

## Chapter 7

HOW, WITHOUT ANY ONE KNOWING WHY, THE KING WAS CONVERTED BEFORE THE NEXT DAY.

Three hours passed thus.

Suddenly, a terrible cry was heard, which came from the king's room.

All the lights in his room were out, and no sound was to be heard except this strange call of the king's. For it was he who had cried.

Soon was heard the noise of furniture falling, porcelain breaking, steps running about the room, and the barking of dogs-mingled with new cries. Almost instantly lights burned, swords shone in the galleries, and the heavy steps of the Guards were heard.

"To arms!" cried all, "the king calls."

And the captain of the guard, the colonel of the Swiss, and some attendants, rushed into the king's room with flambeaux.

Near an overturned chair, broken cups, and disordered bed, stood Henri, looking terrified and grotesque in his night-dress. His right hand was extended, trembling like a leaf in the wind, and his left held his sword, which he had seized mechanically.

He appeared dumb through terror, and all the spectators, not daring to break the silence, waited with the utmost anxiety.

Then appeared, half dressed and wrapped in a large cloak, the young queen, Louise de Lorraine, blonde and gentle, who led the life of a saint upon earth, and who had been awakened by her husband's cries.

"Sire," cried she, also trembling, "what is the matter? Mon Dieu! I heard your cries, and I came."

"It--it is nothing," said the king, without moving his eyes, which seemed to be looking up the air for some form invisible to all but him.

"But your majesty cried out; is your majesty suffering?" asked the queen.

Terror was so visibly painted on the king's countenance, that it began to gain on the others.

"Oh, sire!" cried the queen again, "in Heaven's name do not leave us in this suspense. Will you have a doctor?"

"A doctor, no," cried Henri, in the same tone, "the body is not ill, it is the mind; no doctor--a confessor."

Everyone looked round; nowhere was there to be seen any traces of what had so terrified the king. However, a confessor was sent for; Joseph Foulon, superior of the convent of St. G n vi ve, was torn from his bed, to come to the king. With the confessor, the tumult ceased, and silence was reestablished; everyone conjectured and wondered--the king was confessing.

The next day the king rose early, and began to read prayers then he ordered all his friends to be sent for. They sent to St. Luc, but he was more suffering than ever. His sleep, or rather his lethargy, had been so profound, that he alone had heard nothing of the tumult in the night, although he slept so

near. He begged to be left in bed. At this deplorable recital, Henri crossed himself, and sent him a doctor.

Then he ordered that all the scourges from the convent should be brought to him, and, going to his friends, distributed them, ordering them to scourge each other as hard as they could.

D'Epernon said that as his right arm was in a sling, and he could not return the blows he received, he ought to be exempt, but the king replied that that would only make it the more acceptable to God.

He himself set the example. He took off his doublet, waistcoat, and shirt, and struck himself like a martyr. Chicot tried to laugh, as usual, but was warned by a terrible look, that this was not the right time, and he was forced to take a scourge like the others.

All at once the king left the room, telling them to wait for him. Immediately the blows ceased, only Chicot continued to strike D'O, whom he hated, and D'O returned it as well as he could. It was a duel with whips.

The king went to the queen, gave her a pearl necklace worth 25,000 crowns, and kissed her, which he had not done for a year. Then he asked her to put off her royal ornaments and put on a sack.

Louise, always good, consented, but asked why her husband gave her a necklace, and yet made such a request.

"For my sins," replied he.

The queen said no more, for she knew, better than any one, how many he had to repent of.

Henri returned, which was a signal for the flagellation to recommence. In ten minutes the queen arrived, with her sack on her shoulders. Then tapers were distributed to all the court, and barefooted, through the snow, all the courtiers and fine ladies went to Montmartre, shivering. At five o'clock the promenade was over, the convents had received rich presents, the feet of all the court were swollen, and the backs of the courtiers sore. There had been tears, cries, prayers, incense, and psalms. Everyone had suffered, without knowing why the king, who danced the night before, scourged himself to-day. As for Chicot, he had escaped at the Porte Montmartre, and, with Brother Gorenflot, had entered a public-house, where he had eaten and drank. Then he had rejoined the procession and returned to the Louvre.

In the evening the king, fatigued with his fast and his exercise, ordered himself a light supper, had his shoulders washed, and then went to visit St. Luc.

"Ah!" cried he, "God has done well to render life so bitter."

"Why so, sire?"

"Because then man, instead of fearing death, longs for it."

"Speak for yourself, sire, I do not long for it at all."

"Listen, St. Luc, will you follow my example?"

"If I think it a good one."

"I will leave my throne, and you your wife, and we will enter a cloister. I will call myself Brother Henri----"

"Pardon, sire, if you do not care for your crown, of which you are tired, I care very much for my wife, whom I know so little. Therefore I refuse."

"Oh! you are better."

"Infinitely better, sire; I feel quite joyous, and disposed for happiness and pleasure."

"Poor St. Luc!" cried the king, clasping his hands.

"You should have asked me yesterday, sire, then I was ill and cross. I would have thrown myself into a well for a trifle. But this evening it is quite a different thing. I have passed a good night and a charming day. Mordieu, vive la joie!"

"You swear, St. Luc."

"Did I, sire? but I think you swear sometimes."

"I have sworn, St. Luc, but I shall swear no more."

"I cannot say that; I will not swear more than I can help, and God is merciful."

"You think he will pardon me?"

"Oh! I speak for myself, not for you, sire. You have sinned as a king, I as a private man, and we shall, I trust, be differently judged."

The king sighed. "St. Luc," said he, "will you pass the night in my room?"

"Why, what should we do?"

"We will light all the lamps, I will go to bed, and you shall read prayers to me."

"No, thank you, sire."

"You will not?"

"On no account."

"You abandon me, St. Luc!"

"No, I will stay with your majesty, if you will send for music and ladies, and have a dance."

"Oh, St. Luc, St. Luc!"

"I am wild to-night, sire, I want to dance and drink."

"St. Luc," said the king, solemnly, "do you ever dream?"

"Often, sire."

"You believe in dreams?"

"With reason."

"How so?"

"Dreams console for the reality. Last night I had a charming dream."

"What was it?"

"I dreamed that my wife----"

"You still think of your wife?"

"More than ever, sire; well, I dreamed that she, with her charming face--for she is pretty, sire----"

"So was Eve, who ruined us all."

"Well, my wife had procured wings and the form of a bird, and so, braving locks and bolts, she passed over the walls of the Louvre, and came to my window, crying, 'Open, St. Luc, open, my husband.'"

"And you opened?"

"I should think so."

"Worldly."

"As you please, sire."

"Then you woke?"

"No, indeed, the dream was too charming; and I hope to-night to dream again; therefore I refuse your majesty's obliging offer. If I sit up, let me at least have something to pay me for losing my dream. If your majesty will do as I said----"

"Enough, St. Luc. I trust Heaven will send you a dream to-night which will lead you to repentance."

"I doubt it, sire, and I advise you to send away this libertine St. Luc, who is resolved not to amend."

"No, no, I hope, before to-morrow, grace will have touched you as it has me. Good night, I will pray for you."