

THE FAVORITE

VOL. II.—No. 8.

MONTREAL, SATURDAY, AUGUST 30, 1873.

PRICE { FIVE CENTS, OR SIX CENTS, U. S. C.

FEUDAL TIMES;

OR, TWO SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE.

A Romance of Daring and Adventure.

(Translated especially for the FAVORITE from the French of Paul Duplessis.)

CHAPTER LII.

REWARDED.

It was not without considerable difficulty that De Maurevert and Lehardy, after carrying the chevalier to his room, were able to bring him out of his swoon.

"Come, come, dear friend," cried the captain, "it is madness to allow yourself to be so affected by the loss of a mistress—charming, it is true, but completely ruined. Do not take this occurrence so much to heart. I will go at once into the country, and I swear I will find out the young lady's place of retreat."

The first words of Raoul when he came to his senses were addressed to Lehardy.

"Wretch!" he cried, with violent indignation—"your mistress has fallen into the power of an infamous rascal, and I see you here! You have not thought of defending her then? You are a coward!"

"Chevalier Sforzi," replied the servant,

"I will not take in ill part the hard words you address to me, for the bitterness of your language proves the intensity of your sorrow. Be assured that if the sacrifice of my life were demanded to save the honor of my mistress, I should not hesitate to render it up. I did all that was humanly possible to have her. The misfortune we deplore has fallen on us like thunder."

"How has this frightful catastrophe happened?"

"It was ten o'clock," replied Lehardy, "and I was sleeping soundly, when I was suddenly awakened by a scream. I sprang out of bed and listened, but all was silent. Thinking that I had been dreaming, I was about to return to my bed, when a presentiment—heaven be praised, for it spared me a great remorse—took possession of my mind. Instead of going back to bed, I took my arquebuse and went down into the garden hastily, on to which the window of my young mistress opened. There I saw a man escap-

"And you did not kill him, Lehardy?"

"No, monsieur; but I wounded him."

"And who was this man?"

"The apostle Benoit, monsieur."

"The apostle Benoit!" cried Raoul, passionately, "Oh! then I have no longer the consolation of being left in doubt!"

"Not only does Benoit—whom I gave in custody of the watch, and who is now confined in the conciergerie—not seek to deny his master's crime, but takes pride in it," replied Lehardy.

"Not for this frightful and criminal expedition, Benoit must have had a number of accomplices, for two old servants of the Dwager Madame de Lamballe, and the lady herself, were gagged in their beds."

"Let us hasten to the Grand Prévôt," cried Raoul, springing to his feet. "Let the watch, the archers, all the troops, search every nook and corner of Paris; there may yet be time to

capture the ruffians and deliver Diane! Come, Lehardy!—come!"

"Alas!" replied Lehardy, "I have already taken every possible measure. But such outrages are too common in Paris for the police to think of abandoning their occupations or their pleasures to go in pursuit of the culprits."

Sforzi was about to insist, when De Maurevert, who, for a moment, had appeared to be buried in thought, struck the table a violent blow with his fist.

"Malediction and furies!" he cried, "a frightful idea has come into my mind!—What if his majesty, after the first feeling of alarm is past, and seeing his inability to punish any one for the attempt upon his life, were to deny that any such attempt has been made! The result would be that you and I, Raoul, instead of being the king's preservers, would become simply the heroes of a vulgar night-adventure. Death of my life!—we were too hasty. We ought to have waited until some harm, however small, had been done to his majesty."

"What do I care for the king's opinion!" cried Raoul, indignant at the little interest De Maurevert appeared to take in the abduction of Diane.

"If you wish to recover Mademoiselle d'Erlanges, it concerns you a great deal," replied the adventurer. "Henry III., can deny nothing to his preservers—at least, in the course of a few hours, we shall know what to think on the subject of the gratitude of kings. But the first thing you have to do is to get some rest. I will wake you at daybreak, and we will then go together to the Louvre."

Desiring to be left alone, Raoul made believe to accede to the captain's wishes: it need hardly be added that he passed a sleepless and tormented night.

It was five o'clock in the morning when the chevalier and De Maurevert reached the Louvre. Raoul was to deeply absorbed in his sorrow to

notice the curiosity and envy which his presence provoked among the crowd of courtiers through which he was, without a moment's hesitation or delay, conducted to the king's cabinet.

At sight of Sforzi, Henry III., rose and came forward to meet him—one of the greatest and earnest favors he ever accorded. The Duc d'Epéron turned pale rather with fear than with anger.

"You appear ill this morning, chevalier," said the king. "Is the wound upon your forehead more serious than you at first thought it to be?"

"I humbly thank your majesty for the interest he deigns to show concerning me," replied Raoul. "Alas! it is not my body, but my heart which suffers and bleeds."

"Be seated, Sforzi," said the king, after a slight pause, "and tell me in detail the history of your past life."

"Sire, I fear to encroach too much upon your majesty's time."

"Sforzi," interrupted Henry, kindly, "since you are destined to live at court, you must learn that the wishes and personal desires of the king are never to be discussed; the politeness of courtiers consists in the readiness of their obedience. I am not now addressing a reproach to you, but giving you a proof of the solicitude and interest I take in you. I wish to see you as perfect in manners as you are already noble in sentiments. Be seated, therefore, and tell me the history of your life."

Raoul seated himself on a carved oaken stool indicated to him by Henry III., and commenced his story. During the half hour which this recital lasted, the king never once interrupted him. When the chevalier related the outrages he had sustained at the hands of the Marquis de la Tremblais, Henry III., turned slightly pale, and a flush of anger passed over his countenance; but the young man's passion for Diane d'Erlanges appeared to interest him deeply, though he made no remark on the subject.

As to the Duc d'Epéron, his face, clouded at first, lightened considerably when the chevalier had done speaking of his love affairs.

"Sforzi," said the king, "I see that you have suffered a great deal, and I will try and repay you for what you have endured. Last night you saved my life; I would have you do better still—I beg of you, Sforzi, to let no one know the service you have rendered me. If you should be questioned, you will answer that my pages provoked the quarrel, and that the assassins were ignorant of my presence in the house of Mademoiselle d'Assy. I recom mend this course of conduct to you, Sforzi, on politic grounds solely, and not out of any wish to hide the immense gratitude I owe you. Ask of me now what favor you most desire, and, on my royal word, I grant it you beforehand."

D'Epéron rose hastily from his seat, and Sforzi, under the influence of an indescribable emotion, replied:

"Sire, there is but only one recompense that can reward me for the service I have rendered to the kingdom—it is that your majesty will give me the power to labor for his glory. Let him forgive my boldness in consideration of the sentiment which inspires me. There is one sad page in the history of your reign, sire, which will be transmitted to posterity—it is that which chronicles the abuse and insolence

of your provincial nobles. Coming generations, sire, will not forgive you for having abandoned the interests of your people to the cupidity and violence of your great vassals. It will be said of you that you were the first gentleman, but not the king of France. The kings preceding you, sire, carried on a rude and successful warfare against feudalism, then much more powerful than it is at present; that warfare your majesty would do well to bring to a triumphant close."

"Alas! Sforzi," replied Henry III., sadly, "I have almost more than I can do to keep Paris in order, without attempting to deal with the provinces—which are too distant for my power to reach."

"Sire, your majesty deceives himself," replied Sforzi, boldly. "Let the king but say 'I will it,' and, believe me, the most mutinous will return to their duty, the most haughty will bow their heads."

"Good, very good, Monsieur Sforzi!" cried d'Epéron, advancing and shaking the chevalier warmly by the hand, to his utter astonishment. "My approbation surprises you," continued the *mignon*; "that proves, chevalier, that you do not know me. I am superior to feeling jealousy against any one in the world; I have too much intelligence not to know how to appreciate men at their true value. Since I have been at Court, chevalier, I have never heard a courtier speak to his majesty as you have just spoken. It is dangerous to try to be useful to kings; to devote one's self to their glory requires great courage. Monsieur Sforzi is right, Henry," pursued d'Epéron, turning to the king; "the day you say 'I will it,' the brows of the most haughty and insolent will be bowed in the dust. What you need, Henry, is servants like Monsieur Sforzi. Set the chevalier to work! Send him into one of the rebel provinces, and I answer for it with my head that before a month is past, that province will be



"CHEVALIER SFORZI," REPLIED THE KING, "I NAME YOU MY COMMISSIONER EXTRAORDINARY."