

Chapter 84

LE CARDINAL DE JOYEUSE.

Youth has its obstinate resolutions, both as regards good and evil in the world, which are by no means inferior to the inflexibility of purpose of maturer years.

When directed toward good purposes, instances of this dogged obstinacy of character produce what are termed the great actions of life, and impress on the man who enters life an impulse which bears him onward, by a natural course, toward a heroism of character of some kind or another.

In this way Bayard and Du Gueselin became great captains, from having been the most ill-tempered and most intractable children that ever existed; in the same way, too, the swineherd, whom nature had made the herdsman of Montalte, and whose genius had converted him into Sexte-Quinte, became a great pope, because he had persisted in performing his duties as a swineherd in an indifferent manner.

Again, in the same way were the worst Spartan natures displayed in a heroic sense, after they had commenced life by a persistence in dissimulation and cruelty.

All we have now to sketch is the portrait of a man of an ordinary stamp; and yet, more than one biographer would have found in Henri du Bouchage,

at twenty years of age, the materials for a great man.

Henri obstinately persisted in his affection and in his seclusion from the world; as his brother had begged and as the king had required him to do, he remained for some days closeted alone with his one enduring thought; and then, when that thought had become more and more fixed and unchangeable in its nature, he one morning decided to pay a visit to his brother the cardinal, an important personage, who, at the age of twenty-six, had already for two years past been a cardinal, and who, from the archbishopric of Narbonne, had passed to the highest degrees of ecclesiastical dignity, a position to which he was indebted as much to his noble descent as to his powerful intellect.

Francois de Joyeuse, whom we have already introduced with the object of enlightening Henri de Valois respecting the doubt he had entertained with regard to Sylla--Francois de Joyeuse, young and worldly-minded, handsome and witty, was one of the most remarkable men of the period. Ambitious by nature, but circumspect by calculation and position, Francois de Joyeuse could assume as his device, "Nothing is too much," and justify his device.

The only one, perhaps, of all those who belonged to the court--and Francois de Joyeuse was attached to the court in a very especial manner--he had been able to create for himself two means of support out of the religious and lay thrones to which he in some measure approximated as a French gentleman, and as a prince of the church; Sixtus protected him against Henri III., Henri III. protected him

against Sixtus. He was an Italian at Paris, a Parisian at Rome, magnificent and able everywhere.

The sword alone of Joyeuse, the high admiral, gave the latter more weight in the balance; but it might be noticed from certain smiles of the cardinal, that if those temporal arms failed him, which the hand of his brother, refined and admired as he was, wielded so successfully, he himself knew not only how to use, but also how to abuse, the spiritual weapons which had been intrusted to him by the sovereign head of the Church.

The Cardinal Francois de Joyeuse had very rapidly become a wealthy man, wealthy in the first place from his own patrimony, and then from his different benefices. At that period the Church was richly endowed--very richly endowed even, and when its treasures were exhausted, it knew the sources, which at the present day are exhausted, where and whence to renew them.

Francois de Joyeuse, therefore, lived in the most magnificent manner. Leaving to his brother all the pageantry and glitter of a military household, he crowded his salons with priests, bishops and archbishops; he gratified his own individual peculiar fancies. On his attaining the dignity of cardinal, as he was a prince of the church, and consequently superior to his brother, he had added to his household pages according to the Italian fashion, and guards according to that which prevailed at the French court. But these guards and pages were used by him as a still greater means of enjoying liberty of action. He frequently ranged his

guards and pages round a huge litter, through the curtains of which his secretary passed his gloved hand, while he himself on horseback, his sword by his side, rode through the town disguised with a wig, an enormous ruff round his neck, and horseman's boots, the sound of which delighted him beyond measure.

The cardinal lived, therefore, in the enjoyment of the greatest consideration, for, at certain elevated positions in life, human fortunes are absorbing in their nature, and, as if they were composed of nothing else but of adhesive particles, oblige all other fortunes to attend on and follow them like satellites; and on that account, therefore, the recent and marvelous successes of his brother Anne reflected on him all the brilliancy of those achievements. Moreover, as he had scrupulously followed the precept of concealing his mode of life, and of dispensing and diffusing his mental wealth, he was only known by the better sides of his character, and in his own family was accounted a very great man, a happiness which many sovereigns, laden with glory and crowned with the acclamations of a whole nation, have not enjoyed.

It was to this prelate that the Comte du Bouchage betook himself after his explanation with his brother, and after his conversation with the king of France; but, as we have already observed, he allowed a few days to elapse in token of obedience to the injunction which had been imposed on him by his elder brother, as well as by the king.

Francois resided in a beautiful mansion in that part of Paris called La Cité. The immense courtyard was never quite free from cavaliers and

litters; but the prelate, whose garden was immediately contiguous to the bank of the river, allowed his courtyards and his antechambers to become crowded with courtiers; and as he had a mode of egress toward the river-bank, and a boat close thereto, which conveyed him without any disturbance as far and as quietly as he chose, it not unfrequently happened that the courtiers uselessly waited to see the prelate, who availed himself of the pretext of a serious indisposition, or a rigid penance, to postpone his reception for the day. For him it was a realization of Italy in the bosom of the capital of the king of France, it was Venice embraced by the two arms of the Seine.

Francois was proud, but by no means vain; he loved his friends as brothers, and his brothers nearly as much as his friends. Five years older than Du Bouchage, he withheld from him neither good nor evil counsel, neither his purse nor his smile.

But as he wore his cardinal's costume with wonderful effect, Du Bouchage thought him handsome, noble, almost formidable, and accordingly respected him more, perhaps, than he did the elder of them both. Henri, with his beautiful cuirass, and the glittering accessories of his military costume, tremblingly confided his love affairs to Anne, while he would not have dared to confess himself to Francois.

However, when he proceeded to the cardinal's hotel, his resolution was taken, and he accosted, frankly enough, the confessor first, and the friend afterward.

He entered the courtyard, which several gentlemen were at that moment quitting, wearied at having solicited without having obtained the favor of an audience.

He passed through the antechambers, salons, and then the more private apartments. He had been told, as others had, that his brother was engaged in conference; but the idea of closing any of the doors before Du Bouchage never occurred to any of the attendants.

Du Bouchage, therefore, passed through all the apartments until he reached the garden, a true garden of a Roman prelate, luxurious in its shade, coolness, and perfume, such as, at the present day, may be found at the Villa Pamphile or the Palais Borghese.

Henri paused under a group of trees: at this moment the gate close to the river side rolled on its hinges, and a man shrouded in a large brown cloak passed through, followed by a person in a page's costume. The man, perceiving Henri, who was too absorbed in his reverie to think of him, glided through the trees, avoiding the observation either of Du Bouchage or of any one else.

Henri paid no attention to this mysterious entry; and it was only as he turned round that he saw the man entering the apartments.

After he had waited about ten minutes, and as he was about to enter the house, for the purpose of interrogating one of the attendants with the view of ascertaining at what hour precisely his brother would be

visible, a servant, who seemed to be in search of him, observed his approach, and advancing in his direction, begged him to have the goodness to pass into the library, where the cardinal awaited him.

Henri complied with this invitation, but not very readily, as he conjectured that a fresh contest would result from it; he found his brother the cardinal engaged, with the assistance of a valet-de-chambre, in trying on a prelate's costume, a little worldly-looking, perhaps, in its shape and fashion, but elegant and becoming in its style.

"Good-morning, comte," said the cardinal; "what news have you?"

"Excellent news, as far as our family is concerned," said Henri. "Anne, you know, has covered himself with glory in that retreat from Anvers, and is alive."

"Heaven be praised! and are you too, Henri, safe and sound?"

"Yes, my brother."

"You see," said the cardinal, "that Heaven holds us in its keeping."

"I am so full of gratitude to Heaven, my brother, that I have formed the project of dedicating myself to its service. I am come to talk seriously to you upon this project, which is now well matured, and about which I have already spoken to you."

"Do you still keep to that idea, Du Bouchage?" said the cardinal, allowing a slight exclamation to escape him, which was indicative that Joyeuse would have a struggle to encounter.

"I do."

"But it is impossible, Henri," returned the cardinal; "have you not been told so already?"

"I have not listened to what others have said to me, my brother, because a voice stronger than mine, which speaks within me, prevents me from listening to anything which would turn me aside from my purpose."

"You cannot be so ignorant of the things of this world, Henri," said the cardinal, in his most serious tone of voice, "to believe that the voice you allude to was really that of Heaven; on the contrary--I assert it positively, too--it is altogether a feeling of a worldly nature which addresses you. Heaven has nothing to do in this affair; do not abuse that holy name, therefore, and, above all, do not confound the voice of Heaven with, that of earth."

"I do not confound, my brother; I only mean to say that something irresistible in its nature hurries me toward retreat and solitude."

"So far, so good, Henri; we are now making use of proper expressions. Well, my dear brother, I will tell you what is to be done. Taking what you say for granted, I am going to render you the happiest of men."

"Thank you, oh! thank you, my brother."

"Listen to me, Henri. You must take money, a couple of attendants, and travel through the whole of Europe, in a manner befitting a son of the house to which we belong. You will see foreign countries; Tartary, Russia, even the Laplanders, those fabulous nations whom the sun never visits; you will become absorbed in your thoughts, until the devouring germ which is at work in you becomes either extinct or satiated; and, after that, you will return to us again."

Henri, who had been seated, now rose, more serious than his brother had been.

"You have not understood me, monseigneur," he said.

"I beg your pardon, Henri; you made use of the words 'retreat and solitude.'"

"Yes, I did so; but by retreat and solitude, I meant a cloister, and not traveling; to travel is to enjoy life still. I wish almost to suffer death, and if I do not suffer it, at least to feel it."

"That is an absurd thought, allow me to say, Henri; for whoever, in point of fact, wishes to isolate himself, is alone everywhere. But the cloister, let it be. Well, then, I understand that you have come to talk to me about this project. I know of some very learned Benedictines, and

some very clever Augustines, whose houses are cheerful, adorned with flowers, attractive, and agreeable in every respect. Amid the works of science and art you will pass a delightful year, in excellent society, which is of no slight importance, for one should avoid lowering one's self in this world; and if at the end of the year you persist in your project, well, then, my dear Henri, I will not oppose you any further, and will myself open the door which will peacefully conduct you to everlasting rest."

"Most certainly you still misunderstand me, my brother," replied Du Bouchage, shaking his head, "or I should rather say your generous intelligence will not comprehend me. I do not wish for a cheerful residence or a delightful retreat, but a rigorously strict seclusion, as gloomy as the grave itself. I intend to pronounce my vows, vows which will leave me no other thought or occupation than a grave to dig for myself, or constant prayer."

The cardinal frowned, and rose from his seat.

"Yes," he said, "I did perfectly understand you; and I endeavored by opposition, without set phrases or discussion, to combat the folly of your resolutions, but you oblige me to do so; and now listen to me."

"Ah!" said Henri, despondently, "do not try to convince me; it is impossible."

"Brother, I will speak to you in the name of Heaven, in the first place;

of Heaven, which you offend in saying that this wild resolution is of its inspiration. Heaven does not accept sacrifices hastily made. You are weak, since you allow yourself to be conquered by a first disappointment; how can Heaven be pleased to accept a victim as unworthy as that you offer?"

Henri started at his brother's remark.

"Oh! I shall no longer spare you. Henri, you, who never consider any of us," returned the cardinal; "you, who forget the grief which you will cause our elder brother, and will cause me too--"

"Forgive me," interrupted Henri, whose cheeks were dyed with crimson, "forgive me, monseigneur; but is the service of Heaven then so gloomy and so dishonorable a career that all the members of a family are to be thrown into distress by it? You, for instance, my brother, whose portrait I observe suspended in this room, with all this gold, and diamonds, and purple around you, are you not both the delight and honor of our house, although you have chosen the service of Heaven, as my eldest brother has chosen that of the kings of the earth?"

"Boy, boy!" exclaimed the cardinal impatiently, "you will make me believe your brain is turned. What! will you venture to compare my residence to a cloister? my hundred attendants, my outriders, the gentlemen of my suite, and my guards, to a cell and a broom, which are the only arms and the sole wealth of a cloister? Are you mad? Did you not just now say that you repudiate these superfluities--these pictures,

precious vases, pomp and distinction, which I cannot do without? Have you, as I have, the desire and hope of placing on your brow the tiara of St. Peter? That, indeed, is a career, Henri; one presses onward toward it, struggles for it, lives in it. But as for you! it is the miner's pick, the trappist's spade, the gravedigger's tomb, that you desire; utter abandonment of life, of pleasure, of hope; and all that--I blush with shame for you, a man--all that, I say, because you love a woman who loves you not. You do foul injustice to your race, Henri, most truly."

"Brother!" exclaimed the young man, pale as death, while his eyes blazed with kindling fire, "would you sooner have me blow out my brains, or plunge in my heart the sword I have the honor to wear by my side? Pardieu, monseigneur, if you, who are cardinal and prince besides, will give me absolution for so mortal a sin, the affair will be so quickly done that you shall have no time to complete your odious and unworthy thought that I am capable of dishonoring my race, which, Heaven be praised, a Joyeuse will never do."

"Come, come, Henri," said the cardinal, drawing his brother toward him, and pressing him in his arms; "come, forget what has passed, and think of those who love you. I have personal motives for entreating you. Listen to me; a rare occurrence in this world of ours, we are all happy, some from feelings of gratified ambition, the others from blessings of every kind with which Heaven has bedecked our existence. Do not, I implore you, Henri, cast the mortal poison of the retreat you speak of upon our family happiness; think how our father would be grieved at it; think, too, how all of us would bear on our countenances the dark

reflection of the bitter mortification you are about to inflict upon us. I beseech you, Henri, to allow yourself to be persuaded; the cloister will not benefit you.

"I do not say that you will die there, for, misguided man, your answer will be a smile, which alas, would be only too intelligible for me. No, believe me that the cloister is more fatal to you than the tomb. The tomb annihilates but life itself, the cloister annihilates intelligence; the cloister bows the head, instead of raising it to heaven; the cold, humid atmosphere of the vaults passes by degrees into the blood, and penetrates the very marrow of the bones, changing the cloistered recluse into another granite statue in the convent. My brother, my dear brother, take heed; our time here below is but brief; youth visits us but once in our lives. The bright years of our earlier days will pass away too, for you are under the influence of a deep-seated grief; but at thirty years of age you will have become a man, the vigor of maturity will have then arrived; it will hurry away with it all that remains of your wornout sorrow, and then you will wish to live over again; but it will be too late. Then, too, you will have grown melancholy in thought, plain in person, suffering in feeling; passion will have been extinguished in your heart, the bright light of your eye will have become quenched. They whose society you seek will flee you as a whited sepulcher, whose darksome depths repel every glance. Henri, I speak as a friend, seriously, wisely; listen to me."

The young man remained unmoved and silent. The cardinal hoped that he had touched his feelings, and had shaken his resolution.

"Try some other resource, Henri. Carry this poisoned shaft, which rankles in your bosom, about with you wherever you may go, in the turmoil of life; cherish its companionship at our fetes and banquets; imitate the wounded deer, which flees through the thickets and brakes and forests, in its efforts to draw out from its body the arrow which is rankling in the wound; sometimes the arrow falls."

"For pity's sake," said Henri, "do not persist any more; what I solicit is not the caprice of a moment, or the reflection of an hour; it is the result of a laborious and painful determination. In Heaven's name, therefore, my brother, I adjure you to accord me the favor I solicit."

"And what is the favor you ask?"

"A dispensation, monseigneur."

"For what purpose?"

"To shorten my noviciate."

"Ah! I knew it, Du Bouchage. You are worldly-minded even in your rigorousness, my poor boy. Oh! I know very well what reason you are going to give me. Yes, you are, indeed, a man of the world; you resemble those young men who offer themselves as volunteers, and are eagerly desirous for fire, balls, and blows, but care not for working in the trenches, or for sweeping out the tents. There is some resource left

yet, Henri; so much the better, so much the better."

"Give me the dispensation I ask; I entreat you on my knees."

"I promise it to you; I will write to Rome for it. It will be a month before the answer arrives; but, in exchange, promise me one thing."

"Name it."

"That you will not, during this month's postponement, reject any pleasure or amusement which may be offered to you; and if, in a month hence, you still entertain the same projects, Henri, I will give you this dispensation with my own hand. Are you satisfied now, and have you nothing further to ask me?"

"No. I thank you; but a month is a long time, and the delay will kill me."

"In the meantime, and in order to change your thoughts, will you object to breakfast with me? I have some agreeable companions this morning."

And the prelate smiled in a manner which the most worldly disposed favorites of Henri III. would have envied.

"Brother," said De Bouchage, resisting.

"I will not accept any excuse; you have no one but myself here, since

you have just arrived from Flanders, and your own house cannot be in order just yet."

With these words the cardinal rose, and drawing aside a *_portière_*, which hung before a large cabinet sumptuously furnished, he said:

"Come, comtesse, let us persuade Monsieur le Comte du Bouchage to stay with us."

At the very moment, however, when the count drew aside the *_portière_*, Henri had observed, half reclining upon the cushions, the page who had with the gentleman entered the gate adjoining the banks of the river, and in this page, before even the prelate had announced her sex, he had recognized a woman.

An indefinable sensation, like a sudden terror, or an overwhelming feeling of dread, seized him, and while the worldly cardinal advanced to take the beautiful page by the hand, Henri du Bouchage darted from the apartment, and so quickly, too, that when Francois returned with the lady, smiling with the hope of winning a heart back again to the world, the room was perfectly empty.

Francois frowned; then, seating himself before a table covered with papers and letters, he hurriedly wrote a few lines.

"May I trouble you to ring, dear countess," he said, "since you have your hand near the bell."

And as the page obeyed, a valet-de-chambre in the confidence of the cardinal appeared.

"Let a courier start on horseback, without a moment's loss of time," said Francois, "and take this letter to Monsieur le Grand-amiral à Château-Thierry."