

his way till he reach the spot, where glows this wondrous flower, and with eyes undazzled by necromancy, if so it may happily be, he will resolve this weighty question. But what gallant Knight shall we appoint to this perilous adventure?

"The King! the King!" said several voices; "to his decision we will bow."

With forced gaiety Henry now joined in the conversation. The flush of excitement had passed from Bellegarde's face; he was now pale, even his lips were bloodless. All this could not pass unnoticed, and the apparently unwarrantable anxiety felt by both parties in such an affair, incited the others to carry it out. It was arranged that the Duke de Bellegarde, accompanied by Henry and three of the nobles then present, should proceed to Creuvres as soon as possible, but that their decision should be unrevealed till the same company were again assembled. Soon after these arrangements were concluded, Bellegarde, pleading the necessity of making some preparations for this unexpected enterprise, retired. When once released from the now irksome society of his companions, Bellegarde gave way to his excited feelings. He almost ran till he reached his quarters; entering he gave orders to be denied to all.

"A curse on my folly!" said he, as he closed and bolted his door, "ay, and a thousand curses will follow it. Fool! to betray my rare and beautiful bird into the net of the fowler, and then to *dream or hope* of mercy. But she is so good, so pure. Fool, madman! will the innocence and gentleness of the bird save her from the serpent's wife, or the hawk's strength?" and in his passionate frenzy he ground his teeth, and smote his brow with his clenched fist.

With feelings scarcely less excited and bitter, did Henry pace his chamber that night. As willingly as Bellegarde would Henry have avoided this adventure, which had been almost forced upon him. A word of his might even now prevent its being further pursued, and yet, he resolved that that word should remain unsaid. Henry did indeed cherish an affection for Gabrielle, so deep and holy, that for her he was now prepared to immolate his own feelings. He well knew that if for him Gabrielle had ever cherished a warmer feeling than that of grateful friendship, his appearance in his real character must be its death blow. And dear though that hope was and had been,—for his passion for Marie de Beauvilliers was but a phantom which he had invoked, to drive away the only true love that ever warmed his breast,—how ineffectual the attempt had been, his own heart could best answer, dear though it was—he now determined not only to go with Bellegarde, but more, to advance by every means in his power his rival's interest. That Bellegarde was worthy

of the most ardent affection, he knew; and Henry wrought himself to believe that his dearest happiness would be in promoting Gabrielle's real felicity, even though, by so doing, he effectually shut her heart to himself. O, man! strong and generous in your impulses and theories, too often weak and selfish in practice!

Some three or four days after the event we have related, Henry, accompanied by Bellegarde and three other nobles, all in disguise, left the camp, on what, at best, was but a hair-brained expedition. To the incentives before given for its prosecution, we may add the charm of danger. To Henry, who always seemed to delight in placing himself in situations calculated rather to display his temerity than his wisdom, this was more particularly a stimulating motive. Not but that there was a nobler one, but danger was as much an element that ministered to and was necessary to his existence, as was the air he breathed. The almost inaction of a tedious siege, made him willing to throw himself into anything that promised exciting adventure. Nor must we forget to mention that the ostensible reason for this secret journey, was the securing a body of German cavalry.

Bellegarde still regarded the affair in the same gloomy light; yet he had hopes that something might happen to prevent its full execution. Reports were continually reaching them of the Duke of Parma's movements, and the news of his entering France was now daily and even hourly expected. Again, though Bellegarde did not really wish that they should be discovered, he would have been very willing that their danger should be so great as to deter even Henry. These, however, were but hopes, faint ones too. He knew Henry too well to imagine that his projects would be easily turned aside, and the publicly avowed, and, indeed, one of the real reasons for the expedition, was the securing valuable and necessary aid.

The journey was indeed a perilous one, so perilous that all entreated Henry, that he, at least, would return to quarters, where the danger was not so imminent. As they advanced further into the country, they were frequently obliged to halt or turn from the highway, to avoid detachments of Mayenne's army, which was now concentrating about Rouen. It was vain that every argument was adduced to dissuade Henry from his purpose of proceeding. It was evident the enemy had resolved upon decisive measures, and with those measures his own scrutiny would best acquaint him. They followed close in the wake of these detachments, and from the flying rumours Henry was enabled to form some notion of the enemy's intentions. He felt convinced that there