

## Chapter 85

### THE FÊTE DIEU.

During these eight days events were preparing themselves, as a tempest gathers in the heavens during the calm days of summer. Monsoreau had an attack of fever for twenty-four hours, then he rallied, and began to watch, himself; but as he discovered no one, he became more than ever convinced of the hypocrisy of the Duc d'Anjou, and of his bad intentions with regard to Diana.

Bussy did not discontinue his visits by day, but, warned by Rémy of this constant watchfulness, came no more at night to the window.

Chicot divided his time between the king, whom he watched like a child, and his friend Gorenflot, whom he had persuaded to return to his convent. He passed hours with him in his cell, always bringing with him large bottles in his pocket, and the report began to be spread that Gorenflot had nearly persuaded him to turn monk.

As for the king, he gave constant lessons in fencing to his friends, teaching them new thrusts, and, above all, exercising D'Epéron, to whom fate had given so skilful an adversary, that he was visibly preoccupied by it.

Any one walking in the streets of Paris at certain hours, might have met the strange monks, of whom our first chapters furnished some description, and who resembled troopers more than monks. Then, to complete the picture, we must add that the Hôtel de Guise had become at once mysterious and turbulent, the most peopled within and the most deserted without that can be imagined; that meetings were held every night in the great hall, and with all the blinds and windows hermetically closed, and that these meetings were preceded by dinners, to which none but men were invited, and which were presided over by Madame de Montpensier. Of all these meetings, however, important though they were, the police suspected nothing. On the morning of the great day, the weather was superb, and the flowers which filled the streets sent their perfumes through the air. Chicot, who for the last

fortnight had slept in the king's room, woke him early; no one had yet entered the royal chamber.

"Oh, Chicot!" cried the king, "you have woke me from one of the sweetest dreams I ever had in my life."

"What was it, my son?"

"I dreamed that Quelus had run Antragues through the body, and was swimming in the blood of his adversary. Let us go and pray that my dream may be realized. Call, Chicot, call."

"What do you want?"

"My hair-cloth and my scourge."

"Would you not prefer a good breakfast?"

"Pagan, would you go to hear mass on the Fête Dieu with a full stomach?"

"Even so."

"Call, Chicot."

"Patience; it is scarcely eight o'clock, and you will have plenty of time to scourge yourself. Let us talk first. Converse with your friend; you will not repent it, Valois, on the faith of a Chicot."

"Well, talk; but be quick."

"How shall we divide our day, my son?"

"Into three parts."

"In honor of the Trinity; very well, let me hear these three parts."

"First, mass at St. Germain l'Auxerrois."

"Well?"

"Return to the Louvre, for a collation."

"Very good."

"Then, a procession of penitents through the streets, stopping at the principal convente of Paris, beginning at the Jacobine and finishing at St. Geneviève, where I have promised the prior to stay till to-morrow in the cell of a saint, who will pray for the success of our arms."

"I know him."

"The saint?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"So much the better; you shall accompany me, and we will pray together."

"Yes; make yourself easy."

"Then dress yourself, and come."

"Wait a little."

"What for?"

"I have more to ask."

"Be quick, then, for time passes."

"What is the court to do?"

"Follow me."

"And your brother?"

"Will accompany me."

"Your guard?"

"The French guard wait for me at the Louvre, and the Swiss at the door of the Abbey."

"That will do; now I know all."

"Then I may call?"

"Yes."

Henri struck on his gong.

"The ceremony will be magnificent," said Chicot.

"God will accept our homage, I hope."

"But tell me, Henri, before any one comes in, have you nothing else to say to me?"

"No, I have given you all the details."

"Have you settled to sleep at St. Genevieve?"

"Doubtless."

"Well, my son, I do not like that part of the program."

"How so?"

"When we have dined I will tell you another plan that has occurred to me."

"Well, I consent."

"Whether you consent or not, it will be all the same thing."

"What do you mean?"

"Hush! here are your valets."

As he spoke, the ushers opened the door, and the barber, perfumer, and valet of the king entered, and commenced to execute upon his majesty one of those toilets which we have described elsewhere. When the king was dressing, the Duc d'Anjou was announced. He was accompanied by M. de Monsoreau, D'Epernon, and Aurilly. Henri, at the sight of Monsoreau, still pale and looking more frightful than ever, could not repress a movement of surprise.

"You have been wounded, comte, have you not?"

"Yes, sire"

"At the chase, they told me."

"Yes sire."

"But you are better now?"

"I am well."

"Sire," said the duke, "would it please you that, after our devotions, M, de Monsoreau should go and prepare a chase for us in the woods of Compiègne?"

"But do you not know that to-morrow----"

He was going to say, "Four of your friends are to fight four of mine;" but he stopped, for he remembered that it was a secret.

"I know nothing" said the duke; "but if your majesty will inform me----"

"I meant that, as I am to pass the night at the Abbey of St. Genevieve, I should perhaps not be ready for to-morrow; but let the count go; if it be not to-morrow, it shall be the day after."

"You hear?" said the duke to Monsoreau.

"Yes monseigneur."

At this moment Quelus and Schomberg entered. The king received them with open arms.

Monsoreau said softly to the duke, "You exile me, monseigneur."

"Is it not your duty to prepare the chase for the king?"

"I understand--this is the last of the eight days fixed by your highness, and you prefer sending me to Compiègne to keeping your promise."

"No, on the contrary; I keep my promise."

"Explain yourself."

"Your departure will be publicly known."

"Well?"

"Well, do not go, but hide near your house; then, believing you gone, the man you wish to know will come; the rest concerns yourself: I engage for no more."

"Ah! if that be so----"

"You have my word."

"I have better than that, I have your signature."

"Oh, yes, mordieu! I know that."

Aurilly touched D'Epernon's arm and said, "It is done; Bussy will not fight to-morrow."

"Not fight!"



"I answer for it."

"Who will prevent it?"

"Never mind that."

"If it be so, my dear sorcerer, there are one thousand crowns for you."

"Gentlemen," said the king, who had finished his toilet, "to St. Germain l'Auxerrois."

"And from there to St. Genevieve?" asked the duke.

"Certainly," replied Henri, passing into the gallery where all his court were waiting for him.