

These words seemed to increase the Queen's displeasure and embarrassment, and he resumed more seriously:

"Madame! I do know the enterprise which but now engaged the attention of your councillors, and although I disapprove, and have refused to share in it, I will never breathe a single word of it, however opposed I may consider it to the end they have in view; it is sufficient for me that it had your Majesty's approbation. If, then, contrary to etiquette, I have entered thus unexpectedly amid your deliberations, it is because the event I am about to announce is of a nature to annul your project. In two words, the Prince of Condé has been warned this evening of what was preparing for him, and has just quitted Paris with his brothers, and with all the nobility who espouse his cause."

A thunderbolt bursting in the midst of the assembly could scarcely have produced a more startling effect on the courtiers, than those words of Paul de Gondî. Each of them believing himself betrayed by name to the wrath of the first Prince of the Blood, found it impossible to conceal his agitation and alarm. The practical knowledge they had of similar intrigues, led them to believe that, sooner or later, they would be sacrificed to the vengeance of him whom they had endeavoured to destroy; they remained in alarm and perplexity, without even daring, at first, to interchange their mutual fears. The Baron de Croissi, in especial, who had been one of the principal movers of this enterprise, and whose position was rendered still worse by his treason towards the Prince, considered himself lost without resource, and cast a sinister look around, as if to see whom he could drag with him in his fall.

Fabian and Elizabeth, alone, inwardly rejoiced at an event which, in rendering impossible the execution of the proposed plot, seemed to have saved the life of one of the most important men in the kingdom.

The Queen had become thoughtful, and seemed calculating silently, whether this news were fatal to her interests or not.

"He is gone then at last! he has yielded up the field!" she exclaimed, at the end of a few moments' reflection, and in an accent of satisfied pride. "The *Great Condé*, as they insisted on calling him, has fled before a woman! How rejoiced the Cardinal will be!"

Then, remarking that her words were attentively watched, she turned towards Paul de Gondî, and said with interest:

"There is both good and evil in your intelligence, Monsieur; but since you seem so well

informed, can you not also tell us at least whether the Prince is said to have retired? Doubtless to Guienne, to commence a civil war?"

"I hope, Madame!" said the Coadjutor, "that the State will not again have to suffer these cruel extremities. According to reports which seem to me authentic, the Prince has only retired for the present to his chateau of Saint Maur, near Paris; from thence he can every day attend Parliament with a suitable escort, and there demand vengeance on his enemies."

The wily prelate accompanied these words with that peculiar twinkling of the eyes, to which we have already alluded, betokening that they were uttered on purpose to augment the secret apprehensions of the courtiers. The countenances of all were so sad and gloomy as to attract the attention of the Queen.

"My faithful servants have no occasion to be alarmed at this event," she said, in a tone of voice, however, so full of anxiety as almost to belie her words; "it is possible that I may be forced by circumstances to come to terms with this rebel Prince, but I shall never be weak enough to sacrifice my friends to him—you know what it already cost me to part with the Cardinal. But before considering the probable issue of this event, gentlemen!" she continued with some sternness, "it is important that we should know who could have put the Prince of Condé on the alert, and I now command the Coadjutor to tell me all he knows on the subject."

"Madame!" replied Paul de Gondî, with affected slowness, "I ought to acquaint your Majesty, in the first place, with a circumstance, which may perhaps tend to diminish your tender solicitude for your councillors, and possibly," he added, with a sarcastic glance around, "may contribute to restore their assurance. It is that the Prince, however well informed on other points, knows not the name of a single one of those who have aided in the enterprise; and the suspicions which he may doubtless conceive cannot furnish sufficient ground for a solemn accusation before the Parliament."

This information, which the prelate seemed maliciously to have postponed, re-assured the alarmed courtiers; they breathed more at their ease, and raised their heads, which had hitherto drooped dejectedly. Joy shone on every countenance, and the knowledge that the danger was not so pressing as they fancied, gave them fresh courage.