

## Chapter 66

IN WHICH WE SEE THE QUEEN-MOTHER ENTER THE TOWN OF ANGERS,  
BUT NOT TRIUMPHANTLY.

At the same time that M. de Monsoreau fell under the sword of St. Luc, a flourish of trumpets sounded at the closed gates of Angers. It was Catherine de Medicis, who arrived there with rather a large suite. They sent to tell Bussy, who rose from his bed, and went to the prince, who immediately got into his. Certainly the airs played by the trumpets were fine, but they had not the virtue of those which made the walls of Jericho fall, for the gates did not open. Catherine leaned out of her litter to show herself to the guards, hoping the sight of her would do more than the sound of the trumpets. They saw her, and saluted her courteously, but did not open the gates. Then she sent a gentleman to demand admittance, but they replied that Angers being in a state of war, the gates could not be opened without some necessary formalities. Catherine was furious. At last Bussy appeared, with five other gentlemen.

"Who is there?" cried he.

"It is her majesty the queen mother, who has come to visit Angers."

"Very well, go to the left, and about eighty steps off you will find the postern."

"A postern for her majesty!" cried the gentleman. But Bussy was no longer there to hear, he and his friends had ridden off towards the indicated spot.

"Did your majesty hear?" asked the gentleman.

"Oh! yes, monsieur, I heard; let us go there, if that be the only way to get in."

The cortege turned to the left, and the postern opened.

"Your majesty is welcome to Angers," said Bussy.

"Thank you, M. de Bussy," said the queen, descending from her litter, and advancing towards the little door. Bussy stopped her. "Take care, madame," said he, "the door is low, and you will hurt yourself."

"Must I then stoop?" replied she; "it is the first time I ever entered a city so."

Once through the gate she re-entered her litter to go to the palace, Bussy and his friends escorting her.

"Where is my son?" cried she; "why do I not see M. d'Anjou?"

"Monseigneur is ill, madame, or else your majesty cannot doubt that he would have come himself to do the honors of his city."

Catherine was sublime in hypocrisy.

"Ill--my poor child, ill!" cried she; "ah! let us hasten to him; is he well taken care of?"

"Yes, madame, we do our best."

"Does he suffer?"

"Horribly, he is subject to these sudden indispositions."

"It was sudden, then?"

"Mon Dieu! yes, madame."

When they arrived at the palace, Bussy ran up first to the duke.

"Here she is!" cried he.

"Is she furious?"

"Exasperated."

"Does she complain?"

"No, she does worse, she smiles."

"What do the people say?"

"They looked at her in mute terror; now, monseigneur, be careful."

"We stick to war?"

"Pardieu, ask one hundred to get ten, and with her you will only get five."

"Bah! you think me very weak. Are you all here? Where is Monsoreau?"

"I believe he is at Méridor."

"Her majesty the queen mother!" cried the usher at the door.

Catherine entered, looking pale. The duke made a movement to rise, but she threw herself into his arms and half stifled him with kisses. She did more-- she wept.

"We must take care," said Antragues to Ribeirac, "each tear will be paid for by blood."

Catherine now sat down on the foot of the bed. At a sign from Bussy everyone went away but himself.

"Will you not go and look after my poor attendants, M. de Bussy? you who are at home here," said the queen.

It was impossible not to go, so he replied, "I am happy to please your majesty," and he also retired.

Catherine wished to discover whether her son were really ill or feigning. But he, worthy son of such a mother, played his part to perfection. She had wept, he had a fever. Catherine, deceived, thought him really ill, and hoped to have more influence over a mind weakened by suffering. She overwhelmed him with tenderness, embraced him, and wept so much that at last he asked her the reason.

"You have run so great a risk," replied she.

"In escaping from the Louvre, mother?"

"No, after."

"How so?"

"Those who aided you in this unlucky escape----"

"Well?"

"Were your most cruel enemies."

"She wishes to find out who it was," thought he.

"The King of Navarre," continued she, "the eternal scourge of our race----"

"Ah! she knows."

"He boasts of having gained much by it."

"That is impossible, for he had nothing to do with it; and if he had, I am quite safe, as you see. I have not seen the King of Navarre for two years."

"It was not only of danger I spoke!"

"Of what, then?" replied the duke, smiling, as he saw the tapestry shake behind the queen.

"The king's anger," said she, in a solemn voice; "the furious anger which menaces you----"

"This danger is something like the other, madame; he may be furious, but I am safe here."

"You believe so?"

"I am sure of it; your majesty has announced it to me yourself."

"How so?"

"Because if you had been charged only with menaces, you would not have come, and the king in that case would have hesitated to place such a hostage in my hands."

"A hostage! I!" cried she, terrified.

"A most sacred and venerable one," replied the duke, with a triumphant glance at the wall.

Catherine was baffled, but she did not know that Bussy was encouraging the duke by signs.

"My son," said she at length, "you are quite right; they are words of peace I bring to you."

"I listen, mother, and I think we shall now begin to understand each other."