

a great repugnance to the enterprise in question, sent you an order to reveal nothing to him, and to choose some other instrument."

Fabian made a motion of surprise.

"Was this all?" said the Baron tranquilly.

"Well, my charming young lady, you may re-assure your own mind and that of the Queen, on the subject of my brother. He has not taken the matter in such very bad part; and, saving some scruples which will easily be removed, he accepts the task."

"He accepts!" repeated Elizabeth, trembling.

"Yes! he will tell you so himself."

"Oh! you have not told him the truth!" replied the young Countess, energetically. "You have misled his reason by some cunning fable!"

"Answer for yourself, Fabian!" said the Baron, smiling.

"I know," said Fabian, with a slow and solemn voice, "that I am charged to shed the purest blood in France,—that I am charged to strike to the death, meanly and treacherously, the hero who has saved the State in twenty battles, and has acquired immortal glory! But I know, also, that Elizabeth de Montglat was the first to engage me to this enterprise, and it is on the faith of her name that I will go through with it."

"Fabian! oh Fabian! do not believe—"

"What would you say, Mademoiselle?" cried the Baron, fixing on her his keen glance; "do you forget so soon the engagements you have taken in my presence, and would you now disavow your actions and your words?"

The Countess bent her head with an air of shame and grief.

"Will you deny," resumed Albert, "that you knew with what purpose I was about to bring Fabian to Paris, when you entrusted me with a billet to ensure his consent?"

"I do not deny it," replied Elizabeth, faintly.

"Is it not true that you have promised to bestow your hand on my brother, in recompense for the service he is about to render to the State?"

"Have pity, Baron!" exclaimed Elizabeth, amid her tears.

"Reply, reply!" repeated Albert, in a menacing tone; "is it true, or not?"

"It is true!"

"You hear her, Fabian!" resumed the Baron, turning towards his brother, who observed with consternation, the species of moral torture which Elizabeth had undergone; "you see whether I have deceived you. One of the conditions on which you have promised obedience has been fulfilled; the other will soon be so likewise."

The Baron paused, and cast on the silent

Fabian and sobbing Elizabeth, a look of triumph.

"Now, that we understand each other," he continued tranquilly, "we must separate. This evening, Fabian, I will come to conduct you into the presence of those who must see you before you put our design in execution; till then, seek not to issue from this house, or you may meet rough friends ere you go far. For myself, I go immediately to announce the result of our interview to some who are anxiously awaiting it; I shall be happy, Mademoiselle," he went on with overstrained politeness, "to offer my hand to lead you to your carriage."

"If it is an order you thus convey," replied the young lady, repressing her emotion with an effort, "I refuse to submit to it; if an invitation such as may become a gentleman of your birth, I avow frankly, Sir, that I wish to converse for a few moments with Monsieur Fabian de Croissi."

"Ah! yes! yes! stay here!" exclaimed Fabian wildly; "I must speak to you, or die!"

"It is—it can be—nothing more than an invitation," replied the Baron, with a sarcastic smile; "I only conceived the proprieties of society, which a noble lady ought to observe—"

"There are circumstances still more imperative than the proprieties of society," interrupted the Countess

"I leave you, then," resumed Albert. "Bill and coo as you please, my pretty turtles; but take good care to recollect the promises you have both made, and not to say too much—I give you this counsel as a friend—Adieu!"

He fixed a significant look on the Countess, and then left the room.

#### CHAPTER XVI.

#### THE LOVERS.

SCARCELY was the door closed, when Mademoiselle de Montglat, giving free course to the feelings she had hitherto endeavored to repress, quickly approached Fabian, and said to him, with despair:

"This cannot be, Fabian! It is not true that you have undertaken this horrid enterprise? Hasten to assure me of this! Oh no! you are too noble, too loyal, too generous, to be concerned in this frightful plot!"

"And you, Elizabeth!" demanded the young man passionately. "Tell me that you have never approved it! Tell me that I have not rightly understood the avowal made by you before the Baron—that it has been forced from you by violence, and that you have never desired to urge me to assassination!"