

native which remained to him from disgrace and want.

The envoy received the duke's pledge to join his master, and departed. But scorning like a cowardly renegade to flee immediately from France, Bourbon remained shut up in the very heart of the kingdom, and in his castle of Chantelle, which he strongly fortified, awaited the assault, which he was assured would ere long be directed against him. And so it proved—a strong force, led on by Francis in person, shortly invested the place, and with the courage that had made his name a terror to his foes, Bourbon resisted almost to the death. But the power and strength of the assailants were more than a match for the stout and valiant hearts that defended the walls of Chantelle, and though they quailed not, they were at last reduced to the extremity of submission or flight. Many preferred the former; but the duke, although he received an intimation that Francis would pardon the past, on condition of his again returning to his allegiance, was too deeply exasperated to accept any terms from his sovereign, and choosing rather to fly, assumed a humble disguise, and followed by a small train of gentlemen, who still adhered to his doubtful fortune, he safely made his escape.

During this brief and stormy period in the life of Bourbon, there were moments when softer thoughts held sway over him, and the gentle image of the princess Renée, came like an angel visitant to calm his harassed soul. He had received tidings of her through a private courier, on the morning succeeding his departure from Bras de Fer, and recently had learned, that she was still at Fontainebleau, where she had remained with the queen, after the king's departure for Paris. On the eve of bidding, perhaps, an eternal farewell to France, a resistless wish to behold her ere he went, took strong possession of his heart. He knew not if he could ever call her his, for he feared that his own hand had placed an insurmountable barrier between them, but he longed not the less, to tell her he was not quite the guilty thing he seemed, and to hear her pure lips pronounce his pardon. Many plans were devised and rejected, for the accomplishment of this object—but difficult as it was, he resolved, before joining the emperor, to hazard life rather than leave it unattempted.

The princess in the meantime had heard of his defection, and it smote her to the heart. She was suffering much from her accident in the forest, at the time, and tenderly and proudly as she loved him, the startling tidings retarded her recovery, and threw her into a state of nervous weakness and dejection, which furnished a plea for her remaining in quiet at Fontainebleau, when the king and his gay courtiers left it. The queen, who understood and sympathised in her feelings, kindly favoured her wish, and announced her own intention, also to prolong her stay,

till the approach of the Christmas festivities. Retaining only their favourite ladies and attendants, the royal sisters were left to that quiet which their tastes peculiarly fitted them to enjoy, and many were the hours during those few weeks of calm seclusion, that they passed alone with each other, in the interchange of mutual confidence and affection.

One evening, when the princess had seemed more languid than usual, the queen retired early from the circle of her ladies, and repairing to her sister's apartment, seated herself beside the low couch on which the lovely Renée indolently reclined. The sun was setting with almost tropical splendour, and its rays streaming through an opposite window, fell upon the recumbent figure of the princess, and seemed to restore, to the pale, yet lovely face which they irradiated, the departed glow of health and joy. Tears were hanging on her eyelids, and as the queen, bending over her, tenderly kissed them away,—

“You have been nursing sad thoughts, sweet sister,” she gently said; “I left the countess charming you with Clement Marot's witty rhymes, and deemed all would be well when I returned. How is it then, my loved one, that I find you thus alone, and in tears?”

“I sent her from me,” sobbed the princess; “my heart ached for solitude,—for ah, dearest Claude, I can dwell on naught but that sad flight from Chantelle—his wanderings,—his sufferings—ah, might I but share them with him!”

“You would not dishonour our royal father's memory by linking your name with that of —”

“Hush! speak it not aloud!” exclaimed the princess, eagerly laying her small hand upon the queen's. “Pray for for me, dearest, pray that I may have strength to still my murmurs. God has sent this chastening upon me, and I should strive to hear it meekly.”

“Do so, dear one,” said the queen,—“Glorious rewards await those who endure with child-like faith and patience, the sorrows and trials of life. They are mercifully designed to purify the soul—to refine it from the passions and desires of earth, and, as they are sent in love, so we in meekness should receive them.”

“I will strive and pray that I may do so, dear sister,” said the princess. “Light indeed are my afflictions compared with the sorer trials of your lot, and yet you smile amid them all, with serene and saintly patience.”

“God is my helper, sweetest Renée,” said the queen; “ask of him, my sister, and he will grant you all needful aid.”

She turned aside to wipe away a starting tear—for her's was indeed a lofty but a bitter lot. A queen without power,—a wife unblest by the affections of her lord, her rightful place in his heart supplanted by the worthless and abandoned, what marvel that her hold on earth was weakened, and