

Chapter 83

IN WHICH CHICOT SLEEPS.

The movements of the young men had been remarked by the king and Chicot. The king walked up and down, waiting impatiently for his friends to return; but Chicot followed them at a distance, and saw enough to be satisfied of their intentions. When he returned to the house he found the king, walking up and down, muttering.

"Ah! my dear friend! do you know what has become of them?" cried Henri.

"Whom? your minions?"

"Alas! yes, my poor friends."

"They must lie very low by this time."

"Have they been killed?" cried Henri; "are they dead?"

"Dead I fear----"

"And you laugh, wretch?"

"Oh! my son, dead drunk."

"Oh! Chicot, how you terrified me. But why do you calumniate these gentlemen?"

"On the contrary, I praise them."

"Be serious, I beg; do you know that they went out with the Angevins?"

"Of course, I know it."

"What was the result?"

"What I tell you; that they are dead drunk."

"But Bussy!"

"He is intoxicating them; he is a dangerous man."

"Chicot, for pity's sake----"

"Yes; Bussy has given a dinner to your friends; how do you like that?"

"Impossible! They are sworn enemies."

"Have you good legs?"

"What do you mean?"

"Will you go to the river?"

"I would go to the end of the world to see such a thing."

"Well! go only to the Hôtel Bussy."

"Will you accompany me?"

"Thank you, I have just come from there."

"But----"

"Oh! no; I, who have seen, do not need to be convinced. Go, my son, go. You disquiet yourself about your friends; you first pity them as if they were dead, and when you hear they are not dead, you are uneasy still----"

"You are intolerable, M. Chicot."

"Would you have preferred that they should each have had seven or eight wounds by a rapier?"

"I should like to be able to depend on my friends."

"Oh! ventre de biche, depend upon me; I am here, my son, only feed me. I want pheasant and truffles."

Henri and his only friend went to bed early, the king still sighing.

The next day, at the petite levée of the king, MM. Quelus, Schomberg, Maugiron, and D'Epernon presented themselves. Chicot still slept. The king

jumped from his bed in a fury, and tearing off the perfumed mask from his face, cried, "Go out from here."

The young men looked at each other in wonder.

"But, sire, we wished to say to your majesty----"

"That you are no longer drunk, I suppose."

Chicot opened his eyes.

"Your majesty is in error," said Quelus, gravely.

"And yet I have not drunk the wine of Anjou."

"Oh! I understand," said Quelus, smiling.

"What?"

"If your majesty will remain alone with us, we will tell you."

"I hate drunkards and traitors."

"Sire," cried three of the gentlemen.

"Patience, gentlemen," said Quelus, "his majesty has slept badly, and had unpleasant dreams. A few words will set all right."

"Speak then, but be brief."

"It is possible, sire, but difficult."

"Yes; one turns long round certain accusations."

"No, sire, we go straight to it," replied Quelus, looking again at Chicot and the usher, as though to reiterate his request that they might be left alone. The king signed to the usher to leave the room, but Chicot said, "Never mind me, I sleep like a top," and closing his eyes again, he began to snore with all his strength.