

THE HEPTAMERON: First Day

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

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NOVEL I.

A Woman of Alençon having two Lovers, one for her Pleasure and the other for her Profit, caused that one of the two to be Slain who was the first to Discover her Gallantries.-She obtained her Pardon and that of her Husband, who had fled the Country, and who afterwards, in order to save some Money, applied to a Necromancer.-The Matter was found out and Punished.

IN the lifetime of the last Duke Charles, there was at Alençon a proctor named St. Aignan, who had married a gentlewoman of that country more handsome than virtuous, who, for her beauty and her levity, was much courted by the Bishop of Sées. In order to accomplish his ends, this prelate took care to amuse the husband so well, that not only he took no notice of the doings of either of the pair, but even forgot the attachment he had always felt towards his masters. He passed suddenly from fidelity to perfidy, and finally went the length of practising sorceries to cause the death of the duchess. The prelate maintained a long correspondence with this unlucky woman, who intrigued with him rather from motives of interest than of love; whereto she was also solicited by her husband. But she entertained such a passion for the son of the Lieutenant-General of Alençon, named Du Mesnil, that it half crazed her; and she often made the prelate give her husband some commission or another, that she might see the lieutenant-general's son at her ease. This affair lasted a long while, the prelate being entertained for her purse, and the other for her pleasure. She vowed to Du Mesnil that if she received the bishop well, it was only that she might be the more free to continue her caresses to himself; and that whatever she did, the bishop got nothing but words, and he might be assured that nobody but himself should ever have anything else of her.

One day when her husband had to wait upon the bishop, she asked leave of him to go to the country, alleging that the air of the city did not agree with her. No sooner had she arrived at his farm, than she wrote to the lieutenant's son, bidding him not fail to visit her about ten o'clock at night. The poor young man did so, but on his arrival the servant woman who usually let him in, met him and said, "Go elsewhere, my friend; for your place is filled." Du Mesnil supposing that the husband had returned, asked the servant how all was going on. Seeing before her a handsome, well-bred young man, the girl could not help pitying him to think how much he loved, and how little

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he was loved. With this feeling , she resolved to acquaint him with her mistress' behavior, believing that it would cure him of loving her so much. She told him that the Bishop of Sées had but just entered the house, and was in bed with her mistress, who had not expected him till the following day; but having detained the husband at his own residence, he had stolen away by night to visit her. The lieutenant's son was thunderstruck at this disclosure, and could hardly bring himself to believe it. To clear up his doubts, he secreted himself in a neighboring house, where he remained on sentry till three o'clock in the morning, when he saw the bishop come out, and recognized him but too well, in spite of his disguise.

The young man returned in despair to Alençon where his wicked mistress arrived soon after. Never doubting but that she should dupe him as usual, she lost no time in coming to see him. But he told her that since she had touched sacred things, she was too holy to talk to a sinner like him, but a sinner so repentant, that he hoped his sin would soon be forgiven. When she found she was detected, and that excuses and promises never to offend in that way again were of no avail, she went off and complained to her bishop. After long pondering over the matter, she told her husband that she could no longer reside in Alençon, because the lieutenant's son, whom he thought so much his friend, was incessantly importuning her; and she begged that in order to prevent all suspicion, he would take a house at Argentan. The husband, who let himself be led by her, easily consented.

They had been but a few days settled in Argentan, when this wretched woman sent word to the lieutenant's son that he was the most wicked of men, and that she was not ignorant that he publicly maligned her and the prelate; but that she would yet find means to make him repent of this. The young man, who had never spoken to any one but herself, and who was afraid of involving himself in a quarrel with the prelate, mounted his horse and rode to Argentan, attended by two of his servants. He found the lady at the Jacobins, where she was hearing vespers. "I am come, madam," he said, "to protest to you before God, that I have never complained of you to any but yourself. You have behaved so vilely to me, that what I have said to you is not half what you deserve. But if any one says that I have publicly spoken ill of you, I am here to give that person the lie in your presence."

The proctor's wife, seeing that there were many people in the church, and that he was accompanied by two stout men, put constraint upon herself, and spoke to him as civilly as she could. She told him she did not doubt the truth of what he said; that she believed him too upright to speak ill of anybody, and still less of her, who always loved him; but as something had come to her husband's ears, she begged he would say before him that he had never spoken as had been said, and that he did not believe a word of such tales. To this he readily consented, and took her by the arm to conduct her home; but she begged him not to do so, lest her husband should suppose that she had schooled him as to what he should say. Then taking one of his servants by the sleeve, she said, "Let this man come with me, and when it is time he shall come and fetch you. Meanwhile you may remain quietly in your lodging." He, never dreaming of a conspiracy against him, made no objection to what she proposed.

She gave the servant she took home with her his supper, and when the man frequently asked her when would it be time to go for his master, she always replied that he would come soon enough.

At night she privily sent off one of her own domestics to fetch Du Mesnil, who, having no suspicion, accompanied the man to St. Aignan's house, having with him only one of his servants, the other being with the mistress of the house. As he entered the door his guide told him his mistress would be glad to say a few words to him before he spoke to her husband; that she was waiting for him in a room with only one of his servants, and that he had better send away the other by the front door. This he accordingly did; and as he was going up a narrow and very dark flight of stairs, the proctor, who had set men in ambush, hearing a voice, called out to know what it was. Some one replied it was a man who was making his way secretly into the house. Upon this one Thomas Guerin, an assassin by profession, and hired by the proctor for the occasion, fell upon the poor young man, and gave him so many sword-wounds that at last he fell dead. Meanwhile his servant who was with the lady said to her, "I hear my master's voice on the stairs. I will go to him." But she stopped him, saying, "Don't trouble yourself, he will come soon enough." Soon afterwards, hearing his master cry out, "I am a dead man! my God have mercy on me!" he wanted to go to his aid, but again she stopped him. "Be quiet," she said; "my husband is chastising him for his

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pranks. Let's go see." Leaning over the stairhead, she called out to her husband, "Is it done?" "Come and see," replied the husband; "you are avenged on him who put you to such shame." And so saying, he struck his dagger ten or twelve times into the dead body of a man whom when living he durst not have looked askance upon.

After the deed was done, and the two servants of the murdered man had fled with the news to his poor father, St. Aignan began to consider what steps he should next take. The servants of the murdered man could not be admitted to give evidence, and no one else had seen the deed besides the murderers, an old woman—servant, and a girl of fifteen. He endeavored to secure the old woman, but she found means of escape, and took refuge in the Jacobins. Her testimony was the best that was had respecting this crime. The young chambermaid remained some days in St. Aignan's house; but contriving to have her suborned by one of the assassins, he had her taken to Paris, and placed in a house of ill-fame, in order to hinder her from being believed as a witness. That nothing else might remain to prove his guilt, he burned the body; and the bones which the fire could not consume he had mixed with mortar, for he was then building. All this being done, he sent to the courts, to sue for his pardon, and set forth that having ascertained that the deceased was endeavoring to dishonor his wife, he had often forbid him his house; that he had come notwithstanding by night, under suspicious circumstances, to speak with her, and that having found him at the door of his wife's chamber, he had killed him more in the heat of anger than deliberately. But in spite of his haste, before he had dispatched his letter, the duke and duchess learned the whole truth, which they had from the father of the unfortunate young man, and made it known to the chancellor in order to hinder St. Aignan from obtaining his pardon. Upon this the wretch fled to England with his wife and several of her relations. Before his departure, he told the assassin he had employed that he had express orders from the king to arrest him and have him put to death; but that, in consideration of the service he had rendered him, he would save his life. He gave him ten crowns to quit the realm, and the man has never been heard of since. The murder, however, was so well authenticated by the servants of the deceased, by the old woman who had fled to the Jacobins, and by the bones which were found in the mortar, that the criminal process was completed in the absence of St. Aignan and his wife, who were condemned to death as contumacious, to pay their victim's father fifteen hundred crowns for the costs of the process, and to have the rest of their property confiscated to the sovereign.

St. Aignan being in England, and finding himself condemned to death in France, so managed by his services to gain the good-will of several great lords, and set his wife's relations to work to such purpose, that the King of England entreated the King of France to pardon him and to restore him to his possessions and his honors. The king having been informed of the atrocity of this affair, sent the details of the process to the King of England, and begged him to consider if the crime was one which could be pardoned; adding, that throughout his realm none but the Duke of Alençon had the privilege of granting grace in his duchy. The King of England did not yield to these representations, but so urgently solicited St. Aignan's pardon, that at last he obtained it.

On his return home, to fill up the measure of his wickedness the proctor made acquaintance with a sorcerer named Gallery, hoping to be put by him in a way to escape payment of the fifteen hundred crowns due by him to his victim's father. To this end he and his wife went in disguise to Paris; but the wife, seeing how he often shut himself up for a long time with Gallery without saying a word to her, watched them one morning, and saw Gallery set before her husband five wooden images, three of which had their hands hanging down, and two had them raised. "We must have waxen images made like them," said Gallery to St. Aignan; "those which shall have their arms hanging down will be for the persons we shall cause to die; and those with raised arms will be for the persons whose good-will we seek."

"Very well," said the proctor. "This one, then, shall be for the king, by whom I would be favored, and this one for Monsieur Brinon, Chancellor of Alençon."

"The images," said Gallery, "must be put under the altar, where they will hear mass, with certain words which I will teach you."

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The proctor coming then to the images with pendent arms, said that one was for Maître Giles du Mesnil, father of the deceased, for he knew well, that as long as the old man lived, he would not cease to pursue the murderer of his son. One of the female figures with pendent arms was for my lady the Duchess of Alençon, the king's sister, because she was so fond of her old servant Du Mesnil, and had on so many occasion known the wickedness of the proctor, that unless she died he could not live. The second female figure of the same sort was for his wife, who, he said, was the cause of all his misfortunes, and who, he well knew, would never amend. His wife, who was peeping through the keyhole, and saw herself thus devoted by him to death, thought it high time to anticipate him. She had an uncle, named Neaufle, who was referendary to the Duke of Alençon, and going to him under the pretense of borrowing money, she related to him all she had seen and heard. The uncle, a good old servant of the duke's, went to the Chancellor of Alençon, and communicated to him what he had learned from his niece. As the duke and duchess were not that day at court, the chancellor waited on Madame la Régente, the mother of the king and the duchess, who as soon as she was informed of the matter set La Barre, the Provost of Paris, to work at once. The provost did his duty so promptly and so well, that the proctor and his necromancer were both arrested. Neither torture nor constraint was required to make them avow their guilt, and on their own confession their judgment was completed and laid before the king. Some persons who wished to save the lives of the culprits represented to the king that they had no other intention in performing their enchantments than to secure his good graces; but the king, to whom his sister's life was as dear as his own, commanded that they should be sentenced just as though they had been guilty against his own person. His sister, the Duchess of Alençon, nevertheless entreated the king to spare the proctor's life, and condemn him to a severe corporal punishment. Her request was granted, and St. Aignan and Gallery were sent to Saint Blancart's galleys at Marseilles, where they ended their days, and had leisure to reflect on the atrocity of their crimes. The proctor's wicked wife, after the loss of her husband, conducted herself worse than ever, and died miserably. *

Consider, ladies, I beseech you, what disorders a wicked woman occasions, and how many mischiefs ensued from the sin of the one you have just heard of. Since Eve made Adam sin, it has been the business of women to torment, kill and damn men. For my part, I have had so much experience of their cruelty, that I shall lay my death to nothing but the despair into which one of them has plunged me. And yet I am crazed enough to confess this hell is more agreeable to me, coming from her hand, than the paradise which another might bestow upon me.

Parlamente, affecting not to understand that it was of herself he spoke, replied, "If hell is as agreeable as you say, you can't be afraid of the devil who put you into it."

"If my devil," replied Simontault in a pet, "were to become as black as it has been cruel to me, it would cause this company as much fright as I feel pleasure in looking upon it. But the fire of love makes me forget the fire of that hell. So I will say no more about it, but call upon Madame Oisille, being assured that if she would speak of women as she knows them, she would corroborate my opinion."

The whole company turned to the old lady and begged her to begin, which she did with a smile, and with this little preamble:-"It seems to me, ladies, that the last speaker has cast such a slur upon our sex by the true story he has narrated of a wretched woman, that I must run back through all the past years of my life in order to call to my mind one woman whose virtue was such as to belie the bad opinion he has of our sex. Happily I recollect one such woman who deserves not to be forgotten, and will now relate her story to you."

NOVEL II.

Chaste and Lamentable Death of the Wife of One of the Queen of Navarre's Multeers.

THERE was at Amboise a muleteer who served the Queen of Navarre, sister of Francis I. This princess being at Blois, where she was delivered of a prince, the muleteer went thither to receive his quarterly payment, and left his wife at Amboise, in a house beyond the bridges. For a long time one of her husband's men had felt such a passion

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for her, that at last he could not help declaring it; but she being a virtuous woman, reproved him so sharply, threatening to have him beaten and dismissed by her husband, that he never afterwards durst address her with such language. Nevertheless, the fire of his love, though smothered, was not extinguished. His master then being at Blois, and his mistress at vespers at St. Florentin, which is the church of the castle, very remote from the muleteer's house, in which he was left alone, he resolved to have by force what he could not obtain either by prayers or services. To this end he broke an opening through the boarded partition between his mistress's chamber and that in which he himself slept; and this was not perceived, being covered by the curtains of the master's bed on one side, and by those of the men's bed on the other.

When the poor woman had gone to bed with a little girl of twelve years old, and was sleeping soundly, as one usually does in the first sleep, the man entered the room through the opening, in his shirt, with his sword in his hand, and got into the bed with her. The moment she felt him she sprang out of bed, and addressed such remonstrances to him as would occur to any woman of honor in the like case. He, whose love was but brutality, and who would better have understood the language of his mules than such virtuous pleadings, appeared more insensible to reason than the brutes with which he had long associated. Seeing that she ran so fast round a table that he could not catch her, and that although he had twice laid hands on her she had strength enough both times to break from his grasp, he despaired of ever taking her alive, and stabbed her in the loins, to see if pain would make her yield what fear and force had failed to extort from her. But it was quite the reverse; for as a brave soldier when he sees his own blood is the hotter to revenge himself on his enemies and acquire honor, so her chaste heart gathering new strength, she ran faster than ever to escape falling into the hands of that wretch, at the same time remonstrating with him in the best way she could, thinking by that means to make him conscious of his fault. But he was in such a frenzy that he was incapable of profiting by good advice. In spite of the speed with which she ran as long as her strength lasted, she received several more wounds, till at length, weakened by loss of blood and feeling the approach of death, she raised her eyes and her clasped hands to heaven, and gave thanks to God, whom she called her strength, her virtue, her patience, and her chastity, beseeching him to accept the blood which, according to his commandment, was shed through respect for that of his Son, wherein she was thoroughly assured that all sins are washed out, and effaced from the memory of his wrath. Then exclaiming, "Lord, receive my soul which thy goodness has redeemed," she fell on her face and received several more wounds from the villain, who, after she had lost the power of speech and motion, satisfied his lust, and fled with such speed that, in spite of all efforts to track him, he was never heard of afterwards.

The little girl who had been in bed with the poor woman had hid herself beneath it in her fright; but as soon as she saw that the man was gone, she went to her mistress, and finding her speechless and motionless, she called out through the window to the neighbors for help. Esteeming and liking the muleteer's wife as much as any woman in the town, they all hurried at once to her aid, and brought with them surgeons, who found that she had received twenty-five mortal wounds. They did all they could for her, but she was past saving. She lingered, however, for an hour, making signs with her eyes and hands, and showing thereby that she had not lost consciousness. A priest having asked her in what faith she died, she replied by signs as unequivocal as speech, that she put her trust in the death of Jesus Christ, whom she hoped to see in his heavenly glory. And so with a serene countenance and eyes uplifted to heaven, she surrendered her chaste body to the earth, and her soul to her Creator.

Her husband arrived just as they were about to carry her to the grave, and was shocked to see his wife dead before he had heard any news of her; but double cause he had to grieve when he was told how she had died; and so poignant was his sorrow, that it had like to cost him his life. The martyr of chastity was buried in the church of St. Florentin, being attended to the grave by all the virtuous women of the place, who did all possible honor to her memory, deeming it a happiness to be the townswomen of one so virtuous. Those, too, who had led bad lives, seeing the honors paid to the deceased, amended their ways, and resolved to live better for the time to come. *

There, ladies, you have a true tale, and one which may well incite to chastity, which is so fine a virtue. Ought we not to die of shame, we who are of good birth, to feel our hearts full of the love of the world, since, to avoid it, a poor muleteer's wife did not fear so cruel a death? Therefore we must humble ourselves, for God does not bestow

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his graces on men because they are noble or rich; but, according as it pleases his goodness, which regards not the appearance of persons, he chooses whom he will. He honours with his virtues, and finally crowns with his glory, those whom he has elected; and often he chooses low and despised things to confound those which the world esteems high and honourable. Let us not rejoice in our virtues, as Jesus Christ says, but let us rejoice for that we are enrolled in the Book of Life.

The ladies were so touched by the sad and glorious death of the muleteer's wife, that there was not one of them but shed tears, and promised herself that she would strive to follow such an example should fortune expose her to a similar trial. At last, Madame Oisille, seeing they were losing time in praising the dead woman, said to Saffredent, "If you do not say something to make the company laugh, no one will forgive me for the fault I have committed in making them weep." Saffredent, who was really desirous to say something good and agreeable to the company, and especially to one of the ladies, replied that this honor was not due to him, and that there were others who were older and more capable than himself who ought to speak before him. "But since you will have it so," he said, "the best thing I can do is to despatch the matter at once, for the more good speakers precede me, the more difficult will my task be when my turn comes."

NOVEL III.

A King of Naples, having debauched the wife of a Gentleman, at last wears horns himself.

AS I have often wished I had shared the good fortune of one about whom I am going to tell you a tale, I must inform you that in the time of King Alfonso, the scepter of whose realm was lasciviousness, there was at Naples a handsome, agreeable gentleman, in whom nature and education had combined so many perfections, that an old gentleman gave him his daughter, who for beauty and engaging qualities was in no respects inferior to her husband. Great was their mutual love during the first months of their marriage; but the carnival being come, and the king going masked into the houses, where every one did his best to receive him well, he came to this gentleman's, where he met with a better reception than anywhere else. Confections, music, concerts, and other amusements were not forgotten; but what pleased the king most was the wife, the finest woman, to his thinking, he had ever seen. After the repast she sang with her husband, and that so pleasingly, that she seemed still more beautiful. The king, seeing so many perfections in one person, took much less pleasure in the sweet harmony of the husband and wife than in thinking how he might break it. Their mutual affection appeared to him a great obstacle to his design; therefore he concealed his passion as well as he could; but to solace it in some manner, he frequently entertained the lords and ladies of Naples, and did not forget the husband and his wife.

As one readily believes what one desires, the king thought that the lady's eyes promised him something agreeable, if only those of the husband were not in the way. To put his conjecture to the proof, he sent the husband to Rome with a commission which would occupy him a fortnight or three weeks. When he was gone, his wife, who never before had lost sight of him, so to speak, was in the deepest affliction. The king went to see her frequently, and did his best to console her by obliging words and presents. In a word, he played his part so well, that she was not only consoled, but even very well pleased with her husband's absence. Before the end of three weeks she was so much in love with the king, that she was quite as distressed at her husband's return as she had been at his departure. That she might not be deprived of the king's presence, it was settled between them, that whenever the husband went to the country she should give notice to the king, who then might come to see her in perfect security, and so secretly, that her honor, which she respected more than her conscience, should not be hurt; a hope which the fair lady dwelt on with great pleasure.

The husband, on his return, was so well received by his wife, that even had he been told that the king fondled her during his absence, he never could have believed it. But in course of time this fire, which such pains were taken to conceal, began gradually to make itself visible, and became at last so glaring, that the husband, justly alarmed, set himself to observe, and with such effect, that he had scarcely any room left for doubt. But as he was afraid that he

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who wronged him would do him a still worse mischief if he made any noise about the matter, he resolved to dissemble, thinking it better to live with grief at his heart, than to expose his life for a woman who did not love him. Nevertheless, he longed, in the bitterness of his resentment, to retaliate on the king, if it were possible; and as he knew that spite will make a woman do more than love, especially such as are of a great and honorable spirit, he took the liberty one day to say to the queen how grieved he was that the king her husband treated her with indifference. The queen, who had heard of the king's amour with his wife, replied that she could not have honor and pleasure both together. "I know well," she added, "that I have the honor whereof another receives the pleasure; but then she who has the pleasure has not the same honor as is mine."

Well knowing to whom these words applied, the gentleman responded, "Honor is born with you, madam. You are of so good a lineage, that the rank of queen or empress could add nothing to your nobility; but your beauty, your graces, and your winning deportment, merit so much pleasure, that she who robs you of that which is your due does more harm to herself than to you, since for a glory which turns to shame she loses as much pleasure as you or any woman in the kingdom could enjoy. And I can tell you, madam, that the king, the crown apart, is not more capable than I of contenting a woman. Far from it, I am certain that to satisfy a woman of your merit the king ought to wish that he was of my temperament."

"Though the king is of a more delicate complexion than you," replied the queen, laughing, "the love he has for me gratifies me so much, that I prefer it to any other thing."

"If that be so, madam," returned the gentleman, "I no longer pity you. I know that if the king had for you a love as pure as that you have for him, you would literally enjoy the gratification you speak of; but God has determined that it should be otherwise, in order that, not finding in him what you desire, you should not make him your god on earth."

"I own to you," said the queen, "that the love I have for him is so great, that no heart can love with such passion as mine."

"Allow me, if you please, to tell you, madam, that you have not fathomed the love in every heart. I dare assure you, madam, that there is one who loves you with a love so perfect and impassioned, that what you feel for the king cannot be compared with it. His love grows stronger as that of the king grows weaker, and it only rests with yourself, madam, if you think proper, to be more than compensated for all you lose."

By this time the queen began to perceive, both from the gentleman's words and his manner, that his tongue was the interpreter of his heart. She now recollects that for a long time past he had been seeking opportunities to do her service, and seeking them with such eagerness that he had become quite melancholy. At first she had supposed that his wife was the cause of his sadness; but now she made no doubt that it was all on her own account. As love never fails to make itself felt when it is real, the queen had no difficulty in unriddling what was a secret for every one else. The gentleman, therefore, appearing to her more amiable than her husband, considering, besides, that he was forsaken by his wife, as she was by her husband, and animated with resentment and jealousy against her husband, "My God!" she exclaimed with a sigh, and with tears in her eyes, "must it be that vengeance shall effect upon me what love has never been able to effect?"

"Vengeance is sweet, madam," observed the now hopeful suitor, "when, instead of killing one's enemy, one bestows life on a real friend. It is high time, methinks, that the truth should cure you of an unreasonable love you entertain for a person who has none for you and that a just and well-founded love should expel the fear which is very ill-lodged in a heart so great and so virtuous as yours. Let us put out of consideration, madam, your royal quality, and let us contemplate the fact that you and I, of all persons in the world, are the two who are most basely duped and betrayed by those whom we have most perfectly loved. Let us avenge ourselves, madam, not so much for sake of retaliation as for the satisfaction of love, which on my side is such that I could not bear more and live. If your heart is not harder than adamant, you must feel some spark of that fire which augments in proportion as I

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labor to conceal it, and if pity for me, who am dying for love of you, does not incite you to love me, at least you should do so out of resentment. Your merit is so great, that it is worthy of the love of every honest heart; yet you are despised and abandoned by him for whom you have abandoned all others."

These words caused the queen such violent transports, that in order to conceal the commotion of her spirits, she took the gentleman's arm, and went with him into a garden adjoining her chamber, where she walked up and down a long while without being able to speak a single word to him. But the gentleman, seeing her half-conquered, no sooner reached the end of an alley where no one could see them, than he plied her to good purpose with his long-concealed passion. Being both of one mind, they revenged themselves together; and it was arranged between them that whenever the king went to visit the gentleman's wife, the gentleman should visit the queen. Thus, the cheaters being cheated, four would share the pleasure which two imagined they had all to themselves. When all was over, the queen retired to her chamber, and the gentleman went home, both of them so well contented, that they thought no more of their past vexations. The gentleman, far from dreading lest the king should visit his wife, on the contrary desired nothing better; and to afford him opportunity for doing so, he went to the country oftener than he had been used. When the king knew that the gentleman was at his village, which was but half a league from the city, he went at once to the fair lady; whilst the gentleman repaired by night to the queen's chamber, where he did duty as the king's lieutenant so secretly that no one ever perceived it.

Things went on in this way for a long while; but whatever pains the king took to conceal his amour, all the world was aware of it. The gentleman was much pitied by all good-natured people, and ridiculed by the ill-natured, who used to make horns at him behind his back. He knew very well that they did so, and he laughed in his sleeve, for he thought his horns were as good as the king's crown. One day when the royal-gallant was at the gentleman's, casting his eyes on a pair of antlers hung up in the hall, he could not help saying, with a laugh, in presence of the master of the house himself, "These antlers very well become this place." The gentleman, who had as much spirit as the king, had this inscription put up beneath the antlers after the king was gone:

Io porto le corna, ciascun lo vede;
Ma tal le porta, chi no lo crede.
I wear the horns as all men know;
He wears them too who thinks not so.

On his next visit the king observed this inscription, and asked the meaning of it. "If the stag," replied the gentleman, "does not know the king's secret, it is not just that the king should know the stag's secret. Be satisfied with knowing, sire, that it is not every one who wears horns who has his cap lifted off his head by them; some horns are so soft that a man may wear them without knowing it."

It was plain to the king from this reply that the gentleman knew something of his own affair, but he never suspected either him or the queen. That princess played her part extremely well; for the more pleased she was with her husband's conduct, the more she pretended to be dissatisfied. So they lived as good friends on both sides until old age put an end to their mutual pleasures. This, ladies, is a story which I have great pleasure in proposing to you by way of example, to the end that when your husbands give you horns you may do the same by them. *

"I am very well assured, Saffredent," said Ennasuite, laughing, "that if you were as much in love as you have formerly been, you would endure horns as big as oaks for the sake of bestowing a pair as you pleased; but now that your hair is beginning to turn gray, it is time to put a truce to your desires."

"Though she whom I love, mademoiselle, allows me no hope," replied Saffredent, "and age has exhausted my vigour, my desires remain still in full force. But since you reproach me with so seemly a passion, you will, if you, please, relate to us the fourth novel; and we shall see if you can find some example which may refute me."

One of the ladies present, who knew that she who had taken Saffredent's words to herself was not the person he

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loved so much as to be willing to wears horns of her making, could not help laughing at the manner in which she had taken them up. Saffredent, who perceived that the laughing lady had guessed right, was very glad of it, and let Ennasuite talk on. "To prove, ladies," she said, "to Saffredent and all the company that all women are not like the queen of whom he has told us, and that the audacious are not always successful, I will relate to you the adventure of a lady who deemed that the vexation of failing in love was harder to bear than death itself. I shall not name the persons, because the story is so recent that I should be afraid of offending some of the near relations if I did so."

NOVEL IV.

Presumptuous attempt of a Gentleman upon a Princess of Flanders, and the shame it brought upon him.

THERE was in Flanders a lady of such good family that there was none better in the country. She was a widow, had been twice married, but had no children living. During her second widowhood she resided with her brother, who loved her much, and who was a very great lord, being married to one of the king's daughters. This young prince was much addicted to pleasure, and was fond of the chase, amusements, and the ladies, as usual with young people. He had a very ill-tempered wife, who was by no means well pleased with her husband's diversions; wherefore as his sister was the most lively and cheerful companion possible, she accompanied the prince to every place to which he took his wife. There was at the prince's court a gentleman who surpassed all the others in height, figure, and good looks, and who, seeing that his master's sister was a lively lady, and fond of laughing, thought he would try if a well-bred lover would be to her taste. But the result was quite contrary to what he had expected; although she pardoned his audacity in consideration of his good looks and good breeding, and even let him know that she was not angry that he had spoken to her, only she desired she might never hear the same language from him again. He promised this, that he might not lose the honor and pleasure of her society, but as his passion increased with time, he forgot his promise. He did not, however, have recourse to words, for experience had taught him that she knew how to make chaste replies; but he flattered himself that being a widow, young, vigorous, and good-humored, she would, perhaps, take pity on him and on herself if he could find her in a convenient place.

To this end he acquainted the prince that he had a house admirably situated for the chase, and that if he would come thither and hunt three or four stags in the month of May, he would have excellent sport. The prince promised he would do so, and he kept his word. He found a handsome house prepared for his reception, in the best order, as belonging to the richest nobleman in the country. Its owner lodged her whom he loved better than himself in an apartment opposite to that which he assigned to the prince and princess. Her bedroom was so well tapestried above and so well matted below, that it was impossible to perceive a trap-door he had contrived in the alcove, and which led down into the room occupied by his aged and infirm mother. As the good old lady coughed a great deal, and was afraid of disturbing the princess, she exchanged bedrooms with her son. Not an evening passed that the old lady did not carry confections to the princess, on which occasions her son failed not to accompany her; and as he was much liked by the brother, he was allowed to be present at the sister's coucher and lever, when he always found cause for the increase of his passion.

One night he stayed so late with the princess, that seeing she was falling asleep he was obliged to leave her and return to his own chamber. He took the handsomest and best perfumed shirt he had, and a nightcap of the choicest kind; then, looking at himself in the glass, he was so satisfied with his own appearance, that he thought no lady could possibly withstand his good looks. Promising himself marvels therefore from his enterprise, he lay down on his bed, where he did not think he should stay long, for he expected to exchange it for one more honorable.

No sooner had he dismissed his attendants, than he rose and locked the door, and listened for a long time to hear whether there was any noise in the princess's chamber, which, as already said, was above his own. When he had satisfied himself that all was quiet, he began to put his fine project in execution, and gradually let down the trap-door, which was so well made and so well covered with cloth, that it did not make the least noise. Then

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stealing up into the alcove where the princess was fast asleep, he got into bed to her without ceremony, regardless of her high birth and the obligations he was under to her, and without having in the first instance obtained her consent. The first intimation she had of his arrival was to find herself in his arms; but being a strong woman she broke loose from his grasp, and, demanding who he was, made such good use of her hands and nails that he tried to stuff the quilt into her mouth for fear she should cry out. But he never could accomplish his purpose, for as, she found that he was doing his best to dishonor her, she did her best to defend herself, and called out to her lady of honor, an aged and very prudent woman who slept in the same room, and she hastened in her shift to her mistress's aid.

The gentleman, finding he was discovered, was so much afraid of being recognized, that he hurried away through his trap-door as fast as he could, no less overcome at the plight in which he returned from his enterprise than he had been keen-set and confident when he entered upon it. The candle was still burning on the table before his mirror, which showed his face all scratched and bitten, and the blood streaming from it over his fine shirt. "Thou art rightly served, pernicious beauty!" he said, apostrophizing his own lacerated visage. "Thy vain promises set upon an impossible enterprise, and one which, far from increasing my good fortune, will, perhaps, bring upon me a world of trouble. What will become of me if she knows that I have committed this folly in violation of my promise? The least that can happen to me will be to be banished from her presence. Why did I employ fraud to steal what my birth and my good looks might have obtained for me by lawful ways? Could I expect to make myself master of her heart by violence? Ought I not to have waited till love put me in possession of it in recompense for my patience and my long service? For without love, all the merits and power of man are nothing."

The rest of the night was spent by the discomfited gallant in such reflections as these, mingled with tears, groans, and wailings indescribable. In the morning he feigned illness, to conceal the mangled state of his countenance, pretending all the while the company remained in the house that he could not endure the light. The lady, who was convinced that there was no one at the court capable of so audacious an act except the man who had had the boldness to declare his love to her, searched the chamber with the lady of honor; but not finding a passage through which any one could have entered, she broke into a towering passion. "Be assured," she said to the lady of honor, "that the lord of this mansion is the man, and that I will make such a report to-morrow morning to my brother, that the culprit's head shall bear witness to my chastity."

"I am delighted, madam," said her wary attendant, who saw what a transport of rage she was in,—"I am delighted that honor is so precious in your eyes, that for its sake you would not spare the life of a man who has put it in jeopardy through excess of love. But in this, as in every other matter, one may fall backwards when thinking to advance. Therefore, tell me, madam, the plain truth. Has he had anything of you?"

"Nothing, I do assure you," replied the princess, "besides scratches and cuffs; and unless he has found a very clever surgeon, I am sure he will show the marks of them tomorrow."

"That being the case, madam, it strikes me you ought rather to praise God, than think of vengeance. Since he has had the heart to make such an attempt, the vexation of having failed in it will be more poignant than even death itself. If you would be avenged on him, leave him to his love and to his shame, which will make him suffer more than anything you can do. Do not fall, madam, into the blunder he has committed. He promised himself the sweetest of all pleasures, and he has brought upon himself the most miserable torment. Profit by his example, madam, and do not diminish your glory in thinking to augment it. If you complain of the adventure, you will publish what is known to nobody; for you may be sure that on his part it will remain an everlasting secret. Suppose even my lord your brother does you the justice you demand, and that it costs the poor gentleman his life, people will say that he has had his will of you: and most people will find it hard to believe that he would have made such an attempt if you had not given him encouragement. You are handsome, young, and lively. All the court knows that you are graciously familiar with the gentleman you suspect; and so every one will conclude that he only made this attempt because it was your wish that he should do so. Your honor, which has hitherto sustained no blemish, will become at least questionable wherever this story is told."

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The princess yielded to the force of these judicious representations, and asked the lady of honor what she should do. "Since you are pleased to receive my counsel, madam," replied the lady, "seeing the affection from which it proceeds, I must say, that in my opinion, you ought to be heartily rejoiced that the handsomest and best-bred man I know has neither by fair means nor by foul been able to make you swerve from the path of virtue. For this, madam, you should feel bound to humble yourself before God, and acknowledge that it is his work, and not your own. Many a woman, indeed, has maintained a more imposing air of gravity than you, who yet has yielded to a man less worth loving than this gentleman. You ought to be more on your guard than ever against everything in the shape of soft speeches, and bethink you that many have resisted a first attack who have yielded to a second. Remember, madam, that love is blind, and that he makes people blind, so that they think they have nothing to fear when they are most in danger. It is my opinion, then, madam, that you ought not to tell any one what has occurred to you, and that even if he should think of speaking to you on the subject, you should affect not to understand him. Thereby you will avoid two bad things: one is vainglory for the victory you have achieved; the other, the pleasure you might take in remembering things so agreeable to the flesh; for the chaste of our sex can hardly prevent themselves, strive as they will, from feeling something of the sort. Furthermore, madam, that he may not believe that what he has done accords in any way with your inclinations, I advise you to make him feel his folly by gradually withdrawing something of that friendly countenance you have been used to show him. He will also feel at the same time that you manifest great goodness of heart in contenting yourself with your victory and renouncing vengeance. God grant you the grace, madam, to persist in the virtue with which he has endowed you, and to love and serve him better than you have hitherto done, knowing that he is the source of all good things."

The princess followed her lady of honor's sage counsels, and slept calmly through the rest of the night, whilst the gentleman lay awake in bitter anguish of spirit. Next day, the prince being about to take his departure, asked after his host, and was told he was so ill he could not bear to see the light or hear any one speak. Surprised at this sudden malady, the prince would have gone to see him, but hearing that he was asleep, and not wishing to disturb him, he went away with his wife and sister without bidding him farewell. His sister, concluding that the gentleman's illness was only a pretence to avoid showing the marks she had left upon his face, was now assured beyond all doubt that it was he who had been her nightly assailant. The prince repeatedly sent word to him to return to court, but he did not obey until he had been thoroughly cured of all his wounds, except those which love and vexation had made in his heart. On his return to court, he could not sustain the presence of his victorious enemy without blushing. Though he had been possessed of more assurance than any man at court, he was so disconcerted that he often appeared before her quite abashed-a new proof that her suspicions were well founded. She broke with him, therefore, little by little. Adroitly as she did this, he failed not to perceive it, but durst not remonstrate for fear of worse. He kept his love concealed, and endured patiently a disgrace he had well merited. *

There, ladies, is a story which should strike fear into those who would seize what does not belong to them, and which should inspire ladies with courage, considering the virtue of the young princess and the good sense of her lady of honour. Should a similar thing befall one of you, here you see how it is to be remedied.

"To my thinking," said Hircan, "the tall gentleman you have been telling us of had such a faint heart that he did not deserve the honor of having his adventure talked of. Having such a fine opportunity, nothing should have prevented him from profiting by it. His love, it must be owned, was not very great, since the fear of death and of shame found a place beside it in his heart."

"And what could the poor gentleman have done against two women?" said Nomerfide.

"He should have killed the old one," replied Hircan, "and the young one, seeing herself alone, would have been half vanquished."

"Killed!" exclaimed Nomerfide; "you would turn a lover into a murderer! It would be a terrible thing to fall into your hands, I see."

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"If I had pushed matters so far," continued Hircan, "I should think myself ruined in reputation unless I went the whole way to the end."

"Do you think it matter for wonder," said Geburon, "that a princess trained to virtue proves too much for one man? What would you say, then, to one woman in low life escaping from two men?"

"Geburon," said Ennasuite, "I call upon you for the fifth novel. If I am not mistaken, you know one about this poor woman which will not be displeasing to the company."

"Be it so, then," said Geburon; "I will tell you a story which I know to be true, having examined into it on the spot. You will see from it that princesses are not the only prudent and the only virtuous of their sex, and that often those who are reputed very amorous and very sly are less so than is supposed.

NOVEL V.

A Boatwoman escapes from two Cordeliers, who wanted to force her, and exposes them to public Derision.

THERE was in the port of Coulon, near Niort, a boatwoman, who did nothing day and night but convey people from point to point. Two Cordeliers of Niort crossed the river alone with her. As it is one of the widest ferries in France, they took it into their heads to make love to her, for fear she should grow dull by the way. She gave no more ear to them than they deserved; but the good fathers, who were neither fatigued by the labor of the passage, nor chilled by the coldness of the water, nor abashed by the woman's refusal, resolved to force her, or throw her into the river if she was refractory. But she was as good and as shrewd as they were wicked and witless, and said to them, "I am not so ill-natured as you might suppose; only grant me two things I have to beg of you, and you will see I am not more willing to satisfy you than you are to be satisfied." The Cordeliers swore by their good St. Francis there was nothing they would not grant her to have from her what they wanted. "Well, then," said she, "I ask you, in the first place, to promise and vow that living man shall never know from you what passes between us." This they did with great readiness. "The second thing I ask is, that you will have to do with me one by one, for I should be too much ashamed if it was done in presence of you both. Settle between yourselves which is to have me first." The Cordeliers thought that fair enough, and the younger of them yielded precedence to the elder.

Running the boat ashore at a little island, she said to the younger one, "Say your prayers there whilst your comrade and I go to another island. If he is satisfied with me when we come back, we will leave him, and you and I will go away together." The younger friar jumped ashore at once, and the boatwoman rowed away with his companion to another island. When they reached it, she pretended to be making her boat fast, whilst she said to the monk, "See if you can find a convenient spot." The Cordelier, like a booby, stepped out of the boat to do as she told him, and no sooner was he ashore, than setting her foot against a tree, she shot the boat out into the stream, and left the two good fathers in the lurch. "Wait there, my masters," said she, "till God's angel comes to console you, for you will get nothing from me." The duped Cordeliers went down on their knees, and begged her, for Heaven's sake, not to serve them so, but take them to the port, upon their solemn oath they would ask nothing of her. "A pretty fool I should be," she replied, still rowing away, "to put myself into your hands again once I have got out of them."

When she got home to the village, she told her husband what had occurred, and applied to the ministers of justice to come and capture those two wolves from whose fangs she had contrived to escape. The ministers of justice set out for the purpose, well accompanied, for there was no one, great or small, but was bent on taking part in this hunt. The poor friars, seeing such a multitude coming after them, hid themselves each on his island, as Adam did from the sight of God when he had eaten the apple. Half dead with shame and the fear of punishment, they were caught and led away prisoners, amid the jeers and hootings of men and women. "These good fathers," said one, "preach chastity to us, and want to foul our wives." "They dare not touch money," said the husband, "but they are

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ready enough to handle women's thighs, which are far more dangerous." "They are sepulchres," said others, "whitened without, but full of rottenness within." "By their fruits you shall know the nature of these trees." In short, all the passages of Scripture against hypocrites were cast in the teeth of the poor prisoners. At last the warden came to the rescue. They were given up to him at his request, upon his assuring the magistrate that he would punish them more severely than secular justice itself could do, and that by way of reparation to the offended parties, they should say as many masses and prayers as might be desired. As he was a worthy man, they were chaptered in such a manner, that they never afterwards passed over the river without crossing themselves, and beseeching God to keep them out of all temptation.

If this boatwoman had the wit to trick two such bad men, what should they do who have seen and read of so many fine examples? If women who know nothing, who scarcely hear two good sermons in a year, and have no time to think of anything but earning their bread, do yet carefully guard their chastity, what ought not others of their sex to do who, having their livelihood secured, have nothing to do but to read the Holy Scriptures, hear sermons, and exercise themselves in all sorts of virtues? This is the test by which it is known that the heart is truly virtuous, for the more simple and unenlightened the individual, the greater are the works of God's spirit. Unhappy the lady who does not carefully preserve the treasure which does her so much honor when well kept, and so much dishonor when she keeps it still!

"It strikes me, Geburon," said Longarine, "that it does not need much virtue to refuse a Cordelier. On the contrary, I should rather think it impossible to love such people."

"Those who are not accustomed to have such lovers as you have," replied Geburon, "do not think so contemptuously of Cordeliers. They are well-made, strapping fellows, can talk like angels, and are for the most part importunate as devils.

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Accordingly, the grisettes who escape out of their hands may fairly be called virtuous."

"O by my faith!" exclaimed Nomerfide, raising her voice, "you may say what you will, but for my part I would rather be flung into the river than go to bed with a Cordelier."

"You can swim, then," retorted Oisille, laughing.

Nomerfide was piqued at this, and said with warmth, "There are those who have refused better men than Cordeliers, without making any flourish of trumpets about it for all that."

"Or yet beating the drum about what they have done and granted," rejoined Oisille, who laughed to see her vexed.

"I perceive that Nomerfide has a mind to speak," said Geburon, "and I give voice in her favor, that she may unburden her heart upon some good novel."

"The remarks which have just been made," said Nomerfide, "concern me so little, that they can give me neither pain nor pleasure. But as I have your voice I beg you to hear mine, while I show you that if one is sly for a good purpose, others are so for a bad one. We are vowed to speak the truth, and therefore I will not conceal it; for just as the boatwoman's virtue is no honor to other women if they do not resemble her in it, so the vice of another cannot dishonor them. Listen, then.

NOVEL VI.

Stratagem by which a woman enabled her gallant to escape, when her husband, who was blind of an eye, thought to surprise them together.

CHARLES, the last Duke of Alençon, had an old valet-de-chambre who was blind of an eye, and who was married to a woman much younger than himself. The duke and duchess liked this valet better than any other domestic of that order in their household, and the consequence was that he could not go and see his wife as often as he could have wished, whilst she, unable to accommodate herself to circumstances, so far forgot her honor and her conscience as to fall in love with a young gentleman of the neighborhood. At last the affair got wind, and there was so much talk about it, that it reached the ears of the husband, who could not believe it, so warm was the affection testified to him by his wife. One day, however, he made up his mind to know the truth of the matter, and to revenge himself if he could on the person who put this affront upon him. With this view he pretended to go for two or three days to a place at some little distance; and no sooner had he taken his departure, than his wife sent for her gallant. They had hardly been half an hour together when the husband came and knocked loudly at the door. The wife knowing but too well who it was, told her lover, who was so astounded that he could have wished he was still in his mother's womb. But while he was swearing and confounding her and the intrigue which had brought him into such a perilous scrape, she told him not to be uneasy, for she would get him off without its costing him anything; and that all he had to do was to dress himself as quickly as possible.

Meanwhile the husband kept knocking and calling to his wife as loud as he could bawl, but she pretended not to know him. "Why don't you get up," she cried to the people of the house, "and go and silence those who are making such a noise at the door? Is this a proper time to come to honest people's houses? If my husband was here he would make you know better." The husband, hearing her voice, shouted louder than ever. "Let me in, wife; do you mean to keep me at the door till daylight?" At last, when she saw that her lover was ready to slip out, "Oh, is that you, husband?" she said; "I am so glad you are come! I was full of a dream I had that gave me the greatest pleasure I ever felt in my life. I thought you had recovered the sight of your eye." Here she opened the door, and catching her husband round the neck, kissed him, clapped one hand on his sound eye, and asked him if he did not see better than usual. Whilst the husband was thus blindfolded the gallant made his escape. The husband guessed how it was, but said "I will watch you no more, wife. I thought to deceive you, but it is I who have been the dupe, and you have put the cunningest trick upon me that ever was invented. God mend you! for it passes the act of man to bring back a wicked woman from her evil ways by any means short of putting her to death. But since the regard I have had for you has not availed to make you behave better, perhaps the contempt with which I shall henceforth look upon you will touch you more, and have a more wholesome effect." Therefore he went away, leaving her in great confusion. At last, however, he was prevailed upon by the solicitations of relations and friends, and by the tears and excuses of his wife, to cohabit with her again. *

You see from this example, ladies, with what adroitness a woman can get herself out of a scrape. If she is prompt at finding an expedient to conceal a bad deed, I believe she would be still more prompt and ingenious in discovering means to hinder herself from doing a good one; for, as I have heard say, good wit is always the stronger.

"You may boast of your cunning as much as you will," said Hircan, "but I believe, if the same thing had happened to you, you could not have concealed it."

"I would as soon you told me flatly," said Nomerfide, "that I am the most stupid woman in the world."

"I do not say that," replied Hircan, "but I look upon you as more likely to be alarmed at a rumor against you than to find an ingenious way of putting an end to it."

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"You think that every one is like yourself, who to get rid of one rumor set another afloat. You pass for a very cunning man, but if you think you surpass woman in that way, I will give up my turn to you, that you may tell us some story in point. Of course you know plenty, of which you are yourself the hero."

"I am not here to make myself appear worse than I am," returned Hircan, "though there are some who give me a worse character than I desire or deserve," he added, looking at his wife.

"Don't let me hinder you from speaking the truth," said she. "I would rather hear you relate your sly tricks than see you play them. But be assured that nothing can diminish the love I have for you."

"For that reason," said Hircan, "I do not complain of the injustice with which you often judge me. And so, since we understand each other, there will be so much the more peace and quiet for the future. But I am not the man to tell a story of myself, the truth of which may be displeasing to you, but shall relate one of a person who was an intimate friend of mine."

NOVEL VII.

Trick put by a mercer of Paris upon an old woman, to conceal his intrigue with her daughter.

THERE was a mercer in Paris who was enamored of a girl in his neighborhood, or, to speak more properly, who was loved by her, rather than she by him, for he only pretended to be attached to her in order to conceal another amour with a more exalted object. For her part, she was very willing to be deceived, and loved him so much that she forgot all the usual coyness of her sex. After the mercer had long taken the trouble of going in search of her, he used afterwards to make her come to him wherever he pleased. The mother, who was a respectable woman, perceived this, and forbade her daughter ever to speak to the mercer, under pain of being sent to a convent; but the girl, who loved the mercer more than she feared her mother, behaved worse than ever. One day the mercer, finding her alone in a convenient place, began to entertain her on matters that ought not to be discussed before witnesses; but a servant who had seen him come in, ran and told the mother, who hastened to the spot to put an end to the conversation. The daughter hearing her footsteps, said, with tears in her eyes, "My love for you will cost me dear; here comes my mother, and she will now be convinced of what she has always feared." The mercer, without losing his presence of mind, instantly quitted the girl, ran to meet her mother, threw his arms round the old woman's neck, hugged her with all his might, threw her on a little bed, and began to expend upon her all the rage her daughter had excited within him. The poor old woman, quite confounded at being treated in this way, could only exclaim, "What are you about? Are you mad?" But he no more desisted than if she had been the handsomest young girl in the world; and if her screams had not brought the servant men and maids to her assistance, she would have suffered the fate she apprehended so much for her daughter. The servants dragged the good woman by force out of the mercer's hands, without the poor creature ever knowing why she had been so worried. During the scuffle, the daughter escaped to a neighbor's house, where there was a wedding going on; and she and the mercer often afterwards laughed at the expense of the old woman, who never detected their intercourse.

Here you have, ladies, an instance of a man's having been cunning enough to deceive an old woman, and save the honor of a young one. If I were to name the persons, or if you had seen the countenance of the mercer and the surprise of the old woman, you must have had very tender consciences to keep from laughing. I have sufficiently proved to you by this example that men are not less ingenious than women in inventing at need expedients upon the spot; and so, ladies, you need not be afraid of falling into their hands, for, should your own wit fail, you will find theirs ready to screen your honor.

"I own, Hircan," said Longarine, "that the story is comical and the stratagem well invented; but, for all that, it does not follow that the example is one which ought to be imitated by girls. I have no doubt there are plenty

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whom you would wish to approve of it; but you have too much sense to wish that your wife and your daughter, whose honor is dearer to you than pleasure, should play at such a game. I believe there is no one who would watch them more closely, and put a stop to such doings more promptly, than yourself."

"Upon my conscience," replied Hircan, "if my wife had done the same thing, I should not esteem her the less, provided I knew nothing about it. I don't know if some one has not played as good a trick at my expense, but, fortunately, as I know nothing, I give myself no concern."

"The wicked are always suspicious," said Parlamente; "but happy are they who give no cause for suspicion."

"I can't say I ever saw a fire without some smoke," said Longarine; "but I have certainly seen smoke without any fire. Those who have bad hearts suspect alike where there is mischief and where there is none."

"You have so well supported the cause of ladies unjustly suspected," said Hircan to Longarine, "that I call upon you for your novel. I hope you will not make us weep as Madame Oisille has done by too much praise of honest women."

"Since you would have me make you laugh," said Longarine, laughing with all her heart, "it shall not be at the expense of our sex. I will let you see how easy it is to cheat jealous wives who think they are wise enough to cheat their husbands."

NOVEL VIII.

A man having lain with his wife, believing that he was in bed with his servant, sends his friend to do the same thing; and the friend makes a cuckold of him without the wife being aware of it.

THERE was in the county of Allez a person named Bornet, who had married a virtuous wife, and held her honor and reputation dear, as is the case, I suppose, with all the husbands here present. Though he desired that his wife should be faithful to him, he did not choose to be equally bound to her; in fact, he made love to his servant, though all the good he could get by the change was the pleasure attending a diversity of viands. He had a neighbor, much of his own sort, named Sandras, a tailor by trade, with whom he was on terms of such close friendship, that everything was common between them except the wife. Accordingly Bornet declared the design he had formed upon the servant-girl to his friend, who not only approved of it, but did what he could for its success, in hopes of having a finger in the pie. But the servant would not hear of such a thing, and finding herself persecuted on all sides, she complained to her mistress, and begged to be allowed to go home to her relations, as she could no longer endure her master's importunity. The mistress, who was very fond of her husband and who even before this had been jealous of him, was very glad to have this opportunity of reproaching him, and showing that it was not without reason she had suspected him. With this view she induced the servant to finesse with her master, give him hopes by degrees, and finally promise to let him come to bed to her in her mistress's wardrobe. "The rest you may leave to me," she said "I will take care that you shall not be troubled at all, provided you let me know the night he is to come to you, and that you do not breathe a syllable of the matter to any one living."

The girl faithfully obeyed her mistress's instructions, and her master was so delighted that he hastened at once to impart this good news to his friend, who begged that, since he had been concerned in the bargain, he should also partake of the pleasure. This being agreed to, and the hour being come, the master went to bed, as he supposed, with the servant; but the mistress had taken her place, and received him, not as a wife, but as a bashful and frightened maid; and she played her part so well that he never suspected anything. I cannot tell you which of the two felt the greater satisfaction, he in the belief that he was cheating his wife, or she in the belief that she was cheating her husband.

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After he had remained with her not so long as he wished, but as long as he could, for he showed symptoms of an old married man, he went out of doors to his friend, who was younger and more vigorous, and told him what a fine treat he had just had. "You know what you promised me," said the friend. "Well, be quick then," said the master, "for fear she gets up, or my wife wants her." The friend lost no time, but took the unoccupied place beside the supposed servant, who, thinking he was her husband, let him do whatever he liked without a word said on either side. He made a much longer business of it than the husband, greatly to the surprise of the wife, who was not accustomed to be so well regaled. However, she look it all patiently, comforting herself with the thought of what she would say to him in the morning, and how she would make game of him. The friend got out of bed towards daybreak, but not without taking the stirrup cup. During this ceremony he drew from her finger the ring with which her husband had wedded her, a thing which the women of that country preserve with great superstition, thinking highly of a woman who keeps it till death; on the other hand, one who has had the mischance to lose it, is looked upon as having given her faith to another than her husband.

When the friend had rejoined the husband, the latter asked him what he thought of his bedfellow. "Never was a better," replied the friend; "and if I had not been afraid of being surprised by daylight, I should not have come away from her so soon." That said, they went to bed, and slept as quietly as they could. In the morning, when they were dressing, the husband perceived on his friend's finger the ring which looked very like that he had given his wife when he married her. He asked who had given him that ring, and was astounded to hear that he had taken it from the servant's finger. "Oh Lord! have I made a cuckold of myself, without my wife's knowing it?" cried the husband, knocking his head against the wall. The friend suggested for his consolation that possibly his wife might have given the ring overnight to the servant to keep.

Home goes the husband, and finds his wife looking handsomer and gayer than usual, delighted as she was to have hindered her servant from committing a sin, and to have convicted her husband without any more inconvenience to herself than having passed a night without sleeping. The husband, seeing her in such good spirits, said to himself, "She would not look so merry if she knew what has happened." Falling into chat with her upon indifferent matters, he took her hand, and saw that the ring she always wore was not on her finger. Aghast, and with a trembling voice, he asked her what she had done with it. This gave her the opportunity she was on the watch for to let loose upon him, and she seized it with avidity:

"O, you most abominable of men!" she said, "from whom do you suppose you took it. You thought you had it from the servant. You thought it was for her you did more than you ever did for me. The first time you came to bed to her, I thought you made as much of her as it was possible to do; but after you left the room and came again the second time, it seemed as though you were the very devil of incontinence. What infatuation has possessed you to praise me so much, you wretch? You have had me long enough, and never cared about me. Is it the beauty and plumpness of your servant that made the pleasure seem so sweet to you? No, base man, it is the fire of your own disorderly lust that makes you so blindly and madly in love with the servant, that in the furious fit you were in, I believe you would have taken a she-goat with a nightcap on for a fine girl. It is high time, husband, that you should mend your ways, and content yourself with me who am your wife, and, as you know, an honest woman, as much as you did when you mistook me for a vicious woman. My only object in the matter has been to withdraw you from vice, so that in our old days we may live in amity and repose of conscience; for if you choose to continue the life you have led hitherto, I would rather we should separate than that I should see you daily treading the path that leads to hell, and at the same time using up your body and your substance. But if you resolve to behave better, and to fear God and keep his commandments, I am willing to forget the past, as I trust God will forgive the ingratitude I am guilty of in not loving him as much as I ought."

If ever a man was utterly confounded and horrified, it was the poor husband. It was bad enough to think that he had forsaken his wife, who was fair, chaste, and virtuous, and overflowing with affection for him, for a woman who did not love him; but it was infinitely worse when he represented to himself that he had been so unlucky as to make her quit the path of virtue, in spite of herself and without knowing it, to share with another the pleasures which should have been his alone, and to have forged for himself the horns of perpetual mockery. Seeing,

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however, that his wife was already angry enough about his intended intrigue with the servant, he did not dare to tell her of the villainous trick he had played upon herself. He implored her pardon, promised to make amends for the past by the strictest propriety of conduct in future, and gave her back her ring, which he had taken from his friend, whom he begged not to say a word of what had happened. But as everything whispered in the ear is by-and-by proclaimed from the house-top, the adventure became public at last, and people called him a cuckold, without any regard for his wife's feelings. *

It strikes me, ladies, that if all those who have been guilty of similar infidelity to their wives were punished in the same way, Hircan and Saffredent would have great cause for fear.

"Why, Longarine?" said Saffredent. "Are Hircan and I the only married men in the company?"

"You are not the only married men," she replied, "but you are the only ones capable of playing such a trick."

"Who told you," returned Saffredent, "that we have sought to debauch our wives' servant-maids?"

"If those who are interested in the matter," she answered, "were to speak the truth, we should certainly hear of servant-maids dismissed before their time."

"This is pleasant, truly," observed Geburon; "you promised to make the company laugh, and instead of that you vex these gentlemen."

"It comes to the same thing," replied Longarine; "provided they do not draw their swords, their anger will not fail to make us laugh."

"If our wives were to listen to this lady," said Hircan, "there is not a married couple in the company but she would set at variance."

"Nay," said Longarine, "I know before whom I speak. Your wives are so prudent, and love you so much, that though you were to make them bear horns as big as those of a deer, they would believe, and try to make others believe, that they were chaplets of roses."

The whole company, including even the ladies concerned, laughed so heartily, that the conversation would have ended there if Dagoucin, who had not yet spoken, had not taken it into his head to say, "A man is surely very unreasonable who cannot content himself when he has the means. I have often known people who, thinking to better themselves, only made themselves much worse off because they could not be satisfied in reason. Such people deserve no pity; for, after all, inconstancy is unpardonable."

"But what would you do," inquired Simontault, "with those who have not found their true half? Would you call it inconstancy on their part to seek it wherever it might be found?"

"As it is impossible to know," replied Dagoucin, "where is that half so exactly like its counterpart that there is no difference between them, one should hold fast where love has once attached him, and change neither in heart nor will, happen what may. For if she you love is like you, and has but one will with you, it is yourself you will love and not her."

"You would fall into a false opinion, Dagoucin," said Hircan; "as though we ought to love our wives without being loved."

"When one loves a woman, Hircan," said Dagoucin, "only because she has beauty, charming manners, and fortune, and the end he proposes to himself is pleasure, honors, or riches, such a love is not of long duration; for

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when the principle that inspired it ceases, the love itself vanishes at once. I am then convinced that he who loves, and has no other end and desire than to love well, will die rather than cease to love."

"In good faith, Dagoucin," said Simontault, "I do not believe you have ever been really in love. Had you known what it is to be so, like other men, you would not now be picturing to us Plato's Republic, founded on fine phrases, and on little or no experience."

"You are mistaken," replied Dagoucin; "I have been in love; I am so still, and shall be so long as I live. But I am so much afraid that the demonstration of my passion would do injustice to the perfection of my love, that I shrink from making it known to her by whom I would be loved in equal measure. I dare not even think how I love her, lest my eyes should betray the secret of my heart; for the more I conceal my flame, the more pleasure I feel in the consciousness that I love perfectly."

"Yet I suppose you would be very glad to be loved in return?" said Geburon.

"I own I should; but as nothing could diminish my love, though I love much and am not loved, so it could not be augmented, even were I loved as much I love."

"Take care, Dagoucin," said Parlamente, who disapproved of this fantastic sentiment; "I have known others who chose rather to die than to declare themselves."

"And they were happy, doubtless," returned Dagoucin.

"Yes," retorted Saffredent, "and worthy, moreover, of being classed with those innocents for whom the Church chants Non loquendo, sed moriendo confessi sunt. I have heard much of these languishing lovers, but I never yet saw one of them die for love. Since I myself have recovered, after much tribulation, I do not believe that any other man can ever die from that cause."

"Ah, Saffredent!" said Dagoucin, "how can you expect to be loved! I know many instances of lovers who have died from nothing else than the intensity of their passion."

"Since that is the case, tell us one of those stories, and let it be a good one," said Longarine.

"Yes," said he, "to confirm my doctrine by signs and miracles, I will tell you a story that happened three years ago."

NOVEL IX.

Deplorable death of a lover in consequence of his knowing too late that he was beloved by his mistress.

ON the confines of Dauphiné and Provence there lived a gentleman who was much better endowed with the gifts of nature and education than with those of fortune. He was passionately enamored of a demoiselle whose name I will not mention, on account of her relations, who are of good and great houses; but you may rely on the reality of the fact. Not being of as good family as she was, he durst not declare his passion; but though his inferior birth made him despair of ever being able to marry her, nevertheless the love he bore her was so pure and respectful that he would have died rather than ask of her anything which could compromise her honor. He loved her then only because he thought her perfectly lovable, and he loved her so long that at last she had some inkling of the fact. Seeing, then, that his love for her was founded on virtue only, she deemed herself fortunate in being loved by so upright a man; and she treated him with such affability that he, who aspired to nothing better than this, was transported with delight. But envy, the enemy of all quiet, could not suffer so innocent and so sweet an

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intercourse to continue. Some one told the girl's mother he was surprised the gentleman went so often to her house, that people saw it was her daughter's beauty that attracted him, and that they had often been seen together. The mother, who was thoroughly assured of the gentleman's probity, was greatly annoyed at finding that a bad interpretation was put upon his visits; but in the end, dreading scandal and malicious gossip, she begged he would for some time cease to frequent her house. The gentleman was the more mortified at this, as the proper and respectful manner in which he had always behaved towards the daughter had deserved very different treatment. However, to put an end to the gossip about him, he withdrew, and did not renew his visits until it had ceased.

Absence, meanwhile, by no means diminished his love; but one day, when he was paying a visit to his mistress, he heard talk of her being married to a gentleman not richer than himself, and whom consequently he thought no better entitled to have her. He began to take heart, and employed his friends to speak on his part, in the hope that if the lady was allowed to choose, she would prefer him to his rival; but as the latter was much the wealthier man, the young lady's mother and relations gave him the preference. The gentleman, who knew that his mistress was a loser as well as himself, was so grieved at being rejected, that, without any other malady, he began by degrees to waste away, and became so changed, that one would have said he had covered his handsome face with the mask of death, to which from hour to hour he was gaily hastening. Still he could not refrain from going as often as he could to see her whom he loved so well; but at last, his strength being worn out, he was compelled to keep his bed, but would never let his mistress know of it for fear of distressing her. So entirely did he give himself up to despair, that he neither ate, drank, slept, nor rested; and became so lean and wan that he was no longer to be recognized. Some one made his state known to the mother of the demoiselle, who was very kind-hearted, and had besides so much esteem for the gentleman, that if the relations had been of the same mind as herself and her daughter, the personal merit of the invalid would have been preferred to the alleged wealth of the other suitor; but the paternal relations would not hear of it. However, she went with her daughter to see the poor gentleman, whom she found more dead than alive. As he knew that his end was near, he had confessed and communicated, and never expected to see any more visitors; but on beholding again her who was his life and his resurrection, his strength returned, so that he at once sat up in the bed, and said, "What brings you hither, madam! How come you to visit man who has already one foot in the grave, and of whose death you are the cause?"

"What!" exclaimed the lady. "Is it possible we should cause the death of a person we love so much? Tell me, I entreat, why you speak in this manner?"

"Madam, I concealed my love for your daughter as long as I could; my relations, however, who have asked her of you in marriage, have gone further than I wished, since I have thereby had the misfortune to lose hope. I say misfortune, not with reference to my individual satisfaction, but because I know that no one will ever treat her so well or love her so much as I would have done. Her loss of the best and most faithful friend and servant she has in the world touches me more sensibly than the loss of my life, which I wished to preserve for her alone. Nevertheless, since henceforth it can be of no use to her, I gain much in losing it."

The mother and daughter tried to comfort him. "Cheer up, my friend," said the mother; "I promise you, that if God restores you to health, my daughter shall never have any other husband than you. She is present, and I command her to make you the same promise."

The daughter, weeping sorely, assured him of what her mother said; but he, knowing that although God were to restore him to health, he should not have his mistress, and that it was only to cheer him that these hopes were held out, replied, "Had you spoken in this manner three months ago, I should have been the healthiest and happiest gentleman in France; but this succor comes so late, that I can neither believe it nor rest any hope upon it." Then, as they strove to overcome his incredulity, he continued, "Since you promise me a blessing which can never be mine even if you would grant it, I will ask you to confer on me one much less, which I have never ventured to demand of you." They both vowed that they would grant his request, and that he might declare it boldly. "I implore you," said he, "to put into my arms her whom you promise me for a wife, and to bid her embrace and kiss me."

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The daughter, who was not accustomed to such caresses, was on the point of making objections; but her mother expressly commanded her to comply, seeing that there was no longer in him either the feeling or the power of a living man. After such a command, the daughter no longer hesitated, but going up to the bedside, "Cheer up, my friend," she said; "cheer up, I conjure you." The poor dying creature, notwithstanding his extreme weakness, stretched out his emaciated arms, embraced with all his might her who was the cause of his death, and laying his cold pale lips to hers, clung there as long as he could.

"I have loved you," he said at last, "with a love so intense and so pure, that, marriage excepted, I have never desired any other favor of you than that which I now receive. But as God has not been pleased to unite us in marriage, I gladly surrender up my soul to him who is love and perfect charity, and who knows how much I have loved you, and how pure my desires have been, beseeching him, that since I hold the dear object of my desires within my arms, he will receive my soul in his." So saying, he clasped her again in his embrace with such vehemence, that his enfeebled heart, being unable to sustain the effort, was abandoned by all his spirits; for joy so dilated them, that the seat of the soul gave way and fled to its Creator.

Though it was already some time since the poor gentleman had expired, and could not retain his hold, the love she had felt for him, and which she had always concealed, broke forth at this moment in such wise, that the mother and the servants had much difficulty in detaching the almost dead survivor from the corpse. The poor gentleman was honorably interred; but the greatest triumph in his obsequies was the tears and cries of that poor demoiselle, who as openly displayed her feelings after his death as she had concealed them during his life, as if she would make amends for the wrong she had done him. And I have been told, that for all they gave her a husband to console her, she never afterwards knew real joy. *

Does it not strike you, gentlemen, who refused to believe me, that this example must force you to confess that intense love, too much concealed and too little known, brings people to the grave? There is not one of you but knows the relations on both sides; therefore you cannot question the fact. But this is one of those things which no one believes until he has experienced it.

"Well," said Hircan, who saw that the ladies were weeping, "a greater fool I never heard of. Now, in good faith, is it reasonable that we should die for women who are made only for us, and that we should be afraid of asking of them what God commands them to give us? I do not speak for myself, or for others who are married; for as for me, I have as much as I want in that way, or more; but I say it for those who stand in need. They are, to my thinking, great blockheads to fear those who ought to fear them. Don't you see that this girl repented of her imprudence? Since she embraced the dead man-a thing repugnant to nature-rely upon it she would still better have embraced the living man if he had been as bold as he was pitiable on his deathbed."

"By the very conduct for which you upbraid him," said Oisille, "he showed that he loved honestly, and for that he deserves eternal praise; for chastity in an enamored heart is a thing more divine than human."

"Madam," replied Saffredent, "to confirm what Hircan has just said, I beg you to believe that fortune favors those who are bold, and that no man who is loved by a lady fails to obtain from her at last what he demands, either in whole or in part, provided he knows how to set about it sagely and amorously; but ignorance and timidity make men lose many a good fortune. What is singular is, that they attribute the loss of them to the virtue of their mistress, which they have never put to the least proof. Be assured, madam, that no fortress was ever well attacked but it was taken at last."

"I am shocked at you two," said Parlamente, "that you dare to hold such language. Those whom you have loved have little reason to be obliged to you; or else you have employed your address upon such easy conquests, that you have concluded all others are like them."

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"For my part, madam," said Saffredent, "I have the misfortune to have nothing to boast of; but this I attribute much less to the virtue of the ladies than to the fault I have committed in not having conducted my enterprises with sufficient sagacity and prudence. In support of my opinion, I shall cite no other authority than that of the old woman in the 'Romance of the Rose,' who says: 'Without question, fair sir, we are all made for each other; every she for every he, and every he for every she.' In short, I am persuaded that if a woman is once in love, her lover will compass his end unless he be a booby."

"Now if I should name a lady," returned Parlamente, "who loved well, was strongly solicited, pressed, and importuned, and yet remained a virtuous woman, victorious over her love and her lover, would you own that this fact, which is truth itself, was possible?"

"Why, yes," replied Saffredent.

"Then you are very incredulous if you do not believe the example adduced by Dagoucin."

"As I have given you," said Dagoucin, "an authentic instance of virtuous love on the part of a gentleman which continued to his last gasp, if you, madam, know any story that is to the honor of some lady, I beg you will be good enough to finish the day by relating it. Never mind the length; for there is time enough still to say many good things."

"Since I am to finish the day," said Parlamente, "I will not make you a long preamble, my story being so good, so beautiful, and so true, that I long to put you in possession of it. I have not been an eye-witness to the facts; but I have them from an intimate friend of the hero, who related them to me on condition that if I repeated them I should conceal the names of the persons. Everything, then, which I am about to tell you is true, except the names, the places, and the country.

NOVEL X.

The Loves of Amadour and Florida, wherein are seen Several Stratagems and Dissimulations, and the Exemplary Chastity of Florida.

THERE was in the county of Aranda, in Aragon, a lady who, while still quite young, was left a widow by Count Aranda, with one son and one daughter, named Florida. She spared no pains to bring up her children according to their quality in virtue and good breeding, so that her house was considered to be one of the most honorable in all the Spains. She often went to Toledo, where the King of Spain then resided; and when she came to Saragossa, which was not far from her own house, she used to remain a long time at the queen's court, where she was as much esteemed as any lady could be. Going one day, according to her custom, to pay her court to the king, who was then in Saragossa, she passed through a village belonging to the Viceroy of Catalonia, who did not quit the frontiers of Perpignan, on account of the wars between the Kings of France and Spain. But as peace was then made, the viceroy, accompanied by several officers, had come to pay his devoirs to the king. The viceroy having been apprised that the countess was to pass through his domains, went to meet her, as well by reason of the old friendship he bore her, as to do her honor as the king's kinswoman. He was accompanied by several gentlemen of merit, who had acquired so much glory and reputation during the wars that every one thought it a good fortune to enjoy their society. There was one among them named Amadour, who, notwithstanding his youth (he was not more than eighteen or nineteen), had such an air of self-possession, and a judgment so ripe, that one would have chosen him among a thousand as a fit man to govern a state. It is true that besides good sense he had so engaging a mien, and graces so vivid and natural, that one never tired of gazing upon him. His conversation so well corresponded with all this, that it was hard to say whether nature had been more bountiful in regard to corporeal or to mental endowments. But what gained him most esteem was his great daring, far exceeding what was common with persons of his age. He had on so many occasions shown what he was capable of, that not only the

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Spains, but France and Italy also, highly esteemed his virtues, for he had never spared himself in any of the wars in which he had been engaged. When his country was at peace he went in search of war amongst foreigners, and won the respect and love of friends and enemies.

This gentleman was among those who accompanied his captain to the domain at which the countess had arrived. He could not behold with indifference the beauty and the charms of her daughter, who was then but twelve years old. He had never, he thought, seen a being so beautiful and of such high breeding, and he believed that if he could have her good grace he should be happier than if he possessed all the wealth and all the pleasures he could receive from another. After having long regarded her, he finally resolved to love her, in spite of all the insurmountable obstacles to success which reason presented to his view, whether on account of disparity of birth, or as regarded the extreme youth of the beautiful girl, who was not yet of an age to listen to tender speeches. Against all these obstacles he set a resolute hope, and promised himself that time and patience would bring all his toils to a happy end. To remedy the greatest difficulty, which consisted in the remoteness of his residence and the few opportunities he had of seeing Florida, he resolved to marry, contrary to what he had resolved in Barcelona and Perpignan, where he was in such favor with the ladies that they hardly refused him anything. He had lived so long on those frontiers during the war, that he had the air of a Catalan rather than that of a Castilian, though he was born at Toledo, of a rich and distinguished family. Being a younger son, he had not much patrimony; but love and fortune seeing him ill—provided by his parents, resolved to make him a chef-d'œuvre, and gave him by means of his valor what the laws of the country refused him. He was thoroughly versed in the art of war, and princes and lords esteemed him so highly, that he oftener refused their good offices than took the trouble to solicit them.

The Countess of Aranda arrived then in Saragossa, and was extremely well received by the king and the whole court. The Governor of Catalonia paid her frequent visits, in which Amadour failed not to accompany him, for the sole pleasure of seeing Florida, for he, in order to make himself known in such good company, attached himself to the daughter of an old knight, his neighbor. Her name was Aventurada. She had been brought up from childhood with Florida, and knew all the secrets of her heart. Whether it was that Amadour found her to his taste, or that her dowry of three thousand ducats a year tempted him, he made her an offer of marriage. She listened to him with pleasure; but as he was poor, and the old knight was rich, she was afraid he would never consent to the marriage, except at the solicitation of the Countess of Aranda. She addressed herself, therefore, to Florida, and said, "I believe, madam, that this Castilian gentleman, who as you are aware often speaks to me here, intends to seek me in marriage. You know what sort of man my father is, and you must be sure he will never give his consent unless the countess and you have the goodness to press him strongly." Florida, who loved the damsel like herself, assured her she would make the business her own; whereupon Aventurada presented Amadour to her, who on kissing her hand had like to faint for joy. Though he was considered one of the men who spoke best in all the Spains, he could not find a tongue in presence of Florida. She was greatly surprised at this, for though she was but twelve years old, she nevertheless well remembered to have heard that there was not in Spain a man who could deliver what he had to say more fluently, or with a better grace. Seeing then that he uttered not a word, she broke silence.

"You are so well known by reputation all over the Spains," she said, "that it would be surprising, Señor Amadour, if you were unknown here; and all who know you desire to have an opportunity to serve you. So is I can be of use to you in any way, I beg you will employ me." Amadour, who was gazing on Florida's charms, was so rapt and transported that he could hardly say grammercy. Though Florida was surprised at his silence, she attributed it to some caprice rather than to its true cause, and retired without saying more. "Do not be surprised," said Amadour to her he wished to marry, "if I was tongue-tied in presence of the Lady Florida. She speaks so discreetly, and so many virtues are latent under her great youth, that admiration made me dumb. As you know her secrets, I beg you will tell me, Aventurada, how it is possible that she does not possess the hearts of all the gentlemen of this court, for those who shall know her and love her not must be stones or brutes." Aventurada, who already loved Amadour above all men, and could conceal nothing from him, told him that Florida was loved by everybody; but that, in accordance with the custom of the country, she spoke to few; and that as yet she was aware of only two persons

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who made much show of love for Florida, and those were two young Spanish princes, who desired to marry her. One was the son of the Fortunate Infante, and the other was the young Duke of Cardona.

"Tell me, pray," said Amadour, "which of the two do you think she likes best?"

"She is so good and virtuous, that all she can be prevailed on to say is, that she has no choice but as her mother pleases. As far, however, as we can judge, she likes the son of the Fortunate Infante better than the young Duke of Cardona. I believe you to be a man of such good sense, that you may, if you like, come to a right surmise upon the matter at once. The son of the Fortunate Infante was brought up at this court, and is the handsomest and most accomplished young prince in Europe. If the question were to be decided by the votes of us maidens, this match would take place, in order that the most charming couple in all Spain might be united. You must know, that although they are both very young, she being but twelve and he fifteen, they have loved each other these three years. If you wish to have her good grace, I advise you to become his friend and servant."

Amadour was very glad to hear that Florida loved something, for he hoped, with the help of time, to become, not her husband, but her lover; for her virtue caused him no uneasiness; his only fear being lest she should not love at all. He had little difficulty in introducing himself to the son of the Fortunate Infante, and still less in gaining his good-will, for he was expert in all the exercises which the young prince was fond of. He was, above all, a good horseman, skilled in feats of arms, and in all sorts of exercises befitting a young man. As war was then beginning again in Languedoc, Amadour was obliged to return with the governor; but it was not without keen regret, for there was no prospect of his returning to the place where he could see Florida. Before his departure he spoke to his brother, who was major-domo to the Queen of Spain, told him the good match he had in the Countess of Aranda's house in the Lady Aventurada, and begged him to do his best during his absence to further his marriage, and to procure on his behalf the influence of the king, the queen, and all his friends. The brother, who loved Amadour not only as a brother but for his great worth, promised to do all he could, and bestirred himself so well, that Aventurada's miserly old father forgot his avarice, and suffered himself to be moved by Amadour's virtues as they were represented to him by the Countess of Aranda, the beautiful Florida, and the young Count of Aranda, who was beginning, as he grew up, to love people of merit. After the marriage had been agreed on between the relations, the major-domo made his brother return to Spain under favor of a truce then pending between the two kings. During this truce the King of Spain withdrew to Madrid, to avoid the bad air which was in several places, and at the request of the Countess of Aranda gave his sanction to the marriage of the heiress-Duchess of Medinaceli with the little Count of Aranda. The wedding was celebrated at the palace of Madrid. Amadour was present, and turned the occasion to such account, that he married her whom he had inspired with more love than he felt for her, and whom he made his wife only that he might have a plausible pretext for frequenting the place where his mind incessantly dwelt.

After his marriage he became so bold and so familiar in the family of the Countess of Aranda, that no more distrust was entertained of him than if he had been a woman. Though he was then but twenty-two years old, he was so prudent that the countess communicated all her affairs to him, and commanded her daughter and her son to converse with him and follow all his advice. Having gained this capital point, he conducted himself so discreetly and with such address, that even she whom he loved never suspected it. As she was very fond of Amadour's wife, she had such confidence in the husband that she concealed nothing from him, and even declared to him all the love she felt for the son of the Fortunate Infante; and Amadour, whose views were all directed to gaining her entirely, talked to her incessantly of the young prince; for he cared not what was the subject on which he spoke to her provided he could hold her long in conversation.

He had hardly been a month married when he was obliged to go to the wars again, and it was more than two years before he could return to his wife, who all the while continued to reside where she had been brought up. He wrote frequently to her in the interval; but the chief part of his letters consisted of compliments to Florida, who on her part failed not to return them, and often even wrote with her own hand some pretty phrase in Aventurada's letters. This was quite enough to induce the husband to write frequently to his wife; yet in all this Florida knew nothing

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but that she loved him like a brother. Amadour went and came several times, and during five years he saw Florida not more than two months altogether. Yet, in spite of distance and long absence, his love not only remained in full force, but even grew stronger.

At last Amadour, coming to see his wife, found the countess far away from the court. The king had gone into Andalusia, and had taken with him the young Count of Aranda, who has already beginning to bear arms, and the countess had retired to a country-house of hers on the frontier of Aragon and Navarre. She was very glad of the arrival of Amadour, whom she had not seen for nearly three years. He was welcomed by everybody, and the countess commanded that he should be treated as her own son. When he was with her, she consulted him on all the affairs of her house, and did just as he advised. In fact, his influence in the family was unbounded; and so strong was the belief in his discernment, that he was trusted on all occasions as though he had been a saint or an angel. As for Florida, who loved Aventurada, and had no suspicion of her husband's intentions, she testified her affection for him without reserve. Her heart being free from passion, she felt much pleasure in his society, but she felt nothing more. He, on the other hand, found it a very hard task to evade the penetration of those who knew by experience the difference between the looks of a man who loves and of one who does not love; for when Florida talked familiarly with him in her frank simplicity, the hidden fire in his heart blazed up so violently, that he could not help feeling it in his face, and letting some sparks from it escape from his eyes.

To baffle observation, therefore, he entered into an intrigue with a lady named Paulina, who was considered in her time so beautiful, that few men saw her and escaped her fascinations. Paulina being aware how Amadour had made love in Barcelona and Perpignan, and won the hearts of the handsomest ladies in the country, especially that of a certain Countess of Palamos, who has reputed the finest woman in all Spain, told him one day that she pitied him for having, after so many good fortunes, married a wife so ugly as his own. Amadour, who well knew that she had a mind to supply his wants, talked to her in the most engaging terms he could use, hoping to conceal a truth from her by making her believe a falsehood. As she had experience in love she did not content herself with words, and plainly perceiving that Amadour's heart was not her own, she made no doubt that he wanted to use her as a stalking-horse. With this suspicion in her mind, she observed him so narrowly, that not a single glance of his eyes escaped her; but he managed, though with the utmost difficulty, to regulate them so well, that she could never get beyond conjectures. Florida, who had no notion of the nature of Amadour's feelings towards her, used to speak to him so familiarly before Paulina, that he could hardly prevent his eyes from following the movements of his heart. To prevent bad consequences, one day, as Florida and he were talking together at a window, he said to her, "My dear, I beseech you to advise me which of the two is better, to speak or to die?"

"I shall always advise my friends to speak," she replied without hesitation; "for there are few words which cannot be remedied; but from death there is no return."

"You promise me, then, that not only you will not be angry at what I want to tell you, but even that you will not give way to surprise until I have laid my whole mind open to you?"

"Say what you please," replied Florida, "for if you surprise me there is no one who can reassure me."

"Two reasons, madam, have hindered me hitherto from declaring the strong passion I feel for you; one is, that I wished to make it known to you by long services, and the other, that I was afraid you would regard it as a great vanity that a simple gentleman like myself should raise his desires so high. Even though my birth were as illustrious as your own, a heart so true as yours would take it ill that any other than he on whom you have bestowed it, the son of the Fortunate Infante, should talk to you of love. But, madam, as in war necessity often compels the belligerent to destroy his own property, and ruin his standing crops that the enemy may not profit by them, so I venture to forestall the fruit which I hoped to gather in time, lest your enemies and mine profit by our loss. Know, madam, that from the first moment I had the honour of seeing you, I so wholly consecrated myself to your service, though you were very young, that I have forgotten nothing whereby I could hope to acquire your good grace. It was to that end alone that I married her whom I thought you loved best; and knowing the love you

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bore to the son of the Fortunate Infante, I took pains to serve him and be about him; in short, whatever I thought could please you, I have tried with all my might to do. You see that I have had the good fortune to win the esteem of the countess your mother, of the count your brother, and of all those whom you love, and that I am regarded here not as a servant, but as a son of the family. All the pains I have taken for five years have had no other object than to procure me the happiness of passing my whole life with you. I crave no favor or pleasure of you which is not consistent with virtue. I know that I cannot wed you, and if I could I would not do so to the prejudice of the love you bear to him whom I would gladly see as your husband. To love you with a criminal love, like those who presume to think that a lady's dishonor should be the recompense of their long services, is a thought I am so far from entertaining, that I would rather see you dead than know that you were less worthy of love, and that your virtue should suffer the least blemish for sake of any pleasure whatever to myself. I ask but one thing of you in recompense for my long services, and that is, that you will deign to become a mistress so loyal as never to remove me from your good grace, but let me continue on my present footing, and trust in me more than in any one besides. Furthermore, madam, do me the honor to be well assured that, be the matter what it may, should you have need of the life of a gentleman, you may count on mine, which I would sacrifice for you right gladly. I beseech you to believe, likewise, madam, that whatever I shall do that is honorable and virtuous shall be done for love of you. If, for sake of ladies inferior to you, I have done things which have been thought well of, what shall I not do for a mistress like you? Things which I found difficult or impossible will seem easy to me. But if you will not permit me to be wholly devoted to you, my resolution is to forsake the career of arms, and renounce the virtue which shall not have helped me at need. I entreat you, then, madam, to grant me the just grace which I ask, and you cannot refuse in conscience and with honor."

Florida changed color at a speech so novel to her. Surprise made her cast down her eyes; nevertheless, her good sense prompted her to reply, "Does it need so long an harangue, Amadour, to ask of me what you have already? I fear so much, that under your seemingly courteous and modest language there is some lurking mischief to deceive my unpractised youth, that I know not how to reply to you. Were I to reject the virtuous friendship you offer me, I should do contrary to what I have done hitherto; for you are the person in whom I have reposed most confidence. My conscience and my honor do not revolt either against your request, or against the love I bear to the son of the Fortunate Infante, since it rests on marriage, to which you do not aspire. There is nothing, then, to hinder me from replying in accordance with your desires, except a fear I have in my heart, proceeding from the little occasion you have for speaking to me as you do; for if you already have what you ask, how comes it that you ask for it again with so much eagerness?"

"You speak very prudently, madam," replied Amadour, who had his answer ready, "and you do me so much honor and so much justice in putting the confidence in me you say, that if I were not content with such a blessing, I were unworthy of all others. But consider, madam, that he who wants to build a durable edifice must begin by laying a good and solid foundation. As I desire to remain for ever in your service, I think not only of the means of being near you, but also of hindering my attachment to you from being perceived. Though this attachment, madam, is quite pure, yet those who do not know the hearts of lovers often judge ill of them, and this gives occasion for scandal as much as if their conjectures were well founded. What makes me speak of this is, that Paulina, who knows well that I cannot love her, suspects me so much, that wherever I am she has her eyes continually upon me. When you speak to me before her with so much kindness, I am so much afraid of making some gesture on which she may rest a surmise, that I fall into the very thing I wish to avoid. I am, therefore, constrained, madam, to request you will not for the future address me so suddenly before her, or before those whom you know to be as malicious as she is, for I would rather die than that any creature living should perceive it. If your honor was less dear to me, I should not have been in haste to say this to you, since I am so happy in the love and the confidence you manifest towards me, that I desire nothing more than their continuance."

Florida was so gratified that she could hardly contain herself, and thenceforth she felt in her heart emotions that were new to her. "Virtue and good breeding reply for me," she said, "and grant you what you request."

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That Amadour was transported with joy will not be doubted by any who love. Florida followed his advice better than he could have wished; for as she was timid not only in presence of Paulina, but everywhere else too, she no longer sought his society as she had been used to do. She even disapproved of his intercourse with Paulina, who seemed to her so handsome that she could not believe he did not love her. Florida vented her grief with Aventurada, who was beginning to be very jealous of her husband and Paulina. She poured out her lamentations to Florida, who being sick of the same distemper, consoled her as well as she could.

Amadour, soon perceiving the change in Florida's conduct, believed not only that she was reserved, as he had advised her to be, but even that she had conceived unfavorable sentiments with regard to him. One day, as he was escorting her home from a convent where she had heard vespers, "What sort of countenance do you show me, madam?" he said.

"Such as I believe you wish me to show," she replied.

Suspecting the truth then, he continued, "I have taken such means, madam, that Paulina no longer suspects you."

"You could not do better for yourself and for me," she replied; "for while doing yourself pleasure, you do me honor."

Amadour, inferring from this that she believed he took pleasure in talking with Paulina, was so incensed, that he could not help saying in anger, "You begin betimes, madam, to make me suffer. I am more to be pitied than blamed, and the most cruel mortification I have ever endured in my life, is the painful necessity I am under of speaking to a woman I do not love. Since you put a bad interpretation on what I have done for your service, I will never speak more to Paulina, happen what may. To hide my sorrow as I have hidden my joy, I will retire to some place in the neighborhood, and wait there until your caprice has passed away. But I hope I shall receive news from my captain, and be obliged to return to the army, where I will remain so long as will prove to you, I hope, that nothing keeps me here but you."

So saying, he went away without awaiting her reply, which caused Florida an anxiety it is impossible to express. Thus love began to make its strength felt through its opposite. Finding on reflection that she had been wrong, Florida wrote to Amadour begging him to return, which he did after his anger had somewhat subsided. I cannot tell you in detail what they said to each other to destroy these prejudices of jealousy; but the result was, that he justified himself so well that she promised not only that she would never believe he loved Paulina, but that she would remain convinced that it was a most cruel martyrdom for him to speak to her, or any other woman, except only with a view to render her service.

After love had dissipated this cloud, and when the lovers were beginning to take more pleasure than ever in each other's society, news came that the King of Spain was sending his whole army to Salces. Amadour, whose custom it was to be among the first to join the royal standards, would not miss this new opportunity of acquiring glory; but it must be owned that he set out with unwonted regret, as well on account of the pleasure he lost, as because he was afraid of finding a change on his return. He reflected that Florida was now fifteen, that many princes and great lords were seeking her hand, and that if she married during his absence he would have no more opportunity of seeing her, unless the Countess of Aranda should give her Aventurada for her companion. Accordingly, he managed so adroitly, that the countess and Florida both promised him that wherever the latter resided after her marriage, his wife should never leave her; and as there was a talk then of her being married in Portugal, it was resolved that Aventurada should accompany her to that country. Upon this assurance Amadour took his departure, not without extreme regret, and left his wife with the countess.

Florida, left lonely by her lover's departure, lived in such a manner as she hoped would gain for her the reputation of the most perfect virtue, and make the whole world confess that she merited such a servant as Amadour. As for him, on arriving at Barcelona, he was cordially welcomed by the ladies; but they found him so changed, that they

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never could have believed that marriage could have such an effect upon a man. In fact, he was no longer the same; he was even vexed at the sight of what he formerly desired; and the Countess of Palamos, of whom he had been so enamored, could never find means to make him even visit her. Being impatient to reach the spot where honor was to be gained, he made as short a stay as possible in Barcelona. He was no sooner arrived at Salces than war broke out with great fury between the two kings. I will not enter into details of the campaign, nor enumerate the heroic actions performed in it by Amadour, for then instead of telling a tale, I should have to compose a great book. It is enough to say that his renown overtopped that of all his comrades in arms. The Duke of Nagyeres, who commanded two thousand men, arrived at Perpignan, and took Amadour for his lieutenant. He did his duty so well with his little corps, that in every skirmish no other cry was heard than that of Nagyeres!

Now the King of Tunis, who had long been at war with the Spaniards, learning that Spain and France were waging mutual hostilities about Perpignan and Narbonne, thought it a good opportunity to harass the King of Spain, and sent a great number of ships to pillage and destroy every ill-guarded point they found on the coasts of Spain. The people of Barcelona, seeing so many strange sail pass by, sent word to the viceroy, who was then at Salces, and who immediately despatched the Duke of Nagyeres to Palamos. The barbarians, finding the place so well defended, made a feint of sheering off; but they returned in the night, and landed so many men that the Duke of Nagyeres, who had let himself be surprised, was taken prisoner. Amadour, who was very vigilant, hearing the noise, assembled instantly as many men as he could, and made so stout a resistance that the enemy, however superior in numbers, were for a long time held at bay. But at last, learning that the Duke of Nagyeres was a prisoner, and that the Turks were resolved to burn Palamos and the house in which he withstood them, he thought it better to surrender than to cause the loss of those who had followed him. Besides, by paying for his ransom, he expected to see Florida again. He surrendered then to a Turk named Dorlin, Viceroy of Tunis, who presented him to his master, in whose service he remained nearly two years, honored and well treated, but still better guarded; for, having him in their hands, the Turks thought they had the Achilles of all the Spains.

The news of this event having reached Spain, the relations of the Duke of Nagyeres were greatly affected at his disaster; but those who had the glory of the country at heart thought the loss of Amadour still more grievous. It became known to the Countess of Aranda, in whose house poor Aventurada lay dangerously ill. The countess, who had great misgivings as to the tender feelings which Amadour entertained for her daughter, but concealed and tried to suppress them, in consideration of the virtues which she recognized in him, called her daughter aside to communicate this painful intelligence to her. Florida, who could dissemble well, said it was a great loss for their whole house, and that, above all, she pitied his poor wife, who, to make the matter worse, was on her sick bed; but seeing that her mother wept much, she let fall a few tears to keep her company, for fear that the feint should be discovered by being overdone. The countess often talked with her again on the subject, but could never draw from her any indication on which she could form a definite conclusion. I will say nothing of the pilgrimages, prayers, orisons, and fasts which Florida regularly performed for Amadour's safety. Immediately on his reaching Tunis, he sent an express to Florida to acquaint her that he was in good health and full of hope that he should see her again, which was a great consolation to her. In return, she corresponded with him so diligently, that Amadour had not leisure to grow impatient.

At this period the countess received orders to repair to Saragossa, where the king was. The young Duke of Cardona was there, and bestirred himself so effectually with the king and queen, that they begged the countess to conclude the marriage between him and Florida. The countess, who neither could nor would refuse their majesties anything, consented to it the more willingly, as she believed that her daughter would at those years have no other will than hers. All being settled, she told her daughter she had chosen for her the match she thought would be most advantageous; and Florida submitted, seeing no room was left her for deliberation, the business being already settled. To make matters worse, she heard that the Fortunate Infante was at the pint of death. She never suffered the least evidence of her mortification to escape in presence of her mother or any one else; and so strongly did she constrain her feelings, that instead of shedding tears she was seized with a bleeding at the nose so copious as to endanger her life. By way of re-establishing her health, she married the man she would willingly have exchanged for death. After the marriage she went with her husband to the duchy of Cardona, and took with

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her Aventurada, whom she acquainted, in confidence, with her mother's harshness towards her, and her regret for the loss of the Fortunate Infante; but with regard to Amadour, she spoke of him only to console his wife.

Resolutely setting God and honor before her eyes, she so well concealed her sorrows, that none of those who were most intimate with her ever perceived that she disliked her husband. For a long time did she continue this life, which was hardly better than death. She failed not to make all known to Amadour, who, knowing the greatness of her heart, and how she had loved the Fortunate Infante, thought it impossible she could live long, and mourned for her as one whom he looked upon as worse than dead. This affliction augmented that under which he already labored. Gladly would he have been a slave all his life, so Florida had found a husband after her own heart; for the thought of his mistress's sorrows made him forget his own. Meanwhile he learned from a friend he had made at the court of Tunis, that the king was resolved to give him his choice, either to renounce his faith or be impaled, for he wished to keep him in his service if he could make a good Turk of him. To prevent this, Amadour prevailed upon his master to let him go upon his parole without speaking to the king; and his ransom was set so high that the Turk calculated that a man who had so little wealth could never raise that amount.

On his return to the court of Spain he made but a short stay there, and went away to seek his ransom in the purses of his friends. He went straight to Barcelona, whither the young Duke of Cardona, his mother, and Florida, were gone on some business. Aventurada was no sooner apprised of her husband's return, than she imparted the news to Florida, who rejoiced at it as if for her sake. But for fear lest the joy of again beholding Amadour should produce a change in her countenance which might be noticed by those who did not know her, and therefore would misjudge her, she placed herself at a window, in order to catch sight of him at a distance, and the moment she perceived him, running down a staircase so dark that it was impossible to discern if she changed color, she embraced him, took him up to her chamber, and then presented him to her mother-in-law, who had never seen him. He had not been there two days before he was as great a favorite as he had been in the house of the Countess of Aranda. I will say nothing of the conversations between Florida and Amadour, nor all she told him of the afflictions she had incurred during his absence. After many tears wrung from her eyes by her grief at having married contrary to her inclination, and at having lost him whom she loved so passionately, and whom she never hoped to see again, she resolved to console herself with the love and confidence she had in Amadour. However, she durst not avow her intentions; but Amadour, who suspected them, lost neither time nor opportunity to make known to her how much he loved her.

Just when Florida could hardly refrain from advancing Amadour from the condition of an expectant to that of a favored lover, a distressing and very inopportune accident occurred. The king summoned Amadour to the court upon an affair of importance. His wife was so shocked by this news that she fainted, and falling down a flight of stairs, hurt herself so much that she never recovered. Florida, whom her death bereaved of all her consolation, was as much afflicted as one who had lost all her good friends and relations. Amadour was inconsolable, for, on the one hand, he lost one of the best of wives, and, on the other hand, the means of being again with Florida; and so overwhelming was his grief that he was near dying suddenly. The old Duchess of Cardona was constantly at his bedside, repeating the arguments of the philosophers to console him; but it was of no avail, for if his grief for the dead was great, his love for the living made him a martyr.

Amadour's wife being interred, and the king's orders being pressing, he could find no pretext to prolong his stay; which so augmented his anguish that he had like to lose his senses. Florida, who, thinking to console him, was his very desolation, passed a whole afternoon in conversing with him in the most gracious manner, thinking to comfort him by the assurance that she would always find means to see him, oftener than he supposed. As he was to depart on the following day, and was so weak that he could not quit his bed, he entreated her to come again in the evening to see him, after every one else had left him. She promised to do so, not knowing that excessive love knows no restraint of reason; whilst he, despairing for the future of seeing her whom he had so long loved, and of whom he had never had but what you have seen, was so racked by his love and despair, that he resolved to play, as it were, at double or quits—that is to say, to win or lose all, and to pay himself in one hour for what he thought he had merited. He had his bed hung with such good curtains that he could not be seen by persons in the room, and he complained more than usual, so that everybody in the house thought he had not four—and—twenty hours to

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live.

After every one else had visited him in the evening, Florida came at the request of her husband himself to see him, her mind made up to console him by a declaration of her affection, and to tell him, without disguise or reserve, that she was resolved to love him as much as honor could allow her. Seated on a chair beside the head of his bed, she began her consolations by weeping with him; seeing which, Amadour fancied that in this great agitation of her mind he could the more easily accomplish his purpose, and he sat up in his bed. Florida, thinking he was too weak to do this, offered to prevent him. "Must I lose you for ever?" he exclaimed, on his knees; and saying this he let himself fall into her arms like a man whose strength suddenly failed him. Poor Florida embraced and supported him a long while, doing her best to comfort him; but the remedy she applied to assuage his pain increased it greatly. Still counterfeiting the appearance of one half dead, and saying not a word, he set himself in quest of what the honor of ladies prohibits. Florida, seeing his bad intention, but unable to believe it after the laudable language he had always addressed to her, asked him what he meant. Amadour, fearing to provoke a reply which he knew could not be other than chaste and virtuous, went straight to his mark without saying a word. Florida's surprise was extreme, and choosing rather to believe that his brain was turned than that he had a deliberate design upon her virtue, she called aloud to a gentleman who she knew was in the room, whereupon Amadour in an agony of despair, threw himself back on his bed so suddenly that the gentleman thought he was dead. Florida, who had risen from her chair, sent the gentleman to fetch some vinegar, and then said to Amadour, "Are you mad, Amadour? What is this you have thought of doing?"

"Do such long services as mine merit such cruelty?" replied Amadour, who had lost all reason in the violence of his love.

"And where is that honor you have so often preached to me?" she retorted.

"Ah, madam," said he, "it is impossible to love your honor more than I have done. As long as you were unmarried I so well mastered my passion that you never were aware of it; but now that you are married and your honor is shielded, what wrong do I do you in asking of you what belongs to me? For have I not won you by the force of my love? The first who had your heart has so little coveted your body that he deserved to lose both. He who possesses your body is unworthy to have your heart, and consequently your body even does not belong to him. But I have taken such pains for your sake during the last five or six years, that you cannot but be aware, madam, that to me alone belong your body and your heart, for which I have forgotten my own. If you think to excuse yourself on the ground of conscience, doubt not that when love forces the body and the heart, sin is never imputed. Those even who are so infuriated as to kill themselves, cannot sin; for passion leaves no room for reason. And if the passion of love is the most intolerable of all others, and that which most blinds all the senses, what sin would you attribute to him who lets himself be led by an invincible power? I am constrained to go away without the hope of ever seeing you again. But if I had from you before my departure that assurance which my love deserves, I should be strong enough patiently to endure the pains of that long absence. If, however, you will not grant me what I ask, you will soon learn that your rigor has caused me to perish miserably."

Florida, equally astonished and grieved at hearing such language from a man whom till then she had never distrusted, replied, in tears, "Is this, Amadour, the end of all the virtuous speeches you made me during my youth? Is this the honor and the conscience you have often counselled me to prize more than my own life? Have you forgotten the good examples you have given me of virtuous ladies who have withstood criminal love, and the scorn you have always expressed for the wanton? I cannot believe, Amadour, that you are so different from yourself that God, your conscience and my honor, are dead in you. But if what you say is true, I thank God for having prevented the misfortune into which I had nearly fallen, by causing your tongue to make known to me the bottom of your heart, which I have never fathomed till now. After losing the son of the Fortunate Infante, not only by my marriage, but also because I know he loves another, and seeing myself wedded to a man I cannot love in spite of all my efforts, I had resolved to love you with my whole heart, basing my affection on that virtue which I thought I discerned in you, and which I think I have attained through your means, which is to love my honor and

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my conscience more than my very life. With these laudable views I had come, Amadour, to lay a good foundation for the future; but you have convinced me that I should have built on a drifting sand, or rather on loathsome mud; and though a great part of the house was already built, in which I hoped perpetually to abide, you have knocked it all down at a blow. So never more expect anything of me; and never think of speaking to me wherever I may be, either with your tongue or your eyes; and be assured that my sentiments will never change. I say this to you with extreme regret. If I had plighted you a perfect friendship, I am sure my heart could not have borne this rupture and lived; though, indeed, the amazement into which I am cast at having been deceived is so intense and poignant, that if it does not cut short my life, it will at least render it very unhappy. I have no more to say but to bid you an eternal farewell."

I will not attempt to describe the anguish of Amadour at hearing these words. It would be impossible not only to depict it but even to imagine it, except for those who have been in a similar position. As Florida turned to depart, he caught her by the arm, well knowing that he should lose her forever unless he removed the bad opinion his conduct had caused her to entertain of him. "It has been the longing of my whole life, madam," he said, with the most sanctimonious countenance he could assume, "to love a woman of virtue; and as I have found few such, I wished to know if you were as estimable in that respect as you are for beauty; whereof I am now, thanks be to God, fully convinced. I congratulate myself on having given my heart to such an assemblage of perfections; and I entreat you, madam, to pardon my caprice and my audacity, since the dénouement is so glorious for you, and yields me such pleasure."

Florida was beginning to have her eyes opened to the wiles of men; and as she had been slow to believe evil where it existed, she was still slower to believe good where it was not. "Would to God," she said, "that your words were true; but I am not so ignorant but that my married experience shows me clearly that the force and infatuation of passion have made you do what you have done. Had God suffered me to slacken the reins, I am quite sure you would not have tightened them. No one would think of looking for virtue in that sort of way. But enough of this. If I too lightly gave you credit for some goodness, it is time I should know the truth, which now delivers me out of your hands."

So saying, she left the room, and passed the whole night in tears. The anguish she felt from the change was so great that she could hardly bear it. Reason told her she should cease to love, but her heart told her quite another thing, and who can master the heart? Unable, then, to overcome her love, she resolved to cherish it as warmly as ever, but to suppress all tokens of it for the satisfaction of her honor.

Amadour went away the next day, in such a state of mind as you may imagine. His great heart, however, instead of letting him yield to despair, suggested to him a new device whereby he might again see Florida and regain her good-will. Taking the road then to Toledo, where the King of Spain was residing, he passed through the county of Aranda, arrived late one evening at the countess's mansion, and found the countess sick with grief at the absence of Florida. She kissed and embraced Amadour as though he were her own son, both because she loved him, and because she suspected that he loved Florida. She asked news of her, and he gave her as much as he could, but not all true. He avowed the friendship which subsisted between them, which Florida had always concealed, begged her mother often to send him news of her, and to bring her soon to Aranda. He passed the night at the countess's, and continued his journey next day.

Having despatched his business with the king, he joined the army, but looked so melancholy and so changed, that the ladies and the captains with whom he was intimate could hardly believe he was the same man. He wore only black clothes, and those of a much coarser nap than was requisite for the mourning he wore ostensibly for his wife, whose death served as a convenient pretext for his sadness. Amadour lived in this way for three or four years, without returning to court. The Countess of Aranda, hearing that her daughter was piteously changed, wanted her to come back to her, but Florida would not; for when she learned that Amadour had acquainted her mother with their mutual friendship, and that her mother, though so discreet and virtuous, had so much confidence in Amadour that she approved of it, she was in marvellous perplexity. On the one hand, she considered that if she

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told her mother the truth, it might occasion mischief to Amadour, which she would not have done for her life, believing that she was quite able to punish his insolence without any help from her relations. On the other hand, she foresaw that if she concealed his misconduct, her mother and her friends would oblige her to speak with him and show him a fair countenance, and thereby, as she feared, encourage his evil intentions. However, as he was far away, she said nothing of what was past, and wrote to him when the countess desired her to do so; but it was plain, from the tone of her letters, that they were written not from her spontaneous impulses, but in obedience to her mother, so that Amadour felt pain in reading them instead of the transports of joy with which he had formerly received them.

Having during two or three years performed so many fine exploits that all the paper in Spain could not contain them, he devised a grand scheme, not to regain Florida's heart, for he believed he had lost it wholly, but to vanquish his enemy, since such she declared herself. Setting aside reason, and even the fear of death to which he exposed himself, he adopted the following course. He made such interest with the governor-in-chief that he was deputed to go and report to the king respecting certain enterprises that were in hand against Leucate; and without caring for the consequences, he communicated the purport of his journey to the Countess of Aranda before he had mentioned it to the king. As he knew that Florida was with her mother, he posted to the countess's under pretence of wishing to take her advice, and sent one of his friends before him to apprise her of his coming, begging she would not mention it, and would do him the favor to speak with him at night unknown to every one. The countess, very glad of this news, imparted it to Florida, and sent her to undress in her husband's room, that she might be ready when she should send for her after every one was in bed. Florida, who had not recovered from her first fear, said nothing of it, however, to her mother, and went to her oratory to commend herself to God, and pray that he would guard her heart from all weakness. Remembering that Amadour had often praised her for her beauty, which had lost nothing by her long illness, she chose rather to impair it with her own hand than to suffer it to kindle so criminal a fire in the heart of so worthy a man. To this end she took a stone, which she found opportunely, and gave herself such a great blow with it on the face, that her mouth, eyes, and nose were quite disfigured. That it might not appear she had done it designedly, when the countess sent for her she let herself fall on coming out of her oratory. The countess hearing her cries hurried to her, and found her in that sad condition. Florida raised herself up and told her mother she had struck her face against a great stone. Her wounds were immediately dressed and her face bandaged, after which her mother sent her to her own chamber, and begged her to entertain Amadour, who was in her cabinet, until she had got rid of her company. Florida obeyed, supposing that Amadour had some one with him; but when she found herself alone with him, and the door closed, she was as much vexed as Amadour was delighted, fancying that he should achieve, by fair means or by force, what he had so long coveted.

After a brief conversation, finding her sentiments unchanged, and hearing from her lips a protestation that, though it were to cost her her life, she would never swerve from the principles she had professed at their last meeting, he exclaimed desperately, "By God, Florida, your scruples shall not deprive me of the fruit of my toils. Since love, patience, and entreaties are of no avail, I will employ force to have that without which I should perish."

Amadour's visage and his eyes were so changed that the handsomest complexion in the world was become red as fire, and the mildest and most agreeable aspect so horrible and furious, that it seemed as though the fire in his heart blazed out through his eyes. In his rage he had seized both Florida's delicate hands in his strong gripe, and finding herself deprived of all means of defence or flight, she thought the only chance left her was to try if his former love was so extinct that it could not disarm his cruelty. "If I must now look upon you as an enemy, Amadour," she said, "I conjure you, by the virtuous love with which I formerly believed your heart was animated, at least to hear me before you do me violence. What can possess you, Amadour," she said, seeing that he listened to her "to desire a thing that can give you no pleasure, and would overwhelm me with grief? You have so well known my sentiments during my youth and my prime, which might have served as an excuse for your passion, that I wonder how, at my present age, and ugly as you see I am, you seek for that which you know you cannot find. I am sure you do not doubt that my sentiments are still the same, and, consequently, that nothing but violence can enable you to obtain your wishes. Look at the state of my face, forget the beauty you have seen in it,

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and you will lose all desire to approach me. If there is any remnant of love in your heart, it is impossible but that pity shall prevail over your rage. It is to your pity, and to the virtue of which you have given me so many proofs, that I appeal for mercy. Do not destroy my peace of mind, and make no attempt upon my honor, which, in accordance with your counsel, I am resolved to preserve. If the love you had for me has degenerated into hate, and you design from vindictiveness rather than affection to make me the most miserable woman on earth, I declare to you that it shall not be so, and that you will force me to complain openly of your vicious conduct to her who is so prejudiced in your favor. If you reduce me to this extremity, consider that your life is not safe."

"If I must die," replied Amadour, "a moment will put an end to all my troubles; but the disfigurement of your face, which I believe is your own work, shall not hinder me from doing what I have resolved; for though I could have nothing of you but your bones, I would have them close to me."

Finding that entreaties, arguments, and tears were useless, Florida had recourse to what she feared as much as the loss of life, and screamed out as loudly as she could to her mother. The countess, on hearing her cries, at once suspected the truth, and hastened to her with the utmost promptitude. Amadour, who was not so near dying as he said, let go his hold so quickly that the countess, on opening the cabinet, found him at the door, and Florida far enough away from him. "What is the matter, Amadour?" said the countess. "Tell me the truth." Amadour, who was prepared beforehand, and was never at a loss for an expedient at need, answered, with a pale and woe-begone countenance, "Alas! madam, I no longer recognise Florida. Never was man more surprised than I am. I thought, as I told you, that I had some share in her good-will, but now I see plainly I have no longer any. Methinks, madam, that whilst she lived with you she was neither less discreet nor less virtuous than she is now; but she had no squeams of conscience to hinder her from talking to people and looking them in the face. I wanted to look at her, but she would not allow it. Seeing this, I thought I must be in a dream or a trance, and I asked leave to kiss her hand, according to the custom of the country, but she absolutely refused it. It is true, madam, I have done wrong, and I crave your pardon for it, in taking her hand and kissing it in a manner by force. I asked nothing more of her, but I see plainly that she is resolved upon my death, and that, I believe, is why she called you. Perhaps she was afraid I had some other design upon her. Be that as it may, madam, I acknowledge I was wrong; for though she ought to love all your good servants, such is my ill-luck, that I have no part in her good-will. My heart will not change for all that, with regard either to her or to you; and I entreat you, madam, to let me retain your good-will, since I have lost hers without deserving it."

The countess, who partly believed and partly doubted, asked her why she had called out so loudly. Florida replied that she did so because she was frightened. The countess asked her many other questions, and never got any but the same reply; for having escaped from her enemy, Florida thought him sufficiently punished by the disappointment. After the countess had conversed a long time with Amadour, she let him talk again with Florida in her presence, in order to see how he would look; but he said little to her, and contented himself with thanking her for not having told her mother, and begging her that at least, since he was banished from her heart, another might not profit by his disgrace. "If I could have defended myself in any other way," said Florida, "all would have passed between our two selves. You shall be let off with this, unless you force me to do worse. Do not be afraid that I shall ever love; for since I have been deceived in my judgment of a heart which I thought was full of virtue, I shall never believe that a man exists who is worthy to be trusted. This misfortune will make me banish forever from my breast all passions which love can occasion." So saying she took leave of him.

Her mother, who had been watching them, could come to no conclusion, except that she saw clearly that her daughter had no longer any friendship for Amadour. She thought this unreasonable and that it was enough for herself to like any one to make Florida conceive an aversion for that person. From that moment she was so displeased with her, that for seven years she never spoke to her but with asperity, and all this at the solicitation of Amadour. Florida, who had formerly shunned nothing so much as her husband's presence, resolved to pass all her life by his side, to avoid her mother's harshness; but seeing that nothing succeeded with her, she made up her mind to deceive Amadour. To this end she pretended to be more tractable, and advised him to attach himself to a lady who she said she had spoken of their mutual love. This lady, who was in the queen's household, and whose

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name was Loretta, delighted at having made such a conquest, was so little mistress of her transports, that the affair became noised abroad. The Countess of Aranda herself, being at court, became aware of it, and afterwards treated Florida with more gentleness. Loretta's husband, who was a captain, and one of the King of Spain's great governors, was so incensed, that he was resolved to kill Amadour at all hazards; but Florida, who heard of this, and, in spite of herself, still loved Amadour, instantly gave him warning. Eager as he was to return to her, he replied, that if she would grant him every day three hours' conversation, he would never speak another word to Loretta; but she would do nothing of the sort. "Since, then, you do not wish me to live," said Amadour, "why would you hinder me from dying, unless you hope to make me suffer more in living than the pain of a thousand deaths. Let death fly me as it will, I will seek it so that at last I shall find it, and then only I shall be at rest."

Meanwhile news arrived that the King of Grenada had begun hostilities against the King of Spain, which obliged the king to send his son thither with the Constable of Castile and the Duke of Alva, two old and sage lords. The Duke of Cardona and the Count of Aranda desired to take part in the campaign, and begged the king to give them some command. The king gave them appointments suitable to their quality, and desired they should act under the advice of Amadour, who performed during the war such astonishing acts as testified as much desperation as valor. His desperate rashness at last cost him his life. The Moors having offered battle, gave way before the charge of the Spaniards, and made a feint of flying, in order to draw on the Christian army to pursue them. Their stratagem succeeded. The old Constable and the Duke of Alva, suspecting it, detained the Prince of Spain against his will, and hindered him from passing the river; but the Count of Aranda and the Duke of Cardona crossed it in defiance of orders to the contrary. The Moors, finding themselves pursued only by a small body, wheeled round. The Duke of Cardona was killed with a scymetar, and the Count of Aranda was so dangerously wounded, that he was left for dead on the field. Amadour, coming up, cleft his way through the mêlée with such fury, that one would have said he was a maniac, and had the bodies of the duke and the count carried to the camp of the prince, who regretted them as if they had been his own brothers. On examining their wounds, it was found that the Count of Aranda was not dead. He was laid on a litter and carried home, where he lay ill for a long time. The body of the young duke was transported to Cardona. After rescuing the two bodies, Amadour took so little care of his own person that he let himself be surrounded by a great number of Moors. Knowing, then, that if he fell into the hands of the King of Grenada he should die a cruel death, unless he renounced the Christian religion, he resolved not to give his enemies the glory of his death or his capture, but to surrender up his body and his soul to God; and kissing the cross of his sword he plunged it into his body with such force that no second blow was needed.

Thus died poor Amadour, as much regretted as his virtues deserved. The news instantly spread from mouth to mouth all over Spain. Florida, who was then at Barcelona, where her husband had formerly directed that he should be buried, after having caused his obsequies to be performed with pomp, retired into the convent of Jesus, without saying a word to her mother or her mother-in-law, taking for her spouse and lover him who had delivered her from a love so violent as that of Amadour, and from the distress caused her by the society of such a husband. Her sole subsequent occupation and care was to love God so perfectly that, after having been a long time a nun, she surrendered up her soul to him with the joy with which a bride meets her husband. *

I am afraid, ladies, you have found this long story tedious; but it would have been still longer if I had given it as it was told to me. Imitate Florida's virtues, ladies, but be not so cruel; and never esteem men so highly, lest, when you are undeceived, you bring upon them a miserable death, and a life of sorrow upon yourselves.

"Do you not think," said Parlamente, turning to Hircan, "that this lady was tried to the utmost, and that she resisted virtuously?"

"No," he replied; "for the least resistance a woman can decently make is to cry out. But what would she have done if she had been in a place where she could not be heard? Besides, if Amadour had not been more swayed by fear than by love, he would not so easily have given up. So I still maintain that no man ever loved heartily and was loved in return, who did not obtain what he sought if he went the right way about it. I must, however, applaud Amadour for having in part done his duty."

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"Duty?" said Oisille. "Do you think that a servant does his duty, in offering violence to his mistress, to whom he owes all respect and obedience?"

"When our mistresses, madam," replied Saffredent, "hold their rank in chamber or hall, seated at their ease as our judges, we are on our knees before them; we timidly lead them out to dance, and serve them with so much diligence that we anticipate their commands; we have so much fear of offending them, and so much desire to serve them well, that no one can look upon us without compassion. We are often thought more witless than brutes, and people praise the proud spirit of our ladies, who look so imperious, and speak with so much good breeding, that they make themselves feared, loved, and esteemed by those who see only the outside. But in private, where there is no other judge than love, we know very well that they are women and we are men. The name of mistress is then changed to that of friend and he who was a servant in public become a friend in a tête-à-tête. Thence comes the old proverb—

Well to serve and loyal to be,
Raiseth a servant to mastery. Of honor they have as much as men, who can give it them and take it away; and as they see we suffer with patience, it is just that they should indemnify us when they can do so without damage to their honor."

"You do not speak," said Longarine, "of that true honor which is the most perfect contentment that can be had in this world. Though all the world believed me a virtuous woman, and I alone knew the contrary, the praises of others would but increase my shame and my secret confusion. On the other hand, were all mankind to condemn me, whilst my conscience was free from all reproach, I should derive a sort of pleasure from calumny, so true it is that virtue is never wholly unhappy."

"Though you have left nothing to say," observed Geburon, "you will permit me to remark that I regard Amadour as the most worthy and most virtuous of cavaliers. Though he has been given a feigned name, I think, nevertheless, that I recognize him; but since others have not named him, neither will I. I will only say that if he is the same as I suppose, never was his heart susceptible of fear, or exempt from love."

"It strikes me," said Oisille, "that this day has passed so agreeably, that if this continues, our time will seem very short. The sun is already low, and vespers have been rung at the abbey this long time. I did not tell you so before, because I was less desirous to hear vespers than to know the end of the story."

Hereupon everybody rose, and proceeding to the abbey they found that the monks had been waiting for them for more than an hour. After vespers they supped. The evening was not passed without discussing the tales that had been told in the day, and reviewing in memory the means of making the next day pass as agreeably as the first. After no end of sports in the meadow, every one went to bed highly gratified by the way in which their first day had been spent.