

name. She is a paragon of conjugal virtue ; worthy of all love and reverence, and incapable of harbouring a thought that could militate against the glory and honour of him, who so lightly appreciates her excellence."

A cold and bitter sneer wreathed the proud lip of the duchess.

"And the fair Renée," she said,—“have you not also an eulogium for her ? Methinks from the scene enacted this morning in the forest”——

"Forbear, madame !" sternly interrupted the duke. "You touch a theme too sacred for light words. I can endure the probe to search all other wounds,—but this—oh God !——"

And with an indistinct murmur, he turned away, and leaned against a pillar, subdued by the rushing thought that she might be lost to him, in the desperate career on which he had resolved. No pity for his sufferings touched the relentless heart of the duchess—she deemed them light, compared with those which tortured her own heart, and she gloated on them with a fierce and cruel triumph.

"Comfort yourself, my lord," she said, with a malignant smile, "for ere your shadow has flitted from the soil of France, your fair and faithless princess will have found a solace in the love of Ercole da Este."

"Fiend !" muttered the duke between his closed teeth,—and then, reluctant to increase her triumph, he said, with forced serenity :

"So let it be, if Heaven ordains it. I would not win her, if I could, to share my unknown fortunes, but I shall bear her image with me to the end of life, and may he, who shall have the happiness to call her his, cherish her, even as I would have done, within his heart of hearts."

"Tis well," exclaimed the duchess, trembling with rage,—“since words like these but lend a keener edge to my resolve. My lord, we part now, and it may be forever. But my curse remains with you, and may the sufferings which you have inflicted on my soul, be repaid with tenfold interest by the intenser agonies of yours. I go—and amid the many trials that await you in the future, learn to repent the indignities offered to one, whose most unworthy act was that of lavishing her affections on an undeserving and ungrateful object."

She drew the friar's garb around her as she spoke, and bending a glance of proud disdain upon the noble face of him, who had by turns awakened her impassioned love, and her vindictive hate, she turned haughtily away, and with imperial step and air, swept from the apartment. But she did not return immediately to the palace. Two confidential servants had attended her to Bras de Fer, and safe in their protection, she proceeded to the house of Cornelius Agrippa, her physician, and a celebrated astrologer of the time. The fires of vengeance were again kindled in her soul ; the calm yet resolute

repulse of Bourbon to her love, rendered almost intolerable her sense of the humiliation to which she had subjected herself—but more than even this, the frank avowal of his passion for another, had added fuel to the flames. It was the earnest desire of her heart, that evil in every shape might befall him, and anxious to learn if her malignant wishes were destined to be accomplished, she hastened to consult Agrippa, in whose occult science she cherished unbounded faith.

The man of art erected the duke's horoscope, according to the desire of his noble patroness,—but aware of the persecutions which Bourbon had been compelled to endure from the duchess, and himself detesting her with all his heart, Agrippa, on purpose to torment her, predicted for the constable all kinds of triumph and happiness, instead of the miserable fate which his tormentor had desired the celestial bodies to reveal. Enraged and disappointed by his answers, which she more than half suspected were prompted by malice towards herself, the duchess quitted the astrologer in a paroxysm of anger, and the next day deprived him of the pension he had enjoyed from her bounty, and dismissed him from her service. He was a man of wit and genius, and this act of gross injustice, roused him to write the cutting satire against her, for which he was compelled, in order to escape her terrible vengeance, to seek his safety in flight.

When the duchess had given utterance to her last bitter denunciation, and quitted the presence of Bourbon, he felt like one suddenly released from the fearful horrors of the incubus. Left once more to the solitary companionship of his thoughts, he no longer remained listlessly inactive, while their shadowy forms flitted around him. The intelligence conveyed to him by the duchess, of the king's extreme exasperation, and the active measures already taken by him to express it, convinced Bourbon that his personal safety would be endangered by remaining even till morning, at Bras de Fer, and accordingly he summoned his attendants, and caused the household to be immediately aroused.

A brief consultation ensued, hasty arrangements were made for an instant departure, and escorted by a train of faithful followers, the duke set forth for Chantelle, just as the castle bell tolled out the hour of midnight. Thither he had long intended to repair in case an open rupture with the king compelled him to retire from court ; there the Lord of Beaurien, the emperor's envoy, awaited the answer to his master's overtures, which decided by the events of the day and evening, Bourbon was now prepared to render in the affirmative. Driven to desperation by a long series of injuries, and at that moment smarting beneath that last cruel act of tyranny, which stripped him of fortune and estates, the duke rushed to open revolt, not only to gratify his revenge, which was a virtue of the age, but as the only alter-