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CHAPTER VII.

"Alas!" said she, sadly; "I know my father too well; his word once passed will not be broken. And consider, Walter, the disgrace and ruin it would bring on him. The queen would banish him at once, perhaps do even worse. Oh no, Walter; it is we who must submit."

"But Constance cannot ask me to stoop to dishonour?"

"Dearest, it is not dishonour. Surely the prisoner who feigned in order to outwit his jailer, and escaped, would be fully justified; and England now is one great prison, where we dare not say or do as we list, but as pleasures the queen. Walter, you have such wild notions," continued she, looking playfully up at him, "fit only for the times of the crusades; this is what half the world does now, why should you scruple?"

"If it were lawful, my Constance, we should not see half the nobility of England exiled from the court, fined, imprisoned, and in constant suffering. Men are not so in love with all this as not gladly to escape from it, if conscience permitted. No, Constance, my beloved, do not urge me to do that which you would yourself hereafter despise me for."

Constance endeavoured to disengage herself from the close embrace in which she was held.

"It is time we part, then," said she, as haughtily as she could.

"Constance, you will not leave me in anger?"

"I have tarried too long," said she. "It is not a maiden's part to be rejected; you count a sacrifice of feeling too great to win my hand."

"Constance, have you no mercy?" said he, in a tone of anguish; "it is my honour and my faith that stand between us."

"No, no," said she, "it is not so; let me go, Walter; choose quickly between my love and happiness, and the vision of honour you conjure up. I will never disobey my father. Seek me, as he bade you, or seek me not all. We part for ever."

She was gone.

He watched the flutter of her white dress along the terrace. He saw her lean on Rose, who had been waiting at a distance. He saw her gather the flowers as she went along, and those she mislaid she cast down at her feet. She stood for an instant on the steps, and the moonlight cast an unearthly radiance on her snowy robe and golden hair. She looked like some vision from fairy-land, as she disappeared within the house. He followed the path her tiny feet had trodden; he picked up those scattered leaves of autumn roses, and laid them next his heart, and then he went to his own chamber, went to the struggle with himself for life or death. The breeze whistled blithely by that cool bright evening; the round of life went on, but though mortal eyes saw them not, and mortal ears heard them not, intent upon the scene, bent the gaze of heavenly intelligences, and keenly they listened to every sigh and groan that burst from that aching heart in Walter de Lisle's lonely chamber.

Differently, in truth, was that night spent by the betrothed. Constance never entertained the thought of losing her lover. She was flushed with triumph, she had performed her father's behest—resisted Walter's arguments, and she did not doubt the next day would bring him a captive to her feet, and she pictured to herself bright visions—how the Baroness de Lisle would comport herself in the proud court of Elizabeth, how rapidly Walter would advance in favour and trust, and how, through it all, she would be the star that led him on, the best cherished of that noble heart.

The light in her eye, and the smile that sat on her lip, reassured her father that victory was secure, so that though Walter was missed from the supper-table, he did not feel anxious.

No, Walter did not sup that night, neither when the weary inhabitants of the house sought their beds did he follow the example. Constance slept soundly, smiling in her sleep.

On the ground, fighting with his anguish, lay Walter de Lisle; close beside was the invisible tempter, busy at his work.

"But for a little time," he whispered. "Elizabeth must ere long recognise the rights of her Catholic subjects, and queens do not live for ever. Can you not even secretly serve your party by your influence? Deceit, oh! call it not by that name, it is not that; it is understood by everybody in these days, when religion has changed with each Tudor that has sat on the throne; it is only a scruple of yours thus to relinquish all the sweetness of life. What will life be without her?" And then, in glowing colours, he painted the future with Constance, and in hues that made the heart shrink back—the future without her! Walter half yielded; he began to form plans, how much he would give up; he would see Lord Beauville again—would argue it with him once more. He would show Constance his meaning more clearly. It was a fearful crisis in Walter's life; but in the darkest hour we are not left alone, and if the tempter were on the one side, an angel, in glorious array, was on the other, strengthening, pleading, bringing back by-gone memories of innocent and happy days. The eyes of angels and saints were bent upon that lonely boy, and in the courts of heaven there went up many a prayer for him from the white-robed throng. On earth too, in the vigil he was wont to keep, Father Mordaunt prayed in the chapel of the college at Rheims, and impelled by a sudden memory of the boy he had loved so much, he prayed especially for Walter. Walter at last fell asleep, still lying on the ground, and he dreamt strangely and confusedly. He was back at Rheims in the old chapel: there was a figure all in white; he could not see who it was; yes, it showed his mother's face, and vanished slowly away; then again, he too was clothed in white, he was to serve Father Mordaunt's mass, but the chapel seemed to move about in a marvellous manner. The falling of some heavy weight woke him up; he awoke saying aloud, "*Ne nos inducas in tentationem, sed libera nos a malo.*"

NOTE.—"But if such person or child so passing, or sent, shall after become conformable and obedient to the laws of the Church, and shall repair to church, and continue in such conformity, he shall, during such term as he shall so continue, be discharged of every such disability and incapacity."—*Burns' Ecclesiastical Law.*

CHAPTER VIII.

"But there are some Lutheran baits, by which the devil propagates his kingdom and invigiles many in your speare. What are they? Gold, glory, delights, pleasures; contentu them. For what else are they than the scam of the earth, a horse air, a feast of the worms, specious dunghills? Despise them. Christ is full; He will feed us; He is King who will honour us; He is rich who will endow us with all felicity."—EDMUND CAMPAN.

Very early the following morning, Walter went out. He roused the lumbering porter, and passed through the gates, and in a few minutes reached the high road. The sun was hardly risen, and the air was keen, and refreshed him as it blew on his aching brow and fevered cheeks. His mind was in a very tumult. Every sudden passion contended fiercely within, and the long warfare of the night seemed only to rage more wildly. Spirits, good and evil, still battled round him. He took no heed of surrounding objects, and was unconscious that a rough-looking peasant who had advanced towards him from the opposite quarter, had been scanning his features with the utmost interest. He started when the man spoke.

"God save your honour, may this be the way to Apowell Court?"

"It is hard by," said Walter; "but you keep early hours, my friend, and I doubt me whether you will find the porter willing to attend you."

"Perhaps," answered the man, "you honour would condescend to tell me if there is a young nobleman called De Lisle tarrying at the court?"

"You speak with him," said Walter, hastily, forgetting in his surprise the caution of the times.

The peasant bowed, and taking a letter from his vest, presented it to Walter.

The handwriting, which was a female one, was unknown to him; he eagerly opened it and turned to the signature; it was from Amy Travers—his mother's dear and early friend. "I cannot bring myself to believe," she wrote "that so many letters of mine addressed to you,