

Sedgwick, Catharine M. "The White Scarf" [by Miss Sedgwick], in *The Token*, edited by Samuel G. Goodrich, Boston: Otis, Broaders and Company, 1839 [pub. 1838], pp. 1-62.

THE WHITE SCARF.

BY MISS SEDGWICK.

"Be just, and fear not.
Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy country's.
Thy God's, and truth's; then, if thou fall'st, O Cromwell,
Thou fall'st a blessed martyr."

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THE reign of Charles the Sixth is one of the most humiliating periods of the French history, which, in its centuries of absolute kinds and unquestioning subjects, presents us a most melancholy picture of the degradation of man, and disheartening prolongation of the infancy of society. Nature had given Charles but an hereditary monarch's portion of brains, and that portion had not been strengthened or developed by education or exercise of any sort. Passions he had not; he never rose to the dignity of passion; but his appetites were strong,

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and they impelled him, unresisted, to every species of indulgence. His excesses brought on fits of madness, which exposed his kingdom to the rivalship and misrule of the princes of the blood. Fortunately for the subsequent integrity of France, these men were marked by the general, and as it would seem, constitutional weakness of transmitted royalty; and were besides too much addicted to pleasure, to crave political independence or renown in arms, the common passions of the powerful and high-born.

Instead of sundering the feeble ties that bound them to their allegiance, and raising their princely domains to independence of the crown, they congregated in Paris, then, as now, the Paradise of the devotees to pleasure, and surrendered themselves, as their chroniclers quaintly express it, to "*festins, mascarades, danses, caroles et ébattemens*," (every species of diversion,) varied by an occasional affray, an ambuscade, or an assassination. The talent, that is now employed upon the arts of life, in inventing new machines, and contriving new fabrics, was then exhausted in originating new pastimes. Games of cards, and the revival of dramatic entertainments,

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date from this period,--the beginning of the fifteenth century.

There shone at Charles's court one of those stars, that occasionally cross the orbit of royalty, whose brilliancy obscured the splendor of the hereditary nobility,--the lights,

that, according to conservative opinion, are set in the firmament to rule the day and night of the plebeian world.

In the month of September, of the year 1409, a stranger, attended by a servant with a small travelling-sack, knocked at the gate of a magnificent *hôtel* in Paris. He was answered by a porter, who cast on him a glance of inquiry as keen as a bank clerk's upon the face of an unknown bank-note; and, seeing neither retinue, livery, nor other insignia of rank, he was gruffly dismissing him, when the stranger said, "Softly, my friend; present this letter to the Grand-Master, and tell him the bearer awaits his pleasure! Throw the sack down within the gate, Luigi!" he added to his attendant, "and come again at twelve; " and, without more ado, he took his station within the court, a movement in which the porter acquiesced, seeing that in the free bearing of the stranger, and in the flashing of

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his dark eye, which indicated, it were wise not to question an authority that had nature's seal. On one side of the court was fountain, and on the other a group of Fauns, rudely carved in wood. Adornings of sculpture were then unknown in France; -- the art was just reviving, and the ancient models still lay buried under barbaric ruins. Two grooms appeared, conducting, in front of the immense flight of steps that led up to the *hôtel*, four horses caparisoned for their riders, two for females, as was indicated by the form of the saddles, and the gay silk knots that decked the bridles, one of which was studded with precious stones. At the same moment, there issued from the grand entrance a gentleman, and a lady who had the comely *embonpoint* befitting her uncertain "certain age." She called her companion "*mon mari*," and he assisted her to mount, with that nonchalant, conjugal air, which indicated that gallantry had long been obsolete in their intercourse.

The interest the wife did not excite, was directed to another quarter. *Mon mari's* eye was constantly reverting to the door, with an expression of eager expectation. "Surely," said the lady, "Violette has had time to find

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my *eau-de-rose*; --let us go, my husband,-- we are losing the freshness of the morning. She may follow with Edouard."

"Go you, *ma chère amie*," replied her husband. "Mount, Edouard, and attend your mistress, --my stirrup wants adjusting, -- I'll follow presently. How slow she rides! A plague on old women's fears!" he muttered, as she ambled off. "Ah, there you are, my morning star," he cried, addressing a young girl who darted through the door and appeared well to warrant a comparison to the most beautiful of the celestial lights. She wore a Spanish riding-cap, a cloth dress, the waist neatly fitted to her person, and much in the fashion of the riding costume of the present day, save that it was shorter by some half-yard, and thus showed to advantage a rich Turkish pantalette and the prettiest feet in

the world, laced in boots. "Is my lady gone?" she exclaimed, dropping her veil over her face.

"Yes, Violette, your lady is gone, but your lord is waiting for my lady's *mignonne*. Come, mistress of my heart! here is my hand for your stepping-stone." He then threw his arm around her waist, under the pretext of

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assisting her to mount; but she darted away like a butterfly from a pursuer's grasp, and, snatching the rein from the groom's hand, and saying, "My lord, I am country bred, and neither need nor like your gallantries," she led the horse to the platform on which the Fauns were placed, and, for the first time seeing the stranger, who stood, partly obscured by them, looking curiously upon this little scene, she blushed, and he involuntarily bowed. It was an instinctive homage, and she requited it with a look as different from that which she returned to the libertine gaze of the Count de Roucy, as the reflection in a mirror of two such faces, the one bloated and inflamed, the other pure and deferential, would have been. Availing herself of the slight elevation of the platform, she sprang into her saddle and set off at a speed, that, in De Roucy's eye, provokingly contrasted with her mistress's cautious movement. "who are you, and what do you here?" he said, turning to the stranger.

"My name," replied the stranger, without condescending to notice the insolent manner of the question, "is Felice Montano, and I am here on business with the Grand-Master."

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"Did ye not exchange glances with that girl?"

"I looked on her, and the Saints reward by her, she looked on me."

"*Par amour?*"

"I stand not here to be questioned; -- I ne'er saw the lady before, but, with Heaven's kind leave, I will see her again!"

"Take care, -- the girl is my wife's minion, the property of the house, --ye shall be watched!" muttered De Roucy, and, mounting his horse, he rode off, just as the porter reappeared, attended by a *valet-de-place*, whose obsequious address indicated that a flattering reception awaited Montano.

Montano was conducted up a long flight of steps, and through a corridor to an audience-room, whose walls were magnificently hung with tapestry, and its windows curtained with the richest Oriental silk. Silver vases, candelabra of solid gold, and various

costly furniture, were displayed with dangerous profusion, offering a tempting spoil to the secret enemies of their proprietors.

There were already many persons of rank assembled, and others entering. Montano stood apart, undaunted by their half insolent,

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half curious glances. He had nothing to ask, and therefore feared nothing. He felt among these men, notorious for their ignorance and their merely animal lives, the conscious superiority of an enlightened man, that raised him far above the mere hereditary distinction, stigmatized by a proud plebeian as the “accident of an accident.” Montano was an Italian, and proudly measured the eminence from which his instructed countrymen looked down upon their French neighbors.

As he surveyed the insolent nobles, he marveled at the ascendancy which Jean de Montagu, the Grand-Master of the Palace, had maintained over them for nearly half a century. The son of a humble notary of Paris, he had been ennobled by King John, had been the prime and trusted favorite of three successive monarchs, had maintained through all his capricious changes the favor of Charles, had allied his children to nobles and kings, had liberally expended riches, that the proudest of them all did not possess, had encouraged and defended the laboring classes, and was not known to have an enemy, save Burgundy, the fearful “*Jean sans peur*.”

The suitors to the Grand-Master had as-

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sembled early, as it was his custom to receive those who had pressing business before breakfast, it being his policy not to keep his suitors in vexing attendance. He knew his position even while it seemed firmest, to be an uncertain one; and he warily practiced those arts which smooth down the irritable surface of men’s passions, and lull to sleep the hydra, vanity.

“The Grand-Master is as true as the dial!” said a person standing near Montano; “the clock is on the stroke of nine; -mark me! as it striketh the last stroke, he will appear.”

Montano fixed his eyes on the grand entrance to the saloon, expecting, that, when the doors “wide open flew, “ he should see that Nature had put the stamp of her nobility on the plebeian who kept these lawless lords in abeyance. The portal remained closed, there was no flourish of trumpets, but, at a low side-door, gently opened and shut, entered a man low of stature, and so slender and shrunken, that it would seem Nature and time had combined to compress him within the narrowest limits of the human frame. His features were small, his chin beardless, and the few locks that hung, like silver fringe around

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his head, were soft and curling as an infant's. He wore a Persian silk dressing-gown over a citizen's simple under-dress, and his tread was so soft, his manner so unpretending and unclaiming, that Montano would scarcely have looked at him a second time, if he had not perceived every eye directed towards him, and certain tokens of deference analogous to those flutterings and shrinkings that are seen in the *basse cour*, when its sovereign steps forth among his subdued and abject rivals. But, when he did look again, he saw the fire glowing in a restless eye, that seemed to see and read all at a glance,-- an eye that no man, carrying a secret in his bosom, could meet without quailing.

"Your Grace believes," said the Grand-Master to the Duke of Orleans, who had been vehemently addressing him in a low voice, "that these mysteries are a kind of divertisement that will minister to our sovereign's returning health?"

"So says the learned leech, and we all know they are the physic our brother loves."

"Then be assured, your poor servant will honor the drafts on his master's treasury, though it be well nigh drained by the revels

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of the late marriages. The King's poor subjects starve, that his rich ones may feast; and children scarce out of leading-strings are married, that their fathers and mothers may have pretexts for dances and masquerades."

"Methinks," said the Count de Vaudemont, the ally and messenger of Burgundy, "the Grand-Master's example is broad enough to shelter what seems, in comparison of the late gorgeous festival within these walls, but the revels of rustics."

"The festivals within *these* walls are paid with coin from our own poor coffers," replied the Grand-Master, "not drawn from the King's treasury, after being coined from the sweat and tears of his subjects. But what have we here?" He passed his eye over a petition to the King, from sundry artisans, whose houses had been stripped of their movables by the valets of certain Dukes,-- these valets pleading the common usage in justification of this summary process. "Tell our good friends," he said, "it shall be my first business to present this to our gracious sovereign; but in the mean time, let them draw on me for the amount of their loss. I can better afford the creditor's patient waiting than our

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poor friends, who, after their day's hard toil, should lie securely on their own beds at night. Ah, my lords, why do ye not, like our neighbors of England, make the poor man's cottage his castle." After various colloquies with the different groups, in which, whether

he denied or granted, it was always with the same gracious manner, the same air of self-negation, he drew near to De Vaudemont, who stood apart from the rest, with an air of frigid indifference, and apparent unconsciousness of the Grand-Master's presence or approach, till Montagu asked, in a low and deferential tone, "What answer sendeth his Grace of B-b-b-b--?" Montague had a stammering infirmity, which beset him when he was most anxious to appear unconcerned. He lowered his voice at every fresh effort to pronounce the name, and this confidential tone gave a more startling effect to the loud, rough voice, in which the party addressed pronounced, "Burgundy! his Grace bids me say, that for some diseases blood-letting is the only remedy."

"Tell Burgundy," replied the Grand-Master, now speaking without the slightest faltering, an in allusion to the recent alliance of his own with the royal family, "tell Burgundy,

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that the humblest stream that mingles with the Ganges becomes a portion of holy water, and that blood-letting is dangerous when ye approach the royal arteries! Ah!" he continued, turning suddenly to Montano, grasping his hand, and resuming his usual tone, "You, I think, are the son of Nicoló Montano, -- welcome to Paris! You must stay to breakfast with me. I have much to ask concerning my old friend. It is one and twenty years since your mother put my finger in your mouth to feel your first tooth. Bless me, what goodly rows are there now! So time passes!"

"And where it were once safe to thrust your finger, it might now be bitten off. Ha! Jean de Montagu?" growled Vaudemont.

"When there are wolves abroad, we keep our fingers to ourselves," replied Montagu.

These discourteous sallies and significant retorts were afterwards remembered, as are the preludes to an earthquake after the catastrophe has interpreted them. The assembly broke up, Montagu bidding his young friend to take a stroll in the garden, and rejoin him at the ringing of the breakfast bell. When that sounded, a valet appeared and

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conducted Montano to a breakfast room, where game, cakes, and fruit were served on plate, and the richest wine sparkled in cups that old Homer might fain have gemmed with his consecrating verse. "I had forgotten," said Montagu, "that a boy of two and twenty needs no whetting to his appetite; but sit ye down, and we will dull its edge. Ah, here you are De Roucy. We have a guest to season our fare this morning, the son of my old schoolmate, Nicoló Montano." De Roucy bowed haughtily, and Montano returned the salutation as it was given. "Why comes not Elinor to breakfast?" asked Montagu of the Count de Roucy, who was the husband of his eldest daughter.

“She likes not strangers.”

“God forgive her! Felice Montano is no stranger;-- the son of her father’s first and best friend, --of the playfellow of his boyhood, -- of the founder of his fortunes, a *stranger!*”

“I thought you had *woven* your own fortunes, Sir.”

“So have I, and interwoven with them some rotten threads. Think not, De Roucy, I do not notice, or that, noticing, I care for your

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allusion to my father’s craft. Come hither, Pierre.” De Roucy’s son, a boy of seven, came and stood at his knee. “When you are a grown man, Pierre, remember, that when your father’s fathers were burning cottages, bearing off poor men’s daughters, slaughtering their cattle, and trampling down their harvest-fields, -- doing the work of hereditary lordlings, --my child, your mother’s ancestor’s were employed in planting mulberries, rearing silkworms, multiplying looms—in making bread and wine plenty, and adding to the number of happy homes in their country.

“But, grandpapa, I wont remember the wicked ones that stole and did such horrid deeds!”

“Ah, Pierre, you will be a lord then, and learn in lordly phrase to call stealing *levying*. Go, boy, and eat your breakfast; -- God forgive me ! I have worked hard to get my posterity into the ranks of robbers !”

At another moment, Montano would have listened with infinite interest to all these hints, as so many clues to the history and mind of a man who was the wonder of his times; but now something more captivating to the imagi-

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nation of two and twenty, than the philosophy of any old man’s history, occupied him, and he was wondering, why no inquiry was made about the companion of the Countess, and whether that creature, who seemed to him only fit to be classed with the divinities, was really a menial in the house of this weaver’s son.

“Your father,” resumed the Grand-Master, “writes with a plainness that pleases me. I thank him. It shall not be my fault, if every window in my sovereign’s palace is not curtained with the silks from his looms; and, if it were not that my son’s espousals have drained my purse, I would give you the order on the instant for the re-furnishing of my hôtel. But another season will come, and then we shall be in heart again. Your father does not write in courtly vein. He says, that, amid his quiet and obedient subjects, who toil and spin for him while he sleeps, he envies not my uncertain influence over a maniac

monarch, and dominion over factious nobles. Uncertain, -- St. Peter ! What think ye, De Roucy? May not a man who has allied one daughter to your noble house, another to the Sire de Montbaron, and another to Meun, and now

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has affianced his only son to the Constable d'Albret, doubly cousin to the King, may not he throw his glove in dame Fortune's face?"

"Yes, my lord, and dame Fortune may throw it back again. He only betrays his weakness, who props himself on every side."

"Weakness ! I have not an enemy save Burgundy."

"And he who has Burgundy needs none other."

"You are bilious this morning, De Roucy. But come, wherewith shall we entertain our young friend? We have no pictures, no statues. Our gardens are a wilderness to your paradises; but I have one piece of workmanship, that I think would even startle the masters of your land." He called the servant in waiting, and whispered an order to him. In a few moments the door re-opened and a young girl appeared, bearing a silver basket of grapes. Her hair was golden, and, parted in front and confined on her temples with a silver thread, fell over her shoulders, a mass of curls. Her head was gracefully bent over the basket she carried, showing, in its most beautiful position, a swan-like neck. Her features were all symmetrical

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and her mouth had that perfection of outline, that art can imitate, and that flexibility, obedient to every motion of the soul, in which Nature is inimitable. Her dress was of rich materials, cut in the form prescribed to her rank. The mistresses were fond of illustrating their own generosity, or outdoing their rivals, by the rich liveries of their train, while they jealously maintained every badge of the gradation of rank. Her dress was much in the fashion of a Swiss peasant girl of the present times. Her petticoat, of a fine light-blue cloth, was full and short, exposing a foot and ankle, that a queen might have envied her the power to show, and which she, however, modestly sheltered, with the rich silver fringe that bordered her skirt. Her white silk boddice was laced with a silver cord, and her short, full sleeves were looped with cords and tassels of the same material. "Can ye match this girl in Italy?" whispered the old man to Montano.

"In Italy! nay, my lord, not in the world is there such another model of perfection!" replied Montano, who, changed as she was, by doffing her demi-cavalier dress, had, at a glance, recognized his acquaintance of the morning.

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“Thank you! Violette,” said Montagu, “are these grapes from your own bower?”

“They are, my lord.”

“Then they must needs be sweeter than old Roland’s, for they have been ripened by your bright eyes and sunny smiles.”

“Ah, but grandfather,” interposed little Pierre, “Violette did not say that, when I asked her for her grapes. She said, they would only taste good to her father, for whom she reared them, and that I should love Roland’s better.”

“And why did you not thus answer me, Violette ?”

“You asked for them, my lord, --the master’s request is law to the servant.”

“God forgive me, if I be such a master ! Take away the grapes, Violette, and send them, with what else ye will from the refectory, to the forester. Nay, -- no thanks, my pretty child, or, if you will, for all thanks let me kiss your cheek.” Violette stopped and offered her beautiful cheek, suffused with blushes, to Montagu’s lips.

“The old have marvelous privileges !” muttered De Roucy. The same thought was expressed in Montano’s glance, when his eye,

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as Violette turned, encountered hers. She involuntarily curtsied, as she recognized the gallant of the court. “A very suitable greeting for a stranger, Violette,” said the Grand-Master ; “but this youth must have a kinder welcome from my household. It is Felice Montano, -- my friend’s son, -- give him a fitting welcome, my child.”

“Nobles and princes,” she replied, in a voice that set her words to music, “have welcomes for *your* friends, my lord ; but such as a poor rustic can offer, she gives with all her heart.” She took from her basket of grapes a half-blown rose. “Will ye take this, Signor?” she said, “ it offers ye Nature’s sweet welcome.”

Montano kissed the rose, and placed it in his bosom, as devoutly as if it had dropped from the hand of his patron saint. He then opened the small sack which his attendant had brought to the hôtel, and which, at his request, had been laid on a side-table. It contained specimens of the most beautiful silks manufactured in his father’s filature in Lombardy, unrivaled in Italy. While these were spread out and displayed, to the admiration of the Grand-Master, he took from

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among them, a *white silk scarf*, embroidered in silver with lilies of the valley, and throwing it over Violette's shoulders, he asked, if she "would grace and reward their arts of industry by wearing it?"

"If it were fitting, Signor, one to whom it is prescribed what bravery to wear, and how to wear it," she replied, looking timidly and doubtfully at the Grand-Master.

"It is *not* fitting," interposed De Roucy.

"And pray ye, Sir, why not?" asked Montagu; "we do not here allow, that gauds are for those alone who are born to them; -- beneath our roof-tree, the winner is the wearer; -- keep it, my pretty Violette, it well becomes thee." Violette dropped on her knee, kissed the Grand-Master's hand, and casting a look at Montano, worth, in his estimation, all the words of thanks in the French language, she disappeared.

Montagu insisted, that during the time his young friend's negotiations with the silk vendors of Paris detained him there, he should remain an inmate of his family; and nothing loath was Montano to accept a hospitality,

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which afforded him facilities for every day seeing Violette. His affairs were protracted; day after day he found some plausible pretext, if pretext he had needed, for delaying his departure; but, by his intelligence, his various information, and his engaging qualities, he had made such rapid advances in Montagu's favor, that he rather wanted potent reasons to reconcile him to their parting. If such had been the progress of their friendship, we need not be surprised, that one little month sufficed to mature a more tender sentiment, a sentiment, that, in the young bosoms of southern climes, ripens and perfects itself with the rapidity of the delicious fruits of a tropical sun. Daily and almost hourly, Violette and Montano were together in bower and hall. Set aside by their rank from an equal association with the visitors of the Grand-Master, they enjoyed a complete immunity from any open interference with their happiness; but Violette was persecuted with secret gallantries from De Roucy, that had become more abhorrent to her since her affections were consecrated to Montano. At the end of the month, their love was confessed and plighted; -- the Grand-Master had given his assent to

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their affiancing, and the Countess de Roucy had yielded hers, glad to be relieved from a favorite, whom she had begun to fear as a rival. The eighth of October was appointed for their nuptials. "To-morrow morning, Violette," said Montagu to her on the evening of the sixth, "ye shall go and ask your father's leave and blessing, and bid him to the wedding. Tell him, " he added, casting a side-glance towards De Roucy, who stood at a

little distance, eyeing the young pair “with jealous leer malign,” “that I shall envy him his son-in-law; --nay, tell him not that, I will not envy any man aught ; my course has been one of prosperity and possession, -- I have numbered threescore and fifteen years, -- I am now in sight of the farther shore of life, and no man can interrupt my peaceful passage to it!”

“Let no man count on that from which one hour of life divides him !” cried De Roucy, starting from his fixed posture, and striding up and down the saloon. His words afterwards recurred to all that then heard him, as a prophecy.

Montano asked, for his morning’s ride, and escort of six armed men. “I have travelled,”

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he said to the Grand-Master, “over your kingdom with no defence but my own good weapon, and with gold enough to tempt some even of your haughty lords to violence; but, till now, I never felt fear, or used caution.”

“Because till now,” replied Montagu, “your heart was not bound up in the treasure you exposed. That spirit is not human, that is not susceptible of fear.”

The escort was kindly provided, and, by Montagu’s order, furnished with baskets of fruit, wine, and &c., to aid the extempore hospitalities of Violette’s cottage-home. Before the sun had nearly reached the meridian, she was within sight of that dear home, on the borders of the Seine; and her eyes filled with tears, as, pointing out to Montano each familiar object, she thought how soon she was to be far separated from these haunts of her childhood. It was a scene of sylvan beauty and rustic abundance. Stacks of corn and hay, protected from the weather, not only witnessed the productiveness of the well-cultured farm, but seemed to enjoy the security, with which they were permitted to lie on the lap of their mother earth, -- a rare security in those times of rapine, when the lazy nobles

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might, at pleasure and with impunity, snatch from the laborers the fruit of their toil. The cows were straggling in their sunny pasture, the sheep feeding on the hill-side, the domestic birds gossiping in the poultry-yard, and the oxen turning up, for the next summer’s harvest, the rich soil of fields whose product the proprietor might hope to reap, as he enjoyed, through the favor of the Grand-Master, the benefit of the act called an *exemption de prise*. Barante, Violette’s father, was lying on an oaken settle, that stood under an old pear tree, laden with fruit, at his door. Two boys, in the perfection of boyhood, were eating their lunch and gamboling on the grass with a little sturdy house dog; while an old, blind grandmother, who sat within the door, was the first to catch the sound of the trampling of the horses’ hoofs. “Look, Henri, who is coming,” she said. The dog and the boys started forth from the little court, and directly there was a welcoming

bark, and shouts of, "It's Violette ! it's our dear sister !" Amidst this shouting and noisy joy, Violette made her way to her father's arms, and the fond embrace of the old woman.

"And whom shall I bid welcome, Vio-

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lette ?" asked Barante, offering his hand to Montano.

"Signor Felice Montano," answered Violette, her eyes cast down, and her cheek burning, as if, by pronouncing the name, she told all she had to tell.

"Welcome here, Sir," resumed Barante; "ye have come, doubtless, to see how poor folk live ?" and the good man looked round on his little domain with a very proud humility.

"Oh no, dear father; he came not for that."

"What did he come for, then, sister?" asked little Hugh.

"I came not to see how *you* live, " said Montano, "but to beg from you wherewith to live myself," and taking Barante aside, he unfolded his errand.

"Come close to grandmother, Violette," said Henri, "and let her feel your russet gown. I am glad you come not home in your bravery, for then you would not seem like our own sister."

"And yet," said the old woman, with a little of that womanish feeling, that clings to the sex, of all conditions and ages, "I think

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none would become it better; -- but, dear me, Lettie, how you've grown ! I can hardly reach to the top of your head."

"Not a hair's breadth have I grown, grandmother, since I saw you last; but now do I seem more natural?" and she knelt down before the old woman.

"Yes, -- yes, -- now you are my own little Lettie again, -- your head just above my knee. How time flies ! it seems but yesterday, when your mother was no higher than this, and its five years, come next All-Saints-Day, since we laid her in the cold earth. But why have you bound up your pretty curls in this net-work, Lettie?" Henri playfully snatched the silver net from her head, and her golden curls fell over her shoulders. The old woman stroked, and fondly kissed them, and then passed her shriveled fingers over Violette's face, seeming to measure each feature. "Oh, if I could but once more see those eyes, -- I

remember so well their color, -- just like the violet that is dyed deepest with the sunbeams, -- and that was why we called you Violette ; but, when they turned from the light, and glanced up through your long, dark, eyelashes, they looked black ;

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so many a foolish one disputed me the color, as if I should not know, that had watched them by all lights, since they first opened on this world.”

“Dear grandmother, I am kneeling for your blessing, and you are filling my head with foolish thoughts.”

“And there is another, who would fain have your blessing, good mother,” said Montano, whose hand Barante had just joined to Violette’s.

“What? – a stranger ! – who is this?”

“One, good mother, who craves a boon, which if granted, he desires nought else; if denied, all else would be bootless to him.”

“What means he, Violette?”

“Nothing, -- and yet much, grandmother,” replied Violette, with a smile and a blush, that would, could the old woman have seen them, have interpreted Montano’s words.

“Ah, a young spark!” she said. “It is ever so with them, -- their cup foameth and sparkleth, and yet there is nothing in it.”

“But there is much in it this time,” interposed Barante; and, a little impatient of the periphrasing style of the young people, he proceeded to state, in direct terms, the char-

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acter and purpose of his visiter, and said, in conclusion, “I have given my consent and blessing; for you know, mother, we can’t keep our Lettie, -- we bring up our children for others, not for ourselves, and, when their time comes, they will, for it’s God’s law, cleave their father’s house and cleave unto a stranger.”

“But why, dear Lettie,” asked the old woman, “do ye not wed among your own people? why go among barbarians ?”

“Barbarians !” dear grandmother, --if ye knew all that I have learned of his people, from Felice Montano, ye would think we were the barbarians, instead of they. Why, grandmother, Felice can both read and write like a priest, while our great lords can

only make their mark. And so much do these Italians know of what the learned call the *arts* and *sciences*, (I know not the meaning of the words, but Felice has promised to explain them to me, when we can talk of such things, that our people call them *sorcerers*.”

“Ah, well-a-day ! I thought how it would be, when the Lady Elinor took such a fancy to your bonnie face, and begged you away from us. But why cannot ye content yourself at the Grand-Master’s ?”

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“Oh, ask me not to stay there. He is kind as my father, and so is the Lady Elinor; but,” added Violette in a whisper, “her husband is a bold, bad, man; he hath said to me what it maketh me blush to recall.”

“Why need ye fear him, Violette.”

“If all be true that men whisper of him, he dares do whate’er the Evil One bids him. They say he was at the bottom of the horrid affair at the Hôtel de St. Paul, and that, at Mans, he it was, that directed the mad King against the Chevalier de Polignac.” * [1]

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“But surely, dear child, the Grand-Master can protect ye.”

“Now he can, -- but we know not how long his power may last. They say that he is far out of favor with Burgundy, and none standeth

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long, on whom he frowneth. Indeed, indeed, dear grandmother, it is better your child should fly away to a safe shelter.”

“Ye have given me many reasons; but that ye love, is always enough for you young ones. Well, -- God speed ye, -- ye must have your day; kneel down, both, and take an old woman’s blessing, it may do ye good, -- it can do ye no harm !”

This ceremony over, the boys, who heard they were bidden to the wedding, and who thought not of the parting, not any thing beyond it, were clamorous in their expressions of joy. Their father sent them, with some refection, to the men, who, at his bidding, had conducted their horses to a little paddock in the rear of his cottage, where they were refreshing them from his stores of provender.

The day was passing happily away. Never had Violette appeared so lovely in Montano’s eyes, as in the atmosphere of home, where every look and action was tinged by a holy light that radiated from the heart. Time passed as he always does when he “only

treads on flowers,” and the declining sun admonished them to prepare for their departure. “But first,” said Barante, “let us taste to-
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gether our dear patron’s bounty. Unpack that hamper, boys, and you, dear Violette, serve us as you were wont.” Violette donned her little home-apron of white muslin, tied with sarsnet bows, and, spreading a cloth on the ground under the pear tree, she and the boys arranged the wine, fruit, and various confections from the basket. “It’s all sugar, Hugh!” said Henri, touching his tongue to the tip of a bird’s wing. “And this is sugar, too!” replied Hugh, testing in the same mode a bunch of mimic cherries. The French *artistes* already excelled all others in every department of the confectionary art, and to our little rustics their work seemed miraculous. “Hark ye, Hugh!” said his brother; “I believe St. Francis dropped these from his pocket, as he flew over.”

“Come, loiterers!” cried his father, “while you are gazing, we would be eating. Ah, that is right, Signor Montano! Is it the *last* time, my pretty Violette?” to Violette and Montano, who were leading the old woman from her chair to the oaken settle. “Come, sit by me, my child. Now we are all seated, we will fill the cup, and drink ‘Many happy years to Jean de Montagu!’”

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As if to mark the futility of the wish, the progress of the cup to the lip was interrupted by an ominous sound; and forth from the thick barrier of shrubbery, that fenced the northern side of the cottage, came twelve men, armed and masked.

“De Roucy! God help us!” shrieked Violette.

“Seize her instantly, and off with her, as I bade ye!” cried a voice, that Montano recognized as the Count de Roucy’s.

“Touch her at your peril, villain!” cried Montano, drawing his sword and shouting for his attendants. Montano and Barante, the latter armed only with a club, kept their assailants at bay till his men appeared, and they, inspired by their master’s example and adjurations, fought valiantly; but one, and then another of their number fell, and the ruffians were two to one against Violette’s defenders. The rampart they had formed around her was diminishing. “Courage, my boys, courage!” cried Barante, as he shot a glance at his children, crouching round his old mother, motionless as panic-struck birds. “Courage! God and the Saints are on our side!”

“Beat them back, my men!” shouted

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Montano. “Jean de Montagu will reward ye!”

““Jean de Montagu!” retorted De Roucy, “his bones are cracking on the rack! Ah! I’m wounded! –‘t is but a scratch! – seize her, Le Croy! – press on, my men! –the prize is ours!” But they, seeing their leader fall back, for an instant faltered.

A thought, as if from Heaven, inspired Montano. De Roucy, to avoid giving warning of his approach, had left his horses on the outer side of the wood. Montano’s attendants had, just before the onset of De Roucy’s party, saddled their master’s horse and led him to the gate of the court; there he was now standing, and the passage from Violette to him unobstructed. Once on him and started, thought Montano, she may escape. “Mount my horse, Violette,” he cried, “fear nothing, --we will keep them back,-- Heaven guard you!” Violette shot from the circle, like an arrow loosed from the bow, unfastened the horse, and sprang upon him. He had been chafing and stamping, excited by the din of arms, and impatient of his position; and, as she leaped into the saddle, he sprang forward like a released captive. Vio-

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lette heard the yell of the ruffians mingling with the victorious shouts of her defenders. Once her eye caught the flash of their arms; but whether they were retreating or still stationary, she knew not. She had no distinct perception, no consciousness, but an intense desire to get on faster than even her flying steed conveyed here. There were few persons on the road, though passing through the immediate vicinity of a great city. Many of those, who cultivated the environs of Paris, had their dwellings, for greater security, within the walls; and, their working-day being over, they had already retired within them.* [2]

From a *hostelrie*, where a party of cavaliers were revelling, there were opposing shouts of “Stop!” and “God speed ye!” and, of the straggling peasants returning from market, some crossed themselves, fancying this aerial figure, with colorless face and golden hair streaming to the breeze, was

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some demon in angelic form; and others knelt and murmured a prayer, believing it was indeed an angel. She had just made a turn in the road, which brought her within sight of Notre Dame and the gates of Paris, when she heard the trampling of horses coming rapidly on behind her. Her horse too heard the sound, and, as if conscious of his sacred trust and duty, redoubled his speed. The sounds approached nearer and nearer, and now were lost in the triumphing shouts of her pursuers. Violette’s head became giddy; a sickening despair quivered through her frame. “We have her now!” cried the foremost, and stretched his hand to grasp her rein. The action gave a fresh impulse to her horse. He was within a few yards of the barriers. He sprang forward, and in an instant was within the gates. “We are baulked!” cried the leader of the pursuit, reining in his horse; and, pouring out a volley of oaths, he ordered his men to retreat, saying, it was more than the head of a follower of De Roucy was worth, to venture within the barriers. As the

sounds of the retiring party died away, Violette's horse slackened his speed, and was arrested by the captain of the guard, who had

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just begun the patrol for the night. To his questions Violette replied not a word. Her consciousness was gone, and, exhausted and fainting, she slid from the saddle into his arms. Fortunately he was a humane man; he was touched with her innocent and lovely face; and, not knowing to what other place of shelter and security to convey her, he procured a little, and carried her to his own humble home, where he consigned her to the care of his good wife, Susanne. There being then little provision for the security of private property and individual rights, Montano's horse was classed among those *strays*, that, in default of an owner, escheated to the King, and was sent, by the guard, to the King's stables; and thus all clue to Montano was lost.

As soon as Violette recovered her consciousness, her first desire was to get news of those whom she had left in extremest peril; and, as the readiest means of effecting this, entreated the compassionate woman, who was watching at her bedside, to send her to the Grand-Master.

"The Grand-Master!" replied the good dame; "Mary defend us ! what would ye with him?"

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Violette, in feeble accents, explained her relations with him, and her hope, through him, to obtain news of her friends. Susanne answered her with mysterious intimations, which implied, not only that he, whom she deemed her powerful protector, could do nothing for her, but that it was not even safe to mention his name; and then, after promising her that a messenger should be despatched, in the morning, to her father's cottage, she administered the common admonitions and consolations, that seem so very wise and sufficient to the bestower, --are so futile to the receiver. "She must hope for the best; -- "she must cast aside her cares;" -- "sleep would tranquilize her;" -- "brighter hours might come with the morning; but, if they came not, she might live to see what seemed worst now, to be best, and, at any rate, grieving would not help her."

Thus it has been from the time of Job's comforters to the present; words have been spoken to the wretched, as impotent as the effort of the child, who, stretching his arm against a torrent, expects to hold it back! But, to do dame Susanne justice, she acted as well as spoke; and the next morning a messen-

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ger was sent, and returned in due time with news, which no art could soften to Violette. Her father's cottage was burned to the ground, and all about it laid waste. Some peasants reported, that they had seen the flames during the night, and men, armed and mounted,

conveying off whatever was portable, and driving before them Barante's live stock. What had become of the poor man, his children, and old mother, no one knew; but there were certain relics among the ashes, which too surely indicated, they had not all escaped. Poor Violette had strength neither of body nor mind left, to sustain her under such intelligence. She was thrown into a delirious fever, during which she raved continually about her murdered family and Montano, who was never absent from her thoughts. But, whatever an individual sufferer might feel, such scenes of marauding and violence were too common to excite surprise. "Barante," it was said, "had but met at last the fate of all those, who were fools enough to labor and heap up riches, for the idle and powerful to covet and enjoy."

This feeling was natural and just in the laboring classes, when the valets of princes were legalized robbers, and were permitted,

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whenever their masters' idle followers were to be accommodated, not only to slay the working man's bees, and appropriate the produce of his fields, but to enter his house and sweep off the blankets that covered him, and the pillows on which his children were sleeping. Those, who fancy the world has made no moral progress, should read carefully the history of past ages, and compare the condition of the laborers then, like so many defenceless sheep on the borders of a forest filled with beasts of prey, to the security and independence of our working sovereigns. They would find, that the jurisdiction of that celebrated judge, who unites in his own person the threefold power of judge, jury, and executioner, was then exercised by the armed and powerful; that it was universal and unquestioned, whereas now, if he ventures his summary application of *Lynch law*, his abuses are bruited from Maine to Georgia, and men shake their heads and sigh over the deterioration of the world, and the licentiousness of liberty!

On the ninth day of her illness, while Susanne was standing by Violette, she awoke from her first long sleep. Her countenance was changed, her flaming color was gone,

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and her eye was quiet. She feebly raised her head, and bursting into tears, said, "Oh, why did you not wake me sooner?"

"Why should I wake you, dear?"

"Why! do you not hear that dreadful bell?" The great bell of Notre Dame was tolling. "They will be buried,--the boys and all, --all, --before I get there!"

"*Dieu-merci*, child, your people are not going to the burial; -- that bell tolls not for such as yours and mine. We are thrown into the earth, and Notre Dame wags not her proud tongue for us."

“Ah, true, --true.” She pressed her hand on her head, as if collecting her thoughts; and then, looking up timidly and shrinking from the answer, she said, “Ye ‘ve heard nothing of them?”

“Nothing as yet; but you are better, and that’s a token we shall hear. Now rest again. It is a noisy day. All the world is abroad. It’s the nobles’ concern, not ours; so I pray ye sleep again, and, whatever ye hear, lift not your head; there be throngs of bad men in the street, and where such are, there may be ugly sights. I will go below, and keep what quiet I can for ye.”

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Susanne’s dwelling was old and rickety. The apartment under that, which Violette occupied, was a little shop, where dame Susanne vended cakes, candies, and common toys. Violette could hear every sentence spoken there in a ordinary tone; but, owing to Susanne’s well-meant efforts, her ear caught only imperfect sentences, such as follow.

“Good day, Mistress Susanne ! will you lend me a lookout from your window to see the -----”

“Hush!”

“There are Burgundy’s men first; ye’ ll know them, boy, by the cross of St. Andrew on their bonnets; and there are the Armangacs, -- see their scarfs!”

“Speak lower, please neighbour!”

“It’s well for them they have provided against a rescue; -- the *bourgeois* are all for him, -- every poor man’s heart is for him; for why? he was for every poor man’s right; God reward him.”

“Pray speak a little lower, neighbour.”

“But is it not a shame, dame Susanne?”

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But ten days ago and all, save Burgundy, were his friends, and now-----”

“There he is, mother ! see ! see!”

“They stop ! Oh, mother, see him show his broken joints ! Mother ! mother ! how his head hangs on one side ? Curse on the rack, that cracked his bones asunder ! ”

“Hush ! I bid ye hush !”

“Who can that goodly youth be, that stands close by his side ? See, he is speaking to him !”

“Oh, he looks like an angel,-- so full of pity, mother!”

“By St. Dominic, neighbour, the boy is right!”

“Oh, mother, what eyes he has ; -- now he is looking up, --see!”

“Hush!”

“But look at them, dame Susanne,-- would ye not think the lamp of his soul was shining through them?”

“See him kiss the poor, broken hand, that hangs down so! God bless him! There’s true courage in that; and see those same lips, how they curl in scorn, as he turns towards those fierce wretches! He is some stranger-youth. Whence is he, think ye, Susanne?”

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“I think by the cut of his neck-cloth, and the fashion of his head-gear,” replied Susanne, who for a moment forgot her caution, “he comes from *Italy*.”

The word was talismanic to Violette. She sprang from her bed to a window, and the first object she saw amidst a crowd was Montano; the second, her protector and friend, Jean de Montagu, the Grand-Master. He was stretched on a hurdle, for the torments of the rack had left him unable to sustain an upright position. Violette’s eye was riveted to the mutilated form of her good old master. Her soul seemed resolved into one deep supplication; but not one word expressed its intense emotions, so far did they “transcend the imperfect offices of prayer.” Not one treacherous glance wandered to her lover, till the procession moved; and then the thought, that she was losing her last opportunity of being re-united to him, turned the current of feeling, and suggested an expedient, which she immediately put into execution. She had taken her white scarf, in her pocket, to the cottage, to show it to her father; and through her delirium she had persisted in keeping it by her. She now hung it in the window, in

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the hope, that, fluttering in the breeze, it might attract Montano’s eye. She watched him, but his attention was too fixed to be diverted by anything, certainly not by a device so girlish. The procession moved on. The hurdle, and the stately figure beside it, were passing from her view. She threw the casement open, and leaned out. The scaffold,

erected at the end of the street, struck her sight. She shrieked, fainted, and fell upon the floor. That one moment gave the color to her after-life. She had been seen, and marked, -- and was remembered.

The Duke of Burgundy had taken advantage of a moment, when Charles was but partially recovered from a fit of insanity, to compass the Grand-Master's ruin. The nobles had wept at Montagu's execution, but they had been consoled by the rich spoils of his estate. There was no such balm for the sovereign; and it became a matter of policy to get up some dramatic novelty to divert his mind, and prevent a recurrence to the past, which might prove dangerous, even to Burgundy. Accordingly, a new *mystery* was

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put in train for presentation, and one month after the last act of Montagu's tragedy, and while his dishonored body was still attached to the gibbet of Montfaucon, the gay world of Paris assembled, to witness the representation of a legend of a certain saint, called "The Espousals of St. Thérèse."

The seat over which the regal canopy was suspended, corresponded to our stage-box, and afforded an access to the stage, that royalty might use at pleasure. The King was surrounded by his own family. His wandering eye, his vacant laugh, and incessant talking, betrayed the still disordered state of his mind; for when sane, amidst a total destitution of talents and virtues, he had a certain affability of manner, and the polish of conventional life, which, as his historian says, acquired for him the "ridiculous title of '*well-beloved*.'" On Charles's right sat his Queen, Isabel of Bavaria, a woman remarkable for nothing but excessive obesity, the gluttony that produced it, and the indolence consequent upon it, -- and a single passion, avarice. And sovereigns, such as these, are, in some men's estimation, *rulers* by "divine right"! Behind the Queen, a place was left vacant for the Duke of Or-

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leans, who, in consequence of a marvelous escape from death during a thunder-storm, when his horses had plunged into the Seine, had vowed to pay his creditors, and had, on that very day, bidden them to a dinner, at which he had promised the dessert should be a satisfaction of their debts. "So soon from your dinner, my lord" said his Duchess to him as he entered, with an expression of face, which indicated a fear that all had not gone as she wished.

"Yes. A short horse is soon curried."

"What? Came they not? Surely of the eight hundred bidden, there were many who would not do you such a discredit, as to believe your virtue exhaled with the shower?"

“Ah, their faith was sufficient,-- they came, every mother’s son of them, butchers, bakers, fruiterers, and all.”

“And you sent them away happy?”

“Yes, with one of the beatitudes; -- blessed are those who have nothing! I charged my valets to turn them back from my gate, and to tell them, if they came again, they should be beaten off!”

There was a general laugh through the royal box. The Duchess of Orleans alone

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turned away with an expression of deep mortification. Valentine Visconti, daughter of the Duke of Milan and Duchess of Orleans, was one of the most celebrated women of her time. Her lovely figure might have served for a model of one of the *chef-d’oeuvres* of her classic land. As she sat by the gross Queen, she inspired the idea of what humanity might become, when invested with the “glorified body” of the Saints. Her soul beamed with preternatural lustre from her eyes, and spoke in the musical accents of her beautiful lips. Her gentleness and sympathy, more than the intellectual power and accomplishments, that signalized her amidst a brutified and ignorant race, gave her an ascendancy over the mad King, which afforded some color to the wicked imaginations of those, who, in the end, accused her of sorcery! —an accusation very common against the Italians of that period, whose superior civilization and science were attributed to the diabolical arts of magic. The secret of Valentine’s power over the maniac King has been discovered and illustrated by modern benevolence. She could lead him like a little child, when, for months, he would not consent to be washed or dressed,

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and when these offices were performed at night by ten men, masked, lest, when their sovereign recovered all the reason he ever possessed, he should cause them to be hung for this act of necessary violence!

The spectators, while awaiting the rising of the curtain, were exchanging the usual observations and salutations. “Valentine,” whispered the beautiful young wife of the old Duke of Berri, “did not that man, --*mon Dieu*, how beautiful he is! — who stands near the musicians, kiss his hand to you?”

“Yes, --he is my countryman.”

“I thought so; --he looks as if the blood of all your proud old nobles ran in his veins; --the Confalonieris, Sforzas, Viscontis, and Heaven knows who.”

“He has a loftier nobility than theirs, cousin; his charter is direct from Heaven, and written by the finger of Heaven on that noble countenance. As to this world’s

honors, he boasts none but such as the son of a rich and skilful weaver of silks may claim.”

“*Mon Dieu!* Is it possible; he is a counterfeit, that well might pass in any King’s exchequer. But he looks sad and abstracted, and, seeing, seemeth as though he saw not. Know ye, cousin, what aileth him?”

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“Yes, but it is a long tale; the lady of his thoughts has strangely disappeared, and, though for more than a month he has sought her, day and night, he hath, as yet, no trace of her. He has come hither ton-night at my bidding, for I deeply pity the poor youth, and would fain divert his mind; -- but soft, --the curtain is rising!”

“Pray tell me what means this scene, Valentine?”

“It is the interior of a chapel. You know the legend of St. Thérèse?”

“Indeed I do not. I cannot read, and my confessor never told me.”

“She was betrothed to one she loved. The preparations were made for the espousals, when, on the night before her marriage, she saw, in vision, St. Francis, who bade her renounce her lover, and told her, that she was the elected bride of Heaven; that she must repair to the convent of the Sisters of Charity, and there resign the world, and abjure its sinful passions. You now see her obedient to the miraculous visitation. She has concluded her novitiate. One weakness she has as yet indulged. She has secretly retained the last gift of her betrothed. Hark! there

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you hear the vesper-bell. She is coming to deposite it at that shrine yonder.”

A female now entered, closely veiled and clad in a full, grey stuff dress, that concealed every line of her person. She held something in her hands, which were folded on her bosom, and walking, with faltering steps, across the stage to the shrine, knelt and made the accustomed signs of prayer. She then rose, and raising the little roll to her lips, kissed it fervently, and then, as if asking pardon for this involuntary weakness, again dropped on her knees, and depositing the roll, withdrew. It would seem, she had entered completely into the tender regrets of the young saint she impersonated, for a tear she had dropped on the last bequest of the lover was seen, as it caught and reflected the lamp’s rays. Immediately, through an open window in the ceiling, a dove entered, the symbol of the Holy Spirit. It was not uncommon, in these mysteries, to bring the sacred persons of the Trinity upon the scene. The bird descended, and took the roll in his bill. As he rose with it, it unfolded, and the *white silk scarf*, given to poor Violette, represented the last earthly treasure of Saint Thérèse. The dove made

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three evolutions in his ascent, and disappeared. While the cries of "*Bravo! Bravissimo! Petit oiseau! Jolie colombe!*" were resounding through the house, the Duchess of Berri whispered to Valentine, "See your Italian! he looks as if he would spring upon the state! how deadly pale! and his eyes! blessed Mary! they are like living fires! Surely he is going mad!"

"Heaven help him!" replied the gentle Valentine. "I erred in counselling him to come hither! Would I could speak with him."

"Never mind him now, cousin; the scene is changing; --tell me, what comes next?"

"Next you will see St. Thérèse praying before her crucifix, --ah, there she is! there is the coffin in which she sleeps at night, -- there the death's-head she contemplates all day."

"Shocking! shocking! I never would be a nun."

"It is but for the last days of her penitence. After her vows are made, she, like all her order, will be devoted to nursing the sick, and succouring the wretched, --a happier life than ours, cousin!"

"Think ye so? Methinks the next world

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will be soon enough to be a saint, and do such tiresome good deeds. But why has she that ugly mantle drawn up over her head, so that one cannot see her hair, or the form of her neck and shoulders?"

"Be not so impatient. You see the door behind her. The Devil is coming into her cell under the form of her lover. Ah, there he is!"

"Bless my heart, if I were the Devil, I would never leave that goodly form again. Now she'll turn! now we shall see her face! Pshaw! she has pulled that ugly mantle over, for a veil."

"Pray be still, cousin; --this is her last temptation. I would not lose a word. Listen, --hear how she resists the prince of darkness."

"The pretended lover performed his part so as to do honor to the supernatural power he represented. At first, he would have embraced the saint; but she shrunk from him, and, reverently placing her hand on the crucifix, stood statue-like against the wall.

He then knelt and poured out his passion vehemently. He reminded her of their early love, -- of the home, where he had wooed and won her;

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he besought her to speak to him, -- once to withdraw her veil, and look at him. She was still silent and immovable. He described the wearisome and frigid existence of a conventional life, and then painted, in a lover's colors, the happiness that awaited them, if she would but keep her first vow made to him. He told her, that horses awaited them at the outward gate. The force of the temptation now became apparent. The weak, loving girl, was triumphing over the saint. Her head dropped on her bosom, her whole frame trembled, and was sinking. Her lover saw his triumph and sprang forward to seize her. But her virtue was re-nerved; she grasped the crucifix, and looking up to a picture of the Virgin, shrieked, "Mary, blessed mother! aid me!"

The Evil One extended his arm to wrest the crucifix, when, smitten by its holy virtue, he sunk through the floor, enveloped in flames. The saint fell on her knees, the dove again descended and fluttered around her and the curtain fell.

In those days, when conventual life had lost nothing of its sacredness, and men's minds were still subjected to a belief in the visible interference of good and evil spirits in men's

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concerns, such a scene was most effective. The spectators were awed; not a sound was heard, till the Duchess of Berri, never long abstracted from the actual world, whispered, "Valentine, did you see your Italian when she shrieked; how he struck his hand upon his head! and see him now, what a color is burning in his cheek! He will certainly go mad, and, knowing you, he may dart hither before we can avoid him. Will ye not ask Orleans to order those men at arms to conduct him out; -- you know," in a whisper, "I have such a horror of madmen."

"You need have none, believe me, in this case. My poor countryman is suffering from watching and exhaustion, and his imagination is easily excited. The next scene will calm him. The saint, victorious over the most importunate of mortal passions, will resolutely make her vows, and receive the veil."

"Oh, then we shall see her face, after all?"

"Yes, and with all that factitious charm, that dress and ornament can lend it; for, to render her renunciation of the world more striking, she is to appear in a bridal dress, decked with the vanities that we women cling last to; -- but hush! the curtain is rising!"

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The curtain rose, and discovered the chapel of a convent. The nuns and their superior stood on one side, a priest and attendants on the other. A golden crucifix was placed in the centre, with a figure of the Saviour, as large as life. Before this, St. Thérèse was kneeling. Her dress was white silk, embroidered with pearls, with a full sleeve, looped to the shoulder with pearls. A few symbolical orange-buds drooped over her forehead, certainly not whiter than the brow on which they rested. Her hair was parted in front, and drawn up behind in a Grecian knot of rich curls, and fastened there with a diamond cross. St. Thérèse looked, as most saints would, (not as a saint should,) pale as monumental marble; her eyes not raised to Heaven, but riveted to earth, as if she were still clinging to the parting friend. The priest advanced to cut off her hair, the last office previous to investing her with the grey gown and fatal veil. As he unfastened the diamond cross, her bright tresses fell over her neck and shoulders, and, reaching even to the ground, gave the finishing touch to her beauty, and called forth a general shout of "Beautiful! beautiful! most beautiful!"

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Over every other voice, and soon stilling every other, was heard the King's, and seized with an excess of madness, he rushed upon the stage clapping his hands and screaming, "She is mine! my bride! Out with ye, ugly nuns! She is mine! mine!" finishing each reiteration with a maniac yell.

"Nay, she is mine! my own Violette! my betrothed wife!" interposed Montano, springing forward and encircling Violette with one arm, while he repelled Charles with the other.

A general rising followed. The stage was filled with the nobles, rushing forward to chastise the stranger who had presumed to lay his hands on sacred majesty. A hundred weapons were drawn, and pointed at Montano. There was a Babel confusion of sounds. At this crisis, Valentine penetrated into the midst of the *mêlée*, whispering, as she passed Montano, "Leave all to me."

The lords, who had more than once seen her power over the madness of their sovereign, fell back. She placed herself between the King and Montano, and putting her hand soothingly on Charles's side, she said, with a smile, "Methinks, my lord King, we are all beside ourselves with this bewitching show, -- we know

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not who or what we are. Here is a churl hath dared come between the King and his subject, and you, my sovereign," (in a whisper,) "have strangely forgotten your Queen's presence. Unhand that maiden, sir stranger. Kneel, my child, to your gracious sovereign, and let him see you loyally hold yourself at his disposal." Violette mechanically obeyed.

"Nay, my pretty one, kneel not," said Charles, still wild, but no longer violent. "Ah, I had forgot! here are the bridal orange-buds. Come, --come, you lazy priest, --

come marry us!” Violette looked as if she would fain again take refuge in Montano’s arms.

“To-morrow, my lord King, will surely be soon enough,” whispered Valentine with a confidential air, and, pointing to Isabel, she added, “it would not seem well to have the rights performed in her presence!” The Queen, with characteristic nonchalance, had remained quietly in her place, where she seemed quite absorbed and satisfied in devouring a bunch of delicious grapes.

“You are right, *dear sister*,” replied the King, --thus, in his softened moods, he always addressed Valentine,--“it is not according to church rule to marry one wife in presence

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of another!” He then burst into a peal of idiotic laughter, which, after continuing for some moments, left him in a state of imbecility, so nearly approaching to unconsciousness, that he was conveyed to his palace without making the slightest resistance.

A general movement followed the King’s departure, and cries rose, that the stranger must be manacles and conveyed to prison. The Duchess of Orleans interposed. “My lords,” she said, “I pray ye give this youth into my charge. He is my countryman. I will be responsible for him to our gracious sovereign.” There were murmurings of hesitation and discontent. “In sooth, my lords,” added Valentine, “ye should not add an injustice to a stranger to our usages, to the error you have already committed this night, in bringing our royal master, but half recovered from his malady, into this heated atmosphere and exciting scene; -- it were well, if we can avoid it, to preserve no memorials of this night’s imprudence.” This last hint effected what an appeal to their justice failed to obtain, and the lords permitted Montano unmolested to withdraw with the Duchess of Orleans.

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Intent on making those happy, who *could* be happy, Valentine bade Montano and Violette attend her to her carriage. When they were alone, Violette’s first words were, “My father, --my brothers, Montano, can ye tell me aught of them?”

“They are safe, --safe and well, in all save their ignorance of you, dear Violette,” replied Montano; “and by this time they are arrived in my happy country.”

“Thank God! – and my dear old grandmother?”

“Nay, ask no farther to-night.”

“Better it is, my good friend,” said Valentine, “to satisfy her inquiry now, while her cup is full with joy, and sparkling; --you can bear, my child, patiently a single bitter drop.”

“She was murdered, then?”

“She is at rest, my child, --lay your head on my bosom, --we should weep for the good and kind.”

Before the little party separated for the night, Violette told how, in consequence of having been seen at the window on the day of Montagu’s execution, she had been sought out by the managers of the mystery, and

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compelled, in the King’s name, to obey their behests.

“And to-morrow,” said Valentine, “ye shall obey mine. I, too, will be the manager of a mystery, and real espousals shall be enacted by Montano and Violette; then, ho! for my happy country.”

[Sedgwick’s notes]

* [1] The two passages, here referred to, so well illustrate the character of the times, that I am induced to translate them from Sismondi’s *History of the French*.

“Among these festivals, there was one which terminated sadly. A widow, maid of honor to the Queen, was married a second time, to a certain Chevalier du Vermandois. The King ordered the nuptials to be celebrated at the palace. The nuptials of widows were occasions of extreme licentiousness. Words and actions were permitted, which elsewhere would have called forth blushes, at a time when blushes were rare. The King, wishing to avail himself of the occasion, assumed, with five of his young courtiers, the disguise of a Satyr. Tunics besmeared with tar, and covered with tow, gave them, from head to foot, a hairy appearance. In this costume they entered the festive hall, dancing. No one recognised them. While the five surrounded the bride, and embarrassed her with their dances, Charles left them to torment his aunt, the Duchess of Berri, who, though married to an old man, was the youngest of the princesses. She could not even conjecture who he was. In the mean time, the Duke of Orleans approached the others, with a torch in his hand, as if to reconnoiter their faces, and set fire to the tow. It was but a sally of mad sport on his part, though he was afterwards reproached with it, as if it were an attempt on his brother’s life. The King discovered himself to the Duchess of Berri, who covered him with her mantle, and conducted him out of the hall.” Four of the five perished.

The historian, after saying, that Charles, conducting his army into Brittany, left Mas one very hot day, and that, while riding over a sandy plain, under a vertical sun, and excited by a trifling accident and some random words of his fool, he became suddenly mad, proceeds; “He drew his sword, and, putting his horse to his speed, and crying ‘On, on ! Down with the traitors!’ he fell upon the pages and knights nearest to him. No one dared defend himself otherwise than by flight, and, in this access of fury, he successively killed the bastard De Polignac, and three other men. At first the pages raged him; but when he attacked the Duke of Orleans, his brother, they perceived he had lost his reason.” The historian proceeds to say, that, not daring to control him, they agreed upon the expedient of letting him pursue them till he was exhausted; but finally a Norman knight, much loved by the King, ventured to spring up behind him and pinion his arms.

* [2] “In despotic countries, rights are only respected inasmuch as they are sustained by power. The inhabitants of towns, even the poorest, had a certain degree of force. Their title, *bourgeois*, in the German, whence it is derived, means *confederates*, a reciprocal responsibility.” – *Études de l’Économie Politique*, par Sismondi.