

CHAPTER XVII

CANZON DE REINI—PART III

THE three fugitives had walked a long stage through drenching heaths and woods, whose quietude was broken only by the drip of falling dew; the promise of the dawn had been blotted out by dense exhalation from the land. Mist, soft and lapping as fleece, imprisoned them in sunless and unshadowing light—a light omnipresent, glaring and cheerless. Their cloaks wrapped them against the raw cold of it, against the wet; Mabilla's hair, long since shaken loose from the bodkin that held it, sagged streaming about her shoulders; time and again she shook them free from the clinging burden, which then lay in one heavy roll, lustrous as a ship's cable new hauled from the tideway. She was tired; her skirt clung to her knees, hobbling her; but her cheeks were as fresh as dewy roses, and her eyes sparkled like two mountain tarns under a windy sky. Light danced in them; they sang, and they dared greatly toward the utter subjugation of Lanceilhot, now owned lord of her mind. He, good youth, under stress of his cares—conducting on a flight from the Red Earl two fair women of his seraglio (and one the fairest woman under the sun)—had, for the moment, no eyes for the happy provocation alight in hers. He carried