

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

MARIANNA MANCINI.

FOR a day Eugene remained in his room, while Conrad kept vigil in the antechamber without. The unhappy prince had longed so intensely for the privilege of grieving without witnesses, that he felt as if no boon on earth was comparable to solitude. Not only his affections, but his honor, had been mortally wounded: what medicine could ever restore it to life?

And through the long night Conrad had listened to his slow, measured step, as forth and back he had paced his room in the vain hope of wooing sleep to

“steep his senses in forgetfulness.”

Finally day dawned, and Conrad then ventured to knock and inquire whether his lord would not breakfast. The door was not opened, but Eugene thanked him, and refused. The poor fellow then threw himself down on the carpet and slept for several hours. He was awakened by his father, the only servant besides himself that had remained to share the humiliations of the family, and who now came as bearer of a letter from the Duke de Bouillon, which was to be delivered to the prince without delay.

Delighted to have a pretext that might gain him admittance to the presence of his master, Conrad sprang up and knocked. The door was just sufficiently opened to give passage to the latter, was hastily closed, and the bolt was heard to slide. But two hours later Eugene appeared, and greeted his two faithful attendants with a gracious inclination of the head.

“Now, Conrad,” said he, “I am ready to oblige you by taking my breakfast. Immediately after, I shall go out, and, as

I go on an affair of importance, order the state-coach, two footmen, and two outriders. What makes you look so blank? Does it seem singular that I ride in state through the streets of Paris?”

“God forbid, your highness!” exclaimed Conrad, “but—”
“But—”

“But we have no footmen—no outriders, your highness.”

“True,” said Eugene, “I had forgotten. But I suppose that the rascals may be found and re-engaged. Go after them, Conrad, and—stay—where is the steward?”

“He went with the princesses to the Hôtel Carignan, your highness.”

“True—true—you told me so yesterday. Go to him, Conrad; bid him return and resume his duties, for the Hôtel de Soissons must be open, and I must have a household befitting my rank. Be as diligent as you can, my good fellow, and let the carriage be before the entrance in one hour.”

“But first, your highness must breakfast.”

“And how can I breakfast if all the servants have deserted? Or has the cook been more loyal than his companions?”

“No, your highness; he went with the rest, but he is in the neighborhood, and will be glad to return.”

“I am rejoiced to hear it. Fetch him, then, and let him provide breakfast. But, above all things, find me footmen and outriders. I would rather go out hungry than without attendants.”

“Your highness shall have all you desire,” returned Conrad, with alacrity; and he kept his word. An hour later, the state-coach stood before the portal of the palace, and the outriders and footmen were each man in his proper place. The prince had partaken of an excellent breakfast, and was advancing to his carriage.

When he saw old Philip, the coachman, he gave him a look of grateful recognition, and inquired whether he had recovered from the fatigues of their uncomfortable journey.

“I endured no fatigue, your highness,” was the old man’s reply. “I was on duty, and had no right to be fatigued.”

“Bravely answered,” returned Eugene. “I see that you,

at least, are unchanged, and I may rely upon your loyalty. And the rest of you," continued he, looking searchingly around at the captured deserters, "you have returned, I perceive."

"Your highness," replied one of them, eagerly, "I had the honor of accompanying you to Flanders."

"Oh, I do not allude to you, Louis. I know that I can count upon you."

"We, too, are loyal, your highness," replied the others, "and are ready to serve you from the bottom of our hearts. The hôtel was empty, and we had supposed ourselves to be without places. But we are only too happy to return."

"Very well, I shall have occasion to test your fidelity this very day. Conrad, get in the coach with me. I desire to converse with you in private."

Conrad dared not disobey, although to sit opposite to his master in a carriage, seemed to him the acme of presumption. He took his seat with a look of most comic embarrassment, and stared at the prince as though he suspected him of being suddenly attacked with insanity.

"To the Hôtel Bouillon!" was the order given, and the coach went thundering through the gates toward the Quai Malaquais. It was stared at, precisely as before, when Eugene and his mother had attempted to join the royal cortège at the Pré aux Clercs. The people sneered at the equipage and escutcheon of a countess, who, for three days in succession, had been publicly summoned before the tribunal of justice; but of the young prince, who was the solitary occupant of the coach, they took no notice whatever. He was not guilty, therefore he provoked no curiosity; he was not handsome, therefore he attracted no attention. As lonely and heart sick his head reclined amid the velvet cushions, whose silken threads seemed each a pricking thorn to give him pain, Eugene's resolves of vengeance deepened into vows, and he swore an oath of enmity against his mother's enemies, which long years after he redeemed.

Conrad was perplexed, and ashamed of the honor conferred upon him; but when after a long pause Eugene began to speak in low, earnest tones, the embarrassed expression of the

valet's countenance gave place to a look of interest, and finally he ventured a smile.

"Indeed, your highness," replied he, "it shall be accomplished to your entire satisfaction, and old Philip will be delighted to be of the party. He is already burning to revenge himself upon the Louvois family for taking precedence of carriages that have the right to go before them; and he has more than once approached the coachmen of the nobles thus insulted, for their cowardice in suffering it."

"Well—you will both have an opportunity of exhibiting your powers to-day in the Pré aux Clercs, and I only hope that the court will be there to witness it."

"Philip will not fail, your highness, nor I either."

"Thank you. There may be an affray, and perchance a blow or two in store for you; but I will reward you handsomely. But what is this? The carriage has stopped, and we have not yet reached the Hôtel de Bouillon."

Conrad sprang out to ascertain the cause of their detention.

"Your highness," said he, returning, "we cannot proceed any farther. The street is blocked up with carriages that extend all the way to the entrance of the hôtel. Some of them are equipages of the princes of the blood."

"Then I must go on foot, and you and Philip can profit by your leisure to discuss the manner of your attack. But by all means let it be in the Pré aux Clercs, where all these carriages will be filled with occupants."

So saying, Eugene alighted, and hurried to the hôtel. Its large portals were flung wide open, and streams of elegantly-dressed courtiers and ladies were entering the palace. In such a crowd, where the men were in glittering uniforms, and the women, resplendent with diamonds, wore long trains of velvet or satin, borne by gayly-attired pages, nobody had eyes for a little abbé, clad in russet gown, with buttons of brass; so that Eugene was more than once forced back before he made his way to the state apartments. Step by step he advanced, until at last he reached the centre of the room, where the family were assembled to receive their distinguished guests.

The duke, in the uniform of a general, stood in the midst

of the group. At his side was the duchess, the celebrated Marianna Mancini, the rival of Olympia de Soissons, not only in the affections of Cardinal Mazarin, but also in those of the king. When the heart of Louis had wearied of the elder sister, its capricious longings fluttered toward the younger, for whose sake he deserted La Vallière, and to whom, for a season, he swore every imaginable vow of love and eternal constancy.

Marianna had gained wisdom from the experience of her sister. Quite convinced of the transitory nature of a king's favor, she formed the bold design of capturing the hand as well as the heart of his majesty of France. Perhaps Louis fathomed her intentions, and resolved to punish her ambition, for he suddenly manifested a willingness to marry the Spanish princess, whom Mazarin had vainly endeavored to force upon him as a wife; and Marianna, like her sister, sought consolation in marriage with another, and became Duchess de Bouillon.*

Years had gone by, but Marianna was still a court beauty, and she still possessed a certain influence over the heart of her royal admirer. She alone refused to do homage to De Montespan, and she alone ventured to interrupt the pious conversations of the king with his new favorite De Maintenon. When the obsequious courtiers were vying with each other as to who should minister most successfully to the vanity of the monarch that considered himself as the state; when princes and princesses listened breathlessly to the oracles that fell from his inspired lips, the Duchess de Bouillon was not afraid to break their reverential silence, by conversing at her ease in a tone of voice quite as audible as that of his majesty.

She stood in the midst of that brilliant throng, accepting their homage as though she had been born to a throne, and dispensing gracious words with the proud consciousness that every smile of hers was received as a condescension. And yet, in that very hour, the Duchess de Bouillon was under impeachment for crime. Her summons had been sent "in the name of the king;" but everybody knew that it was the work of Louvois, and everybody knew equally well that the com-

*This is a mistake. The one whom Louis loved was Marie Mancini, Princess of Colonna.—TRANS.

pliment paid to the duchess that day, was especially gratifying to the king, who himself had suggested it as a means of vexing his arrogant minister.

That morning, his majesty had held a grand levee, which was punctually attended by all who had the inestimable privilege of appearing there. Louis received his courtiers with that gay and smiling affability which was the result of his temperament, and had procured for him from one of his adorers the surname of Phœbus. But, all of a sudden, a cloud was seen to obscure the face of the sun, and the dismayed sycophants were in a flutter to know what was passing behind it. The firmament had darkened at the approach of the Duke de Vendôme and the Cardinal d'Albret.

"My lords," said the king, curtly, "I am surprised to see you here. Methinks the proper place for you both this morning would be at the side of your relative, the Duchess de Bouillon."

"Sire," replied the young duke, "I came to see if the sun had risen. I behold it now; and since the day has dawned on which my aunt is to appear before her accusers, I hasten whither duty calls, to take my place among her adherents."

"And you, cardinal?" said Louis, to the handsome brother of the Duke de Bouillon.

"I, my sovereign, am accustomed to say my orisons before turning my thoughts to the affairs of this world. Now that I have worshipped at the shrine of my earthly divinity, I am ready to admit the claims of my noble sister-in-law."

The king received all this adulation as a matter of course, and, without vouchsafing any reply, turned to his confessor. Père la Chaise looked displeased; he had no relish for court nonsense at any time; but what availed his exhortations to humility, if his royal penitent was to have his ears poisoned with such abominable stuff as this!

Louis guessed somewhat the nature of his confessor's vexation, for he blushed, and spoke in a mild, conciliatory tone:

"Pardon me, father, if this morning I have ventured to permit the things of this world to take precedence of things spiritual. But a king should be ready at all hours to do justice unto all men; and as this is the day fixed for the trial of a

noble lady of France, for crimes of which I hope and believe that she will be found *innocent*, I have deemed it proper to show my impartiality by upholding those who have the courage to avow themselves champions or defenders of the Duchess de Bouillon. Come, father, let us hasten to the chapel."

He rose from his couch, and, with head bowed down, traversed his apartments, until he reached a side-door which communicated with the rooms of the Marquise de Maintenon. On either side were long rows of obsequious courtiers, imitating as far as they could the devotional demeanor of the king; and, following the latter, came Père la Chaise—the only man in all the crowd who walked with head erect. His large, dark eyes wandered from one courtier to another, and their glances were as significant as words. They asserted his supremacy over king and court; they proclaimed him the ambassador of the King of kings.

At the threshold Louis turned, and, letting fall the mantle of his humility, addressed his courtiers.

"My lords," said he, imperiously, "we dispense with your attendance in chapel this morning, and you are all free to go whithersoever you deem best."

With a slight bend of the head, he passed through the portière and disappeared. The courtiers had comprehended the motive of their dismissal: it was a command from his majesty to repair to the Hôtel de Bouillon. They hastened to avail themselves of the royal permission, and one and all were shortly after in presence of the duchess, offering sympathy, countenance, and homage.

CHAPTER II.

THE TRIAL.

WHILE she received her numerous visitors with cordiality, Marianna Mancini tempered her affability with just enough of stateliness to make it appear that their presence there was a matter of course, and not of significance. She had arrayed

herself with great splendor for this extraordinary occasion of mingled humiliation and triumph. She wore a dress of rose-colored satin, whose folds, as she moved, changed from the rich hues of the carnation to the delicate tinge of the peach-blossom. Her neck and arms were resplendent with diamonds, and her whole person seemed invested with more than its usual majesty and grace.

She saw Eugene, who was making vain endeavors to approach her. With mock-heroic air, she raised her white arm, and motioned away those who were immediately around her person.

"Let me request the mourners," said she, "to give place to the priest, who advances to hear the last confession of the criminal. Poor little abbé! How will he manage to sustain the weight of the iniquities I shall pour into his ears?"

A merry laugh followed this sally, and all eyes were turned upon Eugene, who, blushing like a maiden, kissed his aunt's outstretched hand, but was too much embarrassed to reply to her greeting.

"Prince," said a tall personage coming forward, "will you allow me to act as your substitute? My shoulders are broad, and will gladly bear the burden of all the sins that have ever been committed by your charming penitent."

"I dare say, Monsieur la Fontaine," replied Eugene, recovering himself, "and they will incommode you no longer than the time it will occupy you to weave them into a tissue of pleasant fables."

"Thanks, gallant abbé!" cried Marianna, pleased. "You look upon my crimes, then, as fiction?"

"Yes, dearest aunt," said Eugene, resolutely; "they are, I heartily believe, as fictitious as those attributed to my dear and honored mother."

As he spoke, Eugene's large eyes looked courageously around, to read the countenances of the men that were listening. Whatever they might think of the mother, the chivalry of her son was indisputable, and no one was disposed to wound his filial piety by so much as a supercilious glance.

The silence that ensued was broken by La Fontaine. "Did

you know," said he, "that Madame de Coulanges had been summoned to trial yesterday?"

"Yes," replied the duchess, "but I have not heard the result. Can you tell it to us, my dear La Fontaine?"

"I can. The judges paid her a compliment which I am sure she has not received from anybody else, since the days of her childhood."

"What was it?"

"They gave in a verdict of—innocent."

A hearty laugh followed this satire of La Fontaine's, and the duchess indulged in so much mirth thereat, that her eyes sparkled like the brilliants on her person, and her cheeks flushed until they rivalled the deepest hues of her pink dress.

"Ah!" cried La Fontaine, bending the knee before her, "*La mère des amours, et la reine des grâces, c'est Bouillon, et Venus lui cède ses emplois.*" *

"Go on, go on, fabulist!" cried Marianna, laughing.

La Fontaine continued:

"Ah, que Marianne a de beautés, de grâces, et de charmes;
Elle sait enchanter et l'esprit et les yeux;
Mortels, aimez-la tous! mais ce n'est qu'à des dieux,
Qu'est réservé l'honneur de lui rendre les armes!" †

"Do you, then, desert and go over to my enemies?" asked the duchess, reproachfully.

"I!" exclaimed La Fontaine, rising to his feet. "Who could so calumniate me?"

"Why, did not you say '*elle sait enchanter*'? And is not that the very crime of which I am accused?"

La Fontaine was about to make some witty reply to this sportive reproach, when the Duke de Bouillon announced to the duchess that she must prepare herself to appear before her judges.

"I am ready," was the response, and Marianna passed her arm within that of her husband.

"My friends," said she, addressing all present, "I invite

* La Fontaine's "Letters to the Duchess de Bouillon," p. 49.

† See Works of La Fontaine.

you to accompany me on my excursion to the Arsenal. Come, Eugene, give me your other arm. It is fit that the criminal should go before her accusers between her confessor and her victim."

"Madame," returned Eugene, frowning, "I am no confessor. A confessor should be an anointed of the Lord, which I am not."

"Not anointed!" exclaimed the duchess. "I have an excellent receipt for unguent given me by La Voisin; and, if you promise that I shall not be made to mount the scaffold for my obliging act, I will anoint you myself, whenever you like."

"Mount the scaffold!" cried La Fontaine. "For such as you, duchess, we erect altars, not scaffolds. True, you have bewitched our hearts, but we forgive you, and hope to witness, not your disgrace, but your triumph."

And, indeed, the exit of the Duchess de Bouillon had the appearance of an ovation. The streets were lined with people, who greeted her with acclamations, as though they were longing to indemnify one sister for the obloquy they had heaped upon the other. The aristocracy, too, felt impelled to avenge the insult offered to their order by the impeachment of the Countess de Soissons. In the cortège of the Duchess de Bouillon were all the flower of the French nobility; and such as had not joined her train were at their windows, waving their handkerchiefs and kissing their hands to Marianna, who, in a state-carriage drawn by eight horses, returned their greetings with as much unconcern as if she had been on her way to her own coronation.

Next to her equipage was that of the Countess de Soissons; and bitter were the feelings with which Eugene gazed upon the multitude, who, but a few days before, had driven his mother into exile. He was absorbed in his own sorrowful musings, when the carriage stopped, and it became his duty to alight and hand out his aunt.

She received him with unruffled smiles, and they entered the corridors of the Arsenal. Behind them came a gay concourse of nobles, drawn out in one long glittering line, which, like a gilded serpent, glided through the darksome windings of that gloomy palace of justice.

The usher that was stationed at the entrance of the council-chamber was transfixed with amazement at the sight. He rubbed his eyes, and wondered whether he had fallen asleep and was dreaming of the fairy tales that years ago had delighted his childhood. And when he saw the duchess smile, and heard her ringing laugh, he was so bewitched with its music that, instead of challenging her train of followers, he suffered them every one to pass into the chamber without a protest.

At the upper end of the hall of council, seated around a table covered with a heavy black cloth, were the judges in their funeral gowns and long wigs, which floated like ominous clouds around their sinister faces. Close by, at a smaller table similarly draped, sat the six lateral judges of the criminal court, and the scribes, who were prepared to take notes of all that was said during the trial.

When Marianna came in, with her cortège stretching out behind her like the tail of a comet, the pens dropped from their hands and the solemn judges themselves looked around in undisguised astonishment.

The duchess, affecting complete unconsciousness of the sensation she was creating, came in smiling, graceful, and self-possessed. While the frowning faces of the judiciary scanned the gay host of intruders, who were desecrating the solemnity of the council-chamber with their levity, the duchess advanced until she stood directly in front of their table, and there she smiled again and inclined her head.

The judges were still more astounded—so much so, that they were at a loss how to express their indignation. It took the form of exceeding respect, and their great black wigs were all simultaneously bent down in acknowledgment of the lady's greeting.

The only one among them who allowed expression to his displeasure was the presiding judge, Laraynie, who, with a view to remind the criminal that her blandishments were out of place, stiffened himself considerably.

"The Duchess de Bouillon has been summoned before this august tribunal to answer for the crimes with which she has been charged," said he, severely. "Are you the accused?"

"My dear president," returned Marianna, flippantly, "how can you be so absurd? If you have forgotten *me*, I perfectly remember *you*. You were formerly amanuensis to my uncle, Cardinal Mazarin, who promoted you to the office, because of your dexterity in mending pens. Yes, I am the Duchess de Bouillon, and nobody has a better right to know it than you, who wrote out my marriage contract, and were handsomely paid for your trouble."

"Our business is not with the past, but the present," replied Laraynie, haughtily. "The question is not whether you are or are not the niece of the deceased Cardinal Mazarin, but whether you are or are not guilty of the crimes for which you have been summoned hither?"

"Which summons, you perceive, I have obeyed," interrupted the duchess. "But I pray you to understand that I acknowledge no right of yours to cite a duchess before your tribunal, sir. If I come at your call, it is because it has been made in the name of the king, my sovereign and yours!"*

"You have obeyed the citation, because it was your duty to obey it," returned Laraynie. "But I see here a multitude who have come neither by indictment nor invitation. It is natural enough that the Duke de Bouillon should accompany his spouse on an occasion of such solemn import to her safety; but who are all these people that have obtruded themselves upon our presence?"

"Did you not comply with my husband's request that I might be accompanied to the Arsenal by a few of my friends?"

"Yes—his petition was granted."

"Well, then," replied Marianna, turning toward the brilliant assembly that had grouped themselves around the room in a circle, "these are a few of my most particular friends. You see on my right the Dukes de Vendôme and d'Albret, and the Prince of Savoy; on my left, the Prince de Chatillon, and others with whose names and persons you were familiar in the days of your secretaryship under Cardinal Mazarin."

* The duchess's own words.—See Renée, "The Nieces of Mazarin," p. 395.

"To our business!" cried Laraynie, angrily. "We will begin the examination."

"First let me have a seat," replied the duchess, looking around, as though she had expected an accommodation of the kind. There was not even a stool to be seen in the council-chamber. But at the table of the judges stood a vacant arm-chair, the property of some absent member; and in the twinkling of an eye Eugene had perceived and rolled it forward. He placed it respectfully behind his aunt, and resumed his position on her left.

This bold act was received by the judiciary with a frown, by the other spectators with a murmur of applause, and by the beautiful daughter of the house of Mancini with one of those bewitching smiles which have been celebrated in the sonnets of Benserade, Corneille, Molière, St. Evremont, and La Fontaine.

She sank into the luxurious depths of the arm-chair, and her "particular friends" drew nearer, and stationed themselves around it.

"Now, gentlemen," said she, in the tone of a queen about to hold a levee, "now I am ready. What is it that you are curious to know as regards my manner of life?"

"First, your name, title, rank, position, age, and—"

"Oh, gentlemen!" cried Marianna, interrupting the president in his nomenclature, "is it possible that you can be so uncivil as to ask a lady her age? I warn you, if you persist in your indiscreet curiosity, that you will compel me to resort to falsehood, for I positively will not tell you how old I am. As regards the rest of your questions, you are all acquainted with my name, title, rank, and position. Let us come to the point."

"So be it," replied the president, who was gradually changing his tone, and assuming a demeanor less haughty toward the duchess. "You are accused of an attempt on the life of the Duke de Bouillon."

"Who are my accusers?" asked Marianna.

"You shall hear," replied Laraynie, trying to resume his official severity. "Are you acquainted with La Voisin?"

"Yes, I know her," said Marianna, without any embarrassment whatever.

"Why did you desire to rid yourself of your husband?" was the second interrogatory.

"To rid myself of my husband!" cried the duchess, with a merry laugh. Then turning to the duke, "Ask him whether *he* believes that I ever meditated harm toward him."

"No!" exclaimed the duke. "No! She has ever been to me a true and loving wife, and we have lived too happily together for her ever to have harbored ill-will toward me. Of evil deeds, my honored wife is incapable!"

"You hear him, judges; you hear him!" exclaimed Marianna, her face beaming with exultation. "What more have you to ask of me now?"

"Why were you in the habit of visiting La Voisin?"

"Because she was shrewd and entertaining, and because she promised me an interview with spirits."

"Did you not show her a purse of gold, and promised it to her in case these spirits made their appearance?"

"No!" said Marianna, emphatically, "and that for the best of reasons. I never was possessed of any but an empty purse—a melancholy truth, to which my husband here can bear witness. That I may have promised gold to La Voisin is just possible, but that she ever saw any in my possession is impossible."

Marianna glanced at her friends, who returned her look with approving nods and smiles.

"You deny, then," continued the judge, not exactly knowing what to say next, "you deny that you ever made an attempt to poison your husband?"

"I do, and I am sure that La Voisin never originated a calumny so base. But I confess that I was dying to see the spirits. Unhappily, although La Voisin called them, they never came."

"You confess, then, that you *did* instigate La Voisin to cite spirits?"

"I certainly did, but it was all to no purpose. The spirits were excessively disobliging, and refused to appear."

Another murmur of approbation was heard among the friends of the duchess, some of whom applauded audibly.

"You are accused not only of raising spirits, but of citing the devil," pursued Laraynie, in tones of marked reproof. "Have you ever seen the devil?"

"Oh, yes! He is before me now. He is old, ugly, and wears the disguise of a presiding judge."

This time the applause rang through the council-chamber. It was accompanied by shouts of laughter, and no more attempt was made by the amused spectators to preserve the least semblance of decorum. The president, pale with rage, rose from his seat, and darting fiery glances at the irreverent crowd, whom the duchess had named as her particular friends, he cried out:

"The trial is over, and I hereby dismiss the court."

"What—already?" said the duchess, rising languidly from her seat. "Have you nothing more to say to me, my dear President Laraynie?"

Her "dear president" vouchsafed not a word in reply: he motioned to his compeers to rise, and they all betook themselves to their hall of conference. When the door had closed behind them, Marianna addressed her friends.

"My lords," said she, "I must apologize for the exceeding dulness of the scene you have just witnessed. But who would ever have imagined that such wise men could ask such a tissue of silly questions? I had hoped to experience a sensation by having a distant glimpse of the headsman's axe, and lo! I am cheated into an exhibition of President Laraynie's long ears!" *

"Come, Marianna," said her husband, passing her arm within his. "It is time for our drive to the *Pré aux Clercs*; the king and court are doubtless there already."

"And I shall annoy Madame de Maintenon by entertaining his majesty with an account of the absurd comedy that has just been performed in the council-chamber of the Arsenal."

So saying, Marianna led the way, and, followed by her adherents, left the tribunal of justice, and drove off in triumph to the *Pré aux Clercs*.

* The duchess's own words. This account of the trial is historical.—See Rénée, "The Nieces of Mazarin," p. 395.

CHAPTER III.

A SKIRMISH.

INSTEAD of accompanying his aunt from the council-chamber to her carriage, Eugene fell back, and joined two young men, who were walking arm in arm just behind the duke and duchess.

They greeted him with marked cordiality, and congratulated him upon the presence of mind with which he had captured the judicial arm-chair, and pressed it into the service of his aunt.

"My cousins of Conti are pleased to jest," replied Eugene. "Such praise befits not him who removes a chair, but him who unsettles a throne."

"Have you any such ambitious designs?" asked Prince Louis de Conti, sportively.

"Why not?" returned his brother, Prince de la Roche. "It would not be the first time that such a feat had been performed by an ecclesiastic. Cardinal Mazarin removed the throne of France from the Louvre to his bedchamber, and what Giulio Mazarini once accomplished, may perchance be repeated by his kinsman, the abbé."

"Who tells you that I am a priest?" said Eugene.

"First—your garb; second, the will of your family; and third, the command of the king."

"You forget the will of the individual most interested. But of that anon—I have a request to make of you both."

"It is granted in advance," exclaimed the brothers with one voice.

"Thank you, gracious kinsmen. Will you, then, accept a seat in my carriage, and drive with me to the *Pré aux Clercs*?"

"With pleasure. Is that all?"

"Almost all," replied Eugene, laughing. "What else remains to be done, must be performed by myself."

"Ah! There is something then in the wind? May we ask what it is?"