

unhappy lovers, yet should the duke be detected in this daring and unauthorised visit, she shuddered at the fearful consequences in which it must inevitably involve him. Yet, as her commands had interdicted intrusion, when she sought the princess, she felt that for the present moment there was security, and from this certainty she drew comfort, and courage also, to await a reasonable time, the termination of the interview—her devout mind in the mean time assuming the attitude which it best loved, that of humble prayer to Him, who was her stay and support all at seasons, and her only refuge in times of extremity and trouble.

During that anxious interval, brief as it really was, the minutes seemed to her to lengthen themselves out into hours, and when the queen at last felt, that there was peril in granting the lovers a longer period of indulgence, she arose and reluctantly intruded on their privacy. Startled by her appearance, Bourbon, however, had still sufficient presence of mind to bend down his head and appear as if absorbed in the duties of his assumed office; but the princess astonished at the queen's intrusion, looked fixedly upon her, and read in her countenance a confirmation of her fears.

"Ah, my sister, all is known to you!" she wildly exclaimed.

At the sound of her voice, the duke sprang to his feet, and turned his uncovered face calmly and boldly towards the queen.

"I only am the aggressor, madame," he hastily said, "her highness was wholly ignorant of my intention to come hither, and deserves not to suffer blame for my act."

"But you, my lord," returned the queen in a suppressed voice, "what temerity in you to venture here. Had this discovery been left, as it might have been, to another than myself, I tremble at the thought of the consequences, which must have involved more than yourself in suffering and shame."

"God forbid, that through word or deed of mine any should unjustly suffer wrong," exclaimed the duke, "and least of all, those whom it is my bounden duty, and my dearest joy to love and to obey." And with a gesture of humble reverence he bent before his sovereign.

"Then waste not another moment here," she said;—"my weak heart has lured me to grant you dangerous indulgence, but now I must use my power to command your instant departure hence."

"I will obey your majesty forthwith," he said, "and may God forever bless you, madame,—bless and reward you for all your goodness, and for your thousand acts and words of kindness, to him, who has shown himself a too unworthy servant of so bounteous and gracious a mistress. I beseech your majesty to grant me your forgiveness for all my past offences, and I shall depart in peace."

"I have naught to forgive, my lord," said the

gentle queen, tears filling her soft eyes as she looked upon the wronged and noble Bourbon, "naught, naught, in all your bearing to pardon—but much to grieve for; and most of all, that a loyal son of France should turn traitor to the soil he had so long and gloriously defended."

"Madame, I should never have deserved this reproach had your illustrious father still sat upon the throne, which he honored by his virtues," said the duke with emotion; "but this is a sore subject, and if so please your majesty we will not dwell upon it now,—I have matters of tenderer import to speak of, and time wastes fast. Madame, to your kind care I commend my plighted bride. My farewell words to her are spoken, and with God's leave I will return at no distant day, to bear her to the home, and it shall be a princely one, which I am yet to win for her. Till then I commend her to your care, and I implore your majesty to shelter her, even as you would your own princely infants from every rude and cutting blast which malice, worldliness, or levity, may with cruel aim, direct against her, and so shall the prayers of an exile and a wanderer ascend daily to Heaven for blessings on your head. Madame, farewell! and much as appearances bely my sincerity, doubt it not, when I swear to you, that never shall the queen of France or her royal children want a defender, while the arm of Charles de Bourbon can wield a sword."

He knelt before her as he uttered the closing words, and pressed the folds of her robe reverently to his lips, then slowly rising, turned towards the mute and weeping princess. She knew it was to speak one more farewell, his last and saddest, and almost frenzied at the thought that he was leaving her, perhaps forever, she cast herself in wild abandonment upon his breast, sobbing as if her very heart would break. He held her there in speechless agony, for the words of hope and comfort which he strove to whisper in her ear, died away amid that fearful strife of love and grief, in inarticulate and murmured sounds. Never before had his firm soul been so shaken, as by the bitter agony of that last wild farewell.

At length he laid her from his clasping arms, death-like, and still, and cold, for in unconsciousness that fond and throbbing heart had lost awhile its sense of wo. One long and straining look he bent upon her quiet face, sealed once again, with lingering love his lips upon her brow, then rising drew the cowl close over his features, and quitting the apartment, threaded his way through the corridors, and reached, unsuspected, the low postern door by which he had obtained admission into the palace.

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The career of the Constable de Bourbon, both before and subsequent to his flight from Chantelle, is