

## Chapter 46

### MARGUERITE'S ROOM.

Marguerite's room was fashionably furnished; and tapestries, enamels, china, books and manuscripts in Greek, Latin and French covered all the tables; while birds in their cages, dogs on the carpet, formed a living world round Marguerite.

The queen was a woman to understand Epicurus, not in Greek only, but she occupied her life so well that from a thousand griefs she drew forth a pleasure.

Chicot was invited to sit down in a beautiful armchair of tapestry, representing a Cupid scattering a cloud of flowers; and a page, handsome and richly dressed, offered to him refreshment. He did not accept it, but as soon as the Vicomte de Turenne had left them, began to recite his letter. We already know this letter, having read it in French with Chicot, and therefore think it useless to follow the Latin translation. Chicot spoke with the worst accent possible, but Marguerite understood it perfectly, and could not hide her rage and indignation. She knew her brother's dislike to her, and her mind was divided between anger and fear. But as he concluded, she decided on her part.

"By the Holy Communion," said she, when Chicot had finished, "my brother writes well in Latin! What vehemence! what style! I should never have

believed him capable of it. But do you not understand it, M. Chicot? I thought you were a good Latin scholar."

"Madame, I have forgotten it; all that I remember is that Latin has no article, that it has a vocative, and that the head belongs to the neuter gender."

"Really!" said some one, entering noiselessly and merrily. It was the king of Navarre. "The head is of the neuter gender, M. Chicot? Why is it not masculine?"

"Ah, sire, I do not know; it astonishes me as much as it does your majesty."

"It must be because it is sometimes the man, sometimes the woman that rules, according to their temperaments."

"That is an excellent reason, sire."

"I am glad to be a more profound philosopher than I thought--but to return to the letter. Madame, I burn to hear news from the court of France, and M. Chicot brings them to me in an unknown tongue."

"Do you not fear, sire, that the Latin is a bad prognostic?" said Chicot.

"M. Chicot is right, sire," said the queen.

"What!" said Henri, "does the letter contain anything disagreeable, and from your brother, who is so clever and polite?"

"Even when he had me insulted in my litter, as happened near Sens, when I left Paris to rejoin you, sire."

"When one has a brother whose own conduct is irreproachable," said Henri, in an indefinable tone between jest and earnest, "a brother a king, and very punctilious--"

"He ought to care for the true honor of his sister and of his house. I do not suppose, sire, that if your sister, Catherine d'Albret, occasioned some scandal, you would have it published by a captain of the guards."

"Oh! I am like a good-natured bourgeois, and not a king; but the letter, the letter; since it was addressed to me, I wish to know what it contains."

"It is a perfidious letter, sire."

"Bah!"

"Oh! yes, and which contains more calumnies than are necessary to embroil a husband with his wife, and a friend with his friends."

"Oh! oh! embroil a husband with his wife; you and me then?"

"Yes, sire."

Chicot was on thorns; he would have given much, hungry as he was, to be in bed without supper.

"The storm is about to burst," thought he.

"Sire," said Marguerite, "I much regret that your majesty has forgotten your Latin."

"Madame, of all the Latin I learned, I remember but one phrase--'Deus et virtus oeterna'--a singular assemblage of masculine, feminine, and neuter."

"Because, sire, if you did understand, you would see in the letter many compliments to me."

"But how could compliments embroil us, madame? For as long as your brother pays you compliments, I shall agree with him; if he speaks ill of you, I shall understand his policy."

"Ah! if he spoke ill of me, you would understand it?"

"Yes; he has reasons for embroiling us, which I know well."

"Well, then, sire, these compliments are only an insinuating prelude to calumnious accusations against your friends and mine."

"Come, ma mie, you have understood badly; let me hear if all this be in the letter."

Marguerite looked defiant.

"Do you want your followers or not, sire?" said she.

"Do I want them? what a question! What should I do without them, and reduced to my own resources?"

"Well, sire, the king wishes to detach your best servants from you."

"I defy him."

"Bravo, sire!" said Chicot.

"Yes," said Henri, with that apparent candor, with which to the end of his life he deceived people, "for my followers are attached to me through love, and not through interest; I have nothing to give them."

"You give them all your heart and your faith, sire; it is the best return a king can make his friends."

"Yes, ma mie, I shall not fail to do so till I find that they do not

merit it."

"Well, sire, they wish to make you believe that they do not."

"Ah! but how?"

"I cannot tell you, sire, without compromising--" and she glanced at Chicot.

"Dear M. Chicot," said Henri, "pray wait for me in my room, the queen has something particular to say to me."