

Then he ran up to the first floor, pushed in the windows of Catherine de Médicis's room, that opened like double doors, and sat down on the stone sill, helping the lady across when, more slowly, she attained his altitude. Then he drew her down to the sill, she facing inwards, he outwards.

"Thérèse," he said, with more than usual solemnity, "do you know what this night has done for me?"

"Yes," she replied flippantly, "it has given you a very excellent dinner."

"I am glad it pleased your ladyship. But make another guess."

For answer the girl hummed very accurately, and in a most pleasing voice, a bar of the music she had said she would never forget.

"Mademoiselle, if you will not be serious, I will tell you seriously. It has given me the hope that even should I fail in my mission, I may, on other grounds, receive my reward."

"There speaks the self-confidence of the Gascon," said Thérèse, humming the tune once more.

"Am I right?" he asked, but the music continued. He tried to draw her towards him, but she resisted, then, suddenly:

"Perhaps," she said, and kissed him with surprising suddenness, of her own accord. Springing up, she closed the window, and almost precipitated her lover to the terrace.