

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

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

Table of Contents

<u>THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day</u>	1
<u>Marguerite de Navarre (d'Angoulême) Duchesse d'Alençon</u>	1
<u>THIRD DAY</u>	1
<u>NOVEL XXI</u>	1
<u>TROISIÈME JOURNÉE. Nouvelle XXIIe</u>	9
<u>NOVEL XXII</u>	10
<u>NOVEL XXIII</u>	15
<u>NOVEL XXIV</u>	19
<u>NOVEL XXV</u>	23
<u>NOVEL XXVI</u>	25
<u>TROISIÈME JOURNÉE. Nouvelle XXVIe</u>	28
<u>NOVEL XXVII</u>	32
<u>NOVEL XXVIII</u>	33
<u>NOVEL XXIX</u>	34
<u>NOVEL XXX</u>	35

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

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

This page copyright © 2001 Blackmask Online.

<http://www.blackmask.com>

- THIRD DAY.
 - NOVEL XXI.
 - TROISIÈME JOURNÉE. Nouvelle XXIIe
 - NOVEL XXII.
 - NOVEL XXIII.
 - NOVEL XXIV.
 - NOVEL XXV.
 - NOVEL XXVI.
 - TROISIÈME JOURNÉE. Nouvelle XXVIe
 - NOVEL XXVII.
 - NOVEL XXVIII.
 - NOVEL XXIX.
 - NOVEL XXX.
-

THIRD DAY.

EARLY as it was next morning when the company assembled in the refectory, they found Madame Oisille already there. She had been meditating for half an hour on what she was to read to them; and so intent were they on listening to her that they did not hear the bell, and a monk had to come and tell them that high mass was about to begin. After hearing mass and dining soberly, in order to have their memories more clear, they all retired to their chambers to review their several repertoires of tales previously to the next meeting in the meadow. Those who had some droll story to tell were already so merry, that one could not look in their faces without being prepared beforehand for a hearty laugh. When all were seated, they asked Saffredent to whom he addressed his call. "The fault I committed yesterday," he said, "being as you say so great, and knowing not how to repair it, I call on Parlamente. Her excellent sense will enable her to praise the ladies in such a manner as will make you forget the truth I have told you."

"I do not undertake to repair your faults," replied Parlamente; "but I will take good care not to imitate them. To this end, without departing from the truth we have pledged ourselves to speak, I will show you that there are ladies who in their love have had no other end in view than virtue and honor. As the lady of whom I have to speak is of a good family, I will change nothing in her story but the names. You will see, ladies, from what I am going to narrate, that love can make no change in a chaste and virtuous heart."

NOVEL XXI.

Virtuous love of a young lady of quality and a bastard of an illustrious house-hindrance of their marriage by a queen-Sage reply of the demoiselle to the queen-Her subsequent marriage.

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

THERE was a queen in France who had in her household several young ladies of good birth, and among the rest, one named Rolandine, who was her near relation. But the queen being displeased with this young lady's father, punished the innocent for the guilty, and behaved not very well to Rolandine. Though this young lady was neither a great beauty nor the reverse, such was the propriety of her demeanor and the sweetness of her disposition, that many great lords sought her in marriage, but obtained no reply, for Rolandine's father was so fond of his money that he neglected the establishment of his daughter. On the other hand, she was so little in favor of her mistress, that she was not wooed by those who wished to ingratiate themselves with the queen. Thus, through the negligence of her father and the disdain of her mistress, this poor young lady remained long unmarried. At last she took this sorely to heart, not so much from eagerness to be married, as from shame at not being so. Her grief reached such a pitch that she forsook the pomp and mundane pursuits of the court to occupy herself only with prayer and some little handiworks. In this tranquil manner she passed her youth, leading the most blameless and devout of lives.

When she was approaching her thirtieth year, she became acquainted with a gentleman, a bastard of an illustrious house, and one of the best-bred men of his day, but ill endowed by fortune, and of so little comeliness that no one but herself would have readily chosen him for a lover. As this poor gentleman had remained solitary like herself, and as the unfortunate naturally seek each other's society, he one day accosted Rolandine. There being a strong similitude between them in point of temperament and fortune, they poured their griefs into each other's ears, and that was the beginning of a very intimate friendship between them. Seeing that they both labored under the same misfortune, they everywhere sought each other out for mutual consolation, and thus they became more and more attached to each other to an extraordinary degree. Those who had known Rolandine so coy that she would hardly speak to any one, were shocked to see her every moment with the bastard, and told her gouvernante that she ought not to permit such long conversations. The gouvernante spoke to Rolandine on the subject, telling her that it was taken amiss that she should be on such familiar terms with a man who was neither rich enough to marry her, nor good-looking enough to be loved. Rolandine, who had hitherto been reproved for her austerity, rather than for her mundane ways, replied, "You see, mother, that I cannot have a husband of my own quality. I have hitherto always attached myself to the young and good-looking; but as I am afraid of falling into the pit into which I have seen so many fall, I now attach myself to this gentleman, who, as you know, is so correct and so virtuous that he never talks to me but of seemly things. What harm, then, do I do to you, and to those who make a talk about it, consoling my sorrows by means of an innocent converse?"

The poor woman, who loved her mistress more than herself, made answer, "I see plainly, mademoiselle, that you are right, and that your father and your mistress do not treat you as you deserve. But since this acquaintance gives rise to remarks which are not to the advantage of your honor, you ought to break it off, though the man were your own brother."

"I will do so, since such is your advice," replied Rolandine, weeping, "but it is very hard to have no consolation in the world."

The bastard came to see her as usual, but, with tears in her eyes, she related to him in detail all that her gouvernante had said to her, and begged him not to visit her any more until this tattle should have subsided; and he complied with her entreaty. Both of them having lost their consolation through this separation, they began to feel an uneasiness such as neither had ever before experienced. Her whole time was spent in prayer, fasting, and journeying; for the sentiment of love, so totally new to her, caused her such agitation that she did not know a moment's rest. The bastard was not in a much better plight; but as he had made up his mind to love her and try to obtain her for a wife, and saw that it would be a very glorious thing for him to succeed in the attempt, his only thought was how he should press his suit, and how he should secure the gouvernante in his interest. To this end he represented to her the deplorable condition of her mistress, who was wilfully deprived of all consolation. The good woman thanked him with tears for the interest he took in her mistress's welfare, and cast about with him for means to enable him to have an interview with her. It was arranged between them that Rolandine should pretend to be troubled with a headache, which made all noise insupportable to her; and that when her companions left her

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

in her chamber, the bastard and she might remain alone, and converse together without restraint. The bastard, delighted with the expedient, gave himself up entirely to the guidance of the *gouvernante*, and in this way he was enabled to talk with his mistress whenever he pleased.

But this pleasure was not of long duration; for the queen, who disliked Rolandine, asked what she was doing in her chamber. Some one replied that she had a headache; but somebody else; either disliking her absence or wishing to cause her annoyance, said that the pleasure she took in conversing with the bastard would be sure to cure her headache. The queen, who regarded as mortal sins in Rolandine what would have been venial sins in others, sent for her, and forbade her ever to speak to the bastard, except in her own chamber or hall. Rolandine professed obedience, and replied, that had she known that the bastard, or any one else, was displeasing to her majesty, she would never have spoken to him. At the same time she was inwardly resolved to find out some other expedient, of which the queen should know nothing. As she fasted on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, and did not quit her chamber, she took care to be visited on those days by the bastard, whom she was beginning to love greatly, and had time to talk with him in presence of her *gouvernante* whilst the others were at supper. The less time they had at their disposal, the more fervid and impassioned was their language; for they stole the time for mutual conversation, as the thief steals something precious. But there is no secret which is not found out at last. A varlet, having seen the bastard come in one day, mentioned it in a place where it failed not to be repeated, till it reached the ears of the queen, who put herself into such a towering passion, that the bastard never afterwards durst enter the chamber of the *demoiselles*. He often pretended to go a journey, in order to have opportunity to see the object of his affections, and every evening he used to return to the chapel of the *château*, dressed sometimes as a *Cordelier*, sometimes as a *Jacobin*, and always so well disguised that no one knew him except Rolandine and her *gouvernante*, who failed not at once to accost the good father.

The bastard, feeling assured that Rolandine loved him, did not scruple to say to her one day, "You see, *mademoiselle*, to what I expose myself for your service, and how the queen has forbidden you to speak to me. You see, too, that nothing is further from your father's thoughts than disposing of you in marriage. He has refused so many good offers, that I know no one far or near who can have you. I know that I am poor, and that you could not marry a gentleman who was not richer than myself; but if to have a great deal of love were to be rich, I should think myself the most opulent man in the world. God has given you great wealth, and the expectation of still greater. If I were so happy as to be chosen by you for your husband, I would be all my life your spouse, your friend, and your servant. If you marry one who is your own equal—and such a one, I think, will not easily be found—he will insist on being the master, and will have more regard to your wealth than to your person, to beauty than to virtue; he will enjoy your wealth, and will not treat you as you deserve. My longing to enjoy this contentment, and my fear that you will have none with another, oblige me to entreat that you will make me happy, and yourself the best—satisfied and best—treated wife in the world."

Rolandine, hearing from her lover's lips the declaration she had made up her mind to address to him, replied with a glad face, "I rejoice that you have anticipated me, and have said to me what I have long resolved to say to you. Ever since I have known you, now two years, not a moment has passed in which I have not thought over all the arguments that could be adduced in your favor and against you; but at last, having resolved to engage in matrimony, it is time that I should make a beginning, and choose the man with whom I think I can pass my life with most quiet and satisfaction. I have had as suitors men of good figure, wealthy and of high birth; but you are the only one with whom it seems to me that my heart and mind can best agree. I know that in marrying you I do not offend God, but that, on the contrary, I do what he commands. As for my father, he has so much neglected the duty of establishing me, and has rejected so many opportunities, that the law empowers me to marry without his having a right to disinherit me; but even should I have nothing but what belongs to myself, I shall esteem myself the happiest woman in the world in having such a husband as you. As for the queen my mistress, I need make no scruple of disobeying her to obey God, since she has not scrupled to frustrate all the advantages that offered themselves to me during my youth. But to prove to you that my love for you is founded on honor and virtue, I require your promise, that in case I consent to the marriage you propose, you will not ask to consummate it until after the death of my father, or until I shall have found means to obtain his consent."

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

The bastard having promised this with alacrity, they gave each other a ring in pledge of marriage, and exchanged kisses in the church before God, whom they called to witness their mutual promise; and never afterwards was there anything between them of a more intimate nature than kisses. This slight satisfaction quite contented these two perfect lovers, who were a long time without seeing each other, or ever giving way to mutual suspicion. There was hardly a place where honor was to be acquired to which the bastard did not repair, being assured that he could never be poor, since God had bestowed on him a rich wife; and she during his absence so faithfully preserved that perfect affection for him, that she made no account of any other man. There were some who sought her in marriage, and had for answer, that having been so long unmarried, she was resolved to remain so for ever. This reply obtained such publicity that it reached the ears of the queen, who asked her the reason of such language. Rolandine replied that it was dictated by obedience; that she well knew her majesty had never chosen to marry her when very advantageous matches had offered; and that age and patience had taught her to be content with her present condition. Whenever marriage was mentioned to her, she always replied to the same effect.

The war being ended, and the bastard having returned to court, she did not speak to him before others, but always in the church under pretext of confession, for the queen had forbidden both of them, on pain of their lives, ever to converse except in public. But virtuous love, which fears no prohibitions, was more ingenious in suggesting to them means and opportunity to meet and converse than their enemies in hindering them. There was no monastic habit which the bastard did not successively assume; and by that means their intercourse was always agreeably maintained, until the king went to one of his country seats near Tours, which was so situated that the ladies could not go on foot to any other church than that of the château, which had such an exposed confessional, that the confessor would have easily been recognized. But as often as one opportunity failed them, love furnished them with another. At that very time there came to the court a lady nearly related to the bastard. She and her son were lodged in the king's residence; and the young prince had a projecting chamber, detached as it were from the king's apartments, and so placed, that from his window one could see and speak to Rolandine, their windows being exactly at the angle of the main building and the wing. The chamber which was over the king's hall was that of Rolandine and the other ladies of honor. Rolandine having frequently seen the young prince at the window, sent word of the fact by her *gouvernante* to the bastard. The latter having reconnoitered the ground, pretended to take great pleasure in reading the book of the Knights of the Round Table, which was one of those belonging to the prince; and towards dinner-hour he used to beg a valet de chambre to let him in, and leave him shut up in the chamber to finish reading his book. The valet, knowing him to be his master's relation, and a gentleman to be trusted, let him read as much as he pleased. Rolandine, on her part, used to come to her window, and in order to be free to remain there the longer, she pretended to have a sore leg; and she took her meals so early that she had no need to go to the table of the ladies of honor. She also bethought her of working at a crimson silk coverlet, which she hung at the window where she was very glad to be left alone to converse with her husband, who spoke in such a manner that no one could overhear them. When she saw any one coming she coughed and made signs to the bastard to retire. Those who had orders to watch them were persuaded that there was no love between them, for she never quitted a chamber in which he certainly could not see her, the *entrée* being forbidden him.

The mother of the young prince being one day in her son's chamber, placed herself at the window where lay the big book. Presently one of Rolandine's companions in office, who was at the window of their chamber, saluted the lady. The latter asked her how Rolandine was. The other replied that she should see her if she pleased, and made her come to the window in her nightcap. After some conversation about Rolandine's illness, both parties retired. The lady, casting her eyes on the big book of the Round Table, said to the valet de chambre who had charge of it, "I am astonished that young people give up their time to reading such follies." The valet de chambre replied that he was still more surprised that persons of ripe years, and who passed for sensible people, were more attached to them than the young; and thereupon he told her, as a curious fact, how the bastard, her relation, spent four or five hours every day in reading that book. The lady at once guessed the reason, and ordered the valet de chambre to conceal himself, and watch narrowly what the bastard did. The valet de chambre executed his commission, and found that, instead of reading, the bastard planted himself at the window, and that Rolandine came and talked with him. He even overheard many expressions of their love, which they thought they had so well concealed. Next day, the valet having told his mistress what he had seen and heard, she sent for her cousin, the bastard, and after some

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

sharp remonstrances, forbade him ever more to place himself at that window. In the evening she spoke to Rolandine, and threatened she would inform the queen if she persisted in that foolish attachment. Rolandine, without losing her presence of mind, replied, that whatever the lady might have been told, she had not spoken to the bastard since she had been prohibited from doing so by her mistress, as her companions, and her servants, could witness. As for the window of which the lady spoke, she had never talked there with the bastard.

The lover now fearing lest his intrigue should be exposed, withdrew from the danger, and absented himself for a long time from court, but not without writing to Rolandine, which he managed to do with such address, that, in spite of all the queen could do, Rolandine heard from him twice a week. In the first instance he employed a monk to convey his letters; but this means failing, he sent a little page, dressed sometimes in one color, sometimes in another. The page used to post himself at the places through which the ladies passed, and, mingling with the other servants, found means always to deliver his letters to Rolandine. The queen going into the country, one of those persons whom she had charged to be on the watch regarding this affair recognized the page, and ran after him; but the page, who was a cunning lad, darted into the house of a poor woman, who was boiling her pot, and instantly thrust his letters into the fire. The gentleman who pursued him having caught and stripped him naked, searched him all over, but, finding nothing, let him go. When the page was gone, the good woman asked the gentleman why he had searched the poor boy in that manner. He replied, that it was because he believed the boy had letters about him. "You were not likely to find them," she said; "he had hidden them too well." "Where, pray?" inquired the gentleman who now made sure of having them. He was quite confounded when he heard that they were burnt, and saw that the page had been too clever for him. However, he went at once, and told the queen what he had ascertained.

The bastard not being able to employ the page any more, sent in his stead an old domestic, who, without caring for the threats of death which he well knew the queen had proclaimed against all who should meddle in this affair, undertook to convey the letters to Rolandine. Having entered the château, he stationed himself at a door which was at the foot of a great staircase used by all the ladies; but a valet, who had formerly known him, recognized him at once, and denounced him to the queen's maître d'hôtel, who gave orders for his instant arrest. The wary servant, seeing that he was watched, turned to the wall, under a certain pretence, tore his letters into the smallest possible pieces, and threw them behind the door. Immediately afterwards he was arrested and searched, but nothing being found on him, he was interrogated upon oath as to whether he had not carried letters. Nothing was left untried in the way of promises or threats to make him confess the truth, but, in spite of all they could do, they could never get anything out of him. This unsatisfactory result was reported to the queen; but some one having thought of looking behind the door, found there the fragments of the letters. The king's confessor was sent for; and having arranged all the pieces on a table, he read the whole of the letter, in which the secret marriage was plainly revealed, for the bastard called Rolandine his wife. The queen, who was not of a humor to conceal her neighbor's fault, made a great noise about the matter; and insisted on every means being employed to make the man confess the truth respecting the letter, the identity of which he could not deny; but say to him or show him what they would, there was no possibility of making him avow anything. Those who had been commissioned in this matter took him to the edge of the river, and put him into a sack, telling him that he lied to God and the queen, contrary to the proved truth. Choosing rather to die than to betray his master, he asked for a confessor, and after having set his conscience right, he said to them, "I pray you, Sir, to tell the bastard my master, that I commend to him my wife and my children, and that I die with a good heart for his service. Do with me what you please and be assured that you will never extract anything from me to my master's disadvantage." Then, to frighten him more, they threw him into the water, shut up as he was in the sack, and shouted to him that his life should be saved if he would speak the truth; but seeing that he made no reply, they took him out of the water, and reported his firm behavior to the queen. "Neither the king nor myself," said her majesty, "is so fortunate in servants as the bastard, who has not wherewithal to reward them." She did all she could to engage the worthy fellow in her service, but he would never quit his master, until the latter permitted him to enter the service of the queen; in which he lived happy and contented.

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

Having discovered the secret marriage by means of the intercepted letter, the queen sent for Rolandine, and with great violence of manner called her several times wretch instead of cousin, upbraiding her with the dishonor she had done to her house, and to her who was her mistress, in having thus married without her consent. Rolandine, who was long aware of the little kindness the queen entertained for her, fully returned that feeling. As there was no love between them, fear no longer availed; and as Rolandine saw plainly that a reprimand so publicly given was prompted less by regard for her than by the wish to put her to shame, and that the queen was more pleased in mortifying her than grieved to find her in fault, she replied with an air as calm and composed as that of the queen was agitated and passionate, "If you did not know your own heart, madam, I would set before you the bad feeling you have long entertained towards my father and me; but you know it so well, that you will not be surprised to hear that it is not a secret for anybody. For my part, madam, I have seen and felt it to my cost. If you had been as kind to me as to those who are not so nearly related to you, I should now be married in a manner that would do honor both to you and to me; but you have forsaken me, and not shown me the least mark of favor, so that I have missed all the good offers I have had through my father's negligence and the little account you have made of me. This unkind treatment threw me into such despair, that if my health had been strong enough to endure the austerities of a convent, I would gladly have entered one to escape from the continual vexations which your harshness caused me. In the midst of this despondency I became acquainted with one who would be of as good a house as myself, if the love of two persons was as much esteemed as the matrimonial ring; for you know that his father would take precedence of mine. He has long loved and cheered me; but you, madam, who have never forgiven me the least fault, or praised any good act I may have done, though you knew by experience that it was not my wont to talk of love and mundane vanities, and that I lived a more religious life than any other of your servants, you have not hesitated from the first to take offence at my speaking to a gentleman as unfortunate as myself, and in whose friendship I sought nothing else than consolation of mind. When I saw that I was entirely deprived of this, my despair was so great that I resolved to seek my repose with as much solicitude as you took to deprive me of it. From that very hour we interchanged promises of marriage which were sealed with a ring. It seems to me, then, madam, that you wrong me in calling me wicked. The great and perfect friendship which subsists between the bastard and myself would have given me occasion to do wrong if I had been so disposed, yet we have never gone further than kissing, it being my conviction that God would do me the grace to obtain my father's consent before the consummation of our marriage. I have done nothing against God or against my conscience. I have waited till the age of thirty to see what you and my father would do for me; and my youth has been passed in such chastity and virtue that no one in the world can justly cast the least reproach upon me in that respect. Finding myself on the decline, and without the hope of obtaining a husband of my own rank, reason determined me to take one according to my taste, not for the lust of the eyes, for, as you know, he whom I have chosen is not comely; nor yet for that of the flesh, since there has been no consummation; nor for the pride and ambition of this life, for he is poor, and of little preferment; but I have had regard purely and simply to the virtue and good qualities he possesses, as to which all the world is constrained to do him justice, and to the great love he has for me, which affords me the hope of enjoying quiet and contentment with him. After having maturely considered the good and the evil which might result to me, I took the course which appeared to me the best, and finally resolved, after two years' examination, to end my life with him; and this I so fully resolved, that no torments which could be inflicted upon me, nor death itself, could make me change my purpose. So, madam, I beseech you to excuse in me what is highly excusable, as you very well know, and leave me to enjoy the peace and quiet I expect to find with him."

The queen, unable to make any reasonable reply to language so resolute and so true, could only renew her passionate chiding and abuse, and, bursting into tears, "Wretch," she said, "instead of humbling yourself, and testifying repentance for the fault you have committed, you speak with audacity, and, instead of blushing, you do not so much as shed one tear; thereby giving plain proof of your obstinacy and hardness of heart. But if the king and your father do as I would have them, they will put you in a place where you will be constrained to hold other language."

"Since you accuse me, madam, of speaking with audacity," replied Rolandine, "I am resolved to say no more, unless you are pleased to permit me to speak." The queen having given her permission, she continued: "It is not

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

for me, madam, to speak to you with audacity. As you are my mistress, and the greatest princess in Christendom, I must always entertain for you the respect which is your due; and it has never been my intention to depart from it. But as I have no advocate but the truth, and as it is known to myself alone, I am obliged to speak it boldly, in the hope that if I have the good fortune to make you thoroughly cognizant of it, you will not believe me to be such as you have been pleased to call me. I am not afraid that any mortal creature should know in what manner I have conducted myself in the affair which is laid to my charge, for I know that I have not done anything contrary either to God or to my honor. This, madam, is what makes me speak without fear, being well assured that He who sees my heart is with me; and with such a judge on my side, I should be wrong to fear those who are subject to His judgment. Wherefore should I weep, madam, since honor and conscience do not upbraid me? As to repentance, madam, I am so far from repenting of what I have done, that were it to be done again, I would do it. It is you, madam, who have great reason to weep, both for the wrong you have done me in the past, and for that which you now do me in censuring me publicly for a fault of which you are more guilty than I. If I had offended God, the king, you, my kindred, and my conscience, I ought to testify my repentance by my tears; but I ought not to weep for having done an act that is good, just, and holy, which would never have been spoken of but with honor, if you, madam, had not prematurely divulged it, and given it an air of culpability; thereby plainly showing that you are more bent on dishonoring me than on preserving the honor of your house and your kindred. But since it is your pleasure, madam, to act thus, it is not for me to gainsay you. Innocent as I am, I shall feel no less pleasure in submitting to the punishment you may choose to inflict upon me, than you in imposing it. You and my father, madam, have but to say what you desire that I should suffer, and you shall be promptly obeyed. I reckon upon it, madam, that he will not be backward in this; and I shall be very glad if he will share your sentiments, and if, after having agreed with you in the negligence he has shown in providing for my welfare, he imitates your activity now that the question is how to do me harm. But I have another Father in heaven, who, I hope, will give me patience enough to endure the evils I see you are preparing for me; and it is in Him alone I put my whole trust."

The queen, bursting with rage, gave orders that Rolandine should be taken out of her sight, and shut up alone in a chamber where she should not be allowed to speak to any one. Nevertheless, her gouvernante was left with her, and through her it was that Rolandine made known her present condition to the bastard, asking his advice at the same time as to what she should do. The bastard, believing that the services he had rendered to the king would be counted for something, repaired at once to the court. He found the king at the chase, told him the truth of the matter, reminded him of his poverty, and besought his majesty to appease the queen and permit the consummation of the marriage. The king made no other reply than to say, "Do you assure me that you have married her?"

"Yes, sire," replied the bastard, "by words and by presents only; but if your majesty pleases, the ceremony shall be completed."

The king looked down, and without saying another word returned to the château. On arriving there, he called for the captain of his guards, and ordered him to arrest the bastard. However, one of the friends of the latter, who guessed the king's intention, sent him warning to get out of the way and retire to one of his houses which was not far off, promising, that if the king should send in search of him, as he expected would be the case, he should have prompt notice, so that he might quit the kingdom; and that should matters be more favorable, he would send him word to return. The bastard took his friend's advice, and made such good speed that the captain of the guards did not find him.

Meanwhile, the king and queen having conferred together as to what should be done with the poor lady who had the honor to be their relation, it was decided, at the queen's suggestion, that she should be sent back to her father, who should be made acquainted with the truth of the matter. Before she went away, several ecclesiastics and people of sage counsel went to see her, and represented to her that, being engaged only by word of mouth, the marriage could easily be dissolved, provided both parties were willing, and that it was the king's pleasure she should do so, for the honor of the house to which she belonged; but she replied, that she was ready to obey the king in all things, provided conscience was not implicated; but what God had joined men could not put asunder. She besought them not to ask of her a thing so unreasonable. "If the love and the good-will which are founded

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

only on the fear of God," she added, "are a true and solid bond of marriage, then am I so closely bound that neither steel, nor fire, nor water can loose me. Death alone can do so, and to it alone will I surrender my ring and my oath; so, gentlemen, I beg you will say no more to me on the subject." She had so much steadfastness, that she would rather die and keep her word, than live after having broken it.

This resolute reply was reported to the king, who, seeing that it was impossible to detach her from her husband, gave orders that she should be taken away to her father's; and thither she was carried with such little ceremony or regard to her quality, that none who saw how she was treated could restrain their tears. She had transgressed, indeed; but her punishment was so great and her fortitude so singular, that they made her fault seem a virtue. Her father, on hearing this disagreeable news, would not see his daughter, but sent her away to a castle situated in a forest, and which he had formerly built for a reason well worthy to be narrated. There she was for a long time a prisoner, and every day she was told, by her father's orders, that if she would renounce her husband he would treat her as his daughter, and set her at liberty. But nothing could shake her constancy. One would have thought she made pleasant pastime of her sufferings, to see how cheerfully she bore them for the sake of him she loved.

What shall I say here of men? The bastard, who was under such obligations to her, fled to Germany, where he had many friends, and showed by his inconstancy that he had attached himself to Rolandine through avarice and ambition, rather than through real love; for he became so enamored of a German lady, that he forgot to write to her who was suffering so much for his sake. However cruel fortune was towards them, she yet left it always in their power to write to each other; but this sole comfort was lost through the bastard's inconstancy and negligence; whereat Rolandine was distressed beyond measure. The few letters he did write were so cold and so different from those she had formerly received from him, that she felt assured some new amour had deprived her of her husband's heart, and done what vexations and persecutions had been incapable of effecting. But her love for him was too great to allow of her taking any decisive step on mere conjectures. In order, therefore, to know the truth, she found means to send a trusty person, not to carry any letters or messages to him, but to observe him, and make careful inquiries. This envoy, on his return, informed her that the bastard was deeply in love with a German lady, and that it was said she was very rich, and that he wished to marry her. So extreme was poor Rolandine's affliction on learning this news, that she fell into a dangerous illness. Those who were aware of its cause told her, on the part of her father, that since the bastard's inconstant and dastardly behavior were known, she had a perfect right to abandon him; and they tried hard to persuade her to do so. But it was in vain they tormented her; she remained unchanged to the end, displaying alike the greatness of her love and of her virtue. In proportion as the bastard's love diminished, Rolandine's augmented, the latter gaining as it were all that the former lost. Feeling that in her bosom alone was lodged all the love that had formerly dwelt in two, she resolved to cherish it until the death of the one or the other.

The divine goodness, which is perfect charity and true love, took pity on her sorrows, and had so much regard for her patience, that the bastard died soon after in the midst of his wooing of another woman. The news being brought her by persons who had been present at his burial, she sent to her father, begging he would be so good as to allow her to say a few words to him. Her father, who had never spoken to her during the whole time of her captivity, went to her forthwith. After having heard her plead her justification at very great length, instead of condemning and thinking of killing her, as he had often threatened, he embraced her, and said, with swimming eyes, "You are more just than I, my daughter; for if you have committed a fault, I am the principal cause of it. But since it has pleased God that things should happen thus, I will try to make amends for the past." Accordingly, he took her home, and treated her as his eldest daughter.

A gentleman who bore the name and the arms of the family at last sought her in marriage. This gentleman, who was very prudent and virtuous, often saw Rolandine, and conceived so much esteem for her, that he praised her for what others blamed, persuaded as he was that she acted only upon virtuous principles. The chevalier being liked both by the father and the daughter, the marriage was forthwith concluded. It is true that a brother she had, and who was the father's sole heir, would never give her a portion of the family wealth, under pretext that she had been wanting in obedience to her father; after whose death he treated her so cruelly, that she and her husband,

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

who was a younger son, found it a hard matter to subsist. But God provided a remedy, for the brother, who wished to retain all, died, leaving behind him both his own wealth and that of his sister, which he unjustly retained. By this means Rolandine and her husband were raised to great affluence. They lived honorably, according to their quality, were grateful for the favors bestowed on them by Providence, had much love for one another, and, after they had brought up two sons, with whom it pleased God to bless their marriage, Rolandine joyfully yielded up her soul to him in whom she had always put her whole trust. *

Ladies, let the men who regard us as inconstancy's very self show us a husband like the wife of whom I have been telling you, one who had the same goodness, fidelity, and constancy. I am sure they will find the task so very hard, that I will acquit them of it altogether, rather than put them to such infinite pain. As for you, ladies, I beg that, for the maintenance of your dignity, you will either not love at all, or love as perfectly as this demoiselle. Do not say that she exposed her honor, since by her firmness she has been the means of so augmenting ours.

"It is true, Oisille," said Parlamente, "that your heroine was a woman of a very lofty spirit, and the more commendable for her steadfastness, as she had to do with an unfaithful husband, who wished to quit her for another."

"That, I think," said Longarine, "must have been the hardest thing for her to bear; for there is no burden so heavy which the love of two persons who are truly united may not bear with ease and comfort; but when one of the two deserts his duty, and leaves the whole burden to the other, the weight becomes insupportable."

TROISIÈME JOURNÉE. Nouvelle XXIIe

"You ought then to have pity on us," said Geburon, "since we have to bear the whole weight of love, and you will not so much as help with a finger—end to ease the burden."

"The burdens of the man and of the woman are often different," observed Parlamente. "The wife's love, founded on piety and virtue, is so just and reasonable, that he who is untrue to the duties of such a friendship ought to be regarded as a dastard, and wicked in the sight of God and man. But as men love only with a view to pleasure, women, who in their ignorance are always the dupes of wicked men, often engage themselves too deeply in a commerce of tenderness; but when God makes known to them the criminal intentions of those whom they supposed to entertain none but good ones, they may break off with honor, and without damage to their reputation, for the shortest follies are always the best."

"That is a mere whim of your own," said Hircan, "to assert that virtuous women may honorably cease to love men, whilst the latter may not in like manner cease to love women; as if the heart of one sex was different from that of the other. For my part, I am persuaded that, in spite of the diversity in faces and dresses, the inclinations of both are the same; the only difference is, that the more hidden guilt is the worse."

"I am very well aware," said Parlamente, with some anger, "that in your opinion the least guilty women are those whose guilt is known."

"Let us change the subject," interrupted Simontault, "and dismiss that of the heart of man and of woman by saying that the best of them is good for nothing. Let us see to whom Parlamente will give her voice."

"To Geburon," she said.

"Since I have begun with mentioning the Cordeliers," said he, "I must not forget the monks of St. Benedict, and cannot forbear relating what happened in my time to two of these good fathers; at the same time, let not what I am going to tell you of a wicked monk hinder you from having a good opinion of those that deserve it. But as the

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

Psalmist says that all men are liars, and that there is none that worketh righteousness, no not one, it seems to me that one cannot fail to esteem a man such as he is. In fact, if there is good in him, it is to be attributed, not to the creature, but to Him who is the principle and the source of all good. Most people deceive themselves in giving too much to the creature, or in too much esteeming themselves. And that you may not suppose it impossible to find extreme concupiscence under an extreme austerity, I will relate to you a fact which happened in the time of King Francis I."

NOVEL XXII.

A hypocritical Prior tries every means to seduce a Nun, but at last his villainy is discovered.

THERE was at St. Martin-des-Champs, at Paris, a prior, whose name I will not mention, because of the friendship I once bore him. He led so austere a life until the age of fifty, and the fame of his sanctity was so strong throughout the kingdom, that there was no prince or princess who did not receive him with veneration when he paid them a visit. No monastic reform was effected in which he had not part; and he received the name of the "Father of true monasticism." He was elected visitor of the celebrated society of the Ladies of Fontevrault, who were in so much awe of him, that when he came to any of their convents the nuns trembled with fear, and treated him just as they might have treated the king, hoping thereby to soften his rigor towards them. At first, he did not wish that such deference should be paid him; but as he approached his fifty-fifth year, he at last came to like the honors he had refused in the beginning; and coming by degrees to regard himself as the public property of the religious societies, he was more careful to preserve his health than he had been. Though he was bound by the rules of his order never to eat meat, he granted himself a dispensation in that respect, a thing he would never do for any one else, alleging as his reason, that the whole burden of the brethren's spiritual interests rested upon him. Accordingly, he pampered himself, and to such good purpose, that from being a very lean monk he became a very fat one.

With the change in his manner of living a change took place in his heart also, and he began to look at faces on which he had before made it a matter of conscience to cast his eyes casually. By dint of looking at beauties, rendered more desirable by their veils, he began to lust after them. In order to satisfy his unholy passion he changed from a shepherd into a wolf; and if he found an Agnes in any of the convents under his jurisdiction, he failed not to corrupt her. After he had long led this wicked life, Divine goodness taking pity on the poor misused sheep, was pleased to unmask the villain, as you shall hear.

He had gone one day to visit a convent near Paris named Gif, and while he was confessing the nuns there came before him one named Sister Marie Herouet, whose sweet and pleasing voice indicated that her face and heart were not less so. The mere sound inspired the good father with a passion exceeding all he had ever felt for other nuns. In speaking to her he stooped down to look at her, and seeing her mouth so rosy and charming, he could not help lifting up her veil to satisfy himself if her eyes corresponded to the beauty of her lips. He found what he sought, and noted it so well that his heart became filled with a most vehement ardor; he lost his appetite for food and drink, and even all countenance, in spite of his efforts to dissemble. On his return to his priory there was no rest for him. He passed his days and nights in extreme disquietude, his mind continually occupied in devising means to gratify his passion, and make of this nun what he had made of so many others. As he had observed that she possessed steadiness of character and quickness of perception, the thing appeared to him hard to accomplish. Conscious, moreover, that he was ugly and old-looking, he resolved not to attempt to win her by soft words, but extort from her by fear what he could not hope to obtain for love.

With this intention, he returned a few days after to the convent of Gif, and displayed more austerity there than ever he had done before, angrily rating all the nuns. One did not wear her veil low enough; another carried her head too high; another did not make obeisance properly like a nun. So severe was he with regard to all these trifles, that he seemed as terrible as the picture of God on the day of judgment. Being gouty, he was much

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

fatigued in visiting all the parts of the convent, and it was about the hour of vespers (an hour assigned by himself) that he reached the dormitory. The abbess told him it was time to say vespers. "Have them said, mother," replied the prior, "for I am so tired that I will remain here, not to repose, but to speak to Sister Marie about a scandalous thing I heard of her; for I am told that she babbles like a worldling." The prioress, who was aunt to Sister Marie's mother, begged that he would chapter her soundly, and left her in the hands of the prior, quite alone, except that a young monk was with him.

Left alone with Sister Marie, he began by lifting up her veil, and bidding her look in his face. Sister Marie replied, that her rule forbade her to look at men. "That is well said, my daughter," said the prior, "but you are not to believe that monks are men."

For fear, then, of being guilty of disobedience, Sister Marie looked at him, and thought him so ugly, that it seemed to her more a penance than a sin to look at him. The reverend father, after talking of the love he bore her, wanted to put his hands on her breasts. She repulsed him as she ought; and the reverend father, vexed at so untoward a beginning, exclaimed in great anger, "What business has a nun to know that she has breasts?"

"I know that I have," replied Sister Marie; "and I am very certain that neither you nor any one else shall ever touch them. I am neither young enough nor ignorant enough not to know what is a sin and what is not so."

Seeing, then, that he could not compass his designs in that way, he had recourse to another expedient, and said, "I must declare my infirmity to you, my daughter; I have a malady which all physicians deem incurable, unless I delight myself with a woman whom I passionately love. I would not for my life commit a mortal sin; but even should it come to that, I know that simple fornication is not to be compared to the sin of homicide. So, if you love my life, you will hinder me from dying, and save your own conscience."

She asked him what sort of diversion it was that he contemplated; to which he replied, that she might rest her conscience on his, and he assured her that he would do nothing which would leave any weight on either. To let her judge by the preliminaries what sort of pastime it was he asked of her, he embraced her and tried to throw her on a bed. Making no doubt then of his wicked intention, she cried out, and defended herself so well that he could only touch her clothes. Seeing, then, that all his devices and efforts were fruitless, like-I will not say a madman, but like a man without conscience or reason, he put his hand under her robe, and scratched all that came under his nails with such fury, that the poor girl, shrieking with all her might, fell in a faint. The abbess, hearing her cries, ran to the dormitory, reproaching herself for having left her relation alone with the reverend father. She stood for a moment at the door to listen, but, hearing her niece's voice, she pushed open the door, which was held by the young monk. When she entered the dormitory, the prior, pointing to her niece, said, "You did wrong, mother, not to acquaint me with Sister Marie's constitution; for, not knowing her weakness, I made her stand before me, and while I was reprimanding her, she fainted away, as you see."

Vinegar and other remedies being applied, Sister Marie recovered from her faint; and the prior, fearing lest she should tell her aunt the cause of it, found means to whisper in her ear, "I command you, my daughter, on pain of disobedience and eternal damnation, never to speak of what I have done to you. It was my great love for you that made me do it; but since I see that you will not respond to my passion, I will never mention it to you while I live. I may, however, assure you for the last time, that if you will love me I will have you chosen abbess of one of the best abbeys in this kingdom."

She replied that she would rather die in perpetual imprisonment than ever have any other friend than Him who had died for her on the cross; deeming herself happier in suffering all ills with Him, than enjoying without Him all the pleasures the world can afford. She warned him once for all not to speak to her any more in that manner, if he did not wish her to complain of it to the abbess; but if he desisted, she would say nothing of what was past. Before this bad shepherd withdrew, in order to appear quite different from what he was in reality, and to have the pleasure of again gazing on her he loved, he turned to the abbess and said, "I beg, mother, that you will make all

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

your daughters sing a Salve Regina in honor of the Virgin, in whom I rest my hope." The Salve Regina was sung; and all the while the fox did nothing but weep, not with devotion, but with regret at having so ill succeeded. The nuns, who attributed his emotion to the love he felt for the Virgin Mary, regarded him as a saint; but Sister Marie, who knew his hypocrisy, prayed to God in her heart to confound a villain who had such contempt for virginity.

The hypocrite returned to St. Martin's, carrying with him the criminal fire which consumed him day and night, and occupied his mind only in trying to find means for accomplishing his unrighteous end. Being afraid of the abbess, whose virtue he was aware of, he thought he could not do better than to remove her from that convent. With that view, he went to Madame de Vendôme, who was then residing at La Fère, where she had built and endowed a convent of the order of St. Benedict, named Mont d'Olivet. In his professed character of a sovereign reformer, he represented to her that the abbess of Mont d'Olivet was not capable of governing such a community. The good lady begged him to name one who should be worthy to fill that office. This was just what he wanted, and he at once recommended her to take the abbess of Gif, whom he depicted to her as the abbess of the greatest capacity in France. Madame de Vendôme sent for her forthwith, and gave her the government of her convent of Mont d'Olivet; whilst the prior, who commanded the suffrages of all the communities, had one who was devoted to him elected abbess of Gif.

This being done, he went to the convent to try once more if by prayers or promises he could prevail over Sister Marie. He succeeded no better than the first time, and returning in despair to St. Martin's, he there contrived more villainy. As much with a view to accomplish his original purpose as to be revenged on the uncomplying nun, and for fear the affair should obtain publicity, he had the relics stolen from the convent of Gif by night, accused the confessor of the convent, an aged and worthy monk, of having committed the theft, and imprisoned him at St. Martin's. Whilst he kept him there he suborned two witnesses, who deposed that they had seen the confessor and Sister Marie committing an infamous and indecent act in a garden: and this he wanted to make the old monk confess. The good man, who knew all the prior's tricks, begged him to assemble the chapter, and said he would state truly all he knew in presence of the monks. This demand he took care not to grant, fearing lest the confessor's justification should condemn himself; but finding the latter so invincibly steadfast, he treated him so ill that some say he died in prison; others say that the prior forced him to unfrock and quit the realm. Be that as it may, he was never seen afterwards.

The prior, having, as he thought, such a great hold on Sister Marie, went to Gif, where the abbess his creature never disputed a word that fell from his lips. He began by exercising his authority as visitor, and summoned all the nuns one by one, that he might hear them in chamber in form of confession and visitation. Sister Marie, who had lost her good aunt, having at last appeared in her turn, he began by saying to her, "You know, Sister Marie, of what a crime you are accused; and consequently you know that the great chastity you affect has availed you nothing, for it is well known that you are anything but chaste."

"Produce my accuser," replied Sister Marie, undauntedly, "and you will see how he will maintain such a statement in my presence."

"The confessor himself has been convicted of the fact, and that must be proof enough for you," returned the prior.

"I believe him to be such a good man," said Sister Marie, "that he is incapable of confessing such a falsehood. But even should he have done so, set him before me and I will prove the contrary."

The prior, seeing she was not daunted, said, "I am your father, and as such I wish to be tender with your honor; I leave the matter between you and your conscience, and will believe what you shall tell me. I conjure you, then, on pain of mortal sin, to tell me the truth. Were you a virgin when you entered this house?"

"My age at that time, father, is warrant for my virginity. I was then but five years old."

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

"And since then, my daughter, have you not lost that fair flower?"

She swore she had not, and that she had never undergone any temptation except from him.

"I cannot believe it," the hypocrite replied: "it remains to be proved."

"What proof do you require?"

"That which I exact from other nuns. As I am the visitor of souls, so am I also of bodies. Your abbess and prioresses have all passed through my hands, and you must not scruple to let me examine your virginity. Lay yourself on that bed, and turn the front of your robe over your face."

"You have told me so much of your criminal love for me," replied Sister Marie, indignantly, "that I have reason to believe your intention is not so much to examine my virginity as to despoil me of it. So be assured I will never consent."

"You are excommunicated," returned the prior, "to refuse obedience; and unless you do as I bid you, I will dishonor you in full chapter, and will state all I know of you and the confessor."

Sister Marie, without suffering herself to be dismayed, replied that He who knew the hearts of His servants would be her stay. "And since you carry your malevolence so far," she said, "I would rather be the victim of your cruelty than the accomplice of your criminal desires; because I know that God is a just judge."

In a rage that may be more easily imagined than described, the prior hurried off to assemble the chapter. Summoning Sister Marie before him, he made her kneel, and thus addressed her: "It is with extreme grief, Sister Marie, that I see how the wholesome remonstrances which I have addressed to you on so capital a fault have been of no avail, and I am compelled with regret to impose a penance on you contrary to my custom. I have examined your confessor touching certain crimes of which he was accused, and he has confessed to me that he has abused you, and that in a place where two witnesses depose to having seen you. Instead, then, of the honorable post of mistress of the novices in which I had placed you, I ordain that you be the lowest of all, and also that you eat your diet of bread and water on the ground in the presence of all the sisters, until you shall have merited pardon by your repentance."

Sister Marie, having been warned beforehand, by one of her companions who knew her whole affair, that if she made any reply which was displeasing to the prior he would put her in pance, that is, immure her forever in a cell, heard her sentence without saying a word, raising her eyes to heaven, and praying that He who had given her the grace to resist sin, would give her the patience necessary to endure her sufferings. This was not all. The venerable prior further prohibited her speaking for three years to her mother or her relations, or writing any letters excepting in community.

After this the wretch went away and returned no more. The poor girl remained a long time in the condition prescribed by her sentence; but her mother, who had a more tender affection for her than for her other children, was surprised at not hearing from her, and said to one of her sons that she believed her daughter was dead, and that the nuns concealed her death in order the longer to enjoy the annual payment made for her maintenance. She begged him to inquire into the matter and see his sister if it were possible. The brother went of at once to the convent, was answered with the usual excuses, and was told that for three years his sister had not quitted her bed. The young man would not be put off with that reply, and swore that unless she were shown to him he would scale the walls and break into the convent. This threat so alarmed the nuns that they brought his sister to the grating: but the abbess followed her so closely, that she could not speak to her brother without being heard by the good mother. But Sister Marie, having her wits about her, had taken the precaution beforehand to write down all the facts I have related, together with the details of a thousand other stratagems which the prior had employed to

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

seduce her, and which, for the sake of brevity, I omit.

I must not, however, forget to mention that, whilst her aunt was abbess, the prior, fancying that it was on account of his ugliness he was repulsed, caused Sister Marie to be tempted by a young and handsome monk, hoping that, if she yielded to the latter for love, he himself might afterwards have his will of her through fear. But the young monk having accosted her in a garden, with words and gestures so infamous that I should be ashamed to repeat them, the poor girl ran to the abbess, who was talking with the prior, and cried to her, "Mother, they are demons, and not monks, who come to visit us." Upon this the prior, afraid of being discovered, said to the abbess, with a laugh, "Certainly, mother, Sister Marie is right." He then took her hand, and said, in presence of the abbess, "I had heard that Sister Marie spoke very well, and with such facility as led people to believe that she was mundane. For this reason I have done violence to my nature, and have spoken to her as worldlings speak to women, so far as I know that language from books: for in point of personal experience I am as ignorant as I was the day I was born. And as I attributed her virtue to my age and ugliness, I ordered my young monk to speak to her in the same tone. She has made, as you see, a sage and virtuous resistance. I am pleased with her for it, and esteem her so highly, that henceforth I desire that she be the first after you, and the mistress of the novices, in order that her virtue may be fortified more and more." The venerable prior did many feats of the same sort during the three years he was in love with the nun, who, as I have said, gave her brother a full written narrative of her sad adventures through the grating.

The brother carried the paper to his mother, who hurried distractedly to Paris, where she found the Queen of Navarre, only sister to the king, and laid this piteous tale before her, saying, "Put no more trust, madam, in these hypocrites. I thought I had placed my daughter on the outskirts of heaven, or at least on the way to it; but I find I have placed her in hell, and in the hands of people worse than all the devils there; for the devils tempt us only so far as we are ourselves consenting parties, but these wretches try to prevail over us by violence when they cannot do so by love." The Queen of Navarre was greatly perplexed. She had implicit confidence in the prior of St. Martin's, and had committed to his charge the abbesses of Montivilliers and of Caen, her sisters-in-law. On the other hand, the crime appeared to her so black and horrible, that she longed to avenge the poor innocent girl, and communicated the matter to the king's chancellor, who was then legate in France. * The legate made the prior appear before him, and all that the latter could allege in excuse for himself was that he was seventy years of age. He appealed to the Queen of Navarre, beseeching, by all the pleasures she could ever wish to do him, and as the sole recompense of his past services, that she would have the goodness to put a stop to these proceedings, assuring her he would avow that Sister Marie Herouet was a pearl of honor and chastity. The queen was so astounded at this speech, that, not knowing how to reply to it, she turned her back upon him, and left him there. The poor monk, overwhelmed with confusion, retired to his monastery, where he never more would let himself be seen by anybody, and died a year afterwards. Sister Marie Herouet, esteemed as the virtues God had given her deserved, was taken from the abbey of Gif, where she had suffered so much, and was made by the king abbess of the abbey of Giv, near Montargis. She reformed the abbey which his majesty had given her, and lived like a saint, animated by the spirit of God whom she praised all her life long for the repose He had procured her, and the dignity with which he had invested her. *

There, ladies, is a story which well confirms what St. Paul says to the Corinthians, that God makes use of weak things to confound the strong, and of those who seem useless in men's eyes to overthrow the glory and splendor of those who, thinking themselves something, are yet in reality nothing. There is no good in any man but what God put into him by His grace; and there is no temptation out of which one does not come victorious, when God grants us aid. You see this by the confession of a monk, who was believed to be a good man, and by the elevation of a girl whom he wished to exhibit as criminal and wicked. In this we see the truth of our Lord's saying, that "He that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

"How many worthy people this monk deceived!" said Oisille; "for I have seen how they trusted in him more than in God."

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

"I should not have been one of those he deceived," said Nomerfide, "for I have such a horror of the very sight of a monk that I could not even confess to them, believing them to be worse than all other men, and never to frequent any house without leaving in it some shame or dissension."

"There are some good men amongst them," said Oisille; "and the wickedness of an individual ought not to be imputed to the whole body; but the best are those who least frequent secular houses and women."

"That is very well said," observed Ennasuite, "for the less one sees and knows them the better one esteems them; for upon more experience one comes to know their real nature."

"Let us leave the monastery where it is," said Nomerfide, "and see to whom Geburon will give his voice."

"To Madame Oisille," replied Geburon, "in order that she may tell us something in honor of the regular clergy."

"We have pledged ourselves so strongly to speak the truth," replied Oisille, "that I could not undertake that task. Besides, your tale reminded me of a piteous one, which I must relate to you, as I come from the neighborhood of the country where the thing occurred in my own time. I choose this story of recent date, ladies, in order that the hypocrisy of those who believe themselves more religious than others may not so beguile you as to make your faith quit the right path, and induce you to hope for salvation in any other than Him who will have no companion in the work of our creation and redemption. He alone is almighty to save us in eternity, and to comfort us in this life, and deliver us out of all our afflictions. You know that Satan often assumes the appearance of an angel of light, in order that the eye, deceived by the semblance of sanctity and devotion, may attach itself to the things it ought to shun."

NOVEL XXIII.

A Cordelier is the cause of three murders, that of husband, wife and child.

THERE was in Perigord a gentleman whose devotion to St. Francis was such that he imagined all those who wore that saint's habit were, as a matter of course, as holy as the sainted founder of their order. In honor of that good saint he fitted up a suite of apartments in his house to lodge the Franciscan monks, by whose advice he regulated all his affairs, even to the smallest household matters, thinking that he could not but walk safely when he followed such good guides. It happened that the wife of this gentleman, a handsome lady, and as virtuous as she was handsome, was delivered of a fine boy; for which her husband, who already loved her much, now regarded her with redoubled affection. The better to entertain his wife, the gentleman sent for one of his brothers-in-law; and a Cordelier, whose name I shall conceal for the honor of the order, arrived also. The gentleman was very glad to see his spiritual father, for whom he had no secrets; and after a long conversation between the lady, her brother, and the monk, they all sat down to supper. During the repast, the gentleman, looking wistfully at his lovely wife, said aloud to the good father, "Is it true, father, that it is a mortal sin to be with one's wife during the month of her confinement?"

The Cordelier, who was anything but what he seemed, replied, "Certainly, sir, I think it is one of the greatest sins that can be committed in marriage. I need only refer you to the example of the blessed Virgin, who would not enter the Temple till the day after her purification, though she had no need of that ceremony. This alone should teach you the indispensable necessity of abstaining from this little pleasure, since the good Virgin Mary, in order to obey the law, abstained from going to the Temple in which was her whole consolation. Beside, the physicians say that there is reason to fear for the children that might be begotten under such circumstances."

The gentleman, who had expected that the monk would give him permission to lie with his wife, was much annoyed at a reply so contrary to his hope; however, he let the matter drop. The reverend father having drunk a

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

little more than was reasonable during the conversation, cast his eyes on the lady, and concluded within himself that if he was her husband, he would lie with her without asking any one's advice. As the fire kindles little by little, and at last waxes so strong and fierce that it burns down the house, so the poor monk felt himself possessed with such vehement concupiscence, that he resolved all at once to satisfy the desire he had cherished in secret for three years. After the supper—things had been taken away, he took the gentleman by the hand, led him to the side of the bed, and said to him, in the presence of his wife, "Knowing, sir, as I do, the affection that subsists between you and mademoiselle, I compassionate the feelings with which your great youth inspires you both. Therefore I will impart to you a secret of our holy theology. You must know, then, that the law which is so rigorous on account of the abuses committed by indiscreet husbands, is not so strict with regard to husbands so prudent and moderate as you. Hence, sir, after having stated before others what is the severity of the law, I must tell you in private what is its mildness. Know, then, that there are women and women, as there are men and men. Before all things, then, it is necessary that mademoiselle, who has been delivered these three weeks, should tell you if her flux of blood has quite ceased."

The demoiselle replied very positively that it had.

"That being the case, my son," resumed the Cordelier, "I permit you to lie with her without scruple, on these two conditions: first, that you mention it to no one, and that you come to her secretly; secondly, that you do not come to her until two hours after midnight, in order not to disturb your wife's digestion."

The gentleman promised to observe both these conditions, and confirmed his promise by so strong an oath that the monk, who knew him to be more of a fool than a liar, did not doubt that he would keep his word. After a pretty long conversation he bade them good—night, gave them plenty of benedictions, and retired to his chamber. As he was leaving the room he took the gentleman by the hand, and said, "Certes, sir, it is time for you to retire also, and leave mademoiselle to repose." They gentleman obeyed, and withdrew, telling his wife in the good father's presence to leave the door open.

On reaching his chamber the good monk thought of anything but sleeping. As soon as he found that the house was all still, that is to say, about the hour when he was wont to go to matins, he went straight to the chamber where the gentleman was expected. He found the door open, and having entered, he began by putting out the candle, and then got into bed to the lady as fast as he could. "My dear, this is not what you promised the good father," said the demoiselle, who mistook him for her husband; "you said you would not come here until two o'clock." The Cordelier, who was more intent on action than on contemplation, and was afraid, too, of being recognized if he spoke, made no reply, but proceeded at once to gratify the criminal passion which had long poisoned his heart; whereat the demoiselle was much astonished. The hour when the husband was to come being at hand, the Cordelier got out of bed and returned to his chamber; but as love had before hindered him from sleeping, so now the fear that always follows crime allowed him no repose. He got up, went to the porter, and said, "My friend, monsieur has commanded me to go back at once to our convent, where I am to put up prayers for him. So pray let me have my beast, and open the door for me without letting any one know, for this business requires secrecy." The porter, knowing that to obey the Cordelier was to serve his master, opened the gate and let him out.

At that moment the gentleman awoke, and seeing that it was near the time when he was to go to his wife, he wrapped his dressing—gown about him, and went to his wife's bed, whither he might have gone in accordance with God's law without asking leave of any one. His wife being ignorant of what had occurred, and finding her husband beside her, and hearing his voice, said to him, in surprise, "What, sir! Is this the promise you made to the good Cordelier, that you would be cautious of your health and mine? Not content with having come hither before the time, you now come again. Do think better of it, I entreat you."

Confounded at being addressed in this manner, and unable to conceal his vexation, the husband replied, "What is this you say? It is three weeks since I have been in bed with you, and you accuse me of coming to you too often. If you continue to talk to me in that strain, you will make me believe that my company is distasteful to you. And

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

constrain me to do what I have never yet done, that is, to seek elsewhere the lawful pleasure you refuse me."

The lady, who thought he was joking, replied, "Do not deceive yourself, sir, in thinking to deceive me. Though you did not speak to me the first time you came, I knew very well that you were there."

The gentleman then perceived that they had both been duped, and solemnly vowed that he had not been there before; and the wife, in an agony of grief, begged he would find out at once who it could be that had deceived her, since the only persons who slept in the house were her brother and the Cordelier. The husband's suspicions falling immediately on the latter, he ran to his chamber, and found it empty. To make sure whether or not he had fled, he called the porter, and asked if he knew what had become of the Cordelier. The porter told him what had passed, and the poor gentleman, convinced of the monk's villainy, went back to his wife, and said, "Be assured, my dear, that person who lay with you and performed such feats was no other than our father confessor."

The lady, to whom honor had always been most precious, was so horror-stricken, that, forgetting all humanity and the natural gentleness of her sex, she entreated her husband on her knees to revenge her for such a cruel outrage; whereupon he mounted his horse, and rode off in pursuit of the Cordelier. The wife, left alone in her bed, without any one to counsel her, and without any consolation except her new-born babe, pondered over the hideous adventure which had befallen her, and making no account of her ignorance, regarded herself as guilty, and as the most miserable woman in the world. And then, having never learned anything from the Cordelier but confidence in good works, satisfaction for sins by austerity of life, fasting, and discipline, and being wholly ignorant of the grace given by our good God through the merits of His Son, the remission of sins through His blood, the reconciliation of the Father with us through His death, and the life given to sinners by His sole goodness and mercy, she was so bewildered between her horror at the enormity of the deed and her love for her husband and the honor of her line, that she thought death far happier than such a life as hers. Thus rendered desperate by her grief, she lost not only the hope which every Christian ought to have in God, but common sense too, and the recollection of her own nature. Not knowing, then, either God or herself, but, on the contrary, full of rage and madness, she undid one of the cords of her bed, and strangled herself with her own hands. In the agony of that painful death, amidst the last violent efforts of nature, the unfortunate woman pressed her foot upon her infant's face, and its innocence could not secure it from a death as piteous as its mother's.

Roused by a great cry uttered by the expiring lady, a woman who slept in her room got up, and lighted a candle. Seeing her mistress hanging dead by the bedcord, and her infant smothered at her feet, the horrified servant went to the bedroom of the deceased's brother, and took him to see that sad spectacle. The brother, as deeply afflicted as a man would naturally be who tenderly loved his sister, asked the servant who had perpetrated such a crime? She could not tell at all; the only thing she could say was, that no one had entered the room but her master, who had quitted it but a moment ago. The brother, hurrying instantly to his brother-in-law's chamber, and not finding him there, was firmly persuaded that he had done the deed. Mounting his horse without more delay, or waiting for fuller information, he rode after his brother-in-law, and met him as he was returning from his ineffectual pursuit of the Cordelier. "Defend yourself, base villain!" cried the brother-in-law; "I trust that God will revenge me with this sword on the greatest miscreant on earth." The husband would have expostulated; but the brother-in-law pressed him so hard, that all he could do was to defend himself, without knowing what was the cause of the quarrel. They dealt each other so many wounds, that they were compelled, by loss of blood and weakness, to dismount and rest a little. While they were taking breath, the husband said, "Let me at least know, brother, why the friendship we have always had for one another has been changed into such rancorous hatred?"

"Let me know why you have put my sister to death, one of the best women that ever lived," replied the brother; "and why, under pretext of going to sleep with her, you have hung her with the bedcord?"

More dead than alive on hearing these words, the poor husband faltered out, "Is it possible, brother, that you found your sister in the state you say?" Being assured that this was the exact truth, "Pray, brother, listen to me," he continued, "and you shall know why I left the house." And then he related the adventure of the Cordelier. The

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

astonished brother now bitterly repented the precipitation with which he had acted, and earnestly implored forgiveness. "If I have wronged you," said the husband, "you are avenged; for I am wounded beyond hope of recovery." The brother-in-law set him on his horse as well as he could, and led him back to his own house, where he died the next day, and the survivor confessed before all his relations and friends that he was the cause of his death.

For the satisfaction of justice, the brother-in-law was advised to go and solicit his pardon of King Francis I. To this end, after having honorably interred the father, mother, and child, he set out one Good Friday, to solicit his pardon at court; and he obtained it through the favor of François Olivier, chancellor of Alençon, afterwards, in consideration of his great endowments, chosen by the king to be chancellor of France.

I am persuaded, ladies, that after this story, which is the very truth, there is not one of you but will think twice before giving reception to such guests. Let it at least teach you, that the more hidden the venom, the more dangerous it is.

"Surely," said Hircan, "this husband was a great fool to bring such a gallant to sup by the side of such a handsome and virtuous woman."

"I have seen the time," said Geburon, "when there was not a house in our country in which there was not a chamber for the good fathers; but at present people know them so well, that they are more feared than adventurers."

"It seems to me," said Parlamente, "that a woman in bed ought never to let monk or priest into her room except to administer to her the sacraments of the church; and for my part, when I summon any of them to my bedside, it may be taken for a sure sign that I am very far gone."

"If everybody was as austere as you," said Ennasuite, "the poor clergy would no longer be free to see women when and where they pleased, and that would be worse to them than excommunication."

"Have no fear on their account," said Saffredent; "these worthies will never want for women."

"Is not this too bad?" exclaimed Simontault. "It is they who unite us with our wives in the bonds of wedlock, and they have the wickedness to try to disunite us, and make us break the oath they have imposed upon us."

"It is a pity," said Oisille, "that they who have the administration of the sacraments make light of them in this manner. They ought to be burned alive."

"You would do better to honor them than to blame them," replied Saffredent, "and to flatter instead of abusing them, for it is they who have the power to burn and dishonor others; therefore, let them alone and let us see, whom does Oisille call on?"

"On Dagoucin," she replied; "for I see he is so pensive, that it strikes me he must have something good at the tip of his tongue."

"Since I cannot and dare not say what I think," said Dagoucin, "at least I will speak of a man to whom cruelty was prejudicial and afterwards advantageous. Although love has such a good opinion of its own strength and potency that it likes to show itself quite naked, and finds it extremely irksome, nay, insupportable to go cloaked, yet those who in obedience to its dictates make too great haste to disclose themselves, often suffer for it, as happened to a gentleman of Castile, whose story I shall relate to you."

THE END OF VOLUME ONE.

NOVEL XXIII.

NOVEL XXIV.

Ingenious device of a Castilian in order to make a declaration of love to a Queen, and what came of it.

THERE was at the court of a king and queen of Castile, whose names history does not mention, a gentleman of such good birth and comely person, that his equal there was not in all Spain. Every one held his endowments in admiration, but still more his eccentricity; for it had never been perceived that he loved or courted any lady, though there were many at the court who might have fired ice itself; but there was not one who could kindle the heart of Elisor, for so this gentleman was named. The queen, who was a woman of great virtue, but a woman nevertheless, and not more exempt than the rest of her sex from that flame which is the more violent the more it is compressed—the queen, I say, surprised that this gentleman did not attach himself to any of her ladies, asked him one day if it was true that he was as indifferent as he appeared? He replied, that if she saw his heart as she saw his face, she would not have asked him that question. Eager to know what he meant, she pressed him so hard, that he confessed he loved a lady whom he believed to be the most virtuous in all Christendom. She did all she could by entreaties and commands to make him say who the lady was, but all to no purpose; till at last she pretended to be most deeply incensed against him, and swore that she would never speak to him again if he did not name the lady he loved so passionately. To escape from her importunities, he was forced to say, that he would rather die than do what she required of him; but at last, finding that he was about to be deprived of the honor of seeing her, and to be cast out of her favor for not declaring a truth in itself so seemly that no one could take it in bad part, he said to her, trembling with emotion, "I cannot and dare not, madam, name the person; but I will show her to you the first time we go to the chase; and I am sure that you will say as well as I, that she is the most beautiful and most accomplished lady in the world."

After this reply, the queen went to the chase sooner than she would otherwise have done. Elisor had notice of this, and prepared to wait on her majesty as usual. He had got made for himself a great steel mirror in the shape of a corslet, and this he placed on his chest, concealed beneath a mantle of black frieze, all bordered with purl and gold. He rode a black horse very richly caparisoned. His harness was all gilded and enameled black in the Moorish fashion, and his black silk hat had a buckle adorned with precious stones, and having in the center, for a device, a Love concealed by Force. His sword, poniard, and the devices upon them, corresponded to the rest; in short, he was admirably accoutred; and he was such a good horseman, that all who saw him neglected the pleasures of the chase to see the paces and the leaps which Elisor made his horse perform. After escorting the queen to the place where the toils were spread, he alighted and went to aid her majesty to dismount. At the moment she held out her arms, he opened his cloak, which covered his new cuirass, and said, "Be pleased, madam, to look here;" and without awaiting her reply he set her gently on the ground.

When the chase was ended, the queen returned to the palace without speaking to Elisor. After supper she called him to her, and told him he was the greatest liar she had ever seen, for he had promised to show her at the chase the lady of his love, and yet he had done no such thing; but for her part, she was resolved for the future to make no account of him. Elisor, fearing that the queen had not understood what he had said to her, replied that he had kept his word, and that he had shown her not only the woman, but also that thing in all the world which he loved best. Affecting ignorance of his meaning, she declared she was not aware that he had shown her any of her ladies. "That is true," replied Elisor; "but what did I show you when you dismounted from your horse?"

"Nothing," said the queen, "but a mirror you had on your chest."

"And what did you see in the mirror?"

"Nothing but myself."

"Consequently, madam, I have kept my word and obeyed you. Never did anything enter my heart but that which

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

you saw when you looked at my chest. She who was there pictured is the only one whom I love, revere, and adore, not as a woman merely, but as an earthly divinity, on whom my life and death depend. The only favor I ask of you, madam, is, that the perfect passion, which has been life to me whilst concealed, may not be my death now that I have declared it. If I am worthy that you should regard me and receive me as your most impassioned servant, suffer me at least to live, as I have hitherto done, upon the blissful consciousness that I have dared to give my heart to a being so perfect and so worthy of all honor, that I must be content to love her, though I can never hope to be loved in return. If the knowledge you now possess of my intense love does not render me more agreeable to your eyes than heretofore, at least do not deprive me of life, which for me consists in the bliss of seeing you as usual. I now receive from you no other favor than that which is absolutely necessary for my existence. If I have less you will have a servant the less, and will lose the best and most affectionate one you have ever had or ever will have."

The queen, whether it was that she might appear other than she really was, or that she might put his love for her to a longer proof, or that she loved another whom she would not forsake for him, or, lastly, that she was glad to have this lover in reserve in case her heart should become vacant through any fault which might possibly be committed by him whom she loved already, said to him, in a tone which expressed neither anger nor satisfaction, "I will not ask you, Elisor, although I know not the power of love, how you can have been so presumptuous and so extravagant as to love me; for I know that the heart of man is so little at his own command, that one cannot love or hate as one chooses. But since you have so well concealed your feelings, I desire to know how long you have entertained them?"

Elisor, looking in her beautiful face, and hearing her inquire about his malady, was not without hopes that she would afford him some relief; but, on the other hand, seeing the self-command and the gravity with which she questioned him, he feared he had to do with a judge who was about to pronounce sentence against him. Notwithstanding this fluctuation between hope and fear, he protested that he had loved her since her early youth; but that it was only within the last seven years he had been conscious of his pain, or rather of a malady so agreeable that he would rather die than be cured.

"Since you have been constant for seven years," said the queen, "I must be no more precipitate in believing you than you have been in declaring your love to me. Therefore, if you speak the truth, I wish to convince myself of it in a manner that shall leave no room for doubt; and if I am satisfied with the result of the trial, I will believe you to be such towards me as you swear that you are; and then, when I find you to be indeed what you say, you shall find me to be what you wish."

Elisor besought her to put him to any proof she pleased, there being nothing so hard that would not appear to him very easy, in the hope that he might be happy enough to convince her of the perfect love he bore her. He only waited, he said, to be honored with her commands.

"If you love me, Elisor, as much as you say," replied the queen, "I am sure that nothing will seem hard to you to obtain my good graces; so I command you, by the desire you have of possessing them, and the fear of losing them, that to-morrow, without seeing me more, you quit the court and go to a place where for seven years you shall hear nothing of me, nor I of you. You know well that you love me, since you have had seven years' experience of the fact. When I shall have a similar seven years' experience, I shall believe what all your protestations would fail to assure me of."

This cruel command made Elisor believe at first that her intention was to get rid of him; but, upon second thoughts, he accepted the condition, hoping that the proof would do more for him than all the words he could utter. "If I have lived seven years without any hope," he said, "under the painful necessity of dissembling my love, now that it is known to you, and that I have some gleam of hope, I shall pass the other seven years with patience and calmness. But, madam, since in obeying the command you impose upon me, I am deprived of all the joy I have ever had in the world, what hope do you give me that, at the end of seven years, you will own me for your

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

faithful servant?"

Drawing a ring off her finger, "Let us cut this ring in two," said the queen; "I will keep one half and you the other, in order that I may recognize you by that token in case length of time makes me forget your face."

Elisor took the ring, divided it in two, gave the queen one half, and kept the other. Then, taking leave of her, more dead than those who have already given up the ghost, he went home to give orders for his departure. Sending his whole retinue to the country, he went away with only one attendant to a place so lonely and sequestered, that none of his relations and friends had any tidings of him for seven years. How he lived during that time, and what sorrow absence made him endure, are things beyond my telling; but those who love can be at no loss to conceive them.

Precisely at the end of seven years, and at the moment when the queen was going to mass, a hermit with a long beard came to her, kissed her hand, and presented to her a petition, which she did not peruse at once, though her custom was to receive all the petitions that were presented to her, however poor were the people who preferred them. When mass was half said, she opened the petition, and found enclosed in it the half of the ring she had given to Elisor. This was an agreeable surprise for her, and before she read the paper she ordered her almoner to bring her straightway the hermit who had presented the petition. The almoner sought for him in all directions, but all he could learn was, that he had been seen to mount and ride away, but no one could tell which way he had gone. While awaiting the return of her almoner, the queen read the petition, which turned out to be a letter, composed in the best possible manner, and but for the desire I feel to make it intelligible to you, I should never have ventured to translate it; for I must beg you to understand, ladies, that the Castilian is better adapted than the French tongue to express the emotions of love. The letter was as follows:

"Time, a mighty teacher, gave me perfectly to know the nature of love. Time was afterwards assigned me, that the incredulous one might see by my protracted woe what love could not convince her of. Time hath shown me on what foundation my heart built its great love. That foundation was your beauty, which concealed great cruelty. Time teaches me that beauty is nothing, and that cruelty is the cause of my weal. Exiled by the beauty whose regards I so yearned for, I have come to be more conscious of your extreme unkindness. I obey your cruel order, however, and am perfectly content to do so; for time has had such pity on me that I have wished to return to this place to bid you, not a good day, but a last farewell. Time has shown me love just as it is, poor and naked; and I have no sense of it except regret. But time has likewise shown me the true love, which I have known only in that solitude where for seven years I have been doomed to mourn in silence. Through time I have come to know the love that dwells on high, at sight of which the other love vanishes, and I have given myself wholly to the one, and weaned my affections from the other. To that better love I devote my heart and my body, to do suit and service to it and not to you. When I served you, you esteemed me nothing. I now give you back entirely the love you put into my heart, having no need either of it or of you. I take my leave of cruelty, pain, torment, scorn, hatred, and the burning fire with which you are filled, no less than you are adorned with beauty. I cannot better bid farewell to all woes and pains and intolerable distresses, and to the hell of the amorous woman, than in bidding farewell to you, madam, without the least prospect that wherever you or I may be we shall ever look upon each other more."

This letter was not read without tears and incredible surprise and regret. Indeed, the queen could not but feel so keenly the loss of a servant who loved her so perfectly, that not all her treasures, nor even her crown, could hinder her from being the poorest and most miserable princess in the world, since she had lost that which no wealth could replace. After hearing mass, she returned to her chamber, where she gave utterance to the lamentations her cruelty had merited. There was no mountain, rock, or forest to which she did not send in quest of the hermit; but he who had taken him out of her hands hindered him from falling into them again, and removed him to Paradise before she could discover his retreat in this world.

This example shows that no one can tell what can do him harm only and no good. Still less, ladies, should you carry distrust and incredulity so far as to lose your lovers, through desiring to put them to too severe a proof.

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

"All my life long, Dagoucin," said Geburon, "I have heard the lady in question spoken of as the most virtuous woman in the world; but now I regard her as the most cruel that ever lived."

"It seems to me, however," said Parlamente, "that she did him no such great wrong, if he loved her as much as he said, in exacting from him seven years of trial. Men are so accustomed to lie on these occasions, that one cannot take too many precautions before trusting them-if they are ever to be trusted."

"The ladies of our day," said Hircan, "are wiser than those of time past; for in seven days' trial they are as sure with regard to a lover as the others were in seven years."

"Yet are there those in company," said Longarine, "who have been wooed for seven years without ever being won."

"That is true," said Simontault; "but with your leave they ought to be classed with the ladies of bygone times, for in the modern class they would not be received."

"After all," said Oisille, "Elisor was greatly indebted to the queen, since she was the cause of his giving his heart entirely to God."

"It was great luck for him," said Saffredent, "to find God in his way, for crossed as he was I wonder he did not give himself to the devil."

"When your lady ill-used you," inquired Ennasuite, "did you give yourself to such a master?"

"Thousands of times; but the devil would never take me, seeing that the tortures of hell were less than those she made me suffer, and that there is no devil more insupportable than a woman who is passionately loved and will not love in return."

"If I was in your place and entertained such sentiments," said Parlamente, "I would never love a woman."

"Such has always been my unfortunate propensity," replied Saffredent, "that when I cannot command I think myself very happy in being able to serve. But tell me, pray, in conscience, now, do you applaud this princess for such excessive rigor?"

"Yes," said Oisille, "for I believe she did not choose either to love or be loved."

"That being the case," said Simontault, "why give him hopes after seven years should have passed?"

"You are right," said Longarine; "and I think that ladies who do not choose to love should cut the matter short at once, and hold out no hopes to their suitors."

"Perhaps," said Nomerfide, "she loved another who was not so worthy as Elisor, and preferred the worse man to the better."

"It is my belief," said Saffredent, "that she was glad to keep him in play, that she might have him ready to her hand whenever she cast off the lover she then preferred to him."

"I see plainly," said Oisille, "that as long as the conversation runs upon this topic, those who do not like to be treated harshly will say everything bad they can of us; so, be pleased, Dagoucin, to give your voice to some one."

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

"I give it to Longarine," said he, "being assured that she will tell us something novel, and speak the very truth without sparing either men or women."

"Since you have such a good opinion of my sincerity," said Longarine, "I will relate an anecdote of a great prince who surpassed in endowments all the princes of his time. Permit me also to remark, that falsehood and dissimulation are things which should be least of all used, unless in a case of extreme necessity. They are a very ugly and disgraceful vice, especially in princes and great lords, whom truth becomes still more than other men. But there is no prince in the world, however glorious or rich he may be, who does not acknowledge the empire of love, and submit to its tyranny. Indeed, that arrogant god disdains all that is common, and delights only in working miracles every day, such as weakening the strong, strengthening the weak, making fools of the wise, and knowing persons of the ignorant, favoring the passions, destroying reason, and, in a word, turning everything topsy-turvy. As princes are not exempt from it, no more so are they from the necessity in which they are put by the desire of amorous servitude. Thence it comes that they are forced to use falsehood, hypocrisy, and feigning, which, according to Maître Jean de Meun, are means for vanquishing enemies. Though conduct of this nature is laudable in a prince, though it be censurable in all other men, I will recount to you the device employed by a young prince who tricked those who are used to trick all the world."

NOVEL XXV.

Cunning contrivance of a young Prince to enjoy the wife of an advocate of Paris.

THERE was in Paris an advocate more esteemed than any nine others in his profession; and as his knowledge and ability made him sought by all clients, he became the richest of all the men of the gown. Now, seeing that he had no children by his first wife, he thought he should have some by a second; for though he was old, he had, nevertheless, the heart and the hope of a young man. He made choice of a Parisian of eighteen or nineteen, very handsome in face and complexion, and handsomer still in figure and plumpness. He loved her and treated her as well as possible; but he had no children by her any more than by his first wife; which the fair one at last took sorely to heart. As youth cannot carry the burden of care very far, the advocate's young wife resolved to seek elsewhere the pleasure she did not find at home, and used to go to balls and feasts, but this she did, nevertheless, with such outward propriety and so much caution, that her husband could not take offence, for she was always with those ladies in whom he had most confidence.

One day, when she was at a wedding entertainment, there happened to be present a young prince, who told me the story, and forbade me to name him. All I can tell you is, that there never was, and never will be, I think, a prince in France of finer person and demeanor. The eyes and the countenance of the advocate's lady inspired the prince with love. He spoke to her so well and with such grace, that she took pleasure in his discourse, and ingenuously owned to him that she had long had in her heart the love for which he craved, and begged he would spare himself the pains of trying to persuade her to a thing to which love had already made her consent at mere sight. The frankness of love having bestowed on the prince what was well worth the pains of being won by time, he failed not to thank the god who favored him; and he plied his opportunity so well, that they agreed there and then upon the means of seeing each other in less crowded company. The time and the place being assigned, the prince appeared punctually, but in disguise, that he might not compromise the honor of the fair one. As he did not wish to be known by the rogues and thieves who roam by night, he had himself escorted by some trusty gentlemen, from whom he separated on entering the street where the lady resided, saying to them, "If you hear no noise within a quarter of an hour, go away, and return about three or four o'clock." The quarter of an hour having expired, and no noise having been heard, the gentlemen withdrew.

The prince went straight to the advocate's house, and found the door open as he had been promised, but on going up the staircase he met the advocate with a candle in his hand, who saw him first. Love, however, which gives wit and boldness in proportion to the crossings and thwartings it occasions, prompted the prince to go up at once to

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

the advocate and say to him, "You know, master advocate, the confidence which I and all my house repose in you, and that I regard you as one of my best and most faithful servants. I am come to see you privately, as well to recommend my affairs to you as to beg you will give me something to drink, for I am very thirsty, and not let anybody know that I have been here. When I quit you I shall have to go to another place where I should not like to be known."

The poor man, delighted with the honor the prince did him by this familiar visit, begged him to enter his room, and told his wife to prepare a collation of the best fruits and the most exquisite confections she could find; which she did right gladly, with all possible daintiness. Though she was in kerchief and mantle, and appeared to more than usual advantage in that *négligé*, the prince affected not to look at her, but talked continually about his business to her husband, who had always had the management of it. Whilst the wife knelt before the prince to present him some confections, and the husband was going to the buffet to fetch him something to drink, she found time to tell him not to fail, on departing, to enter a garderobe on the right, where she would soon join him. When he had drunk, he thanked the advocate, who wished by all means to accompany him; but this the prince would not allow, assuring him he was going to a place where he had no need of company. Then turning to the wife he said, "I will not deprive you of your good husband, who is one of my old servants. You are so happy in having him that you have reason to thank God. You must serve and obey him well; and if you did otherwise you would be very ungrateful." So saying, he went out, shut the door after him, that he might not be followed to the staircase, and entered the garderobe, where the fair one joined him as soon as her husband was asleep. She took him into a cabinet as elegant as could be, but in truth there was nothing in it handsomer than he and she; and I doubt not that she kept word with him as to all she had promised. He left her at the hour he had told his people, and found them at the place where he had desired them to wait for him.

As the intrigue was of long duration, the prince chose a shorter way to go to the advocate's; this was to pass through a monastery. He managed matters so well with the prior, that every night the porter opened the door for him towards midnight, and did the same when he returned. The advocate's house not being far from the monastery, he took no one with him. Notwithstanding the prince led the life I have described, still he loved and feared God, so true it is that man is a whimsical mixture of good and evil, and a perpetual contradiction. On his way to the advocate's he only passed through the monastery, but on his return he never failed to remain a long time at prayer in the church. The monks seeing him on his knees as they went to matins, or returned from them, believed he was the most pious of men.

The prince had a sister who was much in the habit of frequenting that convent. As she loved her brother above all men, she used to commend him to the prayers of all the good people she knew. One day when she was thus speaking for him with great earnestness to the prior of this monastery, the good father replied, "Why, madam, what is this you ask of me? You name the very man above all others to whose prayers I most desire to be myself commended; for if he is not pious and righteous, I never expect to see one that is so." Thereupon he quoted the text which says that "Blessed is he who can do evil, and doeth it not." The sister, who longed to know what proof the prior had of her brother's sanctity, questioned him so earnestly that he said to her, as if he was revealing a secret of the confessional, "Is it not a marvellous and goodly thing to see a young and handsome prince abandoning pleasures and repose to come frequently to our matins? He does not come like a prince who seeks to be honored of men, but quite alone like a simple monk, and he goes and hides himself in one of our chapels. This devotion so confounds my brethren and myself, that we do not think ourselves worthy to be called men of religion in comparison with him?"

The sister did not know what to think of this; for though her brother was very mundane, she knew, nevertheless, that he had a good conscience, that he believed in God and loved him much; but she could never have imagined that he would make a practice of going to church at that hour. As soon as she saw him, she told him what a good opinion the monks had of him. He could not help laughing, and in such a manner, that she, who knew him as she did her own heart, readily guessed that there was something concealed under this pretended devotion. She teased him so much that at last he told her the whole truth as you have heard from me, and as she did me the honor to

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

relate it to me. *

You see by this, ladies, that there are no advocates so crafty, or monks so shrewd, but that they may be tricked in case of need, when one loves well. Since, then, love teaches how to trick the tricksters, how much reason have we to fear it, we who are poor simple creatures?

"Though I guess pretty well," said Geburon, "who is the hero of this tale, I cannot help saying that he is to be praised for having kept the secret; for there are few great lords who give themselves any concern either about the honor of women or public scandal, provided they have their pleasure. Frequently, even, they act in such a manner as to make people believe more than the truth."

"It would be well," said Oisille, "if all young lords followed this example, for often the scandal is worse than the sin."

"You may well believe," said Nomerfide, "that the prayers he offered up in church were very sincere and very acceptable to God."

"That is not a question for you to decide," said Parlamente; "for, perhaps, his repentance was such on his return from his assignation, that his sin was forgiven."

"It is very difficult," said Hircan, "to repent of a thing that gives such pleasure. For my part, I have often confessed, but hardly repented it."

"If one does not repent, it were better not to confess," observed Oisille.

"Sin displeases me, madam," rejoined Hircan; "I am vexed at offending God; but pleasure pleases me."

"You would be very glad, you and others like you," remarked Parlamente, "that there were neither God nor law but what agreed with your own inclination."

"I confess," said Hircan, "I should be glad if my pleasures were as pleasing to God as they are to me. In that case, I would often give matter for rejoicing."

"You will not make a new God, however," said Geburon; "and so the best thing we can do is to obey the one we have. But let us leave these disputes to theologians, and see to whom Longarine will give her voice."

"To Saffredent," said Longarine, "on condition that he tells us the finest tale he can recollect, and that he is not so intent on speaking ill of women as not to do them justice when he can say anything to their advantage."

"With all my heart," said Saffredent. "I recollect, quite à propos, a story of a loose woman and a staid one; so you may choose whichever example of the two you prefer. You will see from this story that love makes bad acts be done by persons of bad heart; it also makes people of worth do things deserving of praise; for love is good in itself, but the depravity of the individual often makes it take a new title, such as lascivious, light, cruel, or vile. You will see, nevertheless, from the tale I am about to tell, that love does not change the heart, but makes it appear such as it is: wanton in the wanton, sober in the sober."

NOVEL XXVI.

By the advice and sisterly affection of a virtuous lady the lord of Avannes was weaned from his dissolute amours with a lady of Pampeluna.

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

IN the time of king Louis XII., there was a young lord named Monsieur d'Avannes, son of Monsieur d'Albret, the brother of John, king of Navarre, with whom d'Avannes usually resided. This young lord was so handsome, and had such an engaging demeanor at the age of fifteen, that he seemed to be made only to be beloved and admired; and so he was by all who saw him, and above all, by a lady who lived in Pampeluna, in Navarre, and was married to a very wealthy man, with whom she lived happily. Though she was but three-and-twenty, yet as her husband was nearly fifty, she dressed so modestly that she had more the appearance of a widow than of a married woman. She was never seen at weddings or festivities but with her husband, whose worth she prized so highly, that she preferred it to the good looks of all other men. The husband, on his side, knew her to be so discreet, and had so much confidence in her, that he entrusted all the affairs of the house to her prudence.

This rich man and his wife were one day invited to the wedding of one of their female relations. D'Avannes was present to do honor to the bridal, and also because he was fond of dancing, in which he acquitted himself better than any man of his day. When dinner was over and the ball began, the rich man begged D'Avannes to dance. The latter asked with whom he would have him dance: whereupon the rich man, taking his wife by the hand, presented her to D'Avannes, and said, "If there was a handsomer lady in the room, monsieur, or one so much at my disposal, I would present her to you as I do this one, begging you, monsieur, to do me the honor to dance with her." The prince gladly complied; and he was still so young, that he took more pleasure in dancing and skipping than in gazing on ladies' charms. It was not so with his partner, who paid more attention to the handsome figure and good looks of her cavalier than to the dance; but she took care not to let this appear.

Supper time being come, M. d'Avannes took leave of the company and retired to the château. The rich man escorted him thither, mounted on his mule, and said to him on the way, "Monsieur, you have to-day done so much honor to my relations and myself, that I should be ungrateful if I did not make you every offering in my power. I know, monsieur, that lords like you, who have strict and closehanded fathers, have often more need of money than we, who, with our small retinue and good management, do nothing but amass. God, who has given me everything that could be desired in a wife, has thought fit to leave me still something to wish for in this world, since I am deprived of the joy which fathers derive from children. I know, monsieur, that it does not belong to me to adopt you; but if you please to regard me as your servant, and confide your little affairs to me, as far as a hundred thousand crowns may go, you shall never want for aid in your need."

M. d'Avannes was very glad of this offer, for he had just such a father as the other had mentioned; and after thanking his generous friend, he called him his father by alliance. Thenceforth the rich man was so fondly attached to M. d'Avannes, that he failed not to ask him every morning and evening if he wanted anything; and he made no secret of this to his wife, who was much pleased with it. M. d'Avannes never afterwards wanted anything he could desire. He often went to see his father by alliance, and eat with him; and when he did not find him at home, the wife gave him whatever he asked for, and spoke to him so sagely, exhorting him to virtue, that he feared and loved her above all women in the world. For her part having the fear of God and honor before her eyes, she contented herself with seeing and speaking to him, which is enough for a virtuous love; nor did she ever give him any indication from which he could conjecture that she entertained for him any other than a sisterly and Christian regard. About the age of seventeen, M. d'Avannes began to attach himself more to the ladies than he had been used to do; and though he would more gladly have loved his own good lady than any other, the fear of losing her friendship hindered him from speaking, and made him fix his choice elsewhere.

He addressed himself to a lady near Pampeluna, who had a house in the town, and had married a young man whose ruling passion was horses, dogs, and hawks. For her sake he gave a thousand entertainments, such as tournaments, games, races, wrestling-matches, masquerades, balls, but as the husband was of a jealous temper, and the lady's father and mother knew her to be fair and frolicsome, and were afraid of her tripping, they watched her so closely that all M. d'Avannes could do was to whisper a word or two in her ear at a ball, although he well knew, and this made the matter still more provoking, that nothing but time and place was wanting for the consummation of their mutual inclinations. He went to his good father, told him he had a mind to visit Notre Dame de Montferrat, and begged he would receive his whole retinue into his house, for it was his wish to go

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

alone. This request was instantly granted; but as love is a great prophet, and as the wife was under the influence of that power, she guessed the truth at once, and could not help saying to M. d'Avannes, "The Notre Dame you adore, monsieur, is not outside the walls of this town. Take care of your health, I beseech you." M. d'Avannes, who, as I have already said, feared and loved her, blushed so much at these words, that he tacitly betrayed the truth, and went away.

After buying two handsome Spanish horses, he dressed himself as a groom, and disguised himself so well that no one could have known him. The husband of the wanton lady, being fond of horses above all things, saw the two belonging to M. d'Avannes, and immediately offered to buy them. The bargain being concluded, he took particular notice of the groom, and seeing that he managed the horses very well, asked if he would enter his service. M. d'Avannes at once agreed to do so, and said he was a poor groom, who could do nothing but take care of horses, but this he could do so well that his master would be satisfied with him. The gentleman gave him the charge of all his horses, and when he reached home told his wife that he was going to the château, and that he begged her to look after his groom and his horses. As much to please her husband as because she had no other recreation, the lady went to see the horses, and noticed the new groom, who seemed to her a good-looking man; but she did not recognize him. Seeing this, he made his obeisance to her in the Spanish fashion, took her hand and kissed it, and in so doing pressed it so strongly that she knew him, for he had often done the same thing in dancing with her. From that moment she thought of nothing but how she might contrive to speak with him in private; and this she did that very evening. She was invited to an entertainment to which her husband was to have taken her; but she feigned indisposition, and would not go. Her husband, not wishing to disappoint his friends, begged her, since she would not accompany him, to look after his dogs and his horses, and see that they wanted for nothing. This commission was most agreeable to her; but the better to play her part, she replied that, since he would not employ her in higher things, she would prove to him, by her care for the least, how much she desired to please him.

No sooner was her husband gone than she went to the stable, where she found that something was not as it should be. To set matters right, she gave so many orders to the men that she was left alone with the head groom, and, for fear of any one coming upon them, she told him to go into the garden and wait for her in a little corner at the end of an alley, which he did with such haste that he had not time even to thank her. Having given her orders in the stables, she went to see the dogs, and busied herself so much about them, that it seemed as though from being mistress she had become servant. All this being done, she went back to her chamber, and complained so much of fatigue that she had to go to bed. All her women withdrew except one, in whom she specially confided; and this one she sent to the garden with orders to bring her the man she should find at the end of the alley. The chambermaid found the head-groom, brought him straightway to her mistress, and then mounted guard outside, to give warning should the husband return. M. d'Avannes, finding himself alone with his fair one, stripped off his groom's dress, his false nose and false beard, and not as a timorous groom, but in his own proper character, boldly stepped into bed to her without asking leave, and was received as the handsomest man of his time by the most wanton woman in the country. There he remained until the return of the husband, when he resumed his mask, and quitted the place he so cunningly usurped.

The husband, on entering his court-yard, found that his wife had carefully executed his orders, and thanked her for it. "I have only done my duty, my dear," she said. "It is true, that if one had not an eye on the varlets, you have not a dog but would be mangy, or a horse but would be out of condition; but as I know their laziness and your wishes, you shall be better served than ever you have been." The husband, who thought he had got the best groom in the world, asked her what she thought of him. "I assure you, monsieur," said she, "that he knows his business as well as any man you could find. Still he requires to be kept to his work, for he is the sleepest varlet I ever saw." The wedded pair were on better terms with each other than they had ever been, and the husband became quite cured of his jealousy, because his wife was now as attached to her household concerns as she had previously been fond of feasts, dances, and company. Formerly she used always to spend four hours at her toilette; but now she dressed very simply. Her husband, and those who did not know that a worse devil had driven out a lesser, extolled her for so happy a change. Meanwhile this virtuous-seeming hypocrite led such a licentious life, that reason,

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

conscience, order, or moderation had no longer any place in her. M. d'Avannes, being young and of a delicate constitution, could not long sustain all this; but became so pale and thin that he had no need of a mask to conceal his identity. His extravagant love for this woman had so infatuated him, that he imagined he had strength to accomplish devoirs for which that of Hercules would not have been sufficient. Having fallen ill at last, and being teased by the lady, who was not so fond of him sick as sound, he asked for his discharge, which the husband granted with regret, making him promise to return as soon as he was recovered.

M.d'Avannes had no need of a horse for his departure, for he had only the length of a street to travel. He went at once to his good father's, and found there only his wife whose virtuous love for him had not at all decreased through absence. When she saw him so pale and thin, she could not help saying to him, "I do not know, monsieur, what is the present state of your conscience; but I do not perceive that your pilgrimage has increased your plumpness. I am very much mistaken if your travels by night have not fatigued you more than those by day. If you had made the journey to Jerusalem on foot, you would have come back more sunburnt, but not so lean and weak. Recollect this ride, and pay no more devotions to such images, which, instead of resuscitating the dead, bring the living to death. I should say more to you, but I see that if you have sinned, you have been so punished that it would be cruel to add to your distress."

M.d'Avannes, more ashamed than penitent, replied, "I have heard, madam, that repentance follows close upon the fault. This I experience, to my cost; and I pray you, madam, to excuse my youth, which is punished by the experience of the mischief it would not be warned against."

The lady changed the conversation, and made him lie down in a fine bed, where he remained for a fortnight, taking nothing but restoratives; and the husband and the wife were so assiduous in their attentions, that one or other was always with him. Though he had committed the folly you have heard against the feelings and the advice of the excellent lady, she nevertheless continued to love him as before, in the hope that

TROISIÈME JOURNÉE. Nouvelle XXVIe

when this great fire of youth had passed away, he would reform and come to love rightly, and then he would be all her own. During the fortnight he remained in her house, she talked so much and so well to inspire him with a love of virtue, that he began to hate vice, and to be disgusted with his fault.

Gazing one day on the virtuous lady, who appeared to him much handsomer than the wanton, and knowing her excellent qualities better than he had ever done, he banished all fear, and thus addressed her, "I see no better means, madam, of becoming as good as you would have me to be, than to turn my whole heart to the love of virtue. Pray tell me, madam, I beseech you, would you not have the goodness to give me all the aid in your power to that end?"

The lady, delighted to see him come to the point to which she wished to lead him, replied, "I promise you, monsieur, that if you love virtue as much as becomes a lord of your rank, I will spare nothing to render you all the services of which I may be capable."

"Remember your promise, madam," returned d'Avannes; "and consider that God, whom the Christian knows only by faith, has deigned to assume flesh like that of the sinner, in order that attracting our flesh to the love of His humanity, He might also attract our spirits to the love of His divinity, thus employing visible things to make us love the invisible. As this virtue which I wish to love all my life long has nothing visible about it except the outward effects it produces, it is necessary that it should assume some body, in order to make itself known to men. It has assumed that body, madam, in putting on yours, the most perfect it could have found. I own, therefore, that you are not only virtuous, but actually virtue itself; and I, who see that virtue shine beneath the veil of the most beautiful body that ever existed, wish to serve and honor it all my life, and to renounce for ever the love that is

criminal and vain."

The lady, though no less delighted than surprised to hear him speak thus, was able completely to conceal her feelings, and said, "I will not take upon me, monsieur, to reply to your theology; but as I am much more disposed to fear the evil than to believe the good, I beg you will not address me in a language which gives you so poor an opinion of those who are weak enough to believe it. I know very well that I am a woman like any other, and a woman that has so many defects that virtue would do something greater in transforming me into itself than in transforming itself into me, unless it wished to remain unknown to the world. No one would think of recognizing it under such a garb as mine. Howbeit, with all my faults, my lord, I still love you as much as a woman can and ought who fears God and cherishes honor; but this love shall not be declared to you until your heart is capable of the patience which a virtuous love requires. When that time comes, monsieur, I know what I shall have to tell you. Meanwhile, be assured that your welfare, your person, and your honor are dearer to me than to yourself."

Trembling, and with tears in his eyes, M. d'Avannes begged to be allowed to take a kiss as a pledge of her word, but she refused, saying that she did not choose to violate the custom of the country for him. Presently the husband arrived. "I am so much indebted, father," said D'Avannes, "to you and your wife, that I entreat you always to regard me as your son." The good man willingly expressed his assent. "Let me kiss you, then, in assurance of that affection," continued D'Avannes. This was done. "If I were not afraid," he said next, "of contravening the law, I would request the same favor of my mother, your wife." The husband desired his wife to kiss him, which she did without testifying either repugnance or alacrity; whilst the fire which the previous conversation had already kindled in the heart of M. d'Avannes grew hotter at this kiss so ardently longed for, and before so peremptorily denied him.

After this M. d'Avannes went back to the king, his brother, and told all sorts of stories about his journey to Montferrat. To his great vexation he learned that his brother was going to Oly and Taffares, and fearing that the journey would be a long one, he resolved to try before his departure if the lady were not better disposed towards him than she appeared. To this end he went to lodge in town, and took, in the street in which she lived, a dilapidated old wooden house, to which he set fire about midnight. The whole town was in great alarm; the rich man was roused by the noise, and calling out from the window to know where the fire was, he was told that it was at the house of M. d'Avannes. Hurrying thither with all his domestics, he found the young lord in the street in his shirt. Such was his pity for him that, taking him in his arms, and covering him with his own robe, he hastened home with him, and said to his wife, "Here is a prisoner, my dear, whom I commit to your custody. Treat him like myself."

He was no sooner gone than M. d'Avannes, who would have been glad to be treated as her husband, jumped into the bed, hoping that the opportunity and the place would inspire the chaste lady with more humane sentiments; but he was quite disappointed, for as he got in at one side she got out at the other, carrying away her chamarre, which she put on; and seating herself at the bedside, she said, "What! monsieur, did you imagine that opportunity could change a virtuous heart? Know that as gold becomes purer in the fire, so a chaste heart grows stronger amid temptations. Often it grows stronger among them than elsewhere, and becomes more cold the more it is attacked by its opposite. Be assured, then, that if I had entertained any other sentiments than those I have avowed, I should not have lacked means, and that I neglect them only because I do not choose to use them. If you would have me continue to love you, banish not only the desire but the thought that, do what you may, you can ever bring me to be other than what I am."

Her women now coming in, she ordered them to prepare a collation of all sorts of confections; but D'Avannes could neither eat nor drink, so great was his vexation at having missed his blow, and exposed himself, as he feared, by that demonstration of his desires, to lose the position of familiarity in which he had been with her. The husband having taken measures for extinguishing the fire, returned, and prevailed on M. d'Avannes to pass the night in his house; but he passed it in such a manner that his eyes were more occupied in weeping than in sleeping. He went and bade them adieu at the bedside very early in the morning, and plainly perceived, in kissing

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

the lady, that she felt more pity than anger for his fault. This was a fresh brand to the fire of his love. After dinner he set out for Taffares with the king; but before his departure he went twice more to take a final farewell of his good father and his wife, who, since her husband's first command, no longer made any scruple to kiss M. d'Avannes as her son.

There is no doubt that the more virtue did violence to the poor lady's eyes and countenance, constraining them to hide the fire that was in her heart, the more it augmented and became insupportable. Unable, then, any longer to endure the conflict between love and honor, which yet she had resolved should never be manifested, and having no longer the pleasure and consolation of seeing and conversing with him for whom she lived, she fell into a continuous fever, caused by a melancholy humor which she was forced to conceal, and which rendered the extremities of her body quite cold, though the inside burned continually. The physicians, a class of men on whose hands hangs not the health of men, began to despair on account of an obstruction of the spleen, which rendered her melancholy, and they advised the husband to warn his wife to think of her conscience, saying that she was in the hands of God; as if people in good health were not there also. The husband, who was excessively fond of his wife, was so overwhelmed at this news, that he wrote, for his own consolation, to M. d'Avannes, begging he would take the trouble to come and see them, in the hope that his presence would be a comfort to the patient. M. d'Avannes, on receipt of the letter, instantly started off post-haste, and on entering the house, he found the domestics of both sexes as full of grief for their mistress as she deserved. Shocked at what he saw, he remained at the door as if paralyzed, until his good father came and embraced him with tears, and without being able to utter a word, led him to the sick woman's chamber. Turning her languid eyes full upon him, she held out her hand, and drew him towards her with all the little strength left her.

"The moment is come, my lord," she said, embracing him, "when all dissimulation must cease, and I must declare to you the truth I have had so much difficulty in concealing; it is, that if you have had much love for me, I have had no less for you. But my pain is greater than yours, because I have been compelled to hide it. Conscience and honor have never allowed me to declare to you the sentiments of my heart, for fear of augmenting in you a passion which I wished to diminish. But know, my lord, that the no which I have said to you so often, and which it has cost me so much pain to pronounce, is the cause of my death. I die with satisfaction, since, by God's grace, notwithstanding the excess of my love, I have nothing to reproach myself with in regard to piety and honor. I say the excess of my love, for a less fire than mine has destroyed greater and stronger edifices. I die happy, since before quitting this world, I can declare my affection, which corresponds to yours, save only that the honor of men and that of women are not the same thing. I pray you, my lord, henceforth not to be afraid to address yourself to the greatest and most virtuous ladies you can; for it is hearts of that character which have the strongest passions, and which control them most wisely; and your grace, good looks, and good breeding will always enable you to gather the fruits of your love. I will not ask you to pray to God for me, for I know that the gate of Paradise is not shut against true lovers, and that love is a fire which punishes lovers so well in this life, that they are exempted from the sharp torment of Purgatory. And now farewell, my lord; I commend to you your good father, my husband. Tell him truly, I beg you, what you know of me, in order that he may know how much I have loved God and him. And come no more before my eyes, for henceforth I wish to employ my mind only in putting myself in a condition to receive the promises made to me by God before the foundation of the world."

So saying, she embraced him with all the strength of her weak arms. M. d'Avannes, on whom compassion produced the same effect as pain and sickness in the lady, retired without being able to say a word, and threw himself upon a bed which was in the room, where he fainted several times. The lady then called her husband, and after many becoming demonstrations, she recommended M. d'Avannes to him, assuring him that next to himself that was the person she had loved best in the world. Having kissed her husband she bade him farewell, and then the holy sacrament of the altar was brought her after extreme unction, which she received with joy, and an entire assurance of her salvation. Finding at last that her sight was leaving her, and that her strength was failing, she began to repeat aloud her *In manus*, hearing which M. d'Avannes sat up in the bed, and saw her render up with a gentle sigh her glorious soul to Him from whom it came. When he saw that she was dead, he threw himself upon the body, which he had never approached without trembling while she lived, and embraced it so, that it was with

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

difficulty he was forced away from it. The husband, who had never supposed he loved her so much, was surprised, and said, "It is too much, my lord." And thereupon they withdrew.

After they had long deplored, the one his wife, the other his mistress, M. d'Avannes recounted his love to the husband, and told him that until her death the deceased had never shown him any other signs than those of rigid reserve. This increased the husband's admiration for his departed wife, and still more his grief for her loss, and all his life afterwards he rendered service to M. d'Avannes. The latter, who was then but eighteen, returned to the court, and it was a long time before he would speak to any of the ladies there, or even see them; and for more than two years he wore mourning.

You see, ladies, what a difference there is between a chaste woman and a wanton. Their love, too, produced very different effects; for the one died a glorious death, and the other lived but too long after the loss of her reputation and her honor. As much as the death of the saint is precious before God, so is that of the sinner the reverse.

"Truly, Saffredent," said Oisille, "anything finer than the story you have just narrated one could not wish to hear; and if the rest of the company knew the persons as I do, they would think it still finer, for I never saw a handsomer gentleman, or one of better deportment, than M. d'Avannes."

"Must it not be owned," replied Saffredent, "that this was a chaste and good woman, since, in order to appear more virtuous than she was in reality, and to hide the love which reason and nature willed that she should have for so perfect a gentleman, she let herself die for want of giving herself the pleasure she desired without owning it."

"If she had felt that desire," said Parlamente, "she would not have lacked either place or opportunity to reveal it; but she had so much virtue that reason always controlled her desire."

"You may paint her portrait as you please," said Hircan; "but I know that a greater devil always drives out a less, and that the pride of the ladies seeks rather carnal pleasure than the fear and love of God. They are perpetual enigmas, and they are such clever dissemblers, that it is impossible to know what is in their hearts. If the world had not annexed infamy to the loss of their honour, it would be universally found that nature has made them with the same inclinations and the same affections as ourselves. Not daring to take the pleasure they long for, they have changed that vice into another which they think more decorous, I mean a cruelty quite as much pretended as real, by which they think to gain immortal renown; and through the petty vanity of resisting the vice of nature's law (if nature is vicious), they resemble not only the brutes in cruelty and inhumanity, but even the devils, whose pride and craft they borrow."

"It is a pity you have a good woman for your wife," said Nomerfide, "since, not a content with despising the virtue of other women, you would fain have it believed that they are all vicious."

"I am very glad," replied Hircan, "to have a wife who gives no ground for scandal; a thing which I would not do either; but as for chastity of heart, I believe that she and I are children of Adam and Eve: so, if we examine ourselves well, we have no business to cover our nakedness with leaves, but rather to confess our weakness."

"I know well," said Parlamente, "that we all have need of the grace of God, being as we are by nature disposed to sin; but it must be owned, nevertheless, that our temptations are not similar to yours: and if we sin through pride, no one suffers for it, and neither our body nor our hands receive any stain. But your pleasure consists in dishonoring women, and your glory in killing men in war; which are two things absolutely opposed to the law of God."

"I admit what you say," remarked Geburon; "but when God says that whoever looks upon a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery in his heart, and that whoever hateth his neighbor is a homicide, do you suppose he does not also mean to speak of women?"

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

"God, who knoweth the heart, will decide," said Longarine. "Meanwhile, it is always a good thing that men should have no power to accuse us, for God's goodness is so great that He will not judge us without an accuser. Not judge us, did I say? The frailty of our hearts is so well known to Him, that He will give us credit for not having proceeded to overt acts."

"Pray let us drop this dispute," said Saffredent. "We are here to tell tales, not to preach sermons. I therefore give my voice to Ennasuite, and beg that she will not forget to make us laugh."

"I shall not fail to do so," replied Ennasuite. "On my way hither I was told a story of two servants of a princess, which seemed to me so droll, and made me laugh so much, that I forgot the dismal tale I had prepared for to-day, and which I will postpone until to-morrow, my countenance being now too merry to make it pass well with you."

NOVEL XXVII.

A Secretary had the imprudence to solicit the favors of his host's wife, and had only the shame for his pains.

THERE was at Amboise a man who served a princess in the capacity of chamberlain, and who, being an obliging, civil person, gladly entertained people who came to him, especially his own comrades. Not long ago, one of his mistress's secretaries came to lodge with him, and remained ten or twelve days. This secretary was so ugly, that he was more like a king of the cannibals than a Christian. Though his host treated him as a friend and a brother, yet he behaved to him like a man who had-I will not say forgotten all decency, but who had never had a feeling of it in his heart: this was, to solicit in the way of lawless love his companion's wife, who not only had nothing engaging in her, but looked the very antidote of criminal pleasure, and as good and virtuous a woman as any in Amboise. On becoming aware of the man's bad intentions, the woman thought it better to expose his turpitude than to suppress and conceal it by a prompt and decisive refusal; she therefore pretended to listen to his suit. He, thinking that he had made a conquest, pressed her incessantly, without considering that

she was fifty, that she was not handsome, and that she had the reputation of a good woman who loved her husband. One day among others, when the husband was at home, and they were in a lower room, she pretended that the only thing requisite was to find a safe place for a tête-à-tête, where they might entertain each other as he wished. He proposed that they should go up to the garret. She rose at once, and begged him to go first, promising to follow him. He, laughing and grinning like an amorous monkey, went up-stairs and posted himself in the garret. Whilst he was waiting for what he had so hotly desired, he listened with all his ears for his fair one's footsteps; but, instead of them, he heard her voice crying out, "Wait a bit, master secretary, till I go and ask my husband if it is his pleasure that I should go to you." Imagine how the man looked in tears who had cut such an ugly figure when laughing. He hurried down-stairs with tears in his eyes, and begged her for God's sake to say nothing, and not set her husband against him. "I am certain," she replied, "that you are too much his friend to wish to say anything which might not be repeated to him; so I am going to speak to him about this matter." And so she did, in spite of all he could do to prevent her. He ran away, and was as much ashamed as the husband was glad to hear of the trick his wife had played him. So satisfied was the good man with his wife's virtue, that he gave himself no concern about his companion's villainy, thinking him sufficiently punished in having the shame he had intended for him recoil upon his own head.

This tale teaches us, ladies, that honest folk ought never to attach themselves to those who have neither conscience, heart, nor wit enough to know God, honor, and true love.

"Though your tale be short," said Oisille, "it is as amusing as any I have heard, and to the honor of a worthy woman."

"It is no great thing to boast of," said Simontault, "for an honest woman to refuse a man so ugly as you represent

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

this secretary to have been. Had he been handsome and well-bred, her conduct would then have been some evidence of virtue. As I think I know the man, if it was my turn to tell a story, I think I could give you one about him not less droll than this."

"Well, do so," said Ennasuite.

"Courtiers, and inhabitants of great cities," he continued, "have such a good opinion of their own capacity, that they regard others as very small folk in comparison with themselves. Though craft and cunning are of all countries and all conditions, yet as those who think themselves the shrewdest do so only through vanity, they are only the more laughed at when they happen to make some mistake, as I shall instance to you in an affair of recent occurrence."

NOVEL XXVIII.

A Secretary, thinking to dupe a certain person, was himself duped.

WHEN King Francis I. was at Paris with his sister the Queen of Navarre, that princess had a secretary named Jean, who was not one of those who let anything worth having be lost for want of picking it up. There was neither president nor counsellor with whom he was not acquainted, merchant nor rich man whose house he did not frequent. At the same time there also arrived in Paris a merchant of Bayonne, named Bernard du Ha, who, having business in hand, and being in need of protection, addressed himself to the lieutenant criminel, who was of his country. The Queen of Navarre's secretary used also to go frequently to see the same person, as a good servant of his master and mistress. One holiday, when he went to the house, he found neither the lieutenant nor his lady at home; but there was Bernard du Ha, playing a viol or some other instrument for the servant-women of the house, and teaching them to dance the branles of Gascony. When the secretary saw this, he wanted to make Bernard believe that he was doing wrong, and that if the lieutenant and his lady knew of it they would be very angry. Having talked to him in so alarming a manner that the other begged him not to tell what he had seen, he said, "What will you give me not to say a word about it?" Bernard du Ha, who was not so frightened as he made believe, perceiving that the secretary wanted to dupe him, promised to give him a pasty of the best Basque ham he had ever eaten. The secretary was highly pleased, and begged that he might have the pasty on the following Sunday after dinner, which the other promised.

Counting on this promise, the secretary went to see a lady of Paris whom he passionately desired to marry, and said to her, "On Sunday, madam, I will come and sup with you, if you please; but do not trouble yourself about anything but good bread and good wine, for I have so gulled a stupid fellow of Bayonne, that he will be at the cost of the rest: I will bring you the best Basque ham that ever was tasted in Paris." The lady, taking his word for it, invited two or three of her fair neighbors, and assured them she would treat them to something they had never tasted before. Sunday being come, the secretary went in quest of the merchant, and found him at the Pont au Change. Saluting him very politely, he said, "To the devil with you for having given me such trouble to find you."

"Many a one has taken more trouble than you," replied Bernard du Ha, "and has not been so well rewarded in the end." So saying, he produced the pasty; which he had under his cloak, and which was big enough to set before a small army. The secretary was so pleased, that although he had an enormous ugly mouth, he squeezed it up so small that one would have thought he could not bite the ham. Hastily clutching the pasty, he turned his back upon the merchant without inviting him to partake of the treat, and carried it to his mistress, who was very curious to know if the eatables of Guienne were as good as those of Paris. Supper-time being come, the company began to fall to at the soup with much vigor. "Leave those insipid things," said the secretary, "and let us taste this whet for wine." So saying, he opened the pasty, and set about cutting the ham, but it was so hard that he could not stick the knife into it. After trying again and again, he found that he was hoaxed, and that instead of a ham he had been given a wooden shoe, such as is worn in Gascony, with a stick thrust into the end of it, and the whole smeared

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

with suet and powdered with rust of iron and spices, which gave out a very pleasant odor. The secretary was greatly ashamed, both of having been duped by the person he thought to dupe, and having deluded his mistress, contrary to his intentions; to say nothing of his sore disappointment at having to content himself with soup for supper. The ladies, who were as vexed as himself, would have accused him as the author of the trick if they had not seen by his face that he was anything but pleased with its success.

After making a light supper, the secretary retired in great dudgeon and seeing that Bernard du Ha had not kept his word, he did not think himself bound by his own. Accordingly, he went to the lieutenant criminel, intending to say everything bad he could of the merchant; but the latter had been beforehand with him, and had already related the adventure to the lieutenant, who laughed in the secretary's face, and told him that he had learned to his cost what it was to play tricks on Gascons. And so all he got was the shame of having been the dupe of his own cunning.

The same thing happens to many, who, wishing to deceive, find themselves deceived. Therefore it is best to do to others only as we would be done by.

"I assure you," said Geburon, "that I have often witnessed such occurrences; and those who pass for village boobies often overreach persons who think themselves very clever; for there is no greater ninny than a man who thinks himself cunning, nor any one wiser than he who knows that he is not so."

"He who knows his own incapacity, knows something, after all," said Parlamente.

"For fear time should fail us, I give my voice to Nomerfide," said Simontault. "I am sure she will not delay us long by her rhetoric."

"You shall have from me the satisfaction you desire," said Nomerfide. "I am not surprised, ladies, if love inspires princes and well-educated persons with the art of extricating themselves from danger. In fact, they are brought up in intercourse with so many persons of knowledge, that it would be very surprising if they were ignorant of anything. But address in love appears with much greater luster when those who display it are persons of less intelligence. I shall, then, relate to you a piece of cleverness exhibited by a priest through the prompting of love alone; for he was so ignorant in all other things, that he could hardly say mass."

NOVEL XXIX.

A villager, whose wife intrigued with the parish priest, suffered himself to be easily deceived.

THERE was at Carrelles, a village in the county of Maine, a rich husbandman, who in his old age married a handsome young wife, by whom he had no children; but she consoled herself for this disappointment with several friends. When gentlemen and persons of mark failed her, she reverted to her last resource, which was the church, and chose for the accomplice of her sin him who could absolve her—that is to say, her priest, who paid frequent visits to his sheep. The dull old husband suspected nothing; but as he was a rough and sturdy old fellow, she played her game as secretly as she could, being afraid that her husband would kill her if he came to know of it.

One day, when the husband was gone into the fields, and his wife did not expect him back for some time, she sent for master parson to confess her; but during the time they were making good cheer together, the husband arrived so suddenly, that the priest had not time to steal off. Intending then to hide, he went by the wife's directions up into a loft, and covered the trap-hole in the floor by which he had got in with a winnowing basket. Meanwhile the wife, who was afraid her husband might suspect something, regaled him well at dinner, and plied him so well with wine, that the good man, having taken a little drop too much, and being fatigued with walking, fell asleep in a chair by the fireside. The priest, who found it dull work waiting in the loft, on ceasing to hear any noise in the room below, leaned over the trap-hole, and stretching out his neck as far as he could, saw that the good man was

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

asleep. But while making his observations he inadvertently leaned with so much weight on the winnowing basket, that down fell basket, priest and all, by the side of the good man, and woke him up with the noise. But the priest was on his legs before the other had opened his eyes, and said, "There's your winnowing basket, gossip, and I'm much obliged to you:" and so saying, he walked off. The poor husbandman, quite bewildered, asked his wife what was the matter? "It is your winnowing basket, my dear," she replied, "which the priest had borrowed and has now returned."

"It is a very clumsy way of returning what one has borrowed," said the good man, grumbling, "for I thought the house was falling."

In this way the priest saved himself at the expense of the husbandman, who objected to nothing but the abrupt manner in which his reverence had returned his winnowing basket. The master he served, ladies, saved him for that time, in order to possess and torment him longer.

"Do not imagine that simple folk are more exempt from craft than we are," said Geburon; "far from it, they have a great deal more. Look at thieves, murderers, sorcerers, false coiners, and other people of that sort, whose wits are always at work; they are all simple folk."

"I am not surprised that they have more craft than others," said Parlamente, "but I am surprised that, having their wits directed to so many other things, they can think of love. Is it not strange that so fine a passion can enter such vulgar hearts?"

"You know, madam, what Maître Jean de Meun says:

Aussi bien sont amourettes
Sous bureau que sous brunettes.

Besides, the love of which the tale speaks is not that which makes one wear harness. The poor, who have not wealth and honors like us, have in compensation more of the commodities of nature. Their viands are not so delicate as ours, but good appetite makes amends for that deficiency, and they fare better on coarse bread than we on dainties. Their beds are not so handsome or so well made as ours, but their sleep is sounder. Their ladies are neither painted nor decked out like ours whom we idolize, but they receive pleasure from them much oftener than we, without fearing any other tongues than those of the beasts and birds that see them. In a word, they lack what we have, and have abundance of what we have not."

"Pray let us have done with this peasant and his wife," said Nomerfide, "and finish the day before vespers. It is for Hircan to do so."

"I will finish it, then, with a very dismal tale," said Hircan. "Though I do not willingly speak ill of ladies, knowing as I do that men are malicious enough to deduce from the fault of one conclusions disparaging to all the rest, yet the singularity of the adventure overcomes my fear, and the exposure of ignorance will perhaps make others wiser."

NOVEL XXX.

Notable example of human frailty in a lady who, to conceal an evil, commits a still greater one. IN the time of Louis XII., the legate at Avignon being then a lord of the house of Amboise, nephew to the Legate of France, whose name was George, there was a lady in Languedoc who had an income of more than four thousand ducats. Her name I will not mention, for sake of her relations. She was still very young when her husband died, leaving her but one son; and whether from regret for her husband, or love of her son, she resolved never to marry again.

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

To avoid all occasion for doing so, she frequented only the society of the devout, thinking that opportunity makes sin, and not knowing that sin forges opportunity. She gave herself up wholly to the divine service, shunning all parties of pleasure and everything worldly, insomuch that she made it a matter of conscience to be present at a wedding, or to hear the organ played in church. When her son was seven years old, she chose a man of holy life as his preceptor, to bring him up in piety and sanctity. But when he was between fourteen and fifteen, nature, who is a very mysterious schoolmaster, finding him well grown and idle, taught him very a different lesson from any he had learned from his preceptor; for under that new instruction he began to look upon and desire such things as seemed to him fair, and among others a demoiselle who slept in his mother's room. No one had the least suspicion of this, for he was regarded as a child, and nothing was ever heard in the house but goodly discourse.

The young gallant having begun secretly to solicit this girl, she went and told her mistress. The mother loved her son so much, that she believed this to be a story told to get him into disgrace; but the girl repeated her complaints so often, that her mistress at last said she would find out the truth of the matter: if it was as the girl stated she would punish her son severely, but if not, the accuser should pay the penalty. In order, then, to come at the truth, she ordered the demoiselle to make an appointment with the young gentleman that he should come to her at midnight, to the bed in which she lay alone near the door in his mother's chamber. The demoiselle obeyed her orders, and that night the mother lay down in the demoiselle's bed, resolving that if her son came thither she would chastise him in such a manner that he should never lie with a woman without remembering it. Such were her angry thoughts when her son actually entered the bed in which she lay; but unable still to bring herself to believe that he had any unchaste intention, she waited for some plainer evidence of his bad purpose before she would speak to him. But she waited so long, and nature is so frail, that her anger ended in an abominable pleasure, and she forgot that she was a mother. As water retained by force is more impetuous when let loose, so was it with this unfortunate woman, who made her whole pride consist in the violence she did her body. When she began to descend the first step from her chastity she found herself at once at the bottom, and became pregnant that night, by him whom she wished to hinder from getting others with child.

No sooner was the sin committed than she was seized with the most poignant remorse, and her repentance lasted as long as her life. So keen was her anguish on rising from beside her son, who never discovered his mistake, that entering a closet, and calling to mind the firm resolution she had formed, and which she had so badly executed, she passed the whole night alone in an agony of tears. But instead of humbling herself, and owning that of ourselves alone, and without the aid of God, we can do nothing but sin, she thought by her own efforts and by her tears to repair the past and prevent future mischief, always imputing her sin to the occasion, and not to wickedness, for which there is no remedy but the grace of God. As if there was but one sort of sin which could bring damnation; she applied her whole mind to avoid that one; but pride, which the sense of extreme sinfulness should destroy, was too strongly rooted in her heart, and grew in such a manner, that; to avoid one evil, she committed many others.

Early next morning she sent for her son's governor, and said to him, "My son is coming to maturity, and it is time that he should be removed from the house. One of my relations, who is beyond the mountains with the Grand Master of Chaumont, will be glad to have him. Take him away, then, forthwith; and to spare me the pain of parting, do not let him come to bid me farewell." Without more ado she gave him money for the journey, and he set out the next day with his pupil, who was very glad of it; and having had what he wanted of his mistress, desired nothing better than to go to the wars. The lady was long plunged in extreme grief, and but for the fear of God she could have wished that the unhappy fruit of her womb should perish. To conceal her fault she pretended to be ill; and having a bastard brother in whom she confided above all men, and to whom she had made large donations, she sent for him, informed him of the misfortune that had happened to her, but not of her son's share in it, and begged him to save her honor by his help; which he did. Some days before she expected to be confined he advised her to try change of air, and remove to his house, where she would be more likely to recover than at home. She went thither with hardly any attendants, and found there a midwife, who had been sent for as if to attend her brother's wife, and who, without knowing the lying-in-woman, delivered her by night of a fine little girl. The gentleman put the infant out to nurse as his own; and the lady, after a month's stay, returned home, where

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

she lived more austerely than ever.

Her son being grown up, and Italy being at peace, he sent to beg his mother's permission to return to her. But as she was afraid of relapsing into the same crime, she put him off from time to time as well as she could; but he pressed her so much that at last she gave him leave to come home, having no plausible reason to allege for persisting longer in her refusal. She sent him word, however, not to appear before her until he was married; to choose a wife whom he loved passionately; and not to let his choice be determined by wealth, for if he chose a comely wife that was enough.

During this time the daughter, who had been left with the bastard brother, having grown up into a very handsome girl, her guardian thought of removing her to some place where she should not be known. He consulted the mother on the subject, and it was her wish that she should be given to the Queen of Navarre, named Catherine. The girl was so handsome and well-bred at the age of thirteen, that the Queen of Navarre had a great regard for her, and wished much to marry her well; but the girl being poor, many lovers presented themselves, but no husband. The unknown father, returning from Italy, visited the court of the Queen of Navarre, and no sooner saw his daughter than he fell in love with her. As he had his mother's permission to marry any woman he liked, he only asked was she of noble lineage, and being told that she was, he demanded her in marriage of the Queen of Navarre, who very gladly bestowed her upon him, knowing well that the cavalier was as wealthy as he was well-bred and handsome.

The marriage having been consummated, the gentleman wrote to his mother, saying she could no longer close her doors against him, since he brought with him a wife as handsome and as perfect as she could wish for. His mother made inquiries as to the wife he had taken, and found that it was their own daughter, which caused her such excessive affliction, that she was near dying suddenly, seeing that the means she employed to put a stop to the course of her misfortune only served to make it greater. Finding no remedy for what had occurred, she went to the Legate of Avignon, confessed the enormity of her crime, and asked his advice. The legate, to satisfy her conscience, summoned several theologians, to whom he submitted the affair, without naming the person concerned. The decision of this council of conscience was, that the lady was never to reveal the secret to her children, who had not sinned, inasmuch as they had known nothing; but that, as for herself, she was to do penance all her life. So the poor lady returned home, where soon after arrived her son and her daughter-in-law, who loved each other so much, that never was there a fonder couple, or one more like each other, she being his daughter, sister, and wife; and he her father, brother, and husband. Their love continued unabated to the last, whilst their profoundly penitent mother never saw them caress but she withdrew to weep. *

"There, ladies, is what happens to those of your sex who think to vanquish, by their own strength, love and nature with all the faculties which God has given them. Better were it to own their weakness, avoid exposure to temptation, and say to God, like David, "Lord I suffer force: answer for me."

"It is impossible to imagine a stranger case," said Oisille. "Methinks there is no man or woman who ought not to humble himself and fear God, seeing how the hope of doing a good thing was so productive of mischief."

"Be assured," said Parlamente, "that the first step man takes in self-confidence, removes him so far from the confidence he ought to have in God."

"Man is wise," said Geburon, "when he recognizes no greater enemy than himself, and distrusts his own will and counsel, however good and holy they may seem in his eyes."

"For no apparent prospect of good to come of it, however great," said Longarine, "should a woman expose herself to share the same bed with a man, however nearly related to her. Fire and tow are no safe neighbors."

THE HEPTAMERON: Third Day

"Assuredly," said Ennasuite, "this woman was a conceited fool, who thought herself such a saint that she could not sin, as some would have simple folks believe of them, which is a gross and pernicious error."

"Is it possible," exclaimed Oisille, "that there are people so foolish as to believe anything of the sort?"

"They do still more," said Longarine; "they say that it is necessary to habituate oneself to chastity; and to try their strength, they talk with the handsomest women and those they love best, and by kissing and touching them make trial of themselves as to whether or not they are in a condition of complete mortification of the flesh. When they find that this pleasure moves them, they fall back on solitude, fasting, and discipline; and when they have so subdued the flesh that neither conversation nor kissing causes them any emotion, the fools try the temptation of lying together and embracing without any voluptuous desire. But, for one who resists, a thousand succumb. Thence have ensued so many mischiefs, that the Archbishop of Milan, where this religious practice was introduced, was compelled to separate the sexes, and put the women into the women's convent, and the men into that of the men."

"Was there ever a more extravagant folly?" said Geburon. "A man wants to make himself sinless, and seeks with avidity provocations to sin."

"Some there are," said Saffredent, "who do quite the reverse; they shun temptation as much as possible, and yet concupiscence clings to them everywhere. The good Saint Jerome; after having soundly flogged and hid himself in the desert, confessed that he had been unable to overcome the fire of lust that burned in his marrow. The sovereign remedy, then, is to commend oneself to God; for, unless He upholds us by His power, His virtue, and His goodness, we not only fall, but take pleasure in falling."

"You do not see what I do," said Hircan; "which is, that whilst we were telling our stories the monks who were behind that hedge did not hear the vesper-bell; but no sooner did they hear us talk of God than away they went, and now they are ringing the second bell."

"We shall do well to follow them," said Oisille, "and praise God for his grace in enabling us to pass this day so happily."

Upon this the whole company rose and went to the church, where they devoutly heard vespers. At supper they talked over the conversation of the day, and many things which had occurred in the time, each citing what he thought most worthy of recollection. After a cheerful evening, they retired to their beds, in the hope of resuming next day a pastime which was so agreeable to them. Thus ended the third day.