

## Chapter 33

### CHICOT, LATINIST.

After the departure of the young men, Chicot went on quietly; but as soon as they had disappeared in the valley, he stopped at the top of a hill and looked all round him; then, seeing no one, he seated himself, and commenced an examination. He had now two purses, for he perceived that the packet he had received contained money, besides the letter. It was quite a royal purse, embroidered with an "H" at each end.

"It is pretty," said Chicot, "no one could be more generous or more stupid. Decidedly I shall never make anything of the king. All that astonishes me is that he did not have the letter embroidered outside also. Now let me see how much money he has sent. One hundred crowns; just the sum I borrowed from Gorenflot. Ah! pardon, Henri, this is good. But the purse annoys me; if I were to keep it I should feel as if the very birds, as they flew over my head, would denounce me as a royal messenger."

So saying, he drew from his pocket Gorenflot's bag, emptied the king's money into it, then placed a stone in the purse, and threw it into the Orge, which flowed under the bridge at his feet.

"So much for myself--now for Henri," said Chicot; and he took up the letter, broke the seal with the utmost tranquillity, and sent the

envelope into the river after the purse. "Now," said he, "let us read.

"Dear brother, the deep love which you felt for our late dear brother and king, Charles IX., still clings to the Louvre and to my heart; it grieves me, therefore, to have to write to you about vexatious things. You are strong, however, against ill fortune, so that I do not hesitate to communicate these things to you--things which can only be told to a tried friend. Besides, I have an interest in warning you--the honor of my name and of your own, my brother. We resemble each other in one thing, that we are each surrounded with enemies. Chicot will explain to you.

"M. de Turenne, your servant, causes daily scandal at your court; God forbid that I should interfere in your affairs, except where your honor is concerned; but your wife, whom to my regret I call my sister, should be more careful than she is of your honor. I advise you, therefore, to watch the communications of Margot with Turenne, that she does not bring shame on the house of Bourbon. Act as soon as you shall be sure of the fact, into which I pray you to inquire as soon as Chicot shall have explained to you my letter.

"Those whom as brother and king I denounce to you, generally meet at a little chateau called Loignac, the pretext being generally the chase. This chateau is, besides, the focus for intrigues to which the Guises are not strangers, and you know the strange love with which my sister pursued Henri de Guise. I embrace you, and am ever ready to aid you in all, and for all; meanwhile aid yourself by

the advice of Chicot, whom I send to you. Your affectionate,' etc.

"\_Age auctore Chicot\_," said Chicot, "here am I, installed counselor of the king of Navarre! This seems to me a bad commission, and in flying one ill, I have fallen into a worse one. Really, I should almost prefer Mayenne. But the letter is clever, and if Henriot be like other husbands, it will embroil him at once with his wife, Turenne, the Guises, and even with Spain. But if Henri de Valois is so well informed of all that passes in Navarre, he must have some spy there.

"Then, again," continued he, "this letter will lead me into mischief if I meet a Spaniard, a Lorraine, a Béarnais, or a Fleming curious enough to wish to know what brings me here, and I should be very foolish not to remember that there is a chance of that. M. Borromée, above all, I suspect may play me some trick. Besides, what did I seek in asking the king for this mission? Tranquillity. And now I am going to embroil the king of Navarre with his wife. However, that is not my affair, except that I shall make mortal enemies, who will prevent me from ever reaching the happy age of eighty.

"Ma foi! but that is not much, for it is only worth living when you are young. But then I might as well have waited for the knife of M. de Mayenne. However, I will take precautions, and will translate this fine letter into Latin, and engrave it on my memory; then I will buy a horse, because from Juvisy to Pau I should have too often to put the right foot before the left if I walked--but first I will destroy this letter."

This he proceeded to do; tearing it into an infinite number of little pieces, sending some into the river, others into the air, and burying the rest in holes in the ground.

"Now let me think of my Latin theme," said he; and this study occupied him until he arrived at Corbeil, where he bestowed a glance at the cathedral, but fixed an earnest look at a traiteur's, whence came an appetizing smell of dinner. We will not describe either the dinner he made or the horse he bought; suffice it to say that the dinner was long and the horse was bad.