Chapter 31

HOW THE MONK CONFESSED THE ADVOCATE, AND THE ADVOCATE THE MONK.

At last M. Bernouillet came into Chicot's room, laughing immoderately.

"He is dying," said he, "and the man has arrived from Avignon."

"Have you seen him?"

"Of course."

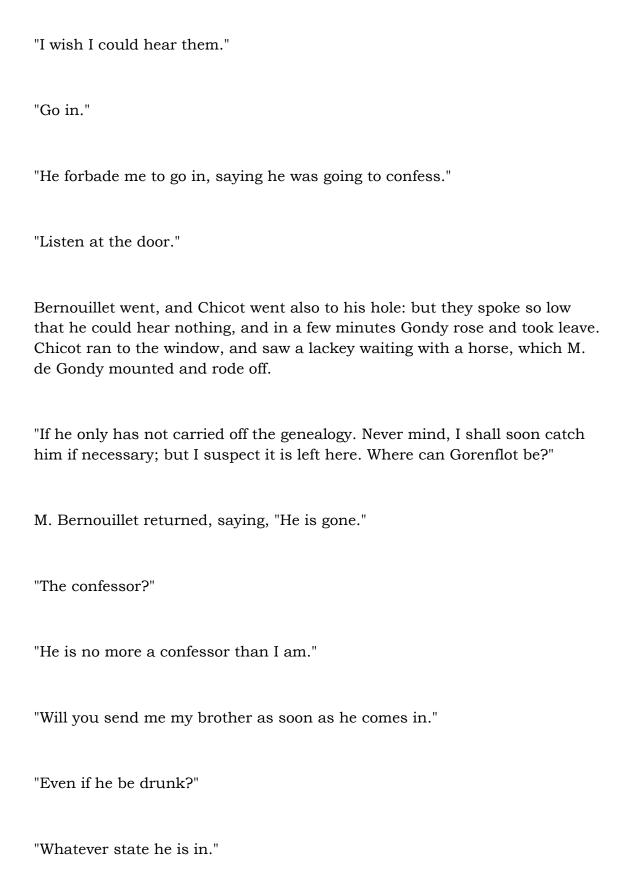
"What is he like?"

"Little and thin."

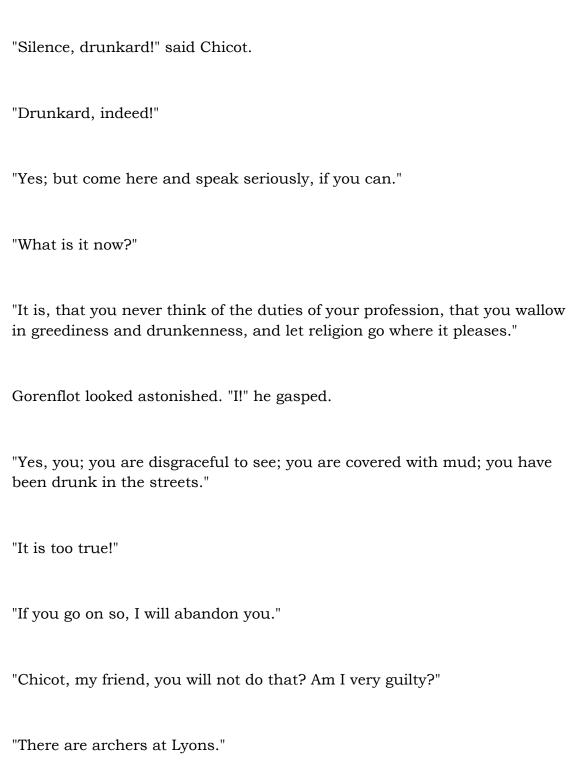
"An hour ago I was in the kitchen, when I saw a great horse, ridden by a little man, stop before the door. 'Is M. Nicolas here?' asked he. 'Yes, monsieur,' said I. 'Tell him that the person he expects from Avignon is here.' 'Certainly, monsieur, but I must warn you that he is very ill.' 'All the more reason for doing my bidding at once.' 'But he has a malignant fever.' 'Oh, pray, then, be quick!' 'How! you persist?' 'I persist.' 'In spite of the danger!' 'In spite of everything I must see him.' So I took him to the room, and there he is now. Is it not odd?"

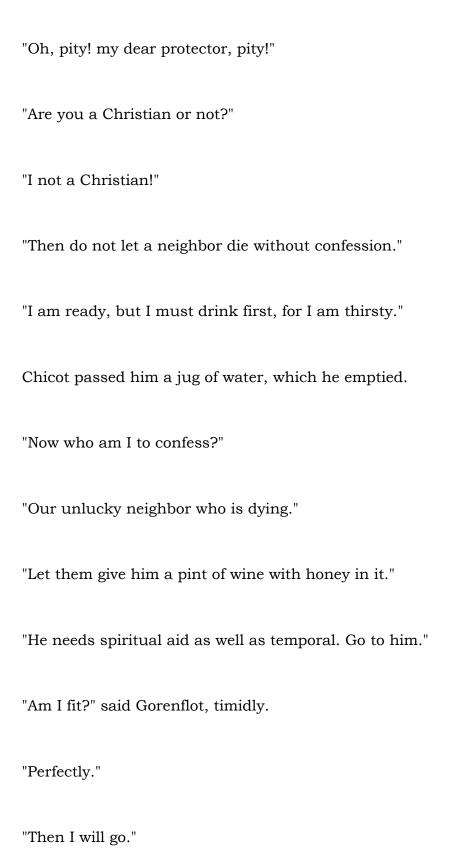
"It is he," thought Chicot; and he said, "Tell me about his arrival."

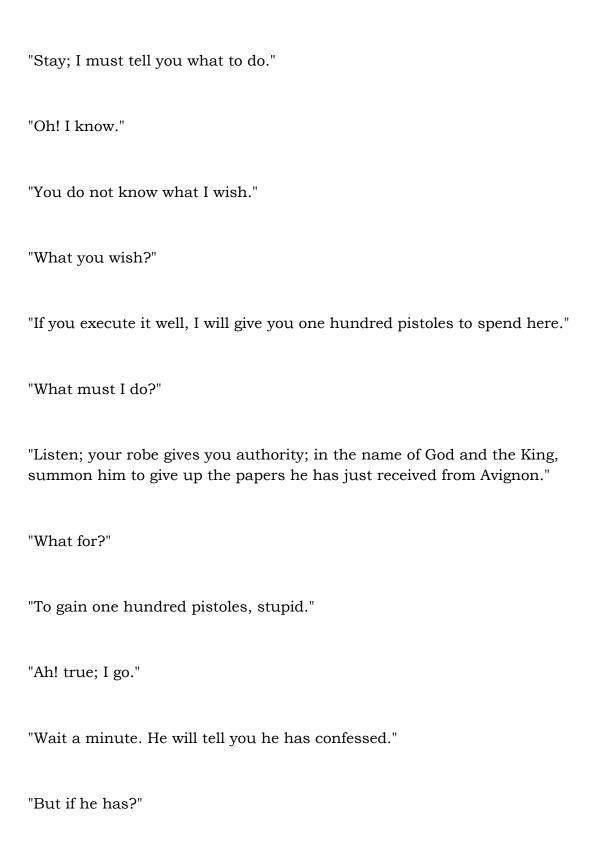
"Very droll."

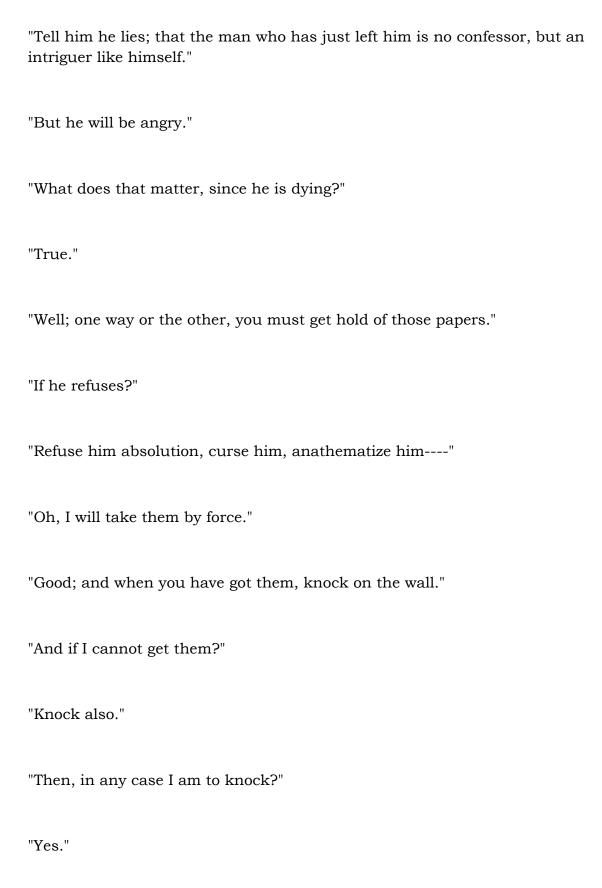


Bernouillet went, and Chicot remained in a state of indecision as to what to do, for he thought, "If David is really so ill, he may have sent on the despatches by Gondy." Presently he heard Gorenflot's voice, singing a drinking song as he came up the stairs.



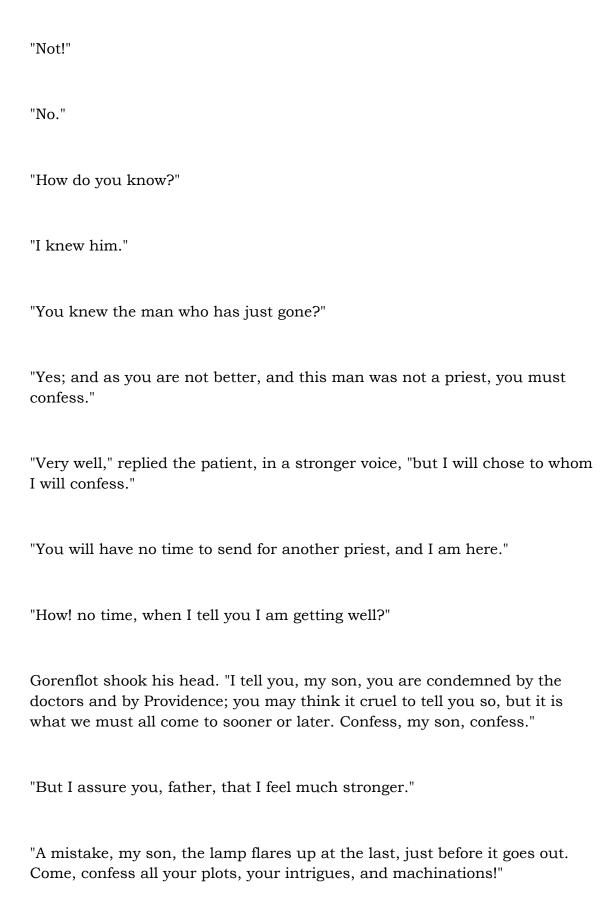






Gorenflot went, and Chicot placed his ear to the hole in the wall. When Gorenflot entered, the sick man raised himself in his bed, and looked at him with wonder.

"Good day, brother," said Gorenflot. "What do you want, my father?" murmured the sick man, in a feeble voice. "My son, I hear you are in danger, and I come to speak to you of your soul." "Thank you, but I think your care is needless; I feel better." "You think so?" "I am sure of it." "It is a ruse of Satan, who wishes you to die without confession." "Then he will be deceived, for I have just confessed." "To whom?" "To a worthy priest from Avignon." "He was not a priest."



"My intrigues and plots!" cried David, frightened at this singular monk, whom he did not know, but who seemed to know him so well.

"Yes; and when you have told all that, give me up the papers, and perhaps God will let me absolve you."

"What papers?" cried the sick man, in a voice as strong as though he were quite well.

"The papers that the pretended priest brought you from Avignon."

"And who told you that he brought me papers?" cried the patient, putting one leg out of bed.

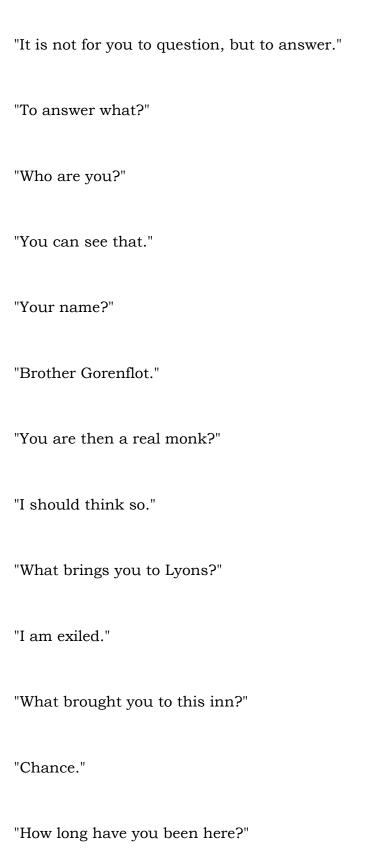
Gorenflot began to feel frightened, but he said firmly, "He who told me knew well what he was saying; give me the papers, or you shall have no absolution."

"I laugh at your absolution," cried David, jumping out of bed, and seizing Gorenflot by the throat, "and you shall see if I am too ill to strangle you."

Gorenflot was strong, and he pushed David back so violently that he fell into the middle of the room. But he rose furious, and seizing a long sword, which hung on the wall behind his clothes, presented it to the throat of Gorenflot, who sank on a chair in terror.

"It is now your turn to confess," said he, "speak, or you die."

"Oh!" cried Gorenflot, "then you are not ill--not dying."





His name?" cried David.
Oh! I can hold out no more."
'Speak."
'It was Chicot."
'The king's jester!"
'Himself."
'And where is he?"
'Here!" cried a voice, and Chicot appeared at the door with a drawn sword in his hand.