

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

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

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----------|
| <u>THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day</u> | 1 |
| <u>Marguerite de Navarre (d'Angoulême) Duchesse d'Alençon</u> | 1 |
| <u>FOURTH DAY</u> | 1 |
| <u>NOVEL XXXI</u> | 2 |
| <u>NOVEL XXXII</u> | 4 |
| <u>NOVEL XXXIII</u> | 7 |
| <u>NOVEL XXXIV</u> | 9 |
| <u>NOVEL XXXV</u> | 11 |
| <u>NOVEL XXXVI</u> | 15 |
| <u>NOVEL XXXVII</u> | 17 |
| <u>NOVEL XXXVIII</u> | 19 |
| <u>NOVEL XXXIX</u> | 21 |
| <u>NOVEL XL</u> | 22 |

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

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

This page copyright © 2001 Blackmask Online.

<http://www.blackmask.com>

- FOURTH DAY.
 - NOVEL XXXI.
 - NOVEL XXXII.
 - NOVEL XXXIII.
 - NOVEL XXXIV.
 - NOVEL XXXV.
 - NOVEL XXXVI.
 - NOVEL XXXVII.
 - NOVEL XXXVIII.
 - NOVEL XXXIX.
 - NOVEL XL.
-

FOURTH DAY.

MADAME OISILLE rose earlier than the rest, according to her good custom, and meditated on Holy Writ whilst awaiting the gradual assemblage of the company. The laziest excused themselves with the words of Scripture, "I have a wife and I cannot come so soon." Thus it was, that when Hircan and his wife made their appearance, Madame Oisille had already begun her reading; but she knew how to pick out the passages in which those are censured who neglect the hearing of the Word. She not only read the text, but she made them such good and holy exhortations, that it was impossible for them to take offence at them. When these devotional exercises were ended, Parlamente said to her, "I was vexed when I came in at having been lazy, but I now congratulate myself on my laziness, since it has made you speak so well. I derive a double advantage from it-repose of body, and satisfaction of mind."

"For penance, then, let us go to mass," said Oisille, "to pray to our Lord for the will and the strength to do His commands; and then let Him command what he pleases."

As she said these words they entered the church, and after having heard mass with much devotion, they sat down to table, where Hircan did not fail to banter his wife for her laziness. After dinner every one retired to study his part, and at the appointed hour they all repaired punctually to the usual rendezvous. Oisille asked Hircan who should begin the day. "If my wife had not been the first speaker yesterday," he said. "I would give my voice for her; for though I have always believed that she loved me better than any man in the world, she has shown me to-day that she loves me a great deal better than God and his Word, since she has preferred my company to your reading. Since, then, I cannot give my voice to the most discreet of the women, I will give it to the most discreet of the men-I mean Geburon, whom I entreat not to spare the monks."

"It is not necessary to make the entreaty," replied Geburon. "I hold them too well in mind to forget them. It is not long since I heard a story told by Monsieur de Saint Vincent, then the emperor's ambassador, which is too good to be lost."

NOVEL XXXI.

A Monastery of Cordeliers was burned and the monks in it, in perpetual memory of the cruelty of one of them who was in love with a lady.

THERE was in the dominions of the Emperor Maximilian of Austria a monastery of Cordeliers, held in high esteem, near which was the house of a gentleman. He was so infatuated with these Cordeliers that there was nothing he did not give them, in order to have part in the benefit of their fastings and prayers. Among others, there was in this monastery a tall, handsome young Cordelier, whom the gentleman had taken for his confessor, and who was as absolute in the house as the master himself. The Cordelier, struck by the exceeding beauty and propriety of the gentleman's wife, became so enamored of her, that he could neither eat nor drink, and lost all natural reason. Resolved to execute his design, he went all alone one day to the gentleman's house. Finding no one at home, the monk asked the lady whither her husband was gone? She replied that he was gone to one of his estates, where he was to remain two or three days; but that if he wanted him she would send an express to bring him back. The Cordelier told her that was not necessary, and began to go to and fro about the house, as if he had some affair of consequence in his head.

As soon as the monk had left the lady's room, she said to one of her women (there were but two of them), Run after the father, and learn what he wants; for I know by his looks that he is not pleased." The girl, finding him in the courtyard, asked him if he wanted anything? He said he did, and drawing her into a corner, he plunged into her bosom a poniard he carried in his sleeve. He had hardly done the deed when one of the gentleman's men, who had gone to receive the rent of a farm, entered the yard on horseback. As soon as he had dismounted, he saluted the Cordelier, who embraced him, and buried the poniard in his back, after which he closed the gates of the château.

The lady, seeing that her servant did not return, and surprised at her remaining so long with the Cordelier, said to the other woman, "Go see why your companion does not come back." The servant went, and no sooner came in sight of the Cordelier than he called her aside, and served her as he had done the other. Knowing that he was then alone in the house, he went to the lady, and told her that he had long loved her, and that it was time she should obey him. She, who could never have suspected him of anything of the kind, replied, "I believe, father, that if I were so unhappily inclined, you would be the first to condemn me and cast a stone at me."

"Come out into the yard," said the monk, "and you will see what I have done."

The poor woman did so, and seeing her two women and her man lying dead on the ground, was so horrified, that she remained motionless and speechless as a statue. The villain, who did not want to have her for an hour only, did not think fit to offer her violence then, and said to her, "Have no fear, mademoiselle; you are in the hands of that man in all the world who loves you most." So saying, he took off his robe, beneath which he had a smaller one, which he presented to the demoiselle, threatening, if she did not put it on, that he would treat her as he had done the others. The demoiselle, more dead than alive, made a show of obeying him, as well to save her life as to gain time, in hopes that her husband would return. She took off her head-dress by the Cordelier's order as slowly as she could; and when she had done so, the monk, without regard to the beauty of her hair, cut it off in haste, made her strip to her shift and put on the small robe, and then, resuming his own, set off with all the speed he could make along with the little Cordelier he had so long coveted.

God, who has pity on the wronged innocent, was touched by the tears of this poor lady, and so ordered things that her husband, having despatched his business sooner than he expected, took that very road to return home by which the Cordelier was carrying off his wife. The monk, descrying the husband from a distance, said to the lady, "Here comes your husband. I know that if you look at him he will try to get you out of my hands; so walk before me, and do not turn your head in his direction, for if you make him the least sign, I shall have plunged my poniard

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

in your breast sooner than he will have delivered you." Presently the gentleman came up, and asked him whence he came? "From your house, monsieur," replied the Cordelier. "I left mademoiselle quite well and she is expecting you." The gentleman rode on without perceiving his wife; but the valet who accompanied him, and who had always been in the habit of conversing with the Cordelier's companion, named Friar John, called to his mistress, thinking that she was that person. The poor woman, who durst not turn her head towards her husband, made no reply to the valet; and the latter crossed the road, that he might see the face of this pretended Brother John. The poor lady, without saying anything, made a sign to him with her eyes, which were full of tears. The valet then rode up to his master, and said, "In conscience, monsieur; Friar John is very like mademoiselle your wife. I had a look at him as I crossed the road. It is certainly not the usual Friar John; at least, I can tell you, that if it is, he weeps abundantly, and that he gave me a very sorrowful glance of his eye."

The gentleman told him he was dreaming, and made light of what he said. The valet, however, still persisting in it that there was something wrong, asked leave to ride back and see to it, and begged his master to wait for him. The gentleman let him go, and waited to see what would be the upshot. But the Cordelier, hearing the valet coming after him with shouts to Friar John, and making no doubt that the lady had been recognized, turned upon the valet with a great iron-bound staff, gave him such a blow on the side that he knocked him off his horse, and springing instantly upon him with the poniard, speedily despatched him. The gentleman, who from a distance had seen his valet fall, and supposed that this had happened by some accident, spurred towards him at once to help him. As soon as he was within reach, the Cordelier struck him a blow of the same staff with which he had struck the valet, unhorsed and fell upon him; but the gentleman being very strong, threw his arms round the Cordelier, and hugged him so roughly, that he not only prevented his doing him any more mischief, but made him drop the poniard. The wife caught it up at once and gave it to her husband. At the same time she seized him by his hood and held him with all her might, whilst her husband stabbed him several times with the poniard. The Cordelier, being unable to do anything else, begged for quarter, and confessed the crime he had committed. The gentleman granted him his life, and begged his wife to go for his people, and a cart to carry the prisoner away, which she did, throwing off her Cordelier's robe, and hurrying home in her shift and her cropped hair. The gentleman's retainers all hastened to help him to bring home the wolf he had captured; and the culprit was afterwards sent by the gentleman to Flanders to be tried by the emperor's officers.

He not only confessed the crime for which he was tried, but also avowed a fact, which was afterwards verified on the spot by special commissioners sent for that purpose, which was, that several other ladies and handsome girls had been taken to that convent in the same manner as this Cordelier had attempted to carry off the lady of whom we are speaking; and if he did not succeed, this was owing to nothing else than the goodness of God, who always takes upon Him the defence of those who trust in Him. The girls and the other stolen spoil found in the monastery were removed, and the monks were burned with the monastery, in perpetual memorial of a crime so horrible. We see from this that there is nothing more cruel than love when its principle is vice, as there is nothing more humane or more laudable when it dwells in a virtuous heart. *

I am very sorry, ladies, that truth does not furnish us with so many tales to the advantage of the Cordeliers as contrariwise. I like this order, and should be very glad to know some story in which I could praise them. But we are so pledged to speak the truth, that I cannot conceal it after the report of persons so worthy of belief; though, at the same time, I assure you that if the Cordeliers of the present day did anything worthy of memory which was to their honor, I would do justice to it with more alacrity than I have told the truth in the story I have just related to you.

"In good faith, Geburon," said Oisille, "that sort of love might well be called cruelty."

"I am surprised," said Simontault, "that he did not ravish the lady at once when he saw her in her shift, and in a place where he was master."

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

"He was not picksome but gluttonous," said Saffredent. "As he intended to have his fill of her every day, he had no mind to amuse himself with nibbling at her."

"That is not it," said Parlamente. "A ruffian is always timorous. The fear of being surprised and losing his prey made him carry off his lamb, as the wolf carries off a sheep, to devour it at his ease."

"I cannot believe he loved her," said Dagoucin, "nor can I conceive that so exalted a passion as love should enter so cowardly and villainous a heart."

"Be it as it may," said Oisille, "he was well punished for it. I pray God that all who do the like deeds may suffer the like penalties. But to whom do you give your voice?"

"To you, madam," said Geburon, "for I know you will not fail to tell us a good tale."

"If new things are good," replied Oisille, "I will tell you one which cannot be bad, since the event happened in my time, and I have it from an eye-witness. You are, doubtless, not ignorant that death being the end of all our woes, it may, consequently, be called the beginning of our felicity and our repose. Thus man's greatest misery is to wish for death and not be able to obtain it. The greatest ill which can befall a criminal is not to be put to death, but to be made to suffer so much that he longs for death, while his sufferings, though continual, are of such a nature as not to be capable of abridging his life. It was in this way that a gentleman treated his wife, as you shall hear."

NOVEL XXXII.

A husband surprises his wife in flagrante delicto, and subjects her to a punishment more terrible than death itself.

KING CHARLES VIII. sent to Germany a gentleman named Bernage, Lord of Sivray, near Amboise. This gentleman, traveling day and night, arrived very late one evening at the house of a gentleman, where he asked for a night's lodging; and obtained it, but with difficulty. The owner of the house, nevertheless, learning in whose service he was, came to him and begged he would excuse the incivility of his servants, stating that certain of his wife's relations, who meant him mischief, obliged him to keep his doors thus closed. Bernage told him on what business he was travelling, and his host expressing his readiness to render the king his master all possible services, received his ambassador into his house, and lodged and treated him honorably. Supper-time being come, he showed him into a richly-tapestried hall, where, entering from behind the hangings, there appeared the most beautiful woman that ever was seen; but her hair was cropped close, and she was dressed in black garments of German cut. After the gentleman had washed with Bernage, water was set before this lady, who washed also, and took her seat at the end of the table without speaking to any one, or any one to her. Bernage often looked at her, and thought her one of the handsomest women he had ever seen, except that her face was very pale, and her air extremely sad. After she had eaten a little, she asked for drink, which was given to her by a domestic in a very singular vessel. This was a death's head, the holes of which were stopped with silver; and out of this vessel she drank two or three times. After she had supped and washed, she made a reverence to the master of the house, and retired again behind the tapestry without speaking to any one.

Bernage was so surprised at this extraordinary spectacle that he became quite sombre and pensive. His host perceived this, and said to him, "You are surprised, I see, at what you have beheld at table. Now, the courteous demeanor I have marked in you does not permit me to make a secret of the matter to you, but to explain it, in order that you may not suppose me capable of acting so cruelly without great reason. That lady whom you have seen is my wife, whom I loved more than man ever loved woman. I risked everything to marry her, and I brought her hither in spite of her relations. She, too, evinced so much love for me, that I would have hazarded a thousand lives to obtain her. We lived long in such concord and pleasure that I esteemed myself the happiest gentleman in Christendom; but honor having obliged me to make a journey, she forgot hers and the love she had for me, and

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

conceived a passion for a young gentleman I had brought up in this house. I was near discovering the fact on my return home, but I loved her so ardently that I could not bring myself to doubt her. At last, however, experience opened my eyes, and I saw what I feared more than death. The love I had felt for her changed into fury and despair. Feigning one day to go into the country, I hid myself in the chamber which she at present occupies. Soon after my pretended departure, she retired to it, and sent for the young gentleman. I saw him enter the room and take liberties with her which should have been reserved for me alone. When I saw him about to enter the bed with her, I issued from my hiding-place, seized him in her arms, and slew him. But as my wife's crime seemed to me so great that it would not have been a sufficient punishment for it had I killed her as I had killed her gallant, I imposed upon her one which I believe is more insupportable than death; which was, to shut her up in the chamber in which she used to enjoy her stolen pleasures. I have hung there in a press all the bones of her gallant as one hangs up something precious in a cabinet; and that she may not forget them at her meals, I have her served, as she sits opposite to me at table, with the skull of that ingrate instead of a cup, in order that she may see living him whom she has made her mortal enemy by her crime, and dead, for her sake, him whose love she preferred to mine. In this way, when she dines and when she sups, she sees the two things which must afflict her most, namely, the living enemy and the dead friend; and all this through her guilt. In other respects, I treat her as I do myself, except that her hair is cropped; for the hair is an ornament no more appropriate to the adulteress than the veil to a harlot; therefore, her cropped head denotes that she has lost honor and chastity. If you please to take the trouble to see her, I will take you into her room."

Bernage willingly accepted the offer, and going down stairs with his host, found the lady seated alone by an excellent fire in a very handsome chamber. The gentleman drew back a curtain which concealed a great press, and there he saw all the bones of a man suspended. Bernage had a great wish to speak to the lady, but durst not for fear of the husband, until the latter, guessing his thoughts, said to him, "If you like to say anything to her, you will see how she expresses herself."

"Your patience, madam," said Bernage, turning to her, "is equal to your torture; I regard you as the most unhappy woman in the world."

The lady, with eyes filled with tears, and with incomparable grace and humility, replied, "I confess, sir, that my fault is so great, that all the ills which the master of this house, whom I am not worthy to call husband, could inflict upon me, are nothing in comparison to the grief I feel for having offended him." So saying, she wept profusely.

The gentleman took Bernage by the arm and led him away. Next morning he continued his journey upon the king's service; but on taking leave of the gentleman he could not help saying to him, "The esteem I entertain for you, sir, and the courtesies you have shown me in your house, oblige me to tell you, that, in my opinion, considering the great repentance of your poor wife, you ought to forgive her; the more so as you are young and have no children. It would be a pity that a house like yours should fall, and that those who perhaps do not love you should become inheritors of your substance."

The gentleman, who had resolved never to forgive his wife, pondered long over what Bernage had said to him, and at last, owning that he had spoken the truth, promised that if she persevered in her present humility, he would forgive her after some time. Bernage, on his return to the court, related the whole story to the king, who directed inquiries to be made into the matter, and found that it was all just as Bernage had reported. The description he gave of the lady's beauty so pleased the king, that he sent his painter, Jean de Paris, to take her portrait exactly as she was, which he did with the husband's consent. After she had undergone a long penance, and always with the same humility, the gentleman, who longed much for children, took pity on his wife, reinstated her, and had by her several fine children.

If all those wives who have done the same sort of thing had to drink out of similar vessels, I am greatly afraid, ladies, that many a gilt cup would be turned into a death's-head. God keep us from the like, for, if His goodness

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

does not restrain, there is not one of us but may do worse; but if we trust in Him, He will guard those who own that they cannot guard themselves. Those who rely on their own strength run great risk of being tempted, and of being constrained by experience to acknowledge their infirmity. I can assure you that there are many who have stumbled through pride in this way, whilst others, who were reputed less discreet, have been saved through their humility. The old proverb says truly, What God keeps is well kept.

"I look upon the punishment inflicted in this case as quite reasonable," said Parlamente; "for, as the offence was worse than death, so also ought the penalty to be."

"I am not of your opinion," said Ennasuite. "I would rather see the bones of all my lovers hung up in my cabinet all my life long than die for them. There is no misdeed that cannot be repaired, but from death there is no return."

"How can infamy be repaired?" asked Longarine. "Do what she may, you know that a woman cannot retrieve her honor after a crime of this nature."

"I should like to know," returned Ennasuite, "if the Magdalen is not now in more honor among men than her sister who was a virgin?"

"I admit," replied Longarine, "that we praise her for her love for Jesus Christ, and for her great penitence; nevertheless, the name of sinner clings to her always."

"Much I care what name men give me," said Ennasuite; "only let me have God's pardon and my husband's too, there is no reason why I should wish to die."

"If this lady loved her husband as she ought," said Dagoucin, "I am surprised she did not die of grief at looking upon the bones of him whom her crime had brought to death."

"Why, Dagoucin," said Simontault, "have you yet to learn that women know neither love nor regret?"

"Yes," he replied, "for I have never ventured to prove their love for fear of finding it less than I should have wished."

"You live, then, on faith and hope," said Nomerfide, "as the plover lives on wind. You are easily kept."

"I content myself with the love I feel in my own heart," he replied, "and with the hope that there is the same in the hearts of ladies. But if I was quite sure that that love corresponded to my hope, I should feel a pleasure so extreme, that I could not sustain it and live."

"Keep yourself safe from the plague," said Geburon, "for as for the other malady, I warrant you against it. But let us see to whom Madame Oisille will give her voice."

"I give it," she said, "to Simontault, who I know will spare no one."

"That is as much as to say that I am rather given to evil speaking," said he. "I shall nevertheless let you see that people who have been regarded in that same light have yet spoken the truth. I believe, ladies, you are not so simple as to put faith in everything a person tells you, however sanctified an air he may assume, unless the proof is clear beyond doubt. Many an abuse is committed under the guise of a miracle. Therefore I intend to relate to you a story not less honorable to a religious prince than shameful to a wicked minister of the church."

NOVEL XXXIII.

Incest of a priest who got his sister with child under the cloak of sanctity, and how it was punished.

THE Count Charles d'Angoulême, father of Francis I., and a prince of great piety, being one day at Coignac, some one told him that in a village named Cherves there was a maiden who lived with such austerity that it was a marvel, yet she was with child, and did not even make any secret of it, but assured everybody that she had never known man, and that she knew not how it had happened to her, unless it was the work of the Holy Ghost. The people readily gave credit to this delusion, and looked upon the girl as a second Virgin Mary, the more so as she had been known to be so well-behaved from her childhood, and never to have shown the least sign of a disposition to mundane vanities. She not only fasted at the seasons appointed by the church, but also made several voluntary fasts every week, and never stirred from the church as long as there was any service going on in it. The common people made so much account of this manner of life, that every one flocked to see her as though she were a living miracle, and, fortunate was he who could touch her gown. The priest of the parish was her brother, a man in years, of an austere life, and a reputed saint. So rigorously did he treat his sister, that he had her shut up in a house, whereat the people were greatly displeased, and the affair made so much noise, that it came, as I have already said, to the ears of Count Charles, who seeing the delusion into which everybody had fallen, resolved to put an end to it.

To this end, he sent a referendary and an almoner, both of them worthy men, to ascertain the truth. They went to the spot, inquired into the fact as carefully as possible, and applied to the priest, who was so vexed at the affair, that he begged them to be present at the verification he hoped to make of it. Next morning the priest celebrated mass, his sister, who was very big, being present on her knees. After it was over, he took the corpus Domini and said to his sister in presence of the whole congregation, "Wretch that thou art, here is He who suffered death for thee, in whose presence I ask thee if thou art a virgin as thou has always assured me." She replied boldly and fearlessly that she was so. "How, then, is it possible that thou art pregnant, yet still a virgin?" "All I can say," she replied, "is, that it is the grace of the Holy Ghost, who does in me whatever he pleases; but also I cannot deny the grace which God has done me in preserving me a virgin. Never have I had even a thought of marrying."

Her brother then said to her, "I give thee here the precious body of Jesus Christ, which thou wilt take to thy damnation if thou dost not speak the truth; whereof will be witnesses these gentlemen, who are here present on the part of my lord the count."

The girl, who was about thirteen years of age, then made oath as follows: "I take the body of Our Lord here present to my condemnation before you, sirs, and you my brother, if ever man has touched me any more than you." So saying, she received the body of Our Lord.

The referendary and the almoner went away quite confounded, not being able to believe that any one would lie after such an oath, and they made their report to the count, whom they tried to bring to entertain the same belief as themselves. But he being a wise man, after much thought, made them repeat the very words of the oath; and having well weighed them, he said, "She told you that never man touched her any more than her brother. I am persuaded that it was her brother who got her with child, and that she seeks to conceal his incest by prevarication. We, who believe that Jesus Christ is come, must not expect another. Return then to the place, and put the priest in prison; I am sure he will confess the truth."

They executed their orders, but unwillingly, and not without remonstrating against the necessity of putting such a scandal upon a good man. The priest was no sooner committed to prison than he confessed his crime, and owned that he had instructed his sister to speak as she had done, in order to conceal the intercourse between them, and this not only to baffle inquiry by so slight a device, but also to secure to themselves universal esteem and veneration by this false statement. Being asked how he could carry his wickedness to such an excess as to make

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

his sister swear upon Our Lord's body, he replied, that his audacity had not reached that length, and that he had used an ordinary wafer, which was neither consecrated nor blessed.

All this having been reported to the Count d'Angoulême, he sent the affair before the courts of justice. Execution was delayed until the sister was delivered of a fine boy. After her delivery the brother and sister were burned, to the great astonishment of all the people, who had beheld a monster so horrible under such a garb of holiness, and so detestable a crime under the appearances of a life so laudable and regenerate.

The good Count d'Angoulême's faith, ladies, was proof against outward signs and miracles. He knew that we have but one Saviour, who when he said *consummatum est* showed thereby that we are not to expect a successor for our salvation.

"Truly," said Oisille, "that was a monstrous piece of effrontery covered with unparalleled hypocrisy. It is the height of impiety to cover so enormous a crime with the mantle of God and religion."

"I have heard," said Hircan, "that those who commit acts of cruelty and tyranny under pretence of having the king's commission, are doubly punished, the reason being that they make the king's name a cover for their injustice. Likewise, it is seen, that although hypocrites prosper for some time under the cloak of godliness, God no sooner unmasks them, than they appear such as they are; and then their nakedness, their filth, and their infamy are the more horrible the more august and sacred was the wrapper with which they concealed them.

"There is nothing more agreeable," said Nomerfide, "than to speak frankly and as the heart feels."

"It serves to make one fat," replied Longarine, "and I imagine you decide from your own case."

"Let me tell you," returned Nomerfide, "I remark that fools live longer than the wise, unless some one kills them; for which I know but one reason, namely, that fools do not dissemble their passions. If they are angry they strike; if they are merry they laugh; but those who deem themselves wise hide their defects with so much care that their hearts are all poisoned with them."

"I believe that is true," said Geburon, "and that hypocrisy, whether as regards God, men, or nature, is the cause of all the evil that befalls us."

"It would be a fine thing," said Parlamente, "if faith so filled our hearts with Him who is all virtue and all joy, that we should show them to every one without disguise."

"That will be when there is no longer any flesh on our bones," observed Hircan.

"Yet," remarked Oisille, "the spirit of God, which is mightier than death, can change our hearts without changing our bodies."

"You speak, madam," said Saffredent, "of a gift which God hardly makes to men."

"He does make it," rejoined Oisille, "to those who have faith. But as this is a matter above the comprehension of flesh, let us see to whom Simontault gives his voice."

"To Nomerfide," he said. "As she has a merry heart, I don't think her words will be sad."

"Since you have a mind to laugh," said Nomerfide, "I must serve you after your own way, and give you matter for laughter. I wish to show you that fear and ignorance are equally mischievous, and that one often sins only for want of knowing things. With this view I will relate to you what happened to two poor Cordeliers of Niort, who,

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

for not understanding the language of a butcher, had like to die of fright."

NOVEL XXXIV.

Two over-inquisitive Cordeliers had a great fright, which had like to cost them their lives.

BETWEEN Niort and Fors there is a village named Grip, which belongs to the Lord of Fors. Two Cordeliers of Niort arrived late one night at this village, and took up their quarters with a butcher. As their bedroom was separated from their host's only by an ill-jointed boarded partition, they had a mind to listen to what passed between the husband and wife, and they clapped their ears to the partition close to the head of the host's bed. As the butcher had no suspicion of his guests, he talked to his wife about his business, and said, "My dear, I must be up betimes tomorrow, and see about our Cordeliers. One of them is very fat; we will kill him and salt him forthwith, and we shall make a good thing of him."

Though the butcher talked of his pigs, which he called Cordeliers, the two poor friars, hearing this, set it all down to their own account, and awaited daylight with great terror. One of them was very fat, the other very lean; and the fat one set about confessing himself to his companion, alleging that a butcher, having lost the love and fear of God, would make no more of slaughtering them than an ox or any other beast. As they were shut up in their chamber, from which there was no issue but through their host's, they gave themselves up for dead men, and earnestly commended their souls to God. The young man, who was not so overcome by fear as the elder, said to him, that since they could not get out at the door, they must try to escape through the window; at the worst they could only be killed in the attempt, and death one way or the other was the same thing in the end. The fat friar consented to the expedient. The young one opened the window, and, as it was not very high, dropped lightly to the ground, and ran away as fast and as far as he could, without waiting for his companion, who was not so lucky, for, being very bulky, he fell so heavily that he hurt one leg severely, and was unable to rise from the ground. Deserted by his companion, and unable to follow him, he looked about for some place where he might hide, and saw nothing but a pigsty, into which he dragged himself the best way he could. When he opened the door, two big porkers which were inside rushed out and left the place free to the Cordelier, who shut himself in, hoping that he might hear people passing by, to whom he would call and obtain help.

As soon as daylight appeared the butcher got ready his big knives, and told his wife to come and help him to kill the two pigs. Going to the sty, he opened the little door, and cried out, "Come, turn out here, my Cordelier. I'll have your chitterlings for my dinner to-day." The Cordelier, who could not stand on his leg, crawled out on his hands and knees, roaring for mercy. If he was in a great fright, the butcher and his wife were no less so. The first idea that came into their heads was that St. Francis was angry with them because they had called pigs Cordeliers; and under that notion they fell on their knees before the poor friar, begging pardon of St. Francis and his order. On the one side was the Cordelier, bawling for mercy to the butcher, on the other side, the butcher making the same appeal to the Cordelier. At last the Cordelier, finding that the butcher had no intention of hurting him, told him why he had hid himself in that place. Fear then gave place to laughter, except on the part of the poor friar, whose leg pained him so much that he had no inclination to laugh. The butcher, to console him in some degree, took him back to the house and had his hurt carefully attended to. As for his companion, who had forsaken him in distress, he ran all night, and arrived in the morning at the house of the Lord of Fors, where he made loud complaints of the butcher, who, he supposed, had by that time killed his companion, since the latter had not followed him. The Lord of Fors sent immediately to Grip to see how matters stood, and his messengers brought back matter for laughter, which he failed not to communicate to his mistress, the Duchess d'Angoulême, mother of Francis I.

It is not good, ladies, to listen to secrets when one is not invited, and to have a curiosity to hear what others say.

"Did not I tell you," exclaimed Simontault, "that Nomerfide would not make us cry, but laugh? Every one of us, I

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

think, has done so very heartily."

"Whence comes it," said Oisille, "that one is always more disposed to laugh at a piece of nonsense than at a good thing?"

"Because," replied Hircan, "the nonsense is more agreeable to us, being more conformable to our own nature, which of itself is never wise. Thus every one is fond of his like: fools love folly, and wise men wisdom. I am sure, however, that neither fools nor wise could help laughing at this story."

"There are some," said Geburon, "who are so engrossed with the love of wisdom that nothing you could say to them would make them laugh. Their joy and their satisfaction are so moderate, that no accident is capable of altering them."

"Who are these persons?" inquired Hircan.

"The philosophers of past times," replied Geburon, "who hardly felt either mirth or sadness; at least they showed no manifestation of either, so possessed were they with the belief that there is virtue in vanquishing oneself."

"I am as much convinced as they that it is good to vanquish a vicious passion," said Sagredent, "but to vanquish a natural passion, which has no evil tendency, seems to me a useless victory."

"Nevertheless, that was regarded as a great virtue," remarked Geburon.

"But then," returned Saffredent, "it is not said that all the ancients were sages; and I would not swear that there was not in them more of the appearance of sense and virtue than of the reality."

"You see, however," said Geburon, "that they condemn everything that is bad, and even that Diogenes trampled on Plato's coverlet, because he thought it too rich and curious, and to show that he despised and wished to trample under foot Plato's vainglory and avarice, 'I trample,' said he, 'on the pride of Plato.'"

"You do not tell all," replied Saffredent; "you forget that Plato at once retorted upon him, 'Thou tramplest on it, indeed, but with still more pride.' In fact, it was only through a certain arrogance that Diogenes despised elegance."

"In truth," said Parlamente, "it is impossible to overcome ourselves by ourselves; nor can one think to do so without prodigious pride, the vice of all others the most to be feared, since it rears itself upon the ruins of all the rest."

"Did I not read to you this morning," said Oisille, "that those who believed themselves wiser than others, and who came by the light of reason to know a God, the creator of all things, for having been vain thereof, and not having attributed this glory to Him to whom it belonged, and for having imagined that they had acquired this knowledge by their own labors, became more ignorant and less reasonable, I will not say than other men, but than the very brutes? In fact, their minds having run astray, they ascribed to themselves what belongs to God alone, and manifested their errors by the disorders of their lives, forgetting their very sex, and abusing it, as St. Paul says in his Epistle to the Romans."

"There is not one of us," said Parlamente, "but recognizes, on reading that epistle, that outward sins are the fruits of inward unbelief, the more dangerous to eradicate the more it is covered by virtue and miracles."

"We men," said Hircan, "are nearer to salvation than women, for as they do not hide their fruits they easily know their roots. But you women, who dare not produce yours, and who do so many acts that are fair in appearance,

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

hardly know the root of pride, that grows under so goodly a covering."

"I own," said Longarine, "that if God's word does not show us by faith the leprosy of unbelief that is hidden in our hearts, God does us a great grace when He suffers us to commit a visible fault, which manifests our hidden disposition. Blessed are they whom faith has so humbled that they have no need of outward acts to make them conscious of the weakness and corruption of their natures."

"Do let us consider, I beseech you," said Simontault, "what a course our conversation has taken. From an instance of extreme folly we have come to philosophy and theology. Let us leave these matters to those who are more competent to discuss them, and ask Nomerfide to whom she gives her voice."

"To Hircan," she replied, "but on condition that he will be tender of the honor of the ladies."

"The condition fits me very aptly," said Hircan, "for the story I have to tell you is the very one to fulfil it. You shall see from it, nevertheless, that the inclination of men and of women is naturally vicious, unless it be kept right by the goodness of Him to whom we ought to impute all the victories we achieve over ourselves. And to abate the airs you give yourselves when any story is told which does you honor, I will tell you one which is strictly true."

NOVEL XXXV.

Contrivance of a sensible husband to cure his wife of her passion for a Cordelier.

THERE was at Pampelune a lady who was reputed fair and virtuous, and at the same time the most devout and chaste in the country. She loved her husband much, and was so obsequious to him that he had entire confidence in her. She was wholly occupied with God's service, and never missed a single sermon, and omitted nothing by which she could hope to persuade her husband and her children to be as devout as herself, who was but thirty years old, an age at which women commonly resign the pretensions of beauties for those of new she-sages.

On the first day of Lent this lady went to church to receive the ashes which are a memorial of death. A Cordelier, whose austerity of life had gained him the reputation of a saint, and who, in spite of his austerity and his macerations, was neither so meagre nor so pale but that he was one of the handsomest men in the world, was to preach the sermon. The lady listened to him with great devotion, and gazed no less intently on the preacher. Her ears and her eyes lost nothing that was presented to them, and both alike found wherewithal to be gratified. The preacher's words penetrated to her heart through her ears; and the charms of his countenance passing through her eyes, insinuated themselves so deeply into her mind, that she felt as it were in an ecstasy. The sermon being ended, the Cordelier celebrated mass, at which the lady was present, and she took the ashes from his hand, which was as white and shapely as that of any lady. The devotee paid much more attention to the monk's hand than to the ashes he gave her, persuading herself that this spiritual love could not hurt her conscience, whatever pleasure she received from it. She failed not to go every day to the sermon, and to take her husband with her; and both so highly admired the preacher, that at table and elsewhere they talked of nothing but him.

This fire, for all its spirituality, at last became so carnal, that the heart of this poor lady, which was first kindled by it consumed all the rest. Slow as she had been to feel the flame she was equally prompt to take fire, and she felt the pleasure of her passion before she was aware that passion had possession of her. Love, which had rendered himself master of the lady, no longer encountered any resistance on her part; but the mischief was, that the physician who might have relieved her pain was not aware of her malady. Banishing, therefore, all fear, and the shame she ought to have felt in exposing her wild fantasy to so sober-minded a man, and her incontinence to one so saintly and virtuous, she resolved to acquaint him in writing of the love she cherished for him; which she did as modestly as she could, and gave her letter to a little page, with instructions as to what he was to do, especially

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

enjoining him to take good care that her husband did not see him go to the Cordeliers.

The page, taking the shortest road, passed through a street where his master happened, by the merest chance, to be sitting in a shop. The gentleman seeing him pass, stepped forward to see which way he was going; and the page perceiving this, hid himself with some trepidation. His master saw this, followed him, and seizing him by the arm, asked him whither he was going. His embarrassed and unmeaning replies, and his manifest fright, aroused the suspicions of the gentleman, who threatened to beat him if he did not tell the truth. "Oh, sir," said the little page, "if I tell you, my mistress will kill me." The gentleman no longer doubted that his wife was making a bargain without him, encouraged the page, and assured him that nothing should befall him if he spoke the truth—on the contrary, he should be well rewarded; but if he told a lie, he should be imprisoned for life. Thus urged by fear and hope, the page acquainted him with the real fact, and showed him the letter his mistress had written to the preacher, whereat the husband was the more shocked, as he had been all his life assured of the fidelity of his wife, in whom he had never seen a fault.

Being a wise man, however, he dissembled his anger, and further to try his wife, he answered her letter in the preacher's name, thanking her for her gracious inclination, and assuring her that it was fully reciprocated. The page, after being sworn by his master to manage the affair discreetly, carried this letter to his mistress, who was so transported with joy, that her husband perceived it by the change in her countenance, for instead of her fastings in Lent having emaciated her, she looked handsomer and fresher than ever. It was now Mid-Lent, but the lady, without concerning herself about the Lord's Passion or the Holy Week, wrote as usual to the preacher, the theme being always her amorous rage. When he turned his eyes in her direction, or spoke of the love of God, she always imagined that he addressed himself covertly to her, and so far as her eyes could explain what was passing in her heart, she did not suffer them to be idle.

The husband, who regularly replied to her in the name of the Cordelier, wrote to her after Easter, begging she would contrive to give him a meeting in private; and she, impatiently longing for an opportunity to do so, advised her husband to go see some land they had near Pampelune. He said he would do so, and went and concealed himself in the house of one of his friends; whereupon the lady wrote to the Cordelier that her husband was in the country, and that he might come and see her.

The gentleman, wishing to prove his wife's heart thoroughly, went and begged the preacher to lend him his robe. The Cordelier, who was a good man, replied that his rule forbade him to do so, and that for no consideration would he lend his robe to go masking in. The gentleman assured him it was not for any idle diversion he wanted it, but for an important matter, and one necessary to his salvation; whereupon the Cordelier, who knew him to be a worthy, pious man, lent him the robe. The gentleman then procured a false beard and a false nose, put cork in his shoes to make himself as tall as the monk, put on the robe, which covered the greater part of his face, so that his eyes were barely seen, and, in a word, dressed himself up so that he might easily be mistaken for the preacher. Thus disguised, he stole by night into his wife's chamber, where she was expecting him in great devotion. The poor creature did not wait for him to come to her, but ran to embrace him like a woman out of her senses. Keeping his head down to avoid being recognized, he began to make the sign of the cross, pretending to shun her, and crying, "Temptation! temptation!"

"Alas! you are right, father," said she, "for there is no more violent temptation than that which proceeds from love. You have promised to afford me relief, and I pray you to have pity on me now that we have time and opportunity."

So saying she made great efforts to embrace him, while he kept dodging her in all directions, still making great signs of the cross, and crying, "Temptation! temptation!" But when he found that she was pressing him too closely, he drew a stout stick from under his robe, and thrashed her so soundly that he put an end to the temptation. This done, he left the house without being known, and immediately returned his borrowed robe, assuring the owner that he had used it to great advantage. Next day he returned home as if from a journey, and

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

found his wife in bed. Pretending not to know the nature of her malady, he asked her what ailed her. She replied that she was troubled with a kind of catarrh, and that she could neither move hand nor foot. The husband, who had a great mind to laugh, pretended to be very sorry, and by way of cheering her, said that he had invited the pious preacher to supper. "Oh, my dear!" said she, "don't think of inviting such people; for they bring ill-luck wherever they go."

"Why, my love," replied the husband, "you know how much you have said to me in praise of this good father. For my part, I believe if there is a holy man on earth, it is he."

"They are all very well at church and in the pulpit," she rejoined; "but in private houses they are antichrists. Don't let me see him, my dear, I entreat you, for, ill as I am, it would be the death of me."

"Well, you shall not see him, since you do not choose to do so; but I cannot help having him to supper."

"Do as you please," said she; "only, for mercy's sake, let me not set eyes on him, for I cannot endure such folk."

After entertaining the Cordelier at supper, the husband said to him, "I look upon you, father, as a man so beloved by God, that I am sure he will grant any prayer of yours. I entreat you, then, to have pity on my poor wife. She has been possessed these eighteen days by an evil spirit, so that she wants to bite and scratch everybody, and neither cross nor holy water does she care for one bit; but I believe firmly, that if you put your hand on her, the devil will go away. From my heart, I beseech you to do so."

"All things are possible to him who believes, my son," replied the good father. "Are you not well assured that God never refuses his grace to those who ask for it with faith?"

"I am assured of this, father."

"Be assured also, my son, that He is able and willing, and that He is not less mighty than munificent. Let us strengthen ourselves in faith to resist this roaring lion, and snatch from him his prey, which God has made His own by the blood of his Son Jesus Christ."

Thereupon the gentleman conducted the excellent man into the room where his wife was resting on a couch. Believing that it was he who had beaten her, she was roused to a prodigious degree of fury at the sight of him, but her husband's presence made her hang down her head and hold her tongue. "As long as I am present," said the husband to the good father, "the devil does not torment; but as soon as I leave her, you will sprinkle her with holy water, and then you will see how violently the evil spirit works her." So saying, the husband left him alone with his wife, and stopped outside the door to see what would ensue.

When she found herself alone with the Cordelier, she began to scream at him like a mad woman, "Villain! cheat! monster! murderer!" The Cordelier, believing in good faith that she was possessed, wanted to take hold of her head, in order to pray over it; but she scratched and bit him so fiercely that he was obliged to stand further off, throwing plenty of holy water over her, and saying many good prayers. The husband, seeing it was time to put an end to the farce, entered the room again, and thanked the Cordelier for the pains he had taken. The moment he appeared there was an end to the wife's termagant behavior, and she meekly kissed the cross for fear of her husband. The pious Cordelier, who had seen her in such a fury, believed firmly that our Lord had expelled the devil at his prayer and went away praising God for this miracle. The husband, seeing his wife so well cured of her folly, would never tell her what he had done, contenting himself with having brought her back to the right way by his prudence, and having put her into such a frame of mind that she mortally hated what she had so unwisely loved, and was filled with detestation for her own infatuation. Thenceforth she was weaned from all superstition, and devoted herself to her husband and her family in a very different way from what she had done before.

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

Here you may see, ladies, the good sense of the husband, and the weakness of one who was regarded as a woman of strict propriety. If you attend well to this example, I am persuaded that, instead of relying on your own strength, you will learn to turn to Him on whom your honor depends.

"I am very glad," said Parlamente, "that you are become the ladies' preacher; you would be so with better right if you would address the same sermons to all those you hold discourse with."

"Whenever you please to hear me," he replied, "I assure you I will speak the same language to you."

"That is to say," observed Simontault, "that when you are not by he will talk to a different purpose."

"He will do as he pleases," said Parlamente; "but, for my own satisfaction, I would have him always speak thus. The example he has adduced will at least be of service to those women who think that spiritual love is not dangerous; but to me it seems that it is more so than any other."

"I cannot think, however," remarked Oisille, "that one should scorn to love a man who is virtuous and fears God; for, in my opinion, one cannot but be the better for it."

"I pray you to believe, madam," rejoined Parlamente, "that nothing can be more simple-willed and easy to deceive than a woman who has never loved; for love is a passion which takes possession of the heart before one is aware of it. Besides, this passion is so pleasing, that provided one can wrap oneself up in virtue as in a cloak, it will be scarcely known before some mischief will come of it."

"What mischief can come of loving a good man?" said Oisille.

"There are plenty, madam," replied Parlamente, "who pass for good men as far as ladies are concerned; but there are few who are so truly good before God that one may love them without any risk to honor or conscience. I do not believe that there is one such man living. Those who are of a different opinion, and trust in it, become its dupes. They begin this sort of tender intimacy with God, and often end it with the devil. I have seen many a one who, under color of talking about divine things, began an intimacy which at last they wished to break off but could not, so fast were they held by the fine cloak with which it was covered. A vicious love perishes and has no long abode in a good heart; but decorous love has bonds of silk so fine and delicate that one is caught in them before one perceives them."

"According to your views, then," said Ennasuite, "no woman ought ever to love a man. Your law is too violent; it will not last."

"I know that," replied Parlamente; "but for all that it is desirable that every woman should be content with her own husband, as I am with mine."

Ennasuite, taking these words personally, changed color, and said, "You ought to think every one the same at heart as yourself, unless you set yourself up for being more perfect than the rest of your sex."

"To avoid dispute," said Parlamente, "let us see to whom Hircan will give his voice."

"I give it to Ennasuite," said he, "in order to make up matters between her and my wife."

"Since it is my turn to speak," said Ennasuite, "I will spare neither man nor woman, so as to make: both sides even. You find it hard to overcome yourselves and admit the probity and virtue of men. This obliges me to relate a story of the same nature as the preceding one."

NOVEL XXXVI.

A President of Grenoble, becoming aware of his wife's irregularities, took his measures so wisely, that he revenged himself without any public exposure of his dishonor.

THERE was at Grenoble a president whose name I shall not mention. It is enough to say that he was not a Frenchman, that he had a very handsome wife, and that they lived very happily together. The husband, however, being old, the lady thought fit to love a young clerk named Nicolas. When the husband went in the morning to the Palace of Justice, the clerk used to step into the bedchamber and take his place. An old domestic of the president's, who had been in his service for thirty years, discovered this, and as a faithful servant, could not help revealing it to his master. The president, who was a prudent man, would not believe the fact without inquiry, and told the servant that he wanted to create dissension between him and his wife; adding, that if the fact was as he stated, he could easily give him ocular proof of it; and if he failed to do so, then he, the president, would believe that the servant had trumped up this lying tale to make mischief between husband and wife. The valet assured him that he should see what he had told him.

One morning when the president had gone to the palace, and the clerk had stolen into the bedroom as usual, the valet sent one of his fellow-servants to apprise the president, while he himself remained on the watch before the bedroom door, to see if Nicolas came out. The president, on seeing the messenger beckon to him, immediately quitted the court on pretence of sudden illness, and hurried home, where he found his old servant standing sentry at the bedroom door, and was assured by him that Nicolas was inside, having gone in not long before. "Remain at the door," said the president. "There is no other way to get in or out of the room as thou knowest, except a little closet, of which I always keep the key."

The president enters the room, and finds his wife and the clerk in bed together. Nicolas, who did not expect such a visit, threw himself in his shirt at his master's feet and implored pardon, whilst the lady fell a crying. "Though what you have done," said the president to her, "is as bad as it can be, I do not choose to have the credit of my house blasted for you, and the daughters I have had by you made the sufferers. I command you, then, to cease your crying, and see what I am going to do. As for you, Nicolas," said he to the clerk, "hide yourself in my cabinet, and make no noise." Nicolas having done as he ordered, he opened the door, and calling in the old servant, said to him, "Didst thou not assure me thou wouldst show me my clerk in bed with my wife? I came hither on the strength of thy word, and thought to kill my wife. I have found nothing, though I have searched everywhere. Search thyself, under the beds and in all directions."

The valet, having searched and found nothing, said to his master, "The devil must have flown away with him; for I saw him go in, and he did not come out by the door; however, I see he is not here."

"Thou art a very bad servant," said his master, "to want to put such division between my wife and me. Begone, I discharge thee, and for the services thou has rendered me, I will pay thee what I owe thee and more; but get thee gone quickly, and beware how thou art found in this city after twenty-four hours are past."

The president paid him his wages, and five or six years over; and as he had reason to be satisfied with his fidelity, he resolved within himself to reward him still more. When the valet had gone away, with tears in his eyes, the president called the clerk out of the cabinet, and after having given him and his wife such a lecture as they deserved, he forbade them both to give the least hint of the matter to any one. His wife he ordered to dress more elegantly than she had been used to do, and to let herself be seen at all parties and entertainments. As to the clerk, he ordered him to make better cheer than before; but that as soon as he should whisper in his ear the words "Go away," he should take good care not to remain three hours longer in the city.

For a fortnight the president did nothing but feast his friends and neighbors, contrary to his previous custom, and

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

after the repast he gave a ball to the ladies. One day, seeing that his wife did not dance, he ordered the clerk to dance with her. The clerk, thinking he had forgotten the past, danced gaily with the lady; but when the ball was over, the president, feigning to have some order to give him about household matters, whispered in his ear, "Begone, and never come back." Sore loth was Nicolas to leave the lady—president, but very glad to get off safe and sound. After the president had fully impressed all his relations and friends, and all the inhabitants of Grenoble, with the belief that he was very fond of his wife, he went one fine day in the month of May into his garden to gather a salad. I do not know what herbs it was composed of; but I know that his wife did not live twenty—four hours after eating of it, whereat he appeared greatly afflicted, and played the disconsolate widower so well, that no one ever suspected him of having killed her. In this way he revenged himself and saved the honor of his house. *

I do not pretend, ladies, to laud the president's conscience; but my design is to exhibit the levity of a woman, and the great patience and prudence of a man. Do not be offended, ladies, I beseech you, with the truth, which sometimes tells against you as well as against the men; for women, too, have their vices as well as their virtues.

"If all those who have intrigued with their valets were compelled to eat such salads," said Parlamente, "I know those who would not be so fond of their gardens as they are, but would pluck up all the herbs in them, to avoid thoe which save the honor of children at the expense of a wanton mother's life."

Hircan, who guessed for whom she meant this, replied with great warmth, "A woman of honor should never suspect another of things she would not do herself."

"To know is not to suspect," rejoined Parlamente. "However, this poor woman paid the penalty which many deserve. Moreover, I think that the president, being bent on avenging himself, could not set about it with more prudence and discretion."

"Nor with more malice," Longarine subjoined. "It was a cold—blooded and cruel vengeance, which plainly showed that he respected neither God nor his conscience."

"What would you have had him do then," said Hircan, "to revenge the most intolerable outrage a wife can ever offer to her husband?"

"I would have had him kill her," she answered, "in the first transports of his indignation. The doctors say that such a sin is more pardonable, because a man is not master of such emotions; and consequently, the sin he commits in that state may be forgiven."

"Yes," said Geburon, "but his daughters and his descendants would have been disgraced for ever."

"He ought not to have poisoned her," said Longarine, "for since his first great wrath was past, she might have lived with him like an honest woman, and nothing would ever have been said about the matter."

"Do you suppose," said Saffredent, "that he was appeased, though he pretended to be so? For my part, I'm persuaded that the day he mixed his salad his wrath was as hot as on the very first day. There are people whose first emotions never subside until they have accomplished the dictates of their passion."

"It is well to ponder one's words," said Parlamente, "when one has to do with people so dangerous as you. What I said is to be understood of an anger so violent, that it suddenly engrosses the senses, and hinders reason from acting."

"I take it in that very sense," replied Saffredent, "and I say, that of two men who commit a fault, he who is very amorous is more pardonable than the other who is not so, for when one loves well, reason is not easily mistress. If

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

we would speak truly, we must own there is not one of us but has some time or other experienced that furious madness, and yet hopes for grace. Let us say then, that true love is a ladder by which to ascend to the perfect love which we owe to God. No one can ascend to it but through the afflictions and calamities of this world, and through the love of his neighbor, to whom he ought to wish as much good as to himself. This is the true bond of perfection; for as St John says, 'How can you love God whom you do not see, unless you love your neighbor whom you do see?'"

"There is no fine text in Scripture which you may not warp to your own purposes," said Oisille. "Beware of doing like the spider, which extracts a poison from every good viand; for I warn you, that it is dangerous to quote Scripture out of place, and without necessity."

"Do you mean to say, then," returned Saffredent, "that when we talk to your unbelieving sex, and call God to our aid, we take His name in vain? If there is sin in this, it all lies at your door, since your unbelief constrains us to use all the oaths we can think of; and even so we cannot kindle your icy hearts."

"A plain proof," said Longarine, "that you all lie; for if you spoke the truth, it is so potent that it would persuade us. All that is to be feared is lest the daughters of Eve too easily believe in the serpent."

"I see plainly how it is," said Saffredent; "the women are invincible. So I give up the game to see on whom Ennasuite will call."

"On Dagoucin," she said, "who, I think, will not be disposed to speak against the ladies."

"Would to God," said he, "that they were as favorable to me as I am disposed to speak so of them. To show you that I have endeavored to do honor to the virtuous of their sex by the pains I have taken to learn their good actions, I will relate one of these to you.. I will not say, ladies, that the patience of the gentleman of Pampelune and of the president of Grenoble was not great, but I maintain that their vindictiveness was no less so. In praising a virtuous man, we must not so much exalt a single virtue, as to make it serve as a cloak and cover for so great a vice. A woman who has done a virtuous action for the love of virtue itself is truly laudable. An instance of this I will give you in the story I am about to tell you of a young married lady, whose good deed had for motive only the honor of God and the salvation of her husband."

NOVEL XXXVII.

Judicious proceedings of a wife to withdraw her husband from a low intrigue with which he was infatuated.

THERE was a lady of the house of Loue who was so good and virtuous, that she was loved and esteemed by all her neighbors. Her husband with good reason confided to her all his affairs, which she managed so discreetly, that in a short while their house became under her hands one of the richest and best furnished in Anjou and Touraine. She lived long with her husband and had several fine children by him; but as there is no enduring felicity here below, hers began to be crossed. Her husband, not feeling satisfied with a life of such perfect ease, had a mind to try if trouble would increase his enjoyment. His wife was no sooner asleep, than he used to get up from beside her, and not return till daylight. The lady took this conduct so much to heart, that falling into a profound melancholy, which yet she tried to conceal, she neglected the affairs of her house, her person, and her family, thinking she had lost the fruit of her labors in losing her husband's love, to preserve which there were no pains she would not willingly have sustained. But as she saw he was lost to her, she became so negligent of everything else, that the consequences were soon seen in the mischief that ensued. On the one hand, the husband spent without order and measure; on the other hand, the wife no longer attending to the affairs of the house, they soon became so involved, that the timber began to be felled, and the lands to be mortgaged. One of her relations who knew her secret grief, remonstrated with her on the fault she committed, and told her, that if she did not regard the fortunes

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

of the family for her husband's sake, she ought at least to consider her poor children. This argument struck her; she rallied her spirits, and resolved to try by every means to regain her husband's love.

Next night, perceiving that he rose from beside her, she also got up, put on her night-wraper, had her bed made, and sat down to read for hours until his return. When he entered the room, she went up and kissed him, and presented a basin and water to him to wash his hands. Her husband, astonished at this extraordinary behavior, told her that he had only been to the privy, and that he had no need to wash. She replied, that although it was no great matter, still it was decent to wash one's hands when one came from so nasty a place, thereby wishing to make him know and hate his wicked way of life. As this did not produce any amendment in him, she continued the same course of proceeding for a year, but still without success.

This being the case, one night, when she was waiting for her husband, who stayed away longer than usual, she took it into her head to go after him. She did so, and looking for him in chamber after chamber, she at last found him in a back lumber-room in bed with the ugliest and dirtiest servant wench about the house. To teach him to quit so handsome and so cleanly a wife for so ugly and frousy a servant, she took some straw and set it on fire in the middle of the room. But seeing that the smoke would as soon smother her husband as awake him, she pulled him by the arm, crying out "Fire! fire!" If the husband was ashamed and confounded at being found by so worthy a wife with such a swinish bedfellow, it was not without great reason. "For more than a year, sir," said his wife, "have I been endeavoring by gentleness and patience to withdraw you from such a wicked life, and make you comprehend that, while washing the outside, you ought to make the inside clean also; but when I saw that all my efforts were useless, I bethought me of employing the element which is to put an end to all things. If this does not correct you, sir, I know not if I shall be able another time to withdraw you from the danger as I have done now. I pray you to consider that there is no greater despair than that of slighted love, and that if I had not had God before my eyes, I could not have been patient so long."

The husband, glad to be let off so cheaply, promised that for the future he would never give her cause for sorrow. The wife gladly believed him, and with his consent turned away the servant who offended her. They lived so happily afterwards, that even past faults were for them a source of increased satisfaction, in consequence of the good that had resulted from them.

If God gives you such husbands, ladies, do not despair, I entreat you, before you have tried all means to reclaim them. There are four-and-twenty hours in the day, and there is not a moment in which a man may not change his mind. A wife ought to esteem herself happier in having regained her husband by her patience, than if fortune and her relations had given her one more faultless. *

"There," said Oisille, "is an example for all married women to follow."

"Follow it who will," said Parlamente; "but for my part it would be impossible for me to be so patient. Although, in every condition in which one is placed, patience is a fine virtue, it seems to me, nevertheless, that in matrimonial matters it at last produces enmity. The reason is, that suffering from one's mate, one is constrained to keep aloof from the offender as much as possible. From this alienation springs contempt for the faithless one, and this contempt gradually diminishes love; for one loves a thing only in proportion as one esteems it."

"But it is to be feared," said Ennasuite, "that the impatient wife would meet with a furious husband, who, instead of patience, would cause her sorrow."

"And what worse could a husband do than we have just heard?" said Parlamente.

"What could he do?" rejoined Ennasuite. "Beat his wife soundly, make her sleep on the little bed, and put her he loves into the best bed." Ý

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

"I believe," said Parlamente, "it would be less painful to a right-minded woman to be beaten in a fit of passion than to be despised by a husband who was not worthy of her. After the rupture of wedded affection, the husband could do nothing which could be more painful to the wife. Accordingly, the tale states that the lady took pains to bring back the truant only for the sake of her children—a fact I can readily believe."

"Do you think it a great proof of patience in a woman," said Nomerfide, "to kindle a fire on the floor of a room in which her husband is sleeping?"

"Yes," said Longarine, "for when she saw the smoke she woke him up; and that was perhaps the greatest fault she committed, for the ashes of such husbands would be good to make lye withal."

"You are cruel, Longarine," said Oisille. "Yet that is not the way in which you lived with your husband."

"No," replied Longarine, "for, thank God, he never gave me cause; on the contrary, I must regret him as long as I live, instead of complaining of him."

"And if he had treated you otherwise," said Nomerfide, "what would you have done?"

"I loved him so much," replied Longarine, "that I believe I should have killed him, and myself afterwards. After having thus avenged myself, I should have found more pleasure in dying than in living with a faithless man."

"So far as I can see," observed Hircan, "you love your husbands only for your own sakes. If they commit the least fault on Saturday, they lose their whole week's labor. Do you want to be mistresses, then? For my part, I am willing to have it so; if other husbands will consent to it."

"It is reasonable that the man should rule us," said Parlamente; "but it is not reasonable that he should forsake and ill use us."

"God has so wisely ordained, both for the man and for the woman," said Oisille, "that I believe marriage, provided it be not abused, is one of the best and happiest conditions in life. I am persuaded that all present are as much impressed with that opinion as myself, or even more so, however they may affect to think otherwise. As the man esteems himself wiser than the woman, the fault will be more severely punished if it comes from him. But enough of this. Let us know on whom Dagoucin will call."

"On Longarine," was the reply.

"You give me great pleasure," said Longarine; "for I have a story which is worthy to follow yours. Since we are upon

QUATRIÈME JOURNÉE Nouvelle XXXVIIIe

the praise of virtuous patience in ladies, I will tell you of one whose conduct was still more laudable than hers of whom you have just heard, and was the more commendable as she was a city lady, a class who are usually less trained to virtue than others."

NOVEL XXXVIII.

Remarkable charity of a lady of Tours with regard to her faithless husband.

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

THERE was at Tours a handsome and discreet bourgeoisie, who, for her virtues, was not only loved but feared by her husband. However, as husbands are frail, and often grow tired of always eating good bread, hers fell in love with one of his métayères. * He used frequently to go from Tours to visit his métairie, always remained there two or three days, and always came back so jaded and out of sorts, that his poor wife had trouble enough to set him up again. But no sooner was he himself once more, than back he would go to his métairie, where pleasure made him forget all his ailments. His wife, who loved his life and health above all things, seeing him always come back in such a bad plight, went to the métairie, where she found the young woman whom her husband loved, and said to her, not angrily, but in the gentlest manner possible, that she knew her husband often visited her, but was sorry she treated him so badly as invariably to send him home ill. The poor woman, constrained by respect for her mistress and by the force of truth, had not courage to deny the fact, and besought pardon. The Tourangeade Ý desired to see the room and the bed in which her husband slept. The room struck her as so cold and dirty, that she was struck with pity, and sent straightaway for a good bed, fine blankets, sheets, and counterpane after her husband's taste. She had the room made clean and neat, and hung with tapestry, gave the woman a handsome service of plate, a pipe of good wine, sweetmeats, and confections, and begged her for the future not to send her husband back to her in so broken-down a condition.

It was not long before the husband went to see the métayère as usual; and great was his surprise to find the sorry room become so neat, but still greater was it when she gave him a silver cup to drink out of. He asked her where it came from, and the poor woman told him with tears that it was his wife who, pitying his poor entertainment, had thus furnished the house, enjoining her to be careful of his health. Struck by the great goodness of his wife, who thus returned so much good for so much evil, the gentleman reproached himself for ingratitude as great as his wife's generosity. He gave his métayère money, begged her henceforth to live like an honest woman, and went back to his wife. He confessed the whole truth to her, and told her that her gentleness and goodness had withdrawn him from a bad course, from which it was impossible he should ever have escaped by any other means; and forgetting the past, they lived henceforth together in great peace and concord. *

There are very few husbands, ladies, whom the wife does not win in the long run by patience and love, unless they are harder than the rocks which yet the weak and soft water pierces in time.

"Why, this woman had neither heart, nor gall, nor liver!" exclaimed Parlamente.

"What would you have?" said Longarine; "she did as God commands, rendering good for evil."

"I fancy," said Hircan, "that she was in love with some Cordelier, who ordered her as a penance to have her husband so well treated in the country, in order that while he was there she might have leisure to treat himself well in town."

"In this you plainly show the wickedness of your own heart," said Oisille, "judging so ill of a good dead. I believe, on the contrary, that she was so penetrated by the love of God, that she cared for nothing but her husband's welfare."

"It strikes me," said Simontault, "that he had more reason to return to his wife during the time he was in such bad case at the métairie than when he was made so comfortable there."

"I see," said Saffredent, "that you are not of the same way of thinking as a rich man of Paris, who, when he lay with his wife, could not lay aside the least of his mufflings without catching cold; but when he went to see the servant girl in the cellar, without cap or shoes, in the depth of winter, he never was a bit the worse for it. Yet his wife was very handsome, and the servant very ugly."

"Have you not heard," said Geburon, "that God always helps madmen, lovers, and drunkards? Perhaps the Tourangeau was all three."

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

"Do you mean thence to infer," said Parlamente, "that God does nothing for the chaste, the wise, and the sober?"

"Those who can help themselves," replied Geburon, "have no need of aid. He who said, that He came for the sick and not for the hale, came by the law of His mercy to aid our infirmities, and canceled the decrees of his rigorous justice; and he who thinks himself wise is a fool in the sight of God. But to end the sermon, whom do you call upon, Longarine?"

"On Saffredent," she said.

"Then I will prove to you by an example," said he, "that God does not favor lovers. Though it has been already said, ladies, that vice is common to women and to men, yet a woman will invent a cunning artifice more promptly and more adroitly than a man. Here is an example of the fact."

NOVEL XXXIX.

Secret for driving away the Hobgoblin.

A LORD of Grignaux, gentleman of honor to Anne, Duchess of Brittany and Queen of France, returning home after an absence of more than two years, found his wife at another estate he had, not far from that in which he usually resided. He asked the reason for this, and was told that the house was haunted by a spirit which made such a disturbance that no one could live in it. Monsieur de Grignaux, who was not a man to give credit to these fancies, replied that if it was the devil himself he should not fear him, and took his wife home with him to their usual abode. At night he had plenty of torches lighted, the better to see this spirit; but, after watching a long time without seeing or hearing anything, he at last fell asleep. No sooner had he done so than he was awakened by a sound box on the ears, after which he heard a voice crying, "Brenigne, Brenigne," which was the name of his deceased grandmother. He called to a woman who slept in the chamber to light a candle, for he had had all the torches put out, but she durst not rise. At the same time, Monsieur de Grignaux felt his bed-clothes pulled off, and heard a great noise of tables, trestles, and stools tumbled about the room with a din that lasted until day. But he never believed that it was a spirit; he was not so frightened as vexed at losing his night's rest.

On the following night, being resolved to catch Master Goblin, he had no sooner lain down, than he pretended to snore with all his might, keeping his open hand over his face. While thus awaiting the arrival of the spirit, he heard something approach, and began to snore louder than ever. The spirit, which by this time had become familiar, gave him a great thump, whereupon Monsieur de Grignaux seized its hand, crying out, "Wife, I have caught the spirit." His wife rose instantly, lighted a candle, and behold you, it turned out that the spirit was the girl who slept in their chamber. She threw herself at their feet, begging to be forgiven, and promised to tell them the truth, which was, that the love she long entertained for a domestic had made her play this trick in order to drive the master and mistress out of the house, and that they two who had charge of it might make good cheer, which they failed not to do when they were alone. Monsieur de Grignaux, who was not a man to be trifled with, had them both beaten in a manner they never forgot, and then turned them both out of doors. In this way he got rid of the spirits who had haunted his house for two years.

Love, ladies, works wonders. It makes women lose all fear, and torment men to arrive at their ends. Condemning the wickedness of the servant, we must equally applaud the good sense of the master, who knew that the departed spirit does not return.

"Decidedly," said Geburon, "the valet and the wench were not then favored by love. I agree with you, however, that the master had need of much good sense."

"The girl, however," said Ennasuite, "lived for a long while to her heart's content, by means of her stratagem."

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

"That is a very wretched content," said Oisille, "which begins with sin, and ends with shame and punishment."

"That is true," rejoined Ennasuite; "but there are many persons who suffer whilst living righteously, and who have not the wit to give themselves in the course of their lives as much pleasure as the pair in question."

"I firmly believe," replied Oisille, "that there is no perfect pleasure unless the conscience is at rest."

"The Italian maintains," said Simontault, "that the greater the sin the greater the pleasure."

"One must be a perfect devil to entertain such a thought," said Oisille; "but let us drop the subject, and see to whom Saffredent will give his voice."

"No one remains to speak but Parlamente," said Saffredent; "but though there were a hundred others, she should have my voice, as a person from whom we are sure to learn something."

"Since I am to finish the day," said Parlamente, "and promised yesterday to tell you why Rolandine's father had the castle built in which he kept her so long a prisoner, I will now fulfil my word."

NOVEL XL.

The Count de Jossebelin has his brother-in-law put to death, not knowing the relationship.

THE Count de Jossebelin, father of Rolandine, had several sisters. Some made wealthy marriages, others became nuns, and one, who was incomparably handsomer than the rest, remained in his house unmarried. The brother was so fond of this sister, that he preferred neither his wife nor his children to her; and though she had many eligible offers of marriage, they were all rejected, from his fear of losing her, and being obliged to pay down money. Consequently she remained a great part of her life unmarried, living with strict propriety in her brother's house. There was a young and handsome gentleman who had been reared in the house, and who as he grew in age grew also in personal and mental endowments, to that degree that he completely governed his master. When the latter had any message to send his sister, he always made this young gentleman the bearer of it; and as this took place morning and evening, it led to such a familiarity as presently ripened into love. The young gentleman durst not for his life offend his master; the demoiselle was not without scruples of honor; and so they had no other fruition of their love than in conversing together, until the brother had said again and again to the lover, that he wished he was of as good family as his sister, for he had never seen a man he would rather have for a brother-in-law. This was repeated so often, that after consulting together the lovers came to the conclusion that if they married secretly they should easily be forgiven. Love, which makes people readily believe what they desire, persuaded them that no bad consequences would ensue for them; and with that hope they married, unknown to any one except a priest and some women.

After having for some years enjoyed the pleasure which two handsome persons who passionately love each other can reciprocally bestow, fortune, jealous of their happiness, roused up an enemy against them, who, observing the demoiselle, became aware of her secret delights, being yet ignorant of her marriage. This person went and told the brother that the gentleman in whom he had such confidence visited his sister too often; and at hours when a man ought never to enter her chamber. At first he could not believe this, such was his trust in his sister and the gentleman. But, as he loved his house's honor, he caused them to be observed so closely, and set so many people on the watch, that the poor innocent couple were at last surprised.

One evening, word being brought the brother that the gentleman was with his sister, he went straightway to her chamber, and found them in bed together. Choking with rage and unable to speak, he drew his sword, and ran after the gentleman to kill him; but the latter being very nimble, evaded him; and, as he could not escape by the

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

door, he jumped out of a window that looked upon the garden. The poor lady threw herself in her shift on her knees before her brother, crying, "Spare my husband's life, monsieur, for I have married him, and if he has offended you, let me alone suffer the punishment, for he has done nothing but at my solicitation."

"Were he a thousand times your husband," replied the incensed brother, "I will punish him as a domestic who has deceived me." So saying, he went to the window, and called out to his people to kill him, which was forthwith done before his eye and those of his sister.

At this sad spectacle, which her prayers and supplications had been unable to prevent, the poor wife was like one distracted. "Brother," she said, "I have neither father nor mother, and I am of an age to marry as I choose. I chose a man whom you had told me repeatedly that you would have liked me to marry. And because I did so, as by law I had a right to do without your interference, you put to death the man you loved best in the world. Since my prayers have not availed to save him, I conjure you by all the affection you have ever had for me to make me the companion of his death as I have been of all his fortunes. Thereby you will glut your cruel and unjust wrath, and give repose to the body and soul of a wife who will not and cannot live without her husband."

Though the brother was beside himself with passion, he had so much pity on his sister, that, without saying yes or no, he left her and withdrew. After having carefully investigated the matter, and ascertained that the murdered man had been wedded to his sister, he would have been glad if the deed had not been done. Being afraid, however, that his sister, to revenge it, would appeal to justice, he had a castle built in the midst of a forest, and there he confined her, with orders that no one should be admitted to speak to her.

Some time after, to satisfy his conscience, he tried to conciliate her, and caused her to be sounded upon the subject of marriage; but she sent him word that he had given her such a bad dinner she had no mind to be regaled with the same dish for supper; that she hoped to live in such wise that he should never have the pleasure of killing a second husband of hers; and that after dealing so villainously with the man he loved best in the world, she could not imagine that he would pardon another. She added, that notwithstanding her weakness and impotence, she trusted that He who was a just judge and would not suffer wrong to go unpunished, would do her the grace to avenge her, and let her finish her days in her hermitage in meditating on the love and charity of her God. And this she did. She lived in that place with so much patience and austerity, that after her death every one visited her remains as those of a saint. From the moment of her death her brother's house began to fall into decay, so that of six sons not one remained to continue it. They all died miserably; and in the end Rolandine, his daughter, remained sole heiress of all, as you have been told in another tale, and succeeded to her aunt's prison. *

I wish, ladies, that you may profit by this example, and that none of you may think of marrying for your own pleasure, without the consent of those to whom you owe obedience. Marriage is an affair of such long duration, that one cannot engage in it with too much deliberation; and deliberate ever so well and so sagely, yet one is sure to find in it at least as much pain as pleasure. "Were there no God or law to teach maidens discretion," said Oisille, "the example might suffice to make them have more respect for their relations than to marry without their knowledge."

"Nevertheless, madam," replied Nomerfide, "when one has one good day in the year, one is not wholly unfortunate. She had the pleasure of seeing and conversing for a long time with him whom she loved better than herself. Besides, she enjoyed it through marriage without scruple of conscience. I regard this satisfaction as so great, that, to my thinking, it fairly counterbalanced the grief that subsequently befel her."

"You mean to say, then," said Saffredent, "that the pleasure of bedding with a husband is more to a woman than the pain of seeing him killed before her eyes."

"No such thing," said Nomerfide; "were I to say so, I should speak contrary to my own experience of women. What I mean is, that an unaccustomed pleasure like that of marrying the man one loves best must be greater than

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

the pain of losing him by death, which is an ordinary occurrence."

"That may be true of natural death," said Geburon; "but the one in question was too cruel. I think it very strange that this lord, who was neither her father nor her husband, but only her brother, should have dared to commit such a cruel deed, seeing even that his sister was of an age at which the laws allow girls to marry as they think fit."

"For my part, I see nothing strange in that," said Hircan. "He did not kill his sister whom he loved so fondly, and over whom he had no jurisdiction; but he dealt as he deserved with the young gentleman, whom he had brought up as his son and loved as his brother. He had advanced and enriched him in his service, and then, by way of gratitude, the young gentleman married his sister, which he ought not to have done."

"Again," resumed Nomerfide, "it was no common and ordinary pleasure for a lady of such high family to marry a gentleman domestic. Thus, if the death was a surprise, the pleasure also was novel, and the greater as it was contrary to the opinion of all the wise, and was helped by the satisfaction of a heart filled with love, and by repose of soul, seeing that God was not offended. As to the death you call cruel, it seems to me that death being necessary, the quicker it is the better; for do we not know that death is a passage which must inevitably be crossed? I regard as fortunate those who do not linger long in the outskirts of death, and who by good luck, which alone deserves that name, pass at one bound into everlasting felicity."

"What do you call the outskirts of death?" said Simontault.

"Sorrows, afflictions, long maladies," replied Nomerfide. "Those who have to sustain such extreme pangs of body or of mind that they come to despise death and complain of its too tardy approach, are in the outskirts of death, and they will tell you how the inns are named in which they have sighed more than reposed. The lady in question could not help losing her husband by death; but her brother's anger saved her from the pain of seeing him for a long time an invalid or ill-tempered, and she could deem herself happy in converting to the service of God the satisfaction and joy she had with her husband."

"Do you count for nothing the shame she underwent and the tedium of her prison?" said Longarine.

"I am persuaded," replied Nomerfide, "that when one loves well, and with a love founded on God's command, one makes no account of shame, except so far as it lessens love; for the glory of loving well knows no shame. As for her prison, as her heart was wholly devoted to God and her husband, I imagine she hardly felt the loss of her liberty; for where one cannot see what one loves, the greatest blessing one can have is to think of it incessantly. A prison is never narrow when the imagination can range in it as it will."

"Nothing can be truer than what Nomerfide alleges," said Simontault; "but the madman who effected this separation ought to have deemed himself a very wretch, offending as he did God, love, and honor."

"I am astonished," said Geburon, "that there is so much diversity in the nature of women's love; and I see plainly that those who have the most love have the most virtue; but those who have the least love are the virtuous in false seeming."

"It is true," said Parlamente, "that a heart that is virtuous towards God and man loves with more passion than a vicious heart, because the former is not afraid that the real nature of its sentiments should be apparent."

"I have always understood," said Simontault, "that men are not blamable for paying court to women; for God has put into the heart of man love and the boldness to sue, and into that of woman fear and the chastity to refuse. If a man has been punished for having used the power implanted in him, he has been treated with injustice."

THE HEPTAMERON: Fourth Day

"But was it not a monstrous inconsistency in this brother," said Longarine, "to have persisted so long in praising this young gentleman to his sister? It seems to me that it would be a great folly, not to say cruelty, in a man who had charge of a fountain to praise its water to one who gazed on it, parched with thirst, and then to kill him for offering to drink of it."

"The fire of his encomiums on the young man," said Parlamente, "unquestionably kindled the fire of love in the lady's heart; and he was wrong to put out with his sword a fire he himself had lighted by his sweet words."

"I am surprised," said Saffredent, "that it should be taken amiss that a simple gentleman, by dint of courtship alone, and not through any false pretences, should come to marry a lady of so illustrious a house, since the philosophers maintain that the least of men is worthier than the greatest and most virtuous of women."

"The reason is," said Dagoucin, "that in order to preserve the public tranquillity, regard is only had to the degree of the families, the age of the persons, and the laws, men's love and virtue being counted as nothing, in order not to confound the monarchy. Thence it comes that in the marriages which take place between equals, and in accordance with the judgment of men and of the relations, the persons are often so different in heart, temperament, and disposition, that instead of entering into an engagement which leads to salvation, they throw themselves into the confines of hell."

"Instances have also been seen," said Geburon, "of persons who have married for love, with hearts, dispositions, and temperaments mutually conformable, without concerning themselves about difference of birth, and who have nevertheless repented of what they have done. In fact, a great but indiscreet love often changes into jealousy and fury."

"To me it seems," said Parlamente, "that neither the one course nor the other is commendable, and that those persons who submit to the will of God, regard neither glory, nor avarice, nor voluptuousness. They alone are to be commended, who, actuated by virtuous love, sanctioned by the consent of their relations, desire to live in the married state as God and nature ordain. Though there is no condition without its troubles, I have yet seen these latter run their course without repenting that they had entered upon it. The present company is not so unhappy as not to number in it married persons of this class."

Thereupon Hircan, Geburon, Simontault, and Saffredent vowed that they had all married in that very spirit, and that accordingly they had never repented of the act. Whether that was true or not, the ladies whom it concerned were nevertheless so pleased with the declaration, that, being of opinion they could hear nothing better than it, they rose to go and give thanks for it to God, and found that the monks were ready for the vesper service. Their devotions ended, they supped, but not without reverting to the subject of marriage, every one recounting his own experience whilst wooing his wife. But as they interrupted each other, it was not possible to make a full record of their several stories; which was a pity, for they were not less agreeable than those they had recounted in the meadow. This conversation was so interesting, that bedtime arrived before they were aware of it. Madame Oisille was the first to perceive that it was time to retire, and her example was followed by the rest. All went to bed in the gayest humor, and I do not think the married couples slept more than the others, but spent a part of the night in talking over their affections in times past, and giving each other evidences of its present existence. Thus the night passed agreeably away.