

DUMAS ALEXANDRE

TEN YEARS
LATER

Александр Дюма
Ten Years Later

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Дюма А.

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Alexandre Dumas

Ten Years Later

Transcriber's Notes:

As you may be aware, Project Gutenberg has been involved with the writings of both the Alexandre Dumases for some time now, and since we get a few questions about the order in which the books should be read, and in which they were published, these following comments should hopefully help most of our readers.

The Vicomte de Bragelonne is the final volume of D'Artagnan Romances: it is usually split into three or four parts, and the final portion is entitled The Man in the Iron Mask. The Man in the Iron Mask we're familiar with today is the last volume of the four-volume edition. [Not all the editions split them in the same manner, hence some of the confusion...but wait...there's yet more reason for confusion.]

We intend to do ALL of The Vicomte de Bragelonne, split into four etexts entitled The Vicomte de Bragelonne, Ten Years Later, Louise de la Valliere, and The Man in the Iron Mask; you WILL be getting The Man in the Iron Mask.

One thing that may be causing confusion is that the etext we have now, entitled Ten Years Later, says it's the sequel to The Three Musketeers. While this is technically true, there's another book, Twenty Years After, that comes between. The confusion is generated by the two facts that we published Ten Years Later BEFORE we published Twenty Years After, and that many people see those titles as meaning Ten and Twenty Years "After" the original story...however, this is why the different words "After" and "Later"...the Ten Years "After" is ten years after the Twenty Years later...as per history. Also, the third book of the D'Artagnan Romances, while entitled The Vicomte de Bragelonne, has the subtitle Ten Years Later. These two titles are also given to different volumes: The Vicomte de Bragelonne can refer to the whole book, or the first volume of the three or four-volume editions. Ten Years Later can, similarly, refer to the whole book, or the second volume of the four-volume edition. To add to the confusion, in the case of our etexts, it refers to the first 104 chapters of the whole book, covering material in the first and second etexts in the new series. Here is a guide to the series which may prove helpful:

The Three Musketeers: Etext 1257 – First book of the D'Artagnan Romances. Covers the years 1625-1628.

Twenty Years After: Etext 1259 – Second book of the D'Artagnan Romances. Covers the years 1648-1649. [Third in the order that we published, but second in time sequence!!!]

Ten Years Later: Etext 1258 – First 104 chapters of the third book of the D'Artagnan Romances. Covers the years 1660-1661.

The Vicomte de Bragelonne: Etext 2609 (first in the new series) – First 75 chapters of the third book of the D'Artagnan Romances. Covers the year 1660.

Ten Years Later: Etext 2681 (our new etext) – Chapters 76-140 of that third book of the D'Artagnan Romances. Covers the years 1660-1661. [In this particular editing of it]

Louise de la Valliere: forthcoming (our next etext) – Chapters 141-208 of the third book of the D'Artagnan Romances. Covers the year 1661.

The Man in the Iron Mask: forthcoming (following) – Chapters 209-269 of the third book of the D'Artagnan Romances. Covers the years 1661-1673.

If we've calculated correctly, that fourth text SHOULD correspond to the modern editions of The Man in the Iron Mask, which is still widely circulated, and comprises about the last 1/4 of The Vicomte de Bragelonne.

Here is a list of the other Dumas Etexts we have published so far:

Sep 1999 La Tulipe Noire, by Alexandre Dumas[Pere#6/French][tlpnrxxx.xxx]1910 This is an abridged edition in French, also see our full length English Etext Jul 1997 The Black Tulip, by Alexandre Dumas[Pere][Dumas#1][tbtlpxxx.xxx] 965 Jan 1998 The Count of Monte Cristo by Alexandre Dumas[Pere][crstoxxx.xxx]1184

Many thanks to Dr. David Coward, whose editions of the D'Artagnan Romances have proved an invaluable source of information.

Introduction:

In the months of March-July in 1844, in the magazine *Le Siecle*, the first portion of a story appeared, penned by the celebrated playwright Alexandre Dumas. It was based, he claimed, on some manuscripts he had found a year earlier in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* while researching a history he planned to write on Louis XIV. They chronicled the adventures of a young man named D'Artagnan who, upon entering Paris, became almost immediately embroiled in court intrigues, international politics, and ill-fated affairs between royal lovers. Over the next six years, readers would enjoy the adventures of this youth and his three famous friends, Porthos, Athos, and Aramis, as their exploits unraveled behind the scenes of some of the most momentous events in French and even English history.

Eventually these serialized adventures were published in novel form, and became the three D'Artagnan Romances known today. Here is a brief summary of the first two novels:

The Three Musketeers (serialized March-July, 1844): The year is 1625. The young D'Artagnan arrives in Paris at the tender age of 18, and almost immediately offends three musketeers, Porthos, Aramis, and Athos. Instead of dueling, the four are attacked by five of the Cardinal's guards, and the courage of the youth is made apparent during the battle. The four become fast friends, and, when asked by D'Artagnan's landlord to find his missing wife, embark upon an adventure that takes them across both France and England in order to thwart the plans of the Cardinal Richelieu. Along the way, they encounter a beautiful young spy, named simply Milady, who will stop at nothing to disgrace Queen Anne of Austria before her husband, Louis XIII, and take her revenge upon the four friends.

Twenty Years After (serialized January-August, 1845): The year is now 1648, twenty years since the close of the last story. Louis XIII has died, as has Cardinal Richelieu, and while the crown of France may sit upon the head of Anne of Austria as Regent for the young Louis XIV, the real power resides with the Cardinal Mazarin, her secret husband. D'Artagnan is now a lieutenant of musketeers, and his three friends have retired to private life. Athos turned out to be a nobleman, the Comte de la Fere, and has retired to his home with his son, Raoul de Bragelonne. Aramis, whose real name is D'Herblay, has followed his intention of shedding the musketeer's cassock for the priest's robes, and Porthos has married a wealthy woman, who left him her fortune upon her death. But trouble is stirring in both France and England. Cromwell menaces the institution of royalty itself while marching against Charles I, and at home the Fronde is threatening to tear France apart. D'Artagnan brings his friends out of retirement to save the threatened English monarch, but Mordaunt, the son of Milady, who seeks to avenge his mother's death at the musketeers' hands, thwarts their valiant efforts. Undaunted, our heroes return to France just in time to help save the young Louis XIV, quiet the Fronde, and tweak the nose of Cardinal Mazarin.

The third novel, **The Vicomte de Bragelonne** (serialized October, 1847 – January, 1850), has enjoyed a strange history in its English translation. It has been split into three, four, or five volumes at various points in its history. The five-volume edition generally does not give titles to the smaller portions, but the others do. In the three-volume edition, the novels are entitled *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*, *Louise de la Valliere*, and *The Man in the Iron Mask*. For the purposes of this etext, I have chosen to split the novel as the four-volume edition does, with these titles: *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*, *Ten Years Later*, *Louise de la Valliere*, and *The Man in the Iron Mask*. In the last etext:

The Vicomte de Bragelonne (Etext 2609): It is the year 1660, and D'Artagnan, after thirty-five years of loyal service, has become disgusted with serving King Louis XIV while the real power resides with the Cardinal Mazarin, and has tendered his resignation. He embarks on his own project, that of restoring Charles II to the throne of England, and, with the help of Athos, succeeds, earning himself quite a fortune in the process. D'Artagnan returns to Paris to live the life of a rich citizen, and Athos, after negotiating the marriage of Philip, the king's brother, to Princess Henrietta of England,

likewise retires to his own estate, La Fere. Meanwhile, Mazarin has finally died, and left Louis to assume the reigns of power, with the assistance of M. Colbert, formerly Mazarin's trusted clerk. Colbert has an intense hatred for M. Fouquet, the king's superintendent of finances, and has resolved to use any means necessary to bring about his fall. With the new rank of intendant bestowed on him by Louis, Colbert succeeds in having two of Fouquet's loyal friends tried and executed. He then brings to the king's attention that Fouquet is fortifying the island of Belle-Ile-en-Mer, and could possibly be planning to use it as a base for some military operation against the king. Louis calls D'Artagnan out of retirement and sends him to investigate the island, promising him a tremendous salary and his long-promised promotion to captain of the musketeers upon his return. At Belle-Isle, D'Artagnan discovers that the engineer of the fortifications is, in fact, Porthos, now the Baron du Vallon, and that's not all. The blueprints for the island, although in Porthos's handwriting, show evidence of another script that has been erased, that of Aramis. D'Artagnan later discovers that Aramis has become the bishop of Vannes, which is, coincidentally, a parish belonging to M. Fouquet. Suspecting that D'Artagnan has arrived on the king's behalf to investigate, Aramis tricks D'Artagnan into wandering around Vannes in search of Porthos, and sends Porthos on an heroic ride back to Paris to warn Fouquet of the danger. Fouquet rushes to the king, and gives him Belle-Isle as a present, thus allaying any suspicion, and at the same time humiliating Colbert, just minutes before the usher announces someone else seeking an audience with the king.

And now, the second etext of *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*. Enjoy!

John Bursey Mordaunt

There is one French custom that may cause confusion. The Duc d'Orleans is traditionally called "Monsieur" and his wife "Madame." Gaston, the king's uncle, currently holds that title. Upon the event of his death, it will be conferred upon the king's brother, Philip, who is currently the Duc d'Anjou. The customary title of "Monsieur" will go to him as well, and upon his future wife, Henrietta of England, that of "Madame." Gaston's widow will be referred to as the "Dowager Madame." – JB

Chapter I. In which D'Artagnan finishes by at Length placing his Hand upon his Captain's Commission

The reader guesses beforehand whom the usher preceded in announcing the courier from Bretagne. This messenger was easily recognized. It was D'Artagnan, his clothes dusty, his face inflamed, his hair dripping with sweat, his legs stiff; he lifted his feet painfully at every step, on which resounded the clink of his blood-stained spurs. He perceived in the doorway he was passing through, the superintendent coming out. Fouquet bowed with a smile to him who, an hour before, was bringing him ruin and death. D'Artagnan found in his goodness of heart, and in his inexhaustible vigor of body, enough presence of mind to remember the kind reception of this man; he bowed then, also, much more from benevolence and compassion, than from respect. He felt upon his lips the word which had so many times been repeated to the Duc de Guise: "Fly." But to pronounce that word would have been to betray his cause; to speak that word in the cabinet of the king, and before an usher, would have been to ruin himself gratuitously, and could save nobody. D'Artagnan then, contented himself with bowing to Fouquet and entered. At this moment the king floated between the joy the last words of Fouquet had given him, and his pleasure at the return of D'Artagnan. Without being a courtier, D'Artagnan had a glance as sure and as rapid as if he had been one. He read, on his entrance, devouring humiliation on the countenance of Colbert. He even heard the king say these words to him: —

"Ah! Monsieur Colbert; you have then nine hundred thousand livres at the intendance?" Colbert, suffocated, bowed but made no reply. All this scene entered into the mind of D'Artagnan, by the eyes and ears, at once.

The first word of Louis to his musketeer, as if he wished it to contrast with what he was saying at the moment, was a kind "good day." His second was to send away Colbert. The latter left the king's cabinet, pallid and tottering, whilst D'Artagnan twisted up the ends of his mustache.

"I love to see one of my servants in this disorder," said the king, admiring the martial stains upon the clothes of his envoy.

"I thought, sire, my presence at the Louvre was sufficiently urgent to excuse my presenting myself thus before you."

"You bring me great news, then, monsieur?"

"Sire, the thing is this, in two words: Belle-Isle is fortified, admirably fortified; Belle-Isle has a double *enceinte*, a citadel, two detached forts; its ports contain three corsairs; and the side batteries only await their cannon."

"I know all that, monsieur," replied the king.

"What! your majesty knows all that?" replied the musketeer, stupefied.

"I have the plan of the fortifications of Belle-Isle," said the king.

"Your majesty has the plan?"

"Here it is."

"It is really correct, sire: I saw a similar one on the spot."

D'Artagnan's brow became clouded.

"Ah! I understand all. Your majesty did not trust to me alone, but sent some other person," said he in a reproachful tone.

"Of what importance is the manner, monsieur, in which I have learnt what I know, so that I know it?"

"Sire, sire," said the musketeer, without seeking even to conceal his dissatisfaction; "but I must be permitted to say to your majesty, that it is not worth while to make me use such speed, to risk twenty times the breaking of my neck, to salute me on my arrival with such intelligence. Sire, when people

are not trusted, or are deemed insufficient, they should scarcely be employed.” And D’Artagnan, with a movement perfectly military, stamped with his foot, and left upon the floor dust stained with blood. The king looked at him, inwardly enjoying his first triumph.

“Monsieur,” said he, at the expiration of a minute, “not only is Belle-Isle known to me, but, still further, Belle-Isle is mine.”

“That is well! that is well, sire, I ask but one thing more,” replied D’Artagnan. – “My discharge.”

“What! your discharge?”

“Without doubt I am too proud to eat the bread of the king without earning it, or rather by gaining it badly. – My discharge, sire!”

“Oh, oh!”

“I ask for my discharge, or I will take it.”

“You are angry, monsieur?”

“I have reason, *mordieux!* Thirty-two hours in the saddle, I ride day and night, I perform prodigies of speed, I arrive stiff as the corpse of a man who has been hung – and another arrives before me! Come, sire, I am a fool! – My discharge, sire!”

“Monsieur d’Artagnan,” said Louis, leaning his white hand upon the dusty arm of the musketeer, “what I tell you will not at all affect that which I promised you. A king’s word given must be kept.” And the king going straight to his table, opened a drawer, and took out a folded paper. “Here is your commission of captain of musketeers; you have won it, Monsieur d’Artagnan.”

D’Artagnan opened the paper eagerly, and scanned it twice. He could scarcely believe his eyes.

“And this commission is given you,” continued the king, “not only on account of your journey to Belle-Isle but, moreover, for your brave intervention at the Place de Greve. There, likewise, you served me valiantly.”

“Ah, ah!” said D’Artagnan, without his self-command being able to prevent a blush from mounting to his eyes – “you know that also, sire?”

“Yes, I know it.”

The king possessed a piercing glance and an infallible judgment when it was his object to read men’s minds. “You have something to say,” said he to the musketeer, “something to say which you do not say. Come, speak freely, monsieur; you know that I told you, once and for all, that you are to be always quite frank with me.”

“Well, sire! what I have to say is this, that I would prefer being made captain of the musketeers for having charged a battery at the head of my company, or taken a city, than for causing two wretches to be hung.”

“Is this quite true you tell me?”

“And why should your majesty suspect me of dissimulation, I ask?”

“Because I have known you well, monsieur; you cannot repent of having drawn your sword for me.”

“Well, in that your majesty is deceived, and greatly; yes, I do repent of having drawn my sword on account of the results that action produced; the poor men who were hung, sire, were neither your enemies nor mine; and they could not defend themselves.”

The king preserved silence for a moment. “And your companion, M. d’Artagnan, does he partake of your repentance?”

“My companion?”

“Yes, you were not alone, I have been told.”

“Alone, where?”

“At the Place de Greve.”

“No, sire, no,” said D’Artagnan, blushing at the idea that the king might have a suspicion that he, D’Artagnan, had wished to engross to himself all the glory that belonged to Raoul; “no, *mordieux!* and as your majesty says, I had a companion, and a good companion, too.”

“A young man?”

“Yes, sire; a young man. Oh! your majesty must accept my compliments, you are as well informed of things out of doors as things within. It is M. Colbert who makes all these fine reports to the king.”

“M. Colbert has said nothing but good of you, M. d’Artagnan, and he would have met with a bad reception if he had come to tell me anything else.”

“That is fortunate!”

“But he also said much good of that young man.”

“And with justice,” said the musketeer.

“In short, it appears that this young man is a fire-eater,” said Louis, in order to sharpen the sentiment which he mistook for envy.

“A fire-eater! Yes, sire,” repeated D’Artagnan, delighted on his part to direct the king’s attention to Raoul.

“Do you not know his name?”

“Well, I think – ”

“You know him then?”

“I have known him nearly five-and-twenty years, sire.”

“Why, he is scarcely twenty-five years old!” cried the king.

“Well, sire! I have known him ever since he was born, that is all.”

“Do you affirm that?”

“Sire,” said D’Artagnan, “your majesty questions me with a mistrust in which I recognize another character than your own. M. Colbert, who has so well informed you, has he not forgotten to tell you that this young man is the son of my most intimate friend?”

“The Vicomte de Bragelonne?”

“Certainly, sire. The father of the Vicomte de Bragelonne is M. le Comte de la Fere, who so powerfully assisted in the restoration of King Charles II. Bragelonne comes of a valiant race, sire.”

“Then he is the son of that nobleman who came to me, or rather to M. Mazarin, on the part of King Charles II., to offer me his alliance?”

“Exactly, sire.”

“And the Comte de la Fere is a great soldier, say you?”

“Sire, he is a man who has drawn his sword more times for the king, your father, than there are, at present, months in the happy life of your majesty.”

It was Louis XIV. who now bit his lip.

“That is well, M. d’Artagnan, very well! And M. le Comte de la Fere is your friend, say you?”

“For about forty years; yes, sire. Your majesty may see that I do not speak to you of yesterday.”

“Should you be glad to see this young man, M. d’Artagnan?”

“Delighted, sire.”

The king touched his bell, and an usher appeared. “Call M. de Bragelonne,” said the king.

“Ah! ah! he is here?” said D’Artagnan.

“He is on guard to-day, at the Louvre, with the company of the gentlemen of monsieur le prince.”

The king had scarcely ceased speaking, when Raoul presented himself, and, on seeing D’Artagnan, smiled on him with that charming smile which is only found upon the lips of youth.

“Come, come,” said D’Artagnan, familiarly, to Raoul, “the king will allow you to embrace me; only tell his majesty you thank him.”

Raoul bowed so gracefully, that Louis, to whom all superior qualities were pleasing when they did not overshadow his own, admired his beauty, strength, and modesty.

“Monsieur,” said the king, addressing Raoul, “I have asked monsieur le prince to be kind enough to give you up to me; I have received his reply, and you belong to me from this morning. Monsieur le prince was a good master, but I hope you will not lose by the exchange.”

“Yes, yes, Raoul, be satisfied; the king has some good in him,” said D’Artagnan, who had fathomed the character of Louis, and who played with his self-love, within certain limits; always observing, be it understood, the proprieties and flattering, even when he appeared to be bantering.

“Sire,” said Bragelonne, with voice soft and musical, and with the natural and easy elocution he inherited from his father; “Sire, it is not from to-day that I belong to your majesty.”

“Oh! no, I know,” said the king, “you mean your enterprise of the Greve. That day, you were truly mine, monsieur.”

“Sire, it is not of that day I would speak; it would not become me to refer to so paltry a service in the presence of such a man as M. d’Artagnan. I would speak of a circumstance which created an epoch in my life, and which consecrated me, from the age of sixteen, to the devoted service of your majesty.”

“Ah! ah!” said the king, “what was that circumstance? Tell me, monsieur.”

“This is it, sire. – When I was setting out on my first campaign, that is to say, to join the army of monsieur le prince, M. le Comte de la Fere came to conduct me as far as Saint-Denis, where the remains of King Louis XIII. wait, upon the lowest steps of the funeral *basilique*, a successor, whom God will not send him, I hope, for many years. Then he made me swear upon the ashes of our masters, to serve royalty, represented by you – incarnate in you, sire – to serve it in word, in thought, and in action. I swore, and God and the dead were witnesses to my oath. During ten years, sire, I have not so often as I desired had occasion to keep it. I am a soldier of your majesty, and nothing else; and, on calling me nearer to you, I do not change my master, I only change my garrison.”

Raoul was silent and bowed. Louis still listened after he had done speaking.

“*Mordieux!*” cried D’Artagnan, “that was well spoken! was it not, your majesty? A good race! a noble race!”

“Yes,” murmured the king, without, however daring to manifest his emotion, for it had no other cause than contact with a nature intrinsically noble. “Yes, monsieur, you say truly: – wherever you were, you were the king’s. But in changing your garrison, believe me you will find an advancement of which you are worthy.”

Raoul saw that this ended what the king had to say to him. And with the perfect tact which characterized his refined nature, he bowed and retired.

“Is there anything else, monsieur, of which you have to inform me?” said the king, when he found himself again alone with D’Artagnan.

“Yes, sire, and I kept that news for the last, for it is sad, and will clothe European royalty in mourning.”

“What do you tell me?”

“Sire, in passing through Blois, a word, a sad word, echoed from the palace, struck my ear.”

“In truth, you terrify me, M. d’Artagnan.”

“Sire, this word was pronounced to me by a *piqueur*, who wore crape on his arm.”

“My uncle, Gaston of Orleans, perhaps.”

“Sire, he has rendered his last sigh.”

“And I was not warned of it!” cried the king, whose royal susceptibility saw an insult in the absence of this intelligence.

“Oh! do not be angry, sire,” said D’Artagnan; “neither the couriers of Paris, nor the couriers of the whole world, can travel with your servant; the courier from Blois will not be here these two hours, and he rides well, I assure you, seeing that I only passed him on the thither side of Orleans.”

“My uncle Gaston,” murmured Louis, pressing his hand to his brow, and comprising in those three words all that his memory recalled of that symbol of opposing sentiments.

“Eh! yes, sire, it is thus,” said D’Artagnan, philosophically replying to the royal thought, “it is thus the past flies away.”

“That is true, monsieur, that is true; but there remains for us, thank God! the future; and we will try to make it not too dark.”

“I feel confidence in your majesty on that head,” said D’Artagnan, bowing, “and now – ”

“You are right, monsieur; I had forgotten the hundred leagues you have just ridden. Go, monsieur, take care of one of the best of soldiers, and when you have reposed a little, come and place yourself at my disposal.”

“Sire, absent or present, I am always yours.”

D’Artagnan bowed and retired. Then, as if he had only come from Fontainebleau, he quickly traversed the Louvre to rejoin Bragelonne.

Chapter II. A Lover and His Mistress

Whilst the wax-lights were burning in the castle of Blois, around the inanimate body of Gaston of Orleans, that last representative of the past; whilst the *bourgeois* of the city were thinking out his epitaph, which was far from being a panegyric; whilst madame the dowager, no longer remembering that in her young days she had loved that senseless corpse to such a degree as to fly the paternal palace for his sake, was making, within twenty paces of the funeral apartment, her little calculations of interest and her little sacrifices of pride; other interests and other prides were in agitation in all the parts of the castle into which a living soul could penetrate. Neither the lugubrious sounds of the bells, nor the voices of the chanters, nor the splendor of the wax-lights through the windows, nor the preparations for the funeral, had power to divert the attention of two persons, placed at a window of the interior court – a window that we are acquainted with, and which lighted a chamber forming part of what were called the little apartments. For the rest, a joyous beam of the sun, for the sun appeared to care little for the loss France had just suffered; a sunbeam, we say, descended upon them, drawing perfumes from the neighboring flowers, and animating the walls themselves. These two persons, so occupied, not by the death of the duke, but by the conversation which was the consequence of that death, were a young woman and a young man. The latter personage, a man of from twenty-five to twenty-six years of age, with a mien sometimes lively and sometimes dull, making good use of two large eyes, shaded with long eye-lashes, was short of stature and swart of skin; he smiled with an enormous, but well-furnished mouth, and his pointed chin, which appeared to enjoy a mobility nature does not ordinarily grant to that portion of the countenance, leant from time to time very lovingly towards his interlocutrix, who, we must say, did not always draw back so rapidly as strict propriety had a right to require. The young girl – we know her, for we have already seen her, at that very same window, by the light of that same sun – the young girl presented a singular mixture of shyness and reflection; she was charming when she laughed, beautiful when she became serious; but, let us hasten to say, she was more frequently charming than beautiful. These two appeared to have attained the culminating point of a discussion – half-bantering, half-serious.

“Now, Monsieur Malicorne,” said the young girl, “does it, at length, please you that we should talk reasonably?”

“You believe that that is very easy, Mademoiselle Aure,” replied the young man. “To do what we like, when we can only do what we are able – ”

“Good! there he is bewildered in his phrases.”

“Who, I?”

“Yes, you; quit that lawyer’s logic, my dear.”

“Another impossibility. Clerk I am, Mademoiselle de Montalais.”

“Demoiselle I am, Monsieur Malicorne.”

“Alas, I know it well, and you overwhelm me by your rank; so I will say no more to you.”

“Well, no, I don’t overwhelm you; say what you have to tell me – say it, I insist upon it.”

“Well, I obey you.”

“That is truly fortunate.”

“Monsieur is dead.”

“Ah, *peste!* that’s news! And where do you come from, to be able to tell us that?”

“I come from Orleans, mademoiselle.”

“And is that all the news you bring?”

“Ah, no; I am come to tell you that Madame Henrietta of England is coming to marry the king’s brother.”

“Indeed, Malicorne, you are insupportable with your news of the last century. Now, mind, if you persist in this bad habit of laughing at people, I will have you turned out.”

“Oh!”

“Yes, for really you exasperate me.”

“There, there. Patience, mademoiselle.”

“You want to make yourself of consequence; I know well enough why. Go!”

“Tell me, and I will answer you frankly, yes, if the thing be true.”

“You know that I am anxious to have that commission of lady of honor, which I have been foolish enough to ask of you, and you do not use your credit.”

“Who, I?” Malicorne cast down his eyes, joined his hands, and assumed his sullen air. “And what credit can the poor clerk of a procurer have, pray?”

“Your father has not twenty thousand livres a year for nothing, M. Malicorne.”

“A provincial fortune, Mademoiselle de Montalais.”

“Your father is not in the secrets of monsieur le prince for nothing.”

“An advantage which is confined to lending monseigneur money.”

“In a word, you are not the most cunning young fellow in the province for nothing.”

“You flatter me!”

“Who, I?”

“Yes, you.”

“How so?”

“Since I maintain that I have no credit, and you maintain I have.”

“Well, then, – my commission?”

“Well, – your commission?”

“Shall I have it, or shall I not?”

“You shall have it.”

“Ay, but when?”

“When you like.”

“Where is it, then?”

“In my pocket.”

“How – in your pocket?”

“Yes.”

And, with a smile, Malicorne drew from his pocket a letter, upon which mademoiselle seized as a prey, and which she read eagerly. As she read, her face brightened.

“Malicorne,” cried she after having read it, “In truth, you are a good lad.”

“What for, mademoiselle?”

“Because you might have been paid for this commission, and you have not.” And she burst into a loud laugh, thinking to put the clerk out of countenance; but Malicorne sustained the attack bravely.

“I do not understand you,” said he. It was now Montalais who was disconcerted in her turn. “I have declared my sentiments to you,” continued Malicorne. “You have told me three times, laughing all the while, that you did not love me; you have embraced me once without laughing, and that is all I want.”

“All?” said the proud and coquettish Montalais, in a tone through which the wounded pride was visible.

“Absolutely all, mademoiselle,” replied Malicorne.

“Ah!” – And this monosyllable indicated as much anger as the young man might have expected gratitude. He shook his head quietly.

“Listen, Montalais,” said he, without heeding whether that familiarity pleased his mistress or not; “let us not dispute about it.”

“And why not?”

“Because during the year which I have known you, you might have had me turned out of doors twenty times if I did not please you.”

“Indeed; and on what account should I have had you turned out?”

“Because I have been sufficiently impertinent for that.”

“Oh, that, – yes, that’s true.”

“You see plainly that you are forced to avow it,” said Malicorne.

“Monsieur Malicorne!”

“Don’t let us be angry; if you have retained me, then it has not been without cause.”

“It is not, at least, because I love you,” cried Montalais.

“Granted. I will even say, at this moment, I am certain that you hate me.”

“Oh, you have never spoken so truly.”

“Well, on my part, I detest you.”

“Ah! I take the act.”

“Take it. You find me brutal and foolish; on my part I find you have a harsh voice, and your face is too often distorted with anger. At this moment you would allow yourself to be thrown out of that window rather than allow me to kiss the tip of your finger; I would precipitate myself from the top of the balcony rather than touch the hem of your robe. But, in five minutes, you will love me, and I shall adore you. Oh, it is just so.”

“I doubt it.”

“And I swear it.”

“Coxcomb!”

“And then, that is not the true reason. You stand in need of me, Aure, and I of you. When it pleases you to be gay, I make you laugh; when it suits me to be loving, I look at you. I have given you a commission of lady of honor which you wished for; you will give me, presently, something I wish for.”

“I will?”

“Yes, you will; but, at this moment, my dear Aure, I declare to you that I wish for absolutely nothing, so be at ease.”

“You are a frightful man, Malicorne; I was going to rejoice at getting this commission, and thus you quench my joy.”

“Good; there is no time lost, – you will rejoice when I am gone.”

“Go, then; and after – ”

“So be it; but in the first place, a piece of advice.”

“What is it?”

“Resume your good-humor, – you are ugly when you pout.”

“Coarse!”

“Come, let us tell the truth to each other, while we are about it.”

“Oh, Malicorne! Bad-hearted man!”

“Oh, Montalais! Ungrateful girl!”

The young man leant with his elbow upon the window-frame; Montalais took a book and opened it. Malicorne stood up, brushed his hat with his sleeve, smoothed down his black doublet; – Montalais, though pretending to read, looked at him out of the corner of her eye.

“Good!” cried she, furious; “he has assumed his respectful air – and he will pout for a week.”

“A fortnight, mademoiselle,” said Malicorne, bowing.

Montalais lifted up her little doubled fist. “Monster!” said she; “oh! that I were a man!”

“What would you do to me?”

“I would strangle you.”

“Ah! very well, then,” said Malicorne; “I believe I begin to desire something.”

“And what do you desire, Monsieur Demon? That I should lose my soul from anger?”

Malicorne was rolling his hat respectfully between his fingers; but, all at once, he let fall his hat, seized the young girl by the shoulders, pulled her towards him, and sealed her mouth with two lips that were very warm, for a man pretending to so much indifference. Aure would have cried out,

but the cry was stifled in his kiss. Nervous and, apparently, angry, the young girl pushed Malicorne against the wall.

“Good!” said Malicorne, philosophically, “that’s enough for six weeks. Adieu, mademoiselle, accept my very humble salutation.” And he made three steps towards the door.

“Well! no, – you shall not go!” cried Montalais, stamping with her little foot. “Stay where you are! I order you!”

“You order me?”

“Yes; am I not mistress?”

“Of my heart and soul, without doubt.”

“A pretty property! *ma foi!* The soul is silly and the heart dry.”

“Beware, Montalais, I know you,” said Malicorne; “you are going to fall in love with your humble servant.”

“Well, yes!” said she, hanging round his neck with childish indolence, rather than with loving abandonment. “Well, yes! for I must thank you at least.”

“And for what?”

“For the commission; is it not my whole future?”

“And mine.”

Montalais looked at him.

“It is frightful,” said she, “that one can never guess whether you are speaking seriously or not.”

“I cannot speak more seriously. I was going to Paris, – you are going there, – we are going there.”

“And so it was for that motive only you have served me; selfish fellow!”

“What would you have me say, Aure? I cannot live without you.”

“Well! in truth, it is just so with me; you are, nevertheless, it must be confessed, a very bad-hearted young man.”

“Aure, my dear Aure, take care! if you take to calling me names again, you know the effect they produce upon me, and I shall adore you.” And so saying, Malicorne drew the young girl a second time towards him. But at that instant a step resounded on the staircase. The young people were so close, that they would have been surprised in the arms of each other, if Montalais had not violently pushed Malicorne, with his back against the door, just then opening. A loud cry, followed by angry reproaches, immediately resounded. It was Madame de Saint-Remy who uttered the cry and the angry words. The unlucky Malicorne almost crushed her between the wall and the door she was coming in at.

“It is again that good-for-nothing!” cried the old lady. “Always here!”

“Ah, madame!” replied Malicorne, in a respectful tone; “it is eight long days since I was here.”

Chapter III. In Which We at Length See the True Heroine of this History

Appear.

Behind Madame de Saint-Remy stood Mademoiselle de la Valliere. She heard the explosion of maternal anger, and as she divined the cause of it, she entered the chamber trembling, and perceived the unlucky Malicorne, whose woeful countenance might have softened or set laughing whoever observed it coolly. He had promptly intrenched himself behind a large chair, as if to avoid the first attacks of Madame de Saint-Remy; he had no hopes of prevailing with words, for she spoke louder than he, and without stopping; but he reckoned upon the eloquence of his gestures. The old lady would neither listen to nor see anything; Malicorne had long been one of her antipathies. But her anger was too great not to overflow from Malicorne on his accomplice. Montalais had her turn.

"And you, mademoiselle; you may be certain I shall inform madame of what is going on in the apartment of one of her ladies of honor?"

"Oh, dear mother!" cried Mademoiselle de la Valliere, "for mercy's sake, spare –"

"Hold your tongue, mademoiselle, and do not uselessly trouble yourself to intercede for unworthy people; that a young maid of honor like you should be subjected to a bad example is, certes, a misfortune great enough; but that you should sanction it by your indulgence is what I will not allow."

"But in truth," said Montalais, rebelling again, "I do not know under what pretense you treat me thus. I am doing no harm, I suppose?"

"And that great good-for-nothing, mademoiselle," resumed Madame de Saint-Remy, pointing to Malicorne, "is he here to do any good, I ask you?"

"He is neither here for good nor harm, madame; he comes to see me, that is all."

"It is all very well! all very well!" said the old lady. "Her royal highness shall be informed of it, and she will judge."

"At all events, I do not see why," replied Montalais, "it should be forbidden M. Malicorne to have intentions towards me, if his intentions are honorable."

"Honorable intentions with such a face!" cried Madame de Saint-Remy.

"I thank you in the name of my face, madame," said Malicorne.

"Come, my daughter, come," continued Madame de Saint-Remy; "we will go and inform madame that at the very moment she is weeping for her husband, at the moment when we are all weeping for a master in this old castle of Blois, the abode of grief, there are people who amuse themselves with flirtations!"

"Oh!" cried both the accused, with one voice.

"A maid of honor! a maid of honor!" cried the old lady, lifting her hands towards heaven.

"Well! it is there you are mistaken, madame," said Montalais, highly exasperated; "I am no longer a maid of honor, of madame's at least."

"Have you given in your resignation, mademoiselle? That is well! I cannot but applaud such a determination, and I do applaud it."

"I do not give in my resignation, madame; I take another service, – that is all."

"In the *bourgeoisie* or in the *robe*?" asked Madame de Saint-Remy, disdainfully.

"Please to learn, madame, that I am not a girl to serve either *bourgeoises* or *robines*; and that instead of the miserable court at which you vegetate, I am going to reside in a court almost royal."

"Ha, ha! a royal court," said Madame de Saint-Remy, forcing a laugh; "a royal court! What do you think of that, my daughter?"

And she turned towards Mademoiselle de la Valliere, whom she would by main force have dragged away from Montalais, and who instead of obeying the impulse of Madame de Saint-Remy, looked first at her mother and then at Montalais with her beautiful conciliatory eyes.

"I did not say a royal court, madame," replied Montalais; "because Madame Henrietta of England, who is about to become the wife of S. A. R. Monsieur, is not a queen. I said almost royal, and I spoke correctly, since she will be sister-in-law to the king."

A thunderbolt falling upon the castle of Blois would not have astonished Madame de Saint-Remy more than the last sentence of Montalais.

"What do you say? of Son Altesse Royale Madame Henrietta?" stammered out the old lady.

"I say I am going to belong to her household, as maid of honor; that is what I say."

"As maid of honor!" cried, at the same time, Madame de Saint-Remy with despair, and Mademoiselle de la Valliere with delight.

"Yes, madame, as maid of honor."

The old lady's head sank down as if the blow had been too severe for her. But, almost immediately recovering herself, she launched a last projectile at her adversary.

"Oh! oh!" said she; "I have heard of many of these sorts of promises beforehand, which often lead people to flatter themselves with wild hopes, and at the last moment, when the time comes to keep the promises, and have the hopes realized, they are surprised to see the great credit upon which they reckoned vanish like smoke."

"Oh! madame, the credit of my protector is incontestable and his promises are as good as deeds."

"And would it be indiscreet to ask you the name of this powerful protector?"

"Oh! *mon Dieu!* no! it is that gentleman there," said Montalais, pointing to Malicorne, who, during this scene, had preserved the most imperturbable coolness, and the most comic dignity.

"Monsieur!" cried Madame de Saint-Remy, with an explosion of hilarity, "monsieur is your protector! Is the man whose credit is so powerful, and whose promises are as good as deeds, Monsieur Malicorne!"

Malicorne bowed.

As to Montalais, as her sole reply, she drew the brevet from her pocket, and showed it to the old lady.

"Here is the *brevet*," said she.

At once all was over. As soon as she had cast a rapid glance over this fortunate *brevet*, the good lady clasped her hands, an unspeakable expression of envy and despair contracted her countenance, and she was obliged to sit down to avoid fainting. Montalais was not malicious enough to rejoice extravagantly at her victory, or to overwhelm the conquered enemy, particularly when that enemy was the mother of her friend; she used then, but did not abuse her triumph. Malicorne was less generous; he assumed noble *poses* in his *fauteuil* and stretched himself out with a familiarity which, two hours earlier, would have drawn upon him threats of a caning.

"Maid of honor to the young madame!" repeated Madame de Saint-Remy, still but half convinced.

"Yes, madame, and through the protection of M. Malicorne, moreover."

"It is incredible!" repeated the old lady: "is it not incredible, Louise?" But Louise did not reply; she was sitting, thoughtfully, almost sad; passing one hand over her beautiful brow, she sighed heavily.

"Well, but, monsieur," said Madame de Saint-Remy, all at once, "how did you manage to obtain this post?"

"I asked for it, madame."

"Of whom?"

"One of my friends."

"And you have friends sufficiently powerful at court to give you such proofs of their credit?"

“It appears so.”

“And may one ask the name of these friends?”

“I did not say I had many friends, madame, I said I had one friend.”

“And that friend is called?”

“*Peste!* madame, you go too far! When one has a friend as powerful as mine, we do not publish his name in that fashion, in open day, in order that he may be stolen from us.”

“You are right, monsieur, to be silent as to that name; for I think it would be pretty difficult for you to tell it.”

“At all events,” said Montalais, “if the friend does not exist, the *brevet* does, and that cuts short the question.”

“Then, I conceive,” said Madame de Saint-Remy, with the gracious smile of the cat who is going to scratch, “when I found monsieur here just now – ”

“Well?”

“He brought you the *brevet*.”

“Exactly, madame; you have guessed rightly.”

“Well, then, nothing can be more moral or proper.”

“I think so, madame.”

“And I have been wrong, as it appears, in reproaching you, mademoiselle.”

“Very wrong, madame; but I am so accustomed to your reproaches, that I pardon you these.”

“In that case, let us begone, Louise; we have nothing to do but retire. Well!”

“Madame!” said La Valliere starting, “did you speak?”

“You do not appear to be listening, my child.”

“No, madame, I was thinking.”

“About what?”

“A thousand things.”

“You bear me no ill-will, at least, Louise?” cried Montalais, pressing her hand.

“And why should I, my dear Aure?” replied the girl in a voice soft as a flute.

“*Dame!*” resumed Madame de Saint-Remy; “if she did bear you a little ill-will, poor girl, she could not be much blamed.”

“And why should she bear me ill-will, good gracious?”

“It appears to me that she is of as good a family, and as pretty as you.”

“Mother! mother!” cried Louise.

“Prettier a hundred times, madame – not of a better family; but that does not tell me why Louise should bear me ill-will.”

“Do you think it will be very amusing for her to be buried alive at Blois, when you are going to shine at Paris?”

“But, madame, it is not I who prevent Louise following me thither; on the contrary, I should certainly be most happy if she came there.”

“But it appears that M. Malicorne, who is all-powerful at court – ”

“Ah! so much the worse, madame,” said Malicorne, “every one for himself in this poor world.”

“Malicorne! Malicorne!” said Montalais. Then stooping towards the young man: —

“Occupy Madame de Saint-Remy, either in disputing with her, or making it up with her; I must speak to Louise.” And, at the same time, a soft pressure of the hand recompensed Malicorne for his future obedience. Malicorne went grumbling towards Madame de Saint-Remy, whilst Montalais said to her friend, throwing one arm around her neck: —

“What is the matter? Tell *me*. Is it true that you would not love me if I were to shine, as your mother says?”

“Oh, no!” said the young girl, with difficulty restraining her tears; “on the contrary, I rejoice at your good fortune.”

“Rejoice! why, one would say you are ready to cry!”

“Do people never weep except from envy?”

“Oh! yes, I understand; I am going to Paris and that word Paris recalls to your mind a certain cavalier – ”

“Aure!”

“A certain cavalier who formerly lived near Blois, and who now resides at Paris.”

“In truth, I know not what ails me, but I feel stifled.”

“Weep, then, weep, as you cannot give me a smile!”

Louise raised her sweet face, which the tears, rolling down one after the other, illumined like diamonds.

“Come, confess,” said Montalais.

“What shall I confess?”

“What makes you weep; people don’t weep without cause. I am your friend; whatever you would wish me to do, I will do. Malicorne is more powerful than you would think. Do you wish to go to Paris?”

“Alas!” sighed Louise.

“Do you wish to come to Paris?”

“To remain here alone, in this old castle, I who have enjoyed the delightful habit of listening to your songs, of pressing your hand, of running about the park with you. Oh! how I shall be *ennuyee*! how quickly I shall die!”

“Do you wish to come to Paris?”

Louise breathed another sigh.

“You do not answer me.”

“What would you that I should reply?”

“Yes or no; that is not very difficult, I think.”

“Oh! you are very fortunate, Montalais!”

“That is to say you would like to be in my place.”

Louise was silent.

“Little obstinate thing!” said Montalais; “did ever any one keep her secrets from her friend thus? But, confess that you would like to come to Paris; confess that you are dying with the wish to see Raoul again.”

“I cannot confess that.”

“Then you are wrong.”

“In what way?”

“Because – do you not see this *brevet*?”

“To be sure I do.”

“Well, I would have got you a similar one.”

“By whose means?”

“Malicorne’s.”

“Aure, are you telling the truth? Is that possible?”

“Malicorne is there; and what he has done for me, he surely can do for you.”

Malicorne had heard his name pronounced twice; he was delighted at having an opportunity of coming to a conclusion with Madame de Saint-Remy, and he turned round: —

“What is the question, mademoiselle?”

“Come hither, Malicorne,” said Montalais, with an imperious gesture. Malicorne obeyed.

“A *brevet* like this,” said Montalais.

“How so?”

“A *brevet* like this; that is plain enough.”

“But – ”

“I want one – I must have one!”

“Oh! oh! you must have one!”

“Yes.”

“It is impossible, is it not, M. Malicorne?” said Louise, with her sweet, soft voice.

“If it is for *you*, mademoiselle – ”

“For me. Yes, Monsieur Malicorne, it *would* be for me.”

“And if Mademoiselle de Montalais asks it at the same time – ”

“Mademoiselle de Montalais does not ask it, she requires it.”

“Well! we will endeavor to obey you, mademoiselle.”

“And you will have her named?”

“We will try.”

“No evasive answers, Louise de la Valliere shall be maid of honor to Madame Henrietta within a week.”

“How you talk!”

“Within a week, or else – ”

“Well! or else?”

“You may take back your *brevet*, Monsieur Malicorne; I will not leave my friend.”

“Dear Montalais!”

“That is right. Keep your *brevet*; Mademoiselle de la Valliere shall be a maid of honor.”

“Is that true?”

“Quite true.”

“I may then hope to go to Paris?”

“Depend on it.”

“Oh! Monsieur Malicorne, what joy!” cried Louise, clapping her hands, and bounding with pleasure.

“Little dissembler!” said Montalais, “try again to make me believe you are not in love with Raoul.”

Louise blushed like a rose in June, but instead of replying, she ran and embraced her mother. “Madame,” said she, “do you know that M. Malicorne is going to have me appointed maid of honor?”

“M. Malicorne is a prince in disguise,” replied the old lady, “he is all-powerful, seemingly.”

“Should you also like to be a maid of honor?” asked Malicorne of Madame de Saint-Remy. “Whilst I am about it, I might as well get everybody appointed.”

And upon that he went away, leaving the poor lady quite disconcerted.

“Humph!” murmured Malicorne as he descended the stairs, – “Humph! there goes another note of a thousand livres! but I must get through as well as I can; my friend Manicamp does nothing for nothing.”

Chapter IV. Malicorne and Manicamp

The introduction of these two new personages into this history and that mysterious affinity of names and sentiments, merit some attention on the part of both historian and reader. We will then enter into some details concerning Messieurs Malicorne and Manicamp. Malicorne, we know, had made the journey to Orleans in search of the *brevet* destined for Mademoiselle de Montalais, the arrival of which had produced such a strong feeling at the castle of Blois. At that moment, M. de Manicamp was at Orleans. A singular person was this M. de Manicamp; a very intelligent young fellow, always poor, always needy, although he dipped his hand freely into the purse of M. le Comte de Guiche, one of the best furnished purses of the period. M. le Comte de Guiche had had, as the companion of his boyhood, this De Manicamp, a poor gentleman, vassal-born, of the house of Gramont. M. de Manicamp, with his tact and talent had created himself a revenue in the opulent family of the celebrated marechal. From his infancy he had, with calculation beyond his age, lent his mane and complaisance to the follies of the Comte de Guiche. If his noble companion had stolen some fruit destined for Madame la Marechale, if he had broken a mirror, or put out a dog's eye, Manicamp declared himself guilty of the crime committed, and received the punishment, which was not made the milder for falling on the innocent. But this was the way this system of abnegation was paid for: instead of wearing such mean habiliments as his paternal fortunes entitled him to, he was able to appear brilliant, superb, like a young noble of fifty thousand livres a year. It was not that he was mean in character or humble in spirit; no, he was a philosopher, or rather he had the indifference, the apathy, the obstinacy which banish from man every sentiment of the supernatural. His sole ambition was to spend money. But, in this respect, the worthy M. de Manicamp was a gulf. Three or four times every year he drained the Comte de Guiche, and when the Comte de Guiche was thoroughly drained, when he had turned out his pockets and his purse before him, when he declared that it would be at least a fortnight before paternal munificence would refill those pockets and that purse, Manicamp lost all his energy, he went to bed, remained there, ate nothing and sold his handsome clothes, under the pretense that, remaining in bed, he did not want them. During this prostration of mind and strength, the purse of the Comte de Guiche was getting full again, and when once filled, overflowed into that of De Manicamp, who bought new clothes, dressed himself again, and recommenced the same life he had followed before. The mania of selling his new clothes for a quarter of what they were worth, had rendered our hero sufficiently celebrated in Orleans, a city where, in general, we should be puzzled to say why he came to pass his days of penitence. Provincial *debauches*, *petits-maitres* of six hundred livres a year, shared the fragments of his opulence.

Among the admirers of these splendid toilettes, our friend Malicorne was conspicuous; he was the son of a syndic of the city, of whom M. de Conde, always needy as a De Conde, often borrowed money at enormous interest. M. Malicorne kept the paternal money-chest; that is to say, that in those times of easy morals, he had made for himself, by following the example of his father, and lending at high interest for short terms, a revenue of eighteen hundred livres, without reckoning six hundred livres furnished by the generosity of the syndic; so that Malicorne was the king of the gay youth of Orleans, having two thousand four hundred livres to scatter, squander, and waste on follies of every kind. But, quite contrary to Manicamp, Malicorne was terribly ambitious. He loved from ambition; he spent money out of ambition; and he would have ruined himself for ambition. Malicorne had determined to rise, at whatever price it might cost, and for this, whatever price it did cost, he had given himself a mistress and a friend. The mistress, Mademoiselle de Montalais, was cruel, as regarded love; but she was of a noble family, and that was sufficient for Malicorne. The friend had little or no friendship, but he was the favorite of the Comte de Guiche, himself the friend of Monsieur, the king's brother; and that was sufficient for Malicorne. Only, in the chapter of charges, Mademoiselle de Montalais cost *per annum*: – ribbons, gloves, and sweets, a thousand livres. De Manicamp cost

– money lent, never returned – from twelve to fifteen hundred livres *per annum*. So that there was nothing left for Malicorne. Ah! yes, we are mistaken; there was left the paternal strong box. He employed a mode of proceeding, upon which he preserved the most profound secrecy, and which consisted in advancing to himself, from the coffers of the syndic, half a dozen year's profits, that is to say, fifteen thousand livres, swearing to himself – observe, quite to himself – to repay this deficiency as soon as an opportunity should present itself. The opportunity was expected to be the concession of a good post in the household of Monsieur, when that household would be established at the period of his marriage. This juncture had arrived, and the household was about to be established. A good post in the family of a prince of the blood, when it is given by the credit, and on the recommendation of a friend, like the Comte de Guiche, is worth at least twelve thousand livres *per annum*; and by the means which M. Malicorne had taken to make his revenues fructify, twelve thousand livres might rise to twenty thousand. Then, when once an incumbent of this post, he would marry Mademoiselle de Montalais. Mademoiselle de Montalais, of a half noble family, not only would be dowered, but would ennoble Malicorne. But, in order that Mademoiselle de Montalais, who had not a large patrimonial fortune, although an only daughter, should be suitably dowered, it was necessary that she should belong to some great princess, as prodigal as the dowager Madame was covetous. And in order that the wife should not be of one party whilst the husband belonged to the other, a situation which presents serious inconveniences, particularly with characters like those of the future consorts – Malicorne had imagined the idea of making the central point of union the household of Monsieur, the king's brother. Mademoiselle de Montalais would be maid of honor to Madame. M. Malicorne would be officer to Monsieur.

It is plain the plan was formed by a clear head; it is plain, also, that it had been bravely executed. Malicorne had asked Manicamp to ask a *brevet* of maid of honor of the Comte de Guiche; and the Comte de Guiche had asked this *brevet* of Monsieur, who had signed it without hesitation. The constructive plan of Malicorne – for we may well suppose that the combinations of a mind as active as his were not confined to the present, but extended to the future – the constructive plan of Malicorne, we say, was this: – To obtain entrance into the household of Madame Henrietta for a woman devoted to himself, who was intelligent, young, handsome, and intriguing; to learn, by means of this woman, all the feminine secrets of the young household; whilst he, Malicorne, and his friend Manicamp, should, between them, know all the male secrets of the young community. It was by these means that a rapid and splendid fortune might be acquired at one and the same time. Malicorne was a vile name; he who bore it had too much wit to conceal this truth from himself; but an estate might be purchased; and Malicorne of some place, or even De Malicorne itself, for short, would ring more nobly on the ear.

It was not improbable that a most aristocratic origin might be hunted up by the heralds for this name of Malicorne; might it not come from some estate where a bull with mortal horns had caused some great misfortune, and baptized the soil with the blood it had spilt? Certes, this plan presented itself bristling with difficulties: but the greatest of all was Mademoiselle de Montalais herself. Capricious, variable, close, giddy, free, prudish, a virgin armed with claws, Erigone stained with grapes, she sometimes overturned, with a single dash of her white fingers, or with a single puff from her laughing lips, the edifice which had exhausted Malicorne's patience for a month.

Love apart, Malicorne was happy; but this love, which he could not help feeling, he had the strength to conceal with care; persuaded that at the least relaxing of the ties by which he had bound his Protean female, the demon would overthrow and laugh at him. He humbled his mistress by disdaining her. Burning with desire, when she advanced to tempt him, he had the art to appear ice, persuaded that if he opened his arms, she would run away laughing at him. On her side, Montalais believed she did not love Malicorne; whilst, on the contrary, in reality she did. Malicorne repeated to her so often his protestation of indifference, that she finished, sometimes, by believing him; and then she believed she detested Malicorne. If she tried to bring him back by coquetry, Malicorne played the coquette better than she could. But what made Montalais hold to Malicorne in an indissoluble fashion, was

that Malicorne always came cram full of fresh news from the court and the city; Malicorne always brought to Blois a fashion, a secret, or a perfume; that Malicorne never asked for a meeting, but, on the contrary, required to be supplicated to receive the favors he burned to obtain. On her side, Montalais was no miser with stories. By her means, Malicorne learnt all that passed at Blois, in the family of the dowager Madame; and he related to Manicamp tales that made him ready to die with laughing, which the latter, out of idleness, took ready-made to M. de Guiche, who carried them to Monsieur.

Such, in two words, was the woof of petty interests and petty conspiracies which united Blois with Orleans, and Orleans with Pairs; and which was about to bring into the last named city where she was to produce so great a revolution, the poor little La Valliere, who was far from suspecting, as she returned joyfully, leaning on the arm of her mother, for what a strange future she was reserved. As to the good man, Malicorne – we speak of the syndic of Orleans – he did not see more clearly into the present than others did into the future; and had no suspicion as he walked, every day, between three and five o'clock, after his dinner, upon the Place Sainte-Catherine, in his gray coat, cut after the fashion of Louis XIII. and his cloth shoes with great knots of ribbon, that it was he who was paying for all those bursts of laughter, all those stolen kisses, all those whisperings, all those little keepsakes, and all those bubble projects which formed a chain of forty-five leagues in length, from the palais of Blois to the Palais Royal.

Chapter V: Manicamp and Malicorne

Malicorne, then, left Blois, as we have said, and went to find his friend, Manicamp, then in temporary retreat in the city of Orleans. It was just at the moment when that young nobleman was employed in selling the last decent clothing he had left. He had, a fortnight before, extorted from the Comte de Guiche a hundred pistoles, all he had, to assist in equipping him properly to go and meet Madame, on her arrival at Le Havre. He had drawn from Malicorne, three days before, fifty pistoles, the price of the *brevet* obtained for Montalais. He had then no expectation of anything else, having exhausted all his resources, with the exception of selling a handsome suit of cloth and satin, embroidered and laced with gold, which had been the admiration of the court. But to be able to sell this suit, the last he had left, – as we have been forced to confess to the reader – Manicamp had been obliged to take to his bed. No more fire, no more pocket-money, no more walking-money, nothing but sleep to take the place of repasts, companies and balls. It has been said – “He who sleeps, dines;” but it has never been affirmed – He who sleeps, plays – or, He who sleeps, dances. Manicamp, reduced to this extremity of neither playing nor dancing, for a week at least, was, consequently, very sad; he was expecting a usurer, and saw Malicorne enter. A cry of distress escaped him.

“Eh! what!” said he, in a tone which nothing can describe, “is that you again, dear friend?”

“Humph! you are very polite!” said Malicorne.

“Ay, but look you, I was expecting money, and, instead of money, I see *you*.”

“And suppose I brought you some money?”

“Oh! that would be quite another thing. You are very welcome, my dear friend!”

And he held out his hand, not for the hand of Malicorne, but for the purse. Malicorne pretended to be mistaken, and gave him his hand.

“And the money?” said Manicamp.

“My dear friend, if you wish to have it, earn it.”

“What must be done for it?”

“Earn it, *parbleu*!”

“And after what fashion?”

“Oh! that is rather trying, I warn you.”

“The devil!”

“You must get out of bed, and go immediately to M. le Comte de Guiche.”

“I get up!” said Manicamp, stretching himself in his bed, complacently, “oh, no, thank you!”

“You have sold all your clothes?”

“No, I have one suit left, the handsomest even, but I expect a purchaser.”

“And the *chausses*?”

“Well, if you look, you will see them on that chair.”

“Very well! since you have some *chausses* and a *pourpoint* left, put your legs into the first and your back into the other; have a horse saddled, and set off.”

“Not I.”

“And why not?”

“*Morbleu*! don’t you know, then, that M. de Guiche is at Etampes?”

“No, I thought he was at Paris. You will then only have fifteen leagues to go, instead of thirty.”

“You are a wonderfully clever fellow! If I were to ride fifteen leagues in these clothes, they would never be fit to put on again; and, instead of selling them for thirty pistoles, I should be obliged to take fifteen.”

“Sell them for whatever you like, but I must have a second commission of maid of honor.”

“Good! for whom? Is Montalais doubled, then?”

“Vile fellow! – It is you who are doubled. You swallow up two fortunes – mine, and that of M. le Comte de Guiche.”

“You should say, that of M. le Comte de Guiche and yours.”

“That is true; honor where it is due; but I return to my *brevet*.”

“And you are wrong.”

“Prove me that.”

“My friend, there will only be twelve maids of honor for madame; I have already obtained for you what twelve hundred women are trying for, and for that I was forced to employ all my diplomacy.”

“Oh! yes, I know you have been quite heroic, my dear friend.”

“We know what we are about,” said Manicamp.

“To whom do you tell that? When I am king, I promise you one thing.”

“What? To call yourself Malicorne the First?”

“No; to make you superintendent of my finances; but that is not the question now.”

“Unfortunately.”

“The present affair is to procure for me a second place of maid of honor.”

“My friend, if you were to promise me the price of heaven, I would decline to disturb myself at this moment.”

Malicorne chinked the money in his pocket.

“There are twenty pistoles here,” said Malicorne.

“And what would you do with twenty pistoles, *mon Dieu!*”

“Well!” said Malicorne, a little angry, “suppose I were to add them to the five hundred you already owe me?”

“You are right,” replied Manicamp, stretching out his hand again, “and from that point of view I can accept them. Give them to me.”

“An instant, what the devil! it is not only holding out your hand that will do; if I give you the twenty pistoles, shall I have my *brevet*?”

“To be sure you shall.”

“Soon?”

“To-day.”

“Oh! take care! Monsieur de Manicamp; you undertake much, and I do not ask that. Thirty leagues in a day is too much, you would kill yourself.”

“I think nothing impossible when obliging a friend.”

“You are quite heroic.”

“Where are the twenty pistoles?”

“Here they are,” said Malicorne, showing them.

“That’s well.”

“Yes, but my dear M. Manicamp, you would consume them in post-horses alone!”

“No, no, make yourself easy on that score.”

“Pardon me. Why, it is fifteen leagues from this place to Etampes?”

“Fourteen.”

“Well! fourteen be it; fourteen leagues makes seven posts; at twenty *sous* the post, seven *livres*; seven *livres* the courier, fourteen; as many for coming back, twenty-eight! as much for bed and supper, that makes sixty *livres* this complaisance would cost.”

Manicamp stretched himself like a serpent in his bed, and fixing his two great eyes upon Malicorne, “You are right,” said he; “I could not return before to-morrow;” and he took the twenty pistoles.

“Now, then, be off!”

“Well, as I cannot be back before to-morrow, we have time.”

“Time for what?”

“Time to play.”

“What do you wish to play with?”

“Your twenty pistoles, *pardieu!*”

“No; you always win.”

“I will wager them, then.”

“Against what?”

“Against twenty others.”

“And what shall be the object of the wager?”

“This. We have said it was fourteen leagues to Etampes.”

“Yes.”

“And fourteen leagues back?”

“Doubtless.”

“Well; for these twenty-eight leagues you cannot allow less than fourteen hours?”

“That is agreed.”

“One hour to find the Comte de Guiche.”

“Go on.”

“And an hour to persuade him to write a letter to Monsieur.”

“Just so.”

“Sixteen hours in all?”

“You reckon as well as M. Colbert.”

“It is now twelve o’clock.”

“Half-past.”

“*Hein!*— you have a handsome watch!”

“What were you saying?” said Malicorne, putting his watch quickly back into his fob.

“Ah! true; I was offering to lay you twenty pistoles against these you have lent me, that you will have the Comte de Guiche’s letter in – ”

“How soon?”

“In eight hours.”

“Have you a winged horse, then?”

“That is no matter. Will you bet?”

“I shall have the comte’s letter in eight hours?”

“Yes.”

“In hand?”

“In hand.”

“Well, be it so; I lay,” said Malicorne, curious enough to know how this seller of clothes would get through.

“Is it agreed?”

“It is.”

“Pass me the pen, ink, and paper.”

“Here they are.”

“Thank you.”

Manicamp raised himself with a sigh, and leaning on his left elbow, in his best hand, traced the following lines: —

“Good for an order for a place of maid of honor to Madame, which M. le Comte de Guiche will take upon him to obtain at sight. DE MANICAMP.”

This painful task accomplished, he laid himself down in bed again.

“Well!” asked Malicorne, “what does this mean?”

“That means that if you are in a hurry to have the letter from the Comte de Guiche for Monsieur, I have won my wager.”

“How the devil is that?”

“That is transparent enough, I think; you take that paper.”

“Well?”

“And you set out instead of me.”

“Ah!”

“You put your horses to their best speed.”

“Good!”

“In six hours you will be at Etampes; in seven hours you have the letter from the comte, and I shall have won my wager without stirring from my bed, which suits me and you too, at the same time, I am very sure.”

“Decidedly, Manicamp, you are a great man.”

“*Hein!* I know that.”

“I am to start then for Etampes?”

“Directly.”

“I am to go to the Comte de Guiche with this order?”

“He will give you a similar one for Monsieur.”

“Monsieur will approve?”

“Instantly.”

“And I shall have my *brevet*?”

“You will.”

“Ah!”

“Well, I hope I behave genteely?”

“Adorably.”

“Thank you.”

“You do as you please, then, with the Comte de Guiche, Manicamp?”

“Except making money of him – everything?”

“*Diable!* the exception is annoying; but then, if instead of asking him for money, you were to ask – ”

“What?”

“Something important.”

“What do you call important?”

“Well! suppose one of your friends asked you to render him a service?”

“I would not render it to him.”

“Selfish fellow!”

“Or at least I would ask him what service he would render me in exchange.”

“Ah! that, perhaps, is fair. Well, that friend speaks to you.”

“What, you, Malicorne?”

“Yes; I.”

“Ah! ah! you are rich, then?”

“I have still fifty pistoles left.”

“Exactly the sum I want. Where are those fifty pistoles?”

“Here,” said Malicorne, slapping his pocket.

“Then speak, my friend; what do you want?”

Malicorne took up the pen, ink, and paper again, and presented them all to Manicamp. “Write!” said he.

“Dictate!”

“An order for a place in the household of Monsieur.”

“Oh!” said Manicamp, laying down the pen, “a place in the household of Monsieur for fifty pistoles?”

“You mistook me, my friend; you did not hear plainly.”

“What did you say, then?”

“I said five hundred.”

“And the five hundred?”

“Here they are.”

Manicamp devoured the rouleau with his eyes; but this time Malicorne held it at a distance.

“Eh! what do you say to that? Five hundred pistoles.”

“I say it is for nothing, my friend,” said Manicamp, taking up the pen again, “and you exhaust my credit. Dictate.”

Malicorne continued:

“Which my friend the Comte de Guiche will obtain for my friend Malicorne.”

“That’s it,” said Manicamp.

“Pardon me, you have forgotten to sign.”

“Ah! that is true. The five hundred pistoles?”

“Here are two hundred and fifty of them.”

“And the other two hundred and fifty?”

“When I am in possession of my place.”

Manicamp made a face.

“In that case give me the recommendation back again.”

“What to do?”

“To add two words to it.”

“Two words?”

“Yes; two words only.”

“What are they?”

“In haste.”

Malicorne returned the recommendation; Manicamp added the words.

“Good,” said Malicorne, taking back the paper.

Manicamp began to count out the pistoles.

“There want twenty,” said he.

“How so?”

“The twenty I have won.”

“In what way?”

“By laying that you would have the letter from the Comte de Guiche in eight hours.”

“Ah! that’s fair,” and he gave him the twenty pistoles.

Manicamp began to scoop up his gold by handfuls, and pour it in cascades upon his bed.

“This second place,” murmured Malicorne, whilst drying his paper, “which, at first glance appears to cost me more than the first, but – ” He stopped, took up the pen in his turn, and wrote to Montalais: —

“MADEMOISELLE, – Announce to your friend that her commission will not be long before it arrives; I am setting out to get it signed: that will be twenty-eight leagues I shall have gone for the love of you.”

Then with his sardonic smile, taking up the interrupted sentence: – “This place,” said he, “at first glance, appears to have cost more than the first; but – the benefit will be, I hope, in proportion with the expense, and Mademoiselle de la Valliere will bring me back more than Mademoiselle de Montalais, or else, – or else my name is not Malicorne. Farewell, Manicamp,” and he left the room.

Chapter VI. The Courtyard of the Hotel Grammont

On Malicorne's arrival at Orleans, he was informed that the Comte de Guiche had just set out for Paris. Malicorne rested himself for a couple of hours, and then prepared to continue his journey. He reached Paris during the night, and alighted at a small hotel, where, in his previous journeys to the capital, he had been accustomed to put up, and at eight o'clock the next morning presented himself at the Hotel Grammont. Malicorne arrived just in time, for the Comte de Guiche was on the point of taking leave of Monsieur before setting out for Le Havre, where the principal members of the French nobility had gone to await Madame's arrival from England. Malicorne pronounced the name of Manicamp, and was immediately admitted. He found the Comte de Guiche in the courtyard of the Hotel Grammont, inspecting his horses, which his trainers and equerries were passing in review before him. The count, in the presence of his tradespeople and of his servants, was engaged in praising or blaming, as the case seemed to deserve, the appointments, horses, and harness that were being submitted to him; when, in the midst of this important occupation, the name of Manicamp was announced.

"Manicamp!" he exclaimed; "let him enter by all means." And he advanced a few steps toward the door.

Malicorne slipped through the half-open door, and looking at the Comte de Guiche, who was surprised to see a face he did not recognize, instead of the one he expected, said: "Forgive me, monsieur le comte, but I believe a mistake has been made. M. Manicamp himself was announced to you, instead of which it is only an envoy from him."

"Ah!" exclaimed De Guiche, coldly; "and what do you bring me?"

"A letter, monsieur le comte." Malicorne handed him the first document, and narrowly watched the count's face, who, as he read it, began to laugh.

"What!" he exclaimed, "another maid of honor? Are all the maids of honor in France, then, under his protection?"

Malicorne bowed.

"Why does he not come himself?" he inquired.

"He is confined to his bed."

"The deuce! he has no money then, I suppose," said De Guiche, shrugging his shoulders. "What does he do with his money?"

Malicorne made a movement, to indicate that upon this subject he was as ignorant as the count himself. "Why does he not make use of his credit, then?" continued De Guiche.

"With regard to that, I think – "

"What?"

"That Manicamp has credit with no one but yourself, monsieur le comte!"

"He will not be at Le Havre, then?" Whereupon Malicorne made another movement.

"But every one will be there."

"I trust, monsieur le comte, that he will not neglect so excellent an opportunity."

"He should be at Paris by this time."

"He will take the direct road perhaps to make up for lost time."

"Where is he now?"

"At Orleans."

"Monsieur," said De Guiche, "you seem to me a man of very good taste."

Malicorne was wearing some of Manicamp's old-new clothes. He bowed in return, saying, "You do me a very great honor, monsieur le comte."

"Whom have I the pleasure of addressing?"

"My name is Malicorne, monsieur."

“M. de Malicorne, what do you think of these pistol-holsters?”

Malicorne was a man of great readiness and immediately understood the position of affairs. Besides, the “de” which had been prefixed to his name, raised him to the rank of the person with whom he was conversing. He looked at the holsters with the air of a connoisseur and said, without hesitation: “Somewhat heavy, monsieur.”

“You see,” said De Guiche to the saddler, “this gentleman, who understands these matters well, thinks the holsters heavy, a complaint I had already made.” The saddler was full of excuses.

“What do you think,” asked De Guiche, “of this horse, which I have just purchased?”

“To look at it, it seems perfect, monsieur le comte; but I must mount it before I give you my opinion.”

“Do so, M. de Malicorne, and ride him round the court two or three times.”

The courtyard of the hotel was so arranged, that whenever there was any occasion for it, it could be used as a riding-school. Malicorne, with perfect ease, arranged the bridle and snaffle-reins, placed his left hand on the horse’s mane, and, with his foot in the stirrup, raised himself and seated himself in the saddle. At first, he made the horse walk the whole circuit of the court-yard at a foot-pace; next at a trot; lastly at a gallop. He then drew up close to the count, dismounted, and threw the bridle to a groom standing by. “Well,” said the count, “what do you think of it, M. de Malicorne?”

“This horse, monsieur le comte, is of the Mecklenburg breed. In looking whether the bit suited his mouth, I saw that he was rising seven, the very age when the training of a horse intended for a charger should commence. The forehead is light. A horse which holds its head high, it is said, never tires his rider’s hand. The withers are rather low. The drooping of the hind-quarters would almost make me doubt the purity of its German breed, and I think there is English blood in him. He stands well on his legs, but he trots high, and may cut himself, which requires attention to be paid to his shoeing. He is tractable; and as I made him turn round and change his feet, I found him quick and ready in doing so.”

“Well said, M. de Malicorne,” exclaimed the comte; “you are a judge of horses, I perceive;” then, turning towards him again, he continued, “you are most becomingly dressed, M. de Malicorne. That is not a provincial cut, I presume. Such a style of dress is not to be met with at Tours or Orleans.”

“No, monsieur le comte; my clothes were made at Paris.”

“There is no doubt about that. But let us resume our own affair. Manicamp wishes for the appointment of a second maid of honor.”

“You perceive what he has written, monsieur le comte.”

“For whom was the first appointment?”

Malicorne felt the color rise in his face as he answered hurriedly.

“A charming maid of honor, Mademoiselle de Montalais.”

“Ah, ah! you are acquainted with her?”

“We are affianced, or nearly so.”

“That is quite another thing, then; a thousand compliments,” exclaimed De Guiche, upon whose lips a courtier’s jest was already fitting, but to whom the word “affianced,” addressed by Malicorne with respect to Mademoiselle de Montalais, recalled the respect due to women.

“And for whom is the second appointment destined?” asked De Guiche; “is it for anyone to whom Manicamp may happen to be affianced? In that case I pity her, poor girl! for she will have a sad fellow for a husband.”

“No, monsieur le comte; the second appointment is for Mademoiselle de la Baume le Blanc de la Valliere.”

“Unknown,” said De Guiche.

“Unknown? yes, monsieur,” said Malicorne, smiling in his turn.

“Very good. I will speak to Monsieur about it. By the by, she is of gentle birth?”

“She belongs to a very good family and is maid of honor to Madame.”

“That’s well. Will you accompany me to Monsieur?”

“Most certainly, if I may be permitted the honor.”

“Have you your carriage?”

“No; I came here on horseback.”

“Dressed as you are?”

“No, monsieur; I posted from Orleans, and I changed my traveling suit for the one I have on, in order to present myself to you.”

“True, you already told me you had come from Orleans,” saying which he crumpled Manicamp’s letter in his hand, and thrust it in his pocket.

“I beg your pardon,” said Malicorne, timidly; “but I do not think you have read all.”

“Not read all, do you say?”

“No; there were two letters in the same envelope.”

“Oh! are you sure?”

“Quite sure.”

“Let us look, then,” said the count, as he opened the letter again.

“Ah! you are right,” he said opening the paper which he had not yet read.

“I suspected it,” he continued – “another application for an appointment under Monsieur. This Manicamp is a regular vampire: – he is carrying on a trade in it.”

“No, monsieur le comte, he wishes to make a present of it.”

“To whom?”

“To myself, monsieur.”

“Why did you not say so at once, my dear M. Mauvaisecorne?”

“Malicorne, monsieur le comte.”

“Forgive me; it is that Latin that bothers me – that terrible mine of etymologies. Why the deuce are young men of family taught Latin? *Mala* and *mauvaise*– you understand it is the same thing. You will forgive me, I trust, M. de Malicorne.”

“Your kindness affects me much, monsieur: but it is a reason why I should make you acquainted with one circumstance without any delay.”

“What is it?”

“That I was not born a gentleman. I am not without courage, and not altogether deficient in ability; but my name is Malicorne simply.”

“You appear to me, monsieur!” exclaimed the count, looking at the astute face of his companion, “to be a most agreeable man. Your face pleases me, M. Malicorne, and you must possess some indisputably excellent qualities to have pleased that egotistical Manicamp. Be candid and tell me whether you are not some saint descended upon the earth.”

“Why so?”

“For the simple reason that he makes you a present of anything. Did you not say that he intended to make you a present of some appointment in the king’s household?”

“I beg your pardon, count; but, if I succeed in obtaining the appointment, you, and not he, will have bestowed it on me.”

“Besides he will not have given it to you for nothing, I suppose. Stay, I have it; – there is a Malicorne at Orleans who lends money to the prince.”

“I think that must be my father, monsieur.”

“Ah! the prince has the father, and that terrible dragon of a Manicamp has the son. Take care, monsieur, I know him. He will fleece you completely.”

“The only difference is, that I lend without interest,” said Malicorne, smiling.

“I was correct in saying you were either a saint or very much resembled one. M. Malicorne, you shall have the post you want, or I will forfeit my name.”

“Ah! monsieur le comte, what a debt of gratitude shall I not owe you?” said Malicorne, transported.

“Let us go to the prince, my dear M. Malicorne.” And De Guiche proceeded toward the door, desiring Malicorne to follow him. At the very moment they were about to cross the threshold, a young man appeared on the other side. He was from twenty-four to twenty-five years of age, of pale complexion, bright eyes and brown hair and eyebrows. “Good-day,” said he, suddenly, almost pushing De Guiche back into the courtyard again.

“Is that you, De Wardes? – What! and booted, spurred and whip in hand, too?”

“The most befitting costume for a man about to set off for Le Havre. There will be no one left in Paris to-morrow.” And hereupon he saluted Malicorne with great ceremony, whose handsome dress gave him the appearance of a prince.

“M. Malicorne,” said De Guiche to his friend. De Wardes bowed.

“M. de Wardes,” said Guiche to Malicorne, who bowed in return. “By the by, De Wardes,” continued De Guiche, “you who are so well acquainted with these matters, can you tell us, probably, what appointments are still vacant at the court; or rather in the prince’s household?”

“In the prince’s household,” said De Wardes looking up with an air of consideration, “let me see – the appointment of the master of the horse is vacant, I believe.”

“Oh,” said Malicorne, “there is no question of such a post as that, monsieur; my ambition is not nearly so exalted.”

De Wardes had a more penetrating observation than De Guiche, and fathomed Malicorne immediately. “The fact is,” he said, looking at him from head to foot, “a man must be either a duke or a peer to fill that post.”

“All I solicit,” said Malicorne, “is a very humble appointment; I am of little importance, and I do not rank myself above my position.”

“M. Malicorne, whom you see here,” said De Guiche to De Wardes, “is a very excellent fellow, whose only misfortune is that of not being of gentle birth. As far as I am concerned, you know, I attach little value to those who have but gentle birth to boast of.”

“Assuredly,” said De Wardes; “but will you allow me to remark, my dear count, that, without rank of some sort, one can hardly hope to belong to his royal highness’s household?”

“You are right,” said the count, “court etiquette is absolute. The devil! – we never so much as gave it a thought.”

“Alas! a sad misfortune for me, monsieur le comte,” said Malicorne, changing color.

“Yet not without remedy, I hope,” returned De Guiche.

“The remedy is found easily enough,” exclaimed De Wardes; “you can be created a gentleman. His Eminence, the Cardinal Mazarin, did nothing else from morning till night.”

“Hush, hush, De Wardes,” said the count; “no jests of that kind; it ill becomes us to turn such matters into ridicule. Letters of nobility, it is true, are purchasable; but that is a sufficient misfortune without the nobles themselves laughing at it.”

“Upon my word, De Guiche, you’re quite a Puritan, as the English say.”

At this moment the Vicomte de Bragelonne was announced by one of the servants in the courtyard, in precisely the same manner as he would have done in a room.

“Come here, my dear Raoul. What! you, too, booted and spurred? You are setting off, then?”

Bragelonne approached the group of young men, and saluted them with that quiet and serious manner peculiar to him. His salutation was principally addressed to De Wardes, with whom he was unacquainted, and whose features, on his perceiving Raoul, had assumed a strange sternness of expression. “I have come, De Guiche,” he said, “to ask your companionship. We set off for Le Havre, I presume.”

“This is admirable – delightful. We shall have a most enjoyable journey. M. Malicorne, M. Bragelonne – ah! M. de Wardes, let me present you.” The young men saluted each other in a restrained

manner. Their very natures seemed, from the beginning, disposed to take exception to each other. De Wardes was pliant, subtle, full of dissimulation; Raoul was calm, grave, and upright. "Decide between us – between De Wardes and myself, Raoul."

"Upon what subject?"

"Upon the subject of noble birth."

"Who can be better informed on that subject than a De Gramont?"

"No compliments; it is your opinion I ask."

"At least, inform me of the subject under discussion."

"De Wardes asserts that the distribution of titles is abused; I, on the contrary, maintain that a title is useless to the man on whom it is bestowed."

"And you are correct," said Bragelonne, quietly.

"But, monsieur le vicomte," interrupted De Wardes, with a kind of obstinacy, "I affirm that it is I who am correct."

"What was your opinion, monsieur?"

"I was saying that everything is done in France at the present moment, to humiliate men of family."

"And by whom?"

"By the king himself. He surrounds himself with people who cannot show four quarterings."

"Nonsense," said De Guiche, "where could you possibly have seen that, De Wardes?"

"One example will suffice," he returned, directing his look fully upon Raoul.

"State it then."

"Do you know who has just been nominated captain-general of the musketeers? – an appointment more valuable than a peerage; for it gives precedence over all the *marechals* of France."

Raoul's color mounted in his face; for he saw the object De Wardes had in view. "No; who has been appointed? In any case it must have been very recently, for the appointment was vacant eight days ago; a proof of which is, that the king refused Monsieur, who solicited the post for one of his *proteges*."

"Well, the king refused it to Monsieur's *protege*, in order to bestow it upon the Chevalier d'Artagnan, a younger brother of some Gascon family, who has been trailing his sword in the ante-chambers during the last thirty years."

"Forgive me if I interrupt you," said Raoul, darting a glance full of severity at De Wardes; "but you give me the impression of being unacquainted with the gentleman of whom you are speaking."

"I not acquainted with M. d'Artagnan? Can you tell me, monsieur, who does *not* know him?"

"Those who *do* know him, monsieur," replied Raoul, with still greater calmness and sternness of manner, "are in the habit of saying, that if he is not as good a gentleman as the king – which is not his fault – he is the equal of all the kings of the earth in courage and loyalty. Such is my opinion, monsieur; and I thank heaven I have known M. d'Artagnan from my birth."

De Wardes was about to reply, when De Guiche interrupted him.

Chapter VII. The Portrait of Madame

The discussion was becoming full of bitterness. De Guiche perfectly understood the whole matter, for there was in Bragelonne's face a look instinctively hostile, while in that of De Wardes there was something like a determination to offend. Without inquiring into the different feelings which actuated his two friends, De Guiche resolved to ward off the blow which he felt was on the point of being dealt by one of them, and perhaps by both. "Gentlemen," he said, "we must take our leave of each other, I must pay a visit to Monsieur. You, De Wardes, will accompany me to the Louvre, and you, Raoul, will remain here master of the house; and as all that is done here is under your advice, you will bestow the last glance upon my preparations for departure."

Raoul, with the air of one who neither seeks nor fears a quarrel, bowed his head in token of assent, and seated himself upon a bench in the sun. "That is well," said De Guiche, "remain where you are, Raoul, and tell them to show you the two horses I have just purchased; you will give me your opinion, for I only bought them on condition that you ratified the purchase. By the by, I have to beg your pardon for having omitted to inquire after the Comte de la Fere." While pronouncing these latter words, he closely observed De Wardes, in order to perceive what effect the name of Raoul's father would produce upon him. "I thank you," answered the young man, "the count is very well." A gleam of deep hatred passed into De Wardes's eyes. De Guiche, who appeared not to notice the foreboding expression, went up to Raoul, and grasping him by the hand, said, – "It is agreed, then, Bragelonne, is it not, that you will rejoin us in the courtyard of the Palais Royal?" He then signed to De Wardes to follow him, who had been engaged in balancing himself first on one foot, then on the other. "We are going," said he, "come, M. Malicorne." This name made Raoul start; for it seemed that he had already heard it pronounced before, but he could not remember on what occasion. While trying to recall it half-dreamily, yet half-irritated at his conversation with De Wardes, the three young men set out on their way towards the Palais Royal, where Monsieur was residing. Malicorne learned two things; the first, that the young men had something to say to each other; and the second, that he ought not to walk in the same line with them; and therefore he walked behind. "Are you mad?" said De Guiche to his companion, as soon as they had left the Hotel de Grammont; "you attack M. d'Artagnan, and that, too, before Raoul."

"Well," said De Wardes, "what then?"

"What do you mean by 'what then?'"

"Certainly, is there any prohibition against attacking M. d'Artagnan?"

"But you know very well that M. d'Artagnan was one of those celebrated and terrible four men who were called the musketeers."

"That they may be; but I do not perceive why, on that account, I should be forbidden to hate M. d'Artagnan."

"What cause has he given you?"

"Me! personally, none."

"Why hate him, therefore?"

"Ask my dead father that question."

"Really, my dear De Wardes, you surprise me. M. d'Artagnan is not one to leave unsettled any *enmity* he may have to arrange, without completely clearing his account. Your father, I have heard, carried matters with a high hand. Moreover, there are no enmities so bitter that they cannot be washed away by blood, by a good sword-thrust loyally given."

"Listen to me, my dear De Guiche, this inveterate dislike existed between my father and M. d'Artagnan, and when I was quite a child, he acquainted me with the reason for it, and, as forming part of my inheritance, I regard it as a particular legacy bestowed upon me."

"And does this hatred concern M. d'Artagnan alone?"

“As for that, M. d’Artagnan was so intimately associated with his three friends, that some portion of the full measure of my hatred falls to their lot, and that hatred is of such a nature, whenever the opportunity occurs, they shall have no occasion to complain of their allowance.”

De Guiche had kept his eyes fixed on De Wardes, and shuddered at the bitter manner in which the young man smiled. Something like a presentiment flashed across his mind; he knew that the time had passed away for *grands coups entre gentilshommes*; but that the feeling of hatred treasured up in the mind, instead of being diffused abroad, was still hatred all the same; that a smile was sometimes as full of meaning as a threat; and, in a word, that to the fathers who had hated with their hearts and fought with their arms, would now succeed the sons, who would indeed hate with their hearts, but would no longer combat their enemies save by means of intrigue or treachery. As, therefore, it certainly was not Raoul whom he could suspect either of intrigue or treachery, it was on Raoul’s account that De Guiche trembled. However, while these gloomy forebodings cast a shade of anxiety over De Guiche’s countenance, De Wardes had resumed the entire mastery over himself.

“At all events,” he observed, “I have no personal ill-will towards M. de Bragelonne; I do not know him even.”

“In any case,” said De Guiche, with a certain amount of severity in his tone of voice, “do not forget one circumstance, that Raoul is my most intimate friend;” a remark at which De Wardes bowed.

The conversation terminated there, although De Guiche tried his utmost to draw out his secret from him; but, doubtless, De Wardes had determined to say nothing further, and he remained impenetrable. De Guiche therefore promised himself a more satisfactory result with Raoul. In the meantime they had reached the Palais Royal, which was surrounded by a crowd of lookers-on. The household belonging to Monsieur awaited his command to mount their horses, in order to form part of the escort of the ambassadors, to whom had been intrusted the care of bringing the young princess to Paris. The brilliant display of horses, arms, and rich liveries, afforded some compensation in those times, thanks to the kindly feelings of the people, and to the traditions of deep devotion to their sovereigns, for the enormous expenses charged upon the taxes. Mazarin had said: “Let them sing, provided they pay;” while Louis XIV.’s remark was, “Let them look.” Sight had replaced the voice; the people could still look but they were no longer allowed to sing. De Guiche left De Wardes and Malicorne at the bottom of the grand staircase, while he himself, who shared the favor and good graces of Monsieur with the Chevalier de Lorraine, who always smiled at him most affectionately, though he could not endure him, went straight to the prince’s apartments, whom he found engaged in admiring himself in the glass, and rouging his face. In a corner of the cabinet, the Chevalier de Lorraine was extended full length upon some cushions, having just had his long hair curled, with which he was playing in the same manner a woman would have done. The prince turned round as the count entered, and perceiving who it was, said: “Ah! is that you, De Guiche; come here and tell me the truth.”

“You know, my lord, it is one of my defects to speak the truth.”

“You will hardly believe, De Guiche, how that wicked chevalier has annoyed me.”

The chevalier shrugged his shoulders.

“Why, he pretends,” continued the prince, “that Mademoiselle Henrietta is better looking as a woman than I am as a man.”

“Do not forget, my lord,” said De Guiche, frowning slightly, “you require me to speak the truth.”

“Certainly,” said the prince, tremblingly.

“Well, and I shall tell it you.”

“Do not be in a hurry, Guiche,” exclaimed the prince, “you have plenty of time; look at me attentively, and try to recollect Madame. Besides, her portrait is here. Look at it.” And he held out to him a miniature of the finest possible execution. De Guiche took it, and looked at it for a long time attentively.

“Upon my honor, my lord, this is indeed a most lovely face.”

“But look at me, count, look at me,” said the prince, endeavoring to direct upon himself the attention of the count, who was completely absorbed in contemplation of the portrait.

“It is wonderful,” murmured Guiche.

“Really one would imagine you had never seen the young lady before.”

“It is true, my lord, I have seen her but it was five years ago; there is a great difference between a child twelve years old, and a girl of seventeen.”

“Well, what is your opinion?”

“My opinion is that the portrait must be flattering, my lord.”

“Of that,” said the prince triumphantly, “there can be no doubt; but let us suppose that it is not, what would your opinion be?”

“My lord, that your highness is exceedingly happy to have so charming a bride.”

The Chevalier de Lorraine burst out laughing. The prince understood how severe towards himself this opinion of the Comte de Guiche was, and he looked somewhat displeased, saying, “My friends are not over indulgent.” De Guiche looked at the portrait again, and, after lengthened contemplation, returned it with apparent unwillingness, saying, “Most decidedly, my lord, I should rather prefer to look ten times at your highness, than to look at Madame once again.” It seemed as if the chevalier had detected some mystery in these words, which were incomprehensible to the prince, for he exclaimed: “Very well, get married yourself.” Monsieur continued painting himself, and when he had finished, looked at the portrait again once more, turned to admire himself in the glass, and smiled, and no doubt was satisfied with the comparison. “You are very kind to have come,” he said to Guiche, “I feared you would leave without bidding me adieu.”

“Your highness knows me too well to believe me capable of so great a disrespect.”

“Besides, I suppose you have something to ask from me before leaving Paris?”

“Your highness has indeed guessed correctly, for I have a request to make.”

“Very good, what is it?”

The Chevalier de Lorraine immediately displayed the greatest attention, for he regarded every favor conferred upon another as a robbery committed against himself. And, as Guiche hesitated, the prince said: “If it be money, nothing could be more fortunate, for I am in funds; the superintendent of the finances has sent me 500,000 pistoles.”

“I thank your highness; but is not an affair of money.”

“What is it, then? Tell me.”

“The appointment of a maid of honor.”

“Oh! oh! Guiche, what a protector you have become of young ladies,” said the prince, “you never speak of any one else now.”

The Chevalier de Lorraine smiled, for he knew very well that nothing displeased the prince more than to show any interest in ladies. “My lord,” said the comte, “it is not I who am directly interested in the lady of whom I have just spoken; I am acting on behalf of one of my friends.”

“Ah! that is different; what is the name of the young lady in whom your friend is so interested?”

“Mlle. de la Baume le Blanc de la Valliere; she is already maid of honor to the dowager princess.”

“Why, she is lame,” said the Chevalier de Lorraine, stretching himself on his cushions.

“Lame,” repeated the prince, “and Madame to have her constantly before her eyes? Most certainly not; it may be dangerous for her when in an interesting condition.”

The Chevalier de Lorraine burst out laughing.

“Chevalier,” said Guiche, “your conduct is ungenerous; while I am soliciting a favor, you do me all the mischief you can.”

“Forgive me, comte,” said the Chevalier de Lorraine, somewhat uneasy at the tone in which Guiche had made his remark, “but I had no intention of doing so, and I begin to believe that I have mistaken one young lady for another.”

"There is no doubt of it, monsieur; and I do not hesitate to declare that such is the case."

"Do you attach much importance to it, Guiche?" inquired the prince.

"I do, my lord."

"Well, you shall have it; but ask me for no more appointments, for there are none to give away."

"Ah!" exclaimed the chevalier, "midday already, that is the hour fixed for the departure."

"You dismiss me, monsieur?" inquired Guiche.

"Really, count, you treat me very ill to-day," replied the chevalier.

"For heaven's sake, count, for heaven's sake, chevalier," said Monsieur, "do you not see how you are distressing me?"

"Your highness's signature?" said Guiche.

"Take a blank appointment from that drawer, and give it to me." Guiche handed the prince the document indicated, and at the same time presented him with a pen already dipped in ink; whereupon the prince signed. "Here," he said, returning him the appointment, "but I give it on one condition."

"Name it."

"That you make friends with the chevalier."

"Willingly," said Guiche. And he held out his hand to the chevalier with an indifference amounting to contempt.

"Adieu, count," said the chevalier, without seeming in any way to have noticed the count's slight; "adieu, and bring us back a princess who will not talk with her own portrait too much."

"Yes, set off and lose no time. By the by, who will accompany you?"

"Bragelonne and De Wardes."

"Both excellent and fearless companions."

"Too fearless," said the chevalier; "endeavor to bring them both back, count."

"A bad heart, bad!" murmured De Guiche; "he scents mischief everywhere, and sooner than anything else." And taking leave of the prince, he quitted the apartment. As soon as he reached the vestibule, he waved in the air the paper which the prince had signed. Malicorne hurried forward, and received it, trembling with delight. When, however, he held in his hand, Guiche observed that he still awaited something further.

"Patience, monsieur," he said; "the Chevalier de Lorraine was there, and I feared an utter failure if I asked too much at once. Wait until I return. Adieu."

"Adieu, monsieur le comte; a thousand thanks," said Malicorne.

"Send Manicamp to me. By the way, monsieur, is it true that Mlle. de la Valliere is lame?" As he said this, he noticed that Bragelonne, who had just at that moment entered the courtyard, turned suddenly pale. The poor lover had heard the remark, which, however, was not the case with Malicorne, for he was already beyond the reach of the count's voice.

"Why is Louise's name spoken of here," said Raoul to himself; "oh! let not De Wardes, who stands smiling yonder, even say a word about her in my presence."

"Now, gentlemen," exclaimed the Comte de Guiche, "prepare to start."

At this moment the prince, who had complete his toilette, appeared at the window, and was immediately saluted by the acclamations of all who composed the escort, and ten minutes afterwards, banners, scarfs, and feathers were fluttering and waving in the air, as the cavalcade galloped away.

Chapter VIII. Le Havre

This brilliant and animated company, the members of which were inspired by various feelings, arrived at Le Havre four days after their departure from Paris. It was about five o'clock in the afternoon, and no intelligence had yet been received of Madame. They were soon engaged in quest of apartments; but the greatest confusion immediately ensued among the masters, and violent quarrels among their attendants. In the midst of this disorder, the Comte de Guiche fancied he recognized Manicamp. It was, indeed, Manicamp himself; but as Malicorne had taken possession of his very best costume, he had not been able to get any other than a suit of violet velvet, trimmed with silver. Guiche recognized him as much by his dress as by his features, for he had very frequently seen Manicamp in his violet suit, which was his last resource. Manicamp presented himself to the count under an arch of torches, which set in a blaze, rather than illuminated, the gate by which Le Havre is entered, and which is situated close to the tower of Francis I. The count, remarking the woe-begone expression of Manicamp's face, could not resist laughing. "Well, my poor Manicamp," he exclaimed, "how violet you look; are you in mourning?"

"Yes," replied Manicamp; "I am in mourning."

"For whom, or for what?"

"For my blue-and-gold suit, which has disappeared, and in the place of which I could find nothing but this; and I was even obliged to economize from compulsion, in order to get possession of it."

"Indeed?"

"It is singular you should be astonished at that, since you leave me without any money."

"At all events, here you are, and that is the principal thing."

"By the most horrible roads."

"Where are you lodging?"

"Lodging?"

"Yes!"

"I am not lodging anywhere."

De Guiche began to laugh. "Well," said he, "where do you intend to lodge?"

"In the same place you do."

"But I don't know, myself."

"What do you mean by saying you don't know?"

"Certainly, how is it likely I should know where I should stay?"

"Have you not retained an hotel?"

"I?"

"Yes, you or the prince."

"Neither of us has thought of it. Le Havre is of considerable size, I suppose; and provided I can get a stable for a dozen horses, and a suitable house in a good quarter –"

"Certainly, there are some very excellent houses."

"Well then –"

"But not for us."

"What do you mean by saying not for us? – for whom, then?"

"For the English, of course."

"For the English?"

"Yes; the houses are all taken."

"By whom?"

"By the Duke of Buckingham."

"I beg your pardon?" said Guiche, whose attention this name had awakened.

“Yes, by the Duke of Buckingham. His Grace was preceded by a courier, who arrived here three days ago, and immediately retained all the houses fit for habitation the town possesses.”

“Come, come, Manicamp, let us understand each other.”

“Well, what I have told you is clear enough, it seems to me.”

“But surely Buckingham does not occupy the whole of Le Havre?”

“He certainly does not occupy it, since he has not yet arrived; but, once disembarked, he will occupy it.”

“Oh! oh!”

“It is quite clear you are not acquainted with the English; they have a perfect rage for monopolizing everything.”

“That may be; but a man who has the whole of one house, is satisfied with it, and does not require two.”

“Yes, but two men?”

“Be it so; for two men, two houses, or four or six, or ten, if you like; but there are a hundred houses at Le Havre.”

“Yes, and all the hundred are let.”

“Impossible!”

“What an obstinate fellow you are. I tell you Buckingham has hired all the houses surrounding the one which the queen dowager of England and the princess her daughter will inhabit.”

“He is singular enough, indeed,” said De Wardes, caressing his horse’s neck.

“Such is the case, however, monsieur.”

“You are quite sure of it, Monsieur de Manicamp?” and as he put this question, he looked slyly at De Guiche, as though to interrogate him upon the degree of confidence to be placed in his friend’s state of mind. During this discussion the night had closed in, and the torches, pages, attendants, squires, horses, and carriages, blocked up the gate and the open place; the torches were reflected in the channel, which the rising tide was gradually filling, while on the other side of the jetty might be noticed groups of curious lookers-on, consisting of sailors and townspeople, who seemed anxious to miss nothing of the spectacle. Amidst all this hesitation of purpose, Bragelonne, as though a perfect stranger to the scene, remained on his horse somewhat in the rear of Guiche, and watched the rays of light reflected on the water, inhaling with rapture the sea breezes, and listening to the waves which noisily broke upon the shore and on the beach, tossing the spray into the air with a noise that echoed in the distance. “But,” exclaimed De Guiche, “what is Buckingham’s motive for providing such a supply of lodgings?”

“Yes, yes,” said De Wardes; “what reason has he?”

“A very excellent one,” replied Manicamp.

“You know what it is, then?”

“I fancy I do.”

“Tell us, then.”

“Bend your head down towards me.”

“What! may it not be spoken except in private?”

“You shall judge of that yourself.”

“Very well.” De Guiche bent down.

“Love,” said Manicamp.

“I do not understand you at all.”

“Say rather, you cannot understand me yet.”

“Explain yourself.”

“Very well; it is quite certain, count, that his royal highness will be the most unfortunate of husbands.”

“What do you mean?”

“The Duke of Buckingham – ”

“It is a name of ill omen to the princes of the house of France.”

“And so the duke is madly in love with Madame, so the rumor runs, and will have no one approach her but himself.”

De Guiche colored. “Thank you, thank you,” said he to Manicamp, grasping his hand. Then, recovering himself, added, “Whatever you do, Manicamp, be careful that this project of Buckingham’s is not made known to any Frenchman here; for, if so, many a sword would be unsheathed in this country that does not fear English steel.”

“But after all,” said Manicamp, “I have had no satisfactory proof given me of the love in question, and it may be no more than an idle tale.”

“No, no,” said De Guiche, “it must be the truth;” and despite his command over himself, he clenched his teeth.

“Well,” said Manicamp, “after all, what does it matter to you? What does it matter to me whether the prince is to be what the late king was? Buckingham the father for the queen, Buckingham the son for the princess.”

“Manicamp! Manicamp!”

“It is a fact, or at least, everybody says so.”

“Silence!” cried the count.

“But why, silence?” said De Wardes; “it is a highly creditable circumstance for the French nation. Are not you of my opinion, Monsieur de Bragelonne?”

“To what circumstance do you allude?” inquired De Bragelonne with an abstracted air.

“That the English should render homage to the beauty of our queens and our princesses.”

“Forgive me, but I have not been paying attention to what has passed; will you oblige me by explaining.”

“There is no doubt it was necessary that Buckingham the father should come to Paris in order that his majesty, King Louis XIII., should perceive that his wife was one of the most beautiful women of the French court; and it seems necessary, at the present time, that Buckingham the son should consecrate, by the devotion of his worship, the beauty of a princess who has French blood in her veins. The fact of having inspired a passion on the other side of the Channel will henceforth confer a title to beauty on this.”

“Sir,” replied De Bragelonne, “I do not like to hear such matters treated so lightly. Gentlemen like ourselves should be careful guardians of the honor of our queens and our princesses. If we jest at them, what will our servants do?”

“How am I to understand that?” said De Wardes, whose ears tingled at the remark.

“In any way you chose, monsieur,” replied De Bragelonne, coldly.

“Bragelonne, Bragelonne,” murmured De Guiche.

“M. de Wardes,” exclaimed Manicamp, noticing that the young man had spurred his horse close to the side of Raoul.

“Gentlemen, gentlemen,” said De Guiche, “do not set such an example in public, in the street too. De Wardes, you are wrong.”

“Wrong; in what way, may I ask you?”

“You are wrong, monsieur, because you are always speaking ill of someone or something,” replied Raoul, with undisturbed composure.

“Be indulgent, Raoul,” said De Guiche, in an undertone.

“Pray do not think of fighting, gentlemen!” said Manicamp, “before you have rested yourselves; for in that case you will not be able to do much.”

“Come,” said De Guiche, “forward, gentlemen!” and breaking through the horses and attendants, he cleared the way for himself towards the center of the square, through the crowd, followed by the whole cavalcade. A large gateway looking out upon a courtyard was open; Guiche

entered the courtyard, and Bragelonne, De Wardes, Manicamp, and three or four other gentlemen, followed him. A sort of council of war was held, and the means to be employed for saving the dignity of the embassy were deliberated upon. Bragelonne was of the opinion that the right of priority should be respected, while De Wardes suggested that the town should be sacked. This latter proposition appearing to Manicamp rather premature, he proposed instead that they should first rest themselves. This was the wisest thing to do, but, unhappily, to follow his advice, two things were wanting; namely, a house and beds. De Guiche reflected for awhile, and then said aloud, "Let him who loves me, follow me!"

"The attendants also?" inquired a page who had approached the group.

"Every one," exclaimed the impetuous young man. "Manicamp, show us the way to the house destined for her royal highness's residence."

Without in any way divining the count's project, his friends followed him, accompanied by a crowd of people, whose acclamations and delight seemed a happy omen for the success of that project with which they were yet unacquainted. The wind was blowing strongly from the harbor, and moaning in fitful gusts.

Chapter IX. At Sea

The following day was somewhat calmer, although the gale still continued. The sun had, however, risen through a bank of orange clouds, tingeing with its cheerful rays the crests of the black waves. Watch was impatiently kept from the different look-outs. Towards eleven o'clock in the morning a ship, with sails full set, was signalled as in view; two others followed at the distance of about half a knot. They approached like arrows shot from the bow of a skillful archer; and yet the sea ran so high that their speed was as nothing compared to the rolling of the billows in which the vessels were plunging first in one direction and then in another. The English fleet was soon recognized by the line of the ships, and by the color of their pennants; the one which had the princess on board and carried the admiral's flag preceded the others.

The rumor now spread that the princess was arriving. The whole French court ran to the harbor, while the quays and jetties were soon covered by crowds of people. Two hours afterwards, the other vessels had overtaken the flagship, and the three, not venturing perhaps to enter the narrow entrance of the harbor, cast anchor between Le Havre and La Heve. When the maneuver had been completed, the vessel which bore the admiral saluted France by twelve discharges of cannon, which were returned, discharge for discharge, from Fort Francis I. Immediately afterwards a hundred boats were launched; they were covered with the richest stuffs, and destined for the conveyance of the different members of the French nobility towards the vessels at anchor. But when it was observed that even inside the harbor the boats were tossed to and fro, and that beyond the jetty the waves rose mountains high, dashing upon the shore with a terrible uproar, it was readily believed that not one of those frail boats would be able with safety to reach a fourth part of the distance between the shore and the vessels at anchor. A pilot-boat, however, notwithstanding the wind and the sea, was getting ready to leave the harbor, for the purpose of placing itself at the admiral's disposal.

De Guiche, who had been looking among the different boats for one stronger than the others, which might offer a chance of reaching the English vessels, perceiving the pilot-boat getting ready to start, said to Raoul: "Do you not think, Raoul, that intelligent and vigorous men, as we are, ought to be ashamed to retreat before the brute strength of wind and waves?"

"That is precisely the very reflection I was silently making to myself," replied Bragelonne.

"Shall we get into that boat, then, and push off? Will you come, De Wardes?"

"Take care, or you will get drowned," said Manicamp.

"And for no purpose," said De Wardes, "for with the wind in your teeth, as it will be, you will never reach the vessels."

"You refuse, then?"

"Assuredly I do; I would willingly risk and lose my life in an encounter against men," he said, glancing at Bragelonne, "but as to fighting with oars against waves, I have no taste for that."

"And for myself," said Manicamp, "even were I to succeed in reaching the ships, I should not be indifferent to the loss of the only good dress which I have left, – salt water would spoil it."

"You, then, refuse also?" exclaimed De Guiche.

"Decidedly I do; I beg you to understand that most distinctly."

"But," exclaimed De Guiche, "look, De Wardes – look, Manicamp – look yonder, the princesses are looking at us from the poop of the admiral's vessel."

"An additional reason, my dear fellow, why we should not make ourselves ridiculous by being drowned while they are looking on."

"Is that your last word, Manicamp?"

"Yes."

"And then yours, De Wardes?"

"Yes."

“Then I go alone.”

“Not so,” said Raoul, “for I shall accompany you; I thought it was understood I should do so.”

The fact is, that Raoul, uninfluenced by devotion, measuring the risk they run, saw how imminent the danger was, but he willingly allowed himself to accept a peril which De Wardes had declined.

The boat was about to set off when De Guiche called to the pilot. “Stay,” said he: “we want two places in your boat;” and wrapping five or six pistoles in paper, he threw them from the quay into the boat.

“It seems you are not afraid of salt water, young gentlemen.”

“We are afraid of nothing,” replied De Guiche.

“Come along, then.”

The pilot approached the side of the boat, and the two young men, one after the other, with equal vivacity, jumped into the boat. “Courage, my men,” said De Guiche; “I have twenty pistoles left in this purse, and as soon as we reach the admiral’s vessel they shall be yours.” The sailors bent themselves to their oars, and the boat bounded over the crest of the waves. The interest taken in this hazardous expedition was universal; the whole population of Le Havre hurried towards the jetties and every look was directed towards the little bark; at one moment it flew suspended on the crest of the foaming waves, then suddenly glided downwards towards the bottom of a raging abyss, where it seemed utterly lost. At the expiration of an hour’s struggling with the waves, it reached the spot where the admiral’s vessel was anchored, and from the side of which two boats had already been dispatched towards their aid. Upon the quarter-deck of the flagship, sheltered by a canopy of velvet and ermine, which was suspended by stout supports, Henriette, the queen dowager, and the young princess – with the admiral, the Duke of Norfolk, standing beside them – watched with alarm this slender bark, at one moment tossed to the heavens, and the next buried beneath the waves, and against whose dark sail the noble figures of the two French gentlemen stood forth in relief like two luminous apparitions. The crew, leaning against the bulwarks and clinging to the shrouds, cheered the courage of the two daring young men, the skill of the pilot, and the strength of the sailors. They were received at the side of the vessel by a shout of triumph. The Duke of Norfolk, a handsome young man, from twenty-six to twenty-eight years of age, advanced to meet them. De Guiche and Bragelonne lightly mounted the ladder on the starboard side, and, conducted by the Duke of Norfolk, who resumed his place near them, they approached to offer their homage to the princess. Respect, and yet more, a certain apprehension, for which he could not account, had hitherto restrained the Comte de Guiche from looking at Madame attentively, who, however, had observed him immediately, and had asked her mother, “Is not that Monsieur in the boat yonder?” Madame Henriette, who knew Monsieur better than her daughter did, smiled at the mistake her vanity had led her into, and had answered, “No; it is only M. de Guiche, his favorite.” The princess, at this reply, was constrained to check an instinctive tenderness of feeling which the courage displayed by the count had awakened. At the very moment the princess had put this question to her mother, De Guiche had, at last, summoned courage to raise his eyes towards her and could compare the original with the portrait he had so lately seen. No sooner had he remarked her pale face, her eyes so full of animation, her beautiful nut-brown hair, her expressive lips, and her every gesture, which, while betokening royal descent, seemed to thank and to encourage him at one and the same time, than he was, for a moment, so overcome, that, had it not been for Raoul, on whose arm he leant, he would have fallen. His friend’s amazed look, and the encouraging gesture of the queen, restored Guiche to his self-possession. In a few words he explained his mission, explained in what way he had become envoy of his royal highness; and saluted, according to their rank and the reception they gave him, the admiral and several of the English noblemen who were grouped around the princess.

Raoul was then presented, and was most graciously received; the share that the Comte de la Fere had had in the restoration of Charles II. was known to all; and, more than that, it was the comte

who had been charged with the negotiation of the marriage, by means of which the granddaughter of Henry IV. was now returning to France. Raoul spoke English perfectly, and constituted himself his friend's interpreter with the young English noblemen, who were indifferently acquainted with the French language. At this moment, a young man came forward, of extremely handsome features, and whose dress and arms were remarkable for their extravagance of material. He approached the princesses, who were engaged in conversation with the Duke of Norfolk, and, in a voice which ill concealed his impatience, said, "It is now time to disembark, your royal highness." The younger of the princesses rose from her seat at this remark, and was about to take the hand which the young nobleman extended to her, with an eagerness which arose from a variety of motives, when the admiral intervened between them, observing: "A moment, if you please, my lord; it is not possible for ladies to disembark just now, the sea is too rough; it is probable the wind may abate before sunset, and the landing will not be effected, therefore, until this evening."

"Allow me to observe, my lord," said Buckingham, with an irritation of manner which he did not seek to disguise, "you detain these ladies, and you have no right to do so. One of them, unhappily, now belongs to France, and you perceive that France claims them by the voice of her ambassadors;" and at the same moment he indicated Raoul and Guiche, whom he saluted.

"I cannot suppose that these gentlemen intend to expose the lives of their royal highnesses," replied the admiral.

"These gentlemen," retorted Buckingham, "arrived here safely, notwithstanding the wind; allow me to believe that the danger will not be greater for their royal highnesses when the wind will be in their favor."

"These envoys have shown how great their courage is," said the admiral. "You may have observed that there was a great number of persons on shore who did *not* venture to accompany them. Moreover, the desire which they had to show their respect with the least possible delay to Madame and her illustrious mother, induced them to brave the sea, which is very tempestuous to-day, even for sailors. These gentlemen, however, whom I recommend as an example for my officers to follow, can hardly be so for these ladies."

Madame glanced at the Comte de Guiche, and perceived that his face was burning with confusion. This look had escaped Buckingham, who had eyes for nothing but Norfolk, of whom he was evidently very jealous; he seemed anxious to remove the princesses from the deck of a vessel where the admiral reigned supreme. "In that case," returned Buckingham, "I appeal to Madame herself."

"And I, my lord," retorted the admiral, "I appeal to my own conscience, and to my own sense of responsibility. I have undertaken to convey Madame safe and sound to France, and I shall keep my promise."

"But, sir – " continued Buckingham.

"My lord, permit me to remind you that I command here."

"Are you aware what you are saying, my lord?" replied Buckingham, haughtily.

"Perfectly so; I therefore repeat it: I alone command here, all yield obedience to me; the sea and the winds, the ships and men too." This remark was made in a dignified and authoritative manner. Raoul observed its effect upon Buckingham, who trembled with anger from head to foot, and leaned against one of the poles of the tent to prevent himself falling; his eyes became suffused with blood, and the hand which he did not need for his support wandered towards the hilt of his sword.

"My lord," said the queen, "permit me to observe that I agree in every particular with the Duke of Norfolk; if the heavens, instead of being clouded as they are at the present moment, were perfectly serene and propitious, we can still afford to bestow a few hours upon the officer who has conducted us so successfully, and with such extreme attention, to the French coast, where he is to take leave of us."

Buckingham, instead of replying, seemed to seek counsel from the expression of Madame's face. She, however, half-concealed beneath the thick curtains of the velvet and gold which sheltered

her, had not listened to the discussion, having been occupied in watching the Comte de Guiche, who was conversing with Raoul. This was a fresh misfortune for Buckingham, who fancied he perceived in Madame Henrietta's look a deeper feeling than that of curiosity. He withdrew, almost tottering in his gait, and nearly stumbled against the mainmast of the ship.

"The duke has not acquired a steady footing yet," said the queen-mother, in French, "and that may possibly be his reason for wishing to find himself on firm land again."

The young man overheard this remark, turned suddenly pale, and, letting his hands fall in great discouragement by his side, drew aside, mingling in one sigh his old affection and his new hatreds. The admiral, however, without taking any further notice of the duke's ill-humor, led the princesses into the quarter-deck cabin, where dinner had been served with a magnificence worthy in every respect of his guests. The admiral seated himself at the right hand of the princess, and placed the Comte de Guiche on her left. This was the place Buckingham usually occupied; and when he entered the cabin, how profound was his unhappiness to see himself banished by etiquette from the presence of his sovereign, to a position inferior to that which, by rank, he was entitled to. De Guiche, on the other hand, paler still perhaps from happiness, than his rival was from anger, seated himself tremblingly next to the princess, whose silken robe, as it lightly touched him, caused a tremor of mingled regret and happiness to pass through his whole frame. The repast finished, Buckingham darted forward to hand Madame Henrietta from the table; but this time it was De Guiche's turn to give the duke a lesson. "Have the goodness, my lord, from this moment," said he, "not to interpose between her royal highness and myself. From this moment, indeed, her royal highness belongs to France, and when she deigns to honor me by touching my hand it is the hand of Monsieur, the brother of the king of France, she touches."

And saying this, he presented his hand to Madame Henrietta with such marked deference, and at the same time with a nobleness of mien so intrepid, that a murmur of admiration rose from the English, whilst a groan of despair escaped from Buckingham's lips. Raoul, who loved, comprehended it all. He fixed upon his friend one of those profound looks which a bosom friend or mother can alone extend, either as protector or guardian, over the one who is about to stray from the right path. Towards two o'clock in the afternoon the sun shone forth anew, the wind subsided, the sea became smooth as a crystal mirror, and the fog, which had shrouded the coast, disappeared like a veil withdrawn before it. The smiling hills of France appeared in full view, with their numerous white houses rendered more conspicuous by the bright green of the trees or the clear blue sky.

Chapter X. The Tents

The admiral, as we have seen, was determined to pay no further attention to Buckingham's threatening glances and fits of passion. In fact, from the moment they quitted England, he had gradually accustomed himself to his behavior. De Guiche had not yet in any way remarked the animosity which appeared to influence that young nobleman against him, but he felt, instinctively, that there could be no sympathy between himself and the favorite of Charles II. The queen-mother, with greater experience and calmer judgment, perceived the exact position of affairs, and, as she discerned its danger, was prepared to meet it, whenever the proper moment should arrive. Quiet had been everywhere restored, except in Buckingham's heart; he, in his impatience, addressed himself to the princess, in a low tone of voice: "For Heaven's sake, madame, I implore you to hasten your disembarkation. Do you not perceive how that insolent Duke of Norfolk is killing me with his attentions and devotions to you?"

Henrietta heard this remark; she smiled, and without turning her head towards him, but giving only to the tone of her voice that inflection of gentle reproach, and languid impertinence, which women and princesses so well know how to assume, she murmured, "I have already hinted, my lord, that you must have taken leave of your senses."

Not a single detail escaped Raoul's attention; he heard both Buckingham's entreaty and the princess's reply; he remarked Buckingham retire, heard his deep sigh, and saw him pass a hand over his face. He understood everything, and trembled as he reflected on the position of affairs, and the state of the minds of those about him. At last the admiral, with studied delay, gave the last orders for the departure of the boats. Buckingham heard the directions given with such an exhibition of delight that a stranger would really imagine the young man's reason was affected. As the Duke of Norfolk gave his commands, a large boat or barge, decked with flags, and capable of holding about twenty rowers and fifteen passengers, was slowly lowered from the side of the admiral's vessel. The barge was carpeted with velvet and decorated with coverings embroidered with the arms of England, and with garlands of flowers; for, at that time, ornamentation was by no means forgotten in these political pageants. No sooner was this really royal boat afloat, and the rowers with oars uplifted, awaiting, like soldiers presenting arms, the embarkation of the princess, than Buckingham ran forward to the ladder in order to take his place. His progress was, however, arrested by the queen. "My lord," she said, "it is hardly becoming that you should allow my daughter and myself to land without having previously ascertained that our apartments are properly prepared. I beg your lordship to be good enough to precede us ashore, and to give directions that everything be in proper order on our arrival."

This was a fresh disappointment for the duke, and, still more so, since it was so unexpected. He hesitated, colored violently, but could not reply. He had thought he might be able to keep near Madame during the passage to the shore, and, by this means, to enjoy to the very last moment the brief period fortune still reserved for him. The order, however, was explicit; and the admiral, who heard it given, immediately called out, "Launch the ship's gig." His directions were executed with that celerity which distinguishes every maneuver on board a man-of-war.

Buckingham, in utter hopelessness, cast a look of despair at the princess, of supplication towards the queen, and directed a glance full of anger towards the admiral. The princess pretended not to notice him, while the queen turned aside her head, and the admiral laughed outright, at the sound of which Buckingham seemed ready to spring upon him. The queen-mother rose, and with a tone of authority said, "Pray set off, sir."

The young duke hesitated, looked around him, and with a last effort, half-choked by contending emotions, said, "And you, gentlemen, M. de Guiche and M. de Bragelonne, do not you accompany me?"

De Guiche bowed and said, "Both M. de Bragelonne and myself await her majesty's orders; whatever the commands she imposes on us, we shall obey them." Saying this, he looked towards the princess, who cast down her eyes.

"Your grace will remember," said the queen, "that M. de Guiche is here to represent Monsieur; it is he who will do the honors of France, as you have done those of England; his presence cannot be dispensed with; besides, we owe him this slight favor for the courage he displayed in venturing to seek us in such a terrible stress of weather."

Buckingham opened his lips, as if he were about to speak, but, whether thoughts or expressions failed him, not a syllable escaped them, and turning away, as though out of his mind, he leapt from the vessel into the boat. The sailors were just in time to catch hold of him to steady themselves; for his weight and the rebound had almost upset the boat.

"His grace cannot be in his senses," said the admiral aloud to Raoul.

"I am uneasy on the Duke's account," replied Bragelonne.

While the boat was advancing towards the shore, the duke kept his eyes immovably fixed on the admiral's ship, like a miser torn away from his coffers, or a mother separated from her child, about to be lead away to death. No one, however, acknowledged his signals, his frowns, or his pitiful gestures. In very anguish of mind, he sank down in the boat, burying his hands in his hair, whilst the boat, impelled by the exertions of the merry sailors, flew over the waves. On his arrival he was in such a state of apathy, that, had he not been received at the harbor by the messenger whom he had directed to precede him, he would hardly have had strength to ask his way. Having once, however, reached the house which had been set apart for him, he shut himself up, like Achilles in his tent. The barge bearing the princess quitted the admiral's vessel at the very moment Buckingham landed. It was followed by another boat filled with officers, courtiers, and zealous friends. Great numbers of the inhabitants of Le Havre, having embarked in fishing-cobles and boats of every description, set off to meet the royal barge. The cannon from the forts fired salutes, which were returned by the flagship and the two other vessels, and the flashes from the open mouths of the cannon floated in white fumes over the waves, and disappeared in the clear blue sky.

The princess landed at the decorated quay. Bands of gay music greeted her arrival, and accompanied her every step she took. During the time she was passing through the center of town, and treading beneath her delicate feet the richest carpets and the gayest flowers, which had been strewn upon the ground, De Guiche and Raoul, escaping from their English friends, hurried through the town and hastened rapidly towards the place intended for the residence of Madame.

"Let us hurry forward," said Raoul to De Guiche, "for if I read Buckingham's character aright, he will create some disturbance, when he learns the result of our deliberations of yesterday."

"Never fear," said De Guiche, "De Wardes is there, who is determination itself, while Manicamp is the very personification of the artless gentleness."

De Guiche was not, however, the less diligent on that account, and five minutes afterwards they were within sight of the Hotel de Ville. The first thing which struck them was the number of people assembled in the square. "Excellent," said De Guiche; "our apartments, I see, are prepared."

In fact, in front of the Hotel de Ville, upon the wide open space before it, eight tents had been raised, surmounted by the flags of France and England united. The hotel was surrounded by tents, as by a girdle of variegated colors; ten pages and a dozen mounted troopers, for an escort, mounted guard before the tents. It had a singularly curious effect, almost fairy-like in its appearance. These tents had been constructed during the night-time. Fitted up, within and without, with the richest materials that De Guiche had been able to procure in Le Havre, they completely encircled the Hotel de Ville. The only passage which led to the steps of the hotel, and which was not inclosed by the silken barricade, was guarded by two tents, resembling two pavilions, the doorways of both of which opened towards the entrance. These two tents were destined for De Guiche and Raoul; in whose absence they were intended to be occupied, that of De Guiche by De Wardes, and that of Raoul by Manicamp.

Surrounding these two tents, and the six others, a hundred officers, gentlemen, and pages, dazzling in their display of silk and gold, thronged like bees buzzing about a hive. Every one of them, their swords by their sides, was ready to obey the slightest sign either of De Guiche or Bragelonne, the leaders of the embassy.

At the very moment the two young men appeared at the end of one of the streets leading to the square, they perceived, crossing the square at full gallop, a young man on horseback, whose costume was of surprising richness. He pushed hastily thorough the crowd of curious lookers-on, and, at the sight of these unexpected erections, uttered a cry of anger and dismay. It was Buckingham, who had awakened from his stupor, in order to adorn himself with a costume perfectly dazzling from its beauty, and to await the arrival of the princess and the queen-mother at the Hotel de Ville. At the entrance to the tents, the soldiers barred his passage, and his further progress was arrested. Buckingham, hopelessly infuriated, raised his whip; but his arm was seized by a couple of officers. Of the two guardians of the tent, only one was there. De Wardes was in the interior of the Hotel de Ville, engaging in attending to the execution of some orders by De Guiche. At the noise made by Buckingham, Manicamp, who was indolently reclining upon the cushions at the doorway of one of the tents, rose with his usual indifference, and, perceiving that the disturbance continued, made his appearance from underneath the curtains. "What is the matter?" he said, in a gentle tone of voice, "and who is making this disturbance?"

It so happened, that, at the moment he began to speak, silence had just been restored, and, although his voice was very soft and gentle in its touch, every one heard his question. Buckingham turned round, and looked at the tall thin figure, and the listless expression of countenance of his questioner. Probably the personal appearance of Manicamp, who was dressed very plainly, did not inspire him with much respect, for he replied disdainfully, "Who may you be, monsieur?"

Manicamp, leaning on the arm of a gigantic trooper, as firm as the pillar of a cathedral, replied in his usual tranquil tone of voice, – "And *you*, monsieur?"

"I, monsieur, am the Duke of Buckingham; I have hired all the houses which surround the Hotel de Ville, where I have business to transact; and as these houses are let, they belong to me, and, as I hired them in order to preserve the right of free access to the Hotel de Ville, you are not justified in preventing me passing to it."

"But who prevents you passing, monsieur?" inquired Manicamp.

"Your sentinels."

"Because you wish to pass on horseback, and orders have been given to let only persons on foot pass."

"No one has any right to give orders here, except myself," said Buckingham.

"On what grounds?" inquired Manicamp, with his soft tone. "Will you do me the favor to explain this enigma to me?"

"Because, as I have already told you, I have hired all the houses looking on the square."

"We are very well aware of that, since nothing but the square itself has been left for us."

"You are mistaken, monsieur; the square belongs to me, as well as the houses in it."

"Forgive me, monsieur, but you are mistaken there. In *our* country, we say, the highway belongs to the king, therefore this square is his majesty's; and, consequently, as we are the king's ambassadors, the square belongs to us."

"I have already asked you who you are, monsieur," exclaimed Buckingham, exasperated at the coolness of his interlocutor.

"My name is Manicamp," replied the young man, in a voice whose tones were as harmonious and sweet as the notes of an Aeolian harp.

Buckingham shrugged his shoulders contemptuously, and said, "When I hired these houses which surround the Hotel de Ville, the square was unoccupied; these barracks obstruct my sight; I hereby order them to be removed."

A hoarse and angry murmur ran through the crowd of listeners at these words. De Guiche arrived at this moment; he pushed through the crowd which separated him from Buckingham, and, followed by Raoul, arrived on the scene of action from one side, just as De Wardes came up from the other. "Pardon me, my lord; but if you have any complaint to make, have the goodness to address it to me, inasmuch as it was I who supplied the plans for the construction of these tents."

"Moreover, I would beg you to observe, monsieur, that the term 'barrack' is a highly objectionable one!" added Manicamp, graciously.

"You were saying, monsieur – " continued De Guiche.

"I was saying, monsieur le comte," resumed Buckingham, in a tone of anger more marked than ever, although in some measure moderated by the presence of an equal, "I was saying that it is impossible these tents can remain where they are."

"*Impossible!*" exclaimed De Guiche, "and why?"

"Because I object to them."

A movement of impatience escaped De Guiche, but a warning glance from Raoul restrained him.

"You should the less object to them, monsieur, on account of the abuse of priority you have permitted yourself to exercise."

"*Abuse!*"

"Most assuredly. You commission a messenger, who hires in your name the whole of the town of Le Havre, without considering the members of the French court, who would be sure to arrive here to meet Madame. Your Grace will admit that this is hardly friendly conduct in the representative of a friendly nation."

"The right of possession belongs to him who is first on the ground."

"Not in France, monsieur."

"Why not in France?"

"Because France is a country where politeness is observed."

"Which means?" exclaimed Buckingham, in so violent a manner that those who were present drew back, expecting an immediate collision.

"Which means, monsieur," replied De Guiche, now rather pale, "that I caused these tents to be raised as habitations for myself and my friends, as a shelter for the ambassadors of France, as the only place of refuge which your exactions have left us in the town; and that I and those who are with me, shall remain in them, at least, until an authority more powerful, and more supreme, than your own shall dismiss me from them."

"In other words, until we are ejected, as the lawyers say," observed Manicamp, blandly.

"I know an authority, monsieur, which I trust is such as you will respect," said Buckingham, placing his hand on his sword.

At this moment, and as the goddess of Discord, inflaming all minds, was about to direct their swords against each other, Raoul gently placed his hand on Buckingham's shoulder. "One word, my lord," he said.

"My right, my right, first of all," exclaimed the fiery young man.

"It is precisely upon that point I wish to have the honor of addressing a word to you."

"Very well, monsieur, but let your remarks be brief."

"One question is all I ask; you can hardly expect me to be briefer."

"Speak, monsieur, I am listening."

"Are you, or is the Duke of Orleans, going to marry the granddaughter of Henry IV.?"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Buckingham, retreating a few steps, bewildered.

"Have the goodness to answer me," persisted Raoul tranquilly.

"Do you mean to ridicule me, monsieur?" inquired Buckingham.

“Your question is a sufficient answer for me. You admit, then, that it is not you who are going to marry the princess?”

“You know it perfectly well, monsieur, I should imagine.”

“I beg your pardon, but your conduct has been such as to leave it not altogether certain.”

“Proceed, monsieur, what do you mean to convey?”

Raoul approached the duke. “Are you aware, my lord,” he said, lowering his voice, “that your extravagances very much resemble the excesses of jealousy? These jealous fits, with respect to any woman, are not becoming in one who is neither her lover nor her husband; and I am sure you will admit that my remark applies with still greater force, when the lady in question is a princess of the blood royal!”

“Monsieur,” exclaimed Buckingham, “do you mean to insult Madame Henrietta?”

“Be careful, my lord,” replied Bragelonne, coldly, “for it is you who insult her. A little while since, when on board the admiral’s ship, you wearied the queen, and exhausted the admiral’s patience. I was observing, my lord; and, at first, I concluded you were not in possession of your senses, but I have since surmised the real significance of your madness.”

“Monsieur!” exclaimed Buckingham.

“One moment more, for I have yet another word to add. I trust I am the only one of my companions who has guessed it.”

“Are you aware, monsieur,” said Buckingham, trembling with mingled feelings of anger and uneasiness, “are you aware that you are holding language towards me which requires to be checked?”

“Weigh your words well, my lord,” said Raoul, haughtily; “my nature is not such that its vivacities need checking; whilst you, on the contrary, are descended from a race whose passions are suspected by all true Frenchmen; I repeat, therefore, for the second time, be careful!”

“Careful of what, may I ask? Do you presume to threaten me?”

“I am the son of the Comte de la Fere, my lord, and I never threaten, because I strike first. Therefore, understand me well, the threat that I hold out to you is this – ”

Buckingham clenched his hands, but Raoul continued, as though he had not observed the gesture. “At the very first word, beyond the respect and deference due to her royal highness, which you permit yourself to use towards her, – be patient my lord, for I am perfectly so.”

“You?”

“Undoubtedly. So long as Madame remained on English territory, I held my peace; but from the very moment she stepped on French ground, and now that we have received her in the name of the prince, I warn you, that at the first mark of disrespect which you, in your insane attachment, exhibit towards the royal house of France, I shall have one of two courses to follow; – either I declare, in the presence of every one, the madness with which you are now affected, and I get you ignominiously ordered back to England; or if you prefer it, I will run my dagger through your throat in the presence of all here. This second alternative seems to me the least disagreeable, and I think I shall hold to it.”

Buckingham had become paler than the lace collar around his neck. “M. de Bragelonne,” he said, “is it, indeed, a gentleman who is speaking to me?”

“Yes; only the gentleman is speaking to a madman. Get cured, my lord, and he will hold quite another language to you.”

“But, M. de Bragelonne,” murmured the duke, in a voice, half-choked, and putting his hand to his neck, – “Do you not see I am choking?”

“If your death were to take place at this moment, my lord,” replied Raoul, with unruffled composure, “I should, indeed, regard it as a great happiness, for this circumstance would prevent all kinds of evil remarks; not alone about yourself, but also about those illustrious persons whom your devotion is compromising in so absurd a manner.”

“You are right, you are right,” said the young man, almost beside himself. “Yes, yes; better to die, than to suffer as I do at this moment.” And he grasped a beautiful dagger, the handle of which was inlaid with precious stones; and which he half drew from his breast.

Raoul thrust his hand aside. “Be careful what you do,” he said; “if you do not kill yourself, you commit a ridiculous action; and if you were to kill yourself, you sprinkle blood upon the nuptial robe of the princess of England.”

Buckingham remained a minute gasping for breath; during this interval, his lips quivered, his fingers worked convulsively, and his eyes wandered, as though in delirium. Then suddenly, he said, “M. de Bragelonne, I know nowhere a nobler mind than yours; you are, indeed, a worthy son of the most perfect gentleman that ever lived. Keep your tents.” And he threw his arms round Raoul’s neck. All who were present, astounded at this conduct, which was the very reverse of what was expected, considering the violence of the one adversary and the determination of the other, began immediately to clap their hands, and a thousand cheers and joyful shouts arose from all sides. De Guiche, in his turn, embraced Buckingham somewhat against his inclination; but, at all events, he did embrace him. This was the signal for French and English to do the same; and they who, until that moment, had looked at each other with restless uncertainty, fraternized on the spot. In the meantime, the procession of the princess arrived, and had it not been for Bragelonne, two armies would have been engaged together in conflict, and blood would have been shed upon the flowers with which the ground was covered. At the appearance, however, of the banners borne at the head of the procession, complete order was restored.

Chapter XI. Night

Concord returned to its place amidst the tents. English and French rivaled each other in their devotion and courteous attention to the illustrious travelers. The English forwarded to the French baskets of flowers, of which they had made a plentiful provision to greet the arrival of the young princess; the French in return invited the English to a supper, which was to be given the next day. Congratulations were poured in upon the princess everywhere during her journey. From the respect paid her on all sides, she seemed like a queen; and from the adoration with which she was treated by two or three; she appeared an object of worship. The queen-mother gave the French the most affectionate reception. France was her native country, and she had suffered too much unhappiness in England for England to have made her forget France. She taught her daughter, then, by her own affection for it, that love for a country where they had both been hospitably received, and where a brilliant future opened before them. After the public entry was over, and the spectators in the streets had partially dispersed, and the sound of the music and cheering of the crowd could be heard only in the distance; when the night had closed in, wrapping with its star-covered mantle the sea, the harbor, the town, and surrounding country, De Guiche, still excited by the great events of the day, returned to his tent, and seated himself upon one of the stools with so profound an expression of distress that Bragelonne kept his eyes fixed upon him, until he heard him sigh, and then he approached him. The count had thrown himself back on his seat, leaning his shoulders against the partition of the tent, and remained thus, his face buried in his hands, with heaving chest and restless limbs.

"You are suffering?" asked Raoul.

"Cruelly."

"Bodily, I suppose?"

"Yes; bodily."

"This has indeed been a harassing day," continued the young man, his eyes fixed upon his friend.

"Yes; a night's rest will probably restore me."

"Shall I leave you?"

"No; I wish to talk to you."

"You shall not speak to me, Guiche, until you have first answered my questions."

"Proceed then."

"You will be frank with me?"

"I always am."

"Can you imagine why Buckingham has been so violent?"

"I suspect."

"Because he is in love with Madame, is it not?"

"One could almost swear to it, to observe him."

"You are mistaken; there is nothing of the kind."

"It is you who are mistaken, Raoul; I have read his distress in his eyes, in his every gesture and action the whole day."

"You are a poet, my dear count, and find subjects for your muse everywhere."

"I can perceive love clearly enough."

"Where it does not exist?"

"Nay, where it does exist."

"Do you not think you are deceiving yourself, Guiche?"

"I am convinced of what I say," said the count.

"Now, inform me, count," said Raoul, fixing a penetrating look upon him, "what happened to render you so clear-sighted."

Guiche hesitated for a moment, and then answered, "Self-love, I suppose."

“Self-love is a pedantic word, Guiche.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that, generally, you are less out of spirits than seems to be the case this evening.”

“I am fatigued.”

“Listen to me, Guiche; we have been campaigners together; we have been on horseback for eighteen hours at a time, and our horses dying from exhaustion, or hunger, have fallen beneath us, and yet we have laughed at our mishaps. Believe me, it is not fatigue that saddens you to-night.”

“It is annoyance, then.”

“What annoyance?”

“That of this evening.”

“The mad conduct of the Duke of Buckingham, do you mean?”

“Of course; is it not vexations for us, the representatives of our sovereign master, to witness the devotion of an Englishman to our future mistress, the second lady in point of rank in the kingdom?”

“Yes, you are right; but I do not think any danger is to be apprehended from Buckingham.”

“No; still he is intrusive. Did he not, on his arrival here, almost succeed in creating a disturbance between the English and ourselves; and, had it not been for you, for your admirable presence, for your singular decision of character, swords would have been drawn in the very streets of the town.”

“You observe, however, that he has changed his tactics.”

“Yes, certainly; but this is the very thing that amazes me so much. You spoke to him in a low tone of voice, what did you say to him? You think he loves her; you admit that such a passion does not give way readily. He does not love her, then!” De Guiche pronounced the latter with so marked an expression that Raoul raised his head. The noble character of the young man’s countenance expressed a displeasure which could easily be read.

“What I said to him, count,” replied Raoul, “I will repeat to you. Listen to me. I said, ‘You are regarding with wistful feelings, and most injurious desire, the sister of your prince, – her to whom you are not affianced, who is not, who can never be anything to you; you are outraging those who, like ourselves, have come to seek a young lady to escort her to her husband.’”

“You spoke to him in that manner?” asked Guiche, coloring.

“In those very terms; I even added more. ‘How would you regard us,’ I said, ‘if you were to perceive among us a man mad enough, disloyal enough, to entertain other than sentiments of the most perfect respect for a princess who is the destined wife of our master?’”

These words were so applicable to De Guiche that he turned pale, and, overcome by a sudden agitation, was barely able to stretch out one hand mechanically towards Raoul, as he covered his eyes and face with the other.

“But,” continued Raoul, not interrupted by this movement of his friend, “Heaven be praised, the French, who are pronounced to be thoughtless and indiscreet, reckless, even, are capable of bringing a calm and sound judgment to bear on matters of such high importance. I added even more, for I said, ‘Learn, my lord, that we gentlemen of France devote ourselves to our sovereigns by sacrificing them our affections, as well as our fortunes and our lives; and whenever it may chance to happen that the tempter suggests one of those vile thoughts that set the heart on fire, we extinguish the flame, even if it has to be done by shedding our blood for the purpose. Thus it is that the honor of three is saved: our country’s, our master’s, and our own. It is thus that we act, your Grace; it is thus that every man of honor ought to act.’ In this manner, my dear Guiche,” continued Bragelonne, “I addressed the Duke of Buckingham; and he admitted I was right, and resigned himself unresistingly to my arguments.”

De Guiche, who had hitherto sat leaning forward while Raoul was speaking, drew himself up, his eyes glancing proudly; he seized Raoul’s hand, his face, which had been as cold as ice, seemed on fire. “And you spoke magnificently,” he said, in a half-choked voice; “you are indeed a friend, Raoul. But now, I entreat you, leave me to myself.”

“Do you wish it?”

“Yes; I need repose. Many things have agitated me to-day, both in mind and body; when you return to-morrow I shall no longer be the same man.”

“I leave you, then,” said Raoul, as he withdrew. The count advanced a step towards his friend, and pressed him warmly in his arms. But in this friendly pressure Raoul could detect the nervous agitation of a great internal conflict.

The night was clear, starlit, and splendid; the tempest had passed away, and the sweet influences of the evening had restored life, peace and security everywhere. A few fleecy clouds were floating in the heavens, and indicated from their appearance a continuance of beautiful weather, tempered by a gentle breeze from the east. Upon the large square in front of the hotel, the shadows of the tents, intersected by the golden moonbeams, formed as it were a huge mosaic of jet and yellow flagstones. Soon, however, the entire town was wrapped in slumber; a feeble light still glimmered in Madame’s apartment, which looked out upon the square, and the soft rays from the expiring lamp seemed to be the image of the calm sleep of a young girl, hardly yet sensible of life’s anxieties, and in whom the flame of existence sinks placidly as sleep steals over the body.

Bragelonne quitted the tent with the slow and measured step of a man curious to observe, but anxious not to be seen. Sheltered behind the thick curtains of his own tent, embracing with a glance the whole square, he noticed that, after a few moments’ pause, the curtains of De Guiche’s tent were agitated, and then drawn partially aside. Behind them he could perceive the shadow of De Guiche, his eyes, glittering in the obscurity, fastened ardently upon the princess’s sitting apartment, which was partially lighted by the lamp in the inner room. The soft light which illumined the windows was the count’s star. The fervent aspirations of his nature could be read in his eyes. Raoul, concealed in the shadow, divined the many passionate thoughts that established, between the tent of the young ambassador and the balcony of the princess, a mysterious and magical bond of sympathy – a bond created by thoughts imprinted with so much strength and persistence of will, that they must have caused happy and loving dreams to alight upon the perfumed couch, which the count, with the eyes of his soul, devoured so eagerly.

But De Guiche and Raoul were not the only watchers. The window of one of the houses looking on the square was opened too, the casement of the house where Buckingham resided. By the aid of the rays of light which issued from this latter, the profile of the duke could be distinctly seen, as he indolently reclined upon the carved balcony with its velvet hangings; he also was breathing in the direction of the princess’s apartment his prayers and the wild visions of his love.

Raoul could not resist smiling, as thinking of Madame, he said to himself, “Hers is, indeed, a heart well besieged;” and then added, compassionately, as he thought of Monsieur, “and he is a husband well threatened too; it is a good thing for him that he is a prince of such high rank, that he has an army to safeguard for him that which is his own.” Bragelonne watched for some time the conduct of the two lovers, listened to the loud and uncivil slumbers of Manicamp, who snored as imperiously as though he was wearing his blue and gold, instead of his violet suit.

Then he turned towards the night breeze which bore towards him, he seemed to think, the distant song of the nightingale; and, after having laid in a due provision of melancholy, another nocturnal malady, he retired to rest thinking, with regard to his own love affair, that perhaps four or even a larger number of eyes, quite as ardent as those of De Guiche and Buckingham, were coveting his own idol in the chateau at Blois. “And Mademoiselle de Montalais is by no means a very conscientious garrison,” said he to himself, sighing aloud.

Chapter XII. From Le Havre to Paris

The next day the *fetes* took place, accompanied by all the pomp and animation that the resources of the town and the cheerful disposition of men's minds could supply. During the last few hours spent in Le Havre, every preparation for the departure had been made. After Madame had taken leave of the English fleet, and, once again, had saluted the country in saluting its flags, she entered her carriage, surrounded by a brilliant escort. De Guiche had hoped that the Duke of Buckingham would accompany the admiral to England; but Buckingham succeeded in demonstrating to the queen that there would be great impropriety in allowing Madame to proceed to Paris, almost unprotected. As soon as it had been settled that Buckingham was to accompany Madame, the young duke selected a corps of gentlemen and officers to form part of his own suite, so that it was almost an army that now set out towards Paris, scattering gold, and exciting the liveliest demonstrations as they passed through the different towns and villages on the route. The weather was very fine. France is a beautiful country, especially along the route by which the procession passed. Spring cast its flowers and its perfumed foliage on their path. Normandy, with its vast variety of vegetation, its blue skies and silver rivers, displayed itself in all the loveliness of a paradise to the new sister of the king. *Fetes* and brilliant displays received them everywhere along the line of march. De Guiche and Buckingham forgot everything; De Guiche in his anxiety to prevent any fresh attempts on the part of the duke, and Buckingham, in his desire to awaken in the heart of the princess a softer remembrance of the country to which the recollection of many happy days belonged. But, alas! the poor duke could perceive that the image of that country so cherished by himself became, from day to day, more and more effaced in Madame's mind, in exact proportion as her affection for France became more deeply engraved on her heart. In fact, it was not difficult to perceive that his most devoted attention awakened no acknowledgement, and that the grace with which he rode one of his most fiery horses was thrown away, for it was only casually and by the merest accident that the princess's eyes were turned towards him. In vain did he try, in order to fix upon himself one of those looks, which were thrown carelessly around, or bestowed elsewhere, to produce in the animal he rode its greatest display of strength, speed, temper and address; in vain did he, by exciting his horse almost to madness, spur him, at the risk of dashing himself in pieces against the trees, or of rolling in the ditches, over the gates and barriers which they passed, or down the steep declivities of the hills. Madame, whose attention had been aroused by the noise, turned her head for a moment to observe the cause of it, and then, slightly smiling, again entered into conversation with her faithful guardians, Raoul and De Guiche, who were quietly riding at her carriage doors. Buckingham felt himself a prey to all the tortures of jealousy; an unknown, unheard of anguish glided through his veins, and laid siege to his heart; and then, as if to show that he knew the folly of his conduct, and that he wished to correct, by the humblest submission, his flights of absurdity, he mastered his horse, and compelled him, reeking with sweat and flecked with foam, to champ his bit close beside the carriage, amidst the crowd of courtiers. Occasionally he obtained a word from Madame as a recompense, and yet her speech seemed almost a reproach.

"That is well, my lord," she said, "now you are reasonable."

Or from Raoul, "Your Grace is killing your horse."

Buckingham listened patiently to Raoul's remarks, for he instinctively felt, without having had any proof that such was the case, that Raoul checked the display of De Guiche's feelings, and that, had it not been for Raoul, some mad act or proceeding, either of the count, or of Buckingham himself, would have brought about an open rupture, or a disturbance – perhaps even exile itself. From the moment of that excited conversation the two young men had held in front of the tents at Le Havre, when Raoul made the duke perceive the impropriety of his conduct, Buckingham felt himself attracted towards Raoul almost in spite of himself. He often entered into conversation with him, and it was nearly always to talk to him either of his father or of D'Artagnan, their mutual friend, in whose

praise Buckingham was nearly as enthusiastic as Raoul. Raoul endeavored, as much as possible, to make the conversation turn upon this subject in De Wardes's presence, who had, during the whole journey, been exceedingly annoyed at the superior position taken by Bragelonne, and especially by his influence over De Guiche. De Wardes had that keen and merciless penetration most evil natures possess; he had immediately remarked De Guiche's melancholy, and divined the nature of his regard for the princess. Instead, however, of treating the subject with the same reserve which Raoul practiced; instead of regarding with that respect, which was their due, the obligations and duties of society, De Wardes resolutely attacked in the count the ever-sounding chord of juvenile audacity and pride. It happened one evening, during a halt at Mantes, that while De Guiche and De Wardes were leaning against a barrier, engaged in conversation, Buckingham and Raoul were also talking together as they walked up and down. Manicamp was engaged in devoted attendance on the princess, who already treated him without reserve, on account of his versatile fancy, his frank courtesy of manner, and conciliatory disposition.

"Confess," said De Wardes, "that you are really ill, and that your pedagogue of a friend has not succeeded in curing you."

"I do not understand you," said the count.

"And yet it is easy enough; you are dying of love."

"You are mad, De Wardes."

"Madness it would be, I admit, if Madame were really indifferent to your martyrdom; but she takes so much notice of it, observes it to such an extent, that she compromises herself, and I tremble lest, on our arrival at Paris, M. de Bragelonne may not denounce both of you."

"For shame, De Wardes, again attacking De Bragelonne."

"Come, come, a truce to child's play," replied the count's evil genius, in an undertone; "you know as well as I do what I mean. Besides, you must have observed how the princess's glance softens as she looks at you; – you can tell, by the very inflection of her voice, what pleasure she takes in listening to you, and can feel how thoroughly she appreciates the verses you recite to her. You cannot deny, too, that every morning she tells you how indifferently she slept the previous night."

"True, De Wardes, quite true; but what good is there in your telling me all that?"

"Is it not important to know the exact position of affairs?"

"No, no; not when I am a witness of things that are enough to drive one mad."

"Stay, stay," said De Wardes; "look, she calls you, – do you understand? Profit by the occasion, while your pedagogue is absent."

De Guiche could not resist; an invincible attraction drew him towards the princess. De Wardes smiled as he saw him withdraw.

"You are mistaken, monsieur," said Raoul, suddenly stepping across the barrier against which the previous moment the two friends had been leaning. "The pedagogue is here, and has overheard you."

De Wardes, at the sound of Raoul's voice, which he recognized without having occasion to look at him, half drew his sword.

"Put up your sword," said Raoul; "you know perfectly well that, until our journey is at an end, every demonstration of that nature is useless. Why do you distill into the heart of the man you term your friend all the bitterness that infects your own? As regards myself, you wish to arouse a feeling of deep dislike against a man of honor – my father's friend and my own; and as for the count you wish him to love one who is destined for your master. Really, monsieur, I should regard you as a coward, and a traitor too, if I did not, with greater justice, regard you as a madman."

"Monsieur," exclaimed De Wardes, exasperated, "I was deceived, I find, in terming you a pedagogue. The tone you assume, and the style which is peculiarly your own, is that of a Jesuit, and not of a gentleman. Discontinue, I beg, whenever I am present, this style I complain of, and the tone also. I hate M. d'Artagnan, because he was guilty of a cowardly act towards my father."

“You lie, monsieur,” said Raoul, coolly.

“You give me the lie, monsieur?” exclaimed De Wardes.

“Why not, if what you assert is untrue?”

“You give me the lie, and will not draw your sword?”

“I have resolved, monsieur, not to kill you until Madame shall have been delivered safely into her husband’s hands.”

“Kill me! Believe me, monsieur, your schoolmaster’s rod does not kill so easily.”

“No,” replied Raoul, sternly, “but M. d’Artagnan’s sword kills; and, not only do I possess his sword, but he has himself taught me how to use it; and with that sword, when a befitting time arrives, I will avenge his name – a name you have dishonored.”

“Take care, monsieur,” exclaimed De Wardes; “if you do not immediately give me satisfaction, I will avail myself of every means to revenge myself.”

“Indeed, monsieur,” said Buckingham, suddenly, appearing upon the scene of action, “that is a threat which savors of assassination, and therefore, ill becomes a gentleman.”

“What did you say, my lord?” said De Wardes, turning round towards him.

“I said, monsieur, that the words you have just spoken are displeasing to my English ears.”

“Very well, monsieur, if what you say is true,” exclaimed De Wardes, thoroughly incensed, “I at least find in you one who will not escape me. Understand my words as you like.”

“I take them in the manner they cannot but be understood,” replied Buckingham, with that haughty tone which characterized him, and which, even in ordinary conversation, gave a tone of defiance to everything he said; “M. de Bragelonne is my friend, you insult M. de Bragelonne, and you shall give me satisfaction for that insult.”

De Wardes cast a look upon De Bragelonne, who, faithful to the character he had assumed, remained calm and unmoved, even after the duke’s defiance.

“It would seem that I did not insult M. de Bragelonne, since M. de Bragelonne, who carries a sword by his side, does not consider himself insulted.”

“At all events you insult someone.”

“Yes, I insulted M. d’Artagnan,” resumed De Wardes, who had observed that this was the only means of stinging Raoul, so as to awaken his anger.

“That, then,” said Buckingham, “is another matter.”

“Precisely so,” said De Wardes; “it is the province of M. d’Artagnan’s friends to defend him.”

“I am entirely of your opinion,” replied the duke, who had regained all his indifference of manner; “if M. de Bragelonne were offended, I could not reasonably be expected to espouse his quarrel, since he is himself here; but when you say that it is a quarrel of M. d’Artagnan – ”

“You will of course leave me to deal with the matter,” said De Wardes.

“Nay, on the contrary, for I draw my sword,” said Buckingham, unsheathing it as he spoke; “for if M. d’Artagnan injured your father, he rendered, or at least did all that he could to render, a great service to mine.”

De Wardes was thunderstruck.

“M. d’Artagnan,” continued Buckingham, “is the bravest gentleman I know. I shall be delighted, as I owe him many personal obligations, to settle them with you, by crossing my sword with yours.” At the same moment Buckingham drew his sword from its scabbard, saluted Raoul, and put himself on guard.

De Wardes advanced a step to meet him.

“Stay, gentlemen,” said Raoul, advancing towards them, and placing his own drawn sword between the combatants, “the affair is hardly worth the trouble of blood being shed almost in the presence of the princess. M. de Wardes speaks ill of M. d’Artagnan, with whom he is not even acquainted.”

“What, monsieur,” said De Wardes, setting his teeth hard together, and resting the point of his sword on the toe of his boot, “do you assert that I do not know M. d’Artagnan?”

“Certainly not; you do not know him,” replied Raoul, coldly, “and you are even not aware where he is to be found.”

“Not know where he is?”

“Such must be the case, since you fix your quarrel with him upon strangers, instead of seeking M. d’Artagnan where he is to be found.” De Wardes turned pale. “Well, monsieur,” continued Raoul, “I will tell you where M. d’Artagnan is: he is now in Paris; when on duty he is to be met with at the Louvre, – when not on duty, in the Rue des Lombards. M. d’Artagnan can easily be discovered at either of those two places. Having, therefore, as you assert, so many causes of complaint against him, show your courage in seeking him out, and afford him an opportunity of giving you that satisfaction you seem to ask of every one but of himself.” De Wardes passed his hand across his forehead, which was covered with perspiration. “For shame, M. de Wardes! so quarrelsome a disposition is hardly becoming after the publication of the edicts against duels. Pray think of that; the king will be incensed at our disobedience, particularly at such a time, – and his majesty will be in the right.”

“Excuses,” murmured De Wardes; “mere prettexts.”

“Really, M. De Wardes,” resumed Raoul, “such remarks are the idlest bluster. You know very well that the Duke of Buckingham is a man of undoubted courage, who has already fought ten duels, and will probably fight eleven. His name alone is significant enough. As far as I am concerned, you are well aware that I can fight also. I fought at Lens, at Bleneau, at the Dunes in front of the artillery, a hundred paces in front of the line, while you – I say this parenthetically – were a hundred paces behind it. True it is, that on that occasion there was far too great a concourse of persons present for your courage to be observed, and on that account perhaps you did not reveal it; while here, it would be a display, and would excite remark – you wish that others should talk about you, in what manner you do not care. Do not depend upon me, M. de Wardes to assist you in your designs, for I shall certainly not afford you that pleasure.”

“Sensibly observed,” said Buckingham, putting up his sword, “and I ask your forgiveness, M. de Bragelonne, for having allowed myself to yield to a first impulse.”

De Wardes, however, on the contrary, perfectly furious, bounded forward and raised his sword, threateningly, against Raoul, who had scarcely enough time to put himself in a posture of defense.

“Take care, monsieur,” said Bragelonne, tranquilly, “or you will put out one of my eyes.”

“You will not fight, then?” said De Wardes.

“Not at this moment; but this I promise to do; immediately on our arrival at Paris I will conduct you to M. d’Artagnan, to whom you shall detail all the causes of complaint you have against him. M d’Artagnan will solicit the king’s permission to measure swords with you. The king will yield his consent, and when you shall have received the sword-thrust in due course, you will consider, in a calmer frame of mind, the precepts of the Gospel, which enjoin forgetfulness of injuries.”

“Ah!” exclaimed De Wardes, furious at this imperturbable coolness, “one can clearly see you are half a bastard, M. de Bragelonne.”

Raoul became as pale as death; his eyes flashed lightning, causing De Wardes involuntarily to fall back. Buckingham, also, who had perceived their expression, threw himself between the two adversaries, whom he had expected to see precipitate themselves on each other. De Wardes had reserved this injury for the last; he clasped his sword firmly in his hand, and awaited the encounter. “You are right, monsieur,” said Raoul, mastering his emotion, “I am only acquainted with my father’s name; but I know too well that the Comte de la Fere is too upright and honorable a man to allow me to fear for a single moment that there is, as you insinuate, any stain upon my birth. My ignorance, therefore, of my mother’s name is a misfortune for me, and not a reproach. You are deficient in loyalty of conduct; you are wanting in courtesy, in reproaching me with misfortune. It matters little, however,

the insult has been given, and I consider myself insulted accordingly. It is quite understood, then, that after you shall have received satisfaction from M. d'Artagnan, you will settle your quarrel with me."

"I admire your prudence, monsieur," replied De Wardes with a bitter smile; "a little while ago you promised me a sword-thrust from M. d'Artagnan, and now, after I shall have received his, you offer me one from yourself."

"Do not disturb yourself," replied Raoul, with concentrated anger; "in all affairs of that nature, M. d'Artagnan is exceedingly skillful, and I will beg him as a favor to treat you as he did your father; in other words, to spare your life at least, so as to leave me the pleasure, after your recovery, of killing you outright; for you have the heart of a viper, M. de Wardes, and in very truth, too many precautions cannot be taken against you."

"I shall take my precautions against you," said De Wardes, "be assured of it."

"Allow me, monsieur," said Buckingham, "to translate your remark by a piece of advice I am about to give M. de Bragelonne; M. de Bragelonne, wear a cuirass."

De Wardes clenched his hands. "Ah!" said he, "you two gentlemen intend to wait until you have taken that precaution before you measure your swords against mine."

"Very well, monsieur," said Raoul, "since you positively will have it so, let us settle the affair now." And, drawing his sword, he advanced towards De Wardes.

"What are you going to do?" said Buckingham.

"Be easy," said Raoul, "it will not be very long."

De Wardes placed himself on his guard; their swords crossed. De Wardes flew upon Raoul with such impetuosity, that at the first clashing of the steel blades Buckingham clearly saw that Raoul was only trifling with his adversary. Buckingham stepped aside, and watched the combat. Raoul was as calm as if he were handling a foil instead of a sword; having retreated a step, he parried three or four fierce thrusts which De Wardes made at him, caught the sword of the latter with within his own, and sent it flying twenty paces the other side of the barrier. Then as De Wardes stood disarmed and astounded at his defeat, Raoul sheathed his sword, seized him by the collar and the waist band, and hurled his adversary to the other end of the barrier, trembling, and mad with rage.

"We shall meet again," murmured De Wardes, rising from the ground and picking up his sword.

"I have done nothing for the last hour," said Raoul, rising from the ground, "but say the same thing." Then, turning towards the duke, he said, "I entreat you to be silent about this affair; I am ashamed to have gone so far, but my anger carried me away, and I ask your forgiveness for it; – forget it, too."

"Dear viscount," said the duke, pressing with his own the vigorous and valiant hand of his companion, "allow me, on the contrary, to remember it, and to look after your safety; that man is dangerous, – he will kill you."

"My father," replied Raoul, "lived for twenty years under the menace of a much more formidable enemy, and he still lives."

"Your father had good friends, viscount."

"Yes," sighed Raoul, "such friends, indeed, that none are now left like them."

"Do not say that, I beg, at the very moment I offer you my friendship;" and Buckingham opened his arms to embrace Raoul, who delightedly received the proffered alliance. "In my family," added Buckingham, "you are aware, M. de Bragelonne, we die to save our friends."

"I know it well, duke," replied Raoul.

Chapter XIII. An Account of what the Chevalier de Lorraine Thought of Madame

Nothing further interrupted the journey. Under a pretext that was little remarked, M. de Wardes went forward in advance of the others. He took Manicamp with him, for his equable and dreamy disposition acted as a counterpoise to his own. It is a subject of remark, that quarrelsome and restless characters invariably seek the companionship of gentle, timorous dispositions, as if the former sought, in the contrast, a repose for their own ill-humor, and the latter a protection for their weakness. Buckingham and Bragelonne, admitting De Guiche into their friendship, in concert with him, sang the praises of the princess during the whole of the journey. Bragelonne, had, however, insisted that their three voices should be in concert, instead of singing in solo parts, as De Guiche and his rival seemed to have acquired a dangerous habit of doing. This style of harmony pleased the queen-mother exceedingly, but it was not perhaps so agreeable to the young princess, who was an incarnation of coquetry, and who, without any fear as far as her own voice was concerned, sought opportunities of so perilously distinguishing herself. She possessed one of those fearless and incautious dispositions that find gratification in an excess of sensitiveness of feeling, and for whom, also, danger has a certain fascination. And so her glances, her smiles, her toilette, an inexhaustible armory of weapons of offense, were showered on the three young men with overwhelming force; and, from her well-stored arsenal issued glances, kindly recognitions, and a thousand other little charming attentions which were intended to strike at long range the gentlemen who formed the escort, the townspeople, the officers of the different cities she passed through, pages, populace, and servants; it was wholesale slaughter, a general devastation. By the time Madame arrived at Paris, she had reduced to slavery about a hundred thousand lovers: and brought in her train to Paris half a dozen men who were almost mad about her, and two who were, indeed, literally out of their minds. Raoul was the only person who divined the power of this woman's attraction, and as his heart was already engaged, he arrived in the capital full of indifference and distrust. Occasionally during the journey he conversed with the queen of England respecting the power of fascination which Madame possessed, and the mother, whom so many misfortunes and deceptions had taught experience, replied: "Henrietta was sure to be illustrious in one way or another, whether born in a palace or born in obscurity; for she is a woman of great imagination, capricious and self-willed." De Wardes and Manicamp, in their self-assumed character of courtiers, had announced the princess's arrival. The procession was met at Nanterre by a brilliant escort of cavaliers and carriages. It was Monsieur himself, followed by the Chevalier de Lorraine and by his favorites, the latter being themselves followed by a portion of the king's military household, who had arrived to meet his affianced bride. At St. Germain, the princess and her mother had changed their heavy traveling carriage, somewhat impaired by the journey, for a light, richly decorated chariot drawn by six horses with white and gold harness. Seated in this open carriage, as though upon a throne, and beneath a parasol of embroidered silk, fringed with feathers, sat the young and lovely princess, on whose beaming face were reflected the softened rose-tints which suited her delicate skin to perfection. Monsieur, on reaching the carriage, was struck by her beauty; he showed his admiration in so marked a manner that the Chevalier de Lorraine shrugged his shoulders as he listened to his compliments, while Buckingham and De Guiche were almost heart-broken. After the usual courtesies had been rendered, and the ceremony completed, the procession slowly resumed the road to Paris. The presentations had been carelessly made, and Buckingham, with the rest of the English gentlemen, had been introduced to Monsieur, from whom they had received but very indifferent attention. But, during their progress, as he observed that the duke devoted himself with his accustomed eagerness to the carriage-door, he asked the Chevalier de Lorraine, his inseparable companion, "Who is that cavalier?"

“He was presented to your highness a short while ago; it is the handsome Duke of Buckingham.”

“Ah, yes, I remember.”

“Madame’s knight,” added the favorite, with an inflection of the voice which envious minds can alone give to the simplest phrases.

“What do you say?” replied the prince.

“I said ‘Madame’s knight’.”

“Has she a recognized knight, then?”

“One would think you can judge of that for yourself; look, only, how they are laughing and flirting. All three of them.”

“What do you mean by *all three*?”

“Do you not see that De Guiche is one of the party?”

“Yes, I see. But what does that prove?”

“That Madame has two admirers instead of one.”

“You poison the simplest thing!”

“I poison nothing. Ah! your royal highness’s mind is perverted. The honors of the kingdom of France are being paid to your wife and you are not satisfied.”

The Duke of Orleans dreaded the satirical humor of the Chevalier de Lorraine whenever it reached a certain degree of bitterness, and he changed the conversation abruptly. “The princess is pretty,” said he, very negligently, as if he were speaking of a stranger.

“Yes,” replied the chevalier, in the same tone.

“You say ‘yes’ like a ‘no’. She has very beautiful black eyes.”

“Yes, but small.”

“That is so, but they are brilliant. She is tall, and of a good figure.”

“I fancy she stoops a little, my lord.”

“I do not deny it. She has a noble appearance.”

“Yes, but her face is thin.”

“I thought her teeth beautiful.”

“They can easily be seen, for her mouth is large enough. Decidedly, I was wrong, my lord; you are certainly handsomer than your wife.”

“But do you think me as handsome as Buckingham?”

“Certainly, and he thinks so, too; for look, my lord, he is redoubling his attentions to Madame to prevent your effacing the impression he has made.”

Monsieur made a movement of impatience, but as he noticed a smile of triumph pass across the chevalier’s lips, he drew up his horse to a foot-pace. “Why,” said he, “should I occupy myself any longer about my cousin? Do I not already know her? Were we not brought up together? Did I not see her at the Louvre when she was quite a child?”

“A great change has taken place in her since then, prince. At the period you allude to, she was somewhat less brilliant, and scarcely so proud, either. One evening, particularly, you may remember, my lord, the king refused to dance with her, because he thought her plain and badly dressed!”

These words made the Duke of Orleans frown. It was by no means flattering for him to marry a princess of whom, when young, the king had not thought much. He would probably have retorted, but at this moment De Guiche quitted the carriage to join the prince. He had remarked the prince and the chevalier together, and full of anxious attention he seemed to try and guess the nature of the remarks which they had just exchanged. The chevalier, whether he had some treacherous object in view, or from imprudence, did not take the trouble to dissimulate. “Count,” he said, “you’re a man of excellent taste.”

“Thank you for the compliment,” replied De Guiche; “but why do you say that?”

“Well I appeal to his highness.”

“No doubt of it,” said Monsieur; “and Guiche knows perfectly well that I regard him as a most finished cavalier.”

“Well, since that is decided, I resume. You have been in the princess’s society, count, for the last eight days, have you not?”

“Yes,” replied De Guiche, coloring in spite of himself.

“Well then, tell us frankly, what do you think of her personal appearance?”

“Of her personal appearance?” returned De Guiche, stupefied.

“Yes; of her appearance, of her mind, of herself, in fact.”

Astounded by this question, De Guiche hesitated answering.

“Come, come, De Guiche,” resumed the chevalier, laughingly, “tell us your opinion frankly; the prince commands it.”

“Yes, yes,” said the prince, “be frank.”

De Guiche stammered out a few unintelligible words.

“I am perfectly well aware,” returned Monsieur, “that the subject is a delicate one, but you know you can tell me everything. What do you think of her?”

In order to avoid betraying his real thoughts, De Guiche had recourse to the only defense which a man taken by surprise really has, and accordingly told an untruth. “I do not find Madame,” he said, “either good or bad looking, yet rather good than bad looking.”

“What! count,” exclaimed the chevalier, “you who went into such ecstasies and uttered so many exclamations at the sight of her portrait.”

De Guiche colored violently. Very fortunately, his horse, which was slightly restive, enabled him by a sudden plunge to conceal his agitation. “What portrait?” he murmured, joining them again. The chevalier had not taken his eyes off him.

“Yes, the portrait. Was not the miniature a good likeness?”

“I do not remember. I had forgotten the portrait; it quite escaped my recollection.”

“And yet it made a very marked impression upon you,” said the chevalier.

“That is not unlikely.”

“Is she witty, at all events?” inquired the duke.

“I believe so, my lord.”

“Is M. de Buckingham witty, too?” said the chevalier.

“I do not know.”

“My own opinion is that he must be,” replied the chevalier, “for he makes Madame laugh, and she seems to take no little pleasure in his society, which never happens to a clever woman when in the company of a simpleton.”

“Of course, then, he must be clever,” said De Guiche, simply.

At this moment Raoul opportunely arrived, seeing how De Guiche was pressed by his dangerous questioner, to whom he addressed a remark, and in that way changed the conversation. The *entree* was brilliant and joyous.

The king, in honor of his brother, had directed that the festivities should be on a scale of the greatest possible magnificence. Madame and her mother alighted at the Louvre, where, during their exile they had so gloomily submitted to obscurity, misery, and privations of every description. That palace, which had been so inhospitable a residence for the unhappy daughter of Henry IV., the naked walls, the uneven floorings, the ceilings matted with cobwebs, the vast dilapidated chimney-places, the cold hearths on which the charity extended to them by parliament hardly permitted a fire to glow, was completely altered in appearance. The richest hangings and the thickest carpets, glistening flagstones, and pictures, with their richly gilded frames; in every direction could be seen candelabra, mirrors, and furniture and fittings of the most sumptuous character; in every direction, also, were guards of the proudest military bearing, with floating plumes, crowds of attendants and courtiers in the ante-chambers and upon the staircases. In the courtyards, where the grass had formerly been

allowed to luxuriate, as if the ungrateful Mazarin had thought it a good idea to let the Parisians perceive the solitude and disorder were, with misery and despair, the fit accompaniments of fallen monarchy; the immense courtyards, formerly silent and desolate, were now thronged with courtiers whose horses were pacing and prancing to and fro. The carriages were filled with young and beautiful women, who awaited the opportunity of saluting, as she passed, the daughter of that daughter of France who, during her widowhood and exile, had sometimes gone without wood for her fire, and bread for her table, whom the meanest attendant at the chateau had treated with indifference and contempt. And so, the Madame Henriette once more returned to the Louvre, with her heart more swollen with bitter recollections than her daughter's, whose disposition was fickle and forgetful, with triumph and delight. She knew but too well this brilliant reception was paid to the happy mother of a king restored to his throne, a throne second to none in Europe, while the worse than indifferent reception she had before met with was paid to her, the daughter of Henry IV., as a punishment for having been unfortunate. After the princess had been installed in their apartments and had rested, the gentlemen who had formed their escort, having, in like manner, recovered from their fatigue, they resumed their accustomed habits and occupations. Raoul began by setting off to see his father, who had left for Blois. He then tried to see M. d'Artagnan, who, however, being engaged in the organization of a military household for the king, could not be found anywhere. Bragelonne next sought out De Guiche, but the count was occupied in a long conference with his tailors and with Manicamp, which consumed his whole time. With the Duke of Buckingham he fared still worse, for the duke was purchasing horses after horses, diamonds upon diamonds. He monopolized every embroiderer, jeweler, and tailor that Paris could boast of. Between De Guiche and himself a vigorous contest ensued, invariably a courteous one, in which, in order to insure success, the duke was ready to spend a million; while the Marechal de Gramont had only allowed his son sixty thousand francs. So Buckingham laughed and spent his money. Guiche groaned in despair, and would have shown it more violently, had it not been for the advice De Bragelonne gave him.

"A million!" repeated De Guiche daily; "I must submit. Why will not the marechal advance me a portion of my patrimony?"

"Because you would throw it away," said Raoul.

"What can that matter to him? If I am to die of it, I shall die of it, and then I shall need nothing further."

"But what need is there to die?" said Raoul.

"I do not wish to be conquered in elegance by an Englishman."

"My dear count," said Manicamp, "elegance is not a costly commodity, it is only a very difficult accomplishment."

"Yes, but difficult things cost a good deal of money, and I have only got sixty thousand francs."

"A very embarrassing state of things, truly," said De Wardes; "even if you spent as much as Buckingham, there is only nine hundred and forty thousand francs difference."

"Where am I to find them?"

"Get into debt."

"I am in debt already."

"A greater reason for getting further."

Advice like this resulted in De Guiche becoming excited to such an extent that he committed extravagances where Buckingham only incurred expenses. The rumor of this extravagant profuseness delighted the hearts of all the shopkeepers in Paris; from the hotel of the Duke of Buckingham to that of the Comte de Gramont nothing but miracles was attempted. While all this was going on, Madame was resting herself, and Bragelonne was engaged in writing to Mademoiselle de la Valliere. He had already dispatched four letters, and not an answer to any one of them had been received, when, on the very morning fixed for the marriage ceremony, which was to take place in the chapel

at the Palais Royal, Raoul, who was dressing, heard his valet announce M. de Malicorne. "What can this Malicorne want with me?" thought Raoul; and then said to his valet, "Let him wait."

"It is a gentleman from Blois," said the valet.

"Admit him at once," said Raoul, eagerly.

Malicorne entered as brilliant as a star, and wearing a superb sword at his side. After having saluted Raoul most gracefully, he said: "M. de Bragelonne, I am the bearer of a thousand compliments from a lady to you."

Raoul colored. "From a lady," said he, "from a lady of Blois?"

"Yes, monsieur; from Mademoiselle de Montalais."

"Thank you, monsieur; I recollect you now," said Raoul. "And what does Mademoiselle de Montalais require of me?"

Malicorne drew four letters from his pocket, which he offered to Raoul.

"My own letters, is it possible?" he said, turning pale; "my letters, and the seals unbroken?"

"Monsieur, your letters did not find at Blois the person to whom they were addressed, and so they are now returned to you."

"Mademoiselle de la Valliere has left Blois, then?" exclaimed Raoul.

"Eight days ago."

"Where is she, then?"

"In Paris."

"How is it known that these letters were from me?"

"Mademoiselle de Montalais recognized your handwriting and your seal," said Malicorne.

Raoul colored and smiled. "Mademoiselle de Montalais is exceedingly amiable," he said; "she is always kind and charming."

"Always, monsieur."

"Surely she could have given me some precise information about Mademoiselle de la Valliere. I never could find her in this immense city."

Malicorne drew another packet from his pocket. "You may possibly find in this letter what you are anxious to learn."

Raoul hurriedly broke the seal. The writing was that of Mademoiselle Aure, and inclosed were these words: – "Paris, Palais Royal. The day of the nuptial blessing."

"What does this mean?" inquired Raoul of Malicorne; "you probably know?"

"I do, monsieur."

"For pity's sake, tell me, then."

"Impossible, monsieur."

"Why so?"

"Because Mademoiselle Aure has forbidden me to do so."

Raoul looked at his strange visitor, and remained silent; – "At least, tell me whether it is fortunate or unfortunate."

"That you will see."

"You are very severe in your reservations."

"Will you grant me one favor, monsieur?" said Malicorne.

"In exchange for that you refuse me?"

"Precisely."

"What is it?"

"I have the greatest desire to see the ceremony, and I have no ticket to admit me, in spite of all the steps I have taken to secure one. Could you get me admitted?"

"Certainly."

"Do me this kindness, then, I entreat."

"Most willingly, monsieur; come with me."

“I am exceedingly indebted to you, monsieur,” said Malicorne.

“I thought you were a friend of M. de Manicamp.”

“I am, monsieur; but this morning I was with him as he was dressing, and I let a bottle of blacking fall over his new dress, and he flew at me sword in hand, so that I was obliged to make my escape. That is the reason I could not ask him for a ticket. He wanted to kill me.”

“I can well believe it,” laughed Raoul. “I know Manicamp is capable of killing a man who has been unfortunate enough to commit the crime you have to reproach yourself with, but I will repair the mischief as far as you are concerned. I will but fasten my cloak, and shall then be ready to serve you, not only as a guide, but as your introducer, too.”

Chapter XIV. A Surprise for Raoul

Madame's marriage was celebrated in the chapel of the Palais Royal, in the presence of a crowd of courtiers, who had been most scrupulously selected. However, notwithstanding the marked favor which an invitation indicated, Raoul, faithful to his promise to Malicorne, who was so anxious to witness the ceremony, obtained admission for him. After he had fulfilled this engagement, Raoul approached De Guiche, who, as if in contrast with his magnificent costume, exhibited a countenance so utterly dejected, that the Duke of Buckingham was the only one present who could contend with him as far as pallor and discomfiture were concerned.

"Take care, count," said Raoul, approaching his friend, and preparing to support him at the moment the archbishop blessed the married couple. In fact, the Prince of Conde was attentively scrutinizing these two images of desolation, standing like caryatides on either side of the nave of the church. The count, after that, kept a more careful watch over himself.

At the termination of the ceremony, the king and queen passed onward towards the grand reception-room, where Madame and her suite were to be presented to them. It was remarked that the king, who had seemed more than surprised at his sister-in-law's appearance, was most flattering in his compliments to her. Again, it was remarked that the queen-mother, fixing a long and thoughtful gaze upon Buckingham, leaned towards Madame de Motteville as though to ask her, "Do you not see how much he resembles his father?" and finally it was remarked that Monsieur watched everybody, and seemed quite discontented. After the reception of the princess and ambassadors, Monsieur solicited the king's permission to present to him as well as to Madame the persons belonging to their new household.

"Are you aware, vicomte," inquired the Prince de Conde of Raoul, "whether the household has been selected by a person of taste, and whether there are any faces worth looking at?"

"I have not the slightest idea, monseigneur," replied Raoul.

"You affect ignorance, surely."

"In what way, monseigneur?"

"You are a friend of De Guiche, who is one of the friends of the prince."

"That may be so, monseigneur; but the matter having no interest whatever for me, I have never questioned De Guiche on the subject; and De Guiche, on his part, never having been questioned, did not communicate any particulars to me."

"But Manicamp?"

"It is true I saw Manicamp at Le Havre, and during the journey here, but I was no more inquisitive with him than I had been towards De Guiche. Besides, is it likely that Manicamp should know anything of such matters? for he is a person of only secondary importance."

"My dear vicomte, do you not know better than that?" said the prince; "why, it is these persons of secondary importance, who, on such occasions, have all the influence; and the truth is, that nearly everything has been done through Manicamp's presentations to De Guiche, and through De Guiche to Monsieur."

"I assure you, monseigneur, I was ignorant of that," said Raoul, "and what your highness does me the honor to impart is perfectly new to me."

"I will most readily believe you, although it seems incredible; besides we shall not have long to wait. See, the flying squadron is advancing, as good Queen Catherine used to say. Ah! ah! what pretty faces!"

A bevy of young girls at this moment entered the *salon*, conducted by Madame de Navailles, and to Manicamp's credit be it said, if indeed he had taken that part in their selection which the Prince de Conde assigned him, it was a display calculated to dazzle those who, like the prince, could appreciate every character and style of beauty. A young, fair-complexioned girl, from twenty to one-

and-twenty years of age, and whose large blue eyes flashed, as she opened them, in the most dazzling manner, walked at the head of the band and was the first presented.

“Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente,” said Madame de Navailles to Monsieur, who, as he saluted his wife, repeated “Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente.”

“Ah! ah!” said the Prince de Conde to Raoul, “she is presentable enough.”

“Yes,” said Raoul, “but has she not a somewhat haughty style?”

“Bah! we know these airs very well, vicomte; three months hence she will be tame enough. But look, there, indeed, is a pretty face.”

“Yes,” said Raoul, “and one I am acquainted with.”

“Mademoiselle Aure de Montalais,” said Madame de Navailles. The name and Christian name were carefully repeated by Monsieur.

“Great heavens!” exclaimed Raoul, fixing his bewildered gaze upon the entrance doorway.

“What’s the matter?” inquired the prince; “was it Mademoiselle Aure de Montalais who made you utter such a ‘Great heavens’?”

“No, monseigneur, no,” replied Raoul, pale and trembling.

“Well, then, if it be not Mademoiselle Aure de Montalais, it is that pretty *blonde* who follows her. What beautiful eyes! She is rather thin, but has fascinations without number.”

“Mademoiselle de la Baume le Blanc de la Valliere!” said Madame de Navailles; and, as this name resounded through his whole being, a cloud seemed to rise from his breast to his eyes, so that he neither saw nor heard anything more; and the prince, finding him nothing more than a mere echo which remained silent under his railleries, moved forward to inspect somewhat closer the beautiful girls whom his first glance had already particularized.

“Louise here! Louise a maid of honor to Madame!” murmured Raoul, and his eyes, which did not suffice to satisfy his reason, wandered from Louise to Montalais. The latter had already emancipated herself from her assumed timidity, which she only needed for the presentation and for her reverences.

Mademoiselle de Montalais, from the corner of the room to which she had retired, was looking with no slight confidence at the different persons present; and, having discovered Raoul, she amused herself with the profound astonishment which her own and her friend’s presence there caused the unhappy lover. Her waggish and malicious look, which Raoul tried to avoid meeting, and which yet he sought inquiringly from time to time, placed him on the rack. As for Louise, whether from natural timidity, or some other reason for which Raoul could not account, she kept her eyes constantly cast down; intimidated, dazzled, and with impeded respiration, she withdrew herself as much as possible aside, unaffected even by the nudges Montalais gave her with her elbow. The whole scene was a perfect enigma for Raoul, the key to which he would have given anything to obtain. But no one was there who could assist him, not even Malicorne; who, a little uneasy at finding himself in the presence of so many persons of good birth, and not a little discouraged by Montalais’s bantering glances, had described a circle, and by degrees succeeded in getting a few paces from the prince, behind the group of maids of honor, and nearly within reach of Mademoiselle Aure’s voice, she being the planet around which he, as her attendant satellite, seemed constrained to gravitate. As he recovered his self-possession, Raoul fancied he recognized voices on his right hand side that were familiar to him, and he perceived De Wardes, De Guiche, and the Chevalier de Lorraine conversing together. It is true they were talking in tones so low, that the sound of their words could hardly be heard in the vast apartment. To speak in that manner from any particular place without bending down, or turning round, or looking at the person with whom one may be engaged in conversation, is a talent that cannot be immediately acquired by newcomers. Long study is needed for such conversations, which, without a look, gesture, or movement of the head, seem like the conversation of a group of statues. In fact, the king’s and queen’s grand assemblies, while their majesties were speaking, and while every one present seemed to be listening in the midst of the most profound silence, some of these noiseless

conversations took place, in which adulation was not the prevailing feature. But Raoul was one among others exceedingly clever in this art, so much a matter of etiquette, that from the movement of the lips, he was often able to guess the sense of the words.

“Who is that Montalais?” inquired De Wardes, “and that La Valliere? What country-town have we had sent here?”

“Montalais?” said the chevalier, – “oh, I know her; she is a good sort of girl, whom we shall find amusing enough. La Valliere is a charming girl, slightly lame.”

“Ah! bah!” said De Wardes.

“Do not be absurd, De Wardes, there are some very characteristic and ingenious Latin axioms about lame ladies.”

“Gentlemen, gentlemen,” said De Guiche, looking at Raoul with uneasiness, “be a little careful, I entreat you.”

But the uneasiness of the count, in appearance at least, was not needed. Raoul had preserved the firmest and most indifferent countenance, although he had not lost a word that passed. He seemed to keep an account of the insolence and license of the two speakers in order to settle matters with them at the earliest opportunity.

De Wardes seemed to guess what was passing in his mind, and continued:

“Who are these young ladies’ lovers?”

“Montalais’s lover?” said the chevalier.

“Yes, Montalais first.”

“You, I, or De Guiche, – whoever likes, in fact.”

“And the other?”

“Mademoiselle de la Valliere?”

“Yes.”

“Take care, gentlemen,” exclaimed De Guiche, anxious to put a stop to the chevalier’s reply; “take care, Madame is listening to us.”

Raoul had thrust his hand up to the wrist into his *justaucorps* in great agitation. But the very malignity which he saw was excited against these poor girls made him take a serious resolution. “Poor Louise,” he thought, “has come here only with an honorable object in view, and under honorable protection; and I must learn what that object is which she has in view, and who it is that protects her.” And following Malicorne’s maneuver, he made his way toward the group of the maids of honor. The presentations were soon over. The king, who had done nothing but look at and admire Madame, shortly afterwards left the reception-room, accompanied by the two queens. The Chevalier de Lorraine resumed his place beside Monsieur, and, as he accompanied him, insinuated a few drops of the venom he had collected during the last hour, while looking at some of the faces in the court, and suspecting that some of their hearts might be happy. A few of the persons present followed the king as he quitted the apartment; but such of the courtiers as assumed an independence of character, and professed a gallantry of disposition, began to approach the ladies of the court. The prince paid his compliments to Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente, Buckingham devoted himself to Madame Chalais and Mademoiselle de Lafayette, whom Madame already distinguished by her notice, and whom she held in high regard. As for the Comte de Guiche, who had abandoned Monsieur as soon as he could approach Madame alone, he conversed, with great animation, with Madame de Valentinois, and with Mademoiselle de Crequy and de Chatillon.

Amid these varied political, and amorous interests, Malicorne was anxious to gain Montalais’s attention; but the latter preferred talking with Raoul, even if it were only to amuse herself with his innumerable questions and his astonishment. Raoul had gone directly to Mademoiselle de la Valliere, and had saluted her with the profoundest respect, at which Louise blushed, and could not say a word. Montalais, however, hurried to her assistance.

“Well, monsieur le vicomte, here we are, you see.”

"I do, indeed, see you," said Raoul smiling, "and it is exactly because you are here that I wish to ask for some explanation."

Malicorne approached the group with his most fascinating smile.

"Go away, Malicorne; really you are exceedingly indiscreet." At this remark Malicorne bit his lips and retired a few steps, without making any reply. His smile, however, changed its expression, and from its former frankness, became mocking in its expression.

"You wished for an explanation, M. Raoul?" inquired Montalais.

"It is surely worth one, I think; Mademoiselle de la Valliere is a maid of honor to Madame!"

"Why should she not be a maid of honor, as well as myself?" inquired Montalais.

"Pray accept my compliments, young ladies," said Raoul, who fancied he perceived they were not disposed to answer him in a direct manner.

"Your remark was not made in a very complimentary manner, vicomte."

"Mine?"

"Certainly; I appeal to Louise."

"M. de Bragelonne probably thinks the position is above my condition," said Louise, hesitatingly.

"Assuredly not," replied Raoul, eagerly, "you know very well that such is not my feeling; were you called upon to occupy a queen's throne, I should not be surprised; how much greater reason, then, such a position as this? The only circumstance that amazes me is, that I should have learned it only to-day, and that by the merest accident."

"That is true," replied Montalais, with her usual giddiness; "you know nothing about it, and there is no reason you should. M. de Bragelonne had written several letters to you, but your mother was the only person who remained behind at Blois, and it was necessary to prevent these letters from falling into her hands; I intercepted them, and returned them to M. Raoul, so that he believed you were still at Blois while you were here in Paris, and had no idea whatever, indeed, how high you had risen in rank."

"Did you not inform M. Raoul, as I begged you to do?"

"Why should I? to give him opportunity of making some of his severe remarks and moral reflections, and to undo what we have had so much trouble in effecting? Certainly not."

"Am I so very severe, then?" said Raoul, inquiringly.

"Besides," said Montalais, "it is sufficient to say that it suited me. I was about setting off for Paris – you were away; Louise was weeping her eyes out; interpret that as you please; I begged a friend, a protector of mine, who had obtained the appointment for me, to solicit one for Louise; the appointment arrived. Louise left in order to get her costume prepared; as I had my own ready, I remained behind; I received your letters, and returned them to you, adding a few words, promising you a surprise. Your surprise is before you, monsieur, and seems to be a fair one enough; you have nothing more to ask. Come, M. Malicorne, it is now time to leave these young people together: they have many things to talk about; give me your hand; I trust that you appreciate the honor conferred upon you, M. Malicorne."

"Forgive me," said Raoul, arresting the giddy girl, and giving to his voice an intonation, the gravity of which contrasted with that of Montalais; "forgive me, but may I inquire the name of the protector you speak of; for if protection be extended towards you, Mademoiselle de Montalais, – for which, indeed, so many reasons exist," added Raoul, bowing, "I do not see that the same reasons exist why Mademoiselle de la Valliere should be similarly cared for."

"But, M. Raoul," said Louise, innocently, "there is no difference in the matter, and I do not see why I should not tell it you myself; it was M. Malicorne who obtained it for me."

Raoul remained for a moment almost stupefied, asking himself if they were trifling with him; he then turned round to interrogate Malicorne, but he had been hurried away by Montalais, and was

already at some distance from them. Mademoiselle de la Valliere attempted to follow her friend, but Raoul, with gentle authority, detained her.

“Louise, one word, I beg.”

“But, M. Raoul,” said Louise, blushing, “we are alone. Every one has left. They will become anxious, and will be looking for us.”

“Fear nothing,” said the young man, smiling, “we are neither of us of sufficient importance for our absence to be remarked.”

“But I have my duty to perform, M. Raoul.”

“Do not be alarmed, I am acquainted with these usages of the court; you will not be on duty until to-morrow; a few minutes are at your disposal, which will enable you to give me the information I am about to have the honor to ask you for.”

“How serious you are, M. Raoul!” said Louise.

“Because the circumstances are serious. Are you listening?”

“I am listening; I would only repeat, monsieur, that we are quite alone.”

“You are right,” said Raoul, and, offering her his hand, he led the young girl into the gallery adjoining the reception-room, the windows of which looked out upon the courtyard. Every one hurried towards the middle window, which had a balcony outside, from which all the details of the slow and formal preparations for departure could be seen. Raoul opened one of the side windows, and then, being alone with Louise, said to her: “You know, Louise, that from my childhood I have regarded you as my sister, as one who has been the confidante of all my troubles, to whom I have entrusted all my hopes.”

“Yes, M. Raoul,” she answered softly; “yes, M. Raoul, I know that.”

“You used, on your side, to show the same friendship towards me, and had the same confidence in me; why have you not, on this occasion, been my friend, – why have you shown suspicion of me?”

Mademoiselle de la Valliere did not answer. “I fondly thought you loved me,” said Raoul, whose voice became more and more agitated; “I fondly thought you consented to all the plans we had, together, laid down for our own happiness, at the time when we wandered up and down the walks of Cour-Cheverny, under the avenue of poplar trees leading to Blois. You do not answer me, Louise. Is it possible,” he inquired, breathing with difficulty, “that you no longer love me?”

“I did not say so,” replied Louise, softly.

“Oh! tell me the truth, I implore you. All my hopes in life are centered in you. I chose you for your gentle and simple tastes. Do not suffer yourself to be dazzled, Louise, now that you are in the midst of a court where all that is pure too soon becomes corrupt – where all that is young too soon grows old. Louise, close your ears, so as not to hear what may be said; shut your eyes, so as not to see the examples before you; shut your lips, that you may not inhale the corrupting influences about you. Without falsehood or subterfuge, Louise, am I to believe what Mademoiselle de Montalais stated? Louise, did you come to Paris because I was no longer at Blois?”

La Valliere blushed and concealed her face in her hands.

“Yes, it was so, then!” exclaimed Raoul, delightedly; “that was, then, your reason for coming here. I love you as I never yet loved you. Thanks, Louise, for this devotion; but measures must be taken to place you beyond all insult, to shield you from every lure. Louise, a maid of honor, in the court of a young princess in these days of free manners and inconstant affections – a maid of honor is placed as an object of attack without having any means of defence afforded her; this state of things cannot continue; you must be married in order to be respected.”

“Married?”

“Yes, here is my hand, Louise; will you place yours within it?”

“But your father?”

“My father leaves me perfectly free.”

“Yet – ”

“I understand your scruples, Louise; I will consult my father.”

“Reflect, M. Raoul; wait.”

“Wait! it is impossible. Reflect, Louise, when *you* are concerned! it would be insulting, – give me your hand, dear Louise; I am my own master. My father will consent, I know; give me your hand, do not keep me waiting thus. One word in answer, one word only; if not, I shall begin to think that, in order to change you forever, nothing more was needed than a single step in the palace, a single breath of favor, a smile from the queen, a look from the king.”

Raoul had no sooner pronounced this latter word, than La Valliere became as pale as death, no doubt from fear at seeing the young man excite himself. With a movement as rapid as thought, she placed both her hands in those of Raoul, and then fled, without adding a syllable; disappearing without casting a look behind her. Raoul felt his whole frame tremble at the contact of her hand; he received the compact as a solemn bargain wrung by affection from her child-like timidity.

Chapter XV. The Consent of Athos

Raoul quitted the Palais Royal full of ideas that admitted no delay in execution. He mounted his horse in the courtyard, and followed the road to Blois, while the marriage festivities of Monsieur and the princess of England were being celebrated with exceeding animation by the courtiers, but to the despair of De Guiche and Buckingham. Raoul lost no time on the road, and in sixteen hours he arrived at Blois. As he traveled along, he marshaled his arguments in the most becoming manner. Fever is an argument that cannot be answered, and Raoul had an attack. Athos was in his study, making additions to his memoirs, when Raoul entered, accompanied by Grimaud. Keen-sighted and penetrating, a mere glance at his son told him that something extraordinary had befallen him.

"You seem to come on a matter of importance," said he to Raoul, after he had embraced him, pointing to a seat.

"Yes, monsieur," replied the young man; "and I entreat you to give me the same kind attention that has never yet failed me."

"Speak, Raoul."

"I present the case to you, monsieur, free from all preface, for that would be unworthy of you. Mademoiselle de la Valliere is in Paris as one of Madame's maids of honor. I have pondered deeply on the matter; I love Mademoiselle de la Valliere above everything; and it is not proper to leave her in a position where her reputation, her virtue even, may be assailed. It is my wish, therefore, to marry her, monsieur, and I have come to solicit your consent to my marriage."

While this communication was being made to him, Athos maintained the profoundest silence and reserve. Raoul, who had begun his address with an assumption of self-possession, finished it by allowing a manifest emotion to escape him at every word. Athos fixed upon Bragelonne a searching look, overshadowed indeed by a slight sadness.

"You have reflected well upon it?" he inquired.

"Yes, monsieur."

"I believe you are already acquainted with my views respecting this alliance?"

"Yes, monsieur," replied Raoul, in a low tone of voice; "but you added, that if I persisted – "

"You do persist, then?"

Raoul stammered out an almost unintelligible assent.

"Your passion," continued Athos, tranquilly, "must indeed be very great, since, notwithstanding my dislike to this union, you persist in wanting it."

Raoul passed his hand trembling across his forehead to remove the perspiration that collected there. Athos looked at him, and his heart was touched by pity. He rose and said, —

"It is no matter. My own personal feelings are not to be taken into consideration since yours are concerned; I am ready to give it. Tell me what you want."

"Your kind indulgence, first of all, monsieur," said Raoul, taking hold of his hand.

"You have mistaken my feelings, Raoul, I have more than mere indulgence for you in my heart."

Raoul kissed as devotedly as a lover could have done the hand he held in his own.

"Come, come," said Athos, "I am quite ready; what do you wish me to sign?"

"Nothing whatever, monsieur, only it would be very kind if you would take the trouble to write to the king, to whom I belong, and solicit his majesty's permission for me to marry Mademoiselle de la Valliere."

"Well thought, Raoul! After, or rather before myself, you have a master to consult, that master being the king; it is loyal in you to submit yourself voluntarily to this double proof; I will grant your request without delay, Raoul."

The count approached the window, and leaning out, called to Grimaud, who showed his head from an arbor covered with jasmine, which he was occupied in trimming.

“My horses, Grimaud,” continued the count.

“Why this order, monsieur?” inquired Raoul.

“We shall set off in a few hours.”

“Whither?”

“For Paris.”

“Paris, monsieur?”

“Is not the king at Paris?”

“Certainly.”

“Well, ought we not to go there?”

“Yes, monsieur,” said Raoul, almost alarmed by this kind condescension. “I do not ask you to put yourself to such inconvenience, and a letter merely – ”

“You mistake my position, Raoul; it is not respectful that a simple gentleman, such as I am, should write to his sovereign. I wish to speak, I ought to speak, to the king, and I will do so. We will go together, Raoul.”

“You overpower me with your kindness, monsieur.”

“How do you think his majesty is affected?”

“Towards me, monsieur?”

“Yes.”

“Excellently well disposed.”

“You *know* that to be so?” continued the count.

“The king has himself told me so.”

“On what occasion?”

“Upon the recommendation of M. d’Artagnan, I believe, and on account of an affair in the Place de Greve, when I had the honor to draw my sword in the king’s service. I have reason to believe that, vanity apart, I stand well with his majesty.”

“So much the better.”

“But I entreat you, monsieur,” pursued Raoul, “not to maintain towards me your present grave and serious manner. Do not make me bitterly regret having listened to a feeling stronger than anything else.”

“That is the second time you have said so, Raoul; it was quite unnecessary; you require my formal consent, and you have it. We need talk no more on the subject, therefore. Come and see my new plantations, Raoul.”

The young man knew very well, that, after the expression of his father’s wish, no opportunity of discussion was left him. He bowed his head, and followed his father into the garden. Athos slowly pointed out to him the grafts, the cuttings, and the avenues he was planting. This perfect repose of manner disconcerted Raoul extremely; the affection with which his own heart was filled seemed so great that the whole world could hardly contain it. How, then, could his father’s heart remain void, and closed to its influence? Bragelonne, therefore, collecting all his courage, suddenly exclaimed, —

“It is impossible, monsieur, you can have any reason to reject Mademoiselle de la Valliere! In Heaven’s name, she is so good, so gentle and pure, that your mind, so perfect in its penetration, ought to appreciate her accordingly. Does any secret repugnance, or any hereditary dislike, exist between you and her family?”

“Look, Raoul, at that beautiful lily of the valley,” said Athos; “observe how the shade and the damp situation suit it, particularly the shadow which that sycamore-tree casts over it, so that the warmth, and not the blazing heat of the sun, filters through its leaves.”

Raoul stopped, bit his lips, and then, with the blood mantling in his face, he said, courageously, — “One word of explanation, I beg, monsieur. You cannot forget that your son is a man.”

“In that case,” replied Athos, drawing himself up with sternness, “prove to me that you are a man, for you do not show yourself a son. I begged you to wait the opportunity of forming an illustrious

alliance. I would have obtained a wife for you from the first ranks of the rich nobility. I wish you to be distinguished by the splendor which glory and fortune confer, for nobility of descent you have already.”

“Monsieur,” exclaimed Raoul, carried away by a first impulse. “I was reproached the other day for not knowing who my mother was.”

Athos turned pale; then, knitting his brows like the greatest of all the heathen deities: – “I am waiting to learn the reply you made,” he demanded, in an imperious manner.

“Forgive me! oh, forgive me,” murmured the young man, sinking at once from the lofty tone he had assumed.

“What was your reply, monsieur?” inquired the count, stamping his feet upon the ground.

“Monsieur, my sword was in my hand immediately, my adversary placed himself on guard, I struck his sword over the palisade, and threw him after it.”

“Why did you suffer him to live?”

“The king has prohibited duelling, and, at the moment, I was an ambassador of the king.”

“Very well,” said Athos, “but all the greater reason I should see his majesty.”

“What do you intend to ask him?”

“Authority to draw my sword against the man who has inflicted this injury upon me.”

“If I did not act as I ought to have done, I beg you to forgive me.”

“Did I reproach you, Raoul?”

“Still, the permission you are going to ask from the king?”

“I will implore his majesty to sign your marriage-contract, but on one condition.”

“Are conditions necessary with me, monsieur? Command, and you shall be obeyed.”

“On the condition, I repeat,” continued Athos; “that you tell me the name of the man who spoke of your mother in that way.”

“What need is there that you should know his name; the offense was directed against myself, and the permission once obtained from his majesty, to revenge it is my affair.”

“Tell me his name, monsieur.”

“I will not allow you to expose yourself.”

“Do you take me for a Don Diego? His name, I say.”

“You insist upon it?”

“I demand it.”

“The Vicomte de Wardes.”

“Very well,” said Athos, tranquilly, “I know him. But our horses are ready, I see; and, instead of delaying our departure for a couple of hours, we will set off at once. Come, monsieur.”

Chapter XVI. Monsieur Becomes Jealous of the Duke of Buckingham

While the Comte de la Fere was proceeding on his way to Paris, accompanied by Raoul, the Palais Royal was the theatre wherein a scene of what Moliere would have called excellent comedy, was being performed. Four days had elapsed since his marriage, and Monsieur, having breakfasted very hurriedly, passed into his ante-chamber, frowning and out of temper. The repast had not been over-agreeable. Madame had had breakfast served in her own apartment, and Monsieur had breakfasted almost alone; the Chevalier de Lorraine and Manicamp were the only persons present at the meal, which lasted three-quarters of an hour without a single syllable having been uttered. Manicamp, who was less intimate with his royal highness than the Chevalier de Lorraine, vainly endeavored to detect, from the expression of the prince's face, what had made him so ill-humored. The Chevalier de Lorraine, who had no occasion to speculate about anything, inasmuch as he knew all, ate his breakfast with that extraordinary appetite which the troubles of one's friends but stimulates, and enjoyed at the same time both Monsieur's ill-humor and the vexation of Manicamp. He seemed delighted, while he went on eating, to detain a prince, who was very impatient to move, still at table. Monsieur at times repented the ascendancy which he had permitted the Chevalier de Lorraine to acquire over him, and which exempted the latter from any observance of etiquette towards him. Monsieur was now in one of those moods, but he dreaded as much as he liked the chevalier, and contented himself with nursing his anger without betraying it. Every now and then Monsieur raised his eyes to the ceiling, then lowered them towards the slices of *pate* which the chevalier was attacking, and finally, not caring to betray the resentment, he gesticulated in a manner which Harlequin might have envied. At last, however, Monsieur could control himself no longer, and at the dessert, rising from the table in excessive wrath, as we have related, he left the Chevalier de Lorraine to finish his breakfast as he pleased. Seeing Monsieur rise from the table, Manicamp, napkin in hand, rose also. Monsieur ran rather than walked, towards the ante-chamber, where, noticing an usher in attendance, he gave him some directions in a low tone of voice. Then, turning back again, but avoiding passing through the breakfast apartment, he crossed several rooms, with the intention of seeking the queen-mother in her oratory, where she usually remained.

It was about ten o'clock in the morning. Anne of Austria was engaged in writing as Monsieur entered. The queen-mother was extremely attached to her son, for he was handsome in person and amiable in disposition. He was, in fact, more affectionate, and it might be, more effeminate than the king. He pleased his mother by those trifling sympathizing attentions all women are glad to receive. Anne of Austria, who would have been rejoiced to have had a daughter, almost found in this, her favorite son, the attentions, solicitude, and playful manners of a child of twelve years of age. All the time he passed with his mother he employed in admiring her arms, in giving his opinion upon her cosmetics, and recipes for compounding essences, in which she was very particular; and then, too, he kissed her hands and cheeks in the most childlike and endearing manner, and had always some sweetmeats to offer her, or some new style of dress to recommend. Anne of Austria loved the king, or rather the regal power in her eldest son; Louis XIV. represented legitimacy by right divine. With the king, her character was that of the queen-mother, with Philip she was simply the mother. The latter knew that, of all places, a mother's heart is the most compassionate and surest. When quite a child he always fled there for refuge when he and his brother quarreled, often, after having struck him, which constituted the crime of high treason on his part, after certain engagements with hands and nails, in which the king and his rebellious subject indulged in their night-dresses respecting the right to a disputed bed, having their servant Laporte as umpire, – Philip, conqueror, but terrified at victory, used to flee to his mother to obtain reinforcements from her, or at least the assurance of forgiveness,

which Louis XIV. granted with difficulty, and after an interval. Anne, from this habit of peaceable intervention, succeeded in arranging the disputes of her sons, and in sharing, at the same time, all their secrets. The king, somewhat jealous of that maternal solicitude which was bestowed particularly on his brother, felt disposed to show towards Anne of Austria more submission and attachment than his character really dictated. Anne of Austria had adopted this line of conduct especially towards the young queen. In this manner she ruled with almost despotic sway over the royal household, and she was already preparing her batteries to govern with the same absolute authority the household of her second son. Anne experienced almost a feeling of pride whenever she saw any one enter her apartment with woe-begone looks, pale cheeks, or red eyes, gathering from appearances that assistance was required either by the weakest or the most rebellious. She was writing, we have said, when Monsieur entered her oratory, not with red eyes or pale cheeks, but restless, out of temper, and annoyed. With an absent air he kissed his mother's hands, and sat himself down before receiving her permission to do so. Considering the strict rules of etiquette established at the court of Anne of Austria, this forgetfulness of customary civilities was a sign of preoccupation, especially on Philip's part, who, of his own accord, observed a respect towards her of a somewhat exaggerated character. If, therefore, he so notoriously failed in this regard, there must be a serious cause for it.

"What is the matter, Philip?" inquired Anne of Austria, turning towards her son.

"A good many things," murmured the prince, in a doleful tone of voice.

"You look like a man who has a great deal to do," said the queen, laying down her pen. Philip frowned, but did not reply. "Among the various subjects which occupy your mind," said Anne of Austria, "there must surely be one that absorbs it more than others."

"One has indeed occupied me more than any other."

"Well, what is it? I am listening."

Philip opened his mouth as if to express all the troubles his mind was filled with, and which he seemed to be waiting only for an opportunity of declaring. But he suddenly became silent, and a sigh alone expressed all that his heart was overflowing with.

"Come, Philip, show a little firmness," said the queen-mother. "When one has to complain of anything, it is generally an individual who is the cause of it. Am I not right?"

"I do not say no, madame."

"Whom do you wish to speak about? Come, take courage."

"In fact, madame, what I might possibly have to say must be kept a profound secret; for when a lady is in the case –"

"Ah! you are speaking of Madame, then?" inquired the queen-mother, with a feeling of the liveliest curiosity.

"Yes."

"Well, then, if you wish to speak of Madame, do not hesitate to do so. I am your mother, and she is no more than a stranger to me. Yet, as she is my daughter-in-law, rest assured I shall be interested, even were it for your own sake alone, in hearing all you may have to say about her."

"Pray tell me, madame, in your turn, whether you have not remarked something?"

"Something"! Philip? Your words almost frighten me, from their want of meaning. What do you mean by 'something'?"

"Madame is pretty, certainly."

"No doubt of it."

"Yet not altogether beautiful."

"No, but as she grows older, she will probably become strikingly beautiful. You must have remarked the change which a few years have already made in her. Her beauty will improve more and more; she is now only sixteen years of age. At fifteen I was, myself, very thin; but even as she is at present, Madame is very pretty."

"And consequently others have remarked it."

“Undoubtedly, for a woman of ordinary rank is noticed – and with still greater reason a princess.”

“She has been well brought up, I suppose?”

“Madame Henriette, her mother, is a woman somewhat cold in manner, slightly pretentious, but full of noble thoughts. The princess’s education may have been neglected, but her principles, I believe, are good. Such at least was the opinion I formed of her when she resided in France; but she afterwards returned to England, and I am ignorant what may have occurred there.”

“What do you mean?”

“Simply that there are some heads naturally giddy, which are easily turned by prosperity.”

“That is the very word, madame. I think the princess rather giddy.”

“We must not exaggerate, Philip; she is clever and witty, and has a certain amount of coquetry very natural in a young woman; but this defect in persons of high rank and position, is a great advantage at a court. A princess who is tinged with coquetry usually forms a brilliant court; her smile stimulates luxury, arouses wit, and even courage; the nobles, too, fight better for a prince whose wife is beautiful.”

“Thank you extremely, madame,” said Philip, with some temper; “you really have drawn some very alarming pictures for me.”

“In what respect?” asked the queen, with pretended simplicity.

“You know, madame,” said Philip, dolefully, “whether I had or had not a very great dislike to getting married.”

“Now, indeed, you alarm me. You have some serious cause of complaint against Madame.”

“I do not precisely say it is serious.”

“In that case, then, throw aside your doleful looks. If you show yourself to others in your present state, people will take you for a very unhappy husband.”

“The fact is,” replied Philip, “I am not altogether satisfied as a husband, and I shall not be sorry if others know it.”

“For shame, Philip.”

“Well, then, madame, I will tell you frankly that I do not understand the life I am required to lead.”

“Explain yourself.”

“My wife does not seem to belong to me; she is always leaving me for some reason or another. In the mornings there are visits, correspondences, and toilettes; in the evenings, balls and concerts.”

“You are jealous, Philip.”

“I! Heaven forbid. Let others act the part of a jealous husband, not I. But I *am* annoyed.”

“All these things you reproach your wife with are perfectly innocent, and, so long as you have nothing of greater importance – ”

“Yet, listen; without being very blamable, a woman can excite a good deal of uneasiness. Certain visitors may be received, certain preferences shown, which expose young women to remark, and which are enough to drive out of their senses even those husbands who are least disposed to be jealous.”

“Ah! now we are coming to the real point at last, and not without some difficulty. You speak of frequent visits, and certain preferences – very good; for the last hour we have been beating about the bush, and at last you have broached the true question.”

“Well then, yes – ”

“This is more serious than I thought. It is possible, then, that Madame can have given you grounds for these complaints against her?”

“Precisely so.”

“What, your wife, married only four days ago, prefers some other person to yourself? Take care, Philip, you exaggerate your grievances; in wishing to prove everything, you prove nothing.”

The prince, bewildered by his mother's serious manner, wished to reply, but he could only stammer out some unintelligible words.

"You draw back, then?" said Anne of Austria. "I prefer that, as it is an acknowledgement of your mistake."

"No!" exclaimed Philip, "I do not draw back, and I will prove all I asserted. I spoke of preference and of visits, did I not? Well, listen."

Anne of Austria prepared herself to listen, with that love of gossip which the best woman living and the best mother, were she a queen even, always finds in being mixed up with the petty squabbles of a household.

"Well," said Philip, "tell me one thing."

"What is that?"

"Why does my wife retain an English court about her?" said Philip, as he crossed his arms and looked his mother steadily in the face, as if he were convinced that she could not answer the question.

"For a very simple reason," returned Anne of Austria; "because the English are her countrymen, because they have expended large sums in order to accompany her to France, and because it would hardly be polite – not politic, certainly – to dismiss abruptly those members of the English nobility who have not shrunk from any devotion or sacrifice."

"A wonderful sacrifice indeed," returned Philip, "to desert a wretched country to come to a beautiful one, where a greater effect can be produced for a guinea that can be procured elsewhere for four! Extraordinary devotion, really, to travel a hundred leagues in company with a woman one is in love with!"

"In love, Philip! think what you are saying. Who is in love with Madame?"

"The Duke of Buckingham. Perhaps you will defend him, too?"

Anne of Austria blushed and smiled at the same time. The name of the Duke of Buckingham recalled certain recollections of a very tender and melancholy nature. "The Duke of Buckingham?" she murmured.

"Yes; one of those arm-chair soldiers –"

"The Buckinghams are loyal and brave," said Anne of Austria, courageously.

"This is too bad; my own mother takes the part of my wife's lover against me," exclaimed Philip, incensed to such an extent that his weak organization was affected almost to tears.

"Philip, my son," exclaimed Anne of Austria, "such an expression is unworthy of you. Your wife has no lover; and, had she one, it would not be the Duke of Buckingham. The members of that family, I repeat, are loyal and discreet, and the rights of hospitality are sure to be respected by them."

"The Duke of Buckingham is an Englishman, madame," said Philip, "and may I ask if the English so very religiously respect what belongs to princes of France?"

Anne blushed a second time, and turned aside under the pretext of taking her pen from her desk again, but in reality to conceal her confusion from her son. "Really, Philip," she said, "you seem to discover expressions for the purpose of embarrassing me, and your anger blinds you while it alarms me; reflect a little."

"There is no need for reflection, madame. I can see with my own eyes."

"Well, and what do you see?"

"That Buckingham never quits my wife. He presumes to make presents to her, and she ventures to accept them. Yesterday she was talking about *sauchets a la violette*; well, our French perfumers, you know very well, madame, for you have over and over again asked for it without success – our French perfumers, I say, have never been able to procure this scent. The duke, however, wore about him a *sachet a la violette*, and I am sure that the one my wife has came from him."

"Indeed, monsieur," said Anne of Austria, "you build your pyramids on needle points; be careful. What harm, I ask you, can there be in a man giving to his countrywoman a recipe for a new

essence? These strange ideas, I protest, painfully recall your father to me; he who so frequently and so unjustly made me suffer.”

“The Duke of Buckingham’s father was probably more reserved and more respectful than his son,” said Philip, thoughtlessly, not perceiving how deeply he had wounded his mother’s feelings. The queen turned pale, and pressed her clenched hands upon her bosom; but, recovering herself immediately, she said, “You came here with some intention or another, I suppose?”

“Certainly.”

“What was it?”

“I came, madame, intending to complain energetically, and to inform you that I will not submit to such behavior from the Duke of Buckingham.”

“What do you intend to do, then?”

“I shall complain to the king.”

“And what do you expect the king to reply?”

“Very well, then,” said Monsieur, with an expression of stern determination on his countenance, which offered a singular contrast to its usual gentleness. “Very well. I will right myself!”

“What do you call righting yourself?” inquired Anne of Austria, in alarm.

“I will have the Duke of Buckingham quit the princess, I will have him quit France, and I will see that my wishes are intimated to him.”

“You will intimate nothing of the kind, Philip,” said the queen, “for if you act in that manner, and violate hospitality to that extent, I will invoke the severity of the king against you.”

“Do you threaten me, madame?” exclaimed Philip, almost in tears; “do you threaten me in the midst of my complaints?”

“I do not threaten you; I do but place an obstacle in the path of your hasty anger. I maintain, that, to adopt towards the Duke of Buckingham, or any other Englishman, any rigorous measure – to take even a discourteous step towards him, would be to plunge France and England into the most disastrous disagreement. Can it be possible that a prince of the blood, the brother of the king of France, does not know how to hide an injury, even did it exist in reality, where political necessity requires it?” Philip made a movement. “Besides,” continued the queen, “the injury is neither true nor possible, and it is merely a matter of silly jealousy.”

“Madame, I know what I know.”

“Whatever you may know, I can only advise you to be patient.”

“I am not patient by disposition, madame.”

The queen rose, full of severity, and with an icy ceremonious manner. “Explain what you really require, monsieur,” she said.

“I do not require anything, madame; I simply express what I desire. If the Duke of Buckingham does not, of his own accord, discontinue his visits to my apartments I shall forbid him entrance.”

“That is a point you will refer to the king,” said Anne of Austria, her heart swelling as she spoke, and her voice trembling with emotion.

“But, madame,” exclaimed Philip, striking his hands together, “act as my mother and not as the queen, since I speak to you as a son; it is simply a matter of a few minutes’ conversation between the duke and myself.”

“It is that very conversation I forbid,” said the queen, resuming her authority, “because it is unworthy of you.”

“Be it so; I will not appear in the matter, but I shall intimate my will to Madame.”

“Oh!” said the queen-mother, with a melancholy arising from reflection, “never tyrannize over a wife – never behave too haughtily or imperiously towards your own. A woman unwillingly convinced, is unconvinced.”

“What is to be done, then? – I will consult my friends about it.”

“Yes, your double-dealing advisers, your Chevalier de Lorraine – your De Wardes. Intrust the conduct of this affair to me. You wish the Duke of Buckingham to leave, do you not?”

“As soon as possible, madame.”

“Send the duke to me, then; smile upon your wife, behave to her, to the king, to every one, as usual. But follow no advice but mine. Alas! I too well know what any household comes to, that is troubled by advisers.”

“You shall be obeyed, madame.”

“And you will be satisfied at the result. Send the duke to me.”

“That will not be difficult.”

“Where do you suppose him to be?”

“At my wife’s door, whose *levee* he is probably awaiting.”

“Very well,” said Anne of Austria, calmly. “Be good enough to tell the duke that I shall be charmed if he will pay me a visit.”

Philip kissed his mother’s hand, and started off to find the Duke of Buckingham.

Chapter XVII. Forever!

The Duke of Buckingham, obedient to the queen-mother's invitation, presented himself in her apartments half an hour after the departure of the Duc d'Orleans. When his name was announced by the gentleman-usher in attendance, the queen, who was sitting with her elbow resting on a table, and her head buried in her hands, rose, and smilingly received the graceful and respectful salutation which the duke addressed to her. Anne of Austria was still beautiful. It is well known that at her then somewhat advanced age, her long auburn hair, perfectly formed hands, and bright ruby lips, were still the admiration of all who saw her. On the present occasion, abandoned entirely to a remembrance which evoked all the past in her heart, she looked almost as beautiful as in the days of her youth, when her palace was open to the visits of the Duke of Buckingham's father, then a young and impassioned man, as well as an unfortunate prince, who lived for her alone, and died with her name upon his lips. Anne of Austria fixed upon Buckingham a look so tender in its expression, that it denoted, not alone the indulgence of maternal affection, but a gentleness of expression like the coquetry of a woman who loves.

"Your majesty," said Buckingham, respectfully, "desired to speak to me."

"Yes, duke," said the queen, in English; "will you be good enough to sit down?"

The favor which Anne of Austria thus extended to the young man, and the welcome sound of the language of a country from which the duke had been estranged since his stay in France, deeply affected him. He immediately conjectured that the queen had a request to make of him. After having abandoned the first few moments to the irrepressible emotions she experienced, the queen resumed the smiling air with which she had received him. "What do you think of France?" she said, in French.

"It is a lovely country, madame," replied the duke.

"Had you ever seen it before?"

"Once only, madame."

"But, like all true Englishmen, you prefer England?"

"I prefer my own native land to France," replied the duke; "but if your majesty were to ask me which of the two cities, London or Paris, I should prefer as a residence, I should be forced to answer Paris."

Anne of Austria observed the ardent manner with which these words had been pronounced. "I am told, my lord, you have rich possessions in your own country, and that you live in a splendid and time-honored place."

"It was my father's residence," replied Buckingham, casting down his eyes.

"Those are indeed great advantages and *souvenirs*," replied the queen, alluding, in spite of herself, to recollections from which it is impossible voluntarily to detach one's self.

"In fact," said the duke, yielding to the melancholy influence of this opening conversation, "sensitive persons live as much in the past or the future, as in the present."

"That is very true," said the queen, in a low tone of voice. "It follows, then, my lord," she added, "that you, who are a man of feeling, will soon quit France in order to shut yourself up with your wealth and your relics of the past."

Buckingham raised his head and said, "I think not, madame."

"What do you mean?"

"On the contrary, I think of leaving England in order to take up my residence in France."

It was now Anne of Austria's turn to exhibit surprise. "Why?" she said. "Are you not in favor with the new king?"

"Perfectly so, madame, for his majesty's kindness to me is unbounded."

"It cannot," said the queen, "be because your fortune has diminished, for it is said to be enormous."

“My income, madame, has never been so large.”

“There is some secret cause, then?”

“No, madame,” said Buckingham, eagerly, “there is nothing secret in my reason for this determination. I prefer residence in France; I like a court so distinguished by its refinement and courtesy; I like the amusements, somewhat serious in their nature, which are not the amusements of my own country, and which are met with in France.”

Anne of Austria smiled shrewdly. “Amusements of a serious nature?” she said. “Has your Grace well reflected on their seriousness?” The duke hesitated. “There is no amusement so serious,” continued the queen, “as to prevent a man of your rank – ”

“Your majesty seems to insist greatly on that point,” interrupted the duke.

“Do you think so, my lord?”

“If you will forgive me for saying so, it is the second time you have vaunted the attractions of England at the expense of the delight which all experience who live in France.”

Anne of Austria approached the young man, and placing her beautiful hand upon his shoulder, which trembled at the touch, said, “Believe me, monsieur, nothing can equal a residence in one’s own native country. I have very frequently had occasion to regret Spain. I have lived long, my lord, very long for a woman, and I confess to you, that not a year has passed I have not regretted Spain.”

“Not one year, madame?” said the young duke coldly. “Not one of those years when you reigned Queen of Beauty – as you still are, indeed?”

“A truce to flattery, duke, for I am old enough to be your mother.” She emphasized these latter words in a manner, and with a gentleness, which penetrated Buckingham’s heart. “Yes,” she said, “I am old enough to be your mother; and for this reason, I will give you a word of advice.”

“That advice being that I should return to London?” he exclaimed.

“Yes, my lord.”

The duke clasped his hands with a terrified gesture, which could not fail of its effect upon the queen, already disposed to softer feelings by the tenderness of her own recollections. “It must be so,” added the queen.

“What!” he again exclaimed, “am I seriously told that I must leave, – that I must exile myself, – that I am to flee at once?”

“Exile yourself, did you say? One would fancy France was your native country.”

“Madame, the country of those who love is the country of those whom they love.”

“Not another word, my lord; you forget whom you are addressing.”

Buckingham threw himself on his knees. “Madame, you are the source of intelligence, of goodness, and of compassion; you are the first person in this kingdom, not only by your rank, but the first person in the world on account of your angelic attributes. I have said nothing, madame. Have I, indeed, said anything you should answer with such a cruel remark? What have I betrayed?”

“You have betrayed yourself,” said the queen, in a low tone of voice.

“I have said nothing, – I know nothing.”

“You forget you have spoken and thought in the presence of a woman; and besides – ”

“Besides,” said the duke, “no one knows you are listening to me.”

“On the contrary, it is known; you have all the defects and all the qualities of youth.”

“I have been betrayed or denounced, then?”

“By whom?”

“By those who, at Le Havre, had, with infernal perspicacity, read my heart like an open book.”

“I do not know whom you mean.”

“M. de Bragelonne, for instance.”

“I know the name without being acquainted with the person to whom it belongs. M. de Bragelonne has said nothing.”

“Who can it be, then? If any one, madame, had had the boldness to notice in me that which I do not myself wish to behold – ”

“What would you do, duke?”

“There are secrets which kill those who discover them.”

“He, then, who has discovered your secret, madman that you are, still lives; and, what is more, you will not slay him, for he is armed on all sides, – he is a husband, a jealous man, – he is the second gentleman in France, – he is my son, the Duc du Orleans.”

The duke turned pale as death. “You are very cruel, madame,” he said.

“You see, Buckingham,” said Anne of Austria, sadly, “how you pass from one extreme to another, and fight with shadows, when it would seem so easy to remain at peace with yourself.”

“If we fight, madame, we die on the field of battle,” replied the young man, gently, abandoning himself to the most gloomy depression.

Anne ran towards him and took him by the hand. “Villiers,” she said, in English, with a vehemence of tone which nothing could resist, “what is it you ask? Do you ask a mother to sacrifice her son, – a queen to consent to the dishonor of her house? Child that you are, do not dream of it. What! in order to spare your tears am I to commit these crimes? Villiers! you speak of the dead; the dead, at least, were full of respect and submission; they resigned themselves to an order of exile; they carried their despair away with them in their hearts, like a priceless possession, because the despair was caused by the woman they loved, and because death, thus deceptive, was like a gift of a favor conferred upon them.”

Buckingham rose, his features distorted, and his hands pressed against his heart. “You are right, madame,” he said, “but those of whom you speak had received their order of exile from the lips of the one whom they loved; they were not driven away; they were entreated to leave, and were not laughed at.”

“No,” murmured Anne of Austria, “they were not forgotten. But who says you are driven away, or that you are exiled? Who says that your devotion will not be remembered? I do not speak on any one’s behalf but my own, when I tell you to leave. Do me this kindness, – grant me this favor; let me, for this also, be indebted to one of your name.”

“It is for your sake, then, madame?”

“For mine alone.”

“No one whom I shall leave behind me will venture to mock, – no prince even who shall say, ‘I required it.’”

“Listen to me, duke,” and hereupon the dignified features of the queen assumed a solemn expression. “I swear to you that no one commands in this matter but myself. I swear to you that, not only shall no one either laugh or boast in any way, but no one even shall fail in the respect due to your rank. Rely upon me, duke, as I rely upon you.”

“You do not explain yourself, madame; my heart is full of bitterness, and I am in utter despair; no consolation, however gentle and affectionate, can afford me relief.”

“Do you remember your mother, duke?” replied the queen, with a winning smile.

“Very slightly, madame; yet I remember how she used to cover me with her caresses and her tears whenever I wept.”

“Villiers,” murmured the queen, passing her arm round the young man’s neck, “look upon me as your mother, and believe that no one shall ever make my son weep.”

“I thank you, madame,” said the young man affected and almost suffocated by his emotion; “I feel there is still room in my heart for a gentler and nobler sentiment than love.”

The queen-mother looked at him and pressed his hand. “Go,” she said.

“When must I leave? Command me.”

“At any time that may suit you, my lord,” resumed the queen; “you will choose your own day of departure. Instead, however, of setting off to-day, as you would doubtless wish to do, or to-morrow,

as others may have expected, leave the day after to-morrow, in the evening; but announce to-day that it is your wish to leave.”

“My wish?” murmured the young duke.

“Yes, duke.”

“And shall I never return to France?”

Anne of Austria reflected for a moment, seemingly absorbed in sad and serious thought. “It would be a consolation for me,” she said, “if you were to return on the day when I shall be carried to my final resting-place at Saint-Dennis beside the king, my husband.”

“Madame, you are goodness itself; the tide of prosperity is setting in on you; your cup brims over with happiness, and many long years are yet before you.”

“In that case you will not come for some time, then,” said the queen, endeavoring to smile.

“I shall not return,” said Buckingham, “young as I am. Death does not reckon by years; it is impartial; some die young, some reach old age.”

“I will not harbor any sorrowful ideas, duke. Let me comfort you; return in two years. I perceive from your face that the very idea which saddens you so much now, will have disappeared before six months have passed, and will be not only dead but forgotten in the period of absence I have assigned you.”

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