



CHAPTER XIV.



"C'EST étonnant !" murmured the Duc de St. Louis the same evening softly to himself, standing on the steps of the Hôtel Murat, after assisting in the morning at those various civil ceremonies and impediments with which our beloved Italy, in her new character as a nation of Free Thought, does her best to impede and deter all such as cling to so old-world and pedantic a prejudice as marriage.

The dénouement of the drama which he himself had first set in action had fallen upon him like a thunder-bolt. He had had no conception of what would happen. He had thought to enrich his friend by one of the finest fortunes