



Renée and Claude.

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RENEE.

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Florence H. Crowell.

R E N E E .

I HAVE told you the history of that pious queen, Margaret of Navarre. I must now tell you something of her cousin, Renee, a princess of France. She was the daughter of King Louis the Twelfth of France, and when she grew up was married to a duke of

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Italy—the Duke of Ferrara.
She lived in the sixteenth century.

Children sometimes think that great people are always joyous, and that riches bring happiness. They say, “She was as happy as a queen,” about those whom they think very happy.

This is a great mistake, as well as a common one. Renee, poor child, was far from happy.

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She had great wealth, high station, some power, but she lacked much love and care and joy that is shared by many little children in very poor homes.

God gave Renee, at last, a gift which made up to her for much that she had lost. He gave her himself.

Renee, daughter of the King of France, became also a daughter of the King of kings.

From her splendid and often unhappy home on earth she has gone to a holy and happy home in heaven.

We will tell you first something of Renee's family. Her father, King Louis, was a good-natured old man, who loved ease and pleasure and hated all noise or care.

Her mother was Anne of Bostagne, a proud, vain, envious person.

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Her sister was the princess Claude, afterward by her marriage the wife and mother—as she had been the daughter—of a king. Claude was a gentle, lovely, but unhappy woman.

Though Queen Anne, the mother of Renee, had many faults, she was careful that her two children did not grow up in the folly and vice of the gay court. She kept them with

their teachers and servants in a quiet palace away from the city, where she sometimes went to visit them.

Thus, you see, Renee's mother, being full of the gayeties and the splendor of the court, and the king, their father, busy in feasting and hunting, Renee was left with her sister Claude for her only near friend.

You can imagine these two lonesome little princesses, go-

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ing hand in hand about the quiet gardens and in the deep woods around their palace home, or bending over their books, reciting lessons to solemn old monks, or kneeling in the palace-chapel, praying to the Virgin and the saints, for these two princesses were Catholics. They had no Bible, no tracts, no hymn-book. Instead of them they had false tales of saints and miracles.

Claude was the eldest of the girls. The sisters were not alike in looks or in feelings. Claude was pale and delicate. She was very soft and mild in her nature, easily frightened, ready to obey everybody, and always believing what she was told, whether it was right or not.

Renee, on the other hand, was bright and gay. She had a hot temper, a strong will, a

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wise mind. She was brave in doing right. She had a desire to study for herself and learn what was right, and then no one could keep her from doing as she thought she should.

Both the girls were kind to the poor, and very fond of each other. They would sit together in the window of a high tower, working embroidery. From this tower they could see far across the woods and plains.

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Sometimes they would see the coach of their queen-mother as she came to visit them. Sometimes they would see the king, their father, riding out to the chase, with splendid horses, and servants in gold-laced coats, and beautiful hounds leaping along. When they saw the deer running, they always wished it would get away from the dogs and save its life.

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“What shall we be when we grow up?” Renee would say.

“I’m afraid to grow up,” Claude would reply. “I had rather always live here, and work tapestry and give to the poor, and pray in the chapel and have you with me, dear Renee. I know that you love me.”

But Renee had a bolder mind and gayer hope than Claude. She would answer,

“Why, sister Claude, we should get so tired growing old here! It does very well for now, but by and by we want something better. We shall marry great princes, and have palaces close together; and we shall always see and love each other, and have plenty to love us.”

“Well, Renee, maybe so,” Claude would say, too mild even to dispute.

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What Renee fancied never came true.

While the girls were very young their mother died. Then the king said Claude must marry her cousin Francis, the brother of Margaret of Navarre, and then she would be queen of France.

Claude loved her cousin Francis, but he did not care for her. This made her very sad. She was taken away

from Renee and the quiet old tower, and married to Francis. He had her live in a grand palace, but Claude looked back to the old tower and her sister's love, and sighed.

Then the king—the father of these sisters—died, and Francis was king and Claude was queen of France.

Claude had little children, but they were taken away from her for teachers to bring

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them up, and she was more lonely than ever.

She found a friend who loved her nearly as well as Renee had done, and that friend was Margaret of Navarre, her husband's sister.

Margaret told Claude of Jesus and his love, showed her the true way of faith, and tried to bring her into the Reformed Church, as in that Church they had Bibles to read, and

worshiped God instead of the saints.

Claude was afraid of her priests, and dared not leave the Romish Church. She read Margaret's Bible now and then; and spent most of her time in doing good. At last she persuaded the king to let her sister Renee come and live with her.

When Renee came to live with Claude she was a very

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lovely young girl. She became a friend of Margaret of Navarre.

Margaret saw that Renee had a much stronger and braver mind than Claude. She spoke much to Renee of the wickedness and folly of the Romish Church, and of the need of a pure and simple faith.

Margaret gave Renee a copy of the Bible.

“Dear Renee,” said Claude, “I should think you would be afraid to read that book, for the Church forbids it.”

“I have as much right to it as the priests have!” cried Renee. “God’s book is for all his children. It is needful that I should know the way of the Lord more perfectly.”

Margaret spoke to Bishop Brignonnet about Renee’s feelings, and the bishop very

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gladly taught her more about prayer and faith.

Renee also knew William Farel, the great French preacher, about whom I shall write you in our next little book.

In France, at that time, there were many good and earnest men. Even at the court of the king were pious men and women; and you know how the Bible tells us

that it is natural for those who love the Lord to “speak often one to another.” Thus Renee was more and more instructed, and accepted with all her heart the belief of the Reformed Church.

This was a blessed thing for the young princess. She was soon to leave her sister and her friend Margaret and her life at the court of France, and go far away to another land to

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a home of her own, where many cares and trials and duties were in store for her. Only by the grace of God could Renee walk through them all.

As I dare say you feel sorry for poor, mild, sad Queen Claude, I will in a few words tell you what became of her. She was a very good woman, and I hope that in her heart she truly loved and trusted

Jesus. After Renee had left her she was more lonely than ever. The king was taken prisoner and carried to Spain, and then Margaret went to Spain to visit her brother. Separated from her husband, her sister, her children and her friends, Queen Claude, though in a palace full of wealth and servants, pined away. She fell ill, and a year after her husband was taken

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prisoner she died. She was but twenty-five years old. She seemed very glad to die, and said she felt that she was going to a good God, who had sent her troubles to make her better and to lead her to love him and heaven.

Renee was, of course, much grieved at the loss of her sister.

A young princess can make no choice for herself when she

marries. When her friends choose, they select a prince, such as they like, make all the plans, and then the princess must go and be his wife whether she like him or not. Such was Renee's fate.

The king gave Renee to the Duke Ercole, of Ferrara. Queen Claude and Margaret bade her farewell, and Renee of France was taken to Italy. The duke was a Roman Catho-

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lic. Very likely, if Renee had been allowed a voice in the matter, she would not have chosen the Duke of Ferrara; but, as it was, she meant to be as good a wife to him as she could be.

The duke liked his wife quite well. He thought her witty and handsome, and did not forget that she was the daughter of a great king.

Renee was one of the wisest

women of her day. She was a great scholar, and when she was established in her own red-stone palace, in the city of Ferrara, like Margaret, she called about her poets and wise and good men. The duke liked this very well.

Renee was very kind to the poor, and they loved her. She did so much good in the duke's country that the land improved, and all was peace and



Renee and her Steward.

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joy and happiness. This also was fine for the duke, for it made his people willing to obey him.

Renee had three dear daughters.

Now at this time the Reformed people were persecuted and oppressed by the priests. Many of them fled to Renee for shelter, and when good ministers were driven from their homes they went to Re-

nee too, to be kept safe in her city of Ferrara.

You remember Calvin went to Renee, after he had been to Queen Margaret of Navarre. I dare say Renee was very happy to see him, for he was a famous preacher and writer, and was very wise and holy.

A friend came to Renee in another way. Andelot, a soldier, was made a prisoner of war and sent into Italy. Re-

nee heard of him, and she sent him good books. He read these books, and by the blessing of God became a pious man. He gave new courage to the duchess, and sent news of salvation by Christ to his friends in France, many of whom became Protestant Christians.

Another good man who came to Renee was the poet Arnot. He fled from the

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priests, and Renee gave him a home.

The priests became very angry at our lady Renee. They hated her, and began to try to make trouble between her and the duke.

Her three girls were given to Catholics to bring up. This made Renee sad. She wished her girls to learn the truth, but she could not teach them. A good mother can have no

greater trial than this, that she may not lead her dear children to God.

The priests could not accuse Renee of any wrong. She was kind to poor Roman Catholics, and helped them when they were ill or in trouble, just as she helped those of her own faith.

Renee owned a castle called Montargis, and here she sheltered so many of the good and

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poor that it was called by people "God's Inn," or hotel. Renee was not ashamed of this name; she was quite ready to be an innkeeper to the saints of God.

Renee's eldest daughter was named Anne. When she was quite young the duke married her to a Frenchman, the Duke of Guise. This man was very rich and high in power, but he was a bad man and a bit.

ter Catholic. Anne was a Catholic too; she had been taught to hate her good mother's faith.

Renee's new son-in-law did not like her. He was a bold and bad man; but Renee had learned to do all the good she could even to her enemies, and she was kind to Guise and gave him help in food, money and men for his army.

Her steward said to her,

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“Madam, you will make yourself poor to make others rich.”

“That is nothing,” said Renée; “the Lord Jesus Christ was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor.”

Renee, in fact, was like the sun; she blessed all she shone upon, being good even to the evil and the unthankful.

Still, led by the priests, the duke told Renee that unless she would be a Catholic she

could not live in his house any more.

“I cannot sin against God by leaving the Reformed Church, where he has given peace to my soul,” said Renee.

The duke now gave her a palace by herself, and would not even visit her. He forbid her to have any minister of her own Church, but he let two or three ladies who believed as she did live with her.

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Renee begged him to let her two children live with her.

“I will let them stay in your house,” he said, “with a priest and some nuns to stay with them, if you will promise me never to say a word to them about religion, and not to give them a Bible or any of your books.”

This was hard, but Renee could do nothing for her girls if they went to live somewhere

else. She promised what the duke asked, but she hoped that her earnest prayers and her good example would turn the hearts of her daughters to their mother's God.

In the midst of these troubles Calvin wrote to her. He told her to do right and fear not. He said that God was able to bring good out of evil, and that she must learn to bear these hard things meekly

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for Jesus' sake, for Jesus did yet greater things for her.

Let a priest begin to persecute and he is never ready to stop. It was thus in Renee's case. The priests had made her unhappy in her children; they had parted her from her husband; they had denied her a pastor. Would they do more? Yes; they would be yet more unkind.

What next would they do?

They made the duke forbid Renee to give any help to poor people; they would not allow her to bring any more Bible-readers, any more good pious poets, any more pastors to her castle.

Renee loved to do good; it grieved her that she might no more be the keeper of "God's Inn;" but she must obey, for the duke and the king made the law.

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More trial came still: the two daughters who had been left to her were taken away from Renee's palace.

Yet more trouble: the Protestant ladies who had lived with good Renee were sent off, and very cruelly used too. The duchess was kept in her castle like a prisoner, and watched so that she could send no letters to her friends, and could get no more good

advice from Calvin or any of her other pastors.

This was a cruel way, truly, in which to treat a king's daughter, a kind woman, who had never done anything but serve God and help the poor.

Queen Margaret was dead, and King Francis, the husband of Claude, was dead. Renee's nephew was now King of France, and he cared so little for her that he said she

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had better be killed or shut up in a dungeon if she did not turn Romanist.

Renee was not afraid of death; she had read in the Bible, "Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but fear him who is able to cast both body and soul into hell."

Yes, Renee had a holy fear for God.

I never heard that the brave Renee cried over her own troubles, but I can tell you of one time when she shed very many tears. It was thus:

The Duke of Ferrara was dead. Renee's daughters were all married. Renee could no longer be kept a prisoner in a palace, for she owned several towns, and in one of them she lived.

After a cruel battle, hun-

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dreds of poor people, many of them women and children or very old people, faint and tired and homeless, came to Montargis, Renee's town.

Renee wanted to give them food and shelter and care. The king, led by the priest, sent her orders to drive them off. Renee wept.

“Oh,” she said, “if I were a man, I would raise an army and fight for these poor people.

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I would not drive them off to die on the road !”

Renee went out to the gate, and told her poor friends that the king would not let her keep them in her town. Then she gave them all her horses and wagons, all her money and all the food she had, leaving herself without any of these riches, to help the pious poor. Said Renee,

“Jesus gave himself for us.

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I can give these things for his sake.”

The King of France sent men to Renee to say to her, “You had better leave this place and go away. We do not want you here; you are in our way. You can stay if you will be a Roman Catholic; but if you will not, go!”

I told you Renee was brave, and not afraid to do right. She held up her head and

made answer: "These towns are mine; I will live in them. These people are mine; I will take care of them. The Reformed religion is the true one, and I will never deny it. The Bible is the word of God, and I will read it every day."

Oh how noble a thing is moral courage! We hope that every little child will try to have it.

You may ask me what came

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of such a life as Renee's. How shall we sum up her work?

First, you know there is great power in a good example. Renee shone before all the world a true child of God. She was like a city set on a hill that cannot be hid. Her light shone so that all could glorify her Father in heaven. In the folly, vice and pride of her court home, Renee was like a lily among thorns.

Again, you can think how many sorry hearts Renee, by love and kindness, made glad, how many sick she comforted, how many poor she helped. The world was happier for her having lived in it. God says, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." Think of that — "one of the least!" God's blessing followed Renee.

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And, lastly, in thinking of Renee's life, we will consider the good she did for the Church, for the souls of men. For many years Renee protected the Reformers. She saved from persecution such men as Calvin, and others of the Huguenot and Reformed pastors. In Italy, the very heart and stronghold of the Romish Church, Renee built up a Church of Reformers, of

holy - praying, Bible - reading men and women. Bibles were scattered about, churches formed by the help of this good duchess, and she gave money to build churches in other places.

All through Renee's life there were troubles and enemies and unkindness. When she was old and ill her wicked son of Guise sent an army to try and turn her out of her

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home, so that he could give over the people of the town to the priests.

“I will die fighting for my people on the wall,” said Renée — true, brave child of a king, and, far better, the brave child of the King of heaven.

After a long voyage, after storms and head winds and high seas, the strong ship rides into the safe harbor at last; so, after a long life, when

foes had been cruel and friends false, when no rest had come to Renee, and when even that sister-love that had been hers in the castle where she spent her early days had been lost in the grave, Renee, grown old and weary of earth, entered a rest that no man could disturb, even the rest that remains for the children of God.

The longest and most troubled life seems short when it

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is ended. Renee has been now nearly three hundred years with her Saviour. Do you think she is sorry that she did not deny her faith and live an easy and merry life? No; she thanks God, whose grace kept her firm and caused her to “stand fast in the truth.”

Renee was persecuted for her love of the truth. Though a princess, she was made to suffer. And how was it with

people of less rank ? Alas for the poor and the humble in Italy who looked to Christ and not to Rome for salvation ! They were driven from their homes, with the loss of everything ; they were imprisoned ; they were chained in dungeons, while the irons on their wrists cut into their flesh ; they were led forth to be drowned in the waters of Venice ; they were burned at the stake.

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And why did they endure these things? Why not live at ease in their Italian homes? Why have their limbs torn asunder on the cruel rack? Why be burned alive?

If they would but say, "I will attend the Roman Catholic Church; I will go to mass; I give up heresy," they would be let go. But no; these people had read the Bible, and had learned that God forgives

sin for Jesus' sake. They had found that the Bible forbade the worship of saints and of any but God alone. They believed that after death God would take them to heaven; so they were faithful; they endured tortures; they died, looking to Jesus; and they thus entered into rest.

The power of the pope crushed the Protestant faith out of Italy. The darkness

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came back to that land; but now, in our day, the light shines there again. The Bible is sold and read there; the gospel is preached, and many are turning to God.

Ah, children, you can never be too thankful that you live in an age when you are as free to worship as you wish as God's blessed air and sunlight; when you have no priests to fear if you do not go

to mass and confession. Let us, then, try to do all we can to please and obey the merciful Father who loves all of us and has provided a Way whereby we can all be saved—his Son, Christ Jesus.