

events should separate us, and wherefore then, when you go forth to scenes of trial and of danger, should I live on alone and sad, amid the slanderers of your name, the spoilers of your honours and your fortune."

"Alas, that I must turn away from the faithful and devoted heart, that would cling to me even in disgrace," he said despondingly. "But by the very depth and energy of my love, I am forbidden to involve in my uncertain destiny, her, who would nobly renounce life's luxuries and splendours, to share the stigma and the scorn which rest upon my name! Sweetest Renée, tempt not my weakness further—I sought you to exchange one fond farewell—to hear from your lips that I was not utterly condemned—to tell you that death must still this heart before it can cease to cherish your dear image, with tender and inviolable fidelity—to ask of you sometimes to recall our past moments of happiness, and to breathe a prayer for brighter days, when the lone wanderer shall have achieved a happier fortune, and return to claim this hand as the dear reward of his sufferings."

"And for this only, to wring my heart with the anguish of a sad, perchance an eternal farewell, have you now sought me," she exclaimed with a wild vehemence that Bourbon had thought foreign to her nature. "But it shall not be! I have naught to live for, here, and I will not forsake you in this your hour of darkness and need; urge me not, Bourbon, unless you would that I distrust the sincerity of your love."

"That you can never do, my beloved," he said, "for at your feet I would now lay down my life, if the proof were wanting of my entire and changeless affection. Blest to me would be any lot which your presence brightened, my Renée; and yet I would not, no, not for the wealth of worlds, take advantage of your generous and self-sacrificing love, and link your fate with mine, in this, the hour of its darkest and gloomiest despondency."

The princess bent her face upon her hands, and tears trickled fast and bright through her slender fingers, while her bursting sobs almost unmanned his heart. But the purity and fervour of his affection for her, aided by his high sense of honour and of duty, enabled him to withstand her pleadings, and drawing her tenderly towards him:

"Cherish firm faith in my unchanging love, sweet one," he said, "even as I do in yours; and when in other realms, and in the service of a nobler monarch, I have won with my sword, (the only possession that remains to me) a name and rank among my peers, I will return to claim my plighted bride; and then, if my hopes deceive me not, the proud Francis will no longer dare withhold her from me. In the face of the world I will demand my own betrothed, and kings, as is meet, shall stand beside us at the altar! Is not this a bright picture, my be-

loved, and is it not better so, than now, like a lurking bandit, to steal you forth from the palace of your ancestors?"

He paused but her lips gave no reply, silently she wept on, and again his low murmurs were poured into her ear.

"Rest quietly here for awhile, my loved one, and our separation will soon be ended; amidst the uncertain changes of my lot, the busy turmoil of my life, my thoughts will gladly seek you here, peacefully cradled in your princely home, and solaced by the tender ministries of kind and kindred hearts."

"Ah, little do you know," she said in trembling accents, "how small my chance of peace is in the home to which you doom me. To hear your name reviled,—our love denounced, and scorned, myself wounded with many a cruel word, for daring to cherish even your remembrance—and ah, worse than all,—persecuted to bestow my hand on one, from whom I shrink with cold indifference, if not with utter hate—this is the peace which I enjoy, the rest amidst which your thoughts must seek me."

The duke was pierced to the soul by her sad low murmurs—that she, his gentle, his cherished one, should be exposed to bear all this for his sake, while he was powerless to chastise those, who crushed his bruised flower to the earth. Almost he felt it a duty to yield to her entreaties, and to the pleadings of his own fond heart, and bear her from the power of those, who so cruelly added to her affliction, to share the lesser evils of his yet uncertain lot. But firmly resisting this impulse, he strove to speak with cheerfulness, as tenderly folding her to his heart, he said:

"You rive my very soul with your sad words, my best beloved, and fain would I shelter my drooping one henceforth and for ever in this bosom. But yet it cannot be—for your sake, sweet one, I constrain myself to quit you; but only for a while—bear bravely on for a brief, brief space, and all shall then be well,—your wrongs, and mine avenged, our destinies united, and hope and joy again shedding their bright unclouded light upon our path."

Before the princess could reply, the side door gently opened, and the queen slowly re-entered the apartment. On retiring, at the entrance of the supposed confessor, she had remained in an adjoining chamber, awaiting his departure, to rejoin her sister. But she had not sat long alone, before some unguarded expressions uttered by the duke, caught her ear and awakened her suspicions. They were so unlike the low passionless tones of Father Gregory, that fears of the truth flashed athwart her mind, and in a few moments were confirmed, by the half suppressed sobs of the princess, and a few words which were audible to her in Bourbon's low and soothing reply. Terrified by the discovery, the queen remained motionless and trembling, unknowing what course to pursue. Her heart bled for the