

beautiful Adele lying in peaceful slumbers so near him. Pausing one moment to quiet his excited feelings, he cautiously unclosed the door, and the next instant stood in the midst of the apartment. Good Heavens! what a scene presented itself! Stretched on a bier, attired in the vestments of the grave, lay the body of the Duchess, while on a table near, with the features distorted by the most loathsome of all diseases, lay the severed head of her whom he had left in the bloom of youth and health and beauty! Tall tapers, placed at each extremity of the bier, shed a ghastly glare upon this dreadful spectacle; and uttering a smothered cry of horror, the wretched man fell senseless beside the dead. His mistress had died of small-pox, after an illness of only six hours, and amid the confusion and dread which always attended this frightful malady, her remains were so little respected, that the coffin having been found too short, the surgeons had severed her head from her body!

When he recovered his consciousness, the Abbe de Rance found himself still alone with the frightful images of death. In a paroxysm of incipient madness, he rushed from the apartment, and at day-break was found lying senseless at the door of his own hotel. When the attendants, who should have watched the Duchess, entered the room, they found the private door unclosed, and a manteau, which was recognized as belonging to the Abbe de Rance, together with a glove, stamped with his family arms, lying beside the bier. Death had betrayed the secret of their loves, and ere the disfigured remains of the beautiful Adele were deposited in the tomb, the whole court rang with the tale of horror.

This is no wild and unprobable fiction, gentle reader. Such was the fate, as recorded in the annals of the time, of one of the chief ornaments of a court, and such the revolting barbarity which characterized the obsequies of youth and beauty and rank, in the age of Louis the Fourteenth.

Months passed away ere the Abbe de

Rance recovered from the terrible shock. Madness would have been almost mercy compared to the pangs of grief, the stings of remorse, and the fearful recollections which haunted him day and night. The image of Madame de Montbazon leaning on his bosom, her arms entwined about his neck, her eyes beaming unutterable tenderness into his, was frightfully blended with the remembrance of the bloodstained head, the loathsome features, the glazed and half open eyes which had so lately met his view; and often were his attendants aroused at deep midnight by the wild shrieks which told of the horror such visions awakened in the suffering penitent. But time wrought its usual work of peace in the heart. Armand de Rance rose from the bed of sickness stricken in spirit, desolate in heart, but resolved to expiate the sin for which he had suffered. With a calmness that seemed almost unnatural, and even led to the suspicion that the taint of insanity still lingered about him, he set himself to the task of reforming his mode of life. Dismissing his retinue of servants, he sold all his plate, jewels, and rich furniture, and distributed their price among the poor. All luxury was banished from his table, and denying himself even the most innocent recreation, he spent his whole time in prayer, and the study of the sacred writings. Neither the railleries of his friends, nor the jeers of the gay world could deter him from the course he had now marked out for himself. He sold all his estates, and relinquished all his rich benefices, reserving only the Abbey of La Trappe, which he obtained permission from the king to hold, not as a church gift, but simply as an Abbot, subject to the same laws that governed the brotherhood.—To this humble retreat he retired in the year 1662, bidding adieu for ever to a world in which he had sinned and suffered so much.

His first care, after opening the duties of the abbey, was to reform the abuses which had crept into the fraternity, through the relaxed discipline of his predecessors; but finding many of the