

## Chapter 30

### Threefold Love.

As soon as Buckingham departed, Guiche imagined the coast would be perfectly clear for him without any interference. Monsieur, who no longer retained the slightest feeling of jealousy, and who, besides, permitted himself to be monopolized by the Chevalier de Lorraine, allowed as much liberty and freedom in his house as the most exacting could desire. The king, on his side, who had conceived a strong predilection for his sister-in-law's society, invented a variety of amusements, in quick succession to each other, in order to render her residence in Paris as cheerful as possible, so that in fact, not a day passed without a ball at the Palais Royal, or a reception in Monsieur's apartments. The king had directed that Fontainebleau should be prepared for the reception of the court, and every one was using his utmost interest to get invited. Madame led a life of incessant occupation; neither her voice nor her pen were idle for a moment. The conversations with De Guiche were gradually assuming a tone of interest which might unmistakably be recognized as the prelude of a deep-seated attachment. When eyes look languishingly while the subject under discussion happens to be colors of materials for dresses; when a whole hour is occupied in analyzing the merits and the perfume of a *sachet* or a flower; - there are words in this style of conversation which every one might listen to, but there are gestures and sighs that every one cannot perceive. After Madame had talked for some time with De Guiche, she conversed with the king, who paid her a visit regularly every day. They played, wrote verses, or selected mottoes or

emblematical devices; this spring was not only the Maytide of nature, it was the youth of an entire people, of which those at court were the head. The king was handsome, young, and of unequalled gallantry. All women were passionately loved by him, even the queen, his wife. This mighty monarch was, however, more timid and more reserved than any other person in the kingdom, to such a degree, indeed, that he did not confess his sentiments even to himself. This timidity of bearing restrained him within the limits of ordinary politeness, and no woman could boast of having any preference shown her beyond that shown to others. It might be foretold that the day when his real character would be displayed would be the dawn of a new sovereignty; but as yet he had not declared himself. M. de Guiche took advantage of this, and constituted himself the sovereign prince of the whole laughter-loving court. It had been reported that he was on the best of terms with Mademoiselle de Montalais; that he had been assiduously attentive to Mademoiselle de Chatillon; but now he was not even barely civil to any of the court beauties. He had eyes and ears for one person alone. In this manner, and, as it were, without design, he devoted himself to Monsieur, who had a great regard for him, and kept him as much as possible in his own apartments. Unsociable from natural disposition, he had estranged himself too much previous to the arrival of Madame, but, after her arrival, he did not estrange himself sufficiently. This conduct, which every one had observed, had been particularly remarked by the evil genius of the house, the Chevalier de Lorraine, for whom Monsieur exhibited the warmest attachment because he was of a very cheerful disposition, even in his

remarks most full of malice, and because he was never at a loss how to wile the time away. The Chevalier de Lorraine, therefore, having noticed that he was threatened with being supplanted by De Guiche, resorted to strong measures. He disappeared from the court, leaving Monsieur much embarrassed. The first day of his absence, Monsieur hardly inquired about him, for he had De Guiche with him, and, except that the time given to conversation with Madame, his days and nights were rigorously devoted to the prince. On the second day, however, Monsieur, finding no one near him, inquired where the chevalier was. He was told that no one knew.

De Guiche, after having spent the morning in selecting embroideries and fringes with Madame, went to console the prince. But after dinner, as there were some amethysts to be looked at, De Guiche returned to Madame's

cabinet. Monsieur was left quite to himself during the time devoted to dressing and decorating himself; he felt that he was the most miserable of men, and again inquired whether there was any news of the chevalier, in reply to which he was told that no one could tell where the chevalier was to be found. Monsieur, hardly knowing in what direction to inflict his weariness, went to Madame's apartments dressed in his morning-gown. He found a large assemblage of people there, laughing and whispering in every part of the room; at one end, a group of women around one of the courtiers, talking together, amid smothered bursts of laughter; at the other end, Manicamp and Malicorne were being pillaged at cards by Montalais and Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente, while two others were standing by, laughing. In another part were Madame, seated upon some

cushions on the floor, and De Guiche, on his knees beside her, spreading out a handful of pearls and precious stones, while the princess, with her white and slender fingers pointed out such among them as pleased her the most. Again, in another corner of the room, a guitar player was playing some of the Spanish seguedillas, to which Madame had taken the greatest fancy ever since she had heard them sung by the young queen with a melancholy expression of voice. But the songs which the Spanish princess had sung with tears in her eyes, the young Englishwoman was humming with

a smile that well displayed her beautiful teeth. The cabinet presented, in fact, the most perfect representation of unrestrained pleasure and amusement. As he entered, Monsieur was struck at beholding so many persons enjoying themselves without him. He was so jealous at the sight that he could not resist exclaiming, like a child, "What! you are amusing yourselves here, while I am sick and tired of being alone!"

The sound of his voice was like a clap of thunder coming to interrupt the warbling of birds under the leafy covert of the trees; a dead silence ensued. De Guiche was on his feet in a moment. Malicorne tried to hide himself behind Montalais. Manicamp stood bolt upright, and assumed a very ceremonious demeanor. The guitar player thrust his instrument under a table, covering it with a piece of carpet to conceal it from the prince's observation. Madame was the only one who did not move, and smiling at her husband, said, "Is not this the hour you usually devote to your toilette?"

"An hour which others select, it seems, for amusing themselves," replied the prince, grumblingly.

This untoward remark was the signal for a general rout; the women fled like a flock of terrified starlings; the guitar player vanished like a shadow; Malicorne, still protected by Montalais, who purposely widened out her dress, glided behind the hanging tapestry. As for Manicamp, he went to the assistance of De Guiche, who naturally remained near Madame, and both of them, with the princess herself, courageously sustained the attack. The count was too happy to bear malice against the husband; but Monsieur bore a grudge against his wife. Nothing was wanting but a quarrel; he sought it, and the hurried departure of the crowd, which had been so joyous before he arrived, and was so disturbed by his entrance, furnished him with a pretext.

"Why do they run away at the very sight of me?" he inquired, in a supercilious tone; to which remark Madame replied, that, "whenever the master of the house made his appearance, the family kept aloof out of respect." As she said this, she made so funny and so pretty a grimace, that De Guiche and Manicamp could not control themselves; they burst into a peal of laughter; Madame followed their example, and even Monsieur himself could not resist it, and he was obliged to sit down, as, for laughing, he could scarcely keep his equilibrium. However, he very soon left off, but his anger had increased. He was still more furious because he had permitted himself to laugh, than from having seen others laugh. He looked at Manicamp steadily, not venturing to show his anger towards

De Guiche; but, at a sign which displayed no little amount of annoyance, Manicamp and De Guiche left the room, so that Madame, left alone, began sadly to pick up her pearls and amethysts, no longer smiling, and speaking still less.

"I am very happy," said the duke, "to find myself treated as a stranger here, Madame," and he left the room in a passion. On his way out, he met Montalais, who was in attendance in the ante-room. "It is very agreeable to pay you a visit here, but outside the door."

Montalais made a very low obeisance. "I do not quite understand what your royal highness does me the honor to say."

"I say that when you are all laughing together in Madame's apartment, he is an unwelcome visitor who does not remain outside."

"Your royal highness does not think, and does not speak so, of yourself?"

"On the contrary, it is on my own account that I do speak and think. I have no reason, certainly, to flatter myself about the reception I meet with here at any time. How is it that, on the very day there is music and a little society in Madame's apartments - in my own apartments, indeed, for they are mine - on the very day that I wish to amuse myself a little in my turn, every one runs away? Are they afraid to see me, that they all take wing as soon as I appear? Is there anything wrong, then, going on in my absence?"

"Yet nothing has been done to-day, monseigneur, which is not done every day."

"What! do they laugh like that every day?"

"Why, yes, monseigneur."

"The same group of people simpering and the same singing and strumming going on every day?"

"The guitar, monseigneur, was introduced to-day; but when we have no guitars, we have violins and flutes; ladies soon weary without music."

"The deuce! - and the men?"

"What men, monseigneur?"

"M. de Guiche, M. de Manicamp, and the rest of them?"

"They all belong to your highness's household."

"Yes, yes, you are right," said the prince, as he returned to his own apartments, full of thought. He threw himself into the largest of his arm-chairs, without looking at himself in the glass. "Where can the chevalier be?" said he. One of the prince's attendants happened to be

near him, overheard his remark, and replied, -

"No one knows, your highness."

"Still the same answer. The first one who answers me again, 'I do not know,' I will discharge." Every one at this remark hurried out of his apartments, in the same manner as the others had fled from Madame's apartments. The prince then flew into the wildest rage. He kicked over a chiffonier, which tumbled on the carpet, broken into pieces. He next went into the galleries, and with the greatest coolness threw down, one after another, an enameled vase, a porphyry ewer, and a bronze candelabrum. The noise summoned every one to the various doors.

"What is your highness's pleasure?" said the captain of the guards, timidly.

"I am treating myself to some music," replied the prince, gnashing his teeth.

The captain of the guards desired his royal highness's physician to be sent for. But before he came, Malicorne arrived, saying to the prince, "Monseigneur, the Chevalier de Lorraine is here."

The duke looked at Malicorne, and smiled graciously at him, just as the chevalier entered.