

moment to step hurriedly forward, and whisper in his brother's ear:

"Wretch! retract thy words, or else —."

But Fabian, pre-occupied with his generous design, listened not to him; he remained prostrate at the feet of the Queen, and, joining his hands, he cried energetically:

"Madame! in the name of Heaven, overwhelm me not with your wrath and contempt! I have yielded to no vain and ridiculous temerity in thus laying before you a bitter truth; I have fulfilled, at the hazard of drawing upon me your royal vengeance, what I considered a sacred duty. I am only one of the most obscure, the most submissive of your subjects; like the others, I owe you my respect, my devotion, my love: I would make the sacrifice of my life for you without a murmur—but Heaven forbid that for any one I should sacrifice my honor and my conscience!"

Anne of Austria seemed at last to have overcome the emotion which had for a time overwhelmed her; she raised her head, and with a haughty air addressed her councillors.

"What think ye, gentlemen, of this young preacher? Had he only wounded my feelings as a queen and as a mother, by recalling the state of abasement into which my son's power has fallen during my rule, I could forget that he has expressed himself as no subject is permitted to do in my presence. But he has your secret and mine—it no longer remains to me to dispose of him."

Fabian arose and awaited his lot with calm dignity. The councillors looked at each other in silence, as if to communicate their mutual distrust, but none had yet spoken, when Mademoiselle de Montglut, who had undergone during this scene, extreme mental suffering, advanced within the circle that had been formed around the Queen, and cried, almost in despair:

"I told your Majesty—I was certain of it—that he would never undertake this task! But, oh! Madame! have pity on him, pardon him! He is faithful, loyal and generous—he will never betray your secret."

"Are you about to re-commence your whining, Mademoiselle?" interrupted the Queen, in a tone of much ill-humour. "I am weary of all this business, and it is only in consequence of extreme importunity that I consented to bring you here. Why! you will have it," she continued, angrily, "that these gentlemen and myself, to please your foolish pate, must lay aside the measures necessary for our repose, and that of the state. We must liberate this valiant paladin, I suppose, that he may boast, in the taverns of Paris, of the bold words he has spoken to the face of the Queen!"

This unsympathising answer did not discourage the generous ardour of the young girl.

"Heaven preserve the state, and grant your Majesty many happy days!" she resumed, boldly. "But permit me, Madame, to represent that it is not necessary to entomb this unfortunate young man in a prison, to assure his discretion. He is a gentleman, and you may trust his word of honour. I, who know how noble and generous he is, will boldly guarantee his fidelity."

Then, noticing that the noblemen who surrounded her, seemed astonished at the warmth with which she defended Fabian, she turned towards them, the tears streaming down her cheeks:

"Gentlemen!" she said, "it was I who first led him towards the abyss into which he has fallen; it was I who caused him to quit the peaceable province where he lived happy and undisturbed, in order to involve him in these hateful intrigues. And yet I loved him—I loved him with all my soul! but I was deceived by an infamous wretch —"

Tears here choked her utterance.

"In good sooth, gentlemen!" resumed the Queen, in cold displeasure, "I regret that, having summoned you to deliberate on an enterprise on which the fate of the kingdom may depend, your time should thus be occupied with the love affairs of one of my maids of honour and a Norman squire. Believe, at least, that this spectacle is as little amusing to me, as it must be to yourselves."

Several voices at once began to tender their advice, but the Baron de Croisai, with livid face and eyes of flame, stepped forward and addressed the Queen with animation.

"I supplicate your Majesty to believe that I was myself deceived by the feigned simplicity of this wretched youth. He has disgracefully abused my trust; he has sworn his solemn promises. Let not your Majesty, however, despair for this of the design which your faithful councillors have conceived; I shall search unremittingly till I procure one who will fulfil it without condition or scruple. As to the person here present, I seek not to interfere against the just vengeance which ought to visit the heads of those by whom you are betrayed."

"Avenge myself on this man!" repeated the Queen, disdainfully; "my vengeance cannot descend so low. Let these gentlemen fix his fate—I give him up to them."

"Madame!" exclaimed D'Harcourt, with fervour; "I have only known this young man since yesterday, and see him now for the second time. I avow that he has just acted and spoken