

the unanticipated presence of this young lady might disturb. Never fear—I shall speak in your favor!”

“Our only earthly hope is now in the powerful protection of the Coadjutor,” murmured the young Countess, sinking into a seat.

Eustache returned a smile of encouragement, and without waiting to awaken the valet and have himself formally announced, he entered the adjoining apartment.

The Coadjutor was alone and busily employed; seated before a large desk, with letters and papers, he was committing to writing, by the light of two large silver candelabra, the notes which afterwards served as the foundation of his celebrated Memoirs, and which he took great pains to put in order every night. Although, during the whole day and part of the night he had given free scope to that restless activity which never left him an instant idle, his appearance displayed no languor or fatigue; when Eustache entered, he turned towards him with that frank gaiety which betokens the most perfect tranquillity of mind.

“Ah! 'tis thou, my worthy lieutenant!” he exclaimed, throwing down his pen, and leaning back in his chair. “Well! it appears that we have succeeded wonderfully. The air of the poor Baron de Croissi was most amusing when he found his prisoner slip out of his clutch, even in the midst of the Palais Royal, and almost under the very eyes of the Queen! It was a fine and bold stroke, *ma foi!* and all the honour of it belongs to thee, my brave scholar! Thou seemest to have a rare disposition for intrigue.”

“I am glad that Monseigneur is satisfied with my small services,” replied Eustache, with outward humility, but inward pride. “Monseigneur must not, however, attribute to others than himself the whole success of the affair. *Discite justitiam moniti.*”

“You wish to flatter me,” returned the Coadjutor, also affecting a modesty he was far from feeling; “the plan was thine own, and thou hast executed it almost unaided. But, by-the-bye! where is our man? Did'st thou not bring him with thee?”

“Yes, Monseigneur, he is in the ante-chamber, but——”

“Why does he not enter, then?”

“To say sooth, your Excellency! the stroke is a finer one than you supposed. It is double!—in place of one prisoner, I have rescued two.”

“What riddle is this, Eustache?” enquired the Coadjutor with surprise.

“It is nothing but the truth, Monseigneur! Just fancy—when we were farreting our way out

of the palace, a charming girl, overcome with despair and drowned in tears, threw herself into the arms of our gentleman, who vowed that he would not stir a step in our company without her.”

Deep wrinkles of thought were by this time gathered on the brow of the prelate.

“Here is a new perplexity,” he exclaimed; “did'st thou know this young lady?”

“Who should it be, Monseigneur, but Made-moiselle de Montglat, the Queen's maid of honour?”

“What was thy stupid brain about, to allow this?” returned the Coadjutor, with vexation; “I dare answer for it that, to finish the affair, thou hast brought the damsel here—to the Cloisters of Notre-Dame?”

“Indeed,” replied the Sorbonnian timidly, “she was unwilling to quit Monsieur de Croissi, and I supposed that your Excellency's ordinary benevolence——”

“Plague take the rascal and his suppositions!” ejaculated Paul de Gondi, starting from his seat and traversing the chamber with agitated steps; “Thou hast played me a pretty trick, Master Eustache! the abduction of the young gentleman out of the reach of his scoundrel of a brother, was nothing but a trick of jugglery; and some day, when the Queen was in a good humour, I could have amused her with the story. But to carry away so boldly one of her personal attendants who had incurred her displeasure, is rather too serious for a joke. The Queen will be furious at her disappearance, and should she come to learn that I had a hand in this prank, at the very moment when she had procured me the dignity of Cardinal——”

“Cardinal!” interrupted Vireton, in astonishment.

“Yes, Cardinal!” repeated the Coadjutor. “This evening, after the close of the secret council, she presented me with my formal nomination; judge, then, if the moment is well chosen to involve me in an affair which must cost me her favour? Besides, where could you conceal this girl in so public and frequented a mansion as this? It would soon reach the ears of the Queen, and of certain other ladies, and then——”

He paused and bit his lips with vexation.

“Come, we must not think of it,” he resumed; “send away these young people! Get them a chariot, and let them be conducted wherever they please. I would keep the youngster, but I suppose he would not consent to be separated from his fair one. Quick! let them depart! I will not see them!”