

Mountain Sentinel.

"WE GO WHERE DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES POINT THE WAY;—WHEN THEY CEASE TO LEAD, WE CEASE TO FOLLOW."

BY JOHN G. GIVEN.]

EBENSBURG, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1850.

VOL. 6.—NO. 19.

MISCELLANEOUS.

MARY OF MANTUA. A True History.

BY G. P. R. JAMES.

"The noble house of Gonzaga," says an Italian writer, in the year 1627, "had declined from its former splendor, and forgetful of its ancient valor and wisdom, had given itself up to luxury and intemperance." Three brothers had successfully filled the ducal chair, Francisco, Ferdinando, and Vincenzo, and each had distinguished himself not by restoring any vigor to a decaying line, but by introducing new modes and forms of vice.

The first of these brothers, Francisco, had left one child by a neglected and injured wife; but that child was a daughter, in her mere infancy when her father died, and while the undoubted law bestowed the Duchy of Mantua on the brother of the power gave him also the Duchy of Montferat, which the laws of Italy held to belong of her own right, to Mary of Mantua. Under the guardianship of her uncle Ferdinand, she rose towards womanhood, acquiring new graces and new accomplishments every hour, but rarely suffered to appear at his court, and kept carefully from the eyes and tongues of all who might be captivated by her beauty or inform her of her rights.

At length, however, in the year 1626, the consequences of vices and follies carried Ferdinand childless to the grave, and the last male of the race, Vincenzo, bound his brow with the ducal wreath of a Mantua. Scarcely had he taken possession of the Dukedom, when Mary received a summons to appear in his presence, and hastened to obey. She was at the time in the Convent of —, a few miles from the city of Mantua, in which she had been educated, and usually resided. No state, no display, marked out the Princess from amongst the nuns; and it was only a greater degree of liberty, a different dress, and the practice of the various accomplishments which formed the relief of her solitary life, that distinguished the fair young Duchess of the Montferat from her cloistered companions. Two servants, indeed were allowed to her; the maid who had attended upon her from her youth, and the good man who had been ordinary *ecuyer* to her mother. She had mules, too, to take the fresh air, beyond the limits of the convent gardens, so that her life was easy, if not happy; and feeling no passions, knowing no joys beyond the simple ones of her condition, she sought not to change a fate so calm, amidst that sea of troubles, the distant roaring of whose waves she heard even in her tranquil solitude.

It was evening when she received the summons to attend upon the new Duke, and her heart beat somewhat quickly, for many a dark tale had been told within the convent walls, of the crimes and faults of Vincenzo, of Gonzaga, the faithless priest, the married cardinal. It was evening, and in the autumn, but yet warm and bright, with glowing skies and rich verdure, and grapes swinging from tree to tree, ready for the basket of the husbandman; and as Mary stood in the convent garden waiting for the carriage which was to convey her to Mantua, as fair and beautiful a scene was spread out before her eyes as the pencil ever borrowed from the land of sunshine. Wide extended beneath her feet, lay the fair Mantuan plains toward Verona—plains and scenes which never quitted the memory of the great Roman poet, though he abandoned his birth place for more southern lands—and there bathed in purple light with every blue shadow, mingled with liquid gold, appeared the gentle sweeps and soft lines of trees and manifold streams, with here and there the feudal castle crowning an eminence, or the tower of some village church rising up out of the dell. The songs of the vine gatherers, for they had already begun, made the air tuneful; and the sight of manifold living objects in the distance, trains of his gay peasantry, the loaded cart, the quick driven car, and the silver gray cattle swimming in Mincio, rendered the landscape gay as well as beautiful.

Nor was Mary herself (could any eye have seen her there) an object worthy of but slight remark. Exquisitely lovely, with an air and expression not exactly melancholy, but of that calm pensiveness which her life and situation were so well adapted to give, she stood by the wall of the convent garden, partly leaning upon a worn stone table which had much the character of an ancient tomb, partly resting against a high gothic cross which rose from the low wall of the garden, and marked out—to the eyes of those who travelled the road that ran at the bottom of the deep bank below—the abode of those who, dedicating themselves to a life of religious solitude, found peace or dis-

content according to the feelings of their own hearts. Her whole person was full of loveliness, her whole attitude replete with grace. Her hands rested crossed on a book, which she had taken to while away the time, her head was slightly bent forward, and her eyes gazed upon the distant prospect—the distant prospect always more striking, because more aided by fancy, than that which is near; and the warm loveliness of her complexion,—with the white drapery in which she was clothed, contrasted beautifully with the cold grayness and yellow lichens of the ancient cross and table of stone.

As she thus stood and gazed, she heard a voice not far distant say, "Lady!" in a low and gentle tone. Those were days, however, in which danger was so frequently close to the domestic hearth, that preparation was ever the part of manly courage, apprehension a natural part of womanly weakness.

Mary of Mantua started suddenly back, and looked round with fear, but the same voice repeated, "Lady, be not alarmed. It is a friend who would warn you of a matter touching your safety."

At the same time, from behind the ruined column of what had once been a small chapel attached to the walls, came forth a stranger with a slow step, as if afraid, by any sudden movement, of scaring the fair girl away. The wall was still between them it is true; but the stranger held his giddy footing easily on the top of the high bank, and the wall was there not breast high.

Mary of Mantua drew back; she turned one timid glance towards the monastery—it was within sight, the people, who were slowly preparing the carriage, were within call; the stranger was alone, too. But that was not all; there was an open candor in his look, a nobility in his demeanor, a frank free grace in his countenance, that struck and won upon her. He was in the prime of youth, with a warm glowing cheek and bright eye. The full arching lips, parted in somewhat of a smile at her apprehensions, and there was a cheerful glance in his eye that spoke of a bright free spirit. Above the ordinary height—tall and graceful, though his features were like some that she had seen before; his person and complexion were anything but Italian, and had he not spoken the language without the slightest accent, she might have taken him for some of the followers of the house of Austria. The whole, however, was extremely pleasing, and though still somewhat alarmed, she at length ventured to ask what were his wishes.

"Be not afraid, Lady," he answered in a low, sweet-toned voice, "I come to save you from danger, not to place you in it. Approach a little nearer, for I must speak low, and must not be seen by any but you."

She took a step nearer to the place where he stood, still looking upon him as a timid fawn looks at those who would draw it to eat bread out of their hand.

"Listen!" he said; "listen Mary of Mantua, for what I have to say imports you much to know—and I have short time to say it. Your hand is a prize, for which three Princes now will strive.—First, Vincenzo, Duke of Mantua!"

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Mary, in a tone of fear; "can you mean my uncle?"

"Even so!" answered the stranger; but hear me out, fair maid, for the time is short. The next is one you know well, Ferrand, Prince of Guastalla."

"I know him not!" cried Mary, with a look of horror. "Once, only once, have I seen his dark and lowering face, but I have heard enough to make me abhor the ground that bears him."

"The stranger made no comment, but went on; "The third is Charles, Duke of Rhetel."

"An alien to our race, and the son of my father's enemy!" exclaimed Mary.

The stranger smiled, apparently well pleased.

"These are three Princes," he said; "but what say you, Lady, if a simple gentleman, of noble birth, and of some renown—against these three Princes, fate, fortune and all the world to boot—were to enter the lists for that fair hand?"

"He were a bold man!" answered Mary with a deep blush.

"Thank God! he is a bold man," replied the stranger—"but to my more pressing task, for I see the carriage is nearly ready. The Prince of Guastalla is now within the territory of Mantua; he knows that this night you enter the city. If you go by the ordinary road, you will fall into his hands, and nothing but a miracle can save you from his power. When you come to the vineyard of Perioti, just opposite the castle of Frederick di Sasso, order the driver to turn down the left hand road and follow it to the city. Aid shall be near at hand, if needful; but it were better, far better, to avoid than to encounter evil."

"Oh! better, far better!" echoed Mary; "but, oh! gentle stranger, do not leave me. If you have power, give me protection against that daring man."

"I will not be far from thee, fairest and brightest," replied the stranger, "but have I not said, that I am without power in the land. What this hand can do shall be done in your defence, and if it be needful to pour out the last drop of my heart's blood, it shall be staked as freely as a gambler's ducat. A few faithful servants, too, will not flinch from their poor master in the hour of need; and if you are saved from hazard, my guerdon shall be one kiss of that fair hand. Shall it not be so?"

"Oh, you might claim far better boon than that!" cried Mary, eagerly.

"Well, then it shall be so," he said; "one kiss of those sweet lips! But now, bethink you, lady, how you will meet your uncle? If, as sure I am he will, he offers, contrary to God's law, to make his brother's child his wife, be wise, and drive not his passionate mind to frenzy. He has a wife still living; but the bonds between them the church is now about to sever. Be cautious; show no harsh repugnance. Tell him that you can bear no such words so long as he is priest, uncle, husband, to another; that all those bonds must be loosened by the church, ere you can even let his words rest in your ear. But, lo! they seek you, I'm away! Conceive some short delay, that I may reach the point of danger first. Tomorrow, at this hour, if you have returned, I will seek you here."

Thus saying, the stranger turned and left her, and the servants sought her, saying that the carriage was ready. The directions of the stranger she followed implicitly, trusting with the confidence of unchastised youth. She detained the carriage for a few minutes, and then ordered the coachman to drive as she had been instructed. The Italian looked at her in sulky silence, and went on as if intending to obey; but when the vehicle reached the turning of the road, he was evidently about to pursue the way which had been forbidden. Mary of Mantua, however, stopped the carriage, and trying to raise her gentle voice into the sharp tone of displeasure, asked how he dared to disobey.

The man replied surlily, "because it is the best road!" and he would certainly have drove on, had not the old servant who attended upon her interferred to enforce his mistress' command. Even his authority the driver was inclined to resist; but while with true Italian carelessness of time, loud words and exaggerated gesture, the two were arguing, there came a sound of horses and galloping. It was what he driver wished and expected, and looking up the road, he saw a body of some ten or twelve mounted men coming at full speed. Mary saw them too, and terror and anguish took possession of her heart.

As they came on, however, there suddenly appeared other figures in the road between her and them. From amongst the trees and vineyards, poured out a little band on foot and horseback, and at their head, managing his fiery horse with ease and grace, he whom she had seen at the convent not an hour before. Of her now he took no notice; but standing firm in the way, formed with his band a barrier between her and the coming horsemen. The driver still paused, though she besought him to go on, and she could behold swords crossed and pistols fired, and one or two horsemen fly up the road again. She saw not well which party had the advantage, but the driver judged more clearly, and smacking his whip, drove down the road he had been ordered to take.

New agitation now fell upon Mary of Mantua, as she approached the abode of her uncle; as drawbridge after drawbridge gate after gate were passed, she prayed to heaven for strength and prudence to save herself from the dark horror of his love.

She had not seen the Duke Vincenzo for many years, and had long forgotten him, so that imagination drew her own sketch from the rumors and stories of the day.—It was not twilight, and she was ushered up the long flight of marble stairs—afterwards destroyed in the cruel sacking of the city—and then into a cabinet, where she remembered having played in the days of her childhood, when her father was living and Duke of Mantua. It now seemed smaller and more gloomy, though it was well lighted, and on the opposite side sat one whose appearance at once marked out the prince. He rose and advanced towards her as different a being as it was possible to conceive, from all that she had previously fancied. Tall, graceful, handsome, though in his decline, and though sickness—perhaps vice—had worn all the rosy lines of youth away, and left nothing but the shadow of beauty behind, his appearance was certainly far more prepossessing than Mary of Mantua had expected. Nevertheless, there was something in the ex-

pression of his countenance—something in the fixed and criticising gaze with which he looked upon the lovely creature before him, that made an involuntary shudder pass over her frame; and when he took her by the hand, and, as her uncle kissed her cheek, the warm blood rose up in it, and she thought of the warning she had received, and of him who had given it.

The Duke was not long ere he spoke upon that theme which she most dreaded to hear; but he spoke not in terms which might have been most painful to her. He traced it as but a matter of court necessity; he talked of his marriage with her as a thing that would benefit the state. Princes, he said, must be the slaves of their duties, and though he doubted not that to one so young and beautiful as herself, it must be somewhat painful to unite herself to a man in the decline of life, yet he was sure she would make no opposition to that which would set at rest forever, all the contending claims on Mantua and Montferret.

So well and wisely had her unknown counsellor hitherto advised her, that Mary followed his directions in this also to a letter. She showed no repugnance, but bending down her head with the ingenuous blush of modesty upon her cheeks she replied as he dictated. The Duke seemed pleased; perhaps it was more than he expected, and he replied with sanguine expectation that his divorce would not be long delayed, after which a dispensation would be easily obtained. There was but one thing which Mary besought him earnestly to grant, which was, that she might return on the morrow to the convent where she passed her early days.

The Duke consented; but while he spoke the old attendant, who had ever remained attached to her, was admitted by a page, and bending low he related to the Duke the adventure which had befallen them on the way, and commented bitterly on the treachery of their driver. The Duke sent for his secretary and whispered a word in his ear; and as he was leading Mary to the hall where supper waited them, there came through the windows the sound of a loud volley and one shrill piercing cry. The Duke moved gracefully on by her side without a change of countenance, but Mary turned deadly pale, and on the following morning another servant drove the vehicle that contained her, back to the convent.

It was about noon when she arrived, and the busy nuns surrounded her like a swarm of bees. They were all eager to hear tidings from without, but they were soon satisfied; and at the same evening hour at which on the day before she had watched the fair prospect of the Mantua plains, she again stood by the table of stone in the convent garden, and the stranger was by her side. She thanked him eagerly and often, gazed upon the bright and glowing countenance that gazed with tender admiration upon her again.

"Have I not won my reward?" he said. Mary replied not, but cast down her eyes with a blush. The stranger bent over her and with the tenderness of love chastened by respect, he pressed his lips to hers.

"Mary," he said, "Mary, I will win thee or die. Three more evenings will I stand by your old shrine, in the dear hope of seeing you again, and then my footsteps must wander from thee far. But I leave thee not unwatched, unguarded. My spirit shall hover round thee though my body be absent; and I promise, I swear in three months more, even to a day, to stand again in your presence and win you for my bride or die."

There might have been many in Mary's state and station who would have thought the stranger bold to believe she might be so won by an unknown, and inferior person, and talk as if he were born to contend for her hand with princes. But Mary thought not so; feelings that she had never known before were busily possessing themselves of her heart, and though to feel like apprehension, yet they were so sweet she would do nothing to banish them. She lingered with him long, and he with her, and for three nights more they met and passed a happy hour, gilded with the dawning brightness of young love.

He left her on the third night with a painful and anxious farewell; and Mary now felt how lonely was her state of being.

The hours flew heavily, the day rolled on in care and anxiety—but she forgot not the absent; and every rumor that she heard of movements at the court of Rome regarding her uncle's divorce, made her heart sick. But Vincenzo himself seemed to press matters but feebly, and when at length the appalling news reached her that he was free, he showed no inclination to profit by that freedom. She then heard

that he was sick—sick even to the gates of death, and there were rumors of arming in Guastalla, and of Austrian forces moving to take possession of Mantua on the Duke's decease or of France sending armies to secure it for the house of Nevers. Then came tidings of messengers hurrying to and from between Paris and Mantua and Rome, and so went by the time till the three months had passed over, and then, though the air was wintry, Mary eagerly hurried forth and stood by the table of stone as the sun was sinking to repose. She gazed ever the Mantua plain, but no one was seen; she listened, but heard not the voice whose memory had cheered her solitude. The sun sank, and all was darkness.

With a heart sad and depressed she was taking her way back to the convent when the bell at the gate rung, and an immediate summons was given her to proceed to Mantua in one of the Duke's carriages with all speed, to hear the last injunctions of her dying uncle. State now surrounded her, guards were on each side of the vehicle, and in the convent parlor waited a high dame of the court to accompany her on the way.

The scene she had to go through Mary felt would be painful; but there was a greater degree of depression at her heart than even the anticipation of standing by the death bed of her uncle could account for. Gloomy then and desponding disappointed and anxious, Mary entered the carriage, asking herself what was to be her fate when her uncle should be no more.—The night was dark and stormy; the dull winds whistled along the road, and for about a mile not a word was spoken by either Mary or her companion.

At length however, the lady said, "I have been commanded to inform your highness as soon as we were actually on the way, that it will be necessary for you to prepare your mind for a great change of condition. The Duke is, as you know, at the point of death. The Duke of Nevers is next heir, to the coronet of Mantua, and as it is absolutely necessary that all claims to this duchy and Montferret should centre in one race, it has been determined that your highness should give your hand to the young Duke Rhetel, son of the Duke of Nevers. The prince destined to be your husband has already arrived in Mantua, and as there is the most urgent necessity for your marriage should take place before the death of Duke Vincenzo, he has generously determined, that even in his mortal illness, he will see the alliance completed this very night, the proper dispensations having already arrived from Rome."

It was with difficulty that Mary of Mantua prevented herself from sinking off the seat in terror and agony. The horror the awful horror of being called upon in a moment to wed one whom she had never before beheld, while her heart was but too surely given to another, overpowered her for a few moments; but when she recollected all the resolution and courage of her race, she protested against the cruelty and injustice of the act which her uncle proposed to commit, and solemnly declared that nothing should induce her to yield her hand in such indecent haste to an utter stranger. The lady who accompanied her, heard all with that chilling coldness which is far more dispiriting than actual opposition, and merely said "that she feared her highness would find herself forced to obey."

Mary had recourse to silence and though her heart was sad and heavy, it remained firm, and she said to herself, "They can but kill me—that they will not do—and if they do, better to die."

Once more then she passed the manifold gates and drawbridges, and entered what she felt to be, one vast dark prison; but she thought of him she loved and though she called him cruel in her own heart for not having come to advise or deliver her—still she felt that she loved, and that she could not, dared not, wed another.

The gates of the palace were at length reached, the courts were filled with soldiers; cannon guarded the entrance; every thing told that vast preparations had been made to secure tranquility among the people on the death of the reigning Duke. She saw lights streaming from the hall above, and led forward by her companion she advanced up the wide staircase and into the anti-chamber. There however, an officer addressed her saying, "All is ready madam; the Duke awaits your Highness. There is not a moment to spare!"

"Go forward madam!" said Mary to the lady who accompanied her, "go forward, and tell my uncle my unalterable resolve as I announced it to you."

The lady paused and looked back but she saw that Mary could not escape, and advancing, she entered the hall beyond leaving the door ajar behind her. Mary could only see the faded form of her uncle

lying on a splendid couch, and looking as if death had already achieved the victory. But she heard first his voice very sharply "If not by good will, by force!" and then another, "but a sweeter voice, and the French tongue, "Let me speak with her for a moment my gracious lord."

An instant after the door opened, and clothed in princely apparel, a young man appeared—but Mary's heart beat fast—her knees trembled—the color went and came in her cheek—she stretched forth her arms towards him—she fell almost fainting on his bosom.

"Oh! why came you not? why came you not?" she cried.

"Hark, Mary!" he answered, as the palace clock struck loud and clear, "hark beloved, it is our hour of meeting! and I am here—shine own dear cousin, Charles of Gonzaga—will you refuse the Duke of Rhetel still?"

The warm, warm blood was all over that bright face; but the smile—the timid yet confiding smile spoke more than words could have done, and in a moment more the Duke of Rhetel led on to the altar raised in the hall beyond, a trembling, a blushing but not unhappy bride.

Children will Talk.
We heard a very amusing story related, says the Boston Museum, a few days since; of a gentleman being possessed of a somewhat prominent proboscis being invited out to take tea with a handsome young widow, having the small incumbrance of about forty thousand dollars and a beautiful and interesting little daughter about five years of age. The little girl, (whom we shall take the liberty of calling Mary,)—although much beloved by all who knew her, had the habit of speaking aloud in company, and commenting upon each and every peculiarity that any of her mamma's guests might have; and the charming widow knowing this fact, took little Mary to one side on the afternoon in question, and gave her a lesson somewhat in the following manner:

"Mary, dear, I have invited a very particular friend of mine to come and take tea with me this evening, and as he has rather a long nose, I wish to warn you against speaking of it in his presence. He is the most sensitive on that point upon all subjects, therefore, if you allude to it in his presence, you shall be most assuredly severely reprimanded; but on the other hand, if you will sit up in your little chair and be a lady, you shall have that beautiful frosted cake I purchased from the baker this morning."

Little Mary made the requisite promise, and was amusing herself with her abundant supply of playthings, when the long nosed gentleman arrived. The compliments of the day being exchanged, and the topics of the day fully discussed, the widow, with one of her blandest smiles, invited Mr. — into the adjoining room to partake of the choicest dainties of the season, with which the table was bountifully supplied.

As they were passing out of the room leaving little Mary to amuse herself as best she could, the little cherub hastily intercepted them at the door, and archly looking up into the sparkling and animated countenance of her mother, exclaimed—

"Mother, dear, ain't it most time for me to have my nice frosted cake for not saying anything about this gentleman's long nose?"

The widow fainted, and the long nosed gentleman is still a bachelor.

American Tea.
The New York Journal of Commerce publishes a letter from Dr. Junius Smith, dated Golden Grove, Greenville, S. C., Jan. 14, 1850, in which that gentleman thus describes the progress he has made in his experiment of tea culture:

You will be pleased to hear that tea plant, in strength and vigor, is in bud and blossom still, and promises to continue until greeted by the vernal breeze, and cheered by solar heat. I have one remarkable plant, a branch of which is so loaded with seed, now about the size of a pea, that it bends under its weight, and almost touches the ground. The tea plant is a curious shrub, and to watch its development is an amusement deeply interesting. In answer to your enquiries respecting the probable time of my being able to dispose of tea plants and seed, I beg to inform you that it is my intention to accommodate the public, so far as I can, with both plants and tea nuts, the ensuing spring, most likely in March, and thus open the way to an extensive cultivation in the United States.

A gentleman visiting a deaf and dumb institution, asked one of the pupils,—"What is eternity?"

The answer was,—"It is the life-time of the Almighty!"