingness to atone even with his life for giving her uneasiness. He added, that a presentiment of evil had led him to seek Pettura, when, to his consternation, he found the young girl had not been seen by her father. The father's deep and unfeigned sorrow; his repentance, at allowing his lovely child to leave his roof, all had pierced Poltrot to the heart; and the agitated father ended by declaring, that should Poltrot deliver her from the Guises, in whose hands she had no doubt fallen, then

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he should receive her hand in marriage. "Now," continued the young man, with a flushed cheek, and daring look of courage, "now will I deliver the maiden, even should my hand seek the Duke's life."

The Queen-Mother waited patiently the *dénouement* of his speech, and looked up when he had finished, with the undisturbed expression of a person who had foreseen the conclusion of the sentence, before the speaker had ended; dissimulation, however, was so inherently linked in the Queen-Mother's disposition, that she merely added in a calm voice, "And pray, young man, why seek you me, to talk of your future plans of revenge?"

Poltrot de Méré raised his large eyes to the Queen-Mother's face; and a blush overspread her features, as he said, as calmly as the question was asked—

"I sought your Majesty because your note has fallen into the hands of the Duke of Guise, and because he is your mortal enemy."

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"True, true; now we understand each other," said the Queen-Mother, feeling Poltrot would not be trifled with; "yet use not my name—do else as you list; where go you now?"

"I will go seek an interview with the Duke," said Poltrot; "he owes me some gratitude, and will not harm me; but for my assistance, he would have perished at the massacre of Vassi. My arm raised him from the blood-stained ground. But I have sworn to be a true knight, and rescue those who are in distress; and the lovely Clementina shall not be detained, if I can help it."

The young man did not wait for an answer—but Catherine's dark eyes spoke volumes; they told her secret pleasure, at finding an agent ripe for revenge; they told more than I care to express; and not one word to check erring youth in its headlong career of unreined passion passed the Queen-Mother's lips, as she saluted Poltrot, when he took his leave.

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The Queen-Mother's health now quickly amended, and she was preparing herself to seek Pettura, when a messenger arrived in breathless haste, and brought the news of the sudden attack upon Rouen. No time was to be lost; the Queen-Mother did not choose that the League should fancy they were fighting at random to avenge political quarrels; she therefore determined to take the King of France to the scene of action, in order to inspire the besieged with new courage, and to remind them, that it was to assert the independence of the King, to deliver him from the triumvirate, that they were fighting.

The Queen-Mother's plan answered her most sanguine expectations. The besieged defended themselves with the greatest ardour and courage; and even women assisted by every means in their power. But very dreadful were the scenes of murder which took place at a siege where political fury and revenge filled every heart—where bigotry on one side, and retali-

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ation for wrongs received on the other, nerved the hand with a dire wish for vengeance, and steeled the heart against remorse. The President of Bosc, a very illustrious man, was murdered, together with a minister, and several gentlemen. On the other hand, the Prince of Condé massacred a clerk of the Council and an abbot!

France was now the scene of domestic horrors of all kinds: alas! for the dreadful ravages of civil war! Strangers took advantage of the troublous times, and German troops poured into the kingdom. The armies came to an engagement at Dreux, and met in combat with all the ferocious feeling which characterises a civil war. Persons of the highest rank perished; amongst others, Marshal Saint-André, and the head of the triumvirate, the King of Narvarre.

The Duke of Guise, nothing daunted, determined to pursue the advantages he had reaped in the conflict, and after the battle of Dreux he marched to the siege of Orleans. Here, how-

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ever, Fate had a sad destiny in store for a great warrior, a keen politician, but a most ambitious man!

The battle of Dreux left a pause whilst the siege of Orleans was planning, and the Duke had now a short leisure.

One morning, he entered a large house in the suburbs of Orleans, and appeared before poor Clementina, who had been compelled to follow the Duke's army. Loretta had been sent back to her Royal mistress, although she generously offered to remain with the Astrologer's daughter; for she considered her pertness had caused her misfortunes.

"Go, go!" cried Clementina, "the Queen is accustomed to your services! Go, and leave me here; fear not, they will not harm me."

Loretta, who was now as warm in her devotion as she had before been cold, would still have resisted, but the Duke left her no choice; perhaps he had reasons for wishing her away, for Loretta was keen and observing. Perhaps

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he really did it out of courtesy to his Royal mistress; but, be this as it may, she returned to tell her disasters, and to listen to Catherine's angry remonstrances, whilst anger was now too late.

"So you really will not tell me, when the Queen meditated my death, and who were your accomplices," said the Duke to Clementina; "now I will relate to you an anecdote, and you can inform me if the party was instigated by the Queen.

"A young man was pointed out to me at the siege of Rouen, as an instrument in the hands of the Protestants, ready to assassinate me. I sent for him, and asked him why he sought my death.

"'I wish to revenge the wrongs offered to my religion,' he replied, 'and you are its greatest enemy.'*

"I answered him: 'If your religion teaches you to murder me, mine tells me to forgive.

* This is an historical fact.

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Go now, and see whose religion is the most efficacious.' "

"But what have I to do with this, my Lord?"

"You can say whether it is the Queen-Mother who instigated the man. But stay; you say you do not even know the contents of the note I took from you. Will you swear it before God and the Holy Virgin?"

Clementina took the oath with fervour; and the Duke, looking at her young countenance, and the expression of truth sparkling in her upraised eyes, felt ashamed at having caused those beautiful lips to take an oath.

The Duke now placed the Queen-Mother's note before her, and she read as follows:—

"Your picture of 1572 is ever before me. Before that period arrives, however, the Roman Catholic party must unite their forces; no massacres in provinces—no private murders—but *the stroke.* My enemies are now distraught, and I see but one road; help me to rid me of

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that powerful branch my own foolish indulgence rescued from prison: one blow, and he who strikes it shall have his reward!"

The young girl read the note rapidly to the end; but she was totally unable to understand its meaning.

"The Queen does not talk of you, my Lord," she said, artlessly.

"No!" exclaimed the Duke, satirically, "it is very well to feign ignorance! you have been at Court for a month—but were it only for a day, you could not have touched the hem of the Queen-Mother's robe without imbibing a portion of her keen dissembling, and very prettily you do your part. Howbeit, you remain here, and are my prisoner, unless your father takes your place. He is your ransom—no gold, no riches so valuable to me! He has the key to the Médicis' heart, and I will break the lock by force, if the key will not unlock it!"

"Indeed, indeed, it is very cruel of you to use me thus," cried poor Clementina; "oh! pray

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believe me when I say I knew not what I was carrying to my father. I have never uttered a falsehood, and will not do it now; you will allow me to return to the Queen? I am very much attached to her."

"How very strange, that youth, frankness, and virtue, should cling to art, deceit, and fraud," muttered the Duke, in a scarcely audible voice; "thus, little rivulets flow on for a while, and then eddying fall into the river, where they are lost amidst the more powerful current. Young girl, it is working a high and holy deed to keep you away from that den of wickedness the Court, where a Médicis sways. Did you but know half of her deeds, how many of my family have been sacrificed to her revenge—did you know that her hand clasps in a suffocating pressure, that her smile is concealed poison, her wit and beauty, pointed daggers—arrows concealed in golden quivers—would you still love the Médicis?"

"Oh! no, no!" exclaimed Clementina, with

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her usual candour; "but tell me not what my heart refuses to believe; let my soul live in the contemplation of virtue, and let the knowledge of vice spread elsewhere her nets."

"Mine are no delusive stories, young lady!" persisted the Duke. "No! I will not shock you by any painful recitals; but my death alone shall place you again in that Queen's power. Heaven bids me protect the innocent; you are too fair, too young, too guileless to be the dupe of a wicked and artful woman, who has already employed you to carry her cursed plots to those who abet her."

The Duke had worked himself to a towering passion; and he left Clementina to her own reflections, whilst he himself sought the retirement of his chamber, and there gave vent to his anger in loud expressions against the Médicis. Ever alive to the power of beauty, he was unwilling that so young and so guileless a being as Clementina should be trained in a school of deceit; and making a sacrifice

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of his own wish of having Pettura in his power, he determined not to offer the father the means of saving his daughter; but resolved to keep her in view. Still, her look of sorrow recurred to his mind—still, the earnest voice in which she sued for liberty; and the Duke henceforth determined to train her young mind to new happiness — to reconcile her to her absence from Court, by surrounding her with every luxury—by making her as free as her safety allowed it—by showing her life in all its splendour, and herself the brightest star of his military circle.

Clementina most unsuspectingly fell into the new and agreeable life marked out for her. Will any wonder at it? will any wonder that youth sucks with delight the nectar from the honied flowers? and even when a noxious taste sometimes is felt, still, still youth flutters on gaily, and sips deeper into the chalice of delight, until no more sweets can be extracted. Amongst the valiant chevaliers who composed

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the suite of the Duc de Guise, and shared the splendour and amusements of his camp, none was more assiduous in his endeavours to captivate the Astrologer's lovely daughter than Henri, the Duke's eldest son. He cantered by her side, when she sat on her jennet; he sympathized with her when she was dull; he laughed with her in her hours of mirth, until he incurred his father's displeasure, by falling deeply in love with the young girl. Light-hearted and gay as the young chevalier was, he dare not make light professions to Clementina. A soft dignity sat on her beautiful brow; a look of virtue, meekness, but determination, was engraven in the expression of her face, and the bearing of her figure. What then could the Duke do? He reasoned with his son; the pride of a long race of Guises lent power to his voice, and warmth to his discourse; he remonstrated, he pleaded, and then he felt that he must come to the determination of sending away Clementina, for never could he submit

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to unite his eldest son with the Astrologer's daughter.

Thus through life, our plans are defeated, and how often by the very means we take to cement them more strongly. What ramparts are powerful enough to shut out pride? and what pride is more strongly depicted in history, than the hauteur of the Guises and Médicis'?

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CHAPTER VII.

Jeanne d'Albert, Queen of Navarre, was plunged into the deepest sorrow by the loss of the King. He had been an affectionate and loyal husband; he had allowed his Queen to follow her Protestant faith, and had even turned away his eyes when she instructed the young Prince de Béarn in her own tenets, pretending not to observe that which policy would have forbidden him to permit. Poltrot de Méré was one of the chevaliers who composed her retinue, and as soon as he could obtain access to her, he told the Queen Clementina's

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strange history—how he feared the Médicis' love would turn into hate, when the young girl should return to her presence—how the maiden was alone amidst the gay persons composing the camp of the Guises—how much need there was for a benevolent female hand to be stretched forth to shield, to protect, to guide her young steps.

Poltrot left the Queen of Navarre with her promise of protecting the Astrologer's daughter whenever Poltrot could find means of bringing her to her Court. He was preparing to leave the palace, when he was stopped by the Admiral Coligny.

"Where go you now?" said the venerable old gentleman.

"To the rescue of beauty!" cried the young man gaily.

"Then, shame on your trifling, *passe temps;* these troublous days are not the days of romance," was the grave rebuke of the old warrior.

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"You had better talk to those who like to listen to you," cried Poltrot, whose hasty temper was beginning to burn.

"Be not insolent!" said the Admiral, "or thy shoulders shall feel the weight of my sword hilt."

"Your sword *hilt*," cried Poltrot, drawing his sword from its sheath; "talk not of hilts, but of blades; mine will measure yours any day. Draw now, or my vengeance shall follow you!"

"Your vengeance, fair-haired boy," cried Coligny, indignantly; "go, go, and pass thy hours as thou wilt, but fie on thee to run after the Astrologer's daughter—a heretic, and a Médicis' friend. Go, treacherous boy! I spurn thee!" So saying, the Admiral turned on his heels, and closed the door after him, leaving Poltrot distraught with vengeance, anger, and passion.

Coligny had caught the fire of the times; he angered at the idea of the Queen of Navarre

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receiving, and having near her person, a young girl, not only a Roman Catholic, but also the daughter of a man, whose dark counsels had so often caused Catherine to dip her hand in innocent blood. Coligny knew not the haughty spirit, the deep and lasting love, or the burning hate, which subsisted in the heart of Poltrot; he whom he had scoffingly termed the "fair-haired boy." And the sequel will show that Poltrot would have done better, had he reined in his temper.

Meanwhile, the Duke of Guise had found a pretext for sending away his son with a detachment of cavalry, and his plans with regard to Clementina's future fate were not yet matured. He was more and more struck with her beauty, her grace, and modesty, but his pride refused to allow him to contemplate her union with his son. How much anxiety he would have spared himself had he known that the Astrologer's daughter had an insurmountable dislike to his son, perhaps without much real founda-

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tion at first, but deeply-rooted when Henri of Guise, finding his father implacable in his refusal to his marriage, made proposals to the young girl, from which her heart turned away with horror.

"No, no," she cried with warmth; "I am not high-born enough to be your wife, and no other tie is high enough for my pride."

To love for the first time, deeply, strongly, how naturally that love should flow; how it speaks in a look, trembles in a sigh, talks when no words are uttered. This love, Clementina had never felt for Henri of Guise, and she spared no pains in telling it him.

"I cannot live without you," persisted her passionate admirer; "life has not one charm equal to that of loving you. You have twined yourself around my heart as the ivy twines around the stem of a strong tree; to protect, to shield, to love, to adore you, is all my hope. Oh! turn not away."

"Once for ever, you have my answer," ex-

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claimed Clementina; "bring not the passionate language of love to your aid—it will be of no avail; I seek no high rank. Oh! silly girl that I was, to wish to see the world; but having embarked in it, I will not cast my heart to the wide wreck of misery; and even as your wife, as one high in station, higher in riches, my soul would be in misery, for I do not——"

"Do not say you do not love me," interrupted the young Prince, throwing himself at her feet; "you must not, you shall not say it; you are dearer to me than hope; you are dearer to me than life. I cannot exist without you, and I rise not without a word which can waft my heart in a dream—even a remote dream of happiness!"

"Nay, rise from your knees, Prince; or see me fall at yours, and conjure you to leave me in peace. Would you place me at the mercy of the vengeance of your haughty family? Would you wish me to give my heart, whilst that heart, proud as your own, refused to believe it was

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raised by becoming the prize of one higher than itself There is a pride in imagination, Prince, and I have it. There is a pride in education, and I feel it. There is a pride in youth, in health, in all that is glowing, and not my lot shall it be to send my inherent pride to be crushed by the Guises."

"It shall never be crushed, beautiful Clementina," said the Prince, still kneeling at her feet, with her hands clasped in his, whilst his manly and beautifully cast features were glowing with ardour; "it shall never be crushed. Your pride shall nurture mine; together we will fleet our days—you shall be my adored, my beloved, and no law shall attain us—no separation tear us asunder. My father's pride shall not waft by us, if, if—I will say it though you crush me with your scorn—if you have *courage* enough to fly with me, and be my care, my love, my adoration, without those ties which my father can annul?"

"Enough! enough," exclaimed Clementina,

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bursting into tears; "this is more misery than I have hitherto felt! Courage do you call it, to break every good and holy bond; to live in vice, in misery; to bow my pride to follow you; to sacrifice every virtue at the shrine of unlawful love! Shame on you! I have seen nothing of this vast whirlpool you call life, but quite enough to turn from you with hatred and disgust; and bid you take your immoral vows of love elsewhere. Let my parting words sound in your ears, for I will tolerate no more your discourse; 'I am not high-born enough to be your wife, and no other tie is high enough for my pride,' the just pride of a virtuous heart."

A few days after this conversation, Henri of Guise, more ambitious, more madly fond than ever, placed himself at the head of his detachment; whilst Clementina, wounded in heart, harassed with newly-awakened fears, vainly endeavoured to still the voice which bid her confess, "life was not all fair." Having given her parole not to escape, or even write

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to the Court of France, the young girl was allowed to range freely; her steps were not so buoyant as when she trod the salons of a palace; her eyes were more frequently cast on the ground, and she was enjoying a meditative ramble, when she heard her name pronounced, and looking up, she beheld Poltrot de Méré. He placed his finger cautiously on his lips, and dashed into a thicket, whither Clementina followed him, feeling assured he did not come like the Prince to speak of rash love; but she traced his footsteps with a trusting heart, and a fearless determination of knowing herself safe.

"I have never lost sight of you, since your captivity," said Poltrot, advancing towards Clementina before she had reached him. "I promised you should hear of me again, and now I come to deliver you from the power of the Guises. Will you trust yourself to me?"

"I have given my parole not to escape," replied Clementina, blushing; "and the Duke

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has been tolerably kind to me; therefore I cannot deceive him."

"Kind to you!" exclaimed Poltrot; "there are virtues which go too far, and your forgiveness, in this instance, oversteps the latitude of human virtue. Kindness! what for insulting you! for taking away the Queen's note—for detaining you here—for leaving you amidst gay and licentious chevaliers—for—"

"Enough," cried Clementina, as the recollection of Henri of Guise fleeted before her mind; "I believe I may break my promise, for indeed I am not safe here." Poor Clementina's heart was weighed down, and she burst into tears.

"Can it be true?" cried Poltrot, seizing her hand, and drawing it gently away from her face; "have they been mean enough to insult you? if they have—"

"Oh! no, no," exclaimed Clementina, shuddering at the sinister expression of Poltrot's face, speaking quickly, and with much con-

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fusion; "no, he did no more than perhaps others would have done: he thought me not high enough for his wife, and I feel sad at—but I will go back to Catherine, chevalier, for you will never deceive me?"

Poltrot, however, did not answer; his hand involuntarily clutched the handle of his sword; he fancied Clementina had spoken of the Duke, and he muttered between his closed teeth, "the villain—the perfidious, wicked-hearted old villain."

"Will you not take me back to the Queen-Mother?" said the young girl.

"No, never," cried Poltrot; "you know not Catherine de Médicis; even now, she is plotting some plan to unite herself in pretended friendship with the Guises, and she would let them form some scheme to take you again, ere she would allow anything to stand between her political reconciliation. I will take you hence, sweet one; but it shall be to the Queen of Navarre—to the mild Jeanne d'Albert."

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"Ah, but she is a Protestant, and will not love me."

"She will, she will," said Poltrot; "she loves all mankind—more particularly those in trouble; beware only of the Admiral Coligny."

"Enemies everywhere," said Clementina, sadly; "whilst I, a harmless girl, know not the very meaning of the word. I would fain hie me back to my solitude."

"It is not fit for you to be there," replied Poltrot. "The Queen-Mother has been obliged to place armed men to protect your father; and it is rumoured that he is going to leave his house, and come near the Queen, who is having solitary apartments fitted up for him in the palace—clever will be the person who finds access to his chambers, when a Médicis guards them."

"It must then be as you say," replied Clementina. "I am as a forest deer, driven from tree to tree; but how shall I ever be able to express one half of the gratitude which swells

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my heart towards you, for so disinterestingly following my footsteps, and harbouring me safe from the pursuit of the huntsmen."

"Say not I am disinterested," said Poltrot, "or you know not the reward promised to me. Your father has—you blush, fair one, but you do not look disconcerted—your father has promised me your hand. I will, if possible, win your heart."

Clementina did not withdraw her hand from Poltrot: a warm glow covered her face, but love and pleasure sat on her eye. Poltrot drew her nearer to him, and kissed her beautiful brow; it was the first kiss of love. It was early spring; the birds around were chanting a gay chorus; the flowers, the wild thyme, and forget-me-not, were growing around them; and there, in the picturesque thicket, under the foliage of the trees, under the expanse of the ethereal sky, Clementina listened to pure love, which told its tale, but brought not the blush of shame to her young brow.

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Long would the happy lovers have lingered, unheedful of the present—fearless of the future; but the imminent danger in which Clementina stood, if any one should surprise her, recalled Poltrot's ideas to the business of the day.

"I will be ready with horses, at the end of the thicket; be sure to come here to-morrow night, and once we have passed the barriers, the Queen of Navarre's troops will escort us. Now, farewell; our next meeting will be under happier auspices. God bless and defend you."

"Farewell!" cried Clementina; and a presentiment of coming evil caused her to turn back, and say again, with tender pathos—"farewell! farewell!"

Farewell! a word, which absence echoes, and Time laughs at, with rudest laugh. Farewell! which sorrow fosters; and tears feed with nourishing fare. Farewell! the knell of departed happiness—the parting salute of death: sad, sad, farewell!

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Was it the gloom of the cloudy atmosphere, presaging a storm?—was it the discordant croaking of the rooks?—was it the recollection that she was not yet free, which caused the tears to course each other down Clementina's cheeks? Since a short period, she had grown a year in experience; she had listened twice to the language of love; she had seen it all, daring; she had seen it all, hoping; and now she herself had enlisted under Cupid's banner. This, then, was that love at first sight, which we hear of; this the spontaneous love which fills the young heart, and is so seldom seen, because our cold generation cannot comprehend it. Go thou to thy slumbers, Clementina, and in thy rest, the cherub-god waft thee in his gentle embraces, and softly breathe in thy slumbering ears his never-failing tale—his too-delusive *language d'amour!*

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE Duke of Guise was a *bon vivant*, and his spirits were generally in the highest state of excitement when he returned from partaking of the good cheer of some of his brother officers. The next day passed, and the Duke returned from a carouse, about five o'clock in the afternoon—for in those days men did not dine when it is nearly time to go to bed. The Duke's faithful horse seemed accustomed to his master's moods, and proceeded cautiously across roads which, in our modern days, would be pronounced perfectly intolerable. Poltrot

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de Méré had been sauntering about the whole day, his mind wholly centred on the approaching flight of that young girl, who had so unexpectedly taken possession of his warmest affections. Alas, for the mutability of all earthly bliss! alas, for the fiery passions of our youth, which eddy on like the clouds driven by the fury of the tempest! Poltrot de Méré, generous but erring one, Crime is writing thy name in her darkly-written book; History has taken up the tale, and it has descended to posterity. There were hosts of murderers in those days of fanatical barbarism; Elegance reigned at Court; Beauty swayed the kingdom; but hideous Vice had set its stamp on Mortality; evil passions roamed like coursers, without bridle or bit; Wickedness reigned in the palace, the hall, the camp; a word and a blow, the steel or poison —these were the horrible remedies in full force. The heart truly turns cold in perusing the history of that dark age; truly it recoils when it *must* believe all is true. We fain would read

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each dark occurrence, and believe it is a nursery legend, to inculcate a useful lesson; but alas, alas for human nature! it is all too true."

The Duke of Guise was much excited when his quick eye caught sight of Poltrot de Méré, who stood still, whilst the Duke surveyed him with more *hauteur* than recognition.

"Take off your hat, young man," he said; "I am the Duke of Guise."

But Poltrot only smiled a bitter smile of hatred; for he would *not* bow to the being he believed had dealt treacherously towards Clementina; nor would he turn from his path, but met the Duke's almost insupportably proud look with one equally proud, and far more collected.

"Perhaps your Grace does not recognise Poltrot de Méré," he said; "if so, you would be forced to acknowledge that gratitude alone should cause you to treat with becoming courtesy one who preserved your life."

"It is your duty, stripling, to bow to the

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Duke of Guise," said the unfortunate nobleman, totally unable to recognise Poltrot.

"This is too much," cried the chevalier, not perceiving that the Duke's orgies had excited him, but so blinded by his rising passion as to see only the affront; "this is part of your ungenerous, unthankful disposition; part of your treachery, like the deceit you have used towards the young Clementina."

"How dare you speak of her?" cried the Duke; "a lovely and sweet lass—my captive queen—the pearl of my camp—my captive sultana; she is mine—she is mine."

"You lie," exclaimed Poltrot; "she is none of yours; she is pure and bright as that blue sky over our heads; she is my adored, my sweet, my affianced bride."

"She is mine! my captive! mine, mine, mine!"

Here the Duke reeled, and fell from his horse, still echoing "mine!"

"Die, wretch! die," exclaimed Poltrot,

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piercing him with his sword; "die wretch! and go tell thy sins and thy punishment to the demoniac spirits who have lent their spells to thy life of sins."

One deep groan, one more hideous blow, and the spirit of the haughty Duke had fled.

* * * * * *

Must we now hate Poltrot de Méré? must we turn away with a shudder? must my tale weave its spell to talk of a murderer? Already the brand, the Cain-like mark, was set on that lofty countenance. Already youth's clear brow was stamped with the hideous mark of sin; already the hope of life, the pride of youth, the buoyancy of the free spirit had fled, and Poltrot de Méré stood alone, the curse of murderer hanging over his destiny. He fled to *the* thicket, for he fancied he heard a noise amidst the branches behind the neighbouring hedge; and he fancied that through the air was wafted the tale of his dreadful crime. He fled! the drops of fear and remorse falling heavily from his clammy

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brow. He rushed into the thicket, where that very morning he had held converse with an angelic being of surpassing loveliness. Should he ever turn his hollow eye and meet her trusting gaze? dare he soil her spotless lips with a kiss? Dare he press her dear hand within his—within a murderer's grasp? Oh! horrible, horrible! The unfortunate youth pressed his hands to his agonized brow; he buried his face in his burning palms; he vainly—oh, how vainly—tried to think it was all one dark and unsubstantial dream. Then suddenly rising from the cold earth, he exclaimed—"It may yet be time to save him," and rushed in search of his victim. Alas! the large sanguine drops marked the spot with their glaring crime-like hue. No tears, no sigh, no remorse, no despair could wipe them from the murder-stained sod. There they were in conspicuous ugliness; there they paved the way to the horrid scene. Poltrot raised the Duke's head, and he shuddered. The smiling, triumphant "mine!" appeared yet

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to linger on the distorted lips, and the staring eyes appeared yet full of life, but the form was cold and heavy, whilst Poltrot fancied innumerable spirits were looking at him, and calling him a murderer!

Oh! for a human voice to break the silence around. Oh! for some sound save the croaking of the birds of prey who scented the murdered corpse. Oh! for a storm in the heavens, which could boast of equalling the heat and fury of that unhappy youth. But no! all, all was still! The vesper bell sounded on the evening air; the evening star burst forth in its purity; the moon cast her refulgent rays on the thickly-covered hedge, and the wild flowers on the turf; the birds had twittered and twittered their last lay; there was calmness in the air, and sweetness on the earth—but there was dark despair and unavailing remorse in the heart of the unhappy murderer.

Suddenly, Poltrot heard the sound of horses' hoofs. He tried to flee, to rise; but no, the

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very earth seemed to chain him with bonds he could not sever. Nearer and nearer the sounds were heard. More powerful were Poltrot's struggles: still, all in vain; cold drops were on his brow, his hair stood upright on his head; his hands convulsively tore up the green turf, his eyes were horribly fixed on the corpse, but he could not move. The horseman stood before him, and although Poltrot was in a state approaching frenzy, still he recognised him; there was was no mistaking the floating white hair, the large blue eye, the calm expression of astonishment, horror, and contempt: that horseman was the noble and venerable Coligny!

"I did not do it," exclaimed the agitated Poltrot, clasping his blood-stained hands. "I found him here: I did not do it."

"Lie not before God and your conscience," coldly replied Coligny, dismounting from his horse, and throwing his cloak from him, to be more free. "Let me see. Good heavens! it

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is the Duke. Oh, Poltrot de Méré, wretched, unhappy youth! you have disgraced our Protestant cause; ere another sun gladdens the earth, all will be confusion, and bloodshed, and murder. Sink to the earth, ay, lower thyself, sinful, headstrong youth. It is a fearful crime, the crime of murder.

Coligny approached nearer the murdered Duke; he looked with calm sorrow at the recent wounds; and he stood, lost in a chaos of wavering thoughts. Meanwhile, Poltrot de Méré had recovered from the panic which had seized him. The next step to crime is cunning, and an anxious wish for personal security. The murderer recovered; awoke with newly-sprung energy to the awful fiat which hung over him. A desperate determination shook his frame; his pallid face recovered its colour, and his limbs their power. He started up, threw himself on Coligny's horse, enveloped himself in his mantle; and the venerable admiral recovered from his surprise to find

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himself alone with the murdered Duke—with one who had been his bitter enemy!

"Ah!" exclaimed Coligny, "speed on as thou wilt, unhappy boy, Heaven's vengeance will reach thee. Oh, death! vast nothingness of humanity! heirloom of the great, heirloom of the poor. No tales can that cold form tell, no more speak of strife; no accusation will it bring against the blood-stained hand; yet vengeance, vengeance is near."

"Vengeance," exclaimed a voice, approaching the spot; "ay! dire, deep, torturing vengeance. If there be such a word on earth, if its meaning be known in heaven or hell, vengeance shalt thou have, my unhappy, murdered parent!"

The young Prince Henri de Guise threw himself on the Duke's cold corpse; his voice was choked by his sobs; but deep in the inmost recess of his heart he breathed a prayer of vengeance on his father's murderer; that murderer, he thought, was Coligny.

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Mastering his emotions, he now turned to him, exclaiming, "Was it to perpetrate this foul deed, that you have lived on earth until Time has whitened your locks? Time did not, however, impair your strength; look at the gaping wounds: here, I solemnly swear, by all I hold dear and honourable, that you shall grace a gibbet—that you shall be exposed to all mankind—that the populace shall learn how a Guise revenges the death of a Guise. This future retaliation restrains my hand, albeit, it is so ready to pierce your heart." The Prince blew a shrill note from a cornet at his belt, and a troop of bōdy-guards rushed forward at the sound.

"Seize the Admiral Coligny," exclaimed the unhappy Prince; "I am bereaved of a father—you have lost your Duke."

"Shame! shame!" echoed from every mouth.

"Silence!" cried Coligny, raising his hand majestically; "away! dare ye tie my hands?

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I adjure Heaven and earth to witness my innocence; and more than that, I know the murderer. I came here with intentions, which for the present I will not divulge; but I can clear my innocence. Away with bonds; I will accompany you. Give me a horse, the murderer has taken mine."

"Silly tales, fit to tell babies and fools," exclaimed Henri of Guise; "tell them to the wind, not to Christian ears. You are a foul murderer. A horse! tie his hands behind him, and let him walk in the midst of you. Raise the Duke my father, and come we to the camp."

* * * * * *

How tediously long that dreadful day had appeared to Clementina; how slowly the hours fleeted; how her poor heart throbbed wfth palpitating fear and keen hopes; how new to her were the dawning symptoms of love—happy, returned, reciprocal love.

"How very fortunate I am," thought the

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poor, unsuspicious girl; how very different to the heroines of romance, books delight in portraying. I saw; I loved; I was loved; ay, *am* loved; and my father gives his consent. No torturing doubts, no sighing hopes; Poltrot is my affianced husband, and I am his betrothed bride. I feel yet his tender kiss on my brow; I see yet the quivering emotion of his lips; how handsome are his hazle eyes; how clusters his rich brown hair: he is all dear, all beautiful, all beloved."

In such soft thoughts the day fleeted by, and Clementina sat by her casement, watching the crepuscular shades falling gently on the surrounding scenery. She saw the tops of the fir-trees around the thicket, towards whose shades her longing heart was bounding. At length the young girl became impatient; she waited in vain for the Duke's signal-horn of return to blow, and until that note was heard, she knew the gates were closed, far above her power to draw the bolts. As soon as they were removed,

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the Duke always allowed her to take her stroll. He gave the night's watch-word, and then Clementina determined to escape. Clementina at last heard the trampling of horses in the court-yard below, and she descended a few steps, for her heart was ill at ease. Oh, what a sight met her gaze—the bloody and lifeless form of the old Duke, carried between his soldiers, and Henri of Guise, with a countenance nearly as pale as that of the deceased, with dishevelled hair and streaming eyes. Forgetting her wish to escape, forgetting Poltrot de Méré, forgetting the insult he had offered to her, Clementina saw only one dreadful sight—she beheld only Henri of Guise as a son mourning the loss of a father, and rushing past the guards, she stood by his side, and looking at him tenderly, as a woman can soothe the sorrows of the sterner sex, she placed her hand on his arm, and exclaimed: "Prince Henri, be comforted."

The sound of that gentle voice recalled the

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Prince to reason. He endeavoured to speak, but his voice was choked by his sobs; he reached the nearest apartment, and burying his face in hands, he wept aloud.

Now, Clementina could have escaped; the guards had forsaken their post; all the household was in confusion; the postern-gate was open, but the young girl did not remember that she had ever wished to eseape; her whole mind was intent on one object—that of consoling the afflicted Prince. She poured out a glass of wine from a bottle which stood on the buffet, and forced him to drink it.

Henri appeared to have forgotten he had ever addressed her before. "Ah! why tell me to console myself?" he exclaimed; "my poor, unfortunate father, he was hasty and impetuous, but he loved me well. Dark shall be the punishment of his murderer!"

"Who murdered him?" exclaimed Clementina, with newly-awakened fear.

"Coligny," replied Henri, fiercely.

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Poor Clementina breathed more freely, for she had a fluttering fear she could not account for.

"Coligny murdered him," continued the Prince; "and oh, how he shall suffer: every white hair on his head shall number the many tortures he shall endure;" and the Prince clutched convulsively the tassel of his cloak.

Clementina shuddered:—"Prince Henri of Guise," she said, whilst tears of pity filled her eyes, "I cannot wonder at your grief: but let reason again hold her sway. What torturing punishment can restore your father to life—Coligny a murderer! with his soft speech, and gentle, though warlike manner. I cannot believe it."

"What! not when I saw him bending over the murdered corpse—not when I beheld his hands stained with his blood—my father's blood! Ah," cried the Prince, looking at her stedfastly, "ah, you are Clementina; oh, thanks, many thanks, for your kindness, angel of goodness, pattern of forgiveness. With my life

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would I efface the rash words I uttered before my departure. Will you, can you forgive me?"

"Oh yes, I can forgive," said Clementina, blushing under his ardent gaze; "grief is so sacred, that every personal feeling of pique bends before it."

"Oh thank you, my lovely Clementina," exclaimed the Prince, "and if a whole life of attachment, of fidelity, of ——"

"You totally mistake me," said Clementina, much alarmed; "I can forgive without loving; I can pity, whilst no feeling save commiseration fills my heart. Once more, I cannot be your wife; let the image of your dying father stand between our union."

And at that moment, the young Prince really imagined he saw his haughty father before him, with his proud mien and high bearing. He shuddered, when he recalled the cold remains of all that was warlike and grand. The picture thus conjured up had its weight, and not for worlds could he have continued talking

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of love. Rousing himself from his grief, he pressed Clementina's hand with respect, totally unmingled with familiarity; he thanked her warmly for her sympathy, and wished her a comfortable rest.

"But," said Clementina, "you do not mean to detain me any longer?"

"No; you shall be free to-morrow. Where would you turn yourself?"

"To the Queen of Navarre's Court," replied Clementina, without any hesitation.

"You shall go, escorted by a party of my own army," said the Prince; "and when I am far from you, think of me sometimes; forget my past conduct towards you, and let my image be coupled with that of a broken-hearted, miserable being."

"You will be happier, when Time has healed the severity of your wound," said the young girl.

The Prince shook his head mournfully, but a new gush of sorrow prevented his replying.

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Presently, Clementina heard him in the court-yard; he gave the watch-word, and then the young girl remembered that it was time to escape.

"Yet, why escape? had not the Prince given her his word, that she should leave the next day? Why not allow him to have the pleasure of being generous? But Poltrot! how uneasy he would be, could she allow him to believe her wavering and irresolute; yet, how unfeeling to wander out when the Duke's corpse was scarcely cold, and the house resounded with melancholy sobs. Clementina evinced the trust of love, when she ended thus her soliloquy:—"Poltrot loves me, I love him, and he can no more doubt my constancy than I do his. Grief is sacred, love is pleasure, and pleasure must not reign predominant in the heart. To-morrow, he will find me near the sweet Jeanne d'Albret; and long months, ay, years of bliss, will efface this one night in which he will feel disappointment."

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Excited, grieved, and pitying, the young girl retired to rest, and awoke the next morning to the delightful recollection, that she was going to the Court of Navarre.

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CHAPTER IX.

My readers are no doubt curious to know whither the unhappy Poltrot directed his steps. He fled on Coligny's horse, with the speed of one who feels life or death are both hanging on so slight a thread, that the smallest chance could render all speed of no avail. On, on, he went; the night-breeze fell coldly on his brow, but quenched not the dreadful fire of his agonized heart. At length he paused at an inn, and gave hasty directions for having his horse speedily refreshed.

Morning had scarcely dawned, but the in-

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habitants of the inn were already alert, for in those days it was nothing unusual to be woke at any hour by chevaliers going to and from the different camps.

Poltrot himself hastened into an upper room; there he washed his blood-stained hands, arranged his dishevelled hair, and surveyed with much bitterness his deadly-pale complexion. Not a thought, save dark despair, crossed his reeking memory; he saw Clementina's form before his saddened gaze, not trusting and loving, but spurning him from her as a murderer; but darker than all, was the venerable figure of Coligny, holding out his finger, and saying, "Lie not before Heaven and thy conscience: thou art the murderer." At length, a desperate wish of exculpating himself took possession of the young man's mind; his face became flushed with a glow of designing purpose; he paid the ostler, mounted again his horse, and sped on with redoubled haste. At length, he reached the Court, and

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sought an interview with Catherine de Médicis.

The Queen-Mother of France was not much pleased with Poltrot; he had lingered away, without giving her any information respecting Clementina; now, however, the young girl was far from her thoughts as soon as Poltrot said in a low voice, "The Duke of Guise is dead?"

"Rash young man," exclaimed Catherine, rising from her seat, and recoiling a few steps from him.

"Stay," cried Poltrot; "I did not murder him. The Admiral Coligny took the task I contemplated from my hands; I have not murdered him."

Poltrot's voice sank almost to a whisper as he concluded his falsehood, for the unfortunate young man was both headstrong and passionate, but not habitually wicked. His conscience had been clear of all grave offences, until he stained it with the late horrible deed, and he dare not

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utter a falsehood without shrinking from the sound of his own voice.

A cold smile of incredulity passed over Catherine's face.

"This is a sad business," she exclaimed, after a pause; "and sadder consequences will ensue. But think not to deceive *me*, though you deceive all the world. Come with me; there is one here, within the palace, who can give you counsel, both for the present danger and your future safety; be guided by him, but seek not to deceive him."

Catherine left Poltrot no choice, and he dare not reply; she beckoned to him to follow her. They traversed the suite of private apartments belonging to the Queen; she opened a small door concealed in the tapestry. Poltrot then stood in a long and lugubre passage, which appeared to have no exit on either side, but Catherine unfastened a board, which was apparently part of the wainscoting. This board withdrawn, the Queen touched a spring, and a door

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flew open. To Poltrot's astonishment, he found himself in a spacious apartment, filled with globes, telescopes, crucibles, chymical instruments, phrenological heads, and all sorts of indescribable apparatus. Standing over a large fire, superintending some cooking, which emitted a strong medicinal odour, stood the handsome Pettura.

Catherine closed the door, after saying impressively—

"This young man has murdered the Duke of Guise. I will return in an hour."

Pettura turned round slowly; he did not appear in the least astonished, but continued watching the cooking, until at length he said to Poltrot—

"Hold that bottle steadily, whilst I pour this liquid in it."

Poltrot obeyed; but he had to grasp the phial with both hands, for he trembled violently.

"To do an evil deed, and to have the courage

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to meet the sequel, are two very different things, are they not, young man?" inquired Pettura.

Poltrot stammered a low "I suppose so!"

"Suppose so," cried the Astrologer; "say rather, you feel it in every sensitive nerve. Sit down, and I will reinforce your frame."

"Pettura poured out a glass of wine from a flask, and threw in a few grains of a dark-coloured powder."

At first Poltrot hesitated.

"It is not poison," said Pettura. "Why should I wish to poison you? Drink, drink—drain the last drop; and tell me if you do not feel better."

In a few minutes more, Poltrot really felt a refreshing feeling through his body; and unable to dissimulate with the keen Magician, he confessed all, and did not omit a single event which had happened to him since he last saw Pettura.

"Oh man, rash man! how he runs headlong

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to his fate. Let it be dark, let it be light, how he hurries with precipitate steps down the declivity of misfortune; but now, to business," said Pettura, speaking as if murder were amongst one of the casualities of every-day life. "Let me see; you have distinctly accused Coligny of the murder."

"Only to the Queen-Mother," said Poltrot.

"But you left him with the corpse."

"I did."

"Then my penetration enables me to see the consequence," said Pettura. "Now listen to me: should Coligny suffer for your crime—should all men deem you innocent, should you prosper through life, whatever be your fate, I know you to be a murderer. Recoil not; you must learn to be familiar with the word. Now listen to me: in these days of bloodshed, vengeance, and political sins of all kind, there are worse murderers than you, who are living in apparent innocence; who are respected, high at Court, and are apparently happy. What are

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they to me? Nothing—mere drops in the bosom of the sea; but you, you, Poltrot de Méré, are more to me, for I must ever have an eye upon your footsteps. You have now the affection of my child, and she has plighted her faith to you. Should the earth open to receive its prey, should a tomb be here, or the choice of your hand between it, I would lay my Clementina in the tomb, in the bloom of her youth, in the pride of her beauty, sooner than she should become your bride."

"Poltrot heard every word; and as the Astrologer spoke, Clementina appeared before him, as he had seen her last, in all her budding loveliness; he had sipped the nectar of delight for one brief moment, and now she was lost to him for ever; he had pressed her in one embrace, and that was to be the last. Oh, how he repented his rash conduct! how bitterly he dwelt upon the past! how dreadful appeared the future.

At length, incapable of more thought, his

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brain reeled, his eyes were fixed and rigid, and he sunk, without life or motion, at the Astrologer's feet.

Pettura raised the unhappy youth; he chafed his temples, he felt his pulse, and at length Poltrot recovered from his swoon, but fixed a maniac's gaze on the Astrologer. Oh! how dreadful was the change! Instead of the chevalier-looking being, the strong and intellectual man—the mind, the soul, were temporarily lost; and a miserable, degraded maniac, writhed in a fever of agony in Pettura's strong grasp.

The Queen-Mother returned, and all her usual equanimity of deportment staggered under the dreadful sight which met her gaze.

"Will he ever recover?" she said.

"Yes! oh yes! I think so," replied Pettura; "now he is more quiet, listen to me. The poor youth must remain with me, and if Coligny be accused, your Majesty must allow the trial to proceed."

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"But who will believe Coligny is a murderer?" said Catherine.

"His enemies will *feign* to believe it," replied the Astrologer.

The Queen-Mother now returned to her apartments, and the rest of the day she remained a prey to the most poignant feelings; partly commiseration for the unfortunate Poltrot, partly fear of the consequences of the murder of the Duke.

Three days elapsed, during which time the greatest calm hung over the stirring events which were at hand. Catherine often visited poor Poltrot, and Loretta was still oftener sent to make inquiries. All, however, was of no avail. Poltrot continued in a state of insanity, or slumbered heavily under the narcotic draughts with which the Astrologer plied him, in order to stifle his dreadful screams.

Oh! could poor Clementina have seen her unfortunate lover, now writhing in agony, now stupified with delirium, a prey to the torments

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of an evil conscience, branded as a murderer. But the gentle Clementina was happy under the roof of the mild Jeanne d'Albret, who welcomed her with deep kindness, and reassured her heart with the hope that, though absent, Poltrot was necessarily detained, and would soon appear to answer for himself.

When Jeanne d'Albret heard of the accusation which the Prince Henri had brought against the venerable Coligny, her meek spirit was fired with more than usual indignation; she said she had wept bitter tears at the death of her husband, but not more bitter than at the disgrace of his faithful friend. The Prince de Béarn loved Coligny with the most tender affection: he had always looked up to him as the standard of merit—as the pattern of all that was good and estimable; and although his heart recoiled from the very thought of believing Coligny guilty, he felt equally indignant at the idea of the Admiral being accused of so heinous an offence.

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"But, why did the Admiral go to the camp of the Guises?" said the Prince, musingly.

"Henri, Henri," cried the Queen Jeanne, reproachfully, "trifle not with words, actions, or place; you *know* Coligny is innocent."

Clementina sent a message to the Court of France to inform the Queen-Mother of her present abode with Jeanne d'Albret; but other business now occupied the Queen-Mother's attention, and Clementina's message was disregarded.

The Prince Henri, now the Duke of Guise, had openly accused Coligny of murdering his father, and that venerable Admiral had indignantly asserted his innocence. Perhaps, however, he might have suffered, and most unjustly, for another's crime, when an accident caused Poltrot de Méré to be arrested.

He had been lying for several hours in a state of somnolence, when the Astrologer found it necessary to leave his apartments in quest of

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an herb he wanted, in order to try its efficacy on his patient. Pettura had watched with unwearied solicitude by the youth's couch. He remembered that Clementina loved him; he was assured by Loretta that his child was in safety at the Court of Navarre, and he felt as sorry for the youth's transgression as anxious for his precarious health. Thus it is that the darkest-minded man has at least one tender point, which can recal him to a sense of duty. Pettura was crafty, superstitious, believed in signs, and pretended to lore he did not possess. He was guilty in nourishing the flame of superstition, pride, and cruelty, in the Queen-Mother's breast; but where his child was concerned, then he recoiled from vice even fanning her cheek; and he would rather, as he said, have seen Clementina's youth and beauty low in the slumbering grasp of death, than affiance her to a murderer. She was *his* ray of light, steering on his dark path; and, oftentimes, her light form appearing before him, gave him the only remorse

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of conscience it was in his power to feel. But return we to Poltrot.

He remained for some time stunned by the narcotic draught; but at last he awoke—awoke to partial consciousness, and to a longing desire of liberty; he could not remember how long he had been lying there; the scene of the murder was, as it were, straying from his memory: but he had a strange and keen recollection of the circuitous road to the Astrologer's apartments. He clothed himself, and laughed wildly at his long, dishevelled hair, and strange appearance. At length he found himself down stairs. The whole Court and attendants were attending vespers, and Poltrot strayed down to the court-yard. Two or three grooms looked at him, and fled, thinking they had seen a vision. Poltrot went into the stable, and recognised the horse he had taken from Coligny; he saddled him, placed himself on the saddle, and was on the point of going out, when a groom accosted him as follows:—

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"Heigho! here you are; I have watched long for the person who would claim the Admiral's horse. He a murderer, indeed!"

"I did not kill the Duke, did I? Well, perhaps I did. Did he confess? Do you know me? Did he say I took the horse?"

These, and other words, incoherently uttered, roused the just suspicions of the groom. He summoned the guards; Poltrot was captured; Coligny declared him to be the murderer. The unhappy youth's senses again forsook him—Coligny was released, and Poltrot sentenced to execution.

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CHAPTER X.

The shades of evening were overshadowing the earth; the night was gloomy and tempestuous; the wind howled a melancholy strain: it was one of those unpleasant nights when good persons feel the power of an innocent conscience, and bad men must endure the tortures attendant on a life of crime; when the lugubre whistling of the wind must speak words of terror to the heart. It was on a night, dark, tempestuous, and gloomy, that the unfortunate Poltrot lingered in a damp and close dungeon, and the next morning was fixed for his last

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tragedy on earth. The unhappy Poltrot had recovered his reason, but he was weak and ill; his whole appearance was changed, and on his altered brow, his disordered locks, his sunken eyes, might be traced—oh, how visibly—the ravages of sin! Life was fleeting before his gaze; he fain would grasp at existence, but Death clasped him in its cold embraces. His nights had brought him no repose; lying down, or sitting up, still the same phantom-spirit haunted him; still he fancied he saw the murdered Duke, calling for vengeance. Presently, the door of his dungeon was slowly opened, and Pettura stood before Poltrot.

"Oh do not look at me," cried the unfortunate youth; "there is something in your pitying gaze, which reminds me of Clementina. Away! away! let me die, and when my body is cold, when my warm heart is still, then tell your lovely daughter, that her image strengtheued me through the pain of dying; that all my hope, all my prayer, is to

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obtain her forgiveness, and her pity for my crime."

"You have more than her pity," said Pettura. "She will not believe you guilty, though you told her so yourself; she would not credit it. Oh! how powerful, how generous is young love! The pure-minded Clementina would give up her own existence to hear men say, 'Poltrot de Méré is innocent.'"

"And that they never will, and they never *can*," said poor Poltrot. "Alas! alas! how degraded, how sinful I am. Oh, surely Signor, the body which writhes with agony, from the recollection of sin, ought to have possessed a soul which would have recoiled from the idea of — of murder — yes, I am becoming familiar with the awful word. See, see, I trace it on my prison walls, I carve it on my table, on my chair; I have it ever before me; it seems separate from myself: it was *not* Poltrot de Méré who murdered the Duke, it was a fiend-spirit, which took possession of his heart,

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which led his hand, and has sent his soul to perdition."

"No more of this," interrupted Pettura, fearing Poltrot's mind would again waver. "We have no time to lose. I have come to save you, if you think life worth preserving at the price I affix to it."

Poltrot fixed his eyes on the Astrologer with the keenest gaze. "Oh tell me quickly what you mean," he exclaimed; "is life sweet? ay, it is, even to a murderer. I will repent; I will purify my soul with fasting, with tears, with prayers, and then—" here the young man fell on his knees at Pettura's feet, and his uplifted hands, his streaming eyes, told what his lips could not pronounce.

"Rise," sternly said the Astrologer, "and let me add what I know you fain would say. No repentance, no tears, no fasting, no prayers, will avail you anything. Clementina is no longer yours; before I proceed to unveil my plans, you must take a solemn oath not even

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to contemplate ever seeing her; you must be dead to her, to the very world, until many months have elapsed; before you are free, Clementina will be the bride of another. Poltrot de Méré, listen to me; your affianced bride will be the wife of Prince Henri, *now* the Duke of Guise; and she will sue her husband, the son of your victim, that he spare your life."

"Oh this is a dreadful tragedy to play," cried poor Poltrot; "not only to lose my bride, but to owe my life to the Duke! No, no, he would not give me the boon, even were he asked."

"He *will*," firmly said the Astrologer; "he would give his existence to win Clementina's hand."

"Then she is not desirous of the union," said Poltrot, with a bitter ray of pleasure.

"What is that to you," quickly answered the Astrologer; "willing or not willing, she shall never be yours; but the alternative

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to you is life or death—certain, ignominous death."

"The escape is dubious," soliloquized Poltrot.

"There is nothing impossible with me," replied Pettura. "The governor of the prison is in the Queen-Mother's confidence; need I then say he is in mine? No matter why the Médicis bows her will to mine—certain it is that she does. The common report will be, that you were executed early in the morning, whilst you will then be safe under my protection. Fear not the Duke; he will make no inquiry—it pleases him to believe you innocent, and Coligny guilty; the latter opinion serves as a colour for the hatred he has ever borne the Admiral; in you he sees a rival to Clementina's affections, rather than the murderer of his father."

Pettura ceased speaking, and Poltrot had had time for consideration. The Duke did *not* believe him guilty, nor did Clementina; as he

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had once escaped from the Astrologer's, might he not a second time? A faint revival of hope sprung in his grief-stricken heart—a distant picture of love fleeted before his imagination—the recollection of Clementina's soft voice, her graceful naïveté—all, all, appeared to taunt him; the reverse of hope to him had not the alternative, "Patience." No, no, it was a decisive fiat, "life or death." He yielded, he chose life; but whilst he took the oath of not seeing Clementina again, his lips murmured the words, but his conscience went not with the oath.

The next morning dawned; the guards' cups had been filled by the Astrologer, and they were unusually drowsy; the idea of having taken a strong narcotic beverage never entered their minds; they believed that the young man who had been imprisoned for murder had been privately executed; but Poltrot had eluded the vigilance of the law.

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At length the war which had deluged France with blood, and caused the death of the bravest men in the kingdom, was brought to a close by a temporary treaty of peace, which concluded the year 1563. Liberty of conscience (as was called the free worship of the Huguenots) was again granted; and, by a trait of policy, Catherine de Médicis declared that Condé and his followers had the King's interest at heart. She forgave all parties, and grasped the chiefs of the divisions in friendly amity. Catholics and Protestants appeared re-united. They joined their armies and conquered Havre, which Queen Elizabeth refused to surrender. This breach of promise on the part of the English Queen furnished the French with a plausible reason for refusing to restore Calais, as they had originally agreed upon by the late treaty.

The Roman Catholics now loudly demanded a general Council. This had long been frustrated, sometimes by the quarrels of the opponent princes, sometimes by the policy of the

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Pope; but now there was no plausible excuse, and the Roman Catholics wished, by superior eloquence, to intimidate the Huguenots. Pope Pius IV. was much opposed to the validity of the Council; but fearing that a national Council would be the next step, he preferred contending with party spirits, and he accordingly sanctioned the Council of Trente, begun in 1545, under Paul III.; again assembled in 1551, under Jules III. This Council was dissolved in the year we are concluding (1563). No favourable results were the consequences of the meeting. The Roman Catholics felt stronger in their opinions; but the opposite party was not more convinced of the fallacy of its own. On the contrary, petty quarrels began anew; the Protestants declared they ought to have had a Council entirely composed of men of their tenets. They declared that the late Council was a meeting of scholars, met to promote disunion.

The Court refused to sanction the publica-

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tion of the Articles concluded in the Council, partly on account of the new treaty, partly because the opinions of the members were too arbitrary.

Catherine de Médicis vainly tried to keep a sort of medium between two parties determined to ruin each other. The Queen-Mother's slow decision excited their suspicions. The Romanists fancied she leaned towards Calvinism, whilst she paid the greatest attention to every Church ceremony, in order to disarm their opinions.

Her ardent wish of conciliating the Queen of Narvarre, rendered the Queen-Mother obnoxious to the Roman Catholics; for, as we have before noticed, Jeanne d'Albret was a zealous Protestant. Her tender, mild, pliable, and delicately feminine mind seemed to have centred all its energies on one point, that of her religion. She had seen the greatest warriors of the day swerving from one side to the other; her own husband had been as

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a tottering tower, whose foundation, built on sand, was swept away with the fury of the waves—now, he was a weak Protestant; now, a cold Romanist, and had died without any well-grounded opinions, handing down his name to posterity as a weak and wavering man. Not so Jeanne D'Albret; her character had widely spread, and she had betimes circulated the report, that her son, the Prince of Béarn was, like herself, a Protestant. The Queen-Mother had serious thoughts of uniting her lovely daughter, the Princess Marguerite, with the young Prince. Her increasing loveliness, the early love she had evinced for the Prince, rendered it exceedingly improbable that her views would be frustrated. Her pressing invitations to the young Prince had long been declined; there was generally a reason found which, although the Queen-Mother felt satisfied was a mere excuse, was nevertheless sufficiently palpable to disarm anger. The little Princess was generally the only person at Court who had

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leisure to regret the absence of the Prince de Béarn, and Loretta was the only one ready to listen to her complaints. The last reason which Jeanne d'Albret assigned for refusing the Queen-Mother's invitation, was one which the latter could not understand—namely, she was watching by the sick bed of Clementina Pettura.

Queen Catherine de Médicis could have pillowed her Marguerite's head if her temples throbbed, or her pretty face was pale. She could have inquired kindly after Clementina; she would even occasionally say to Loretta, "How now, girl? art ill? go thee to thy bed; I will dispense with thy attendance." But Clementina's religion was different to that of Jeanne d'Albret, and the Médicis could not understand the mild and Christian-like feeling which could devote hours, days, and nights too, to the sick couch of a young girl, lately a perfect stranger to the Queen of Navarre.

Jeanne d'Albret's assiduous care appeared to

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have but little effect in reviving the poor invalid. Misfortune seemed to have stunned the fair girl; her bloom had entirely fled; and when she was enabled to rise and lie on a couch by her sweet mistress, oh! how like a shadow of herself was that still fair, but very pale girl. Clementina did not live in these modern days, when girls change their lovers as indifferently as their lovers seek another girl to love. It was in vain that Jeanne d'Albret whispered words of comfort—it was in vain too she told her, "I too have suffered the loss of a beloved husband."

"Ah, he was your husband," replied poor Clementina; "he died in glory; men did not raise their loud voices, and proclaim him a—"

"But, dear girl," continued the gentle Queen, "men did not accuse him in vain; was he not a mur—"

"Hush, hush; will your Majesty, too, utter those cruel, those false words? A train of circumstances led to his accusation, but never will

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I believe it. I fancy even now, that I hear his voice, saying, 'Clementina, *you* will never believe me guilty?'" Tears coursed each other down Clementina's pale cheeks, her breast heaved convulsively, her sobs threatened to annihilate her delicate frame; and Poltrot de Méré, the passionate, the unbridled youth, had planted the first seeds of sorrow in that beautiful girl's heart. The pleasures of a Court were lost upon her, the joys of youth had fleeted by; the bloom of happiness had withered; the bounding exhuberance, the free and elastic step, had all sunken in an early tomb. No ray of sunshine shed its lustre over the page of her destiny: others had mourned the loss of a lover, but in mourning his earthly loss, she had also to weep over his lost soul. Yes, though she refused to believe in Poltrot's guilt, still she *felt* she had lost him for ever; although she shuddered from analysing why it *was* for ever, sad echo repeated, "for ever, for ever."

Oh, Vice, how dreadful thy birth! how

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dreadful thy life! how dreadful thy death! The once bright and gay chevalier was now an idiotic being, at the mercy of a crafty Italian Astrologer; the gayest hours of his life had fleeted by as a tale which is told, bringing with it no moral, save the dark lesson of crime. The sweet Clementina had laughed her last joyous laugh, had uttered her last mirthful song; an undying pang of sorrow was cankering her heart; life had lost its pristine hue of delight. Then, in the solitude of her chamber, her lips parched with the fever of grief, her sunny tresses all neglected, poor Clementina remembered the song she had sung, when Catherine de Médicis appeared before her, ready to launch her into the ocean of life; now her voice was sometimes heard; words came spontaneously to her overcharged heart, and the sweet Jeanne d'Albret brushed away a tear of sympathy, as she gave ear to words which grief had engendered. Sorrowfully she listened now to

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CLEMENTINA'S SONG.

"I weep for the days of joy which *were*,
But now have fleeted by;
I weep for the hours which had no care,
When tearless was my eye.

"I weep as I tell the tale of strife,
My sad, my hapless lot;
I weep for a new, a higher life,
Where sorrows are forgot.

"I weep for my own, my love now dead,
And echo weeps again;
I weep for the joys for ever fled,
Whilst sorrow fills my brain.

"I'll weep whilst I may; I soon shall sink
Into the lonely tomb:
I weep, as I near the shrouded brink;
Yet life is midst that gloom."

These mournful strains were Clementina's lullabys. Poor girl! they were sweeter to her than other consolation, for there are sorrows, which no human voice can relieve; there are pangs, which time alone can heal, or death alone can sever.

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CHAPTER XI.

WERE I to enumerate the broils, the cabals, the petty strife, the party feeling, which reigned at the period we are speaking of, I should weary the patience of my fair readers, and gentlemen would justly say, "they are more acquainted with history than their authoress." I must therefore beg my readers to suppose a lapse of *four* years has passed, during which time, I will give a very brief sketch of national events, and then proceed to introduce Jeanne d'Albret at the Court of the-Queen-Mother of France.

The Prince de Condé had endeavoured to

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take the King, but the Court of France fortunately became acquainted with his design, and the brave Swiss Guards delivered him from his perilous situation. They surrounded the King, and escorted him from Meux to Paris. Montmorency attacked the Prince de Condé, but in that engagement at Saint Denis, the brave Montmorency lost his life. He received eight wounds, and his death is rendered memorable from his last words, so expressive of the undying fire which existed in his expiring body. A priest was giving him words of comfort.

"Do you suppose," exclaimed Montmorency, "that a man who has lived with honour, nearly eighty-four years, does not know how to suffer, for one quarter of an hour, the pangs of death?"

Thus died a glorious warrior, a brave and honourable man. The rule of his life was comprehended in three words—*une foi, une loi, un roi.*

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The young Duc d'Anjou was appointed Lieutenant-General of the kingdom, and the French armies were now led by a young Prince, sixteen years of age.

The times were becoming every day more troublous; and however ingenious Catherine de Médicis strove to be, however much she wished to stop the headlong course, the ruinous havoc of these civil wars, it must be confessed that she had no sinecure in her function of Queen-Mother; indeed, it is astonishing that she did not lay down the reins, which appeared far above the restraining curb of a woman's hand. But Catherine had no idea of allowing her high spirit to be quelled, or even of submitting to circumstances. She thought it advisable to imprison the heads of the insurrection, and endeavoured to arrest Condé and Coligny. They were, however, informed of her design and took refuge at La Rochelle, which was, in fact, the harbour of the Protestants. Condé had now an excuse for kin-

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dling anew the fire of strife. The English and Germans took part in the war; the edict of free worship was annulled. Massacres, wrongs on both sides, vice, revenge, horrors of all kinds, at length were renewed with worse fury than on previous occasions. The armies met at Jarnac, near La Saintonge. The Duc d'Anjou, under the auspices of Marshal de Tavannes was completely victorious. Montesquieu killed the Prince of Condé; the latter fought as a hero—his arm was shot off, his leg was broken, but still he fought, until, pierced with innumerable wounds, he expired under Montesquieu's sword.

The Prince de Condé was universally regretted; his character was much respected; he was amiable, courageous, and capable of the most valiant deeds. He was a Calvinist, without any taste for the strife of religious parties; and if he rebelled, a train of untoward circumstances ushered iu his rebellion. Poor Condé! why was he the head of an opponent party?

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His misfortune was to have lived in an age when men either remained passively inactive, or took up arms in their own country. *For* or *against* the King, it could hardly be called; Charles the Ninth was yet under the control of tutors. There was no other Royal person contending for the crown; it was Charles the Ninth's undisputed right. May I not, therefore, contend, that men were *not* fighting *for* or *against* the King, but were contending from political motives, and from unrestrestrained family hate? Until the death of the Duke of Guise, his and Catherine de Médicis' deep family hatred—a hatred which had grown with years, and been nurtured with rising power—was cause enough for strife. Coligny's well-known quarrels with the family of Guise, another cause; the Prince de Condé's aversion to the triumvirate, another.

But why enumerate the causes of strife? my pen recoils from a task befitting wiser and more political feeling writers. Certain it is, that

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France would have long been deluged in its own blood, but the heads of the party had been mown as grass before the unsparing brand of war.

Voices which were so lately heard sounding the loud battle-cry, were silent in the quiet tomb; those gallant men who, full of fire, life, and energy, had been seen in the beginning of the affray, now lay cold and stiff on the gory field. Montmorency, Condé, the King of Navarre, the Guise, where, oh! where were they? Gone where the battle cry is heard no more—where the sanguine stream is replaced by flowing rivulets of peace—where strife is buried in never-waking sleep—where feud raises not its clamorous voice—where the eddy of party-spirit is swept away—where the hurricane of discord is still—gone, were these brave warriors—gone to their eternal rest!

The thought of the death of the warrior on the battle-field recalls a train of saddened reflections. I think of those lines, those beauti-

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fully expressive lines of Byron's, in the *Giaour*:

"He who has bent him o'er the dead!"

Alas, alas! who bends over the dying frame of a warrior? Does he die gradually, slowly? do friends watch the expiring fire of life? do their loved hands wipe away the drops of dewy death trembling on the fading brow? do their affectionate bosoms pillow the dying head? do their gentle voices waft into the dying one's ears words of trust, of religion, hope and love? Ah! truly

"He who has bent him o'er the dead,"

has a soothing, a melancholy pleasure; but the hapless warrior is pierced and falls; the gory plain his couch, dying men's recumbent forms his hideous pillow; shouts, firing, horses trampling, bugles resounding, voices heard amidst the din—this is the music which marshals the soul to eternity!

I am sadly digressing from my subject; but

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gentle readers, have patience; my little vein of thought has flown; I shake it off half sadly, half willingly, and I take up anew the thread of those troublous days of which I speak.

The Prince de Béarn was now showing the early seeds of that genius, that warlike valour, that activity of mind, which formed the basis of the character of the famous Henri Quatre—a King, whose name will be famous as long as men peruse the pages of history! It is worth living well, methinks, to attain that end!

The Prince de Condé's death was a severe blow on the Calvanist's side, and it might have wrought the utter destruction of their party, but Coligny exerted himself to replace the irreparable loss of his colleague. A new star, however, was dawning in fresh-born splendour; a new star was rising under Coligny's sage training; a new hope to the Protestants, and objects of dread to the Catholics—a being beloved by the Calvinists: this was no other than the Prince de Béarn.

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Henri fought under the protection of Coligny; and his young rival, the Duc d'Anjou, headed the Royalists. The latter had gained a decisive victory; but he imprudently lingered to raise a siege. Poitou, Saintong, Béarn, Guceiuse, were the scenes of dreadful bloodshed. The fury of both parties continued unabated; and the Protestants would only surrender on the most advantageous conditions.

At length, the treaty of Germain-en-Laie was signed. The Protestants were allowed to possess four towns, in which they were to be protected from wrongs. Amongst these towns, was La Rochelle.

It was Catherine de Médicis who effected this peace! Peace! oh perfidious Queen! oh, base-hearted woman! was it becoming so fair a form, to harbour a heart so full of deadly treachery! Peace! it was a trap covered with loveliest exotics, redolent with flowery perfume; soft and fragrant the road to this well-covered trap; honied the words of her who

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conducted her enemies to the well-disguised place; deep, deep, the trench beneath, deep as unfathomable abysses, dark and treacherous as blackest night. Readers, peace was proclaimed; but we, who know the sequel—can we echo that word peace? We must, however, feign to believe in it, as we read this tale, and wonder at the blindness of those who believed in a Médicis. This little sketch brings me to the end of the lapse of the four years, and ushers in the year 1569! The young Princesse de France was a budding beauty, the pride of the Court, the belle of Royalty. The young King of France was now Monarch, in word and in deed; the young Prince de Béarn was the accepted lover of the Princess Marguerite. Her heart was proud of her handsome and noble-minded bridegroom; his youthful affections were touched by her budding graces. Never were a lovelier pair seen; and the mild Jeanne d'Albret was truly happy. Much as she would have liked her son to marry

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a Protestant, she was wise enough to see all the advantage of the anticipated union; pleased and flattered by the Médicis' offer, she came to Court, to sign the nuptial papers; she saw no perfidy, no guile; she believed and trusted. Poor Jeanne arrived at Paris with all hope, all new-born delight, and there she found a tomb. On her arrival, she was overwhelmed with kindness. .satiated with pleasure. The King of France, no longer open-hearted, no longer the troublesome, but frank boy, who gave so much trouble to Mariot, his preceptor, was sucking the food of craft and deceit from his mother's political-speaking lips. Charles brought his blushing sister to Jeanne d'Albret's presence, and giving her hand to the Prince de Béarn, he thought not he was betrothing her to the future monarch of France.

Jeanne d'Albret kissed the beautiful girl, and she thought her a most lovely being—as beautiful as Clementina, when she saw her; but, alas! since then she was much altered.

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"May no sorrow ever alter that sweet expression of happiness," said the Queen of Navarre.

"Oh! I am too happy to think of sorrow," replied the blushing young girl.

"I trust such feelings may ever last," continued the pious Queen, still gazing at her. "Alas! alas! it is a sad thing to watch the sorrow of youth—to see it prey on the soft, fair cheek. But this is not a fit manner to greet my daughter; I leave you to my son's care."

The Queen kissed Marguerite's cheek, and the Prince de Béarn, putting his arm round her slender waist, led her into the alcove of a window, and was soon engaged with her in very animated discourse.

The Queen of Navarre joined the young King and his mother. After they separated, the Queen-Mother called her son, and the following conversation which passed between them is authenticated by history (that part which is in italics). It is, methinks, so expressive of the

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feeling of deceit which swayed the Court, so despicable, yet so truly portrays the young King's mind, that I cannot help introducing it in my tale :—

"Have I not well played my part?" said the King.

"Yes; very well indeed," answered Catherine.

"*But it is nothing to begin well; you must finish well also.*"

"*I will draw a net over the whole Court,*" answered the young King.

"You are my son, my own beloved son," cried Catherine, rapturously; "you are worthy to reign; you will yet triumph over your many enemies. Now, listen to me: Coligny is the only person I cannot understand; he is ever courtly, ever the sedate, well-bred gentleman; but he is so cold, so distant, so inaccessible, that you will have some trouble, my son, in drawing your net over him."

The young King mused for some time; at

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length he looked up to his mother's face, and striking the hilt of the sword, he exclaimed—"A moi les resources, ma bonne mére."

"Dis les moi donc," answered Catherine.

"Suppose, then," said the King, "I give Coligny, *pro tem.*, the command of the army I intend sending against Philip the Second. Will not that offer bring the Admiral to our Court?"

"Of course it would," replied Catherine; "it would bring him to any Court in Europe. But would you trust him with your army?"

"Trust him!" cried Charles; "I would trust my life in his sole keeping. Yet I hate the Admiral, and he despises me."

"Tush, what care you for that?"

"Not much," said the King; "but a little, since I cannot return the compliment. I may hate, but cannot despise him."

"If he lifted his hand against the Duke?"

"Ah, *if!* but it is *if*," replied Catherine. "With *if*, the accusation began, and with *if*, the young Duke's revenge must die. Coligny

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extricated himself from the accusation, as easily as he washed his hands from the stain he had taken from raising the murdered corpse; the tale of Coligny's being a murderer, was indeed a silly tale, fit to amuse those who like to watch the little nothings of which the thread of human misery is spun. I never believed a word of the accusation, nor should I, even if I had not known the murderer."

"But I firmly believe Henri of Guise truly credits the belief that Coligny murdered his father," said the King. "'Seeing is believing,' is an old adage, and certainly the young Duke saw a suspicious sight—Coligny kneeling by the side of the murdered man, with blood-stained hands and pallid brow. *Foi de roi!* if that was not strong proof, what is? and reports speak so differently of the actual reason which took Coligny to the enemy's camp."

"I believe I know the right tale," said Catherine. Coligny had spoken harshly to Poltrot de Méré, for he was exasperated at the idea of

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his bringing Clementina to the Queen of Navarre's Court; you know how downcast, how sqeamishly pious this Coligny is, and his tender conscience upbraiding him with want of Christian feeling, in refusing to be indulgent towards a maiden in distress, this gallant Admiral could do nothing better than proceed after Poltrot; he went with all due humility, as a penitent on a pilgrimage, ready to escort the young maiden to Jeanne d'Albret's Court. There, it seems, he met the unfortunate Poltrot, and was taken up for the murder. You know the rest."

"But plausible as all this really is, and true as it *is*," said the King, "the young Duke shuts his eyes against all conviction; he loved his father dearly, and I can find no means of turning his thoughts from his deeply-rooted hatred of Coligny. The whole Protestant forces will be in arms, if one of his white hairs be injured; the Prince de Béarn, now unanimously loved, will animate them; and it is time the

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King of France's peace should not be disturbed by his rash subjects' quarrels."

"They say the Duke de Guise is passionately fond of Clementina," said the Queen-Mother musingly; "she must know her lover murdered the Guise, and she shall be compelled to tell it him, she shall see her father, and he must enforce this. For my part, I pity the young Duke's taste; poor Clementina was once very lovely, even surpassingly beautiful; but since seventeen to twenty-two years of age, she has never ceased mourning for Poltrot de Méré, and her attractions have fled. The very sound of her meek suffering voice takes away my patience; I have never seen a man for whom I would mourn more than a month, and I cannot sympathize with one who has mourned for five years, during which time, the young Duke strove to forget his love, fled from her, and then returned—saw Clementina—oh, how different, how changed; the blush of youth had fled, and keen despair was marked in every

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feature. Yet they say, as he loved her once for her extreme freshness and beauty, so he loves her now for her constancy and interesting position. I will make him confess his love; I will obtain Clementina's consent to be his wife; and he shall hear from her, that Coligny did not murder his father; if a pale-faced woman can give us peace, *bonheur á son visage interressant.*"

"I suppose Clementina's beauty will be immortalized," said the King, gaily; "I confess, I think her very pretty, and the young Prince de Condé is *éperdu de ses charmes;* he prefers her to our blooming Marguerite; and my little jealous sister, although betrothed to Henri of Béarn, is very sorry to think how long a time will elapse before her marriage, and how many of Henri's treasured smiles will belong to Clementina, when away at the Court of Navarre."

"Pettura's daughter shall never cause the Princesse de France a moment's uneasiness,"

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cried Marguerite, bounding into the room; "I have heard your last words, Charles, but I shall never be jealous now I have heard my Henri's own voice. Oh, dear mother, when shall we be married?"

"You must tell Time to walk on its swiftest wings, my fair child," exclaimed the Queen; "for although my rule, '*avec moi il n'y a rein d'impossible,*' might be serviceable to you were I to allow the union, the young Prince obeys his Lady-Mother implicitly, and she would never consent to the marriage of a Princess, fifteen years old, to a Prince seventeen!"

"We mus twait patiently, then; and meanwhile, my Henri must go with Coligny to the wars, and perhaps—" continued the pretty little Princess, dashing away a tear; "perhaps he will be killed. If so, dear mother, the dirge I will sing over his grave, shall be a dirge, saying—'the Princess de France, *ne se marira jamais.*' Am I jealous of Clementina?

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Oh! no, no; but I pity and admire her. I should have done as she has. She will never marry."

"She must marry!" exclaimed the Queen, violently; "she must marry the Duke of Guise, and that, soon."

"The Guise," almost shrieked Marguerite; "what! the very man she detests—the man who would hourly remind her that Monsieur de Méré murdered his father! Oh, mother, mother, could you wish it? I have not forgotten Monsieur de Méré and his gentle sister Augusta; I remember yet, his sunny locks, his chevalier figure, and all his grace. Poor, poor, Clementina!" Here, the affectionate young Princess reddened with emotion, and then burst into tears.

Ah! the Princess changed her disposition when she had lived for some time in the gay world, from which her extreme youth now partially excluded her; then, when jealousy haunted her bosom, when she imbibed much of Catherine de Medicis' wary temper, then

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must she have looked back as on a dream, at those touchingly tender, youthful days, when Marguerite de Valois wept for another's sorrows.

There are many besides the Princess Marguerite who can look back on the green valley of youth, and know that they then watered the garden of humanity with the last tear they ever shed. Since then, they have walked through the vast field of life: they have gathered some honied drops; they have sipped much bitterness; they have become callous and cold; the fountain of their sympathy has long ceased to exist. Ask those who have withered in misfortune, if a return of prosperity can make them great again. Ask those whose sunny tempers are soured with unkindness, if they dare grasp with avidity a newly-found friend? Others have promised much, but have never performed; and the heart once deceived, hardly dares to trust.

* * * * *

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It was unusual to see the fair Princess Marguerite in tears; the Queen-Mother was almost angry, and yet there was no pretext for saying so; she therefore found a reason to declare the necessity of her absence, and left her daughter with the King.

The door had hardly closed, when Marguerite threw her arms round the King's neck.

"Brother, dear brother, do not let our mother make poor Clementina marry the Duke—she is dying of a broken heart."

"How do you know that?" said the King.

"Oh, she sighs so piteously," replied the little Princess, "she is so patient, though. Her face, too, is so very, very pale, and her voice so gently sweet—I love her very dearly. Do promise, brother—you can save her if you will."

"You must ask the fair Clementina if she really hates the Duke," replied Charles; "and if she does, this must be the sign—I will walk

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in the garden this evening, and Clementina must give me a rose."

"But that is all nonsense," replied Marguerite, pettishly; "you are so surrounded by chevaliers, and Clementina is so timid, she will never be able to give you the flower."

"I will come in your garden between seven and eight o'clock," cried the King, who loved a little romantic adventure, "no chevaliers are allowed to walk in your castle of beauty, so there the most timid lady may come."

"Well, be it so, if it is your will," said Marguerite; "but you will not allow Clementina to be tormented?"

"*Non foi de roi;* not if she gives me the rose."

Poor Marguerite was obliged to be contented, and left the King to seek Clementina.

"My brother seems to make a joke of it," soliloquized the youthful Princess; "but then, he has not listened to Clementina's sighs—to her

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night's cough. He has never watched the varying emotion of her pale face. I have: I love and pity her, and she shall not marry the Duke."

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CHAPTER XII.

CLEMENTINA was arranging some flowers in a vase, when the Princess Marguerite entered the apartment.

There are moments when we are so busily engaged in thought, that we do not heed outward objects; and Clementina, lost in a chaos of bygone recollections, did not hear the Princess, who glided noiselessly by her side.

"Why do you weep over those lovely flowers?" she said, taking Clementina's hand.

"Why do I weep, young Princess? Because Hope is dead, and Grief alone now weaves

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her pale wreath round my brow. Look at this gay flower; I, too, was once very bright and smiling, but the keen hand of Adversity robbed me of every boasted charm. Thus will it be with these gay children of the Earth. See, see, some are already drooping, and yet they have not long been culled."

"But, see how many young buds are blowing to replace the decaying flowers. Thus Hope should speak to you, Clementina. Indeed, indeed, you must not be so sad."

"Tell the green leaves to stop for ever on the trees, and bid autumnal gales pass by without laying its yellow-tinged hand on the gems of creation; bid all nature change her routine; it is as easy as to bid me be happy. I am a blighted, lonely creature. I feed on sorrow; I live in sorrow, in sorrow I shall die—forgive me for speaking so freely to you, fair Princess."

"Fair!" exclaimed the young Marguerite; "never will I be vain, or value passing beauty. I was a mere child when you came to Court;

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but I think I see you as you were then. I went to bed dreaming of you; I rose with your image before me. Oh, you were so fair, so very happy; it seemed as if sorrow would never touch your heart. But I am making you weep. Oh, pray do not cry; it makes me so sad to see you. Can you not try and forget Monsieur de Méré. Tell me—speak to me as if I were your sister, a favourite young sister."

"Forget!" replied Clementina; "yes, I could forget Poltrot de Méré; it is not for *him* I grieve. Princess, no one has ever cared enough for my sorrow for me to analyze it. Do you wish me to tell you the real reason of my grief?"

"Yes, I do wish it very much," replied the young Princess.

"Then, believe me, I grieve not because I do not see Poltrot—because I can no more hear his voice; my sorrow is deeper than this; I pine when I think, that even after death, when that blessed time arrives, when souls are re-united, never more to part, when kindred spirits hope

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to be happy in one long reign of eternal bliss, then Poltrot de Méré's soul will not dwell near mine; he has soiled it with a sin surpassing all forgiveness, and we have parted on earth, never more to meet: our parting is eternal."

"My mother says you do not believe M. de Méré murdered the Duke," murmured the Princess.

"I did not believe it a week ago," replied Clementina, "and would I never had. My unbelief was joy and balm to my heart; it was as 'a bright gem in a broken casket,' and I kept it with dear and loving care; but the spell is broken, and in one week I have suffered more pain than during long, weary years; then my grief was all worldly: now it is lasting—it is eternal.

"Do tell me how you have convinced yourself of a circumstance which has filled your mind with such keen sorrow."

"About a week ago, the Admiral Coligny paid me a visit; he said—'I was going to a

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Court where his name would be uttered by some with deep opprobrium, and that he felt it a duty towards himself, as well as towards me, to convince me, as far as was in his power, of the fallacy of that treasured dream of my Poltrot's innocence.' I listened, and every word the venerable old man uttered brought a bitter conviction to my soul; a veil was torn from my eyes. I *tried* to disbelieve, but it was vain, and Coligny has planted a never-dying pang of agony in my mind. I, who had considered Poltrot as a martyr to wrong accusation, now know how bitterly I was deceived—I, who had looked forward to death as a bright life which would waft my soul homewards; which would re-unite me to Poltrot: now, now, all is dark and gloomy; life has lost its interest for me, and death is no longer my angel of consolation."

"Do not speak so hopelessly," said the affectionate Princess, kissing Clementina's pale brow; "remember our Saviour pardoned the malefactor on the cross; we will both pray for

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Poltrot's soul; let us, every morning, raise our voices to the Throne of Grace."

"Ah, why did I not think of this before?" said Clementina, pressing Marguerite's hand, whilst the first tears of comfort she had shed for many long months of sorrow coursed each other down her cheeks. No wonder the Princess was unwilling to break the spell; no wonder she could not speak of the Duke, but clasping Clementina's thin hand in hers, she let her weep, and felt it would be wrong to wish to stop those tears.

At length, Clementina raised her face from her hands, in which it had been buried; her cheeks were slightly flushed, and a ray of new-born hope was already written on the expression of despairing sorrow which had before sat on her brow. Will any persons say the young know not how to sympathize? The Princess Marguerite had indeed sprung a vein of consolation in the desolate heart, where true sorrow had so long dwelt. Seeing that Clementina was

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more calm, Marguerite, though with considerable hesitation, hazarded the question—

"Clementina, could you not love again?"

Were it not for the gentle tone of voice in which the question was asked, Clementina would have thought the Princess was mocking her sorrow. "You are too young to understand the human heart," she replied, not angrily, but sadly. "If you were older you would not have asked that question, after seeing my grief."

"I may be too young to be supposed to know the usual range of human hearts, but I can read yours," said the Princess; "and *I* know you will not love again; but my mother says, 'there are some persons who marry without feeling any love;' more than that, she adds, 'that it is an imperious duty on your part to marry.' Do not think me ill-natured, dear Clementina. If I do not speak to you now, I may not have another opportunity for some time to come, and meanwhile, my mother will tell you, but less

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gently, words, which I know are *now* poisoned arrows to your heart. Do you think it would be wrong to marry without love, so long as you have strength to fulfil your duty? Would it not be a sacrifice of self, and a meritorious action, if you made the happiness of a person who loves you, and did not seek to deceive him, by telling him you could love him as you would have loved Poltrot?"

"This is, indeed, talking according to Court reasoning," said Clementina; "and I am sorry to find every-one misunderstands me. The last sad morning I saw Poltrot, was the first and only time he had ever told his love. It is true, I should have preferred him to any other person from the moment we met; but that love at first sight is more easily understood than defined. It is silly to imagine that I actually grieve for the want of a love I had so little enjoyed. I have told you, Princess, that it is for Poltrot de Méré's *soul* I grieve; and as to love, never can I hear its voice; a cold shudder seizes

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me every time I think of it; a superstitious recollection flashes across my brain; for, have I not cause to remember that, the first morn I believed in its existence, ushered in my life of misery; and that from that hour, Poltrot de Méré's soul was lost!"

Clementina ceased speaking, and the Princess would fain have concluded the sad interview; but she had already acquired that inherent firmness of disposition so conspicuous in the Queen-Mother's character, and she therefore resumed the conversation.

"It is of no use dissembling with you," she said; "I must tell you that it is the Queen's will that you marry Henri of Guise, and he himself presses it with all speed.

"How unworthy of a Duke, how unworthy of a Queen, to wish to dispose of the hand of a young woman so inferior to them in birth—so incapable of defending herself."

"You do yourself grievous injustice," replied Marguerite, warmly; "are not half our courtly

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grandees risen persons? Was our great Cardinal de Lorraine always the proud mitred being he now is? Your intellect and beauty first won Henri of Guise's attention; my mother's gratitude will raise you to honour. Do not say you cannot defend yourself; for four years you have evaded the young Duke's offers—you have escaped my mother's control; do you not reflect on all this?"

"The Court was so busily engaged in war; and Henri of Guise was following the battle-cry, or methinks, humble as I am, I must have been the subject of Royal persecution; small thanks will I give for my temporary peace. What cares the hunted deer how long he has ranged unmolested in the forest, when at length he is brought to bay? he feels the hunter's blow as keenly at the last, as if it had come before a wearying chase had deprived the poor animal of strength."

"Now you look proud and angry, and that does not become you," said the young Princess;

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"I love my Clementina, when I can compare her to the beautiful though drooping lily; you are not yourself now. You must not be angry with me; if I *have* spoken as the Court speaks, I have not uttered half the words my mother will; she says you *must* marry Henri of Guise!"

"That will I never do," exclaimed Clementina. "I will lie me down and die. I care not; anything rather than marry the Duke. I will kneel at his feet; I will beg him to spare me. Do not say the words again. Oh, I cannot marry the Duke." Here poor Clementina wept bitterly.

"Dear, dearest Clementina, weep not thus," cried the Princess. "I have come to save you; forgive me if I have pained you, now I know your heart." But at that moment the door opened, and the Queen-Mother stood before the trembling girls. Marguerite de Valois, the frank young Princess, drew back quite abashed, and nervously pressed Clementina's hand; the

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latter gained strength when she marked the dark spot on Catherine's brow, for she saw she must be firm or fall without a struggle into the Médicis' power. I do not know if I quote the very words, but Shakspeare says to this meaning:—

"A worm will turn when trodden on."

Clementina possessed one of those truly feminine and dove-like tempers, which strive not to be heard amidst the noisy clamour of angry passions, but she also inherited a firm and determined rule of conduct, and she now felt she would not be a worm to be crushed by the Médicis.

"Ho, so," cried Catherine, "it is here you learn those pretty tragedy airs, such as you displayed, Marguerite: no more of this, for I am weary of this sentimental folly. Go now away, you must leave me. I wish to speak to Clementina."

The Princess dare not disobey her mother, but she could not control the emotion which

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stole over her; she clasped her hands round Clementina's fair neck, and covered her with kisses. The Queen-Mother advanced, but Clementina gently disengaged herself from her young friend's embrace, and whispered, "Do not fear for me—I am firm."

"I will tell Jeanne d'Albret all I know, and all I apprehend," whispered the Princess in return; and she glided out of the room.

Clementina was very much exhausted by her trying interview with the young Princess, and cold as Catherine de Médicis generally was, careless as she generally felt towards the feelings of another person, she involuntarily placed a chair near the poor sufferer, and seated her in it.

"You seem in indifferent health," she said, surveying that pale and much altered face.

"I am not strong," answered Clementina.

"Have you had any medical consultation?" continued the Queen.

"What can medicine do for me?" said Cle-

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mentina. "Yet I am stronger than I look. For three years I have watched the budding Spring, and then thought I should not see the Summer's ripeness: God willed it otherwise, and I am still here, a sickly, delicate plant, and the rude Wintry winds will yet blow on me, unless one strong tempest severs me from future misery."

"It is your own fault if you are not, on the contrary, supremely happy," said the Queen-Mother. "You certainly are endeavouring to realize a perfect picture of a heroine of romance. Why should you be unhappy? say rather you are the source of envy to many a fair damsel—the wife of the young and handsome Duke. *Pardi ou finirout les mécontents?*

"The wife of Henri of Guise, did your Majesty say? Never, never. Nay, I must speak; I will tell the Duke that his image sears my heart. He is handsome, he is noble-hearted, and I recoil not from him from any trifling emotions; but I will tell him that his presence

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reminds me of one dark scene, one hideous wreck, which has been to me a lasting knell, proclaiming all my wretchedness."

Catherine de Médicis stifled the passionate burst of anger which was rising to her lips, and suppressing, as well as she could, the torrent of warm blood, which was mounting to her temples, she lowered her voice, and spoke in those soft, tremulously-persuasive accents, which she could at times command, and by which Warriors and Courtiers, Protestants and Papists, had so often been deceived.

"Clementina, I am not harsh with you," she began; "but I wish to promote your own happiness. I wish to convince you that a long life of married bliss will efface the very recollection of clouds which have overshadowed your early life. I cannot bear to see you at two-and-twenty consuming the energy of youth; throwing away health, spirits, and every earthly enjoyment, at the shrine of useless

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regrets. I cannot bear to hear my Courtiers call you romantic, and silly; I do not like to hear them raising bets about who is the most likely amongst their gay, frivolous set, to win you from your grief. I remember that you are a young and beautiful woman; but I recollect also, that you were once still more lovely. Years have not yet had time to impair your beauty; you should now be blooming, and you are fading; as the bud dies, nipped by one night's frost, so you will not survive the lustre of your girlhood's beauty; here, then, I come before you; I surrender all my eloquence—I feel as a mother yearning towards her child. I beg, beseech, but I am not commanding;—do not look upon me now as a Queen, but open your heart to me as a friend. Oh, throw not away the chalice of happiness, it is now trembling near your lips; but it will perchance never come again at your bidding. You told me once you wished to see life, and—"

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"Remind me not! remind me not of those vanished hours which have left so dreary a shade Oh! tell me not of those moments of girl-like delusion," cried poor Clementina; "Oh! would that it were all a dream! Queen-Mother of France, tell me not you feel towards me as a mother; it is well I have no mother—her tender heart would have broken if she knew one half of the misery I have felt—if she had heard half my sighs—if she had watched the decay of health and happiness."

"I thought you were a strong-minded girl, Clementina; that you could soar above the trials of life; that you could bow to circumstances, and remember that the type of a high soul is to suffer without letting the whole world know it."

"That may be if the broken heart be allowed to feed unobserved on its own misery; but I am taken from Court to Court: I have bowed to Queens; I have had to force a smile at gay entertainments; I have been tormented by

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hollow love; Oh! I am ready to be shrouded in the tomb, but I cannot wear my bridal-dress!"

"Have you never called the voice of religion to your aid?"

"Have I not?" asked Clementina; "have I not bedewed my sleepless couch with the tears of hopeless resignation? have I not prayed until my parched lips were dry, and refused further utterance? I have prayed during the hours of the day; I have awoke from my feverish sleep, prayers still trembling on my lips. Now, I have a new hope; a new life has sprung up within me; my benighted heart shall turn to it for comfort, for rest; shall I tell you my new hope? But did you not speak kindly to me just now? Yes, yes, you will rejoice to know that a heavenly balm has been sent to me; that I am kindling with new delight, for I am going to save my Poltrot's soul!"

"The maiden is distraught," muttered Catherine; but she did not say the words aloud.

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There was an impressive earnestness about the poor girl's voice, a touching vividness in her words; they fell slowly and melodiously —they spoke, as it were, the real poesy of grief, and they told how hopelessly broken was that poor maiden's heart.

"Clementina, my words do not seem to reach your heart; you must now listen to the voice of your father."

"Ah, my poor father," said Clementina, "is is long since I have seen him; I have often thought the prohibition of my meeting him arbitrary and cruel; it is so sweet to be pressed to a parent's bosom."

"It was not my wish that you should not see your father," said Catherine (and for once, she told the truth). "Now, however, you shall see him."

"Not this evening," replied Clementina, drawing away from the Queen's proffered hand. "I have been so agitated during this day, that my courage sinks at the idea of this meeting.

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It is long since I have heard my father's voice; it is long since he has pressed me to his heart, and I have much to tell him; to-morrow morning I shall be ready, but not this evening."

Catherine could not resist, for Clementina had hardly finished speaking, when she fell back in her chair, nearly fainting.

"Queen Jeanne d'Albret wishes to see you, Clementina," said the Princess Marguerite, coming in at this moment.

The Queen took the Princess by the hand, muttering, "Jeanne d'Albret could find another messenger."

Clementina rose with tottering steps; she bowed to the Queen, but her strength was utterly exhausted, and she burst into a flood of tears.

"I have not spoken harshly to you," said Catherine, who felt unwilling Jeanne d'Albret should accuse her of harshness.

"You have not spoken harshly," replied the

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suffering girl, "but you have spoken without reflecting that my heart is broken."

"I am wearying of that girl's nonsense," said Catherine, half aloud, and the Princess turned pale with alarm.

Clementina's sobs were heard in the passage; she reached Jeanne d'Albret's apartments, and fell at her feet.

"Rise, dear Clementina," cried the Queen; "rise, and tell me all."

"Oh! let me leave this treacherous Court," sobbed Clementina; "let me be again in comparative peace; do not let them torment me so cruelly."

The Queen raised her afflicted *protégée;* she pressed her trembling hands in hers, and she drew her gently by her side. It was not a proper time to speak to Clementina, who was quite exhausted; the Queen, therefore, insisted on her going to bed, and the poor girl passively submitted.

The Princess remained some time with her

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mother, who found various excuses for venting her ill-humour on the amiable young creature; at length, she suddenly exclaimed, "I should like to walk in my garden?"

"Go, if you will," cried the Queen; "but talk no more to Clementina, until she returns to her duty."

The Princess saw the young King in the garden. "Clementina will not be here this evening," she said.

"I did not expect she would," replied the King, sarcastically; "she is as proud as the proudest dame in the land; the Duke will be well matched."

"Fie, Charles, she will never marry the Duke."

"Not if my mother makes her?" responded the King.

"No, I believe she would die first," repeated the Princess.

"Ha! ha! how you are stamping on those lovely pinks," said the King; "you are as

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passionate as my curs in the dog-days. I am thinking, Henri of Béarn will have a pretty task in taming you."

"He would if he attempted it, but he would not tease me as you do; have I not told you Clementina cannot come? she is now with Jeanne d'Albret."

"She could have come if she liked," replied the King; "yet, I will give her one more chance," continued he: "I will ask her for a rose to-morrow, and if she refuses me, I will let her marry the Duke, without saying a word against the match." On a simple flower, then, was such misery to depend!

Readers, you will say this is a mere plot in my tale; this is one of many fictitious events. But of what, save trifles, is the sum-total of life composed? Trifles, smaller than the gift or refusal of a flower, have led to happiness or misery. Those well-known lines of Hannah More are indeed full of reflective truth:—

"Trifles make the sum of human happiness."

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Trifling words, too, may be of serious consequence, as well as trifling deeds. When Hastings uttered his contemptive "if," that "if" of fatal incredulity, he thought not that the incensed Gloucester would send him to his grave. When the King of France derided the Norman Conqueror, he thought not that, piqued by his "*mots plaisants*," the conquering William would invade France, and then die amidst the embers of Normandy. When the despised Italian Conrad threw down the gauntlet from the scaffold steps, who thought that the next event would be the "Sicilian Vespers?" Enough; history, as well as domestic life, are replete with examples, and every home-circle knows that

"Trifles magnify, until they reach the climax of good or evil."

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CHAPTER XIII.

We have before introduced ourselves to the apartment of the Astrologer, whom Catherine regarded with superstitious blindness, as necessary to her own safety; and Lorraine most artfully fed the flame of the Queen's weakness. To the Cardinal, Pettura was indebted to his apparently extraordinary knowledge of the Court. When the Queen-Mother had caused him to dwell under her very roof, his foresight of all her proceedings appeared extraordinary; he seldom quitted his apartments, and the Médicis was therefore certain, that he gained

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his information by some miraculous power, which she dare not unravel, whilst the true key to the Astrologer's knowledge was the Cardinal Lorraine. It may be easily imagined, that Lorraine was very desirous to persuade the Queen that he neither abetted, or even tolerated, the Italian's proceedings; this he contrived to do, by frequently telling his Royal mistress that he considered her reliance on Pettura as a blot of weakness on her character, which she must carefully conceal from the world. To speak of weakness to Catherine, was touching her most sensitive vanity; and she abstained from letting any one know that she ruled her conduct according to Pettura's words.

Loretta was now doubly useful to her Royal mistress; but the waiting-woman's temper was daily more soured. Some persons are likely to rise at Court, by a succession of faithful services; but Loretta had quite enough sense to know she would always remain in the same

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grade. Catherine required a person in her situation. It was a relief to her to know that she could say "Now go, Loretta, I will ring when I want you;" it was a relief to know the girl's dark eyes could not be fixed upon her in the drawing-room—would not follow her at the banquet-table. It was a comfort, too, to know that Loretta's pride alone would prevent her talking to menials, and that if faithfulness towards her Royal mistress did not seal her lips, her pride would most effectually do so.

Loretta had much changed since my readers were introduced to her, at the beginning of my tale: in appearance she was altered for the better; she had grown from a pretty girl, to a very handsome woman: her figure was tall and full, and her large Italian eyes shone with a brilliancy rarely surpassed; her hair was smoothly banded, and the little coiff or frill, which proclaimed her situation, was most coquettishly arranged, so that it should not conceal her beautiful jetty hair. Loretta was more

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soigneuse of her appearance than she had been in her girlish days; and this is the clue to her careful toilette. She had grown weary of her own sorrow; who cared if the Italian waiting-maid's face wore a smile, or was bedewed with a tear? Who cared whether her bosom was the seat of happiness, or whether it was the abode of sighs? No one. Loretta was a subordinate being in a rich and luxurious Court, and no voice was raised to bid her be happy. None, did I say? There I must contradict myself, for there was one who cheered the maiden's heart; there was one who first endeavoured to win favour with the Italian girl, from the selfish motive that she could be useful to him; there was one who at length sympathized with her, and towards whom Loretta's long cold-stricken heart warmed with a fire as keen as it was hopeless; and yet, oh strange fatality of the human heart! the more hopeless her passion, the more she nurtured it. No words of love had she listened to—no soft caresses had she

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felt: it was with sympathy her heart had been stolen, and it was with sympathy her love was fed. I have said that Loretta's passion was hopeless; and therefore rigidly strict persons will say, that it must be wrong, and that the young novelist writer should carefully weed her tale from such subjects. To them, I say ye are fortunate fair ones; ye have never been mournfully, hopelessly unhappy! If you had, you would pity, rather than condemn, that essence of the passion of love, which sympathy has kindled, and which never, never dies. The sympathy of love I will not here decipher: these are its attributes—it is told in a look, it speaks through trifles of kindness, it trembles in a sigh, it finds relief in a tear. Why then is the passion hopeless? because we are apt to look up for sympathy to those, who in the first instance are older, much older, than ourselves: to those who feel at first impartially towards us, and are afterwards warmed by *sympathy*; because we open a sorrowing heart to a being

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whom we imagine will relieve it from natural kindness; we fondly call this being our *friend*, our *adviser*, our *comforter*, and then how often we wake from a dream of Platonic feeling, and find we are hopelessly, deeply in love!

Oh, how carefully poor Loretta concealed her passion! how she strove to hide it from herself; how she refused to believe in its existence; for indeed hopeless was her love towards —. Nay, nay, she may divulge her own secret.

* * * * * *

Pettura sat in his apartment, and the Cardinal de Lorraine was by his side. Both appeared to have been engaged in very absorbing conversation, and we can only now gather the end of their parley.

"I am sorry my poor child's destiny should be a source of such deep interest," said Pettura; "she is one of those timid beings who would prefer gliding through life unobserved; and she has, by a strange fatality of human wishes, been on the most conspicuous *tapis*.

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"Yet, how can you speak of her disposition?" asked the Cardinal; "you have not seen her for many years."

"I have not *spoken* to her," said Pettura; "but I have often gazed upon her pale face, when she thought not a father's tears fell at the same time as hers. But you are curious to know why I have not spoken to my child, and I will tell you. Before I was sequestered in this palace, my mansion was very spacious; my child dwelt in her own apartments—they were splendid, modern, and fitted up with exquisite taste; I was known to Clementina as a grave student—as one who gave his advice to those who sought his reputed knowledge; but she never saw me in my dark chambers, she never saw me, as now, surrounded by objects from which she would turn away, shuddering and hating. Thus was it with her mother. How surpassing all earthly love was the trust and affection she felt towards me; until, one unlucky day, she surprised me in the melancholy

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task of dissecting a head, from which, having known the person's vices in his life-time, I wished to ascertain the precise seat in which sat the root of evil. My bride caught me in the fact, and from that time her spirits drooped; her love decayed. She tried to dissemble, but it would not do; I saw it in her countenance—I read her hatred in her eyes—I heard it speak in her softest accents. She drooped as the lily by the side of the gentle streamlet; she died in that balmy clime, where other beings come to seek new life; she died bequeathing me her only earthly treasure—my fair and unhappy Clementina. Can you wonder that remorse and sorrow often fill my breast? Can you not believe that I oft-times call myself a dark-plotting wretch? for I ought to have told my fair young bride, that in uniting her fate to mine, in flying, full of love and trust, from her kindred and dear home, she was uniting her destiny to an 'Astrologer's!' Ask me not why I did not alter my course; it is as

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easy to say, 'Why does not the Médicis resign her power?' We all follow with blind assurance the course which our headlong folly makes us cling to; and following still through danger and strife, we at length reach that end of all earthly grasping and wishing—the dark, fathomless tomb!"

"If biographers spoke as clearly as, *multum in parvo*, you do, by my faith I would read more Chronicles," said Lorraine: "but it is absolutely necessary you should see your daughter; it is a fate which Destiny seems to have had in store for her. And you, who study the future, have you not read that to marry the young Duke of Guise is her imperious fiat?"

"I have read that she would not survive the marriage ceremony," replied Pettura; and judge now whether it is no sacrifice, when I compel her to give her hand to the man she abhors."

"Tush, tush," cried Lorraine; "you know very well you feign to believe, but you have no more foreknowledge than I have. I do not

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think there is a man on earth who can prophesy more than another."

"Perhaps not, if he prophesied without deep thought," replied Pettura; "but my words have not hitherto been idle tales. I have buried my rest in thought; I have sounded the basis of politics, of cabals, of religious differences. I prophesied the various events which have happened for some time past, and I have Clementina's future life before my eyes; ask me not what it is—ask me not if she has bid farewell to happiness."

"You believe too implicity in broken hearts, and such maiden-like assertions, which have been in fashion since time immemorial," replied Lorraine, "There is an old saying that '*Nous revenous toujours à nos premiers amours.*' That is, methinks, a most ambiguous phrase, insomuch as so many maidens hardly know where to trace their '*premier amour.*' The confessional teems with pathetic stories of broken hearts and blighted hopes. Another summer

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returns, and the fair mourner has found out it is sinful to spend life in useless regrets after more sinful man. '*Quelques douces larmes sur le passé, beaucoup d'espoir pour l'avenir, voilà la fin d'un premier amour.*' I feel persuaded, Clementina has suffered more from kind, but too tender friends, than if she had fallen into severe hands. Every person around her has conspired to spoil her. The Queen of Navarre has mingled her gentle tears with hers—for Jeanne d'Albret deserves a patent for knowing how to cry without injuring her beauty. The Princess Marguerite has a fund of pretty speeches and consolation, freshly imported from her school-room. Clementina has lived in an atmosphere of sighs and tears, and the more she weeps, the more she wishes to continue in the luxury of wo. I will speak to her; but what is the use of any one striving to make her see the road of her duty, if you are too weak to enforce it?"

"I am not too weak," exclaimed Pettura;

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but at the same moment he asserted it, his dark eyes glistened through a tear, which he hastily removed, and which Lorraine did not appear to notice.

"Do not ask me to see Clementina here," continued the Astrologer, after a pause, looking round almost sadly at a number of curious-looking apparatus, which he probably had around him more to make a show in the Médicis' eyes, than for actual use.

"Will you receive her in my closet?" said Lorraine.

"I should like it better than here," said Pettura.

At this moment Loretta knocked at the door.

"The Queen has bid me prepare the Maestro for a visit from her Majesty," she said, speaking to Lorraine, and bowing to Pettura.

Lorraine arose, and followed Loretta, merely stopping to say to Pettura, "Clementina shall await you in my closet."

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"How fares it with you?" said Lorraine to the Italian girl who followed him at a little distance.

"I am as well as I can be," replied Loretta; "the *beau-monde's* folly does not reach me; I only feel its slightest shadow."

"Perhaps you would like to live in its bustle?" said the Cardinal.

"Aye! but for the pleasure of choosing a right path between its hollow follies."

"That is the cant of all women who live out of the pale of fashion," replied Lorraine; "a ball is a sin, a fête a depravity, late hours wickedness, and scandal is past the power of forgiveness. I should like to see you move amongst the number of those who form the mummery of a Court; you would like it, Loretta."

"No! no, I should not," exclaimed Loretta, her face flushing with a lovely blush; "I like my own thoughts better than gay talk; and yet, my Lord, they are sometimes very dull."

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The Cardinal had now reached his apartments, and Loretta was bowing her *congé*, but the Cardinal espied a large nosegay of flowers on the table.

"Ha! here are the flowers the Princess Marguerite promised me from her own fairy garden!" he exclaimed; "come Loretta, you must arrange them in these vases, and let me see if you can display any taste."

Loretta displayed more than taste, for she knew the language of flowers, which every young Italian woman does, and she arranged them in such a manner, that had Lorraine been equally *au fait* he might have read in that vase the history of a hopeless passion; but the Cardinal only exclaimed, when the nosegay was duly disposed—

"Oh! Loretta, I thought your slender fingers would have arranged my nosegay better; you have no green in the whole vase;" and the Cardinal proceeded to take some of the discarded leaves which he placed abundantly at the back

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of the bouquet. "See, what an evident improvement," he said.

"Ah, yes," replied Loretta, "roses smiling amidst a heap of green young hope; but why place all the green near the roses?"

"Then arrange them better if you can," replied the Cardinal.

Loretta made very little alteration, but she took away one small and very delicate rose, upon which the pink tint was nearly effaced by pure white, and she placed the flower away from the green leaves; the Cardinal heard her sigh as she did so.

"Did I sigh," said Loretta, raising her beautiful eyes. "Well I will sigh no more; but I, too, will surround myself by green leaves."

"They are a type of hope, are they not?"

"Yes my lord."

"But hope sometimes deceives."

"Very, very often," replied Loretta; "therefore, why place those flowers under its green banner?"

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"Because, hoping we live Loretta, and hoping we die; hope is our surest anchor, and our dearest friend."

"Then I will bind hope around my heart," said Loretta. "There, there, place more green in your bouquet; but let that one pale rose be away from its reach. Let us see if the flowers which are shaded by green hope live longer than that isolated rose."

"Well, it shall be as you like, Loretta; and now to another subject: tell me, do you often speak to Mademoiselle Pettura?"

"Very seldom indeed," replied Loretta.

"And why so?"

"I will tell you, my Lord.—When first the young lady came to Court, she had received many pretty lessons of pride from her father—such as—'she was not to speak to menials,' etc. There was no approaching the lovely girl, yet I strove to be heard; I told her to beware of flattery, and such friendly caution; but she would not heed me, and the Queen fed her

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pride. One evening the Queen was ill, and sent Pettura's daughter to the Maestro: I was to accompany her. The Queen had previously wounded my pride by telling me I was not high-born enough to carry her message. I believe I was in a very bad humour, and kept the fair girl waiting. Strong in her own imagination, bounding with youth and health, the maiden went by herself: then it was she first met Monsieur de Méré—you know the rest, and I too often reproach myself as the real author of her life of misery."

"But you have nothing to do with the murder of the old Duke," said Lorraine.

"Heaven forbid!" replied Loretta. "Oh, no; the Queen has never yet given me any such tasks, even to think upon; and I would rather be a waiting-maid with my conscience, than a Queen with hers. But I never talk to poor Mademoiselle Pettura; her pale face speaks so sorrowfully to the heart. I remember her buoyant gaiety; and I see in her faded frame

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a lesson of constancy from which I turn aside, for I am not so constant."

"You are more reasonable, you mean, Loretta?"

"I do not know," replied the young woman, bitterly, "whether it is very reasonable to exchange an old sorrow for a new one."

"But you must not be sorrowful at all, or I shall think I have only half cured you. Are you not much happier, since I convinced you of the sin of sorrow?"

"Happier!" exclaimed the young woman, bitterly; but the Cardinal cast a searching look on her. Loretta coloured, and replied in a tone of gratitude, "Yes, my Lord, I *am* happier; but why did your Lordship wish to know if I talked to Pettura's daughter?"

"Because I think she is a very sweet young person, and I would some one knew how to comfort her."

"Would that I could," said Loretta, with genuine feeling.

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"It may not be so far out of your power," replied Lorraine; "you can talk to her of Henri of Guise, extol his virtues, his military fame. Would you not like so young and handsome a husband?"

"I shall never marry," replied Loretta.

The Cardinal laughed.

"I am only saying what I mean," continued Loretta.

"I will remind you of your words when you kneel before me, and I pronounce your nuptial blessing. I will remind you of your words, when you change your little coiff for the orange wreath."

"You *shall* remind me of my words whenever that time arrives," said Loretta with feigned mirth; "but I have tarried very long, and perhaps wearied you with my silly prattle."

"Silly," said the Cardinal, "there is more reason in your words than happiness in your heart, notwithstanding all my endeavours to teach you resignation. Here, poor child, take

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this piece of green, and as you look upon it, think of the young hope which those leaves typify."

Loretta bowed low, and took the leaf. "Hope," cried she, when she had closed the door, "what have I to do with fresh, green hope; yet I will wear the deceitful badge;" and opening her little bodice, she placed the green leaf in her bosom.

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CHAPTER XIV.

Oh, how affectingly, how rapturously beautiful, was the meeting between the Astrologer and his daughter after their long separation. Study, late hours, and anxiety had spangled Pettura's hair with silvery streaks. Sorrow and fretting had robbed his sweet daughter of her bloom: they turned their gaze upon each other, and father and child mingled their tears in one long and affectionate embrace. How fraught with pain was that meeting! How those two beings felt the weight of the world's chains! how willingly

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would they now burst from the shackles of a Court! how willingly would Clementina dwell once more, unobserved, in her childhood's home! how willingly would Pettura recal much of his life; all, indeed, since the day he lost the affections of his English bride.

As thus the afflicted pair gazed on each other, blinded with tears, oppressed with sighs, how unwilling each felt to disturb the silence of sorrow. Leaning on her father's bosom, her beautiful, tearful eyes raised to his, her long tresses falling on his dark dress, the sweet Clementina appeared in the Astrologer's eyes as beautiful as in her spring of beauty. Sorrow had tempered the once buoyant look into a softened expression of angelic patience, and she looked more like a pale and beautifully sculptured statue than like a being, upon whom the rude hand of Adversity could be cruel enough to place its stamp. Oh, then, in that quiet moment, methinks I can fathom the Astrologer's thoughts; methinks he could have

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placed his grief-stricken child in her resting-place — have calmly closed her eyes in the slumber of death; but, instead of that, his task was to recal her to grief and pain. How he hated his own voice, when, raising his daughter from his bosom, he said: "Oh, my child, my Clementina, hate me not! but I must speak to you."

"Oh! dear father, if it be of the future you are going to speak, let it slumber in oblivion. Disturb not now the rapturous dream of the present which fills my soul; the pang of absence is doubly compensated in the loved kiss of re-union. If you must break the trance of pure delight in which my heart is wandering, tell me only these welcome words; tell me—'Clementina, you shall no more wander in a Court, wretched and broken-hearted—you shall return to your childhood's home, and your soul shall be at rest.'"

"Your childhood's home!" exclaimed Pettura, bitterly; "ah, my poor child, that home

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is now a heap of cinders; and those who placed the brand, and revelled in the sight of the glaring flames, fancy the Astrologer perished in the incendry, and now I am houseless, and hide myself from the sight of men."

"This is a bitter reward for devoting your days and nights for the improvement of mankind; but I speak of a far-off home—a land of grapes and olives—a balmy home, where the sun's rays are not warmer than the heart—a land where the gondolier sings his love-tuned lay, and plies his oars in the moonlight. I speak of Italy, my father-land."

"Alas! my child, think you we should be safe? Is not the Médicis as queenly over Italy as over France? are not her relations spread over every part of the land? has she not spies at the Inquisitorial Council, and at the Papal assemblies? Where should we be safe if we incurred the Médicis' hatred? Rivers, could they speak, would tell tales of deadly plunges—steel, poison—"

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"Oh, hush, dear father—and I have pressed the Médicis' hand, and I have hung over her words, and I have paid homage at the shrine of her wonderful beauty; but I will dwell with her no more. I will think wholly of that better world—that bright land of happiness, where the good are not obliged to mix with the vicious. Away with worldly thoughts! I will not enter into any of the Médicis' plans, I will not be the bride of any one here below, but prepare myself for the marriage-feast above."

Pettura felt a holy fear diffusing itself through his veins, but he shook off the dread he involuntarily experienced, and he interrupted the train of his daughter's conversation. "Clementina," he said, "you are ranging in a world of dreamy imagination; this world will not, cannot understand you. Oh, my child! learn that the most philosophic human virtue is to bend to circumstances. Shake off a grief which neither becomes your

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years nor the station which is awaiting you. Be not a Duchess to please the Médicis—to please any one—not even yourself; but submit with a good grace, to please a fond and doting parent—one who loves and cherishes you—who longs, with pardonable ambition, to see a Duchess's coronet encircle your brow. Be happy, my beloved child, happy in the acceptation of the worldly term. Why seek to transplant heavenly bliss in a world which is not worthy of comprehending its existence?"

"But, why not have a foretaste of Heaven here below?" said Clementina. "Why mix unwillingly in the world's gay scenes. Why wander in the labyrinth of pleasure, and drag on a weary existence? Oh! when shall I be happy?"

"When you marry the Duke," exclaimed Pettura.

"Oh, father!" cried Clementina, falling at Pettura's feet, and clasping her hands in unfeigned agony; "oh, spare me, spare me!

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let me not hear your loved voice pronounce those cruel words; bid me not utter vows from which my heart turns away with disgust. Wish me dead and cold; wish me every misfortune; none is to me more dreadful than to marry the Duke."

"Have you any cause to hate him?"

"Poltrot de Méré murdered his father," said Clementina.

"Rise," said Pettura, almost sullenly; "a pretty reason for disliking the Duke. Silly, wayward girl, it is no use running against your destiny; you must marry the Duke, and you will wish it, too. Hear me; it is useless to be silent any longer. Poltrot de Méré lives! the murderer is near my own apartments; but he dare not escape. Marry the Duke on condition that he give Poltrot his liberty."

Poor Clementina rose with sudden energy; she caught only at those words of bliss—"Poltrot lives! She forgot he was a murderer; she remembered only his gentle voice, his kindness

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to her. Her heart palpitated quickly, and a most lovely smile played around her mouth. "He lives," she exclaimed, rapturously: "oh, day of bliss! it is worth living to have heard the words. My beloved Poltrot! he a murderer? Oh! no, no; he will tell me how false it was, how wrong it was of me to believe the wickedly-woven tale; no more will I grieve—no more will I fret. Poltrot de Méré, I am yours, and yours only!"

Pettura was taken entirely by surprise.

"Clementina," he exclaimed, "provoke not my anger! You have wearied every one's patience, and now you must hear the unmasked truth. Poltrot de Méré is a murderer, and he shall suffer for his crime, unless you marry the Duke."

"Will he take me for his wife," said Clementina? "will he listen to my false vows, when my heart is entirely Poltrot's? Let him tell me he is a murderer—let me hear his voice; that alone will I heed—and then bind the

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orange wreath around my brow, link the flowing veil around my form. Firmly will I kneel at the altar; aye, firmly will I pronounce the vow which will liberate my Poltrot; for a long life of repentance will atone for his sin!"

"You shall hear Poltrot de Méré's voice," said Pettura; "you shall hear him confess himself guilty; you shall see his altered countenance, and then you must forgive me, Clementina; you must realize the fond love and the bitter disappointment which has wrung a secret from my lips: even now, before we part, you must forgive me."

"Oh! my father!" exclaimed Clementina. She turned to weep on his bosom, but she suddenly drew back, for the door opened, and Catherine de Médicis entered; not alone, for Clementina darted with one joyous spring into Poltrot de Méré's arms.

Pettura's dark brow scowled even upon the Queen-Mother of France

"I heard your conversation," she said, in answer to his searching look, "and—"

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But Pettura did not give her time to continue. He advanced towards Poltrot, exclaiming, in a voice of thunder:—

"How dare you clasp my daughter in your arms? Draw back, sinner, nor dare repeat your embrace."

"It may be the last; we have met again to be severed for ever," replied Poltrot; and he repeated the embrace.

The Astrologer's rage knew no bounds, and his liquid eyes seemed to flash fire, but the Médicis interposed, with her calm, decided voice.

"Nay, Pettura," she said, "let Poltrot speak to Clementina; your daughter will have no wish to unite herself to Poltrot, when she hears his confession."

"Ah! not *if* he be guilty," said Clementina, plaintively.

Alas! Poltrot could only cast his eyes on the ground; he fell at her feet, he took her hand in his. Oh! how cold was the grasp the afflicted girl encountered. His streaming eyes met hers

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he loved, and they responded to his fast-falling tears. The Astrologer's heart was touched; the Médicis took him by the arm, and drew him out of the apartment.

The wretched lovers were left alone.

Clementina sunk on a seat, but Poltrot continued kneeling.

"Oh! he need not *confess* his crime," thought the poor heart-stricken girl; "it is written with indelible marks on his brow."

It is impossible to describe anything more handsome, wild, and hopeless, than was Poltrot de Méré's appearance. His face had not one shade of colour, but was pale and clear as statuary marble; his eyes—his once strikingly bright hazel eyes—were touchingly expressive of hopeless despair; and his thick clustering brown curls strayed in neglected, but beautiful profusion, on a forehead so lofty, so clear, that Vice had not yet dared trace on it a line—it had defied sorrow and pain; and Poltrot now knelt at the feet of the much-afflicted girl, as a wan and

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unearthly shadow, seeming to say in its own lustreless beauty, "how bright it *ought* to have been."

"Forgive me," cried Poltrot, in a hollow voice; "forgive me, my adored, my long-lost Clementina; hear me say that I was mad when I did the deed. Call me not a murderer—call me rather an erring maniac. Cast on my pallid brow one pitying gaze; press on it your warm hand; feel how cold and cheerless it is. Oh! could you know all I have suffered, all I shall still suffer; all my wrecked happiness, all my keen despair! then, all pure, all good, as you are, you would say "I forgive." Let me hear those words of heavenly comfort; tell me that there is a place in heaven for a penitent sinner. Comfort me, bless me, with your own sweet voice; then I will pray for one boon—the boon of death."

"Then you are guilty," said Clementina. "Poltrot! my heart shares your disgrace; you must believe it. Oh! look at my wasted

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form, my faded beauty; all, all, is as cold within my heart as within yours. Why did you soil your bright soul with such a deep-stained crime? What did I say? Look not so beseechingly, or my heart will break. Rise from your knees, my once-beloved, my still dear Poltrot; sit by my side, and let me press your cold hand in mine! But one grace I ask —do not look at me, or, sleeping, or waking, that look will haunt me through life."

"It is the look of crime and despair," replied the unfortunate Poltrot; "it is the branding mark which was placed on Cain's brow. Then cast down your dear eyes, Clementina, and do not look at me, but let me have the consolation of gazing at your pure brow. You are like an angel of mercy, and the softness of your fair cheek, shadowed by those long silken fringes, will return before me in the sickening hour of despair and loneliness, and I will no more despond."

"You must not think of me any more," said

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Clementina; you must direct your thoughts towards that forgiving world above. Oh! blessed thought! repent, repent, Poltrot; and, purified by your prayers, by mine—by those of the Church, which I will invoke with heart and soul—think, Poltrot, of the blessed hope of being re-united in another world; of taking our flight together towards regions of real and tender forgiveness."

"Is there such a hope for me?" said Poltrot.

"Yes, yes, I feel assured there is; none are so fallen but they may repent; turn towards the well of everlasting life, poor stray lamb from the fold of virtue; though all here should be black as blackest night, still, still there is hope."

"Men would say, I am a Huguenot, and your pure prayers will avail me nothing."

"A Huguenot?" cried Clementina; "do not Huguenots and Papists pray to the same Almighty Father? Weary not your poor heart

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with unmeaning questions, but bind around it those words, "repent, repent!"

At that moment, Clementina involuntarily raised her eyes, and she saw Poltrot's face. Hope seemed to have kindled every feature into new-born beauty, and the poor girl did not turn away; but their eyes met, and in that one gaze of undying love, they felt it would have been bliss to have ceased to exist.

Silently the unhappy pair continued gazing; their hearts beat with one nervously unhappy pulse. Poltrot felt he was forgiven.

"Oh! Poltrot," cried Clementina, "do not let me see you all hope, all love, when I, unhappy girl, must speak as I am commanded to do. I must save your life; but I must live a wretched and unhappy wife. I—Oh, God! give me courage to say the words—I must marry the Duke."

"You shall not! you must not!" exclaimed Poltrot, writhing with agony at the very idea. "Clementina, I know how they will persuade

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you, but do not think of me; I will suffer torture or death! my dearest consolation will be to know your thoughts are bent on me. Dearest, best, my once promised bride, promise me you will not marry the Duke."

"Nay, nay! I cannot promise it. If the young Duke sets you free before I give him my hand, then will I kneel at the altar, and give him all I can—a broken heart. You have my love, he shall have my faithful duty. If that cold moiety of love can satisfy him, then will I no more repine. Then, dear, though fallen Poltrot, you must go to England, you must rejoin your gentle sister; but from that moment I marry the Duke, no consideration will make me see you. I can suffer all the pangs of an unhappy marriage, but I will ever do my duty. Hark! I hear voices; you must consent: liberty is dear to us all. Poltrot, you must consent!"

"Do as you please, dear angel of pity," exclaimed Poltrot; "but know that I shall share

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your broken heart; no change of place or clime, no change of scene, but death alone, can sever my heart from yours. To me alone belong tears, suffering, and unhappiness; to you, happiness, and all joy. Clementina, my lost bride, give me at least a token, which in my lone wanderings can remind me of you, something I can gaze at and call a shadow of a happiness which might have been substantial."

"Take this," cried Clementina, detaching a gold chain from her neck; "it is a portrait of myself. Vain as it seems in me to have worn it, it has been my companion for many long months, and every time I looked at it, I asked myself if I were indeed the Clementina of that smiling-looking picture."

"And I, guilty, unhappy, creature, robbed you of your bloom and your light heart; and yet you can forgive."

"And suffer too," said Clementina, with a bitter smile;" for you must not waver. I shall be a Duchess—the wife of the Duke."

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"But you will be my bride in heaven," exclaimed Poltrot, with an unearthly gladness, and he once more folded her in a last embrace.

The Médicis returned alone; her cold figure seemed to step in between the lovers, and alas! it was a timely interference, for that one close embrace, that gush of the hearts' affection, might have proved the weakness of the struggle between love and Clementina's future plans.

The Queen-Mother's voice reminded the unfortunate Poltrot, that he was an unhappy murderer; and the poor weeping girl, that she had sealed her heart's unhappiness.

"Take me away; oh, spare me further discourse," cried the agitated girl. "I am a passive victim in your hands; I am ready to marry the Duke."

"But you must recover from this shock; you must give yourself time to listen to Henri's gentle voice; you must give him some love," said the Queen.

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"I have none to give," said Clementina, with stern sorrow, but seeming to recollect herself, she continued gathering firmness, though her poor heart throbbed ready to burst. In an agony of tears, "I will be rightly assured of Poltrot's safety, before I see the Duke," she said.

"I will not deceive you," replied the Queen.

"I know not that," muttered Clementina; "I am no longer the trusting girl I used to be; and those who talk fairly, are not always the kindest."

Catherine reddened, but the young girl continued—

"I must have a sign from Poltrot, that I may know he is safe in England; and no one must hear what the sign shall be. I shall then fear no fraud."

The Queen-Mother consented.

"You must send me back the chain, which holds my portrait," whispered Clementina, in Poltrot's ears.

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"And then you will marry the Duke?" said Poltrot, with a solemn despair.

"Then I will marry Henri of Guise," repeated the poor broken-hearted girl, heaving a bitter sigh. "Now farewell, Poltrot; a long, a last farewell. Nay, advance not nearer; you have had my last kiss, you have heard my voice for the last time. I dare not be weak again. Farewell! my fondest prayers are for you, and the purest links of pity are everlastingly bound round my heart. I am quite altered now; firm, firm as a rock, I shall hear of sorrow, but shall not weep; I will be a faithful wife—a wretched, broken-hearted woman. Farewell, Poltrot; go kneel at the throne of God's goodness, and ask His forgiveness. When you see the setting sun, think its expiring rays whisper oblivion of the past; let the twilight hour—let all earth—all, that His hand formed—speak to you in compassionating accents; and when your heart is quite calm, when you can say, I am quiet

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and resigned; then, but not till then, think once more of an earthly being—think then of your lost Clementina."

Clementina pressed her hand over her tearless eyes; she rushed past the Queen, and even the cold-hearted Medicis felt her very heart-strings tighten; her throat felt convulsively swollen, and tears coursed each other down her cheeks. Poltrot placed his head in his hands, and sobbed aloud. Oh, it was agonizing to hear the burst of grief which issued from his overcharged heart; every vein in his face seemed distorted with agony. Memory spoke of young and innocent days, when the very idea of such deep sorrow would have caused the heart to burst. He pressed his hand against his bosom; there was Clementina's loved image! no more would he gaze upon her own living face; no more hear the charm of her inexpressibly sweet voice—she was lost, lost to him for ever. For ever! words which are fraught with excruciating pain—how heavily they fall on the bereaved

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heart; yet to Poltrot, to the wretched, unhappy Poltrot, they whispered a far remote comfort—they spoke of eternity! Eternity! ah yes, there he might again see Clementina, there his own forgiven soul would perhaps be reunited to her. "Be still, my broken heart," he thought; "away, my hopeless despondency; there is life beyond the tomb—a life of forgiveness."

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Have any of my readers known what it is to be suddenly recalled from deep and absorbing sorrow; from grief which is selfish, insomuch that it is all-engrossing? Have any of my readers been suddenly awakened from the dull apathy of sorrow, by the voice of persons who have not noticed the dejection which is over the countenance, and pay no regard to the grief? This jarring, this unharmonious insensibility, Clementina experienced, when she was suddenly accosted by the gay young King.

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"Fair Clementina," he said, "I want a pretty nosegay, or at least a blooming rose. Will you cull me one?

"I have no roses," replied Clementina, sullenly.

"I know where gay ones grow," replied the King; "but I should like to have one from you."

The King advanced, but Clementina ran away from him, with an impetuous "I am in no humour to be trifled with."

You shall marry the Duke," muttered the revengeful little King; but he knew not that poor Clementina had reached her own apartment, had thrown herself on her bed, and was sobbing convulsively, "I *shall* marry the Duke."

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CHAPTER XV.

A FEW weeks after this conversation, the Queen Médicis, the Princess Marguerite, the Queen of Navarre, and Clementina were sitting together; and each person in the little group appeared to be feigning a mirth little felt.

The Princess and Clementina were working together at the same embroidery frame; and their slender fingers were industriously plying the needle, whilst the young Princess ever and anon burst forth into a sunny laugh; one look a the forced smile which hovered round Clementina's mouth dispelled the laugh, and a sigh chased away a smile.

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The Queen of Navarre and Catherine de Médicis were engaged in light conversation; and those who knew the Queen-Mother could easily trace that it was Catherine's wish to evade all serious discourse.

"Are you determined to be robed in white?" she said, turning suddenly towards Clementina. "Methinks you are rather too pale—pink would be the most becoming."

"Oh! I like to see Clementina in white," cried the little Princess; "she looks like my favourite drooping lily."

"Pshaw, child, how romantic you are," said her mother. "Why cannot you speak in plain language?"

"Oh, let her talk," said Jeanne d'Albret. "I like to hear the lovely flowers compared to our fair friends. What say you, dear Clementina?"

"Did your Majesty speak to me?" said Clementina, listlessly.

"Are you deaf?" jokingly asked Jeanne d'Albret.

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"It is a complaint husbands soon cure," said the Médicis.

Clementina raised her lustreless eyes to Catherine's face, and her usually mild expression was changed to one of scorn and defiance: it seemed to say, "Queen Catherine, you may be as cruel as you like; you cannot add to my misery."

Presently Loretta joined the group. She had a large box in her hands.

"What have you there?" exclaimed the Princess, who was glad some one had arrived to break a painfully felt silence.

"It is Mademoiselle Pettura's veil," replied Loretta; and she displayed a most beautiful piece of fairy-looking workmanship.

With true feminine curiosity, all eyes were turned to Loretta; but hers were fixed on Clementina, and they rested compassionately on her pale face. Lower still, Clementina bent her head over the embroidery; and a casual observer would never have believed

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that the pale, listless, cheerless-looking Clementina, was the promised bride, for whom such preparation was going forth. At last she slowly arose from her seat, and approaching the party, she mechanically took a corner of the veil, and was examining it, when suddenly a warm tear fell on the flower she was holding; the amiable Jeanne d'Albret brushed it away, and silently pressed Clementina's hand —unkindness the poor unhappy girl could bear, but sympathy touched her heart, and she hastily left the room.

"How glad I shall be when the ceremony is over," said the Princess Marguerite.

"I doubt if she will have strength to go through it," replied Jeanne d'Albret. "What a shocking tale of sorrow that poor girl's life has been."

"Those too sensitive hearts always find some sorrow," said Catherine, coldly.

Unfeeling woman! ought she not to have shielded that sensitive heart? Poor unhappy

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girl! the very being whose powerful voice, whose powerful hand, could be stretched forth to save her, led her on to her fate, and disregarded her unfeigned wretchedness.

Clementina slowly descended into the garden, and she strove to regain that firmness which she had at length assumed; she twisted the links of a thick gold chain around her fingers, and as she did so, her eyes were so deeply rivetted on it, that it seemed as if the unmeaning bauble could speak. Unmeaning! the chain was fraught with recollection; it was the sign that Poltrot de Méré was safe. At that recollection sweet tears of thankfulness coursed each other down her pale cheeks; and she murmured a prayer of resignation for herself, and forgiveness for Poltrot.

"One week more," exclaimed the wretched girl; "one week more, and I shall be the wife of the Duke. Oh that I could die! Is the wish so wicked? is it not better to slumber in oblivion of wo, than to drag on a weary

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existence? Clementina spent the greater part of her time in the garden; the morning air refreshed her; the noon-tide beauty whispered hope; the evening shades harmonized with her broken spirits. In the fading day, and in the entrancing blue of the sky above, she fancied a voice was speaking to her heart! How beautiful are the phenomena of Nature! what a congeniality there is between the crepuscular hour and the tried and sad human heart! Day is fading, and so is the enjoyment of mirth; and the setting sun speaks volumes of pathos. The mellow hue of the sky, the expiring light, the unbroken silence which reigns around; and then the sudden appearance of the moon, replacing the bright Monarch of the East, oh! how gloriously beautiful! Then gliding, one by one, brightly, gently, gracefully on the the bosom of the richly-tinted sky, the moon's attendants, her satellites, the twinkling stars, shine forth in their glory, and the Queen of Heaven holds

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her Court. No wonder Clementina raised her tearful eyes above, and then she dreamed she was once more happy. She saw again, in a blissful vision, Poltrot, her own Poltrot—not soiled with crime, but bright and good. She heard again the rich tones of his loved voice; she felt the pressure of his hand! Oh, that all this should be but a vision! How rudely the reality came upon her; how bitterly were the words proclaimed—"Why does the Duke love me. I am a faded, unhappy girl. Would that each withered charm could take away his love."

As thus Clementina stood alone in the moonlight, her slight, but very graceful figure, shaded by the dimness of night; her pale face touchingly expressive of the sorrow of her heart; of her might be said, in the words of Haynes Bayley:—

"Her cheek had lost its summer's bloom,
And her breath has lost its soft perfume;
And the gloss has dropped from her golden hair,
And her brow is pale, but no longer fair."

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Methinks it strangely shows the perversity of the human heart, when a lover continues to sue the affections of a girl, knowing all the time that there is an obstacle between them. Though Clementina's wasted beauty told its tale, though her deep sighs echoed her sorrow, still Henri of Guise continued to love with passionate ardour, nothing daunted by his betrothed's sadness, but trusting to the too-often believed tale "That love would come after marriage."

Clementina was still engaged with her own poignant thoughts, when her lover drew her arm within his; and looking tenderly at her, he said, "Is it right of you to court the damp evening air? What charms can you find in so much solitude?"

"And is not solitude the hand-maiden of thought?" replied Clementina; "does not the bright soul love to dwell in its own atmospheric region? Is not the soul the monarch of thought? Does it not lend its tales to

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the heart! Who can want better companions than 'The heart, and the soul.'"

"Yours must be dull companions," replied Henri of Guise; "for even by this doubtful light, I can see the traces of tears shining on your face. Oh, Clementina! life is too short to indulge in melancholy."

Henri of Guise was a gallant courtier, and a brave warrior; he was also an admiring and fond lover, but he had not made a study of the delicacy of true love. He had never contemplated the possibility of being a refused suitor; and although he knew the cruel stratagem which had been used to compel the reluctant Clementina to accept him, he knew she was his promised bride, and he did not pause to consider how delicate a task it was to win her from grief. "Oh! had he been as gentle as the unhappy Poltrot," thought the broken-hearted girl by his side "then I might again have loved."

"How brightly the stars are shining," ex-

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claimed Henri, after a pause; "they seem to smile over our love." Was this a mockery of her love? Clementina involuntarily shuddered.

"You are cold," continued Henrie; you must not walk any longer." And he added, with a smile, "when you are my wife, moonlight walks must be a forbidden indulgence."

"But I am my own mistress yet," replied Clementinia, with much bitterness."

"Nay, I am only joking," said Henri: "do not look angry," Clementinia; I will leave you if you prefer being alone."

"Oh, no, you can stay," said Clementina, evidently trying to conquer her feelings "it is better to understand each other fully before—before our marriage."

"I do understand you fully," exclaimed her lover; "you are a bright pearl lost in a casket of sorrow, but my love, my soothing care, shall restore you to your original brightness. Oh, but once to hear you laugh; but once to see your eyes full of lustre and love."

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Clementina sighed.

"Clementina, you sigh, you refuse to be happy. Oh, that I had sufficient courage to bid you be free—to tear myself away from all your imposing beauty—your mild and suffering charms. Should you love me then, my Clementina? Would you bestow one thought of gratitude on me? Would you pity me, when you remembered that, like yourself, I am broken-hearted." Oh the ray of light which fleeted accross the poor girl's blue eyes.

"You are mocking me," she said. "Henri, why bring before me a picture I dare not realize? You cannot know the struggle I have had to appear calm; you cannot believe in the misery of a broken heart, or you would not trifle with me. Henri, I had promised to be your bride; I had schooled myself to appear calm; I promised you all I could give—my loyal and obedient duty; but now you have called up a dream in my mind, a dream of freedom at which I hardly dare grasp. Should I be grateful if

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you released me from my vow? Passing, everlastingly grateful! Your name should speak in a balmy reality of happiness. Henri, are you mocking me?" Clementina's words were abrupt, but the crest-fallen lover felt all their sincerity; he had wrung them from the heart in which they had been slumbering. Involuntarily he released her arm, and looking at her, more in sadness than in anger, he endeavoured to speak, but found it was impossible; the words died on his lips, and he hastily rushed from her presence."

In the vestibule he met the young King and the Duc d'Aujou."

"Have you been visiting your fair inamorata? cried the King. "If so, you return rather *au-désespoir*."

The Duke endeavoured to smile.

"We did not ask you to laugh against your inclination," said the King, "but it seems an effort beyond command."

"I do not know why I have provoked your

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Majesty's derision," said the Duke, "and I do not know why I should submit to it."

"Ha! ha! you are getting angry," exclaimed the King;" *foi de roi*, every one is angry, and Clementina seems to make her mood as catching as the small pox; every one is affected with it, from my Queenly mother down to her waiting-maid. Next time I order my horses, I shall expect my groom to appear with a languid air *à la* Clementina.

The Duke of Anjou now burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter; and Henri of Guise, on the contrary, fell into paroxysm of passion.

"How dare you make Clementina the subject of your mimicry?"

"It is seldom any one says *dare* to me," exclaimed the King.

"Then it must be a pleasant change to you," said the Duke.

Again the Duke of Anjou laughed, louder than before, and this time the King chose to take the laugh home to himself. The three

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young men now lost all command of temper, and going into a sequestered part of the Royal gardens, they (that is, the King and the Duke) tried the strength of their swords, whilst the Duke of Anjou encouraged them by his silly laugh. He did not think fit to calm them until the King aimed so sure a blow at the Duke, that his sword lodged in his shoulder, and he fell to the ground in excruciating pain. The young King's anger was appeased; but his alarm was very considerable. The Duke of Anjou raised the Guise in his arms, and the King followed his footsteps, without even asking whither he went. At length, they stopped before the door of a small cottage, at the extremity of the garden. An old man, clad in the faded garb of a huntsman, received the insensible burden from the young Duke's arms, and proceeded to examine the wound. After some considerable time, he succeeded in stopping the hermorrhage, and the Duke languidly opened his eyes. He extended his hand towards the young King.

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"It was my own fault," he cried; "I should have remembered I was speaking to the King of France."

"And I should have recollected I was speaking to the gallant young Duke of Guise," fra nkly answered the King.

And I ought not to have been a meddling *tiers*," said Anjou, and in those few words the reconciliation was perfect.

How much easier it is to be very hasty than to remedy the evil consequences which follow. The young men were again at perfect amity, but the Duke lay pale and bleeding, and the old porter was not an experienced doctor.

The King, whose natural vivacity predominated over every difficulty, exclaimed:—

"Ah, François, this is the worst scrape you have ever had to shield me from, and your old dame can do nothing for me; she used to hide me when Monsieur Mariot chased me round the grounds, with his open Latin Orations; but this is worse than all Plutarch, and Virgil, and

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Ovid put together. Just summon your old dame, and let us hear what she advises."

The King forgot he was no longer a school-boy, but a King of importance, with a glittering and jewelled sword-hilt, and golden epaulettes. If he forgot the difference in his appearance, the old dame of the Lodge did not, for she bowed so low and reverentially that her short serge dress actually swept the ground.

"I want your advice," said the King.

Another curtsey from the respectful matron, deprived her of her equilibrium, and the King of his gravity.

"What is the use of bowing there like a tottering Chinese mandarin? Come, old dame, are you a doctor?"

Oh, I have some skill," said the woman, twisting nervously the corner of her apron, and simpering in a very interesting manner. "What is it ails your sweet Majesty?"

"My sweet Majesty is quite well," replied

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the King, "but in a very sad plight;" and he pointed to the bed on which the Duke lay groaning.

"Oh, well-a-day, that it is not your Majesty," said the obsequious dame, examining the wound. "It is a deep one, and will take long to cure. See how the steel has penetrated—it was a sure aim."

"Hold your tongue, can't you?" cried her husband, seeing the King's brow grow very dark.

"Could you find Monsieur Mariot?" said the King, in a whisper to his brother.

"I will try. Good heavens! the Duke is fainting again."

The Duke d'Anjou hurried away, and the King bent with great anxiety over the sufferer, who recovered with a deep groan of pain.

Anjou fortunately found M. Mariot. The good man was in his study, surrounded with books. He was a comic-looking old man, with a very fat body, and very short legs to carry

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the weight of mortality and learning of which he was composed. His skin was hueless, and seemed to have dried itself up to a parchment texture during the course of his studies His head was not bald, but every hair was perfectly gray—not silvery, but of that harsh iron-gray, which is considered pretty on a horse's back; his eyes were of that watery pale blue, which belong to that class known as "mackerel eyes." Perhaps he had once taken too lengthened a survey of the globes, perhaps looked too keenly on the "globular celestial," for his eyes were indented deeply in his head, as if they had been sent there because they were too prying. Near the hearth was Mariot's high desk, most curiously carved; the room was covered with odd-looking relics and antediluvian-looking specimens of stone and shells. On the table innumerable old volumes were opened—they were all finger-worn, pencil-marked, dog-eared, binding minus; in fact, they all bore authentic marks of having seen "active service." Per-

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haps, like our own English Johnson, Mariot loved a thumb-worn book; if so, he encouraged this favourite taste:—

"*Minerve dêese belle, savante les hommes ne te feront jamais honneur.*"

"Cease your orations, and leave Minerva in other hands; the King wants your assistance," exclaimed Anjou, rushing into the room.

"Softly, softly," said Mariot; "want is a word which bears much delineation. The King wants——. Is he hungry? No. Is he athirst? No. Is he houseless? No. Then he wants some one. He wants Mariot; but last time I wanted His Majesty to study, his kingly answer was, '*Mariot allez au Diable.*' Declination consequent on such a wish—*I may want, Thou may'st want, He may want.*"

Mariot concluded his sentence with provoking coolness; turning from book to book, he again spoke:—

"Perhaps the King has been invoking Bacchus, and wants Mariot to invoke the

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gods to restore him to his usual *moderatissimo* share of reason."

"*Bacchus—es tu homme es tu diable—es tu dieu—Bacchus les rois t'invoquent misérable.*"

"Hold your nonsense," cried Anjou, "it has nothing to do with Bacchus; the King is sober as a Reformer at his morning devotions."

But Mariot shouted with double fury—

"*Bacchus tes ouvrages, tes cris, ta langue erient fureur, confusion et mort.*"

The Duke knew that remonstrances were vain; but he cut short Mariot's orations by tossing his books about.

"Desist," cried the enraged preceptor, snatching up his pet monstrosities in octavo volumes.

"I will throw your hideous, dusty books at the back of the fire, if you do not follow me," said Anjou.

The old man uttered a very *classical* howl of regret, if I may so apply the name to a

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sound which resembled the growl of a mastiff disputing for a most delicious bone.

The Duke, pitying his distress, replaced the volumes on the table, and brushed away the dust which had fallen from them on his rich dress.

"A little dusting would do your books good," said he; "but, my good Mariot, follow me, if you please."

"*If you please*," exclaimed Mariot, pronouncing the words with visible derision; "well, then, good faith, that is telling me to stay here. Young man, have I not before told you, those words are arbitrary and treacherous? When a criminal is condemned to the block, the executioner makes his best bow, and says, most politely, 'Your head right in the middle, facing the multitude, *if you please*.' Do you think it *does* please the condemned man? When I used to try the strength of my cane on your Royal brother, I led him not like a gruff bear, but most civilly asked him to hold

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himself *statu quo*, adding, of course, 'if it so please your Majesty.' Now you ask me to follow you, 'if I please;' and my pleasure is to stay where I am."

"Then let your conscience bear the blame," cried Anjou. "You are an incorrigible old idiot, if your head be filled with all Ovid, Plutarch, and a hundred more such bores. I tell you the King wants you; he has wounded the Duke, and the consequences may be very serious, if the quarrel be noised abroad." The preceptor heard no more, but snatching up his hat, he said he was ready to follow the Duke. Shaking his head to and fro, and railing against the hasty folly of drawing the sword, Mariot at length reached the suffering Duke. The King submitted with tolerable patience to a lengthened harangue from his preceptor, and then had the satisfaction to hear Mariot declare he did not consider the Duke was dangerously wounded. He dismissed the King, promising to remain with the wounded man until the

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evening, and then have him gently moved to own apartments, where he would tend him with all care. The Duke of Guise heard every word Mariot uttered; he also heard that it would be some some time before he recovered; and, although too much exhausted to answer, these were indeed bitter words for him to hear, when a few days only remained between his bridal morn.

During this time we have left Clementina in the garden alone, but communing with most delicious thoughts—a new idea of freedom, a new born dream of joy. Had she heard aright? Was it possible the Duke was not deceiving her? And as she asked herself the question, a whole chorus of voices seemed to answer from the depths of the sky, "Maiden, you are free." Her cheek became suddenly flushed, and through all her veins a quick circulation of pleasure animated and refreshed her frame. She was fearfully excited, and reaching her own apartment she felt an irresistible wish of

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courting repose, of being lulled to sleep, of being wafted in a dream of happines—of freedom. Loretta begged to be admitted, and received Clementina's instructions to ask the Queen of Navarre to dispense with her services that evening.

Loretta speedily returned with the ready permission, and a kind inquiry as to the cause.

"My head aches," replied Clementina, and it was indeed the truth. When her long tresses were thrown over her shoulders, and her eyes were raised towards her mirror, then Clementina caught one bright glance of what she *had* been. There was the mantling colour which was once always tinging her fair cheek; there sat the lustre of the speaking eyes. "Oh, Loretta," she exclaimed, "how pleasant it would be, but for one night to fall asleep to the sound of old voices, of old recollections."

"I, too, have sometimes had that wish," said Loretta, "but not now."

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"But I feel it so strongly, Loretta. Haste, more haste; let me lay my aching head on the pillow, and I shall fancy in my slumber that old voices are greeting me, and that guardian angels are singing over me their numbers. Haste! haste!

"I will stop and watch till you are asleep," said Loretta, as she softly closed the rich curtains.

"Then do not talk to me," said Clementina; "let me ramble on in my own manner. Give me my breviary and I will say my prayers."

Loretta involuntarily knelt behind the curtain, whilst Clementina prayed for happiness; *she* prayed that she might gain strength, and overcome her weak heart.

Clementina was silent for some time after her devotions, but at length she again spoke. She rambled in a luxurious dream of pleasure. Oh, how keenly felt, after the stern sorrow in which her frame had lately been numbed! "Open the window-curtain, Loretta," she

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cried; "let me watch the evening star. Oh, bright luminary of hope, how resplendently it has set this night! See how it shines on me! I lie as a withering flower, and that star is warming me into new life. Look up, my soul, to the firmament whence comes that star, where it is daily cased in fairy-like disguise. Look up, and think no more of the doom of misery. That star, that radiant star, speaks of hope."

"Poor weary girl," thought Loretta, "she is losing her reason, or her bright soul, tired of its load of pain, is passing into a world of peace." And, between fear and sympathy, Loretta wept.

"Why do you weep," cried Clementina, "when I am so joyful? I have seen such a soft vision, and yet it is earthly. The birds are twittering in their mossy nests, the eddying wind is wafting its softest perfume; it fans my pale brow, I feel its luxuriant breath. The crystal springs are flowing on, and mur-

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muring a gentle, plaintive lay, and fairy spirits are dancing on the crested wood. No thoughts of death, of despair, are in that vision; no requiem of sorrow: day wanes, evening draws her veil, and still there is joy—still the purest streams fall from the fount of happiness. Each shady dell holds a nymph of gladness; no gloomy cypress trees, all green young myrtles, with the celestial-looking blossom, sprinkled in graceful array. Away with the orange wreath—it shall not gall my brow: not as a meagre and haggard form will I kneel at the altar; I will not smile a sepulchral, a hollow smile; I will not turn my sickly gaze on a detested bridegroom. Speak, glad voices, speak in roseate words of unalloyed gladness; waft my soul in a dreamy view of hope, innocence, and freedom; let me smile in fancy wild, unfettered by lugubrious pangs of sorrow. Loretta did you hear the voices? Hark! they say, 'Free! free! Daughter of sorrow, you are free!'"

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"I hear only the vesper bell sounding from the chapel," replied Loretta. "Oh, dear lady, be calm, or in one dreamy farewell to reality you will expire!"

"Expire!" exclaimed Clementina, still more wildly; "expire, when I am newly-born? No, the sun's warm rays shall gladden me yet, and I shall gather new health from the sickly birth of Spring. I will wander, all blithe and gay, where the early violet blows on the mossy banks; I will catch the first dewy drops of early morning. I am pleasure, smiling, hoping pleasure! No dell so sequestered, but I shall find it; no haunt of fairies, but I shall seek. On rocky depths, on towering heights, to ocean's billows, to flowered earth, and star-bespangled heaven—to all my happiness shall be present. Loretta—Loretta—I am happy!"

The words died away slowly on the poor girl's lips; they fell liquidly, slowly. They had risen at first as the billows on the ocean,

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and they sunk like the last vibration of an Æolian harp on the gentle breeze. The upraised hand sunk from its elevated position, until it was fanned by the sleeper's breath; the colour faded from the cheek, as the last star retreats from the morn-coming streaks; the long tresses floated around the pillow; not a sound was heard save the ticking of the clock. Clementina's words still rang in Loretta's brain. But to save the reason, the heart, and perhaps life, Nature interposed: Clementina slept!

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

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THE

ASTROLOGER'S DAUGHTER.

AN HISTORICAL NOVEL.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY ROSE ELLEN HENDRIKS.

VOL. II.

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THE

ASTROLOGER'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

A WEEK elapsed, and during that period the Court was a scene of marvellous gossip; and it might be said, that it was the "Romance of a Week." Readers, you all know how much can happen in a week. Have not some persons rested at night on the mossy pillow of fortune? riches and honours have been their soft lullaby; day has dawned, and a dark night of sorrow succeeds their late happy existence. Life is as a windmill: its wheel goes round with careless freedom, unsparing of evil, caring

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little if it sends good to some persons; the turn of the wheel brings dark and tempestuous billows. To others who are weeping in distress, it tells of sweet and softest things. The most culpable of human frailties is despair. There is ever a merciful spirit lingering near the heart; it speaks in the haunts of want and penury, and is the angel of comfort, leaning on the banner of Hope. None so wretched, none so helpless, none so sinful, but they may heed the voice. It forsakes the dwelling of the rich, the gay, the prosperous; it finds its dwelling in the lone and broken heart. It can feed on the food of sighs; it can listen without turning away, to the fast-falling tears. Spirit of Compassion! thou pourest thy balm on the heart, as the soft spring-tide wind cools the flowers in their first feverish grasp, as they leave the snow-capped earth. Thou lullest away sorrow with thy gentle voice speaking so mildly; gliding softly as the waters by the heather-bordered soil. Spirit of Consolation!

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when shall we invoke thee? When the voice grows weary of its own faint breathing; when the soul is sickened at its tenement of clay; when the brain grows dizzy; when the heart is cold; when no friendly grasp presses the grief-benumbed hand; when the light tread walks no more over the flowery sod of pleasure; when the lips drink no more of the springs of delight, and the harmonious music of joy fades for ever from the hearing—then, Spirit of Consolation! visit our grief-stricken heart. Oh, the balm of the tears which are sent by the Spirit of Consolation! Are they not pearls shining with a gleam of newly-restored hope? Are they not sent as the rainbow after the shower, to speak of the goodness of a great Creator? Ask the flowers of the earth, if they are not refreshed by the dew-drops of the soft morning? See how they raise their bloom-restored heads! could they speak, how they would thank the beneficent sod for the dewy moisture from which they sap their existence. Thus, then,

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are tears—tears sent from the Spirit of Consola tion—thus they are to human beings' hearts. The pining infant sighing, it knows not why, wishing, it knows not what, places its feverish head on its pillow. Consolation is at hand—the infant weeps. The mother who gazes for the last time on the death-stricken infant, who has seen it grow and bud, then droop in its first green leaf; how tight is her bereaved heart! forgive her, if she repine. She has lost the jewel of her eye: she has watched the Spring, the Summer, and now the Autumn—the sad Autumn of sorrow—has arrived. Consolation lends all she can—she gives a tear.

The storm of adversity comes with its venomed malice; the disappointment of early love sears the heart—all, all, may be withering; the heart may scorch, and the brain may reel—still Consolation comes with her kind, her hallowed hand, and she steeps the eyes in a tear.

A week! seven days! a week is sometimes a year—at least so it seems by the multiplicity of

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events which take place from Monday to Sunday. At the commencement of the week, Clementina was writhing with concealed agony; at the end of it she was lying pale and exhausted, stricken by the force of her own passion, and that passion was one of all-absorbing joy. Loretta hung around the sick couch; she shook the downy cushions, she bathed the throbbing temples, but the disorder increased; and that fragile frame, which had so courageously borne the heavy stroke of misfortune, was bowed down by the exuberance of its own pleasure. Days and weeks passed, and Clementina was still in a balmy dream of bliss; still from her murmuring lips were heard the words—"I am free, I am free!"

One evening, Loretta sat by the patient: it was a beautiful autumnal night; the fire blazed on the well-filled hearth, and reflected phantom shapes on the richly tapestried walls; The room was lighted by a silver lamp, which shed a pale lustre over the crimson coverlet,

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which was bordered with pure white down. Stretched on the couch, the Astrologer's Daughter lay as beautiful as a statue, so motionless, so still. Suddenly the coverlet heaved to and fro, as if moved by a gentle wind, and at last a murmuring sound was heard—a voice so mild, so musical, cannot be conceived. It was many weeks since Clementina had spoken, and those who have watched for the first returning words of consciousness trembling on an invalid's lips, can conceive how gladly Loretta listened to the following strain:—

"I shall see again my father-land,
The bright home of my youth;
I shall walk again, and hand in hand
Will grasp at love and truth.
I shall wander where the waterfall
Ebbs on in reckless grace;
And the golden sun, the soft breeze, all
Shall fan once more my face.

"Oh, bear me back, in a gentle dream,
To the land of fairy sight,
Where on shady dells, the flowers glean
Their sun-bespangled light.

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Oh, let me rest where the chilly blast
Shall no more fan my brow;
The tints of hope now all are past:
Now lay me, lay me low.

"Oh, lay me where the silvery breeze
Sighs o'er the sea's wild moan;
Where the stars shine o'er the billowy seas,
And fairies glide alone.
Italia, thou, my father-land,
Receive me in my grief;
And foster, with rich fretted hand,
A lone, a wither'd leaf."

When Clementina had concluded her song, Loretta approached nearer, and had the satisfaction of hearing her name pronounced in the accents of recognition.

"Loretta," said the sufferer, "I have been dreaming. I cannot recal my senses; it seems to me as if I have been dwelling far, far away; it seems as if a load of grief were removed from my heart; it seems, too, as if I long to speak to some one—to tell them I am happy, and ask why it is, and how long my grief has been removed."

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"You must not agitate yourself," replied Loretta; "but if you will try and sleep, I will seek the Princess."

Clementina, exhausted by this little exertion, lay down again, and fell into a gentle slumber. She did not awake for more than half-an-hour; and when she recognised the Princess Marguerite, Loretta wept and cried for joy by turns.

"Oh, my dear Clementina," said the Princess, sitting on the bed, and looking at the attenuated form before her, "how sweet it is to hear you talk again! it is like the revived notes of a harp which has been long unstrung; and it is so sweet, also, to know that you revive to hear pleasant news; but you are not strong enough to listen to me yet."

"Yes, yes, I am," cried the invalid; "let me gaze a little longer on you, before I am selfish enough to think only of myself; then, I will hear what glad tidings you bring. What a beautiful boon is health," continued Clemen-

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tina, parting the clustering curls from Marguerite's brow; "my faint breathing, like a mockery of your vivacity; is it possible that I had ever a roseate bloom like yours?"

"You must not think of such things," replied the Princess; "I have an antidote against illness; you will soon be fresh and well again. Draw the curtains aside, Loretta; I must have the pleasure of seeing Clementina's first glad smile. Now listen to me:—The Duke of Guise has been dangerously wounded; it is noised that he fought a duel with a young brother officer, but my kingly brother was in fact his adversary. It will be many months before the Duke recovers; he is weakened by fever and the loss of blood, and his friends have agreed to hush up the matter, which in the old Duke's lifetime would have been productive of a war. The Duke is to retire to Italy, and remain there until his recovery is perfected; then he will return to take possession of his treasured bride: that is what the Court is to believe,

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but my brother of Anjou has told me in confidence, that the Duke intends releasing you from your vow, on condition that you never marry any one else. In the meanwhile, you are to be entirely under Jeanne d'Albret's care, and you are neither to be questioned or spoken to on the subject of the Duke; only my brother added one speech which I hardly dare repeat."

"Speak, pray speak!" said Clementina; "you are indeed my angel of consolation; Speak; do not fear."

The Princess blushed and averted her head; but after a pause, she added—"My brother says, you are to be very wary of your conduct, or you will excite the jealousy of the Duke, who has his spies at Court."

"Oh! is that all?" exclaimed Clementina, in a joyous tone; "then I will indeed guard my words and actions, and if possible, even my keen joy shall be buried in my own bosom. Kind and beloved Princess, I see your dear

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hand in all this, and you have indeed been active in my service."

"Indeed you overrate my power; but I again repeat, that you are very dear to me. I share your happiness or your sorrow, and I have now a boon to ask."

"Which means, it shall be granted," replied Clementina.

"This is my boon," said the Princess: "when I am married, you must dwell with me, and I shall know *why* you remain in single blessedness; therefore, I shall be able to indulge you with all the items of old-maidism, without laughing at your preciseness. You shall have a waiting-maid, as demure and prim, as little ambitious for marriage, as can possibly be imagined; she shall shudder if a pin were found out of its place. Your drawers and boxes, your flowers and buds, shall rival all old maids' appendages in neatness. Then you shall be surrounded with cats, and pets, and you shall have your own *sanctum sanctorum*,

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whilst on the door shall be engraven, 'No admission for gentlemen.'" The young Princess spoke so gravely, that Clementina fell into a paroxysm of laughter, and Jeanne d'Albret entered in time to hear the end of the unusual merriment.

"You ought not to excite our patient," said the gentle Queen. "See, Marguerite, the fever-spot on the cheek; I must forbid all further conversation."

"I have made Clementina very happy."

"But I have forgotten the most essential mark of my gratitude," said Clementina; "I ought to offer up my thankful prayers to the throne of mercy, and thank our Heavenly Father for all his goodness."

This was so exactly in unison with the gentle Jeanne d'Albret's ideas, that she, too, fell on her knees; the young Princess imitated her example, and the trio offered up a long prayer of joyful thankfulness. Clementina now rapidly recovered, and the Queen-Mother's

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attention was too deeply engaged with state affairs to annoy the young girl. But in the depth of her vindictive heart, she felt severe hatred towards her she had once much loved. Catherine was so seldom thwarted in her plans, that it was with bitter anger she beheld the Duke of Guise leaving the Court; and nothing but the knowledge that her son had wounded him, prevented her opposing his wish of indulging Clementina.

I must not allow my readers to suppose the Duke really intended to abandon Clementina: he loved her still with fondest love, but he began to read her heart, and he trusted that an act of generosity on his part would speak more forcibly than any persuasive eloquence. Nor was he mistaken; Clementina felt such keen pleasure at her happy release, that gratitude towards the Duke next took possession of her heart. Her fervent hope was, that absence would cure his love, and she trusted that he would place his affections elsewhere. How

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gladly would she be a lowly train-bearer in the ladies' suite, rather than the exalted wife of the rich Duke. Excuse me, readers, for so abruptly closing this chapter: but I dare not revel too long in a rehearsal of Clementina's unexpected joy. Months waned by, and her sad and pensive face, on which solemn and resigned grief had dwelt, gave place to a sweet serenity, almost akin to a bounding exuberance of delight. The fearful dream of misery, of an unhappy union, had fled, and the released sufferer allowed the future to be veiled in a shroud of mystery. Clementina enjoyed again the beautiful view of the Creator's works; she read of green hope in the leafy corn, and the soft summer's wind sang a lullaby of joy; her spirit was wrapt in a halo of peace. Oh, leave we her path in the sunny vale of happiness!

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CHAPTER II.

Readers, I have led you gradually through many years of Charles the Ninth's reign, and an epoch is now drawing near, which is indeed a deep stain on history; and darker still the blot, when we consider it was at the instigation of a woman that the Massacre of St. Bartholomew took place. How past searching out are the ways of Providence! Where was that bright assemblage of noblemen which Catherine had boasted she could congregate at her Court? The unsparing hand of Death had taken them from her grasp, and the venerable Coligny was

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the only prey her vindictive heart coveted—the only courtly individual she now hated—unless we are really to credit the dark tale, that Catherine poisoned the gentle and inoffensive Jeanne d'Albret. Jeanne d'Albret has not played a very conspicuous part in my tale, but her gentle heart glided in as an angel of pity, and we cannot help feeling a soft emotion of regret at her untimely end. She was cut off in the bloom of womanhood, at a time when she was looking forward to the nuptials of her son; and believing the accredited report that the Médicis poisoned her, how can we contemplate without a deep shudder the cruel wickedness of a woman who could affiance her daughter to the son of the murdered Jeanne? Coligny had repeatedly begged his Royal mistress to beware of the treachery of Court, but her own religious feelings made her judge too leniently of a sister Queen, who basely held out her hand in deceptive friendship. The Admiral himself, would not have tarried at the Médicis' Court, although

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baited with the most specious invitations; but from the moment he mistrusted the Court, he determined to watch his Royal mistress. Alas! it was all in vain. Jeanne d'Albret died suddenly, in agonizing pain: and those who wept a bitter requiem over her loss, dared not openly express their fear. It was rumoured that a gentleman made her a present of a very beautiful pair of gloves, which were purposely poisoned; others said the Queen had smelt a poisoned rose, but the matter was hushed up; there was no real proof of the murder; and the gentle Jeanne d'Albret glided into the tomb, a victim in the Médicis' hands. As her sorrowing maidens hung over her cold form, as they gave her the truest requiem of sorrow, their heartfelt tears, they turned in sombre gloom towards that Court, where a murderous hand was so constantly stretched forth. Strong in her pride, holding all opinions at defiance, the haughty Médicis shed feigned tears over Jeanne d'Albret's memory, and was the first

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to greet the afflicted Henri of Navarre with well-feigned tears of commiseration. Oh, how deeply the young Prince of Béarn felt his loss! how he loathed the new title of King of Navarre, by which he was now called! How bitter were the tears he shed over the last remains of the most gently feminine of women, of the most tender mother. Jeanne d'Albret's death shed a gloom throughout the Court, which was not removed by the return of the young Duke of Guise. He came again in renewed health, in increased beauty, and he turned again to the bride of his choice. How beautiful she appeared to him in her restored health! the commanding air of womanhood, in its first full splendour, taking the place of her girlish loveliness! Jeanne d'Albret was dead, and the Princess Marguerite, however willing, had not the power to befriend her; yet she so ardently asked Clementina to endeavour to defer her marriage until her union with the King of Navarre, that under various excuses Clementina managed to delay the fixed

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day; and she engrossed the attention of the Duke, by her intelligent conversation, contriving an excuse for leaving him, as the impatient words of love trembled on his lips. Clementina thought this was only a cowardly wish of delaying an event, which she felt assured would ultimately take place, yet still she did dally on; but let us do her the justice to say, with the praiseworthy wish of *endeavouring* to love.

Oh, what a bitter trial it must be to *endeavour* to love! what a dull, unmeaning passion! yet how many a fair bosom has been wrung with the trial, and how many more will be, I, cannot tell.

It was not with Clementina, in the words of Lorraine, "*Quelques douces larmes sur le passé, beaucoup d'espoir pour l'avenir.*" The memory of her first love survived the present and the past; but Clementina strenuously endeavoured to banish the image of the unfortunate Poltrot de Méré. Did she succeed? Not as well as she wished. There were silent hours

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in the night, when the silvery bosom of heaven was bedight with stars; there she fancied she read the sad tale of his life. There were day-waking dreams, in which his name spoke all dearly to memory; and, above all, there were moments when, on bended knee praying for sinners, she prayed for him most.

However extraordinary may appear the *contre temps* which prevented or retarded Clementina's union with the Duke, they are not all imaginary, for I follow the path of History; and if I make my self-formed characters submit to historical manœuvres, I endeavour not to make history bow to them. The next event which retarded the long-expected marriage of Clementina was the nuptials of the youthful King of Navarre to the beautiful Marguerite de Valois, a bride of sixteen.

It was on the 17th of August, 1572, that this interesting ceremony took place; but I must go back a short period, as the days preceding the ceremony were fraught with mourn-

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ful events—at least, so those who have so far read my tale will feel. Hardly was the Royal nuptial-day fixed, when Catherine pressed Clementina, with more pertinacity than usual, to fulfil her promise. But my readers will readily believe that, as she has delayed so far, she felt unwilling to lose the chance of seeing how far Henri of Navarre's powerful interest with the Duke could forward her distant hope of release.

The young King of France was extremely gay; and as Clementina had offended him, he indulged his revenge by making her the butt of his ill-humour. Clementina, however, was no longer a giddy young girl, but a lady-like and graceful young woman—young enough to be exceedingly captivating, and old enough to look with proper contempt at the workings of a petty though a kingly mind. Seeing that all his methods to annoy her had no weight, the King determined to use all his power in forcing her to marry the Duke, and that by the most crafty stratagem.

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"You are listless to-day, my son," cried the Queen, as she entered an apartment, where Charles was stretched on a couch, caressing a favourite spaniel. It was the beginning of August, that lovely month, when summer is in all her purest beauty; the windows were open to the ground, and flowers in the richest Dresden and Chinese vases shed a faint perfume over the room; the walls were hung with splendid pictures from the hands of the Médicis' own countrymen. Over the rich Turkey carpet, ottomans of refined tapestried work were disposed. Some had been made by the young Princess, and some were the work of the unfortunate Mary of Scotland, when she dwelt at the French Court; instruments of music, the Poet's loved harp, and the lyre of which the Bards speak, were carelessly disposed around the room. Birds in their gilded cages were singing their imprisoned lays; on the tables, covered with crimson velvet, finished with thickly-woven fringe, lay

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volumes which slumbered in their golden-cased bindings. Oh, how poor Monsieur Mariot would have sighed, had he seen the indolent Monarch reclining in idleness with works of rare interest disregarded at his side.

"You are listless to-day, my son," were the words of the Queen-Mother to her son, as she languidly threw herself back on a soft velvet chair.

Charles the Ninth breathed a false, a hollow sigh.

"Now, now!" cried his mother, with her usual impetuosity. What, are you sighing now? Well, the revelries which are at hand for our Marguerite's wedding will be the best cure for your listlessness."

"I wish I were not a King," drawled Charles, in a most effective manner.

"What can be the matter with you?" said Catherine; "wish you were not a King! It is a most unregal wish for a crowned head, and I do not not remember its having been

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expressed from Charlemagne until Charles the Ninth's reign. You are surely joking. Would you be the abbot of a monastery?"

"No, no," said Charles; "then I could not marry."

"Marry!" cried the Queen; "there is more than enough time to think of that. I suppose the approaching nuptials have given you this novel desire;" and the Queen laughed very heartily.

"You may laugh," answered the King, with another sigh, "but I *do* wish I were not a King."

"Whom would you like to be?" exclaimed Catherine, petulantly.

"The Duc de Guise," boldly answered the King, with such well feigned-fervour, that the Queen instantly exclaimed, stamping her foot violently—

"Is it possible that you are in love with Clementina?"

"Forgive me! forgive me!" exclaimed the deceitful actor.

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"Forgive you!" ejaculated the Médicis; "Clementina shall marry the Duke directly, or—my son, my son! what a clue is this to many long-hidden signs! This was the cause of your duel with the Duke; this the reason of Clementina's obstinate refusals! Who shall we be able to trust next?"

The Queen did not utter another syllable, but left the room with a most thoughtful step; and, totally heedless of the consequence of his rash folly, the King buried his face amidst a heap of downy cushions, and laughed long and convulsively. For himself he feared not: if Catherine were Queen-Mother, he was a King, and rapidly approaching his majority; moreover, Catherine doted on her son, and, selfishly careless about others, Charles knew he himself was safe.

The Queen-Mother's countenance wore such a stormy appearance of anger, that Loretta did not utter one syllable, whilst she assisted her at her night's *dishabille*.

When persons are in a very bad humour,

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they are frequently apt to fancy it is a subordinate person who is unusually taciturn; and it pleased the Queen to speak abruptly, severely, and spitefully, for she could not bear her own evil thoughts.

"How deceitful, how treacherous, are those apparently meek-hearted persons we meet through life," she exclaimed; "how often a fair and delicate frame conceals a plotting, wary disposition'"

"Appearances are sometimes treacherous," replied Loretta; "we should judge the heart, not the countenance."

"The heart!" cried Catherine; "and pray, thee, how is that to be judged, save through the words, and they are honied treachery. A rose conceals a sting; and the well-speckled insects leave their venom behind. There is now at this Court an innocent-looking being; one who walks in the dissembling badge of meek, suffering sorrow, but who is the most aspiring person in the land."

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Loretta had heard that the Cardinal de Lorraine was the most aspiring person in the land. Perhaps her mistress's sharp voice had disturbed her heart, which had before been at rest; or why did every spark of colour forsake her cheek? and why did her hand tremble?

"I hope no one has displeased your Majesty," exclaimed she, after a long pause.

The Queen was startled by the unusually tremulous manner in which these words were uttered, sounding so softly through the silence of the vast chamber. Catherine turned her keen gaze on the Italian's pale face; and for the first time since she had served her Royal mistress, Loretta was unable to stand that stedfast, proud gaze; she turned away, and burst into an hysterical flood of tears.

"You cannot be well," said the Queen, remembering that she had not uttered a word which she conceived could touch the maiden, who turned so faint, that to avoid calling in any of her other women, Catherine herself

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poured out a glass of water, and opened Loretta's bodice; in doing which, a faded leaf fell to the ground.

"Ah, my poor withered leaf, it is a bad omen," muttered Loretta, stooping down and picking it up, whilst the turn the casual event gave to her feelings was more favourable towards her recovery than sal volatile or any other remedy.

Catherine did not hear Loretta's faintly-murmured words, but she called her a silly creature, and other still harsher epithets; declaring she thought the practice of going into hysterics had not descended to Loretta.

The poor girl did not answer; but, for the first time, since many months, she sighed to think she *was* a waiting-maid.

At last the Queen finished her disrobing. Loretta placed the richly-fretted lamp in a shaded corner; she closed the large sheet of tapestry which encircled the bed, and she sought her own not distant chamber. She

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passed by Clementina's room, and heard her soft breathing, little thinking it was of her who slumbered tranquilly that Catherine spoke; but she, poor girl, she did not even undress, but she counted the dull hours of the night: now she knelt, now she paced up and down her room; pale and paler grew her brow, until her faint complexion resembled the flickering gray twilight. At last the dawn broke softly on her sight, and Loretta left the palace, nor did she pause in her hasty walk until she had reached Lorraine's hotel.

To the wondering gaze of the hardly-awake servants, she replied that she came from the Queen. She was well known by sight, and gained admittance into the house, although she had to wait long in an ante-chamber, until the Cardinal's *réveillé* had sounded; then she sent in a brief message, and the wondering Cardinal appeared before her. He had risen hastily, and was wrapped in a stamped velvet dress of richest dye, lined with crimson satin;

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a cord of twisted silk, with silken tassels, confined it at the waist; the sleeves were long and loose at the end, turned up with a crimson silk border.

Loretta had seen him in his full clerical robes, and she had seen him in his courtly attire; but he was so strikingly handsome in his rich, but less imposing toilette, that her heart fluttered quickly, as she replied to his kind and anxious greeting.

"You are ill!" cried he, drawing her nearer to the light, and looking at her pale face; "have you met with any trouble?—is there anything I can do for you?"

"Oh, no, my Lord," replied Loretta, averting her head until the starting tear had fallen; "I should not have come thus early for myself—I come to warn you that you are in danger."

"And pray, in what peril do I stand, my fair young adviser?"

"No, no, my Lord, you think I am joking, and you are talking to me in a courtly—a

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patronizing tone; indeed, indeed, you must heed my voice — the Queen let fall menacing words against the 'most aspiring' person in the land! I—I—"

"You thought she meant me; but why so?"

"Because men call you the highest in the realm," she boldly replied; "and the Queen but changed the word—the meaning was the same."

"Not quite," replied the Cardinal; "the Queen knows I hold my power from the Pope; it has naught to do with her. Your intention is kind; but you have, methinks, mistaken—the Queen might have spoken of some one else."

But Loretta only shook her head; she thought of her sleepless night, of the falling leaf, and she had a presentiment of fear.

"Now you have so kindly fulfilled your mission of self-imposed kindness," continued the Cardinal, "I must insist upon knowing whether there is anything I can do to restore you to tranquillity; whether you are not well, and a

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nervous panic has taken possession of your mind; or some person has been frightening you with erroneous tales."

"I am quite well," replied Loretta, "and I only repeat words which I myself have heard. Will you not heed me? will you not be cautious?"

"Since you are determined to make a coward of me, I will abide your will," replied Lorraine, smiling. "Shall I clothe myself in steel? shall I wear a concealed dagger?"

"Now you are mocking me, my Lord," said Loretta, with a slight mixture of pride in her well-modulated voice.

"No, no, I must not trifle with your kindness," replied the Cardinal; "here, my kind maiden, is a token of my thanks," and he placed a diamond ring on her finger.

"Not there," said Loretta; "Queen Catherine's eyes would spy it with anger;" so saying, she drew it from her finger, and placed it in her bosom.

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"I placed the leaf you gave me there," she said, "and the ring shall bear it company."

"Ah!" exclaimed the Cardinal, "I remember; that leaf was to be a token of hope."

"But it is decayed and withered," said Loretta; "did the white rose die?"

"No; it has faint, and fainter grown, but still it lives."

"Faint, and fainter grown," soliloquized Loretta: and with a deep reverence she left the Cardinal's presence, hastened to the Palace, and snatched a hasty slumber, before Catherine's *réveillé* had sounded.

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CHAPTER III.

Is it an idea of my own imagination, that we have as it were a presentiment when some ominous event is going to take place? Does not the expanse of the ethereal atmosphere seem tinged with a lugubre tint? Do not the birds seem to utter more languidly their love-tuned lays? Do not the inanimate flowers appear to be decked in sombre colours? Well, perhaps this is my own fancy; but will any say, the heart does not often presage, by its dull beating, that a tide of misfortune is hovering round our soul? When Loretta had dressed her Royal

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mistress, she descended on the terrace: her head ached, and she imagined the cool morning breeze would refresh her. Golden fish were swimming swiftly in a limpid tide of pure water, and Loretta listlessly watched their light movements, smiling languidly at the idea of envying "a fish." There was a restlessness about her eyes, a tremulous quivering around her lips; her heart fluttered unequally, and her face was alternately deadly pale, or hecticly flushed.

At length the very silence, the harmony of Nature, were overpowering to her love-sick heart, and she returned to the Queen's apartments, intending to arrange her trinkets, or employ herself in some manner, in order to divert her ennui.

The Queen-Mother had a pet bird, of rare plumage, which had seen its first day on Italia's sunny shore. It was never taken from the splendid dressing-room adjoining Catherine's sleeping apartment, and there, in its gilded

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and elaborately-carved cage, it sung its morning song, to charm a Royal ear.

It was Loretta's first care to provide for the daily wants of her Royal mistress's favourite; but the morning in question, she had only risen from her hasty slumber to attend the Queen, and the Royal favoured bird uttered a shrill cry, seeming to express its indignation at being neglected.

"Poor little caged prisoner! it is the first time I have neglected thee," said Loretta. "I have ever loved thee; thou art a type of my father-land, and the music of thy notes reminds me of the harmony of my childhoood's home."

"So speaking, Loretta placed the cage on the table before her. The water-bottles were not yet replenished, but there was a glass on the chimney, carefully covered over, and the water in it appeared beautifully clear.

Loretta replenished the bird's fountain; and feeling thirsty herself, she drank off the re-

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maining portion. When she had drained the last drop, she wondered that she retained a sour taste, and, with peculiar kindness, emptied the bird's fountain, rinsed it carefully, and sought water elsewhere. When she returned, Catherine was standing by the chimney, and her face was very much flushed.

"I covered that glass because I did not wish it touched," she said, angrily; "why did you throw it away?"

"I did not throw it away," replied Loretta; "I was thirsty, and I drank it."

"Oh, Loretta, my poor, faithful Loretta," cried Catherine, clasping her hands in agony, "what have you done? you are poisoned!"

"Gracious heavens!" exclaimed Loretta, turning very pale, "your Majesty surely is joking—it was pure limpid water, and I feel quite well."

"It is poison—deadly poison; did you take the whole?"

"No, I threw part of it away," replied

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Loretta; but, as you speak, I feel a dizzy sickness—must I die?"

"No, no," cried the Queen, "I will summon medical aid;" and Catherine was leaving the apartment, but Loretta caught the border of her robe, and besought the Queen to desist.

"Oh, let me die," she cried, "I am weary of existence; do not think of me. I have loved you in life, and I will be faithful in death; never will I tell that I was poisoned."

"I did not mean to poison you," said the Queen.

"But you intended the fatal draught for the Cardinal de Lorraine?"

"No; on my sacred honour," replied the Queen; "I—"

"Tush, tush; I wish not to know your Majesty's secrets: you did not wish to poison *him*. Oh, let me die, let me slumber in oblivion; let me lie down quietly on yonder couch; let me gaze on you; but I fain would confess."

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"I cannot let you die," said the Queen.

"All is useless, I *must* die," replied Loretta; "the poison is finding its way round my heart. Let me confess to—to the Cardinal de Lorraine."

The Queen rushed out of the apartment, and when she returned, she brought the Cardinal Lorraine with her; and, contrary to Loretta's wish, she was also accompanied by a physician.

The latter felt the poor maiden's pulse, as she lay extended on the couch. He looked at her glassy eye, he examined her attentively; he questioned the Queen in a low whisper: the words—"How many grains were there?" fell heavily on the acute ears of the dying girl, and she heard also the fatal answer—"She must die."

"Pillow my head a little higher," she cried; "and now leave me—I must confess."

The Queen pillowed her sinking head, and she would have pressed a kiss on her fading

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brow; but Loretta gently repulsed her, saying, with a faint shudder: "It is poisoned."

"Poisoned!" repeated the Queen, in a mournful voice; "my faithful Loretta, forgive me; and hear now the tale: you are no menial waiting-maid, you are—"

"Never mind what I am," exclaimed Loretta, with revived ardour; "I have lived in the belief, that I moved but to serve a Royal mistress, and I will die as I have lived, calling myself her servant. My thread of life is nearly spent; and I have frailties to confess, and faults to own." The Queen said no more, she left the room sadly; and Loretta wept her last tears on Lorraine's bosom.

How he started, when he heard the confession of her love: it was innocent, insomuch that, in her own dying words—"She would never have confessed it, except at the portals of death." "I have faded as my green leaf," she said, taking it from its fond hiding place. "Take back your ring, my Lord Cardinal,

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and wear it again. Now that I am dying, now I have confessed my hopeles passion, now that no mortal aid can save me, promise one thing: you must never reveal the cause of my death. I wronged the Queen; she did *not* mean to harm you. Call her not until I am quite dead; my brow is already damp and cold; kneel down and pray beside me, and let your voice be the last I shall hear before I am gone, to be here on earth no more."

The Cardinal clasped the dying girl's cold hands in his, and he prayed fervently. Loretta's large eyes rested on his face; an answering amen trembled on her lips, a deep sigh followed it, and the beautiful Italian girl's spirit had flown to its mansion on high. When the Médicis returned into the room, the vital spark of life was totally extinguished; Lorraine was still on his knees, gazing at the poor girl's cold and suffering-looking face: his head was bent low, and Catherine would have indeed wondered, had she known the Cardinal's

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thoughts. He appeared to rouse himself with the greatest difficulty, and approached the Queen, who was sitting with her face buried in her hands.

"Do not look so reproachfully at me, my Lord Cardinal," she said, at length; "I did not intend any harm towards Loretta."

"I will not doubt your words, daughter," he replied; "but it is a lesson—a strong and bitter lesson against sin."

"And yet you once told me there was absolution for sinners."

"Tush!" cried Lorraine, impatiently; "that was when we were talking about establishing the true religion in the land—when we plotted not against one individual person. Is it right of you to exert the energies of your mind in petty acts of revenge? let that poor girl's cold form speak an indelible lesson to your heart. I ask no questions; I will give you no further advice; but I inflict, as a spiritual punishment, that you remain with Loretta's corpse until the

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sun has sunken in his evening rest. When you leave the apartment, you may, perchance, gather much good from your reflections."

The Cardinal did not wait for an answer, but casting one long and sorrowful look on the couch on which Loretta's remains lay, he left the room, with slow steps, and a pensive brow.

Catherine felt that the Cardinal had not spoken so harshly as she expected he would have done, and her keen penetration caused her thus to reason:—"The Cardinal considers this only *one* of the many sins which weigh grievously in the balance against me." Yet the Queen reasoned in vain; she could not combat the curiosity which filled her mind, when she recalled the evident pity which sat upon his countenance, and the cold and collected manner in which he spoke.

My readers can, however, guess Lorraine's thoughts; he had heard Loretta's secret—the confession of her love were the last words she had uttered; he recalled to mind all her sighs,

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all the hopelessness of her life; he looked upon her untimely death as he would at a beautiful flower which had withered, struck by the coldness of one frosty blight; instead of lingering until its colours faded, its bloom departed, it would bow its head to the autumnal gale. Those who *have* wept over the pangs of a hopeless love, those who *have* concealed it, and have been undermined by its searching hand, will know how much sorrow poor Loretta was saved; and if they shed a tear over the creature of imagination, it will be a pearly drop from a sympathizing source. The Queen had said Loretta was not a maiden humbly born—perhaps this will further interest my fair readers; but Catherine shall keep her unrevealed secret, for Loretta's soul is wafted in that haven of equality, that boon of rich and poor, the goal to which we all run; and there, there is no distinction of persons—merit has the highest place, virtue finds its reward.

It was, no doubt, a most unwelcome task

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for Catherine to remain during the long hours which intervened until sunset, alone, with Loretta's last remains. So accustomed was Catherine to the services of the poor departed girl, that although she was actually watching by her cold corpse, when she felt weary of her loneliness, she was on the point of saying —"I will call Loretta." By this it will be imagined, that Catherine was not near the couch on which Loretta had breathed her last sigh; on the contrary, she was at the farthest end of the vast apartment, and a prey to the most poignant feelings of anguish. The day was excessively sultry, and a storm set in with unusual violence; the Palace shook with the violence of each loud vibration; vivid flashes of lightning illuminated the room, and cast flickering rays on the tapestried walls, until every form there seemed to be animated with life. The rain fell in torrents, and the warring elements seemed to sing a sombre requiem to Loretta's memory. As the dark heavens

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parted, and the vivid flashes came forth from their vast hiding-place, Catherine fancied she saw the Italian girl's dark eyes resting on her face, and she imagined her usually liquidly soft voice was changed into the depth of the thunder's loud cry. The heavy drops of nervous fear stood on the Royal brow, on which grave sins had not chosen to mar the excessive beauty, which sat on each lovely feature; long pent-up recollections crowded to her memory, and painful indeed was the retrospect of that Royal life. Figures which had long since been shrouded in the tomb, sprung up to taunt her reproachfully; and Jeanne d'Albret's mild voice was pleading for her forgiveness, not cursing her, although she had such deep cause. At length, the raging elements were appeased: the thunder hushed its loud cry, and the lightning gilded no more a heavens; the birds chorussed in a timorous manner, and a delightful odour of sweetest perfume was wafted through the open windows, as each

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restored flower held up again its crushed head to the summer's light. Fragrant was the smell of the earth, tranquillizing the calm which followed the tempest; the horizon seemed to say, in its blue young beauty, "a smile has conquered a tear." No smile, however, hovered round the Medicis' beautifully formed mouth; her long raven tresses were damp and disordered, and Catherine felt it impossible to tarry lohger with the dead, when Lorraine fortunately entered to release her.

"Oh my Lord Lorraine," she exclaimed, "I thought not a storm would affright me; but when the nerves are weakened, a tempest will sometimes affect the body."

"The voice of the Lord always seems to me to speak through a storm," said Lorraine, "and when our consiences reproves us, the voice tells its words in anger. I fancy I have heard a voice this day.

"What did it say?"

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"It told me this: How pleasantly must a good man glide through life, how lovely must it be so to pass through the world, that no dread is felt at the last; how much richer, how much more really happy, is a poor unlettered peasant with a good conscience, than a rich man with a load at his heart! The good man sees also the hand of God in a storm, but he does *not* fancy he hears a voice calling "revenge, *my* revenge is at hand" To him the tempest appears a natural casualty, and when he thinks of the Almighty hand which guides it, it is to exclaim, with fervid warmth of soul, "How wonderful are His ways! how past finding out!"

"But in your capacity as confessor, tell me, Cardinal, where do you find the harmless being you describe?"

"Not in the midst of Courts, your Majesty is justified in saying; but think not so ill of mankind as to imagine goodness is banished from the earth. It can dwell in a Court,

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though it exists rarely in it; the much-lamented Jeanne d'Albret was a bright example."

"She was a Huguenot, a bigoted Huguenot," said the Queen, a crimson flush spreading over her unusually pale countenance.

"Can you persuade yourself that cause banishes virtue?"

"Then why do you enter so warmly into every plan to destroy them?" asked Catherine, with much bitterness.

"Ask the lion if he tolerates another animal if he equals his power? ask if the lion is not lord of the forest? Are there other trees to rival the oak? is it not lord of the forest? Are there other potentates on earth to equal the spiritual power of the Pope?"

"I understand, you are afraid of the Huguenot's power?"

"I am," boldly replied the Cardinal. "But why does your Majesty provoke such explanations? *You* are afraid; your son is

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afraid; every courtly breast dreads their increasing power. My hand is in the strife, and I will not shrink from it. But away with hypocrisy: if we deceive ourselves, we shall next imagine we deceive the world, and the world is too keen for us. This is the riddle of religious differences—they are *political:* the Duke hates Coligny, and the Admiral hates the Duke. Until Henri of Navarre's death, the triumvirate were the obnoxious party, *not* the religion. Oh! man, vain man, he fain would place a veil over his own conscience, and, dashing headlong into a precipice, still like to hear a delusive voice whisper, he is sailing on a smooth glad sea, with an ethereal sky above his head; he would die with a voice calling for revenge sounding in his ears, and fain believe the next would bring him once more to an ocean of deception such as he now lives in: this is but a sketch of politically-blinded men."

"As you speak," said Catherine, forcing

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a smile; "I am asking myself, if I could resign my power—if I could live in seclusion—if I could rest away from the hurricane of political action—and the answer is "No." Such as I have lived, such must I die. Already History has perhaps woven together her pages; already it speaks against "Catherine de Médicis, the Queen-Regent of France." Then let them speak; but let them say also, that during the early days of Charles the Ninth she was surrounded by men who spoke honied words; but where the bee lighted, there it died: it sucked one sweetened draught, and then it drew no more. Catherine must have been the lion-hearted, the remorseless Catherine, or another would have usurped her place. My Lord Cardinal, you have spoken openly to me, and I will deal the same way with you: I grieve for my maiden's death; you *know* I do, for you have marked how serviceable she has ever been to me; do me the justice to say that all the maiden may

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have confessed has been the burden of a love-sick heart. If I send my own soul far from the pale of mercy, I have never caused a dependant to sin; and now I will feign no repentant turn. It is useless to detain me here, my Lord; the tempest has passed, and so have the temporary feelings of a qualmy conscience."

Crafty, hardened Catherine! Yet she felt more remorse than she chose to own; but she knew the Cardinal's character, and she spoke accordingly.

"You are at liberty to go when you choose, my daughter," he said; "the news of Loretta's death has spread—that is to say, it is reported she died in a fit."

The Cardinal pronounced these last words slowly and with emphasis, but the Queen gave him no clue whether she should disavow the report; she left the apartment, and the Cardinal gave orders that Loretta's remains should be taken to his mansion, where

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a private, but handsome funeral was given to her. This was all *he* could do for her, whom she, poor girl! had so unexpectedly, yet so deeply, loved. Her grave was often decked with young green leaves, and on the snowy marble were engraven these words: "There is hope above." Casual observers thought the words common-place; they thought them too short, or not applicable to one who had not, to their knowledge, died hopeless. But Lorraine knew how fraught with meaning were those words, and how deep a tale the green leaves told; and the Cardinal's last words on retiring to rest the night after the last sad duty had been paid to Loretta's remains were, "*There is hope above.*"

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CHAPTER IV.

How lovely, how joyous, how full of nature's deepest, most enthralling passion, is the month of August! Spring has blushed her last maiden blush, and Summer has dawned in all its splendour. June, modest as a new-made bride, has fleeted by; July has waned, and August is full in the plenitude of its perfect beauty. The hedges are laden down with the weight of their own lovely freight; the corn waves cheerily in the gale; posies and blue flowers, peep forth, and smile as it were upon their rich resting place. The birds carouse now in a chorus of

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full voices; the fairy-like heaven is bespangled by the purest rays; one beauteous, chamelion-looking sheet of gay colours, stretches over the hemisphere above. August is indeed a lovely month, a month when thanksgiving to the Disposer of all things seems to spring spontaneously to the lips; when the heart loves to be thankful, and loves to express its happiness. Happiness! that word knows no bonds, is fettered by no links, is confined to no dwelling-place; if it glide in the palace, if it follow the gilded hall, it is also to be found in the humble dwelling-place of the poor and needy. Alas, that I should turn the picture; alas! that I should say that misery is equally fecund in its existence. How many are there who glide through life apparently happy, who conceal a broken heart, withered affections, sometimes remorse, sometimes crime! No, no, I must not compare misery with happiness, insomuch, that misery will call happiness to its aid, but happiness will never summon

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misery. How forcibly nature speaks to the human voice, and methinks none are really deeply soul-stricken with sin, who can listen to the harmony of its innocent calling.

Poltrot de Méré watched the ripe summer beauty, but he watched its cornucopia in a distant shore, away from those early haunts of childhood, towards which the heart of man ever yearns. England was his father-land, but it was in France Poltrot had drawn the breath of life; it was there, in the land of the vineyard, that he had first lisped the word "Father." Death had deprived him at an early period of those dear ties which are the truest supporters of virtue (when parents know how to fulfil their duty). And Poltrot had led a careless, a free life; he had sipped the follies of a Court, he had imbibed the faulty party-spirit of the age. He hated or loved, for in those days there was no medium, and following his headstrong career, he was a banished, a hopeless man. What a bitter thing it is to

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be banished! how the heart yearns towards spots, to which imagination lends a thousand attractions it had not recognised before. How the bosom palpitates with a never-dying wish of revisiting the familiar haunts, which seem to fade further down the never-coming grasp. As even in midnight dreams, the slumberer presses forth his hands to clasp at *something*, he knows not what, and grasps, waking at a shapeless shadow, how often did Poltrot wake in the dead of the night; how often did he fancy he heard Clementina, his once promised bride's voice, uttering in softly tremulous accents—"Poltrot, repent, repent." Did he *not* repent? did he not bedew his sleepless couch with the tears of real, or never-dying remorse? Did he not wake from uncertain slumbers, with the voice of prayer trembling on his lips?

But, alas! the *beau ideal* of his existence had fleeted by as a long-forgotten dream, and Clementina's form came in a trance, but to

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mock him with the vanity of human expectations. In each vision, however, his fair, lost bride appeared more touchingly beautiful, more spiritless, more dejected than before; tears trembled ever on her long lashes, and her voice had ever those faltering accents of a wounded heart. "Oh, that she should make the sacrifice of her peace, for me," thought the unhappy Poltrot; and he pitied her from his heart. A man, who truly, disinterestingly loves, cannot repress the pity which steals over him, when he beholds or thinks of a young female plighting her vow at the altar, whilst her heart lingers towards the one beloved in her early life. Towards Clementina, Poltrot's heart was ever straying: *he* was not near her, whose voice could make her heart thrill; *he* gazed not at her face, *he* pressed not her hand in his—a frigid picture of the beautiful being he adored, was all he could press to his longing lips; he bedewed the fair semblance with his tears, he dimmed the frame

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with his deeply-heaved sighs; but that was all he could do. Each day he expected to hear of her marriage with the Duke; and the reflection that her cold line of self-imposed duty had not yet begun, brought an inexpressible balm to his heart.

Does Poltrot de Méré linger on his spiritless existence by himself? does he prey upon his grief? does he weary with his own sighs? No, Heaven is too kind to allow a repentant sinner to be so cheerless, so hopeless; and Poltrot lives amidst the voice of kindred.

Augusta de Méré resided with a widowed aunt and a very beautiful cousin; her early days had glided by in peaceful elegance, and the first sorrow she had known was a severe one—the convicted crime of her much-loved brother, and his reported execution. From the moment Augusta wore the garbs of mourning for a brother she fancied no more existed, his name was never uttered by her; she could not talk of his death-*bed*, for, alas! she fancied

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he had perished on the cold, conspicuous scaffold, and that the discordant voices of the reckless multitude had pillowed his soul to its last rest. When the object of all this grief appeared again, in sad paleness, but in truest beauty, then the crime was forgotten in Augusta's gentle clasp, and Poltrot wept on her bosom, as he hid his shamed face on those dark garbs she was wearing for him.

Mrs. Ailesbury forgot her nephew stood before her a "banished murderer!" the hideous words did not cross her mind; she remembered he was her deceased sister's only son; she read on his pallid brow the truest account of his sufferings, and she mingled her tears to his, as, remembering the prodigal son's warm reception to his neglected home, she bade him be welcome, and find peace.

When Poltrot at length raised his tear-bedewed face, he encountered the gaze of his cousin, Edwina Ailesbury, and then again the crimson tide of shame mounted to his

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brow. He could bear the gaze of his own gentle sister, of his widowed aunt; but, alas! it was doubly painful to greet a stranger—a beautiful girl, who, in childhood, had been taught to be proud of "Cousin Poltrot," to hear of his deeds in arms, and now to appear before her, soiled with crime, stricken with sorrow. But, more than all this, there was evident admiration expressed in Edwina's clear brown eyes, and Poltrot turned away with a shudder, remembering that sad day when Clementina's had rested upon him, all-pitying, but still all-loving.

Edwina did not speak, but hers was one of those expressive faces which can tell tales when the voice is silent. Her features were not strictly regular, but had a purity of expression—that refined yet well-marked outline which stamps genteel birth—and her mouth was particularly attractive, as it possessed a peculiar grace, seeming to harmonize with the love-feeling expression of her eyes. Her com-

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plexion was beautifully fair, yet she was not a blonde, and her bright brown hair was classically arranged, displaying the profusion of her long locks, yet falling smoothly on her clear brow. Edwina was rather below than above the height termed tall, and her cousin called her, her *little* Edwina; but no one could have wished to add to the height of a person so gracefully moulded, so perfect in the *tout ensemble*, that each movement was new grace. With great promptitude of feeling the young girl immediately perceived her cousin's distress, and took the earliest opportunity of gliding out of the room, and Poltrot was left alone with his aunt and sister.

"Oh, Augusta, how I have dreaded this meeting; how I had half-determined to still the throbbings of my heart, to forget the ties of kindred which made me yearn towards your innocent home; I had half made up my mind to hide my shame-stricken brow in some lonely spot, but I summoned courage, and you have

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met me with such kindness. God bless you, my gentle, my dear, my only sister; and He *will* bless you, for thus his angels in heaven receive a penitent sinner."

"Talk no more of the past," replied the gentle girl; "welcome to our home—we must make you forget your sorrow, or rather, you must temper it with holy consolation; you must kneel beside us at the village church, and you must fancy again that you are a young boy, and that I am the romping Augusta you used to reprove."

"Those days are fled, my Augusta; never can I efface the image of what I *was*, and what I now am; here, look at my loss, but remember that this mute token is only a small, a very small, part of my loss; it is the treasured worth of my intellectual soul, of her searching mind, and her guileless heart; it is the worth of a virtuous and a living woman, for which my weary heart must ever pine."

Augusta gazed upon the portrait, and her

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tears fell on the expressive countenance which, painted in the joyousness of Clementina's first spring, had not one shade of care to dim its brightness.

Poltrot was deeply touched by his sister's sympathy, and those mingled tears had the truest affection in their outpouring; they fell slowly but plentifully from Poltrot's overcharged heart, and they alleviated the sorrow of his lonely sufferings. He felt the delightful conviction that he should no more weep alone; and those who are sorrowful, know all the unspeakable bliss of sympathy.

"How very beautiful is the country, here," said Poltrot, after a pause; "I have revelled in Italian scenery, but the soft and modest beauty of Twickenham, speaks so gently to the heart. The full hedges speak of the summer's gladness; and the gentle streamlets tell of peace. There is music in the air, and freshness on the earth; no sultry warmth makes the feverish heart long for

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coolness; the gentle wafting of the breeze to and fro, the harmony of the delightful scenery, glides even to the heart of sorrow and shame; and, Augusta, I loved its pleading voice; something within me seemed to warn me of the sympathy I should here meet, and I am so grateful I summoned the moral courage of appearing before you."

"And you shall never repent your wise choice: we must wander together in the summer dells; we must catch the first sound of the the lark; we must cull the flowers as they open their freshness to the day. I will console your heart, and I will catch your first smile; dear, Poltrot! say you will smile again."

Poltrot turned towards his sister, and a sickly smile played round his mouth. It was the shadow of a smile, but Augusta caught it gladly, and treasured it as the sweet token that there was still a ray of hope within that poor heart.

"Dear, dear Poltrot! come and see our

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pretty garden; come and see my birds. I have a pet tame canary, which hovers on my shoulders; and I have a parrot who repeats your name."

At that moment, the bird exclaimed from an inner room—"Poltrot, poor Poltrot."

"Ah, poor Poltrot! yes, that is my name," cried the unhappy young man; "right, quite right—poor Poltrot *is* my name."

"We taught him that, because you were away from us," said Augusta, blushing deeply; "long, long before—"

"Before I was a murderer! Augusta, my gentle sister, soil not your dear lips with that word; it tells sadly from the mouth of innocence and purity. Promise me you will never utter that word."

The answer was a fervent kiss, and an earnest request that he would come into the garden; but there, too, every object which met his eye spoke volumes to Poltrot's heart. There was one particular spot which was so very like the

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pleasant shade of trees where Clementina had breathed her love. The flowers were too bright, they were too joyous in their fresh, open beauty; the sky appeared too pure; the silent influence of Nature overpowered him, and Poltrot leaned heavily upon his sister's arm. Tear after tear coursed each other down his pale cheeks, and fell upon Augusta's auburn curls. In silence they continued their walk, until they approached a summer-seat, where, under the spreading branches of a tree, the graceful Edwina was wreathing a garland of flowers, singing, as she added flower after flower to her bouquet. The silent brother and sister heard the words:—

"Ye lovely flowers, in brightness blooming,
Hail to your morning birth!
Sweet Rose, lov'd Rose! the gale perfuming,
Thou beauteous child of earth!
The dew-drops love thy blushing head,
The sun-beams drink thee dry;
By mossy green thy charms are fed,
And kiss'd by zephyr's sigh.

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"Fair Lily, too, thy cheek is pale
As Winter's drifted snow;
Thou feedest on love-breathing gale,
Where sparkling waters flow;
Sweet sounds around thee wreathe their spell,
Gay insects haunt the stream;
They leave the spot with one 'Farewell,'
To Summer's last, bright beam!

"Oh beauteous Primrose, thou must be
Entwined amid the Rose;
For thou—" * * * *

"Oh, I did not mean to let Poltrot know I was a poet, or rather attempted to be one," cried Edwina, as she half-concealed herself behind her graceful bouquet, and endeavoured to hide the blushes which mounted to her cheek.

"Oh, nonsense, Edwina," said Augusta, playfully, "you know you live on poetry."

"I beg your pardon, my fair coz.; aunt will tell you I require something more substantial than poetry to support the spark of health and spirits which are within my body."

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"But poetry rocks you to sleep, Edwina."

"Well I love to ramble over some old song, when I lie awake; but what maiden, save a candid one, like myself, would own that she ever lies awake?"

"And why not, Edwina?"

"Why not?" repeated Edwina, with a peculiarly arch expression, which became her so well; "why not? because that is confessing to indulging romantic visions, or wandering in thought amidst a labyrinth of true love, which never runs smooth, at least so we are told."

"But I shall not accuse you of being in love; I only accuse you of being a poet."

"That is nearly the same; at least no one will believe person *can* be poetical, unless they *are* in love, or have been in love, or mean to to be in love; unless they have some lover who likes to come in the moonlight and can bear to freeze a whole night in January, singing love serenades under a window—who can leap across a wall of stupendous thickness—who can, in

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short, say wondrous things, do impossibilities. No, no, Gussy, I am not half stamped a poet."

"All your words are of no avail," continued her amiable cousin; "you are a poet to my liking; you are pretty enough to say what you please, and not strictly handsome enough to say ill-natured things, and look out of humour. An hour of sulkiness would spoil your face for a week, so you are sure always to be in a good humour."

"What a beautiful portrait you are making of me; Poltrot, pray come to my assistance, and say that I need not be such an insipid, inanimate being; I love to see a woman in a passion, if she has real cause to be in one, particularly since that celebrated painter told me I looked best when I was animated; and certainly I had been in a passion that day—let me see what it was about; but what does that signify? I only want Poltrot to give me licence to be in a passion whenever I please."

Alas! alas! for a guilty conscience; even

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the playful, innocent Edwina, had, without knowing it, rankled a thorn in Poltrot's bosom. Passion! had not passion hurled him to commit a sinful crime? had not passion dashed him from the summit of happiness, to the abyss of misery? He had stood, as it were, upon a mountain, whose brow touched the ethereal hemisphere; flowers bloomed upon its mossy sides, and gentle rivulets flowed around it: suddenly he was transported, hurled from this sunny domain, and now he bowed low to the ground. Could he talk of passion?

"You must give me an answer," still persisted the unconscious girl.

But Poltrot fled into the house.

"Oh, Augusta! what have I done?" she cried, turning to her cousin, and letting her bouquet fall to the ground.

"Nothing intentionally; but my brother's nerves are so sensitive. I will go after him; but you had better take no notice of this occurrence; it was the word 'passion' which hurt

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his spirits. Kiss me, Edwina; you did not mean to wound him."

"I did not, indeed," muttered Edwina; and she was glad her cousin left her, for tears flowed down her cheeks. It was very seldom that such drops of emotion dimmed the lustre of her brown eyes, but Edwina could not repress them: there was a softness, a melancholy, in Poltrot's face, a graceful despondency in his figure, a wearied yet a touching expression; and the gay young girl preferred his subdeud appearance, and the soft and trembling sound of his voice, to any other she had ever heard. Day after day her fondness increased, and yet poor Edwina scarcely dare speak to her cousin, for a want of forethought was her greatest fault; and unlike the gentle Augusta, she did not know how to time her words and looks, for it was necessary to time even the expression of the face, in order to avoid wounding the sensibility of Poltrot's morbid feelings. Edwina was gay, and her gaiety

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jarred against Poltrot's melancholy—she became pensive, and he morbidly fancied his sorrow was infectious, even to his lively cousin; she looked kindly, fondly at him, and there her gaze was met by one of almost sullen return, seeming to say—"What business has any one to love me?" A grief-stricken, a morbidly-sensitive disposition, is a most delicate companion; and the lively Edwina, pitying, admiring, and loving her cousin, became an object of hatred to Poltrot. Her love was a mockery of what he had once so tenderly fostered, and poor Edwina was totally blind to this circumstance, whilst Augusta was far too amiable to tell her of it.

She was, indeed, herself as an angel of compassion hovering round her brother's steps; she led him to wild spots, which she felt would suit his humour. At night she lay awake, endeavouring to fancy herself in his situation, and wondering what then would best soothe her; then, when some bright thought fleeted past her ima-

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gination, oh then she longed for the dawning morning, in order to put her plan into execution. Her voice was the first which greeted her brother's ears, as tapping gently at his door, she told him the lark was up, and the dew was on the grass, would he take an early walk?

Arm in arm, the sister and brother wended their way across the fields, following the course of the river, and their conversation was so pure, so wholly directed heavenward, that Poltrot ever returned from his morning rambles, comforted in spirit, more resigned, more tranquil. Will it then be wondered that Edwina's gay voice broke inharmoniously upon the unearthly calmness which, after these rambles, reigned in his heart? Sometimes she was subdued, but her gentleness was not inherent, like Augusta's; the latter was a being fit to comfort and alleviate suffering. Edwina was a creature fit to captivate man in his gayest hours; she twined round the heart, as long as it was blithe and free, but she had not drunk long draughts

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of sorrow, she did not *then* know what it was to feed on sighs. Poetry was the favourite hemisphere of her mind, but it was a graceful, animated poetry; it was clothed, like herself, in sprightly gracefulness; she charmed, she stole upon man's sight, but she did not cling round the grief-stricken soul.

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CHAPTER V.

It was with sorrow that Mrs. Ailesbury watched a degree of languor fall upon her usually animated daughter. The song was more seldom heard, the laugh was less buoyant, the step had a pensiveness which was new to the sprightly girl. Those who admired Edwina in the gay moods of wit, or high spirits, would hardly have recognised her in a pensive humour. A mother's eye (and a widowed mother's especially) is ever alive to the feelings of her child, but in this case Mrs. Alisbury was entirely in the dark. She

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never imagined Edwina loved Poltrot; she scarcely ever saw him; she had generally left the breakfast-room before he and his sister returned from their morning's ramble, and during the day they scarcely ever met. The mother attributed her child's failing spirits to the warmth of the weather, to every cause save the right one. As is often the case in such dilemmas, Mrs. Alisbury called upon a neighbour to consult her upon the propriety of tonics, or other remedies suitable to a case which she did not understand.

Mrs. Ailesbury's neighbour resided in a Gothic-looking cottage. The lawn was trimly decorated with plants which the old gardener boasted had been in existence, or at least were sprouts springing from plants which had vegetated in another reign; each geranium had its pedigree, and wo to those who did not admire the prim, though somewhat tasty garden, which its owner, Mrs. Grandison,

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noticed once a week on her journey to church, when the old gardener invariably vied with the other servants in endeavouring to open the gate, feeling recompensed for a week's arduous labour, when his mistress, graciously looking round, exclaimed, "The flowers look very well, gardener."

"Yes, yes, they are bonny things," replied the old man, too much pleased to add more; and in that state affairs remained until the same laconic compliment was passed the next Sunday. The porch of the cottage was ornamented with honey-suckle, roses, and sweet-briar; and the comfortable seats placed in the recesses were often tenanted by the poor of the neighbourhood, to whom Mrs. Grandison distributed her weekly donation of bread; for the good lady was as charitable as she was prosy, two qualities which, when they meet, charity so soon oversteps prosiness, that the latter is lost in the sum-total of human virtues. The interior of the cottage was so sumptuously

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furnished that the house rather deserved the appellation of a mansion, were it not for the low roof and the rather mean appearance which pendant branches of grapes growing over it gave to the exterior of a house, which had been, as it were, without an effort or a wish on the part of its owner, styled a cottage. The drawing-room was a mass of needle-work, all executed in that peculiar manner which our ancestors called Gobelin-stitch, and of which such curious relics are still preserved. The chair backs, the large cushions, the table-covers, various mats, but, above all, the large sheets of tapestry which decorated the walls, all gave authentic marks of the industry of one, or rather several, pair of hands, for Mrs. Grandison had a catalogue by heart; this was Mary's work — and this was Jane's — and this was Susan's; and thus she went through a host of names, ending with the doleful exclamation, "But now they are all married, poor girls." A large and

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curiously constructed clock graced the old mantel-shelf, and the walls were covered with a profusion of wigged-head pictures; one old baron being placed in a most conspicuous situation, to denote that he was the head of the family: a lady was placed at either side of this "top of the tree," and both had been so drawn that their eyes were turned towards the well-surrounded Baron, whose rosy, laughing, portly face appeared to blush, even through the paint (at least one almost fancied it did, under the scrutiny of four dark and full-looking eyes). Dutch porcelain, of uncouth and very ancient construction, were disposed on various gilded shelves which projected from cornices, and supplied the place of our modern chiffoniers. Vases well filled with flowers, birds in their gilded cages, an old-fashioned instrument, which I suppose we must call a piano, and music so rudely written that now it would be antediluvian to talk about; these, and

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various old-fashioned gold snuff-boxes, formed the distinguishing marks of the apartment; but the windows thrown open on the flowery lawn, the fine silken textured curtains—these, and the richness of the carpets, in those days denoted great wealth.

Widow Grandison (as she had been called for many years) was reported to be rich; she had well married four or five girls, and was very happy in her solitude, occasionally making the effort of inviting one of her daughters and her children separately, but at length they had amongst them so many little Annes, and Janes, and Marys, that Mrs. Grandison found she had too many christening presents to give; and she finally ended by declaring that her memory failed so much that she could not remember which were Susan's children, which were Jane's, etc.; this effectually affronted the parents, as one set of the Janes were red-haired, and the other beautiful: the children were no more brought

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to see their opportunely blind grand-mother; and by this expedient Mrs. Grandison kept much loose cash in her ample pocket. I feel inlcined to publish Mrs. Grandison's manœuvre and have it circulated as a most saving plan for grandmothers in general.

Mrs. Grandison was sitting knitting in her easy chair, her high coiff was duly placed over her silvery locks, whilst her thick frill *à la* Elizabeth, completely concealed her throat, which is an advantage in old age. Her dress was a dark satin, with a very short-waisted body, and a long training skirt; a massive golden chain, to which was attached a watch, which our modern taste would call the size of a warming-pan; this completed her toilette, unless we mention the numerous rings, glittering with pearls and diamonds, which were always placed on the same fingers, and were each separately promised to a grandchild after death.

Mrs. Grandison was, as I before said, sitting

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in her arm-chair, when her neighbour was announced. The knitting was immediately put aside, and most prosy conversation began. Mrs. Grandison was a blue and a politician, Mrs. Ailesbury a *religionaire;* and though I do not accuse *my* readers of being prosy, and though I have not yet been *accused* of being so myself, still I will be bold, or cruel enough, to note down the two ladies' conversation.

"Well, now, this is indeed kind of you to come out this disagreeable day (the sun was shining brightly), all to see me! I declare; but I always say the world is so kind to me; and indeed so it ought to be: my husband was a high man, and albeit he was loyal to our gracious Queen, and followed the Reformation, his own sentiments (this was said in a professional whisper) leaned towards the Papists, and he tolerably, mind I *say* tolerably, preferred the pomps of the Romish Church; because he said, that the more pomp there was, the more grandeur was displayed in the

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Church, the more the people looked down from the spiritual to the temporal King; and seeing the deference paid to the sumptuously clad clergy, they there heard of the due subjection to be paid to those above them, and—"

"Excuse me," said Mrs. Ailesbury, piously lifting up her eyes to heaven; "but really, I am not a politician, and I cannot mix the Church and State, or party or political feelings, together; they are utterly distinct—at least so goes my poor judgment; but I advocate the mild doctrines of Calvin; and the more simplicity we have in our rites, and the less we think of the clergy, except as instruments of His will, the more we think of God."

"My dear madam! it is very easy to perceive your husband has never tutored you in politics. Law! I never could obtain a new trinket, or scarcely a needful article of dress, without I had every rule of toleration, and reformation, and free conscience, and free thinking, and Papal bulls, and God knows

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what besides, at my fingers' ends; even on his death-bed the good man said, in a faint voice —'Mary, don't forget your politics.' Now, allow me to tell you, dear Mrs. Ailesbury, that no woman is competent to move in society, in these days, without having a distinct notion why she is a Papist or a Reformer. Now, our Queen is a Reformer, and so are you; but, in strict confidence, I affirm that the French Government is—"

* * * * *

"Oh, do not speak of the French Government," said Mrs. Ailesbury, turning pale; "I have cause, indeed, to regret I know anything about it. It is a school for wickedness, engendering malice, revenge, and every bad feeling which God, in his Holy Word, forbids."

"Oh, yes, yes, I quite forgot your nephew; yes—a bad job—highly political—but bad—yes, yes—murdered the Duke. I call it a duel, a political rencontre; he met the Duke—the Duke wanted to kill him—he killed the Duke,

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just one and the same, *quid pro quo*—if the Duke were alive, he would kill Poltrot; ha! ha! ha! nothing like politics; I know a little of Latin—read it in political works—used to pore over them till I was nearly blind—a beautiful language, Latin—tells so much in a few words—pity it is a dead language—I always speak fast—never pause—never stop—and so on. That comes of learning Latin, and politics. *Multum in parvo.* Shall I tell you how I write to my daughters?"

"If you like," said Mrs. Ailesbury, casting her eyes on the large clock, and seeing that, as her neighbour had only talked for a quarter of an hour, it was hopeless yet to hazard a question. "Yes, if you like."

"Dear Mary, or Sue, or Jane, or Anna, it is all the same, as I don't vary my letters, unless any visible cause makes me do so.

"'Dear Mary,

"'Hope you are well—children also; keep

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loyal to the Queen. Political obligations tell you to be a Reformer—all the same—one road to Heaven—duty to God and neighbour—golden rule—next virtue, charity—cleanliness next—proper for growth of the children—love to them.'

"That is very good, I say, unless I have to congratulate on the birth of another child, or give a receipt for the measles, or hooping-cough, or some such casualty, which will disturb the peace of the best regulated family. But, to other subjects.—Do you credit the report of the Queen's marriage? highly political, ensure the succession, and please the nation. Too self-confident to see a Queen single on the English throne. Ah, I see you are rather impatient — very good of you to come out this damp weather. Dew falls heavily. How is dear Edwina?"

"That is the very subject on which I wish to speak to you, dear Mrs. Grandison; Edwina is not well."

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"What ails her?"

"I really do not know."

"Have you felt her pulse?"

"Why no; it might alarm her."

"Oh, not at all, not at all; does she sleep well?"

"That I cannot tell."

"You must inquire; indeed you must. Doctors are politicians in their way—the pulse, sleep, and diet, are synonymous with them to the financial, commercial, and militia regulations of statesmen. What a political world this is! I perfectly live amidst politics, dote upon them, instil them into the minds of my servants. My gardener arranges his plants under a trained system—gave him the lesson myself. That tall plant by the sycamore tree is the general of the staff, then follow the other high-grade officers. The whole regiment is so disposed, that, in case of a heavy gale, the small plants are protected by a powerful reinforcement. Ha, ha, ha; do you not call that very droll?"

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"Very; but, do you know what I am to do with Edwina? she sighs."

"Do not let her read dull books; and, above all, let her come to me every day. I will store her mind with such a useful, amusing, instructive, and engrossing subject, that she will have no time for sighing. I have now a paper speaking of treating and detailing the Spanish Armada's arrangements, and the true and forcible plan of managing a fleet."

"I must lave you now," said Mrs. Ailesbury, rising; "Edwina has no taste for such pursuits. I must trust only in that Providence, who orders and plans both health and sickness."

"Quite right, quite right; it is the policy of the mind to quiet itself like that; quite right," continued Mrs. Grandison; and a powdered valet escorted Mrs. Ailesbury to the gate, Mrs Grandison promising to call very shortly, and see the fair patient.

A week elapsed before Mrs. Grandison found it convenient to come; and when she

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visited Mrs. Ailesbury, Edwina's illness was no longer imaginary; she was actually in bed, suffering from a severe headache (which with young ladies is sometimes synonymous with heartache). Augusta was weeping very bitterly, and Mrs. Ailesbury was endeavouring to console her.

"Mercy on us! what is the matter?" exclaimed Mrs. Grandison; "bad policy to weep, Augusta—never cures a misfortune—spoil your pretty eyes—injure your complexion: never cry, it is the worst policy."

"Do not speak of policy," cried Augusta de Méré; "my poor brother has left us suddenly, and it is in vain to conjecture why, or wherefore."

"Bad, very bad," said the political comforter; "very bad, my love, very. French Government seized him—caged him. Ever heard of the Inquisition? Médicis fond of it—very bad, very."

"Oh, pray, my dear madam, do not speak

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so," said Mrs. Ailesbury, entreatingly; "only consider Augusta's feelings."

"Ah, true, very true—bad, very—bad, very. I remember in Henry the Eighth's time, my poor dear husband was in—oh, dear, I quite forgot, it is a political secret; I never divulge, only as you are such particular dear friends, I will give you the heads, you can place all together: bad, a very bad scrape—Tower—distant view of gallows—Tower Hill—axe—loop-hole—cords—escape—so on."

Mrs. Grandison would probably have proceeded with her unconnected, but tolerably explicit, history of her deceased husband's perilous situation, had not Augusta fallen fainting into her aunt's arms. Now Mrs. Grandison, who though a bore, was very good natured, exerted herself to recover the afflicted Augusta. Hers was not a *feigned faint*, for in those days, the remarkably interesting state of a fainting young lady was not so gently handled, at least Mrs. Grandison shook

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Augusta, gave her various twists, and turns, pinches, pushes, screamed in her ears; and at length Augusta awoke from her fainting fit, only begging one boon, that of being left alone. Mrs. Grandison had so fully persuaded herself that an inquisitorial tribunal had taken away Poltrot, that she hardly felt on *terra firma*, within the walls of a marked house. Accordingly, esteeming it a *political* movement of personal safety, she made her exit; and Augusta was particularly glad when she heard the distant noise of her rustling satin far off in the corridor. Many persons have felt consolation irksome, when given by those who have not the tact of consoling gently. None felt this more than poor Augusta; even her aunt's usually welcome presence was a burden; and she was glad when Mrs. Ailesbury went up stairs to her daughter.

Then Augusta wandered in the beautiful grounds which surrounded the villa; she read and re-read the letter, which briefly said that

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Poltrot could no more dwell with those he loved. She clasped it to her bosom—it might be the last letter she would receive from him. Had he again partially lost his reason, or was it true, as Mrs. Grandison had affirmed, that the French government had retaken him, and would punish him with a severer punishment than banishment? The flowers spread heir fragrance to the day, the lawn was tufted in its green beauty, the dew-drops were still hanging languidly on the trees, the birds were chirping in that soft, liquid manner, when every note sounds as water dropping in a cascade below. Augusta thought the soft harmony of air and sounds too rapturous, too soul-stirring, when her own heart was all dark and sad. How different it is to feel sorrow for another than to experience it personally. Not a thought of her own loneliness filled her breast; not a dream of self, not a wish save that of knowing that her beloved brother was safe. He had lately been so calm, so resigned; religion had

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spoken to his benighted heart; he had knelt by her side in the village church; he had *not* said any more, "I cannot pray." She had caught the sounds of his warm, his ardent prayer; it was the essence of a penitent soul; and now, alas! again, he was, perchance, exposed to danger; again the maddening thoughts of his past crime would perhaps be brought up against him. Oh, but for once to hear Poltrot say, that no time, no place, no care, no temptation, could recal him to his grief; but for once to hear his own voice say "farewell," even though the word might be the last, the parting knell; oh, for once to hear those words—"I am reconciled to my God!"

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CHAPTER VI.

Readers, travelling is now so easy, that a journey from one spot to the other is merely asking a person to take a newspaper or periodical work in his pocket, sit down comfortably, and perhaps come to a *finale*, just as the journey is at its terminus; but it requires to beg my readers many excuses, when, in the sixteenth century, they are unceremoniously transplanted from the English shore, where our good Queen Bess was holding her firmly-established sceptre, to the French Court, where the well-known Catherine de Médicis was still

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the plotting, bigoted, political, and erring mistress. If her dark eyes ever trembled through a tear, when she recalled some domestic calamitiy, the proud smile of power, the triumph of an unprincipled woman, chased away all remorse and gloom, in the continuous bustle, the hurry, the noise, the plots and changes of her detestable Court. Politic is a word which, methinks, hardly becomes a woman, unless it is so blended by the softest feelings of her sex, so guided by truth and equity, that like, in the hands of our present sweet-minded and gentle young Queen, policy is to secure the love of a nation—to promote the welfare of her subjects, and to show her power by all those endearing acts of the heart's goodness, which have already woven their spells around her, aud will cause her name to be engraved on the tablets of history and memory, coupled with the truest virtue. With Catherine de Médicis, policy did not mean "to reign well;" it was, in fact the democrat of *power*—

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to be head of the nation, to tyrannize over the poor, to subdue the power of the nobles, to establish the Papal forms in all their rigour (in order to derive benefit from the Pope)—this was the key of the Médicis' policy; at least so it seems to me, after a diligent survey of the annals of her reign.

The French Court was now a scene of unusual grandeur and gaiety; preparations were actively proceeding for the marriage of the lovely Marguerite de Valois; she was indeed a blithe young creature, looking upon Henri of Navarre with that doting fondness which is felt towards the young object of our first affections.

Clementina never wearied hearing how beautiful, how gallant, was the expected bridegroom: and she chased away the selfish sigh which sprung at the recollection of how happy her love might have been.

At length the Royal bridal day dawned in all the splendour of a most beautiful sum

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mer day; the populace crowded to catch a glimpse of the young bride, and from the earliest hour the streets presented a dense multitude of heads. Triumphal arches were raised, all decorated with the choicest flowers; music resounded through the air; and singers raised their voices in praise of the fair young Princess. The nobles were already assembled in the large state apartments, when the young Princess, attired in her nuptial robes, entered the room where Clementina was finishing her toilette. The latter was pale and thoughtful, for a host of feelings were crowding round her heart; and a gentle voice, mournful as the dirge of the evening wind, seemed to whisper soft lullabys of grief. Oh, she thought of those beautiful hazel eyes, of the clustering locks, of the grace and the love of poor Poltrot de Méré.

"I have finished my toilette," cried Marguerite, bounding joyfully into the room; "I am so happy, so joyous, that I fear me I

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do not look interesting enough for a modest bride."

"You look surpassingly lovely," replied Clementina, surveying the fairy-like looking Princess, whose attire added to her native beauty and grace. Her robe was of rich white satin, covered with the most costly lace, looped up with mock roses composed of pearls, with a glittering diamond in the middle. The body was high; and the frill then worn round the throat, was composed of quilled lace, encircled by a string of diamonds; on her head she wore a long veil, which descended low to the ground, fastened round with a large diamond pin, and surmounted by a wreath of white rose blossoms: her fair long locks were scattered round her neck, and glistened as they fell in rich masses, just relieved from the *soubrette's* hands.

Clementina was also attired in white, but more simply arranged, and was to follow in the bride's train.

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As soon as the maid who was attiring her had finished her duty, the Princess turned towards Clementina with one of those young sunny smiles which so gladden the heart.

"Clementina, one week spent here in rejoicings, one week given entirely to my Henri, then I will think again of the ties of friendship, and make you happy for ever."

"Princess it is time to explain myself; I thank you for all your kindness, for all your gentle sympathy. You are very young, but you are on the point of entering a new life, which seems, as it were, to banish afar girlish hours and girlish thoughts: now need I no longer speak to your Highness as the gay young Princess Marguerite, but I may address a sensible and feeling young bride. Princess—kind and dear lady—I must marry the Duke. I am tranquil and resigned; one week, and Henri of Guise shall follow in your train, as well as myself; not engrossed by each other, but directing all our attention towards our

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Royal mistress. One week more and I will kneel beside him at the altar, whilst low in the depths of my heart I will pray to banish the recollection of a love which was once innocent and pure, but would now be a passion guilty and debasing."

"Noble-hearted, generous, dear Clementina! how much I admire you! I dare not say I pity you, for happy must be that heart which can reason so purely as yours—happy in its own hemisphere of virtues, surpassingly good and beautiful; another hour, and the sun will shine on me, the bride of Henri of Navarre. Joyfully, gladly, and trustingly, I give him my young heart. He has possessed my affections since childhood, and my heart yearns to him now. The present is all smiling—the future may be cloudy; then whether I change my name, for weal or for wo, oh, now hear me say how fervently I wish to be constant, true, and resigned, as you are. Yours is, methinks, a true and noble heart of rectitude."

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Clementina bent low over the ungloved hand which the Princess held to her; but the latter suddenly exclaimed, "Not so, not so: this is the last kiss you will receive from the Princess de Valois;" and she twined her arms close and fondly round Clementina's neck.

How beautiful was that embrace, and how beautiful the feelings of the love of goodness glowing in young Marguerite's heart!

Alas! how many of us feel thus keenly in youth, but afterwards leave far behind those transitory feelings of exalted virtue which pass as a bright glow-worm, shining for awhile, but leaving no trace of where it has once shone!

With a heart glowing with love and purity, scarcely caring for the buzz of admiration with which she was greeted, the fair Princess bent down her beautiful head, whilst the Cardinal Lorraine pronounced the nuptial blessing.

Deeply in Clementina's heart every word was treasured; and bending her own head

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against a column, she secretly prayed for strength.

Henri of Guise was standing by her side, and he caught the smile of holy piety which sat on Clementina's lip; he pressed her hand, and she returned the pressure gently, very gently, and with a crimson blush, half timidly, half repenting; but still she *did* return it, and that soft touch thrilled deep into the heart of the young Duke, while it wafted him to his slumbers, amidst dreams of new-born pleasure. Now, he devoted all his time, all his talents, to please and captivate her he had so long loved, so hopelessly cherished; he forgot all her former coldness, he thought only of coming days of joy; and he who might have married the richest and highest-born damsel in the land, turned with heartfelt pride and fondness towards the Astrologer's Daughter. It might be that he read in Pettura's high bearing, in his eloquent language, in his noble frame, that he was, perchance, of noble birth. But, above all, he was

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proud of the intrinsic value of Clementina's heart and mind; the elevation of refinement was stamped on her elegant figure; she had trod the Courts of Kings, she had joined the pastimes of the highest; she had been the friend of the amiable and much-regretted Jeanne d'Albret, and she was high enough for the Duke. If Henri's father ever appeared before his eyes, he fancied he smiled upon his love; his frowns fled before the recollection of his long and ardent attachment. Everything now appeared to shine on his love; and had a spirit from the departed warned him of the uncertainty of human bliss, he would have rejected the unwelcome voice, and have continued in his dream of happiness.

Oh, Henri of Guise, and oh, many others in our days, heed this *truth* of my pen—listen to a young, but a thoughtful mind:—The present is ours, the future a hidden mystery. We hover around a garden, where softest flowerets bespangle the parterre; we bask under a sky,

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all bedight with luminous stars; and though the moon may light us to the one spot where the true nectar of happiness lies concealed, still, with the flighty wings of a butterfly, we soar and light upon all that is transiently lovely; but we leave for a *future* research that one sure, that lonely spot, towards which the light is guiding us. Then comes the future, veiled in a valley of darkness: no blooming flowers near, no gay parterre, no fairy bedight, blazoned sky; the moon no longer lends her pure light, and our steps are slow and uncertain. The heart is as a benighted wanderer, roaming amidst a blank moor, leaving a distant recollection of a shelter once seen, but vainly looking for the signal-light, which has vanished with a *past*, which was once the *present*. How wise it is to remember, that amidst each present joy, the *present* must change to *past*, and we allow each opportunity to glide down the era of time without deriving any permanent benefit from the good which is within our grasp.

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The young heart which trusts and is deceived, must ever in after life look back to the bright moment when it believed, and wonder at its own blind folly in not reflecting on the uncertainty of life. And the heart which is suddenly elated with new-born hopes, would do wisely to remember, that there are equally sudden reverses, from the summit of a palace to the lonely hovel of poverty.

Oh, how passing human joy was the bliss which filled the soul of the Duke, when he thought now of his betrothed! Her youngest and loveliest days had fleeted by, and sorrow and pain had robbed her of many charms; but she was still beautiful, and had waned gently from a fascinating gay girl, to a young and intellectual woman. She was more dazzling when, as his father's prisoner, she burst upon Henri's sight, with her golden locks, and her blooming complexion; but she was more endearing, more expressively, more interestingly beautiful, now, with her subdued brow, her

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smoothly braided hair, and the look of pain which occasionally sat on her pale countenance. Not one wish of seeing Clementina younger or more blooming crossed the mind of Henri of Guise. His love had been given in her first hours of girlish loveliness; he had been bold, he had been spurned. His love had only increased by the coldness opposed to it. His thoughts had so gradually glided down with Clementina's youth, that as he now pressed her no longer reluctant hand within his, he himself, older, wiser, and if possible more fondly loving, fancied he pressed again within his own, that dear young hand, which he had once held against Clementina's will.

The week had not yet elapsed, and the Court rejoicings for Marguerite's nuptials had not yet tired themselves with their taste and splendour. Still the golden festooned drapery hung from alcove to alcove; and the lovely children of earth, the fair gay flowers, were pending from arches and balconies; still the

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music was heard ushering in the merry dance; the noise of lances breaking against each other, proclaimed the tournament held in the balmy air had not yet finished; all was merriment and joy. The gay young Prince de Condé (Henri of Navarre's cousin), the Duc d'Anjou, and lastly here mentioned, but first in rank, the King of France, were the principal *élite* of the young parties wrestling. The Admiral de Coligny, Retz, Tavannes, the Duc de Nevers, the Queen of Spain (sister to the Princess Marguerite), the dazzling and beautiful Queen Médicis, graced the tournament which preceded the evening's ball.

The combatants were masked, and free permission was given to any masked chevalier to join the sport. The King himself joined in the amusement; at first without caring much about it, though afterwards most willingly, when Marguerite of Navarre declared it to be her wish that her favourite Clementina should be "Queen of Beauty of

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the tournament." The latter was seated on an elevated throne, covered with blue velvet, worked in silver, with massive tassels and cord hangings, and a canopy above, on which a broken lance was worked in silver, whilst underneath was placed this motto: "*Je m'agenouille aux pieds de la Reine de Beauté.*"

It was with great reluctance that Clementina was led to the throne, amid the applause of hundreds of handsome chevaliers, the scrutinizing glances of most brilliant women, and the approving smiles of the young Royal bride. Marguerite, still the naïve creature of impulse, detached her glittering diamond crown, and despatched it by her brother of Anjou to adorn Clementina's head, who sat opposite to her.

Charles the Ninth arose, and coaxingly pleaded the honour of placing it on Clementina's head. The Duke of Anjou was forced to comply; and Clementina turned at first very pale, then perfectly crimson; for she

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encountered one deep look of hatred from Catherine de Médicis.

"A Queen ought to be crowned only by a King," whispered Charles, as he bent over Clementina's throne, and placed the crown on her reluctant brow.

This little movement of impulse on the part of the young Queen of Navarre was productive of very unpleasant feelings: the Duke of Anjou was discontented at not being suffered to crown the *élite* Queen of Beauty; the Duke of Guise beheld with a jealous eye favours she would have to confer on the fortunate chevaliers whose bravery would entitle them to a prize from her hands; the Queen-Mother looked at her son with a bitter look of displeasure; and poor Clementina sat in torturing fear, with the crown meant to adorn her, actually piercing her, as if it were composed of thorns instead of diamonds.

Many a fair bosom there present, beat with envy at the apparently enviable situation of

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the Astrologer's Daughter; many envied the friendship which Marguerite of Navarre had favoured her with. The sweet bride herself looked at her with true and genuine smiles of girlish delight, joined perhaps to a little keen buoyancy at disappointing many prouder damsels; her *enjoument*, her wit, her youthful beauty, contrasted forcibly with the Queen of Beauty's pallid but poetically lovely face.

At length the trumpets sounded, and the shrill horn replied to the sound: bright lances shone in the air; the well polished arms clashed against each other, and every eye was turned towards the combatants. The King of France was several times victorious, and Clementina found him on bended knee before her. Twice she saw the same sinister expression of countenance on the Queen-Mother's face; at length she muttered, so softly that she fancied none heard her, "Oh that some one would discomfit the King." She looked round for Henri of Guise, but he

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had been struck and slightly hurt, and was leaning against her throne with a pale countenance and a troubled eye.

The King again loudly called for an antagonist. There was a pause. It was very apparent, that however little His Majesty had attended to Mariot's Latin orations, he had given more attention to the study of arms; he wrestled with surprising agility, and the discomfited antagonists had no wish of re-entering the lists, when a tall chevalier, clothed in dark armour, with a close vizor drawn over his face, entered the ranks, the soldiery making way for him. The martial music was hushed, and the heralds cried with a loud voice; "A champion; a champion, *vive la Reine de Beauté.*"

Clementina knew not why, but she felt a sudden thrill through every vein, and a secret conviction that the new comer would discomfit the King.

According to the rules of the tournament,

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no questions were asked. The champion was properly accoutred, and had free power to enter the lists. The King, however, surveyed the tall, but very slight figure before him, with a degree of contempt, and he asked tauntingly—

"Did the Unknown know that he had discomfited many brave knights—he, the King of France?"

The chevalier merely bowed.

"Oh, you are deaf as well as black," cried the King."

Still no answer; but the chevalier drew his lance, and the King, shielding his head, imitated his example, spurred on to revenge, and yet he knew not why. For a long time the engagement appeared doubtful, but at length, after a noble display of skill, force, and activity, the King was thrown down, and acknowledged himself vanquished. The Unknown had not even uttered the usual words, "*Chevalier rends toi.*" Silently he had overthrown the

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King, and he then turned with the rapidity lightning towards the spot where the graceful Queen of Beauty was enthroned; he bent low, and kissed her hand. The heralds advanced to announce his conquest and perform the accustomed tedious introduction to the Queen of the Tournament; but the Unknown raised himself from his knees, bent over the throne, dexterously drew a thick golden chain off the astonished Clementina's neck, and made his exit with the same rapid pace.

"Stop him!" shouted the Duke of Guise; "he has insulted and robbed the Queen."

"Stop him!" echoed many voices; but the populace, ever leaning towards a fugitive party, made way for him, and Echo only repeated, "Stop him! stop him!"

The Duke of Guise cast a scrutinizing glance at Clementina's face, but she could not answer his gaze; her head turned dizzy, her eyes elosed, and she fainted in his arms.

This unforeseen event, and the approaching

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estivity of a masked ball, closed the tournament. Many were the conjectures which arose, many were the suppositions as to the name of the Unknown, whilst Clementina was the object of curiosity; yet she recovered her spirits, and she smiled, but it was a ghastly smile. She danced with Henri of Guise, but she no more returned the pressure of his hand; she moved with a becoming, an enchanting, but a listless grace; and on retiring to rest, she buried her face deeply in the soft cushions, exclaiming, "Was it a vision, or was it really him? Oh, God forgive me, I am still weak, still wicked! God forgive me, I love him still."

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CHAPTER VII.

The morning which followed the tournament dawned, and Clementina fully expected it would be a trying day for her. She had spent a most restless night—the most dreadful visions had haunted her pillow. Poltrot de Méré, appeared before her, pale, aghast—reproached her for a levity he could never feel—told her she was basking in the sunshine of delight, whilst he was withering under the torments of banishment; he was faithful, she was faithless. "But I have promised to marry Henri of Guise," she exclaimed; and, uttering these words, she awoke.

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How agonizing it is to wake from a dream—to know it *is* a dream—to repeat, again and again, "it is but a vision," and still vainly try to call it foolish, delusive, whilst the heart whispers that the dream is but a requiem of *facts*. How dreadful it is to wake and find good resolutions wafted away by the strength of a nocturnal vision. Clementina's love for the Duke vanished as the slight snow before a warm sun. Her new love had touched the surface of her affection, but had not warmed her heart.

The day which followed the tournament was fraught with an event which bade all love-scenes slumber in total oblivion. The Admiral Coligny had been watching the King playing at billiards, and leaving His Majesty, was returning on foot to his own house, when an assassin struck him a violent blow, which fortunately escaped piercing his heart, but the venerable old man was borne senseless and bleeding to his home, whilst the murderer escaped amongst the crowd.

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"This is the consequence of my reconciliation with the Duke of Guise," faintly exclaimed the Admiral, as he remembered that Henri had sworn that he would, some day, revenge upon him the death of his father.

The Duke of Guise was playing at billiards with the King, when a messenger arrived to tell the news.

"Is this your doing, Duke?" exclaimed the King, throwing down the balls, and fixing his eyes angrily on the Duke.

"I have never given a voice or a word to this assassination," he replied; "I once swore to revenge my father's death upon him, but I know now he was not the murderer."

"I cannot help thinking some persons have done it, wishing to ingratiate themselves with you. Have a care, my Lord Duke; these things are not like playing a lover's part with the love-sick Clementina."

"Report says, your Majesty has no objection to win her good graces; and surely your Ma-

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jesty will not deny fighting valiantly, yesterday, to win her favours."

"But to make you jealous," said the King.

At this moment Catherine joined the angry monarch.

"See how you are quarrelling with those harmless billiard balls," exclaimed Catherine; "what ails you, sweet King?"

"Ails me? The Admiral has been assassinated. I *tried* to show him civility at first, until trying it became a pleasure; and if the Duke has murdered him, why he must dearly pay the price of blood."

"The Duke has *not* murdered him," said Catherine, grasping the Duke's hand. "Heed him not, heed him not; leave His Majesty now."

The Duke retired with angry strides, and Catherine, turning to Charles, said—"Hasty ever hasty; when will you learn to be calm?"

"Calm! tush, this is monstrous; at my sister's wedding festivities, too."

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"It is no use dissembling any more, my son; the crisis which Pettura prophesied is drawing near. I want the assistance of the Duke; he did not touch Coligny; your brother of Anjou employed emissaries, and I instigated him." *

Awful words falling from a mother's tongue! to think that the King had once reposed in peaceful childish slumbers upon that mother's breast, and to hear her talking thus of a dark and dreadful crime! The Médicis' beauty and grace is so loudly vaunted, that I have met with those who speak with more pathos of her endowments than horror of her vices. I have endeavoured to delineate her character; and if fiction has aided me in placing her before my readers in domestic scenes, when speaking of *historical* plots, I am still behind-hand in depicting her sad career. At the head of each dark plot, there recorded, her name stands conspicuously in the frontispiece, a type

* This is strictly historical, as well as the Admiral's exclamation when wounded.

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of the wilfulness of woman when her heart is allowed to range amidst scenes of vice.

The son did not shudder at the voice of Vice, to which he listened with cold indifference; and before the Medicis had finished a conversation, the purport of which the sequel will unravel, the King interrupted her by exclaiming—"I see, my very sagacious mother, and I will act accordingly."

A few moments more, the King and his attendants were on their way towards the Admiral's hotel, and, hastening up stairs, he bent over Coligny's couch, whilst he uttered for a salutation words which History records in *italics*, so craftily false they appear:—

"*Mon Père la blessure est pour vous, et la douleur pour moi.*"

The populace, who loved the Admiral's virtues, and esteemed him for the *brusque franchise* for which he was famous, assembled in groups, and loudly called for vengeance on his murderer. The King's visit to his sick

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couch, coloured the supposition that the Admiral's life had been attempted by some high person, who had thereby displeased the King; and the Duke of Guise being everywhere suspected, was obliged to secrete himself.

Two or three evenings after this self-imposed banishment, the Cardinal de Lorraine joined him, and the following conversation took place between them:—

"I think it is a mistaken plan," said Lorraine; "I like not night work, in such cases; think how many Catholics may fall pierced, instead of a Huguenot."

"Ay, faith, it will be too late in the next world to beg each other's pardon for butchering each other in this. But what is to be done, my Lord Cardinal? each rencontre we have had with those cursed Huguenots has been attended with much bloodshed, but they have ever retired with a treaty in their favour.—Free toleration! good faith, I wish their consciences were in my keeping; I would not give

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them their free edict. I hear they are rebelling; do you credit it?"

"Yes, by the Holy Marie, I do. This white-haired Coligny is their earthly idol; a sort of Mammon of flesh and blood which they choose to worship; his assassination will be a glorious bulwark upon which they will found their quarrel; whilst many are again leaving the country. Queen Elizabeth of England's kingdom must be in an overflowing state of population; and yet she has an effectual remedy if she chooses to disgorge her land of such runaways."

"How, so?"

"Why a few portable bills are all the goods they can take with them; and if Queen Elizabeth levied taxes and the emigrants had to pay, by my faith! I think some would like a French revolt, and the chance of the scaffold, to the lingering mercies of an English prison."

"Oh, but the Queen of England, though lion-

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hearted, is also very tender: she receives the emigrants as a mother the children of her love; when I weary of my ecclesiastical pomp, I will sue her protection."

"That will not be whilst Rheims, Metz, St. Denis, Cluny, Téchamps, and other livings are as productive as they now are, my Lord. You do not much mind how many pious souls attend your *prêche* so long as the fields are green, and your corn waves high in the breeze."

"Not so bad; not so bad. I fain would have my brethren good Christians."

"So should I," said the Duke, laughing; "but Christians include Huguenots and Papists, and in these days they cannot mix together. One night's work, as the Queen contemplates acting, will strike more terror in their hearts than any previous meetings we have had. Vassi was nothing compared to this projected blow. The King will try the power of an arquebuse himself."

"But as I before said, there will be much

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butchery; how will Papists be distinguished in the dark?"

"Oh, easily enough; kindle torches—have a watch-word."

"The torches would provoke incendry, and the watch-word be learned by the flying Huguenots."

"You are timorous, my Lord Cardinal."

"Not so, my son; but I have yet a heart, although it has been gradually freezing in a Court. There are some actions which are really intolerably bad. The idea of marrying Henri of Navarre to the fair young Princess, and making her a widow ten days afterwards, is too repugnant to contemplate."

"Are you sure such a thing is intended?"

"Quite sure, for I heard the Queen give particular instructions not to touch him, should the Princess attempt to shield him at the expense of her life."

"Oh! she is so tender as that" said the Duke, tauntingly. "Good patience! this passes

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much of her usual tenderness: but there is a refinement of cruelty in the deed; it were better to slay the bride and bridegroom, than hear the fondly-loving Marguerite's requiem of sorrow."

"You make me shudder," said Lorraine, as the recollection of the faithful young Italian girl Loretta fleeted across his imagination." I will not divulge a secret, but I will let Marguerite of Navarre know that there is a trap-door, behind the tapestry near her bed."

"Well, pray do so; it is dreadful to mar the happiness of a newly-married couple. If I mistake not Henri of Navarre's temper, he will weary soon enough of his fair bride, and they need not be separated before a month has passed over them."

"I feel it is useless cruelty," said the Cardinal. "Adieu now; we meet to-morrow night."

Readers, that dreadful night dawned, and I need not say I am speaking of the massacre of St. Bartholomew—a massacre which is well known, which has often been discussed, and yet

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will ever be returned to with new horror and contempt. When guardian angels were singing their numbers around the pillows of the innocent—when the moon was gently tinging the celestial surface on which she reposed—when her shadow was hovering on the limpid waves—when nature was kissing harmony, and peace was pillowed on the bosom of all that was umbrageously beautiful—then were the swords drawn, then men hurried with naked blades—then the sanguinary stream flowed, and deluged even the walls of that sumptuous Palace, lately the scene of nuptial festivities. And the fair young bride was awakened from her slumbers, and was earnestly entreating her young husband to escape. "I would not tell you of it last night, my beloved, but I received a note in a twisted and strange hand, telling me of a secret door in this chamber, and warning me that it might be useful. Hark! hear those screams, my Henri, my husband, my beloved! Hark! they cry, '*Mort aux Huguenots!*' Fly, haste away!"

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Marguerite gave him no time to answer, but she pushed him away with a force nerved by the love of her young heart. Hardly had she closed the door and replaced the falling tapestry, when armed men indecorously entered the room, but instantly retreated when they found the young King had escaped.

The cries were now awfully loud, and broke upon the night's vigil with a dire and lugubrous sound. "Kill the Huguenots—slay them all," and other equally cruel words, resounded from chamber to chamber, in the vast Palace; whilst the King himself, from an elevated loop-hole, shot at the flying Huguenots, and was encouraged by the voice of his mother, who, stifling every feminine feeling in her heart, was awake to the dreadful scene. and spoke of it as a circumstance which was inevitably to take place, and persuaded herself it was pre-ordained by Heaven itself.

Fearful was the havoc, the real butchery of human lives, which now took place, men actu-

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ally thrusting torches in each other's face, in order to recognise whether they were killing foes or friends.

The most atrocious murder was that of the unfortunate Coligny. His assassins entered his apartment; the venerable man was yet pale and exhausted by the illness which had followed the the last atrocious attempt on his life; he grasped his sword, and holding it with all the strength of which he was capable, he boldly defended himself, until at length he fell to the ground, his venerable form presenting one cadaverous mass of wounds.

Even after the vital spark had left his aged body, the greatest indignities were offered to his memory. There is something hallowed and sweet in the feeling that after death our forms are slumbering in the genial and quiet tomb; that the mossy earth pillows our head; that the fragrant children of Earth are lying at our feet. But this was not to be the fate of the Admiral's pale corpse; it was carried away as a trophy of

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the blackest and most heinous sin—as a mark of a midnight transaction, which will ever be a conspicuous brand on the sixteenth century.

Did men term these bloody scenes religion? Oh, wilful mockery of the mild and placid faith taught by a Prince of Peace! Oh, innovation of a religion which, whether differing in form or no, still united hearts to hearts in the bonds of fraternity. What policy could justify the inhuman spilling of so much blood? It was the unreined fury of the heart, the rush of ungodly passions, the thirst for revenge, the love of bloodshed, which spurred on the detestable tragedy.

Oh! nocturnal spirits of the blackest region of hell alone must have wandered on the earth during that midnight scene! And those pure spirits we love to imagine still weave their fascinations over the virtuous hearts of men, must surely have retreated far, far in the upper hemisphere of their purity, and demons of fury alone have guided the unruly

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heart. Did they smile in demoniac glory as form after form was crushed, and returned to clay? Did they laugh with a hideous shout of triumph as mothers pressed their trembling babes to their arms, and lovers snatched the last kiss from the loved ones of their hearts? Did they stare and gloat on the sight of those innocent beings, who awoke from a peaceful slumber, and were clasped by the cold and unmerciful steel? Did they lend their light to guide the torches, as the hands which clasped them thrust open the most private dwelling places of innocence? Hollow must have been the sepulchral groans of the departing spirits, whilst a few angels of mercy glided about, and endeavoured to save the flying Huguenots. I never like to hear that word Huguenot! For no particular crime was this massacre begun: it sought not even any particular men, nor distinguished women or children; *all* bearing the name of Huguenot were cruelly slain, and the mockery of a word,

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derived as I have before stated, merely from an accidental circumstance, was the passport to death, and the requiem of the expiring sigh.

The perpetrators of the horrid massacre might wash their their blood-stained hands, but they could not hush the voice of their conscience—that echo which speaks of the faults or virtues of the mind, and which no power can hush.

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CHAPTER VIII.

Morning was beginning to dawn; the gray streaks were falling on the earth; the rising sun had chased away the moon, and the stars had dropped away one by one from the bosom of the heavens. The clock was striking three, when Clementina awoke with that half-stifled sigh, which accompanies a *réveillé*—when dreams have been hovering round the pillow. The chamber in which Clementina slept was apart from the Royal dormitory; it opened on to a large gallery, leading to several intricate turnings. Clementina had been

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so apart from the noise of the bloody scene (for the quarter of the Palace in which she slept was marked by the Queen as impenetrable to the murderers). There, amidst a range of rooms in which slumbered other damsels of the Court, the fair Queen of the Tournament had been dreaming of the darkly-clad knight who had snatched the golden chain from her neck. Suddenly she heard a deep groan; it sounded as if it fell from the lips of a person in the last extremity of death, and was repeated again and again, though more feebly each time.

At first Clementina was too much alarmed to move; she sat upright in bed, but she could not summon courage to rise; at length, however, the groans died into the soft plaintive moaning of exhausted pain, and she thought it was perfectly wrong not to assist a fellow-creature. She hastily wrapped herself in a loose gown; did not stay to arrange her tresses which fell in disorder over her pale face,

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but with a tremulous hand she opened the door, and there, on the very threshold, she saw the darkly-clad chevalier of the tournament extended on the floor, whilst the blood was flowing from a deep gash in his side. The the rays of the morning sun shone gently on the coloured glass windows of the long gallery, and appeared to light the fallen chevalier to his eternal home. Clementina bent over the recumbent form, and gently detached the black mask, when her own, her still cherished, Poltrot's dying eyes met her own, and sunk exhausted with pain.

She hastened back to her apartment, and returned with some water; she bathed his pale brow, she chafed his cold hands within her own, which trembled so violently. She listened to the uncertain beating of that constant heart, but alas! she felt certain it was every moment growing fainter.

"What shall I do? what shall I do?" cried the agitated Clementina. "Oh, he will die,

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he will expire, and I cannot save him." Her feeble hands could not even detach the armour which covered the gash; she endeavoured to stanch the wound, but all in vain; the vital drops sprinkled freely over her own robe.

Wringing her hands in the most bitter agony, she felt that she herself would faint, when a voice was heard, exclaiming, "Oh! where is my child—my beautiful, my only daughter?"

"Here I am, dear father," said Clementina, springing to her feet, and finding new energy. "Oh father, dear, beloved father, if you have ever loved me, if you have ever thought of me as the child of the departed mother you loved so fondly, prove it now; save Poltrot—my own, my once bright Poltrot; let him not die here, or I will expire by his side."

Steps were heard rapidly advancing; the Astrologer placed his finger on his lips to intimate silence, and throwing his powerful

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arms round Poltrot's fainting form, he rushed from the gallery, Clementina following, running rather than walking, until she found herself in the Astrologer's room. She had no time, however, to examine curiously the strange implements which were around her, for every feeling of her heart was absorbed in bending over Poltrot; and kneeling at his side, she parted the curls from his pale brow; her head fell as it were spontaneously lower and lower, until at length she pressed a fond kiss on that pallid forehead.

The Astrologer turned round sharply at the sound of that embrace; but Clementina looked at him so innocently, so calmly, that he could not reprove; and he felt touched at the plaintive accents in which she said—"Leave us alone; he is dying."

At length, after many unavailable remedies, Poltrot languidly opened his eyes, and they rested fondly upon her who knelt at his side; he lifted her hand to his lips, and she had not

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the courage to recoil from his embrace; he was again to her the lover of her youth, the possessor of her heart. Oh, what then are the best formed human wishes, and what are the strongest resolutions? As a piece of mechanism, which appears incomprehensible to those who are not acquainted with its composition, but which is easily pulled to pieces by the person who has arranged its intricate parts. Absence will foster many delusive ideas; loved faces may be forgotten, loved voices hushed in oblivion; the fond gaze on which we loved so to dwell may be obliterated from the memory, but a reunion will kindle anew the flame of love; and Clementina had now forgotten every sage, every newly-formed rigid rule of moral conduct, every wish of marrying the Duke; she was again by Poltrot's side—she had forgotten his dark sin; he was her beloved—her own. Eagerly she listened to his feeble voice; eagerly she heard how he had dwelt in the stranger's land; how he had discovered his

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gentle cousin's love for him; how he had found her tracing his name on the trees, echoing it in her poetical numbers; how he had fled, for he feared to love again. It was sweet to be beloved, but it was wrong to linger near a young girl who loved him in vain. "And this," thought the distracted Clementina, "this noble heart has been stained with crime."

Then, again, Poltrot spoke; he told how, spurred on by love, he had determined to kneel at her feet in a last farewell, and there expire, pierced by grief, as he heard her utter her vow to the Duke. "Now, list to me, my beloved," he continued: "I am stained with guilt; I am fallen in your sight; but I die with the full conviction that I am forgiven. Heaven is all-merciful, and the suffering of my life, as well as my early tomb, will perchance atone for my guilt. My beloved one, when you marry the Duke, think not he is better than myself. I murdered his father—and he this night has pierced me; recoil not, it is Hea-

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ven's retribution; I deserve the punishment at his hands. Yet, oh! it is a bitter thought to believe your loved head, will lean on the bosom of the man who killed your first and fondly attached lover!"

"Believe it not, believe it not; every feeling of my heart tells me my vow is cancelled. Poltrot, I will die, I will follow you to the grave; the Médicis may poison me, the Duke may kill me, but I will never be his bride."

Meanwhile, Pettura had been reclining his face in his hands, and a host of feelings was crowding his brain. The bride of his enthusiastic days appeared to speak through his daughter's voice, and Poltrot fancied he read pity in his dark and handsome countenance. He clasped his hands together. "Clementina, go kneel at your father's feet," he cried; "go, tell him to swear you shall not marry the Duke; my spirit shall hover around him, and in the secret pleasure of his heart he shall have his bright reward. I die in the flower of my

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age, and I die happy if those words fall from Pettura's tongue."

Pettura raised his daughter, and kissing her affectionately, he took the oath: then, as the last word trembled on his lips, Poltrot's face became brightened with a glow of ineffable delight; and gently, balmily, the welcome words fell on his dying ears.

"Come near, quite near," he whispered; "pillow my head on your bosom, my own, my bride! Mine is not the pain, but the pleasure of dying."

"Poltrot, waste no more your thoughts on me; let me read to you; let holy words waft your soul to its eternal rest. Are you still a Huguenot?"

"I am a Christian," said the dying lover; "and I am a repentant sinner. Read, my beloved; what signifies the difference in our sects? We are Christians! we believe in that bright land of happiness, towards which my longing soul looks forward as a re-union which

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will never more be broken. I am faint—I cannot see—read, read louder, Clementina."

Blinded with tears, but in a smooth and silvery tone, Clementina read words of holy comfort to her departing lover.

The sun now shone brightly in the chamber, and Poltrot's face looked so beautiful, so resigned, one might indeed have fancied angels were hovering round his dying couch, as, with one or two gentle sighs, his soul forsook its tenement of clay, and rejoined—at least so let us hope—those forgiven spirits who sing their hymns of gratitude around the Divine throne.

Pure and resigned were the tears which Clementina shed over her lover's remains. Her father called her by her name; she heeded him not, but continued gazing at the rigid form before her, wondering if it were really true that those full lips would part no more to utter their gentle sounds, and those eyes never again rekindle in their brilliancy. Death breaks incomprehensibly, strangely, on

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the young mind, or at least on those who for the first time contemplate its ravages. Long, long, Clementina gazed on the departed but ever-loved Poltot; but at length the truth, the substantial truth of death, came in full force upon her imagination, and a salutary burst of grief relieved the trouble of her soul.

Soft are the feelings which entrance the heart when communing with the newly-departed soul? holy and gentle are the thoughts worthy of being wafted to the Throne on High! How passing, how fleeting, how trivial, how vain human expectations then appear, and the consummation of all earthly desires has found a bed in the silence of death! The loved voice is hushed, and the welcome step will cheer no more. Solemn is the last farewell look which we give to a departed friend, and yet how beautifully full of a most salutary lesson!

Clementina's gentle, feminine grief, touched her father's heart: at length he succeeded in withdrawing her from the corpse; he pillowed

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her aching head on his breast, and his dark eyes rested on her tearful face with a look of parental solicitude. Her form was so tremulous under his firm grasp, her soft cheek was so pale and fragile, that a pang of remorse shot through the parent's bosom as he remembered what she *had* been. He mourned over her as we do when we contemplate the faded leaves of a beautiful exotic which we have guarded with shielding care, and have vainly endeavoured to save from decay. Blighted as a withered leaf which the tempest's gale has stricken, reclining pale and agitated in her father's arms, Pettura inwardly vowed that, through trouble, care or pain, he would gratify the most darling wish of her heart.

As Clementina at length slumbered in her parent's arms, worn out with sorrow and emotion, a soft and refreshing dream visited her sleeping eyes. She fancied she was in a peaceful abode, and had bid farewell to the world. A calm and social quiet reigned around her;

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the vesper-bell chimed the hour of prayer, and feminine voices echoed the loud Amen. No glittering swords, no embroidered epaulettes were there; all soberly clad maidens in monastic garbs—all gentle Sisters of Peace.

"Oh how beautiful! how beautiful!" she exclaimed, waking with a sigh.

"What is beautiful, my child?

"Oh it is long since you have called me by that gentle name. Yes, I have had a delightful dream; I should *so* like it to be true. I wish to leave a Court, which has brought me only wo; I wish to leave its hollow gaieties. I will listen no more to words of love; let them be true, let them be false, I fain would dwell in a peaceful abode—that type of heaven, the solemn, quiet monastery."

"Have patience, my child, and your wish shall be accomplished. True! I shall regret that I may no longer, even at uncertain intervals, gaze on your dear countenance, catch the likeness of that pure one, who is at eternal rest.

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There, in your sacred retreat, you must pray for me, for dark has too often been my heart, and I have much to repent of; but my hour has not yet arrived—I must still be as I am; but some day you shall receive a token that light has dawned on my soul."

"Ah, leave not to a future day that which it is right to do at the present time. Yes, yes, I will pray for you; but, above all, leave nothing to futurity."

"Dear angel of goodness, your words touch my affection, but they cannot yet pierce my heart. No, as I have before said, my time has not yet arrived; but pray for me long and earnestly. Now I will take you back to your chamber. Here is a bugle horn; one shrill note blown on it, will bring me to your assistance. Bless you, my child! God and the Holy Virgin preserve you!"

"One more look *there*," said Clementina, springing towards the spot where Poltrot's form was stretched. "Give him a gentle and

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proper funeral. Oh, let not his body be thrown to the cold wind, and the birds press around his corpse; give him not the burial of those who shed blood, for his gentle spirit is forgiven."

No one sought Clementina. The gentle Queen of Narvarre was mourning the necessary flight of her husband; and the political Catherine de Médicis was vainly endeavouring to persuade her daughter that the horrors of St. Bartholomew were a just punishment on the Huguenots for their obstinacy.

Widows were weeping for their husbands, mothers for their sons. The bride had been torn from the side of the bridegroom; innocent children lay weltering in their blood, whilst many hurried to England, leaving their houses to be entered and pillaged. To save life was the desirable end.

England kindly fostered the flying Huguenots; and the emigrants for the most part exerted their talent and industry in order to

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obtain a living. Elizabeth's predominant passion for dress encouraged their efforts. Women who had been brought up in the most luxurious manner—some who had trodden the splendid Court of the Médicis—now plied the needle, and extraordinary works of female ingenuity in tapestry and embroidery were the results.

France! France! I love thee ever! for there I have spent my first young days! there I have spent my girlish hours; and now, near the verge of womanhood—to thee I seem to address my "Girlhood's Farewell." Even now as I write, I rememember, that in France, I first read the thrilling account of the tragedy of St. Bartholomew; and I fancy I am still wandering in amaze at the cruelty of the beautiful Médicis Queen. It is, perhaps, the fate of those who do not paint, to imagine the best subject for a portrait; and methinks I could now add a picture of interest to my book—but I have not a painter's talent. It may, however, serve for a

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hint for an *artiste* who feels inclined to humour the wish of a young lady.

This, then, shall be the portrait:—

A flying party of Huguenots—closely following, the blood-thirsty Catholics, holding swords in one hand, and torches in the other. Mothers flying with infants in their arms. The towering Palace, where, from a high loop-hole, the King's malicious face is looking on with savage brutality, holding a levelled musket in his hand. Further back, the handsome, but cruel face of the Médicis should be seen encouraging her son; the pale moon high in the heavens, lending her light to the dreadful scene.

Readers, I have finished: perhaps you are calling me an enthusiastic author, and I will say no more; yet, I would that my pencil could trace such a stirring scene.

Was it in Paris alone, that the murderous cry was heard? Alas! no; the provinces groaned with the same lamentable voice; and more than one grand, and some good as well

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as great heroes, perished in the fray which followed the first night's massacre. None was more regretted than Coligny, and I have met with a remarkable instance, showing how much his real integrity of character was appreciated.

His papers were confiscated after his death, and one was brought to the Queen-Mother. This was a petition to the King, begging him not to give too much power to his brothers.

The Duke d'Alençon, the King's youngest brother, was much grieved for the Admiral's death; and accordingly, Catherine ordered the document to be read before the Duke, in order to stop his lamentations.

"Your friend gives the King strange advice," said the Queen.

"*I do not know,*" answered the Duke, "*whether he liked me well; but I know that such advice was only given by a man who loved the welfare of his King.*"*

* Historical fact.

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If we consider the politics of the time of which we are treating, this is high praise towards the memory of a man, whom men regarded mostly as an enemy of the Court; but, alas! no opinion could recall the unfortunate Admiral to life: his body had been exposed on a gibbet, and every possible indignity had been shown to it.

Whilst we reflect on Coligny's good qualities, and mourn his sad fate, it is not, however, entirely justifiable to gloss over his errors; he certainly had more than once revolted against his King: rebellion in a little mind is a contemptible defiance of the just laws of the country; and when associated with the image of a great man, must ever be a blot in his memory. Kings' persons are sacred: they are the representatives of a whole nation; if their hearts be cold, if their minds be bad, there is one above, who is the King of kings, and he can reward them accordingly; but to revolt against the sovereign of the land is a degrad-

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ing act; and Coligny, in lifting up his hand, and joining the league, had sullied his otherwise unblemished name. In reading the history of these times, we are struck with the unfortunate fate which met all those who lifted up their hands, either from political, ambitious, or falsely termed religious opinions. The Duke of Guise, Louis of Condé, and the Admiral were assassinated. Montmorency, the King of Navarre, Antoine of Bourbon, and Marshal St. André were killed in war. Many other great men perished, but these were the most conspicuous on the *tapis* of the eventful scenes of that period; and they all met an untimely end—not untimely in the usual acceptation of the word, for these heroes were not young; but they were sent suddenly to their tomb, hurled to eternity with the weight of all their unrepented errors on their shoulders.

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CHAPTER IX.

We have left Clementina during this time in her own chamber, where she had not remained long when she heard steps in the corridor, and presently a gentle tap sounded at the door.

It was repeated, and admittance being granted, the Duke of Guise entered. Every drop of blood which mantled her cheeks retreated to her heart; and yet Clementina had now heard the last knell of her happiness, and she roused herself in order to be as firm and collected as she possibly could be.

"Excuse me, my beloved," said the Duke;

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"excuse me for not coming to you sooner. I knew you were safe, and I have been so busy."

"I know you have; but clasp not my hands within yours; I know how your time has been employed."

"How coldly you speak, my own—"

"I am no longer yours; listen to me, Henri: it seems as if Heaven itself had conspired to keep me from being your bride; it seems as if we never could have been happy together. I never loved you spontaneously, at a glance. I was never thrilled by your touch; I have never reposed my head on your shoulder, and felt that there was my loved resting-place. You *know* I have never loved you; yet my heart trained itself to obedience. I had taught myself to be submissive; I might have been a loyal, but never a fond wife. Now, however, my vow is cancelled—at least, Duke, you can cancel it. I do not wish to part with you in anger, but Poltrot de Méré is no more. Did

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not a secret voice tell you who that darkly-clad knight of the tournament was? He who stole the golden chain from my neck had before received from my hands the picture of my once fair face, which had been attached to it. From the moment he re-appeared before me, I no more could heed the voice of duty which whispered your name. Now I throw myself on your generosity; I cannot love you. My thoughts are not towards any other human being; you need never fear a rival, for I wish to retire to a monastery. Surely you will not refuse my being the bride of the Church?"

"It is in vain you speak—it cannot be. No, Clementina; I have been gentle, I have been patient; I have restrained every burst of passion. It may *not* be. I love you, I adore you; the silvery tones of your plaintive voice have followed me in the battle-field, and have pillowed me to my rest. It cannot be; no envious mortal, no voice from Heaven itself could be cruel enough to deny me my bride. Have

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you a heart, Clementina? Oh yes, you have; I feel now its tremulous beating."

"Nay, nay, I am agitated, but my heart beats not for you. It is a vain mockery to deceive you; I cannot, will not, shall not be your bride!"

"Here, on my knees, I bend before you; here, Clementina, I pledge you all fidelity. You shall be sad, but I will restore you to mirth. Curse me, hate me, loathe me, but spurn me not in this. I must claim the reward of my constancy."

Moved by a sudden impulse she could not command, Clementina dropped on her knees by his side.

"Henri of Guise, have you never thought of any tie save that of love? Have you never thought of the lasting friendship of woman—of a woman whose heart would be warmed by gratitude? Oh, this affection resembles the pure love of the angels above, and the prayers of friendship mount so purely to the throne on

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high. Henri of Guise, here, on *my* knees, I offer you this lasting friendship. I will mingle your name in my prayers, and dwell upon it with deep gratitude."

"Gratitude is the sister of love; and when you felt that flame you would then be immured in a convent. No, Clementina! no, beautiful and dear pleader! If I am cruel now, it is to be more fondly loving afterwards. You must be my bride by to-morrow evening, and I will not leave you till I have obtained your consent. Now must I clasp you as a betrothed bride, not as a friend."

"Do not touch me, do not press my hand," exclaimed Clementina, rising; and she darted to the other end of the room. Before the Duke had reached her, she had blown the bugle horn, and Pettura rushed into the room.

"Protect me—shield me—keep your promise; say I shall not marry the Duke," cried Clementina clinging to her father. "Tell him to leave me. Speak! speak!"

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"Words are useless," said the Duke; "I have the Queen's permission and the King's order to marry your daughter. Her own promise is binding; I claim her as my betrothed bride."

"You shall never have her," cried Pettura; "her vow is cancelled by Poltrot de Méré's death. My promise has been given to the dying. The Queen owes me as much gratitude as she owes you, and I alone will dispose of my daughter's hand. Her own choice is made; she will enter a monastery.

"Bury all that grace, all those charming features in a monastery! you surely cannot mean it. But why do I exchange words with you? By force or by good will, I will have my bride. Oh, see! she is fainting. Forgive me, Clementina; oh, forgive me! I am impetuous, but I am fondly loving. I love the very ground on which you walk; I love the very air which you inhale. You are associated with every fond feeling of my heart. Beautiful Clementina, let me yet hope."

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Clementina had not time to reply, for her father had great difficulty in supporting her from falling. He cast a withering look at the Duke, and left the apartment.

Henri of Guise, however, did not return it; vindictive feelings were all buried in the force of his love; and truly, his devotion to Clementina increased instead of diminished by every new opposition.

The forest oak does not fall by one stroke of the tempest; it resists many shocks ere it bows its head and kisses the earth; and true love, though its course, as the old saying is, "does not run smooth," will turn down many intricate windings, will run through the declivities of fortune, through every vicissitude, provided it can but find one little spark of hope on which to cast its anchor. The anchor of hope on which love rests is a bright spot, shining as the guiding star which cheers the mariner on his dangerous passage; and Henri of Guise still fondly listened to a whispering voice which

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told him that his love would meet its reward.

Meanwhile, the Palace was unusually quiet. The populace were so much irritated that the courtiers did not venture without. On each face sat a mournful discontent. Some repented of the part they had taken on the preceding night; some feared the consequences, and each party spoke in suppressed whispers.

The King was taken suddenly ill; and it is remarkable, that from the period of the massacre until that of his death he never enjoyed his health; and truly it was a scene likely to haunt the memory, and banish away sleep from the breast. Marguerite of Navarre's tearful face was his greatest punishment; she had received private intimation of the safety of her husband, but she had made her choice—she would follow Henri, and then she must forsake the Court.

From that evening, a secret voice told her her husband would never again trust the Médi-

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cis; and, although Catherine was so cruel, so vindictive, she had been kind to her; and all her feelings centred in the words "Catherine was her mother." More bitter and serious thoughts filled her mind than any she had ever fostered before, and she tortured her heart with prematurely distressing questions.

Would Henri as fondly love again the child of her who had ordered him to be assassinated? Would his noble heart truly believe that she had not the most distant idea of her mother's intention? Would he not feel sorry at having united himself to a Royal but treacherous house? These distressing thoughts haunted that young mind, so lately the scene of calm repose. Flowers still strewed her room—flowers culled on her bridal day; they teemed a faint perfume, they seemed to be wearying of blooming, and her heart was wearying of joy; they drooped their heads, they would no longer blow in their green freshness; and her heart was perchance dead to its early feelings of joy.

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There is something so poetically alike in flowers and the human heart, that the comparison comes naturally to my mind; others have before me made the same comparison, no doubt, but sensible minds will not weary at the before told tale. A parterre of flowers speaks volumes of pathos to the heart; gay children of the earth, which to-day are blooming, may, ere another sun sets, be withering on the turf—a type of the form of man, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cut off as the mown grass. As the sickly perfume teems from their fading breath, so the hope which fills the young heart droops before misfortune and trial. The dew-drops which for some time endeavour to refresh the flowers are types of those tears which cheer sorrow; but at length they, like the dew-drops of early spring, come no more to the assistance of misfortune, and lighten no more the chains of grief. Then, as we tread the gay flowered parterre, let us take a lesson from each plant; let us think of the change and decay of all here

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below. Perhaps such thoughts as these sprung to the mind of the fair Queen of Navarre, for she promenaded alone, with her large blue eyes bent low on the ground. There was a balmy stillness in the air, but through the calm beauty of the hemisphere still resounded in the young creature's ears the dreadful shrieks of the preceding night. She longed to fly; she longed to be pillowed again on Henri's bosom; she longed to look again in his manly face, and tell him she was linked heart and soul to him; when lo, a messenger arrived, and bent low to the young Queen. Marguerite hastily perused a note—Henri of Navarre was in England, suing succour from the British Queen. To a young and enthusiastic heart, this was a severe sorrow; one week ago, and her feelings were so different; then she had been accustomed to Henri's absence; since, she had learned to love his presence. She bedewed the note with tears, and hastened with it to the Queen her mother.

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This was not a political step, such as Catherine would have taken, under such circumstances; but she thought of nothing at present save consoling the young bride, who wept pasiionate tears, and stamped her pretty foot, declaring as ladies young or old, do declare in the absence of their husbands—"That she was very much ill-used."

"Henri of Navarre is over hasty," cried Catherine; "those who sought his rooms were probably ignorant of any wish of slaying any particular person."

"Do not think so, or try to persuade me, that—" and here the young Queen shuddered. "Do you think I shall ever forget the scene? do you think I shall ever forget the voice? They called for my husband, for my Henri; I myself favoured his escape, and the assassins left my presence highly incensed at losing their prey. He is quite right to go to England, quite right; I will try and be resigned."

"Marguerite, you are forgetting yourself:

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is it right to call in foreign aid against the King your brother?"

"Oh, I am not thinking of his political movements; I am only thinking of his dear life. The chased deer flies whither he can, when too closely hunted; what cares he on whose ground he treads? Oh! mother, you know I fain would be dutiful; I have never questioned you, I have never interfered with any of your plans; but this was really too cruel, to change the mirth of a bride into the weeping of a widow. Oh, mother! it was too bad."

Catherine was rather staggered: ay, cold and cruel as she was, she turned abashed from the genuine sorrow of the young bride, who wept still passionately, though she continued her outpouring cry:—

"Oh! yes, it was a refinement of cruelty: my bridal dress is still hanging up before my view, and ye planned the bridegroom's shroud; the flowers which decked my hair

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are still in their vases, and I will long cherish their faded blossoms to recall that never-to-be-forgotten day. In one night I seem to have grown old. I will trust no one—I will care for no one; I will be like the world, inaccessible to pity, because I know not who most deserves it. Who would have thought that the lately gay Marguerite de Valois would have wept her usually clear eyes as red, as if that were their original colour? Mother, mother, I have been thinking deeply, during the short time which has elapsed since last night, and in that short space I have thought more of eternity than during all the rest of my days. I have been thinking of that night, when we shall be called to account for the sin we here commit. I am glad my husband was not murdered; so rejoiced for himself, so enraptured for my own account; but more glad still that you will not have this sin at your door."

"This to me!" cried Catherine, stamping

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her foot, and rudely clasping Marguerite's delicate arm; "this to me! *foi de Reine,* you are a tragedy Queen—a proper Queen for a King, who is but a King by name."

"Let me go," persisted Marguerite; "I have spoken nothing but the truth. You know you sought Henri's life—you cannot deny it."

"I can."

"Can you swear it, solemnly, truly?"

"I do not take oaths to please a girl of sixteen."

"Because you dare not lie before Heaven and your own child;" and so saying, Marguerite rushed back to her own apartments.

Perhaps the Queen-Mother felt more shame in the silent moments which followed, than she had ever before experienced. The words of the young Queen rung in her ears, and the Medicis had the assurance that she could not touch a hair of her pretty head; and therefore her passion was deeper at the moment, because it did not vent itself in plans of revenge. It was

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a bitter pang to be reproached by the girl-like being, who had so lately pillowed her blushing head on the maternal bosom of her who was giving her instructions; it was a bitter pang to acknowledge that her child had cause to despise, if not to hate her. Oh, yes, vice must always bring its own punishment; and turn which way she would, Catherine knew she dare nowhere repose love, even had she wished it. She shut herself up in a halo of pride, in order to avoid showing that she felt remorse. She cast her haughty glances around, and defied every curious look, but conscience was busy all the while; it was whispering at the root of the heart, it was marring her peace. Then there were (as she had once told the Cardinal de Lorraine) silent hours in the night, when she dare not repass in review the deeds of her life; then she did *not*, as the Cardinal had told her, call absolution to her, for she began to doubt if any absolution could save her soul.

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There is no rite in the Popish Church which some, like myself, perhaps, deprecate so much as the rite of absolution. Who can forgive sins, save Him who was sinless? Can man, frail man, dispose of his fellow-man's immortal soul? Is it not as much beyond his finite grasp, as the glorious sun is superior to a glittering chandelier? Can his sin-stained lips attempt to say to the soul, "Thou are forgiven?" Far be it from me, an inexperienced person, to enter into theological discourses; but I have been reflecting, and I ask my readers to have the patience to listen to my reflections. I have been thinking how much Lorraine and other powerful Churchmen swayed the Court at times when the most atrocious crimes have been committed; and I feel assured that this promise of absolution must have spurred on the unreined heart towards the rapid declivity of sin, whilst the mind was buoyed by the delusive hope of the soul's absolution.

Catherine de Medicis, for example, knowing

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so well Lorraine's mind—knowing how he had spurred her to deal harshly with the Huguenots—can my readers credit more than I do, that she believed in the absolution which confession could obtain for her, if she confessed to a man sinful as herself?

No, Catherine de Médicis; it was at God's Throne you should have humbled your proud heart; it was in the privacy of your chamber, alone with Him who knows the heart, that you should have sued for pardon. None too sinful to hope for it, none too weak to pray for it, and to no penitent sinner has it ever been refused.

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CHAPTER X.

The same night that Marguerite of Navarre retired, spiritless and unhappy, to her couch, to dream of her absent husband—that same night, Clementina sought her chamber, and leaning over the bed, held conversation with her, until the night was so far advanced that she still lingered with the young Queen; they both arose with the lark, and wandered abroad, choosing the most sequestered spot.

It is gloriously beautiful to catch the first freshness of a summer's morn; to watch the dew-drops glittering on the green sward; to catch

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the first love-tuned lays of the birds; to look above, and see the pure canopy of heaven; to look below, and see the tufted gracefulness of the flowering earth. The budding flowers so languidly open their heads to the day, as if fearing to dazzle by a too sudden display of their rich beauty. A gentle breeze wafts afar the scent which fills the fragrant gale, whilst the hedges look most temptingly green. There, in the grounds of the cháteau, the Queen and her companion saw only a limited view of the grand scale of nature, when waking from her slumbers. They saw no distant view, no rivulets, no gentle rills, no braes, no cascade falls; but they saw enough to awaken in their bosoms the truest love towards the Almighty, and the purest wish of being pleasing in his sight.

"I have spent a very wretched night," said the young Queen; "not only mourning for Henri, but I reproached myself for talking abruptly, and rudely to my mother. Clementina,

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it is a sacred tie, the relationship between Mother and Daughter; but it is a cruel position to feel we strive in vain to look up with respect towards the Author of our being. The child may be forgiven by a parent, even for the worst sin, because, with riper years, the parent looks forward to repentance and amendment. But when a child looks to a parent, and finds all dark around, tell me is it not dreadful, Clementina? I will never breathe it to any ears save yours, not even to my Henri's—but I am sure it was my mother's own voice that sent men to murder him."

"Can you think so?"

"Yes, yes, I do; Catherine de Médicis never fears taking an oath; it is as easy to her as saying her *Ave Marias;* but she dare not take an oath on that subject. She pretended it was because I was too young to demand it; but I spoke not then as a young being—I spoke in the language of an injured woman, with the nervous energy of an af-

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flicted wife, and my mother quailed under my gaze, although she endeavoured to appear the injured party. Well she deserves to feel remorse for contemplating so dark a sin; but, as I before said, the tie is so sacred—she is my mother, and I have spoken to her as any stranger would to a guilty woman; and it is not from my lips she should be reproved. Tell me, dear Clementina, has not this been a sad week? a week begun in so much glee, to end in so much sorrow?"

"It has, indeed," said Clementina, with such a bitter sigh, that the Queen turned round and saw what had before escaped her—that Clementina looked wretchedly ill.

"Oh, how selfish sorrow makes us," cried she; "dear Clementina, what ails you? Were you awake on St. Bartholomew's night?"

"I was not only awake, but I caught Poltrot de Méré's last sigh. He died repentant; and I will now shed the last tear I have over his memory. He is far happier in a world above,

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far happier shrined in that promised land of delightful, angelic communion, than when he wandered, unhappy and dejected, through this wilderness world. You, Queen of Navarre, last heard me say I would try and love the Duke. I said I was tranquil and resigned, but then I knew not my own heart. Poltrot returned, and I was again weak, for I could not keep back my heart from him. He died so beautifully, so tranquilly; he fell into the last slumber of death, as calmly as an infant reposes on the bosom of its parent. A heavenly smile hovered round his lips, and I almost fancied I saw angelic beings wafting him to his last home. Then, on his death-bed, I restored to him my love. That assurance comforted his sinking soul; and now all that is left for me is to die."

"You do not mean to injure yourself?"

"Does your Majesty think I would do so?"

"Forgive me, Clementina."

"You are quite forgiven. No, no, I shall die,

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but naturally, calmly—the sorrows I have had have shattered my health; and if the Duke drags me to the altar, I shall die with horror and disgust. I fain would find shelter in some peaceful cloister; I fain would leave a world which has indeed tried me with all its force. Now, still I look back on those girlish days, when, singing to my lyre, I wished to see life, I promised to

"Lie me down and die,"

if I found no joy in the world. I have found none: I am weary of life itself. Poltrot de Méré has caught my last sad smile; it was a strange smile of glad resignation at having heard his last breath. What a strange gladness! —but then I thought he would die in the stranger's land; I thought I had seen him for the last time; that was the reason I was glad. I felt he had lived long enough, since he had lived to repent and died reconciled to his

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Maker. But my words are making your Majesty weep:—"

"No, my tears are not flowing exactly from hearing your tale; they are, like yours, shed half in resignation. I am thinking of the passing world we live in; of its fleeting joys, of its pleasures without any sure foundation. Clementina, I am so devoted to Henri, that were he to order me to do right or wrong I should obey his voice. I am so jealous of his love, that were he to forsake me, my very nature would change. But now I am inclined to heed the voice of virtue; and if ever, like the powerful Queen who guides my brother King, my name should be associated with oppression and cruelty, you must promise to remember these sweet conversations we have held together; you at least will know that some great cause has turned my heart from the paths of rectitude."

"But why not fortify your heart now that you have not these trials near you? It is no use

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to try and brave the tempest of adversity at the time it falls on us with all its force; we must prepare, whilst all is joyous and sunny, to encounter the reverse; look at those flowerets which the gardener has surrounded with palisades: the northern gale may blow, and the wind may beat against the rails, but the flowers are protected, and will bloom still in their freshness. Do you understand what I mean?"

"I do, I do; for, Clementina, you speak gently and calmly, and your words fall pleasantly on the ear. Would that it were in my power to place you in the monastic solitude for which you sigh; but you ought to reflect well before you form such a wish: remember, it is for ever. Can you leave the bright and intoxicating world in which we move? can you submit never more to hear the voice of love, which, albeit it oftentimes makes the heart sad, is still pleasant to our weak minds? The chime of the bell calling you to prayer, the continual sameness of the conversation of your sister

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nuns, will substitute all the gaiety of a Court. Can you, have you, thought of all this?"

"Yes, sweet Queen, it has been a suddenly expressed wish, but not a sudden thought. I have lulled myself to sleep to the imaginary sound of that soft bell of peace, and I have risen again with its chime still echoing in my ears. I have prayed night and morning that my vow may be accomplished, and a consoling voice at my heart whispers that Heaven will ratify my prayers. Think of me sometimes, sweet Queen; think of me on bended knee, praying for your heart's warmest weal, and for your soul's everlasing bliss. We shall meet no more on earth; but on the eternal shore, if spirits are rekindled to the memory of their friends below, then will we raise our voices in glad chorus together."

"Clementina, you thrill my heart. Oh, yes, I shall often, very often, think of you. The vesper bell sounding on the breeze will seem to waft your gentle voice; the waking sun

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will remind me of those quiet but fleeting hours we have spent together; and the soft crepuscular hour, with its gentle shades, will remind me that you on bended knee are offering up your prayers for me."

Thus, arm linked in arm, both these truly soft and feminine voices communed together; and it had been well had the young Queen of Navarre always had such a pious-minded adviser near her as the much-tried Clementina. Tossed amidst the gaiety and perfidy of a licentious and erring Court, her young heart, worn with the pang of knowing that her handsome husband was flighty, gay, and inconstant; fed on adulation and flattery, with a bad example before her eyes in the person of her own mother; those who peruse history, know that Marguerite of Valois has been much blamed; and they will perchance blend pity with blame, when they remember how much she was tried.

Pity is one of the noblest attributes of our

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nature; it opens the heart to so many good feelings. There are natures upon whom anger and reproof is of no avail; who have been softened to the truest penitence by a word or a look of pity. The angels above look with a pitying gaze on erring mortals; and we love to think that when our hearts are filled with pity, we are imitating them. A tear of compassion shed over the recollection of the frailty of a creature we have known all good, all virtuous, is a pearl of unspeakable price, and is wafted into the bosom of Heaven by those benign ones, who rejoice over one repentant sinner.

Silently the young Queen and her attendant continued their promenade. Nature was now more fully awakened; the birds chirped in a more full band, and the spell of the quiet harmony of solitude was broken by the chiming of the matin bells, the distant hum of voices from the Palace, as the attendants bustled to and fro taking up water to those who were languidly

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rising from their late slumbers. As Marguerite and Clementina slowly returned to the Palace, they heard the following conversation between two grooms, who were standing together behind the wall which separated the court-yard from the inner terrace.

"Are you really going away?" said the first speaker.

"*Pardi!* yes; my young Lord has ordered his horses saddled and accoutred for two o'clock to-day."

"Whither does he go?"

"That is nothing to me; the further the better; I like to roam. If my master had roamed more, he would not have been dying of love for so many years."

"He takes a long time dying."

"Ay, such matters do kill slowly, but Death comes suddenly at last; and the noble Duke will go off one of these days—perhaps in a slumber of love."

"You are quite sentimental."

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"Yes, I feel that way sometimes. My Lord of Guise's valet was in love once, and I learnt it of him."

"What, is being in love catching?"

"No, no, I mean I learnt sentiment, till I almost fancied I was in love too; but I could not make up my mind which I loved best—a blue-eyed Marie, or a dark-eyed Fanchon, so I was obliged to give up the game. However, the young Lord of Guise *is* in love, and God forgive him for loving that Italian Astrologer's Daughter."

"That man who was burnt in his house?"

"Burnt! Signor Pettura is the very Dark One himself. Burnt! not he; he is safe enough —no one dares harm him, unless it be my young master, who dares anything; but then I suppose he has no wish to injure the father of the young lady he loves. *Pardi!* to think she refuses him, when he is so handsome and so courtly! I wonder what women are made of? all vanity, I am thinking."

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"Ah, that is the very word, 'Vanity.' I have been married some years, and my wife is still as vain as on her wedding-day — such dresses, such trinkets, though they are but brass, she wears! I tell her to think of her daughters more, and herself less; but she says, married women might as well be dead as forget themselves.

"Then they would never die; for when do they ever forget themselves."

"Never, my good friend. What a thing it is to be as learned as you! I always wanted the right word to upbraid my wife with. Now I shall tell her she is all vanity, and nothing less. How she will stare at my book-learning! How my daughter will wonder when I say, 'you are as full of vanity as the Astrologer's Daughter, who won't have the Duke of Guise.'"

"Shall I tell you why she won't'"

"Pray, do."

"Because she knows the King admires her."

* * * * *

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"Help! help!" was heard behind the wall. The talkative grooms hastened to open the gate, and there they beheld the young Queen of Navarre supporting Clementina, who had sunk down fainting. Without imagining that their own careless words had caused her illness, they assisted to carry her in the house, and summoned female assistance.

"You do not believe a word about it, do you, dear Queen?" cried Clementina, opening her languid eyes.

"No, I do not; console yourself now; it is my turn to tell you to be calm."

"But to be talked of in this manner—to hear my name thus uttered by ignorant men, who are, in fact, the echo of the great men they serve—this is very dreadful. A woman's best and most precious fortune is her fame, and it is cruel, monstrous, to take away my good name. I will have this cleared; my father shall prove my innocence. I have never encouraged the King's gay words. He begged me for a rose

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one day—I refused—he was nettled, and I feared his anger, but I buried my fear in my own bosom. I trembled, but none knew of it. When poor Loretta died, I had a secret warning to beware of all I took either to eat or drink. I have risen each morn, hardly knowing whether I should be alive in the evening. This is the safety of a Médicis' Court. This false tale accounts for the looks of deep hatred which your Royal Mother has cast on me—looks which filled my heart with fear, and buried away peace from my bosom. Oh, yes! I have suffered deeply—suffered agonizing fear, torturing love, keen despair—but this wickedly-woven tale has been the most bitter pang I have yet known."

"Be calm, dear Clementina; your head is so warm, and your cheek is so flushed; come into my room and lie down."

The Queen led the unresisting girl into her room; but Clementina lay tossing on the bed, a prey to the most conflicting feelings. Her tem-

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per was subdued by the power of religion to the most feminine softness; but her heart was innately proud, and firm, in its own rectitude, it had never even been suspected of erring. It was a bitter pang to hear her bright fame spoken of in so disparaging a manner. It wounded and galled her gentle heart, and, alas! her enemies were the highest in the realm.

Stung as by the bite of a scorpion, she felt differently under this infliction than under any she had yet experienced. All other woes were light compared to that of hearing her name coupled with that of a King whose character she bitterly despised. She had never before felt this total annihilation of spirits; bowed low—low—by the poignancy of the stroke.

"Lift up your head," cried the gentle Queen of Navarre; look up again with your own placid expression of countenance. Why should you bow to the stroke of calumny? Call your pride to your aid, the justifiable pride of a vir-

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tuous heart! Call your religious feelings—forgive your enemies!"

"What care they for my forgiveness?" said Clementina, bitterly; "what care they for the despised 'Astrologer's Daughter?' How blind I have been; the King has so malignantly cast me into his nets. He told me when he crowned me at the tournament. 'that a King only should crown a Queen!' Did he not mean rather, that a King alone knew how to torture my heart? Proud by nature, I have ever endeavoured to bow my pride; I have quelled it—I have supported grief—I have borne the load of sorrow which it has pleased Heaven to inflict on me. But this is no heavenly dispensation; it is man—wicked, frail, guilty man's device. My heart is broken, my mind is lowered.—I one of the gay beings who flutter around the unfaithful King! I——"

"Pray be comforted," still persisted the Queen."

"You know not what you say? You do not

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know how bitter is this unexpected stroke! Oh God, who from thy high throne seest the hearts of men, oh look down upon me, comfort me, support me; look upon a sinful mortal, sinful as all mankind is by birth, but innocent of the sins laid to her charge. Queen, dear young Queen! I call Heaven to witness that I have not one fond, or one weak thought, towards the King. I fain would not curse him, but I hate him with more hate than I ever thought it capable in my heart to hate."

"Do not curse him; he is my brother, and King of the realm."

"I know he is, and the words that tremble on my lips shall die there; but I am sad, I am as the tree bowed down by the destructive axe. If my name be blighted, I shall never raise my head again. Oh, I wish to die, I wish—" but here a passionate flood of tears came to her relief; and the Queen, knowing how salutary were those tears, did not endeavour to check them. She almost dreaded the moment when

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she should hear again those plaintive accents. However, the fair face fell languidly on the pillow, the sweet mouth was parted, and murmured a tremulous prayer. The young Queen closed the curtains gently, and Clementina slept.

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CHAPTER XI.

Heavy and unrefreshing were the slumbers into which Clementina fell, from the exhaustion of her grief; and she awoke to the full consciousness of feeling her heart wrung by a bitter pang. A desire to fly—she cared not whither—took possession of her heart; a wish of withdrawing herself from the absorbing sorrow which injured pride, and the consciousness of having been wronged, fills a virtuous mind. The familiar room told her, that there, within its walls, the Queen of Navarre had known the injury which her fame had sustained. The

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King of France was so peculiarly disagreeable to Clementina, there was so much malignity in the expression of his countenance, so much littleness in his character, that her high and exalted mind shuddered at being associated with the stigma of contributing to his gay amusements.

Love can never exist where we despise the person who wishes to love us; and even if the proper ties of society link us by some unfortunate fate to the object of our scorn, still the hearts are as disunited as ever; but worse, when no ties unite the opposite hearts, to think that the world imagines a fondness, or similarity of ideas exist between such different characters. Tossed about by these conflicting ideas, poor Clementina arose from the bed on which she had been reclining; she sighed as she pushed aside the gorgeous trammelling of which it was composed; for, notwithstanding all its greatness, on it the pretty young Queen of Navarre was now doomed to spend her

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sleepless nights. Every sorrow in life brings a salutary lesson to the heart, and a well-directed mind, in the midst of the most absorbing sorrow, will find balm of some kind. Clementina fell on her knees by the bedside, and when she arose, it was easy to distinguish in her calm countenance the efficacy of prayer.

Yes, prayer is the sweetest, the most blessed means given to man, to recognise in all things the dispensations of an all-wise Providence. Let misfortunes press ever so heavily, the Christian knows the end of all earthly suffering. A little patience is all that is required—a continual and steadfast glance at the forthcoming Life of Promise; and in the most severe trials a pious Christian will ever look serene. I have heard some persons affirm, that these thoughtful effusions of the heart are ill-timed in a novel, but I consider this observation the result of a very limited understanding. It is just as well, methinks, to say, that we cannot rationally enjoy the pleasures of life, and at the same time give

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up much of our time to the service of our great Creator. Is love so reprehensible, that it cannot be coupled with thoughts of higher consideration? Is there not love in the very hemisphere above? Are we not told that there exists most *perfect* love? I wish not to be personal, but I recommend that persons should *think* before they condemn a novel; and I cannot help smiling as I recollect those younger days, when I myself thought a novel quite a holyday treat. How often I have pilfered one, and sat by myself, poring over each page; but in confidence I say, that I occasionally passed over those parts which school-girls emphatically call *dry*. These *dry parts* include, moral reflections, religious feelings, &c.; and those who condemn a novel, are sometimes the first to skip these passages.

Mr. Dickens, Sir Bulwer Lytton, Mr. Ainsworth, and many other gentlemen, besides a numerous train of ladies—you are all guilty of having fed the flame of my literary *penchant*,

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and you must bear part of the blame of my feeble effort which is now before you.

As I have before said, a pious mind will ever find a ray of hope to cheer it on through the lone pilgrimage of suffering.

It was a sunny noon, and Clementina descended into the garden. There was happiness and budding tenderness in the harmony of the summer tints. The birds were faltering their liquid notes in that deeply-impassioned swell which speaks so forcibly to the heart. In the light clouds which eddied past, borne along by the wafting of a gentle breeze, in the pure, warm, genial summer sky, Clementina read comfort, and new hope. The walls encircling the garden seemed as it were to confine within too narrow bonds the scenery of hope, which nature's gifts were lavishing on her disconsolate heart. She felt as if she must have unlimited scope to range in mental communion, in thoughts high and lofty. Yet, when she arrived at the last gate, her heart beat with a

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tremulous throbbing, and a voice was whispering a farewell, she knew not to what. Strange it is, that amidst the full presentiment of *something*, we never pause to consider what the presentiment may lead to. We hush the voice, we call it a superstitious indulgence: we fear, we tremble, but we heedlessly proceed. We are as timorous birds hovering around a lake, whose surface presents a troublous mass of angry billows; the bird soars near and nearer; the heavy weight which restrains the freedom of its wings ought to keep the heedless creature from venturing on the angry waves. One plunge, one troubled eddy of the waters, and its dark billows close over the silly bird.

When the waters of affliction close over the human heart, then, when it is too late, it remembers that unheeded voice of presentiment, which endeavoured to check its course.

As Clementina timorously opened the garden gate, and looked beyond the safety, or at least, the bounds of the Palace, she felt an unaccount-

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able fear; she felt assured it was wrong not to retrace her steps and yet every stronger impulse of her nature induced her to continue her course. The prudent voice was disregarded, and Clementina found herself beyond the Palace pale. It is a strange feeling to go abroad after having been for some time confined to a limited space. The unbounded expanse of nature is almost too grand to be viewed boldly: it dazzles the eyes, it lightens the heart. Tears sprung to Clementina's soft blue eyes as, proceeding she hardly knew where, she found herself at length by the banks of the gentle Seine. She followed the margin of the tranquil blue waves, and thought, with a sigh, that her heart was unlike that undisturbed current. The sun played in golden bubbles on the bespangled surface; and the shadow of the extended wings of the birds, as they rapidly soared or hovered around the waters, were casting fantastical shapes on its bosom. The soul felt a thrilling delight; no alarm, no fear of being alone, mixed in the

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pure pleasure which filled the admiring heart, which was melting in its grief under the scenic influence of nature. The breeze fanned that subdued brow, and the pure and classical expression of the grief-faded features was kindled with a sort of holy joy. Butterflies hovered around her with their golden, gossamer, brightly-tinted wings; and the bees, all honey laden, buzzed around, as they rested on the wild thyme which kissed the borders of the river. The wind sweeping in harmonious cadence, kept time with the mellow sound of the rippling waves, whilst the verdant banks were ever and anon laved by the waters which gently ebbed, flowed, and retreated. It was one of those lovely summer days, in which the soul delights to remember that it will not die for ever; and that the purest scenery, the sweetest, the most entrancing harmony of nature, is only an imperfect type of that verdant shore of eternal beatitude, rife with all that is pleasurable and delightful. It was one of

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those soul-stirring days, when the heart looks back with tears half shed in sorrow, half in resignation, at the griefs of early life—one of those days, when sorrow is tempered by the recollection, that having lived through many trials, we are nearer to the land where no sorrow exists. The spirit is lofty in the midst of its grief when it is soaring in a dream of immortality, and the soft vision of the next world will subdue the passions in which the heart is tossed in this existence. "Poltrot de Méré, in thy resting place dost thou enjoy such bliss as this?" murmured Clementina. Do yon fleecy clouds close over a world too sweetly beautiful for mortal man to gaze upon? Does the sun shine in unveiled glory. Does the moon stand unclouded by even a shadowy haze? Art thou in peace in the starry bespangled hemisphere; that sparkling expanse of radiant glory? Is the bitter cup of thy sufferings over? Does the memory of sin no more embitter thy bright destiny? Art thou in the bosom of eternal for-

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giveness? Oh! I hope so, I trust so; a bright, a resigned, almost a cheerful glow is warming my poor heart; and a kindred voice, thy own silvery voice, is singing its numbers to my soul; thy smile is hovering round my gaze—that bright, unclouded smile of early love. A wreath of hope is encircling my pale brow—the hope of soon rejoining thy own angel-winged soul.

Kindling with hope, Clementina sat on the verdant moss; her words were no more the words of a grief-stricken mortal, but they flowed in the unmeasured poesy of cadenced harmony, as there she sung her song of hope.

THE SONG OF HOPE.

"As here, on mossy sward reclining,
The wavy essence mild inhaling;
As here the waves spring, ebb, and flow,
A spirit new gladdens my brow;
A silvery voice speaks in the billow,
And echoes through the water-willow;
Is caught above, far, far on high,
Far o'er all bright Eternity—
That voice is Hope.

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"Spirit of love! spirit so good!
Oh, fill my soul with holy food!
Not Poltrot's last, mourn'd, fun'ral dirge,—
A voice of gladness in that surge,
So mellow, gently, on the breeze—
Whilst I, here, on my bended knees,
Bind round my heart that balmy voice,
Heaven's treasure—the Angels' choice—
That voice is Hope.

"Harmonious sound! passionate spell,
Entrancing bliss, soul-stirring swell!
Oh, once more let me hear thy lay,
And still before my fond gaze stray;
Waft me in dreams of purest beauty;
Speak in that voice so cheer and sunny;
Bind well thy numbers round my soul,
Voice harmonious of grief's control!
That voice is Hope.

"Sorrow, despair, end in the grave—
There, angels stretch their hands to save;
No dizzy tears flow in the tomb—
No requiem there of sorrow's gloom;
A warning voice is in the light,
Shining around me here, so bright—
A voice echoed in Eternity—
A voice of 'trancing harmony—
That voice is Hope."

A pity it is to break the spell of the quietude

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which had stolen over Clementina's grief-tossed spirit—a pity to break the trance of poetic hope in which her soul was wrapped. The novelist is a *cruel* intruder on the feelings, and it is my fate to change the picture lately presented to my readers. But are not the brightest dreams of human expectations very often broken by sad reality? Life, they tell us, is a dream. But it must be owned that its vision is often composed of very substantial realities, of very trying difficulties. Not all fair is the dream of life; not all-pleasing its vanities; and yet how unwilling we contemplate leaving it! How much, too, we dwell upon its passing follies!

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CHAPTER XII.

The calm harmony of nature, the warmth of the sun, the stillness of the air, the freshness of the earth, or perhaps her own subdued spirit, had gradually drawn Clementina into a lethargic slumber. It might be three hours afterwards when she awoke, and she vainly endeavoured to remember all that had occurred; she only knew that, to her astonishment, she found herself in a vessel which was quickly gliding from the shore, the city of Paris looking as a speck in the distance. The minarets of the churches, the irregular buildings, the streets,

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and even the opposite bank of the river, at length were left far behind; and now Clementina felt assured she had been forced to take a narcotic draught, for her tongue refused utterance to the words she fain would utter. She felt no particular pain; but a strange lassitude fell over her, and her eyes sunk in her pale cheeks, whilst she vainly endeavoured to open them. Her hands were crossed on her bosom; she had an inclination to move them, but they still remained there. Her rest appeared profound, and unfortunately her hearing was perfectly acute; and she heard the following conversation, recognising, with horror and dismay, the voice of the Duke:

"Lorraine! if you play me falsely, the friendship which now unites us shall sever as the hoar-frost leaves the green-sward. You know not how fondly, how madly, I love. You Churchmen know not what that passion is!"

"Do we not?" replied the Cardinal, bitterly.

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"No, I am sure you do not. When you love, you cast off the feeling as easily as our soldiers take up their quarters from camp to camp. At least say that *my* love is constant and enduring."

"Is it not now half enduring from pique at the advice the Astrologer gave the Médicis about you?"

"No, by my soul it is not: it has burned for years amidst icicled obstacles. No, believe me, I love Clementina—love her as I never loved woman before, and never shall again—and you cannot, you dare not, break your vow: you must unite us by the holy bonds of the Church."

"How tranquil, how pure she looks in her slumbers," said Lorraine, replying more to his own thoughts than to the Duke's words, "She *does* look like the bride of the Church. Young man, it is a serious thing to thwart that pious choice."

"It was *not* a choice!" said Henri, vehemently. "It was rather a subterfuge; it was a

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last resource, implanted in her mind by the dying Poltrot de Méré, who, even in leaving the earth, could not depart without grasping from my hands the happiness which trembled near—quite near me. Clementina had fondly returned the pressure of my hand, she had looked at me with a clear, almost a loving gaze. I had heard her silvery voice, *not* in anger, scarcely in coldness. Then came Poltrot de Méré, springing between my bliss, as a wan spectre from the shadowy world of spirits; he snatched away, with an envious grasp, the chalice of delight which trembled near my lips. Had Clementina never relented, I might perchance have schooled my heart to forget—but now it is impossible. Ask the sun to retreat this moment behind yon clouds and refuse to gild the beautiful river; ask the river to turn to dry ground! ask any thing, and everything impossible, but never ask me to leave off loving. Oh, could I but warm her heart towards me! Had I some magical power to make her know

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and believe how fondly I would shield her from all harm, how I will strive to win her fondest affection! Can Heaven be cruel enough to deny me the boon, the only boon of happiness I crave?"

"Accuse not Heaven, young man. Heaven is not cruel; it is man, who thwarts the brightest designs which Providence throws in his way! It is man who mars his own happiness, when a safe road is shown him to steer his bark to the Rubicon of happiness! It is man who loiters by the road-side, and takes the path his own will prefers! Do not accuse Heaven, young Duke?"

"But, my good father, tell me, I beseech you, tell me, how in this instance I have been wilful?"

"You slew the lover of Clementina's youth, and by that blow turned her relenting heart to the same frozen channel in which it had before flown towards you."

"I knew not that masked chevalier was Poltrot de Méré."

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"The more wilful for murdering a man without any reason. I myself repent of much of that dark night, which will never be forgotten. I would make much sacrifice to shrine my conscience, and I fain would wish to hear you say the same. I will tell you how to propitiate the wrath of Heaven:—By sacrificing your most darling wish; by—"

"By giving up my Clementina! By heavens! I will not do it—not if a legion of men or spirits stood between me and the altar; not if I thought the deed could send me from the portal gates of Heaven."

"Hush, blaspheme not," cried Lorraine, shuddering. "Yonder lies the bride for whom you are sighing: pale, unearthly, and still as death she lies. One drop too much of the somnific draught would have sent her pure soul to rejoin her departed lover. Neither her heart nor her affections are yours; and even in that death-like torpor, perchance her soul is communing with him whom your hand slew.

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Young man, you have had my most solemn vow to unite you to Clementina, and I will steel my heart to a deed I consider a refinement of cruelty. I will not be moved by her sighs, nor be turned by her tears. Why do I this? Because on that dark St. Bartholomew's night you saved me from the Huguenots who had surrounded my house to slay me. Selfish thus I am—but this my reason—if I broke my vow—if I bared my bosom before your sword and bid you take the life you saved, you would find some other person to take my place."

"Most assuredly; I cannot give up Clementina."

"Stay! stay! you must hear me talk; the view of futurity, usually hidden from mortal man, seems now clearly before me. You will not be happy—you will never obtain her heart. A cold and cheerless wedded life is the slowest poison, leading at length most surely to the grave."

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"I have, too, a view of futurity," said the Duke, whilst a strange smile marred the beauty of his exquisitely-moulded face. "I, too, have a view of futurity, and I see Clementina *begging* me to receive her love."

"Impossible," said Lorraine.

"Quite possible," replied the Duke, and now the vessel stopped. The soft shades of evening were falling gently and gradually on the lovely scenery in which a painter's eye would have revelled with delight. Darker but equally calmly, the waters flowed on, clothed in sombre evening shades; they who had so lately been decked in such bright sunny colours. The moon was peeping timidly from the hemisphere of peace in which she was enshrined. Clementina heard the splashing of oars; the shrill cry of the boatmen, the subdued songs of the mariners, and then she was lifted gently from the vessel and placed in a litter. By a painful effort she opened her eyes, fixed them on Lorraine, who sat by her side, and then they closed

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again heavily, whilst she uttered a deep sigh. The sigh was echoed by her companion, and all-drowsy as she was, Clementina felt a ray of comfort at hearing that sympathizing sigh—so keenly is the suffering heart alive to kindness!

It proved true, as Lorraine had said, that a few more drops of the draught, which the sleeping Clementina had unconsciously taken, would have proved fatal; for she fell from one long slumber into another; and the Duke was racked with torture, fearing that his own manœuvering ingenuity would deprive him of his bride.

At length she awoke, but felt as weak and helpless as a new-born infant. How subdued is every feeling, when we recover to life with the conviction through each nerve of the frail tenure of our human life; feeling as it were, that existence hangs on the most slender thread, the feeble pulse warning us that it *can* cease to throb for ever.

How apt are we in ill-health to forget that

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those around us, not feeling weak and dependent on kindness as we do, cannot enter into our feelings. There, as Clementina lay amongst total strangers, in an old-fashioned and not very commodious chamber—at least contrasting strangely with the gorgeously sumptuous chambers of the Louvre—there she felt so prepared to die, so meek, so resigned—at least to everything save the one event which haunted her mind—that she fondly imagined that the Duke's heart too was softened. She recalled with difficulty part of the conversation she had heard in the boat. Casting her eyes round the room, she perceived a strange and very ugly old woman, slumbering in an arm-chair; the exclamation of surprise which escaped her lips, awoke the sleeper, who started to the bed, exclaiming—

"Well, now, bless my soul, how pleased the young Duke will be! he promised me a mark of gold the first time I should go to him and tell him you were awake and could speak.

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You do not know how often I have fed you; thanks to it for your being alive now. Come, my dear young lady, you must have a stoup of wine, and then I will call the Duke."

"Pray do not talk of calling the Duke," replied the invalid, in feeble but expressive accents. "Now let me tell you, if you care for gold, I have plenty, not here, but at the Louvre. I have beautiful jewels, Queens' presents, treasures in abundance—only aid me to escape."

"Ha, ha, ha! gold and treasures; much use would they be to a head without a body, or a body without a head. Do you think my life would be safe after such an act, even if it were in my power?"

"My father would protect and recompense you."

"Recompense me! he is here, in close confinement, and is only to be released on the day you marry the Duke. Oh, mercy on me! what a tongue I have! There, my jewel, my pretty one,

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take this, or you will faint. Come, cheer up; it is not so bad to be a Duchess, after all. Cheer up, cheer up."

"Never, never; but I suppose it is written in the book of fate that I must be dragged broken-hearted to the altar. But now I see you are alarmed. Fear not, I shall not tell the Duke you gave me any information whatever. In return, you must oblige me; help me to rise, and then summon the Cardinal de Lorraine."

"I was told to call the Duke."

"Here, take this," cried Clementina, detaching a ring from her finger.

The old woman's covetous eyes rested on the jewelled bauble. "Well, I suppose it will not matter, as you perhaps want to confess."

"Confess what? that I am ill-used, and unhappy? Never mind, do as I wish; perhaps I will confess:"

In a few moments the old woman had as-

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sisted Clementina to dress, and she was touched to see so beautiful a form reduced to such infantine weakness.

"Poor young creature! 'tis a shadow of a beauty, indeed; but, as I before said, cheer up, lady; a few weeks restore the bloom to a young cheek."

"Mine has long lost its bloom—my grief is not of to-day; I have fed on grief—I have risen each day, growing paler than the day before. Have you a remedy for this?"

"Hope, lady, hope! and trust in future happiness; when the great gush of sorrow has passed away, this is all the remedy which the most skilful physician could give you."

The old woman's shrunken face looked almost handsome as she pronounced these words; and Clementina, weak and dispirited, wept on in silence, whilst the old woman still continued—

"I have seen much grief in my time. I once had three beautiful daughters; they all married,

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and they all had their sorrows; but on their death-beds how bitterly they lamented that they had not risen superior to grief, before it was too late; for after all, it is blithe to live, and we do not know what we say when we think we wish to die."

"Then, God forgive me; I have often said it, my good woman; but, maybe, that I have always had a presentiment I should die young —yet not so young either: I am four-and-twenty, and have seen as much sorrow as some who have lived to fifty. I wonder if it be sinful to wish to die, when a secret voice tells us that a bright inheritance is in store for us. But, as you said, perhaps I want to confess; I do wish to tell the Cardinal all I feel. Will you fetch his Lordship now?"

A few moments more, and Clementina was alone with the Cardinal.

Lorraine felt particularly awkward at the contemplation of an interview he dreaded. He remembered poor Loretta's death-bed, her

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hopeless despondency, her broken heart; and he wondered at the strange fate which was his—that of catching the plaintive murmurings of those young females.

Since the awful night of St. Bartholomew a wonderful alteration had taken place in the heart of Lorraine; and had he not bound himself by a solemn oath, instead of uniting Clementina in the detestable union she abhorred, he would have helped her to escape.

In those troublous and guilt-stained days, when murder, pillage, and wrongs of all kinds were so common on the *tapis* of life, when a dark system of Italian retaliation swayed the Court of France, it is well that an oath was still held in its truly sacred responsibility; the more so, as superstition joining to make it more binding, in some instances an oath taken to spare an enemy, or turn to a better course, was the only rein which bridled the sinful heart of man.

It was with thoughts of deep remorse, and a

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feeling of shame he had never felt before, that Lorraine respectfully presented himself before Clementina. He actually started back with undisguised horror when he beheld the ravages which indisposition, suffering, and fright had made on the delicate girl's frame The dented chest which marks consumption, had stamped its hideous tale, and the hollow and distressing cough came and went as the flashes of lightning, warning us of the approach of a storm. That lovely glow, which is the fatal print of approaching decay, was tinging the pale and death-like cheek; the hands were taper-like, and transparently pure, and those once very expressive eyes had that bright, glassy look, which the fever of consumption imprints upon them. No more the wavy golden locks twined in silken tresses round the neck; they parted smoothly, and were damp and weak, as if they, too, were stamped with approaching decay.

"Start not, my Lord Cardinal," said Cle-

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mentina: "start not, for though my body is altered, my soul and mind are the same as ever. My Lord, I have heard your words when you thought I could not; I tried to move, for it was very distressing to hear and not to speak. Alas! all in vain. I heard you endeavour to convince the Duke to take away a love I cannot return. Deep, deep in my heart, every word is treasured, and there they shall be until the day I can think no more. If it be sinful, I will no longer pray to die; but if you have any influence over the Duke, tell him this from me—I will be his wife when I have recovered from this illness, brought on by his own hands; but tell him not to sue me as lovers sue when they know they are loved; such words are a perfect mockery of my grief. I cannot, indeed I cannot, bear them. Let him come as seldom as may be; I will think of him, I will try all, all I can, to be as resigned as I was before I pillowed Poltrot de Méré's dying head; but if he comes to me whilst I am weak

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and ill, he will only receive the tears of a mournful heart."

The Cardinal could only press Clementina's thin hands; but, at length, he replied, in tremulous accents:—

"Young maiden, I need not say I pity you, for you have heard my words, when they were uttered only for the ears of the Duke. Now I rejoice that a heavenly hand has given you mental strength, even though your boasted beauty should for a time be low. Like the flowers who raise again their tufted heads after a shower, so will you shine again in the full power of your beauty. My voice perchance may falter when I pronounce your nuptial blessing, but I tremble not for your future life. To say "Ay" to the man you do not love, is a severe pang, but far worse if *you* loved *him*, and he did not love *you*: that grief breaks the female heart; I know it, I know it."

* * * * *

The Cardinal seemed absorbed in grief at

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the recollection of something which Clementina did not understand. She marvelled at his emotion, but her quick cough and difficult breathing filled Lorraine's mind with the conviction that she was very ill, when she began the conversation again—

"My Lord Cardinal, I wished to have been the bride of the Church, to have raised my voice amidst the choir of those sweet sisters, who, abandoning all earthly desires and vanity, leave the world to commune with God. Now, however, I think I am scarcely good enough to join their pure throng. Love, tormenting love, has fanned my cheek; hasty and daring words have been wafted to my heart. My Lord Lorraine, it is passing my understanding that the Duke should persevere in his love. Tell me truly—tell me, as you hold everything dear and sacred—tell me, do you believe it *is* love, or the sole wish of tormenting me, which makes him thus persevere."

"He does love you, dearly, fondly; he will

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make you happy. He is impetuous, daring, ambituous—sometimes, alas! vindictive; but he loves you dearly."

"Enough, enough; I can speak no more," said Clementina. "Thank you, my Lord; thank you for your words."

The Cardinal left, for Clementina had buried her face in her hands, and he glided out of the room without her noticing him.

"My father, my beloved father, I will sacrifice myself for you," she exclaimed, wringing her hands bitterly. "The world will say the Duke does me honour: cruel, cruel, Henri! He loves me—loves me well, did Lorraine say? Then his soothing care will perhaps raise again my head, and that will scarcely be kindness. This deep cough is kinder, this burning fever is more welcome than his embraces; and towards the grave—the grave which holds Poltrot de Méré's remains—my heart still turns."

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CHAPTER XIII.

It is well known in history that Charles the Ninth suffered from a most grievous illness; and it is very remarkable that the first symptoms of his decaying health displayed themselves after the night of horrid remembrance — the night of St. Bartholomew. Waking or sleeping, the sound of the dying Huguenots vibrated in his ear. Now he fancied he saw them flying, pierced and wounded; now he thought he felt the weight of the arquebuse which he was levelling against them: he fancied he ever stood in the loophole, with the

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weapon of destruction in his hand. The troubled frame of his mind was truly distressing. Coligny's form haunted his pillow; he woke with a start, a prey to the most distressing dreams, and fell asleep but to wake again. Surely we must have a good conscience, to slumber at peace through the night, or to wake in its thick darkness and not dread the voice of that conscience which in the still midnight hour speaks so forcibly. No misfortune so bad as the reproofs of a conscience which cannot turn in a repentant prayer, and which knows not where to seek for relief. Proud in heart as his haughty mother, it was not in *her* ears that the King of France owned he felt remorse. She was kind to him in the world's acceptation of the word, but she inquired not if his young heart, not so hardened as her own, was troubled and distressed. She pillowed his aching head, and she supported his form when he took his unrelished meals; she sought the advice of the most skilful physicians, she sta-

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tioned the faithful Mariot near his pupil's bedside; she did all that she thought right and proper to do, and believed she had fulfilled her maternal duty. Is not the heart, the soul, of her offspring committed to a mother's care? Is her sole duty to pamper the body? If so, Catherine de Médicis fulfilled her duty. Her own heart had not repented since the awful tragedy which had been sanctioned by her voice; but, deep in her heart, that hatred towards Henri of Navarre grew; a hatred which she fostered until it broke out after the death of Charles, in the distressing wars of the League.

Catherine de Médicis' history has often been treated about; and in offering my work to the Public, I know that in many points I am treading on old ground; that abler writers can speak more fully of her *political* career, I am perfectly sure, but I am considering the evil influence of a woman's heart on an enlightened nation. To cement the bonds of marriage between the en-

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gaging Marguerite de Valois and the young King of Navarre, had ever been the darling wish of the Médicis' heart. To invite the gentle d'Albret to her Court, was a plan which she had matured in order to perpetrate a deep crime; at least I believe that it is generally (though some deny it) accredited, that Catherine de Médicis poisoned the harmless widow of the King of Navarre. Now, as this event happened before the marriage of the young orphan King with Marguerite of Valois, as History does not relate any Court quarrel, any jealousy on either side, are we not naturally led to believe that Catherine had long intended getting rid of the young Henri? And then, how truly horrid is the recollection that she suffered the enthusiastic Marguerite to twine every youthful and warm affection of her heart on a bridegroom, who was to be slain at her side! Horrible, detestable, refinement of policy—or rather, cruelty, dark cruelty of the heart! Henri escaped to Eng-

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land; and although my tale will finish before the wars of the League, still I may be permitted to follow the thread of this little sketch. Henri asked the assistance of the wise English Queen, and Elizabeth, detesting the atrocious policy of Catherine, whose reign reminded her of the darkest times of her deceased sister, instantly assisted her Royal cousin, and then began those wars which deluged France with blood, and swept the land of the noblest and highest persons in the land. The wars of the League have formed the subject of many tales, and I do not wish now to enter upon them.

Readers, many of you, like myself, may be just entering womanhood's career, and at that period when girlish follies fade before new ideas, then is it that history is particularly beneficial to the heart. If we admire many noble characters there delineated, if we feel a glowing emulation when we read of *women* performing good deeds, we may also learn from the most contemptible charac-

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ters, that in reprehending their conduct, we must think seriously of our own; if we have no wish of being ambitious, we shall not take the consequence of Catherine's detestable policy home to ourselves. But her character is composed of a tissue of small vices, all flowing on until they formed that stern and implacable disposition, for which Catherine de Médicis is famed. I have often thought that the very circumstance of her being so beautiful, is a lesson, or part of the lesson, of her life, from which more than one fair girl can derive information. What signifies beauty, if it be marred by the hideous deformity of the mind? Will sculptured features atone for faults? Beauty, associated with vice, must on the contrary remind us that a sweet picture of human perfection is utterly spoiled.

No remorse visited the heart of the proud Médicis, as, day after day, she hovered round the sick couch of the unfortunate, stricken Charles. His Royal pomp was lost upon him;

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the Court resounded no more with the trammel of rejoicings. No balls, no tournaments, disturbed a stillness which Catherine hated; for stillness is the sister twin of thought—and thought is the enemy of a vicious mind. Mariot was one day sitting near the King's bed, buried in a thoughtful reminiscence of the past. He remembered Charles in his boyish, gay hours, blithe and careless as a June flower; he remembered his unchecked laugh, his rosy cheeks, the animated expression of his countenance; he remembered him during the last year which preceded his formal introduction as King of the realm—he remembered the definition of his character, as he had described it to the Queen Mother; he thought of his words—"Charles the Ninth, will either be a very good, or a very bad King," and then he recalled to mind with much bitter regret, that his unfortunate pupil had chosen the bad path.

Mariot had almost forgotten his Latin orations; he thought no more of his pet volumes;

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but he sat day after day, watching the King's countenance, and scrupulously striving to disguise his own thoughts, for fear they should distress the erring but still favourite pupil, who had once given Mariot hopes of better things. Mariot's sensible mind knew that the true source of Charles's conduct was the conduct and advice of the Queen-Mother; and he pitied the poor Royal youth, who lay on his sick couch, apart from the pastimes of a Court, and the natural amusements of his age.

On the day in question, Charles suddenly turned round to Mariot, and said abruptly—

"Where is Clementina Pettura?"

"She has fled with the Duke."

"Fled! impossible; she hated him. It is one of the plots of the Duke. Where is the Maestro?"

"Fled also.

"Nonsense, Mariot; will you make me in a downright passion? I will never credit a word of it. My mother has the happy or convenient

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art of dissembling, till she can persuade herself anything is true which she likes to believe. Clementina has been carried away, in order, I suppose, that she may marry the Duke, rather than allow herself to be slightingly spoken of."

"I never thought of this before," said Mariot.

"No, I dare say not. You never understood a love-plot in your life. Has any one ever been in love with you, Mariot?"

"Not that I know of; they never told me so."

"Come, now, you must confess that your hard heart has not always been impenetrable."

"Plutarch stole my heart," replied its learned translator (which sentence, by-the-by, I will not *vouch* is historical, unless my readers like to make me their historian).

"Well, well, Mariot, if you lost your dear Plutarch, what would you do?"

"Look till I recovered my lost treasure, your Majesty."

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"That is the point, Mariot. It is no use wasting your time watching by my bed-side, as a spaniel looks up to his master's countenance (*pardonnez moi,* Mariot); but I am going to give you a most knight-errant message: go and find out, by every possible means, where Clementina Pettura is concealed."

"That is like bidding me fetch the golden fruit of the Hesperides."

"How tamely indolent you are, Mariot. You might as well say at once, 'King of France, I will not go, unless you force me to do it.'"

"That might be very well whilst your Majesty was in health," cried the faithful tutor, his dull gray eyes filling with tears. "Now, however, I will go to the furthest end of the world to serve you. I would visit the Court of the learned Elizabeth of England—I would put myself within the pale of the infuriated Monarch of Spain—nay, I would lay down my life to see your Majesty rise blithe and well from your sick couch."

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"Your life, Mariot! Now, young as I am, I will read you a lecture, my most sage preceptor. Never talk of laying down your life, or I shall imagine you have never been on a sick bed, or have not roughed the storms of life. I know now the value of life; for, ailing as I am, I would fain receive as many warnings as death will send me, before clasping me in its embrace."

"You are young," said Mariot; "but I have lived long enough to know many things which we believe not in early life. I have seen ambitious plans fleet away from the grasp of those who built their hope on the fulfilment of them. I have seen the fair and gay fade away after a bright dream of happiness, which appeared too glorious to fall to decay. I have seen the old and ailing survive the blast of the tempest's hurricane, and have now laid to heart the lesson of the mutability of all human things."

"Mariot, you are, methinks, speaking in

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hints, and I never can bear that; give me the lash if you like, in broad stripes, as you used in my early days; but do not conceal it in a golden case, as my mother does."

"Have I ever been slow at reproving you?" said Mariot, almost reproachfully. "My words have fallen upon your ears like an unwelcome shower at the moment ladies are preparing to go to a féte in the open air. They have too often been as the seed thrown upon unfruitful ground, but they have not been niggardly given."

"No, of that, both myself and my brother of Anjou, can bear testimony. I fancy I see your face of patient gravity, ending your orations with, I speak not for my own good young King, but '*Pro bono publico.*' And now, *semper fidelis tutor*, I am conning your pet language on my sick bed, instead of buckling my sword, and rushing against that rising and ambitious young devil, Henri of Navarre. '*Le Roi et l'etat,*' my own trusty battle-cry, would

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be more welcome to my Kingly ears than, '*La médecine, et l'espoir.*"

"Your spirits are so good, that I fancy '*La médecine, et l'espoir,*' have not been meagre shadows of hope."

"That compliment is all because I remember my Latin, eh, Mariot? but '*vérité sans peur,*' it is ennui, the very blue essence of ennui, which wrings the hideous nonsense from my lips."

"Now my sweet King, now—now, I pray you—remember my love for the classics. I pray you continue in a strain which is as sweet to mine, as martial music to your ears; '*occurent nubes,*" even in the lives of Kings *mais le bon temps reviendra.*"

"Now between your French and Latin, you will make a philosopher of the King my master," cried a singularly shrill voice, as bursting unceremoniously into the room, the King's favourite jester stood by his Royal master's bedside.

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"Joseph wore a ludicrously grotesque dress. His jacket was a bright pink, covered with silver tinselling, with the arms of his master so frequently embroidered upon it, that Joseph was a walking piece of heraldic information; his head was covered with a high cap, surmounted with a feather, whilst innumerable little bells hung around it, forming a fringe round his strange, but not unpleasant face, Joseph was fair, and rather inclined to possess red hair, which was a glaring defect, with a person who disdained the coxcombish use of oils and pomatums, and would hardly allow the barber to rob him of an ornament, which—remembering the history of Samson—perhaps Joseph thought contributed to his strength and wit, according to its weight and length. His features were rather ludicrously mirthful than shrewd, and they might be called unmeaningly flat, relieved from utter void of expression by the most perfect "*ney retroussé.*"

"Why do you come in uninvited, sirrah?"

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cried the King, surveying his jester from top to toe; "and why do you always look so lean, reminding one of a spectre, whilst so many are hovering round me, not having made up their minds whether I am to live, or go join their community?"

"How can I get into good condition, when your Majesty is lying there, battling between the doctor for the body, and the doctor of the mind? *Garre à vous, mon joli roi,* or your physician and Monsieur Mariot will dissect you before you are dead; which is, perhaps, after all, more honest than robbing the churchyards of their dead. I never mean to be dissected, having no organs for them to find out, my cranium being as blank as a forest on a November day."

"Hist, hist! dost dare speak against my reverend preceptor? Now, Mariot, excommunicate him in Latin."

"I am '*virtute quies,*'" said Joseph, folding his arms in nun-like simplicity across his

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bosom; and certainly, if the strength of his virtue, as well as its safety, were measured by the longitude of his face, the jester was a pure type of modest-looking goodness.

"What! jester, you know Latin? I never thought your bells chimed to that tune."

"My learning comes forth gradually, lest I should cast preceptors too far in the shade. I could have taught your Majesty Latin as well as that pampered Mariot."

"Ha! ha! ha! Mariot, retort I pray thee. Did'st ever suffer such an attack before?" said the King.

"It amuses your Majesty, and, perhaps I have caught the same vein. Poor, ignorant Joseph, thy soft cranium has made thy fortune; not for its abilities, but because it was worth a King's while to listen to its void."

"I never knew void was anything, and there must be something in void, if the King can listen to it. Thanks, Mariot; now the King is out of leading-strings, methinks I will sit on a

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high chair, with my hands behind me, listening to thee. Lesson first: Mariot's Dictionary of Words—void—signifies something."

"Insolence means you deserve the horse-whip," said the King, smothering his mirth under the bed-clothes.

"The horse-whip is applied to those who have some goodness to be drawn out of them, but who have allowed it to sink too far from the surface, your Majesty. Poor Joseph has no good in his whole composition; at least so folks say: he is a compound of void—whose component parts are *something*. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Begone! unwelcome intruder on a King's rest, begone I say!" But the King did not retort begone, for, sooth to say, he was convulsed with laughter.

"I have not disturbed the King's rest," continued the jester; "no, *foi de chevalier*, or *foi de fou*, which is one and the same thing; I listened at the door full ten minutes before I entered; and if the King were at rest, he was

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strangely tossed in dreams, for he was talking in an allegory of another world he knows nothing at all about; and not content with clipping the King's French, which is his own by right of patent, His Majesty was robbing other countries of their language. Where do they talk Latin, Monsieur Mariot? Some folks say it is dead, but it lives for ever in your mouth."

"You were not invited here," exclaimed Mariot, angrily; if the King prefers the company of a fool to a rational man, well then I will hie me away."

"Right welcome, Mariot; the King is my brother on Adam's side, a few generations removed, and he would not offer insult to so near a relation. As to your great wisdom, *grand merci!* I always think an over-wise man is a distilled fool, with all pleasantness drained in the strainer, and nothing but a mass of learning left to bore people with. My mother, peace to her memory! had an old saying, that

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a sane man never wrote; and you have translated Plutarch, though you might have left the unoffending old man alone. Invited, indeed! who stands on ceremony? Did Queen Elizabeth of England invite His Majesty's sweet cousin, Henri of Navarre to her Court? Yet he made his bow, and he doffed his plumed cap, whilst Elizabeth curtsied and smiled. Now he will reap the benefit of his audacity, and come to visit us with a troop of English soldiers at his back. There is policy in going to Court!"

"Now, Joseph, thou shalt have thy ears slit, if thou touchest ground like this. Policy, do you call it, you knave, you fool, you buffoon, with a powdered face. It was a mean, derogatory step."

"More mean to lie still in his bed and be murdered by the side of his bride. Didst ever see a woman, in hysterics, eh, my Kingly brother?"

"Yes, tiresome fool, more than one."

"What didst think of their hysterical oh, ha! oh! ha! oh, de—er—ar."

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"That their smiles are better than their tears."

"*Foi de fou,* you are a reasonable King, and deserve to wear my bells, which are as meritorious as the orders the King of Spain confers on the grandees when he reads in their sallow faces that they are inclined to rebel. Yes, *foi de fou, de roi et de chevalier;* Henri of Navarre did quite right; there is more courage in flying, than in remaining to be murdered."

"How so, fool?"

"'Tis easily told. As soon as a man is murdered, his friends extol his virtues, and write prologues on his goodness and unfortunate end; this is very enlightening for the world's edification, and perhaps his spirit revels in delight if it catches the echo of this sweet world's dear and timely sympathy. Now, if a man flies, he hears himself called a dastardly coward; and there is courage in supporting calumny. Now will I laud Henri of Navarre as a hero."

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"*Grand merci* for your nice distinction of bravery! it is your philosophy then which keeps you from the wars, when your master is risking his life in battle; he is a coward, and you are a brave man. Now a truce to your learning, knave—but you have no more left for a future occasion. Canst answer a plain question?"

"I hope so, if it is asked in plain French!"

"It is simply this: where does the Duke generally spend his time, when he is not at Court?"

"At the wars."

"Tush! I mean when he is at peace."

"Sometimes shrining his conscience in the Church of Notre Dame de Lorraine—sometimes he gambles at his chateau—sometimes he dabbles in politics—sometimes he shows his *chef de cuisine* how to compose a *ràgout*, which, when men have partaken of, they can tell no more tales; this dish is called by courtesy a '*rágout á la Médicis*.'"

"*Parbleu*, you are the most incorrigible

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knave in the whole world," said the King; too much accustomed to Joseph's manner to feel angry, and knowing that if he let him have his own way, he would at length be tired of joking, and shift his sails in the right direction.

"I mean, Joseph, has he any particular hiding place, when it is his ducal will not to let the whole world know what he is about? Now, pray thee, collect thy memory, and tell me if thou knowest how to find out the fox in his hole—there is more honour in that than shooting preserves."

"I think I can," replied Joseph, placing his finger knowingly on his mouth; "but secrets must not be told to a third party; and though yon sapient Preceptor is casting his meek eyes on the pages of his thumb-worn book, I have not seen him turn over the page for more than five minutes; and as deafness does not come under the list of his complaints, perchance he happens to love my dulcet voice just now!"

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"Speak before him; he shall accompany thee to the Duke's hiding-place."

"No, by my faith! that will I not do," said the usually placid Mariot, warming with anger; "by the honour of my situation, as preceptor to your Majesty, I will not scour the country with that prating fool by my side; his bells hardly sounding more meaningless than his tongue."

"Now I pledge my Kingly word that I differ from thee, Mariot; his tongue is too flippant for a book-worm man; but it is a pleasant and warm companion, and nothing meaningless, but withal tart and ludicrous. I have laughed at my poor Joseph's puns till I fancied I felt the glow of a June day on a cold November morn; and I have laughed in July, until very exhaustion caused me to cry out for a stoup of iced claret."

"And a good and refreshing beverage your Majesty found it; say it is true, Royal brother," said the much-gratified jester.

"Now hold thy glib tongue," retorted the

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King, "and hear me, for I am getting exhausted. Thou must doff thy plumed cap, and not announce thine honourable calling by sounding twenty bells at once. Frown not at this sacrifice; thy wit is like the sparkling froth on the top of champagne, and as soon as thy mouth opens, it will sparkle forth, and never be taken for tame lemonade."

"By my jester's honour, it *is* no *sham pain* to wander in the train of so fool-learned a man as Mariot. Upon your Majesty's own shoulders be the blame if you lose your jester, and gain an author—for composition is catching; if the words fall from Mariot's lips, and I write them down, I shall be stamped an author. By my discarded bells, I believe that is the way of those learned men. I understand the joke; I will dress myself as a courier, attending Mariot;—but he must pay me well, for my silver tinselling tarnishes, when it lies by long. When I have found the Duke, what then?"

"Then thou may'st return as quickly as thou

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went, and take heed thy tongue doth not betray thee into eating a *ràgout*, such as thou spakest of a minute ago."

"Oh, *pardi!* trust me for that; I can smell a *ràgout à la Médicis*, long before the cook has placed the last ingredient in its compound. But I see your Majesty wants rest, and I will leave you to Monsieur Mariot's tender care, whilst I equip myself to be his humble guide, interpreter, protector, and every other subordinate rank, which his high condescension will please to bestow upon me."

The King had great difficulty in persuading Mariot to allow Joseph to be his guide: but at length remembering that the hideous and conspicuously ornamented cap was not to form part of the jester's toilette—seeing, too, how pale and languid the King's face looked, although flushed from the exertion of speaking—Mariot forgot all his scruples, and listened most patiently to the King.

"Mariot," said the strangely wavering King,

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"the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, I acknowledge, is the most heinous sin weighing on my conscience; but, as you know, I planned not the hideous transaction myself, but the manner of my conduct towards Clementina Pettura is a sin lying immediately at my own door. I have so often taunted the Duke with his unsuccessful love, that I have spurred him on to the highest pitch of fury; and when I heard the Astrologer say he withheld his consent, then he swore that no power, no earthly control, would deprive him of his bride; and still my laugh sounded in his ears, whilst my pretended love towards the innocent object of his affections led him to the desperate plot of carrying her off. Mariot, seek her, find her—take a body of my men, under the command of Tavannes; thou act the deputy of peace; he is sent to use force if need be. Bring her back—good and forgiving as she is—bring her here, that I may beg her pardon, and then, according to her own wish, she shall enter the Church,

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even if the Duke should war in the attempt to retake her. Wars, in my unhappy country, have been too often the cause of ambitious and unlawful designs; and surely, to rescue a virtuous woman from a long life of unhappiness, is as good an excuse. So thought those who fought for the beautiful Helen; and Paris may be a second Troy, for I am determined to rescue the Astrologer's Daughter, let the Duke go where he pleases."

Mariot lingered yet to receive full instruction, and then sought his own apartment, feeling he was engaged on a mission totally foreign to his own quiet frame of mind.

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CHAPTER XIV.

My readers have seen enough of Mariot's temper to believe that it was a matter of much consideration for him to undertake the unexpected and uncertain journey which the King had imposed on him. The idea of being surrounded by armed men, was a dignity the worthy preceptor had never wished to have showered on him; but actually to contemplate the probability of their drawing the sword around him, made his heart palpitate with any thing rather than loving loyalty towards the fair object of his research. Then, in the solitude of his chamber, Mariot wondered at the

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infatuation of those who had, as the King had recalled to his mind, raised the long and celebrated siege of Troy, to rescue a fair woman. It was ludicrously strange to behold the preparations poor Mariot thought fit to make. He actually cased himself in steel, and then he fancied he felt the blows which were never to come near him.

"To think of the King being surrounded by men who have been partakers of his gay amusements, and choosing me to be the bearer of his messages to ladies," reflected the crest-fallen preceptor; "it is an affront to my learned character; and yet how can I refuse the poor young King? I fear me this sin, which weighs heavily on his Royal mind, is only as a drop of water on the bosom of the ocean. More disturbance spero meliora company, than that ridiculous jester. None so foolish, but they know how to trim their quiver with their arrows. Come in, come in!" cried Mariot, in answer to a gentle but protracted knock.

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"*Mon bon Mariot; croyey vous que je suis un loup, qui vient surprendre votre agneau?*" said the young Queen of Navarre, extending her hand to Mariot.

"*Plutôt votre Majesté est l'agneau qui vient surprendre le loup,*" answered Mariot, bowing low, and presenting the young Queen with a chair.

"No, no! Monsieur Mariot, I cannot sit still one instant. I am roaming about the Palace, as if the Louvre were an enchanted garden, and I expected to find golden fruit on every dull wall; and in my ramblings I heard a strange noise of knocking, and came to inquire the cause."

"I am nailing up this box, containing translations, over which I have laboured long and assiduously. I am preparing to go to the wars, and am therefore leaving my documents as men leave their wills—very unwilling, of course."

"Now you are joking; and it is strange to hear *you* jest, especially whilst the Palace is so

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gloomy that no one jokes. *You* going to the wars, indeed!"

"It is very like it, when I am to be surrounded by armed men, and be tacked to the skirts of the warlike Tavannes."

"He who headed the Massacre of St. Bartholomew!" said the young Queen with a sigh.

"It is not very goodly company to be in, I agree, young Queen; but I must even think that we are not obliged to sin, because we know there exists a Prince of darkness, and not wish to have a view of his dark kingdom, although it is ready for the reception of unrepenting sinners. But think not I am joking; I am sent by your Royal brother to the rescue of Clementina Pettura, who is confined somewhere, the Lord knows where."

"You are then sent on a merciful errand, Monsieur Mariot; and if you knew all the sweetness of disposition of that much persecuted being, you would rejoice at being allowed to engage in her service. I shall indeed wel-

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come her back. You are a fortunate man, Monsieur Mariot."

Poor Mariot thought himself about as fortunate as a man who is told to be glad he is to be guillotoined, for, as he is unjustly accused, and his conscience is free from sin, it was a mercy to deliver him from this sinful world.

Such delightful feelings of happiness crossed Mariot's mind as he smiled bitterly, and replied:—

"It is a wild errand; the Duke of Guise knows better than to leave his bride unprotected; and when I am no more, the King will say, 'Poor Mariot, he went like a lamb to the slaughter, not daring to rebel against the fatal knife.'"

"Why so desponding? I would that I were sent on the errand; my woman's heart has more courage than yours."

"Woman's heart is more buoyant, and perhaps her perception of danger is not so clear," said Mariot.

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"I did not say that; but woman is sometimes too much spoilt by indulgence to allow herself to believe anything can thwart a design she wishes to be accomplished. Mariot, this I thought a short time since; but do you forget that I *know* the brightest happiness can be thwarted? You forget you are speaking to an unhappy young Queen, one who *was* a bride, and is now weeping alone. He is away who ought to be kissing the tears from my brow; his steps no more bound by my side—my mirth is turned to a bitter fount of grief: then, Mariot, instead of speaking of the wilfulness of woman, rejoice rather over her mind, since, through the cloudy hemisphere of a sky gathering in sombre preparation for a tempest, she can still trace a ray of light to warn that afterwards there will be a sure calm. It is well that woman's heart is buoyant; if not, wo for her sad fate! Whilst man can soar to the very spot where the difficulty lies, woman is forced to remain at home; and the shackles of society pronounce

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as unfeminine, that mind bold and enterprizing enough to forget her generally beloved timidity, and seek the place of danger. Think you I should not suffer much less, if I could follow my Henri's footsteps? Mariot, you know how gallant, how true, how beautiful, he is; you can therefore tell how much his noble spirit has suffered from the ignoble attempt against his life. It was like rearing a Chinese rose, in the warmth of a forcing-house, tending it with most assiduous care, and then suddenly casting it forth to wither in the frosty air. My mother tended poor Henri with this false care, and I was the prize which kept him at our too-deceptive Court; he never will, he never can, forget the treacherous conduct displayed towards him, and perchance———perchance he will think I am to blame. Mariot, I am not telling you all this, that you should idly listen to a woman's fears; but I feel within me a new and daring spirit. I wish to embark under the banner of danger; indeed, Mariot, I *cannot*,

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and *will* not remain inactive here. I, too, wish to see the Duke; he has ever professed to worship my beauty. I could, by a word of encouragement, have had him sighing at my feet; ay, even when he was suing Clementina—so much for man's constancy! Oh! man, false man!" continued the enthusiastic and beautiful young creature. "Well may man sometimes excuse a woman for being coquettish; and beauty, sometimes a fatal gift, is a pearl of price, when it can soften a man's heart. Now will I call to my aid the beauty of which hitherto I have not been vain. I will look up to Henri of Guise's face—not as in a bright halo of smiles I used to look, but through a haze of tears. I will move his admiring heart. Then will I fall at his feet, and tell him that it was not towards him but towards Henri my heart was turned, and I will not rise till he promises to send me, duly escorted, to own bridegroom."

"Queen, artless young Queen, be not angry

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if I speak my mind freely; it is the first, and it may be the last, time I shall thus converse with you. All guileless as you *now* are, you will fall into error if you so philosophically talk of exerting the power of your fascinating beauty. Owe no obligations to the Duke. Listen to my voice: beware of such a manner of proceeding; your conduct may be guided by the purest movement of a virtuous heart; but, alas! jealousy reigns now. All unreined amidst the human passions — take my word for it, you will repent interesting the Duke of Guise in your favour."

"How you talk," said Marguerite, pettishly; "but to a person who has never loved, it is so easy to talk in that manner. Do you think I should like Henri if he intended me to keep my beauty veiled in impenetrable darkness, to shine only for him? He cannot condemn my conduct, for he must feel all the purity of my intentions; then, when I look at his dear face, when he clasps me again

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to his heart, think you he will care how I returned to him? suffice it for his love that I am there."

"Henri is but nineteen," said Mariot, "but his character is fully developed, and the organ of jealousy has most plainly taken its root; a certain degree of obstinacy, too, will always make him retain his first impressions."

"And perhaps you wish to say, a certain degree of levity on my part will admirably cement the jealousy; but Mariot, my good Mariot, I can excuse your boldness, for my happiness is at your heart; and I say, with tears in my eyes, that my mother has never spoken to me with the tender solicitude you have. Now hear me: let me go with you to—to Clementina."

"To the Duke, you mean," said Mariot calmly, and with his usual blunt love of veracity. "No, indeed, I cannot take you to the Duke; I would rather escort you to England myself."

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"Say no more; I see you are over scrupulous," said Marguerite; and after a few more common-place observations, she left the apartment.

Mariot continued his preparations until General Tavannes entered the room; and being partly acquainted with his *compagnon du voyage's* love of peace, he chose to amuse himself at the expense of his nerves by speaking of war; a word which jarred inharmoniously on the *ci-devant* preceptor's ears.

"*Meglio tardi che mai,* says the Italian proverb," cried Tavannes; "I thought not to give you a lesson in arms, at your time of life. *Meilleur compagnon, que bon soldat,* I suspect will be the device you will strike on your banner."

"I would I were striking '*Nous revenons de la guerre.*' Why should a man be ashamed to love peace, Tavannes? I hate war, and the idea of bloodshed fills my heart with a repulsive feeling I cannot conquer. Our bodies are

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wonderfully and fearfully made, and so organized that one member conduces to the support of another. Will you tell me that all this admirable order in our human construction is not meant for us to preserve? and to risk our bodies in useless danger seems to me a most unnecessary shortening of our breath."

"But to risk it for a lovely female," said Tavannes.

"I am not dubbed a knight-errant, and therefore I would as soon some one else were deputed to take my part; but you are the General, remember."

"You are my senior," said the provoking Tavannes, "and of course I shall be guided by your advice."

"My advice is of too peaceful a strain for martial ears: would that I had never embarked in this expedition. Shall we require all these men?" cried the learned poltroon, who was anything but a Ulysses or a Hector; and began to wonder if it were because he had devoted

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much time to study that he found himself so unexpectedly transformed into a hero, seeking a fair lady; whilst no lady in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America had ever warmed his heart. "Shall we require all those men?" he again said, looking fearfully back.

"All those men! Lord bless you, my good colleague! we shall require a strong reinforcement if we come to arms with the Duke. What weapons stand best in your grasp, Mariot?"

"They all stand much the same chance, namely, being thrown from me in utter inability to manage them; and the contents of my gun are much more likely to find a resting-place in my brain, than in that of the enemy."

"Look here, Mariot, I will teach you how to manage a gun—nothing easier: face your enemy—pray to the favourite saint of your *chères pensées*—forget yourself—and think of your foe."

"For God's sake, don't come so near; you are

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looking at me as if you took me for your foe; put down your gun, and I will pray to my guardian saints, but it shall be to protect me."

"And let your enemies *aller au Diable. Ma foi!* you have your duty towards your neighbour by heart. A pity you cannot read an oration to the Duke, instead of drawing your sword; you would come off best in that contest: as it is, to return to the Louvre minus an arm or a leg is the least you can expect. But the King will advance you, no doubt—perhaps make you a General, and give you the command of a Royal army instead of a lady's band, sent to deliver her from a fond lover's power."

"Methinks a preceptor is as good as a General," said Mariot, who was getting extremely pettish from positive bodily fear; "and the honour of being a General has never entered my mind; besides, if I am to return from this expedition minus a limb, I think I shall deserve to be rather on the wounded list than on the promoted side."

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"That would certainly suit your humour better, for you could study your pet unintelligible jargon, and con all the learning of the ancient Greeks and Romans, besides enjoying the honour of having fought. The fact is, by placing you in a most honourable situation in the detachment, I will do all in my power to secure you the *poste d'honneur* of being placed on the maimed list. 'Wounded honourably fighting for his country,' sounds well, Mariot."

"You have managed to fight long, without losing arm or leg," he replied, surveying the General's portly figure, and mentally deriving much courage from an observation which had only that moment entered his *esprits fins*. "Except a scar, which has somewhat marred your beauty, your Generalship does not look as if you patronized the honourable list of the maimed."

"That scar, on the contrary, is a most fortunate circumstance, proclaiming my bravery. I once knew a young man who had fallen from

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his horse, and scarred his face. A short time afterwards he took a post in the body-guard of Royalty, where he had nothing at all to do, save putting on his regimentals and looking as handsome as he pleased on a Court-day. Well, the ladies were all in love with this young *soldier*, for they declared he had obtained his scar in a most meritorious, courageous, and exalted post of honour; fighting like a lion against the Spaniards. Of course the young gallant took no possible pains to contradict the easily-fought battle; and he gained such an ascendancy with the ladies, that whenever he went to a ball he used to chalk his scar, lest the lights should render it too pale; and it must have been warm fuel to his martial virtues to hear the universal whisper when he entered the room, commanding a view from six feet (without his boots)—'That is the handsome man who was wounded in Spain.'"

"But you *have* fought many battles," said

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Mariot, who began to wonder if the General ever concealed himself during the fray.

"Ay, you may say that; *that* is not the reason I congratulate myself on having received a wound on my face. On strict *fide* of our companionship in the same honourable career, I must tell you, I was as ugly a young man as human flesh dressed up in regimentals could possibly be, and, moreover, had the misfortune of being amazingly fond of handsome ladies. It was very amusing to see the excuses they made when I asked them to dance with me at a ball. As surely as I advanced towards the beauty of the room (all armed with my best smile, and making my best bow), the lady of my polite attentions vanished in search of something she had never lost; another found a peculiar beauty in a star, which proved to be a lamp, hanging on a most unromantic post—in fact, the fair ones used tauntingly to ask each other the next morning, how many times they had danced with the

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ugly captain. Nothing daunted, I continued assiduous in my devotions, though, sooth to say, they were of a multitudinous nature; as I admired, at the same time, girls from the palest shade of a blonde to the darkest hue of Italian beauty. At length, I began to learn there was a striking advantage in being ugly. Mammas perceiving their daughters were not likely to be persuaded to run away with me, or fall in love with me either, I obtained *par passe port de ma laideur*, the chaperonage of the handsomest girls in the town. At length, the bugle was heard calling the sons of Mars to the field, and I exchanged dancing shoes for steel, kid gloves for the heavy battle sword. Well, I returned with this charming scar. This time I took up my abode in a different part of the town—my old friends had dispersed, some belles had married; others had merged into patent sort of old maidens, holding themselves up for a pattern for the new generation. These were not to be found in

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the gay *salons* I frequented, and my new acquaintances greeted me with something very like this saltutaion: 'That is General Tavannes (for I was no longer a captain), who was so handsome before he was wounded. Only see what a beautiful profile he has!' Mariot, you are very much like myself—not troubled with too much beauty; and the best advice I can give you is, to get wounded as soon as possible."

"*Grand merci* for your advice! but if we are to trust ourselves to the guidance of the jester in soldier's clothes, had we not better summon him, and ask him where he is conducting us?"

"If he be a fool, take my word, leave him alone. Wise men may lose their way, engrossed by the weight of their wise thoughts; but a fool thinks only of 'number one;' and Joseph likes a good bed and wholesome food too well to put up with a wandering life at the extremity of the ranks of the army."

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"Art happy, Joseph?" shouted the merry General, at the highest pitch of his voice.

"So happy, that I am intoxicating your men with the most refined essence of *martial* delight," replied the feigned soldier, laying a particular stress on the word. "I am recounting my various campaigns in foreign parts, only I have the misfortune of having a short memory, and can neither remember the names of the places where I fought, or the particular Generals under whom I enlisted."

"Ha, ha, ha! a merry rogue; come near, my man, thy voice is lost amidst the noise of the horses' hoofs."

"More the pity," said Joseph; "particularly as your Generalship's own lungs seem of the tenor style of construction—or harmony, if Monsieur Mariot considers the word more applicable to the subject. Lord help me, and forgive me for laughing at so learned a man; but by my faith as a fool—no, no, I meant by my faith as a soldier—I never saw so droll an ani-

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mal on horseback; he carries his arms like the animal who has a pouch ready for its young. It is evident that Monsieur Mariot's arms are meant for the tender ones who mean to come right *on* them to be shot, and that self is forming no part of his nature; his gun is positively on one side of his *horse*, and his sword bearing it company on the other, lest like a milkmaid if she carried but one pail, her grandmother would say: "Nancy, take heed, you will grow on one side."

"Monsieur Joseph," said Mariot (here Joseph bowed, for he had never been called Monsieur before), "Monsieur Joseph, I will take no further insolence from you; take heed, lest, instead of the horse-whip, which generally crosses your shoulders, I try the power of the gun you so much despise."

"You don't allow duels in your army, General, do you?" said the jester.

"No, not to any one save captains and colonels, or they would get too common."

"Well, then," answered the much-pleased

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jester (who possessed as much courage as poor Mariot), it is very evident I must decline your very polite challenge, as we are neither of us captains or colonels yet."

"You do not mean to compare yourself to me, sirrah?"

"No, not a bit of it," replied the jester, with a low bow; "I have too much regard for my own merits."

"Ha! ha! ha! laughed the General; a merry knave, and a shrewd fool. Wilt always remain with me?"

"And forsake my Royal brother, Charles, when I owe him so much gratitude for having so often cuffed my bad qualities out of me, and made me at last such a bright specimen of humanity? How would you like to train a horse into all its graceful paces, and then send the animal to a friend?"

"Not much, Joseph, unless he were a particular friend indeed."

"Just so. But you are no friend of mine;

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for, like *my* friend Monsieur Mariot, I love peace."

"Who told you I love peace?" exclaimed Mariot furiously, casting a look at the sword by his horse's side; seeming as it were to say, "If I dared take thee up, I would."

"It is no use," replied Joseph, guessing his thoughts; "it is no use your longing to have a duel with me; the General won't allow it, till you are a colonel, and I a captain; at all events, you would not be ungentlemanly enough not to *write* your challenge; and, as I never put pen to paper in my life, it will lie snugly in my pocket, on the forgotten list, as many worthy members of society do who deserve a better fate, and as many high statesmen *ought* to have done who stand high in power."

"A political knave, too," said the General.

"Political? I believe you. Look here, General, you must not give me the merit of being very clever either. When I was young, my mother, or my grand-mother, or Catherine de

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Médicis—I don't know precisely which of the three—held me on their sweet knees, and caressed my pretty face (here Joseph stroked his ugly countenance, as an apology for beauty); whilst, instead of filling me with sweetmeats, and making me a pampered courtier, they crammed me with politics, and made me a fool."

"And pray let us hear some of their lessons!"

"Oh, who remembers what their grandmothers tell them? I have long forgotten their words, but have reduced the theory to practice. This is the difference I find between the Medicis' and the Duke's politics. The former prefers poison and the mitred heads; the latter the stiletto and the red coats. That theory is so easy that I reduced it to practice; I have tried the poison, and found it too bitter; the mitre, and found (except in Lorraine's case) it does not suit me; and then I turned politician to the Guises. The stiletto pierces too well through

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the steel, and the red coats are not so richly paid as the fool in his cap of bells. Now I am a renegade, but belong to neither party; I am on neutral ground, and at liberty to fly without being called a deserter."

"See what the king would do for thee, if thou didst desert thy post," said Mariot, fearing the knave would put his plan in execution, and leave the knight-errants to their fate."

"As to the King, he knows that between his preceptors and doctors, he would die if it were not for me; and as long as a man is useful to his superiors, his life is as safe as if he had taken a lease of it *ad libitum*. But do not fear, Monsieur Mariot; I am neither a General, or Colonel, or Captain; and they alone are allowed to run away where they please, so make yourself quite easy."

"But where on earth are you leading us to?"

"The Duke has a chateau some sixteen miles from here; it is quite an enchanted place, where a parcel of fairies, or silly ladies, might like

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to dwell. Now, as a lady is in the case, it is most likely he is there. Was there not a King, who once confined a lady in a house, where he guided himself to her by a silken thread?"

"He means the fair Rosamond," said the General, who, by this piece of erudition, rose much in Mariot's estimation."

"Rosamond?" said the Jester; "I thought that was the name of a bush; yes, there is rosemary in abundance in the castle, and flowers trimly bedeck the garden and grounds. Now, I always reason, Monsieur Mariot, by thinking of myself. If I had a beautiful castle, such as fairies might like to dwell in, and a goodly host of armed men came to take possession of it, headed by a man who sat high in his stirrups, like M. Mariot, by my faith I would come from any distance to drive them away."

The General perfectly agreed with Joseph, that his way of reasoning was most convincing; and at length the Jester returned to amuse the men in the ranks, although he shrewdly ob-

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served, that he was not accustomed to mix with such low people at home.

The horsemen continued their way; Mariot became gradually more reconciled to the novelty of his situation, in consequence of which the General thought fit to leave off teasing him.

The beauty of the country which bounded the banks of the Seine, burst upon their gaze in the full splendid array of a calm day in summer. Here, and there a pretty villa bordered the banks, but the scenery was mostly picturesque and wild.

Mariot was a passionate admirer of nature, but he failed to interest the General in his conversation; for Tavannes had seen more than pretty scenery—he had seen the most stupendous range of Nature's climax of beauty; he had stood where the burning volcano throws forth its angry missives — he had seen mountains hurled from their summits, and whole towns blazing in destructive, but magnificent flames; he had been on the highest summits of the

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Alps—he had watched the fall of the avalanche—he had followed the lofty range of the Pyrennees, and sat under the cool shade of the most lovely bowers. He had plucked the luscious fruit in Italia's sweet plains, and his steed had galloped over Andalusia's shores. Far-off, eastern lands, too, had been admired and descanted; his form had darkened the gorgeous mosques, and the stupendous pyramids of Egypt had met his admiring gaze, whilst the picturesque passages of the Chinese empire had also contributed their share in his extended view of scenery. Mariot therefore had to admire by himself the plain, but exquisitely pure, scenery of the land of his birth. It *was* his father-land, and that circumstance alone lent it attractions, for who feels not a love for his father-land? The heart which was dead to the beauty or attraction of the fair sex, was warm, doubly warm on that point. France and its verdant shores was the utmost summit of Mariot's scenic wish; and if

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he thought of other countries, it was but to think his own, after all, the best. The flowerets throwing their balmy scent to the evening gale; the thickly tufted trees gracefully bending their slender branches to and fro; what more could Mariot want? Nothing. For there were also the limpid waves of the Seine, and the richly-tufted mossy banks, which laved its verdant shore.

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CHAPTER XV.

A SCENE of a very different description to the jocular conversation of the knight-errants was taking place between the Duke and the handsome Astrologer, who was then in the young Duke's power. Life may indeed be termed a "wheel of fortune;" we all aspire to prize-tickets, but we often return with a blank. Pettura's proud heart loathed as it were the bright morning sun, which shed its rays upon the solitary room which he paced up and down, with those quick perturbed strides which mark the disquietude of the mind.

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"Perfidious, treacherous, ungrateful Médicis," he exclaimed; "I thought that much deceit lurked in thy bosom, I knew that thy dark eye shot forth glances unfathomable; but never did I dream that thou would'st forsake me, and pretend to be blind to my fate, after every ambitious view towards the suppression of the Huguenots had been accomplished."

"And pray, what had you to do with the Massacre of St. Bartholomew?" said Henri of Guise, coming unceremoniously into the room.

"Perhaps the most bitter part of my captivity is, that I am to be intruded upon thus unseasonably by such a young dare-every-thing as you are," said Pettura, turning his dark eyes to Henri's face, who met the gaze without flinching.

"It is very well, Signor, for you to pretend to be the injured party; now hear me coolly say the scores I have against you. You secreted from the hands of *justice*, the youth who murdered my unfortunate parent, but you offered

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me such a prize—your fair Daughter's hand—and I could not resist the tempting, the dear offer, although my father's spirit seemed to call aloud for revenge. The banished Poltrot returned, and your dastardly spirit quailed before the last sigh of a dying murderer; whilst your daughter was excusable for withdrawing her love from me, because she would so soon have returned to her promise. You stood inexcusable, and now, if you exert not your full parental influence on Clementina's heart—if you do not insist on her fulfilling her long engagement—then, by my ducal coronet, there is only one fate for you. Shrive your conscience to the most lenient saint in the calendar, and prepare to leave the earth. I tell you your fate in time, in order that you may write as many sonnets to the sun and moon as you please."

"You tell me it in time for me to speak my mind, at all events. Rather would I the murder-stained Poltrot clasped my sweet Clementina, than she should be your bride. A mur-

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derer! and pray what better are you? Have you not this moment confessed that you meditate murder?"

"It is no murder to rid the world of a sorcerer, who knows not how to keep his word."

"It is no murder then to rid the world of a young and crafty upstart; but, Henri of Guise, wert thou in my power, wert thou the captive and I the coronetted Duke, I would let thee go, convinced that the gnawing of thy conscience will be thy severest torment; for, young as thou art, it is, methinks, already more heavily laden than thou wilt confess."

"Thanks that you are not my father confessor. I would not shrive thee if I might."

"It is pitiful to hear thee talk to me of death," said Pettura; "I who have had it before me more times than thou would'st have patience to count. But, hark thee, my death even shall not give thee happiness. If there be a fiend in the dark world who will come at my bidding—if there be a bright angel above, who, more

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pitying still, will not allow thee to have thy reckless way—I will invoke every shapeless spirit, and every saint above, to preserve Clementina from being thy bride."

"Were my admiration turned into a bitter fount of hate, she should still be mine. All mankind seems, as it were, to dare me to it, and no one shall stand between my happiness." As the Duke concluded, such a strange expression crossed his handsome features, that the feelings of Pettura changed, and he determined to appeal to his feelings.

"You do not know what it is," he said, "to live and feel the world a blank, with the exception of one single spot towards which the heart turns—turns with the same warmth, that the one ray of the electric fluid is sufficient to kindle the burning volcano into its stupendous heat. The being towards whom all my thoughts are centred, is so innocent, so good, that were I to idolize her with tenfold more love, the doting feelings of my heart would be excusable.

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Were marriage the pastime of a day, my thoughts would be different, but I cannot contemplate the whole future life of my child cast in bitter shades of misery, far darker than those which have hitherto overshadowed her destiny. Has her sweet, though melancholy life, been the *avant courier* of far greater unhappiness? Her bloom has withered in girlhood never to bloom in the pride of matronly life? Young Duke, pity my keen presentiment; pity the warmly-excited feelings of a father. Look higher for a bride fit to wear your coronet on her brow. Leave Clementina alone; she wishes to be the bride of the Church."

"She wishes it, because your canting lips have persuaded her to it. She would embrace that life in the hurry of a moment, and repent it during the leisure of years. It is in vain you speak; it is in vain. Clementina's tears may flow; were they so plentiful as to wash away the very altar stairs, they shall all be wiped away by my fondness. Gracious powers! why are you so

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obstinate? I do not want to make my bride unhappy. Why teach her marrriage is a sort of type for unfeigned misery."

Because her heart goes not with her words. When in the midnight hour you catch her sighs, think not they fan your cheek in plaintive love; they are lullabys, pillowing in thought Poltrot de Méré's head. When you catch the mellow tone of that eye which melts so softly, so liquidly in love, think not it is upraised towards you; it is as it were taking a glance above at Poltrot de Méré's happiness. His name will ever falter on her tongue; in midnight visions she will sound it; in day-dreams she will invoke it; the gentle streams of her affections will ever flow into the same channel, and her feet as it were ever trace the flowery mead of love, trodden in younger and blither days."

"This is harmony beyond measure to a fond lover's ears," said the Duke, bitterly; but supposing I have courage not to heed all these

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symptoms of love towards the dead; that might, methinks, be a patience easily attained, insomuch that the dead cannot injure the living. Were Poltrot de Méré still alive, it would be a more difficult task; but now I shall feel like husbands who, marrying widows, are constantly hearing of the virtues and excellences of their dear departed, sainted husbands. Patience is the only cure for such evils; and, methinks, I deserve to be dubbed God of Patience, for my long submission to Clementina's will and pleasure. *Grand merci!* some lovers would have passed the sword through their bodies, whilst I, Ptolemy-like, have waited patiently for my Cleopatra, knowing that Clementina is too pious to try the Egyptian Queen's fond embrace of the deadly asp. I marry her under a most sane reasoning, which many lovers would be wise to copy—namely, with my eyes wide open. I know she will mix each love-strain towards me with a requiem for the dead. A most reasonable husband I am,

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Pettura. Why be jealous of the moiety of love I shall possess? I should have expired with hopeless love before this, but for two things—the first is, my disposition is not romantic; the second is, that I have quartered on my shield the motto—'*Dum spiro, spero.*'"

"It is a very excellent motto, as far as you are concerned; but, methinks, my poor child has quartered on hers, that she becomes your bride, '*Ex necessitate rei.*'"

"After all, our parley seems to end in nothing better but a *jeu de mots*, and this pastime will not turn me from my purpose. I thought you read the stars with a surer meaning than to be so blind to my destiny and that of your child."

"It is because I *have* read her destiny, that I speak so vehemently against this marriage—turn before it be too late."

* * * * *

For all answer, the impatient Duke turned himself upon his heels, and left Pettura to the

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not very comfortable companionship of his thoughts, and the certainty that he had heard a bolt drawn outside the door. The sound of a bolt was horribly inharmonious to Pettura's ears; and to be the captive of a young Duke, his superior in rank, and his junior in years, galled his proud spirit into unbearable anger. The Astrologer, however, knew he had no redress. In those days, as in the Barons' feudal days in our own land, every powerful nobleman took upon himself the punishment or pardon of his enemies; and to interfere with the Duke, in that respect, Catherine de Médicis knew was one and the same as voluntarily placing a brand in the coals, which would blaze into a civil war. Again, Henri of Navarre's unexpected journey to Elizabeth of England's Court, had filled Catherine with undisguised apprehensions; the more so, as the illness of Charles the Ninth began to assume a dangerous turn. Divided between that inherent superstition, which caused her to lean toward the

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Italian Astrologer, and the fear of offending the young, but powerful Duke, Catherine, like all those who have begun reigning a kingdom without knowing how to control her own heart, was sadly tossed about.

Yes, after all, the human heart is more difficult to govern than a kingdom, or why are we so powerfully struck with the remark, that some of the wisest and most political Kings were the weakest mortals recorded on the pages of history? Elizabeth, the great contemporary of Catherine—she who ruled England as if her high spirit were essentially moulded for the times in which she lived—had she not a heart full of passions and weakness? Did not jealousy, that inherent bad quality of a woman's weak heart, prompt her, even more than political feelings, to sacrifice the beautiful Queen of Scotia's heather borders?—jealousy of a beauty, which is, after all, a gift from Heaven, not always rendering the possessor of it happy? Was it not a weak feeling of slighted love, which

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caused her to sacrifice also the all-powerful Essex, the avowed favourite of her Royal heart! Elizabeth was a great Queen, but a weak woman! She could by her wisdom ward off the aspiring views of the Monarch, whose Andalusian pride was equal to her own.

Her able seamen, emulous of *her* praise, who knew so well how to bestow eulogiums, so well how to express scorn, defeated the boasted fleet, that superb Spanish Armada, which threatened to be monarch of the seas, conquerors of Great Britain! But, wise as was the great Elizabeth, warmly as English hearts, from the throne to the peasant's cot, boast of "England's Bess," she was not wise enough to rule the fiery impulse of a naturally passionate heart. Tempestuous were the clouds she had to part before she saw sunshine in unveiled day; for to succeed to the throne after the troublous days of Mary, is telling in itself a whole history of masterly *coups d'esprit*, when we find a woman again

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swaying the throne, and hear that that woman was beloved and respected. But those who peruse history, not merely to see powerfully glorious persons, but to deduce from each character a lesson they can apply to themselves, *they* are, no doubt, struck with my again-repeated words—Elizabeth was a great Queen, but not a good Woman. It is wrong in many points of view to compare Queen Elizabeth to Catherine de Médicis. Britain's Queen was totally guileless of that mean spirit which could one hour clasp a foe in the grasp of pretended friendship, and the next deliver him to torture or to death.

Elizabeth was free and untainted from that superstition which the Médicis felt in every flowing vein. When Elizabeth erred, it was from the impulse of a heart left for a time without a bridle: when she repented, it was with the genuine warmth of a heart ashamed of its failings; and the very fact of the brief but deep grief of her last moments, makes us

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forget the erring woman in unfeigned pity for the genuine worth of that heart which could so bitterly repent.

Pettura knew exactly how Catherine de Médicis was situated; he knew that if her position in society were duly looked into, the brilliant-looking Queen would be changed to a miserable woman. And in the midst of anger for her neglect towards him, Pettura was philosophic enough greatly to forget his wrongs, and to remember, with a softened feeling, the beauty of the erring Queen, and the graceful symmetry of that commanding figure. He remembered how long, months, ay, years ago, she had sat by his side in the midnight hour, all absorbed in the predictions which had been too fatally accomplished. He remembered that her eyes then outshone the lustre of the chandeliers, that her complexion sparkled in the glow of the most fervid animation; and lately, he had noticed, that shades of growing fear, repentance or despondency, so

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often had dimmed the brightness of that dark, full eye, and the once boasted complexion was hueless, whilst the beautifully rounded lips were growing each day paler—drooping as the last flower of summer, whose brightest tints had waned.

Pettura turned also a pitying sigh towards the gay young Princess, now the Queen of Navarre. She who had for years known the dark Astrologer only by name, had, since her marriage and sorrow, paid Pettura's chambers a visit. She had cast back, unheedful of their beauty, the golden tresses of her hair; she had looked into his dark eyes, whilst a deluge of tears dimmed the blue lustre of her own. She had clasped her tiny, dimpled hands, and she had entreated to see a portrait of the future.—The future! that fair young Queen was a bright image of what his darling Clementina had once been, and the cunning of the man of art faded before the innocency of the child of nature, as there he stood confessed, that the

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future was as far beyond his reach as her own! Then, Marguerite, the lately bride-Queen, had clasped her hands in an agony of despair, whilst, pressing them on her young heart, she exclaimed—

"God help me! God protect me! I am very wretched!"

That young voice, from which every light spark of mirth had fled, that tearful blue eye, now said to Pettura's heart—

"Even the young have troubles; why should *I* despair?"

Another vision now fleeted before the Astrologer's imagination, sad and mournful as those ramblings of the mind generally are—a vision this was of Poltrot de Méré. First as the ardent youth, suing a father for his daughter's hand, promising to love, to shield, and to protect her, as a husband should the partner of his choice—glowing with courage, inspired with hope, radiant in manly beauty, and youth's speaking grace; then came another and a fearful pic-

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ture—Poltrot soiled with sin, pale, hopeless, haggard and degraded, a burden to himself, weighed down with his own sorrow. Pettura thought he stood once more in that damp condemned cell, and that Poltrot knelt at his feet. He felt the cold pressure of those thin, emaciated hands; he caught the faint and hurried breath, and he fancied he uttered again the knell of the unhappy youth's happiness, and signed the joy of the Duke.

Again, another equally fearful tragedy—Poltrot's agony and death. He heard, in fancy, the expiring accents—he saw the look of hope and trust—he saw Clementina kneeling by his side, and heard again the tremulous accents of her prayer—that prayer, uttered in such plaintive soul-stirring accents, that surely the angels must have wafted it to their own pure sky. The shades of evening mantled the scenery, which was slumbering in quiet harmony; and as Pettura gazed from the casement and caught the soft perfume of the trees, all laden with the

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drops which a gentle summer shower had sprinkled them with—as he caught the last plaintive notes of the birds, ere their little heads were pillowed under their wings—as the murmur of the evening breeze flowed harmoniously by, and hushed his troubled heart with its sweet lullaby, then no wonder that a dream of futurity —not of human futurity, but of the everlasting land of hope—fleeted by that tossed mind, and Pettura thought more deeply, more purely that evening, than he had for many long years. He remembered once—oh! it was many years ago, for Clementina was then an infant—he was sitting by the entrancing Gulf of Venice, and his beautiful infant was bounding by his side. Her black garments floated in the breeze; they were worn, because the mother, whose gentle voice would have guided her, was silent in the grave. Even at the early age of infant lisping, the poetical genius which glowed in her bosom developed itself on more than one occasion. She had a particularly

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bewitching manner of culling the pencilled flowers; and a still more bewitching manner of presenting them to her father; and she pointed with her tiny finger to the bright blue sky, and listened to the songs of the birds; placing her finger on her lips to intimate she wished all should be silent, save that charming harmony. Pettura remembered, that tears coursed each other down his cheeks, and bedewed the fair neck of his child; that he pressed her near to his widowed heart, and wondered how he should be able to guard her from the contagion of the world, if she grew up as lovely in girlhood, as she was charming in infancy. And now the same feeling stole over him again; for he remembered that the bloom of Clementina's youngest days had fled, and that she *had* been preserved from the contagion of the world, but had, alas! been tossed about by its most agonizing tempests. She had weathered gales which a virtuous heart alone could have weathered; she had withstood

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temptation, and her exalted mind had drawn long draughts of comfort from its inherent piety. She was now within the same roof as he was, and he could not see her; yet he longed to weep, to bend his spirit in a burst of womanly weakness, whilst perhaps that gush would have done his spirit good.

Little thought Pettura, when he heard a distressing cough in the dead of the night, that it was his child who was ebbing away the last days of her health. The sound of that cough, shrill and deep in the night, sounded even into his far-off chamber, but he saw not the ravages of the fatal disease, which preys so often on the young and the lovely—a disease which Clementina hailed as the voice of an angel of mercy, calling her from the world in which she had so much suffered; the fatal spot glowed brightly on her cheek, and the fire of the fever within lighted her pure blue eye until it shone with supernatural beauty. What a shocking ailing is felt in the human breast! what a

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shocking load of sorrow, when the young and beautiful pray for the boon of death! Yet, instead of praying for death, how many can courageously pierce through the blackness of clouds, shadowing dark and densely the once rayonant path of their life. How many sincere Christians suffer trials fully as deep as can possibly be my unfortunate heroine's lot. Mothers have hung in lovely resignation over the death-bed of some darling hope; there, before the maternal gaze, lies the cold remains of all that once was bright and beautiful; and grief-stricken, still the parent prays *not* for death. No, years have improved the feelings of the heart; it is not that hearts are grown more callous, but the nearer we advance to the end of all things the more clearly we admire God's beneficent views, and consequently the more cheerfully we bow to the dispensations of His providence.

Would that such reflections were not passed over by the careless reader! would that some

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possessed not the erroneous belief that such feelings mix not in the pages of a novel. Foolish idea! offspring of a weak mind!

Reader; Clementina's fate—her sorrows—are they ended? Nay, moralize as *ye* please, ye must read on still.

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

LONDON:
Reding and Judd, Printers, 4, Horse Shoe Court, Ludgate Hill.

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THE

ASTROLOGER'S DAUGHTER.

AN HISTORICAL NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY ROSE ELLEN HENDRIKS.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
T. C. NEWBY, 72, MORTIMER STREET.

1845.

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THE

ASTROLOGER'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

SEPTEMBER—who loves not September? It is the waning voice of summer, telling its last passionful notes to mankind. Already the bright Eastern sun sinks earlier in the West, and evening breezes warn us that a colder time is approaching. September is hailed by a thoughtful mind, as the soft shadow of the glow of summer, marshalling the way slowly to a hemisphere of colder feeling. Those who have spent the summer in a dream of hope,

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wake in that month to the reality that expectation has grown dimmer; and September warns the heart, that Hope's warm whispers will sometimes cease to exist.

It was with pensive and subdued feelings, that Clementina felt a secret presentiment that she should not live to see another September; that she should not weather another winter, nor watch another spring-tide blow; her beauty was pale, and her form drooped as the lily by the side of the gentle stream; her eye had the plaintive look of long-existing suffering, and her breath the faint perfume of the pale, dying rose; no bright buoyancy lent quickness to her footsteps; and yet Henri of Guise passed his fingers through the thin but lovely tresses of her hair; his breath fanned her cheek, and she had not courage to shudder. To-morrow was fixed for their union. Clementina heard her lover fondly repeat it, and she answered with a sickly smile; her voice was choked by her distressing cough, and with a lover's blind-

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ness, still Henri persuaded himself that it was a passing indisposition.

"I shall soon die," said Clementina, pressing her thin hands on her aching chest.

"Oh, say not so," replied Henri; "Italia's balmy skies will restore you; my love shall cheer you. The rose blooms still, after it has been washed with many showers; and you, too, will soon raise your graceful head, and, perchance, smile on me."

And Clementina unconsciously smiled on him *then*, but it was one of those smiles, which, had not the Duke been wrapped in a delusive dream of bliss, he must have caught as a warning that angels were hovering round Clementina's pure spirit, ready to pillow her in their own slumbers.

After a pause, Clementina continued:—"If I die, Henri—die your own bride—you must consider I have fulfilled the wish of your heart. And, oh, Henri, you must never injure my father; you must persuade him not to dissect heads, and live amongst such strange things

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as I saw once, and once only, in his chamber. Oh, that day, that dreadful day! Do not look angry, Henri, or I shall weep, and it hurts my chest sadly when I weep. I had a dream last night. I *fancied* my father was here May I see him?"

"It was a dream, Clementina, nothing but a dream; yet, he *shall* see you as soon as the Cardinal de Lorraine has united us. Your pardon, beloved, for keeping you here, but I wish you to enter my castle as my bride; this is pure regard for your own reputation."

Clementina loathed the heart which had already told her two falsehoods in a moment, but she was afraid to make him angry; and still that small gentle voice at her heart whispered that her soul would soon be at rest.

"Henri, you have not yet answered me; say, that if I die, you will not injure one hair of my father's head?"

"Why speak of your death, my beloved? Look at the mirror before you; your cheek has

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the bright tint of the damask rose, and your eyes sparkle like that bright diamond on your finger."

"Oh, that was the Queen of Navarre's gift; at least, I like to think of her as the gay young Princess Marguerite, for then she knew not what it was to weep. But again we are wandering from our subject. You will not harm my father?

"No, no; why think it?"

"Do not speak like that, Henri; your words do not sink to the heart; they sound as light as the white froth on the bosom of the sea, which is seen one moment and vanishes into naught the next. Look at this golden crucifix," continued Clementina, drawing it from her bosom; "all good Catholic as I am, I regard it as sacred only when, in looking at it, we direct our gaze towards Him who suffered on it; pause, then, Henri, before you swear; pause, and think you are uttering a binding, a sacred oath: pause, ere you tell me you will not injure my father!"

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A mighty spirit seemed to turn the Duke from uttering the oath; but he looked again at Clementina: her lovely eyes were fixed on him, waiting to gladden at the sound of the oath; in her white hands she held the crucifix, whilst her lips were parted, as if the words trembled on *her* tongue, which she wished to hear uttered by the Duke.

"Clementina, give me the crucifix, and hear me; I swear on it, not to injure your father!"

You swear it solemnly, as you value your peace here, and your rest hereafter?"

"I do; solemnly, most solemnly.

Stop!" exclaimed Clementina, with sudden energy. "And you promise, too, that no absolution shall absolve you from your vow?"

"That do I also promise. And now, my Clementina, replace that cross in your bosom, and bid it bind trust, love, and hope around your heart; say you do *not* wish to die, for if you did, the angels could refuse you nothing!"

"I think it is sinful to wish to die, Henri;

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but when we feel every nerve shattered, when the heart is actually beating fainter and fainter within us, is it right to neglect the warning voice?"

"But, Clementina, you look so beautiful!"

"The earth often looks lovely just before the death-like breath of the tempest is ushered in; and human beings are only creatures of earth. Have you ever seen any one in a consumption?"

"No," replied Henri

"I have," said Clementina; "poor Loretta, who died so suddenly, took me one day to solace the death-bed of a young creature, eighteen years old, who died so beautiful; and she was in a consumption. She coughed as I do, and her cheek had that same burning glow, blooming like a delusive picture of a rose which has no scent. Feel how burning warm it is; I know I am in a consumption. Oh, this dreadful cough; give me a glass of water, Henri."

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Henri obeyed, and supported her trembling head, feeling a sort of bitter reflection at the recollection that the head which reposed on his shoulder, from utter inability to support itself, had never reclined there in its bright days of glory.

"Yes, Henri," continued the poor young girl, "I know I am in a consumption; never mind, when I die you can marry again. I am not high-born enough to be a Duchess."

"You are fit to be a Queen!" And at the mention of that name, Clementina recollected the uncomfortable words which she had heard uttered with regard to the King; and with the truest delicacy of the female heart, though conscious that her death was at hand, she determined that to marry the Duke was the only way of insuring that her name should still be held in respect.

"When we are drawing near the eternal shore," she continued, rather speaking to her own burning thoughts, than to the Duke,

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"how very differently we consider earthly events. How much of my life would I recall, and now it is too late—my foolish wish of forming one of the gay throng who break their hearts in the *beau milieu* of the vortex of fashion. I thought myself much to be pitied when I was at peace with my lyre, my birds, and my girlish thoughts; and now, now—but painful is the retrospect of the lives of more than one person who is at the threshold of Eternity. No willingly-committed sin has soiled my conscience, and yet I know I am sinful. I have keen regrets, for I feel that my sorrows have been sent as a punishment for my temerity in wishing to change that lot in which it pleased Providence to place me."

"Clementina, are these fit words to cheer a lover's ears? This is a desponding fear which temporary weakness has made you feel. Cast it off, dearest; live again for my own ardent love."

"When the toilsome bee has accomplished its

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summer's work, when it has fluttered round the gayest flowers, and sucked the nectar from the honeysuckle and rose, then, in its plain straw hive, it learns that a cold winter comes, when no more honey can be gathered. What has it then to do but to lie down and die? Roses and honeysuckle have been at my feet, but they faded after blooming one morn; thorns and brambles next thickly strewed my path; I gathered them too, and now what have I left but to die?"

"No, you must walk with me to a fairer parterre, where more roses and more honeysuckle will twine around you; you must sip anew the cup of happiness, and leave despondency to those who have not the moral courage to soar above the trying circumstances of life. For my part, I always think there are more Edens than one."

"That sort of consolation is like throwing a cord to a mariner who sinks for the second time; but after the third plunge, he has not

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even strength to seize the proffered assistance. My bark, Henri, has foundered on hard rocks, and cannot be rebuilt; I have *had* my third plunge, and I shall not live to have a fourth."

"No, dearest, I do not wish to see you toss again on the sea of affliction; I wish to see you raise your head, and show me that you can again return my devoted and constant love."

Words like these always seemed to Clementina's ears a mockery of the past, and she interrupted Henri by asking him if he would accompany her into the garden, which relieved the isolated mansion from much of its loneliness.

"Very willingly," replied Henri; and the old woman, who had most faithfully attended by Clementina's bed-side, duly wrapped her shawls, whilst the grateful girl smiled her thanks, though a mournful shake of her head seemed to say, "It is all useless; the worm lies in the bark of the tree."

Presently Henri and his promised bride

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wended their way down the sloping stone stairs which conducted to a garden, excavated so as to form a place of sweet shade. An inattentive observer, to have seen that fair form leaning on the arm of the handsome young Duke by her side, would have proclaimed them passing happy; but, alas! the reason of that close pressure of her arm originated in her weakness, for her tottering steps could hardly support her fragile form. As she passed on towards the broad gravelled road, Clementina raised the heads of more than one drooping flower; and as she bent over them with more tender solicitude than is usually bestowed on anything which cannot express a love of being fondled, her tears moistened the raised leaves, and she muttered softly, "Blow, blow, until I also am no more."

How much a fair garden makes us think of a future existence; and how wonderful it is that nature is so admirably constructed, that the heart must be hard indeed, when wrapped in its

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own idiotical feelings of Atheism, it refuses to believe that there is One above who made the lovely chaos of nature. Henri, I shall be your bride before my spirit takes its flight to its long-promised home. Then, as the solemn bell tolls slowly for me—as, earth to earth, my form is placed in the cold grave—then think more of my words than perhaps you would have done in my life-time. And Henri, if you ever feel inclined to do a dark or evil deed, go there, where I loved so on earth to wander; and if departed spirits from their seat of beatitude are allowed to range on earth below, then mine shall hover around you, and impart strength to your wavering heart. Walk, then, when the shades of evening are stealing placidly on the departing day; come when no prying eyes can see you; and should a tear start to your eye, as your soul catches the divine harmony of the sun's farewell, dash not away the tear; tears shame not a man when they wash away a sin from the heart ere it has found its way to the

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view of fellow men. Let flowery dells and leafy groves be your favourite haunts, for they have been the loved places of my admiration. The low moaning wind chasing to and fro the leaves at your feet, will at length become a welcome music to your ears. There is a poesy in nature which grafts in the heart a wish to do *better* than the common range of men, for the mind must acquire a certain degree of noble and lofty feelings, ere it dare commune with heart-felt pleasure with nature's works.

"Where did you learn your pleasing eloquence, which flows like gentle music on the ear?"

"Where, Henri? It makes me sad to think. I formed my philosophy (if loving nature be philosophic) by learning to feel that there was more sympathy in the mute works of creation than in all the consolation man lends to our woes. Misfortune often comes with a salutary balm to the heart. Perhaps, had fortune smiled upon me, I too might have formed

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the train of one of the frivolous persons who bask in a sunny dream of unmeaning ideas."

"Never, never! Oh! my beloved Clementina, your heart is worth the trouble of suing and loving long. If we admire your graceful body, and your fair face, your noble mind is stamped on both. Methinks a graceful body is so often the type of a lofty mind."

"Lofty, perhaps, but for all that, ill-directed," replied Clementina, as her thoughts strayed towards Catherine de Médicis; that powerful mind being indeed cased in a most graceful mould, but working, nevertheless, no good. "You forget, Henri, how often false, though glittering, gold is placed in a tinselled and showy casket; whilst the pure unvarnished metal is so often shrined in the plainest exterior. Men rarely care for the outward case, if their jewel be of great value; and it is rare, I think, that a graceful body has a mind capable of lending all the boasted beauty of the exterior."

"Then how much more to be treasured when

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it *is* found. Clementina, as here I walk by your side, as I catch the silvery notes of your sweetly-toned voice, I feel inclined to inhale, if I could, part of your mildness and goodness. I could love you through wo as well as weal, and shall content myself with winning a smile of approval from you; only, beloved of my heart! gem of purest price! talk no more of dying. Nay, hear me! bear our final destiny in view, if thou wilt, but talk not of it on the eve of our wedding-day."

"So soon! is it the third of September? Oh yes, so it is; forgive me for forgetting it; and your promise, or rather your oath, towards my father will not be forgotten."

"No, never, never!"

"Now, then, let us return. Yet, no; let us wait awhile; twilight's beauty is the farewell of day, and we will utter our farewell to the light. Hark! dost thou hear the vesper bell chiming dulcetly on the breeze! The chapel is afar, or I would fain go there."

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"Not to-night, dearest; the evenings are chilly?"

"No, not to-night," repeated Clementina, "but I feel not the air cool: there is a kindred balm in it; it refreshes my whole frame; it seems as if the air and myself were twin-sisters, it kisses so gently my brow. Methinks it would be sweet to yield up our breath in one of these ecstasies of bliss. Methinks it would be more blessed to die with the tall posies blowing before our expiring gaze, and the crystal founts flowing at our feet, than to depart in the lonely night, with the sighs of those around us thrilling to our hearts."

"Again talking of dying, Clementina?"

"Pardon, me, Henri, but I feel so lonely here. I feel as if this house were not my habitation; I feel as lonely as if I were far off in the stranger's land, where the sunny flowers of Italia cannot possibly blow. Death is stamped on my brow; death is cankering my heart. Like yon blade of grass, many a blade lies

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withered by its side, and already its root is parched, and it hastes to rejoin its companions. Henri, my mother died in a consumption."

But Henri could not answer. Every feeling of his heart was wrung; the slender arm which hung upon his had felt gradually more tremulous, and the hectic glow having dispersed from her cheek, his promised bride was pale, pale as a stricken flower by the snowy mountain's side; and yet, as Henri led her towards the house, he pressed her thin hand to his lips, saying, fervently—"To-morrow, to-morrow."

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CHAPTER II.

The Astrologer, from his chamber on high, saw that fervent kiss; but he saw, too, another sight. With eyes blinded with tears, distorted with the gaze which tried to penetrate deeper, the Astrologer saw a sight which made the blood flow uneasily in his veins—which made him tremble in every limb—which palsied him with sorrow: he saw—he saw—that Clementina was dying. From the open casement he endeavoured to call her beloved name, but his tongue felt tied to the roof of his mouth; he tried, but vainly, hopelessly, to call her, and

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then he sunk on a chair, whilst tears, flowing from the deepest fount of agony, coursed each other down his cheeks, and oozed out of his extended hands, in which his horror-stricken face rested. Pettura wrung his hands in agony—he clasped them far above his head—he lifted his tearful eyes to heaven—angels seemed to whisper, "fall down on thy knees and pray;" and evil spirits hovered round too, and said, "Thou benighted heart, what hast *thou* to do with prayer?" But, convinced that prayer is not denied to any one, at length Pettura fell on his knees:

"Oh Almighty Father, Great Creator of mankind," he exclaimed, "my child looks wan and pale; she is withered as the tall grass which the mowers reap, but Thou canst restore her if Thou wilt. Cut off rather the strong man, the sinful father of that innocent, that sweet young plant. Oh spare the twig, and take the gigantic oak."

Alas! Pettura felt he *could* not pray; his

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words were fervid, but they were wild, and wanted the resignation of early habits of piety. Man, learn that in thy affliction it is not the only time to pray. In the sweetest hour of sunny mirth it is as dangerous to neglect prayer as in the hour of misfortune.

The unhappy Pettura paced up and down his room; he shook the heavy door violently, but the trusty bolts refused to surrender to his strength. There he felt he must linger, and reflect too on that painful truth! Now learnt he that the hideous cough which had sounded in his chamber, in the silence of the night, issued from poor Clementina's lips. The evening set in; a slight tempest took place of the calm of the day; a piteous, howling wind moaned through the open casement; the rain pattered against his pale face; yet there the unhappy father leant, watching each starry gem, which gradually spangled the bosom of the sky. But there he read no comfort; no voice cheered his grief-stricken heart, for it is a pitiful thing

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for a fond father to lose a daughter. No voice was there, save the low murmuring of the wind, singing a requiem of what?—of Clementina's death, the spirit of the grave whispered, and poor Pettura believed the cry. In vain he tried to struggle with the burden of his sorrow. "Is nothing to live which belongs to me?" exclaimed the grief-stricken man. "I pillowed my bride in the slumbering hands of death; I caught her last faint sigh, and she looked scarcely paler than did my child last night. Can nothing save her? Is it the hideous love of the Duke, which has led her to her early grave? have his unwelcome caresses tainted her with death's mark? Must she, oh, must she die? Child of my affections! dearest object of my earthly hopes! now, according to thy wishes, thou wilt be a bride; not in the Church, but in Heaven itself. And was not that graceful form worthy of dying in her trimly-decked bed in the Palace walls? Was it written in the book of her fate, that she was to die in this

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unknown place, away from those to whom her eye had become familiar! Away the dreadful thought! she *will* not die."

* * * * *

When he raised again his face from his hands, the attendant who brought him his evening meal, civilly asked him if any thing ailed him?

"Man, man, art thou a father?"

"Yes, I have two blooming children."

"Ah! then thou wilt scarcely do my bidding, for thou hast not a child falling, withering, dying; thou hast not a child whose life is waning away, without one kindred soul near to wipe away the drops of death gathering on her brow, and whisper the last, sad farewell."

"Speak you of the fair Clementina, Signor? Ah, yes, she is pale and thin; and she sighs, and sometimes smiles, just as an angel would smile. But speak you of her?"

"I do! Hark! didst hear that fearful cough? It is the knell of her death."

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"Man, man, thou art a servant, and I have never bowed to crowned heads, but here I bow me to thee; here, on my knees, I ask but one grace; deny it me, and I shall expire. Leave but the bolt of my door unfastened."

"But the risk——"

"Thou shalt have none, my child is too weak to fly. I pledge my word to give her but one kiss; or, if more, not to wake her from her slumbers. I will return at one in the morning; come thou then back and bolt the door."

"My death be on your shoulders if you break your word, Signor; but I have two children, and they may prosper from my kindness."

"I understand thee; here is gold, plenty of gold;" and the Astrologer poured more coins into the servant's hands than he would have received for a twelvemonth's wages which were his due.

I will withdraw your bolt at twelve, Signor, for the Duke is yet stirring."

"No, no, my word is as good as thine; leave

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the door unfastened. I will not sally forth till twelve. Where does my daughter sleep?"

"See you yon light!" said the servant, leading Pettura to the window; "she must have retired, for that is her chamber."

"Thank you, thank you. Good night; I cannot speak."

The man bowed, and retired.

Pettura pushed his untasted meal far from him, and stood watching that light which beamed from the chamber where his beloved child was suffering; whilst ever and anon, at uncertain intervals, that distressing shrill cough broke upon the father's ears, as he had heard it in years gone by, when his bride was dying.

"Thank, thanks to the Duke, for bringing me to this captive place," said the afflicted Pettura; for, at least, I may snatch a last fond kiss from my child's pale brow."

* * * * *

Poor consolation for a doting parent!

"Must she die—must she die?" cried the

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afflicted Pettura, striking his hand on his poor beating temples. "Oh, God! again, again that warning cough! Unhappy parent, unhappy being!" and again Pettura sunk on his knees; again he offered up a prayer, fervent—heart-felt—agonizing; not through the whole course of his life had he ever thus prayed. Vain belief of man, that he can thus pass a sinful life, careless of all futurity, careless of the commands of his Maker, and that at the last hour of danger his prayer will be heard!"

Pettura felt a cold shudder through all his veins, as there he prayed; he dared no more beg the boon of life for his child, and he it was who had helped to undermine the fair young tree. Now, all that he dared pray for was to pillow the poor dying head—to listen to her last sad breathing—to hope that, since die she must, her death might come when he was pillowing her.

Lost in a chaos of by-gone reflections, Clementina appeared before the father's gaze, as

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if again a lisping darling child; he shuddered—he thought her baby hands were round his neck; he groaned aloud—he thought her lips were pressed to his. Unhappy parent! what so dreadful as tardy remorse? Pale, pale, was his brow; like a spectre of the spell-binding creature, that energetic being once had been, and yet bruised and spirit-warped in mind. He was feeling more hallowed fear in that one dreadful night, than he had in a whole life before. Now appeared before him many black and dreadful scenes, far more terrific than pen can describe. Now, now, he deemed in his agony, that his child's death would be his curse-like visitation.

"Visit not on my beloved child, thy wrath; God! Gracious God! if thou canst be the Avenger, be Thou also the Merciful? Impart new health to the child! Take! oh! take the erring father?"

No more he said—no more; he laid himself down upon his couch—the prisoned couch, near

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the abode of his suffering child. He buried his head in his hands; he groaned from the depths of his troubled soul; and then he seemed to feel each moment magnified to an hour's endurance. Some nameless power seemed to spell-bind the time. Still, still, burned the quenchless fire of the perturbed heart.

The heavy clock struck eleven, but the sound of human voices still resounded through the lonely mansion; still the rain descended in torrents, and Pettura's head was not withdrawn from the open casement. Another hour, and the confirmation of his fears were to be realized—another hour, and his own feverish lips would press Clementina's pale brow. Pettura had not been in the habit of meeting his child at each morning meal; he had not for many years nightly given her a father's blessing; but for sixteen years of her young life, she had been constantly under his eye, and it is the ties of early life which principally bind a father to his child. Every limb of Pettura's body shook, as he

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looked for, and yet dreaded, the coming hour; and the stormy heavens seemed to prognosticate that his worst fears would be realized.

The world was wrapped in her night's garb; the bats and owls had left their hiding-place, the discordant flapping of their wings sounding against the jutting and irregular wings of the mansion. Again Pettura clasped his hands, and bowed his knees in prayer; he uttered words almost wild from their passionate energy, whilst to his bewildering brain the world seemed darkened, and he fancied he held converse with spirits, which, whether they boded good or evil, he had not power to know. Scarcely could it be termed prayer, the broken exclamations which fell from the Astrologer's lips; they were more the most eloquent outpourings of grief; and yet, with his knees bowed, he continued long, for the lowly posture of genuflexion seemed to express the utter lowliness of his spirit.

Meanwhile, the gentle Clementina had long

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reposed in a slumber which was refreshing, although the sleeper sighed deeply and frequently, even when wrapped in the oblivion which Nature grants to the wearied children of earth. Grief then sung a requiem around her couch, whilst the oppression of illness caused those sighs to heave, which fell drearily from her oppressed chest.

"Did she feel the warm breath which fanned her cheek? Did she hear the deep sigh which surpassed the strength of her own? Did she feel the scalding tear which laved her fair cheek? Did she hear her name pronounced wildly, fondly, uttered from the depths of a doting father's heart? Or was it instinctively that in her slumbers her arms twined themselves round Pettura's neck?

It was the passion of despair which nerved the strain of affection in which her slumbering form was clasped, till that distressing cough fanned the Astrologer's cheek, and he laid her then gently back on her pillow.

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He placed her as carefully as a mother hushes her pretty babe to rest; and he hung around her, wondering if mortality had indeed struck that face of almost marble whiteness. The long lashes were reflected, as in downcast heaviness they fringed the cheek. Then, Pettura seized the lamp, and held it at a little distance from the bed; the dull reflection served only to make Clementina's face appear paler, and he placed it down again, lest his groan of agony should awake the sufferer from her slumbers.

"Shall I wake her?" thought Pettura; "shall I let her know that I am watching, tearfully, by her bed-side; that her cheek is bedewed with my tears? No! rather let her slumber, ignorant that one, far less pure than she is, is now watching her angelic face."

Again the Astrologer found himself within his chamber, and not for the wealth of kingdoms would he have wandered away. He heard the bolt drawn outside his door; and it was a

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welcome sound—it seemed to bind him closer, nearer, to his sick child.

The morning dawned, and, as if to lend a momentary ray of gladness to the faded girl's heart, it dawned in all the purity of the most sunny loveliness; it seemed as if it wished to cheer the heart of the desponding bride.

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CHAPTER III.

"HENRI, my mother died in a consumption." These were words which, in spite of all his assumed lightness, haunted the young Duke's ears. Was it true that Clementina was withering, like the summer flowers droop, too lovely to be seared by autumn's last breath?

Whilst the unhappy Pettura prayed, the Duke was watchful also. A boding fear he could not surmount took possession of his heart, and once or twice he paced up and down his chamber.

He dare not ask himself whether he had re-

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duced Clementina to her present state. All he could wish was for the morrow.

Oh, man, man, canst thou not conceive that the darkness of the night often-times veils sorrow and care in her keeping?

Ah, Henri of Guise wished so ardently for that morning to dawn: but suddenly he starts —yes, upon his ears broke the same hollow cough which had so sorely tried Pettura's feelings. Could that hollow, sepulchral sound, come from the chest of her he loved? He stole softly into the passage—he listened—it was true.

Again, and again, it broke upon the midnight stillness, forewarning the fate of her, so lovely, so gentle.

Henri clasped his hands in agony to his brow; he returned to his room, and after a few moments he left the house.

A walk of some ten minutes brought him to a white house, surrounded by high palings, and situated in an isolated lane

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He knocked, and was admitted; he gave his message to a sleepy servant, and presently a portly, good-humoured-faced man, forty-three or forty-four years of age, stood before him.

"Good Heavens, my Lord Duke! do you feel ill?" said Monsieur Baptiste, with his lowest bow. "You do look very pale."

"Nay, nay, good M. Baptiste; I come not for myself. Is—is—is—Clementina worse?"

The physician turned away his head, whilst a tear trembled in his honest eye.

"Answer my question," said the Duke, in a hollow voice. "Will she—will she die?"

"The disease is often deceptive; very, my Lord."

The disease—what disease? speak, man. Is —is——"

"She is *consumptive*——"

"*Consumptive!* Man, man. Monsieur Baptiste—you mean she *is* in a *consumption*, and she will die. Poor, poor Clementina! But *you* do not say she will die. Perhaps there is

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hope. Perhaps Italy's balmy clime may restore her. Many persons are cured in Italy, Monsieur Baptiste? She is not so very, very bad, is she?"

Alas! the physician knew she was very bad; but tender-hearted most medical men are. They know what sorrow is,—they know that the mind's sorrow is worse than that of the body; they see life waning, and unbelievers they must be, if they asked not where went the soul, wafted from its tenement of clay. Monsieur Baptiste had a keen knowledge of human hearts; he felt that, since Clementina had been taken by the Duke to become his wife, was now the best reparation a dying woman could wish.

It was for this event poor Clementina now prayed, and it was for this event the kind physician continued his exertions, although he felt how utterly past recovery his hapless young patient was.

"I dare not say I can save your affianced

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bride," said Monsieur Baptiste, after a pause; "but——"

"What, in the name of Heaven, is the use of my marrying Clementina, if she is to die?" exclaimed the Duke, stamping his foot on the floor; but the next moment he seemed to read the thoughts which were passing in the physician's heart.

"Ah, yes," he cried, in softened accents, "death will be no punishment to her; she will be far happier than here. I alone shall feel the anguish. Clementina! beloved Clementina! yes, dearly do I love thee; thou shalt be my bride; none after thy death shall have the power of saying 'the Duc de Guise kept thee.' Fear not, good Monsieur Baptiste, I am calmer now. Tell me, I pray, can she not yet live some time longer?"

"She may, perhaps, live longer than we can even imagine," was the reply.

"Thank you, thank you;" and pressing the physician's hands in his, the Duke could add

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no more, but, bowing his head down, tears fell on the hands he held.

The humble village physician never thought to see the proud Duke humbled before him. He felt most painfully affected by the scene, and he vainly endeavoured to change the subject. It was one which had taken complete hold of the young Duke's mind.

"Well, then, to-morrow Clementina will be my bride," said the Duke, looking up, whilst a smile—a strange, sad smile—lighted his features.

"Good night, Monsieur Baptiste—good night—pray for Clementina—good night."

* * * * *

He could not return home, but he wandered forth in the night air. The bats and owls were wandering about: they flapped their wings rudely round him; the young man shuddered.

Not a star was on the breast of heaven; the evening was calm, but dark; it was close, too—no balmy wind fanned his heated brow, no blithesome light guided his steps.

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He returned home, but he did not undress. Oh, what a fearful night he passed! If Clementina sighed for the morning to complete her sacrifice, how anxiously he watched for the sun's earliest rays! He walked forth once more from his chamber, and trod with somewhat more hope the dew-glistening lawns.

Alas! alas! Clementina came not forth as usual; as his fond heart had anticipated.

A fearful crisis had arrived, and, for the first time, the invalid herself felt how near she was to her end. In the exertion of the last night's distressing cough, she had ruptured a vessel, and the sanguinary drops were ebbing from her gentle lips. Her old attendant, with tear-streaming eyes, was propping her in bed, whispering in broken accents her words of consolation.

"She had known consumptive people recover after such catastrophes—the weather was favourable for invalids—perhaps it would relieve her chest—she must not despair."

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Poor Clementina! she did not despair; she was prepared to die. "Not yet, though; not yet," she exclaimed. "Oh my poor father—" she could not add another word until her faded brows were refreshed.

Bidding at length the attendant to throw a large loose robe over her, she begged that the Duke of Guise should be summoned.

"Henri," she exclaimed, smiling sweetly as he entered the room—"Henri, it is the first time you have been in my room. I thought not to send for you myself, but now that we are alone (for the attendant had retired) repeat again your words—injure not my father. I am very, very ill, Henri. Nay, I cannot live long: humour me now; do not be angry with me."

"Angry!" cried Henri, and he approached to encircle her in his arms, but a modest blush covered her pale cheeks; she waved her thin hand so majestically, that he retreated.

"Nay, nay, take not advantage of my illness," she said, rather bitterly. "You would

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not have been here, but for the certainty I feel I cannot live. God knows, I wish to forgive you, but Henri—Henri—you have fearfully embittered my young life. I am young—young to die. I shall care less to leave the world when the rites of the Church have obliterated the shame which remorseless men dare cast o'er my unsullied reputation. Thought you not how dear fame is to a virtuous woman, when you thus took me away from those of my own sex, to abide here your pleasure? And now, hear your sentence. You *must* marry me, if you have one spark of manly feeling left; you *must* and you shall hear my vows! But, Henri, my heart is not, never will, in life or death, be yours!"

Her eyes were upraised; her fair tresses were in beautiful disorder around her shoulders; and so lovely did she look in her wrath, that Henti sank upon his knees.

"Clementina, I dare not ask your forgiveness. I have sinned passing woman's forgive-

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ness; but here, humbled, sorrowful, wretched —I sue for your pity. Let me press you once, only once, to a heart aching as much as your own. Let me pillow upon my breast your throbbing temples."

Clementina wept aloud; for she could not fail, poor dying girl, of being touched by Henri's devotion; yet after a pause, she dried her tears, and again she waved her hand, for her lover was once more approaching.

"I sent not for you for this, Henri; go, leave me; I shall be dressed—dressed in my bridal robe—ere noon. Now repeat your oath, and go; leave me."

And, passive as an infant, the gay Duke dared not disobey that gentle, yet commanding girl. He repeated the words she imposed. Not even by one kiss was his obedience rewarded. Slowly and sorrowfully he left that chamber, seeing too clearly all was lost.

Sad and painful, tediously long, was that bridal toilette. Clementina was too proud to

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kneel in disorder as the Duchess of Guise, and she went through a lengthened process with all the resigned patience and lofty dignity which characterized her.

Painful, too, were her words to her only attendant.

"Thou art but an unhandy lady's-maid, albeit a good nurse. See you not where those once bright ringlets should be placed? There—there—well, never mind; look not awry; though many attendants await me at my ducal castle, thou shalt be my last attendant! Dost understand me? And hark! mind my words: seek my father when the last stroke is placed to my toilette, and tell him his heart would have broken to see me, so I send him my last greeting." The attendant turned aside and wept. "Haste!" cried Clementina, "or I shall faint! Bring the satin dress—bah! how large it is; surely this silver net will hang strangely over it. There, invent some handicraft—stuff me with wool around—do anything! but send me not forth

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such a mummy, for the Duke to repent him of his choice. Gracious! am I to encircle all those diamonds around me? It is at best but a wearisome task."

The old attendant liked not the hilarity of the weak voice, nor the brightness of the eye; she apprehended more than she dared express, and her trembling hands almost refused to proceed. Long and tedious was the manœuvring by which the attenuated ravages of that once faultless form were concealed. But yet it wanted ten minutes to the time for the ceremony, when the veil and orange wreath were brought. Henri had sent for these to Paris, and the sight of the veil recalled the recollection of the one which poor Lorretta had brought into Queen Catherine de Médicis' sitting-room. Once more, and for the last time, Clementina burst into a flood of tears; and amidst that last anguish of the heart, many —many scenes passed in quick succession across her mind: even Poltrot de Méré's form, dying

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as she had seen it last, came to bid the spiritless girl both a farewell and a greeting.

"Never, never wish to be above your station," said Clementina, turning to the old woman; greatness brings care and sorrow. Perhaps now, some merry, blithe-hearted village girl, is so joyously preparing for her bridal morn—and I—I. Ah! I have yet five minutes; bring me that vase of flowers—I will make myself a bouquet!"

It was affecting to see that faded, yet exquisitely lovely girl, wreathing together flowers blooming, whilst she would no more bloom.

"I have always loved flowers," she said, smiling artlessly; "and yet, save that I have scarcely had any girl-like feelings, I have felt prematurely old; and I am tired, yet still unwilling to leave the world. There, my diamond necklace has fallen again; surely it is an ominous sign! You must tie it with a thread, for my thin throat is no support for it."

The hands of the clock now went swiftly

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round: it wanted but two minutes to the time. Alas! prepared as she was, if possible, that sweet face grew paler; and the quivering lips could scarcely part to utter the words still lingering there. She cast her eyes around, as if taking a farewell of her chamber; and suddenly taking her attendant's dry hands in her own, she looked searchingly, earnestly, at her, as she said—

"Hearken to me, faithful, kind-hearted woman. Something within me tells me I shall never, never see my ducal home. You must not let the ill-natured world say what it pleases. You have never left me; and you know that, however I cannot love the Duke, I cannot reproach him of any want of respect and propriety, since he took me from Paris. Testify to this, albeit the rich and the great should dare to speak against my good name. You have been a mother—fancy I am your child."

"And a sweet, and fair, and good child, truly," said the matron, arranging once more the soft tresses. "Fear not; you are not so

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near your end; but fear less to leave your name in my hands. Should Queen Catherine herself tell me to hold my tongue, I would but speak the louder."

"Nay, nay, be not rash, I pray you; believe me, it is no easy task to contend with Catherine de Médicis. It is as easy to bid the Seine turn to dry land, as to bid her vengeance be tarried."

"Poor young lady! I am sure you have suffered; but still, let me tell you, there seems nothing so very dreadful in marrying the Duke. See—see—he is giving directions in the courtyard below; see how his diamond buckles and diamond-hilted sword glisten in the sun's rays! A pity you should not like him."

It was quite useless to explain to the well-intentioned but simple woman, that her love was buried with the dead. She did not, however, go to the window, and the old woman continuing there, Clementina poured out a glass of refreshing medicine, and smiled faintly as

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she looked at the long row of phials on the table.

"Poor Monsieur Baptiste," she said; "if medicine could aught avail, there lacketh no display here. Give Monsieur Baptiste this diamond ring from me. Nay, nay, I hear his voice: call him up—I will speak to him in the next room."

Her nerves temporarily strengthened by the draught she had just taken, enabled her to sustain, with apparent firmness, the conference. She rather gave her opinion than asked her physician's, whilst, laying her tiny hands on her chest, she said—"All, all is written there. Thank you, dear doctor, for all your attention. It must be soothing, in your trying position, to hear it expressed that you have cheered your patient. You have tried all that skill can do, Monsieur Baptiste, but a broken heart has baffled you."

"Dear young lady, who knows? Youth is on your side."

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"And sorrow, and care, and wrong also, kind doctor; you know now you are speaking against your heart. Tell me now, is there anything I can do for you? At all events, wear this as a little remembrance of me; and when I am low, low in the grave, shed a tear to my memory."

Even the grave doctor was struck with the particular expression, almost angelic in its innocent purity. He could not answer the direct questions placed to him, but at that moment the village bells struck up a merry peal.

Clementina turned ghastly pale. "Silly, silly girl," she exclaimed, rallying with a faint smile, "it will soon be over. I beg you will wait here, dear doctor. I am not quite coiffed. I will return to you in a moment, and I will lean upon your arm. I am not strong enough to walk down stairs without support."

The physician only pressed her hand in silent assent, and Clementina retired and rejoined her attendant. "Now, now," she cried, affecting

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a gaiety she did not feel. "Now, good woman, heed well thy occupation, and place the finishing stroke to my bridal array. I will try and adjust the veil myself; but I fear me I cannot. Strange vanity! I fain would look well upon my bridal day."

And, oh, she did look well; she did look surpassingly lovely! those golden-hued ringlets brightly drooping round her snowy neck. It seemed as if for that morning's ceremony all her wonted beauty had returned; not so brilliant, not so splendid, but gracefully, entrancingly lovely. And those sweet lips parted to laugh faintly, as surveying herself, Clementina saw how, by dint of hoops, and the richness of her skirts, looped up with white rose garlands, her slight form had a majestic appearance; but no dress could impart the charming beauty of that expressive countenance, clear, painfully clear, inasmuch as the too vivid rose on the cheeks of lily whiteness told its own tale. Her large blue eyes appeared languidly swimmingly

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in lustre, and the fringy lashes rested in calmest, sweetest beauty on her hectic glowing cheek.

"Now bind the orange wreath round my tresses," she said to the attendant; "I cannot lift my hands so high. How very faint I feel; have you no restorative near you?"

The old woman went in search of one, and Clementina feebly fell on her knees. Her white dress hung in graceful folds around her, and the veil streamed over her form; she buried her face in her hands, and she prayed.

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The splendid carriage, almost equal to the Medicis' newly-built one,* was waiting to take Clementina to the castle of the Duke—*her* home. The servants in their gorgeous trappings were talking in groups in the court-yard. And Clementina knelt at the altar by the side of the young Duke; who, in his superb golden

* Carriages were first in use in France in this reign.

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laced Court dress, with his glittering sword, the hilt all spangled with diamonds, and his Mecklin lace ruffs, was as handsome as a maiden's heart would wish her bridegroom to look.

The Cardinal de Lorraine, in his richest robes, held his gilded book in his hands. His face was pale, and his lips quivered. He turned over the leaves in search of a place he knew well where to find.

Not a sound disturbed the silence of the room which had been fitted up for the occasion. The Cardinal looked round as if he fain would like *something* to occur; anything, save unite that deadly pale bride, who, with hands clasped on her bosom, awaited with a cheerless, unsmiling countenance, the beginning of the ceremony. Lower, and lower, the wreathed head bent on the desk of the high-backed chair; and in a low, solemn voice she uttered the binding vow.

"I *am* your bride now," she murmured in

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the ears of the Duke; "I *am* your *wedded* wife."

The Duke turned round to kiss the fair face which had sunk on his shoulder. He raised the bridal veil; he expected to see a blush, and his eyes met the fixed gaze of a lifeless corpse!

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The midnight hour again approached; it chimed its time dully on the air, and echoed with cheerless, doleful sound on the ears of a fond father, who knelt weeping, beside the couch on which a pale corpse lay, all attired in bridal white. The orange flowers, the badges of a ceremony to which death alone had answered Amen, were still around the glossy tresses. There was a hallowed look about that cold, young face, and no hands seemed pure enough to disrobe it, so there it lay encircled in the trimmings of fashion; and the waxen tapers shed

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their mournful light on it. Lorraine knelt side by side with the Astrologer; he held a crucifix in his hands. At the foot of the bed, nearly as pale as the corpse itself, with dishevelled hair, with up-clasped hands, and tear-streaming eyes, knelt the bridegroom, whose hopes had been defeated, even at the foot of the altar. Not a sound save his own sobs disturbed the stillness of the chamber, for Pettura was too stern in his grief to find relief in tears; whilst Lorraine had more than once knelt by the death-bed of youth and beauty, aad therefore there was calm enough to pray.

Hope there was none! for when death comes, Hope's sunny wings ply elsewhere their gossamer lightness. All felt convinced that Clementina's pure soul was at peace, in the haven of everlasting rest, and yet they prayed; but *not* for Clementina—they prayed for their own sinful hearts.

At length the Duke arose from his knees, and he glided close to Pettura's side; he placed

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his cold hand on his, and he said in faltering accents—"Forgive me! forgive me." For a moment Pettura hesitated; it was an impressive sight to watch the strong man's sorrow struggling with sympathy, and still more affecting to see the young Duke bowing his pride, the inherent pride of his noble family, and speaking in mild grief.

"Thou *art*, thou *wert*, my child's husband, Henri of Guise; let us be friends."

It seemed then as if the spirit of the departed had caught the sound of those words. Henri fancied a smile hovered round his death-stricken bride, and his grief was less agonizing to bear.

At length Pettura too arose from his knees. He pressed his child's face in that last sad farewell embrace which the fond living bestow on the dead, and silently he cut off two shining tresses of those flowing curls: one he placed in his own bosom, the other he handed to Henri.

With passionate tears—with sighs so deep

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that they shook his frame—the Duke seized the treasure; and taking up the cold hand, he kissed it, saying, "let her keep her *wedding* ring."

Deep were the sobs which lulled the death slumbers of Clementina Pettura, as there she lay so pale, but beautiful even in death's grasp. What an awful lesson of the evanescing tenure of all human happiness was this to the young and buoyant Duke! How plaintively soft were the words which he recollected had fallen from the tongue of the now lifeless girl—how she had raised the heads of the drooping flowers—how she had called herself the twin-sister of air. Then the Duke *did* as he had been bidden by her, commune with nature's beauty; and he wandered not alone, for at early dawn Pettura joined him, and their conversation was such as might be expected, drawn from the fount of the same sorrow, which occupied both their hearts.

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CHAPTER IV.

Could the repentance of the living atone to the dead for the injuries or persecution they have too often received in their lifetime, this compensation would often fall to their share. When the cold lips are mute—when the eye is sunken and dim—when the nearest relation would be at a loss to recognise the withered and altered features, then indeed compensation comes too late. Then how often tardy justice is done to the memory of beings to whom justice can no longer bring weal or wo. Statues are raised to the memory of heroes who were sacrificed

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at the shrine of their fellow-men's ambition. Statesmen are applauded, who in their lifetime withered under the opprobrium of following unlawful politics. Poets have effigies and tablets raised to them, and their name is borne triumphantly from mouth to mouth, whilst in their lifetime they vainly mounted their Pegasus.

Thus goes the world, paying more attention to the memory of the dead, than to the comforts of the living.

An author whose volumes in his lifetime slumber in unmolested quietude on the shelves of a bookseller's shop, may assure himself that as soon as he is dead, he will be called a "divinely-souled being," a rival of the productions of Walter Scott, a second Dickens; he will have the pathos of Bulwer, the harmony of a Campbell or Keat; in fact, every author, living or deceased, will form a component part of his merits. In lifetime men hardly give "The Devil his due," but after death they give the

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deceased *more* than his meed, with proper interest for keeping him so long waiting.

Your pardon, gentle readers, for getting in a freer turn, and pardon too to the world, for speaking scoffingly of the justice of its opinions; whilst here my own unworthy production must stand the test of its leniency, and even *after* death *my* Pegasus* may have cantered in vain.

Good patience! what a host of Heathen Gods an author need call to his existence, before he feels a *l'abri descoups du monde;* of what a degree of ultra nervousness must his frame be composed before he can send his Æolian harp to the breeze, and not care which notes the wind will awaken.

"Pro and con." so often change places, that con. is generally the victorious side; and an author may sometimes feel so dispirited at the unfavourable result of a work (judged in his *lifetime,* remember, kind readers), that in dis-

* Vide certain unfortunate Poems.

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burdening his heavily laden brain: and he is tempted to exclaim, with all due humility, "*Peccavi, Peccavi!*" "There is rest in Heaven," says the Latin Poverb (*in cælo quies*); and verily an Author's Allegro begins sometimes after a dull reign of "*Il Penseroso,*" followed by what musicians call "*Dolente ad libitum.*"

For the benefit of those young beings who, like myself, are daring enough to enter the list of "literary *hardships,*" I will tell them what mythological gods come to their Court, when their *mind* "holds a levee." Then, a truce to this long prologue, which (a pity we cannot love our neighbour as well as ourselves) relates too much to "number one." It is strictly classical to begin with Minerva (because an author likes to think his manuscript has found favour with that goddess). Lead her all smiling to a sort of *Hesperian* region (a kingdom of my coining), holding a *beau milieu,* between an Olympus and a Tartarus; your locality is easily

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explained. To lead our Minerva at once to an Olympus would hardly suit her, insomuch that wisdom likes to *pave* her way, not fall (like a colonel raised by promotion,) too suddenly into great happiness.

Tell Minerva that your kingdom is guarded by Hesperides, and that you have golden apples which are beyond your reach, unless she helps you by her wisdom to pluck them. She will shake her head gravely (a type of friends reading your manuscript), and she will tell you that you must have patience. Calliope, Clio, Erato, Euterpe, Melpomene, Polyhynia, Thalia and Urania (namely, Eloquence, Lyric Fancy, Poetry, Tragedy, Mirth, Music, Rhetoric, and Astronomy), are summoned from Apollo's Court to come to your levee. Whilst Minerva talks of patience, *they*, holding up her train, by their inspiring mirth inspire *you* with an irresistible wish of being impetuous, and you thirst for the golden apples. This brings you to the period when your publisher is lei-

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surely reading your work, and forming his well-digested opinions of its merit—you, of course, thinking his wisdom intolerably slow.

Your publisher—(I beg pardon, I forgot I was high in the classics)—your Ulysses of consummate wisdom, having read and *approved* of your manuscript, you fancy you have attained the golden apples. Patience *pas encore.* There are Penates besides guardian ones, and your neighbour's lares are not always your own. The lares of the streets, the towns and countries, are sometimes as unpropitious to you as if they abetted the fabulous sphinx, and your immediate friends warn you of the body of the dog, the tail of a serpent, the wings of a bird, the paws of a lion, concentrated in the human voice—the Public. Minerva is too wise to be hasty, and you suffer heart-aches, and head-aches, and fits of impatience, and sympathetic nervousness, and—*mais c'en est assez,* before your Ulysses produces your work in the glory of *three volumes.* If the Harpies reign, there is next a

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famine in the land, and in the dearth, men want better food than your mental nutriment; they will carry away the provisions from the dainty table of Phineas, but they will not carry off your three pet volumes from the bookseller's shelves.

You are in a sort of Elysium, and you have no Achilles to conduct you to Troy. Ancient heroes would fight to rescue the beauty of their age; but were you, sister authors, as fair as the lovely Helen, there are few Diomedes now who will (at the risk of excommunication from grand-fathers, grand-mothers, great-aunts, and great-uncles, brothers, sisters, and friends, who pronounce your work a pile of insipidity) rescue your writing from oblivion.

Parthenope and her sister Syrens now come to your levee, and they talk in such a melodious voice, that your heart buoys with hope (a new edition with a different title-page in perspective); it seems as if some fairy had touched you with an Orpheus'-wand, making printers,

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binders, and publishers, dance with a *Polka*-toed nimbleness, as they *advertise*, and *admirize*, and raise your work to an Atlas height. Sappho composed nine books, whilst you, without being stimulated to lyrics, epigrams, and elegaics, by the love of Phaon, may now write as quickly as you please. You have earned your reputation, and need not stand on a Leucadia, and perish in the sea. Yet as I before said, if you *are* unsuccessful, as soon as you *die* (oh balmy consolation), Lesbians will rise to pay your memory a Sappho-like tribute; and, instead of money stamped with her image, they will obtain your picture, drawn, of course, just as you were merging into ugliness; because, to have drawn you when you were young, would have made you vain. The famous painter of Rhodes, the persevering Protogenes, slumbered in oblivion, until, at length, Apelles came to Rhodes, and, admiring his productions, the public chose also to admire him.

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Readers, fair young sister authors, this event took place 328 years before Christ. Let us then say that our world is no worse with regard to authors and aspirants to public fame, than it was many long years back.

Now sum up my mythological theory. If you court the poetical deity with her open wings and her blowing trumpet; if you pillow her slumbers with the dreams of the Nine Sisters; if you lave her at the fount where naiad virgins lean on the urn of pure water; if you sing her *réveillé* in a syren's voice; if you lend her the grace of a Thalia, clothing her in liberality, eloquence, and wisdom; if you endow her mind with actions great as the twelve labours of Hercules; if, like Jupiter and Juno's daughter, you make your pet Fame a Hebe of beauty, crowned with flowers, and lightly clad; then to make the *tableau* of your Hebe complete, you must place a vase in her hands; and remember, young authors, that your Hebe's vase will not always be filled with

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the nectar of admiration and triumph; but that a Midas-like portion of attention may fall into the vase, whose proportions are large enough to receive a Phrygian share of corn and wine. The Gorgons had the power of transforming those who guarded the golden fruit into stone, and so the public will not always walk with your work in a Castor and Pollux proximity. Thus, sister authors, the pinnacle on which we stand is not one to be much envied. There are trials of patience, deep and and many to endure. There are some who deem themselves reflected, when the author is not intentionally personal. In fact, thorns arise where the fervid heart of youth has imagined that flowers of Eden-growth are blooming.

Now, farewell; in the words of the song—

"The spell is broken, and we must part!"

part at least on this subject. But to return to my tale.

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CHAPTER V.

General Tavannes, Mariot, and the escort of soldiers had now taken possession of the chateau of the Duke of Guise. The Duke's retainers made a feeble effort to keep their master's premises from invasion; they drew up the portcullis, raised every bolt and bar, until the Jester, fearing that bloodshed would ensue, behaved in a manner which stamped him a second Puss in Boots, or a *first*, perhaps; for from *bien dire*, I do not know if "Puss in Boots" was published in those days. His companion, Mariot, was transformed into a Mar-

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quis of Carrabas, as Joseph, advancing towards the portcullis, blew through a shrill speaking trumpet, his wish of speaking to the head steward, or retainer of the Duke's household. That important personage came bare-headed to meet his very respectable colleague, who thus began a treaty which did honour to a man wearing armour, instead of the fool's bells; or rather, it showed plainly that steel cannot hide a knave."

"My good friend, you are, methinks, the steward of the Duke's household."

"I am," was the answer, with a bow, which would have honoured a Michau's tuition.

"*Pardi!* I should have known it; the Duke, your master, described you so well."

"You come then in amity. Why, then, those armed men? Why come you in so military an array?"

"Simply to represent part of the *corps de garde* of the French King's Court, who intends adding to the splendour of the Duke's ap-

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proaching marriage. We thought the Duke had already arrived from—"

"From where?" said the steward; "for, by all the saints dead and living, we know no more where our young master is, than the man in the moon."

"Perhaps he knows better than you do," said the Jester; who, for all his assumed gravity, could not resist a jest. "Perhaps he knows far better than you; for you must remember that his Majesty of the moon has an extensive view of the haunts of men."

"I thought you just now began telling me where the Duke was."

"I am a dull scholar, and never remember words. I began my sentence, thinking you would perhaps have the goodness to finish it for me. I am something like the cuckoo, who never builds a nest, because it prefers taking possession of that of another bird. *Pardi!* you will find me a merry companion, and we must needs quarter here until the Duke chooses

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to make his appearance, which he will as soon as my master, the great and valiant General Mariot, despatches a messenger in all directions to fetch him home."

"Where is thy master?"

"La! man, thou must be as dull as a calf's head with the brains removed, not to be able to distinginguish a General at a bird's-eye view. Don't you see how heedlessly he holds his arms? He don't care to protect himself, not he; all he cares for is his trusty courser, true Arabia breed; came over from Palestine (if that be in Arabia). The great Mogul, or the the King of the Cannibal Islands, or the Sultan of ——, I forget the name, but some great man, whose grandfather was great before him, rode on it, and at last my master bought it for a great sum of money."

"Your master is a traveller, then?"

"I believe you he is; he has been through Europe, Asia, Africa, and America; he has discovered islands (so he has, on the map,

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thought the Jester). I cannot tell you all he has *not* done; his courage is *surpassed* by his wonderful learning."

No wonder the steward, who was a simple white-haired old man, was touched at the idea of entertaining a guest of such quality. The draw-bridge was raised, the portcullis was thrown widely open, and Tavannes concealed with difficulty a loud burst of laughter, when the Jester pointed to Mariot, exclaiming: "My master, the valiant General Mariot."

Mariot supported himself under this unwelcome introduction; for although this want of truth sadly galled him, he remembered that the fearful odds of a sanguinary rencontre were in the balance.

Marshalled in with all due honour, Tavannes was conducted to be, or thought, a lieutenant in his train; whilst Mariot's unwieldy body received the obsequious bows of the liveried servants who came to receive their master's guest, and a General who had fought in the four

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quarters of the globe. Thus Mariot earned the reputation of a warrior, because he had held a gun, which reminds me of those persons who, touching for an hour the *terra-firma* of Boulogne, talk of having been on the Continent.

Capons, rounds of beef, dishes of all kinds, wine in abundance, huge pasties, were hastily collected; and soon the board groaned beneath the hospitable fare. Mariot ate sparingly, feeling that he was a tacit approver of a falsehood. Tavannes ate abundantly, because he thought "To-day we live, to-morrow we die." Joseph ate till he could hardly move from table, from no philosophy whatever, save that he was hungry, which, after all was the best philosophy; although anchorites, who lose their appetites by long fasts, and the noxious food they take, talk so grandly of the virtue of starving. It is like a man taking the pledge of teetotalism, on the principle that he cannot take wine without the danger of an attack of apoplexy.

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"Bless me," cried Joseph, as he swallowed a large glass of sherbet; "if this is not living on the plan of 'Live well, and keep out the doctor,' I do not know what is. How do you like it, General?"

"Do not speak to me, sirrah."

"Ha! ha! ha! I am blessed if Mariot does not begin to think he *is* the General," said the Jester, in a whisper to Tavannes, who had insisted on his sitting at table with him, which invitation Joseph accepted, saying, "He had often sat down with his brother, the King of France."

"You are hardy, to call the King your brother; you, who are his fool."

"And pray, General Tavannes, (your pardon, General Mariot) what is the difference between the King of France and a fool? He is earning his bells as fast as he well can, whilst I have long worn them. The King is as much a fool already as the eldest son of a Duke is one in idea; insomuch, as he only

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waits with tolerable patience to take his father's place."

"Thank goodness, I have no son."

"And if you had, brave Signor, a Generalship is not hereditary, only catching sometimes." Here Joseph looked at Mariot.

"You are making *maigre, chère,*" he continued, looking at Mariot; "a stranger coming in, to see you look so doleful, would think you were at the expense of the banquet."

"I wish I were; it would be honestly procured," said the man of scruples.

"I am sure it is honest enough, when the steward invited us in, and the servants wait upon us so submissively."

"Monsieur Mariot means he would rather have had a fight and earn the repast, *par conquête de guerre,*" said the General.

"I—I—I am not very hungry," replied poor Mariot, swallowing a tart at a mouthful, which exertion brought on a severe fit of coughing, which threatened to deprive him of the

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power of again performing such a dexterous feat.

"Ha! ha! ha! the enemy's food is too hard for your honest heart, Monsieur Mariot. I never knew before that a wise man's mastication and digestion were so bad. What is the reason of it, General Tavannes?"

"I suppose the tart did not savour classically."

"No! I dare say not," said Joseph; "there were not sufficient ingredients to compose the whole pasty; and one part of speech wanting, makes it go down the wrong way. Take a glass of wine, Monsieur Mariot, and I will pledge you, and all such valiant Generals, who sit at home, reposing from their warlike toils, after winning their laurels."

"I have not won any," said Mariot; "you know I have not."

"More silly you; the conquest was easy enough; there were laurel bushes in abundance, and you might have plucked a few leaves here

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and there, as types at least of a martial promenade. What is the use of being so extremely scrupulous? When Princes are little boys, and they go and shoot, the game-keeper strews dead birds in their way, and the young Royalists will sometimes fancy they *have* shot them, until they persuade themselves it is the truth."

"I never persuade myself that a falsehood is veracity."

"Oh, no, I am sure not," said the Jester, rather nettled; "you know champagne from '*vin ordinaire*;' but you drink the latter *moderato* in company, and the former *con gusto e spirito*, when no one is near."

Mariot did not swallow champagne or *vin ordinaire*, but he was forced to swallow the insinuation.

It is curious to think how free men can sometimes make of their neighbours' goods. Notwithstanding Mariot felt as ill-placed in the chateau of the Duke as a cat would be chained to a dog's kennel, still he found the smooth

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bed prepared for his Generalship, far better than he imagined an encampment outside the portcullis would have been; and, if it be right to pray for peace, Mariot certainly prayed so fervently, that had he been kneeling on Roman ground, the gates of the Temple of Peace might have had a chance of having their rusty gates opened. With an Ode to Peace yet trembling on his lips, Mariot slept. So much for the exalted courage of a General!

As to Tavannes, he was so accustomed to take castles by *storm*, that to have comfortable quarters in one, without even loading a gun, was such an extraordinary freak of fortune, that he laughed heartily at the adventure; thinking that when the blows came, it would be like dessert after dinner, from which he could abstain without feeling better or worse. At the same time he enjoyed, beyond measure, the facetious jokes of the King's jester, and owned that though "the tongue is a little member," Joseph had found his particularly serviceable,

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since it had better contributed to open the gates of a castle than any force of arms.

"What a beautiful place it is," exclaimed Tavannes, surveying the rich tapestry on the walls, and the beautifully carved oaken ceiling.

"How beautiful the mouse thinks the wired palace, with its tempting bait," said Joseph. "I wonder if that poor timorous Mariot will sleep?"

"Why, you do not think we are in any particular danger just now, do you?"

"Not now, oh, no; I am sure the steward looks honest enough, and he is sensible too. How soon he recognised that he was speaking to a gentleman."

"What! dost call thyself a gentleman?"

"Of course I do! The moment a man has shaken hands with a gentleman he is one himself. Your Generalship has only to shake hands with me, and you may style yourself one directly!"

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"I have shaken hands with less honest men."

"I don't know that; you do not call thieves honest men?"

"But you are not a thief, merry fool!"

"Your pardon, for contradicting your sapient wisdom, which flows almost as glibly as Mariot's, only it is all spoken in one language. Your pardon, I am a desperate thief. I steal time as if it belonged to me; whilst it is neither yours, mine, nor the King's, nor any one's. It belongs to every one, and to no one; and I rob my Royal brother of the portion of it his lady mother calls his own, when, instead of learning politics, His Majesty is listening to my wisdom. I rob authors, too, the same as I rob Mariot of his Latin. I tell him, all donkies feed on the same fodder; and if I were not sometimes munching from the same nettle-bush, *ma foi!* Mariot might prick up his ears and refuse to own a brother."

"You *ought* to be proud of such a General, Joseph!"

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"Yes, he has retired, overwhelmed with honours, like the chevaliers who feel their golden *eperons* rather too heavy to bear. But let me tell you, General, that Mariot is about as brave as many a man of pigmy courage who keeps hovering round an army, giving plenty of commands, and reserving the privilege of flying all to himself. I would rather be a soldier, than some of the chevaliers who earn a golden fame. The trumpet which sounds one man's praise never cares if its shrill note speaks against another. A less honest man than Mariot might follow up the game and be called a General in good earnest; therefore he is doubly a fool, an eccentric fool, wishing to be honest whilst all the world are the contrary."

In such conversation as this the evening passed, and at length Joseph found that his liberal potations were making him more sleepy than merry. At his request he was shown to a sleeping apartment, and there he reasoned much to this effect—

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"*L'habit fait l'homme;*" and if I prefer the saying in French than in English, my dear countrymen acknowledge that you prefer the *tournure* of *à l'habit Français;* there, then, especially, "*l'habit fait l'homme.*" I remember reading, or rather learning, during my school days, some admirable verses addressed, "*A mon habit.*" I cannot now remember their versification further than they *begin*—

> "Oh mon cher habit,
> Comme je te remercie;"

which is as bad as when nurses drawl forth—

> "On the tree top
> The cradle will rock,"

and leave off the moment the child whom they are nursing falls to sleep. At least, however, I will claim the premium over the nursery genius, inasmuch as I perfectly remember the substantial meaning of the lines, namely, that

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such is man's blind folly, that the man of genius was lost until the dexterous hand of his tailor transformed him into a man of fashion. Then he recounts the unexpected success he met with, thanking his coat in due form, and ending each verse with a praise *to cloth*. Poets have written to ladies' lips, to ladies' faces; they have written sonnets to birds, sonnets to flowers, sonnets to faithful dogs, and sonnets to faithless lovers; but to write to broad-cloth, no *lady* poet would be guilty of such *broad* poetry. *Mais l'habit fait l'homme* is as trite as it is old; and how much the gay and gallant ones they admire are indebted for grace to their coats, they would laughingly think of, if they had perused that amusing little sketch. The idea of recommending a poem, and forgetting its author, is very much like the fox saying the grapes were too sour, whilst they are pendant and beautiful above his head. The words of the poem are hovering round my lips; and as I cannot recollect them, I am tempted to follow

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the example of the cunning fox, and say, "The poem was not *worth* remembering."—(Behind the scenes—which will serve for reynard and myself—it was very beautiful.)

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CHAPTER VI.

Mariot and Tavannes held a long conversation the next day, to take into consideration the next movement they were to adopt. It was worse than useless to call the Jester to the parley; for he was so pleased with his own wit, in having gained admittance to the castle, and so intoxicated with the liberty they enjoyed, that he would not hear of leaving it. One plan was formed, and then another; but still no certain one was taken, for Mariot seemed almost bewildered; and even his Latin citations seemed to have taken their flight elsewhere.

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Poor Mariot! how he longed to be safely in his snuggery, instead of the castle of the Duke. He felt hungry and could not eat; he was almost as bad as the crane, who was invited to a sumptuous feast, but found his bill would not contain the food.

It was noon: the beautiful grounds of the chateau, watered by the meandering Seine, invited the lovers of harmony to court its delvy groves. A bright sun glowed in the horizon; all was so beautiful, but Tavannes and Mariot felt in an uncomfortable situation, and could not admire the works of Nature, whilst uncertainty hung over their steps. Suddenly the martial ear of Tavannes, so practised in the sounds, heard the trampling of horses, far off in the distance.

"If that be the Duke," he said to Mariot, "he comes very slowly. I know so well the paces of horses, and now——. How pale you are, man; it is no use dallying; call the men," he said to an officer who stood in the room;

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"we will go and meet the Duke. We can shake hands in the open air and deliver our King's message, or, if needs be, we have more chance of retaking the fair Clementina there by his side."

Mariot trembled in every limb, and he longed to secrete himself in the castle, but he had not the courage, or cowardice (which word is best?) to utter his wish. Before he actually had collected himself, he was on horseback by Tavannes; and the latter, seeing his companion was as pale as a spectre and as silent as an Egyptian mummy, now took upon himself the control of the little band.

Presently the trampling of the horses appeared nearer; but to a less experienced ear than Tavannes' it was plain they came slowly. Then a soft, but very mournful music, broke upon the air.

"The Duke's taste for music is all in the melancholy style," whispered the Jester.

"Silence!" said Mariot, imperiously; and

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Joseph knew not why, but this time no jocose answer rose to his lips.

Still, on the balmy air that plaintive strain was heard, and from a thicket of trees, which skirted either side of the picturesque road, a most impressive sight met the gaze of Mariot and his band. The Duke's troops advanced, followed by his servants, their arms reversed, and their pace slow, whilst the Cardinal de Lorraine, bareheaded, walked before a coffin carried on men's shoulders, and covered with a snowy cloth, on which was placed a wreath of orange flowers. The young Duke of Guise held a handkerchief to his weeping eyes, and Tavannes had time to sign to his men, who retreated immediately at a rapid gallop.

All left; all save one chevalier, clad in armour, and wearing a closely-drawn vizor. This chevalier was of small stature; he bounded nimbly from his horse, and running towards the coffin, threw himself on it with a piercing cry.

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The Duke, in a hoarse voice, exclaimed—"How dare you touch the coffin?"

"Henri of Guise, do you not know me?" said a soft and plaintive voice.

Henri approached; he drew up his vizor, and exclaimed—"Good Heavens, it is Marguerite of Navarre!"

"Ay, ay, I asked Mariot to bring me to you, and he would not. He knows not what an afflicted woman can do. I am weary, I am faint—this heavy armour sits uneasily on my frame, take me into your castle and then hear my prayer."

The Duke drew down her vizor, lest the curious should see the bold and indecorous step the young Queen had taken, and he approached the portcullis of his castle.

"Your pardon, my liege," said Mariot, offering his sword to the Duke; "I came here to do the King's bidding—to return to him with—"

"Man, man, utter not her name; I cannot

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bear it. Do you think an earthly king should have made me surrender my treasure—my pearl of precious price? There she lies, there, as I point to that coffin; there, there, is all that remains of my beautiful bride! But she *was* my bride; and let any one speak disparagingly of her if they dare. Now go thee back, Mariot, and tell the King that next time I see him, I shall come to lay my bride in her grave; she shall slumber where my ancestors slumber, and every respect shall be paid to her memory."

"Had *you* not better return to your Royal brother," said he, turning in a whisper to Marguerite.

The young Queen paused. Henri of Guise *had* been married, but he had no longer a bride; surely it was not proper for her to linger after that. She left the Duke's arm, and she approached Mariot, who started when he heard the words—

"I am the Queen of Navarre; take me back with you."

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"Henri of Guise, promise me one thing," she said, whilst tears gushed from her beautiful eyes; "promise me that I shall see Clementina's remains consigned to her last rest."

"She loved you well; yes, yes, I promise it; and now farewell. If you are unhappy, do not despair; it is death alone which sends away hope. Think of those who are far less happy than yourself—think of me."

"Ah, Henri! it is woman, fond, trusting woman, who feels real unhappiness under sorrow. Men have so many things to occupy their attention; it is to woman belongs weeping; tears, warm, deep, passionate man can forget."

She said no more, but pressing Henri of Guise's extended hand, she followed Mariot, who had neither courage or inclination to reprimand or wonder, for the Princess's scalding tears fell on her steel-gloved hand.

"Poor little Queen!" thought Mariot; "how soon her summer's mirth is changed to winter

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sadness. How changed are her feelings which so lately had a child's buoyancy. Oh, sorrow! thou vast heirloom of mortality, thy bitter hand spares neither the young nor the beautiful; thou art not a slave, going or coming at any-one's bidding; thou canst pierce the palace wall, or thou canst find a dwelling-place in the cottager's lowly dome. Happiness fleets as a bright midsummer dream, and happy indeed are those who embark on a sunny lake with the full conviction that its still waters can be changed into a tempestuous sea; that the skies may be obscured, and the dark surges may roar.

Yes! happy are those who amidst prosperity, know and feel that a night can set, a cloudy night, when no star can guide the bark of human hope to the sunny shore of happiness.

The young Queen of Navarre recalled all the sweet and holy converse she had held with Clementina; and no wonder her tears flowed at the recollection, that her pure spirit had now left the earth.

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"Monsieur Mariot," she said, in a sweet and solemn tone, "it is passing strange that some persons do not believe in a future happiness. How could I bear the troubles of life, if I directed not my thoughts to a higher world?"

"But if those unhappy persons are prosperous, have you ever reflected, young Queen, how little they can enjoy even this life, which they blindly believe is the highest point of bliss?"

"I never thought of this before; but it is a wise observation. It is so sweet to be grateful for any favour received; but how doubly sweet when the soul is raised in thankfulness to our great Creator!"

"Beautiful thought!" replied Mariot, surveying with pious rapture that young and enthusiastic countenance. "May your Majesty ever preserve a lasting foundation of religion, built on a rock which cannot be driven away by the eddy of the wind."

"Alas! alas!" replied the Queen, "I some-

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times feel most strangely wavering; my temperament is so extremely impulsive, that ways and means are secondary when I obtain my end."

"Impulse is often the daughter of imprudence," said Mariot; "and those hearts, especially young hearts, who follow blindly the impulse of their feelings, will often take a most fallacious view of the world. *Their* hearts are warm and glowing, and they erroneously fancy they can inspire others with the same enthusiastic throbbing."

"You are right," said the Queen; and the warm blood mounted to her face, although none could see her blushing face, which was concealed by her vizor. "You are quite right, Monsieur Mariot," she continued; "it was my impulse which led me to *ask* you to let me accompany you to the Duke; you refused, and then impulse summoned the imprudence of which you spoke, and I wilfully followed my way, at the risk even of reputation. I shall re-

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member, for the future, that an impulsive mind makes an imprudent woman."

"Not always." said Mariot, who had been thinking deeply; "I think the argument between right and wrong will often bear a medium. Impulse, when guided by reason, when checked, when pruned of its wild impetuosity by a strong mind and a well-regulated heart, will lead to deeds of virtue and undaunted courage."

"Is it courage to sit at home, and not dare the shafts of the lightning which are playing around the head of the beloved object of our affections?"

"There is courage in resignation! You could not ameliorate the condition of your Royal husband; and your Majesty must know that affliction would be doubly felt by him if it were shared by a being brought up in such luxury and attention."

"And so *he* must suffer alone!" said the Queen, passionately. "Oh, Clementina! had I

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only thy calm frame of mind! had I only thy pious resignation! Are the spirits of the dead suffered to hover around us, Monsieur Mariot?"

"It is a question, I ever think, our finite reason hardly dares answer. The idea that departed spirits look down in compassion on their kindred is very prevalent, but yet I often think that were hardly the consummate bliss of a spirit at peace."

"Nor I," said the Queen. "Supposing—which, alas! I fear me is too likely to come to pass—supposing I am tossed on a sea of affliction, and that sorrow be my lot, oh! then how grieved a kindred soul would be to see me sink in grief, or fall into temptation. Mariot, I can hardly believe now that the spirits of the departed look down upon us."

"I consider the idea very allegorical! When we are inclined to sin, and we recal the sweet voice of a friend who is dead, but who, were the body still on earth, would give us the

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strongest advice to the contrary course—when the recollection of departed virtue restrains us from committing evil, then we figuratively say—'The spirits of the departed are hovering around us.'"

In such conversation as this, the time wore away; and the young Queen scarcely feared to meet the angry glance of her mother, so much had her communion with Clementina's departed worth strengthened her heart. Thus, even after death, a virtuous life is beneficial to the hearts of the living!

"Mother, mother, be not angry with me," cried the young Queen submissively, whilst she related the mournful journey she had had.

And Catherine was *not* angry; she was inwardly pleased and proud to imagine that the same daring spirit which was in her character, existed in the lovely young Queen's heart. *She* did not, like Mariot, tell her to avoid the erring impulse of woman's heart; she did *not* tell her that to depart from the barrier of so-

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ciety, is unfeminine unless very peculiar circumstances oblige a woman so to act. She did not say that her daughter's flight had caused many surmises, and might already have reached the ears of Henri of Navarre; but she left the Royal bride to the rest she so much needed.

Then, for the first time, the conviction that she had no mother to care for her spiritual welfare came across her mind. Her dreams were scarcely less distressing that night than those which hovered round the pillow of the Duke, as, starting up from his hasty slumbers, he threw his arms frantically on the coffin with its wreath of flowers, which was in his room. There, then, was his bride in her castle home, of which he had so often temptingly spoken; there, then, she lay, his wedded bride—wedded, and then clasped in death's arms. Awful lesson of the mutability of Earth's happiness!

All those who had known Clementina, shed a tear over her remains, when, according to the wish of Henri of Guise, she was buried with

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the honour due to a Duchess. Yet Pettura insisted that her own name should be inscribed on the sculptured urn; for, to call her a Duchess, would not better speak her worth. A simple wreath of orange blossoms, entwined with roses, was also there engraven; and there, beneath the cold sod, was buried "youth, beauty, and worth." Those sweetly-tinged flowers, the "*Fleures Immortelles*," were profusely scattered round the turf.

Low, almost lying on the sward, the imposing-looking, and handsome Pettura, uttered a last and fond farewell to the only earthly object of earthly mould he had to regret.

According to her own expressed wish, the Queen of Navarre, clad in sables, her head covered with a thick crape veil, also assisted in at the ceremony. When the coffin was slowly borne into the church; when the many wax-lights reflected dimly on the black drapery around; when the Cardinal de Lorraine, he who had lately wedded a bride, uttered the

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solemn burial service of the dead, oh, then, scalding tears fell down her fair cheeks; and these were the *last* tears Marguerite shed as purely, and for so good a cause.

No more will I speak of her. I have loved to twine around her a wreath of youthful attractions. I have delighted in portraying the *élans* of her young guileless heart. History has, and too justly, blackened her character. Coquettish vanity succeeded to a moderate admiration of her really lovely person; pique succeeded to trust; levity to buoyancy. Alas! she had worse faults. Let History record them; and then, if my readers please, let them own it is time to leave a picture of virtue ere it be spoiled with vice.

A wonderful change took place in the Astrologer's mind. He did not reproach the Médicis for her ungrateful conduct towards him, but he positively refused to see her.

Some years afterwards he entered a strict monastery. His dark luxuriant hair was cut

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close, and the monk's cowl replaced it. He performed every penance—he followed every fast which the Church enjoined. His knees were very frequently bowed in prayer. If ever his thoughts strayed towards human creatures, they hovered not towards the Court of the Médicis, nor towards the home where he had spent long days and sleepless nights, in the vain wish of acquiring a knowledge of a futurity which is wisely cased from the human eye. But he suffered his thoughts to dwell on that dear child of his warmest affections, who slumbered at rest and at peace! How often he fancied he felt her arms entwined round his neck. How often he fancied he heard her voice speaking her own flowing Italian language! A new life, new hopes, new thoughts, swelled Pettura's heart, and he looked back on the wasted hours of his life with deep regret, but with a firm hope of forgiveness. Oh! that men would not require to be so severely chastised before they return to their allegiance and submission towards God!

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Who would have known the once proud man, humbled, self-reproaching—subdued in every feeling? ever bowed in prayer, those knees, which had so long refused to bend—ever parted in praying words, those lips, which had never before so much prayed?

If Clementina appeared to his view, she seemed no more to reproach—she whispered some mystic words of forgiveness; the fancied words sunk calmly and balm-like upon his affrighted ears, until at length the proud man was resigned—resigned to trust, hope, and await God's commands to return to a purer existence.

And that stern man remembered so many sweet recollections, as daily he returned to the same monotonous round of life. To his lofty, though erring mind, the monastic life was indeed a punishment. And what was now the Astrologer's dearest delight? Ay, he sometimes smiled at his own childishness—he took such a keen pleasure in recalling days so long, long riven

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that it was like hailing spectres from another world.

Sometimes he was wandering, in thought, in his own native land; Italia's sweet balmy sky was shining over him; voices so richly toned, saluted his ears; and the mother so long slumbering in death, his own Italian mother, was in the picture; and he was wandering in grounds bathed by the flowing waves of the river; he was straying amidst vineyards; orchards were before him, pines and grapes, rich and lustrous, overhanging his head. And then the scene changed.

The first ambition of his boyish days returned. He delighted then in purer studies; but alas! boyish ambition was succeeded by the ambition of power; he was introduced to the Italian Princess, and the crafty Catherine de Médicis became a dupe to his ambition, whilst he helped to feed the fuel of her own. Then, passions deep and unconfined arose, like whirlwinds in their fury; they scorched the

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soil of the heart, they preyed upon every vital spot of the mind; there they were, like fuel ready to be lighted upon every opportunity, tyrannically burning every better feeling. Now, now, all was changed; but sweet Clementina had been the sacrifice, ere that heart returned to its duty. Pettura felt that the poor maiden's death had recalled him to life.

To life! Yes; as sinners *do* feel they will be forgiven, no matter the difference between Protestants and Roman Catholics—in that we are agreed. It is the good man's belief; it is the sinner's hope; it is the anchor—the pilot to steer the benighted heart.

Oh, blessed forgiveness! like the rainbow, so sweetly reminds us of a lasting promise. There is a time when the repentant sinner *feels* he will be forgiven; there is a time when the sinner's prayers become less confused, and the throbbings of his heart less violent.

After indulging in retrospective views, poor Pettura clasped his hands together; he lifted

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on high his tearful eyes, and he felt he was forgiven.

The King of France still continued on a sick-bed, and some historians say that the most revolting remedies were tried, but without success. If they tell truly, we are informed that Charles was bathed in the blood of infants, who were born dead, in the hope of sustaining his perishing frame. The tidings of peace in the kingdom never wafted by his tossing couch, for the Massacre of St. Bartholomew was productive of no good effect. Instead of crushing the Calvinists, the horrible, the appalling Massacre, rendered them stronger, or rather made them furiously angry against their opponents.

Oh! how vain of weak man to raise his hand to annihilate a religion, which the Almighty stamps with his protection! The Duke d'Anjou had now the command of the army, and in 1573 the celebrated siege of Rochelles took place—a siege which will ever be memorable. Women and peasantry, artisans, the peaceful labourers

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of the field, all ranks of men there formed a soldiered band. Then the year 1574 dawned; the winter was succeeded by balmy, joyous Spring. Summer approached; the white blossoms of the trees lay scattered on the ground, and were replaced by the genial clustering fruit, and Charles the Ninth was dying.

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CHAPTER VII.

To die with the consolotary voice of a good conscience whispering peace to the parting soul, is no doubt a blessed exit from this world of wo; and yet a good man feels the pain of dying. To die with sin gnawing at the vitals of the heart; to see phantomed visions of murdered victims; to hear the shrieks of the dying, to live mentally in a range of impassioned remorse—oh! terrible passage of the soul to the threshold of eternal life! No angelic forms hover round the couch of sin; no angels sing

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their gentle numbers; they dare not say, "Sister spirit, come away."

Oh! for the agony of the mother of that Royal youth, who, at twenty-four years of age, in the first green blush of manhood, was dying—dying in bodily and mental anguish. Could any one, to have seen the haughty Médicis' hands clasped in anguish—could any one, after gazing at her pallid brow, have believed that she would ever again be the all-political, all-dark, Regent-Queen? Yes, she shook off a grief, which was so natural to a woman; that woman a mother. She wiped away the cold drops which gathered on the Royal youth's brow; she pillowed higher the sinking head, and then she spoke in the dying ears—Oh! horrible—not a mission of heavenly purport, not words fit to marshal a soul to its new and glorious abode. Her words were deep and solemn, but they were all earthly, all selfish. "Charles, if you have ever loved me," she said, "Leave not the earth without making a

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more binding arrangement; it is for the public weal I desire the Regency."

"Mother, mother, that will be when I am dead."

"My son, we must all die once."

"But oh! my soul is so troubled, so disquieted; I am so unhappy, so unfit to die! Can you give me no comfort?"

"We will talk of that anon; sign the Regency Bill first."

"Are you sure the people will like it? What pain I am suffering! pillow me up higher; moisten my parched lips. Now call Lorraine; call Mariot."

"You had better sign first."

"No, no, no," cried Charles, "let me pray. But I am a sinner! Mother, heard you that dreadful shriek?"

"No, my son, all is still, all is quiet; you hear the soft summer wind, wafting the lilac and laburnums close to your chamber window. All, all is still."

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"It is *not*," said Charles. "Hark! dost call that the wafting of a tree? It was Coligny's dying shriek—it was, it was—"

"My son, it is my voice you hear; none is near to harm you."

"None near!" said Charles, with a bitter laugh; "there are spirits; dark, ugly spirits, all around me. Coligny is first in the throng. Oh, why was I not more wise, mother? Why was I so sinful?"

"Peace, my son; peace to your sorrowful heart. You have naught to reproach yourself with; I alone am to blame."

"I might have silently allowed the massacre, but I had the weakness to fire—to slay with my own hands—and now—now, I am dying. No scalding tears can erase the dark spot from my soul; no repentance can aught avail; for repentance may sing a bitter requiem, yet it cannot recall those injured martyrs to life. Pray, mother, pray; though it be too late, yet prayer is the food of the dying soul. My eye

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cannot rest on you; it is dim, and an impenetrable film is crossing the line of light; the sun seems veiled in darkness, and darker is my soul. Mother, mother, pray—"

* * * * *

"Time is waning, Charles; the light of life is extinguishing. Would you leave your kingdom all distraught? Others were *my* sins; this would be *yours*. Sign the Regency Bill; give me the charge of the kingdom; your soul will be easier."

"Will it?" cried the poor weak youth; "give me the paper—guide my hand—I cannot see. Now it is done, *will* you not pray? No, no, you shall not pray. Call Lorraine—haste—call him!"

* * * * *

Long and deep were Lorraine's prayers; convulsive were Mariot's sobs: they caught the attention of the dying King.

"Come here, my faithful Mariot; let me pillow my head on your breast; and let my heart

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cease to beat whilst it is on your own so quickly throbbing. Press on my pallid brow the last kiss of affection. Oh! that I had listened to thee!"

"Hope, trust; rely on a merciful Providence."

"Alas! alas!" said Charles.

"Alas, for all the sins of mankind," said Mariot; "but, thanks to the forgiving One above, who has pardoned sinners as deeply stained as thou."

"Blessed words," murmured the dying King; "and bless thee, faithful Mariot, for uttering them. Farewell now, my life is waning. Mother—Mariot—a long, a last farewell!

The head sunk heavily on Mariot's breast; and for a moment the latter thought the Royal youth had expired; but once again he spoke.

"Lorraine, when I am no more, cause masses to be said for the rest of my soul Oh, Mariot, I am in torture!"

"Where is the seat of your pain?"

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"Where? In the brain—in the soul—on every waning vital spark. No sinner ever felt worse remorse. I—"

No more words could the Royal youth utter. A few hard and agonizing struggles, and Charles the Ninth's soul had gone to the last rest of the departed.

* * * * *

Hark! hark! There arose a wild, an awful-sounding scream—the cry of a mother, who now for the first time believed that there was no more hope. That cry, proceeding from the Médicis' lips, was shrill—it was the wail of an erring and hopeless spirit: it was such a cry as we should utter over the dead, if we had not the blest assurance that "there is life beyond the grave."

Yes, whatever has been said of Catherine de Médicis, there was a deep root of maternal pride in her heart, which necessarily filled it with at least a shadow of that purest of all feelings—maternal love. It has been extolled by

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poets, that feeling, surpassing all other in its exquisitely beautiful refinement. But poets are too rapturous in their ecstasies—they dazzle more than they convince. Maternal love, as a general, lofty feeling, is less beautiful than when it is individualized. The roaring lion tames his nature, and loves his little ones. The actual feeling of loving a child *is no virtue whatever*—it is an inherent impulse implanted in the human breast. But when a mother enters into all the imaginations of her child, until confidence, love—pure, unutterable love—unites them—when the love *is* passing general extol, it is *then* it is beautiful. This feeling had never entered Catherine de Médicis' ideas. She had much maternal pride, but no sweet, dear, maternal love; her children knew how ambitious, how imperious, how searching she was—they obeyed her as every one seemed to obey her—not from love, but from the sway of a voice, manner, and will, seeming formed to command. But death is so

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different to any other stroke. No sooner was Charles's poor suffering frame cold and still, than the Queen merged into the woman—she buried her face in the rich velvet coverlet, and she wept.

Yet scarcely were those tears the same as other mourners shed; she repined rather than regretted. She felt astonished that children should be taken before their parent; she felt dissatisfied with the just dispensations of Providence; but that unruly heart never asked —"Where, oh, where, had the bright soul flown?"

The question would have been salutary.

Catherine would have next inquired—

"Whither her own soul would have gone?"

But more Queenly, and more majestically, proudly-beautiful, the Médicis arose from her meditation—or rather with her self-argument, for it all ended in this cold sophistry.—

That since all men must die, *she* should en-

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joy, whilst she might, the passing hours of life!"

* * * * *

The day—that most solemn day—arrived, when the corpse is placed in the coffin; and although the mother withdrew to a distant part of the Palace, still the melancholy sound of preparation was heard. A mother's ear alone could have detected it. Yes, yes! the mother thought her once blithesome son was being lifted up and placed in his coffin. She remembered the once untameable spirits, and all his youthful glee; but after one effort—an effort, alas! but too successful—a glow once more visited her cheeks. Strange-hearted woman!

* * * * *

And upon the air, hark! hark! there is a sound! meaning—sad—lonely! Hark! the dismal peal! it is for Charles the Ninth's burial. Poor, unhappy, monarch! Mafiot had once had bright expectations, but when he saw his hopeful pupil firing at the Huguenots, what

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must have been his feelings? Now, remorse and sorrow were too late: the grave had closed over his faults. No more could the disconsolate tutor hope, and the vision he formed of the future seemed only to augment his tears.

Deeply, solemnly, tolled the deep-toned bell: the sound is echoed afar on the balmy air; the fragrant lilac bends in the luxuriance of its beauty; the upsoaring lark utters her notes of love; the gay children of earth spread their heads to the breeze; all is tranquil, save the troubled hearts of men, whilst Charles the Ninth's corpse is borne by the sable-clad retainers, and the nodding black plumes tower high.

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Deeply, solemnly, still tolled the deep-toned bell. Did it tell that a soul was at peace? Did it seem to say, high up in the haven of Eternal happiness Charles the Ninth's soul is

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wafted? Away with the sad inquiry! He *was* a sinner, but we know that He who reads the heart has sometimes forgiven sinners crimson-stained.

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Deeply, solemnly, tolled the deep-toned bell. Did its mournful pathos speak salutary words to the ambitious heart of Catherine de Médicis? She sits in the embrasure of a window overlooking the lovely gardens of the Louvre; she is clad in the deep trappings of sorrow; her face, pale and tearful, is hidden in her hands. She hears that bell, and she feels that Death has been near, quite near. Yet a few days more and she is *too* calm, *too* much the same as usual. She is no more the weeping mother; she is again "Catherine de Médicis."

Henri the Third, successor to his brother, is still in Poland, and the Queen is once more Regent. Her hatred to Henri of Navarre is declared; she meets him no more with well-

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feigned pleasure; she has no more need to dissemble, for, aided by the assistance of the British Queen, the King is advancing towards Rouen.

There are few persons who have a moderate share of information, who will not discover, that whatever grave faults they may find in my fiction, they will at the same time see, that I have endeavoured to rein in with veracity historical facts.

At this period, then, it is well to leave off talking of France, as it is *not* my wish to enter into the subject of the Wars of the League. The lovers of the reign of Henri Quatre must also be acquainted with that of the less significant Henri III., his predecessor. And now for a few reflections on Catherine de Médicis.

Let us view this very beautiful woman in every possible light; the shades of vice predominate, and the youngest novelist who has had the boldness to give her opinions of her charac-

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ter, *dares* not palliate one part of her principles, lest she herself should be accused of loving vice. She was a woman, but she had a masculine understanding; and the softness she could sometimes assume made her only the more dangerously attractive. She was not Queen by right, but the Regent of the kingdom, and the Royal mother of a youth, who, in better hands, might have lived in glory and died in peace. She was doubly culpable, because she was doubly responsible. Charles the Ninth was a great encourager of arts and sciences; and although his excessive love of the chase necessarily hardened him, and prevented his giving much time to literature, yet History records that he sometimes bent his mind to the *harmony* of poetry. Poetry, methinks, speaks so softly to the human heart; it can so lull the passions; but the Médicis' voice was louder than the plaintive Muse.

Mariot, the learned translator of Plutarch, was not suffered to slumber in oblivion; the

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King had him created First Almoner of the kingdom, and never forgot his services as his much-patient preceptor. Perhaps the truest tears of regret shed over his memory fell from Mariot's eyes; for the reflective mentor of his deceased pupil, must then have recalled that Charles had the seeds of knowledge engrafted in his heart, which might have been productive of the sunniest fruit.

Charles the Ninth's early death, his keen sufferings in his last agony, his short, but eventful reign, are indeed reflective truths of the baneful influence of listening to bad advice. That mother's voice, who spurred him on to level his gun at the flying Huguenots, had planted a poisoned dagger in her son's heart.

Perhaps in early life she had held that son on her knee; he had looked up to her in the trusting confidence of infantine love, little thinking that she would close the dying eyes of a despairing sinner.

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Blessed and good are the counsels of those who have the moral courage to tell us of our faults. Wise are we when we follow their advice. The type of a true, a disinterested friend, is what? "*Sincerity.*"

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CHAPTER VIII.

When the King had breathed his last sigh—when his erring soul was wafted to that bourne, to meet punishment or forgiveness, but alas! to find repentance too late—then arose a doleful cry—such as a faithful mastiff utters over the grave of the master he has so truly loved. It was Joseph—the poor fool Joseph—lamenting his master's death.

There he had remained in an adjoining anteroom to that in which the dying King lay; there he had heard each low moan; and when the last—the very last—was uttered, he turned

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himself towards the very Regal chamber, my
he dared to penetrate even before the prese good
of Regal grief.

And Catherine, the mother, was then id the
her knees; she had placed her head o
coverlet, she saw not the Jester—and he faith
faithful creature, he advanced to the rd thee
the bed, and he gazed long and sorr explain
upon that once joyous King's much altere e must
Unable to contain his burst of sorrow Priest,
roamed disconsolate down stairs; and the jester
met one of the priests, who had come to as
in administering comfort to the King. as

"You are too late," cried poor Joseph, of
shaking his head mournfully, whilst a chorus
of bells chimed, as he did so; the Jester doffed
his ornamented hat.

"Curse those bells," he cried; "I will never
wear them more. I am lost now I have lost
my master. Royal Charles, thou art no better
now than thy poor Jester will be in death; and
it may be, I shall fare better than thou wilt."

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Peace to the King's memory," said the
st, twirling his beads. "It is the will of
"

es, but it was the will of men—of priests
rafty astrologers, that the poor young
ent his soul afar from the righteous; he
wicked by nature. I remember the
en he was otherwise than——"

rest thou, Jester, talk thus to a holy
? Darest thou mean to insinuate, St.
olomew's day was not a glorious one?
thou not a heretic, sinner?"

"I am a sinner and a heretic, if so it pleaseth thee to call me, Priest; yet, but an hour ago, I was Joseph the jester—the fool—the buffoon. And thou, Priest, what art thou? what art thou more than a Jester? what council wilt thou give the Queen-Mother? Is it the poison or sword by which thou wilt say—'get rid of Joseph!' Ha! ha! ha!"

"The fellow is mad!"

"Mad!" cried Joseph; "wise men go mad.

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fools never. Is it mad to weep for Charles, my master? Why, Mariot wept; Mariot the good —Mariot the learned; Is *he* a fool?"

"And by my faith, indeed not," said the Priest.

"Faith! *thy* faith—thou hast no more faith than a brute being; nay, Priest, I heard thee when Catherine de Médicis told thee to explain to the King that before all things, he must settle the Regency upon her. Catiff Priest, was that thine office? *Pardi!* Joseph the jester would have made as good a priest!"

"And Joseph the jester will hang as well as any other man," said the Priest, laying hold of his collar; but Joseph shook him off as if he were a mere babe.

"Thy fastings have made thee over light, Sieur Priest; get thee gone, and touch me not again."

"Son! reprobate son! I will pass my anathema upon thee."

"And so will I!" cried Joseph; "I, Jo-

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seph the jester, Joseph the fool; I excommunicate thee—thou false, caitiff Priest. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Enter, never, the pale of the Church," cried the Priest.

"*Grand merci!* I shall not be obliged to hear thy croaking voice," said the still more angry Jester.

Faithful fool! he could only show his anger by choler, and he lacked none of that. How the controversy would have ended is a matter of doubt, but at that moment, General Tavannes crossed the court-yard. It was a fortunate *contre temps*. The Priest withdrew, sulkily, casting a furious glance at Joseph from beneath his thick lashes, whilst Joseph, for an answer, snapped his fingers in derision.

"Joseph, my merry man, what art thou about?" cried General Tavannes; "remember—the *ràgout à la Médicis!*"

"Go to the devil with your folly," said the Jester; "I am a wise man now!"

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"I have seen no signs of thy wisdom yet," said Tavannes.

"And tell me one man at Court who displays any, save in his own opinion, Monsieur le Géneral?"

"Come, come, Joseph, cease thy prattling; the King is dead; but we all knew he was dying. Come along with me; I will be a good master unto thee."

"Master, indeed," cried Joseph, drawing himself up with all the dignity he could command. "Master, forsooth! I, who have never been apart from Royalty. Get a crown, General, and then be my master; for, hang me, if I am not as proud as if Catherine de Médicis had inoculated me."

"Come, come with me," still persisted the General, soothingly.

"No more," cried Joseph; "I will never come to Court again."

The poor Jester cast one most sad glance at a window on high; he howled piteously

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and then he ran away with the swiftness of lightning.

And that poor creature knew where to find sympathy; he knew of one sweet spot away from the Court of sin and folly. He turned to the poverty-stricken mother who had given him birth; and he railed not at *her* as he had at others.

"Here is gold—gold—gold, mother; enough for thee, enough for poor Joseph. I will never go to Court again. I will die here. I cannot serve two masters."

And that mother—old, barely clad—she seemed more beautiful to the simple Jester's eyes than the fair ladies of the Court he had just quitted.

Holy, maternal love! holy bond of nature! it is the poor and ignorant who feel so truly that balm of all sympathy, a mother's pathos of consolation.

She let the Jester continue his raillery against crowned and mitred heads; she knew

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it was no use stopping the torrent of his invectives, but by the time the shades of evening had descended upon the earth, the turbulent heart was calmed in the refreshment of sleep.

Ay, and long after Charles the Ninth's death was forgotten; when even the horrors of 1572, when Paris, Orleans, Lyons, Thoulouse, and all the most persecuted provinces were calm, still that faithful heart thought upon his once gay young master.

But twenty-three years of age he was; who will not sigh at the thought of a death so untimely! And sad is the power of example; there arose another, guided as Charles had been, by a woman whose every thought was tinged with vice.

Fickle and pleasure loving, Henri the Third was more truly cruel than his unfortunate brother. The Poles, from whom he fled on his brother's decease, never gave one sigh for the loss of such a King, and he ascended

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the French throne with projects of tyranny ripe for execution.

The Jester kept his word—he never returned to the French Court; he loathed the thoughts of grandeur. Poor fool! he had thought his cap and bells as grand as a chancellor thinks his wig; and it was sorrowful, yet ludicrous, to hear Joseph soliloquize, hat in hand, talking to it as if it were a relic, such as pilgrims preserve.

I won each bright bell, one by one, as I deserved it," he would exclaim: "this I had for outwitting a Duke—that for thrashing an Abbot—that for finding my master's books, and prompting him with a duplicate behind a door. Ah, poor bells, poor bells! how bright they look! laurels these are which never die—laurels which I will leave behind me."

And truly the Jester did not live long. One chilly November morning he kissed his mother with more than wonted affection.

"I go a roaming, mother," he cried; "hast thou a message?"

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"No, Joseph, and it is a cold day; see how bright is our little fire, and you look pale and ill; stop here, Joseph."

But for all answer, Joseph whistled to his faithful dog, and Dodo looked up wistfully in his poor master's face. "Come along, Dodo, come along with me; what care we for cold weather? come along."

He felt the rigorous cold—he felt benumbed—he felt ill—ay more, he felt he was dying—he felt his poor heart, once bruised, now broken, and he knew where he fain would expire. He wished to weep once more on his Royal master's grave—there he wished to die. One more look he turned upon the house where that lonely mother would henceforth dwell; one solitary tear fell upon his sunken cheeks, and then he proceeded on his way.

What a thing is habit! dull, ill, dying, still the Jester continued joking; yet each joke was accompanied with a doleful finale.

What a merry, jolly fool, I was once upon

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a time! now—now—well—well it was summer once—now, how cold and chilly it is. My name is Joseph Winter, so it is. Come along, Dodo, you are more slow than I am; dance along, my jolly fellow; nay, nay, not so fast; thou must dance to the tune of a minuet—slow and graceful, and gentle. I've seen Catherine de Médicis and pretty Queen Marguerite dance a minuet; they never danced better than Joseph and Dodo"

But at length, after halting and panting, the grave of Charles the Ninth appeared in view. There, beside it, knelt the poor Jester; and gradually his aching head sunk low upon the cold turf. And Dodo, too, drew near; poor faithful Dodo—faithful to his master, as Joseph to his King. He licked those cold, clammy, death-stricken eyes; he howled piteously, and then he crouched down by the dying Jester's side. The damp of death was now upon his brow; the vital spark beat slower and slower; the snow descended in large flakes, and ever

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and anon poor Joseph, feebly brushed away the falling drops, as they fell pitiless upon his face; and his last act was kindness, for he took Dodo and smiled a languid smile, full of the pain of dying, as he sheltered the animal under his own clothes, to keep him from the cold tempest. A few moments more, and Joseph existed no more; whilst the weight of the cold corpse, falling heavily on Dodo, the dog died with his master—poor faithful brute!

Even Catherine was struck by so much fidelity, and Joseph was buried with much solemnity; over his tomb two figures are erected—Joseph and his dog, extended on a grave. The solitary mother had long expected this catastrophe, and Tavannes, who had really loved the once merry Jester, provided for her, who never ceased to lament the half-witted creature, who had, amidst his bursts of folly, entertained better thoughts, than many of those refined beings deemed—courtiers.

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Courtiers! yes — they had shared all the blithe hours of Charles's wildest merriment; but none, save the Jester, wept true tears over his grave!

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CHAPTER IX.

It was at the close of a stormy day, that Pettura was one evening disturbed from his devotions by the entrance of a brother friar.

"Brother Pettura, there is one below wisheth to see thee," he said.

And Pettura, who began to look back upon life as upon a troubled dream, had scarcely collected himself, ere, descending to a small room below stairs, to his astonishment the Duc de Guise stood before him. Pettura turned deadly pale, and retreated back a few steps.

"What would'st thou with me?" he said.

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"Art thou here to recall a dream, pregnant with thoughts deeply, everlastingly rife? Art thou here to bode some future evil? Ah, Henri of Guise, a father's grief never slumbers."

"Pettura," said Henri of Guise, turning upon the bereaved parent a look full of young melancholy; "Pettura, lay aside thy feeling grief for a few moments, and listen to me. I am no longer to be duped by the smiles of Catherine de Médicis; her beauty is waning, and with it her power of disguising. Some presentiment tells me I shall be assassinated. I have met with traps at almost every step I have trodden. Henri the Third is a pleasure-loving monarch, possessing not even his late brother's freaks of generosity. Pettura, you will be revenged, and I come to tell you."

"Tell me no more of a Court, vile, miserable, degraded! And as to revenge, ah! I think of it no longer. Why come to remind me I ever lived in its contemplation? Oh! Henri of Guise, shun those vicious haunts, where

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wickedness, like lions let loose, run insatiate, roaring for a new prey. Shun that majestic woman, who, when her beauty wanes, must still be powerful, clad in wit and deception. I know the poison lurking beneath each golden arrow. Go, young man! I have nothing save words of regret and remorse to say. Go!—go! leave me!"

"Not yet! not yet, Pettura! there is still one thing I would perform here; take this key!" he cried, detaching a small chain from his neck; "take it, and keep it, for the rust upon it is grafted there by my falling tears. It is the key of the chapel, where Clementina's remains are laid! If I die a foul death—assassinated—thrown aside ignominiously—perchance my pale corse may not be buried; but if possible, cause me to be buried near her, the young, the beautiful, the *bride*!"

No more he said, but paced up and down the narrow room, and then, with one last gaze at Pettura, he rushed from the apartment.

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Even from his tranquil dwelling-place, the Astrologer heard hereafter of Henri of Guise's fate.

When he tottered, old and bent, and leaned upon a stick—when he took a calm walk in the enclosure of the convent, the young and hapless Duke had slumbered his last sleep—assassinated as he had predicted, and actually murdered by orders of the King.

He died in the flower of his age; yet none wept a tear o'er his grave, for in those troublous days, a selfish feeling pervaded all breasts; each one mistrusted the other.

Readers, let me add a few historical remarks; these many deaths are not imaginary, indeed; if we would sum up many facts to bring forward, with strength, a forcible lesson, let us think of the awful retribution depicted in History's pages.

After all her toil, after scaring her heart, after staining the soul—once formed brightly to type a purer nature—did the grasping,

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longing, searching Catherine de Médicis, reap any positive benefit? Could even her callous heart rejoice to witness the sad havoc, both of war and the fatal spirit of revenge, marking that period?

Now do we look back with grave astonishment upon those days of hasty revenge; and we wonder, as we peruse a work of romance, "how far all this may be true." A few words may, therefore, be welcomed by the thoughtful reader.

Poltrot de Méré, a young man of English extraction, *did* murder the old Duke of Guise; and the young Duke Henri, his son, was sacrificed in the reign of Henri the Third, to that King's political revenge. And not only were the Protestants, or Huguenots, persecuted by Charles the Ninth, under the influence of the Queen-Mother, but they met with the same fate under the dynasty of Charles's predecessor, Francis the Second.

Catherine de Médicis, in her husband's life-

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time, and in that of three of her sons, was the actual instigator of all these evils. She died a short time before Henri the Third, in the seventh-first year of her reign.

Oh! then, like a calm after a tempest; like sun-beams dispersing a misty sky; like hope on the heart, when sorrow has long there reigned, there came another one to the French throne—one who had caught a spark from Queen Elizabeth of England's lofty mind; one who threw a halo around the slumbering genius of France. *The great Henri Quatre.*

Memorable edict of Nantes! when the persecuted Protestants returned, hoping, joyful; exalted by misfortune, improved by persecution.

Hail, joyful throng of quiet Christians! unobtrusive followers of the Prince of Peace. Hail, monarch! hail, *all* monarchs, who bring back peace to a long-disturbed country!

It is why Elizabeth of England has so im-

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mortal a name. Faults she had—some very great ones; but when prisons were broken open, chains were snapped and severed, the brand was thrown aside, the persecution ceased, oh! then the woman's faults were lost in the magnitude of the chaotic power of genius; and cold are the hearts which echo not—"Great Queen Bess!" Strange to say, Henri Quatre, her contemporary, was such another; he was oftentimes wavering; he was weak. Lofty in genius, he knew not how to govern his own heart; his mind could cope with the greatest; his heart was a wanton thing, in the power of many women.

It is not here my intention to talk of the King husband's conduct to the lovely Marguerite of Valois. As I have before dismissed her from my realms of fiction, I dare not speak of her any longer; whilst those latent observations, lingering thoughtfully, retrospectively, on the pages of a novel, may be dismissed by some, and slighted by others.

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Yet there are some, aye, and many, who will love the author's pen when steeped in the thoughts of her heart; who will patiently and gently ponder over them; and, perhaps, think they see the mind more, than when fiction's thraldom glosses over the individual writer. A word, then, to these! Is there profit or pleasure in revenge?

Nay; by every written fact, by every recorded word, I answer nay; by the sorrow of sinners' death-beds, by their unhappy lives and unhallowed deaths—I answer nay.

Politicians, the horrors of the sixteenth century in France under the Médicis' dynasty—in England, under bloody Queen Mary's sway—may never, never be repeated; but may not the sad and petty pique of political feeling be carried to a great length? may not some who have enjoyed together early scholastic days of pure, boyish friendship, hold against each other's throats the dagger of jealousy, the poisoned cup of retaliation? Oh, by the

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memory of those early days, when political thoughts were afar; by the memory of all the gentle ideas ye love, Politicians, pause ere party-feeling would estrange your hearts; and pause, ere ye condemn one another's judgment; ere men, whose hearts swell with all that is noble, all that is kind, are levelled against with weapons of opposition, piercing sometimes from the public press, unto the domestic haunts of their love.

Remember, Politicians, that toleration is the groundwork equally of domestic and political virtues. Still not the cry—hear, hear—it is often the voice, like a still, small sound, recalling you to a sane step.

For aye, it is temporary insanity to tear each other, manly English hearts, solely because ye differ. Ye have England's weal at heart—ye are the loyal servants of a virtuous Queen. Oh, then, that spirit of toleration but raises ye higher—higher—far higher than woman's pen can descry.

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Forgive the young author; or if ye would give her a *quid pro quo* for her heartfelt, though "tremblingly brave" oration, tell her she has not offended, and allow your attention to be rivetted.

Happy England! happy politicians! ye upon whose names youthful eyes are turned; ye to whom *young* English politicians look up—*old* England, never be extant; it is thy model to whom all should direct their gaze. Invidious pen! dare not to trace a name—speak but in hints of the father of England's liberty, he is so tolerant, he is so truly noble. It is the blood of intrinsic goodness flows in his veins; he is as the father of the child he loves; the father of England's welfare.

And seek not, young author—dare not trace the name of that genius of oratory—that lion of emphasis, that open hearted Politician! No cry can still his ardour, and death alone will silence that voice rushing, falling, rising, like swelling torrents dashing down, but not to over-

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whelm. To relieve the heat of the heart, sometimes to be quelled, and *be* convinced, oftener *to convince,* but always harmoniously cadenced to one tune—who—who art thou?

"And who art thou, young Member? risen like a bright star; twinkling yet modestly aspiring, but not vain; lofty, but not obtrusive. And who knows not another one, though no name be traced—the Politician who stoops to grace his leisure hours by embodying those ideas, those thoughts taught by so grand a hand, to fall gently upon Woman's ears? Yes, Woman's eyes can thus gaze, without flinching, upon the word Politic; and even if she understand not all, she *knows*, she *feels* its practical theory —*fame* all centred in one word—*good;* whilst spangled with love-frighted imaginings—romance, blended with wholesome truths—Woman reads—and reads to be convinced.

No more from my quiet home: who cares what thoughts rest in my heart? And when laying my head to rest, at the hour others dress

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for a ball, who cares that imaginative creation is the companion of my pillow? And still doth the roar of the vast world reach me—not to overwhelm, not to dazzle. Leisurely do I pluck the faded leaves from my bouquet; and I fain would rear for the public a wreath—immortal, undying.

Catherine de Médicis, thy faults were as spurs guiding the author's course to a deeper loathing for thy erring career; virtues, alas! there were none to depict. In searching for them, each grain was too deeply concealed, if any there were, in that unwieldy soil. Unhappy woman; even the ruthless hand of Death brought no salutary lesson to thy heart—none, none; and her sons died, and her friends and foes dropped around her. She heeded not the warning voice, and yet she lived long enough to feel all the burden of her sins.

Oh, what a pity that genius should have been so wantonly thrown away; for, doubtless, genius there was amidst all that cruel sway.

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What a pity it was that Catherine felt not the real tenure

> "Of all that forms our true pre-eminence."

But nay! on, on she went, until of her might be exclaimed—

> "Morn, noon, and night, in one eternal play,
> Are thine ambition!"

But we may *not* add—

> "Till thou wear'st away;"

for when did Catherine de Médicis' ambition wear away? How true it was of that ambition—

> "'Tis thine to suffer through uncounted day."

Yet it was not on this subject the Poet wrote —for, if I quote rightly, it is added—

> "Yet, welcome, all."

Welcome, means the Poet (Montgomery), all

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proper exertions towards the welfare of the land of our kindred, but ambition, cemented by cruelty, fostered by revenge, fed by horrid vice—that ambition has no welcome; though it may never die, its only requiem is remorse.

Yet, fellow-mortals, fellow-readers of this our world, who can answer this, save in the spirit I answer it? who dare affirm with certainty what sins can be forgiven? Think of the superstitious times in which she lived; think of the encouragement even clergy gave to every vice of that spoilt heart; bring the sixteenth century before your gaze, and say—Is Catherine de Médicis, fallen from that balmy, holy path of forgiveness! Let not Disdain curl her proud lips; let not Cruelty cast the first stone; let not Ignorance bind each fetter; let not Blindness shut out the vale of mercy. And now, robbing once more, the Poet's leaves—

> "If ever thought of mine,
> Hath woo'd a spirit into calm divine,"

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let me woo it now, when I would cause those feelings to be wrapt in a halo of brightness; so that having some lustre to spare, other minds may, without blushing for the plagiarism, catch up the lustre, and exclaim, "We will not judge hastily."

Slumber, then, Catherine de Médicis! Thy fatal beauty and thy vices slumber in Oblivion's tomb;—at least, never more shall *my* pen hover oe'r thy name, albeit a choir of voices would not be too many to my ears when conning over the pages written in my first novel. If aught of floweried sweetness should blossom o'er that oblivious tomb, be they watered by the tears of regret kind hearts shed over the sinner's grave.

They are hallowed, those tears, and they purify the sternest soil. *Hope* blooms in renovated freshness as the drops flow upon it; and *forgiveness*, cherub-like, stretches its mild wings forth even over the Médicis' tomb.

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CHAPTER X.

And Mariot, the faithful preceptor—he whom even Catherine de Médicis respected—even amidst his favourite orations he felt no more a ray of delight. There was something of occasional frankness in the unfortunate King's disposition. There had been seeds of good all crushed, yet it never had been poor Mariot's fault. How often he had railed against that vile policy which makes men forget what a purer mind bears ever in view; how he railed at that still viler spirit of revenge, which, demoniac-like, rushed impetuous, unreined, over

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the land of France. Nurtured in the land where balmy air, orange groves, vineyards, sunlit mountains, are extolled, Catherine de Médicis—a *woman*—had bruised and broken most countless hearts; and for many reasons Mariot did all in his power to keep away from that haughty Queen-Mother. He never felt "the ruin of her smile," for no smile could allure him; but he felt the true rectitude of his own heart would make him too boldly speak the truth—truth too bold in itself for Catherine de Médicis to hear. But one evening Lorraine broke upon Mariot's solitude; and the latter, who ever mistrusted the Cardinal, wondered what new plot was brooding.

A frown passed over his face, but he bowed, and pointed in silence to a chair.

"You are dumb," said Lorraine, haughtily; "but I forgot you loved Charles."

"You forget, then, my Lord Cardinal, that which I can never cease to remember," was the laconic reply.

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"France will soon forget there was even a Charles the Ninth," said the Cardinal.

"Nay, nay," said Mariot, with considerable bitterness, "say not Charles the Ninth will ever be forgotten. Not so long as men can remember, will St. Bartholomew's dreadful deeds be effaced either from the pages of History or the pages of men's hearts. And thou, my well-beloved, though erring pupil, thou hast done all this. Not *all*, not all—thine were the deeds; to another's conscience the advice must be placed. My Lord Cardinal, I pray you speak no more to me of the Past. When I am shrined at rest, where oblivion's tomb casts its shadows over men, then only shall I be at peace."

"Gracious! Mariot, there be many would deem themselves fortunate in thy stead. The King's bounty—"

"Talk not to me of gold," cried Mariot, gradually warming; "talk not to me of the base metal, the price so often of all virtue.

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Talk not of gain, I think only of loss—of the loss which no gold can buy—the loss irreparable of my young Royal master. Sin cannot be retrieved with gold, and he, hapless youth—he——"

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"Mariot, art thou unbelieving? do I not cause masses to be prayed for the deceased King's soul? and hundreds of tapers are burning even now on the consecrated altar—"

"Churchman, hear me!" said Mariot. "Send me to the confessional—send me to the torture—send me to the Pope—send me to Catherine de Médicis—do as thou wilt afterward! now thou shalt hear my words!

"I believed once in every rite of our Popish Church. If I sinned, I confessed; if I were absolved, I deemed myself forgiven; but mine eyes are opened! Thou, Cardinal—thou, great Lorraine! thou didst absolve Catherine de Médecis, when sin black as hell lay at her heart! thou didst hear her foul intentions; thou didst

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give her thy absolution—and I believe no more in that rite!"

The Cardinal's face grew deadly pale with the rage he could not conceal. He stamped his feet, he threw back the cowl from his head, and he peered into Mariot's face, as if to ascertain if he were in his right senses.

And Mariot, conscious in his own rectitude, returned look for look, scorn for scorn; his loud voice rolled at length like angry thunder, and Lorraine quivered as he continued:—

"Yes, Churchman, not only wilt thou answer for thy deeds, but thou hast made thyself answerable for those of Catherine de Médicis. I would not have thy conscience, to be Cardinal Lorraine this very night. Cankered must be thy heart—and thy religion! God of Heaven! is *that* religion? Was it religion to persecute hoary-headed men, to learn the secrets of Court-born maidens' hearts, and *tell* them again to Catherine de Médicis? Was this thy sacred avocation as Confessor? And

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to what image, save the mammon of thy coveteous heart, hast thou ever bowed thy knees? Go, Cardinal; it is by men's lives, not the abstract theory, we judge of their religion; and thou, with thy mitred head, thou hast a heathen's heart. A heathen! God forgive me —thou art not as good. The poor fire-worshippers, gazing with reverence at the luminary of their adoration, look up at least with a feeling of awe. The Mahometan longs to dwell in the paradise of his creation, with the bright houries around him; he believes that if he be vicious his hopes will never be realized; but thou, Cardinal, thou hast made a mockery of religion, and I scorn to follow the same rituals thou hast disgraced!"

"Man, be thou man, or be there some devil in you—fear my revenge, and expect it too," continued Lorraine, in a voice choked with passion. "Live to-day, and live tomorrow. Yet, know not how soon thy end is at hand."

"I care not," said Mariot. "I expected

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this; I have so lived as not to dread death; I have not murdered—ruined—betrayed; I have not held a sacred office, to work out worldly ends; I have not glanced at crowned heads, and said, "Ye are mine, as much as if they *were* mine." I have not accumulated riches, by robbing others; I am plain Mariot, the simple, unpretending man—the man of sorrow, pining over the sins of others; and in thy secret heart, thou art envying now even the victim thou hast written in thy tablets."

"Mariot," said Loraine, "it was not to be insulted I came here; the Queen-Mother requires thy presence."

"I require not hers," said Mariot, "and, so help me, God, I will not willingly seek *her* presence. Go to that degraded woman, and tell her other tales than those thou art wont to con in her deluded ears; go tell her there is an hereafter, a terrible Tribunal, a God Merciful, a God Avenger! Go, tell her, that if poison and steel tell no tales here, they record words

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on high; sent there by the very demons who arranged and plotted, and then betrayed! go, tell her all this, and then——"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Loraine, pretending to scoff at Mariot. "And thy learned head, my virtuous, my saintish Mariot—at how many francs dost thou value it, that thou would'st have me bear a message, which, by its purport, would bring the answer delivered by the executioner?"

"No executioner has power to change my sentiment; but, I read thy thoughts, Cardinal: thou knowest I speak but the truth; thou wilt not repeat a word I have said; thou fearest my death more than I do."

"And why so, Mariot?"

"Why, because even now, disease is written on thy brow, and thou art thinking of thinning, not burdening thy conscience with more vice. Go on thy ways, my Lord Cardinal; like the poor fool Joseph, I am weary of Courts; I will

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cross thy path no more, and I shall soon be out of thy recollection."

Mariot turned away, and the Cardinal sullenly left the room.

"I will go no more to the Médicis," cried Mariot, aloud; and he kept his word. When next a message came for him, he had retired to a quiet house in a distant province. Poor Mariot! and for this had he toiled at night, to inculcate precepts by day. A rude, remorseless hand—albeit it had been a mother's—had snapped the young twig, in its early growth, and thus bent, and twisted, it had continued to grow. A mightier architect than poor Mariot was found in the architect raising up the temple of vice; and the pernicious poison of a Médicis' advice had destroyed, with unrelenting grasp, a young, wavering heart. The last funeral knell sounding for Charles the Ninth's death had struck a doleful chord in that faithful Tutor's heart

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The clever translator of Plutarch was fast growing morose, when, after a short illness, he slumbered the death of the righteous.

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CHAPTER XI.

INDULGENT readers, cross we now the Channel. Let us take a little survey of the house where the unfortunate Poltrot de Méré's gentle sister, Augusta, is living in harmony, and feels sorrow for her brother's fate, tempered by the sweetest hope of a promised forgiveness towards *repentant* sinners. She knew not who had dealt him his death-blow; but the tidings that he was dead, were wafted from that sister shore, so wrapped in most degrading vice. Augusta recalled Poltrot's saddened, handsome face; no pale despair had been left there; every calmed feature spoke of hope and resignation.

Did the fascinating Edwina Ailesbury droop

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under a passion as new as it was at the time deep? No, hers was not a disposition to indulge long in a dream which could never come to a substance. Her political neighbour's counsels, who assured her "that the best of men were hardly worth a fair girl's constant tears," might have weighed in the balance of the scale which caused her (after a certain number of sighs, and lonely rambles, and pensive songs, and melancholy-strained poems) to return to her more sunny poetry, and the soft language of flowers. A few months more, and the gay girl's laughing brown eyes were as purely youthful in their expression, as if no Poltrot de Méré had ever caused them to shed a tear.

A very handsome young man is walking by Edwina's side. His arm is twined round her waist; and the widowed mother, from her open window, hears with heartfelt pleasure the silvery tones of her gay young laugh.

"Do not speak again of my '*Amore dolore.* and *furore*,' reign of love, bold one," exclaimed

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Edwina, in answer to a whisper from Count Joceleyn; "I am older and wiser now, and consider a love-sick illness is the grave play which comes before the pantomine, and the latter I hail as the most agreeable."

"And my love, then, is naught but an opportune pantomine?"

"Exactly so; if you proved faithless, I would perform the tragedy first. Faint, droop, sigh, cry, and pine; walk up and down my room at night like a bear in his den; look at my meals, but live on the food of a balloon, the love-tuned *air*; grow interestingly thin, then——"

"What then, beloved?"

"What then?" Edwina looked at Count Joceleyn's handsome face; she saw his eyes resting on hers, and she hid her graceful head on his bosom, whilst she spoiled her récit by nothing save the truth, as she whispered, "Joceleyn, no pantomine would come after *that* tragedy."

And Joceleyn imprinted a fond kiss on her

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brow, whilst the happy girl was recompensed for her sincerity.

A few weeks more, and she is sitting at an open window; her clustering brown curls are waving to and fro, as the wind, fanning the casement, disturbs their arrangement; a beautiful blush is on her white skin, and as she bends gracefully over her embroidery frame, her syren-like voice is checking her cousin, Augusta de Méré.

"How blessed a thing it is to be loved," she says. To-morrow, I shall be a bride. Come pretty coz., I must be romantic or modest enough to look more shy than I do, or the whole village will call me 'Countess Boldness:' what a name for a bride! Yet I cannot boast that it is the influence of a bad example; for, if I copied you, Augusta, I should indeed look modest. Why are you sighing? Are you afraid the count loves me better now, than he will after the marriage is over? yet I assure, you I have taken a lease of his love for

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twelve months, with an earnest wish of renewing it after."

"May he love you for ever; may you be as happy as you deserve. I was not thinking of Count Joceleyn; I was wrapped in a dream of the past."

"That is the worst of the three tenses for *you* to dwell upon, sweet coz.; why do you not think of the present, with a perspective view of the future, in the shape of orange flowers and white satin?"

"Oh! you will spoil that flower, Augusta! Pray have a care, or I shall say you are in love. Is it with Lord Holdernese? is it with Colonel de Charpentier, or is it with our handsome, though *à mon goût,* too grave minister?"

"You think I have a capacious heart, Edwina."

"You have at least an *embarras de richesses,*" said her lively tormentor.

And at that moment, the grave, and hand-

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some minister was seen coming up the lawn. Edwina looked at her cousin, and Augusta looked low on her embroidery frame, the crimson tide mounting to her brow.

"*Le sage entend un demi mot,*" said Edwina, kissing Augusta, and leaving the room as Mr. Englefield was announced.

* * * * *

Yes, she had pined, that gentle Augusta, she had pined for her brother's loss; and in the stillness of night, as well as during the balmy hours of day, still, still, a prayer quivered on her chiselled lips.

No wonder if a soft melancholy sat upon her interesting countenance; no wonder when such serious thoughts were ever at her heart's core. Not only to lose a beloved relation, but to have been pointed at—she, so good, so gentle—as a murderer's sister.

If grief dimmed not her beauty, it was that it was ever-tempered by holy and soothing thoughts! Inspirations of heavenly hope,

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kindling rays sent refulgently bright from a beatified shore! Many there were who offered their affection to that most graceful being; but Augusta turned away with a sigh approaching to a shudder, when light hearts spoke, and light voices reached her hearing; for *these* she could not feel love, for they reminded her by their very ardour of that fiery energy she had once endeavoured to check in her impetuous brother. And what a fate was his! what a life he had led; what dreary thoughts, what bitter remorse had followed him. But at length one there appeared before the saddened gaze, one who brought tears of holy comfort to the sweet dove-like eyes; one who led the grief-stricken heart to the cool fount of never dying consolation—a holy Protestant minister.

He knew what grief was, for his own family had one by one been cut off in the bigotted Mary's persecuting fury. None save those who *have* steeped their eye-lids in a tear can shed the same sympathizing grief.

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So at length, words hitherto unheeded fell more sweetly upon ears much dulled with grief. Augusta learned—what many grief-stricken persons learn—that when one holy love is dead, another may rise up as pure—for love is a boon from Heaven. It was the early boon bestowed upon our first parents—it is the earliest feeling with which the human heart throbs—it is the commencement of woman's life; she lives in a hemisphere of love.

In infancy she turns crying and moaning, and a mother's voice, a mother's holy love comforts her. Brothers, sister, or companions next claim her love; and then, there arises a brighter, dearer, keener, feeling—the love gentle woman gives to man. What trust there is in that love—that forsaking those with whom her earliest thoughts are associated. Woman binds her destiny to one she has perhaps accidentally met. Strange mystic love—strange! as poets love to call it.

Augusta now felt her heart flutter with a

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new and strange delight; she, who had never thought she could love since her brother's death, felt all the influence of the charm of the gentle voice pouring words of entreaty into her inmost soul. Loving, yet not passionate, speaking of quiet, domestic life.

"I cannot bring thee a title, my own much-beloved Augusta," said the minister. "I can but offer thee a heart, faithful—faithful unto death. Tarry your tears, sweet one; repay me by at least a smile."

Augusta repaid him by more; she returned the gentle pressure of his hand, and her eyes were the first to express all the love she felt. By the power of their bright, glistening answer, the amiable clergyman felt he might press his suit.

Multum in parvo. Two weddings in a day. Cupid's arrows sometimes take long aim, especially if the young and beautiful are the targets on which they mean to rest.

Mrs. Grandison emphatically declared that it

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was more diplomatic of the quiet Mrs. Ailesbury than she should have imagined it was in that lady's composition to manage; whilst all the time the placid widow had been knitting, and (as all *obliging* mothers will do) allowing the Count Jocelyn to win her daughter, and the Minister of the Parish her niece. Which of the two fair creatures, the graceful Edwina or the commanding-looking Augusta, looked best in her bridal attire, as that is *not* an historical event, I leave it to my Readers to decide.

Merrily rung the wedding bells, and merry smiles adorned the face of Edwina, as she rose from the altar, and was greeted, not "Countess Boldness," but the sweet-looking "Countess Jocelyn." Augusta's noble features were less radiant with joy, though her heart was equally full of love, but she was not selfish enough to think only of her own pleasure; her heart breathed a fervent prayer that her brother's soul might dwell at peace, and a tear started

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to her eye at the recollection that he could not be present at her bridal.

Months, however, brought serenity, happiness, and joy to her heart; and, let us hope, that like her merry cousin, she would each year renew the lease of love.

THE END.

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THE

SPANISH GIRL'S REVENGE.

A Tale

OF THE REIGN OF QUEEN MARY.

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THE

SPANISH GIRL'S REVENGE.

CHAPTER I.

MERRILY sound our Sabbath bells; welcome call to Christian ears. All ranks of men crowding together, gaily prepare to take their place in the sacred temple; there, rich and poor are under the same roof, type of that heavenly choir, where there is no distinction of persons—where merit claims the highest place. We pass the peasant in his lowly garb, the children of the poor, as well as the wealthy and great, and upon each face a smile appears to linger—a sweet, a happy smile. Some, resting from a long week of toil, seek the nearest place of worship,

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to thank their God for the daily bread they have received, and to invoke a renewed blessing on the ensuing week's labour. Others, in jewels and satin, lay open hearts aching with secret sorrow, and pray for assistance and grace, for pardon and support. How thankful ought we to be, that we live in these happy days, when the voice of Persecution is hushed; when mothers may instruct their lisping babes; when together we may commune in those accents of religion which our Divine Saviour has taught us are "the way, the truth, and the life."

The hands which were raised to shed blood, or to kindle the funeral pile, are cold and powerless, still in the never-waking sleep of death. When we pause and look back into the lapse of years, what pictures present themselves to our imagination. Fellow creatures, possessed, like ourselves, with feeling hearts, and warm affections, loving the world as we do, clinging to life as we do, hurried like sheep to the slaughter, torn from their happy homes, their family *re-*

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unions, their evening fire-sides, and led to torture and to excruciating death. Mary! Bonner! Gardiner! what images of cruelty these three names bring to mind. Unfeminine Mary! was it to execute thy bloody persecutions, that God created thee a *Queen* and a *Woman?* Was it to bury all thy noble and feminine attributes, all Christian-like graces? Alas! we tremble when we reflect, that long ere this, a tribunal of mercy, but also of acknowledged justice, has judged thee for thy unnatural conduct. What victims, by thee made! what family circles severed and disunited! The father, torn from the wife of his choice, for a moment staggers under the load of oppression; he pauses—a word, almost a sign, will save his life; the word trembles on his lips, but his tongue refuses utterance; the high-principled, the gifted soul, has triumphed over the infirmities of the flesh; that soul, purified in the fire of faith, rises triumphant to meet him, who set us himself so glorious an example of constancy in death.

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Readers, will you accompany me to the scene, where my story commences? will you wander with me in far-famed Woodstock? where then dwelt the Princess, afterwards our great Elizabeth. As she walks in the midst of the beautiful grounds, and softly treads the verdant green, her mind is lost in a chaos of great and searching thoughts, and the beautiful influence of the summer's charm is lost upon her, at the recollection that she, the daughter of the proud and despotic Henry, was little better than prisoner to the Queen of the realm, and that Queen was her sister. A tear involuntarily started to Elizabeth's pale-blue eye, and she walked on, without raising her head. Flowers spread their fragrance to the day; a gentle murmur was heard from the zephyr-like motion of the trees; the lilac drooped in the richness of its beauty, and swept the daisied lawn; but the Princess heeded not the charms of Nature, for if she indulged herself in contemplating the universal works of crea-

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tion, she only felt with double bitterness the wish of being free. Only twenty-three summers had passed over the Princess's head, but youth's bright hilarity had long since given place to a look of deep and anxious thought; the blue eye was thoughtful and searching, and there was a quivering restlessness round the parted lips, which indicated a mind ill at ease; whilst her tall, commanding figure, taller-looking still, from her long train, which swept the ground, possessed a majesty, and even a grace, which struck every person who beheld her with the conviction, that a post of responsibility and honour would be well placed under her guidance. Elizabeth's lofty mind, soaring high above the timid beings who composed her Court, sought in vain for some kindred soul, some high genius like her own, to share with her the heavy burden of her thoughts. Upon whom, too, could she place her affections? Not upon her Royal sister, though both daughters of Henry VIII., their minds and pursuits, their virtues

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and faults, were essentially different. Elizabeth was open, generous and vain; Mary, vindictive, cruel, and jealous; to which, add suspicious, and then conceive two such opposite characters assimilating together. True, there were short and passing moments when Mary relented, when, as sisters, they communed together. Then would the young Elizabeth take advantage of the softened eye, and gentler voice, and plead with the fervour of high spirits, and longing desire for more liberty, more change of scene, and more amusements.

Alas! for Elizabeth. Perhaps at the very moment her suit seemed likely to be granted, when Mary gazed upon her sister's animated countenance and princely bearing, and for a moment felt the force of her superiority, some word, too warmly spoken, or accompanied by a look of unconquerable ambition, would dispel the charm. As ice melts and leaves the water, to rise and fall, to bubble and play, disburdened of its heavy surface, so a word recalled Mary's

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natural *hauteur;* and, as she had not the grace of speech or manner which causes a refusal to be shorn of the prickly thorn of ungraciousness, so the Royal sisters parted as they met—the one as Queen, and her sister's mistress, severe and almost spiteful; the other, indignant and haughty, gave way when she found herself alone, in an unrestrained burst of passion, to the pent-up feelings which she had smothered during her interview with the Queen.

Thus Elizabeth formed her courageous and dauntless character. She banished away frivolity, she scarcely ever indulged in the feminine pursuits of her age, and the times she lived in. Words doubly magnified by time-serving courtiers, were repeated to Mary; and Elizabeth, surrounded by persons appointed by the Queen, found herself daily more rigorously watched.

If Mary treated her Royal sister with severity, not so her husband; Philip of Spain both appreciated and admired Elizabeth's cha-

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racter. He thought her a talented and highly intellectual female; he considered that her amiability of disposition was marred by Mary's severity towards her. He admired the manner in which, without deviating from truth, the Princess answered questions relative to her religious opinions, with a force and yet a caution astonishing for her years and sex, as well as her critical position. Pity succeeded admiration, when Philip beheld the Princess the slave of Mary's tyrannical temper. It was a delicate task for the King-Consort to take Elizabeth's part; Mary's watchful jealousy, the many constructions she might place on his conduct, rendered it very difficult to serve the Princess as openly as Philip wished it. At the same time, Elizabeth possessed a high and Queenly bearing, a voice of authority, an eye of self-willed expression, which marked her, at one glance, as a person likely to have much influence over the people; and the King of Spain felt assured that the Prin-

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cess would be dangerous to Mary's peace, if she were suffered to have unrestrained liberty. Puzzled beyond measure how to act, fearing Elizabeth's influence over him, Philip very seldom visited his Royal sister, and sometimes forgot her altogether, unless her name was mentioned before him.

One morning, perhaps a week, after Elizabeth's first introduction to my readers, a page belonging to her household peeped cautiously through the arras of the tapestry, into a small drawing-room, situated in the Tower of London, where the Court was then held. Seeing that the King was alone, the page stole into the room, and delivering a small note into His Majesty's hands, placed his finger cautiously on his lips, and hastily retreated. The precaution was necessary, for Mary's step was heard in the corridor. The King hastily glanced at the note, recognised Elizabeth's hand-writing, and placed it in his pocket.

"How fares it with your Majesty?" he asked,

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as the Queen entered the apartment, with a slow step and a gloomy brow.

"I doubt me if your Majesty cares much about my health," answered Mary, bitterly; "I shall not ask where you have been spending your long truant hours; but, methinks, that some portion of your time might be devoted to your consort, who is harassed and wearied of a crown without peace, a continued persecution without amelioration, Ministers without sincerity, and a husband without love. My bold sister Elizabeth was perhaps right when she refused her many suitors; and I weary with enforcing her to marry, for she is right enough when she says that the marriage state is not so enviable."

Said she so, the saucy maiden?" answered Philip, laughing, nothing disconcerted by his wife's rebukes; "nay, methinks I will pay the Princess a visit, and convince her that I myself am a Royal exception to her list of unruly husbands. I will convince her Highness, that

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I am a pattern of amiable, conjugal, and—and——"

"Shall I finish your sentence?" said Mary, sneeringly.

"*C'est comme tu voudras,*" replied Philip, gaily.

"Say," continued the Queen, "that you are a pattern of gallantry towards every one but your own wife."

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Philip, kissing the angry frown from Mary's brow. "Come, come, no more of this; shall we visit the Princess Elizabeth?"

"I shall not go!" answered the Queen; I am tired with her obstinacy, and moreover, have been entertained during the past week with no other topic save a panegyric account of her wit, grace, and beauty.

"Take heed, giddy girl," continued Mary, in an under-tone; "for high as now stands thy pretensions, and higher still thy pride and *hauteur*, thou may'st yet feel that two daughters of

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Henry VIII. cannot live at the same time, and I am Queen!"

"And I am King, and will protect the Princess," exclaimed Philip, drawn out of his usual caution by the Queen's menacing words, as well as the sinister expression of her countenance.

"Ha!" meaningly exclaimed Mary.

But Philip had left the room, and with angry strides sought his own chamber, where he perused Elizabeth's note; it contained only these words,

"The Princess Elizabeth wishes to speak with His Majesty, Philip of Spain, on a matter of great importance."

The Queen continued some time without moving. Her feelings were highly incensed against Elizabeth; she imagined Philip's words were fraught with meaning; and now she began to feel that pang of jealousy which destroyed her peace, jaundiced her years, and rendered her more an object of scorn than of

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love to her foreign husband. "I will certainly go to Woodstock," thought Philip; "but at the same time, he did not like to leave his Queen until he was reconciled with her; for, although afterwards unable to bear Mary's increasing ill-humour, he left her, and returned to Spain, it was not without endeavouring by good-nature to disperse those clouds which too often hung over the domestic happiness of the ill-assorted pair.

On the present cloudy morning, Philip determined to make his niece, the Lady Eldrida, the means of reconciling him to Mary. This young lady, the daughter of one of Philip of Spain's sisters, was all-powerful with the Queen of England. Less bigotted than her Royal relative, she had considerable enthusiasm in her devotions; and her disposition, so warm where she loved, so violent where she disliked, might, under wise control, have been trained to the noblest deeds. But, alas! the stem was branching forth rapidly, and the fruits of a

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powerful mind were such as could be expected from the tuition she received from her confessor, Gardiner. If the tear of sympathy started to her eye, or her bosom heaved a sigh, when she heard of the persecutions of the Protestants, the tear was dashed away, ere it had hardly appeared on the beautiful lid, and the aching of the heart was treated as a weakness Eldrida ought not to indulge. If the Queen of England ever loved any human being besides her Spanish husband (to whom, notwithstanding her moody humours, she was tenderly attached), it was this young girl. Philip of Spain had brought her with him to England, and she was associated with those soft recollections which will crowd at times in every woman's breast, when she looks back upon days gone by, and especially that *day*, when her fate was linked to another's, by bonds which only death, or the unfortunate disuniting hand of *divorce*, can break asunder. Gratified with the warm reception she met with from her Royal aunt, Eldrida returned her love with corre-

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sponding affection. Blind to those faults others felt to their cost, she looked upon the Queen as a person of superior intellect, who was zealously endeavouring to restore what Gardiner had taught the young girl to consider the right religion in the land; and although her heart revolted at the persecution and the dreadful fate of the Protestants, she was at last persuaded to accuse them of blind obstinacy, for refusing to listen to the persuasive voices which were raised to induce them to recant, and turn to the Roman Catholic faith. We may, during the course of this tale, have occasion to view Eldrida's character in its worst points; we will therefore now turn to her good qualities.

Pitying the agonizing death which the Protestants endured, the young girl's compassion was further strengthened by witnessing an affecting scene. A whole family, father, mother, and children, gained admission to the Tower, and knelt supplicatingly before Mary's throne. They prayed for mercy; they begged for life;

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their tears flowed in torrents on the Royal robes, and their hands convulsively clasped Mary's ermine-bordered mantle. Eldrida, inexpressively moved, joined her tears to the afflicted group, and Mary pondered; she might have relented, but the door opened, and Gardiner, stern, pale, saint-like, and resolute, entered. No words of salutation to the Queen passed the prelate's lips; no expressions of wonder at the scene before him: he drew from his breast an ivory crucifix, which he always carried with him; he approached the unfortunate victims of persecution; "Kiss this cross," he said to the eldest member of the group; "kiss this cross—turn from your heresy and live." With a gesture of firm, though painful determination, each one of the afflicted party refused the sign of recantation, and were conducted back to prison and death. Eldrida turned away from the prelate with a shudder, and from that hour she determined to exert all her influence and dedevote her time to the instruction of the Protest-

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ants; happy if she could, however seldom, at least occasionally have the pleasure of saving one brand from the raging fire. Eldrida thought the Roman Catholic religion the best form of worship; her motives were therefore pure; ardently she devoted herself to the self-imposed task. She left scenes of gaiety, tore herself from the voice of admiration which everywhere followed her footsteps, and returned, day after day, to the soul-searching object. When she succeeded, then she led the converted person to her Royal aunt, exclaiming—"Saved! saved!" and even Mary, all bigotted and cruel as she was, felt in the young girl's beaming countenance that hers was a labour of love. What a picture to be traced! the young girl repairing each day with renewed vigour to her task of mixed success and disappointment. She pleads, and her large eyes and full Spanish figure dilate into positive majesty! Now she reads, now she prays, now entreats; and whilst her beauty and grace

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increase with her animation, she never thinks that the loveliness of her person has a leading influence even in the high task. Eldrida's was a lofty style of beauty, which almost baffles description, as it is the majesty of the countenance, the expression of the dark liquid eye, which forms the great attraction of a Spanish girl, and indeed of every mental-looking woman. The English rose did not bloom on Eldrida's soft cheek; her complexion was dark, but of that beautiful soft pure brown which harmonizes best with hair of the darkest hue of black. The contour of her figure, her walk, and general bearing were commanding in the extreme. Scarcely above the middle height, her figure was so well expanded, that she appeared taller; but perhaps her greatest attraction was her voice, so melodious, so soft, so enticing, that it was like the sound of a crystal rivulet, falling drop by drop in the cascade below.

Eldrida was sitting in her own room, when

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her uncle gently knocked at the door; she did not hear the sound, for she was wrapped in one of those reveries which the French call *les domes, rêveries de jeunes filles.*

"Open your door, *or foi de roi,* I will break it with my sword hilt," said Philip, laughingly; as he entered without further bidding; but his countenance fell, when his quick observation made him aware that Eldrida had been weeping. Not a particle of colour was in her cheeks, and her large eyes had an expression of deep wretchedness.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed Philip.

"Nothing at all, my very particular Uncle," answered Eldrida, endeavouring to force a smile.

The King, however, could not be deceived; he put his arm round the young girl's waist, and drawing her towards him—

"Eldrida," he said, "we must have no more of this dull business; you really must not go to the heretics any more. Let Gardiner and Bonner

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do their business; if theywill not repent at their bidding, so much the worse. Nay, I must insist on your abandoning your pursuits. You look harassed and ill. Let me see; you are almost nineteen; why, Eldrida, I have neglected you, but nevertheless we can make up for lost time, and, before long, sweet niece, you must make your choice. The Swedish Ambassador—how like you him?"

"I have never thought of marrying," answered Edrida, quickly.

"Nay but it is time, then. Would that I were one of your *preux Chevaliers*. I will speak to the Queen on the subject."

"No, no, pray do not think of me; I am happier as I now am," answered Eldrida, with a sigh.

The sigh was scarcely audible, but Philip heard it. He looked fixedly at the young girl. Perhaps he was more severe than usual; perhaps she felt some secret sorrow: be this as it may, Eldrida burst into tears.

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There are some dispositions who so soon yield to the emotion of weeping, that very little notice is taken of the circumstances which cause the tears to flow; but Eldrida's was one of those high and daring spirits, who think it a weakness to indulge in grief, and her uncle, never before, since the days when in infancy she dwelt with him, had seen one tear dim her eye. The young girl's weeping was now very violent from its unusual occurrence, and the King, failing to console her, left the room with a disturbed countenance and a painful feeling at his heart, that all was not as it should be with Eldrida.

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CHAPTER II

We left the Princess Elizabeth walking in the grounds which surround her habitation. There was not anything particularly soothing in the contemplation of the past, nor in the fancied visions of the future, which sprung up before her mind; but unwilling to enter into conversation with the ladies of her suite, the Princess frequently wandered about until late in the evening, and on her return not unfrequently spent an hour or two alone, either reading or studying.

"It is no use wasting life in vain hopes, or useless regrets," exclaimed Elizabeth; "I feel

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a secret conviction that my day of glory will come; that Mary will leave the crown without a successor; and when I am Queen of this great realm, England shall say, that the Princess Elizabeth knew how to employ the solitude of her early days, by spending them in improving her mind. Poor England! my heart is with you, and I sympathize with your sufferings; and sooner would I exchange place with the meanest person of the realm, than, following the example of my bigotted sister, kindle again the funeral pile."

Alas! how little are we masters of our actions! What would the wise-minded Princess have said, if any one had appeared to her, and predicted her future life; have foretold how the annals of her great history would be tarnished by the recital of her unfeminine conduct towards the unfortunate Mary of Scots; her weakness and subsequent treatment of the condemned Essex. And the great Princess, who during her young days cared only for the

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beauty of the mind, when she was approaching her seventieth year, became so foolishly and blindly vain, as to allow her courtiers, and even foreign ambassadors, to compliment her on her beauty.*

The Princess retired into the house, and amused herself for some time in arranging the flowers she had culled during her ramble. After completing her task, she was on the point of ringing the bell, in order to return to her attendants, when the door opened, and a venerable man stood before her.

"My good Cranmer," exclaimed the Princess, rising, and placing a chair for the prelate, "you do indeed surprise me; we will have lights."

"No, no," answered the Prelate, as the

* Hume brings forward two notes in corroboration of this fact; as if the historian feared persons would hardly credit the circumstance unless authenticated. "See," says "Birch's Memoirs, vol. II., p. 442; and Sydney's Letters, vol. II., p. 171."

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Princess was on the point of ringing a little silver bell by her side; "my words must be spoken quickly and secretly, and I care not for the light, for my body will soon repose in deeper darkness than this. Princess, I have come to bid you a last farewell."

"Gracious Heaven! can it be true?" answered Elizabeth. "No, no, dear Father, they dare not do it. You are surely not talking in earnest?"

"Alas! I speak too truly," replied Cranmer, "and I shall soon be a heap of cinders; think you there is aught to be gained from Gardiner and Bonner? The latter stills his heart against the very name of humanity, and practises on himself the very cruelties he orders to others. You have marked his shrivelled hand, Lady?"

"Oh, yes," answered Elizabeth; he held his hand to the candle, until the sinews and veins shrunk and burst; and, sometimes he will whip the prisoners with his own hands, until he is

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tired of the violence of the exercise; but, perhaps, Gardiner will not be so obdurate."

"Ah! I repeat it," said Cranmer, "there is nothing to be hoped for from these men, and God's will be done."

"But it is not, it cannot, be His will that one so good and holy as you are, should perish by the hands of his own creatures. I will fall at Mary's feet—she is my sister, and must pity me; I will place myself between her and the door, and Queen Mary must trample over Henry VIII.'s daughter before she escapes my fervent prayer."

"You fall at Mary's feet," replied Cranmer; "then would Henry the Eighth have some trouble to recognise his daughter. Never, never; sooner would I that my blood now stained this floor, than see the Princess Elizabeth humble herself to that haughty woman. Oh, Princess! how vain it is to trust to the promises of the great! Once I rendered your Royal sister a great service, and she earnestly

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promised to serve me, if it were ever in her power. How graciously she has kept her word."

"Art thou sure, good prelate, that thy doom is sealed?" said the Princess.

"Quite sure," answered Cranmer; "and before to-morrow morning dawns, I must be in my prison; but I have sought this interview to speak with your Highness on an important subject. Are we quite safe?"

"Quite so," answered the Princess; "but, in order not to be disturbed, if you will retire into the inner room, I will at once order lights."

Fearing any interruption this time, the prelate consented, and withdrew into the next room, which led to the Princess Elizabeth's private suite of apartments. The latter gave orders to be left alone, pleading indisposition; nor was this statement incorrect, for she felt a chill of horror, in thinking that before many

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evenings closed, the venerable prelate's career in this world would have closed.

When Cranmer returned, Elizabeth gazed through her overflowing eyes on the prelate's ghastly face. He appeared faint, and the Princess earnestly besought him to take some refreshment.

"Kind Princess," said the prelate, "allow me to make use of the short time I have, in communicating my dying wishes to you; in a week I shall be no more."

Elizabeth seized the venerable man's hand; she pressed it within her own: that hand, warm with youthful energy, trembled and almost recoiled when she felt the cold pressure of the prelate's. One large tear after the other fell from her blue eyes, but she was speechless.

"I harass your mind, young Princess, but, nevertheless, I must begin with the early part of my persecution. In an evil hour I was tempted to recant, and to acknowledge myself a convert to that religion which can sanctify

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such deeds of horror as we daily witness in our unhappy country. I recanted; but, Lady, you cannot understand the agony of my feelings, the longing for a continuation of life, which, in spite of myself, stole over my senses, when Gardiner and Bonner multiplied by strong language the horrors of a death at the stake. My blood froze, my heart trembled, my eyes saw through a thick mist; I was beside myself; I feared, I trembled, I durst not die; I—I—recanted! My prison walls still confined me, and none save Gardiner and Bonner witnessed the scene of my unworthy weakness. Not satisfied with my signature, they declared that I must openly proclaim my conversion to their tenets. Then the full force of my sin rushed before me; I remembered that the Holy One, the Lord of all, suffered for us; I remembered, too, that he had declared that "His cross was heavy to bear;" that if we would be His, indeed, we must leave father, and mother, and brother, and every

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tie which binds us to earth. Religion comforted my sinking heart; I stilled the weak desire of life; I lulled human feelings into slumber; I hushed all worldly ideas in the chaos of oblivion; I prayed for grace and strength. Now will I lean on the Rock of ages, and when this soul forsakes its tenement of clay—when the flames have played their destructive part around me—then shall I find a glorious and everlasting reward. Princess, I can suffer now, and not fear the blow."

"Pray let me save you" exclaimed Elizabeth; "that fiery persecution must surely cease. Do as I do: worship God in your own manner, but do it secretly; God will accept your prayers."

"Lady, your position is different to mine," answered the Prelate; I am called upon to declare openly my religion, whilst the Queen will never expect that of you. If the ties of nature and the bonds of affection do not restrain her, she will consult policy. You are beloved by the whole nation, and an open trial of your faith

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would draw the public eye towards you, which the Queen wishes to avoid."

"I believe you are very right," answered the Princess; "but all this argument cannot make me waver. If my life is worth preserving, yours is more so. Still live, good prelate, to guide and instruct those who are led from the right path of religion: fly, hide yourself awhile; I will assist you."

"Be calm, Princess," answered the prelate; let not your youthful spirits tempt me to err. Indeed it is not in my power to escape, if I had the wish."

"Then how came you here, good prelate?"

"The Lady Eldrida assisted me, and I gave her my word that I would return. Am I not right in keeping my promise?"

"The Lady Eldrida has much power," answered the Princess, somewhat bitterly.

"She has," answered the prelate, entirely mistaking the meaning of Elizabeth's words.

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But, all-powerful as she is, I would not that on my account she incurred the displeasure of such men as Gardiner or Bonner. Her life would scarcely be safe, for their revenge is sure and deadly; and surely, to the young, life is even more valuable than to the old, who know that the next step they take will be into the grave."

"Ah! it is strange how sweet is life," replied Elizabeth; "how we cling to it, even when beset by adversities, and borne down with grief. How beset with perilous shoals and fatal sands is our pilgrimage through this world. Sometimes I envy the peasant, singing as he daily repairs to his arduous toil; I envy the careless laugh, when lo! the next morrow dawns, and the enviable happiness has oft-times fled; some unforseen calamity has overtaken him. I turn away with a sigh, and am forced to acknowledge that 'All here below is vanity, and vexation of spirit.'"

"Ah! your Highness——"

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"Nay, nay," interrupted the Princess, "not your Highness; call me sweet Elizabeth, or sweet lady, as in the days of my childhood, when first I heard divine truths fall from thy tongue; then thou lovedst me with parental love, such as a father loves his child."

"Ay, as I *do love my child*," emphatically replied the prelate.

"Thy child!" exclaimed the Princess, starting from her seat; "and yet thou canst not joke."

"It is time to explain myself," answered Cranmer. "Lady, yours is not one of those narrow minds who can allow their intellects and opinions to waver with every passing tenet of the day; surely, if you know aught of the human heart, you are aware, that, although some resemble more than others the bright image in which man was originally created. Still, human inclination, human affections, human admiration of Nature's most beautiful work of creation—woman! is implanted in every

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heart. Although the clergy are now forbidden to marry, it was not always thus, and every right-judging mind must see the utter falseness of a doctrine, which can deny man the privilege ordained by Heaven itself. When was Adam's happiness complete? Though dwelling in Eden's sweet garden, where ever-blooming bowers were planted by his Maker's hands, where streamlets of freshest waters flowed, where fruits of richest ripeness grew; in that abode of peace and happiness, where scenery, harmony, freshness, all, *all* that could enthral the senses, and pour delight into the soul existed, even then, Adam's happiness was not completed until, waking from his deep trance, by his side stood the fairest of the Heavenly creation—woman, in her first innocence and beauty. And when the bright and glowing scene changed—when man, wretched, fallen, degraded and sinful, spurned by the angels, triumphed over by the devil of wickedness, the crawling, deceitful, insidious serpent—was ba-

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nished for ever from his dwelling-place, the fair garden of Eden; then Eve, equally wretched, more culpable, followed her outcast husband, united to him by a tie, considered binding by his all-seeing Master. Alas! the pleasure of loving may be defined, but the anguish of parting from the object of a long-cherished love can never be depicted. I never see a happy couple, newly united by the voice of the Church and deep voice of love, but a dream of the future flashes before me, at the very moment when my smiles ought to co-mingle with the bridal pair. Alas! I think, now both united, who first will break the wedded tie? Who will be the surviving mourner? Who will whisper, "go, join thy Creator; we shall meet in a world above?" When I first looked upon my blushing bride, I thought not of all this, though I have paused upon it since; nor dreamed I that consumption had implanted her deadly seeds, that corruption sat upon that glowing cheek, and the fire of the destroying blaze within was kindled in the azure

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eye. My beautiful bride survived for two years the birth of her only infant—years spent in agony, baffling, as it were, in the arms of death, till at length, calmly resigned, the victim of consumption died, as June's pale rose, before the hand of Time had struck the root. Italia's balmy skies availed naught: there poets love to sing their strains; there the canopy of Heaven smiles brightest; there the purple fruit ripens to strengthen man's body by the juice of its lustrous pendant fruit; but to the dying, sinking body, what climate can restore fresh life, if it is God's will to recall the spirit to its original dwelling-place? Grief for the loss of my beautiful wife for a time deprived me of the use of my reason; the lovely babe, slumbering in her cradle, awoke and lisped her mother's name. Oh, heart-rending call! in vain the tiny hands were stretched forth; in vain the azure eyes wandered about; they rested but upon a disconsolate father. When a mother brings a helpless babe into the world of sin, can she feel the strong

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affection twined round each delicate fibre of the heart? I cannot think it. My babe's cries were different to other babes'; and already a look of pensiveness sat on the features scarcely yet formed. Poor babe! poor babe! I grew weary of its cries; and she might have been neglected, when a kind hand was stretched forth to watch over the delicate infant; and my blessing—the fervent blessing of a father—attend this friend, wherever she may be. The lady I speak of, whose name is Mrs. Stracey, arrived in Italy a few months after the death of my wife; she was accompanied by her little boy, Alphonso, a handsome, noble-faced child, scarcely five years old. The lady was attired in the deepest black; she never spoke of her husband; there was an indescribable something stamped on her lofty, intelligent countenance, which spoke of much suffering: there was a tremulous sweetness about the voice, which seemed to indicate that smothered, but soft affection, was still busy at her heart.

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Her dark-eyed boy was as different to his mother as an obscure November fog to June's celestial sky. He could scarcely be called spoilt, for Mrs. Stracey suffered not one wayward wish to be gratified; but even when with prompt obedience the boy desisted from some forbidden sport, there was a haughty toss of the well-turned head, a quick rolling of the large dark eye, and, above all, a slight curl of the lip, which made the mother's heart beat; and once I heard her mutter to herself—"How like his father!" a deep sigh followed this remark. There are sorrows into which no human eye dare pry; there are characters, with whom grief is too sacred to be discussed. Unhappy, Mrs. Stracey evidently appeared, but the word *guilty* associated with her pure expression of countenance, could not be coupled.

We were then at Florence. Mrs. Stracey resided at a beautiful villa, near the Palazzo Pitti. Her grace, her excessive beauty, her

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subdued look of sorrow, could not fail attracting attention; but it was evidently, not the lady's wish to receive admiration. As, day after day, she took her accustomed walk by the side of the flowing Arno, her greatest pleasure seemed to be embracing my little motherless Constance; she pressed her soft cheek to hers with a fondness, which seemed to say—"I want such a gentle being to comfort me!" Then she turned to her high-spirited boy, who was bounding before her, and her large blue eyes filled with tears.

The city of Florence is divided into two unequal parts, by the river Arno, over which four handsome bridges are erected.

One fine morning, my child, accompanied by an attendant, was taken for her usual walk, when the nurse, in a moment of forgetfulness, placed the infant on one of the projecting flat pieces of iron of the bridge, that she might be pleased with the view around. The child, no doubt thought little of the scenery, but was

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delighted beyond measure with her elevated situation. Constance was at the time little more than two years old; she was so delicately made, so fair, so sylph-like, that it was perfectly wonderful how swiftly she trod, as if her light feet scarcely touched the ground. Suddenly the child darted away from her maid, and before the terrified attendant could look round, the agile creature bounded down the narrow railing, which continued until it ended in a slope, and before an exclamation could be heard, Constance had reached the terminus and was caught in Mrs. Stracey's arms. A smile of triumph played round the infant's dimpled cheek; but not so her deliverer's: had Constance paused one moment, had her tiny foot stumbled only half an inch, a watery grave awaited the daring infant; whilst, had she not been caught in Mrs. Stracey's arms, she would have been dashed with violence to the ground, at the terminus of the bar on which she stood, as the distance to the foot-path was

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beyond a child's reach. Happy moment, when Mrs. Stracey clasped the child to her bosom, whilst Constance fainted from fright and excitement—when a numerous concourse of persons assembled on the bridge, all eagerly discoursing the child's perilous position. I say that I felt deep gratitude for Mrs. Stracey's timely assistance, and a train of circumstances requiring my presence in England, I left my child under her deliverer's care. Years passed, and Constance improved as she grew; the lily scarcely surpasses her snowy skin, and the rose might own her cheek its rival; her hair, of silken softness, is of the colour silk-worms spin their fragile fabric, encircled by a slight shade of darkness from Italia's sun; in tapered ringlets down her shoulders it streams, and shades, without concealing, her faultless features. Timid as the forest deer, Constance is firm in one, alas! too fatal point—she is a stanch Protestant. She has dwelt in the midst of Popery, she has witnessed its most solemn rituals; and

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her feelings are only more strongly drawn towards that pure, that simple, yet heart-searching religion, which our Saviour came down from glory on high to inculcate. "Princess, my fate is sealed, and so will my innocent child's be, unless a strong and powerful arm is stretched forth to protect, and save her. Lady, it is worthy of your high hand."

"But where is Mrs. Stracey?" quickly answered Elizabeth.

"There is a fearful mystery about that unhappy lady," said Cranmer. "Her son entered the army, and by his courage gained rapid advancement; but, following the King of Spain to England, change of climate enfeebled him, and he became dangerously ill. The unhappy parent, who doted on her son with a deeper love than even maternal affection generally bestows on her offspring, settled her affairs, and, accompanied by Constance, repaired to England. Affectionately Constance took her place by the invalid's couch, and in her pure

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heart grew a daily stronger flame, so unusual, so strange, to the timid girl, that one day, when I paid my daily visit to the country seat near Windsor, which Mrs. Stracey inhabited, I was struck by my child's pale countenance.

"I do not think you are quite well, my love," said Mrs. Stracey, drawing her towards her.

"I am quite well," answered Constance, returning her caress, "but—but, there is something here—I do not understand," and she placed her hand upon her heart; "I will go to Alphonzo, and as he looks upon me, I feel comforted."

Constance rushed from the room, and Mrs. Stracey burst into tears. Before I could recover my astonishment, or offer condolence, the lady began speaking in passionate but mysterious language.

"Weak, short-sighted mortals that we are," she exclaimed; "why had I not foreseen this blow? Constance loves my son—and he never can be hers."

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"Why not?" I asked, piqued at what I thought pride.

"Oh! do not look proudly at me," answered the afflicted lady, nor pry into what I dare not reveal; a terrible oath binds me to secresy; and should memory fail from the intenseness of pain which I feel from the restraint, still, still, I may not speak! Alphonzo belongs not to me. What did I say? Why did you start? Yes, yes! he is my son, my only son; the noblest blood flows through his veins—he is *not* the child of sorrow or shame, and yet I—what have I said? did I reveal it? Cranmer, take away your lovely girl—let not sorrow sit upon her brow; pleasure alone should fan that angelic face. Alphonzo cannot marry—no, no, I must not speak!" More words she uttered, but they were more incoherent, more wild than the first. I called loudly to Constance—I rushed up stairs—I found her sitting by Alphonzo's couch. Wrapped in a large cloak, lined with crimson silk, he lay, with scarcely

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any index that life was in the tall body, for it looked still and pale as statuary marble; not a drop of blood appeared to circulate in the transparent veins, so pure, so smooth, was the brow over which clustered the richest black hair, making what was in fact an olive complexion, appear of dazzling whiteness in the darkened chamber. The large dark eyes were subdued, and rested pensively on Constance, who, sitting on a low seat by the couch, listened to words which, no doubt, though I heard them not, were breathed in the tenderest spirit of love. 'Unhappy girl,' I exclaimed drawing her away, 'come, come to your father's arms; come away from trial and sorrow; come dwell where hopeless love shall not blanch your cheeks, nor your innocent smiles be withered by the destroyer's frowns.' Before the invalid could understand the scene, before Constance could recover her astonishment, she was on horseback by my side, and cantering away from the home where her young heart lingered. Then came

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the time when the persecution began; when the clergy's marriages were not considered lawful, and I concealed my Constance with her faithful attendant in a little cottage, by a lonely moor; and as the wind blew, and the rain pattered down, as I kissed away her starting tears, how my heart was rung; how I—no I did *not* curse, but I regretted the hour of her birth.

"No more of this; my time is short. Lady, I adjure you, by the remembrance of your injured mother, by your hopes of the future, by your recollection of your younger days, to every soft, to every feminine feeling, I apply to you. Oh, protect, protect my child. I will send her to you; call her Constance Comines, which is the name of the lady the French Queen intended sending you, for a maid in waiting. No one besides yourself and the person who brought you the news know, that fearing Queen Mary's irritable humour, the young lady refused to leave her native country. Your messenger told me the circumstance, for I had known him

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abroad. Take my child, Princess; she will wait upon you, she will love you, she will twine round your heart, and bless your name. Take the fatherless girl to your Royal arms. God will reward you, God will bless you. He is the father of the small and the great, of the rich and the poor. Take her—take her."

Sobs choked his voice, but Elizabeth's mingled with his. The father felt his prayer was heard; and when Elizabeth looked up, when she drew her handkerchief from her eyes, the old man had eft, and she was alone.

Flow on, flow on, tears of sympathy; pour down from your crystal cell. Fear not to moisten the fair cheek, to swell the beauteous eye; there is a secret hallowed feeling in the scalding, falling drop. In after years, amidst scenes of trouble, when love and its attendant passions were harassing a Queenly breast; when, after hearing the Countess of Nottingham's confession, she shook the dying lady in her bed, when she burst from her, with the hardened

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words, "*God may forgive you, but I never can;*" when she refused consolation, sustenance, or advice; when she lay down on the hard floor instead of her splendid couch; when she raved for the beheaded Essex, then lay down again and died, what then would Elizabeth have given for the relief of tears—for one of those sobs of early feeling and of a softer heart!

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CHAPTER III.

THERE are some natures upon whom affection takes a stronger hold than on others; and, generally speaking, a naturally cold heart, when once warmed by the tie of love, of whatsoever nature it may be—on such a heart the fire will feed, until every particle of it beats with equal warmth. Philip of Spain's coldness towards his English wife is too generally known to require speaking of; and that rich monarch, who boasted "that the sun never set upon his vast dominions," could not boast that the sunshine of affection equally warmed his heart

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towards his wife. In one point, however, the Royal couple always agreed—they both doted with fond affection upon Lady Eldrida; and her pensive, sometimes mournful, expression of countenance, was strongly in her favour. Her Royal relatives joined deep sympathy with their love for the Spanish girl, whose morbidly sensitive mind dwelt with warmth upon little acts of kindness.

It is, indeed, very true, that upon "the smallest trifles hang the sum of human happiness;"* and none felt the maxim so strongly as the dark-eyed Spanish girl. She was far from the scenes of her early days—away from the warmth which is not only felt in the sky, but eloquently spoken in the rich Spanish eye, in the quick gesture, and the rounded, voluptuous lips. She could not accustom herself to the equanimity of an English disposition; with her, all was love or hate; she knew no medium, and

* Hannah More.

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her hand could one hour have grasped a person in friendship, or drawn a stiletto the next to pierce an enemy's heart. Unhappy girl! she never paused to check this extravagant temper—her will was her law. Wild as the Arab steed upon which, in her infant days, she rode, nor place, nor time, nor danger could stop the impetuous girl in her uncontrolled career. And yet, under much self-will, under much pride, and much obstinacy, there lurked the seeds of a better nature. A pity it was that some skilful hand was not stretched forth to quell the stormy passions; to speak of gentleness, of meekness; to pour words of encouragement where they were wanted, and also to speak severely, if required. Better let the righteous man reprove, than listen to the plaudits of the unworthy.

In Philip of Spain, Eldrida found an indulgent, an affectionate and generous friend. Like his niece he was enthusiastic, and would often do a deed of goodness, more because there was

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a tincture of romance, or a display of energy in the action, than because it was enjoined to us by a Just and Holy One "to weep with those who weep."

Did Eldrida like her uncle? She doted on him; she watched his every look; she felt a glowing delight in having his praise; she hung upon his words, and if she displeased him, she knew no greater pain. Willingly would she on these occasions have made any sacrifice, but the words of contrition died away. Pride, in its worst form, interposed; pride, in its most insidious garb, clothed in obstinacy. Deeply feeling her uncle's displeasure, yet unwilling to confess her fault, Eldrida was on these occasions intensely miserable, and a severe headache, which confined her to her room, was generally the consequence; and the haughty Philip of Spain, who bowed not his pride to any living being besides, was the first to conciliate her. On the last occasion, however, that Philip saw his niece, he was more distressed than angry. Long after he left her,

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he paced his room in great agitation. The Princess Elizabeth's note was entirely forgotten, and Woodstock far from his thoughts. Tired of walking, Philip advanced to a bureau, and leaning his head on the slanting desk, indulged in a reverie, deep and absorbing.

Twice he fancied he heard his name, and did not raise his head; but at length, hearing it repeated, he looked up, and angrily asked who dared intrude upon his solitude?

"Ha! is it you, Calipsa?" he said, looking fixedly at Eldrida's old attendant, who appeared quite heedless of the angry tone in which Philip spoke.

"I thought," said the attendant, slowly and firmly, "that I might be of some service to your Majesty, who appears annoyed about the Lady Eldrida."

"Annoyed," said Philip, in bitterness pronouncing the word; "Eldrida's agitation has unmanned me—has wrung my heart to its deep

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core. Is there one human being I love on earth? it is Eldrida. Is there one whom I regard with a pure and devoted love? it is Eldrida. Calipsa, you, who, following my footsteps, know much of me, and oft-times can read my very thoughts—you, who know what none save yourself even dreams of—still I defy you to understand the whole delight there is in feeling that the ties of nature have given me a *right*, an undisputed *right*, to dote, to love, to look with delight upon my niece. All other beautiful and intellectual females I may meet have other ties, other friends to care for, and there is no pure affection in loving one of these. But Eldrida is an orphan; I am her guardian, her protector; hitherto I have filled her heart, and she has cared for no other love to take place of the affection she has for me. Calipsa, your directions were plain; I told you I intended her hand to be given to one of the most illustrious persons in Europe. With the dowry I intend for her, no obstacle would

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arise, and her beauty would enrich the gift. But fondly loving her as I do, I did not wish her, in sweet blushing girlhood, to leave me for a more binding, a holier love. I intended seeing her grow up to womanhood; I contemplated being within reach of her smiles, of her looks of affection. Eldrida, in thy haughty mood of pride, I love thee still; if thou art unhappy, I cannot laugh, and to-day I left thee bathed in tears; poor Eldrida——— old woman, beware of my vengeance if you have betrayed the trust I reposed in you; beware, beware! Who does my niece love? for some secret passion is hidden in her breast."

Calipsa raised her bony figure to its utmost heighth, and approaching the King, whispered in his ears.

"'Tis false," replied Philip, pushing the old woman rudely from him; "'tis false as thou art. Now hear me, old crone: shrine thy conscience; take thy last farewell of earth; thou shalt die."

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"Ha! ha! ha! King of Spain, is that thy dread punishment? Thinkest thou I have not long enough borne the burden of life? Look at my sunken eye and shrivelled skin. Ah, not half so sunken as my broken heart. Who would think Calipsa had once been blithe and gay; that she rose with the sun, and sung with the lark; that Andalusia boasted not a bonnier lass, when I was trusted by—"

"Mention not her name," interrupted Philip, placing his hand on Calipsa's mouth. Calipsa, when I fain would speak calmly, I cannot; my anger masters me. I have marked Vesuvius' volcano; I have marked the gradual storm which shook the earth, arise. I have stood nigh that burning mountain, where Pliny lost his life; where Pompeii and Herculaneum were buried under the stones and ashes; but, Calipsa, the dreadful eruption does not take place suddenly; for years the mountain will send forth smoke, sometimes throwing out stones, scoriæ, and cinders. Then appears more

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smoke, and from the mountain's intestines burst forth rumbling, strange, unfathomable noises; and during the night the sublime sight of the most beautiful fireworks may be seen. Beautiful did I call it? At last the curious dare only gratify their curiosity at a distance, and venture only to gaze through telescopes at a sight too grand, too terrific for human eyes. When the awful crash arrived, windows shattered to atoms, shrieks rent the air, drowned by the sound of the burning crater; fountains of liquid, transparent fire, arose; puffs of dense smoke succeeded a pale, electrical fire, playing in zig-zag lines. The fire spread, the wind carried it backwards and forwards. Awful, dreadful, soul-searching sight! to what shall I liken Mount Vesuvius? Start not, Calipsa; it is like the human heart. Gradual at first is the work of fiery passions—slow, indeed, but sure; burning, wearing, tearing the human heart; then bursting forth, in jealousy, revenge, malice, and every hateful

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passion. Calipsa, this must not be Eldrida's fate; I will stop her from falling into the volcano of unhappiness. Oh! 'tis a dreadful thing to mark youth's grief; to see the open brow lined with untimely marks; to watch the shades of care falling upon a creature God has made naturally blithe and gay; to see youth's buoyant laugh blighted, and the fire of the eye dimmed. Tell me, is there yet time? I will give young——, let me say the name—young Stracey—a post in a distant army. Will time work the cure, Calipsa?"

"Ah! your Majesty, the Lady Eldrida is not like these cold English girls; and love, which to them is a traffic of money, a change of name, a position in society, is to our southern blood a passion deep and lasting; it will dull the fire of our maidens' eyes, it will eat away the damask tint, will sear the heart, will fever the brain—but such love cannot change or roam. Though ocean's billows, placed between them, may divide each other's gaze; though

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tossed by affliction's fury, the heart may sink, it will not turn. Philip of Spain, curse me if thou wilt—revile me, spurn me—but listen to thy slave—sever not united hearts."

"Calipsa, you think not of what you ask," furiously answered Philip; "you, who know the revenge which lurks in Spanish blood, would you have me trust Eldrida's happiness to one who will hate the friend of her youth; who will despise and abhor me? Even now, he may know the secret of his birth; and the oath which bound his dead mother to secresy may have been slighted ere this; and when he hears all, when he knows that * * * Enough, enough, this must not be; help me, advise me; here is gold, plenty of gold."

"Keep your money," answered Calipsa, "I want none of your gold; clothe not your words in silken vesture. Speak plainly, even as I speak. Advice do you want? No, no; you want me again to sin, to break more hearts. Speak plainly, but offer me not gold; Calipsa

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despises the Royal hand which gives it, and serves your Majesty with the same blind fondness which causes a dog to caress his master's hand, even when he beats him. Recompense! What reward is my due for sending my soul to everlasting punishment?"

"Nonsense, woman, you shall be absolved!"

"Ha! ha! do I believe in those rites? Ay, once I did, when, as a girl, I confessed sins, which now weigh light as wafers in the heavy balance against me. But the veil of Popery, the falsity of confession, where no amendment ensues, is torn from my eyes."

"What! art thou confessing thyself a heretic?" said the King, forcing a smile.

"Would I were as good as some of those heretics," was the evasive reply.

"Well," answered the King, "the Princess Elizabeth could scarce have spoken better;" and at the mention of her name, he remembered his note. Hastily writing a few lines, he gave them to the old woman. "Deliver

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this to my Lord Gardiner. And now leave me —more of this sad business anon."

* * * * *

And Calipsa was left alone—alone with thoughts of deep and secret sin. There was One, the wretched woman knew, who could read every guilty line written on her hardened heart; there was One, she knew, who could take revenge, passing man's retaliating revenge, on the evil she had done. Burning drops of sorrow coursed down her cheeks; sighs, deep and loud, echoed from their pent-up abode.

"Of one sin, however, I am innocent," exclaimed Calipsa, talking aloud, in the bitterness of her grief. "Agnes Stracey lives; my hand did not—poison her."

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CHAPTER IV.

When Calipsa returned to Eldrida, she found her very ill. The fire of fever sat upon her dark eye, and tinged her southern cheek. Her hair was negligently thrown back, her voice was hasty and imperious.

"Where is my uncle?" she asked.

"He is going out."

"I must see him."

"Lady, he is displeased."

"What care I?" answered Eldrida; "I have given him no cause for displeasure."

"Lady, when the provident swallow flie

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from her nest, it is not the present danger she fears; she builds her anxiety upon the future."

"The future," replied Eldrida, bitterly; "and what of the future for me? When once young Stracey is free, he will forget the Spanish Girl, who loves him more than all the fair-eyed English beauties. Though he bears an English name, I know not why, I cannot trace his English origin. There is a warmth in his dark eye, an enthusiastic ardour in his voice, a something which is too indescribable to dwell upon. Calipsa, often in thy passing moods of humour, I have listened to thy tales with pleasure, and oft-times pleasant things were presaged, such as that I should be happy and great. Come now near my bedside, and say, shall I gain young Stracey's love?"

There was a pause. Eldrida raised her large eyes, now flushed with fever, to the old woman's deeply-furrowed countenance. "Lady Eldrida, indeed I dare not think of the future. If you continue self-willed, difficulties must

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arise; your enemy is your own heart, fortitude your best friend. Forget young Stracey—he never spoke to you of love?"

"Never, Calipsa; and still he is the theme of my thoughts, the object of my dreams—my first, my only love. The word "love" is imprisoned in his breast, but it lurks in his smile; it trembles on his lips, and eloquently speaks in the radiant glances of his searching eye. Wretched I can be—I can smother my sobs, I can bid the tear cease to flow; but if I thought his destiny were chained to another's, nor place nor time should stand before me; never should he clasp his bride—sooner shall my hand pierce her heart."

Calipsa started with horror; but seeing the delirium of a high fever approaching, she administered a soothing potion, darkened the room, and at length, after restless, tossing, and incoherent exclamations, the Spanish Girl fell into one of those heavy dozes which follow the excitement of fever.

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When Calipsa knew by the heavy breathing that all pain was hushed, and that uninterrupted sleep had taken possession of her patient, she stationed a domestic in the anteroom; and clothing herself in a shawl, and putting a large bonnet over her head, she quickly but noiselessly trod the almost mystic corridors, and descending the winding stairs, now mounting a few steps, now descending, until, by the light of a dim lantern, she found herself in a small turret, where she paused. She saw the guard outside the door leading to the opposite side of the passage; his back was towards her, and by the attitude in which he stood, he appeared drowsy. In breathless haste Calipsa drew forth a key from under her shawl, and in less than a second was in a small, damp room. Seated by a small table, was young Stracey, looking pale and intensely unhappy. After asking after Lady Eldrida's health, he remained silent, unable to command enough energy to enter into conversation.

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"Young man, would you like to leave your dungeon?"

"Certainly," replied Alphonzo Stracey; "especially as I know not why I am here."

"Yes you do," answered Calipsa, sternly. "Your foreign Christian name, coupled with your English surname, your foreign appearance, give you a suspicious look; and you refuse to satisfy my Lord Gardiner's scruples, besides being only an indifferent Roman Catholic."

"The latter opinion of me I care not to dispute; an angel of purity taught me that the mild Protestant religion was the right path in which to walk, and one feather in the scale would make me a heretic; but such a confession now is not necessary. As to the secret of my birth, I would give more than my Lords Gardiner or Bonner to discover it."

"Do you mean to say, you know not your parents?"

"Not my father," answered Alphronzo; "and even had I deemed it generous to let merciless

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men know my mother's place of abode, I cannot do it, for when I returned home one afternoon I found it desolate, and no traces of my mother's future abode was left to cheer my lonely steps. A note from her informed me that she was quite safe, and that one day, perhaps, I should see her again, but not yet. Although I can scarcely refrain making inquiries about her, my mother once enjoined me not to mention her name to any one, and I dare not disobey her, for fear harm should arise."

"Young man, your mother is right; and now listen to me. I know more of your early life than you do yourself; never speak of your mother to any one: she is safe, but one imprudent word may forfeit her life. And hearken further. The King of Spain will befriend you; heed not his hasty words, his heart is good; but beware on one point: give not encouragement to the Lady Eldrida, for she thinks you love her. Do you not?"

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"I know not what right you have to ask such a question," answered Philip; "but if the answer can save Lady Eldrida from one unpleasant pang, I can candidly answer, that I have not encouraged such an idea as love towards her. Much gratitude of course I feel, for a young and very beautiful lady sacrificing many hours in cheering a lonely prisoner; but I understand that Lady Eldrida was in the habit of extending this favour to many other prisoners besides."

"True," said Calipsa, rather tartly; "but all the prisoners do not *look* admiration, nor cause unavailing sighs. Ah, you young people may scoff, when I say that I know what it is to love; ugly I now am, but once I was fresh and young. Lady Eldrida's eye is not brighter than was mine, nor her hair more glossy and black; and time, which has left indelible lines on my brow, has also imprinted a bitter lesson on my heart; and deep in its recesses, even now I feel the pang of disappointed love. I

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am wearying you: no more of this; I have come to set you free, on condition that you seek not afterwards to speak to Lady Eldrida."

"I have not the least wish to do so, only pray forget not to return her my best thanks for all her kindness to an unknown prisoner."

"Nay, nay, this will not do for me; you shall not move from hence until you have bound yourself by a solemn oath never to speak to Lady Eldrida; a few words of common-place courtesy, should you ever meet, I will exempt; but if you ever meet her purposely, if you suffer her to give you an appointment, if you have any intercourse with her, by word, or mouth, or letter, my vengeance will accompany you wherever you go, and your mother's fate will be dreadful."

Alphonzo did not take the desired oath immediately; he cross-questioned the old woman; he made her describe his mother. She did so most accurately; there was nothing wanting in the portrait; her noble bearing, her look of

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resigned sorrow, all was complete. Alphonzo, firmly believing that his fate was in the old woman's keeping, gave her the binding oath she required, pronounced the words on the crucifix she held to him, and then again Calipsa spoke.

"Here is the King's signet-ring — you will speedily gain an exit; follow this pasage—give the words, 'England and Spain;' they are the passwords this evening. Wrap your cloak around you; show not the signet-ring unless your passage is opposed. Go! why do you linger?"

"Because I have a few words to speak, which are of more importance to me than liberty itself—for what is liberty without happiness? If I could speak to Cranmer but for a few moments, I care not how soon I go."

"Did any one but you speak to me as you do," answered Calipsa, "it would not serve their turn; but you have your father's spirit, his warm heart, his commanding voice. Come,

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I will show you the way to Cranmer's cell; after to-morrow, he dies."

"Poor old man," said Alphonzo, touchingly.

"Ah! poor old man, you say now," answered Calipsa, musingly; "wait yet a few years, and, perhaps, that same voice will be heard sanctioning deeds of equal barbarity. Was I not pitying towards my fellow-creatures once? Ha! ha! and now——"

During this soliloquy, the young man and his strange conductor passed the guards; and, as the right word of pass was given, no obstacle occurred. The night guards did not know Alphonzo, and he continued unmolested, following his guide through turnings and windings, which appeared to him a perfect labyrinth.

"This is the room in which Cranmer is confined," said Calipsa; and going up to the nearest guard, she asked where she could find the turnkey?

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The man shook his head, but pointed to a small door. Calipsa opened it cautiously, and the first noise she heard was a loud snoring. "Go on sleeping, good man," thought she; "the weight of these keys fatigue you." She noiselessly passed the bed, and taking up a candle which was on the floor, she held it before a strip of wood, from which, suspended on long hooks, hung many a huge rusty key. A label was attached to each one, and when Calipsa came to the name "Cranmer," she detached the key and stole out of the room as softly as she had entered it. Alphonzo unfastened the door, and bidding Calipsa wait outside, was soon by the approaching martyr's side. Cranmer was sleeping soundly on a miserable pallet; the roof of his cell was so low that the bed was almost on the floor to prevent its touching the ceiling, which was green from damp and the hand of time. The walls had once been papered, but now hung in tattered pieces; whilst, here and there, patches were en-

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tirely torn away, and coarse snatches of songs written by profane hands substituted; and in the smallest corner of that miserable room, slept one more worthy to slumber on a downy couch than Mary, the bigotted, who reposed upon it. How unfathomable are the ways of Providence—how past finding out! It is a difficult, but very necessary, doctrine, to believe that—

"He whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth."

Although the wicked prosper awhile, the blow will eventually come to disappoint unrighteous plans. Probably Queen Mary contemplated establishing the Roman Catholic faith in England, not only intending its rituals to be observed during her reign, but hoping that, in ages to come, her established religion would be the acknowledged and only existing one throughout Europe. Many historians exculpate Mary from blame; they declare that she acted from conscientious motives, thinking her religion the best. But, may I ask, are we certain

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she did act from such motives? The Roman Catholic religion, although different in some material points from the Protestant, still has one faith, one hope, tending to the same road. Brethren and believers in Christ both sects are, hoping alike to be saved through His intercession, knowing alike that by nature we are heirs to Death, and everlasting punishment. How, then, could Mary believe she was acting in the spirit of Christianity, when the reeking blood of the innocent martyrs daily called for Heaven's vengeance? Had not that Holy One, whose life was peace, commanded Peter to return the sword in its place, and not to shed blood? And was it for His sake—was it under cover of serving the meek Prince of Peace—that relentless men sacrificed their fellow-creatures?

Again, Henry the Eighth, Mary's imperious father, had turned to the Protestant religion, in order to satisfy private feelings of revenge against the Pope and his Roman Catholic sub-

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jects; * and Mary, probably, was influenced by the same motives, when she restored the Popish forms. She disliked her sister Elizabeth—she was jealous of her superior beauty and attainments; and was it not very possible that she imagined that if once she firmly instituted the Roman Catbolic religion in England, Elizabeth would be excluded from the succession?

Although the Princess had not been formally called upon to dcclare her religious tenets, Mary could, at any time, have proved how sincerely her sister leant to the Protestant side.

Taking every view of the question, I cannot agree with those persons who exalt Mary's heinous transactions until they persuade themselves she was virtuous. But I do sincerely hope that many of her offences may be forgiven by the One who sees more into the heart at one glance than we short-sighted mortals can after the severest historical research into the

* 1546.

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character of that Queen, who, from childhood, we are taught to call "Bloody Queen Mary."

Return we now to Cranmer. Alphonzo continued some time gazing at the Prelate, as he lay passively stretched in the arms of Morpheus. He knew that every moment was precious; and still, when he would fain wake the venerable man, his hand fell powerless by his side, for he could not find courage to disturb a sleep, which buried wo in temporary oblivion. Even in repose, the integrity of mind, the bland suavity of Cranmer's temper, were drawn on the unconscious features; and Alphonzo shuddered when he contemplated the amiable slumberer, and remembered that the span of his life had nearly drawn to a close; that his days were numbered, and that man, sinful erring man, would raise his hand to strike the blow. At length the sleeper woke; the expression of listless indifference gradually subsided, and as the prelate opened his eyes he heaved a heavy sigh, a sigh of a conscious return to pain,

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and grief, and solitude. Cramner was much surprised when he saw Alphonzo standing by him. His first impulse was anger, but he looked again on the young man's pale countenance, and there he read not only sympathy towards himself, but personal suffering. Deep and earnest was their short conference; Cranmer opened the subject nearest Alphonzo's heart —he spoke of Constance, and at the sound of her name a thrill of desponding feeling ran through the father's breast, at the idea of leaving his orphan girl; no wonder, then, that he listened eagerly, when young Stracey spoke of his affection towards her; when he assured the astonished father that he loved, dearly loved, his fair daughter, but that an insurmountable obstacle must prevent their union; and that when Cranmer imagined he was pouring a tale of love into the fair girl's ears, he was arguing with her upon theological subjects, and both were vainly endeavouring to remove the bar which stood between them, for Constance was

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most strongly attached to the Protestant religion, and her lover was a Roman Catholic, although Bonner had *chosen* to doubt the strength of his principles. Poor Cranmer! he heard all, and he imagined he had discovered the mystery which hung around Mrs. Stracey; he imagined that a great part of her grief was owing to the difference between her religion and her son's. He sounded the young man's principles of conduct; there was no one in that lonely cell to bias or to advise. Cranmer knew that his daughter was too firm in her religious opinions to change her determination. He questioned the young man concerning his parentage; and when Alphonzo, in unaffected sorrow, confessed that he was as ignorant as the prelate, for a moment the latter felt staggered in his opinions, and disappointed in his hopes; but he looked up once more—he gazed earnestly at Alphonzo's handsome, noble, and intelligent countenance; he remmbereed poor Mrs. Stracey's words, "he is not the child of

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shame;" and without further hesitation, Cranmer informed the astonished Alphonzo of the Princess Elizabeth's intention of protecting his child; but fearing danger might arise during the journey, knowing no one who would escort her, he entrusted her safety to the very being from whom he had a short time ago severed her, after solemnly declaring, that relying upon Alphonzo's honour, a father's blessing, or his deepest malediction, would attend him. A few words of mutual blessing, a cordial farewell followed, and the impatient Calipsa sternly refused to wait any longer.

I do not know whether our intellects take a different turn as we draw nearer to the eternal shore—whether a belief springs into the heart, that we are inspired how to act; but, how frequently men are led, on their death-beds, to alter plans of long years' arranging, of many anxious speculations.

Had any one told Alphonzo that Cranmer intended committing Constance to his pro-

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tection, he would have laughed, and called it the silly rambling of an insane mind; but now the event appeared perfectly natural. And when Calipsa, in her dry, caustic manner, asked the young man if he were satisfied with his visit to the prelate, Alphonzo noticed not the sarcastic manner of the speaker, but quietly answered, that his visit had indeed cheered him.

Calipsa knew every turning and winding of the intricate tower. There was something very solemn in passing through the sombre building in the dark hour of night, guided only by the light of a dismal lamp. Damp and unearthly was the odour emitted by the humid air, as they continued descending; until Calipsa, with a triumphant smile, exclaimed—"Here is the mud wall again in view, and through this dungeon is an exit known to few now living."

"You appear intimately acquainted with the outlets of the Tower," said Alphonzo to his conductor, breaking a long silence.

"So are the bats," answered Calipsa; "they

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wander about as I do. When there is no one nigh to point at their ugliness, when animals of a superior creation are slumbering, then alone do the revolting creatures venture forth."

Alphonzo did not find an answer at first, for there was a degree of bitterness in the old woman's language which he could not understand. After a short pause, however, he continued—

"Why compare yourself to so loathsome an animal? The bat wanders about at night, it is true, but there is another cause beside hiding its ugliness, for the bat loves to conceal its destroying propensity, and dilapidates the treasured remains of old buildings, assisted by his companions, the mischevious owls, whilst you assist your fellow-creatures; and if you do the deed in the secret of the night, accuse your fellow-men, whose cry for vengeance and blood prevent your openly showing your goodness."

"Goodness! did you say?" almost shrieked

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Calipsa; "is there any goodness in the boa constrictor, when he looks without vengeance upon the harmless rabbit within his deadly grasp? Is he not sure, that with one distension of his enormous mouth, he can satiate his hunger?"

"I do not understand you," answered Alphonzo, slightly, but perceptibly, shuddering.

"Perhaps not," replied the old woman; "but it is my custom to speak in riddles. I bartered my happiness for riddles I have never solved; the whole world is a riddle, and we the component parts of it; go, then, and solve mine, and add this—'The boa-constrictor when confined cannot seek the harmless rabbit, but when it is brought to him he will gladly eat it;' so Calipsa will not seek Alphonzo Stracey, but should her keeper throw him into her den, she must satisfy—if not her own feelings of revenge—those of others, under whose directions she acts. Young man, now we part; though now under the damp ground, there is a

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trap-door above, which has the appearance simply of a piece of pavement, over an old spring of water. We are far from reach, and although I have this night befriended you, *beware of me in future*, for I blindly follow my chalked-out path, hired by one who stops not at any danger. Farewell." She raised the trap-door; Alphonzo with difficulty climbed up, and before he could thank the extraordinary old woman, she had already retreated, and was retracing her steps. "Ha! ha! ha! how I love this damp old place," she exclaimed, sitting down, notwithstanding the chilly air. "I am alone here, and under no one's control, and I can jeer and laugh at human nature, and I can think what fools the most cunning persons are; aye, and I can rail against Kings and Queens without the attainder of treason. Ha! ha! Philip! Didst think I could have poisoned her? Didst think I could have withstood that large blue eye, bathed in tears, and the rending appeal she made to my heart?

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Heart! have I one left? It never beats in fear, it never palpitates in pleasure; it never sinks, it never rises; and yet, perhaps, my heart is warmer than Mary's, Queen of England; and they pray for her *Christian Majesty* in the church! And where is her heart? Fathers bend their knees to her, and she bids them rise; mothers, bathed in tears, supplicate, and she spurns them, infants kiss her robes, and she turns from their innocent pleadings. But even in this world doth she receive her punishment, for all the fond hopes she entertains of having an heir to this fine country will be blighted; her husband, upon whom she dotes with blind and devoted fondness, cares not for his English bride; and there lives one, he thinks now dead, who could move him more by one tear, than the Queen with her pomp and her glory. Is Royal happiness disguised grief? Is Royal power the pleasure of ordering an execution? Are Royal passions revenge, bitterness, and jealousy? Mary, Mary, Queen of

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England, I envy not thy purple and gold; and oh! I envy not thy cankered heart. And Gardiner told me to shrine my conscience; and does he tell the Queen to do the same? What have I to do with the Queen? Perhaps more than she would like to know. Ha! ha! Mary, are we equal in any thing? Yes, in wickedness!

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CHAPTER V.

It was a calm moonlight night, in the middle of June, when a young man, mounted on a handsome charger, galloped across an open space of ground in the neighbourhood of Windsor. He cantered on; he paused not to look at the canopy of Heaven, sprinkled with the starry twinkling luminaries; he thought not of the refreshing night breezes, which gently wafted around his cheek; he thought not of the beautiful reflection of the moon's rays upon the grassy hillocks and the rising plains; but though the cavalier (whose sword hilt shone

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brightly when the wind threw back his cloak) paused not to think separately of the many attractions of the moon-tide beauty, he felt a grateful sense of the enthralling splendour of the scene. He passed Windsor Castle, that seat of princely greatness, of princely pleasures, and princely wo; there some had wept their last tears; there others had buried their last joyous laugh; comedy and tragedy were there commingled, vice and virtue there had dwelt. The horseman swept by the venerable pile, and continuing his solitary ride, the beauty of the scenery increased. Cottages of dazzling whiteness appeared on rising mounds, apparently springing from fairy wand; little pieces of water, upon whose surface the moon had cast her silvery rays, and many a star had also shed its brightness; groups of solemn-looking fir trees, tempering the lightness of the landscape; all was bewitchingly beautiful. But, alas! even in that calm spot Persecution had cast her hateful touch, perverting and corroding

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everything with her death-like embrace. Some of the sweet little English cottages were deserted; the windows were negligently open. The rose, the honeysuckle, and the sweet-briar, so thickly clustering round the porch, told only that the inhabitants of the cottages had fled. Fair hands, which were wont, year after year, to cull the blithesome flowers, where, oh, where were they? Dispersed and away, flying from a country where rivulets of human blood flowed—where the voice of humanity was drowned by the louder call of persecution. The cattle looked lean and wan, and as the horseman glided by, they languidly raised their heads, and uttered plaintive cries, as if to recall their masters home. True, they had the rich grass for their pasture; but even dumb animals love kindness; and where now was the fodder, and the soothing caresses, which their masters' hands were wont to give. And here and there a wretched-looking dog, houseless, wan, uncared for, unloved, wandered about in lean

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wretchedness; and after a feeble effort to bark at the horseman, crouched down with a piteous howl by the deserted hearth. And as the rider continued his course, another sign of the times met his gaze. Many a closed chapel, where formerly Protestant worshippers repaired, were closed, and the seal of heresy placed upon them; rising high a little further, was a Roman Catholic church in its stead; whilst towering high above all, above the houses, and the cottages, above the trees, and all other objects, was the cross, the emblem of undying faith, then, alas! used only as a cover for barbarity and wickedness.

That solitary rider, upon whom the ravages of persecution were bursting forth in unmasked robing, was Alphonzo Stracey; and he belonged to that sect who had vainly endeavoured, by violence of the most appalling kind, to stop the pure and holy Protestant faith. A secret voice told him, that ere long he should turn; that continuing still in the same essential doc-

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trine, he should believe in truth; that deeds compatible with a Christian character, not an outward *show* of religion, are required by him, who cared more for the inward repentance of the heart, than for the sacrifice of bulls and rams. But the time of his conversion was not yet; he could not give up the love of liberty and the love of life. Not yet had he seen the bright lantern to guide him through the vale of darkness; not yet had he found the refreshing fountain of life; not yet heard a voice say—

> Weary Pilgrim, come and drink,
> Let no more thy spirit sink.
> Think no more of mortal strife,
> After death—Eternal life.

At length, Alphonzo reached the end of his journey. He stopped by the side of a clustering group of trees; and looking around, he appeared to reconnoitre whether he was quite alone; and then, brushing aside with his whip the clustering branches of lilac and laburnum

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which opposed his progress, he dismounted from his horse, for fear the noise of his hoofs should disturb the fair occupier of the cottage, and leading him by the bridle, he gave a gentle knock at the door. He had to repeat it, before any notice was taken of it, and then a trembling servant opened the highest window. She shrieked when she saw the horseman, fearing Gardiner or Bonner had traced her mistress in her retreat; but, before she could close the casement, Alphonzo called to her in reassuring accents, and bade her tell her mistress, that a friend wished to speak to her. In a few moments he was ushered into a little parlour, and the servant placed lights on the table, informing him that her mistress would come down as soon as she had dressed.

During the time which necessarily elapsed, young Stracey examined the little room. He felt a pleasure in imagining how poor Constance had spent her time in her sequestered cottage. He opened several books; they all

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related to the Protestant faith; and, in fear, the young Papist closed them again. Flowers were arranged in glasses; they at least were equally open for both sects to admire, and he hastily placed a rose and a forget-me-not in his breast. Dried flowers placed in leaves, arranged for the purpose, next claimed Alphonzo's attention; under each leaf an appropriate motto was written, and as he turned over the pages the lines under a rose attracted his attention—

"When crushed by a summer's shower,
The rose loses her bloom,
Some kind hand oft will save the flower
From a watery tomb.
Alphonzo, if I were thine,
My sighs I'd cease to breathe;
But till thou hear'st the Truth Divine,
My hand I cannot give."

The book fell from Alphonzo's hand. "Alas! I can save the rose, and can restore her to a place of safety," he thought; "but when she blooms again in her renewed loveliness, her freshness will he bestowed on some one else.

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"Constance, I cannot believe thy religion the best, although thy purity is angelic; still there is a want of ardour in the form of thy Protestant rituals. Where the mystic signs, and the holy sprinkling of water, and the confessional disburdening of the soul, when, albeit we are talking to sinful man, we are secretly communing with God?" Lost in such reflections as these, the moments quickly fled, and long before the mental strife which those inward arguments produced was over, the door opened, and Constance had smiled upon Alphonzo, and fearlessly placed her small hand in his. There was something too imposing in the young girl's appearance, to allow frivolous ideas to give themselves utterance in conversation. She was one of those rare instances of a gifted mind using its best energies for her Maker's service, not giving negligently its overplus. Although very young, and fair—almost too fragile for human frame to be moulded in—still there was a firm determina-

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tion painted on the intellectual brow which baffles description; and when those liquid blue eyes, shaded with the most exquisite light tresses, were raised, they gave her whole expression in one glance! and that expression was so pure, so free from personal vanity, that it chased away all idea on the beholder's part of praising one who appeared far above the vulgar voice of personal admiration. Many tears besprinkled the fair girl's cheeks, as she listened to the conversation Alphonzo had had with her father; and when she heard of her approaching interview with the Princess Elizabeth, she exclaimed, in all the fervour of youth, "Oh! how I will beg her Highness to use her power with her Royal sister to obtain my father's pardon. Oh, that men would not be so cruel! Poor old man! his gray locks ought to plead his cause; but Alphonzo, you shake your head, and think my father obstinate. He once recanted, and the very fever of remorse he felt in consequence, shows powerfully how much he was

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in the wrong. Oft-times in the dark midnight hour, will my father's image appear before me; for, although only lately united again, I warmly feel the parental tie. Oft-times I shall fancy, I see his frame writhing under the torments of the flame; but nevertheless, it would not be possible for me to esteem him if he recanted. Alphonzo, mine is not a wavering faith, founded on the bent to which my childish heart was directed. I have studied the divine truths in which I believe; I have well examined the difference between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant faith, and I cannot waver. Would that you thought as I do! Maiden modesty vanishes before this important point, and I most solemnly promise, what our hearts both wish, that I will be your affianced bride the moment you renounce that faith, which is void of humility and human charity. The blood of my father calls for vengeance, and I cannot unite myself to one who follows his enemies' creed. Think me not forward if I have thus

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commenced a conversation without encouragement from you; but, Alphonzo, I am not situated as are other girls of my age, and it behoves me to take care of myself. The friend of my infancy has left me—at least I am informed that some mystery I cannot solve must now part us. My venerable father dares not openly protect me; even if he does not suffer the horrible stake, where then am I to turn for comfort? Where, but in my own principles, and my own heart? One severe pang is better than a protracted uncertainty. Answer me, therefore, friend of my childhood, companion of my early days; answer me now, in the same spirit of truth in which we used to converse under Italia's balmy sky; answer, above all, as if you were responsible not to a weak, silly girl, but to an all-seeing God."

The simple, yet searching appeal, struck deep into Alphonzo's sensitive heart; every chord vibrated with admiration, every pulse beat quickly in his breast. More binding than the strongest

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oaths, more sacred than the eyesight of a hundred witnesses, appeared to him that slight girl's words, whose fate, though he knew not how much of her happiness, depended on his answer.

"You hesitate," replied Constance, withdrawing Alphonzo's hands gently from his face; "you cannot look up, you dare not contemplate my unhappiness. But, Alphonzo, fear not; I am a lenient judge. I should despise any person who could throw off his religion, as an old for a new garment. Watch the seasons—how gradual the opening of the tiny bud; watch creation—how graduating the scale of human growth; watch the passions—how very slow the path to sure happiness. And thus it is with your heart, Alphonzo; gradual will be the workings of your feelings, and yet, methinks they have already changed."

"They have changed," answered Alphonzo, fervently; "they are lost in one absorbing principle of admiration; they are centred wholly on one point—that of gaining your love. Yes,

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friend of my childhood—for no one can take that title from us—companion of my early rambles—well do I remember when first we prattled together in infantine glee. Since then, our hearts have altered on one essential point, but still, in affection, together they are both united. I will then examine this faith which can calm every feeling of your heart, which can make you tranquil in alarm, and resigned e'en if death should stretch forth his pale hands to grasp you. I will not hover around your path; I will not be influenced in my determination by the beauty of your face, or the grace of your deportment; I will not let any earthly claim bias me in this great work; but listen to me, Constance, for this may be for many long months our last interview: if I turn to your faith, if I brave danger, if I embrace your religion, no place shall separate me from you; no argument, no power shall estrange us; my fate must be yours, my home yours; if you suffer for re-

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ligion, encouraged by your example, so will I if this persecution ceases, and we can worship in peace; then our prayers will mingle together. Constance, you may trust me; although my love for you is strong, I forget it in the one wish of serving and pleasing you; and during our journey to Woodstock, no words of mine shall cause you uneasiness."

Alphonzo pressed the young girl's hand within his own, and was astonished to find how violently she trembled; perhaps he knew not how woman, when warmly attached to the religion in which she has been trained, can sacrifice her dearest hope, if it stands against her faith.

When Constance returned, she was equipped in a riding habit, which displayed her well-turned figure to great advantage, and her glossy light hair hung gracefully round her pretty face; the words of admiration which arose to Alphonzo's lips he instantly checked, for he remembered his promise, and they determined as it were mutually to cast away all

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light thoughts, and to devote the whole journey to theological conversation; and thus the youthful pair spent many hours, until, after resting several times, their journey was drawing to a close; then Constance began to feel the bashfulness of her situation, and, to make anxious enquiries about the Princess Elizabeth. Alphonzo had seen her when she was almost a prisoner in the Tower; when Courtney, afterwards Earl of Devonshire, refusing to pay his addresses to Mary, incurred her displeasure by his devoted attentions towards the Princess, her sister.

"But do you think I shall love the Princess?" said Constance.

"You will both love and fear her; there is something very commanding in her manners, but she is kind and affable, unless her proud nature has been stung by some ungracious or unjust action towards herself; towards the Queen, the Princess bears herself haughtily, but, alas! she has too much reason so to do."

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Thus prepared to find the Princess of a wavering disposition, Constance was almost afraid of meeting a cold reception. If any event during the day had displeased Elizabeth, she knew not that the Princess could so perfectly command her temper; that it was not until many years afterwards that her disposition became passionate, when her power, necessarily left her sole mistress of her actions. Elizabeth then often repented, too late, of deeds which were past recalling, and thus became fretful and passionate. Alphonzo had rightly said that the Princess was haughty; but where her heart was touched, no signs of *hauteur* could be discovered, and she received Constance with the most affectionate solicitude. Nevertheless, she could not understand how Mrs. Stracey's son had escorted her *protégé;* she felt inclined to question the servant who had accompanied Constance, but her pride restrained. She, however, treated the young man coldly, and he had left the mansion when

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Constance next inquired for him, leaving her a few lines, to tell her that their compact was binding, and that in a few months she should see him again. As Constance thought how lonely she should feel without one human being, save her maid, to remind her of her earlier days, she vainly repressed her tears, and at length sobbed aloud; and although Elizabeth endeavoured to assuage her grief by every affectionate caress she could bestow, the young girl reflected with bitterness that her father's death would seal this new tie; she could not repress the emotion which stole over her, but throwing herself on her knees before Elizabeth, she exclaimed, "Save him, oh save my father?"

"My power is very limited, Constance, and I have done all I possibly can; but I fear me that amounts to little."

"God will reward you for your kindness, lady; but these fanatics——"

"Hush, hush; you must be cautious—indeed you must."

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"That is a difficult thing to learn; but your Highness knows that God loves the truth."

"Ay, that is true, but you are young and beautiful; and, remember, that one word spoken against those persons you are now calling fanatics, might cost you your life."

"Ah, lady, if I could suffer instead of my father, willingly would I give my life; for this world is but a thing of naught, and we live as it were in a dream, awakening only at the threshold of death. My path through life has scarcely yet begun, but whether I tread the fragrant lane of thornless roses or the chequered vale of brambles and thorns, each coming morn will usher one image before me—namely my dying father's phantom spirit."

"Constance, dear Constance, you make me shudder; come, seek some repose, and your mind will be easier."

Constance complied, with a thankful smile, for she was very weary.

Woodstock is sixty miles west-north-west of

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London, and eight miles north of Oxford. It is pleasantly situated on a rising ground, and a clear rivulet flows through the plains around.

The journey from London had been slow and tedious; for though, thanks to steam, we now perform our flying expeditions with magic speed, in the days of Queen Mary it was very different. No wonder, then, that the fair Constance eagerly courted repose; and the Princess, after seeing her charge asleep, walked alone on the terrace which surrounded the west side of her mansion. Bitter, many of her thoughts undoubtedly were, but through the darkened canvass glimmered a bright picture, for the Princess felt she had done all in her power to save Cranmer. She had sent a message to Philip of Spain; she had bowed her haughty spirit—she had sued a favour, and Philip had had an interview with the Princess, during which, though both often fell into bitter expressions, still Elizabeth had gained her point.

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"You surprise me," said the King, when he had silently heard the object of the Princess's note. "I imagined your Highness had some mighty plan in your head to consult me upon. And has my long journey amounted to a mere nothing?"

"Nothing, do you call it, Sire, when you can save a fellow-creature's life?"

"The obstinate old fool," replied Philip; "by one word of recantation, he could live, without giving me or any one else any further trouble."

"Ah, Sire, talk not thus. Is religion, then, of no weight, can we vascillatingly change from one sect to another? Albeit the good old man clings to life, he dreads death less than to deny that faith which has borne him through the trials of life, guided his youth, supported his manhood, and now comforts his sinking heart."

"Very eloquent, indeed," coldly answered Philip; "but I cannot see what great harm it can do your favourite to change his religion."

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"Hush, hush," said Elizabeth, rising indignantly; remember, King of Spain, you are talking to Henry the Eighth's daughter; and although I am of no consequence at Court—although I have no influence, no power—still I am so far mistress of my own actions, that I brook not insult—no, not even from Philip of Spain. Your, levity, Sire, not only marks disrespect towards an English Princess, but it also plainly shows that Philip of Spain is King by birth, but that his heart is not equal to his high rank."

"Well, Princess, you have not been spending your leisure hours in learning to flatter, that is very certain. Pray do not leave me in anger, and accuse my education, not my heart, if I have been trained in less mental gravity with yourself. Now, what can you reasonably expect me to do?"

The Princess paused; her pride was hurt; and had she followed the bent of her inclination, she would have left the room; but the

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prelate's pale face appeared to upbraid her for her weakness, and she once more took a seat opposite the King of Spain. She placed her hand on his, and with an open expression of countenance, she continued the conversation.

"Philip of Spain, have you spoken idle words, when you have so often assured me that your relationship to me was pleasing in your sight? that you would never allow me to be Mary's slave? that——"

"Enough, Princess; order, and you shall be obeyed. And in return, look not so proudly upon me; we are equally proud, and although high in station, we are, methinks, equally unhappy. Princess, I will do your bidding, and I will save the prelate's life."

"Now, indeed, I have gained a grand and heartfelt pleasure in this interview," said Elizabeth.

"Well then, Princess, I must place a condition on my intercession with the Queen; I must beg your Highness to endeavour to submit

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to your Royal sister, and in peace and unity to adorn our Court by your bright presence."

Elizabeth had not expected this burst of gallantry, and an arch smile accompanied her answer.

"Mary is my Queen, and she is your wife; therefore I will refrain from speaking of her."

"*Toi de roi*," replied the King, equally archly; "if you are only afraid of speaking your mind of the Queen because she is my wife, fear not, Princess; my conjugal nerves can bear it."

Elizabeth burst into a hearty fit of laughter, in which the King involuntarily joined; and when he took his departure he again promised instant compliance with the Princess's request, thinking at the same time that Elizabeth was more bewitchingly persevering in her will, more enchanting, and more witty, every time he saw her. The Princess, however, was far from feeling the momentary mirth in which she indulged; but she was so well acquainted with

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the bent of Philip's mind, she knew so well when to plead in a jocose or a serious manner, that studying thus her part, she generally gained her point. The Princess Elizabeth's tutor, Roger Ascham, had wisely trained her mind to bear with equanamity the revolutions of pleasure and pain. She studied not the Roman and Greek languages; she read not Plato, for the sake of boasting of her love of abstruse learning, but she gleaned crops of useful knowledge from every page, and stocked with unsparing abundance her mental storehouse. Elizabeth thus learned that first and essential rule to clever judgment. She said everything in its proper place, and she gave her advice at the seasonable moment when the person to whom it was given, would receive it. And, although she was sorry to hear Constance continue her lamentations when she awoke, still the Princess feared to tell her all she hoped, lest a disappointment of some kind should occur.

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CHAPTER VI.

It will not be ill placed here, to give a short biographical account of Cranmer and other martyrs in the Protestant cause. Cranmer's general character is given in these words: "He was mild and indulgent in his judgment of his fellow-creatures, severe towards himself, charitable towards others." Yet his manners were extremely conciliating; he lived in that age when no restraint was placed upon any action which sprung from religious motives; and following this sad example, in the reign of Edward the Sixth he caused a Kentish lady to be put to

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death. Painful is it when we read the biography of an illustrious person, and find the pages sullied with one spot, which time and all the leniency of biographers cannot efface. How often, too, the very fault which mars the bright page of a great man's career, is the very one by which he suffers afterwards, as exercised towards himself. Cranmer, then, in the height of his power, did not contemplate a death similar to the Kentish lady who suffered by his orders. The prelate was born in Nottinghamshire, and at the time of his death was in his sixtieth year. When the persecution began in Mary's reign, Cranmer was not called upon to recant; he was to see others suffer before him as a type of what he would afterwards endure. In vain Pole pleaded; in vain he told Mary that the Emperor recommended her to be more lenient towards the Protestants; nothing save their blood could satisfy Gardiner, and his arguments were more agreeable to the cruel bigotry of Mary and Philip.

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England was soon a scene of undisguised horrors; and under cover of the mantle of religion, cruelty of the most refined nature was practised. The first person who suffered was Rogers, prebendary of St. Paul's, a man eminent in his party for virtue and learning. Gardiner was disappointed in his hopes of intimidating him, and vainly strove to make him the first example of recantation. Rogers had a beloved wife and ten children, but he parted from them with calm resignation, hoping to meet them again on the eternal shore, where peace and happiness reign. When his last moments drew near, Rogers desired to see his wife, but Gardiner, joining insult to cruelty, told him that as he was a priest he could not have a wife.

Hooper, bishop of Glocester, was executed at his own diocese; but whilst the circumstance was intended to strike terror amongst his flock, the manner in which he cheerfully gave up his life served only to impress on the beholders' minds the strength of that religion which could

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thus calm the parting soul, on the verge of Eternity. Hooper suffered the most intense agony. The wind being high, blew the flame of the faggots around his body. Part of his body was consumed before his vitals were attacked. One of his hands dropped off, with the other he contined beating his breast. He was heard to pray and exhort the people until his tongue, swollen with the violence of his agony, could no longer permit him utterance. He was three quarters of an hour in excruciating torture, whilst Mary's pardon in case he recanted was all the while placed before his eyes.

Sanders suffered at Coventry: a pardon was also offered to him on the usual conditions of recantation; but rejecting it, he embraced the fatal stake, saying, "Welcome, the cross of Christ; welcome, everlasting life."

Taylor, minister of Hadley, was also executed at the same place amidst all his congregation and personal friends. When tied to the stake, he repeated a psalm in English; one of

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his guards struck him on the mouth, and bade him speak Latin; another struck him so violent a blow on the head with his halbert, that his torments ceased in death.

Philpot, archdeacon of Winchester, having engaged in a dispute with an Indian, and such being his zeal for orthodoxy, that forgetting all rules of propriety, both of conduct and manners he spat in his adversary's face; he afterwards wrote a treatise to justify this action, and declared he had been led to the deed to signify how unworthy was such a miscreant of being admitted into the society of any Christian. Philpot was a Protestant, and falling now into the hands of people as jealous as himself, but more powerful, he was condemned to death, and suffered at Smithfield.

Ferrar, bishop of St. David's, was burned in his diocese, and his appeal to Cardinal Pole was disregarded.

Ridley, bishop of London, and Latimer, formerly bishop of Worcester, two prelates cele-

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brated for learning and virtue, perished together at Oxford. Latimer, when tied to the stake, supported his brother bishop's constancy saying, "Be of good cheer brother, we shall this day kindle such a torch in England, as I trust in God, shall never be extinguished." The executioners had tied bags of gunpowder about the prelates, in order to put a speedy period to their tortures; and this merciful invention immediately killed Latimer, who was in extreme old age; Ridley continued for some time after, alive in the midst of the flames.

Hunter, a young man nineteen years of age, having been seduced into a dispute by a priest, had unwarily denied the real Presence. Sensible of his danger, he immediately absconded, and Bonner, more cruel than Gardiner, more relentless, more remorseless, laid hold of Hunter's father, and threatened him with the greatest severities, if he did not produce the young man to stand his trial. Hunter, hearing his father's uncomfortable situation, voluntarily

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surrendered to Bonner, and that persecuting prelate condemned him to the flames. Thomas Haukes, another martyr, wishing even in his last moments to prevent the Protestants recanting, agreed with them, that should he find the torture tolerable, he would make them a signal to that purpose in the midst of the flames. Supported by his devoted zeal, he suffered with constancy, stretched out his arms as a signal agreed on, and in that posture he expired.

The female sex produced many examples of inflexible courage; some were tortured, some were condemned to the flames, and even children laid down their young lives for the sake of the religion they had embraced.

Persons condemned to death were not convicted of teaching, or dogmatizing contrary to the established religion; they were merely seized on suspicion, and, refusing to subscribe to articles offered them, they were instantly committed to the flames. To exterminate the

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whole Protestant party was impossible, and every new martyr brought another stanch adherent to the faith, which inspires men with so much hope and courage.

The Spanish Government became each day more odious, and Philip endeavoured to remove the reproach cast upon him, by a very gross artifice. He ordered his confessor to deliver in his presence a sermon in favour of toleration, a doctrine somewhat extraordinary in the mouth of a Spanish friar. This step, however, was of no avail; Bonner, although shameless and savage, found it impossible to bear the whole blame of the dreadful persecutions, and cautiously throwing off the mask, the relentless tempers of the Queen and the King of Spain appeared without disguise. A bold step was taken to introduce the inquisition in England. The Queen, in imitation of it, named a commission of twenty one persons, armed with the power of searching out heretics, by every political, or artificial, or cunning man-

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ner imaginable; they were to arrest the bringers in, the sellers, and readers of all heretical books. They were to examine, and punish, all misbehaviours or negligences, in any church or chapel; and to try all priests who did not preach the sacrament at the altar; all persons who did not attend mass in their own parish church; who refused to go in processions, or did not take holy bread or holy water. They might search premises, break into the domestic circle of peace, and tear away, without any further notice, any who refused to give up their Protestant documents. Letters were even written to Lord North, and others, ordering them to put to the torture any persons who would not confess.*

With so many secret agents in every parish to execute the Queen's will, executions were very numerous; and although for a time some persons congratulated themselves on having escaped the notice of the inqusitorial parties, they were soon fatally undeceived. "The com-

* See Hume, Fox, Burnet, Strype, &c.

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mon net at that time," says Sir Richard Baker, "for catching Protestants, was the real Presence, and that net was used to catch the Lady Elizabeth. For being asked one time, what she thought of the words of Christ, '*This is my body*,' whether she thought it the true body of Christ that was in the sacrament? it is said, that after a pause, she answered:

> "Christ was the word that spake it;
> He took the bread and brake it;
> And what the word did make it
> That I believe, and take it."

If Elizabeth did not make use of these ambigious words, which are supposed to have caused her to escape the snare laid for her, it is certain that it required all her presence of mind to free herself from the machinations of Gardiner and Bonner, who regarded her with a jealous eye; fearing that if Mary died without a successor, the Princess Elizabeth would justly punish all those now concerned in the bloody persecution.

The year 1555 had been marked by the exe-

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cutions mentioned in the beginning of this chapter; and the year 1556 witnessed another act of barbarity in the execution of the venerable Cranmer. This prelate's services towards the Queen had been great, during the reign of Henry the Eighth, and he had employed his power in mitigating the prejudices which that monarch had formed against his daughter; but the active part he had taken in obtaining the mother's choice, as well as in conducting the information, inspired Mary with hatred towards him. The Primate, therefore, had reason to expect little favour from her; but it was his own indiscreet zeal that brought on him the beginning of his persecution. We must, to explain this, look back in history to the year 1553, when a report was spread that Cranmer, in order to make his court with his Queen, had promised to officiate in the Latin service. The prelate, to wipe off this aspersion, drew up a manifesto in his defence. Among other aspersions, he said: "that as the devil was a liar

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from the beginning, and the father of lies, so had he at this time stirred up his servants to persecute Christ and his true religion. That the infernal spirit now endeavoured to restore the Latin satisfactory masses, a thing of his own invention and device. And in order to effectuate his purpose, had falsely made use of Cranmer's name and authority. And that the mass is not only without foundation, either in the Scriptures or the Primitive Church, but likewise discovers a plain contradiction to antiquity and the inspired writings; and is, besides, replete with many horrid blasphemies." *

On the publication of this exciting document, Cranmer was imprisoned and tried for high treason, the part he had taken in bringing the Lady Jane Grey to the throne being alleged against him. The execution of the sentence pronounced against him was not enforced, and

* Hume corroborates this extraordinary manifesto, by authentic testimonies—Fox, Heylin, Godwin, Burnet, Cranmer's Memoirs, page 305.

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Cranmer's life was spared until the year 1556, when the Queen was determined to satisfy her revenge, and punish him, not for high treason, but for heresy. He was cited by the Pope to stand his trial at Rome. Although he was kept in close custody at Oxford, he was, upon his not appearing, condemned as contumacious. Bonner and Thirleby exulted over the fallen prelate with fiendish delight. But the Queen was not satisfied; to triumph fully over her enemy, she wished him to sign a recantation in the theological conversations. She well knew the prelate was ever prepared with a ready answer; but Gardiner and Bonner, following the instructions they received, spoke to him in glowing colours of the ornament he would be to the Popish Church; they clad life in its most attractive garb, and Cranmer, overcome by the love of life, terrified at the thought of the tortures which awaited him, agreed to subscribe the doctrines of the Papal Supremacy and the real Presence. The Court, not only

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cruel, but perfidious, determined that this recantation should be of no avail, and they sent orders that he should be required to acknowledge his errors in church, before all the people. Whether Cranmer had received a secret intimation of these designs of causing him to be executed equally for high treason, or whether he repented of his momentary weakness, he surprised the audience by a contrary declaration, and his fate was then sealed. The last morning dawned, and Cranmer bade farewell to hope. There, in the solitary walls of his close imprisonment, he severely accused himself for having, in an unguarded moment of weakness, consented to make an insincere declaration of the Roman Catholic faith. Having fervently prayed for pardon, the prelate rose from his knees with a resigned expression of countenance, which forsook him not during the writhing tortures he suffered. He raised his meek eyes to Heaven, and breathed a prayer for his lovely child, for the Princess Elizabeth,

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and for all his unhappy countrymen; and after mentally bidding farewell to each loved person, and each spot endeared by recollections of the past, Cranmer folded his arms on his breast and awaited his doom. Ten minutes more elapsed—moments which appeared as long hours—and he was then hurried to an open space of ground, where the ominous stake, and all its fearful appendage, were awaiting their victim. A deep bell tolled solemnly, and at its knell, a concourse of some thousands hurried to the spot, to witness the last moments of a candid, sincere, and beneficent prelate, possessed of virtues eminently calculated to render him useful and amiable in society. The old man advanced with firm steps towards the pile. Gardiner was standing beside it, arrayed in a long canonical flowing robe, holding a silver crucifix in the one hand, and a vase of the same metal, containing holy water, in the other. Bonner, looking triumphant, but striving to disguise it, held a scroll of parchment and a pen. Both the pre-

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lates advanced towards their victim, and a thrill of anxious expectation ran through the crowd. "Sign this paper, kiss this cross, dip your finger in the holy water, and your soul will be saved."

Cranmer answered not a syllable, but turned from his wily tormentors with a look of unutterable disgust. And looking at the dense mob around him, the venerable Prelate addressed his last words to his countrymen:—

"Brethren, and fellow pilgrims on earth, be warned by my last voice; witness how a Christian can die. Shake off the shackle which binds your soul; hold not the same faith as men who depart from every law of equity and humanity. What is life? E'en at the best, the retrospect has more pain than pleasure; life is a vale of tears, an echoing of farewell. The God who breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, that God who made him an accountable creature, who blessed him with a soul, capable of the most refined feelings; that God, and he alone, should recall the life

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he gives. It is not His spirit, then, which influences bad men to this barbarous persecution; the spirit of departed martyrs, of Latimer, of Rogers, and of many more, all loudly call for vengeance. Raise not your voices, my friends; vengeance will come, but it is not yet time. Let me suffer; I desire it: and this hand, this weak member of a faulty body, shall be held in the flames until every sinew shrinks. Ah, shed your tears; they will pray for my forgiveness. Pray on, pray on, for my soul, on the verge of eternity, is bewildered and lost, amidst thoughts of the wondrous things passing man's understanding, which I shall soon see. My sight is dazzled, and my voice trembles. No friends of early life can I distinguish amidst yon dense crowd; and yet, methinks, that each heart palpitates in grief, in alarm, and in sympathy. As long as this earth lasts, man's heart, corrupt and fallen, knows not what new wickedness to work. Since the blood of righteous Abel stained the

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earth, like blood-hounds after their prey, men scent out new objects of revenge. Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, whose blood gushed to the altar's precincts, since canonized and worshiped, does he now look down! Did he see through the lapse of years, and did he know that Cranmer, holding his archbishopric, would suffer worse torments than he did. My blood, like his, will not be shown to the anxious.* But, countrymen, hear me, my spirit shall——"

"Come, cease this noise," coarsely exelaimed Bonner, perceiving the populace were deeply touched; "we seek not to send your soul to torments worse than those awaiting you; recant from your heresy, and let your soul live."

Welcome death; away with recantation! away with detestable perjury!" answered Cranmer."

Far is it from my pen to trace the horror of the scene which followed. The hangman's knot is a brief mode of death; the block is a quick

* It is pretended that Becket's blood is still to be seen marking the spot where he was slain.

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transit from wo; the guillotine, so called from Dr. Guillotine, a Frenchman of mild and quiet habits, who invented the machine, as a means of quickly relieving the suffering criminal from his pain (little thinking that the Republicans would make it reek with innocent blood); this, and all other modes of death, are light in comparison to the dreadful sufferings endured at the stake. A simple piece of burning sealing-wax, a drop of scalding water, will cause the most acute pain. What then must be the agony, when limb after limb is destroyed by the fiery element? when the excitement, before the operation begins, strengthens the nerves, and the wind sometimes dispersing the flames, gives a short respite from death? and the vital spark of life *will* linger, even when the body is a wretched mass of black, falling substance.

No words were uttered in that dense crowd. The sufferings of Cranmer were dreadful; a few stifled groans burst from him, growing fainter and fainter, lost in the noise of the hideous

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cracking of the bones, as they were severed by the dreadful flames. At last the scene was drawing to a close; the fire more brightly shone, then embered slowly away. Thank God! the breath of life had departed; the vital tenure of existence had just fled; the last remains of Cranmer's body fell with a crash to the ground; the stake in flames, mingled with the dust, when suddenly tearing over the ground, covered with dense clouds of dust, an object, at first indistinct, attracted the attention of the spectators; nearer and nearer it approached, and a horseman was seen spurring the flanks of his reeking courser, whose sides were pierced, and marked the dust which its speed raised. As the horseman drew near, the crowd spontaneously made room for him; but when he cast his eyes on the expiring embers, a mist came over him, and he paused; the instant his faithful charger left off its hurried course, he bowed his head, the flowing mane became perfectly rigid, the limbs bent, and he expired. The

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nearest bystander assisted the almost fainting cavalier to dismount.

"Ah, poor beast! poor beast!" exclaimed the rider, "I might have spared they bleeding sides, for we are too late; not one vestige is left of the venerable prelate. The dust of his body, and the embers of the faggots commingle. A few moments more speed, and had I expired with exhaustion, my friends, I would have saved Cranmer. This paper," he continued, unfolding a parchment, "contains her Gracious Majesty's pardon, at the intercession of her husband, Philip of Spain. All of ye be witnesses that I have discharged my duty. My Lords Gardiner and Bonner, ye will repent if ye have been over hasty."

"Who art thou, daring intruder, to talk thus?" said Bonner, making his way through the crowd. He pushed aside the high collar of the cavalier's cloak, and then exclaimed, in some amazement—"By my faith, it is young Stracey, and I arrest thee as an unknown in-

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truder on the popular tranquillity of the realm, and retain thee as a prisoner unlawfully escaped from the Tower. Guards, arrest your prisoner!"

No one moved; the appalling scene just witnessed, the faintness which overspread Alphonzo's fine features, from exhaustion, the Queen's signature on the parchment, all had their weight with the guards who were stationed round the stake.

Bonner, perceiving their thoughts, tore the parchment from Alphonzo's hands, and, throwing it on the embers, a flame immediately rekindled, and one of the bystanders approaching, rescued the prelate's heart from amidst the flames.* The action was not unobserved, and the guards, feeling by Bonner's deed how powerful that vindictive prelate was, reluctantly seized Alphonzo, who was again conducted as a prisoner to the Tower.

* It is pretended, that after Cranmer's body was consumed, his heart was found entire amidst the ashes—an event which the Protestants considered as an emblem of his constancy.

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CHAPTER VII.

VERY different were Alphonzo's feelings when he found himself once more a prisoner in the Tower. This time he was confined in a damp and uncomfortable cell; a wretched pallet was his only bed, and coarse food his fare. No voice came near the prisoner to cheer his captivity—the Lady Eldrida's dark eyes rested not on his face. That she still loved Alphonzo with the warmth her fervent nature was capable of feeling, was true; but it required only a trifle with her Spanish heart to mix resentment with love. Although the latter was not les-

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sened, Calipsa artfully insinuated that Alphonzo ought not to have left the Tower without risking any danger to see his kind advocate.

At first Eldrida scarcely heeded the insinuation, but as day after day passed, no message, no note, arrived, when she vainly endeavoured to conquer a passion equally hopeless and warm; then anger took hold of Eldrida's heart, and she daily grew more moody. Philip of Spain noticed her dejection, but, knowing the cause, he left it to time to cure the wound. The Queen was so absorbed with the persecution which was immediately under her command, that she saw Eldrida only in those gay moments when a Court wears, as it were, a veil, when every face is smiling; when sighs and tears are hidden; when each person vies with his neighbour to be light and gay. A wonderful change, however, had passed over the young girl's heart. It is truly astonishing how small a weight will overbalance whatever is good in our nature. Carefully as Eldrida concealed her

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grief, striving, as she did, to keep it within her breast, and "let the canker-worm prey upon her damask cheek:" it was useless; the bud was blighted; and an attentive observer could easily trace hidden grief in that heavy eye, and that cold, unchanging expression, which replaced youth's smiling beams. In those days of violence and bloodshed, the greatest secresy prevailed through Court actions. Who thought of inquiring openly into Bonner's secrets? Who asked him where he went? Who inquired why a scowl sat on his countenance? Who wondered when a smile of scorn or displeasure stole over his lips? Who asked how many persons, or what the name was of any particular individual confined in the Tower? No one: secret as the inquisitorial tribunal in Spain were the actions of that prelate, so detestable to the whole nation. Ah, how would Bonner rest at night, when he reflected of the transactions of each day; when, before going to rest, he had each time to wash his hands from some

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innocent person's blood? Did not their shrieks sound in his ears? Did not their voices call for vengeance? Did not their ghosts hover around him in phantom mockery, calling for vengeance? Bonner had steeled heart; he had bid his conscience be still; he persuaded himself he was following the right path; he accused the heretics of obstinacy, himself of firmness and courage; and daily a new victim was secreted in the Tower, and speedily replaced by another person when death made room for the next martyr. Secretly as Bonner acted, there was one person who watched his actions, for motives better known to herself than any one else; this person was Calipsa. Circumstances had made her cruel; one step in wickedness had rendered her heartless; but hers was the heartlessness of a despairing spirit, of one who knew not where to turn for advice and consolation; no feelings of personal revenge lurked in her heart. But such was her love and obedience towards Philip of Spain, that, had he commanded her to cut off

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her right hand and bring it to him, she would have unhesitatingly complied with the request. Poor soul! she sinned for her Royal master, and doubly sinful in the sight of Heaven, must have been that heart, who, knowing her weakness, bade her sin.

Secretly as Bonner intended concealing Alphonzo, Calipsa had spies the prelate thought not of; and the old woman lost no time in apprizing the King of young Stracey's detention. Bonner had been closeted with Philip during a great part of the day; then voices were heard in the rooms around—they were apparently conversing angrily together, and Philip was evidently in a towering passion. At last the prelate left, and Calipsa arranged with the King that he should visit the captive Alphonzo as soon as it was evening. When the hour arrived, and the King glided noiselessly through the secret passages in the Tower, a bitter smile crossed his features, when he reflected that he, the powerful King of Spain—he, the King-con-

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sort of England—he, whose vast dominions stretched from north to south, and east to west, thus sought the evening hour to avoid the attention of Bonner—a menial, subject, risen at the expense of blood, treachery, and cruelty of the most refined kind. The King had bidden the gaoler to follow him; and when Calipsa at length told him that they had arrived at the end of their journey, he commanded the man to open the door.

The gaoler turned very pale.

"How now, sirrah! dost hear me?" said Philip.

"Ah, your Malesty, preserve me from my Lord Gardiner; he bade me refuse to open that cell, even, if—if your Majesty commanded it."

"Give me the key directly," said Philip, in a thundering voice, echoed far in the lofty corridors around.

The man complied; and Philip, repenting his momentary passion, assured the gaoler that he had nothing to fear. Calipsa waited outside

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the dungeon, and Philip, taking the lamp from her hands, was soon by Alphonzo's pallet. The young man had just fallen into a restless sleep, and as he tossed about on his hard couch, he was wandering in dreams of early childhood. Cranmer's daughter was near him; now he fancied that summer tints were blooming around him, and that he was by Albano's still waters; he heard the gentle ripple of the lake; and the murmuring song of the birds around; he was sitting, in imagination, on the verdant turf, shaded by the spreading trees; and Constance, young, smiling, trusting, and happy, she was by his side.

The dream changed, and the sleeper fancied he was spending a few months in exploring the beauties of that country where his youth had been spent. He stood by the Lago Maggiore, he saw the lovely Arona; and speeding on from Laveno and the Bensca Hill, next Lake Verbanus appeared. Complete was the infatuation of the dream: the lake, the land, the mountains,

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and the vale; and afar, the Alps reared their white-capped heads; and many a floating bark gracefully wended its way down the stream; and the sun was gilding its surface with its brightest tints: there was music on the earth, and gladness in the air, and the isles around echoed to the voice of mirth. Complete was the deceiving dream; and then the sleeper awoke, not to find himself under Albano's sunny sky, but in a damp and sickly-feeling dungeon.

The sensation of waking from a pleasingly deceptive dream, to the sad reality of sorrow and pain, has often been delineated by able writers, and does not want more description; for those who have felt the acute pain of this feeling would not esteem a repeated description of it; and to those fortunate persons who wake only to pleasure and enjoyment, to them I say, "ye are blessed."

When Alphonzo beheld the King of Spain, he could not recall the circumstance of his imprisonment; nor did he awaken from the sort

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of trance in which he had fallen, until he found himself in a spacious and well-furnished room leading to the King's bed-chamber. Anything approaching to grandeur stole with a pleasant feeling over the senses, for buildings and household furniture were very rude in those days. Hume quotes from Nicholson's Historical Library, where he affirms that a Comptroller of Edward the Sixth's household, paid only thirty shillings a year of our present money for his house in Channel Row.

Alphonzo, however, had dwelt in that land where luxury and pomp were far before-hand with our English isle; and he felt himself again in his own natural position, away from the narrow dungeon, where useless sighs were wafted, and scalding tears flowed in vain.

"You were too late to save the prelate," exclaimed the King, after desiring Alphonzo to sit opposite to him; "and when you found that was the case, where was the use of naming me, or reading the pardon aloud? I had not

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yet convinced the Queen of the good, probable to arise, by showing clemency to Cranmer; and it is possible, that I should never have convinced her Majesty on the point. I had, however, my own plan on the subject, and now you have frustrated it by naming me as accessory to Cranmer's pardon. Full two hours have I argued with Bonner, and have at length convinced him it is all a mistake; that I have nothing to do with the document he destroyed."

"What!" exclaimed Alphonzo, indignantly; "has your Majesty really denied giving me that paper, and making the venerable Cranmer's pardon the condition for my entering your Majesty's Spanish service, and engaging in the newly-kindling war against France?"

"No, I have not forgotten anything," answered Philip; "but it is no use wasting words. When I gave you that paper, I thought not you would be too late (which would not have been

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the case, had they not hurried the prelate's end); then I never contemplated Bonner seizing you, but had procured your passport, and secured your passage to the Continent. When once you were out of the reach of Bonner, it mattters not now how I intended acting; but now I tell you that Bonner has no conscience, no scruples. He is in possession of a secret, which a foolish domestic confided to him under seal of the confessional—secresy. Bonner, however, waits but his own time to reveal it; I read it in his sinister smile, hidden under his crouching language—he will perjure himself, and the Pope will grant him absolution; and the knowledge of this secret will break the best link which binds me to the Queen of England; for few know, as I do, her keen jealousy. All these difficulties you can remove whilst you are in England. Bonner fancies that you are at the head of a Spanish confederacy, watching his movements. When you leave this coast, I can hush up

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matters. Young man, you know not how much my fate depends on yours."

Alphonzo uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Hush," said Philip; "the time may come when the mysterious language I now use will be plain as the noon-day. But, mark me—'*Not until Queen Mary's death!*' You must remain here concealed in my own private sitting-room until to-morrow evening. Bonner will then be far away towards the north, whither the Queen has despatched him to quell a body of powerful heretics. Furnished with credentials to the Emperor, who is now in Flanders, your progress to fortune is sure as rapid; and the moment you give the necessary assent, you leave not this apartment as Alphonzo Stracey, but Alphonzo, Duke de La Mancha, with all the fortune and honours appertaining thereunto."

Alphonzo paused. The King had spoken in his hurried characteristic manner, and the

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young man had hardly time to realize the bright prospects held out to him. A dukedom, a situation in the army, fortune, and every wish his heart could form; still, in the chaos of ideas which sprung from the bright scene, no answer came to his lips.

"I will leave you for some hours," said Philip; "your answer will then be ready."

Alphonzo was left alone, with burning, intense, newly-awakened thoughts. What meant the King's mysterious words? How was he connected with Philip's fate? Then a sudden idea sprung to his mind, but he immediately rejected it. Through all the feeling of pleasure and astonishment, the image of Constance arose before him. Oh, how often love has a powerful effect in the whole future life of man! Beauty would not waste one smile or speak one frivolous heartless word, nor attire herself in all her attractive charms, if she knew that once her image was engraven on her lover's heart; her own folly alone could efface it. It was not

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only in her grace and her beauty that Constance appeared now, before Alphonzo's searching imagination; it was in the two-fold loveliness of her virtue, and her Christian graces. He drew forth a faded flower from his bosom, and repeated the lines he had seen traced in her book:—

> "But till thou hear'st the Truth Divine,
> My hand I cannot give."

Her heart, then, was his, and it depended on himself to secure her hand. Great, however, would be the sacrifice; and now, as in all romantic love, mountains appeared to divide him from her he loved. If he accepted Philip's offer, if he invested himself with his dukedom, his Roman Catholic faith must be sealed, and an everlasting barrier placed between him and Constance. If he refuse the honours held out to him, wandering penniless, unknown, escaping from prison with difficulty, what then would be his lot? Does Constance really wish me to make the sacrifice? Does she think that her re-

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ligion calls for so much denial?" Then he remembered that a year was to elapse before he made up his mind to any decisive step, and he resolved to let that year decide for him, when Philip re-entered. Alphonzo was prepared with an answer: he told the King he was ready to accept his offer, under some conditions. He would go to the Emperor in Flanders, and would enter the Spanish army, but would decline the dukedom of La Mancha until a year had elapsed, and, if the King then saw fit to grant him a request, then it might perhaps be one of a different nature. Philip heard all, and he wondered at many of the words Alphonzo spoke; but as he himself had spoken in mysteries to the young cavalier, he felt it was only just he should in return bear with Alphonzo's humour.

"I have one more request to ask," said Philip; "you shall see the Lady Eldrida before your departure, and she must hear from your own lips, words which no one else can pro-

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nounce so well as yourself: you must tell her whether you love her or not."

"This is the second time," answered Alphonzo, "that I have given a negative reply to this question; and it is doing me too much honour, to suppose that the Lady Eldrida cares for such a knight-errant as I am."

"The lady appears to think otherwise," said Philip, evasively.

"I will speak to the Lady Eldrida, if it be your Majesty's will and pleasure; but unless the young lady sees fit to call for an explanation of a few words of simple gratitude and courtesy, I shall not have the boldness to begin the conversation."

"You must be guided by circumstances, I admit," said Philip; "but I will prepare my niece to bid you farewell. Rest here till morning." So saying, he left the room, turning the key outside. The apartment in which Alphonzo was placed, was the last of the suite of rooms leading to it. No one disturbed him

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for several hours in the morning. Breakfast was little thought of in those days, when the dinner-hour was eleven before noon. Towards that hour, the door opened, and the Lady Eldrida, pale, but perfectly collected, entered, gravely, leaning on her uncle's arm

Her dinner toilet was completed; and if Alphonzo had before thought Eldrida handsome, he now saw her beauty enriched by her attire. Her robe, of rich blue velvet, was ornamented with roses formed of riband to correspond; in the midst of each, shone a bright diamond; the stomacher was ornamented with splendid brilliants, and her arms ornamented with bracelets of great value. Her dark, glossy hair, hung in rich tresses, and was looped up carelessly with a comb inlaid with diamonds. Alphonzo could hardly believe the dark, majestic-looking beauty, was the same warm-hearted, enthusiastic creature, who had sought his prison-cell; the quivering emotion of the lips had fled, and the kindling expression of the

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eyes, formed to speak love's powerful language, had given place to melancholy. Eldrida's whole appearance now wore the frigid look of a firm purpose; and as she spoke, her cold, measured words, seemed as if pronounced with condescending effort.

"My uncle has informed me that you wish to see me."

"I am going to leave England," said Alphonzo," and I——"

"You wish to thank me for visiting you in prison. The desire was hardly necessary, for I have visited many other prisoners beside."

"Farewell, lady," said Alphonzo, astonished at Eldrida's strange display of love; "farewell, and may every earthly happiness be your lot."

This time, Eldrida answered, with a marked emphasis on each word—

"Farewell, Sir; and may the same earthly happiness attend you, which you hope will fall to my share." She made a low bow, and left

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the room. Her uncle remained rooted to the spot with astonishment; but totally misunderstanding Eldrida's disguised coldness, he inwardly congratulated himself upon her return to reason, and laughingly accused himself of having given Alphonzo a very useless interview.

"You need not be sorry on my account," replied the young man; "I am only sorry for the young lady."

"Sorry! for why?" said the King, in astonishment; but Alphonzo made no reply.

Was he right? Had he seen through the cold surface of the icicled water? Had he traced the circulating current through the frozen exterior? Could he read the disappointment, the bitterness, the agony, which filled Eldrida's heart?

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CHAPTER VIII.

SINCE the martyrdom of Cranmer, no particular person is mentioned in the dates of history, as suffering at the stake for the Protestant cause. The same cruelties still continued; domestic circles were broken into; property was confiscated, and the secret tribunal, headed by the persevering Bonner, was as active as ever. But the Queen's attention was drawn in another channel: she wished to engage in the war beween France and Spain. Cardinal Pole, whose cool judgment had much weight with the people, openly opposed this measure; he repre-

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sented, in glowing terms, the binding marriage articles which provided against Her Majesty's entering into this war, besides, enlarging on the disordered state of the finances.

At first, Mary listened to the Cardinal, and other councillors who followed the same train of politics; but suddenly Philip of Spain returned from Flanders, where he had spent the summer months, away from his fretful bride.

All Mary's tenderness returned with double warmth from her temporary absence from her husband. She promised him to fulfil every wish of his heart; and he coldly threatened, that if his reasonable request was not granted, he would never again set his foot in England.

What was this reasonable request? He ordered Mary to brave the nation's displeasure, to defy Cardinal Pole, to levy troops, to extort money from the citizens of London; and Mary, weak and loving, complied, though with great difficulty.

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A fortunate circumstance occurred to rouse the populace in anger against France. Some conspirators, headed by a man of the name of Stafford, were detected in a design of surprising Scarborough. Perhaps they were merely acting for themselves, and willing to save themselves by placing the blame on others; be this as it may, when Stafford was put to the torture, he confessed that Henry of France had sent them to make the attempt. Mary now determined to make this act of hostility the foundation of a more serious quarrel, and war was declared against France.

The revenues of England at that time little exceeded £300,000. The Parliament could not afford to grant a fresh supply. The Queen herself was very poor; she owed great arrears to her servants, but she continued to levy money in the most arbitary and violent manner. She obliged the City of London to supply her with £60,000; she levied before the legal time, the second year's subsidy voted by Par-

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liament; she issued many privy seals, by which she procured loans from the people; and she victualled her fleet, by seizing all the corn she could find in Suffolk and Norfolk, without paying any price to the owners. By these various expedients, Mary levied an army of ten thousand men, which was sent over to the Low Counties, under the command of the Earl of Pembroke.

She gentry who resisted the taxation, and the seizure of their corn, were hood-winked and muffled, and then conducted to the Tower.

The King of of Spain's army, added to the English forces, amounted on the whole to above sixty thousand men; and it was under Philibert, Duke of Savoy, one of the bravest captains of the age, that young Stracey began his first campaign. Montmorency, who commanded the French army, had a much smaller force than his opponents. The Duke of Savoy, after menacing Mariembourg and Ronoy, now suddenly drew up his forces before St. Quin-

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tin; and as the town was ill provided with a garrison, he expected to become possessor of it. The brave Admiral Coligny, Commandant of the Province, threw himself into the town with some troops of French and Scots gensdarmes. His uncle, apprized of the Admiral's intention of defending St. Quintin, sent a reinforcement, and a supply for the army, but the Duke of Savoy; fell upon the detachment, and not above five hundred men reached their destination to tell the tale of their disaster. Many of the ancient French nobility were slain or taken prisoners; the old constable Coligny, uncle of the govenor of St. Quintin, fell into the enemy's hands. The Parisians now commenced fortifying Paris, fearing the Spaniards would make themselves masters of their city. But Philip's whole determination was centred upon possessing St. Quintin, in order to secure a communication with his own dominions. Vainly, however, the Duke of Savoy bravely fought; his opponents were equally brave. Admiral Coligny, inspired the

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French troops to the liveliest deeds of valour. The Duke of Guise and his army were recalled from Italy. Philip of Spain perceived that the tide of fortune was against him. Winter was fast approaching; he conquered Ham and Castelet, and then broke up his camp.

The Duke of Guise now formed a plan which, although hardy in itself, had every appearance of being attended with success. My readers have no doubt already guessed that I allude to the conquest of Calais, by the French. Winter had now approached, and the fortress was very indifferently garrisoned, for the English of late had not been able to spare many of their troops, and their finances were too low, besides, to furnish the necessities of a fresh levy. It had been the custon of the Queen to dismiss part of the garrison stationed at Calais at the end of the autumn, and recall them in the spring.

Aware of this circumstance, Coligny had secretly sent some engineers to survey the for-

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tress; and although he was taken prisoner at St. Quintin, his papers were fortunately found by the Duke of Guise, who immediately began to consider the great undertaking of the seizure of Calais. I do not wonder at Mary's subsequent grief when the noble fortress was lost, for, Calais, standing exactly between the two countries, when taken by the French seemed as it were to say, "Ay, Englishmen, you may cross your channel, but directly you place your feet on dry ground, you are in France, on French territory." Whilst before, we could cross our Channel, and although away from our English isle, still feel at home, and tread on our English possession. Yet whenever I have been at Calais, I have always felt that it ought to belong to the French; their possessions ought there, and there only, to terminate. From the windows of the hotels, we gaze upon the flowing channel; we see the steamers gaily entering the port; and I hope others respond to my feelings when I like to hear the passengers say on land

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ing, "Here France begins." Deeply as Mary regretted Calais, heartfelt as was her grief when she declared. "The name of Calais would be found engraven on her heart" not more deep was her affliction, than the overwhelming sorrow of the bave men, who in Edward the Third's reign had resigned the keys of their fortress, with the fatal cord around their necks. When Edward's Queen, on bended knees sued for their life, then must she have felt as I do, that "Calais rightfully belongs to the French."

When the French were making secret arrangements for taking Calais, Mary was reconciling herself to Philip's absence by the reflection, that she had been fortunate enough to please him by leaving the forces he required; and although the news of her husband's prolonged campaign annoyed her, she was comforted by the assurance that the Spaniards, with their colleagued English reinforcement, were determined to continue their conquests.

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Mary now, more warmly than ever, strove to use her influence over her sister, and oblige her to marry. Sometimes she treated Elizabeth with more than ordinary kindness: then the Princess feared there was some secret treachery concealed. Sometimes she treated her with great rigour; and then the whole nation were aware of it, looking with a scrutinizing eye, fearing not only the succession, but the life of their favourite Princess, was in danger.

The Spanish Ambassador had been for some months studying the character of the English Princess, at once the nation's pride and the Queen's abhorrence; and he rather surprised Elizabeth when he made proposals to her, in his master, the King of Sweden's name.

Recovering herself, the Princess asked whether the Queen was acquainted with the King of Sweden's, proposals?

"No," answered the Ambassador; "my master the King, acting as a gentleman, first addresses himself to you, after obtaining your

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Highness's consent; he will then, as a King, to your Royal sister.*

The Princess broke up the conference, and covered a respectful refusal by declaring her attachment to a single life. When Mary questoned her on the subject, she received the same answer; but fearing the Princess would engage her affections unknown to her; she watched her closely; and not trusting the integrity of the spies, who gave her every report concerning Elizabeth, the Queen at length removed her from Woodstock, and gave the Princess a mansion at Hatfield. As Mary daily expected the return of Philip, her nerves became so irritable that she could not bear the slightest restraint, and even her favourite Eldrida often felt the Queen's temper was very intolerable; she therefore became anxious to absent herself from Court, and at length obtained her aunt's permission to visit the Princess Elizabeth.

* This conversation is an authentic fact.

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The latter, although flattered by Eldrida's evident marks of admiration, nevertheless felt ill at ease with the Spanish Girl. Her talents were perhaps equal to the Princess. Her powers of pleasing were even greater; but there was lacking that confidence and that candour which Elizabeth so much valued in her *protégé*, Constance, or Mademoiselle de Comines, as she was called.

Bonner, in his capacity of clerical surveyor into every mansion he chose to enter, was much ofter at Hatfield than the Princess wished. Towards Elizabeth he entertained more fear than dislike; but, above all, he dreaded the time when, in default of an heir to the Crown, the Princess would reign over the realm, now filled with cheerless subjects. He dreaded the shouts of the multitude, and the proclamation of a Protestant Queen.

Towards the Lady Eldrida, Bonner was greatly incensed. He falsely imagined she had been instrumental in removing young Stracey from his reach.

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The King of Spain wronged Bonner, when he imagined that prelate would reveal a secret confided to him in the privacy of the confessional. He wocld advise and almost enforce the person whose secret he had gained, to act according to his wishes; but he was too superstitious, too firm in the belief that there was a real absolution in the rite of confession, to break through its first and most sacred rule. Calipsa had once spoken to the Prelate—she was then suffering under an illness which threatened to terminate her life; and in a moment of fear she disburdened the heavy load at her conscience. As soon, however, as health again visited her frame, the old woman repented the part she had acted, and she boldly told the prelate that she would be guided only by that master who had hitherto cautioned her —that master, the King of Spain.

Baffled in every hope of intimidating the old woman, fearing to deal harshly with one in whose fate the King of Spain must from neces-

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sity feel interested, the prelate now resolved to possess himself of young Stracey; and imagining he was acquainted with the mystery of his birth, he trusted that the solitude of confinement, and on the other hand, the offer of liberty if he complied with Bonner's request, would induce the young man to confide in him, and then the prelate intended working his own pleasure afterwards; but Alphonzo's escape put an end to Bonner's views. It was not, however, because he wished to see the Princess Elizabeth or Eldrida, that he was now a frequent visitor at Hatfield; Bonner had gazed upon young Constance—she had looked upon him in return, and had not turned away her head as if shrinking from his gaze, but boldly, yet sorrowfully, looked again. There, then, stood before her that prelate who had caused her father's death—there, then, stood before her the man of infamous repute, who, in the space of three years, had destroyed 200 Protestants. Her breath came and went quickly, and the

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colour forsook her cheek, as the prelate put out his hand to press hers, after taking leave of the Princess Elizabeth. The latter guessed her feelings, and feared Constance would betray herself; when the next minute Bonner retraced his steps, and looking earnestly at her, exclaimed, with the tone of authority he always used, "Young lady, I will speak to you on religious matters to-morrow; I have never seen you at the confessional, and I shall now expect you."

"I have my own chaplain," answered Elizabeth, placing herself before Constance so as to hide her colourless cheeks; "this maiden is very delicate, and cannot attend mass in the chapel, but I will see to her religious worship."

"That may do for you, Princess, but not for a servant of God—a minister of His holy rites. Howbeit, if the young lady is delicate, I can attend her here." But, as a thought occurred to him that she might escape his vigilance, the prelate continued, "Or, to be more agreeable to

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the young lady, I will depute the Lady Eldrida to inquire into the young person's religious feelings."

"I am mistress of my own establishment," said Elizabeth; "and when I request the Lady Eldrida to shrine the conscience of my maids of honour, it will then be time enough for her to offer her services."

"Princess," said the prelate, approaching Constance, and looking at her again most searchingly: "Princess, you mistake me; it is not because I am harsh towards the maiden, that I thus speak, but the Lady Eldrida knows so intimately my way of thinking, that my mind on religious subjects is echoed by hers; and she has so much interested me already in favour of your young attendant, that I would willingly so fair a shell contained a pearl of rarest size, and that the conscience may be as clear as the exterior."

As Bonner concluded, he extended his hand once more to Constance, but she burst into a

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flood of tears, and left the apartment, rushed into her own room, and there continued sobbing for some time.

Elizabeth bit her lips, and, accustomed as she was, from habit, to restrain the words which flowed to her mouth, she felt this time that the work of self-command was a very bitter task. She was angry with Lady Eldrida for speaking to Bonner of her young friend; but her judgment, even in the height of her passion, whispered two things:—First, that Eldrida was Mary's niece, and it was impolitic to talk against her before the prelate. Secondly, that not aware of Constance's real position in speaking of her as a beautiful maid, in Elizabeth's suite, the Lady Eldrida had committed no intentional indiscretion. As her feelings softened by the power of a correct argumental train of mind, the Princess thought only of the necessity of conciliating the prelate. Candour, she had ever found her best armour in controversy with him; for men are often conquered by the

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very opposite force which they use; and Bonner, who could baffle any crafty person, always felt awed by Elizabeth's plain, truthful manner.

"My Lord Bonner," she now said, "the young maiden you saw is like unto myself; she passively submits to the present religion of the realm, but she would more willingly follow the Protestant faith." The Prelate pretended to be satisfied; bowed, and left the house, nor did he again come for several weeks.

"Ever wary, ever cautious, yet ever truthful Princess," exclaimed Bonner, on his way home. "Those whom thou wilt afterwards govern, will be ruled by no woman's weak hand. My power leans now, as a tottering tower; one loose stone will throw down the whole fabric. Mary's death will be that loosened stone, for I rely but on her for support; all feelings of this kind, however, are weighed down before the one idea of the moment. Is it possible that I love? Have the firm, yet dove-like glances of that fair girl's

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eyes, shot through my heart? Or has Satan clothed himself in that celestial garb, to entice a holy priest to sin? The Virgin Mary preserve me! I must not see her again."

Edmund Bonner, Bishop of London, was then in his forty-third or forty-fourth year; and had not every beholder naturally associated his image with all that is barbarous and cruel, he would no doubt have been pronounced a handsome-looking man. But when once Vice has set her stamp on the human heart, it will blight the fairest exterior; and under every smile, under every word Bonner uttered, might be traced the hidden serpent, lurking softly but surely, ready to spring forth with its deadly sting.

Although Strype says he was born of poor parents, who lived in an humble cottage, known to this day as Bonner's Cottage, the prelate had received an excellent education. About the year 1512, he was entered as a student at Broadgate Hall, in Oxford. In 1519,

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he was admitted Bachelor of the Canon and Civil Law. About the same time, he obtained preferment in the Diocese of Worcester, where he first took orders. In 1525, he was created Doctor of Canon Law. Having now acquired the reputation of a shrewd politician and civilian, he was soon distinguished by Cardinal Wolsey, who made him his commissary for the faculties, and heaped upon him a variety of church preferments. Bonner was with Wolsey at Caw-wood, when the latter was arrested for high treason.

After the death of that minister, he soon found means to insinuate himself into the favour of Henry VIII., who made him his chaplain, and employed him in several embassies abroad, particularly to the Pope. In 1532, he was sent to Rome with Sir Edward Thame, to answer for the King, whom his Holiness had cited to appear personally or by proxy. In 1533, he was again despatched to Pope Clement VII., at Marseilles, upon the excommu-

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nication of Henry, on account of his divorce. On this occasion, he threatened the Pope with so much resolution, that his Holiness talked of burning him alive, or throwing him into a cauldron of melted lead, upon which Bonner thought fit to decamp. In 1538, being then Ambassador at the Court of France, he was nominated Bishop of Hereford; but, before consecration, was translated to the see of London, and enthroned April, 1540. Henry VIII. died in 1547, at which time Bonner was Ambassador with the Emperor Charles V. During this reign he was constantly zealous in opposing the Pope, and in compliance with the King, favoured the Reformation. This Bonner did because Henry VIII. was not to be trifled with; but as soon as Edward VI. ascended the throne, Bonner refused the oath of supremacy, and was committed to the Fleet; however, he promised obedience to the laws, and was released. He continued to follow the Reformation, but with such a want of

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zeal, that he was twice reprimanded by the Privy Council, and in 1549, after a long trial, was committed to the Marshalsea, and deprived of his bishopric. The succeeding reign changed the scene, and gave Bonner ample opportunities of revenge. Mary was scarce seated on the throne, before she reinstated the prelate in his bishopric, and soon after appointed him vicegerent and president of the convocation.* From this time he became the chief instrument of the persecuting spirit of the times, and with equal imprudence and relentless remorse, severed the sweetest ties of domestic life.

As Bonner traced his steps home, after his last visit to the Princess Elizabeth, his heart was unusually affected; and whilst Constance had inspired him with soft feelings long dormant in his breast, he had filled the young girl's bosom with dread of him, and brought again to mind her aged father, with his white hair, surrounded by the glaring flames.

* See Biography of Bonner.

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CHAPTER IX.

The first month of the year 1558 had elapsed; the wintry reign of the season was beginning to be less acutely felt; the spring dawned, the trees began to shoot, and the first flowerets of the earth—the early crocus, and hardy hyacinths—were peeping from the still hard earth; the birds were languidly uttering their long imprisoned notes, and poor Constance awaited in vain her true lover's return. Had he fallen in battle? Was the light of his bright-beaming eye extinguished? Were his limbs stretched powerless on the blood-sodden field? Had she

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received the last pressure of his hand? Had she listened to his last words? and, above all, had he died in that faith, which promised life beyond the grave? Should she meet him once more in a world above, and in that ethereal sphere would their spirits commingling commune in blissful union? Here was a mine of searching thought, and yet Constance retained her own quiet, peaceful mien; she appeared as a creature of superior mould, moving amidst a sphere of beings, like them in flesh, but how different in spirit! Her early life had been tempestuous, but the raging war of the elements had not burst upon a solitary tree, placed in the midst of a forest, a meek mark to attract the lightning's dart. Steeled by the power of her faith in a God of mercies, she was as a well-arranged conductor, ready to receive, but to cast off again the elementary fire. Shaft after shaft of sharpest arrowed grief pierced her heart, and still one spot was ever brightly shining amidst the darkness, for Constance

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there to cast her anchor of hope. There are indeed some few lovely characters upon whom grief serves but more strongly to impress the holy truths of religion; but to give this assurance in Divine mercy, the heart must be hourly trained to survey in a chastened spirit every trial which God sees fit to send.

There was a native grace, a dignified simplicity of manner about Constance, which the Lady Eldrida deeply admired. The Princess Elizabeth's difficult studies were foreign to Constance's nature; and, although she esteemed her, there was also one point of her character which the young girl could not reconcile with her pure way of thinking. That the Princess should avoid, as necessary to her safety, every topic of theological controversy, was a very needful, and even an imperious duty; but that she should professedly follow the Roman Catholic rituals, whilst her heart revolted at its superstitions, was more than Constance could approve of. No persuasion on Elizabeth's part had ever in-

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duced her young *protégé* to accompany her to mass, or to perform one of the outward forms of the Roman Church. At Woodstock the Princess could screen the young girl from observation, but now the task increased in difficulty, since Bonner had noticed her. Elizabeth spoke at random, when she told the prelate that her young maiden was too delicate to attend the chapel; but one Sunday, the prelate called upon the Lady Elizabeth, and positively declared his intention of seeing Constance at mass. Elizabeth did not tell the young girl of Bonner's orders, until she had used every means in her power to persuade her with warning her of the danger of a refusal. The prelate's words, even when delivered by her kind friend, fell heavily upon Constance's ears; they seemed as the parting knell, sounding her exit from the world. A faint feeling stole over the gentle girl. Elizabeth herself wiped away the heavy drops which gathered on her brow, and then, rather dragged than led the stupified Con-

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stance towards the chapel. Bonner was there; and when Constance met his gaze—when she saw that instead of a triumphant or an impertinent look, his eyes were resting on her pale countenance, with a mingled expression of fondness and compassion—then the poor maiden thought that all was conspiring to persuade her against her better judgment, and she turned her head aside to hide the fast falling tears. She remembered that the evil one, whilst tempting Eve to sin, put on the sweet voice of insinuative sympathy. She remembered that with the same deceitful purpose, he tempted our Lord in different guises, and she turned away from Bonner, loathing his look of admiration more than his most withering scowl of displeasure.

And now the service began: the unknown Latin words trembled on the priest's tongue, and the chorister children, in their white robes, echoed in thrilling accents the loud amen. Deep and impressive was the loud-toned seraphim; high above the people's heads the burning in-

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cense was thrown in the silver sconces, confined to the priests' hands by their bright silver chains. When the mystic bell rung, and the congregation bowed low their heads, while the priest above looked up and spake; then, indeed, Constance felt that she had lingered too long; she remembered how in a foreign land her childish heart had revolted at all these rites. A mist came over her; she felt the Princess Elizabeth gently, but forcibly, bowing her head; lower still she bowed it herself, and with a deep groan she fell to the ground; her high-backed chair dropping at the same time, caused the noise to echo again on the stony floor. Still no hand was raised; not a head moved, and the young girl would have remained until the mystic bell had done sounding, so strictly was the Church discipline enjoined, had not Bonner himself, led by an irresistible feeling he could not control, advanced towards Constance, and raising her in his arms, he carried her carefully into the vestry. Oh, how his head throbbed as

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he bent over her pale features; how his gaze was rivetted on the only being he had for many years contemplated with varying feelings. One monomaniac sensation of revenge had lately pursued him; and Constance had appeared in his path as a creature of light—of dazzling beauty—of innocence and Christian virtue, to stay his uplifted hand and soften his heart. He lingered until Constance began slowly to recover; and, as he bade the Princess Elizabeth adieu, again he feigned what he did not believe, and said, with apparent sincerity—

"You are right, lady; the maiden is too delicate to attend the chapel—she need not go again."

And Elizabeth, the usually quick-sighted Princess, she believed Bonner; she would as soon have thought the roaring lion capable of feeling the lamb's gentleness, as that fiery prelate of a sensation of softness, much less of love. Bonner, on his part, did everything in his power to check the rising passion; but the more

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he reasoned against it, the stronger it grew, and absence only increased its warmth. Had many hundred miles separated the prelate from Constance, they would not now be more asunder; for the young girl's nerves had received a severe shock, and she lay on a bed of sickness, which might prove her bed of death. And now the prelate wondered why he had not, in years recently gone by (but as much beyond recall as if a century had elapsed), sought some gentle, soothing spirit, to curb the turbulent feelings in his breast; and, tossed about in mental strife, his spirit was lost in vain reviews of the past, until the Queen claimed all his spiritual advice and assistance, to cure the wound of disappointed pride, for—*Calais was lost.*

After well considering the plan laid out by Coligny, the Duke of Guise made an unexpected march towards Calais, and he next sent a fleet to attack the fortifications. Although the garrison of St. Agatha made a vigorous de-

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fence, they were obliged to lay down their arms, and retreated in great numbers towards Newman-bridge. Lord Wentworth, governor of the castle, was a brave officer, but finding resistance was impossible, he ordered his troops to surrender, and to join him in Calais, in the vain hope of saving the town.

The Duke of Guise thought his success certain, but he went on blockading the place in breathless haste, for fear his fortune should change. He planted his batteries against the Castle. Coligny's brother drained the fosse, and the French penetrated into the Castle. On the night following, Wentworth endeavoured to recover his post, but having already lost two hundred men, in a furious attack which he made upon it, he found his garrison so weak that he was obliged to capitulate. Guisnes fell soon after, and thus the Duke of Guise, in eight days, during the depth of winter, made himself master of this strong fortress, that had cost Edward the Third a siege of eleven months,

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at the head of a numerous army, which had, that very campaign, been victorious in the battle of Cressy.

No words are adequate to express the grief of Mary, when she found herself bereaved of her valuable fortress. The nation loudly exclaimed against their Queen, for sending her troops to foreign parts, and thus leaving Calais an open mark, for the enemy to dart upon. Philip of Spain returned to England, and he now boldly declared his intention of recovering Calais; but how was England ready to receive him? The treasury was exhausted, and burdened with debts; the people divided and dejected, and the people of Scotland, at the instigation of the French councils, began to make inroads on the borders of England. And Mary, the Popish-minded Queen, how did she feel? Listening to the superstitious turn of her mind, she looked upon the loss of Calais as a signal that Heaven was visiting her for some evil which she had done.

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She ordered masses, and she endowed churches; she wept tears of agony and remorse; and still the guilt-stained conscience was not relieved. But bitterly, amidst all her burning thoughts, arose the image of her sister Elizabeth ruling over the nation.

Philip of Spain grew weary of her moody fits; and to add to all her grief, she daily expected him to return to Spain, there to spend the remainder of his days, which since his union with Mary had never been sweetened by one blissful moment of conjugal love. Ill-matched pair! Is there a sorrow in the page of regal life, a sorrow passing description, it is when hands are joined together from motives of interest and ambition, whilst the hearts are severed and cannot sympathize. In a private sphere, a dissension in married life is surely a moral evil, passing the pen's power to trace; but in Royal dissension, a more dreadful picture of matrimonial strife is seen; for, added to the cold loneliness of the domestic hearth, busy tongues

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abroad are canvassing the disunion of the pair who cannot conceal their mutual estrangement. Happy then a Sovereign, who has moral courage to consult her own heart; to marry, not for interest, but for love—to add to the splendour of a palace, and to regal pomp, domestic happiness, and affection's ties, to be severed only when death, equally inherent to the beggar and to Royalty, can alone sever the bonds of united hearts.

The loss or gain of a battle, whilst in a material point of view it principally affects the Sovereign, still causes many domestic pangs. There are widowed mothers and disconsolate brides; there are orphans, and brotherless sisters to mourn the loss of gallant relatives, who, when last pressed in close embrace, were strong, and bright with life's uncertain pulse. Philip of Spain returned after the battle of St. Quintin; but many brave Englishmen, who left their native homes to fight under the banner of the foreign King, returned no more to

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cheer the domestic hearth; and children raised their tiny hands and pressed their weeping eyes; and mothers strained them to their bereaved hearts, and taught their lisping tongues to say—"Our father is slain."

Some gallant officers returned with mutilated limbs and flowing wounds; and as the wives of their affections hovered around the suffering invalids, as they caught the groans of agony, as they felt the burning hands, could the afflicted ones pray for life, if it were to continue such a tissue of anguish?

Amongst the wounded officers was Alphonzo Stracey; often he had placed himself before the King of Spain, and received the shot aimed at his Majesty's breast. Foremost he dashed in the fight; he appeared reckless of life; he sought for no acquaintances; he sought not observation. He appeared to have no tie to restrain him from launching into the midst of danger, and he performed extraordinary feats of active valour, when arriving before the

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walls of Calais. On his return to England, after the battle of St. Quintin, he reached the frontiers in time to assist the garrison of St. Agatha.

Many writers talk of love following the warrior on the battle plain; and Nelson, our dauntless British hero, is said to have been inspired with the image of "love and beauty;" but there are, no doubt, many officers, whose reckless hand is warmest in the conflict, who dart into the heat of battle with unrestrained enthusiasm, precisely from wishing to bury in oblivion the voice of love. Well, after all, this argument brings the subject to the same bearing; one officer fights bravely, but cautiously screens himself from danger, because he lives for love; another recklessly dashes foremost before the enemy's darts, because he will not listen to love. Thus—

> "In peace love tunes the shepherd's lay,
> In war it moves the warrior on;
> And well may every Poet say,
> Love forms the burden of each song."

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Whilst the furious battle raged, and the cannon roared, and loudly echoed the voice of the wounded and dying, then Alphonzo paused not to think of one whose writing—

> "Till thou hears't the truth Divine,
> My heart I cannot give,"

ever sounded in his ears, when a momentary pause in the action gave him room to think. And for more than a year, the graceful form of that lovely one, who had penned those decisive words, had haunted his daily thoughts and his midnight watchings. And he had kept his promise; he had studied the Scriptures, and weighed over and over the important subject; but wherever he went, the religion he professed was observed, and no voice was near him to speak in behalf of that mild faith, which teaches better than any other the way to peace and never-dying happiness. On one hand difficulties, persecution, and poverty arose; on the other, peace, honours, and riches. Alphonzo next began to wonder if Constance would not relent in

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favour of his doctrine, but his heart gave him spontaneously a negative reply. Then he asked himself if he could not exist without the young companion of his early life? and he could not satisfactorily answer the question; therefore, he dashed into the battle-field with the carelessness of one who rather seeks, than dreads, the fatal shot.

The scene changed; and, weak and wounded, the young man lay stretched on a couch; the warm drops of suffering stood upon his feverish brow, and the voice of anguish was wrung from the force of his agony; then, when the priest offered him the cross to kiss, as a way to salvation—then, for the first time, the young man felt a repugnance of the Popish rites. The priest knew not, whether he had spent his life in careless living, or had broken and slighted the commandments, but he offered him pardon for every sin. And who was this priest? Alphonzo tremblingly asked himself. Like himself, a fallen man, a-guilt stained mortal;

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like himself, heir to death, and saved only at the intercession of Him, whose blood atoned for the sins of the whole world. Perhaps, too, that meek-looking priest, in his ecclesiastic surplice, had imbued his hands in the blood of the innocent Protestants. Those persons condemned to death as heretics, Alphonzo knew, spent much of their time in exploring the Scriptures, and gleaned from the holy pages that constancy, which kept up their faith in the midst of the flames. From martyrs in general, Alphonzo's thoughts wandered to particular individuals, and the image of his lovely Constance arose brightly upon him. Surely her mild spirit erred not; surely her intellectual, high, aspiring mind, had grasped the right faith, and imbibed proper ideas; and she pronounced his religion superstitious and unavailing. A restless wish to know more, to explore more deeply into the sealed pages of ecclesiastical lore, now took possession of his heart; and after

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much conflict, and much tossing to and fro in the spirit, Alphonzo felt ready to

"Hear the Truth Divine."

and to turn to the same faith as Constance. Oh! man, man! creature of impulse, wavering, changing, unstable man! must the hand of a High Maker be constantly chastening, before it can turn his creatures' hearts to hear his sovereign will? Must misfortune or sickness lay the corner-stone of salvation? Cannot men be prosperous and believe? cannot the hilarity of the body echo the joy of the soul? Must that bright emblem of God's image be drowned in the absorbing pleasures of the ocean of life? and must misfortunes arise, before it can be wholly given to Him, who placed the soul in the corrupt body, as a type of a likeness lost through man's first disobedience, and consequent fall. Enough: burning thought echoes enough.

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CHAPTER X.

THERE is a secret communion between youth; and youth and friendship will spring into the hearts of the most opposite characters when they meet together; the bold and enterprising girl will look with admiration on the mild virtues of a meek and quiet disposition; and the weak will gather strength and confidence from a more energetic friend. Well is it when the two characters blend, and friendship's bonds unite the tie; but, on the contrary, if the stronger disposition twines itself around the weaker sap, and uses its power to exercise its

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strength over the the trusting heart, then bitter is the havoc which may ensue. Far be it from me to assert that Friendship is always an empty name; but still experience will daily show us that those enthusiastic bonds of affection formed between young and romantic minds, often lead to bitter consequences; and, allowing that no greater mischief arises than the pang of the dissolution of this friendship, surely that is an evil of great magnitude. It leaves a blank on the heart, and a void on the mind; it clothes life in its most sombre tints, and the hitherto clear waters of the streamlet of trust are crustrated with the thick film of disappointed feeling.

The Lady Eldrida, deputed by Bonner to inquire into the religious state of Constance's mind, fulfilled her task in the most delicate manner possible. Not understanding the motives which inspired Bonner's pleasure when he heard occasionally that her health improved, the Spanish girl, who now began to love Con-

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stance, dreaded the time when her friend's convalescence would place her within reach of the prelate's power. One morning, when Eldrida entered the invalid's room, her dark eyes were red with weeping, and her whole frame shook, notwithstanding all her efforts to appear calm. Constance tolerated Eldrida's instructions, and even strove to like hearing her controversies, hoping, at the same time, to let her mild truths shine through the Spanish girl's deeper thoughts; and thus both deceived herself that her friend was believing. The Princess Elizabeth, although possessed of many great qualities, never had the grace of patience; and, from her earliest days, always impetuously turned a subject of conversation. The only reason she complied with the Romish Church was because she knew that violence would not be resorted towards her without the most learned and tedious efforts being made to turn her from her own faith; and fearing her impetuous temper would lead her to contradict Eldrida's doctrines, the

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Princess never assisted at her conference with Constance, but secretly hoped that each one would be the last.

The roseate hue of health was very slow in revisiting the young invalid's cheek, and her pulse still beat with languid faintness; probably the long conversations she had with the Lady Eldrida retarded her recovery, and yet the Princess dared not check the interviews; as long as Constance was confined to her room, and yet not so seriously ill as to require clerical attendance—so long as Bonner could gain no admittance to her; and a secret voice, echoed by many persons in the realm, told Elizabeth that Mary's approaching death would soon call her to the English throne.

The morning when Eldrida entered the invalid's room, with her agitated frame of mind, her eloquence failed her; and, between a much longer pause than generally occurred in her reading, Constance took occasion to expatiate on her own religious views. She spoke much

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of the power of Protestant faith in calming all earthly passions.

"There, I grant, you are right," answered Eldrida, hardly knowing what she was saying; "at least, I cannot calm my poor heart, and yours is always tranquil; but, perhaps you have nothing particularly distressing to annoy you?"

Constance sighed, and evasively answered:

"We all have troubles here below."

"So we have; but with some dispositions they are more acutely felt. Constance, I have no friend to lean upon; I never confide in any one. My Royal aunt has no time to listen to me, and my beloved uncle is generally absent. My poor head aches from sympathizing with the throbbings of my heart, and many there are who pronounce me cold and stately, but they cannot see within. Constance, you can calm this burning pain; you can teach me the way of peace, and I will confide in you. We would not apply ice to a fevered brain, were it not

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that we know its calming properties; and I should not open to you my heart, so full of warmth and disappointed hope, were it not that you are so passionless, so calm, so good. Constance, there is a busy devil at my heart, and it will not let me rest; I look for peace, and I cannot find it; I wish to hate, and my hatred turns to love. Oh! happy-minded girl! calm English beauty! teach me, oh teach me, a cure for my woes."

"Lady Eldrida, pray calm yourself," said Constance, almost as much agitated as the Spanish girl; "let not any earthly passion destroy a mind which God has filled with other thoughts than these wild ravings. Banish the image of the person who now occupies too large a share of your heart, and my prayers will be united with yours to help you to the task."

"Very easy words to speak, young lady, but not so easy to practise; perhaps you think I love one who will talk thus to me? No, no; my love is not returned, and that is galling

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enough for Philip of Spain's niece. But that is not all; more handsome, more endearing than ever, the object of my affection has returned from the wars more distanced from me than before, for he has turned Protestant. And now the cup of my wo is full—full to the brink, and even overflowing; and not only separated from him by his coldness, my very heart's communion now must be different from his. It would have been sweet to have knelt down under the same dome, to have listened to the same priest, perhaps to have confessed at the same confessional; and Revenge, dire Revenge, is working in my heart, and she says: 'Eldrida, denounce him! let him suffer! he is a heritic! let him die!' Then this fond heart interposes, and says, 'Remember, it is Alphonzo Stracey!'"

"Alphonso Stracey! and a Protestant!" exclaimed Constance, starting from her couch. "Eldrida, still the throbbings of thy breast; to me Alphonzo now belongs; his heart, his soul, they are mine. It was for me he changed

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his faith: together in early childhood we have lived, and together now we will die."

Was this the calm, the passionless English girl?

Back fell the silken ringlets on the pillow, and the richest colour dyed her cheek. Constance clasped her hand, and she prayed aloud for her lover; she thanked God for his conversion; she turned round to Eldrida, but the latter had fled.

Long and deep were the Spanish Girl's sobs that night; yet the burning tears which fell quenched not the fire within; she wrung her tiny hands in agony, and she opened a book. She tried to read, but the writing appeared as strange hierographics; the letters were indistinct. Eldrida clasped her brow, and then, as if the action had caused the recollection there to spring, before her eyes seemed traced in large letters, her own long-since-uttered words: '*Sooner than he loved another, my hand should pierce her breast.*' Vainly Eldrida strove to

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chase away the horrid words; she thought of Constance, so lately her friend, so pure, so lovely; she tried to close her eyes to sleep, and awoke again with the words trembling on her tongue. And Constance, what were her thoughts? Ever leaning to the most amiable point of view, Eldrida's confessions caused her no pain, save the sorrow of knowing the Spanish girl felt the pang of unrequited love. Such was the elevated, yet meek tendency of her mind, that if Alphonso had loved her rival, she would have resigned her place, and blessed their union; but, had she not heard Eldrida confess that her lover was indifferent in his feelings towards her? Had he not turned to the Protestant faith to possess her affections? Yes, yes, he was hers; and soon awaited her the task of impressing more firmly on his mind the truths which she believed with such ardour. And now Constance longed to see Eldrida; to tell her how, in years gone by, she had lived with Alphonzo under

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the same roof; how his voice first taught her to lisp his name; how together they had wandered where Italia's sun ripens as it were the growth of love. All this she longed to tell her, and next to convince the Spanish Girl how much higher she ought to soar, and how unworthy it was of her to stand between the happiness of two persons beneath her in their station of life. Many times, however, Constance arranged the words she intended speaking, and Eldrida came not. Then Constance remembered how kindly the Princess Elizabeth had sheltered her; how she had protected her, and shielded her from persecution; and she reproached her guileless heart, for not having confided in her before.

Elizabeth listened to the gentle girl, and she longed for the time to arrive, when the land should be filled with like-minded Protestant thinkers; and as she embraced her young *protégé*, she assured her, that Cranmer had made her acquainted with her secret. Then the happy

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Constance thanked her Royal friend for the delicacy with which she had refrained speaking on the subject, and both indulged together, as young minds will indulge, in long and happy dreams of the future; dreams, alas! never to be realized!

Difficulties of course presented themselves: first, if young Stracey's conversion were made public, would he be allowed to keep his liberty? Then, would Constance herself long escape the vindictive Bonner's observant eye? And who was young Stracey? Where was his widowed mother? All these questions, even the buoyant spirits of young hope could not satisfactorily solve; and Constance felt a weariness of spirit steal gradully over her, as she vainly strove to find an exit to this labyrinth of thought. She had always trusted in a Divine Hand to guide her through every difficulty, and now she determined not to despond. As the sun gilds the top of the mountains after the tempest is over, so her spirits rose as she inwardly prayed for assistance and grace.

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CHAPTER XI.

Are there not moments of intense grief, when the mind cannot hear the truths of religion?—when sympathy is ill-placed, and words of comfort fall heavily on the mourner's ears?—when the pressure of the friendly grasp is not felt, and nothing is heeded but the voice of the sufferer's own grief? Was such grief to be Constance's lot? Let us not anticipate.

Some weeks had elapsed since the loss of Calais, and Mary still brooded in melancholy contemplation upon her loss. The nation at large felt the disgrace of being thus beaten by

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their French adversaries, and each warlike heart palpitated with one desire, that of revenging their loss. The Parliament granted a supply of money, and the Queen fitted out a fleet of a hundred and forty sail, which were joined by thirty Flemish ships, and, carrying six thousand land forces on board, were sent to make an attempt on the coast of Brittany. Finding Brest well guarded, the English landed at Conquet; they plundered and burnt the town, with some adjoining villages; but a Breton gentleman of the name of Theisimon, at the head of some militia, fell upon them, put them to the rout, and drove them to their ships with considerable loss. An opportunity soon occurred to retrieve their fortune. The Marechal de Thermes, Governor of Calais, had made an irruption into Flanders, with an army of fourteen thousand men; and having forced a passage over the river Aa, had taken Dunkirk and Berg St. Winoc. Advancing as far as Newport, Count Egmont now came upon

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Thermes, and obliged him to retire; the Spaniards obliged him to close with a battle near Gravelines, and Thermes skilfully arranged his men for the conflict. He fortified his left wing with all the precautions possible, and posted his right along the river Aa, which, he conjectured reasonably, gave him a full security from that quarter. The English ships, roused by the distant noise of the firing, sailed up the river from every side of the coast, and flanking the French, did such execution by their artillery, that they put them to flight, and gained a complete victory.*

The Queen of England and Philip of Spain now consulted together upon the state of affairs; and it was agreed to enter into a treaty with France, negotiated on the following terms —that France should restore Calais to the English, and that Spain should relinquish Navarre to its lawful owner, Henry, afterwards

* See Holingshed, page 1,150.

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the great Henri Quatre. But this treaty was not made immediately; it required long determination on both sides. Meanwhile, Mary, no longer active, and greatly enfeebled in body, allowed Bonner to exercise unlimited power over the Protestant party, over whom he was more than ever master; for Pole, whose modest and benign deportment—and, it is often imagined, a lurking feeling of love which Mary entertained for him — alone weighed with Bonner, was now confined to his room, with an intermittent fever, and was unable to mix his mild admonitions in the dregs of the bitter cup which Bonner prepared for the Reformers.

It was a cold and stormy evening in October; the snow descended in large flakes, and the wind roared lustily through the many communicating doors in the vast Tower. Winter was exercising its iron rod; but not more chilly was the northern blast than the cold void which Constance experienced, as, once more on a bed

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of sickness, she was the tenanter of a small, but warmly-furnished room in the Tower. Why was the fair young girl there, away from her princely mistress? Who had placed her there? Alas! it was Lady Eldrida who had immured her within those walls, where, in Mary's reign, many hundred victims had last seen the light of day. Readers, think not this improbable; though revenge is hateful, it is too common a passion in the human heart. The raving mastiff bites with deadliest aim the master who has daintily fed him at his own table, and under whose chair he has oft times reposed. The raving maniac will speak most loudly against his dearest friend. The monomaniac will, in preference, slay one before dear to him; and the worker of revenge will sting with deadliest aim, where it has before loved with deepest affection. Day after day Eldrida thought only on one subject, only of Alphonzo Stracey; she dared not speak of him to her uncle; that friend so indulgent, so kind, was as obstinate as

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Eldrida, where he thought her happiness concerned. Philip heard Alphonzo's refusal of the Duchy of La Mancha with sorrow, because he heard also that the brave young soldier intended embracing the Protestant faith. Unwilling to allow him to fall into Bonner's hands, knowing he was too weak to be sent on the Continent, Philip procured him a place of residence, placed guards, concealed at a short distance from the house, filled the house itself with armed men, under the guide of servants, and daily received news of his safety, for Philip, too, saw that the Queen of England was declining, and then——oh, awful! to form daring plans, to be executed after a living person's death.

Eldrida was disappointed, when Calipsa, with all her boasted vigilance, failed to trace the young man's steps; and the latter was lost in conjectures when she was unable to find Mrs. Stracey, whom she had concealed, and to whom she intended to apply, threateningly if necessary,

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in order to obtain the news, which, perhaps, that lady could reveal. And as to questioning the King of Spain, Calipsa dared not, for his Majesty was in no mood to be questioned; it was bad enough to answer his impatient questions. Philip had several reasons for being moody; he cared not much for the English repossessing Calais; he was younger than the Queen of England, and her Majesty was daily growing worse from an incurable dropsy. Philip feared the Princess Elizabeth would ever think he had treated her with a lack of courtesy, and if she succeeded to the throne of England, what cared Philip, if Calais appertained to her dominions? Navarre was a territory Philip valued, and that he must give up to render the treaty binding. Domestic cause for anger weighed in the scale; his favourite niece obstinately refused to marry the different suitors which were offered to her; And the young man whom Philip wished to advance to honours, turned from his offer, and

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from the Catholic faith. And Eldrida; still she loved her uncle, but her conscience now was less pure than before; evil thoughts were busy at her heart, revenge crowding in her brain. No more could she look into Philip's face, with her dark but cloudless eye; no longer dared she let his lips imprint the fond kiss on her brow, nor twine his arm round her small waist, for Eldrida felt that he would soon spurn her!

Too proud to conciliate Constance, fearing that the Princess Elizabeth would read into her darkened heart, Eldrida now determined to have possession of Constance, to watch her, to have her within her power, to listen to the first words Alphonzo should speak to her, to catch those accents which were dearer to her than life. Well she remembered the last time she had seen him, when, leaning on her uncle's arm, she coldly bade him farewell, and she determined to see him once more, to conceal herself where she could hang on his words, and pour

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out her gaze, not in dissembled coldness, but in a last burst of warmth; and then—oh! then —what next?

Bonner listened to Eldrida's words. He heard the news; he knew well that Constance was a heretic; he looked steadfastly at the Spanish Girl's countenance, when she eagerly besought the prelate to place Constance within the reach of his spiritual power. Eldrida flinched not from his searching looks; her eye did not turn away, nor her lip quiver; and Bonner turned from her with disgust, for he knew her heart's secret.

When a bad man meets a companion equally abandoned as himself—when their heads work together in the same evil course, and their thoughts flow into the same channel—then no real friendship exists between them, although an outward show of amity may exist; but when man meets with a kindred spirit in wickedness in woman, then he abhors that heart which can change her naturally softened feelings of

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gentleness into the hateful passion of vengeance. Fain would a bad man, amidst his evil course, know there was an object in creation capable of stopping the bad tendency of his life by the power of her goodness; fain would he find a resting place of peace in the bosom of *a woman.* But when Bonner (who, in his capacity of confessor, knew every Court secret) discovered the rising passions in Eldrida's breast, when he saw her covering jealousy under the garb of religion, then many past sins of his own appeared before his awakening conscience, and he feared to look again at Eldrida, lest she should read that his bosom could feel—*Love!*

After the first day, poor Constance was transported to the Tower: too ill to plead, too ill to think, there she lay, passively stretched on a bed of illness uncheered by any familiar face. Eldrida dared not come near her (for guilt is always cowardly); and every time the fair young girl lifted her eyes from under the

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coverlet, she met the gaze of a withered-looking crone, and Constance almost shrieked as she turned away from the sinister look of those sunken, but still piercing eyes. This person was Calipsa: she was moody, but attentive; she thought the young girl was very ill, and though she was sent more as a spy than as an attendant, she fulfilled Eldrida's commands, perhaps better than the latter wished it; for she hourly administered the cooling draught, and never failed to shake the invalid's pillow. It would have been well for poor Constance, if she could have avoided showing her abhorrence to Calipsa; but she had been accustomed to look at the Princess Elizabeth, and her own English maid had, like that Royal lady, an open expression of countenance, on which shone the reflection of an English heart. When this servant, who had attended her many days before she had accompanied her mistress to Woodstock, to claim Elizabeth's protection, was refused to accompany her mistress, then Con-

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stance feared that some treachery was intended, and she turned away from Calipsa's dark and shrivelled form, with a dislike she neither cared nor sought to disguise.

Calipsa, however, had received orders from Bonner to attend assiduously upon her charge, and the old woman sullenly but punctually attended to her commands. She was unchanged in heart; ever ready to obey rather than lead, her strange nature would prompt her to deeds of kindness as long as they were enforced, and the next moment she was equally ready to dart into the opposite path of cruelty. She was a perfect windmill; a passive creature in others' hands; her conscience so blunted, that she scarcely saw good from evil. She was wicked without spite; she was good-natured without a heart; she liked a change, and took a particular delight in having a place assigned to her in any plot provided she was only trusted; and "if there is virtue amongst thieves," there is secresy amongst rogues. Never had Calipsa be-

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trayed her employers; never till the day when, as a confessional trust, she had entrusted Bonner with a secret which concerned many persons in this tale.

One evening she had given Constance her last dose; she had arranged her couch, had replenished the fire, and turned her back towards the young girl, knowing instinctively how much she disliked her, when she heard her name called, in the small room ajoining Constance's apartment, which served for her own bedroom.

The old woman instantly tottered into the room, and asked, in her own shrill voice, who wanted her?

"Hush! not so loud," answered Bonner; "is your charge sleeping?"

"She never sleeps," said Calipsa.

"Figuratively speaking, do you mean? for she could not exist without sleep," said the prelate.

"Do you call it sleeping, when the night is

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spent in talking and making incoherent exclamations? It is like the expiring flame of a lamp, gaining strength and brightness to glimmer a moment, and die away in darkness. That fair English flower will not last long."

"Old woman, speak those words at your peril."

"Ha, ha, ha, peril! My Lord Bonner, will that restore the bloom to the floweret? Ay, perhaps I may be wrong. I have watched only the darker flowers of Cadiz, and I have closed many a lovely dark eye in death's last sleep, and more than one dying breath has fanned my cheek; but perhaps this English bud holds her life by a different tenure. Ha, ha, ha."

"Cease thy laughter, woman, and rather bewail thy sins; mourn, mourn, and laugh not."

"And why not, my Lord? Why should I not laugh? Many a glad demon has re-echoed my mirth when I have obeyed my master's orders. They laugh but at sin, and I have sinned, so I may laugh. Ha, ha, ha."

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"Woman, have I not told you, that if you repent, your sins will be forgiven? Did I not tell you, that your repenting, and refusing to poison your mistress, showed a glimmering of remaining good? Did I not tell you, not to continue scoffing and railing, but to believe in the efficacy of the holy rites of religion, and be saved?"

"No, no, my Lord Bonner; talk not to me of repenting: though I did not poison her, I embittered her life. You forget *the left-handed marriage.*"

"No, no, I repeat it woman; there are greater sinners than you, who can be forgiven: fall down on your knees and repent."

"Ay, ay; perhaps some day when my cup is full," replied the hardened woman; "but Calipsa will not repent to sin again. Now, my Lord, what would you with me?"

"I will relieve you for a short time," said Bonner. "Go where you list; I intend speaking to the invalid."

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"I can remain here," replied Calipsa, sullenly.

"There is no reason why you should not," answered Bonner, "were it not that I am not used to be contradicted: go now to some menials like yourself, and bandy not words with the Bishop of London."

Calipsa left the room, with a heinous scowl on her dark countenance. Bonner heeded it not, but watched her until the corridor hid her round the winding corner; he then closed the ante-room, took the key, as well as the one outside Constance's chamber, and entering it by the folding door opening into the ante-room, he approached Constance. The noise of the voices in the adjoining room, contrasting with the silence which had previously reigned around, had stupified the invalid, and she sunk into a heavy sleep. Her white hand was extended on the coverlet, and her long lashes rested heavily on her pale cheek, so fair that each soft hair was reflected as if pencilled there;

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her light curls were confined with a small comb, but escaping the restraining curb, a few long locks hung around her. The room was darkened, and the bright fire reflected the only light around, casting fantastic shadows on the opposite wall. There was such a purity of expression in the fair girl's face, that as Bonner gazed upon it, he felt sorry to think that one movement would awaken her to pain and care. Fain would he have fallen on his knees by the young slumberer's bed-side, but he felt unworthy to kneel in the presence of one whose heart was so much purer than his. Bonner left the bed-side, and sat before the fire; he watched the burning coals, and imagined he could trace living forms in the spiritless kindling mass. What did that mass and another recall to mind? Oh! horrible thought! martyred saints seemed to stand up; he could trace the writhing features, the agonized convulsions. The smoke even was replete with meaning; it had the repulsive smell—Bonner knew of what—and he

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plainly heard the crackling sound. How horrible! how appalling! He stretched forth to catch the coals, and then he remembered that those heated pieces of the miner's produce were *not* calling for assistance; were *not* suffering; that they were *not* human creatures; but *they*, the injured martyrs, they would sooner or later be revenged.

Terrified beyond measure, the words Bonner had determined to speak died on his lips, when Constance, in a feeble voice, asked if she was alone? Bonner approached, and the young girl recognised his features. Contrary to the prelate's anticipation, she uttered not a word of surprise, nor of abhorrence; she appeared as if she had been prepared for the interview. After begging the prelate to light a taper, feeling perhaps that the dark reminded her too forcibly of his far darker deeds, Constance herself began the conversation. "My Lord Bonner, in bringing me here, you have of course treated me as many other Pro-

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testants; but waste not your time in endeavouring to turn me from a faith which is dearer to me than life. I feel daily sinking; but if I have strength, I will willingly go to the stake. Only waste not words; I cannot change."

"I know it, I know it," replied Bonner; "and if you were not to say the words, they are spoken in your whole deportment, Constancy there is fully written. Constance, for many months, and even years, I have gone on sinning, and have never allowed the voice of remorse to be heard in my heart; and I have never paused to contemplate the future, or to examine the course of my conduct. Religion, *my* religion, certainly has been the main-spring of my actions; and even now, I believe my tenets the best, the true, and the only road to savation. What would I then give to see you, Constance, turn from your blind-folded ways, and, kissing this cross, say 'I believe?'"

"Put it away, pray do, my Lord Bonner.

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Approach me not with that symbol of the Christian faith; for indeed, indeed, I will not worship it it reminds me of the threats you have used to better Christians than myself. My Lord, speak no more to me."

"Nay, nay, young girl, I seek not to distress you; nor can I convince you of the feelings with which you have inspired me. Pray for mé, Constance, pray with me; but let me now, though, never perhaps, again, tell you how much I—I love you."

"Do you forget yourself, my Lord? Do you wish to insult me, because, I am alone, and in your power? What, is it for this you brought me hither? Where is the wretched old woman, a proper tool of wickedness in your hands."

"Nay, hear me, Constance!"

"Call me not Constance; speak not familiary to me. I am none of yours; I belong not to your bigoted set. I am—yes I will own it. Tremble, Bonner! let his image come before you; let his pale ghost reproachingly warn you

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to beware—martyred Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, appear before Bonner, and protect thy child."

Bonner recoiled several steps; then he approached again, and next retreated. Constance buried her face in her hands, and scalding tears of mingled fear and emotion coursed down her cheeks, and fell fast through her thin fingers; but when Bonner gently drew aside he hands, and she looked upon him, a reassuring voice told her not to fear.

"Let me once more call you Constance," he said; "and I solemnly swear that this is the last time I will bring my darkened image before you. I dare not look upon Cranmer's daughter with evil thoughts lurking in my heart. But is it evil to love one, pure as those bright angels, who raise on high their seraphic voices? Is it wrong to dwell with fondness on one, meek, lowly, and yet firm, who bears upon her the stamp of better things than thoughts of this corrupt earth? God forgive

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me; but if I could turn heretic, it would be your fault. Constance, turn not away from me; I must speak feelings which long have been dormant, are crowding in my brain; and Memory racks herself in vain to remember one solitary hour like unto this. Fear not, young girl, I could not harm you; but is there no medium between deep, burning love, and insatiable hate? Albeit, your affections cannot be mine; although my office as priest places an everlasting barrier between us; yet, Constance, once again hear the voice of love, trembling for the first and last time on my tongue. Now, young, girl, shudder not; heave not one sigh; chase away the flowing tear. I have said my say, I have disburdened my heart; I have calmed my feverish brain, and now thy tormentor is again Bonner; but not Bonner, burning for revenge, thirsting for blood, wishing to change tenets founded on a rock, hewn deeply in thy breast. Bonner is now a passive slave, ready to work thy will, ready to sacri-

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fice all for thee. Command, and though mountains should arise, I would wend my way along; through strife, through care, through weal or wo, thy slave I am. Constance, I conjure thee, speak."

But Constance could not answer directly; the prelate's last passionate appeal was lost upon her. She was buried in prayer; she was thanking that All-seeing One, who rules men's hearts; who change them from the fury of the lion to the gentleness of the bleating lamb.

Again Bonner addressed her, and Constance, feeling his love now more tolerable than his hate, suffered him to take his seat beside her, and then calmly bade him restore her to the Princess Elizabeth.

"I expected this," said the prelate, musingly, "but it cannot yet well be; there are others beside myself who know of your captivity here, and for a short time it must needs be so, or the Queen would believe the Princess had a share in shortening your captivity; soon, young lady,

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an epoch will open for that Princess to protect you without restraint—an epoch which you anticipate with pleasure, which will be the Protestant's glory, the Roman Catholic's overthrow. Ay men have called me cruel, but methinks I have been too weak to work out the glorious work I undertook, to establish the Pope's supremacy and the Romish faith. Long ere this, by one firm blow, the Princess Elizabeth should have been removed from the succession."

Again Constance shuddered, and turned from the prelate; and again she felt it was indeed Bonner, her father's murderer, who was speaking in his own callous words. The prelate saw the effect his last sentence had produced, and he felt inwardly convinced that he was indeed unfitted to hold any communion with one who shuddered at his very words.

"Then you will not release me?" said poor Constance, breaking the ominous silence.

"I cannot refuse you anything," replied the prelate; "but you will not think me unreason-

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able if I ask you to remain here a week longer, when I shall be going to the North, and will tell the Queen, that you are better placed with the Princess until my return."

Constance thanked the prelate so warmly, she so patiently acceded to his will, in delaying for a week her departure (and a week in captivity is, comparativly speaking, an age), that Bonner felt his softer feelings again dawning. He therefore determined to close the conference.

"This may be the last time I shall see you, Constance, and a right understanding must exist between us. I could not approach you without giving utterance to words which are not only repugnant to you, but unfitted to my sacred character. I could not hold long conversations with you, without feeling my faith staggering; and, besides, I cannot reconcile it with my conscience to tolerate a heretic. Conscience, you say! Yes, Constance; though all men should disbelieve it—though, after my

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death, my name be associated with all that is cruel and bad—look not on the darkest side of the picture; pierce through the intricacies of the path of my life, and if you can, Constance, pause when you find one bright spot to rest upon. As I have lived, so will I die, in the Roman Catholic faith; with my last breath, I will uphold its tenets. I have caused the martyrdom of many, but will you not believe that my conscience told me I was right? Will you not believe that now my conscience is telling me how to act towards you? Constance, could I not have made you feel my power?"

"Yes, yes," replied Constance; "though all men should gainsay it, I shall remember with gratitude, that Bonner was just and honourable towards a young girl completely in his power. Bonner, you have been my enemy; you deprived me of a parent; but you have saved the child. And if my prayers can avail aught, as I trust they will, daily shall

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they be offered up for your conversion, and your everlasting salvation. Farewell now; if we both have said more than men's ears might hear, I trust we shall both be benefitted in a manner passing man's finite understanding. I shall believe that there is indeed in your breast a conscience ready to be awakened, and to turn once more into the right path; and you will, on your side, know, that through the world's hate or fear, there is one being drawn towards you with deep feelings of gratitude. Farewell, Bonner; farewell."

Bonner pressed her hand, and when the young girl drew it away—was it a fancy? was it the warmth of her feverish excitement? or had the prelate dropped a warm tear on his saved victim? Had that hard heart really melted, and the tear of contrition flowed from its frozen source?

Bonner now wondered where he should find Calipsa; but he need not have wondered long, for she had never left the turning of the passage,

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where she was concealed behind a huge pillar, which supported the chambers above; and the prelate, unwilling to meet curious eyes, until he had subdued his agitation, walked for some time down the long corridor; and as he passed Calipsa, she vainly sought to catch the half-suppressed words which escaped from Bonner's lips. At last he paused exactly before the spot where the trembling woman stood, and she distinctly heard him say, "Everything I can do to please and comfort her, I will; to-morrow, before noon, she shall see her lover, young Stracey."

Calipsa heard the words, and she heard the deep sigh which followed; and when the prelate's footsteps died away in the distance, she burst forth into a croaking laugh, exclaiming—"Ha! ha! ha! Don't Calipsa live to see strange things? By my faith, the worthy prelate is bewitched by that pale English girl; or, if I could believe it, he is in love."

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CHAPTER XII.

Oh, could we pierce through the darkness of the night—could we pry into each other's secrets—could we lift the mantle of thought—could we draw aside the thick veil of hidden things—what discoveries one single night would unseal! Whilst one person rests calmly in the refreshing arms of sleep, another is tossing about on a bed of pain. Whilst one is free from even a distressing dream, another is holding communion with the most agonizing thoughts. More sound were the slumbers of Constance that night, when Bonner had left her, than she

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had experienced for many nights before: true, she felt sorry to have listened to words of love from the enemy of her Protestant party; but, contrary to her most sanguine expectations, she had found the prelate not only well-principled towards her, but she had secured his compassion, and that without having by any action, or even a look, compromised her dignity or her Protestant faith. Constance had not promised in vain; and before she closed her eyes in sleep, she had mingled the name of Bonner in her prayers.

Whilst others wished for his downfall and his death, she prayed that his hard heart might be permanently softened; and that she, a weak woman, would be the means of working out this wonderful reformation.

Very different was the scene in a far off chamber in the Tower. Not on the side appropriated for captives, but in a regal bed, the Spanish girl uttered her wild and impassioned expressions.

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"Calipsa could not deceive me, and to-morrow, at noon, she is to see her lover. Oh, Constance! fair and fortunate girl! thou canst not know the depth of sorrow into which I am plunged. Oh, strange fate! I have clasped the English flower close, close to my heart, and in sickness there I have pillowed her head; and she did not know why then my heart was so still; it was the stillness of despair. He returned, and then its quick palpitations were intolerable to bear, and—oh! horrible—I opened that heart, bleeding with anguish and pain. I opened it before my rival's eyes, and she knows its deep secret; and when the bridal ring unites that beautiful pair, when the fair English girl leans on that arm I have never pressed, then will she tell him of the Spanish Girl's love, and recall to mind the scene of my grief. Why was I not fair, like her? What care I now that my dark hair waves to please many admirers? what care I when they say the gazelle's eyes equal not mine in brightness? that not more stately

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Juno's swan-like figure than my Spanish form? Perhaps it is this very stateliness *he* disliked; perhaps *he* liked not the vivid glances of my black eye. What care I, then, for every boasted charm? I am not his English flower. It is the pale, pale rose he loves, and not flowerets of deeper bloom. Oh, Alphonzo! would that we had never met. But now—no, no, thou canst not leave her. *My hand must pierce her heart!* No, I did not say the words, but they *will* appear before me. Could I even hold the murderous weapon? Tush! it is a phantom dream. Oh, sleep, calm my throbbing temples—have pity on my heart. Heaven send me a short respite from pain. Sleep, throw thy heavy hand on every pulse, and heal my troubled breast!

* * * * *

How glowing are the sun's rays on a bright October morning! It does not shine like in summer, from the earliest dawn of light, but towards noon he sheds his glorious beams on

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the snowy path, and reflects a thousand diamonds on the snow-clad ground. The captive, from his high-barred window, cannot discern the beauty of his golden reflections over mountain and streamlet, and on the white-tipped trees, but his rays dart even into his obscure room; and then the captive knows it is noon. With what different sensations are those hues viewed! Sometimes the prisoner knows that he will contemplate the morrow's sun, freed from his chains, freed from his confinement; that in the possession of liberty, he will watch the heavenly luminary glide down gradually in the setting west. Sometimes, alas! the prisoner, for the last time, gazes at the sun's rays, and knows that ere his next rising, the spark of life will be extinct, and that the warm pulse will be still. Then how his soul lingers in a last contemplation of his bright beams! how the saddened spirit wishes the pain of dying over, and that he were already launched into that ethereal sphere, where his

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eyes will behold more glorious things than even the resplendent plenipotentiary of the sky.

Constance had risen; and, seated by the window—or rather, as near to it as its height would admit—she was lost in a reverie, in which sweetness predominated over the bitter parts, and bright hope had succeeded to keen despair. A sweet smile played around the dimpled mouth, and the bright tresses, more cared for than usual, hung in glossy curls of luxuriant growth. The young girl was still very weak; her fair cheek was like the blushing tint of the palest rose, hardly pale, hardly pink; and as she reposed in a chair, well propped with pillows, she looked queenly in her solitude—not Queen of a worldly domain, but Sovereign of a world of thought, too exalted in their range for man's improvement. The blue eyes, concealed under their deep fringe, were partially closed, for the invalid could not bear much light; and the small mouth was languidly parted, the upper lip disclosing the pearly teeth.

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Constance was happy, and yet she knew not why; she was full of hope, and she knew not of what.

What was that gliding noise, seeming to steal from behind the tapestry? What, but the breeze through the opened casement? Yet her cheek grew very pale; and again a rustling noise was heard, and again Constance chided herself for being so childish.

Another half hour elapsed; Calipsa had been sent for, to speak with Bonner, and Constance had remained still, and in the same position; yet twice again had she heard a strange sound, and her cheek had paler grown. A few moments more, and Alphonzo had pressed her to his heart, and had called her his own, his beloved; and she had leant her head upon his bosom, and had sobbed tears of sweet joy; and her blue eyes had gazed on his darker orbs, and reflected the mirror of her thoughts; her cheek had regained its bloom. What, was it the breeze again through the casement? but

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once more she heard a sound; and once more she heard a sigh. Closer still, Constance drew towards Alphonzo, and then she bade him close the window.

All now was still; and long was the uninterrupted conference the lovers held; they talked of happy childish ours, of sunny Italian scenes; they traced the growth of their love, and the anguish of their absence; and then Constance, looking earnestly in Alphonzo's face, asked him, "Are you a Protestant?"

And Alphonzo playfully put aside the young girl's tresses, and looking at her equally earnestly, he smiled as he replied, "Could I look upon you thus, my own beloved, if I were not?"

"Ah, then, my prayer has been heard; and if no other happiness awaited me; I should be secure of this one: chained now heart to heart, worshipping in the same spirit, will we raise our glad voices to the throne of grace; and since Bonner has thus given me this bliss by

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sending you to me, you too will pray for him —for that wretched, but still reclaimable prelate."

"Constance, you have showed me the true path of religion, and I will do as you bid me; I will pray for the man who, amidst all his dark and stormy passions, sought thee for harm, and left thee admiring, and feeling unworthy to hold again the language of love; who found a calming potion in your innocence, and a safeguard in your prayers."

"My Lord Bonner seems to have turned confessor to you," said Constance, blushing deeply. "Are you not afraid of a rival?"

"No, no, these burning blushes avail you nothing, and the smile which follows, alone I heed; and it says that you have not only bound me to you by earthly ties, but with an angel's purity have likewise linked my heart to yours in faith; so now in one faith, one belief, under the same temple we will worship."

"Alphonzo, Alphonzo, what is that noise?"

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"I heard nothing; your nerves are weak."

"There! hark! again I think I hear it; and ever and anon a deep sigh. What can it be?"

They both listened attentively, but all was silent. Alphonzo looked into the little anteroom, but all was still.

"Indeed, dear Constance, you are fancying things which do not exist."

"Perhaps I am, for I am very nervous; ever since the Lady Eldrida told me in passionate words she loved you."

"Constance, I thought you above being jealous."

"Jealous!" said Constance; "I know not what the word means. I pity the Lady Eldrida, but you wrong me if you think I am jealous. If you love her, Alphonzo, do not think of me; I would not stand between her happiness."

"But I cannot tell why you should even think of the dark-eyed Spanish Girl. I owe her some gratitude for visiting me in prison, though

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afterwards she coldly told me she would have done the same for any other chevalier; but I never entertained any feeling like love towards her. Hers was that commanding style of beauty—that unfathomable power of intellect—which either shines in noon-tide openness, or can lurk in the dark; and few could undertake to know the Lady Eldrida's heart, without long examining her impressive movements. Yet, without loving her, I feel interested in her fate. Although her parting words were cold, they had much meaning; she wished me as much happiness as she should feel herself; and I fain would know that she was really happy."

"She never sees me," said Constance; "but her own servant attends me."

"That is strange," said Alphonzo, musingly; "surely no treachery exists under that apparently too warm heart? 'tis a pity," he continued, smiling, "that she cannot find another Alphonzo."

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"Or," said Constance, joining in his smile, "that the laws will not allow you two wives."

"I should indeed look an enviable chevalier, with my fair English rose, and my dark-eyed Spanish bride."

And now an audible, gasping sigh, echoed through the room. Alphonzo started up; another was uttered, approaching almost to a groan; then followed a rustling sound, and when he opened the door, he fancied he saw the last glimpse of a woman's drapery, as a slender figure glided rapidly down the nearest turret-stairs. Fearing however, to alarm Constance, he returned to her, declaring that the wind echoing through the turret windows had caused the strange noise. The time was now fully spent, and Bonner was waiting for him in the court-yard below. Alphonzo therefore once more embraced his blushing Constance, and left her with a calmer heart.

Surely it must have been the wind, and she must not be so weak; but in spite of all her

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endeavours to reassure herself, the young girl felt so lonely, that she almost wished for Calipsa's return.

Where was Calipsa? Bonner had detained her for a long time, under plea of asking her questions concerning her charge, but in fact, to allow Alphonzo time to speak with Constance. How strangely blind, men are, when they are buried in one absorbing thought! Bonner asked questions, without caring for the answer. Calipsa answered without heeding the question; she knew the prelate's secret, and he knew hers. When the latter got tired of the old woman, and despatched her on a useless errand, then she had no more patience for such silly trifling; but instead of executing her task, she sought Eldrida's chamber, intending to tell that, *conte qui conte*, she would no longer wait upon the young girl, since Bonner no longer dealt openly with her. Calipsa had told her mistress all she had heard concerning Bonner's intention of allowing Constance to see her lover; she

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fancied that Eldrida's disguised coldness was really felt, and had so blinded herself, so wrapped herself in that idea, that she had no pain in giving the news which sounded to poor Eldrida as the parting knell of her happiness.

After waiting for some time, Calipsa was preparing to leave the room, when Eldrida rushed in, pale, dishevelled, and sobbing as if her heart would break.

"My dear, dear young lady, what is the matter?"

"Do not speak to me, Calipsa; you can do no good; and yet, oh! yet, I cannot bear alone my bitter anguish: when, tossed by a thousand contending feelings, I lay on a bed of sickness, then you bode me chase away *his* image from my heart, and I told you there it was engraven, and there it has been fostering the warm affection into burning love. Calipsa, my brain is distraught, my head is reeling; a thousand fiends are busily weaving their dread advice. The poniard, poison, anything, but rid me of my

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rival. What have I done? Calipsa, you shudder, and I have never seen you shudder before. Well, then let her live; but if she waits awhile, I soon shall be no more. Unhappy Eldrida, why wars she born to weep in the prime of her days, to die of a broken heart, and blighted affection? Calipsa, speak, speak; I cannot bear my own voice."

Here, then, was a new plot for Calipsa, and here she was trusted. She placed her mistress on a couch; she bathed her throbbing temples with a cooling lotion, and the young girl felt refreshed.

"Give me something to drink," she said; "the sight of that cool lotion makes me wish to drink it."

"Not that; here is some water," replied Calipsa, endeavouring to take away the bottle, which Eldrida held tightly in her hands; "talk not of drinking the contents of that bottle. *It is poison.*"

"*Poison!*" exclaimed Eldrida, holding the

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phial tighter still; "then give me water; fear not, I am calm now; but look not so wistfully at the bottle, I do not want it now; yet I will keep it to cool my temples next time they throb. Why do you stare at me?"

"No, no, you cannot mean it," said Calipsa; "yet I would fain have again that phial, it is most deadly poison; know you not how I dilute the smallest quantity with water? It is a Spanish prescription; give it me, give it me back."

"I am not used to be contradicted," replied Eldrida, sumoning all the authority she could command. "I tell you now, you shall see that poison no more. Go, talk of the scene which has passed between us, and I will drain the phial even to the last drop—my death be then on your shoulders."

"Do not talk so," said Calipsa, bursting into a flood of tears; "I who could die for you, would I betray you? But lady, dear lady! if you knew the horrors of a troubled conscience, you

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would not burden it with this sin. And if you really do poison the English girl, heed me now; a few drops will suffice, for it is the *most deadly poison!* but no comforting drops will ever remove the stain from your conscience."

"I did not say I intended poisoning any one," replied Eldrida, pettishly; "but you asked for the bottle, as if I were used to be commanded. Once again I say, you shall not have it. Now go to your charge; I will remain here alone."

* * * * *

"How changed is now my heart," exclaimed Eldrida; "how full of love—how full of hate; and the two opposites meeting, are too much for my brain; such intense passions can never commingle. Another day of like agony, and each vessel in my head would burst; the pain is intolerable, and fountains of freshest water would not refresh the parched soil. Oh, what a short space there is between misery and unhappiness; between a smile and a tear; between life and

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eternity; and yet that short space is a barrier difficult to surmount. The bear, confined in his circular den, climbs to the highest top of its pole, and there stands, the spectators looking on in irony, laughing at the monster's grim grimaces; but one leap, and he would be in the midst of them, and dart away from his pursuers the freest of the free; but it is that *one* leap he cannot conquer, and there he must remain on the provoking pole, or else retire growling into his low den on the parterre. There is but one step between me and happiness, for Alphonzo said it—'her heart requires to be sued long; and he might have sued it long, sure to have found its most tender side, its warmest affections, all for him. Surely he would have loved me—he *must* have loved me; but the pale English rose stepped forth in her almost child-like beauty, and the blue eyes looked like a bud in the midst of a heavy shower; it required careful culling, gentle nurturing, and she had it all. Whilst I, stricken

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as the deer of the forest, by the sharp pointer pursued, I waft in vain my heart-felt sighs, I shed in vain my scalding tears! Is there any excuse in Heaven for a dark crime? Is a broken heart any palliation? Is a reeling brain any plea? Dare I hope it? I fear not. Then Heaven see not the black deed. God forgive me!"

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CHAPTER XIII.

Another morning was nearly spent, and again it was the noon-tide hour; the sun shone not upon the dark, stern tower, but its battlements frowned in darkness; the elements seemed at war; the rain and the sleet battered on the huge turrets, and the wind howled through the long corridors. That morning, Constance could not rise; she felt more restless than she had been for many days before; and her whole life passed before her memory, as if she were collecting her journal to be read after her death. She fancied she felt her mother's

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voice, blessing her in her cradle bed; and the maternal embrace she had ever remembered, appeared but as yesterday imprinted. Then she dwelt with the friend of her childhood; she stood upon the dangerous brink from whence Mrs. Stacey had rescued her. Her childhood advanced; she wandered about in lovely gardens, the rich purple fruit hung around her, and its graceful festoons formed a bower, her tiny fingers oft times disturbed. She thought she wandered by the borders of the lovely lakes, that she gazed on the afar scenery of the Alps, and the distant panorama of Switzerland. The palaces, the noble buildings, the papal seats of grandeur, all passed in review before her; and thus in rambling contemplation many hours passed. The evening shades were approaching, when a low rap was heard at the door, and Constance having answered "Come in," the Lady Eldrida stood before her. Constance felt the colour forsaking her cheek, as she met the Spanish girl's earnest expression of countenance; the

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latter looked half repentant at having sought the interview, and Constance felt her whole frame quivering with emotion. "I would have risen, had I known Lady Eldrida intended honouring me with her company; but now it is again in bed that I have the honour of receiving her visit."

"You think it no honour," said Eldrida, sullenly.

"But there is a pleasure in welcoming a long-absent friend."

"You think it no pleasure," said Eldrida."

"Well, Lady, at all events you will allow me to say you are welcome here, but I really cannot understand you."

"I am not welcome," replied Eldrida, bitterly; "I am an intruder—an intruder into your room—an intruder into your secret. I have come in unannounced, I shall go away when I please: but you shall hear me—nay, I mind not your tears; I have shed mine till my eyes are dry with weeping; I mind not your sobs—I

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uttered mine until, in convulsive agony, I was forced to leave off. Why do you weep? Are you not blest? Is not Alphonzo yours? Why do you fear? Have I yet cursed you? No, but I have come to do it! and more: if you stand before my happiness, though Bonner may befriend you, my vengeance will find you out. As heretics, both shall suffer; you and your betrothed husband. Constance, you can save him from the torment of the stake; your heart is cold, your soul passionless. Have I not seen how you bore his absence? When my heart was being eaten up, when each vital part was preyed upon by the canker-worm, which never dies, you felt not this pain; and you call this love! You slept calmly at night, and you call this love! No! waking or sleeping, in silence or in conversation, I am alike full of grief, with the sapping mine of sorrow ever at my heart. Fair-haired girl, you can live for friendship. You do not know what is love."

"Nor do I ever wish to do," said Constance,

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"if this violent, passionate, outpouring of the heart were fed at its shrine. Love with me has been associated with a holier work of faith, lady. I sought not to possess Alphonzo's heart, so much as to claim a share in saving his soul. You once asked me the road to peace—I taught it *him*, and will teach it you. Keep your warm passions under a sober, reasoning judgment; pray without ceasing, and faint not. What would you have me do? To give up Alphonzo for a right cause, would wring, but not break my heart; to refuse him my plighted hand, and to take away that love which he has now, and thought of through the battle, through imprisonment, and at the brink of the grave itself, what for? To satisfy the malice and revenge of a jealous Spanish girl. Eldrida, you have roused my passion; and now leave me, lest your vehemence teach my passionless heart to rebel."

Eldrida did leave her; she gained her chamber; she emptied the contents of a small phial,

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and substituted a colourless liquor. She retraced her steps, and noiselessly entering the ante-room, which led to Eldrida's, she placed the phial again on the chimney. She listened one moment: she heard Constance sobbing convulsively; then she rushed down to her own room, bolted the door, and sunk senseless on the floor.

Hardly had Eldrida left Constance, when, cautiously mounting the staircase, Alphonzo once more entered the room where Constance lay stunned by the emotion her frame had undergone in the trying interview with the high-spirited Spanish Girl; her generous soul reproached her for having uttered one harsh word. Perhaps she could have soothed, perhaps she could have comforted, Eldrida. In faltering accents she told her lover all that had passed, but he did not upbraid her. He suppressed with difficulty his indignation towards Eldrida for seeking her rival on a bed of sickness.

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"Calm yourself, my Constance; our prospects soon will change. The Queen is relenting in her persecutions; her continued illness whispers in her ears, that after death comes judgment. Bonner will pretend to be too busy to look into the particulars of the case. We will kneel before the King of Spain, and he will bless our union."

"Ah, Alphonzo, as I hear you speak, I feel my heart grow heavy; but, think me not wanting in trust, nor accuse my temper of being pettish and superstitious, when I say, that through your smiling hemisphere of hope and love, I see dark clouds arising. Whilst angels hover in your clear sky, mine is replete with dark-looking creatures; and, even now, the Spanish Girl's eye is before my mind, and makes me tremble."

"Constance," said Alphonzo, turning very pale, he knew not why; "you are ill and weakened, and you do not take sufficient restoratives. You recover from one feverish attack

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to be plunged into some fright, and new illness succeeds. Do you not take any soothing potions? Something to do you good? Come, I must be your doctor."

"Well, how very strange that I was thinking that you looked ill; and, at all events, I have agitated you as much as Eldrida has harmed me; so we both require a calming potion. There is one on the chimney in Calipsa's room; open this door, you can then go in."

Alphonzo obeyed; he approached the chimney, carefully read the label, which ordered the dose to be taken in two parts.

"That is the bottle," said Constance, "I almost hoped I should not have required another; but there is fortunately enough for two persons. Now, bring a second glass, and, instead of drinking together a good toast of malmsey, gay knight, you must fain accept a reviving draught."

Alphonzo took the bottle, shook it, poured out two glasses of it: "God bless you, my beloved, and restore you to health."

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"God bless you, and strengthen your faith in Him," answered Constance; and they both swallowed the contents.

* * * * *

Eldrida lay for some time in a death-like swoon; but at length she recovered her consciousness, and with it, an indistinct idea of having seen Constance, of having spoken harsh words, and then—oh! then, her reason returned, and she recollected everything. She arose from the ground, hastily swallowed a glass of water, to prevent herself fainting, then rushed into *the* ante-room, and looked on the chimney: *the* bottle was no longer there. A dead faintness came over her; she leant against the wall for support; she tried to pray, but she dared not; she tried to weep, but she could not. Her trembling limbs at length regained some strength; she wiped the drops which had gathered on her brow, and then tottered, rather than walked, into the next room. Oh! horrible sight! Gasping in the last agonies of death,

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Alphonzo Stracey was extended on the floor. The fallen chair told that the writhing pain had laid him there. His features were distorted in horrible convulsions, and his hands were tightly clinched. One deep groan after the other burst from him; once he looked upon Eldrida, but his eyes grew sightless, his breath short; and looking still fixedly at the palsied, wretched Spanish Girl, he expired in unspeakable agony.

Eldrida rushed past him; she almost trod on the cold corpse; she knew not what she did: she approached the bed, she drew down the coverlit, and she contemplated the awful work of her dire revenge. Her young rival lay cold and inanimate; she had apparently died in less pain than her lover—perhaps expired in her sleep. Her blue eyes were closed, and the only alteration in her lovely countenance was, that instead of the sweet smile round her mouth, the lips were parted, and slightly, very slightly convulsed. Lower and lower Eldrida bent

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her head, until it touched the cold frame; she listened for one sound, one slight quivering sign of life. No, no; the bright spirit had flown away. Constance was dead, cold, and gone!

* * * * *

Hours flew by, and Bonner grew angry with Alphonzo for lingering with Constance. He patiently waited for some time, for he had promised to see her no more; but at last he could no longer command his temper, and he rushed up to that fatal chamber. What there met his gaze? The brave young soldier, in his first manhood's dream of hope and love; and the fair young girl, so lovely, so good, both slumbering in one everlasting sleep! What did the awful sight mean? Not a sound was heard in that chamber of death, silent as the tomb; not a trace was there of a murderer's hand, but its awful work was seen. Bonner had destroyed many a warm, beating heart, but there had ever been a hope of pardon, if the vic-

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tim recanted. He had never murdered thus the young; and he raised the young man's corpse with the remaining hand he had (the other he had burned); then he went to the bed where Constance lay; he strove to catch at a hope of life; he rubbed the hands, but no circulation came; he kissed the lips, but they were cold and clammy: and, was it a fancy? he tasted a strange thing—a deadly, sickly taste—the poisoned draught. Then Bonner guessed part of the truth, and he swore over those cold pale forms to revenge their death—to pursue their murderers with sure aim. How to proceed first he knew not. Bonner was beside himself, and for a moment he wondered if he envied not the calm sleep of death. At the thought of death, his sins ever recurred to his mind, and Bonner rushed out of the room, daring to think only of one thing—to bury thought in one feeling of retaliation and revenge. With hurried steps, he trod many dark passages in the Tower; he bent down through arches, descended winding

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steps, and opened concealed doors known only to himself. At last he reached a room; he paused not to knock, he rushed in. A woman, bearing the traces of much loveliness, but very pale and thin, started up as the prelate entered—so ghastly, so heinously frightful, that the poor lady drew back to the furthest end of the room.

"What now? what now?" she said, in a touching voice, seeming to say, "Have I not suffered enough?"

"Do you ask, what now? Ah, poor lady! you will know soon enough. Go, reach Philip's presence; throw yourself low at his feet; ask for revenge, for searching, never-pausing revenge. Go, tell him that your son—*his* son, is—is—lady, is poisoned."

"What, do you bring me these words to terrify me? No, they cannot be true; yet your agitation, your pallid face—yes, you are not speaking false. Show me the way, Bonner; speed on, I will follow you. Is he not my hus-

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band? Although he wished to kill me, he *is* my husband; and if he has anything to do with this base action, he shall never escape my vengeance! Is it a dream? Bonner, you could not trifle with a mother's heart? My poor boy!"

"Lady, hear me again; hear me whilst I am calm enough to speak. Your son, and his betrothed Constance, Cranmer's daughter, they are both dead; they have both been poisoned, and their memory asks for revenge."

"Revenge!" said Mrs. Stracey. "Is there a heinous sin that asks for it, it is this. Could the sun of Heaven shine upon such murderers? Could they bear life? Ought they to live? But why was the black deed done? Why was that sweet, fair girl, poisoned too? Oh, Bonner! speed on, speed on. I cannot tarry."

"Where go you, lady?"

"To the King!"

They did not speak another word; the prelate hushed his lamentations, and the mother

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her sighs; and they sped on with the swiftness of lightning. They opened Philip's most private rooms, but he was not there; they rushed by the wondering household; they overturned many a gaping page; at last they gained the presence-chamber. Bonner threw wide open the door, and then crossed his hands in sullen determination. Mrs. Stracey advanced: there was the lover of her youthful days, gay and gallant as ever; his sullen bride, England's Queen, was by his side; he was holding long and earnest conversation with her, and her face was dark and gloomy; disease there had stamped her hand, and pain had laid her wrinkles on the brow.

How the King started. Was it a phantom from the world of spirits? Was it a ghost in earthly form? or did Agnes Stracey, his injured Agnes, stand before him? Philip's face turned ashy pale, his hair stood erect on his head; his knees shook together; and Mrs. Stracey, mistaking all these symptoms for the quivering of

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remorse felt for his last crime, burst forth in all the wild eloquence of a mother's love—

"Base, mean, murderous man! King of Spain, dare you stand in the presence of your English bride, of a crowned Queen, and fear not an injured woman's revenge? Was it because you found out that my life was saved, that you sought to murder my beautiful boy? Was he not your son, your own brave boy? Has he not fought by your side? Has he not been taught to love the hand which was raised to murder his mother? Has he not wandered through life, without knowing whom to call 'Father?' Has he not been separated from his mother, lest your hand should again be put forth to do her harm? Have I not hidden myself from your eye, and buried my life in seclusion, and for many months dwelt in a damp and distant room in this Tower? Then Bonner told me, that you spoke softly to my boy; that (yes, tremble; before your acknowledged wife I say it) you waited but *her* death, to bring

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forward my son's claims to honour and high station; and now, false man! treacherous husband! King unworthy of a sceptre! you have poisoned my son. His dark eye, why was it like yours? Ah, it will never beam again; and his raven hair, which in his baby hours I loved to twine, is now clustering damply around his cold brow. Heaven, wilt thou see the deed of horror? Wilt thou——"

* * * * *

"Woman, I know you not. You are raving. How dare you approach the Queen with your idle words. Go, you are raving!"

'Raving?" said Mrs. Stracey, laughing, hysterically; "go with Bonner—he will show you your murdered son; go, look at the work of death you have wrought; go kneel down, and ask God if perchance he can forgive you; I cannot?

"Woman, I again say I do not understand you. I now acknowledge having a son, but I never raised my hand to harm him. Bonner,

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I follow thee; haste, and thou shalt answer for this scene."

But Bonner replied not; he swiftly mounted the staircase. Philip followed, and Mrs. Stracey was left alone with the Queen.

Then she poured forth her heart before her astonished hearer; then she told the tale of her early love; how she had once been a fair and guileless girl; how Philip, in a tour through Italy, met her in that clime; how she withstood his daring love; how, not knowing his rank, she confessed, at last, her own love in return; and when Philip at last threw aside his incognito, how she wept and sobbed; how her nights were spent in watching, and her days in wretchedness; and still she refused to be his. Then she told how, imposing on her youth (for sixteen summers had not quite gone over her head), the King had persuaded her, that although he could only unite himself to Royalty, still a "left-hand marriage would be binding;" that he would never marry any other way, and that she alone

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would ever lay claim to his heart; how she pondered over his words; how they fed upon her mind; how she consented. Then, for a few short years, came love and bliss; but at last, Philip grew weary of his bride, and repented of the tie, even of this "left hand-marriage;" how, night and day, he sought to find the paper which mutely witnessed the nuptial; how he removed from his path every eye-witness to the act; how next Calipsa was persuaded to kill her; but when the time arrived, when her dark-eyed boy was pressed to her bosom, and in artless innocence he smiled upon the very being who was sent to do the black deed; how then Calipsa turned from her sin, but embittered her life, by binding her by the most solemn oath never to reveal her existence; how she had long wandered, wretched and forsaken, without one tie save her boy; and when that son grew up, Calipsa once more appeared before the mother, and bade her separate herself from him, bade her choose between his death

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and his advancement. Then was it that he loved Cranmer's gentle daughter, and the task was doubly embittered by this fact. But Calipsa, fearing Philip would discover her existence, tore her forcibly away, and kept her concealed, until Bonner, finding her in his research after heretics, had wrung the truth from Calipsa, who was on a bed of sickness; and now she claimed vengeance for her murdered son.

Mary heard no more; she fell down in a swoon.

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CONCLUSION.

WHAT strange rumour is heard throughout the land? Why are those loud shouts echoed? The road from Hatfield is lined with people, and from the Houses of Parliament the members are pouring. Hark! they exclaim, "God save Queen Elizabeth! Long and happily may she reign!"

The Princess Elizabeth arrived in London, and she entered the gloomy Tower; she reflected on the difference in her present fortune, and knelt down to thank her God.

The prison doors flew open, and the rescued Protestants knew that "*Mary was no more.*"

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Where was Philip? Away in the Low Countries. Lord Cobham was despatched by Elizabeth to inform him of his Queen's death, and her own accession to the Throne. She thanked the Spanish Monarch for the protection he had often shown her, and hoped that their friendship would continue to exist.

How did Philip receive the message? He refused, in the first place, to continue the proposed treaty with France. What cared he now if the English regained Calais? This, perhaps, was the only cause why the nation regretted Mary's death. First, Philip ordered the Duke of Teria to make proposals of marriage to Queen Elizabeth. Her Majesty refused him; but in a manner so obliging, so evasive, that Philip heeded not the refusal, and sent his messengers to Rome, to order the dispensation.

Meanwhile, Philip passes much of his time in endeavouring to comfort a pale, weeping girl, who hangs upon his arm.

"Eldrida, you did it in a moment of revenge;

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you were beside yourself. Be comforted; look up again; there is surely some hope."

"Oh, none for such a sinner as I am. No, thousands of masses could not calm my mind, nor a deluge of tears relieve my brain. Now I see Constance before me; I feel her cold lips, and I press her clammy hand. Oh, why paused I not? Why did I not dash the fatal phial to the ground? Why did I ever see *poison*."

Dreadful convulsive fits followed these exclamations of grief: the mind became enfeebled by the body's sufferings, and soon the Spanish Girl leant no more on her uncle's arm, but reclined on a couch by the open verandah. The warm sun shone through the blinds; the room was perfumed, and refreshingly sprinkled with odoriferous waters; delicacies of every kind surrounded the dying girl's couch. But dark was her broken heart; well Eldrida knew that the most gloomy prison-walls were too good for her; and she loathed the luxuries she was unworthy to touch.

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The soft breeze fanned her sunken cheek; and she turned her head feebly aside, as if the air were too pure for her. She spoke to her uncle, but she never looked upon his face; her eyes were always downcast and heavy.

A few days more, and a priest knelt by her bed-side. The physician shook his head; and naught was heard through the room but the prayers of the priest. At the foot of the bed Calipsa knelt, like a grim shadow, so unearthly she looked; so wan, so thin.

The King of Spain encircled Eldrida's head with his arms, and his warm tears fell on her long tresses. They shaded a face of such exquisite beauty, that who would have thought shame and guilt had robbed the colourless cheek of its bloom?

It is a solemn thing to sit by the death-bed of departing worth—to watch the expiring embers of a fire which has been well tended; but, how much more awful to whisper words of comfort into the sinner's ears? To hope and

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trust in mercy, but hardly dare to expect it. The priest prayed, and clasped his hands in fervent supplication; but, alas! he had heard that young girl's confession, and he trembled. Many other secrets, dark and gloomy, he had heard, but never one like this; and, as he looked upon the dying girl, how he shuddered to think that she would soon be launched before a just tribunal, with her awful sins upon her youthful head.

A calm stupor had succeeded to Eldrida's violent fits of grief; and, for many days, although she prayed not audibly, her soul was busily communing away from earthly thoughts. Let us draw a curtain over those thoughts. Surely she had seen a bright vision; surely some sustaining arm was, in mercy, stretched forth to receive her parting spirit; for, without one groan, she expired.

Death, which, for a time, leaves a dreary blank in the heart, in the home, in the very

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town in which we dwell, after a time is forgotten in the world's busy throng.

Philip of Spain left the scene of his last sorrow, and Calipsa remained, watching with earnestness over the couch of a lady, still pale, still melancholy, but resigned to her fate; that lady is Mrs. Stracey. Upon her brow sorrow is written, and no smile plays upon her lips, but a calm heart dwells within. She looks forward to death as the harbinger of peace; for, in a world above, she hopes to meet again her dark-eyed boy and his fair betrothed. And now she has forgiven her enemies, and prays for the forgiveness of that being, once innocent —lately so wretched, so degraded—that unhappy "SPANISH GIRL!"

Lea Grove, Blackheath.

THE END.

LONDON:
Reding and Judd, Printers, 4, Horse Shoe Court, Ludgate Hill.

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