

rated me soundly and imposed this penance, and perhaps the worse punishment that was to follow, on me.

In the anteroom there was but a cushioned stool for the lady in waiting, and this was placed close to the door, so that one could hear Queen Catherine calling, for she never rang for us, as did the Lorrainer for even such ladies as the Duchesse de Nemours, the mother of Guise.

I pushed the seat closer towards the door and, hardly thinking what I was doing, leaned my head against the woodwork and dropped off into a sort of troubled doze. How long I slept in this manner I cannot say; but I was suddenly aroused by the distinct mention of my name, followed by a laugh from within the cabinet. I looked up in affright, for the laugh was the King's, and for the moment I wondered how he had passed in, then recollecting the private passage I knew that he must have come in thence. I would have withdrawn, but the mention of my name coupled with the King's laughter aroused my curiosity, and I remained in my position, making, however, a bargain with my conscience by removing my head from the carved oak of the door. It was my duty to be where I was, and although I would make no effort to listen, yet if those within were talking of me, and loud enough for me to hear, I thought it no harm to stay, especially as it was Henri who was speaking, for I knew enough to be aware that no one was safe from his scandalous tongue. I may have been wrong in acting as I did, but I do not think there is one woman in a thousand who would have done otherwise, supposing her to be as I was—but one-and-twenty years of age.