

she had learned to garner up her hopes in heaven. The brief pause was broken by the princess.

"It is strange that father Gregory comes not," she said, in a low and thoughtful tone; "at noon he should have been here; I have much to say to him,—many thoughts to unburden—precious counsel to crave,—and my sleep would have been calmer tonight, could I have seen him but for one half hour."

"Some errand of mercy has detained him, or he would not have failed to come at the hour appointed," said the queen. "But even yet he may be here; or he shall be summoned, if it is of moment to you, my sister, that he come."

Before the princess could reply, a side door softly unclosed, and the tall figure of the father confessor glided noiselessly into the apartment. His rosary was in his hand, and with head bent down, he passed it through his fingers, muttering a prayer to every bead, as he slowly moved towards the princess. The queen rose, and as she passed near him to retire, he paused and bent in silent reverence before her.

"You are welcome, father," she said, "our poor invalid craves your counsel and your prayers, and I leave you to pour into her soul the blessed source of that comfort, which earth can neither give nor take away."

She bowed her head meekly to receive the murmured blessing of the churchman, and then quitted the apartment. The priest approached the princess, and with a mute inclination of his head, knelt down beside her, and buried his face in his hands, while his frame shook with the violence of his emotions. She raised herself and gazed on him with concern. She thought he was wrestling in prayer for her sinful heart, and her own tender and imploring orisons went up to heaven, for faith and resignation. Shortly he raised his head, but the cowl still concealed his features.

"Father!" she softly said—and at the sound of her voice he started convulsively—the cowl was cast aside, and her amazed and doubting eye gazed on the noble features of the loved, lamented Bourbon! A wild cry of joy escaped her, as she cast herself into the arms that opened to receive her, and lay like a subdued child, motionless on the faithful breast that loved her. He held her there in silent rapture; but with the kisses which he pressed upon her brow, were mingled scalding tears. These eyes that seldom wept, now melted with more than woman's weakness, as pride, ambition, and revenge, faded before the one distracting thought, that she he loved, this tender and devoted being, who clung to him with such unchanging, trustful affection, was lost to him perhaps forever—or at best, till he had won for her a station worthy of her birth. Her voice recalled him to composure. Shrinking timidly from

his embrace, and turning her sweet and happy face towards him,

"Ah," she said, "I have so pined to look on you,—to hear once more your voice—and now—ah, I fear you have risked much to venture here—too much—for should you be discovered—that life—that precious life were lost—and I —," tears choked her utterance, and she turned away her face and wept.

"Fear not, my loved one," he said, tenderly caressing her. "Father Gregory is surely for my safety—he it was who furnished me with this garb; he knew of my purpose to seek you, and permitted the assumption of his character, which won me ready access to the palace."

"Bless him for it," murmured the princess, "and God forbid that his kindness should involve himself or you in peril."

"Not him, I trust," returned the duke; "but for me, sweet Renée, peril has no terrors—life has become a changed scene to me since last we met,—for then, though smarting under injuries deep and deadly, I was struggling hard against pride and anger and bearing wrong in silence, that I might not raise between my cherished hopes and your dear love a barrier, never to be passed. But I was goaded on—how fiercely, it boots not now to tell, and the irretrievable step is taken—fortune, country, honours, all are forfeited, and with them too the right—I fear it must be so—the right to claim this hand—this precious hand, which would have strewed sweet flowers along my devious path, and led me with love's gentle guidance through life's thorny ways."

His utterance was low and rapid, but his tones impassioned, and as they fell with sad and tender pathos on the princess' ear, she wept in silent bitterness; but when he paused, her tearful eyes were turned with fond confiding tenderness on his, and the soft bright smile that played upon her lip, was like a ray of sunshine to his heart.

"Still is it yours," she said, as gently she laid her fairy hand in his—"and wherefore should it not be so? Our plighted faith is held by a frail bond indeed, if the first breath of misfortune is to sever it. Our hearts are united—let our hands become so also and I will go with you to share your changeful fortunes, to soothe, to comfort, to minister to you as woman should to him, whom she has sworn to love."

"God bless you, my beloved, for constancy like this," he said in accents of surprised and joyful tenderness. "But no, not yet must it be so—your words of hope and love, have lent new brightness to the future, and when I can return to bear my bride to such a home —."

She broke in with passionate energy upon his words.

"My home is in your heart, and there let me abide—solemn vows have we exchanged, that no