

THE HEPTAMERON: Seventh Day

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

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SEVENTH DAY.

MADAME OISILLE failed not to administer to them in the morning the wholesome pasture she drew from the reading of the acts and virtuous deeds of the glorious knights and apostles of Jesus Christ, and told them that those narratives were enough to fill one with the wish to have lived in such times, and make one deplore the deformity of this age compared with that. After reading and explaining to them the beginning of that excellent book, she begged them to go to church in the union with which the apostles addressed their prayers to Heaven, and solicit the grace of God, who never refuses it to those who ask for it with faith. Every one thought the advice very good, and they arrived in church just as the mass of the Holy Ghost was beginning. This was so à propos, that they listened to the service with great devotion. Again at dinner the conversation turned on the lives of the blessed apostles, and the subject was so pleasing that the company had nearly forgotten to return to the rendezvous for the novels. Nomerfide, who was the youngest of them, observed this, and said: "Madame Oisille has put us so much upon devotion, that the time for relating novels is passing away without our thinking of retiring to prepare our novels." Thereupon the company rose, went for a short while to their respective chambers, and then repaired to the meadow as they had done the day before.

When all were comfortable seated, Madame Oisille said to Saffredent, "though I am quite sure you will say nothing to the advantage of women, yet I must remind you that you promised us a novel yesterday evening."

"I stipulate, madam," replied Saffredent, "that I shall not pass for an evil speaker in speaking the truth, nor lose the good-will of virtuous ladies by relating what wantons do. Experience has taught me what it is to be deprived of their presence, and if I were likewise deprived of their good graces, I should not be alive at this moment."

So saying, he cast his eyes on the opposite side to that where sat she who was the cause of his weal and woe; but at the same time he looked at Ennasuite, and made her blush as if what he had said was meant for her. However, he was not the less understood by the right person. Madame Oisille having them assured him he might fairly speak the truth at the cost of whom it concerned, he began as follows.

NOVEL LXI.

A husband became Reconciled to his wife after she had lived fourteen or fifteen years with a canon.

THERE lived near the town of Autun a very handsome woman, fair complexioned, very tall, and of as goodly a presence as any woman I ever saw. She had married a respectable man, who seemed younger than herself, and with whom she had reason to be satisfied. Shortly after their marriage he took her to Autun, where he had business. Whilst the husband was engaged as a suitor in the courts of justice, the wife went to church and prayed for him. She continued her visits to that holy place so long, that a very rich canon fell in love with her, and took his measures so well that the poor wretch gave herself up to him; but the husband had no suspicion of this, and was more intent to taking care of his property than of his wife.

When the time came for the husband and wife to return to their home, which was distant seven good leagues from the town, great was the regret on her part. The canon promised to go see her often, which he did under pretence of journeys, in which he always called at their house. The husband was not such a fool as not to understand the canon's purpose, and accordingly, when he next came there he did not see the wife, for her husband had taken good care to prevent it. The wife pretended not to notice this jealousy, of which she was well aware, but she was bent on counteracting the precautions it led to, deeming it a hell to be deprived of the sight of her idol. One day, when her husband was abroad, she gave her men and women servants so much to do, that she remained alone and unobserved in the house. Immediately, taking what was necessary for her, and without any other company than her extravagant love, she started off on foot for Autun, where she arrived not so late but that she was recognized by her canon, who kept her close and concealed for more than a year, in spite of all the monitions and excommunications launched at him at the husband's suit.

Finding all other expedients fail, the husband laid his plaint before the bishop, whose archdeacon, as good a man as any in France, personally visited all the houses of the canons, until he found the woman who was supposed to be lost, committed her to prison, and condemned the canon to a heavy penance. The husband, hearing that his wife had been recovered by the exertions of the good archdeacon, and of several other worthy people, was willing to take her back upon her oath that, for the future, she would behave like an honest woman; an oath which the simple man, who loved her much, readily believed that she would keep. He took her back into his house, and treated her in all respects as before, except that he gave her two old servant women, one of whom was always with her when the other was elsewhere. But for all her husband's good treatment, her extravagant love for the canon made her regard all her repose as a torment. Though she was a very fine woman, and he a man of strong and vigorous temperament, yet she had no children by him, for her heart was always seven leagues away from her body. Nevertheless, such was her dissimulation, that her husband believed she had forgotten the past as he had done on his part; but her heart was too wicked to be capable of so happy and laudable a change.

At the very time when she saw that her husband loved her most and distrusted her least, she feigned illness, and carried on the deception so well that the poor husband was in great distress on her account, and spared nothing for her cure. At last he and all his household believed that she really was sinking to the grave. Seeing that her husband was as much afflicted at this as he had reason to be rejoiced, she begged he would authorize her to make her will; which he freely did with tears in his eyes. Having the power to make a will, because she had no children, she bequeathed to her husband all she had in her gift, beseeching his pardon for the affront she had put upon him. Then she sent for the parish priest, confessed, and received the holy sacrament of the altar with such devotion, that every one wept at witnessing so fine and so glorious an end. In the evening she begged her husband to have extreme unction brought her, and told him she was sinking so fast she was afraid she should not live to receive it. Her husband had it brought with the utmost speed, and she received it with a devotion that excited every one's admiration. After partaking of these fine mysteries she said to her husband, that since by God's grace she had received all that the Church had ordained, she felt her conscience so calm that she wished to repose a little, and begged that he would do the same, seeing what great need he had of it, after having wept and watched so long

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beside her bed. The husband and the men-servants having gone to sleep, the two old women who had kept guard over her so long while she was in health, having now no fear of losing her but by death, went to sleep likewise. As soon as she heard them snoring soundly, she got up in her shift, and stole out of the room, listening to hear if there was anybody stirring in the house. Finding all quiet, she passed out through a little garden door which was not locked, and walked all night, in her shift and barefooted, in the direction of Autun, to repair to the saint who had hindered her from dying.

The road, however, was so long, that daylight overtook her before she reached her journey's end. Looking round then on all sides, she saw two men on horseback coming towards her at full gallop, and making no doubt that one of them was her husband who was in pursuit of her, she hid her whole body in the mud of a marsh and her head between the rushes, and heard her husband say to his servant as he rode by like a man in despair, "O the wicked wretch ! Who would ever have imagined that she would have thought of cloaking such an infamous and abominable act under the holy sacraments of the Church?"

"Since Judas did not scruple to betray his master when partaking of the like food," replied the servant, "can you wonder at a woman's betraying her husband in that manner?"

The husband rode on, and the wife remained among the rushes, more joyous at having duped and baffled him than ever she had been at home in a good bed, where she thought she was held in slavery. The husband searched for her all over Autun, but having clearly ascertained that she had not entered the town, he retraced his steps, and on his way did nothing but inveigh against her and his great loss, threatening her with nothing less than death if he caught her; but she was as inaccessible to fear as to the sense of cold, although the weather and the place might well have made her repent of her horrible journey. Any one who knew not how the fire of hell heats those who are full of it, would have wondered how this woman, coming out of a warm bed, could have endured such severe cold for a whole day. She did so, however, without losing courage, and resumed her journey to Autun as soon as night came. Just as they were about to close the town gates this pilgrim arrived, and went straightway to her saint, who was so astonished to see her in such a trim that he could hardly believe it was she. After turning her about and examining her well on all sides, he found that she had flesh and bones, which a spirit has not; he was satisfied she was not a phantom, and they agreed so well together that she remained with him for fourteen or fifteen years.

For a while she lived secluded, but at last she lost all fear; and what was worse, she prided herself so much on the honor of having such a lover, that she took precedence at church of most of the respectable women of the town, the wives of officers as well as others. She had children by the canon, and, among others, a daughter, who was married to a rich merchant, with so much magnificence that all the ladies of the town were indignant, but had not influence enough to correct such an abuse.

It happened at this time that Queen Claude, consort of King Francis, passed through Autun, accompanied by the regent-mother and her daughter, the Duchess of Alençon. Then came a femme de chambre of the queen, named Perrette, to the duchess, and said to her, "Hearken to me, madam, I beseech you, and you will do as good an act as if you went to hear the service of the day, or even better." The duchess willingly listened, knowing that from her lips would come nothing but what was meet to be heard. Perrette told her how she had engaged a little girl to help her to soap the queen's linen, and that on asking her news of the town, the girl had told her of the vexation felt by the honorable ladies thereof at being obliged to yield precedence to this canon's wife, part of whose history she related to her. The duchess immediately went to the queen and the regent-mother, and repeated to them what she had heard; and without other form of process they immediately sent for that wretch, who did not conceal herself; far, indeed, of being ashamed, she was proud of the honor of being the mistress of the house of so rich a man. Accordingly, she presented herself with effrontery before the princesses, who were so astounded at her impudence, that at first they knew not what to say to her; but afterwards the regent-mother spoke to her in terms that would have drawn tears from any woman of good understanding. Instead, however, of weeping, the wretched woman said to them with great assurance:

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"I beseech you, mesdames, not to let my honor be touched; for, thank God, I have lived with the canon so well and so virtuously, that no one can say a word against me on that score. Let it not be supposed that I offend God; for it is three years since the good canon has touched me, and we live as chastely and with as much love as if we were two dear little angels, without there ever having been between us a word or a wish to the contrary. Whoever, then, shall disunite us will commit a great sin; for the good man, who is nearly eighty years old, will not live long without me, who am forty-five."

You may imagine what these ladies said to her, and how they reprov'd her for her obduracy: but say what they would to her, old as she was, and illustrious and worshipful as were the persons who addressed her, there was no shaking her obstinacy. To humble her the princesses sent for the good archdeacon of Autun, who sentenced her to a year's imprisonment on bread and water. They also sent for her husband, who, in consideration of their good exhortations, promised to take her back after her penance. But finding herself a prisoner, and knowing that the canon was resolved never to take her back, she thanked the ladies for having taken a devil off her shoulders; and her repentance was so great and so perfect that her husband, instead of waiting the year's end to take her back, did not wait a fortnight before he claimed her of the archdeacon, and they have since that lived together in peace and harmony.

You see, ladies, how wicked ministers convert St. Peter's chains into chains of Satan, so strong and hard to break, that the sacraments, which cast out devils, are means of retaining them longer in the consciences of such people; for the best things become the most pernicious when they are abused.

"Truly she was a great wretch," said Oisille, "but no less true is it that she was severely punished in appearing before such judges. In fact, the regent-mother's mere look had such a virtue, that there was no good woman who did not fear to stand before her, thinking herself unworthy of her sight; or who, if regarded by her with gentleness, did not think herself deserving of great honor, knowing that the regent-mother was one who could not look with a favorable eye upon any but virtuous women."

"It would be a fine thing," said Hircan, "that one should stand more in awe of the eyes of a woman than of the holy sacrament, which if not received in faith and charity is received to eternal damnation."

"I promise you," said Parlamente, "that those who are not inspired of God are more afraid of temporal than of spiritual powers. I believe, too, that this wretched woman was much more mortified by her imprisonment and by the loss of her canon, than by all the remonstrances and rebukes that could be addressed to her."

"But you forget the principal thing that determined her to return to her husband," said Simontault, "and that was that the canon was eighty years old, and her husband was younger than herself; so the good lady was a gainer on both hands. But had the canon been young, she would never have quitted him; the remonstrances of the ladies would have availed no more than the sacraments."

"I think she did right," said Nomerfide, "not to confess her sin too easily; for one should only tell that sort of offence humbly to God, and deny it stoutly before men, since, though the thing be true, by dint of lying and swearing one throws doubt on its truth."

"It is difficult, however, for a sin to be so secret as never to come to light," said Longarine, "unless God himself conceals it for sake of those who repent of it truly for love of Him."

"What would you say of women," said Hircan, "who have no sooner committed a folly than they go and tell it?"

"The thing seems so surprising," said Longarine, "that it seems to me a token that they do not dislike the sin. I have already said that the sin which is not covered by the grace of God can hardly be denied before men. There are many who take pleasure in talking of such things, and glory in publishing their vices, and others who accuse

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themselves by self-contradiction."

"That is a very clumsy kind of self-contradiction," said Saffredent, "but if you know any example of it, I beg you will relate it."

"Hearken, then," said Longarine.

NOVEL LXII.

A lady recounting an adventure of gallantry that had occurred to herself, and speaking in the third person, inadvertently betrayed her own secret.

IN the time of King Francis I. there was a lady of the blood royal who had honor, virtue, and beauty, and who knew how to tell a story with grace, and also to laugh at a good one when she heard it. * This lady being at one of her houses, was visited by all her dependants and neighbors, by whom she was greatly beloved. Among other visits she received one from a certain lady, who seeing that every one told the princess tales to divert her, wished to do like the rest, and said, "I have a story to tell you, madam; but you must promise not to speak of it. It is quite true, and I can conscientiously give it you as such.

"There was a married lady who lived on very creditable terms with her husband, though he was old and she young. A gentleman in her neighborhood, seeing she had married this old man, fell in love with her, and solicited her for several years, but she only replied to him as became a virtuous woman. One day it occurred to the gentleman that if he could come upon her at a moment advantageous to himself, she would perhaps not be so cruel. After he had long weighed the danger to which he exposed himself, love smoothed over all difficulties, dissipated his fear, and determined him to seek time and opportunity. Keeping good watch for intelligence, he learned that the lady's husband was going away to another of his houses, and intended to set out at daybreak to avoid the heat, whereupon he repaired to the lady and found her asleep in bed. Seeing that the maid-servants were not in the chamber, he got into the lady's bed, booted and spurred as he was, without having had the wit to lock the door. She awoke, and was very much vexed to see him there; but in spite of all her remonstrances there was no stopping him—he violated her, and threatened, if she made a noise, to tell everybody she had sent for him; which frightened her so much that she durst not cry out. One of the servants came back some moments afterwards into the chamber. The gentleman jumped up with such celerity that she would have noticed nothing, if his spur had not stuck in the top sheet, and carried it clean off the bed, leaving the lady quite naked."

So far the lady had told her story as if of another; but here she could not help saying :

"Never was woman more astonished than I when I found myself thus naked."

The princess, who had listened to the whole tale without a smile, could not then restrain her laughter, and said, "I see you were quite right in saying you knew the story to be true." The poor lady tried hard to mend the matter; but there was no possibility of finding a good plaister for it.

I assure you, ladies, if the act had given her real pain she would have been glad to have lost the recollection of it; but as I have already said, sin is sure to discover itself unless it be covered by the mantle which, as David says, makes man blessed.

"Truly, of all the fools I ever heard of this was the greatest, to set others laughing at her own expense," said Ennasuite.

"I am not surprised that speech follows action," said Parlemente; "for it is easier to say than to do."

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"Why," said Geburon, "what sin had she committed? She was asleep in her bed, and he threatened her with death and infamy. Lucretia, who has been so much lauded, did quite as much."

"It is true," said Parlamente, "there is no righteous person who may not fall; but when one has felt at the instant great disgust at one's fall, one remembers it only with horror. To efface its memory Lucretia killed herself; but this wanton chose to make others laugh at it in her own case."

"It seems to me, nevertheless," said Nomerfide, "that she was a good woman, since she was urgently solicited several times, but would not consent. Accordingly, the gentleman was obliged to use fraud and violence in order to succeed."

"What!" said Parlamente, "do you suppose that a woman's honor is spotless when she succumbs after two or three refusals? At that rate there would be many a woman of honor among those who are regarded as having none. Plenty of women have been known for a long time to repulse him to whom their hearts were already given. Some do it because they fear infamy; others to make themselves the more loved and esteemed by a feigned resistance. A woman, therefore, ought not to be held in any consideration unless she remains firm to the end."

"If a young man were to refuse a handsome girl," said Dagoucin, "would you not regard that as a great act of virtue? "

"Assuredly," said Oisille, "if a young man in good health made such a refusal, I should think the act very laudable, but not hard to believe."

"I know some," said Dagoucin, "who have refused adventures which all their comrades ought for with avidity."

"Pray take my place," said Longarine, "and tell us what you know in that way; but recollect that we are pledged to speak the truth."

"I promise to tell it you," said Dagoucin, "without cover or disguise."

NOVEL LXIII.

Notable chastity of a French lord.

THERE were in Paris four girls, two of whom were sisters, so handsome, so young, and so fresh, that they had the choice of all the gallants. The gentleman whom the king then reigning had made provost of Paris, seeing that his master was young, and of an age to desire such company, managed so dexterously with the four, making each of them believe that she was for the king, that they consented to what the provost desired. This was that they should all be present at a banquet to which he invited his master, communicating to him his design, which was approved by the king, and by two great lords of the court, who were not sorry to have a finger in the pie. While they were at a loss for a fourth, in came a young lord, a handsome, well-bred man, and younger by ten years than the others. He was at once invited to the treat, and accepted the invitation with a good grace, though in reality he had no mind for it, for two reasons. He had a wife with whom he was very happy, who bore him fine children; and they lived so tranquilly together, that for no consideration would he have given her cause to suspect him. Besides, he loved one of the handsomest ladies then in France, and esteemed her so much that all others seemed ugly to him in comparison with her; so that in his early youth, and before he was married, there was no means of making him see and frequent other women, however fair, for he had more pleasure in seeing his mistress, and loving her perfectly, than he could have had from all he could have obtained of another.

This young lord went to his wife, told her what the king had in view, and said he would rather die than do what he

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had promised. "As there is no man," he said, "whom I would not dare to attack in anger, so I would rather die than commit a murder in cold blood, unless honor compelled to it. In like manner I would rather die than violate conjugal fidelity at another's caprice, unless extreme love, such as blinds the best, extorted such a violation from me."

His wife, seeing in him so much virtue with so much youth, loved him more than ever, and asked him how he could excuse himself, seeing that princes often take it amiss that others do not applaud what they like. "I have heard say," he replied, "that the wise man is always ready at a critical moment with an illness or a journey. So I intend to be sick four or five days beforehand; and, provided you play the sorrowing wife, I trust I shall get out of the scrape."

"This is what one may call a good and holy hypocrisy," said his wife. "I will not fail to wear as sad a face as possible; for one is very fortunate when one can avoid offending God and provoking the sovereign's resentment."

So said, so done; and the king was very sorry to hear through the wife of the husband's illness, which, however, was not of long duration. Certain affairs having then supervened to claim the king's attention, he forgot his pleasure to think of his duty, and suddenly quitted Paris. One day, recollecting his unfulfilled project, he said to the young prince, "We were great fools to quit Paris with such haste as not to have seen the four girls who have been represented to us as the handsomest in my realm."

"I am very glad," replied the prince, "that you have not done so, for I was greatly afraid during my illness that I alone should lose such a good fortune."

The king never suspected the dissimulation of the young lord, who thenceforth was more beloved by his wife than ever." *

Parlamente burst out laughing, and said, "He would have shown his love for his wife much more if he had done it for her sake only; but, in any point of view, such conduct was certainly most commendable."

"It seems to me no such great merit in a man to be chaste for his wife's sake," said Hircan. "He is bound to it by so many reasons that he can hardly do otherwise. In the first place, God commands it; he is pledged to it by his marriage vow; and besides, the satiated appetite is not subjected to temptation like the craving one. But for the free love one cherishes for a mistress whom one does not enjoy, obtaining from her no other pleasure than that of seeing and speaking to her, and often nothing but mortifying replies, when this love is so faithful and so constant that it will not change, happen what may, then I maintain that chastity displayed on occasions of this sort is not only laudable but miraculous."

"It is no miracle," said Oisille, "for when the heart is devoted, nothing is impossible for the body."

"Yes, for angelic bodies," observed Hircan.

"I do not mean to speak only of those who by God's grace are all transmuted into Him," said Oisille, "but also of the most carnal among men; and if you examine, you will find that those who have set their hearts and affections on seeking perfection in the sciences, have not only forgotten the delights of the flesh, but even things which are most necessary to nature, such as food and drink. In fact, as long as the soul is in the body by affection, the flesh remains, as it were, insensible. Thence it comes that those who love handsome and virtuous women take such delight in seeing and hearing them speak, that the flesh then suspends all its desires. Those who cannot experience this contentment are carnal persons, who, enveloped in too much fat, know not whether they have a soul or not; but when the body is subjected to the spirit, it is almost insensible to the imperfections of the flesh, so that the strong persuasions of persons of this character may render them insensible. I knew a gentleman who, to show that his love for his mistress surpassed any other man's, was willing to give proof of this by holding his bare fingers

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over the flame of a candle. He had his eyes bent on his mistress at the same moment, and he bore the fire with such fortitude that he burned himself to the bone; and yet he said that he felt no pain."

"Methinks," said Geburon, "that the devil to whom he was a martyr ought to make a St. Lawrence of him, for there are few who endure such a great fire of love as not to fear that of the smallest taper. If a lady had put me to so severe a trial, I should demand a great recompense of her; or, failing it, should cease to love her."

"You would then insist on having your hour after your mistress has had hers," said Parlamente. "So did a Spanish gentleman of Valencia, whose story was related to me by a very worthy commander."

"Pray take my place, madam, and tell it us," said Dagoucin, "for I suspect it is a good one."

"The story I am going to relate, ladies," said Parlamente, "will make you think twice before you refuse a good offer, and not trust that the present state of things will last for ever. You shall see that it is subject to change, and that will oblige you to have a care for the future."

NOVEL LXIV.

A gentleman having been unable to marry a person he loves, becomes a Cordelier in despite-Sore distress of his mistress thereat.

THERE was in Valencia a gentleman who for five or six years had loved a lady with so much propriety, that the honor and conscience of neither had suffered any blemish. The gentleman's intention was to marry her-an intention the more reasonable as he was handsome, rich, and of good family. Before engaging in the lady's service, he had an explanation with her on the subject of marriage, respecting which she referred him to her relations. They assembled to consider the question, and resolved that the match was a very suitable one, provided the young lady was willing. But she, whether thinking to do better, or willing to dissemble her love for the gentleman, started so many objections, that the assembly broke up, regretting that they had not been able to bring the affair to a conclusion, advantageous as it would have been on both sides. The most sorely disappointed of all was the poor lover, who could have borne his rejection with patience if he could have persuaded himself that it was not the maiden's fault, but her relations'. But as the truth was well known to him, his affliction was so extreme that, without speaking to his mistress or any one, he went home, and, after setting to his affairs in order, retired to a deserted spot to try to forget his love, and turn it wholly towards Our Lord, to whom he was more bound in gratitude than to his mistress.

During his abode there he heard nothing from the lady or her relations, and resolved, after having missed the happiest life he could have hoped for, to choose the most austere and disagreeable he could imagine. In this dismal state of mind, which might well be called despair, he betook himself, with a view to becoming a monk, to a Franciscan monastery, which was not far from the residences of several of his relations. As soon as they were aware of his purpose, they did all they could to dissuade him from it, but his resolution was so fixed that nothing could shake it. As the cause of the mischief was known to them, they sought a remedy at the hands of her who had given occasion to such a precipitate fit of devotion. She was greatly surprised and distressed at this news; and as her intention had only been to try her lover's fervor by refusing him for a while, and not to lose him for ever, as she saw she was about to do, she wrote him a letter, earnestly beseeching him to forego his dismal resolution, and return to her who loved him, and was ready to be wholly his own, as she had always desired to be, even when she affected coyness for the purpose of proving the sincerity of his love, whereof she was now fully convinced.

This letter, conveyed by one of her friends, who was charged to accompany it with all possible remonstrances, was received by the gentleman Cordelier with so sad a countenance, and with so many tears and signs, that it seemed as though he would fain have drowned and burned the poor paper. His only reply was to tell the bearer

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that the mortification of his excessive passion had cost him so dear, that it had taken from him the wish to love and the fear to die. That being the case, he begged her who was the occasion of it, and who had not chosen to respond to his passion, to torment him no more now that he had overcome it, and to content herself with the harm she had already done him. "I could find no other remedy," he said, "than the austere life I have chosen. Continual penance makes me forget my grief. I so weaken my body by fastings and castigations, that the thought of death is for me a sovereign consolation. Let her, then, who sends you to me, spare me, I entreat, the misery of hearing her mentioned, for the mere recollection of her name is to me an intolerable purgatory."

The bearer returned with this unwelcome reply, and reported it to her who had sent him. It was with inconceivable regret she heard it; but love, which will not suffer the spirit to be utterly cast down, put it into her head that if she could see him she would effect more by her eyes and her tongue than she had by her pen. She went then to the monastery, accompanied by her father and her nearest relations. She had omitted nothing that she thought could set off her beauty, in the belief that if he once saw her and heard her, it was impossible but that a fire so long cherished should kindle up more strongly than ever. She entered the monastery towards the end of vespers, and sent for him to meet her in a chapel of the cloisters. Not knowing who wanted him, he obeyed the summons, and went to encounter the rudest stock he had ever sustained. He was so pale and worn that she could hardly recognize him; nevertheless, as he seemed to her as comely and as lovable as ever, love constrained her to stretch out her arms, thinking to embrace him; but she was so touched by the sad state in which he appeared, and the idea of it caused such a sinking at the heart, that she fainted away. The good monk, who was not destitute of brotherly charity, raised her up, and seated her on a bench in the chapel. Though he had not less need of aid than she, he nevertheless affected to ignore her passion, fortifying his heart in the love of his God against the present opportunity, and he succeeded so well that he seemed to be unconscious of what was before his eyes.

Recovering from her weakness, and turning upon him eyes so lovely and so sad that they might have softened a rock, the maiden said everything she could think of as most likely to persuade him to quit that place. To all her arguments and entreaties he made the best replies he could; but at last, finding that his heart was beginning to yield to his mistress's tears, and seeing that Love, whose cruelty he had long experienced, had in its hand a gilded arrow ready to inflict on him a new and mortal wound, he fled from Love and from his mistress, as his only means of safety. Shut up, then, in his cell, and unable to let her depart in that uncertainty, he wrote her a few words in Spanish, which appear to me so expressive, that I will not translate them for fear of impairing their grace: *Volved donde veniste anima mi, que en las tristes vidas es la mia.* * The lady seeing from this that no hope remained, resolved to follow his advice and that of her friends, and returned home, to lead a life as melancholy as that of her lover in his monastery was austere.

You see, ladies, how the gentleman revenged himself on his rigorous mistress, who, intending only to try him, drove him to such despair, that, when she would have relented towards him, it was too late.

"I am sorry he did not throw off the gray gown and marry her," said Nomerfide. "Theirs, I think, would have been a perfectly happy marriage."

"In faith I think he did very wisely," said Simontault; "for all who have well considered the inconveniences of marriage are agreed that there are none greater in the austerities of the monastic life. As he was already weakened by fastings and abstinences, he was afraid to load himself with a burden he would have been obliged to bear all his life long."

"She did wrong, I think, by so weak a man," said Hircan, "to tempt him by a proposal of marriage, since that is a matter in which the most vigorous and robust find themselves hard bestead. But if she had talked to him of an intimacy free from all but voluntary obligation, there was no knot but would have been untied. But since, by way of drawing him out of purgatory, she offered him a hell, I maintain that he was right to refuse, and make her feel the pain which her refusal had caused him."

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"Many there are," said Ennasuite, "who, thinking to do better than others, do either worse, or the reverse of what they had expected."

"Truly you put me in mind," said Geburon, "though the fact is not quite to the point, of a woman who did the contrary of what she intended, which was the cause of a great tumult in the church of Saint Jean de Lyon."

"Pray take my place," said Parlamente, "and tell us the story."

"Mine will be neither so long nor so sad as yours," he replied.

NOVEL LXV.

Simplicity of an old woman who presented a lighted candle to Saint Jean de Lyon, and wanted to fasten it on the forehead of a soldier who was sleeping on a tomb-What happened in consequence. *

THERE was a very dark chapel in the church of Saint Jean de Lyon, and in front of the chapel a stone tomb, with figures of great personages as large as life, and several men-at-arms represented in sleeping postures round them. A soldier walking one day about the church (it was in the heat of summer) felt inclined to sleep. He cast his eyes on this chapel, and seeing it was dark and cool, he went and lay down among the other recumbent figures on the tomb, and fell asleep. Presently up came a very pious old woman, who, after performing her devotions with a candle in her hand, wanted to fix it to the tomb, and the sleeping man being more within her reach than the other figures, she set about sticking the candle on his forehead, imagining that it was stone; but the wax would not stick. The good woman, supposing that this was in consequence of the coldness of the image, clapped the lighted end of the candle to its forehead, but the image, which was not insensible, began to roar. The good woman was frightened almost out of her wits, and shrieked out "Miracle, miracle!" so loudly, that all the people in church ran, some to the bells, others to the scene of the miracle. She took them to see the image which had stirred, which made many laugh; but certain priests, not contenting themselves with laughing, resolved to turn the tomb to account, and make as much money of it as of the crucifix on their pulpit, which is said to have spoken; but the display of an old woman's silliness put an end to the comedy."

If every one knew what are their follies they would not be deemed holy, nor their miracles true. I pray you then, ladies, take care, henceforth, to what saints you give your candles.

"How strange it is," said Hircan, "that be it in what manner it may, women must always do wrong!"

"Is it doing wrong to carry candles to the tomb?" said Nomerfide.

"Yes," replied Hircan, "when the lighted end is put to a man's forehead; for no good deed should be called a good deed when mischief comes of it. The poor woman thought of course she had made a grand present to God in giving Him a paltry candle."

"God does not look to the value of the present," said Oisille, "but to the heart that offers it. Perhaps this poor woman loved God more than those who gave great torches; for as the Gospel says, she gave out of her need."

"I do not believe, however," said Saffredent, "that God, who is supreme wisdom, can look with favor on women's folly. Simplicity is acceptable to Him, it is true; but the Scriptures inform me that He scorns the ignorant; and if we are there commanded to be simple as doves, we are also enjoined to be prudent as serpents."

"For my part," said Oisille, "I do not regard as ignorant her who carries before God her lighted candle, as making amende honorable, kneeling on the ground, and candle in hand, to her sovereign Lord, in order to confess her

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guilt, and pray with lively faith for His grace and salvation."

"Would to God that every one acquitted herself in this way as well as you," said Dagoucin; "but I do not believe that poor ignorant women do the thing with this intention."

"Those women who are least capable of expressing themselves well," rejoined Oisille, "are often those who have the most lively sense of the love and the will of God; consequently, it is prudent not to judge any but oneself."

"It is no wonderful thing to have frightened a sleeping groom," said Ennasuite, laughing, "since women of as mean condition have frightened great princes without setting fire to their foreheads."

"I am sure you know some story of the sort which you wish to tell us," said Dagoucin, "so take my place, if you please."

"The story will not be long," said Ennasuite; "but if I could recount it to you as it occurred, you would have no mind to cry."

NOVEL LXVI.

Amusing adventure of Monsieur de Vendôme and the Princess of Navarre.

THE year when Monsieur de Vendôme married the Princess of Navarre, the king and queen, their father and mother, after having been regaled at Vendôme, accompanied them into Guienne. They visited the house of a gentleman in which there were several ladies, young and fair, and where the company danced so long that the young married pair, being tired, retired to their chamber, where they threw themselves on the bed in their clothes, the doors and windows being closed, and no one remaining with them. They were wakened from their sleep by the sound of some one opening their door from without. Monsieur de Vendôme drew back the curtain, and looked out to see who it might be, supposing that it was one of his friends who wished to surprise him. But instead of that he saw a tall old chamber-woman, who walked straight up to their bed. It was too dark for her to distinguish their features but she could see that they were very close together, and cried out, "Ah, thou naughty, shameless wanton! 'tis long I have suspected thee for what thou art; but not having proofs to show, I durst not speak of it to my mistress, but now I have seen thy infamy I am resolved to conceal it no longer. And thou, villainous apostate, that hast done this house the scorn to beguile this poor wench, were it not for the fear of God I would beat the life out of thee on the spot. Get up, in the devil's name, get up! It seems thou art not even ashamed."

Monsieur de Vendôme and the princess, to prolong the scene, hid their faces against each other, and laughed so heartily that they could not speak. The chamber-woman, seeing then that they did not budge for her rebuke, or show any signs of rising, went to drag them out of bed by the legs and arms; but then she perceived by their dresses that they were not what she took them for. The moment she recognized their faces she fell on her knees and implored their pardon for the fault she had committed in disturbing them. Monsieur de Vendôme, wishing to know more of the matter, got up at once and begged the good woman to tell him for whom she had taken them. At first she would not do so; but after making him promise on oath that he would never mention it, she told him that the cause of her mistake was a demoiselle belonging to the house, with whom a prothonotary * was in love; and she had long watched them, because she was vexed that her mistress put confidence in a man who offered her such an affront. She then retired, and left the prince and princess shut in as she had found them. They laughed long at the adventure; and though they often told the tale, nevertheless they would never name the persons for whom they had been mistaken.

You see, ladies, how the good woman, thinking to do a righteous act, informed these princely strangers of things whereof the domestics of the house had never heard a word

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"I think," said Parlamente, "I know where the adventure happened, and the name of the prothonotary. He has already governed many ladies' houses, and when he cannot win the good graces of the mistress, he never misses one of the demoiselles; with that exception, he is a well-behaved and worthy man."

"Why do you say with that exception," said Hircan, "since it is for that very thing that I esteem him a worthy man?"

"I see," replied Parlamente, "that you know the malady and the patient, and that if he needed an apology you would not fail to be his advocate. However, I should not like to entrust an intrigue to a man who did not know how to conduct his own without letting it be known even to the chamber-women."

"Do you suppose," said Nomerfide, "that men care whether such things are known or not? Provided they attain their end, that is enough for them. Be assured, that if nobody spoke of the matter they would publish it themselves."

"There is no need for men to say all they know," said Hircan, angrily.

"Perhaps," replied Nomerfide, blushing, "they would say nothing to their own advantage."

"To hear you talk," said Simontault, "it seems as though men took pleasure in hearing women spoken ill of, and I am sure you think me one of that sort. For that reason I have a great mind to say some good of them, that I may not be regarded as a slanderer."

"I give you my vote," said Ennasuite, "and pray you to constrain yourself a little in order to do your devoir to our honor."

"It is no new thing, ladies," said Simontault, "to hear of your virtues. In my opinion, when some one of your noble actions presents itself, far from being hidden it ought to be written in letters of gold, to serve as an example to women, and to give men cause for admiration, to see in the weaker sex what weakness recoils from. It is this that prompts me to relate what I heard from Captain Robertval and several of his company."

NOVEL LXVII.

Love and extreme hardships of a woman in a foreign land.

THE king having given the command of a small squadron to Robertval for an expedition he had resolved to make to the island of Canada, that captain intended to settle in the island, in case the air proved good, and to build towns and castles there. Every one knows what were the beginnings of this project. In order to people the country with Christians, he took with him all sorts of artisans, among whom there was one who was base enough to betray his master, so that he was near falling into the hands of the natives. But it was God's will that the conspiracy should be discovered; and so did no great harm to Captain Robertval, who had the traitor seized, intending to hang him as he deserved. He would have done so but for the wife of this wretch, who, after sharing the perils of the sea with her husband, was willing to follow his bad fortune to the end. She prevailed so far by her tears and supplications, that Robertval, both for the services she had rendered him, and from compassion for her, granted what she asked. This was, that her husband and herself should be left on a little island in the sea, inhabited only by wild beasts, with permission to take with them what was necessary for their subsistence.

The poor creatures, left alone with fierce beasts, had recourse only to God, who had always been the firm hope of the poor wife. As she had no consolation but in her God, she took with her for her preservation, her nurture, and her consolation, the New Testament, which she read incessantly. Moreover, she worked along with her husband at

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building a small dwelling. When the lions and other wild beasts approached to devour them, the husband with his arquebuse, and the wife with stones, defended themselves so well, that not only the beasts durst not approach them, but even they often killed some of them which were good to eat. They subsisted for a long time on such flesh and on herbs after their bread was gone. However, in the long run, the husband could not resist the effects of such diet; besides, they drank such unwholesome water that he became greatly swollen, and died in a short while, having no other service or consolation than his wife's, who acted as his physician and his confessor; so that he passed with joy from his desert to the heavenly land. The poor woman buried him in a grave which she made as deep as she could; the beasts, however, immediately got scent of it, and came to devour the body, but the poor woman firing from her little dwelling with her arquebuse, hindered her husband's body from having such a burial. Thus living like the beasts as to her body, and like the angels as to her spirit, she passed the time in reading, contemplation, prayers, and orisons, having a cheerful and contented spirit in a body emaciated and half dead.

But He who never forsakes his own in their need, and who displays His powers when all seems hopeless, did not suffer that the virtue with which this woman was endowed should be unknown to the world, but that it should be known there for His glory. After some time one of the vessels of Robertval's fleet passing before the island, those on deck saw a woman, who reminded them of the persons they had put ashore there, and they resolved to go and see in what manner God had disposed of them. The poor woman, seeing the vessel approach went down to the sea-beach, where they found her on landing. After thanking God for their arrival, she took them to her poor little hut, and showed them on what she had subsisted during her melancholy abode there. They could never have believed it, had they not known that God can nourish his servants in a desert as at the finest banquets in the world. As she could not remain in such a place, they took her straight-way with them to Rochelle; and there, when they had made known to the inhabitants the fidelity and perseverance of this woman, the ladies paid her great honor, and were glad to send their daughters to her to learn to read and write. She maintained herself for the rest of her days by that honorable profession, having no other desire than to exhort every one to love God and trust in Him, holding forth as an example the great mercy with which He had dealt towards her.

Now, ladies, you cannot say but that I laud the virtues which God has implanted in you—virtues which appear the greater, the weaker the being that displays them.

"We are not sorry," said Oisille, "that you praise in us the graces of our lord, for in truth it is from Him that comes all virtue; but neither man nor woman contributes to the work of God. In vain both bestir themselves and strive to do well; they do but plant, and it is God that gives the increase."

"If you have well read Scripture," said Saffredent, "You know that St. Paul says that he has planted and Apollos has watered; but he does not speak of women having put their hands to the work of God."

"You do like those bad men who take a passage of Scripture which makes for them, and pass over that which is contrary to them," said Parlamente. "If you have read St. Paul from one end to the other, you will find that he commends himself to the ladies who have toiled much with him in the propagation of the Gospel."

"Be that as it may," said Longarine, "this woman is worthy of great praise, both for her love for her husband, for whom she risked her life, and her confidence in God, who, as you see, did not abandon her."

"As for the first point," said Ennasuite, "I believe there is no wife present who would not do as much to save her husband's life."

"And I believe," said Parlamente, "that there are husbands such mere beasts that it could be no surprise to their wives to find themselves reduced to live among their fellows."

Ennasuite could not help replying, as taking this to have been said on her account, "If beasts did not bite me, their company would be more agreeable to me than that of men, who are irascible and unbearable. But I do not retract

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my assertion, and I say again, that if my husband was in the like danger, I would not forsake him though it were to cost me my life."

"Beware," said Nomerfide, "how you love to such a degree that the excess of your love may be mischievous both to you and to him. There is a medium in all things, and for want of a right understanding, love is often converted into hatred."

"It seems to me," said Simontault, "that you have not pushed the matter so far without purposing to confirm your principle by some example. Therefore, if you know one, let us hear it."

"Well then, my tale shall be short and ay, as usual," replied Nomerfide.

NOVEL LXVIII.

A woman gives her husband powder of cantharides to make him love her, and goes near to killing him.

THERE was formerly at Pau, in Bearn, an apothecary whose name was Maître Etienne. He had married a good thrifty woman, with such a share of beauty as ought to have contented him; but as he tasted different drugs, so too he had a mind to taste different women, the better to judge of all. This was so disagreeable to his wife that she lost all patience, for he never noticed her except in Passion Week, by way of penance. The apothecary being one day in his shop, and his wife hid behind the door, listening, in came a woman of the place, who was commère * to the apothecary, and was sick of the same complaint as the listener behind the door. "Alas! compère, my friend," she said to the apothecary, sighing deeply, "I am the most unfortunate woman in the world. I love my husband more than myself. I have not a thought but how to serve and obey him; but it is all labor in vain, and he loves the worst and nastiest woman in the town better than he does me. If you know any drug that can change his constitution, pray give it me, compère. If it succeeds with me, and I am well treated by my husband, I assure you I will recompense you to the utmost of my power."

The apothecary, to comfort her, told her he knew of a marvelous powder, and that if she made her husband take it in his broth or in his roast meat, like duc powder, he would regale her in the best possible manner. The poor woman, wishing to see this miracle, asked him what it was, and if she could not have some of it. He told her she had only to take some powder of cantharides, of which he had good store. Before they parted she made him prepare this powder, and took as much of it as she needed; and subsequently she thanked him for it many times; for her husband, who was strong and vigorous, and who did not take too much of it, found himself none the worse for it, and she all the better.

The apothecary's wife, who had overheard the whole conversation, thought to herself that she had no less need of the recipe than his commère. She marked the place where her husband put away the rest of the powder, and resolved to use it when an occasion should offer. She had not long to wait. Her husband, feeling himself incommoded with a coldness of stomach, begged her to make him some good broth. She told him that a roast with duc powder would do him still more good, and he begged her to make him one forthwith, and to get some cinnamon and some sugar out of the shop. She did so, and did not forget the remainder of the powder which he had given to his commère, without regarding either weight, or dose, or measure. The husband ate the roast, which he found very good, and soon experienced its effect, which he thought to appease with his wife; but it was impossible, for he felt all on fire, so that he did not know on what side to turn. He told his wife she had poisoned him, and insisted on knowing what she had put in the broth. She did not disguise the truth, but told him plainly that she had as much need of that recipe as his commère. The poor apothecary was in such torture that he could not belabor her with anything harder than bad words. He ordered her out of his sight, and sent her to the Queen of Navarre's apothecary to beg he would come and see him, which he did, and administered the remedies suitable to the case. The queen's apothecary set the patient on his legs again in a very little time, and censured him sharply

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for making another take drugs which he would not willingly take himself; adding, that his wife had done as she ought, seeing the desire she had to make herself loved by him. The poor man was obliged to have patience, and own that God had justly punished him in exposing him to the raillery to which he would have subjected another.

To me, it seems, ladies, that this woman's love was not less indiscreet than excessive.

"Do you call it loving her husband," said Hircan, "to make him suffer for the pleasure she expected of him?"

"I imagine," said Longarine, "she had no other intention than to regain her husband's regard, which she thought she had lost. There is nothing women would not do for such a blessing."

"Nevertheless," said Geburon, "in matters of food and drink, a woman ought on no account whatever to give her husband anything of which she is not sure, as well by her own experience as by that of persons of knowledge, that it can do him no harm; but ignorance must be excused. The woman in question was excusable, for the passion which blinds people most is love, and the person most blinded is the woman who has not the strength to carry such a great burden judiciously."

"Geburon" replied Oisille, "you depart from your own good custom to conform to the sentiments of your companions. Yet there are women who have patiently sustained love and jealousy."

"Ay," said Hircan, "and pleasantly too; for the most sensible are those who take as much pleasure in laughing at their husbands' doings, as the husbands in secretly playing them false. If you will allow me to speak before Madame Oisille closes the day, I will tell you a tale about a husband and a wife who are known to all the company."

"Begin, then," said Nomerfide; and Hircan, laughing, began thus.

NOVEL LXIX.

An Italian suffered himself to be duped by his servant maid, and was caught by his wife bolting meal in place of the girl.

AT the château of Odoz, in Bigorre, dwelt one of the king's equerries, named Charles, an Italian. He had married a very good and virtuous lady, who had grown old after bearing him several children. He, too, was not young, and lived on peaceable and friendly terms with his wife. It is true he sometimes talked to his women servants, which his good wife pretended never to observe, but she always dismissed the girls very quietly when she knew that they had forgotten their station in the house. One day she took one who was an honest, good girl, told her what was her husband's humor and her own, and warned her that she would turn off a girl the moment she knew she was not well behaved. The servant, being anxious to remain in her mistress's service and gain her esteem, resolved not to swerve from the path of virtue. Though her master often addressed improper language to her, she never would hearken to him, but told all to her mistress, who laughed with her at her husband's folly.

One day the servant was bolting meal in a back room, with her surcoat over her head after the manner of the country. This surcoat is made like a *crèmeau*, but it completely covers the back and shoulders. Her master, finding her in that trim, was very pressing with her; and she, who would as soon have died as done what he wished, pretended to consent, and begged he would first let her go and see whether or not her mistress was engaged in any way, so that they might not be surprised by her. He willingly consented to this, and then she begged him to put on her surcoat and continue to bolt during her absence, so that her mistress might not miss the sound of the bolting machine. This he did with glee, in the hope of having what he desired. The servant, who loved a good laugh, ran to her mistress, and said, "Come and see your husband, whom I have taught to bolt, in order to get rid of him."

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The wife made haste to see this new servant, and found her husband with the surcoat on his head, working away at the bolting machine, and laughed at him so heartily, clapping her hands, that it was as much as she could do to say to him, "How much a month dost thou ask for wages, wench?" The husband, hearing his wife's voice, and seeing that he was duped, threw away the surcoat and the bolting machine, and darted at the servant, whom he called all sorts of bad names. If his wife had not interposed he would have paid her for her courtesy; however, the storm was at last appeased to the content of all parties, who afterwards lived peaceably together. *

What say you of this wife, ladies? Was she not wise to make sport of her husband's sport?

"It was no sport for the husband to miss his aim," said Saffredent.

"I imagine," said Ennasuite, "that he had more pleasure in laughing with his wife than in half killing himself with his servant at his age."

"I should have been sorely annoyed to have been found with that fine *crèmeau* over my head," said Simontault.

"I have heard," said Parlamente, "that it was not your wife's fault that she did not catch you pretty nearly in the same trim; and since that time, they say, she has never known rest."

"Be content with the adventures of your own house," replied Simontault, "without looking after mine. My wife has no cause to complain of me; but even if I were such as you say, she would not notice it, for she is not at all stinted."

"Women of honor need nothing but the love of their husbands, the only persons who can content them," said Longarine; "but those who desire a brutal pleasure will never find it where propriety prescribes."

"Do you call it brutal pleasure when a woman wishes to have from her husband what belongs to her?" said Geburon.

"I maintain," replied Longarine, "that a chaste wife, who loves truly, finds more contentment in being perfectly loved, than in all the pleasures which the flesh can desire."

"I am of your opinion," said Dagoucin "but their lordships here will neither hear of it nor confess it. I believe that if mutual love does not content a woman, a husband will content her no more; for if she does not conform in love to the seemly ways of women, she must be possessed by the infernal lust of the brutes."

"Truly you remind me," said Oisille, "of a fair lady who was well married, and who, for want of contenting herself with that seemly love, became more carnal than swine, and more cruel than lions."

"I pray you, madam, to finish the day by telling us that story," said Simontault.

"I cannot, for two reasons," replied Oisille: "first, because it is long; and secondly, because it is not of our time. It has been written, however, by an author worthy of credit; but we are vowed to relate nothing here that has been written."

"That is true," observed Parlamente; "but as I believe I know the tale you mean, I must tell you it is written in such antiquated language that I do not think any one present, except us two, has heard of it. Therefore it will be as good as new."

The whole company then besought her to tell the story without troubling herself about its length, for they had still a good hour to spare before vespers. Madame Oisille, therefore, yielded to their entreaties, and began as follows.

NOVEL LXX.

The horrible incontinence and malice of a duchess of Burgundy was the cause of her death, and of that of two persons who fondly loved each other.

THERE was in the duchy of Burgundy a duke who was a very agreeable prince and of very goodly person. He had a wife with whose beauty he was so satisfied that it blinded him to her disposition, and he thought only of pleasing her, whilst she, on her part, made a show of responding only to his affection. This duke had in his household a young gentleman so accomplished in all that can be desired in a man, that he was loved by everybody, and especially by the duke, about whose person he had been brought up from childhood, and who, knowing him to possess so many perfections, had the warmest regard for him, and trusted him in all affairs suitable to his years. The duchess, who was not a virtuous woman, nor satisfied with her husband's love and the kind treatment she received from him, often cast her eyes on this gentleman, and found him so much to her taste, that she loved him beyond measure. She was evermore trying to make this known to him by languishing and tender glances, sighs, and impassioned airs; but the gentleman, who never studied anything but virtue, knew nought of vice in a lady who had so little excuse for it; so that the glances, sighs, and impassioned airs of the poor wanton brought her nothing but bitter disappointment. She carried her extravagance so far, that, forgetting she was a wife who ought, though solicited, to grant no favor, and a princess who was made to be adored, yet disdain such servants, she resolved to act like a man transported with passion, and to discharge her bosom of a burden that was insupportable.

One day then, when the duke went to council, to which the gentleman was not admitted, being too young, she beckoned to him, and he came, thinking she had some order to give him. Leaning then on his arm, like a woman wearied by too much repose, she walked about with him in a gallery, and said, "I am surprised that, being as you are, young, handsome, and full of engaging qualities, you have been able hitherto to live in continual intercourse with so many fair ladies without loving any of them." And then, with one of her most gracious looks, she paused for his answer.

"Madam," he replied, "if I were worthy that your greatness should descend to think of me, you would have more reason for surprise, to see so insignificant a man as I am offer his services only to meet with refusal or mockery."

Upon this discreet reply the duchess loved him more than ever, and vowed that there was not a lady in the court but would be too happy to have a lover of his merit; that he might try, and that she assured him he would succeed without difficulty. The gentleman kept his eyes constantly bent on the ground, not daring to look on the countenance of the duchess, which glowed enough to warm an icicle. Just when he was about to excuse himself, the duke sent for the duchess to come to the council upon an affair in which she was interested. She went with much regret. As for the gentleman, he pretended not to have understood what she said, which vexed and confused her so much that she knew not what to impute it to but the silly fear with which she thought the young man possessed. Seeing, then, that he did not understand her language, she resolved a few days afterwards to overleap fear and shame, and declare her passion to him in plain terms, never doubting but that beauty like hers could not fail to be well received. Nevertheless, she would have been glad to have had the honor to be solicited; but, after all, she preferred pleasure to honor.

After having several times again tried the same means she had first essayed, and always with the same unwelcome result, she plucked him by the sleeve one day, and told him she wanted to speak to him on an affair of importance. With all due respect and humility the gentleman followed her to a window recess, where, finding that she could not be seen from the chamber, she resumed the subject of her past conversation with a trembling voice, indicative alike of desire and fear. She reproached him for not having yet made choice of a lady, and assured him that wherever he fixed his affections she would spare no pains to ensure his success. The gentleman, not less distressed than astonished at such language, replied, "My heart is so tender, madam, that if I were once refused I

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should never know joy; and I am so well aware of my slender merit, that I am sure there is no lady in the court who would accept my services."

The duchess blushed at these words, and imagining that his heart was lost, protested he had only to wish, and she would answer for it that she knew the fairest lady in the court who would receive him with extreme joy, and make him consummately happy. "I do not believe, madam," he replied, "that there is any woman in this court so unfortunate and so infatuated as to have made me the object of her predilections."

Seeing that he would not understand her, she proceeded to give him a more direct glimpse of her passion; and as the gentleman's virtue gave her cause for fear, she spoke by way of interrogation. "If fortune," she said, "had so favored you that it was myself who was thus well inclined to you, what would you say?"

The gentleman, who thought he was dreaming to hear her speak thus, dropped on one knee on the ground and replied, "When God shall do me the grace, madam, to make me possessor of the good-will of the duke my master, and of yourself, I shall deem myself the happiest of men. It is the sole recompense I crave for my faithful services, bound as I am above all others to sacrifice my life for you both. I am convinced, madam, that the love you have for my lord and your spouse is so pure and great, that not even the greatest prince and the most accomplished man in the world, to say nothing of myself, who am but a worm of the earth, could impair the union that subsists between my master and you. As for me, whom he has nurtured from childhood and made what I am, I would not for my life entertain a thought other than that which becomes a faithful servant as regards either his wife, sister, or mother."

The duchess would not suffer him to proceed, but seeing she was in danger of receiving a shameful refusal, she broke in upon him suddenly, "Wicked and arrogant fool! who requires any such thing of you? Because you are good-looking you imagine that the very flies are enamored of you; but if you were presumptuous enough to address yourself to me, I would soon let you know that I love, and will love, none but my husband. I have spoken to you as I have done only for my own diversion, to sift you, and make you my laughing-stock, as I do all amorous coxcombs."

"I have all along been assured that it was just as you say, madam," replied the gentleman.

She would hear no more, but turned abruptly from him, and to avoid her ladies who followed her into her chambers, she shut herself up in her closet, where she gave way to an indescribable burst of bitter feeling. On the one hand, the love in which she had failed caused her mortal sadness; and on the other, her despite against herself for entering upon so injudicious a dialogue, and against the gentleman for having answered so prudently, put her into such a fury that at one moment she wished to kill herself, at the next she would live to be revenged on him she regarded as her deadliest enemy. After a long fit of tears she feigned indisposition, to avoid appearing at the duke's supper, at which the gentleman was usually in attendance. The duke, who loved his wife more than himself, failed not to go and see her; when, in order to arrive the more easily at her ends, she told him she believed she was pregnant, and that her pregnancy had caused a rheum to fall upon her eyes, which gave her great pain. The duchess kept her bed for two or three hours in so sad and melancholy a mood, that the duke suspected there was something else the matter besides pregnancy. He went to sleep with her that night; but seeing that, in spite of all the caresses he could bestow upon her, she continued to sigh incessantly, he said, "You know, my dear, that I love you as my own life, and that if you die I cannot possibly survive you. If, then, you value my health and life, tell me, I entreat, what makes you sigh thus; for I cannot believe that pregnancy alone can produce that effect."

The duchess, seeing her husband in the very mood she wished, hastened to turn it to her vengeful purpose. "Alas! monsieur," she said, embracing him with tears, "my worst suffering is to see you the dupe of those whose duty it is to preserve your honor and all that is yours." This made the duke wondrously eager to know what she meant, and he begged her to speak openly, without fear or disguise. "I shall never be surprised," she said at last, after

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repeated refusals, "if strangers make war on princes, since those who are most bound to them undertake to wage such a horrible war against them, that the loss of domains is nothing in comparison with it. I say this, monsieur, with reference to a gentleman" (here she named her enemy) "whom you have fed, reared, treated more like a relation than a domestic, and who, by way of gratitude, has had the impudence and the baseness to attempt the honor of your wife, on which depends that of your house and your children. Though he long labored to insinuate to me things that left me no doubt of his black perfidy, yet my heart, which is only for you, and thinks only on you, could not comprehend him; but at last he explained himself, and I replied to him as my rank and my honor required. I hate him, however, so that I cannot bear the sight of him; and this it was, monsieur, which made me keep my room and lose the happiness of your company. I beseech you, monsieur, not to keep such a pestilence near you; for after such a crime, the fear of your being made acquainted with it might very likely induce him to do something worse. You know now, monsieur, the cause of my grief, which seems to me most just and most worthy that you should right it without delay."

The duke, who on the one hand loved his wife and felt himself outraged, and on the other hand loved the gentleman, of whose fidelity he had often had practical proof, could hardly believe that this lie was truth. He withdrew to his chamber in great perplexity and anger, and sent word to the gentleman that he was not to appear any more in his presence, but was to retire to his own home for some time. The gentleman, ignorant of the cause of an order so peremptory and so unexpected, was the more keenly affected by it, as he thought he had deserved the very opposite treatment. Conscious of his innocence in heart and deed, he got one of his comrades to speak to the duke on his behalf, and deliver him a letter, wherein he most humbly entreated, that if he had the misfortune to be removed from his master's presence, in consequence of some report to his prejudice, the duke would have the goodness to suspend his judgment until he should have inquired into the truth; and then he durst hope it would be found he had in nowise offended. This letter somewhat appeased the duke; he sent for the gentleman to come secretly to his chamber, and said to him with great gravity, "I could never have believed that after having had you nurtured like my own child, I should have cause to repent of having so highly advanced you, forasmuch as you have sought to outrage me in a manner that would have been worse to me than the loss of life and fortune, namely, by attempting the honor of her who is the half of myself, and seeking to cover my house with perpetual infamy. You may believe that I feel this insult so deeply, that if I was quite sure that the fact was true, you would by this time be at the bottom of the water, to punish you secretly for the affront you have secretly sought to put upon me."

The gentleman was not dismayed by this speech; on the contrary, he spoke with the confidence of his innocence, and besought the duke to have the goodness to tell him who was his accuser, the accusation being one of those which are better discussed with the lance than with the tongue. "Your accuser," replied the duke, "has no other arms than her chastity. It was my wife, and no one else, who told me this, praying me to take vengeance upon you."

Amazed as the poor gentleman was at the prodigious malice of the duchess, he would not accuse her, but contented himself with saying, "My lady may say what she pleases. You know her, monsieur, better than I; and you know if I have seen her elsewhere than in your company, except once only when she spoke to me a very little. Your judgment is as sound as that of any prince in Christendom. Therefore, my liege, I beseech you to consider if you have ever seen anything in me which can have caused you suspicion. It is a fire which it is impossible long to conceal in such wise that those who labor under the same malady shall not have some inkling of it. I beg, my liege, that you will be graciously pleased to believe two things of me; one is, that I am so true to you, that though my lady your spouse were the finest woman in the world, love would not be capable of making me do anything contrary to my honor and my duty; the other is, that even were she not your spouse, she is, of all the women I have ever seen, the one I should be the least inclined to love; and there are enough of others on whom I should sooner fix my choice."

The duke's anger was somewhat mitigated by these words. "Well," said he, "I did not believe it; so you may go on as usual, with the assurance that if I find that the truth is on your side, I will love you more than ever; but if the

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contrary appears, your life is in my hand." The gentleman thanked him, and declared his willingness to submit to the severest penalty his master could devise if he were found guilty.

The duchess, seeing the gentleman continue to serve as usual, could not patiently endure it, and said to her husband, "It would be no more than you deserve, monsieur, if you were poisoned, since you have more confidence in your mortal enemies than in your nearest friends."

"Do not make yourself uneasy, my dear," replied the duke; "for if it appears that what you have told me is true, I assure you he has not twenty-four hours to live. But as he has protested the contrary to me on oath, and as, besides, I never perceived anything of the sort, I cannot believe it without good proofs."

"Truly, monsieur," she returned, "your goodness makes my malice greater. What greater proof would you have than that a man like him has never had any amour imputed to him. Be assured, monsieur, that but for the vain and presumptuous idea with which he has flattered himself of becoming my servant, he would not be without a mistress at this time of the day. Never did a young man live so solitary as he in good company; and the reason can only be that his heart is set so high that his vain hope stands him in stead of everything else. If you believe that he conceals nothing from you, swear him as to his amours. If he tells you that he loves another, why then believe him; I am content you should; but if not, be assured that what I say is true."

The duke approved of his wife's suggestion, and taking the gentleman into the country, said to him, "My wife continues still to speak to me of you to the same purpose, and mentions a circumstance which gives me some suspicion. To be plain with you, it excites surprise that you, a young and gallant man, have never been known to be in love; and this very thing makes me fear that you entertain the sentiments you have been charged with, and the hope you cherish is so pleasing to you that you cannot think of any other woman. I pray you then as a friend, and order you as a master, to tell me truly do you pay your court to any lady in this world?"

The poor gentleman, who would fain have concealed his love as carefully as he would have preserved his life, seeing his master's extreme jealousy, was constrained to swear to him that he loved a lady so beautiful that the beauty of the duchess and of all the ladies of her suite was mean in comparison, not to say ugliness and deformity; at the same time he besought the duke not to insist on his naming the lady, because the intimacy between him and his mistress was such that it could only be broken by whichever of the two first disclosed it. The duke promised he would never press him on that point, and was so satisfied with him, that he behaved more graciously to him than ever. The duchess perceived it, and employed her usual artifices to find out the reason; nor did the duke conceal it from her. Strong jealousy was now added to her thirst of vengeance, and she besought the duke to insist that the gentleman should name his mistress, declaring that if he refused to do so, her husband would be the most credulous prince in the world to put faith in so vague a statement.

The poor prince, who was led by his wife as she pleased, went and walked alone with the gentleman, and told him he was in still greater embarrassment than ever, being afraid that what he had told him was only an excuse to hinder him from coming at the truth, which made him more uneasy than before; therefore he besought him most earnestly to tell him the name of her he loved so much. The poor gentleman implored the duke not to constrain him to break the promise he had given to a person he loved as his life, and which he had kept inviolate until that moment. It would be tantamount to requiring him to lose in one day what he had preserved for more than seven years, and he would rather die than do that wrong to a person who was so faithful to him. His refusal threw the duke into such a violent fit of jealousy, that he exclaimed furiously, "Take your choice: either tell me the name of her you love above all others, or quit my dominions on pain of death if you are found in them after eight days."

If ever faithful servant was smitten with keen anguish it was this poor gentleman, who might well say, *Angustiæ sunt mihi undique*. On the one hand, if he told the truth he lost his mistress, should it come to her knowledge that he had broken his word to her; on the other, if he did not tell it, he was exiled from the country where she resided, and could never see her more. Thus pressed on all sides, a cold sweat broke out upon him, as if his anguish had

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brought him to the brink of the grave. The duke, perceiving his embarrassment, imagined he loved only the duchess, and that his confusion arose from the fact that he could not name any one else. In this belief he said to him sternly, "If you had told me the truth, you would have less difficulty in doing what I desire; but I believe it is your crime that occasions your embarrassment."

The gentleman, stung by these words, and urged by the love he bore his master, resolved to tell him the truth, assuring himself that the duke was a man of so much honor that he would keep his secret inviolate. He fell on his knees then, and said to him, with his hands pressed together, "My liege, the obligations I am under to you, and the love I bear you, constrain me more than the fear of death. You are possessed with so false a prejudice against me, that, to undeceive you, I am resolved to tell you what no torments could extort from me. The only favor I ask of you, my liege, is, that you will swear, on the faith of a prince and a Christian, never to reveal the secret which you force from me." The duke promised him, with all the oaths he could think of, never to tell his secret to any one, either by word, act, or signs; and the gentleman, relying on the good faith of a prince whom he knew, put the first hand to his own undoing, saying to him, "It is seven years, my lord, since having known your niece, the Lady du Verger, as a widow and disengaged, I tried to acquire her good-will. As I was not of birth to marry her, I contented myself with being received by her as a lover, in which I succeeded. Our intercourse has been conducted hitherto with so much prudence, that no one has come to the knowledge of it except you, my lord, into whose hands I put my life and honor, entreating you to keep the secret, and to have no less esteem for my lady your niece, than whom I do not think there is under heaven a creature more perfect."

The duke was delighted with this declaration, for knowing the extraordinary beauty of his niece, he doubted not that she was more capable of pleasing than his wife. But not conceiving it possible that such a mystery should have been carried on without adequate means, he begged to know how her lover managed to see her. The gentleman told him that his mistress's chamber opened on a garden, and that on the days when he was to visit her a little gate was left open, through which he entered on foot, and advanced until he heard the barking of a little dog, which the lady let loose in the garden after her women had all retired; that then he went to her, and conversed with her all night, and on his departure appointed the day when he was to come again in which he had never failed, except for indispensable reasons. The duke, who was the most curious of men, and who had been very gallant in his time, begged him, as well to dissipate his suspicions as for the pleasure of hearing so singular an adventure recounted, to take him with him, not as a master, but as a companion, the next time he went thither. The gentleman, having gone so far, assented, and told him his assignation was for that very day. The duke was as glad of this as if he had won a kingdom, and feigning to retire to his garderobe to rest, had two horses brought, one for the gentleman and the other for himself, and they travelled all night from Argilly, where the duke resided, to Le Verger, where they left their horses at the entrance of the park.

The gentleman made the duke enter through the little gate, and begged him to place himself behind a large walnut-tree, whence he might see if what he had told him was true or not. They had not been long in the garden before the little dog began to bark, and the gentleman walked towards the tower, whilst the lady advanced to meet him. She saluted him with an embrace, and told him it seemed a thousand years since she had seen him. Then they entered the chamber, the door of which they locked. The duke having seen the whole of this mystery, felt more satisfied; nor had he time to grow weary, for the gentleman told the lady that he was obliged to leave her sooner than usual, because the duke was going to the chase at four o'clock, and he durst not fail to attend him. The lady, who preferred honor to pleasure, did not attempt to hinder him from doing his duty; for what she prized most in their honorable intimacy was that it was a secret for all mankind.

The gentleman quitted the house at one o'clock in the morning, and his lady, in mantle and kerchief, escorted him not so far as she wished, for he made her go back for fear she should meet the duke, with whom he mounted again and returned to the château of Argilly. On the way, the duke never ceased protesting to the gentleman that he would rather die than ever divulge his secret; and his confidence in him was so confirmed, that no one at court stood higher in favor. The duchess was enraged at this. The duke forbade her ever to mention the subject any more to him, saying that he knew the truth, and was satisfied, for the lady whom the gentleman loved was

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handsomer than herself. These words so stung the heart of the duchess that they threw her into an illness worse than fever. The duke tried to console her, but nothing would do unless he would tell her who was that fair lady who was so devotedly loved. So much did she importune him, that at last he quitted the chamber, saying to her, "If you speak to me any more of these things, we will part." This made her still more ill, and she pretended to feel her infant move; whereat the duke was so rejoiced that he went to bed to her; but when she saw that his passion for her was at the height, she turned from him, saying, "Since you love neither wife nor child, monsieur, I entreat you to let both die." These words she accompanied with so many tears and cries, that the duke was greatly afraid she would miscarry; wherefore, taking her in his arms, he entreated her to tell him what she wanted, protesting he had nothing that was not at her command. "Ah! monsieur," she replied, sobbing and crying, "what hope can I have that you would do a difficult thing for me, since you will not do the easiest and most reasonable thing in the world, which is to tell me the name of the mistress of the worst servant you ever had? I thought that you and I had but one heart, one soul, and one flesh, but I see that you regard me as if I were a stranger, since you conceal your secrets from me as if I were an alien. You have confided to me many important secrets, and have never known that I divulged a tittle of them. You have had such proof that I have no will but yours, that you ought not to doubt but that I am more you than myself. If you have sworn never to tell any one the gentleman's secret, you do not violate your oath in telling it to me, for I neither am nor can be other than yourself. I have you in my heart; I hold you between my arms; I have a child in my womb in whom you live; yet I cannot have your love as you have mine. The more faithful I am to you, the more cruel and austere you are to me. This makes me long a thousand times for the day when a sudden death may deliver your child from such a father, and me from such a spouse. I hope it will soon come, since you prefer a worthless servant to your wife, to the mother of a child which is your own, and which is on the point of perishing because you will not tell me what I have the greatest longing to know."

So saying, she embraced and kissed her husband, watering his face with her tears, and sobbing and crying so violently that the poor prince, fearing he should lose both mother and child, resolved to tell her the truth; but he swore that if ever she mentioned it to any one in the world she should die by no hand but his own. She accepted the condition; and then the poor abused duke told her all he had seen from beginning to end. She pretended to be satisfied, but in her heart it was quite otherwise. However, as she was afraid of the duke, she dissembled her passion as well as she could.

The duke, holding his court on a great feast-day, had called to it all the ladies of the country, his niece among the rest. After the banquet the dances began, and every one did his devoir; but the duchess was too much vexed by the sight of her niece's beauty and grace to enjoy herself, or hide her spleen. Making all the ladies sit down, she turned the conversation on love; but seeing that Madame du Verger said not a word, she said to her, with a heart rankling with jealousy, "And you, fair niece, is it possible that your beauty is without a lover?"

"Madam," replied the Lady du Verger, "my beauty has not yet produced that effect; for since my husband's death I have had no lovers but his children; nor do I desire any others."

"Fair niece, fair niece," rejoined the duchess, with execrable spite, "there is no love so secret as not to be known, nor any little dog so well trained as not to be heard to bark."

I leave you to imagine the anguish of poor Madame du Verger at finding that an affair she had thought so secret was published to her shame. The thought of her honor, so carefully guarded, and so unhappily lost, was torture to her; but the worst was her fear that her lover had broken his word to her, which she did not believe he could ever have done unless he loved some fairer lady, and in doting fondness had suffered her to extort the secret from him. However, she had so much self-command that she did not let her emotion be seen, but laughingly replied that she did not understand the language of brutes. But her heart was so wrung with grief that she rose, and passing through the duchess's chamber, entered a garderobe, in sight of the duke, who was walking about. Thinking herself alone, she threw herself on a bed. A demoiselle, who had sat down beside it to sleep, roused herself and peeped through the curtains to see who it might be, and perceiving it was the duke's niece, who thought herself

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alone, she durst not speak, but remained as still as possible to listen, whilst the poor lady in a dying voice thus began her lamentation:

"Alas! what have I heard! What words of death have smitten my ears! O thou who was loved as man was never loved before, is this the reward of my chaste and virtuous love? O my heart! hast thou made so dangerous a choice, and attached thyself to the most faithless, artful, and mischievous-tongued of all men, mistaking him for the most faithful, upright, and secret? Is it possible, alas! that a thing hidden from all the world has been revealed to the duchess? My little dog, so well trained, sole agent of my long and virtuous friendship, it was not you that betrayed my secret: it was a man, with a voice more piercing than a dog's, and a heart more ungrateful than any beast's. It was he who, contrary to his oath and his word, divulged the happy life we long led without injuring any one. O my friend! for whom alone my heart cherished love, a love wherewith my life has been preserved, has the beauty of the duchess metamorphosed you, as that of Circe did her lovers? Has she turned you from virtue to vice, from good to bad, from a man into a savage beast? O my friend! though you have broken your word to me, I will keep mine, and never see you more after having revealed our intimacy. But as I cannot live without seeing you, I willingly yield to the excess of my sorrow, and will never seek any remedy for it either from reason or from medicine. Death alone shall end it, and that death will be more welcome to me than to remain in the world without my lover, without honor, and without contentment. Neither war nor death has taken my lover from me; my sins and transgressions have not deprived me of honor; nor has my bad conduct bereft me of happiness. It is cruel fortune that has made an ingrate of the most favored of all men, and has brought upon me the contrary of what I deserved. O duchess, how delighted you were to make that jeering allusion to my little dog! Revel in a bliss that belongs to me alone. Laugh at her who thought to escape derision whilst loving virtuously and concealing it with care. How that word wrung my heart! How it made me red with shame and pale with jealousy! Heart, heart, I feel thou art undone. Ill-requited love burns thee, jealousy and grief turn thee to ice, and forbid thee all consolation. Through having too much adored the creature, my soul has forgotten the Creator. It must return to Him from whom a vain love detached it. Be assured, my soul, thou wilt find a Father more tender than the friend for whom thou hast often forgotten Him. O God, my creator, who art the true and perfect love, by whose grace the love I have borne my friend has been sullied by no vice, save that of loving too much, be pleased to receive in the greatness of Thy mercy the soul and spirit of her who repents of having broken Thy first and righteous command. Through the merits of Him whose love is incomprehensible, forgive the fault which excess of love made me commit, for my trust is in Thee alone. Farewell, my friend, whose unworthiness of that name breaks my heart." So saying she fell backwards, her face ghastly, her lips blue, and her extremities cold.

At the same moment the gentlemen she loved entered the reception-room, where the duchess was dancing with the other ladies. He looked round for his mistress, and not seeing her, went into the duchess's chamber, where he found the duke, who, guessing his purpose, whispered to him that she was gone into the garderobe, and appeared to be unwell. The gentleman asked for leave to follow her, and the duke not only granted it, but urged him to do so. Entering the garderobe then, he found her at the last gasp; and, throwing his arms round her, he said, "What is this, my love? Do you want to quit me?" Roused by the well-known voice, the poor lady opened her eyes to look upon him who was the cause of her death; but that look so increased her love and her anguish, that with a piteous sigh she gave up the ghost.

The gentleman, more dead than alive, asked the demoiselle how the lady's illness had begun, and she told him all she had heard. He then knew that the duke had revealed his secret. His grief was so intense, that, embracing the body of his mistress, he wept over it long in silence, and at last exclaimed, "Traitor, villain, wretch that I am! Why has not the penalty for my treachery fallen on me, and not on her who was innocent? Why did not Heaven's lightning blast me the day my tongue revealed our secret and virtuous love? Why did not the earth open to swallow up a wretch who violated his faith? May my tongue be punished as was that of the wicked rich man in hell! O heart, that too much feared death and exile, may eagles tear thee perpetually as they did that of Ixion! * Alas, my dear friend! in thinking to hold you fast, I have lost you. I thought to possess you long alive, with virtue and pleasure, and I embrace you dead, and you have been dissatisfied to your last gasp with me, my heart, and my tongue. O most faithful of women! I denounce myself as the most inconstant, faithless, and perfidious of men. I

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would I could complain of the duke, whose word I trusted, hoping by that means to prolong our agreeable life; but ought I not to have known that no one could keep my secret better than myself? The duke was more justifiable in telling his secret to his wife, than I in telling mine to him. I am the only guilty one, the only one who deserves to be punished for the greatest crime ever committed between friends. I ought to have suffered him to throw me into the river as he threatened. You at least, dear one, would then be alive, and I should have closed my life with the glory of having observed the rule prescribed by true friendship; but having broken it I live still, and you are dead for having perfectly loved. Your pure heart could not know the baseness of mine, and live. O my God, why didst thou create me with a love so frivolous and a heart so ignorant? Why was I not the little dog that faithfully served its mistress? Alas! my little friend, I used to feel joy at the sound of your barking; but that joy is turned into sorrow, for having been the cause of another besides us two hearing your voice. Yet, sweetheart, neither love of the duchess nor of any other woman ever made me vary, though the wicked duchess has often solicited me to love her; but ignorance has undone me, for I thought by what I did to insure our intimacy for ever. But that ignorance does not make me the less guilty. I have revealed my mistress's secret, I have broken my word, and therefore it is that she is dead before me. Alas, sweetheart, will death be less cruel to me than to you, who have died only for having loved? Methinks death would not deign to touch my faithless and miserable heart. The loss of honor, and the memory of her I have lost through my fault, are more insupportable to me than ten thousand deaths. If any one had cut short your days through mischance or malice, I should use my sword to avenge you. It is not reasonable, then, that I should pardon that murderer, who has caused your death by a deed more vile than if he had killed you with a sword. If I knew a more odious executioner than myself, I would entreat him to do justice upon your perfidious lover. O love! I have offended thee from not having known how to love; and therefore thou wilt not succour me as thou hast succoured her who perfectly kept all they laws. Nor is it just that I should make such a glorious end: it must be by my own hand. I have washed your face with my tears; I have implored your pardon; and it now only remains that my arm make my body like yours, and sent my soul whither yours is gone, in the assurance that a virtuous and honorable love end neither in this world nor in the next."

Starting up then, like a frantic man, from the corpse, he drew his poniard, and stabbed himself to the heart; and then, clasping his mistress in his arms for the second time, he kissed her so fondly, that he seemed more like a blissful lover than a dead man. The demoiselle seeing the deed, ran to the door and screamed for help. The duke, suspecting the disaster of those he loved, was the first to enter the garderobe, and on seeing that sad couple he tried to separate them, in order to save the gentleman if it were possible; but he held his mistress so fast, that it was impossible to tear him from her until he had expired. Nevertheless, hearing the duke exclaim, "My God! who has been the cause of this?" "My tongue and yours, monsieur," he replied, with a look of fury. So saying he breathed his last, with his face laid on that of his mistress.

The duke, wishing to know more of the matter, constrained the demoiselle to tell him all she had seen and heard, which she did from beginning to end, without forgetting anything. The duke then, knowing that he was the cause of the whole mischief, threw himself on the bodies of the two lovers, and with cries and tears implored their pardon. He kissed them repeatedly; and then rising furiously, he drew the poniard out of the gentleman's body. As a wild boar wounded by a spear runs impetuously at him who has struck the blow, so ran the duke at her who had wounded him to the soul. He found her still dancing in the reception-room, and gayer than usual, cause she thought she had so well revenged herself on the Lady du Verger. Her husband seized her in the midst of the dance, and said, "You took the secret upon your life, and upon your life shall fall the forfeiture." So saying he grasped her by her head-dress, and buried the poniard in her bosom.

The astonished company thought the duke was out of his senses; but he had done the deed advisedly; and assembling all his servants on the spot, he recounted to them the glorious and melancholy story of his niece, and the wicked conduct of his wife: a narrative which drew tears from all his hearers. The duke then ordered that his wife should be buried in an abbey which he founded, partly with a view to atone for the sin he had committed in killing his wife; and then he had a magnificent tomb erected, in which the remains of his niece and of the gentleman were laid side by side, with an epitaph setting forth their tragic history.; The duke made an expedition against the Turks, in which God so favored him that he achieved glory and profit. Finding on his return that his

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eldest son was of an age to govern, he became a monk, and retired to the abbey in which his wife and the two lovers were buried, and there he passed his old age happily with God. *

This, ladies, is the story you begged me to relate, and which, your eyes tell me, you have not heard without compassion. It seems to me an example from which you should profit, so as to beware of fixing your affections on men. However honorable and virtuous be that affection, it always ends badly. You see even that St. Paul would not have married people love to such excess; for the more one is attached to earthly, the more one is detached from heavenly, things; and the more honorable and virtuous love is, the harder is it to break its bonds. This constrains me to beg, ladies, that you will continually pray to God for His Holy Spirit, which will so inflame your hearts with the love of God, that at the hour of death it will not be hard for you to quit the things of the world, for which you have too much attachment.

"The love of these two persons being so virtuous as you represent it," said Hircan, "what need was there to make a secret of it?"

"Because," said Parlamente, "men are so depraved that they can never believe that love and virtue go hand in hand. They judge of the virtue of men and women according to their own passions, and consequently, if a woman has a dear friend other than one of her near relations, it is necessary for her to converse with him in secret if she would converse with him long. Whether a woman loves virtuously or viciously, her honor is alike doubted, because men judge only from appearances."

"But," said Geburon, "when the secrets gets vent, the woman is so much the worse thought of."

"That is true, I confess," said Longarine; "and therefore the best course is not to love at all."

"We appeal from that sentence," said Dagoucin; "for if we believed that the ladies were without love, we would rather be without life. I speak of those who live only to win love; and even it if does not come to them, the hope of it supports them, and makes them do a thousand honorable things, until old age changes that fair passion into other pains. But if we thought that the ladies did not love, instead of following the profession of arms we should have to turn merchants, and instead of winning glory, to think only of amassing wealth."

"You mean to say, then," said Hircan, "that if there were no ladies we should be all caitiffs, as if we had no spirit but what they inspire us with. I am of the contrary opinion; and I assert that nothing is more lowering to the spirit of a man than devoting himself too much to the society of women, and loving them to excess. It was for that very reason that the Hebrews prohibited a man from going to war the year he was married, lest the love of his wife should make him recoil from the dangers he ought to seek."

"I do not think there was much sense in that law," said Saffredent, "for there is nothing that makes a man readier to leave home than being married, the reason being, that no war without is more intolerable than that within. I am convinced, that to give men a taste for going into foreign parts, and not loitering by their own firesides, nothing more need be done than to marry them."

"It is true," said Ennasuite, "that marriage exonerates them from care for the house; for that they commit to their wives, and think only of acquiring glory, relying on it that their wives will attend sufficiently to their interest."

"Be it how it may," said Saffredent, "I am very happy that you are of my opinion."

"But," observed Parlamente, "you do not discuss the most remarkable point-namely, why the gentleman who was the cause of all the mischief did not die of grief as promptly as his mistress who was innocent."

"That was because women love better than men," said Nomerfide.

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"Rather," replied Simontault, "because the jealousy of women and the violence of their passion make them give up the ghost without knowing why, whilst men, with more prudence, desire to be informed of the truth. Once they have ascertained it, their good senses makes them show the greatness of their spirit. Thus it was with the gentleman, who, as soon as he knew that he was the cause of his mistress's death, manifested the greatness of his love for her at the cost of his life."

"Nevertheless," said Ennasuite, "the fidelity of her love was the cause of her death; for her heart was so constant and so true, that she could not bear to be so villainously deceived."

"Her jealousy hindered her reason from acting," returned Simontault; "and as she believed the evil of which her lover was not guilty, her death was not voluntary, for she could not help dying; but her lover owned he had done wrong, and died voluntarily."

"Be it as you please," said Nomerfide; "but at all events the love must be great that causes such mortal sorrow."

"Don't be afraid," said Hircan; "you will not die of such a fever."

"No more than you will kill yourself on being conscious of having done wrong," she retorted.

Parlamente, who did not know but that the dispute was at her expense, said, laughing, "It is enough that two died for love, without two others fighting for the same cause. There is the last vesper-bell to separate you, whether you like or not."

At these words the company rose to hear vespers. They did not forget in their prayers the souls of the true lovers, for whom the monks willingly said a *De profundis*. During supper nothing was talked of but Madame du Verger. After amusing themselves a little together they retired to their respective chambers, and so ended the seventh day.