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THE VALOIS ROMANCES.

THE FORTY-FIVE.

VOL. I.

THE
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 1 vol.



“A FAVOR, MONSIEUR.”

Drawn by Eugène Courboin, heliogravured by Dujardin.

THE FORTY-FIVE, I.

THE FORTY-FIVE.

BY

ALEXANDRE DUMAS.

VOL. I.

BOSTON:
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.

1899.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

SOME six or seven years elapsed between the **tragic** death of Bussy d'Amboise, as told in the concluding chapters of "La Dame de Monsoreau," and the coming to Paris of the famous Gascon body-guard of Henri III., known in history as the Forty-Five, with which this tale opens.

The vengeance wrought by Diane de Méridor upon the prince, who was the instigator of the concerted attack upon Bussy, is the theme from which the "Forty-Five" derives most of its romantic interest. Diane, the lovely, lovable, loving woman, has become a cold, loveless, pitiless statue, living only to avenge her murdered lover; but she is still beautiful, almost superhumanly beautiful,—so beautiful that Henri de Joyeuse is lost in hopeless love of her, and that the perfidious Duc d'Anjou, the object of her relentless pursuit, thirsts to possess her, and by his very passion makes her

task easy. History records that he died, from an unexplained cause, at Château-Thierry on the date here assigned.

The acquaintance so pleasantly begun in the earlier story, with Chicot, is here renewed with even greater delight. Disguised as Maître Robert Briquet, to escape the vengeance of the Duc de Mayenne, he is no less original and amusing than in his proper person, — no less active in his care for the interests of the somewhat unappreciative and ungrateful master, to whom his faithful attachment never varies.

The whole episode of the jester's mission to the Court of Navarre — his hazardous journey, his brief stay at Nerac, the "hunt" which ended at Cahors, and his narration of his experiences to the king on his return — would alone be sufficient to stamp the "Forty-Five" as one of the very best of our author's romances. In all his varied experiences, Chicot never found his match in shrewdness and finesse till he crossed swords with Henri of Navarre. And how frankly he acknowledged his defeat, and how warmly each appreciated the other's merits!

The events which led to the journey of the Duc d'Anjou to Flanders with the hope of wearing a

crowns at last, the course of William of Orange towards the French prince, and the abortive attempt upon Antwerp, are sufficiently touched upon in the body of the story. François, after all his longing and scheming, died uncrowned; and it may be doubted whether he would ever have ascended the French throne, even if he had outlived his brother. Had he done so, it is safe to say that the crimes and shortcomings of his brothers would have been almost forgotten, and the odium which attaches to the memory of the last degenerate Valois kings would have been concentrated upon him.

The constant growth of the Holy League under the leadership of the Guises, and with the almost avowed patronage of Philip II. of Spain, is interestingly woven into the narrative; perhaps we need not marvel at the success of a cause which had for its high priestess so charming a personality as the heroine of the celebrated golden scissors, — that energetic *intrigante*, the clever and fascinating Duchesse de Montpensier.

It is interesting to know the estimation in which these romances were held by their author's compatriot, George Sand, herself a novelist of the first rank.

Says Andrew Lang in his "Essays in Little:"
"M. Borie chanced to visit the famous novelist just before her death, and found Dumas's novel, 'Les Quarante-Cinq,' lying on her table. He expressed his wonder that she was reading it for the first time. 'For the first time!' said she; 'why, this is the fifth or sixth time I have read "Les Quarante-Cinq" and the others. When I am ill, anxious, melancholy, tired, discouraged, nothing helps me against moral and physical troubles like a book of Dumas.'"

LIST OF CHARACTERS.

Period, 1585.

- HENRI III., King of France.
LOUISE DE LORRAINE, his wife.
FRANÇOIS, Duc d'Anjou, brother of Henri III.
AURILLY, the confidant of Duc d'Anjou.
CATHERINE DE MÉDICIS, the Queen Mother.
CHICOT, the King's jester, passing under the name of Robert Briquet.
ANNE, Duc de Joyeuse, Grand Admiral of France.
HENRI DE JOYEUSE, Comte du Bouchage, } his brothers.
FRANÇOIS, Cardinal de Joyeuse, }
NOGARET DE LAVALETTE, Duc d'Épernon.
COMTE DE SAINT-AIGNAN.
M. DE LOIGNAC, Captain of the Forty-Five Guardsmen.
VICOMTE ERNAUTON DE CARMAINGES, }
M. DE SAINTE-MALINE, }
M. DE CHALABRE, } of the "Forty-Five."
PERCUDAS DE PINCORNAY, }
PERTINAX DE MONTCRABEAU, }
EUSTACHE DE MIRADOUX, }
HECTOR DE BIRAN, }
M. DE CRILLON, Colonel of the French Guards.
M. DE VESIN, commanding the garrison at Cahors.
DIANE DE MÉRIDOR.
RÉMY LE HAUDOUIN.
THE SUPERIOR OF THE CONVENT OF THE HOSPITALIÈRES.

- HENRI, Duc de Guise,
 DUC DE MAYENNE,
 DUCHESSE DE MONTPENSIER, his sister,
 M. DE MAYNEVILLE,
 M. DE CRUCÉ,
 BUSSY-LECLERC,
 M. DE MARTEAU,
 NICOLAS POULAIN, lieutenant to the
 provost of Paris,
 PRESIDENT BRISSON OF THE COUNCIL.
 M. DE SALCÈDE.
 HENRI DE BOURBON, King of Navarre.
 MARQUERITE, his wife.
 M. DE TURENNE,
 M. D'AUBIAC,
 M. DUPLESSIS-DE MORNAY, } of the Court of Navarre.
 MADEMOISELLE DE MONTMORENCY, "la Fosseuse," mistress of
 the King of Navarre.
 WILLIAM OF NASSAU, Prince of Orange.
 THE BURGOMASTER OF ANTWERP.
 GOES, a Flemish sailor.
 DOM MODESTE GORENFLOT,
 BROTHER EUSÈBE,
 BROTHER JACQUES,
 BROTHER BORROMÉE,
 BROTHER PANURGE, } of the Priory of the Jacobins.
 MAÎTRE BONHOMET, host of the "Corne d'Abondance" inn.
 MAÎTRE FOURNICHON, host of "The Sword of the Brave Cheva-
 lier."
 DAME FOURNICHON, his wife.
 LARDILLE DE CHAVANTRADE, wife of Eustache de Miradoux.
 MILITOR DE CHAVANTRADE, her son.
 MAÎTRE MITON, } bourgeois.
 JEAN FRIARD, }
 MIRON, a Physician.

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THE FORTY-FIVE.

CHAPTER I.

THE PORTE ST. ANTOINE.

ON the 26th of October, 1585, the barriers of the Porte St. Antoine were, contrary to custom, still closed at half-past ten in the morning. A quarter of an hour after, a guard of twenty Swiss, the favorite troops of Henri III., then king, passed through these barriers, which were again closed behind them. Once through, they arranged themselves along the hedges, which, outside the barrier, bordered each side of the road.

There was a great crowd collected there, for numbers of peasants and other people had been stopped at the gates on their way into Paris. They were arriving by three different roads, — from Montreuil, from Vincennes, and from St. Maur; and the crowd was growing more dense every moment. There were monks from the convent in the neighborhood, women seated on pack-saddles, and peasants in their carts; and all, by their questions more or less pressing, made a continual murmur, while some voices were raised above the others in shriller tones of anger or complaint.

Besides that multitude of people who had approached to enter the city, special groups might have been observed

of persons who appeared to have come out from it. These, instead of looking at the gate, fixed their gaze on the horizon, bounded by the convent of the Jacobins, the priory of Vincennes, and the Croix Faubin, as though they were expecting the advent of some Messiah. These groups consisted chiefly of *bourgeois*, warmly wrapped up, for the weather was cold, and the piercing northeast wind seemed trying to tear from the trees the few last yellow leaves which still remained on them.

Three of these *bourgeois* were talking together, — that is to say, two talked and the third listened ; or, we ought to say, the third did not even seem to listen, so occupied was he in looking towards Vincennes. Let us turn our attention to this last. He was a man who must be tall when he stood upright, but at this moment his long legs were bent under him, and his arms, not less long in proportion, were crossed over his breast. He was leaning against the hedge, which almost hid his face, before which he also held up his hand as if for further concealment. By his side a little man, mounted on a hillock, was talking to a large man who was constantly slipping off the slope of the same hillock, and at each slip catching at the button of his neighbor's doublet.

“Yes, Maître Miton,” said the little man to the tall one, “yes, I tell you that there will be a hundred thousand people around the scaffold of Salcède, — a hundred thousand, at least. See, without counting those already on the Place de Grève, or who are on the way thither from different parts of Paris, the number of people here ; and this is but one gate out of sixteen.”

“A hundred thousand ! that is a large number, Friard,” replied the large man. “You may be sure that many will follow my example, and will not go to see this unlucky man quartered, for fear of an uproar.”

“Maître Miton,” replied the small man, “be careful! you are talking politics. There will be no trouble at all, I am sure.” Then, seeing his interlocutor shake his head with an air of doubt, he turned to the man with long legs and long arms, and continued, “Am I not right, Monsieur?”

“What?” said the other, as though he had not heard.

“I am saying that nothing will happen on the Place de Grève to-day.”

“I think you are wrong, and that there will be the execution of Salcède,” quietly replied the long-armed man.

“Yes, doubtless; but I mean that there will be no noise about it.”

“There will be the noise of the blows of the whip which they will give to the horses.”

“You do not understand; by noise I mean tumult. If there were likely to be any, the king would not have had a stand prepared for him and the two queens at the Hôtel de Ville.”

“Do kings ever know when a tumult will take place?” replied the other, shrugging his shoulders with an air of pity.

“Oh, oh!” said Maître Miton, privately, to his interlocutor, “this man talks in a singular way. Do you know who he is, comrade?”

“No.”

“Then why do you speak to him? You are wrong. I do not think he likes to talk.”

“And yet it seems to me,” replied Friard, loud enough to be heard by the stranger, “that one of the greatest pleasures in life is to exchange thoughts.”

“Yes, with those whom we know well,” answered Maître Miton.

“Are not all men brothers, as the priests say?”

“They were primitively; but in times like ours the relationship is singularly loosened. Talk, then, with me if you must talk, and leave the stranger alone.”

“But I know you so well that I know what you will reply, while this stranger may have something new to tell me.”

“Hush! he is listening.”

“So much the better; perhaps he will answer. Then you think, Monsieur,” continued he, turning again towards him, “that there will be a tumult?”

“I? I said nothing of the sort.”

“No; but I believe you think so.”

“And on what do you found your surmise? Are you a sorcerer, M. Friard?”

“Why, he knows me!”

“Have I not named you two or three times?” said Miton.

“Ah! true. Well, since he knows me, perhaps he will answer. Now, Monsieur, I believe you agree with me, or else you would be there, while on the contrary, you are here.”

“But you, M. Friard, since you think the contrary of what you think I think, why are you not at the Place de Grève? I thought the spectacle would have been a joyful one to all friends of the king. Perhaps you will reply that you are not among the friends of the king, but among those of MM. de Guise, and that you are waiting here for the Lorraines, who they say are about to enter Paris in order to deliver M. de Salcède.”

“No, Monsieur,” replied the little man, visibly frightened at this suggestion; “I wait for my wife, Nicole Friard, who has gone to take twenty-four table-cloths to the priory of the Jacobins, — having the honor to be washerwoman to Dom Modeste Gorenflot the abbé.”

“Look, comrade,” cried Miton. “See what they are doing!”

M. Friard, following the direction of his friend’s finger, saw that besides the gates the closing of which had already created so much excitement, they were closing still another gate, while a party of Swiss placed themselves before it. “How! more barriers?” cried he.

“What did I tell you?” said Miton.

“It is queer, is it not?” said the unknown, smiling.

At the sight of this new precaution, a long murmur of astonishment and some cries of fear proceeded from the crowd.

“Clear the road! Back!” cried an officer.

This manœuvre was not executed without difficulty; the people in carts and on horseback tried to go back, and nearly crushed the crowd behind them. Women cried and men swore, while those who could escape did so, overturning the others.

“The Lorraines! the Lorraines!” cried a voice in the midst of this tumult.

“Oh!” cried Miton, trembling, “let us fly.”

“Fly! and where?” said Friard.

“Into this enclosure,” answered Miton, tearing his hands by seizing the thorns of the hedge.

“Into that enclosure? it is not so easy. I see no opening, and you cannot climb a hedge that is higher than I am.”

“I will try,” returned Miton, making new efforts.

“Oh, take care, my good woman!” cried Friard, in a tone of distress; “your ass is on my feet. Oh, Monsieur, take care! your horse is going to kick.”

While Maître Miton was vainly trying to climb the hedge, and M. Friard to find an opening through which to push himself, their neighbor quietly stretched his long legs and strode over the hedge with a movement as simple

as that by which a horseman places himself in the saddle. Maître Miton imitated him at last with much detriment to his hands and clothes ; but poor Friard could not succeed, in spite of all his efforts, till the stranger, stretching out his long arms, and seizing him by the collar of his doublet, lifted him over.

“ Ah, Monsieur,” said Friard, when he felt himself on the ground, “ on the word of Jean Friard, you are a real Hercules. Your name, Monsieur, — the name of my deliverer ? ”

“ I am called Briquet, — Robert Briquet, Monsieur.”

“ You have saved me, M. Briquet ! my wife will bless you. But, by the way, *mon Dieu !* she will be stifled in this crowd. Ah, cursed Swiss, only good to crush people ! ”

As he spoke, he felt a heavy hand on his shoulder ; and looking round and seeing that it was a Swiss, he took to flight, followed by Miton. The other man laughed quietly, then turning to the Swiss, said, “ Are the Lorraines coming ? ”

“ No.”

“ Then why do they close the door ? I do not understand it.”

“ There is no need that you should,” replied the Swiss, laughing at his own wit.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT TOOK PLACE OUTSIDE THE PORTE ST. ANTOINE.

ONE of the groups was formed of a considerable number of citizens. They surrounded four or five cavaliers of a martial appearance, whom the closing of the gates annoyed very much, as it seemed, for they cried with all their might, "The gate! the gate!"

Robert Briquet advanced towards this group and began to cry louder than any of them, "The gate! the gate!"

One of the cavaliers, charmed at this, turned towards him and said, "Is it not shameful, Monsieur, that they should close the gates in open day as though the Spaniards or the English were besieging Paris?"

Robert Briquet looked attentively at the speaker, who seemed to be about forty-five years of age, and the principal personage in the group. "Yes, Monsieur," he replied, "you are right; but may I venture to ask what you think their motive is for these precautions?"

"*Pardieu!* the fear they have lest some one should eat their *Salcède*."

"*Cap de Bioux!*" said a voice, "a sad meal."

Robert Briquet turned towards the speaker, whose voice had a strong Gascon accent, and saw a young man twenty to twenty-five years old, resting his hand on the crupper of the horse of the first speaker. His head was bare; he had probably lost his hat in the confusion.

"But, as they say," replied Briquet, "that this *Salcède* belongs to M. de Guise —"

“Bah ! they say that ?”

“Then you do not believe it, Monsieur ?”

“Certainly not,” replied the cavalier ; “doubtless, if he had, the duke would not have let him be taken, or at all events would not have allowed him to be carried from Brussels to Paris bound hand and foot, without even trying to rescue him.”

“An attempt to rescue him,” replied Briquet, “would have been very dangerous, because, whether it failed or succeeded, it would have been an avowal on the duke’s part that he had conspired against the Duc d’Anjou.”

“M. de Guise would not, I am sure, have been restrained by such considerations ; therefore, as he has not defended Salcède, it is certain that Salcède is not one of his men.”

“Excuse me, Monsieur, if I insist ; but it is not I who invent, for it appears that Salcède has confessed.”

“Where, — before the judges ?”

“No, Monsieur ; at the torture.”

“They assert that he did, but they do not repeat what he said.”

“Excuse me again, Monsieur ; but they do.”

“And what did he say ?” cried the cavalier, impatiently. “As you seem so well informed, what were his words ?”

“I cannot boast of being well informed, since, on the contrary, I am seeking information from you.”

“Come, let us hear !” said the cavalier, impatiently. “You say that Salcède’s words are repeated ; what are they ? Speak.”

“I cannot certify that they were his words,” replied Briquet, who seemed to take a pleasure in teasing the cavalier.

“Well, then, those they attribute to him.”

“They assert that he has confessed that he conspired for M. de Guise.”

“Against the king, of course?”

“No; against the Duc d’Anjou.”

“If he confessed that — ”

“Well?”

“Well, he is a poltroon!” said the cavalier, frowning.

“Ah, Monsieur, the boot and the thumb-screw make a man confess many things.”

“Alas! that is true, Monsieur.”

“Bah!” interrupted the Gascon, “the boot and the thumb-screw, nonsense; if Salcède confessed that, he was a knave, and his patron another.”

“You speak loudly, Monsieur,” said the cavalier.

“I speak as I please; so much the worse for those who dislike it.”

“More calmly,” said a voice at once soft and imperative, of which Briquet vainly sought the owner.

The cavalier seemed to make an effort over himself, and then said quietly to the Gascon, “Do you know those of whom you speak?”

“Salcède?”

“Yes.”

“Not in the least.”

“And the Duc de Guise?”

“No.”

“And the Duc d’Alençon?”

“Still less.”

“Do you know that M. de Salcède is a very brave man?”

“So much the better; he will die bravely.”

“And that when the Duc de Guise wishes to conspire, he conspires for himself?”

“*Cap de Bious!* what is that to me?”

“And that the Duc d’Anjou, formerly M. d’Alençon, has killed, or allowed to be killed, all who were interested in him, — La Mole, Coconnas, Bussy, and the rest?”

“I don’t care for that.”

“What! you don’t care?”

“Mayneville! Mayneville!” murmured the same voice.

“To be sure; it is nothing to me. I know only one thing, *sang Diou!* I have business in Paris this very day, — this morning; and because of that madman Salcède they close the gates in my face. *Cap de Biours!* this Salcède is a scoundrel, and so are all those who, with him, have caused the gates to be closed.”

At this moment there was a sound of trumpets. The Swiss had cleared the middle of the road, along which a crier proceeded, dressed in a flowered tunic, and bearing on his breast a scutcheon on which was embroidered the arms of Paris. He read from a paper in his hand the following proclamation: —

“This is to make known to our good people of Paris and its environs that the gates will be closed for one hour, and that none can enter during that time; and this by the will of the king and by direction of the mayor of Paris.”

The crowd gave vent to their discontent in a long hoot, to which, however, the crier seemed indifferent. The officer commanded silence, and when it was obtained, the crier continued: —

“All who are the bearers of a sign of recognition, or are summoned by letter or mandate, are exempt from this rule. Given at the Hôtel de la Prévôté de Paris, Oct. 26, 1585.”

Scarcely had the crier ceased to speak, when the crowd began to undulate like a serpent behind the line of soldiers. “What is the meaning of this?” they all cried.

“Oh! it is to keep us out of Paris,” said the cavalier, who had been speaking in a low voice to his companions. “These guards, this crier, these bars, and these trumpets, are all for us; we ought to be proud of them.”

“Room!” cried the officer in command; “make room for those who have the right to pass!”

“*Cap de Biours!* I know who will pass, whoever is kept out!” said the Gascon, leaping into the cleared space.

He walked straight up to the officer who had spoken, and who looked at him for some moments in silence, and then said, “You have lost your hat, it appears, Monsieur?”

“Yes, Monsieur.”

“Did you lose it in the crowd?”

“No. I had just received a letter from my mistress, and was reading it, *cap de Biours!* near the river, about a mile from here, when a gust of wind carried away both my letter and my hat. I ran after the letter, although the button of my hat was a single diamond; I caught my letter, but my hat was carried by the wind into the middle of the river. It will make the fortune of some poor devil, — so much the better!”

“So that you have no hat?”

“Oh, there are plenty in Paris, *cap de Biours!* I will buy a more magnificent one, and put in it a diamond twice as large as the other.”

The officer shrugged his shoulders slightly and said, “Have you a card?”

“Certainly I have one — or rather, two.”

“One is enough, if it be the right one.”

“But it cannot be wrong — oh, no, *cap de Biours!* Is it to M. de Loignac that I have the honor of speaking?”

“It is possible,” said the officer, coldly, and evidently not much charmed by that recognition.

“M. de Loignac, my compatriot?”

“I do not say no.”

“My cousin?”

“Good! Your card!”

“Here it is;” and the Gascon drew out the half of a card, carefully cut.

“Follow me,” said Loignac, without looking at it, “and your companions, if you have any. We will verify the admissions.”

The Gascon obeyed, and five other gentlemen followed him. The first was adorned with a magnificent cuirass, so marvellous in its work that it might have come from the hands of Benvenuto Cellini. However, as the make of this cuirass was somewhat old-fashioned, its magnificence attracted more laughter than admiration; and it is true that no other part of the costume of the individual in question corresponded with this magnificence. The second, who was lame, was followed by a gray-headed lackey, who looked like the precursor of Sancho Panza, as his master did of Don Quixote. The third carried a child of ten months old in his arms, and was followed by a woman who kept a tight grasp of his leathern belt, while two other children, one four and the other five years old, held by her dress. The fourth was attached to an enormous sword, and the fifth, who closed the troop, was a handsome young man, mounted on a black horse. He looked like a king by the side of the others. Forced to regulate his pace by those who preceded him, he was advancing slowly, when he felt a sudden pull at the scabbard of his sword; he turned round, and saw a slight and graceful young man with black hair and sparkling eyes.

“What do you desire, Monsieur?” said the cavalier.

“A favor, Monsieur.”

“Speak; but quickly, I pray you, for I am expected.”

“I desire to enter into the city, Monsieur ; an imperious necessity demands my presence there. You, on your part, are alone, and want a page to do justice to your fine appearance.”

“Well ?”

“Take me in ; I will be your page.”

“Thank you ; but I do not wish to be served by any one.”

“Not even by me ?” said the young man, with such a strange glance that the cavalier felt the icy reserve in which he had tried to close his heart melting away.

“I meant to say that I am not able to take any one into my service,” said he.

“Yes, I know that you are not rich, M. Ernauton de Carmainges,” said the young page. The cavalier started ; but the lad went on, “Therefore I do not speak of wages ; it is you, on the contrary, who if you grant what I ask, shall be paid a hundredfold for the service you will render me. Let me enter with you, then, I beg, and remember that he who now begs has often commanded.” Then, turning to the group of which we have already spoken, the lad said, “I shall pass ; that is the most important thing. But you, Mayneville, try to do so also if possible.”

“It is not everything that you should pass,” replied Mayneville ; “it is necessary that he should see you.”

“Make yourself easy ; once I am through he shall see me.”

“Do not forget the sign agreed upon.”

“Two fingers on the mouth, is it not ?”

“Yes ; success attend you.”

“Well, Master Page,” said the man on the black horse, “are you ready ?”

“ Here I am,” replied he, jumping lightly on the horse, behind the cavalier, who immediately joined his friends, who were occupied in exhibiting their cards and proving their right to enter.

“ *Ventre de biche !*” said Robert Briquet ; “ they are all Gascons, or the devil take me !”

CHAPTER III.

THE EXAMINATION.

THE process of examination consisted in comparing the half-card with another half in the possession of the officer.

The Gascon with the bare head advanced first.

“Your name?” said Loignac.

“My name, Monsieur? It is written on that card, on which you will find something besides.”

“No matter! your name!” repeated the officer, impatiently. “Don’t you know your name?”

“Yes, I know it, *cap de Bioux!* and had I forgotten it you might have told it to me, since we are compatriots and even cousins.”

“Your name! Thousand devils! do you suppose I have time to lose in recollections?”

“Well, I am called Perducas de Pincornay.”

Then, throwing his eyes on the card, M. de Loignac read, “Perducas de Pincornay, Oct. 26, 1585, at noon precisely. Porte St. Antoine.”

“Very good; it is all right,” said he. “Enter. Now for you,” said he to the second.

The man with the cuirass advanced.

“Your card?” said Loignac.

“What! M. de Loignac, do you not know the son of your old friend, whom you have danced twenty times on your knee?”

“No.”

“I am Pertinax de Montcrabeau,” replied the young man, with astonishment. “Do you not know me now?”

“When I am on service I know no one. Your card, Monsieur?”

The young man with the cuirass offered his card.

“All right! pass,” said Loignac.

The third now approached, whose card was demanded in the same terms. The man plunged his hand into a little goat-skin pouch which he wore, but in vain; he was so embarrassed by the child in his arms that he could not find it.

“What the devil are you doing with that child?” asked Loignac.

“He is my son, Monsieur.”

“Well, put your son down on the ground.” The Gascon obeyed; the child began to howl. “You are married, then?” Loignac asked.

“Yes, Monsieur.”

“At twenty?”

“They marry young among us; you ought to know that, M. de Loignac, who were married at eighteen.”

“Oh!” thought Loignac, “here is another who knows me.”

“And why should he not be married?” cried the woman, advancing. “Is it out of fashion in Paris to marry? Yes, Monsieur, he is married; and here are two other children who call him their father.”

“Yes, but who are only sons of my wife, M. de Loignac, as also is that great boy who follows us. Come forward, Militor, and salute M. de Loignac, our compatriot.”

A lad of from sixteen to eighteen years of age, came forward, — vigorous, agile, and in his round eye and hooked nose resembling a falcon. A light budding mustache shaded his lip, at once insolent and sensual.

"This is Militor, my step-son, M. de Loignac, the eldest son of my wife, who is a Chavantrade, related to the Loignacs, — Militor de Chavantrade, at your service. Salute, then, Militor." Then, stooping to the child who rolled and cried in the road, he added, while searching all his pockets for his card, "Be quiet, Scipion; be quiet, little one."

"In Heaven's name, Monsieur, your card!" cried Loignac, with impatience.

"Lardille!" cried the Gascon to his wife, "come and help me."

Lardille searched the pouch and pockets of her husband, but uselessly. "We must have lost it!" she cried.

"Then I arrest you," said Loignac.

The man turned pale, and said, "I am Eustache de Miradoux, and M. de Sainte-Maline is my patron."

"Oh!" said Loignac, a little mollified at this name; "well, search again."

They turned to their pockets again, and began to re-examine them.

"Why, what do I see there on the sleeve of that block-head?" said Loignac.

"Yes, yes!" cried the father. "I remember, now, Lardille sewed the card on Militor."

"That he might carry something, I suppose," said Loignac, ironically.

The card was looked at and found all right; and the family passed on in the same order as before.

The fourth man advanced and gave his name as Chalabre. His card was found correct, and he also entered.

Then came M. de Carmainges. He got off his horse and presented his card, while the page hid his face by pretending to adjust the saddle.

“The page belongs to you?” asked Loignac.

“You see he is attending to my horse.”

“Pass, then.”

“Quick, my master!” said the page.

Behind these men the gate was closed, much to the discontent of the crowd. Robert Briquet, meanwhile, had drawn near to the porter's lodge, which had two windows, one looking towards Paris, and the other into the country. He had hardly reached his new post of observation when a man, approaching from Paris on horse-back, and at full gallop, leaped from his saddle, entered the lodge, and appeared at the window.

“Ah, ah!” said Loignac.

“Here I am, M. de Loignac,” said the man.

“Good. Where do you come from?”

“From the Porte St. Victor.”

“Your number?”

“Five.”

“The cards?”

“Here they are.”

Loignac took them, examined them, and wrote on a slate the number five. The messenger left, and two others appeared, almost immediately. One came from the Porte Bourdelle, and brought the number four, the other from the Porte du Temple, and announced six. Then came four others, — the first from the Porte St. Denis, with the number five; the next from the Porte St. Jacques, with the number three; the third from the Porte St. Honoré, with the number eight; and the fourth from the Porte Montmartre, with the number four. Lastly came a messenger from the Porte Bussy, who announced four. Loignac wrote all these down, added them to those who had entered the Porte St. Antoine, and found the total number to be forty-five.

“ Good ! ” said he. “ Now open the gates, and all may enter.”

The gates were thrown open, and then horses, mules, and carts, men, women, and children, pressed into Paris, at the risk of suffocating one another, and in a quarter of an hour all the crowd had vanished.

Robert Briquet remained until the last. “ I have seen enough,” said he ; “ would it be very advantageous to me to see M. de Salcède torn in four pieces ? No, *pardieu* ! Besides, I have renounced politics ; I will go and dine.”

CHAPTER IV.

HIS MAJESTY HENRI III.

M. FRIARD was right when he talked of a hundred thousand as the number of spectators who would meet on the Place de Grève and in that vicinity, to witness the execution of Salcède. All Paris appeared to have a rendezvous at the Hôtel de Ville. Paris is very exact, and never misses a fête ; and the death of a man is a fête, especially when he has succeeded in exciting so many passions that some curse and others bless him, while the greater number lament him.

The spectators who succeeded in reaching the Place saw the archers and a large number of Swiss and light-horse surrounding a little scaffold raised about four feet from the ground. It was so low as to be visible only to those immediately surrounding it, or to those who had windows overlooking the Place. Four vigorous white horses beat the ground impatiently with their hoofs, to the great terror of the women, who had chosen this place, or had been forcibly pushed there. These horses were unused to work ; they had scarcely done more than sometimes in the pastures of their native country to carry on their broad backs the chubby children of peasants returning slowly home at sunset.

After the scaffold and the horses, what next interested the spectators was the principal window of the Hôtel de Ville, which was hung with red velvet and gold, and or-

namented with the royal arms. This was for the king. Half-past one had just struck when this window was filled. First came Henri III., pale, almost bald, — although he was at that time only thirty-five years old, — his eyes sunk in their bluish circles, and his lips constantly trembling with nervous contractions. He entered, sombre, with eyes fixed, at once majestic and unsteady, strange in his appearance, strange in his bearing, a ghost more than a living person, a spectre more than a king, — always an incomprehensible mystery to his subjects, who when they saw him appear never knew whether to say “Vive le roi!” or to pray for his soul. He was dressed in black, without jewels or orders; a single diamond shone in his cap, serving as a fastening to three short plumes. He carried in his hand a little black dog that his sister-in-law, Marie Stuart, had sent him from her prison, and on which his fingers looked as white as alabaster.

Behind the king came Catherine de Médicis, already bowed by age, — for she was at this time sixty-six or sixty-seven years old, — but still carrying her head firm and erect, and darting bitter glances from under her thick eyebrows. At her side appeared the melancholy but sweet face of the queen, Louise de Lorraine. Catherine came to a triumph, Louise to an execution. Behind them came two handsome young men, — one of them hardly twenty years old, the other not more than twenty-five. They had each an arm around the other, in defiance of the etiquette which in the presence of kings, as at church in the presence of God, forbids that men should seem attached to anything. They smiled, — the younger with ineffable sadness, the elder with enchanting grace. They were brothers. The elder was Anne, Duc de Joyeuse, and the other Henri de Joyeuse, Comte du Bouchage. The people had for these favorites of the king none of the hatred which they had

felt towards Mangiron, Quélus, and Schomberg, — a hatred of which D'Épernon was sole heir.

Henri saluted the people gravely ; then, turning to the young men, he said, “ Anne, lean against the tapestry ; it may last a long time.”

“ I hope so,” said Catherine.

“ You think, then, that Salcède will speak, Mother ? ”

“ God will, I trust, give this confusion to our enemies.”

Henri looked doubtful.

“ My son,” said Catherine, “ do I not see some tumult yonder ? ”

“ What clear sight you have ! I believe you are right. I have such bad eyes ; and yet I am not old. Yes, here comes Salcède.”

“ He fears,” said Catherine ; “ he will speak.”

“ If he has strength,” said the king. “ See, his head falls about like that of a corpse.”

“ He is frightful,” said Joyeuse.

“ How should a man be handsome whose thoughts are so ugly ? Have I not explained to you, Anne, the secret connection of the physical and the moral, as Hippocrates and Galen understood and expounded them ? ”

“ I admit it, Sire ; but I am not a good pupil. I have sometimes seen very ugly men very good soldiers. Have you not, Henri ? ” said he, turning to his brother ; but Henri, buried in deep meditation, looked without seeing and heard without understanding, so the king answered for him.

“ Eh, *mon Dieu !* my dear Anne, who says this man is not brave ? He is brave, *pardieu !* like a wolf, a bear, or a serpent. He burned in his house a Norman gentleman, his enemy ; he has fought ten duels and killed three of his adversaries. He has now been taken in the act of coining, for which he has been condemned to death.”

“That is a well-filled existence, which will soon be finished.”

“On the contrary,” said Catherine, “I trust it will be finished as slowly as possible.”

“Madame,” said Joyeuse, “I see those four stout horses, who appear to me so impatient of their state of inactivity that I do not believe in a long resistance of the muscles, tendons, and cartilages of M. de Salcède.”

“Yes, but my son is merciful,” replied she, with the smile peculiar to herself; “and he will tell the men to go gently.”

“But, Madame,” said the queen, timidly, “I heard you say this morning that there were to be only two draws.”

“Yes, if he conducts himself well. In that case all will be finished as soon as possible; and as you interest yourself so much in him, you had better let him know as much, my daughter.”

“Madame,” said the queen, “I have not your strength when looking at suffering.”

“Do not look, then.”

The king heard nothing; he was all eyes. They were lifting Salcède from the car to the scaffold, round which the archers had cleared a large space, so that it was distinctly visible to all eyes, notwithstanding its small elevation.

Salcède was about thirty-five years of age, strong and vigorous; and his pale features, on which stood drops of blood, were animated, as he looked around him, by an indefinable expression, sometimes of hope, sometimes of agony. At first he cast his eyes towards the royal party; but as if comprehending that death, not life, came to him from that quarter, his gaze did not rest there. It was in the multitude, in the midst of that stormy sea, that he

searched with burning eyes, his soul trembling on his lips. The crowd gave him no sign.

Salcède was no vulgar assassin ; he was of good birth, even distantly related to the queen, and had been a captain of some renown. Those bound hands had valiantly borne the sword ; and that livid head, on which were depicted the terrors of death, — terrors which doubtless the victim would have hidden in the depths of his soul had not hope still lingered there, — had conceived great designs. Therefore, to many of the spectators he was a hero ; to others, a victim. Some looked on him as an assassin ; but the crowd seldom despises those very great criminals who are registered in the book of history as well as in that of justice. Thus they narrated in the crowd that Salcède was of a race of warriors ; that his father had fought against the Cardinal de Lorraine, but that the son had joined with the Guises to destroy in Flanders the rising power of the Duc d'Anjou, so hated by the French.

Salcède had been arrested and conducted to France, and had hoped to be rescued by the way ; but unfortunately for him, M. de Bellièvre had kept such good watch that neither Spaniards nor Lorraines nor Leaguers had been able to approach. In the prison Salcède hoped ; during the torture, on the car, even on the scaffold, he still hoped. He wanted neither courage nor resignation ; but he was one of those who defend themselves to their last breath. He darted anxious glances towards the crowd, but constantly turned away with a look of disappointment.

At this moment an usher, raising the tapestry of the royal tent, announced that the President Brisson and four councillors desired the honor of an instant's conversation with the king on the subject of the execution.

“Good,” said the king. “Mother, you will be satisfied.”

“Sire, a favor,” said Joyeuse.

“Speak, Joyeuse; and provided it be not the pardon of the criminal—”

“Sire, permit my brother and me to retire.”

“What! you take so little interest in my affairs that you wish to retire at such a moment?”

“Do not say so, Sire. All that concerns your Majesty profoundly interests me; but I am of a miserable organization, and the weakest woman is stronger than I am on this point. I cannot see an execution without being ill for a week; and as I am the only person who ever laughs at the Louvre, since my brother, I know not why, has given it up, think what would become of the Louvre—so sad already—if I were sad also.”

“You wish to leave me then, Anne?”

“*Peste!* Sire, you are exacting; an execution is a spectacle of which, unlike me, you are fond. Is not that enough for you, or must you also enjoy the weakness of your friends?”

“If you will remain, Joyeuse, you will see that it is interesting.”

“I do not doubt it, Sire; I only think that the interest will be carried to a point that I cannot bear;” and he turned towards the door.

“Go, then,” said Henri, sighing; “my destiny is to live alone.”

“Quick, Bouchage!” said Anne to his brother. “The king says yes now; but in five minutes he will say no.”

“Thanks, my brother,” said Bouchage; “I was as anxious as you to get away.”

CHAPTER V.

THE EXECUTION.

THE councillors entered.

“Well, gentlemen,” said the king, “is there anything new?”

“Sire,” replied the president, “we come to beg your Majesty to promise life to the criminal; he has revelations to make which, on this promise, we shall obtain.”

“But have we not obtained them?”

“Yes, in part; is that enough for your Majesty?”

“No,” said Catherine; “and the king has determined to postpone the execution if the culprit will sign a confession substantiating his depositions under the torture.”

“Yes,” said Henri; “and you can let the prisoner know this.”

“Your Majesty has nothing to add?”

“Only that there must be no variation in the confessions, or I withdraw my promise; they must be complete.”

“Yes, Sire; with the names of the compromised parties.”

“With all the names.”

“Even if they are of high rank?”

“Even if they are those of my nearest relatives.”

“It shall be as your Majesty wishes.”

“No misunderstanding, M. Brisson. Writing materials must be brought to the prisoner, and he must write his confessions; after that we shall see.”

“But I may promise?”

“Oh, yes! promise.”

M. Brisson and the councillors withdrew.

“He will speak, Sire,” said the queen; “and your Majesty will pardon him. See the foam on his lips.”

“No,” said Catherine; “he is seeking something. What is it?”

“*Parbleu!*” said Henri; “he seeks M. le Duc de Guise, M. le Duc de Parma, and my brother, the very Catholic king. Yes, seek, wait. Do you believe that there is more chance of rescue on the Place de Grève than on the route from Flanders? Do you think I have not here a hundred Bellièvres to prevent your escaping the scaffold to which one alone has brought you?”

Salcède had seen the archers sent off for the horses; and he understood that the order for punishment was about to be given. Then there appeared on his lips that bloody foam which the young queen had noticed. The unfortunate man, in the mortal impatience which consumed him, bit his lips till they bled.

“No one!” he murmured; “not one of those who promised me help! Cowards! cowards!”

The horses were now seen making their way through the crowd, and creating everywhere an opening which closed immediately behind them. As they passed the corner of the Rue St. Vannerie, a handsome young man, whom we have seen before, was pushed forward impatiently by a young lad, apparently about seventeen. It was the Vicomte Ernauton de Carmainges and the mysterious page.

“Quick!” cried the page. “Throw yourself into the opening; there is not a moment to lose.”

“But we shall be stifled; you are mad, my little friend.”

“I must be near,” cried the page, imperiously. “Keep close to the horses, or we shall never arrive there.”

“But before we get there you will be torn to pieces.”

“Never mind me; only go on.”

“The horses will kick.”

“Take hold of the tail of the last; a horse never kicks when you hold him so.”

Ernauton gave way in spite of himself to the mysterious influence of this lad and seized the tail of the horse, while the page clung to him. And thus, through the crowd, waving like the sea, leaving here a piece of a cloak, and there a fragment of a doublet, they arrived with the horses close to the scaffold on which Salcède was writhing in the convulsions of despair.

“Have we arrived?” asked the young man, panting.

“Yes, happily!” answered Ernauton, “for I am exhausted.”

“I cannot see.”

“Come before me.”

“Oh, no! not yet! What are they doing?”

“Making slip-knots at the ends of the cords.”

“And he, — what is he doing?”

“Who?”

“The condemned.”

“His eyes turn incessantly from side to side.”

The horses were near enough to enable the executioner to tie the feet and hands of the criminal to the harness. Salcède uttered a cry when he felt the cord in contact with his flesh.

“Monsieur,” said the Lieutenant Tanchon to him, politely, “will it please you to address the people?” and added in a whisper, “A confession will save your life.”

Salcède looked earnestly at him, as though to read the truth in his eyes.

“You see,” continued Tanchon, “they abandon you.

There is no other hope in the world but what I offer you."

"Well!" said Salcède, with a sigh, "I am ready to speak."

"It is a written and signed confession that the king exacts."

"Then untie my hands and give me a pen; and I will write it."

They loosened the cords from his wrists; and an usher who stood near with writing materials placed them before him on the scaffold.

"Now," said Tanchon, "state everything."

"Do not fear; I will not forget those who have forgotten me;" but as he spoke, he cast another glance around.

Doubtless the moment had come for the page to show himself; for seizing the hand of Ernauton, "Monsieur," said he, "for pity's sake, take me in your arms and raise me above the heads of the people, who prevent me from seeing!"

"Ah! you are insatiable, young man."

"This one more service; I must see the condemned, indeed I must."

Then, as Ernauton still hesitated, he cried, "For pity's sake, Monsieur, I entreat you!"

The lad was no longer a whimsical tyrant; he was an irresistible suppliant. Ernauton raised him in his arms and was somewhat astonished at the delicacy of the body he held. Just as Salcède had taken the pen, and looked round as we have said, he saw this young lad above the crowd, with two fingers placed on his lips. An indescribable joy spread itself instantaneously over the face of the condemned man, for he recognized the signal so impatiently waited for, and which announced that aid was near

After a moment's hesitation, however, he took the paper and began to write.

"He writes!" cried the crowd.

"He writes!" exclaimed Catherine.

"He writes!" cried the king; "and I will pardon him."

Suddenly Salcède stopped and looked again at the lad, who repeated the signal. He wrote on, then stopped to look once more; the signal was again repeated.

"Have you finished?" asked Tanchon.

"Yes."

"Then sign."

Salcède signed, with his eyes still fixed on the young man. "For the king alone," said he, and he gave the paper to the usher, though with hesitation.

"If you have disclosed all," said Tanchon, "you are safe."

A smile compounded of irony and anxiety played on the lips of the victim, who seemed to question impatiently his mysterious interlocutor. Ernauton, who was fatigued, wished now to put down the page, who made no opposition. With him disappeared all that had sustained the unfortunate man; he looked round wildly and cried, "Well, come!"

No one answered.

"Quick! quick! the king holds the paper; he is reading!"

Still there was no response.

The king unfolded the paper.

"Thousand devils!" cried Salcède, "if they have deceived me! Yet it was she! it was really she!"

No sooner had the king read the first lines than he called out indignantly, "Oh, the wretch!"

"What is it, my son?"

"He retracts all,—he pretends that he confessed nothing, and he declares that the Guises are innocent of any plot!"

“But,” said Catherine, “if it be true?”

“He lies!” cried the king.

“How do you know, my son? Perhaps the Guises have been calumniated; the judges, in their zeal, may have put a false interpretation on the depositions.”

“Oh, no, Madame; I heard them myself!” cried Henri.

“You, my son?”

“Yes, I!”

“How so?”

“When the criminal was questioned, I was behind a curtain and heard all he said.”

“Well, then; if he will have it, order the horses to pull.”

Henri in anger gave the sign. It was repeated; the cords were refastened; four men jumped on the horses, which, urged by violent blows, started off in opposite directions. A horrible cracking, and a terrible cry was heard. The blood was seen to spout from the limbs of the unhappy man, whose face was no longer that of a man, but of a demon.

“Ah, treason! treason!” he cried; “I will speak, I will tell all! Ah! cursed duch —”

The voice had been heard above everything, but suddenly it ceased.

“Stop, stop!” cried Catherine; “let him speak.”

But it was too late. The head of Salcède fell helplessly on one side; his eyes were dilated, fixed, and obstinately directed towards the group where the page had appeared. But he could no longer speak, — he was dead. Tanchon gave some rapid orders to his archers, who plunged into the crowd in the direction indicated by Salcède's denouncing gaze.

“I am discovered!” said the page to Ernauton. “For pity's sake, aid me! they come; they come!”

“What do you want?”

“To fly! Do you not see that it is I whom they are seeking?”

“But who are you, then?”

“A woman. Oh, save me! protect me!”

Ernauton turned pale; but generosity triumphed over astonishment and fear. He placed his *protégée* before him, opened a path with blows, and pushed her towards the corner of the Rue du Mouton, towards an open door. The young page leaped off and darted towards that door, which seemed to have been opened for her, and was closed behind her. Ernauton had not time to ask her name, or where he should find her again; but in disappearing she had made a sign full of promise.

Meanwhile Catherine was standing up in her place, full of rage.

“My son,” said she at last, “you would do well to change your executioner; he is a Leaguer.”

“What do you mean, Mother?”

“Salcède suffered only one draw; and he is dead.”

“Because he was too sensitive to pain.”

“No; but because he has been strangled with a fine cord from underneath the scaffold, just as he was about to accuse those who let him die. Let a doctor examine him, and I am certain that he will find round his neck the circle that the cord has left.”

“You are right!” cried Henri, with flashing eyes; “my cousin of Guise is better served than I am!”

“Hush, my son, — no commotion! we shall only be laughed at, for once more we have missed our aim.”

“Joyeuse did well to go and amuse himself elsewhere,” said the king; “one can reckon on nothing in this world, — not even on executions. Come, ladies, let us go.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE BROTHERS.

MM. DE JOYEUSE had, as we have seen, left this scene. Side by side they walked through the streets of that populous quarter, which on that day were deserted, so general was the rush to the Place de Grève. Henri seemed preoccupied and sad; and Anne was unquiet on account of his brother. He was the first to speak.

“Well, Henri,” said he, “whither are you leading me?”

“I am not leading you, Brother; I am only walking before you. Do you wish to go to any place in particular?”

“Do you?”

“Oh, I do not care where I go.”

“Yet you go somewhere every evening, for you always go out at the same hour and return late at night.”

“Are you questioning me, Brother?” said Henri, with gentleness.

“Certainly not; let us each keep our own secrets.”

“If you wish it, Brother, I will have no secrets from you.”

“Will you not, Henri?”

“No; are you not my elder brother and my friend?”

“Oh! I thought you had secrets from me, who am only a poor layman. I thought you confessed to our learned brother, that pillar of theology, that light of the Church, who will be a cardinal some day; and that you

obtained absolution from him, and perhaps at the same time, advice."

Henri took his brother's hand affectionately. "You are more than a confessor to me, my dear Anne, — more than a father; you are my friend."

"Then, my friend, why, when you used to be so gay, have I seen you become sad? And why, instead of going out by day, do you go out only at night?"

"My brother, I am not sad."

"What, then?"

"In love."

"Good! and this preoccupation?"

"Is because I am always thinking of my love."

"And you sigh in saying that?"

"Yes."

"You sigh! You, Henri, Comte du Bouchage; you, the brother of Joyeuse; you, whom some people call the third king in France (you know M. de Guise is the second, if not the first); you, rich and handsome, who will be peer and duke on the first occasion, — you in love, and you sigh! you, whose device is 'hilariter.'"

"My dear Anne, I have never reckoned the gifts of fortune, past and to come, as things to constitute happiness; I have no ambition."

"That is to say, you have not at present."

"At all events, not for the things you speak of."

"Not just now perhaps; but later you will return to them."

"Never, Brother; I desire nothing, I want nothing."

"You are wrong. When one is called 'Joyeuse,' — one of the best names in France, — when one has a brother a king's favorite, one desires everything, and has everything."

Henri hung his blond head sadly.

"Come," continued Anne, "we are quite alone here ; have you anything to tell me?"

"Nothing, but that I love."

"The devil! that is not a very serious affair ; I also am in love."

"Not as I am, Brother."

"I also think sometimes of my mistress."

"Yes, but not always."

"I also have annoyances."

"Yes ; but you also have joys, for you are loved."

"True ; but I have obstacles. They exact from me so much mystery."

"They exact ! If your mistress exacts, she loves you."

"Yes, she loves me and M. de Mayenne, — or rather only me, for she would give up Mayenne at once if she was not afraid he would kill her ; it is his habit to kill women, you know. But then I detest those Guises, and it interests me to amuse myself at the expense of one of them. Well, I repeat I have sometimes annoyances, quarrels, but I don't become sober as a monk on that account ; I continue to laugh, if not always, at least once in a while. Come, tell me whom you love, Henri ; your mistress is beautiful, at least ?"

"Alas ! she is not my mistress."

"Is she beautiful ?"

"Very beautiful."

"Her name ?"

"I do not know it."

"Come, now."

"On my honor."

"My friend, I begin to think it is more dangerous than I thought ; it is not sadness, but madness."

"She never spoke but once before me, and since then I have not heard the sound of her voice."

“And you have not inquired about her?”

“Of whom?”

“Why, of the neighbors.”

“She lives in her own house; and no one knows her.”

“Ah! then she is a ghost?”

“She is a woman, tall and beautiful as a nymph, serious and grave as the angel Gabriel.”

“When did you meet her?”

“One day I followed a young girl to the church of La Gypécienne; I entered a little garden close to it, where there is a stone seat under some trees. Do you know this garden, Anne?”

“No; but never mind. Go on.”

“It began to grow dark; I had lost sight of the young girl, and in seeking her I arrived at this seat. I saw a woman’s dress, and held out my hands. ‘Pardon, Monsieur,’ said the voice of a man whom I had not noticed; and he gently but firmly pushed me away.”

“He dared to touch you, Henri?”

“Listen; he had his face hidden in a sort of frock, and I took him for a monk. Besides, he impressed me also by the polite manner of his warning; for as he spoke, he pointed out to me the woman whose white dress had attracted me, and who was kneeling before the seat as though it were an altar. It was towards the beginning of September that this happened. The air was warm; the flowers planted by friends around the tombs scattered their delicate perfume; and the moon, rising above the white clouds, began to shed her silver light over all. Whether it was the place or her own dignity, I know not, but this woman seemed to me like a marble statue, and impressed me with a strange respect. I looked at her earnestly. She bent over the seat, enveloping it in her

arms, placed her lips to it, and soon I saw her shoulders heave with such sobs as you never heard, my brother. As she wept, she kissed the stone with ardor. Her tears had troubled me ; but her kisses maddened me."

"But, by the pope, it is she who is mad, — to kiss a stone and sob for nothing."

"Oh ! it was a great grief that made her sob, a profound love which made her kiss the stone. Only whom did she love ? For whom did she weep ? For whom did she pray ? I know not."

"Did you not question this man ?"

"Yes."

"What did he reply ?"

"That she had lost her husband."

"Bah ! as if people wept like that for a husband. Were you content with such an answer ?"

"I was obliged to be content, for he would give me no other."

"But the man — what is he ?"

"A sort of servant who lives with her."

"His name ?"

"He would not tell me."

"Young or old ?"

"He might be about thirty."

"Well, afterwards ! She did not stop all night praying and weeping, did she ?"

"No ; when she had exhausted her tears, she rose. And there was so much mystery and sadness about her that instead of advancing to her as I might have done to another, I drew back ; but she turned towards me, though she did not see me, and the moon shone on her face, which was calm and sad, and the traces of her tears were still on her cheeks. She moved slowly ; and the servant went to support her. But, oh, my brother, what startling, what

superhuman beauty! I have never seen anything like it on earth; only sometimes in my dreams heaven has opened, and visions have descended resembling that reality."

"Well, Henri, what happened then?" said Anne, interested, in spite of himself, at a recital at which he had determined to laugh.

"Oh, it is nearly finished, Brother. Her servant whispered something to her; and she lowered her veil. Doubtless he told her I was there; but she did not glance towards me. I saw her no more; and it seemed to me, when the veil concealed her face, as if the sky had become suddenly overshadowed, — that it was no longer a living thing, but a shade escaped from the tomb, which was gliding silently before me. She went out of the garden; and I followed her. From time to time the man turned and saw me, for I did not hide myself. I had still the old habits in my mind, the old leaven in my heart."

"What do you mean, Henri?"

The young man smiled. "I mean, Brother," said he, "that I have often thought I loved before; and that all women, until now, have been for me — women to whom I might offer my love."

"Oh! and what is this one?" said Anne, trying to recover his gayety, which in spite of himself had been a little disturbed by his brother's narration.

"My brother," said Henri, seizing his hand in a fervent grasp, "as truly as I live, I know not if she be a creature of this world or not."

"By the pope! you would make me afraid, if a Joyeuse could know fear. However, as she walks, weeps, and gives kisses, it seems to me to augur well. But go on."

"There is little more. I followed her, and she did not

try to escape or lead me astray ; she never seemed to think of it."

"Well, and where does she live ?"

"By the side of the Bastille, Rue de Lesdiguières. At the door, the servant turned and saw me."

"You made him a sign that you wished to speak to him ?"

"You will think it ridiculous, but I dared not ; the servant impressed me almost as seriously as the mistress."

"You entered the house, then ?"

"No, Brother."

"Really, Henri, I am tempted to disown you this evening. But you returned the next day ?"

"Yes, but uselessly ; and equally in vain I went to La Gypécienne."

"She had disappeared ?"

"Like a shadow."

"But you inquired ?"

"The street has few inhabitants, and no one knew her. I watched for the servant ; but he also had disappeared. However, a light which shone every evening through the Venetian blinds consoled me by the knowledge that she was still there. I employed a hundred devices to enter the house, — letters, messages, flowers, presents ; all in vain. One evening the light failed to appear, and I saw it no more. The lady, wearied doubtless by my pursuit, had left the Rue de Lesdiguières, and no one knew where she had gone."

"But you found her again ?"

"Chance aided me. Listen ; it is really strange. I was going along the Rue de Bussy, a fortnight ago, about midnight. You know how strict the regulations are about fire ; well, I saw not only light in the windows of a house, but a real fire, which had broken out

in the second story. I knocked at the door, and a man appeared at the window. 'You have fire in your house!' I cried. 'Silence! I beg; I am occupied in putting it out.' 'Shall I call the watch?' I asked. 'No! in Heaven's name, call no one!' 'But can I help you?' 'Will you? I shall be very grateful;' and he threw me the key out of the window.

"I mounted the stairs rapidly and entered the room where the fire was burning; it was used as a chemist's laboratory, and in making I know not what experiments, an inflammable liquid had been spilled, which had ignited the floor. When I entered, the fire was almost got under. I looked at the man. A frightful scar disfigured his cheek, and another his forehead; the rest of his face was hidden by a thick beard. 'I thank you, Monsieur,' said he; 'but you see all is now over. If you are as gallant a man as you seem, have the goodness to retire, for my mistress may return at any moment, and will be angry if she sees a stranger here.'

"The sound of his voice struck me instantly. I was about to cry, 'You are the man of La Gypécienne, — of the Rue de Lesdiguières!' (for you remember that I had not seen his face before, but only heard his voice), when suddenly a door opened and a woman entered. 'What is the matter, Rémy, and why this noise?' she asked. Oh, my brother, it was she! — more beautiful by the dying light of the fire than she had appeared in the light of the moon. It was she! — the woman whose memory had ever lived in my heart. At the cry which I uttered the servant looked narrowly at me. 'Thanks, Monsieur,' said he again; 'you see the fire is out. Go, I beg of you.' 'My friend,' said I, 'you dismiss me very rudely.' 'Madame,' said he, 'it is he.' 'Who?' 'The young man we met in the garden, and who followed us

home.' She turned towards me and said, 'Monsieur, I beg you to go.' I hesitated; I wished to speak, but words failed me. I remained motionless and mute, gazing at her. 'Take care, Monsieur,' said the servant, sadly; 'you will force her to fly again.' 'Heaven forbid!' cried I; 'but how do I offend you, Madame?' She did not reply. Insensible, mute, and cold, as though she had not heard me, she turned; and I saw her disappear gradually in the shade."

"And is that all?"

"All; the servant led me to the door, saying, 'Forget, Monsieur, I beg of you.' I fled, bewildered and half crazy; and since then I have gone every evening to this street, and concealed in the angle of the opposite house, under the shade of a little balcony, I see, once in ten times, a light in her room,—that is my life, my happiness."

"What happiness!"

"Alas! I should lose this if I tried for more."

"But suppose you lose yourself by practising that resignation?"

"My brother," said Henri, with a sad smile, "I am happy thus."

"Impossible!"

"What would you have? Happiness is relative. I know that she is there, that she lives and breathes there. I see her through the wall, or rather I seem to see her; if she left that house, if I should spend another fortnight like that which I spent when I had lost her, I should be crazy, or should become a monk."

"Not so, *mordieu!* One monk in a family is enough."

"No railleries, Brother."

"But let me say one thing."

"What is it?"

“That you have been taken in like a schoolboy.”

“I am not taken in; I only gave way to a power stronger than mine. When a current carries you away you cannot fight against it.”

“But if it lead to an abyss?”

“You must be swallowed up.”

“Do you think so?”

“Yes.”

“I do not; and in your place —”

“What would you have done?”

“Enough, certainly, to have learned her name and —”

“Anne, you don’t know her.”

“No; but I know you, Henri. You had fifty thousand crowns that I gave you out of the last hundred thousand the king gave to me.”

“They are still in my chest, Anne; I have not touched one of them.”

“*Mordieu!* so much the worse; if they were not in your chest the woman would be in your bedroom.”

“Oh, my brother!”

“Certainly. An ordinary servant may be bought for ten crowns, a good one for a hundred, an excellent one for a thousand, and a marvel for three thousand. Let us see, then. Suppose this man to be the phoenix of servants, the beau ideal of fidelity; yet, by the pope! for twenty thousand crowns you will buy him. There would then remain thirty thousand crowns to pay the phoenix of women delivered over by the phoenix of servants. Henri, my friend, you are a ninny.”

“Anne,” sighed Henri, “there are people who cannot be bought; there are hearts that the king is not rich enough to purchase.”

“Well, perhaps so; but hearts are sometimes given. What have you done to win that of the beautiful statue?”

“I believe, Anne, that I have done all I could.”

“Really, Comte du Bouchage, you are mad. You see a woman, sad, solitary, and melancholy; and you become even more sad, more recluse, and more melancholy than she is. She is alone; keep her company. She is sad; be gay. She regrets; console her, and replace him she regrets.”

“Impossible, Brother!”

“Have you tried? Are you in love, or are you not?”

“I have no words to express how much!”

“Well, in a fortnight you shall have your mistress.”

“My brother!”

“Faith of Joyeuse! You have not despaired, I suppose?”

“No, for I have never hoped.”

“At what time do you see her?”

“I have told you that I do not see her.”

“Never?”

“Never!”

“Not even at her window?”

“Not even her shadow, I have told you.”

“We must put an end to that. Do you think she has a lover?”

“I have never seen any one enter her house except that Rémy of whom I spoke to you.”

“Take the house opposite.”

“It may not be to let.”

“Bah! offer double the rent!”

“But if she sees me there, she will disappear as before.”

“You shall see her this evening.”

“I!”

“Yes. Be under her balcony at eight o'clock.”

“I shall be there, as I am every day, but without more hope than usual.”

“ Well, give me the address.”

“ Between the Porte Bussy and the Hôtel St. Denis, near the corner of the Rue des Augustins, and a few steps from a large inn having for a sign the Sword of the Brave Chevalier.”

“ Very well, then ; this evening at eight o’clock.”

“ But what do you intend to do ? ”

“ You shall see. Meanwhile, go home ; put on your richest dress, and use your finest perfume. This evening you shall enter the house.”

“ May God hear you, Brother ! ”

“ Henri, when God is deaf the Devil is not. I leave you ; my mistress awaits me, — no, I should say M. de Mayenne’s mistress. By the pope ! she at any rate is not a prude.”

“ My brother ! ”

“ Pardon, good servant of love ; I make no comparison between those two ladies, you may be sure, although after what you have told me, I prefer mine, or rather ours. But she expects me, and I don’t want to make her wait. Adieu, Henri, till the evening.”

The brothers then pressed each other’s hands, and separated.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SWORD OF THE BRAVE CHEVALIER.

DURING the conversation we have just related, night had begun to fall, enveloping the city with its damp mantle of fog.

Salcède dead, all the spectators were ready to leave the Place de Grève, and the streets were filled with people hurrying towards their homes. Near the Porte Bussy, whither we must now transport our readers, to follow some of their acquaintances and to make new ones, a hum, like that in a bee-hive at sunset, was heard proceeding from a house painted in rose-color, and ornamented with blue and white pointings, which was known by the sign of the Sword of the Brave Chevalier, and which was an immense inn, recently built in this new quarter. This house was decorated to suit all tastes. On the entablature was painted a representation of a combat between an archangel and a dragon breathing flame and smoke, in which the artist, animated by sentiments at once heroic and pious, had placed in the hands of the "brave chevalier" not a sword, but an immense cross, with which he hacked in pieces the unlucky dragon, whose bleeding fragments were seen lying on the ground. At the bottom of the picture crowds of spectators were represented raising their arms to heaven; while from above angels were extending over the chevalier laurels and palms. Then, as if to prove that he could paint in every style, the artist had grouped

around gourds, grapes, a snail on a rose, and two rabbits, one white and the other gray.

Assuredly the proprietor must have been difficult to please if he was not satisfied, for the artist had filled every inch of space ; there was scarcely room to add a caterpillar. In spite, however, of this attractive exterior, the hotel did not prosper ; it was never more than half full, though it was large and comfortable. Unfortunately, from its proximity to the Pré aux Clercs, it was frequented by so many couples prepared to fight that other couples, more peaceably disposed, avoided it. Indeed, the Cupids with which the interior was decorated had been ornamented with mustaches in charcoal by the *habitués* ; and Dame Fournichon, the landlady, always affirmed that the sign had brought them ill luck, and that had her wishes been attended to, and the painting represented more pleasing things, — such as the rose-tree of love surrounded by flaming hearts, — all tender couples would have flocked to them.

M. Fournichon, however, stuck to his sign, and replied that he preferred fighting men, since any one of them drank as much as six lovers ; so that though he should pay but half his account, there was still a gain, for the most prodigal lover would n't pay as much as three fighting men. And besides, he would add, wine is more moral than love.

In reply to this Dame Fournichon would shrug her plump shoulders in a way which indicated her ideas on the subject of morality.

The Fournichon affairs were in this divided state, and the Fournichons were vegetating in the Rue de Bussy as they had previously vegetated in the Rue St. Honoré, when an unforeseen incident changed everything, and brought victory to the opinions of Maître Fournichon, to

the greater glory of that worthy sign on which every kingdom of nature had its representative.

About a month before the execution of Salcède, the host and hostess, all of whose rooms were then empty, were looking out of the window sadly, and were watching the exercises of some soldiery on the Pré aux Clercs, when they saw an officer, followed by a single soldier, advancing towards their hotel. He was about to pass when the host called out loudly, "Oh, Wife, what a beautiful horse!"

Madame Fournichon replied in an equally audible voice, "And what a handsome cavalier!"

The officer, who did not appear insensible to flattery, raised his head and looked first at the host and hostess and then at the hotel. Fournichon ran rapidly downstairs and appeared at the door.

"Is the house empty?" asked the officer.

"Yes, Monsieur, just at present," replied the host, humiliated; "but it is not usually so."

However, Dame Fournichon, like most women, was more clear-sighted than her husband, and called out, "If Monsieur desires solitude, he will find it here."

"Yes, my good woman, that is what I desire at present," said the officer, who dismounted, threw the bridle to the soldier, and entered the hotel.

He was a man of about thirty-five years of age; but he did not look more than twenty-eight, so carefully was he dressed. He was tall, with a fine countenance and a distinguished air.

"Ah, good!" said he, "a large room and not a single guest."

Maître Fournichon looked at him with astonishment, while Madame Fournichon smiled at him significantly.

"But," continued the captain, "there must be some-

thing either in your house or in your conduct that keeps people away."

"Neither, Monsieur," replied Madame Fournichon; "only the place is new, and we choose our customers."

"Oh! very well."

Maître Fournichon condescended meanwhile to nod his head in approval of his wife's answers.

"For example," she continued, "for a person like your Lordship, we would send away a dozen."

"That is polite, my pretty hostess; thank you."

"Will Monsieur taste the wine?" asked Fournichon.

"Will Monsieur visit the rooms?" added his wife.

"Both, if you please."

Fournichon descended to the cellar.

"How many people can you lodge here?" asked the captain of the hostess.

"Thirty."

"That is not enough."

"Why so, Monsieur?"

"I had a project; but we will speak of it no more."

"Ah, Monsieur, you will find nothing larger, except the Louvre itself."

"Well, you can lodge thirty people?"

"Yes, doubtless."

"But for a day?"

"Oh! for a day, forty, or even forty-five."

"Forty-five! *parfandious!* that is just my number."

"Really? You see, then, it is all right."

"Without making a commotion outside?"

"We have often eighty soldiers here on Sundays."

"And no crowd before the house, — no spying by the neighbors?"

"*Mon Dieu!* no! our nearest neighbors are a worthy *bourgeois*, who meddles with no one, and a lady who

lives so retired that although she has been here for three weeks I have not seen her."

"That will do excellently."

"So much the better."

"And in a month from to-day —"

"That will be the 26th of October."

"Precisely. Well, on that day I hire your inn."

"The whole of it?"

"Yes, the whole. I wish to give a surprise to some countrymen, officers — or at least soldiers; they will be told to come here."

"But if it be a surprise —"

"Oh, if you are curious or indiscreet —"

"No, no, Monsieur," cried she.

Maitre Fournichon, who had heard what had been said, added, "Monsieur, you shall be master here, and there will be no questions; all your friends will be welcome."

"I did not say my friends; I said countrymen," replied the officer, haughtily.

"Yes, Monsieur, it was my mistake."

"You will give them supper."

"Certainly."

"If necessary they will sleep here."

"Yes, Monsieur."

"In a word, give them all they want, and ask no questions."

"Very well, Monsieur."

"Here are thirty livres in advance."

"Well, Monsieur, these gentlemen shall be treated like princes. Will you assure yourself by tasting the wine?"

"Thank you; I never drink."

"But, Monsieur, how shall I know these gentlemen?"

“That is true ; *parfondious* ! I forgot. Give me paper, light, and wax.”

When they were brought, the captain made a seal on the paper with a ring he had on his finger. “Do you see this figure?” said he.

“A beautiful woman.”

“Yes ; a Cleopatra. Well, each of these men will present a similar one, on which you will receive him. You will have further orders afterwards.”

The captain then descended the stairs and rode off, leaving the Fournichons delighted with their thirty livres in advance.

“Decidedly,” said the host, “the sign has brought us good fortune.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GASCON.

WE dare not affirm that Dame Fournichon was as discreet as she had promised to be, for she interrogated the first soldier whom she saw passing as to the name of the captain who had conducted the review. The soldier, more cautious than she, asked her why she wished to know.

"Because he has just been here," she replied; "and one likes to know to whom one has been talking."

The soldier laughed. "The captain who conducted the review would not have entered this hotel," said he.

"Why not? Is he too great for that?"

"Perhaps so."

"Well, but it is not for himself that he wanted the hotel."

"For whom, then?"

"For his friends."

"He would not lodge his friends here, I am sure."

"*Peste!* how you run on, my brave fellow! Who, then, can he be who is too grand to lodge his friends in the best hotel in Paris?"

"Well, my good woman, he who conducted the review is simply M. le Duc Nogaret de Lavalette d'Épernon, peer of France, and colonel-general of infantry. What do you say to that?"

"That if it was he, he did me great honor."

"Did you hear him say '*parfandious*'?"

"Oh, yes!"

We may now judge if the 26th of October was impatiently expected. On the evening of the 25th a man entered, bearing a heavy bag, which he placed on Fournichon's table.

"It is the price of the repast ordered for to-morrow," said he.

"At how much a head?"

"At six livres."

"Will they have only one meal here?"

"That is all."

"Has the captain found them a lodging, then?"

"It appears so," said the messenger, who departed, declining to answer any more questions.

At last the much-desired day arrived; half-past twelve had just struck when some cavaliers stopped at the door of the hotel. One, who appeared to be their chief, came with two well-mounted lackeys. Each of them produced the seal of Cleopatra's head, and was received with all sorts of courtesies, especially the young man with the lackeys. Nevertheless, excepting this young man, they all seemed timid and preoccupied, especially when they mechanically touched their pockets. Most of them went out, however, until supper-time, either to swell the crowd at the execution of Salcède, or to see Paris.

About two o'clock a dozen other travellers arrived, in small parties. One man came in alone, without a hat, a cane in his hand, and swearing at Paris, where he said the thieves were so adroit that they had stolen his hat as he had passed through a crowd, without his being able to see who had taken it. However, he said he was himself to blame for wearing a hat ornamented with such a superb diamond. At four o'clock forty people had arrived.

"Is it not strange?" said Fournichon to his wife; "they are all Gascons!"

“Well, what of that? The captain said they were all countrymen, and he is a Gascon. M. d’Épernon is from Toulouse.”

“Then you still believe it was M. d’Épernon?”

“Did he not let slip three times the famous ‘*parfondious*’?”

“He let slip the famous ‘*parfondious*’?” asked Fournichon, anxiously; “what sort of an animal is that?”

“Imbecile! it is his favorite oath.”

“Ah!”

“There is only one thing to be surprised about, and that is that we have only forty Gascons, when there should be forty-five.”

But about five o’clock the five other Gascons arrived, and the number of guests was complete. Never was such surprise painted on so many Gascon faces; for an hour nothing was heard but “*sandieux!*” “*mordieux!*” and “*cap de Bious!*” and there was such noisy joy that it seemed to the Fournichons that all Poitou and Languedoc were collected in their room. Some knew and greeted each other.

“Is it not singular to find so many Gascons here?” asked one.

“No,” replied Perducas de Pincornay; “the sign is tempting for men of honor.”

“Ah! is it you?” said Sainte-Maline, the gentleman with the lackeys; “you have not yet explained to me what you were about to do when the crowd separated us.”

“What was that?” asked Pincornay, reddening.

“How it happens that I met you on the road between Angoulême and Angers without a hat, as you are now.”

“It seems to interest you, Monsieur?”

“Faith! yes. Poitiers is far from Paris, and you came from beyond Poitiers.”

"Yes, from St. André de Cubsac."

"And without a hat?"

"Oh! it is very simple. My father has two magnificent horses; and he is quite capable of disinheriting me for the accident that happened to me."

"What was that?"

"I was riding one of them, when it took fright at the report of a gun that was fired close to me, and ran away; it made for the bank of the Dordogne and plunged in."

"With you?"

"No; luckily I had time to slip off, or I should have been drowned with him."

"Ah! then the poor beast was drowned?"

"*Pardioux!* you know the Dordogne, — half a league across."

"And then?"

"Then I resolved not to return home, but to go away as far as possible from my father's anger."

"But your hat?"

"The devil! my hat had fallen off."

"Like you?"

"I did not fall; I slipped off."

"But your hat?"

"Ah! my hat had fallen. I sought for it; it was my only resource, as I had come out without money."

"But how could your hat be a resource?"

"*Sandioux!* it was a great one, for I must tell you that the plume of this hat was fastened by a diamond clasp that his Majesty the Emperor Charles V. gave to my grandfather when, on his way from Spain to Flanders, he stopped at our château."

"Ah, ah! and you have sold the clasp, and the hat with it. Then, my dear friend, you ought to be the richest of us all; and you should have bought another

glove. Your hands are not alike ; one is as white as a woman's, and the other as black as a negro's."

"But listen ; as I turned to seek my hat I saw an enormous crow seize hold of it."

"Of your hat ?"

"Or rather of the clasp ; attracted by the glitter, and in spite of my cries, he flew away with it, and I saw it no more. So that, overwhelmed by this double loss, I did not dare to return home, but came to seek my fortune in Paris."

"Good !" cried a third, "the wind has changed into a crow. I heard you tell M. de Loignac that the wind had carried it away while you were reading a letter from your mistress."

"Now," cried Sainte-Maline, "I have the honor of knowing M. d'Aubigné, who, though a brave soldier, writes well, and I recommend you to tell him the history of your hat ; he will make a charming story of it."

Several stifled laughs were heard.

"Ah, gentlemen," cried the Gascon, "do you laugh at me ?"

They turned away to laugh again.

Perducas threw a glance around him, and saw a young man near the fireplace hiding his face in his hands. He thought it was to laugh, and going up to him, struck him on the shoulder, saying, "Eh, Monsieur, if you laugh, at all events, show your face."

The young man looked up ; it was our friend Ernauton de Carmainges, still stupefied by his adventure at La Grève. "I beg you will leave me alone," said he, "I was not thinking of you."

"Oh, very well," Pincornay grumbled, "if you were not thinking of me, I have nothing to say."

"Ah, Monsieur," said Eustache de Miradoux to

Carmainges, with the most conciliatory intentions, "you are not polite to our compatriot."

"And what the devil have you to do with it, Monsieur?" replied Ernauton, more and more irritated.

"You are right, Monsieur," said Miradoux, saluting; "it does n't concern me." And he turned away to rejoin Lardille, who was sitting by the fireplace.

But some one barred his passage. It was Militor, with both hands in his belt, and a sly smile on his lips. "Say, then, Step-father," said the scamp.

"Well?"

"What have you to say about it?"

"About what?"

"The way in which that gentleman silenced you?"

"Eh?"

"He shook you off in fine style."

"Ah! you noticed that?" said Eustache, attempting to pass Militor. But the latter defeated the movement by a step to the left which brought him in front of Eustache.

"Not only I," Militor continued, "but every one else. See how they are laughing all around us."

In fact, they were laughing, but not more at that than at anything else. Eustache turned red.

"Come, come, Step-father," said Militor, "don't let the affair grow cold."

Eustache assumed a lofty air and approached Carmainges. "It is said, Monsieur," said he, "that you have intended to be particularly disagreeable to me."

"When was that?"

"Just now."

"To you?"

"To me."

"Who says so?"

“Monsieur,” said Eustache, indicating Militor.

“Then Monsieur,” replied Carmainges, dwelling ironically on the title, — “*Monsieur* is a goose.”

“Oh, oh!” said Militor, furious.

“And I beg him,” continued Carmainges, “not to come here troubling me with his impertinence, or I shall recall the opinion of M. de Loignac.”

“M. de Loignac did not say that I was a goose, Monsieur.”

“No, he said you were an ass; do you prefer that? It is of small consequence to me. If you are an ass, I will strap you; if you are a goose, I will pluck you.”

“Monsieur,” said Eustache, “he is my step-son. Treat him more gently, I beg you, for my sake.”

“Ah! that is how you defend me, Step-father!” cried Militor, in a rage; “I can defend myself better alone.”

“Go to school, children!” said Ernauton; “go to school!”

“To school!” cried Militor, advancing with raised fist on M. de Carmainges; “I am seventeen years old, do you understand, Monsieur?”

“And I am twenty-five years old,” said Ernauton, “and I shall therefore punish you according to your deserts.” And seizing him by the collar and belt, he lifted him from the ground and threw him, as if he had been a package, through the window into the street, while Lardille yelled at the top of her voice.

“Now,” said Ernauton, quietly, “step-father, step-mother, step-son, and all the rest, I will make mince-meat of any one who disturbs me again.”

“Faith!” said Miradoux, “I think you are right.”

“Ah, there! say, then, do they throw men out of the window here?” said an officer, entering. “What the

devil ! when one indulges in such amusement, he ought at least to cry, ‘ Out from under ! ’ ”

“ M. de Loignac ! ” cried twenty voices.

“ M. de Loignac ! ” repeated the Forty-five.

At that name, known through all Gascony, every one arose and was silent.

CHAPTER IX.

M. DE LOIGNAC.

BEHIND M. de Loignac, Mitor entered, bruised by his fall and crimson with rage.

“Servant, gentlemen,” said M. de Loignac ; “we are making a good deal of noise, it seems to me. Ah ! Maître Mitor, it appears, has been vicious again, and his nose has suffered.”

“I shall be paid,” muttered Mitor, shaking his fist at Carmainges.

“Supper, Maître Fournichon,” cried M. de Loignac ; “and from this moment let all be friends, and love one another like brothers.”

“Hum !” said Sainte-Maline.

“That would be difficult,” added Ernauton.

“See,” cried Pincornay, “they laugh at me because I have no hat ; and they say nothing to M. Montrabeau, who is going to supper in a cuirass of the time of the Emperor Pertinax, from whom it probably descended. See what it is to have defensive arms.”

“Gentlemen,” cried Montrabeau, “I take it off ; so much the worse for those who prefer seeing me with offensive instead of defensive arms.” And he gave his cuirass to his lackey, — a man about fifty years old.

“Peace ! peace !” cried Loignac, “and let us go to table.”

Meanwhile the lackey whispered to Pertinax, “And am I not to sup ? Let me have something, Pertinax ; I am dying of hunger.”

Pertinax, instead of being offended at this familiar address, replied, "I will try; but you had better try to get something for yourself."

"Hum! that is not reassuring."

"Have you no money?"

"We spent our last crown at Sens."

"The devil! then try to sell something."

A few minutes after a cry was heard in the street of, "Old iron! who wants to sell old iron?"

Madame Fournichon ran to the door, while Fournichon placed the supper on the table; and to judge by its reception it must have been exquisite. Fournichon, not being able to sustain all the compliments addressed to him, wished his wife to share them; but he looked for her in vain, — she had disappeared. He called her, and she did not come. "What is she doing, then?" he asked a servant.

"Oh, Master," he replied, "she is selling all your old iron for new money."

"I hope not my cuirass and arms," said he, running to the door.

"No," said Loignac; "it is forbidden to buy arms."

Madame Fournichon entered triumphantly.

"You have not been selling my arms?" cried her husband.

"Yes, I have."

"I will not have them sold."

"Bah! now that we are at peace two stewpans are worth more than an old cuirass."

"Nevertheless, the trade in old iron must be rather languishing since the king's edict which M. de Loignac just mentioned," said Chalabre.

"On the contrary, Monsieur," said Dame Fournichon, "for a long time that same merchant has tempted me

with his offers. Faith! to-day I could n't resist, and finding the opportunity, I have seized it. Ten crowns, Monsieur, are ten crowns; and an old cuirass is never more than an old cuirass!"

"What! ten crowns?" said Chalabre; "so dear as that? the devil!"

"Ten crowns! Samuel, do you hear?" said Pertinax, looking for his valet; but he was not to be seen.

"It seems to me," said Loignac, "that this man carries on a dangerous trade. But what does he do with all that old iron?"

"Sells it again by weight."

"By weight! and you say he gave you ten crowns — for what?"

"A cuirass and a helmet."

"Why, even if they weighed twenty pounds, that is half a crown a pound. This hides some mystery."

The party became more animated, thanks to the Burgundy wine, of which Fournichon's spices increased the consumption. The voices mounted to a higher pitch; the dishes rattled; heads were filled with vapors through which each Gascon saw everything in rose-color, except Militor, who thought of his fall, and Carmainges, who thought of his page.

"Here are a good many joyful men," said Loignac to his neighbor, who happened to be Ernauton, — "joyful without knowing why."

"Nor do I know," replied Carmainges. "But then, I am an exception; I am not joyful at all."

"You do yourself wrong, Monsieur, for you are one of those persons for whom Paris is a mine of gold, a paradise of honors, a world of happiness."

Ernauton shook his head.

"Very well! we will see."

“ Do not laugh at me, M. de Loignac.”

“ I do not ; I distinguished you at once, and that other young man also who looks so grave.”

“ Who is he ? ”

“ M. de Sainte-Maline.”

“ And why this distinction, if this question be not too curious ? ”

“ I know you, that is all.”

“ Me ! you know me ? ”

“ You, and him, and all here.”

“ It is strange.”

“ Yes, but necessary.”

“ Why ? ”

“ Because a chief should know his soldiers.”

“ And all these men ? ”

“ Will be my soldiers to-morrow.”

“ But I thought that M. d'Épernon — ”

“ Hush ! do not pronounce that name here, or rather do not pronounce any name here. Open your ears and shut your mouth. Since I have promised you all favor, I begin by giving you that advice as part of the account.” Then, rising, M. de Loignac said, “ Gentlemen, since chance unites here forty-five compatriots, let us empty a glass of wine to the prosperity of all.”

This proposal gave rise to frantic applause. “ They are almost all half drunk,” said Loignac ; “ it would be a good opportunity to make them repeat their histories, but we have n't time enough.” Then, raising his voice, “ Holloa ! Maître Fournichon, dismiss from the room all women, children, and lackeys.”

Lardille retired grumbling ; she had not finished her dessert. Militor did not move.

“ Did you not hear, M. Militor ? ” said Loignac ; “ to the kitchen ! ”

There remained only the forty-five men, and M. de Loignac then said, "Now, gentlemen, each knows who called him to Paris. Good! that will do; do not call out his name. You know also that you have come to obey him."

A murmur of assent came from all, mingled with astonishment, for each one knew only what concerned himself, and was ignorant that his neighbor had been moved by the same influence.

"Very good!" continued Loignac. "Later you will become acquainted with one another. You agree that you have come here to obey him?"

"Yes, yes!" they cried.

"Then, to begin, go quietly out of this hotel to the lodgings prepared for you."

"For all?" asked Sainte-Maline.

"Yes, for all."

"We are all commanded, are all equal here," cried Perducas, whose legs were so unsteady that he had to put his arm around Chalabre's neck.

"Yes," replied Loignac; "all are equal before the will of the master."

"Oh!" cried Carmainges, coloring; "I did not know that M. d'Épernon would be called my master."

"Wait!"

"I did not expect that."

"Wait, hot-head! I did not tell you who was to be your master."

"No; but you said we should have one."

"Every one has a master; and if you are too proud to acknowledge him we spoke of, you may look higher. I authorize you."

"The king!" murmured Carmainges.

"Silence!" said Loignac. "You have come here to

obey ; obey, then. Meanwhile, here is an order which you will please read aloud, M. Ernauton."

Ernauton took it and read these words :—

Order to M. de Loignac to take command of the forty-five gentlemen whom I have summoned to Paris with the consent of his Majesty.

NOGARET DE LAVALETTE,
Duc d'Épernon.

They all bowed at this.

"Thus," continued Loignac, "you have to follow me at once. Your equipages and servants will remain here. M. Fournichon will take care of them, and I will send for them afterwards ; but now be quick ! the boats are ready."

"The boats !" cried all the Gascons ; "we are, then, to embark ?"

"Certainly ; to go to the Louvre we must go by water."

"To the Louvre !" they cried joyfully. "*Cap de Biours !* we are going to the Louvre."

Loignac made them all pass before him, counting them as they went, and then conducted them to the place where three large boats were waiting for them.

CHAPTER X.

THE PURCHASE OF CUIRASSES.

As soon as the valet of Pertinax heard the words of Madame Fournichon, he ran after the dealer in old iron. It was already late; and doubtless the dealer was in a hurry, so that he had gone some distance when Samuel went out from the hotel. Samuel was therefore obliged to call to him. He appeared to hesitate at first; but seeing that Samuel was laden with merchandise, he stopped.

“What do you want, my friend?” said he.

“*Pardieu!* I want to do a little business with you.”

“Well, be quick!”

“Are you in a hurry?”

“Yes.”

“When you have seen what I bring you, you will be willing to wait.”

“What is it?”

“A magnificent piece, of which the work—but you do not listen.”

“Yes; but I am also looking round.”

“Why?”

“Do you not know that it is forbidden to buy arms?”

Samuel thought it best to feign ignorance, and said, “I know nothing; I have just arrived from Mont de Marsan.”

“Oh, that is another thing; but you have just arrived, and yet you know already that I buy arms?”

“ Yes, I know it.”

“ And who told you ? ”

“ *Sandioux* ! no need for any one to tell me ; you proclaimed it loud enough a little while ago.”

“ Where was that ? ”

“ At the door of the Brave Chevalier.”

“ You were there, then ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ With whom ? ”

“ With a crowd of friends.”

“ A crowd of friends ? No one is there usually. But whence come all these friends ? ”

“ From Gascony, like myself.”

“ Are you for the King of Navarre ? ”

“ Come, now ! we are Frenchmen, heart and soul.”

“ Yes ; but Huguenots ? ”

“ Catholic as our Holy Father the Pope, thank God ! ” said Samuel, taking off his hat. “ But our business is not about that ; it has to do with this cuirass.”

“ Well, come under this portico ; it is too public in the street. Now let me see this cuirass,” said he, when they were under the portico.

“ See,” said Samuel, “ how heavy it is.”

“ It is old and out of date.”

“ A work of art.”

“ I will give you six crowns.”

“ What ! six crowns ! and you gave ten just now for an old thing — ”

“ Six, or none.”

“ But look at the chasing.”

“ Of what use is the chasing, when I sell by weight ? ”

“ The gilding alone is worth ten crowns — ”

“ Well, I will give you seven.”

“ You bargain here ; and at the inn you gave anything.

You go against the law, and then endeavor to cheat honest people."

"Do not call out so loud."

"Oh, I am not afraid," said Samuel, raising his voice; "I am not engaged in unlawful commerce, and nothing obliges me to hide myself."

"Come, then, take ten crowns and begone."

"I told you the gold was worth more. Ah, you want to escape; I will call the guard."

At the noise a window opposite was opened. The dealer was frightened. "Come," said he; "I see I must give you what you want. Here are fifteen crowns; now go."

"That will do," said Samuel; "only these are for my master. I want something for myself."

The dealer half drew his dagger.

"Yes, yes, I see your dagger," said Samuel; "but I also see the figure in that balcony watching you."

The dealer, white with terror, looked up and saw a man who had witnessed the whole scene. "Oh!" said he, affecting to laugh, "you get all you want out of me; here is another crown. And may the devil strangle you!" he added in a low tone.

"Thanks, my good friend," said Samuel; and he made off.

The dealer began to take up his wares, and was also going, when the *bourgeois* opposite cried out, "It seems, Monsieur, that you buy armor."

"No, Monsieur," said the unlucky dealer; "this was a mere chance."

"A chance that suits me."

"In what respect, Monsieur?"

"I have a heap of old things that I want to get rid of."

"I have as much as I can carry."

“ But let me show them to you.”

“ It is useless ; I have no more money.”

“ Never mind, I will give you credit ; you look like an honest man.”

“ Thank you ; but I cannot wait.”

“ It is odd, but I seem to know you.”

“ Know me ? ” cried the dealer, trembling.

“ Look at this helmet,” said the *bourgeois*, showing it from the window.

“ You say you know me ? ” asked the dealer.

“ I thought so. Are you not — ” he seemed seeking for the name — “ are you not Nicolas — ”

The dealer looked frightened.

“ Nicolas Trouchou, ironmonger, of the Rue de la Cossonnerie ? ”

“ No, no ! ” cried the man, breathing more freely again.

“ Never mind ; will you buy all my armor, — cuirass, sword, and all ? ”

“ It is a forbidden commerce.”

“ I know that ; he whom you dealt with just now called it out loud enough.”

“ You heard ! ”

“ Yes, all ; and you were liberal. But be easy ; I will not be hard upon you. I have been a trader myself.”

“ What did you sell ? ”

“ Never mind ; I have made my fortune.”

“ I congratulate you.”

“ And consequently I like to take comfort ; I sell all my old iron because it is in my way.”

“ I understand that.”

“ And there are the thigh-pieces and the gloves.”

“ But I have no use for all that.”

“ Nor I.”

“ I will take only the cuirass.”

“ You buy only cuirasses, then ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ That is odd, for if you buy and sell by weight, one sort of iron is as good as another.”

“ That is true, but I have preferences.”

“ Well, then, buy only the cuirass, or rather — now I think again — buy nothing at all.”

“ What do you mean ? ”

“ I mean that in these times every one wants his arms.”

“ What ! in perfect peace ? ”

“ My good friend, if we were in perfect peace, there would be no such demand for cuirasses, *ventre de biche !* ”

“ Monsieur ! ”

“ And so secret too.”

The dealer made a movement to go away.

“ But really, the longer I look at you the more I think I know your face. You are not Nicolas Trouchou, but still I know you.”

“ Silence ! ”

“ And if you buy cuirasses — ”

“ Well ? ”

“ I am sure it is for a work agreeable to God.”

“ Be quiet ! ”

“ You enchant me ! ” cried the *bourgeois*, stretching out a long arm over the balcony, and seizing the hand of the dealer.

“ Then who the devil are you ? ” cried he, who felt his hand held as if in a vice.

“ I am Robert Briquet, the terror of schismatics, the friend of the Union, and a fierce Catholic ; and now I positively recognize you.”

The dealer turned white.

“ You are Nicolas — Grimbelot the currier.”

"No, you are mistaken. Adieu, Maître Robert Briquet ; delighted to have made your acquaintance." And the dealer turned his back to the balcony.

"What ! you are going away ?"

"You see that I am."

"Without taking my old iron ?"

"I have no money with me, I told you."

"My valet can go with you."

"Impossible."

"Then what shall we do ?"

"Why, remain as we are."

"*Ventre de biche !* that does n't suit me ; I have too great a desire to cultivate your acquaintance."

"And I to escape from yours," replied the dealer, who, resigning himself to abandon his cuirasses and lose everything rather than be recognized, took to his heels and ran away.

But Robert Briquet was not a man to be foiled ; he jumped from his balcony and speedily overtook the dealer.

"You are mad !" said he, putting his large hand on the poor devil's shoulder. "If I were your enemy, I have but to cry out, and the watch is in the next street ; but you are my friend, and now I know your name."

This time the dealer began to laugh.

"You are Nicolas Poulain, lieutenant to the provost of Paris. I knew it was Nicolas something."

"I am lost !" murmured the man.

"No ; you are saved. *Ventre de biche !* I will do more for the good cause than ever you would."

Nicolas Poulain uttered a groan.

"Come, come, courage !" said Robert Briquet ; "recover yourself. You have found a brother, — Brother Briquet. Take one cuirass ; I will take the two others. I give you

my gloves and the rest of my armor for nothing. Come on, and Vive l'Union !”

“ You accompany me ? ”

“ I will help you to carry these cuirasses which are to conquer the Philistines. Go on ; I follow.”

A spark of suspicion lingered in the soul of the lieutenant, but he thought, “ If he wished me ill, he would not have acknowledged he knew me. Come on, then ! ” he added aloud, “ if you will.”

“ To life or death ! ” cried Briquet, and he continued to talk in this strain till they arrived near the Hôtel Guise, where Nicolas Poulain stopped.

“ I fancied it would be here,” thought Briquet.

“ Now,” said Nicolas, with a tragic air, “ there is still time to retire before entering the lion's den.”

“ Bah ! I have entered many. *Et non intremuit medulla mea !* ” exclaimed Briquet. “ But pardon me ; perhaps you do not understand Latin ? ”

“ Do you ? ”

“ As you see.”

“ What a catch ! ” thought Poulain, — “ learned, strong, bold, and rich ! ” Then he added aloud, “ Well, let us enter,” and he conducted Briquet to the door of the hotel. The court was full of guards and men wrapped in cloaks, and eight horses, saddled and bridled, waited in a corner ; but there was not a light to be seen. Poulain whispered his name to the porter, and added, “ I bring a good companion.”

“ Pass on.”

“ Take these to the magazine,” said Poulain, handing the cuirasses to a soldier.

“ Good ! so there is a magazine,” said Briquet to himself. “ *Peste !* what an organizer you are, Monsieur Provost ! ”

“Yes, yes, there is judgment in it,” replied Poulain, with a proud smile. “But come, let me present you.”

“No, I am very timid. When I have done some work, I will present myself.”

“As you please. Then wait here for me.”

“What are we waiting for?” asked a voice.

“For the master,” replied another.

At this moment, a tall man entered. “Gentlemen,” said he, “I come in his name.”

“Ah! it is M. de Mayneville,” said Poulain.

“Ah, really!” said Briquet, making a hideous grimace which entirely changed his appearance.

“Let us go up, gentlemen,” said M. de Mayneville; and he ascended a staircase leading to an archway.

All the others followed; and Briquet brought up the rear, murmuring, “But the page! where the devil is the page?”

CHAPTER XI.

STILL THE LEAGUE.

At the moment when Robert Briquet was about to enter, he saw Poulain waiting for him.

"Pardon," said he; "but my friends do not know you, and decline to admit you to their councils till they know more of you."

"It is very just; and you know my natural modesty had anticipated that objection."

"I do justice to you," said Poulain; "you are an accomplished man."

"I retire, then," said Briquet, "happy to have seen in one evening so many brave defenders of the Catholic Union."

"Shall I reconduct you?"

"No, I thank you; I will not trouble you."

"But perhaps they will not open for you; yet I am wanted."

"Have you not a password?"

"Yes."

"Then give it to me. I am a friend, you know."

"True. It is 'Parma and Lorraine!'"

"And they will open?"

"Yes."

"Thanks; now return to your friends."

Briquet took some steps as if to go out, and then stopped to explore the locality. As a result of his observations, he conjectured that the archway ran parallel to

the exterior wall, and terminated in a hall where the mysterious council from which he had been excluded was to assemble. What confirmed him in this supposition was that he saw a light at a barred window, pierced in the wall, and guarded by a sort of wooden pipe, such as they placed at the windows of convents and prisons to intercept the view from without, while the air was still admitted. Briquet imagined this to be the window of the hall, and thought that if he could gain this place he could see all. He looked round him ; the court had many soldiers and servants in it, but it was large, and the night was dark. Besides, they were not looking his way, and the porter was busy preparing his bed for the night.

Briquet rapidly climbed upon the cornice which ran towards the window in question, and ran along the wall like a monkey, holding on with his hands and feet to the ornaments of the sculpture. Had the soldiers seen in the dark this figure gliding along the wall without apparent support, they would not have failed to cry, "Magic!" but they did not see him. In four strides he reached the window, and established himself between the bars and the pipe, so that from the inside he was concealed by the one, and from the outside by the other.

He then saw a great hall, lighted by an iron lamp with four branches, and containing piles of armor of all sorts. There were enough pikes, swords, halberds, and muskets, to arm four regiments. He gave less attention, however, to the arms than to the people engaged in distributing them ; and his piercing eyes sought eagerly to distinguish their faces.

"Oh, oh!" said he, "there is Maître Crucé, little Brigard, and Leclerc, who dares to call himself Bussy. *Peste!* the *bourgeoisie* is grandly represented ; but the nobility — ah! M. de Mayneville presses the hand of

Nicolas Poulain ; what a touching fraternity ! An orator too !” continued he, as M. de Mayneville prepared to harangue the assembly.

Briquet could not hear a word ; but he thought that the speaker did not make much impression on his audience, for one shrugged his shoulders and another turned his back. But at last they approached, seized his hand, and threw up their hats in the air. But though Briquet could not hear, we must inform our readers of what took place.

First, Crucé, Marteau, and Bussy had complained of the inaction of the Duc de Guise. Marteau was spokesman, and said, “ M. de Mayneville, you come on the part of M. le Duc de Guise, and we accept you as his ambassador ; but the presence of the duke himself is indispensable. After the death of his glorious father, he, when only eighteen years of age, made all good Frenchmen join this project of the Union, and enrolled us under this banner. We have risked our lives and sacrificed our fortunes for the triumph of this sacred cause, according to our oaths, and yet in spite of our sacrifices, nothing progresses, — nothing is decided. Take care, M. de Mayneville, Paris will grow tired ; and then what will you do ?”

This speech was applauded by all the Leaguers.

M. de Mayneville replied, “ Gentlemen, if nothing is decided, it is because nothing is ripe. Consider our situation : Monsieur the Duke and his brother the cardinal are at Nancy. The one is organizing an army to keep in check the Huguenots of Flanders, whom M. d’Anjou wishes to oppose to us ; the other is expediting courier after courier to the clergy of France, and to the pope, to induce them to adopt the Union. The Duc de Guise knows, what you do not, that the old alliance between the Duc d’Anjou and the Béarnais is ready to be renewed ; and he wishes, before coming to Paris, to be in a position to crush both

heresy and usurpation. But in the absence of M. de Guise we have M. de Mayenne, who is both general and counsellor, and whom I am expecting every moment."

"That is to say, your princes are everywhere where they are not wanted," said Bussy. "Where is Madame de Montpensier, for instance?"

"She entered Paris this morning."

"No one has seen her."

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Who was it?"

"Salcède."

"Oh, oh!" cried all.

"But," said Crucé, "has she, then, become invisible?"

"Not at all; but unseizable, I trust."

"And how does any one know that she is here?" asked Nicolas Poulain. "I presume Salcède did n't tell you."

"I know that she is here," replied Mayneville, "because I accompanied her to the Porte St. Antoine."

"I heard that they had shut the gates."

"Yes, they had."

"Then how did she pass?"

"In her own fashion."

"She had the power, then, to open the gates of Paris?" said the Leaguers, jealous and suspicious, as the common people always are when allied with the great.

"Gentlemen," said Mayneville, "something took place at the gates of Paris this morning of which you appear to be ignorant. The orders were to open only to those who brought a card of admission, — signed I know not by whom. Immediately five or six men, some of whom were poorly clothed, passed with these cards before our eyes. Now, who were those men? What were the cards? Reply, gentlemen of Paris, who promised to learn everything concerning your city."

Thus Mayneville, from the accused, became the accuser, which is the great art of an orator.

"Cards and exceptional admissions!" cried Nicolas Poulain, "what can that mean?"

"If you do not know who live here, how should we know who live in Lorraine, and spend all our time on the roads to join the two ends of the circle called the Union?"

"How did these people come?"

"Some on foot, some on horseback; some alone, and some with lackeys."

"Did they belong to the king?"

"Three or four had the appearance of beggars."

"Were they soldiers?"

"There were but two swords among the six."

"They were strangers?"

"I think they were Gascons."

"Oh!" said several voices, in a tone of contempt.

"No matter," said Bussy; "were they Turks, they must receive our attention. We must find out about them. M. Poulain, that is your business. But all that throws no light on the League's affairs."

"There is a new plan," replied M. de Mayneville. "You will know to-morrow that Salcède, who had betrayed us and would have done so again, not only did not speak, but retracted on the scaffold, — thanks to the duchess, who, in the suite of one of these card-bearers, had the courage to penetrate the crowd even to the place of execution, and made herself known to Salcède, at the risk of discovery. At this sight Salcède stopped his confession, and an instant after, the executioner stopped his repentance. Thus, gentlemen, you have nothing to fear as to our enterprise in Flanders; this secret is buried in the tomb."

It was this last speech which had so pleased all the conspirators. Their joy seemed to annoy Briquet ; he slipped down from his place, and returning to the court, said to the porter, "Parma and Lorraine !" The gate was opened, and he left.

History tells us what took place afterwards. M. de Mayneville brought from the Guises the plan of an insurrection, which consisted of nothing less than to murder all the principal people of the city who were known to be in favor with the king, and then to go through the streets crying, "*Vive la Messe !* death to our enemies !" — in fact, to enact a second Saint Bartholomew, in which, however, all hostile Catholics were to be confounded with the Protestants. And in so doing they would serve two gods, — the one who reigns in heaven, and the one who wished to reign on earth ; the Eternal and M. de Guise.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHAMBER OF HIS MAJESTY HENRI III.

IN a great room at the Louvre sat Henri, pale and unquiet. Since his favorites, Schomberg, Quélus, and Maugiron, had been killed in a duel, Saint-Mégrin had been assassinated by M. de Mayenne; and the wounds left by their deaths were still fresh and bleeding. The affection he bore his new favorites was very different from what he had felt for the old. He had overwhelmed D'Épernon with benefits; but he loved him only by fits and starts, and at certain times he even hated him and accused him of cowardice and avarice.

D'Épernon knew how to hide his ambition, which was indeed vague in its aspirations; but his cupidity governed him completely. When he was rich he was laughing and good-tempered; but when he was in want of money he used to shut himself up in one of his châteaux, where, frowning and sad, he bemoaned his fate, until he had drawn from the weakness of the king some new gift.

Joyeuse was very different. He loved the king, who, in turn, had for him almost a fatherly affection. Young and impulsive, he was perhaps somewhat egotistical, and cared for little but to be happy. Handsome, brave, and rich, Nature had done so much for him that Henri often regretted that she had left so little for him to add.

The king knew well these two men, and loved them, doubtless, by force of contrast. Under his sceptical and superstitious covering, Henri concealed a depth of philos-

ophy which, but for Catherine, would have been developed in useful directions. Often betrayed, Henri was never deceived.

It was, then, with this complete understanding of the character of his friends, with this profound acquaintance with their faults and their good qualities, that, remote from them, isolated, sad, in that sombre chamber, he meditated upon them, upon himself, upon his life, and contemplated in the shadows those funereal horizons already outlined on the future to many eyes less clear-sighted than his own.

“After all,” he said to himself, “why should I be uneasy? I have no further wars to encounter. Guise is at Nancy, Henri at Pau; the one is obliged to keep his ambition to himself, the other has none. The enterprising spirits are quiet; no Frenchman has seriously contemplated that impossible enterprise, — to dethrone his king. That third crown promised by Madame de Montpensier’s golden scissors was but the freak of a woman wounded in her vanity. My mother alone dreams always of that phantom of usurpation, without being able to show me the usurper. But I, who am a man; I, who have a young head notwithstanding my sorrows, — I know what course to take with the pretenders whom she suspects. I will make Henri de Navarre ridiculous, Guise odious; and sword in hand I will break the foreign leagues. *Par la mordieu!* at Jarnac and at Moncontour I was not stronger than I am to-day. Yes,” he continued, letting his head fall upon his breast, “but meantime I am lonely; and it is horrible to be lonely. Eh! there is my only, my real conspirator, — ennui; and my mother has never spoken to me of that. Let me see; will any one come this evening? Joyeuse promised to be here early. He amuses himself; but what the devil

does he do to amuse himself? D'Épernon, — ah, he does not amuse himself, he sulks; well, faith, let him sulk at his ease."

"Sire," said the usher, "M. le Duc d'Épernon."

All those who have known the weariness of waiting, the accusations it suggests against the person awaited, the readiness with which the cloud is dissipated when the person appears, will understand the eagerness with which the king ordered a chair to be brought forward for the duke. "Ah! good-evening, Duke," said he; "I am enchanted to see you."

D'Épernon bowed respectfully.

"Why were you not present at the execution of Salcède? I told you there would be room at my window."

"Sire, I was unable to avail myself of your Majesty's kindness."

"Unable?"

"Yes, Sire; I was busy."

"One would think that you were my minister, coming to announce with a long face that some subsidy had not been paid."

"Faith! your Majesty is right. The subsidy has not been paid; and I am penniless. But it was not that which occupied me."

"What then?"

"Your Majesty knows what took place at the execution of Salcède?"

"*Parbleu!* I was there."

"They tried to carry off the criminal."

"I did not see that."

"It is the rumor all through the city, however."

"A groundless one."

"I believe your Majesty is wrong."

"On what do you found your belief?"

“On the fact that Salcède denied before the people what he had confessed to the judges.”

“Ah! you know that already.”

“I try to know all that interests your Majesty.”

“Thanks; but what do you conclude from all this?”

“That a man who dies like Salcède was a good servant, Sire.”

“Well?”

“And the master who has such followers is fortunate.”

“You mean to say that I have none such, or rather that I no longer have them. You are right, if that be what you mean.”

“I did not mean that; your Majesty would find, I am sure, were there occasion, followers as devoted as the master of Salcède found him.”

“The master of Salcède! Call things by name! Who is this master of Salcède?”

“Your Majesty should know better than I.”

“I know what I know. Tell me what you know.”

“I know nothing; but I suspect much.”

“Good!” said Henri, annoyed. “You come here to disturb me and to say disagreeable things, do you not? Thank you, Duke; I recognize you well in that.”

“Now, then, your Majesty is unjust to me.”

“Just, I think.”

“No, Sire, a devoted man may give a warning that proves to have been erroneous; but none the less the man does his duty in giving the warning.”

“These are my affairs.”

“Ah! since your Majesty thinks so, you are right, Sire; we will say no more about them.”

A silence ensued, which the king at length interrupted. “Come,” said he, “don’t oppress me, Duke;

I am already as gloomy as a Pharaoh in his pyramid. Enliven me."

"Gayety cannot be forced, Sire."

The king struck the table angrily. "You are a bad friend," said he; "I lost all when I lost my former ones."

"May I dare to say to your Majesty that you hardly encourage the new ones?"

The king looked at him with an expression which he well understood.

"Ah! your Majesty reproaches me with your benefits," said he; "but I do not reproach you with my devotion."

"Lavalette," cried Henri, "you make me sad,—you who are so clever, and could so easily make me joyful. It is not your nature to fight continually, like my old favorites; but you are facetious and amusing, and sometimes give good counsel. You know all my affairs, like that other more humble friend, with whom I never experienced a moment's ennui."

"Of whom does your Majesty speak?"

"Of my poor jester, Chicot. Alas! where is he?"

D'Épernon rose, piqued. "Your Majesty's souvenirs to-day are not very amusing for other people," said he.

"Why so?"

"Your Majesty, without intending it perhaps, compared me to Chicot, which is not very flattering."

"You are wrong, D'Épernon; I could only compare to Chicot a man who loves me and whom I love. He was a faithful and intelligent servant."

"It was not to make me resemble Chicot, I suppose, that your Majesty made me a duke?"

"Chicot loved me, and I miss him; that is all I can say. Oh, when I think that in the same place where you now are have been all those young men, handsome,

brave, and faithful ; that there, on that very chair on which you have placed your hat, Chicot has slept more than a hundred times —”

“That may have shown a great deal of mind,” interrupted the duke ; “but certainly it was not very respectful.”

“Alas ! he has now neither mind nor body.”

“What became of him ?”

“He is dead, like all who have loved me.”

“Well, Sire, I think he did well to die ; he was growing old, — much less, however, than were his jokes, — and I have heard that sobriety was not one of his virtues. Of what did the poor devil die, — indigestion ?”

“Of grief.”

“Oh, he told you so, to make you laugh once more.”

“You are wrong ; he would not sadden me with the news of his illness. He knew how I regretted my friends, — he, who had so often seen me weep for them.”

“Then it was his shade that came to tell you ?”

“No ; I did not even see his shade. It was his friend, the worthy prior Gorenflot, who wrote me this sad news.”

“I see that if he were alive your Majesty would make him chancellor.”

“I beg, Duke, that you will not laugh at those who loved me, and whom I loved.”

“Oh, Sire, I do not desire to laugh ; but just now you reproached me with want of gayety, *parfandious !*”

“Well, now I am cooled down ; now I am in the mood in which you wanted to find me when you began the conversation with your sinister hints. Tell me, then, your bad news, D'Épernon. The king has always the strength of a man.”

“I do not doubt it, Sire.”

“And it is fortunate ; for, badly guarded as I am, if I

did not guard myself, I should be dead ten times a day."

"Which would not displease certain people of our acquaintance."

"Oh! against them I have the arms of my Swiss."

"I could find you a better guard than that."

"You?"

"Yes, Sire."

"What is it?"

"Will your Majesty be so good as to accompany me to the old buildings of the Louvre?"

"On the site of the Rue de l'Astruce?"

"Precisely."

"What shall I see there?"

"Oh, come first!"

"It is a long way, Duke."

"We can go in five minutes through the galleries."

"D'Épernon —"

"Well, Sire?"

"If what you are about to show me be not worth seeing, take care."

"I answer for it, Sire."

"Come, then," said the king, rising.

The duke took his cloak, presented the king's sword to him, then, taking a light, preceded his Majesty.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DORMITORY.

IN less than five minutes they arrived at their destination. The duke took out a key, and after crossing a court, opened an arched door, the bottom of which was overgrown with long grass. They went along a dark corridor and then up a staircase to a room, of which D'Épernon had also the key. He opened the door, and showed the king forty-five beds, and in each of them a sleeper.

The king looked at all this with a troubled curiosity.

“Well,” said he, “who are these people?”

“People who sleep to-night, but will not do so to-morrow night, except, of course, by turns.”

“Why not?”

“That your Majesty may sleep in peace.”

“Explain yourself. Are these your friends?”

“Chosen by me, Sire; intrepid guards, who will not leave your Majesty, and who, gentlemen all, will be able to go wherever your Majesty goes, and will let no one approach you.”

“And you thought of this, D'Épernon?”

“I alone, Sire.”

“We shall be laughed at.”

“No, we shall be feared.”

“But they will ruin me!”

“How can a king be ruined?”

“I cannot pay my Swiss.”

“Look at these men, Sire. Do you think they would be very expensive to keep?”

“But they could not always live like this; they would be stifled. And look at their doublets!”

“Oh, I confess they are not all very sumptuously clothed, but if they had been born dukes and peers—”

“Yes, I understand; they would have cost me more?”

“Just so.”

“Well, how much will they cost? That will perhaps decide me, for in truth, D'Épernon, they do not look very inviting.”

“Sire, I know they are rather thin and burnt by our southern sun, but I was so when I came to Paris. They will fatten and whiten like me.”

“How they snore!”

“Sire, you must not judge them to-night; they have supped well.”

“Stay, there is one speaking in his sleep; let us listen.”

Indeed, one of the gentlemen called out, “If you are a woman, fly!”

The king approached him softly. “Ah, ah!” said he, “he is a gallant.”

“What do you think of him, Sire?”

“His face pleases me; and he has white hands and a well-kept beard.”

“It is Ernauton de Carmainges, a fine fellow, who is capable of much.”

“He has left behind him some love, I suppose, poor fellow. But what a queer figure his next neighbor is!”

“Ah! that is M. de Chalabre. If he ruins your Majesty, it will not be without enriching himself, I answer for it.”

“And that one with such a sombre air; he does not seem as though he dreamed of love.”

“What number, Sire?”

“Number 12.”

“M. de Sainte-Maline, a brave fellow, with a heart of bronze.”

“Well, Lavalette, you have had a good idea.”

“I should think so. Imagine the effect that will be produced by these new watch-dogs, who will follow you like your shadow.”

“Yes, yes; but they cannot follow me like a shadow in that garb. My body is of good style; and I will not have it disgraced by its shadow, or rather by its shadows.”

“Ah! we return, Sire, to the question of money.”

“Did you expect to avoid it?”

“Not at all; on the contrary, it is in all affairs the fundamental question. But about this also, I have an idea.”

“D'Épernon!”

“My zeal for your Majesty doubles my imagination.”

“Well, let us hear it.”

“If it depended upon me, each of these gentlemen should find by his bed to-morrow morning a purse containing a thousand crowns, as payment for the first six months.”

“One thousand crowns for six months! six thousand livres a year! You are mad, Duke; an entire regiment would not cost that.”

“You forget, Sire, that they are to be your Majesty's shadows; and you have yourself said that you wish your shadows to be decently clad. Each will have to take from his thousand crowns enough for arms and equipments. Set down fifteen hundred livres to effect this in

a manner to do you honor, and there would remain forty-five hundred livres for the first year. Then for subsequent years you could give three thousand livres."

"That is more reasonable."

"Then your Majesty accepts?"

"There is only one difficulty, Duke."

"What is it?"

"Want of money."

"Sire, I have found a method. Six months ago a tax was levied on shooting and fishing."

"Well?"

"The tax has yielded in the first six months sixty-five thousand crowns, which have not yet been turned into the treasury, and await your Majesty's disposal."

"I destined it for the war, Duke."

"The first interest of the kingdom is the safety of the king."

"Well; there still would remain twenty thousand crowns for the army."

"Pardon, Sire; but I had disposed of them, also."

"Ah!"

"Yes, Sire; your Majesty had promised me money."

"I was sure of it," said the king. "You give me a guard so that you may obtain your money."

"Oh, Sire!"

"But why that number forty-five?" asked the king, passing to a new idea.

"I will explain, Sire. The number three is primordial and divine; furthermore, it is convenient. For instance, when a cavalier has three horses, he is never reduced to going on foot. When the first is weary, the second is at hand; and the third replaces the second in case of wounds or disease. You will always have, then, three times fifteen gentlemen, — fifteen in active employment, thirty

resting. Each day's service will last twelve hours, and during those twelve hours you will always have five on the right hand, five on the left, two before, and three behind. Let any one attack you with such a guard as that !”

“ *Par la mordieu !* it is a skilful combination, Duke ; I congratulate you.”

“ Look at them, Sire ; will they not have a good effect ? ”

“ Yes, when dressed they will not look bad. Well, so be it.”

“ Well, then, Sire, I have a favor to ask.”

“ I should be astonished if you had not.”

“ Your Majesty is bitter to-day.”

“ Oh, I only mean that having rendered me a service, you have the right to ask for a return.”

“ Well, Sire, it is an appointment.”

“ Why, you are already colonel-general of infantry ; more would crush you.”

“ In your Majesty's service I am a Samson.”

“ What is it, then ? ”

“ I desire the command of these forty-five gentlemen.”

“ What ! you wish to march before me, behind me ? You carry your devotedness to that point ? You wish to be captain of guards ? ”

“ No, I should have a deputy ; only I desire that they should know me as their head.”

“ Well, you shall have it. But who is to be your deputy ? ”

“ M. de Loignac, Sire.”

“ Ah ! that is good.”

“ He pleases your Majesty ? ”

“ Perfectly.”

“ Then it is decided ? ”

“Yes ; let it be as you wish.”

“Then I will go at once to the treasurer, and get my forty-five purses.”

“To-night ?”

“They are to find them to-morrow when they wake.”

“Good ; then I will return.”

“Content, Sire ?”

“Tolerably.”

“Well guarded, at all events.”

“By men who sleep.”

“They will not sleep to-morrow, Sire.”

D'Épernon conducted the king to the door of the corridor, and left him, saying to himself, “If I am not king, I have guards like a king ; and they cost me nothing, *parfondious !*”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SHADE OF CHICOT.

THE king, as we have said, was never deceived as to the character of his friends; he knew perfectly well that D'Épernon was working for his own advantage, but as he had expected to be obliged to give without receiving anything in return, whereas he had got forty-five guards, he was pleased with the idea. Besides, it was a novelty which was a thing that a poor king of France could not always get, and especially Henri III., who, when he had gone through his processions, counted his dogs, and uttered his usual number of sighs, had nothing left to do. Therefore he became more and more satisfied as he returned to his room.

“These men are doubtless brave, and perhaps will be very devoted,” thought he; “and forty-five swords always ready to leap from their scabbards are a grand thing.”

This thought brought to his mind the other devoted swords that he regretted so bitterly; and he sank again into that deep melancholy into which at this period he fell so often that it might be called his habitual condition. The times so inauspicious, men so wicked, crowns so loosening on the heads of kings, — impressed him again with that strong desire either to die or to become animated, which the English, our superiors in melancholy, had already baptized by the name of “spleen.” He looked around for Joyeuse, and not seeing him, inquired for him.

"Monsieur the Duke has not yet returned," said the usher.

"Then call my *valet de chambre*."

When he was in bed they asked if his reader should attend, for Henri was subject to long fits of wakefulness, and was often read to sleep.

"No," replied the king. "I want no one; only if M. de Joyeuse returns, bring him to me."

"If he returns late, Sire?"

"Alas! he is always late; but whatever be the hour, bring him here."

The servants extinguished the candles and lighted a lamp of essences, which gave a pale blue flame that the king liked. Henri, brave in the presence of a real danger, had all the fears and weaknesses of children and women. He feared apparitions; he feared ghosts. Following the shadows made on the wall by his light, searching with his eyes the obscure corners of his chamber, listening for the slightest noise, he at length fell asleep. But his sleep was of short duration; he awoke, thinking he heard a noise in the room.

"Joyeuse," he asked, "is it you?"

No one replied. The light burned dim, and threw faint circles on the ceiling of carved oak.

"Alone still!" murmured the king. "*Mon Dieu*! give me the strength to be always alone in my life, as I shall be after death."

"Eh, eh! alone after death? That is not certain," answered a strident voice that vibrated with a metallic ring a few feet from the bed; "and the worms,—how about the worms?"

The king started up and looked round him in terror "Oh, I know that voice!" he murmured.

"Ah! that is fortunate," replied the voice.

"It is like the voice of Chicot."

"You burn, Henri; you burn."

Then the king, getting half out of bed, saw a man sitting in the very chair which he had pointed out to D'Épernon.

"Heaven protect me!" cried he; "it is the shade of Chicot."

"Ah! my poor Henriquet, are you still so foolish?"

"What do you mean?"

"Shades cannot speak, imbecile, since they have no body, and consequently no tongue."

"Then you are Chicot himself," cried the king, joyfully.

"I have nothing to say about that; we shall see later what I am, — we shall see."

"Then you are not dead, my poor Chicot?"

"Here you are, screaming like an eagle. Yes, on the contrary, I am dead, a hundred times dead."

"Chicot, my only friend!"

"You, at least, are not changed; you say always the same thing."

"But you, Chicot, are you changed?"

"I hope so."

"Chicot, my friend, why did you leave me?"

"Because I am dead."

"You said just now that you were not dead."

"Dead to some; alive to others."

"And to me?"

"Dead."

"Why dead to me?"

"It is easy to comprehend; you are not the master here."

"What do you mean?"

"You can do nothing for those who serve you."

“Chicot!”

“Do not be angry, or I shall be so also.”

“Speak then, my friend,” said the king, fearing that Chicot would vanish.

“Well, I had a little affair to settle with M. de Mayenne, you remember?”

“Perfectly.”

“I settled it; I beat this valiant captain without mercy. He sought for me to hang me; and you, whom I thought would protect me, abandoned me, and made peace with him. Then I declared myself dead and buried, by the aid of my friend Gorenflot, so that M. de Mayenne has ceased to search for me.”

“What a frightful courage you had, Chicot! Did you not know the grief your death would cause me?”

“Yes, it is courageous, but not at all frightful. I have never lived so tranquilly as since the world thought me dead.”

“Chicot, my head turns. You frighten me; I know not what to think.”

“Well! settle something.”

“I think that you are dead and —”

“Then I lie; you are polite.”

“You conceal from me a part of the truth; but presently, like the orators of antiquity, you will tell me terrible truths.”

“Oh, as to that, I do not say no. Prepare, poor king!”

“If you are not a shade, how could you come unnoticed into my room, through the guarded corridors?” And Henri, abandoning himself to new terrors, threw himself down in the bed and covered up his head.

“Come, come!” cried Chicot; “you have only to touch me to be convinced.”

“You are not, then, a messenger of vengeance?”

“*Ventre de biche!* have I horns like Satan, or a flaming sword like the archangel Michael?”

“But how did you come?”

“Why, I have still the key that you gave me, and which I hung round my neck to enrage your gentlemen, and with this I entered.”

“By the secret door, then?”

“Certainly.”

“And why to-day more than yesterday?”

“Ah! that you shall hear.”

Henri, sitting up again, said like a child, “Do not tell me anything disagreeable, Chicot. Oh, if you only knew how glad I am to see you again!”

“I will tell the truth; so much the worse if it be disagreeable.”

“But your fear of Mayenne is not serious?”

“Very serious, on the contrary. You understand that M. de Mayenne gave me fifty blows with a stirrup-leather, in return for which I gave him one hundred with the sheath of my sword. No doubt he thinks, therefore, that he still owes me fifty, so that I should not have come to you now, however great your need of me, had I not known him to be at Soissons.”

“Well, Chicot, I take you now under my protection; and I wish—”

“What do you wish? Take care, Henriquet! every time you say ‘I wish,’ you are on the point of saying something silly.”

“I wish that you should be resuscitated and appear openly.”

“There! I said so.”

“I will defend you.”

“Good!”

“Chicot, I pledge my royal word.”

“Bah! I have better than that.”

“What?”

“My hole; and there I remain.”

“I will protect you, I tell you,” cried the king, jumping out of bed.

“Henri, you will catch cold; go back to bed, I pray.”

“You are right, but you exasperate me. How! when I have enough guards, Swiss, Scotch, and French, for my own defence, should I not have enough for yours?”

“Let us see; you have the Swiss —”

“Yes, commanded by Tocquenot.”

“Good! then you have the Scotch —”

“Commanded by Larchant.”

“Very well! and you have the French guards —”

“Commanded by Crillon. And then — but I do not know if I ought to tell you —”

“I did not ask you.”

“A novelty, Chicot!”

“A novelty?”

“Yes; imagine forty-five brave gentlemen.”

“Forty-five? What do you mean?”

“Forty-five gentlemen.”

“Where did you find them? Not in Paris, I suppose?”

“No; but they arrived here yesterday.”

“Oh!” cried Chicot, with a sudden illumination, “I know these gentlemen.”

“Really!”

“Forty-five beggars, who only want the wallet, — figures to make one die with laughter.”

“Chicot, there are splendid men among them.”

“Gascons, like your colonel-general of infantry.”

“And like you, Chicot. However, I have forty-five formidable swords at command.”

“ Commanded by that forty-sixth formidable sword called D'Épernon.”

“ Not exactly.”

“ By whom, then ? ”

“ Loignac.”

“ And it is with them you think to defend yourself ? ”

“ Yes, *mordieu* ! yes,” said Henri, irritated.

“ Well, I have more troops than you.”

“ You have troops ? ”

“ Why not ? ”

“ What are they ? ”

“ You shall hear. First, all the army that MM. de Guise are raising in Lorraine.”

“ Are you mad ? ”

“ No ; a real army, — at least six thousand men.”

“ But how can you, who fear M. de Mayenne so much, be defended by the soldiers of M. de Guise ? ”

“ Because I am dead.”

“ Again that pleasantry.”

“ Now, it was to Chicot that M. de Mayenne owed a grudge. I have therefore taken advantage of my death to change my body, my name, and my social position.”

“ Then you are no longer Chicot ? ”

“ No.”

“ What are you, then ? ”

“ I am Robert Briquet, merchant and Leaguer.”

“ You a Leaguer ? ”

“ A devoted one, so that I keep away from M. de Mayenne. I have, then, for my defence (for me, Briquet, member of the holy Union) : first, the army of Lorraine, — six thousand men ; remember that number.”

“ I listen.”

“ Then, about one hundred thousand Parisians.”

“ Famous soldiers ! ”

“Sufficiently so to annoy you much, my prince. Six thousand and a hundred thousand are one hundred and six thousand. Then there is the pope, the Spaniards, M. de Bourbon, the Flemings, Henri de Navarre, the Duc d’Anjou —”

“Have you done?” interrupted Henri, impatiently.

“There still remain three classes of people who are opposed to you.”

“What are they?”

“First, the Catholics, who hate you because you destroyed only three quarters of the Huguenots; then the Huguenots, who hate you because you have destroyed three quarters of them; and the third party is that which desires neither you nor your brother nor M. de Guise, but your brother-in-law, Henri de Navarre.”

“Provided that he abjure. But these people of whom you speak are all France.”

“Precisely. These are my troops as a Leaguer; now add, and compare.”

“You are joking, are you not, Chicot?”

“Is it a time to joke, when you are alone against all the world, my poor Henriquet?”

Henri assumed an air of royal dignity. “Alone I am,” said he; “but at the same time I alone command. You show me an army; but where is the chief? You will say M. de Guise; but do I not keep him at Nancy? M. de Mayenne, you say yourself, is at Soissons, the Duc d’Anjou is at Brussels, and the King of Navarre at Pau; so that if I am alone I am free. I am like a hunter in the midst of a plain waiting to see his prey come within his reach.”

Chicot scratched his nose. The king thought he was convinced. “What can you reply to that?” he asked.

“How eloquent you are always, Henri! Your tongue remains your own; that is, in fact, more than I expected, and I offer you my sincere congratulations. In your discourse I object to only one thing.”

“What is it?”

“Oh, nothing, almost nothing, — a figure of rhetoric, merely; I object to your comparison.”

“In what respect?”

“You say that you are the hunter lying in wait for the game, while I, on the contrary, maintain that you are the game, whom the hunters track to his lair.”

“Chicot!”

“Well, man lying in wait, let me hear whom you have seen approach.”

“No one, *pardieu!*”

“Yet some one has come.”

“Of those whom I named?”

“Not exactly, but nearly.”

“Who?”

“A woman.”

“My sister Margot?”

“No; the Duchesse de Montpensier.”

“She! at Paris?”

“*Mon Dieu!* yes.”

“Well, what if she be? I do not fear women.”

“True; but she comes to announce the arrival of her brother.”

“Of M. de Guise?”

“Yes.”

“And you think that embarrasses me?”

“Oh! you? nothing embarrasses you.”

“Give me ink and paper.”

“What for? To sign an order for M. de Guise to remain at Nancy?”

“Exactly; the idea must be good, since you had it also.”

“Execrable, on the contrary.”

“Why?”

“As soon as he receives it he will know he is wanted at Paris; and he will come.”

The king grew angry. “If you only returned to talk like this,” said he, “you had better have stayed away.”

“What would you have, Henri? Ghosts are not flatterers.”

“You confess, then, that you are a ghost?”

“I have never denied it.”

“Chicot!”

“Come, don’t get angry, for near-sighted as you are, you will become blind. Let us see. Didn’t you say that you kept your brother in Flanders?”

“Certainly, and I maintain that it is good policy.”

“Now listen, and let us not get excited; with what purpose do you think M. de Guise remains at Nancy?”

“To organize an army.”

“Well; and for what purpose does he destine this army?”

“Ah, Chicot! you fatigue me with all these questions.”

“You will sleep better after it. He destines this army —”

“To attack the Huguenots in the north —”

“Or rather, to thwart your brother of Anjou, who has called himself Duc de Brabant, and wishes to build himself a throne in Flanders, and who constantly solicits your aid in the prosecution of that purpose.”

“Aid which I always promise him, and which, of course, I shall never send.”

“To the great joy of the Duc de Guise. Well, if you were to feign to send this aid; if they only went half way —”

“ Ah, yes ! I understand ; M. de Guise would not leave the frontier.”

“ And the promise of Madame de Montpensier that her brother would be here in a week — ”

“ Would be broken.”

“ You see, then ? ”

“ So far, good ; but in the south — ”

“ Ah, yes ; the Béarnais — ”

“ Do you know what he is doing ? ”

“ No.”

“ He claims the towns which were his wife’s dowry,” said the king.

“ Insolent ! to whom the honor of an alliance with the House of France is not sufficient, and who permits himself to claim what belongs to him ! ”

“ Cahors, for example ; as if it would be good policy to give up such a town to an enemy.”

“ No, indeed, that would not be good policy ; but it would be the act of an honest man perhaps.”

“ M. Chicot ! ”

“ Let it be as if I had said nothing ; you know I don’t meddle with your family affairs.”

“ But to return to Flanders. I will send some one to my brother. But whom can I send ? To whom can I trust a mission of so great importance ? Oh ! now I think of it, you shall go, Chicot.”

“ A dead man go to Flanders ? Come, now ! ”

“ No ; you shall go as Robert Briquet.”

“ Good ! a *bourgeois*, a Leaguer, a friend of M. de Guise, performing the functions of an ambassador near M. le Duc d’Anjou ! ”

“ That is to say, you refuse ? ”

“ *Pardieu !* ”

“ You disobey me ? ”

“I disobey you? Do I owe you obedience? Have you ever given me anything which binds me to you? I am poor and obscure. Make me duke and peer; erect my land of Chicoterie into a marquisate; endow me with five hundred thousand crowns; and then we will talk about embassies.”

Henri was about to reply, when the door opened, and the Duc de Joyeuse was announced.

“Ah! there is your man,” said Chicot; “who could make a better ambassador?”

“Decidedly,” murmured Henri, “this devil of a man is a better adviser than any minister of mine has ever been.”

“Ah! you agree to it, then?” said Chicot. He then buried himself in the great chair, so as to be quite invisible in the dim light. M. de Joyeuse did not see him. The king uttered a cry of joy on seeing his favorite, and held out his hand.

“Sit down, Joyeuse, my child,” said he; “how late you are!”

“Your Majesty is very good,” answered Joyeuse, approaching the bed, on which he sat down.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DIFFICULTY OF FINDING A GOOD AMBASSADOR.

CHICOT was hidden in his great chair, and Joyeuse was half lying on the foot of the bed in which the king was bolstered up, when the conversation began.

“Well, Joyeuse,” said Henri, “have you wandered much about the town?”

“Yes, Sire,” replied the duke, carelessly.

“How quickly you disappeared from the Place de Grève!”

“Sire, to speak frankly, I do not like to see men suffer.”

“Tender heart!”

“No; egotistical heart, rather. Their sufferings act on my nerves.”

“You know what occurred?”

“No.”

“Salcède denied all.”

“Ah!”

“You take that very indifferently, Joyeuse.”

“I confess I do not attach much importance to it; besides, I was certain he would deny everything.”

“But since he confessed before the judges —”

“All the more reason that he should deny it afterwards. The confession put the Guises on their guard, and they were at work while your Majesty remained quiet.”

“What! you foresee such things, and do not warn me?”

“I am not your minister, to talk politics.”

“ Well, Joyeuse, I want your brother.”

“ He, like myself, is at your Majesty’s service.”

“ Then I may count on him ? ”

“ Doubtless.”

“ I wish to send him on a little mission.”

“ Out of Paris ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ In that case, it is impossible.”

“ How so ? ”

“ Bouchage cannot go away just now.”

The king looked astonished. “ What do you mean ? ”
said he.

“ Sire,” said Joyeuse, quietly, “ it is the simplest thing possible. Bouchage is in love ; but he has carried on his negotiations badly, and everything is going wrong. The poor boy is growing thinner and thinner.”

“ Indeed,” said the king, “ I have remarked it.”

“ And he has become sad, *mordieu !* as if he had lived in your Majesty’s court.”

A kind of grunt proceeding from the corner of the room interrupted Joyeuse, who looked round astonished.

“ It is nothing, Joyeuse,” said the king, laughing, “ only a dog asleep on the footstool. You say, then, that Bouchage has become sad ? ”

“ Sad as death, Sire. It seems he has met with some woman of a funereal turn of mind. However, one may succeed as well with this sort of woman as with others, if he knows how to take them.”

“ You would not have been embarrassed, libertine ? ”

“ You understand, Sire, that no sooner had he made me his confidant than I undertook to save him.”

“ So that — ”

“ So that already the cure has begun.”

“ What ! is he less in love ? ”

“No ; but he has more hope of making her so. For the future, instead of sighing with the lady, we mean to amuse her in every possible way. To-night I stationed thirty Italian musicians under her balcony.”

“Fie !” said the king ; “that is common.”

“What ! common, — thirty musicians who have no equals in the entire world ?”

“Ah, upon my word, music would not have amused me when I was in love with Madame de Condé.”

“No ; but you were in love, Sire.”

“Madly,” said the king.

Another grunt was heard, which sounded very much like a mocking laugh.

“You see that this is quite another thing, Sire,” said Joyeuse, seeking, but in vain, to see whence came that strange interruption. “The lady, on the contrary, is indifferent as a statue, and cold as an icicle.”

“And you think music will melt the icicle, will animate the statue ?”

“I do not say that she will come at once and throw herself into the arms of Bouchage ; but she will be pleased on seeing that all this noise is made on her account. If she do not care for this, we shall have plays, enchantments, poetry, — in fact, all the pleasures of the earth ; so that even if we do not bring gayety back to her, I hope we shall to Bouchage.”

“Well, I hope so ; but let us drop Bouchage, since it would be so trying to him to leave Paris. I hope you are not also, like him, the slave of some passion ?”

“I never was more free, Sire.”

“Oh ! I thought you were in love with a beautiful lady ?”

“Ah, yes ! the mistress of M. de Mayenne, — a woman who adored me.”

“Well?”

“Well, imagine that this evening, after having given my lesson to Bouchage, I went to see her with my head full of his love-story, and believing myself almost as much in love as he. I found a trembling, frightened woman. The first idea that occurred to me was that I had interrupted some one. I tried to reassure her; but it was useless. I interrogated her; but she did not reply. I tried to embrace her; and she turned her head away. I grew angry, and we quarrelled; and she told me she should never be at home to me any more.”

“Poor Joyeuse!” said the king, laughing, “what did you do?”

“*Pardieu*, Sire! I took my hat and cloak, bowed, and went out, without once looking back.”

“Bravo, Joyeuse! it was courageous.”

“The more so, Sire, that I thought I heard her sigh.”

“But you will return?”

“No, I am proud.”

“Well, my friend, this rupture is for your good.”

“Perhaps so, Sire; but I shall probably be horribly bored for a week, having nothing to do. It may perhaps amuse me, however; it is something new, and I think it high-toned.”

“Certainly it is; I have made it so,” said the king. “However, I will occupy you with something.”

“Something lazy, I hope?”

A third grunt came from the chair; one might have thought the dog was laughing at the words of Joyeuse.

“That is a very intelligent dog,” said Henri. “He divines what I want you to do.”

“What am I to do, Sire?” continued Joyeuse.

“Get on your boots.”

“Oh, that is against all my ideas.”

“Get on horseback.”

“On horseback! impossible.”

“And why?”

“Because I am an admiral, and admirals have nothing to do with horses.”

“Well, then, Admiral, if it be not your place to mount a horse, it is so at all events to go on board ship. So you will start at once for Rouen, where you will find your admiral’s ship, and make ready to sail immediately for Antwerp.”

“For Antwerp!” cried Joyeuse, in a tone as despairing as though he had received an order to set out for Canton or Valparaiso.

“I said so,” replied the king, in a cold and haughty tone, “and there is no need to repeat it.”

Joyeuse, without making the least further resistance, fastened his cloak and took his hat.

“What a trouble I have to make myself obeyed!” continued Henri. “*Ventrebleu!* if I forget sometimes that I am the master, others might remember it.”

Joyeuse bowed stiffly, and said, “Your orders, Sire?”

The king began to melt. “Go,” said he, “to Rouen, where I wish you to embark, unless you prefer going by land to Brussels.”

Joyeuse bowed without answering.

“Do you prefer the land route, Duke?” asked Henri.

“I have no preference when I have an order to execute, Sire.”

“There, now you are sulky. Ah! kings have no friends.”

“Those who give orders can expect to find only servants.”

“Monsieur,” replied the king, angry again, “you will go, then, to Rouen; you will go on board your ship, and

will take the garrisons of Caudebec, Harfleur, and Dieppe, which I will replace afterwards. You will put them on board six transports, and place them at the service of my brother, who expects aid from me."

"My commission, if you please, Sire."

"And since when have you been unable to act by virtue of your rank as admiral?"

"I only obey, Sire, and as much as possible avoid responsibility."

"Well, then, Monsieur the Duke, you will receive the commission at your hotel before you depart."

"And when will that be?"

"In an hour."

Joyeuse bowed and turned to the door. The king's heart misgave him. "What!" cried he, "not even the courtesy of an adieu? You are not polite; but that is a common reproach to naval people."

"Pardon me, Sire, but I am a still worse courtier than I am a seaman;" and shutting the door violently, he went out.

"See how those love me for whom I have done so much!" cried the king; "ungrateful Joyeuse!"

"Well, are you going to recall him?" said Chicot, advancing. "Because for once in your life you have been firm, you repent it!"

"Ah! so you think it very agreeable to go to sea in the month of October. I should like to see you do it."

"You are quite welcome to do so; my greatest desire just now is to travel."

"Then if I wish to send you somewhere you will not object to it?"

"Not only I do not object, but I request it."

"On a mission?"

"Yes."

"Will you go to Navarre?"

"I would go to the Devil, great king."

"Are you joking, buffoon?"

"Sire, I was not very gay during my life, and I swear to you I am even sadder since my death."

"But you refused just now to leave Paris."

"My gracious sovereign, I was wrong, very wrong, and I repent."

"So that now you wish to leave Paris?"

"Immediately, illustrious king; this instant, grand monarch."

"I no longer understand you," said Henri.

"You have not, then, heard what was said by the Grand Admiral of France?"

"What was that?"

"That he had broken with the mistress of M. de Mayenne."

"Yes; well, what of it?"

"If that woman, in love with a charming fellow like the duke, — for Joyeuse is charming —"

"Doubtless."

"If that woman dismisses him, sighing, it is of course for some reason."

"Probably; otherwise she would not dismiss him."

"Well, that reason, do you know what it is?"

"No."

"You cannot guess?"

"No."

"It is that M. de Mayenne is about to return."

"Oh, oh!" said the king.

"You comprehend at last? I congratulate you."

"Yes, and I begin to believe that Mayenne will return."

"Well, then, I will go to Navarre if you wish to send me."

“I wish it, certainly.”

“I wait your orders, gracious prince,” said Chicot, assuming the same attitude as Joyeuse.

“But you do not know if the mission will suit you. I have certain projects of embroiling Margot with her husband.”

“‘Divide to reign’ was the A B C of politics one hundred years ago.”

“Then you have no repugnance?”

“It does not concern me; do as you wish. I am ambassador, that is all; and as long as I am inviolable, that is all I care for.”

“But still you must know what to say to my brother-in-law.”

“I say anything! Certainly not.”

“Not?”

“I will go where you like; but I will say nothing.”

“Then you refuse?”

“I refuse to give a message; but I will take a letter.”

“Well, I will give you a letter.”

“Give it me, then.”

“What! you do not think such a letter can be written at once? It must be well weighed and considered.”

“Well, then, think over it. I will come or send for it early to-morrow.”

“Why not sleep here?”

“Here?”

“Yes, in your chair.”

“*Peste!* that is done with; I shall sleep no more at the Louvre. A ghost to be seen asleep in an armchair, — what an absurdity!”

“But you must know my intentions concerning Margot and her husband. My letter will make a noise, and they will question you; you must be able to reply. What the

devil! you represent me; I don't want you to appear like a fool."

"*Mon Dieu!*" said Chicot, shrugging his shoulders, "how obtuse you are, great king! Do you think I am going to carry a letter two hundred and fifty leagues without knowing what is in it? Be easy; at my first stopping-place I shall open your letter and read it. What! have you sent ambassadors for ten years to all parts of the world and know no better than that? Come, rest in peace, and I will return to my solitude."

"Where is it?"

"In the cemetery of the Grands Innocents, great prince."

Henri looked at him in astonishment again.

"Ah! you did not expect that," said Chicot. "Well, till to-morrow, when I or my messenger will come —"

"How shall I know your messenger when he arrives?"

"He will say he comes from the Shade." And Chicot disappeared so rapidly that the superstitious mind of Henri doubted whether it was in fact a body or a shade which had passed through that door without a sound, under that tapestry without moving a fold.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DEATH OF CHICOT.

CHICOT, in actual substance, — we grieve to disappoint those of our readers who favor the marvellous to the point of believing that we should have the audacity to introduce a ghost into this story, — Chicot, then, had taken his departure after saying to the king, under the guise of badinage according to his custom, all the truths that he wished to declare.

This is what had happened. After the death of the king's friends, after the troubles and conspiracies fomented by the Guises were entered upon, Chicot had reflected. Courageous, as we have seen him to be, and indifferent to events, he was yet disposed to make the most of all the incidents of experience, and find amusement in them, as do all men of superior endowments; for it is only the addle-brained who become weary of this world and seek diversion in the other.

Chicot's reflections led him to the conclusion that M. de Mayenne's vengeance was likely to prove more efficacious than the king's protection; and he said to himself, with his own characteristic philosophy, that in this world nothing can annul material fact; and, therefore, all the king's halberds and all his courts of justice could provide no remedy for an opening — even though almost im-

perceptible — which the blade of M. de Mayenne might make in Chicot's jacket. Besides, he was weary of playing the part of a jester, and of those royal familiarities which seemed to be leading him straight to destruction.

Chicot began, therefore, by putting between his own person and M. de Mayenne's sword the greatest possible distance. To that end he set out for Beaune, with the threefold purpose of getting away from Paris, embracing his friend Gorenflot, and tasting the famous wine of 1550, which is so warmly discussed in the letter which closes our story of "La Dame de Monsoreau." It must be admitted that the consolation thus sought was sufficient to him. At the end of two months he could see that he had conspicuously increased in bulk, and reflected that in this way he was effectually disguised. But at the same time he observed that as he became more rotund he was coming to resemble Gorenflot more than was fitting for a man of intelligence. With him spirit still dominated matter.

After Chicot had imbibed the contents of several hundred bottles of the famous wine of 1550, and had devoured the twenty-two volumes comprised in the library of the priory, — in which the prior had found the Latin maxim, *Bonum vinum lætificat cor hominis*,¹ — he was aware of a great weight in his stomach, and a great void in his head.

"I might become a monk in good earnest," he said to himself; "but with Gorenflot I should be too much the master, and in any other abbey I should be not masterful enough. To be sure, the frock would conceal me forever from the eyes of M. de Mayenne; but, by all the devils! there must be other means, less commonplace,

¹ Good wine rejoices the heart of man.

worth seeking. I have read in another book, not included in Gorenflot's library : *Quere et invenies.*"¹

Chicot sought, therefore, and this is what he found. Under the circumstances it was sufficiently original. He made a confidant of Gorenflot, and persuaded him to write to the king under his dictation.

Gorenflot wrote with difficulty, it is true ; but he managed to state that Chicot had retired to the priory ; that his sorrow on being obliged to separate from his master, when the latter had become reconciled with M. de Mayenne, had affected his health ; that he had struggled against his regrets, but his grief had proved to be greater than his strength, and he had finally succumbed.

Chicot also wrote a letter to the king. This letter, dated in 1580, was divided into five paragraphs. These paragraphs were written from day to day, and reflected the progress of his disease. The first paragraph was written and signed with a firm hand ; the second betrayed his faltering strength, and was signed in a tremulous hand ; at the end of the third he wrote "Chic—" ; at the end of the fourth, "Ch—" ; at the end of the fifth only "C," with a scrawl.

That scrawl from the hand of a dying man produced on the king a painful effect, and explains his taking Chicot for a ghost.

We would gladly here present to our readers the letter of Chicot ; but Chicot was, as we say nowadays, a very eccentric man. The style is the man ; and his epistolary style was so very eccentric that we dare not reproduce his letter here, however effective we might expect it to be.

At the end of that letter, lest Henri's interest should grow cold, Gorenflot added that since the death of his

¹ Seek and ye shall find.

friend the priory of Beaune had become odious to him, and he would prefer to live in Paris.

This postscript Chicot had with much difficulty drawn from Gorenflot's fingers; for Gorenflot was well satisfied with his situation at Beaune, as was also Panurge. He piteously begged Chicot to remember that wine is always adulterated, unless one is on the spot to choose it for himself. But Chicot promised the worthy prior that he would himself come every year to provide him with choice wines; and as, on this point among many others, Gorenflot recognized Chicot's superiority, he at last yielded to his friend's persuasions.

In reply to Gorenflot's letter and Chicot's words of farewell, the king wrote with his own hand as follows:—

MONSIEUR LE PRIEUR,—You will give a sacred and poetic burial to poor Chicot, whom I regret with all my heart; for he was not only a devoted friend, but was also a gentleman of rank, though unable to trace his genealogy beyond his great-great-grandfather.

You will surround him with flowers, and arrange so that he shall lie towards the sun, which he especially loved, being from the South. As to yourself, whose grief I honor the more since I share it, you will leave your priory of Beaune, according to the desire which you have expressed to me. I have too much need at Paris of devoted and intelligent men to allow you to remain at a distance. I therefore appoint you prior of the Jacobins, with a residence near the Porte Saint-Antoine, in Paris, a neighborhood to which our poor friend was especially attached.

Your affectionate

HENRI,

Who begs you not to forget him in your holy prayers.

It may be easily imagined that an autograph like that, a letter written entirely by a royal hand, made the prior

open his eyes; that he admired the power of Chicot's genius, and hastened to take flight toward the honors that awaited him. For ambition had already, as may be recalled, started one of its tenacious off-shoots in the heart of Gorenflot, whose name had always been "Modeste," and who, since he had become prior of Beaune, was called "Dom Modeste Gorenflot."

Everything took place according to the desires of the king, and those of Chicot at the same time. A bundle of sticks, designed to represent the corpse physically and allegorically, was buried in a sunny place, in the midst of flowers, beneath a flourishing vine. Then, once dead and buried in effigy, Chicot assisted Gorenflot in his preparations for removal.

Dom Modeste was installed with great pomp in the priory of the Jacobins.

Chicot slipped into Paris under cover of night. He purchased, near the Porte Bussy, a small house which cost him three hundred crowns. When he wished to visit Gorenflot he had three routes: that by way of the city, which was the shortest; that along the bank of the river, which was the most romantic; and that which followed the walls of Paris, which was the most sure. But Chicot, who was a dreamer, chose generally the route along the Seine; and since at that time the river was not yet confined between walls of stone, the water came, as says the poet, to lap its sloping shores, on which the dwellers in the Cité could often see Chicot's long shadow outlined by the bright light of the moon.

Once installed in his new abode, and having changed his name, Chicot gave himself to the task of changing his appearance. He called himself Robert Briquet, as we have already seen, and as he walked, was bent slightly

forward. Moreover, anxiety and the lapse of five or six years had rendered him nearly bald ; the black and curly hair of other days had withdrawn, as the ebbing sea retires, from his forehead back towards the nape of his neck. We have already said that he was an adept in the art, so prized by ancient actors, of changing by skilful contractions the natural play of the muscles and the habitual expression of the features.

By dint of assiduous practice, Chicot was able, even in broad daylight, to become at will a veritable Robert Briquet, — that is to say, a man whose mouth was stretched from ear to ear, whose chin went up to his nose, and whose eyes were crossed in a way to make one shudder, — all this without grimace, but not without interest to the lovers of change ; for Chicot's face, delicate, long, and angular as it was, became broad, ruddy, dull, and sodden. His long arms and legs he could in no way contrive to reduce ; but by perseverance he managed, as we have said, to acquire a curve in his back, and that made his arms seem almost as long as his legs.

To these various exercises Chicot joined the precaution of avoiding intimate relations with any one. For however disjointed he might be, he could not keep himself in the same posture eternally ; but how could he appear humped at twelve o'clock when at ten he had been seen upright ? What excuse can you give a friend who sees you suddenly change your face because while walking with him you happen to meet one you suspect ?

Robert Briquet adopted therefore the life of a recluse, — a life which agreed, moreover, with his inclination. His sole diversion was to visit Gorenflot and consume with him that famous wine of 1550, which the worthy prior had taken good care not to leave in the cellars of Beaune.

But vulgar souls, not less than great, are subject to change. Gorenflot changed. He beheld, fallen within his power and discretion, the man who thitherto had been the arbiter of his destiny. Chicot, coming to dine at the priory, seemed to him a Chicot in bondage, and from that moment Gorenflot thought too much of himself, and too little of Chicot.

Chicot noticed the change in his friend, but was not offended; the changes he had met in his companionship with King Henri had taught him to bear such things philosophically. He put himself more on his guard, and that was all. Instead of visiting the priory every day, he began to go there only once a week; then he went once a fortnight, and finally only once a month. And Gorenflot was so puffed up that he appeared to perceive no difference. Chicot was too philosophical to be sensitive; he laughed in his sleeve at Gorenflot's ingratitude, and scratched his nose and chin as usual.

"Water and time," he said, "are the two most powerful resolvents that I know: the one breaks rock, the other self-conceit. Let us wait."

Chicot waited; and while he waited those events happened which we have recited, and from the midst of which there seemed to him to arise certain new combinations which portended political catastrophe; and, therefore, since his king, whom he still loved,—dead though he was,—seemed to him, in the face of coming events, to incur certain dangers similar to those from which he, Chicot, had already rescued him, he took it upon himself to visit the king in the rôle of ghost, with the sole purpose of revealing to him the future.

We have seen how the announcement of M. de Mayenne's approaching arrival—an announcement involved in

the return of Joyeuse, and which Chicot had sagaciously evolved — had caused Chicot to be transformed from ghost to flesh and blood, and from the condition of a prophet to that of an ambassador.

Now that all which might seem obscure in our narrative has been explained, by our readers' permission, we will follow Chicot as he goes from the Louvre and takes his way to his little house in Bussy Square.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SERENADE.

FROM the Louvre Chicot had not far to go to his home. He went to the bank of the Seine and got into a little boat which he had left there.

“It is strange,” thought he, as he rowed and looked at the still-lighted window of the king’s room, “that after so many years, Henri is still the same. Others have risen or fallen ; while he has gained some wrinkles, and that is all. He has the same weak, yet elevated mind ; still fantastical and poetical ; still the same egotistical being, always asking for more than one has to give him, — friendship from the indifferent, love from the friendly, devotion from the loving, — and more sad than any one else in his kingdom. I believe, in fact, that I am the only one who has fathomed that strange compound of debauchery and repentance, of impiety and superstition, as I alone am acquainted with the Louvre, through the corridors of which so many favorites have passed on their way to the tomb, to exile, or to oblivion.” He breathed a sigh, rather of reflection than of melancholy, and applied himself vigorously to his oars. “By the way,” he said suddenly, “the king did not speak of giving me any money for my journey ; that proves at least that he thinks me a friend.” And he laughed quietly.

He soon arrived at the opposite bank, where he fastened his boat. On entering the Rue des Augustins, he was

struck by the sound of instruments and voices in a quarter usually so quiet at that late hour. "Is there a wedding here?" thought he. "*Ventre de biche!* I had only five hours to sleep, and now this will keep me awake."

As he advanced, he saw a dozen torches carried by pages, while thirty musicians were playing on different instruments. The band was stationed before a house that Chicot, with surprise, recognized as his own. The invisible general who directed the affair had disposed musicians and pages in such a manner that all had their faces turned towards the house of Robert Briquet, and gazed at his windows in ardent contemplation. On observing that, Chicot was for a moment stupefied. Then, slapping his thighs with his bony hands, he said, "But there is some misunderstanding. All that noise cannot be made on my account." Approaching nearer, he mingled with the spectators who had been attracted to the scene, and looking attentively around, he became satisfied that all the light of the torches illumined his house, as all the harmony surrounded it; no one in that crowd was giving attention to the house opposite or to any others in that vicinity.

"In fact," Chicot said to himself, "it is for me! Has some unknown princess fallen in love with me?" But that idea, flattering as it was, did not satisfy him; and he turned towards the house facing his, but it showed no signs of life.

"They must sleep soundly there," said he; "*ventre de biche!* such a noise is enough to wake the dead. Pardon me, my friend," said he, addressing himself to a torch-bearer, "but will you tell me, if you please, for whom all this music is designed?"

"For the *bourgeois* who lives there," replied he, pointing out to Chicot his own house.

"Decidedly, it is for me!" thought he. "To whom

do you belong?" he asked of a tambourine player, at that moment unoccupied.

"To the *bourgeois* who lives there."

"Ah! they not only come for me, but they belong to me, — still better. Well, we shall see; ' and elbowing his way through the crowd, he opened his door, went upstairs, and appeared at his balcony, in which he placed a chair and sat down. Without appearing to notice the laughter which greeted his appearance, he said, "Gentlemen, are you sure there is no mistake? Is all this really for me?"

"Are you M. Robert Briquet?" asked the director of the orchestra.

"Himself."

"Then we are at your service, Monsieur," replied the Italian, with a movement of his baton which started a new outbreak of harmony.

"Certainly it is unintelligible," thought Chicot. He looked around; all the inhabitants of the street were at their windows, excepting those of the opposite house, which, as we have said, remained dark and quiet. But on glancing downwards, he saw a man wrapped in a dark cloak, and who wore a black hat with a red feather, leaning against the portico of his own door, and looking earnestly at the opposite house. The leader of the band from time to time left his post and spoke softly to this man. Chicot instantly understood that here lay all the real interest of the scene, and from that moment gave that person all his attention. Suddenly a gentleman on horseback, followed by two squires, appeared at the corner of the street and pushed his way through the crowd.

"M. de Joyeuse!" murmured Chicot, who recognized at once the Grand Admiral of France, hooted and spurred in obedience to the king's order. The crowd dispersed;

the music ceased. The cavalier approached the gentleman under the balcony. "Well, Henri," said he, "what news?"

"Nothing, Brother, nothing."

"Nothing?"

"No, she has not even appeared."

"They have not made noise enough."

"They have roused all the neighborhood."

"They did not cry, as I told them, that it was all in honor of this *bourgeois*."

"They cried it so faithfully that there he is, sitting in his balcony, listening to the serenade."

"And she has not appeared?"

"Neither she nor any one."

"The idea was ingenious, however," said Joyeuse, disappointed; "for she might, like the rest of the people, have profited by the music given to her neighbor."

"Ah, you do not know her, Brother."

"Yes, I do; or at all events, I know women, and as she is but a woman, we will not despair."

"Ah! you say that in a discouraged tone, Brother."

"Not at all; only give the *bourgeois* his serenade every night."

"But she will go away."

"Not if you do not speak to her, or seem to be doing it on her account, and remain concealed. Has the *bourgeois* spoken?"

"He has addressed the orchestra; and there he is, about to speak again."

In fact, Briquet, resolved to bring the matter to an explanation, rose to address once more the leader of the band.

"Hold your tongue up there and go in!" cried Joyeuse, out of humor. "What the devil! since you have had your serenade, you have nothing to say; so keep quiet!"

“My serenade!” replied Chicot, in his most polite manner; “but I should like to know at least to whom my serenade is addressed?”

“To your daughter, imbecile!”

“Pardon, Monsieur; but I have no daughter.”

“To your wife, then.”

“Thank God, I am not married!”

“Then to yourself; and if you do not go in —” cried Joyeuse, urging his horse towards the balcony.

“*Ventre de biche!* but if the music be for me —”

“Old fool!” growled Joyeuse. “If you do not go in and hide your ugly face, they shall break their instruments over your head.”

“Let the man alone, Brother,” said Henri; “the fact is, he must be very much astonished.”

“And what right has he to be astonished, *morbleu?* Besides, if we get up a quarrel, perhaps she will look to see what is the matter. So let us pommel the *bourgeois*; let us burn his house, if necessary; but, *corbleu!* let us make a commotion!”

“No, for pity’s sake, Brother, do not let us force her attention! we are beaten, and must submit.”

Chicot had not lost a word of this last dialogue, which had thrown some light on his still confused ideas. He therefore mentally prepared for his defence, knowing the humor of him who attacked; but Joyeuse yielded to his brother’s request, and dismissed the pages and musicians. Then he said to his brother, “I am in despair; everything conspires against us.”

“What do you mean?”

“I have no longer time to aid you.”

“I see now that you are in travelling-dress; I did not remark it before.”

“I set off to-night for Antwerp, by desire of the king.”

“When did he give you the order?”

“This evening.”

“*Mon Dieu!*”

“Come with me, I entreat.”

“Do you order me, Brother?” said Henri, turning pale at the thought.

“No; I only beg you.”

“Thank you, Brother. If I were forced to give up spending my nights under this window —”

“Well?”

“I should die.”

“You are mad.”

“My heart is here, Brother; my life is here.”

Joyeuse crossed his arms with a mixture of anger and pity. “If our father,” he said, “begged you to let yourself be attended by Miron, who is at once a philosopher and a doctor —”

“I should reply to our father that I am well, and that my brain is sound, and that Miron cannot cure love-sickness.”

“Well, then, Henri, I must make the best of it. She is but a woman, and at my return I hope to see you more joyous than myself.”

“Yes, yes, my good brother, I shall be cured; I shall be happy, thanks to your friendship, which is my most precious possession.”

“After your love.”

“Before my life.”

Joyeuse, deeply affected, notwithstanding his apparent frivolity, interrupted him.

“Let us go, Brother,” said he.

“Yes, Brother, I follow you,” said Bouchage, sighing.

“Yes, I understand, — the last adieux to the window but you have also one for me, Brother.”

Henri passed his arms round the neck of his brother, who leaned down to embrace him.

“No!” cried he. “I will accompany you to the gates.” And with a last look towards the window, he followed his brother.

Chicot continued to watch. Gradually every one disappeared; and the street was deserted. Then one of the windows of the opposite house was opened, and a man looked out.

“There is no longer any one here, Madame,” said he; “you may leave your hiding-place and go down to your own room.” And lighting a lamp, he gave it into a hand stretched out to receive it.

Chicot looked earnestly; but as he caught sight of her pale but sublime face, he shuddered and sat down, entirely subjugated, in his turn, by the melancholy influence of the house.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHICOT'S PURSE.

CHICOT passed the remainder of the night dreaming in his armchair. "Dreaming" is the proper word, for they were dreams, rather than thoughts, that occupied his mind. To revisit the past, to see clearly in the light of a single glance an entire epoch almost effaced from memory, — that is not to think. Chicot dwelt that night in a world already left by him far behind, peopled by shades illustrious or gracious, whom the glance of a pale woman, like a faithful lamp, showed to him passing one after another, with their trains of remembrances happy or terrible; so that he who on returning from the Louvre regretted his lost sleep did not even think of going to bed. When the dawn began to silver the glass of his windows, "The hour for ghosts has passed," he said; "it is time to think of the living." He rose, girded on his long sword, threw a cloak over his shoulders, and with the firmness of a sage, examined the bottom of his purse and his shoes. The latter seemed to him in good condition for a campaign; the former deserves particular attention.

Chicot, a man of an ingenious imagination, had made in the principal beam which ran through his house a cavity, a foot and a half long and six inches wide, which he used as a strong-box, to contain a thousand crowns in gold. He had made the following calculation: "I spend the twentieth part of one of these crowns every day;

therefore I have enough to last me for twenty thousand days. I cannot live so long as that ; but I may live half as long, and as I grow older my wants and expenses will increase. This will provide for twenty-five or thirty good years, and that is enough." He was therefore tranquil as to the future.

This morning, on opening his store, "*Ventre de biche !*" he cried, "times are hard ; and I need not be delicate with Henri. This money did not come from him, but from an old uncle. If it were still night, I would go and take one hundred crowns from the king's pocket ; but it is day, and I now have no resource but in myself or in Gorenflot."

This idea of drawing money from Gorenflot made Chicot smile. "It would be odd," thought he, "if Gorenflot should refuse a hundred crowns to the friend through whom he was appointed prior to the Jacobins. Ah !" he continued, shaking his head, "he is Gorenflot no longer. Yes ; but Robert Briquet is always Chicot. But that letter from the king, — that famous letter which is to kindle a conflagration in the court of Navarre, — I was to go for it before day ; and here it is day already."

Chicot replaced the board which covered his hiding-place, and fastened it with four nails ; then, ready to depart, he looked for the last time around that little chamber, in which for many happy days he had been inaccessible and safe. Then he gave a glance to the house opposite. "Those devils, the Joyeuses," he said, "are quite capable of burning my house down some night to attract the lady to her window. And my thousand crowns ! really, I think it would be better to hide them in the ground. However, if they burn my house, the king shall pay me for it."

Thus reassured, Chicot left the house, and at that mo-

ment saw at the window of the opposite house the servant of the unknown lady. This man, as we have said, was completely disfigured by a scar extending from the left temple over a portion of the cheek ; but although bald and with a gray beard, he had a quick, active appearance, and a fresh and young-looking complexion. On seeing Chicot, he drew his hood over his head, and was going in ; but Chicot called out to him, "Neighbor ! the noise here last night has disgusted me with my house, and I am going for some weeks to my farm. Will you be so obliging as to look after my house a little ?"

"Willingly, Monsieur."

"And if you see robbers ?"

"Be easy, Monsieur ; I have a good arquebuse."

"I have still one more favor to ask."

"What is it ?"

"I hardly like to call it out."

"I will come down to you."

He came down accordingly, with his hood drawn closely round his face, saying, as a sort of apology, "It is very cold this morning."

"Yes," said Chicot, "there is a bitter wind. Well, Monsieur, I am going away."

"You told me that before !"

"Yes, I know ; but I leave a good deal of money behind me."

"So much the worse. Why not take it with you ?"

"I cannot ; a man is duller and less resolute when he has to save his purse at the same time with his life. Therefore I leave my money here ; but I leave it well hidden, — so well that I have nothing to fear but fire. If that should happen, will you who are my neighbor watch the burning of a certain great beam, the end of which you

can see there on the right? Watch it and search in its ashes."

"Really, Monsieur, you embarrass me. This confidence would have been far better made to a friend than to a stranger, of whom you know nothing."

"It is true, Monsieur, that I do not know you; but I believe in faces, and I think yours that of an honest man."

"But, Monsieur, it is possible that this music may annoy my mistress also, as well as yourself; and then she may move."

"Well, that cannot be helped; and I must take my chance."

"Thanks, Monsieur, for your confidence in a poor unknown! I will try to be worthy of it;" and bowing, he went into the house.

Chicot murmured to himself, "Poor young man! what a wreck! and I have seen him so gay and so handsome!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PRIORY OF THE JACOBINS.

THE priory which the king had bestowed upon Gorenflot in recompense for his loyal services, and especially in recognition of his brilliant eloquence, was situated near the Porte St. Antoine. This was at that time a quarter much frequented, for the king frequently visited the Château de Vincennes, and several noblemen had built charming residences in its neighborhood.

It was a good position for the priory, which arose proudly on the road to Vincennes. The priory was built on four sides of an immense court, planted with trees; it had a kitchen-garden behind, and a number of out-houses, which made it look like a small village. Two hundred monks occupied the dormitories situated at the end of the court, while in the front four large windows, with a balcony before them, gave to the apartments of the priory air and light.

Like a city prepared to stand a siege, the priory was maintained by its own resources and dependencies; its pasture-land fed a troop of fifty oxen and ninety-nine sheep, — for by some traditional law, no religious order was allowed to possess one hundred of anything, — while certain out-buildings sheltered ninety-nine pigs of a particular breed, which were most carefully reared and fattened. The espaliers of the priory, which were exposed to the midday sun, furnished peaches, apricots, and grapes; while preserves of these fruits were skilfully made by a

certain Brother Eusèbe, who was the architect of the famous rock constructed of confectionery which had been presented to the two queens by the Hôtel de Ville of Paris at the last state banquet which had taken place there.

In the interior of this paradise for gourmands and sluggards, in a sumptuous apartment on the first floor, whose balcony overlooked the high-road, we shall find Gorenflot, ornamented with an additional chin, and characterized by that sort of venerable gravity which the constant habit of repose and good living gives to the most vulgar faces. Half-past seven in the morning had just struck. The prior had profited by the rule which gave to him an hour's more sleep than to the other monks, and now, although he had risen, he was quietly continuing his sleep in a large and luxurious armchair. The furniture of the room was more mundane than religious. A carved table, covered with a rich cloth; books of religious gallantry (that singular mixture of love and devotion which we meet with only at that epoch of art); expensive vases; and curtains of rich damask, — were some of the luxuries of which Dom Modeste Gorenflot had become possessed by the grace of God, of the king, and especially of Chicot.

Gorenflot slept, as we have said, in his chair, when the door opened softly, and two men entered. The first was about thirty-five years of age, thin and pale, and with a look which commanded even before he spoke; lightnings seemed to dart from his eyes when they were open, although their expression was generally softened by a careful lowering of the white eyelids. This was Brother Borromée, who had been for the last three weeks treasurer of the convent. The other was a young man about seventeen or eighteen, with piercing black eyes, a bold look, of small stature, but well-formed, and whose turned-up sleeves displayed two strong arms quick in gesticulation.

"The prior sleeps still, Father Borromée," said he. "Shall we wake him?"

"On no account, Brother Jacques."

"Really, it is a pity to have a prior who sleeps so long, for we might have tried the arms this morning. Did you notice what beautiful cuirasses and arquebuses there were among them?"

"Silence, Brother! you will be heard."

"What a misfortune!" cried the young man, impatiently, stamping his foot; "it is so fine to-day, and the court is so dry."

"We must wait, my child," replied Borromée, with a feigned submission which the fire of his eyes contradicted.

"But why do you not order them to distribute the arms?"

"I order!"

"Yes, you."

"You know that I am not the master here; there is the master."

"Yes, asleep, when every one else is awake," replied Jacques, impatiently.

"Let us respect his rank and his sleep," said Borromée, overturning a chair, however, as he spoke.

At the sound Gorenflot looked up and said sleepily, "Who is there?"

"Pardon us," said Borromée, "if we interrupt your pious meditations; but I have come to take your orders."

"Ah! good-morning, Brother Borromée; what orders do you want?"

"About the arms."

"What arms?"

"Those which your Reverence ordered to be brought here."

"I! and when?"

"About a week ago."

“ I ordered arms ? ”

“ Without doubt,” replied Borromée, firmly.

“ And what for ? ”

“ Your Reverence said to me, ‘ Brother Borromée, it would be wise to procure arms for the use of the brethren ; gymnastic exercises develop the bodily forces, as pious exhortations do those of the soul.’ ”

“ I said that ? ”

“ Yes, reverend prior ; and I, an unworthy but obedient brother, hastened to obey.”

“ It is strange ; but I remember nothing about it.”

“ You even added this Latin maxim, ‘ *Militat spiritu, militat gladio.*’ ”

“ What ! ” cried Gorenflot, immeasurably astonished, “ I added that maxim ? ”

“ I have a faithful memory,” said Borromée, lowering his eyes.

“ Well, if I said so,” Gorenflot replied, gently moving his head up and down, “ it is because I had my reasons for saying so, Brother Borromée. In fact, that has always been my opinion, that it is necessary to exercise the body ; and when I was simply a monk I fought with the word and with the sword, — *militat — spiritu.* Very good, Brother Borromée ; it was an inspiration from the Lord.”

“ Then I will finish executing your orders, reverend prior,” said Borromée, retiring with Jacques.

“ Go ! ” said Gorenflot, majestically.

“ Ah ! ” said Borromée, “ I had forgotten ; there is a friend in the parlor who asks to see your Reverence.”

“ What is his name ? ”

“ Maître Robert Briquet.”

“ Oh, he is not a friend, — only an acquaintance.”

“ Then your Reverence will not see him ? ”

“ Oh, yes ! let him come up ; he amuses me.”

CHAPTER XX.

THE TWO FRIENDS.

WHEN Chicot entered, the prior did not rise, but merely bent his head.

“ Good-morning,” said Chicot.

“ Ah, there you are ! you appear to have come to life again.”

“ Did you think me dead ? ”

“ Of course ; I saw you no more.”

“ I was busy.”

“ Ah ! ”

Chicot knew that before being warned by two or three bottles of old Burgundy, Gorenflot was sparing of his words ; and since, considering the time of the morning, it was probable that he was still fasting, Chicot sat down to wait.

“ Will you breakfast with me, M. Briquet ? ” asked Gorenflot.

“ Perhaps.”

“ You must not be angry with me if it has become impossible for me to give you as much time as I could wish.”

“ And who the devil asked you for your time ? I did not even ask you for breakfast ; you offered it.”

“ Certainly I offered it ; but — ”

“ But you thought I should not accept.”

“ Oh, no ! is that my habit ? ”

“ Ah ! a superior man like you can adopt any habits, Monsieur the Prior,” replied Chicot, with one of those smiles that were peculiarly his own.

Gorenflot looked at Chicot ; he could not tell whether he was laughing at him or speaking seriously. Chicot rose.

“ Why do you rise, M. Briquet ? ” asked Gorenflot.

“ Because I am going away.”

“ And why are you going away, when you said you would breakfast with me ? ”

“ I did not say I would ; I said ‘ perhaps.’ ”

“ You are angry ? ”

Chicot laughed. “ I angry ! ” said he, “ at what ? Because you are impudent, ignorant, and rude ? Oh, my dear monsieur, I have known you too long to be angry at your little imperfections ! ”

Gorenflot, astounded by that naïve sally on the part of his guest, remained with his mouth open and his arms extended.

“ Adieu,” said Chicot.

“ Oh, do not go ! ”

“ My journey will not wait.”

“ You travel ? ”

“ I have a mission.”

“ From whom ? ”

“ From the king.”

“ A mission from the king ! then you have seen him again ? ”

“ Certainly.”

“ And how did he receive you ? ”

“ With enthusiasm ; he has a memory, king as he is.”

“ A mission from the king ! ” stammered Gorenflot.

“ Adieu,” repeated Chicot.

Gorenflot rose, and seized him by the hand. "Come! let us explain ourselves," said he.

"On what?"

"On your irritability to-day."

"I! I am the same to-day as on all other days."

"No."

"A simple mirror of the people I am with. You laugh, and I laugh; you are rude, so am I."

"Well, I confess I was preoccupied."

"Really!"

"Can you not be indulgent to a man who has so much work on his shoulders? Governing this priory is like governing a province. Remember, I command two hundred men. I am at the same time manager, architect, intendant, — all that without including my spiritual functions."

"Ah! it is too much indeed for an unworthy servant of God."

"Ah! you are ironical, M. Briquet. Have you lost all your Christian charity?"

"I had Christian charity, then?"

"I think that you are envious. Be careful; envy is a capital sin."

"Envious! of whom?"

"Why, you say to yourself, Dom Modeste Gorenflot is rising; he is on the ascending grade."

"While I am on the descending grade, I suppose?"

"It is the fault of your false position, M. Briquet."

"M. Gorenflot, do you remember the text, 'He who humbles himself shall be exalted?'"

"Nonsense!" cried Gorenflot.

"Ah! now he doubts the Holy Writ, — the heretic!"

"Heretic! it is the Huguenots who are heretics."

"Schismatic, then."

“Come, what are you trying to say, M. Briquet? Really, you bewilder me.”

“Nothing, but that I am setting out on a journey, and that I have come to make you my adieux; so good-by, Seigneur Dom Modeste.”

“You will not leave me thus?”

“Yes, *pardieu!*”

“A friend!”

“In grandeur one has no friends.”

“Chicot!”

“I am no longer Chicot; you reproached me with my false position just now.”

“But you must not go without eating; it is not wholesome. You have yourself told me so twenty times. Come, let us breakfast.”

“Oh, you live too badly here.”

“Badly here!” murmured the prior, in astonishment.

“I think so.”

“You had to complain of your last dinner here?”

“The horrible taste is still in my mouth; phew!”

“Of what? speak!”

“The pork cutlets were burned.”

“Oh!”

“The stuffed ears did not crackle under your teeth.”

“Ah!”

“The capon was soft.”

“Good heavens!”

“The soup was greasy.”

“For pity’s sake!”

“The gravy was covered with oil, which yet floats in my stomach.”

“Chicot! Chicot!” sighed Dom Modeste, in the same tone in which Cæsar, dying, said to his assassin, “Brutus! Brutus!”

“And then you have no time to give me.”

“I!”

“You said so, did you not? It only remains for you to become a liar.”

“Oh, I can put off my business; it was only a lady who asks me to see her.”

“See her, then.”

“No, no, dear M. Chicot! although she has sent me a hundred bottles of Sicilian wine.”

“A hundred bottles of Sicilian wine!”

“I will not receive her, although she is probably some great lady. I will receive only you, dear M. Chicot. She wishes to become my penitent, — that great lady who sends bottles of Sicilian wine by the hundred. Well, I will refuse her my spiritual counsels; I will send word to her to choose another director.”

“You will do all that?”

“To breakfast with you, dear M. Chicot; to repair my wrongs towards you.”

“Your wrongs spring from your savage pride, Dom Modeste.”

“I will humble myself, my friend.”

“From your idleness.”

“Chicot! Chicot! beginning to-morrow, I will mortify myself by joining my monks in their exercise.”

“Your monks in their exercise!” said Chicot, opening his eyes. “In what exercise, — that of the fork?”

“No, of arms.”

“Arms!”

“Yes; but it will be fatiguing to command.”

“Who had this idea?”

“I, it seems.”

“You! impossible!”

“Yes; I gave the order to Brother Borromée.”

“Who is he?”

“The new treasurer.”

“And whence comes this treasurer?”

“M. le Cardinal de Guise recommended him.”

“In person?”

“No, by letter.”

“Is it he whom I saw down below?”

“That is the man.”

“He who announced me?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, oh!” said Chicot, involuntarily; “and what qualification has he, — this treasurer, so warmly recommended by the Cardinal de Guise?”

“He reckons like Pythagoras.”

“And it is with him you decided on these exercises of arms?”

“Yes, my friend.”

“That is to say, he proposed to you to arm your monks?”

“No, my dear M. Chicot; the idea was entirely mine.”

“And for what end?”

“To arm them.”

“No pride, hardened sinner; pride is a capital sin. That idea did not originate with you.”

“Oh, I do not know. And yet it must have been mine, for it seems that I pronounced a very good Latin text on the occasion.”

“You! Latin! Do you remember it?”

“‘*Militat spiritu* —’”

“‘*Militat gladio.*’”

“Yes, yes; that was it.”

“Well, you have excused yourself so well that I pardon you. You are still my true friend.”

Gorenflot wiped away a tear.

“ Now let us breakfast, and I promise to be indulgent.”

“ Listen ! I will tell the cook that if the fare be not regal, he shall be placed in confinement ; and we will try some of the wine of my penitent.”

“ I will aid you with my judgment.”

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BREAKFAST.

GORENFLOT was not long in giving his orders. The cook was summoned.

“Brother Eusèbe,” said Gorenflot, in a severe voice, “listen to what my friend M. Briquet is about to tell you. It seems that you are negligent; and I hear of grave faults in your last soup, and a fatal negligence in the crackling of your ears. Take care, Brother, take care! a single step in a wrong direction may be irremediable.”

The monk grew red and pale by turns, and stammered out an excuse.

“Enough,” said Gorenflot; “what can we have for breakfast to-day?”

“Eggs fried with cocks’ combs.”

“What else?”

“Mushrooms.”

“Well?”

“Crabs cooked with Madeira.”

“Those are all trifles; tell us of something solid.”

“A ham, boiled with pistachios.”

Chicot looked contemptuous.

“Pardon!” cried Eusèbe; “it is cooked in sherry wine.”

Gorenflot hazarded an approving glance towards Chicot.

“Good, is it not, M. Briquet?” said he.

Chicot made a gesture of half-satisfaction.

“And what have you besides?”

“ You can have some eels.”

“ Oh, we will dispense with the eels,” said Chicot.

“ I think, M. Briquet,” replied the cook, “ that you can taste of my eels without regretting it.”

“ What ! are they rarities ?”

“ I nourish them in a particular manner.”

“ Oh, oh !”

“ Yes,” added Gorenflot ; “ it appears that the Romans or the Greeks, I forget which, — a people of Italy, in short, — nourished their lampreys as Eusèbe does his eels. He read of it in an old author called Suetonius.”

“ What ! Brother Eusèbe,” cried Chicot, “ you give men to your eels to eat ?”

“ No, Monsieur ; I mince the intestines and livers of fowls and game with a little pork, and make a kind of sausage-meat, which I throw to my eels, and they are kept in soft water, often renewed, in which they become large and fat. The one which I shall offer you to-day weighs nine pounds.”

“ It must be a serpent !” said Chicot.

“ It swallowed a chicken at a meal.”

“ And how will it be dressed ?”

“ Skinned and fried in anchovy paste, and done with bread-crumbs ; and I shall have the honor of serving it up with a sauce flavored with garlic and allspice, lemons and mustard.”

“ Perfect !” cried Chicot.

Brother Eusèbe breathed again.

“ Then we shall want sweets,” said Gorenflot.

“ I will invent something that shall please you.”

“ Well, then, I trust to you ; be worthy of my confidence.”

Eusèbe bowed and retired. Ten minutes after, they sat down, and the programme was faithfully carried out.

They began like famished men, drank Rhenish wine, Burgundy, and Hermitage, and then attacked that of the fair penitent.

“What do you think of it?” asked Gorenflot.

“Good, but light. What is your penitent’s name?”

“I do not know; she sent an ambassador.”

They ate as long as they could, and then sat drinking and talking, when suddenly a great noise was heard.

“What is that?” asked Chicot.

“It is the exercise which is beginning.”

“Without the chief? Your soldiers are badly disciplined, I fear.”

“Without me! never!” cried Gorenflot, who had become excited with wine. “That cannot be, since it is I who command, I who instruct; and stay, here is Brother Borromée, who comes to take my orders.”

Indeed, as he spoke, Borromée entered, throwing on Chicot a sharp and oblique glance.

“Reverend prior,” said he, “we only wait for you to examine the arms and cuirasses.”

“Cuirasses!” thought Chicot; “I must see this,” and he rose quietly.

“You will be present at our manoeuvres?” said Gorenflot, rising in his turn, like a block of marble on legs. “Your arm, my friend; you shall see some good instruction.”

CHAPTER XXII.

BROTHER BORROMÉE.

WHEN Chicot, sustaining the reverend prior, arrived in the courtyard, he found there two bands of one hundred men each, waiting for their commander. About fifty among the strongest and most zealous had helmets on their heads, and long swords hanging to belts from their waists. Others displayed with pride rounded cuirasses, on which they liked to make a noise with an iron gauntlet. Brother Borromée took a helmet from the hands of a novice, and placed it on his head. While he did so, Chicot looked at it and smiled. "You have a handsome helmet there, Brother Borromée," said he. "Where did you buy it, my dear prior?"

Gorenflot could not reply, for at that moment they were fastening a magnificent cuirass upon him, which, although spacious enough to have covered Hercules Farnese, painfully compressed the undulations of the flesh of the worthy prior. "Not so tight!" cried he. "I shall stifle; stop!"

"You asked the reverend prior, I believe," said Borromée, "where he had purchased my helmet."

"I addressed that question to the reverend prior, and not to you," Chicot replied, "because I presume that in this convent, as in all others, nothing is done except on the order of the superior."

"Certainly," said Gorenflot, "nothing is done here but by my order. What were you asking, dear M. Briquet?"

“I ask Brother Borromée if he knows where that helmet was obtained.”

“It made part of a lot of armor that the reverend prior bought yesterday to arm the convent.”

“I!” said Gorenflot.

“Yes; do you not remember that they brought several cuirasses and helmets here, according to your Reverence’s orders?”

“It is true,” said Gorenflot.

“*Ventre de biche!*” thought Chicot; “my helmet is much attached to me, for after I carried it myself to the Hôtel Guise, it comes, like a lost dog, to find me at the priory of the Jacobins!”

At a sign from Borromée, the monks now formed into lines, while Chicot sat down on a bench to look on.

Gorenflot stood up. “Attention!” whispered Borromée to him.

Gorenflot drew a gigantic sword from the scabbard, and waving it in the air, cried in the voice of a stentor, “Attention!”

“Your Reverence will fatigue yourself, perhaps, in giving the orders,” said Borromée, softly; “if it please you to spare your precious health, I will command to-day.”

“I do indeed wish it,” said Dom Modeste. “In fact, I am suffering; I am stifling. Go on.”

Borromée bowed and placed himself at the head of the troop.

“What a complaisant servant!” said Chicot. “That fellow is a jewel.”

“He is charming; I told you so.”

“I am sure he does the same for you every day.”

“Oh, every day! He is as submissive as a slave.”

“So that you have really nothing to do here, — Brother Borromée acts for you?”

“Oh, *mon Dieu*, yes!”

It was wonderful to see Borromée with his arms in his hands, his eye dilated, and his vigorous arm wielding his sword in so skilful a manner that one would have thought him a trained soldier. Each time that Borromée gave an order, Gorenflot repeated it, adding, “Brother Borromée is right; but I told you all that yesterday. Pass the pike from one hand to the other! Raise it to the level of the eye! A half-turn to the left is exactly the same thing as a half-turn to the right, except that it is just the contrary.”

“*Ventre de biche!* you are a skilful instructor!” said Chicot.

“Yes, I understand it well.”

“And you have in Borromée an apt pupil.”

“He understands me. Oh, yes! he is very intelligent.”

While the monks went through their exercises, Gorenflot said, “You shall see my little Jacques.”

“Who is Jacques?”

“A nice lad, calm-looking, but strong, and quick as lightning. Look! there he is with a musket in his hand, about to fire.”

“And he fires well.”

“That he does.”

“But stay —”

“What is it, then?”

“But if — but no!”

“Do you know my little Jacques?”

“I? not at all.”

“But you thought for a moment that you did?”

“Yes, I thought I had seen him in a certain church one day, or rather one night, when I was shut up in a confessional. But no, I was mistaken; it was not he.”

This time, we must confess, Chicot’s words were not

exactly in accordance with the truth. He was too good a physiognomist ever to forget a face that he had once seen. Meanwhile Jacques loaded a heavy musket, and placing himself at one hundred yards from the mark, fired, and the ball lodged in the centre, amid the applause of the monks.

“That was well done!” cried Chicot.

“Thank you, Monsieur!” said Jacques, whose cheeks colored with pleasure.

“You manage your arms well, my child,” added Chicot.

“I study, Monsieur.”

“But he is best at the sword,” said Gorenflot; “those who understand it say so; and he is practising from morning till night.”

“Ah! let us see,” said Chicot.

“No one here, except perhaps myself, is capable of fencing with him; but will you try him yourself, Monsieur?” said Borromée.

“I am but a poor *bourgeois*,” said Chicot; “formerly I have used my sword like others, but now my legs tremble, and my arm is weak.”

“But you practise still?”

“A little,” replied Chicot, with a smile. “However, you, Brother Borromée, who are all muscle and tendon, give a lesson to Brother Jacques, I beg, if the prior will permit it.”

“I order it,” declaimed the prior.

All the monks came to make a ring around the pupil and the professor. Gorenflot leaned towards his friend and naively said, “It is almost as interesting as to chant vespers, is it not?”

“That is what the light-horse say,” replied Chicot.

The two combatants prepared for the trial. Borromée had the advantage in height and experience. The blood

mounted to the cheeks of Jacques and animated them with a feverish color. Borromée gradually dropped all appearance of a monk, and was completely the master of arms. He accompanied each thrust with a counsel or a reproach; but often the vigor and quickness of Jacques triumphed over the skill of his teacher, who was several times touched. When they paused, Chicot said, "Jacques touched six times, and Borromée nine; that is well for the scholar, but not so well for the master."

A flash, unperceived by all but Chicot, leaped from Borromée's eyes, and revealed a new trait in his character.

"Good!" thought Chicot, "he is proud."

"Monsieur," replied Borromée, in a tone which he endeavored to render calm, "the exercise of arms is a difficult one, especially for poor monks."

"Nevertheless," said Chicot, "the master ought to be at least half as good again as his pupil; and if Jacques were calmer, I am certain he would fence as well as you."

"I do not think so," replied Borromée, biting his lips with anger.

"Well, I am sure of it."

"M. Briquet, who is so clever, had better try Jacques himself," replied Borromée, in a bitter tone.

"Oh! I am old."

"Yes, but learned."

"Ah! you mock," thought Chicot; "but wait." Then he said, "I am certain, however, that Brother Borromée, like a wise master, often let Jacques touch him out of complaisance."

"Ah!" cried Jacques, frowning in his turn.

"No," replied Borromée; "I love Jacques, certainly, but I do not spoil him in that manner. But try yourself, M. Briquet."

“ Oh, no ! ”

“ Come, only one pass ! ”

“ Try, ” said Gorenflot.

“ I will not hurt you, Monsieur, ” said Jacques ; “ I have a very light hand. ”

“ Dear child ! ” murmured Chicot, with a strange glance followed by a smile. “ Well ! ” said he, “ since every one wishes it, I will try ; ” and he rose slowly, and prepared himself with about the agility of a tortoise catching flies.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LESSON.

FENCING was not at that time the science that it is now. The swords, sharp on each side, were used almost as often to strike with the edge as to thrust with the point; besides, the left hand, armed with a dagger, was at the same time offensive and defensive, and hence resulted a number of slight wounds, which in a real combat kept up a continual excitement. Fencing, then in its infancy, consisted in a multitude of evolutions, in which the actor moved continually, and which, on a ground chosen by chance, might be continually impeded by the character of its surface.

It was common to see the fencer throw himself forward, draw back again, or jump to the right or left; so that agility, not only of the hand, but of the legs and of the whole body, was one of the first conditions of the art. Chicot did not appear to have learned in this school, but seemed to anticipate the modern style, of which the superiority and grace is in the agility of the hands and immovability of the body. He stood erect and firm, with a wrist at once strong and supple, and with a sword which seemed a flexible reed from the point to the middle of the blade, and an inflexible steel from the middle to the guard.

After the first passes, Jacques, seeing before him this man of bronze, whose wrist alone seemed alive, gave some impatient passes, which merely made Chicot ex-

tend his arm, and at every opening left by the young man, strike him full on the chest. At each of these strokes of the button, Jacques, red with anger and eagerness, made a leap backwards. For ten minutes he displayed all the resources of his wonderful agility; he flew like a tiger, twisted like a serpent, and bounded from right to left. But Chicot, with his calm air and his long arm, seized his time, and putting aside his adversary's foil, still sent his own to the same place, while Borromée grew pale with anger. At last, Jacques rushed a last time on Chicot, who, parrying his thrust with force, threw the poor fellow off his equilibrium; and he fell, while Chicot himself remained firm as a rock.

"You did not tell us that you were a pillar of the fencing-school," said Borromée, biting his nails with vexation.

"I, a poor *bourgeois*!" said Chicot; "I, Robert Briquet, a pillar of the fencing-school! Ah, Monsieur!"

"But, Monsieur, to manage a sword as you do you must have practised enormously."

"Oh, *mon Dieu*! yes, Monsieur, I have sometimes held the sword, and have always found one thing."

"What is that?"

"That for him who holds it, pride is a bad counsellor, and anger a bad assistant. Now, listen, Jacques," he added; "you have a good wrist, but neither legs nor head. You are quick; but you do not reason. There are three essential things in arms, — first the head, then the hands, and then the legs. With the first you can defend yourself; with the first and second you may conquer; but with all three you can always conquer."

"Ah, Monsieur," said Jacques, "try Brother Borromée; I should like to see it."

"No," said the treasurer; "I should be beaten, and I would rather confess it than prove it."

"How modest and amiable he is!" said Gorenflot.

"On the contrary," whispered Chicot, "he is stupid with vanity. At his age I would have given anything for such a lesson;" and he sat down again.

Jacques approached him, and admiration triumphing over the shame of defeat, "Will you give me some lessons, M. Briquet?" said he; "the prior will permit it, will you not, your Reverence?"

"With pleasure, my child."

"I do not wish to interfere with your master," said Chicot, bowing to Borromée.

"Oh, I am not his only master," said he. "Neither the honor nor the defeat is wholly due to me."

"Who is the other, then?"

"Oh, no one!" cried Borromée, fearing he had committed an imprudence.

"Who is he, Jacques?" asked Chicot.

"I remember," said Gorenflot; "he is a little fat man who comes here sometimes, — a well-appearing man, who is a good drinker."

"I forget his name," said Borromée.

"I know it," said a monk who was standing by. "It is Bussy Leclerc."

"Ah, a good sword!" said Chicot.

Jacques reiterated his request.

"I cannot teach you," said Chicot. "I taught myself by reflection and practice, and I advise you to do the same."

Gorenflot and Chicot now returned to the house.

"I hope," said Gorenflot, with pride, "that this is a house devoted to the king's service, and good for something, eh?"

“ *Peste!* I should think so !” said Chicot. “ One sees fine things, reverend prior, in visiting you.”

“ And all this in one month, — in less than a month.”

“ And done by you ?”

“ Done by me, by me alone, as you see,” said Gorenflot, straightening himself.

“ It is more than I expected, my friend ; and when I return from my mission — ”

“ Ah, true, dear M. Chicot ; let us speak of your mission.”

“ The more willingly because I have a message to send to the king before I go.”

“ To the king, my dear friend ! You correspond with the king ?”

“ Directly.”

“ And you want a messenger ?”

“ Yes.”

“ Will you have one of our monks ? It would be an honor to the priory.”

“ Willingly.”

“ Then you are restored to favor ?”

“ More than ever.”

“ Then,” said Gorenflot, “ you can tell the king all that we are doing here in his interest.”

“ I shall not fail to do so.”

“ Ah, my dear Chicot !” cried Gorenflot, who already believed himself a bishop.

“ But first I have two requests to make.”

“ Speak.”

“ First, money, which the king will restore to you.”

“ Money ! I have my coffers full.”

“ Faith ! you are fortunate.”

“ Will you have a thousand crowns ?”

"No, that is far too much ; I am modest in my tastes, humble in my desires, and my title of ambassador does not make me proud ; I conceal it rather than boast of it ; therefore one hundred crowns will suffice."

"Here they are ; and the second thing ?"

"An attendant."

"An attendant ?"

"Yes, to accompany me ; I like society."

"Ah, my friend, if I were but free, as formerly."

"But you are not."

"Greatness enslaves me," murmured Gorenflot.

"Alas !" said Chicot, "one cannot do everything at once. But not being able to have your honorable company, my dear prior, I will content myself with that of the little Jacques ; he pleases me."

"You are right, Chicot ; he is a rare lad, who will go far."

"I will begin by taking him two hundred and fifty leagues, if you will permit it."

"He is yours, my friend."

The prior struck a bell, and when the servant appeared, said, "Let Brother Jacques come here, and also our messenger."

Ten minutes after, both appeared at the door.

"Jacques," said Gorenflot, "I give you a special mission."

"Me ?" cried the young man, astonished.

"Yes, you are to accompany M. Robert Briquet on a long journey."

"Oh !" cried he, enthusiastically, "that will be delightful. We shall fight every day, shall we not, Monsieur ?"

"Yes, my child."

"And I may take my arquebuse ?"

"Certainly."

Jacques bounded joyfully from the room.

'As to the message, I beg you to give your orders. Advance, Brother Panurge.'

"Panurge!" said Chicot, to whom the name recalled certain pleasing remembrances, "Panurge!"

"Alas! yes," said Gorenflot; "I have chosen this brother, called Panurge like the other, to make journeys as the other did."

"Then our old friend is out of service."

"He is dead."

"Oh!" said Chicot, in a tone of sympathy; "but then he must have become quite old."

"Nineteen years, my friend; he was nineteen years old."

"That is a case of remarkable longevity," said Chicot; "it is only in convents that one finds such instances."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PENITENT.

PANURGE advanced. There was certainly nothing in either his moral or his physical character that entitled him to receive the name of an ass; he resembled a fox rather, with his small eyes, pointed nose, and projecting jaw. Chicot looked at him a moment, and in that moment measured his value as a messenger of the convent. Panurge remained humbly near the door.

“Come here, Monsieur the Courier,” said Chicot. “Do you know the Louvre?”

“Yes, Monsieur.”

“And in the Louvre a certain Henri de Valois?”

“The king?”

“I am not so sure about that; but people generally call him so.”

“Is it to him that I am to go?”

“Precisely; you will ask to speak to him.”

“Will they let me?”

“Yes, till you come to his *valet de chambre*. Your frock is a passport, for the king is very religious.”

“And what shall I say to the *valet de chambre*?”

“Say you are sent by the Shade.”

“What shade?”

“Curiosity is a vice, my brother.”

“Pardon!”

“Say then that you are sent by the Shade.”

“Yes.”

“And that you want the letter.”

“What letter?”

“Again!”

“Ah! true.”

“My Reverend,” said Chicot, turning to Gorenflot, “decidedly I liked better the other Panurge.”

“Is that all I am to do?” asked the courier.

“You will add that the Shade will wait for it, going slowly along the road to Charenton.”

“It is on that road, then, that I am to join you?”

“Exactly.”

Panurge went to the door and lifted the *portière* to go out. It appeared to Chicot that in lifting the *portière* Brother Panurge had unmasked a listener. Chicot's acute mind was satisfied that Brother Borromée was listening.

“Ah, you listen,” thought he; “so much the better, I will say something for your benefit.”

“So,” said Gorenflot, “here you are, honored with a mission from the king, dear friend?”

“Yes, confidential.”

“It relates to politics, I presume.”

“So do I.”

“What! you don't know with what mission you are charged?”

“I know that I am to carry a letter, that is all.”

“A State secret, probably?”

“I think so.”

“And you have no suspicion?”

“We are sufficiently alone for me to tell you what I think, are we not?”

“Speak; I am a tomb for secrets.”

“Well, the king has finally decided to send aid to the Duc d'Anjou.”

“Really?”

“Yes; M. de Joyeuse was to set out last night for that purpose.”

“But you, my friend?”

“I go towards Spain.”

“How do you travel?”

“Oh, anyhow; on foot, on horseback, in a carriage, — just as it happens.”

“Jacques will be good company for you.”

“Thanks, my good friend. I have now, I think, only to make my adieux.”

“Adieu; I will give you my benediction.”

“Bah! it is useless between us.”

“You are right; but it does for strangers;” and they embraced.

“Jacques!” called the prior; “Jacques!”

Borromée appeared.

“Brother Jacques!” repeated the prior.

“Jacques has gone.”

“What! gone?” cried Chicot.

“Did you not wish some one to go to the Louvre?”

“Yes; but it was Panurge,” said Gorenflot.

“Oh! stupid that I am,” cried Borromée, “I understood it to be Jacques.”

Chicot frowned; but Borromée appeared so sorry that it was impossible to say much. “I will wait, then,” said he, “till Jacques returns.”

Borromée bowed, frowning in his turn. “By the way,” said he, “I forgot to announce to your Reverence — and I came up for that — that the unknown lady has arrived and desires to speak to you.”

“Is she alone?” asked Gorenflot.

“No; she has a squire with her.”

“Is she young?”

Borromée lowered his eyes.

“Good ! he is a hypocrite,” said Chicot to himself.

“She appeared still young,” said Borromée.

“My friend,” said Gorenflot, turning towards Chicot, “you understand?”

“I will leave you,” said Chicot, “and wait in a neighboring room or in the court.”

“It is far from here to the Louvre, Monsieur,” said Borromée ; “and Jacques may be delayed, or they may hesitate to confide an important letter to a child.”

“You make these reflections rather late,” replied Chicot ; “however, I will go on the road to Charenton, and you can send him after me.” And he turned to the staircase.

“Not that way, if you please,” said Borromée, “the lady is coming up, and she does not wish to meet any one.”

“You are right,” said Chicot, smiling ; “I will take the little staircase.”

“Do you know the way?”

“Perfectly.” And Chicot went out through a cabinet which led to another room, from which led the secret staircase. The room was full of armor, swords, muskets, and pistols.

“They hide Jacques from me,” thought Chicot, “and they hide the lady ; therefore, of course I ought to do exactly the opposite to what they want me to do. I will wait for the return of Jacques, and I will watch the mysterious lady. Oh, here is a fine shirt-of-mail thrown into a corner ; it is much too small for the prior, and would fit me admirably. I will borrow it from Gorenflot, and give it to him again when I return.” And he folded it together and slipped it under his doublet. He had just finished when Borromée entered.

Chicot pretended to be admiring the arms.

“Is Monsieur seeking some arms to suit him?” asked Borromée.

“I! *mon Dieu!* what do I want with arms?”

“You use them so well.”

“Theory, all theory; I may use my arms well, but the heart of a soldier is always wanting in a poor *bourgeois* like me. And then my breath fails me, and my legs are execrable; that is my principal defect.”

“Permit me to observe, Monsieur, that that defect is even more important in travelling than in a passage-at-arms.”

“Ah! you know that I am travelling?” said Chicot, carelessly.

“Panurge told me,” replied Borromée, coloring.

“That is queer; I thought I had n’t spoken of that to Panurge. But no matter; I have no reason to conceal myself. Yes, my brother, I am making a little journey; I am going to my own country, where I have property.”

“Do you know, M. Briquet, that you have procured Brother Jacques a great honor?”

“That of accompanying me?”

“Yes, but especially that of seeing the king.”

“Or his valet; for it is quite probable that Jacques will get no farther.”

“You are, then, on intimate footing at the Louvre?”

“Oh, most intimate, Monsieur! It is I who furnish the king and the young noblemen of the court with hosiery.”

“The king?”

“I had his custom already when he was Duc d’Anjou. On his return from Poland he remembered me, and made me furnisher for his court.”

“It is a fine acquaintance you have there, M. Briquet.”

“The acquaintance with his Majesty?”

“Yes.”

“Every one would n’t say so, Brother Borromée.”

“Oh! the Leaguers?”

“Every one is more or less a Leaguer now.”

“You, surely, are not much of a Leaguer?”

“I? why do you say that?”

“When one knows the king personally.”

“Eh, eh! I have my politics, like every one else.”

“Yes, but your politics are in harmony with those of the king.”

“Don’t be too sure of that; we often dispute.”

“If you disagree, how is it that he intrusts you with a mission?”

“A commission, you mean.”

“Mission or commission, it is the same; the one or the other implies confidence.”

“Pshaw! if I know enough to take my measures, that is all the king expects.”

“Your measures?”

“Yes.”

“Political or financial measures?”

“No, measures of cloth.”

“What!” said Borromée, stupefied.

“Certainly; you can easily comprehend.”

“I listen.”

“You know that the king has made a pilgrimage to Notre-Dame de Chartres.”

“Yes, to obtain an heir.”

“Exactly. You know there is a sure way of arriving at the result which the king desires.”

“It appears, at any rate, that the king does not employ that method.”

“Brother Borromée!”

“What is it?”

“You know well that the only question is to obtain an heir to the crown by miracle, and not otherwise.”

“And that miracle they seek —”

“At Notre-Dame de Chartres.”

“Ah, yes! the chemise?”

“Yes, the king has taken her chemise from that good Notre-Dame, and has given it to the queen; and in exchange for that chemise he wishes to bestow a robe like that of the Notre-Dame de Toledo, which is said to be the most beautiful and the richest robe of the Virgin in the world.”

“So that you are going —”

“To Toledo, dear Brother Borromée; to Toledo, to take the measure of that robe and make one like it.”

Borromée appeared to hesitate whether he ought to believe or not the words of Chicot. After mature reflection, we are authorized to think he did not believe.

“You can judge, then,” continued Chicot, as if not suspecting what was going on in the treasurer’s mind, “how agreeable to me must be the company of men of the Church under such circumstances. But time passes, and Jacques cannot be long delayed; I will go and wait for him at the Croix Faubin.”

“I think that will be best.”

“Then you will tell him as soon as he comes?”

“Yes.”

“And send him after me?”

“I will not fail.”

“Thanks, Brother Borromée; I am enchanted to have made your acquaintance.”

He went out by the little staircase, and Borromée locked the door behind him.

“I must see the lady,” thought Chicot.

He went out of the priory and went on the road he had named ; then, when out of sight, he turned back, crept along a ditch, and gained, unseen, a thick hedge which extended before the priory. Here he waited to see Jacques return or the lady go out.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE AMBUSH.

CHICOT made a slight opening through the hedge, that he might see those who came and went. The road was almost deserted as far as he could see ; there was no one but a man poorly clothed measuring the ground with a long pointed stick. Chicot had nothing to do, and therefore was preparing to watch this man, when a more important object attracted his attention.

The window of Gorenflot's room opened with folding-doors upon a balcony ; and Chicot saw them open, and Gorenflot come out, with his most gallant manner and winning smile, leading a lady almost hidden under a mantle of velvet and fur.

“ Oh ! ” thought Chicot, “ here is the penitent. She looks young ; it is very odd, but I find resemblances in every one I see. And here comes the squire. As for him, there is no mistake ; I know him, and if he be Mayneville, — *ventre de biche !* — why should not the lady be Madame de Montpensier ? And, yes, *morbleu !* it is the duchess ! ”

After a moment, he saw the pale head of Borromée behind them.

“ What are they about ? ” thought Chicot. “ Does the duchess want to board with Gorenflot ? ”

At this moment Chicot saw M. de Mayneville make a sign to some one outside. Chicot looked round ; but there

was no one to be seen but the man measuring. It was to him, however, that the sign was addressed, for he had ceased measuring, and was looking towards the balcony. Gorenflot continued his courtesies to the penitent. M. de Mayneville whispered something to Borromée, and the latter began immediately to gesticulate behind the prior, in a manner unintelligible to Chicot, but apparently clear to this man, for he went to another place, where, on a new sign from Borromée and Mayneville, he remained fixed like a statue. After a few seconds, upon another sign made by Brother Borromée, he began a sort of exercise which engaged Chicot's attention the more, because he could not divine its purpose. He began to run quickly towards the gate of the priory, while M. de Mayneville held his watch in his hand.

"The devil!" said Chicot; "all this looks suspicious. The enigma is well put, but perhaps I could solve it, could I but see the face of that man of measures."

At that moment the man looked around; and Chicot recognized Nicolas Poulain, — the man to whom he had sold his armor the day before. Shortly after, they all re-entered the room and shut the window, and then the duchess and her squire came out of the priory and went towards the litter which waited for them. Gorenflot accompanied them to the door, exhausting himself in bows and salutations. The curtains of the litter were still open, when a monk, in whom Chicot recognized Jacques, advanced from the Porte St. Antoine, approached, and looked earnestly into it. The duchess then went away, and Nicolas Poulain was following, when Chicot called out from his hiding-place, "Come here, if you please!"

Poulain started, and turned his head.

"Do not seem to notice, M. Nicolas Poulain," said Chicot.

The lieutenant started again. "Who are you, and what do you want?" asked he.

"I am a friend, new but intimate. What I want will take long to explain; come here to me."

"To you?"

"Yes; here in the ditch."

"What for?"

"You shall know when you come."

"But —"

"Come and sit down here, without appearing to notice me."

"Monsieur!"

"Oh! M. Robert Briquet has the right to be exacting."

"Robert Briquet!" cried Poulain, doing as he was desired.

"That is right; it seems you were taking measures in the road."

"I?"

"Yes; there is nothing surprising that you should be a surveyor, especially as you acted under the eyes of such great people."

"Great people! I do not understand."

"What! you did not know?"

"What do you mean?"

"You did not know who that lady and gentleman on the balcony were?"

"I declare —"

"Oh, how fortunate I am to be able to enlighten you! Only imagine, M. Poulain; you had for admirers Madame de Montpensier and M. de Mayneville. Do not go away. If a still more illustrious person — the king — saw you —"

"The king?"

"His Majesty, yes, M. Poulain; he is very quick, I assure you, to admire and recompense labor."

“ Ah, M. Briquet, for pity’s sake ! ”

“ If you move, dear M. Poulain, you are a dead man ; keep still, therefore, and avoid that disgrace.”

“ But in the name of Heaven, what do you want with me ? ”

“ Your good, — nothing else ; have I not said that I am your friend ? ”

“ Monsieur,” cried Nicolas Poulain, in despair, “ I do not know what wrong I have ever done to the king, or to you, or to anybody ! ”

“ Dear M. Poulain, my ideas may be wrong, but it seems to me that the king would not approve of his lieutenant of the provosty acting as surveyor for M. de Mayneville ; and that he might also take it ill that you should omit in your daily report the entrance of Madame de Montpensier and M. de Mayneville yesterday into his good city of Paris.”

“ M. Briquet, an omission is not a crime ; and his Majesty is too good — ”

“ M. Poulain, I see clearer than you ; and I see — ”

“ What ? ”

“ A gallows.”

“ M. Briquet ! ”

“ And more, — a new cord, four soldiers at the four cardinal points, a number of Parisians around, and a certain lieutenant of my acquaintance at the end of the cord.”

Nicolas Poulain trembled so that he shook the hedge. “ Monsieur ! ” cried he, clasping his hands.

“ But I am your friend, dear M. Poulain, and I will give you a counsel.”

“ A counsel ? ”

“ Yes ; and very easy to follow. Go at once, — at once, you understand, — to — ”

“Whom?”

“Let me think. To M. d'Épernon.”

“M. d'Épernon, the king's friend?”

“Exactly; you will take him aside —”

“M. d'Épernon?”

“Yes, and you will tell him all about that measuring of the road.”

“Is this madness, Monsieur?”

“It is wisdom, on the contrary, the highest wisdom.”

“I don't understand.”

“It is clear, nevertheless. If I denounce you as the man of the cuirasses and measures, they will hang you; but if, on the contrary, you disclose all with a good grace, they will reward you. You do not appear convinced, however. Well, that will give me the trouble of returning to the Louvre, but I do not mind doing that for you;” and he began to rise.

“No, no; stay here! I will go.”

“Good! But you understand, — no subterfuges, or to-morrow I shall send a little note to the king, of whom I have the honor — such as you see me, or rather such as you do not see me — to be the intimate friend; so that if you are not hanged till the day after to-morrow, you will only be hanged the higher.”

“I will go,” said the lieutenant, terrified; “but you strangely abuse —”

“Eh, dear M. Poulain, erect altars to me. Five minutes ago you were a traitor, and I make you the savior of your country. Now, go quickly, for I am in a hurry! The Hôtel d'Épernon; do not forget.”

Nicolas Poulain ran off with a despairing look.

“Ah, it was time!” said Chicot, “for some one is leaving the priory. But it is not Jacques; that fellow is half as tall again.”

Chicot then hastened to the Croix Faubin, where he had given the rendezvous. The monk who was there to meet him was a giant in height ; his monk's robe, hastily thrown on, did not hide his muscular limbs, and his face bore anything but a religious expression. His arms were as long as Chicot's own ; and he had a knife in his belt.

As Chicot approached, he turned and said, "Are you M. Robert Briquet?"

"I am."

"Then I have a letter for you from the reverend prior."

Chicot took the letter and read as follows : —

MY DEAR FRIEND, — I have reflected since we parted ; it is impossible for me to let the lamb which the Lord has confided to me go among the devouring wolves of the world. I mean, you understand, our little Jacques Clement, who has been received by the king and has fully performed your errand. Instead of him, who is too young, I send you a good and worthy brother of our order ; his manners are good and his humor innocent, and I am sure you will like him. I send you my benediction. Adieu, dear friend.

"What fine writing !" said Chicot ; "I will wager it is the treasurer's."

"It was Brother Borromée who wrote it," said the Goliath.

"In that case," said Chicot, smiling pleasantly at the great monk, "you will return to the priory, my friend."

"I?"

"Yes ; and tell his Reverence that I have changed my mind, and intend to travel alone."

"What ! you will not take me, Monsieur?" said the man, with astonishment, mixed with menace.

"No, my friend, no."

"And why, if you please?"

“ Because I must be economical, and you would eat too much.”

“ Jacques eats as much as I do.”

“ Yes ; but Jacques is a monk.”

“ And what am I ?”

“ You, my friend, are a gendarme, or a foot-soldier.”

“ What do you mean ? Do you not see my monk’s robe ? ”

“ The dress does not make the monk, my friend ; but the knife makes the soldier. Tell Brother Borromée that, if you please.”

The giant disappeared, grumbling, like a beaten hound. As to our traveller, as soon as he had seen the man enter the great gate of the convent, he hid himself behind a hedge, took off his doublet, and put on the fine shirt-of-mail which we have mentioned. Having done that, he struck across country for the road to Charenton.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE GUISES.

ON the evening of the same day on which Chicot set out for Navarre, we find again, in a large room at the Hôtel Guise, the person who, disguised as a page, had entered Paris behind Carmainges, and who was also, as we know, the penitent of Gorenflot. On this occasion no precaution had been taken to disguise her person or her sex. Madame de Montpensier, elegantly dressed, her hair glittering with precious stones, was waiting impatiently for some one.

At last a horse's step was heard ; and the usher almost immediately announced M. le Duc de Mayenne. Madame de Montpensier ran to her brother so hastily that she forgot to proceed on the point of the right foot, as was her habit, in order to conceal her lameness. "Alone, Brother?" said she ; "you are alone?"

"Yes, my sister," said the duke, seating himself, after kissing the duchess's hand.

"But Henri ; where is Henri ? Do you know that every one expects him here ?"

"Henri has nothing to do here, and plenty to do in Flanders and Picardy. We have work to do there ; and why should we leave it to come here, where our work is done ?"

"But where it will be quickly undone, if you do not hasten."

“Bah !”

“Bah as much as you please, Brother ; I tell you the citizens will be put off no longer ; they insist upon seeing their Duc Henri.”

“They shall see him at the right time. And Salcède ?”

“Is dead.”

“Without speaking ?”

“Without uttering a word.”

“Good ! and the arming ?”

“Finished.”

“And Paris ?”

“Is divided into sixteen quarters.”

“And each quarter has the chief whom we have appointed ?”

“Yes.”

“Then let us live in peace ; and so I shall say to our good *bourgeoisie*.”

“They will not listen to you.”

“Bah !”

“I tell you they are furious.”

“My sister, you judge others by your own impatience. What Henri says, must be done ; and he says we are to remain quiet.”

“What is to be done, then ?” asked the duchess, impatiently.

“What do you wish to do ?”

“Firstly, to take the king.”

“That is your fixed idea ; I do not say it is bad, if it could be done, but think how often we have failed already.”

“Times are changed ; the king has no longer defenders.”

“No ; except the Swiss, Scotch, and French guards.”

“My brother, when you wish it, I will show you the king on the road with only two lackeys.”

“I have heard that a hundred times, and never seen it once.”

“You will see it if you stay here only three days.”

“Still another project?”

“A plan, if you please.”

“In that case, tell me about it.”

“Oh! it is only a woman’s idea; and you will laugh at it.”

“God forbid that I should wound your pride as an author! But let me hear the plan.”

“You are laughing at me, Mayenne.”

“No, I am listening.”

“Very well; in four words it is —”

At this moment M. de Mayneville was announced.

“My accomplice,” said the duchess; “let him enter.”

M. de Mayneville entered, and approaching the Duc de Mayenne, kissed his hand. “One word, Monseigneur,” said he; “your arrival is suspected at the Louvre.”

“How so?”

“I was conversing with the captain of the guard at St. Germain l’Auxerrois, when two Gascons passed.”

“Do you know them?”

“No; they were quite newly dressed. ‘*Cap de Bioux!*’ said one, ‘you have a magnificent doublet; but it will not render you so much service as your cuirass of yesterday.’ ‘Bah!’ said the other; ‘however heavy the sword of M. de Mayenne may be, it will do no more harm to this satin than to my cuirass;’ and then he went on in a series of bravadoes, which showed that they knew you were near.”

“And to whom did these men belong?”

“I do not know; they talked so loudly that some passers-by approached, and asked if you were really coming. They were about to reply, when a man ap-

proached, whom I think was Loignac, and touched them on the shoulder. He said some words in a low voice, and they looked submissive, and accompanied him, so that I know no more ; but be on your guard !”

“ You did not follow them ?”

“ Yes, but from afar. They went towards the Louvre and disappeared behind the Hôtel des Meubles.”

“ I have a very simple method of reply,” said the duke.

“ What is it ?” asked his sister.

“ To go and pay my respects to the king to-night.”

“ To the king ?”

“ Certainly. I have come to Paris ; I bring him news from Picardy, — he can have nothing to say against that.”

“ The idea is good,” said Mayneville.

“ It is imprudent,” said the duchess.

“ It is indispensable, Sister, if they indeed suspect my arrival. Besides it was the advice of Henri that I should go at once and present to the king the respects of the family ; that once done, I am free, and can receive whom I please.”

“ The members of the committee, for example, who expect you.”

“ I will receive them at the Hôtel St. Denis on my return from the Louvre. You will wait for us, if you please, my sister.”

“ Here ?”

“ No ; at the Hôtel St. Denis, where I have left my equipages. I shall be there in two hours.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE LOUVRE.

THAT same day, about noon, the king came out of his cabinet and called for M. d'Épernon. The duke, when he came, found the king attentively examining a young Jacobin, who blushed and lowered his eyes under the searching scrutiny of the king.

The king took D'Épernon aside. "Look, what an odd-looking monk!" said he.

"Does your Majesty think so? I think him very ordinary."

"Really!" Then to the monk the king said, "What is your name?"

"Brother Jacques, Sire."

"Your family name?"

"Clement."

"Good! You have performed your commission very well."

"What commission, Sire?" said the duke, with his wonted familiarity.

"Nothing!" said Henri. "It is a little secret between me and some one you do not know."

"How strangely you look at the lad, Sire! You embarrass him."

"It is true; I know not why, but it seems to me that I have seen him before; perhaps it was in a dream. Go, my child; I will send the letter to him who asks for it. Be easy. D'Épernon, give him ten crowns."

"Thanks, Sire," said the monk.

"You did not say that as if you meant it," said D'Épernon, who did not understand a monk despising ten crowns.

"I would rather have one of those beautiful Spanish knives on the wall," said Jacques.

"What! you do not prefer money?"

"I have made a vow of poverty."

"Give him a knife, then, and let him go, Lavalette," said the king.

The duke chose one of the least costly and gave it to him. Jacques took it, quite joyful to possess such a beautiful weapon. When he had gone, the king said to D'Épernon, "Duke, have you among your Forty-five two or three men who can ride?"

"Twelve, at least, Sire; and in a month all will be good horsemen."

"Then choose two, and let them come to me at once."

The duke went out, and calling Loignac, said to him, "Choose me two good horsemen, to execute a commission for his Majesty."

Loignac went to the gallery where they were lodged, and called M. de Carmainges and M. de Sainte-Maline. They soon appeared, and were conducted to the duke, who presented them to the king. The duke then withdrew, and the two young men remained.

"You are of my Forty-five, gentlemen?" said the king.

"I have that honor, Sire," said Sainte-Maline.

"And you, Monsieur?"

"And I also, Sire," replied Carmainges; "and I am devoted to your Majesty's service, as much as any one in the world."

"Good! Then mount your horses, and take the road to Tours; do you know it?"

“ We will inquire.”

“ Go by way of Charenton.”

“ Yes, Sire.”

“ And proceed till you overtake a man travelling alone.”

“ Will your Majesty describe him ?” said Sainte-Maline.

“ He has long arms and legs, and has a large sword by his side.”

“ May we know his name, Sire ?” asked Carmainges.

“ He is called ‘ the Shade.’”

“ We will ask the name of every traveller we see, Sire.”

“ And we will search the hotels.”

“ When you find him, give him this letter.”

Both the young men held out their hands.

The king remained for a moment embarrassed. “ What is your name ?” said he to one of them.

“ Ernauton de Carmainges, Sire.”

“ And yours ?”

“ René de Sainte-Maline.”

“ M. de Carmainges, you shall carry the letter ; and you, M. de Sainte-Maline, shall deliver it.”

Ernauton took the precious charge, and was going to place it in his doublet, when Sainte-Maline stopped him, kissed the letter, and then returned it to Ernauton. This made Henri smile. “ Come, gentlemen,” said he ; “ I see I shall be well served.”

“ Is this all, Sire ?”

“ Yes, gentlemen ; only our last recommendation. This letter is more precious than the life of a man. Upon your lives, do not lose it. Give it secretly to the Shade, who will give you a receipt for it, which you will bring back to me ; and above all, travel as though it were on your own affairs. Go.”

The two young men went out, — Ernauton full of joy, and Sainte-Maline full of jealousy. M. d’Épernon waited

for them, and wished to question them, but Ernauton replied, "Monsieur the Duke, the king did not authorize us to speak."

They went to the stables, and the king's huntsman gave them two strong horses. M. d'Épernon would have followed them, but at that moment he was told that a man wished to speak to him at once.

"Who is he?" he asked.

"The lieutenant of the provosty of Paris."

"*Parfandious!* am I sheriff or provost?"

"No, Monseigneur; but you are a friend of the king, and, as such, I beg you to hear me," said a humble voice at his side.

The duke turned. Near him was a man bowing perpetually.

"Who are you?" asked the duke.

"Nicolas Poulain, at your service, Monseigneur."

"And you wish to speak to me?"

"I beg for that favor."

"I have no time."

"Not even to hear a secret?"

"I hear a hundred every day, Monsieur. Yours would make a hundred and one; that would be one too many."

"But this concerns the life of his Majesty," said Poulain, in a low voice.

"Oh, oh! then come into my cabinet."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE REVELATION.

M. d'ÉPERNON, while crossing the antechamber, addressed himself to one of the gentlemen who stood there. "What is your name, Monsieur?" said he.

"Pertinax de Moncrabeau, Monseigneur."

"Well, M. de Moncrabeau, place yourself at that door, and let no one enter."

"Yes, Monsieur the Duke;" and M. Pertinax, who was sumptuously dressed, with a blue satin doublet and orange stockings, obeyed. Nicolas Poulain followed the duke into his cabinet. He saw the door open and shut, then the *portière* fall over the door, and he began to tremble.

"Now let us hear your conspiracy," said the duke.

"Oh, Monsieur the Duke, it concerns the most frightful crimes."

"They wish to kill me, I suppose."

"It does not concern you, Monsieur; it is the king. They wish to carry him off."

"Oh, again that old story," replied the duke, disdainfully.

"This time the thing is serious, Monsieur the Duke."

"On what day do they intend to do it?"

"The first time that his Majesty goes to Vincennes in his litter."

"How will they do it?"

"By killing his two attendants."

“And who will do it?”

“Madame de Montpensier.”

D'Épernon began to laugh. “That poor duchess! what things are attributed to her!”

“Less than she projects, Monsieur.”

“And she occupies herself with that at Soissons?”

“No; she is in Paris.”

“In Paris!”

“I can answer for it.”

“Have you seen her?”

“Yes.”

“That is to say, you thought you did.”

“I have had the honor of speaking to her.”

“The honor!”

“I am wrong; the misfortune.”

“But, my dear lieutenant, the duchess cannot carry off the king.”

“With her associates, of course.”

“And where will she be when this takes place?”

“At a window of the Jacobin priory, which is, as you know, on the road to Vincennes.”

“What the devil do you tell me?”

“The truth, Monsieur; all is prepared to stop the litter at the gate of the priory.”

“And who made the preparations?”

“Alas!”

“Finish quickly!”

“I did, Monseigneur.”

D'Épernon started back. “You, who denounce them?”

“Monsieur, a good servant should risk all in the service of the king.”

“*Mordieu!* you risk hanging.”

“I prefer death to infamy, or to the death of the king; therefore I came. And I thought, Monsieur the Duke,

that you, the friend of the king, would not betray me, and would turn my news to good account."

The duke looked fixedly at Poulain. "There must be more in it," said he; "resolute as the duchess is, she would not attempt such an enterprise alone."

"She expects her brother."

"The Duc Henri?" cried D'Épernon, with the terror one might feel on the approach of a lion.

"No, Monsieur; only the Duc de Mayenne."

"Ah, good!" said D'Épernon; "now I must set to work to counteract these fine projects."

"Doubtless, Monsieur; it was for that I hastened hither."

"If you have spoken the truth, you shall be rewarded."

"Why should I lie, Monseigneur, — I, who eat the king's bread? If you do not believe me, I will go to the king himself, and will die, if I must, to prove my words."

"No, *parfandious!* you shall not go to the king; you shall have to deal with me alone."

"So be it, Monseigneur; I said that only because you seemed to hesitate."

"No, I do not hesitate; and to begin with, I owe you a thousand crowns, and you shall keep this secret between you and me."

"I have a family, Monsieur."

"Well! a thousand crowns, *parfandious!*"

"If they knew in Lorraine that I had spoken, each word would cost me a pint of blood; and in case of any misfortune, my family must be able to live, therefore I accept a thousand crowns."

"To the devil with your explanation! What matters it to me for what reason you accept, so long as you do not refuse? The thousand crowns are yours."

“ Thank you, Monseigneur.”

The duke approached a coffer. Poulain thought it was for the money, and held out his hand, but the duke only drew out a little book and wrote, “ Three thousand livres to M. Nicolas Poulain.” “ It is as if you had them,” said he.

Nicolas bowed, and looked puzzled.

“ Then it is agreed ? ” said the duke.

“ What is agreed, Monseigneur ? ”

“ That you will continue to instruct me ? ”

Nicolas hesitated ; it was the office of a spy that was imposed on him.

“ What ! has your noble devotion vanished already ? ”

“ No, Monseigneur.”

“ Then I may count on you ? ”

“ You may.”

“ And I alone know this ? ”

“ You alone.”

“ Now you may go, my friend ; and, *parfondious !* let M. de Mayenne look to himself ! ”

When D'Épernon returned to the king he found him playing at cup and ball. D'Épernon assumed a thoughtful air, but the king did not remark it. However, as the duke remained obstinately silent, the king raised his head and said, “ Well, Lavalette, what is the matter ? Are you dead ? ”

“ I wish I were,” replied D'Épernon ; “ I should not see what I do see.”

“ What, my cup and ball ? ”

“ Sire, in a time of great peril the subject may be alarmed for the safety of his master.”

“ What ! again perils ? devil take you, Duke ! ”

“ Then you are ignorant of what is going on ? ”

“ Faith ! yes, perhaps.”

“Your most cruel enemies surround you at this moment.”

“Bah! who are they?”

“First, the Duchesse de Montpensier.”

“Yes, that is true; she came to see Salcède. But what is that to me?”

“You knew it, then?”

“You see I did, since I tell it to you.”

“But that M. de Mayenne has arrived, did you know that also?”

“Yes, since yesterday evening.”

“What! this secret?” cried D’Épernon, with a disagreeable surprise.

“Are there, then, any secrets from the king? You are zealous, dear Lavalette, but you are slow. This news would have been good at four o’clock yesterday, but to-day —”

“Well, Sire, to-day?”

“It comes a little late, you will admit?”

“Still too soon, Sire, it seems, since you will not listen to me.”

“I have been listening for half an hour.”

“You are menaced; they lay ambushes for you.”

“Well, yesterday you gave me a guard, and assured me that my immortality was secured. Are your Forty-five no longer worth anything?”

“Your Majesty shall see what they are.”

“I should not be sorry, Duke; when shall I see?”

“Sooner perhaps than you think.”

“Ah! you want to frighten me.”

“You shall see, Sire. By the way, when do you go to Vincennes?”

“On Saturday.”

“That is enough, Sire.” D’Épernon bowed and withdrew.

CHAPTER XXIX.

TWO FRIENDS.

WE will now follow the two young men sent by the king. Scarcely on horseback, Ernauton and Sainte-Maline, determined that one should not get before the other, nearly crushed each other in the gateway. The face of Sainte-Maline became purple, and that of Ernauton pale.

"You hurt me, Monsieur," cried the former after they had passed through; "do you wish to crush me?"

"You also hurt me, only I did not complain."

"You wish to give a lesson, I believe?"

"I wish to give you nothing."

"Ah!" cried Sainte-Maline, urging forward his horse so as to be nearer his companion, "pray repeat that."

"You are seeking a quarrel, are you not?" replied Ernauton, quietly; "so much the worse for you."

"And why should I wish to quarrel? I do not know you," answered Sainte-Maline, disdainfully.

"You know me well, Monsieur; for in the country from which we come my house is but two leagues from yours, and I am well known there, being of an old family. But you are furious at seeing me in Paris when you thought that you alone were sent for; also, because the king gave me the letter to carry."

"Well," said Sainte-Maline, white with anger; "I admit all that you say; but there is one result."

"What is it?"

"That I do not like to be near you."

“Go away, then ; *pardieu*, I do not want to keep you.”

“You appear not to understand me.”

“On the contrary, I understand perfectly. You would like to take the letter from me and carry it yourself ; but unfortunately you must kill me first.”

“And who tells you that I do not wish to do that ?”

“To desire and to do are two different things.”

“Descend with me to the banks of the water, and you will see that with me they are the same.”

“My dear monsieur, when the king gives me a letter to carry, I carry it.”

“I will tear it from you by force.”

“You will not force me, I hope, to shoot you like a dog.”

“You !”

“Yes ; I have a pistol, and you have not.”

“You shall pay for this.”

“I trust so, after my commission is over ; but meanwhile I beg you to observe that as we belong to the king it is setting a bad example to quarrel.”

Sainte-Maline was furious, and bit his fingers with rage.

“There, there, Monsieur !” said Ernauton, “keep your hands to hold the sword when we shall come to that.”

“Oh, I shall burst !” cried Sainte-Maline.

“A task less for me,” said Ernauton.

It is impossible to say how far the still increasing rage of Sainte-Maline would have carried him, for suddenly Ernauton, in crossing the Rue St. Antoine, saw a litter, and uttering a cry of surprise, stopped short to look at a woman half-veiled. “My page of yesterday !” he murmured. The lady gave no indication that she recognized him, but leaned back in her litter.

“*Cordieu !* you keep me waiting,” said Sainte-Maline, — “and that to look at women !”

“I beg pardon, Monsieur,” said Ernauton, resuming his course.

The young men now rode on without speaking. Sainte-Maline soon discovered, to his chagrin, that his horse was not as good as Ernauton's, and could hardly keep pace with him. This annoyed him so much that he began to quarrel with his horse, and he so tormented him with whip and spur that at last the animal started off and made for the river Bièvre, where he got rid of his rider by throwing him in. One might have heard half a mile off the imprecations of Sainte-Maline, although he was half stifled by the water. By the time he scrambled out, his horse had got some little way off. He himself was wet and muddy, and his face bleeding with scratches, and he felt sure that it was useless to try and catch it; and to complete his vexation he saw Ernauton going down a cross-road which he judged to be a short cut.

He climbed up the banks of the river, but now could see neither Ernauton nor his own horse. But while he stood there, full of sinister thoughts towards Ernauton, he saw him reappear from the cross-road, leading the runaway horse, which he had made a *détour* to catch. At this sight Sainte-Maline was full of joy and even of gratitude; but gradually his face clouded again as he thought of the superiority of Ernauton over himself, for he knew that in the same situation he should not even have thought of acting in a similar manner.

He stammered out thanks, to which Ernauton paid no attention, then furiously seized the reins of his horse and mounted again. They rode on silently till about half-past two, when they saw a man walking with a dog by his side. Ernauton passed him; but Sainte-Maline, hoping to be more clever, rode up to him and said, “Traveller, do you expect something?”

The man looked at him. Certainly his aspect was not agreeable. His face still bore marks of anger; and the mud half dried on his clothes, the blood on his cheeks, and his hand extended more in menace than interrogation, all seemed very sinister to the traveller.

“If I expect something,” said he, “it is not some one; and if I expect some one it is not you.”

“You are very impolite, my master!” said Sainte-Maline, glad to find at last an opportunity to let loose his wrath, and furious besides at having afforded by his mistake a new triumph to his adversary. While he spoke, he raised his arm to strike the traveller with his whip, but he, with his stick, struck Sainte-Maline on the shoulder, while the dog rushed at him, tearing his clothes, as well as his horse’s legs.

The horse, irritated by the pain, rushed furiously on. Sainte-Maline could not stop him for some time, but he kept his seat. They passed thus before Ernauton, who saw him go by without even smiling at his misfortune. When Sainte-Maline had succeeded in quieting his horse, and M. de Carmainges had rejoined him, his pride had not diminished, but impelled him to attempt a compromise. “Come, come!” said he, forcing a smile, “it seems I have fallen on my unlucky day. That man, however, bore a close resemblance to him whom his Majesty described to us.”

Ernauton continued silent.

“I am speaking to you, Monsieur,” said Sainte-Maline, exasperated by that coolness, which he regarded with good reason as a sign of contempt, and which he was determined should give place to some definite outbreak, though it should cost him his life, — “I am speaking to you; don’t you hear me?”

“He whom his Majesty described to us,” replied Ernauton, “had neither stick nor dog.”

“That is true,” said Sainte-Maline ; “and if I had reflected, I should have a contusion the less on my shoulder and two holes less on my thigh. It is good to be wise and calm, I see.”

Ernauton made no reply ; but rising in his stirrups, and putting his hand above his eyes, he said, “Yonder is the man we seek, waiting for us.”

“*Peste !* Monsieur,” grumbled Sainte-Maline, jealous of his companion’s new advantage, “you have good eyes ; I can see only a black spot, and hardly that.”

Ernauton, without replying, continued to advance. Very soon Sainte-Maline also could see and recognize the man designated by the king. An evil impulse seized him, and he pushed on so as to arrive first. Ernauton looked at him with a glance that recalled him to himself, and he went more slowly.

CHAPTER XXX.

SAINTE-MALINE.

ERNAUTON was not deceived ; the man he saw was really Chicot. He on his side had seen the cavaliers coming, and suspecting that it was for him that they came, waited for them. Ernauton and Sainte-Maline looked at each other.

“ Speak, Monsieur, if you wish,” said Ernauton to his adversary.

Sainte-Maline was suffocated by this courtesy. He could not speak ; he could only bend his head. Then Ernauton, advancing, said to Chicot, “ Monsieur, would it be indiscreet to inquire your name ? ”

“ I am called ‘ the Shade. ’ ”

“ Do you expect anything ? ”

“ Yes, Monsieur. ”

“ Will you be good enough to tell us what ? ”

“ A letter. ”

“ From where ? ”

“ From the Louvre. ”

“ Sealed with what seal ? ”

“ The royal seal. ”

Ernauton put his hand into the breast of his doublet and drew out a letter.

“ That is it,” said Chicot ; “ and for greater certainty I was to give you something in exchange, was I not ? ”

“ A receipt ? ”

“ Yes. ”

“Monsieur,” continued Ernauton, “I was told to carry it; but this gentleman was to deliver it.” And he handed the letter to Sainte-Maline, who gave it to Chicot.

“You see,” said Ernauton, “that we have faithfully fulfilled our mission. There is no one here, and no one has seen us give you the letter.”

“It is true, gentlemen; but to whom am I to give the receipt?”

“The king did not say,” said Sainte-Maline, looking at his companion with a threatening expression.

“Write two, Monsieur, and give one to each of us. It is far from this to the Louvre; and some misfortune may happen to one of us on the road.” And as he spoke, Ernauton’s eyes flashed in their turn.

“You are wise,” said Chicot, drawing his tablets from his pocket, from which he tore out two pages and wrote on each:—

Received from the hands of M. de Sainte-Maline the letter brought by M. Ernauton de Carmaingés.

THE SHADE.

“Adieu, Monsieur,” said Sainte-Maline, taking his.

“Adieu, Monsieur, and a pleasant journey to you,” added Ernauton. “Have you anything else to send to the Louvre?”

“Nothing, I thank you.”

Then the young men set off towards Paris, and Chicot in the opposite direction. When he was out of sight, “Now, Monsieur,” said Ernauton to Sainte-Maline, “dismount, if you please.”

“And what for, Monsieur?” said Sainte-Maline, with astonishment.

“Our task is accomplished; we have now to converse. This place appears excellent for such an interview as ours.”

“As you please, Monsieur;” and they got off their horses.

Then Ernauton said, “You know, Monsieur, that without any cause on my part, you have during the whole journey insulted me grievously. You wished to make me fight at an inopportune time, and I refused; but now the time is good and I am your man.”

But Sainte-Maline was angry no longer, and did not wish to fight. “Monsieur,” replied he, “when I insulted you, you responded by rendering me a service. I can no longer use the language towards you that I did then.”

Ernauton frowned. “No, Monsieur,” he said; “but you think now what you said then.”

“How do you know?”

“Because your words were dictated by hatred and envy, and they cannot already be extinct in your heart.”

Sainte-Maline colored, but did not reply.

Ernauton continued, “If the king preferred me to you, it was because I pleased him best; if I was not thrown into the Bièvre like you, it was because I ride better; if I did not accept your challenge before, it was because I was wiser than you; if I was not bitten by the dog, it was because I had more sagacity; if I now summon you to draw your sword, it is because I have more honor; and if you hesitate, I shall say more courage.”

Sainte-Maline looked like a demon, and drew his sword furiously. Ernauton already held his in his hand.

“Stay, Monsieur,” said Sainte-Maline; “withdraw your last words. They are too strong, you must admit, who know me well, — since, as you have said, we live only two leagues apart. Withdraw them; be satisfied with my humiliation, and do not disgrace me.”

“Monsieur,” said Ernauton, “as I never allow myself to get into a rage, I never say more than I mean; conse-

quently, I shall withdraw nothing. I also am sensitive ; and being new to the court, I don't want to have to blush every time I may meet you. A stroke of the sword, if you please, Monsieur ; it is for my satisfaction as well as yours."

"Oh, Monsieur, I have fought eleven times," said Sainte-Maline, "and two of my adversaries are dead. Are you aware of that, Monsieur?"

"And I, Monsieur, have never fought, for I have never had occasion ; and I did not seek it now. I wait your pleasure, Monsieur."

"Stay !" said Sainte-Maline, "we are compatriots, and we are both in the king's service ; do not let us quarrel. You are a brave man, and I would give you my hand if I could. What would you have ? I am envious ; it is my nature. M. de Chalabre or M. de Moncrabeau would not have made me angry ; it was your superior merit. Console yourself, therefore, for my envy cannot injure you ; and unfortunately for me, your merit remains. I should not like any one to know the cause of our quarrel."

"No one will know it, Monsieur."

"No one ?"

"No ; for if we fight I shall kill you, or you will kill me. I do not despise life ; on the contrary, I cling to it, for I am only twenty-three years of age, have a good name, and am not poor. I shall defend myself like a lion."

"Well, I, on the contrary, am thirty, and am disgusted with life ; but still I would rather not fight with you."

"Then you will apologize?"

"No, I have said enough. If you are not content, so much the better, for then you cease to be superior to me."

"But, Monsieur, one cannot end a quarrel thus, without the risk of being laughed at."

“ I know it.”

“ Then you refuse to fight ? ”

“ With you.”

“ After having provoked me ? ”

“ I confess it.”

“ But if my patience fail, and I attack you ? ”

“ I will throw my sword away ; but I shall then have reason to hate you, and the first time I find you in the wrong, I will kill you.”

Ernauton sheathed his sword. “ You are a strange man,” said he ; “ and I pity you from the bottom of my heart.”

“ You pity me ? ”

“ Yes, for you must suffer horribly.”

“ Horribly.”

“ Do you never love ? ”

“ Never.”

“ Have you no passions ? ”

“ One alone, jealousy ; but that includes all others to a frightful degree. I adore a woman as soon as she loves another ; I love gold when another possesses it. Yes, you are right ; I am unhappy.”

“ Have you never tried to become good ? ”

“ I have never succeeded.”

“ What do you hope ? What do you expect to do ? ”

“ What does the venomous plant ? It has flowers, like other plants, and there are those who know how to make them useful. What do the bear and bird of prey ? They destroy, but certain breeders know how to train them for the chase. So shall I be in the hands of MM. d'Épernon and de Loignac, till the day when they shall say, ‘ This plant is hurtful ; let us tear it up. This beast is furious ; let us kill him.’ ”

Ernauton was calmed ; Sainte-Maline was no longer an object of anger, but of pity.

“ Good fortune should cure you,” said he ; “ when you succeed, you will hate less.”

“ However high I should rise, others would be higher.”

They rode on silently for some time. At last Ernauton held out his hand to Sainte-Maline, and said, “ Shall I try to cure you ? ”

“ No, do not try that ; you would fail. Hate me, on the contrary, and I shall admire you.”

An hour after, they entered the Louvre ; the king had gone out, and would not return until evening.

CHAPTER XXXI.

LOIGNAC'S ADDRESS TO THE FORTY-FIVE.

EACH of the young men placed himself at a window to watch for the king's return. Ernauton, however, soon became abstracted in wondering who the woman could be who had entered Paris as his page, and whom he had since seen in such a splendid litter ; and with a heart more disposed to love-adventure than to making ambitious calculations, he forgot why he was sitting there till, suddenly raising his head, he saw that Sainte-Maline was no longer there. He understood at once that he had seen the king arrive, and had gone to him. He rose quickly, traversed the gallery, and arrived at the king's room just as Sainte-Maline was coming out.

"Look !" cried he, joyfully ; "see what the king has given me !" and he showed a gold chain.

"I congratulate you, Monsieur," said Ernauton, quietly ; and he entered in his turn.

Sainte-Maline waited impatiently until he came out again, which he did in about ten minutes, although it appeared an hour to Sainte-Maline. When Ernauton came out, he looked all over him, and seeing nothing, he cried joyfully, "And you, Monsieur, what has he given to you ?"

"His hand to kiss," replied Ernauton.

Sainte-Maline crushed his chain impatiently in his hands ; and they both returned in silence. As they entered the hall the trumpet sounded ; and at this signal all

the Forty-five came out of their rooms, wondering what was the matter, while they profited by this reunion to examine one another. Most of them were richly dressed, though generally in bad taste. They resembled a corps of officers in civilian garb, — the military manner being what, with few exceptions, they most affected.

The most discreet might be known by their quiet colors, the most economical by the substantial character of their equipments, and the most gay by their white or rose-colored satins. Perducas de Pincornay had bought from some Jew a gold chain as thick as a cable. Pertinax de Moncrabeau was all bows and embroidery; he had bought his costume from a merchant who had purchased it of a gentleman who had been wounded by robbers. It was rather stained with blood and dirt, it was true; but he had managed to clean it tolerably. There remained two holes made by the daggers of the robbers, but Pertinax had had them embroidered in gold.

Eustache de Miradoux did not shine; he had had to clothe Lardille, Militor, and the two children. All the gentlemen were there admiring one another, when M. de Loignac entered frowning, and placed himself in front of them with a countenance anything but agreeable.

“Gentlemen,” said he, “are you all here?”

“All!” they replied.

“Gentlemen, you have been summoned to Paris as a special guard to the king; it is an honorable title, but it engages you too much. Some of you seem not to have understood your duties; I will therefore recall them to you. If you do not assist at the deliberations of the council, you will constantly be called upon to execute the resolutions passed there; therefore the responsibility of those secrets rests upon you. Suppose now that one of the officers on whom the safety of the State and the tran-

quillity of the crown reposes, betray the secrets of the council, or a soldier charged with a commission does not execute it, — his life is the forfeit ; you know that ? ”

“ Doubtless,” replied many voices.

“ Well, gentlemen, this very day a measure of his Majesty’s has been betrayed, and a step which he wished to take rendered perhaps impossible.”

Terror began to replace pride in the minds of the Forty-five, and they looked at one another with suspicion and disquietude.

“ Two of you gentlemen,” continued Loignac, “ have been heard in the open street chattering like a couple of old women, and that about grave things.”

Sainte-Maline advanced. “ Monsieur,” said he, “ pray explain at once, that suspicion may not rest on us all.”

“ That is easy. The king heard to-day that one of his enemies — precisely one of those whom we have been enrolled to guard him against — had arrived in Paris to conspire against him. This name was pronounced secretly, but was overheard by a soldier on guard ; that is to say, by a man who should be regarded as a wall, — deaf, dumb, and immovable. However, that man repeated this name in the street with a noise and boasting which attracted the attention of the passers-by, and raised quite a commotion. I know it, for I was there, and heard and saw all ; and had I not placed my hand on his shoulder to stop him, he would have compromised such grave interests that had he not been quiet at my touch, I should have been compelled to poniard him on the spot.”

Pertinax de Monterabeau and Perducas de Pincornay turned deadly pale ; and Monterabeau tried to stammer out some excuses. All eyes were turned towards them.

“ Nothing can excuse you,” said Loignac. “ Even if

you were drunk, you should be punished for that ; if you were only boastful and vain, you still ought to be punished. Consequently," continued Loignac, " M. de Montcrabeau, and you, also, M. de Pincornay, shall be punished."

A terrible silence ensued. Then Pertinax said, " Pardon, Monsieur ! we are provincials, new to the court, and unaccustomed to politics."

" You should not have accepted the honor of serving the king without weighing its responsibilities."

" For the future we will be as mute as sepulchres, we swear to you ! "

" Good ; but can you repair the evil you have done to-day ? "

" We will try."

" It is impossible, I tell you."

" Then for this time pardon us."

" You live," continued Loignac, " with a sort of license which I must repress by a strict discipline. Those who find the terms too hard will return home ; I can easily replace them. But I warn you that justice will be done among us secretly and expeditiously. Traitors will be punished with death on the spot."

Montcrabeau nearly fainted ; and Pertinax grew paler than ever.

" I shall have," Loignac continued, " for smaller offences lighter punishments, as imprisonment, for instance. For this time, I spare the lives of M. de Montcrabeau and M. de Pincornay, because they probably acted in ignorance. I do not punish them with imprisonment because I may need them this evening or to-morrow. I give them, consequently, the third punishment I shall use for delinquents, — a fine. You have received one thousand livres apiece, gentlemen ; you will each return one hundred. And I

will use that money to reward those whose conduct I approve."

"One hundred livres!" cried Pincornay; "*Cap de Bious!* I have n't them. I have spent them on my equipment."

"Sell your chain, then. But I have a word more to say. I have remarked many signs of irritation between different members of your body; whenever a difference arises I wish the matter referred to me, and I alone shall have the power of allowing a duel to take place. Duelling is much in fashion now, but I do not wish that in following the fashion my company should continually be made incomplete. The first duel, therefore, that takes place without my permission will be punished with a rigorous imprisonment and a heavy fine. Let those of you to whom these words apply bear them in mind. You may go, gentlemen. By the way, fifteen of you will place yourselves this evening at the foot of the staircase when his Majesty receives, and at the first signal will occupy the antechambers, should the occasion arise; fifteen will station themselves outside, mingling in the train of those who visit the Louvre; and fifteen will remain at home. Also, as you should have some chief, and I cannot be everywhere, I will each day name a chief for the fifteen, so that all shall learn to obey and command. At present I do not know the capacities of any one, but I shall watch and learn. Now go, gentlemen; and M. de Montcrabeau and M. de Pincornay, you will remember that I expect your fines to be paid to-morrow."

They all retired except Ernauton, who lingered behind.

"Do you wish anything?" asked Loignac.

"Yes, Monsieur," said Ernauton, bowing; "it seems to me that you have forgotten to point out to us our duties. To be in the king's service has a glorious sound,

doubtless, but I should wish to know in what this service consists ? ”

“ That, Monsieur, is a question to which I cannot reply. ”

“ May I ask why, Monsieur ? ”

“ Because I myself am often ignorant in the morning of what I shall have to do in the evening. ”

“ Monsieur, you are placed in such a high position that you must know many things of which we are ignorant. ”

“ Do as I do, M. de Carmainges : learn those things without being told ; I do not binder you. ”

“ I ask you, Monsieur, ” said Ernauton, “ because, coming to the court without likes or dislikes, led by no passion, I might be more useful to you than another, without being more valiant. ”

“ You have neither likes nor dislikes ? ”

“ No, Monsieur. ”

“ You love the king, at least, I suppose ? ”

“ I ought to, and I wish to, as a subject and a gentleman. ”

“ Well, that is the cardinal point by which to regulate your conduct. ”

“ Very well, Monsieur ; but there is one point which disquiets me. ”

“ What is it ? ”

“ Passive obedience. ”

“ It is an essential condition. ”

“ So I understand ; but it is sometimes difficult for persons who are delicate on points of honor. ”

“ That does not concern me, M. de Carmainges. ”

“ But, Monsieur, when an order displeases you — ”

“ I read the signature of M. d'Épernon, and that consoles me. ”

“ And M. d'Épernon ? ”

“ He reads the signature of his Majesty, and consoles himself as I do. ”

“You are right, Monsieur, and I am your humble servant ;” and Ernauton was about to retire, when Loignac stopped him.

“I will say to you,” said he, “what I have not said to the others, for no one else has had the courage to speak to me thus.”

Ernauton bowed.

“Perhaps,” continued Loignac, “a great personage will come to the Louvre this evening ; if so, do not lose sight of him, and follow him when he leaves.”

“Pardon me, Monsieur ; but that seems the work of a spy.”

“Do you think so ? It is possible ; but look here ;” and he drew out a paper which he presented to Ernauton, who read :—

Have M. de Mayenne followed this evening, if he presents himself at the Louvre.

D'ÉPERNON.

“Well, Monsieur ?”

“I will follow M. de Mayenne,” said Ernauton, bowing

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE BOURGEOIS OF PARIS.

M. DE MAYENNE, with whom they were so much occupied at the Louvre, set out from the Hôtel de Guise, booted and on horseback, as though he had just arrived. He was received by the king affectionately.

“Well, Cousin,” said he, “you have, then, come to visit Paris?”

“Yes, Sire ; I come in my brother’s name and my own, to recall to your Majesty that you have no more faithful subjects than ourselves.”

“*Mordieu!*” said the king, “that is so well known that aside from the pleasure your visit gives me, you might have spared yourself this trouble. You must have had some other motive.”

“Sire, I feared that your regard for us might be shaken by the reports which our enemies circulate about us.”

“What reports?” asked Henri, with that simplicity which made him so dangerous, even to those most intimate with him.

“What!” cried Mayenne, rather disconcerted ; “has not your Majesty heard any reports unfavorable to us?”

“My cousin, know once for all that I allow no one to speak ill of the Guises in my presence.”

“Well, Sire, I do not regret my visit, since I have had the pleasure of finding my king so well disposed towards us ; but I will admit that my precipitation was groundless.”

“Oh, there is always something to do in Paris.”

“Yes, Sire ; but we have our business at Soissons.”

“What business, Duke ?”

“Your Majesty’s, Sire.”

“Ah, true ; continue, Mayenne, to do as you have done. I know how to appreciate the conduct of my subjects.”

The duke retired, smiling. The king rubbed his hands, and Loignac made a sign to Ernauton, who spoke to his valet, and then followed M. de Mayenne. There was no fear of missing him, for Pincornay’s indiscretion had made known the arrival in Paris of a prince of the House of Guise, and the good Leaguers were pouring from their houses to meet him. In vain Mayneville checked the more zealous, saying, “Not so much zeal, my friends ! not so much zeal ! Good God ! you will compromise us.”

The duke had an escort of two or three hundred men when he arrived at the Hôtel St. Denis, — a circumstance which made it easy for Ernauton to follow him without being noticed.

As the duke entered his hotel, Ernauton saw a litter pierce through the crowd. Mayneville approached it ; the curtains were opened ; and Ernauton thought he recognized his former page. The litter disappeared under the gateway, and Mayneville followed ; an instant after, Mayneville appeared on the balcony, and thanked the Parisians in the duke’s name, but begged them to disperse and go home.

All went away accordingly, except ten men, who had entered after the duke. These were the deputies of the League, who were sent to thank M. de Mayenne for his visit, and to entreat him to persuade his brother to come also. In fact, these worthy citizens, who were not want-

ing in imagination, had in their preparatory meetings contrived a number of plans which needed only the sanction and support of a chief on whom they could rely.

Bussy-Leclerc came to announce that he had instructed the monks of three monasteries in the use of arms, and had enrolled five hundred *bourgeois* in a regiment; that is to say, had got ready an effective force of a thousand men.

Lachapelle-Martean had worked among the magistrates, the clerks, and the lawyers. He could offer both counsel and action, — the former represented by two hundred black robes, the latter by two hundred archers.

Brigard had gained the merchants of the Rue Lombards and the Rue St. Denis.

Crucé had shared with Lachapelle-Martean the work among the lawyers, and had gained over the University of Paris.

Delbar promised for all the sailors in the port, — a formidable contingent of five hundred men.

Each of the others had something to offer, even Nicolas Poulain, the friend of Chicot.

When Mayenne had heard them all, he said, “I admire your strength; but I do not see the end you propose to yourselves.”

Bussy-Leclerc answered, “We want a change, and as we are the strongest —”

“But how will you arrive at this change?”

“It seems to me,” replied Bussy, boldly, “that as the idea of the Union came from our chiefs, it is for them to point out its aim.”

“You are perfectly right,” said Mayenne; “but it is also for them to judge of the proper time for action. The troops of M. de Guise may be ready, but he does not give the signal until he thinks fit.”

“But, Monseigneur, we are impatient.”

“For what?”

“To arrive at our end. We also have our plan.”

“Ah! that is different; if you have your own plan, I say no more.”

“Yes, Monseigneur; but may we count on your aid?”

“Doubtless, if this plan be approved by my brother and myself.”

“We believe it will be.”

“Let me hear it, then.”

The Leaguers looked at one another, then Marteau advanced. “Monseigneur,” said he, “we think the success of our plan certain. There are particular points where all the strength of the city lies, — the great and the little Châtelet, the Hôtel de Ville, the Arsenal, and the Louvre.”

“It is true.”

“All these are guarded, but could easily be surprised.”

“I admit this also.”

“The town itself, however, is defended outside, firstly, by the chevalier of the watch with his archers. We thought of seizing him in his house, which could be easily done, as it is a lonely place.”

Mayenne shook his head. “However lonely,” said he, “you cannot force a door and fire twenty shots without attracting attention.”

“We have foreseen this objection, but one of the archers of the watch is on our side. In the middle of the night two or three of us will go and knock at the door; the archer will open, and tell his chief that the king wishes to speak to him, which would not appear strange, as he is often sent for in this manner. Once the door is open, we will introduce ten men, — sailors who lodge near, — who will soon finish him.”

“ Murder him ? ”

“ Yes, Monseigneur. At the same time we will force the doors of the other functionaries who might take his place, such as M. d’O, M. de Chiverny, and M. le Procureur Laguesle. Saint Bartholomew has taught us how to manage.”

“ This is all well, gentlemen ; but you have not told me if you mean at the same time to force the doors of the Louvre, — that strong and well-guarded fortress. Believe me, the king is not so easily taken as the chevalier of the watch. He will take to the sword ; and remember, he is the king. His presence will have a strong effect on the citizens ; and you will be beaten.”

“ We have chosen for this undertaking four thousand men who do not love the Valois enough for his presence to have on them the effect of which you speak.”

“ And you think that enough ? ”

“ Doubtless ; we shall be ten to one.”

“ Why, the Swiss are four thousand strong.”

“ Yes, but they are at Lagny, and that is eight leagues from Paris ; and supposing they were sent for, it would take two hours for the messenger to go on horseback, and eight for them to return on foot. That would make ten hours ; so that they would arrive just in time to be stopped at the gates, for in ten hours we should be masters of Paris.”

“ Very good ; but supposing all this accomplished, the watch disarmed, the authorities disappeared, and all obstacles removed, what do you mean to do ? ”

“ Form a new government of honest men. As for our selves, so long as our commerce is successful, and we have enough for our wives and children, we care for little else. Some among us might desire a command, and they should have it. We are not difficult to satisfy.”

“I know you are all honest, and would not suffer a mixture in your ranks.”

“No, no!” cried several voices.

“Now, M. Poulain,” said the duke, “are there many idlers and bad people in Paris?”

Nicolas Poulain, who had hitherto kept in the background, was now forced to advance. “Certainly, Monseigneur, there are a great many,” he replied.

“Can you give us an estimate of their number?”

“About four thousand thieves, three thousand or more beggars, and four or five hundred assassins.”

“Well, there are at least eight thousand good-for-nothings; of what religion are they?”

Poulain laughed. “Of all, Monseigneur, or rather, of none; gold is their god, and blood their prophet.”

“Yes; but their politics? Are they Valois, Leaguers, Navarrais, or what?”

“Robbers only.”

“Monseigneur,” said Crucé, “do not suppose that we mean to take these people for allies!”

“No, I do not suppose so; and that is what disturbs me.”

“And why so, Monseigneur?” they asked with surprise.

“Because as soon as there are no longer magistrates in Paris, as soon as there is no longer royalty, or public force, or anything to restrain them, they will begin to pillage your shops while you fight, and your houses while you occupy the Louvre. Sometimes they will join the Swiss against you, and sometimes you against the Swiss, so that they will always be the strongest.”

“The devil!” cried the deputies, looking at one another.

“I think this is a question for grave consideration, gentlemen,” said the duke. “I will think it over, and en-

deavor to find the means of overcoming the difficulty ; your interests, before our own, has ever been our maxim."

The deputies gave a murmur of approbation.

"Now, gentlemen, permit a man who has travelled twenty-four leagues on horseback in forty-eight hours to seek a little sleep."

"We humbly take our leave, Monseigneur," said Brigard. "What day shall you fix for our next meeting?"

"As soon as possible, gentlemen ; to-morrow or the day after ;" and he left them all astounded by the foresight which had detected a danger of which they had not even dreamed.

No sooner had he disappeared than a door opened and a woman rushed in.

"The duchess !" they cried.

"Yes, gentlemen ; who comes to save you from your embarrassments. What the Hebrews could not do, Judith did. Hope, then, gentlemen, for I also have my plan ;" and she disappeared through the same door as her brother.

"*Tudieu !*" cried Bussy-Leclerc ; "I believe that is the man of the family."

"Oh !" murmured Nicolas Poulain, "I wish I were out of all this."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BROTHER BORROMÉE.

It was about ten o'clock in the evening when the deputies returned home. Nicolas Poulain remained behind the others, reflecting on the perplexing situation in which he found himself, and considering whether he should report all that he had heard to M. d'Épernon, when, in the middle of the Rue de la Pierre au Réal, he ran against a Jacobin monk. They both began to swear, but looking up, recognized each other.

"Brother Borromée!" cried Poulain.

"Nicolas Poulain!" exclaimed the monk.

"How are you?" asked Nicolas, cautiously. "Where in the world were you running to in such a hurry at this time of night? Is the priory on fire?"

"No; I was going to the Duchesse de Montpensier's hotel, to speak to M. de Mayneville."

"And what for?"

"Oh! it is very simple," said Borromée, seeking for a specious answer. "Our reverend prior was solicited by the duchess to become her confessor; he accepted at the time, but since then he has had scruples, and has sent me to tell her not to rely upon him."

"Very good; but you are going away from the Hôtel de Guise."

"Exactly so; for I hear she is at the Hôtel St. Denis, with her brother."

“Quite true; but why do you deceive me? It is not the treasurer who is sent with messages of that sort.”

“But to a princess! Now do not detain me, or I shall miss her.”

“She will return; you might have waited for her.”

“True; but I shall not be sorry to see Monsieur the Duke also.”

“Oh, that is more like the truth! Now that I know with whom your business is to be transacted, I will hinder you no longer. Adieu, and good luck!”

Borromée, seeing the road clear, hastened on.

“Come, come,” said Poulain, looking after him, “there is something new; but why the devil should I want to know what is going on? Is it possible that I am beginning to like the occupation to which I am condemned? Fie!”

Meanwhile the brother and sister had been conversing together, and had settled that the king had no suspicions, and was therefore easy to attack. They also agreed that the first thing to be done was to organize the League more generally in the provinces, while the king abandoned his brother, who was the only enemy they had to fear so long as Henri de Navarre occupied himself only with love-affairs.

“Paris is all ready, but must wait,” said Mayenne.

At this moment M. de Mayneville entered, and announced Borromée.

“Borromée! who is he?” cried the duke.

“The man whom you sent me from Nancy, when I asked for a man of action and a man of intelligence.”

“I remember; I told you I had the two in one, and sent you Captain Borroville. Has he changed his name to Borromée?”

“Yes, Monseigneur, his name and his uniform. He is now named Borromée, and is a Jacobin.”

“Borroville a Jacobin ?”

“Yes, Monseigneur.”

“And why, then, is he a Jacobin? The Devil would be much amused should he recognize him under his frock.”

“Why is he a Jacobin?” The duchess made a sign to Mayneville. “You will know that later,” he continued; “it is our secret, Monseigneur. In the mean time let us hear Captain Borroville, or Brother Borromée.”

“Yes, his visit disturbs me,” observed Madame de Montpensier.

“And me, also, I confess,” said Mayneville.

“Then introduce him immediately,” said the duchess.

As to the duke, he hesitated between a wish to hear the messenger, and the fear of failing an appointment with his mistress. He looked at the door and at the clock. The door opened, and the clock struck eleven.

“Eh, Borroville,” said the duke, unable to restrain his laughter, notwithstanding his ill-humor, “how you are disguised, my friend !”

“Yes, Monseigneur, I am not much at my ease in this devil of a dress, I confess; but as it is worn in the service of her Highness, I do not complain.”

“Good! thank you, Captain. And now let us hear what you have to say to us at so late an hour.”

“I could not come sooner; I have all the priory on my hands.”

“Well, now speak !”

“Monsieur the Duke, the king is sending succors to the Duc d’Anjou.”

“Bah! we have heard that the last three years.”

“Yes; but this time it is certain. At two o’clock

this morning M. de Joyeuse set out for Rouen. He is to take ship to Dieppe, and convey three thousand men to Antwerp."

"Oh! who told you that, Borroville?"

"I heard it from a man who is going to Navarre."

"To Navarre! to Henri?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"And who sends him?"

"The king, with a letter."

"What is his name?"

"Robert Briquet; he is a great friend of Gorenflot's."

"And an ambassador from the king?"

"Yes; I am sure of it, for he sent one of our monks to the Louvre to get the letter."

"And he did not show you the letter?"

"The king did not give it to him; he sent it by his own messenger."

"We must have this letter."

"Certainly," said the duchess.

"How was it that this did not occur to you?" said Mayneville.

"I did think of it, and wished to send one of my men, who is a perfect Hercules, with M. Briquet, but he suspected, and dismissed him."

"You must go yourself."

"Impossible!"

"And why?"

"Because he knows me."

"As a monk, but not as captain, I hope."

"Upon my soul, I don't know; that Robert Briquet has an eye that is very embarrassing."

"What is he like?"

"He is tall, — all nerves, muscles, and bones; shrewd, mocking, and taciturn."

“ Ah, ah ! and clever with his sword ? ”

“ Marvellously.”

“ A long face ? ”

“ Monseigneur, he has all faces.”

“ And an old friend of the prior’s ? ”

“ From the time when he was only a monk.”

“ Oh, I have a suspicion which I must have cleared up. Borroville, you must go to Soissons, to my brother — ”

“ But the priory ? ”

“ Oh, you can invent some excuse to Gorenflot ; he believes all you say,” said Mayneville.

“ You will tell my brother all you know about the mission of M. de Joyeuse.”

“ Yes, Monseigneur.”

“ And Navarre — ” said the duchess.

“ Oh, I charge myself with that ! ” said Mayenne. “ Let them saddle me a fresh horse, Mayneville.” Then he murmured to himself, “ Can he be still alive ? Yes, it must be he.”

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CHICOT, LATINIST.

AFTER the departure of the young men, Chicot went on at a rapid pace ; but as soon as they had disappeared in the valley, he stopped at the top of a hill and looked all round him. Then, seeing no one, he seated himself on the edge of a ditch, leaned back against a tree, and began what he called his examination of conscience. He had now two purses, for he perceived that the packet he had received contained money, besides the letter. It was quite a royal purse, embroidered with an "H" at each end.

"This is fine !" said Chicot, examining the purse ; " it is charming on the part of the king. His name, his arms ! no one could be more generous or more stupid. Decidedly I shall never make anything of him. All that astonishes me is that he did not have embroidered on the same purse the letter which he sends by me to his brother-in-law. Now let me see how much money he has sent. One hundred crowns, — just the sum I borrowed from Gorenflot. Ah, pardon, let us not calumniate ; here is a little package, — five quadruples in Spanish gold. Come, that is delicate ; it is very polite, Henriquet. But the purse annoys me ; if I were to keep it I should feel as if the very birds, as they flew over my head, would denounce me as a royal messenger."

So saying, he drew from his pocket Gorenflot's bag, emptied the king's money into it, then placed a stone in

the purse, and threw it into the Orge, which flowed under the bridge at his feet.

“So much for myself; now for Henri,” said Chicot; and he took up the letter, broke the seal with the utmost tranquillity, and sent the envelope into the river after the purse. “Now,” said he, “let us read.” And he opened the letter and read as follows:—

DEAR BROTHER, — The deep love which you felt for our late dear brother and king, Charles IX., still clings to the Louvre and to my heart; it grieves me, therefore, to have to write to you about vexatious things. You are strong, however, against ill-fortune, so that I do not hesitate to communicate these things to you, — things which can be told only to a tried friend. Besides, I have an interest in warning you, — the honor of my name and of your own, my brother. We resemble each other in one thing, that we are each surrounded with enemies. Chicot will explain to you.

“‘Chicotus explicabit,’” said Chicot, — “or rather, ‘evolvet,’ which is infinitely more elegant.”

M. de Turenne, your servant, causes daily scandal at your court. God forbid that I should interfere in your affairs, except where your honor is concerned; but your wife, whom to my regret I call my sister, ought to exercise such care for you, instead of me, — which she does not do.

“Oh, oh!” said Chicot, continuing his Latin rendering, “‘quæque omittit facere.’ That is severe.”

I advise you, therefore, to watch the communications of Margot with Turenne, that she does not bring shame on the House of Bourbon. Act as soon as you shall be sure of the fact, into which I pray you to inquire as soon as Chicot shall have explained to you my letter.

“‘Statim atque audiveris Chicotum litteras explicantem,’” said Chicot; “let us proceed.”

It would be a grievous calamity if the least suspicion should attach to the legitimacy of your successor, my brother, — a momentous consideration, of which God has forbidden me to think; for, alas! I am condemned in advance not to live again in my posterity.

The two accomplices, whom as brother and king I denounce to you, generally meet at a little château called Loignac, — the pretext being generally the chase. This château is, besides, the focus for intrigues to which the Guises are not strangers, and you know the strange love with which my sister pursued Henri de Guise. I embrace you, and am ever ready to aid you in all, and for all; meanwhile aid yourself by the advice of Chicot, whom I send to you.

“ ‘Age, auctore Chicot,’ ” said Chicot. “ Here am I installed counsellor of the King of Navarre! This seems to me a bad commission, and in flying from one ill I have fallen into a worse one. Really, I should prefer Mayenne. But the letter is clever, and if Henriot be like other husbands, it will embroil him at once with his wife, Turenne, the Guises, and even with Spain. In fact, if Henri de Valois is so well informed of all that occurs in Navarre, he must have some spy there; and that spy is going to annoy Henriot. Then again,” he continued, “ this letter will lead me into mischief if I meet a Spaniard, a Lorraine, a Béarnais, or a Fleming, curious enough to wish to know what brings me here; and I should be very foolish not to remember that there is a chance of that. M. Borromée, above all, I suspect may play me some trick. Besides, what did I seek in asking the king for this mission? Tranquillity. And now I am going to embroil the King of Navarre with his wife. However, that is not my affair, except that I shall make mortal enemies, who will prevent my reaching the happy age of eighty. Faith! so much the better; life is pleasant only while one is young. But then I might as well have waited for the knife of M. de

Mayenne. No, for there must be reciprocity in all things. I will pursue my journey ; but I will take precautions, so that if any one kills me he will find on me money only, and will do harm to me alone. I will finish what I began ; I will translate this fine letter into Latin, and engrave it on my memory. Then I will buy a horse, because from Juvisy to Pau I should have too often to put the right foot before the left if I walked ; but first I will destroy this letter."

This he proceeded to do, tearing it into an infinite number of little pieces, sending some into the river, others into the air, and burying the rest in holes in the ground.

"Now let me think of my Latin theme," said he ; and this study occupied him until he arrived at Corbeil, where he gave little attention to the wonders of the Cathedral, and much to those of a restaurant whence came an appetizing smell of dinner. We will not describe either the dinner he made or the horse he bought ; suffice it to say that the dinner was long and the horse was bad.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE FOUR WINDS.

CHICOT, with his little horse, — which ought to have been a big one to carry him, — after having slept at Fontainebleau, made a *détour* to the right, and proceeded towards the little village of Orgeval. He would have been glad to make some leagues farther that day, for he wished to increase his distance from Paris; but his horse stumbled so frequently and so badly that he thought it prudent to make a halt. Besides, he had seen nothing on the road to arouse suspicion. But Chicot never trusted to appearances. Before going to bed he examined with great care the house in which he was to sleep. They showed him handsome chambers, with three or four doors; but in his judgment those chambers had too many doors, and the doors were not well enough secured. The host had just finished repairing a large closet, with but one door, which opened on the stairway, and which was provided with formidable bolts on the inside. Chicot had a bed prepared in that closet, which at first sight he preferred to the magnificent chambers which had been shown to him.

Although the hotel had appeared almost uninhabited, he locked the door and placed a heavy table and a chest of drawers against it. He then put his purse under his pillow, and repeated to himself three times the translation of the king's letter. There was an extremely high wind blowing, and as it howled in the neighboring trees, it was

with a feeling of great satisfaction that Chicot plunged into a very comfortable bed. He had a lamp by his bedside ; before going to sleep — and partly that he might go to sleep — he read in a very curious book which had just appeared, written by a certain mayor of Bordeaux, called Montagne, or Montaigne. This book had been printed in Bordeaux in 1581 ; it contained the first two parts of a work since then well known, entitled “The Essays.” It was interesting enough to be read and re-read — by day. But it had the merit also of being tedious enough not to keep a man from sleeping who had travelled fifteen leagues on horseback, and had taken his bottle of generous wine at supper. Chicot had a great liking for that book, which on leaving Paris he had slipped into his pocket, and with the author of which he was personally acquainted. Cardinal du Perron had called it the breviary of honest men ; and Chicot willingly took it for his breviary. Nevertheless, in reading the eighth chapter he fell into a deep sleep.

The wind moaned about the house, sometimes like a child crying, and sometimes like a husband scolding his wife ; and as Chicot slept, it seemed to him, in his dreams, that the tempest came nearer and nearer. All at once a sudden squall of invincible force broke locks and bolts, pushed the chest of drawers, which fell on the lamp, which it extinguished, and on the table, which it smashed.

Chicot had the faculty of waking quickly, and with all his senses about him ; he understood at once that it would be better to slip out of bed into the recess behind than to get out in front. As he glided into the recess, his left hand seized the bag of crowns, and his right hand grasped the hilt of his sword. He opened his eyes ; the darkness was profound. He listened, and it seemed to

him that everything in the room was going to pieces in the battle of the four winds ; chairs were falling, and the table breaking more and more under the weight of the drawers. As he understood that he could do nothing against the gods of Olympus, he contented himself with standing in a corner of the recess, with his sword held out before him, so that if any of these mythological personages approached, they would spit themselves upon it. At last he profited by a momentary cessation in the uproar to cry loudly, " Help ! help ! "

Chicot made so much noise that it seemed to quiet the elements, as if Neptune had pronounced the famous ' Quos ego ; ' and after six or seven minutes, during which Eurus, Notus, Boreas, and Aquilo seemed to beat a retreat, the host appeared with a lantern and enlightened the scene, which looked deplorably like a field of battle. The great chest of drawers was overturned on the broken table ; the door was held only by one of its hinges, and the bolts were broken ; three or four chairs were on the floor with their legs in the air ; and to crown all, the crockery, which had been on the table, lay in bits on the floor.

" What ! it is hell here, then ? " cried Chicot, recognizing his host in the light of his lantern.

" Oh, Monsieur, " cried the host, on seeing the frightful havoc, " what has happened ? "

" Tell me, my friend, how many demons have you in your house ? " asked Chicot.

" Oh, Jesus, what weather ! " replied the host, in a pathetic tone.

" But the bolts do not hold ; this house must be made of card-board. I would rather go away ; I prefer the road. "

" Oh, my poor furniture ! " sighed the host.

" But my clothes ! Where are they ? They were on this chair. "

“Your clothes, my dear monsieur?” said the host, innocently; “if they were there, they ought to be there still.”

“What! ‘if they were there!’ Do you think I came here yesterday in this costume?”

“*Mon Dieu!* Monsieur,” answered the host, at a loss for a reply to such an argument, “I know you were clothed.”

“It is fortunate that you can admit that.”

“But —”

“But what?”

“The wind has dispersed everything.”

“Ah! that is an explanation!”

“You see.”

“But, my friend, when the wind comes in, it comes from outside; and it must have come in here if it made this destruction.”

“Certainly, Monsieur.”

“Well, the wind in coming in here should have brought with it the clothes of others, instead of carrying mine out.”

“So it should, and yet the contrary seems to have happened.”

“But what is this? The wind must have walked in the mud, for here are footmarks on the floor.” And Chicot pointed out the traces left by a muddy boot, on seeing which the host turned pale. “Now, my friend,” continued Chicot, “I advise you to keep a watch over these winds which enter hotels, penetrate rooms by breaking doors, and retire, carrying away the clothes of the guests.”

The host drew back towards the door. “You call me thief!” said he.

“You are responsible for my clothes, and they are gone; you will not deny that?”

“ You insult me.”

Chicot made a menacing gesture.

“ Holloa ! ” cried the host ; “ holloa ! help ! ”

Four men armed with sticks immediately appeared.

“ Ah, here are Eurus, Notus, Aquilo, and Boreas,” said Chicot. “ *Ventre de biche !* since the opportunity presents itself, I will deprive the earth of the north wind ; it is a service to humanity, — there will be an eternal spring.” And he made such a thrust with his long sword in the direction of the nearest assailant that the latter, if he had not leaped back with the lightness of a veritable son of Æolus, would have been pierced through and through. Unfortunately, as in making that backward leap he was facing Chicot, and consequently could not look behind, he landed on the edge of the upper step of the stairway, down which he rolled with a great noise. That retreat was a signal for the three others, who disappeared through the opening before them — or rather, behind them — like ghosts sinking through a trap-door. But the last to disappear had time, while his companions made their descent, to whisper something to the host.

“ Your clothes shall be found,” he growled.

“ Well, that is all I ask.”

“ They will be brought to you.”

“ Very good. I don’t want to go naked ; that is reasonable, it seems to me.”

The clothes soon made their appearance, but visibly deteriorated.

“ Ah ! there are nails in your staircase ; what a devil of a wind it was ! ” said Chicot. “ But no matter ; it is an honorable restitution. How could I have suspected you ? — you have such an honest face.”

The host smiled pleasantly. “ Now,” he said, “ you will go to sleep again, I suppose.”

“ No, I thank you ; I have slept enough. Leave me your lantern, and I will read.”

Chicot replaced the chest of drawers against the door, got into bed again, and read till daybreak, when he asked for his horse, paid his bill, and went away, saying to himself, “ We shall see to-night.”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOW CHICOT CONTINUED HIS JOURNEY, AND WHAT HAPPENED
TO HIM.

CHICOT passed his morning in congratulating himself on the coolness and patience he had displayed through his night of trials.

“But,” thought he, “they never take an old wolf twice in the same snare; therefore it is nearly certain that they will invent some new deviltry to practise on me to-day, so I must be on my guard.”

The result of this reasoning was that Chicot made a march that day worthy of being immortalized by Xenophon. Every tree, rising ground, or wall served him for a point of observation. He also concluded on the road alliances, if not offensive, at least defensive. Four grocers from Paris, who were going to Orléans to order preserves, and to Limoges for dried fruits, allowed Chicot, who called himself a hosier from Bordeaux returning home, to join their company, which was rendered more formidable by four clerks, who were following their masters. It was quite a little army, and scarcely less formidable in mind than in number, so warlike a spirit had the League introduced among the Parisian shopkeepers. At all events, the proverb is true which says that three cowards together have less fear than one brave man alone. At last they reached the town fixed on for supper and sleeping. They supped, and then each went to his room.

Chicot, who had not been sparing during the repast, either of his fun, which amused his companions, or of the Muscat and Burgundy, went to bed, after having arranged to travel again with the grocers on the morrow. He thought himself guarded like a prince by the four travellers, whose rooms were in the same corridor and close to his own. Indeed, at this epoch, the roads being far from safe, travellers were in the habit of promising one another mutual aid in case of need. Chicot then, after bolting his door and striking the walls, which returned everywhere a satisfactory sound, went to bed and to sleep. But during his first sleep an event occurred which the Sphinx himself, the diviner *par excellence*, could not have foreseen; but the Devil was mixing himself up with Chicot's affairs, and he is more cunning than all the sphinxes in the world.

About half-past nine a blow was struck on the door of the room where the clerks all slept. One of them opened in a very bad humor, and found himself face to face with the host. "Gentlemen," said he, "I see with pleasure that you are sleeping all ready dressed, for I wish to render you a great service. Your masters grew very warm over politics at supper-time; and it seems that a sheriff of the town heard them and reported it. Now, as we are very loyal here, the mayor sent down the watch, and they have arrested your masters and carried them off. The prison is near the Hôtel de Ville. Go, my lads! Your mules are ready for you; your masters will join you on the road."

The four clerks shook like hares, ran downstairs, jumped on their mules, and took the road back to Paris, telling the host to let their masters be informed of their departure and of the direction they had taken, if they should return to the hotel.

Having seen them disappear, the host went to knock

very gently at one of the doors in the corridor. One of the merchants cried out in a loud voice, "Who is there?"

"Silence!" replied the host, "and come quietly to the door."

The merchant obeyed, but before opening, he said again, "Who are you?"

"Your host; do you not recognize my voice?"

"*Mon Dieu!* what is the matter?"

"Why, it seems you talked rather too freely at table, and the mayor has been informed by some spy, and has sent to arrest you. Luckily, I thought of showing them your clerks' room instead of yours, so that they are busy upstairs arresting them."

"Oh, oh! what are you telling me?"

"Pure and simple truth. Make haste, and escape while you can!"

"But my companions?"

"Oh, I will tell them."

And while the merchant dressed, the host awakened the others, and very soon they all disappeared, walking on the points of their toes, that they might not be heard.

"That poor hosier!" said they. "It will all fall on him; but it is true he said the most."

Of course Chicot had received no warning. While the merchants were flying, he was sleeping peacefully.

The host now descended into the hall, where stood six armed men, one of whom seemed to command the others.

"Well?" said this one.

"I have obeyed your orders, Monsieur."

"Your iun is deserted?"

"Absolutely."

"The person is not awakened."

"No."

“ You know in whose name we act, and what cause we serve, for you serve the same.”

“ Yes, certainly. Therefore, I have sacrificed, to keep my oath, the money that these men would have spent at my house ; for it is said in the oath, ‘ I will sacrifice my goods to the defence of the holy Catholic religion.’ ”

“ ‘ And my life,’ you forget that,” replied the officer.

“ *Mon Dieu !* ” cried the host, clasping his hands. “ Do they want my life ? I have a wife and children.”

“ Your life will be demanded only if you do not obey blindly what is ordered you.”

“ Oh ! I will obey.”

“ Then go to bed, shut the doors, and whatever you see or hear, do not come out, even if your house is burning.”

“ Oh, I am ruined ! ”

“ I am instructed to indemnify you ; here are thirty crowns.”

“ My house estimated at thirty crowns ! ” cried the innkeeper, piteously.

“ We shall not break even a window, poltroon ! Bah ! what poor champions of the holy League we have here ! ”

The host went away and did as he was told. Then the officer ordered two men to place themselves under Chicot’s window, while he himself, with the three others, mounted to his room.

“ You know the order,” said the officer. “ If he opens and lets us search, and we find what we seek, we will not do him the least harm ; but if the contrary happens, a good blow with a dagger. No pistol, you understand ; besides, it is needless, since we are four against one.”

The officer knocked.

“ Who is there ? ” cried Chicot.

“ Your friends the grocers, who have something important to tell you.”

“ Oh ! ” said Chicot ; “ how last night’s wine has strengthened your voice ! ”

The officer lowered his voice and said in an insinuating tone, “ Open quickly, dear companion. ”

“ *Ventre de biche !* how your grocery smells of old iron ! ”

“ Ah ! you will not open ? ” cried the officer, impatiently. “ Upon him, then ; break open the door ! ”

Chicot ran to the window, but saw below two naked swords shining.

“ I am caught, ” said he.

“ Ah, ah ! ” cried the officer, who had heard the noise of the window opening ; “ you fear the perilous leap, and you are right. Come, open ! ”

“ Faith ! no ; the door is solid, and I shall get help when you make a noise. ” And he began to call for the merchants.

The officer laughed. “ Fool ! ” cried he. “ Do you think we have left you their help ? Undeceive yourself ; you are alone, so make up your mind to it. Go on, soldiers ! ”

Chicot heard three blows struck on the door.

“ There are three muskets there, and an officer, ” said he ; “ below there are only two swords. There are fifteen feet to jump ; that is hard, but I prefer the swords to the muskets. ”

And tying his bag to his belt, he got on the window-sill with his drawn sword. The two men below stood ready with their swords ; but as Chicot had expected, on seeing him jump sword in hand, they drew back, intending to strike him after he reached the ground. Chicot alighted on his feet, and one of the men gave him a thrust immediately. Thanks, however, to Gorenflot’s coat-of-mail, the blade broke like glass.

“He has armor!” cried the soldier.

“*Pardieu!*” said Chicot, cutting open his head with a blow of his sword.

The other began to cry out, thinking now only of defending himself; but at the second pass, Chicot laid him by his comrade, so that when the door was burst open, the officer saw through the window his two sentinels lying in their blood, and Chicot running quietly away.

“He is a demon; he is steel-proof!” cried he.

“Yes; but not ball-proof!” cried a soldier, taking aim.

“No firing; no noise! You will wake the city. We shall catch him to-morrow.”

“Ah!” said one of the soldiers, philosophically; “four men should have been placed here, and two only sent upstairs.”

“You are a fool!” replied the officer.

“We shall see what the duke will say he is,” grumbled the soldier, to console himself.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE THIRD DAY OF THE JOURNEY.

CHICOT retreated with that tranquillity only because he was at Étampes ; that is to say, in a city, in the midst of a population, under the protection of magistrates, who would have arrested the officer immediately on his complaint. It was the knowledge of this which had induced the officer to withhold his men from firing and to abstain from pursuit. Therefore he retired with his soldiers, leaving the two dead men on the ground, after laying their swords by them, that it might seem as though they had killed each other.

Chicot vainly searched for his former companions, and then, supposing that his enemies, having missed their stroke, would avoid remaining in the city, he considered it good strategy to remain there himself. Nay, more ; after making a *détour*, and from the corner of a neighboring street hearing the footsteps of horses going away, he had the audacity to return to the inn. There he found the host, who had not recovered from his terror, and who let him saddle his horse in the stable, watching him with the same stupor he would have shown in looking at a ghost. Chicot took advantage of that stupor not to pay his account ; and the host refrained from making any claim.

Chicot went and finished his night in the public-room at another inn, among all the drinkers, who were far from thinking that this tall unknown, who looked so

smiling and gracious, had just killed two men. At break of day he started again, a prey to anxiety, which increased from moment to moment. Two attempts had failed; the third might be fatal to him. A clump of trees inspired him with apprehensions difficult to describe; a ditch made shivers run over his body; a wall, somewhat elevated, almost made him turn back. From time to time he resolved that once at Orléans, he would send a courier to the king to ask for an escort from city to city. But as the road to Orléans was passed without accident, Chicot began to think again that it was needless, and that the king would lose his good opinion of him, and also that an escort would be a great trouble. He went on therefore; but his fears began to return as evening approached. All at once he heard behind him the galloping of horses; and turning round, he counted seven cavaliers, of whom four had muskets on their shoulders. They gained rapidly on Chicot, who, seeing that flight was hopeless, contented himself with making his horse move in zigzags, so as to escape the balls which he expected every moment. He was right, for when they came about fifty feet from him, they fired; but thanks to his manœuvre, all the balls missed him. He immediately abandoned the reins and let himself slip to the ground, taking the precaution to have his sword in one hand and a dagger in the other. He came to the ground in such a position that his head was protected by the breast of his horse.

A cry of joy came from the troop, who, seeing him fall, believed him dead.

“I told you so,” said a man, riding up, with a mask on his face; “you failed because you did not follow my orders. This time, here he is; search him, dead or alive, and if he moves, finish him.”

Chicot was not precisely a pious man ; but at that moment it occurred to him that there is a God, and he thought that God was opening his arms to him, and that perhaps in less than five minutes the sinner would be in the presence of his Judge. He stammered some prayer, serious and fervent, which certainly was heard on high.

Two men approached Chicot, sword in hand. It was easy to discover from his groans that he was not dead. But since he made no movement to defend himself, the more zealous of the two had the imprudence to come within reach of his left hand ; the dagger, as if moved by a spring, was plunged into his throat. At the same instant half of the sword in Chicot's right hand disappeared in the side of the second cavalier, who was trying to get away.

"Ah, treason!" cried the chief, "he is not dead ; charge your muskets!"

"No, I am not dead yet," cried Chicot, whose eyes flashed lightning ; and quick as thought he threw himself upon the chief of the troop.

But two soldiers came to the rescue ; Chicot turned and wounded one in the thigh.

"The muskets, *mordieu!*" cried the chief.

"Before they are ready," cried Chicot, "I shall have opened your entrails, brigand, and shall have cut the cords of your mask, that I may know who you are."

"Stand firm, Monsieur ! stand firm, and I will aid you !" cried a voice, which seemed to Chicot to come from heaven.

It was that of a handsome young man on a black horse. He had a pistol in each hand, and cried again to Chicot, "Stoop ! *morbleu*, stoop !"

Chicot obeyed. One pistol was fired, and a man rolled at Chicot's feet ; then the second, and another man fell.

"Now we are two to two," cried Chicot. "Generous

young man, you take one, here is mine ;” and he rushed on the masked man, who, groaning with rage or with fear, defended himself as if used to arms.

The young man seized his opponent by the body, threw him down, and bound him with his belt. Chicot soon wounded his adversary, who was very corpulent, between the ribs ; he fell, and Chicot, putting his foot on his sword to prevent him from using it, cut the strings of his mask. “ M. de Mayenne ! *ventre de biche !* I thought so,” said he.

The duke did not reply ; he had fainted from loss of blood and the shock of his fall. Chicot, after a brief reflection, rolled up his sleeve, took his large dagger, and approached the duke to cut off his head, when his arm was seized by a grasp of iron, and a voice said, “ Stay, Monsieur ; one does not kill a fallen enemy.”

“ Young man,” replied Chicot, “ you have saved my life, and I thank you with all my heart ; but accept a little lesson very useful in the time of moral degradation in which we live. When a man has been attacked three times in three days ; when he has been each time in danger of death ; when his enemies have, without provocation, fired four musket-balls at him from behind, as they might have done to a mad dog, — then, young man, he may do what I am about to do.” And Chicot returned to his work.

But the young man stopped him again. “ You shall not do it, Monsieur,” he said, “ while I am here, at least. Not in that way should such blood be shed as that now issuing from the wound you have already inflicted.”

“ Bah !” said Chicot, with surprise, “ you know this wretch ?”

“ That wretch is M. le Duc de Mayenne, — a prince equal in rank to many kings.”

“ All the more reason ; and who are you ? ”

“ He who has saved your life, Monsieur.”

“ And who, if I do not deceive myself, brought me a letter from the king three days ago.”

“ Precisely.”

“ Then you are in the king’s service ? ”

“ I have that honor.”

“ And yet you save M. de Mayenne ? Permit me to tell you, Monsieur, that that is not being a good servant.”

“ I think, on the contrary, that at this moment it is I who am the king’s good servant.”

“ Perhaps,” said Chicot, sadly, — “ perhaps ; but this is not a time for philosophizing. What is your name ? ”

“ Ernauton de Carmainges.”

“ Well, M. Ernauton, what are we to do with this great carcass, equal in grandeur to all the kings of the earth ? ”

“ I will watch over M. de Mayenne, Monsieur.”

“ And his follower, who is listening there ? ”

“ The poor devil hears nothing ; I have bound him too tightly, and he has fainted.”

“ M. de Carmainges, you have saved my life to-day ; but you endanger it fearfully for the future.”

“ I do my duty to-day ; God will provide for the future.”

“ As you please, then, and I confess I dislike killing a defenceless man. Adieu, Monsieur. But first, I will choose one of these horses.”

“ Take mine ; I know what it can do.”

“ Oh, that is too generous.”

“ I have not so much need as you have to go quickly.”

Chicot made no more compliments, but got on Ernauton’s horse and disappeared.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ERNAUTON DE CARMAINGES.

ERNAUTON remained on the field of battle much embarrassed what to do with the two men, who would shortly open their eyes. As he deliberated, he saw a wagon coming along, drawn by two oxen, and driven by a peasant. Ernauton went to the man and told him that a combat had taken place between the Huguenots and Catholics, that four had been killed, but that two were still living. The peasant, although desperately frightened, aided Ernauton to place first M. de Mayenne and then the soldier in the wagon. The four bodies remained.

“Monsieur,” said the peasant, “were they Catholics or Huguenots?”

“Huguenots,” said Ernauton, who had seen the peasant cross himself in his first terror.

“In that case there will be no harm in my searching the heretics, will there?”

“None,” replied Ernauton, who thought it as well that the peasant should do it as the first passer-by. The man did not wait to be told twice, but turned out their pockets. It seemed that he was far from disappointed, for his face looked smiling when he had finished the operation, and he drove on his oxen at their quickest pace in order the sooner to reach his home with his treasure.

It was in the stable of this excellent Catholic, on a bed of straw, that M. de Mayenne recovered his consciousness. He opened his eyes, and looked at the men and the things

surrounding him with a surprise easy to imagine. Ernauton immediately dismissed the peasant.

“Who are you, Monsieur?” asked Mayenne.

Ernauton smiled.

“Do you not recognize me?” said he.

“Yes, I do now; you are he who came to the assistance of my enemy.”

“Yes; but I am he who prevented your enemy from killing you.”

“That must be true, since I live; unless, indeed, he thought me dead.”

“He went away knowing you to be alive.”

“Then he thought my wound mortal.”

“I do not know; but had I not opposed him, he would have given you one which certainly would have been so.”

“But then, Monsieur, why did you aid him in killing my men?”

“Nothing more simple, Monsieur; and I am astonished that a gentleman, as you seem to be, does not understand my conduct. Chance brought me on your road, and I saw several men attacking one. I defended the one; but when this brave man (for whoever he may be, he is brave), when he remained alone with you, and had decided the victory by the blow which prostrated you, — then, seeing that he was about to abuse his victory by killing you, I interfered to save you.”

“You know me, then?” said Mayenne, with a scrutinizing glance.

“I had no need to know you, Monsieur; you were a wounded man, — that was enough.”

“Be frank; you know me.”

“It is strange, Monsieur, that you will not understand me. It seems to me that it is equally ignoble to kill a defenceless man as it is for seven men to attack one.”

“There may be reasons for all things.”

Ernauton bowed, but did not reply.

“Did you not see,” continued Mayenne, “that I fought sword to sword with that man?”

“It is true.”

“Besides, he is my most mortal enemy.”

“I believe it, for he said the same thing of you.”

“And if I survive my wound —”

“That will no longer concern me, and you will do what you please, Monsieur.”

“Do you think me dangerously wounded?”

“I have examined your wound, Monsieur, and I think that although it is serious, you are in no danger of death. I believe the sword slipped along the ribs, and did not penetrate the breast. Breathe, and I think you will find no pain in the lungs.”

“It is true; but my men?”

“Are dead, all but one.”

“Are they left on the road?”

“Yes.”

“Have they been searched?”

“The peasant whom you must have seen on opening your eyes, and who is your host, searched them.”

“What did he find?”

“Some money.”

“Any papers?”

“I think not.”

“Ah!” said Mayenne, with evident satisfaction. “But the living man; where is he?”

“In the barn, close by.”

“Bring him to me, Monsieur; and if you are a man of honor, promise me to ask him no questions.”

“I am not curious, Monsieur; and I wish to know no more of this affair than I know already.”

The duke looked at him uneasily.

“Monsieur,” said Ernauton, “will you charge some one else with the commission you have just given me?”

“I was wrong, Monsieur; I acknowledge it. Have the kindness to render me the service I ask of you.”

Five minutes after, the soldier entered the stable. He uttered a cry on seeing the duke; but the latter had strength enough to put a finger to his lip, and the man was silent.

“Monsieur,” said Mayenne to Ernauton, “my gratitude to you will be eternal; and doubtless some day we shall meet under more favorable circumstances. May I ask to whom I have the honor of speaking?”

“I am the Vicomte Ernauton de Carmaingés, Monsieur.”

The duke expected further details; but it was now the young man’s turn to be reserved.

“You were going to Beaugency?”

“Yes, Monsieur.”

“Then I have delayed you, and you cannot go on to-night, perhaps?”

“On the contrary, Monsieur, I am about to start at once.”

“For Beaugency?”

Ernauton looked at Mayenne like a man annoyed by this questioning. “To Paris,” said he.

The duke appeared astonished. “Pardon,” said he; “but it is strange that going to Beaugency, and being stopped by an unforeseen circumstance, you should return without fulfilling the object of your journey.”

“Nothing is more simple, Monsieur. I was going to a rendezvous appointed for a particular time, which I have lost by coming here with you; therefore I return.”

“Oh, Monsieur, will you not stay here with me for two or three days? I shall send this soldier to Paris for a sur-

geon ; and I cannot remain here alone with these peasants, who are strangers to me."

"Then let the soldier remain with you, and I will send you a doctor."

Mayenne hesitated. "Do you know the name of my enemy?" said he.

"No, Monsieur."

"What ! you saved his life, and he did not tell you his name?"

"I did not ask him."

"You did not ask him?"

"I have saved your life also, Monsieur ; have I asked you your name ? But on the other hand, you both know mine."

"I see, Monsieur, there is nothing to be learned from you ; you are as discreet as brave."

"I observe that you say that in a reproachful manner ; but on the contrary, you ought to be reassured, for a man who is discreet with one person will be so with another."

"You are right ! your hand, M. de Carmainges."

Ernauton gave him his hand, but without betraying, by anything in his manner, his knowledge that he was giving his hand to a prince.

"You have blamed my conduct, Monsieur," said Mayenne ; "but I cannot justify myself without revealing important secrets. It will be better, I think, that we carry our confidences no farther."

"You defend yourself, Monsieur, when I do not accuse. You are entirely free, believe me, to speak or to keep silent."

"Thank you, Monsieur ; I will keep silent. I will only say that I am a gentleman of good rank, and able to be of use to you."

"Say no more, Monsieur ; thanks to the master whom I serve, I have no need of assistance from any one."

“Your master,” asked Mayenne, anxiously, “who is he?”

“Oh, no more confidences! you proposed it yourself.”

“It is true.”

“Besides, your wound begins to inflame; I advise you to talk less.”

“You are right; but I want my surgeon.”

“I am returning to Paris, as I told you; give me his address.”

“M. de Carmainges, give me your word of honor that if I intrust you with a letter it shall be given to the person to whom it is addressed.”

“I give it, Monsieur.”

“I believe you; I am sure I may trust you. I must tell you a part of my secret. I belong to the guards of Madame de Montpensier.”

“Oh, I did not know she had guards.”

“In these troublous times, Monsieur, every one guards himself as well as he can, and the House of Guise being a princely one — ”

“I asked for no explanation, Monsieur.”

“Well, I had a mission to Amboise; when on the road I saw my enemy. You know the rest.”

“Yes.”

“Stopped by this wound, I must report to the duchess the reason of my delay.”

“Well?”

“Will you therefore put into her own hands the letter I am about to write?”

“If there is ink and paper here,” said Ernauton, rising to seek for those articles.

“It is needless; my soldier should have my tablets with him.”

The soldier drew from his pocket some closed tablets.

Mayenne turned towards the wall to work a secret spring, and the tablets opened ; he wrote some lines in pencil, and shut them again. It was impossible for any one who did not know the secret to open them without breaking them.

“ Monsieur,” said Ernauton, “ in three days these tablets shall be delivered.”

“ Into her own hands ? ”

“ Yes, Monsieur.”

The duke, exhausted by talking, and by the effort of writing the letter, sank back on his straw.

“ Monsieur,” said the soldier, in a tone little in harmony with his dress, “ you bound me like a calf, it is true, but whether you wish it or not, I regard those bonds as chains of friendship, and will prove it to you some day.” And he held out a hand whose whiteness Ernauton had already remarked.

“ So be it,” said he, smiling ; “ it seems I have gained two friends.”

“ Do not despise them,” said the soldier ; “ one has never too many.”

“ That is true, comrade,” said Ernauton ; and he left them.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE STABLE-YARD.

ERNAUTON arrived at Paris on the third day. At three in the afternoon he entered the quarters of the Forty-five, at the Louvre. The Gascons called out in surprise on seeing him. M. de Loignac, hearing those cries, entered, and perceiving Ernauton, assumed a frowning expression; Ernauton approached him directly. M. de Loignac signed to him to enter a little room, where he always gave his private audiences. "This is nice behavior, Monsieur," said he, — "five days and nights absent. And it is you, — you, Monsieur, whom I thought one of the most sensible, — it is you who set the example of such a breach of discipline."

"Monsieur, I did what I was told to do."

"What were you told to do?"

"To follow M. de Mayenne, and I have followed him."

"For five days and nights?"

"For five days and nights, Monsieur."

"Then he has left Paris?"

"He left that same evening, and that seemed to me suspicious."

"You were right, Monsieur. What then?"

Ernauton related clearly and energetically all that had taken place. When he mentioned the letter, "You have it, Monsieur?" asked Loignac.

"Yes, Monsieur."

“The devil! that deserves attention; come with me, I beg of you!”

Ernanton followed Loignac to the courtyard of the Louvre. All was preparing for the king's going out, and M. d'Épernon was seeing two new horses tried, which had been sent from England as a present from Elizabeth to Henri, and which were that day to be harnessed to the king's carriage for the first time.

Loignac approached D'Épernon. “Great news, Monsieur the Duke!” said he.

“What is it?” said D'Épernon, drawing him to one side.

“M. de Carmainges has seen M. de Mayenne lying wounded in a village beyond Orléans.”

“Wounded!”

“Yes, and more, he has written a letter to Madame de Montpensier, which M. de Carmainges has in his pocket.”

“Oh, oh! send M. de Carmainges to me.”

“Here he is,” said Loignac, signing to Ernanton to advance.

“Well, Monsieur, it seems you have a letter from M. de Mayenne.”

“Yes, Monsieur.”

“Addressed to Madame de Montpensier?”

“Yes, Monsieur.”

“Give it to me, if you please;” and the duke extended his hand.

“Pardon, Monseigneur; but did you ask me for the duke's letter?”

“Certainly.”

“You do not know that this letter was confided to me?”

“What matters that?”

“It matters much, Monseigneur ; I passed my word to the duke to give it to the duchess herself.”

“Do you belong to the king or to M. de Mayenne ?”

“To the king.”

“Well ! the king wishes to see the letter.”

“Monsieur, you are not the king.”

“I think you forget to whom you speak, M. de Carmainges,” said D’Épernon, pale with anger.

“I remember perfectly, Monseigneur, and that is why I refuse.”

“You refuse ?”

“Yes, Monseigneur.”

“M. de Carmainges, you forget your oath of fidelity.”

“Monseigneur, I have sworn fidelity only to one person, and that is the king. If he asks me for the letter, he must have it ; but he is not here.”

“M. de Carmainges,” said the duke, growing very angry, “you are like the rest of the Gascons, — blind in prosperity. Your good fortune dazzles you, my little gentleman ; the possession of a State secret stuns you like a blow with a mallet.”

“What stuns me, Monseigneur, is the disgrace into which I seem likely to fall, — not my fortune, which my refusal to obey you renders, I know, very precarious. But no matter ! I do what I ought, and I will do only that ; and no one, excepting the king, shall see this letter but the person to whom it is addressed.”

“Loignac,” cried D’Épernon, “go at once and place M. de Carmainges in prison.”

“It is certain that will prevent me from delivering the letter, — so long at least as I remain in prison ; but once I come out — ”

“If you never do come out ?”

“I shall come out, Monsieur, — unless you have me

assassinated. Yes, I shall come out ; the walls are less strong than my will, and then — ”

“ Well ? ”

“ I will speak to the king.”

“ To prison with him, and take away the letter ! ” roared D'Épernon, beside himself with rage.

“ No one shall touch it ! ” cried Ernauton, starting back and drawing from his breast the tablets of M. de Mayenne ; “ I will break it to pieces, since I can save it in no other way ; M. de Mayenne will approve my conduct, and the king will pardon me.”

The young man was about to execute his threat, when a touch arrested his arm. He turned and saw the king, who, coming down the staircase behind them, had heard the end of the discussion.

“ What is the matter, gentlemen ? ” said he.

“ Sire,” cried D'Épernon, furiously, “ this man, one of your Forty-five Guardsmen, to which he shall soon cease to belong, being sent by me to watch M. de Mayenne, in Paris, followed him to Orléans, and received from him a letter for Madame de Montpensier.”

“ You have received from M. de Mayenne a letter for Madame de Montpensier ? ” asked the king of Ernauton.

“ Yes, Sire ; but M. d'Épernon does not tell you under what circumstances.”

“ Well, where is this letter ? ”

“ That is just the cause of the quarrel, Sire. M. de Carmainges resolutely refuses to give it to me, and determines to carry it to its address.”

Carmainges bent one knee before the king. “ Sire,” said he, “ I am a poor gentleman, but a man of honor. I saved the life of your messenger, who was about to be assassinated by M. de Mayenne and six of his followers,

for I arrived just in time to turn the fortune of the combat."

"And M. de Mayenne?"

"Was dangerously wounded."

"Well, what then?"

"Your messenger, Sire, who seemed to have a particular hatred of M. de Mayenne —"

The king smiled.

"Wished to kill his enemy. Perhaps he had the right, but I thought that in my presence, whose sword belongs to your Majesty, this vengeance would be a political assassination, and —"

"Go on, Monsieur."

"I saved the life of M. de Mayenne, as I had saved that of your messenger."

D'Épernon shrugged his shoulders; Loignac bit his long mustache; the king remained cold.

"Go on," said the king.

"M. de Mayenne, reduced to one companion, — for the four others were killed, — did not wish to part with him, and ignorant that I belonged to your Majesty, confided to me a letter to his sister. I have this letter, Sire, and here it is; I offer it to your Majesty, who has the right to dispose of it and of me. My honor is dear to me, Sire; but I place it fearlessly in your hands."

Ernauton, so saying, held out the tablets to the king, who gently put them back.

"What did you say, D'Épernon?" said he; "M. de Carmainges is an honest man and a faithful servant."

"What did I say, Sire?"

"Yes; I heard you pronounce the word 'prison.' *Mordieu!* on the contrary, when one meets a man like M. de Carmainges, it is reward we should speak of. A letter, Duke, belongs only to the bearer and to the person

to whom it is sent. You will deliver your letter, M. de Carmainges."

"But, Sire," said D'Épernon, "think of what that letter may contain. Do not play at delicacy, when perhaps your Majesty's life is concerned."

"You will deliver your letter, M. de Carmainges," said the king.

"Thanks, Sire," said Carmainges, beginning to retire.

"Where do you take it?"

"To Madame la Duchesse de Montpensier, I think I had the honor of telling your Majesty."

"I mean, to the Hôtel de Guise, St. Denis, or where?"

"I had no instructions on that subject, Sire. I shall take the letter to the Hôtel de Guise, and there I shall learn where Madame de Montpensier is."

"And when you have found her?"

"I will deliver my letter."

"Very good. M. de Carmainges, have you promised anything else to M. de Mayenne than to deliver that letter to his sister?"

"No, Sire."

"No secrecy as to the place where you find her?"

"No, Sire."

"Then I will impose only one condition on you."

"I am your Majesty's servant."

"Deliver your letter, and then come to me at Vincennes, where I shall be this evening."

"Yes, Sire."

"And you will tell me where you found the duchess?"

"I will, Sire."

"I ask no other confidences, remember."

"Sire, I promise."

"What imprudence, Sire!" cried D'Épernon.

“There are men you cannot understand, Duke. This one is loyal to Mayenne; he will be loyal to me.”

“Towards you, Sire, I shall be more than loyal,— I shall be devoted,” cried Ernauton.

“Now, D'Épernon, no more quarrels,” said the king; “and you must at once pardon in this brave fellow what you looked upon as a want of devotion, but which I regard as a proof of loyalty.”

“Sire,” said Ernauton, “Monsieur the Duke is too superior a man not to have discovered, through my disobedience (for which I confess my regret), my respect for him; only before all things, I must do what I believe to be my duty.”

“*Parfandious!*” said the duke, changing his countenance like a mask, “this trial has done you honor, my dear Carmainges, and you are really a fine fellow; is he not, Loignac? However, we gave him a good fright;” and the duke burst out laughing.

Loignac did not answer; he could not lie like his illustrious chief.

“If it was a trial, so much the better,” said the king, doubtfully; “but I counsel you not to try these experiments often. Too many would give way under them. Now let us go, Duke; you accompany me?”

“It was your Majesty's order that I should ride by the carriage-door?”

“Yes; and who goes the other side?”

“A devoted servant of your Majesty's, — M. de Sainte-Maline,” said D'Épernon, glancing at Ernauton to see the effect of his words; but Ernauton remained unmoved.

CHAPTER XL.

THE SEVEN SINS OF MAGDALENE.

THE king, however, on seeing the liveliness of his horses, did not wish to be alone in the carriage, but desired D'Épernon to sit by him. Loignac and Sainte-Maline rode on either side, and an outrider in front. The king was, as usual, surrounded by dogs, and there was also a table in the carriage, covered with illuminated pictures, which the king cut out with wonderful skill, in spite of the movement of the carriage. He was just then occupied with the life of Magdalene the sinner. The different pictures were labelled, — “Magdalene gives way to the sin of anger;” “Magdalene gives way to the sin of gluttony,” and so on through the seven cardinal sins. The one that the king was occupied with as they passed through the Porte St. Antoine represented Magdalene giving way to anger.

The beautiful sinner, half lying on cushions, and with no other covering than the magnificent hair with which she was afterwards to wipe the feet of Jesus, was having a slave, who had broken a precious vase, thrown into a pond filled with lampreys, whose eager heads were protruding from the water; while on the other side a woman, even less dressed than her mistress, as her hair was bound up, was being flogged because she had, while dressing her mistress's head, pulled out some of those magnificent hairs whose profusion might have rendered her more indulgent to such a fault. In the background were visible

some dogs being whipped for having allowed beggars to pass quietly, and some cocks being murdered for having crowed too loudly in the morning.

On arriving at the Croix Faubin, the king had finished this figure, and was passing to "Magdalene giving way to the sin of gluttony."

This represented the beautiful sinner lying on one of those beds of purple and gold on which the ancients used to take their repasts; all that the Romans had most *recherché* in meat, in fish, and in fruit, — dormice in honey, red mullets, lobsters from Stromboli, and pomegranates from Sicily, — ornamented the table. On the ground some dogs were disputing for a pheasant, while the air was full of birds, which had carried off from the table figs, strawberries, and cherries, sometimes dropping them on a colony of mice, who with their noses in the air awaited that manna from heaven. Magdalene held in her hand one of those singularly shaped glasses which Petronius has described, filled with a white *liqueur*.

Fully occupied with this important work, the king merely raised his eyes as they passed by the convent of the Jacobins, from which vespers was sounding on every bell, and of which every window and door was closed. But a hundred steps farther on, an attentive observer would have seen him throw a more curious glance on a fine-looking house on his left, which, built in the midst of a charming garden, opened on the road. This house was called Bel-Esbat, and unlike the convent, had every window open with the exception of one, before which hung a blind. As the king passed this blind moved perceptibly; Henri smiled at D'Épernon, and then fell to work on another picture. This was the sin of luxury. The artist had represented this in such glowing colors, and had painted the sin with so much courage and minuteness

that we can only mention a single feature of it, which, however, was altogether episodic: Magdalene's guardian angel was flying back to heaven affrighted, and hiding his face in his hands. This picture, full of minute details, occupied the king so completely that he never noticed an image of vanity who rode by his carriage. It was a pity, for Sainte-Maline was very happy and proud on his horse, as he rode so near that he could hear the king say to his dog, "Gently, M. Love, you get in my way," or to M. le Duc d'Épernon, "Duke, I believe these horses will break my neck." From time to time, however, Sainte-Maline glanced at Loignac, who was too much accustomed to these honors not to be indifferent to them; and he could not but feel the superiority of his calm and modest demeanor, and even would try to imitate it for a few minutes, until the thought would recur again, "I am seen and looked at, and people say, 'Who is that happy gentleman who accompanies the king?'" Sainte-Maline's happiness seemed likely to last for a long time, for the horses, covered with harness heavy with gold and embroidery, and imprisoned in shafts like those of David's ark, did not advance rapidly. But as he was growing too proud, something peculiarly annoying to him came to moderate his joy; he heard the king pronounce the name of Ernauton, and not once, but two or three times. Sainte-Maline strained his attention to hear more, but some noise or movement always prevented him, — either the king uttered some exclamation of regret at an unlucky cut of the scissors, or one of the dogs began to bark; so that between Paris and Vincennes, the name of Ernauton had been pronounced at least six times by the king, and at least four times by D'Épernon, without Sainte-Maline's knowing the reason. He persuaded himself that the king was merely inquiring the cause of

Ernauton's disappearance, and that D'Épernon was explaining it. At last they arrived at Vincennes, and as the king had still three sins to cut out, he went at once to his chamber to finish them. It was a bitterly cold day, therefore Sainte-Maline sat down in a chimney-corner to warm himself, and was nearly falling asleep, when Loignac put his hand on his shoulder.

"You must work to-day," said he. "You shall sleep some other day; so get up, M. de Sainte-Maline."

"I will keep awake for a fortnight if necessary, Monsieur."

"Oh, we shall not be so exacting as that."

"What must I do, Monsieur?"

"Get on your horse and return to Paris."

"I am ready; my horse is standing saddled."

"Good; go then straight to the room of the Forty-five, and awaken every one. But excepting the three chiefs, whom I will name to you, no one must know where he is going, nor what he is about to do."

"I will obey these instructions implicitly."

"Here, then, are some more: leave fourteen of these gentlemen at the Porte St. Antoine, fifteen others half-way, and bring the rest here."

"Yes, Monsieur; but at what hour must we leave Paris?"

"When night falls."

"On horseback or on foot?"

"On horseback."

"Armed?"

"Fully; with daggers, pistols, and swords."

"With armor?"

"Yes."

"What else?"

"Here are three letters, — one for M. de Chalabre, one

for M. de Biran, and one for yourself. M. de Chalabre will command the first party, M. de Biran the second, and yourself the third."

"Good, Monsieur."

"These letters are not to be opened till six o'clock; M. de Chalabre will open his at the Porte St. Antoine, M. de Biran his at the Croix Faubin, and you yours on your return."

"Must we come quickly?"

"As quickly as possible, without creating suspicion. Let each troop come out of Paris by a different gate, — M. de Chalabre by the Porte Bourdelle, M. de Biran by the Porte du Temple, and you through the Porte St. Antoine. All other instructions are in the letters. Go quickly from here to the Croix Faubin, but then slowly; you have still two hours before dark, which is more than necessary. Now do you well understand your orders?"

"Perfectly, Monsieur."

"Fourteen in the first troop, fifteen in the second, and fifteen in the third; it is evident they do not count Ernauton, and that he no longer is one of the Forty-five," said Sainte-Maline to himself when Loignac had gone.

Sainte-Maline, swollen with pride, fulfilled all his directions punctually. When he arrived among the Forty-five, the greater number of them were already preparing for their supper. Thus the noble Lardille de Chavantrade had prepared a dish of mutton stewed with carrots and spices, after the method of Gascony, in which Militor had occasionally aided by trying the pieces of meat and vegetable with a fork.

Pertinax de Montcrabeau, and the singular servant who spoke to him so familiarly, were preparing supper for themselves and six companions, who had each contributed six sous towards it; each one, in fact, was disposing ac-

ording to his fancy of the money of his Majesty Henri III. One might judge of the character of each man by the aspect of his little lodging. Some loved flowers, and displayed on their window-sills some fading rose or geranium ; others had, like the king, a taste for pictures ; others had introduced a niece or housekeeper. And M. d'Épernon had told M. de Loignac privately to shut his eyes on these things. At eight o'clock in winter, and ten in summer, they went to bed ; but always leaving fifteen on guard. As, however, it was but half-past five when Sainte-Maline entered, he found every one about, and, as we said, gastronomically inclined. But with one word he put an end to all this. "To horse, gentlemen!" said he, and leaving them without another word, went to explain his orders to MM. de Biran and Chalabre. Some, while buckling on their belts and grasping their cuirasses, ate great mouthfuls, washed down by a draught of wine ; and others, whose supper was less advanced, armed themselves with resignation. They called over the names, and only forty-four, including Sainte-Maline, answered.

"M. Ernauton de Carmainges is missing," said M. de Chalabre, whose turn it was to exercise the functions of quarter-master. A profound joy filled the heart of Sainte-Maline, and a smile played on his lips, — a rare thing with this sombre and envious man. In fact, Ernauton seemed to him to be finally ruined by that unexplained absence from an expedition of such importance.

The forty-four set off on their different routes.

CHAPTER XLI.

BEL-ESBAT.

It is needless to say that Ernauton, whom Sainte-Maline thought ruined, was, on the contrary, pursuing the course of his unexpected and ascending fortunes. He had gone first to the Hôtel de Guise. There, after having knocked at the great door, which was opened to him with extreme circumspection, he was only laughed at when he asked for an interview with the duchess. Then, as he insisted, they told him that he ought to know that her Highness lived at Soissons, and not at Paris. Ernauton was prepared for this reception, so it did not discourage him.

“I am grieved at her Highness's absence,” said he, “for I had a communication of great importance to deliver to her from the Duc de Mayenne.”

“From the Duc de Mayenne! Who charged you to deliver it?”

“The duke himself.”

“The duke!” exclaimed the porter, with an astonishment admirably affected; “where, then, did he give you that charge? for he is not at Paris either.”

“I know that, as I met him on the road to Blois.”

“On the road to Blois?” said the porter, a little more attentive.

“Yes; and he there charged me with a message for Madame de Montpensier.”

“A message?”

“ A letter.”

“ Where is it ? ”

“ Here,” said Ernauton, striking his doublet.

“ Will you let me see it ? ”

“ Willingly.” And Ernauton drew out the letter.

“ What singular ink ! ” said the man.

“ It is blood,” said Ernauton, calmly.

The porter grew pale at these words, and at the idea that this blood was perhaps that of M. de Mayenne. At this time, when there was great dearth of ink, and an abundance of blood spilled, it was not uncommon for lovers to write to their mistresses, or absent relations to their families, with that fluid.

“ Monsieur,” said the servant, “ I do not know if you will find Madame de Montpensier in Paris or its environs; but go to a house in the Faubourg St. Antoine, called Bel-Esbat, which belongs to the duchess. It is the first on the left hand going to Vincennes, after the convent of the Jacobins. You will be sure to find some one there in the service of the duchess sufficiently in her confidence to be able to tell you where Madame the Duchess is just now.”

“ Thank you,” said Ernauton, who saw that the man either could or would say no more.

He found Bel-Esbat without making any inquiries, rang, and the door opened.

“ Enter,” said a man, who then seemed to wait for some password; but as Ernauton did not give any, he asked him what he wanted.

“ I wish to speak to Madame la Duchesse de Montpensier,” replied Ernauton.

“ And why do you come here for her ? ”

“ Because the porter at the Hôtel de Guise sent me here.”

“ Madame the Duchess is neither here nor in Paris.”

"Then," said Ernauton, "I will put off till a more auspicious moment acquitting myself of a mission with which M. de Mayenne charged me."

"For Madame the Duchess?"

"Yes."

"From M. le Duc de Mayenne?"

"Yes."

The valet reflected a moment. "Monsieur," said he, "I cannot answer; there is some one else whom I must consult. Please to wait."

"These people are well served," thought Ernauton. "Certainly, they must be dangerous people who think it necessary to hide themselves in this manner. One cannot enter a house of the Guises as you can the Louvre. I begin to think that it is not the true King of France whom I serve."

He looked round him. The courtyard was deserted; but all the doors of the stables were open, as if they expected some troop to enter and take up quarters there. He was interrupted by the return of the valet, who was followed by another.

"Leave me your horse, Monsieur," said he, "and follow my comrade; you will find some one who can answer you much better than I can."

Ernauton followed the valet, and was shown into a little room, where a simply though elegantly dressed lady was seated at an embroidery frame.

"Here is the gentleman from M. de Mayenne, Madame," said the servant.

She turned, and Ernauton uttered a cry of surprise.

"You, Madame!" cried he, recognizing at once, under that third transformation, his page and the lady of the litter.

"You!" cried the lady, in her turn, letting her work

drop, and looking at Ernauton. "Leave us," she said to the valet.

"You are of the household of Madame de Montpensier, Madame?" said Ernauton, with surprise.

"Yes; but you, Monsieur, how do you bring here a message from the Duc de Mayenne?"

"Through a series of circumstances which it would take too long to repeat," replied Ernauton, cautiously.

"Oh, you are discreet, Monsieur," said the lady, smiling.

"Yes, Madame, whenever it is necessary to be so."

"But I see no occasion for your discretion here; for if you really bring a message from the person you say — Oh, do not look angry! if you really do, I say, it interests me so much that in remembrance of our acquaintance, short though it was, you should tell it to me."

The lady threw into these words all the caressing and seductive grace that a pretty woman can employ.

"Madame," replied Ernauton, "you cannot make me tell what I do not know."

"And still less what you will not tell?"

"Madame, all my mission consists in delivering a letter to her Highness."

"Well, then, give me the letter," said the lady, holding out her hand.

"Madame, I believe I had the honor of telling you that this letter was addressed to the duchess."

"But as the duchess is absent, and I represent her here, you may —"

"I cannot, Madame."

"You distrust me, Monsieur?"

"I ought to do so, Madame; but," said the young man with an expression there was no mistaking, "in spite of the mystery of your conduct, you have inspired me, I confess, with very different sentiments."

“Really!” said the lady, coloring a little under Ernauton’s ardent gaze.

Ernauton bowed.

“Take care, Monsieur!” said she, laughing, “you are making a declaration of love.”

“Yes, Madame; I do not know if I may ever see you again, and the opportunity is too precious for me to let it slip.”

“Then, Monsieur, I understand.”

“That I love you, Madame? that is easy to understand.”

“No, but how you came here.”

“Ah, pardon, Madame! but now it is I who do not understand.”

“Yes, I understand that wishing to see me again, you invented a pretext to get in.”

“I, Madame! a pretext! you judge me ill. I was ignorant if I should ever see you again, and placed my sole reliance upon chance, which already had twice thrown me in your way; but invent a pretext, I?—never! I am strange, perhaps; I do not think like all the world.”

“Oh, you say you are in love, and you have scruples as to the manner of introducing yourself again to her you love! It is very fine, Monsieur; well, I suspected that you would have scruples.”

“Why, Madame, if you please?”

“The other day you met me. I was in a litter; you recognized me; and yet you did not follow me.”

“Madame, you are confessing you paid some attention to me.”

“And why not? Surely the way in which we first met justified my putting my head out of my litter to look after you when you passed. But you galloped away, after uttering an ‘Ah!’ which made me tremble in my litter.”

“ I was forced to go away, Madame.”

“ By your scruples ? ”

“ No, Madame, by my duty.”

“ Well ! ” said the lady, laughing, “ I see that you are a reasonable, circumspect lover, who, above all things, fears to compromise himself.”

“ If you had inspired me with certain fears, there would be nothing astonishing in it. Is it customary that a woman should dress as a man, force the barriers, and come to see an unfortunate wretch drawn to pieces, using meanwhile all sorts of gesticulations utterly incomprehensible ? ”

The lady grew rather pale, although she tried to smile.

Ernauton went on. “ Is it natural also that this lady, after this strange announcement, fearful of being arrested, should fly as though she were a thief, — she who is in the service of Madame de Montpensier, a powerful princess, although not much in favor at court ? ”

This time the lady smiled again, but ironically. “ You are not clear-sighted, Monsieur,” she said, “ in spite of your pretension to be an observer ; for with a little sense, all that seems obscure to you would have been clear. Was it not very natural that Madame de Montpensier should be interested in the fate of M. de Salcède, in what he might be tempted to say, what true or false revelations he might utter to compromise the House of Lorraine ? And if that was natural, Monsieur, was it not also natural that this princess should send some one, — some safe, intimate friend, — to be present at the execution, and bring her all the details ? Well, Monsieur, this person was I. Now, do you think I could go in my woman’s dress ? In fine, now that you know my relation to the duchess, do you think I could remain indifferent to the sufferings of the victim and his possible revelations ? ”

“ You are right, Madame ; and now I admire as much your logic and talent as I admired your beauty.”

“ Thank you, Monsieur. And now that we know each other, and that everything is explained, give me the letter, since the letter exists, and is not a simple pretext.”

“ Impossible, Madame.”

The unknown seemed trying not to grow angry. “ Impossible ? ” she repeated.

“ Yes, impossible ; for I swore to M. de Mayenne to deliver it only to the duchess herself.”

“ Say rather,” cried the lady, giving way to her irritation, “ that you have no letter ; that in spite of your pretended scruples, it was a mere pretext for getting in here ; that you wished to see me again, and that was all. Well, Monsieur, you are satisfied ; not only you have effected your entrance, but you have seen me, and have told me you adore me.”

“ In that, as in all the rest, I have told you the truth, Madame.”

“ Well, so be it. You adore me ; you wished to see me ; and you have seen me. I have procured you a pleasure in return for a service. We are quits. Adieu ! ”

“ I will obey you, Madame ; since you send me away, I will go.”

“ Yes,” cried she, now really angry, “ but if you know me, I do not know you. You have too much advantage over me. Ah, you think you can enter, on some pretext, into the house of a princess, and go away and say, ‘ I succeeded in my perfidy ! ’ Ah, Monsieur, that is not the behavior of a gallant man ! ”

“ It seems to me, Madame, that you are very hard on what would have been after all only a trick of love, if it had not been, as I have already told you, an affair of the greatest importance and the simplest truth. I put aside

all your injurious expressions, and I will forget all I might have said, affectionate or tender, since you are so badly disposed towards me. But I will not go out from here under the weight of your unworthy suspicions. I have a letter from the duke for Madame de Montpensier, and here it is ; you can see the handwriting and the address."

Ernauton held out the letter to the lady, but without delivering it. She cast her eyes on it, and cried, "His writing ! Blood !"

Without replying, Ernauton put the letter back in his pocket, bowed low, and very pale and bitterly hurt, turned to go. But she ran after him, and caught him by the skirt of his cloak.

"What is it, Madame ?" said he.

"For pity's sake, pardon me ! has any accident happened to the duke ?"

"You ask me to pardon you only that you may read this letter ; and I have already told you that no one shall read it but the duchess."

"Ah, obstinate and stupid that you are !" cried the duchess, with a fury full of majesty ; "do you not recognize me, or rather, could you not divine that I was the mistress ? And are these the eyes of a servant ? I am the Duchesse de Montpensier ; give me the letter."

"You are the duchess ?" cried Ernauton, starting back in dismay.

"Yes, I am ! Give it to me ! I want to know what has happened to my brother."

But instead of obeying, as the duchess expected, the young man, recovering from his first surprise, crossed his arms. "How can I believe you," said he, "when you have already lied to me twice ?"

The duchess's eyes shot forth fire at these words ; but Ernauton stood firm. "Ah, you doubt still ! you want

proofs of what I affirm!" she cried, tearing her lace ruffles with rage.

"Yes, Madame," replied Ernauton, coldly.

She darted towards the bell, and rang it furiously; a valet appeared.

"What does Madame want?" said he.

She stamped her foot with rage. "Mayneville!" she cried; "I want Mayneville! Is he not here?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Let him come here."

The valet went; and a minute after Mayneville entered.

"Did you send for me, Madame?" said he.

"Madame! And since when am I simply Madame?" cried she, angrily.

"Your Highness!" said Mayneville, in surprise.

"Good!" said Ernauton, "I have now a gentleman before me; and if he has lied, I shall know what to do."

"You believe then, at last?" said the duchess.

"Yes, Madame, I believe, and here is the letter;" and bowing, the young man gave to Madame de Montpeusier the letter so long disputed.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE LETTER OF M. DE MAYENNE.

THE duchess seized the letter, opened it, and read it eagerly, while various expressions passed over her face, like clouds over the sky. When she had finished she gave it to Mayneville to read. It was as follows :

MY SISTER, — I tried to do myself the work I should have left to others, and I have been punished for it. I have received a sword-wound from the fellow whom you know. The worst of it is that he has killed five of my men, and among them Boularon and Desnoises, — that is to say, two of my best, — after which he fled. I must tell you that he was aided by the bearer of this letter, — a charming young man, as you may see. I recommend him to you; he is discretion itself.

One merit which he will have, I presume, in your eyes, my dear sister, is in having prevented my conqueror from killing me, as he much wished, having pulled off my mask when I had fainted, and recognized me.

I recommend you, Sister, to discover the name and profession of this discreet cavalier; for I suspect him, while he interests me. To my offers of service, he replied that the master whom he served let him want for nothing.

I can tell you no more about him, but that he pretends not to know me. I suffer much, but believe my life is not in danger. Send me my surgeon at once; I am lying like a horse upon straw, the bearer will tell you where.

Your affectionate brother,

MAYENNE.

When they had finished reading, the duchess and Mayneville looked at each other in astonishment. The duchess broke the silence.

“To whom,” said she, “do we owe the signal service that you have rendered us, Monsieur?”

“To a man who, whenever he can, helps the weak against the strong.”

“Will you give me some details, Monsieur?”

Ernauton told all he had seen, and named the duke’s place of retreat.

Madame de Montpensier and Mayneville listened with interest. When he had finished, the duchess said, “May I hope, Monsieur, that you will continue the work so well begun, and attach yourself to our house?”

These words, spoken in the gracious tone that the duchess knew so well how to use, were very flattering to Ernauton, after the avowal which he had made; but the young man, putting vanity aside, attributed them to simple curiosity. He knew well that the king, in making it a condition that he should reveal the duchess’s place of abode, had some object in view. Two interests contended within him, — his love, which he could sacrifice, and his honor, which he could not. The temptation was all the stronger that by avowing his position near the king, he should gain an enormous importance in the eyes of the duchess; and it was not a light consideration for a young man coming straight from Gascony to be important in the eyes of the Duchesse de Montpensier. Sainte-Maline would not have resisted an instant. All these thoughts rushed through Ernauton’s mind, and resulted in making him stronger than before.

“Madame,” said he, “I have already had the honor of telling M. de Mayenne that I serve a good master, who treats me too well for me to desire to seek another.”

“My brother tells me in his letter, Monsieur, that you seemed not to recognize him. How, then, if you did not know him, did you use his name to penetrate to me?”

“M. de Mayenne seemed to wish to preserve his incognito, Madame; and I therefore did not think I ought to recognize him. And it might have been inconvenient to him that the peasants should know what an illustrious guest they were entertaining. Here there was no reason for secrecy; on the contrary, the name of M. de Mayenne opened the way to you, so I thought that here, as there, I acted rightly.”

The duchess smiled, and said, “No one could extricate himself better from an embarrassing question; and you are, I must confess, a clever man.”

“I see no cleverness in what I have had the honor of telling you, Madame.”

“Well, Monsieur,” said the duchess, impatiently, “I see clearly that you will tell nothing. You do not reflect that gratitude is a heavy burden for one of my house to bear; that you have twice rendered me a service; and that if I wished to know your name, or rather, who you are—”

“I know, Madame, you would learn it easily; but you would learn it from some one else, and I should have told nothing.”

“He is always right,” cried the duchess, with a look which gave Ernauton more pleasure than ever a look had done before. Therefore he asked no more, but like the gourmand, who leaves the table when he thinks he has had the best bit, he bowed, and prepared to take leave.

“Then, Monsieur, that is all you have to tell me?” asked the duchess.

“I have executed my commission, and it only remains for me to present my humble respects to your Highness.”

The duchess let him go ; but when the door shut behind him, she stamped her foot impatiently. "Mayneville," said she, "have that young man followed."

"Impossible, Madame. All our household are out ; I myself am waiting for the event. It is a bad day on which to do anything else than what we have decided to do."

"You are right, Mayneville ; but afterwards —"

"Oh ! afterwards, if you please, Madame."

"Yes ; for I suspect him, as my brother does."

"He is a brave fellow, at all events ; and really, we are fortunate, — a stranger, an unknown, falling from the sky to render us such a service."

"Nevertheless, Mayneville, have him watched later, at any rate."

"Eh, Madame ! later I trust we shall have no need to watch any one."

"Come, really, I don't know to-night what I am saying ; I have lost my head."

"It is permitted to a general like you, Madame, to be preoccupied on the eve of a decisive action."

"That is true. But night is falling, and Valois must be returning from Vincennes."

"Oh ! we have time before us ; it is not eight o'clock, and our men have not arrived."

"All have the word, have they not ?"

"All."

"They are trustworthy ?"

"Tried, Madame."

"How many do you expect ?"

"Fifty ; it is more than necessary, for besides them we have two hundred monks as good as soldiers, if not better."

"As soon as our men have arrived, range your monks on the road."

“They are all ready, Madame. They will intercept the way; our men will push the carriage towards them; the gates of the convent will be open, and will have but to close behind the carriage.”

“Let us sup, then, Mayneville; it will help us to pass the time. I am so impatient that I should like to push the hands of the clock.”

“The hour will come; be easy.”

“But our men?”

“They will be here; it is hardly eight.”

“Mayneville, my poor brother asks for his surgeon. The best surgeon, the best cure for his wound, would be a lock of the Valois’s hair; and the man who should carry him that present, Mayneville, would be sure to be welcome.”

“In two hours, Madame, that man shall set out to find our dear duke in his retreat; he who went out of Paris as a fugitive shall return triumphantly.”

“One word more, Mayneville; are our friends in Paris warned?”

“What friends?”

“The Leaguers.”

“God forbid, Madame! to tell a *bourgeois* is to tell all Paris. Once the deed is done, remember, we have to send out fifty couriers before it becomes known; then, the prisoner being in a cloister, we can defend ourselves against an army. There will then no longer be any risk in crying from the roof of the convent, ‘We have the Valois!’”

“You are both skilful and prudent, Mayneville. Do you know, though, that my responsibility is great, and that no other woman, in any period, has ever conceived and executed such a project?”

“I know it, Madame; therefore I counsel you, trembling with apprehension.”

“The monks will be armed under their robes?”

“Yes.”

“The soldiers are on the way?”

“They should be there at this moment.”

“The *bourgeois* to be notified after the event?”

“Three couriers will attend to that. In ten minutes Lachapelle-Marteau, Brigard, and Bussy-Leclerc will be informed; they will inform the rest.”

“Mind you kill those two fellows whom we saw pass, riding at the sides of the carriage; then we can describe what takes place as pleases us best.”

“Kill those poor devils, Madame! do you think that necessary?”

“Loignac! would he be a great loss?”

“He is a brave soldier.”

“A low adventurer, like that other ill-looking fellow who pranced on the left, with his fiery eyes and his black skin.”

“Oh, that one I don't care so much about! I don't know him, and I agree with your Highness in disliking his looks.”

“Then you abandon him to me?” laughed the duchess.

“Oh, yes, Madame! What I said was only for your renown, and the morality of the party that we represent.”

“Good, Mayneville, I know you are a virtuous man; and I will sign you a certificate to that effect if you like. You need have nothing to do with it; they will defend the Valois and get killed. To you I recommend that young man.”

“What young man?”

“He who just left us; see if he be really gone, and if he be not some spy sent by our enemies.”

Mayneville opened the window, and tried to look out.

“Oh, what a dark night!” said he.

“ An excellent night ; the darker the better. Therefore, good courage, my captain.”

“ Yes, but we shall see nothing.”

“ God, whom we fight for, will see for us.”

Mayneville, who did not seem quite so sure of the intervention of Providence in affairs of this nature, remained at the window looking out.

“ Do you see any one ? ” asked the duchess.

“ No, but I hear the tramp of horses.”

“ It is they ; all goes well.” And the duchess touched the famous pair of golden scissors at her side.

CHAPTER XLIII.

HOW DOM GORENFLOT BLESSED THE KING AS HE PASSED
BEFORE THE PRIORY OF THE JACOBINS.

ERNAUTON went away with a full heart but a quiet conscience ; he had had the singular good fortune to declare his love to a princess, and to cause her, by the important conversation which followed, to forget his declaration just so far that it had worked no immediate harm, and might bear fruit at some future time. He had betrayed neither the king, M. de Mayenne, nor himself. Therefore he was content ; but he still wished for many things, and among others, a quick return to Vincennes, where the king expected him ; then to go to bed and dream. He set off at full gallop as soon as he left Bel-Esbat, but he had scarcely gone a hundred yards when he came on a body of cavaliers who stretched right across the road. He was surrounded in a minute, and half-a-dozen swords and as many pistols were presented at him.

“ Oh ! ” said Ernauton, “ robbers on the road, a league from Paris ! The devil take the country ! The king has an inefficient provost ; I shall advise him to make a change.”

“ Silence, if you please ! ” said a voice that Ernauton thought he recognized. “ Your sword, your arms ! quick ! ”

And one man seized the bridle of the horse, while two others stripped him of his arms.

"*Peste!* what clever thieves!" said Ernauton. "At least, gentlemen, do me the favor to tell me —"

"Why, it is M. de Carmainges!" said the man who had seized his sword.

"M. de Pincornay!" cried Ernauton. "Oh, fie! what a bad trade you have taken up!"

"I said 'silence!'" cried the voice of the chief; "and take this man to the *dépôt*."

"But, M. de Sainte-Maline, it is our companion, Ernauton de Carmainges."

"Ernauton here!" cried Sainte-Maline, angrily; "what is he doing here?"

"Good-evening, gentlemen," said Carmainges; "I did not, I confess, expect to find so much good company."

Sainte-Maline remained silent.

"It seems that I am arrested," continued Ernauton; "for I presume you don't intend to plunder me?"

"The devil!" growled Sainte-Maline; "this is unforeseen."

"By me also, I assure you," said Ernauton, laughing.

"It is embarrassing. What were you doing here?"

"If I asked you that question, would you answer?"

"No."

"Then let me act as you would."

"Then you will not tell me what you were doing on the road?"

Ernauton smiled, but made no reply.

"Nor where you were going?"

Ernauton did not answer.

"Then, Monsieur, since you do not explain, I must treat you like any other man."

"Do what you please, Monsieur; only I warn you, you will have to answer for it."

"To M. de Loignac?"

“Higher than that.”

“M. d'Épernon?”

“Higher still.”

“Well, I have my orders, and I shall send you to Vincennes.”

“That is capital; it is just where I was going.”

“I am glad, Monsieur, that this little journey pleases you so much.”

Two men, pistol in hand, immediately took possession of the prisoner, whom they conducted to two other men about five hundred feet farther on. These did the same with him; so that Ernauton had the society of his comrades even to the courtyard of Vincennes. Here he found fifty disarmed cavaliers, who, looking pale and dispirited, and surrounded by fifty light-horse, were deploring their bad fortune, and anticipating a disastrous ending to an enterprise so well planned. The Forty-five had taken all these men, either by force or cunning, as they had, for precaution, come to the rendezvous either singly, or two or three together at most. Now all this would have rejoiced Ernauton had he understood it, but he saw without understanding. “Monsieur,” said he to Sainte-Maline, “I see that you were told of the importance of my mission, and that, fearing some accident for me, you were good enough to take the trouble to escort me hither. Now I will tell you that you were right; the king expects me, and I have important things to say to him. I will tell the king what you have done for his service.”

Sainte-Maline grew red and then pale; but he understood, being clever when not blinded by passion, that Ernauton spoke the truth, and that he was expected. There was no joking with MM. de Loignac and d'Épernon; therefore he said, “You are free, M. Ernauton; I am delighted to have been agreeable to you.”

Ernauton waited for no more, but began to mount the staircase which led to the king's room. Sainte-Maline followed him with his eyes, and saw Loignac meet him on the stairs, and make a sign to him to come on. Loignac then descended to see the captives with his own eyes, and pronounced the road perfectly safe and free for the king's return. He knew nothing of the Jacobin convent, and the artillery and musketry of the fathers. But D'Épernon did, being completely informed by Nicolas Poulain. Therefore, when Loignac came and said to his chief, "Monsieur, the roads are free," D'Épernon replied, "Very well; the king orders that the Forty-five Guards form themselves into three compact bodies, — one to go before and one on each side of the carriage, — so that if there be any firing it may not reach the carriage."

"Very good!" said Loignac, "only I do not see where firing is to come from."

"At the priory of the Jacobins, Monsieur, they must close their ranks."

This dialogue was interrupted by the king, who descended the staircase, followed by several gentlemen, among whom Sainte-Maline, with rage in his heart, recognized Ernauton.

"Gentlemen," said the king, "are my brave Forty-five all here?"

"Yes, Sire," said D'Épernon, directing his attention to them.

"Have the orders been given?"

"Yes, Sire, and will be followed."

"Let us go, then!"

The light-horse were left in charge of the prisoners, and forbidden to address a word to them. The king got into his carriage with his naked sword by his side. M. d'Épernon swore, "*Parfondious!*" and gallantly tried

his own sword to see whether it moved readily in its scabbard. At nine o'clock they started.

An hour after the departure of Ernauton, M. de Mayneville was still at the window, whence, as we have seen, he had vainly endeavored to follow the young man's course in the darkness ; but after the lapse of that hour he was far less tranquil and hopeful, for none of his soldiers had appeared, and the only sound heard along the silent, black road was the occasional sound of horses' feet on the road to Vincennes. When this was heard, Mayneville and the duchess vainly tried to see what was going on. At last Mayneville became so anxious that he sent off a man on horseback, telling him to inquire of the first body of cavaliers they met. The messenger did not return ; the duchess sent another, but neither reappeared.

"Our officer," said the duchess, always hopeful, "must have been afraid of not having sufficient force, and must have kept our men to help him ; it is prudent, but it makes one anxious."

"Yes, very anxious," said Mayneville, whose eyes never left the dark and gloomy horizon.

"Mayneville, what can have happened ?"

"I will go myself, Madame, and find out."

"Oh, no ! I forbid that. Who would stay with me ? Who would know our friends when the time comes ? No, no ! stay, Mayneville. One is naturally apprehensive when a secret of this importance is concerned ; but really the plan was too well combined, and, above all, too secret not to succeed."

"Nine o'clock !" replied Mayneville, rather to himself than to the duchess. "Well, here are the Jacobins coming out of their convent, and ranging themselves along the walls."

"Listen !" cried the duchess.

They began to hear from afar a noise like thunder.

"It is cavalry!" cried the duchess. "They are bringing him; we have him at last;" and she clapped her hands in the wildest joy.

"Yes," said Mayneville, "I hear a carriage and the gallop of horses."

And he cried out loudly, "Outside the walls, my fathers, outside!"

Immediately the gates of the priory opened, and a hundred armed monks marched out, with Borromée at their head, and took position across the road. Then they heard Gorenflot's voice crying, "Wait for me! wait for me! I must be at the head of the chapter to receive his Majesty worthily."

"Go to the balcony, Prior," cried Borromée, "and overlook us all."

"Ah, true! I forgot that I had chosen that place; happily, you are here to remind me, Brother Borromée."

Borromée despatched four monks to stand behind the prior, on the pretence of doing him honor.

Soon the road was illumined by a number of torches, thanks to which the duchess and Mayneville could see cuirasses and swords shining. Incapable of moderation, she cried, "Go down, Mayneville, and bring him to me, bound and attended by guards!"

"Yes, Madame; but one thing disquiets me."

"What is it?"

"I do not hear the signal agreed on."

"What use is the signal, since they have him?"

"But they were to arrest him only here, before the priory."

"They must have found a good opportunity earlier."

"I do not see our officer."

"I do."

"Where?"

“ See that red plume.”

“ *Ventrebleu!* that red plume — ”

“ Well? ”

“ It is M. d'Épernon, sword in hand.”

“ They have left him his sword? ”

“ *Mordieu!* he commands.”

“ Our people! There has been treason.”

“ Oh, Madame! they are not our people.”

“ You are mad, Mayneville! ”

But at that moment Loignac, at the head of the first body of guards, cried, brandishing his large sword, “ Vive le roi! ”

“ Vive le roi! ” replied enthusiastically all the Forty-five, with their Gascon accent. The duchess grew pale and sank down almost fainting. Mayneville, sombre but resolute, drew his sword, not knowing but that the house was to be attacked. The *cortége* advanced, and had reached Bel-Esbat. Borromée came a little forward, and as Loignac rode straight up to him, he immediately saw that all was lost, and determined on his part.

“ Room for the king! ” cried Loignac. Gorenflot, excited by the cries and by the noise of arms, dazzled by the flaming of the torches, extended his powerful arm and blessed the king from his balcony. Henri saw him, and bowed smilingly; and at this mark of favor Gorenflot gave out a “ Vive le roi! ” with his stentorian voice. The rest, however, remained mute; they expected a different result from their two months' training. But Borromée, feeling certain, from the absence of the duchess's troops, of the fate of the enterprise, knew that to hesitate a moment was to be ruined, and he answered with a “ Vive le roi! ” almost as sonorous as Gorenflot's. Then all the rest took it up.

“ Thanks, reverend fathers, thanks! ” cried Henri; and

then he passed the convent, where his course was to have terminated, like a whirlwind of fire, noise, and glory, leaving behind him Bel-Esbat in obscurity.

From her balcony, hidden by the golden escutcheon, behind which she was kneeling, the duchess saw and examined each face on which the light of the torches fell.

“Oh,” cried she, “look, Mayneville! That young man, my brother’s messenger, is in the king’s service! We are lost!”

“We must fly immediately, Madame, now that the Valois is conqueror.”

“We have been betrayed! That young man has betrayed us! He knew all!”

The king had already, with all his escort, entered the Porte St. Antoine, which had opened before him and shut behind him.

CHAPTER XLIV.

HOW CHICOT BLESSED KING LOUIS XI. FOR HAVING INVENTED
POSTING, AND RESOLVED TO PROFIT BY IT.

CHICOT, to whom our readers will now permit us to return, after his last adventure went on as rapidly as possible. He well understood that between the duke and himself there would now exist a mortal struggle, which would end only with life. Mayenne, wounded in his body, and still more grievously in his self-love, would never forgive him.

“Come, come!” said the brave Gascon, hastening on towards Beaugency; “now is the time, if ever, to spend on post-horses the joint contributions of those three illustrious personages called Henri de Valois, Dom Modeste Gorenflot, and Sebastien Chicot.”

Skilful as he was in the imitation of all conditions, Chicot immediately assumed the manner of a great lord, as he had assumed previously that of a good *bourgeois*. And never was prince served with more zeal than he, when he had sold Ernauton’s horse and had talked for a quarter of an hour with the master of the post. Once in the saddle, he was determined not to stop until he reached a place of safety, and he went as quickly as constant fresh relays of horses would permit. He himself seemed made of iron, and at the end of sixty leagues, accomplished in twenty hours, he felt no fatigue. When, thanks to this rapidity, in three days he reached Bordeaux, he thought he might take breath.

A man can think while he gallops, and Chicot thought much. What kind of prince was he about to find in that strange Henri, whom some thought a fool, others a coward, and all a renegade of small importance? But Chicot's opinion was generally rather different from that of the rest of the world; and he was clever at divining what lay below the surface. Henri de Navarre was to him an enigma, although an unsolved one; but to know that he was an enigma was to have found out much. Chicot knew more of him than others did, in knowing, like the old Grecian sage, that he knew nothing. Therefore, where most people would have gone to speak freely, and with their hearts on their lips, Chicot felt that he must proceed cautiously, and with carefully guarded words.

This necessity of dissimulation was impressed on his mind by his natural penetration, and also by the aspect of the country through which he was passing. Once within the limits of the little principality of Navarre, — a country whose poverty was proverbial in France, — Chicot, to his great astonishment, ceased to see the impress of that misery which showed itself in every house and on every face in the finest provinces of that fertile France which he had just left. The wood-cutter who passed along, with his arm leaning on the yoke of his favorite ox; the girl with short petticoat and alert step, carrying water on her head; the old man humming a song of his youthful days; the tame bird who warbled in his cage or pecked at his plentiful supply of food; the brown, thin, but healthy children playing about the roads, — all said in a language clear and intelligible to Chicot, "See, we are happy here."

Sometimes, hearing the sound of wheels creaking in the ruts, Chicot felt a sudden terror; he recalled the heavy artillery which tore up the roads of France. But

at a turn of the road the wagon of a vintager would come to view, full of casks and of children with red faces. Sometimes the barrel of an arquebuse seen behind a hedge, or vines, or fig-trees, made him tremble for fear of an ambush ; but it always turned out to be a hunter, followed by his great dogs, traversing the plain, plentiful in hares, to reach the mountain, equally full of partridges and heathcocks. Although the season was advanced, and Chicot had left Paris full of fog and hoar-frost, it was here warm and fine. The great trees, which had not yet entirely lost their leaves, which, indeed, in the south they never lose entirely, threw deep shadows from their reddening tops.

The Béarnais peasants, their caps over one ear, rode about on the little cheap horses of the country, which seem indefatigable, go twenty leagues at a stretch, and never combed, never covered, give themselves a shake at the end of their journey, and go to graze on the first tuft of heath, — their only and sufficing repast.

“ *Ventre de biche !* ” said Chicot ; “ I have never seen Gascony so rich. I confess the letter weighs on my mind, although I have translated it into Latin. However, I have never heard that Henriot, as Charles IX. called him, knew Latin ; so I will give him a free French translation.”

Chicot inquired, and was told that the king was at Nérac. He turned to the left to reach this place, and found the road full of people returning from the market at Condom. He learned — for Chicot, careful in answering the questions of others, was a great questioner himself — that the King of Navarre led a very joyous life, and was always changing from one love to another.

On the road Chicot made acquaintance with a young Catholic priest, a sheep-merchant, and an officer, who had joined company on the road, and were travelling to-

gether. This chance association seemed to him to represent Navarre, — learned, commercial, and military. The priest recited to him several sonnets which had been made on the loves of the king and the beautiful Fosseuse, daughter of René de Montmorency, Baron de Fossenx.

“Oh!” said Chicot; “in Paris, we believe that the king is mad about Mademoiselle de Rebours.”

“Oh!” said the officer, “that was at Pau.”

“What! has the king a mistress in every town?”

“Very likely; I know that he was the lover of Mademoiselle de Dayelle, while I was in garrison at Castelnaudary.”

“Oh! Mademoiselle Dayelle, — a Greek, was she not?”

“Yes,” said the priest; “a Cypriote.”

“I am from Agen,” said the merchant; “and I know that when the king was there he made love to Mademoiselle de Tignonville.”

“*Ventre de biche!*” said Chicot; “he is a universal lover. But to return to Mademoiselle Dayelle; I knew her family.”

“She was jealous and was always threatening; she had a pretty little poniard, which she kept on her work-table, and one day the king went away and carried the poniard with him, saying that he did not wish any misfortune to happen to his successor.”

“And Mademoiselle de Rebours?”

“Oh! they quarrelled.”

“Then La Fosseuse is the last?”

“Oh, *mon Dieu!* yes; the king is mad about her, — and the more so because she is *enceinte.*”

“But what does the queen say?”

“She carries her griefs to the foot of the crucifix,” said the priest.

"Besides," said the officer, "she is ignorant of all these things."

"That is not possible," said Chicot.

"Why so?"

"Because Nérac is not so large that it is easy to hide things there."

"As for that," said the officer, "there is a park there containing avenues more than three thousand feet long, bordered by cypresses, plane-trees, and magnificent sycamores; and the shade is so thick it is almost dark in broad daylight. Think what it must be at night."

"And then the queen is much occupied, Monsieur," said the priest.

"Occupied?"

"Yes."

"With whom, pray?"

"With God, Monsieur," said the priest, gravely.

"With God?"

"Why not?"

"Ah, the queen is religious?"

"Very religious."

"Nevertheless, there is no Mass at the palace, I imagine," said Chicot.

"And you imagine very incorrectly, Monsieur. No Mass! do you take us for heathens? Learn, Monsieur, that if the king goes to church with his gentlemen, the queen hears Mass in her private chapel."

"The queen?"

"Yes, yes."

"Queen Marguerite?"

"Yes; and I, unworthy as I am, received two crowns for officiating there twice. I even preached a very good sermon on the text, 'God has separated the wheat from the chaff.' It is in the Bible, 'God will separate;'

but as it is a long time since that was written, I supposed that the thing was done."

"And did the king know about that sermon?"

"He heard it."

"Without annoyance?"

"On the contrary, he applauded it."

"You astound me," said Chicot.

"I must add," said the officer, "that they do something else than hear Mass at the palace; they give good dinners — and the promenades! I don't believe that anywhere in France there are more mustaches shown than in the promenades at Nérac."

Chicot had obtained more information than he needed to enable him to lay out his course. He knew Queen Margnerite well, and he knew that if she was blind to these love-affairs, it was because she had some motive for placing a bandage over her eyes.

"*Ventre de biche!*" said he, "these avenues of cypresses, and three thousand feet of shade, make me feel uncomfortable. I am coming from Paris to tell the truth at Nérac, where they have such deep shade that women do not see their husbands walking with other women. *Corbiou!* they will be ready to kill me for troubling so many charming promenades. Happily, I know the king is a philosopher; and I trust in that. Besides, I am an ambassador, and sacred."

Chicot entered Nérac in the evening, just at the hour of those promenades which occupied so much the King of France and his ambassador. Chicot could satisfy himself in regard to the simplicity of the royal manners by the ease with which he obtained an audience. A valet opened the door of a rustic-looking apartment bordered with flowers, above which was the king's antechamber and sitting-room. An officer or page ran to find the king

wherever he might be when any one wished for an audience, and he always came at the first summons. Chicot was pleased with this; he judged the king to be open and candid, and he thought so still more when he saw the king coming up a winding walk bordered with laurels and roses, an old hat on his head, and dressed in a dark-green doublet and gray boots, and with a cup and ball in his hand. He looked gay and happy, as though care never came near him.

“Who wants me?” said he to the page.

“A man who looks to me half courtier, half soldier.”

Chicot heard these words and advanced timidly. “It is I, Sire.”

“What! M. Chicot in Navarre! *Ventre-saint-gris!* welcome, dear M. Chicot!”

“A thousand thanks, Sire.”

“Still alive, thank God!”

“I hope so, at least, dear sire,” said Chicot, transported with happiness.

“Ah, *parbleu!* we will drink together. Really, you make me very happy, M. Chicot; sit there.” And he pointed to a grassy bank.

“Oh, no, Sire.”

“Have you come two hundred leagues to see me, and shall I leave you standing? No, no; sit down. One cannot talk standing.”

“But, Sire, respect —”

“Respect! here in Navarre! You are mad, my poor Chicot.”

“No, Sire, I am not mad; I am an ambassador.”

A slight frown contracted Henri’s brow, but disappeared at once. “Ambassador from whom?”

“From Henri III. I come from Paris and the Louvre, Sire.”

“ Oh, that is different ! Come with me,” said the king, rising with a sigh. “ Page, take wine up to my chamber, — no, to my cabinet. Come, Chicot, I will conduct you.”

Chicot followed the king, thinking, “ How disagreeable ! — to come and trouble this honest man in his peace and his ignorance. Bah ! he will be philosophical.”

CHAPTER XLV.

HOW THE KING OF NAVARRE GUESSES THAT "TURENNIUS"
MEANS TURENNE, AND "MARGOTA" MARGOT.

THE King of Navarre's cabinet was not very sumptuous, for he was not rich, and did not waste the little he had. It was large, and with his bedroom occupied all the right wing of the château. It was well, though not royally, furnished, and from its windows could be seen the magnificent meadows bordering on the river. Great trees, willows and planes, here and there hid the course of the river, which glanced between, golden in the sunlight, or silver in the light of the moon. This beautiful panorama was terminated by a range of hills, which looked violet in the evening light. The windows on the other side looked upon the court of the château. All these natural beauties interested Chicot less than the arrangements of the room, which was the ordinary sitting-room of Henri.

The king seated himself, with his usual simplicity and his constant smile, in a great armchair of leather with gilt nails, and Chicot, at his command, sat down on a stool similar in material. Henri looked at him smilingly, but with curiosity.

"You will think I am very curious, dear M. Chicot," began the king; "but I cannot help it. I have so long looked on you as dead that in spite of the pleasure your resurrection causes me I can hardly comprehend that you are still alive. Why did you so suddenly disappear from this world?"

“Oh, Sire!” said Chicot, with his usual freedom, “you disappeared from Vincennes. Every one eclipses himself according to his need.”

“I recognize by your ready wit that it is not to your ghost I am speaking.” Then, more seriously, “But now we must leave wit and speak of business.”

“If it does not too much fatigue your Majesty, I am ready.”

Henri’s eyes kindled. “Fatigue me! It is true I grow rusty here; but I am not fatigued, for I have done nothing. I have to-day exercised my body much, but my mind little.”

“Sire, I am glad of that; for, ambassador from a king, your relative and friend, I have a delicate commission to execute with your Majesty.”

“Speak quickly; you pique my curiosity.”

“Sire —”

“First, your letters of credit. I know it is needless, since you are the ambassador; but I wish to show you that, Béarnais peasant as we are, we know our duty as king.”

“Sire, I ask your Majesty’s pardon; but all the letter of credit that I had I have drowned in rivers, thrown in the fire, scattered in the air.”

“And why so?”

“Because one cannot travel charged with an embassy to Navarre as one travels to buy cloth at Lyon; and if one has the dangerous honor of carrying royal letters, he runs a risk of carrying them only to the tomb.”

“It is true,” said Henri, “the roads are not very safe, and in Navarre we are reduced, for want of money, to trust to the honesty of the people; but they do not steal much.”

“Oh, no, Sire; they behave like lambs or angels. But

that is only in Navarre ; out of it one meets wolves and vultures around every prey. I was a prey, Sire, so I had both."

"At all events, I am glad to see they did not eat you."

"*Ventre de biche!* Sire, it was not their fault ; they did their best, but they found me too tough, and could not get through my skin. But to return to my letter."

"Since you have none, dear M. Chicot, it seems to me useless to return to it."

"I should say that if I have none now, I had one."

"Very good," said Henri, extending his hand ; "give it to me, M. Chicot."

"Here is the misfortune, Sire : I had a letter, as I have had the honor to inform your Majesty, and few have ever had a better one."

"You have lost it ?"

"I hastened to destroy it, Sire, for M. de Mayenne ran after me to steal it from me."

"Cousin Mayenne ?"

"In person."

"Luckily, he does not run fast. Is he still getting fatter ?"

"*Ventre de biche!* not just now, I should think."

"Why not ?"

"Because, you understand, Sire, he had the misfortune to catch me, and unfortunately got a sword-wound."

"And the letter ?"

"He had not a glimpse of it, thanks to my precautions."

"Bravo! your journey is interesting. You must tell me the details. But one thing disquiets me, — if the letter was destroyed for M. de Mayenne, it is also destroyed for me. How, then, shall I know what my brother Henri wrote, if the letter no longer exists ?"

"Pardon, Sire ; it exists in my memory."

“How so?”

“Sire, before destroying it I learned it by heart.”

“An excellent idea, M. Chicot! You will recite it to me, will you not?”

“Willingly, Sire.”

“Word for word?”

“Yes, Sire; although I do not know the language, I have a good memory.”

“What language?”

“Latin.”

“I do not understand you. Was my brother Henri’s letter written in Latin?”

“Yes, Sire.”

“And why?”

“Ah, Sire, doubtless because Latin is an audacious language, — a language which may say anything, and in which Persius and Juvenal have immortalized the follies and errors of kings.”

“Kings?”

“And of queens, Sire.”

The king began to frown.

“I mean emperors and empresses,” continued Chicot.

“You know Latin, M. Chicot?”

“Yes and no, Sire.”

“You are fortunate if it is ‘yes,’ for you have an immense advantage over me, who do not know it. For that reason I have never been able to attend seriously to the Mass, on account of that devilish Latin. Then you know it, do you?”

“They taught me to read it, Sire, as well as Greek and Hebrew.”

“That is very convenient, M. Chicot; you are a living book.”

“Your Majesty has found the exact word, — ‘a book.’

They print something on my memory ; they send me where they like ; I arrive ; I am read and understood."

"Or not understood."

"How so, Sire?"

"Why, if one does not know the language in which you are printed."

"Oh, Sire, kings know everything."

"That is what we tell the people, and what flatterers tell us."

"Then, Sire, it is useless for me to recite to your Majesty the letter which I learned by heart, since neither of us would understand it."

"Is Latin not very much like Italian?"

"So they say, Sire."

"And Spanish?"

"I believe so."

"Then let us try. I know a little Italian, and my Gascon *patois* is something like Spanish ; perhaps I may understand Latin without ever having learned it."

"Your Majesty orders me to repeat it, then?"

"I beg you, dear M. Chicot."

Chicot began, —

"FRATER CARISSIME, — Sincerus amor quo te prosequatur germanus noster Carolus Nonus, functus nuper, colet usque regiam nostram et pectori meo pertinaciter adhæret."

"If I am not mistaken," said Henri, interrupting, "they speak in this phrase of love, obstinacy, and of my brother, Charles IX."

"Very likely," said Chicot. "Latin is such a beautiful language that all that might go in one sentence."

"Go on," said the king.

Chicot began again, and Henri listened with the utmost calm to all the passages about Turenne and his wife ;

only at the word "Turennius," he said, "Does not 'Turennius' mean Turenne?"

"I think so, Sire."

"And 'Margota' must be the pet name which my brothers gave to their sister Marguerite, my beloved wife."

"It is possible," said Chicot; and he continued his letter to the end without the king's face changing in the least.

"Is it finished?" asked Henri, when he stopped.

"Yes, Sire."

"It ought to be superb."

"I think so also, Sire."

"How unfortunate that I understood only two words, 'Turennius' and 'Margota'!"

"An irreparable misfortune, Sire, unless your Majesty decides on having it translated by some one."

"Oh, no! you yourself, M. Chicot, who were so discreet in destroying the autograph, you would not counsel me to make this letter public?"

"But I think that the king's letter to you, recommended to me so carefully, and sent to your Majesty by a private hand, must contain here and there good things from which your Majesty might derive some advantage."

"Yes, but to confide these good things to any one, I must have great confidence in him."

"Certainly."

"Well, I have an idea. Go and find my wife Margota. She is learned, and will understand it if you recite it to her; then she can explain it to me."

"That is an excellent plan."

"Is it not? Go!"

"I will, Sire."

"Mind not to alter a word of the letter."

“That would be impossible, Sire. To do that I must know Latin.”

“Go, then, my friend.”

Chicot received directions for finding Madame Marguerite, and went away more convinced than ever that the king was an enigma.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE AVENUE THREE THOUSAND FEET LONG.

THE queen inhabited the other wing of the château. The famous avenue began at her very window, and her eyes rested only on grass and flowers. A native poet (Marguerite, in the provinces as in Paris, was always the star of the poets) had composed a sonnet about her.

“She wishes,” said he, “by all these agreeable sights to chase away painful memories.”

Daughter, sister, and wife of a king as she was, Marguerite had indeed suffered much. Her philosophy, although more boasted of than that of the king, was less solid, for it was due only to study, while his was natural. Therefore, philosopher as she was, or rather, tried to be, time and grief had already begun to leave their marks on her countenance. Still she was remarkably beautiful. With her joyous yet sweet smile, her brilliant and yet soft eyes, Marguerite was still an adorable creature. She was idolized at Nérac, whither she brought elegance, joy, and life. She, a Parisian princess, supported patiently a provincial life; and this alone was a virtue in the eyes of the inhabitants. Every one loved her, both as queen and as woman.

Full of hatred for her enemies, but patient that she might avenge herself better; feeling instinctively that under the mask of carelessness and long-suffering worn by Henri de Navarre he had a bad feeling towards her, — she

had accustomed herself to replace by poetry, and by the semblance of love, relatives, husband, and friends.

No one, excepting Catherine de Médicis, Chicot, or melancholy ghosts returned from the realms of death, could have told why Marguerite's cheeks were often so pale, why her eyes often filled with tears, or why her heart often betrayed its melancholy void. Marguerite had no more confidants ; she had been betrayed too often.

However, her belief that Henri had a hostile feeling towards her was instinctive only, and came rather from the consciousness of her own faults than from his behavior. He treated her like a daughter of France, always spoke to her with respectful politeness or grateful kindness, and was always the husband and friend.

When Chicot arrived at the place indicated to him by Henri, he found no one ; Marguerite, they said, was at the end of the famous avenue. When he had gone about two thirds of its length, he saw at the end, in an arbor covered with jasmine, clematis, and broom, a group covered with ribbons, feathers, velvets, and swords. Perhaps all this finery was slightly old-fashioned, but for Nérac it was brilliant ; and even Chicot, coming straight from Paris, was satisfied with the *coup d'œil*.

As a page of the king preceded Chicot, the queen, whose eyes wandered here and there with the continual restlessness of melancholy hearts, saw the colors of Navarre and called to him. "What do you want, D'Aubiac?" she asked.

"Madame, a gentleman from Paris, an envoy from the Louvre to the King of Navarre, and sent by his Majesty to you, desires to speak to your Majesty."

A sudden flush passed over Marguerite's face, and she turned quickly. Chicot was standing near ; Marguerite

left the circle, and waving an adieu to the company, advanced towards the Gascon.

“M. Chicot !” she cried in astonishment.

“Here I am, at your Majesty’s feet,” said he, “and find you ever good and beautiful, and queen here, as at the Louvre.”

“It is a miracle to see you here, Monsieur ; they said you were dead.”

“I pretended to be so.”

“And what do you want with us, M. Chicot ? Am I happy enough to be still remembered in France ?”

“Oh, Madame,” said Chicot, smiling, “we do not forget queens of your age and your beauty. The King of France even writes on this subject to the King of Navarre.”

Marguerite colored. “He writes ?”

“Yes, Madame.”

“And you have brought the letter ?”

“I have not brought it, Madame, for reasons that the King of Navarre will explain to you, but learned it by heart and repeated it.”

“I understand. This letter was important, and you feared to lose it, or have it stolen.”

“That is the truth, Madame ; but the letter was written in Latin.”

“Oh, very well ; you are aware that I know Latin.”

“And the King of Navarre, does he know it ?”

“Dear M. Chicot, it is very difficult to find out what he does or does not know. If one can believe appearances, he knows very little of it, for he never seems to understand when I speak to any one in that language. Then you told him the purport of the letter ?”

“It was to him it was addressed.”

“And did he seem to understand ?”

“ Only two words.”

“ What were they ? ”

“ ‘ Turennius ’ and ‘ Margota. ’ ”

“ ‘ Turennius ’ and ‘ Margota ’ ? ”

“ Yes ; those two words were in the letter.”

“ Then what did he do ? ”

“ He sent me to you, Madame.”

“ To me ? ”

“ Yes, saying that the letter contained things of too much importance to be confided to a stranger, and that it was better to take it to you, who are the most beautiful of learned ladies, and the most learned of beautiful ones.”

“ I will listen to you, M. Chicot, since such are the king’s orders.”

“ Thank you, Madame ; where does your Majesty wish me to deliver it ? ”

“ Come to my cabinet.”

Marguerite looked earnestly at Chicot, who, through pity for her, had let her have a glimpse of the truth. The poor woman felt the need of a support, of a last return to love perhaps, before encountering the trial that awaited her. She turned towards a gentleman in the group, and said, “ M. de Turenne, your arm to the château. Precede us, M. Chicot.”

CHAPTER XLVII.

MARGUERITE'S CABINET.

MARGUERITE'S cabinet was fashionably furnished ; and tapestries, enamels, china, books, and manuscripts in Greek, Latin, and French, covered all the tables ; while birds in their cages, dogs on the carpet, formed a living world round Marguerite.

The queen was a woman to understand Epicurus, — not in Greek only ; she occupied her life so well that from a thousand griefs she drew forth a pleasure.

Chicot was invited to sit down in a beautiful armchair of tapestry, representing a Cupid scattering a cloud of flowers ; and a page, handsome and richly dressed, offered to him refreshment. He did not accept it, but as soon as the Vicomte de Turenne had left them, began to recite his letter. We already know this letter, having read it with Chicot, and therefore think it useless to follow the Latin translation. Chicot spoke with the worst accent possible, that Marguerite might be slower in understanding it ; but she understood it perfectly, and could not hide her rage and indignation. She knew her brother's dislike to her, and her mind was divided between anger and fear. But as he concluded, she decided on her part.

“By the holy communion,” said she, when Chicot had finished, “my brother writes well in Latin ! What vehemence ! what style ! I should never have believed him

capable of it. But do you not understand it, M. Chicot? I thought you were a good Latin scholar."

"Madame, I have forgotten it; all that I remember is that Latin has no article, that it has a vocative, and that 'head' is of the neuter gender."

"Really!" said some one, entering noiselessly and merrily. It was the King of Navarre. "'Head' is of the neuter gender, M. Chicot? Why is it not masculine?"

"Ah, Sire, I do not know; it astonishes me as much as it does your Majesty."

"It must be because it is sometimes the man, sometimes the woman, that rules, according to their temperaments."

"That is an excellent reason, Sire."

"I am glad to be a more profound philosopher than I thought. But to return to the letter. Madame, I burn to hear news from the court of France, and M. Chicot brings them to me in an unknown tongue. Otherwise —"

"Otherwise?" repeated Marguerite.

"Otherwise, I should be delighted, *ventre-saint-gris!* You know how much I like news, and especially scandalous news, such as my brother, Henri de Valois, so well knows how to repeat." And Henri de Navarre sat down, rubbing his hands.

"Come, M. Chicot," the king continued, with the manner of a man preparing to enjoy himself, "you have repeated that famous letter to my wife, have you not?"

"Yes, Sire."

"Well, my dear, tell me what that famous letter contains."

"Do you not fear, Sire, that the Latin is a bad prognostic?" said Chicot.

"Why so?" asked the king. Then, turning towards his wife, "Well, Madame?"

Marguerite hesitated for a moment, as if recalling one by one the phrases that had fallen from Chicot's lips. "Our messenger is right, Sire," she said, when her examination was finished, and her course decided upon; "the Latin is a bad sign."

"What!" said Henri, "does the letter contain anything disagreeable, — from your brother, who is so clever and polite?"

"Even when he had me insulted in my litter, as happened near Sens, when I left Paris to rejoin you, Sire."

"When one has a brother whose own conduct is irreproachable," said Henri, in an indefinable tone between jest and earnest, — "a brother a king, and very punctilious —"

"He ought to care for the true honor of his sister and of his house. I do not suppose, Sire, that if your sister, Catherine d'Albret, occasioned some scandal, you would have it published by a captain of the guards."

"Oh, I am like a good-natured *bourgeois*, and not a king; but the letter, the letter! since it was addressed to me, I wish to know what it contains."

"It is a perfidious letter, Sire."

"Bah!"

"Oh, yes, and which contains more calumnies than are necessary to embroil a husband with his wife, and a friend with his friends."

"Oh, oh! embroil a husband with his wife! you and me, then?"

"Yes, Sire."

"And in what way, my dear?"

Chicot was on thorns; he would have given much, hungry as he was, to be in bed without supper. "The storm is about to burst," thought he.

"Sire," said Marguerite, "I much regret that your Majesty has forgotten your Latin."

"Madame, of all the Latin I learned, I remember but one phrase, — 'Deus et virtus æterna,' — a singular assemblage of masculine, feminine, and neuter, which my professor never could explain except by the Greek, which I understand still less than I do Latin."

"Sire, if you did understand, you would see in the letter many compliments to me."

"But how could compliments embroil us, Madame? For as long as your brother pays you compliments, I shall agree with him; if he speaks ill of you, I shall understand his policy."

"Ah! if he spoke ill of me, you would understand it?"

"Yes; he has reasons for embroiling us, which I know well."

"Well, then, Sire, these compliments are only an insinuating prelude to calumnious accusations against your friends and mine."

After boldly uttering these words, Marguerite awaited a contradiction. Chicot lowered his head; Henri raised his shoulders.

"Come, my dear," said the king, "you have understood the Latin none too well, after all; such an evil intention cannot be in my brother's letter."

Although Henri uttered these words in gentle and pleasant tones, Marguerite shot at him a glance of defiance. "Understand me to the end, Sire," she said.

"God is my witness that I ask nothing better," replied Henri.

"Do you want your followers or not, Sire?" said she.

"Do I want them? What a question! What should I do without them, and reduced to my own resources?"

“ Well, Sire, the king wishes to detach your best servants from you.”

“ I defy him ! ”

“ Bravo, Sire ! ” said Chicot.

“ Yes,” said Henri, with that apparent candor with which to the end of his life he deceived people, “ for my followers are attached to me through love, and not through interest ; I have nothing to give them.”

“ You give to them all your heart and your faith, Sire ; it is the best return a king can make his friends.”

“ Yes, my dear ; well ? ”

“ Well, Sire, have more faith in them.”

“ *Ventre-saint-gris !* I shall not lose faith in them till they compel me to ; that is to say, till they forfeit it.”

“ Well, Sire, the attempt is made to show that they have deserved to lose it, that is all.”

“ Ah ! but how ? ”

“ I cannot tell you, Sire, without compromising — ” and she glanced at Chicot.

“ Dear M. Chicot,” said Henri, “ pray wait for me in my cabinet ; the queen has something particular to say to me.”

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE EXPLANATION.

To get rid of a witness whom Marguerite believed to know more of Latin than he admitted, was already a triumph, or at least a pledge of security for her; for alone with her husband, she could give whatever translation of the Latin she pleased.

Henri and his wife were, then, left together alone. He had on his face no appearance of disquietude or menace; decidedly he could not understand Latin.

"Monsieur," said Marguerite, "I wait for you to interrogate me."

"This letter preoccupies you much, my dear; do not alarm yourself thus."

"Sire, it is because that letter is, or should be, an event. A king does not in this way send a messenger to a brother king without reasons of the highest importance."

"Well, my dear, let us leave it for the present; have you not something like a ball this evening?"

"Yes, Sire," said Marguerite, astonished, "but that is not extraordinary; you know we dance nearly every evening."

"I have a great chase for to-morrow."

"Each our pleasure, Sire; you love the chase, I the dance."

"Yes, my dear; and there is no harm in that," said Henri, sighing.

“Certainly not ; but your Majesty sighed as you said it.”

“Listen to me, Madame ; I am uneasy.”

“About what, Sire ?”

“About a current report.”

“A report ! your Majesty uneasy about a report ?”

“What more simple, — since this report may annoy you ?”

“Me ?”

“Yes, you.”

“Sire, I do not understand you.”

“Have you heard nothing ?”

Marguerite began to tremble. “I am the least curious woman in the world,” said she ; “I hear nothing but what is cried in my very ears. Besides, I think so little of reports, that I should not listen to them if I heard them.”

“It is then your opinion, Madame, that one should despise these reports ?”

“Absolutely, Sire ; particularly kings and queens.”

“Why so, Madame ?”

“Because, as every one talks of us, we should have too much to do if we listened to them all.”

“Well, I believe you are right, my dear ; and I am about to furnish you with an excellent opportunity of exercising your philosophy.”

Marguerite believed that the decisive moment had come, and rallied all her courage. “So be it, Sire,” said she.

Henri began in the tone of a penitent who has some great sin to acknowledge. “You know the great interest I take in Fosseuse ?”

“Ah !” cried Marguerite, triumphantly, seeing he was not about to accuse her. “Yes, yes ; the little Fosseuse, your friend.”

“Yes, Madame.”

“My lady-in-waiting?”

“Yes.”

“Your passion, your love.”

“Ah! you speak like one of the reports you were abusing just now.”

“It is true, Sire, and I ask your pardon,” said Marguerite, smiling.

“My dear, you are right. Public report often lies, and we sovereigns have great reason to establish this theorem as an axiom. *Ventre-saint-gris!* Madame, I believe I am talking Greek;” and he burst into loud laughter.

Marguerite perceived irony in that laughter, and especially in the subtle glance which accompanied it. Slightly uneasy, she replied, “Well, and Fosseuse?”

“She is ill, my dear; and the doctors do not understand her malady.”

“That is strange, Sire. Fosseuse, who you say has always remained chaste; Fosseuse, who, according to you, would have resisted a king, had a king spoken love to her, — Fosseuse, that flower of purity, that limpid crystal, ought to allow the eye of science to search her joys and her sorrows.”

“Alas! it is not so,” said Henri, sadly.

“What!” cried the queen. “Is she not a flower of purity?”

“I do not say that,” replied Henri, dryly. “God forbid that I accuse any one! I mean that she persists in hiding the cause of her illness from the doctors.”

“But to you, Sire, her confidant, her father?”

“I know nothing, or at least wish to know nothing.”

“Then, Sire,” said Marguerite, who now believed that she had to confer instead of asking a pardon, — “then, Sire, I do not know what you want, and wait for you to explain.”

“Well, then, my dear, I will tell you. I wish you — but it is asking a great deal.”

“Speak on, Sire.”

“To have the goodness to go to Fosseuse.”

“I go to visit this girl whom every one says has the honor of being your mistress, — a thing which you do not deny !”

“Gently, gently, my dear. On my word, you will make a scandal with your exclamations ; and really I believe that will rejoice the court of France, for in the letter from my brother-in-law that Chicot repeated to me, there were these words, ‘quotidie scandalum,’ which must mean ‘daily scandal.’ It is not necessary to know Latin to understand that. It is almost French.”

“But, Sire, to whom did these words apply ?”

“Ah ! that is what I am unable to understand ; but you, who know Latin, can help me to find out.”

Marguerite colored up to her ears, while with his head down and his hand in the air, Henri appeared to search innocently to what person in his court the “quotidie scandalum” could apply. “Well, Monsieur,” said she, “you wish me to take a humiliating step for the sake of peace ; and for the sake of peace I will comply.”

“Thanks, my dear, thanks.”

“But what is the object of this visit ?”

“It is very simple, Madame.”

“Still, you must tell me, for I am not clever enough to guess it.”

“Well ! you will find Fosseuse among the ladies-of-honor, sleeping in their room ; and they, you know, are so curious and indiscreet that one cannot tell to what extremity Fosseuse may be reduced.”

“But then she fears something ?” cried Marguerite, with a burst of anger and hatred. “She wishes to hide herself ?”

“I do not know. All I know is that she wishes to leave the room of the maids-of-honor.”

“If she wishes to hide, let her not count on me. I may shut my eyes to certain things, but I will never be an accomplice in them,” said Marguerite. She then awaited the effect of her ultimatum.

But Henri seemed not to have heard. He had resumed that thoughtful attitude which Marguerite had noticed a moment before. “‘Margota,’” he murmured, “‘Margota cum Turenno.’ Ah! those are the names I was seeking, Madame, — ‘Margota cum Turenno.’”

Marguerite grew crimson. “Calumnies, Sire!” she cried. “Are you going to repeat calumnies to me?”

“What calumnies?” replied he, with the most natural air. “Do you find any calumny in it? It is a passage from my brother’s letter, — ‘Margota cum Turenno conveniunt in castello nomine Loignac.’ Decidedly I must get this letter translated.”

“Leave this comedy, Sire,” said Marguerite, tremblingly, “and tell me at once what you want from me.”

“Well, I wish, my dear, that you would separate Fosseuse from the other girls, and having given her a chamber by herself, that you would send her a discreet doctor, — your own, for example.”

“Ah! I see what it is,” cried the queen, — “Fosseuse the paragon is near her *accouchement*.”

“I do not say so, my dear; it is you who affirm it.”

“It is so, Monsieur; your insinuating tone, your false humility, prove it to me. But there are sacrifices that no man should ask of his wife. Take care of Fosseuse yourself, Sire; it is your business. And let the trouble fall on the guilty, not on the innocent.”

“The guilty! Ah! that makes me think of the letter again.”

“How so?”

“Guilty is ‘nocens,’ is it not?”

“Yes.”

“Well, there was that word in the letter, — ‘Margota cum Turenno, ambo nocentes, convenient in castello nomine Loignac.’ *Mon Dieu!* how I regret that my knowledge is not as great as my memory is good!”

“‘Ambo nocentes,’” repeated Marguerite, in a low voice, and turning very pale; “he understands, he understands!”

“‘Margota cum Turenno, ambo nocentes,’” repeated Henri. “What the devil could my brother mean by ‘ambo’? *Ventre-saint-gris!* my dear, it is astonishing that you who know Latin so well have not yet explained it to me.”

“Sire, I have already had the honor to tell you —”

“Eh, *pardieu!*” the king broke in, “there now is ‘Turenno’ walking under your windows, and looking up as if he expected you. I will call to him to come up; he is very learned, and he will explain it to me.”

“Sire, Sire! be superior to all the calumniators of France.”

“Oh, my dear, it seems to me that people are not more indulgent in Navarre than in France; you yourself were very severe about poor Fosseuse just now.”

“I severe?”

“Yes; and yet we ought to be indulgent here, we lead such a happy life, — you with your balls, and I with my chase.”

“Yes, yes, Sire; you are right. Let us be indulgent.”

“Oh, I was sure of your heart, my dear.”

“You know me well, Sire.”

“Yes. Then you will go and see Fosseuse?”

“Yes, Sire.”

“And separate her from the others?”

“ Yes, Sire.”

“ And send her your doctor ? ”

“ Yes, Sire.”

“ And no nurse. Doctors are reticent by profession. nurses are babblers by habit.”

“ That is true.”

“ And if, unluckily, what you say were true, and she had been weak ; for women are frail — ”

“ Well, Sire, I am a woman, and know the indulgence due to my sex.”

“ Ah, you know all things, my dear ; you are in truth a model of perfection, and — ”

“ And ? ”

“ And I kiss your hands.”

“ But believe, Sire, that it is for the love of you alone that I make this sacrifice.”

“ Oh, yes, my dear ; I know you well, Madame, and my brother of France also, — he who says so much of you in this letter, and adds, ‘ Fiat sanum exemplum statim, atque res certior eveniet. ’ Doubtless, my dear, it is you who give this good example.” And Henri kissed the cold hand of Marguerite. Then, turning on the threshold of the door, he said, “ Say everything kind from me to Fosseuse, and do for her as you have promised me. I set off for the chase ; perhaps I shall not see you till my return, perhaps never, — those wolves are wicked beasts. Come and let me embrace you, my dear.”

Then he embraced Marguerite almost affectionately, and went out, leaving her stupefied with all she had heard.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE SPANISH AMBASSADOR.

THE king rejoined Chicot, who was still agitated with fears as to the explanation. "Well, Chicot," said Henri, "do you know what the queen says?"

"No."

"She pretends that your cursed Latin will disturb our peace."

"Oh, Sire, forget it, and all will be at an end. It is not with a piece of spoken Latin as though it were written; the wind carries away the one, fire cannot sometimes destroy the other."

"I! I think of it no more."

"That is right."

"I have something else to do, faith, than to think of that."

"Your Majesty prefers amusing yourself?"

"Yes, my son," said Henri, somewhat annoyed by the tone in which Chicot had uttered these words, — "yes, my Majesty prefers to amuse himself."

"Pardon, but perhaps I annoy your Majesty."

"Eh! my son," said Henri, shrugging his shoulders, "I have already told you that here it is not as at the Louvre; here we do everything openly, — love, war, and politics."

"The first more than the last two, do you not, Sire?"

"Faith! yes; I confess it, my dear friend. This country is so fine, and its women so beautiful."

“Oh, Sire, you forget the queen ; can the Navarrese women be more pleasing and beautiful than she is ? If they are, I compliment them.”

“*Ventre-saint-gris !* you are right, Chicot. And that I should forget that you are an ambassador, and represent King Henri III. ; and that he is the brother of Marguerite ; and that consequently, before you, I ought to place her before every one ! But you must excuse my imprudence, I am not accustomed to ambassadors.”

At this moment the door of the room opened, and D’Aubiac announced, “The ambassador from Spain.” Chicot gave a start which made the king smile.

“Upon my word !” said Henri, “that is a contradiction that I did not expect. The ambassador from Spain ! and what the devil can he want here ?”

“Yes,” said Chicot ; “what the devil does he want here ?”

“We shall soon know ; perhaps our Spanish neighbor has some frontier dispute to settle with us.”

“I will retire,” said Chicot. “This is doubtless a real ambassador from his Majesty Philip II., while I —”

“The ambassador from France give place to Spain, and that in Navarre ! *Ventre-saint-gris !* that shall not be. Open that library door, Chicot, and go in there.”

“But from there I shall hear all, in spite of myself.”

“And you shall hear all, *morbleu !* I have nothing to hide. By the way, have you nothing more to say to me from your king ?”

“Nothing at all, Sire.”

“Very well, then, you have nothing to do but to see and hear, like all other ambassadors, and the library will do excellently for that purpose. Look with all your eyes, and listen with all your ears, my dear Chicot. D’Aubiac, let the ambassador enter.”

Chicoz hastened to his place of concealment, and drew the tapestry close.

When the preliminaries consecrated to the details of etiquette were over, and Chicot, in his place of concealment, had satisfied himself that the Béarnais well understood how to give an audience, the ambassador said, "Can I speak freely to your Majesty?"

"You may, Monsieur."

"Sire, I bring the answer from his Catholic Majesty."

"An answer," thought Chicot; "then there was a question."

"An answer to what?" said Henri.

"To your proposals of last month."

"Faith! I am very forgetful! please to recall to me what they were."

"About the encroachments of the Lorraine princes."

"Yes, I remember, particularly those of M. de Guise; go on, Monsieur."

"Sire, the king, my master, although solicited to sign a treaty of alliance with Lorraine, has regarded an alliance with Navarre as more loyal, and — to speak plainly — more advantageous."

"Yes, let us speak plainly," said Henri.

"I will be frank with your Majesty, for I know my master's intentions with regard to you."

"May I also know them?"

"Sire, my master will refuse nothing to Navarre."

Chicot bit his fingers to convince himself that he was not dreaming.

"Since he will refuse me nothing, let us see what I can ask," said Henri.

"Whatever your Majesty pleases."

"The devil!"

"If your Majesty will speak openly and frankly."

“*Ventre-saint-gris!* everything! that is embarrassing.”

“Shall I announce his Majesty the King of Spain’s proposal?”

“I listen.”

“The King of France treats the Queen of Navarre as an enemy; he repudiates her as a sister, and covers her with opprobrium. All this—but I beg your Majesty’s pardon for touching on so delicate a subject—”

“Go on.”

“All this, then, is public.”

“Well, Monsieur, what are you aiming at in this?”

“It is consequently easy for your Majesty to repudiate as a wife her whom her brother disclaims as a sister.”

Henri looked towards the tapestry, behind which Chicot, with staring eyes, awaited, trembling, what should follow.

“The queen being repudiated,” continued the ambassador, “the alliance between the King of Navarre and the King of Spain is concluded; the King of Spain will give the infanta, his daughter, to your Majesty, and he himself will marry Madame Catherine de Navarre, your Majesty’s sister.”

A movement of pride shook Henri, while Chicot shuddered with terror. The one saw his star rising, radiant like the morning sun; the other saw the sceptre and the fortune of the Valois ready to decline and fall.

For an instant there was profound silence; and then Henri said, “The proposal, Monsieur, is magnificent, and crowns me with honor.”

“His Majesty,” said the negotiator, who already counted on an enthusiastic acceptance, “proposes only one condition.”

“Ah, a condition! that is but just; let me hear it.”

“In aiding your Majesty against the Lorraine princes,—that is to say, in opening to your Majesty a way to the

throne, — my master desires to facilitate by your alliance the safety of Flanders, which the Duc d'Anjou is already attacking. Your Majesty will understand that it is pure preference on my master's part for you over the Lorraine princes, since MM. de Guise, his natural allies, as Catholic princes, make of themselves a party against the Duc d'Anjou in Flanders. Now, this is the only condition, which you must think reasonable. His Majesty the King of Spain, allied to you by a double marriage, will help you to —” the ambassador seemed to seek for the right word — “to succeed to the King of France, and you will guarantee Flanders to him. I may, then, knowing your Majesty's wisdom, now regard the negotiation as happily terminated.”

Henri took two or three turns up and down the cabinet. “This, then,” said he at last, “is the answer you were charged to bring me?”

“Yes, Sire.”

“Nothing else?”

“Nothing else, Sire.”

“Well! I refuse the offer of the King of Spain.”

“You refuse the hand of the *infanta*!” cried the Spaniard, with a start, as though he had received a sudden wound.

“It would be a great honor; but I cannot think it a greater one than that of having married a daughter of France.”

“No; but that alliance brought you nearly to the tomb, and this will bring you to the throne.”

“An incomparable piece of good fortune, Monsieur, I know; but I will never buy it with the blood and honor of my future subjects. What, Monsieur! I draw the sword against the King of France, my brother-in-law, for the Spaniards! I arrest the standard of France in its

career of glory ! I kill brothers by brothers' hands ! I bring the stranger into my country ! No, Monsieur ; I asked the King of Spain for aid against the Guises, who wish to rob me of my inheritance, but not against the Duc d'Anjou, my brother-in-law ; not against Henri III., my friend ; not against my wife, sister of my king. You will aid the Guises, you will say, and lend them your support. Do so, and I will let loose on you and on them all the Protestants of Germany and France. The King of Spain wishes to reconquer Flanders, which is slipping from him ; let him do what his father, Charles V., did, and ask a free passage to go and claim his title of first *bourgeois* of Ghent, and Henri III., I am certain, will grant it to him, as François I. did. I wish for the throne of France, says his Catholic Majesty ; it is possible, but I do not need him to aid me in getting it. I will do that for myself, once it is vacant, in spite of all the kings in the world. Adieu, then, Monsieur. Tell my brother Philip that I am grateful for his offers, but cannot believe for a moment that he thought me capable of accepting them. Adieu, Monsieur."

The ambassador was stupefied. He stammered, " Take care, Sire ! the good understanding between two neighbors may be destroyed by a hasty word."

" Monsieur, understand this : King of Navarre or King of nothing, it is all one to me. My crown is so light that I should scarcely feel the difference if it slipped off ; besides, I believe I can guard it. Therefore, once more, adieu, Monsieur, and tell the king your master that I have greater ambitions than he dreams of." And the Béarnais, becoming once more, not himself, but what he generally seemed to be, conducted the ambassador with a courteous smile to the door.

CHAPTER L.

THE POOR OF HENRI DE NAVARRE.

CHICOT remained plunged in profound surprise. Henri lifted the tapestry, and striking him on the shoulder, said, "Well, Maitre Chicot, how do you think I managed?"

"Wonderfully, Sire; and really, for a king who is not accustomed to ambassadors —"

"It is my brother Henri who sends me these ambassadors."

"How so, Sire?"

"If he did not incessantly persecute his poor sister, others would not dream of it. Do you believe that if the King of Spain had not heard of the public insult offered to the queen, when a captain of the guards searched her litter, he would have proposed to me to repudiate her?"

"I see with pleasure, Sire," replied Chicot, "that all attempts will be useless, and that nothing can interrupt the harmony that exists between the queen and yourself."

"Oh, my friend, the interest they have in making us quarrel is too clear."

"I confess to you, Sire, that I am not so penetrating as you are."

"Doubtless Henri would be delighted if I repudiated his sister."

"Why so? Pray explain to me. *Peste!* I did n't think I was coming to so good a school."

“ You know they forgot to pay me my wife’s dowry, Chicot.”

“ I guessed as much, Sire.”

“ This dowry was to consist of three hundred thousand golden crowns and some towns, — among others, Cahors.”

“ A pretty town, *mordieu!*”

“ I have claimed, not the money, but Cahors.”

“ *Ventre de biche!* Sire, in your place, I should have done the same.”

“ And that is why — do you understand now?”

“ No, indeed, Sire.”

“ That is why they wish me to quarrel with my wife and repudiate her. No wife, no dowry, no three hundred thousand crowns, no Cahors. It is one way of eluding a promise, and Henri is clever in laying snares.”

“ You would like much to hold Cahors, Sire?”

“ Doubtless; for after all, what is my kingdom of Béarn? A poor little principality, so clipped by the avarice of my mother-in-law and brother-in-law that the title of ‘king’ attached to it is ridiculous.”

“ While Cahors — ”

“ Cahors would be my rampart, — the safeguard of my religion.”

“ Well, Sire, go into mourning for Cahors; for whether you break with Madame Marguerite or not, the King of France will never give it to you, and unless you take it — ”

“ Oh, I would soon take it if it was not so strong, and, above all, if I did not hate war.”

“ Cahors is impregnable, Sire.”

“ Oh! impregnable! But if I had an army, which I have not — ”

“ Listen, Sire. We are not here to flatter each other. To take Cahors, which is held by M. de Vesin, one must be a Hannibal or a Cæsar; and your Majesty — ”

“ Well ? ” said Henri, with a smile.

“ Has just said that you do not like war.”

Henri sighed, and his eyes flashed for a minute ; then he said, “ It is true that I have never drawn the sword, and perhaps never shall. I am a king of straw, a man of peace ; but by a singular contrast, I like to think of war-like things, — that is in my blood. Saint Louis, my ancestor, pious by education and gentle by nature, became on occasion a brave soldier and a skilful swordsman. Let us talk, if you please, of M. de Vesin, who is a Cæsar and a Hannibal.”

“ Sire, pardon me if I have wounded or annoyed you. I spoke only of M. de Vesin to extinguish every trace of the mad expectation which youth and ignorance of affairs might have allowed to spring up in your heart. Cahors, you see, is so well guarded because it is the key of the south.”

“ Alas ! I know it well. I wished so much to possess Cahors that I told my poor mother to make it a *sine qua non* of our marriage. See, I am speaking Latin now. Cahors, then, was my wife’s dowry. They owe it to me — ”

“ Sire, to owe and to pay — ”

“ Are two different things, I know. So your opinion is that they will never pay me ? ”

“ I fear not.”

“ The devil ! ”

“ And frankly — ”

“ Well ? ”

“ They will be right, Sire.”

“ Why so ? ”

“ Because you did not know your part of king. You should have got it at once.”

“ Do you not, then, remember the tocsin of St. Germain l’Auxerrois ? ” said Henri, bitterly. “ It seems to me that

a husband whom they try to murder on the night of his marriage might think less of his dowry than of his life."

"Yes; but since then, Sire, we have had peace and — excuse me, Sire — you should have profited by it, and instead of making love, have negotiated. It is less amusing, I know, but more profitable. I speak, Sire, as much for my king as for you. If Henri de France had a strong ally in Henri de Navarre, he would be stronger than any one; and if the Protestants and Catholics of France and Navarre would unite in a common political interest, they would make the rest of the world tremble."

"Oh, I do not aspire to make others tremble, so long as I do not tremble myself. But if I cannot get Cahors, then, and you think I cannot —"

"I think so, Sire, for three reasons."

"Tell them to me, Chicot."

"Willingly. The first is that Cahors is a town of good productiveness, which Henri III. will prefer to keep for himself."

"That is not very honest."

"It is very royal, Sire."

"Ah! it is royal to take what you like?"

"Yes, that is called acting like a lion; and the lion is the king of beasts."

"I shall remember what you have just told me, Chicot, if ever I become king. Now, your second reason."

"Madame Catherine —"

"Oh! does my good mother Catherine still mix in politics?"

"Always; and she would rather see her daughter at Paris than at Nérac, — near her than near you."

"You think so? Yet she does not love her daughter to distraction."

"No ; but Madame Marguerite serves you as a hostage, Sire."

"You are cunning, Chicot. Devil take me if I thought of that ! But you may be right. Yes, yes ! a daughter of France would be a hostage in case of need. Well ?"

"Well, Sire, in diminishing one's resources, you diminish the attractiveness to him of any particular dwelling-place. Nérac is a very pleasant place, with a charming park, and avenues such as can be found nowhere else. But Madame Marguerite, deprived of resources, would become weary of Nérac and long for the Louvre."

"I prefer your first reason, Chicot," said Henri, shaking his head.

"Then I pass to the third. Between the Duc d'Anjou, who seeks to make a throne for himself in Flanders, MM. de Guise, who wish for a crown, and shake that of France, and his Majesty the King of Spain, who wishes for universal monarchy, you hold the balance and maintain a certain equilibrium."

"I, — without weight ?"

"Precisely. If you became powerful, — that is to say, heavy, — you would turn the scale. You would be no longer a counterpoise, but a weight."

"Ah ! I like that reason, and it is admirably argued. This is the explanation of my situation ?"

"Complete."

"And I, who did not see all this, and went on hoping !"

"Well, Sire, I counsel you to cease to hope."

"Then I must do for this debt of the King of France what I do for those of my farmers who cannot pay their rent ; I put a P against their names."

"Which means 'paid' ?"

"Yes."

"Put two P's, Sire, and give a sigh."

“So be it, Chicot. You see I can live in Béarn, even without Cahors.”

“I see that, and also that you are a wise and philosophical king. But what is that noise?”

“Noise! where?”

“In the courtyard, I think.”

“Look out the window.”

“Sire, there are below a dozen of poorly clothed people.”

“Ah! they are my poor,” said the king, rising.

“Your Majesty has his poor?”

“Doubtless; does not God recommend charity? If I am not a Catholic, Chicot, I am a Christian.”

“Bravo, Sire!”

“Come, Chicot, we will give alms together, and then go to supper.”

“Sire, I follow you.”

“Take that purse lying on the table near my sword; do you see?”

They went down, but Henri seemed thoughtful and preoccupied. Chicot looked at him, and thought, “What the devil made me talk politics to this brave prince, and make him sad? Fool that I was!”

Once in the court, Henri approached the group of mendicants. There were a dozen men unlike in stature, features, and dress. An ordinary spectator would have taken them for tramps. An observer would have seen that they were gentlemen in disguise. Henri took the purse from the hands of Chicot and made a sign. All the mendicants appeared to understand that sign. They came forward and saluted Henri with an air of humility, which did not preclude a glance full of intelligence at the king. Henri replied by a motion of the head. Then, putting his fingers into the purse, which Chicot held open, he took out a piece.

“Do you know that it is gold, Sire?” said Chicot.

“Yes, my friend, I know.”

“*Peste!* you are rich.”

“Do you not see that each of these pieces serves for two? On the contrary, I am so poor that I am forced to cut my pistoles in two to make them go round.”

“It is true,” said Chicot, with surprise. “They are half-pieces, with fantastic designs.”

“Oh, I am like my brother Henri, who amuses himself in cutting out images. I amuse myself with clipping my ducats.”

“Nevertheless, Sire, it is an odd method of giving charity,” said Chicot, who suspected some hidden mystery.

“What would you do?”

“Instead of cutting each piece, I would give it entire, and would say, ‘This is for two.’”

“They would fight, and I should do harm instead of good.”

Henri then took one of the pieces, and placing himself before the first beggar, looked at him inquiringly.

“Agen,” said the man.

“How many?” asked Henri.

“Five hundred.”

“Cahors;” and he gave him the piece and took a second.

The man bowed and withdrew.

The next advanced and said, “Auch.”

“How many?”

“Three hundred and fifty.”

“Cahors;” and he gave him his piece.

“Narbonne,” said the third.

“How many?”

“Eight hundred.”

“Cahors;” and he gave him his piece.

“Montauban,” said the fourth.

“How many?”

“Six hundred.”

“Cahors.”

Each one in this way pronounced a name, received a piece of gold, and mentioned a number, which altogether amounted to about eight thousand. To each of them Henri replied, “Cahors,” without varying the tone of his voice in uttering that word. The distribution finished, there were no longer half-pieces in the purse, nor beggars in the court.

“That is all, Sire?” asked Chicot.

“Yes; I have finished.”

“Sire, am I permitted to be curious?”

“Why not? Curiosity is natural.”

“What did these beggars say, and what the devil did you reply?”

Henri smiled.

“Indeed,” continued Chicot, “all is mysterious here.”

“Do you think so?”

“Yes; I have never seen alms given in that way.”

“It is the custom at Nérac. You know the proverb, ‘Every town has its own customs.’”

“A singular custom, Sire.”

“No; nothing is more simple. Each of those men came from a different city.”

“Well, Sire?”

“Well, that I may not always give to the same, they each tell me the name of their town, so that I can distribute my benefits equally among all the unfortunates in my kingdom.”

“Yes, Sire; but why did you answer ‘Cahors’?”

“Ah!” cried Henri, with a most natural air of surprise. “Did I say ‘Cahors’?”

“*Parbleu !*”

“You think so?”

“I am sure of it.”

“It must have been because we had been talking so much about it. I wish for it so much that I must have spoken of it without meaning to do so.”

“Hum!” said Chicot, suspiciously, “and then there was something else.”

“What! something else?”

“A number that each one pronounced, all of which added together made more than eight thousand.”

“Ah! as to that, Chicot, I did not understand it myself; unless, as the beggars are divided into corporations, they named the number of members belonging to each,—which seems to me probable.”

“Sire, Sire!”

“Come and sup, my friend; nothing enlightens the mind like eating and drinking. Let us go to table, and you shall see that if my pistoles are cut, my bottles are full.”

Then, passing his arm familiarly through Chicot’s, the king went back to his room, where supper was served. Passing by the queen’s room, he glanced at it, and saw no light.

“Page,” said he, “is not her Majesty at home?”

“Her Majesty is gone to see Mademoiselle de Montmorency, who is ill.”

“Ah, poor Fosseuse!” said Henri; “it is true; the queen has such a good heart! Come to supper, Chicot.”

CHAPTER LI.

THE TRUE MISTRESS OF THE KING OF NAVARRE.

THE repast was joyous. Henri seemed no longer to have any weight either on his heart or his mind, and he was an excellent companion. As for Chicot, he concealed as well as he could the uneasiness he had felt since the coming of the Spanish ambassador and the scene with the mendicants. He endeavored to drink little and keep cool, to observe everything; but this Henri would not allow. However, Chicot had a head of iron; and as for Henri, he said he could drink these wines of the country like milk.

“I envy you,” said Chicot to the king; “your court is delightful, and your life pleasant.”

“If my wife were here, Chicot, I would not say what I am about to say; but in her absence I will tell you that the best part of my life is that which you do not see.”

“Ah, Sire, they tell indeed fine tales of you!”

Henri leaned back in his chair to laugh. “They say that I reign more over my female than my male subjects, do they not?” said he.

“Yes, Sire; and it astonishes me.”

“Why so?”

“Because, Sire, you have much of that restless spirit which makes great kings.”

“Ah, Chicot, you are wrong. I am lazy, and all my life proves it. If I have a love to choose, I take the

nearest ; if a wine, the bottle close to my hand. To your health, Chicot !”

“Sire, you do me honor,” said Chicot, emptying his glass.

“Thus,” continued the king, “what quarrels in my household !”

“Yes, I understand ; all the ladies-in-waiting adore you, Sire.”

“They are my neighbors, Chicot.”

“Then, Sire, it might result from this that if you lived at St. Denis instead of Nérac, the king might not live very tranquilly.”

“The king ! what do you say, Chicot ? Do you think I am a Guise ? I wish for Cahors, it is true, because it is near to me, — still following my system.”

“*Ventre de biche !* Sire, this ambition for things within the reach of your hand resembles much that of Cæsar Borgia, who gathered together a kingdom, city by city, — saying that Italy was an artichoke to be eaten leaf by leaf.”

“This Cæsar Borgia was not a bad politician, it seems to me, my friend.”

“No, but he was a very dangerous neighbor and a bad brother.”

“Ah ! would you compare me to the son of a pope, — me, a Huguenot chief ?”

“Sire, I compare you to no one.”

“Why not ?”

“I believe he would be wrong who should liken you to any other than yourself. You are ambitious, Sire.”

“Here is a man determined to make me want something,” cried Henri.

“God forbid, Sire ! I desire with all my heart, on the contrary, that your Majesty should want nothing.”

“ Nothing calls you back to Paris, does it, Chicot ? ”

“ No, Sire.”

“ Then you will pass some days with me ? ”

“ If your Majesty does me the honor to wish for my company, I ask nothing better than to give you a week.”

“ So be it ; in a week you will know me like a brother. Drink, Chicot.”

“ Sire, I am no longer thirsty,” said Chicot, who had given up all hopes of seeing the king take too much.

“ Then I will leave you ; a man should not stay at table when he does nothing. Drink, I tell you.”

“ Why, Sire ? ”

“ To sleep better. Do you like the chase, Chicot ? ”

“ Not much, Sire ; and you ? ”

“ Passionately, — since I lived at the court of Charles IX.”

“ Why did your Majesty do me the honor to ask me ? ”

“ Because I hunt to-morrow, and count on taking you with me.”

“ Sire, it would be a great honor ; but — ”

“ Oh ! this chase is calculated to gladden the eyes and the heart of every man of the sword. I am a good hunter, Chicot, and I wish you to see me to advantage. You wish to know me, you say ? ”

“ *Ventre de biche !* Sire, it is one of my strongest wishes, I confess.”

“ Well, that is a side on which you have never yet studied me.”

“ Sire, I am at your orders.”

“ Good ! then it is settled. Ah ! here is a page to disturb us.”

“ Some important business, Sire ? ”

“ Business at table ! You think you are still at the

court of France, my dear Chicot. Learn one thing, — at Nérac, when we have supped, we go to bed.”

“But this page?”

“Well, cannot he come for anything but business?”

“Ah, I understand; and I will go to bed.”

Chicot rose; the king did the same, and took his arm. This haste to send him away appeared suspicious to Chicot; and he determined not to leave the room if he could help it.

“Oh, oh!” said he, tottering, “it is astonishing, Sire.”

The king smiled. “What is astonishing?”

“*Ventre de biche!* my head turns; while I sat still it was all very well, but when I rise —”

“Bah!” said Henri, “we only tasted the wine.”

“You call that tasting, Sire? You are a drinker, and I do you homage, as to my superior.”

“Chicot, my friend,” said Henri, endeavoring to make out by one of his keen glances whether Chicot was really drunk or was pretending, “the best thing you can do is to go to bed.”

“Yes, Sire; good-night, Sire.”

“Good-night, Chicot.”

“Yes, Sire, you are right; the best thing Chicot can do is to go to bed.” And he lay down on the floor.

Henri glanced towards the door, and then, approaching him, said, “You are so drunk, my poor Chicot, that you have taken my floor for your bed.”

“Chicot does not mind little things.”

“But I expect some one.”

“For supper; yes, let us sup —” And Chicot made a fruitless effort to rise.

“*Ventre-saint-gris!* how quickly you get drunk! But go along, *mordieu!* she is getting impatient.”

“She! who?”

"The lady I expect."

"A lady; why did you not say so, Henriquet? Ah, pardon! I thought I was speaking — to the King of France. He has spoiled me, that good Henriquet. Ah! I will go."

"You are a gentleman, Chicot. Now go quickly."

Chicot rose and went stumbling to the door.

"Adieu, dear friend," said Henri; "adieu, and sleep well."

"And you, Sire?"

"Sh!"

"Yes, yes, — sh!" and he opened the door.

"You will find the page in the gallery, who will show you your room."

"Thank you, Sire." And Chicot went out, after saluting with as low an inclination as a drunken man could make. But as soon as the door closed behind him every trace of drunkenness disappeared; he took three steps forward, and suddenly returning he placed his eye to the large keyhole. Henri was already opening the door to the unknown, whom Chicot, with the curiosity of an ambassador, wished by all means to see. Instead of a woman, it was a man who entered. The man took off his hat, and Chicot saw the noble but severe face of Duplessis-Mornay, — the rigid and vigilant counsellor of Henri de Navarre.

"Ah!" thought Chicot, "this will annoy our lover more than I did."

But Henri's face showed only joy; and after locking the door, he sat down eagerly to examine some maps, plans, and letters, which his minister had brought him. The king then began to write and to mark the maps.

"Oh! this is the way Henri de Navarre makes love," thought Chicot.

At this moment he heard steps behind him, and afraid of being surprised, he turned hastily away, and seeing the page, asked for his room.

“Come with me, if you please, Monsieur,” said D’Aubiac, “and I will show you the way;” and he conducted Chicot to the second story, where a room had been prepared for him.

Chicot began to understand the King of Navarre. Therefore, instead of going to sleep, he sat sombre and thoughtful on his bed, while the moon shed its silver light over stream and meadows.

“Henri is a real king; and he conspires,” thought Chicot. “All this palace, park, town, — the whole province, — is a focus of conspiracy. All the women make love, but it is political love; and all the men live in the hope of a future. Henri is clever; his talent borders on genius; and he is in communication with Spain, the land of deceit. Who knows if even his noble answer to the ambassador was not a farce, and if he did not communicate with him by some sign unknown to me? Henri has spies. Those beggars were nothing more nor less than gentlemen in disguise. Those pieces of gold, so artistically cut, were pledges of recognition, — rallying signs.

“Henri feigns to care for nothing but love and pleasure, and then passes his time working with Mornay, who never sleeps, and does not know what love means. Queen Marguerite has lovers, and the king knows it, and tolerates them, because he has need of them, or of her, — perhaps of both. Happily, God, in giving him the genius for intrigue, did not add to it that of war, for they say he is afraid of the noise of musketry, and that when he was taken, when quite young, to battle, he could not stay more than a quarter of an hour in the saddle. It is

lucky, for if he had the arm, as well as the head, this man might do anything.

“There is indeed the Duc de Guise, who has both ; but he has the disadvantage of being known as brave and skilful, so that every one is on guard against him, while no one fears the Béarnais. I alone have seen through him. Well, having seen through him, I have no more to do here, so while he works or sleeps I will go quietly out of the city. There are not many ambassadors, I think, who can boast of having fulfilled their mission in one day, as I have. So I will leave Nérac, and gallop till I am in France.” And he began to put on his spurs.

CHAPTER LII.

CHICOT'S ASTONISHMENT AT FINDING HIMSELF SO POPULAR
IN NÉRAC.

CHICOT, having taken his resolution, began to prepare his little packet. "How much time will it take me," thought he, as he did so, "to carry to the king intelligence of what I have seen, and of what, consequently, I fear? Two days to arrive at a city whence the governor can send couriers, — Cahors, for example, of which Henri de Navarre thinks so much. Once there I can rest, for after all, a man must rest sometime. I will rest, then, at Cahors, and the horses can run for me. Come, then, Chicot, speed and patience! You thought you had accomplished your mission, and you are but halfway through it."

Chicot now extinguished the light, opened his door softly, and went out on tiptoe. He had hardly gone four steps in the antechamber before he kicked against something. This something was a page lying on a mat outside the chamber, who, awaking, said, "Good-evening, M. Chicot, good-evening."

Chicot recognized D'Aubiac. "Eh, good-evening, M. d'Aubiac," said he. "But get out of the way a little, I beg. I want to go for a walk."

"Ah, but it is forbidden to walk by night in the château."

"Why so?"

"Because the king fears robbers, and the queen lovers."

“The devil!”

“None but robbers or lovers want to walk at night, when they ought to be sleeping.”

“However, dear M. d’Aubiac,” said Chicot, with his most charming smile, “I am neither the one nor the other. I am an ambassador, very tired from having talked Latin with the queen, and supped with the king. Let me go out, then, my friend, for I want a walk.”

“In the city, M. Chicot?”

“Oh, no! in the gardens.”

“*Peste!* that is still more forbidden than in the city.”

“My little friend, you are very vigilant for your age. Have you nothing to occupy yourself with?”

“No.”

“You neither gamble nor fall in love?”

“To gamble one must have money, M. Chicot; and to be in love, one must find a woman.”

“Assuredly,” said Chicot; and feeling in his pocket, he drew out ten pistoles and slipped them into the page’s hand, saying, “Seek well in your memory, and I bet you will find some charming woman, to whom I beg you to make some presents with this.”

“Oh, M. Chicot!” said the page, “it is easy to see that you come from the court of France; you have manners to which one can refuse nothing. Go, then, but make no noise.”

Chicot went on. He glided like a shadow into the corridor, and down the staircase; but at the bottom he found an officer sleeping on a chair, placed right against the door, so that it was impossible to pass.

“Ah! little brigand of a page,” murmured Chicot, “you knew this and didn’t tell me.”

Chicot looked round him to see if he could find no other way by which he could escape with the assistance

of his long legs. At last he saw what he wanted ; it was an arched window, of which the glass was broken. He climbed up the wall with his accustomed skill, and without making more noise than a dry leaf in the autumn wind ; but unluckily, the opening was not big enough, so that when he had got his head and one shoulder through, and had taken away his foot from its resting-place on the wall, he found himself hanging between heaven and earth, without being able either to advance or retreat.

He began then a series of efforts, of which the first result was to tear his doublet and scratch his skin. What rendered his position more difficult was his sword, of which the handle would not pass, making a hook by which Chicot hung on to the sash. He exerted all his strength, patience, and industry to unfasten the clasp of his shoulder-belt ; but it was just on this clasp that his body leaned, so that he was obliged to change his manœuvre. He succeeded in passing his hand behind his back and drawing his sword from its sheath. The sword once drawn, it was easy — thanks to that angular frame — to find an interstice through which the hilt would pass ; the sword therefore fell first on the flagstones, and Chicot now managed to get through after it. All this, however, was not done without noise, and Chicot, on rising, found himself face to face with a soldier.

“ Ah, *mon Dieu!* have you hurt yourself, M. Chicot ? ” said he.

Chicot was surprised, but said, “ No, my friend, not at all.”

“ That is very fortunate. There are not many people who could accomplish such a feat without breaking their heads ; in fact, no one but you could do that, M. Chicot.”

“ But how the devil did you know my name ? ”

"I saw you to-day at the palace, and asked who was the gentleman that was talking with the king."

"Well! I am in a hurry; allow me to pass."

"But no one goes out of the palace by night; those are my orders."

"But you see they do come out, since I am here."

"Yes, but —"

"But what?"

"You must go back, M. Chicot."

"Oh, no!"

"How! no?"

"Not by that way, at all events; it is too troublesome."

"If I were an officer instead of a soldier, I would ask you why you came out so; but that is not my business, which is only that you should go back again. Go in, therefore, M. Chicot, I beg you."

And the soldier said this in such a persuasive tone that Chicot was touched. Consequently he put his hand in his pocket and drew out ten pistoles.

"You must understand, my friend," said he, "that as I have torn my clothes in passing through once, I should make them still worse by going back again, and should have to go naked, which would be very indecent in a court where there are so many young and pretty women; let me go, then, to my tailor." And he put the money in his hand.

"Go quickly, then, M. Chicot," said the man.

Chicot was in the street at last. The night was not favorable for flight, being bright and cloudless, and he regretted the foggy nights of Paris, where people might pass close to one another unseen. The unfortunate ambassador had no sooner turned the corner of the street than he met a patrol. He stopped of his own accord, thinking it would look suspicious to try to pass unseen.

“Oh, good-evening, M. Chicot!” said the chief; “shall we reconduct you to the palace? You appear to have lost your way.”

“It is very strange,” murmured Chicot, “every one knows me here.” Then aloud, and as carelessly as he could, “No, Cornet, I am not going to the palace.”

“You are wrong, M. Chicot,” replied the officer, gravely.

“Why so, Monsieur?”

“Because a very severe edict forbids the inhabitants of Nérac to go out at night, except in cases of urgent necessity, without permission and without a lantern.”

“Excuse me, Monsieur, but this edict cannot apply to me, who do not belong to Nérac.”

“But you are at Nérac. ‘Inhabitant’ means living at; now you cannot deny that you live at Nérac, since I see you here.”

“You are logical, Monsieur. Unfortunately, I am in a hurry; make an exception to your rule, and let me pass, I beg.”

“You will lose yourself, M. Chicot; Nérac is a strange town. Allow three of my men to conduct you to the palace.”

“But I am not going to the palace, I tell you.”

“Where are you going, then?”

“I cannot sleep well at night, and then I always walk. Nérac is a charming city, and I wish to see it, to study it.”

“My men shall conduct you where you please, M. Chicot. Holloa! three men!”

“Oh, Monsieur, I would rather go alone.”

“You will be assassinated by thieves.”

“I have my sword.”

“Ah, true; then you will be arrested for bearing arms.”

Chicot, driven to despair, drew the officer aside, and said, "Come, Monsieur, you are young ; you know what love is, — an imperious tyrant."

"Doubtless, M. Chicot."

"Well, Cornet, I have a certain lady to visit."

"Where ?"

"In a certain place."

"Young ?"

"Twenty-three years old."

"Beautiful ?"

"As the graces."

"I felicitate you, M. Chicot."

"Then you will let me pass ?"

"Why, it seems to me that it is a case of urgent necessity."

"'Urgent' is the very word, Monsieur."

"Go on, then."

"And alone ? you know I cannot compromise —"

"Of course not ; pass on, M. Chicot."

"You are a gallant man, Cornet. But how did you know me ?"

"I saw you at the palace with the king. By the way, in what direction are you going ?"

"Towards the Agen gate. Am I not in the right road ?"

"Yes, go straight on ; I wish you success."

"Thank you ;" and Chicot went on more light and joyous than ever. But before he had taken a hundred steps he met the watch.

"*Peste !* this town is well guarded," thought Chicot.

"You cannot pass !" cried the provost, in a voice of thunder.

"But, Monsieur, I want —"

"Ah, M. Chicot, is it you ? In the streets in this cold ?" asked the officer.

"Ah, decidedly it must be a bet," thought Chicot; and howing, he tried to pass on.

"M. Chicot, take care!" said the provost.

"Take care of what?"

"You are going wrong; you are going towards the gates."

"Precisely."

"Then I arrest you, M. Chicot!"

"Not so, Monsieur; you would be very wrong."

"However —"

"Approach, Monsieur, that your soldiers may not hear."

The man approached.

"The king has given me a commission for the lieutenant of the Agen gate."

"Ah!"

"That astonishes you?"

"Yes."

"It ought not, since you know me."

"I know you from having seen you at the palace with the king."

Chicot stamped his foot impatiently. "That should prove to you that I possess the king's confidence."

"Doubtless; go on, M. Chicot, and execute your commission."

"Come," thought Chicot, "I advance slowly; but I do advance. *Ventre de biche!* here is a gate; it must be that of Agen. In five minutes I shall be out."

He arrived at the gate, which was guarded by a sentinel walking up and down, his musket on his shoulder.

"My friend, will you open the gate for me?" said Chicot.

"I cannot, M. Chicot," replied the man, "being only a private soldier."

“ You also know me ? ” cried Chicot, in a rage.

“ I have that honor, M. Chicot ; I was on guard at the palace this morning, and saw you talking with the king.”

“ Well, my friend, the king has given me a very urgent message to convey to Agen ; open the postern for me.”

“ I would with pleasure, but I have not the keys.”

“ And who has them ? ”

“ The officer for the night.”

Chicot sighed. “ And where is he ? ”

The soldier rang a bell to wake his officer.

“ What is it ? ” said he, passing his head through a window.

“ Lieutenant, it is a gentleman who wants the gate opened.”

“ Ah, M. Chicot,” cried the officer, “ I will be down in a moment.”

“ What ! does every one know me ? ” cried Chicot. “ Nérac seems a lantern, and I the candle.”

“ Excuse me, Monsieur,” said the officer, approaching, “ but I was asleep.”

“ Oh, Monsieur, that is what night is made for ; will you be good enough to open the door ? Unluckily, I cannot sleep, for the king, — doubtless you also are aware that the king knows me ? ”

“ I saw you talking with his Majesty to-day at the palace.”

“ Of course ! ” growled Chicot. “ Well, the king has sent me on a commission to Agen ; this is the right gate, is it not ? ”

“ Yes, M. Chicot.”

“ Will you please to have it opened ? ”

“ Of course. Anthenas, open the gate quickly for M. Chicot.”

Chicot began to breathe ; the gate creaked on its hinges,

— the gate of paradise to Chicot, who saw beyond it all the delights of liberty. He saluted the officer cordially, and advanced towards the gate. "Adieu," said he; "thank you."

"Adieu, M. Chicot! a pleasant journey! But stay one moment; I have forgotten to ask for your pass," cried he, seizing Chicot by the sleeve to stop him.

"What! my pass?"

"Certainly, M. Chicot; you know what a pass is? You understand that no one can leave a town like Nérac without a pass, particularly when the king is in it."

"And who must sign this pass?"

"The king himself; so if he sent you he cannot have forgotten to give you a pass."

"Ah, you doubt that the king sent me?" cried Chicot, with flashing eyes, for he saw himself on the point of failing, and had a great mind to kill the officer and sentinel, and rush through the gate.

"I doubt nothing you tell me; but reflect that if the king gave you this commission —"

"In person, Monsieur."

"All the more reason, then. If he knows you are going out, I shall have to give up your pass to-morrow morning to the governor."

"And who is he?"

"M. de Mornay, who does not jest with disobedience, M. Chicot."

Chicot put his hand to his sword, but another look showed him that the outside of the gate was defended by a guard who would have prevented his passing if he had killed the officer and sentinel.

"Well," said Chicot to himself, with a sigh, "I have lost my game!" and he turned back.

“ Shall I give you an escort, M. Chicot ? ” said the officer.

“ No, thank you.”

Chicot retraced his steps, but he was not at the end of his griefs. He met the chief of the watch, who said, “ What ! have you finished your commission already, M. Chicot ? *Peste !* how quick you are ! ”

A little farther on the cornet cried to him, “ Well, M. Chicot, what of the lady ? Are you content with Nérac ? ”

Finally, the soldier in the courtyard said, “ *Cordieu !* M. Chicot, the tailor has not done his work well ; you seem more torn than when you went out.”

Chicot did not feel inclined to climb back through the window, and he lay down before the door and pretended to sleep ; but by chance, or rather by charity, the door was opened, and he returned into the palace. Here he saw the page, who said, “ Dear M. Chicot, shall I give you the key to all this ? ”

“ Yes, serpent,” murmured Chicot.

“ Well, the king loves you so much he did not wish to lose you.”

“ And you knew, brigand, and never told me ? ”

“ Oh, M. Chicot, impossible ! It was a State secret.”

“ But I paid you, knave.”

“ Oh, dear M. Chicot, the secret was worth more than ten pistoles.”

Chicot returned to his room in a rage.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE KING'S MASTER OF THE HOUNDS.

ON leaving the king, Marguerite had gone directly to the apartment of the maids of honor. On the way thither she had called for her doctor, Chirac, who had a room at the château, and with him she had visited the poor Fosseuse, who, pale and curiously regarded by those about her, was complaining of pains in her stomach. — unwilling, so great was her suffering, to answer questions or accept relief.

Fosseuse was at this time about twenty-one years of age, — a tall, handsome woman, with blue eyes, light hair, and a supple and graceful form. For three months she had not left her room; she had complained of a lassitude which compelled her to lie down, and beginning by reclining on a lounge, she had finally taken to her bed.

Chirac began by dismissing the bystanders, and taking possession of the patient, he remained alone with her and the queen.

Fosseuse, terrified by these preliminaries, to which the expression on the faces of Chirac and the queen, the one impassive and the other cold, lent a certain solemnity, raised herself on her pillow and stammered her thanks for the honor done her by the queen her mistress.

Marguerite was paler than Fosseuse; for wounded pride is more painful than cruelty or sickness.

Chirac felt the young girl's pulse in spite of her resistance. "Where is your pain?" he asked, after a moment's examination.

"In my stomach, Monsieur," replied the poor child; "but that would be nothing if I could only have peace of mind."

"What do you mean, Mademoiselle?" asked the queen. Fosseuse burst into tears.

"Do not be troubled, Mademoiselle," continued Marguerite. "His Majesty asked me to come and cheer you up."

"Oh how kind, Madame!"

Chirac let fall the sick girl's hand, saying, "I know now what your trouble is."

"You know?" murmured Fosseuse, trembling.

"Yes, we know that you must be suffering very much," added Marguerite.

Fosseuse was still in terror at finding herself thus at the mercy of science and jealousy, both so unsympathetic.

Marguerite made a sign to Chirac, who left the room. Then the fear of Fosseuse turned to trembling, and she was near fainting away.

"Mademoiselle," said Marguerite, "although for some time you have treated me as a stranger, and although I have been told every day of the wrong you have done me —"

"I, Madame?"

"Do not interrupt me, if you please. Although you have aspired to a fortune beyond your reasonable ambitions, the friendship which I bore you and that which I have vowed to the maids of honor one of whom you are, urges me to be of service to you in your present misfortune."

"Madame, I swear to you —"

"Make no denials, — I have already too much sorrow ;

do not wreck your honor and mine. I say mine, for I have almost as much interest in your honor as you yourself can have, since you belong to me. Mademoiselle, tell me all, and I will assist you as would a mother."

"Oh, Madame! Madame! do you then believe what they say?"

"Take care not to interrupt me, Mademoiselle, for it seems to me time presses. I would say that Monsieur Chirac, who knows the nature of your sickness (you recall his words spoken without hesitation) is at this moment in the ante-chamber announcing to all, that the contagious disease prevalent in the country has reached the palace, and that you are threatened with an attack. Nevertheless, I will take you — there is time yet — to Mas-d'Aginois, which is a house quite remote from the residence of the king my husband; we shall be there alone or nearly so. The king is setting out with his attendants upon a hunting expedition, which he says will keep him away for several days; we will not leave Mas-d'Aginois until after your confinement."

"Madame! Madame!" exclaimed La Fosseuse, red with shame and grief, "if you believe all that is reported of me, leave me alone to die a miserable death!"

"You show no gratitude for my generosity, Mademoiselle, and you also reckon too much upon the friendship of the king, who has begged me not to abandon you."

"The king! the king has said —"

"Do you doubt what I say, Mademoiselle? If I did not understand the symptoms of your sickness, if I did not divine from your suffering that the crisis is near, I might perhaps have faith in your denials."

Just then, as if to justify the queen, the poor Fosseuse, attacked by a terrible pain, fell back livid and palpitating upon the bed.

Marguerite regarded her for a while, without anger, also without pity.

“Do you still expect me to believe your denials, Mademoiselle?” she said at last to the poor girl, as soon as the latter was able to rise, showing, as she did so, a countenance so distracted and tearful as would have melted Catherine herself.

At this moment, as if God had taken pity on the unfortunate girl, the door opened, and the King of Navarre entered hastily. Henri, who had not the same reasons as Chicot for sleeping, had not slept. After having labored an hour with Mornay, and made all his arrangements for the chase so formally announced to Chicot, he had hastened to the pavilion of the maids of honor.

“Well, how is it?” said he as he came in; “is my child Fosseuse still suffering?”

“Do you not see, Madame,” cried the young girl at the sight of her lover, and strengthened by the succor his arrival brought, “do you not see that the king has said nothing; and that I am right in denying?”

“Monsieur,” interrupted the queen, turning toward Henri, “put an end, I beg you, to this humiliating struggle. I think I understood that your Majesty had honored me with your confidence, and disclosed to me mademoiselle’s condition. Apprise her therefore that I know all, so that she can no longer doubt my assertions.”

“My child,” said Henri, with an emotion which he did not attempt to conceal, “do you persist in your denial?”

“The secret is not mine, Sire,” replied the courageous child, “and so long as I had not received from your lips permission to tell all —”

“My child Fosseuse is brave, Madame,” said Henri. “Pardon her, I beg you; and you, my child, must place

perfect confidence in the kindness of your queen; the acknowledgment concerns me, and I take it upon myself;" and Henri took Marguerite's hand and pressed it warmly.

Just then a sharp pain again attacked the young girl; yielding yet a second time to the tempest and bent like a lily, she bowed her head with a dull moan.

Henri was moved to the very depths of his heart as he looked on that pale brow, those eyes wet with tears, those damp, streaming locks; as he beheld, standing in drops upon the temples and lips of Fosseuse, the sweat of that anguish which is kindred to agony. He threw himself passionately toward her with outstretched arms. "Fosseuse, dear Fosseuse," he murmured, falling on his knees by her bed.

Marguerite, stern and silent, went to cool her burning brow upon the glass of the window panes.

Fosseuse had sufficient strength to raise her arms and place them around the neck of her lover; then she put her lips to his, thinking that she was about to die, and that in this last, this supreme kiss went out to Henri her soul and her farewell. Then she fell back unconscious.

Henri, as pale as she, still and voiceless like her, let her head fall upon the sheet on her bed of agony, which seemed almost as if it were her winding-sheet.

Marguerite drew near this group, in which pain of body was combined with anguish of spirit.

"Rise, Monsieur, and let me fulfil the duty you have imposed upon me," she said with dignity. And as Henri seemed disturbed at this manifestation, and half rose upon his knees, "Oh, do not fear, Monsieur," she said; "since my pride alone is wounded I am strong; were my heart involved I could not answer for myself; but happily my heart is not concerned in this matter."

Henri raised his head. "Madame?" he said.

"Not another word, Monsieur," said Marguerite, extending her hand, "or I shall believe that your indulgence has been the result of calculation. We will agree together as brother and sister."

Henri led her to Fosseuse, whose icy fingers he placed in Marguerite's burning hand.

"Go, Sire, go," said the queen; "set out for the chase. The more persons you take away with you, the more will you shield from curious inquiry the bed of — mademoiselle."

"But," said Henri, "I saw no one in the ante-chambers."

"No, Sire," replied Marguerite smiling, "they think the plague is here. Hasten, therefore, to seek your pleasures elsewhere."

"Madame," said Henri, "I depart and will go to hunt for us both." And he cast a last tender glance at the still unconscious Fosseuse, and then darted out of the room. Once in the ante-chambers, he shook his head as if to cast from his brow the last sign of disquietude; then with a smile upon his face, that shrewd smile peculiar to him, he went up to find Chicot, who, as we have said, was sleeping with clenched fists.

"Eh! eh! comrade, get up, get up! it is two o'clock in the morning."

"Ah, *diable!*" said Chicot. "You call me comrade, Sire; do you take me for the Duc de Guise perchance?"

As it happened, Henri, in speaking of the Duc de Guise, was accustomed to call him his comrade.

"I take you for my friend," he said.

"And you make me prisoner, — me, an ambassador! Sire, you violate the law of nations."

Henri began to laugh. Chicot, who was especially a man of wit, could not help joining in the merriment.

"You are mad. *Diable!* why did you wish to leave here? Are you not treated well?"

"Too well, *ventre de biche!* too well; my position here seems to be like that of a goose fattening in a farmyard. Everybody says, 'Little, little Chicot, how fine he is! but they cut his wings, and keep him shut up.'"

"Chicot, my good fellow," said Henri, shaking his head, "never fear; you are not fat enough for my table."

"Eh! Sire," said Chicot, raising his head, "you are very merry this morning; what, then, is the news?"

"Ah, I will tell you; I am about to set out for the chase, you see, and that always makes me merry. Come, out of bed, comrade, out of bed!"

"What! am I to go with you, Sire?"

"You shall be my historiographer, Chicot."

"I am to keep count of the shots?"

"Exactly."

Chicot shook his head.

"Well, what is the matter?" asked the king.

"Well, I have never seen such high spirits without anxiety."

"Bah!"

"Yes, it is like the sun when —"

"Well?"

"When, Sire, rain, lightning, and thunder are not far distant."

Henri stroked his beard, smiled, and answered: "If a storm arises, Chicot, my cloak is large, and you will be protected." He then went toward the antechamber, while Chicot began to dress, muttering meanwhile to himself.

“My horse!” cried the king; “and have Monsieur de Mornay notified that I am ready.”

“Ah! Monsieur de Mornay is to be the master of hounds for this chase?” asked Chicot.

“Monsieur Mornay is my sole reliance, Chicot,” replied Henri. “The King of Navarre is too poor to indulge in specialties. I have one man only.”

“Yes, but he is a good one,” sighed Chicot.

END OF VOL. I.

