

ever been to me a friend, a protector, a second father? Let us drop this subject, Baron! To prove how unfounded are your suspicions, I declare that I am ready to obey you in everything, whereby I can assist you in bringing to a successful termination the enterprise of which you have spoken; since Elizabeth—the Countess de Montglat, I mean—and yourself, have assigned me a part in it, it cannot be other than glorious and honorable. And as for leaving you, my brother! I will never quit you, till you yourself repulse me."

The countenance of the Baron had gradually assumed a calmer expression.

"That will never happen, my dear Fabian!" he exclaimed cordially; "henceforth we shall be ever united in heart and will. Be it as you propose, and let us bury in oblivion this foolish quarrel, as painful to myself as to you."

They resumed their journey, and proceeded for some time side by side, occupied with the reflections to which this little altercation gave rise in their minds. In spite of the reconciliation with which it had closed, Fabian was more dejected than before, and Albert more disturbed.

"Brother!" resumed the former, after a long interval of silence; "I have no desire to revoke in anything the promise of submission which I have given you; yet permit me one question—only one. This enterprise, in which my share is already assigned—is it to advance the interests of any political party, such, for example, as that of the Prince of Condé, whose colours you wear, and one of whose suite I have understood you to be?"

The Baron examined his brother keenly, to ascertain what degree of importance he attached to this question.

"Would you have so great a repugnance, Fabian!" he said tranquilly, "to serve the greatest warrior of our age—a prince whose exploits shall ever be noted in history?"

"No one, Baron, admires more than I do, the military qualities of the great Condé; but I fear much, if the rumours which have reached our quiet province are not false, that the glory of so many brilliant actions is tarnished by that unbridled love of faction, which the Prince now displays."

The Baron could not restrain a gesture of satisfaction.

"Is that your opinion of the Prince of Condé?" he returned, with a smile. "Well, Fabian! take courage! it is not for the profit of a faction, even that of the first prince of the blood, that your services will be employed; to assure you of this, I may tell you, that, though I still wear his colours to

preserve appearances, I have myself quitted his party."

"Can it be possible?" exclaimed Fabian with pain and surprise.

"Enough of this!" interrupted the Baron, with some return of his former haughtiness. "You shall know the whole truth after we reach Paris. In the mean time, you must make me one other promise, Fabian! It is, that whatever you hear me say, or see me do, you will not allow either my words or actions to surprise you; what may appear to you mysterious at the time, will be sufficiently explained afterwards, and I trust that my motives will then appear to you in no wise blameable. Give me then your word as a gentleman that you will abstain from all reflections adverse to me, and that you will yield implicitly to my instructions, until the moment when I shall myself explain to you the reasons of my conduct."

Fabian hesitated, but his deference towards his brother was such, and so little distrust had been awakened in his mind as to the projects of the Baron, that he decided to adopt the blind submission exacted of him.

"I promise, on the faith of a gentleman, that I will never annoy you with useless questions," he answered frankly.

"Tis well, my brother!" resumed Albert; "this ready compliance does honour to us both; but bear in mind that your confidence in me may be subjected to very severe trials. Happily, if you resist them, I can promise you the recompense which is doubtless in your eyes the most enviable and precious in the world—the hand of the young Countess de Montglat."

The young De Croissi started at these words, and in the transport of his joy, was on the point of throwing himself from his horse at the feet of the Baron.

"Can this be possible?" he cried. "Oh! my brother! to claim a reward like this, I would face a thousand dangers, whatever the hazard! But do you really think Elizabeth would consent?"

"I am certain of it," replied Albert quickly; "and she herself will soon give you assurance of it. Be but devoted and faithful in what is expected of you, and, ere a month elapse, the Queen Regent will sign your contract of marriage with her maid of honour."

"My brother! my brother!" cried Fabian rapturously; "I will obey you to the death!"

Albert regarded him with a smile of triumph.

"This is the spirit I desired to see in you," he said; "and you seem well disposed for the proposition which will soon be made to you. We understand one another, Fabian! and be assured that your hopes shall not be deceived."