

A light step was heard at the other end of the corridor they were then traversing, and a female figure, whose features they could not distinguish in the obscurity, glided like a shadow towards them. She walked with a faltering step, and from her lips escaped at intervals sighs and sobs, as she advanced, totally unconscious of their presence. Our three adventurers remained perfectly motionless, scarcely even daring to breathe. At last the lady approached so close that the least movement on their part must betray them. Fancy then the terror of Boniface and his cousin, when Fabian, at this critical moment, made a step forward, and in a distinct but repressed voice, exclaimed, "Elizabeth! Elizabeth!"

Mademoiselle de Montglat, for she it was, started and threw a frightened glance around.

"It is I,—Fabian!" he again said. "Be not afraid—do not utter a cry, or we are lost!"

"Oh! Fabian! are you still here?" she murmured, in deep distress; "What detains you? why do you not quit the palace?"

"Elizabeth!" replied the young man eagerly; "I thank Heaven for the chance which has again for a moment united us. I experienced a keen anguish in leaving you, without knowing what was to become of you. For pity's sake, relieve me from my anxiety—tell me that you are out of all danger, that the Queen has pardoned you,—and I shall leave you, if not without regret, at least without fear."

"How imprudent," returned Mademoiselle de Montglat, "to permit the precious time thus irremediably to depart!"

And at the same time her eyes rested on the two companions of Fabian, who had still remained in the shade. De Croissi understood the cause of her hesitation.

"These are my friends, my liberators," he rapidly said, pointing to his companions; "let not their presence alarm you. But, I beseech you, Elizabeth, tell me what passed in the oratory of the Queen after my departure."

"If I have to weep over your ruin, Fabian!" replied the young Countess, avoiding a direct answer, "my lot will be without consolation."

"The Queen has then been pitiless?"

"I am to be driven from the court—shut up in the convent of the Carmelites for the rest of my life,—such is my fate!" replied Elizabeth in a voice choked with sobs.

Fabian raised the hand of the Countess to his lips, and the next few moments were passed by them in the mute ecstasy of sorrow. In the meantime the guide grew impatient and each moment increased their danger.

"Mademoiselle!" he said in a supplicating

tone, "if you value the happiness of Monsieur de Croissi, do not detain him here; time presses, and we may be met before we are in safety."

"Yes, yes, Fabian!" said the young lady, withdrawing her hand; "you must go! Perhaps, hereafter, the fortunes of both may be more favorable, and then—But now, fly! Adieu, adieu!"

With these words she was about to depart, so as to leave Fabian no pretext to remain; but the young man had now taken a bold resolve.

"Elizabeth!" he said, "I consented to fly, because I hoped that you would still be happy, and that I might at some early day again see you. But now that I know the hateful lot for which you are destined, what matters it what they do with me? What care I for liberty, for life, now that we must live for ever separated from each other? I will not any longer hazard the safety of these brave men, who have risked themselves to save me. Let them only point out some officer of the palace to whom I may surrender myself; I am weary of striving against an irresistible fatality!"

Even in that faint light the cheeks of the maid of honour might have been discovered to become gradually paler.

"Fabian!" she exclaimed with much agitation; "you cannot seriously entertain such a thought! Renounce it and fly! Why think of such a desperate action?"

"I remain here," said Fabian, "unless——"

His eyes were fixed upon Mademoiselle de Montglat with so strange an expression that hers bent to the ground before them.

"Elizabeth!" he continued, vehemently, "the moment for scrupulous etiquette is past. I will speak to you clearly. I will never quit this palace, unless you are the companion of my flight."

"What do you propose, Fabian?" said the young lady with a start.

"Listen to me, Elizabeth!" he replied. "For you or for me life is henceforth a desert, through which we must wander lone and sad, unless we love one another, comfort one another. We are both orphans, both condemned to a miserable fate, both have been the sport of a selfish and culpable ambition, which envelopes us as in a net. Come, Elizabeth, let us resist the tyranny that overwhelms us! Remember, my beloved, the happy days at Montglat; there I pledged you my faith, and received yours in return. Now all the obstacles which then seemed interposed between us are removed; persecution itself has aided to re-unite us. Consent to accompany me, Elizabeth, and in a few days the ties which now unite us, shall be consecrated by religion, and made indissoluble. Elizabeth, dear Eliza-