

An Enemy To The King

Robert Neilson Stephens

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AN ENEMY TO THE KING

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From the recently discovered memoirs of the Sieur de la Tournoire

By Robert Neilson Stephens

Author of "The Continental Dragoon," "The Road to Paris," "Philip Winwood," etc.

1897

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AN ENEMY TO THE KING

CHAPTER I.

TWO ENCOUNTERS BY NIGHT

Hitherto I have written with the sword, after the fashion of greater men, and requiring no secretary. I now take up the quill to set forth, correctly, certain incidents which, having been noised about, stand in danger of being inaccurately reported by some imitator of Brantome and De l'Estoile. If all the world is to know of this matter, let it know thereof rightly.

It was early in January, in the year 1578, that I first set out for Paris. My mother had died when I was twelve years old, and my father had followed her a year later. It was his last wish that I, his only child, should remain at the chateau, in Anjou, continuing my studies until the end of my twenty-first year. He had chosen that I should learn manners as best I could at home, not as page in some great household or as gentleman

in the retinue of some high personage. "A De Launay shall have no master but God and the King," he said. Reverently I had fulfilled his injunctions, holding my young impulses in leash. I passed the time in sword practice with our old steward, Michel, who had followed my father in the wars under Coligny, in hunting in our little patch of woods, reading the Latin authors in the flowery garden of the chateau, or in my favorite chamber,--that one at the top of the new tower which had been built in the reign of Henri II. to replace the original black tower from which the earliest De Launay of note got the title of Sieur de la Tournoire. All this while I was holding in curb my impatient desires. So almost resistless are the forces that impel the young heart, that there must have been a hard struggle within me had I had to wait even a month longer for the birthday which finally set me free to go what ways I chose. I rose early on that cold but sunlit January day, mad with eagerness to be off and away into the great world that at last lay open to me. Poor old Michel was sad that I had decided to go alone. But the only servant whom I would have taken with me was the only one to whom I would entrust the house of my fathers in my absence,--old Michel himself. I thought the others too rustic. My few tenants would have made awkward lackeys in peace, sorry soldiers in war.

Michel had my portmanteau fastened on my horse, which had been brought out into the courtyard, and then he stood by me while I took my last breakfast in La Tournoire; and, in my haste to be off, I would have eaten little had he not pressed much upon me, reminding me how many leagues I would have to ride before meeting a good inn on the Paris road. He was sad, poor old Michel, at my going, and yet he partook of some of my own eagerness. At last I had forced down my unwilling throat food enough to satisfy even old Michel's solicitude. He girded on me the finest of the swords that my father had left, placed over my violet velvet doublet the new cloak I had bought for the occasion, handed me my new hat with its showy plumes, and stood aside for me to pass out. In the pocket of my red breeches was a purse holding enough golden crowns to ease my path for some time to come. I cast one last look around the old hall and, trying to check the rapidity of my breath, and the rising of the lump in my throat, strode out to the court-yard, breathed the fresh air with a new ecstasy, mounted the steaming horse, gave Michel my hand for a moment, and, purposely avoiding meeting his eyes, spoke a last kind word to the old man. After acknowledging the farewells of the other servants, who stood in line trying to look joyous, I started my horse with a little jerk of the rein, and was borne swiftly through the porte, over the bridge, and out into the world. Behind me was the home of my fathers and my childhood; before me was Paris. It was a fine, bracing winter morning, and I was twenty-one. A good horse was under me, a sword was at my side, there was money in my pocket. Will I ever feel again as I did that morning?

Some have stupidly wondered why, being a Huguenot born and bred, I did not, when free to leave La Tournoire, go at once to offer my sword to Henri of Navarre or to some other leader of our party. This is easily answered. If I was a Huguenot, I was also a man of twenty-one; and the latter much more than the former. Paris was the centre of the world. There was the court, there were the adventures to be had, there must one go to see the whole of life; there would I meet men and make conquests of women. There awaited me the pleasures of which I had known only by report, there the advancement, the triumphs in personal quarrels; and, above all else, the great love affair of my dreams. Who that is a man and twenty-one has not such dreams? And who that is a man and seventy would have been without them? Youth and folly go together, each sweetening the

other. The greatest fool, I think, is he who would have gone through life entirely without folly. What then mattered religion to me? Or what mattered the rivalry of parties, except as they might serve my own personal ambitions and desires? Youth was ebullient in me. The longing to penetrate the unknown made inaction intolerable to me. I must rush into the whirlpool; I must be in the very midst of things; I longed for gaiety, for mystery, for contest; I must sing, drink, fight, make love. It is true that there would have been some outlet for my energies in camp life, but no gratification for my finer tastes, no luxury, no such pleasures as Paris afforded,--little diversity, no elating sense of being at the core of events, no opportunities for love-making. In Paris were the pretty women. The last circumstance alone would have decided me.

I had reached twenty-one without having been deeply in love. I had, of course, had transient periods of inclination towards more than one of the demoiselles in the neighborhood of La Tournoire; but these demoiselles had rapidly become insipid to me. As I grew older, I found it less easy to be attracted by young ladies whom I had known from childhood up. I had none the less the desire to be in love; but the woman whom I should love must be new to me, a mystery, something to fathom and yet unfathomable. She must be a world, inexhaustible, always retaining the charm of the partly unknown. I had high aspirations. No pretty maid, however low in station, was unworthy a kiss and some flattery; but the real *affaire d'amour* of my life must have no elements but magnificent ones. She must be some great lady of the court, and our passion must be attended by circumstances of mystery, danger, everything to complicate it and raise it to an epic height. Such was the amour I had determined to find in Paris. Remember, you who read this, that I am disclosing the inmost dreams of a man of twenty-one. Such dreams are appropriate to that age; it is only when they are associated with middle age that they become ridiculous; and when thoughts of amatory conquest are found in common with gray hairs, they are loathsome. If I seem to have given my mind largely up to fancies of love, consider that I was then at the age when such fancies rather adorn than deface. Indeed, a young man without thoughts of love is as much an anomaly as is an older man who gives himself up to them.

I looked back once at La Tournoire, when I reached the top of the hill that would, in another minute, shut it from my view. I saw old Michel standing at the porte. I waved my hand to him, and turned to proceed on my way. Soon the lump in my throat melted away, the moisture left my eyes, and only the future concerned me. Every object that came into sight, every tree along the roadside, now interested me. I passed several travellers, some of whom seemed to envy me my indifference to the cold weather, my look of joyous content.

About noon I overtook, just where the road left a wood and turned to cross a bridge, a small cavalcade consisting of an erect, handsome gentleman of middle age, and several armed lackeys. The gentleman wore a black velvet doublet, and his attire, from his snowy ruff to his black boots, was in the best condition. He had a frank, manly countenance that invited address. At the turn of the road he saw me, and, taking me in at a glance, he fell behind his lackeys that I might come up to him. He greeted me courteously, and after he had spoken of the weather and the promise of the sky, he mentioned, incidentally, that he was going to Paris. I told him my own destination, and we came to talking of the court. I perceived, from his remarks, that he was well acquainted there. There was some talk of the quarrels between the King's favorites and those of his brother, the Duke of Anjou; of the latter's sulkiness over

his treatment at the hands of the King; of the probabilities for and against Anjou's leaving Paris and putting himself at the head of the malcontent and Huguenot parties; of the friendship between Anjou and his sister Marguerite, who remained at the Court of France while her husband, Henri of Navarre, held his mimic Huguenot court in Bearn. Presently, the name of the Duke of Guise came up.

Now we Huguenots held, and still hold, Henri de Guise to have been a chief instigator of the event of St. Bartholomew's Night, in 1572. Always I had in my mind the picture of Coligny, under whom my father had fought, lying dead in his own courtyard, in the Rue de Bethizy, his murder done under the direction of that same Henri, his body thrown from his window into the court at Henri's orders, and there spurned by Henri's foot. I had heard, too, of this illustrious duke's open continuance of his amour with Marguerite, queen of our leader, Henri of Navarre. When I spoke of him to the gentleman at whose side I rode, I put no restraint on my tongue.

"The Duke of Guise!" I said. "All that I ever wish to say of him can be very quickly spoken. If, as you Catholics believe, God has an earthly representative in the Pope, then I think the devil has one in Henri de Guise."

The gentleman was quiet for a moment, and looked very sober. Then he said gravely:

"All men have their faults, monsieur. The difference between men is that some have no virtues to compensate for their vices."

"If Henri de Guise has any virtues," I replied, "he wears a mask over them; and he conceals them more effectually than he hides his predilection for assassination, his amours, and his design to rule France through the Holy League of which he is the real head."

The gentleman turned very red, and darted at me a glance of anger. Then restraining himself, he answered in a very low tone:

"Monsieur, the subject can be discussed by us in only one way, or not at all. You are young, and it would be too pitiful for you to be cut off before you have even seen Paris. Doubtless, you are impatient to arrive there. It would be well, then, if you rode on a little faster. It is my intention to proceed at a much slower pace than will be agreeable to you."

And he reined in his horse.

I reined in mine likewise. I was boiling with wrath at his superior tone, and his consideration for my youth, but I imitated his coolness as well as I could.

"Monsieur," said I, "whether or not I ever see Paris is not a matter to concern you. I cannot allow you to consider my youth. You wish to be obliging; then consider that nothing in the world would be a greater favor to me than an opportunity to maintain with my sword my opinion of Henri de Guise."

The man smiled gently, and replied without passion:

"Then, as we certainly are not going to fight, let my refusal be, not on

account of your youth, but on account of my necessity of reaching Paris without accident."

His horse stood still. His lackeys also had stopped their horses, which stood pawing and snorting at a respectful distance. It was an awkward moment for me. I could not stand there trying to persuade a perfectly serene man to fight. So with an abrupt pull of the rein I started my horse, mechanically applied the spur, and galloped off. A few minutes later I was out of sight of this singularly self-controlled gentleman, who resented my description of the Duke of Guise. I was annoyed for some time to think that he had had the better of the occurrence; and I gave myself up for an hour to the unprofitable occupation of mentally reenacting the scene in a manner more creditable to myself.

"I may meet him in Paris some day," I said to myself, "and find an occasion to right myself in his estimation. He shall not let my youth intercede for me again."

Then I wished that I had learned his name, that I might, on reaching Paris, have found out more about him. Having in his suite no gentlemen, but several lackeys, he was, doubtless, not himself an important personage, but a follower of one. Not wishing to meet him again until circumstances should have changed, I passed the next inn to which I came, guessing that he would stop there. He must have done so, for he did not come up with me that day, or at any time during my journey.

It was at sunset on a clear, cold evening that, without further adventure, I rode into Paris through the Porte St. Michel, and stared, as I proceeded along the Rue de la Harpe, at the crowds of people hurrying in either direction in each of the narrow, crooked streets, each person so absorbed in his own errand, and so used to the throng and the noise, that he paid no heed to the animation that so interested and stirred me. The rays of the setting sun lighted up the towers of the colleges and abbeys at my right, while those at my left stood black against the purple and yellow sky. I rode on and on, not wishing to stop at an inn until I should have seen more of the panorama that so charmed me. At last I reached the left bank of the Seine, and saw before me the little Isle of the City, the sunlit towers of Notre Dame rising above the wilderness of turrets and spires surrounding them. I crossed the Pont St. Michel, stopping for a moment to look westward towards the Tour de Nesle, and then eastward to the Tournelle, thus covering, in two glances, the river bank of the University through which I had just come. Emerging from the bridge, I followed the Rue de la Barillerie across the Isle of the City, finding everywhere the same bustle, the same coming and going of citizens, priests, students, and beggars, all alert, yet not to be surprised by any spectacle that might arise before them. Reaching the right arm of the Seine, I stopped again, this time on the Pont-au-Change, and embraced, in a sweeping look from left to right, the river bank of the town, the Paris of the court and the palaces, of the markets and of trade, the Paris in which I hoped to find a splendid future, the Paris into which, after taking this comprehensive view from the towers of the Louvre and the Tour de Bois away leftward, to the Tour de Billy away right ward, I urged my horse with a jubilant heart. It was a quite dark Paris by the time I plunged into it. The Rue St. Denis, along which I rode, was beginning to be lighted here and there by stray rays from windows. The still narrower streets, that ran, like crooked corridors in a great chateau, from the large thoroughfare, seemed to be altogether dark.

But, dark as the city had become, I had determined to explore some of it that night, so charming was its novelty, so inviting to me were its countless streets, leading to who knows what? I stopped at a large inn in the Rue St. Denis, saw my tired horse well cared for by an hostler, who seemed amazed at my rustic solicitude for details, had my portmanteau deposited in a clean, white-washed chamber, overlooking the street, ate a supper such as only a Paris innkeeper can serve and a ravenous youth from the country can devour, and went forth afoot, after curfew, into the now entirely dark and no longer crowded street, to find what might befall me.

It had grown colder at nightfall, and I had to draw my cloak closely around me. A wind had come up, too, and the few people whom I met were walking with head thrust forward, the better to resist the breeze when it should oppose them. Some were attended by armed servants bearing lanterns. The sign-boards, that hung from the projecting stories of the tall houses, swung as the wind swayed, and there was a continual sound of creaking. Clouds had risen, and the moon was obscured much of the time, so that when I looked down some of the narrower streets I could not see whether they ended within a short distance, turned out of sight, or continued far in the same direction. Being accustomed to the country roads, the squares of smaller towns, and the wide avenues of the little park at La Tournoire, I was at first surprised at the narrowness of the streets. Across one of them lay a drunken man, peacefully snoring. His head touched the house on one side of the street, and his feet pressed the wall on the opposite side. It surprised me to find so many of the streets no wider than this. But there was more breathing room wherever two streets crossed and where several of them opened into some great place. The crookedness and curvature of the streets constantly tempted me to seek what might be beyond, around the corner, or the bend; and whenever I sought, I found still other corners or bends hiding the unknown, and luring me to investigate.

I had started westward from the inn, intending to proceed towards the Louvre. But presently, having turned aside from one irregular street into another, I did not know what was the direction in which I went. The only noises that I heard were those caused by the wind, excepting when now and then came suddenly a burst of loud talk, mingled mirth and jangling, as quickly shut off, when the door of some cabaret opened and closed. When I heard footsteps on the uneven pebble pavement of the street, and saw approaching me out of the gloom some cloaked pedestrian, I mechanically gripped the handle of my sword, and kept a wary eye on the stranger,—knowing that in passing each other we must almost touch elbows. His own suspicious and cautious demeanor and motions reflected mine.

At night, in the narrow streets of a great town, there exists in every footfall heard, every human figure seen emerging from the darkness, the possibility of an encounter, an adventure, something unexpected. So, to the night roamer, every human sound or sight has an unwonted interest.

As I followed the turning of one of the narrowest streets, the darkness, some distance ahead of me, was suddenly cleft by a stream of light from a window that was quickly opened in the second story of a tall house on the right-hand side of the way. Then the window was darkened by the form of a man coming from the chamber within. At his appearance into view I stood still. Resting for a moment on his knees on the window-ledge, he lowered first one leg, then the other, then his body, and presently he was hanging by his hands over the street. Then the face of a woman appeared in the window, and as the man remained there, suspended, he looked up at

her inquiringly.

"It is well," she said, in a low tone; "but be quick. We are just in time." And she stood ready to close the window as soon as he should be out of the way.

"Good night, adorable," he replied, and dropped to the street. The lady immediately closed the window, not even waiting to see how the man had alighted.

Had she waited to see that, she would have seen him, in lurching over to prevent his sword from striking the ground, lose his balance on a detached paving-stone, and fall heavily on his right arm.

"_Peste_!" he hissed, as he slowly scrambled to his feet. "I have broken my arm!"

With his right arm hanging stiff by his side, and clutching its elbow with his left hand, as if in great pain, he hastened away from the spot, not having noticed me. I followed him.

After a second turn, the street crossed another. In the middle of the open space at the junction, there stood a cross, as could be seen by the moonlight that now came through an interval in the procession of wind-driven clouds.

Just as the man with the hurt arm, who was slender, and had a dandified walk, entered this open space, a gust of wind came into it with him; and there came, also, from the other street, a robust gentleman of medium height, holding his head high and walking briskly. Caught by the gust of wind, my gentleman from the second story window ran precipitantly into the other. The robust man was not sent backward an inch. He took the shock of meeting with the firmness of an unyielding wall, so that the slender gentleman rebounded. Each man uttered a brief oath, and grasped his sword, the slender one forgetting the condition of his arm.

"Oh, it is you," said the robust man, in a virile voice, of which the tone was now purposely offensive. "The wind blows fragile articles into one's face to-night."

"It blows gentlemen into muck-heaps," responded the other, quickly.

The hearty gentleman gave a loud laugh, meant to aggravate the other's anger, and then said:

"We do not need seconds, M. de Quelus," putting into his utterance of the other's name a world of insult.

"Come on, then, M. Bussy d'Amboise," replied the other, pronouncing the name only that he might, in return, hiss out the final syllable as if it were the word for something filthy.

Both whipped out their swords, M. de Quelus now seemingly unconscious of the pain in his arm.

I looked on from the shadow in which I had stopped, not having followed De Quelus into the little open space. My interest in the encounter was naturally the greater for having learned the names of the antagonists. At La Tournoire I had heard enough of the court to know that the Marquis de

Quelus was the chief of the King's effeminate chamberlains, whom he called his minions, and that Bussy d'Amboise was the most redoubtable of the rufflers attached to the King's discontented brother, the Duke of Anjou; and that between the dainty gentlemen of the King and the bullying swordsmen of the Duke, there was continual feud.

Bussy d'Amboise, disdainful even to remove his cloak, of which he quickly gathered the end under his left arm, made two steps and a thrust at De Quelus. The latter made what parade he could for a moment, so that Bussy stepped back to try a feint. De Quelus, trying to raise his sword a trifle higher, uttered an ejaculation of pain, and then dropped the point. Bussy had already begun the motion of a lunge, which it was too late to arrest, even if he had discovered that the other's arm was injured and had disdained to profit by such an advantage. De Quelus would have been pierced through had not I leaped forward with drawn sword and, by a quick thrust, happened to strike Bussy's blade and make it diverge from its course.

De Quelus jumped back on his side, as Bussy did on his. Both regarded me with astonishment.

"Oh, ho, an ambush!" cried Bussy. "Then come on, all of you, messieurs of the daubed face and painted beard! I shall not even call my servants, who wait at the next corner."

And he made a lunge at me, which I diverted by a parry made on instinct, not having had time to bring my mind to the direction of matters. Bussy then stood back on guard.

"You lie," said De Quelus, vainly trying to find sufficient strength in his arm to lift his sword. "I was alone. My servants are as near as yours, yet I have not called. As for this gentleman, I never saw him before."

"That is true," I said, keeping up my guard, while Bussy stood with his back to the cross, his brows knit in his effort to make out my features.

"Oh, very well," said Bussy. "I do not recognize him, but he is evidently a gentleman in search of a quarrel, and I am disposed to be accommodating."

He attacked me again, and I surprised myself, vastly, by being able to resist the onslaughts of this, the most formidable swordsman at the court of France. But I dared not hope for final victory. It did not even occur to me as possible that I might survive this fight. The best for which I hoped was that I might not be among the easiest victims of this famous sword.

"Monsieur," said De Quelus, while Bussy and I kept it up, with offence on his part, defence on mine, "I am sorry that I cannot intervene to save your life. My arm has been hurt in a fall, and I cannot even hold up my sword."

"I know that," I replied. "That is why I interfered."

"The devil!" cried Bussy. "Much as I detest you, M. de Quelus, you know I would not have attacked you had I known that. But this gentleman, at least, has nothing the matter with his arm."

And he came for me again.

Nothing the matter with my arm! Actually a compliment upon my sword-handling from the most invincible fighter, whether in formal duel or sudden quarrel, in France! I liked the generosity which impelled him to acknowledge me a worthy antagonist, as much as I resented his overbearing insolence; and I began to think there was a chance for me.

For the first time, I now assumed the offensive, and with such suddenness that Bussy fell back, out of sheer surprise. He had forgotten about the cross that stood in the centre of the place, and, in leaping backward, he struck this cross heavily with his sword wrist. His glove did not save him from being jarred and bruised; and, for a moment, he relaxed his firm grasp of his sword, and before he could renew his clutch I could have destroyed his guard and ended the matter; but I dropped my point instead.

Bussy looked at me in amazement, and then dropped his.

"Absurd, monsieur! You might very fairly have used your advantage. Now you have spoiled everything. We can't go on fighting, for I would not give you another such opening, nor would I kill a man who gives me my life."

"As you will, monsieur," said I. "I am glad not to be killed, for what is the use of having fought Bussy d'Amboise if one may not live to boast of it?"

He seemed pleased in his self-esteem, and sheathed his sword. "I am destined not to fight to-night," he answered. "One adversary turns out to have a damaged arm, which would make it a disgrace to kill him, and the other puts me under obligation for my life. But, M. de Quelus, your arm will recover."

"I hope so, if for only one reason," replied Quelus.

Bussy d'Amboise then bowed to me, and strode on his way. He was joined at the next crossing of streets by four lackeys, who had been waiting in shadow. All had swords and pistols, and one bore a lantern, which had been concealed beneath his cloak.

De Quelus, having looked after him with an angry frown, now turned to me, and spoke with affability:

"Monsieur, had you not observed the condition of my arm, I should have resented your aid. But as it is, I owe you my life no less than he owes you his, and it may be that I can do more than merely acknowledge the obligation."

I saw here the opportunity for which a man might wait months, and I was not such a fool as to lose it through pride.

"Monsieur," I said, "I am Ernanton de Launay, Sieur de la Tournoire. I arrived in Paris to-day, from Anjou, with the desire of enlisting in the French Guards."

De Quelus smiled. "You desire very little for a gentleman, and one who can handle a sword so well."

"I know that, but I do not bring any letters, and I am not one who could

expect the favor of a court appointment. I am a Huguenot."

"A Huguenot?" said De Quelus. "And yet you come to Paris?"

"I prefer to serve the King of France. He is at present on good terms with the Huguenots, is he not?"

"Yes,--at least, he is not at war with them. Well, gentlemen like you are not to be wasted, even though Huguenots. Attach yourself to Duret's company of the guards for the present, and who knows when you may win a vacant captaincy? I will bring you to the attention of the King. Can you be, to-morrow at eleven o'clock, at the principal gate of the Louvre?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Very well. I will speak to Captain Duret, also, about you."

He looked at my active figure, neither tall nor short, neither broad nor too thin, observed the length of my arm, and remembered that I had made so respectable a showing with the sword against Bussy, I could see that he was thinking, "It is well to have in one's debt as many such strong and honest young gentlemen as can be had. Even a Huguenot may be useful in these days."

Then, when so many leaders contended, every man was desirous of gaining partisans. At court, wise people were scrupulous to repay obligations, in the hope of securing future benefit. I divined De Quelus's motives, but was none the less willing to profit by them as to the possible vacant captaincy.

"Then I thank you, monsieur, and will keep the appointment," I said.

"You are alone," said De Quelus. "One does not know when one may have one's throat cut for a sou, after dark in the streets of Paris. Will you accept the escort of two of my servants? They are waiting for me in the next street. One does not, you know, let one's servants wait too near windows out of which one expects to drop," he added with a smile.

"I thank you, monsieur, but I have already fared so well alone to-night, that I should fear to change my fortune by taking attendants."

"Then good night, monsieur. No, thank you. I can sheathe my own sword. My arm has lost its numbness. _Parbleu_, I should like to meet Bussy d'Amboise now."

And he strode away, leaving me standing by the cross.

I hesitated between returning to the inn, and resuming my exploration of the streets. I decided to go back, lest I be shut out for the night.

I had made my way some distance, in the labyrinth of streets, when, on reaching another junction of ways, I heard steps at some distance to the left. Looking in that direction, I saw approaching a little procession headed by two men servants, one of whom carried a lantern. I stepped back into the street from which I had just emerged, that I might remain unseen, until it should pass. Peering around the street corner, I saw that behind the two servants came a lady, whose form indicated youth and elegance, and who leaned on the arm of a stout woman, doubtless a servant. Behind these two came another pair of lackeys.

The lady wore a mask, and although heavily cloaked, shivered in the January wind, and walked as rapidly as she could. The four men had swords and pistols, and were sturdy fellows, able to afford her good protection.

The two men in advance passed without seeing me, stepping easily over a pool of muddy water that had collected in a depression in the street, and had not yet had time to freeze.

When the lady reached this pool, she stopped at its brink and looked down at it, with a little motion of consternation.

"I cannot step across this lake," she said, in a voice that was low-pitched, rich, and full of charm to the ear. "We must skirt its borders."

And she turned to walk a short distance up the street in which I stood.

"Not so, madame," I said, stepping forth and bowing. "The lake is a long one, and you would have to go far out of your way. I will convey you across in a moment, if you will allow me." And I held out my arms, indicating my willingness to lift her across the pool.

The two servants in the rear now hastened up, ready to attack me, and those ahead turned and came back, their hands on their weapons.

The lady looked at me through the eye-holes of her mask. Her lips and chin being visible, she could not conceal a quizzical smile that came at my offer.

"Why not?" she said, motioning her servants back.

I caught her up in my arms and lifted her over the puddle. She slid from my grasp with a slight laugh.

I sought some pretext to prolong this meeting. "When I came out to-night," I said, "I dared not hope for such happiness as this."

"Nor did the astrologer predict anything of the kind to me," she replied. From this I knew the cause of her being in the street so late,--a secret visit to some fortune-teller. Then she called to the stout woman, who was looking for a place to step over the pool. "Come, Isa, in the name of Heaven. You know that if the guard is changed--"

She stopped, but she had already betrayed herself. She meant the guard of the palace, doubtless; and that her secret entrance, so long after the closing of the gates, depended for its ease on the presence of some officer with whom she had an understanding. She must be one of the ladies attached to the royal household, and her nocturnal excursion, from the Louvre, was evidently clandestine.

Isa now joined her mistress, and the latter, with a mere, "I thank you, monsieur," turned and hastened on her way. Soon the footsteps of her attendants died out of hearing.

I had not even seen her face, save the white, curved chin and the delicate mouth. I had only beheld her lithe figure, felt its heaving as I carried her, had my cold cheek warmed for a moment by her breath, heard her provoking laugh and her voice, rich with vitality. Yet her charm had

caught me and remained with me. I could not, nor did I try to throw it off. I was possessed by a craving to see her again, to know more of her. Already I made this unknown the heroine of my prospective love affair. I could soon find her, after gaining the entree of the court; and I could identify her by her voice as well as by her probable recognition of me. Heaving a deep sigh, I left the place of our meeting and found my way back to the inn. Thanks to the presence of some late drinkers, I got in without much pounding on the door; and in my little white-washed chamber I dreamt of soft eyes that glowed through the holes of a lady's mask.

CHAPTER II.

LOVE-MAKING AT SHORT ACQUAINTANCE

The next morning was bright, and not too cold. At eleven I approached the great gate of the Louvre, wearing the bold demeanor of a man determined not to be abashed, even by the presence of royalty. Yet within me there was some slight trepidation lest I should, on first setting foot within the precincts of a palace, betray my rustic bringing up.

Others were being admitted at the gate, and some were coming out, both the King's council and the reception having been over for some time. A page, who had been waiting just inside the court, came out as I approached, and asked me if I were M. de Launay. Astonished, that he should have so easily picked me out, I replied that I was. He then said that he had come to conduct me to Monsieur the Marquis de Quelus, and I followed him into the great courtyard of the Louvre.

Before me was the imposing facade of the palace. Around me was an animated scene of well-dressed gentlemen coming and going, meeting one another forming little groups for a moment's interchange of news or inquiries, and as quickly breaking up. There were soldiers on guard, officers on duty and off, courtiers in brilliant doublets, dazzling ruffs, rich hose; gentlemen with gay plumes, costly cloaks, jewelled sword-hilts. There were pages, strutting about with messages; lackeys, belonging only to the greatest nobles or royal favorites. Everybody, whether gentleman, soldier, household officer, priest, page, or valet, went with an air of great consequence, with head high in air, every step, expression, and attitude proclaiming a sense of vast superiority to the rest of the world. It was as if people attached to the court were an elevated race of beings; or as if the court were Olympus, and these were gods and the servitors of gods, who, very properly, regarded mortals with disdain. Each man, too, maintained not only this lofty air as befitting one of the court, but also an aspect of individual preciousness as towards his fellow divinities. There was, in many a face or bearing, an expressed resentment, in advance, of any affront that might be offered. The soldiers swaggered, the gentlemen showed self-esteem in every motion. Nevertheless, there was much good nature and courtesy in the salutations, fragments of conversation, and exchanges of gossip. Leaving the sunlit courtyard behind, the page showed me up a fine stairway, where some gentlemen tarried in little parties, while others ascended or descended. We passed through large galleries, the same animation continuing everywhere. I had no time, as we passed, to examine the superb hangings and fanciful decorations of the galleries in detail. The clothes of the courtiers, the brilliant

display of velvet, silk, furs, and the finest linen, of every known hue, made a continually changing, moving panorama of color.

We approached, at last, a group extraordinarily radiant in attire. It was composed of very young men, some of whom had hardly yet acquired the beard required by the universal fashion. Even at a distance I could see that their cheeks were painted, could note their affectation of feminine attitudes, could smell the perfumes with which they had deluged their bodies. These were some of the favorites of the King, and more of the imitators of the favorites. No wonder that Bussy d'Amboise and the sturdy gentlemen of the King's ungainly brother, Anjou, had a manly detestation for these bedaubed effeminates, and sought opportunities to extirpate them with the sword. Yet these dainty youths, one of whom was De Quelus, who now came forward to meet me, were not cowards.

The young Marquis wore a slashed doublet of brown velvet and gold. His silken hose were of a lighter tint of brown. His ruff was so enormous that he had to keep the point of his beard thrust forward at an elevation.

"I shall present you when the King passes," he said to me. "I have already spoken a word to Captain Duret, to whom you will report to-morrow. He will make a veteran of you in a quarter of an hour. The King, by the way, knows of your family. He knows every family in France, for that matter. I spoke of you to him at his rising this morning. He said that your father was a Huguenot, and I told him that you also were Protestant. You know enough of things in France to be aware that your Protestantism stands a little in your way at court, just now; but things may change before there is a vacant captaincy in the Guards."

People who have thought it bad enough that I should have gone to Paris, instead of to the court of Henri of Navarre, have been astonished, beyond expression, at my having desired to serve in the King's infantry, which, in the event of another civil war, might be arrayed against the army of our faith. But it must be borne in mind that I had this desire at a time when none knew how the different armies might be placed towards one another in the civil war, which everybody admitted must, at some time or other, occur. I was one of the many who believed that the Duke of Guise, using the newly formed Holy League as his instrument, would aim for the throne of France; that King Henri III. would be forced, in self-defence, to make an alliance with the Huguenot leaders; and that, therefore, I, in fulfilling my ambition to be of this King's own soldiers, with quarters in or near Paris in time of peace, would, at the outbreak of civil war, find myself in line with the armies of our faith, opposed to the common enemy, the great Catholic Guise faction. Of the various predictions as to the future of France, I chose this one, perhaps because it was the only one which permitted me to follow out my wishes without outraging my sense of duty.

Before I could answer De Quelus, a voice said, "The King!" At the end of the gallery, where two halberdiers and two ushers stood, a pair of curtains had quickly parted, and out came a slender young man all velvet, silk, gold, and jewels; with the legs and the walk of a woman; with face painted like a courtesan's; a very slight beard on his chin, and a weak growth of hair on his upper lip; with a look half brazen, half shamefaced; with eyes half wistful, half malicious; his pear-shaped face expressing some love of the beautiful, some wit, some cynicism, much personal vanity, vicious inclinations and practices, restlessness, the torture of secret self-reproach, a vague distress, a longing to escape

somewhere and be at peace.

He wore ear-rings, a necklace, bracelets, and a small jewelled velvet cap; but he was without his famous basket of little dogs. This was Henri III., and he was going to pray in one of the churches.

As he came down the gallery, he noticed De Quelus, from afar, and then glanced at me. When he was before us, De Quelus made obeisance and presented me. Before I could finish my bow, the King said:

"Ah, it was your sword that helped to preserve my chamberlain from the ambush laid for him?" (From which it appeared that De Quelus had given his own account of the previous night's occurrence.) "And you wish to enlist in my regiment of French Guards? My faith, I have done well in reestablishing that corps, if such brave young gentlemen are induced to enter it. I'll wager you hope to earn a commission soon."

I could only reply: "Such a hope is beyond my deserts, sire."

It was indeed beyond them, for I had seen no military service; but it was not beyond them for any other reason.

"Nothing is beyond the deserts of one whose sword is always loyal," said the King, with intended significance, and passed on; his gentlemen falling in behind him. De Quelus gave me directions as to my reporting, on the morrow, to Captain Duret, and added, "Rely on me for any favor or privilege that you may wish, and for access to the palace. You have only to send me word." He then joined the following of the King.

I seemed now at liberty to remain in the Louvre as long as I might choose, having once entered it. I thought I would look about, knowing that if at any time I should be about to trespass on forbidden ground, there would be guards to hinder me. I went first to a window overlooking the court. I had no sooner turned my eyes down upon the splendid and animated scene below, then I felt a touch on my elbow. Looking around, I saw a familiar face,—that of M. de Rilly, another Anjou gentleman, whom I had known before his coming to court. He was now one of the King's equerries.

He was a sprightly man of about thirty, with none of the effeminacy that marked so many of the officers of the King's household. Though not of my religion, he made me heartily welcome, and undertook, at once, to initiate me into the mysteries of the court. He was a loquacious, open-minded man, who did not fear to express his thoughts, even in the shadow of royalty itself.

Hearing some clatter in the direction whither the King had gone, I looked after him. A short, compact young gentleman, plainly, but richly dressed, slightly stooping, with a rather surly face, and an envious eye, was coming towards the King. He wore riding-boots and a cloak, and behind him came a troop of young men similarly attired. The foremost of them was Bussy d'Amboise, expressing defiance in every line of his bold, square countenance.

"Ah," said De Rilly, "there is the Duke of Anjou, who has been riding in the faubourg."

I took a second look at the surly gentleman. At this moment he exchanged glances with his brother, the King. The look of each was eloquent. The

King's said, "I hate you for being a disloyal brother and a fractious subject; for conspiring to take away part of my kingdom; and who knows but that you are secretly aiming at my throne and my life?" The younger brother's look conveyed this much: "I hate you for your suspicions of me; for your not obtaining for me in your court the respect due the son and brother of a king; for encouraging your favorites to ridicule me. If I am driven to rebel against you, it is your own fault."

The King received the Duke's perfunctory salutation indifferently, and passed on. Anjou and his men turned into a gallery leading to his own apartments.

"I see that everybody is following the King," I said.

"Yes, but not I," replied De Rilly. "I find it no more amusing to pray when the King does than at any other time. I came here, this morning, to catch a glimpse of one of the Queen's ladies, but her Majesty has a cold, and my lady is in attendance."

"Which of the Queens has a cold?"

"Queen Louise, the King's wife. It is true, one may well ask which, when there is mention of the Queen nowadays. The Queen of France is a small factor when compared with the King's mother, Queen Catherine, or even with his sister, the Queen of Navarre, whose name is on everyone's tongue, on account of her love affairs, and of her suspected plots."

"What plots?"

"Some think she plots with the Duke of Guise, who cannot wait to rule France until Catherine's sons are both dead,--but Catherine will make him wait. Others believe that she plots with her Huguenot husband, the King of Navarre, to join him; and that the King keeps her here virtually a prisoner, lest her departure might be taken as a concession to the Huguenots; and, lastly and chiefly, they aver that she plots with her brother Anjou, to help him to join the Huguenots and malcontents as their leader."

"This is very interesting, M. de Rilly; but, pardon me, is it safe to say these things openly at court? I am fresh from the country, and anxious not to blunder."

"It is safe for me, because I am nobody at all, and, moreover, I say whatever is in my thoughts, and am looked upon as a rattlebrain, and not taken seriously. But it would not be safe for some. There comes the Queen of Navarre now. She and her ladies have been walking in their garden."

A number of ladies were entering the gallery from a side stairway. Marguerite de Valois, who ought to have been with her husband, the King of Navarre, at his little court at Nerac, remained instead at the court of France, to be its greatest ornament. She was, alas, its greatest scandal, also. But I admired her none the less for that, as she stood there, erect among her women, full of color and grace. Vast possibilities of mischief seemed buried in the depths of the big and brilliant eyes which gave so much life to the small, round face.

While she stood still for one of her maids to detach from her ruff a dead leaf that had dropped there during her walk, Bussy d'Amboise returned from Anjou's apartment. He walked up to her with a conquering

air, bowed, and said something that made her laugh. Then he looked around and saw me. He spoke to her again, in a low tone, and she cast her fine eyes in my direction. She directed her ladies to fall back out of hearing, and again conferred with Bussy. At the end of this he left her, and strode over to me.

"Monsieur," he said, "the Queen of Navarre would like to know your name. I do not remember to have heard it last night."

I told him my name, and he took me by the arm, led me to Marguerite, and presented me, somewhat to my confusion, so rapidly was the thing done.

"You are a newcomer at court?" she said.

"I arrived in Paris only yesterday."

"And have taken service with--whom?"

"In the French Guards."

"We shall doubtless hear more of your skill with the sword," said Marguerite.

"I knew not I had any," I replied, "until I found out that I could stand up for a minute against the sword I met last night. Now I am glad to know that I possess skill, that I may hold it ever at the service of your Majesty as well as of the King."

This speech seemed to be exactly what Marguerite had desired of me, for she smiled and said, "I shall not forget you, M. de la Tournoire," before she turned away.

Bussy followed her, and I returned to De Rilly.

"Why should they pay any attention to me?" I said to him.

"No newcomer is too insignificant to be sought as an ally where there are so many parties," he replied, indifferently. "Those two are with Anjou, who may have use for as many adherents as he can get one of these days. They say he is always meditating rebellion with the Huguenots or the Politiques, or both, and I don't blame a prince who is so shabbily treated at court."

"But what could a mere guardsman do, without friends or influence? Besides, my military duties--"

"Will leave you plenty of time to get into other troubles, if you find them amusing. How do you intend to pass the rest of the day?"

"I have no plans. I should like to see more of the Louvre on my first visit; and, to tell the truth, I had hoped to find out more about a certain lady who belongs to the court."

"What do you know of her?"

"Only that she has a beautiful figure and a pretty mouth and chin. She wore a mask, but I should recognize her voice if I heard it again."

"I wish you better luck than I have had to-day."

Marguerite and her damsels had turned down a corridor leading to her apartments. Bussy d'Amboise was disappearing down the stairs. There came, from another direction, the lively chatter of women's voices, and there appeared, at the head of the stairs up which Marguerite had come, another group of ladies, all young and radiant but one. The exception was a stout, self-possessed looking woman of middle age, dressed rather sedately in dark satin. She had regular features, calm black eyes, an unruffled expression, and an air of authority without arrogance.

"Queen Catherine and some of her Flying Squadron," said De Rilly, in answer to my look of inquiry. "She has been taking the air after the King's council. Her own council is a more serious matter, and lasts all the time."

"Queen Catherine?" I exclaimed, incredulously, half refusing to see, in that placid matron, the ceaseless plotter, the woman accused of poisoning and all manner of bloodshed, whom the name represented.

"Catherine de Medici," said De Rilly, evidently finding it a pleasure to instruct a newcomer as to the personages and mysteries of the court. "She who preserves the royal power in France at this moment."

"She does not look as I have imagined her," I said.

"One would not suppose," said De Rilly, "that behind that serene countenance goes on the mental activity necessary to keep the throne in possession of her favorite son, who spends fortunes on his minions, taxes his subjects to the utmost, and disgusts them with his eccentric piety and peculiar vices."

"Dare one say such things in the very palace of that King?"

"Why not say what every one knows? It is what people say in hidden places that is dangerous."

"I wonder what is passing in the Queen-mother's mind at this moment," I said, as Catherine turned into the corridor leading to Anjou's apartments.

In the light of subsequent events, I can now give a better answer to that query than De Rilly, himself, could have given then. Catherine had to use her wits to check the deep designs of Henri, Duke of Guise, who was biding his time to claim the throne as the descendant of Charlemagne, and was as beloved of the populace as Henri III. was odious to it. Thanks to the rebellion of Huguenots and malcontents, Guise had been kept too busy in the field to prosecute his political designs. As head of the Catholic party, and heir to his father's great military reputation, he could not, consistently, avoid the duties assigned him by the crown. That these duties might not cease, Catherine found it to her interest that rebellion should continue indefinitely. The Huguenot party, in its turn, was kept by the Guise or Catholic party from assaults on the crown. In fine, while both great factions were occupied with each other, neither could threaten the King. This discord, on which she relied to keep her unpopular son safe on his throne, was fomented by her in secret ways. She shifted from side to side, as circumstances required. The parties must be maintained, in order that discontent might vent itself in factional contest, and not against the King. The King must belong to neither party, in order not to be of the party that might be ultimately defeated; yet he must belong to

both parties, in order to be of the party that might ultimately triumph. To the maintenance of this impossible situation was the genius of Catherine de Medici successfully devoted for many years of universal discontent and bloodshed.

Now the Duke of Guise had found a way to turn these circumstances to account. Since the King of France could not hold down the Huguenots, the Holy Catholic League, composed of Catholics of every class throughout the most of France, would undertake the task. He foresaw that he, as leader of the League, would earn from the Catholics a gratitude that would make him the most powerful man in the kingdom. Catherine, too, saw this. To neutralize this move, she caused the King to endorse the League and appoint himself its head. The Huguenots must not take this as a step against them; on the contrary, they must be led to regard it as a shrewd measure to restrain the League. The King's first official edicts, after assuming the leadership of the League, seemed to warrant this view. So the King, in a final struggle against the Guise elements, might still rely on the aid of the Huguenots. But the King still remained outside of the League, although nominally its chief. Catherine saw that it was not to be deluded from its real purpose. The only thing to do was to conciliate the Duke of Guise into waiting. There was little likelihood of either of her sons attaining middle age. The Duke of Guise, a splendid specimen of physical manhood, would doubtless outlive them; he might be induced to wait for their deaths. The rightful successor to the throne would then be Henri of Navarre, head of the Bourbon family. But he was a Huguenot; therefore Catherine affected to the Duke of Guise a great desire that he should succeed her sons. The existing peace allowed the Duke of Guise the leisure in which to be dangerous; so every means to keep him quiet was taken.

Some of these things De Rilly told me, as we stood in the embrasure of a window in the gallery, while Catherine visited her son, Anjou,--whose discontent at court complicated the situation, for he might, at any time, leave Paris and lead the Huguenots and malcontents in a rebellion which would further discredit her family with the people, demonstrate anew the King's incompetence, and give the League an opportunity.

"And does the Duke of Guise allow himself to be cajoled?" I asked De Rilly.

"Who knows? He is a cautious man, anxious to make no false step. They say he would be willing to wait for the death of the King, but that he is ever being urged to immediate action by De Noyard."

"De Noyard?"

"One of Guise's followers; an obscure gentleman of very great virtue, who has recently become Guise's most valued counsellor. He keeps Guise on his guard against Catherine's wiles, they say, and discourages Guise's amour with her daughter, Marguerite, which Catherine has an interest in maintaining. Nobody is more *_de trop_* to Catherine just at present, I hear, than this same Philippe de Noyard. Ah! there he is now,--in the courtyard, the tallest of the gentlemen who have just dismounted, and are coming in this direction, with the Duke of Guise."

I looked out of the window, and at once recognized the Duke of Guise by the great height of his slender but strong figure, the splendid bearing, the fine oval face, with its small mustache, slight fringe of beard, and its scar, and the truly manly and magnificent manner, of which report had

told us. He wore a doublet of cloth of silver, a black cloak of velvet, and a black hat with the Lorraine cross on its front. The tallest man in his following--Philippe de Noyard, of whom De Rilly had just been speaking--was the gentleman whom I had met on the road to Paris, and who had refused to fight me after resenting my opinion of the Duke of Guise.

He must have arrived in Paris close behind me.

I was watching Guise and his gentlemen as they crossed the court to enter the palace, when suddenly I heard behind me the voice that had lingered in my ears all the previous night. I turned hastily around, and saw a group of Catherine's ladies, who stood around a fireplace, not having followed the Queen-mother to Anjou's apartments.

"Who is the lady leaning against the tapestry?" I quickly asked De Rilly.

"The one with the indolent attitude, and the mocking smile?"

"Yes, the very beautiful one, with the big gray eyes. By heaven, her eyes rival those of Marguerite, herself!"

"That is Mlle. d'Arency, a new recruit to Catherine's Flying Squadron."

Her face more than carried out the promise given by her chin and mouth. It expressed to the eye all that the voice expressed to the ear.

She had not seen me yet. I had almost made up my mind to go boldly over to her, when the Duke of Guise and his gentlemen entered the gallery. At the same instant, Catherine reappeared on the arm of the Duke of Anjou. The latter resigned her to the Duke of Guise, and went back to his apartment, whereupon Catherine and Guise started for the further end of the gallery, as if for private conversation. His manner was courteous, but cold; hers calm and amiable.

"Ah, see!" whispered De Rilly to me. "What did I tell you?"

Catherine had cast a glance towards Guise's gentlemen. De Noyard, grave and reserved, stood a little apart from the others. For an instant, a look of profound displeasure, a deeply sinister look, interrupted the composure of Catherine's features.

"You see that M. de Noyard does not have the effect on the Queen-mother that a rose in her path would have," remarked De Rilly.

He did not notice what followed. But I observed it, although not till long afterward did I see its significance. It was a mere exchange of glances, and little did I read in it the secret which was destined to have so vast an effect on my own life, to give my whole career its course. It was no more than this: Catherine turned her glance, quickly, from De Noyard to Mlle. d'Arency, who had already been observing her. Mlle. d'Arency gave, in reply, an almost imperceptible smile of understanding; then Catherine and Guise passed on.

Two looks, enduring not a moment; yet, had I known what was behind them, my life would assuredly have run an entirely different course.

The gentlemen of the Duke of Guise now joined Catherine's ladies at the fireplace. For a time, Mlle. d'Arency was thus lost to my sight; then the group opened, and I saw her resting her great eyes, smilingly, on the

face of De Noyard, who was talking to her in a low tone, his gaze fixed upon her with an expression of wistful adoration.

"The devil!" I muttered. "That man loves her."

"My faith!" said De Rilly, "one would think he was treading on your toes in doing so; yet you do not even know her."

"She is the woman I have chosen to be in love with, nevertheless," I said.

It seemed as if the Duke of Guise had come to the Louvre solely for a word with the Queen-mother, for now he took his departure, followed by his suite, while Catherine went to her own apartments. As De Noyard passed out, he saw me. His face showed that he recognized me, and that he wondered what I was doing in the palace. There was nothing of offence in his look, only a slight curiosity.

De Rilly now expressed an intention of going out to take the air, but I preferred to stay where I was; for Mile. d'Arency had remained in the gallery, with some other of Catherine's ladies. So the loquacious equerry went without me.

I formed a bold resolution. Quelling the trepidation that came with it, I strode quickly over to Mlle. d'Arency, who still stood against the tapestry as if she had been a figure in it but had come to life and stepped out into the apartment.

Her large eyes fell on me, and opened slightly wider, showing at once recognition and a not unpleasant surprise. I bowed very low, partly to conceal the flush that I felt mounting to my face.

"Pardon me, Mile. d'Arency," I said, in a voice as steady as I could make it. Then I looked at her and saw her features assuming an expression of such coldness and astonishment that for some time neither my tongue nor my mind could continue the speech, nor could I move a step in retreat. All the while she kept her eyes upon me.

I drew a deep breath at last, and said in desperation:

"Doubtless I ought not to address you, being unknown to you, but if you will permit me, I will go and bring M. de Rilly, who will present me."

Her face softened somewhat, and she looked amused. "You seem quite able to present yourself," she said.

I was immensely relieved at this melting of the ice, just when I was beginning to feel that I was becoming a spectacle.

"I am Ernanton de Launay, Sieur de la Tournoire," I said, and to fill up the embarrassing pause that followed, I added, "and, being a Huguenot, I am a nobody in Paris,--in fact, a mere volunteer in the French Guards."

"Well, Monsieur Guardsman, what do you wish to say to me?"

She was now in quite a pleasant, quizzical mood.

"I trust you do not expect me to say it in one word," I answered; and then I lowered my voice, "or in a single interview."

"It does not matter how many interviews it requires, if it is interesting," she answered nonchalantly.

"Alas!" I said. "I fear it is a story which many others have told you."

"An old story may seem new, when it comes from new lips."

"And when it is new to the lips that tell it, as mine is. Actually, I have never before made a confession of love."

"Am I to understand that you are about to make one now?"

"Have I not already made it?" I said.

We now stood quite apart from all others in the gallery, unnoticed by them; and our voices had fallen almost to a whisper.

She smiled, as if refusing to take my words seriously.

"If you have waited so long before making any confession of love whatever," she said, "you have certainly made up for the delay by the speed which you use in making your first."

"On the contrary, I have had my confession ready for a long time, as my love has existed for a long time. I waited only to meet its object,—the woman of whom I had formed the ideal in my mind."

She looked as if about to burst into a laugh; but she changed her mind, and regarded me with a look of inquiry, as if she would read my heart. The smile was still on her lips, yet she spoke gravely when she said:

"Monsieur, I cannot make you out. If you are as sincere as you are original,—but I must go to the Queen-mother now. To-morrow afternoon, I shall walk in the gardens of the Tuileries, if the weather is clear."

"But one moment, I beg! M. de Noyard,—he is in love with you, is he not?"

Her face again took on its mocking look. "I have not asked him," she said lightly. Then she regarded me with a new and peculiar expression, as if some daring idea had come into her mind, some project which had to be meditated upon before it might be safely breathed.

"You look at me strangely, mademoiselle."

"Oh, I merely wonder at your curiosity in regard to M. de Noyard."

"My curiosity is not in regard to his feelings, but in regard to yours."

"Monsieur," she said, with a very captivating air of reproach, "have I not told you that I shall walk in the gardens of the Tuileries to-morrow afternoon?"

And she glided away, leaving behind her the most delighted and conceited young man, at that moment, in France.

CHAPTER III.

THE STRANGE REQUEST OF Mlle. D'ARENCY

I was disappointed in the interview that I had with Mlle. d'Arency in the gardens of the Tuileries, the next day. I saw her for only a few minutes, and then within sight of other of Catherine's ladies. Although I lost nothing of the ground I had taken, neither did I gain anything further. Afterward, at court receptions and *_fetes_*, and, sometimes, in the palace galleries, when she was off duty, I contrived to meet her. She neither gave me opportunities nor avoided me. All the progress that I made was in the measure of my infatuation for her. When I begged for a meeting at which we might not be surrounded by half the court, she smiled, and found some reason to prevent any such interview in the near future. So, if I had carried things very far at our first meeting in the Louvre, I now paid for my exceptional fortune by my inability to carry them a step further.

Thus matters went for several days, during which the assertion of De Rilly was proven true,—that my duties as a member of the French Guards would leave me some time for pleasure. Thanks to De Quelus, and to his enemy, Bussy d'Amboise, I made acquaintances both in the King's following and in that of the King's brother, the Duke of Anjou. De Rilly made me known to many who belonged to neither camp, and were none the worse for that. Our company lodged in the Faubourg St. Honore, but I led the life of a gentleman of pleasure, when off duty, and, as such, I had a private lodging within the town, near the Louvre, more pretentious than the whitewashed chamber in the Rue St. Denis. I drank often in cabarets, became something of a swaggerer, and something of a fop,—though never descending to the womanishness of the King's minions,—and did not allow my great love affair, which I never mentioned save in terms of mystery, to hinder me from the enjoyment of lesser amours of transient duration. At this time everybody was talking of the feud between the King's favorites and the followers of the Duke of Anjou. The King's minions openly ridiculed Anjou for his ungainliness, which was all the greater for his look of settled discontent and resentment. His faithful and pugnacious Bussy retaliated by having his pages dress like the King's minions,—with doublets of cloth of gold, stiff ruffs, and great plumes,—and so attend him at the Twelfth Day *_fetes_*. The minions, in their turn, sought revenge on Bussy by attacking him, on the following night, while he was returning from the Louvre to his lodgings. He eluded them, and the next morning he accused M. de Grammont of having led the ambushade. De Quelus then proposed that all the King's gentlemen should meet all those of the Duke in a grand encounter to the death. The Duke's followers gladly accepted the challenge. Three hundred men on each side would have fought, had not the King resolutely forbidden the duel. De Quelus, that night, led a number of gentlemen in an attack on Bussy's lodgings. Bussy and his followers made a stout resistance, the tumult becoming so great that the Marechal de Montmorency called out the Scotch Guard to clear the street in front of Bussy's house; and it was time. Several gentlemen and servants were lying in their blood; and some of these died of their wounds.

It was openly known, about the court, that the Duke of Anjou held the King to be privy to these attacks on Bussy, and was frightfully enraged thereby; and that the King, in constant fear of the Duke's departure to join the Huguenots,—which event would show the King's inability to

prevent sedition even in the royal family, and would give the Guise party another pretext to complain of his incompetence,--would forcibly obstruct the Duke's going.

It was this state of affairs that made Catherine de Medici again take up her abode in the Louvre, that she might be on the ground in the event of a family outbreak, which was little less probable to occur at night than in the daytime. She had lately lived part of the time in her new palace of the Tuileries, and part of the time in her Hotel des Filles Repenties, holding her council in either of these places, and going to the Louvre daily for the signature of the King to the documents of her own fabrication. At this time, Mlle. d'Arency was one of the ladies of the Queen-mother's bedchamber, and so slept in the Louvre. What should I be but such a fool as, when off duty, to pass certain hours of the night in gazing up at the window of my lady's chamber, as if I were a lover in an Italian novel! Again I must beg you to remember that I was only twenty-one, and full of the most fantastic ideas. I had undertaken an epic love affair, and I would omit none of the picturesque details that example warranted.

Going, one evening in February, to take up my post opposite the Louvre, I suddenly encountered a gentleman attended by two valets with torches. I recognized him as De Noyard, who had twice or thrice seen me about the palaces, but had never spoken to me. I was therefore surprised when, on this occasion, he stopped and said to me, in a low and polite tone:

"Monsieur, I have seen you, once or twice, talking with M. Bussy d'Amboise, and I believe that, if you are not one of his intimates, you, at least, wish him no harm."

"You are right, monsieur," I said, quite mystified.

"I am no friend of his," continued M. de Noyard, in his cold, dispassionate tone, "but he is a brave man, who fights openly, and, so far, he is to be commended. I believe he will soon return from the Tuileries, where he has been exercising one of the horses of the Duke of Anjou. I have just come from there myself. On the way, I espied, without seeming to see them, a number of the gentlemen of the King waiting behind the pillars of the house with a colonnade, near the Porte St. Honore."

"One can guess what that means."

"So I thought. As for me, I have more important matters in view than interfering with the quarrels of young hot-heads; but I think that there is yet time for Bussy d'Amboise to be warned, before he starts to return from the Tuileries."

"M. de Noyard, I thank you," I said, with a bow of genuine respect, and in a moment I was hastening along the Rue St. Honore.

I understood, of course, the real reasons why De Noyard himself had not gone back to warn Bussy. Firstly, those in ambush would probably have noticed his turning back, suspected his purpose, and taken means to defeat it. Secondly, he was a man from whom Bussy would have accepted neither warning nor assistance; yet he was not pleased that any brave man should be taken by surprise, and he gave me credit for a similar feeling. I could not but like him, despite my hidden suspicion that there was something between Mlle. d'Arency and him.

I approached the house with the colonnade, feigning carelessness, as if I were returning to my military quarters in the faubourg. The Porte St. Honore was still open, although the time set for its closing was past.

Suddenly a mounted figure appeared in the gateway, which, notwithstanding the dusk, I knew, by the way the rider sat his horse, to be that of Bussy. I was too late to warn him; I could only give my aid.

Three figures rushed out from beneath the supported upper story of the house, and made for Bussy with drawn swords. With a loud oath he reined back his horse on its haunches, and drew his own weapon, with which he swept aside the two points presented at him from the left. One of the three assailants had planted himself in front of the horse, to catch its bridle, but saw himself now threatened by Bussy's sword, which moved with the swiftness of lightning. This man thereupon fell back, but stood ready to obstruct the forward movement of the horse, while one of the other two ran around to Bussy's right, so that the rider might be attacked, simultaneously on both sides.

This much I had time to see before drawing my sword and running up to attack the man on the horseman's left, whom I suddenly recognized as De Quelus. At the same instant I had a vague impression of a fourth swordsman rushing out from the colonnade, and, before I could attain my object, I felt a heavy blow at the base of my skull, which seemed almost to separate my head from my neck, and I fell forward, into darkness and oblivion.

I suppose that the man, running to intercept me, had found a thrust less practicable than a blow with the hilt of a dagger.

When I again knew that I was alive, I turned over and sat up. Several men--bourgeois, vagabonds, menials, and such--were standing around, looking down at me and talking of the affray. I looked for Bussy and De Quelus, but did not see either. At a little distance away was another group, and people walked from that group to mine, and _vice versa._

"Where is M. Bussy?" I asked.

"Oho, this one is all right!" cried one, who might have been a clerk or a student; "he asks questions. You wish to know about Bussy, eh? You ought to have seen him gallop from the field without a scratch, while his enemies pulled themselves together and took to their heels."

"What is that, over there?" I inquired, rising to my feet, and discovering that I was not badly hurt.

"A dead man who was as much alive as any of us before he ran to help M. Bussy. It is always the outside man who gets the worst of it, merely for trying to be useful. There come the soldiers of the watch, after the fight is over."

I walked over to the other group and knelt by the body on the ground. It was that of a gentleman whom I had sometimes seen in Bussy's company. He was indeed dead. The blood was already thickening about the hole that a sword had made in his doublet.

The next day the whole court was talking of the wrath of the Duke of Anjou at this assault upon his first gentleman-in-waiting. I was ashamed of having profited by the influence of De Quelus, who, I found, had not

recognized me on the previous evening. Anjou's rage continued deep. He showed it by absenting himself from the wedding of Saint-Luc, one of De Quelus's companions in the King's favor and in the attack on Bussy. Catherine, knowing how the King's authority was weakened by the squabbles between him and his brother, took the Duke out to Vincennes for a walk in the park and a dinner at the chateau, that his temper might cool. She persuaded him to show a conciliatory spirit and attend the marriage ball to be held that night in the great hall of the Louvre. This was more than she could persuade Marguerite to do, who accompanied mother and son to Vincennes, sharing the feelings of the Duke for three reasons,--her love for him, her hatred for her brother, the King, and her friendship for Bussy d'Amboise. It would have been well had the Duke been, like his sister, proof against his mother's persuasion. For, when he arrived at the ball, he was received by the King's gentlemen with derisive looks, and one of them, smiling insolently in the Duke's piggish, pockmarked face, said, "Doubtless you have come so late because the night is most favorable to your appearance."

Suppose yourself in the Duke's place, and imagine his resentment. He turned white and left the ball. Catherine must have had to use her utmost powers to keep peace in the royal family the next day.

On the second morning after the ball, I heard, from De Rilly, that the King had put his brother under arrest, and kept him guarded in the Duke's own apartment, lest he should leave Paris and lead the rebellion which the King had to fear, not only on its own account, but because of the further disrepute into which it would bring him with his people. The King, doubtless, soon saw, or was made to see, that this conduct towards his brother--who had many supporters in France and was then affianced to Queen Elizabeth of England--would earn only condemnation; for, on the day after the arrest, he caused the court to assemble in Catherine's apartments, and there De Quelus went ironically through the form of an apology to the Duke, and a reconciliation with Bussy. The exaggerated embrace which Bussy gave De Quelus made everybody laugh, and showed that this peace-making was not to be taken seriously. Soon after it, Bussy d'Amboise and several of his followers left Paris.

The next thing I saw, which had bearing on the difference between the King and Monsieur his brother, was the procession of penitents in which Monsieur accompanied the King through the streets, after the hollow reconciliation. I could scarcely convince myself that the sanctimonious-looking person, in coarse penitential robe, heading the procession through the mire and over the stones of Paris, from shrine to shrine, was the dainty King whom I had beheld in sumptuous raiment in the gallery of the Louvre. The Duke of Anjou, who wore ordinary attire, seemed to take to this mummerly like a bear, ready to growl at any moment. His demeanor was all that the King's gentlemen could have needed as a subject for their quips and jokes.

Two evenings after this, I was drinking in the public room of an inn, near my lodgings in the town, when a young gentleman named Malerain, who, though not a Scot, was yet one of the Scotch bodyguard, sat down at my table to share a bottle with me.

"More amusement at the palace," he said to me. "To think that, any one of these nights, I may be compelled to use force against the person of the King's brother, and that some day he may be King! I wonder if he will then bear malice?"

"What is the new trouble at the Louvre?" I asked.

"It is only the old trouble. Monsieur has been muttering again, I suppose, and this, with the fact that Bussy d'Amboise keeps so quiet outside of Paris, has led the King to fear that Monsieur has planned to escape to the country. At least, it has been ordered that every member of the Duke's household, who does not have to attend at his retiring, must leave the palace at night; and Messieurs de l'Archant, De Losses, and the other captains, have received orders from the King that, if Monsieur attempts to go out after dark, he must be stopped. Suppose it becomes my duty to stop him? That will be pleasant, will it not? To make it worse, I am devoted to a certain damsel who is devoted to Queen Marguerite, who is devoted to Monsieur, her brother. And here I am inviting misfortune, too, by drinking wine on the first Friday in Lent. I ought to have followed the example of the King, who has been doing penance all day in the chapel of the Hotel de Bourbon."

"Let us hope that the King will be rewarded for his penance by the submission of Monsieur. I, for one, hope that if Monsieur attempts to get away, he will run across some Scotchman of the Guard who will not scruple to impede a prince of France. For if he should lead a Huguenot army against the King, I, as one of the Guards, might be called on to oppose my fellow-Protestants."

"Oh, the Duke does not wish to join the Huguenots. All he desires is to go to the Netherlands, where a throne awaits him if he will do a little fighting for it."

"I fear he would rather revenge himself on the King for what he has had to endure at court."

Presently Malerain left to go on duty at the Louvre, and soon I followed, to take up my station in sight of the window where Mlle. d'Arcy slept. The night, which had set in, was very dark, and gusts of cold wind came up from the Seine. The place where, in my infatuation and affectation, I kept my lover's watch, was quite deserted. The Louvre loomed up gigantic before me, the lights gleaming feebly in a few of its many windows, serving less to relieve its sombre aspect than to suggest unknown, and, perhaps, sinister doings within.

I laugh at myself now for having maintained those vigils by night beneath a court lady's window; but you will presently see that, but for this boyish folly, my body would have been sleeping in its grave these many years past, and I should have never come to my greatest happiness.

Suddenly my attention was attracted to another window than that on which I had fixed my gaze. This other window appertained to the apartments of the King's sister, Queen Marguerite, and what caused me to transfer my attention to it was the noise of its being opened. Then a head was thrust out of it,—the small and graceful head of Marguerite herself. She looked down at the moat beneath, and in either direction, and apparently saw no one, I being quite in shadow; then she drew her head in.

Immediately a rope was let down into the moat, whose dry bed was about five times a tall man's length below the window, which was on the second story. Out of the window came a man of rather squat figure, who let himself boldly and easily down the rope. As soon as he had reached the bed of the moat, he was followed out of the window and down the rope by a second man, who came bunglingly, as if in great trepidation. This person,

in his haste, let go the rope before he was quite down, but landed on his feet. Then a third figure came out from the chamber and down the cable, whereupon Marguerite's head again appeared in the opening, and I could see the heads of two waiting-women behind her. But the Queen of Navarre manifestly had no intention of following the three men. These now clambered up the side of the moat, and the one who had been first down turned and waved her a silent adieu, which she returned with a graceful gesture of her partly bare arm. The three men then rapidly plunged into one of the abutting streets and were gone. All this time I stood inactive and unobserved.

Marguerite remained at the window to cast another look around. Suddenly, from out the darkness at the base of the Louvre, as if risen from the very earth at the bottom of the moat, sprang the figure of a man, who started toward the guard-house as if his life depended on his speed. Marguerite drew her head in at once with a movement of great alarm. An instant later the rope was drawn up and the window closed.

Two conjectures came into my head, one after the other, each in a flash. The one was that Marguerite had availed herself of the fraternal quarrel that occupied the King's attention to plan an escape to her husband, King Henri of Navarre, and that these three men had gone from a consultation in her apartments to further the project. The other conjecture was that they were but some of Monsieur's followers who had transgressed the new rule, requiring their departure from the palace at nightfall, and had taken this means of leaving to avoid discovery. If the former conjecture embodied the truth, my sympathies were with the plot; for it little pleased me that the wife of our Huguenot leader should remain at the French court, a constant subject of scandalous gossip. If the second guess was correct, I was glad of an opportunity to avert, even slight, trouble from the wilful but charming head of Marguerite. In either case, I might serve a beautiful woman, a queen, the wife of a Huguenot king. Certainly, if that man, paid spy or accidental interloper, should reach the guard-house with information that three men had left the Louvre by stealth, the three men might be overtaken and imprisoned, and great annoyance brought to Marguerite. All this occupied my mind but an instant. Before the man had taken ten steps, I was after him.

He heard me coming, looked around, saw my hand already upon my sword-hilt, and shouted, "The guard! Help!" I saw that, to avoid a disclosure, I must silence him speedily; yet I dared not kill him, for he might be somebody whose dead body found so near the palace would lead to endless investigations, and in the end involve Marguerite, for suppose that the King had set him to watch her? Therefore I called to him, "Stop and face me, or I will split you as we run!"

The man turned at once, as if already feeling my sword-point entering his back. Seeing that I had not even drawn that weapon, he, himself, drew a dagger and raised it to strike. But I was too quick and too long of arm for him. With my gloved fist I gave him a straight blow on the side of the chin, and he dropped like a felled tree, at the very moat's edge, over which I rolled him that he might recover in safety from the effects of the shock.

I knew that, when he should awake, he would not dare inform the guard, for the three men would then be far away, and he would have no evidence to support his story. He would only put himself in danger of having fabricated a false accusation against the King's sister.

I deemed it best to go from the vicinity of the Louvre at once, and I did so, with a last wistful look at the windows behind which Mlle. d'Arcy might or might not be reposing. I did not reappear there until the next morning. The first person I then met was Malerain, who was coming from the church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, where he had been making up for previous neglect of devotions.

"Well," I said, as I stood before him, and twisted my up-shooting mustaches, in unconscious imitation of him, "I trust you found your quarter on duty last night an easy one. You must thank me for saving you some labor."

"What do you mean?" he asked, with a look of sudden interest.

"Nothing, only that you might have been called on to give chase to some flying bird or other, if I had not knocked down a rascal who was running to inform the guard."

"And you saw the bird fly?" he said, with increasing astonishment.

"From an opening in that great cage," I replied, looking towards the Louvre.

"Then I, for myself, am glad you knocked down the said rascal who would have made falcons of us to bring the bird down. But be more cautious. Suppose what you did should reach the ears of the King?"

"Why should the King concern himself?"

"Monsieur, is it possible that you don't know that the bird that flew from the Louvre last night was the Duke of Anjou?"

It was now my turn to stare in astonishment.

"But," I said, "what use for him to leave the palace? There would be the gates of Paris to pass."

"There is more than one way to cross the fortifications of Paris, especially when one has such an ally as Bussy d'Amboise, free, to arrange matters. Monsieur is at this moment certainly on his way to some stronghold of his own. The King is mad with rage. Queen Marguerite is looking innocent and astonished, but I'll wager she had a hand in this evasion. My friend, I am under obligations to you!"

"How?"

"Why, since Queen Marguerite undoubtedly rejoices at her favorite brother's escape, and you helped to make it good, she owes you gratitude. So do all her maids, who, naturally, share in her feelings and benefit by her joy. Now, that gratitude extends of course to your friends, of whom I am one. Therefore a good turn is due me from one of those maids in particular, and for that I am obliged to you!"

I laughed at this fantastic extension of a debt of gratitude.

"Doubtless," I said; "but since neither Marguerite nor the maid knows anything about my share in the matter, I don't see how you are going to collect the debt."

Malerain said nothing, but there was already that in his mind which,

absurd as it might seem at that time, was to save me when death should rise threateningly about me on every side. It is a world in which much comes from little.

I was somewhat agitated at realizing that I had been the means of aiding an escape which might result in opposing the troops of the King to those of certain Huguenot leaders; but this thought was suddenly driven from my mind by a sight which caused me to leave Malerain abruptly, and make for one of the streets that led from the Louvre to the midst of the town.

It was Mlle. d'Arency, mounted on a plumed horse, with tassellated trappings, which was led by a young equerry who wore Catherine's colors, and followed by two mounted lackeys in similar livery. Beside her rode the stout, elderly woman who usually attended her. Mlle. d'Arency wore a mask of black velvet, but that could not conceal her identity from eyes to which every line of her pretty head, every motion of her graceful person, had become familiar in actual contemplation and in dreams. Her cloak and gown were, alike, of embroidered velvet of the color of red wine, as was the velvet toque which sat perched on her dark brown hair.

I followed her at some distance, resolved to find an opportunity for a seemingly accidental meeting. I supposed that she was going to visit some of the shops,--perhaps for the Queen-mother, perhaps for herself.

She led me on and on, until I began to wonder what could be her destination. She avoided the streets of fine shops, such as were patronized by the court, skirted market-places, and continued, in a general easterly direction, until she had crossed both the Rue St. Denis and the Rue St. Martin. At last, turning out of the Rue St. Antoine, she reached, by a little street lined with bakeries, a quiet square before a small church, of which I never even learned the name. She and the stout woman dismounted, and entered the church, leaving her male attendants outside with the horse.

"Oho," I mused, stopping at the door of a pastry-cook's at the place where the little street joined the square; "she chooses an obscure place for her devotions. Evidently she prefers to mingle solitude with them, so I must not disturb her."

I decided, therefore, to wait at the pastry-cook's till she should come out, and then to encounter her as if by chance. I would have, at least, a word in payment for having come so far afoot.

The pastry-cook must have been convinced of two things before Mlle. d'Arency came out of church: first, that his fortune was made if this new customer, myself, should only continue to patronize him; second, that there existed, at least, one human stomach able to withstand unlimited quantities of his wares.

I stood back in the shop, devouring one doughy invention after another, with my ear alert for the sound of her horse's hoofs on the stones. At last it occurred to me that she might have left the square by some other street. I made for the door of the shop to look. As I did so, a man rapidly passed the shop, going from the square towards the Rue St. Antoine. Was not that figure known to me? I hastened to the street. My first glance was towards the church. There stood her horse, and her three attendants were walking up and down in the sunlight. Then I looked after the man; I thought that the figure looked like that of De Noyard.

He disappeared into the Rue St. Antoine, having given me no opportunity to see his face. I would have followed, to make sure, roused into an intolerable jealousy at the idea of a secret meeting between Mlle. d'Arency and him, but that I now heard the full melodious voice of the lady herself. Looking around, I saw her on the steps of the church, with her middle-aged companion. At that instant her eyes met mine.

I advanced, with an exaggerated bow, sweeping the stones of the street with the plumes of my hat.

"So it is true!" I said, making no effort to control my agitation, and restraining my voice only that the lackeys might not hear; "you love that man!"

She looked at me steadily for a moment, and then said, "Do you mean M. de Noyard?"

"Ah, you admit it!"

"I admit nothing. But if I did love him, what right would you have to call me to account?"

"The right of a man who adores you, mademoiselle."

"That is no right at all. A man's right concerning a woman must be derived from her own actions. But come inside the church, monsieur."

She made a gesture to her attendants, and reentered the church. I followed her. We stood together before the font in the dim light.

"And now," she continued, facing me, "suppose I grant that I have so acted as to give you a right to question me; what then? Is it my fault that you have followed me this morning? Is it, then, any more my fault that I have been followed, also, by M. de Noyard?"

"But he must have been here before you."

"What does that prove? A score of people in the Louvre knew yesterday that I was coming to this church to-day."

"But so deserted a church,--so out of the way! Who would come here from the Louvre but for a tryst?"

She smiled, indulgently. "Can a thing have no cause except the obvious one?" she said. "I visit this church once every month, because, obscure though it be, it is associated with certain events in the history of my ancestors."

"But," I went on, though beginning to feel relieved, "if M. de Noyard was thrusting his presence on you, why did he leave before you did?"

"Probably because he knew that I would not leave the church while he remained to press his company upon me outside."

The low tones that we had to use, on account of our surroundings, gave our conversation an air of confidence and secrecy that was delicious to me; and now her voice fell even lower, when she added:

"I take the pains to explain these things to you, monsieur, because I do

not wish you to think that I have intrigues;" and she regarded me fixedly with her large gray eyes, which in the dimness of the place were darker and more lustrous than usual.

Delightfully thrilled at this, I made to take her hand and stoop to kiss it, but stopped for a last doubt.

"Mademoiselle," I said, "I think you only the most adorable woman in the world. But there is one thing which has cost me many a sleepless hour, many a jealous surmise. If I could be reassured as to the nature of your errand that night when I first saw you--"

"Oh!" she laughed, "I was coming from an astrologer's."

"But you were not coming from the direction of Ruggieri's house."

"There are many astrologers in Paris, besides Ruggieri. Although the Queen-mother relies implicitly on him, one may sometimes get a more pleasing prediction from another; or, another may be clear on a point on which he is vague."

"But the hour--"

"I took the time when I was not on duty, and he kept me late. It was for a friend that I visited the astrologer,--a friend who was required in the palace all that evening. The astrologer had to be consulted that night, as my friend wished to be guided in a course that she would have to take the next morning. Now, Monsieur Curiosity, are you satisfied?"

This time I took her hand and pressed my lips upon it.

She was silent for a moment, noting the look of admiration on my face. Then, quickly, and in little more than a whisper, she said:

"I have answered your questions, though not admitting your right to ask them. Would you know how to gain that right?"

"Tell me!" I said, my heart beating rapidly with elation.

"Challenge M. de Noyard, and kill him!"

I stared in astonishment.

"Now you may know whether or not I love him," she added.

"But, mademoiselle,--why--"

"Ah, that is the one thing about which I must always refuse to be questioned! I ask you this service. Will you grant it?"

"If he has given you offence," I said, "certainly I will seek him at once."

"Not a word of me is to be said between you! He must not know that I have spoken to you."

"But a man is not to be killed without reason."

"A pretext is easily invented."

"Certainly,--a pretext to hide the cause of a quarrel from the world. But the real cause ought to be known to both antagonists."

"I shall not discuss what ought or ought not to be. I ask you, will you fight this man and try to kill him? I request nothing unusual,--men are killed every day in duels. You are a good swordsman; Bussy d'Amboise himself has said so. Come! will you do this?" She looked up at me with a slight frown of repressed petulance.

"If you will assure me that he has affronted you, and permit me to let him know, privately, the cause of my quarrel."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, with irritation, "must a lady give a hundred reasons when she requests a service of a gentleman?"

"One sufficient reason, when it is a service like this."

"Well, I shall give none. I desire his death,--few gentlemen would ask a further reason."

"I had not thought you so cruel, mademoiselle, as to desire the death of any man."

"God forbid that I should desire the death of any other man! So, monsieur, I must understand that you refuse to serve me in this?"

Her contemptuous look made me sigh. "Can you not see, mademoiselle, that to resolve deliberately and secretly on a man's death, and with premeditation to create a pretext for a challenge, is little better than assassination?"

"A fine excuse to avoid risking your life!"

Again I had to endure a look of profound scorn from her.

"Mademoiselle," I replied, patiently, "I would that you might see how ready I am to fight when an affront is given me or some one needs a defender."

"Oh!" she said, with an ironical smile. "Then to show yourself a lion against De Noyard, you require only that he shall affront you, or that some one shall need a defender against him! Suppose that I should ever be in such need?"

"You know that in your defence I would fight an army."

Her smile now lost its irony, and she assumed a look of conciliation, which I was both surprised and rejoiced to behold.

"Well, monsieur, it is pleasant to know that, if you will not take the offensive for me, you will, at least, act readily on the defensive if the occasion comes."

Much relieved at the turn the conversation had taken, I now undertook to continue it to my advantage. After some bantering, maintained with gaiety on her part, she said that she must return to the Louvre. Then, as she would not have me accompany her in the streets, I begged her to appoint another meeting. She evaded my petition at first, but, when I took her

hand and refused to release it until she should grant my request, she said, after a little submissive shrug of her shoulders:

"Very well. Follow me, at a distance, from this church, and observe a house before which I shall stop for a moment as if to adjust my cloak. It is a house that has been taken by a friend of mine, one of the Queen-mother's ladies. I shall be there tomorrow afternoon."

"Alas! To-morrow I shall be on duty till six in the evening."

"Then come at seven. Knock three times on the street door." And with that she slipped her hand from mine, and hastened lightly out of the church. I stood alone by the font, delighted and bewildered. There was so much to mystify me that I did not even search my mind for explanations. I thought my happiness about to be attained, and left it for the future to explain,--as it did!

CHAPTER IV.

HOW LA TOURNOIRE WAS ENLIGHTENED IN THE DARK

It was already dark when I started, on the evening appointed, for the house indicated by Mlle. d'Arency. I went without attendance, as was my custom, relying on my sword, my alertness of eye, and my nimbleness of foot. I had engaged a lackey, for whose honesty De Rilly had vouched, but he was now absent on a journey to La Tournoire, whither I had sent him with a message to my old steward. I have often wondered at the good fortune which preserved me from being waylaid, by thieving rascals, on my peregrinations, by night, through Paris streets. About this very time several gentlemen, who went well attended, were set upon and robbed almost within sight of the quarters of the provost's watch; and some of these lost their lives as well as the goods upon their persons. Yet I went fearlessly, and was never even threatened with attack.

On the way to the house, I reviewed, for the hundredth time, the conversation in the church. There were different conjectures to be made. Mlle. d'Arency may have made that surprising request merely to convince me that she did not love De Noyard, and intending, subsequently, to withdraw it; or it may have sprung from a caprice, a desire to ascertain how far I was at her bidding,--women have, thoughtlessly, set men such tasks from mere vanity, lacking the sympathy to feel how precious to its owner is any human life other than their own;--or she may have had some substantial reason to desire his death, something to gain by it, something to lose through his continuing to live. Perhaps she had encouraged his love and had given him a promise from which his death would be the means of release easiest to her,--for women will, sometimes, to secure the smallest immunity for themselves, allow the greatest calamities to others. This arises less from an active cruelty than from a lack of imagination, an inability to suppose themselves in the places of others. I soon felt the uselessness of searching, in my own mind, for the motive of Mlle. d'Arency's desire, or pretence of desire, for the death of De Noyard. What had passed between them I could not guess. So, after the manner of youth, I gave up the question, satisfied with knowing that I had before me an interview with a charming woman, and willing to wait for disclosures until events should offer them.

The street in which the house was situated was entirely dark and deserted when I stepped into it. The house was wider than its neighbors, and each of its upper stories had two chambers overlooking the street. At the window of one of these chambers, on the second story, a light shone. It was the only light visible in any of the houses, all of which frowned down menacingly; and hence it was like a beacon, a promise of cheer and warmth in the midst of this black, cold Paris.

I knocked three times on the street door, as she had directed me. Presently the wicket at the side of the door was opened, and a light was held up to it, that my face might be seen by a pair of eyes that peered out through the aperture. A moment later the bolts of the door were drawn, and I was let in by the possessor of the eyes. This was the elderly woman who always attended Mlle. d'Arancy when the latter was abroad from the palace. She had invariably shown complete indifference to me, not appearing aware of my existence, and this time she said only:

"This way, monsieur."

Protecting the flame of her lamp with her hand, she led me forward to a narrow staircase and we ascended, stopping at a landing on which opened the second story chamber whose street window had shone with light. She gave three knocks at the door of this chamber. At the last knock, her lamp went out.

"Curse the wind!" she muttered.

So I stood with her, on the landing, in darkness, expecting the door in front of me to open, immediately, and admit me to the lighted chamber.

Suddenly I heard a piercing scream from within the chamber. It was the voice of Mlle. d'Arancy.

"Help! Help!" she cried. "My God, he will kill me!"

This was followed by one long series of screams, and I could hear her running about the chamber as though she were fleeing from a pursuer.

I stood for an instant, startled.

"Good God!" cried the old woman at my elbow. "An assassin! Her enemies have planned it! Monsieur, save her life!"

And the dame began pounding on the door, as if to break into the room to assist her mistress.

I needed no more than this example. Discovering that the door was locked on the inside, and assuming that Mlle. d'Arancy, in the flight which she maintained around the room, could not get an opportunity to draw the bolt, I threw my weight forward, and sent the door flying open on its hinges.

To my astonishment, the chamber was in complete darkness. Mlle. d'Arancy had doubtless knocked the light over in her movements around the room.

She was still screaming at the top of her voice, and running from one side to another. The whiteness of the robe she wore made it possible to descry her in the absence of light.

I stood for a second, just inside the threshold, and drew my sword. At first, I could not see by whom or what she was threatened; but I heard heavy footsteps, as of some one following her in her wild course about the place. Then I made out, vaguely, the figure of a man.

"Fear not, mademoiselle!" I cried.

"Oh, monsieur!" she screamed. "Save me! Save my life!"

I thrust my sword at the figure of the man. An ejaculation of pain told me that it touched flesh. A second later, I heard a sword slide from its scabbard, and felt the wind of a wild thrust in my direction.

At this moment, Mlle d'Arcy appeared between me and the street window of the room. There was enough light from the sky to enable her head and shoulders to stand out darkly against the space of the window. Her head was moving with the violent coming and going of her breath, and her shoulders were drawn up in an attitude of the greatest fright. Is it any wonder that I did not stop to ascertain who or what her assailant might be, or how he had come there? I could make out only that the man in the darkness was a large and heavy one, and wielded a swift blade. All other thoughts were lost in the immediate necessity of dealing with him. The extreme terror that she showed gave me a sense of his being a formidable antagonist; the prompt response that he had given to my own thrust showed that he was not to be quelled by a mere command. In fine, there was nothing to do but fight him as best I could in the blackness; and I was glad for so early an opportunity to show Mlle. d'Arcy how ready I was to do battle for her when I found her threatened with danger.

From the absence of any sound or other demonstration, except what was made by Mlle. d'Arcy and the man and myself, I knew that we three were the only ones in the room. The elderly woman had not entered with me,—a fact whose strangeness, in view of the great desire she had first evinced to reach her mistress's side, did not occur to me until afterward.

I made another thrust at the man, but, despite the darkness, he parried it with his sword; and a quick backward step was all that saved me from his prompt reply. Angered at having to give ground in the presence of the lady, I now attacked in turn, somewhat recklessly, but with such good luck as to drive him back almost to the window. Mlle. d'Arcy gave another terrified scream when he came near her, and she ran past me towards the door of the apartment. Both my antagonist and myself were now beginning to have a clearer impression of each other's outlines, and there was sharp sword-work between us by the window. As we stood there, breathing rapidly with our exertion and excitement, I heard the door close through which I had entered. I knew from this that Mlle. d'Arcy had left the chamber, and I was glad that she was out of danger. It was natural that she should close the door, instinct impelling her to put any possible barrier between her assailant and herself.

The man and myself were alone together to maintain the fight which, having once entered, and being roused to the mood of contest, I had no thought of discontinuing now that Mlle. d'Arcy was out of immediate danger. It had reached a place at which it could be terminated only by the disarming, the death, or the disabling of one of us.

I gradually acquired the power of knowing all my opponent's movements, despite the darkness. I supposed that he was equipped with dagger as well

as with sword, but as he made no move to draw the shorter weapon, I did not have recourse to mine. Though I would not take an advantage over him, even in the circumstances, yet I was not willing to be at a disadvantage. Therefore, as he was not encumbered with cloak or mantle, I employed a breathing moment to tear off my own cloak and throw it aside, not choosing to use it on my left arm as a shield unless he had been similarly guarded.

So we lunged and parried in the darkness, making no sound but by our heavy breathing and an occasional ejaculation and the tramping of our feet, the knocking of our bodies against unseen pieces of furniture, and the clashing of our blades when they met. Each of us fenced cautiously at times, and at times took chances recklessly.

Finally, in falling back, he came to a sudden stop against a table, and the collision disturbed for an instant his control over his body. In that instant I felt a soft resistance encounter my sword and yield to it. At once, with a feeling of revulsion, I drew my sword out of the casing that his flesh had provided, and stood back. Something wet and warm sprinkled my face. The man gave a low moan and staggered sideways over towards the window. Then he plunged forward on his face. I stooped beside him and turned him over on his back, wetting my gloves with the blood that gushed from his wound and soaked his doublet. At that moment a splash of moonlight appeared on the floor, taking the shape of the window. His head and shoulders lay in this illumined space. I sprang back in horror, crying out his name:

"De Noyard! My God, it is you!"

"Yes, monsieur," he gasped, "it is De Noyard. I have been trapped. I ought to have suspected."

"But I do not understand, monsieur. Surely you could not have attacked Mlle, d'Arency?"

"Attacked her! I came here by her appointment!"

"But her cry for help?"

"It took me by complete surprise. There was a knock on the door--"

"Yes,--mine. I, too, came by her appointment!"

"Mademoiselle instantly put out the light and began to scream. I thought that the knock frightened her; then that she was mad. I followed to calm her. You entered; you know the rest."

"But what does it mean?"

"Can you not see?" he said, with growing faintness. "We have been tricked,--I, by her pretense of love and by this appointment, to my death; you, by a similar appointment and her screams, to make yourself my slayer. I ought to have known! she belongs to Catherine, to the Queen-mother. Alas, monsieur! easily fooled is he who loves a woman!"

Then I remembered what De Rilly had told me,--that De Noyard's counsels to the Duke of Guise were an obstacle to Catherine's design of conciliating that powerful leader, who aspired to the throne on which her son was seated.

"No, no, monsieur!" I cried, unwilling to admit Mlle. d'Arcy capable of such a trick, or myself capable of being so duped. "It cannot be that; if they had desired your death, they would have hired assassins to waylay you."

Yet I knew that he was right. The strange request that Mlle. d'Arcy had made of me in the church was now explained.

A kind of smile appeared, for a moment, on De Noyard's face, struggling with his expression of weakness and pain.

"Who would go to the expense of hiring assassins," he said, "when honest gentlemen can be tricked into doing the work for nothing? Moreover, when you hire assassins, you take the risk of their selling your secret to the enemy. They are apt to leave traces, too, and the secret instigator of a deed may defeat its object by being found out."

"Then I have to thank God that you are not dead. You will recover, monsieur."

"I fear not, my son. I do not know how much blood I lose at every word I speak. *Parbleu!* you have the art of making a mighty hole with that toy of yours, monsieur!"

This man, so grave and severe in the usual affairs of life, could take on a tone of pleasantry while enduring pain and facing death.

"Monsieur," I cried, in great distress, "you must not die. I will save you. I shall go for a surgeon. Oh, my God, monsieur, tell me what to do to save your life!"

"You will find my lackeys, two of them, at the cabaret at the next corner. It is closed, but knock hard and call for Jacques. Send him to me, and the other for a surgeon."

De Noyard was manifestly growing weaker, and he spoke with great difficulty. Not daring to trust to any knowledge of my own as to immediate or temporary treatment of his wound, I made the greatest haste to follow his directions. I ran out of the chamber, down the stairs, and out to the street, finding the doors neither locked nor barred, and meeting no human being. Mlle. d'Arcy and her companion had silently disappeared.

I went, in my excitement, first to the wrong corner. Then, discovering my blunder, I retraced my steps, and at last secured admittance to the place where De Noyard's valets tarried.

To the man who opened the door, I said, "Are you Jacques, the serving-man of Monsieur de Noyard?"

"I am nobody's serving man," was the reply, in a tone of indignation; but a second man who had come to the door spoke up, "I am Jacques."

"Hallo, Monsieur de la Tournoire," came a voice from a group of men seated at a table. "Come and join us, and show my friends how you fellows of the French Guards can drink!"

It was De Rilly, very merry with wine.

"I cannot, De Rilly," I replied, stepping into the place. "I have very important business elsewhere." Then I turned to Jacques and said, quietly, "Go, at once, to your master, and send your comrade for a surgeon to follow you there. Do you know the house in which he is?"

The servant made no answer, but turned pale. "Come!" he said to another servant, who had joined him from an obscure corner of the place. The two immediately lighted torches and left, from which fact I inferred that Jacques knew where to find his master.

"What is all this mystery?" cried De Rilly, jovially, rising and coming over to me, while the man who had opened the door, and who was evidently the host, closed it and moved away. "Come, warm yourself with a bottle! Why, my friend, you are as white as a ghost, and you look as if you had been perspiring blood!"

"I must go, at once, De Rilly. It is a serious matter."

"Then hang me if I don't come, too!" he said, suddenly sobered, and he grasped his cloak and sword. "That is, unless I should be *_de trop_*."

"Come. I thank you," I said; and we left the place together.

"Whose blood is it?" asked De Rilly, as we hurried along the narrow street, back to the house.

"That of M. de Noyard."

"What? A duel?"

"A kind of duel,--a strange mistake!"

"The devil! Won't the Queen-mother give thanks! And won't the Duke of Guise be angry!"

"M. de Noyard is not dead yet. His wound may not be fatal."

I led the way into the house and up the steps to the apartment. It was now lighted up by the torch which Jacques had brought. De Noyard was still lying in the position in which he had been when I left him. The servant stood beside him, looking down at his face, and holding the torch so as to light up the features.

"How do you feel now, monsieur?" I asked, hastening forward.

There was no answer. The servant raised his eyes to me, and said, in a tone of unnatural calmness, "Do you not see that he is dead, M. de la Tournoire?"

Horror-stricken, I knelt beside the body. The heart no longer beat; the face was still,--the eyes stared between unquivering lids, in the light of the torch.

"Oh, my God! I have killed him!" I murmured.

"Come away. You can do nothing here," said De Rilly, quietly. He caught me by the shoulder, and led me out of the room.

"Let us leave this neighborhood as soon as possible," he said, as we descended the stairs. "It is most unfortunate that the valet knows your name. He heard me speak it at the tavern, and he will certainly recall also that I hailed you as one of the French Guards."

"Why is that unfortunate?" I asked, still deprived of thought by the horror of having killed so honorable a gentleman, who had not harmed me.

"Because he can let the Duke of Guise know exactly on whom to seek vengeance for the death of De Noyard."

"The Duke of Guise will seek vengeance?" I asked, mechanically, as we emerged from that fatal house, and turned our backs upon it.

"Assuredly. He will demand your immediate punishment. You must bespeak the King's pardon as soon as possible. That is necessary, to protect oneself, when one has killed one's antagonist in a duel. The edicts still forbid duels, and one may be made to pay for a victory with one's life, if the victim's friends demand the enforcement of the law,--as in this case the Duke of Guise surely will demand."

"M. de Quelus can, doubtless, get me the King's pardon," I said, turning my mind from the past to the future, from regret to apprehension. The necessity of considering my situation prevented me from contemplating, at that time, the perfidy of Mlle. d'Arencey, the blindness with which I had let myself be deceived, or the tragic and humiliating termination of my great love affair.

"If M. de Quelus is with you, you are safe from the authorities. You will then have only to guard against assassination at the hands of Guise's followers."

"I shall go to M. de Quelus early in the morning," I said.

"By all means. And you will not go near your lodgings until you have assured your safety against arrest. You must reach the King before the Duke can see him; for the Duke will not fail to hint that, in killing De Noyard, you were the instrument of the King or of the Queen-mother. To disprove that, the King would have to promise the Duke to give you over to the authorities. And now that I think of it, you must make yourself safe before the Queen-mother learns of this affair, for she will advise the King to act in such a way that the Duke cannot accuse him of protecting you. My friend, it suddenly occurs to me that you have got into a rather deep hole!"

"De Rilly," I asked, with great concern, "do you think that I was the instrument of Catherine de Medici in this?"

"Certainly not!" was the emphatic answer. "The fight was about a woman, was it not?"

"A woman was the cause of it," I answered, with a heavy sigh. "But how do you know?"

"To tell the truth," he said, "many people have been amused to see you make soft eyes at a certain lady, and to see De Noyard do likewise. Neither young men like you, nor older men like him, can conceal these things."

Thus I saw that even De Rilly did not suspect the real truth, and this showed me how deep was the design of which I had been the tool. Everybody would lay the quarrel to rivalry in love. The presence of so manifest a cause would prevent people from hitting on the truth. Mlle. d'Arcy had trusted to my youth, agility, and supposed skill to give me the victory in that fight in the dark; and then to circumstances to disclose who had done the deed. "It was De Noyard's jealous rival," everybody would say. Having found a sufficient motive, no one would take the trouble to seek the real source,--to trace the affair to the instigation of Catherine de Medici. The alert mind of De Rilly, it is true, divining the equally keen mind of the Duke of Guise, had predicted that Guise might pretend a belief in such instigation, and so force the King to avenge De Noyard, in self-vindication. Mlle. d'Arcy well knew that I would not incriminate a woman, even a perfidious one, and counted also on my natural unwillingness to reveal myself as the dupe that I had been. Moreover, it would not be possible for me to tell the truth in such a way that it would appear probable. And what would I gain by telling the truth? The fact would remain that I was the slayer of De Noyard, and, by accusing the instigators, I would but compel them to demonstrate non-complicity; which they could do only by clamoring for my punishment. And how could I prove that things were not exactly as they had appeared,--that the woman's screams were not genuine: that she was not actually threatened by De Noyard? Clearly as I saw the truth, clearly as De Noyard had seen it in his last moments, it could never be established by evidence.

With bitter self-condemnation, and profound rancor against the woman whose tool I had been, I realized what an excellent instrument she had found for her purpose of ridding her mistress of an obstacle.

It was not certain that the King, himself, had been privy to his mother's design of causing De Noyard's death. In such matters she often acted without consulting him. Therefore, when De Quelus should present my case to him as merely that of a duel over a love affair, Henri would perhaps give me his assurances of safety, at once, and would hold himself bound in honor to stand by them. All depended on securing these before Catherine or the Duke of Guise should have an opportunity to influence him to another course.

I felt, as I walked along with De Rilly, that, if I should obtain immunity from the punishment prescribed by edict, I could rely on myself for protection against any private revenge that the Duke of Guise might plan.

De Rilly took me to a lodging in the Rue de L'Autruche, not far from my own, which was in the Rue St. Honore. Letting myself be commanded entirely by him, I went to bed, but not to sleep. I was anxious for morning to come, that I might be off to the Louvre. I lay speculating on the chances of my seeing De Quelus, and of his undertaking to obtain the King's protection for me. Though appalled at what I had done, I had no wish to die,--the youth in me cried for life; and the more I desired life, the more fearful I became of failing to get De Quelus's intercession.

I grew many years older in that night. In a single flash, I had beheld things hitherto unknown to me: the perfidy of which a woman was capable, the falseness of that self-confidence and vanity which may delude a man into thinking himself the conqueror of a woman's heart, the danger of going, carelessly, on in a suspicious matter without looking forward to

possible consequences. I saw the folly of thoughtlessness, of blind self-confidence, of reckless trust in the honesty of others and the luck of oneself. I had learned the necessity of caution, of foresight, of suspicion; and perhaps I should have to pay for the lesson with my life.

Turning on the bed, watching the window for the dawn, giving in my mind a hundred different forms to the account with which I should make De Quelus acquainted with the matter, I passed the most of that night. At last, I fell asleep, and dreamt that I had told De Quelus my story, and he had brought me the King's pardon; again, that I was engaged in futile efforts to approach him; again, that De Noyard had come to life. When De Rilly awoke me, it was broad daylight.

I dressed, and so timed my movements as to reach the Louvre at the hour when De Quelus would be about to officiate at the King's rising. De Rilly left me at the gate, wishing me good fortune. He had to go to oversee the labors of some grooms in the King's stables. One of the guards of the gate sent De Quelus my message. I stood, in great suspense, awaiting the answer, fearing at every moment to see the Duke of Guise ride into the Place du Louvre on his way to crave an interview with the King.

At last a page came across the court with orders that I be admitted, and I was soon waiting in a gallery outside the apartments of the chamberlains. After a time that seemed very long, De Quelus came out to me, with a look of inquiry on his face.

Ignoring the speech I had prepared for the occasion, I broke abruptly into the matter.

"M. de Quelus," I said, "last night, in a sudden quarrel which arose out of a mistake, I was so unfortunate as to kill M. de Noyard. It was neither a duel nor a murder,--each of us seemed justified in attacking the other."

De Quelus did not seem displeased to hear of De Noyard's death.

"What evidence is there against you?" he asked.

"That of M. de Noyard's servant, to whom I acknowledged that I had killed his master. Other evidence may come up. What I have come to beg is your intercession with the King--"

"I understand," he said, without much interest. "I shall bring up the matter before the King leaves his bed."

"When may I expect to know?" I asked, not knowing whether to be reassured or alarmed at his indifference.

"Wait outside the King's apartments. I am going there now," he replied.

I followed him, saw him pass into the King's suite, and had another season of waiting. This was the longest and the most trying. I stood, now tapping the floor with my foot, now watching the halberdiers at the curtained door, while they glanced indifferently at me. Various officers of the court, whose duty or privilege it was to attend the King's rising, passed in, none heeding me or guessing that I waited there for the word on which my life depended. I examined the tapestry over and over again, noticing, particularly, the redoubtable expression of a horseman with lance in rest, and wondering how he had ever emerged from the tower

behind him, of which the gateway was half his size.

A page came out of the doorway through which De Quelus had disappeared. Did he bring word to me? No. He glanced at me casually, and passed on, leaving the gallery at the other end. Presently he returned, preceding Marguerite, the Queen of Navarre, whom he had gone to summon.

"More trouble in the royal family," I said to myself. The King must have scented another plot, to have summoned his sister before the time for the petite levee. I feared that this would hinder his consideration of my case.

Suddenly a tall figure, wearing a doublet of cloth of silver, gray velvet breeches, gray mantle, and gray silk stockings, strode rapidly through the gallery, and curtly commanded the usher to announce him. While awaiting the usher's return, he stood still, stroking now his light mustaches, and now his fine, curly blonde beard, which was little more than delicate down on his chin. As his glance roved over the gallery it fell for a moment on me, but he did not know me, and his splendid blue eyes turned quickly away. His face had a pride, a nobility, a subtlety that I never saw united in another. He was four inches more than six feet high, slender, and of perfect proportion, erect, commanding, and in the flower of youth. How I admired him, though my heart sank at the sight of him; for I knew he had come to demand my death! It was the Duke of Guise. Presently the curtains parted, he passed in, and they fell behind him.

And now my heart beat like a hammer on an anvil. Had De Quelus forgotten me?

Again the curtains parted. Marguerite came out, but this time entirely alone. As soon as she had passed the halberdiers, her eyes fell on me, but she gave no sign of recognition. When she came near me, she said, in a low tone, audible to me alone, and without seeming to be aware of my presence:

"Follow me. Make no sign,--your life depends on it!"

She passed on, and turned out of the gallery towards her own apartments. For a moment I stood motionless; then, with a kind of instinctive sense of what ought to be done, for all thought seemed paralyzed within me, I made as if to return to the chamberlains' apartments, from which I had come. Reaching the place where Marguerite's corridor turned off, I pretended for an instant to be at a loss which way to go; then I turned in the direction taken by Marguerite. If the halberdiers, at the entrance to the King's apartments, saw me do this, they could but think I had made a mistake, and it was not their duty to come after me. Should I seek to intrude whither I had no right of entrance, I should encounter guards to hinder me.

Marguerite had waited for me in the corridor, out of sight of the halberdiers.

"Quickly, monsieur!" she said, and glided rapidly on. She led me boldly to her own apartments and through two or three chambers, passing, on the way, guards, pages, and ladies in waiting, before whom I had the wit to assume the mien of one who was about to do some service for her, and had come to receive instructions. So my entrance seemed to pass as nothing remarkable. At last we entered a cabinet, where I was alone with her. She

opened the door of a small closet.

"Monsieur," she said, "conceal yourself in this closet until I return. I am going to be present at the _petite levee_ of the King. Do not stir, for they will soon be searching the palace, with orders for your arrest. Had you not come after me, at once, two of the Scotch Guards would have found you where you waited. I slipped out while they were listening to the orders that my mother added to the King's."

I fell on my knee, within the closet.

"Madame," I said, trembling with gratitude, "you are more than a queen. You are an angel of goodness."

"No; I am merely a woman who does not forget an obligation. I have heard, from one of my maids, who heard it from a friend of yours, how you knocked a too inquisitive person into the moat beneath my window. I had to burn the rope that was used that night, but I have since procured another, which may have to be put to a similar purpose!"

And, with a smile, she shut the closet door upon me.

CHAPTER V.

HOW LA TOURNOIRE ESCAPED FROM PARIS

I heard the key turn in the lock, and the Queen of Navarre leave the cabinet. She took the key with her, so that a tiny beam of light came through the keyhole, giving my dark hiding-place its only illumination.

I felt complete confidence both in Marguerite's show of willingness to save me, and in her ability to do so. All I could do was to wait, and leave my future in her hands.

After a long time, I heard steps in the cabinet outside the closet door, the beam of light from the keyhole was cut off, the key turned again, the door opened, and Marguerite again stood before me.

"Monsieur," she said, "that we may talk without danger, remain in the closet. I will leave the door slightly ajar, thus, and will sit here, near it, with my 'Book of Hours,' as if reading aloud to myself. Should any one come, I can lock your door again and hide the key. Hark! be silent, monsieur!"

And as she spoke, she shut the door, locked it, drew out the key, and sat down. I listened to learn what had caused this act of precaution.

"Madame," I heard some one say, "M. de l'Archant desires, by order of the King, to search your apartments for a man who is to be arrested, and who is thought to have secreted himself somewhere in the palace."

"Let him enter." said Marguerite. My heart stood still. Then I heard her say, in a tone of pleasantry:

"What, M. le Capitain, is there another St. Bartholomew, that people

choose my apartments for refuge?"

"This time it is not certain that the fugitive is here," replied Captain de l'Archant, of the bodyguard. "He is known to have been in the palace this morning, and no one answering his description has been seen to leave by any of the gates. It was, indeed, a most sudden and mysterious disappearance; and it is thought that he has run to cover in some chamber or other. We are looking everywhere."

"Who is the man?" asked Marguerite, in a tone of indifference.

"M. de la Tournoire, of the French Guards."

"Very well. Look where you please. If he came into my apartments, he must have done so while I attended the *_petite levee_* of the King; otherwise I should have seen him. What are you looking at? The door of that closet? He could not have gone there without my knowledge. One of the maids locked it the other day, and the key has disappeared." Whereupon, she tried the door, herself, as if in proof of her assertion.

"Then he cannot be there," said De L'Archant, deceived by her manner; and he took his leave.

For some minutes I heard nothing but the monotonous voice of Marguerite as she read aloud to herself from her "Book of Hours."

Then she opened my door again. Through the tiny crack I saw a part of her head.

"Monsieur," she said to me, keeping her eyes upon the book, and retaining the same changeless tone of one reading aloud, "you see that you are safe, for the present. No one in the palace, save one of my maids, is aware that I know you or have reason to take the slightest interest in you. Your entrance to my apartments was made so naturally and openly that it left no impression on those who saw you come in. I have since sent every one of those persons on some errand, so that all who might happen to remember your coming here will suppose that you left during their absence. It was well that I brought you here; had I merely told you to leave the palace, immediately, you would not have known exactly how matters stood, and you would have been arrested at your lodgings, or on your way to your place of duty. By this time, orders have gone to the city gates to prevent your leaving Paris. Before noon, not only the body-guard, the Provost of the palace, and the French and Scotch Guards will be on the lookout for you, but also the gendarmes of the Provost of Paris. That is why we must be careful, and why stealth must be used in conveying you out of Paris."

"They make a very important personage of me," I said, in a low tone.

"Hush! When you speak imitate my tone, exactly, and be silent the instant I cough. Too many people are not to be trusted. That you may understand me, you must know precisely how matters stand. This morning my mother went to see the King in his chamber before he had risen. They discussed a matter which required my presence, and I was sent for. After we had finished our family council, my mother and I remained for a few words, in private, with each other. While we were talking, M. de Quelus came in and spoke for a while to the King. I heard the King reply, 'Certainly, as he preserved you to me, my friend.' De Quelus was about to leave the King's chamber, when the Duke of Guise was announced. De Quelus waited, out of

curiosity, I suppose. M. de Guise was admitted. He immediately told the King that one of his gentlemen, M. de Noyard, had been killed by the Sieur de la Tournoire, one of the French Guards. I became interested, for I remembered your name as that of the gentleman who, according to my maid, had stopped the spy from whom I had had so much to fear. I recalled, also, that you had the esteem of my brother's faithful Bussy d'Amboise. My mother immediately expressed the greatest horror at De Noyard's death, with the greatest sympathy for M. de Guise; and she urged the King to make an example of you."

I remembered, with a deep sigh, what De Rilly had told me,--that Catherine, to prevent the Duke of Guise from laying the death of De Noyard to her, would do her utmost to bring me to punishment.

"The King looked at De Quelus," continued Marguerite. "That gentleman, seeing how things were, and, knowing that the King now wishes to seem friendly to the Duke, promptly said, 'This is fortunate. La Tournoire is now waiting for me in the red gallery; I suppose he wishes to beg my intercession. His presumption will be properly punished when the guards arrest him there.'"

I turned sick, at this revelation of treachery. This was the gentleman who owed his life to me, and, in the first outburst of gratitude, had promised to obtain for me a captaincy!

"The King," Marguerite went on, "at once ordered two of the Scotch Guards to arrest you. All this time, I had been standing at the window, looking out, as if paying no attention. My mother stopped the guards to give them some additional direction. No one was watching me. I passed carelessly out, and you know what followed. At the petite levee, I learned what was thought of your disappearance,--that you had seen the Duke of Guise enter the King's apartments, had guessed his purpose, and had precipitately fled."

I did not dare tell his sister what I thought of a King who would, without hesitation or question, offer up one of his guards as a sacrifice to appease that King's greatest enemy.

"And now, monsieur," said Marguerite, still seeming to read from her book, "the King and the Queen, my mother, will make every effort to have you captured, lest it be thought that they are secretly protecting the slayer of M. de Noyard. To convince you that you may rely on me, thoroughly, I will confess that it is not solely gratitude for your service the other night that induces me to help you,--although my gratitude was great. I had seen the spy rise out of the moat and all night I was in deadly fear that he had reached the guard-house and prevented my brother's flight, or, at least, betrayed me. When I became convinced that he had not done so, I thanked Heaven for the unknown cause that had hindered him. So you may imagine, when my maid told me that a friend of her lover's was that unknown cause, how I felt towards that friend."

"Madame," I said, with emotion, "I ought to be content to die, having had the happiness of eliciting your gratitude!"

"But I am not content that you should die, for I wish you to serve me once more, this time as a messenger to my brother, the Duke of Anjou, who is at Angers; to M. Bussy d'Amboise, who is with him; and to my husband, the King of Navarre, who is at Nerac, in Gascony. Thus it is to my own

interest to procure your safe escape from Paris. And if you reach Nerac, monsieur, you cannot do better than to stay there. The King of Navarre will give you some post more worthy of you than that of a mere soldier, which you hold here."

"I enlisted in the French Guards," I hastened to explain, "because I was unknown, and a Huguenot, and could expect no higher beginning."

"For the very reason that you are a Huguenot, you can expect a great deal from the King of Navarre. His kingdom is little more than a toy kingdom, it is true, and his court is but the distant echo of the court of France, but believe me, monsieur,"--and here Marguerite's voice indicated a profound conviction,"--"there is a future before my husband, the King of Navarre! They do not know him. Moreover, Paris will never be a safe place for you as long as the Duke of Guise lives. He does not forget!"

I knew that Marguerite had excellent means of knowing the Duke of Guise, and I did not dispute her assertion. Moreover, I was now quite willing to go from the city wherein I was to have achieved such great things. My self-conceit had been shaken a little.

"But if every exit is watched, how can I leave Paris?" I asked.

"The exits were watched to prevent the going of my brother Anjou," said Marguerite, "but he went. He crossed the Seine with his chamberlain, Simier, and his valet, Cange, and went to the Abbey of St. Genevieve, of which the gardens are bounded by the city wall. The Abbot Foulon was secretly with us. M. Bussy had returned to Paris, and was waiting at the Abbey for Monsieur. They left Paris by way of the Abbey garden. The Abbot is a cautious soul, and to protect himself, in case of discovery, he had M. Bussy tie him to a chair, and after Monsieur and Bussy had joined their gentlemen, outside, and galloped off toward Angers, the Abbot came to the Louvre, and informed the King of Monsieur's escape. Now I suppose we shall have to make use of the same ingenious Foulon."

"You know what is best, madame," I said.

"But the Abbot of Saint Genevieve would not do for you, or even for me, what he would do for my brother Anjou. If he knew who you were, he might gladly seize an opportunity to offset, by giving you up, the suspicion that he had a hand in my brother's escape."

"But if there is a suspicion of that, will they not watch the Abbey now, on my account?"

"No; for you are not of my brother's party, and the Abbot would have no reason for aiding you. The question is how to make him serve us in this. I must now think and act, monsieur, and I shall have to lock you up again."

She rose and did so, and again I was left to meditate. It is astonishing how unconcerned I had come to feel, how reliant on the ingenuity of this charming princess with the small head, the high, broad forehead, the burning, black eyes the curly blonde hair, the quizzically discrete expression of face.

After some hours, during which I learned, again, the value of patience, the door was opened, and Marguerite thrust in some bread and cold meat, which she had brought with her own hand. I took it in silence, and

stooped to kiss the hand, but it was too soon withdrawn, and the door locked again.

When the door next opened, Marguerite stood before it with a candle in her hand. I therefore knew that it was night. In her other hand, she held four letters, three of them already sealed, the fourth open.

"I have made all arrangements," she said, quickly. "This letter is to the Abbot Foulon. Read it."

She handed it to me, and held the candle for me while I read:

This gentleman bears private letters to Monsieur. As he was about to depart with them, I learned that the King had been informed of his intended mission, and had given orders for his arrest at the gate. I call upon you to aid him to leave Paris, as you aided my brother Anjou. His arrest would result in a disclosure of how that matter was conducted.

MARGUERITE.

I smiled, when I had finished reading the letter.

"That letter will frighten Brother Foulon into immediate action," said Marguerite, "and he will be compelled to destroy it, as it incriminates him. Take these others. You will first go to Angers, and deliver this to the Duke of Anjou, this to M. de Bussy. Then proceed to Gascony with this, for the King of Navarre."

"And I am to start?"

"To-night. I shall let you down into the moat, as Monsieur was let down. You cannot cross the bridges of the Seine, lest you be stopped by guards at the entrances; therefore I have employed, in this matter, the same boy who served me the other night. Go immediately from the moat to that part of the quay which lies east of the Hotel de Bourbon. You will find him waiting there in a boat. He will take you across the river to the Quay of the Augustines, and from there you will go alone to the Abbey. When Foulon knows that you come in my name, he will at once admit you. I am sorry that there is not time to have a horse waiting for you outside the fortifications."

"Alas, I must leave my own horse in Paris! I must go forth as a deserter from the Guards!"

"It is better than going to the executioner," said Marguerite, gaily. "For the last time, monsieur, become a bird in a cage. I am about to retire. As soon as all my people are dismissed, and the palace is asleep, I shall come for you."

The door closed again upon my prison of a day. I placed the letters within my doublet, and looked to the fastening of my clothes, as a man who prepares for a race or contest. I straightened myself up in my place of concealment, and stood ready to attempt my flight from this Paris of which the King had made a cage to hold me.

More waiting, and then came Marguerite, this time without a candle. She stood in the darkness, in a white *_robe de nuit_*, like a ghost.

"Now, monsieur," she whispered.

I stepped forth without a word, and followed her through the cabinet into a chamber which also dark. Three of Marguerite's maids stood there, in silence, one near the door, the other two at the window. One of the latter held a stout stick, to the middle of which was fastened a rope, which dangled down to the floor and lay there in irregular coils. I saw this by the little light that came through the window from the clouded night sky.

Marguerite took the stick and held it across the window. It was longer than the width of the window, and hence its ends overlapped the chamber walls on either side.

"Are you ready, monsieur?" asked Marguerite, in a whisper.

"Ready, madame."

Still holding the stick in position with one hand, she opened the window with the other, and looked out. She then drew in her head, and passed the loose end of the rope out of the window. Then she looked at me, and stood a little at one side, that I might have room to pass.

Summoning a bold heart, I mounted the window-ledge, got on my knees with my face towards the chamber, caught the rope in both hands, lowered my head, and kissed one of the hands of the Queen of Navarre; then, resting my weight on my elbows, dropped my legs out of the window. Two more movements took my body after them, and presently I saw before me only the wall of the Louvre, and was descending the rope, hand after hand, the weight of my body keeping the stick above in position.

When I was half-way down, I looked up. The wall of the palace seemed now to lean over upon me, and now to draw back from me. Marguerite was gazing down at me.

At last, looking down, I saw the earth near, and dropped. I cast another glance upward. Marguerite was just drawing in her head, and immediately the rope's end flew out of my reach.

"There's no going back the way I came!" I said, to myself, and strode along the moat to find a place where I could most easily climb out of it. Such a place I found, and I was soon in the street, alone, near where I had been wont to watch under the window of Mlle. d'Arcy. I took a last look at the window of Marguerite's chamber. It was closed, and the rope had disappeared. My safety was no longer in the hands of the Queen of Navarre. She had pointed out the way for me, and had brought me thus far; henceforth, I had to rely on myself.

I shivered in the cold. I had left my large cloak beside the dead body of M. de Noyard the previous night, and had worn to the Louvre, in the morning, only a light mantle by way of outer covering.

"Blessings on the night for being so dark, and maledictions on it for being so cold!" I muttered, as I turned towards the river.

I had reached the Hotel de Bourbon, when I heard, behind me, the sound of footsteps in accord. I looked back. It was a body of several armed men, two of them bearing torches.

Were they gendarmes of the watch, or were they guards of the King? What

were they doing on my track, and had they seen me?

Probably they had not seen me, for they did not increase their gait, although they came steadily towards me. The torches, which illuminated everything near them, served to blind them to what was at a distance from them.

Fortunately, I had reached the end of the street, and so I turned eastward and proceeded along the quay, high walls on one side of me, the river on the other. It had been impossible for Marguerite to indicate to me the exact place at which the boat was to be in waiting. I did not think it best, therefore, to go to the edge of the quay and look for the boat while the soldiers were in the vicinity. They might come upon the quay at the moment of my embarking, and in that event, they would certainly investigate. So I walked on along the quay.

Presently I knew, by the sound of their steps, that they, too, had reached the quay, and that they had turned in the direction that I had taken. I was still out of the range of their torchlight.

"How far will I be made to walk by these meddlesome archers?" I asked myself, annoyed at this interruption, and considering it an incident of ill omen. I looked ahead, to see whither my walking would lead me.

I saw another body of gendarmes, likewise lighted by torches, just emerging from a street's end, some distance in front of me. They turned and came towards me.

I stopped, feeling for an instant as if all my blood, all power of motion, had left me. "Great God!" I thought, "I am caught between two rows of teeth."

I must wait no longer to seek the boat. Would God grant that it might be near, that I might reach it before either troop should see me?

I ran to the edge of the quay and looked over into the river. Of all the boats that lay at rest there, not one in sight was unmoored, not one contained a boatman!

The two bodies of men were approaching each other. In a few seconds the two areas of torchlight would merge together. On one side were walls, frowning and impenetrable; on the other was the river.

I took off my sword and dagger, on account of their weight, and dropped them with their sheathes into the river. I started to undo the fastening of my mantle, but the knot held; my fingers became clumsy, and time pressed. So I gave up that attempt, threw away my hat, let myself over the edge of the quay, and slid quietly into the icy water. I immediately dived, and presently came to the surface at some distance from the shore. I then swam for the middle of the river. God knows what powers within me awoke to my necessity. I endured the cold, and found strength to swim in spite of the clothes that impeded my movements and added immensely to my weight.

Without looking back, I could tell, presently, from the talking on the quay that the two detachments of gendarmes had met and were standing still. Had either one descried me, there would have been loud or hurried words, but there were none. After a while, during which I continued to swim, the voices ceased, and I looked back. Two torches remained on the

quay. The others were moving away, along the river. I then made a guess, which afterward was confirmed as truth. The boy sent by Marguerite had been discovered in his boat, had been taken to the guard-house, and had given such answers as led to the suspicion that he was waiting to aid the flight of some one. The captain of the Guard, thinking so to catch the person for whom the boatman waited, had sent two bodies of men out, one to occupy the spot near which the boy had been found, the other to patrol the river bank in search of questionable persons. I had arrived on the quay in the interval between the boy's capture and the arrival of the guards.

My first intention was to reach the left bank and proceed to the Abbey of St. Genevieve. But it occurred to me that, although a boat could not pass down the river, out of Paris, at night, because of the chain stretched across the river from the Tour du Coin to the Tour de Nesle, yet a swimmer might pass under or over that chain and then make, through the faubourg outside the walls, for the open country. Neither Marguerite nor I had thought of this way of leaving Paris, because of the seeming impossibility of a man's surviving a swim through the icy Seine, and a flight in wet clothes through the February night. Moreover, there was the necessity of leaving my sword behind, and the danger of being seen by the men on guard at the towers on either side of the river. But now that necessity had driven me into the river, I chose this shorter route to freedom, and swam with the current of the Seine. In front of me lay a dark mass upon the water in the middle of the river. This was the barge moored there to support the chain which stretched, from either side, across the surface of the water, up the bank and to the Tour de Nesle on the left side, and to the Tour du Coin on the right. I might pass either to the right or to the left of this barge. Naturally, I chose to avoid the side nearest the bank from which I had just fled, and to take the left side, which lay in the shadow of the frowning Tour de Nesle.

By swimming close to the left bank of the river, I might pass the boundary without diving under the chain, for the chain ascended obliquely from the water to the tower, leaving a small part of the river's surface entirely free. But this part was at the very foot of the tower, and if I tried passage there I should probably attract the attention of the guard. I was just looking ahead, to choose a spot midway between the barge and the left bank, when suddenly the blackness went from the face of things, a pale yellow light took its place, and I knew that the moon had come from behind the clouds. A moment later, I heard a cry from the right bank of the river, and knew that I was discovered. The shout came from the soldiers whom I had so narrowly eluded.

I knew that it was a race for life now. The soldiers would know that any man swimming the Seine on a February night was a man whom they ought to stop. I did not look back,—the one thing to do was to pass the Tour de Nesle before the guards there should be put on the alert by the cries from the right bank. So on I swam, urging every muscle to its utmost.

Presently came the crack of an arquebus, and spattering sounds behind me told me where the shot had struck the water. I turned to swim upon my left side, and so I got a glimpse of the quay that I had left. By the hurried movement of torches, I saw that the body that had gone to patrol the river bank was returning to rejoin the other force. Of the latter, several men were unmooring and manning a large boat. I turned on my back to have a look at the sky. I saw that very soon a heavy mass of black cloud would obscure the moon. At once I turned, and made towards the left bank, as if not intending to pass the chain. I could hear the men in the

boat speaking rapidly at this, as if commenting on my change of course. Again looking back, I saw that the boat had pushed off, and was making towards that point on the left bank for which I seemed to be aiming. And now I had something else to claim my attention: the sound of voices came from the Tour de Nesle. I cast a glance thither. A troop of the watch was out at last, having taken the alarm from the movements on the right bank. This troop from the Tour de Nesle was moving towards the place for which I seemed to be making; hence it was giving its attention solely to that part of the left bank which was inside the fortifications. I felt a thrill of exultation. The moon passed under the clouds. I changed my course, and struck out for the chain. The light of the torches did not reach me. Both the boat from the right bank and the watch from the Tour de Nesle continued to move towards the same point. I approached the chain, took a long breath, dived, felt the stifling embrace of the waters for a season, rose to the surface, breathed the air of heaven again, and cast a look behind. The chain stretched between me and the distant boat and torches. I was out of Paris.

I swam on, past the mouth of the Paris moat, and then made for the left bank. Exhaustion seized me as I laid hold of the earth, but I had strength to clamber up. I fell into a sitting posture and rested my tired arms and legs. What pains of cold and heat I felt I cannot describe. Presently, with returning breath, came the strength to walk,--a strength of which I would have to avail myself, not only that I might put distance between myself and Paris, but also to keep my wet clothes from freezing. I rose and started.

Choosing not to follow the left bank of the Seine, which was unknown territory to me, I turned southeastward, in the hope of finding the road by which I had entered Paris. To reach this, I had but to traverse the Faubourg St. Germaine, along the line of the wall of Paris. I had already gone some distance along the outer edge of the moat, with the sleeping faubourg on my right, when I heard, behind me, the sound of men treading a bridge. I looked back. The bridge was that which crossed the moat from the Tour de Nesle.

Had the guards at last discovered my way of eluding pursuit, and was I now being sought outside the walls? It appeared so, for, after crossing the moat, the troop divided into two bodies, one of which went toward the left bank below the chain, where I had landed, while the other came along the moat after me. I began to run. The moon came out again.

"Look! he is there!" cried one of my pursuers. I heard their footsteps on the frozen earth,--they, too, were running. But I had the advantage in one respect: I had no weapons to impede me. The coming out of the moon did not throw me into despair; it only increased my determination to make good the escape I had carried so far. Though nature, herself, became the ally of the King of France and the Duke of Guise against me, I would elude them. I was filled with hate and resolution.

Suddenly, as I ran, it occurred to me that I was a fool to keep so near the fortifications, for, at any of the gates, guards might emerge, alarmed by the shouts of my pursuers; and even as I thought this, I looked ahead and saw a number of halberdiers coming from the Porte St. Germaine. My situation was now as it had been on the quay, with this disadvantage, that I was seen by my enemies, and this advantage, that I had a way of retreat open on my right; and I turned and sped along a street of the Faubourg St. Germaine, towards the country.

It matters not how many pursue you, if you can run faster and longer than the best of them all. Gradually, as I went, panting and plunging, onward, heedless of every obstacle, I increased the distance between me and the cries behind. Soon I was out of the faubourg, but I did not stop. I do not know what ground I went over, save that I went southward, or what village I presently went through, save that it was silent and asleep. I came upon a good road, at last, and followed it, still running, though a pain in my side warned me that soon I must halt. All my hunters had abandoned the chase now but one. Every time I half turned for a backward look, I saw this one coming after me. He had dropped his weapons, and so had enabled himself to keep up the chase. Not being weakened by a previous swim in the Seine, he was in better form than I, and I knew that he would catch me in time. And what then? He was a large fellow, but since the struggle must come, I would better let it come ere I should be utterly exhausted. So I pretended to stagger and lurch forward, and presently came to my knees and then prone upon the ground. With a grunt of triumph, the man rushed up to me, caught me by the collar of my doublet, and raised me from the ground. Hanging limp, and apparently senseless, I put him quite off his guard.

"Stand up!" he cried. "Stomach of the Pope! Have I come so far only to take a dead man back?"

While he was trying to make me stand, I suddenly gathered all my energy into my right arm and gave him a quick blow in the pit of the stomach. With a fearful howl, he let me go and fell upon his knees. A blow in the face then made him drop as limp as I had pretended to be; and I resumed my flight, this time at a more leisurely pace.

And now all my physical powers seemed to be leaving me. Pains racked my head, and I seemed at one time to freeze and burn all over, at another time to freeze in one part and burn in another. I ached in my muscles, my bones, my stomach. At every step, I felt that it was vastly difficult to take another, that it would be ineffably sweet to sink down upon the earth and rest. Yet I knew that one taste of that sweetness meant death, and I was determined not to lose a life that had been saved from so great peril by so great effort. Despite all the soldiers at their command, the King of France and the Duke of Guise should not have their will with me. At last,--I know not how far from Paris,--I came to an inn. There were still a few crowns in my pocket. Forgetting the danger from which I had fled, not thinking that it might overtake me here, feeling only the need of immediate shelter and rest, I pounded on the door until I got admittance. I have never had any but the vaguest recollection of my installation at that inn, so near to insensibility I was when I fell against its door. I have a dim memory of having exchanged a few words with a sleepy, stolid host; of being glad of the darkness of the night, for it prevented him from noticing my wet, frozen, begrimed, bedraggled, half-dead condition; of my bargaining for the sole occupancy of a room; of his leading me up a winding stairway to a chamber; of my plunging from the threshold to the bed as soon as the door was opened. I slept for several hours. When I awoke, it was about noon, and I was very hungry and thirsty. My clothes had dried upon me, and I essayed to put them into a fairly presentable condition. I found within my doublet the four letters, which had been first soaked and then stiffened. The now useless one addressed to the Abbot Foulon, I destroyed; then I went down to the kitchen, and saw, with relief, that it was empty. I ate and drank hurriedly but ravenously. Again the fear of capture, the impulse to put Paris further and further behind, awoke in me. I bought a peasant's cap from the landlord, telling him that the wind had blown my hat into the

river the previous night, and set forth. It was my intention to walk to La Tournoire, that my money might last. Afoot I could the better turn from the road and conceal myself in woods or fields, at any intimation of pursuit. At La Tournoire, I would newly equip myself with clothes, weapons, horse, and money; and thence I would ride to Angers, and finally away, southward, to Nerac.

It was a fine, sunlit day when I stepped from the inn to take the road going southward. I had not gone four steps when I heard horses coming from the north. I sought the shelter of a shed at the side of the inn. There was a crack between two boards of this shed, through which I could look. The horses came into sight, ten of them. The riders were brown-faced men, all armed with swords and pistols, and most of them having arquebusses slung over their backs. Their leader was a large, broad, black-bearded man, with a very ugly red face, deeply scarred on the forehead, and with fierce black eyes. He and his men rode up to the inn, beat on the door, and, when the host came, ordered each a stirrup-cup. When the landlord brought the wine, the leader asked him some questions in a low tone. The landlord answered stupidly, shaking his head, and the horsemen turned to resume their journey. Just as they did so, there rode up, from the south, a merry-looking young cavalier followed by two mounted servants. This newcomer gaily hailed the ill-looking leader of the troop from the north with the words:

"Ah, M. Barbemouche, whither bound, with your back towards Paris?"

"For Anjou, M. de Berquin," growled the leader.

"What!" said the other, with a grin. "Have you left the Duke of Guise to take service with the Duke of Anjou?"

"No, M. le Vicomte," said the leader. "It is neither for nor against the Duke of Anjou that we go into his province. It is to catch a rascal who may be now on the way to hide on his estate there, and whom my master, the Duke of Guise, would like to see back in Paris."

"Indeed? Who is it that has given the Duke of Guise so great a desire for his company?"

"The Sieur de la Tournoire," replied Barbemouche. "Have you met him on the road?"

"I have never heard of him, before," said the young cavalier, indifferently; and he rode on northward, while Barbemouche and his men silently took the opposite direction.

He had never heard of me, as he said, nor I of him; yet he was to know much of me at a time to come, was the Vicomte de Berquin; and so was Barbemouche, the scowling man who was now riding towards Anjou in search of me.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW HE FLED SOUTHWARD

When one is pursued, one's best course is to pursue the pursuer. So, when M. Barbemouche and his troop of Guisards had gone some distance down the road, I came forth from the shed and followed them, afoot, keeping well to the roadside, ready to vanish, should any of them turn back. It was evident that Barbemouche had little or no hope of catching me on the road. His plan was to surprise me at my chateau, or to lie there in wait for me. He had not shown any persistence in questioning the landlord. The latter, through laziness or sheer stupidity, or a fear of incurring blame for having sheltered a fugitive, had not given him any information that might lead him to suspect that the man he was seeking was so near. So I could follow, in comparative safety, into Anjou.

Their horses constantly increased the distance between the Guise man-hunters and me, their desired prey. In a few hours they were out of sight. Thus they would arrive at La Tournoire long before I could. Not finding me there, they would probably put the servants under restraint, and wait in ambush for me. Several days of such waiting, I said to myself, would exhaust their patience; thereupon, they would give up the hope of my seeking refuge at La Tournoire, and would return to their master. My best course, therefore, would be to take my time on the road, to be on the alert on coming near La Tournoire, and to lie in hiding until I should be assured of their departure. In order to consume as much time as I could, and to wear out the enemy's patience without putting my own to the test, I decided to go first to Angers, deliver Marguerite's letters to Monsieur and Bussy d'Amboise, and then make for La Tournoire. Therefore, when, after a few days of walking, I came to LeMans, I did not turn southward, towards La Tournoire, but followed the Sarthe southwestward to Angers.

On this journey, I skirted Rambouillet, Anneau, and the other towns in my way, and avoided large inns, for fear of coming up with the Guise party. I made my money serve, too, by purchasing cheaply the hospitality of farmers and woodmen. My youth had withstood well the experiences attending my escape from Paris, and enabled me to fare on the coarse food of the peasantry. There was plenty of healthy blood in my veins to keep me warm. Outside of my doublet, my shoulders had no covering but the light mantle, of which I was now glad that I had been unable to rid myself in my swim down the Seine. People who saw me, with my rumpled clothes and shapeless ruff and peasant's cap, probably took me for a younger son who had endured hard fortune.

Such was my condition when I reached Angers and presented myself at the gate of the chateau wherein the Duke of Anjou had taken residence. There were many soldiers in and about the town, and horsemen were arriving and departing. I might not easily have obtained audience of the Duke, had not Bussy d'Amboise ridden up at the head of a small troop of horse, while I was waiting at the gate. I called out his name, and he recognized me, showing surprise at my appearance. I gave him his letter, and he had me conducted to the Duke, who was striding up and down the hall of the chateau. His mind was evidently preoccupied, perhaps already with fears as to the outcome of his rebellious step, and he did not look at me when he took the letter. His face brightened, though, when he saw the inscription in Marguerite's handwriting, and he went, immediately, to a window to read the letter. Bussy d'Amboise, who had dismounted and come in with me, now beckoned me to follow him, and when we were outside, he offered to supply me with a horse, money and arms, proposing that I enter the service of the Duke of Anjou. But I told him that I was bound for Gascony, and when he still offered me some equipment, I protested that I would refurnish myself at my own chateau; so he let me go my way. I could

see that he was in haste to break the seal of Marguerite's letter.

I had gone two leagues or more northward from Angers, and was about to turn eastward toward La Tournoire, when I saw a long and brilliant cortege approaching from the direction of Paris. Several men-at-arms were at the head, then came a magnificent litter, then a number of mounted ladies and gentlemen, followed by a host of lackeys, a number of mules with baggage, and another body of soldiers. This procession was winding down the opposite hillside. The head of it was already crossing the bridge over a stream that coursed through the valley toward the Sarthe. Slowly it came along the yellow road, the soldiers and gentlemen holding themselves erect on their reined-in horses, the ladies chatting or laughing, and looking about the country, the wind stirring the plumes and trappings, the sunlight sparkling on the armor and halberds of the guards, the sword-hilts of the gentlemen, the jewels and rich stuffs which shone in the attire of the riders. There were velvet cloaks and gowns; satin and silk doublets, breeches, and hose; there were cloth of gold and cloth of silver. Here and there the cavalcade passed clumps of trees that lined the road, and it was then like pictures you have seen in tapestry.

Concealment had lately become an instinctive act with me, and I now sought refuge in the midst of some evergreen bushes, at a little distance from the road, from which I could view the cavalcade as it passed. On it came, the riders throwing back their shoulders as they filled their lungs with the bracing country air. The day was a mild one for the time of year, and the curtains of the litter were open. Inside sat a number of ladies. With a start, I recognized two of the faces. One was Mlle. d'Arency's; the other was the Queen-mother's. Mlle. d'Arency was narrating something, with a derisive smile, to Catherine, who listened with the slightest expression of amusement on her serene face.

Catherine was going to try to persuade her son, the Duke of Anjou, to give up his insurrectionary designs and return to the court of his brother. I guessed this much, as I lay hidden in the bushes, and I heartily wished her failure. As for Mlle. d'Arency, I have no words for the bitterness of my thoughts regarding her. I grated my teeth together as I recalled how even circumstance itself had aided her. She could have had no assurance that in the combat planned by her I should kill De Noyard, or that he would not kill me, and yet what she had desired had occurred. When the troop had passed, I arose and started for La Tournoire. It seemed to me that a sufficient number of days had now passed to tire the patience of Barbemouche, and that I might now visit my chateau for the short time necessary.

Nevertheless, it was with great caution that I approached the neighborhood in which all my life, until my departure for Paris, had been passed. At each bend of the road, I stopped and listened before going on. When I entered a piece of woods, I searched, with my eyes, each side of the road ahead, for a possible ambush. When I approached the top of a hill, it was with my ears on the alert for the sound of horsemen or of human feet, and, when I reached the crest, I found some spot where, lying on my stomach or crouching behind underbrush, I could survey the lowland ahead. And so, meeting no indication of peril, treading familiar and beloved ground, I at last reached the hill-top from which I would have my long-expected view of La Tournoire. It was just sunset; with beating heart, I hastened forward, risking something in my eagerness to look again upon the home of my fathers. I gazed down, ready to feast my eyes on the dear old tower, the peaceful garden, the--

And I saw only a smouldering pile of ruins, not one stone of my chateau left upon another, save a part of the stables, before which, heeding the desolation no more than crows are repelled by the sight of a dead body, sat M. Barbemouche and two of his men throwing dice. Only one tree was left in the garden, and from one of its limbs hung the body of a man, through which a sword was thrust. By the white hair of the head, I knew the body was that of old Michel.

So this was the beginning of the revenge of the Duke of Guise upon a poor gentleman for having eluded him; thus he demonstrated that a follower of his might not be slain with impunity. And the Duke must have had the assurance of the King that this deed would be upheld; nay, probably the King, in his design of currying favor with his powerful subject, had previously sanctioned this act, or even suggested it, that the Duke might have no ground for suspecting him of protecting me.

Grief at the sight of the home of my youth, the house of my ancestors, laid low, gave way to rage at the powerful ones to whom that sight was due,—the Duke who despoiled me, the King who had not protected me, the Queen as whose unknowing tool I had made myself liable to this outrage. As I stood on that hill-top, in the dusk, and looked down on the ruins of my chateau, I declared myself, until death, the enemy to that Queen, that Duke, and that King,—most of all to that King; for, having saved the life of his favorite, having taken humble service in his Guards, and having received from him a hinted promise of advancement, I had the right to expect from him a protection such as he gave every day to worthless brawlers.

At nightfall, I went to the hovel of a woodman, on whose fidelity I knew I could depend. At my call, he opened the door of his little hut, and received me with surprise and joy. With him was a peasant named Frolichard.

"Then you are alive, monsieur?" cried the woodman, closing the door after me, and making for me a seat on his rude bed.

"As you see," I replied. "I have come to pass the night in your hut. To-morrow I shall be off for the south."

"Alas, you have seen what they have done! I knew nothing of it until Michel was dead, and the servants came fleeing through the woods. They have gone, I know not where, and the tenants, too. All but Frolichard. As yet, the soldiers have not found this hut."

By questioning him, I learned that M. Barbemouche had denounced me as a heretic and a traitor (I could see how my desertion from the French Guards might be taken as implying intended rebellion and treason), and had told Michel that my possessions were confiscated. What authority he

pretended to have, I could not learn. It was probably in wrath at not finding me that he had caused the destruction of my chateau, to make sure that it might not in any circumstances shelter me again.

I well knew that, whatever my rights might be, my safety lay far from La Tournoire; and so did my means of retaliation.

"If I had but a horse and a sword left!" I said.

"There is a horse which I have been using, in my shed," replied the forester; "and I made one of the servants leave here the swords that he was carrying away in his flight. Moreover, he had filled a bag with crowns from Michel's strong box. So you need not leave entirely unprovided."

I thanked the faithful fellow as he brought forth the swords and the little bag of gold pieces from under his bed, and then I lay down to sleep. The peasant Frolichard was already dozing in a corner by the fire.

I was awakened suddenly by a shake of the shoulder. The woodman stood by the bed, with every sign of alarm on his face.

"Monsieur," he whispered, "I fear you would best eat and begone. That cursed rascal, Frolichard, left while I was asleep. I am sure that the devil has been too much for him. He has probably gone to tell the soldiers that you are here. Eat, monsieur!"

I sprang up, and saw that the forester had already prepared some porridge for me.

"It is nearly dawn," he added, as I looked around I swallowed a few mouthfuls of the porridge, and chose the better one of the swords. Then I took up the little bag of golden crowns, and went out to mount horse. The animal that the woodman held for me was a sorry one, the ugliest and oldest of my stable.

Yet I rode blithely through the woods, happy to have again a horse under me, and a sword at my side. I knew that the forester could take care of himself as long as there should remain woods to hunt in or streams to fish in.

When I reached, the road it was daylight. I made for the hill-top, and stopped for a last look at my fields. I did not have to hesitate as to my course. In my doublet was Marguerite's letter, to be borne to the King of Navarre. Yet there was another reason why I should not attach myself to the Duke of Anjou, although he was already in rebellion against the King: the look on his face, when I saw him at Angers, had convinced me that he would not hold out. Should Catherine not win him back to allegiance, his own weakness would. I would place my hopes in the future of Henri of Navarre. Nothing could, as yet, be predicted with assurance concerning this Prince, who, being the head of the house of Bourbon, which constituted the younger branch of the Royalty of France, was the highest, by blood, of the really Huguenot leaders. Some, however, whispered that there was more in him than appeared in his amours and his adventures of the chase.

I was just about to turn my horse's head towards the south, when a man came out of my half-ruined stable and looked up at me. Instantly he called to some one in the stable, and two or three other soldiers came out. I recognized the burly form of one of these as that of Barbemouche. Another figure, a limp and cringing one, was that of Frolichard the peasant. Barbemouche gave some orders, and two or three brought horses out of the stable. I knew what all this meant.

I turned my horse, and galloped off towards the south. In a few moments I heard the footfalls of galloping horses behind me. Again I was the object of a chase.

When I had gone some distance, I looked back and saw my hunters coming, ten of them, down the hillside behind me. But the morning was bracing, and my horse had more life in him than at first sight appeared. I put another hill behind me, but in time my followers appeared at its crest. Now they gained on me, now I seemed to leave them further behind. All day this race continued. I bore directly southward, and hence passed far east of Angers. I soon made up my mind that M. Barbemouche was a man of persistence. I did not stop anywhere for food or drink. Neither did M. Barbemouche. I crossed the Loire at Saumur. So did he.

"Very well," I said. "If my horse only holds out, I will lead you all the way to Gascony."

Once I let my horse eat and rest; twice I let him drink.

At nightfall, the sound of the hoofs behind me gradually died away. My

own beast was foaming and panting, so I reined in to a walk. Near Loudun, I passed an inn whose look of comfort, I thought, would surely tempt my tired pursuers to tarry, if, indeed, they should come so far. Some hours later, coming to another and smaller inn, and hearing no sound of pursuit behind me, I decided to stop for a few hours, or until the tramp of horses' feet should disturb the silence of the night.

The inn kitchen, as I entered, was noisy with shouts and curses. One might have expected to find a whole company of soldiers there, but to my surprise, I saw only one man. This was a robust young fellow, with a big round face, piercing gray eyes, fiercely up-sprouting red mustache, and a double--pointed reddish beard. There was something irresistibly pugnacious, and yet good-natured, in the florid face of this person. He sat on a bench beside a table, forcibly detaining an inn maid with his left arm, and holding a mug of wine in his right hand. Beside him, on the bench, lay a sword, and in his belt was a pistol. He wore a brown cloth doublet, brown breeches, and green hose.

"A thousand devils!" he roared, as I entered. "Must a fighting man stand and beg for a kiss from a tavern wench? I don't believe in any of your painted saints, wooden or ivory, but I swear by all of them, good-looking girls are made to be hugged, and I was made to hug them! Here, you ten times damned dog of a landlord, bring me another bottle of your filthy wine, or I'll make a hole in your barrel of a body! Be quick, or I'll roast you on your own spit, and burn down your stinking old inn!" At this moment he saw me, as I stood in the doorway. "Come, monsieur!" he cried, "I'm not fastidious, curse me, and you might drink with me if you were the poxy old Pope himself! Here, wench, go and welcome the gentleman with a kiss!" And he shoved the girl towards me and began to pound, in sheer drunken turbulence, on the table with his mug.

I left the kitchen to this noisy guest, and took a room up-stairs, where the landlord presently brought me light and supper.

I paid in advance for my night's lodging, and arranged to have access, at any time during the night, to the shed in which was my horse, so that at the least alarm I might make hasty flight. I opened my window, that the sound of horses on the road might be audible to me from a distance. Then, having eaten, I put out my light and lay down, in my clothes, ready on occasion to rise and drop from the window, take horse, and be off.

From the kitchen, below, came frequent sounds emitted or caused by the

tipsy young Hercules in the brown doublet. Now he bellowed for wine, now he thundered forth profanity, now he filled the place with the noise of Gargantuan laughter; now he sang at the top or the depth of his big, full voice; then could be heard the crash of furniture in collision. These sounds continued until far into the night.

I had intended not to sleep, but to lie with ears alert. I could not yet bring myself to feel that I was safe from pursuit. So used had I become to a condition of flight, that I could not throw off the feeling of being still pursued. And yet, I had hoped that Barbemouche would tire of the chase. My plan had not been to confuse him as to my track, by taking by-roads or skirting the towns, but merely to outrun him. Because I wished to reach Nerac at the earliest possible moment, and because the country was new to me and I desired not to lose my way, I had held to the main road southward, being guided in direction by the sun or the stars. Moreover, had I made detours, or skirted cities, Barbemouche might have gone ahead by the main road and lain in wait further south for my coming up, for Frolichard, the peasant, had heard me tell the woodman my destination. So, in that first day's flight, I had trusted to the speed of my horse, and now there was some reason to believe that Barbemouche had abandoned pursuit, as the soldiers had done who chased me from Paris. And yet, it seemed to me that this ugly Barbemouche was not one to give up his chosen prey so soon.

Despite my intention, I fell asleep, and when I awoke it was daylight. I sprang up and went cautiously down-stairs, sword in hand. But there was no danger. Only the host and a servant were stirring in the inn. I made a rapid breakfast, and went to see my horse fed. Before the shed, I saw the young man who had made such drunken tumult in the kitchen the previous night. He was just about to mount his horse; but there was now nothing of the roysterer about his look or manner. He had restored neatness to his attire, and his expression was sedate and humble, though strength and sturdiness were as apparent in him as ever.

"A fine morning," I said, as the inn-servant brought out my own horse.

"Yes, monsieur," said the young man, in a very respectful tone. "A sunrise like this is a gift from the good God."

"Yet you look pensive."

"It is because I know how little I deserve such mercy as to live on such a day," answered the man, gravely; and he bowed politely, and rode southward.

This devoutness and humility impressed me as being strangely out of harmony with the profanity and turbulence of the night before, yet the one seemed no less genuine than the other.

My horse fed, I mounted and rode after the sturdy youth.

Not far from Mirebeau, happening to turn my head towards the north, I saw, in the distance, a group of horsemen approaching at a steady gallop. From having looked back at this group many times during the preceding day, I had stamped certain of its figures on my memory, and I now recognized it as Barbemouche and his party.

"Another day of it," I said, to myself, and spurred my horse to a gallop.

An increase in their own pace told me that they in turn had recognized me.

"This grows monotonous," I mused. "If there were only fewer of them, or more of me, I would make a stand."

Presently I came up with the young man in the brown doublet. He stared at me with a look of inquiry as I passed at such speed; then he looked back and saw the distant horsemen coming on at equal speed. He appeared to realize the situation at a glance. Without a word, he gave his own horse a touch of the spur, with the manifest intention of keeping my company in my flight.

"You have a good horse," I said to him, at the same time watching him out of the corner of my eye, seeking some indication that might show whether, on occasion, he would stand as my friend or my enemy.

"Better than yours, I fear, monsieur," he replied.

"Mine has been hard run," I said, lightly.

Presently he looked back, and said:

"Ah, the devil! Your friends, back there, are sending out an advance guard. Three of them are making a race of it, to see which shall have the honor of first joining you."

I looked back. It was true; three of them were bearing down with great speed, evidently on fresh horses. Barbemouche remained back with the rest.

I urged on my horse.

"It is useless, monsieur," said the young man at my side. "Your beast is no match for theirs. Besides, you will not find a better place to make a stand than the bridge yonder." And he pointed ahead to a bridge that crossed a narrow stream that lay between high banks.

"What, face ten men?" I said.

"There are only three. The thing may be over before the others come up."

I laughed. "Well, admitting that, three against one--" I began.

"Oh, there will be two of us," replied the other.

My heart gave a joyous bound, but I said, "I cannot expect you to risk your life in my quarrel."

And he answered, "By God! I myself have a quarrel with every man that wears on his hat the white cross of the Guises!" His grey eyes flashed, his face became red with wrath. "Let us stop, monsieur."

We stopped and turned our horses on the narrow bridge. We both drew sword and waited. My new-found ally threw back his hat, and I saw across his forehead a deep red scar, which I had not before noticed.

The three men rode up to the attack. They all stopped suddenly before they reached the bridge.

"Give up your sword and come with us, monsieur," cried one of them to me.

I said nothing. "Go to hell!" roared my companion. And with that he charged with the fury of a wild beast, riding between two of the horsemen, and thrusting his sword through the eye and into the brain of one before either could make the least show of defence. His horse coming to a quick stop, he drew his weapon out of the slain man's head and turned on the other. While there was some violent fencing between the two, and while the dead man's horse reared, and so rid itself of its bleeding burden, the third horseman urged his horse towards me. I turned the point of his rapier, whereupon he immediately backed, and then came for me again just as I charged on him. Each was too quick to meet the other's steel with steel. His sword passed under my right arm and my sword under his right arm, and we found ourselves linked together, arm to arm. I saw him reach with his left hand for his dagger, and I grew sick at the thought that I had no similar weapon with which to make matters even. He plucked the dagger from his belt, and raised it to plunge it into my back; but his wrist was caught in a clutch of iron. My man in the brown doublet, in backing his horse to make another charge on his still remaining opponent, had seen my antagonist's motion, and now, with a twist of his vigorous fingers, caused the dagger to fall from a limp arm. Then my comrade returned to meet his own enemy, and I was again on equal terms with mine. We broke away from each other. I was the quicker to right myself, and a moment later he fell sidewise from his horse, pierced through the right lung.

I backed my horse to the middle of the bridge, and was joined by my stalwart friend, who had done for his second man with a dagger thrust in the side.

"Whew!" he panted, holding his dripping weapons on either side of him, so as not to get any more blood on his clothes. Then a grin of satisfaction appeared on his perspiring face, and he said:

"Three Guisards less to shout '_Vive la messe_.' It's a pity we haven't time to exchange horses with these dead whelps of hell. But the others are coming up, and we ought to rest awhile."

We sheathed our weapons and spurred on our horses, again southward. Looking back, soon, we saw that the other pursuers, on coming up to their dead comrades, had chosen first to look after the belongings of the latter rather than to avenge their deaths. And while Barbemouche and his men, of whom there were now six, tarried over the dead bodies, we made such good speed that at last we were out of sight of them.

My first use of my returned breath was to thank my stalwart ally.

He received my gratitude with great modesty, said that the Lord had guided his arm in the fight, and expressed himself with a humility that was in complete contrast to the lion-like fury shown by him in the combat. Judging him, from his phrases, to be a Huguenot, I asked whether he was one, by birth, as I was.

"By birth, from my mother," he replied. "My father was a Catholic, and in order to win my mother, he pretended to have joined the reformers. That deceit was the least of his many rascally deeds. He was one of the chosen instruments of the devil,—a violent, roystering cut-throat, but a good soldier, as was shown in Italy and at St. Quentin, Calais, Jarnac, and

elsewhere. My mother, though only the daughter of an armorer's workman, was, in goodness, an angel. I thank God that she sometimes has the upper hand in me, although too often it is my father that prevails in me." He sighed heavily, and looked remorseful.

In subsequent talk, as we rode, I learned that he was a soldier who had learned war, when a boy, under Coligny. He had fought at his father's side against Italians, Spanish, and English, and against his father in civil war. His father had died of a knife-wound, received, not in battle, but from a comrade in a quarrel about a woman, during the sacking of a town. His mother, when the news of the fate of her unworthy spouse reached the village where she lived, died of grief. The son was now returning from that village, which was near Orleans, and whither he had been on a visit to his relations, to Gascony, where he had been employed as a soldier in the small army with which Henri of Navarre made shift to garrison his towns.

I told him that I hoped to find a place in that little army.

"You do well, monsieur," said the young soldier, whose intelligence and native dignity made him, despite his peasant origin, one with whom a gentleman might converse. "Some day they will learn in France of what stuff the little Bearnaise King is made. I have stood watching him when he little supposed that a common soldier might take note of such things, and I have seen on his face the sign of great intentions. More goes on under that black hair than people guess at,--he can do more than drink and hunt and make love and jest and swear."

He was in no haste to reach Gascony, he said, and so he intended to visit a former comrade who dwelt in a village some leagues from my road. In the afternoon, coming to the by-road which led to this place, he left me, with the words:

"My name is Blaise Tripault, and should it happen that you ever enroll a company for the King of Navarre--"

"The first name on my list shall be Blaise Tripault," I replied, smiling, and rode on, alone.

Whenever I heard riders behind me, I looked back. At evening I reached an eminence which gave a good view of the country through which I had passed. Two groups of horsemen were visible. One of these consisted of seven men. The chief figure was a burly one which I could not mistake,--that of Barbemouche.

"_Peste_!" I muttered, frowning. "So they are following me into Poitou! Am I never to have any rest?"

I took similar precautions that night to those which I had taken the night before. The next day, about noon, emerging out of a valley, I saw my pursuers on the top of the hill at my rear. Plainly, they intended to follow me to the end of the earth. I hoped they would stop in Poitiers and get drunk, but they tarried there no more than I. And so it was, later, at Civray and at Angouleme.

Every day I got one or two glimpses of this persistent pack of hounds. Every night I used like measures to make sudden flight possible. One night the sound for which I kept my ears expectant reached them,--the sound of horses' hoofs on the hard road. I dropped from the open window

of the inn at which I was, led out my horse from the shed, and made off, southward. The noise made by their own horses prevented my pursuers from hearing that made by mine. Presently the clatter abruptly ceased, whereupon I knew that they had stopped at the inn which I had left. My relief at this was offset by chagrin at a discovery made by me at the same moment: I had left my bag of golden crowns in the inn chamber. I dared not now go back for them. Well, Nerac could not be far away, now. I had traversed a good part of Guienne. The Dordogne was behind me.

I was glad that I had taken better care of the letter from Marguerite to her husband than I had taken of my crowns. Fortunately it had not left my doublet. I felt that my future depended on the delivery of that letter. There could be no doubt that Marguerite had recommended me in it with a favor that would obtain for me both protection and employment from the King of Navarre.

Daylight came, and with it hunger. I stopped at an inn, and was about to dismount, when I remembered that I had no money.

I could do without food for a time, but my horse could not. I told the landlord,--a short, heavy, square-faced, small-eyed man,--that I would, later, send him payment for a breakfast. He looked at me with a contempt that even a peasant dare show to a gentleman, when the gentleman has no money.

"Very well, then," I said. "I will leave you security."

He looked more respectful at this, and made a quick examination of me with his eyes.

"Unless you have some jewelry about you," he said, "your sword is the only thing that I would accept."

"You clod," I exclaimed, in a rage. "I ought to give you my sword through the body."

"A gentleman ought not to demand, for nothing, that which a poor man makes his living by selling," answered the host, turning to go in.

I looked down at my horse, which had already shown an endurance beyond its stock, and which now turned its eyes, hungrily, towards the inn stable. At the same time I thought I heard the sound of hoofs, away northward. After all, the delivery of the letter depended more on the horse than on my sword, for one horse is more likely to beat seven horses than one sword to beat seven swords.

To try whether it were possible, I made one movement, as if to hand over the weapon. But my arm refused. As well try to pluck the heart out of my body, and give it to the dog's keeping. Rather kill the man on his own threshold and, like a brigand, help myself. But I chose to be merciful.

"Be quick, then," I said. "Bring me some wine, and feed my horse as it stands here. I could take, for nothing, what you ask such high security for."

"And I have three strong sons," said the innkeeper, impudently. But he brought the wine, and ordered one of his sons to bring oats for the horse. So we made our breakfast there, horse and man, standing before the inn door. When the animal had licked up the last grain, I suddenly hurled

the heavy wine-mug at the innkeeper's head, wheeled my horse about, and galloped off, shouting back to the half-stunned rascal, "Your three sons must be swift, as well as strong, to take my sword." And I rode on, southward.

"Will the Guisards follow me over this river, also?" I asked myself, as I crossed the Garonne.

In the afternoon, I stopped for another look backward. There was not a soul to be seen on the road.

"Adieu, M. Barbemouche!" I said. "I believe you have grown tired of me at last."

At that instant a group appeared at the distant turn of the road. I counted them. Seven! And they were coming on at the speed of the wind.

I patted my horse on his quivering neck. "Come, old comrade," I said. "Now for one last, long race. In your legs lies my future."

He obeyed the spur, and his increased pace revealed a slight lameness, which had not before been perceptible.

"We have only to reach some Gascon town," I said to him. "The soldiers of the King of Navarre will protect the bearer of a letter to him from their Queen."

I turned in my saddle, and looked back. They were gaining ground.

"They know that this is their last chance," I said. "We are near the country held by the King of Navarre, and so they make a last effort before giving up the chase. On, my staunch fellow! You shall have fine trappings, and shall fare as well as your master, for this!"

The animal maintained its pace as if it understood; but it panted heavily and foamed, its eyes took on a wild look, and its lameness increased.

"They are coming nearer, there is no doubt of it!" I told myself. "Have I escaped from the Louvre and from Paris, led my enemies a chase through five provinces, to be taken when refuge is at last in sight? Shall Marguerite's letter to Henri of Navarre fall into the hands of those who wish him no good?"

Tears gushed from my eyes as I thought of the cruelty of destiny, which had sustained me so far in order to betray me at the end. I took the letter from my doublet, and held it ready to tear into pieces should I indeed be caught. Although Marguerite was thought to have secrets with the Duke of Guise, it was likely that she would not wish him to know what she might write to her husband, whose political ally she always was.

And now my horse dropped its head lower at each bound forward. The seven horses behind showed no sign of tiring.

"Thank God, I kept my sword! I can kill one of them, at least!"

I no longer looked back. Blindly forward I went, impelled only to defer the end to the last possible moment. God knew what might yet intervene.

Suddenly my horse gave a snort of pain, stumbled blindly, and fell to his knees. He slid forward a short distance, carried on by his impetus, and then turned over on his side, and lay quivering. I had taken my feet from the stirrups at his stumble, so that I now stood over his body.

I heard the loud clank of the hoofs behind. I stepped over the horse, and drew my sword. A short distance ahead was a clump of scrubby pines; there I would turn and make my stand.

Then was the time when I might have torn up the letter, had I not suddenly forgotten my intention. I held it clutched in my hand, mechanically, as I ran. I was conscious of only one thing,--that death was bearing down on me. The sound of the horses' footfalls filled my ears. Louder and louder came that sound, drowning even the quick panting of my breath. Again came that aching in the side, that intolerable pain which I had felt in my flight from Paris.

I pressed my hand to my side, and plunged forward. Suddenly the road seemed to rise and strike me in the face. I had fallen prostrate, and now lay half-stunned on the earth. I had just time to turn over on my back, that I might face my pursuers, when the foremost horse came up.

"Well, my man," cried the rider, in a quick, nervous voice, as I looked stupidly up at his short, sturdy figure, hooked nose, keen eyes, black hair and beard, and shrewd, good-natured face, "did you think the devil was after you, that you ran so hard? _Ventre Saint Gris_! You would make an excellent courier."

"I am a courier," I answered, trying to rise. "I ran so fast that I might soon reach Nerac with this letter for your majesty."

And I held the letter out to King Henri of Navarre.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW HE ANNOYED MONSIEUR DE LA CHATRE

I had never seen Henri of Navarre, before, but had often heard him described, and no other man exactly fitted his description. His favorite oath confirmed my recognition.

He took the letter, saying, "It looks as if it had been through fire and flood"

"I had to swim the Seine with it," I said.

He read it, sitting on his horse in the middle of the road, I standing beside the horse, the other six riders eyeing me curiously.

Having finished it, he looked at me with some interest and approval. "And what made you run from us?" he asked.

"Sire, there were seven horsemen left in the party that has been chasing me for some days past. Counting seven in your group, I too quickly assumed that it was the same."

The King of Navarre laughed, and ordered one of the lackeys to give me his horse and proceed afoot to the nearest town. When I was mounted, he asked me to ride beside him.

"The speed at which you rode excited our curiosity," he explained, "and that is why we gave chase."

I learned, later, that Henri and three of his gentlemen, with three valets, had been inspecting the defences of one of his Gascon towns, and were now returning to Nerac. He sometimes traversed those parts of his French provinces where his authority as governor was recognized, without any state, and often without a guard.

In reply to his questions, I said that I preferred a military position to a civil one, but confessed my inexperience. He told me that I might serve as ensign in one of his regiments, at Nerac, until I should acquire some knowledge of military affairs, when he would give me a captain's commission, and I might enlist a company.

I told him of the destruction of my chateau, and the loss of my money. He thereupon required me to accept the horse on which I rode, and a purse which one of the valets handed over to me. As he then beckoned one of his gentlemen to his side, I fell back. We entered Nerac in the evening. As soon as the gate was passed, the King and his followers turned towards the chateau, and I took the main street to an inn.

The King of Navarre kept his promises. I had been ensign for only a few months, stationed at Nerac, when he sent for me, and informed me that he intended to augment his army, and that he would maintain a company of my raising. He caused a captain's commission to be given to me before I left the chateau. I walked thence, down the avenue of fine trees, which were now in full leaf, before the chateau, debating with myself the possibility of easily raising a company. When I reached the square before the inn, I heard from within a human roar which had a familiar sound. Entering, I found that it proceeded from the stentorian lungs of Blaise Tripault, the young soldier who had aided my flight to Gascony by killing two Guisards in my defence. He was sitting at a table, very drunk.

"Ah, Blaise Tripault," I cried, "I see that your father prevails in you now!"

He recognized me, threw his bottle of wine out of the open window, and made an attempt at sobriety.

"You have been long on the way to Nerac," I went on, "but you come just in time to keep your promise. I enroll you first in the company which the King has commissioned me to raise."

"I thank you, monsieur," he replied. "I will now go to bed, and will come to you as soon as I am sober."

He was of great use to me in enlisting the company. He scoured the country daily, and brought me recruits. When the roll was complete, I was ordered to remain at Nerac for a time. Subsequently, I was sent to garrison different towns, one after another, not only in Gascony and parts of Guienne but also in Henri's principality of Bearn and his little kingdom of Navarre.

I am proud to have had a share in the constant efforts made by Henri of Navarre, while the world thought him given over entirely to gallantry at his small but agreeable court, to increase his territory and his resources against the time when he was to strike the great blows that no one yet dreamed he was meditating. Thanks to the unwillingness, or inability, of the King of France to put him in actual possession of his governorship of Guienne, we had the pleasant task, now and then, of wresting some town from the troops of the League or of Henri III. Our Henri had to take by force the places ceded to him by the King of France as Marguerite's dower, but still withheld from him. One of these was Cahors, in the taking of which I fought for days in the streets, always near our Henri, where the heart of the fighting was. It was there that Blaise Tripault covered himself with glory and the blood of the enemy, and was openly praised by the King.

But my life in the south had other pleasures besides those of fighting. As Henri's was a miniature kingdom, so was his court, at cheerful Nerac or sombre Pau, a miniature court; yet it had its pretty women and gallant gentlemen. Gaiety visited us, too, from the greater world. When the King of France and the Queen-mother thought it to their interest to seem friendly to our Henri, they ordered Marguerite to Nerac. Catherine herself came with her, bringing the Flying Squadron, that Henri and his Huguenots might be seduced into the onesided treaties desired by her. Catherine was one of the few, I think, who foresaw Henri's possible future. Her astrologer, Cosmo Ruggieri, had predicted that he would succeed her three sons to the throne of France, and I suppose she could not endure the thought of this. Better a Guise than a Bourbon, the son of Jeanne d'Albret. But our Henri might be useful to her as an instrument to check the Duke of Guise in any attempted usurpation during the life of her son. Therefore, Henri was to be cajoled while he was being restrained. But he was not fooled into disadvantageous compacts or concessions. All that he lost was a single town, which Catherine caused to be attacked while he was at a fete; but he learned of this at the fete, and retaliated by taking a town of the French King's on the same night.

I was presented to Catherine while she was at Nerac. No allusion was made to the circumstances which had caused my flight from Paris, or, indeed, to my having ever been in Paris. Yet, from her scrutiny of my features, I knew that she recalled those circumstances with my name. But Nerac was not the place where it would serve her to concern herself about me. I learned from one of Catherine's gentlemen that Mlle. d'Arcy, who had not come with her to Nerac, had wedded the Marquis de Pirillaume, who was jealous and kept her on his estate in Dauphiny, away from the court. I wished him joy of her.

When Catherine and her troop went back to the French court, leaving Marguerite at Nerac, they could boast of a few Huguenot gentlemen won over to their designs, but I was not one of the few. I do not say that I did not amuse myself where charming women abounded, but I kept my heart to myself. I had not resolved to become invulnerable to woman, but I had determined that she by whom I would let myself be wounded should be one vastly unlike any in Catherine's train. When I should find the woman pure as beautiful, incapable of guile, I would love. "Somewhere in France," I often said to myself, "that woman exists. I shall know her when I see her." As in the former affair, I had my ideal already formed, and was already in love, watching for the embodiment of that ideal to appear. But this second ideal was different from the first. And it is time to tell how at last I met her,--and how, for a while, the reality seemed worse

even than the first The death of the Duke of Anjou, after his reconciliation with the King, his brother, and his failure to win the crown he sought in the Netherlands, was a great event for us in Gascony. It left our Henri of Navarre next in succession to the throne of France. And our Henri was a sturdy man, while Henri III. seemed marked by destiny to follow the three other sons of Catherine to an early grave. It appeared that Marguerite monopolized all the longevity granted to the family. But we knew that the Guises and their League would not let our Huguenot Henri peacefully ascend his throne. Therefore, Henri's policy was to strengthen himself against the time when the death of Henri III. should leave the throne vacant for him. It was his interest also to prevent a usurpation of that throne during the life of Henri III., for such a usurpation would eventually exclude himself also. Thus circumstance made him the natural ally of Henri III. It was, conversely, the interest of the Guises to sow enmity between the two kings. The power of the League in France, and particularly in Paris, was now so great that Henri III. dared not oppose the wishes of the Duke of Guise. He was reduced to devices for gaining time. And so, against his own interest, he sanctioned the war which the League presently demanded against the Huguenots,—a war which might do two things for the Duke of Guise: destroy the next heir to the throne, and deprive the present King of his chief resource against a usurpation. For the present, the Duke of Guise cloaked his design by having the Pope proclaim the old Cardinal de Bourbon heir to the throne, our Henri being declared ineligible on account of heresy.

In the summer of 1585, the King of France issued anti-Huguenot edicts required by the League. Governors of provinces were ordered to make it uncomfortable for the "heretics." Several of them promptly obeyed, arresting some Huguenots for remaining in their provinces, and arresting others for trying to escape therefrom. By this time, Henri of Navarre had gathered a sufficient army and acquired a sufficient number of towns to hold his own in Guienne, and, indeed, throughout southwestern France. The Prince de Conde also put a Huguenot army in the field. Pending the actual opening of war, which the edicts of Henri III. foreshadowed, our Henri maintained a flying camp in Guienne. Every day recruits came, some of them with stories of persecution to which they had been subjected, some with accounts of difficulty in escaping from their provinces. One day I was summoned to the presence of Henri of Navarre.

"M. de la Tournoire," said he, speaking with his usual briskness and directness, "there are, in most of the provinces of France, many Huguenots who have publicly recanted, to save their lives and estates. Many of these are secretly for us. They would join me, but they fear to do so lest their estates be confiscated. These are to be assured that what they may lose now by aiding me shall some day be restored to them. Here is a list of a number of such gentlemen in the province of Berry, and you are to give them the assurances necessary to enlist them in our cause. Use what persuasions you can. Take your company, and find some place of concealment among the hills of the southern border of Berry. You can thus provide escort in crossing the border for those who may need it. Where you can in any way aid a Huguenot to escape from the province, where you can rescue one from death or prison, do so, always on condition of promised service in our cause. As for the gentlemen whose names are on this list, have them bring, as contributions, what money and arms they can. We are in even greater need of these than of men. Impress upon these gentlemen that their only hope of ultimate security lies in our triumph. It is a task of danger with which I charge you, monsieur, and I know that you will, therefore, the more gladly undertake it. The governor of Berry,

M. de la Chatre, is one of the bulwarks of the League. I learn that he is enforcing the edicts of Henri III. against the Protestants with the greatest zeal. He is devoted to the Duke of Guise, and is one of our most formidable enemies. It will not, therefore, be well for you to fall into his hands. Go, monsieur, and God be with you!"

I bowed my thanks for the favor of this dangerous mission, and went away with the list in my doublet, proud of having been made the confidant of Henri's resolution to fight for his rights to the end. I was elated, too, at the opportunity to work against the King of France and the Duke of Guise.

To annoy and hamper M. de la Chatre in his work of carrying out the public edicts of the King and the secret designs of the Duke, would give me the keenest joy. For once, both my great enemies, usually so opposed to each other in interest, could be injured at the same time by the same deeds; and such deeds would help my beloved captain, by whom I had been chosen to perform them. I could hardly contain my happiness when I returned to my company, and ordered immediate preparations for a night's march northward.

We set out, myself and Tripault mounted, the others afoot, with several horses bearing provisions and supplies. Marching at night, and concealing ourselves in the forests by day, we at last reached the mountains that form part of the southern boundary of Berry. They were thickly wooded, and though the month of August made them a series of masses of deep green, they presented a sombre aspect.

"It is somewhere up there," I said, pointing toward the still and frowning hills before us, "that we are to find a burrow, from which to issue forth, now and then, to the plains on the other side."

"The only man in the company who knows this country," replied my devoted squire, Blaise Tripault, "is Frojac, but he makes up for the ignorance of the others by knowing it very well. He can lead us to the most deserted spot among these mountains, where there is an abandoned chateau, which is said to be under a curse."

"If part of it is under a roof as well, so much the better," I answered. "Bring Frojac to me."

Blaise rode back along the irregular line formed by my rude soldiers, picked out an intelligent looking young arquebusier, and led him forward to me. I made this man, Frojac, our guide.

After toilsome marches, forcing our way up wooded ascents devoid of human habitation, and through almost impenetrable thickets of brushwood, we crossed the highest ridge of the mountain chain, and from a bare spot, a natural clearing, gazed down on the Creuse, which wound along the line formed by the northern base of the mountains. Beyond that lay the province of Berry, which was to be the scene of our operations. Some leagues to the northeast, crowning a rocky eminence that rose from the left bank of the Creuse, stood a mass of grim-looking towers and high gray walls. From the southern side of this edifice, a small town ran down the declivity to the plain.

"What is that place yonder?" I asked.

"It is the town and chateau of Clochonne," said Frojac.

"Who occupies the chateau?"

"It belongs to M. de la Chatre, the governor of the province, who sometimes comes there. A part of it is occupied by a garrison."

We resumed our progress through the forest, now descending the northern slope of the ridge. After some hours, when night was already beginning to fall in the woods, Frojac pointed ahead to a knoll covered with huge trees between whose trunks the space was choked with lesser vegetation.

"There it is," he said. "The Chateau de Maury."

We made our way through the thicket, and came suddenly upon ruined walls, rising in the midst of trees. Wild growths of various kinds filled up what had been the courtyard, and invaded the very doors. The broken walls and cracked towers themselves seemed as much a part of nature as the trees and bushes were. Branches thrust themselves through apertures in the crumbling stone. Southward from the foot of the knoll rose the mountains, eastward and westward extended an undulating natural platform that interrupted the descent of the mountain side. Northward the ground fell in a steep precipice to the left bank of the Creuse, along which ran a little-used road from Clochonne, which was northeast, to Narjec, which was southwest.

"Is there a path down the slope, by which we could reach that road, should we wish to go north by way of Clochonne?" I asked.

"I do not think so," replied Frojac. "But there used to be a road from here to Clochonne, through the forest. It has not been used since the Sieur de Maury left, twenty years ago, to hunt for gold in the new world. They said that, before going, he made a compact with the devil, here, by which Satan was to lead him to a land of gold across the sea. The devil is believed to be taking care of his estate until he returns. Perhaps this road has not been entirely wiped out by the forest."

A part of the chateau was yet under roof. This portion included the hall and three or four chambers above it. On the day after our arrival, we found the road through the forest still sufficiently open to serve us for expeditious egress. This abandoned way did not itself go to Clochonne, but it ran into a road that went from that town southward across the mountain. At the point of junction was the abode of an old woodman and his wife, where the couple maintained a kind of inn for the entertainment of people crossing the mountain. This man, Godeau, was rheumatic, bent, thin, timid, shrill-voiced, and under the domination of his large, robust, strong-lunged spouse, Marianne. By means of a little flattery, a gold piece, promises of patronage, and hints of dire vengeance upon any who might betray me, I secured this woman's complete devotion. These two were the only human dwellers within two leagues of our chosen hiding-place.

In Guienne, my master considered as enemies those who did not acknowledge his authority, and he provisioned his army at their expense. Inasmuch as the province of Berry was making war on our party, I treated it as hostile country, subject to pillage, according to the customs of war. It is true, some of its people were friendly to our cause, but it was as much their duty to contribute to our maintenance, since we were fighting in their behalf, as it was our right to take from those to whom our relation was one of warfare. So I gave my men permission to forage,

putting but one condition upon them,--that of losing their lives rather than allow our hiding-place to be disclosed. Thus, by virtue of many nightly visits to farms in the vicinity of Clochonne and Narjec, we contrived to avoid the pangs of an empty stomach.

Having established my company on a living basis at Maury, I began with relish the work of annoying M. de la Chatre. I sent out certain of my men, severally, to different parts of southern Berry as seekers of information. In the guise of peasants, or of soldiers going to serve in the army which the Governor, La Chatre, was then augmenting, they learned much that was valuable to me. It is written, under the title of "How the Lord Protected His Own and Chastised His Enemies in Berry," in the book called "The Manifold Mercies of God to His Children," by the pastor Laudrec, who has reported rightly what I related to him: how we made recruits for Henri of Navarre by finding out Huguenots in towns and villages and convincing them that they were sure to be arrested should they remain in Berry; how we guided these out of the province by various ways of our own discovery, across the mountain; how we interrupted the hanging of several men at Issoudun, who had been condemned for heresy and treason, and sent them in safety to Guienne; how certain of my men, without my authority, despoiled Catholic churches of their instruments of idolatry, and thus helped to replenish the treasury of our master; how I once marched my company by night to a wood near Bourges, lay in wait there until a guard came, conducting captured Huguenots for trial, attacked the guard, rescued the prisoners, and protected them in a hurried flight to the border, whence they proceeded to swell the army of our Henri; and how we served our cause in numerous other exploits, which I need not relate here, as you may read them in Laudrec's book, printed in Geneva.

The many secret departures of Huguenots from southern Berry, despite the vigilance of the garrisons at Clochonne and other frontier strongholds, must naturally have attracted the attention of the authorities, and so must the sudden public appearances that I made with my company on occasions like that at Issoudun and that near Bourges. My men, who moved, unknown, among the people, began to hear reports of a mysterious captain who hid in the southern hills and sallied forth at night to spirit Huguenots away. To this mysterious captain and his band were attributed not only all the exploits that we did accomplish, but many that we did not; and some daring robberies, of which we were innocent, were laid to our charge.

Finally, in September, I had evidence that our deeds had begun to make an impression on M. de la Chatre, the illustrious governor of the province and of the Orleanais as well. One of my men, Roquelin, saw in the market-place of Chateauroux an offer of five hundred crowns for the capture of this unknown rebel captain, which document was signed by La Chatre. I here saw an opportunity to make myself known in high places as one capable of harming and defying his enemies, despite their greatness. I was rejoiced at the hope of acquainting the Duke of Guise and the King of France with the fact that I had survived to work defiantly against their cause, under the very nose of one of their most redoubtable servants. I had not been of sufficient consequence for the Duke to fear, or for the King to protect, but now I was of sufficient consequence, as their enemy, for a price to be put on my head. So I sent one of my clever fellows, Sabray, to fasten by night beside La Chatre's placard in Chateauroux, a proclamation of my own, in which I offered ten crowns for the head of M. de la Chatre, and twenty crowns for that of his master, the Duke of Guise. I appended this signature: "The Sieur de la Tournoire,

who does not forget." I knew that some of La Chatre's enemies would take great pleasure in making this known to the Duke of Guise, and that the latter would reproach the King with my continued existence. It irritates the great to be defied by the small, and to irritate these two great ones was my delight.

I soon learned, with glee, that my return of compliments had reached the knowledge of the governor. Maugert brought me word of a notice posted in Clochonne, in which La Chatre doubled his offer and termed me the "heretic, rebel, traitor, and robber calling himself Sieur de la Tournoire."

While I gave myself the pleasure of annoying M. de la Chatre, I did not neglect the more important service imposed on me by Henri of Navarre. Accompanied only by Blaise Tripault, and travelling by night, I visited, one after another, the gentlemen named on my master's list, and used

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