

"My dear kinsman and distinguished field-marshal: To my unspeakable regret, I am deprived, by a serious illness, of taking part in the attack upon Gab. My physicians have ordered me back to Embrun, there to await the result. These presents will convey to the advance guard my command to retreat to Embrun until further orders. It is my intention (unless I succumb before your arrival) to hold a council of war; and, to this intent, I require the presence of all the general officers. Hasten, therefore, my dear Eugene, lest you should find me no longer alive; and believe that, living or dying, I am, as ever, your devoted kinsman and friend.

(Signed) "VICTOR AMADEUS, Duke of Savoy."

"Do you believe all this?" asked De Commercy.

"Stay till you hear the postscript from his own hand:

"My dear cousin: You must pardon my egotistic ambition, if I do not allow the siege of Gab to be prosecuted without me. I am very desirous of glory, and perchance your laurels have contributed to my indisposition. At any rate, before you take a third fortress, I must have my opportunity of capturing two. So, instead of attacking Gab, come to Embrun to the relief of

"Yours, besieged by illness, V. A."

"I repeat my question—do you believe in his illness?"

"And you—do you believe in his ambition?"

"Why not? He avows it openly."

"For which very reason, it has no existence. Victor Amadeus is too crafty to make such an avowal in good faith. He never says what he thinks, nor does he ever think what he says. No, no—my poor little leaflets of laurel would have given him no uneasiness, had they not been plucked on French soil!—But we must wait and see. The main point is to retreat to Embrun."

"And Gab? Will you retract your gift of its empty houses to the Ravens?"

"No. My instructions were not to besiege Gab. It surrendered before they reached me, and I shall leave it to the sol-

diery. As for you and me, we must hasten to Embrun to try to break the seal of my cousin's impassible countenance, and read a few of his thoughts. Did I not tell you that we would march no farther than Embrun?"

CHAPTER III.

SICK AND WELL.

THE Duke of Savoy had taken up his residence at the castle of Embrun, where, as soon as the officers had arrived, his highness called a council of war. They were assembled in the council-chamber, awaiting the appearance of the invalid.

The doors leading to a room beyond, were opened to give passage to a huge arm-chair on rollers, which was wheeled by four lackeys, to the centre of the hall. The duke's head reclined on a cushion which had been fastened for the occasion to the back of the chair: the remainder of his person was buried under a purple velvet coverlet, except his neck and arms, which were clothed in a black doublet, the whole costume being eminently calculated to heighten the pallor of the duke's cheeks, and increase the whiteness of his hands as they lay limp and helpless on the velvet covering. His eyes were half-closed, and as he made a feeble attempt to survey the assemblage before him, they appeared to open with difficulty. With a faint motion of the hand, he signed to the lackeys to retire, and then made a painful effort to raise his head.

Deep silence reigned throughout the council-chamber, but the gaze of every man there was fixed upon the pallid face of him in whose trembling hands lay the destinies of four different armies. His dim eyes wandered slowly about the room until they rested on the person of Prince Eugene, who, hot and dusty, presented an appearance that contrasted strongly with that of his brother-officers.

"Our dear kinsman Eugene has arrived, I see," said the duke, in a faint voice. "We were afraid that we would be obliged to hold this important council without your presence."

"I hastened with all speed to obey your highness's summons," replied Eugene, "and I must avail myself of this opportunity to apologize for my dress. I have just dismounted, and hurried to the council-chamber that I might myself announce to your highness the good news of which I am the bearer."

"Let us hear it," murmured the duke, closing his eyes, and letting his head droop upon the pillow.

"Your highness, we were not obliged to storm Gab: it surrendered without a shot."

The duke's eyelids moved, and a flush overspread his face. No one remarked this save Eugene, for all other eyes in the hall were riveted upon himself.

"This is very good news," said the duke, feebly.

"Your highness sees, then, what a panic is produced by the mere mention of your name. It is a talisman that will lead us to Paris without opposition or loss of life. Like Cæsar, you come, see, and conquer—and that—not by your presence, but by your reputation."

"Your highness is too modest," said Victor Amadeus, somewhat recovering his voice. "I cannot accept the laurels you have so honorably won. Alas!" continued he, "I fear that I shall never lead an army into battle again!"

And, as if exhausted by the thought, he fell back and was silent. In a few moments, he raised his head and spoke: this time with open eyes, and with some distinctness.

"Gentlemen take your seats. The council is opened."

The great question of the next movement of the army was now to be agitated. The council were divided in their sentiments. Some were for rapid advance, others were of opinion that great discretion was to be exercised, now that they stood on the enemy's territory, and that not one step should be made without great deliberation as to its expediency.

At the head of the latter party stood General Caprara. "We have no right to trust to luck in war," said he. "We must take into consideration all the mischances that may befall us in the enemy's country, and act accordingly. Prince Eugene's advance-guard, for example, had the good luck to find Gab abandoned by its inhabitants. Had they remained

to defend their city, we would have lost our men to no purpose whatever."

"My advance-guard is composed of young and brave men, who, to avenge the injuries of Germany, have devoted themselves to death; but they are so fearless, and therefore so terrible, that I believe they will live to perform many a gallant deed."

"If they are not hanged as marauders," retorted Caprara; "for my edicts against plunderers and incendiaries remain in force here as well as at home."

"Your excellency has, then, changed your mode of warfare since your soldiery devastated the towns of Hungary," said Eugene.

"Field-Marshal!" cried Caprara, reddening.

"What, your excellency?" asked Eugene, with a provoking smile.

"Gentlemen," interposed the Duke of Savoy, "distract not our councils with your personal differences. Field-Marshal Caprara, you are, then, of opinion that it would be perilous for us to advance farther into the enemy's territory?"

"Yes, your highness," growled Caprara, looking daggers at Eugene. "A rapid march might give opportunity for the display of personal prowess, which, while it redounded to the credit of the few, would imperil the safety of the many."

"I heartily second the views of General Caprara," said General Legnaney, the leader of the Spanish division. "If we march on, we leave our base of operations far behind, and render unforeseen calamities irremediable."

"That is my opinion;" "And mine," cried several voices together, but among the younger officers there was dissenting silence.

Victor Amadeus gave a long sigh, and, turning his head slowly, addressed Eugene:

"Field-Marshal, Prince of Savoy, it is your turn to speak."

"I, your highness, am of opinion that we push our conquest with vigor. All the talent and strength of the French army has been sent to the Netherlands, and France is, so to speak, at our mercy. We have no obstacles before us in the shape of men in the field or garrisoned strongholds. As we

captured Barcelonetta, Guillestre, and Gab, so will we capture every place that lies on our march. There is absolutely nothing of the proportions of a mole-hill to prevent us from going as far as Grenoble—nay, as far as Lyons.”

“The Prince of Savoy has spoken like a sagacious general,” said the Prince de Commercy. “Nothing prevents us from marching to Lyons.”

“I sustain his views,” added the Duke of Schomberg. “We must advance. Let us promise protection to the Waldenses, and so foment civil discord among the enemy. To create disaffection in the enemy’s country is good policy—and it is a policy that will bear us on to Paris.”

“We are of the same mind,” said the other officers, who had kept silence.

And now ensued another pause. The casting vote on this momentous question was to be given by Victor Amadeus. He had recovered his strength in a wonderful manner, for his face had lost its pallor, his eyes their dimness, and his whole countenance beamed with resolution.

“Gentlemen,” cried he, as, in his excitement, he rose from his chair, “to youth belong fame and conquest; to youth belongs the strength that casts away impediments, and overleaps all hindrances to success. Forgive us, who, being young, thirst for glory, and long to quench that thirst in the sparkling waters of military success. Forgive me, you who are satiated with ambition gratified, if, rather than be discreet with you, I would be rash with my young kinsman. I am of Prince Eugene’s opinion. Nothing hinders our march to Grenoble. I am impatient—”

Suddenly he paused, and grasped the arms of the chair. A shudder pervaded his whole body, and, with a convulsive gasp, he fell back, apparently insensible.

The assembly broke up in confusion. Physicians were summoned, and, at their bidding, the duke was slowly borne back into his chamber. His head was enveloped in damp cloths, his temples were rubbed with stimulants, and, after various restoratives had been applied, he slowly opened his eyes, and looked bewildered about him. Nobody was near except Doctor Mirazzi. The other physicians had retired to the

embrasure of a bay-window, and the lackeys had gathered about the door, where they were awaiting further orders from their superiors. All this the duke had seen at a glance. He closed his eyes again, but, as he did so, he made a sign to Doctor Mirazzi.

The latter bent his head to listen, but in such a manner as to convey the idea that he was watching his patient’s fluttering breath.

“Dismiss them all,” whispered the sick man.

The doctor gave no ostensible sign of having heard. He still kept his ear to the patient’s mouth; then, after a while, he placed it close to his heart. The examination at an end, he went on tiptoes toward the window where his colleagues were standing.

“He sleeps,” whispered he. “When he awakes, his malady will probably declare itself. I will remain here to watch him; it is unnecessary for you to confine yourselves with me in this close sick-room. Will you oblige me by returning this evening for a consultation?”

“Certainly,” was the reply of the others, who were grateful to be relieved from duty. “Shall we appoint seven o’clock?”

“Yes,” answered Mirazzi; “and we will hold our consultation in the duke’s sitting-room. Our presence here might be prejudicial.”

And, with injunctions for silence, the doctor accompanied his colleagues to the door, which was noiselessly opened by the lackeys; but, before they had time to close it again, Mirazzi shut it with his own hands, loosening simultaneously a thick velvet portière, through whose heavy folds no sound could penetrate without.

Victor Amadeus, meanwhile, lay motionless in his arm-chair.

“Your highness,” said Mirazzi, “we are now safe and alone.”

The duke arose, kicked off his coverlet, and stood erect. “My dear doctor,” said he, “you must prove to me that I may trust you.”

“For thirty years I have served your royal highness’s fam-

ily, and I am ready to do so, be it with my life," replied Mirazzi.

"I believe you, Mirazzi; and therefore I, who am insincere toward everybody else, am honest in my intercourse with you. Now listen to me. In the science of medicine there are many remedies for diseases. Are there any potions, known to physicians, that have power to *produce* maladies?"

"That is a dangerous inquiry, your highness; for it regards the most tragic secrets of the craft. There are many, many things known to us that will produce sickness, followed by death, immediate or remote; but unfortunately there are not as many as you suppose, that will restore the vital energies where they are impaired by disease."

"But, doctor, surely you have some way of simulating disease without injuring the patient. Cutaneous maladies, for instance, must be very easily induced."

"They can more easily be induced than simulated. I can raise a scarlet eruption on a man's skin; but when it appears, it will bring with it fever and thirst."

"So much the better, so much the better!" exclaimed Victor Amadeus, eagerly. "How long will the symptoms last?"

"If proper remedies are administered, they will disappear in five or six days, your highness."

"Good, good," murmured the duke to himself; and then he began to pace forth and back the length of the apartment. After a while he came and stood directly in front of the doctor, who with his sharp eyes had been watching him as he walked, and perfectly apprehended the nature of the service he was expected to render to his distinguished patient.

"Doctor," said the sick man, "I feel the premonition of some serious illness. My head swims, my limbs ache, and cold chills are darting through my body. My fever will be high, and perchance I may grow delirious. Let me then use the rational interval left me, to make such dispositions as might be necessary in case of my demise."

"Then let me advise your highness to get to bed as speedily as possible," replied the doctor, solemnly. "This done, I will call in our consulting physicians—"

"By no means: I hate consultations. Nobody shall come

into my room but yourself, and, when you need the advice of your coadjutors, you must assemble them in some other part of the castle."

"I thank your highness for so signal a proof of confidence," said Mirazzi, "but I am not at liberty to assume the undivided responsibility of your nursing; for you may become really sick, and you must have all needful attention. Were we in Turin, her highness your noble spouse would suffer no one to attend you except herself; but here—"

"Here she shall not come; and to make sure of this fact, I will write her a letter in my own hand that will allay any anxiety she might feel on my account. Write yourself to the duchess, and ask her to send my old nurse—her that has always tended me in sickness. But I feel very ill, doctor. Call my valet to undress me. When I am comfortably arranged in bed, I will send for my secretary, and afterward for my staff-officers. They must receive their orders from *me*, before I lose my senses."

"To bed, to bed, your highness—that is the main thing!"

"Yes, that is the main thing," echoed the duke, falling into his arm-chair, and drawing up his velvet coverlet. "Now, doctor," added he, in a very faint voice, "call my valets, or I shall swoon before they get me to bed."

CHAPTER IV.

THE DUKE'S DANGEROUS ILLNESS.

THE news of the duke's terrible illness spread through the castle, over the town, and reached the barracks of the soldiers, who, like their officers, received the intelligence with blank looks of disappointment.

The staff-officers hastened to the castle, and some of them made attempts to penetrate the sick-chamber. But all in vain. Doctor Mirazzi's orders were stringent, and the nerves of his patient were not to be tried by the presence of any man, were that man his own brother.

"We can determine nothing, nor can we administer any remedies," said he, "until the malady declares itself. We must wait."

"We must wait," said the duke's physician, and the whole army was doomed to inaction, while urgent and more urgent grew the necessity for active operations.

Throughout the castle reigned profound stillness: not the least sound was permitted to reach the duke's ears. The officers that called were kept at a distance from his apartments, and to all their inquiries there was but one and the same reply—the duke was delirious, and incapable of giving orders.

Finally, after three days of mortal suspense, it was announced that his highness of Savoy had malignant scarlet fever.

During the four days that followed this announcement, nobody was allowed to enter the room except Doctor Mirazzi, and the old nurse that sat up with the duke at night. But, on the fifth day, two persons were admitted. Of these, one was the marshal of the duke's household, the other was his cousin Eugene.

They were received with mysterious whisperings, and were warned not to excite the patient. He had, in the incipency of his illness, insisted upon making his will, and these two confidential friends had been summoned to witness it.

The old nurse now joined them to say that his highness was awake, and would see Prince Eugene.

"My dear cousin," said the duke, languidly, "come and receive my last greeting."

Eugene entered the alcove, and stood at the bedside. The bed was curtained in purple velvet, and the hangings were so arranged as to leave the duke's face in obscurity. Eugene perceived, nevertheless, that there was no emaciation of features, nor any alteration in the expression of the sharp, restless eye.

"My dear kinsman," continued the invalid, "it is all over with me. I die without fame; I have fought my last battle and am vanquished by invincible death."

"No, your highness, you have not the aspect of a dying man; and I have strong hope that you will live to perform

great deeds yet. Young, wise, and brave as you are, your strong will may vanquish not only death, but our common enemy—the King of France."

"May your words prove prophetic!" sighed the duke, "but something tells me that I must prepare for the worst. I have made my will, and—"

He paused, gasped for breath, and closed his eyes. Then motioning to Eugene to come nearer, he whispered: "I have appointed you my executor until the majority of my heir. Promise me to do all in your power to make my subjects happy."

"Your royal highness amazes me, and I know not—"

He was interrupted by a loud groan which brought Doctor Mirazzi to the bed in a trice. The duke was trembling; his teeth were clinched, and his hands were pressed upon his temples.

Restoratives were used, and at the proper time the patient unclosed his eyes. With a great effort he raised himself in bed, beckoned to the marshal of the household to approach, and, supported by Mirazzi, he put his name to the will.

"I request my minister and the marshal of my household to approach and witness the signing of my will."

They came in, and, taking up a document which lay on a table close by, the duke raised himself in bed, and, supported by the doctor, gave his signature.

"Take it," said he, "to Turin. Place it in the archives, and when I am dead let it be opened in the presence of the duchess and of my well-beloved kinsman here present, the Prince of Savoy. And now," said he, "farewell. My strength is exhausted! The end is nigh!"

And with these faintly-articulated words, Victor Amadeus fell back upon his pillow and swooned.

Eugene returned to his quarters in a state of extreme perplexity.

"How is the duke?" cried De Commercy, who shared his lodgings.

"I do not know," said Eugene, moodily. "But this I know: we march, not to Grenoble, but back to Turin."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; such are the duke's latest orders, and, as he has appointed no one to represent him, the army is still under his sole control. I told you, we should get no farther than Emburn!"

"But the duke? It is not possible that he is acting the sick man all this while?"

"Not possible! Nothing is impossible to such a crafty, vulpine nature as his!"

"The bulletins say that he is attacked with scarlet fever, and you must have seen whether he bears its marks on his skin or not."

"He has them, but—this shrewd kinsman of mine has many a secret unknown to such as you and myself, Commercy. Perhaps I do him injustice; for, in good sooth, I am provoked, and in a humor to suspect everybody. His voice is very weak, and indeed, Commercy, I would feel very uncomfortable should he prove to me, by dying, that I have suspected him unjustly. I must go again; I *must* satisfy my doubts."

The duke's condition was declared to be so precarious that sentries were stationed at every entrance of the castle, to prevent so much as the lightest footstep from being heard by the noble patient. He was passing a crisis, and, during the transition, not a soul must be admitted within the castle gates.

Prince Eugene, nevertheless, at dusk, betook himself thitherward. The sentry saluted him, but barred the entrance.

"You do not know me," said the prince. "I am the duke's nearest kinsman, and, unless you have orders to exclude me personally, I have the entrance to his chamber."

"We have no orders with reference to your highness," was the reply.

"Then I must pass, and I shoulder the responsibility."

The officer signed to the sentry to stand aside, and Eugene entered the castle, crossed the tessellated vestibule, and ascended the wide marble staircase. Here he was stopped a second time, but he referred the guards to the officer below, and was again allowed to pass. "I must try to solve this riddle," thought he. "The emperor's interests hang upon the solution."

Luckily, I have a pretext for my unexpected visit in these dispatches."

He had now traversed the long, lofty hall; had entered a smaller one that led to the duke's antechamber, and had reached the opposite end of the room, where stood two more sentries, one before each door that opened into the duke's chamber. They had seen him in the morning, and taking it for granted that, having penetrated thus far, he had authority to go farther, they saluted him, and stepped aside.

Eugene whispered, "Is this the door by which I entered this morning?"

The sentry bowed.

"Whither does it lead?"

"To his royal highness's alcove, my lord."

"Right," said Eugene, laying his hand on the lock. It turned, and he was in a small recess which opened into the alcove. The portière was down, and Eugene stood irresolute before it. He felt a nervous dread of he knew not what, and almost resolved to retrace his steps. He thought he could not bear the shock of the duke's treachery, should the illness prove—as he feared it would—a sham. He wondered what he would do; and began to think it better not to penetrate into the secrets of his kinsman's acts, but—

No, no! He had gone too far to lose his opportunity, and, ashamed of his irresolution, he raised the portière. The alcove was darkened by draperies, but as soon as Eugene's eyes had accustomed themselves to the obscurity of the place, he drew near the bed, opened the curtains, and beheld—nobody! nothing!

"I was right," muttered he, grinding his teeth; "it was a comedy!" As he retreated, he stumbled against the little table, and the chink of the phials that stood upon it was audible.

"Is that you, my good Annetta?" said the voice of the duke.

Eugene emerged from the alcove, and entered the sitting-room. There, in an arm-chair, before a table laden with viands, fruits, and rare wines, sat the expiring patient that had made his will in the morning.

The duke was in the act of raising a glass of wine to his lips. He laid it hastily down, and his keen eyes darted fire at the intruder.

"What means this?" asked he, in a voice that was somewhat uncertain.

"If I may be permitted to interpret what I see before me," replied Eugene, "I should say that your highness is merely carrying out military customs. We were at a funeral this morning, to the tune of a dead march—we return, this afternoon, to that of a quick-step."

"I hope you are agreeably surprised to find that instead of being left behind, I have come back with the music," said the duke, recovering his self-possession. "Come and join me in a glass of good wine. I am as yet too weak to do the honors of my house, but I shall enjoy my repast twofold, now that I have a guest. Sit down. My physician, having ascertained that what I mistook for approaching dissolution was a favorable crisis, has prescribed a generous diet for me, and I do assure you that, with every mouthful, I feel my health return. Ah, Eugene! life is a great boon, and I thank God, who has generously prolonged mine. I hope that you, too, are glad to see me revive; the army, I know, will rejoice to hear of my recovery."

"I do not doubt their joy," replied Eugene, "for your highness's quick convalescence will spare them the mortification of a retreat to Piedmont. I presume you will now march to Paris."

"My fiery, impetuous Eugene," replied Victor Amadeus, with an air of superiority, "you forget that convalescence is not health. I am here for three weeks at least, and by that time the season will be too much advanced to make a second invasion of France. So, God willing, we shall return to Piedmont, there to prosecute the war against Catinat and his incendiaries, whom I hope to drive ignominiously from Italy."

"That is—we are to hold ourselves on the defensive," replied Eugene, bitterly. "Your highness is truly magnanimous! All France lies within your grasp, and, instead of taking advantage of your good fortune, you lay it humbly at the feet of Louis. We have it in our power to dictate terms,

while this retreat exposes us to have them dictated to ourselves."

"Field-marshal," said the duke, haughtily, "you forget that you speak to your commander-in-chief."

"Yes—to remember that I speak to the Duke of Savoy—"

"With the head of your house," interrupted the duke, "to whom you owe respect."

"I accord it with all my heart. Precisely because the Duke of Savoy is the chief of our house, do I implore him not to turn his back upon the road which lies open to fame and renown, but to advance bravely to the front, as becomes the friend and ally of the emperor."

Victor Amadeus put his hand up to his head. "Excuse me—I am not equal to the holding of a council of war, nor do I intend to have my commands discussed. We go back to Piedmont."

"Then I must submit," said Eugene, mournfully. "But I crave permission to ask one question of my kinsman."

"Say on," answered the duke, wearily.

"Does your highness propose to desert the cause of the emperor, and renew your alliance with France? Ah, you smile! You smile to think that I should be so unpractised in the art of diplomacy, as to expect a direct answer to such an inquiry. But I entreat you to remember, that your defection concerns not only your honor but mine also."

"My dear Eugene," said the duke, mildly, "you are anxious without any grounds for anxiety. At your solicitation, and from my own convictions of duty, I became the ally of the emperor; I have never reaped any advantage from the alliance, and yet I have remained perfectly loyal. France has made me many offers, every one of which I have rejected. So, make yourself easy on the score of my good faith, and let us change the subject. To what chance do I owe the pleasant surprise of this visit from you?"

"I have the honor to bring letters to your royal highness from the emperor," answered Eugene, presenting his dispatches. "I owe it to my relationship with your highness, that I was allowed by your sentries to effect my entrance here."

"Of course, of course. Everybody knows in what high es-

teem I hold Prince Eugene. Verily I believe you to be the most popular man in the army, and your brown cassock to inspire more respect than my field-marshal's uniform. And now to study the emperor's letter. I say *study*, for his majesty will write to me in Latin, and I am no great scholar."

"While your highness is occupied," said Eugene, rising, "I will retire to the window." He crossed the room, and, entering the embrasure, was completely lost to view behind its hangings.

There was a silence of some duration. The duke studied his Latin, while Eugene looked out of the window. Suddenly, without any previous formality of knocking, the door leading to the antechamber flew open, and the voice of the old nurse was heard.

"Your highness," said she, as though communicating a most agreeable piece of news, "your highness, here is the French ambassador. I—"

"Peace, Annetta, peace!" cried Victor Amadeus. But Annetta was too much interested to hear, and she went on with great volubility:

"Here he is; I passed him through. Everybody mistook him for Prince Eugene—"

"Annetta, hold your tongue!" cried the duke, in a thundering voice.

"Ay, your highness, ay," was the reply of the old woman, who, stepping back, opened the door and called out:

"Count Tessé, his highness expects you; come in."

And, to be sure, there walked in a gentleman wearing the identical brown cassock, with its brass buttons, which was known as the costume of Prince Eugene of Savoy!

Victor Amadeus, in despair, sprang from his chair, and made a deprecatory movement by which he hoped to prevail upon the count to retreat. But he only looked bewildered; and his bewilderment increased to positive consternation, when the curtains opened, and the veritable Eugene stepped out and surveyed him with undisguised contempt.

"My dear Eugene," said the duke, in a conciliatory voice, "you see how pertinaciously I am besieged by these Frenchmen. Here, for instance, is Count Tessé. This is his third

attempt to force an interview with me, and he has gained his end by bribing my silly old nurse to admit him under the garb of one to whom no one here would dare deny entrance. Count Tessé is an envoy of the King of France, and in your presence I intend to show him that no offer, however brilliant, can induce me to forsake my imperial ally of Austria."

"I am perfectly convinced of your loyalty," said Eugene, with an ironical smile, "and, to prove my trust, I beg permission to withdraw. I have the honor to bid you good-evening."

So saying, Eugene inclined his head to the duke, and, paying no attention whatever to his double, passed on.

With a saddened heart he returned to his barracks. He was met by the Prince de Commercy, holding aloft a huge placard. "The bulletin! The bulletin!" cried he. "The crisis is past, and the duke is safe."

"We, however, my friend, are in great danger. We are not driven from French territory by our enemies, but by our pretended friends. Ah! Victor Amadeus has this day inflicted upon me a wound more painful than that of the Janizary's arrow at Belgrade. He has withered my laurels at the very moment when my hand was extended to pluck them."

"Then he abandons us, and declares himself for France?" asked De Commercy.

"If that were all, we could bear his defection, for we would have one enemy more—that is all. Instead of which, we have a double-faced friend who will have far more power to injure us by his treachery in our own camp, than by his hostility in that of the enemy. I will warn the emperor, as it is my duty to do; but he will be dazzled by the fine promises of the duke, and disregard my warning.* Meanwhile, as long as Victor Amadeus wears his mask, should we even wrest a victory in

* Every thing happened exactly as Eugene predicted. The Duke of Savoy retained command of the imperial army for three years, during which he played into the hands of Louis XIV., condemning the allied forces to total inaction, until France had complied with all his exactions, when he declared himself for Louis, and accepted the rank of a general in the French army. The Prince de Commercy was so exasperated that he challenged the duke, but the challenge was refused.

spite of his intrigues, he will manage to deprive us of all its advantages. He will sell us to France, of that you may be sure."

CHAPTER V.

THE MARQUIS STROZZI.

"THEN you think that Strozzi will not recognize me?" asked Barbesieur de Louvois.

"I know it," replied Carlotta. "His memory is a blank from which every image, except that of his wife, has been effaced."

"Does he love her still?"

"Unhappily he does," sighed Carlotta.

"My good girl," said Barbesieur, trying to look amiable, "pray don't be so concise. Tell me the condition of the marquis, at once: I did not come to this old owl's roost for pastime. I came to see what could be done to restore its unhappy lord to reason. That you are observing, I remember; you proved it by the good care you took of my sister Laura."

"My lord, you jest; but the flight of the marchioness has disgraced me. She outwitted me, and I shall hate her to the end of my days."

"Verily I believe you," laughed Barbesieur, as he saw the glitter of her pale-green eyes. "I see in your face that you know how to hate. But you must excuse me if I am amused when I think I see you watching the doors like a she-Cerberus, while that sly creature was flying out of the chimney. But never mind her: I want to talk with you of her husband. I know that he was confined in a mad-house; but, having occasion to see if he was sane enough to do me a service, I found out that he had been discharged as cured, and had retired within himself. Now, good Carlotta, tell me his veritable condition."

"He never has been sane since the flight of the marchioness. The morning after, when, in spite of our knocking and calling, we received no answer, I set Julia to watch the doors

(for I thought she was merely trying to frighten us, and would make her escape while we were away), and went to consult the marquis as to what we must do. When we returned, Julia assured us that she had not heard a breath since I had been away."

"And I suppose that the marquis forced the doors?"

"Oh, no, my lord," replied Carlotta, bitterly. "He was so fearful of displeasing her that he resisted all my importunities to break them open. He knocked and begged so humbly for admission, that I fairly cried with rage. This lasted for hours. Finally he fell on his knees and cried like a child, promising, if she would open the door, to give her her freedom, and never imprison her again. Then he swore by the memory of his father that he would go to Rome and get a divorce for her. It was shameful; and at last I cried out for passion, and told him to get up and behave like a man. But all in vain. Suddenly Julia came running to say that, while the marquis had been lying before the parlor door, she had forced the one that led to the sitting-room, and that the marchioness had escaped."

"What did Strozzi do when he heard this? Whine louder?"

"Oh, no! He sprang up, rushed into the rooms, and began to search for her."

"I suppose you helped, like good dogs after their game?"

"Of course, for it seemed impossible that she should have gotten out by any but supernatural means. But at last we were obliged to accept the fact of her flight, wonderful as it was, and we sat down. Not so the marquis. He appeared to think that she had been transformed into a mouse, for he ran about, opening boxes, looking under tables, occasionally stopping to roar like a wild beast, or falling on his knees and weeping. Then he would begin his hunt again, and this lasted the whole day. We asked him to take some rest, and let his servants be sent out to search the woods, but he gave us no answer, still going round and round until dusk, when he called for lights. He kept up his search the whole night; and when the sun rose, and we awoke, we found him running to and fro, from one room to the other. In vain we pressed him to eat or to rest, he spoke not a word to any of us. Finally, one of