THE HEPTAMERON: Sixth Day

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

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SIXTH DAY.

NEXT morning, earlier than usual, Madame Oisille went to prepare her exhortation in the hall; but the rest of the company being informed of this, their desire to hear her good instructions made them dress so speedily, that she was not kept waiting long. As she knew their hearts, she read the epistle of St. John, which speaks only of love. This was so palatable to the company, that although this morning's devotion was longer than usual, they all thought it had not occupied more than a quarter of an hour. After it was over they went to mass, and commended themselves to the Holy Ghost. When they had dined and taken a little rest they went to the meadow to continue their novels. Madame Oisille asked who should begin the day. "I call upon you to do so, madam," said Longarine, "for you gave us such a fine lecture this morning, that it is impossible you should tell a story which should not correspond to the glory you acquired thereby."

"I regret," replied Oisille, "that I cannot relate anything to you so profitable as what you heard this morning. What I shall tell you, however, will be conformable to the precepts of the Scriptures, which warn us not to put our trust in princes, or in any sons of man, who cannot save us. For fear you should forget this truth for want of an example, I will give you one that is quite true, and so recent, that those who beheld the sad spectacle have hardly yet dried away their tears."

NOVEL LI.

Perfidy and cruelty of an Italian Duke.

THE Duke of Urbino, surnamed the Prefect, who married the sister of the first Duke of Mantua, had a son about eighteen or twenty years of age, who was in love with a girl of good family. Not being free to converse with her as he wished, in consequence of the custom of the country, he had recourse to a gentleman who was in his service, and who was in love with a handsome, virtuous young damsel in the service of the duchess. The cavalier employed this damsel to make known his passion to his mistress, and the poor girl took pleasure in rendering him

service, believing that his intentions were good, and that she might with honor take upon her to be his ambassadress. But the duke, who looked more to the interest of his house than to his son's pure affection, was afraid that this correspondence would end in marriage; and he set so many spies on the watch, that at last he was informed that the girl had meddled with carrying letters from his son to her of whom he was so passionately enamoured. Burning with rage, he resolved to put it out of his power to do so any more; but as he was not sufficiently careful to conceal his resentment, the girl was warned of it in time. She knew the prince to be malicious and without conscience, and was so terrified, that she went to the duchess, and implored permission to retire until the fit of anger had passed away. The duchess told her that before she gave her leave she would try to find how her husband took the matter. She did so, and found that the duke spoke of it with great bitterness; whereupon she not only gave her young lady permission, but even advised her to retire into a convent until the storm should have blown over; and this she did as secretly as possible.

The duke, however, missed her, and asked his wife, with a countenance of feigned good humor, where the damsel was. The duchess, who supposed that he knew the truth, told it him without reserve. He pretended to be sorry for this, and said there was no need for her to do so, that he meant her no harm, and that the duchess had better make her come back, for it did no good to have a talk made about such matters. The duchess told him that if the poor girl had been so unfortunate as to incur his displeasure, it was better that she should abstain from appearing in his presence for some time; but he would not be so put off, but insisted on her return.

The duchess made known the duke's pleasure to the damsel; but the latter was not satisfied, and begged her mistress would excuse her from running such a risk, knowing as she did that her husband the duke was not so ready to grant forgiveness. The duchess, however, pledged her life and honor that no harm should happen to her; and the damsel, who felt sure that her mistress loved her, and would for no consideration deceive her, trusted to her promise, believing that the duke would never violate a promise made by his wife on her life and honor, and she returned to court. As soon as the duke was aware of this, he entered his wife's chamber: and the moment he set eyes upon the poor damsel, he ordered his gentlemen to arrest her, and take her to prison. The duchess, who had induced her to quit her asylum upon the faith of her word, was filled with horror, and throwing herself at her husband's feet, besought him, for his own honor and that of his house, not to do such an act. But no supplications she could make, no arguments she could urge, had power to soften his hard heart, or turn him from his stubborn purpose to be revenged. Without answering his wife a word, he abruptly quitted the room, and without form of justice, forgetting God and the honor of his house, this cruel duke had the poor girl hanged.

I will not undertake to depict the indignation of the duchess; enough to say that it was such as might have been expected of a lady of honor and spirit, who, contrary to her plighted faith, saw a person whom she would have saved, put to death by her husband. Much less will I attempt to portray the affliction of the poor gentleman, the unfortunate girl's lover. He did all he could to save his mistress's life, and even offered to die in her place; but nothing could move the duke, who knew no other felicity than taking vengeance on those he hated. Thus was this poor innocent put to death by this cruel duke, against all equity and honor, to the great regret of all who knew her.

Here you see, ladies, what a bad heart is capable of when it is united with power.

"I have heard," said Longarine, "that the Italians were prone to all capital vices; but I could never have supposed they would carry vindictiveness and cruelty so far as to put a person to such a miserable death for so slight a cause."

"You have mentioned one of the three vices," said Saffredent, laughing; "let us know, Longarine, what are the other two."

"I would do so willingly," she replied, "if you did not know them; but I am sure you are acquainted with them all."

"You think me, then, very vicious?" said Saffredent.

"Not at all," returned Longarine; "but I believe you know so well the loathsomeness of vice, that you can better avoid it than another."

"Do not be surprised at this excess of cruelty," said Simontault, "for they who have been in Italy relate such horrible things of the kind, that what we have heard is but a trifle in comparison with them."

"When the French took Rivolte," said Geburon, "there was an Italian captain who had the reputation of a brave man, and who, seeing a man lie dead who was not otherwise his enemy than in having been a Guelph whilst he was Ghibelline, tore out his heart, broiled it, ate it greedily, and replied to those who asked him was it good, that he had never eaten anything more delicious. Not content with this fine deed, he killed the dead man's wife, who was pregnant, ripped her open, tore out the child, and dashed it to pieces against the wall; and then stuffed the bodies of the husband and wife with oats for his horses to eat. Judge if this man would not have put to death a girl whom he suspected of having done anything offensive to him."

"This duke," said Ennasuite, "was more afraid his son should marry one who was not wealthy enough, than desirous of giving him a wife to his liking."

"There is no doubt, said Simontault, "that the tendency of the Italians is to love more than nature the things that are only made for nature's service."

"Their case is still worse," said Hircan, "for they make their God of things that are contrary to nature."

"Those are the sins I meant," said Longarine; "for we know that to love money beyond what is necessary for our wants is idolatry."

Parlamente said that "St. Paul had not forgotten their vices, no more than those of such as think themselves surpassing in prudence and human reason, on which they count so much, that they do not render to God the honor that is His due. Therefore, the Almighty, jealous of His glory, renders more insensate than the brute beasts those who think they have more sense than other men, and allows them to do acts contrary to nature, which shows evidently that their sense is reprobate."

"That is the third sin," said Longarine, interrupting her, "to which the Italians are addicted."

"In good sooth, I like this remark," said Nomerfide. "Since those who are regarded as having the subtlest wits and are the best speakers, are punished in this manner, and brutified more than the brutes themselves, it must be concluded that persons who are humble and low and of little reach like myself, are endowed with angelic sapience."

"I assure you," said Oisille, "I am not far from your way of thinking; and I am persuaded that there are none more ignorant than those who imagine themselves knowing."

"I never knew a mocker who was not mocked," said Geburon, "a deceiver who was not deceived, or a proud man who was not humbled."

"You put me in mind of a trick I should like to relate to you if it was seemly," said Simontault.

"Since we are here to tell the truth, tell it, whatever it be," said Oisille.

"Well, since you desire it, madam, I will tell it you," he replied.

NOVEL LII.

A nasty breakfast given to an advocate and a gentleman by an apothecary's man.

IN the time of the last Duke Charles there was at Alençon an advocate named Antoine Bacheret, a merry companion, and fond of breakfasting o' mornings. One day, as he was sitting before his door, he saw a gentleman pass whose name was Monsieur de la Tireliere. He had come on foot upon business he had in town, and the day being cold, he had not forgotten to take with him his great robe, lined with foxskin. Seeing the advocate, who was much such a man as himself, he asked him how he was getting on, and observed that a good breakfast would not be amiss. The advocate replied that a breakfast would be found soon enough, provided some one could be found to pay for it. Thereupon La Tireliere took him by the arm, saying, "Come along, gaffer, perhaps we shall fall in with some fool who will pay for us both."

There happened to be behind them an apothecary's man, a cunning and inventive young fellow, whom the advocate was perpetually making game of. That moment the thought of having his revenge came into his head, and without going more than ten steps out of his way, he found behind a house a fine big sir reverence, well and duly frozen, which he wrapped up so neatly in paper that it might be taken for a small sugar−loaf. He then looked out for his men, and passing them like a person in great haste, entered a house, and let fall the sugar−loaf from his sleeve, as if inadvertently. The advocate picked it up with great glee, and said to La Tireliere, "This clever fellow shall pay our scot; but let us be off quickly for fear he comes back."

The pair having entered a cabaret, the advocate said to the servant girl, "Make us a good fire, and give us good bread and good wine, and something nice with it ;" for he fancied he had wherewithal to pay. They were served to their liking; but as they grew warm with eating and drinking, the sugar−loaf, which the advocate carried in his bosom, began to thaw, and gave out such a stench that, thinking it came from elsewhere, he said to the servant, "You have the most fetid and stinking house I ever was in." La Tireliere, who had his share of this fine perfume, said the same thing. The servant, incensed at thus being accused of sluttishness, replied, "By St. Peter, my masters, the house is so neat and clean that there is no nastiness in it but what you have brought in with you." The two friends rose from table, spitting and holding their noses, and stood near the fire; and presently, while warming himself, the advocate took his handkerchief out of his bosom, disgustingly smeared with the syrup of the melted sugar−loaf, which he produced with it. You may well believe that the servant made fine fun of them after the insult they had offered her, and that the advocate was sorely confounded at finding himself the dupe of an apothecary's man, whom he had always made the butt of his wit. The servant, instead of taking pity on them, made them pay as handsomely as they had been served; and said that no doubt they must be greatly intoxicated, since they had drunk both by nose and mouth. The poor wights slunk away with their shame and their cost.

They were no sooner in the street than they saw the apothecary's man going about and asking every one if they had seen a loaf of sugar wrapped up in paper. They tried to avoid him, but he shouted to the advocate, "Monsieur, if you have my loaf of sugar I beg you will give it back to me; for it is a double sin to rob a poor servant." His shouts brought many people to the spot out of curiosity to witness the dispute; and the real state of the case was so well verified, that the apothecary's man was as glad to have been robbed as the others were vexed at having committed such a nasty theft. They comforted themselves, however, with the hope of one day giving him tit for tat.

The like often happens, ladies, to those who take pleasure in such tricks. If the gentleman had not wanted to eat at another's expense, he would not have had such a nasty draught at his own. It is true that my story is not very decorous, but you gave me permission to speak the truth. I have done so, to show that when a deceiver is deceived no one is sorry for it.

"It is commonly said that words do not stink," said Hircan; "but those who utter them cannot help smelling of

them."

"It is true," said Oisille, "that words of this sort do not stink; but there are others called dirty, which have such a bad odor, that the soul suffers from them more than the body would suffer from smelling a sugar−loaf like that you have spoken of."

"Do tell me, pray," rejoined Hircan, "what words you know so dirty, that they make a woman of honor suffer both in body and soul."

"It would be a fine thing," replied Oisille, "if I were to say to you words which I would not advise any woman to say."

"I understand now what those words are," said Saffredent. "Women like to appear demure, and do not commonly use such language. But I should like to ask those present why they laugh so readily when they are uttered before them, since they will not themselves utter them. I cannot understand their laughing at a thing which is so offensive to them."

"It is not at those pretty words we laugh," said Parlamente, "but by reason of the natural propensity every one feels to laugh either when we see some one fall, or when we hear something said out of place, as it often happens to the best speakers to say one thing instead of another. But when men talk filth intentionally, and with premeditation, I know no honorable woman but feels intense aversion for such people, and, far from listening to them, shuns their society."

"It is true," said Geburon, "that I have seen women cross themselves on hearing that sort of words which seemed more disgusting the more they were repeated."

"But," said Simontault, "how often have they put on their masks to laugh behind them as heartily as they pretended to be vexed? "

"Even that were better than to show that one took pleasure in such language," said Parlamente.

"So, then," remarked Dagoucin, "you praise hypocrisy in ladies as much as virtue?"

"Virtue would be much better," replied Longarine; "but when it is wanting, we must have recourse to hypocrisy, as we use high−heeled shoes to hide our littleness. If we can hide our defects, even that is no little advantage."

"By my faith, it would be better sometimes to let some little defect appear," said Hircan, "than to hide it so carefully under the cloak of virtue."

"It is true," said Ennasuite, "that a borrowed garment dishonors him who is obliged to return it, as much as it did him honor to wear it. There is a lady in the world who, in her over−anxiety to hide a small fault, has committed a much greater one."

"I think I know whom you mean," said Hircan; "but at least do not name her."

"O! you have my voice," said Geburon, "on condition that when you have told the tale, you will tell us the names, which we will swear never to mention."

"I promise it," said Ennasuite, "for there is nothing which may not be said decorously."

NOVEL LIII.

Madame de Neufchastel, by her dissimulation, forced the Prince of Belhoste to put her to such a proof as turned to her dishonor.

ON one occasion, when King Francis I. went with but a small suite to spend some days at a very handsome château, to enjoy the chase and other recreations, he was accompanied by the Prince of Belhoste, as much distinguished for every excellence of mind and person as any at court. He had married a wife who was not of a great family, but whom he loved as much as any husband can love a wife. He put such confidence in her, that when he loved elsewhere he made no secret of it to her, well knowing that she had no other will than his. This lord conceived a strong regard for a widow named Madame de Neufchastel, who was considered the handsomest woman of her time. If the prince was greatly attached to this widow, the princess his wife was no less so, often invited her to table, and thought so highly of her, that far from being displeased that her husband loved her, she was delighted to see that he addressed his attentions to so worthy and virtuous an object. This friendship was of such long duration, and so perfect, that the prince busied himself with Madame de Neufchastel's affairs as much as with his own, and the princess his wife did likewise.

The widow's beauty attracted round her many great lords and gentlemen as suitors, some of whom were actuated only by love, others had an eye to her wealth; for, in addition to her beauty, she was very rich. One gentleman especially, named the Seigneur des Cheriots, was so assiduous in his wooing, that he never failed to present himself at her lever and her coucher, and spent as much time in her society as he possibly could. The prince, who thought that a man of such mean birth and appearance did not deserve to be treated so favorably, was not at all pleased with his assiduities, and often remonstrated with the widow on the subject; but as she was a duke's daughter, she excused herself, saying that she talked generally to everybody, and that their intimacy would be the less observed when it was seen that she did not talk more to one than another. After some time, this Sieur des Cheriots pressed his suit so much, that she promised to marry him, more in consequence of his importunity than of her preference for him, on condition that he would not require her to declare the marriage until her daughters were married. After this promise, the gentleman used to go to her chamber without scruple, at any hour he pleased; and there was only a femme−de−chambre and a man who were privy to the affair.

The prince was so displeased at seeing the gentleman becoming more and more domesticated with her he loved, that he could not help saying to her, "I have always prized your honor as that of my own sister. You know with what propriety I have always addressed you, and what pleasure I feel in loving a lady so discreet and virtuous as you; but if I thought that another obtained by importunity what I would not ask for against your inclination, I could not endure it, nor would it do you honor. I say this to you because you are young and fair, and have hitherto enjoyed a good reputation; but you are beginning to be the subject of reports greatly to your disadvantage. Though this person has neither birth, fortune, credit, knowledge, nor good looks in comparison with you, it would have been better, nevertheless, that you had married him than have given rise to suspicion, as you are doing. Tell me, then, I entreat, if you are resolved to love him; for I do not choose to have him for a companion, but will leave you wholly to him, and will no longer entertain for you the sentiments I have hitherto cherished."

The poor lady, fearing to lose his friendship, began to cry, and vowed to him that she would rather die than marry the gentleman in question; but that he was so importunate that she could not hinder his entering her room at the hours when every one else visited her. "I do not speak of those hours," said the prince, "for I can visit you then as well as he, and every one sees what you do; but I have been told that he comes to you after you are in bed, which I think so bad, that if you continue it without declaring that he is your husband, I look upon you as the woman most ruined in reputation that ever was."

She assured him with all the oaths she could think of that she regarded the man neither as husband nor lover, but as the most importunate person in the world. "Since that is the case," said the prince, "I promise that I will rid you

of him."

"What! "replied the widow, "would you put him to death?"

"No, no," said the prince; "but I will let him know that he must not give occasion in this way for people to speak ill of ladies in the king's residence. I swear to you, by the love I bear you, that if he does not correct himself after I have spoken to him, I will correct him in such a manner that he shall be an example for others."

With these words the prince went away, and on leaving, the room he met the Seigneur des Cheriots coming thither, and spoke to him to the same purpose, assuring him that the first time he found him there at any other hour than one in which it was proper for gentlemen to visit ladies, he would give him such a fright as he should not forget as long as he lived, and would teach him not to trifle with a lady whose relations were persons of such consequence. The gentleman protested that he had never been there except like other visitors; and that if the prince found him transgressing in that respect he would give him leave to do the worst he could.

Some days afterwards, the gentleman, fancying that the prince had forgotten what he had told him, went to see the lady in the evening, and stayed very late. The prince told his wife that Madame de Neufchastel had a severe cold, and the good lady begged him to go see her for them both, and apologize for her, as she was prevented from accompanying him by indispensable business. The prince waited till the king was in bed, and then went to say good evening to the widow. He had just reached the foot of the staircase, and was about to go up, when he met a valet de chambre coming down, who swore, in reply to the prince's questions, that his mistress was in bed and asleep. The prince retraced his steps, but presently, suspecting that the valet had told a lie, he looked back and saw the man returning hastily. He stopped, therefore, and walked up and down the yard before the door to watch if the valet reappeared, and a quarter of an hour afterwards he saw him come down, and peer about in all directions to see who was in the yard. The prince entertaining no doubt now that the Seigneur des Cheriots was with the widow, and durst not come out for fear of him, continued his promenade for a long while. Recollecting that one of the lady's chamber windows looked upon a little garden, and was not very high, he called to mind the proverb which says, "Whoso cannot pass through the door let him jump through the window." He therefore called one of his valets and said, "Go into that garden, and if you see a gentleman come down from a window, draw your sword, and the moment he is down, make your sword clash upon the wall, and shout, 'Kill! kill!' but do not touch him." The valet went to where his master ordered him, and the prince walked up and down till near midnight.

The Seigneur des Cheriots hearing that the prince was still in the yard, resolved to escape by the window, and throwing his cloak into the garden he followed it with the help of his good friends. The valet no sooner espied him than he made a great clatter with his sword, and shouted, "Kill him, kill him!" The poor gentleman, mistaking the valet for the master, was so frightened, that, without stopping to pick up his cloak, he ran off as fast as his legs could carry him, and was met by the archers of the watch, who were greatly surprised to see him running so. He durst not say anything else to them than to beg earnestly they would open the gate for him, or take him to their quarters till the next day; which they did, not having the keys.

Then it was that the prince went to bed. He found his wife asleep, woke her, and asked her to guess what o'clock it was. "I have not heard the clock strike since I came to bed," said she.

"It is past three o'clock," said he.

"Good Heavens! monsieur, where have you been staying so long?" exclaimed the wife. "I am afraid you will be the worse for it."

"Watching will never make me ill, my dear," he replied, "so long as I keep those awake who think to deceive me." And so saying, he laughed so heartily that she begged him to tell her what it was for. He told her the whole story, and showed her the wolf's skin, which his valet had carried home with him. After they had diverted themselves at

the expense of the widow and her gallant, they went to sleep with as much composure as the other pair felt fear and uneasiness lest their intrigue should be discovered.

Now the gentleman, reflecting that he could not dissemble before the prince, came to his levee next morning, and besought the prince not to expose him, and to order his cloak to be restored to him. The prince pretended not to understand him, and played his part so well that the poor gentleman did not know what to make of it. But at last he received such a rating as he had not expected; for the prince assured him that if ever he was found there again, he would speak to the king and have him banished from the court.

Judge, ladies, I pray you, if this poor widow would not have done better to speak frankly to him who did her the honor to love and esteem her, than by her dissimulation to reduce him to the necessity of seeking evidence so dishonoring to herself.

"She knew," said Geburon, "that if she told him the truth she would wholly lose his esteem, which she wished to preserve by all means."

"It strikes me," said Longarine, "that since she had chosen a husband to her liking, she had no reason to care for losing the love of all her other admirers."

"I believe," said Parlamente, "that if she had ventured to declare her marriage she would have contented herself with her husband; but wishing to conceal it until her daughters were married, she could not make up her mind to let go so good a means of cloaking her real sentiments and conduct."

"That is not it," said Saffredent; "but the fact is, that the ambition of women is so great, that they never content themselves with one lover. I have heard that the best of them like to have three-one for honor, one for interest, and the third for pleasure; and each of the three believes himself the most favored; but the first two serve the last."

"You speak of women who know neither love nor honor," said Oisille.

"There are women, madam, of the character I describe, whom you regard as the most virtuous women in the country," replied Saffredent.

"Rely upon it," said Hircan, "that a clever woman will always contrive to live where others would die of hunger."

"But when their slyness is known their case is mortal," said Longarine.

"Nay, they thrive all the better for it," said Simontault. "It is no small glory for them to be reputed more cunning than their companions. Such a reputation brings more lovers under subjection to them than does their beauty. In fact, one of the greatest pleasures known to lovers is to conduct their amours slily."

"You are speaking of criminal love," said Ennasuite; "for lawful love has no need of concealment."

"Put that notion out of your head, I beseech you," said Dagoucin, "for the more precious a drug is the less it should be exposed to the air. Secrecy is necessary whether one loves virtuously or the reverse; and that for fear of false judgment on the part of those who cannot believe a man capable of loving a woman honorably. Such persons judge others by themselves; and as they love their pleasure only they imagine that every one is like themselves. If we were all of good faith, dissimulation would be needless, at least with regard to those who would rather die than harbor a bad thought."

"I assure you, Dagoucin," said Hircan, "your philosophy is so sublime that there is not one person in this company who can compass or believe it. To hear you talk, one would say you meant to persuade us that men are either

angels, or stones, or devils."

"I know well," replied Dagoucin, "that men are men, and subject to all the passions; but I know that there are those among them who would rather die than for their pleasure the lady they love should do aught against her conscience."

"To say they would rather die is saying a great deal," said Geburon. "I could not believe it, though I were told it by the most austere monk in the world."

"I am disposed to believe," said Hircan, "there is no one whose desires do not run quite the other way. People pretend, however, not to like grapes when they are too high for them to reach."

"But," said Nomerfide, "I suppose the prince's wife was very glad that he came to know what women are."

"I assure you it was quite the reverse," said Ennasuite; "she was very sorry for it, because she loved the widow."

"She was a match for the woman who laughed when her husband kissed her servant," said Saffredent.

"Decidedly, you shall tell us that story," said Ennasuite.

"It is short," he replied, "but it will make you laugh, which is better than being long."

NOVEL LIV.

A lady laughed to see her husband kissing her servant, and being asked the reason, replied that she laughed at her shadow.

THERE lived between the Pyrenees and the Alps a gentleman named Thogas, who had a wife and children, a very fine house, and so much wealth and pleasure that he had great reason to be content. The only drawback to so many sources of enjoyment was a violent pain under the roots of the hair, on account of which the physicians advised him to desist from sleeping with his wife. To this she readily consented, preferring her husband's health and life before all things, and had her bed put at the other corner of the room, directly opposite her husband's, so that they could neither of them put their heads out without seeing each other. This lady had two chamber women. The husband and wife used often to read entertaining books in bed, the servant women holding the candle, the younger for the husband, and the other for the wife. The gentleman finding the servant younger and handsomer than his wife, took such pleasure in contemplating her, that he used to leave off reading to converse with her. His wife heard all, and was not displeased that her valets and her handmaids should amuse her husband, being sure that he loved none but herself.

One evening, after reading longer than usual, the lady looked along her husband's bed, and saw only the back of the servant who was holding the candle to him; whilst of her husband she saw nothing but his shadow projected on the white wall forming the side of the chimney which jutted into the room. She perfectly distinguished the face of both, and saw by their shadows, as clearly as she could have seen by the substance of each, if they were apart, or met, or laughed. The gentleman, who was not aware of this, and never supposed that his wife could see him, kissed his servant. For that time the wife said not a word; but seeing that the shadows often repeated the same movement, she was afraid there was reality beneath it, and she burst into such a loud laugh that the shadows separated in alarm. The gentleman asked her why she laughed so heartily, and begged she would let him have part in her merriment. "I am such a simpleton, my dear," she replied, "that I laugh at my shadow." Question her as he would, there was no getting any other answer from her. There was an end, however, to that shadowy dalliance.

I have been reminded of this incident by what you said of the lady who loved her husband's mistress.

"In faith," said Ennasuite, "if my servant had served me so, I would have got up and smashed the candle on her nose."

"You are very terrible," said Hircan; "but it would have been a bad business for you if your husband and the servant had turned round upon you and beaten you soundly. What need to make such a pother about a kiss? The wife would have done still better not to say a word, but leave her husband to divert himself. That would, perhaps, have cured him."

"Perhaps, on the contrary, she feared that the end of the diversion would make him worse," said Parlamente.

"She was not one of those of whom our Lord speaks," said Oisille, "when he says, 'We have mourned and you have not wept, we have sung and you have not danced,' for when her husband was ill she wept, and when he was merry she laughed. All good women ought thus to share with their husbands good and evil, joy and sorrow, and should love, serve, and obey them as the Church does Jesus Christ."

"Our husbands, madam," said Parlamente, "ought likewise to behave to us as Jesus Christ does to the Church."

"And so we do," said Saffredent; "and we would do something more if it were possible; for Jesus Christ died only once for his Church, and we die daily for our wives."

"Die?" exclaimed Longarine; "it strikes me that you and the rest of you here are worth more crowns that you were worth sous before you were married."

"I know why," said Saffredent. "It is because our worth is so often proved. Nevertheless, our shoulders feel the effects of having so long worn harness."

"If you had been constrained," retorted Ennasuite, "to wear harness for a month, and to lie on the bare ground you would be very glad to get back to your good wife's bed and wear the harness of which you now complain. But they say that people can bear anything except ease, and that no one knows the value of repose until he has lost it."

"This good woman, who laughed when her husband was merry," said Oisille, "was glad to enjoy her repose under any circumstances."

"It is my belief," said Longarine, "that she loved her repose better than her husband, since nothing could move her, do what he might."

"She took to heart what might be injurious to his conscience and his health," said Parlamente; "but at the same time she was not a women to make a fuss about trifles."

"You make me laugh when you talk of conscience," said Simontault. "That is a thing about which I would never have a woman make herself uneasy."

"You deserve," said Nomerfide, "to have a wife like her who plainly showed, after her husband's death, that she cared more for his money than his conscience."

"Pray tell us that tale," said Saffredent.

"I had not intended to tell so short a tale," replied Nomerfide; "but since it comes so à propos, you shall have it."

NOVEL LV.

Cunning device of a Spanish widow to defraud the Mendicant Friars of a testamentary bequest made to them by her husband.

THERE was at Saragossa a merchant who, feeling his end approach, and seeing that he must quit his possessions, which he had, perhaps, acquired with bad faith, thought to make satisfaction in part for his sins after his death by giving some little present to God, as if God gave his grace for money. After giving orders respecting his house, he desired that a fine Spanish horse, which constituted nearly the whole of his wealth, should be sold, and the money bestowed on the poor Mendicants; and he charged his wife to do this with fail immediately after his death. The burial being over, and the first tears shed, the wife, who was no more of a simpleton than Spanish women are in general, said to the man−servant, who, like her, had heard her husband deliver his last will, "Methinks I lose enough in losing my husband, whom I so tenderly loved, without losing, also, the rest of my property. I would by no means, however, contravene the orders he laid upon me, but would rather improve upon his intentions. The poor man, beguiled by the avarice of the priests, thought to make a sacrifice to God, in giving away after his death a sum, one crown of which he would not have given in his lifetime, however pressing might be the need, as you very well know; it has occurred to me, then, that we will do what he ordered us much better than he could have done it himself had he lived a few days longer, but no one in the world must know a word about it."

The man having promised to keep the secret, she continued: "You will take the horse to the market, and when you are asked the price you will say one ducat. But I have a very good cat which I want to sell also. You will sell it along with the horse, and charge for it ninety−nine ducats, making of the two one hundred ducats, which is the price at which my husband wished to sell the horse alone."

The man promptly obeyed his mistress's orders. As he was walking the horse about in the market−place, carrying the cat under his arm, a gentleman who knew the horse, and had before wished to buy it, came up and asked what he would take for it at a word. "A ducat," said the man.

"I would thank you not to make game of me," said the gentleman.

"I assure you, sir," said the man, "it will cost you more. It is true you must buy this cat at the same time, and I want ninety−nine ducats for it."

The gentleman, who thought it a pretty good bargain, paid him forthwith a ducat for the horse, and then the remainder for the cat, and had his two purchases taken home. The man on his side went off with the money to his mistress, who was delighted to get it, and failed not to bestow on the poor Mendicants, according to her husband's intentions, the ducat for which the horse had been sold, and kept the rest to provide for her own wants and those of her family.

Don't you think she was wiser than her husband, and did she not take more care of the fortune of her family than of his conscience?

"I believe she loved her husband," said Parlamente; "but seeing that most men wander in their wits on their death−bed, and knowing his intentions, she interpreted them to the advantage of her children; and in this, I think, she showed laudable prudence."

"Do you not think it a great fault," said Geburon, "to contravene the last wishes of our deceased friends?"

"A very great one," replied Parlamente, "when the testator is in his sound senses, and not raving."

"Do you call it raving," returned Geburon, "to bequeath one's property to the Church and to the poor Mendicants?"

"I do not call it raving," she answered, "to give to the poor what God has given to us; but to give away as alms what belongs to another appears to me no great proof of good sense. How commonly you see the greatest usurers in the world erecting the finest and most sumptuous chapels, as thinking to make their peace with God for a hundred thousand ducats' worth of robbery by ten thousands ducats' worth of building, just as though God did not know how to count."

"Truly, I have often wondered," said Oisille, "how they think to make their peace with God by means of things which he himself reprobated when he was on earth, such as great buildings, gildings, painting, and decorations, But if they rightly understood what God has said, that the only offering he requires of us is a humble and contrite heart, and another text in which St. Paul says that we are the temple of God in which he desires to dwell, they would have taken pains to adorn their consciences while they were alive, and not have waited for the time when a man can no longer do either good or ill; nor would they have done what is still worse, in laying upon those they leave behind the burden of giving their alms to those they would not have deigned to look upon all through their lives. But He who knows the heart cannot be deceived, and will judge them not according to their works merely, but according to the faith and charity that was in them."

"Wherefore is it, then," said Geburon, "that these Cordeliers and Mendicants talk to us of nothing at death but making great bequests to their monasteries, assuring us that they will put us into Paradise, whether we will or not?"

"How now, Geburon," said Hircan; "have you forgotten the wickedness you have related to us of the Cordeliers, that you ask how it is possible for such men to lie? I declare to you I do not think there are in the world greater lies than theirs. It may be that those among them are not to be blamed who speak on behalf of their whole community; but there are many of them who forget their vow of poverty to gratify their own avarice."

"It strikes me, Hircan," said Nomerfide, "that you know of some such case; if it is worthy of this company, I beg you will tell it us."

"I will do so," he replied, "although I dislike speaking of such people, for methinks they are of that class of whom Virgil says to Dante, 'Pass on, and heed them not.' However, to show you that they have not laid aside their passions with their mundane garments, I will tell a thing that happened." *

NOVEL LVI.

A pious lady having asked a Cordelier to provide a good husband for her daughter, he marries another Cordelier to the young lady, and possesses himself of her dowry-the cheat is discovered and punished.

A FRENCH lady who visited Padua heard that there was a Cordelier in the episcopal prison. Observing that every one talked and joked about him, she inquired the reason, and learned that this Cordelier was an old man, confessor to a very respectable and devout lady, who had been some years a widow, and had but one daughter, whom she loved so much that she spared no pains to amass wealth for her and procure her a good match. As her daughter grew up, her whole thought was how to find her a husband who might live happily with them both; that is to say, a conscientious person like herself. As she had heard it laid down by some stupid preacher that it was better to do wrong by the advice of the doctors of the Church than to do right trusting in the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, she applied to her confessor, an aged monk, who was a doctor of theology, and bore a blameless reputation throughout the town, never doubting but that she should secure her own peace and her daughter's through the advice and the prayers of the good father.

She besought him earnestly to choose a husband for her daughter-such a husband as he knew would be suitable to a girl who loved God and her honor. He told her he must first of all implore the grace of the Holy Spirit by fasting and prayer, and then, God lending him light, he hoped he should be able to find what he sought. Upon that he went away to ponder over the affair. As the mother had told him that she had five hundred ducats ready to hand over to her daughter's husband, and that she would maintain both husband and wife, and supply them with lodging, furniture, and clothes, he bethought him of a handsome strapping young brother of his order on whom he would bestow the pretty girl, the house, furniture, board, and clothing, while he himself would keep the five hundred ducats to assuage his burning covetousness. After he had talked with his man and arranged everything, he went to the mother and said to her: "I believe, madam, that God has sent me his angel Raphael, as of old to Tobias, to enable me to find a spouse for your daughter. I have in my house the most respectable young gentleman in Italy, who has seen your daughter, and is deeply in love with her. When I was to−day at prayer, God sent him to me, and he declared how much he longs for this marriage; and I, knowing his family and his relations, and that he comes of a notable race, promised to speak to you on the subject. I know but one inconvenience attending this match, which is, that wishing to save one of his friends whom another man would have slain, he drew his sword to part them; but it happened that his friend killed the other; in consequence of which, though he never struck a stroke, he is nevertheless a fugitive, because he was present at the murder, and had drawn his sword. His parents have advised him to retire to this city, where he wears the dress of a student, and where he will remain incognito until this affair of his is arranged, which it is hoped it will be before long. You see, consequently, that it would be necessary for the marriage to be secret, and that you should not object to his going every day to the public lectures, and coming home in the evening to sup and sleep in your house."

"I see a great advantage to myself in what you tell me, sir," said the mother; "for at least I shall have by me what I desire most in the world."

The Cordelier produced the gallant in very good trim, and with a handsome doublet of crimson satin. He was so well received that the betrothal took place without more delay, and midnight had no sooner struck than mass was said, they were wedded and bedded, and remained together until day−break, when the bridegroom said to his bride, that, in order to maintain his incognito, he was obliged to leave her and go to the college. After putting on his crimson satin doublet and his long robe, not forgetting his black silk coif, he took leave of his wife, who was still in bed, and assured her that every evening he would come and sup with her, but that she must not expect him at dinner. Thereupon he went away, and left his wife the happiest woman in the world in her own esteem, for having met with so excellent a match. Away went the young Cordelier to the old father, and handed over the five hundred ducats, according to their previous agreement, and in the evening he returned to her who regarded him as her husband; nor did he fail to make himself so beloved by her and by his mother−in−law, that they would not have exchanged him for the greatest prince in the world.

This went on for some time; but as God has pity on those who honestly err, it came to pass that the mother and daughter had a mind to go hear mass at the church of the Cordeliers, and to pay a visit at the same time to the good father confessor through whose instrumentality they thought themselves so well provided, the one with a son−in−law, the other with a husband. Chance so ordained, that, not finding the confessor there, nor any one else they knew, they were content to hear high mass, which was just beginning, whilst they awaited the confessor's arrival. The young wife attending closely to the divine service, was greatly surprised when the priest turned to say Dominus vobiscum, for she fancied she beheld her husband, or some one singularly resembling him. She said not a word, however, but waited till he appeared again, when she had a still better view of him than before, and no longer doubting that it was he, "Oh, mother!" she exclaimed, "what do I see?"

"What is it?" said the mother.

"My husband saying mass, or somebody the most like him in the world."

"Pray my dear," said the mother, who had not taken much notice of the priest, "don't let such a notion into your head. It is absolutely impossible that such pious men should practise such a cheat. It would be a great sin in you to believe any such thing."

For all that the mother did not fail to use her eyes, and when it came to saying Ite Missa est, she saw for certain that no twin brothers were ever more like each other. Nevertheless, so simple was she, that she would fain have said, "God preserve me from believing my eyes." However, as the matter was one which so deeply concerned her daughter, she determined to sift it to the bottom and know the truth. The husband, who had not perceived them, having returned home, she said to her daughter, "We shall now know the truth about your husband if you choose. When he is in bed I will come in, and you will pull off his coif from behind before he is aware of it. We shall see then if he is tonsured like the one who said mass."

So said, so done. The wicked husband was no sooner in bed than the old lady came in, and took him by both hands as if in play, whilst the daughter lifted up the back of his cap and discovered his fine shorn crown. Appalled at the sight, they instantly called in the domestics, who seized and bound him, and kept him fast till morning, in spite of all his excuses and fine words, which moved no one. Next morning the mother sent for her confessor, under pretence that she had some great secret to communicate to him. He came with speed, and had no sooner entered her doors than she had him seized like the other, upbraiding him with the cheat he had put upon her. After this she committed them both into the hands of justice; and if the judges were honest men, it is not likely that this crime was left unpunished.

You see from this, ladies, that those who take the vow of poverty are not exempt from being tempted by avarice, and this is what leads them to the commission of so much mischief.

"Or rather of so much good," said Saffredent; "for how often did the monk make good cheer with the five hundred ducats which the old woman would have hoarded? Besides, the poor girl who had longed so much for a husband was put by his means into a condition to have two, and to judge the better of all hierarchies."

"You always entertain the falsest opinions I ever heard," said Oisille. "This comes of your believing that the temperaments of all women are like your own."

"By your leave, madam, that is not it," said Saffredent; "and I would with all my heart that women could be as easily satisfied as men."

"That is a bad saying," replied Oisille, "for there is no one here but knows the very contrary, and that what you say is not true. The tale we have heard is a convincing proof of the ignorance of poor women, and the wickedness of those whom we regard as better than the generality of men; for neither the mother nor the daughter would do anything by themselves, but submitted to the advice of those whom they believed to be wise and good."

"There are women so hard to please," said Longarine, "that it seems as if nothing less than angels will suit them."

"Thence it comes," said Simontault, "that they often meet with devils; and especially those of them who, not trusting in God's grace, imagine that by their own good sense, or by that of others, they shall find in this world the felicity which can only come from God."

"Why, Simontault!" exclaimed Oisille, "I was not aware that you knew so much good."

"Madam," replied he, "it is a pity I am not much tried and proved, because, for want of being known to you, I see you have formed a bad opinion of me. I may fairly, however, practice a Cordelier's trade, since a Cordelier has put his hand to mine."

"Then you call deceiving women your trade," said Parlamente; "thus, out of your own mouth, you condemn yourself."

"If I had deceived a hundred thousand of them," he returned, "I should not yet have revenged myself for the woes which one alone of their sex has made me endure."

"I know," retorted Parlamente, "that you complain perpetually of women; yet we see you so merry and in such good case, that there is no appearance of your having suffered as much as you say. But the Fair Lady without Mercy replies that 'it suits well to say so, by way of deriving some comfort from it.'" *

"You quote a notable doctor," said Simontault, "who is not only disagreeable, but makes all those ladies so who have read and followed his doctrine."

"Nevertheless, his doctrine is as profitable to young ladies as any I know," rejoined Parlamente.

"Were it come to that," said Simontault, "that the ladies were without mercy, we might well let our horses rest and our harness rust until the next war, and do nothing but think of household affairs. I pray you tell me, is it to a lady's credit that she should be without pity, charity, love, or compassion?"

"Without charity or love, no," replied Parlamente, "that she should not be, but that word compassion sounds so badly among women, that they cannot use it without wronging their honor. For what is this pity or compassion? It is properly granting the favor one asks for. Now we know well what is the favor men usually crave."

"With your good leave, madam," said Simontault, "some there are so moderate that the only favor they ask is liberty to speak."

"You remind me of one who was contented with a glove," said Parlamente.

"Let us know something about a lover who was so easy to deal with," said Hircan.

"I will tell you the tale with pleasure," she replied.

NOVEL LVII.

Of a ridiculous milord who wore a lady's glove on his dress−coat.

KING LOUIS XI. sent Monsieur de Montmorency to England in the capacity of ambassador. He conducted himself so well there that he won the friendship of the king and all the other princes, and they even communicated to him many secret affairs on which they wished to have his advice. One day, when he was at an entertainment given by the king, he was seated beside a milord of high family, who wore, fastened to his doublet, a small glove such as women use. The glove was fastened with golden hooks, and the seams were adorned with such a great quantity of diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and pearls, that the value of the glove was something extraordinary. Monsieur de Montmorency cast his eyes on it so often, that the milord perceived he wished to ask him the reason of his magnifience; and, thinking the explanantion would redound to his honor, he said to the ambassador, "I perceive, monsieur, that you are surprised I have so much enriched this poor glove; but I will tell you the reason. I look upon you as a gallant man, and I am sure you know what love is. You must know that I have all my life loved a lady whom I still love and shall love even after I am dead. As my heart was bolder to make a good choice than my tongue to declare it, I remained for seven years without daring even to show any signs of loving her, for fear, if she perceived them, I should lose the opportunities I had of being frequently with her-a thought which terrified me more than death. But one day, being in a meadow and gazing upon her, I was seized with such a

palpitation of the heart that I lost all color and countenance. She having noticed this, and asked me what was the matter, I replied that I felt intolerably sick at heart. Thinking that this sickness was one in which love had no share, she expressed her pity for it; and that made me to entreat that she would put her hand on my heart, and see how it beat. She did so, more from charity than affection, and as I held her gloved hand on my heart, its motions became so violent that she perceived I had spoken the truth. Then I pressed her hand on my bosom, and said to her, 'Receive this heart, madam, which struggles to escape from my bosom and put itself in the hands of her from whom I hope for grace, life, and pity. It is this heart, madam, which now constrains me to declare the love I have long cherished for you in secret, for neither my heart nor I, madam, can longer withstand so potent a god.' Surprised at so unexpected a declaration, she would have withdrawn her hand, but I held it so fast that her glove remained with me instead of that cruel hand. As I never had before or since any other approach to nearer intimacy with her, I placed this glove over my heart as the fittest plaister I could apply to it. I have enriched it with all the finest jewels in my possession; but what is dearer to me than all of them is the glove itself, which I would not give for the realm of England, for there is nothing I prize in the world so much as to feel it on my bosom."

The Seigneur de Montmorency, who would rather have had a lady's hand than her glove, highly extolled his gallantry, and told him he was the most genuine lover he had ever seen, and worthy of better treatment, since he set so much store by such a trifle. "But," said he, "there is some comfort even in ill luck, as the proverb says. You were so much in love, that if you had had something better than the glove you would perhaps have died of joy." The milord admitted this probability, without perceiving that Monsieur de Montmorency was making game of him.

If all the men in the world were of this character, the ladies might trust them, since it would cost them no more than a glove.

"I have been so well acquainted with Monsieur de Montmorency," said Geburon, "that I am sure he would not have been so easily satisfied as the Englishman, otherwise he would not have achieved so many successes as he did in love; for, as the old song says, 'Of a faint heart in love no one hears any good.'"

"You may be sure the poor lady withdrew her hand in great haste when she felt the great agitation of the heart," said Saffredent. "She thought, no doubt, that the milord was about to expire; and there is nothing, they say, which women abhor so much as to touch dead bodies."

"If you had frequented hospitals as much as taverns," said Ennasuite, "you would not say that; for you would have seen women lay out dead bodies for burial, which men with all their boldness were often afraid to approach."

"It is true," said Simontault, "that there is no one on whom penance has been imposed who has not done the reverse of that which afforded him pleasure; witness a lady I once saw in a distinguished house, who, to compensate for the pleasure she had taken in kissing a man she loved, was found at four o'clock in the morning kissing the dead body of a man who had been killed the preceding day, and for whom she had never had any especial love more than for another. Every one was then aware that she was doing penance for her past pleasures."

"This is just the way," said Oisille, "in which men poison all the good acts done by women. My opinion is that we ought to kiss neither the living nor the dead, except after the manner which God commands."

"For my part," said Hircan, "I care so little for kissing any other woman than my wife, that I willingly subscribe to any terms that may be made on the subject; but I pity the young folk whom you would deprive of such a small gratification, annulling the precept of Saint Paul, who ordained that people should kiss in osculo sancto."

"If Saint Paul had been a man like you," said Nomerfide, "we should have demanded palpable evidence of the spirit of god which spoke in him."

"To the last you will rather doubt Holy Writ than give up a hair's breadth of one of your petty ceremonies," said Geburon.

"God forbid," replied Oisille, "that we should doubt Holy Writ, though we put little faith in your lies. There is no woman but knows that her proper creed consists in never doubting the Word of God, and always distrusting that of men."

"I believe," said Simontault, "that there are more men deceived by women than women deceived by men. Their want of love for us hinders them from believing the truth; whilst we, on the contrary, love them to such excess, that we readily believe their falsehoods, and find ourselves their dupes before we have imagined the possibility of their duping us."

"I suppose," said Parlamente, "you have heard some fool complain of having been duped by some light woman. In fact, what you state carries so little weight with it, that it has need of being supported by some example. So, if you have one to adduce, let us hear it. I do not mean to say that we are bound to believe you; but it will not pain our ears to hear you malign us, for we know the truth of the matter."

"Well, that being so," said Simontault, "you shall be satisfied."

NOVEL LVIII.

How a lady of the court pleasantly revenged herself on her faithless lover.

THERE was at the court of Francis I. a lady of lively wit, who, by her beauty, her good breeding, and pleasing tongue, had won the hearts of several gentlemen, with whom she contrived to pass the time very well without exposing her honor, playing with them so pleasantly that they knew not on what to reckon; for the most confident were in despair, and the most despairing were not without hope. However, whilst making sport of most of them she could not help greatly loving one of them, whom she called her cousin-a name which served as a pretext for a closer intimacy. But, as there is nothing stable in the world, their friendship often turned into anger, and then again became stronger than ever, in such wise that the whole court could not be ignorant of it. One day this lady, in order to let it be seen that she was passionless, as well as to tease him on account of whose love she had suffered much annoyance, showed him a more gracious countenance than ever she had done before. The gentleman, who was not deficient in boldness either in war or in love, began hotly to press the suit he had often before addressed to her. She pretended she could no longer resist, granted what he asked, and told him that, in order to do so, she would go up to her chamber, which was on a garret−floor, where she knew that there was nobody, and as soon as he saw her go, he was to follow her; and then, as she said, so graciously was she disposed towards him, that he would find her alone.

The gentleman believed her, and went with great delight to amuse himself with the other ladies, until he should see her depart. His fair one, who was not deficient in any of the sly ways of women, went up to Madame Margaret, the king's daughter, and the Duchess of Montpensier, and said to them, "I will show you, if you like, the finest sport you have ever seen." The princesses, who were no friends to melancholy, begged she would tell them what the sport was. "There is such a one, whom you both know," she said, "a charming man, if there ever was one, but the most audacious in the world. You know how many tricks he has played on me; and you know, also, that when I loved him most he quitted me for others; which vexed me more than I suffered to appear. But now God has given me an opportunity to be revenged. I am now going to my room, which is overhead; and if you will watch, you will presently see him come up after me. When he shall have passed the galleries, and is about to ascend the stairs go both of you to the window, help me to cry 'Thief! thief!' and you will see what a rage he will be in. I am sure his anger will not become him badly; and if he does not openly abuse me, I am sure he will not fail to do so in his heart."

This plan was agreed on, not without much laughter beforehand; for there was no gentleman who waged war more on the ladies, all of whom loved and esteemed him so much, that for nothing in the world would they have exposed themselves to his raillery. As soon as the concocter of the plot had left them, the two princesses, who anticipated a large share in the glory which she was to win from the gentleman, set themselves on the watch, and when he went out they followed him into the gallery. There, suspecting nothing, he muffled himself in his cloak to hide his face, and descended the stairs to the court, but, seeing some one by whom he did not wish to be observed, he traversed the court and returned by another way, all the while without perceiving the princesses, who saw all his movements. When he reached the staircase leading to the fair one's chamber, the princesses posted themselves at the window, and presently they heard the lady above crying "Thief! thief! "with all her might. The two princesses repeated the cry so loudly that they were heard all over the château. I leave you to imagine the vexation of the gentleman as he ran away, not so well muffled but that he was known by those who were in the secret. They often rallied him on the affair afterwards; nor did she who had played him the trick spare him, but told him to his face that she had well revenged herself. But he had such ready answers, and defended himself so cleverly, that he would have had them believe he had suspected their design, and that he had only promised to go to the lady to make sport of her in some way, assuring them he would never have given himself the trouble for her sake, for he had long ceased to love her. But the ladies would not own themselves defeated in that way, and the affair is still undecided.

If he really believed the lady, which is not probable, since he was so wary and so bold that few or no men of his age and time surpassed him, whereof his glorious death is good evidence, it strikes me that one cannot help admitting that gallant men who are in love are often the dupes of ladies from excess of credulity. *

"In faith," said Ennasuite, "I applaud the lady for what she did; for when a man loves a lady and quits her for another, she can never revenge herself too much."

"True, if she is loved," said Parlamente; "but some there are who love without making sure they are loved; and when they perceive that their gallants love elsewhere, they accuse them of inconstancy. But women of discretion never suffer themselves to be thus deceived. They pay no heed to anything but the truth, for fear of being exposed to the irksome consequences of falsehood; for the true and the false talk the same language."

"If all women were of your way of thinking," said Simontault, "men might box up their supplications. But for all that you and others like you can say, we will never believe that women are as incredulous as they are fair. Under this conviction we will live as content as you would wish to render us uneasy by your maxims."

"As I very well know the lady who played this good trick," said Longarine, "I can have no difficulty in believing any slythings that may be attributed to her. Since she did not spare her own husband, it is not likely that she would spare her lover."

"What, her husband?" said Simontault. "Then you know more than I; so pray tell us what you know."

"I will, since you wish it," she replied.

NOVEL LIX.

The same lady, whose husband was jealous of her without just cause, contrives to detect him in such a position with one of her women that he is obliged to humble himself, and allow his wife to live as she pleases.

THE lady of whom you told the tale was married to a man of good and ancient family, whose fortune was not inferior to his birth. Their marriage was solely the result of their mutual love. The wife, who was of all women in the world the most ingenuous, made no secret of it to her husband that she had lovers, whom she made game of,

and only used for her pastime. Her husband had his share in this pleasure; but in the long run he grew dissatisfied with this manner of proceeding. On the one hand he took it amiss that she had long visits from persons he regarded neither as relations nor as friends, and on the other he was not pleased with the expenditure he was compelled to make in attending the court. For this reason he retired to his own house as often as he could; but he received so many visits there that his expenses were hardly diminished. Wherever he was, his wife always found means to divert herself, whether with play, or dancing, or other amusements, to which young ladies may decorously addict themselves. When her husband sometimes told her that they spent too much, she would reply that he might be assured she would never make him a cuckold, but only a rogue. In fact, she was so fond of magnificence in attire, that she insisted on having dresses as rich and fine as any seen at the court, to which her husband took her as seldom as possible, notwithstanding her eager desire to be always there. For this reason she made herself so so complaisant to her husband that it was with difficulty he refused her most extravagant requests.

One day, when she had failed in all her devices to induce him to take her to court, she perceived that he looked very wistfully at a chambermaid of hers, and thought she might turn this circumstance in some way to her own advantage. She questioned the girl in private, and managed so cleverly, by dint of promises and threats, that she made her confess that since she had been in her service not a day had passed in which her master had not made love to her; but that she would rather die than do anything contrary to God and her honor, the more so as the lady had done her the honor to receive her into her service, which would make the crime double.

The lady, on learning her husband's infidelity, was at once vexed and rejoiced. She was vexed that at the very time when he testified so much regard for her, he was furtively seeking means to put an affront upon her under her very eyes, and to quit her for a girl she regarded as greatly inferior to herself in beauty and attractions. She was rejoiced, because she hoped to surprise her husband in the fact, and to work him in such a way that he would never again reproach her with her lovers or her fondness for residing at court. To this end she begged the girl to yield gradually to her husband's solicitations upon certain conditions. The girl made some objections; but her mistress having made herself warrant for her life and honor, she promised to do whatever she pleased.

The next time the husband accosted the girl he found her quite changed, and pressed her to comply with more than his usual vivacity; but knowing her part by rote, she represented to him that she was a poor girl, and would become poorer than ever if she yielded to him, because she would be dismissed by her mistress, in whose service she hoped to save enough to get her a good husband. The gentleman replied, that she had no need to be uneasy on that score, for he would settle her better in marriage than her mistress could do; and, moreover, he would manage the intrigue with such secrecy that no one should ever be able to say a word against her. Thereupon the bargain was concluded. When the parties came to deliberate on the place where it was to be sealed, the girl said she knew no better place, or less likely to be suspected, than a little house in the park, in which it happened, fortunately, that there was a chamber and a bed. The gentleman, who would never have made objections to any place proposed, was quite satisfied with this, and awaited with great impatience the day and hour agreed on.

The girl kept her word with her mistress, told her all that had passed between her master and herself and said that the rendezvous was for the next day after dinner. She would not fail, she said, to give her mistress a signal when it was time for her to keep the appointment, and begged she would not fail to notice it, and be upon the spot in time to deliver her from the peril to which she exposed herself for her sake. The lady vowed she might depend upon her, begged her to have no fear, and assured her she would never forsake her, and would perfectly secure her from her master's resentment.

Next day after dinner the gentleman showed a fairer face to his wife than he had ever done; this was by no means agreeable to her: but she dissembled so well that he never suspected what was passing in her mind. When dinner was over, she asked him how he would while away the time. He said he knew nothing better for the purpose than to play at cent. * The company then sat down to play, but she would not be of the party, saying she would be as much amused looking on. Before he sat down to play he did not forget to tell the girl to remember her promise. The game had no sooner begun than she went out of the room, making a sign to her mistress that she was setting

out on the pilgrimage she had to make. The signal was not lost upon the wife, but the husband saw nothing. An hour afterwards, however, one of his valets having made him a sign from a distance, he told his wife he had a headache, and must go into the open air and rest a little. She knew what ailed him quite as well as he did himself, and asked him, should she hold his cards. He begged her to do so, and said he would soon be back. There was no need to hurry himself, she said, for she could play for two hours without being tired. The husband then retired to his chamber, and thence to the park. His wife, who knew a short way, waited a little, and then suddenly pretending to have the colic, she gave up her hand to another.

The moment she left the room she threw off her high pattens, and ran as fast to the place where she did not choose the bargain to be concluded without her, and arrived in good time, almost as soon as her husband. She remained behind the door to hear the fine things he said to her servant, and when she saw that he was approaching the criminal point, she caught hold of him behind, and said, "I am too near for you to take another." It is needless to ask if he was then in a towering passion, both at being frustrated of his expected pleasure, and at seeing that his wife, whose good−will he was afraid of losing for ever, knew more than he would have had her know. Believing, however, that it was a trick played upon him by the girl, he ran at her with such fury, without speaking to his wife, that if the latter had not held his hands he would have killed her. He said, in a transport of rage, that she was the worst baggage he had ever known, and that if his wife had waited, she would have seen that he only came there to try her and make a fool of her; and that instead of what she expected he would have given her a flogging. But the wife knew better than to accept such flimsy excuses, and rated him so roundly that he was greatly afraid she would leave him. He made her all the promises she desired, and touched by her sage remonstrances, he confessed that he was wrong to take it amiss that she had lovers. He agreed with her that a handsome and respectable woman is not the less virtuous for being loved, provided she say and do nothing contrary to her honor; but that a man is unpardonable who takes pains to pursue a girl who does not love him, and to wrong his wife and his own conscience. He ended by promising that he would no longer prevent her from going to court, nor ever take it amiss that she had lovers, convinced, as he was, that she retained them only for her diversion, not for any regard she had for them.

This language was not displeasing to the lady, who thought she had gained a great point; however, she pretended quite the reverse, saying she did not care to go to court, and that there was nothing dearer to her than his affection, without which all companies were odious to her. A woman, she said, who was loved by her husband, and who loved him as she did hers, carried with her a safe−conduct, warranting her to speak with all the world and be blamed by no one. The poor gentleman took such pains to assure her of the love he cherished for her, that at last they went back good friends. To avoid a recurrence of the mischief, he begged her to dismiss the servant who had caused all this hubbub. She did so; but it was by marrying her well and respectably at the expense of her husband, who, to make his wife forget the prank he had played took her soon to court with such pomp and magnificence that she had full reason to be satisfied.

This, ladies, was what made me say I was not surprised at the trick she had played on one of her lovers after the one I knew she had played on her husband.

"You have depicted to us a very sly wife, and a very stupid husband," said Hircan. "Since he had gone so far, he ought not to have stopped on so fair a road."

"And what should he have done?" inquired Longarine.

"What he wanted to do," replied Hircan, "for his wife was not less angry at knowing what he had intended to do than if he had actually done it. Perhaps she would have liked him better if he had shown himself bolder and a better fellow."

"That's all very well," said Ennasuite; "but where do you find men who can force two women at once? The wife would have defended her rights, and the girl her maiden−head."

"That is true," said Hircan; "but a strong and bold man will fearlessly attack two weak persons, and be sure to get the better of them."

"I admit that if he had drawn his sword he might have killed them both," returned Ennasuite; "but I don't see how he could have escaped from them otherwise. Tell us, pray, what would you have done, had you been in his place?"

"I would have thrown my arms round my wife and carried her out of doors, and then I would have done what I pleased to the servant by fair means or by force."

"It is enough, Hircan," said Parlamente, "that you know how to do wrong."

"I am sure, Parlamente," he replied, "that I do not scandalize the innocent before whom I speak, or wish to maintain a bad cause. I neither praise the enterprise which was bad in itself, nor the enterpriser who stopped short half−way for fear rather than for love. I applaud a man who loves his wife as God ordains; but when he does not love her, I do not think the better of him for fearing her."

"Truly," returned Parlamente, "if love did not make you a good husband, what you would do for fear would be no great thing, and so I should esteem it."

"The love I have for you, Parlamente," said Hircan, "subjects me as much to your wishes as the fear of death and hell could do."

"You may say what you will," his wife replied, "but I have reason to be content with what I have seen and known of you. As for what I have not known, I have no wish to doubt, and still less to inquire about it."

"It is in my opinion," said Nomerfide, "a great folly in women to pry so curiously into what their husbands do; but it is no less a one in husbands to want to know every step taken by their wives. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof, without taking so much thought for the morrow."

"Nevertheless it is sometimes necessary," said Oisille, "to inquire into matters in which the honor of a house is concerned; that is to say, for the purpose of setting things right, and not from a wish to judge ill of persons, for every one is liable to error."

"Many have come to mischief for want of inquiring into their wives' freaks," said Geburon.

"If you know any instance of the kind, pray tell it us," said Longarine.

"I will do so with pleasure," he replied, "since you desire it."

NOVEL LX.

A woman of Paris quits her husband for one of the king's chanters, counterfeits death, and is buried, but secretly disinterred alive and well-her husband marries another wife, and fifteen years afterwards is obliged to repudiate her, and take back his first wife.

THERE was in Paris a man so good−natured that he would have scrupled to believe that a man had lain with his wife though he had seen it with his own eyes. This poor man married the most profligate woman in the world, but never noticed her licentiousness, and treated her as though she were the best of wives. But one day, when King Louis XII. was in Paris, this woman went and gave herself up to one of that prince's chanters; and when she found

that the king was quitting Paris, and that she was about to lose her lover, she resolved to go with him and quit her husband. The chanter had no objection to this, and took her to a house he had near Blois, where they lived long together. The poor husband, not finding his wife, searched for her in all directions, and learned at last that she had gone off with the chanter. Wishing to recover his lost sheep, which he had badly guarded, he wrote her several letters, begging her to return, and promising to receive her, provided she would lead a good life for the future; but she took such pleasure in the chanter's singing that she had forgotten her husband's voice, made no account of his fair words, and snapped her fingers at him. The incensed husband then gave her notice that he would claim her legally through the Church, since she would not return to him of her own accord; whereupon, fearing that if justice meddled with the matter she and her chanter would come badly off, she devised a scheme worthy of such a woman.

She pretended to be sick, sent for some worthy women of the city to visit her, and they came the more willingly as they hoped to make her illness instrumental towards bringing her back from her vicious ways. To this end each of them addressed the best remonstrances she could to her, and the seemingly dying woman listened to them with tears, confessed her sin, and played the part so well, that the whole company had pity on her, believing her tears and her repentance to be sincere. They tried to console the poor penitent, told her that God was not so terrible by a great deal as some indiscreet preachers represented him to be, and assured her He would never withhold his mercy from her; and then they sent for a good man to hear her confession. Next day the priest of the parish came and administered to her the holy sacrament, which she received with so much devotion that all the good women of the town who were present were moved with tears, and praised the divine goodness for having had pity on the poor creature. Afterwards, upon her feigning that she could no longer swallow food, the priest brought her extreme unction, which she received with many fine signs of devotion; for she could hardly speak, at least so it was believed. She lay a long while in the same state; but at last the spectators imagined that she gradually lost her sight, her hearing, and her other senses, whereupon everybody began to cry, "Jesus! Lord! have mercy!" Night being now at hand, and the ladies having some way to go, they all retired. As they were leaving the house, word was brought them that she had just expired. They said a De profundis for her, and went away.

The priest asked the chanter where he would have her buried. He replied that she had expressed a wish to be buried in the cemetery, and that it would be advisable under the circumstances that the interment should take place by night. The unfortunate woman was laid out for burial by a servant, who took good care not to hurt her; and then she was carried by torchlight to the grave which the chanter had caused to be dug. When the body was carried past the houses of those who had seen the deceased receive extreme unction, they all came out and accompanied her to the grave, where the priests and the women left her, but the chanter remained after them. The moment he saw that the company were far enough off, he and his servant woman lifted the pretended dead woman out of the grave more alive than ever, and took her back to his house, in which he kept her long concealed.

The husband, who was bent on recovering his wife, went to Blois to demand justice, and found that she was dead and buried. The fact was certified to him by all the ladies of Blois, who related to him what a fine end she had made; and greatly did the good man rejoice, believing that the soul of his wife was in Paradise, and himself disencumbered of her wicked body. He returned to Paris with a glad heart, and entered into a second marriage with a respectable young woman, a good housewife, by whom he had several children, and with whom he lived fourteen or fifteen years. But at last rumor, which keeps no secrets, informed him that his first wife was not dead, and that she was still with her chanter. The poor man dissembled as much as he could, affecting to know nothing, and heartily wishing that the rumor might be false; but his virtuous wife heard of it, and was so distressed that she almost died of grief. Could she have concealed her misfortune without wounding her conscience, she would gladly have done it; but that was impossible, for the Church took up the matter at once, and began by separating them until the truth should have been ascertained. The fact having been verified, the poor man was constrained to quit his good wife and go after his bad one. He came to Blois shortly after Francis I. became king. He found there Queen Claude and the regent−mother, laid his complaint before them, and demanded of them her whom he would fain not have found; but he was forced to seek her, to the great pity of all beholders.

His wife, on being confronted with him, insisted for a long time that he was not her husband; which he would gladly have believed if he could. Angry but unabashed, she then told him she would rather die than go back to him. The good man was very well satisfied with this declaration; but the ladies, before whom she spoke so impudently, condemned her to return to her husband, and so sharply admonished and threatened the chanter, that he was constrained to tell his ugly mistress he did not want to have anything more to do with her, and that she must go back to her husband. Thus repulsed on all sides, the wretched creature went away with her husband and was better treated by him than she deserved.

I repeat, ladies, that if the poor husband had taken heed to his wife, he would not thus have lost her; for a thing well watched is not easily lost, and doubtless the proverb is true, which says that negligence makes the thief.

"It is strange," remarked Hircan, "strong love is where it seems least reasonable."

"I have heard," said Simontault, "that one might sooner break two marriages than the love of a priest and his servant."

"I believe it," said Ennasuite, "for those who bind others in marriage know how to fasten the knot so tightly that it is only to be undone by death; the doctors, too, maintain that spiritual language is more persuasive than other, and consequently spiritual love surpasses every other kind."

"I cannot pardon ladies," said Dagoucin, "who forsake a well−bred husband or lover for a priest, however good−looking."

"Leave our holy mother the Church alone, I pray you," said Hircan, "and be assured that it is a great pleasure for poor timid women to sin in secret with those who can absolve them; for some there are who are much more ashamed of confessing a sin than of committing it."

"You speak of such as know not God," said Oisille, "and imagine that secret things will not be revealed before the whole host of Heaven. But I do not believe that it is for sake of confession that such women seek confessors. The enemy has so blinded them that they think much more of settling down upon a place that seems to them the most secret and secure, than of having absolution for the guilt of which they do not repent."

"Repent, indeed!" exclaimed Saffredent. "They think themselves much more saintly than other women, and I am sure that there are some who think it is a great honor to them to persevere in intrigues of this sort."

"From the way in which you express yourself," said Oisille, "one would think you know some such person. That being the case, I beg you will begin the day to−morrow by telling us what you know. There goes the last bell for vespers; for the monks went away after our tenth novel, and left us to decide our dispute between ourselves."

So saying she rose, and the company following her example, they went to church, where they found they were waited for. After vespers they supped, and not without talking over several fine tales. After supper they all went, according to custom, to divert themselves in the meadow, and then to bed, to have their memories clearer next day.