

Chapter 55

Happy as a Prince.

At the very moment he was about entering the chateau, Bragelonne met De Guiche. But before having been met by Raoul, De Guiche had met Manicamp,

who had met Malicorne. How was it that Malicorne had met Manicamp?

Nothing more simple, for he had awaited his return from mass, where he had accompanied M. de Saint-Aignan. When they met, they congratulated each other upon their good fortune, and Manicamp availed himself of the circumstance to ask his friend if he had not a few crowns still remaining at the bottom of his pocket. The latter, without expressing any surprise at the question, which he perhaps expected, answered that every pocket which is always being drawn upon without anything ever being put in it, resembles those wells which supply water during the winter, but which gardeners render useless by exhausting during the summer; that his, Malicorne's, pocket certainly was deep, and that there would be a pleasure in drawing on it in times of plenty, but that, unhappily, abuse had produced barrenness. To this remark, Manicamp, deep in thought, had replied, "Quite true!"

"The question, then, is how to fill it?" Malicorne added.

"Of course; but in what way?"

"Nothing easier, my dear Monsieur Manicamp."

"So much the better. How?"

"A post in Monsieur's household, and the pocket is full again."

"You have the post?"

"That is, I have the promise of being nominated."

"Well!"

"Yes; but the promise of nomination, without the post itself, is like a purse with no money in it."

"Quite true," Manicamp replied a second time.

"Let us try for the post, then," the candidate had persisted.

"My dear fellow," sighed Manicamp, "an appointment in his royal highness's household is one of the gravest difficulties of our position."

"Oh! oh!"

"There is no question that, at the present moment, we cannot ask Monsieur for anything."

"Why so?"

"Because we are not on good terms with him."

"A great absurdity, too," said Malicorne, promptly.

"Bah! and if we were to show Madame any attention," said Manicamp,
"frankly speaking, do you think we should please Monsieur?"

"Precisely; if we show Madame any attention, and do it adroitly, Monsieur
ought to adore us."

"Hum!"

"Either that or we are great fools. Make haste, therefore, M. Manicamp,
you who are so able a politician, and make M. de Guiche and his royal
highness friendly again."

"Tell me, what did M. de Saint-Aignan tell you, Malicorne?"

"Tell me? nothing; he asked me several questions, and that was all."

"Well, was he less discreet, then, with me."

"What did he tell you?"

"That the king is passionately in love with Mademoiselle de la Valliere."

"We knew that already," replied Malicorne, ironically; "and everybody talks about it loud enough for all to know it; but in the meantime, do what I advise you; speak to M. de Guiche, and endeavor to get him to make advances to Monsieur. Deuce take it! he owes his royal highness that, at least."

"But we must see De Guiche, then?"

"There does not seem to be any great difficulty in that; try to see him in the same way I tried to see you; wait for him; you know that he is naturally very fond of walking."

"Yes; but whereabouts does he walk?"

"What a question to ask! Do you not know that he is in love with Madame?"

"So it is said."

"Very well; you will find him walking about on the side of the chateau where her apartments are."

"Stay, my dear Malicorne, you were not mistaken, for here he is coming."

"Why should I be mistaken? Have you ever noticed that I am in the habit of making a mistake? Come, we only need to understand each other. Are

you in want of money?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Manicamp, mournfully.

"Well, I want my appointment. Let Malicorne have the appointment, and Manicamp shall have the money. There is no greater difficulty in the way than that."

"Very well; in that case make yourself easy. I will do my best."

"Do."

De Guiche approached, Malicorne stepped aside, and Manicamp caught hold

of De Guiche, who was thoughtful and melancholy. "Tell me, my dear comte, what rhyme you were trying to find," said Manicamp. "I have an excellent one to match yours, particularly if yours ends in _ame_."

De Guiche shook his head, and recognizing a friend, he took him by the arm. "My dear Manicamp," he said, "I am in search of something very different from a rhyme."

"What is it you are looking for?"

"You will help me to find what I am in search of," continued the comte:

"you who are such an idle fellow, in other words, a man with a mind full

of ingenious devices."

"I am getting my ingenuity ready, then, my dear comte."

"This is the state of the case, then: I wish to approach a particular house, where I have some business."

"You must get near the house, then," said Manicamp.

"Very good; but in this house dwells a husband who happens to be jealous."

"Is he more jealous than the dog Cerberus?"

"Not more, but quite as much so."

"Has he three mouths, as that obdurate guardian of the infernal regions had? Do not shrug your shoulders, my dear comte: I put the question to you with an excellent reason, since poets pretend that, in order to soften Monsieur Cerberus, the visitor must take something enticing with him - a cake, for instance. Therefore, I, who view the matter in a prosaic light, that is to say in the light of reality, I say: one cake is very little for three mouths. If your jealous husband has three mouths, comte, get three cakes."

"Manicamp, I can get such advice as that from M. de Beautru."

"In order to get better advice," said Manicamp, with a comical seriousness of expression, "you will be obliged to adopt a more precise formula than you have used towards me."

"If Raoul were here," said De Guiche, "he would be sure to understand me."

"So I think, particularly if you said to him: 'I should very much like to see Madame a little nearer, but I fear Monsieur, because he is jealous.'"

"Manicamp!" cried the comte, angrily, and endeavoring to overwhelm his tormentor by a look, who did not, however, appear to be in the slightest degree disturbed by it.

"What is the matter now, my dear comte?" inquired Manicamp.

"What! is it thus you blaspheme the most sacred of names?"

"What names?"

"Monsieur! Madame! the highest names in the kingdom."

"You are very strangely mistaken, my dear comte. I never mentioned the highest names in the kingdom. I merely answered you in reference to the subject of a jealous husband, whose name you did not tell me, and who, as a matter of course, has a wife. I therefore replied to you, in order to see Madame, you must get a little more intimate with Monsieur."

"Double-dealer that you are," said the comte, smiling; "was that what you said?"

"Nothing else."

"Very good; what then?"

"Now," added Manicamp, "let the question be regarding the Duchess - or the Duke -; very well, I shall say: Let us get into the house in some way or other, for that is a tactic which cannot in any case be unfavorable to your love affair."

"Ah! Manicamp, if you could but find me a pretext, a good pretext."

"A pretext; I can find you a hundred, nay, a thousand. If Malicorne were here, he would have already hit upon a thousand excellent pretexts."

"Who is Malicorne?" replied De Guiche, half-shutting his eyes, like a person reflecting, "I seem to know the name."

"Know him! I should think so: you owe his father thirty thousand crowns."

"Ah, indeed! so it's that worthy fellow from Orleans."

"Whom you promised an appointment in Monsieur's household; not the

jealous husband, but the other."

"Well, then, since your friend Malicorne is such an inventive genius, let him find me a means of being adored by Monsieur, and a pretext to make my peace with him."

"Very good: I'll talk to him about it."

"But who is that coming?"

"The Vicomte de Bragelonne."

"Raoul! yes, it is he," said De Guiche, as he hastened forward to meet him. "You here, Raoul?" said De Guiche.

"Yes: I was looking for you to say farewell," replied Raoul, warmly, pressing the comte's hand. "How do you do, Monsieur Manicamp?"

"How is this, vicomte, you are leaving us?"

"Yes, a mission from the king."

"Where are you going?"

"To London. On leaving you, I am going to Madame; she has a letter to

give me for his majesty, Charles II."

"You will find her alone, for Monsieur has gone out; gone to bathe, in fact."

"In that case, you, who are one of Monsieur's gentlemen in waiting, will undertake to make my excuses to him. I would have waited in order to receive any directions he might have to give me, if the desire for my immediate departure had not been intimated to me by M. Fouquet on behalf of his majesty."

Manicamp touched De Guiche's elbow, saying, "There's a pretext for you."

"What?"

"M. de Bragelonne's excuses."

"A weak pretext," said De Guiche.

"An excellent one, if Monsieur is not angry with you; but a paltry one if he bears you ill-will."

"You are right, Manicamp; a pretext, however poor it may be, is all I require. And so, a pleasant journey to you, Raoul!" And the two friends took a warm leave of each other.

Five minutes afterwards Raoul entered Madame's apartments, as Mademoiselle de Montalais had begged him to do. Madame was still seated at the table where she had written her letter. Before her was still burning the rose-colored taper she had used to seal it. Only in her deep reflection, for Madame seemed to be buried in thought, she had forgotten to extinguish the light. Bragelonne was a very model of elegance in every way; it was impossible to see him once without always remembering him; and not only had Madame seen him once, but it will not be forgotten he was one of the very first who had gone to meet her, and had accompanied her from Le Havre to Paris. Madame preserved therefore an excellent recollection of him.

"Ah! M. de Bragelonne," she said to him, "you are going to see my brother, who will be delighted to pay to the son a portion of the debt of gratitude he contracted with the father."

"The Comte de la Fere, Madame, has been abundantly recompensed for the little service he had the happiness to render the king, by the kindness manifested towards him, and it is I who will have to convey to his majesty the assurance of the respect, devotion, and gratitude of both father and son."

"Do you know my brother?"

"No, your highness; I shall have the honor of seeing his majesty for the

first time."

"You require no recommendation to him. At all events, however, if you have any doubt about your personal merit, take me unhesitatingly for your surety."

"Your royal highness overwhelms me with kindness."

"No! M. de Bragelonne, I well remember that we were fellow-travelers once, and that I remarked your extreme prudence in the midst of the extravagant absurdities committed, on both sides, by two of the greatest simpletons in the world, - M. de Guiche and the Duke of Buckingham. Let us not speak of them, however; but of yourself. Are you going to England to remain there permanently? Forgive my inquiry: it is not curiosity, but a desire to be of service to you in anything I can."

"No, Madame; I am going to England to fulfil a mission which his majesty has been kind enough to confide to me - nothing more."

"And you propose to return to France?"

"As soon as I have accomplished my mission; unless, indeed, his majesty, King Charles II., should have other orders for me."

"He will beg you, at the very least, I am sure, to remain near him as long as possible."

"In that case, as I shall not know how to refuse, I will now beforehand entreat your royal highness to have the goodness to remind the king of France that one of his devoted servants is far away from him."

"Take care that when you are recalled, you do not consider his command an abuse of power."

"I do not understand you, Madame."

"The court of France is not easily matched, I am aware, but yet we have some pretty women at the court of England also."

Raoul smiled.

"Oh!" said Madame, "yours is a smile which portends no good to my countrywomen. It is as though you were telling them, Monsieur de Bragelonne: 'I visit you, but I leave my heart on the other side of the Channel.' Did not your smile indicate that?"

"Your highness is gifted with the power of reading the inmost depths of the soul, and you will understand, therefore, why, at present, any prolonged residence at the court of England would be a matter of the deepest regret."

"And I need not inquire if so gallant a knight is recompensed in return?"

"I have been brought up, Madame, with her whom I love, and I believe our affection is mutual."

"In that case, do not delay your departure, Monsieur de Bragelonne, and delay not your return, for on your return we shall see two persons happy; for I hope no obstacle exists to your felicity."

"There is a great obstacle, Madame."

"Indeed! what is it?"

"The king's wishes on the subject."

"The king opposes your marriage?"

"He postpones it, at least. I solicited his majesty's consent through the Comte de la Fere, and, without absolutely refusing it, he positively said it must be deferred."

"Is the young lady whom you love unworthy of you, then?"

"She is worthy of a king's affection, Madame."

"I mean, she is not, perhaps, of birth equal to your own."

"Her family is excellent."

"Is she young, beautiful?"

"She is seventeen, and, in my opinion, exceedingly beautiful."

"Is she in the country, or at Paris?"

"She is here at Fontainebleau, Madame."

"At the court?"

"Yes."

"Do I know her?"

"She has the honor to form one of your highness's household."

"Her name?" inquired the princess, anxiously; "if indeed," she added, hastily, "her name is not a secret."

"No, Madame, my affection is too pure for me to make a secret of it to any one, and with still greater reason to your royal highness, whose kindness towards me has been so extreme. It is Mademoiselle Louise de la Valliere."

Madame could not restrain an exclamation, in which a feeling stronger than surprise might have been detected. "Ah!" she said, "La Valliere - she who yesterday - " she paused, and then continued, "she who was taken ill, I believe."

"Yes, Madame; it was only this morning that I heard of the accident that had befallen her."

"Did you see her before you came to me?"

"I had the honor of taking leave of her."

"And you say," resumed Madame, making a powerful effort over herself, "that the king has - deferred your marriage with this young girl."

"Yes, Madame, deferred it."

"Did he assign any reason for this postponement?"

"None."

"How long is it since the Comte de la Fere preferred his request to the king?"

"More than a month, Madame."

"It is very singular," said the princess, as something like a film clouded her eyes.

"A month?" she repeated.

"About a month."

"You are right, vicomte" said the princess, with a smile, in which De Bragelonne might have remarked a kind of restraint; "my brother must not keep you too long in England; set off at once, and in the first letter I write to England, I will claim you in the king's name." And Madame rose to place her letter in Bragelonne's hands. Raoul understood that his audience was at an end; he took the letter, bowed lowly to the princess, and left the room.

"A month!" murmured the princess; "could I have been blind, then, to so great an extent, and could he have loved her for this last month?" And as Madame had nothing to do, she sat down to begin a letter to her brother, the postscript of which was a summons for Bragelonne to return.

The Comte de Guiche, as we have seen, had yielded to the pressing persuasions of Manicamp, and allowed himself to be led to the stables, where they desired their horses to be got ready for them; then, by one of the side paths, a description of which has already been given, they advanced to meet Monsieur, who, having just finished bathing, was returning towards the chateau, wearing a woman's veil to protect his face

from getting burnt by the sun, which was shining very brightly. Monsieur was in one of those fits of good humor to which the admiration of his own good looks sometimes gave occasion. As he was bathing he had been able to compare the whiteness of his body with that of the courtiers, and, thanks to the care which his royal highness took of himself, no one, not even the Chevalier de Lorraine, was able to stand the comparison. Monsieur, moreover, had been tolerably successful in swimming, and his muscles having been exercised by the healthy immersion in the cool water, he was in a light and cheerful state of mind and body. So that, at the sight of Guiche, who advanced to meet him at a hand gallop, mounted upon a magnificent white horse, the prince could not restrain an exclamation of delight.

"I think matters look well," said Manicamp, who fancied he could read this friendly disposition upon his royal highness's countenance.

"Good day, De Guiche, good day," exclaimed the prince.

"Long life to your royal highness!" replied De Guiche, encouraged by the tone of Philip's voice; "health, joy, happiness, and prosperity to your highness."

"Welcome, De Guiche, come on my right side, but keep your horse in hand, for I wish to return at a walking pace under the cool shade of these trees."

"As you please, monseigneur," said De Guiche, taking his place on the prince's right as he had been invited to do.

"Now, my dear De Guiche," said the prince, "give me a little news of that De Guiche whom I used to know formerly, and who used to pay attentions to my wife."

Guiche blushed to the very whites of his eyes, while Monsieur burst out laughing, as though he had made the wittiest remark in the world. The few privileged courtiers who surrounded Monsieur thought it their duty to follow his example, although they had not heard the remark, and a noisy burst of laughter immediately followed, beginning with the first courtier, passing on through the whole company, and only terminating with the last. De Guiche, although blushing scarlet, put a good countenance on the matter; Manicamp looked at him.

"Ah! monseigneur," replied De Guiche, "show a little charity towards such a miserable fellow as I am: do not hold me up to the ridicule of the Chevalier de Lorraine."

"How do you mean?"

"If he hears you ridicule me, he will go beyond your highness, and will show no pity."

"About your passion and the princess, do you mean?"

"For mercy's sake, monseigneur."

"Come, come, De Guiche, confess that you did get a little sweet upon Madame."

"I will never confess such a thing, monseigneur."

"Out of respect for me, I suppose; but I release you from your respect, De Guiche. Confess, as if it were simply a question about Mademoiselle de Chalais or Mademoiselle de la Valliere."

Then breaking off, he said, beginning to laugh again, "Comte, that wasn't at all bad! - a remark like a sword, which cuts two ways at once. I hit you and my brother at the same time, Chalais and La Valliere, your affianced bride and his future lady love."

"Really, monseigneur" said the comte, "you are in a most brilliant humor to-day."

"The fact is, I feel well, and then I am pleased to see you again. But you were angry with me, were you not?"

"I, monseigneur? Why should I have been so?"

"Because I interfered with your sarabands and your other Spanish

amusements. Nay, do not deny it. On that day you left the princess's apartments with your eyes full of fury; that brought you ill-luck, for you danced in the ballet yesterday in a most wretched manner. Now don't get sulky, De Guiche, for it does you no good, but makes you look like a tame bear. If the princess did not look at you attentively yesterday, I am quite sure of one thing."

"What is that, monseigneur? Your highness alarms me."

"She has quite forsworn you now," said the prince, with a burst of loud laughter.

"Decidedly," thought Manicamp, "rank has nothing to do with it, and all men are alike."

The prince continued: "At all events, you have now returned, and it is to be hoped that the chevalier will become amiable again."

"How so, monseigneur: and by what miracle can I exercise such an influence over M. de Lorraine?"

"The matter is very simple, he is jealous of you."

"Bah! it is not possible."

"It is the case, though."

"He does me too much honor."

"The fact is, that when you are here, he is full of kindness and attention, but when you are gone he makes me suffer a perfect martyrdom. I am like a see-saw. Besides, you do not know the idea that has struck me?"

"I do not even suspect it."

"Well, then; when you were in exile - for you really were exiled, my poor De Guiche - "

"I should think so, indeed; but whose fault was it?" said De Guiche, pretending to speak in an angry tone.

"Not mine, certainly, my dear comte," replied his royal highness, "upon my honor, I did not ask for the king to exile you - "

"No, not you, monseigneur, I am well aware; but - "

"But Madame; well, as far as that goes, I do not say it was not the case. Why, what the deuce did you do or say to Madame?"

"Really, monseigneur - "

"Women, I know, have their grudges, and my wife is not free from caprices of that nature. But if she were the cause of your being exiled I bear you no ill-will."

"In that case, monseigneur," said De Guiche. "I am not altogether unhappy."

Manicamp, who was following closely behind De Guiche and who did not lose a word of what the prince was saying, bent down to his very shoulders over his horse's neck, in order to conceal the laughter he could not repress.

"Besides, your exile started a project in my head."

"Good."

"When the chevalier - finding you were no longer here, and sure of reigning undisturbed - began to bully me, I, observing that my wife, in the most perfect contrast to him, was most kind and amiable towards me who had neglected her so much, the idea occurred to me of becoming a model husband - a rarity, a curiosity, at the court; and I had an idea of getting very fond of my wife."

De Guiche looked at the prince with a stupefied expression of countenance, which was not assumed.

"Oh! monseigneur," De Guiche stammered out; "surely, that never seriously occurred to you."

"Indeed it did. I have some property that my brother gave me on my marriage; she has some money of her own, and not a little either, for she gets money from her brother and brother-in-law of England and France at the same time. Well! we should have left the court. I should have retired to my chateau at Villers-Cotterets, situated in the middle of a forest, in which we should have led a most sentimental life in the very same spot where my grandfather, Henry IV., sojourned with La Belle Gabrielle. What do you think of that idea, De Guiche?"

"Why, it is enough to make one shiver, monseigneur," replied De Guiche, who shuddered in reality.

"Ah! I see you would never be able to endure being exiled a second time."

"I, monseigneur?"

"I will not carry you off with us, as I had first intended."

"What, with you, monseigneur?"

"Yes; if the idea should occur to me again of taking a dislike to the court."

"Oh! do not let that make any difference, monseigneur; I would follow your highness to the end of the world."

"Clumsy fellow that you are!" said Manicamp, grumblingly, pushing his horse towards De Guiche, so as almost to unseat him, and then, as he passed close to him, as if he had lost command over the horse, he whispered, "For goodness' sake, think what you are saying."

"Well, it is agreed, then," said the prince; "since you are so devoted to me, I shall take you with me."

"Anywhere, monseigneur," replied De Guiche in a joyous tone, "whenever you like, and at once, too. Are you ready?"

And De Guiche, laughingly, gave his horse the rein, and galloped forward a few yards.

"One moment," said the prince. "Let us go to the chateau first."

"What for?"

"Why, to take my wife, of course."

"What for?" asked De Guiche.

"Why, since I tell you that it is a project of conjugal affection, it is necessary I should take my wife with me."

"In that case, monseigneur," replied the comte, "I am greatly concerned, but no De Guiche for you."

"Bah!"

"Yes. - Why do you take Madame with you?"

"Because I begin to fancy I love her," said the prince.

De Guiche turned slightly pale, but endeavored to preserve his seeming cheerfulness.

"If you love Madame, monseigneur," he said, "that ought to be quite enough for you, and you have no further need of your friends."

"Not bad, not bad," murmured Manicamp.

"There, your fear of Madame has begun again," replied the prince.

"Why, monseigneur, I have experienced that to my cost; a woman who was the cause of my being exiled!"

"What a revengeful disposition you have, De Guiche, how virulently you

bear malice."

"I should like the case to be your own, monseigneur."

"Decidedly, then, that was the reason why you danced so badly yesterday; you wished to revenge yourself, I suppose, by trying to make Madame make a mistake in her dancing; ah! that is very paltry, De Guiche, and I will tell Madame of it."

"You may tell her whatever you please, monseigneur, for her highness cannot hate me more than she does."

"Nonsense, you are exaggerating; and this because merely of the fortnight's sojourn in the country she imposed on you."

"Monseigneur, a fortnight is a fortnight; and when the time is passed in getting sick and tired of everything, a fortnight is an eternity."

"So that you will not forgive her?"

"Never!"

"Come, come, De Guiche, be a better disposed fellow than that. I wish to make your peace with her; you will find, in conversing with her, that she has no malice or unkindness in her nature, and that she is very talented."

"Monseigneur - "

"You will see that she can receive her friends like a princess, and laugh like a citizen's wife; you will see that, when she pleases, she can make the pleasant hours pass like minutes. Come, De Guiche, you must really make up your differences with my wife."

"Upon my word," said Manicamp to himself, "the prince is a husband whose wife's name will bring him ill-luck, and King Candaules, of old, was a tiger beside his royal highness."

"At all events," added the prince, "I am sure you will make it up with my wife: I guarantee you will do so. Only, I must show you the way now. There is nothing commonplace about her: it is not every one who takes her fancy."

"Monseigneur - "

"No resistance, De Guiche, or I shall get out of temper," replied the prince.

"Well, since he will have it so," murmured Manicamp, in Guiche's ear, "do as he wants you to do."

"Well, monseigneur," said the comte, "I obey."

"And to begin," resumed the prince, "there will be cards, this evening, in Madame's apartment; you will dine with me, and I will take you there with me."

"Oh! as for that, monseigneur," objected De Guiche, "you will allow me to object."

"What, again! this is positive rebellion."

"Madame received me too indifferently, yesterday, before the whole court."

"Really!" said the prince, laughing.

"Nay, so much so, indeed, that she did not even answer me when I addressed her; it may be a good thing to have no self-respect at all, but to have too little is not enough, as the saying is."

"Comte! after dinner, you will go to your own apartments and dress yourself, and then you will come to fetch me. I shall wait for you."

"Since your highness absolutely commands it."

"Positively."

"He will not lose his hold," said Manicamp; "these are the things to which husbands cling most obstinately. Ah! what a pity M. Moliere could

not have heard this man; he would have turned him into verse if he had."

The prince and his court, chatting in this manner, returned to the coolest apartments of the chateau.

"By the by," said De Guiche, as they were standing by the door, "I had a commission for your royal highness."

"Execute it, then."

"M. de Bragelonne has, by the king's order, set off for London, and he charged me with his respects for you; monseigneur."

"A pleasant journey to the vicomte, whom I like very much. Go and dress yourself, De Guiche, and come back for me. If you don't come back - "

"What will happen, monseigneur?"

"I will have you sent to the Bastile."

"Well," said De Guiche, laughing, "his royal highness, monseigneur, is decidedly the counterpart of her royal highness, Madame. Madame gets me sent into exile, because she does not care for me sufficiently; and monseigneur gets me imprisoned, because he cares for me too much. I thank monseigneur, and I thank Madame."

"Come, come," said the prince, "you are a delightful companion, and you know I cannot do without you. Return as soon as you can."

"Very well; but I am in the humor to prove myself difficult to be pleased, in my turn, monseigneur."

"Bah!"

"So, I will not return to your royal highness, except upon one condition."

"Name it."

"I want to oblige the friend of one of my friends."

"What's his name?"

"Malicorne."

"An ugly name."

"But very well borne, monseigneur."

"That may be. Well?"

"Well, I owe M. Malicorne a place in your household, monseigneur."

"What kind of a place?"

"Any kind of a place; a supervision of some sort or another, for instance."

"That happens very fortunately, for yesterday I dismissed my chief usher of the apartments."

"That will do admirably. What are his duties?"

"Nothing, except to look about and make his report."

"A sort of interior police?"

"Exactly."

"Ah, how excellently that will suit Malicorne," Manicamp ventured to say.

"You know the person we are speaking of, M. Manicamp?" inquired the prince.

"Intimately, monseigneur. He is a friend of mine."

"And your opinion is?"

"That your highness could never get a better usher of the apartments than

he will make."

"How much does the appointment bring in?" inquired the comte of the prince.

"I don't know at all, only I have always been told that he could make as much as he pleased when he was thoroughly in earnest."

"What do you call being thoroughly in earnest, prince?"

"It means, of course, when the functionary in question is a man who has his wits about him."

"In that case I think your highness will be content, for Malicorne is as sharp as the devil himself."

"Good! the appointment will be an expensive one for me, in that case," replied the prince, laughing. "You are making me a positive present, comte."

"I believe so, monseigneur."

"Well, go and announce to your M. Melicorne - "

"Malicorne, monseigneur."

"I shall never get hold of that name."

"You say Manicamp very well, monseigneur."

"Oh, I ought to say Malicorne very well, too. The alliteration will help me."

"Say what you like, monseigneur, I can promise you your inspector of apartments will not be annoyed; he has the very happiest disposition that can be met with."

"Well, then, my dear De Guiche, inform him of his nomination. But, stay - "

"What is it, monseigneur?"

"I wish to see him beforehand; if he be as ugly as his name, I retract every word I have said."

"Your highness knows him, for you have already seen him at the Palais Royal; nay, indeed, it was I who presented him to you."

"Ah, I remember now - not a bad-looking fellow."

"I know you must have noticed him, monseigneur."

"Yes, yes, yes. You see, De Guiche, I do not wish that either my wife or myself should have ugly faces before our eyes. My wife will have all her maids of honor pretty; I, all the gentlemen about me good-looking. In this way, De Guiche, you see, that any children we may have will run a good chance of being pretty, if my wife and myself have handsome models before us."

"Most magnificently argued, monseigneur," said Manicamp, showing his approval by look and voice at the same time.

As for De Guiche, he very probably did not find the argument so convincing, for he merely signified his opinion by a gesture, which, moreover, exhibited in a marked manner some indecision of mind on the subject. Manicamp went off to inform Malicorne of the good news he had just learned. De Guiche seemed very unwilling to take his departure for the purpose of dressing himself. Monsieur, singing, laughing, and admiring himself, passed away the time until the dinner-hour, in a frame of mind that justified the proverb of "Happy as a prince."