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Story From Voltaire

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STORY FROM VOLTAIRE.

WE hope to have the pleasure of delighting our readers frequently with the chaste and classic pen of our correspondent M. By a curious coincidence, about the time he was translating the subjoined story from Voltaire, a correspondent of the Richmond Compiler furnished the Editor of that paper with another version, which was published. Without disparagement to the latter however, the reader of taste will find no difficulty in awarding the preference to the one which we insert in our columns.

For the Southern Literary Messenger.

BELOW, is a neat and sportive little story of Voltaire's, never before translated into English, that I know of; though containing sufficient point and good sense to make it well worthy of that honor. No one who has ever sorrowed, can fail to acknowledge the justice of

styling TIME the "Great Consoler." The balm he brings, has never failed sooner or later to heal any grief, which did not absolutely *derange* the mind of its victim. By one part of the tale, the reader will be reminded of the philosopher in *Rasselas*, who, the morning after he had eloquently and conclusively demonstrated the folly of grieving for any of the ills of life, was found weeping inconsolably, for the loss of his only daughter. Whether Dr. Johnson, or the French wit, first touched off this trait of human weakness, is not material: it may be set down as rather a coincidence than a plagiarism. So much of the region of thought is *common ground*, over which every active mind continually gambols, that it would be wonderful if different feet did not sometimes tread in identical foot prints.

M.

From the French of Voltaire.

THE CONSOLED.

THE great philosopher, Citophilus, said one day to a justly disconsolate lady—"Madam, an English Queen, a daughter of the great Henry IV. was no less unhappy than you are. She was driven from her kingdom: she narrowly escaped death in a storm at sea; she beheld her royal husband perish on the scaffold." "I am sorry for her;" said the lady—and fell a weeping at her own misfortunes.

"But," said Citophilus, "remember Mary Stuart. She was very becomingly in love with a gallant musician, with a fine *tenor* voice. Her husband slew the musician before her face: and then her good friend and relation, Elizabeth, who called herself the Virgin Queen, had her beheaded on a scaffold hung with black, after an imprisonment of eighteen years." "That was very cruel," replied the lady—and she plunged again into sorrow.

"You have perhaps heard," said her comforter, "of the fair Jane of Naples, who was taken prisoner and strangled?" "I have a confused recollection of her," said the afflicted one.

"I must tell you," added the other, "the fate of a Queen, who, within my own time, was dethroned by night, and died in a desert island." "I know all that story," answered the lady.

"Well then, I will inform you of what befel a great princess, whom I taught philosophy. She had a lover, as all great and handsome princesses have. Her father once entering her chamber, surprised the lover, whose features were all on fire, and whose eye sparkled like a diamond: she, too, had a most lively complexion. The young gentleman's look so displeased the father, that he administered to him the most enormous box on the ear, ever given in that country. The lover seized a pair of tongs, and broke the old gentleman's head; which was cured with difficulty, and still carries the scar. The nymph, in despair, sprung through the window; and dislocated her foot in such a way, that she to this day limps perceptibly, though her mien is otherwise admirable. The lover was condemned to die, for having broken the head of a puissant monarch. You may judge the condition of the princess, when her lover was led forth to be hanged. I saw her, during her long imprisonment: she could speak of nothing but her afflictions."

"Then why would not you have me brood over

mine?" said the lady. "Because," said the philosopher, "you *ought not* to brood over them; and because, so many great ladies having been so miserable, it ill becomes *you* to despair. Think of Hecuba—of Niobe." "Ah!" said the lady, if I had lived in their time, or in that of all your fine princesses, and you, to comfort them, had told them my misfortunes, do you think they would have listened to you?"

The next day, the philosopher lost his only son; and was on the point of dying with grief. The lady had a list prepared, of all the kings who had lost their children, and carried it to the philosopher: he read it, found it correct, and——wept on, as much as ever. Three months after, they met again; and were surprised to find each other cheerful and gay. They caused a handsome statue to be reared to TIME, with this inscription:

"TO THE GREAT CONSOLER."