YONGE CHARLOTTE MARY

THE CHAPLET OF PEARLS

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Yonge C.

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Содержание

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PREFACE

It is the fashion to call every story controversial that deals with times when controversy or a war of religion was raging; but it should be remembered that there are some which only attempt to portray human feelings as affected by the events that such warfare occasioned. 'Old Mortality' and 'Woodstock' are not controversial tales, and the 'Chaplet of Pearls' is so quite as little. It only aims at drawing certain scenes and certain characters as the convulsions of the sixteenth century may have affected them, and is, in fact, like all historical romance, the shaping of the conceptions that the imagination must necessarily form when dwelling upon the records of history. That faculty which might be called the passive fancy, and might almost be described in Portia's song,—

'It is engendered in the eyes,
By READING fed—and there it dies,'—

that faculty, I say, has learnt to feed upon character and incident, and to require that the latter should be effective and exciting. Is it not reasonable to seek for this in the days when such things were not infrequent, and did not imply exceptional wickedness or misfortune in those engaged in them? This seems to me one plea for historical novel, to which I would add the opportunity that it gives for study of the times and delineation of characters. Shakespeare's Henry IV. and Henry V., Scott's Louis XI., Manzoni's Federigo Borromeo, Bulwer's Harold, James's Philip Augustus, are all real contributions to our comprehension of the men themselves, by calling the chronicles and memoirs into action. True, the picture cannot be exact, and is sometimes distorted—nay, sometimes praiseworthy efforts at correctness in the detail take away whatever might have been lifelike in the outline. Yet, acknowledging all this, I must still plead for the tales that presumptuously deal with days gone by, as enabling the young to realize history vividly—and, what is still more desirable, requiring an effort of the mind which to read of modern days does not. The details of Millais' Inquisition or of his Huguenot may be in error in spite of all his study and diligence, but they have brought before us for ever the horrors of the *auto-da-fe*, and the patient, steadfast heroism of the man who can smile aside his wife's endeavour to make him tacitly betray his faith to save his life. Surely it is well, by pen as by picture, to go back to the past for figures that will stir the heart like these, even though the details be as incorrect as those of the revolt of Liege or of La Ferrette in 'Quentin Durward' and 'Anne of Geierstein.'

Scott, however, willfully carved history to suit the purposes of his story; and in these days we have come to feel that a story must earn a certain amount of credibility by being in keeping with established facts, even if striking events have to be sacrificed, and that the order of time must be preserved. In Shakespeare's days, or even in Scott's, it might have been possible to bring Henry III. and his *mignons* to due punishment within the limits of a tale beginning with the Massacre of St. Bartholomew; but in 1868 the broad outlines of tragedy must be given up to keep within the bounds of historical verity.

How far this has been done, critics better read than myself must decide. I have endeavoured to speak fairly, to the best of my ability, of such classes of persons as fell in with the course of the narrative, according to such lights as the memoirs of the time afford. The Convent is scarcely a CLASS portrait, but the condition of it seems to be justified by hints in the Port Royal memoirs, respecting Maubuisson and others which Mere Angelique reformed. The intolerance of the ladies

at Montauban is described in Madame Duplessis-Mornay's life; and if Berenger's education and opinions are looked on as not sufficiently alien from Roman Catholicism, a reference to Froude's 'History of Queen Elizabeth' will show both that the customs of the country clergy, and likewise that a broad distinction was made by the better informed among the French between Calvinism and Protestantism or Lutheranism, in which they included Anglicanism. The minister Gardon I do not consider as representing his class. He is a POSSIBILITY modified to serve the purposes of the story.

Into historical matters, however, I have only entered so far as my story became involved with them. And here I have to apologize for a few blunders, detected too late for alteration even in the volumes. Sir Francis Walsingham was a young rising statesman in 1572, instead of the elderly sage he is represented; his daughter Frances was a mere infant, and Sir Philip Sidney was not knighted till much later. For the rest, I have tried to show the scenes that shaped themselves before me as carefully as I could; though of course they must not be a presentiment of the times themselves, but of my notion of them.

C. M. Yonge
November 14th, 1868

CHAPTER I. THE BRIDAL OF THE WHITE AND BLACK

Small was the ring, and small in truth the finger:
What then? the faith was large that dropped it down.

Aubrey De Vere, INFANT BRIDAL

Setting aside the consideration of the risk, the baby-weddings of the Middle Ages must have been very pretty sights.

So the Court of France thought the bridal of Henri Beranger Eustache de Ribaumont and of Marie Eustacie Rosalie de Rebaumont du Nid-de-Merle, when, amid the festivals that accompanied the signature of the treaty of Cateau-Cabresis, good-natured King Henri II. presided merrily at the union of the little pair, whose unite ages did not reach ten years.

There they stood under the portal of Notre-Dame, the little bridegroom in a white velvet coat, with puffed sleeves, slashed with scarlet satin, as were the short, also puffed breeches meeting his long white knitted silk stockings some way above the knee; large scarlet rosettes were in his white shoes, a scarlet knot adorned his little sword, and his velvet cap of the same colour bore a long white plume, and was encircled by a row of pearls of priceless value. They are no other than that garland of pearls which, after a night of personal combat before the walls of Calais, Edward III. of England took from his helmet and presented to Sir Eustache de Ribaumont, a knight of Picardy, bidding him say everywhere that it was a gift from the King of England to the bravest of knights.

The precious heirlooms were scarcely held with the respect due to an ornament so acquired. The manly garb for the first time assumed by his sturdy legs, and the possession of the little sword, were evidently the most interesting parts of the affair to the youthful husband, who seemed to find in them his only solace for the weary length of the ceremony. He was a fine, handsome little fellow, fair and rosy, with bright blue eyes, and hair like shining flax, unusually tall and strong-limbed for his age; and as he gave his hand to his little bride, and walked with her under a canopy up to kneel at the High Altar, for the marriage blessing and the mass, they looked like a full-grown couple seen through a diminishing-glass.

The little bride was perhaps a less beautiful child, but she had a splendid pair of black eyes, and a sweet little mouth, both set into the uncomprehending solemnity of baby gravity and contentment in fine clothes. In accordance with the vow indicated by her name of Marie, her dress was white and blue, turquoise forget-me-nots bound the little lace veil on her dark chestnut hair, the bosom of her white satin dress was sprinkled with the same azure jewel, and turquoises bordered every seam of the sweeping skirt with a train befitting a count's daughter, and meandered in gorgeous constellations round the hem. The little thing lisped her own vows forth without much notion of their sense, and indeed was sometimes prompted by her bridesmaid cousin, a pretty little girl a year older, who thrust in her assistance so glibly that the King, as well as others of the spectators, laughed, and observed that she would get herself married to the boy instead of her cousin.

There was, however, to be no doubt nor mistake about Beranger and Eustacie de Ribaumont being man and wife. Every ceremony, religious or domestic, that could render a marriage valid, was gone through with real earnestness, although with infinite gaiety, on the part of the court. Much depended on their union, and the reconcilement of the two branches of the family had long been a favourite scheme of King Henri II.

Both alike were descended from Anselme de Ribaumont, renowned in the first Crusade, and from the brave Picard who had received the pearls; but, in the miserable anarchy of Charles VI.'s

reign, the elder brother had been on the Burgundian side—like most of the other nobles of Picardy—and had thus been brought into the English camp, where, regarding Henry V. as lawfully appointed to the succession, and much admiring him and his brother Nedford, he had become an ardent supporter of the English claim. He had married an English lady, and had received the grant if the castle of Leurre in Normandy by way of compensation for his ancestral one of Ribaumont in Picardy, which had been declared to be forfeited by his treason, and seized by his brother.

This brother had always been an Armagnac, and had risen and thriven with his party,—before the final peace between France and England obliged the elder line to submit to Charles VII. Since that time there had been a perpetual contention as to the restitution of Chateau Ribaumont, a strife which under Louis XI. had become an endless lawsuit; and in the days of dueling had occasioned a good many insults and private encounters. The younger branch, or Black Ribaumonts, had received a grant from Louis XI. of the lands of Nid-de-Merle, belonging to an unfortunate Angevin noble, who had fallen under the royal displeasure, and they had enjoyed court favour up to the present generation, when Henri II., either from opposition to his father, instinct for honesty, or both, had become a warm friend to the gay and brilliant young Baron de Ribaumont, head of the white or elder branch of the family.

The family contention seemed likely to wear out of its own accord, for the Count de Ribaumont was an elderly and childless man, and his brother, the Chevalier de Ribaumont, was, according to the usual lot of French juniors, a bachelor, so that it was expected that the whole inheritance would centre upon the elder family. However, to the general surprise, the Chevalier late in life married, and became the father of a son and daughter; but soon after calculations were still more thrown out by the birth of a little daughter in the old age of the Count.

Almost from the hour in which her sex was announced, the King had promised the Baron de Ribaumont that she should be the wife of his young son, and that all the possessions of the house should be settled upon the little couple, engaging to provide for the Chevalier's disappointed heir in some commandery of a religious order of knighthood.

The Baron's wife was English. He had, when on a visit to his English kindred, entirely turned the head of the lovely Annora Walwyn, and finding that her father, one of the gravest of Tudor statesmen, would not hear of her breaking her engagement to the honest Dorset squire Marmaduke Thistlewood, he had carried her off by a stolen marriage and *coup de main*, which, as her beauty, rank, and inheritance were all considerable, had won him great reputation at the gay court of Henri II.

Infants as the boy and girl were, the King had hurried on their marriage to secure its taking place in the lifetime of the Count. The Countess had died soon after the birth of the little girl, and if the arrangement were to take effect at all, it must be before she should fall under the guardianship of her uncle, the Chevalier. Therefore the King had caused her to be brought up from the cottage in Anjou, where she had been nursed, and in person superintended the brilliant wedding. He himself led off the dance with the tiny bride, conducting her through its mazes with fatherly kindliness and condescension; but Queen Catherine, who was strongly in the interests of the Angevin branch, and had always detested the Baron as her husband's intimate, excused herself from dancing with the bridegroom. He therefore fell to the share of the Dauphiness Queen of Scots, a lovely, bright-eyed, laughing girl, who so completely fascinated the little fellow, that he convulsed the court by observing that he should not have objected to be married to some one like her, instead of a little baby like Eustacie.

Amid all the mirth, it was not only the Chevalier and the Queen who bore displeased looks. In truth, both were too great adepts in court life to let their dissatisfaction appear. The gloomiest face was that of him whose triumph it was—the bridegroom's father, the Baron de Ribaumont. He had suffered severely from the sickness that prevailed in St. Quentin, when in the last August the Admiral de Coligny had been besieged there by the Spaniards, and all agreed that he had never been the same man since, either in health or in demeanour. When he came back from his captivity and

found the King bent on crowning his return by the marriage of the children, he had hung back, spoken of scruples about such unconscious vows, and had finally only consented under stress of the personal friendship of the King, and on condition that he and his wife should at once have the sole custody of the little bride. Even then he moved about the gay scene with so distressed and morose an air that he was evidently either under the influence of a scruple of conscience or of a foreboding of evil.

No one doubted that it had been the latter, when, three days later, Henri II., in the prime of his strength and height of his spirits, encountered young Des Lorges in the lists, received the splinter of a lance in his eye, and died two days afterwards.

No sooner were his obsequies over than the Baron de Ribaumont set off with his wife and the little bridal pair for his castle of Leurre, in Normandy, nor was he ever seen at court again.

CHAPTER II. THE SEPARATION

Parted without the least regret,
Except that they had ever met.

* * * *

Misses, the tale that I relate,
This lesson seems to carry:
Choose not alone a proper mate,
But proper time to marry!

COWPER, PAIRING TIME ANTICIPATED

'I will have it!'

'Thou shalt not have it!'

'Diane says it is mine.'

'Diane knows nothing about it.'

'Gentlemen always yield to ladies.'

'Wives ought to mind their husbands.'

'Then I will not be thy wife.'

'Thou canst not help it.'

'I will. I will tell my father what M. le Baron reads and sings, and then I know he will.'

'And welcome.'

Eustacie put out her lip, and began to cry.

The 'husband and wife,' now eight and seven years old, were in a large room hung with tapestry, representing the history of Tobit. A great state bed, curtained with piled velvet, stood on a sort of *dais* at the further end; there was a toilet-table adorned with curiously shaped boxes, and coloured Venetian glasses, and filagree pouncet-boxes, and with a small mirror whose frame was inlaid with gold and ivory. A large coffer, likewise inlaid, stood against the wall, and near it a cabinet, of Dutch workmanship, a combination of ebony, ivory, wood, and looking-glass, the centre retreating, and so arranged that by the help of most ingenious attention to perspective and reflection, it appeared like the entrance to a magnificent miniature cinque-cento palace, with steps up to a vestibule paved in black and white lozenges, and with three endless corridors diverging from it. So much for show; for use, this palace was a bewildering complication of secret drawers and pigeon-holes, all depending indeed upon one tiny gold key; but unless the use of that key were well understood, all it led to was certain outer receptacles of fragrant Spanish gloves, knots of ribbon, and kerchiefs strewn over with rose leaves and lavender. However, Eustacie had secured the key, and was now far beyond these mere superficial matters. Her youthful lord had just discovered her mounted on a chair, her small person decked out with a profusion of necklaces, jewels, bracelets, chains, and rings; and her fingers, as well as they could under their stiffening load, were opening the very penetralia of the cabinet, the inner chamber of the hall, where lay a case adorned with the Ribaumont arms and containing the far-famed chaplet of pearls. It was almost beyond her reach, but she had risen on tip-toe, and was stretching out her hand for it, when he, springing behind her on the chair, availed himself of his superior height and strength to shut the door of this Arcanum and turn the key. His mortifying permission to his

wife to absent herself arose from pure love of teasing, but the next moment he added, still holding his hand on the key—'As to telling what my father reads, that would be treason. How shouldst thou know what it is?'

'Does thou think every one is an infant but thyself?'

'But who told thee that to talk of my father's books would get him into trouble?' continued the boy, as they still stood together on the high heavy wooden chair.

She tossed her pretty head, and pretended to pout.

'Was it Diane? I will know. Didst thou tell Diane?'

Instead of answering, now that his attention to the key was relaxed, Eustacie made a sudden dart, like a little wild cat, at the back of the chair and at the key. They chair over-balanced; Beranger caught at the front drawer of the cabinet, which, unlocked by Eustacie, came out in his hand, and chair, children, drawer, and curiosities all went rolling over together on the floor with a hubbub that brought all the household together, exclaiming and scolding. Madame de Ribaumont's displeasure at the rifling of her hoards knew no bounds; Eustacie, by way of defence, shrieked 'like twenty demons;' Beranger, too honourable to accuse her, underwent the same tempest; and at last both were soundly rapped over the knuckles with the long handle of Madame's fan, and consigned to two separate closets, to be dealt with on the return of M. le Baron, while Madame returned to her embroidery, lamenting the absence of that dear little Diane, whose late visit at the chateau had been marked by such unusual tranquility between the children.

Beranger, in his dark closet, comforted himself with the shrewd suspicion that his father was so employed as not to be expected at home till supper-time, and that his mother's wrath was by no means likely to be so enduring as to lead her to make complaints of the prisoners; and when he heard a trampling of horses in the court, he anticipated a speedy release and summons to show himself to the visitors. He waited long, however, before he heard the pattering of little feet; then a stool scraped along the floor, the button of his door was undone, the stool pushed back, and as he emerged, Eustacie stood before him with her finger to her lip. 'CHUT, Beranger! It is my father and uncle, and Narcisse, and, oh! so many *gens d'armes*. They are come to summon M. le Baron to go with them to disperse the *preche* by the Bac de l'Oie. And oh, Beranger, is he not there?'

'I do not know. He went out with his hawk, and I do not think he could have gone anywhere else. Did they say so to my mother?'

'Yes; but she never knows. And oh, Beranger, Narcisse told me—ah, was it to tease me?—that Diane has told them all they wanted to know, for that they sent her here on purpose to see if we were not all Huguenots.

'Very likely, the little viper! Le me pass, Eustacie. I must go and tell my father.'

'Thou canst not get out that way; the court is full of men-at-arms. Hark, there's Narcisse calling me. He will come after me.'

There was not a moment to lose. Berenger flew along a corridor, and down a narrow winding stair, and across the kitchen; then snatching at the arm of a boy of his own age whom he met at the door, he gasped out, 'Come and help me catch Follet, Landry!' and still running across an orchard, he pulled down a couple of apples from the trees, and bounded into a paddock where a small rough Breton pony was feeding among the little tawny Norman cows. The animal knew his little master, and trotted towards him at his call of 'Follet, Follet. Now be a wise Follet, and play me no tricks. Thou and I, Follet, shall do good service, if thou wilt be steady.'

Follet made his advances, but with a coquettish eye and look, as if ready to start away at any moment.

'Soh, Follet. I have no bread for thee, only two apples; but, Follet, listen. There's my *beau-pere* the Count, and the Chevalier, all spite, and their whole troop of savage *gens d'armes*, come out to fall upon the poor Huguenots, who are doing no harm at all, only listening to a long dull sermon. And I am much afraid my father is there, for he went out his hawk on his wrist, and he never does

take Ysonde for any real sport, as thou and I would do, Follet. He says it is all vanity of vanities. But thou know'st, if they caught him at the *preche* they would call it heresy and treason, and all sorts of horrors, and any way they would fall like demons on the poor Huguenots, Jacques and all—thine own Jacques, Follet. Come, be a loyal pony, Follet. Be at least as good as Eustacie.'

Follet was evidently attentive to this peroration, turning round his ear in a sensible attitude, and advancing his nose to the apples. As Beranger held them out to him, the other boy clutched his shaggy forelock so effectually that the start back did not shake him off, and the next moment Beranger was on his back.

'And I, Monsieur, what shall I do?'

'Thou, Landry? I know. Speed like a hare, lock the avenue gate, and hide the key. That will delay them a long time. Off now, Follet.'

Beranger and Follet understood one another far too well to care about such trifles as saddle and bridle, and off they went through green grassy balks dividing the fields, or across the stubble, till, about three miles from the castle, they came to a narrow valley, dipping so suddenly between the hills that it could hardly have been suspected by one unaware of its locality, and the sides were dotted with copsewood, which entirely hid the bottom. Beranger guided his pony to a winding path that led down the steep side of the valley, already hearing the cadence of a loud, chanting voice, throwing out its sounds over the assembly, whence arose assenting hums over an undercurrent of sobs, as though the excitable French assembly were strongly affected.

The thicket was so close that Beranger was almost among the congregation before he could see more than a passing glimpse of a sea of heads. Stout, ruddy, Norman peasants, and high white-capped women, mingled with a few soberly-clad townsfolk, almost all with the grave, steadfast cast of countenance imparted by unresisted persecution, stood gathered round the green mound that served as a natural pulpit for a Calvinist minister, who more the dress of a burgher, but entirely black. To Beranger's despair, he was in the act of inviting his hearers to join with him in singing one of Marot's psalms; and the boy, eager to lose not a moment, grasped the skirt of the outermost of the crowd. The man, an absorbed-looking stranger, merely said, 'Importune me not, child.'

'Listen!' said Beranger; 'it imports–'

'Peace,' was the stern answer; but a Norman farmer looked round at that moment, and Beranger exclaimed, 'Stop the singing! The *gens d'armes*!' The psalm broke off; the whisper circulated; the words 'from Leurre' were next conveyed from lip to lip, and, as it were in a moment, the dense human mass had broken up and vanished, stealing through the numerous paths in the brushwood, or along the brook, as it descended through tall sedges and bulrushes. The valley was soon as lonely as it had been populous; the pulpit remained a mere mossy bank, more suggestive or fairy dances than of Calvinist sermons, and no one remained on the scene save Beranger with his pony, Jacques the groom, a stout farmer, the preacher, and a tall thin figure in the plainest dark cloth dress that could be worn by a gentleman, a hawk on his wrist.

'Thou here, my boy!' he exclaimed, as Beranger came to his side; and as the little fellow replied in a few brief words, he took him by the hand, and said to the minister, 'Good Master Isaac, let me present my young son to you, who under Heaven hath been the means of saving many lives this day.'

Maitre Isaac Gardon, a noted preacher, looked kindly at the boy's fair face, and said, 'Bless thee, young sir. As thou hast been already a chosen instrument to save life, so mayest thou be ever after a champion of the truth.'

'Monsieur le Baron,' interposed Jacques, 'it were best to look to yourself. I already hear sounds upon the wind.'

'And you, good sir?' said the Baron.

'I will see to him,' said the farmer, grasping him as a sort of property. 'M. le Baron had best keep up the beck. Out on the moor there he may fly the hawk, and that will best divert suspicion.'

'Farewell, then,' said the Baron, wringing the minister's hand, and adding, almost to himself, 'Alas! I am weary of these shifts!' and weary indeed he seemed, for as the ground became so steep that the beck danced noisily down its channel, he could not keep up the needful speed, but paused, gasping for breath, with his hand on his side. 'Beranger was off his pony in an instant, assuring Follet that it ought to be proud to be ridden by his father, and exhaling his own exultant feelings in caresses to the animal as it gallantly breasted the hill. The little boy had never been so commended before! He loved his father exceedingly; but the Baron, while ever just towards him, was grave and strict to a degree that the ideas even of the sixteenth century regarded as severe. Little Eustacie with her lovely face, her irrepressible saucy grace and audacious coaxing, was the only creature to whom he ever showed much indulgence and tenderness, and even that seemed almost against his will and conscience. His son was always under rule, often blamed, and scarcely ever praised; but it was a hardy vigorous nature, and respectful love throve under the system that would have crushed or alienated a different disposition. It was not till the party had emerged from the wood upon a stubble field, where a covey of partridges flew up, and to Beranger's rapturous delight furnished a victim for Ysonde, that M. de Ribaumont dismounted from the pony, and walking towards home, called his son to his side, and asked him how he had learnt the intentions of the Count and the Chevalier. Beranger explained how Eustacie had come to warn him, and also told what she had said of Diane de Ribaumont, who had lately, by her father's request, spent a few weeks at the chateau with her cousins.

'My son,' said the Baron, 'it is hard to ask of babes caution and secrecy; but I must know from thee what thy cousin may have heard of our doings?'

'I cannot tell, father,' replied Beranger; 'we played more than we talked. Yet, Monsieur, you will not be angry with Eustacie if I tell you what she said to me to-day?'

'Assuredly not, my son.'

'She said that her father would take her away if he knew what M. le Baron read, and what he sung.'

'Thou hast done well to tell me, my son. Thinkest thou that this comes from Diane, or from one of the servants?'

'Oh, from Diane, my father; none of the servants would dare to say such a thing.'

'It is as I suspected then,' said the Baron. 'That child was sent amongst us as a spy.' Tell me, Beranger, had she any knowledge of our intended journey to England?'

'To England! But no, father, I did not even know it was intended. To England—to that Walwyn which my mother takes such pains to make us speak rightly. Are we then, going?'

'Listen, my son. Thou hast to-day proved thyself worthy of trust, and thou shalt hear. My son, ere yet I knew the truth I was a reckless disobedient youth, and I bore thy mother from her parents in England without their consent. Since, by Heaven's grace, I have come to a better mind, we have asked and obtained their forgiveness, and it has long been their desire to see again their daughter and her son. Moreover, since the accession of the present Queen, it has been a land where the light is free to shine forth; and though I verily believe what Maitre Gardon says, that persecution is a blessed means of grace, yet it is grievous to expose one's dearest thereto when they are in no state to count the cost. Therefore would I thither convey you all, and there amid thy mother's family would we openly abjure the errors in which we have been nurture. I have already sent to Paris to obtain from the Queen-mother the necessary permission to take my family to visit thy grand-father, and it must now be our endeavour to start immediately on the receipt of the reply, before the Chevalier's information can lead to any hindrance or detention of Eustacie.'

'Then Eustacie will go with us, Monsieur?'

'Certainly. Nothing is more important than that her faith should be the same as yours! But discretion, my son: not a word to the little one.'

'And Landry, father? I had rather Landry went than Eustacie. And Follet, dear father, pray take him.'

After M. de Ribaumont's grave confidence to his son and heir, he was a little scandalized at the comparative value that the boy's voice indicated for wife, foster-brother, and pony, and therefore received it in perfect silence, which silence continued until they reached the chateau, where the lady met them at the door with a burst of exclamations.

'Ah, there you are, safe, my dear Baron. I have been in despair. Here were the Count and his brother come to call on you to join them in dispersing a meeting of those poor Huguenots and they would not permit me to send out to call you in! I verily think they suspected that you were aware of it.'

M. de Ribaumont made no answer, but sat wearily down and asked for his little Eustacie.

'Little vixen!' exclaimed the Baroness, 'she is gone; her father took her away with him.' And as her husband looked extremely displeased, she added that Eustacie had been meddling with her jewel cabinet and had been put in penitence. Her first impulse on seeing her father had been to cling to him and poor out her complaints, whereupon he had declared that he should take her away with him at once, and had in effect caused her pony to be saddled, and he had ridden away with her to his old tower, leaving his brother, the Chevalier, to conduct the attack on the Huguenot conventicle.

'He had no power or right to remove her,' said the Baron. 'How could you let him do so in my absence? He had made over her wardship to me, and has no right to resume it!'

'Well, perhaps I might have insisted on his waiting till your return; but, you see, the children have never done anything but quarrel and fight, and always by Eustacie's fault; and if ever they are to endure each other, it must be by being separated now.'

'Madame,' said the Baron, gravely, 'you have done your utmost to ruin your son's chances of happiness.'

That same evening arrived the King's passport permitting the Baron de Ribaumont and his family to pay a visit to his wife's friends in England. The next morning the Baron was summoned to speak to one of his farmers, a Huguenot, who had come to inform him that, through the network of intelligence kept up by the members of the persecuted faith, it had become known that the Chevalier de Ribaumont had set off for court that night, and there was little doubt that his interference would lead to an immediate revocation of the sanction to the journey, if to no severer measures. At best, the Baron knew that if his own absence were permitted, it would be only on condition of leaving his son in the custody of either the Queen-mother or the Count. It had become impossible to reclaim Eustacie. Her father would at once have pleaded that she was being bred up in Huguenot errors. All that could be done was to hasten the departure ere the royal mandate could arrive. A little Norman sailing vessel was moored two evenings after in a lonely creek on the coast, and into it stepped M. de Ribaumont, with his Bible, Marot's Psalter, and Calvin's works, Beranger still tenderly kissing a lock of Follet's mane, and Madame mourning for the pearls, which her husband deemed too sacred an heirloom to carry away to a foreign land. Poor little Eustacie, with her cousin Diane, was in the convent of Bellaise in Anjou. If any one lamented her absence, it was her father-in-law.

CHAPTER III. THE FAMILY COUNCIL

He counsels a divorce

Shakespeare, KING HENRY VIII.

In the spring of the year 1572, a family council was assembled in Hurst Walwyn Hall. The scene was a wainscoted oriel chamber closed off by a screen from the great hall, and fitted on two sides by presses of books, surmounted the one by a terrestrial, the other by a celestial globe, the first 'with the addition of the Indies' in very eccentric geography, the second with enormous stars studding highly grotesque figures, regarded with great awe by most beholders.

A solid oaken table stood in the midst, laden with books and papers, and in a corner, near the open hearth, a carved desk, bearing on one slope the largest copy of the 'Bishops' Bible'; on the other, one of the Prayer-book. The ornaments of the oaken mantelpiece culminated in a shield bearing a cross *boutonnee*, i.e. with trefoil terminations. It was supported between a merman with a whelk shell and a mermaid with a comb, and another like Siren curled her tail on the top of the gaping baronial helmet above the shield, while two more upheld the main weight of the chimney-piece on either side of the glowing wood-fire.

In the seat of honour was an old gentleman, white-haired, and feeble of limb, but with noble features and a keen, acute eye. This was Sir William, Baron of Hurst Walwyn, a valiant knight at Guingate and Boulogne, a statesman of whom Wolsey had been jealous, and a ripe scholar who had shared the friendship of More and Erasmus. The lady who sat opposite to him was several years younger, still upright, brisk and active, though her hair was milk-white; but her eyes were of undimmed azure, and her complexion still retained a beauteous pink and white. She was highly educated, and had been the friend of Margaret Roper and her sisters, often sharing their walks in the bright Chelsea garden. Indeed, the musk-rose in her own favourite nook at Hurst Walwyn was cherished as the gift of Sir Thomas himself.

Near her sat sister, Cecily St. John, a professed nun at Romsey till her twenty-eight year, when, in the dispersion of convents, her sister's home had received her. There had she continued, never exposed to tests of opinion, but pursuing her quiet course according to her Benedictine rule, faithfully keeping her vows, and following the guidance of the chaplain, a college friend of Bishop Ridley, and rejoicing in the use of the vernacular prayers and Scriptures. When Queen Mary had sent for her to consider of the revival of convents, her views had been found to have so far diverged from those of the Queen that Lord Walwyn was thankful to have her safe at home again; and yet she fancied herself firm to old Romsey doctrine. She was not learned, like Lady Walwyn, but her knowledge in all needlework and confectionery was consummate, so that half the ladies in Dorset and Wilts longed to send their daughters to be educated at Hurst Walwyn. Her small figure and soft cheeks had the gentle contour of a dove's form, nor had she lost the conventual serenity of expression; indeed it was curious that, let Lady Walwyn array her as she would, whatever she wore bore a nunlike air. Her silken farthingales hung like serge robes, her ruffs looked like mufflers, her coifs like hoods, even necklaces seemed rosaries, and her scrupulous neatness enhanced the pure unearthly air of all belonging to her.

Eager and lively, fair and handsome, sat the Baronne de Ribaumont, or rather, since the higher title had been laid aside, Dame Annora Thistlewood. The health of M. de Ribaumont had been shattered at St. Quentin, and an inclement night of crossing the Channel had brought on an attack on the lungs, from which he only rallied enough to amaze his English friends at finding the gay dissipated young Frenchman they remembered, infinitely more strict and rigid than themselves. He was never able to leave the house again after his first arrival at Hurst Walwyn, and sank under the cold winds

of the next spring, rejoicing to leave his wife and son, not indeed among such strict Puritans as he preferred, but at least where the pure faith could be openly avowed without danger.

Sir Marmaduke Thistlewood, the husband to whom Annora Walwyn had been destined before M. de Ribaumont had crossed her path, was about the same time left a widower with one son and daughter, and as soon as a suitable interval had passed, she became a far happier wife than she had been in either the Baron's gay or grave days. Her son had continued under the roof of his grandfather, to whose charge his father had specially committed him, and thus had been scarcely separated from his mother, since Combe Manor was not above three miles across the downs from Hurst Walwyn, and there was almost daily intercourse between the families. Lucy Thistlewood had been brought to Hurst Walwyn to be something between a maid of honour and a pupil to the ladies there, and her brother Philip, so soon as he was old enough, daily rode thither to share with Berenger the instructions of the chaplain, Mr. Adderley, who on the present occasion formed one of the conclave, sitting a little apart as not quite familiar, though highly esteemed.

With an elbow on the table, and one hand toying with his long riding-whip, sat, booted and spurred, the jovial figure of Sir Marmaduke, who called out, in his hearty voice, 'A good riddance of an outlandish Papist, say I! Read the letter, Berenger lad. No, no, no! English it! I know nothing of your mincing French! 'Tis the worst fault I know in you, boy, to be half a Frenchman, and have a French name'—a fault that good Sir Marmaduke did his best to remedy by always terming his step-son Berenger or Berry Ribmount, and we will so far follow his example as henceforth to give the youth the English form of his Christian name. He was by this time a tall lad of eighteen, with straight features, honest deep blue eyes, very fair hair cut short and brushed up to a crest upon the middle of his head, a complexion of red and white that all the air of the downs and the sea failed to embrown, and that peculiar openness and candour of expression which seems so much an English birthright, that the only trace of his French origin was, that he betrayed no unbecoming awkwardness in the somewhat embarrassing position in which he was placed, literally standing, according to the respectful discipline of the time, as the subject of discussion, before the circle of his elders. His colour was indeed, deepened, but his attitude was easy and graceful, and he used no stiff rigidity nor restless movements to mask his anxiety. At Sir Marmaduke's desire, he could not but redden a good deal more, but with a clear, unhesitating voice, he translated, the letter that he had received from the Chevalier de Ribaumont, who, by the Count's death, had become Eustacie's guardian. It was a request in the name of Eustacie and her deceased father, that Monsieur le Baron de Ribaumont—who, it was understood, had embraced the English heresy—would concur with his spouse in demanding from his Holiness the Pope a decree annulling the childish marriage, which could easily be declared void, both on account of the consanguinity of the parties and the discrepancy of their faith; and which would leave each of them free to marry again.

'Nothing can be better,' exclaimed his mother. 'How I have longed to free him from that little shrew, whose tricks were the plague of my life! Now there is nothing between him and a worthy match!'

'We can make an Englishman of him now to the backbone,' added Sir Marmaduke, 'and it is well that it should be the lady herself who wants first to be off with it, so that none can say he has played her a scurvy trick.'

'What say you, Berenger?' said Lord Walwyn. 'Listen to me, fair nephew. You know that all my remnant of hope is fixed upon you, and that I have looked to setting you in the room of the son of my own; and I think that under our good Queen you will find it easier to lead a quiet God-fearing life than in your father's vexed country, where the Reformed religion lies under persecution. Natheless, being a born liegeman of the King of France, and heir to estates in his kingdom, meseemeth that before you are come to years of discretion it were well that you should visit them, and become better able to judge for yourself how to deal in this matter when you shall have attained full age, and may be able to dispose of them by sale, thus freeing yourself from allegiance to a foreign prince. And at

the same time you can take measures, in concert with this young lady, for loosing the wedlock so unhappily contracted.'

'O sir, sir!' cried Lady Thistlewood, 'send him not to France to be burnt by the Papists!'

'Peace, daughter,' returned her mother. 'Know you not that there is friendship between the court party and the Huguenots, and that the peace is to be sealed by the marriage of the King's sister with the King of Navarre? This is the most suitable time at which he could go.'

'Then, madam,' proceeded the lady, 'he will be running about to all the preachings on every bleak moor and wet morass he can find, catching his death with rheums, like his poor father.'

There was a general smile, and Sir Marmaduke laughed outright.

'Nay, dame,' he said, 'have you marked such a greed of sermons in our Berry that you should fear his so untowardly running after them?'

'Tilly-vally, Sir Duke,' quoth Dame Annora, with a flirt of her fan, learnt at the French court. 'Men will run after a preacher in a marshy bog out of pure forwardness, when they will nod at a godly homily on a well-stuffed bench between four walls.'

'I shall commit that matter to Mr. Adderley, who is good enough to accompany him,' said Lord Walwyn, 'and by whose counsel I trust that he will steer the middle course between the pope and Calvin.'

Mr. Adderley bowed in answer, saying he hoped that he should be enable to keep his pupil's mind clear between the allurements of Popery and the errors of the Reformed; but meanwhile Lady Thistlewood's mind had taken a leap, and she exclaimed,—

'And, son, whatever you do, bring home the chaplet of pearls! I know they have set their minds upon it. They wanted me to deck Eustacie with it on that unlucky bridal-day, but I would not hear of trusting her with it, and now will it rarely become our Lucy on your real wedding-day.'

'You travel swiftly, daughter,' said Lord Walwyn. 'Nor have we yet heard the thoughts of one who ever thinks wisely. Sister,' he added, turning to Cecily St. John, 'hold not you with us in this matter?'

'I scarce comprehend it, my Lord,' was the gentle reply. 'I knew not that it was possible to dissolve the tie of wedlock.'

'The Pope's decree will suffice,' said Lord Walwyn.

'Yet, sir,' still said the ex-nun, 'methought you had shown me that the Holly Father exceeded his power in the annulling of vows.'

'Using mine own lessons against me, sweet sister?' said Lord Walwyn, smiling; 'yet, remember, the contract was rashly made between two ignorant babes; and, bred up as they have severally been, it were surely best for them to be set free from vows made without their true will or knowledge.'

'And yet,' said Cecily, perplexed, 'when I saw my niece here wedded to Sir Marmaduke, was it not with the words, 'What God hath joined let no man put asunder'?'

'Good lack! aunt,' cried Lady Thistlewood, 'you would not have that poor lad wedded to a pert, saucy, ill-tempered little moppet, bred up that den of iniquity, Queen Catherine's court, where my poor Baron never trusted me after he fell in with the religion, and had heard of King Antony's calling me the Swan of England.'

At that moment there was a loud shriek, half-laugh, half-fright, coming through the window, and Lady Thistlewood, starting up, exclaimed, 'The child will be drowned! Box their ears, Berenger, and bring them in directly.'

Berenger, at her bidding, hurried out of the room into the hall, and thence down a flight of steps leading into a square walled garden, with a couple of stone male and female marine divinities accommodating their fishy extremities as best they might on the corners of the wall. The square contained a bowling-green of exquisitely-kept turf, that looked as if cut out of green velvet, and was edged on its four sides by a raised broad-paved walk, with a trimming of flower-beds, where the earliest blossoms were showing themselves. In the centre of each side another paved path intersected

the green lawn, and the meeting of these two diameters was at a circular stone basin, presided over by another merman, blowing a conch on the top of a pile of rocks. On the gravelled margin stood two distressed little damsels of seven and six years old, remonstrating with all their might against the proceedings of a roguish-looking boy of fourteen of fifteen, who had perched their junior—a fat, fair, kitten-like element of mischief, aged about five—*en croupe* on the merman, and was about, according to her delighted request, to make her a bower of water, by extracting the plug and setting the fountain to play; but as the fountain had been still all the winter, the plug was hard of extraction, especially to a young gentleman who stood insecurely, with his feet wide apart upon pointed and slippery point of rock-work; and Berenger had time to hurry up, exclaiming, 'Giddy pate! Dolly would Berenger drenched to the skin.'

'And she has on her best blue, made out of mother's French farthingale,' cried the discreet Annora.

'Do you know, Dolly, I've orders to box your ears, and send you in?' added Berenger, as he lifted his half-sister from her perilous position, speaking, as he did so, without a shade of foreign accent, though with much more rapid utterance than was usual in England. She clung to him without much alarm, and retaliated by an endeavour to box his ears, while Philip, slowly making his way back to the mainland, exclaimed, 'Ah there's no chance now! Here comes demure Mistress Lucy, and she is the worst mar-sport of all.'

A gentle girl of seventeen was drawing near, her fair delicately-tinted complexion suiting well with her pale golden hair. It was a sweet face, and was well set off by the sky-blue of the farthingale, which, with her white lace coif and white ruff, gave her something the air of a speedwell flower, more especially as her expression seemed to have caught much of Cecily's air of self-restrained contentment. She held a basketful of the orange pistils of crocuses, and at once seeing that some riot had taken place, she said to the eldest little girl, 'Ah, Nan, you had been safer gathering saffron with me.'

'Nay, brother Berry came and made all well,' said Annora; 'and he had been shut up so long in the library that he must have been very glad to get out.'

'And what came of it?' cried Philip. 'Are you to go and get yourself unmarried?'

'Unmarried!' burst out the sisters Annora and Elizabeth.

'What, laughed Philip, 'you knew not that this is an ancient husband, married years before your father and mother?'

'But, why? said Elizabeth, rather inclined to cry. 'What has poor Lucy done that you should get yourself unmarried from her?'

There was a laugh from both brothers; but Berenger, seeing Lucy's blushes, restrained himself, and said. 'Mine was not such good luck, Bess, but they gave me a little French wife, younger than Dolly, and saucier still; and as she seems to wish to be quit of me, why, I shall be rid of her.'

'See there, Dolly,' said Philip, in a warning voice, 'that is the way you'll be served if you do not mend your ways.'

'But I thought,' said Annora gravely, 'that people were married once for all, and it could not be undone.'

'So said Aunt Cecily, but my Lord was proving to her out of all law that a contract between such a couple of babes went for nought,' said Berenger.

'And shall you, indeed, see Paris, and all the braveries there?' asked Philip. 'I thought my Lord would never have trusted you out of his sight.'

'And now it is to be only with Mr. Adderley,' said Berenger; 'but there will be rare doings to be seen at this royal wedding, and maybe I shall break a lance there in your honour, Lucy.'

'And you'll bring me a French fan?' cried Bess.

'And me a pouncet-box?' added Annora.

'And me a French puppet dressed Paris fashion?' said Dolly.

'And what shall he bring Lucy?' added Bess.

'I know,' said Annora; 'the pearls that mother is always talking about! I heard her say that Lucy should wear them on her wedding-day.'

'Hush!' interposed Lucy, 'don't you see my father yonder on the step, beckoning to you?'

The children flew towards Sir Marmaduke, leaving Berenger and Lucy together.

'Not a word to wish me good speed, Lucy, now I have my wish?' said Berenger.

'Oh, yes,' said Lucy, 'I am glad you should see all those brave French gentlemen of whom you used to tell me.'

'Yes, they will be all at court, and the good Admiral is said to be in high favour. He will surely remember my father.'

'And shall you see the lady?' asked Lucy, under her breath.

'Eustacie? Probably; but that will make no change. I have heard too much of *l'escadron de la Reine-mere* to endure the thought of a wife from thence, were she the Queen of Beauty herself. And my mother says that Eustacie would lose all her beauty as she grew up—like black-eyed Sue on the down; nor did I ever think her brown skin and fierce black eyes to compare with you, Lucy. I could be well content never to see her more; but,' and here he lowered his voice to a tone of confidence, 'my father, when near his death, called me, and told me that he feared my marriage would be a cause of trouble and temptation to me, and that I must deal with it after my conscience when I was able to judge in the matter. Something, too, he said of the treaty of marriage being a burthen on his soul, but I know not what he meant. If ever I saw Eustacie again, I was to give her his own copy of Clement Marot's Psalter, and to tell her that he had ever loved and prayed for her as a daughter; and moreover, my father added,' said Berenger, much moved at the remembrance it brought across him, 'that if this matter proved a burthen and perplexity to me, I was to pardon him as one who repented of it as a thing done ere he had learnt to weigh the whole world against a soul.'

'Yes, you must see her,' said Lucy.

'Well, what more were you going to say, Lucy?'

'I was only thinking,' said Lucy, as she raised her eyes to him, 'how sorry she will be that she let them write that letter.'

Berenger laughed, pleased with the simplicity of Lucy's admiration, but with modesty and common sense enough to answer, 'No fear of that, Lucy, for an heiress, with all the court gallants of France at her feet.'

'Ah, but you!'

'I am all very well here, when you have never seen anybody but lubberly Dorset squires that never went to London, nor Oxford, nor beyond their own furrows,' said Berenger; 'but depend upon it, she has been bred up to care for all the airs and graces that are all the fashion at Paris now, and will be as glad to be rid of an honest man and a Protestant as I shall to be quit of a court puppet and a Papist. Shall you have finished my point-cuffs next week, Lucy? Depend upon it, no gentleman of them all will wear such dainty lace of such a fancy as those will be.'

And Lucy smiled, well pleased.

Coming from the companionship of Eustacie to that of gentle Lucy had been to Berenger a change from perpetual warfareto perfect supremacy, and his preference to his little sister, as he had been taught to call her from the first, had been loudly expressed. Brother and sister they had ever since considered themselves, and only within the last few months had possibilities been discussed among the elders of the family, which oozing out in some mysterious manner, had become felt rather than known among the young people, yet without altering the habitual terms that existed between them. Both were so young that love was the merest, vaguest dream to them; and Lucy, in her quiet faith that Berenger was the most beautiful, excellent, and accomplished cavalier the earth could afford, was little troubled about her own future share in him. She seemed to be promoted to belong to him just as she had grown up to curl her hair and wear ruffs and farthingales. And to Berenger Lucy was

a very pleasant feature in that English home, where he had been far happier than in the uncertainties of Chateau Leurre, between his naughty playfellow, his capricious mother, and morose father. If in England his lot was to be cast, Lucy was acquiesced in willingly as a portion of that lot.

CHAPTER IV. TITHONUS

A youth came riding towards a palace gate,
And from the palace came a child of sin
And took him by the curls and led him in!
Where sat a company with heated eyes.

Tennyson, A VISION OF SIN

It was in the month of June that Berenger de Ribaumont first came in sight of Paris. His grandfather had himself begun by taking him to London and presenting him to Queen Elizabeth, from whom the lad's good mien procured him a most favourable reception. She willingly promised that on which Lord Walwyn's heart was set, namely, that his title and rank should be continued to his grandson; and an ample store of letter of recommendation to Sir Francis Walsingham, the Ambassador, and all others who could be of service in the French court, were to do their utmost to provide him with a favourable reception there.

Then, with Mr. Adderley and four or five servants, he had crossed the Channel, and had gone first to Chateau Leurre, where he was rapturously welcomed by the old steward Osbert. The old man had trained up his son Landry, Berenger's foster-brother, to become his valet, and had him taught all the arts of hair-dressing and surgery that were part of the profession of a gentleman's body-servant; and the youth, a smart, acuter young Norman, became a valuable addition to the suite, the guidance of which, through a foreign country, their young master did not find very easy. Mr. Adderley thought he knew French very well, through books, but the language he spoke was not available, and he soon fell into a state of bewilderment rather hard on his pupil, who, though a very good boy, and crammed very full of learning, was still nothing more than a lad of eighteen in all matters of prudence and discretion.

Lord Walwyn was, as we have seen, one of those whose Church principles had altered very little and very gradually; and in the utter diversity of practice that prevailed in the early years of Queen Elizabeth, his chaplain as well as the rector of the parish had altered no more than was absolutely enjoined of the old ceremonial. If the poor Baron de Ribaumont had ever been well enough to go to church on a Sunday, he would perhaps have thought himself still in the realms of what he considered as darkness; but as he had never openly broken with the Gallic Church, Berenger had gone at once from mass at Leurre to the Combe Walwyn service. Therefore when he spent a Sunday at Rouen, and attended a Calvinist service in the building that the Huguenots were permitted outside the town, he was much disappointed in it; he thought its very fervour familiar and irreverent, and felt himself much more at home in the cathedral into which he strayed in the afternoon. And, on the Sunday he was at Leurre, he went, as a part of his old home-habits, to mass at the old round-arched church, where he and Eustacie had played each other so many teasing tricks at his mother's feet, and had received so many admonitory nips and strokes of her fan. All he saw there was not congenial to him, but he liked it vastly better than the Huguenot meeting, and was not prepared to understand or enter into Mr. Adderley's vexation, when the tutor assured him that the reverent gestures that came naturally to him were regarded by the Protestants as idolatry, and that he would be viewed as a recreants from his faith. All Mr. Adderley hoped was that no one would hear of it: and in this he felt himself disappointed, when, in the midst of his lecture, there walked into the room a little, withered, brown, dark-eyed man, in a gorgeous dress of green and gold, who doffing a hat with an umbrageous plume, precipitated himself, as far as he could reach, towards Berenger's neck, calling him fair cousin and dear baron. The lad stood taken by surprise for a moment, thinking that Tithonus must have looked just like this, and skipped like this, just as he became a grasshopper; then he recollected that this must be the Chevalier de Ribaumont, and tried to make up for his want of cordiality. The old man

had, it appeared, come out of Picardy, where he lived on *soupe maigre* in a corner of the ancestral castle, while his son and daughter were at court, the one in Monsieur's suite, the other in that of the Queen-mother. He had come purely to meet his dear young cousin, and render him all the assistance is his power, conduct him to Paris, and give him introductions.

Berenger, who had begun to find six Englishmen a troublesome charge in France, was rather relieved at not being the only French scholar of the party, and the Chevalier also hinted to him that he spoke with a dreadful Norman accent that would never be tolerated at court, even if it were understood by the way. Moreover, the Chevalier studied him all over, and talked of Paris tailors and posture-masters, and, though the pink of politeness, made it evident that there was immensely too much of him. 'It might be the custom in England to be so tall; here no one was of anything like such a height, but the Duke of Guise. He, in his position, with his air, could carry it off, but we must adapt ourselves as best we can.'

And his shrug and look of concern made Berenger for a moment almost ashamed of that superfluous height of which they were all so proud at home. Then he recollected himself, and asked, 'And why should not I be tall as well as M. de Guise?'

'We shall see, fair cousin,' he answered, with an odd satirical bow; 'we are as Heaven made us. All lies in the management and if you had the advantages of training, PERHAPS you could even turn your height into a grace.'

'Am I such a great lubber?' wondered Berenger; 'they did not think so at home. No; nor did the Queen. She said I was a proper stripling! Well, it matters the less, as I shall not stay long to need their favour; and I'll show them there is some use in my inches in the tilt-yard. But if they think me such a lout, what would they say to honest Philip?'

The Chevalier seemed willing to take on him the whole management of his 'fair cousin.' He inquired into the amount of the rents and dues which old Osbert had collected and held ready to meet the young Baron's exigencies; and which would, it seemed, be all needed to make his dress any way presentable at court. The pearls, too, were inquired for, and handed over by Osbert to his young Lord's keeping, with the significant intimation that they had been demanded when the young Madame la Baronne went to court; but that he had buried them in the orchard, and made answer that they were not in the chateau. The contract of marriage, which Berenger could just remember signing, and seeing signed by his father, the King, and the Count, was not forthcoming; and the Chevalier explained that it was in the hands of a notary at Paris. For this Berenger was not sorry. His grandfather had desired him to master the contents, and he thought he had thus escaped a very dry and useless study.

He did not exactly dislike the old Chevalier de Ribaumont. The system on which he had been brought up had not been indulgent, so that compliments and admiration were an agreeable surprise to him; and rebuffs and rebukes from his elders had been so common, that hints, in the delicate dressing of the old knight, came on him almost like gracious civilities. There was no love lost between the Chevalier and the chaplain, that was plain; but how could there be between an ancient French courtier and a sober English divine? However, to Mr. Adderley's great relief, no attempts were made on Berenger's faith, his kinsman even was disposed to promote his attendance at such Calvinist places of worship as they passed on the road, and treated him in all things as a mere guest, to be patronized indeed, but as much an alien as if he had been born in England. And yet there was a certain deference to him as head of the family, and a friendliness of manner that made the boy feel him a real relation, and all through the journey it came naturally that he should be the entire manager, and Berenger the paymaster on a liberal scale.

Thus had the travellers reached the neighbourhood of Paris, when a jingling of chains and a trampling of horses announced the advance of riders, and several gentlemen with a troop of servants came in sight.

All were gaily dressed, with feathered hats, and short Spanish cloaks jauntily disposed over one shoulder; and their horses were trapped with bright silvered ornaments. As they advanced, the

Chevalier exclaimed: 'Ah! It is my son! I knew he would come to meet me.' And, simultaneously, father and son leapt from their horses, and rushed into each other's arms. Berenger felt it only courteous to dismount and exchange embraces with his cousin, but with a certain sense of repulsion at the cloud of perfume that seemed to surround the younger Chevalier de Ribaumont; the ear-rings in his ears; the general air of delicate research about his riding-dress, and the elaborate attention paid to a small, dark, sallow face and figure, in which the only tolerable feature was an intensely black and piercing pair of eyes.

'Cousin, I am enchanted to welcome you.'

'Cousin, I thank you.'

'Allow me to present you.' And Berenger bowed low in succession several times in reply to salutations, as his cousin Narcisse named M. d'O, M. de la Valette, M. de Pibrac, M. l'Abbe de Mericour, who had done him the honour to accompany him in coming out to meet his father and M. le Baron. Then the two cousins remounted, something was said to the Chevalier of the devoirs of the demoiselles, and they rode on together bandying news and repartee so fast, that Berenger felt that his ears had become too much accustomed to the more deliberate English speech to enter at once into what caused so much excitement, gesture, and wit. The royal marriage seemed doubtful —the Pope refused his sanction; nay, but means would be found—the King would not be impeded by the Pope; Spanish influence—nay, the King had thrown himself at the head of the Reformed—he was bewitched with the grim old Coligny—if order were not soon taken, the Louvre itself would become a temple.

Then one of the party turned suddenly and said, 'But I forget, Monsieur is a Huguenot?'

'I am a Protestant of the English Church,' said Berenger, rather stiffly, in the formula of his day.

'Well, you have come at the right moment, 'Tis all for the sermon now. If the little Abbe there wished to sail with a fair wind, he should throw away his breviary and study his Calvin.'

Berenger's attention was thus attracted to the Abbe de Mericour, a young man of about twenty, whose dress was darker than that of the rest, and his hat of a clerical cut, though in other respects he was equipped with the same point-device elegance.

'Calvin would never give him the rich abbey of Selicy,' said another; 'the breviary is the safer speculation.'

'Ah! M. de Ribaumont can tell you that abbeys are no such securities in these days. Let yonder Admiral get the upper hand, and we shall see Mericour, the happy cadet of eight brothers and sisters, turned adrift from their convents. What a fatherly spectacle M. le Marquis will present!'

Here the Chevalier beckoned to Berenger, who, riding forward, learnt that Narcisse had engaged lodgings for him and his suite at one of the great inns, and Berenger returned his thanks, and a proposal to the Chevalier to become his guest. They were by this time entering the city, where the extreme narrowness and dirt of the streets contrasted with the grandeur of the palatial courts that could be partly seen through their archways. At the hostel they rode under such an arch, and found themselves in a paved yard that would have been grand had it been clean. Privacy had scarcely been invented, and the party were not at all surprised to find that the apartment prepared for them was to serve both day and night for Berenger, the Chevalier, and Mr. Adderley, besides having a truckle-bed on the floor for Osbert. Meals were taken in public, and it was now one o'clock—just dinner-time; so after a hasty toilette the three gentlemen descended, the rest of the party having ridden off to their quarters, either as attendants of Monsieur or to their families. It was a sumptuous meal, at which a great number of gentlemen were present, coming in from rooms hired over shops, &c—all, as it seemed, assembled at Paris for the marriage festivities; but Berenger began to gather that they were for the most part adherents of the Guise party, and far from friendly to the Huguenot interest. Some of them appeared hardly to tolerate Mr. Adderley's presence at the table; and Berenger, though his kinsman's patronage secured civil treatment, felt much out of his element, confused, unable to take part in the conversation, and sure that he was where those at home did not wish to see him.

No sooner was the dinner over than he rose and expressed his intention of delivering his letters of introduction in person to the English ambassador and to the Admiral de Coligny, whom, as his father's old friend and the hero of his boyhood, he was most anxious to see. The Chevalier demurred to this. Were it not better to take measures at once for making himself presentable, and Narcisse had already supplied him with directions to the fashionable hair-cutter, &c. It would be taken amiss if he went to the Admiral before going to present himself to the King.

'And I cannot see my cousins till I go to court?' asked Berenger.

'Most emphatically No. Have I not told you that the one is in the suite of the young Queen, the other in that of the Queen-mother? I will myself present you, if only you will give me the honour of your guidance.'

'With all thanks, Monsieur,' said Berenger; 'my grandfather's desire was that I should lose no time in going to his friend Sir Francis Walsingham, and I had best submit myself to his judgment as to my appearance at court.'

On this point Berenger was resolute, though the Chevalier recurred to the danger of any proceeding that might be unacceptable at court. Berenger, harassed and impatient, repeated that he did not care about the court, and wished merely to fulfil his purpose and return, at which his kinsman shook his head and shrugged his shoulders, and muttered to himself, 'Ah, what does he know! He will regret it when too late; but I have done my best.'

Berenger paid little attention to this, but calling Landry Osbert, and a couple of his men, he bade them take their swords and bucklers, and escort him in his walk through Paris. He set off with a sense of escape, but before he had made many steps, he was obliged to turn and warn Humfrey and Jack that they were not to walk swaggering along the streets, with hand on sword, as if every Frenchman they saw was the natural foe of their master.

Very tall were the houses, very close and extremely filthy the streets, very miserable the beggars; and yet here and there was to be seen the open front of a most brilliant shop, and the thoroughfares were crowded with richly-dressed gallants. Even the wider streets gave little space for the career of the gay horsemen who rode along them, still less for the great, cumbrous, though gaily-decked coaches, in which ladies appeared glittering with jewels and fan in hand, with tiny white dogs on their knees.

The persons of whom Berenger inquired the way all uncapped most respectfully, and replied with much courtesy; but when the hotel of the English ambassador had been pointed out to him, he hardly believed it, so foul and squalid was the street, where a large nail-studded door occupied a wide archway. Here was a heavy iron knocker, to which Osbert applied himself. A little door was at once opened by a large, powerful John Bull of a porter, whose looks expanded into friendly welcome when he heard the English tongue of the visitor. Inside, the scene was very unlike that without. The hotel was built round a paved court, adorned with statues and stone vases, with yews and cypresses in them, and a grand flight of steps led up to the grand centre of the house, around which were collected a number of attendants, wearing the Walsingham colours. Among these Berenger left his two Englishmen, well content to have fallen into an English colony. Landry followed him to announce the visitor, Berenger waiting to know whether the Ambassador would be at liberty to see him.

Almost immediately the door was re-opened, and a keen-looking gentleman, about six-and-thirty years of age, rather short in stature, but nevertheless very dignified-looking, came forward with out-stretched hands—'Greet you well, my Lord de Ribaumont. We expected your coming. Welcome, mine honoured friend's grandson.'

And as Berenger bent low in reverent greeting, Sir Francis took his hand and kissed his brow, saying, 'Come in, my young friend; we are but sitting over our wine and comfits after dinner. Have you dined?'

Berenger explained that he had dined at the inn, where he had taken lodgings.

'Nay, but that must not be. My Lord Walwyn's grandson here, and not my guest! You do me wrong, sir, in not having ridden hither at once.'

'Truly, my Lord, I ventured not. They sent me forth with quite a company—my tutor and six grooms.'

'Our chaplain will gladly welcome his reverend brother,' said Sir Francis; and as to the grooms, one of my fellows shall go and bring them and their horses up. What!' rather gravely, as Berenger still hesitated. 'I have letters for you here, which methinks will make your grandfather's wish clear to you.'

Berenger saw the Ambassador was displeased with his reluctance, and answered quickly, 'In sooth, my Lord, I would esteem myself only too happy to be thus honoured, but in sooth–' he repeated himself, and faltered.

'In sooth, you expected more freedom than in my grave house,' said Walsingham, displeased.

'Not so, my Lord: it would be all that I could desire; but I have done hastily. A kinsman of mine has come up to Paris with me, and I have made him my guest. I know not how to break with him—the Chevalier de Ribaumont.'

'What, the young ruffler in Monsieur's suite?'

'No, my Lord; his father. He comes on my business. He is an old man, and can ill bear the cost, and I could scarce throw him over.'

Berenger spoke with such earnest, bright, open simplicity, and look so boyish and confiding, that Sir Francis's heart was won, and he smiled as he said, 'Right, lad, you are a considerate youth. It were not well to cast off your kinsman; but when you have read your letters, you may well plead your grandfather's desires, to say nothing of a hint from her Grace to have an eye to you. And for the rest, you can acquit yourself gracefully to the gentleman, by asking him to occupy the lodging that you had taken.'

Berenger's face brightened up in a manner that spoke for his sincerity; and Sir Francis added, 'And where be these lodgings?'

'At the Croix de Lorraine.'

'Ha! Your kinsman has taken you into a nest of Guisards. But come, let me present you to my wife and my other guests, then will I give you your letters, and you shall return and make your excuses to Monsieur le Chevalier.'

Berenger seemed to himself to be on familiar ground again as his host thus assumed the direction of him and ushered him into a large dining-hall, where the table had been forsaken in favour of a lesser table placed in the ample window, round which sat assembled some six or eight persons, with fruit, wine, and conserves before them, a few little dogs at their feet or on their laps, and a lute lying on the knee of one of the young gentlemen. Sir Francis presented the young Lord de Ribaumont, their expected guest, to Lady Walsingham, from whom he received a cordial welcome, and her two little daughter, Frances and Elizabeth, and likewise to the gentleman with the lute, a youth about a year older than Berenger, and of very striking and prepossessing countenance, who was named as Mr. Sidney, the son of the Lord Deputy of Ireland. A couple of gentlemen who would in these times have been termed *attaches*, a couple of lady attendants upon Lady Walsingham, and the chaplain made up the party, which on this day chanced only to include, besides the household, the young traveller, Sidney. Berenger was at once seated, and accepted a welcoming-cup of wine (i.e. a long slender glass with a beautifully twisted stem), responded to friendly inquiries about his relatives at home, and acknowledged the healths that were drunk in honour of their names; after which Lady Walsingham begged that Mr. Sidney would sing the madrigal he had before promised: afterwards a glee was sung by Sidney, one of the gentlemen, and Lady Walsingham; and it was discovered that Mr. de Ribaumont had a trained ear, and the very voice that was wanting to the Italian song they were practising. And so sped a happy hour, till a booted and spurred messenger came in with letters for his Excellency, who being thus roused from his dreamy enjoyment of the music, carried young Ribaumont off with him to his cabinet, and there made over to him a packet, with good news from home, and orders that made it clear that he could do no other than accept the hospitality of the Embassy. Thus armed with authority, he returned to the Croix de Lorraine, where Mr. Adderley could not contain his joy

at the change to quarters not only so much more congenial, buts so much safer; and the Chevalier, after some polite demur, consented to remain in possession of the rooms, being in fact well satisfied with the arrangement.

'Let him steep himself up to the lips among the English,' said Tithonus to his son. 'Thus will he peaceably relinquish to you all that should have been yours from the first, and at court will only be looked on as an overgrown English page.'

The change to the Ambassador's made Berenger happy at once. He was not French enough in breeding, or even constitution, to feel the society of the Croix de Lorraine congenial; and, kind as the Chevalier showed himself, it was with a wonderful sense of relief that Berenger shook himself free from both his fawning and his patronizing. There was a constant sense of not understanding the old gentleman's aims, whereas in Walsingham's house all was as clear, easy, and open as at home.

And though Berenger had been educated in the country, it had been in the same tone as that of his new friends. He was greatly approved by Sir Francis as a stripling of parts and modesty. Mr. Sidney made him a companion, and the young matron, Lady Walsingham, treated him as neither lout nor lubber. Yet he could not be at ease in his state between curiosity and repulsion towards the wife who was to be discarded by mutual consent. The sight of the scenes of his early childhood had stirred up warmer recollections of the pretty little playful torment, who through the vista of years assumed the air of a tricksy elf rather than the little vixen he used to think her. His curiosity had been further stimulated by the sight of his rival, Narcisse, whose effeminate ornaments, small stature, and seat on horseback filled Sir Marmaduke's pupil with inquisitive disdain as to the woman who could prefer anything so unmanly.

Sidney was to be presented at the after-dinner reception at the Louvre the next day, and Sir Francis proposed to take young Ribaumont with him. Berenger coloured, and spoke of his equipment, and Sidney good-naturedly offered to come and inspect. That young gentleman was one of the daintiest in apparel of his day; but he was amazed that the suit in which Berenger had paid his devoir to Queen Elizabeth should have been set aside—it was of pearl-grey velvet, slashed with rose-coloured satin, and in shape and fashion point-device—unless, as the Ambassador said good-humouredly, 'my young Lord Ribaumont wished to be one of Monsieur's clique.' Thus arrayed, then, and with the chaplet of pearls bound round the small cap, with a heron-plume that sat jauntily on one side of his fair curled head, Berenger took his seat beside the hazel-eyed, brown-haired Sidney, in his white satin and crimson, and with the Ambassador and his attendants were rolled off in the great state-coach drawn by eight horses, which had no sinecure in dragging the ponderous machine through the unsavoury *debris* of the streets.

Royalty fed in public. The sumptuous banqueting-room contained a barrier, partitioning off a space where Charles IX. sat alone at his table, as a State spectacle. He was a sallow, unhealthy-looking youth, with large prominent dark eyes and a melancholy dreaminess of expression, as if the whole ceremony, not to say the world itself, were distasteful. Now and then, as though endeavouring to cast off the mood, he would call to some gentleman and exchange a rough jest, generally fortified with a tremendous oath, that startled Berenger's innocent ears. He scarcely tasted what was put on his plate, but drank largely of sherbet, and seemed to be trying to linger through the space allotted for the ceremony.

Silence was observed, but not so absolute that Walsingham could not point out to his young companions the notabilities present. The lofty figure of Henri, Duke of Guise, towered high above all around him, and his grand features, proud lip, and stern eye claimed such natural superiority that Berenger for a moment felt a glow on his cheek as he remembered his challenge of his right to rival that splendid stature. And yet Guise was very little older than himself; but he walked, a prince of men, among a crowd of gentlemen, attendants on him rather than on the King. The elegant but indolent-looking Duke de Montmorency had a much more attractive air, and seemed to hold a kind of neutral ground between Guise on the one hand, and the Reformed, who mustered at the other end of the

apartment. Almost by intuition, Berenger knew the fine calm features of the gray-haired Admiral de Coligny before he heard him so addressed by the King's loud, rough voice. When the King rose from table the presentations took place, but as Charles heard the name of the Baron de Ribaumont, he exclaimed, 'What, Monsieur, are you presented here by our good sister's representative?'

Walsingham answered for him, alluding to the negotiations for Queen Elizabeth's marriage with one of the French princes—'Sire, in the present happy conjuncture, it needs not be a less loyal Frenchman to have an inheritance in the lands of my royal mistress.'

'What say you, Monsieur?' sharply demanded the King: 'are you come here to renounce your country, religion—and love, as I have been told?'

'I hope, Sire, never to be unfaithful where I owe faith,' said Berenger, heated, startled, and driven to extremity.

'Not ill answered for the English giant,' said Charles aside to an attendant: then turning eagerly to Sidney, whose transcendent accomplishments had already become renowned, Charles welcomed him to court, and began to discuss Ronsard's last sonnet, showing no small taste and knowledge of poetry. Greatly attracted by Sidney, the King detained the whole English party by an invitation to Walsingham to hear music in the Queen-mother's apartments; and Berenger, following in the wake of his friends, found himself in a spacious hall, with a raised gallery at one end for the musicians, the walls decorated with the glorious paintings collected by Francois I., Greek and Roman statues clustered at the angles, and cabinets with gems and antiques disposed at intervals. Not that Berenger beheld much of this: he was absolutely dazzled with the brilliant assembly into which he was admitted. There moved the most beautiful women in France, in every lovely-coloured tint that dress could assume: their bosoms, arms, and hair sparkling with jewels; their gossamer ruffs surrounding their necks like fairy wings; their light laugh mingling with the music, as they sat, stood, or walked in graceful attitudes conversing with one another or with the cavaliers, whose brilliant velvet and jewels fifty mixed with their bright array. These were the sirens he had heard of, the 'squadron of the Queen-mother,' the dangerous beings against whom he was to steel himself. And which of them was the child he had played with, to whom his vows had been plighted? It was like some of the enchanting dreams of romance merely to look at these fair creatures; and he stood as if gazing into a magic-glass till Sir Francis Walsingham, looking round for him, said, 'Come, then, my young friend, you must do your devoirs to the Queens. Sidney, I see, is as usual in his element; the King has seized upon him.'

Catherine de Medicis was seated on a large velvet chair, conversing with the German ambassador. Never beautiful, she appeared to more advantage in her mature years than in her girlhood, and there was all the dignity of a lifetime of rule in demeanour and gestures, the bearing of her head, and motion of her exquisite hands. Her eyes were like her son's, prominent, and gave the sense of seeing all round at once, and her smile was to the highest degree engaging. She received the young Baron de Ribaumont far more graciously than Charles has done, held out her hand to be kissed, and observed 'that the young gentleman was like Madame *sa mere* whom she well remembered as much admired. Was it true that she was married in England?'

Berenger bowed assent.

'Ah! You English make good spouses,' she said, with a smile. 'Ever satisfied with home! But, your Excellency,' added she, turning to Walsingham, 'what stones would best please my good sister for the setting of the jewel my son would send her with his portrait? He is all for emeralds, for the hue of hope; but I call it the colour of jealousy.'

Walsingham made a sign that Berenger had better retreat from hearing the solemn coquetting carried on by the maiden Queen through her gravest ambassadors. He fell back, and remained watching the brilliant throng, trying in vain to discover the bright merry eyes and velvet cheek he remembered of old. Presently a kind salutation interrupted him, and a gentleman who perceived him to be a stranger began to try to set him at ease, pointed out to him the handsome, foppishly-dressed Duke of Anjou, and his ugly, spiteful little brother of Alengon, then designated as Queen Elizabeth's

future husband, who was saying something to a lady that made her colour and bite her lips. 'Is that the younger Queen?' asked Berenger, as his eye fell on a sallow, dark-complexioned, sad-looking little creature in deep mourning, and with three or four such stately-looking, black-robed, Spanish-looking duennas round her as to prove her to be a person of high consequence.

'That? Oh no; that is Madame Catherine of Navarre, who has resided here ever since her mother's death, awaiting her brother, our royal bridegroom. See, here is the bride, Madame Marguerite, conversing with M. de Guise.'

Berenger paid but little heed to Marguerite's showy but already rather coarse beauty, and still asked where was the young Queen Elizabeth of Austria. She was unwell, and not in presence. 'Ah! then,' he said, 'her ladies will not be here.'

'That is not certain. Are you wishing to see any one of them?'

'I would like to see–' He could not help colouring till his cheeks rivaled the colour of his sword-knot. 'I want just to know if she is here. I know not if she be called Madame or Mademoiselle de Ribaumont.'

'The fair Ribaumont! Assuredly; see, she is looking at you. Shall I present you?'

A pair of exceedingly brilliant dark eyes were fixed on Berenger with a sort of haughty curiosity and half-recognition. The face was handsome and brilliant, but he felt indignant at not perceiving a particle of a blush at encountering him, indeed rather a look of amusement at the deep glow which his fair complexion rendered so apparent. He would fain have escaped from so public an interview, but her eye was upon him, and there was no avoiding the meeting. As he moved nearer he saw what a beautiful person she was, her rich primrose-coloured dress setting off her brunette complexion and her stately presence. She looked older than he had expected; but this was a hotbed where every one grew up early, and the expression and manner made him feel that an old intimacy was here renewed, and that they were no strangers.

'We need no introduction, cousin,' she said, giving a hand to be saluted. 'I knew you instantly. It is the old face of Chateau Leurre, only gone up so high and become so handsome.'

'Cousins,' thought he. 'Well, it makes things easier! but what audacity to be so much at her ease, when Lucy would have sunk into the earth with shame.' His bow had saved him the necessity of answering in words, and the lady continued:

'And Madame *votre mere*. Is she well? She was very good to me.'

Berenger did not think that kindness to Eustacie had been her chief perfection, but he answered that she was well and sent her commendations, which the young lady acknowledged by a magnificent curtsey. 'And as beautiful as ever?' she asked.

'Quite as beautiful,' he said, 'only somewhat more *embonpoint*.'

'Ah!' she said, smiling graciously, and raising her splendid eyes to his face, 'I understand better what that famous beauty was now, and the fairness that caused her to be called the Swan.'

It was so personal that the colour rushed again into his cheek. No one had ever so presumed to admire him; and with a degree gratified and surprised, and sensible more and more of the extreme beauty of the lady, there was a sort of alarm about him as if this were the very fascination he had been warned against, and as if she were casting a net about him, which, wife as she was, it would be impossible to him to break.

'Nay, Monsieur,' she laughed, 'is a word from one so near too much for your modesty? Is it possible that no one has yet told you of your good mien? Or do they not appreciate Greek noses and blue eyes in the land of fat Englishmen? How have you ever lived *en province?* Our princes are ready to hang themselves at the thought of being in such banishment, even at court—indeed, Monsieur has contrived to transfer the noose to M. d'Alengon. Have you been at court, cousin?'

'I have been presented to the Queen.'

She then proceeded to ask questions about the chief personages with a rapid intelligence that surprised him as well as alarmed him, for he felt more and more in the power of a very clever as

well as beautiful woman, and the attraction she exercised made him long the more to escape; but she smiled and signed away several cavaliers who would have gained her attention. She spoke of Queen Mary of Scotland, then in the fifth years of her captivity, and asked if he did not feel bound to her service by having been once her partner. Did not he remember that dance?

'I have heard my mother speak of it far too often to forget it,' said Berenger, glowing again for her who could speak of that occasion without a blush.

'You wish to gloss over your first inconstancy, sir,' she said, archly; but he was spared from further reply by Philip Sidney's coming to tell him that the Ambassador was ready to return home. He took leave with an alacrity that redoubled his courtesy so much that he desired to be commended to his cousin Diane, whom he had not seen.

'To Diane?' said the lady, inquiringly.

'To Mademoiselle Diane de Ribaumont,' he corrected himself, ashamed of his English rusticity. 'I beg pardon if I spoke too familiarly of her.'

'She should be flattered by M. le Baron's slightest recollection,' said the lady, with an ironical tone that there was no time to analyze, and with a mutual gesture of courtesy he followed Sidney to where Sir Francis awaited them.

'Well, what think you of the French court?' asked Sidney, so soon as the young men were in private.

'I only know that you may bless your good fortune that you stand in no danger from a wife from thence.'

'Ha!' cried Sidney, laughing, 'you found your lawful owner. Why did you not present me?'

'I was ashamed of her bold visage.'

'What!—was she the beauteous demoiselle I found you gallanting,' said Philip Sidney, a good deal entertained, 'who was gazing at you with such visible admiration in her languishing black eyes?'

'The foul fiend seize their impudence!'

'Fie! for shame! thus to speak of your own wife,' said the mischievous Sidney, 'and the fairest–'

'Go to, Sidney. Were she fairer than Venus, with a kingdom to her dower, I would none of a woman without a blush.'

'What, in converse with her wedded husband,' said Sidney. 'Were not that over-shamefastness?'

'Nay, now, Sidney, in good sooth give me your opinion. Should she set her fancy on me, even in this hour, am I bound in honour to hold by this accursed wedlock—lock, as it may well be called?'

'I know no remedy,' said Sidney, gravely, 'save the two enchanted founts of love and hate. They cannot be far away, since it was at the siege of Paris that Rinaldo and Orlando drank thereof.'

Another question that Berenger would fain have asked Sidney, but could not for very shame and dread of mockery, was, whether he himself were so dangerously handsome as the lady had given him to understand. With a sense of shame, he caught up the little mirror in his casket, and could not but allow to himself that the features he there saw were symmetrical—the eyes azure, the complexion of a delicate fairness, such as he had not seen equaled, except in those splendid Lorraine princes; nor could he judge of the further effect of his open-faced frank simplicity and sweetness of expression—contemptible, perhaps, to the astute, but most winning to the world-weary. He shook his head at the fair reflection, smiled as he saw the colour rising at his own sensation of being a fool, and then threw it aside, vexed with himself for being unable not to feel attracted by the first woman who had shown herself struck by his personal graces, and yet aware that this was the very thing he had been warned against, and determined to make all the resistance in his power to a creature whose very beauty and enchantment gave him a sense of discomfort.

CHAPTER V. THE CONVENT BIRD

Young knight, whatever that dost armes professe,
And through long labours huntest after fame,
Beware of fraud, beware of ficklenesse,
In choice and change of thy beloved dame.

Spenser, FAERY QUEENE

Berenger' mind was relieved, even while his vanity was mortified, when the Chevalier and his son came the next day to bring him the formal letter requesting the Pope's annulment of his marriage. After he had signed it, it was to be taken to Eustacie, and so soon as he should attain his twenty-first year he was to dispose of Chateau Leurre, as well as of his claim to the ancestral castle in Picardy, to his cousin Narcisse, and thus become entirely free to transfer his allegiance to the Queen of England.

It was a very good thing—that he well knew; and he had a strong sense of virtue and obedience, as he formed with his pen the words in all their fullness, Henri Beranger Eustache, Baron de Ribaumont et Seigneur de Leurre. He could not help wondering whether the lady who looked at him so admiringly really preferred such a mean-looking little fop as Narcisse, whether she were afraid of his English home and breeding, or whether all this open coquetry were really the court manners of ladies towards gentlemen, and he had been an absolute simpleton to be flattered. Any way, she would have been a most undesirable wife, and he was well quit of her; but he did feel a certain lurking desire that, since the bonds were cut and he was no longer in danger from her, he might see her again, carry home a mental inventory of the splendid beauties he had renounced, and decide what was the motive that actuated her in rejecting his own handsome self. Meantime, he proceeded to enjoy the amusements and advantage of his sojourn at Paris, of which by no means the least was the society of Philip Sidney, and the charm his brilliant genius imparted to every pursuit they shared. Books at the University, fencing and dancing from the best professors, Italian poetry, French sonnets, Latin epigrams; nothing came amiss to Sidney, the flower of English youth: and Berenger had taste, intelligence, and cultivation enough to enter into all in which Sidney led the way. The good tutor, after all his miseries on the journey, was delighted to write to Lord Walwyn, that, far from being a risk and temptation, this visit was a school in all that was virtuous and comely.

If the good man had any cause of dissatisfaction, it was with the Calvinistic tendencies of the Ambassador's household. Walsingham was always on the Puritanical side of Elizabeth's court, and such an atmosphere as that of Paris, where the Roman Catholic system was at that time showing more corruption than it has ever done before or since in any other place, naturally threw him into sympathy with the Reformed. The reaction that half a century later filled the Gallican Church with saintliness had not set in; her ecclesiastics were the tools of a wicked and bloodthirsty court, who hated virtue as much as schism in the men whom they persecuted. The Huguenots were for the most part men whose instincts for truth and virtue had recoiled from the popular system, and thus it was indeed as if piety and morality were arrayed on one side, and superstition and debauchery on the other. Mr. Adderley thus found the tone of the Ambassador's chaplain that of far more complete fellowship with the Reformed pastors than he himself was disposed to admit. There were a large number of these gathered at Paris; for the lull in persecution that had followed the battle of Moncontour had given hopes of a final accommodation between the two parties, and many had come up to consult with the numerous lay nobility who had congregated to witness the King of Navarre's wedding. Among them, Berenger met his father's old friend Isaac Gardon, who had come to Paris for the purpose of giving his only surviving son in marriage to the daughter of a watchmaker to whom he had for many years been betrothed. By him the youth, with his innocent face and gracious respectful manners, was

watched with delight, as fulfilling the fairest hopes of the poor Baron, but the old minister would have been sorely disappointed had he known how little Berenger felt inclined towards his party.

The royal one of course Berenger could not love, but the rigid bareness, and, as he thought, irreverence of the Calvinist, and the want of all forms, jarred upon one used to a ritual which retained much of the ancient form. In the early years of Elizabeth, every possible diversity prevailed in parish churches, according to the predilections of rector and squire; from forms scarcely altered from those of old times, down to the baldest, rudest neglect of all rites; and Berenger, in his country home, had been used to the first extreme. He could not believe that what he heard and saw among the *Sacrementaires*, as they were called, was what his father had prized; and he greatly scandalized Sidney, the pupil of Hubert Languet, by openly expressing his distaste and dismay when he found their worship viewed by both Walsingham and Sidney as a model to which the English Protestants ought to be brought.

However, Sidney excused all this as more boyish distaste to sermons and love of externals, and Berenger himself reflected little on the subject. The aspect of the venerable Coligny, his father's friend, did far more towards making him a Huguenot than any discussion of doctrine. The good old Admiral received him affectionately, and talked to him warmly of his father, and the grave, noble countenance and kind manner won his heart. Great projects were on foot, and were much relished by the young King, for raising an army and striking a blow at Spain by aiding the Reformed in the Netherlands; and Coligny was as ardent as a youth in the cause, hoping at once to aid his brethren, to free the young King from evil influences, and to strike one good stroke against the old national enemy. He talked eagerly to Sidney of alliances with England, and then lamented over the loss of so promising a youth as young Ribaumont to the Reformed cause in France. If the marriage with the heiress could have taken effect, he would have obtained estates near enough to some of the main Huguenot strongholds to be very important, and these would now remain under the power of Narcisse de Ribaumont, a determined ally of the Guise faction. It was a pity, but the Admiral could not blame the youth for obeying the wish of his guardian grandfather; and he owned, with a sigh, that England was a more peaceful land than his own beloved country. Berenger was a little nettled at this implication, and began to talk of joining the French standard in a campaign in their present home and described the conversation, Walsingham said,—

'The Admiral's favourite project! He would do wisely not to brag of it so openly. The King of Spain has too many in his interest in this place not to be warned, and to be thus further egged on to compass the ruin of Coligny.'

'I should have thought,' said Sidney. 'that nothing could add to his hatred of the Reformed.'

'Scarcely,' said Walsingham; 'save that it is they who hinder the Duke of Guise from being a good Frenchman, and a foe to Spain.'

Politics had not developed themselves in Berenger's mind, and he listened inattentively while Walsingham talked over with Sidney the state of parties in France, where natural national enmity to Spain was balanced by the need felt by the Queen-mother of the support of that great Roman Catholic power against the Huguenots; whom Walsingham believed her to dread and hate less for their own sake than from the fear of loss of influence over her son. He believed Charles IX. himself to have much leaning towards the Reformed, but the late victories has thrown the whole court entirely into the power of the Guises, the truly unscrupulous partisans of Rome. They were further inflamed against the Huguenots by the assassination of the last Duke of Guise, and by the violences that had been committed by some of the Reformed party, in especial a massacre of prisoners at *Nerac*.

Sidney exclaimed that the Huguenots had suffered far worse cruelties.

'That is true,' replied Sir Francis, 'but, my young friend, you will find, in all matters of reprisals, that a party has no memory for what it may commit, only for what it may receive.'

The conversation was interrupted by an invitation to the Ambassador's family and guests to a tilting-match and subsequent ball at the Louvre. In the first Berenger did his part with credit; to

the second he went feeling full of that strange attraction of repulsion. He knew gentlemen enough in Coligny's suite for it to be likely that he might remain unperceived among them, and he knew this would be prudent, but he found himself unexpectedly near the ranks of ladies, and smile and gesture absolutely drew him towards his semi-spouse, so that he had no alternative but to lead her out to dance.

The stately measure was trod in silence as usual, but he felt the dark eyes studying him all the time. However, he could bear it better now that the deed was done, and she had voluntarily made him less to her than any gallant parading or mincing about the room.

'So you bear the pearls, sir?' she said, as the dance finished.

'The only heirloom I shall take with me,' he said.

'Is a look at them too great a favour to ask from their jealous guardian?' she asked.

He smiled, half ashamed of his own annoyance at being obliged to place them in her hands. He was sure she would try to cajole him out of them, and by way of asserting his property in them he did not detach them from the band of his black velvet cap, but gave it with them into her hand. She looked at each one, and counted them wistfully.

'Seventeen!' she said;' and how beautiful! I never saw them so near before. They are so becoming to that fair cheek that I suppose no offer from my—my uncle, on our behalf, would induce you to part with them?'

An impulse of open-handed gallantry would have made him answer, 'No offer from your uncle, but a simple request from you;' but he thought in time of the absurdity of returning without them, and merely answered, 'I have no right to yield them, fair lady. They are the witness to my forefather's fame and prowess.'

'Yes, sir, and to those of mine also,' she replied. 'And you would take them over to the enemy from whom that prowess extorted them?'

'The country which honoured and rewarded that prowess!' replied Berenger.

She looked at him with an interrogative glance of surprise at the readiness of his answer; then, with half a sigh, said, 'There are your pearls, sir; I cannot establish our right, though I verily believe it was the cause of our last quarrel;' and she smiled archly.

'I believe it was,' he said, gravely; but added, in the moment of relief at recovering the precious heirloom, 'though it was Diane who inspired you to seize upon them.'

'Ah! poor Diane! you sometimes recollect her then? If I remember right, you used to agree with her better than with your little spouse, cousin!'

'If I quarrelled with her less, I liked her less,' answered Berenger—who, since the act of separation, had not been so guarded in his demeanour, and began to give way to his natural frankness.

'Indeed! Diane would be less gratified than I ought to be. And why, may I ask?'

'Diane was more caressing, but she had no truth.'

'Truth! that was what *feu* M. le Baron ever talked of; what Huguenots weary one with.'

'And the only thing worth seeking, the real pearl,' said Berenger, 'without which all else is worthless.'

'Ah!' she said, 'who would have thought that soft, youthful face could be so severe! You would never forgive a deceit?'

'Never,' he said, with the crystal hardness of youth; 'or rather I might forgive; I could never esteem.'

'What a bare, rude world yours must be,' she said, shivering. 'And no weak ones in it! Only the strong can dare to be true.'

'Truth is strength!' said Berenger. 'For example: I see yonder a face without bodily strength, perhaps, but with perfect candour.'

'Ah! some Huguenot girl of Madame Catherine's, no doubt—from the depths of Languedoc, and dressed like a fright.'

'No, no; the young girl behind the pale, yellow-haired lady.'

'Comment, Monsieur. Do you not yet know the young Queen?'

'But who is the young demoiselle!—she with the superb black eyes, and the ruby rose in her black hair?'

'Take care, sir, do you not know I have still a right to be jealous?' she said, blushing, bridling, and laughing.

But this pull on the cords made him the more resolved; he would not be turned from his purpose. 'Who is she?' he repeated; 'have I ever seen her before? I am sure I remember that innocent look of *espieglerie*.'

'You may see it on any child's face fresh out of the convent; it does not last a month!' was the still displeased, rather jealous answer. 'That little thing—I believe they call her Nid-de-Merle—she has only just been brought from her nunnery to wait on the young Queen. Ah! your gaze was perilous, it is bringing on you one of the jests of Madame Marguerite.'

With laughter and gaiety, a troop of gentlemen descended on M. de Ribaumont, and told him that Madame Marguerite desired that he should be presented to her. The princess was standing by her pale sister-in-law, Elizabeth of Austria, who looked grave and annoyed at the mischievous mirth flashing in Marguerite's dark eyes.

'M. de Ribaumont,' said the latter, her very neck heaving with suppressed fun, 'I see I cannot do you a greater favour than by giving you Mademoiselle de Nid-de-Merle for your partner.'

Berenger was covered with confusion to find that he had been guilty of such a fixed stare as to bring all this upon the poor girl. He feared that his vague sense of recognition had made his gaze more open than he knew, and he was really and deeply ashamed of this as his worst act of provincial ill-breeding.

Poor little convent maid, with crimson cheeks, flashing eyes, panting bosom, and a neck evidently aching with proud dignity and passion, she received his low bow with a sweeping curtsey, as lofty as her little person would permit.

His cheeks burnt like fire, and he would have found words to apologize, but she cut him short by saying, hastily and low, 'Not a word, Monsieur! Let us go through it at once. No one shall make game of us.'

He hardly durst look at her again; but as he went through his own elaborate paces he knew that the little creature opposite was swimming, bending, turning, bounding with the fluttering fierceness of an angry little bird, and that the superb eyes were casting flashes on him that seemed to carry him back to days of early boyhood.

Once he caught a mortified, pleading, wistful glance that made him feel as if he had inflicted a cruel injury by his thoughtless gaze, and he resolved to plead the sense of recognition in excuse; but no sooner was the performance over than she prevented all conversation by saying, 'Lead me back at once to the Queen, sir; she is about to retire.' They were already so near that there was no time to say anything; he could only hold as lightly as possible the tiny fingers that he felt burning and quivering in his hand, and then, after bringing her to the side of the chair of state, he was forced to release her with the mere whisper of 'Pardon, Mademoiselle;' and the request was not replied to, save by the additional stateliness of her curtsey.

It was already late, and the party was breaking up; but his head and heart were still in a whirl when he found himself seated in the ambassadorial coach, hearing Lady Walsingham's well-pleased rehearsal of all the compliments she had received on the distinguished appearance of both her young guests. Sidney, as the betrothed of her daughter, was property of her own; but she also exulted in the praises of the young Lord de Ribaumont, as proving the excellence of the masters whom she had recommended to remove the rustic clownishness of which he had been accused.

'Nay,' said Sir Francis; 'whoever called him too clownish for court spake with design.'

The brief sentence added to Berenger's confused sense of being in a mist of false play. Could his kinsman be bent on keeping him from court? Could Narcisse be jealous of him? Mademoiselle

de Ribaumont was evidently inclined to seek him, and her cousin might easily think her lands safer in his absence. He would have been willing to hold aloof as much as his uncle and cousin could wish, save for an angry dislike to being duped and cajoled; and, moreover, a strong curiosity to hear and see more of that little passionate bird, fresh from the convent cage. Her gesture and her eyes irresistibly carried him back to old times, though whether to an angry blackbird in the yew-tree alleys at Leurre, or to the eager face that had warned him to save his father, he could not remember with any distinctness. At any rate, he was surprised to find himself thinking so little in comparison about the splendid beauty and winning manners of his discarded spouse, though he quite believed that, now her captive was beyond her grasp, she was disposed to catch at him again, and try to retain him, or, as his titillated vanity might whisper, his personal graces might make her regret the family resolution which she had obeyed.

CHAPTER VI. FOULLY COZENED

I was the more deceived.—HAMLET

The unhappy Charles IX. had a disposition that in good hands might have achieved great nobleness; and though cruelly bound and trained to evil, was no sooner allowed to follow its natural bent than it reached out eagerly towards excellence. At this moment, it was his mother's policy to appear to leave the ascendancy to the Huguenot party, and he was therefore allowed to contract friendships which deceived the intended victims the more completely, because his admiration and attachment were spontaneous and sincere. Philip Sidney's varied accomplishment and pure lofty character greatly attracted the young King, who had leant on his arm conversing during great part of the ball, and the next morning sent a royal messenger to invite the two young gentlemen to a part at pall-mall in the Tuileries gardens.

Pall-mall was either croquet or its nearest relative, and was so much the fashion that games were given in order to keep up political influence, perhaps, because the freedom of a garden pastime among groves and bowers afforded opportunities for those seductive arts on which Queen Catherine placed so much dependence. The formal gardens, with their squares of level turf and clipped alleys, afforded excellent scope both for players and spectators, and numerous games had been set on foot, from all of which, however, Berenger contrived to exclude himself, in his restless determination to find out the little Demoiselle de Nid-de-Merle, or, at least, to discover whether any intercourse in early youth accounted for his undefined sense of remembrance.

He interrogated the first disengaged person he could find, but it was only the young Abbe de Mericour, who had been newly brought up from Dauphine by his elder brother to solicit a benefice, and who knew nobody. To him ladies were only bright phantoms such as his books had taught him to regard like the temptations of St. Anthony, but whom he actually saw treated with as free admiration by the ecclesiastic as by the layman.

Suddenly a clamour of voices arose on the other side of the closely-clipped wall of limes by which the two youths were walking. There were the clear tones of a young maiden expostulating in indignant distress, and the bantering, indolent determination of a male annoyer.

'Hark!' exclaimed Berenger; 'this must be seen to.'

'Have a care,' returned Mericour; 'I have heard that a man needs look twice are meddling.'

Scarcely hearing, Berenger strode on as he had done at the last village wake, when he had rescued Cis of the Down from the impertinence of a Dorchester scrivener. It was a like case, he saw, when breaking through the arch of clipped limed he beheld the little Demoiselle de Nid-de-Merle, driven into a corner and standing at bay, with glowing cheeks, flashing eyes, and hands clasped over her breast, while a young man, dressed in the extreme of foppery, was assuring her that she was the only lady who had not granted him a token—that he could not allow such *pensionnaire* airs, and that now he had caught her he would have his revenge, and win her rose-coloured break-knot. Another gentleman stood by, laughing, and keeping guard in the walk that led to the more frequented part of the gardens.

'Hold!' thundered Berenger.

The assailant had just mastered the poor girl's hand, but she took advantage of his surprise to wrench it away and gather herself up as for a spring, but the Abbe in dismay, the attendant in anger, cried out, 'Stay—it is Monsieur.'

'Monsieur; be he who he may,' exclaimed Berenger, 'no honest man can see a lady insulted.'

'Are you mad? It is Monsieur the Duke of Anjou,' said Mericour, pouncing on his arm.

'Shall we have him to the guardhouse?' added the attendant, coming up on the other side; but Henri de Valois waved them both back, and burst into a derisive laugh. 'No, no; do you not see who it is? Monsieur the English Baron still holds the end of the halter. His sale is not yet made. Come away, D'O, he will soon have enough on his hands without us. Farewell, fair lady, another time you will be free of your jealous giant.'

So saying, the Duke of Anjou strolled off, feigning indifference and contempt, and scarcely heeding that he had been traversed in one of the malicious adventures which he delighted to recount in public before the discomfited victim herself, often with shameful exaggeration.

The girl clasped her hands over her brow with a gesture of dismay, and cried, 'Oh! if you have only not touched your sword.'

'Let me have the honour of reconducting you, Mademoiselle,' said Berenger, offering his hand; but after the first sigh of relief, a tempestuous access seized her. She seemed about to dash away his hand, her bosom swelled with resentment, and with a voice striving for dignity, though choked with strangled tears, she exclaimed, 'No, indeed! Had not M. le Baron forsaken me, I had never been thus treated!' and her eyes flashed through their moisture.

'Eustacie! You are Eutacie!'

'Whom would you have me to be otherwise? I have the honour to wish M. le Baron a good morning.'

'Eustacie! Stay! Hear me! It concerns my honour. I see it is you—but whom have I seen? Who was she?' he cried, half wild with dismay and confusion. 'Was it Diane?'

'You have seen and danced with Diane de Ribaumont,' answered Eustacie, still coldly; 'but what of that? Let me go, Monsieur; you have cast me off already.'

'I! when all this has been of your own seeking?'

'Mine?' cried Eustacie, panting with the struggle between her dignity and her passionate tears. 'I meddled not. I heard that M. le Baron was gone to a strange land, and had written to break off old ties.' Her face was in a flame, and her efforts for composure absolute pain.

'I!' again exclaimed Berenger. 'The first letter came from your uncle, declaring that it was your wish!' And as her face changed rapidly, 'Then it was not true! He has not had your consent?'

'What! would I hold to one who despised me—who came here and never even asked to see this hated spouse!'

I did! I entreated to see you. I would not sign the application till—Oh, there has been treachery! And have they made you too sign it!'

When they showed me your name they were welcome to mine.'

Berenger struck his forehead with wrath and perplexity, then cried, joyfully, 'It will not stand for moment. So foul a cheat can be at once exposed. Eutacie, you know—you understand, that it was not you but Diane whom I saw and detested; and no wonder, when she was acting such a cruel treason!'

'Oh no, Diane would never so treat me,' cried Eustacie. 'I see how it was! You did not know that my father was latterly called Marquis de Nid-de-Merle, and when they brought me here, they WOULD call me after him: they said a maid of honour must be Demoiselle, and my uncle said there was only one way in which I could remain Madame de Ribaumont! And the name must have deceived you. Thou wast always a great dull boy,' she added, with a sudden assumption of childish intimacy that annihilated the nine years since their parting.

'Had I seen thee, I had not mistaken for an instant. This little face stirred my heart; hers repelled me. And she deceived me wittingly, Eustacie, for I asked after her by name.'

'Ah, she wished to spare my embarrassment. And then her brother must have dealt with her.'

'I see,' exclaimed Berenger, 'I am to be palmed off thus that thou mayest be reserved for Narcisse. Tell me, Eustacie, wast thou willing?'

'I hate Narcisse!' she cried. 'But oh, I am lingering too long. Monsieur will make some hateful tale! I never fell into his way before, my Queen and Madame la Comtesse are so careful. Only to-

day, as I was attending her alone, the King came and gave her his arm, and I had to drop behind. I must find her; I shall be missed,' she added, in sudden alarm. 'Oh, what will they say?'

'No blame for being with thy husband,' he answered, clasping her hand. 'Thou art mine henceforth. I will soon cut our way out of the web thy treacherous kindred have woven. Meantime–'

'Hush! There are voices,' cried Eustacie in terror, and, guided by something he could not discern, she fled with the swiftness of a bird down the alley. Following, with the utmost speed that might not bear the appearance of pursuit, he found that on coming to the turn she had moderated her pace, and was more tranquilly advancing to a bevy of ladies, who sat perched on the stone steps like great butterflies sunning themselves, watching the game, and receiving the attentions of their cavaliers. He saw her absorbed into the group, and then began to prowl round it, in the alleys, in a tumult of amazement and indignation. He had been shamefully deceived and cheated, and justice he would have! He had been deprived of a thing of his own, and he would assert his right. He had been made to injure and disown the creature he was bound to protect, and he must console her and compensate to her, were it only to redeem his honour. He never even thought whether he loved her; he merely felt furious at the wrong he had suffered and been made to commit, and hotly bent on recovering what belonged to him. He might even have plunged down among the ladies and claimed her as his wife, if the young Abbe de Mericour, who was two years older than he, and far less of a boy for his years, had not joined him in his agitated walk. He then learnt that all the court knew that the daughter of the late Marquis de Nid-de-Merle, Comte de Ribaumont, was called by his chief title, but that her marriage to himself had been forgotten by some and unknown to others, and thus that the first error between the cousins had not been wonderful in a stranger, since the Chevalier's daughter had always been Mdlle. de Ribaumont. The error once made, Berenger's distaste to Diane had been so convenient that it had been carefully encouraged, and the desire to keep him at a distance from court and throw him into the background was accounted for. The Abbe was almost as indignant as Berenger, and assured him both of his sympathy and his discretion.

'I see no need for discretion,' said Berenger. 'I shall claim my wife in the face of the sun.'

'Take counsel first, I entreat,' exclaimed Mericour. 'The Ribaumonts have much influence with the Guise family, and now you have offended Monsieur.'

'Ah! Where are those traitorous kinsmen?' cried Berenger.

'Fortunately all are gone on an expedition with the Queen-mother. You will have time to think. I have heard my brother say no one ever prospered who offended the meanest follower of the house of Lorraine.'

'I do not want prosperity, I only want my wife. I hope I shall never see Paris and its deceivers again.'

'Ah! But is it true that you have applied to have the marriage annulled at Rome?'

'We were both shamefully deceivers. That can be nothing.'

'A decree of his Holiness: you a Huguenot; she an heiress. All is against you. My friend, be cautions, exclaimed the young ecclesiastic, alarmed by his passionate gestures. 'To break forth now and be accused of brawling in the palace precincts would be fatal—fatal—most fatal!'

'I am as calm as possible,' returned Berenger. 'I mean to act most reasonably. I shall stand before the King and tell him openly how I have been tamperes with, demanding my wife before the whole court.'

'Long before you could get so far the ushers would have dragged you away for brawling, or for maligning an honour-able gentlemen. You would have to finish your speech in the Bastille, and it would be well if even your English friends could get you out alive.'

'Why, what a place is this!' began Berenger; but again Mericour entreated him to curb himself; and his English education had taught him to credit the house of Guide with so much mysterious power and wickedness, that he allowed himself to be silenced, and promised to take no open measures till he had consulted the Ambassador.

'He could not obtain another glimpse of Eustacie, and the hours passed tardily till the break up of the party. Charles could scarcely release Sidney from his side, and only let him go on condition that he should join the next day in an expedition to the hunting chateau of Montpipeau, to which the King seemed to look forward as a great holiday and breathing time.

When at length the two youths did return, Sir Francis Walsingham was completely surprised by the usually tractable, well-behaved stripling, whose praises he had been writing to his old friend, bursting in on him with the outcry, 'Sir, sir, I entreat your counsel! I have been foully cozened.'

'Of how much?' said Sir Francis, in a tone of reprobation.

'Of my wife. Of mine honour. Sir, your Excellency, I crave pardon, if I spoke too hotly,' said Berenger, collecting himself; 'but it is enough to drive a man to frenzy.'

'Sit down, my Lord de Ribaumont. Take breath, and let me know what is this coil. What hath thus moved him, Mr. Sidney?'

'It is as he says, sir,' replied Sidney, who had beard all as they returned; 'he has been greatly wronged. The Chevalier de Ribaumont not only writ to propose the separation without the lady's knowledge, but imposed his own daughter on our friend as the wife he had not seen since infancy.'

'There, sir,' broke forth Berenger; 'surely if I claim mine own in the face of day, no man can withhold her from me!'

'Hold!' said Sir Francis. 'What mean this passion, young sir? Methought you came hither convinced that both the religion and the habits in which the young lady had been bred up rendered your infantine contract most unsuitable. What hath fallen out to make this change in your mind?'

'That I was cheated, sir. The lady who palmed herself off on me as my wife was a mere impostor, the Chevalier's own daughter!'

'That may be; but what known you of this other lady? Has she been bred up in faith or manners such as your parents would have your wife?'

'She is my wife,' reiterated Berenger. 'My faith is plighted to her. That is enough for me.'

Sir Francis made a gesture of despair. 'He has seen her, I suppose,' said he to Sidney.

'Yes truly, sir,' answered Berenger; 'and found that she had been as greatly deceived as myself.'

'Then mutual consent is wanting,' said the statesman, gravely musing.

'That is even as I say,' began Berenger, but Walsingham help up his hand, and desired that he would make his full statement in the presence of his tutor. Then sounding a little whistle, the Ambassador despatched a page to request the attendance of Mr. Adderley, and recommended young Ribaumont in the meantime to compose himself.

Used to being under authority as Berenger was, the somewhat severe tone did much to allay his excitement, and remind him that right and reason were so entirely on his side, that he had only to be cool and rational to make them prevail. He was thus able to give a collected and coherent account of his discovery that the part of his wife had been assumed by her cousin Diane, and that the signature of both the young pair to the application to the Pope had been obtained on false pretences. That he had, as Sidney said, been foully cozened, in both senses of the word, was as clear as daylight; but he was much angered and disappointed to find that neither the Ambassador nor his tutor could see that Eustacie's worthiness was proved by the iniquity of her relation, or that any one of the weighty reasons for the expediency of dissolving the marriage was remove. The whole affair had been in such good train a little before, that Mr. Adderley was much distressed that it should thus have been crossed, and thought the new phase of affairs would be far from acceptable at Combe Walwyn.

'Whatever is just and honourable must be acceptable to my grandfather,' said Berenger.

'Even so,' said Walsingham; 'but it were well to consider whether justice and honour require you to overthrow the purpose wherewith he sent you hither.'

'Surely, sir, justice and require me to fulfil a contract to which the other party is constant,' said Berenger, feeling very wise and prudent for calling that wistful, indignant creature the other party.

'That is also true,' said the Ambassador, 'provided she be constant; but you own that she signed the requisition for the dissolution.'

'She did so, but under the same deception as myself, and further mortified and aggrieved at my seeming faithlessness.'

'So it may easily be represented,' muttered Walsingham.

'How, sir?' cried Berenger, impetuously; 'do you doubt her truth?'

'Heaven forefend,' said Sir Francis, 'that I should discuss any fair lady's sincerity! The question is how far you are bound. Have I understood you that you are veritably wedded, not by a mere contract of espousal?'

'Berenger could produce no documents, for they had been left at Chateau Leurre, and on his father's death the Chevalier had claimed the custody of them; but he remembered enough of the ceremonial to prove that the wedding had been a veritable one, and that only the papal intervention could annul it.

Indeed an Englishman, going by English law, would own no power in the Pope, nor any one on earth, to sever the sacred tie of wedlock; but French courts of law would probably ignore the mode of application, and would certainly endeavour to separate between a Catholic and a heretic.

'I am English, sir, in heart and faith,' said Berenger, earnestly. 'Look upon me as such, and tell me, am I married or single at this moment?'

'Married assuredly. More's the pity,' said Sir Francis.

'And no law of God or man divides us without our own consent.' There was no denying that the mutual consent of the young pair at their present age was all that was wanting to complete the inviolability of their marriage contract.

Berenger was indeed only eighteen, and Eustacie more than a year younger, but there was nothing in their present age to invalidate their marriage, for persons of their rank were usually wedded quite as young or younger. Walsingham was only concerned at his old friend's disappointment, and at the danger of the young man running headlong into a connection probably no more suitable than that with Diane de Ribaumont would have been. But it was not convenient to argue against the expediency of a man's loving his own wife; and when Berenger boldly declared he was not talking of love but of justice, it was only possible to insist that he should pause and see where true justice lay.

And thus the much-perplexed Ambassador broke up the conference with his hot and angry young guest.

'And Mistress Lucy–?' sighed Mr. Adderley, in rather an *inapropos* fashion it must be owned; but then he had been fretted beyond endurance by his pupil striding up and down his room, reviling Diane, and describing Eustacie, while he was trying to write these uncomfortable tidings to Lord Walwyn.

'Lucy! What makes you bring her up to me?' exclaimed Berenger. 'Little Dolly would be as much to the purpose!'

'Only, sir, no resident at Hurst Walwyn could fail to know that has been planned and desired.'

'Pshaw!' cries Berenger; 'have you not heard that it was a mere figment, and that I could scarce have wedded Lucy safely, even had this matter gone as you wish? This is the luckiest chance that could have befallen her.'

'That may be,' said Mr. Adderley; 'I wish she may think so—sweet young lady!'

'I tell you, Mr. Adderley, you should know better! Lucy has more sense. My aunt, whom she follows more than any other creature, ever silenced the very sport or semblance of love passages between us even as children, by calling them unseemly in one wedded as I am. Brother and sister we have ever been, and have loved as such—ay, and shall! I know of late some schemes have crossed my mother's mind–'

'Yea, and that of others.'

'But they have not ruffled Lucy's quiet nature—trust me! And for the rest? What doth she need me in comparison of this poor child? She—like a bit of her own gray lavender in the shadiest nook of the walled garden, tranquil there—sure not to be taken there, save to company with fine linen in some trim scented coffer, whilst this fresh glowing rosebud has grown up pure and precious in the very midst of the foulest corruption Christendom can show, and if I snatch her not from it, I, the innocence and sweetness, what is to be her fate? The very pity of a Christian, the honour of a gentleman, would urge me, even if it were not my most urgent duty!'

'Mr. Adderley argued no more. When Berenger came to his duty in the matter he was invincible, and moreover all the more provoking, because he mentioned it with a sort of fiery sound of relish, and looked so very boyish all the time. Poor Mr. Adderley!' feeling as if his trust were betrayed, loathing the very idea of a French court lady, saw that his pupil had been allured into a headlong passion to his own misery, and that of all whose hopes were set on him, yet preached to by this stripling scholar about duties and sacred obligations! Well might he rue the day he ever set foot in Paris.

Then, to his further annoyance, came a royal messenger to invite the Baron de Ribaumont to join the expedition to Montpipeau. Of course he must go, and his tutor must be left behind, and who could tell into what mischief he might not be tempted!

Here, however, Sidney gave the poor chaplain some comfort. He believed that no ladies were to be of the party, and that the gentlemen were chiefly of the King's new friends among the Huguenots, such as Coligny, his son-in-law Teligny, Rochefoucauld, and the like, among whom the young gentleman could not fall into any very serious harm, and might very possibly be influenced against a Roman Catholic wife. At any rate, he would be out of the way, and unable to take any dangerous steps.

This same consideration so annoyed Berenger that he would have declined the invitation, if royal invitations could have been declined. And in the morning, before setting out, he dressed himself point device, and with Osbert behind him marched down to the Croix de Larraine, to call upon the Chevalier de Ribaumont. He had a very fine speech at his tongue's end when he set out, but a good deal of it had evaporated when he reached the hotel, and perhaps he was not very sorry not to find the old gentleman within.

On his return, he indited a note to the Chevalier, explaining that he had now seen his wife, Madame la Baronne de Ribaumont, and had come to an understanding with her, by which he found that it was under a mistake that the application to the Pope had been signed, and that they should, therefore, follow it up with a protest, and act as if no such letter had been sent.

Berenger showed this letter to Walsingham, who, though much concerned, could not forbid his sending it. 'Poor lad,' he said to the tutor; "tis an excellently writ billet for one so young. I would it were in a wiser cause. But he has fairly the bit between his teeth, and there is no checking him while he has this show of right on his side.'

And poor Mr. Adderley could only beseech Mr. Sidney to take care of him.

CHAPTER VII. THE QUEEN'S PASTORAL

Either very gravely gay,
Or very gaily grave,

—W. M. PRAED

Montpipeau, though in the present day a suburb of Paris, was in the sixteenth century far enough from the city to form a sylvan retreat, where Charles IX, could snatch a short respite from the intrigues of his court, under pretext of enjoying his favourite sport. Surrounded with his favoured associates of the Huguenot party, he seemed to breathe a purer atmosphere, and to yield himself up to enjoyment greater than perhaps his sad life had ever known.

He rode among his gentlemen, and the brilliant cavalcade passed through poplar-shaded roads, clattered through villages, and threaded their way through bits of forest still left for the royal chase. The people thronged out of their houses, and shouted not only 'Vive le Roy,' but 'Vive l'Amiral,' and more than once the cry was added, 'Spanish war, or civil war!' The heart of France was, if not with the Reformed, at least against Spain and the Lorrainers, and Sidney perceived, from the conversation of the gentlemen round him, that the present expedition had been devised less for the sake of the sport, than to enable the King to take measures for emancipating himself from the thraldom of his mother, and engaging the country in a war against Philip II. Sidney listened, but Berenger chafed, feeling only that he was being further carried out of reach of his explanation with his kindred. And thus they arrived at Montpipeau, a tower, tall and narrow, like all French designs, but expanded on the ground floor by wooden buildings capable of containing the numerous train of a royal hunter, and surrounded by an extent of waste land, without fine trees, though with covert for deer, boars, and wolves sufficient for sport to royalty and death to peasantry. Charles seemed to sit more erect in his saddle, and to drink in joy with every breath of the thyme-scented breeze, from the moment his horse bounded on the hollow-sounding turf; and when he leapt to the ground, with the elastic spring of youth, he held out his hands to Sidney and to Teligny, crying 'Welcome, my friends. Here I am indeed a king!'

It was a lovely summer evening, early in August, and Charles bade the supper to be spread under the elms that shaded a green lawn in front of the chateau. Etiquette was here so far relaxed as to permit the sovereign to dine with his suite, and tables, chairs, and benches were brought out, drapery festooned in the trees to keep off sun and wind, the King lay down in the fern and let his happy dogs fondle him, and as a hers-girl passed along a vista in the distance, driving her goats before her, Philip Sidney marvelled whether it was not even thus in Arcadia.

Presently there was a sound of horses trampling, wheels moving, a party of gaily gilded archers of the guard jingled up, and in their midst was a coach. Berenger's heart seemed to leap at once to his lips, as a glimpse of ruffs, hats, and silks dawned on him through the windows.

The king rose from his lair among the fern, the Admiral stood forward, all heads were bared, and from the coach-door alighted the young Queen; no longer pale, subdued, and indifferent, but with a face shining with girlish delight, as she held out her hand to the Admiral. 'Ah! This is well, this is beautiful,' she exclaimed; 'it is like our happy chases in the Tyrol. Ah, Sire!' to the King, 'how I thank you for letting me be with you.'

After her Majesty descended her gentleman-usher. Then came the lady-in-waiting, Madame de Sauve, the wife of the state secretary in attendance on Charles, and a triumphant, coquettish beauty, than a fat, good-humoured Austrian dame, always called Madame la Comtesse, because her German name was unpronounceable, and without whom the Queen never stirred, and lastly a little figure, rounded yet slight, slender yet soft and plump, with a kitten-like alertness and grace of motion,

as she sprang out, collected the Queen's properties of fan, kerchief, pouncet-box, mantle, &c., and disappeared in to the chateau, without Berenger's being sure of anything but that her little black hat had a rose-coloured feather in it.

The Queen was led to a chair placed under one of the largest trees, and there Charles presented to her such of his gentlemen as she was not yet acquainted with, the Baron de Ribaumont among the rest.

'I have heard of M. de Ribaumont,' she said, in a tone that made the colour mantle in his fair cheek; and with a sign of her hand she detained him at her side till the King had strolled away with Madame la Sauve, and no one remained near but her German countess. Then changing her tone to one of confidence, which the high-bred homeliness of her Austrian manner rendered inexpressibly engaging, she said, 'I must apologize, Monsieur, for the giddiness of my sister-in-law, which I fear caused you some embarrassment.'

'Ah, Madame,' said Berenger, kneeling on one knee as she addressed him, and his heart bounding with wild, undefined hope, 'I cannot be grateful enough. It was that which led to my being undeceived.'

'It was true, then, that you were mistaken?' said the Queen.

'Treacherously deceived, Madame, by those whose interest it is to keep us apart,' said Berenger, colouring with indignation; 'they imposed my other cousin on me as my wife, and caused her to think me cruelly neglectful.'

'I know,' said the Queen. 'Yet Mdlle. de Ribaumont is far more admired than my little blackbird.'

'That may be, Madame, but not by me.'

'Yet is it true that you came to break off the marriage?'

'Yes, Madame,' said Berenger, honestly, 'but I had not seen her.'

'And now?' said the Queen, smiling.

'I would rather die than give her up,' said Berenger. 'Oh, Madame, help us of your grace. Every one is trying to part us, every one is arguing against us, but she is my own true wedded wife, and if you will but give her to me, all will be well.'

'I like you, M. de Ribaumont,' said the Queen, looking him full in the face. 'You are like our own honest Germans at my home, and I think you mean all you say. I had much rather my dear little Nid de Merle were with you than left here, to become like all the others. She is a good little *Liegling*, —how do you call it in French? She has told me all, and truly I would help you with all my heart, but it is not as if I were the Queen-mother. You must have recourse to the King, who loves you well, and at my request included you in the hunting-party.'

Berenger could only kiss her hand in token of earnest thanks before the repast was announced, and the King came to lead her to the table spread beneath the trees. The whole party supped together, but Berenger could have only a distant view of his little wife, looking very demure and grave by the side of the Admiral.

But when the meal was ended, there was a loitering in the woodland paths, amid healthy openings or glades trimmed into discreet wildness fit for royal rusticity; the sun set in parting glory on one horizon, the moon rising in crimson majesty on the other. A musician at intervals touched the guitar, and sang Spanish or Italian airs, whose soft or quaint melody came dreamily through the trees. Then it was that with beating heart Berenger stole up to the maiden as she stood behind the Queen, and ventured to whisper her name and clasp her hand.

She turned, their eyes met, and she let him lead her apart into the wood. It was not like a lover's tryst, it was more like the continuation of their old childish terms, only that he treated her as a thing of his own, that he was bound to secure and to guard, and she received him as her own lawful but tardy protector, to be treated with perfect reliance but with a certain playful resentment.

'You will not run away from me now,' he said, making full prize of her hand and arm.

'Ah! is not she the dearest and best of queens?' and the large eyes were lifted up to him in such frank seeking of sympathy that he could see into the depths of their clear darkness.

'It is her doing then. Though, Eustacie, when I knew the truth, not flood nor fire should keep me long from you, my heart, my love, my wife.'

'What! wife in spite of those villainous letter?' she said, trying to pout.

'Wife for ever, inseparably! Only you must be able to swear that you knew nothing of the one that brought me here.'

'Poor me! No, indeed! There was Celine carried off at fourteen, Madame de Blanchet a bride at fifteen; all marrying hither and thither; and I—' she pulled a face irresistibly droll—'I growing old enough to dress St. Catherine's hair, and wondering where was M. le Baron.'

'They thought me too young,' said Berenger, 'to take on me the cares of life.'

'So they were left to me?'

'Cares! What cares have you but finding the Queen's fan?'

'Little you know!' she said, half contemptuous, half mortified.

'Nay, pardon me, *ma mie*. Who has troubled you?'

'Ah! you would call it nothing to be beset by Narcisse; to be told one's husband is faithless, till one half believes it; to be looked at by ugly eyes; to be liable to be teased any day by Monsieur, or worse, by that mocking ape, M. d'Alecon, and to have nobody who can or will hinder it.'

She was sobbing by this time, and he exclaimed, 'Ah, would that I could revenge all! Never, never shall it be again! What blessed grace has guarded you through all?'

'Did I not belong to you?' she said exultingly. 'And had not Sister Monique, yes, and M. le Baron, striven hard to make me good? Ah, how kind he was!'

'My father? Yes, Eustacie, he loved you to the last. He bade me, on his deathbed, give you his own Book of Psalms, and tell you he had always loved and prayed for you.'

'Ah! his Psalms! I shall love them! Even at Bellaise, when first we came there, we used to sing them, but the Mother Abbess went out visiting, and when she came back she said they were heretical. And Soeur Monique would not let me say the texts he taught me, but I WOULD not forget them. I say them often in my heart.'

'Then,' he cried joyfully, 'you will willingly embrace my religion?'

'Be a Huguenot?' she said distastefully.

'I am not precisely a Huguenot; I do not love them,' he answered hastily; 'but all shall be made clear to you at my home in England.'

'England!' she said. 'Must we live in England? Away from every one?'

'Ah, they will love so much! I shall make you so happy there,' he answered. 'There you will see what it is to be true and trustworthy.'

'I had rather live at Chateau Leurre, or my own Nid de Merle,' she replied. 'There I should see Soeur Monique, and my aunt, the Abbess, and we would have the peasants to dance in the castle court. Oh! if you could but see the orchards at Le Bocage, you would never want to go away. And we could come now and then to see my dear Queen.

'I am glad at least you would not live at court.'

'Oh, no, I have been more unhappy here than ever I knew could be borne.'

And a very few words from him drew out all that had happened to her since they parted. Her father had sent her to Bellaise, a convent founded by the first of the Angevin branch, which was presided over by his sister, and where Diane was also educated. The good sister Monique had been mistress of the *pensionnaires*, and had evidently taken much pains to keep her charge innocent and devout. Diane had been taken to court about two years before, but Eustacie had remained at the convent till some three months since, when she had been appointed maid of honour to the recently-married Queen; and her uncle had fetched her from Anjou, and had informed her at the same time that her young husband had turned Englishman and heretic, and that after a few formalities had been

complied with, she would become the wife of her cousin Narcisse. Now there was no person whom she so much dreaded as Narcisse, and when Berenger spoke of him as a feeble fop, she shuddered as though she knew him to have something of the tiger.

'Do you remember Benoit?' she said; 'poor Benoit, who came to Normandy as my *laquais*? When I went back to Anjou he married a girl from Leurre, and went to aid his father at the farm. The poor fellow had imbibed the Baron's doctrine—he spread it. It was reported that there was a nest of Huguenots on the estate. My cousin came to break it up with his *gens d'armes* O Berenger, he would hear no entreaties, he had no mercy; he let them assemble on Sunday, that they might be all together. He fired the house; shot down those who escaped; if a prisoner were made, gave him up to the Bishop's Court. Benoit, my poor good Benoit, who used to lead my palfrey, was first wounded, then tried, and burnt—burnt in the PLACE at Lucon! I heard Narcisse laugh—laugh as he talked of the cries of the poor creatures in the conventicler. My own people, who loved me! I was but twelve years old, but even then the wretch would pay me a half-mocking courtesy, as one destined to him; and the more I disdained him and said I belonged to you, the more both he and my aunt, the Abbess, smiled, as though they had their bird in a cage; but they left me in peace till my uncle brought me to court, and then all began again: and when they said you gave me up, I had no hope, not even of a convent. But ah, it is all over now, and I am so happy! You are grown so gentle and so beautiful, Berenger, and so much taller than I ever figured you to myself, and you look as if you could take me up in your arms, and let no harm happen to me.'

'Never, never shall it!' said Berenger, felling all manhood, strength, and love stir within him, and growing many years in heart in that happy moment. 'My sweet little faithful wife, never fear again now you are mine.'

Alas! poor children. They were a good way from the security they had begun to fancy for themselves. Early the next morning, Berenger went in his straightforward way to the King, thanked him, and requested his sanction for at once producing themselves to the court as Monsieur le Baron and Madame la Baronne de Ribaumont.

At this Charles swore a great oath, as one in perplexity, and bade him not go so fast.

'See here,' said he, with the rude expletives only too habitual with him; 'she is a pretty little girl, and she and her lands are much better with an honest man like you than with that *pendard* of a cousin; but you see he is bent on having her, and he belongs to a cut-throat crew that halt at nothing. I would not answer for your life, if you tempted him so strongly to rid himself of you.'

'My own sword, Sire, can guard my life.'

'Plague upon your sword! What does the foolish youth think it would do against half-a-dozen poniards and pistols in a lane black as hell's mouth?'

The foolish young WAS thinking how could a king so full of fiery words and strange oaths bear to make such an avowal respecting his own capital and his own courtiers. All he could do was to bow and reply, 'Nevertheless, Sire, at whatever risk, I cannot relinquish my wife; I would take her at one to the Ambassador's.'

'How, sir!' interrupted Charles, haughtily and angrily, 'if you forget that you are a French nobleman still, I should remember it! The Ambassador may protect his own countrymen-none else.'

'I entreat your Majesty's pardon,' said Berenger, anxious to retract his false step. 'It was your goodness and the gracious Queen's that made me hope for your sanction.'

'All the sanction Charles de Valois can give is yours, and welcome,' said the King, hastily. 'The sanction of the King of France is another matter! To say the truth, I see no way out of the affair but an elopement.' 'Sire!' exclaimed the astonished Berenger, whose strictly-disciplined education had little prepared him for such counsel.

'Look you! if I made you known as a wedded pair, the Chevalier and his son would not only assassinate you, but down on me would come my brother, and my mother, and M. de Guise and all their crew, veritably for giving the prize out of the mouth of their satellite, but nominally for

disregarding the Pope, favouring a heretical marriage, and I know not what, but, as things go here, I should assuredly get the worst of it; and if you made safely off with your prize, no one could gainsay you—I need know nothing about it—and lady and lands would be your without dispute. You might ride off from the skirts of the forest; I would lead the hunt that way, and the three days' riding would bring you to Normady, for you had best cross to England immediately. When she is one there, owned by your kindred, Monsieur le cousin may gnash his teeth as he will, he must make the best of it for the sake of the honour of his house, and you can safely come back and raise her people and yours to follow the Oriflamme when it takes the field against Spain. What! you are still discontented? Speak out! Plain speaking is a treat not often reserved for me.'

'Sire, I am most grateful for your kindness, but I should greatly prefer going straightforward.'

'Peste! Well is it said that a blundering Englishman goes always right before him! There, then! As your King on the one hand, as the friend who has brought you and your wife together, sir, it is my command that you do not compromise me and embroil greater matters than you can understand by publicly claiming this girl. Privately I will aid you to the best of my ability; publicly, I command you, for my sake, if you heed not your own, to be silent!'

Berenger sought out Sidney, who smiled at his surprise.

'Do you not see,' he said, 'that the King is your friend, and would be very glad to save the lady's lands from the Guisards, but that he cannot say so; he can only befriend a Huguenot by stealth.'

'I would not be such a king for worlds!'

However, Eustacie was enchanted. It was like a prince and princess in Mere Perinne's fairy tales. Could they go like a shepherd and shepherdess? She had no fears-no scruples. Would she not be with her husband? It was the most charming frolic in the world. So the King seemed to think it, though he was determined to call it all the Queen's doing—the first intrigue of her own, making her like all the rest of us—the Queen's little comedy. He undertook to lead the chase as far as possible in the direction of Normandy, when the young pair might ride on to an inn, meet fresh horses, and proceed to Chateau Leurre, and thence to England. He would himself provide a safe-conduct, which, as Berenger suggested, would represent them as a young Englishman taking home his young wife. Eustacie wanted at least to masquerade as an Englishwoman, and played off all the fragments of the language she had caught as a child, but Berenger only laughed at her, and said they just fitted the French bride. It was very pretty to laugh at Eustacie; she made such a droll pretence at pouting with her rosebud lips, and her merry velvety eyes belied them so drolly.

Such was to be the Queen's pastoral; but when Elisabeth found the responsibility so entirely thrown on her, she began to look grave and frightened. It was no doubt much more than she had intended when she brought about the meeting between the young people, and the King, who had planned the elopement, seemed still resolved to make all appear her affair. She looked all day more like the grave, spiritless being she was at court than like the bright young rural queen of the evening before, and she was long in her little oratory chapel in the evening. Berenger, who was waiting in the hall with the other Huguenot gentlemen, thought her devotions interminable since they delayed all her ladies. At length, however, a page came up to him, and said in a low voice, 'The Queen desires the presence of M. le Baron de Ribaumont.'

He followed the messenger, and found himself in the little chapel, before a gaily-adorned altar, and numerous little shrines and niches round. Sidney would have dreaded a surreptitious attempt to make him conform, but Berenger had no notion of such perils,—he only saw that Eustacie was standing by the Queen's chair, and a kindly-looking Austrian priest, the Queen's confessor, held a book in his hand.

The Queen came to meet him. 'For my sake,' she said, with all her sweetness, 'to ease my mind, I should like to see my little Eustacie made entirely your own ere you go. Father Meinhard tells me it is safer that, when the parties were under twelve years old, the troth should be again exchanged. No other ceremony is needed.'

'I desire nothing but to have her made indissolubly my own,' said Berenger, bowing.

'And the King permits,' added Elisabeth.

The King growled out, 'It is your comedy, Madame; I meddle not.'

The Austrian priest had no common language with Berenger but Latin. He asked a few questions, and on hearing the answers, declared that the sacrament of marriage had been complete, but that—as was often done in such cases—he would once more hear the troth-plight of the young pair. The brief formula was therefore at once exchanged—the King, when the Queen looked entreatingly at him, rousing himself to make the bride over to Berenger. As soon as the vows had been made, in the briefest manner, the King broke in boisterously: 'There, you are twice marred, to please Madame there; but hold your tongues all of you about this scene in the play.'

Then almost pushing Eustacie over to Berenger, he added, 'There she is! Take your wife, sir; but mind, she was as much yours before as she is now.'

But for all Berenger had said about 'his wife,' it was only now that he really FELT her his own, and became husband rather than lover-man instead of boy. She was entirely his own now, and he only desired to be away with her; but some days' delay was necessary. A chase on the scale of the one that was to favour their evasion could not be got up without some notice; and, moreover, it was necessary to procure money, for neither Sidney nor Ribaumont had more than enough with them for the needful liberalities to the King's servants and huntsmen. Indeed Berenger had spent all that remained in his purse upon the wares of an Italian pedlar whom he and Eustacie met in the woods, and whose gloves 'as sweet as fragrant posies,' fans, scent-boxes, pocket mirrors, Genoa wire, Venice chains, and other toys, afforded him the mean of making up the gifts that he wished to carry home to his sisters; and Eustacie's counsel was merrily given in the choice. And when the vendor began with a meaning smile to recommend to the young pair themselves a little silver-netted heart as a love-token, and it turned out that all Berenger's money was gone, so that it could not be bought without giving up the scented casket destined for Lucy, Eustacie turned with her sweetest, proudest smile, and said, 'No, no; I will not have it; what do we two want with love-tokens now?'

Sidney had taken the youthful and romantic view of the case, and considered himself to be taking the best possible bare of is young friend, by enabling him to deal honourably with so charming a little wife as Eustacie. Ambassador and tutor would doubtless be very angry; but Sidney could judge for himself of the lady, and he therefore threw himself into her interests, and sent his servant back to Paris to procure the necessary sum for the journey of Master Henry Berenger and Mistress Mary, his wife. Sidney was, on his return alone to Paris, to explain all to the elders, and pacify them as best he could; and his servant was already the bearer of a letter from Berenger that was to be sent at once to England with Walsingham's dispatches, to prepare Lord Walwyn for the arrival of the runaways. The poor boy laboured to be impressively calm and reasonable in his explanation of the misrepresentation, and of his strong grounds for assuming his rights, with his persuasion that his wife would readily join the English church—a consideration that he knew would greatly smooth the way for her. Indeed, his own position was impregnable: nobody could blame him for taking his own wife to himself, and he was so sure of her charms, that he troubled himself very little about the impression she might make on his kindred. If they loved her, it was all right; if not, he could take her back to his own castle, and win fame and honour under the banner of France in the Low Countries. As the Lucy Thistlewood, she was far too discreet to feel any disappointment or displeasure; or if she should, it was her own fault and that of his mother, for all her life she had known him to be married. So he finished his letter with a message that the bells should be ready to ring, and that when Philip heard three guns fired on the coast, he might light the big beacon pile above the Combe.

Meantime 'the Queen's Pastoral' was much relished by all the spectators. The state of things was only avowed to Charles, Elisabeth, and Philip Sidney, and even the last did not know of the renewed troth which the King chose to treat as such a secret; but no one had any doubt of the mutual relations of M. de Ribaumont and Mdlle. de Nid de Merle, and their dream of bliss was like a pastoral

for the special diversion of the holiday of Montpipeau. The transparency of their indifference in company, their meeting eyes, their trysts with the secrecy of an ostrich, were the subjects of constant amusement to the elders, more especially as the shyness, blushes, and caution were much more on the side of the young husband than on that of the lady. Fresh from her convent, simple with childishness and innocence, it was to her only the natural completion of her life to be altogether Berenger's, and the brief concealment of their full union added a certain romantic enchantment, which added to her exultation in her victory over her cruel kindred. She had been upon her own mind, poor child, for her few weeks of court life. She had been upon her own mind, poor child, for her few weeks of court life, but not long enough to make her grow older, though just so long as to make the sense of her having her own protector with her doubly precious. He, on the other hand, though full of happiness, did also feel constantly deepening on him the sense of the charge and responsibility he had assumed, hardly knowing how. The more dear Eustacie became to him, the more she rested on him and became entirely his, the more his boyhood and INSOUCIANCE drifted away behind him; and while he could hardly bear to heave his darling a moment out of his sight, the less he could endure any remark or jest upon his affection for her. His home had been a refined one, where Cecile's convent purity seemed to diffuse an atmosphere of modest reserve such as did not prevail in the court of the Maiden Queen herself, and the lad of eighteen had not seem enough of the outer world to have rubbed off any of that grace. His seniority to his little wife seemed to show itself chiefly in his being put out of countenance for her, when she was too innocent and too proud of her secret matronhood to understand or resent the wit.

Little did he know that this was the ballet-like interlude in a great and terrible tragedy, whose first act was being played out on the stage where they schemed and sported, like their own little drama, which was all the world to them, and noting to the others. Berenger knew indeed that the Admiral was greatly rejoiced that the Nid de Merle estates should go into Protestant hands, and that the old gentleman lost no opportunity of impressing on him that they were a heavy trust, to be used for the benefit of 'the Religion,' and for the support of the King in his better mind. But it may be feared that he did not give a very attentive ear to all this. He did not like to think of those estates; he would gladly have left them all the Narcisse, so that he might have their lady, and though quite willing to win his spurs under Charles and Coligny against the Spaniard, his heart and head were far too full to take in the web of politics. Sooth to say, the elopement in prospect seemed to him infinitely more important than Pope or Spaniard, Guise or Huguenot, and Coligny observed with a sigh to Teligny that he was a good boy, but nothing but the merest boy, with eyes open only to himself.

When Charles undertook to rehearse their escape with them, and the Queen drove out in a little high-wheeled litter with Mne. la Comtesse, while Mme. De Sauve and Eustacie were mounted on gay palfreys with the pommelled side-saddle lately invented by the Queen-mother, Berenger, as he watched the fearless horsemanship and graceful bearing of his newly-won wife, had no speculations to spend on the thoughtful face of the Admiral. And when at the outskirts of the wood the King's bewildering hunting-horn—sounding as it were now here, now there, now low, now high—called every attendant to hasten to its summons, leaving the young squire and damsel errant with a long winding high-banked lane before them, they reckoned the dispersion to be all for their sakes, and did not note, as did Sidney's clear eye, that when the entire company had come straggling him, it was the King who came up with Mme. De Sauve almost the last; and a short space after, as if not to appear to have been with him, appeared the Admiral and his son-in-law.

Sidney also missed one of the Admiral's most trusted attendants, and from this and other symptoms he formed his conclusions that the King had scattered his followers as much for the sake of an unobserved conference with Coligny as for the convenience of the lovers, and that letters had been dispatched in consequence of that meeting.

Those letters were indeed of a kind to change the face of affairs in France. Marshal Strozzi, then commanding in the south-west, was bidden to embark at La Rochelle in the last week of August,

to hasten to the succour of the Prince of Orange against Spain, and letters were dispatched by Coligny to all the Huguenot partisans bidding them assemble at Melun on the third of September, when they would be in the immediate neighbourhood of the court, which was bound for Fontainebleau. Was the star of the Guises indeed waning? Was Charles about to escape from their hands, and commit himself to an honest, high-minded policy, in which he might have been able to purify his national Church, and wind back to her those whom her corruptions had driven to seek truth and morality beyond her pale?

Alas! there was a bright pair of eyes that saw more than Philip Sidney's, a pair of ears that heard more, a tongue and pen less faithful to guard a secret.

CHAPTER VIII. 'LE BROUILON'

But never more the same two sister pearls
Ran down the silken thread to kiss each other.

—Tennyson

Berenger was obliged to crave permission from the King to spend some hours in riding with Osbert to the first hostel on their way, to make arrangements for the relay of horses that was to meet them there, and for the reception of Veronique, Eustacie's maid, who was to be sent off very early in the morning on a pillion behind Osbert, taking with her the articles of dress that would be wanted to change her mistress from the huntress maid of honour to the English dame.

It was not long after he had been gone that a sound of wheels and trampling horses was heard in one of the forest drives. Charles, who was amusing himself with shooting at a mark together with Sidney and Teligny, handed his weapon to an attendant, and came up with looks of restless anxiety to his Queen, who was placed in her chair under the tree, with the Admiral and her ladies round her, as judges of the prize.

'Here is *le brouillon*,' he muttered. 'I thought we had been left in peace too long.'

Elisabeth, who Brantome says was water, while her husband was fire, tried to murmur some hopeful suggestion; and poor little Eustacie, clasping her hands, could scarcely refrain from uttering the cry, 'Oh, it is my uncle! Do not let him take me!'

The next minute there appeared four horses greatly heated and jaded, drawing one of the court coaches; and as it stopped at the castle gate, two ladies became visible within it—the portly form of Queen Catherine, and on the back seat the graceful figure of Diane de Ribaumont.

Charles swore a great oath under his breath. He made a step forward, but then his glance falling on Eustacie's face, which had flushed to the rosiest hue of the carnation, he put his finger upon his lip with a menacing air, and then advanced to greet his mother, followed by his gentlemen.

'Fear not, my dear child,' said the young Queen, taking Eustacie's arm as she rose for the same purpose. 'Obey the King, and he will take care that all goes well.'

The gentle Elisabeth was, however, the least regarded member of the royal family. Her mother-in-law had not even waited to greet her, but had hurried the King into his cabinet, with a precipitation that made the young Queen's tender heart conclude that some dreadful disaster had occurred, and before Mademoiselle de Ribaumont had had time to make her reverence, she exclaimed, breathlessly, 'Oh, is it ill news? Not from Vienna?'

'No, no, Madame; reassure yourself,' replied Diane; 'it is merely that her Majesty, being on the way to Monceaux with Mesdames, turned out of her road to make a flying visit to your graces, and endeavour to persuade you to make her party complete.'

Elisabeth looked as if questioning with herself if this would possibly be the whole explanation. Monceaux was a castle belonging to the Queen Dowager at no great distance from Montpipeau, but there had been no intention of leaving Paris before the wedding, which was fixed for the seventeenth of August, and the bridegroom was daily expected. She asked who was the party at Monceaux, and was told that Madame de Nemours had gone thither the evening before, with her son, M. de Guise, to make ready; and that Monsieur was escorting thither his two sisters, Madame de Lorraine and Madame Marguerite. The Queen-mother had set out before them very early in the morning.

'You must have made great speed,' said Elisabeth; 'it is scarcely two o'clock.'

'Truly we did, Madame; two of our horses even died upon the road; but the Queen was anxious to find the King ere he should set off on one of his long chases.'

Diane, at every spare moment, kept her eyes interrogatively fixed on her cousin, and evidently expected that the taciturn Queen, to whom a long conversation, in any language but Spanish, was always a grievance, would soon dismiss them both; and Eustacie did not know whether to be thankful or impatient, as Elisabeth, with tardy, hesitating, mentally-translated speech, inquired into every circumstance of the death of the poor horses, and then into all the court gossip, which she was currently supposed neither to hear nor understand; and then bethought herself that this good Mademoiselle de Ribaumont could teach her that embroidery stitch she had so long wished to learn. Taking her arm, she entered the hall, and produced her work, so as effectually to prevent any communication between the cousins; Eustacie, meanwhile her heart clinging to her friend, felt her eyes filling with tears at the thoughts of how unkind her morrow's flight would seem without one word of farewell or of confidence, and was already devising tokens of tenderness to be left behind for Diane's consolation, when the door of the cabinet opened, and Catherine sailed down the stairs, with her peculiar gliding step and sweep of dignity. The King followed her with a face of irresolution and distress. He was evidently under her displeasure; but she advanced to the young Queen with much graciousness, and an air of matronly solicitude.

'My daughter,' she said, 'I have just assured the King that I cannot leave you in these damp forests. I could not be responsible for the results of the exposure any longer. It is for him to make his own arrangements, but I brought my coach empty on purpose to transport you and your ladies to Monceaux.

The women may follow with the mails. You can be ready as soon as the horses are harnessed.'

Elisabeth was used to passiveness. She turned one inquiring look to her husband, but he looked sullen, and, evidently cowed by his mother, uttered not a word. She could only submit, and Catherine herself add that there was room for Madame de Sauve and Mademoiselle de Nid de Merle. Madame la Comtesse should follow! It was self-evident that propriety would not admit of the only demoiselle being left behind among the gentlemen. Poor Eustacie, she looked mutely round as if she hoped to escape! What was the other unkindness to this? And ever under the eyes of Diane too, who followed her to their chamber, when she went to prepare, so that she could not even leave a token for him where he would have been most certain to find it. Moments were few; but at the very last, while the queens were being handed in the carriage, she caught the eye of Philip Sidney. He saw the appealing look, and came near. She tried to laugh. 'Here is my gage, Monsieur Sidney,' she said, and held out a rose-coloured knot of ribbon; then, as he came near enough, she whispered imploringly three of her few English words—

'Give to HIM.'

'I take the gage as it is meant,' said Sidney, putting a knee to the ground, and kissing the trembling fingers, ere he handed her into the carriage. He smiled and waved his hand as he met her earnest eyes. One bow contained a scrap of paper pricked with needle-holes. Sidney would not have made out those pricks for the whole world, even had he been able to do more than hastily secure the token, before the unhappy King, with a paroxysm of violent interjections, demanded of him whether the Queen of England, woman though she were, ever were so beset, and never allowed a moment to herself; then, without giving time for an answer, he flung away to his cabinet, and might be heard pacing up and down there in a tempest of perplexity. He came forth only to order his horse, and desire M. de Sauve and a few grooms to be ready instantly to ride with him. His face was full of pitiable perplexity—the smallest obstacle was met with a savage oath; and he was evidently in all the misery of a weak yet passionate nature, struggling with impotent violence against a yoke that evidently mastered it.

He flung a word to his guests that he should return ere night, and they thus perceived that he did not intend their dismissal.

'Poor youth,' said Coligny, mildly, 'he will be another being when we have him in our camp with the King of Navarre for his companion.'

And then the Admiral repaired to his chamber to write one of his many fond letters to the young wife of his old age; while his son-in-law and Philip Sidney agreed to ride on, so as to met poor young Ribaumont, and prepare him for the blow that had befallen him personally, while they anxiously debated what this sudden descent of the Queen-mother might portend. Teligny was ready to believe in any evil intention on her part, but he thought himself certain of the King's real sentiments, and in truth Charles had never treated any man with such confidence as this young Huguenot noble, to whom he had told his opinion of each of his counsellors, and his complete distrust of all. That pitying affection which clings to those who cling to it, as well as a true French loyalty of heart, made Teligny fully believe that however Catherine might struggle to regain her ascendancy, and whatever apparent relapses might be caused by Charles's habitual subjection to her, yet the high aspirations and strong sense of justice inherent in the King were asserting themselves as his youth was passing into manhood; and that the much-desired war would enable him to develop all his higher qualities. Sidney listened, partially agreed, talked of caution, and mused within himself whether violence might not sometimes be mistaken for vigour.

Ere long, the merry cadence of an old English song fell with a homelike sound upon Sidney's ear, and in another moment they were in sight of Berenger, trotting joyously along, with a bouquet of crimson and white heather-blossoms in his hand, and his bright young face full of exultation in his arrangements. He shouted gaily as he saw them, calling out, 'I thought I should meet you! but I wondered not to have heard the King's bugle-horn. Where are the rest of the hunters?'

'Unfortunately we have had another sort of hunt to-day,' said Sidney, who had ridden forward to meet him; 'and one that I fear, will disquiet you greatly.'

'How! Not her uncle?' exclaimed Berenger.

'No, cheer up, my friend, it was not she who was the object of the chase; it was this unlucky King,' he added, speaking English, 'who has been run to earth by his mother.'

'Nay, but what is that to me?' said Berenger, with impatient superiority to the affairs of the nation. 'How does it touch us?'

Sidney related the abstraction of the young Queen and her ladies, and then handed over the rose-coloured token, which Berenger took with vehement ardour; then his features quivered as he read the needle-pricked words-two that he had playfully insisted on her speaking and spelling after him in his adopted tongue, then not vulgarized, but the tenderest in the language, 'Sweet heart.' That was all, but to him they conveyed constancy to him and his, whatever might betide, and an entreaty not to leave her to her fate.

'My dearest! never!' he muttered; then turning hastily as he put the precious token into his bosom, he exclaimed, 'Are their women yet gone?' and being assured that they were not departed when the two friends had set out, he pushed his horse on at speed, so as to be able to send a reply by Veronique. He was barely in time: the clumsy wagon-like conveyance of the waiting-women stood at the door of the castle, in course of being packed with the Queen's wardrobe, amid the janglings of lackeys, and expostulating cries of *femmes de chambre*, all in the worst possible humour at being crowded up with their natural enemies, the household of the Queen-mother.

Veronique, a round-faced Angevin girl—who, like her lady, had not parted with all her rustic simplicity and honesty, and who had been necessarily taken into their confidence—was standing apart from the whirl of confusion, holding the leashes of two or three little dogs that had been confided to her care, that their keepers might with more ease throw themselves into the *melee*. Her face lighted up as she saw the Baron de Ribaumont arrive.

'Ah, sir, Madame will be so happy that I have seen Monsieur once more,' she exclaimed under her breath, as he approached her.

'Alas! there is not a moment to write,' he said, looking at the vehicle, already fast filling, 'but give her these flowers; they were gathered for her; give her ten thousand thanks for her token. Tell

her to hold firm, and that neither king nor queen, bolt nor bar, shall keep me from her. Tell her, our watchword is HOPE.'

The sharp eyes of the duenna of the Queen's household, a rigid Spanish dame, were already searching for stray members of her flock, and Veronique had to hurry to her place, while Berenger remained to hatch new plans, each wilder than the last, and torment himself with guesses whether his project had been discovered. Indeed, there were moments when he fancied the frustration of his purpose the special object of Queen Catherine's journey, but he had the wisdom to keep any such suggestion to himself.

The King came back by supper-time, looking no longer in a state of indecision, but pale and morose. He spoke to no one as he entered, and afterwards took his place at the head of the supper-table in silence, which he did not break till the meal was nearly over. Then he said abruptly, 'Gentlemen, our party has been broken up, and I imagine that after our great hunt tomorrow, no one will have any objection to return to Paris. We shall have merrier sport at Fontainebleau when this most troublesome of weddings is over.'

There was nothing to be done but to bow acquiescence, and the King again became grimly silent. After supper he challenged Coligny to a game of chess, and not a word passed during the protracted contest, either from the combatants or any other person in the hall. It was as if the light had suddenly gone out to others besides the disappointed and anxious Berenger, and a dull shadow had fallen on the place only yesterday so lively, joyous, and hopeful.

Berenger, chained by the etiquette of the royal presence, sat like a statue, his back against the wall, his arms crossed on his breast, his eyes fixed, chewing the cud of the memories of his dream of bliss, or striving to frame the future to his will, and to decide what was the next reasonable step he could take, or whether his irrepressible longing to ride straight off to Monceaux, claim his wife, and take her on horseback behind him, were a mere impracticable vision.

The King, having been checkmated twice out of three times by the Admiral, too honest a man not truly to accept his declaration of not wanting courtly play, pushed away the board, and was attended by them all to his COUCHER, which was usually made in public; and the Queen being absent, the gentlemen were required to stand around him till he was ready to fall asleep. He did not seem disposed to talk, but begged Sidney to fetch his lute, and sing to him some English airs that had taken his fancy much when sung by Sidney and Berenger together.

Berenger felt as if they would choke him in his present turbid state of resentful uncertainty; but even as the unhappy young King spoke, it was with a heavy, restless groan, as he added, 'If you know any lullaby that will give rest to a wretch tormented beyond bearing, let us have it.'

'Alas, Sire!' said the Admiral, seeing that no perilous ears remained in the room; 'there are better and more soothing words than any mundane melody.'

'*Peste*! My good father,' said the King, petulantly, 'has not old Phlipote, my nurse, rocked me to the sound of your Marot's Psalms, and crooned her texts over me? I tell you I do not want to think. I want what will drive thought away—to dull–'

'Alas! what dulls slays,' said the Admiral.

'Let it. Nothing can be worse than the present,' said the wretched Charles; then, as if wishing to break away from Coligny, he threw himself round towards Berenger, and said, 'Here; stoop down, Ribaumont; a word with you. Your matters have gone up the mountains, as the Italians say, with mine. But never fear. Keep silence, and you shall have the bird in your hand, only you must be patient. Hold! I will make you and Monsieur Sidney gentlemen of my bed-chamber, which will give you the *entree* of the Louvre; and if you cannot get her out of it without an *eclat*, then you must be a much duller fellow than half my court. Only that it is not their own wives that they abstract.

With this Berenger must needs content himself; and the certainty of the poor King's good-will did enable him to do his part with Sidney in the songs that endeavoured to soothe the torments of the evil spirit which had on that day effected a fresh lodgment in that weak, unwilling heart.

It was not till the memoirs of the secret actors in this tragedy were brought to light that the key to these doings was discovered. M. de Sauve, Charles's secretary, had disclosed his proceedings to his wife; she, flattered by the attentions of the Duke of Anjou, betrayed them to him; and the Queen-mother, terrified at the change of policy, and the loss of the power she had enjoyed for so many years, had hurried to the spot.

Her influence over her son resembled the fascination of a snake: once within her reach he was unable to resist her; and when in their *tete-a-tete* she reproached him with ill-faith towards her, prophesied the overthrow of the Church, the desertion of his allies, the ruin of his throne, and finally announced her intention of hiding her head in her own hereditary estates in Auvergne, begging, as a last favour, that he would give his brother time to quit France instead of involving him in his own ruin, the poor young man's whole soul was in commotion. His mother knew her strength, left the poison to work, and withdrew in displeasure to Monceaux, sure that, as in effect happened, he would not be long in following her, imploring her not to abandon him, and making an unconditional surrender of himself, his conscience, and his friends into her hands. Duplicity was so entirely the element of the court, that, even while thus yielding himself, it was as one checked, but continuing the game; he still continued his connection with the Huguenots, hoping to succeed in his aims by some future counter-intrigue; and his real hatred of the court policy, and the genuine desire to make common cause with them, served his mother's purpose completely, since his cajolery thus became sincere. Her purpose was, probably, not yet formed. It was power that she loved, and hoped to secure by the intrigues she had played off all her life; but she herself was in the hands of an infinitely more bloodthirsty and zealous faction, who could easily accomplish their ends by working on the womanly terrors of an unscrupulous mind.

CHAPTER IX. THE WEDDING WITH CRIMSON FAVOURS

And trust me not at all or all in all.

—TENNYSON

So extensive was the Louvre, so widely separated the different suites of apartments, that Diane and Eustacie had not met after the pall-mall party till they sat opposite to their several queens in the coach driving through the woods, the elder cousin curiously watching the eyes of the younger, so wistfully gazing at the window, and now and then rapidly winking as though to force back a rebellious tear.

The cousins had been bred up together in the convent at Bellaise, and had only been separated by Diane's having been brought to court two years sooner than Eustacie. They had always been on very kindly, affectionate terms; Diane treating her little cousin with the patronage of an elder sister, and greatly contributing to shield her from the temptations of the court. The elder cousin was so much the more handsome, brilliant, and admired, that no notion of rivalry had crossed her mind; and Eustacie's inheritance was regarded by her as reserved for her brother, and the means of aggradizement an prosperity for herself and her father. She looked upon the child as a sort of piece of property of the family, to be guarded and watched over for her brother; and when she had first discovered the error that the young baron was making between the two daughters of the house, it was partly in kindness to Eustacie, partly to carry out her father's plans, and partly from her own pleasure in conversing with anything so candid and fresh as Berenger, that she had maintained the delusion. Her father believed himself to have placed Berenger so entirely in the background, that he would hardly be at court long enough to discover the imposition; and Diane was not devoid of a strong hope of winning his affection and bending his will so as to induce him to become her husband, and become a French courtier for her sake—a wild dream, but a better castle in the air than she had ever yet indulged in.

This arrangement was, however, disconcerted by the King's passion for Sidney's society, which brought young Ribaumont also to court; and at the time of the mischievous introduction by Madame Marguerite, Diane had perceived that the mistake would soon be found out, and that she should no longer be able to amuse herself with the fresh-coloured, open-faced boy who was unlike all her former acquaintance; but the magnetism that shows a woman when she produces an effect had been experienced by her, and she had been sure that a few efforts more would warm and mould the wax in her fingers. That he should prefer a little brown thing, whose beauty was so inferior to her own, had never crossed her mind; she did not even know that he was invited to the pall-mall party, and was greatly taken by surprise when her father sought an interview with her, accused her of betraying their interests, and told her that this foolish young fellow declared that he had been mistaken, and having now discovered his veritable wife, protested against resigning her.

By that time the whole party were gone to Montpipeau, but that the Baron was among them was not known at the Louvre until Queen Catherine, who had always treated Diane as rather a favoured, quick-witted *protegee*, commanded her attendance, and on her way let her know that Madame de Sauve had reported that, among all the follies that were being perpetrated at the hunting-seat, the young Queen was absolutely throwing the little Nid-de-Merle into the arms of her Huguenot husband, and that if measures were not promptly taken all the great estates in the Bocage would be lost to the young Chevalier, and be carried over to the Huguenot interest.

Still Diane could not believe that it was so much a matter of love as that the young had begun to relish court favour and to value the inheritance, and she could quite believe her little cousin had

been flattered by a few attentions that had no meaning in them. She was not prepared to find that Eustacie shrank from her, and tried to avoid a private interview. In truth, the poor child had received such injunctions from the Queen, and so stern a warning look from the King, that she durst not utter a syllable of the evening that had sealed her lot, and was so happy with her secret, so used to tell everything to Diane, so longing to talk of her husband, that she was afraid of betraying herself if once they were alone together. Yet Diane, knowing that her father trusted to her to learn how far things had gone, and piqued at seeing the transparent little creature, now glowing and smiling with inward bliss, now pale, pensive, sighing, and anxious, and scorning her as too childish for the love that she seemed to affect, was resolved on obtaining confidence from her.

And when the whole female court had sat down to the silk embroidery in which Catherine de Medicis excelled, Diane seated herself in the recess of a window and beckoned her cousin to her side, so that it was not possible to disobey.

'Little one,' she said, 'why have you cast off your poor cousin? There, sit down'—for Eustacie stood, with her silk in her hand, as if meaning instantly to return to her former place; and now, her cheeks in a flame, she answered in an indignant whisper, 'You know, Diane! How could you try to keep him from me?'

'Because it was better for thee, my child, than to be pestered with an adventurer,' she said, smiling, though bitterly.

'My husband!' returned Eustacie proudly.

'Bah! You know better than that!' Then, as Eustacie was about to speak, but checked herself, Diane added, 'Yes, my poor friend, he has a something engaging about him, and we all would have hindered you from the pain and embarrassment of a meeting with him.'

Eustacie smiled a little saucy smile, as though infinitely superior to them all.

'*Pauvre petite*,' said Diane, nettled; 'she actually believes in his love.'

'I will not hear a word against my husband!' said Eustacie, stepping back, as if to return to her place, but Diane rose and laid her hand on hers. 'My dear,' she said, 'we must no part thus. I only wish to know what touches my darling so nearly. I thought she loved and clung to us; why should she have turned from me for the sake of one who forgot her for half his life? What can he have done to master this silly little heart?'

'I cannot tell you, Diane,' said Eustacie, simply; and though she looked down, the colour on her face was more of a happy glow than a conscious blush. 'I love him too much; only we understand each other now, and it is of no use to try to separate us.'

'Ah, poor little thing, so she thinks,' said Diane; and as Eustacie again smiled as one incapable of being shaken in her conviction, she added, 'And how do you know that he loves you?'

Diane was startled by the bright eyes that flashed on her and the bright colour that made Eustacie perfectly beautiful, as she answered, 'Because I am his wife! That is enough!' Then, before her cousin could speak again, 'But, Diane, I promised not to speak of it. I know he would despise me if I broke my word, so I will not talk to you till I have leave to tell you all, and I am going back to help Gabrielle de Limeuil with her shepherdess.'

Mademoiselle de Ribaumont felt her attempt most unsatisfactory, but she knew of old that Eustacie was very determined—all Bellaise know that to oppose the tiny Baronne was to make her headstrong in her resolution; and if she suspected that she was coaxed, she only became more obstinate. To make any discoveries, Diane must take the line of most cautious caresses, such as to throw her cousin off her guard; and this she was forced to confess to her father when he sought an interview with her on the day of her return to Paris. He shook his head. She must be on the watch, he said, and get quickly into the silly girl's confidence. What! had she not found out that the young villain had been on the point of eloping with her? If such a thing as that should succeed, the whole family was lost, and she was the only person who could prevent it. He trusted to her.

The Chevalier had evidently come to regard his niece as his son's lawful property, and the Baron as the troublesome meddler; and Diane had much the same feeling, enhanced by sore jealousy at Eustacie's triumph over her, and curiosity as to whether it could be indeed well founded. She had an opportunity of judging the same evening—mere habit always caused Eustacie to keep under her wing, if she could not be near the Queen, whenever there was a reception, and to that reception of course Berenger came, armed with his right as gentleman of the bedchamber. Eustacie was colouring and fluttering, as if by the instinct of his presence, even before the tall fair head became visible, moving forward as well as the crowd would permit, and seeking about with anxious eyes. The glances of the blue and the black eyes met at last, and a satisfied radiance illuminated each young face; then the young man steered his way through the throng, but was caught midway by Coligny, and led up to be presented to a hook-nosed, dark-haired, lively-looking young man, in a suit of black richly laced with silver. It was the King of Navarre, the royal bridegroom, who had entered Paris in state that afternoon. Eustacie tried to be proud of the preferment, but oh! she thought it mistimed, and was gratified to mark certain wandering of the eye even while the gracious King was speaking. Then the Admiral said something that brought the girlish rosy flush up to the very roots of the short curls of flaxen hair, and made the young King's white teeth flash out in a mirthful, good-natured laugh, and thereupon the way opened, and Berenger was beside the two ladies, kissing Eustacie's hand, but merely bowing to Diane.

She was ready to take the initiative.

'My cousins deem me unpardonable,' she said; 'yet I am going to purchase their pardon. See this cabinet of porcelain *a le Reine*, and Italian vases and gems, behind this curtain. There is all the siege of Troy, which M. le Baron will not doubt explain to Mademoiselle, while I shall sit on this cushion, and endure the siege of St. Quentin from the *bon* Sieur de Selinville.'

Monsieur de Selinville was the court bore, who had been in every battle from Pavia to Montcontour, and gave as full memoirs of each as did Blaise de Monluc, only *viva voce* instead of in writing. Diane was rather a favourite of his; she knew her way through all his adventures. So soon as she had heard the description of the King of Navarre's entry into Paris that afternoon, and the old gentleman's lamentation that his own two nephews were among the three hundred Huguenot gentleman who had formed the escort, she had only to observe whether his reminiscences had gone to Italy or to Flanders in order to be able to put in the appropriate remarks at each pause, while she listened all the while to the murmurs behind the curtain. Yet it was not easy, with all her court breeding, to appear indifferent, and solely absorbed in hearing of the bad lodgings that had fallen to the share of the royal troops at Brescia, when such sounds were reaching her. It was not so much the actual words she heard, though these were the phrases—'*mon ange*, my heart, my love;' those were common, and Diane had lived in the Queen-mother's squadron long enough to despise those who uttered them only less than those who believed them. It was the full depth of tenderness and earnestness, in the subdued tones of the voice, that gave her a sense of quiet force and reality beyond all she had ever known. She had heard and overheard men pour out frantic ravings of passion, but never had listened to anything like the sweet protecting tenderness of voice that seemed to embrace and shelter its object. Diane had no doubts now; he had never so spoken to her; nay, perhaps he had had no such cadences in his voice before. It was quite certain that Eustacie was everything to him, she herself nothing; she who might have had any gallant in the court at her feet, but had never seen one whom she could believe in, whose sense of esteem had been first awakened by this stranger lad who despised her. Surely he was loving this foolish child simply as his duty; his belonging, as his right he might struggle hard for her, and if he gained her, be greatly disappointed; for how could Eustacie appreciate him, little empty-headed, silly thing, who would be amused and satisfied by any court flatterer?

However, Diane held out and played her part, caught scraps of the conversation, and pieced them together, yet avoided all appearance of inattention to M. de Selinville, and finally dismissed

him, and manoeuvred first Eustacie, and after a safe interval Berenger, out of the cabinet. The latter bowed as he bade her good night, and said, with the most open and cordial of smiles, 'Cousin, I thank you with all my heart.'

The bright look seemed to her another shaft. 'What happiness!' said she to herself. 'Can I overthrow it? Bah! it will crumble of its own accord, even if I did nothing! And my father and brother!'

Communication with her father and brother was not always easy to Diane, for she lived among the Queen-mother's ladies. Her brother was quartered in a sort of barrack among the gentlemen of Monsieur's suite, and the old Chevalier was living in the room Berenger had taken for him at the Croix de Lorraine, and it was only on the most public days that they attended at the palace. Such a day, however, there was on the ensuing Sunday, when Henry of Navarre and Marguerite of France were to be wedded. Their dispensation was come, but, to the great relief of Eustacie, there was no answer with it to the application for the CASSATION of her marriage. In fact, this dispensation had never emanated from the Pope at all. Rome would not sanction the union of a daughter of France with a Huguenot prince; and Charles had forged the document, probably with his mother's knowledge, in the hope of spreading her toils more completely round her prey, while he trusted that the victims might prove too strong for her, and destroy her web, and in breaking forth might release himself.

Strange was the pageant of that wedding on Sunday, the 17th of August, 1572. The outward seeming was magnificent, when all that was princely in France stood on the splendidly decked platform in front of Notre-Dame, around the bridegroom in the bright promise of his kingly endowments, and the bride in her peerless beauty. Brave, noble-hearted, and devoted were the gallant following of the one, splendid and highly gifted the attendants of the other; and their union seemed to promise peace to a long distracted kingdom.

Yet what an abyss lay beneath those trappings! The bridegroom and his comrades were as lions in the toils of the hunter, and the lure that had enticed them thither was the bride, herself so unwilling a victim that her lips refused to utter the espousal vows, and her head as force forward by her brother into a sign of consent; while the favoured lover of her whole lifetime agreed to the sacrifice in order to purchase the vengeance for which he thirsted, and her mother, the corrupter of her own children, looked complacently on at her ready-dug pit of treachery and bloodshed.

Among the many who played unconscious on the surface of that gulf of destruction, were the young creatures whose chief thought in the pageant was the glance and smile from the gallery of the Queen's ladies to the long procession of the English ambassador's train, as they tried to remember their own marriage there; Berenger with clear recollection of his father's grave, anxious face, and Eustacie chiefly remembering her own white satin and turquoise dress, which indeed she had seen on every great festival-day as the best raiment of the image of Notre Dame de Bellaise. She remained in the choir during mass, but Berenger accompanied the rest of the Protestants with the bridegroom at their head into the nave, where Coligny beguiled the time with walking about, looking at the banners that had been taken from himself and Conde at Montcontour and Jarnac, saying that he hoped soon to see them taken down and replaced by Spanish banners. Berenger had followed because he felt the need of doing as Walsingham and Sidney thought right, but he had not been in London long enough to become hardened to the desecration of churches by frequenting 'Paul's Walk.' He remained bareheaded, and stood as near as he could to the choir, listening to the notes that floated from the priests and acolytes at the high altar, longing from the time when he and Eustacie should be one in their prayers, and lost in a reverie, till a grave old nobleman passing near him reproved him for dallying with the worship of Rimmon. But his listening attitude had not passed unobserved by others besides Huguenot observers.

The wedding was followed by a ball at the Louvre, from which, however, all the stricter Huguenots absented themselves out of respect to Sunday, and among them the family and guests of the English Ambassador, who were in the meantime attending the divine service that had been postponed on account of the morning's ceremony. Neither was the Duke of Guise present at the

entertainment; for though he had some months previously been piqued and entrapped into a marriage with Catherine of Cleves, yet his passion for Marguerite was still so strong that he could not bear to join in the festivities of her wedding with another. The absence of so many distinguished persons caused the admission of many less constantly privileged, and thus it was that Diane there met both her father and brother, who eagerly drew her into a window, and demanded what she had to tell them, laughing too at the simplicity of the youth, who had left for the Chevalier a formal announcement that he had dispatched his protest to Rome, and considered himself as free to obtain his wife by any means in his power.

'Where is *la petite*?' Narcisse demanded. Behind her Queen, as usual?'

'The young Queen keeps her room to-night,' returned Diane. 'Nor do I advise you, brother, to thrust yourself in the way of *la petite entetee* just at present.'

'What, is she so besotted with the peach face? He shall pay for it!'

'Brother, no duel. Father, remind him that she would never forgive him.'

'Fear not, daughter,' said the Chevalier; 'this folly can be ended by much quieter modes, only you must first give us information.'

'She tells me nothing,' said Diane; 'she is in one of her own humours—high and mighty.'

'*Peste*! where is your vaunt of winding the little one round your finger?'

'With time, I said,' replied Diane. Curiously enough, she had no compunction in worming secrets from Eustacie and betraying them, but she could not bear to think of the trap she had set for the unsuspecting youth, and how ingenuously he had thanked her, little knowing how she had listened to his inmost secrets.

'Time is everything,' said her father; 'delay will be our ruin. Your inheritance will slip through your fingers, my son. The youth will soon win favour by abjuring his heresy; he will play the same game with the King as his father did with King Henri. You will have nothing but your sword, and for you, my poor girl, there is nothing but to throw yourself on the kindness of your aunt at Bellaise, if she can receive the vows of a dowerless maiden.'

'It will never be,' said Narcisse. 'My rapier will soon dispose of a big rustic like that, who knows just enough of fencing to make him an easy prey. What! I verily believe the great of entreaty. 'And yet the fine fellow was willing enough to break the marriage when he took her for the bride.'

'Nay, my son,' argued the Chevalier, will apparently to spare his daughter from the sting of mortification, 'as I said, all can be done without danger of bloodshed on either side, were we but aware of any renewed project of elopement. The pretty pair would be easily waylaid, the girl safely lodged at Bellaise, the boy sent off to digest his pride in England.'

'Unhurt?' murmured Diane.

Her father checked Narcisse's mockery at her solicitude, as he added, 'Unhurt? Yes. He is a liberal-hearted, gracious, fine young man, whom I should much grieve to harm; but if you know of any plan of elopement and conceal it, my daughter, then upon you will lie either the ruin and disgrace of your family, or the death of one or both of the youths.'

Diane saw that her question had betrayed her knowledge. She spoke faintly. 'Something I did overhear, but I know not how to utter a treason.'

'There is no treason where there is no trust, daughter,' said the Chevalier, in the tone of a moral sage. 'Speak!'

Diane never disobeyed her father, and faltered, 'Wednesday; it is for Wednesday. They mean to leave the palace in the midst of the masque; there is a market-boat from Leurre to meet them on the river; his servants will be in it.'

'On Wednesday!' Father and son looked at each other.

'That shall be remedied,' said Narcisse.

'Child,' added her father, turning kindly to Diane, 'you have saved our fortunes. There is put one thing more that you must do. Make her obtain the pearls from him.'

'Ah!' sighed Diane, half shocked, half revengeful, as she thought how he had withheld them from her.

'It is necessary,' said the Chevalier. 'The heirloom of our house must not be risked. Secure the pearls, child, and you will have done good service, and earned the marriage that shall reward you.'

When he was gone, Diane pressed her hands together with a strange sense of misery. He, who had shrunk from the memory of little Diane's untruthfulness, what would he think of the present Diane's treachery? Yet it was to save his life and that of her brother—and for the assertion of her victory over the little robber, Eustacie.

CHAPTER X. MONSIEUR'S BALLET

The Styx had fast bound her
Nine times around her.

—POPE, ODE ON ST.CECILIA'S DAY

Early on Monday morning came a message to Mademoiselle Nid de Merle that she was to prepare to act the part of a nymph of Paradise in the King's masque on Wednesday night, and must dress at once to rehearse her part in the ballet specially designed by Monsieur.

Her first impulse was to hurry to her own Queen, whom she entreated to find some mode of exempting her. But Elisabeth, who was still in bed, looked distressed and frightened, made signs of caution, and when the weeping girl was on the point of telling her of the project that would thus be ruined, silenced her by saying, 'Hush! my poor child, I have but meddled too much already. Our Lady grant that I have not done you more harm than good! Tell me no more.'

'Ah! Madame, I will be discreet, I will tell you nothing; but if you would only interfere to spare me from this ballet! It is Monsieur's contrivance! Ah! Madame, could you but speak to the King!'

'Impossible, child,' said the Queen. 'Things are not her as they were at happy Montpipeau.'

And the poor young Queen turned her face in to her pillow, and wept.

Every one who was not in a dream of bliss like poor little Eustacie knew that the King had been in so savage a mood ever since his return that no one durst ask anything from him a little while since, he had laughed at his gentle wife for letting herself, and Emperor's daughter, be trampled on where his brother Francis's Queen, from her trumpery, beggarly realm, had held up her head, and put down *la belle Mere*; he had amused himself with Elisabeth's pretty little patronage of the young Ribaumonts as a promising commencement in intriguing like other people; but now he was absolutely violent at any endeavour to make him withstand his mother, and had driven his wife back into that cold, listless, indifferent shell of apathy from which affection and hope had begun to rouse her. She knew it would only make it the worse for her little Nid de Merle for her to interpose when Monsieur had made the choice.

And Eustacie was more afraid of Monsieur than even of Narcisse, and her Berenger could not be there to protect her. However, there was protection in numbers. With twelve nymphs, and cavaliers to match, even the Duke of Anjou could not accomplish the being very insulting. Eustacie—light, agile, and fairy-like—gained considerable credit for ready comprehension and graceful evolutions. She had never been so much complimented before, and was much cheered by praise. Diane showed herself highly pleased with her little cousin's success, embraced her, and told her she was finding her true level at court. She would be the prettiest of all the nymphs, who were all small, since fairies rather than Amazons were wanted in their position. 'And, Eustacie,' she added, 'you should wear the pearls.'

'The pearls!' said Eustacie. 'Ah! but HE always wears them. I like to see them on his bonnet —they are hardly whiter than his forehead.'

'Foolish little thing!' said Diane, 'I shall think little of his love if he cares to see himself in them more than you.'

The shaft seemed carelessly shot, but Diane knew that it would work, and so it did. Eustacie wanted to prove her husband's love, not to herself, but to her cousin.

He made his way to her in the gardens of the Louvre that evening, greatly dismayed at the report that had reached him that she was to figure as a nymph of Elysium. She would thus be in sight as a prominent figure the whole evening, even till an hour so late that the market boat which Osbert had arranged for their escape could not wait for them without exciting suspicion, and besides, his delicate English feelings were revolted at the notion of her forming a part of such a spectacle. She

could not understand his displeasure. If they could not go on Wednesday, they could go on Saturday; and as to her acting, half the noblest ladies in the court would be in piece, and if English husbands did not like it, they must be the tyrants she had always heard of.

'To be a gazing-stock–' began Berenger.

'Hush! Monsieur, I will hear no more, or I shall take care how I put myself in your power.'

'That has been done for you, sweetheart,' he said, smiling with perhaps a shade too much superiority; 'you are mine entirely now.'

'That is not kind,' she pouted, almost crying—for between flattery, excitement, and disappointment she was not like herself that day, and she was too proud to like to be reminded that she was in any one's power.

'I thought,' said Berenger, with the gentleness that always made him manly in dealing with her, 'I thought you like to own yourself mine.'

'Yes, sir, when you are good, and do not try to hector me for what I cannot avoid.'

Berenger was candid enough to recollect that royal commands did not brook disobedience, and, being thoroughly enamoured besides of his little wife, he hastened to make his peace by saying, 'True, *ma mie*, this cannot be helped. I was a wretch to find fault. Think of it no more.'

'You forgive me?' she said, softened instantly.

'Forgive you? What for, pretty one? For my forgetting that you are still a slave to a hateful Court?'

'Ah! then, if you forgive me, let me wear the pearls.'

'The poor pearls,' said Berenger, taken aback for a moment, 'the meed of our forefather's valour, to form part of the pageant and mummery? But never mind, sweetheart,' for he could not bear to vex her again: 'you shall have them to-night: only take care of them. My mother would look back on me if she knew I had let them out of my care, but you and I are one after all.'

Berenger could not bear to leave his wife near the Duke of Anjou and Narcisse, and he offered himself to the King as an actor in the masque, much as he detested all he heard of its subject. The King nodded comprehension, and told him it was open to him either to be a demon in a tight suit of black cloth, with cloven-hoof shoes, a long tail, and a trident; or one of the Huguenots who were to be repulsed from Paradise for the edification of the spectators. As these last were to wear suits of knightly armour, Berenger much preferred making one of them in spite of their doom.

The masque was given at the hall of the Hotel de Bourbon, where a noble gallery accommodated the audience, and left full space beneath for the actors. Down the centre of the stage flowed a stream, broad enough to contain a boat, which was plied by the Abbe de Mericour—transformed by a gray beard and hair and dismal mask into Charon.

But so unused to navigation was he, so crazy and ill-trimmed his craft, that his first performance would have been his submersion in the Styx had not Berenger, better accustomed to boats than any of the *dramatis personoe*, caught him by the arms as he was about to step in, pointed out the perils, weighted the frail vessel, and given him a lesson in paddling it to and fro, with such a masterly hand, that, had there been time for a change of dress, the part of Charon would have been unanimously transferred to him; but the delay could not be suffered, and poor Mericour, in fear of a ducking, or worse, of ridicule, balanced himself, pole in hand, in the midst of the river. To the right of the river was Elysium—a circular island revolving on a wheel which was an absolute orrery, representing in concentric circles the skies, with the sun, moon, the seven planets, twelve signs, and the fixed stars, all illuminated with small lamps. The island itself was covered with verdure, in which, among bowers woven of gay flowers, reposed twelve nymphs of Paradise, of whom Eustacie was one.

On the other side of the stream was another wheel, whose grisly emblems were reminders of Dante's infernal circles, and were lighted by lurid flames, while little bells were hung round so as to make a harsh jangling sound, and all of the court who had any turn for buffoonery were leaping and dancing about as demons beneath it, and uttering wild shouts.

King Charles and his two brothers stood on the margin of the Elysian lake. King Henry, the Prince of Conde, and a selection of the younger and gayer Huguenots, were the assailants,—storming Paradise to gain possession of the nymphs. It was a very illusive armour that they wore, thin scales of gold or silver as cuirasses over their satin doublets, and the swords and lances of festive combat in that court had been of the bluntest foil ever since the father of these princes had died beneath Montgomery's spear. And when the King and his brothers, one of them a puny crooked boy, were the champions, the battle must needs be the merest show, though there were lookers-on who thought that, judging by appearances, the assailants ought to have the best chance of victory, both literal and allegorical.

However, these three guardian angels had choice allies in the shape of the infernal company, who, as fast as the Huguenots crossed swords or shivered lances with their royal opponents, encircled them with their long black arms, and dragged them struggling away to Tartarus. Henry of Navarre yielded himself with a good-will to the horse-play with which this was performed, resisting just enough to give his demoniacal captors a good deal of trouble, while yielding all the time, and taking them by surprise by agile efforts, that showed that if he were excluded from Paradise it was only by his own consent, and that he heartily enjoyed the merriment. Most of his comrades, in especial the young Count de Rochefoucauld, entered into the sport with the same heartiness, but the Prince of Conde submitted to his fate with a gloomy, disgusted countenance, that added much to the general mirth; and Berenger, with Eustacie before his eyes, looking pale, distressed, and ill at ease, was a great deal too much in earnest. He had so veritable an impulse to leap forward and snatch her from that giddy revolving prison, that he struck against the sword of Monsieur with a hearty good-will. His silvered lath snapped in his hand, and at that moment he was seized round the waist, and, when his furious struggle was felt to be in earnest, he was pulled over on his back, while yells and shouts of discordant laughter rang round him, as demons pinioned him hand and foot.

He thought he heard a faint cry from Eustacie, and, with a sudden, unexpected struggle, started into a sitting posture; but a derisive voice, that well he knew, cried, 'Ha, the deadly sin of pride! Monsieur thinks his painted face pleases the ladies. To the depths with him—' and therewith one imp pulled him backwards again, while others danced a war-dance round him, pointing their forks at him; and the prime tormentor, whom he perfectly recognized, not only leapt over him, but spurned at his face with a cloven foot, giving a blow, not of gay French malice, but of malignity. It was too much for the boy's forbearance. He struggled free, dashing his adversaries aside fiercely, and as they again gathered about him, with the leader shouting, 'Rage, too, rage! To the prey, imps—' he clenched his fist, and dealt the foremost foe such a blow in the chest as to level him at once with the ground.

'Monsieur forgets,' said a voice, friendly yet reproachful, 'that this is but sport.

It was Henry of Navarre himself who spoke, and bent to give a hand to the fallen imp. A flush of shame rushed over Berenger's face, already red with passion. He felt that he had done wrong to use his strength at such a moment, and that, though there had been spite in is assailant, he had not been therefore justified. He was glad to see Narcisse rise lightly to his feet, evidently unhurt, and, with the frankness with which he had often made it up with Philip Thistlewood or his other English comrades after a sharp tussle, he held out his hand, saying, 'Good demon, your pardon. You roused my spirit, and I forgot myself.'

'Demons forget not,' was the reply. 'At him, imps!' And a whole circle of hobgoblins closed upon with their tridents, forks, and other horrible implements, to drive him back within two tall barred gates, which, illuminated by red flames, were to form the ghastly prison of the vanquished. Perhaps fresh indignities would have been attempted, had not the King of Navarre thrown himself on his side, shared with him the brunt of all the grotesque weapons, and battled them off with infinite spirit and address, shielding him as it were from their rude insults by his own dexterity and inviolability, though retreating all the time till the infernal gates were closed on both.

Then Henry of Navarre, who never forgot a face, held out his hand, saying, 'Tartarus is no region of good omen for friendships, M. de Ribaumont, but, for lack of yonder devil's claw, here is mine. I like to meet a comrade who can strike a hearty blow, and ask a hearty pardon.'

'I was too hot, Sire,' confessed Berenger, with one of his ingenuous blushes, 'but he enraged me.'

'He means mischief.' said Henry. 'Remember, if you are molested respecting this matter, that you have here a witness that you did the part of a gentleman.'

Berenger bowed his thanks, and began something about the honour, but his eye anxiously followed the circuit on which Eustacie was carried and the glance was quickly remarked.

'How? Your heart is spinning in that Mahometan paradise, and that is what put such force into your fists. Which of the houris is it? The little one with the wistful eyes, who looked so deadly white, and shrieked out when the devilry overturned you? Eh! Monsieur, you are a happy man.'

'I should be, Sire;' and Berenger was on the point of confiding the situation of his affairs to this most engaging of princes, when a fresh supply of prisoners, chased with wild antics and fiendish yells by the devils, came headlong in on them; and immediately, completing, as Henry said, the galimatias of mythology, a pasteboard cloud was propelled on the stage, and disclosed the deities Mercury and Cupid, who made a complimentary address to the three princely brothers, inciting them to claim the nymphs whom their valour had defended, and lead them through the mazes of a choric celestial dance.

This dance had been the special device of Monsieur and the ballet-master, and during the last three days the houris had been almost danced off their legs with rehearsing it morning, noon, and night, but one at least of them was scarcely in a condition for its performance. Eustacie, dizzied at the first minute by the whirl of her Elysian merry-go-round, had immediately after become conscious of that which she had been too childish to estimate merely in prospect, the exposure to universal gaze. Strange staring eyes, glaring lights, frightful imps seemed to wheel round her in an intolerable delirious succession. Her only refuge was in closing her eyes, but even this could not long be persevered in, so necessary a part of the pageant was she; and besides, she had Berenger to look for, Berenger, whom she had foolishly laughed at for knowing how dreadful it would be. But of course the endeavour to seek for one object with her eyes made the dizziness even more dreadful; and when, at length, she beheld him dragged down by the demoniacal creatures, whose horrors were magnified by her confused senses, and the next moment she was twirled out of sight, her cry of distracted alarm was irrepressible. Carried round again and again, on a wheel that to her was far more like Ixion's than that of the spheres, she never cleared her perceptions as to where he was, and only was half-maddened by the fantastic whirl of incongruous imagery, while she barely sat out Mercury's lengthy harangue; and when her wheel stood still, and she was released, she could not stand, and was indebted to Charon and one of her fellow-nymphs for supporting her to a chair in the back of the scene. Kind Charon hurried to bring her wine, the lady revived her with essences, and the ballet-master clamoured for his performers.

Ill or well, royal ballets must be danced. One long sob, one gaze round at the refreshing sight of a room no longer in motion, one wistful look at the gates of Tartarus, and the misery of the throbbing, aching head must be disregarded. The ballet-master touched the white cheeks with rouge, and she stepped forward just in time, for Monsieur himself was coming angrily forward to learn the cause of the delay.

Spectators said the windings of that dance were exquisitely graceful. It was well that Eustacie's drilling had been so complete, for she moved through it blindly, senselessly, and when it was over was led back between the two Demoiselles de Limeuil to the apartment that served as a green-room, drooping and almost fainting. They seated her in a chair, and consulted round her, and her cousin Narcisse was among the first to approach; but no sooner had she caught sight of his devilish trim than with a little shriek she shut her eyes, and flung herself to the other side of the chair.

'My fair cousin,' he said, opening his black vizard, 'do you not see me? I am no demon, remember! I am your cousin.'

'That makes it no better,' said Eustacie, too much disordered and confused to be on her guard, and hiding her face with her hands. 'Go, go, I entreat.'

In fact he had already done this, and the ladies added their counsel; for indeed the poor child could scarcely hold up her head, but she said, 'I should like to stay, if I could: a little, a little longer. Will they not open those dreadful bars?' she added, presently.

'They are even now opening them,' said Mdlle. de Limeuil. 'Hark! they are going to fight *en melle*. Mdlle. de Nid de Merle is better now?'

'Oh yes; let not detain you.'

Eustacie would have risen, but the two sisters had fluttered back, impatient to lose nothing of the sports; and her cousin in his grim disguise stood full before her. 'No haste, cousin,' he said; 'you are not fit to move.'

'Oh, then go,' said Eustacie, suffering too much not to be petulant. 'You make me worse.'

'And why? It was not always thus,' began Narcisse, so eager to seize an opportunity as to have little consideration for her condition; but she was unable to bear any more, and broke out: 'Yes, it was; I always detested you more than ever, since you deceived me so cruelly. Oh, do but leave me!'

'You scorn me, then! You prefer to me—who have loved you so long—that childish new-comer, who was ready enough to cast you off.'

'Prefer! He is my husband! It is an insult for any one else to speak to me thus!' said Eustacie, drawing herself up, and rising to her feet; but she was forced to hold by the back of her chair, and Diane and her father appearing at that moment, she tottered towards the former, and becoming quite passive under the influence of violent dizziness and headache, made no objection to being half led, half carried, through galleries that connected the Hotel de Bourbon with the Louvre.

And thus it was that when Berenger had fought out his part in the *melle* of the prisoners released, and had maintained the honours of the rose-coloured token in his helmet, he found that his lady-love had been obliged by indisposition to return home; and while he stood, folding his arms to restrain their strong inclination to take Narcisse by the throat and demand whether this were another of his deceptions, a train of fireworks suddenly exploded in the middle of the Styx—a last surprise, especially contrived by King Charles, and so effectual that half the ladies were shrieking, and imagining that they and the whole hall had blown up together.

A long supper, full of revelry, succeeded, and at length Sidney ad Ribaumont walked home together in the midst of their armed servants bearing torches. All the way home Berenger was bitter in vituperation of the hateful pageant and all its details.

'Yea, truly,' replied Sidney; 'methought that it betokens disease in the mind of a nation when their festive revelry is thus ghastly, rendering the most awful secrets made known by our God in order to warm man from sin into a mere antic laughing-stock. Laughter should be moved by what is fair and laughter-worthy—even like such sports as our own "Midsummer Night's Dream." I have read that the bloody temper of Rome fed itself in gladiator shows, and verily, what we beheld to-night betokens something at once grisly and light-minded in the mood of this country.'

Sidney thought so the more when on the second ensuing morning the Admiral de Coligny was shot through both hands by an assassin generally known to have been posted by the Duke of Guise, yet often called by the sinister sobriquet of *Le Tueur de Roi*.

CHAPTER XI. THE KING'S TRAGEDY

The night is come, no fears disturb
The sleep of innocence
They trust in kingly faith, and kingly oath.
They sleep, alas! they sleep
Go to the palace, wouldst thou know
How hideous night can be;
Eye is not closed in those accursed walls,
Nor heart is quiet there!

—Southey, BARTHOLOMEW'S EVE

'Young gentlemen,' said Sir Francis Walsingham, as he rose from dinner on the Saturday, 'are you bound for the palace this evening?'

'I am, so please your Excellency,' returned Berenger.

'I would have you both to understand that you must have a care of yourselves,' said the Ambassador. 'The Admiral's wound has justly caused much alarm, and I hear that the Protestants are going vapouring about in so noisy and incautious a manner, crying out for justice, that it is but too likely that the party of the Queen-mother and the Guise will be moved to strong measures.'

'They will never dare lay a finger upon us!' said Sidney.

'In a terror-stricken fray men are no respecters of persons,' replied Sir Francis. 'This house is, of course, inviolable; and, whatever the madness of the people, we have stout hearts enough here to enforce respect thereto; but I cannot answer even for an Englishman's life beyond its precincts; and you, Ribaumont, whom I cannot even claim as my Queen's subject—I greatly fear to trust you beyond its bounds.'

'I cannot help it, sir. Nay, with the most grateful thanks for all your goodness to me, I must pray you not to take either alarm or offence if I return not this night.'

'No more, my friend,' said Walsingham, quickly; 'let me know nothing of your purposes, but take care of yourself. I would you were safe at home again, though the desire may seem inhospitable. The sooner the better with whatever you have to do.'

'Is the danger so imminent?' asked Sidney.

'I know nothing, Philip. All I can tell is that, as I have read that dogs and cattle scent an earthquake in the air, so man and women seem to breathe a sense of danger in this city. And to me the graciousness with which the Huguenots have been of late treated wears a strangely suspicious air. Sudden and secret is the blow like to be, and we cannot be too much on our guard. Therefore remember, my young friends both, that your danger or death would fall heavily on those ye love and honour at home.'

So saying, he left the two youths, unwilling to seek further confidence, and Berenger held his last consultation with Sidney, to whom he gave directions for making full explanation to Walsingham in his absence, and expediting Mr. Adderley's return to England. Osbert alone was to go to the Louvre with him, after having seen the five English grooms on board the little decked market-vessel on the Seine, which was to await the fugitives. Berenger was to present himself in the palace as in his ordinary court attendance, and, contriving to elude notice among the throng who were there lodged, was to take up his station at the foot of the stairs leading to the apartments of ladies, whence Eustacie was to descend at about eleven o'clock, with her maid Veronique. Landry Osbert was to join them from the lackey's hall below, where he had a friend, and the connivance of the porter at the postern opening towards the Seine had been secured.

Sidney wished much to accompany him to the palace, if his presence could be any aid or protection, but on consideration it was decided that his being at the Louvre was likely to attract notice to Ribaumont's delaying there. The two young men therefore shook hands and parted, as youths who trusted that they had begun a lifelong friendship, with mutual promises to write to one another—the one, the adventures of his flight; the other, the astonishment it would excite. And auguries were exchanged of merry meetings in London, and of the admiration the lovely little wife would excite at Queen Elizabeth's court.

Then, with an embrace such as English friends then gave, they separated at the gate; and Sidney stood watching, as Berenger walked free and bold down the street, his sword at his side, his cloak over one shoulder, his feathered cap on one side, showing his bright curling hair, a sunshiny picture of a victorious bridegroom—such a picture as sent Philip Sidney's wits back to Arcadia.

It was not a day of special state, but the palace was greatly crowded. The Huguenots were in an excited mood, inclined to rally round Henry of Navarre, whose royal title made him be looked on as is a manner their monarch, though his kingdom had been swallowed by Spain, and he was no more than a French duke distantly related to royalty in the male line, and more nearly through his grandmother and bride. The eight hundred gentlemen he had brought with him swarmed about his apartments, making their lodging on staircases and in passages; and to Berenger it seemed as if the King's guards and Monsieur's gentlemen must have come in in equal numbers to balance them. Narcisse was there, and Berenger kept cautiously amid his Huguenot acquaintance, resolved not to have a quarrel thrust on him which he could not honourably desert. It was late before he could work his way to the young Queen's reception-room, where he found Eustacie. She looked almost as white as at the masque; but there was a graver, less childish expression in her face than he had ever seen before, and her eyes glanced confidence when they met his.

Behind the Queen's chair a few words could be spoken.

'*Ma mie,* art thou well again? Canst bear this journey now?'

'Quite well, now! quite ready. Oh that we may never have masques in England!'

He smiled—'Never such as this!'

'Ah! thou knowest best. I am glad I am thine already; I am so silly, thou wouldest never have chosen me! But thou wilt teach me, and I will strive to be very good! And oh! let me but give one farewell to Diane.'

'It is too hard to deny thee aught to-night, sweetheart, but judge for thyself. Think of the perils, and decide.'

Before Eustacie could answer, a rough voice came near, the King making noisy sport with the Count de Rochefoucauld and others. He was louder and ruder than Berenger had ever yet seen him, almost giving the notion of intoxication; but neither he nor his brother Henry ever tasted wine, though both had a strange pleasure in being present at the orgies of their companions: the King, it was generally said, from love of the self-forgetfulness of excitement—the Duke of Anjou, because his cool brain there collected men's secrets to serve afterwards for his spiteful diversion.

Berenger would willingly have escaped notice, but his bright face and sunny hair always made him conspicuous, and the King suddenly strode up to him: 'You here, sir? I thought you would have managed your affairs so as to be gone long ago!' then before Berenger could reply, 'However, since here you are, come along with me to my bedchamber! We are to have a carouse there to-night that will ring through all Paris! Yes, and shake Rochefoucauld out of his bed at midnight! You will be one of us, Ribaumont? I command it!'

And without waiting for reply he turned away with an arm round Rochefoucauld's neck, and boisterously addressed another of the company, almost as wildly as if he were in the mood that Scots call 'fey.'

'Royalty seems determined to frustrate our plans,' said Berenger, as soon as the King was out of hearing.

'But you will not go! His comrades drink till—oh! two, three in the morning. We should never get away.'

'No, I must risk his displeasure. We shall soon be beyond his reach. But at least I may make his invitation a reason for remaining in the Louvre. People are departing! Soon wilt thou be my own.'

'As soon as the Queen's COUCHER is over! I have but to change to a traveling dress.'

'At the foot of the winding stair. Sweetest be brave!'

'I fear nothing with thee to guard me. See, the Queen is rising.'

Elizabeth was in effect rising to make her respectful progress to the rooms of the Queen-mother, to bid her good night; and Eustacie must follow. Would Diane be there? Oh that the command to judge between her heart and her caution had not been given! Cruel kindness!

Diane was there, straight as a poplar, cold as marble, with fixed eyes. Eustacie stole up to her, and touched her. She turned with a start. 'Cousin, you have been very good to me!' Diane started again, as if stung. You will love me still, whatever you hear?'

'Is this meant for farewell?' said Diane, grasping her wrist.

'Do not ask me, Diane. I may not.'

'Where there is no trust there is no treason,' said Diane, dreamily. 'No, answer me not, little one, there will be time for that another day. Where is he?'

'In the *oeil-de-boeuf*, between the King's and Queen's suites of rooms. I must go. There is the Queen going. Diane, one loving word.'

'Silly child, you shall have plenty another time,' said Diane, breaking away. 'Follow thy Queen now!'

Catherine, who sat between her daughters Claude and Marguerite, looked pre-occupied, and summarily dismissed her daughter-in-law, Elizabeth, whom Eustacie was obliged to follow to her own state-room. There all the forms of the COUCHER were tediously gone through; every pin had its own ceremony, and even when her Majesty was safely deposited under her blue satin coverlet the ladies still stood round till she felt disposed to fall asleep. Elisabeth was both a sleepy and a considerate person, so that this was not so protracted a vigil as was sometimes exacted by the more wakeful princesses; but Eustacie could not escape from it till it was already almost midnight, the period for her tryst.

Her heart was very full. It was not the usual flutter and terror of an eloping girl. Eustacie was a fearless little being, and her conscience had no alarms; her affections were wholly with Berenger, and her transient glimpses of him had been as of something come out of a region higher, tenderer, stronger, purer, more trustworthy than that where she had dwelt. She was proud of belonging to him. She had felt upheld by the consciousness through years of waiting, and now he more than realized her hopes, and she could have wept for exulting joy. Yet it was a strange, stealthy break with all she had to leave behind. The light to which he belonged seemed strange, chill, dazzling light, and she shivered at the thought of it, as if the new world, new ideas, and new requirements could only be endured with him to shield her and help her on. And withal, there seemed to her a shudder over the whole place on that night. The King's eyes looked wild and startled, the Queen-mother's calm was strained, the Duchess of Lorraine was evidently in a state of strong nervous excitement; there were strange sounds, strange people moving about, a weight on everything, as if they were under the shadow of a thunder-cloud. 'Could it be only her own fancy?' she said to herself, because this was to be the great event of her life, for surely all these great people could not know or heed that little Eustacie de Ribaumont was to make her escape that night!

The trains of royalty were not sumptuously lodged. France never has cared so much for comfort as for display. The waiting-lady of the bedchamber slept in the ante-room of her mistress; the others, however high their rank, were closely herded together up a winding stair leading to a small passage, with tiny, cell-like recesses, wherein the demoiselles slept, often with their maids, and then dressed themselves in the space afforded by the passage. Eustacie's cell was nearly at the end of the gallery, and exchanging 'good-nights' with her companions, she proceeded to her recess, where she expected

to find Veronique ready to adjust her dress. Veronique, however, was missing; but anxious to lose no time, she had taken off her delicate white satin farthingale to change it for an unobtrusive dark woolen kirtle, when, to her surprise and dismay, a loud creaking, growling sound made itself heard outside the door at the other end. Half-a-dozen heads came out of their cells; half-a-dozen voices asked and answered the question, 'What is it?' 'They are bolting our door outside.' But only Eustacie sped like lightning along the passage, pulled at the door, and cried, 'Open! Open, I say!' No answer, but the other bolt creaked.

'You mistake, CONCIERGE! We are never bolted in! My maid is shut out.'

No answer, but the step retreated. Eustacie clasped her hands with a cry that she could hardly have repressed, but which she regretted the next moment.

Gabrielle de Limeuil laughed. 'What, Mademoiselle, are you afraid they will not let us out to-morrow?'

'My maid!' murmured Eustacie, recollecting that she must give a colour to her distress.

'Ah! perhaps she will summon old Pierre to open for us.'

This suggestion somewhat consoled Eustacie, and she stood intently listening for Veronique's step, wishing that her companions would hold their peace; but the adventure amused them, and they discussed whether it were a blunder of the CONCIERGE, or a piece of prudery of Madame la Comtesse, or, after all, a precaution. The palace so full of strange people, who could say what might happen? And there was a talk of a conspiracy of the Huguenots. At any rate, every one was too much frightened to go to sleep, and, some sitting on the floor, some on a chest, some on a bed, the girls huddled together in Gabrielle de Limeuil's recess, the nearest to the door, and one after another related horrible tales of blood, murder, and vengeance—then, alas! Only too frequent occurrences in their unhappy land—each bringing some frightful contribution from her own province, each enhancing upon the last-told story, and ever and anon pausing with bated breath at some fancied sound, or supposed start of one of the others; then clinging close together, and renewing the ghastly anecdote, at first in a hushed voice that grew louder with the interest of the story. Eustacie alone would not join the cluster. Her cloak round her shoulders, she stood with her back against the door, ready to profit by the slightest indication outside of a step that might lead to her release, or at least enable her to communicate with Veronique; longing ardently that her companions would go to bed, yet unable to avoid listening with the like dreadful fascination to each of the terrible histories, which added each moment to the nervous horror of the whole party. Only one, a dull and composed girl, felt the influence of weariness, and dozed with her head in her companion's lap; but she was awakened by one general shudder and suppressed cry when the hoarse clang of a bell struck on the ears of the already terrified, excited maidens.

'The tocsin! The bell of St. Germain! Fire! No, a Huguenot rising! Fire! Oh, let us out! Let us out! The window! Where is the fire? Nowhere! See the lights! Hark, that was a shot! It was in the palace! A heretic rising! Ah! there was to be a slaughter of the heretics! I heard it whispered. Oh, let us out! Open the door!'

But nobody heard: nobody opened. There was one who stood without word or cry, close to the door—her eyes dilated, her cheek colourless, her whole person, soul and body alike, concentrated in that one impulse to spring forward the first moment the bolt should be drawn. But still the door remained fast shut!

CHAPTER XII. THE PALACE OF SLAUGHTER

A human shambles with blood-reeking floor.

MISS SWANWICK, Esch. Agamemnon

The door was opened at last, but not till full daylight. It found Eustacie as ready to rush forth, past all resistance, as she had been the night before, and she was already in the doorway when her maid Veronique, her face swollen with weeping, caught her by the hands and implored her to turn back and listen.

And words about a rising of the Huguenots, a general destruction, corpses lying in the court, were already passing between the other maidens and the CONCIERGE. Eustacie turned upon her servant: 'Veronique, what means it? Where is he?'

'Alas! alas! Ah! Mademoiselle, do but lie down! Woe is me! I saw it all! Lie down, and I will tell you.'

'Tell! I will not move till you have told me where my husband is,' said Eustacie, gazing with eyes that seemed to Veronique turned to stone.

'Ah! my lady—my dear lady! I was on the turn of the stairs, and saw all. The traitor—the Chevalier Narcisse—came on him, cloaked like you—and—shot him dead—with, oh, such cruel words of mockery! Oh! woe the day! Stay, stay, dear lady, the place is all blood—they are slaying them all—all the Huguenots! Will no one stop her?—Mademoiselle—ma'm'selle!—'

For Eustacie no sooner gathered the sense of Veronique's words than she darted suddenly forwards, and was in a few seconds more at the foot of the stairs. There, indeed, lay a pool of dark gore, and almost in it Berenger's black velvet cap, with the heron plume. Eustacie, with a low cry, snatched it up, continued her headlong course along the corridor, swiftly as a bird, Veronique following, and vainly shrieking to her to stop. Diane, appearing at the other end of the gallery, saw but for a moment the little figure, with the cloak gathered round her neck, and floating behind her, understood Veronique's cry and joined in the chase across hall and gallery, where more stains were to be seen, even down to the marble stairs, every step slippery with blood. Others there were who saw and stood aghast, not understanding the apparition that flitted on so swiftly, never pausing till at the great door at the foot of the stairs she encountered a gigantic Scottish archer, armed to the teeth. She touched his arm, and standing with folder arms, looked up and said, 'Good soldier, kill me! I am a Huguenots!'

'Stop her! bring her back!' cried Diane from behind. 'It is Mdlle. De Nil-de-Merle!'

'No, no! My husband is Huguenot! I am a Huguenot! Let them kill me, I say!'—struggling with Diane, who had now come up with her, and was trying to draw her back.

'Puir lassie!' muttered the stout Scotsman to himself, 'this fearsome night has driven her demented.'

But, like a true sentinel, he moved neither hand nor foot to interfere, as shaking herself loose from Diane, she was springing down the steps into the court, when at that moment the young Abbe de Mericour was seen advancing, pale, breathless, horrorstruck, and to him Diane shrieked to arrest the headlong course. He obeyed, seeing the wild distraction of the white face and widely glaring eyes, took her by both hands, and held her in a firm grasp, saying, 'Alas, lady, you cannot go out. It is no sight for any one.'

'They are killing the Protestants,' she said; 'I am one! Let me find them and die.'

A strong effort to free herself ensued, but it was so suddenly succeeded by a swoon that the Abbe could scarcely save her from dropping on the steps. Diane begged him to carry her in, since they were in full view of men-at-arms in the court, and, frightful to say, of some of the ladies of the

palace, who, in the frenzy of that dreadful time, had actually come down to examine the half-stripped corpses of the men with whom they had jested not twelve hours before.

'Ah! it is no wonder,' said the youthful Abbe, as he tenderly lifted the inanimate figure. 'This has been a night of horrors. I was coming in haste to know whether the King knows of this frightful plot of M. de Guise, and the bloody work that is passing in Paris.'

'The King!' exclaimed Diane. 'M. l'Abbe, do you know where he is now? In the balcony overlooking the river, taking aim at the fugitives! Take care! Even your *soutane* would not save you if M. d'O and his crew heard you. But I must pray you to aid me with this poor child! I dread that her wild cries should be heard.'

The Abbe, struck dumb with horror, silently obeyed Mdlle. De Ribaumont, and brought the still insensible Eustacie to the chamber, now deserted by all the young ladies. He laid her on her bed, and finding he could do no more, left her to her cousin and her maid.

The poor child had been unwell and feverish ever since the masque, and the suspense of these few days with the tension of that horrible night had prostrated her. She only awoke from her swoon to turn her head from the light and refuse to be spoken to.

'But, Eustacie, child, listen; this is all in vain—he lives,' said Diane.

'Weary me not with falsehoods,' faintly said Eustacie.

'No! no! no! They meant to hinder your flight, but–'

'They knew of it?' cried Eustacie, sitting up suddenly. 'Then you told them. Go—go; let me never see you more! You have been his death!'

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.