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LITERATURE.

Blanche of Paris.

A TALE OF THE GAY AND GALLANT TIME OF CHARLES VII.

From an old Magazine.

One of the most accomplished cavaliers who flourished at the court of Charles VII., King of France, was the Duke de Chateau Rosier. The fame of his name had penetrated all parts of his native country, and was acknowledged even by the stern Britons, whose haughty valor was then signalized by a successful invasion of la belle France. The Duke de Chateau Rosier had wedded the fair Marguerite de Valence, whose beauty he had long proclaimed peerless, and sustained his gallant avowal whenever lances were splintered and swords hacked in the filting-ring. But he was a fickle lover, and after wedding the lady of his choice, his affection grew a little colder. This was not an unusual occurrence in the days of Charles VII., and is sometimes noticed even now. Gay, volatile and gallant, the young Duke lived but for the pursuit of pleasure, and although his temperament rarely hurried him into a criminal excess it prompted him to seek amusement, *coute qui coute*. It happened unfortunately for the Duchess of Chateau Rosier that her husband had promised an old comrade on his death-bed to watch over his surviving daughter, Lady Blanche, called for her pale and pearly beauty, Lys-des-champs. As this fair damsel was not received beneath his roof, the young Duke was constrained to make her frequent visits at her late father's mansion, where, under the guardianship of a staid old duenna, the Lys-des-champs seemed determined to live in monastic seclusion, unknown to and unknowing the world. In her presence he trifled many an hour away; and Blanche endured his society, partly because he was the friend of her father, and partly because he kept at a distance the gaudy courtiers whose flattery annoyed her. In the midst of this unworthy trifling the Duke received a summons to join the banners of Charles VII., then displayed against the English in the North. He briefly acquainted the Duchess of the necessity of a speedy departure, while his trumpets blew to horse and saddle in the court yard.

"Farewell!" said the Duchess, wiping a tear from her eye as she spoke; "farewell, brave of heart, stout of hand! Do thy duty against these fierce invaders, for the honor of thy lady and la belle France. And stay! You are a married man, but still let my color and my favor float over thy lofty helmet." She detached a scarf of blue and silver from her bosom, and gave it to the Duke as she embraced him. The knight received it with an air of proffered respect and perfect indifference, politely enough took leave of the Duchess, and hummed the air of a *provencale* song as he descended the great marble staircase that led from his hall to the court yard.

"A benison for thy gift!" muttered the Duke to himself. "But Henri de Chateau Rosier wears the favor of another dame." As he thus soliloquized, he drew forth a small white glove whereon a single silver lily was embroidered, and placed it on the crest of his helmet. Mounting his strong war-horse, he rode out into the streets of Paris, where, taking an unfrequented route, he sought the dwelling of Lady Blanche. In those remote times they had not discovered the method of being "not at home" to an unwelcome visitor, and so poor Lady Blanche was forced to give an audience to the Duke. She endeavored to keep her old duenna by her side, but that worthy old dame refused to understand the signals of her mistress, and being in the interest of her errant cavalier, made some excuse for leaving him alone with Blanche.

"To what, my Lord," said Blanche "am I to attribute a visit at this early and unseasonable hour, and why do you come hither in garb so unfitting for a lady's bower, wearing corslet of Milan steel instead of doublet of Venetian velvet?"

"Alas! fair lady," answered the Duke, "the morion and corslet must now be familiar to the dames of France, and happy they if they do not see the steel of Englishmen gleaming in their bowers. I am for the wars, and therefore wear my coat of proof. This must be my apology of taking leave of you in harness."

"Say no more, my Lord," said Lady Blanche. "Though I dislike to see noble knights arm themselves for the tournament, prepared to deface the image of their Maker under the pretense of honoring their mistresses, still I can view the departure of the chivalry of France to battle for their country with feelings of unmingled pleasure. Methinks the helmet of the knight sits with loftier grace upon his brow when he rides forth in such a cause. Go then, my Lord, hasten to join the standard of our royal Charles, and believe that while your sword is carrying destruction to the ranks of the invaders, Blanche of Paris is kneeling to Notre-Dame, and praying the blessed Virgin to extend her spotless shield before you."

"Beautiful girl!" exclaimed the Duke, "yours is the noble enthusiasm of the Maid of Orleans. Hear me proffer on my knee the homage"——

"Rise, my Lord," cried Lady Blanche. "This language I have once before forbidden. It is unworthy of yourself—insulting to me. What! do you forget you are a husband and a father? When I listen with attention to your shameless suit, may the avenging fires of heaven strike me dead!"

"Ha!" cried the Duke, rising and muttering to himself—"she preaches rarely. My Carmelite confessor could hardly give more ghostly counsel. By our Lady, there must be more in this than meets the ear. She has some other lover. I'll delay my departure till to-morrow, lying *perdu* in the meanwhile, and try to discover whom this proud girl loves. If Lady Blanche is but as other dames of the court all Paris shall ring with the tale. Henri de Chateau Rosier is not lightly scorned."

With an air of deep respect the knight raised the fair hand of the offended Blanche to his lips, and took his leave of her. From her presence he went to seek his friend and companion in arms, the Chevalier St. Armand de Montluc. Meanwhile, old duenna of poor Blanche, who only favored the Duke de Chateau Rosier for the sake of his money, had told the unhappy Duchess the secret of her husband's infidelity. To return, however, to the Duke.

"St. Armand," said the Duke, when the two knight-companions met, "thou art my tried and trusty friend."

"I thank Your Grace for the confidence," replied St. Armand. "Sir Damon and Sir Pythias, of whom our troubadours tell the story in their jingling ballads, were not, I think, more faithful to each other. If my poor sword cleft the crown of the caitiff who was swinging an axe above thy helm at Pont du Nord, it was thy good lance that saved my life at Barrace."

"I come to ask a favor of thee, St. Armand."

"Twenty, an' you please. My heart and hand, sword and lance, are at your service."

"Thanks, dear St. Armand. But first tell me, chevalier, before thou hearest my request, wert ever in love?"

"Not I!" replied St. Armand frankly; "though it is not to every one I might make so unknightly an avowal. To say it is like speaking ill of Mother Church, the saints absolve us! I have fought for love in the ring, but 'twas an imaginary mistress whose scarf adorned my helm. Thomas de Montford questioned her beauty, and I drove my lance through harness and heart, and the truest knight that ever bear shield bit the dust my charger spurned. Nay, noble Duke, fortune is my mistress, and I pursue her with spur, spear and snaffle."

"Pardon my weakness, then, St. Armand, and listen to me. Mount guard this night at the door of Lady Blanche's dwelling. Suffer no one to enter, questioned or unquestioned. Should a gallant come and seek to force an entrance, discover his name, defeat his purpose with thy sword. But slay him not: my steel alone must drink his blood. Do this, and thou wouldst win my thanks and gratitude."

St. Armand promised to oblige his friend, and the Duke de Chateau Rosier took his departure for an obscure lodging in the suburbs of the city, where he proposed to pass the night.

"By our Lady of Paris!" cried the Chevalier de Montluc, as he folded his dark mantle and leaned back in the angle of a gray buttress at the entrance of Lady Blanche's castellated mansion. "By our Lady of Paris! it ill suits me to sit like a hooded crow when I should be spreading my vans like a soaring falcon. Could not His Grace of Chateau Rosier find some softer gallant than Montluc to sentinel his sleeping Lindamira—this Esclairmonde that turns his noble head! Were it not for the chance of some smart blows to warm my limbs and try the temper of my sword I should be now pricking for the camp of Charles with a score of lances at my back. *Qui vive?*" he exclaimed, suddenly, as a strange footstep met his ear.

"One who seeks to enter," was the answer, as a youth, slightly but gracefully made, and clad in shining steel, showed himself in a small space, on which the moon's rays fell, directly in front of Montluc. "The watchword is, *l'amour des dames*."

"Thou mayst be right," said the Chevalier de Montluc, "but yet thou canst not enter."

"Why, sirrah, this insolence?" cried the youthful stranger. "Thy voice sounds strangely to mine ear. Can the Lady Blanche have changed her servitors?"

"It matters little," said St. Armand. "Thou dost not pass, Sir Boy."

"Defend thyself," cried the youth, instantly drawing his sword.

"I have crossed blades with knights," replied the Chevalier, dispassionately, "but I never war with striplings or women."

"Defend thyself," repeated the stranger, sternly, "or I may test the skill of thine armorer severely." So saying he made a desperate lunge at the steel-clad breast of the Chevalier St. Armand.

"Ha! that was a shrewd thrust," exclaimed the sentinel; and now roused from his indifference, he unsheathed his ponderous sword and attacked the aggressor in turn. But the Chevalier found that his antagonist supplied his deficiency in strength and size by employing consummate adroitness and activity. He avoided a tremendous blow of the Chevalier by leaping to one side, and repaid it with interest by a severe cut on the sword-arm of his adversary. At the moment of receiving this disabling wound the Chevalier's foot slipped and he fell to the ground. The sword of the youth was instantly at his throat.

"Yield thee!" cried the conqueror, "or, by the stainless Notre-Dame de Paris, I will slay thee on the spot!"

"I am vanquished," said the fallen knight, "and my life is in thy hands."

"I spare it!" cried the stranger youth, sheathing his sword, and permitting the Chevalier to rise. "Resume the sword you wield so well. Go to your friend, St. Armand, and tell him that his rival bears testimony to the courage of his sentinel. You perceive that you are known. Adieu."

The Chevalier wound his mantle round his injured arm, returned his blade to the scabbard, and left the scene of his discomfiture with a slow and feeble step. The youth smiled at his good fortune, then, tapping a wicket in the iron-bound door, whispered the pass-word, *l'amour des dames*, and was admitted. The treacherous duenna conducted the youth up the lordly staircase and ushered him into a spacious apartment, where, seated in a rich arm chair, with her head resting pensively upon her hand, the Lady Blanche appeared wrapped in a painful reverie. The sight of a stranger recalled her to her senses, and with an indignant glance at the duenna, she exclaimed:

"What means this, Ursula? Is there a conspiracy to rob me of my rest and name? This morning you admitted one unwelcome visitor, and to-night I am again intruded on. Begone, sir, ere I summon those on whose protection I can rely."

"Beauteous madame," replied the stranger, in a sneering tone, removing his steel casque and bowing with great ceremony, "thy feeble voice would vainly shriek for aid. Know that thy aged seneschal has drunk so deeply of malvoisie he would not awake although the ban dog Bedford and all his crew of English mastiffs were howling at the gates. As for thy other varlets, their drink was drugged by the pottingar, and their leaden sleep is like the sleep of death. Thy sentinel I wounded in the street. This aged damsel is more at my command than thine. I speak the truth, fair Blanche of Paris—thy name is in my hands. Aye, wring thy hands, sweet Lys-des-champs; in nothing it availeth. And, Ursula, begone!"

"Stay," exclaimed Lady Blanche; "stay, Ursula, I conjure, I command you!"

"Nay," muttered the old crone, "I am old and aweary. The young and fair may keep vigils together, but Ursula is past her day of folly. I'll to bed—to bed—to bed—to bed." And muttering to herself the old hag hobbled away.

"Now, Saint Mary be my succor," cried the deserted maiden, dropping into a chair.

"Fairest damsel," said the youth, approaching, "why this terror? I do not speak in vanity, but of a truth, fair ladies have not often looked with fear upon my face." So saying he shook his dark curls from his brow and cast a self satisfied look at a huge mirror of polished steel, on each side of which burned a huge wax torch in a silver sconce. Drawing nearer to the lady he tried to possess himself of the lady's hand, but she angrily withdrew it from his clasp.

"Why so scornful, lovely lady?" asked the audacious youth. "I'll wager my horse against a hawk, if I were the Duke de Chateau Rosier, these lily fingers might have rested in my palm, unstirred."

"Now, out upon thee for a foul-mouthed slanderer," cried the highly insulted Lady Blanche. "Dost thou think this hand has ever clasped in love the fingers of a worthy wedded knight?"

"Without a doubt," replied the stranger.

"Craven, thou liest!" exclaimed Blanche, surprised into the expression by the anger of insulted virtue.

"Our lady forgive me!" she went on, crossing herself, "and teach me how to bear this woe. Sainted Virgin look upon thy humble suppliant in this the hour of distress."

Confident of the protection of heaven, the beautiful maiden drew a crucifix from her bosom and pressed it to her lips. "Now," she said, "approach me if thou darest. Polute me with thy touch while the image of my Saviour is in my hand, and this vaulted roof will cave in upon thy head. Yes, may heaven bid its thunder fall and avenge me, even though it crush this worthless body in the ruins."

"Blanche of Paris!" cried the stranger, "Rise! Thy virtue has been tried and proved; it has sustained the fiery ordeal. Rise! I could not harm thee if I would. Here, take my sword and poniard and plunge them in my bosom if I harbor one single thought against thy peace."

He approached Blanche, who had now risen, and whispered something in her ear.

She gazed upon him with deep astonishment, while a blush overspread her lovely countenance. The next moment she placed her hand in his and led him from the room. The cause of this strange conduct will soon be explained.

The hall they had quitted remained vacant for some time. At length a door on each side of the apartment was flung wide open, and two men, sheathed in steel, advanced towards each other with a rapid pace, their armed heels ringing on the marble floor. As they approached each other, the warriors laid their hands on their swords, and both exclaimed in a breath—

"Who art thou?"

"I," said the larger of the two knights, raising his visor, "am Henri Duke de Chateau Rosier. I scorn disguise. But who art thou that comest hither in the dead of night to disturb the slumbers of our Lady Blanche?"

"I came hither to protect her," was the answer.

"What right hast thou to do so?" demanded the Duke; "and who appointed you her knight? Know that I am her sworn defender, and will yield my privilege to no base churl as thou!"

"You her protector," retorted the other. "Aye, and you give her such protection as the wolf gives the lamb of the valley—you seek but to destroy her."

"Liar!" vociferated the Duke; "but that thou art an unknown churl I would repay you for this insolence with steel."

"Churl!" cried the other, "thou knowest it is false. See! the golden spurs upon my heel, the belt that holds my falchion, proclaim alike my knighthood, my equality to the proud Duke. Look upon my face," he added, "know ye not these lineaments?"

"Surely," answered the Duke, in a more respectful and less determined than he had previously used, "they are the features of Sir Huon de Baisancœur, page to our liege, the King."

"Aye, you know me now," said Huon. "Believe me, Duke, no lover longed to embrace his mistress with half the eagerness I have sought this interview. From Lady Blanche herself I never should have known her wrongs; but the hag who guards her hath some sense of honor. I could hardly credit the tale of Ursula. Hardly could I think that Henri de Chateau Rosier, the renowned, the fortunate, honored by his sovereign, beloved by his lady, could meditate the ruin of an orphan girl. Your presence here brings most damning evidence."

"Ursula! hag! witch!" muttered the Duke to himself. "She must be the very incarnate spirit of mischief. What else could have impelled her to have embroiled us all? But I'll incarcerate her in the lowest cell of the *chateau-noir* in Languedoc, where toads and serpents as venomous as herself shall be her sole companions."

"Is your grace deliberating as to whether you will accept my challenge or not?" inquired Huon, sneeringly, playing with a mailed glove he had drawn from his hand.

"Insolent!" cried the Duke, "thy blood be on thy head!"

Actuated by ungovernable fury, and forgetful of the hour and place, they drew their swords and began a desperate combat, in which the Duke de Chateau Rosier, perhaps depressed by the consciousness of a bad cause or rendered rash by rage, was foiled by the consummate skill and determined resolution of his enemy. Sir Huon had him at a disadvantage and would probably have slain him had there not arisen at this critical moment the shriek of a woman in distress, followed by the rustling of silk and the clanking of armour. Blanche of Paris and her male companion, the former in tears the latter with drawn sword, rushed into the hall. Blanche sprung towards the victorious knight and clung convulsively to his sword arm, while the stranger youth rushing between the combatants struck up their swords and fiercely cried:

"Hold, Huon! Wouldst slay the Duke? And thou, Henri, hast thou no nobler employment than brawling in a lady's dwelling? Shame on ye both! Return your swords until Charles VII. bids ye draw them in your country's cause. Sheath your blades, I say!"

"Under your favor, no!" replied Huon; "Or not until an explanation. Oh, Blanche! Blanche! I did believe thee true. Had an angel whispered ought against thee, I would have closed mine ears to the tale. Farewell, poor Blanche. Henceforth I couch no lance for lady's honor. As for you, dastard," he added, turning fiercely on the stranger youth, "there lies my gauntlet! Take it up and follow forth!"

Ere the youth could make reply, the Duke interfered.

"Pardon me," he said, his haughty air contradicting the courtesy of his words, "but this quarrel belongs to me. I swore to the father of Blanche on his deathbed that I would guard her honor with my sword and life. Woe is me! Her beauty made me for a time forget my vow. But if penance, dread and offerings made can expiate my crime, nor scourge, nor treasure shall be spared. Oh! Blanche of Paris, thou hast wronged thy father's memory; but the author of thy guilt shall rue in blood the ruin he has made!"

"Can you—will you be silent now?" said Blanche imploringly, to her companion.

"Fair sir," said the stranger, advancing, composedly, "I will give you all the satisfaction in my power. Your Grace I cannot combat, being withheld by a sacred vow; and as for this courteous gentleman, Sir Huon de Baisancœur, methinks it as ill to harm the favorite page of our sovereign as to wed the lover of our Lady Blanche."

"Her lover no longer," said Huon, proudly folding his arms.

The stranger youth unhelmed, and passing his ungloved fingers through his hair, a cloud of silken tresses descended gloriously over the fine-rounded shoulders, and the Duchess of Chateau Rosier stood revealed before them.

"Start not, Henri," cried the lady, "Pardon my masquerading habit and I will try to forget your own inconstancy."

"'Twas a passing madness," said the Duke, folding the steel-clad beauty in his arms. "But say how came you here?"

"Yonder ugly, mischief-making hag inflamed my jealousy—nay, breathed calumnious tales about the Lady Blanche. I came—I proved her truth and purity. Ursula has betrayed us all to each other—but her malevolent spirit will be humbled when she finds the happy issue. As for my garb, the prowess of the Maid of the Orleans has fired a matron of Paris with emulation. The time has come, my Lord, when even this feeble arm may guard the life I love. But look. Your Grace! These simple lovers! The cheeks of Blanche are absolutely on fire. And yonder gallant, too. His helm will surely drop from his nervous fingers. What say you, my Lord; shall we not make them happy? Nay, we take upon ourselves the pleasing duty." Advancing gracefully between the youthful pair, she took a hand of each and said, "We, Marguerite, Duchess de Chateau Rosier, do, of our own free will and right, freely bestow the hand of the Lady Blanche of Paris upon Sir Huon de Baisancœur, knight and page of Charles VII., and, furthermore, we do command the Chevalier to salute the lips of this fair damsel as a penance for his having challenged us to mortal combat."

The marriage of Blanche and Huon was shortly after celebrated in the presence of the sovereign and his court. The bride was pale and timid as the lily of the valley, to which the poets liked her, but Huon's lips displayed a smile of lofty triumph while he breathed his vows. The Duke and Duchess viewed them with delight, and they had the holy blessing of the Maid of Orleans as she stood beside the altar, clad in golden armor from head to heel.

Dante Alighieri.

Dante Alighieri was born at Florence in the year 1265. His family was noble and wealthy, and the poet was no doubt educated in all the literature of the time. But this was small. Dante was familiar with the amorous lyrics of the Provencal poets, the Sicilian love songs, and romances of the *trouveres*.

Florence is the city of Dante, and Dante is the poet of Florence. The Florentines look back with a kind of superstitious awe to the first and noblest in the long line of their illustrious men. His works are studied in the schools and commented upon by their ablest professors, and his memory is celebrated in frequent festivals, when the whole population of Florence join in doing honor to the injured shade of its unhappy poet. The last of these celebrations occurred in 1855. Six hundred years had then elapsed since Dante's birth. The city of Florence dedicated the day to his memory; business ceased; the name of Dante was on every tongue; princes and peasants, rich and poor, the man of intellect and the man of pleasure, the aged who had fed upon his verses and the children who could scarcely lisp them, mingled in the procession and moved reverently towards the statue of Dante, and crowned it with a wreath of flowers. It was the nineteenth century doing homage to the thirteenth.

We may now notice a few important particulars in the poet's life. The first was his passion for Beatrice de'Portinari. Beatrice died in early life, but Dante seemed to have kept her form and face constantly before him to the close of his own life. He believed that she had ascended into heaven to become his guardian angel, and her glorified countenance looked down upon him wherever he trod. His great poem seemed chiefly designed to embalm her memory. It is to her that he would owe every thought. She protects him by her intercession when he enters the Inferno, and she meets him in heaven to conduct him to the presence of the Deity; and thus the chivalric conception of a spotless mistress everywhere pervades the first great poem of the Middle ages. The spirit of the troubadour and the knight-errant fills the genius of Dante.

Besides his unhappy attachment, the poet's life was marked by an almost ceaseless series of misfortunes. He took part in the civil government of Florence, fought in her defense bravely, and was for a time chief magistrate of the city. But the opposite party having regained power, Dante was fined, banished, and at length was even sentenced to be burned alive. The remainder of his life was passed in poverty, exile, and sometimes in actual want. He strove in vain to get possession of Florence by force of arms, and then had recourse to a petition to its people; but his fellow-citizens refused to suffer his re-call. Florence offered him while living only imprisonment or the stake, and at length the poet died in 1321, an exile at the court of Ravenna.—*Harper's Magazine for May.*

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WOULD RESPECTFULLY invite the attention of all to their
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Their COMBINATION SOLO STOPS are still unequaled and the combined,
PIPE and REED ORGAN
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USE EVER MANUFACTURED.
Send for Circulars and Music which will be sent free of charge.
GEO. WOODS & CO.,
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Business Cards.

CO-PARTNERSHIP CARD.
I HAVE this day associated MR. H. R. EMMERSON with me in professional Co-Partnership, and the business hereafter will be conducted under the name, style and firm of
HICKMAN & EMMERSON.
Dorchester, N. B., Nov. 2nd, 1877. } A. J. HICKMAN.

L. WESTERGAARD & CO.,
Ship Agents & Ship Brokers,
(Consulate of the Netherlands,) (Consulate of Austria and Hungary,)
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july 24

Notice of Removal.
G. H. VENNING,
Clock and Watch Maker.
WOULD respectfully inform the inhabitants of Sackville and vicinity that he has removed his Shop to Mr. John Bell's NEW BUILDING, where he will be happy to attend to his old customers and as many new ones as will favor him with their patronage. ☞He can promise strict attention and reasonable despatch.
Plain Gold Rings made to order. Jewelry neatly repaired. sep26 G. H. V.

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Marbleized Mantles and Grates,
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Tinware, etc., etc.,
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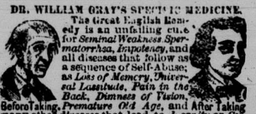
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