

## Chapter 39

### THE SEVEN SINS OF MAGDALENE.

The king, however, on seeing his horses, did not wish to be alone in the carriage, but desired D'Epernon to sit by him. De Loignac and St. Maline rode on each side, and an outrider in front. The king was, as usual, surrounded by dogs, and there was also a table in the carriage, covered with illuminated pictures, which the king cut out with wonderful skill, in spite of the movement of the carriage. He was just then occupied with the life of Magdalene, the sinner. The different pictures were labeled "Magdalene gives way to the sin of anger"--"Magdalene gives way to the sin of gluttony," and so on through the seven cardinal sins. The one that the king was occupied with, as they passed through the Porte St. Antoine, represented Magdalene giving way to anger.

The beautiful sinner, half-lying on cushions, and with no other covering than the magnificent hair with which she was afterward to wipe the feet of Jesus, was having a slave, who had broken a precious vase, thrown into a pond filled with lampreys, whose eager heads were protruding from the water: while on the other side, a woman, even less dressed than her mistress, as her hair was bound up, was being flogged, because she had, while dressing her mistress's head, pulled out some of those magnificent hairs, whose profusion might have rendered her more indulgent to such a fault. In the background were visible some dogs being whipped for having allowed beggars to pass quietly, and some cocks being murdered for

having crowed too loudly in the morning.

On arriving at the Croix-Faubin, the king had finished this figure, and was passing to "Magdalene giving way to the sin of gluttony."

This represented a beautiful woman lying on one of those beds of purple and gold on which the ancients used to take their repasts; all that the Romans had most recherche in meat, in fish, and in fruit, dormice in honey, red mullets, lobsters from Stromboli, and pomegranates from Sicily, ornamented the table, while on the ground some dogs were disputing for a pheasant, while the air was full of birds, which had carried off from the table, figs, strawberries, and cherries. Magdalene held in her hand, filled with white liquor, one of those singularly-shaped glasses which Petronius has described in his feasts.

Fully occupied with this important work, the king merely raised his eyes as they passed by the convent of the Jacobins, from which vespers was sounding on every bell, and of which every window and door was closed.

But a hundred steps further on, an attentive observer would have seen him throw a more curious glance on a fine-looking house on his left, which, built in the midst of a charming garden, opened on the road. This house was called Bel-Esbat, and, unlike the convent, had every window open with the exception of one, before which hung a blind. As the king passed, this blind moved perceptibly; Henri smiled at D'Epernon, and then fell to work on another picture. This was the sin of luxury. The artist had represented this in such glowing colors, and had painted the

sin with so much courage and minuteness, that we can only describe a small part of it, viz.:--that Magdalene's guardian angel was flying back to heaven affrighted, and hiding his face in his hands. All this occupied the king so much, that he never noticed an image of vanity who rode by his carriage. It was a pity; for St. Maline was very happy and proud on his horse, as he rode so near that he could hear the king say to his dog, "Gently, M. Love, you get in my way;" or to M. le Duc d'Epernon, "Duke, I believe these horses will break my neck." From time to time, however, St. Maline glanced at De Loignac, who was too much accustomed to these honors not to be indifferent to them; and he could not but feel the superiority of his calm and modest demeanor, and even would try to imitate, for a few minutes, until the thought would recur again, "I am seen and looked at, and people say, 'Who is that happy gentleman who accompanies the king?'" St. Maline's happiness seemed likely to last for a long time, for the horses, covered with harness heavy with gold and embroidery, and imprisoned in shafts like those of David's ark, did not advance rapidly. But as he was growing too proud, something peculiarly annoying to him came to temper it down; he heard the king pronounce the name of Ernanton, and not once, but two or three times. St. Maline strained his attention to hear more, but some noise or movement always prevented him. Either the king uttered some exclamation of regret at an unlucky cut of the scissors, or one of the dogs began to bark. So that between Paris and Vincennes, the name of Ernanton had been pronounced six times by the king, and four times by D'Epernon, without St. Maline's knowing the reason. He persuaded himself that the king was merely inquiring the cause of Ernanton's disappearance, and that D'Epernon was explaining it. At last they arrived at Vincennes, and as

the king had still three sins to cut out, he went at once to his own room to finish them. It was a bitterly cold day, therefore St. Maline sat down in a chimney corner to warm himself, and was nearly falling asleep, when De Loignac put his hand on his shoulder.

"You must work to-day," said he; "you shall sleep some other day; so get up, M. de St. Maline."

"I will not sleep for a fortnight, if necessary, monsieur."

"Oh! we shall not be so exacting as that."--"What must I do, monsieur?"

"Get on your horse and return to Paris."

"I am ready; my horse is standing saddled."

"Good; go then straight to the room of the Forty-five, and awaken every one; but excepting three, whom I will name to you, no one must know where he is going, nor what he is about to do."

"I will obey these instructions implicitly."

"Here then are some more; leave fourteen of these gentlemen at the Porte St. Antoine, fifteen others half way, and bring the rest here."

"Yes, monsieur; but at what hour must we leave Paris?"

"When night falls."

"On horseback or on foot?"

"On horseback."

"Armed?"

"Fully; with daggers, pistols, and swords."

"With armor?"

"Yes."

"What else?"

"Here are three letters; one for M. de Chalabre, one for M. de Biron, and one for yourself. M. de Chalabre will command the first party, M. de Biron the second, and yourself the third."

"Good, monsieur."

"These letters are only to be opened at six o'clock. M. de Chalabre will open his at the Porte St. Antoine, M. de Biron his at the Croix Faubin, and you yours on your return."

"Must we come quickly?"

"As quickly as possible, without creating suspicion. Let each troop come out of Paris by a different gate; M. de Chalabre by the Porte Bourdelle; M. de Biron by the Porte du Temple, and you through the Porte St. Antoine. All other instructions are in the letters. Go quickly from here to the Croix Faubin, but then slowly; you have still two hours before dark, which is more than necessary. Now do you well understand your orders?"

"Perfectly, monsieur."

"Fourteen in the first troop, fifteen in the second, and fifteen in the third; it is evident they do not count Ernanton, and that he no longer forms part of the Forty-five," said St. Maline to himself when De Loignac was gone.

He fulfilled all his directions punctually. When he arrived among the Forty-five, the greater number of them were already preparing for their supper. Thus the noble Lardille de Chavantrade had prepared a dish of mutton stewed with carrots and spices, after the method of Gascony, to which Militor had occasionally aided by trying the pieces of meat and vegetable with a fork.

Pertinax de Montcrabeau, and the singular servant who spoke to him so familiarly, were preparing supper for themselves and six companions, who had each contributed six sous toward it; each one, in fact, was disposing according to his fancy of the money of his majesty Henri III.

One might judge of the character of each man by the aspect of his little lodging. Some loved flowers, and displayed on their window-sills some fading rose or geranium; others had, like the king, a taste for pictures; others had introduced a niece or housekeeper; and M. d'Epéron had told M. de Loignac privately to shut his eyes on these things. At eight o'clock in winter, and ten in summer, they went to bed; but always leaving fifteen on guard. As, however, it was but half-past five when St. Maline entered, he found every one about, and, as we said, gastronomically inclined. But with one word he put an end to all this: "To horse, gentlemen," said he; and leaving them without another word, went to explain his orders to MM. de Biron and Chalabre. Some, while buckling on their belts and grasping their cuirasses, ate great mouthfuls, washed down by a draught of wine; and others, whose supper was less advanced, armed themselves with resignation. They called over the names, and only forty-four, including St. Maline, answered.

"M. Ernanton de Carmainges is missing," said De Chalabre, whose turn it was to exercise these functions. A profound joy filled the heart of St. Maline, and a smile played on his lips, a rare thing with this somber and envious man.

The forty-four therefore set off on their different routes.