

of rich intellectual endowments, and a heart warm with tender sympathies and affections, and glowing with the fervour of a pure and rational piety. Of all her admirers,—and many clustered around her,—Bourbon was the favoured one; and the sentiment of reverence which mingled with her love, gave to it a depth and sacredness, that appertain not to a lighter passion. She looked upon him as some being of a higher order than those that surrounded her, pre-eminently gifted as he was in person, and endowed with a genius and ambition, that likened him to a god. In the midst of that splendid court he stood alone, preserving his individuality, though hundreds, as elevated in position, and as brilliantly appointed, occupied their places by his side.

The Duchess d'Angoulême was not slow to detect the incipient passion of the lovers, and she threw in the way of its progress every obstacle in her power. The king, likewise, already dreading the aspiring temper of the duke, resolved not to permit an alliance that should bind him in a nearer relation to the throne, and immediately began to revolve upon which of the aspirants to that honour, he should bestow the hand of the Princess. Ercole da Este, the young Duke of Ferrara, from political motives, was at length selected by him; but the entreaties and resistance of the destined bride, induced Francis for the present to suspend the marriage negotiations, though the Duchess d'Angoulême caused it to be well understood that they were only delayed, not terminated, as some seemed to insinuate.

The princess, in the meantime, dreading for her lover, even more than for herself, the anger of the king and the vengeance of the relentless duchess, seldom appeared in public, and when, in the private circles of the palace, she met the duke, she timidly shrunk from his approach, or constrained herself, while her heart was bursting with tenderness, to receive his proffered attentions with coldness. But in the retirement of her own apartments she would throw herself weeping on the neck of the gentle and pitying queen, or like a wearied child sit for hours silent and tearful at her feet.

At first Bourbon was startled by the change that had come over her; but soon his penetrating love solved the mystery of her conduct, and while it strengthened his resolve to win her, it the more deeply exasperated him against the king. As yet, however, he could not brook the thought of openly defying the sovereign, whom he had once loved and honoured, and whom he still felt it his duty loyally to serve; nor, perhaps, would he have ever swerved from his allegiance, had not the ill-timed and taunting accusations of the king at length driven his proud spirit to revolt.

The Emperor Charles the Fifth, had, from time to time, been made acquainted with the growing

enmity which had sprung up between Francis and the Duke de Bourbon, and anxious to win the latter to his service, he failed not to aggravate the king's ill-faith and ingratitude, manifested towards him on many occasions, particularly dwelling on the rankling insult offered him at Valenciennes. By the most magnificent offers he sought to attach him to himself, and among other imperial bribes proffered by Charles, was the hand of his sister Eleonora, the widowed queen of Portugal, which was to be given as the pledge of their union, provided the duke would renounce his fealty to Francis, and accept a command in the army, which was shortly destined to act against France.

But Bourbon was not yet prepared for such a step. The hand of Eleonora possessed no attractions for him,—and though the emperor's envoy was lying perdué at his castle of Chantelle, he awaited only his release from court to repair thither, and for the present decline his master's overtures. But that overruling Power which shapes our destiny, ordered it otherwise, and hastened the denouement of the drama in which Bourbon was playing so important a part. The king had long since set spies about the person of his high constable, for he distrusted his loyalty, and had withdrawn from him his confidence. But on the morning of the stag-hunt, some rumours of the duke's intrigues with the emperor had reached his ears, and darkened with unwonted clouds the gay brow of the joyous monarch. His favourite sport failed to restore his serenity, and many a random shaft, tipped with poisoned words, sped from the royal lips, straight to the heart of Bourbon.

Yet, with rare self-command, the duke smothered every outward sign of wrath, and yielded himself to the intoxicating pleasure of the princess' presence, who, exhilarated by the forest air, and the free, fleet motion of her steed, and, above all, happy to find her lover ever at her side, recovered her enchanting playfulness, and less observed than usual, again betrayed towards him that seducing tenderness of manner which of late, timidity and fear had chilled. He had rode beside her through all the doublings of the chase, and now, when the courtly train, leaving the slain stag to the care of the huntsmen, prepared to quit the forest, he bounded gracefully into his saddle, and again occupied the envied station by her side.

But only a few steps had they paced forward, when the king, stung by the cold and haughty bearing of the duke, spurred his stately hunter, with somewhat less than his accustomed courtesy, into the narrow space between Bourbon's horse and that ridden by the princess, saying, with a smile of scornful irony, and in a tone which signified command:

"By your good leave, my lord, we will relieve