

"What is the matter with you, Adelaide?" I would enquire.

"Nothing!" was the short and unsatisfactory reply.

"Perhaps you dislike the Court?"

"Not at all, Bernard! I am quite happy here."

But still she remained gloomy and low-spirited, and I could find no reason for her conduct.

One night I suddenly awoke and saw her kneeling on a cushion, pale as death, her dark tresses hanging dishevelled over her snowy shoulders.

"What means this, Adelaide?" I exclaimed; "what are you doing there?"

She started to her feet and replied trembling—

"Do you not see, Bernard? I was praying."

The next day, in order to re-assure me, she plunged into the strangest caprices of coquetry. She wore the most magnificent dresses; she outshone all others at the balls and festivals given by the Duke of Orleans, and abandoned herself to the recreations and pleasures of the day, as if she sought to escape from herself in the excitement they occasioned. I was obliged to supplicate her to have a care of her health.

"If you wish it, Adelaide!" I said, "we will retire to the country."

"Yes, yes!" she replied; "we will live there calm and happy. I will have a garden full of the prettiest flowers. You will never leave me, Bernard! you promise that? Oh! how pure and fresh the country air will be!"

"I am sure you will enjoy it, my dear Adelaide! I only regret that we will have to leave Monsieur."

"Monsieur!" she repeated, with a deep blush on her countenance, and her eyes bent to the ground. "Yes! let us quit the Court, Bernard! There ambition, the love of pleasures and of honours, secret hatred and treason devour and destroy the life of man. And yet, Bernard!—Monsieur is so much attached to you!"

Here the conversation ended, and for some days afterwards my wife remained shut up in her oratory, seeing no one but her favorite attendant.

I understood nothing of this strange malady, and the constant anxiety began to affect my own spirits. While in this state, I one day heard on the Promenade a Cardinalist officer speak in light and disparaging terms of Gaston of Orleans. I resented the phrase, rejoicing to give the Prince a new proof of my devotion, and the result of the quarrel was a duel, which was fixed for seven o'clock that evening. I took care to say nothing of this to Adelaide, but that evening she remained at home from the Duchess of Orleans' circle, on the plea of indisposition. She was agi-

tated and trembling, and endeavoured to retain me near her.

"Sit down beside me, Bernard!" she said; "I am really very ill—my brain is on fire."

She raised my hand to her temple, where I felt the artery throbbing violently.

"You require repose," I said, rising and taking up my mantle; "a few hours' sleep would do you much good, Adelaide!"

"Where are you going?" she asked abruptly.

"To the Prince," I answered.

"It is false, Bernard! you wish to deceive me."

I hesitated to reply.

"I know all," she resumed, seizing my hand, "and I will not allow you to leave me."

"The voice of honour calls me," I returned, "and I must obey it. My benefactor, Gaston of Orleans, has been grossly insulted—would you prevent me avenging it?"

"Your benefactor!" repeated she; "that feeble and capricious Prince?"

"Not a word more, Adelaide! My path is chosen."

I was about to issue from the apartment, but she threw herself at my feet.

"You would risk your life for him—for him?" she repeated with an accent and emphasis which were quite inexplicable to me.

"I consider it nothing but my duty," I answered, endeavouring to disengage myself from her grasp, for seven o'clock was now sounding from a neighbouring belfry.

"You will not—you cannot go!" she exclaimed, resisting my efforts to release myself; "Oh! that I had a giant's strength to hold you here!"

"What!" I exclaimed, "is it she who bears my name who would wish to see it dishonoured?"

These words had a totally unexpected effect. For, with a faint shriek, she fell fainting on the floor. I called her attendants to her aid, and hurried to the place of rendezvous. My adversary was there before me. We engaged, and after a short struggle I disabled his sword-arm and closed the contest.

Monsieur thanked me that evening for the devotion and gallantry I had displayed—as he said; but it was in a tone and manner so constrained and unusual, as to cause me much anxiety of mind, which was increased by the severe illness of my wife.

## XVI.

### MELCHIOR'S STORY:—THE EMBASSY.

Cardinal Richelieu, having occasion, about this time, for some new concessions from the King,