

CHAPTER II.

THE ORATORY.

You who read this will please remember that I was but a girl, and that my powers of resistance were limited. Some of you, perhaps, may have gone through the same ordeal, not in the rough-and-ready way that I had to make the passage, but through a slower if not less certain mill. The result being the same in both cases, to wit, that you have stood, as I did, at the altar with vows on your lips that you felt in your heart were false.

A thought had struck me when I was led back to my room, and that was to throw myself on the mercy of de Lorgnac. But means of communication with him were denied to me by the foresight of my persecutors. Even my maid, Mousette, was not allowed to see me, and Madame de Martigny, though kindness itself in every other way, absolutely refused to lend herself to my suggestion that she should aid me, if only to the extent of bearing a note from me to my future husband, in which I meant to implore him, as a man of honour and a gentleman, not to force this marriage upon me. I then tried Parè, who, by the Queen's command, had been sent to me. He brought me a cordial with his own hands, and to him I made my request, notwithstanding