

"You insist upon it?"

"I demand it."

"The Vicomte de Wardes."

"Very well," said Athos, tranquilly, "I know him. But our horses are ready, I see; and, instead of delaying our departure for a couple of hours, we will set off at once. Come, monsieur."

Chapter 16

Monsieur Becomes Jealous of the Duke of Buckingham.

While the Comte de la Fere was proceeding on his way to Paris, accompanied by Raoul, the Palais Royal was the theatre wherein a scene of what Moliere would have called excellent comedy, was being performed. Four days had elapsed since his marriage, and Monsieur, having breakfasted very hurriedly, passed into his ante-chamber, frowning and out of temper. The repast had not been over-agreeable. Madame had had breakfast served in her own apartment, and Monsieur had breakfasted almost alone; the Chevalier de Lorraine and Manicamp were the only persons present at the meal, which lasted three-quarters of an hour without a single syllable having been uttered. Manicamp, who was less intimate with his royal highness than the Chevalier de Lorraine, vainly endeavored to detect, from the expression of the prince's face, what had made him so ill-humored. The Chevalier de Lorraine, who had no occasion

to speculate about anything, inasmuch as he knew all, ate his breakfast with that extraordinary appetite which the troubles of one's friends but stimulates, and enjoyed at the same time both Monsieur's ill-humor and the vexation of Manicamp. He seemed delighted, while he went on eating, to detain a prince, who was very impatient to move, still at table.

Monsieur at times repented the ascendancy which he had permitted the Chevalier de Lorraine to acquire over him, and which exempted the latter from any observance of etiquette towards him. Monsieur was now in one of those moods, but he dreaded as much as he liked the chevalier, and contented himself with nursing his anger without betraying it. Every now and then Monsieur raised his eyes to the ceiling, then lowered them towards the slices of *pate* which the chevalier was attacking, and finally, not caring to betray the resentment, he gesticulated in a manner which Harlequin might have envied. At last, however, Monsieur could control himself no longer, and at the dessert, rising from the table in excessive wrath, as we have related, he left the Chevalier de Lorraine to finish his breakfast as he pleased. Seeing Monsieur rise from the table, Manicamp, napkin in hand, rose also. Monsieur ran rather than walked, towards the ante-chamber, where, noticing an usher in attendance, he gave him some directions in a low tone of voice. Then, turning back again, but avoiding passing through the breakfast apartment, he crossed several rooms, with the intention of seeking the queen-mother in her oratory, where she usually remained.

It was about ten o'clock in the morning. Anne of Austria was engaged in writing as Monsieur entered. The queen-mother was extremely attached to

her son, for he was handsome in person and amiable in disposition. He was, in fact, more affectionate, and it might be, more effeminate than the king. He pleased his mother by those trifling sympathizing attentions all women are glad to receive. Anne of Austria, who would have been rejoiced to have had a daughter, almost found in this, her favorite son, the attentions, solicitude, and playful manners of a child of twelve years of age. All the time he passed with his mother he employed in admiring her arms, in giving his opinion upon her cosmetics, and recipes for compounding essences, in which she was very particular; and then, too, he kissed her hands and cheeks in the most childlike and endearing manner, and had always some sweetmeats to offer her, or some new style of dress to recommend. Anne of Austria loved the king, or rather the regal power in her eldest son; Louis XIV. represented legitimacy by right divine. With the king, her character was that of the queen-mother, with Philip she was simply the mother. The latter knew that, of all places, a mother's heart is the most compassionate and surest. When quite a child he always fled there for refuge when he and his brother quarreled, often, after having struck him, which constituted the crime of high treason on his part, after certain engagements with hands and nails, in which the king and his rebellious subject indulged in their night-dresses respecting the right to a disputed bed, having their servant Laporte as umpire, - Philip, conqueror, but terrified at victory, used to flee to his mother to obtain reinforcements from her, or at least the assurance of forgiveness, which Louis XIV. granted with difficulty, and after an interval. Anne, from this habit of peaceable intervention, succeeded in arranging the disputes of her sons, and in sharing, at the

same time, all their secrets. The king, somewhat jealous of that maternal solicitude which was bestowed particularly on his brother, felt disposed to show towards Anne of Austria more submission and attachment than his character really dictated. Anne of Austria had adopted this line of conduct especially towards the young queen. In this manner she ruled with almost despotic sway over the royal household, and she was already preparing her batteries to govern with the same absolute authority the household of her second son. Anne experienced almost a feeling of pride whenever she saw any one enter her apartment with woe-begone looks, pale cheeks, or red eyes, gathering from appearances that assistance was required either by the weakest or the most rebellious. She was writing, we have said, when Monsieur entered her oratory, not with red eyes or pale cheeks, but restless, out of temper, and annoyed. With an absent air he kissed his mother's hands, and sat himself down before receiving her permission to do so. Considering the strict rules of etiquette established at the court of Anne of Austria, this forgetfulness of customary civilities was a sign of preoccupation, especially on Philip's part, who, of his own accord, observed a respect towards her of a somewhat exaggerated character. If, therefore, he so notoriously failed in this regard, there must be a serious cause for it.

"What is the matter, Philip?" inquired Anne of Austria, turning towards her son.

"A good many things," murmured the prince, in a doleful tone of voice.

"You look like a man who has a great deal to do," said the queen, laying down her pen. Philip frowned, but did not reply. "Among the various subjects which occupy your mind," said Anne of Austria, "there must surely be one that absorbs it more than others."

"One has indeed occupied me more than any other."

"Well, what is it? I am listening."

Philip opened his mouth as if to express all the troubles his mind was filled with, and which he seemed to be waiting only for an opportunity of declaring. But he suddenly became silent, and a sigh alone expressed all that his heart was overflowing with.

"Come, Philip, show a little firmness," said the queen-mother. "When one has to complain of anything, it is generally an individual who is the cause of it. Am I not right?"

"I do not say no, madame."

"Whom do you wish to speak about? Come, take courage."

"In fact, madame, what I might possibly have to say must be kept a profound secret; for when a lady is in the case - "

"Ah! you are speaking of Madame, then?" inquired the queen-mother, with a

feeling of the liveliest curiosity.

"Yes."

"Well, then, if you wish to speak of Madame, do not hesitate to do so. I am your mother, and she is no more than a stranger to me. Yet, as she is my daughter-in-law, rest assured I shall be interested, even were it for your own sake alone, in hearing all you may have to say about her."

"Pray tell me, madame, in your turn, whether you have not remarked something?"

"Something! Philip? Your words almost frighten me, from their want of meaning. What do you mean by 'something?'"

"Madame is pretty, certainly."

"No doubt of it."

"Yet not altogether beautiful."

"No, but as she grows older, she will probably become strikingly beautiful. You must have remarked the change which a few years have already made in her. Her beauty will improve more and more; she is now only sixteen years of age. At fifteen I was, myself, very thin; but even as she is at present, Madame is very pretty."

"And consequently others have remarked it."

"Undoubtedly, for a woman of ordinary rank is noticed - and with still greater reason a princess."

"She has been well brought up, I suppose?"

"Madame Henriette, her mother, is a woman somewhat cold in manner, slightly pretentious, but full of noble thoughts. The princess's education may have been neglected, but her principles, I believe, are good. Such at least was the opinion I formed of her when she resided in France; but she afterwards returned to England, and I am ignorant what may have occurred there."

"What do you mean?"

"Simply that there are some heads naturally giddy, which are easily turned by prosperity."

"That is the very word, madame. I think the princess rather giddy."

"We must not exaggerate, Philip; she is clever and witty, and has a certain amount of coquetry very natural in a young woman; but this defect in persons of high rank and position, is a great advantage at a court. A princess who is tinged with coquetry usually forms a brilliant court; her

smile stimulates luxury, arouses wit, and even courage; the nobles, too, fight better for a prince whose wife is beautiful."

"Thank you extremely, madame," said Philip, with some temper; "you really have drawn some very alarming pictures for me."

"In what respect?" asked the queen, with pretended simplicity.

"You know, madame," said Philip, dolefully, "whether I had or had not a very great dislike to getting married."

"Now, indeed, you alarm me. You have some serious cause of complaint against Madame."

"I do not precisely say it is serious."

"In that case, then, throw aside your doleful looks. If you show yourself to others in your present state, people will take you for a very unhappy husband."

"The fact is," replied Philip, "I am not altogether satisfied as a husband, and I shall not be sorry if others know it."

"For shame, Philip."

"Well, then, madame, I will tell you frankly that I do not understand the

life I am required to lead."

"Explain yourself."

"My wife does not seem to belong to me; she is always leaving me for some reason or another. In the mornings there are visits, correspondences, and toilettes; in the evenings, balls and concerts."

"You are jealous, Philip."

"I! Heaven forbid. Let others act the part of a jealous husband, not I. But I am annoyed."

"All these things you reproach your wife with are perfectly innocent, and, so long as you have nothing of greater importance - "

"Yet, listen; without being very blamable, a woman can excite a good deal of uneasiness. Certain visitors may be received, certain preferences shown, which expose young women to remark, and which are enough to drive out of their senses even those husbands who are least disposed to be jealous."

"Ah! now we are coming to the real point at last, and not without some difficulty. You speak of frequent visits, and certain preferences - very good; for the last hour we have been beating about the bush, and at last

you have broached the true question."

"Well then, yes – "

"This is more serious than I thought. It is possible, then, that Madame can have given you grounds for these complaints against her?"

"Precisely so."

"What, your wife, married only four days ago, prefers some other person to yourself? Take care, Philip, you exaggerate your grievances; in wishing to prove everything, you prove nothing."

The prince, bewildered by his mother's serious manner, wished to reply, but he could only stammer out some unintelligible words.

"You draw back, then?" said Anne of Austria. "I prefer that, as it is an acknowledgement of your mistake."

"No!" exclaimed Philip, "I do not draw back, and I will prove all I asserted. I spoke of preference and of visits, did I not? Well, listen."

Anne of Austria prepared herself to listen, with that love of gossip which the best woman living and the best mother, were she a queen even, always finds in being mixed up with the petty squabbles of a household.

"Well," said Philip, "tell me one thing."

"What is that?"

"Why does my wife retain an English court about her?" said Philip, as he crossed his arms and looked his mother steadily in the face, as if he were convinced that she could not answer the question.

"For a very simple reason," returned Anne of Austria; "because the English are her countrymen, because they have expended large sums in order to accompany her to France, and because it would hardly be polite – not politic, certainly - to dismiss abruptly those members of the English nobility who have not shrunk from any devotion or sacrifice."

"A wonderful sacrifice indeed," returned Philip, "to desert a wretched country to come to a beautiful one, where a greater effect can be produced for a guinea that can be procured elsewhere for four! Extraordinary devotion, really, to travel a hundred leagues in company with a woman one is in love with!"

"In love, Philip! think what you are saying. Who is in love with Madame?"

"The Duke of Buckingham. Perhaps you will defend him, too?"

Anne of Austria blushed and smiled at the same time. The name of the Duke of Buckingham recalled certain recollections of a very tender and

melancholy nature. "The Duke of Buckingham?" she murmured.

"Yes; one of those arm-chair soldiers - "

"The Buckinghams are loyal and brave," said Anne of Austria, courageously.

"This is too bad; my own mother takes the part of my wife's lover against me," exclaimed Philip, incensed to such an extent that his weak organization was affected almost to tears.

"Philip, my son," exclaimed Anne of Austria, "such an expression is unworthy of you. Your wife has no lover; and, had she one, it would not be the Duke of Buckingham. The members of that family, I repeat, are loyal and discreet, and the rights of hospitality are sure to be respected by them."

"The Duke of Buckingham is an Englishman, madame," said Philip, "and may

I ask if the English so very religiously respect what belongs to princes of France?"

Anne blushed a second time, and turned aside under the pretext of taking her pen from her desk again, but in reality to conceal her confusion from her son. "Really, Philip," she said, "you seem to discover expressions for the purpose of embarrassing me, and your anger blinds you while it alarms me; reflect a little."

"There is no need for reflection, madame. I can see with my own eyes."

"Well, and what do you see?"

"That Buckingham never quits my wife. He presumes to make presents to her, and she ventures to accept them. Yesterday she was talking about _souchets a la violette_; well, our French perfumers, you know very well, madame, for you have over and over again asked for it without success – our French perfumers, I say, have never been able to procure this scent. The duke, however, wore about him a _sachet a la violette_, and I am sure that the one my wife has come from him."

"Indeed, monsieur," said Anne of Austria, "you build your pyramids on needle points; be careful. What harm, I ask you, can there be in a man giving to his countrywoman a recipe for a new essence? These strange ideas, I protest, painfully recall your father to me; he who so frequently and so unjustly made me suffer."

"The Duke of Buckingham's father was probably more reserved and more respectful than his son," said Philip, thoughtlessly, not perceiving how deeply he had wounded his mother's feelings. The queen turned pale, and pressed her clenched hands upon her bosom; but, recovering herself immediately, she said, "You came here with some intention or another, I suppose?"

"Certainly."

"What was it?"

"I came, madame, intending to complain energetically, and to inform you that I will not submit to such behavior from the Duke of Buckingham."

"What do you intend to do, then?"

"I shall complain to the king."

"And what do you expect the king to reply?"

"Very well, then," said Monsieur, with an expression of stern determination on his countenance, which offered a singular contrast to its usual gentleness. "Very well. I will right myself!"

"What do you call righting yourself?" inquired Anne of Austria, in alarm.

"I will have the Duke of Buckingham quit the princess, I will have him quit France, and I will see that my wishes are intimated to him."

"You will intimate nothing of the kind, Philip," said the queen, "for if you act in that manner, and violate hospitality to that extent, I will invoke the severity of the king against you."

"Do you threaten me, madame?" exclaimed Philip, almost in tears; "do you threaten me in the midst of my complaints?"

"I do not threaten you; I do but place an obstacle in the path of your hasty anger. I maintain, that, to adopt towards the Duke of Buckingham, or any other Englishman, any rigorous measure - to take even a discourteous step towards him, would be to plunge France and England into the most disastrous disagreement. Can it be possible that a prince of the blood, the brother of the king of France, does not know how to hide an injury, even did it exist in reality, where political necessity requires it?" Philip made a movement. "Besides," continued the queen, "the injury is neither true nor possible, and it is merely a matter of silly jealousy."

"Madame, I know what I know."

"Whatever you may know, I can only advise you to be patient."

"I am not patient by disposition, madame."

The queen rose, full of severity, and with an icy ceremonious manner.

"Explain what you really require, monsieur," she said.

"I do not require anything, madame; I simply express what I desire. If the Duke of Buckingham does not, of his own accord, discontinue his visits to my apartments I shall forbid him entrance."

"That is a point you will refer to the king," said Anne of Austria, her heart swelling as she spoke, and her voice trembling with emotion.

"But, madame," exclaimed Philip, striking his hands together, "act as my mother and not as the queen, since I speak to you as a son; it is simply a matter of a few minutes' conversation between the duke and myself."

"It is that very conversation I forbid," said the queen, resuming her authority, "because it is unworthy of you."

"Be it so; I will not appear in the matter, but I shall intimate my will to Madame."

"Oh!" said the queen-mother, with a melancholy arising from reflection, "never tyrannize over a wife - never behave too haughtily or imperiously towards your own. A woman unwillingly convinced, is unconvinced."

"What is to be done, then? - I will consult my friends about it."

"Yes, your double-dealing advisers, your Chevalier de Lorraine - your De Wardes. Intrust the conduct of this affair to me. You wish the Duke of Buckingham to leave, do you not?"

"As soon as possible, madame."

"Send the duke to me, then; smile upon your wife, behave to her, to the king, to every one, as usual. But follow no advice but mine. Alas! I too well know what any household comes to, that is troubled by advisers."

"You shall be obeyed, madame."

"And you will be satisfied at the result. Send the duke to me."

"That will not be difficult."

"Where do you suppose him to be?"

"At my wife's door, whose levee he is probably awaiting."

"Very well," said Anne of Austria, calmly. "Be good enough to tell the duke that I shall be charmed if he will pay me a visit."

Philip kissed his mother's hand, and started off to find the Duke of Buckingham.