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THE VALOIS ROMANCES.

THE FORTY-FIVE.

VOL. II.



HENRY IV.

THE FORTY-FIVE, II.

THE FORTY-FIVE.

BY

ALEXANDRE DUMAS.

VOL. II.

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THE FORTY-FIVE.



CHAPTER I.

HOW THEY HUNTED THE WOLF IN NAVARRE.

CHICOT, as he glanced over the preparations for departure, could not help remarking to himself in a low voice that the hunting equipments of King Henri of Navarre were much less sumptuous than those of King Henri of France.

A dozen or fifteen gentlemen only, among whom he recognized the Vicomte de Turenne, the object of matrimonial contentions, formed the entire suite of his Majesty.

Moreover, as these gentlemen were rich only in appearance, — as they were not possessed of revenues sufficient to warrant superfluous expenditures, or even to provide always the means for expenditures that were not superfluous, — nearly all of them wore helmets and cuirasses instead of the hunting-garb in vogue at that period; so that Chicot was led to ask if the wolves in the forests of Gascony defended themselves with muskets and artillery.

Henri heard the question, although it was not directly addressed to him. He drew near to Chicot and touched him on the shoulder.

“No, my son,” he replied; “the wolves of Gascony have neither muskets nor artillery; but they are fierce beasts, well supplied with claws and teeth. They draw the huntsmen into thickets, where the garments of the pursuers are likely to be torn by branches and thorns. Now, it is easy enough to tear a coat of silk or of velvet, or even a jacket of strong cloth or of leather; but a cuirass is not to be torn.”

“That is a reason, to be sure,” growled Chicot; “but it is not a very good one.”

“What would you have?” said Henri; “it is the only one I can give you.”

“I suppose, then, that I must put up with it.”

“That, indeed, is the best thing you can do, my son.”

“So be it, then.”

“That ‘So be it’ sounds as if you were not quite satisfied,” said Henri, laughing; “are you angry with me for routing you out to follow this chase?”

“Faith! yes.”

“So, then, you are finding fault?”

“Is it forbidden?”

“No, my friend, no; fault-finding is current money in Gascony.”

“Well, Sire, you must remember,” replied Chicot, “that I am no hunter; and since I have no occupation, poor idler that I am, I must amuse myself in some way while you and the rest are licking your chops as you scent already the fine wolves that a dozen or fifteen of you are going to run down.”

“Ah, yes,” said the king, still amused by Chicot’s satirical observations; “first you object to the dress of the huntsmen, and now you jeer at their number. Laugh away, laugh away, my dear Chicot.”

"Oh, Sire!"

"I must say, however, that you are not very considerate, my son; Béarn is not so large as France. Over there the king is always attended to the chase by a company of two hundred huntsmen; while here, on the other hand, I am obliged to set out with a paltry dozen, as you have so generously pointed out."

"Yes, Sire."

"But," continued Henri, "you may think I am boasting, Chicot; ah, well, think so if you will; sometimes it happens here, as never happens to the king of France, that the gentlemen of the country round about, hearing that I intend setting out for the chase, leave their houses, their castles, and all their affairs, and come to join me; so that, really, Chicot, I sometimes have a quite respectable escort."

"You will see, Sire," said Chicot, "that I shall not have the good fortune to witness a spectacle like that. Indeed, Sire, I fear that I have come at an unlucky time."

"Who knows?" replied Henri, with his bantering laugh.

When, after leaving Nérac, going out by the gates of the city, they had ridden in the open country about half an hour, suddenly Henri exclaimed to Chicot, at the same time shading his eyes by putting his hands above them to serve as a visor:

"Look! look! I am not mistaken, I think."

"What is it?" asked Chicot.

"Look yonder, by the barriers of the Bourg de Moiras: are they not horsemen that I see?"

Chicot raised himself in his stirrups.

"Indeed, Sire," he said, "I believe you are right."

"And I am sure of it."

“Horsemen, yes,” said Chicot, looking with more attention, — “but huntsmen, no.”

“Why not?”

“Because they are armed like Amadis or Roland,” replied Chicot.

“Ah, what matters the dress, my dear Chicot? You have seen already that we are not particular as to that.”

“But I see at least two hundred men there.”

“Ah, that is a good number.”

Chicot began to feel very curious. He had really named too low a number, for the group before them consisted of two hundred and fifty men, who came silently and joined their party. Each man was well armed and mounted, and they were led by a gentleman who came and kissed Henri's hand with much devotion. They forded the river Gers. Between the Gers and the Garonne they met a second troop, of one hundred men. The chief approached Henri, and appeared to excuse himself for not bringing a larger number of huntsmen. Henri accepted his excuses and offered him his hand. They continued their march, and reached the Garonne. As they had crossed the Gers they crossed the Garonne; only as the Garonne is deeper than the Gers, they lost their footing and were obliged to swim a distance of thirty or forty feet. Nevertheless, against all expectation, they reached the farther bank without accident.

“*Tudieu!*” said Chicot; “what exercises, then, are you practising, Sire? When you have bridges above and below, you dip your cuirasses in the water like that?”

“My dear Chicot,” said Henri, “we are savages here, and you must pardon us. You know that my late brother Charles called me his boar. Now, the boar, — but you are not a hunter, and know nothing about it, — the boar never goes out of his way; he goes straight on. Having

his name, I imitate him, and go straight on. I find a river in my way; I cross it. A city rises before me; I eat it."

That pleasantry of the Béarnais evoked great bursts of laughter around him. M. de Mornay alone, always by the side of the king, made no noise in laughing. He limited himself to compressing his lips, which was with him a sign of extravagant hilarity.

"Mornay is in good humor to-day," said the Béarnais, joyously, to Chicot. "He has just laughed at my pleasantry."

Chicot asked himself at which of the two he ought to laugh, — whether at the master, so happy in amusing his servant, or at the servant, so hard to be amused. But his deepest feeling was one of astonishment.

About a half-league beyond the Garonne three hundred horsemen, concealed in a pine forest, appeared to Chicot. "Oh, oh, Monseigneur!" he said in a low tone to Henri, "are not these enemies, who have heard of your chase, and wish to oppose it?"

"No, my son, you are wrong. They are friends from Puymirol."

"*Tudieu!* Sire, you will have more men in your escort than trees in your forest."

"Chicot, I really believe the news of your arrival must have spread through the country, and all these people have come from the four corners of the province to welcome the ambassador from France."

Chicot had too much intelligence not to see that for some time past Henri had been making fun of him. He was disconcerted by that observation, but not offended.

At the end of the day they reached Muroy, where the gentlemen of the country gave a grand supper to the

king, in which Chicot took his part enthusiastically, as it had not been deemed necessary to stop on the road for anything so unimportant as dinner, and he had eaten nothing since he had left Nérac.

Henri had the best house in the town. Half the troop slept outside the gates, the other half in the street where the king was.

“When are we to begin the hunt?” asked Chicot of Henri, as he was undressing.

“We are not yet in the territory of the wolves, my dear Chicot.”

“And when shall we be?”

“Curious!”

“Not so, Sire. But you understand, one likes to know where he is going.”

“You will know to-morrow, my son. Meanwhile, lie down there on those cushions on my left. Here is Mornay snoring already at my right.”

“*Peste!*” said Chicot; “he makes more noise asleep than awake.”

“It is true he is not very talkative; but see him at the chase!”

Day had hardly appeared when a great noise of horses awoke Chicot and the King of Navarre. An old gentleman, who wished to serve the king himself, brought to Henri bread and honey, with spiced wine. Mornay and Chicot were served by servants of the old gentleman. The repast finished, the “boot-and-saddle” was sounded.

“Come, come!” said Henri, “we have a long day’s work before us. To horse, gentlemen! to horse!”

Chicot saw with astonishment that five hundred horsemen had swelled the train during the night.

“Sire!” cried he, “you have an army.”

“Wait!” replied Henri.

At Lauzerte, six hundred more men came and ranged themselves behind the cavaliers.

"Foot-soldiers!" cried Chicot.

"Nothing but beaters," said the king.

Chicot frowned and spoke no more. Twenty times his eyes turned towards the country, and the idea of flight presented itself to him. But Chicot had his guard of honor, doubtless as ambassador of the King of France, and so well was he recommended to this guard that he could not make a movement that was not repeated by ten men. This annoyed him, and he said so to the king.

"The devil!" said Henri; "it is your own fault. You tried to run away from Nérac, and I am afraid you will try it again."

"Sire, if I give my word as a gentleman not to do so?"

"That will do."

"Besides, I should be wrong to do so."

"How so?"

"Yes; for if I stay, I believe I shall see curious things."

"I am of your opinion, my dear Chicot."

At this moment they were going through the town of Montcuq, and four field-pieces took their place in the army.

"I return to my first idea," said Chicot, "that the wolves in this country are different from others, and are differently treated, — with artillery, for instance."

"Ah! you have noticed that?" said Henri; "it is a mania of the people of Montcuq. Since I gave them these four pieces they take them about everywhere."

"Well, Sire, shall we arrive to-day?"

"No, to-morrow."

"To-morrow morning or evening?"

“Morning.”

“Then,” said Chicot, “it is at Cahors that we are to hunt, is it not, Sire?”

“It is in that direction,” replied Henri.

“But, Sire, you who have infantry, cavalry, and artillery to hunt wolves with, should also have taken the royal standard, and then the honor to the wolves would have been complete.”

“We have not forgotten it, Chicot, *ventre-saint-gris!* only it is left in the case for fear of soiling it. But if you wish to see it, and know under whose banner you march, you shall see it.”

“No, no, it is useless; leave it where it is.”

“Well, be easy; you will see it before long.”

They spent the second night at Catus very much as they had spent the night before. From the moment Chicot had given his word of honor not to escape, they paid him no further attention. He took a turn through the village, and visited the advanced posts. On all sides troops of a hundred, a hundred and fifty, two hundred men, came to join the army. That night the foot-soldiers came in.

“It is fortunate that we are not going on to Paris,” said Chicot; “we should arrive with a hundred thousand men.”

The next morning, by eight o'clock, they were before Cahors, with one thousand foot soldiers and two thousand horse. They found the city in a state of defence, M. de Vesin having heard rumors of the advance.

“Ah!” said the king, “he is warned; that is very annoying.”

“We must lay siege in due form, Sire,” said Mornay; “we expect still about two thousand men, and that is enough.”

“Let us assemble the council,” said M. de Turenne, “and begin the trenches.”

Chicot listened to all this in amazement. The pensive and almost pitiful air of Henri alone reassured him, for it confirmed his suspicions that he was no warrior.

Henri let every one give his opinion and remained meanwhile as mute as a fish. All at once he raised his head, and said in a commanding tone, “Gentlemen, this is what we must do. We have three thousand men; and you say you expect two thousand more, Mornay?”

“Yes, Sire.”

“That will make five thousand. In a regular siege we should lose one thousand or fifteen hundred men in two months; their death would discourage the others; and we should lose a thousand more in retreating. Let us sacrifice five hundred men at once, and take Cahors by assault.”

“What do you mean, Sire?” said Mornay.

“My dear friend, we will go straight to the nearest gate. We shall find a fosse in our way, which we will fill with fascines; we may leave two hundred men on the road, but we shall reach the gate.”

“And then, Sire?”

“Then we will break it down with petards and go in. It will not be difficult.”

Chicot looked at Henri, astonished. “Yes,” he grumbled, “coward and braggart, — true Gascon; is it you who will place the petard under the gate?”

At that moment, as if he had heard Chicot’s *aside*, Henri added, “Let us not lose time, gentlemen; the feast will grow cold. Forward! and let all who love me follow!”

Chicot approached M. de Mornay. “Well, Monsieur the Count,” said he, “do you all want to be cut to pieces?”

“ Oh ! we take our chance.”

“ But the king will get killed.”

“ Bah ! he has a good cuirass.”

“ But he will not be foolish enough to go into danger, I suppose ? ”

Mornay shrugged his shoulders and turned on his heel.

“ After all, I like him better asleep than awake, snoring than speaking ; he is more polite,” said Chicot.

CHAPTER II.

HOW HENRI DE NAVARRE BEHAVED IN BATTLE.

THE little army advanced to a position near the town, then they breakfasted. The repast over, two hours were given for the officers and men to rest. Henri was very pale, and his hands trembled visibly, when at three o'clock in the afternoon the officers appeared under his tent.

"Gentlemen," said he, "we are here to take Cahors; therefore we must take it, since we have come here for that purpose. But it is necessary to take Cahors by force, — by force, do you understand?"

"Not bad," thought Chicot; "and if his gesture did not belie his words, one could hardly ask for anything better even from M. Crillon."

"Marshal de Biron," continued Henri, "who has sworn to hang every Huguenot, is only forty-five leagues from here, and doubtless a messenger is already despatched to him by M. de Vesin. In four or five days he will be on us, and as he has ten thousand men with him, we should be taken between the city and him. Let us, then, take Cahors before he comes, that we may receive him well. Come, gentlemen, I will put myself at your head, and let the blows fall as thick as hail!"

The men replied to this speech by enthusiastic cries.

"A good phrase-maker, Gascon still," said Chicot to himself. "How fortunate it is that one does n't talk with

his hands! *Ventre de biche!* the Béarnais would have stammered finely. Let us see him at the work."

As they were setting off, the king said to Chicot, "Pardon me, friend Chicot; I deceived you by talking of wolves, hunting, and such things. But you see Henri will not pay me his sister's dowry, and Margot cries out for her dear Cahors. One must do what one's wife wants, for the sake of peace. Therefore I am going to try and take Cahors, my dear Chicot."

"Why did she not ask you for the moon, Sire, as you are such a complaisant husband?"

"I would have tried for it, Chicot, I love my dear Margot so much!"

"You will have quite enough to do with Cahors, and we shall see how you will get out of it."

"Ah, yes, the moment is critical and very disagreeable. Ah! I am not brave, and my nature revolts at every musket-shot. Chicot, my friend, do not laugh too much at the poor Béarnais, your compatriot and friend. If I am afraid, and you find it out, tell no one."

"If you are afraid?"

"Yes."

"Are you, then, *afraid* of being afraid?"

"I am."

"But then, *ventre de biche!* why the devil do you undertake such a thing?"

"Why, I am compelled to."

"M. de Vesin is a terrible man."

"I know it well."

"Who gives quarter to no one."

"You think so, Chicot?"

"I am sure of it; red plume or white, he will not care; he will cry, 'Fire!'"

"You say that for my white feather, Chicot."

“Yes, Sire; and as you are the only one who wears a plume of that color —”

“Well?”

“I would take it off.”

“But I put it on that I might be recognized.”

“Then you will keep it?”

“Yes, decidedly.” And Henri trembled again as he said it.

“Come, Sire,” said Chicot, who did not understand this difference between words and gestures, “there is still time; do not commit a folly. You cannot mount on horseback in that state.”

“Am I, then, very pale, Chicot?”

“As pale as death, Sire.”

“Good.”

“Why good?”

“Yes, I understand myself.”

At this moment the noise of cannon and a furious fire of musketry was heard; it was M. de Vesin’s reply to the summons to surrender given by Mornay.

“Eh!” said Chicot, “what do you think of this music, Sire?”

“It makes me devilishly cold in the marrow of my bones,” replied Henri. “Here, my horse! my horse!” he cried.

Chicot looked and listened, unable to understand him. Henri mounted, and then said, —

“Come, Chicot, get on horseback too; you are not a warrior either, are you?”

“No, Sire.”

“Well, come, we will go and be afraid together; come and see the firing, my friend. A good horse here, for M. Chicot!”

Henri set off at full gallop, and Chicot followed him.

On arriving in front of his little army, Henri raised his visor, and cried, "Out with the banner! out with the new banner!"

They drew off the case, and the new banner, with the double escutcheon of Navarre and Bourbon, floated majestically in the air; it was white, and had chains of gold on one side, and *fleur de lis* on the other.

"There is a banner," said Chicot to himself, "which will be badly torn up, I am afraid."

At this moment, and as if in response to Chicot's thought, the cannon of the fortifications thundered, and opened a lane through the infantry within ten feet of the king.

"*Ventre-saint-gris!* did you see, Chicot?" said the king, whose teeth chattered.

"He will be ill," thought Chicot.

"Cursed body!" murmured Henri; "ah! you fear, you tremble! Wait! wait! I will give you something to tremble for." And striking his spurs into his horse, he rushed onward before cavalry, infantry, and artillery, and arrived at a hundred feet from the place, red with the fire of the batteries which thundered from above. There he kept his horse immovable for ten minutes, his face turned towards the gate of the city, and crying, "The fascines! *ventre-saint-gris!* the fascines!"

Mornay had followed him, sword in hand, and then came Chicot, wearing a cuirass, but without drawing his sword; behind them the young Huguenot gentlemen, crying, "Vive Navarre!" Each brought a fascine, which he threw in, and the fosse was soon filled. Then came the artillery; and with the loss of thirty or forty men they succeeded in placing their petards under the gate. The shot whistled like a whirlwind of iron round Henri's head, and twenty men fell in an instant before his eyes.

“Forward!” cried he; and rushing on through the midst of the fire, he arrived just as the soldiers had fired the first petard. The gate was broken in two places. The second petard was lighted, and a new opening was made in the wood; but twenty arquebuses immediately passed through, vomiting balls on the soldiers and officers, and the men fell like mowed grass.

“Sire,” cried Chicot, “in Heaven’s name, retire!”

Mornay said nothing; he was proud of his pupil, but from time to time he tried to place himself before him. Suddenly Henri felt the damp on his brow, and a cloud passed over his eyes.

“Ah, cursed nature,” cried he, “it shall not be said that you have conquered!” Then, jumping off his horse, “An axe!” he cried, and with a vigorous arm he struck down wood and iron. At last a beam gave way, and a part of the gate and a portion of the wall fell, and one hundred men rushed to the breach, crying, “Navarre! Navarre! Cahors is ours!”

Chicot had not left the king; he was with him under the arch of the gateway when he entered among the first, and at each discharge he saw him shudder and lower his head.

“*Ventre-saint-gris!* did you ever see such a coward, Chicot?” said Henri, furious.

“No, Sire, I have never seen a coward like you.”

The soldiers of M. de Vesin now tried to dislodge Henri and his advanced guards, who received them sword in hand; but the besieged were the strongest, and succeeded in forcing Henri and his troops back beyond the fosse.

“*Ventre-saint-gris!*” cried the king, “I believe my flag retreats; I must carry it myself.” And snatching it from the hands of those who held it, he raised it aloft, and was the first to re-enter, half enveloped in its folds. “Be

afraid, then!" said he, "tremble now, then, poltroon!" The balls whistled round him, and with a sharp sound struck his armor and pierced the flag. MM. de Turenne, Mornay, and a thousand others were in that open gate following the king. The cannon were silent, and the battle was fought hand to hand. Above all the uproar M. de Vesin's voice was heard crying, "Barricade the streets! let trenches be dug, and the houses garrisoned!"

"Oh!" cried M. de Turenne, "the siege of the city is over, my poor Vesin." And as he spoke he fired at him and wounded him in the arm.

"You are wrong, Turenne," cried M. de Vesin, "there are twenty sieges in Cahors; so if one is over, there are nineteen to come."

M. de Vesin defended himself during five days and nights from street to street and from house to house. Fortunately for the rising fortunes of Henri de Navarre, he had counted too much on the walls and garrison of Cahors, and had neglected to send to M. de Biron.

During these five days and nights, Henri commanded like a captain and fought like a soldier, slept with his head on a stone, and awoke sword in hand. Each day they conquered a street or a square, which each night the garrison tried to retake. On the fourth night the enemy seemed willing to give some rest to the Protestant army. Then it was Henri who attacked in his turn. He forced an intrenched position, but it cost him seven hundred men. MM. de Turenne and Mornay, and nearly all the officers, were wounded, but the king remained untouched. To the fear that he had felt at first, and which he had so heroically vanquished, succeeded a feverish restlessness, a rash audacity. All the fastenings of his armor were broken, as much by his own efforts as by the blows of the enemy. He struck so vigorously that he always

killed his man. When this last post was forced, the king entered into the enclosure, followed by the eternal Chicot, who, silent and sad, had for five days seen growing at his side the phantom of a monarchy destined to destroy that of the Valois.

“Well, Chicot, what do you think of it?” said Henri, raising his visor, and as if he wished to read the soul of the poor ambassador.

“Sire,” murmured Chicot, sadly, “I think that you are a real king.”

“And I, Sire, that you are too imprudent,” said Mornay, “to put up your visor when they are firing at you from all sides.”

As Mornay spoke, and as if to emphasize his words, the king was surrounded by a dozen sharpshooters belonging to the governor’s private troop. They had been placed in ambush by M. de Vesin, and aimed low and with exactness. One ball struck off a plume from Henri’s helmet; his horse was killed by another, and Mornay’s had his leg broken. The king fell, and ten swords were raised above him. Chicot, alone unhurt, leaped from his horse, threw himself before the king, and whirling his sword round to keep off the nearest, helped Henri up and gave him his own horse, saying, “Sire, you will testify to the King of France that if I drew the sword against him, I have at any rate hurt no one.”

“*Ventre-saint-gris!* you must be mine, Chicot!” cried Henri. “You shall live and die with me.”

“Sire, I have but one service to follow, — that of my king. His star diminishes, but I shall be faithful to his adverse fortunes. Let me serve and love him as long as he lives, Sire. I shall soon be alone with him; do not envy him his last servant.”

“Chicot, you will be always dear to me, and after

Henri de France you will have Henri de Navarre for a friend."

"Yes, Sire," said Chicot, simply, kissing his hand.

The siege was soon over after this. M. de Vesin was taken, and the garrison surrendered. Then Henri dictated to Mornay a letter, which Chicot was to carry to the King of France. It was written in bad Latin, and finished with these words, "Quod mihi dixisti profuit multum. Cognosco meos devotos; nosce tuos. Chicotus cætera expedit," which means, "What you told me was very useful. I know my faithful followers; know yours. Chicot will tell you the rest."

"And now, friend Chicot," said Henri, "embrace me; but take care not to soil yourself, for, *mordieu!* I am as bloody as a butcher. Take my ring, and adieu, Chicot; I keep you no longer. Gallop to France; you will make a success at the court by telling all you have seen."

CHAPTER III.

WHAT WAS TAKING PLACE AT THE LOUVRE ABOUT THE
TIME CHICOT ENTERED NÉRAC.

THE necessity of following Chicot to the end of his mission has kept us a long time away from the Louvre. The king, after having passed so bravely through his adventurous return from Vincennes, experienced that retrospective emotion which sometimes is felt by the bravest heart after the danger is over. He entered the Louvre without saying anything, made his prayers longer than usual, forgetting to thank the officers and guards who had delivered him from his peril. Then he went to bed, astonishing his valets by the rapidity of his toilet ; and D'Épernon, who remained in his room to the last, expecting thanks at least, went away in a very bad humor. At two o'clock every one slept in the Louvre.

The next day Henri took four *bouillons* in bed instead of two, and then sent for MM. de Villequier and d'O to come to his chamber to work on a new financial edict. The queen received the order to dine alone ; but it was added that in the evening the king would receive. All day he played with Love, saying, every time that the animal showed his white teeth, " Ah, rebel ! you also want to bite me ; you also attack your king ? but every one is doing that to-day."

Then Henri, with as much apparent effort as Hercules put forth in subduing the Nemean lion, conquered that monster as large as his fist, saying, with unspeakable satis-

faction, "Conquered, Maître Love! conquered, infamous Leagner! conquered, conquered, conquered!" His secretaries of State were somewhat astonished at all this, particularly as he said nothing else, and signed everything without looking at it. At three o'clock in the afternoon he asked for D'Épernon. They replied that he was reviewing the light-horse; then he inquired for Loignac, but he also was absent. He asked for lunch, and while he ate, had an edifying discourse read to him, which he interrupted by saying to the reader, "Was it not Plutarch who wrote the life of Sylla?"

"Yes, Sire," said the reader, much astonished at being interrupted in his pious reading by this profane question.

"Do you remember that passage where the historian recounts how the dictator avoided death?"

The reader hesitated. "Not precisely, Sire; it is a long time since I read Plutarch."

At this moment the Cardinal de Joyeuse was announced.

"Ah, here is a learned man; he will tell me at once!" cried the king.

"Sire," said the cardinal, "am I fortunate enough to arrive at a seasonable moment? It is a rare thing in this world."

"Faith! yes; you heard my question?"

"Your Majesty asked, I think, in what manner and under what circumstances Sylla narrowly escaped death?"

"Precisely; can you answer me, Cardinal?"

"Nothing more easy, Sire."

"So much the better."

"Sylla, who had killed so many men, never risked his life but in combats; did your Majesty mean in one of those?"

"Yes; in one of those combats I think I recollect he was very near death. Open a Plutarch, Cardinal, — there

should be one there, translated by Amyot, — and read me the passage where he escaped the javelins of his enemies, thanks to the swiftness of his white horse.”

“Sire, there is no need of opening Plutarch for that; the event took place in the combat with Teleserius the Samnite, and Lamponius the Lucanian.”

“You are so learned, my dear cardinal!”

“Your Majesty is too good.”

“Now explain to me how this Roman lion, who was so cruel, was never molested by his enemies.”

“Sire, I will reply to your Majesty in the words of this same Plutarch.”

“Go on, Joyeuse.”

“Carbo, the enemy of Sylla, said often, ‘I have to fight at once a lion and a fox who inhabit the soul of Sylla, but it is the fox who gives me most trouble.’”

“Ah! it was the fox?”

“Plutarch says so, Sire.”

“And he is right, Cardinal. But speaking of combats, have you any news of your brother?”

“Of which brother, Sire? Your Majesty is aware that I have four.”

“Of the Duc d’Arques, my friend, in short.”

“Not yet, Sire.”

“If M. d’Anjou, who always plays the fox, will only play the lion a little for once.”

The cardinal did not reply, so Henri, signing to him to remain, dressed himself sumptuously, and passed into the room where the court waited for him. He entered, looking full of good humor, kissed the hands of his wife and mother, paid all sorts of compliments to the ladies, and even offered them confectionery.

“We were uneasy about your health, my son,” said Catherine.

“You were wrong, Madame ; I have never been better.”

“And to what happy influence do you owe this amelioration, my son ?”

“To having laughed much, Madame.”

Every one looked astonished.

“Laughed ! you can laugh much, my son ; then you are very happy ?”

“It is true, Madame.”

“And about what were you so much amused ?”

“I must tell you, Mother, that yesterday I went to Vincennes.”

“I knew it.”

“Oh, you knew it ! well, my people told me, before my return, of an enemy’s army whose muskets shone on the road.”

“An enemy’s army on the road to Vincennes ?”

“Yes, Mother.”

“And where ?”

“In front of the Jacobins, near the house of our good cousin.”

“Near Madame de Montpensier’s ?”

“Precisely so, near Bel-Esbat. I approached bravely, to give battle, and I perceived — ”

“What, Sire ?” cried the queen, in alarm.

“Reassure yourself, Madame. I perceived an entire priory of good monks, who presented arms to me with acclamations.”

Every one laughed, and the king continued, “Yes, you are right to laugh. I have in France more than ten thousand monks, of whom I will make, if necessary, ten thousand musketeers ; then I will create a Grand Master of the Tonsured Musketeers, and give the place to you, Cardinal.”

“Sire, I accept.”

The ladies now, according to etiquette, rose, and bowing to the king, retired. The queen followed with her ladies-of-honor. The queen-mother remained; the king's gayety was a mystery that she wished to fathom.

"Cardinal," said the king, "what has become of your brother, Bouchage?"

"I do not know, Sire."

"What! you do not know?"

"No; I never see him now."

A grave, sad voice from the end of the room said, "Here I am, Sire."

"Ah, it is he!" cried Henri. "Approach, Count; approach!"

The young man obeyed.

"*Mon Dieu!*" cried the king, "he is no longer a man, but a shade."

"Sire, he works hard," said the cardinal, stupefied himself at the change in his brother during the last week. He was as pale as wax, and looked thin and wan.

"Come here, young man," said the king. "Thanks, Cardinal, for your quotation from Plutarch; in a similar case I shall apply to you again."

The cardinal saw that Henri wished to be left alone with his brother, and took his leave.

There only remained the queen-mother, D'Épernon, and Bouchage. The king beckoned to the last, and said, "Why do you hide thus behind the ladies? Do you not know it gives me pleasure to see you?"

"Your kind words do me honor, Sire," said the young man, bowing.

"Then how is it that we never see you here now?"

"If your Majesty has not seen me, it is because you have not deigned to cast an eye on the corner of the room. I am here every day regularly. I never have failed, and

never will as long as I can stand upright; it is a sacred duty to me."

"And is it that which makes you so sad?"

"Oh! your Majesty cannot think so?"

"No, for you and your brother love me, and I love you. Apropos, do you know that poor Anne has written to me from Dieppe?"

"I did not, Sire."

"Yes; but you know he did not like going."

"He confided to me his regrets at leaving Paris."

"Yes; but do you know what he said? That there was a man who would have regretted Paris much more; and that if I gave you this order you would die."

"Perhaps, Sire."

"He said yet more, for your brother talks fast when he is not sulky; he said that if I had given you such an order you would have disobeyed it."

"Your Majesty was right to place my death before my disobedience; it would have been a greater grief to me to disobey than to die, and yet I should have disobeyed."

"You are a little mad, I think, my poor count," said Henri.

"I am quite so, I believe."

"Then the case is serious."

Joyeuse sighed.

"What is it? Tell me."

Joyeuse tried to smile. "A great king like you, Sire, would not care for such confidences."

"Yes, Henri, yes; tell me. It will amuse me," said the king.

"Sire, you deceive yourself," said Joyeuse, haughtily; "there is nothing in my grief that could amuse a noble heart."

The king took the young man's hand. "Do not be

angry, Bouchage," said he; "you know that your king also has known the griefs of an unrequited love."

"I know it, Sire, formerly."

"Therefore I feel for your sufferings."

"Your Majesty is too good."

"Not so; but when I suffered what you suffer no one could aid me, because no one was more powerful than myself, whereas I can aid you."

"Sire?"

"And consequently hope soon for an end of your sorrows."

The young man shook his head.

"Bouchage, you shall be happy, or I shall no longer call myself the King of France!" cried Henri.

"Happy! alas, Sire, it is impossible," said the young man, with a bitter smile.

"And why so?"

"Because my happiness is not of this world."

"Henri, your brother, when he went, recommended you to my friendship. I wish, since you consult neither the experience of your father nor the wisdom of your brother the cardinal, to be an elder brother to you. Come, be confiding, and tell me all. I assure you, Bouchage, that for everything except death my power and love shall find you a remedy."

"Sire," replied the young man, falling at the king's feet, "do not confound me by the expression of a goodness to which I cannot reply. My misery is without remedy, for it is my misery which makes my only happiness."

"Bouchage, you are mad. You will kill yourself with fancies."

"I know it well, Sire."

“But,” cried the king, impatiently, “is it a marriage you wish for?”

“Sire, my wish is to inspire love. You see that the whole world is powerless to aid me in this. I alone can obtain it for myself.”

“Then why despair?”

“Because I feel that I shall never inspire it.”

“Try, try, my child! you are young and rich. Where is the woman that can resist at once beauty, youth, and wealth? There is none, Bouchage.”

“How many persons in my place would bless your Majesty for the great kindness with which you overwhelm me! To be loved by a king like your Majesty is almost equal to being loved by God.”

“If you wish to be discreet, and tell me nothing, do so. I will find out, and then act. You know what I have done for your brother, — I will do as much for you. A hundred thousand crowns shall not stop me.”

Bouchage seized the king's hand, and pressed his lips to it.

“May your Majesty ask one day for my blood, and I will shed it to the last drop to show you how grateful I am for the protection that I refuse!”

Henri III. turned on his heel angrily. “Really,” said he, “these Joyeuses are more obstinate than a Valois. Here is one who will bring me every day his long face and his eyes circled with black. How delightful that will be! there are already so many gay faces at court.”

“Oh, Sire, I will smile so, when I am here, that every one shall think me the happiest of men.”

“Yes, but I shall know the contrary, and that will sadden me.”

“Does your Majesty permit me to retire?” asked Bouchage.

“Go, my child, and try to be a man.”

When he was gone the king approached D'Épernon, and said, “Lavalette, have money distributed this evening to the Forty-five, and give them holiday for a night and a day to amuse themselves. By the Mass! they saved me, the rascals, — saved me like Sylla's white horse.”

“Saved?” said Catherine.

“Yes, Mother.”

“From what?”

“Ah, ask D'Épernon.”

“I ask you, my son.”

“Well, Madame, our dear cousin, the sister of your good friend, M. de Guise, — oh, do not deny it! you know he is your good friend, — laid an ambush for me.”

“An ambush!”

“Yes, Madame, and I narrowly escaped imprisonment or assassination.”

“By M. de Guise?”

“You do not believe it?”

“I confess I do not.”

“D'Épernon, my friend, relate the adventure to my mother. If I go on speaking and she goes on shrugging her shoulders, I shall get angry, and that does not suit my health. Adieu, Madame! cherish M. de Guise as much as you please, but I would advise you not to forget Salcède.”

CHAPTER IV.

RED PLUME AND WHITE PLUME.

It was eight in the evening ; and the house of Robert Briquet, solitary and sad-looking, formed a worthy companion to that mysterious house of which we have already spoken to our readers. One might have thought that these two houses were yawning in each other's face. Not far from there the noise of brass was heard, mingled with confused voices, vague murmurs, and squeaks.

It was probably this noise that attracted a young and handsome cavalier, with a violet cap, red plume, and gray mantle, who, after stopping for some minutes to listen, went on slowly and pensively towards the house of Robert Briquet. Now, this noise of brass was that of saucepans ; these vague murmurs, those of pots boiling on fires, and of spits turned by dogs ; those cries, those of M. Fournichon, host of the Brave Chevalier, and of Madame Fournichon, who was preparing her rooms. When the young man with the violet cap had well looked at the fire, inhaled the smell of the fowls, and peeped through the curtains, he went away, then returned to resume his examinations. He continued to walk up and down, but never passed Robert Briquet's house, which seemed to be the limit of his walk. Every time that he arrived at this limit he found there, like a sentinel, a young man of about his own age, with a black cap, a white plume, and a violet cloak, who, with frowning brow and his hand on his sword, seemed to say, "Thou shalt

go no farther." The young man with the red plume — he whom we first mentioned — took twenty turns before observing this, so preoccupied was he. Certainly he saw a man walking up and down like himself; but as the man was too well dressed to be a robber, he never thought of disquieting himself about him. But the other, on the contrary, looked more and more black at each return of the young man with the red plume, till at last the latter noticed it and began to think that his presence there must be annoying to the other; and wondering for what reason, he looked first at Briquet's house, then at the one opposite, and seeing nothing, turned round and resumed his walk from west to east, while the other walked from east to west. This continued for about five minutes, until, as they once again came face to face, the young man with the white plume walked straight up against the other, who, taken unawares, with difficulty saved himself from falling.

"Monsieur," cried he, "are you mad, or do you mean to insult me?"

"Monsieur, I wish to make you understand that you annoy me much. It seems to me that you might have seen that without my telling you."

"Not at all, Monsieur; I never see what I do not wish to see."

"There are, however, certain things which would attract your attention, I hope, if they shone before your eyes;" and he drew his sword as he spoke, which glittered in the moonlight.

The young man with the red plume said quietly, "One would think, Monsieur, that you had never drawn a sword before, you are in such a hurry to attack one who does not defend himself."

"But who will defend himself, I hope."

“Why so?” replied the other, smiling. “And what right have you to prevent me from walking in the street?”

“Why do you walk in this street?”

“*Parbleu!* because it pleases me to do so.”

“Ah! it pleases you?”

“Doubtless; are you not also walking here? Have you a license from the king to keep to yourself the Rue de Bussy?”

“What is that to you?”

“A great deal, for I am a faithful subject of the king and would not disobey him.”

“Ah! you laugh!”

“And you threaten!”

“Heaven and earth! I tell you that you annoy me, Monsieur, and that if you do not go away willingly I will make you.”

“Oh, oh! we shall see.”

“Yes, we shall see.”

“Monsieur, I have particular business here. Now, if you will have it, I will cross swords with you, but I will not go away.”

“Monsieur, I am Comte Henri du Bouchage, brother of the Duc de Joyeuse. Once more, will you yield me the place, and go away?”

“Monsieur,” replied the other, “I am the Vicomte Ernauton de Carmainges. You do not annoy me at all, and I do not ask you to go away.”

Bouchage reflected a moment, and then put his sword back in its sheath. “Excuse me, Monsieur,” said he; “I am half mad, being in love.”

“And I also am in love, but I do not think myself mad for that.”

Henri grew pale. “You are in love?” said he.

“Yes, Monsieur.”

"And you confess it?"

"Is it a crime?"

"But with some one in this street?"

"Yes, for the present."

"In Heaven's name, tell me who it is!"

"Ah! M. du Bouchage, you have not reflected on what you are asking me; you know a gentleman cannot reveal a secret of which only half belongs to him."

"It is true; pardon, M. de Carmainges; but in truth, there is no one so unhappy as I am under heaven."

There was so much real grief and eloquent despair in these words that Ernauton was profoundly touched. "Oh, *mon Dieu!* I understand," said he; "you fear that we are rivals."

"I do."

"Well, Monsieur, I will be frank."

Joyeuse grew pale again.

"I," continued Ernauton, "have an appointment."

"An appointment?"

"Yes."

"In this street?"

"Yes."

"Written?"

"Yes, in very good writing."

"A woman's?"

"No, a man's."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say. I have an invitation to a meeting with a woman, written by a man; it seems she has a secretary."

"Ah! go on, Monsieur."

"I cannot refuse you, Monsieur. I will tell you the tenor of the note."

"I listen."

"You will see if it is like yours."

“Oh, Monsieur, I have no appointment, no note.”

Ernauton then drew out a little paper. “Here is the note, Monsieur,” said he. “It would be difficult to read it to you by this obscure light; but it is short, and I know it by heart, if you will trust to me.”

“Oh! entirely.”

“This is it, then: ‘M. Ernauton, my secretary is charged by me to tell you that I have a great desire to talk with you for an hour; your merit has touched me.’ I pass over another phrase still more flattering.”

“Then you are waited for?”

“No, I wait, as you see.”

“Are they to open the door to you?”

“No, to whistle three times from the window.”

Henri, trembling all over, placed one hand on Ernauton’s arm, and with the other pointed to the opposite house.

“From there?” said he.

“Oh, no! from there,” said Ernauton, pointing to the Brave Chevalier.

Henri uttered a cry of joy. “Then you are not going to this house?”

“By no means; the note said positively, ‘hostelry of the Brave Chevalier.’”

“Oh! a thousand thanks, Monsieur,” said he; “pardon my incivility,—my folly. Alas! you know that to a man who really loves there exists but one woman; and seeing you always return to this house, I believed that it was here you were waited for.”

“I have nothing to pardon, Monsieur; for really, I thought for a moment that you had come on the same errand as myself.”

“And you had the incredible patience to say nothing! Ah! you do not love! you do not love!”

“Faith ! I have no great rights as yet ; and I awaited some light on the matter before allowing myself to be annoyed. These great ladies are so capricious, and a hoax is so amusing.”

“Oh, M. de Carmainges, you do not love as I do ; and yet — ”

“Yet what ? ”

“You are more fortunate.”

“Ah ! they are cruel in that house ? ”

“M. de Carmainges, for three months I have loved like a madman her who lives there ; and I have not yet had the happiness of hearing the sound of her voice.”

“The devil ! you are not far advanced. But stay ! ”

“What is it ? ”

“Did not some one whistle ? ”

“Indeed, I think I heard something.”

A second whistle was now distinctly heard in the direction of the Brave Chevalier.

“Monsieur the Count,” said Ernauton, “you will excuse me for taking leave, but I believe that is my signal.”

A third whistle sounded.

“Go, Monsieur,” said Joyeuse ; “and good luck to you ! ”

Ernauton made off quickly, while Joyeuse began to walk back more gloomily than ever.

“Now for my accustomed task,” said he ; “let me knock as usual at this cursed door which never opens to me.” And while saying these words he advanced trembling towards the door of the mysterious house.

CHAPTER V.

THE DOOR OPENS.

ON arriving at the door of the house, poor Henri was seized by his usual hesitation. "Courage!" said he to himself. But before knocking, he looked once more behind him, and saw the bright light shining through the windows of the hostelry.

"There," said he, "enter, for love and joy, those who are invited almost without desiring; why have I not a tranquil and careless heart? Perhaps I also might enter there, instead of vainly trying here."

Ten o'clock struck. Henri lifted the knocker, and struck once, then again. "There," said he, listening, — "there is the inner door opening, the stairs creaking, the sound of steps approaching, — always so, always the same thing." And he knocked again. "There," said he, "he peeps through the trellis-work, sees my pale face, and goes away, always without opening. Adieu, cruel house, until to-morrow." And he turned to go; but scarcely had he taken two steps, when the key turned in the lock, and to his profound surprise, the door opened, and a man stood bowing on the threshold. It was the same whom we have seen before in his interview with Robert Briquet.

"Good-evening, Monsieur," said he, in a harsh voice, but whose sound appeared to Bouchage sweeter than the song of birds.

Henri joined his hands and trembled so much that the servant put out a hand to save him from falling, with a visible expression of respectful pity.

"Come, Monsieur," said he, "here I am ; explain to me, I beg, what you want."

"I have loved so much," replied the young man, "that I do not know whether I still love ; my heart has beat so fast that I do not know whether it still beats."

"Will it please you, Monsieur, to sit down and talk to me?"

"Oh, yes !"

"Speak, then, Monsieur, and tell me what you desire."

"My friend, you already know. Many times, you know, I have waited for you and surprised you at the turn of a street, and have offered you gold enough to enrich you, had you been the greediest of men. At other times I have threatened you ; but you have never listened to me, and have always seen me suffer without seeming to pity me. To-day you tell me to speak, — to express my wishes ; what, then, has happened, *mon Dieu ?*"

The servant sighed. He had evidently a pitying heart under a rough covering. Henri heard this sigh, and it encouraged him. "You know," he continued, "that I love, and how I love. You have seen me pursue a woman and discover her, in spite of her efforts to avoid me ; but never in my greatest grief has a bitter word escaped me, nor have I given heed to those violent thoughts which are born of despair and the fire of youth."

"It is true, Monsieur ; and in this my mistress renders you full justice."

"Could I not," continued Henri, "when you refused me admittance, have forced the door, as is done every day by some lad, tipsy or in love ? Then, if but for a minute,

I should have seen this inexorable woman, and have spoken to her."

"It is true."

"And," continued the young count, sadly, "I am something in this world; my name is great as well as my fortune. The king himself protects me; just now he begged me to confide to him my griefs and to apply to him for aid."

"Ah!" said the servant, anxiously.

"I would not do it," continued Joyeuse; "no, no, I refused all, to come and pray at this door with clasped hands, — a door which never yet opened to me."

"Monsieur the Count, you have indeed a noble heart, and are worthy to be loved."

"Well, then, he whom you call worthy, to what do you condemn him? Every morning my page brings a letter; it is refused. Every evening I myself knock at the door; and I am disregarded. You let me suffer, despair, die in the street, without having the compassion for me that you would have for a dog that howled. Ah! this woman has no woman's heart; she does not love me. Well! one can no more tell one's heart to love than not to love. But one may pity the unfortunate who suffers, and give him a word of consolation, — may reach out a hand to save him from falling; but no, this woman cares not for my sufferings. Why does she not kill me, either with a refusal from her mouth, or with a dagger-stroke? Dead, I should suffer no more."

"Monsieur the Count," replied the man, "the lady whom you accuse is, believe me, far from having the hard, insensible heart you think. She has seen you; she has understood what you suffer, and feels for you the warmest sympathy."

"Oh, compassion, compassion!" cried the young man;

“but may that heart of which you boast some day know love, — love such as I feel ! and if in return for that love she is offered compassion, I shall be well avenged.”

“Monsieur the Count, not to reply to love is no proof that one has never loved. This woman has perhaps felt the passion more than ever you will, — has perhaps loved as you can never love.”

“When one loves like that, one loves forever,” cried Henri, raising his eyes to heaven.

“Have I told you that she no longer loves ?”

Henri uttered a doleful cry, and broke down as if he had been struck with death. “She loves !” he cried. “Ah, *mon Dieu !*”

“Yes, she loves ; but be not jealous of the man she loves, Monsieur the Count, for he is no longer of this world. My mistress is a widow.”

These words restored hope and life to the young man. “Oh !” he cried, “she is a widow, and recently ; the source of her tears will dry up in time. She is a widow ; then she loves no one, or only a shadow, — a name. Ah ! she will love me. Oh, *mon Dieu !* all great griefs are calmed by time. When the widow of Mausolus, who had sworn an eternal grief at her husband’s tomb, had exhausted her tears, she was cured. Regrets are a malady, from which every one who survives comes out as strong as before.”

The servant shook his head.

“This lady, Monsieur the Count, has also sworn an eternal fidelity to the dead ; but I know her, and she will keep her word better than the forgetful woman of whom you speak.”

“I will wait ten years if necessary ; since she lives I may hope.”

“Oh, young man, do not reckon thus ! She has lived,

you say. Yes, so she has ; not a month or a year, — she has lived seven years. But do you know why, with what purpose, to fulfil what resolution she has lived ? You hope that she will console herself ; never, Monsieur the Count, never ! I swear it to you, — I, who was but the servant of him who is dead, and yet shall never be consoled.”

“ This man so much regretted, this husband — ”

“ It was not her husband, it was her lover, Monsieur the Count ; and a woman like her whom you unfortunately love has but one lover in her life.”

“ My friend,” cried Joyeuse, “ intercede for me.”

“ I ! Listen, Monsieur the Count. Had I believed you capable of using violence towards my mistress, I would have killed you long ago with my own hand. If on the contrary I could have believed that she would love you, I think I should have killed her. Now, Monsieur the Count, I have said what I wished to say ; do not seek to make me say more, for on my honor, — and although not a nobleman, my honor is worth something, — I have told you all I can.”

Henri rose with death in his soul. “ I thank you,” said he, “ for having had compassion on my misfortunes ; now I have decided.”

“ Then you will be calmer for the future, Monsieur the Count ; you will go away and leave us to a destiny that is worse than yours, believe me.”

“ Yes, be easy ; I will go away, and forever.”

“ You mean to die ? ”

“ Why not ? I cannot live without her.”

“ Monsieur the Count, believe me, it is bad to die by your own hand.”

“ Therefore I shall not choose that death ; but there is for a young man like me a death which has always been

reckoned the best, — that received in defending one's king and country."

"If you suffer beyond your strength; if you owe nothing to those who survive you; if death on the field of battle is offered to you, — die, Monsieur the Count. I should have done so long ago had I not been condemned to live."

"Adieu, and thank you," replied Joyeuse. And he went away rapidly, throwing a heavy purse of gold at the feet of the servant.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW A GREAT LADY LOVED IN THE YEAR 1586.

THE whistles which Ernauton had heard were really his signal. Thus, when the young man reached the door, he found Dame Fournichon on the threshold, waiting for her customers with a smile, which made her resemble a mythological goddess painted by a Flemish painter ; and in her large white hands she held a golden crown, which another hand, whiter and more delicate, had slipped in, in passing. She stood before the door, so as to bar Ernauton's passage. "What do you want, Monsieur?" said she to him.

"Were not three whistles given from one of those windows just now?"

"Yes."

"Well, they were to summon me."

"You?"

"Yes."

"On your honor?"

"As a gentleman, Dame Fournichon."

"Enter, then, Monsieur, enter."

And happy at having a client after her own heart, fit for that ill-fated Rose-tree of Love which had been supplanted by the Brave Chevalier, the hostess conducted Ernauton up the stairs herself. A little door, vulgarly painted, gave access to a sort of antechamber, which led to a room, furnished, decorated, and carpeted with rather more luxury than might have been expected

in this remote corner of Paris; but this was Madame Fournichon's favorite room, and she had exercised all her taste in its adornment.

When the young man entered the antechamber, he smelled a strong aromatic odor, the work, doubtless, of some susceptible person, who had thus tried to overcome the smell of cooking exhaled from the kitchen. On opening the door, he stopped for an instant to contemplate one of those elegant female figures which must always command attention, if not love. Reposing on cushions, enveloped in silk and velvet, this lady was occupied in burning in the candle the end of a little stick of aloes, over which she bent so as to inhale the full perfume. By the manner in which she threw the remainder of the branch in the fire, and pulled her hood over her masked face, Ernauton perceived that she had heard him enter; but she did not turn.

"Madame," said the young man, "you sent for your humble servant; here he is."

"Ah! very well," said the lady; "sit down, I beg, M. Ernauton."

"Pardon, Madame; but before anything I must thank you for the honor that you do me."

"Ah! that is civil, and you are right; but I presume you do not know whom you are thanking, M. de Carnainges."

"Madame, you have your face hidden by a mask and your hands by gloves; I cannot, then, recognize you, — I can but guess."

"And you guess who I am?"

"She whom my heart desires, whom my imagination paints young, beautiful, powerful, and rich, — too rich and too powerful for me to be able to believe that what has happened to me is real, and that I am not dreaming."

"Had you any trouble in entering here?" asked the

lady, without replying directly to the words which had escaped from the full heart of Ernauton.

“No, Madame; the admittance was easier than I could have thought.”

“Yes, all is easy for a man; it is so different for a woman. What were you saying to me, Monsieur?” added she, carelessly, and pulling off her glove to show a beautiful hand, at once plump and taper.

“I said, Madame, that without having seen your face, I know who you are, and without fear of making a mistake, may say that I love you.”

“Then you are sure that I am she whom you expected to find here?”

“My heart tells me so.”

“Then you know me?”

“Yes.”

“Really! you, a provincial, only just arrived, you already know the women of Paris?”

“In all Paris, Madame, I know but one.”

“And that is myself?”

“I believe so.”

“By what do you recognize me?”

“By your voice, your grace, and your beauty.”

“My voice, — perhaps I cannot disguise it; my grace, — I may appropriate the compliment; but as for my beauty, it is veiled.”

“It was less so, Madame, on the day when, to bring you into Paris, I held you so near to me that your breast touched my shoulders, and I felt your breath on my neck.”

“Then, on the receipt of my letter, you guessed that it came from me?”

“Oh, no, Madame, not for a moment; I believed I was the subject of some joke, or the victim of some error, and

it is only during the last few minutes that seeing you, touching you — ” and he tried to take her hand, but she withdrew it.

“Enough !” said the lady ; “the fact is that I have committed a great folly.”

“In what, Madame ?”

“In what ? You say that you know me, and still ask ?”

“Oh, it is true, Madame, that I am very insignificant and obscure in comparison with your Highness.”

“*Mon Dieu !* Monsieur, pray be silent ! Have you no sense ?”

“What have I done ?” cried Ernauton, frightened.

“You see me in a mask ; if I wear a mask it is probably with the design of disguising myself, — and yet you call me ‘your Highness.’”

“Ah, pardon me, Madame !” said Ernauton ; “but I believed in the discretion of these walls.”

“It appears you are credulous.”

“Alas ! Madame, I am in love.”

“And you are convinced that I reciprocate this love ?”

Ernauton rose, piqued. “No, Madame,” replied he.

“Then what do you believe ?”

“I believe that you have something important to say to me, and that not wishing to receive me at the Hôtel de Guise, or at Bel-Esbat, you preferred a secret interview in this isolated place.”

“You thought that ?”

“Yes.”

“And what do you think I could have to say to you ?” asked the lady, rather anxiously.

“How can I tell ? Perhaps something about M. de Mayenne.”

“Had you not already told me all you knew of him ?”

“Perhaps, then, some question about last night’s event.”

“What event? Of what do you speak?” asked the lady, visibly agitated.

“Of the panic experienced by M. d’Épernon and the arrest of those Lorraine gentlemen.”

“They arrested some Lorraine gentlemen?”

“About twenty, who were found upon the road to Vincennes.”

“Which is also the road to Soissons, where M. de Guise holds his garrison. Ah, M. Ernauton, you, who belong to the court, can tell me why they arrested these gentlemen.”

“I belong to the court?”

“Certainly.”

“You know that, Madame?”

“Ah! to find out your address, we were forced to make inquiries. But what resulted from all this?”

“Nothing, Madame, to my knowledge.”

“Then why did you think I should wish to speak of it?”

“I am wrong again, Madame.”

“From what place are you, Monsieur?”

“From Agen.”

“What, you are a Gascon! and yet are not vain enough to suppose that when I saw you at the Porte St. Antoine, on the day of Salcède’s execution, I liked your looks?”

Ernauton reddened and looked confused.

The lady went on. “That I met you in the street, and found you handsome?”

Ernauton grew scarlet.

“That, afterwards, when you brought me a message from my brother, I liked you?”

“Madame, I never thought so, I protest.”

“Then you were wrong,” said the lady, turning on him two eyes which flashed through her mask.

Ernauton clasped his hands. “Madame, are you mocking me?” cried he.

“Faith! no. The truth is that you pleased me.”

“*Mon Dieu!*”

“But you yourself dared to declare your love to me.”

“But then I did not know who you were, Madame; and now that I do know, I humbly ask for pardon.”

“Oh!” cried the lady, “say all you think, or I shall regret having come.”

Ernauton fell on his knees.

“Speak, Madame! speak, that I may be sure this is not all a dream, and perhaps I shall dare to answer.”

“So be it. Here are my projects for you,” said the lady, gently pushing Ernauton back, while she arranged the folds of her dress: “I fancy you, but I do not yet know you. I am not in the habit of resisting my fancies; but I never commit follies. Had we been equals, I should have received you at my house and studied you before I hinted at my feelings; but as that was impossible, I was driven to this interview. Now you know what to do. Be worthy of me; it is all I ask.”

Ernauton exhausted himself in protestations.

“Oh, less warmth, M. de Carmainges, I beg! it is not worth while,” she replied carelessly. “Perhaps it was only your name that pleased me; perhaps it is a caprice, and will pass away. However, do not think yourself too far from perfection, and begin to despair. I cannot endure those who are perfect; I adore those who are devoted. Continue to be devoted; I allow you, handsome cavalier.”

Ernauton was beside himself. This haughty language, those voluptuous movements, that proud superiority, that

frank unreserve, of a person so illustrious, plunged him into extremes of delight and terror. He seated himself near the proud and beautiful lady, and then tried to pass his arm behind the cushions on which she reclined.

“Monsieur,” said she, “it appears you have heard but not understood me. No familiarity, if you please; let us each remain in our place. Some day I will give you the right to call me yours; but this right you have not yet.”

Ernauton rose, pale and angry. “Excuse me, Madame,” said he; “it seems I commit nothing but follies. I am not yet accustomed to the habits of Paris. Among us in the provinces, two hundred leagues from here, when a woman says, ‘I love,’ she loves, and does not hold herself aloof, or take pretences for humiliating the man at her feet. It is your custom as a Parisian, and your right as a princess. I accept it, therefore; only I have not been accustomed to it. The habit, doubtless, will come in time.”

“Ah! you are angry, I believe,” said the duchess, haughtily.

“I am, Madame, but it is against myself; for I have for you, Madame, not a passing caprice, but a real love. It is your heart I seek to obtain, and therefore I am angry with myself for having compromised the respect that I owe you, and which I will change into love only when you command me. From this moment, Madame, I await your orders.”

“Come, come! do not exaggerate, M. de Carmainges; now you are all ice, after being all flame.”

“It seems to me, however, Madame —”

“Eh, Monsieur! never say to a woman that you will love her in the way you prefer, — that is clumsy; show her that you will love her in the way she prefers —”

“That is what I have said, Madame.”

“Yes, but not what you have thought.”

“ I bow to your superiority, Madame.”

“ A truce to politeness ; I do not wish to play the princess. Here is my hand ; take it. It is that of a simple woman.”

Ernauton took this beautiful hand respectfully.

“ Well ! ” said the duchess.

“ Well ? ”

“ You do not kiss it ! Are you mad, or have you sworn to put me in a passion ? ”

“ But just now — ”

“ Just now I drew it away, while now I give it to you.”

Ernauton kissed the hand, which was then withdrawn.

“ You see,” said he, — “ another lesson. You make me jump from one extreme to the other. In the end fear will kill passion. I shall continue to adore you on my knees, it is true ; but I shall have for you neither love nor confidence.”

“ Oh ! I do not wish that, for you would be a sad lover, and it is not so that I like them. No, remain natural ; be yourself, M. Ernauton, and nothing else. I have caprices. Oh, *mon Dieu !* you told me I was beautiful ; and all beautiful women have them. Do not fear me ; and when I say to the too impetuous Ernauton, ‘ Calm yourself,’ let him consult my eyes and not my voice.”

At these words she rose. It was time, for the young man had seized her in his arms, and his lips touched her mask ; but through this mask her eyes darted a light, cold and white, like the ominous light that precedes a tempest. That look so affected Carmainges that he let fall his arms, and all his ardor was extinguished.

“ Well,” said the duchess, “ we will see. Decidedly, you please me, M. de Carmainges.”

Ernauton bowed.

“ When are you free ? ” she asked carelessly.

“Alas ! very rarely, Madame.”

“Ah ! your service is fatiguing, is it not ?”

“What service ?”

“That which you perform near the king. Are you not some kind of guard to his Majesty ?”

“I form part of a body of gentlemen, Madame.”

“That is what I mean. They are all Gascons, are they not ?”

“Yes, Madame.”

“How many are there ? Some one told me ; but I forget.”

“Forty-five.”

“What a singular number !”

“I believe it was chance.”

“And these forty-five gentlemen never leave the king, you say ?”

“I did not say so, Madame.”

“Ah ! I thought you did ; at least, you said you had very little liberty.”

“It is true, I have very little ; because by day we are on service near the king, and at night we stay at the Louvre.”

“In the evening ?”

“Yes.”

“Every evening ?”

“Nearly.”

“What would have happened, then, this evening, if your duty had kept you ? I, who waited for you, ignorant of the cause of your absence, should have thought my advances despised.”

“Ah, Madame, to see you I will risk all, I swear to you !”

“It would be useless and absurd ; I do not wish it.”

“But then —”

“Do your duty; I will arrange, who am free and mistress of my time.”

“What goodness, Madame!”

“But you have not explained to me,” said the duchess, with her insinuating smile, “how you happened to be free this evening, and how you came.”

“This evening, Madame, I was thinking of asking permission of Loignac, our captain, who is very kind to me, when the order came to give a night’s holiday to the Forty-five.”

“And on what account was this leave given?”

“As recompense, I believe, Madame, for a somewhat fatiguing service yesterday at Vincennes.”

“Ah! very well.”

“Therefore to this circumstance I owe the pleasure of seeing you to-night at my ease.”

“Well! listen, Carmainges,” said the duchess, with a gentle familiarity which filled the heart of the young man with joy; “this is what you must do, whenever you think you shall be at liberty, — send a note here to the hostess, and every day I will send a man to inquire.”

“Oh, *mon Dieu!* Madame, you are too good!”

“What is that noise?” said the duchess, laying her hand on his arm.

Indeed, a noise of spurs, of voices, of doors shutting, and joyous exclamations, came from the room below, like the echo of an invasion. Ernauton looked out.

“It is my companions,” said he, “who have come here to celebrate their holiday.”

“But by what chance do they come here, — to this hostelry where we happen to be?”

“Because it is just here, Madame, that we each had a rendezvous on our arrival; and on the happy day of their entry in Paris my friends conceived an affection for

the wine and the cooking of M. Fournichon, — and some of them, too, for Madame's rooms."

"Oh!" said the duchess, with a significant smile, "you speak very knowingly of those rooms, Monsieur."

"It is the first time, upon my honor, that I have entered them, Madame. But you, — you who have chosen them?" he ventured to add.

"I chose (and you will easily understand that) the most deserted part of Paris, — a place near the river, where no one was likely to recognize me, or suspect that I could come; but, *mon Dieu!* how noisy your companions are!"

Indeed, the noise was becoming a perfect storm. All at once they heard a sound of footsteps on the little staircase which led to their room, and Madame Fournichon's voice crying from below, "M. de Sainte-Maline! M. de Sainte-Maline!"

"Well!" replied the young man.

"Do not go up there, I beg!"

"And why not, dear Madame Fournichon? Is not all the house ours to-night?"

"Not the turrets."

"Bah! they are part of the house," cried five or six voices.

"No, they are not; they are private. The turrets are mine, — do not disturb my tenants."

"I also am your tenant; do not disturb me, Madame Fournichon," replied Sainte-Maline.

"Sainte-Maline!" murmured Ernauton, anxiously; for he knew the man's audacity and wickedness.

"For pity's sake!" cried Madame Fournichon.

"Madame," replied Sainte-Maline, "it is midnight, and at nine all fires ought to be extinguished; there is a fire now in your turret, and I must see what disobedient

subject is transgressing the king's edicts." And he continued to advance, followed by several others.

"*Mon Dieu!* M. de Carmainges," cried the duchess, "will those people dare to enter here?"

"I am here, Madame ; have no fear."

"Oh, they are forcing the doors!" she cried.

Indeed, Sainte-Maline rushed so furiously against the door that, being very slight, it was at once broken open.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW SAINTE-MALINE ENTERED INTO THE TURRET, AND
WHAT FOLLOWED.

ERNAUTON'S first thought when he saw the door of the antechamber fly open was to blow out the light.

"M. de Sainte-Maline," cried the hostess, "I warn you that the persons whom you are troubling are your friends."

"Well, all the more reason to present our compliments to them," cried Perducas de Pincornay, in a tipsy voice.

"And what friends are they? We will see!" cried Sainte-Maline.

The good hostess, hoping to prevent a collision, glided among them, and whispered Ernauton's name in Sainte-Maline's ear.

"Ernauton!" cried Sainte-Maline, aloud, for whom this revelation was oil instead of water thrown on the fire, "that is not possible."

"And why so?" asked Madame Fournichon.

"Yes, why so?" repeated several voices.

"Oh, because Ernauton is a model of chastity, and a medley of all the virtues. No, you must be wrong, Madame Fournichon. It cannot be Ernauton who is shut in there." And he approached the second door, to treat it as he had the first, when it was opened, and Ernauton appeared on the threshold with a face which did not announce that patience was one of the virtues which according to Sainte-Maline, he practised so religiously.

“By what right has M. de Sainte-Maline broken down that first door?” he asked. “And having broken that, does he mean to break this?”

“Ah, it is he, really; it is Ernauton!” cried Sainte-Maline. “I recognize his voice; but as to his person, devil take me if I can see in this darkness of what color he is!”

“You do not reply to my question, Monsieur,” said Ernauton. Sainte-Maline began to laugh noisily, which reassured some of his comrades, who were thinking of retiring.

“I spoke. Did you not hear me, M. de Sainte-Maline?” said Ernauton.

“Yes, Monsieur, perfectly.”

“Then what have you to say?”

“We wished to know, my dear friend, if it was you up here.”

“Well, Monsieur, now you know it, leave me in peace.”

“*Cap de Diou!* have you become a hermit?”

“As for that, Monsieur, permit me to leave you in doubt, if you are in doubt.”

“Ah! bah!” cried Sainte-Maline, trying to enter, “are you really alone? Ah, you have no light, — bravo!”

“Gentlemen,” said Ernauton, in a lofty tone, “I know that you are drunk, and I forgive you; but there is a limit even to the patience that one owes to men beside themselves. Your joke is over; do me the favor to retire.”

“Oh, oh, retire! how you speak!” said Sainte-Maline.

“I speak so that you may not be deceived in my wishes; and I repeat, gentlemen, retire, I beg.”

“Not before we have been admitted to the honor of saluting the person for whom you desert our company.

M. de Montrabeau," continued Sainte-Maline, "go down and come back with a light."

"M. de Montrabeau," cried Ernauton, "if you do that, remember it will be a personal offence to me."

Montrabeau hesitated.

"Good," replied Sainte-Maline, "we have our oath, and M. de Carmainges is so strict that he will not infringe discipline. We cannot draw our swords against one another; therefore, a light, Montrabeau, a light!"

Montrabeau descended, and in five minutes returned with a light, which he offered to Sainte-Maline.

"No, no!" said he; "keep it. I shall perhaps want both hands." And he made a step forward.

"I take you all to witness," cried Ernauton, "that I am insulted without reason, and that in consequence" — suddenly drawing his sword — "I will bury this sword in the breast of the first man who advances."

Sainte-Maline, furious, was about to draw his sword also. But before he had time to do so, the point of Ernauton's was on his breast, and as he advanced a step without Ernauton's moving his arm, Sainte-Maline felt the iron on his flesh, and drew back furious; but Ernauton followed him, keeping the sword against his breast. Sainte-Maline grew pale. If Ernauton had wished it, he could have pinned him to the wall; but he slowly withdrew his sword.

"You merit two deaths for your insolence," said he; "but the oath of which you spoke restrains me, and I will touch you no more. Let me pass. Come, Madame, I answer for your free passage."

Then appeared a woman whose head was covered by a hood, and her face by a mask, and who took Ernauton's arm tremblingly. The young man sheathed his sword, and as if he were sure of having nothing further to fear,

crossed the antechamber filled with his companions, who were at the same time anxious and curious. Sainte-Maline had recoiled as far as the landing, stifling with rage at the deserved affront he had received in the presence of his companions and the woman unknown. He understood that all would be against him if things should remain as they were between Ernauton and himself. That conviction urged him on to a last extremity. He drew his dagger as Ernauton passed by him. Did he mean to strike Ernauton, or only to do what he did? No one knew; but as they passed, his dagger cut through the silken hood of the duchess and severed the string of her mask, which fell to the ground. This movement was so rapid that in the half-light no one saw or could prevent it. The duchess uttered a cry; Sainte-Maline picked up the mask and returned it to her, looking now full in her uncovered face. "Ah!" cried he, in an insolent tone, "it is the beautiful lady of the litter. Ernauton, you get on fast."

Ernauton stopped and half drew his sword again; but the duchess drew him on, saying, "Come on, I beg you, M. Ernauton!"

"We shall meet again, M. de Sainte-Maline," said Ernauton; "and you shall pay for this, with the rest."

"Good! good!" said Sainte-Maline; "you keep your account, and I will keep mine, and some day we will settle both."

Carmainges heard, but did not even turn; he was entirely devoted to the duchess, whom he conducted to her litter, guarded by two servants. Arrived there, and feeling herself in safety, she pressed Ernauton's hand, and said, "M. Ernauton, after what has just passed, — after the insult against which, in spite of your courage, you could not defend me, and which might be repeated, — we can

come here no more. Seek, I beg of you, some house in the neighborhood to sell or to let. Before long you shall hear from me."

"Must I now take leave of you, Madame?" said Ernauton, bowing in token of obedience to the flattering orders he had just received.

"Not yet, M. de Carmainges; follow my litter as far as the new bridge, lest that wretch who recognized in me the lady of the litter, but did not know me for what I am, should follow to find out my residence."

Ernauton obeyed, but no one watched them. When they arrived at the Pont Neuf, which then merited the name, as it was scarcely seven years since Ducerceau had built it, the duchess gave her hand to Ernauton, saying, "Now go, Monsieur."

"May I dare to ask when I shall see you again, Madame?"

"That depends on the length of time which you take in executing my commission; and your haste will be a proof to me of your desire to see me again."

"Oh, Madame, I shall not be idle."

"Well, then, go, Ernauton."

"It is strange," thought the young man, as he retraced his steps; "I cannot doubt that she likes me, and yet she does not seem the least anxious as to whether or not I get killed by that brute of a Sainte-Maline. But, poor woman, she was in great trouble, and the fear of being compromised is, particularly with princesses, the strongest of all sentiments."

Ernauton, however, could not forget the insult he had received, and he returned straight to the hostelry. He was naturally decided to infringe all orders and oaths, and to finish with Sainte-Maline; he felt in the humor to fight ten men if necessary. This resolution sparkled in his eyes

when he reached the door of the Brave Chevalier. Madame Fournichon, who expected his return with anxiety, was standing trembling in the doorway. At the sight of Ernauton she wiped her eyes, as if she had been crying, and throwing her arms round the young man's neck, begged for his pardon, in spite of her husband's representations that as she had done no wrong she had no occasion to ask pardon. Ernauton assured her that he did not blame her at all; that it was only her wine that was in fault. This was an opinion which the husband could comprehend, and for which he thanked Ernauton by a nod of the head.

While this was taking place at the door, all the rest were at table, where they were warmly discussing the previous quarrel. Many frankly blamed Sainte-Maline; others abstained, seeing the frowning brow of their comrade. They did not attack with any less enthusiasm the supper of M. Fournichon, but they discussed as they ate.

"As for me," said Hector de Biran, in a loud tone, "I know that M. de Sainte-Maline was wrong, and that had I been Ernauton de Carmainges, M. de Sainte-Maline would be at this moment stretched on the floor instead of sitting here."

Sainte-Maline looked at him furiously.

"Oh, I mean what I say," continued he; "and stay, there is some one at the door who appears to agree with me."

All turned at this, and saw Ernauton standing in the doorway, looking very pale. He descended from the step, as the statue of the commander from his pedestal, and walked straight up to Sainte-Maline firmly but quietly.

At this sight several voices cried, "Come here, Ernauton; come this side, Carmainges. There is room here."

“Thank you,” replied the young man ; “but it is near M. de Sainte-Maline that I wish to sit.”

Sainte-Maline rose ; and all eyes were fixed on him. But as he rose, his face changed its expression.

“I will make room for you, Monsieur,” said he, gently ; “and in doing so address to you my frank and sincere apologies for my stupid aggression just now ; I was drunk, -- forgive me.”

This declaration did not satisfy Ernauton ; but the cries of joy that proceeded from all the rest indicated to him that he ought to appear satisfied, and that he was fully vindicated. At the same time a glance at Sainte-Maline showed him that the latter was more to be distrusted than ever.

“The scoundrel is brave, however,” said Ernauton to himself. “If he yields now, it is to pursue some odious plan which suits him better.”

Sainte-Maline’s glass was full, and he filled Ernauton’s.

“Peace ! peace !” cried all the voices.

Carmainges profited by the noise, and leaning towards Sainte-Maline, with a smile on his lips, so that no one might suspect the sense of what he was saying, whispered, “M. de Sainte-Maline, this is the second time that you have insulted me without giving me satisfaction ; take care, for at the third offence I will kill you like a dog.”

And the two mortal enemies touched glasses as though they had been the best friends.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT WAS TAKING PLACE IN THE MYSTERIOUS HOUSE.

WHILE the hostelry of the Brave Chevalier, — the abode, apparently, of the most perfect concord, — with closed doors and open cellars, showed through the openings of the shutters the light of its candles and the mirth of its guests, an unaccustomed movement took place in that mysterious house of which our readers have as yet seen only the outside.

The servant was going from one room to another, carrying packages, which he placed in a valise. These preparations over, he loaded a pistol, examined his poniard, then suspended it, by the aid of a ring, to the chain which served him for a belt, to which he attached, besides, a bunch of keys, and a book of prayers bound in black leather.

While he was thus occupied, a step, light as that of a shadow, came up the staircase ; a woman, pale and ghost-like under the folds of her white veil, appeared at the door ; and a voice, sad and sweet as the song of a bird in the wood, said, “Rémy, are you ready ?”

“Yes, Madame, I am waiting only for your valise, to place it with mine.”

“Do you think these valises will go easily on our horses ?”

“Oh, yes, Madame ! but if you have any fear, I can leave mine ; I have all I need there.”

“No, no, Rémy, take all that you want for the journey. Oh, Rémy! I long to be with my father. I have sad presentiments, and it seems an age since I saw him.”

“And yet, Madame, it is but three months,—not a longer interval than usual.”

“Rémy, you are such a good doctor; and you yourself told me, the last time we left him, that he had not long to live.”

“Yes, doubtless; but it was only a dread, not a prediction. Sometimes death seems to forget old men, and they live on as though by the habit of living; and often, besides, an old man is like a child, ill to-day and well to-morrow.”

“Alas! Rémy, like the child also, he is often well to-day and dead to-morrow.”

Rémy did not reply, for he had nothing that was really reassuring to say; and silence succeeded for some minutes.

“At what hour have you ordered the horses?” said the lady, at last.

“At two o’clock.”

“And one has just struck.”

“Yes, Madame.”

“No one is watching outside?”

“No one.”

“Not even that unhappy young man?”

“Not even he.” And Rémy sighed.

“You say that in a strange manner, Rémy.”

“Because he also has made a resolution.”

“What is it?”

“To see us no more; at least, not to try to see us any more.”

“And where is he going?”

“Where we are all going,—to rest.”

“God give it him eternally!” said the lady, in a cold voice; “and yet —”

“Yet what, Madame?”

“Had he nothing to do in this world?”

“He had to love, if he had been loved.”

“A man of his name, rank, and age, should think of his future.”

“You, Madame, are of an age, rank, and name little inferior to his, and you do not look forward to a future.”

“Yes, Rémy, I do,” cried she, with a sudden flashing of the eyes; “but listen! is that not the trot of a horse that I hear?”

“Yes, I think so.”

“Can our guide have arrived already?”

“It is possible; but in that case he is an hour too early.”

“He stops at the door, Rémy.”

Rémy ran down, and arrived just as three hurried blows were struck on the door.

“Who is there?” said he.

“I,” replied a trembling voice, — “I, Grandchamp, the baron’s valet.”

“Ah, *mon Dieu!* Grandchamp, you at Paris! Wait till I open the door; but speak low!” and Rémy opened the door. “Whence do you come?” he asked in a low voice.

“From Méridor.”

“From Méridor?”

“Yes, dear M. Rémy, — alas!”

“Come in! come in! *mon Dieu!*”

“Well,” cried the lady from the top of the stairs, “are they our horses, Rémy?”

“No, Madame.” Then, turning to the old man, “What is it, Grandchamp?”

“You do not guess?”

“Alas! I do; but in Heaven’s name, do not announce that news suddenly! Oh, what will she say?”

“Rémy,” said the voice again, “you are talking to some one?”

“Yes, Madame.”

“I thought I knew the voice.”

“Indeed, Madame — how can we manage, Grandchamp? Here she is!”

The lady now appeared at the end of the corridor. “Who is there?” she asked. “Is it Grandchamp?”

“Yes, Madame, it is I,” replied the old man, sadly, uncovering his white head.

“Grandchamp, you! Oh, *mon Dieu!* my presentiments were true; my father is dead?”

“Indeed, Madame, Méridor has no longer a master.”

Pale, but motionless and firm, the lady received the blow without flinching. Rémy went to her and gently took her hand.

“How did he die? Tell me, my friend,” said she.

“Madame, Monsieur the Baron, who could no longer leave his armchair, was struck a week ago by a third attack of apoplexy. He muttered your name for the last time, then ceased to speak, and soon was no more.”

Diane thanked the old servant with a gesture, and without saying more returned to her chamber.

“So she is free at last,” murmured Rémy. “Come, Grandchamp, come.”

Diane’s chamber was on the first story, and looked only into a courtyard. The furniture was sombre, but rich. The hangings, in Arras tapestry, represented the death of our Saviour; a *prie-Dieu* and stool in carved oak, a bed with twisted columns, and tapestries like those on the walls were the sole ornaments of the room. Not a flower, no gilding, but in a frame of black was contained

a portrait of a man, before which the lady now knelt down, with dry eyes, but a sad heart. She fixed on this picture a long look of indescribable love. It represented a young man about twenty-eight years old, lying half naked on a bed. From his wounded breast the blood still flowed; his right hand hung mutilated, and yet it still held a broken sword; his eyes were closed as though he were about to die; paleness and suffering gave to his face that divine character which the faces of mortals assume only at the moment of leaving life for eternity. Under the portrait, in letters red as blood, was written, "Aut Cæsar aut nihil." The lady extended her arm towards the portrait, and addressed it as if she were speaking to a god:—

"I had begged thee to wait, although thy soul must have thirsted for vengeance; and as the dead see all, thou hast seen, my love, that I lived only not to kill my father, else I would have died after you. Then, you know, on your bleeding corpse I uttered a vow to give death for death, to exact blood for blood; but I should have burdened with a crime the white head of the venerable old man who called me his innocent child. Thou hast waited, beloved, and now I am free. The last tie which bound me to earth is broken. I am all yours, and now I am free to come to you." She rose on one knee, kissed the hand which seemed to project from the frame, and then continued, "I can weep no more; my tears have dried up in weeping over your tomb. In a few months I shall rejoin you; and you then will reply to me, dear shade, to whom I have spoken so often without reply."

Diane then rose, and seating herself in her chair, murmured, "Poor father!" and then fell into a profound revery. At last she called Rémy. The faithful servant soon appeared. "Here I am, Madame," said he.

“My worthy friend, my brother, — you, the last person who knows me on this earth, — say adieu to me.”

“Why so, Madame?”

“Because the time has come for us to separate.”

“Separate!” cried the young man. “What do you mean, Madame?”

“Yes, Rémy. My project of vengeance seemed to me noble and pure while there remained an obstacle between me and it, and I contemplated it only from a distance. But now that I approach the execution of it; now that the obstacle has disappeared, — I do not draw back, but I do not wish to drag with me into crime a generous and pure soul like yours; so you must leave me, my friend.”

Rémy listened to the words of Diane with a sombre look. “Madame,” he replied, “do you think you are speaking to a trembling old man? Madame, I am but twenty-six; and snatched as I was from the tomb, if I still live, it is for the accomplishment of some terrible action, — to play an active part in the work of Providence. Never, then, separate your thoughts from mine, since we both have the same thoughts, sinister as they may be. Where you go I will go; what you do I will aid in, — or if in spite of my prayers you persist in dismissing me — ”

“Oh!” murmured the young woman, “dismiss you! What a word, Rémy!”

“If you persist in that resolution,” continued the young man, “I know what I have to do, and all for me will end with two blows with a poniard, — one in the heart of him whom you know, and the other in my own.”

“Rémy! Rémy!” cried Diane, “do not say that. The life of him you threaten does not belong to you; it is mine, — I have paid for it dearly enough. I swear to you, Rémy, that on the day on which I knelt beside his

dead body," — and she pointed to the portrait — "on that day I approached my lips to the lips of that open wound, and those lips trembled and said to me, 'Avenge me, Diane! avenge me!'"

"Madame —"

"Rémy, I repeat, it was not an illusion; it was not a fancy of my delirium. The wound spoke, — it spoke, I tell you, — and I still hear it murmuring, 'Avenge me, Diane! avenge me!'"

The servant bent his head.

"Therefore, I repeat, vengeance is for me, and not for you; besides, for whom and through whom did he die? By me and through me."

"I must obey you, Madame, for I also was left for dead. Who carried me away from the midst of the corpses with which that room was filled? You. Who cured me of my wounds? You. Who concealed me? You, you; that is to say, the half of the soul of him for whom I would have died so joyously. Order, then, and I will obey, provided that you do not order me to leave you."

"So be it, Rémy; you are right, — nothing ought to separate us more."

Rémy pointed to the portrait. "Now, Madame," said he, "he was killed by treason, — it is by treason that he must be revenged. Ah! you do not know one thing: to-night I have found the secret of the *aqua tofana*, — that poison of the Médicis and of René the Florentine."

"Really?"

"Come and see, Madame."

"But where is Grandchamp?"

"The poor old man has come sixty leagues on horse-back; he is tired out, and has fallen asleep on my bed."

"Come, then," said Diane; and she followed Rémy.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LABORATORY.

RÉMY led the lady into a neighboring room, and pushing a spring which was hidden under a board in the floor, and which, opening, disclosed a straight dark staircase, gave his hand to Diane to help her to descend. Twenty steps of this staircase, or rather ladder, led into a dark and circular cave, whose only furniture was a stove with an immense hearth, a square table, two rush chairs, and a quantity of phials and iron boxes. In the stove a dying fire still gleamed, while a thick black smoke escaped through a pipe entering the wall; from a still placed on the hearth filtered a liquid, yellow as gold, into a thick white phial. Diane looked round her without astonishment or terror; the ordinary impressions of experience seemed to be unknown to her, who lived only in the tomb. Rémy lighted a lamp, and then approached a well hollowed out in the cave, attached a bucket to a long cord, let it down into the well, and drew it up full of a water as cold as ice and as clear as crystal.

“Approach, Madame,” said he.

Diane drew near. In the bucket he let fall a single drop of the liquid contained in the phial, and the entire mass of the water instantly became yellow; then the color evaporated, and the water in ten minutes became as clear as before. The fixedness of Diane’s gaze alone showed with what profound interest she followed this operation. Rémy looked at her.

“ Well ? ” said she.

“ Well, Madame,” said he ; “ now dip in that water, which has neither smell nor color, a flower, a glove, or a handkerchief ; soak it into scented soap ; pour some of it into the pitcher from which one will take it to cleanse his teeth, his hands, or his face, — and you will see, as was seen at the court of Charles IX., the flower stifle by its perfume, the glove poison by its contact, the soap kill by its introduction into the pores of the skin. Pour a single drop of this pure oil on the wick of a lamp or candle, and for an hour the candle or lamp will exhale death, and burn at the same time like any other.”

“ You are sure of what you say, Rémy ? ”

“ All this I have tried. See these birds who can no longer sleep, and have no wish to eat ; they have drunk of water like this. See this goat who has browsed on grass wet with this same water ; he moves and totters. Vainly now should we restore him to life and liberty ; his life is forfeited, unless indeed Nature should reveal to his instinct some of those antidotes to poison which animals know, although men do not.”

“ Can I see this phial, Rémy ? ”

“ Yes, Madame, presently.”

Rémy then separated it from the still with infinite care, then corked it with soft wax, tied the top up in cloth, and then presented it to Diane. She took it, held it up to the light, and after looking at it, said, “ It will do ; when the time arrives, we will choose gloves, lamp, soap, or flowers, as convenient. Will the liquor keep in metal ? ”

“ It eats it away.”

“ But then perhaps the bottle will break ? ”

“ I think not. See the thickness of the crystal ; besides, we can enclose it in a covering of gold.”

“Then, Rémy,” said the lady, “you are satisfied, are you not?” and something like a smile touched her lips.

“More than ever, Madame; to punish the wicked is to use the sacred prerogative of God.”

“Listen, Rémy! I hear horses; I think ours have arrived.”

“Probably, Madame, — it is about the time; but I will go and send them away.”

“Why so?”

“Are they not now useless?”

“Instead of going to Méridor, we will go into Flanders. Keep the horses.”

“Ah, I understand!” and Rémy’s eyes gave forth a flash of sinister joy. “But Grandchamp; what can we do with him?” said he.

“He has need of repose. He shall remain here, and sell this house, which we require no longer. But restore to liberty that unhappy animal, whom you were forced to torture. As you say, God may care for its recovery.”

“This furnace, and these stills?”

“Since they were here when we bought the house, why not let others find them here after us?”

“But these powders, essences, and acids?”

“Throw them in the fire, Rémy.”

“Go away, then, or put on this glass mask.”

Then, taking precautions for himself, he blew up the fire again, poured in the powder, — which went off in brilliant sparks, some green and some yellow, — and the essences, which, instead of extinguishing the flame, mounted like serpents of fire into the pipe, with a noise like that of distant thunder.

“Now,” said Rémy, “if any one discovers this cave,

he will only think that an alchemist has been here ; and though they still burn sorcerers, they respect alchemists."

"And besides," said the lady, "if they should burn us, it would be justice, Rémy, it seems to me, — for are we not poisoners ? and provided I have only finished my task, I should not mind that sort of death more than any other. The ancient martyrs mostly died in that way."

At this moment they heard knocking.

"Here are our horses, Madame," said Rémy ; "go up quickly, and I will close the trap-door."

Diane obeyed, and found Grandchamp, whom the noise had awakened, at the door. The old man was not a little surprised to hear of his mistress's intended departure, who informed him of it without telling him where she was going. "Grandchamp, my friend," said she, "Rémy and I are going to accomplish a pilgrimage on which we have long determined ; speak of this journey to none, and do not mention my name to any one."

"Oh, I promise you, Madame !" replied the old servant ; "but we shall see you again ?"

"Doubtless, Grandchamp, — if not in this world, in the next. But, by the way, Grandchamp, this house is now useless to us." Diane drew from a drawer a bundle of papers. "Here are the title-deeds ; let or sell this house. If in the course of a month you do not find a tenant or purchaser, abandon it and return to Méridor."

"But if I find some one, how much am I to ask ?"

"What you please, Grandchamp."

"Shall I take the money to Méridor ?"

"Keep it for yourself, my good Grandchamp."

"What, Madame ! such a sum ?"

"Yes, I owe it to you for your services ; and I have my father's debts to pay as well as my own. Now, adieu."

Then Diane went upstairs, cut the picture from the frame, rolled it up, and placed it in her valise.

When Rémy had tied the two valises with leather thongs, and had glanced into the street to see that there were no lookers-on, he aided his mistress to mount. "I believe, Madame," said he, "that this is the last house in which we shall live so long."

"The last but one, Rémy."

"And what will be the other?"

"The tomb, Rémy."

CHAPTER X.

WHAT MONSEIGNEUR FRANÇOIS, DUC D'ANJOU, DUC DE BRABANT, AND COMTE DE FLANDRE, WAS DOING IN FLANDERS.

OUR readers must now permit us to leave the king at the Louvre, Henri de Navarre at Cahors, Chicot on the road, and Diane in the street, to go to Flanders to find M. le Duc d'Anjou, recently named Duc de Brabant, and to whose aid we have seen sent the Grand Admiral of France, — Anne, Duc de Joyeuse.

At eighty leagues from Paris, towards the north, the sound of French voices and the French banner floated over a French camp on the banks of the Scheldt. It was night ; the fires, disposed in an immense circle, bordered the stream, and were reflected in its deep waters. From the top of the ramparts of the town the sentinels saw shining, by the bivouac-fires, the muskets of the French army. This army was that of the Duc d'Anjou. What he had come to do there we must tell our readers ; and although it may not be very amusing, yet we hope they will pardon it in consideration of the warning, — so many people are dull without announcing it.

Those of our readers who have read “Marguerite de Valois” and “La Dame de Monsoreau,” already know the Duc d'Anjou, — that jealous, egotistical, ambitious prince, who, born so near to the throne, to which every event seemed to bring him nearer, had never been able to wait with resignation until death should clear for him an open way to it. Thus he had desired the throne of

Navarre under Charles IX., then that of Charles IX. himself, then that of his brother Henri III. For a time he had turned his eyes towards England, then governed by a woman, and to possess this throne he had sought to marry this woman, although she was Elizabeth, and was twenty years older than himself. As to this matter Destiny was beginning to smile on him, — if marriage with the daughter of Henry VIII. might be considered a smile of Fortune. This man, who, cherishing ambitious desires through all his life, had been unable even to defend his liberty, who had seen slain (perhaps had slain) his favorites, La Mole and Coconnas, and had villanously sacrificed Bussy, the bravest of his gentlemen, — all without gain, and with great injury to his fame, — this outcast of fortune found himself at the same time overwhelmed with the favor of a great queen, till then inaccessible to human affection, and exalted by a people to the highest rank that they could confer. Flanders offered him a crown, and Elizabeth had given him her ring. He had seen his brother Henri embarrassed in his quarrel with the Guises, and had joined their party ; but he had soon discovered that they had no other aim than that of substituting themselves for the Valois. He had then separated himself from them, although not without danger ; besides, Henri III. had at last opened his eyes, and the duke, exiled or something like it, had retired to Amboise.

It was then that the Flemings opened their arms to him. Tired of Spanish rule, decimated by the Duke of Alva, deceived by the false peace of John of Austria, who had profited by it to retake Namur and Charlemont, the Flemings had called in William of Nassau, Prince of Orange, and had made him Governor-General of Brabant. A few words about this man, who held so great a place in history, but who will make only a brief appearance here.

William of Nassau was then about fifty years of age. He was the son of William called the Old, and of Julienne de Stolberg, cousin of that René of Nassau killed at the siege of Dizier. He had from his youth been brought up in principles of reform, and had a full consciousness of the greatness of his mission. This mission, which he believed he had received from heaven, and for which he died like a martyr, was to found the Republic of Holland, and in that he was successful. When very young, he had been called by Charles V. to his court. Charles was a good judge of men, and often the old emperor, who supported the heaviest burden ever borne by an imperial hand, consulted the child on the most delicate matters connected with the politics of Holland. The young man was scarcely twenty-four when Charles confided to him, in the absence of the famous Philibert Emmanuel of Savoy, the command of the army in Flanders. William showed himself worthy of this high confidence; he held in check the Duc de Nevers and Coligny, two of the greatest captains of the time, and under their eyes fortified Philippeville and Charlemont. On the day when Charles V. abdicated, it was on William of Nassau that he leaned to descend the steps of the throne, and he it was who was charged to carry to Ferdinand the imperial crown which Charles had resigned.

Then came Philip II., and in spite of his father's recommendations to him to regard William as a brother, the latter soon found that Philip II. was one of those princes who do not wish to have intimate friends. This strengthened in his mind the great idea of freeing Holland and Flanders, which he might never have endeavored to carry into effect if the old emperor, his friend, had remained on the throne.

Holland, by his advice, demanded the dismissal of the

foreign troops. Then began the bloody struggle of the Spaniards to retain the prey which was escaping from them; and then passed over this unhappy people the vice-royalty of Margaret of Austria and the bloody consulship of the Duke of Alva; then was organized that struggle, at once political and religious, which began with the protest of the Hôtel Culembourg, and which demanded the abolition of the Inquisition in Holland; then advanced that procession of four hundred gentlemen, walking in pairs, and bearing to the foot of Margaret's throne the general desire of the people, as summed up in that protest. At the sight of these gentlemen, so simply clothed, Barlaimont, one of the counsellors of the duchess, uttered the word "Gueux," which, taken up by the Flemish gentlemen, so long designated the patriot party. From this time William began to play the part which made him one of the greatest political actors of the world. Constantly beaten by the overwhelming power of Philip II., he constantly rose again, always stronger after his defeats, — always organizing a new army to replace the scattered one, and always hailed as a liberator.

In the midst of these successions of moral triumphs and physical defeats, William learned at Mons the news of the massacre of St. Bartholomew. It was a terrible wound, which went almost to the heart of the Low Country; Holland and that portion of Flanders which was Calvinistic lost by that wound the bravest blood of their natural allies, — the Huguenots of France.

William retreated from Mons to the Rhine, and waited for events. Events are rarely false to noble causes. Some of the Gueux were driven by a contrary wind into the port of Brille, and seeing no escape, and pushed by despair, took the city which was preparing to hang them. This

done, they chased away the Spanish garrison, and sent for the Prince of Orange. He came; and as he wished to strike a decisive blow, he published an order forbidding the Catholic religion in Holland, as the Protestant faith was forbidden in France.

At this manifesto war again broke out. The Duke of Alva sent his own son Frederic against the revolters, who took from them Zutphen, Nardem, and Haarlem; but this check, far from discouraging them, seemed to give them new strength. All took up arms, from the Zuyder Zee to the Scheldt. Spain began to tremble, recalled the Duke of Alva, and sent as his successor Louis de Requesens, one of the conquerors at Lepanto.

Then began for William a new series of misfortunes: Ludovic and Henry of Nassau, who were bringing him aid, were surprised by one of the officers of Don Louis near Nimègue, defeated, and killed; the Spaniards penetrated into Holland, besieged Leyden, and pillaged Antwerp. All seemed desperate, when Heaven came once more to the aid of the infant republic. Requesens died at Brussels.

Then all the provinces, united by a common interest, drew up and signed, on Nov. 8, 1576, — that is to say, four days after the sack of Antwerp, — the treaty known under the name of the Treaty of Ghent, by which they engaged to aid one another in delivering their country from the yoke of the Spaniards and other foreigners.

Don John reappeared, and with him the woes of Holland; in less than two months Namur and Charlemont were taken. The Flemings replied, however, to these two checks by naming the Prince of Orange Governor-General of Brabant.

Don John died in his turn, and Alexander Farnèse succeeded him. He was a clever prince, charming in

his manners, which were at once gentle and firm, a skilful politician, and a good general. Flanders trembled at hearing that soft Italian voice call her friend, instead of treating her as a rebel. William knew that Farnèse would do more for Spain with his promises than the Duke of Alva with his punishments. On Jan. 29, 1579, he made the provinces sign the Treaty of Utrecht, which was the fundamental basis of the rights of Holland. It was then that, fearing he should never be able to accomplish alone the freedom for which he had been fighting for fifteen years, he offered to the Duc d'Anjou the sovereignty of the country, on condition that he should respect their privileges and their liberty of conscience. This was a terrible blow to Philip II., and he replied to it by putting a price of twenty-five thousand crowns on the head of William. The States-General, assembled at the Hague, then declared Philip deposed from the sovereignty of Holland, and ordered that henceforth the oath of fidelity should be taken to them.

The Duc d'Anjou now entered Belgium, and was received by the Flemings with the distrust with which they regarded all foreigners. But the aid of France promised by the French prince was so important to them that they gave him a favorable reception, in appearance at least. Philip's promise, however, bore its fruits, for in the midst of a fête, a pistol-shot was heard. William fell, and was believed dead ; but Holland still had need of him. The ball of the assassin had only gone through his cheeks. He who had discharged the pistol was Jean Jaureguy, the precursor of Balthazar Gérard, as Jean Chatel was to be the precursor of Ravailac.

From all these events there came to William a sombre sadness, lighted rarely by a pensive smile. Flemings and Hollanders respected that dreamer as they would have

respected a god; for they perceived that in him, and in him alone, was all their future. And when they saw him approach, enveloped in his long cloak, his brow covered by his hat, his elbow in his left hand, his chin in his right hand, men stood aside to make room for him, and mothers, with a sort of religious superstition, pointed him out to their children, saying, "My son, look at the Silent Man."

The Flemings then, on William's advice, elected François, Duc de Brabant, Sovereign Prince of Flanders. Elizabeth of England saw in this a method of reuniting the Calvinists of Flanders and France to those of England; perhaps she dreamed of a triple crown. William, however, took care to hold the Duc d'Anjou in check, and to counteract the execution of any design which would have given him too much power in Flanders. Philip II. called the Duc de Guise to his aid, on the strength of a treaty which had been entered into by him with Don John of Austria. Henri de Guise consented, and it was then that Lorraine and Spain sent Salcède to the Duc d'Anjou to assassinate him; but Salcède, as we know, was arrested and put to death without having carried his project into execution.

François advanced but slowly, however, in Flanders, for the people were more than half afraid of him; he grew impatient, and determined to lay siege to Antwerp, which had invited his aid against Farnèse, but which when he wished to enter had turned its guns against him. This was the position of the Duc d'Anjou on the day after the arrival of Joyeuse and his fleet.

CHAPTER XI.

PREPARATIONS FOR BATTLE.

THE camp of the new Duc de Brabant was situated on the banks of the Scheldt; and the army, although well disciplined, was agitated by a spirit easy to understand.

Indeed, many Calvinists assisted the duke, not from sympathy with him, but in order to be as disagreeable as possible to Spain and to the Catholics of France and England; they fought rather from self-love than from conviction or devotion, and it was certain that, the campaign once over, they would abandon their leader or impose conditions on him. With regard to these conditions, the duke always gave them to understand that when the time came he should be ready, and was constantly saying, "Henri de Navarre made himself a Catholic, why should not François de France become a Huguenot?" On the opposite side, on the contrary, there existed a perfect unity of feeling, a cause definitely established, — the cause of ambition and wrath.

Antwerp had intended to surrender at her own time and on her own conditions. All at once they saw a fleet appear at the mouth of the Scheldt, and they learned that this fleet was brought by the Grand High Admiral of France, to aid the Duc d'Anjou, whom they now began to look upon as their enemy. The Calvinists of the duke were little better pleased than the Flemings at the sight. They were very brave but very jealous; and they did not wish others to come and clip their laurels, particularly

with swords which had slain so many Huguenots on the day of the Saint Bartholomew. From this proceeded many quarrels, which began on the very evening of their arrival, and continued all the next day. From their ramparts the Antwerpians had every day the spectacle of a dozen duels between Catholics and Protestants ; and as many dead were thrown into the river as a battle might have cost the French. If the siege of Antwerp, like that of Troy, had lasted nine years, the besieged would have needed to do nothing but look at the assailants, who would certainly have destroyed themselves. François acted the part of mediator, but encountered enormous difficulties ; he had made promises to the Huguenots, and could not offend them without offending at the same time all Flanders. On the other hand, to offend the Catholics sent by the king to aid him would be most impolitic. The arrival of this reinforcement, on which the duke himself had not reckoned, filled the Spaniards and the Guises with rage. It was indeed something to the Duc d'Anjou to enjoy at the same time that double satisfaction. But he could not so manage all parties but that the discipline of his army suffered greatly.

Joyeuse, who we know had never liked the mission, was annoyed to find among these men such antagonistic opinions. He felt instinctively that the time for success was past, and both as an idle courtier and as a captain, grumbled at having come so far only to meet with defeat. He declared loudly that the Duc d'Anjou had been wrong in laying siege to Antwerp.

The Prince of Orange, who had treacherously advised the siege, had disappeared when the advice was followed, and no one knew what had become of him. His army was in garrison in the city, and he had promised to the Duc d'Anjou the support of that army. Nevertheless,

there was no rumor of any division between William's soldiers and the Antwerpians, and no news of a single duel among the besieged had come to gladden the besiegers since they had fixed their camp before the place.

What Joyeuse specially urged in his opposition to the siege was that to possess a great city with its own consent was a real advantage; but for the Duc d'Anjou to take by assault the second capital of his future States was to expose himself to the dislike of the Flemings; and Joyeuse knew the Flemings too well not to feel sure that if the duke did take Antwerp, sooner or later they would revenge themselves with usury. This opinion he did not hesitate to declare in the duke's tent the very night on which we have introduced our readers to the French camp.

While the council was held among his captains, the duke was lying on a couch and listening, not to the advice of the admiral, but to the whispers of Aurilly. This man, by his cowardly compliances, his base flatteries, and his continual assiduities, had kept himself in favor with the prince. With his lute, his love-messages, and his exact information about all the persons and all the intrigues of the court; with his skilful manœuvres for drawing into the prince's net whatever prey he might wish for, — he had made a large fortune, while he remained to all appearance the poor lute-player. His influence was immense because it was secret.

Joyeuse, seeing the duke talking to Aurilly, stopped short. The duke, who had after all been paying more attention than he seemed to be, asked him what was the matter.

"Nothing, Monseigneur. I am only waiting until your Highness is at liberty to listen to me."

"Oh, but I do listen, M. de Joyeuse. Do you think I

cannot listen to two persons at once, when Cæsar dictated seven letters at a time?"

"Monseigneur," said Joyeuse, with a glance at the musician, "I am no singer, to need an accompaniment when I speak."

"Very good, Duke; be quiet, Aurilly. Then you disapprove of my *coup de main* on Antwerp?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"I adopted this plan in council, however."

"Therefore, Monseigneur, I speak with much hesitation, after so many distinguished captains." And Joyeuse, courtier-like, bowed to all. Many voices were instantly raised to agree with the admiral.

"Comte de Saint-Aignan," said the prince to one of his bravest colonels, "you are not of the opinion of M. de Joyeuse?"

"Yes, Monseigneur, I am."

"Oh, I thought as you made a grimace —"

Every one laughed but Joyeuse, who said, "If M. de Saint-Aignan generally gives his advice in that manner, it is not very polite, that is all."

"M. de Joyeuse," replied Saint-Aignan, quickly, "his Highness is wrong to reproach me with an infirmity contracted in his service. At the taking of Cateau-Cambrésis I received a blow on the head; and since that time my face is subject to nervous contractions, which occasion those grimaces of which his Highness complains. This is not an excuse that I give you, M. de Joyeuse; it is an explanation," said the count, proudly.

"No, Monsieur," said Joyeuse, offering his hand, "it is a reproach that you make; and you are right."

The blood mounted to the face of Duc François. "And to whom is this reproach addressed?" said he.

"To me, probably, Monseigneur."

“Why should Saint-Aignan reproach you, whom he does not know?”

“Because I believed for a moment that M. de Saint-Aignan cared so little for your Highness as to counsel you to assault Antwerp.”

“But,” cried the prince, “I must settle my position in the country. I am Duc de Brabant and Comte de Flandre in name, and I must be so in reality. This William, who is gone I know not where, spoke to me of a kingdom. Where is this kingdom? In Antwerp. Where is he? Probably in Antwerp also. Therefore we must take Antwerp, and we shall know how we stand.”

“Oh, Monseigneur, you know it now, or you are, in truth, a worse politician than I thought you. Who counselled you to take Antwerp? The Prince of Orange, who disappeared at the moment of taking the field; the Prince of Orange, who, while he made your Highness Duc de Brabant, reserved for himself the lieutenant-generalship of the duchy; the Prince of Orange, whose interest it is to destroy the Spaniards by you, and you by the Spaniards; the Prince of Orange, who will replace you, who will succeed you, if he does not already; the Prince of Orange, — oh, Monseigneur, in following his counsels you have but annoyed the Flemings. Let a reverse come, and all those who do not dare to look you now in the face will run after you, like those timid dogs who run after those who fly.”

“What! you imagine that I can be beaten by wool-merchants and beer-drinkers?”

“These wool-merchants and these beer-drinkers have given plenty to do to Philippe de Valois, the Emperor Charles V., and Philip II., who were three princes placed sufficiently high, Monseigneur, for the comparison not to be disagreeable to you.”

“Then you fear a repulse?”

“Yes, Monseigneur, I do.”

“You will not be there, M. de Joyeuse.”

“Why not?”

“Because you can hardly have such doubts of your own bravery as already to see yourself flying before the Flemings. In any case reassure yourself; these prudent merchants have the habit, when they march to battle, of cumbering themselves with such heavy armor that they would never catch you if you did run.”

“Monseigneur, I do not doubt my own courage. I shall be in the front; but I shall be beaten there, as the others who are behind will be.”

“But your reasoning is not logical, M. de Joyeuse; you approve of my taking the smaller places?”

“I approve of your taking those that do not defend themselves.”

“And then I am to draw back from the great city because she talks of defending herself?”

“Better than to march on to destruction.”

“Well, I will not retreat.”

“Your Highness must do as you like; and we are here to obey.”

“Prove to me that I am wrong.”

“Monseigneur, see the army of the Prince of Orange. It was yours, was it not? Well, instead of sitting down before Antwerp with you, it is in Antwerp, which is very different. William, you say, was your friend and counsellor; and now you not only do not know where he is, but you believe him to be changed into an enemy. See the Flemings. When you arrived they were pleased to see you; now they shut their gates at sight of you, and prepare their cannon at your approach, not less than if you were the Duke of Alva. Well, I tell you, Flemings

and Dutch, Antwerp and Orange, only wait for an opportunity to unite against you, and that opportunity will be when you order your artillery to fire."

"Well, we will fight at once Flemings and Dutch, Antwerp and Orange."

"No, Monseigneur; we have but just men enough to attack Antwerp, supposing we have only the inhabitants to deal with; and while we are engaged in the assault, William will fall on us with his eternal eight or ten thousand men, always destroyed and always reappearing, by the aid of which he has kept in check during ten or twelve years the Duke of Alva, Requesens, and the Duke of Parma."

"Then you persist in thinking that we shall be beaten?"

"Without fail."

"Well, it is easy for you to avoid it, M. de Joyeuse," said the prince, angrily. "My brother sent you here to aid me, but I may dismiss you, saying that I do not need aid."

"Your Highness may say so; but I would not retire on the eve of a battle."

A long murmur of approbation greeted the words of Joyeuse; the prince understood that he had gone too far. "My dear admiral," said he, rising, and embracing the young man, "you will not understand me. Yet it seems to me that I am right, and especially because in the position I occupy I cannot openly admit that I have made a mistake. You reproach me with my errors, — I know them. I have been too jealous of the honor of my name, and wished too much to prove the superiority of the French army; and I have been wrong. But the evil is done; we are before armed men, — before men who now refuse to yield what they themselves offered. Am I to yield to them? To-morrow they would begin to retake,

bit by bit, what I have already conquered. No! the sword is drawn; let us strike, or they will strike first. That is my opinion."

"When your Highness speaks thus," said Joyeuse, "I will say no more. I am here to obey you, and will do so with all my heart, whether you lead me to death or victory; and yet — but I will say no more."

"Speak."

"No, I have said enough."

"No, I wish to hear."

"In private, then, if it please your Highness."

All rose and retired to the other end of the spacious tent.

"Speak," said François.

"Monseigneur may care little for a check from Spain,— a check which will render triumphant those drinkers of Flemish beer, or this double-faced Prince of Orange; but will you bear so patiently the laughter of M. de Guise?"

François frowned.

"What has M. de Guise to do with it?" said he.

"M. de Guise tried to have you assassinated, Monseigneur; Salcède confessed it at the torture. Now, if I mistake not, M. de Guise plays a great part in all this, and he will be delighted to see you receive a check before Antwerp, or even perhaps to obtain, for nothing, that death of a son of France for which he had promised to pay so dearly to Salcède. Read the history of Flanders, Monseigneur, and you will see that the Flemings are in the habit of enriching their soil with the blood of princes, and of the best French warriors."

The duke shook his head.

"Well, Joyeuse," said he, "I will give, if it must be, to the cursed Lorraine the joy of seeing me dead, but not that of seeing me flying. I thirst for glory, Joyeuse;

for alone among those of my name, I have still my battles to win."

"You forget Cateau-Cambrésis, Monseigneur."

"Compare that with Jarnac and Moncontour, Joyeuse, and then reckon up how far I am behind my beloved brother Henri. No, no; I am no kingleet of Navarre, — I am a French prince." Then, turning to the others, who were standing apart, he said, "Gentlemen, the assault is still resolved on. The rain has ceased; the ground is good. We will make the attack this night."

Joyeuse bowed. "Will your Highness give full directions? We wait for them," said he.

"You have eight vessels, without counting the admiral's ship, have you not, M. de Joyeuse?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"You will force the line; the thing will be easy, the Antwerpians having only merchant-vessels in the port; then you will draw near to the quay. If the quay is defended, you will bombard the town, while attempting a landing with your fifteen hundred men. Of the rest of the army I will make two columns, — one to be commanded by M. de Saint-Aignan, the other by myself. Both will attempt an escalade by surprise, at the moment when the first cannon-shot is fired. The cavalry will remain in position, in case of a repulse to protect the retreating columns. Of these three attacks, one must surely succeed. The first column which gains the ramparts will fire a rocket to let the others know."

"But one must think of everything, Monseigneur," said Joyeuse; "and supposing all three attacks should fail?"

"Then we must gain the vessels under the protection of our batteries."

All bowed.

“Now, gentlemen, silence !” said the duke. “Wake the sleeping troops, and embark with order ; but let not a shot reveal our design. You will be in the port, Admiral, before the Antwerpians suspect your intention. We shall go along the left bank, and shall arrive at the same time as yourself. Go, gentlemen, and good courage ; our former good luck will not fail to follow us over the Scheldt.”

The captains left the prince’s tent, and gave their orders with the indicated precautions.

CHAPTER XII.

MONSEIGNEUR.

MEANWHILE the Antwerpians did not quietly contemplate the hostile preparations of the Duc d'Anjou, and Joyeuse was not wrong in attributing to them all possible hostility. Antwerp was like a beehive at night, calm on the exterior, but within full of movement and murmur. The Flemings in arms patrolled the streets, barricaded their houses, and fraternized with the battalions of the Prince of Orange, of whom part were already in garrison there, while the other part entered the city in fractions.

When all was ready for a vigorous defence, the Prince of Orange, on a dark, moonless night, entered the city quietly, and went to the Hôtel de Ville, where his confidants had everything ready for his reception. There he received all the deputies of the *bourgeoisie*, passed in review the officers of the paid troops, and communicated his plans to them, the chief of which was to profit by this movement of the Duc d'Anjou to break with him. The duke had done just what William wished to bring him to, and he saw with pleasure this new competitor for the sovereignty ruin himself, like the others.

William would have taken the offensive, but the governor objected, and determined to wait for the arrival of Monseigneur. Then all eyes were directed to a large clock; and every one seemed to require of it that it should hasten the coming of the personage so impatiently expected.

Nine o'clock in the evening sounded, and the uncertainty became real anxiety, scouts having protested that they had seen a movement in the French camp. A little flat boat had been sent on the Scheldt to reconnoitre ; the Antwerpians, less disturbed by the movements on land than by those on the water, wished to gain definite intelligence in regard to the French fleet. The boat had not yet returned.

“Gentlemen,” said the Prince of Orange to the Antwerpians, “Monseigneur will keep us waiting till Antwerp is taken and burned ; the city can then learn what difference there is between the French and the Spaniards.”

These words were not calculated to reassure the civil officers, and they looked at one another with much emotion. At that moment a spy, who had gone as far as St. Nicolas, returned, saying that he had neither seen nor heard anything indicating the approach of the person expected.

“Gentlemen,” cried William, “you see we wait in vain ; let us attend to our own affairs. It is good to have confidence in superior talents ; but you see that before all things we must rely on ourselves.”

He had hardly finished speaking when the door of the hall opened, and a valet appeared and announced “Monseigneur.” Immediately a man, tall and imperious-looking, wearing with supreme grace the cloak which entirely enveloped him, entered the hall, and saluted courteously those who were there. But at the first glance his eye, proud and piercing, sought out the prince in the midst of his officers. He went straight up to him and offered him his hand, which the prince pressed with affection, and almost with respect. They called each other “Monseigneur.” After this the unknown took off his cloak. He was dressed in a buff doublet, and had high leather

boots. He was armed with a long sword, which seemed to make part of himself, so easily it hung, and with a little dagger, which was passed through his belt. His boots were covered with mud and dust, and his spurs were red with the blood of his horse. He took his place at the table.

“ Well, where are we ? ” asked he.

“ Monseigneur,” replied William, “ you must have seen, in coming here, that the streets were barricaded ? ”

“ I saw that.”

“ And the houses loopholed ? ”

“ I did not see that ; but it is a good plan.”

“ And the sentries doubled ? ”

“ Does not Monseigneur approve of these preparations for defence ? ” said a voice, in a tone of anxious disappointment.

“ Yes, but I do not believe that in our circumstances it will be useful ; it fatigues the soldier and disquiets the *bourgeois*. You have a plan of attack and defence, I suppose ? ”

“ We waited to communicate them to Monseigneur,” said the burgomaster.

“ Speak, then.”

“ Monseigneur arrived rather late, and I was obliged to act meanwhile,” said William.

“ And you did right, Monseigneur ; besides, whatever you do you do well. But I have not lost my time on the road either.”

“ We know by our spies,” said the burgomaster, “ that a movement is preparing in the French camp. They are making ready for an attack ; but as we do not know on which side it will come, we have disposed the guns so that they may be equally distributed over the whole rampart.”

“That is wise,” replied the unknown, with a slight smile and a sly glance at William, who remained silent.

“We have done the same with our civic guards; they are spread over the whole wall, and have orders to run at once to the point of attack. However, it is the opinion of the greater number of our members that it is impossible that the French meditate anything but a feigned attack.”

“And what purpose would that serve?”

“To intimidate us, and induce us to admit them amicably.”

The stranger looked again at the Prince of Orange, who listened to all this with an indifference which almost amounted to disdain.

“And yet,” said an anxious voice, “this evening have been seen in the camp what looked like preparations for attack.”

“Mere suspicions,” said the burgomaster; “I examined the camp myself with an excellent spy-glass. The men were preparing for sleep, and the duke was dining in his tent.”

The unknown threw another glance at the prince, and fancied that this time he returned a slight smile.

“Gentlemen,” said the unknown, “you are in error; a regular assault is preparing against you, and your plans, however good, are incomplete.”

“But, Monseigneur —”

“Incomplete in this, that you expect an attack, and have prepared to meet it.”

“Certainly.”

“Well, it is you who will make the attack, not wait for it, if you will trust to me.”

“Ah!” cried William, “that is talking!”

“At this moment,” said the stranger, who saw that

he might reckon on the prince's support, "the ships of M. de Joyeuse are getting ready."

"How do you know that, Monseigneur?" cried many voices together.

"I know it," replied he.

A murmur of doubt was half uttered, but the stranger caught it.

"Do you doubt it?" asked he, in the tone of a man accustomed to control all fears, prejudices, and self-loves.

"We do not doubt it if your Highness says it; but if you will permit us to observe —"

"Speak."

"That if it were so we should have had tidings of it."

"How so?"

"By our spy."

At this moment another man entered the hall, and came forward respectfully.

"Ah, it is you, my friend," said the burgomaster.

"Myself, Monsieur," replied the man.

"Monseigneur," said the burgomaster, "it is the man whom we sent to reconnoitre."

At the word "Monseigneur," not addressed to the Prince of Orang the new-comer made a movement of surprise and joy, and advanced quickly to see better him who was designated by this title. He was one of those Flemish sailors of whom the type is so recognizable, being marked, — with a square head, blue eyes, short neck, and broad shoulders; he crushed in his large hands his woollen cap, and as he advanced he left behind him a watery track, for his clothes were dripping.

"Oh! here is a brave man who has come back swimming," said Monseigneur, looking at the man with his accustomed air of authority.

“Yes, Monseigneur, yes; and the Scheldt is broad and rapid,” said the sailor, eagerly.

“Speak, Goes, speak!” said Monseigneur, knowing how a sailor would prize being thus called by his name.

Thus from that minute Goes addressed himself to the unknown exclusively; although, having been sent by another, it was to him that he should have given an account of his mission.

“Monseigneur,” said he, “I set out in my smallest boat, and passed, by giving the word, through all our ships, and reached those cursed French. Ah! pardon, Monseigneur.”

The stranger smiled and said, “Never mind, I am but half French, so shall be but half cursed.”

“Then Monseigneur pardons me?”

The unknown nodded; and Goes continued, “While I rowed in the dark with my oars wrapped in cloth, I heard a voice crying, ‘Boat ahoy! what do you want?’ I thought it was to me that the question was addressed, and was about to reply something or other, when I heard some one cry behind me, ‘Admiral’s boat!’”

The unknown looked at the officers with an expression which meant, “What did I tell you?”

“At the same moment,” continued Goes, “I felt a shock. My boat was swamped, and I fell into the water; but the waves of the Scheldt knew me for an old acquaintance, and thrèw me up again. It was the admiral’s boat taking M. de Joyeuse on board, and which had passed over me; God only knows how I was not crushed or drowned!”

“Thanks, brave Goes, thanks!” said the Prince of Orange, putting a purse into his hand. However, the sailor seemed to wait for his dismissal from the stranger, who gave him a friendly nod, which he apparently valued more than the prince’s present.

“ Well,” said Monseigneur to the burgomaster, “ what do you say of this report? Do you still doubt that the French are preparing, and do you believe that it was to pass the night on board that M. de Joyeuse was leaving the camp for his ship?”

“ But you are a diviner, then, Monseigneur?” cried the *bourgeois*.

“ Not more than Monseigneur the Prince of Orange, who is in all things of my opinion, I am sure. But I, like him, was well informed, and know well those on the other side, so that I should have been much astonished had they not attacked to-night. Then be ready, gentlemen, for if you give them time, the attack will be serious.”

“ These gentlemen will do me the justice to admit,” said the prince, “ that before your arrival I held exactly the same language to them that you now do.”

“ But,” said the burgomaster, “ how does Monseigneur think the French will begin the attack?”

“ Here are the probabilities. The infantry is Catholic. It will fight separately; that is to say, it will attack on one side. The cavalry is Calvinist; it also will fight separately. Two sides. The navy is under M. de Joyeuse, who comes from Paris. The court knows with what aim he has set out. He will want his share of battle and glory. Three sides.”

“ Then let us form three corps,” said the burgomaster.

“ Make only one, gentlemen, with all your best soldiers, and leave any of whom you may be doubtful in close fight, to guard your walls. Then with this body make a vigorous sally when François least expects it. They mean to attack; let them be anticipated, and attacked themselves. If you wait for their assault you are lost, for no one equals the French in an attack, as you, gentlemen, have no equals in defending your towns on the field of battle.”

The Flemings looked radiant.

“What did I say, gentlemen?” said William.

“It is a great honor,” said the unknown, “to have been, without knowing it, of the same opinion as the greatest captain of the age.”

Both bowed courteously.

“Then,” continued the unknown, “it is settled; you will make a furious sortie on the infantry and cavalry. I trust that your officers will so conduct it as to defeat your enemies.”

“But their vessels?” cried the burgomaster. “They will force our barrier; and as the wind is northwest, they will be in our city in two hours.”

“You have yourselves six old vessels and thirty boats at Ste. Marie; that is a mile off, is it not? That is your maritime barricade across the Scheldt.”

“Yes, Monseigneur, that is so. How do you know all these details?”

Monseigneur smiled. “I know them, as you see. It is there the fate of the battle lies.”

“Then,” said the burgomaster, “we must send aid to our brave seamen.”

“On the contrary, you may dispose otherwise of the four hundred men who are there. Twenty brave, intelligent, and devoted men will suffice.”

The Antwerpians opened their eyes in surprise.

“Will you,” continued Monseigneur, “destroy the French fleet at the expense of your six old vessels and thirty boats?”

“Hum!” said the Antwerpians, looking at one another, “our vessels are not so old.”

“Well, price them,” said the stranger, “and I will pay you their value.”

“See,” said William, softly, to him, “the men against

whom I have to contend every day. Were it not for that, I should have conquered long ago."

"Come, gentlemen," continued the stranger, "name your price, but name it quickly. I will pay you in bills on yourselves, which I trust you will find good."

"Monseigneur," said the burgomaster, after a few minutes' deliberation with the others, "we are merchants, and not lords; therefore you must pardon some hesitation, for our souls are not in our bodies, but in our counting-houses. However, there are circumstances in which, for the general good, we know how to make sacrifices. Dispose, then, of our ships as you like."

"Faith! Monseigneur," said William, "you have done wonders. It would have taken me six months to obtain what you have obtained in ten minutes."

"This, then, is my plan, gentlemen," said Monseigneur: "the French, with the admiral's galley at their head, will try to force a passage. Make your line long enough, and from all your boats let the men throw grappling-irons; and then, having made fast the enemy's ships, set fire to all your own boats, having previously filled them with combustible materials, and let your men escape in one reserved for the purpose."

"Oh," cried William, "I see the whole French fleet burning."

"Yes, the whole. Then no more retreat by sea, and none by land, for at the same time you must open the sluices of Malines, Berchem, Lier, Duffel, and Antwerp. Repulsed by you, pursued by your open dikes, enveloped on all sides by these waters unexpectedly and rapidly rising, — by this sea, which will have a flow, but no ebb, — the French will be drowned, overwhelmed, destroyed."

The officers uttered a cry of joy.

"There is but one drawback," said the prince.

“What is it, Monseigneur?” asked the unknown.

“That it would take a day to send our orders to the different towns, and we have but an hour.”

“And an hour is enough.”

“But who will instruct the flotilla?”

“It is done.”

“By whom?”

“By me. If these gentlemen had refused to give it to me, I should have bought it.”

“But Malines, Lier, Duffel?”

“I passed through Malines and Lier, and sent a sure agent to Duffel. At eleven o'clock the French will be beaten; at one they will be in full retreat; at two Malines will open its dikes, Lier and Duffel their sluices, and the whole plain will become a furious ocean, which will drown houses, fields, woods, and villages, it is true, but at the same time will destroy the French so utterly that not one will return to France.”

A silence of admiration and almost of terror followed these words; then all at once the Flemings burst into applause. William stepped forward towards the unknown, and holding out his hand, said, “Then, Monseigneur, all is ready on our side?”

“All; and stay — I believe on the side of the French also.” And he pointed to an officer who was entering.

“Gentlemen,” cried the officer, “we have just heard that the French are marching towards the city.”

“To arms!” cried the burgomaster.

“To arms!” cried all.

“One moment, gentlemen,” cried Monseigneur; “I have to give one direction more important than all the rest.”

“Speak!” cried all.

“The French will be surprised; it will not be a com-

bat, nor even a retreat, but a flight. To pursue them you must be lightly armed. No cuirasses, *morbleu!* It is your cuirasses, in which you cannot move, which have made you lose all the battles you have lost. No cuirasses, gentlemen! We will meet again in the combat. Meanwhile, go to the place of the Hôtel de Ville, where you will find all your men in battle array."

"Thanks, Monseigneur," said William; "you have saved Belgium and Holland."

"Prince, you overwhelm me."

"Will your Highness consent to draw the sword against the French?" asked the prince.

"I will arrange so as to fight against the Huguenots," replied the unknown, with a smile which his sombre companion might have envied.

CHAPTER XIII.

FRENCH AND FLEMINGS.

At the moment when the members of the council left the Hôtel de Ville, the officers went to put themselves at the head of their troops, and execute the orders they had received. At the same time the artillery thundered. This artillery surprised the French in their nocturnal march, by which they had hoped to surprise the town ; but instead of stopping their advance, it only hastened it. If they could not take the city by surprise, they might, as we have seen the King of Navarre do at Cahors, fill up the moats with fascines and burst open the gates with petards.

The cannon from the ramparts continued to fire, but in the darkness took scarcely any effect ; and after having replied to the cries of their adversaries, the French advanced silently towards the ramparts with that fiery intrepidity which they always show in attack. But all at once gates and posterns opened, and from all sides poured out armed men, if not with the fierce impetuosity of the French, with a firmness which rendered them massive as a rolling wall. It was the Flemings, who advanced in close ranks and compact masses, above which the cannon continued to thunder, although with more noise than effect. Then the combat began, hand to hand, foot to foot, sword to sword ; and the flash of pistols lighted up faces red with blood. But not a cry, not a murmur, not a complaint, was heard ; and the Flemings and French

fought with equal rage. The Flemings were furious at having to fight, for fighting was neither their profession nor their pleasure ; and the French were furious at being attacked when they meant to have taken the initiative.

While the combat was raging violently, explosions were heard near Ste. Marie, and a light rose over the city, like a crest of flames. It was Joyeuse attacking and trying to force the barrier across the Scheldt ; and he would soon penetrate into the city, — at least, so the French hoped. But it was not so. Joyeuse had weighed anchor and sailed, and was making rapid progress, favored by the west wind. All was ready for action ; the sailors, armed with their boarding-cutlasses, were eager for the combat ; the gunners stood ready with lighted matches ; while some picked men, axe in hand, stood ready to jump on the hostile ships and destroy the chains and cords.

The eight ships advanced in silence, disposed in the form of a wedge, of which the admiral's galley formed the point. Joyeuse himself had taken his first lieutenant's place, and was leaning over the bowsprit, trying to pierce the fogs of the river and the darkness of the night. Soon, through this double obscurity, he saw the barrier extending itself darkly across the stream ; it appeared deserted, but in that land of ambushes, there seemed something terrifying in this desertion. However, they continued to advance, watching the barrier, scarcely ten cable-lengths off ; they approached nearer and nearer, and yet not a single *qui vive ?* struck on their ears. The sailors saw in this silence only a carelessness which pleased them ; but their young admiral, more far-seeing, feared some ruse.

At last the prow of the admiral's ship entered between the two ships which formed the centre of the barrier, and pushing them before it, made the whole line, the parts of which were fastened by chains, bend inwardly, without

breaking, so that the French fleet was flanked by it on either side. Suddenly, as the bearers of the axes received the order to board and cut the chains, grappling-irons, thrown by invisible hands, seized hold of the French vessels. The Flemings had forestalled the intended movement of the French. Joyeuse believed that his enemies were offering him a mortal combat, and he accepted it with alacrity. He also threw grappling-irons, and the two lines of ships were firmly bound together. Then, seizing an axe, he was the first to jump on a ship, crying, "Board them! board them!" All his crew followed him, officers and men uttering the same cry; but no cry replied to them, no force opposed their advance. Only they saw three boats full of men gliding silently over the water like three sea-birds.

The assailants rested motionless on the ships which they had conquered without a struggle. All at once Joyeuse heard under his feet a crackling sound; and a smell of sulphur filled the air. A thought crossed his mind, and he ran and opened a hatchway; the vessel was burning. A cry of "To our ships!" sounded through all the line. Each climbed back again more quickly than he had descended; but Joyeuse this time was the last. Just as he reached his galley the flames burst out over the whole bridge of boats, like twenty volcanoes, of which each ship or boat was the crater. The order was instantly given to cut the ropes and break the chains and grappling-irons, and the sailors worked with the rapidity of men who knew that their safety depended on their exertions. But the work was immense; perhaps they might have detached the grappling-irons thrown by the enemy on their ships, but they had also to detach those which they themselves had thrown.

All at once twenty explosions were heard, and each of

the French ships trembled to its centre. It was the cannon that defended the barrier, and which, fully charged and then abandoned by the Antwerpians, exploded as the fire gained on them, breaking everything in their direction. The flames mounted like gigantic serpents along the masts, rolled themselves round the yards, then, with their forked tongues, came to lick the sides of the French vessels.

Joyeuse, with his magnificent armor covered with gold, giving calmly, and in an imperious voice, his orders in the midst of the flames, looked like a fabulous salamander covered with scales, which on every movement threw off a shower of sparks. But the explosions became louder than ever; the gun-room had taken fire, and the vessels themselves were bursting.

Joyeuse had done his best to free himself, but in vain; the flames had reached the French ships, and showers of fire fell about him. The Flemish barrier was broken, and the French ships, burning, drifted to the shore. Joyeuse saw that he could not save his ships, and he gave orders to lower the boats, and land on the left bank. This was quickly done, and all the sailors were embarked to a man before Joyeuse left his galley. His coolness seemed to communicate itself to all the rest, and every man landed with a sword or an axe in his hand. Before he had reached the shore, the fire reached the magazine of his ship, which blew up, lighting the whole horizon.

Meanwhile, the artillery from the ramparts had ceased, not because the combat had abated, but because it was so close that it was impossible to fire on enemies without firing on friends also. The Calvinist cavalry had charged, and done wonders. Before the swords of its cavaliers a pathway opened; but the wounded Flemings pierced the horses with their large cutlasses. In spite of this brilliant

charge, a little confusion showed itself in the French columns, and they kept their ground only, without advancing, while from the gates of the city new troops continually poured out. All at once, almost under the walls of the city, a cry of "Anjou! France!" was heard behind the mass of the Antwerpians. Joyeuse, to whom a horse had been brought, and his fifteen hundred sailors, armed with hatchets and cutlasses, had fallen suddenly on the Flemings. They had to avenge their fleet in flames, and two hundred of their companions burned or drowned.

No one could manage his long sword better than Joyeuse, — every blow cut open a head; every thrust took effect. The group of Flemings on which he fell were destroyed like a field of corn by a legion of locusts. Delighted with their first success, the sailors continued to push on. Meantime the Calvinist cavalry, surrounded by troops, began to lose ground; M. de Saint-Aignan's infantry, however, kept their place.

The French prince had seen the burning of the fleet, and heard the reports of the cannon and the explosions, without suspecting it could be anything but a fierce combat which must terminate in victory for Joyeuse; for how could a few Flemish ships fight against the French fleet? He expected, then, every minute a diversion on the part of Joyeuse, when the news was brought to him that the fleet was destroyed, and that Joyeuse and his men were fighting in the midst of the Flemings. He now began to feel very anxious; the fleet was a means of retreat, and the safety of the army depended upon it. He sent orders to the Calvinist cavalry to try a fresh charge; and men and horses, almost exhausted, rallied to attack the Antwerpians afresh. The voice of Joyeuse was heard in the midst of the battle, crying, "Hold firm, M. de Saint-Aignan!

France! France!" and, like a reaper cutting a field of corn, he whirled his sword and cut down a harvest of men. The delicate favorite, the Sybarite, seemed to have put on with his cuirass the strength of a Hercules; and the infantry, hearing his voice above all the noise, and seeing his sword flashing, took fresh courage, and like the cavalry, made a new effort, and returned to the combat.

But now the person that had been called Monseigneur came out of the city on a beautiful black horse. He wore black armor, and was followed by five hundred well-mounted horsemen, whom the Prince of Orange had placed at his disposal. By a parallel gate came out William himself, with a picked body of infantry who had not yet appeared. Monseigneur hastened where he was most wanted; that is to say, where Joyeuse was fighting, with his sailors.

The Flemings recognized him, and opened their ranks, crying joyfully, "Monseigneur! Monseigneur!" Joyeuse and his men saw the movement, heard the cries, and all at once found themselves opposed to that new body of men, which had appeared as if by enchantment. Joyeuse pushed his horse towards the black knight, and their swords met. Joyeuse was confident in his armor and his skill with the sword; but all his thrusts were skilfully parried, and one of those of his adversary touched him, and in spite of his armor, drew some drops of blood from his shoulder.

"Ah!" cried the young admiral, "this man is a Frenchman, and what is more, he has studied fencing under the same master as I have."

At these words the unknown turned away, and tried to find a new antagonist.

"If you are French," cried Joyeuse, "you are a traitor,

for you fight against your king, your country, and your flag."

The unknown replied by attacking Joyeuse with fresh fury; but now Joyeuse was on his guard, and knew with what a skilful swordsman he had to deal. He parried two or three thrusts with as much skill as fury, and it was now the stranger who made a step back.

"See," cried Joyeuse, "what one can do fighting for one's country! A pure heart and a loyal arm suffice to defend a head without a helmet, a face without a visor;" and he threw his helmet far from him, displaying his noble and beautiful head, with eyes sparkling with pride, youth, and anger. His antagonist, instead of replying, or following the example given, uttered a dull roar, and struck at his bare head.

"Ah!" cried Joyeuse, parrying the blow, "I said you were a traitor; and as a traitor you shall die!" And pressing upon him with rapid thrusts, he penetrated an opening in the visor of the unknown. "Ah! I shall kill you," cried the young man. "I shall remove that helmet, which so well protects and hides you; and I will hang you to the first tree that I see."

The unknown was about to return the attack, when a cavalier who had come up leaned over and said in his ear, "Monseigneur, no more skirmishing; your presence is wanted over there."

Glancing towards the point indicated, the unknown saw the Flemings giving way before the Calvinist cavalry. "Yes," cried he, "those are the men I wanted to meet."

At this moment a troop of cavalry fell on Joyeuse and his sailors, who, wearied by ceaseless blows with their giant arms, made their first step in retreat. The black cavalier profited by this movement to disappear in the confusion and darkness.

A quarter of an hour later the French began to give way. M. de Saint-Aignan tried to retreat in good order, but a last troop of two thousand infantry and five hundred horse came out fresh from the city, and fell on this harassed and already retreating army. It was the old band of the Prince of Orange, which had fought in turn against the Duke of Alva, Don John, Requesens, and Alexander Farnèse. In spite of the coolness of the chiefs and the bravery of many, a frightful rout ensued.

At this moment the unknown fell again on the fugitives, and once more met Joyeuse with his marines, one half of whom he had left on the field of battle. The young admiral was mounted on his third horse, two having been killed under him. His sword was broken; and he had taken from a wounded sailor a heavy boarding-axe, which he whirled round his head with the greatest apparent ease. From time to time he turned and faced his enemy, like the wild boar who cannot make up his mind to fly, and turns desperately on his hunter. The Flemings, who by Monseigneur's advice had fought without cuirasses, were active in the pursuit, and gave no rest to the Angevin army. Something like remorse seized the unknown at the sight of this disaster.

"Enough, gentlemen!" cried he, in French; "to-night they are driven from Antwerp, and in a week will be driven from Flanders. Ask no more of the God of battles."

"Ah, he is French!" cried Joyeuse; "I guessed it, traitor! Ah, be cursed, and may you die the death of a traitor!"

This furious imprecation seemed to disconcert the unknown more than a thousand swords raised against him; he turned, and, conqueror as he was, fled almost as rapidly as the conquered. But this retreat of a single

man had no effect on the Flemings ; yet fear, which is contagious, seized upon the entire French army, and the soldiers began to fly like madmen. The horses went fast, in spite of fatigue, for they also seemed to be under the influence of fear ; the men dispersed to seek a shelter, and in a few hours the army, as an army, existed no longer. This was the time when the dikes were to be opened. From Lier to Termonde, from Haesdonck to Malines, every little river, swollen by its tributaries, every canal, overflowed, and spread over the flat country its contingent of furious water.

Thus, when the fugitive French began to stop, having tired out the enemy ; when they had seen the Antwerpians return at length towards the town, followed by the soldiers of the Prince of Orange ; when those who had escaped from the carnage of the night believed themselves saved, and stopped to breathe for an instant, some with a prayer, and others with a curse, — then a new enemy, blind and pitiless, was let loose upon them ; an enemy with the swiftness of the wind and the impetuosity of the sea. And yet, notwithstanding the imminence of the danger which began to surround them, they had no suspicion of it. Joyeuse had commanded his sailors, now reduced to eight hundred, to make a halt ; they were the only persons who had preserved some order, the Comte de Saint-Aignan having vainly tried to rally his foot-soldiers.

The Duc d'Anjou, at the head of the fugitives, mounted on an excellent horse and accompanied by a single servant, pushed forward without appearing to think of anything.

“ He has no heart,” cried some.

“ His coolness is magnificent,” said others.

Some hours of repose, from two to six in the morning, restored to the infantry the strength to continue their retreat ; but provisions were wanting. As for the horses,

they seemed more fatigued than the men, and could scarcely move, for they had eaten nothing since the day before.

The fugitives hoped to gain Brussels, where the duke had many partisans, although they were not free from anxiety as to their reception. At Brussels, which was about eight leagues off, they would find food for the famishing troops, and a place of security from which to resume the campaign at a more favorable time. At that time no one foresaw the frightful moment when the ground would give way under the feet of the unhappy soldiers; when mountains of water would beat them down and roll over their heads; and that the remains of so many brave men would be borne on muddy waters to the sea, or would be stopped on the way to fertilize the fields of Brabant.

M. d'Anjou breakfasted in a peasant's hut, between Héboken and Heckhout. It was unoccupied, but a fire still burned in the grate. The soldiers and officers wished to imitate their chief, and spread themselves about the two villages we have named, but found with a surprise mingled with terror that every house was deserted and that the inhabitants had carried away their provisions. M. de Saint-Aignan, who had aided them in their search, now called to the officers, "March on, gentlemen!"

"But we are tired and dying with hunger, General."

"Yes, but you are alive; and if you remain here another hour you will be dead. Perhaps it is already too late."

M. de Saint-Aignan knew nothing; but he suspected some great danger. They went on; but two or three thousand men straggled from the main body, or worn out with fatigue, lay down on the grass, or at the foot of a tree, wearied, desolate, and despairing. Scarcely three thousand able men remained to the Duc d'Anjou.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TRAVELLERS.

WHILE these disasters — the forerunners of a still greater one — were taking place, two travellers, mounted on excellent horses, left Brussels on a fine night, and rode towards Malines. They rode side by side, without any apparent arms but a large Flemish knife, of which the handle appeared in the belt of one of them. They rode on, each occupied with thoughts perhaps the same, without speaking a word. They looked like those commercial travellers who at that time carried on an extensive trade between France and Flanders. Whoever had met them trotting so peaceably along the road would have taken them for honest men, anxious to find a bed after their day's work. However, it was only necessary to overhear a few sentences of their conversation — when they made any conversation — to abandon any such opinion suggested by their appearance. They were about half a league from Brussels, when the taller of them said, “Madame, you were quite right to set off to-night. We shall gain seven leagues by it, and shall probably arrive at Malines by the time the result of the attack on Antwerp is known. In two days of short marches, — and you must take easy stages, — we shall reach Antwerp.”

The person who was called Madame, in spite of her male costume, replied in a voice calm, grave, and sweet, “My friend, believe me, God will tire of protecting this wicked prince, and will strike him cruelly. Let us hasten to put

our projects into execution, for I am not one of those who believe in fatality ; and I think that men have perfect freedom in will and deed. If we leave his punishment to God, and do not act ourselves, it was not worth while living so unhappily until now."

At this moment a blast of north wind, cold and biting, swept across the plain.

"You shiver, Madame," said the other traveller. "Take your cloak."

"No, thank you, Rémy. I no longer feel pain of body or mind."

Rémy rode on silently, only now and then stopping and looking back.

"You see no one behind us ?" asked his companion, after one of these halts.

"No one, Madame."

"That cavalier whom we met at Valenciennes, and who inquired about us, after looking at us so curiously ?"

"I do not see him, Madame."

"But I fancied I saw him again near Mons."

"And I, Madame, am sure I saw him just before we entered Brussels."

"Brussels ?"

"Yes ; but he must have stopped there."

"Rémy," said Diane, drawing near him, as if even on that lonely road she feared to be overheard, "did he not seem to you like (in figure, at least, for I did not see his face) that unhappy young man ?"

"Oh, no, Madame, not at all ; and besides, how could he have guessed that we had left Paris, and were travelling along this road ?"

"But he found us out when we changed our house in Paris."

"No, Madame, I am sure he did not follow us ; and

indeed I believe he had resolved on a desperate course as regards himself."

"Alas, Rémy ! every one has his own share of suffering. I trust God will console this poor youth."

Rémy replied with a sigh ; and they went on with no other sound than that of their horses' feet on the hard road. Two hours passed thus. Just as they were about to enter Vilvoorden, Rémy turned his head, for he heard the sound of horses' feet behind them. He stopped and listened, but could see nothing. His eyes uselessly tried to pierce through the darkness of the night, and as he no longer heard any sounds, they rode on and entered the town.

"Madame," said he, "if you will take my advice, you will stay here. Daylight will soon appear ; the horses are tired ; and you yourself need repose."

"Rémy, you are anxious about something."

"Yes, about your health, Madame. Believe me, a woman cannot support so much fatigue. I can scarcely do so myself."

"As you please, Rémy."

"Well, then, enter that narrow street. I see a light at the end of it, which must proceed from an inn. Be quick, I beg you !"

"You have heard something ?"

"I thought I heard a horse's feet. I am not sure ; but I will stay behind a minute to find out."

The lady, without replying, went on, and Rémy got off his horse and let him follow her, while he hid himself behind an immense post and waited.

The lady knocked at the door of the inn, behind which, according to the hospitable custom of the country, watched, or rather slept, a maid-servant. The girl woke up and received the traveller pleasantly, and then opened the stable-door for the two horses.

“ I am waiting for my companion,” said Diane ; “ let me sit by the fire. I shall not go to bed until he comes.”

The servant threw some straw to the horses, shut the stable-door, then returned to the kitchen, put a chair by the fire, snuffed the candle with her fingers, and went to sleep again.

Meanwhile Rémy was watching for the arrival of the traveller whose horse he had heard. He saw him enter the town and go on slowly, and seeming to listen ; then, seeing the inn, he appeared to hesitate whether to go there or to continue his journey. He stopped close to Rémy, who laid his hand on his knife.

“ It is he again,” thought Rémy, “ and he is following us. What can he want ? ”

After a minute the traveller murmured in a low voice, “ They must have gone on, and so will I ; ” and he rode forward.

“ To-morrow we will change our route,” thought Rémy. And he rejoined Diane, who was waiting impatiently for him.

“ Well,” said she, softly, “ are we followed ? ”

“ There is no one ; I was wrong. You may sleep in perfect safety, Madame.”

“ I am not sleepy, Rémy.”

“ At least have supper, Madame ; you have scarcely eaten anything.”

“ Willingly, Rémy.”

They reawakened the poor servant, who got up as good-humoredly as before, and hearing what they wanted, took from the cupboard a piece of salt pork, a cold leveret, and some pastry, which she set before them, together with a frothing jug of Louvain beer.

Rémy sat down with Diane, who drank half a glass of

beer, and ate a piece of bread. Rémy did the same, and then they both rose.

“Are you not going to eat any more?” asked the girl.

“No, thank you; we have done.”

“Will you not eat any meat? Is it not good?”

“I am sure it is excellent, but we are not hungry.”

The girl clasped her hands in astonishment at this strange abstinence; it was not thus she was used to see travellers eat. Rémy threw a piece of money on the table.

“Oh,” said the girl, “I cannot charge all that! Six farthings would be all your bill.”

“Keep it all, my girl,” said Diane; “it is true my brother and I eat little, but we pay the same as others.”

The servant became red with joy; and at the same time tears of compassion filled her eyes, so sadly were those words spoken.

“Tell me, my girl,” said Rémy, “is there any cross-road from here to Malines?”

“Yes, Monsieur, but it is very bad, while the regular road is a very fine one.”

“Yes, my child, I know that; but we wish to travel by the other.”

“Oh, I told you, Monsieur, because, as your companion is a lady, the road would not do for her.”

“Why not?”

“Because to-night a great number of people will cross the country to go to Brussels.”

“To Brussels?”

“Yes; it is a temporary emigration.”

“For what reason?”

“I do not know; they had orders.”

“From whom, — the Prince of Orange?”

“No; from Monseigneur.”

“Who is he?”

"I do not know, Monsieur."

"And who are the emigrants?"

"The inhabitants of the country and of the villages which have no dikes or ramparts."

"It is strange."

"We ourselves," said the girl, "are to set out at day-break, as well as all the other people in the town. Yesterday, at eleven o'clock, all the cattle were sent to Brussels by canals and cross-roads; therefore, on the road of which you speak there must be great numbers of horses, carts, and people."

"I should have thought the great-road better for all that."

"I do not know; it was the order."

"But we can go on to Malines, I suppose?"

"I should think so, unless you will do like every one else, and go to Brussels."

"No, no, we will go on at once to Malines," said Diane, rising, "open the stable, if you please, my good girl."

"Danger every way," thought Rémy; "however, the young man is before us." And as the horses had not been unsaddled, they mounted again, and the rising sun found them on the banks of the Dyle.

CHAPTER XV.

EXPLANATION.

THE danger that Rémy braved was a real one, for the traveller, after having passed the village and gone on for a quarter of a league without seeing any one before him, made up his mind that those whom he sought had remained behind in the village. He would not retrace his steps, but lay down in a field of clover; having made his horse descend into one of those deep ditches which in Flanders serve as divisions between the properties, he was able to see without being seen. This young man, as Rémy knew, and Diane suspected, was Henri du Bouchage, whom a strange fatality threw once more into the presence of the woman he had determined to avoid. After his conversation with Rémy on the threshold of the mysterious house, — that is to say, after the loss of all his hopes, — he had returned to the Hôtel Joyeuse, quite decided to put an end to a life which he felt to be so miserable, and as a gentleman, and one who had his name to keep untarnished, he decided on the glorious suicide of the field of battle.

Therefore, as they were fighting in Flanders, and his brother had a command there, Henri, on the following day, left his hotel twenty hours after the departure of Diane and Rémy. Letters from Flanders announced the intended attack on Antwerp, and Henri hoped to arrive in time for it. He pleased himself with the idea that he should die sword in hand, in his brother's arms, under a

French flag, and that his death would be talked about until the sound even reached the solitude in which the mysterious lady lived. Noble follies! glorious yet sad dreams!

Just as — full of these thoughts — Henri came in sight of Valenciennes, from whose church tower eight o'clock was sounding, he perceived that they were about to close the gates. He pushed on, and nearly overturned on the drawbridge a man who was fastening the girths of his horse. Henri stopped to make excuses to the man, who turned at the sound of his voice, and then quickly turned away again. Henri started, but immediately thought, "I must be mad, — Rémy here, whom I left four days ago in the Rue de Bussy; here now, without his mistress? Really, grief must be turning my brain and making me see everything in the form of my own fancies." And he continued his way, convinced that his idea had been pure fancy. At the first inn that he came to he stopped, gave his horse to a servant, and sat down on a bench before the door, while they prepared his bed and supper. But as he sat there he saw two travellers approaching, and this time he saw more clearly.

"Now," murmured he, "I do not dream, and still I think I see Rémy. I cannot remain in this uncertainty; I must clear up my doubts."

He got up and ran down the road after them, but they had disappeared. Then he went to all the inns and questioned the servants, and after much search discovered that two cavaliers had been seen going towards a small inn in the Rue du Beffroi. The landlord was just shutting the doors when Henri entered. While the man offered him rooms and refreshment he looked round, and saw on the top of the staircase Rémy going up, lighted by a servant; of his companion he saw nothing. At the

head of the staircase Rémy paused. The count, on recognizing him distinctly, had uttered an exclamation, and Rémy had turned round. On seeing that face, made so remarkable by the scar it carried, and that expression full of anxiety, Henri no longer had any doubt; and being too much moved to take any action at the moment, he withdrew, asking himself with a horrible sinking of the heart why Rémy had left his mistress and was travelling without her; for Henri had been so occupied in identifying Rémy that he had scarcely looked at his companion. The next morning he was much surprised to learn that the two travellers had obtained from the governor permission to go out; and that contrary to all custom, the gates had been opened for them. Thus, as they had set out at one o'clock, they had six hours start of him. Henri put his horse to the gallop and passed the travellers at Mons. He saw Rémy; but Rémy would need to be a sorcerer to know him, for he had on a soldier's greatcoat and rode another horse. Nevertheless, Rémy's companion, at a word from him, turned away his head before Henri could see his face. But the young man did not lose courage; he watched them to their inn, and then questioning, with the aid of an irresistible auxiliary, learned that Rémy's companion was a very handsome but very silent and sad-looking young man.

Henri trembled. "Can it be a woman?" he asked.

"It is possible," replied the host. "Many women travel thus disguised just now, to go and rejoin their lovers in Flanders; but it is our business to see nothing, and we never do."

Henri felt heart-broken at this explanation. Was Rémy indeed accompanying his mistress dressed as a cavalier; and was she, as the host suggested, going to rejoin her lover in Flanders? Had Rémy lied when he

spoke of an eternal regret? Was this fable of a past love, which had clothed his mistress forever in mourning, only his invention to get rid of an importunate watcher?

“If it be so,” cried Henri, “the time will come when I shall have courage to address this woman and reproach her with all the subterfuges which lower her whom I had placed so high above all ordinary mortals; and seeing nearer this brilliant envelope of a common mind, perhaps I shall fall of myself from the height of my illusions and my love.”

And the young man tore his hair in despair at the thought of losing the love which was killing him; so true is it that a dead heart is better than an empty one. So he continued to follow them, and to wonder at the cause which took to Flanders at the same time as himself these two beings so indispensable to his existence.

At Brussels Henri had gathered information as to the Duc d’Anjou’s intended campaign. The Flemings were too hostile to the duke to receive well a Frenchman of distinction, and were too proud of their position to refrain from humiliating a little this gentleman who came from France and questioned them in a pure Parisian accent, which at that period seemed ridiculous to the Belgians. Henri began to conceive serious fears with reference to this expedition in which his brother was to bear so prominent a part, and he resolved in consequence to push on rapidly to Antwerp. It was a constant surprise to him to see Rémy and his companion, in spite of their desire not to be seen, continue to follow the same road as himself.

Henri, now hidden in the clover-field, felt certain of seeing the face of the young man who accompanied Rémy, and thus putting an end to all his doubts. As they passed, unsuspecting of his proximity, Diane was

occupied in braiding up her hair, which she had not dared to untie at the inn.

Henri recognized her, and nearly fainted. The travellers passed on, and then anger took, in Henri's mind, the place of the goodness and patience he had exercised while he believed Rémy and the lady sincere towards him. After the protestations of Rémy, this journey seemed to him a species of treason.

When he had recovered a little from the blow, he rose, shook back his beautiful light hair, and mounted his horse, determined no longer to take those precautions that respect had made him hitherto observe; and he began to follow the travellers openly, and with his face uncovered. No more cloak nor hood, no more stops and hesitation; the road belonged to him as to them; and he rode on, regulating the pace of his horse by that of theirs. He did not mean to speak to them, but only to let them see him. Rémy soon perceived him, and seeing him thus openly advance without any further attempt at concealment, grew troubled; Diane noticed it and turned also. "Ah!" said she, "is it not that young man, Rémy?"

Rémy, still trying to reassure her, said, "I do not think so, Madame. As well as I can judge by the dress, it is some young Walloon soldier, going probably to Amsterdam, and passing through the theatre of war to seek adventures."

"I feel uneasy about him, Rémy."

"Reassure yourself, Madame; had he been really the Comte du Bouchage, he would have spoken to us, — you know how persevering he was."

"I know also that he was respectful, Rémy, or I should never have troubled myself about him, but simply told you to get rid of him."

"Well, Madame, if he be so respectful, you would have

no more to fear from him on this road than in the Rue de Bussy."

"Nevertheless, Rémy, let us change our horses here at Malines, in order to get on faster to Antwerp."

"On the contrary, Madame, I should say, do not let us enter Malines at all. Our horses are good; let us push on to that little village which is, I think, called Villebrock. In that manner we shall avoid the town, with its questioners and curious gazers."

"Go on, then, Rémy."

They turned to the left, taking a road hardly made, but which visibly led to Villebrock; Henri also left the road, and turned down the lane, still keeping his distance from them. Rémy's disquietude showed itself in his constantly turning to look behind him.

At last they arrived at Villebrock. Of two hundred houses which this village contained, not one was inhabited; some forgotten dogs and lost cats ran wildly about the solitude, the former calling for their masters by long howls. Rémy knocked at twenty doors, but found no one. Henri, on his side, who seemed the shadow of the travellers, knocked at the first house as uselessly as they had done, then, divining that the war was the cause of this desertion, deferred continuing his journey until the travellers should have decided what to do.

The travellers fed their horses with some corn which they found in an inn, and then Rémy said, "Madame, we are no longer in a friendly country nor in an ordinary situation; we must not expose ourselves uselessly. We shall certainly fall in with some French, Spanish, or Flemish band; for in the present state of Flanders adventures of all kinds must be rife. If you were a man, I should speak differently; but you are a young

and beautiful woman, and would run a double risk, for life and honor."

"My life is nothing," said she.

"On the contrary, Madame, it is everything. You live for a purpose."

"Well, then, what do you propose? Think and act for me, Rémy."

"Then, Madame, let us remain here. I see many houses which would afford us a sure shelter. I have arms; and we will defend or hide ourselves, according as I shall judge that we are strong enough, or too feeble."

"No, Rémy, no! I must go on. Nothing shall stop me; if I had fears, they would be for you."

"We will go on, then."

They rode on, therefore, without another word, and Henri du Bouchage followed.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE WATER.

As the travellers advanced, the country took a strange aspect; for it was utterly deserted, as well as the towns and villages. Nowhere were the cows to be seen grazing in the meadows, nor the goat perched on the top of the mountain, or nibbling the green shoots of the brier or young vine; nowhere the shepherd with his flock; nowhere the cart with its driver; no foreign merchant passing from one country to another with his pack on his back; no ploughman singing his harsh song or cracking his long whip. As far as the eye could see over the magnificent plains, the little hills, and the woods, not a human figure was to be seen, not a voice to be heard. It seemed like the earth before the creation of animals or men. The only people who animated this dreary solitude were Rémy and his companion, and Henri following behind and preserving ever the same distance. The night came on dark and cold, and the northwest wind whistled in the air, and filled the solitude with its menacing sound.

Rémy stopped his companion, and putting his hand on the bridle of her horse, said, "Madame, you know how inaccessible I am to fear; you know I would not turn my back to save my life; but this evening some strange feeling possesses me, and forbids me to go farther. Madame, call it terror, timidity, panic, what you will, I confess that for the first time in my life I am afraid."

The lady turned. "Is he still there?" she said.

"Oh, I was not thinking of him; think no more of him, Madame, I beg of you. We need not fear a single man. No, the danger that I fear, or rather feel, or divine with a sort of instinct, is unknown to me, and therefore I dread it. Look, Madame, do you see those willows bending in the wind?"

"Yes."

"By their side I see a little house; I beg you, let us go there. If it is inhabited, we will ask for hospitality; and if not, we will take possession of it. I beg you to consent, Madame."

Rémy's emotion and troubled voice decided Diane to yield; she turned her horse in the direction indicated by him. A few minutes after, they knocked at the door. A stream, which ran into the Nethe, — a little river about a mile off, — bordered with reeds and grassy banks, bathed the feet of the willows with its murmuring waters. Behind the house, which was built of bricks, and covered with tiles, was a little garden, encircled by a quickset hedge.

All was empty, solitary, and deserted; and no one replied to the blows struck by the travellers. Rémy did not hesitate. He drew his knife, cut a branch of willow, with which he pushed back the bolt and opened the door. The lock, the clumsy work of a neighboring blacksmith, yielded almost without resistance. Rémy entered quickly, followed by Diane; then, closing the door again, he drew a massive bolt, and thus intrenched, seemed to breathe more freely. Feeling about, he found a bed, a chair, and a table in an upper room. Here he installed his mistress, and then, returning to the lower room, placed himself at the window, to watch the movements of Bouchage.

Henri's reflections were as sombre as those of Rémy.

“Certainly,” said he to himself, “some danger unknown to us, but of which the inhabitants are not ignorant, is about to fall on the country. War ravages the land. Perhaps the French have taken, or are about to assault, Antwerp, and the peasants, seized with terror, have gone to take refuge in the towns.”

But this reasoning, however plausible, did not quite satisfy him. Then he thought, “But what are Rémy and his mistress doing here? What imperious necessity drags them towards this danger? Oh, I will know! the time has come to speak to this woman, and to clear away all my doubts. Never shall I find a better opportunity.”

He approached the house, and then suddenly stopped, with a hesitation common to hearts in love. “No,” said he, — “no, I will be a martyr to the end. Besides, is she not mistress of her own actions? And perhaps she does not even know what fable was invented by Rémy. Oh, it is he alone that I hate, — he who assured me that she loved no one. But still let me be just. Ought this man to have betrayed his mistress’s secrets to me, whom he did not know? No, no! All that remains for me now is to follow this woman to the camp, to see her hang her arms round some one’s neck, and hear her say, ‘See what I have suffered, and how I love you!’ Well, I will follow her there, see what I dread to see, and die of it. It will be trouble saved for the musket or cannon. Alas! I did not seek this. I went calmly to meet a glorious death, and I wished to die with her name on my lips. It is not so to be. I am destined to a death full of bitterness and torture. Well, I accept it.”

Then, recalling his days of waiting and his nights of anguish before the inexorable house, he found that aside from the doubt that gnawed his heart, he was less to be pitied here than at Paris, for now he could at least see

her, and sometimes hear the sound of her voice. Fixing his gaze on the chamber that she occupied, he continued, "While I await that death, and while she reposes in that house, I will take these trees for a shelter; and shall I complain, — I, who can hear her voice if she speaks, and can see her shadow on the window? Oh, no, no! I do not complain. I am even too happy."

He lay down under the willows, listening with a melancholy impossible to describe to the murmur of the water that flowed at his side. All at once he started. The noise of cannon was brought distinctly to him by the wind.

"Ah!" said he, "I shall arrive too late. They are attacking Antwerp."

His first idea was to rise, mount his horse, and ride on as quickly as possible; but to do this he must leave the lady, and die in doubt, so he remained. During two hours he lay there, listening to the reports. He was far from suspecting that what he heard was his brother's ships blowing up. At last, about two o'clock, all grew quiet.

"Now," thought Henri, "Antwerp is taken, and my brother is a conqueror; but after Antwerp will come Ghent, and then Bruges. I shall not want an occasion for a glorious death. But before I die I must know what this woman wants in the French camp."

He lay still, and had just fallen asleep, when his horse, which was grazing quietly near him, pricked up his ears and neighed loudly. Henri opened his eyes. The animal had his head turned to the breeze, which had changed to the southeast, as if listening.

"What is it, my good horse?" said the young man, rising and patting with his hand the animal's neck. "Have you seen some otter which frightened you, or do you regret the shelter of your stable?"

The animal stood still, looking towards Lier, with his eyes fixed and his nostrils distended, and listening.

“Ah!” said Henri, “it is more serious; perhaps some troops of wolves following the army to devour the corpses.”

The horse neighed and began to run forward to the west, but his master caught the bridle and jumped on his back, and then was able to keep him quiet. But in a moment Henri himself began to hear what the horse had heard, — a long murmur, like that of the wind, but more solemn, which seemed to come from several points in a semicircle extending from south to north.

“What is it?” said Henri; “can it be the wind? No, it is the wind which brings this sound, and I hear two sounds distinctly. An army in march, perhaps? But no; I should hear the sound of voices and of regular marching. Is it the crackling of a fire? No, there is no light in the horizon; the heaven seems even to grow darker.”

The noise redoubled and became distinct; it was an incessant growling and rolling, as if thousands of cannon were being dragged over a paved road. Henri thought of this. “But no,” said he; “there is no paved road near.”

The noise continued to increase, and Henri put his horse to the gallop and gained an eminence. “What do I see?” cried he, as he attained the summit. What he saw, his horse had seen before him; for he had only been able to make him advance by furious spurring, and when they arrived at the top of the hill he reared so as nearly to fall backwards. They saw in the horizon an immense band rolling over the plain, and rapidly approaching. The young man looked in wonder at this strange phenomenon, when, looking back to the place he had come from, he saw the plain beginning to be covered with

water, and that the little river had overflowed, and was beginning to cover the reeds which a quarter of an hour before had stood up stiffly on its banks.

"Fool that I am," cried he, "I never thought of it. The water! the water! The Flemings have broken their dikes!"

Henri flew to the house, and knocked furiously at the door. "Open! open!" he cried.

No one replied.

"Open, Rémy!" cried the young man, furious with terror; "it is I, — Henri du Bouchage."

"Oh, you need not name yourself, Monsieur the Count," answered Rémy from within, "I recognized you long ago; but I warn you that if you break in the door you will find me behind it, with a pistol in each hand."

"But you do not understand!" cried Henri. "The water! it is the water!"

"No fables, no pretexts, or dishonorable ruses, Monsieur the Count; I tell you that you will only enter over my body."

"Then I will pass over it; but I will enter. In Heaven's name, in the name of your own safety and your mistress's, will you open?"

"No."

Henri looked round him, and perceived an immense stone. He raised it and threw it against the door, which flew open. A ball passed over Henri's head, but without touching him; he jumped towards Rémy, and seizing his other arm, cried, "Do you not see that I have no arms? Do not defend yourself against a man who does not attack. Look! only look!" and he drew him to the window. "Well," said he, "do you see now?" and he pointed to the horizon.

"The water!" cried Rémy.

“Yes, the water! it invades us; see, at our feet, the river overflows, and in five minutes we shall be unable to leave.”

“Madame! Madame!” cried Rémy.

“Do not frighten her, Rémy; get the horses ready at once.”

Rémy ran to the stable, and Henri flew up the staircase. At Rémy's cry Diane had opened her door; Henri seized her in his arms and carried her away as he would have a child. But she, believing in treason or violence, struggled, and clung to the staircase with all her might.

“Tell her that I am saving her, Rémy!” cried Henri.

Rémy heard the appeal just as he arrived with the two horses, and cried, “Yes, yes, Madame, he is saving you, or rather, he will save you! Come, for Heaven's sake!”

CHAPTER XVII.

FLIGHT.

HENRI, without losing time in reasoning with Diane, carried her out of the house, and wished to place her before him on his horse; but she, with a movement of invincible repugnance, glided from his arms, and was received by Rémy, who placed her on her own horse.

“Ah, Madame!” cried Henri, “how little you understand my heart! It was not, believe me, for the pleasure of holding you in my arms or pressing you to my heart, — although for that favor I would sacrifice my life, — but that we ought to fly as quickly as the birds; and look at them, how they fly!”

Indeed, in the scarcely dawning light were seen large numbers of curlews and pigeons, traversing the air with a quick and frightened flight, which in the night, usually abandoned to the silent bat, looked strange to the eye, and sounded sinister to the ear.

Diane did not reply, but rode on without turning her head. Her horse, however, as well as that of Rémy, was fatigued with the long journey, and Henri, as he turned back each moment, saw that they could not keep up with him. “See, Madame,” said he, “how my horse outstrips yours, and yet I am holding him in with all my strength; for Heaven’s sake, Madame, while there is yet time, if you will not ride with me, take my horse and leave me yours!”

"No, thank you, Monsieur," replied she, in her usual calm voice.

"But, Madame," cried Henri, in despair, "the water gains on us! Do you hear? Do you hear?"

Indeed, a horrible crashing was now heard; it was the dike of a neighboring village giving way to swell the inundation. Boards and props had yielded; a double row of stakes broke with a noise like thunder; and the water, rushing over the ruins, began to invade an oak wood, of which they saw the tops trembling, and heard the branches cracking as though a flight of demons were passing under the leaves.

The uprooted trees knocking against the stakes, the wood of ruined houses floating on the waters, the distant neighings and cries of horses and men carried away by the inundation, formed a concert of sounds so strange and gloomy that the terror which agitated Henri began to seize also upon Diane. She spurred her horse, and he, as if he understood the danger, redoubled his efforts. But the water gained on them, and before ten minutes it was evident that it would reach them. Every instant Henri stopped to wait for his companions, and cried, "Quicker, Madame, for pity's sake! The water comes; here it is!"

It came, indeed, foaming and turbulent, carrying away like a feather the house in which they had taken shelter; and majestic, immense, rolling like a serpent, it arrived like a wall behind the horses of Rémy and Diane. Henri uttered a cry of terror, and turned against the water, as though he would have fought it. "You see you are lost!" he screamed. "Come, Madame, perhaps there is still time; come with me!"

"No, Monsieur," said she.

"In a minute it will be too late; look!" cried he.

Diane turned; the water was within fifty feet of her.

“Let my fate be accomplished,” said she; “you, Monsieur, fly.”

Rémy's horse, exhausted, fell, and could not rise again, despite the efforts of his rider.

“Save her in spite of herself!” cried Rémy.

At that moment, as he disengaged himself from the stirrups, the water passed over the head of the faithful servant. His mistress, at this sight, uttered a terrible cry, and jumped off her horse resolved to die with Rémy. But Henri, seeing her intention, dismounted at the same time, seized her round the waist, and remounting, placed her before him, and set off like an arrow.

“Rémy! Rémy!” she cried, extending her arms. A cry was the only answer. Rémy had come up to the surface, and with the indomitable hope which accompanies the dying man to the last, was swimming, sustained by a beam. By his side came his horse, beating the water desperately with his feet; while the water gained on Diane's horse, and some twenty feet in front Henri and Diane flew on the third horse, which was mad with terror.

Rémy scarcely regretted life, since he hoped that his loved mistress would be saved. “Adieu, Madame!” he cried. “I go first to him who waits for us, to tell him that you live for—”

He could not finish; a mountain of water rolled over his head.

“Rémy, Rémy!” cried the lady, “I wish to die with you! I will, Monsieur, I will go to him! in the name of God, I will!”

She pronounced these words with so much energy and angry authority that the young man unfolded his arms, and let her slip to the ground, saying, “Well, Madame, we will all three die here together. It is a joy I had not hoped for.”

As he said these words, he stopped his horse, and the water reached them almost immediately ; but by a last effort of love, the young man kept hold of Diane's arm as she stood on the ground. The flood rolled over them. It was a sublime spectacle to see the coolness of the young man, whose entire bust was raised above the water, while he sustained Diane with one arm, and with the other guided the last efforts of his expiring horse.

There was a moment of terrible struggle, during which the lady, upheld by Henri, kept her head above water, while with his left hand he kept off the floating wood and the corpses which would have struck against them.

One of the bodies floating past sighed out, "Adieu, Madame!"

"Heavens!" cried Henri, "it is Rémy!" And without calculating the danger of the additional weight, he seized him by his sleeve, drew him up, and enabled him to breathe freely. But the exhausted horse now sank in the water to its neck, then to its eyes, and finally disappeared altogether.

"We must die," murmured Henri. "Madame, my life and soul belonged to you."

As he spoke, he felt Rémy slip from him, and he no longer tried to retain him ; it was useless. His only care was to sustain Diane above the water, that she at least might die the last, and that he might be able to say to himself in his last moments that he had been able to contend with death for her. All at once a joyful cry sounded at his side ; he turned and saw Rémy, who had found a boat. That boat had belonged to the little house where they had taken shelter, and the water had carried it away. Rémy, who had regained his strength, thanks to Henri's assistance, had seized the boat as it floated past. The oars were tied to it, and a boat-hook lay in

the bottom. He held out the boat-hook to Henri, who seized it, and drawing Diane with him, raised her over his shoulders, and passed her to Rémy, and then climbed in himself. The first rays of the rising sun showed them the plains inundated, and the boat swimming like an atom on that ocean covered with wrecks. Towards the left rose a little hill, completely surrounded by water, looking like an island in the midst of the sea. Henri took the oars and rowed towards it, while Rémy, with the boat-hook, occupied himself in keeping off the beams and wrecks which might have struck against them. Thanks to Henri's strength and Rémy's skill, they reached, or rather were thrown against, the hill. Rémy jumped out, and seizing the chain, drew the boat towards him. Henri approached to take the lady in his arms; but she extended her hand, and rising unaided, stepped on the ground. Henri breathed a sigh. For a moment he had the idea of throwing himself into the abyss and dying before her eyes. But an irresistible sentiment chained him to life so long as he could see that woman, whose presence he had so long wished for in vain. He drew up the boat and seated himself a little way from Diane and Rémy. They were saved from the most menacing danger, for the inundation, however strong, could never reach to the summit of the hill. Below them they could see that great angry waste of waters, which seemed inferior in power only to God himself; and by the increasing light, they perceived that it was covered with the corpses of French soldiers and their horses.

Rémy had a wound in his shoulder, where a floating beam had struck against him; but Diane, thanks to Henri's protection, was free from all injury, although she was cold and wet. At last they noticed in the horizon on the eastern side something like fires burning on a

height which the water could not reach. As well as they could judge, they were about a league distant. Rémy advanced to the point of the hill, and said that he believed he saw, about a thousand feet from where they were, a sort of a jetty advancing in a direct line towards the fires. But they could see nothing clearly, and knew not well where they were, for though day was dawning, it came cloudily and full of fog. Had it been clear and under a pure sky, they might have seen the town of Malines, from which they were not more than two leagues distant.

“Well, Monsieur the Count,” said Rémy, “what do you think of those fires?”

“Those fires, which seem to you to announce a hospitable shelter, appear to me to be full of danger.”

“And why so?”

“Rémy,” said Henri, lowering his voice, “look at these corpses. They are all French; there is not one Fleming. They announce to us a great disaster. The dikes have been broken to finish the destruction of the French army, if it has been conquered; to nullify the victory, if they have been victors. Those fires are as likely to have been lighted by enemies as by friends, and may be simply a ruse to draw fugitives to destruction.”

“Nevertheless, we cannot stay here; my mistress will die of cold and hunger.”

“You are right, Rémy; remain here with Madame, and I will go to the jetty and return to you with news.”

“No, Monsieur,” said Diane, “you shall not expose yourself alone. We have been saved together; we will live or die together. Rémy, your arm; I am ready.”

Each word which she pronounced had so irresistible an accent of authority that no one thought of disputing it. Henri bowed, and walked first.

The water had become more tranquil ; the jetty formed with the hill a kind of bay, where the water slept. All three got into the little boat, which was once more launched among the wrecks and floating bodies. A quarter of an hour after, they touched the jetty. They tied the chain of the boat to a tree, landed once more, walked along the jetty for nearly an hour, and then arrived at a number of Flemish huts, among which, in a place planted with lime-trees, were two or three hundred soldiers sitting round a fire, above whom floated the French flag. Suddenly a sentinel, placed about one hundred feet from the bivouac, cried, "Qui vive?"

"France!" replied Bouchage. Then, turning to Diane, he said, "Now, Madame, you are saved. I recognize the standard of the gendarmes of Aunis, — a corps in which I have many friends."

At the cry of the sentinel and the answer of the count several gendarmes ran to meet the new-comers, — doubly welcome, in the midst of this terrible disaster, as survivors and compatriots. Henri was soon recognized ; he was eagerly questioned, and recounted the miraculous manner in which he and his companions had escaped death. Rémy and Diane had sat down silently in a corner ; but Henri brought them and made them come to the fire, for both were still dripping with water. "Madame," said he, "you will be respected here as in your own house. I have taken the liberty of calling you one of my relatives." And without waiting for the thanks of those whose lives he had saved, he went away to rejoin the officers.

The gendarmes of Aunis, of whom our fugitives were claiming hospitality, had retired in good order after the defeat and the retreat of the chiefs. Wherever there is similarity of position and sentiment, and the habit of

living together, it is common to find unanimity in execution as well as in thought. It had been so that night with the gendarmes of Aunis; for seeing their chiefs abandon them, they agreed together to draw their ranks closer, instead of breaking them. They therefore put their horses to the gallop, and under the conduct of one of the ensigns, whom they loved for his bravery and respected for his birth, they took the road to Brussels. Like all the actors in this terrible scene, they saw the progress of the inundation, and were pursued by the furious waters, but by good luck found in this spot a position strong both against men and water. The inhabitants, knowing themselves in safety, had not left their homes, and had sent off only their women, children, and old men to Brussels. Therefore the gendarmes met with resistance when they arrived; but death howled behind them, and they attacked like desperate men, triumphed over all obstacles, lost ten men, but established the others, and turned out the Flemings.

Such was the recital which Henri received from them. "And the rest of the army?" he asked.

"Look!" replied the ensign; "the corpses which pass each moment answer your question."

"But — my brother?" said Henri, in a choking voice.

"Alas, Monsieur the Count, we do not know. He fought like a lion, but he survived the battle; as to the inundation I cannot say."

Henri shook his head sadly, then, after a minute's pause, said, "And the duke?"

"Count, the duke fled one of the first. He was mounted on a white horse, with no spot but a black star on the forehead. Well, just now we saw the horse pass among a mass of wrecks; the foot of a rider was caught in the stirrup, and was borne above the water."

“Great God!”

“Great God!” echoed Rémy, who had drawn near and heard the tale.

“One of my men ventured down into the water and seized the reins of the floating horse, and drew it up sufficiently to enable us to see the white boot and gold spur that the duke wore. But the waters were rushing past, and the man was forced to let go to save himself, and we saw no more. We shall not even have the consolation of giving a Christian burial to our prince.”

“Dead! he also, the heir to the crown! What a disaster!”

Rémy turned to his mistress, and with an expression impossible to describe, said, “He is dead, Madame, you see.”

“I praise the Lord, who has spared me a crime,” said she, raising her eyes to heaven.

“Yes, but it prevents our vengeance.”

“Vengeance belongs to man only when God forgets.”

“But you yourself, Count,” said the ensign to Henri, “what are you about to do?”

The count started. “I?” said he.

“Yes.”

“I will wait here till my brother’s body passes,” replied he, gloomily; “then I will try to draw him to land. You may be sure that if once I hold him I shall not let go.”

Rémy looked pityingly at the young man; but Diane heard nothing, — she was praying.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TRANSFIGURATION.

AFTER her prayer Diane rose so beautiful and radiant that the count uttered a cry of surprise and admiration. She appeared to be waking out of a long sleep, of which the dreams had fatigued her and weighed upon her mind ; or rather, she was like the daughter of Jairus, called from death and rising from her funeral couch, already purified and ready for heaven. Awakening from her lethargy, she cast around her a glance so sweet and gentle, and filled with angelic kindness, that Henri began to believe he should see her feel for his pain, and yield to a sentiment of gratitude and pity if not of love. While the gendarmes, after their frugal repast, slept about among the ruins, while Rémy himself yielded to sleep, Henri came and sat down close to Diane, and in a voice so low and sweet that it seemed a murmur of the breeze, said, "Madame, you live. Oh, let me tell you all the joy which overflows my heart when I see you here in safety after having seen you on the threshold of the tomb !"

"It is true, Monsieur," replied she ; "I live through you, and," she added with a sad smile, "I wish I could say that I am grateful."

"But, Madame," replied Henri, with an immense effort, "if it is only that you are restored to those you love ?"

"What do you mean ?"

"To those you are going to rejoin through so many perils."

“Monsieur, those I loved are dead ! Those I am going to rejoin are so also.”

“Oh, Madame !” cried Henri, falling on his knees, “throw your eyes on me, — on me, who have suffered so much and loved so much. Oh, do not turn away ! You are young, and beautiful as the angels in heaven. Read my heart, which I open to you, and you will see that it contains not an atom of that love that most men feel. You do not believe me ! Examine the past hours ; which of them has given me joy, or even hope ? yet I have persevered. You made me weep ; I drank my tears. You made me suffer ; I devoured my sufferings. You drove me to seek death ; and I went to meet it without a complaint. Even at this moment, when you turn away your head, when each of my words, burning as they are, seems a drop of iced water falling on your heart, my soul is full of you, and I live only because you live. Just now was I not ready to die with you ? What have I asked for ? Nothing. Have I touched your hand ? Never, but to draw you from a mortal peril. I held you in my arms to draw you from the waves, — nothing more. All in me has been purified by the devouring fire of my love.”

“Oh, Monsieur ! for pity’s sake do not speak thus to me !”

“Oh, in pity do not condemn me ! He told me you loved no one ; oh, repeat to me this assurance ! It is a singular favor for a man in love to ask to be told that he is not loved ; but I prefer to know that you are insensible to all. Oh, Madame, you who are the only adoration of my life, reply to me !”

In spite of Henri’s prayers a sigh was the only answer.

“You say nothing,” continued the count ; “Rémy at least had more pity for me, for he tried to console me. Oh, I see you will not reply, because you do not wish to

tell me that you came to Flanders to rejoin some one happier than I ; and yet I am young, and am ready to die at your feet."

"Monsieur the Count," replied Diane, with majestic solemnity, "do not say to me those things that are said to women ; I belong to another world, and do not live in this. Had I seen you less noble, less good, less generous ; had I not for you in the bottom of my heart the tender feeling of a sister for a brother, — I should say, 'Rise, Count, and do not importune with love my ears, which hold it in horror.' But I do not say so, Count, because I suffer in seeing you suffer. I say more : now that I know you I will take your hand and place it on my heart, and I will say to you willingly, 'See, my heart beats no more ; live near me if you like, and assist day by day, if such be your pleasure, at this painful execution of a body which is being killed by the tortures of the soul.' But this sacrifice, which you would accept as a happiness, I am sure —"

"Oh, yes !" cried Henri, eagerly.

"Well, this sacrifice I ought to forbid. This very day a change has taken place in my life. I have no longer the right to lean on any human arm, — not even on the arm of that generous friend, that noble creature, who lies there, and for a time finds the happiness of forgetfulness. Alas ! poor Rémy," continued she, with the first note of sensibility that Henri had remarked in her voice, "your waking will also be sad. You do not know the progress of my thought ; you cannot read in my eyes that you will soon be alone, and that alone I go to God."

"What do you mean, Madame ? Do you also wish to die ?"

Rémy, awakened by the cry of the young count, began to listen.

“You saw me pray, did you not?” said Diane.

“Yes,” answered Henri.

“This prayer was my adieu to earth. The joy that you remarked on my face, — the joy that fills me even now, — is the same you would see in me if the angel of death were to come and say to me, ‘Rise, Diane, and follow me.’”

“Diane, Diane! now I know your name, — Diane, cherished name!” murmured the young man.

“Oh, silence!” said the young woman; “forget this name which escaped me. No living person has the right to pierce my heart by pronouncing it.”

“Oh, Madame, do not tell me you are going to die!”

“I do not say that,” she replied in her grave voice. “I say that I am about to leave this world of tears, of hatreds, of bad passions, of vile interests and desires. I say that I have nothing more to do among the beings whom God created my fellow-mortals. I have no more tears in my eyes, no more blood in my heart, no more thought in my mind, — since the thought that filled it altogether is dead. I am a worthless offering, — for in renouncing the world I sacrifice nothing, neither desires nor hopes; but such as I am I offer myself to my God, and he will accept me, — he who has made me suffer so much, and yet kept me from sinking under it.”

Rémy, who had heard this, rose slowly, and said, “You abandon me?”

“For God,” said Diane, raising her thin white hand to heaven.

“It is true,” said Rémy, sadly; and seizing her hand he pressed it to his breast.

“Oh, what am I by these two hearts?” said Henri.

“You are,” replied Diane, “the only human creature, except Rémy, on whom I have looked twice for years.”

Henri knelt. "Thanks, Madame," said he; "I bow to my destiny. You belong to God; I cannot be jealous of God."

As he rose, they heard the sound of trumpets on the plain, still covered with vapors which were clearing from moment to moment. The gendarmes seized their arms and were on horseback at once.

Henri listened. "Gentlemen," cried he, "those are the admiral's trumpets; I know them. Oh, God, may they announce my brother!"

"You see that you still wish for something," said Diane, "and still love some one. Why, then, should you choose despair, like those who desire nothing, — like those who love no one?"

"A horse!" cried Henri. "Who will lend me a horse?"

"But the water is still all around us," said the ensign.

"But you see that the plain is practicable. They must be advancing, since we hear their trumpets."

"Mount to the top of the bank, Monsieur the Count. The sky is clear; perhaps you will see."

Henri climbed up. The trumpets continued to sound at intervals, but were seemingly stationary.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TWO BROTHERS.

A QUARTER of an hour after, Henri returned ; he had seen a considerable detachment of French troops intrenched on a hill at some distance. Excepting in a large ditch, which surrounded the place occupied by the gendarmes of Aunis, the water had begun to disappear from the plain, — the natural slope of the ground in the immediate neighborhood making the waters run towards the sea, — and several points of earth, higher than the rest, began to reappear. The slimy mud brought by the rolling waters had covered the whole country ; and it was a sad spectacle to see, as the wind cleared the mist, a number of horsemen stuck in the mud, and trying vainly to reach either of the hills. From the other hill, on which the flag of France waved, their cries of distress had been heard, and that was why the trumpets had sounded. The gendarmes now sounded their cornets, and were answered by the firing of muskets in joyful recognition.

About eleven o'clock the sun appeared over this scene of desolation, drying some parts of the plain, and rendering practicable a kind of road. Henri, who tried it first, found that it led by a *détour* from where they were to the opposite hill, and he believed that though his horse might sink to a certain extent, he would not sink altogether. He therefore determined to try it, and recommending Diane and Rémy to the care of the ensign, set off on his perilous way. At the same time that he started, they

could see a cavalier leave the opposite hill, and, like Henri, try the road. All the soldiers seemed trying to stop him by their supplications. The two men pursued their way courageously, and soon perceived that their task was less difficult than had been feared. A small stream of water, escaped from a broken aqueduct, washed over the path, and little by little was clearing away the mud. The cavaliers were within two hundred feet of each other.

“France!” cried the one who came from the opposite hill, at the same time raising his hat, which had a white plume in it.

“Oh, it is you!” cried Henri, with a burst of joy.

“You, Henri! you, my brother!” cried the other.

And they set off as quickly as their horses could manage to go, and soon, among the frantic acclamations of the spectators on each side, embraced long and tenderly. Immediately, all — gendarmes and light-horse, Huguenots and Catholics — rushed along the road, pioneered by the two brothers. Soon the two camps were joined, and there, where they had thought to find death, nearly three thousand Frenchmen cried, “Thank God!” and “Vive la France!”

“Gentlemen,” said a Huguenot officer, “it is ‘Long live the admiral!’ you should cry, for it is to M. de Joyeuse alone that we now owe the happiness of embracing our countrymen.”

Immense acclamations followed this speech. The two brothers talked for some time, and then Joyeuse asked Henri if he had heard news of the duke.

“It appears he is dead,” replied Henri.

“Is that certain?”

“The gendarmes saw his horse drowned, and a rider, whose head was under water, dragged by the stirrup.”

“It has been a sad day for France,” said Joyeuse. Then, turning to his men, he said, “Come, gentlemen, let us not lose time. Once the waters have retired, we shall probably be attacked. Let us intrench ourselves until the arrival of news and food.”

“But, Monseigneur,” said a voice, “the horses have eaten nothing since four o’clock yesterday, and are dying with hunger.”

“We have corn in our encampment,” said the ensign, “but what shall we do for the men?”

“Oh!” said Joyeuse, “if there be corn, that is all I ask; the men must live like the horses.”

“Brother,” said Henri, “I want a little conversation with you.”

“Go back to your place; choose a lodging for me, and wait for me there.”

Henri went back.

“We are now in the midst of an army,” said he to Rémy; “hide yourselves in the lodging I will show you, and do not let Madame be seen by any one.”

Rémy installed himself with Diane in the lodging pointed out. About two o’clock the Duc de Joyeuse entered, with his trumpets blowing, lodged his troops, and gave strict injunctions to prevent disorder. He distributed barley to the men, and hay to the horses, and to the wounded some wine and beer which had been found in the cellars, and himself, in sight of all, dined on a piece of black bread and a glass of water. Everywhere he was received as a deliverer with cries of gratitude.

“Now,” said he to his brother, when they were alone, “let the Flemings come, and I will beat them, and even, if this goes on, eat them; for in truth I am very hungry, and this is miserable stuff,” added he, throwing into a corner the piece of bread which in public he had

been eating so enthusiastically. "But now, Henri, tell me how it happens that I find you in Flanders when I thought you in Paris."

"My brother," said Henri, "life became insupportable to me at Paris, and I set out to join you in Flanders."

"All from love?" asked Joyeuse.

"No, from despair. Now, Anne, I am no longer in love; my passion is sadness."

"My brother, permit me to tell you that you have chosen a miserable woman. Virtue that cares not for the sufferings of others is barbarous, — is a want of Christian charity."

"Oh, my brother, do not calumniate virtue."

"I do not calumniate virtue, Henri; I accuse vice, that is all. I repeat that this is a miserable woman, and not worth all the torments she makes you suffer. Oh, *mon Dieu!* in such a case you should use all your strength and all your power, Henri. In your place, I should have taken her house by assault, and then herself; and when she was conquered, and came to throw her arms round my neck and say, 'Henri, I adore you,' I should have repulsed her, and said, 'You do well, Madame; it is your turn. I have suffered enough for you — to suffer also.'"

Henri seized his brother's hand. "You do not mean a word of what you say," said he.

"Yes, on my honor."

"You, so good, so generous!"

"Generosity with heartless people is folly."

"Oh, Joyeuse, Joyeuse, you do not know this woman!"

"No, I do not wish to know her."

"Why not?"

"Because she would make me commit what others would call a crime, but which I should call an act of justice."

“Oh, my good brother, how happy you are not to be in love! But, if you please, let us leave my foolish love, and talk of other things.”

“So be it; I do not like to talk of your folly.”

“You see we want provisions.”

“Yes; and I have thought of a way to obtain them.”

“What is it?”

“I cannot leave here until I have certain news of the army, — for the position is good, and I could defend myself against five times our number; but I can send out a body of scouts, and they will bring news, and provisions also, for Flanders is a fine country.”

“Not very, Brother.”

“I speak of it as God made it, and not men, who eternally spoil the works of God. Do you know, Henri, what folly this prince has committed, — what this unlucky François has lost through pride and precipitation? His soul is gone to God, so let us be silent; but in truth he might have acquired immortal glory and one of the most beautiful kingdoms in Europe, while he has, on the contrary, aided no one but William of Orange. But do you know, Henri, that the Antwerpians fought well?”

“And you also, so they say, Brother.”

“Yes, it was one of my good days; and besides there was something that excited me.”

“What was it?”

“I met on the field of battle a sword that I knew.”

“French?”

“Yes, French.”

“In the ranks of the Flemings?”

“At their head, Henri; this is a secret which forms a sequel to Salcède’s business.”

“However, dear brother, here you are safe and sound,

to my great joy. But I, who have done nothing yet, must do something also."

"And what will you do?"

"Give me the command of your scouts, I beg."

"No, it is too dangerous, Henri; I would not say so before strangers, but I do not wish you to die an obscure death. The scouts may meet with some of those rascally Flemings who fight with flails and scythes; you kill a thousand of them, and the last cuts you in two or disfigures you. No, Henri; if you will die, let it be a more glorious death than that."

"My brother, grant me what I ask, I beg; I promise you to be prudent, and to return here."

"Well, I understand."

"What?"

"You wish to try if the fame of a brave action will not soften the heart of this ferocious tigress. Confess that that is what makes you insist on it."

"I will confess it if you wish, Brother."

"Well, you are right. Women who resist a great love sometimes yield to a little noise."

"I do not hope that."

"If you do it without this hope, you are mad. Henri, seek no more reasons for this woman's refusal than that she has neither eyes nor heart."

"You give me the command, Brother?"

"I must, if you will have it so."

"Can I go to-night?"

"It is absolutely necessary, Henri; you understand that we cannot wait long."

"How many men do you give me?"

"A hundred; not more. I cannot weaken my force here, you know, Henri."

"Fewer, if you like, Brother."

“No, I would wish to give you double. Only promise me, on your honor, that if you meet with more than three hundred men, you will retreat instead of getting killed.”

“My brother,” said Henri, smiling, “you sell your glory very dear.”

“Then I will neither sell nor give it to you; and another officer shall command.”

“My brother, give your orders and I will execute them.”

“You will only engage with equal, double, or triple forces,—not with more?”

“I swear it.”

“Very well; now, what men would you like to take?”

“Let me take one hundred of the gendarmes of Aunis; I have plenty of friends there, and can choose whom I like.”

“That will do.”

“When shall I set out?”

“At once. Take one day’s rations for the men, and two for the horses. Remember, I want speedy and certain news.”

“I go, Brother; are there any other orders?”

“Do not spread the news of the duke’s death; let it be believed he is here. Exaggerate my strength, and if you find the duke’s body, although he was a bad man and a poor general, yet as he belonged to the royal House of France, have it put in an oak coffin and brought back by your men, that he may be buried at St. Denis.”

“Good, Brother; now is this all?”

“All! but promise me once more, Henri, you are not deceiving me,—you will not seek death?”

“No, Brother. I had that thought when I came to join you; but I have it no longer.”

“And when did it leave you?”

“Three hours ago.”

“On what occasion?”

“Excuse me, Brother.”

“Of course, Henri ; your secrets are your own.”

“Oh, how good you are, Brother!”

And the young men, once more embracing each other, separated, not without turning to salute each other with smiles and gestures.

CHAPTER XX.

THE EXPEDITION.

HENRI, full of joy, hastened to Diane and Rémy. "Get ready; in a quarter of an hour we set out," said he. "You will find two horses saddled at the door of the little wooden staircase leading to this corridor; join my suite and say nothing."

Then, going out on the balcony, he cried, "Trumpet of the gendarmes, sound the call!"

The call was quickly heard; and all the gendarmes ranged themselves round the house.

"Gendarmes," said Henri, "my brother has given me, for the time, the command of your company, and has ordered me to set out to-night to obtain provisions and information as to the movements of the enemy; and one hundred of you are to accompany me. The mission is dangerous, but necessary for the safety of all. Who are willing to go?"

The whole three hundred offered themselves.

"Gentlemen," said Henri, "I thank you all. You have rightly been called the example to the army, but I can take only one hundred; and as I do not wish to choose, let chance decide. Monsieur," continued he, to the ensign, "draw lots, if you please."

While this procedure was going on, Joyeuse gave his last instructions to his brother. "Listen, Henri," said he; "the country is drying, and there is a communication between Conticq and Rupelmonde; you will march be-

tween a river and a stream, — the Scheldt and the Rupel. I trust that there will be no necessity for you to go as far as Rupelmonde to find provisions. My men took three peasants prisoners ; I give one of them to you for a guide. But no false pity ; at the least appearance of treason shoot him without mercy.”

He then tenderly embraced his brother, and gave the order for departure. The one hundred men drawn by lots were ready, and the guide was placed between two, with pistols in their hands, while Rémy and his companion mingled with the others. Henri gave no directions about them, thinking that curiosity was already quite sufficiently aroused about them, without augmenting it by precautions more dangerous than salutary. He himself did not stay by them, but rode at the head of his company. Their march was slow, for often the ground nearly gave way under them, and they sank in the mud. Sometimes figures were seen flying over the plain ; they were peasants who had been rather too quick in returning to their homes, and who fled at the sight of the enemy. Sometimes, however, they were unfortunate Frenchmen, half dead with cold and hunger, who, in their uncertainty whether they were to meet with friends or enemies, preferred to wait for daylight to continue their painful journey.

They made two leagues in three hours, which brought the adventurous band to the banks of the Rupel, along which a stony road ran. But here danger succeeded to difficulty ; two or three horses lost their footing on the slimy stones, and rolled with their riders into the still rapid waters of the river. More than once also, from some boat on the opposite bank, shots were fired, and one man was killed at Diane's side. She manifested regret for the man, but no fear for herself. Henri in these

different circumstances showed himself to be a worthy captain and true friend ; he rode first, telling all the men to follow in his steps, trusting less to his own sagacity than to that of the horse his brother had given him. Three leagues from Rupelmonde the gendarmes came upon six French soldiers sitting by a turf-fire ; the unfortunates were cooking some horse-flesh, — the only food they had had for two days. The approach of the gendarmes caused great trouble among the guests at this sad feast. Two or three rose to fly ; but the others stopped them, saying, “ If they are enemies, they can but kill us, and all will be over.”

“ France ! France ! ” cried Henri.

On recognizing their countrymen, the soldiers ran to them, and received from them cloaks and something to drink ; they were also allowed to mount behind the valets, and in this manner they accompanied the detachment. Half a league farther on they met four men of the fourth light-horse, with, however, only one horse ; they were also welcomed.

At last they arrived on the banks of the Scheldt. The night was dark ; and the gendarmes found two men who were trying, in bad Flemish, to obtain from a boatman a passage to the other side, which he refused. The ensign, who understood Dutch, advanced softly, and heard the boatman say, “ You are French, and shall die here ; you shall not cross.”

“ It is you who shall die, if you do not take us over at once,” replied one of the men, drawing his dagger.

“ Keep firm, Monsieur,” cried the ensign, “ we will come to your aid.”

But as the two men turned at these words, the boatman loosened the rope, and pushed rapidly from the shore. One of the gendarmes, however, knowing how

useful this boat would be, went into the stream on his horse and fired at the boatman, who fell. The boat was left without a guide, but the current brought it back again towards the bank. The two strangers seized it at once and got in. That haste to isolate themselves astonished the ensign. "Gentlemen," said he, "who are you, if you please?"

"Gentlemen, we are marine officers; and you are gendarmes of Aunis, apparently."

"Yes, gentlemen, and very happy to have served you; will you not accompany us?"

"Willingly."

"Get into the wagons, then, if you are too tired to follow us on foot."

"May we ask where you are going?" said one.

"Monsieur, our orders are to push on to Rupelmonde."

"Take care," he replied; "we did not cross the river sooner, because this morning a detachment of Spaniards passed, coming from Antwerp. At sunset we thought we might venture, for two men inspire no inquietude; but you, a whole troop—"

"It is true; I will call our chief."

Henri approached, and asked what was the matter.

"These gentlemen met this morning a detachment of Spaniards following the same road as ourselves."

"How many were they?"

"About fifty."

"And does that stop you?"

"No; but I think it would be well to secure the boat, in case we should wish to cross the river. It will hold twenty men, and in five trips, leading the horses by the bridle, the operation would be completed."

"Good! let us keep the boat. There should be some houses at the junction of the Scheldt and Rupel?"

“There is a village,” said a voice.

“We will go there. The angle formed by the junction of two rivers is a good position. Gendarmes, forward ! Let two men descend the stream with the boat while we go along the bank.”

“We will bring the boat if you will let us,” said one of the two officers.

“If you wish it, gentlemen ; but do not lose sight of us, and come to us in the village.”

“But if we abandon the boat some one will take it ?”

“You will find ten men waiting, to whom you can deliver it.”

“It is well,” said one, and they pushed off from the shore.

“It is singular,” said Henri ; “but I fancy I know that voice.”

An hour after, they arrived at the village, which was occupied by the fifty Spaniards ; but they, taken by surprise, made little resistance. Henri had them disarmed and shut up in the strongest house in the village, and left ten men to guard them. Ten more were sent to guard the boat, and ten others placed as sentinels, with the promise of being relieved in an hour. Henri then decided that they should take supper by twenties, in the house opposite to that in which the Spanish prisoners were confined. The supper for the first fifty or sixty was ready. It was that of the party they had captured. Henri chose a separate room for Rémy and Diane. He then placed the ensign at table with seventeen men, telling him to invite the two naval officers when they arrived. He next went out to look for accommodation for the rest of the men ; and when he returned in half an hour he found them waiting supper for him. Some had fallen asleep on their chairs ; but his entrance roused them.

The table, covered with cheese, pork, and bread, with a pot of beer by each man, would have had a tempting appearance even to men who had not been in want for twenty-four hours. Henri sat down and told them to begin. "By the way," said he, "have the strangers arrived?"

"Yes; there they are at the end of the table."

Henri looked and saw them in the darkest part of the room.

"Gentlemen," said he, "you are badly placed, and I think you are not eating."

"Thanks, Monsieur the Count," said one, "we are very tired, and more in need of rest than food. We told your officers so, but they insisted, saying that it was your orders that we should sup with you. We feel the honor; but if, nevertheless, instead of keeping us longer, you would give us a room —"

"Is that also the wish of your companion?" said Henri; and he looked at this companion, whose hat was pushed down over his eyes, and who had not yet spoken.

"Yes, Count," replied he, in a scarcely audible voice.

Henri rose, walked straight to the end of the table, while every one watched his movements and astonished look. "Monsieur," said he, to the one who had spoken first, "do me a favor."

"What is it, Monsieur the Count?"

"Tell me if you are not Aurilly's brother, or Aurilly himself?"

"Aurilly!" cried all.

"And let your companion," continued Henri, "raise his hat a little and let me see his face, or else I shall call him Monseigneur, and bow before him." And as he spoke, he bowed respectfully, hat in hand. The officer took off his hat.

“Monseigneur le Duc d’Anjou!” cried all. “The duke, living!”

“Faith! gentlemen,” replied he, “since you will recognize your conquered and fugitive prince, I shall not deny myself to you any longer. I am the Duc d’Anjou.”

“Vive Monseigneur!” cried all.

CHAPTER XXI.

PAULUS EMILIUS.

“OH, silence, gentlemen!” said the prince; “do not be more content than I am at my good fortune. I am enchanted not to be dead, you may well believe; and yet if you had not recognized me, I should not have been the first to boast of being alive.”

“What, Monseigneur!” cried Henri, “you recognized me, you found yourself among a troop of Frenchmen, and would have left us to mourn your loss, without undeceiving us?”

“Gentlemen, besides a number of reasons which made me wish to preserve my incognito, I confess that I should not have been sorry, since I was believed to be dead, to hear what funeral oration would have been pronounced over me.”

“Monseigneur!”

“Yes; I am like Alexander of Macedon. I make war like an artist, and have as much self-love; and I believe I have committed a fault.”

“Monseigneur,” said Henri, lowering his eyes, “do not say such things.”

“Why not? The pope only is infallible, and since Boniface VIII., even that has been disputed.”

“See to what you exposed us, Monseigneur, if any of us had given his opinion on this expedition, and it had been blamed.”

“Well, why not? Do you think I have not blamed myself, — not for having given battle, but for having lost it?”

“Monseigneur, this goodness frightens me; and will your Highness permit me to say that this gayety is not natural? I trust your Highness is not suffering.”

A terrible cloud passed over the prince’s face, making it as black as night. “No,” said he, “I was never better, thank God, than now, and I am glad to be among you all.”

The officers bowed.

“How many men have you, Bouchage?” asked he.

“One hundred, Monseigneur.”

“Ah! a hundred out of ten thousand; that is like the defeat at Cannæ. Gentlemen, they will send a bushel of your rings to Antwerp; but I doubt if the Flemish beauties could wear them, unless they had their fingers pared by their husbands’ knives, which, I must say, cut well.”

“Monseigneur,” replied Henri, “if our battle was like the battle of Cannæ, at least we are more lucky than the Romans, for we have preserved our Paulus Emilius!”

“On my life, gentlemen, the Paulus Emilius of Antwerp was Joyeuse; and doubtless, to preserve the resemblance with his heroic model to the end, your brother is dead, is he not, Bouchage?”

Henri felt wounded at this cold question.

“No, Monseigneur, he lives,” replied he.

“Ah, so much the better!” said the duke, with his icy smile. “What! our brave Joyeuse lives! Where is he, that I may embrace him?”

“He is not here, Monseigneur.”

“Ah! wounded?”

“No, Monseigneur; he is safe and sound.”

“But a fugitive like me, wandering, famished, and ashamed. Alas! the proverb is right: ‘For glory, the sword; after the sword, blood; after blood, tears.’”

“Monseigneur, I am happy to tell your Highness that my brother has been fortunate enough to save three thousand men, with whom he occupies a large village about seven leagues from here, and I am acting as scout for him.”

The duke grew pale. “Three thousand men! he has saved three thousand men! He is a Xenophon, and it is very fortunate for me that my brother sent him to me. It is not the Valois who can take for their motto ‘Hilariter.’”

“Oh, Monseigneur!” said Henri, sadly, seeing that this gayety hid a sombre and painful jealousy.

“It is true, is it not, Aurilly?” continued the duke. “I return to France like François after the battle of Pavia. ‘All is lost but honor.’ Ah, ah! I have discovered a motto for the House of France.”

A sad silence received these levities, more terrible than sobs.

“Monseigneur,” said Henri, “tell me how the tutelary genius of France saved your Highness.”

“Oh, dear count, the tutelary genius of France was at that moment occupied with something doubtless of more importance, and I had to save myself.”

“And how, Monseigneur?”

“By my legs.”

No smile welcomed this pleasantry, which the duke would certainly have punished with death if uttered by another.

“Yes, yes,” he continued; “how we ran! Did we not, my brave Aurilly?”

“Every one,” said Henri, “knows the calm bravery and military genius of your Highness, and we beg you not to distress us by attributing to yourself faults which you have not. The best general is not invincible, and Hannibal himself was conquered at Zama.”

“Yes, but Hannibal had won the battles of Trebia, Thrasymene, and Caunæ, while I have only won that of Cateau-Cambrésis; it is not enough to sustain the comparison.”

“But Monseigneur jests when he says he ran away.”

“No, I do not. *Pardieu!* do you see anything there to jest about, Bouchage?”

“Could any one have done otherwise?” said Aurilly.

“Hold your tongue, Aurilly! ask the shade of Saint-Aignan if it was necessary to run away.”

Aurilly hung his head.

“Ah! you others do not know the history of Saint-Aignan. I will tell it to you. Imagine, then, that when the battle was declared to be lost, he assembled five hundred horse, and instead of flying like the rest, came to me and said, ‘We must attack them, Monseigneur.’ ‘What! attack?’ said I. ‘You are mad, Saint-Aignan; they are a hundred to one.’ ‘Were they a thousand to one, I would attack them,’ replied he, with a hideous grimace. ‘Attack if you please,’ said I; ‘I do not.’ ‘Give me your horse, and take mine,’ said he. ‘Mine is fresh; yours is not. And as I do not mean to fly, any horse is good enough for me.’ And then he took my white horse and gave me his black one, saying, ‘Prince, that horse will go twenty leagues in four hours if you like.’ Then, turning to his men, he cried, ‘Come, gentlemen, follow me, all those who will not turn their backs;’ and he rode towards the enemy with a second grimace, more frightful than the first. He thought he should have met men, but he met

water instead, and Saint-Aignan and his paladins were lost. Had he listened to me, instead of performing that act of useless foolhardiness, we should have had him at this table, and he would not have been making, as he probably now is, a third grimace still uglier than the other two."

A thrill of horror ran through the assembly.

"This wretch has no heart," thought Henri. "Oh, why do his misfortune and his birth protect him from the words I long to say to him?"

"Gentlemen," said Aurilly, in a low voice, — for he felt the effect these words had produced, — "you see how Monseigneur is affected; do not heed what he says, for since his misfortune I think he really has moments of delirium."

"And so," continued the duke, emptying his glass, "that is how Saint-Aignan is dead and I am alive. However, in dying, he did me a last service, — for it was believed, as he rode my horse, that it was I who was dead; and this belief spread not only among the French, but among the Flemings, who consequently ceased their pursuit. But reassure yourselves, gentlemen, we shall have our revenge, and I am mentally organizing the most formidable army that ever existed."

"Meanwhile, Monseigneur," said Henri, "will your Highness take the command of my men? It is not fit that I should continue to command in presence of a son of France."

"So be it; and, first, I order every one to sup, particularly you, Bouchage, — you have eaten nothing."

"Monseigneur, I am not hungry."

"In that case, return to visit the posts. Tell the chiefs that I live, but beg them not to rejoice too openly until we gain a better citadel, or rejoin the army of our invin-

cible Joyeuse ; for I confess I do not wish to be taken now, after having escaped from fire and water."

"Monseigneur, you shall be strictly obeyed, and no one shall know excepting ourselves that we have the honor of your company among us."

"And these gentlemen will keep the secret?" said the duke, looking round.

All bowed, and Bouchage went out.

As we have seen, it required but a moment for this vagabond, this fugitive, this conquered runaway, to become again proud, careless, and imperious. To command a hundred men or a hundred thousand men, was still to command.

While Bouchage executed his orders with the best grace he could, François asked questions. He was astonished that a man of the rank of Bouchage had consented to take the command of this handful of men, and of such a perilous expedition. The duke was always suspicious, and asked questions therefore, learning that the admiral had yielded only to his brother's earnest request. It was the ensign who gave this information, — he who had been superseded in his command by Henri himself, as Henri had been by the duke.

The prince fancied he detected a slight irritation in this man's mind against Bouchage ; therefore he continued to interrogate him. "But," said he, "what was the count's reason for soliciting so earnestly such a poor command?"

"First, zeal for the service, no doubt."

"First! what else?"

"Ah, Monseigneur, I do not know."

"You deceive me ; you do know."

"Monseigneur, I can give only, even to your Highness, public reasons."

"You see," said the duke, turning to the others, "I

was quite right to hide myself, gentlemen, since there are in my army secrets from which I am excluded."

"Ah, Monseigneur," said the ensign, "you misunderstand me; there are no secrets but those which concern M. du Bouchage. Might it not be, for example, that while serving the general interests, he might have wished to render a service to some friend or relative by escorting him?"

"Who here is a friend or relative of the count? Tell me, that I may embrace him."

"Monseigneur," said Aurilly, mixing in the conversation, "I have discovered a part of the secret. This relative whom M. du Bouchage wished to escort is — a lady."

"Ah, ah! why did they not tell me so frankly? That dear Henri — it is quite natural. Let us shut our eyes to the relative, and speak of her no more."

"You had better not, Monseigneur, for there seems a great mystery."

"How so?"

"Yes, the lady, like the celebrated Bradamante, about whom I have so often sung to your Highness, disguises herself in the dress of a man."

"Oh, Monseigneur," cried the ensign, "M. du Bouchage seems to me to have a great respect for this lady, and probably would be very angry at any indiscretion."

"Doubtless, Monsieur; we will be as mute as sepulchres, — as mute as poor Saint-Aignan; only, if we see the lady, we will try not to make grimaces at her. Where is this lady, Aurilly?"

"Upstairs."

"Upstairs! what! in this house?"

"Yes, Monseigneur; but hush! here is M. du Bouchage."

"Hush!" said the prince, laughing.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DUC D'ANJOU SEARCHES HIS MEMORY.

HENRI, as he entered, could hear the ill-omened laugh of the prince, but he had not lived enough with him to know the danger that always lurked in his laugh. He could see also, by the uneasiness manifest on the faces of some, that the duke had entered on a hostile conversation in his absence, which had been interrupted by his return. But he could not suspect the subject of the conversation, and no one dared to tell him in the duke's presence. Besides, the duke, who had already formed his plan, kept Henri near him until all the other officers were gone. He then changed the distribution of the posts. Henri had established his quarters in that house, and had intended to send the ensign to a post near the river; but the duke now took Henri's place, and sent him where the ensign was to have been. Henri was not astonished, for the river was an important point. Before going, however, he wished to speak to the ensign, and recommend to his care the two persons under his protection, and whom he was forced for the time to abandon. But at the first word that Henri began to speak to him the duke interposed. "Secrets?" said he, with his peculiar smile.

The ensign had understood, when too late, the fault he had committed. "No, Monseigneur," he replied, "Monsieur the Count was only asking me how much powder we had left fit to use."

The answer had two aims, — the first, to turn away the duke's suspicions, if he had any; and the second, to let Bouchage know that he could count on a friend in him.

"Ah!" said the duke, forced to seem to believe what he was told.

And as he turned to the door, the ensign whispered to Henri, "The prince knows you are escorting some one."

Henri started, but it was too late. The duke remarked the start, and as if to assure himself that his orders were executed, he proposed to Henri to accompany him to his post, — a proposition to which Henri was obliged to consent. He wished to warn Rémy to be on his guard, but it was impossible; all he could do was to say to the ensign, "Watch well over the powder; watch it as I would myself, will you not?"

"Yes, Monsieur the Count," replied the young man.

On the way the duke said to Bouchage, "Where is this powder that you speak of?"

"In the house we have just left, your Highness."

"Oh, be easy, then, Bouchage; I know too well the importance of such an article in our situation, to neglect it. I will watch over it myself."

They said no more until they arrived. The duke, after giving Henri many charges not to leave his post, returned. He found Aurilly wrapped in an officer's cloak, sleeping on one of the seats in the dining-room. The duke woke him. "Come," said he.

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"Do you know what I mean?"

"Yes; the unknown lady, — the relative of M. du Bouchage."

"Good; I see that the fare of Brussels and the beer of Louvain have not clouded your intellect."

"Oh, no, Monseigneur, I am more ingenious than ever."

"Then call up all your imagination, and guess."

"Well, I guess that your Highness is curious."

"Ah, *parbleu* ! I always am ; but what is it that piques my curiosity just now ?"

"You wish to know who is the brave creature who has followed the MM. de Joyeuse through fire and water ?"

"You have just hit it, 'per mille pericula Martis !' as Margot would say. By the way, have you written to her, Aurilly ?"

"To whom, Monseigneur ?"

"To my sister Margot."

"Was I to write to her ?"

"Certainly."

"About what ?"

"To tell her that we are beaten, ruined, and that she must look out for herself, since Spain, disembarassed of me in the north, will fall on her in the south."

"Ah, true."

"You have not written ?"

"No, Monseigneur."

"You slept ?"

"Yes, I confess it ; but even if I had thought of it, with what could I have written ? I have here neither pen, paper, nor ink."

"Well, seek. 'Quære et invenies,' as it is written."

"How in the devil am I to find all that in the hut of a peasant, who probably did not know how to write ?"

"Seek, stupid ! if you do not find that, you will find —"

"What ?"

"Something else."

"Oh, fool that I was !" cried Aurilly. "Your Highness is right, — I am stupid ; but I am very sleepy, you see."

"Well, keep awake for a little while, and since you

have not written, I will write ; only go and seek what is necessary. Go, Aurilly, and do not come back till you have found it ; I will remain here."

"I go, Monseigneur."

"And if in your researches you discover that the house is picturesque, — you know how I admire Flemish interiors, Aurilly ?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"Well, call me."

"Immediately, Monseigneur ; be easy."

Aurilly rose, and with a step light as that of a bird, went up the staircase. In five minutes he returned to his master.

"Well ?" asked the latter.

"Well, Monseigneur, if I may believe appearances, the house is devilishly picturesque."

"How so ?"

"*Peste !* Monseigneur, because one cannot get in to look."

"What do you mean ?"

"I mean that it is guarded by a dragon."

"What foolish joke is this ?"

"Oh, Monseigneur, it is unfortunately not a foolish joke, but a sad truth. The treasure is on the first floor, in a room in which I can see light under the door."

"Well ?"

"Well ! before this door lies a man wrapped in a gray cloak."

"Oh, oh ! M. du Bouchage puts a gendarme at the door of his mistress ?"

"It is not a gendarme, Monseigneur, but some attendant of the lady or of the count."

"What kind of a man ?"

"Monseigneur, it was impossible to see his face ; but I

could distinctly see a large Flemish knife in his belt, and his hand on it."

"It is amusing; go and waken the fellow."

"Oh, no, Monseigneur!"

"Why not?"

"Why, without considering what the Flemish knife might do to me, I am not going to amuse myself with making mortal enemies of MM. de Joyeuse, who stand so well at court. If you had been king of this country, it might have passed; but now you must be gracious, above all, with those who saved you, and the Joyeuses have saved you. They will say so, whether you do or not."

"You are right, Aurilly, and yet — and yet —"

"I understand. Your Highness has not seen a woman's face for fifteen mortal days. I do not speak of the kind of animals who live here; they are males and females, but do not deserve to be called men and women."

"I wish to see this mistress of Bouchage; I wish to see her! Do you understand, Aurilly?"

"Well, Monseigneur, you may see her, — but not through the door."

"So be it; then I will see her through the window."

"Ah, that is a good idea! and I will go and look for a ladder for you."

Aurilly glided into the courtyard, and under a shed found what he wanted. He manœuvred it among horses and men so skilfully as to wake no one, and placed it in the street against the outer wall. It was necessary to be a prince, and sovereignly disdainful of vulgar scruples, to dare in the presence of the sentinel, who walked up and down before the door, to accomplish an action so audaciously insulting to Bouchage. Aurilly felt this, and pointed out the sentinel, who, now observing, called out "Qui vive?"

François shrugged his shoulders and walked up to him. "My friend," said he, "this place is the most elevated spot in the village, is it not?"

"Yes, Monseigneur," said the man, recognizing him; "and were it not for those lime-trees, we could see over a great part of the country."

"I thought so; and therefore I have brought a ladder," said the duke. "Go up, Aurilly, or rather, let me go up; I will see for myself."

"Where shall I place it?" said the hypocritical follower.

"Oh, anywhere; against that wall, for instance."

The sentinel walked off, and the duke mounted the ladder, Aurilly standing at the foot.

The room in which Henri had placed Diane was matted, and had a large oaken bed with serge curtains, a table, and a few chairs. Diane, whose heart seemed relieved from an enormous weight since she had heard the false news of the duke's death, had, almost for the first time since the hour in which she was informed of her father's death, eaten something more substantial than bread, and drunk a little wine. After this she grew sleepy, and Rémy had left her, and was sleeping outside her door, not because he had the least apprehension, but because such had been his habit ever since they had left Paris.

Diane herself slept with her elbow on the table and her head leaning on her hand. A little lamp burned on the table and illumined that interior which, on the first view, seemed so calm and peaceful, and in which a tempest had been stilled which was about to be aroused again. In the glass sparkled the Rhenish wine scarcely touched by Diane. She, with her eyes closed, her eyelids veined with azure, her mouth slightly opened, her hair thrown

back, looked like a sublime vision to the eyes that were violating the sanctity of her retreat. The duke, on perceiving her, could hardly repress his admiration, and leaned over to examine every detail of her ideal beauty. But all at once he frowned, came down two or three steps with a kind of nervous precipitation, and leaning back against the wall, crossed his arms and appeared to reflect. Aurilly watched him as he stood there, with a dreamy air, like a man trying to recall something forgotten. After a few minutes he remounted and looked in again, but apparently without succeeding in the discovery he sought, for the same shadow rested on his brow, and the same uncertainty remained in his glance. While he was in the midst of his researches, Aurilly called out eagerly from the foot of the ladder, "Quick ! quick ! Monseigneur, come down ! I hear steps."

The duke came down, but slowly, still searching his memory.

"It was time," said Aurilly.

"Whence comes the sound ?"

"From there," said Aurilly, pointing to a dark street.

"But the sound has ceased ; it is some spy watching us."

"Remove the ladder."

Aurilly obeyed ; and the prince seated himself on a stone bench near the door of the house. However, no one appeared, and they heard no more noise.

"Well, Monseigneur, is she beautiful ?" said Aurilly, on his return.

"Very beautiful," said the prince, abstractedly.

"What makes you sad, then ? Did she see you ?"

"No, she was asleep."

"Then what is the matter ?"

"Aurilly, it is strange, but I have seen that woman somewhere."

“ You recognized her, then ? ”

“ No, I could not think of her name ; but her face gave me a fearful shock. I cannot tell how it is ; but I believe I did wrong to look.”

“ However, just on account of the impression she has made on you, we must find out who she is.”

“ Certainly we must.”

“ Seek well in your memory, Monseigneur ; is it at court you have seen her ? ”

“ No, I think not.”

“ In France, Navarre, Flanders ? ”

“ No.”

“ A Spaniard perhaps ? ”

“ I do not think so.”

“ An English lady, one of Queen Elizabeth’s ? ”

“ No, she should be connected with my life in a more intimate manner ; I think that she appeared to me in some terrible scene.”

“ Then you would have recognized her at once ; you have not seen many such scenes.”

“ Do you think so ? ” said the duke, with a gloomy smile. “ Now,” continued he, “ that I am sufficiently master of myself to analyze my sensations, I feel that this woman is beautiful, but with the beauty of death, — beautiful as a shade, as a figure in a dream ; and I have had two or three frightful dreams in my life, which left me cold at the heart. Well, now I am sure that it was in one of those dreams that I saw that woman.”

“ Your Highness is not generally so susceptible ; if I did not feel the weight of watching eyes from yonder street, I would mount in my turn and look.”

“ Faith ! you are right, Aurilly. What does it matter whether we are watched or not ? Get the ladder ; place it, and go up and look.”

Aurilly had already taken some steps forward to obey his master, when a hasty step was heard, and Henri's voice, crying, "Alarm, Monseigneur! alarm!"

"You here?" said the duke, while Aurilly bounded back to his side; "you here, Count? On what pretext have you left your post?"

"Monseigneur," replied Henri, firmly, "your Highness can punish me if you think proper; meanwhile, my duty was to come here, and I came."

The duke glanced towards the window. "Your duty, Count? Explain that to me," said he.

"Monseigneur, horsemen have been seen on the Spanish side of the river, and we do not know whether they are friends or enemies."

"Numerous?" asked the duke, anxiously.

"Very numerous, Monseigneur."

"Well, Count, no false bravery; you have done well to return. Awake the gendarmes and let us decamp; it will be the most prudent plan."

"Doubtless, Monseigneur; but it will be necessary, I think, to warn my brother."

"Two men will do."

"Then I will go with a gendarme."

"No, no, Bouchage; you must come with us. *Peste!* it is not at such a moment that I can part with a defender like you."

"When does your Highness set out?" said Henri, bowing.

"At once, Count."

"Holloa, some one!" cried Henri.

The young ensign came out immediately from the dark street. Henri gave his orders, and soon the place was filled with gendarmes preparing for departure. Among them the duke talked with his officers. "Gentlemen,"

said he, "the Prince of Orange is pursuing me, it seems ; but it is not proper that a son of France should be taken prisoner. Let us, therefore, yield to numbers, and fall back upon Brussels. I shall be sure of life and liberty while I remain among you."

Then, turning to Aurilly, "You remain," said he. "This woman cannot follow us. Joyeuse will not dare to bring her with him in my presence. Besides, we are not going to a ball, and the race we shall run would fatigue a lady."

"Where are you going, Monseigneur?"

"To France ; I think my business is over, here."

"But to what part of France? Does Monseigneur think it prudent to return to court?"

"No ; I shall stop at one of my châteaux, — Château-Thierry, for example."

"Has your Highness decided on that?"

"Yes ; Château-Thierry suits me in all respects ; it is a good distance from Paris, about twenty-eight leagues, and I can watch from there MM. de Guise, who are half the year at Soissons. So bring the beautiful unknown to Château-Thierry."

"But, Monsieur, perhaps she will not be brought."

"Nonsense ; since Bouchage accompanies me, and she follows him, it will be quite natural."

"But she may wish to go somewhere else, if she sees that I wish to bring her to you."

"I repeat that it is not to me that you are to bring her, but to the count. Really, one would think it was the first time you had aided me in such circumstances. Have you money?"

"I have the two *rouleaux* of gold that you gave me when you left camp."

"Well, by any and every method, bring me the lady to

Château-Thierry ; perhaps when I see her nearer I shall recognize her."

"And the man also?"

"Yes, if he is not troublesome."

"But if he is?"

"Do with him what you would do with a stone which is in your way, — throw him into a ditch."

"Good, Monseigneur."

While the two conspirators formed their plans, Henri went up and woke Rémy. Rémy knocked at the door in a peculiar manner, and it was almost immediately opened by Diane. Behind Rémy she perceived Henri.

"Good-evening, Monsieur," said she, with a smile which had long been foreign to her face.

"Oh, pardon me, Madame," said Henri, "for intruding on you ; but I come to make my adieux."

"Your adieux, Count ? You are going ?"

"To France, Madame."

"And you leave us ?"

"I am forced to do so ; my duty is to obey the prince."

"The prince ! is there a prince here ?" asked Rémy.

"Yes, M. le Duc d'Anjou, who was believed dead, and who has been miraculously saved, has joined us."

Diane uttered a terrible cry, and Rémy turned as pale as though he had been suddenly struck with death.

"Repeat to me," stammered Diane, "that the Duc d'Anjou is living ; that the Duc d'Anjou is here."

"Had he not been here, Madame, and ordered me to follow him, I should have accompanied you to the convent into which you tell me you are about to retire."

"Yes, yes," said Rémy ; "the convent ;" and he put his finger on his lip.

"I would have accompanied you the more willingly,

Madame," said Henri, "because I fear that you may be annoyed by the prince's people."

"How so?"

"Yes; I believe that he knows there is a lady here; and he thinks, doubtless, that she is a friend of mine."

"And what makes you think so?"

"Our young ensign saw him place a ladder against this window, and look in."

"Oh!" cried Diane; "*mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*"

"Reassure yourself, Madame; he heard him say that he did not know you. Besides, the duke is going to set off at once; in a quarter of an hour you will be alone and free. Permit me to salute you with respect, and to tell you once more that till my last sigh my heart will beat for you and with you. Adieu, Madame, adieu." And the count, bowing, took two steps back.

"No, no!" cried Diane, wildly, "no, God cannot have done this! No, God had killed that man; he cannot have brought him to life again! No, Monsieur, you must be wrong; he is dead!"

At this moment, as if in reply, the duke's voice was heard calling from below, "Count, we are waiting for you."

"You hear him, Madame," said Henri. "For the last time, adieu."

And pressing Rémy's hand, he flew down the staircase. Diane approached the window trembling, and with a convulsive shudder, like the bird fascinated by the serpent of the Antilles. She saw the duke on horseback, and the light of the torches held by the gendarmes fell on his face.

"Oh, he lives! the demon lives!" murmured she; "and we must live also. He is setting out for France; so be it, Rémy, we also must go to France."

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW AURILLY EXECUTED THE COMMISSION OF THE
DUC D'ANJOU.

To the confusion occasioned by the departure of the troops a profound silence succeeded. When Rémy believed the house to have been entirely deserted, he went down to prepare for his departure and that of Diane ; but on opening the door of the room below, he was much surprised to see a man sitting by the fire with his face turned towards him. The man was evidently watching for Rémy's departure, although on seeing him he assumed an appearance of profound indifference. Rémy approached, according to his custom, with a slow, halting step, and uncovering his head, bald like that of an old man. The other had the fire behind him, so that Rémy could not distinguish his features. " Pardon, Monsieur," said he, " I thought myself alone here."

" I also," replied the man ; " but I see with pleasure that I shall have companions."

" Oh ! very sad companions, Monsieur ; for except an invalid young man whom I am taking back to France — "

" Ah," said Aurilly, affecting the good-fellowship of a sympathizing *bourgeois*, " I know what you mean."

" Really ? "

" Yes ; you mean the young lady."

" What young lady ? "

" Oh, do not be angry, my good friend. I am the steward of the House of Joyeuse. I rejoined my young

master by his brother's order, and at his departure the count recommended to my good offices a young lady and an old servant, who were returning to France after following him to Flanders."

As he thus spoke, he approached Rémy with a smiling and affectionate look. By that movement he came within the light of the lamp, so that all its brightness shone on him. Rémy then was able to see him. But instead of advancing, in his turn, towards his interlocutor, Rémy took a step backwards, and a feeling like that of horror appeared for a moment on his mutilated face.

"You do not reply. One would say you were afraid of me," said Aurilly, with his most agreeable expression.

"Monsieur," replied Rémy, affecting a broken voice, "pardon a poor old man, whom his misfortunes and his wounds have rendered timid and suspicious."

"All the more reason, my friend, for accepting the help and support of an honest companion; besides, as I told you just now, I speak on the part of a master who must inspire you with confidence."

"Assuredly, Monsieur," replied Rémy, who however still moved back.

"You leave me," said Aurilly.

"I must consult my mistress. I can decide nothing, you understand."

"Oh, that is natural; but permit me to present myself. I will explain to her my directions in all their details."

"No, no; thank you! Madame is perhaps asleep; and her sleep is sacred to me."

"As you wish. Besides, I have told you what my master told me to say."

"To me?"

"To you and the young lady."

“Your master, M. le Comte du Bouchage, you mean?”

“Yes.”

“Thank you, Monsieur.”

When he had shut the door, all the appearances of age vanished except the bald head, and Rémy mounted the staircase with a rapidity and vigor so extraordinary that one would think the old man, sixty years of age, — as he had appeared a moment before, — had suddenly become a young man of twenty-five.

“Madame, Madame!” cried he, in an agitated voice.

“Well, what is it, Rémy. Is not the duke gone?”

“Yes, Madame, but there is a demon here a thousand times worse, — a demon on whom, for six years, I have daily called down Heaven’s vengeance, as you have on his master.”

“Aurilly?”

“Yes, Aurilly; the wretch is below, forgotten by his infernal accomplice.”

“Forgotten, do you say, Rémy? Oh, you are wrong! you, who know the duke, know that he never leaves to chance any evil deed, if he can do it himself. No, no, Rémy! Aurilly is not forgotten, but left here for some bad design, believe me!”

“Oh, about him, Madame, I can believe anything.”

“Does he know me?”

“I do not think so.”

“And did he recognize you?”

“Oh, Madame!” said Rémy, with a sad smile, “no one recognizes me.”

“Perhaps he knows who I am?”

“No, for he asked to see you.”

“I am sure he must have suspicions.”

“In that case nothing is more easy; and I thank God for pointing out our path so plainly. The village is de-

serted ; the wretch is alone. I saw a poniard in his belt ; but I have a knife in mine."

"One moment, Rémy. I do not ask the life of that wretch of you, but before you kill him, let us find out what he wants of us ; perhaps we may make his evil intentions useful. How did he represent himself to you, Rémy ?"

"As the steward of M. du Bouchage, Madame."

"You see he lies ; therefore he has some reason for lying. Let us find out his intentions, and conceal our own."

"I will act as you wish, Madame."

"What does he ask now ?"

"To accompany us."

"In what character ?"

"As the count's steward."

"Tell him that I accept."

"Oh, Madame !"

"Add that I am thinking of going to England, where I have relatives, but have not quite decided. Lie as he does, Rémy ; to conquer we must fight with equal arms."

"But he will see you ?"

"I will wear my mask ; besides, I suspect he knows me."

"Then if he knows you, there must be a snare."

"The way to guard against it is to pretend to fall into it."

"But —"

"What do you fear ? We can but die ; are you not ready to die for the accomplishment of our vow ?"

"Yes, but not to die without vengeance."

"Rémy," cried Diane, her eyes sparkling with wild excitement, "be easy ; we will be revenged, — you on the servant, and I on the master."

"Well, Madame, then so be it."

And Rémy went down, but still hesitating. The brave young man had felt in spite of himself, at the sight of Aurilly, that nervous shudder that one feels at the sight of a reptile; he wished to kill him because he feared him. But as he went down, his resolution returned, and he determined, in spite of Diane's opinion, to interrogate Aurilly, to confound him, and if he discovered that he had any evil intentions, to kill him on the spot. Aurilly waited for him impatiently. Rémy advanced, armed with an unshakable resolution, but his words were quiet and calm. "Monsieur," said he, "my mistress cannot accept your proposal."

"And why not?"

"Because you are not the steward of M. du Bouchage."

Aurilly grew pale. "Who told you so?" said he.

"No one; but M. du Bouchage, when he left, recommended to my care the person whom I accompany, and never spoke of you."

"He saw me only after he left you."

"Lies, Monsieur, — lies."

Aurilly drew himself up; Rémy appeared to him to be an old man.

"You speak in a singular tone, my good man," said he, frowning. "Take care! you are old, and I am young; you are feeble, and I am strong."

Rémy smiled, but did not reply.

"If I wished ill to you or your mistress," continued Aurilly, "I have but to raise my hand."

"Oh!" said Rémy, "perhaps I was wrong, and you wish to do her good."

"Certainly I do."

"Explain to me, then, what you desire."

"My friend, I will make your fortune at once, if you will serve me."

“And if not?”

“In that case, as you speak frankly, I will reply as frankly that I will kill you. I have full power to do so.”

“Kill me!” said Rémy. “But if I am to serve you, I must know your projects.”

“Well, you have guessed rightly, my good man; I do not belong to the Comte du Bouchage.”

“Ah! and to whom do you belong?”

“To a more powerful lord.”

“Take care! you are lying again.”

“Why so?”

“There are not many families above the House of Joyeuse.”

“Not even the House of France?”

“Oh, oh!”

“And see how they pay,” said Aurilly, sliding into Rémy’s hand one of the *rouleaux* of gold.

Rémy shuddered at the touch of that hand, and took a step back; but controlling himself, he said, “You serve the king?”

“No, but his brother, the Duc d’Anjou.”

“Oh, very well! I am the duke’s most humble servant.”

“That is excellent.”

“But what does Monseigneur want?”

“Monseigneur,” said Aurilly, attempting again to slip the gold into Rémy’s hand, “is in love with your mistress.”

“He knows her, then?”

“He has seen her.”

“Seen her! when?”

“This evening.”

“Impossible; she has not left her room.”

“No, but the prince, by his conduct, has shown that he is really in love.”

“Why, what did he do?”

“Took a ladder and climbed to the balcony.”

“Ah! he did that?”

“Yes; and it seems she is very beautiful.”

“Then you have not seen her?”

“No; but from what he said I much wish to do so, if only to judge of the exaggeration to which love brings a sensible mind. So, then, it is agreed; you will aid me?” and he again offered him the gold.

“Certainly I will, but I must know what part I am to play,” said Rémy, repulsing his hand.

“First, tell me, is the lady the mistress of M. du Bouchage or of his brother?”

The blood mounted to Rémy’s face. “Of neither,” said he; “the lady upstairs has no lover.”

“No lover! But then she is a morsel for a king, — a woman who has no lover! *Morbleu!* Monseigneur, we have found the philosopher’s stone.”

“Then,” said Rémy, “what does M. le Duc d’Anjou want my mistress to do?”

“He wants her to come to Château-Thierry, where he is going at his utmost speed.”

“This is, upon my word, a passion very quickly conceived.”

“That is like Monseigneur.”

“I only see one difficulty,” said Rémy.

“What is that?”

“That my mistress is about to embark for England.”

“The devil! this, then, is where you must try to aid me.”

“How?”

“By persuading her to go in an opposite direction.”

“ You do not know my mistress, Monseigneur ; she is not easily persuaded. Besides, even if she were persuaded to go to Château-Thierry instead of England, do you think she would yield to the prince ? ”

“ Why not ? ”

“ She does not love him. ”

“ Bah ! one always loves a prince of the blood. ”

“ But if Monseigneur le Duc d'Anjou suspects my mistress of loving M. du Bouchage, or M. de Joyeuse, how did he come to think of carrying her off from him she loved ? ”

“ My good man, ” said Aurilly, “ you have trivial ideas, and it appears that we have difficulty in understanding each other ; so I will not discuss the matter. I have preferred kindness to violence, but if you force me to change my plans, well ! I will change them. ”

“ What will you do ? ”

“ I told you I had full powers from the duke to kill you and carry off the lady. ”

“ And you believe you could do it with impunity ? ”

“ I believe all my master tells me to believe. Come, will you persuade your mistress to come to France ? ”

“ I will try ; but I can answer for nothing. ”

“ And when shall I have the answer ? ”

“ I will go up at once and see what I can do. ”

“ Well, go up ; I will wait. But one last word ; you know that your fortune and life hang on your answer ? ”

“ I know it. ”

“ That will do ; I will go and get the horses ready. ”

“ Do not be in too great a hurry. ”

“ Bah ! I am sure of the answer ; no one is cruel to a prince. ”

“ I fancied that happened sometimes. ”

“ Yes, but very rarely. ”

While Rémy went up, Aurilly proceeded to the stables without feeling any doubt as to the result.

“Well!” said Diane, on seeing Rémy.

“Well, Madame, the duke has seen you.”

“And —”

“And he loves you.”

“Loves me! but you are mad, Rémy.”

“No; I tell you that he — that man — that wretch, Aurilly, told me so.”

“But then he recognized me?”

“If he had, do you think that Aurilly would have dared to present himself and talk to you of love in the prince’s name? No, he did not recognize you.”

“Yes, you must be right, Rémy. So many things have passed through that infernal brain in six years that he has forgotten me. Let us follow this man.”

“But this man will recognize you.”

“Why should his memory be better than his master’s?”

“Oh, it is his business to remember, while it is the duke’s to forget. How could he live if he did not forget? But Aurilly will not have forgotten; he will recognize you, and will denounce you as an avenging shade.”

“Rémy, I thought I told you I had a mask, and that you told me you had a knife.”

“It is true, Madame; and I begin to think that God is assisting us to punish the wicked.” Then, calling Aurilly from the top of the staircase, “Monsieur,” said he.

“Well?” replied Aurilly.

“My mistress thanks M. du Bouchage for having provided thus for her safety, and accepts with gratitude your obliging offer.”

“It is well,” said Aurilly; “the horses are ready.”

“Come, Madame, come,” said Rémy, offering his arm to Diane.

Aurilly waited at the bottom of the staircase, lantern in hand, all anxiety to see the lady.

“The devil!” he murmured, “she has a mask. But between here and Château-Thierry the silk cords will be worn out — or cut.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE JOURNEY.

THEY set off. Aurilly affected good-fellowship with Rémy, and showed to Diane the greatest respect. But it was easy for Rémy to see that these manifestations of respect were not without a motive. Indeed, to hold the stirrup of a woman when she mounts or dismounts ; to watch each of her movements with solicitude ; to let slip no opportunity for picking up her glove, — is the rôle of a lover, a servant, or a spy. In touching Diane's glove Aurilly saw her hand, in clasping her cloak he peeped under her mask, in holding her stirrup he invoked a chance which might make her show that face which the duke had not been able to recognize, but which he doubted not he should be able to.

But Aurilly had to deal with one as skilful as himself. Rémy claimed the right to perform his ordinary services to Diane, and seemed jealous of Aurilly ; while Diane herself, without appearing to have any suspicions, begged Aurilly not to interfere with the services which her old attendant was accustomed to render to her. Aurilly was then reduced to hoping for rain or sun to make her remove her mask ; but neither rain nor sun had any effect, and whenever they stopped Diane took her meals in her own room. Aurilly tried looking through the keyholes ; but Diane always sat with her back to the door. He tried to peep through the windows ; but there were always thick curtains drawn, or if none were there, cloaks were

hung up to supply their place. Neither questions nor attempts at corruption succeeded with Rémy, who always declared that his mistress's will was his.

"But these precautions are, then, taken only on my account?" said Aurilly.

"No, for everybody."

"But M. d'Anjou saw her; she was not hidden then."

"Pure chance; but it is just because he did see her that she is more careful than ever."

Days passed on, and they were nearing their destination; but Aurilly's curiosity had not been gratified. Already Picardy appeared to the eyes of the travellers.

Aurilly began to lose patience, and the evil instincts of his nature to gain the ascendant. He began to suspect some important secret under all this mystery. One day he remained a little behind with Rémy, and renewed his attempts at seduction, which Rémy repulsed as usual.

"But," said Aurilly, "some day or other I must see your mistress."

"Doubtless," said Rémy; "but that will be when she likes, and not when you like."

"But if I employ force?"

"Try," said Rémy, while a lightning glance, which he could not repress, shot from his eyes.

Aurilly tried to laugh. "What a fool I am!" said he. "What does it matter to me who she is? At least, she is the person whom the duke saw?"

"Certainly."

"And whom he told me to bring to Château-Thierry?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is all that is necessary! It is not I who am in love with her, it is Monseigneur; and provided that you do not seek to escape—"

"Do we appear to wish to do so?"

“No.”

“And she so little desires to do so that were you not here we should continue our way to Château-Thierry ; if the duke wishes to see us, we wish also to see him.”

“That is capital,” said Aurilly. “Would your mistress like to rest here a little while ?” continued he, pointing to a hostelry on the road.

“You know,” said Rémy, “that my mistress never stops but in towns.”

“Well, I, who have made no such vow, will stop here a moment ; ride on, and I will follow.”

Rémy rejoined Diane.

“What was he saying ?” she asked.

“He expressed his constant desire — ”

“To see me ?”

“Yes.”

Diane smiled under her mask.

“Be on your guard,” said Rémy ; “he is furious.”

“He shall not see me ; I am determined that he shall not, and that is to say, he cannot.”

“But once we are at Château-Thierry, must he not see your face ?”

“What matter, if the discovery come too late ? Besides, the duke did not recognize me.”

“No, but his follower will. All these mysteries which have so annoyed Aurilly for a week had not existed for the prince ; they had not excited his curiosity or awakened his remembrance, while for a week Aurilly has been seeking, imagining, suspecting. Your face will strike on a memory fully awakened, and he will recognize you at once if he has not done so already.”

At this moment they were interrupted by Aurilly, who had taken a cross-road and come suddenly upon them in the hope of surprising some words of their conversation.

The sudden silence which followed his arrival proved to him that he was in the way, and he therefore rode behind them.

From that moment Aurilly's plan was formed. He instinctively feared something, as Rémy had said; but his floating conjectures never for an instant approached the truth. In order the better to carry out his plan, he appeared to have renounced his curiosity, and showed himself the most accommodating and joyous companion possible during the rest of the day. Rémy remarked this change not without anxiety.

The next day they started early, and at noon were forced to stop to rest the horses. At two o'clock they set off again, and went on without stopping until four. A great forest, that of La Fère, was visible in the distance. It had the sombre and mysterious aspect of our northern forests, so imposing to southern natures, to whom, beyond all things, heat and sunshine are necessary; but it was nothing to Rémy and Diane, who were accustomed to the thick woods of Anjou and Sologne. But they exchanged glances as if they understood that there the event awaited them which from the moment of their departure had threatened them. It might have been about six o'clock in the evening when they entered the forest, and half an hour later the day was nearly at an end. A high wind whirled about the leaves and carried them towards a lake, along the shore of which the travellers were journeying. Diane rode in the middle, Aurilly on the right, and Rémy on the left. No other human being was visible under the sombre arches of the trees.

From the long extent of the road; one might have thought it one of those enchanted forests under whose shade nothing can live, had it not been for the hoarse

howling of the wolves waking up at the approach of night. All at once Diane felt that her saddle, which had been put on by Aurilly, was slipping. She called Rémy, who jumped down, and began to tighten the girths. At this moment Aurilly approached Diane, and while she was occupied, cut the strings of silk which fastened her mask. Before she had divined the movement, or had time to put up her hand, Aurilly seized the mask, and looked full at her. The eyes of these two met in fierce encounter; no one could have said which of them looked most pale and menacing. Aurilly let the mask and his dagger fall, and clasping his hands, cried, "Heavens and earth! Madame de Monsoreau!"

"It is a name which you shall repeat no more," cried Rémy, seizing him by the girdle, and dragging him from his horse. Both rolled on the ground together, and Aurilly stretched out his hand to reach his dagger.

"No, Aurilly; no!" said Rémy, placing his knee on his breast.

"Le Haudoin!" cried Aurilly; "oh, I am a dead man!"

"That is not yet true," said Rémy, placing his hand on the mouth of the wretch who struggled under him, "but will be in a moment." With his right hand he drew his knife from its sheath. "Now," said he, "Aurilly, you are right; now indeed you are dead!" and the blade disappeared in the throat of the musician, who uttered an inarticulate gasp.

Diane, with haggard eyes, half turned on her saddle, and leaning on the pommel, shuddering, but pitiless, had not turned her head away from this terrible spectacle. However, when she saw the blood spurt out from the wound, she fell from her horse as though she were dead.

Rémy did not occupy himself with her at that terrible moment, but searched Aurilly, took from him the two *rouleaux* of gold, then tied a stone to the neck of the corpse, and threw it into the lake. He then washed his hands in the water, took in his arms Diane, who was still unconscious, placed her again on her horse, and mounted his own, supporting his companion. Aurilly's horse, frightened by the howling of the wolves, which began to draw nearer, had fled into the woods.

When Diane recovered, she and Rémy, without exchanging a single word, continued their route towards Château-Thierry.

CHAPTER XXV.

HOW KING HENRI III. DID NOT INVITE CRILLON TO BREAKFAST, AND HOW CHICOT INVITED HIMSELF.

THE day after that on which the events that we have just related had taken place in the forest of La Fère, the King of France left his bath at about nine in the morning. His *valet de chambre*, after having rolled him in a blanket of fine wool, and sponged him with that thick Persian wadding which looks like the fleece of a sheep, had given him over to the barbers and dressers, who in their turn gave place to the perfumers and courtiers. When these last had gone, the king sent for his steward, and ordered something more than his ordinary broth, as he felt hungry that morning. This good news spread joy throughout the Louvre, and the smell of the viands was already beginning to be perceptible, when Crillon, colonel of the French guards, entered to take his Majesty's orders.

"Faith! my good Crillon," said the king, "watch as you please over my safety, but do not force me to play the king. I am quite joyful and gay this morning; I feel as if I weighed but an ounce, and could fly away. I am hungry, Crillon; do you understand that, my friend?"

"I understand it very well, Sire, for I am very hungry myself."

"Oh! you, Crillon," said the king, laughing, "are always hungry."

"Not always, Sire. Your Majesty exaggerates, — only three times a day."

“And I about once a year, when I receive good news.”

“*Harnibieu !* it appears that you have received good news, Sire? So much the better, for it is becoming rare, it seems to me.”

“Not at all, Crillon; but you know the proverb.”

“Ah, yes, — ‘no news is good news.’ I do not trust to proverbs, and least of all to that one. You have no news from Navarre, then?”

“None, — a proof that they are asleep.”

“And from Flanders?”

“Nothing.”

“A proof that they are fighting. And from Paris?”

“Nothing.”

“A proof that they are making plots.”

“Or children, Crillon. Speaking of children, Crillon, I think I am going to have a child.”

“You, Sire?” cried Crillon, astonished.

“Yes; the queen dreamed last night that she was *enceinte*.”

“Well, I am happy to hear that your Majesty is hungry this morning. Adieu, Sire.”

“Go, my good Crillon.”

“*Harnibieu !* Sire, since your Majesty is so hungry, you ought to invite me to breakfast with you.”

“Why so, Crillon?”

“Because they say your Majesty lives on air, and the air of the times is very bad. Now I should have been happy to be able to say, ‘These are all pure calumnies; the king eats like every one else.’”

“No, Crillon, no; let them believe as they do. It makes me blush to eat like a simple mortal in the presence of my subjects. Remember this, Crillon, — a king ought always to remain poetical, and only show himself in a noble manner. Thus, for example, do you remember Alexander?”

“What Alexander?”

“Alexander Magnus. Ah! you do not know Latin, I remember. Well, King Alexander loved to bathe before his soldiers, because he was so well-made, handsome, and plump that they compared him to Apollo and even to Antinoüs.”

“Oh, oh! Sire, you would be devilishly in the wrong to bathe before yours, for you are very thin, my poor king.”

“Brave Crillon, go,” said Henri, striking him on the shoulder. “You are an excellent fellow, and do not flatter me. You are no courtier, my old friend.”

“That is why you do not invite me to breakfast,” replied Crillon, laughing good-humoredly, and taking his leave contentedly, for the tap on the shoulder consoled him for not getting the breakfast. When he had gone, the breakfast was laid at once. The steward had surpassed himself.

A certain partridge soup, with a *purée* of truffles and chestnuts, attracted the king’s attention, after he had eaten some fine oysters. Thus the ordinary broth, that faithful old friend of the king, implored vainly from its golden basin; it was neglected. The king began to attack the partridge soup, and was at his fourth mouthful, when a light step near him made the floor creak, and a well-known voice behind him said sharply, “A plate!”

The king turned. “Chicot!” he cried.

“Himself.”

And Chicot, falling at once into his old habits, sat down in a chair, took a plate and a fork, and began on the oysters, picking out the finest without saying a word.

“You here! you returned!” cried Henri.

“Hush!” said Chicot, with his mouth full; and he drew the soup towards him.

“Stop, Chicot! that is my dish.”

Chicot divided it equally, and gave the king half. Then he poured himself some wine, passed from the soup to a *pâté* made of tunny-fish, then to stuffed crab, swallowed as a finish the royal broth, then, with a great sigh, said, “I am no longer hungry.”

“*Par la mordieu!* I hope not, Chicot.”

“Ah, good-morning, my king. How are you? You seem to me very gay this morning.”

“Am I not, Chicot?”

“You have quite a color; is it your own?”

“*Parbleu!*”

“I compliment you on it.”

“The fact is, I feel very well this morning.”

“I am very glad of it. But have you no little titbits left for breakfast?”

“Here are cherries which were preserved by the ladies of Montmartre.”

“They are too sweet.”

“Nuts stuffed with raisins.”

“Bah! they have left the stones in the raisins.”

“You are not content with anything.”

“Well! really, on my word, everything degenerates, even cooking, and you begin to live very badly at your court.”

“Do they live better at that of the King of Navarre?”

“Well! I do not say no.”

“Then there must be great changes.”

“Ah, you do not know how right you are, Henriquet.”

“Tell me about your journey; that will amuse me.”

“Willingly; that is what I came for. Where shall I begin?”

“At the beginning. How did you make your journey?”

“Oh! delightfully.”

“And met with no disagreeable adventures, — no bad company?”

“Oh, who would dream of annoying an ambassador of his most Christian Majesty? You calumniate your subjects, my son.”

“I asked,” said the king, flattered by the tranquillity that reigned in his kingdom, “because you had no official character, and might have run some risk.”

“I tell you, Henriquet, that you have the most charming kingdom in the world. Travellers are nourished gratis; they are sheltered for the love of God; they walk on flowers; and as for the wheel-ruts, they are carpeted with velvet and fringed with gold. It is incredible, but true.”

“Then you are content?”

“Enchanted.”

“Yes, yes; my police is well organized.”

“Marvellously; I must do them justice.”

“And the roads are safe?”

“As that of paradise; one meets upon them only little angels, who pass singing the praises of the king.”

“Chicot, we are returning to Virgil.”

“To what part?”

“To the Bucolics, — ‘O fortunatos nimium!’”

“Ah! very well; but why this exception in favor of ploughmen, my son?”

“Alas! because it is not the same in towns.”

“The fact is, Henri, that the towns are the centres of corruption.”

“Judge of it. You go five hundred leagues without accident, while I go only to Vincennes, three fourths of a league, and narrowly escape assassination by the way.”

“Oh! bah!”

“I will tell you about it, my friend; I am having it

written. Without my Forty-five Guardsmen I should have been a dead man."

"Truly! where did it take place?"

"You mean, where was it to have taken place?"

"Yes."

"At Bel-Esbat."

"Near the convent of our friend Gorenflot?"

"Precisely."

"And how did he behave under the circumstances?"

"Wonderfully, as usual. Chicot, I do not know if he had heard any rumor; but instead of snoring in bed, he was up in his balcony, while all his convent kept the road."

"And he did nothing else?"

"Who?"

"Dom Modeste."

"He blessed me with a majesty peculiar to himself, Chicot."

"And his monks?"

"They cried, 'Vive le roi!' tremendously."

"And were they not armed?"

"They were completely armed, which was a wonderful piece of thoughtfulness on the part of the worthy prior; and yet this man has said nothing, and asked for nothing. He did not come the next day, like D'Épernon, to search my pockets, crying, 'Sire, something for having saved the king!'"

"Oh, as for that, he is incapable of it; besides, his hands would not go into your pockets."

"Chicot, no jests about Dom Modeste. He is one of the greatest men of my reign; and I declare that on the first opportunity I will give him a bishopric."

"And you will do well, my king."

"Remark one thing, Chicot," said the king, assuming

his oracular style: "a great man from the ranks of the people is complete; we gentlemen, you see, inherit in our blood certain vices and virtues. Thus, the Valois are cunning and subtle, brave but idle; the Lorraines are ambitious, greedy, and intriguing; the Bourbons are sensual and circumspect, without ideas, force, or will,—look at Henri, for example. When Nature, on the contrary, suddenly forms a man, born of nothing, she uses only her finest clay; so your Gorenflot is complete."

"You think so?"

"Yes; learned, modest, cunning, and brave, you could make of him what you liked,—minister, general, or pope."

"Pray stop, Sire. If the brave man heard you, he would burst his skin, for in spite of what you say, Dom Modeste is very vain."

"You are jealous, Chicot."

"I! Heaven forbid! Jealous!"

"I am but just; noble blood does not blind me. 'Stemmata quid faciunt?'"

"Bravo! and you say, then, Henri, that you were nearly assassinated?"

"Yes."

"By whom?"

"By the League, *mordieu!*"

"How does the League get on?"

"Always the same."

"Which means that it grows daily."

"Oh, political bodies never live which grow big too young. They are like children, Chicot."

"Then you are content, my son?"

"Nearly so."

"You are happy?"

"Yes, Chicot, and I am very glad to see you return."

“ ‘ Habemus consulem factum,’ as Cato said.”

“ You bring good news, do you not ? ”

“ I should think so.”

“ You keep me in suspense.”

“ Where shall I begin ? ”

“ I have already said at the beginning ; but you always wander from the point. You say that the journey was good ? ”

“ You see I have returned whole.”

“ Yes ; then let me hear of your arrival in Navarre. What was Henri doing when you arrived ? ”

“ Making love.”

“ To Margot ? ”

“ Oh, no ! ”

“ It would have astonished me had it been so ; he is always unfaithful to his wife, the rascal ! Unfaithful to a daughter of France ! Luckily, she pays him back. And when you arrived, what was the name of Margot’s rival ? ”

“ Fosseuse.”

“ A Montmorency. Come, that is not so bad for a bear of Béarn. They spoke here of a peasant, a gardener’s daughter.”

“ Oh, that is very old.”

“ Then he is faithless to Margot ? ”

“ As much as possible.”

“ And she is furious ? ”

“ Enraged.”

“ And she revenges herself ? ”

“ I believe so.”

Henri rubbed his hands joyfully.

“ What will she do ? ” cried he, laughing. “ Will she move heaven and earth, bring Spain on Navarre, Artois and Flanders on Spain ? Will she call in her little brother Henriquet against her little husband Henriot, eh ? ”

"It is possible."

"You saw her?"

"Yes."

"Then they execrate each other?"

"I believe that in their hearts they do not adore each other."

"But in appearance?"

"They are the best friends in the world."

"Yes; but some fine morning some new love will embroil them completely."

"Well, this new love has come."

"Bah!"

"Yes, on my honor; but shall I tell you what I fear?"

"Yes."

"That this new love, instead of embroiling, will reconcile them."

"Then there is a new love, really?"

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* yes."

"Of Henri's?"

"Of Henri's."

"For whom?"

"You wish to know all, do you not?"

"Yes, Chicot, tell me all about it."

"Well, my son, then I must go back to the beginning."

"Go back, but be quick."

"You wrote a letter to the Béarnais."

"Well?"

"And I read it."

"What do you think of it?"

"That if it was not delicate, at least it was cunning."

"It ought to have embroiled them?"

"Yes, if Henri and Margot had been an ordinary, commonplace couple."

"What do you mean?"

“ I mean that Henri is no fool.”

“ Oh ! ”

“ And that he guessed.”

“ Guessed what ? ”

“ That you wished to make him quarrel with his wife.”

“ That was clear.”

“ Yes ; but what was less clear was your object in doing so.”

“ Ah, the devil ! the object — ”

“ Yes, this cursed Béarnais thought your aim was to make him quarrel with his wife, that you might not have to pay her dowry.”

“ Oh ! ”

“ *Mon Dieu*, yes ! that is what got into the head of that devil of a Béarnais.”

“ Go on, Chicot,” said the king, beginning to look annoyed.

“ Well, scarcely had he guessed that when he became as you are at this moment, — sad and melancholy ; so much so that he hardly thought of Fosseuse.”

“ Bah ! ”

“ Yes, really ; and then he conceived that other love I told you of.”

“ But this man is a Turk, — a pagan. And what did Margot say ? ”

“ This time, my son, you will be astonished. Margot was delighted.”

“ But what is the name of this new mistress ? ”

“ Oh, she is a beautiful and strong person, capable of defending herself if she is attacked.”

“ And did she defend herself ? ”

“ Oh, yes ! ”

“ So that Henri was repulsed ? ”

“ At first.”

“ And afterwards ? ”

“ Oh, Henri is obstinate ! he returned to the charge.”

“ So that ? ”

“ So that he captured her.”

“ How ? ”

“ By force.”

“ By force ? ”

“ Yes, with petards.”

“ What the devil are you telling me ? ”

“ The truth.”

“ Petards ! Who is this belle that is taken with petards ? ”

“ It is Mademoiselle Cahors.”

“ Mademoiselle Cahors ! ”

“ Yes, a large and beautiful girl, who has one foot on the Got and the other on the hills, and whose guardian is, or rather was, M. de Vesin, a brave gentleman, and one of your friends.”

“ *Mordieu !* ” cried Henri, furiously, “ my city ! he has taken my city ! ”

“ Why, you see, Henri, you would not give it to him after having promised it, and he was obliged to take it. But, by the way, here is a letter that he asked me to deliver into your own hand.”

And Chicot, drawing out a letter, gave it to the king. It was the one which Henri had written after taking Cahors, and which finished with these words, “ *Quod mihi dixisti profuit multum. Cognosco meos devotos ; nosce tuos. Chicotus cætera expedit.* ” Which meant, “ What you told me was very useful. I know my faithful followers ; know yours. Chicot will tell you the rest.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOW, AFTER RECEIVING NEWS FROM THE SOUTH, HENRI
RECEIVED NEWS FROM THE NORTH.

THE king, highly exasperated, could hardly read the letter which Chicot gave to him. While he deciphered the Latin with every sign of impatience, Chicot, before a great Venetian mirror, which hung over a gilt table, was admiring the infinite grace of his own person under his military dress.

“Oh, I am betrayed!” cried Henri, when he had finished the letter. “The Béarnais had a plan, and I never suspected it.”

“My son,” said Chicot, “you know the proverb, ‘There is no worse water than still water’?”

“Go to the devil with your proverbs!”

Chicot went to the door as if to obey.

“No, remain.”

Chicot stopped.

“Cahors taken!” continued Henri.

“Yes, and very well done too.”

“Then he has generals and engineers?”

“No, he is too poor for that. He could not pay them; he does it all himself.”

“He fight!” said Henri, disdainfully.

“I do not say that he rushes into it with enthusiasm. No, he resembles those people who try the water before they bathe; he just dips the ends of his fingers with a little shudder, which augurs badly, then his breast. All

this takes him about ten minutes, and then he rushes into action, and through fire, like a salamander."

"The devil!"

"And I assure you, Henri, the fire was hot there."

The king rose and walked up and down the room. "Here is a misfortune for me," he cried. "They will laugh at it; they will sing about it. *Mordieu!* it is lucky I thought of sending the promised aid to Antwerp. Antwerp will compensate for Cahors; the north will blot out the disaster in the south."

"Amen!" said Chicot, plunging his hands into the king's confectionery-box to finish his dessert.

At this moment the door opened, and the usher announced, "M. le Comte du Bouchage."

"Ah," cried Henri, "I told you so; here is news. Enter, Count, enter."

The usher opened the door, and Henri du Bouchage entered slowly and bent a knee to the king.

"Still pale and sad," said the king. "Come, friend, take a holiday air for a little while, and do not tell me good news with a doleful face. Speak quickly, Bouchage, for I want to hear. You come from Flanders?"

"Yes, Sire."

"And quickly?"

"As quickly, Sire, as a man can ride."

"You are welcome. And now, what of Antwerp?"

"Antwerp belongs to the Prince of Orange."

"To the Prince of Orange?"

"Yes, to William."

"But did not my brother attack Antwerp?"

"Yes, Sire; but now he is travelling to Château Thierry."

"He has left the army?"

"Sire, there is no longer an army."

“Oh,” cried the king, sinking back in his armchair, “but Joyeuse —”

“Sire, my brother, after having done wonders with his marines, after having conducted the whole of the retreat, rallied the few men who escaped the disaster, and made them an escort for M. le Duc d’Anjou.”

“A defeat!” murmured the king. But all at once, with a strange look, “Then Flanders is lost to my brother?”

“Absolutely, Sire.”

“Without hope?”

“I fear so, Sire.”

The clouds gradually cleared from the king’s brow. “That poor François!” said he, smiling. “He is unlucky in his search for a crown. He missed that of Navarre; he has stretched out his hand for that of England, and has touched that of Flanders. I would wager, Bouchage, that he will never reign, although he desires it so much. And how many prisoners were taken?”

“About two thousand.”

“How many killed?”

“At least as many; and among them M. de Saint-Aignan.”

“What! poor Saint-Aignan dead!”

“Drowned.”

“Drowned! Did you throw yourselves into the Scheldt?”

“No, the Scheldt threw itself upon us.”

The count then gave the king a description of the battle, and of the inundation. Henri listened silently. When the recital was over, he rose, and kneeling down on his *prie-Dieu*, said some prayers, and then returned with a perfectly calm face.

“Well,” said he, “I trust I bear things like a king; a

king supported by the Lord is really more than a man. And you, Count, since your brother is saved, like mine, — thank God! — smile a little.”

“Sire, I am at your orders.”

“What do you ask as payment for your services, Bouchage?”

“Sire, I have rendered no service.”

“I dispute that; but at least your brother has.”

“Immense, Sire.”

“He has saved the army, you say, or rather its remnants?”

“There is not a man left who does not say that he owes his life to my brother.”

“Well, Bouchage, my will is to extend my benefits to both, and I only imitate in that Him who made you both rich, brave, and handsome; besides, I should imitate those great politicians who always rewarded the bearers of bad news.”

“Oh!” said Chicot, “I have known men hanged for bringing bad news.”

“That is possible,” said the king; “but remember the senate that thanked Varro.”

“You cite Republicans, Valois; misfortune makes you humble.”

“Come, Bouchage, what will you have? What would you like?”

“Since your Majesty does me the honor to speak to me so kindly, I will dare to profit by your goodness. I am tired of life, Sire, and yet have a repugnance to shortening it myself, for God forbids it, and all the subterfuges that a man of honor employs in such a case are mortal sins. To get one’s self killed in battle, or to let one’s self die of hunger, or to forget how to swim in crossing a river, are travesties of suicide through which God sees

very clearly ; for you know, Sire, our most secret thoughts are open to God. I renounce the idea, therefore, of dying before the term which God has fixed for my life ; and yet the world fatigues me, and I must leave it."

"My friend!" said the king.

Chicot looked with interest at the young man, so beautiful, so brave, so rich, and yet speaking in this tone of despair.

"Sire," continued the count, "everything that has happened to me for some time has strengthened my resolution. I wish to throw myself into the arms of God, who is the sovereign consoler of the afflicted, as he is at the same time sovereign master of the happy. Deign, then, Sire, to facilitate my entrance into a religious life, for my heart is sad unto death."

The king was moved at this doleful request. "Ah! I understand," said he ; "you wish to become a monk, but you fear the probation."

"I do not fear the austerities, Sire, but the time they leave one in indecision. No, what I wish is, not to mitigate the trials that may be imposed on me, — for I do not hope to withdraw my body from physical suffering, or my soul from moral privations, — it is to remove from both every pretext for a return to the past ; it is, in a word, to make spring from the ground that grating which will separate me forever from the world, and which, under ecclesiastical regulations, is formed as slowly as a hedge of thorns."

"Poor boy!" said the king. "I think he will make a good preacher ; will he not, Chicot?"

Chicot did not reply. Bouchage continued, "You see Sire, that it is with my own family that the struggle will take place, and with my relatives that I shall meet with the greatest opposition. My brother the cardinal, at once

so good and so worldly, will find a thousand reasons to urge against it. At Rome your Majesty is all-powerful. You have asked me what I wish for, and promised to grant it; my wish is this, obtain from Rome permission for me to dispense with my novitiate."

The king rose, smiling, and taking the count's hand, said, "I will do what you ask, my son. You wish to serve God, and you are right; he is a better master than I am."

"A fine compliment you are paying him!" murmured Chicot, between his mustache and his teeth.

"Well, let it be so," continued the king; "you will be directed according to your wishes, dear count, I promise you."

"Your Majesty overwhelms me with joy," cried the young man, kissing Henri's hand as though he had made him duke, peer, or Marshal of France. "Then it is settled?"

"On my word as a king and a gentleman."

Bouchage's face brightened; something like a smile of ecstasy passed over his lips. He bowed respectfully to the king and took leave.

"What a happy young man!" said Henri.

"Oh," said Chicot, "you need not envy him; he is not more doleful than yourself."

"But, Chicot, he is going to give himself up to religion."

"And who the devil prevents you from doing the same? I know a cardinal who will give all needed dispensations, and he has more interest at Rome than you have. Do you not know him? I mean the Cardinal de Guise."

"Chicot!"

"And if the tonsure disquiets you (for it is rather a delicate operation) the prettiest hands and the prettiest

scissors — golden scissors, faith! — will give you this precious symbol, which would raise to three the number of the crowns you will have worn, and will justify the device, ‘*Manet ultima cœlo.*’ ”

“Pretty hands, do you say?”

“Yes, do you mean to abuse the hands of Madame de Montpensier? How severe you are upon your subjects!”

The king frowned, and passed over his eyes a hand as white as those spoken of, but certainly more tremulous.

“Well!” said Chicot, “let us leave that, for I see that the conversation does not please you, and let us return to subjects that interest me personally.”

The king made a gesture, half indifferent, half approving.

“Have you heard, Henri,” continued Chicot, “whether those Joyeuses carried off any woman?”

“No.”

“Have they burned anything?”

“What?”

“How should I know what a great lord burns to amuse himself? — the house of some poor devil, perhaps.”

“Are you mad, Chicot? Burn a house for amusement in my city of Paris!”

“Oh, why not?”

“Chicot!”

“Then they have done nothing of which you have heard the noise or seen the smoke?”

“Why, no.”

“Oh! so much the better!” said Chicot, drawing a long breath, like a man much relieved.

“Do you know one thing, Chicot?” said Henri.

“No, I do not.”

“It is that you have become wicked.”

“I?”

“Yes, you.”

“My sojourn in the tomb had sweetened me, but your presence, great king, has destroyed the effect.”

“You become insupportable, Chicot ; and I now attribute to you ambitious projects and intrigues of which I formerly believed you incapable.”

“Projects of ambition ! I ambitious ! Henriquet, my son, you used to be only foolish, now you are mad ; you have progressed.”

“And I tell you, M. Chicot, that you wish to separate from me all my old friends, by attributing to them intentions which they have not, and crimes of which they have never thought ; in fact, you wish to monopolize me.”

“I monopolize you ! what for ? God forbid ! you are too tiresome, without counting the difficulty of pleasing you with your food. Oh, no, indeed ! Explain to me whence comes this strange idea.”

“You began by listening coldly to my praises of your old friend, Dom Modeste, to whom you owe much.”

“I owe much to Dom Modeste ? Good !”

“Then you tried to calumniate the Joyeuses, my true friends.”

“I do not say no.”

“Then you launched a shaft at the Guises.”

“Ah ! you love them now ; you love all the world to-day, it seems.”

“No, I do not love them ; but as just now they keep themselves close and quiet, and do not do me the least harm, I do not fear them, and I cling to all old and well-known faces. All these Guises, with their fierce looks and great swords, have never done me any harm, after all, and they resemble, — shall I tell you what ?”

“Do, Henri ; I know how clever you are at comparisons.”

“They resemble those perch that they let loose in the

ponds to chase the great fish and prevent them from growing too fat ; but suppose that the great fish are not afraid ? ”

“ Well ? ”

“ Then the teeth of the perch are not strong enough to get through their scales. ”

“ Oh, Henri, my child, how subtle you are ! ”

“ While your Béarnais — ”

“ Well, have you a comparison for him also ? ”

“ While your Béarnais, who mews like a cat, bites like a tiger. ”

“ Well, my son, I will tell you what to do, — divorce the queen and marry Madame de Montpensier. Was she not once in love with you ? ”

“ Yes, and that is the source of all her menaces, Chicot ; she has a woman’s spite against me, and she provokes me now and then. But happily I am a man, and can laugh at it. ”

As Henri finished these words, the usher cried at the door, “ A messenger from M. le Duc de Guise for his Majesty. ”

“ Is it a courier or a gentleman ? ” asked the king.

“ It is a captain, Sire. ”

“ Let him enter ; he is welcome. ”

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE TWO COMPANIONS.

CHICOT, at this announcement, sat down, and turned his back to the door; but the first words pronounced by the duke's messenger made him start. He opened his eyes. The messenger could see nothing but the eye of Chicot peering from behind the chair, while Chicot could see him altogether.

"You come from Lorraine?" asked the king of the new-comer, who had a fine and warlike appearance.

"Not so, Sire; I come from Soissons, where Monsieur the Duke, who has not left the city for a month, gave me this letter to deliver to your Majesty."

The messenger then opened his buff coat, which was fastened by silver clasps, and drew from a leather pouch lined with silk, not one letter, but two; for they had stuck together by the wax, and as the captain advanced to give the king one letter, the other fell on the carpet. Chicot's eyes followed the messenger, and saw the color spread over his cheeks as he stooped to pick up the letter he had let fall. But Henri saw nothing; he opened his own letter and read, while the messenger watched him closely.

"Ah, Maître Borromée," thought Chicot, "so you are a captain, and you give only one letter to the king, when you have two in your pocket. Wait, my darling, wait!"

“Good,” said the king, after reading the duke’s letter with evident satisfaction. “Go, Captain, and tell M. de Guise that I am grateful for his offer.”

“Your Majesty will not honor me with a written answer?”

“No, I shall see the duke in a month or six weeks, and can thank him myself.”

The captain bowed and went out.

“You see, Chicot,” then said the king, “that M. de Guise is free from all machinations. This brave duke has learned the Navarre business, and he fears that the Huguenots will raise their heads, for he has also ascertained that the Germans are about to send reinforcements to Henri. Now, guess what he is about to do.”

As Chicot did not reply, Henri continued, “Well! he offers me the army that he has just raised in Lorraine to watch Flanders, and says that in six weeks it will be at my command, with its general. What do you say to that, Chicot?”

No answer.

“Really, my dear Chicot,” continued the king, “you are as absurdly obstinate as a Spanish mule; and if I happen to convince you of some error, you sulk, — yes, sulk.”

Not a sound came to contradict Henri in this frank opinion of his friend. Now, silence displeased Henri more than contradiction. “I believe,” said he, “that the fellow has had the impertinence to go to sleep. Chicot!” continued he, advancing to the armchair; “reply when your king speaks.”

But Chicot could not reply, for he was not there; and Henri found the armchair empty.

He looked all round the room; but Chicot was not to be seen. The king was seized with a sort of superstitious

shudder ; it sometimes came into his mind that Chicot was a supernatural being, a diabolic incarnation, — of a good kind, it was true, but still diabolical.

He called Nambu the usher, and questioned him, and he assured his Majesty that he had seen Chicot go out five minutes before the duke's messenger left; that he had gone out with the light and careful step of a man who does not wish his movements to be observed.

“Decidedly,” thought Henri, “Chicot was vexed at being in the wrong. How ill-natured men are, even the best of them !”

Nambu was right ; Chicot had crossed the antechambers silently, but still he was not able to keep his spurs from sounding, which made several people turn, and bow when they saw who it was.

The captain came out five minutes after Chicot, went down the steps across the court, proud and delighted at the same time, — proud of his person, and delighted that the king had received him so well, and without any suspicions of M. de Guise. As he crossed the drawbridge, he heard behind him steps which seemed to be the echo of his own. He turned, thinking that the king had perhaps sent some message to him, and great was his stupefaction to see behind him the demure face of Robert Briquet. It may be remembered that the first feeling of these two men towards each other had not been exactly sympathetic. Borromée opened his mouth, and paused, and in an instant was joined by Chicot.

“*Corbœuf !*” said Borromée.

“*Ventre de biche !*” cried Chicot.

“The *bourgeois !*”

“The reverend father !”

“With that helmet !”

“With that buff coat !”

"I am surprised to see you."

"I am delighted to meet you again."

And they looked fiercely at each other; but Borromée, quickly assuming an air of amiable urbanity, said, "*Vive Dieu!* you are cunning, Maître Robert Briquet."

"I, reverend father? and why do you say so?"

"When you were at the convent of the Jacobins, you made me believe you were only a simple *bourgeois*. You must be ten times more cunning and more valiant than a lawyer and a captain together."

"Ah!" replied Chicot, "and what must we say of you, Seigneur Borromée?"

"Of me?"

"Yes, of you."

"And why?"

"For making me believe you were only a monk. You must be ten times more cunning than the pope himself; but you took me in the snare."

"The snare?"

"Yes, doubtless. Under that disguise you spread a snare. A brave captain like you does not change his cuirass for a frock without grave reasons."

"With a soldier like you, I will have no secrets. It is true that I have certain personal interests in the convent of the Jacobins; but you?"

"And I also; but hush!"

"Let us converse a little about it."

"I am quite ready."

"Do you like good wine?"

"Yes, when it is good."

"Well, I know a little inn, which I think has no rival in Paris."

"And I know one also. What is yours called?"

"The Corne d'Abondance."

"Ah!" said Chicot, with a start.

"Well, what is it?"

"Nothing."

"Do you know anything against this house?"

"Not at all."

"You know it?"

"Not the least in the world, and that astonishes me."

"Shall we go there, comrade?"

"Oh, yes, at once!"

"Come, then."

"Where is it?"

"Near the Porte Bourdelle. The host appreciates well the difference between the palate of a man like you and the throat of every thirsty passer-by."

"Can we talk there at our ease?"

"In the cellar, if we wish."

"And without being disturbed?"

"We will close the doors."

"Come," said Chicot, "I see that you are a man of resources, and as well acquainted with wine-rooms as with convents."

"Do you think I have an understanding with the host?"

"It looks like that to me."

"Faith! no; this time you are wrong. Maître Bonhomet sells me wine when I want it, and I pay when I can; that is all."

"Bonhomet! upon my word, that is a name that promises well."

"And keeps its promise. Come, my friend, come!"

"Oh, oh!" said Chicot to himself. "Now I must choose among my best grimaces, for if Bonhomet recognizes me at once, it is all over."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE CORNE D'ABONDANCE.

THE way along which Borromée led Chicot, never suspecting that he knew it as well as himself, recalled to our Gascon the happy days of his youth. How many times had he in those days, under the rays of the winter sun, or in the cool shade in summer, sought out this house, towards which a stranger was now conducting him ! Then a few pieces of gold, or even of silver, jingling in his purse, made him happier than a king ; and he gave himself up to the delightful pleasures of laziness, having no mistress in his lodgings, no hungry child on the threshold, no relatives suspicious and grumbling behind the window. Then he used to sit down carelessly on the wooden bench, waiting for Gorenflot, who however was always punctual to the time fixed for dinner ; and then he used to study, with intelligent curiosity, Gorenflot in all the varying phases of drunkenness. Soon the great street of St. Jacques appeared to his eyes, the cloister of St. Benoît, and nearly in front of that the hostelry of the Corne d'Abondance, rather dirty, and rather dilapidated, but still shaded by its planes and chestnuts, and embellished inside by its pots of shining copper and brilliant saucepans, looking like imitations of gold and silver, and bringing real gold and silver into the pockets of the innkeeper. Chicot bent his back until he seemed to have lost five or six inches of his height, and making a most hideous grimace, prepared to meet his old friend Bonhomet. How-

ever, as Borromée walked first, it was to him that Bonhomet spoke, and he scarcely looked at Chicot, who stood behind. Time had left its traces on the face of Bonhomet, as well as on his house. Besides the wrinkles, which seem to correspond on the human face to the cracks made by time on the front of buildings, Maître Bonhomet had assumed airs of great importance since Chicot had seen him last. These, however, he never showed much to men of a warlike appearance, for whom he had always a great respect.

It seemed to Chicot that nothing was changed excepting the tint of the ceiling, which from gray had turned to black.

“Come, friend,” said Borromée, “I know a little nook where two men may talk at their ease while they drink. Is it unoccupied?” continued he, turning to Bonhomet.

Bonhomet answered that it was, and Borromée then led Chicot to the little room so well known to those of our readers who have been willing to waste their time in reading “La Dame de Monsoreau.”

“Now,” said Borromée, “wait here for me while I avail myself of a privilege granted to the *habitués* of this house, and which you can use in your turn when you are better known here.”

“What is that?”

“To go to the cellar and choose the wine we are to drink.”

“Ah! a fine privilege! Go, then.”

Borromée went out. Chicot followed him with his eye, and as soon as the door closed behind him went to the wall and raised a picture, representing Credit killed by bad debtors, behind which was a hole, through which he could see into the public room. Chicot knew this hole well, for he had made it himself. “Ah, ah!” he said;

“you lead me to an inn which you are accustomed to frequent ; you take me to a room where you think I cannot see or be seen, — and in that room there is a hole, thanks to which you cannot make a movement without my seeing it. Come, come, my captain, you are not bright.”

On looking through, Chicot perceived Borromée, after placing his finger on his lips as a sign of caution, saying something to Bonhomet, who seemed to acquiesce by a nod of the head. By the movement of the captain’s lips, Chicot, an expert in such matters, understood him to say, “Serve us in that room ; and whatever noise you may hear, do not come in.” After this Borromée took a light, which was always kept burning in readiness, and descended to the cellar. Then Chicot knocked on the wall in a peculiar manner. On hearing this knock, which seemed to recall to him some remembrance deeply rooted in his heart, Bonhomet started, looked up, and listened. Chicot knocked again impatiently, like a man surprised that his first summons is not obeyed. Bonhomet ran to the little room, and found Chicot standing there with a threatening face. At this sight, Bonhomet, who, like the rest of the world, had believed Chicot dead, uttered a cry, for he thought he saw his ghost.

“Since when,” said Chicot, “has a person like me been obliged to call twice ?”

“Oh, dear M. Chicot, is it you or your shade ?” cried Bonhomet.

“Whichever it be, since you recognize me, I hope you will obey me.”

“Oh, certainly, dear M. Chicot.”

“Then, whatever noise you hear in this room, and whatever takes place here, do not come until I call you.”

“Your directions will be the easier to obey, since they

are exactly the same as your companion has just given to me."

"Yes, but if he calls, do not come; wait until I call."

"I will, M. Chicot."

"Good! now send away every one else from your inn, and in ten minutes let us be as free and as solitary here as if we came to fast on Good Friday."

"In ten minutes, M. Chicot, there shall not be a soul in the hotel excepting your humble servant."

"Go, Bonhomet; you have retained all my esteem," said Chicot, majestically.

"Oh! *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*" said Bonhomet, as he retired, "what is about to take place in my poor house?"

As he went, he met Borromée, returning from the cellar with his bottles. "You understand?" said the latter; "in ten minutes, not a soul in the establishment."

Bonhomet made a sign of obedience and retired to the kitchen to consider how he should obey that double injunction of his two formidable patrons.

Borromée returned to the room, and found Chicot waiting for him with a smile on his lips.

We do not know how Bonhomet managed, but when the ten minutes had expired, the last customer was crossing the threshold of the door, muttering, "Oh, oh! the weather is stormy here to-day; we must avoid the storm."

CHAPTER XXIX.

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE LITTLE ROOM.

WHEN the captain re-entered the room with the basket in his hand containing a dozen bottles, he was received by Chicot with a face so open and smiling that Borromée almost regarded him as a simpleton. Borromée was in haste to uncork his bottles, but his haste was nothing to Chicot's; thus the preparations were soon made, and the two companions began to drink. At first, as though their occupation was too important to be interrupted, they drank in silence. Chicot uttered only these words, "Upon my word, this is good Burgundy."

They drank two bottles in this way.

"*Pardieu!*" murmured Borromée to himself, "it is a singular chance that I should light on such a drunkard as this."

At the third bottle Chicot raised his eyes to heaven, and said, "Really, we are drinking as though we wished to intoxicate ourselves."

"It is so good," replied Borromée.

"Ah! it pleases you. Go on, friend; I have a strong head."

And each of them emptied another bottle. The wine produced on them opposite effects; it unloosened Chicot's tongue, and tied that of Borromée.

"Ah!" murmured Chicot, "you are silent; then you doubt yourself."

“Ah!” said Borromée, apart, “you chatter; then you are getting tipsy.” Then he asked Chicot, “How many bottles does it take you?”

“For what?”

“To get lively.”

“About four.”

“And to get tipsy?”

“About six.”

“And dead drunk?”

“Double.”

“Gascon!” thought Borromée, “he stammers already, and has only drunk four. Come, then, we can go on,” said he, and he drew out a fifth for Chicot and a fifth for himself.

But Chicot remarked that of the bottles ranged beside Borromée some were half full, and others two thirds; not one was empty. This confirmed him in his suspicions that the captain had bad intentions with regard to him. He rose to receive the fifth bottle as Borromée presented it, and staggered as he did so.

“Oh!” said he, “did you feel it?”

“What?”

“The shock of an earthquake.”

“Bah!”

“Yes. *Ventre de biche!* fortunately the hostelry of the Corne d’Abondance is solid, although it is built on a pivot.”

“What! built on a pivot?”

“Doubtless, since it turns.”

“True!” said Borromée, “I felt the effects, but did not guess the cause.”

“Because you are not a Latin scholar, and have not read the ‘*De Natura Rerum.*’ If you had, you would know that there is no effect without a cause.”

“Well, my dear captain, — for you are a captain like me, are you not?”

“ Yes, from the points of my toes to the roots of my hair.”

“ Well, then, my dear captain, tell me, since there is no effect without a cause, as you say, what was the cause of your disguise ? ”

“ What disguise ? ”

“ That which you wore when you came to visit Dom Modeste.”

“ How was I disguised ? ”

“ As a *bourgeois*.”

“ Ah ! true.”

“ Tell me that, and you will begin my education in philosophy.”

“ Willingly, if you will tell me why you were disguised as a monk. Confidence for confidence.”

“ Agreed,” said Borromée.

“ You wish to know, then, why I was disguised ? ” said Chicot, with an utterance which seemed to grow thicker and thicker.

“ Yes, it puzzles me.”

“ And then you will tell me ? ”

“ Yes, that was agreed.”

“ Ah ! true ; I forgot. Well, the thing is very simple ; I was a spy for the king.”

“ A spy ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Is that, then, your profession ? ”

“ No, I am an amateur.”

“ What were you watching there ? ”

“ Every one. Dom Modeste himself, then Brother Borromée, little Jacques, and the whole convent.”

“ And what did you discover, my friend ? ”

“ First, that Dom Modeste is a great fool.”

“ It does not need to be very clever to find that out.”

“ Pardon me ; his Majesty Henri III., who is no fool, regards him as one of the lights of the Church, and is about to make a bishop of him.”

“ So be it. I have nothing to say against that promotion ; on the contrary, it will give me a good laugh. But what else did you discover ? ”

“ I discovered that Brother Borromée was not a monk, but a captain.”

“ Ah ! you discovered that ? ”

“ At once.”

“ Anything else ? ”

“ I discovered that Jacques was practising with the foils in preparation for practice with the sword ; and that he aimed at a target in preparation for aiming at a man.”

“ Ah ! you discovered that ? ” said Borromée, frowning. “ And did you discover anything else ? ”

“ Oh, give me something to drink, or I shall remember nothing.”

“ Remember that you are beginning your sixth bottle,” said Borromée, laughing.

“ So I am getting tipsy ! ” said Chicot ; “ I don’t pretend I am not. Did we come here, then, to philosophize ? ”

“ We came here to drink.”

“ Let us drink, then.” And Chicot filled his glass.

“ Well,” said Borromée, “ now do you remember ? ”

“ What ? ”

“ What else you saw in the convent.”

“ Well, I saw that the monks were really soldiers, and instead of obeying Dom Modeste, obeyed you.”

“ Ah, truly ; but doubtless that was not all ? ”

“ No ; but more to drink, or my memory will fail me.” And as his bottle was empty, he held out his glass to Borromée, who filled it from his own. Chicot emptied his glass without taking breath.

“ Well, now do you remember ? ”

“ Oh, yes, I should think so.”

“ Well, what else ? ”

“ I saw that there was a plot.”

“ A plot ! ” cried Borromée, turning pale.

“ Yes, a plot.”

“ Against whom ? ”

“ Against the king.”

“ Of what nature ? ”

“ To try to carry him off.”

“ And when was that to be done ? ”

“ When he should be on his way from Vincennes.”

“ *Tonnerre !* ”

“ What did you say ? ”

“ Nothing. And you discovered that ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ And warned the king ? ”

“ *Parbleu !* that was what I came for.”

“ Then it was you who caused the failure of the project ? ”

“ Yes, I.”

“ *Massacre !* ” murmured Borromée between his teeth.

“ What did you say ? ”

“ I said that you have good eyes, friend.”

“ Bah ! ” said Chicot, stammering, “ I have seen something else still. Pass me one of your bottles, and I will astonish you when I tell you what I have seen.”

Borromée hastened to comply with Chicot’s desire.

“ Let me hear,” said he ; “ astonish me.”

“ In the first place, I have seen M. de Mayenne wounded.”

“ Bah ! ”

“ No wonder ; he was on my route. And then I have seen the taking of Cahors.”

“What! the taking of Cahors?”

“Certainly. Ah, Captain, it was a grand thing to see, and a brave man like you would have been delighted.”

“I do not doubt it. You were, then, near the King of Navarre?”

“Side by side, my friend, as we are now.”

“And you left him?”

“To announce this news to the King of France.”

“Then you have been at the Louvre?”

“Yes, just before you.”

“Then, as we have not left each other since, I need not ask you what you have done since our meeting at the Louvre.”

“On the contrary, ask; for upon my word, that is the most curious of all.”

“Tell me, then.”

“Tell, tell!” said Chicot. “*Ventre de biche!* it is very easy to say, ‘Tell.’”

“Make an effort.”

“One more glass of wine, then, to loosen my tongue,—quite full; that will do. Well, I saw, comrade, that when you gave the king the Duc de Guise’s letter, you let another fall.”

“Another!” cried Borromée, starting up.

“Yes, it is there.” And having tried two or three times with an unsteady hand, he put his finger on the buff doublet of Borromée, just where the letter was. Borromée started as though Chicot’s finger had been a hot iron, and had touched his skin instead of his doublet.

“Oh, oh!” said he, “there is but one thing wanting.”

“What is that?”

“That you should know to whom the letter is addressed.”

“ Oh, I know quite well,” said Chicot, letting his arms fall on the table; “ it is addressed to the Duchesse de Montpensier.”

“ Blood of Christ ! I hope you have not told that to the king.”

“ No ; but I will tell him.”

“ When ? ”

“ When I have had a nap.” And he let his head fall on his arms.

“ Ah ! you know that I have a letter for the duchess ? ”

“ I know that,” stammered Chicot, “ perfectly.”

“ Then as soon as you can walk you will go to the Louvre ? ”

“ I will go to the Louvre.”

“ You will denounce me ? ”

“ I will denounce you.”

“ Is it not a joke ? ”

“ What ? ”

“ That you will tell the king after your nap.”

“ Not at all. You see, my dear friend,” said Chicot, half raising his head and looking sleepily at Borromée, “ you are a conspirator, and I am a spy ; you have a plot, and I denounce you. We each follow our business. Good-night, Captain.” And Chicot laid his head down again, so that his face was completely hidden by his hands, while the back of his head was protected by his helmet.

“ Ah ! ” cried Borromée, looking with flaming eyes at his companion, “ ah, you will denounce me, dear friend ? ”

“ As soon as I awake, dear friend ; it is agreed.”

“ But you will not awake ! ” cried Borromée ; and at the same time he made a furious blow with his dagger on the back of his companion, thinking to pierce him through and nail him to the table. But he had not reckoned on the shirt of mail which Chicot had carried away from the

priory. The dagger broke upon it like glass, and for the second time Chicot owed his life to it.

Before Borromée had time to recover from his astonishment Chicot's right arm sprang out as if moved by a spring, described a semi-circle, and delivered a fist-blow weighing five hundred pounds in the face of Borromée, who rolled bleeding and stunned against the wall. In a second he was up again; in another second he had his sword in hand.

Those two seconds had sufficed for Chicot to draw his sword also and prepare himself. He seemed to shake off, as if by enchantment, all the fumes of the wine, and stood with a steady hand to receive his adversary. The table, like a field of battle, covered with empty bottles, lay between them and served as a rampart for both. But the blood flowing down his face infuriated Borromée, who lost all prudence and sprang towards his enemy, approaching as near as the intervening table would permit.

"Dolt!" cried Chicot, "you see that it is decidedly you who are drunk, for you cannot reach me across the table, while my arm is six inches longer than yours, and my sword as much longer than your sword; and here is the proof." As he spoke, he stretched out his arm with the quickness of lightning and pricked Borromée in the middle of the forehead. Borromée uttered a cry, more of rage than of pain, and as he was a man of great courage, attacked with double fury.

Chicot, however, still on the other side of the table, took a chair and quietly sat down. "*Mon Dieu!*" he said, shrugging his shoulders, "how stupid these soldiers are! they pretend to know how to manage their swords, and any *bourgeois*, if he liked, could kill them like flies. Ah, now you want to put out my eye! And now you mount on the table; that alone was wanting. *Ventre de*

biche ! take care, donkey ! upward strokes are dangerous, and if I wished, see, I could spit you like a lark." And he pricked him with his sword in the stomach, as he had already done in the forehead.

Borromée roared with anger, and leaped from the table to the floor.

"That is as it should be," said Chicot ; "now we are on the same level, and we can talk while we are fencing. Ah, Captain, Captain, and so we sometimes try our hand a little at assassination in our spare moments, do we ?"

"I do for my cause what you do for yours," said Borromée, now brought back to seriousness, and terrified in spite of himself by the ominous fire which gleamed in Chicot's eyes.

"Now that is talking," said Chicot ; "and yet, my friend, it is with no little pleasure I find that I am a better hand than you are. Ah, that was not bad !"

Borromée had just made a lunge at Chicot which had slightly touched his breast.

"Not bad, but I know the thrust ; it is the very same you showed little Jacques. I was just saying, then, that I have the advantage of you, for I did not begin this quarrel, however anxiously disposed I might have been to do so. More than that, even, I have allowed you to carry out your project by giving you all the latitude you required, and at this very moment even, I act only on the defensive, because I have something to propose to you."

"Nothing," cried Borromée, exasperated at Chicot's imperturbability, "nothing !" And he gave a thrust which would have run the Gascon completely through the body if the latter had not, with his long legs, sprung back a step, which placed him out of his adversary's reach.

"I am going to tell you what this arrangement is, all

the same, so that I shall have nothing left to reproach myself for."

"Hold your tongue!" said Borromée; "hold your tongue! it will be useless."

"Listen," said Chicot; "it is to satisfy my own conscience. I have no wish to shed your blood, you understand; and I don't want to kill you until I am driven to extremes."

"Kill me, kill me, I say, if you can!" exclaimed Borromée, exasperated.

"No, no; I have already once in my life killed another such swordsman as you are; I will even say a better swordsman than you. *Pardieu!* you know him; he also was one of Guise's retainers, — a lawyer too."

"Ah, Nicolas David!" said Borromée, terrified by the precedent, and again placing himself on the defensive.

"Exactly so."

"It was you who killed him?"

"Oh, yes, with a pretty little thrust which I will presently show you, if you decline the arrangement I propose."

"Well, let me hear what the arrangement is."

"You will pass from the Duc de Guise's service to that of the king, without, however, leaving that of the duke."

"In other words, I am to become a spy like yourself?"

"No, for there will be a difference; I am not paid, but you will be. You will begin by showing me the Duc de Guise's letter to Madame la Duchesse de Montpensier; you will let me take a copy of it, and I will leave you quiet until another occasion. Well, am I not considerate?"

"Here," said Borromée, "is my answer."

Borromée's reply was a *coupé sur les armes* so rapidly

dealt that the point of his sword slightly touched Chicot's shoulder.

"Well, well," said Chicot, "I see I must positively show you Nicolas David's thrust. It is very simple and pretty." And Chicot, who had up to that moment been acting on the defensive, made one step forward, and attacked in his turn.

"This is the thrust," said Chicot; "I make a feint in *quarte basse*." And he did so.

Borromée parried and gave way; but after this first step backwards, he was obliged to stop, as he found that he was close to the partition.

"Good! precisely so. You parry in a circle; that's wrong, for my wrist is stronger than yours. I catch your sword in mine, thus. I return to the attack by a *tierce haute*; I fall upon you, so, and you are hit, — or rather you are a dead man!"

In fact, the thrust had followed, or rather had accompanied, the demonstration, and the slender rapier, penetrating Borromée's chest, had glided like a needle completely through him, penetrating deeply, and with a dull sound, the wooden partition behind him.

Borromée flung out his arms, letting his sword fall to the ground. His eyes became fixed and injected with blood; his mouth opened wide; his lips were stained with a red foam; his head fell on his shoulder with a sigh, which sounded like a death-rattle; then his limbs refused their support, and his body, as it sunk forward, enlarged the aperture of the wound, but could not free itself from the partition, supported as it was by Chicot's terrible wrist, so that the unfortunate man, like a gigantic moth, remained fastened to the wall, which his feet kicked convulsively.

Chicot, cold and impassive as he always was in posi-

tions of great difficulty, especially when he had a conviction at the bottom of his heart that he had done everything his conscience could require of him, — Chicot, we say, took his hand from his sword, which remained in a horizontal position, unfastened the captain's belt, searched his doublet, took the letter, and read the address, "Duchesse de Montpensier."

All this time the blood was welling copiously from the wound, and the agony of death was depicted on the features of the wounded man. "I am dying! I am dying!" he murmured. "Oh, Heaven have pity on me!"

This last appeal to the divine mercy, made by a man who had most probably rarely thought of it until this moment of his direst need, touched Chicot's feeling. "Let us be charitable," he said; "and since this man must die, let him at least die as quietly as possible." He then advanced towards the partition, and by an effort withdrew his sword from the wall, and supported Borromée's body, to prevent it from falling heavily. This precaution, however, was useless; the approach of death had been rapid and certain, and had already paralyzed the dying man's limbs. His legs gave way beneath him; he fell into Chicot's arms, and then rolled heavily on the floor. The shock of his fall made a stream of blood flow from his wound, with which the last remains of life ebbed away.

Chicot then went and opened the door of communication, and called Bonhomet. He had no occasion to call twice, for the innkeeper had been listening at the door, and had successively heard the noise of tables and stools, the clashing of swords, and the fall of a heavy body. Now, the worthy Maître Bonhomet had, particularly after the confidence which had been reposed in him, too exten-

sive an experience of the character of gentlemen of the sword in general, and of that of Chicot in particular, not to have understood, step by step, what had taken place. The only thing of which he was ignorant was which of the two adversaries had fallen.

It must however be said in praise of Maître Bonhomet that his face assumed an expression of real satisfaction when he heard Chicot's voice, and when he saw that it was the Gascon, who, safe and sound, opened the door. Chicot, whom nothing escaped, remarked the expression of his countenance, and was inwardly pleased at it.

Bonhomet tremblingly entered the apartment. "Ah, good Jesus!" he exclaimed, as he saw the captain's body bathed in blood.

"Yes, my poor Bonhomet," said Chicot; "this is what we have come to. Our dear captain here is very ill, as you see."

"Oh, my good M. Chicot! my good M. Chicot!" exclaimed Bonhomet, ready to faint.

"Well, what?" inquired Chicot.

"It is very unkind of you to have chosen my inn for this execution. Such a handsome captain too!"

"Would you sooner have seen Chicot lying there, and Borromée alive?"

"No! oh, no!" cried the host, from the very bottom of his heart.

"Well, that would have happened, however, had it not been for a miracle of Providence."

"Really?"

"Upon the word of Chicot. Just look at my back, for it pains me a good deal, my dear friend." And he stooped down before the innkeeper, so that both his shoulders might be on a level with the host's eye.

Between the two shoulders the doublet was pierced

through ; and a spot of blood as large and round as a silver crown-piece reddened the edges of the hole.

“Blood!” cried Bonhomet, “blood! Ah, you are wounded!”

“Wait! wait!” And Chicot unfastened his doublet and his shirt. “Now look,” he said.

“Oh, you wore a cuirass! What a fortunate thing, dear M. Chicot! and you say that the ruffian wished to assassinate you.”

“The devil! it hardly seems likely I should amuse myself by giving a dagger-thrust between my own shoulders. Now, what do you see?”

“A link broken.”

“That dear captain was in good earnest, then. Is there much blood?”

“Yes, a good deal under the links.”

“I must take off the cuirass, then,” said Chicot.

Chicot took off his cuirass, and bared the upper part of his body, which seemed to be composed of nothing but bones, muscles spread over the bones, and skin merely covering the muscles.

“Ah, M. Chicot!” exclaimed Bonhomet, “you have a wound as large as a plate.”

“Yes, I suppose the blood has spread; there is what doctors call ecchymosis. Give me some clean linen, pour into a glass equal parts of good olive oil and wine dregs, and wash that stain for me.”

“But, dear M. Chicot, what am I to do with this body?”

“That is not your affair.”

“What! not my affair?”

“No. Give me some ink, a pen, and a sheet of paper.”

“Immediately, dear M. Chicot,” said Bonhomet, as he darted out of the room.

Meanwhile Chicot, who probably had no time to lose, heated at the lamp the point of a small dagger, and cut in the middle of the wax the seal of the letter. This being done, and as there was nothing else to retain the despatch, Chicot drew it from its envelope, and read it with the liveliest marks of satisfaction. Just as he had finished reading it, Maître Bonhomet returned with the oil, the wine, the paper, and the pen.

Chicot arranged the pen, ink, and paper before him, sat down at the table, and turned his back with stoical indifference towards Bonhomet for him to operate upon. The latter understood the pantomime, and began to rub it.

However, as if, instead of irritating a painful wound, some one had been tickling him in the most delightful manner, Chicot, during the operation, copied the letter from the Duc de Guise to his sister, and made his comments thereon at every word. The letter was as follows :—

DEAR SISTER, — The expedition from Antwerp has succeeded for everybody, but has failed as far as we are concerned. You will be told that the Duc d'Anjou is dead ; do not believe it, — he is alive.

He lives, you understand ; and that is the whole question.

There is a complete dynasty in those words ; those two words separate the House of Lorraine from the throne of France better than the deepest abyss could do it.

Do not, however, make yourself too uneasy about that. I have discovered that two persons whom I thought were dead are still living, and there is a great chance of death for the prince while those two persons are alive.

Think, then, only of Paris ; it will be time enough for the League to act six weeks hence. Let our Leaguers know that the moment is approaching, and let them hold themselves in readiness.

The army is on foot ; we number twelve thousand sure men,

all well equipped ; I shall enter France with it, under the pretext of engaging the German Huguenots, who are going to assist Henri de Navarre. I shall defeat the Huguenots, and having entered France as a friend, I shall act as a master.

“ Oh, oh ! ” cried Chicot.

“ Did I hurt you, dear M. Chicot ? ” said Bonhomet, discontinuing his frictions.

“ Yes, my good fellow. ”

“ I will rub more softly ; don't be afraid. ”

Chicot continued : —

P. S. — I entirely approve your plan with regard to the Forty-five ; only allow me to say, dear sister, that you will be conferring a greater honor on those fellows than they deserve.

“ Ah, the devil ! ” murmured Chicot, “ this is getting obscure. ” And he read it again : —

I entirely approve your plan with regard to the Forty-five.

“ What plan ? ” Chicot asked himself.

Only allow me to say, dear sister, that you will be conferring a greater honor on those fellows than they deserve.

“ What honor ? ”

Chicot resumed : —

Than they deserve.

Your affectionate brother,

H. DE LORRAINE.

“ At all events, ” said Chicot, “ everything is clear, except the postscript. Very good ! we will look after the postscript, then. ”

“ Dear M. Chicot, ” Bonhomet ventured to observe, seeing that Chicot had finished writing, if not thinking, — “ dear M. Chicot, you have not told me what I am to do with this corpse. ”

“That is a very simple affair.”

“For you, who are full of imagination, it may be ; but for me ?”

“Well ! suppose, for instance, that that unfortunate captain had been quarrelling with the Swiss guards or the *reîtres*, and had been brought to your house wounded, would you have refused to receive him ?”

“No, certainly not, unless indeed you had forbidden me, dear M. Chicot.”

“Suppose that, having been placed in that corner, he had, notwithstanding the care and attention you had bestowed upon him, departed this life while in your charge, it would have been a great misfortune, and nothing more, I suppose ?”

“Certainly.”

“And instead of incurring any blame, you would deserve to be commended for your humanity. Suppose, again, that while he was dying this poor captain had mentioned the name, which you know very well, of the prior of Les Jacobins St. Antoine ?”

“Of Dom Modeste Gorenflot ?” exclaimed Bonhomet, in astonishment.

“Yes, of Dom Modeste Gorenflot. Very good ! You will go and inform Dom Modeste of it. Dom Modeste will hasten here with all speed ; and as the dead man’s purse is found in one of his pockets, — you understand it is important that the purse should be found ; I mention this merely by way of advice, — and as the dead man’s purse is found in one of his pockets, and this letter in the other, no suspicion whatever can be entertained.”

“I understand, dear M. Chicot.”

“In addition to which, you will receive a reward instead of being punished.”

“You are a great man, dear M. Chicot. I will run at once to the priory of St. Antoine.”

“Wait a minute! did I not say there was the purse and the letter?”

“Oh, yes! and you have the letter in your hand.”

“Precisely.”

“I must not say that it has been read and copied?”

“*Pardieu!* it is precisely if this letter reaches its destination intact that you will receive a recompense.”

“The letter contains a secret, then?”

“In such times as the present there are secrets in everything, my dear Bonhomet.” And Chicot, with this sententious reply, again fastened the silk under the wax of the seal by making use of the same means as before. He then fastened the wax so artistically that the most experienced eye would not have been able to detect the slightest crack, after which he replaced the letter in the pocket of the dead man, had the linen, which had been steeped in the oil and wine, applied to his wound by way of a cataplasm, put on again the coat of mail next to his skin, his shirt over his coat of mail, picked up his sword, wiped it, thrust it into the scabbard, and withdrew. He returned again, however, saying, “If, after all, the story which I have invented does not seem satisfactory to you, you can accuse the captain of having thrust his own sword through his body.”

“A suicide?”

“Well, that does n’t compromise any one, you understand.”

“But they won’t bury the unfortunate man in holy ground.”

“Pooh!” said Chicot, “will that be giving him much pleasure?”

“Why, yes, I should think so.”

“In that case, do as you like, my dear Bonhomet. Adieu.” Then returning a second time, he said, “By the way, I pay, since he is dead.” And Chicot threw three golden crowns on the table; and then, placing his forefinger on his lips, in token of silence, he departed.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE HUSBAND AND THE LOVER.

It was with no inconsiderable emotion that Chicot again recognized the Rue des Augustins, so quiet and deserted, the angle formed by the block of houses which preceded his own, and lastly, his own dear house itself, with its triangular roof, its worm-eaten balcony, and its gutters ornamented with water-spouts. He had been so afraid that he should find nothing but an empty space in the place of the house ; he had so strongly apprehended that he should see the street blackened by the smoke of a conflagration, — that the street and the house appeared to him miracles of neatness, loveliness, and splendor.

Chicot had concealed the key of his beloved house in the hollow of a stone which served as the base of one of the columns by which his balcony was supported. At the period we are now writing about, any kind of key belonging to a chest or piece of furniture equalled in weight and size the very largest keys of our houses of the present day. The door-keys, therefore, following the natural proportions, were equal in size to the keys of our modern cities. So Chicot had considered the difficulty which his pocket would have in accommodating the happy key, and had hidden it in the spot we have indicated. It must be confessed that he felt a slight shudder creeping over him as he plunged his fingers in the hollow of the stone. This shudder was succeeded by a feeling of the

most unmixed delight when the cold of the iron met his hand, — for the key was actually in the place where he had left it.

It was precisely the same with regard to the furniture in the first room he came to; the same too with the small board which he had nailed to the joist; and lastly, the same with the thousand crowns, which were still slumbering in their oaken hiding-place.

Chicot was not a miser, — quite the contrary, indeed. He had very frequently thrown gold about broadcast, thereby allowing the ideal to triumph over the material, which is the philosophy of every man who is of any value; but no sooner had the mind momentarily ceased to exercise its influence over matter (in other words, whenever money was no longer needed, nor sacrifice requisite); whenever, in a word, the senses temporarily regained their influence over Chicot's mind, and whenever his mind allowed the body to live and to take enjoyment, — gold, that principal, that unceasing, that eternal source of animal delights, reassumed its value in our philosopher's eyes; and no one knew better than he did into how many delicious particles that inestimable totality which people call a crown is subdivided.

“*Ventre de biche!*” murmured Chicot, sitting down in the middle of his room, after he had removed the flagstone, and with the small piece of board by his side, and his treasure under his eyes, — “*ventre de biche!* that excellent young man is a most invaluable neighbor, for he has made others respect my money, and has himself respected it too; in sober truth, such an action is wonderful in such times as the present. *Mordieu!* I owe some thanks to that excellent young fellow, and he shall have them this evening.”

Thereupon Chicot replaced the plank over the joist, the

flagstone over the plank, approached the window, and looked towards the opposite side of the street.

The house still retained that gray and sombre aspect which the imagination sometimes bestows upon certain buildings whose character it knows.

"It cannot yet be their time for retiring to rest," said Chicot. "And besides, those neighbors, I am sure, are no great sleepers; so let us see."

He descended his staircase, crossed the road, — forming, as he did so, his features into their most amiable and gracious expression, — and knocked at his neighbor's door. He remarked the creaking of the staircase, the sound of a hurried footstep, and then waited long enough to feel warranted in knocking again.

At this fresh summons the door opened, and the outline of a man appeared in the gloom.

"Thank you, and good-evening," said Chicot, holding out his hand; "here I am back again, and I am come to return you my thanks, my dear neighbor."

"I beg your pardon?" inquiringly observed a voice, in a tone of disappointment, the accent of which greatly surprised Chicot. At the same moment the man who had opened the door drew back a step or two.

"Stay! I have made a mistake," said Chicot; "you were not my neighbor when I left, and yet I know who you are."

"And I know you too," said the young man.

"You are M. le Vicomte Ernauton de Carmaingés."

"And you are the Shade."

"Really," said Chicot, "I am quite bewildered."

"Well, and what do you want, Monsieur?" inquired the young man, somewhat churlishly.

"Excuse me, but I am interrupting you perhaps, my dear monsieur?"

“No, only you will allow me to ask you what you may want.”

“Nothing, except that I wished to speak to the master of this house.”

“Speak, then.”

“What do you mean?”

“I am the master of the house, that is all.”

“You? since when, allow me to ask?”

“The devil! since three days ago.”

“Good! the house was for sale, then?”

“So it would seem, since I have bought it.”

“But the former proprietor?”

“No longer lives here, as you see.”

“Where is he?”

“I don’t know.”

“Come, come! let us understand each other,” said Chicot.

“There is nothing I should like better,” replied Ernauton, with visible impatience; “only let us do so without losing any time.”

“The former proprietor was a man between five-and-twenty and thirty years of age, but who looked as if he were forty.”

“No; he was a man about sixty-five or sixty-six years old, who looked his age quite.”

“Bald?”

“No, on the contrary, with a forest of white hair.”

“He had an enormous scar on the left side of the head, had he not?”

“I did not observe the scar, but I did a good number of wrinkles.”

“I cannot understand it at all,” said Chicot.

“Well,” resumed Ernauton, after a moment’s silence, “what did you want with that man, my dear Monsieur the Shade?”

Chicot was on the point of stating what he had come to say; suddenly, however, the mystery of the surprise which Ernauton had exhibited reminded him of a certain proverb very dear to all discreet people. "I wished to pay him a neighborly visit," he said, "that is all."

In this way Chicot did not tell a falsehood, and yet admitted nothing.

"My dear monsieur," said Ernauton, politely, but reducing considerably the opening of the door, which he held half closed, "I regret I am unable to give you more precise information."

"Thank you, Monsieur," said Chicot; "I must look elsewhere, then."

"But," continued Ernauton, as he gradually closed the door, "that does not prevent my congratulating myself upon the chance which has brought me again into personal communication with you."

"You would like to send me to the devil, I believe," murmured Chicot to himself, as he returned bow for bow.

However, as notwithstanding this mental reply, Chicot, in his preoccupation, forgot to withdraw, Ernauton, enclosing his face between the door and the doorway, said to him, "I wish you a very good-evening, Monsieur."

"One moment, M. de Carmainges," said Chicot.

"Monsieur, I exceedingly regret that I am unable to wait," replied Ernauton; "but the fact is, I am expecting some one who will come and knock at this very door, and this person will be angry with me if I do not show the greatest possible discretion in receiving him."

"That is quite sufficient, Monsieur; I understand," said Chicot. "I am sorry to have been so importunate, and I now retire."

"Adieu, dear Monsieur the Shade."

"Adieu, excellent M. Ernauton." And as Chicot drew

back a step, he saw the door quietly shut in his face. He listened to satisfy himself whether the suspicious young man was watching his departure, but he heard Ernauton's footsteps as he ascended the staircase; he therefore returned to his own house without uneasiness, and shut himself up in it, thoroughly determined not to interfere with his new neighbor's habits, but in accordance with his usual custom, equally resolved not to lose sight of him altogether.

In fact, Chicot was not a man to slumber on a circumstance which seemed to him of any importance, without having handled and dissected it with the patience of a skilled anatomist. In spite of himself, — and it was an advantage or a defect of his organization, — every material impression that his mind received presented itself by its salient features for analysis, in such a manner that poor Chicot's brain was driven to an immediate examination.

Chicot, whose mind up to that moment had been occupied with that phrase of the Duc de Guise's letter, — namely, "I entirely approve your plan with regard to the Forty-five," — consequently abandoned that phrase, the examination of which he promised himself to return to at a later period, in order that he might forthwith thoroughly exhaust this new subject of preoccupation, which had just taken the place of the older one.

Chicot reflected that nothing could be more singular than to see Ernauton installing himself, as if he were its master, in that mysterious house whose inhabitants had suddenly disappeared. And the more so, since to these original inhabitants a phrase of the Duc de Guise's letter relative to the Duc d'Anjou might possibly have some reference. That was a chance which deserved attentive consideration; and Chicot was in the habit of believing in

providential chances. He developed, even, whenever he was begged to do so, some very ingenious theories on the subject.

The basis of these theories was an idea which in our opinion was quite as good as any other ; it was as follows : chance is God's reserve. The Almighty never communicates that reserve except in momentous circumstances, particularly since he has observed that men are sagacious enough to study and foresee the chances which may befall them in accordance with natural causes and regularly organized principles of existence. Moreover, God likes to counteract the combinations of the proud, whose past pride he has already punished by drowning them, and whose future pride he will punish by burning them. God, then, we say, or rather Chicot said, is pleased to counteract the combinations of the proud by means with which they are unacquainted, and whose intervention they cannot foresee.

This theory, as may be perceived, includes some very specious arguments, and might possibly furnish some very brilliant theses ; but the reader, anxious, as Chicot was, to know what Carmaingés's object was in that house, will feel obliged to us for pausing in their development.

Chicot, then, reflected that it was strange to see Ernauton in the very house where he had seen Rémy. He considered it was strange for two reasons : first, because of the entire ignorance in which the two men lived with respect to each other, which led to the supposition that there must have been an intermediary between them unknown to Chicot ; and secondly, because the house must have been sold to Ernauton, who possessed no means of purchasing it.

"It is true," said Chicot, installing himself as comfortably as he could in his usual place of observation, — "it

is true that the young man pretends he is expecting a visit, and it is probable that the expected visitor is a woman. In these days women are rich and indulge in caprices. Ernauton is handsome, young, and graceful; he has taken some one's fancy; a rendezvous has been arranged; and he has been directed to purchase this house; he has bought the house, and has accepted the rendezvous.

"Ernauton," continued Chicot, "lives at court; it must be some lady belonging to the court, then, with whom he has this affair. Poor fellow, will he love her? Heaven preserve him from such a thing! he is going to fall headlong into that gulf of perdition. Very good! ought I not to read him a moral lecture thereupon? — a moral lecture doubly useless and ten times stupid; useless because he won't understand it, and even if he did understand it, would refuse to listen to it; stupid, because I should be doing far better to go to bed, and to think a little about that poor Borromée.

"On this latter subject," continued Chicot, who had suddenly become thoughtful, "I perceive one thing; namely, that remorse does not exist, and is only a relative feeling. The fact is, I do not feel any remorse at all for having killed Borromée, since the manner in which M. de Carmainges's affair occupies my mind makes me forget that I have killed the man; and if he, on his side, had nailed me to the table as I nailed him to the wainscot, he would certainly have had no more remorse than I have myself at the present moment."

Chicot had reached so far in his reasonings, his inductions, and his philosophy, which had consumed a good hour and a half altogether, when he was drawn from his train of thought by the arrival of a litter proceeding from the direction of the inn of the Brave Chevalier. This lit-

ter stopped at the threshold of the mysterious house. A veiled lady alighted from it, and disappeared within the door, which Ernauton held half open.

“Poor fellow!” murmured Chicot, “I was not mistaken, and it was indeed a lady he was waiting for; and so now I shall go to bed.” Whereupon he rose, but remained motionless, although standing up. “I am mistaken,” he said. “I shall not be able to go to sleep; but I maintain what I was saying, — that if I don’t sleep it will not be remorse which will prevent me, it will be curiosity; and that is so true that if I remain here in my observatory, my mind will be occupied with but one thing, and that is the question which of our noble ladies honors the handsome Ernauton with her affection. Far better, then, to remain where I am; since if I went to bed, I should certainly get up again to return here.” And thereupon Chicot resumed his seat.

An hour had nearly passed away, — and we cannot state whether Chicot was engaged in thinking of the unknown lady or of Borromée, whether he was occupied by curiosity or tormented by remorse, — when he fancied he heard the gallop of a horse at the end of the street. And in fact, a cavalier, wrapped in his cloak, made his appearance immediately.

The cavalier drew up in the middle of the street, and seemed to be looking about him to see where he was. He then perceived the group which was formed by the litter and its bearers. He drove his horse against them. He was armed, for the rattling of his sword against his spurs could be distinctly heard. The bearers of the litter seemed desirous of barring his passage; but he addressed a few words to them in a low tone of voice, and not only did they withdraw with every mark of respect, but one of them, as the rider sprang to the ground from his horse,

even received the bridle from his hand. The unknown advanced towards the door and knocked loudly.

"Well," said Chicot, "I was right in remaining, after all; my presentiments, which told me that something was going to take place, have not deceived me. Here is the husband, poor Ernauton; we shall presently see something serious. If, however, it be the husband, he is very kind to announce his return in so riotous a manner."

Notwithstanding the magisterial manner in which the unknown thundered at the door, some hesitation seemed to be shown in opening it.

"Open!" cried he who was knocking.

"Open! open!" repeated the bearers.

"There is no doubt it is the husband," resumed Chicot; "he has threatened the men that he will have them whipped or hanged, and they have declared themselves on his side. Poor Ernauton, he will be flayed alive! Oh, oh! I shall not suffer such a thing, however," added Chicot. "For in fact," he continued, "he assisted me; and consequently, when an opportunity presents itself, I ought to help him. And it seems to me that the opportunity has now arrived, or it never will arrive."

Chicot was resolute and generous, and curious into the bargain; he unfastened his long sword, placed it under his arm, and hurriedly ran down the staircase. He knew how to open his door noiselessly, which is an indispensable piece of knowledge for any one who may wish to listen with advantage. He glided under the balcony, then behind a pillar, and waited.

Hardly had Chicot installed himself, when the door opposite was opened, as soon as the unknown had whispered a word through the keyhole; and yet he did not venture beyond the threshold. A moment afterwards the lady appeared within the doorway. She took hold

of the cavalier's arm, who led her to the litter, closed the door of it, and then mounted his horse.

"There is no doubt on the subject," said Chicot; "it is the husband, — a good-natured fellow of a husband after all, since he does not think it worth his while to explore the house in order to be revenged on my friend Carmainges."

The litter then moved off, the cavalier walking his horse beside the *portière*.

"*Pardieu!*" said Chicot, "I must follow those people and learn who they are, and where they are going; I shall at all events draw some solid counsel from my discovery for my friend Carmainges."

Chicot accordingly followed the *cortège*, observing the precaution, however, of keeping in the shadow of the walls, and taking care that the noise made by the footsteps of the men and of the horses should render the sound of his own inaudible. His surprise was by no means slight when he saw the litter stop at the door of the Brave Chevalier. Almost immediately afterwards, as if some one had been on the watch, the door was opened.

The lady, still veiled, alighted, entered, and mounted to the turret, the window of the first story of which was lighted. The husband followed her, both being respectfully preceded by Dame Fournichon, who carried a light in her hand.

"Decidedly," said Chicot, crossing his arms on his chest, "I cannot understand a single thing of the whole affair."

CHAPTER XXXI.

SHOWING HOW CHICOT BEGAN TO UNDERSTAND THE PURPOSE OF M. DE GUISE'S LETTER.

CHICOT fancied that he had already seen somewhere the figure of this courteous cavalier ; but his memory, having become a little confused during his journey from Navarre, where he had met with so many different persons, did not, with its usual facility, furnish him with the cavalier's name on the present occasion.

While, concealed in the shade, he was interrogating himself, with his eyes fixed upon the lighted window, as to the object of this lady and gentleman's interview at the Brave Chevalier, our worthy Gascon, forgetting Ernauton in the mysterious house, observed the door of the hostelry open ; and in the stream of light which escaped through the opening, he perceived something resembling the dark outline of a monk's figure. The outline in question paused for a moment to look up at the same window at which Chicot had been gazing.

"Oh, oh!" he murmured ; "if I am not mistaken, that is the frock of a Jacobin friar. Is Maître Gorenflot so lax, then, in his discipline as to allow his sheep to go strolling about at such an hour of the night as this, and at such a distance from the priory?"

Chicot kept his eye upon the Jacobin, who was making his way along the Rue des Augustins ; and something seemed instinctively to assure him that he should, through this monk, discover the solution of the problem which

he had up to that moment been vainly endeavoring to ascertain.

Moreover, in the same way that Chicot had fancied he had recognized the figure of the cavalier, he now fancied he could recognize in the monk a certain movement of the shoulder, and a peculiar military movement of the hips, which belong only to persons in the habit of frequenting fencing-rooms and gymnastic establishments. "May the devil seize me," he murmured, "if that frock yonder does not cover the body of that little miscreant whom I wished them to give me for a travelling-companion, and who handles his arquebuse and foil so cleverly!"

Hardly had the idea occurred to Chicot, when, to convince himself of its value, he stretched out his long legs, and in a dozen strides rejoined the little fellow, who was walking along, holding up his frock above his thin and sinewy legs, in order to move more rapidly. This was not very difficult, however, inasmuch as the monk paused every now and then to glance behind him, as if he was going away with great difficulty and with feelings of profound regret. His glance was invariably directed towards the brilliantly lighted windows of the hostelry.

Chicot had not gone many steps before he felt sure that he had not been mistaken in his conjectures. "Holloa, my little master!" he said; "holloa, my little Jacquot! holloa, my little Clement! Halt!" And he pronounced this last word in so thoroughly military a tone that the monk started at it.

"Who calls me?" inquired the young man, rudely, with something rather antagonistic than cordial in his tone of voice.

"I!" replied Chicot, drawing himself up in front of the monk; "I! don't you recognize me?"

"Oh, M. Robert Briquet!" exclaimed the monk.

"Myself, my little man. And where are you going like that, so late, darling child?"

"To the priory, M. Briquet."

"Very good; but where do you come from?"

"I?"

"Of course, little libertine."

The young man started. "I don't know what you are saying, M. Briquet," he replied; "on the contrary, I have been sent with a very important commission by Dom Modeste, who will himself assure you that such is the case, if there be any occasion for it."

"Gently, gently, my little Saint Jerome. We take fire like a match, it seems."

"And not without reason, too, when one hears such things said as you were saying just now."

"The devil! when one sees a frock like yours leaving a tavern at such an hour —"

"A tavern! I!"

"Oh, of course not; the house you left just now was not the Brave Chevalier, I suppose? Ah, you see I have caught you!"

"You were right in saying that I left that house, but it was not a tavern I was leaving."

"What!" said Chicot; "is not the hostelry of the Brave Chevalier a tavern?"

"A tavern is a house where people drink, and as I have not been drinking in that house, that house is not a tavern for me."

"The devil! that is a subtle distinction, and I am very much mistaken if you will not some day become a very forcible theologian; but at all events, if you did not go into that house to drink, what did you go there for?"

Clement made no reply, and Chicot could read in his

face, notwithstanding the darkness of the night, a resolute determination not to say another word.

This resolution annoyed our friend extremely, for it had become a habit with him to know everything.

It must not be supposed that Clement showed any ill feeling by his silence; for, on the contrary, he had appeared delighted to meet in so unexpected a manner his learned fencing-master, Maitre Robert Briquet, and had given him the warmest reception that could be expected from that close and rugged character.

The conversation had completely ceased. Chicot, for the purpose of starting it again, was on the point of pronouncing the name of Brother Borromée; but although Chicot did not feel any remorse, or fancied he did not feel any, he could not summon up courage to pronounce that name.

His young companion, still preserving the same unbroken silence, seemed as if he were awaiting something; it seemed too as if he considered it a happiness to remain as long as possible in the neighborhood of the hostelry of the Brave Chevalier.

Robert Briquet tried to speak to him about the journey which the boy had for a moment entertained the hope of making with him. Jacques Clement's eyes glistened at the words "space" and "liberty." Robert Briquet told him that in the countries through which he had just been travelling the art of fencing was held greatly in honor; he added with an appearance of indifference that he had even brought away with him several wonderful passes and thrusts.

This was placing Jacques upon slippery ground. He wished to know what these passes were; and Chicot, with his long arm, indicated a few of them upon the arm of the little monk.

But all these delicacies and refinements on Chicot's part in no way affected little Clement's obstinate determination ; and while he endeavored to parry these unknown passes, which his friend Maître Robert Briquet was showing him, he preserved an obstinate silence with respect to what had brought him into that quarter.

Thoroughly annoyed, but keeping a strong control over himself, Chicot resolved to try the effect of injustice ; injustice is one of the most powerful provocatives ever invented to make women, children, and inferiors speak, whatever their nature or disposition may be. "It does not matter," he said, as if he returned to his original idea ; — "it does not matter ; you are a delightful little monk ! but that you visit hostelrys is certain, and what hostelrys too ! — those where beautiful ladies are to be found. And you stop outside in a state of ecstasy before the window, where you can see their shadow. Oh, little one, little one ! I shall tell Dom Modeste all about it."

The bolt hit its mark, — even more exactly than Chicot had supposed it would ; for when he began, he did not suspect that the wound had been so deep.

Jacques turned round like a serpent that had been trodden on. "That is not true," he cried, crimson with shame and anger. "I don't look at women."

"Yes, yes," pursued Chicot ; "on the contrary, there was an exceedingly pretty woman at the Brave Chevalier when you left it, and you turned round to look at her again ; and I know that you were waiting for her in the turret, and I know too that you spoke to her." Chicot proceeded by the inductive process.

Jacques could not contain himself any longer. "I certainly have spoken to her !" he exclaimed. "Is it a sin to speak to women ?"

“No, when one does not speak to them of one’s own accord, and yielding to the temptation of Satan.”

“Satan has nothing whatever to do with the matter; it was absolutely necessary that I should speak to that lady, since I was desired to hand her a letter.”

“Desired by Dom Modeste?” cried Chicot.

“Yes, go and complain to him now if you like.”

Chicot, bewildered, and feeling his way as it were in the dark, perceived at these words a gleam of light traversing the obscurity of his brain.

“Ah!” he said, “I knew it perfectly well.”

“What did you know?”

“What you did not wish to tell me.”

“I do not tell my own secrets, and for a greater reason, the secrets of others.”

“Yes, but to me.”

“Why should I tell them to you?”

“You should tell them to me because I am a friend of Dom Modeste; and for another reason you should tell them to me because —”

“Well?”

“Because I know beforehand all you could possibly have to tell me.”

Jacques looked at Chicot and shook his head with an incredulous smile.

“Very good!” said Chicot, “would you like me to tell you what you do not wish to tell me?”

“I should indeed.”

Chicot made an effort. “In the first place,” he said, “that poor Borromée —”

A dark expression passed across Jacques’s face. “Oh!” said the boy, “if I had been there —”

“Well! if you had been there?”

“The affair would not have turned out as it did.”

“ Would you have defended him against the Swiss with whom he got into a quarrel ? ”

“ I would have defended him against every one. ”

“ So that he would not have been killed ? ”

“ Either that, or I should have got myself killed along with him. ”

“ At all events, you were not there, so that the poor devil breathed his last in an obscure tavern, and in doing so pronounced Dom Modeste’s name ; is not that so ? ”

“ Yes. ”

“ Whereupon the people there informed Dom Modeste of it ? ”

“ A man, seemingly scared out of his wits, who threw the whole convent into consternation. ”

“ And Dom Modeste sent for his litter, and hastened to the Corne d’Abondance ? ”

“ How do you know that ? ”

“ Oh, you don’t know me yet, my boy ; I am somewhat of a sorcerer, I can tell you. ”

Jacques drew back a couple of steps.

“ That is not all, ” continued Chicot, who, as he spoke, began to see clearer by the light of his own words ; “ a letter was found in the dead man’s pocket. ”

“ A letter ; yes, precisely so. ”

“ And Dom Modeste charged his little Jacques to carry that letter to its address. ”

“ Yes. ”

“ And the little Jacques ran immediately to the Hôtel de Guise. ”

“ Oh ! ”

“ Where he found no one —

“ *Bon Dieu !* ”

“ But M. de Mayneville. ”

“ *Misericorde !* ”

“And M. de Mayneville conducted Jacques to the hostelry of the Brave Chevalier.”

“M. Briquet! M. Briquet!” cried Jacques, “if you know that —”

“Eh, *ventre de biche!* you see very well that I know it,” exclaimed Chicot, feeling triumphant at having disentangled this secret, which was of such importance for him to learn, from the provoking intricacies in which it had been at first involved.

“In that case,” returned Jacques, “you see very well, M. Briquet, that I am not guilty.”

“No,” said Chicot, “you are not guilty in act nor in omission, but you are guilty in thought.”

“I!”

“I suppose there is no doubt you think the duchess very beautiful?”

“I!”

“And you turned round to look at her again through the window.”

“I!” The young monk colored and stammered out, “Well, it is true; she is exactly like a Virgin Mary which was placed over the head of my mother’s bed.”

“Oh,” muttered Chicot, “how much those people lose who are not curious!”

And thereupon he made little Clement, whom from this moment he held in his power, tell him all he had himself just told him, but this time with the details, which he could not possibly otherwise have known.

“You see,” said Chicot, when he had finished, “what a poor fencing-master you had in Brother Borromée.”

“M. Briquet,” said little Jacques, “one ought not to speak ill of the dead.”

“No; but confess one thing.”

“What?”

“That Borromée did not make such good use of his sword as the man who killed him.”

“True.”

“And now that is all I had to say to you. Good-night, Jacques ; we shall meet again soon, and if you like — ”

“What, M. Briquet ?”

“Why, I will give you lessons in fencing for the future.”

“Oh, I shall be most thankful.”

“And now off with you, my boy, for they are waiting for you impatiently at the priory.”

“True ; true ! Thank you, M. Briquet, for having reminded me of it.” And the little monk disappeared, running as fast as he could.

Chicot had a reason for dismissing his companion. He had extracted all he wished to learn from him, and on the other hand there still remained something further for him to learn elsewhere. He returned, therefore, as fast as he could, to his own house. The litter, the bearers, and the horse were still at the door of the Brave Chevalier. He regained his place of observation without making a noise. The house opposite to his own was still lighted up, and from that moment all his attention was directed towards it.

In the first place, Chicot observed, by a rent in the curtain, Ernauton walking up and down, apparently waiting with great impatience. He then saw the litter return, saw Mayneville leave, and lastly, he saw the duchess enter the room in which Ernauton, palpitating and throbbing rather than breathing, impatiently awaited her return.

Ernauton kneeled before the duchess, who gave him her white hand to kiss. She then raised the young man from the ground, and made him sit down before her at a table which was most elegantly served.

“This is very singular,” said Chicot. “It began like a conspiracy, and finishes by a rendezvous. Yes,” he continued, “but who appointed this rendezvous? Madame de Montpensier.”

And then, as a fresh light flashed through his brain, he murmured, “‘I entirely approve your plan with regard to the Forty-five; only allow me to say, dear sister, that you will be conferring a greater honor on those fellows than they deserve.’ *Ventre de biche!*” he exclaimed; “I return to my original idea, — it is not a love-affair, but a conspiracy. Madame la Duchesse de Montpensier is in love with M. Ernauton de Carmainges; let us watch over this love-affair of Madame the Duchess.”

And Chicot watched until midnight had long passed, when Ernauton hastened away, his cloak concealing his face, while Madame la Duchesse de Montpensier returned to her litter.

“Now,” murmured Chicot, as he descended his own staircase, “what is that chance of death which is to deliver the Duc de Guise from the presumptive heir of the crown? Who are those persons who were thought to be dead, but are still living? *Mordieu!* I shall trace them before long.”

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE CARDINAL DE JOYEUSE.

YOUTH has its obstinate resolutions, both as regards good and evil in the world, which are by no means inferior to the inflexibility of purpose of maturer years.

When directed towards good purposes, instances of this dogged obstinacy of character produce what are termed the great actions of life, and impress on the man who enters life an impulse which bears him onward, by a natural course, towards a heroism of character of one kind or another.

In this way Bayard and Du Guesclin became great captains, from having been the most ill-tempered and most intractable children that ever existed ; in the same way, too, the swineherd whom nature had made the herdsman of Montalte, and whose genius had converted him into Sixtus Quintus, became a great pope, because he had persisted in performing his duties as a swineherd in an indifferent manner.

Again, in the same way were the worst Spartan natures displayed in heroic directions, after beginning with persistence in dissimulation and cruelty.

We have now to sketch the portrait of a man of an ordinary stamp ; and yet more than one biographer would have found in Henri du Bouchage, at twenty years of age, the materials for a great man.

Henri obstinately persisted in his love and in his seclusion from the world. As his brother had begged, and as

the king had required him to do, he remained for some days closeted alone with his one enduring thought ; and then, when that thought had become more and more fixed and unchangeable in its nature, he one morning decided to pay a visit to his brother the cardinal, — an important personage, who, at the age of twenty-six, had already for two years past been a cardinal, and who from the archbishopric of Narbonne had passed to the highest degree of ecclesiastical dignity, a position to which he was indebted as much to his noble descent as to his powerful intellect.

François de Joyeuse, whom we have already introduced to enlighten Henri de Valois respecting the doubt he had entertained with regard to Sylla, — François de Joyeuse, young and worldly-minded, handsome and witty, was one of the most remarkable men of the period. Ambitious by nature, but circumspect by calculation and position, François de Joyeuse could assume as his device, “ Nothing is too much,” and justify his device.

The only one, perhaps, of all those who belonged to the court, — and François de Joyeuse was attached to the court in a very especial manner, — he had been able to create for himself two means of support out of the religious and lay thrones to which he in some way approximated, as a French gentleman, and as a prince of the Church. Sixtus protected him against Henri III. ; Henri III. protected him against Sixtus. He was an Italian at Paris, a Parisian at Rome, magnificent and able everywhere.

The sword alone of Joyeuse the grand admiral gave the latter more weight in the balance ; but it might be inferred from certain smiles of the cardinal that if those temporal arms failed him which the hand of his brother, refined and admired as he was, wielded so successfully, he himself knew not only how to use, but also how to abuse,

the spiritual weapons which had been intrusted to him by the sovereign head of the Church.

The Cardinal, François de Joyeuse, had very rapidly become a wealthy man, — wealthy in the first place from his own patrimony, and then from his different benefices. At that period the Church was richly endowed, — very richly endowed, even; and when its treasures were exhausted, it knew the sources, which at the present day are exhausted, whence to renew them.

François de Joyeuse therefore lived in the most magnificent manner. Leaving to his brother all the pageantry and glitter of a military household, he crowded his salons with priests, bishops, and archbishops; he gratified his own peculiar fancies. On his attaining the dignity of cardinal, as he was a prince of the Church, and consequently superior to his brother, he had added to his household pages, according to the Italian fashion, and guards, according to that which prevailed at the French court. But these guards and pages were used by him as a still greater means of enjoying liberty of action. He frequently ranged his guards and pages round a huge litter, through the curtains of which his secretary passed his gloved hand, while he himself, on horseback, his sword by his side, rode through the town disguised with a wig, an enormous ruff round his neck, and horseman's boots, the sound of which delighted him beyond measure.

The cardinal, then, lived in the enjoyment of the greatest consideration, for in certain elevated positions in life, human fortunes are absorbing in their nature, and as if they were composed of adhesive particles, oblige all other fortunes to attend on and follow them like satellites; and on that account therefore, the recent and marvellous successes of his brother Anne reflected on him all the brilliancy of those achievements. Moreover, as he had

scrupulously followed the precept of concealing his mode of life, and of dispensing and diffusing his mental wealth, he was known only on the better sides of his character, and in his own family was accounted a very great man, — a happiness which many sovereigns, laden with glory and crowned with the acclamations of a whole nation, have not enjoyed.

It was to this prelate that the Comte du Bouchage be- took himself after his explanation with his brother, and after his conversation with the King of France ; but as we have already observed, he allowed a few days to elapse, in obedience to the injunction which had been imposed on him by his elder brother, as well as by the king.

François resided in a beautiful mansion in that part of Paris called La Cité. The immense courtyard was never quite free from cavaliers and litters ; but the prelate, whose garden was immediately contiguous to the bank of the river, allowed his courtyards and his antechambers to become crowded with courtiers. And as he had a mode of egress towards the river-bank, and a boat close thereto which conveyed him without any disturbance as far and as quietly as he chose, it not unfrequently happened that the courtiers uselessly waited to see the prelate, who availed himself of the pretext of a serious indisposition, or a rigid penance, to postpone his reception for the day. For him it was a realization of Italy in the bosom of the capital of the King of France ; it was Venice embraced by the two arms of the Seine.

François was proud, but by no means vain ; he loved his friends as brothers, and his brothers nearly as much as his friends. Five years older than Bouchage, he withheld from him neither good nor evil counsel, neither his purse nor his smile. But as he wore his cardinal's costume with wonderful effect, Bouchage thought him

handsome, noble, almost formidable, and accordingly respected him more, perhaps, than he did the brother who was older than either of them. Henri, with his beautiful cuirass, and the glittering accessories of his military costume, tremblingly confided his love-affairs to Anne, while he would not have dared to confess himself to François.

However, as Henri proceeded to the cardinal's hotel, his resolution was taken, — he would frankly address the confessor first, and the friend afterwards. He entered the courtyard, which several gentlemen were at that moment leaving, wearied with having solicited, without obtaining, the favor of an audience. He passed through the antechambers, salons, and then the more private apartments. He had been told, as others had, that his brother was engaged in conference; but the idea of closing any of the doors before Bouchage never occurred to any of the attendants.

Bouchage therefore passed through all the apartments until he reached the garden, — a true garden of a Roman prelate, luxurious in its shade, coolness, and perfume, such as at the present day may be found at the Villa Pamphile or the Palace Borghese.

Henri paused under a group of trees. At this moment the gate close to the river-side rolled on its hinges, and a man shrouded in a large brown cloak passed through, followed by a person in a page's costume. The man, perceiving Henri, who was too absorbed in his reverie to think of him, glided through the trees, avoiding the observation either of Bouchage or of any one else.

Henri paid no attention to this mysterious entry; and it was only as he turned round that he saw the man entering the apartments. After he had waited about ten minutes, and as he was about to enter the house for the

purpose of interrogating one of the attendants with the view of ascertaining at what hour precisely his brother would be visible, a servant, who seemed to be in search of him, observed his approach, and advancing in his direction, begged him to have the goodness to pass into the library, where the cardinal awaited him.

Henri complied with this invitation, but not very readily, as he conjectured that a new contest would result from it; he found his brother the cardinal engaged, with the assistance of a *valet de chambre*, in trying on a prelate's costume, a little worldly-looking, perhaps, in its shape and fashion, but elegant and becoming in its style.

"Good-morning, Count," said the cardinal; "what news have you?"

"Excellent news, as far as our family is concerned," said Henri. "Anne, you know, has covered himself with glory in that retreat from Antwerp, and is alive."

"And, thank God! you also, Henri, are safe and sound?"

"Yes, my brother."

"You see," said the cardinal, "that God has his designs in regard to us."

"I am so full of gratitude to God, my brother, that I have formed the project of dedicating myself to his service. I am come to talk seriously to you upon this project, which is now well matured, and about which I have already spoken to you."

"Do you still keep to that idea, Bouchage?" said the cardinal, allowing a slight exclamation to escape him, which was indicative that Joyeuse would have a struggle to encounter.

"I do."

"But it is impossible, Henri," returned the cardinal; "have you not been told so already?"

“I have not listened to what others have said to me, my brother, because a voice stronger than mine, which speaks within me, prevents me from listening to anything which would turn me away from God.”

“You cannot be so ignorant of the things of this world, Henri,” said the cardinal, in his most serious tone of voice, “to believe that the voice you allude to was really that of the Lord; on the contrary, — I assert it positively too, — it is altogether a feeling of a worldly nature which addresses you. God has nothing to do in this affair; do not abuse that Holy Name, therefore, and, above all, do not confound the voice of Heaven with that of earth.”

“I do not confound, my brother; I only mean to say that something irresistible in its nature hurries me towards retreat and solitude.”

“So far, so good, Henri; we are now making use of proper expressions. Well, my dear brother, I will tell you what is to be done. Taking what you say for granted, I am going to render you the happiest of men.”

“Thank you! oh, thank you, my brother!”

“Listen to me, Henri. You must take money, a couple of attendants, and travel through the whole of Europe in a manner befitting a son of the house to which we belong. You will see foreign countries, — Tartary, Russia, even the Laplanders, those fabulous peoples whom the sun never visits; you will become absorbed in your thoughts, until the devouring germ which is at work in you becomes either extinct or satiated; and after that, you will return to us again.”

Henri, who had been seated, now rose, more serious than his brother had been. “You have not understood me, Monseigneur,” he said.

“ I beg your pardon, Henri ; you made use of the words ‘ retreat ’ and ‘ solitude. ’ ”

“ Yes, I did so ; but by ‘ retreat ’ and ‘ solitude ’ I meant a cloister, and not travelling ; to travel is to enjoy life still. I wish almost to suffer death, and if I do not suffer it, at least to live near it.”

“ That is an absurd thought, allow me to say, Henri ; for whoever, in point of fact, wishes to isolate himself, is alone everywhere. But the cloister let it be. Well, then, I understand that you have come to talk to me about this project. I know some very learned Benedictines, and some very clever Augustines, whose houses are cheerful, adorned with flowers, attractive, and agreeable in every respect. Amid the works of science and art you will pass a delightful year, in excellent society, — which is of no slight importance, for one should avoid lowering one’s self in this world ; and if at the end of the year you persist in your project, well, then, my dear Henri, I will not oppose you any further, and will myself open the door which will peacefully conduct you to everlasting rest.”

“ Most certainly you still misunderstand me, my brother,” replied Bouchage, shaking his head, “ or I should rather say your generous intelligence will not comprehend me. I do not wish for a cheerful residence or a delightful retreat, but a rigorously strict seclusion, as gloomy as the grave itself. I intend to pronounce my vows, — vows which will leave me no other distraction than a grave to dig, a long prayer to say.”

The cardinal frowned, and rose from his seat. “ Yes,” he said, “ I did perfectly understand you ; and I endeavored by opposition, without set phrases or discussion, to combat the folly of your resolutions. But you force me to it ; listen to me.”

“Ah!” said Henri, despondently, “do not try to convince me; it is impossible.”

“Brother, I will speak to you in the name of God, in the first place, — of God, whom you offend in saying that this wild resolution comes from him. God does not accept sacrifices hastily made. You are weak, since you allow yourself to be conquered by a first disappointment; how can God be pleased to accept a victim as unworthy as that you offer?”

Henri started at his brother's remark.

“Oh, I shall no longer spare you, Henri, — you, who never consider any of us,” returned the cardinal; “you, who forget the grief which you will cause our elder brother, and will cause me too —”

“Forgive me,” interrupted Henri, whose cheeks were dyed with crimson, — “forgive me, Monseigneur; but is the service of God, then, so gloomy and so dishonorable a career that all the members of a family are to be thrown into distress by it? You, for instance, my brother, whose portrait I observe suspended in this room, with all this gold, these diamonds, this purple around you, — are you not both the delight and honor of our house, although you have chosen the service of God, as my eldest brother has chosen that of the kings of the earth?”

“Boy, boy!” exclaimed the cardinal, impatiently, “you will make me believe your brain is turned. What! will you venture to compare my residence to a cloister? my hundred attendants, my outriders, the gentlemen of my suite, and my guards, to a cell and a broom, which are the only arms and the sole wealth of a cloister? Are you mad? Did you not just now say that you repudiate these superfluities, — necessary to me, — these pictures, these precious vases, pomp, and distinction? Have you,

as I have, the desire and hope of placing on your brow the tiara of Saint Peter? That indeed is a career, Henri; one presses forward in it, struggles in it, lives in it. But as for you, it is the miner's pick, the Trappist's spade, the grave-digger's tomb, that you desire, — utter abandonment of life, of pleasure, of hope. And all that, — I blush with shame for you, a man, — all that, I say, because you love a woman who loves you not. You do foul injustice to your race, Henri, most truly."

"Brother!" exclaimed the young man, pale as death, while his eyes blazed with kindling fire, "would you sooner have me blow out my brains, or plunge in my heart the sword I have the honor to wear by my side? *Pardieu!* Monseigneur, if you, who are cardinal and prince besides, will give me absolution for so mortal a sin, the affair will be so quickly done that you shall have no time to complete your odious and unworthy thought that I am capable of dishonoring my race, which — God be praised! — a Joyeuse will never do."

"Come, come, Henri!" said the cardinal, drawing his brother towards him, and pressing him in his arms; "come, dear child, beloved by all, forgive, and be indulgent towards those who love you. I have personal motives for entreating you. Listen to me; we are all happy, — a rare thing here below, — some through satisfied ambition, some by reason of the blessings of every kind with which God has crowned our lives. Do not, I implore you, Henri, cast the mortal poison of the retreat you speak of upon our family happiness. Think how our father will be grieved at it; think, too, how all of us will bear on our countenances the dark reflection of the mortification you are about to inflict upon us. I beseech you, Henri, to allow yourself to be persuaded. The cloister will not benefit you. I do not say that you will

die there, for, misguided man, your answer will be a smile, which, alas! would be only too intelligible for me. No, believe me, the cloister is more fatal to you than the tomb. The tomb annihilates but life itself; the cloister annihilates intelligence. The cloister bows the head, instead of raising it to heaven; the cold, humid atmosphere of the vaults passes by degrees into the blood and penetrates the very marrow of the bones, changing the cloistered recluse into another granite statue in the convent. My brother, my dear brother, take heed! We have but few years; we have but one period of youth. Well, the beautiful years of your youth will pass as they are passing; for you are under the empire of a great grief. But at thirty years of age you will have become a man; the vigor of maturity will have then arrived; it will hurry away with it all that remains of your worn-out sorrow, and then you will wish to live again. But it will be too late; you will have grown melancholy, ugly, miserable; passion will have been extinguished in your heart; the bright light of your eye will have become quenched. They whose society you seek will flee you as a whited sepulchre, whose darksome depths repel every glance. Henri, I speak as a friend, seriously, wisely; listen to me."

The young man remained unmoved and silent. The cardinal hoped that he had touched his feelings, and had shaken his resolution.

"Try some other resource, Henri. Carry this poisoned shaft which rankles in your bosom into all places, — into the midst of noise, into festive scenes; sit with it at banquets. Imitate the wounded deer, which flees through the thickets and brakes and forests, in its efforts to draw out from its body the arrow which is rankling in the wound; sometimes the arrow falls."

“For pity’s sake,” said Henri, “do not persist any more! What I solicit is not the caprice of a moment, or the decision of an hour; it is the result of a laborious and painful determination. In Heaven’s name, therefore, my brother, I adjure you to accord me the favor I solicit!”

“And what is the favor you ask?”

“A dispensation, Monseigneur.”

“For what purpose?”

“To shorten my novitiate.”

“Ah! I knew it, Bouchage. You are worldly-minded even in your rigorousness, my poor boy. Oh, I know very well what reason you are going to give me! Yes, you are indeed a man of the world; you resemble those young men who offer themselves as volunteers, and eagerly seek fire, balls, and blows, but care not for working in the trenches, or for sweeping out the tents. There is some resource left yet, Henri. So much the better! so much the better!”

“Give me the dispensation I ask; I entreat you on my knees.”

“I promise it to you; I will write to Rome for it. It will be a month before the answer arrives; but in exchange, promise me one thing.”

“Name it.”

“That you will not during this month’s postponement reject any pleasure or amusement which may be offered to you; and if a month hence, you still entertain the same projects, Henri, I will give you this dispensation with my own hand. Are you satisfied now, and have you nothing further to ask me?”

“No, I thank you; but a month is a long time, and delays are killing me.”

“In the mean time, and in order to change your

thoughts, will you object to breakfast with me? I have some agreeable companions this morning." And the prelate smiled in a manner which the most worldly disposed favorites of Henri III. would have envied.

"Brother!" said Bouchage, resisting.

"I will not accept any excuse; you have no one but myself here, since you have just arrived from Flanders, and your own house cannot be in order just yet."

With these words the cardinal rose, and drawing aside a *portière* which hung before a large cabinet sumptuously furnished, he said, "Come, Countess, let us persuade M. le Comte du Bouchage to stay with us."

At the very moment, however, when the cardinal drew aside the *portière*, Henri had observed, half reclining upon the cushions, the page who had with the gentleman entered the gate adjoining the banks of the river; and in this page, before even the prelate had announced her sex, he had recognized a woman. An indefinable sensation, like a sudden terror, or an overwhelming feeling of dread, seized him; and while the worldly cardinal advanced to take the beautiful page by the hand, Henri du Bouchage darted from the apartment, and so quickly that when François returned with the lady, smiling with the hope of winning a heart back again to the world, the room was empty.

François frowned; then, seating himself before a table covered with papers and letters, he hurriedly wrote a few lines. "May I trouble you to ring, dear countess," he said, "since you have your hand near the bell?"

The page obeyed, and a *valet de chambre* in the confidence of the cardinal appeared.

"Let a courier start on horseback, without a moment's loss of time," said François, "and take this letter to the grand admiral at Château-Thierry."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

NEWS FROM AURILLY.

On the following day the king was working at the Louvre with the superintendent of finances, when an attendant entered to inform his Majesty that M. de Joyeuse, the eldest son of that family, had just arrived, and was waiting for him in the large audience-chamber, having come from Château-Thierry with a message from M. le Duc d'Anjou.

The king precipitately left the business which occupied him, and ran to meet a friend whom he regarded with so much affection.

A considerable number of officers and courtiers were present in the cabinet ; the queen-mother had arrived that evening, escorted by her maids-of-honor, and these light-hearted ladies were suns always attended by satellites.

The king gave Joyeuse his hand to kiss, and glanced with a satisfied expression around the assembly.

In the angle of the entrance door, in his usual place, stood Henri du Bouchage, rigorously discharging his service and the duties which were imposed on him. The king thanked him and saluted him with a friendly motion of the head, to which Henri replied by a profound reverence.

These silent communications made Joyeuse turn his head and smilingly look at his brother, without, however, saluting him in too marked a manner, for fear of violating etiquette.

“Sire,” said Joyeuse, “I am sent to your Majesty by M. le Duc d’Anjou, recently returned from the expedition to Flanders.”

“Is my brother well, Monsieur the Admiral?” inquired the king.

“As well, Sire, as the state of his mind will permit. However, I will not conceal from your Majesty that he appears to be suffering greatly.”

“He must need something to change the current of his thoughts after his misfortune,” said the king, delighted at the opportunity of proclaiming the check which his brother had met with, while appearing to pity him.

“I believe he does, Sire.”

“We have been informed that the disaster was most severe.”

“Sire — ”

“But that, thanks to you, a considerable part of the army was saved. Thanks, Monsieur the Admiral, thanks! Does poor M. d’Anjou wish to see us?”

“Most anxiously so, Sire.”

“In that case we will see him. Are not you of that opinion, Madame?” said Henri, turning towards Catherine, whose heart was wrung with feelings the expression of which her face determinedly concealed.

“Sire,” she replied, “I should have gone alone to meet my son; but since your Majesty condescends to join with me in this mark of kind consideration, the journey will be a party of pleasure for me.”

“You will accompany us, gentlemen,” said the king to the courtiers. “We will set off to-morrow, and I shall sleep at Meaux.”

“Shall I at once announce this excellent news to Monseigneur, Sire?”

“Not so. What! leave me so soon, Monsieur the Ad-

miral? Not so, indeed. I can well understand that a Joyeuse must be loved and sought after by my brother; but we have two of them, thank God! Bouchage, you will start for Château-Thierry, if you please."

"Sire," said Henri, "may I be permitted, after having announced your Majesty's visit to Monseigneur le Duc d'Anjou, to return to Paris?"

"You may do as you please, Bouchage," said the king.

Henri bowed, and advanced towards the door. Fortunately, Joyeuse was watching him narrowly.

"Will you allow me to say one word to my brother," he inquired.

"Do so; but what is it?" said the king in an undertone.

"The fact is that he wishes to use the utmost speed to execute the commission, and to return again immediately, which happens to interfere with my projects, Sire, and with those of the cardinal."

"Away with you, then, and rate this love-sick swain most roundly."

Anne hurried after his brother, and overtook him in the antechambers. "Well!" said he, "you are setting off very eagerly, Henri."

"Of course, my brother!"

"Because you wish to return here soon again?"

"That is quite true."

"You do not intend, then, to stay any time at Château-Thierry?"

"As little as possible."

"Why so?"

"Where others are amusing themselves is not my place."

"On the contrary, Henri, it is precisely because Monseigneur le Duc d'Anjou is about to give some fêtes to the court that you should remain at Château-Thierry."

“It is impossible.”

“Because of your wish for retirement, and of the austere projects you have in view?”

“Yes.”

“You have been to the king to solicit him to grant you a dispensation?”

“Who told you so?”

“I know it to be the case.”

“It is true; I have been to him.”

“You will not obtain it.”

“Why so, my brother?”

“Because the king has no interest in depriving himself of such a devoted servant as you are.”

“My brother the cardinal, then, will do what his Majesty will be disinclined to do.”

“And all that for a woman!”

“Anne, I entreat you, do not persist any further.”

“Ah, do not fear that I shall begin again; but, once for all, let us to the point. You set off for Château-Thierry. Well, instead of returning as hurriedly as you seem disposed to do, I wish you to wait for me in my apartments there; it is a long time since we have lived together. I particularly wish to be with you again, you understand.”

“You are going to Château-Thierry to amuse yourself, Anne, and if I were to remain there I should poison all your pleasures.”

“Oh, not at all! I resist, and am of a happy temperament, — quite fitted to drive away your melancholy.”

“Brother —”

“Permit me, Count,” said the admiral, with an imperious air of command; “I am the representative of our father here, and I enjoin you to wait for me at Château-Thierry. You will find out my apartments,

which will be your own also ; they are on the ground-floor, looking out on the park."

"If you command me to do so, my brother," said Henri, with a resigned air.

"Call it by what name you please, Count, desire or command ; but await my arrival."

"I will obey you, my brother."

"And I am persuaded that you will not be angry with me for it," added Joyeuse, pressing the young man in his arms.

The latter withdrew from the fraternal embrace somewhat ungraciously perhaps, ordered his horses, and immediately set off for Château-Thierry. He hurried thither with the anger of a vexed and disappointed man ; that is to say, he pressed his horses to the top of their speed.

The same evening he was slowly ascending, before nightfall, the hill on which Château-Thierry is situated, with the river Marne flowing at its foot. At his name, the doors of the château flew open before him ; but as far as an audience was concerned, it was more than an hour before he could obtain it. The prince, some told him, was in his apartments ; others said he was asleep ; he was practising music, the *valet de chambre* supposed. No one, however, among the attendants could give a positive reply.

Henri persisted, in order that he might no longer have to think of his service on the king, and might abandon himself to his melancholy thoughts unrestrained. By reason of his persistence, and because it was well known that he and his brother were on the most intimate terms with the prince, Henri was ushered into one of the salons on the first floor, where the prince at last consented to receive him.

Half an hour passed away ; and the shades of evening

insensibly closed in. The heavy and measured footsteps of the Duc d'Anjou resounded in the gallery ; and Henri, on recognizing them, prepared to discharge his mission with the accustomed formal ceremonies. But the prince, who seemed much hurried, quickly dispensed with these formalities on the part of his ambassador by taking him by the hand and embracing him. "Good-day, Count," he said ; "why should they have given you the trouble to come and see a poor defeated general?"

"The king has sent me, Monseigneur, to inform you that he is exceedingly desirous of seeing your Highness, and that in order to enable you to recover from your fatigue, his Majesty will himself come and pay a visit to Château-Thierry, to-morrow at the latest."

"The king will be here to-morrow!" exclaimed François, with a gesture of impatience, but recovering himself immediately. "To-morrow, to-morrow," he resumed ; "why, the truth is that nothing will be in readiness, either here or in the town, to receive his Majesty."

Henri bowed, as one whose duty it had been to transmit an order, but who was not charged to comment upon it.

"The extreme haste in which their Majesties are to see your royal Highness has not allowed them to think of the embarrassment they may cause."

"Well, well!" said the prince, hurriedly, "it is for me to make the best use of the time I have at my disposal. I leave you therefore, Henri ; thanks for the alacrity you have shown, for you have travelled fast, I perceive. Go and take some rest."

"Your Highness has no other orders to communicate to me?" Henri inquired respectfully.

"None. Go and lie down. You shall dine in your

own apartments. I hold no reception this evening ; I am suffering, and ill at ease. I have lost my appetite, and cannot sleep, which makes my life a sad, dreary one, which, you understand, I do not choose to inflict upon any one else. By the way, you have heard the news ?”

“No, Mousigneur ; what news ?”

“Aurilly has been eaten up by the wolves.”

“Aurilly ?” exclaimed Henri, with surprise.

“Yes, yes ! devoured ! It is singular how every one who comes near me dies a violent death. Good-night, Count ; may you sleep well !” And the prince hurried away rapidly.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DOUBT.

HENRI descended the staircase, and as he passed through the antechambers, observed many officers of his acquaintance, who ran forward to meet him, and with many marks of friendship offered to show him the way to his brother's apartments, which were situated in one of the corners of the château. It was the library which the duke had given Joyeuse to occupy during his residence at Château-Thierry.

Two salons, furnished in the style of François I., communicated with each other, and terminated in the library, the latter apartment looking out on the gardens. The admiral's bed had been put up in the library. Joyeuse was of an indolent, yet of a cultivated, turn of mind. If he stretched out his arm he laid his hand on science; if he opened the windows he could enjoy the beauties of nature. Finer and superior organizations require more satisfying enjoyments; and the morning breeze, the songs of birds, or the perfumes of flowers, added fresh delight to the triplets of Clément Marot, or to the odes of Ronsard.

Henri determined to leave everything as it was, not because he was influenced by the poetic sybaritism of his brother, but on the contrary through indifference, and because it mattered little to him whether he was there or elsewhere.

But as the count, in whatever frame of mind he might be, had been brought up never to neglect his duty or

respect towards the king or the princes of the royal family of France, he inquired particularly in what part of the château the prince had resided since his return.

By mere accident Henri met with an excellent cicerone in the person of the young ensign whose indiscretion had, in the little village in Flanders where we represented the personages in this tale as having halted for a short time, communicated the count's secret to the prince. This ensign had not left the prince's side since his return, and could impart to Henri very accurate information.

On his arrival at Château-Thierry, the prince had at first entered upon a course of reckless dissipation. At that time he occupied the state apartments of the château, had receptions morning and evening, and was engaged during the day in stag-hunting in the forest; but since the intelligence of Aurilly's death, which had reached the prince from a source unknown, he had retired to a pavilion situated in the middle of the park. This pavilion, which was an almost inaccessible retreat except to the intimate associates of the prince, was hidden from view by the dense foliage of the surrounding trees, and could hardly be perceived above their lofty summits, or through the thick foliage of the hedges.

It was to this pavilion that the prince had retired two days before. Those who did not know him well said that it was Aurilly's death which had made him betake himself to this solitude; while those who were well acquainted with his character maintained that he was carrying out in this pavilion some base or infamous plot, which some day would be revealed to light.

A circumstance which rendered either of these suppositions much more probable was that the prince seemed greatly annoyed whenever a matter of business or a visit summoned him to the château; and so decidedly was

this the case that no sooner had the visit been received, or the matter of business been despatched, than he returned to his solitude, where he was waited upon only by the two old *valets de chambre* who had been present at his birth.

"Then," observed Henri, "the fêtes will not be very gay if the prince continue in this humor."

"Certainly," replied the ensign, "for every one will know how to sympathize with the grief of the prince, smitten in his pride and in his affections."

Henri continued his interrogatories without intending it, and took a strange interest in doing so. The circumstance of Aurilly's death, whom he had known at the court, and whom he had again met in Flanders; the indifference with which the prince had announced the loss he had met with; the strict seclusion in which it was said the prince had lived since his death, — all this seemed to him, without his being able to assign a reason for his belief, a part of that mysterious and darkened web wherein, for some time past, the events of his life had been woven.

"And," inquired he of the ensign, "it is not known, you say, how the news of Aurilly's death reached the prince?"

"No."

"But surely," he insisted, "people must talk about it?"

"Oh, of course," said the ensign; "true or false, you know, people always will talk."

"Well, then, tell me what it is."

"It is said that the prince was hunting under the willows close beside the river, and that he had wandered away from the others who were hunting also, — for everything he does is by fits and starts, and he becomes as

excited in the field as at play, or under fire, or under the influence of grief, — when suddenly he was seen returning with an expression of consternation. The courtiers questioned him, thinking that it was nothing more than a mere incident of the hunting-field. He held two *rouleaux* of gold in his hand. ‘Can you understand this, Messieurs?’ he said in a hard, dry voice. ‘Aurilly is dead; Aurilly has been eaten by the wolves.’

“Every one immediately exclaimed.

“‘Nay, indeed,’ said the prince; ‘may the devil take me if it be not so! The poor lute-player had always been a far better musician than a horseman. It seems that his horse ran away with him, and that he fell into a pit, where he was killed. The next day a couple of travellers who were passing close to the pit discovered his body half eaten by the wolves; and a proof that the affair actually did happen as I have related it, and that robbers have nothing whatever to do with the whole matter, is that here are two *rouleaux* of gold which he had about him, and which have been faithfully restored.’

“Now, since no one had been seen to bring these two *rouleaux* of gold,” continued the ensign, “it is supposed that they had been handed to the prince by the two travellers, who, having met and recognized his Highness on the banks of the river, had announced the intelligence of Aurilly’s death.”

“It is very strange,” murmured Henri.

“And what is more strange still,” continued the ensign, “is that it is said, — can it be true, or is it merely an invention? — it is said, I repeat, that the prince was seen to open the little gate of the park close to the chestnut-trees, and that something like two shadows passed through the gate. The prince, then, has introduced two persons into the park, — probably the two travellers. It

is since that time that he has retired into his pavilion, and we have been able to see him only by stealth."

"And has no one seen these two travellers?" asked Henri.

"As I was proceeding to ask the prince the pass-word for the night, for the sentinels on duty at the château, I met a man who did not seem to me to belong to his Highness's household; but I was unable to observe his face, the man having turned aside as soon as he perceived me, and having drawn the hood of his coat over his eyes."

"The hood of his coat, do you say?"

"Yes; the man looked like a Flemish peasant, and reminded me, I hardly know why, of the person by whom you were accompanied when we met out yonder."

Henri started. The observation seemed to him in some way connected with the profound and absorbing interest with which the story inspired him. To him, too, who had seen Diane and her companion confided to Aurilly, the idea occurred that the two travellers who had announced to the prince the death of the unfortunate lute-player were acquaintances of his own.

Henri looked attentively at the ensign. "And when you fancied you recognized this man, what was the idea that occurred to you, Monsieur?" he inquired.

"I will tell you what my impression was," replied the ensign; "however, I will not pretend to assert anything positively. The prince has not, in all probability, abandoned his idea with regard to Flanders. He therefore maintains spies in his employ. The man with the woollen overcoat is a spy, who on his way hither may have become acquainted with the accident which had happened to the musician, and may thus have been the bearer of two pieces of intelligence at the same time."

"That is not improbable," said Henri, thoughtfully; "but what was this man doing when you saw him?"

“He was walking beside the hedge which borders the parterre, — you can see the hedge from your windows, — and was going towards the conservatories.”

“You say, then, that the two travellers, — for I believe you stated there were two —”

“Others say that two persons were seen to enter; but I saw only one, the man in the overcoat.”

“In that case, then, you have reason to believe that the man in the overcoat, as you describe him, is living in the conservatories?”

“It is not unlikely.”

“And have these conservatories a means of exit?”

“Yes, Count, towards the town.”

Henri remained silent for some time. His heart was throbbing violently; for these details, which were apparently matters of indifference to him, who seemed throughout the whole of this mystery as if he were gifted with the power of prevision, were, in reality, full of the deepest interest for him.

Night had in the mean time closed in, and the two young men were conversing together without any light in Joyeuse's apartments. Fatigued by his journey, oppressed by the strange events which had just been related to him, unable to struggle against the emotions which they had aroused in his breast, the count had thrown himself on his brother's bed and mechanically directed his gaze towards the deep blue heavens above him, which seemed studded with diamonds.

The young ensign was seated on the ledge of the window, and voluntarily abandoned himself to that listlessness of thought, to that poetic revery of youth, to that absorbing languor of feeling, which the balmy freshness of evening inspires.

A deep silence reigned throughout the park and the

town; the gates were closed; the lights were kindled by degrees; the dogs in the distance were barking in their kennels at the servants on whom devolved the duty of shutting up the stables in the evening.

Suddenly the ensign rose to his feet, made a sign of attention with his hand, leaned out of the window, and then, calling in a quick, low tone to the count, who was reclining on the bed, said, "Come! come!"

"What is the matter?" Henri inquired, arousing himself by a strong effort from his reverie.

"The man! the man!"

"What man?"

"The man in the overcoat! the spy!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Henri, springing from the bed to the window, and leaning on the ensign.

"Stay!" continued the ensign; "do you see him yonder? He is creeping along the hedge. Wait a moment; he will show himself again. Now look towards that spot which is illuminated by the moon's rays, — there he is! there he is."

"Yes."

"Do you not think he is a sinister-looking fellow?"

"Sinister is the very word," replied Bouchage, in a gloomy voice.

"Do you believe he is a spy?"

"I believe nothing, and I believe everything."

"See! he is going from the prince's pavilion to the conservatories."

"The prince's pavilion is in that direction, then?" inquired Bouchage, indicating with his finger the direction from which the stranger appeared to be proceeding.

"Do you see that light whose rays are trembling through the leaves of the trees?"

"Well?"

“That is the dining-room.”

“Ah!” exclaimed Henri, “see, he makes his appearance again.”

“Yes, he is no doubt going to the conservatories to join his companion. Did you hear that?”

“What?”

“The sound of a key turning in the lock.”

“It is singular,” said Bouchage; “there is nothing unusual in all this, and yet —”

“And yet you tremble, do you not?”

“Yes,” said the count; “but what is that?”

The sound of a bell was heard.

“It is the signal for the supper of the prince’s household. Are you going to join us at supper, Count?”

“No, I thank you, I do not require anything; and if I should feel hungry, I will call for what I may need.”

“Do not wait for that, Monsieur; but come and amuse yourself in our society.”

“No, it is impossible.”

“Why so?”

“His royal Highness almost directed me to have what I should need served to me in my own apartments; but do not let me delay you.”

“Thank you, Count, good-evening; do not lose sight of our ghost.”

“Oh, rely upon me for that! unless,” added Henri, who feared he might have said too much, — “unless, indeed, I should be overtaken by sleep, which seems more than probable, and a far more wholesome occupation than that of watching shadows and spies.”

“Certainly,” said the ensign, laughingly, as he took leave of Bouchage.

As soon as the ensign had left the library, Henri darted into the garden.

“Oh!” he murmured, “it is Rémy! it is Rémy! I should know him again in the darkness of hell.” And the young man, as he felt his knees tremble beneath him, buried his burning forehead in his cold damp hands. “Great Heaven!” he cried, “is not this rather a phantasy of my poor fevered brain, and is it not written that in my slumbering and in my waking moments, day and night, I shall ever see those two figures who have made so deep and dark a furrow in my life? Why,” he continued, like a man who finds it necessary to convince himself, — “why, indeed, should Rémy be here in this château while the Duc d’Anjou is here? What is his motive in coming here? What can the Duc d’Anjou possibly have to do with Rémy! And why should he have left Diane, — he, who is her constant companion? No; it is not he.”

Then again, a moment afterwards, a conviction, thorough, profound, instinctive, overcame his doubts. “It is he! it is he!” he murmured in despair, leaning against the wall to save himself from falling.

Just as Henri was giving expression to this controlling, unconquerable idea, the sharp sound of the lock was again heard; and although the sound was almost imperceptible, his over-excited senses detected it. An indefinable shudder ran through the young man’s whole frame; again he listened with eager attention. So profound a silence reigned around him on every side that he could hear the throbbings of his own heart. A few minutes passed away without anything he expected making its appearance. In default of seeing, however, his ears told him that some one was approaching; he heard the sound of the gravel under advancing footsteps. Suddenly the straight black line of the hedge seemed broken; he imagined he saw upon this dark background a group still darker moving along.

“It is he returning again,” murmured Henri. “Is he alone, or is some one with him?”

The group advanced from where the silver light of the moon had illuminated a space of open ground. It was at the moment when, advancing in the opposite direction, the man in the overcoat crossed this open space, that Henri fancied he recognized Rémy. This time Henri observed two shadows very distinctly; it was impossible he could be mistaken. A death-like chill struck to his heart and seemed to have turned it to marble.

The two shadows walked quickly along, although with a firm step. The first was dressed in a woollen overcoat; and at that second apparition, as at the first, the count was sure that he recognized Rémy.

The second, who was completely enveloped in a large cloak of masculine apparel, defied every attempt at recognition; and yet beneath that cloak Henri thought he could detect what no human eye could have possibly seen. He could not suppress a groan of despair; and no sooner had the two mysterious personages disappeared behind the hedge than the young man darted after them, and stealthily glided from one group of trees to another, in the wake of those whom he was so anxious to discover. “Oh!” he murmured, as he stole along, “do I not indeed deceive myself? *Mon Dieu!* is it possible?”

CHAPTER XXXV.

CERTAINTY.

HENRI glided along the hedge on the side which was thrown into deep shade, taking care to make no noise either on the gravel or against the trees. Obligated to walk carefully, and while walking to watch over every movement he made, he could not perceive anything. And yet, by his style, his dress, his walk, he was still sure that he recognized Rémy in the man who wore the overcoat. Conjectures, more terrifying for him than realities, arose in his mind with regard to this man's companion.

The road which they were following, and which was bounded by a row of elms, led to a high hawthorn hedge and a wall of poplars, which separated from the rest of the park the pavilion of the Duc d'Anjou, and enveloped it as with a curtain of verdure, in the midst of which, as has been already observed, it was completely concealed in an isolated corner of the grounds of the château. There were several beautiful sheets of water, shaded groves through which winding paths had been cut, and venerable trees, over the summits of which the moon was shedding its streams of silver light, while underneath the gloom was thick, dark, and impenetrable.

As he approached this hedge, Henri felt that his heart was on the point of failing him. In fact, to transgress so boldly the prince's orders, and to abandon himself to a course of conduct as indiscreet as it was rash, was the

act, not of a loyal and honorable man, but of a mean and cowardly spy, or of a jealous man driven to extremities. But when, in opening the gate which separated the greater from the smaller park, the man he followed moved in such a way that his features were revealed, and he perceived that these features were indeed those of Rémy, the count's scruples vanished, and he resolutely advanced at all hazards. Henri found the gate closed. He leaped over the railings, and then continued his pursuit of the prince's two strange visitors, who still hurried onward. Another cause of terror was soon added, for the duke, on hearing the footsteps of Rémy and his companion upon the gravel-walk, made his appearance from the pavilion. Henri threw himself behind the largest of the trees and waited.

He could not see anything, except that Rémy made a very low salutation, that Rémy's companion courtesied like a woman instead of bowing like a man, and that the duke, seemingly transported with delight, offered his arm to the latter as he would have offered it to a woman. Then all three advanced towards the pavilion, disappeared under the vestibule, and the door closed behind them.

"This must end," said Henri; "and I must seek a more convenient place, where without being seen I can see everything that may happen."

He decided in favor of a clump of trees situated between the pavilion and the wall, from the centre of which the waters of a fountain gushed forth,—an impenetrable place of concealment, for it was not likely that in the night-time, with the freshness and humidity which would naturally be found near this fountain, the prince would seek the vicinity of the water and the thickets. Hidden behind the statue with which the fountain was ornamented, standing at his full height behind the pedestal,

Henri was enabled to see what was taking place in the pavilion, the principal window of which was wide open before him. As no one could, or rather as no one was likely, to penetrate so far, no precautions had been taken.

A table was laid, sumptuously served with the richest viands, and with rare wines in bottles of costly Venetian glass. Two seats only at this table awaited two guests. The duke approached one of the chairs; then, leaving the arm of Rémy's companion, and pointing to the other seat, he seemed to request that the cloak might be thrown aside, as although it might be very serviceable for an evening stroll, it became very inconvenient when the object of the stroll was attained, and when that object was a supper.

Thereupon the person to whom the invitation had been addressed, threw the cloak upon a chair, and the dazzling blaze of the torches lighted up, without a shadow on their loveliness, the pale and majestically beautiful features of a woman whom the terrified eyes of Henri immediately recognized. It was the lady of the mysterious house in the Rue des Augustins, the wanderer in Flanders; it was that Diane whose gaze was as mortal as the thrust of a dagger. On this occasion she wore the apparel of her own sex, and was richly dressed in brocaded silk; diamonds blazed on her neck, in her hair, and on her wrists. In that attire she appeared still paler than before, and in the light which shone from her eyes it almost seemed as if the duke had, by the employment of some magical means, evoked the ghost of this woman, rather than the woman herself. Had it not been for the support afforded by the statue round which he had thrown his arms, colder even than the marble itself, Henri would have fallen backwards into the basin of the fountain.

The duke seemed intoxicated with delight; he fixed his

passionate gaze upon this beautiful creature, who had seated herself opposite to him, and who hardly touched the dishes which had been placed before her. From time to time François leaned across the table to kiss one of the hands of his pale and silent guest, who seemed as insensible to his kisses as if her hand had been sculptured in alabaster, which, for transparency and whiteness, it so much resembled. Henri raised his hand to his forehead, and with it wiped away the death-like sweat which dropped from it, and asked himself, "Is she alive or dead?"

The duke tried his utmost efforts and displayed all his powers of eloquence to soften the rigid beauty of Diane's face. Rémy, the only attendant, — for the duke had sent every one away, — waited on them both, and occasionally, lightly touching his mistress with his elbow as he passed behind her chair, seemed to revive her by the contact, and to recall her to life, or rather to the position in which she was placed.

Thereupon a bright flush spread over her whole face, her eyes sparkled, she smiled as if some magician had touched a secret spring in this intelligent automaton, and by the operation of some mechanism had drawn light to her eyes, color to her cheeks, and a smile to her lips. Then she relapsed into immobility. The prince, however, approached her, and by the passionate tone of his conversation succeeded in warming into animation his new conquest. Then Diane, who occasionally glanced at the face of a magnificent clock suspended over the prince's head, against the wall opposite to where she was seated, seemed to make an effort over herself, and keeping the smile upon her lips, took a more active part in the conversation.

Henri, concealed in his leafy covert, wrung his hands in despair, and cursed the whole creation, from the women whom God had made to God who had created him. It

seemed to him monstrous and iniquitous that this woman, so pure and rigidly inflexible, should yield herself so unresistingly to the prince because he was a prince, and abandon herself to love because it was offered within the precincts of a palace. His horror at Rémy was such that he could have slain him without remorse, in order to see whether so great a monster had the blood and heart of a man in him. In such paroxysms of rage and contempt did Henri pass the time during the supper which to the Duc d'Anjou was so full of rapture and delight.

Diane rang. The prince, inflamed by wine, and by his passionate discourse, rose from the table to embrace her. Every drop of blood curdled in Henri's veins. He put his hand to his side to see if his sword were there, and then thrust it into his breast in search of a dagger. Diane, with a strange smile, which most assuredly had never until that moment had its counterpart on any face, stopped the duke as he was approaching her.

"Will you allow me, Monseigneur," she said, "before I rise from the table, to share with your royal Highness one of those tempting-looking peaches?"

And with these words she stretched out her hand towards a basket of gold filagree-work, in which twenty peaches were tastefully arranged, and took one. Then, taking from her girdle a beautiful little knife, with a silver blade and a handle of malachite, she divided the peach into two portions, and offered one of them to the prince, who seized it and carried it eagerly to his lips, as though he would thus have kissed Diane's.

This impassioned action produced so deep an impression on the duke that a cloud seemed to obscure his sight at the very moment he bit into the fruit. Diane looked at him with her clear, steady gaze and her immovable smile. Rémy, leaning his back against a pillar of

carved wood, also looked on with a gloomy expression of countenance.

The prince passed one of his hands across his forehead, wiped away the perspiration which had gathered there, and swallowed the piece that he had bitten. This perspiration was most probably the symptom of a sudden indisposition; for while Diane ate the other half of the peach, the prince let fall on his plate what remained of the portion he had taken, and with difficulty rising from his seat, seemed to invite his beautiful companion to accompany him into the garden in order to enjoy the cool night air.

Diane rose, and without pronouncing a word, took the duke's arm, which he offered her. Rémy watched them, especially the prince, whom the air seemed completely to revive. As she walked along, Diane wiped the small blade of her knife on a handkerchief embroidered with gold, and restored it to its shagreen sheath. In this manner they approached the clump of trees where Henri was concealed.

The prince, with a passionate gesture, pressed his companion's arm against his heart. "I feel better," he said, "and yet I hardly know what heavy weight seems to press down on my brain; I love too deeply, Madame, I perceive."

Diane plucked several sprigs of jasmine and of clematis, and two beautiful roses from among those which bordered the whole of one side of the pedestal of the statue behind which Henri was shrinking, terrified.

"What are you doing, Madame?" inquired the prince.

"I have always understood, Monseigneur," she said, "that the perfume of flowers was the best remedy for attacks of giddiness; I am gathering a bouquet, with the hope that if presented by me it will have the magical

effect which I wish it to have." But while she was arranging the flowers, she let a rose fall from her hand, which the prince eagerly hastened to pick up.

The movement that François made was rapid, but not so rapid, however, but that it gave Diane sufficient time to pour upon the other rose a few drops of a liquid contained in a small gold bottle which she drew from her bosom. She then took from his hand the rose which the prince had picked up, and placing it in her girdle, said, "That one is for me; let us change." And in exchange for the rose which she received from the prince's hand, she held out the bouquet to him.

The prince seized it eagerly, inhaled its perfume with delight, and passed his arm around Diane's waist. But this latter action in all probability completely overwhelmed the already troubled senses of the prince, for his knees trembled under him, and he was obliged to seat himself on a bank of green turf, beside which he happened to be standing.

Henri did not lose sight of these two persons, and yet he had a look for Rémy also, who in the pavilion awaited the termination of this scene, or rather seemed to devour every minute incident of it. When he saw the prince totter, he advanced towards the threshold of the pavilion. Diane, perceiving François stagger, sat down beside him on the bank.

The giddiness from which François suffered continued on this occasion longer than on the former. The prince's head was resting on his chest. He seemed to have lost all connection in his ideas, and almost the perception of his own existence; and yet the convulsive movement of his fingers on Diane's hand seemed to indicate that he was instinctively pursuing his wild dream of love. At last he slowly raised his head, and his lips being almost on a

level with Diane's face, he made an effort to touch those of his lovely guest ; but as if unobservant of the movement, she rose from her seat. " You are suffering, Monseigneur," she said ; " it would be better if we were to go in."

" Oh, yes, let us go in !" exclaimed the prince, in a transport of joy ; " yes, come ; thank you !"

And he arose, staggering, to his feet ; then, instead of Diane leaning on his arm, it was he who leaned on Diane's arm. And, thanks to this support, walking with less difficulty, he seemed to forget fever and giddiness too, for suddenly drawing himself up, he in an unexpected manner pressed his lips on her neck. She started as if instead of a kiss, she had received the impression of a red-hot iron.

" Rémy !" she exclaimed, " a torch ! a torch !"

Rémy immediately returned to the dining-room, and lighted, by the candle on the table, a torch which he took from a small round table, and then, hurrying to the entrance to the pavilion, and holding the torch in his hand, he cried out, " Here is one, Madame."

" Where is your Highness going ?" inquired Diane, seizing the torch and turning her head aside.

" Oh, we will return to my own room ; and you will lead me, I venture to hope, Madame ?" replied the prince, in a frenzy of passion.

" Willingly, Monseigneur," replied Diane, and she raised the torch in the air, and walked before the prince.

Rémy opened, at the end of the pavilion, a window through which the fresh air rushed inwards in such a manner that the flame and smoke of the torch which Diane held were carried back towards Francois's face, which happened to be in the very current of the air. The two lovers, as Henri considered them, proceeded in

this manner, crossing a gallery, to the duke's own room, and disappeared behind a *portière*.

Henri had observed everything that had taken place with increasing fury, and yet this fury was such that it almost deprived him of life. It seemed as if he had no strength left except to curse the fate which had imposed so cruel a trial upon him. He had left his place of concealment, and in utter despair, his arms hanging by his side, and with a haggard gaze, he was on the point of returning, half dead, to his apartments in the château, when suddenly the hangings behind which he had seen Diane and the prince disappear were thrown aside, and Diane herself rushed into the supper-room, and took hold of Rémy, who, standing motionless, seemed only to be awaiting her return. "Quick! quick!" she said to him; "all is finished!" And they both darted into the garden as if they had been drunk, or mad, or raging with passion.

No sooner did Henri observe them, however, than he recovered all his strength. He hastened to place himself in their way; and they came upon him suddenly in the middle of the path, standing erect, his arms crossed, and more terrible in his silence than any one could ever have been in his loudest menaces. Henri's feelings had indeed arrived at such a pitch of exasperation that he would readily have slain any man who would have ventured to maintain that women were not monsters sent from hell to corrupt the world. He seized Diane by the arm and stopped her suddenly, notwithstanding the cry of terror which she uttered, and notwithstanding the dagger which Rémy put to his breast, and which even grazed his flesh. "Oh, doubtless you do not recognize me," he said furiously, grinding his teeth. "I am that simple-hearted young man who loved you, and whose love you would

not return, because for you there was no future, but merely the past. Ah, beautiful hypocrite that you are, and you, foul liar, I know you at last, — I know and curse you. To the one I say, I despise you; to the other, I shrink from you with horror.”

“Make way!” cried Rémy, in a strangled voice; “make way, young fool, or if not —”

“Be it so,” replied Henri; “finish your work, and slay my body, wretch, since you have already destroyed my soul.”

“Silence!” muttered Rémy, furiously, pressing the blade of his dagger more and more against Henri’s breast.

Diane, however, violently pushed Rémy aside, and seizing Bouchage by the arm, she drew him straight before her. She was lividly pale; her beautiful hair streamed over her shoulders; the contact of the hand on Henri’s wrist affected him with a coldness like that of a corpse. “Monsieur,” she said, “do not rashly judge of the affairs of God. I am Diane de Méridor, the mistress of M. de Bussy, whom the Duc d’Anjou miserably allowed to perish when he could have saved him. Eight days since, Rémy slew Aurilly, the duke’s accomplice; and the prince himself I have just poisoned with a peach, a bouquet, and a torch. Move aside, Monsieur! move aside, I say, for Diane de Méridor, who is on her way to the convent of the Hospitalières!” With these words, and letting Henri’s arm fall, she took hold of that of Rémy, as he waited by her side.

Henri fell on his knees, following the retreating figures of the two assassins, who disappeared, like an infernal vision, behind the thick copse. It was not till fully an hour afterwards that Bouchage, overpowered with fatigue and overwhelmed with terror, with his brain on fire, was

able to summon sufficient strength to drag himself to his apartment; nor was it until after he had made the attempt nearly a dozen times that he succeeded in escalating the window. He took a few steps in his chamber and staggered to his bed, on which he threw himself. Every one was sleeping quietly in the château.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

FATALITY.

THE next morning, about nine o'clock, the beautiful rays of the sun were glistening like gold on the gravelled walks of Château-Thierry. Numerous gangs of workmen, who had the previous evening been directed to be in attendance, had been actively at work from daybreak upon the preparations in the park, as well as in the decoration of the apartments destined to receive the king, whose arrival was momentarily expected. As yet nothing was stirring in the pavilion where the duke reposed, for he had on the previous evening forbidden his two old servants to awaken him. They were to wait until he summoned them. Towards half-past nine two couriers rode at full speed into the town, announcing his Majesty's approach. The civic authorities, the governor, and the garrison formed themselves in ranks on either side of the road, leaving a passage for the royal procession. At ten o'clock the king appeared at the foot of the hill; he had mounted his horse when they had taken their last relays. It was an opportunity of which he always availed himself, especially when entering towns, as he was a good rider. The queen-mother followed him in a litter; fifty gentlemen belonging to the court, richly clad and well mounted, followed in their suite. A company of the guards, commanded by Crillon himself, a hundred and twenty of the Swiss, and as many of the Scotch guards, commanded by Larchant,

and all the members of the royal household who accompanied the king in his excursions, mules, coffers, and domestic servants, formed a numerous army, the files of which followed the windings of the road leading from the river to the summit of the hill. At length the *cortége* entered the town, amid the ringing of the church-bells, the roar of cannon, and bursts of music. The acclamations of the inhabitants were enthusiastic, for a visit from the king was of so rare occurrence at that time that seen thus closely, he seemed to be a living embodiment of divine right. The king, as he progressed through the crowd, looked on all sides for his brother, but in vain. He found only Henri du Bouchage waiting for him at the gate of the château.

When once within the château, Henri III. inquired after the health of the Duc d'Anjou from the officer who had assumed the high distinction of receiving the king.

"Sire," replied the latter, "his Highness, during the last few days, has been residing in the pavilion in the park, and we have not yet seen him this morning. It is most probable, however, that as he was well yesterday, he is well also to-day."

"This pavilion is in a very retired part of the park, it seems," said Henri, in a tone of displeasure, "since the sound of the cannon does not seem to have been heard."

"Sire," one of the duke's two aged attendants ventured to remark, "his Highness did not perhaps expect your Majesty so soon."

"Old fool," growled Henri, "do you think, then, that a king presents himself in that way at other people's residences, without giving them notice? M. le Duc d'Anjou has been aware of my intended arrival since yesterday." And then, afraid of casting a gloom over

those around him by a grave or sullen countenance, Henri, who wished to appear gentle and amiable at the expense of his brother François, exclaimed, "Well, then, since he has not come to meet us, we will go to meet him."

"Show us the way there," said Catherine, from the litter.

All the escort followed the road leading to the old park. At the very moment that the guards, who were in advance, approached the hedge, a shrill and piercing cry rent the air.

"What is that?" said the king, turning towards his mother.

"*Mon Dieu!*" murmured Catherine, endeavoring to read the faces of those around her; "it is a cry of distress or despair."

"My prince! my poor master!" cried François's other aged attendant, appearing at the window, and exhibiting signs of the most passionate grief. Every one hastened towards the pavilion, the king himself being hurried along with the others. He arrived at the moment when they were raising from the floor the Duc d'Anjou's body, which his *valet de chambre*, having entered without authority, in order to announce the king's arrival, had just perceived lying on the carpet of the bedroom. The prince was cold and stiff, and it was only by a strange movement of the eyelids and a nervous contraction of the lips that it could be observed he was still alive. The king paused at the threshold of the door, and those behind him followed his example.

"This is an ugly omen," he murmured.

"Do not enter, my son, I implore you," said Catherine to him.

"Poor François!" said Henri, delighted at being

sent away, and thus being spared the spectacle of that agony.

All the company followed the king as he withdrew.

“Strange! strange!” murmured Catherine, kneeling down by the side of the prince, or rather of his inanimate body, no one being in the room with her but the two old servants; and while the messengers were despatched in every quarter of the town to find the prince’s physician, and a courier galloped off to Paris to hasten the attendance of the king’s physicians, who had remained at Meaux with the queen, Catherine, with less knowledge, very probably, but not with less perspicacity than Miron himself could possibly have shown, examined the symptoms of that singular malady which had struck down her son so suddenly. She had experience, the Florentine; in the first place, therefore, she interrogated calmly, and without confusing them, the two attendants, who were tearing their hair and wringing their hands in the wildest despair.

Both the attendants replied that the prince had returned on the previous evening about nightfall, after having been disturbed at an inconvenient hour by M. du Bouchage, who had arrived with a message from the king. They added that when the audience had terminated, which had been held in the château itself, the prince had ordered a delicate supper to be prepared, and had desired that no one should venture to approach the pavilion without being summoned; and lastly, that he had given the strictest injunctions not to be awakened in the morning, and that no one should enter without a positive summons.

“He probably expected a visit from a lady?” observed the queen-mother, inquiringly.

“We think so, Madame,” replied the valet, respectfully; “but we could not discreetly assure ourselves of the fact.”

“But in removing the things from the table, you must have seen whether my son had supped alone?”

“We have not yet removed the things, Madame, since the orders of Monseigneur were that no one should enter the pavilion.”

“Very good!” said Catherine; “no one, then, has been here?”

“No one, Madame.”

“You may go.”

And Catherine was now left quite alone in the room. Leaving the prince lying on the bed where he had been placed, she immediately began the minutest investigation of each symptom, and of each of the traces to which her attention was directed as the result of her suspicions or apprehensions. She had remarked that François’s forehead was of a bistre color, his eyes were bloodshot and encircled with blue lines, his lips marked with furrows, like the impression which burning sulphur leaves on living flesh. She observed the same sign upon his nostrils and upon the sides of the nose.

“Now let me look carefully,” said Catherine, gazing about her on every side. The first thing she remarked was the candlestick in which the candle which Rémy had lighted the previous evening had burned away. “This candle has burned a long time,” she said, “and shows that François was a long time in this room. Ah, here is a bouquet lying on the carpet!” She picked it up eagerly; and then, remarking that all its flowers were still fresh, with the exception of a rose, which was blackened and dried up, “What does this mean?” she said. “What has been poured on the leaves of this flower? If I am not mistaken, I know a liquid which withers roses in this manner.” She threw aside the bouquet, shuddering as she did so. “That explains to me the state of the nos-

trils and the manner in which the flesh of the face is affected ; but the lips ?”

Catherine ran to the dining-room. The valets had spoken the truth, for there was nothing to indicate that anything on the table had been touched since the previous evening's repast had been finished. Upon the edge of the table lay the half of a peach, in which the impression of a row of teeth was still visible. Catherine examined this with special attention. The fruit, usually of a rich crimson near the core, had become black like the rose, and was discolored by violet and brown spots. The corrosive action was more especially visible upon the part which had been cut, and particularly so where the knife must have passed. “This explains the state of the lips,” she said ; “but François had bitten only one piece out of this peach. He did not keep the bouquet long in his hand, for the flowers are still fresh. The evil may yet be repaired, for the poison cannot have penetrated very deeply. And yet if the evil be merely superficial, why should this paralysis of the senses be so complete, and why indeed should the decomposition of the flesh have made so much progress? There must be more that I have not seen.” And as she spoke, Catherine again looked all round her, and observed, hanging by a silver chain to its pole, the red and blue parrot to which François was so attached. The bird was dead, stiff, and the feathers of its wings rough and erect.

Catherine again looked closely and attentively at the torch which she had once before already narrowly inspected, to satisfy herself that by its having burned out completely, the prince had returned early in the evening.

“The smoke !” said Catherine to herself ; “the smoke ! The wick of that torch was poisoned ; my son is a dead man !” She called out immediately ; and the chamber was

in a minute filled with attendants and officers of the household.

“Miron, Miron!” cried some of them.

“A priest!” exclaimed the others.

But Catherine had in the mean time placed to the lips of François one of the small bottles which she always carried in her alms-bag, and narrowly watched her son’s features to observe the effect of the antidote she applied.

The duke immediately opened his eyes and mouth; but no glance of intelligence gleamed in his eyes, no voice or sound escaped from his lips.

Catherine, in sad and gloomy silence, withdrew from the apartment, beckoning to the two attendants to follow her, before they had as yet had an opportunity of communicating with any one. She then led them into another chamber, where she sat down, fixing her eyes closely and watchfully on their faces. “M. le Duc d’Anjou,” she said, “has been poisoned sometime during his supper last evening; and it was you who served the supper.”

At these words the two men turned as pale as death. “Torture us, kill us, if you will,” they said, “but do not accuse us.”

“Fools that you are! do you suppose that if I suspected you, that would not already have been done? You have not yourselves, I know, assassinated your master, but others have killed him; and I must know who the murderers are. Who has entered the pavilion?”

“An old man, wretchedly clothed, whom Monseigneur has seen during the last two days.”

“But the woman?”

“We have not seen her. What woman does your Majesty mean?”

“A woman has been here, who made a bouquet —”

The two attendants looked at each other with an expression of such simple surprise that Catherine recognized their innocence in that single glance.

“Let the governor of the town and the governor of the château be sent for,” she said.

The two valets hurried to the door.

“One moment !” exclaimed Catherine, fixing them to the threshold by this brief command. “You only and myself are aware of what I have just told you ; I shall not breathe a word about it. If any one learns it, therefore, it will be from or through one of you ; on that very day both your lives shall be forfeited. Now, go !”

Catherine interrogated the two governors with more reserve. She told them that the duke had received from some person or persons a distressing intelligence which had deeply affected him ; that that alone was the cause of his illness ; and that if the duke had an opportunity of putting a few further questions to the persons again, he would in all probability soon recover from the alarm into which he had been thrown.

The governors instituted the minutest search in the town, the park, the environs ; but no one knew what had become of Rémy and Diane. Henri alone knew the secret, and there was no danger of his betraying it.

Throughout the whole day, the terrible news, commented upon, exaggerated, and mutilated, circulated through Château-Thierry and the province ; every one explained, according to his own individual character and disposition, the accident which had befallen the duke. But no one, except Catherine and Bouchage, ventured to acknowledge that the chance of saving the duke’s life was hopeless.

The unhappy prince did not recover either his voice

or his senses, — in short, he ceased to give any sign of intelligence.

The king, who was immediately beset with the gloomiest fancies, which he dreaded more than anything, would very willingly have returned to Paris; but the queen-mother opposed his departure, and the court was obliged to remain at the château.

Many physicians arrived. Miron alone divined the cause of the illness, and formed an opinion upon its serious nature and extent; but he was too good a courtier to confess the truth, especially after he had consulted Catherine's looks. He was questioned on all sides, and he replied that the Duc d'Anjou certainly had suffered from some seriously disturbing cause, and had been subjected to some violent mental shock. In this way he avoided compromising himself, which is a very difficult matter in such a case. When Henri III. required him to answer affirmatively or negatively to his question, "Will the duke live?" he replied, "I will answer your Majesty in three days."

"And when will you tell me?" said Catherine, in a low voice.

"You, Madame, are very different; I answer you unhesitatingly."

"Well?"

"Your Majesty has but to interrogate me."

"On what day will my son die, Miron?"

"To-morrow evening, Madame."

"So soon?"

"Ah, Madame," murmured the physician, "the dose was by no means a slight one."

Catherine placed one of her fingers on her lips, looked at the dying man, and repeated in an undertone this sinister word, "Fatality."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

LES HOSPITALIÈRES.

THE count had spent a terrible night, in a state bordering on delirium and death. Faithful, however, to his duty, as soon as he had heard the king's arrival announced, he rose and received him at the gate, as we have said ; but no sooner had he presented his homage to his Majesty, saluted respectfully the queen-mother, and pressed the admiral's hand, than he shut himself up in his own room, not to die, but to carry determinedly into execution his long-cherished project, which nothing could any longer interfere with.

Towards eleven o'clock in the morning, therefore, — that is to say, as soon as, immediately after the terrible news had circulated that the Duc d'Anjou's life was in imminent danger, every one had dispersed, leaving the king completely bewildered by this new event, — Henri went and knocked at his brother's door, who, having passed a part of the previous night travelling, had just retired to his own room.

“ Ah ! is that you ? ” asked Joyeuse, half asleep. “ What is the matter ? ”

“ I have come to bid you farewell, my brother, ” replied Henri.

“ Farewell ! What do you mean ? Are you going away ? ”

“ Yes, I am going away, Brother ; and nothing need keep me here any longer, I presume. ”

“Why nothing?”

“Of course, since the fêtes at which you wished me to be present will not take place, I may now consider myself as freed from my promise.”

“You are mistaken, Henri,” replied the grand admiral; “I have no greater reason for permitting you to leave to-day than I had yesterday.”

“So be it, my brother; but in that case, for the first time in my life, I shall have the misfortune to disobey your orders, and to fail in the respect I owe you, — for from this very moment I declare to you, Anne, that nothing shall restrain me any longer from taking religious vows.”

“But the dispensation which is expected from Rome?”

“I can await it in a convent.”

“You must positively be mad to think of such a thing!” exclaimed Joyeuse, as he rose, with stupefaction depicted on his countenance.

“On the contrary, my dear and honored brother, I am the wisest of you all, for I alone know what I am about.”

“Henri, you promised us a month.”

“Impossible.”

“A week longer, then.”

“Not an hour.”

“You are suffering so much, then, poor boy?”

“On the contrary, I have ceased to suffer; and that is why the evil is without a remedy.”

“But, at all events, this woman is not made of bronze; her feelings can be worked upon. I will undertake to persuade her.”

“You cannot do impossibilities, Anne; besides, even were she to allow herself to be persuaded now, it is I who could no longer consent to love her.”

“Well, that is quite another matter.”

“Such is the case, however, my brother.”

“What! if she were now willing, would you be indifferent? Why, this is sheer madness.”

“Oh, no, no!” exclaimed Henri, with a shudder of horror; “nothing can any longer exist between that woman and myself.”

“What does this mean?” inquired Joyeuse, with marked surprise. “And who, then, is this woman? Come, tell me, Henri; you know very well that we have never had any secrets from each other.”

Henri feared that he had said too much, and that in yielding to the feeling which he had just exhibited, he had opened a door by which his brother would be able to penetrate the terrible secret which he kept imprisoned in his breast. He therefore fell into an opposite extreme; and as it happens in such cases, in order to recall the imprudent words which had escaped him, he pronounced others which were more imprudent still. “Do not press me further,” he said; “this woman will never be mine, since she belongs to God.”

“Folly! mere idle tales! This woman a nun! She has deceived you.”

“No, no! this woman has not spoken falsely; she is now an *Hospitalière*. Do not let us speak any further of her; and let us respect those who throw themselves at the feet of the Lord.”

Anne had sufficient power over himself not to show the delight this revelation gave him. He continued, “This is something new, for you have never spoken to me about it.”

“It is indeed quite new, for she has only recently taken the veil; but I am sure that her resolution, like my own, is irrevocable. Do not therefore seek to detain me any longer, but embrace me, as you love me. Permit

me to thank you for all your kindness, for all your patience, and for your unceasing affection for a poor heart-broken man, and farewell !”

Joyeuse looked his brother full and steadily in the face ; he looked at him like one whose feelings had overcome him, and who relied upon a display of feeling to persuade another. But Henri remained unmoved at this exhibition of emotion on his brother's part, and replied only by the same mournful smile.

Joyeuse embraced his brother, and allowed him to depart. “Go,” he said apart ; “all is not yet finished, and whatever speed you make, I shall soon have overtaken you.” He went to the king, who was taking his breakfast in bed, with Chicot sitting by his side.

“Good-day ! good-day !” said the king to Joyeuse ; “I am very glad to see you, Anne. I was afraid you would lie in bed all day, you indolent fellow. How is my brother ?”

“Alas ! Sire, I do not know ; I am come to speak to you about mine.”

“Which one ?”

“Henri.”

“Does he still wish to become a monk ?”

“More so than ever.”

“And will he take the vows ?”

“Yes, Sire.”

“He is quite right too.”

“How so, Sire ?”

“Because men go straight to heaven that way.”

“Oh !” said Chicot to the king, “men go much faster still by the way your brother is taking.”

“Will your Majesty permit me to ask a question ?”

“Twenty, Joyeuse, twenty. I am as melancholy as I can possibly be at Château-Thierry, and your questions will distract my attention a little.”

“You know all the religious houses in the kingdom, Sire, I believe?”

“As well as I do the coats-of-arms.”

“What is that which goes by the name of Les Hospitalières, Sire?”

“It is a very small, highly distinguished, very strict, very severe order, composed of twenty ladies, canonesses of St. Joseph.”

“Do they take the vows there?”

“Yes, as a matter of favor, and upon a presentation from the queen.”

“Should I be indiscreet if I were to ask your Majesty where this order is situated?”

“Not at all; it is situated in the Rue du Chevet St. Landry, in the Cité, behind the gardens of Notre-Dame.”

“In Paris?”

“Yes.”

“Thank you, Sire.”

“But why the devil do you ask me that? Has your brother changed his mind, and instead of turning a Capuchin friar, does he now wish to become one of the Hospitalières?”

“No, Sire, I should not think he would be so mad, after what your Majesty has done me the honor to tell me; but I suspect he has had his head turned by some one belonging to that order, and I should like to discover who this person is, and speak to her.”

“*Par la mordieu!*” said the king, with a self-satisfied expression, “some seven years ago I knew the superior of that convent, who was an exceedingly beautiful woman.”

“Well, Sire, it may perhaps be the very one.”

“I cannot say; since that time, I too, Joyeuse, have assumed religious vows myself, or nearly so, indeed.”

“Sire,” said Joyeuse, “I entreat you to give me, at any rate, a letter to this lady, and leave of absence for two days.”

“You are going to leave me?” exclaimed the king; “to leave me all alone here?”

“Oh, ungrateful king!” said Chicot, shrugging his shoulders, “am I not here?”

“My letter, if you please, Sire,” said Joyeuse.

The king sighed, but wrote it, notwithstanding. “But you cannot have anything to do at Paris?” said Henri, handing the note to Joyeuse.

“I beg your pardon, Sire; I ought to escort, or at least to watch over my brother.”

“You are right; away with you, but return as quickly as you can.”

Joyeuse did not wait for this permission to be repeated; he quietly ordered his horses, and having satisfied himself that Henri had already set off, galloped all the way until he reached his destination.

Without even changing his dress, the young man went straight to the Rue du Chevet St. Landry. At the end of this street was the Rue d’Enfer, and parallel with it the Rue des Marmouzets.

A dark and venerable-looking house, behind whose walls the lofty summits of a few trees could be distinguished, with a few barred windows and a wicket gate, — such was the exterior appearance of the convent of the Hospitalières. Upon the keystone of the arch of the porch an artisan had rudely engraved these Latin words with a chisel: —

MATRONÆ HOSPITES.

Time had partially destroyed both the inscription and the stone.

Joyeuse knocked at the wicket, and had his horses led

away to the Rue des Marmouzets, fearing that their presence in the street might attract too much attention. Then, knocking at the entrance gate, he said, "Will you be good enough to go and inform Madame the Superior that M. le Duc de Joyeuse, Grand Admiral of France, wishes to speak to her on behalf of the king?"

The face of the nun who had made her appearance behind the gate blushed beneath her veil, and she shut the gate. Five minutes afterwards, a door was opened, and Joyeuse entered a room set apart for the reception of visitors. A beautiful woman of lofty stature made Joyeuse a profound reverence, which the admiral returned gracefully and respectfully.

"Madame," said he, "the king is aware that you are about to admit, or that you have already admitted, among the number of the inmates here, a person with whom I must have an interview. Will you be good enough to place me in communication with that person?"

"Will you tell me the name of the lady you wish to see, Monsieur?"

"I am not acquainted with it."

"In that case, then, Monsieur, how can I accede to your request?"

"Nothing is easier. Whom have you admitted during the last month?"

"You tell me too precisely, or with not sufficient precision, who this person is," said the superior; "and I am unable to comply with your wish."

"Why so?"

"Because during the last month I have received no one here until this morning."

"This morning?"

"Yes, Monsieur the Duke, and you can understand that your own arrival, two hours after hers, has too much

the appearance of a pursuit for me to grant you permission to speak to her."

"I implore you, Madame!"

"Impossible, Monsieur."

"Will you only let me see this lady?"

"Impossible, I repeat. Although your name was sufficient for the doors of this house to be thrown open before you, yet in order to speak to any one here, except indeed to myself, a written order from the king is necessary."

"Here is the order you require, Madame," replied Joyeuse, producing the letter that Henri had signed.

The superior read it and bowed. "His Majesty's will shall be obeyed," she said, "even when it is contrary to the will of God." And she advanced towards the courtyard of the convent.

"You now perceive, Madame," said Joyeuse, courteously stopping her, "that I have right on my side; but I fear committing an error, and abusing the permission I have received from the king. Perhaps the lady may not be the one I seek; will you be kind enough to tell me how she came here, why she came, and by whom she was accompanied?"

"All that is useless, Monsieur the Duke," replied the superior; "you are in no error, for the lady who arrived only this morning, after having been expected for the last two weeks, — this lady, who was recommended by one who possesses the greatest authority over me, is indeed the person with whom M. le Duc de Joyeuse must wish to speak." With these words the superior made another reverence to the duke and disappeared. Ten minutes afterwards she returned, accompanied by an Hospitalière, whose veil completely covered her face. It was Diane, who had already assumed the dress of the order.

The duke thanked the superior, offered a chair to her

companion, himself sat down, and the superior left the room, closing with her own hands the doors of the gloomy apartment.

“Madame,” said Joyeuse, without any preface, “you are the lady of the Rue des Augustins, that mysterious person with whom my brother, M. le Comte du Bouchage, is so passionately and madly in love.”

The Hospitalière bowed her head in reply, but did not open her lips.

To Joyeuse this affectation seemed uncivil. He was already badly disposed towards his interlocutor, and continued, “You cannot have supposed, Madame, that it is sufficient to be beautiful, or to appear beautiful, while you have no heart lying hidden beneath that beauty, while you inspire a wretched and despairing passion in the heart of a young man of my name, and then one day calmly tell him, ‘So much the worse for you if you possess a heart; I have none, nor do I wish for any.’”

“That was not my reply, Monsieur; and you have been incorrectly informed,” said the Hospitalière, in so noble and touching a tone of voice that Joyeuse’s anger was in a moment subdued.

“The actual words are immaterial, Madame, when their sense has been conveyed. You have rejected my brother, and have reduced him to despair.”

“Innocently, Monsieur; for I have always endeavored to keep M. du Bouchage at a distance.”

“That is termed the art of coquetry, Madame; and the result proves the fault.”

“No one has the right to accuse me, Monsieur; I am guilty of nothing. You are angry with me; I shall say no more.”

“Oh, oh!” said Joyeuse, gradually working himself into a passion, “you have been the ruin of my brother,

and you fancy you can justify yourself with this irritating majesty of demeanor. No, no! the steps I have taken must show you what my intentions are. I am serious, I assure you; and you see by the trembling of my hands and lips that you will need some good arguments to move me."

The Hospitalière rose. "If you come here to insult a woman," she said with the same calm self-possession, "insult me, Monsieur; if you have come to induce me to change my opinion, you are wasting your time, and can withdraw."

"Ah, you are no human creature!" exclaimed Joyeuse, exasperated; "you are a demon!"

"I have answered already; I will reply no further. Since that is not sufficient, I shall withdraw." And the Hospitalière moved towards the door. Joyeuse stopped her.

"One moment! I have sought you for too long a period to allow you to leave me in this manner; and since I have succeeded in meeting with you; since your insensibility has confirmed me in the idea which had already occurred to me, that you are an infernal creature, sent hither by the enemy of mankind to destroy my brother, — I wish to see that face whereon the bottomless pit has written its blackest traces; I wish to behold the fire of that fatal gaze which bewilders men's minds. Approach, Satan!"

And Joyeuse, making the sign of the cross with one hand, by way of exorcism, with the other tore aside the veil which covered the face of the Hospitalière; the latter, silent and impassive, free from anger or ill-feeling, fixed her sweet and gentle gaze upon him who had so cruelly outraged her, and said, "Oh, Monsieur the Duke, what you have just done is unworthy a gentleman."

Joyeuse was struck to the heart. Her gentleness quenched his wrath ; her beauty overturned his reason.

“ Oh, Madame,” he murmured, after a long silence, “ you are indeed beautiful, and truly must Henri have loved you. Surely, Heaven can have bestowed upon you loveliness such as you possess only that you might shed it like perfume upon an existence devoted to your own.”

“ Monsieur, have you not conversed with your brother ? If you have done so, he cannot have thought it expedient to make you his confidant ; otherwise, he would have told you that I have done what you say, — I have loved. I shall never love again ; I have lived, and have now only to die.”

Joyeuse had not taken his eyes from Diane’s face ; and the soft and gentle expression of her gaze penetrated the inmost recesses of his being. Her look had destroyed all the baser material in the admiral’s heart ; the pure metal alone was left, and his heart seemed rent asunder, like a crucible which had been riven by the fusion of metal. “ Yes, yes ! ” he repeated in a still lower voice, and continuing to fix upon her a gaze from which the fire of his fierce anger had disappeared, — “ yes, yes ! Henri must have loved you. Oh, Madame, for pity’s sake, on my knees I implore you to love my brother ! ”

Diane remained cold and silent.

“ Do not reduce a family to despair ; do not sacrifice the future prospects of our race ! Be not the cause of the death of one from despair, of the others from regret ! ”

Diane, still silent, continued to look sorrowfully on the suppliant bending before her.

“ Oh,” exclaimed Joyeuse, madly, pressing his hand against his heart, “ have mercy on my brother ! have mercy on me ! I am burning ! that look consumes me ! Adieu, Madame, adieu ! ”

He sprang to his feet like a man bereft of his senses, unfastened, or rather tore open the door of the room where they had been conversing, and, bewildered and almost beside himself, fled from the house towards his attendants, who were awaiting him at the corner of the Rue d'Enfer.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

HIS HIGHNESS MONSEIGNEUR LE DUC DE GUISE.

ON Sunday, the 10th of June, towards eleven o'clock in the day, the whole court were assembled in the apartment leading to the cabinet in which, since his meeting with Diane de Méridor, the Duc d'Anjou was dying by slow but sure degrees. Neither the science of the physicians, nor his mother's despair, nor the prayers which the king had desired to be offered up, had averted the fatal termination. Miron, on the morning of this 10th of June, assured the king that all chance of recovery was hopeless, and that François d'Anjou would not outlive the day. The king pretended to display extreme grief, and turning towards those who were present, said, "This will fill my enemies full of hope."

To which remark the queen-mother replied, "Our destiny is in the hands of God, my son."

Whereupon Chicot, who was standing humbly and reverently near Henri III., added in a low voice, "Let us help God when we can, Sire."

Nevertheless, the dying man, towards half-past eleven, lost both color and sight; his mouth, which up to that moment had remained open, became closed; the flow of blood which for several days past had terrified all who were near him, like the bloody sweat of Charles IX. at an earlier period, had suddenly ceased, and hands and feet became cold. Henri was sitting beside the head of the couch whereon his brother was extended. Catherine

was standing in the recess in which the bed was placed, holding her dying son's hand in hers.

The Bishop of Château-Thierry and the Cardinal de Joyeuse repeated the prayers for the dying, which were joined in by all who were present, kneeling, and with clasped hands. Towards midday, the dying man opened his eyes; the sun's rays broke through a cloud and inundated the bed with a flood of light. François, who up to that moment had been unable to move a single finger, and whose mind had been obscured like the sun, which had just reappeared, raised one of his arms towards heaven with a movement of terror. He looked all round the room, heard the murmuring of the prayers, perceived his weakness, and understood his situation, — perhaps because he already looked into that obscure and sinister world whither go certain souls on leaving the earth. He uttered a loud and piercing cry, and struck his forehead with a force which made every one tremble. Then, knitting his brows, as if he had solved in his thought one of the mysteries of his life, he murmured, "Bussy! Diane!"

This latter name had been overheard by none but Catherine, so weakened had the dying man's voice become before pronouncing it. With the last syllable of that name François d'Anjou breathed his last sigh.

At this very moment, by a singular coincidence, the sun, which had gilded with its rays the royal arms of France and the golden *fleur de lis*, was again obscured; so that the *fleurs de lis*, which had been so brilliantly illumined but a moment before, became as dull as the azure ground which they had but recently studded with constellations almost as resplendent as those whereon the eye of the dreamer rests in his upward gaze towards heaven.

Catherine let her son's hand fall. Henri III. shuddered, and leaned tremblingly on Chicot's shoulder, who shuddered too, but from a feeling of awe which every Christian feels in the presence of the dead.

Miron placed a golden spatula on François's lips; after a few seconds, he looked at it carefully and said, "Monseigneur is dead."

Whereupon a deep prolonged groan arose from the ante-chamber, as an accompaniment to the psalm which the cardinal murmured, "Cedant iniquitates meæ ad vocem deprecationis meæ."

"Dead!" repeated the king, making the sign of the cross as he sat in his *fauteuil*; "my brother, my brother!"

"The sole heir of the throne of France," murmured Catherine, who, having left the bed whereon the corpse was lying, had placed herself beside the only son who now remained to her.

"Oh," said Henri, "this throne of France is indeed large for a king without issue. The crown is indeed large for a single head. No children! no heirs! Who will succeed me?"

Hardly had he pronounced these words when a loud noise was heard on the staircase and in the halls. Nambu hurriedly entered the death-chamber, and announced, "His Highness Monseigneur le Duc de Guise."

Struck by this reply to the question which he had addressed to himself, the king turned pale, rose, and looked at his mother. Catherine was paler than her son. At the announcement of the horrible misfortune to her race which chance predicted, she grasped the king's hand, and pressed it, as if to say, "There lies the danger; but fear nothing, I am near you."

The son and mother, under the influence of the same terror and the same menace, had comprehended each other.

The duke entered, followed by his officers. He entered, holding his head loftily erect, although his eyes ranged from the king to the death-bed of his brother with a glance not free from a certain embarrassment.

Henri III. stood up, and with that supreme majesty of carriage which on certain occasions his singularly poetic nature enabled him to assume, checked the duke's further progress by a kingly gesture, and pointed to the royal corpse upon the bed, the covering of which was in disorder from his brother's dying agonies.

The duke bowed his head, and slowly fell on his knees. All around him, too, bowed their heads and bent their knees. Henri III., together with his mother, alone remained standing, and bent a last look, full of pride, upon those around him. Chicot observed this look, and murmured in a low tone of voice, "*Dejiciet potentes de sede et exaltabit humiles*" ("He will put down the mighty from their seat, and will exalt the humble").

POSTSCRIPT.

A FEW words with reference to the principal characters in "The Forty-five" are necessary to complete the story.

Diane de Monsoreau, having taken the vows at the convent of the Hospitalières, survived the Duc d'Anjou only two years. Of Rémy, her faithful companion, we hear no more. He disappeared without leaving a trace behind him.

History, however, informs us more fully as to the others. The Duc de Guise, having at last broken into open rebellion against Henri III., was so far successful that with the aid of the League he compelled the king to fly from Paris. A hollow reconciliation was, however, patched up between them, the Duc de Guise stipulating that he should be appointed lieutenant-general of the kingdom; but no sooner had the king returned to the Louvre than he determined on the assassination of the duke. He sounded Crillon, the leader of the Forty-five, on the subject, but this noble soldier refused to have anything to do with it, offering, however, to challenge the duke to single combat. Loignac was less scrupulous, and we know the result. The Duc de Guise and his brother the cardinal were both murdered. Ten days after this event, Catherine de Médicis, the queen-mother, died, regretted by none.

The Parisians, exasperated by the murder of the Duc de Guise, declared his brother, the Duc de Mayenne, the head of the League, and rose against the king, who was again obliged to fly. He begged the King of Navarre for aid, who promptly responded to the call, and they were shortly

before Paris with a united army of Catholics and Huguenots. Henri III. was, however, pursued by the relentless hate of the clever and unscrupulous Duchesse de Montpensier. She worked so skilfully on the fanatical mind of the young Jacobin friar, Jacques Clement, that he undertook the death of the king. He entered the camp with letters for Henri, whom he stabbed while reading them. The king died August 2, 1589, after having declared Henri de Navarre his successor.

Of the subsequent life and adventures of Chicot, unfortunately nothing authentic is known.

TRANSLATOR.

THE END.

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