

## Chapter 44

HOW THE KING OF NAVARRE GUESSES THAT "TURENNIUS" MEANS  
TURENNE, AND

"MARGOTA" MARGOT.

The king of Navarre's room was not very sumptuous, for he was not rich, and did not waste the little he had. It was large, and, with his bedroom, occupied all the right wing of the castle. It was well, though not royally furnished, and had a magnificent view over meadows and rivers. Great trees, willows, and planes hid the course of the stream every here and there, which glanced between, golden in the sunlight, or silver by that of the moon. This beautiful panorama was terminated by a range of hills, which looked violet in the evening light. The windows on the other side looked on to the court of the castle.

All these natural beauties interested Chicot less than the arrangements of the room, which was the ordinary sitting-room of Henri.

The king seated himself, with his constant smile, in a great armchair of leather with gilt nails, and Chicot, at his command, sat down on a stool similar in material. Henri looked at him smilingly, but with curiosity.

"You will think I am very curious, dear M. Chicot," began the king, "but I cannot help it. I have so long looked on you as dead, that in spite of the pleasure your resurrection causes me, I can hardly realize the idea.

Why did you so suddenly disappear from this world?"

"Oh, sire!" said Chicot, with his usual freedom, "you disappeared from Vincennes. Every one eclipses himself according to his need."

"I recognize by your ready wit that it is not to your ghost I am speaking." Then, more seriously, "But now we must leave wit and speak of business."

"If it does not too much fatigue your majesty, I am ready."

Henri's eyes kindled.

"Fatigue me! It is true I grow rusty here. I have to-day exercised my body much, but my mind little."

"Sire, I am glad of that; for, ambassador from a king, your relation and friend, I have a delicate commission to execute with your majesty."

"Speak quickly--you pique my curiosity."

"Sire--"

"First, your letters of credit. I know it is needless, since you are the ambassador: but I must do my duty as king."

"Sire, I ask your majesty's pardon; but all the letters of credit that I

had I have drowned in rivers, or scattered in the air."

"And why so?"

"Because one cannot travel charged with an embassy to Navarre as if you were going to buy cloth at Lyons; and if one has the dangerous honor of carrying royal letters, one runs a risk of carrying them only to the tomb."

"It is true," said Henri, "the roads are not very safe, and in Navarre we are reduced, for want of money, to trust to the honesty of the people; but they do not steal much."

"Oh, no, sire; they behave like lambs or angels, but that is only in Navarre; out of it one meets wolves and vultures around every prey. I was a prey, sire; so I had both."

"At all events, I am glad to see they did not eat you."

"Ventre de biche! sire, it was not their faults; they did their best, but they found me too tough, and could not get through my skin. But to return to my letter."

"Since you have none, dear M. Chicot, it seems to me useless to return to it."

"But I had one, sire, but I was forced to destroy it, for M. de Mayenne

ran after me to steal it from me."

"Mayenne?"

"In person."

"Luckily he does not run fast. Is he still getting fatter?"

"Ventre de biche! not just now, I should think."

"Why not?"

"Because, you understand, sire, he had the misfortune to catch me, and unfortunately got a sword wound."

"And the letter?"

"He had not a glimpse of it, thanks to my precautions."

"Bravo! your journey is interesting; you must tell me the details. But one thing disquiets me--if the letter was destroyed for M. de Mayenne, it is also destroyed for me. How, then, shall I know what my brother Henri wrote?"

"Sire, it exists in my memory."

"How so?"

"Sire, before destroying it I learned it by heart."

"An excellent idea, M. Chicot. You will recite it to me, will you not?"

"Willingly, sire."

"Word for word."

"Yes, sire, although I do not know the language, I have a good memory."

"What language?"

"Latin."

"I do not understand you; was my brother Henri's letter written in Latin?"

"Yes, sire."

"And why?"

"Ah! sire, doubtless because Latin is an audacious language--a language which may say anything, and in which Persius and Juvenal have immortalized the follies and errors of kings."

"Kings?"

"And of queens, sire."

The king began to frown.

"I mean emperors and empresses," continued Chicot.

"You know Latin, M. Chicot?"

"Yes and no, sire."

"You are lucky if it is 'yes,' for you have an immense advantage over me, who do not know it, but you--"

"They taught me to read it, sire, as well as Greek and Hebrew."

"You are a living book, M. Chicot."

"Your majesty has found the exact word--'a book.' They print something on my memory, they send me where they like, I arrive, I am read and understood."

"Or not understood."

"How so, sire?"

"Why, if one does not know the language in which you are printed."

"Oh, sire, kings know everything."

"That is what we tell the people, and what flatterers tell us."

"Then, sire, it is useless for me to recite to your majesty the letter which I learned by heart, since neither of us would understand it."

"Is Latin not very much like Italian?"

"So they say, sire."

"And Spanish?"

"I believe so."

"Then let us try. I know a little Italian, and my Gascon patois is something like Spanish: perhaps I may understand Latin without ever having learned it."

"Your majesty orders me to repeat it, then?"

"I beg you, dear M. Chicot."

Chicot began.

"Frater carissime,

"Sincerus amo quo te prosequeretur germanus noster Carolus Nonus, functus nuper, colet usque regiam nostram et pectori meo pertinaciter adhaeret."

"If I am not mistaken," said Henri, interrupting, "they speak in this phrase of love, obstinacy, and of my brother, Charles IX."

"Very likely," said Chicot; "Latin is such a beautiful language, that all that might go in one sentence."

"Go on," said the king.

Chicot began again, and Henri listened with the utmost calm to all the passages about Turenne and his wife, only at the word "Turennius," he said:

"Does not 'Turennius' mean Turenne?"

"I think so, sire."

"And 'Margota' must be the pet name which my brothers gave to their sister Marguerite, my beloved wife."

"It is possible," said Chicot; and he continued his letter to the end without the king's face changing in the least.



"Is it finished?" asked Henri, when he stopped.

"Yes, sire."

"It ought to be superb."

"I think so, also, sire."

"How unlucky that I only understood two words, 'Turennius' and 'Margota.'"

"An irreparable misfortune, sire, unless your majesty decides on having it translated by some one."

"Oh! no; you yourself, M. Chicot, who were so discreet in destroying the autograph, you would not counsel me to make this letter public?"

"But I think that the king's letter to you, recommended to me so carefully, and sent to your majesty by a private hand, must contain something important for your majesty to know."

"Yes, but to confide these important things to any one, I must have great confidence in him."

"Certainly."

"Well, I have an idea. Go and find my wife. She is learned, and will

understand it if you recite it to her; then she can explain it to me."

"That is an excellent plan."

"Is it not? Go."

"I will, sire."

"Mind not to alter a word of the letter."

"That would be impossible, sire. To do that I must know Latin."

"Go, then, my friend."

Chicot took leave and went, more puzzled with the king than ever.