

## 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."

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

"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?"

"Very droll."

"I wish I could hear them."

"Go in."

"He forbade me to go in, saying he was going to confess."

"Listen at the door."

Bernouillet went, and Chicot went also to his hole: but they spoke so low that he could hear nothing, and in a few minutes Gondy rose and took leave. Chicot ran to the window, and saw a lackey waiting with a horse, which M. de Gondy mounted and rode off.

"If he only has not carried off the genealogy. Never mind, I shall soon catch him if necessary; but I suspect it is left here. Where can Gorenflot be?"

M. Bernouillet returned, saying, "He is gone."

"The confessor?"

"He is no more a confessor than I am."

"Will you send me my brother as soon as he comes in."

"Even if he be drunk?"

"Whatever state he is in."

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.

"Silence, drunkard!" said Chicot.

"Drunkard, indeed!"

"Yes; but come here and speak seriously, if you can."

"What is it now?"

"It is, that you never think of the duties of your profession, that you wallow in greediness and drunkenness, and let religion go where it pleases."

Gorenflot looked astonished. "I!" he gasped.

"Yes, you; you are disgraceful to see; you are covered with mud; you have been drunk in the streets."

"It is too true!"

"If you go on so, I will abandon you."

"Chicot, my friend, you will not do that? Am I very guilty?"

"There are archers at Lyons."

"Oh, pity! my dear protector, pity!"

"Are you a Christian or not?"

"I not a Christian!"

"Then do not let a neighbor die without confession."

"I am ready, but I must drink first, for I am thirsty."

Chicot passed him a jug of water, which he emptied.

"Now who am I to confess?"

"Our unlucky neighbor who is dying."

"Let them give him a pint of wine with honey in it."

"He needs spiritual aid as well as temporal. Go to him."

"Am I fit?" said Gorenflot, timidly.

"Perfectly."

"Then I will go."

"Stay; I must tell you what to do."

"Oh! I know."

"You do not know what I wish."

"What you wish?"

"If you execute it well, I will give you one hundred pistoles to spend here."

"What must I do?"

"Listen; your robe gives you authority; in the name of God and the King, summon him to give up the papers he has just received from Avignon."

"What for?"

"To gain one hundred pistoles, stupid."

"Ah! true; I go."

"Wait a minute. He will tell you he has confessed."

"But if he has?"

"Tell him he lies; that the man who has just left him is no confessor, but an intriguer like himself."

"But he will be angry."

"What does that matter, since he is dying?"

"True."

"Well; one way or the other, you must get hold of those papers."

"If he refuses?"

"Refuse him absolution, curse him, anathematize him----"

"Oh, I will take them by force."

"Good; and when you have got them, knock on the wall."

"And if I cannot get them?"

"Knock also."

"Then, in any case I am to knock?"

"Yes."

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."

"Not!"

"No."

"How do you know?"

"I knew him."

"You knew the man who has just gone?"

"Yes; and as you are not better, and this man was not a priest, you must confess."

"Very well," replied the patient, in a stronger voice, "but I will chose to whom I will confess."

"You will have no time to send for another priest, and I am here."

"How! no time, when I tell you I am getting well?"

Gorenflot shook his head. "I tell you, my son, you are condemned by the doctors and by Providence; you may think it cruel to tell you so, but it is what we must all come to sooner or later. Confess, my son, confess."

"But I assure you, father, that I feel much stronger."

"A mistake, my son, the lamp flares up at the last, just before it goes out. Come, confess all your plots, your intrigues, and machinations!"



"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."

"It is not for you to question, but to answer."

"To answer what?"

"Who are you?"

"You can see that."

"Your name?"

"Brother Gorenflot."

"You are then a real monk?"

"I should think so."

"What brings you to Lyons?"

"I am exiled."

"What brought you to this inn?"

"Chance."

"How long have you been here?"

"A fortnight."

"Why did you watch me?"

"I did not."

"How did you know that I had the papers?"

"Because I was told so."

"Who told you?"

"He who sent me here."

"Who was that?"

"I cannot tell you."

"You must."

"Oh! oh! I will cry out."

"And I will kill."

Gorenflot cried out, and a spot of blood appeared on the point of the sword.

"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.