

THE HEPTAMERON: Fifth Day

Marguerite de Navarre (d'Angoulême) Duchesse d'Alençon

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FIFTH DAY.

WHEN day dawned, Madame Oisille prepared for them a spiritual breakfast of such good savor, that it fortified their minds and bodies alike; and the company were so attentive to it, that it seemed they had never heard a sermon to more advantage. The second bell for mass having rung, they went to meditate on the good things they had heard. After mass they took a little walk while waiting for dinner, anticipating as agreeable a day as the preceding one. Saffredent said that he was so charmed with the good cheer they made and the recreation they enjoyed, that he could wish it might be a month yet before the bridge was finished; but as it was no comfort to the abbot to live along with so many respectable people, into whose presence he durst not bring his usual female pilgrims, he urged the workmen to make all possible speed. When the company had rested awhile after dinner, they returned to their usual pastime, and every one being seated, they asked Parlamente who should begin. "It strikes me," she said, "that Saffredent would do so very well, for his face does not seem to me adapted to make us cry."

"Nay, ladies, you will be very cruel," he replied, "if you bestow no pity upon a Cordelier whose story I am going to relate to you. You will say, perhaps, as has been already remarked of other incidents of this kind, that they are things which have happened to ladies, and would not have been attempted but for the facility of their execution; but that is not the case: on the contrary, you shall see from the example I am about to adduce, that the Cordeliers are so blind in their lust, that they know neither fear nor prudence."

NOVEL XLI.

Strange and novel Penance imposed by a Cordelier Confessor on a young lady.

IN the year when Margaret of Austria came to Cambrai on the part of the emperor her nephew to negotiate the peace between him and the Most Christian King, who sent on his part Louise of Savoy his mother, there was in the suite of Margaret of Austria the Countess of Aiguemont, who passed in that assembly for the most beautiful of

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the Flemish ladies. After the conference the Countess of Aiguemont returned home, and the season of Advent being come, she sent to a monastery of Cordeliers, requiring a preacher, a good man, fit to preach to and confess the countess and her household. The warden, who received great benefits from the house of Aiguemont, and from that of Fiennes, to which the countess belonged, sent the best preacher in the society, and the one who was regarded as the most upright man. He performed his duty very well in preaching the Advent sermons, and the countess was perfectly satisfied with him.

On Christmas night, when the countess intended to receive her Creator, she sent for her confessor, and after having well and duly confessed in a chapel carefully closed that the confession might be more secret, she gave place to her lady of honor, who, having made her confession, next sent her daughter. After the young penitent had told all she knew, the good confessor knew something of her secrets, which prompted him to impose upon her an extraordinary penance, and he was bold enough to say to her, "Your sins, my daughter, are so great, that I order you, for penance, to wear my cord on your bare flesh."

The demoiselle, who had no wish to disobey him, replied, "Give it me, father, and I will not fail to wear it."

"No, daughter," replied the holy man, "it would not be meet for you to fasten it on. That must be done by these very hands from which you are to receive absolution, and afterwards you will be absolved from all your sins."

The demoiselle began to cry, and said she would do no such thing. "What!" exclaimed the confessor, "are you a heretic, to refuse the penances which God and our holy Mother Church have ordained?"

"I make of confession the use which the Church has commanded," replied the demoiselle. "I am quite willing to receive absolution, and to do penance; but I will not have you put your hands to it; for in that case, I refuse to submit to your penance."

"That being the case," said the confessor, "I cannot give you absolution."

The demoiselle withdrew, sorely troubled in conscience, for she was so young that she was afraid she had transgressed by the refusal she had given to the reverend father. After mass was over, and the Countess of Aiguemont had taken the communion, her lady of honor, intending to do the same, asked her daughter if she was ready. The girl replied, with tears, that she had not yet confessed. "Then, what have you been doing so long with the preacher?" inquired her mother.

"Nothing," replied the daughter; "for, as I would not submit to the penance he ordered me, he would not grant me absolution."

Thereupon the mother questioned her so shrewdly, that she learned the nature of the extraordinary penance which the monk wished to impose upon her daughter. She made her confess to another, and afterwards they both communicated.

As soon as the countess returned from church, the lady of honor complained to her of the preacher, to the countess's great surprise, for she had a very good opinion of him. All her anger, however, did not hinder her from laughing at the oddity of the penance; but neither did her laughter hinder her from having the good father chastised. He was handsomely thrashed in the kitchen, and so compelled, by dint of blows, to confess the truth; after which, he was sent away, bound hand and foot, to his warden, with a request that another time he would commission better men to preach the Word of God.

Consider, ladies, if the monks do not scruple to display their wickedness in so illustrious a house, what are they not capable of doing in the poor places to which they commonly go to make their gatherings, and where they have such full opportunities that it is a miracle if they quit them without scandal? This obliges me to entreat, ladies, that

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you will change your scorn into compassion, and consider that the power which can blind the Cordeliers does not spare the ladies, when he finds them a fair mark for his shafts.

"Assuredly, this was a wicked Cordelier," said Oisille. "A monk, a priest, and a preacher, to be guilty, on Christmas-day, of such an infamy, and that in the house of God, and under the sacred veil of confession! This was carrying impiety and villany to the very climax."

"Why," said Hircan, "to hear you talk, one would think the Cordeliers should be angels, or more chaste than other men; but they are quite the reverse, as you must know from many an example. As for this one, it appears to me that he was very excusable, finding himself, as he did, shut up alone with a handsome girl."

"Nay," said Oisille, "but it was Christmas night."

"The very thing that makes him the more excusable," said Simontault, "for, being in Joseph's place, beside a beautiful virgin, he had a mind to try and beget a baby, in order to play the mystery of the Nativity to the life."

"Truly," said Parlamente, "if he had thought of Joseph and the Virgin Mary, he would not have harbored such a wicked purpose. At any rate, he was an audacious villain to make such a criminal attempt upon no encouragement."

"The manner in which the countess had him castigated," said Oisille, "might serve, methinks, as a warning to others like him."

"I do not know if she did well," said Nomerfide, "thus to scandalize her neighbor, and if it would not have been better to remonstrate with him on his fault in private and gently, than thus to divulge it."

"That I think would have been better," said Geburon, "for we are commanded to reprove our neighbor in secret, before we speak of his offence, not only to the Church, but to any person whatever. When a man is deprived of all motives on the side of honor, it is very hard for him to reform; and the reason is, that shame keeps as many from sin as does conscience."

"I think," said Parlamente, "that every one should practise the precepts of the Gospel, and it is very scandalous that those who preach them should do the reverse; therefore, we need have no fear of scandalizing those who scandalize others. On the contrary, it appears to me meritorious to make them known for what they are, so that we may be on our guard against their wiles with regard to the fair sex, who are not always wary and prudent. But to whom does Hircan give his voice?"

"Since you ask me," he replied, "I give it to you, to whom no sensible man could refuse it."

"Well then," rejoined Parlamente, "I will tell you a story to which I can testify of my own knowledge. I have always heard that the weaker the vessel in which virtue abides, and the more violently it is assaulted by a powerful and formidable antagonist, the more worthy is it of praise, and the more conspicuously is its nature displayed. That the strong defends himself against the strong is no matter for wonder; but to see the weak beat the strong is a thing to be extolled by all the world. Knowing the persons of whom I mean to speak, methinks it would be wronging the truth I have seen hid under so mean a garb that no one made any account of it, if I did not speak of her by whom were done the honorable actions of which I am about to tell you."

NOVEL XLII.

Chaste perseverance of a Maiden, who resisted the obstinate pursuit of one of the greatest lords of

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France-Agreeable issue of the affair for the Demoiselle.

IN one of the best towns of Touraine lived a lord of great and illustrious family, who had been brought up from his youth in the province. All I need say of the perfections, beauty, grace, and great qualities of this young prince is, that in his time he never had his equal. At the age of fifteen, he took more pleasure in hunting and hawking than in beholding fair ladies. Being one day in a church, he cast his eyes on a young girl who, during her childhood, had been brought up in the château in which he resided. After the death of her mother, her father had withdrawn thence, and gone to reside with his brother in Poitou. This daughter of his, whose name was Françoise, had a bastard sister, whom her father was very fond of, and had married to this young prince's butler, who maintained her on as handsome a footing as any of her family. The father died, and left to Françoise for her portion all he possessed about the good town in question, whither she went to reside after his death; but as she was unmarried and only sixteen, she would not keep house, but went to board with her sister.

The young prince was much struck with this girl, who was very handsome for a light brunette, and of a grace beyond her rank; for she had the air of a young lady of quality, or of a princess, rather than of a bourgeoisie. He gazed upon her for a long while; and as he had never loved, he felt in his heart a pleasure that was new to him. On returning to his chamber, he made inquiries about the girl he had seen at church, and recollected that formerly, when she was very young, she used often to play in the château with his sister, whom he put in mind of her. Her sister sent for her, gave her a very good reception, and begged her to come often to see her, which she did whenever there was any entertainment or assembly. The young prince was very glad to see her, and so glad that he chose to be deeply in love with her. Knowing that she was of low birth, he thought he should easily obtain of her what he sought; and, as he had no opportunity to speak with her, he sent a gentleman of his chamber to her, with orders to acquaint her with his intentions, and settle matters with her. The girl, who was good and pious, replied that she did not believe that so handsome a prince as his master would care to look upon a plain girl like herself, especially as there were such handsome ones in the château that he had no need to look elsewhere; and that she doubted not he had said all this to her out of his own head and without orders from his master.

As obstacles make desire more violent, the prince now became more hotly intent on his purpose than ever, and wrote to her, begging her to believe everything the gentleman should say to her on his part. She could read and write very well, and she read the letter from beginning to end; but for no entreaties the gentleman could make would she ever reply to it, saying that a person of her humble birth should never take the liberty to write to so great a prince; but that she begged he would not take her for such a fool as to imagine that he esteemed her enough to love her as much as he said. Moreover, he was mistaken if he fancied that because she was of obscure birth, he might do as he pleased with her, and that to convince him of the contrary, she felt obliged to declare to him that, bourgeoisie as she was, there was no princess whose heart was more upright than hers. There were no treasures in the world she esteemed so much as honor and conscience. And the only favor she begged of him was, that he would not hinder her from preserving that treasure all her life long, and that he might take it for certain that she would never change her mind though it were to cost her her life.

The young prince did not find this answer to his liking. Nevertheless, he loved her but the more for it, and failed not to lay siege to her when she went to mass; and during the whole service he had no eyes but to gaze on that image to which he addressed his devotions. But when she perceived this, she changed her place and went to another chapel, not that she disliked to see him, for she would not have been a reasonable creature if she had not taken pleasure in looking on him; but she was afraid of being seen by him, not thinking highly enough of herself to deserve being loved with a view to marriage, and being too high-minded to be able to accommodate herself to a dishonorable love. When she saw that in whatever part of the church she placed herself, the prince had mass said quite near it, she went no more to that church, but to the most distant one she could find. Moreover, when the prince's sister often sent for her, she always excused herself on the plea of indisposition.

The prince, seeing he could not have access to her, had recourse to his butler, and promised him a large reward if he served him in this affair. The butler, both to please his master and for the hope of lucre, promised to do so

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cheerfully. He made it a practise to relate daily to the prince all she said and did, and assured him, among other things, that she avoided as much as possible all opportunities of seeing him. The prince's violent desire for an interview with her, set him upon devising another expedient. As he was already beginning to be a very good horseman, he bethought him of going to ride his great horses in a large open place of the town, exactly opposite to the house of the butler, in which Françoise resided. One day, after many courses and leaps, which she could see from her chamber window, he let himself fall off his horse into a great puddle. Though he was not hurt, he took care to make great moans, and asked if there was no house into which he might go and change his clothes. Every one offered him his own; but some one having remarked that the butler's was the nearest and the best, it was chosen in preference to any of the others. He was shown into a well-furnished chamber, and as his clothes were all muddy, he stripped to his shirt and went to bed. Every one except his gentleman having gone away to fetch other clothes for the prince, he sent for his host and hostess, and asked them where was Françoise? They had a good deal of trouble to find her, for as soon as she had seen the prince come in, she had gone and hid herself in the remotest corner of the house. Her sister found her at last, and begged her not to be afraid to come and see so polite and worthy a prince.

"What! sister," said Françoise, "you, whom I regard as my mother, would you persuade me to speak to a young prince of whose intentions I cannot be ignorant, as you well know?"

But her sister used so many arguments, and promised so earnestly not to leave her alone, that Françoise went with her, with a countenance so pale and dejected, that she was an object rather to inspire pity than love. When the young prince saw her at his bedside, he took her cold and trembling hand, and said, "Why, Françoise, do you think me such a dangerous and cruel man that I eat the women I look at? Why do you so much fear a man who desires only your honor and advantage? You know that I have everywhere sought in vain for opportunities to see and speak to you. To grieve me the more, you have shunned the places where I had been used to see you at mass, and thereby you have deprived me of the satisfaction of my eyes and my tongue. But all this has availed you nothing. I have done what you have seen in order to come hither, and have run the risk of breaking my neck in order to have the pleasure of speaking to you without restraint. I entreat you then, Françoise, since it would be hard for me to have taken all this pains to no purpose, that as I have so much love for you, you will have a little for me."

After waiting a long while for her reply, and seeing she had tears in her eyes, and durst not look up, he drew her towards him and almost succeeded in kissing her. "No, my lord, no," she then said, "what you ask cannot be. Though I am but a worm in comparison with you, honor is so dear to me that I would rather die than wound it in the least degree for any pleasure in the world; and my fear, lest those who have seen you come in conceive a false opinion of me, makes me tremble as you see. Since you are pleased to do me the honor to address me, you will also pardon the liberty I take in replying to you as honor prescribes. I am not, my lord, so foolish or so blind as not to see and know the advantages with which God has endowed you, and to believe that she who shall possess the heart and person of such a prince will be the happiest woman in the world. But what good does that do me? That happiness is not for me or for any woman of my rank; and I should be a downright simpleton if I even entertained the desire. What reason can I believe you have for addressing yourself to me, but that the ladies of your house, whom you love, and who have so much grace and beauty, are so virtuous that you dare not ask of them what the lowness of my condition makes you easily expect of me; I am sure that if you had of such as me what you desire, that weakness would supply you with matter to entertain your mistresses for two good hours; but I beg you to believe, my lord, that I am not disposed to afford you that pleasure. I was brought up in a house in which I learned what it is to love. My father and mother were among your good servants. Since then it has not pleased God that I should be born a princess to marry you, or in a rank sufficiently high to be your friend, I entreat you not to think of reducing me to the rank of the unfortunates of my sex, since there is no one who esteems you more than I, or more earnestly desires that you may be one of the happiest princes in Christendom. If you want women of my station for your diversion, you will find plenty in this town incomparably handsomer than myself, and who will spare you the trouble of soliciting them so much. Attach yourself, then, if you please, to those who will gladly let you buy their honor, and harass no longer a poor girl who loves you better than herself; for if God

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were this day to require your life or mine, it would be a happiness to me to sacrifice mine in order to save yours. If I shun your person, it is not for want of love, but rather because I too well love your conscience and mine, and because my honor is more precious to me than my life. I ask you, my lord, if you please, to continue to honor me with your good-will, and I will pray to God all my life for your health and prosperity. It is true that the honor you do me will give me a better opinion of myself among persons of my own station; for after having seen you, where is the man of my own condition whom I would deign to regard? Thus my heart will be free and under no obligation, except that which I shall ever acknowledge, to pray to God for you, which is all I can do for you while I live."

Contrary as this reply was to the prince's desires, nevertheless he could not help esteeming her as she deserved. He did all he could to make her believe he would never love any one but herself; but she had so much sense that he never could bring her to entertain so unreasonable a notion. Though, during the course of this conversation, it was often intimated to the prince that fresh clothes had been brought him, he was so glad to remain where he was that he sent back word he was asleep. But at last, supper-time being come, and not daring to absent himself from respect for his mother, who was one of the most correct ladies in the world, he went away, more impressed than ever with the excellence of Françoise. He often talked of her to the gentleman who slept in his chamber. That person, imagining that money would be more effectual than love, advised him to present a considerable sum to the girl in consideration of the favor he solicited. As the young prince's mother was his treasurer, and his pocket money was not much, he borrowed, and out of his own funds and those of his friends he made up a sum of five hundred crowns, which he sent to Françoise by his gentleman, commissioning him to beg that she would change her mind.

"Tell your master," she said, when the gentleman offered her the present, "that my heart is so noble and generous, that were it my humor to do what he desires, his good looks and his pleasing qualities would have already made a conquest of me; but since these are incapable of making me take the slightest step at variance with honor, all the money in the world could not do it. You will take back his money to him, if you please, for I prefer honest poverty to all the wealth he could bestow upon me."

Baffled by this downright refusal, the gentleman was tempted to think that a little violence might succeed, and he dropped threatening hints of her master's influence and power. "Make a bugbear of the prince," she said, laughing in his face, "to those who do not know him; but I, who know him to be wise and virtuous, can never believe that you say this by his order; and I am persuaded that he will disavow it all if you repeat it to him. But even were it true that you had his authority for what you say, I tell you that neither torments nor death could ever shake my resolution, for, as I have said before, since love has not changed my heart, no earthly good or evil can ever effect what that has failed to accomplish."

It was with indescribable vexation that the gentleman, who had undertaken to humanize her, carried back this answer to his master, whom he urged to carry his point by all possible means, representing to him that it would be shameful for him to have undertaken such a conquest and not achieve it. The young prince, who wished to employ only fair means, and who was afraid, besides, of his mother's anger if the story got abroad and reached her ears, durst not take any further step, until at last the gentleman suggested to him an expedient, which seemed to him so good, that he felt already as if the fair one was his own. To this end he spoke to the butler, who, being ready to serve his master on any terms, consented to everything required of him. It was arranged, then, that the butler should invite his wife and his sister-in-law to go to see their vintage at a house he had near the forest; he did so, and they agreed to the proposal. The appointed day being come, he gave notice to the prince, who was to go to the same place, accompanied only by his gentleman. But it pleased God that his mother was that day adorning a most beautiful cabinet, and had all her children to help her; so that the proper time passed by before the prince could get away. This was no fault of the butler's, who had fully performed his part; for he made his wife counterfeit illness, and when he was on horseback with his sister-in-law on the croup, she came and told him that she could not go. But the hour having passed by and no prince appearing, "I believe," said he to his sister-in-law, "we may as well go back to town."

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"Who hinders us?" said Françoise.

"I was waiting for the prince, who had promised to come," said the butler.

His sister, clearly discerning his wicked purpose, replied, "Wait no longer for him, brother; for I know that he will not come to-day."

He acquiesced, and took her home again. On arriving there she let him know her dissatisfaction, and told him plainly that he was the devil's valet, and did more than he was commanded; for she was very sure that it was his work and the gentleman's, not the prince's; that they both liked better to flatter his weaknesses, and gain money, than to do their duty as good servants; but that since she knew this she would no longer remain in his house. Thereupon she sent for her brother to take her away to his own country, and immediately quitted her sister's house.

The butler having missed his blow, went to the château to know why the prince had not come, and met him on the way, mounted on his mule, with no other attendant than his confidential gentleman.

"Well," said the prince, the moment he saw him, "is she still there?"

The butler told him what had happened, and the prince was greatly vexed at having missed the rendezvous, which he regarded as his last hope. However, he took such pains to meet Françoise, that at last he fell in with her in a company from which she could not escape, and upbraided her strongly for her cruelty to him, and for quitting her brother-in-law's house. Françoise told him she had never known a more dangerous man, and that he, the prince, was under great obligations to him, since he employed in his service not only his body and his substance, but also his soul and his conscience. The prince could not help feeling that there was no hope for him; he therefore resolved to press her no more, and he continued all his life to entertain a great esteem for her. One of his domestics, charmed by her virtue, wished to marry her; but she could never bring herself to consent without the approbation and command of the prince, on whom she had set her whole affection. She had him spoken to on the subject; he consented to the marriage, and it took place. She lived all her life in good repute, and the prince did her much kindness. *

What shall we say, ladies? Are we so low-spirited as to make our servants our masters? She whose story I have related to you was not to be overcome either by love or by importunity. Let us imitate her example and be victorious over ourselves. Nothing is more praiseworthy than to subdue one's passions."

"I see but one thing to regret in this case," said Oisille, "which is, that actions so virtuous did not take place in the time of the historians. Those who have so lauded Lucretia would have left her story to relate the virtues of this heroine. They seem to me so great, that I could hardly believe them had we not sworn to speak the truth."

"Her virtue does not seem to me so great as you make it out to be," said Hircan. "You must have seen plenty of squeamish invalids, who left good and wholesome food for what was bad and unwholesome. Perhaps this girl loved some one else, for whose sake she despised persons of the first order."

To that Parlamente replied, that the life and end of this girl showed that "she had never loved but him whom she loved above her life, but not above her honor."

"Put that out of your head," said Saffredent, "and learn what was the origin of that phrase honor, which prudes make such a fuss about. Perhaps those who talk so much about it do not know what it means. In the time when men were not over-crafty-the golden age, if you will-love was so frank, simple, and strong, that no one knew what it was to dissemble, and he who loved most was the most esteemed. But malignity, avarice, and sin, having taken possession of men's hearts, drove out from them God and love, and put there, instead of them, self-love,

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hypocrisy, and feigning. The ladies seeing that they had not the virtue of true and genuine love, and that hypocrisy was very odious amongst mankind, gave it the name of honor. Those, then, who could not compass that true love, said that they were forbidden by honor. This practice they have erected into so cruel a law, that even those of their sex who love perfectly, dissemble, and think that this virtue is a vice; but such of them as have good sense and sound judgment never fall into this error. They know the difference between darkness and light; and know that genuine love consists in manifesting chastity of heart, which lives upon love alone, and does not pride itself on dissimulation, which is a vice."

"Yet it is said," observed Dagoucin, "that the most secret love is the most commendable."

"Secret," replied Simontault, "for those who might misjudge it, but clear and avowed at least for the two persons concerned."

"So I understand it," said Dagoucin. "Nevertheless, it were better it were unknown by one of the two, than known to a third. I believe that the subject of the tale loved the more strongly that she did not declare her love."

"Be this as it may," said Longarine, "virtue is to be esteemed; and the highest virtue is to overcome one's own heart. When I consider the means and opportunities she had, I maintain that she was entitled to be called a heroine."

"Since you make self-mortification the measure of virtue," said Saffredent, "the prince deserved more praise than she did. To be convinced of this, one has only to consider his passion for her, his power, his opportunities, and the means he might have employed, yet would not, that he might not violate the rule of perfect affection, which makes the indigent equal to the prince, but contented himself with employing the means which fair dealing permits."

"There is many a one who would not have done that," said Hircan.

"He is the more to be esteemed," replied Longarine, "because he overcame the evil disposition common to men. Blessed, unquestionably, is he who has it in his power to do evil, yet does it not."

"You put me in mind," said Geburon, "of a woman who was more afraid of offending men than God, her honor, and love."

"Pray tell us the story," said Parlamente.

"There are people," he continued, "who own no God, or who, if they believe there is one, think him so remote, that He can neither see nor know the bad acts they commit; or if He does, they suppose Him to be so careless and indifferent to what is done here below, that He will not punish them. Of this way of thinking was a lady, whose name I shall conceal for the honor of her race, and call her Jambicque. She used often to say that to care only for God was all very well, but the main point with her was to preserve her honor before men. But you will see, ladies, that her prudence and her hypocrisy did not save her. Her secret was revealed, as you shall find from her story, in which I will state nothing but what is true, except the names of the persons and the places, which I will change."

NOVEL XLIII.

Hypocrisy of a Court Lady discovered by the dénouement of her amours, which she wished to conceal.

A PRINCESS of great eminence lived in a very handsome château, and had with her a lady named Jambicque, of a haughty and audacious spirit, who was, nevertheless, such a favorite with her mistress, that she did nothing but

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by her advice, believing her to be the most discreet and virtuous lady of her time. This Jambicque used to inveigh loudly against illicit love; and if ever she saw that any gentleman was enamored with one of her companions, she used to reprimand the pair with great bitterness, and tell a very bad tale of them to her mistress, so that she was much more feared than loved. As for her, she never spoke to a man except aloud, and with so much haughtiness, that she was universally regarded as an inveterate foe to love; but, in her heart, she was quite otherwise. In fact, there was a gentleman in her mistress's service with whom she was as much in love as a woman could be; but so dear to her was her good name, and the reputation she had made herself, that she entirely dissembled her passion.

After suffering for a year, without choosing to solace herself, like other women, by means of her eyes and her tongue, her heart became so inflamed, that she was driven to seek the ultimate remedy; and she made up her mind that it was better to satisfy her desire, provided none but God knew her heart, than to confide it to one who might betray her secret. Having come to this resolution, one day when she was in her mistress's chamber, and was looking out on a terrace, she saw the gentleman she loved so much walking there. After gazing on him until darkness concealed him from her sight, she called her little page, and, pointing out the gentleman to him, "Do you see," she said, "that gentleman in a crimson satin doublet, and a robe trimmed with lynx fur? Go and tell him that a friend of his wishes to see him, and is waiting for him in the gallery in the garden."

Whilst the page was doing his errand, she went out the back way, and went to the gallery, after putting on her mask and pulling down her hood. When the gentleman entered the gallery, she first fastened both the doors, so that no one should come in upon them, and then, embracing him with all her might, she said in a low whisper, "This long time, my friend, the love I have for you has made me long for place and time to speak with you; but my fear for my honor has been so great that I have been constrained, in spite of myself, to conceal my passion. But at last love has prevailed over fear; and as your honor is known to me, I declare that if you will promise to love me, and never to speak of it to any one, or inquire whom I am, I will be all my life your faithful and loving friend; and I assure you I will never love any but you; but I would rather die than tell you who I am."

The gentleman promised all she asked, and thereby encouraged her to treat him in the same way—that is to say, refuse him nothing. It was in winter, about five or six o'clock in the evening, when of course he could not see much. But if his eyes were of little service to him on the occasion, his hands were not so. Touching her clothes he found they were of velvet, a costly stuff in those times, and not worn every day, except by ladies of high family. As far as the hand could judge, all beneath was neat and in the best condition. Accordingly he tried to regale her to the best of his ability, she too performed her part equally well, and the gentleman easily perceived she was married.

When she was about to return to the place whence she came, the gentleman said to her, "Highly do I prize the favor you have conferred on me without my deserving it; but that will be still more precious to me which you will grant at my entreaty. Enchanted as I am by your gracious favor, I beg you will tell me if I am to expect a continuance of it, and in what manner I am to act; for, not knowing you, how am I to address you elsewhere to solicit the renewal of my happiness?"

"Give yourself no concern about that," replied the fair one, "but rely upon it that every evening after my mistress has supped, I shall be sure to send for you, if you are on the terrace where you were just now. But, above all things, do not forget what you have promised. When I simply send word that you are wanted, you will understand that I await you in the gallery; but if you hear speak of going to meat, you may either retire or come to our mistress's apartment. Above all, I beg you never to attempt to know who I am, unless you wish to break our friendship."

The lady and the gentleman then went their several ways. Their intrigue lasted a long while without his ever being able to know who she was, though he had a marvellous longing to satisfy his curiosity on the point. He wearied his imagination in vain to guess who she might be, and could not conceive that there was a woman in the world who did not choose to be seen and loved. As he had heard some stupid preacher say that no one who had seen the

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face of the devil would ever love him, he imagined that she might possibly be some evil spirit. To clear up his doubts, he resolved to know who she was who received him so graciously. The next time, therefore, that she sent for him, he took some chalk, and in the act of embracing her, marked her shoulder without her perceiving it. As soon as she had left him, he hastened to the princess's chamber, and stationed himself at the door to observe the shoulders of the ladies who entered. It was not long before he saw that same Jambicque advance to the door, with such an air of lofty disdain, that he durst not think of scrutinizing her like the others, feeling assured that she could not be the person he sought. But when her back was turned, he could not help seeing the mark of the chalk, though such was his astonishment he could hardly believe his own eyes. However, after having well considered her figure, which corresponded precisely to that he was in the habit of touching in the dark, he was convinced that it was she herself; and he was very glad to see that a woman who had never been suspected of having a gallant, and was renowned for having refused so many worthy gentlemen, had at last fixed upon him alone.

Love, who never remains in one mood, could not suffer him long to enjoy that satisfaction. The gentleman conceived such a good opinion of his own powers of pleasing, and flattered himself with such fair hopes, that he resolved to make his love known to her, imagining that when he had done so, he should have reason to love her still more passionately. One day, when the princess was walking in the garden, the Lady Jambicque turned into an alley by herself. The gentleman, seeing her alone, went to converse with her, and feigning not to have seen her elsewhere, said to her, "I have long loved you, mademoiselle, but durst not tell you so, for fear of offending you. This constraint is so irksome to me that I must speak or die; for I do not believe that any one can love you as I do."

Here the Lady Jambicque cut him short, and looking sternly upon him, "Have you ever heard," she said, "that I had a lover? I trow not; and I am amazed at your presumption in daring to address such language to a lady of my character. You have seen enough of me here to be aware that I shall never love any one but my husband. Beware, then, how you venture again to speak to me in any such way."

Astonished at such profound hypocrisy, the gentleman could not help laughing. "You have not always been so rigid, madam," he said. "What is the use of dissembling with me? Is it not better we should love perfectly than imperfectly?"

"I neither love you perfectly nor imperfectly," replied Jambicque, "but regard you just as I do my mistress's other servants. But if you continue to speak to me in this manner, I am very likely to hate you in such sort, that you will repent of having given me provocation."

The gentleman, pushing his point, rejoined, "Where are the caresses, mademoiselle, which you bestow upon me when I cannot see you? Why deprive me of them now that day reveals your exquisite beauty to me?"

"You are out of your senses," exclaimed Jambicque, making a great sign of the cross, "or you are the greatest liar in the world; for I don't believe I ever bestowed on you more or less caresses than I do this moment. What is it you mean, pray?"

The poor gentleman, thinking to force her from her subterfuges, named the place where he had met her, and told her of the mark he had put upon her with chalk in order to recognize her. Her exasperation was then so excessive, that instead of confessing, she told him he was the most wicked of men to have invented such an infamous lie against her, but that she would try to make him repent it. Knowing what influence she had with her mistress, he tried to appease her, but all in vain. She rushed from him in fury, and went to where her mistress was walking; who quitted the company with her to converse with Jambicque, whom she loved as herself. The princess, seeing her so agitated, asked her what was the matter? Jambicque concealed nothing, but told her all the gentleman had said, putting it in so artful a manner and so much to the poor gentleman's disadvantage, that his mistress that very evening sent him orders to go home instantly, without saying a word to any one, and to remain there until further orders. He obeyed for fear of worse. As long as Jambicque was with the princess he remained in exile, and never

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heard from Jambicque, who had warned him truly that he should lose her if ever he tried to know her. *

You may see, ladies, how she, who preferred the world's respect to her conscience, lost both the one and the other; for everybody now knows what she wished to conceal from her lover; and through her desire to avoid being mocked by one alone, she has now become an object of derision to all the world. It cannot be said in her excuse that hers was an ingenuous love, the simplicity of which claims every one's pity; for what makes her doubly deserving of condemnation is that her design was to cover the wickedness of her heart with the mantle of glory and honor, and pass before God and man for what she was not. But He who will not give His glory to another was pleased to unmask her, and make her appear doubly infamous.

"Truly," said Oisille, "this woman was wholly inexcusable; for who can say a word for her, since God, honor, and love are her accusers?"

"Who?" exclaimed Hircan, "why, pleasure and folly, two great advocates for the ladies."

"If we had no other advocates," said Parlamente, "our cause would be ill defended. Those who let pleasure get the better of them, ought no longer to call themselves women, but men; for the honor of that sex is not sullied but exalted by lust and concupiscence. A man who revenges himself on his enemy, and kills him for giving him the lie, passes for a brave man, and is so, indeed. It is the same thing when a man loves a dozen women besides his own wife. But the honor of women has a different foundation-that is to say, gentleness, patience, and chastity."

"You speak of the wise among them," rejoined Hircan.

"I do not choose to know any others," said Parlamente.

"If there were no foolish ones," said Nomerfide, "those who would fain be believed by everybody would prove to have been often liars."

"Pray, Nomerfide," said Geburon, "let me give you my voice, in order that you may tell us a tale to that purpose."

"Since virtue constrains me, and you make it my turn, I will tell you what I know to that effect. I have not heard any one here present fail to speak to the disadvantage of the Cordeliers, and in pity for them I propose to say some good of them in the tale you are about to hear."

NOVEL XLIV.

A Cordelier received a double alms for telling the plain truth.

A CORDELIER came to the house of Sedan to ask Madame de Sedan, who was of the house of Coucy, for a pig she used to give them every year as alms. Monseigneur de Sedan, who was a wise and facetious man, made the good father eat at his table, and to put him on his mettle, he said to him among other things, "You do well, good father, to make your gatherings whilst you are not known, for I am greatly afraid that if once your hypocrisy is discovered, you will no longer have the bread of poor children earned by the sweat of their fathers." The Cordelier was not abashed by this remark, but replied, "My lord, our order is so well founded that it will endure as long as the world, for our foundation will never fail so long as there are men and women on earth." Monseigneur de Sedan being curious to know what was this foundation he spoke of, pressed him strongly to tell. After many attempts to excuse himself, the Cordelier said, "Know, my lord, that we are founded on the folly of women; and as long as there is a foolish woman in the world, we shall not die of hunger."

Madame de Sedan, who was very choleric, hearing this speech, flew into such a passion, that if her husband had

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not been there, she would have had the Cordelier roughly handled; and she swore very decidedly he should never have the pig she had promised; but Monseigneur de Sedan, seeing he had not disguised the truth, swore he should have two, and had them sent to his monastery.

Thus it was, ladies, that the Cordelier being sure that ladies' offerings could not fail him, contrived to have the favor and the alms of men for speaking the plain truth. Had he been a flatterer and dissembler, he would have been more pleasing to the ladies, but not so profitable to himself and his brethren.

The novel was not ended without making the company laugh, especially those of them who knew the lord and lady of Sedan. "The Cordeliers then," said Hircan, "ought never to preach with a view to make women wise, since their folly serves them so well."

"They do not preach to them to be wise," said Parlamente, "but only to believe themselves so; for those women who are wholly mundane and foolish, give them no great alms; but those who by reason of frequenting their monasteries, and carrying paternosters marked with a death's head, and wearing their hoods lower than others, think themselves the wisest; are those who may well be called foolish; for they rest their salvation on the confidence they have in those unrighteous men whom, in consideration of a little seeming, they esteem demigods."

"But who can help believing them," said Ennasuite, "seeing that they are ordained by our prelates to preach the Gospel, and reprove us for our sins?"

"Those can," replied Parlamente, "who have known their hypocrisy, and who know the difference between God's doctrine and the devil's."

"Jesus!" exclaimed Ennasuite, "can you suppose that those people would dare to preach a bad doctrine?"

"Suppose?" returned Parlamente, "nay, I am sure there is nothing they believe less than the Gospel; I mean the bad ones among them, for I know many good men who preach the Scriptures purely and simply, and live likewise without scandal, without ambition or covetousness, and in chastity that is neither feigned nor constrained. But the streets are not so full of such men as of their opposites; and the good tree is known by its fruits."

"In good faith, I thought," said Ennasuite, "that we were bound under pain of mortal sin to believe all they tell us from the pulpit of truth, when they speak only of what is in Holy Writ, or adduce the expositions of holy doctors divinely inspired."

"For my part," said Parlamente, "I cannot ignore the fact that there have been among them men of very bad faith; for I know well that one of them, a doctor in theology and a principal of their order, wanted to persuade several of his brethren that the Gospel was no more worthy of belief than Cæsar's Commentaries, or other histories written by authentic doctors; and from the hour I heard that I would never believe a preacher's word, unless I found it conformable to God's, which is the true touchstone for distinguishing true words and false."

"Be assured," said Oisille, "that they who often read it in humility will never be deceived by human fictions or inventions; for whoso has a mind filled with truth cannot receive a lie."

"Yet it seems to me that a simple person is more easily deceived than another," observed Simontault.

"Yes," said Longarine, "if you esteem silliness to be simplicity."

"I say," returned Simontault, "that a good, gentle, simple woman is more easily beguiled than one who is cunning and crafty."

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"I suppose you know some one who is too full of such goodness," said Nomerfide; "if so, tell us about her."

"Since you have so well guessed, I will not disappoint you," replied Simontault; "but you must promise me not to weep. Those who say, ladies, that your craftiness exceeds that of men, would find it hard to produce such an example as that I am now about to relate to you, wherein I intend to set forth the great craft of a husband, and the simplicity and good-nature of his wife."

[The preceding novel and epilogue, which are found in all the MSS., are wanting in the edition of 1588. Claude Gouget has substituted the following for them in that of 1559.]

HOW TWO LOVERS CLEVERLY CONSUMMATED THEIR AMOURS, THE ISSUE OF WHICH WAS HAPPY.

THERE were in Paris two citizens, one of them a lawyer, the other a silk-mercier, who had always been great friends, and on the most familiar terms. The lawyer had a son named Jacques, a young man very presentable in good society, who often visited his father's friend, the mercier; but it was for sake of a handsome daughter the latter had, named Françoise, to whom Jacques paid his court so well, that he became assured she loved him no less than he loved her. Whilst matters stood thus, an army was sent into Provence to oppose the descent which Charles of Austria was about to make in that quarter; and Jacques was forced to join that army, being called out in his order. He had hardly arrived in the camp when he received news of his father's death. This was a double grief to him: on the one hand, from the loss of his father; on the other hand, from the obstacles he plainly foresaw he should encounter on his return to seeing his mistress as often as he had hoped. Time allayed the first of these griefs, but made him feel the other more acutely. As death is in the course of nature, and it is usual for parents to die before their children, the grief that is felt for their loss gradually subsides. But it is quite otherwise with love; for instead of bringing us death, it brings us life, by giving us children who render us immortal, so to speak; and this it is, principally, which renders our desires the more ardent.

Jacques being then returned to Paris, thought of nothing but how to renew his intimacy with the mercier, in order to traffic in the choicest of his wares under pretext of pure friendship. As Françoise had beauty and sprightliness, and had long been marriageable, she had had several suitors during the absence of Jacques; but whether it was that her father was stingy or that, having but that one child, he wished to establish her well, he had not made much account of any of these suitors. As people do not wait now-a-days before talking scandal until they have just grounds for it, especially where the honor of our sex is concerned, this set people talking ill of Françoise. Her father not choosing to do like many others, who, instead of reproving the faults of their wives and children, seem, on the contrary, to incite them thereto, did not shut his ears or his eyes to the popular opinion, but watched his daughter so closely, that even those who sought her with no other intention than marriage saw her but rarely, and then only in her mother's presence. It need not be asked whether or not such vigilance was irksome to Jacques, who could not conceive that they should treat her so rigorously without some important reason to him unknown. This conjecture distressed him, and distracted his feelings between love and jealousy.

Resolved at all cost to know what might be this mysterious reason, he proposed to ascertain in the first place if she still retained the same tender sentiments toward him; and he went about so assiduously that at last he found means one morning at mass to place himself near her, when he perceived from her manner that she was as glad to see him as he her. As he knew that the mother was not so strict as the father, he sometimes took the liberty, when he met them on their way to church, to accost them familiarly and with ordinary politeness; and this as if he had met them by mere chance, the whole being with a view to prepare matters for the design he meditated.

By-and-by, when the year of mourning for his father was nearly expired, he resolved, when changing his garments, to put himself on a good footing, and do honor to his ancestors. He spoke of his intention to his mother, who approved of it, and longed the more ardently to see him well married, as she had but two children, himself and a daughter, who was already settled in life. Like an honorable lady as she was, she encouraged her son to

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virtue by setting before him the example of a great number of young men of his own age, who were making way by themselves, or who at least showed that they were worthy of the parents from whom they derived their being. As the only question now was where they should make their purchases, the good lady said to her son, "It is my opinion, Jacques, that we cannot do better than go to Daddy Pierre's (this was the father of Françoise). He is one of our friends, and would not cheat us."

This was tickling her son where he itched: however, he stood out, and said, "We will go and deal where we are best served, and cheapest. However, as Daddy Pierre was the intimate friend of my late father, I shall be very glad to give him the first call before we go elsewhere."

One morning, accordingly, the mother and son went to see the Sire Pierre, who received them very well, as you know that merchants can do when they scent profit. They had quantities of silk unfolded for their inspection, and chose what suited them; but they could not agree upon the price, for Jacques haggled on purpose, because his mistress's mother did not make her appearance. At last they left the place without making any purchase, and went to look elsewhere; but Jacques could see nothing he liked in any house but his mistress's, and they returned thither some time afterwards. Françoise's mother was there, and gave them the best possible reception. After the little ceremonies were gone through which are practised in such shops, the mercer's wife putting a higher price on her goods than her husband had done, "You are very hard, madam," said Jacques; "but I see how it is. Father is dead, and our friends don't know us now." So saying, he pretended to wipe his eyes, as if the thought of his father had drawn tears from them; but this was only a device to help things forward. His mother, who took the matter up in perfect good faith, said thereupon, in a dolorous tone, "Since the death of my poor good man, we are visited no more than if we had never been known. Little do people care for poor widows."

Hereupon there ensued new demonstrations of friendship, and mutual promises to visit more frequently than ever. Some other merchants now came in, and were taken by the mercer himself into the back shop. The young man took advantage of this favorable moment to say to his mother, "Madame was formerly in the habit of visiting, on Saints' days, the holy places in our neighborhood, especially the convents. If she would take the trouble sometimes to look in upon us in passing, and take her wine, she would do us much honor and pleasure."

The mercer's wife, who suspected nothing, replied that for more than a fortnight past she had intended to go into their quarter; that she would probably do so on Sunday, if the weather was fine, and would not fail to call and see the lady. The conclusion of this affair was followed by that of the bargain for the silks; for it was no time to stand out for a trifle, and risk losing such a fine opportunity.

Things being in this position, and Jacques considering that he could not bring his project to bear without assistance, he resolved to confide the secret of it to a trusty friend. The two took such good measures together, that nothing remained but to put them in execution. Sunday being come, the mercer's wife and her daughter failed not, on their return from their devotions, to call upon the widow, whom they found chatting with one of her female neighbors in a gallery in the garden, whilst her daughter was walking about the alleys with her brother and his friend, whose name was Olivier. On seeing his mistress, Jacques so commanded his face, that not the least change was visible in it, and he went to welcome the mother and daughter with a gay and unembarrassed air. As elderly people usually seek each other's society, the three old ladies seated themselves on a bench with their backs turned to the garden, into which the two lovers gradually moved off, and joined the other two who were walking there. After a little exchange of compliments, all four renewed their promenade, in the course of which Jacques recounted his piteous case to Françoise so movingly, that she could neither grant nor refuse what her lover sued for. It needed no more to make him aware that she was smitten.

I must tell you, that during this ambulatory conversation, in order to prevent suspicion, they frequently passed to and fro before the bench on which the good women were seated, taking care always to talk of trivial and indifferent matters, and now and then romping in the garden. After the old ladies had been accustomed to the noise for half an hour, Jacques made a sign to Olivier, who played his part with the other girl so well, that she did

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not notice the two lovers going into an orchard full of cherries, and inclosed with thick hedges of roses and very tall gooseberry-bushes. They pretended to go into a corner of the orchard to pluck almonds, but it was to pluck prunes. There Jacques, instead of giving his mistress a green gown, gave her a red one, for the color flushed into her cheeks to find herself surprised before she was aware. They had so quickly gathered their prunes, because they were ripe, that Olivier could not have believed it, but that the girl drooped her head, and looked so ashamed. This betokened the truth to him, for before she walked with her head erect, without any fear that the vein in her eye, which ought to be red, should be seen to have the azure hue. Perceiving her confusion, Jacques recalled her to her usual deportment by suitable remonstrances.

The lovers took two or three more turns about the garden, but not without much crying and sobbing on the part of the fair one. "Alas !" she exclaimed, "was it for this you loved me? If I could have thought it, my God! What shall I do? I am undone forever. What account will you make of me henceforth, at least if you are one of those who love only for pleasure? Oh, that I had died before committing such a fault!" Then followed another violent burst of tears. But Jacques exerted himself so much to console her, and made such promises, confirmed by so many oaths, that before they had taken three more turns about the garden, Jacques made another sign to his friend, and they entered the orchard again by another path. In spite of all she could do, she could not help receiving more pleasure from this second green gown than from the first. In short, she liked it so well that they resolved then and there to seek means for meeting oftener and more commodiously until such time as her father should be more favorably inclined.

A young woman, a neighbor of the mercer's, distantly related to Jacques, and a good friend to Françoise, was of great help to them in bringing the good man to reason. I am informed that they continued their intrigue without discovery or scandal until the consummation of their marriage. Françoise, who was an only child, proved to be very rich for the daughter of a shopkeeper. It is true that Jacques had to wait for the greater part of his wife's fortune until the death of the father, who was so close-fisted and distrustful that what he held in one hand he imagined the other stole from him.

There, ladies, you have an example of a tender connexion well begun, well continued, and better ended: for although it is usual with men to despise a woman or a girl as soon as she has given you what you sue to her for with most eagerness, yet this young man, loving well and in good faith, and having found in his mistress what every husband desires to find in his bride; knowing, moreover, that the girl was of good family, and correct in all but the fault into which he himself had led her, would not commit adultery elsewhere, or trouble the peace of another household: conduct for which I deem him highly commendable.

"They were both very blamable, however," said Oisille; "nor was the friend even excusable for having ministered to the crime, or at least acquiesced in such a rape."

"Do you call it a rape when both parties are willing?" said Saffredent. "Are there any better marriages than those which are thus brought about by furtive amours? It has passed into a proverb that marriages are made in heaven; but this applies neither to forced marriages nor to those which are made for money, and which are regarded as well and duly approved as soon as the father and mother have given their consent."

"You may say what you please," replied Oisille, "but parental authority must be obeyed, and if there be no father or mother, the will of the other relations must be respected. Otherwise, if every one was free to marry according to fancy, how many cornuted marriages would there not be? Can any one imagine that a young man and a girl from twelve to fifteen years of age know what is good for them? Any one who should carefully examine, would find that there are as many unhappy marriages among those made for love as those made by constraint. Young people who do not know what they want take the first they meet without inquiry; and then, when they come gradually to know the mistake they have committed, this knowledge leads them into still greater errors. Those, on the contrary, who have not been married voluntarily, have entered into that engagement by the advice and at the solicitation of persons who have seen more and possess more judgment than themselves: so that when they come to experience

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the good they did not know, they enjoy it much better, and embrace it with much more affection." "Ay, madam," said Hircan, "but you forget that the girl was of ripe years and marriageable, and that she knew the injustice of her father, who let her virginity grow musty for fear of rubbing the rust off his crown—pieces. Do you not know that nature is a frisky jade? She loved, she was loved, she found what she wanted ready to her hand, and she might call to mind the old proverb: 'She that will not when she may, when she will she shall have nay.' All these considerations, added to the promptitude of the assailant, left her no time to defend herself. It has been remarked, too, that immediately afterwards a great change was noticed in her countenance. This change was the result of her dissatisfaction at having had so little time to judge whether the thing was good or bad: accordingly, she did not require very long coaxing to prevail on her to make a second trial."

"For my part," said Longarine, "I should not think her excusable but for the good faith of the young man, who, acting like an honest man, did not forsake her, but took her such as he had made her; for which I think him the more deserving of praise, as youth in these days is very corrupt. I do not pretend for all that to excuse his first fault, which virtually amounted to rape with regard to the daughter, and subornation with regard to the mother."

"Not at all, not at all," interrupted Dagoucin; "there was neither rape nor subornation, but all happened voluntarily, both on the part of the mothers, who did not prevent it, though they were duped, and on that of the girl, who liked it well, and never complained."

"All this," said Parlamente, "was only the consequence of the good—nature and simplicity of the mercer's wife, who in good faith led her daughter to the butchery without knowing it."

"Why not say to the wedding?" said Simontault, "since this simplicity was not less advantageous to the girl than it was prejudicial to a wife who was too easily the dupe of her husband."

"Since you know the story," said Nomerfide, "tell it us."

"With all my heart," replied Simontault, "on condition you promise me not to weep. Those who say, ladies, that you have more craft than men, would find it hard to produce an example like that of which I am going to speak. I purpose to exhibit to you not only the great craft of a husband, but also the extreme simplicity and good—nature of his wife."

NOVEL XLV.

A husband, giving the Innocents to his servant girl, plays upon his wife's simplicity.

THERE was at Tours a shrewd, cunning fellow, who was upholsterer to the late Duke of Orleans, son of King Francis I. Though this upholsterer had become deaf in consequence of a severe illness, he nevertheless retained the full use of his wits, and was so well endowed in that respect, that there was not a man in his trade more cunning than himself. As for other matters, you shall see from what I am about to relate to you how he contrived to acquit himself. He had married a good and honorable woman, with whom he lived very peaceably. He was greatly afraid of displeasing her, and she also studied to obey him in all things. But for all the great affection the husband had for his wife, he was so charitable, that he often gave his female neighbors what belonged to her; but this he always did as secretly as possible. They had a good stout wench as a servant, of whom the upholsterer fell in love. Fearing, however, lest his wife should perceive it, he affected often to scold her, saying she was the laziest creature he had ever seen; but that he did not wonder at it since her mistress never beat her.

One day, when they were talking of giving the Innocents, * the upholsterer said to his wife, "It would be a great charity to give them to that lazy jade of yours, but it would not do for her to receive them from your hand, for it is too weak, and your heart is too tender. If I were to put my own hand to the job, we should be better served by her

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than we are." The poor woman, suspecting nothing, begged that he would perform the operation, confessing that she had neither the heart nor the strength to do it. The husband willingly undertook the commission, and as if he intended to flog the wench soundly, he bought the finest rods he could procure; and to show that he had no mind to spare her, he steeped them in pickle, so that the poor woman felt more compassion for her servant than suspicion of her husband.

Innocents' Day being come, the upholsterer rose betimes, went to the upper room, where the servant lay alone, and gave her the Innocents in a very different manner from that he had talked of to his wife. The servant fell a-crying, but her tears were of no avail. For fear, however, that his wife should come up, he began to whip the bedpost at such a rate that he made the rods fly in pieces, and then he carried them broken as they were to his wife. "I think, my dear," said he, showing them to her, "that your servant will not soon forget the Innocents."

The upholsterer having gone out of doors, the servant went and threw herself at her mistress's feet, and complained that her husband had behaved to her in the most shameful way that ever a servant was treated. The good woman imagining that she spoke of the flogging she had received, interrupted her, and said, "My husband has done well, and just as I have been begging him to do this month and more. If he has made you smart I am very glad of it. You may lay it all to me. He has not given you half as much as he ought."

When the girl perceived that her mistress approved of such an act, she concluded that it was not such a great sin as she had supposed, seeing that a woman who was considered so virtuous was the cause of it; and so she never ventured to complain of it again. The upholsterer, seeing that his wife was as glad to be deceived as he was to deceive her, resolved frequently to give her the same satisfaction, and gained the servant's consent so well, that she cried no more for getting the Innocents. He continued the same course for a long time without his wife's knowing anything of the matter, until winter came, and there was a great fall of snow. As he had given his servant the Innocents in the garden on the green grass, he took a fancy to give them to her also on the snow; and one morning before any one was awake, he took her out into the garden in her shift, to make the crucifix on the snow. They romped and pelted each other, and among the sport that of the Innocents was not forgotten. One of the neighbors meanwhile had gone to her window to see what sort of weather it was. The window looked right over the upholsterer's garden, and the woman saw the game of the Innocents that was going on there, and was so shocked that she resolved to inform her good gossip, that she might no longer be the dupe of such a wicked husband and vicious servant. After the upholsterer had finished his fine game, he looked round to see if he had been noticed by any one, and to his great vexation he saw his neighbor at her window. But as he knew how to give all sorts of colors to his tapestry, so he thought he should be able to put such a color on this fact that his neighbor would be no less deceived than his wife. No sooner had he got to bed again than he made his wife get up in her shift, and took her to the very spot where he had been toying with the servant. He frolicked awhile with her at snowball throwing, as he had done with the servant; next he gave her the Innocents as he had done to the other; and then they went back to bed.

The next time the upholsterer's wife went to mass, her neighbor and good friend failed not to meet her there, and entreated her with very great earnestness, but without saying more, to discharge her servant, who was a good-for-nothing, dangerous creature. The upholsterer's wife said she would do no such thing, unless the other told her why she thought the wench so good-for-nothing and dangerous. The neighbor, thus pressed, stated at last that she had seen her one morning in the garden with her husband.

"It was I, gossip dearie," replied the good woman, laughing.

"What!" cried the neighbor. "Stripped to your shift in the garden at four o'clock in the morning!"

"Yes, gossip," said the upholsterer's wife. "In good sooth, it was myself."

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"They pelted each other with snow," continued the neighbor, "and he played with her teaties and all that sort of thing as familiarly as you please."

"Yes, gossip, it was myself."

"But, gossip," rejoined the neighbor, "I saw them do upon the snow a thing that seems to me neither decent nor proper."

"That may be, gossip dearie," replied the upholsterer's wife; "but as I told you before and tell you again, it was myself and no one else that did all this; for my good husband and I divert ourselves in that way together. Don't be shocked, pray. You know that we are bound to please our husbands."

The end of the matter was that the neighbor went home much more disposed to wish that she had such a husband, than to pity her good friend. When the upholsterer came home, his wife repeated to him the whole conversation she had had with her neighbor. "It is well for you, my dear," he replied, "that you are a good and sensible woman; for but for that, we should have been separated long ago. But I trust that by God's grace we shall love each other in time to come as much as we have in the past, and that to His glory, and to our own comfort and satisfaction."

"Amen, my dear," said the good woman. "I hope too that you will never find me fail to do my part towards maintaining the good understanding between us." *

One must be very incredulous, ladies, if, after hearing so true a story, one were of opinion that there was as much wickedness in you as in men; though, to say the truth, without wronging any one, one cannot help coming to the conclusion with regard to the man and woman in question, that neither the one nor the other was good for anything.

"This man was prodigiously wicked," said Parlamente; "for on the one hand he deceived his wife, and on the other his servant."

"You cannot have rightly understood the story," said Hircan; "for it states that he satisfied them both in one morning: a great feat, considering the contrariety of their interests."

"In that respect, he was doubly a knave," replied Parlamente, "to satisfy the simplicity of the one by a lie, and the malice of the other by an act of vice. But I am quite aware that such as these will always be pardoned when they have such judges as you."

"I assure you, however," rejoined Hircan, "that I will never undertake anything so great or so difficult, for provided I satisfy you, my day will not have been ill employed."

"If mutual love does not content the heart," returned Parlamente, "all the rest cannot do so."

"That is true," said Simontault. "I am persuaded there is no greater pain than to love, and not to be loved."

"In order to be loved," said Parlamente, "one should turn to those who love; but very often those women who will not love are the most loved, and those men love most who are the least loved."

"That reminds me," said Oisille, "of a tale which I had not intended to introduce among good ones."

"Pray tell it us," said Simontault.

"I will do so with pleasure," replied Oisille.

NOVEL XLVI.

A Sanctimonious Cordelier attempts to debauch the wife of a Judge, and actually ravishes a young Lady, whose mother had foolishly authorized him to chastise her for lying too late in bed.

IN the town of Angoulême, where Count Charles, father of King Francis, often resided, there was a Cordelier named De Vale, who was esteemed a learned man and a great preacher. One Advent he preached in the town before the count, and was so much admired that those who knew him eagerly invited him to dinner. Among these was the Judge of Exempts of the county, who had married a handsome and virtuous wife, of whom the Cordelier was dying for love, though he had not the boldness to tell her so; she, however, perceived it, and held him and his passion in disdain. One day he observed her going up to the garret all alone, and thinking to surprise her, he went up after her; but on hearing his steps she turned round, and asked whither he was going. "I am coming after you," he replied. "I have a secret to tell you."

"Don't come after me, good father," said the judge's wife, "for I do not choose to talk with such as you in secret, and if you come another step higher you shall repent of it."

The friar, seeing her alone, took no heed of her words, and ran up; but she being a woman of spirit, as soon as he was at the top, gave him a kick in the belly, saying, "Down, down, sir," and sent him rolling from the top to the bottom. The poor friar was so much ashamed of his discomfiture that he forgot his hurt, and ran out of the town as fast as he could, for he was sure she would not conceal the matter from her husband. No more she did, nor from the count and countess, so that the Cordelier durst not appear again in their presence.

To complete his wickedness, he went away to the house of a lady who loved the Cordeliers above all other folk; and after he had preached a sermon or two before her, he cast eyes upon her daughter, who was very handsome; and because she did not rise in the morning to go and hear his sermon, he often scolded her before her mother, who used to say, "I wish to God, father, she had tasted a little of the discipline which you and your pious brethren administer to each other." The good father vowed he would give her some of it if she continued to be so lazy, and the mother begged he would do so. A day or two after the good father entered the lady's room, and not seeing her daughter, asked where she was. "She fears you so little, that she is still in bed," replied the lady.

"Assuredly it is a very bad habit in young people to be so lazy," replied the friar. "Few people make much account of the sin of laziness; but for my part I esteem it one of the most dangerous of all, both for the body and the soul; wherefore you should chastise her well for it; or, if you will leave the business to me, I warrant I will cure her of lying in bed at an hour when she should be at her devotions."

The poor lady, believing that he was a good man, begged he would be pleased to correct her daughter, which he proceeded to do forthwith. Going up a little wooden staircase he found the girl all alone in bed, fast asleep, and sleeping as she was, he ravished her. The poor girl, waking up, knew not whether it was a man or a devil, and began to scream as loud as she could, and cry for help to her mother, who called out from the foot of the stairs, "Do not spare her, sir; give it her again, and chastise the naughty hussey." When the Cordelier had accomplished his wicked purpose he went down to the lady, and said to her with his face all on fire, "I think, madam, your daughter will not forget the discipline I have given her."

After thanking him heartily the mother went up to her daughter, who was making such lamentation as a virtuous woman well might who had been the victim of such a crime; and when she had learned the truth she sent everywhere to look for the Cordelier, but he was already far away, and never afterwards was he found in the realm of France.

You see, ladies, what comes of giving such commissions to persons who are not fit to be trusted with them. The

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correction of men belongs to men, and of women to women; for in correcting men, women would be as pitiful as men would be cruel in correcting women.

"Jesus! madam," said Parlamente, "what a wicked villain of a Cordelier!"

"Say, rather," said Hircan, "what a silly fool of a mother, who, cajoled by hypocrisy, allowed so much familiarity to one of a class of men who ought never to be seen but in church."

"Truly," said Parlamente, "I own she was one of the silliest mothers that ever was; and if she had been as wise as the judge's wife, she would rather have made him go down the stairs than up them. But your half-angel devil is the most dangerous of all, and knows so well how to transform himself into an angel of light, that one makes it matter of conscience to suspect him for what he is; and it seems to me that the person who is not suspicious deserves praise."

"Nevertheless," said Oisille, "one ought to suspect the evil that is to be avoided; especially so should those who have charge of others; for it is better to suspect mischief where it does not exist, than to fall through foolishly believing in the harmlessness of that which does exist. I have never seen a woman deceived for being slow to believe the word of men, but many a one for having too readily put faith in lies. Therefore I say that the mischief which may happen cannot be too much suspected by those who have charge of men, women, towns, and states; for, in spite of the best watch, wickedness and treachery greatly prevail, and the shepherd who is not vigilant will always suffer from the wiles of the wolf."

"Nevertheless," said Dagoucin, "a suspicious person cannot maintain a perfect friendship, and many friends have been parted by a suspicion."

"Supposing that you know a case in point," said Oisille, "I call upon you to relate it."

"I know one so true that you will take pleasure in hearing it," replied Dagoucin. "I will tell you what is most sure to break friendship, ladies, and that is, when the very confidence of the friendship begins to give occasion for suspicion; for, as trusting a friend is the greatest honor one can do him, so doubting him is the greatest dishonor, for it shows that he is thought other than one would have him be, which is the cause of breaking many friendships and turning friends into enemies, as you will see by the tale I am about to relate to you."

[This novel is wanting in the edition of 1558, and the following is substituted for it in that of 1559.]

A CORDELIER'S SERMONS ON THE SUBJECT OF HUSBANDS BEATING THEIR WIVES. IN Angoulême, where Count Charles, father of King Francis I., often made his residence, there was a Cordelier named De Valles, a man of knowledge, and so esteemed as a preacher, that he was selected to preach the Advent sermons before the count, a fact which still further enhanced his reputation. It happened during Advent, that a young scatterbrain of the town, who had married a young and very pretty woman, continued to run after other women right and left, just as dissolutely as though he were unmarried. The young wife, discovering this, could not conceal her resentment, and was often paid for it sooner and otherwise than she would have liked. All this did not hinder her from continuing her lamentations, and sometimes even from proceeding to abuse and railing, by which conduct she so exasperated her husband that he beat her black and blue, and then she made more noise than ever. The neighbors' wives, who knew the cause of their quarrels, could not keep silence, but cried out publicly in the streets, "Fie for shame! To the devil with such husbands!"

By good luck the Cordelier de Valles was passing that way. Having heard the noise, and learned the cause of it, he resolved to touch upon it next day in his sermon; and so he did, bringing in the subject of marriage, and the affection which ought to accompany it. He pronounced a eulogy on the wedded state, strongly censured those who violated its duties, and instituted a comparison between conjugal and parental love. Among other things, he said

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that a husband was more to be condemned for beating his wife than for beating his father or mother; "For," said he, "if you beat your father or mother, you will be sent for penance to Rome; but if you beat your wife, she and her female neighbors will send you to all the devils, that is to say, to hell. Now just see the difference there is between these two penances. One usually comes back from Rome; but from hell there is no returning. *Nulla est redemptio.*"

Subsequently he was informed that the women took advantage of what he had said, and that their husbands could no longer be masters: and this mischief he desired to remedy, as he had that under which the women had labored. To this end, in another sermon he compared women to devils, and said that the two were man's greatest enemies and perpetual persecutors, which he could not get rid of, especially women. "In fact," said he, "the devils fly when they are shown the cross, and women do quite the contrary, for it is that which tames them, makes them go and come, and is the cause of their putting their husbands into no end of passions. Would you know, my good people," said he to the husbands, "the way this is to be remedied? Here it is. When you see that your wives torment you incessantly, as is their wont, take the handle of the cross, and thrash them well with it. You will not have done this above three or four times before you will find yourselves the better for it, and will see that as the devil is driven away by the cross, so you will drive your wives away, and make them hold their tongues, by virtue of the handle of the same cross, provided it be not attached."

There, ladies, is a sample of the sermons of the venerable Cordelier de Valles, of whose life I will tell you no more, and for good reason. I will only say that for all he put a good face on the matter, for I knew the man, he was much more for the women than the men.

"He gave a very bad proof of that in this last sermon of his," said Parlamente, "since he instructed the men to maltreat them."

"You do not discern his cunning," said Hircan. "As you have not much experience of war, you cannot be acquainted with the stratagems that are necessary in it, one of the greatest of which is to create division in the enemy's camp; for then he is more easily beaten. Just so Master Monk knew that aversion and anger between husband and wife often occasion a loose rein to be given to female honor. As virtue is the guard of that honor, it finds itself under the fangs of the wolf before it is aware that it is gone astray."

"Be that as it may," said Parlamente, "I could never love a man who had sown discord between my husband and me to the extent of coming to blows; for with beating there is an end to love. Yet they can be so very demure, as I have heard, when they want to cajole some woman or another, and talk in so engaging a manner, that I am sure there would be more danger in listening to them in secret than in publicly receiving blows from a husband who in other respects was a good one."

"In truth," said Dagoucin, "they have made themselves so notorious that one has good cause to fear them, though, in my opinion, it is a laudable thing not to be suspicious."

"One ought, however, to suspect the evil that may be avoided," said Oisille, "and it is better to fear an imaginary ill than to fall into a real one for want of belief. For my part, I have never known a woman to have been beguiled for having been slow to believe men; but I have known many a one who has been beguiled for too easily believing their falsehoods. Consequently I maintain that those who have charge of men, women, towns, and states, can never too much fear and suspect the evil that may happen. Wickedness and treachery are so much in vogue, that one cannot be too much on one's guard: and the shepherd who is not vigilant will always be plundered by the sly and crafty wolf."

"It is nevertheless true," observed Dagoucin, "that a distrustful and suspicious person can never be a perfect friend; and many friendships have been broken upon a mere suspicion."

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"If you know any example in point, tell it us," said Oisille.

"I know one," he replied, "so true, that you will feel pleasure in hearing it. I am going to tell you, ladies, of what most easily breaks friendship, and that is, when the very security of the friendship itself begins to inspire suspicion. As one cannot do a friend a greater honor than to trust in him, so likewise one cannot offer him a keener insult than to distrust him. The reason is, that one thereby shows that one believes him to be quite different from what one would have him to be; and this causes a breach between many good friends, and makes them enemies, an instance of which you shall see in the tale I am about to tell you."

NOVEL XLVII.

A gentleman of the Pays du Perche, distrusting his friend, obliges him to do him the mischief of which he has falsely suspected him.

NEAR the Pays du Perche there were two gentlemen, who from their childhood had been such perfectly good friends, that they had but one heart, one house, one bed, one table, and one purse. Their perfect friendship lasted a long while, without there having ever been the least dispute, or even a word that savored of it; for they lived, not merely like two brothers, but like one man. One of the two married, but this did not diminish his affection for the other, or prevent his continuing to live with him as happily as before. When they happened to be in any place where beds were scarce he made him sleep with his wife and him. It is true that he himself lay in the middle. All their goods were in common, so that the marriage, whatever might happen, never altered this perfect friendship.

But as there is nothing solid and permanent in this world, time brought about a change in the felicity of a too happy household. The husband, forgetting the confidence he had in his friend, became jealous without cause of him and his wife, to whom he could not refrain from saying some harsh things, whereat she was the more surprised, as he had ordered her to treat his friend in all respects, save one, exactly like himself. All this, however, did not hinder him from forbidding her to speak to him, unless it was in full company. She made known this prohibition to her husband's friend, who could not believe it, well knowing that he had not done or thought anything with which his friend could be displeased. As he was accustomed to conceal nothing from him, he told him what he had heard, begging him to disguise nothing, for it was his earnest desire not to give him, either in that or in any other matter, the least cause to break a friendship of such long duration.

The husband assured him he had never harbored such a thought, and that those who had spread this report had foully lied. "I know well," said the friend, "that jealousy is a passion as insupportable as love, and though you were jealous, and even of me, I should not be angry with you, for you could not help it. But I should have reason to complain of a thing which it is in your own power to do or not to do, and that is, to conceal the matter from me, seeing that you have never yet concealed from me any opinion or emotion you have known. On my part, if I were in love with your wife, you ought not to make it a crime in me, for love is a fire which no one can master; but if I concealed the fact from you, and sought means to make it known to your wife, I should be the worst man that ever lived. Besides, though you have a good wife and a worthy, I can assure you that even though she were not yours, she is, of all the women I have ever seen, the one I should give myself the least concern about. I pray you, however, if you have the least suspicion, to tell me so, in order to take measures accordingly, so that our long friendship may not be broken for sake of a woman; for even if I loved your wife above all the women in the world, I would never speak to her in that case, because I prefer your friendship to any other."

The husband protested to him with great oaths that he had never had such a thought, and begged that he would continue with him in all respects upon the old footing. "I will do so, since you desire it," replied the friend; "but allow me to tell you, that I never will live with you if, after this, you have such a thought of me, and keep a secret from me, or take it amiss."

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They continued then to live together on the same terms as before, until, after some time, the husband's jealous fit came upon him more strongly than ever, and he ordered his wife no longer to show his friend the same fair countenance. She immediately informed the friend of this, and begged him not to speak to her, as she was forbidden to speak to him. The friend, seeing from this and from certain grimaces of his comrade that he had not kept his word, said to him in great indignation, "If you are jealous, my friend, that is a natural thing; but, after the oaths you have sworn to me, I cannot help telling you that I am aggrieved by your having concealed it so long. I had always believed that between your heart and mine there was no medium or obstacle; but I see with regret, and without any fault of mine, that I have not succeeded so well as I had hoped, since not only are you jealous of your wife and me, but you furthermore want to make a mystery of it, in order that your malady may endure so long that it may turn into hatred, and the closest friendship which has been seen in our day be succeeded by the most mortal enmity. I have done what I could, to prevent this mischief, but since you believe me to be so wicked, and the reverse of all I have ever been, I solemnly vow to you that I will be such as you take me to be, and that I will never rest until I have had from your wife what you imagine I am striving for; and I warn you henceforth to be on your guard against me. Since suspicion has made you renounce my friendship, resentment makes me renounce yours."

The husband tried to make him believe that it was all a mistake, but the other would not listen to him. The furniture and property they had in common were divided, and this division was accompanied by that of their hearts, which had always been so united. The unmarried gentleman kept his word, and never rested until he had made his friend a cuckold.

So be it, ladies, to all those who distrust their wives without cause. A woman of honor sooner suffers herself to be overcome by despair than by all the pleasures in the world, and many husbands who are unjustly jealous behave so that at last they have just cause for jealousy, and make their wives do what they suspect them of. Some say that jealousy is love: I deny it; for though it issues from love as ashes from fire, just so it kills it, just as ashes smother the flame.

"I am persuaded," said Hircan, "that there is nothing more irritating to man or woman than to be unjustly suspected. For my own part, there is nothing would sooner make me break with my friends."

"Yet it is not a reasonable excuse," said Oisille, "for a woman to say she revenges herself for her husband's suspicions at the cost of her own shame; it is doing like a man who, not being able to kill his enemy, runs himself through with his own sword, or bites his own fingers when he cannot scratch him. She would have acted more wisely in never speaking to the friend, in order to show her husband that he was wrong in suspecting her, for time would have reconciled them."

"She acted like a woman of spirit," said Ennasuite; "and if there were many wives like her, their husbands would not be so outrageous."

"After all," said Longarine, "patience finally enables a chaste woman to triumph, and by it she should abide."

"A woman, however, may be sinless, and yet not chaste," observed Ennasuite.

"How do you mean?" asked Oisille.

"When she mistakes another for her husband," replied Ennasuite.

"And where is the fool!" exclaimed Parlamente, "who does not know the difference between her husband and another man, disguise himself as he may?"

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"There have been, and there will be," rejoined Ennasuite, "those who have made such a mistake in perfect good faith, and who consequently are not culpable."

"If you know an instance of the kind, relate it to us," said Dagoucín; "to me it seems that innocence and sin are two very incompatible things."

"Well, ladies," said Ennasuite, "if the stories you have already heard have not sufficiently shown you that it is dangerous to lodge those who call us mundane, and look upon themselves as saints, and as persons much more regenerate than we are, here is a tale which will convince you not only that they are men like others, but that they have in them something diabolical exceeding the common wickedness of men."

NOVEL XLVIII.

A Cordelier took the husband's place on his wedding-night, while the latter was dancing with the bridal party.

A GIRL having been married in a village in Perigord, the wedding was celebrated at an inn, where all the relations and friends made merry with the best cheer. Two Cordeliers arrived on the wedding-day, and as it was not in accordance with propriety that they should be present at the marriage-feast, they had their suppers served up to them in their chamber. That one of the pair who had the most authority, and also the most villainy, conceived that since he was not allowed to partake with the rest at board, he ought to have his share in bed, and resolved to show them a trick of his trade.

When evening came, and the dance was begun, the Cordelier gazed long on the bride from the window, and found her handsome and much to his taste. He inquired of the servant-girls which was the bridal-chamber, and learned, to his great satisfaction, that it was close to his own; and then, in order to arrive at his ends, he took care to watch well till he saw the old women steal off with the bride, as usual on such occasions. As it was still early, the husband would not quit the dance, on which he was so intent that he seemed to have forgotten his bride, which the Cordelier had not done; for as soon as his ears informed him that she had been put to bed, he threw off his grey robe, and went and took the bridegroom's place. The fear of being surprised did not allow him to remain there long. He rose, therefore, and went to the end of an alley, where his companion, whom he had left on the watch, signalled to him that the bridegroom was still dancing. The Cordelier, who had not satisfied his wicked lust, then went back to the bride, and stayed with her until his companion made the signal that it was time to go away.

The bridegroom went to bed, and the bride, who had been so briskly plied by the Cordelier, and wanted nothing but rest, could not help saying to her husband, "Have you made up your mind never to go to sleep, but to worry me all night long?" The poor husband, who had but just lain down, asked her in great amazement how he had worried her, seeing that he had been dancing all the evening. "Fine dancing, indeed," said the poor woman; "this is the third time you have come to bed. You had better go to sleep, I think."

Astounded at these words, the husband insisted on knowing the exact truth. After she had related to him the whole thing just as it had occurred, he got up instantly, making no doubt it was the Cordeliers, and went to their chamber, which, as before mentioned, was not far from his own. Not finding them, he shouted for help so loud, that all his friends came flocking round him. When he had told them the fact, every one helped him with candles, lanterns, and all the dogs in the village to hunt for the Cordeliers. Not finding them in the houses, they beat the country road, and caught them in the vineyards, where they treated them as they deserved; for after having well beaten them, they cut off their legs and arms, and left them among the vines to the care of Bacchus and Venus, of whom they were better disciples than of St. Francis.

Do not be astonished, ladies, if these people, who are distinguished by a manner of living so different from ours, do things which adventurers would be ashamed to do. You may rather wonder that they do not do worse, when

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God withdraws his grace from them. The habit does not always make the monk, as the proverb says. It often unmakes him, and pride is the cause.

"Mon Dieu!" said Oisille, "shall we never have done with tales about these monks?"

"If ladies, princes, and gentlemen are not spared," said Ennasuite, "it strikes me they have no reason to complain if they are not spared either. They are, for the most part, so useless, that no one would ever mention them if they did not commit some rascality worthy of memory; which makes good the proverb, that it is better to do mischief than to do nothing at all. Besides, the more diversified our bouquet, the handsomer it will be."

"If you promise not to be angry," said Hircan, "I will tell you a story of a great lady so insatiable in love, that you will excuse the poor Cordelier for having taken what he wanted where he found it, the more so as the lady of whom I have to speaking, having plenty to eat, indulged her craving for tit-bits in a way that was too bad."

"Since we have vowed to speak the truth," said Oisille, "we have also vowed to hear it. You may then speak freely; for the evil we speak of men and women does not injure those who are the heroes of the tale, and only serves to cure people of the esteem they have for the creatures, and the confidence they might repose in them, by showing the faults to which they are subject, to the end that we may rest our hopes on none but Him who is alone perfect, and without whom every man is but imperfection."

"Well then," said Hircan, "I will proceed boldly with my story."

NOVEL XLIX.

Of a Countess who diverted herself adroitly with love sport, and how her game was discovered.

AT the court of one of the kings of France, named Charles (I will not say which of them, for the honor of the lady of whom I am about to speak, and whom I shall also abstain from naming), there was a foreign countess of very good family. As new things please, this lady at once attracted all eyes, both by the novelty of her costume, and by its richness and magnificence. Though she was not a beauty of the first order, she possessed, nevertheless, so much grace, such a lofty deportment, and a manner of speaking which inspired so much respect, that no one ventured to attempt her, except the king, who was very much in love with her. That he might enjoy her society more freely, he gave the count her husband a commission which kept him a long time away from the court, and during that interval the king diverted himself with the countess.

Several of the king's gentlemen, seeing that their master was well treated by the countess, took the liberty to speak to her on the subject; among the rest, one named Astillon, an enterprising and handsome man. At first she answered him with great dignity, and thought to frighten him by threatening to complain to the king his master; but he, who was not a man to be moved by the menaces of an intrepid captain, made light of those which the lady held forth, and pressed her so closely, that she consented to grant him a private interview, and even told him what he should do in order to reach her chamber; a lesson which he failed neither to remember nor to practise. To prevent any suspicion on the king's part, he made a pretense of a journey to obtain leave of absence for some days, and actually took his departure from the court, but quitted his retinue at the first stage, and returned at night to receive the favors which the countess had promised him. She fulfilled her promise; and he was so satisfied with his reception, that he was content to remain seven or eight days shut up in a garderobe, living on nothing but aphrodisiacs.

During the time he was thus confined, one of his comrades, named Duracier, came to make love to the countess. She went through the same ceremonies with this second wooer as with the first, spoke to him at first sternly and haughtily, softened to him only by degrees; and on the day she let the first prisoner go, she put the second into his

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place. Whilst he was there, a third came, named Valbenon, and had the same treatment as his two predecessors. After these three came two or three others, who also had part in that sweet captivity; and so it went on for a long while, the intrigue being so nicely conducted that not one of the whole number knew anything of the adventures of the rest. They heard plenty of talk, indeed, of the passion of every one of them for the countess, but there was not one of them but believed himself to be the only favored lover, and laughed in his sleeve at his disappointed rivals.

One day, all these gentlemen being met together at an entertainment, at which they made very good cheer, they began to talk about their adventures, and the prisons in which they had been during the wars. Valbenon, who was not the man to keep a secret which flattered his vanity, said to the others, "I know in what prisons you have been; but as for me, I have been in one for sake of which I will speak well of prisons in general as long as I live; for I don't believe there is a pleasure in the world equal to that of being a prisoner."

Astillon, who had been the first prisoner, at once suspected what prison he meant. "Under what jailer," he asked, "were you so well treated, that you were so fond of your prison?"

"Be the jailer who he may," replied Valbenon, "the prison was so agreeable that I was very loth to leave it so soon, for I never was better treated or more comfortable than there."

Duracier, who hitherto had said nothing, shrewdly suspected that the prison in question was that in which he had been confined, as well as the other two. "Tell me," said he to Valbenon, "what sort of food did they give you in that same prison you praise so highly?"

"Food? The king has not better, or more nutritive," was the reply.

"But I should like to know, too," returned Duracier, "did not the person who kept you prisoner make you earn your bread?"

"Hah! Ventrebleu!" cried Valbenon, who saw that the mark was hit. "Have I had comrades? I thought myself the only one."

"Well," said Astillon, laughing, "we are all companions and friends from our youth, and all serve the same master. If we all share alike in the same *bonne fortune*, we may well laugh in company. But in order to know if what I imagine is true, pray let me interrogate you, and all of you tell me the truth. If what I suppose has happened to us, it is the oddest and most amusing adventure that ever could be imagined."

All swore they would speak the truth, at least if matters were so that they could not help doing so. "I will relate my adventure to you," said Astillon, "and you will each answer me yes or no, if yours is like it or not."

Every one having agreed to this, "In the first place," said Astillon, "I asked leave of absence of the king, under pretence of a journey."

"And so did we," said the others.

"When I was two leagues from the court, I left my retinue, and went and surrendered myself a prisoner."

"And so did we."

"I remained for seven or eight days hid in a garderobe, where I was fed upon nothing but restoratives, and the best viands I ever tasted. At the end of eight days, my keepers let me go, much weaker than I had come."

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They all swore that they had been served just the same way.

"My imprisonment ended such a day," continued Astillon.

"Mine began the very day yours ended," said Duracier, "and lasted until such a day."

Valbenon now lost patience, and began to swear. "By the Lord," said he, "I find I was the third, though I thought myself the first and the only one; for I entered such a day, and left such another."

The other three who were at table swore that they had entered and departed successively in the same order.

"Since that is the case," said Astillon, "I will describe our jailer. She is married, and her husband is away."

"The very same," said all the others.

"As I was the first enrolled," continued Astillon, "I will be the first to name her, for our common relief. She is the countess, who was so haughty, that in winning her, I thought I had done as great a feat as if I had vanquished Cæsar. To the devil with the slut, that made us toil so hard, and deem ourselves so fortunate in having won her. There never was a more infernal woman. Whilst she had one of us caged, she was trapping another, so that the place might never be vacant. I would rather die than not have my revenge."

They all asked Duracier what he thought of the matter, and in what manner she ought to be punished; adding, that they were ready to put their hands to the work.

"It strikes me," said he, "that we ought to tell the facts to the king our master, who esteems her as a goddess."

"We will not do that," said Astillon; "we can revenge ourselves very well without our master's aid. Let us wait for her to-morrow when she goes to mass, every man with an iron chain round his neck, and when she enters the church, we will salute her as is fitting."

This suggestion was unanimously approved. Every one provided himself with a chain, and next morning, dressed all in black, with their chains round their necks, they presented themselves to the countess as she was going to church. When she saw them in that trim, she burst out laughing, and said to them, "Whither go these people that look in such doleful plight?"

"As your poor captive slaves, madam," said Astillon, "we are come to do you service."

"You are not my captives," she replied, "and I know no reason why you should be bound more than others to do me service."

Valbenon then advanced: "We have so long eaten your bread, madam," he said, "that we should be very ungrateful not to do you service."

She pretended not to have the least idea of what he meant, and preserved an unruffled air, thinking thereby to disconcert them; but they played their parts so well that she could not but be aware that the thing was discovered. Nevertheless, she quite baffled them, for as she had lost honor and conscience, she did not take to herself the shame they sought to put upon her; but as one who preferred her pleasure to all the honor in the world, she showed them no worse a countenance for what they had done, and carried her head as high as ever, whereat they were so astounded that they felt themselves as much ashamed as they had meant to make her. *

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If you do not think, ladies, that this tale sufficiently shows that women are as bad as men, I will tell you others. It strikes me, however, that this one is enough to show you that a woman who has lost shame does evil a thousand times more audaciously than a man.

There was not a lady in the company who, on hearing this story, did not make so many signs of the cross, that one would have thought she saw all the devils in hell.

"Let us humble ourselves, mesdames," said Oisille, "at the contemplation of such horrible conduct, the more so as the person abandoned by God becomes like him with whom she unites. As those who attach themselves to God are animated by His spirit, so those who follow the devil are urged by the spirit of the devil; and nothing can be more brutified than those whom God abandons."

"Whatever this poor lady did," said Ennasuite, "I cannot applaud those who boasted of their prison."

"It is my belief," said Longarine, "that a man finds it as hard to keep his good fortune secret as to pursue it. There is no hunter who does not take pleasure in blowing his horn over his quarry, or lover who is not very glad to proclaim the glory of his victory."

"That is an opinion," said Simontault, "which I will maintain to be heretical before all the inquisitors in the world; for I lay it down as a fact that there are more men than women who keep a secret. I know, indeed, that some might be found who would rather not be so well treated than that any one in the world should know of it. Thence it is that the Church, as a good mother, has appointed priests and not women for confessors, for women can conceal nothing."

"That is not the reason," replied Oisille, "but because women have such a hatred of vice, that they would not give absolution so easily as men, and would impose too severe penances."

"If they were as asutere in imposing penance as they are in responding," said Dagoucin, "they would render more sinners desperate than they would save. The Church, therefore, has ordained wisely in all ages. I do not pretend, for all that, to excuse the gentlemen who boasted of their prison; for it never was to a man's honor to tell ugly tales of a woman."

"Nay," said Geburon, "for the sake of their own honor even they should never have avowed the fact. The books of the Round Table inform us that it is not glorious for a knight to vanquish another who has no valor."

"I am surprised the poor woman did not die of shame in presence of her prisoners," said Longarine.

"Those who have lost shame can hardly ever recover it," said Oisille, "unless they have lost it through deep love. Of such lost ones I have seen many come back."

"I suspect you have seen them come back as they came," said Hircan, "for deep love is very rare in women."

"I am not of your opinion," said Longarine, "for some I know have loved to death."

"I am so curious to hear a story of one such woman," said Hircan, "that my voice is for you. I shall be very glad to find in women a love of which I have always deemed them incapable."

"You will believe it when you have heard the story," said Longarine, "and you will be convinced that there is no stronger passion than love. As it makes one undertake things almost impossible, with a view to obtain some pleasure in this life, so does it above all other passions undermine the existence of him or her who loses the hope of succeeding, as you shall see from what I am going to relate."

NOVEL L.

A lover, after a blood-letting, receives favors from his mistress, dies in consequence, and is followed by the fair one, who sinks under her grief.

IT is not a year ago since there was in Cremona a gentleman named Messire Jean Pierre, who had long loved a lady in his neighborhood; but for all he could do he had never been able to obtain from her the response he longed for, though she loved him with all her heart. The poor gentleman was so distressed at this, that he secluded himself at home, resolving to abandon a vain pursuit in which he was wasting his life. Thinking to detach himself from his cruel fair one, he remained some days without seeing her, and fell into such a profound melancholy, that no one would have known him, so altered were his looks. His relations sent for physicians, who, seeing his face yellow, thought it was an obstruction of the liver, and bled him. The lady who had been so coy, knowing very well that his illness was nothing but grief that she had not responded to his love, sent a trusty old woman with orders to tell him, that as she could no longer doubt that his love was genuine and sincere, she had made up her mind to grant him what she had so long refused; and that to that end she had contrived means to leave home and go to a place where he might see her without impediment.

The gentleman, who had been let blood that morning from the arm, finding himself more relieved by this embassy than by all the remedies of his physicians, sent her word that he would not fail to meet her at the appointed hour, and that she had performed a manifest miracle, inasmuch as by a single word she had cured a man of a malady for which all the faculty could find no remedy. The evening he so longed for being come, he went to the trysting-place with a joy so extreme, that as it could not augment, could not of necessity but diminish and come to an end. He had not long to wait for her he loved more than his soul; nor did he waste time in making long speeches. The fire that consumed him made him rush promptly to the pleasure he promised himself, and which he could hardly believe was within his reach. Too much intoxicated with love and voluptuous delight, and thinking he had found the remedy that would prolong his life, he found that which hastened his death; for heedless of himself in his ardent passion for his mistress, he did not perceive that his arm had come unbound. The wound opened afresh, and the poor gentleman lost so much blood, that he was quite bathed in it. Believing that the excess he had indulged in was the cause of his lassitude, he attempted to return home. Then love, which had too much united them, so dealt with him, that on quitting his mistress, his soul at the same time quitted his body. He had lost so much blood that he fell dead at the lady's feet.

The awful surprise, and the thought of what she lost in so perfect a lover, of whose death she was the sole cause, put her beside herself. Reflecting, besides, on the shame that would devolve on her if a dead body was found in the house with her, she called to her aid a trusty woman servant, and they carried the body into the street. But not choosing to leave it alone, she took the sword of the deceased, and being resolved to follow his destiny, and punish her heart, which was the cause of her calamity, she pierced herself with the sword, and fell dead on her lover's body. That sad spectacle was the first thing that met the eyes of her father and mother when they came out of their house in the morning. After the lamentations due to so tragic an event, they had them both interred together.

This, ladies, was an extreme disaster, which could only be ascribed to a love as extreme.

"That is what I like to see," said Simontault; "a love so reciprocal, that when the one dies the other will not survive. Had I, by God's grace, found such a mistress, I believe that no man would ever have loved more perfectly than I."

"I am sure, said Parlamente, "that love would never have so deprived you of your wits but that you would have taken care to tie up your arm better. Men no longer lose their lives for ladies. That time is gone by."

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"But the time is not gone by," retorted Simontault, "when ladies forget their lovers' lives for sake of their own pleasure."

"I do not believe," said Ennasuite, "that there is a woman in the world who would take delight in any man's death, though he were her enemy; but if men choose to kill themselves, the ladies cannot hinder them."

"She, however, who refused bread to the poor famishing man," said Saffredent, "must be regarded as his murderess."

"If your prayers were as reasonable as those of the beggar who asks for bread," said Oisille, "it would be too cruel on the part of the ladies to deny your petition. But, thank Heaven, this malady kills none but those whose time is come."

"I cannot think, madam," replied Saffredent, "that there is any greater need than that one which makes a man forget all others. When one loves well, one knows no other bread than the glances and the words of the beloved being."

"If you were starved for a while, you would tell a very different story," said Oisille.

"I confess," he replied, "that the body might grow weak under that discipline, but not the heart and the will."

"That being the case," said Parlamente, "God has been very gracious to you in making you fall into the hands of women who have given you so little satisfaction, that you must console yourself for it by eating and drinking. You take so kindly to that sort of consolation, that methinks you ought to thank God for that merciful cruelty."

"I am so inured to suffering," he replied, "that I begin to take pleasure in the ills which others bemoan."

"It may be," said Longarine, "that your lamentations exclude you from the company to which you would otherwise be welcome; for there is nothing so disagreeable as an importunate lover."

"Or as a cruel lady, you may add," said Simontault.

"If we were to wait till Simontault had delivered all his maxims," said Oisille, "I see that we should come in for complines instead of vespers. Let us, then, go and thank God that this day has passed without any dispute of more consequence."

She then rose, and was followed by all the rest; but Simontault and Longarine ceased not to dispute, but so gently that, without drawing the sword, Simontault gained the victory, and proved that there is no greater need than a great passion. Thereupon they entered the church, where the monks were waiting for them. After vespers they went to table, and conversed during the repast; nor did the conversation end with it, but would have been prolonged far into the night if Oisille had not advised them to go and refresh their spirits with sleep. She added, that she was afraid the sixth day would not pass off so agreeably as the five others, for even if they should have recourse to invention, it would be impossible to produce better tales than those which had been already told.

"As long as the world lasts," said Geburon, "there will every day be done things worthy of memory. The wicked are always wicked, and the good always good; and as long as wickedness and goodness reign on earth, something new will always be taking place, although Solomon says that nothing new happens under the sun. As we have not been called to the privy council of God, and consequently are ignorant of first causes, all things seem new to us, and the more wonderful the less we could or would do them. So do not be afraid that the days to come will not be as good as the past, and think only of doing your own duty well."

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Oisille said she commended herself to God, in whose name she bade them good night. And so the whole company retired.