The Forty Five Guardsmen

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Chapter 1. The Porte St. Antoine

On the 26th of October, 1585, the barriers of the Porte St. Antoine were, contrary to custom, still closed at half-past ten in the morning. A quarter of an hour after, a guard of twenty Swiss, the favorite troops of Henri III., then king, passed through these barriers, which were again closed behind them. Once through, they arranged themselves along the hedges, which, outside the barrier, bordered each side of the road.
There was a great crowd collected there, for numbers of peasants and other people had been stopped at the gates on their way into Paris. They were arriving by three different roads—from Montreuil, from Vincennes, and from St. Maur; and the crowd was growing more dense every moment. Monks from the convent in the neighborhood, women seated on pack-saddles, and peasants in their carts, and all, by their questions more or less pressing, formed a continual murmur, while some voices were raised above the others in shriller tones of anger or complaint.
There were, besides this mass of arrivals, some groups who seemed to have come from the city. These, instead of looking at the gate, fastened their gaze on the horizon, bounded by the Convent of the Jacobins, the Priory of Vincennes, and the Croix Faubin, as though they were expecting to see some one arrive. These groups consisted chiefly of bourgeois, warmly wrapped up, for the weather was cold, and the piercing northeast wind seemed trying to tear from the trees all the few remaining leaves which clung sadly to them.
Three of these bourgeois were talking together—that is to say, two talked and one listened, or rather seemed to listen, so occupied was he in looking toward Vincennes. Let us turn our attention to this last. He was a man who must be tall when he stood upright, but at this moment his long legs were bent under him, and his arms, not less long in proportion, were crossed over his breast. He was leaning against the hedge, which almost hid his face, before which he also held up his hand as if for further concealment. By his side a little man, mounted on a hillock, was talking to another tall man who was constantly slipping off the summit of the same hillock, and at each slip catching at the button of his neighbor's doublet.
"Yes, Maitre Miton," said the little man to the tall one, "yes, I tell you that there will be 100,000 people around the scaffold of Salcede—100,000 at least. See, without counting those already on the Place de Greve, or who came there from different parts of Paris, the number of people here; and this is but one gate out of sixteen."
"One hundred thousand! that is much, Friard," replied M. Miton. "Be sure many people will follow my example, and not go to see this unlucky

man quartered, for fear of an uproar."
"M. Miton, there will be none, I answer for it. Do you not think so, monsieur?" continued he, turning to the long-armed man.—"What?" said the other, as though he had not heard.
"They say there will be nothing on the Place de Greve to-day."
"I think you are wrong, and that there will be the execution of Salcede."
"Yes, doubtless: but I mean that there will be no noise about it."
"There will be the noise of the blows of the whip, which they will give to the horses."
"You do not understand: by noise I mean tumult. If there were likely to be any, the king would not have had a stand prepared for him and the two queens at the Hotel de Ville."
"Do kings ever know when a tumult will take place?" replied the other, shrugging his shoulders with an air of pity.
"Oh, oh!" said M. Miton; "this man talks in a singular way. Do you know who he is, compere?"
"No."
"Then why do you speak to him? You are wrong. I do not think he likes to talk."
"And yet it seems to me," replied Friard, loud enough to be heard by the stranger, "that one of the greatest pleasures in life is to exchange thoughts."
"Yes, with those whom we know well," answered M. Miton.
"Are not all men brothers, as the priests say?"
"They were primitively; but in times like ours the relationship is singularly loosened. Talk low, if you must talk, and leave the stranger alone."
"But I know you so well, I know what you will reply, while the stranger may have something new to tell me."
"Hush! he is listening."
"So much the better; perhaps he will answer. Then you think, monsieur," continued he, turning again toward him, "that there will be a tumult?"
"I did not say so."
"No; but I believe you think so."
"And on what do you found your surmise, M. Friard?"
"Why, he knows me!"
"Have I not named you two or three times?" said Miton.
"Ah! true. Well, since he knows me, perhaps he will answer. Now, monsieur, I believe you agree with me, or else would be there, while, on the contrary, you are here."
"But you, M. Friard, since you think the contrary of what you think I think, why are you not at the Place de Greve? I thought the spectacle would have been a joyful one to all friends of the king. Perhaps you will reply that you are not friends of the king; but of MM. de Guise, and that

you are waiting here for the Lorraines, who they say are about to enter Paris in order to deliver M. de Salcede."
"No, monsieur," replied the little man, visibly frightened at this suggestion; "I wait for my wife, Nicole Friard, who has gone to take twenty-four tablecloths to the priory of the Jacobins, having the honor to be washerwoman to Dom. Modeste Gorenflot, the abbe."
"Look, compere," cried Miton, "at what is passing."
M. Friard, following the direction of his friend's finger, saw them closing yet another door, while a party of Swiss placed themselves before it.
"How! more barriers!" cried he.
"What did I tell you?" said Miton.
At the sight of this new precaution, a long murmur of astonishment and some cries of discontent proceeded from the crowd.
"Clear the road! Back!" cried an officer.
This maneuver was not executed without difficulty; the people in carts and on horseback tried to go back, and nearly crushed the crowd behind them. Women cried and men swore, while those who could escape, did, overturning the others.
"The Lorraines! the Lorraines!" cried a voice in the midst of this tumult.
"Oh!" cried Miton, trembling, "let us fly."
"Fly! and where?" said Friard.
"Into this inclosure," answered Miton tearing his hands by seizing the thorns of the hedge.
"Into that inclosure, it is not so easy. I see no opening, and you cannot climb a hedge that is higher than I am."
"I will try," returned Miton, making new efforts.
"Oh! take care, my good woman," cried Friard, in a tone of distress; "your ass is on my feet. Oh, monsieur, take care, your horse is going to kick."
While M. Miton was vainly trying to climb the hedge, and M. Friard to find an opening through which to push himself, their neighbor quietly opened his long legs and strode over the hedge with as much ease as one might have leaped it on horseback. M. Miton imitated him at last after much detriment to his hands and clothes; but poor Friard could not succeed, in spite of all his efforts, till the stranger, stretching out his long arms, and seizing him by the collar of his doublet, lifted him over.
"Ah! monsieur," said he, when he felt himself on the ground, "on the word of Jean Friard, you are a real Hercules; your name, monsieur? the name of my deliverer?"
"I am called Briquet—Robert Briquet, monsieur."
"You have saved me, M. Briquet—my wife will bless you. But apropos; mon Dieu! she will be stifled in this crowd. Ah! cursed Swiss, only good to crush people!"
As he spoke, he felt a heavy hand on his shoulder, and, looking round and seeing that it was a Swiss, he took to flight, followed by Miton. The

other man laughed quietly, then turning to the Swiss, said:
"Are the Lorraines coming?"
"No."
"Then why do they close the door. I do not understand it."
"There is no need that you should," replied the Swiss, laughing at his own wit.

Chapter 2. What Passed Outside The Porte St. Antoine

One of the groups was formed of a considerable number of citizens. They surrounded four or five of a martial appearance, whom the closing of the doors annoyed very much, as it seemed, for they cried with all their might, "The door! the door!"
Robert Briquet advanced toward this group, and began to cry also, "The door! the door!"
One of the cavaliers, charmed at this, turned toward him and said, "Is it not shameful, monsieur, that they should close the gates in open day, as though the Spaniards or the English were besieging Paris?"
Robert Briquet looked attentively at the speaker, who seemed to be about forty-five years of age, and the principal personage in the group.
"Yes, monsieur," replied he, "you are right: but may I venture to ask what you think their motive is for these precautions?"
"Pardieu! the fear they have lest some one should eat their Salcede."
"Diable!" said a voice, "a sad meal."
Robert Briquet turned toward the speaker, whose voice had a strong Gascon accent, and saw a young man from twenty to twenty-five, resting his hand on the crupper of the horse of the first speaker. His head was bare; he had probably lost his hat in the melée.
"But as they say," replied Briquet, "that this Salcede belongs to M. de Guise—"
"Bah! they say that!"
"Then you do not believe it, monsieur?"
"Certainly not," replied the cavalier, "doubtless, if he had, the duke would not have let him be taken, or at all events would not have allowed him to have been carried from Brussels to Paris bound hand and foot, without even trying to rescue him."
"An attempt to rescue him," replied Briquet, "would have been very dangerous, because, whether it failed or succeeded, it would have been an avowal, on the duke's part, that he had conspired against the Duc d'Anjou."
"M. de Guise would not, I am sure, have been restrained by such considerations; therefore, as he has not defended Salcede, it is certain that he is not one of his men."
"Excuse me, monsieur, if I insist, but it is not I who invent, for it appears that Salcede has confessed."
"Where? before the judges?"
"No, monsieur; at the torture."
"They asserted that he did, but they do not repeat what he said."

"Excuse me again, monsieur, but they do."
"And what did he say?" cried the cavalier impatiently. "As you seem so well informed, what were his words?"
"I cannot certify that they were his words," replied Briquet, who seemed to take a pleasure in teazing the cavalier.
"Well, then, those they attribute to him."
"They assert that he has confessed that he conspired for M. de Guise."
"Against the king, of course?"
"No; against the Duc d'Anjou."
"If he confessed that—"
"Well?"
"Well, he is a poltroon!" said the cavalier, frowning.
"Ah! monsieur, the boot and the thumb-screw make a man confess many things."
"Alas! that is true, monsieur."
"Bah!" interrupted the Gascon, "the boot and the thumb-screw, nonsense: if Salcede confessed that, he was a knave, and his patron another."
"You speak loudly, monsieur," said the cavalier.
"I speak as I please; so much the worse for those who dislike it."
"More calmly," said a voice at once soft and imperative, of which Briquet vainly sought the owner.
The cavalier seemed to make an effort over himself, and then said quietly to the Gascon, "Do you know him of whom you speak?"
"Salcede?"—"Yes."
"Not in the least."
"And the Duc de Guise?"
"Still less."
"Well, then, Salcede is a brave man."
"So much the better: he will die bravely."
"And know that, when the Duc de Guise wishes to conspire, he conspires for himself."
"What do I care?"
"What!"
"Mayneville! Mayneville!" murmured the same voice.
"Yes, mordieu! what do I care?" continued the Gascon, "I came to Paris on business, and find the gates closed on account of this execution—that is all I care for."
At this moment there was a sound of trumpets. The Swiss had cleared the middle of the road, along which a crier proceeded, dressed in a flowered tunic, and bearing on his breast a scutcheon on which was embroidered the arms of Paris. He read from a paper in his hand the following proclamation:
"This is to make known to our good people of Paris and its environs, that its gates will be closed for one hour, and that none can enter during that

time; and this by the will of the king and the mayor of Paris."
The crowd gave vent to their discontent in a long hoot, to which, however, the crier seemed indifferent. The officer commanded silence, and when it was obtained, the crier continued:
"All who are the bearers of a sign of recognition, or are summoned by letter or mandate, are exempt from this rule. Given at the hotel of the provost of Paris, 26th of October, 1585."
Scarcely had the crier ceased to speak, when the crowd began to undulate like a serpent behind the line of soldiers.
"What is the meaning of this?" cried all.
"Oh! it is to keep us out of Paris," said the cavalier, who had been speaking in a low voice to his companions. "These guards, this crier, these bars, and these trumpets are all for us; we ought to be proud of them."
"Room!" cried the officer in command; "make room for those who have the right to pass!"
"Cap de Bious! I know who will pass, whoever is kept out!" said the Gascon, leaping into the cleared space. He walked straight up to the officer who had spoken, and who looked at him for some moments in silence, and then said:
"You have lost your hat, it appears, monsieur?"
"Yes, monsieur."
"Is it in the crowd?"
"No. I had just received a letter from my sweetheart, and was reading it, cap de Bious! near the river, about a mile from here, when a gust of wind carried away both my letter and my hat. I ran after the letter, although the button of my hat was a single diamond; I caught my letter, but my hat was carried by the wind into the middle of the river. It will make the fortune of the poor devil who finds it."—"So that you have none?"
"Oh, there are plenty in Paris, cap de Bious! I will buy a more magnificent one, and put in it a still larger diamond."
The officer shrugged his shoulders slightly, and said, "Have you a card?"
"Certainly I have one—or rather two."
"One is enough, if it be the right one."
"But it cannot be wrong—oh, no, cap de Bious! Is it to M. de Loignac that I have the honor of speaking?"
"It is possible," said the officer coldly, and evidently not much charmed at the recognition.
"M. de Loignac, my compatriot?"
"I do not say no."
"My cousin!"
"Good! Your card?"
"Here it is;" and the Gascon drew out the half of a card, carefully cut.
"Follow me," said De Loignac, without looking at it, "and your companions, if you have any. We will verify the admissions."

The Gascon obeyed, and five other gentlemen followed him. The first was adorned with a magnificent cuirass, so marvelous in its work that it seemed as if it had come out of the hands of Benvenuto Cellini. However, as the make of this cuirass was somewhat old-fashioned, its magnificence attracted more laughter than admiration; and it is true that no other part of the costume of the individual in question corresponded with this magnificence. The second, who was lame, was followed by a gray-headed lackey, who looked like the precursor of Sancho Panza, as his master did of Don Quixote. The third carried a child of ten months old in his arms, and was followed by a woman, who kept a tight grasp of his leathern belt, while two other children, one four and the other five years old, held by her dress.

The fourth was attached to an enormous sword, and the fifth, who closed the troop, was a handsome young man, mounted on a black horse. He looked like a king by the side of the others. Forced to regulate his pace by those who preceded him, he was advancing slowly, when he felt a sudden pull at the scabbard of his sword; he turned round, and saw that it had been done by a slight and graceful young man with black hair and sparkling eyes.

"What do you desire, monsieur?" said the cavalier.

"A favor, monsieur."

"Speak; but quickly, I pray you, for I am waited for."

"I desire to enter into the city, monsieur; an imperious necessity demands my presence there. You, on your part, are alone, and want a page to do justice to your appearance."

"Well?"

"Take me in, and I will be your page."

"Thank you; but I do not wish to be served by any one."

"Not even by me," said the young man, with such a strange glance, that the cavalier felt the icy reserve in which he had tried to close his heart melting away.

"I meant to say that I could be served by no one," said he.

"Yes, I know you are not rich, M. Ernanton de Carmainges," said the young page. The cavalier started, but the lad went on, "therefore I do not speak of wages; it is you, on the contrary, who, if you grant what I ask, shall be paid a hundred-fold for the service you will render me; let me enter with you, then, I beg, remembering that he who now begs, has often commanded." Then, turning to the group of which we have already spoken, the lad said, "I shall pass; that is the most important thing; but you, Mayneville, try to do so also if possible."

"It is not everything that you should pass," replied Mayneville; "it is necessary that he should see you."

"Make yourself easy; once I am through, he shall see me."

"Do not forget the sign agreed upon."

"Two fingers on the mouth, is it not?"

"Yes; success attend you."
"Well, monsieur page," said the man on the black horse, "are you ready?"
"Here I am," replied he, jumping lightly on the horse, behind the cavalier, who immediately joined his friends who were occupied in exhibiting their cards and proving their right to enter.
"Ventre de Biche!" said Robert Briquet; "what an arrival of Gascons!"

Chapter 3. The Examination

The process of examination consisted in comparing the half card with another half in the possession of the officer.
The Gascon with the bare head advanced first.
"Your name?" said De Loignac.
"It is on the card."
"Never mind; tell it to me."
"Well, I am called Perducas de Pincornay."
Then, throwing his eyes on the card. M. de Loignac read. "Perducas de Pincornay, 26 October, 1585, at noon precisely. Porte St. Antoine."
"Very good; it is all right," said he, "enter. Now for you," said he to the second.
The man with the cuirass advanced.
"Your card?" said De Loignac.
"What! M. de Loignac, do you not know the son of your old friend, whom you have danced twenty times on your knee?"—"No."
"I am Pertinax de Montcrabeau," replied the young man, with astonishment. "Do you not know me now?"
"When I am on service, I know no one. Your card, monsieur?"
He held it out. "All right! pass," said De Loignac.
The third now approached, whose card was demanded in the same terms. The man plunged his hand into a little goatskin pouch which he wore, but in vain; he was so embarrassed by the child in his arms, that he could not find it.
"What the devil are you doing with that child?" asked De Loignac.
"He is my son, monsieur."
"Well; put your son down. You are married, then?"—-"Yes, monsieur."
"At twenty?"
"They marry young among us; you ought to know that, M. de Loignac, who were married at eighteen."
"Oh!" thought De Loignac, "here is another who knows me."
"And why should he not be married?" cried the woman advancing. "Yes, monsieur, he is married, and here are two other children who call him father, besides this great lad behind. Advance, Militor, and bow to M. de Loignac."
A lad of sixteen, vigorous and agile, with an incipient mustache, stepped forward.
"They are my wife's sons, monsieur."
"In Heaven's name, your card!" cried De Loignac.
"Lardille!" cried the Gascon to his wife, "come and help me."
Lardille searched the pouch and pockets of her husband, but uselessly.
"We must have lost it!" she cried.

"Then I arrest you."
The man turned pale, but said, "I am Eustache de Miradoux, and M. de St. Maline is my patron."
"Oh!" said De Loignac, a little mollified at this name, "well, search again."
They turned to their pockets again, and began to re-examine them.
"Why, what do I see there, on the sleeve of that blockhead?" said De Loignac.
"Yes, yes!" cried the father. "I remember, now, Lardille sewed it on."
"That you might carry something, I suppose, you great lazy fellow."
The card was looked at and found all right, and the family passed on in the same order as before.
The fourth man advanced and gave his name as Chalabre. It was found correct, and he also entered.
Then came M. de Carmainges. He got off his horse and presented his card, while the page hid his face by pretending to adjust the saddle.
"The page belongs to you?" asked De Loignac.
"You see, he is attending to my horse."
"Pass, then."
"Quick, my master," said the page.
Behind these men the door was closed, much to the discontent of the crowd. Robert Briquet, meanwhile, had drawn near to the porter's lodge, which had two windows, one looking toward Paris and the other into the country. From this post he saw a man, who, coming from Paris at full gallop, entered the lodge and said, "Here I am, M. de Loignac."
"Good. Where do you come from?"
"From the Porte St. Victor."
"Your number?"—"Five."
"The cards?"
"Here they are."
De Loignac took them, examined them, and wrote on a slate the number five. The messenger left, and two others appeared, almost immediately. One came from the Porte Bourdelle, and brought the number four, the other from the Porte du Temple, and announced six. Then came four others. The first from the Porte St. Denis, with the number five; the next from the Porte St. Jacques, with the number three; the third from the Porte St. Honore, with the number eight; and the fourth from the Porte Montmartre, with the number four. Lastly came a messenger, from the Porte Bussy, who announced four. De Loignac wrote all these down, added them to those who had entered the Porte St. Antoine, and found the total number to be forty-five.
"Good!" said he. "Now open the gates, and all may enter."
The gates were thrown open, and then horses, mules, and carts, men, women, and children, pressed into Paris, at the risk of suffocating each other, and in a quarter of an hour all the crowd had vanished.

Robert Briquet remained until the last. "I have seen enough," said he: "would it be very advantageous to me to see M. Salcede torn in four pieces? No, pardieu! Besides, I have renounced politics; I will go and dine."

Chapter 4. His Majesty Henri The Third

M. Friard was right when he talked of 100,000 persons as the number of spectators who would meet on the Place de Greve and its environs, to witness the execution of Salcede. All Paris appeared to have a rendezvous at the Hotel de Ville; and Paris is very exact, and never misses a fete; and the death of a man is a fete, especially when he has raised so many passions that some curse and others bless him.

The spectators who succeeded in reaching the Place saw the archers and a large number of Swiss and light horse surrounding a little scaffold raised about four feet from the ground. It was so low as to be visible only to those immediately surrounding it, or to those who had windows overlooking the Place. Four vigorous white horses beat the ground impatiently with their hoofs, to the great terror of the women, who had either chosen this place willingly, or had been forcibly pushed there. These horses were unused, and had never done more work than to support, by some chance, on their broad backs the chubby children of the peasants. After the scaffold and the horses, what next attracted all looks was the principal window of the Hotel de Ville, which was hung with red velvet and gold, and ornamented with the royal arms. This was for the king. Half-past one had just struck when this window was filled. First came Henri III., pale, almost bald, although he was at that time only thirty-five, and with a somber expression, always a mystery to his subjects, who, when they saw him appear, never knew whether to say "Vive le Roi!" or to pray for his soul. He was dressed in black, without jewels or orders, and a single diamond shone in his cap, serving as a fastening to three short plumes. He carried in his hand a little black dog that his sister-in-law Marie Stuart had sent him from her prison, and on which his fingers looked as white as alabaster.

Behind the king came Catherine de Medicis, almost bowed by age, for she might be sixty-six or sixty-seven, but still carrying her head firm and erect, and darting bitter glances from under her thick eyebrows. At her side appeared the melancholy but sweet face of the queen, Louise de Torraine. Catherine came as a triumph, she as a punishment. Behind them came two handsome young men, brothers, the eldest of whom smiled with wonderful beauty, and the younger with great melancholy. The one was Anne, duc de Joyeuse, and the other Henri de Joyeuse, comte de Bouchage. The people had for these favorites of the king none of the hatred which they had felt toward Maugiron, Quelus, and Schomberg.

Henri saluted the people gravely; then, turning to the young men, he said, "Anne, lean against the tapestry; it may last a long time."
"I hope so," said Catherine.
"You think, then, that Salcede will speak, mother?"
"God will, I trust, give this confusion to our enemies."
Henri looked doubtful.
"My son," said Catherine, "do I not see some tumult yonder?"
"What clear sight you have! I believe you are right. I have such bad eyes, and yet I am not old. Yes, here comes Salcede."
"He fears," said Catherine; "he will speak."
"If he has strength," said the king. "See, his head falls about like that of a corpse."
"He is frightful," said Joyeuse.
"How should a man be handsome whose thoughts are so ugly? Have I not explained to you, Anne, the secret connection of the physical and the moral, as Hippocrates and Galen understood and expounded them?"
"I admit it, sire, but I am not a good pupil. I have sometimes seen very ugly men very good soldiers. Have you not, Henri?" said he, turning to his brother: but he looked without seeing, and heard without understanding, so the king answered for him.
"Eh, mon Dieu! my dear Anne, who says this man is not brave? He is brave, pardieu, like a wolf, a bear, or a serpent. He burned in his house a Norman gentleman, his enemy; he has fought ten duels, and killed three of his adversaries. He has now been taken in the act of coining, for which he has been condemned to death."
"That is a well-filled existence, but which will soon finish."
"On the contrary," said Catherine, "I trust it will finish as slowly as possible."
"Madame," said Joyeuse, "I see those four stout horses, who appear to me so impatient of their state of inactivity that I do not believe in a long resistance of the muscles, tendons, and cartilages of M. de Salcede."
"Yes, but my son is merciful," replied she, with the smile peculiar to herself, "and he will tell the men to go gently."
"But, madame," said the queen timidly, "I heard you say this morning that there were only to be two draws?"
"Yes, if he conducts himself well; in that case all will be finished as soon as possible, and, as you interest yourself so much in him, you had better let him know as much, my daughter."
"Madame," said the queen, "I have not your strength when looking at suffering."
"Do not look, then."
The king heard nothing; he was all eyes. They were lifting Salcede from the car on to the scaffold, round which the archers had cleared a large space, so that it was distinctly visible to all eyes.

Salcede was about thirty-five years of age, strong and vigorous; and his pale features, on which stood drops of blood, were animated alternately by hope and anguish. He was no vulgar assassin; he was of good birth, and even distantly related to the queen, and had been a captain of some renown. Those bound hands had valiantly borne the sword, and that livid head, on which were depicted the terrors of death, had conceived great designs. Therefore, to many of the spectators, he was a hero; to others, a victim; some looked on him as an assassin; but the crowd seldom despises those very great criminals who are registered in the book of history as well as in that of justice. Thus they told, in the crowd, that Salcede was of a race of warriors; that his father had fought against the Cardinal de Lorraine, but that the son had joined with the Guises to destroy in Flanders the rising power of the Duc d'Anjou, so hated by the French.

He had been arrested and conducted to France, and had hoped to be rescued by the way; but unfortunately for him, M. de Bellièvre had kept such good watch, that neither Spaniards nor Lorraines, nor leaguers, had been able to approach. In the prison Salcede hoped; during the torture, on the car, even on the scaffold, he still hoped. He wanted neither courage nor resignation; but he was one of those who defend themselves to their last breath. He darted curious glances toward the crowd, but constantly turned away, with a look of disappointment.

At this moment, an usher, raising the tapestry of the royal tent, announced that the president Brisson and four councilors desired the honor of an instant's conversation with the king on the subject of the execution.

"Good," said the king. "Mother, you will be satisfied."

"Sire, a favor," said Joyeuse.

"Speak, Joyeuse; and provided it be not the pardon of the criminal—"

"Sire, permit my brother and me to retire."

"What! you take so little interest in my affairs that you wish to retire at such a moment!"

"Do not say so, sire; all that concerns your majesty profoundly interests me; but I am of a miserable organization, and the weakest woman is stronger than I am on this point. I cannot see an execution without being ill for a week; and as I am the only person who ever laughs at the Louvre, since my brother—I know not why—has given it up, think what would become of the Louvre—so sad already—if I were sad also."

"You wish to leave me then, Anne."

"Peste! sire, you are exacting; an execution is a spectacle of which, unlike me, you are fond. Is not that enough for you, or must you also enjoy the weakness of your friends?"

"If you will remain, Joyeuse, you will see that it is interesting."

"I do not doubt it, sire; I only think that the interest will be carried to a point that I cannot bear;" and he turned toward the door.

"Go, then," said Henri, sighing; "my destiny is to live alone."
"Quick! Du Bouchage," said Anne to his brother. "The king says yes now; but in five minutes he will say no."
"Thanks, my brother," said Bouchage; "I was as anxious as you to get away."

Chapter 5. The Execution

The councilors entered.
"Well, gentlemen," said the king, "is there anything new?"
"Sire," replied the president, "we come to beg your majesty to promise life to the criminal; he has revelations to make, which, on this promise, we shall obtain."
"But have we not obtained them?"
"Yes, in part; is that enough for your majesty?"
"No," said Catherine; "and the king has determined to postpone the execution, if the culprit will sign a confession substantiating his depositions before the judge."
"Yes," said Henri, "and you can let the prisoner know this."
"Your majesty has nothing to add?"
"Only that there must be no variation in the confessions, or I withdraw my promise; they must be complete."
"Yes, sire; with the names of the compromised parties."
"With all the names."
"Even if they are of high rank?"
"If they were those of my nearest relations."
"It shall be as your majesty wishes."
"No misunderstanding, M. Brisson. Writing materials shall be brought to the prisoner, and he will write his confessions; after that we shall see."
"But I may promise?"
"Oh! yes, promise."
M. Brisson and the councilors withdrew.
"He will speak, sire," said the queen; "and your majesty will pardon him. See the foam on his lips."
"No," said Catherine; "he is seeking something. What is it?"
"Parbleu!" said Henri; "he seeks M. le Duc de Guise, M. le Duc de Parma, and my brother, the very Catholic king. Yes, seek, wait; do you believe that there is more chance of rescue on the Place de Greve than on the route from Flanders?"
Salcede had seen the archers sent off for the horses, and he understood that the order for punishment was about to be given, and it was then that he bit his lips till they were covered with blood, as the queen had remarked.
"No one," murmured he; "not one of those who had promised me help. Cowards! cowards!"
The horses were now seen making their way through the crowd, and creating everywhere an opening which closed immediately behind them. As they passed the corner of the Rue St. Vannerie, a handsome young man, whom we have seen before, was pushed forward impatiently

by a young lad, apparently about seventeen. It was the Vicomte Ernanton de Carmainges and the mysterious page.
"Quick!" cried the page; "throw yourself into the opening, there is not a moment to lose."
"But we shall be stifled; you are mad, my little friend."
"I must be near," cried the page, imperiously. "Keep close to the horses, or we shall never arrive there."
"But before we get there, you will be torn to pieces."
"Never mind me, only go on."
"The horses will kick."
"Take hold of the tail of the last; a horse never kicks when you hold him so."
Ernanton gave way in spite of himself to the mysterious influence of this lad, and seized the tail of the horse, while the page clung to him. And thus, through the crowd, waving like the sea, leaving here a piece of a cloak, and there a fragment of a doublet, they arrived with the horses at a few steps from the scaffold.
"Have we arrived?" asked the young man, panting.
"Yes, happily!" answered Ernanton, "for I am exhausted."
"I cannot see."
"Come before me."
"Oh, no! not yet. What are they doing?"
"Making slip knots at the ends of the cords."
"And he—what is he doing?"
"Who?"
"The condemned."
"His eyes turn incessantly from side to side."
The horses were near enough to enable the executioner to tie the feet and hands of the criminal to the harness. Salcede uttered a cry when he felt the cord in contact with his flesh.
"Monsieur," said the Lieutenant Tanchon to him politely, "will it please you to address the people?" and added in a whisper, "a confession will save your life."
Salcede looked earnestly at him, as though to read the truth in his eyes.
"You see," continued Tanchon, "they abandon you. There is no other hope in the world but what I offer you."
"Well!" said Salcede, with a sigh, "I am ready to speak."
"It is a written and signed confession that the king exacts."
"Then untie my hands, and give me a pen and I will write it."
They loosened the cords from his wrists, and an usher who stood near with writing materials placed them before him on the scaffold. "Now," said Tanchon, "state everything."
"Do not fear; I will not forget those who have forgotten me;" but as he spoke, he cast another glance around.

While this was passing, the page, seizing the hand of Ernanton, cried, "Monsieur, take me in your arms, I beg you, and raise me above the heads of the people who prevent me from seeing."
"Ah! you are insatiable, young man."
"This one more service; I must see the condemned, indeed I must."
Then, as Ernanton still hesitated, he cried, "For pity's sake, monsieur, I entreat you."
Ernanton raised him in his arms at this last appeal, and was somewhat astonished at the delicacy of the body he held. Just as Salcede had taken the pen, and looked round as we have said, he saw this young lad above the crowd, with two fingers placed on his lips. An indescribable joy spread itself instantaneously over the face of the condemned man, for he recognized the signal so impatiently waited for, and which announced that aid was near. After a moment's hesitation, however, he took the paper and began to write.
"He writes!" cried the crowd.
"He writes!" exclaimed Catherine.
"He writes!" cried the king, "and I will pardon him."
Suddenly Salcede stopped and looked again at the lad, who repeated the signal. He wrote on, then stopped to look once more; the signal was again repeated.
"Have you finished?" asked Tanchon.
"Yes."—"Then sign."
Salcede signed, with his eyes still fixed on the young man. "For the king alone," said he, and he gave the paper to the usher, though with hesitation.
"If you have disclosed all," said Tanchon, "you are safe."
A strange smile strayed over the lips of Salcede. Ernanton, who was fatigued, wished now to put down the page, who made no opposition. With him disappeared all that had sustained the unfortunate man; he looked round wildly and cried: "Well, come!"
No one answered.
"Quick! quick! the king holds the paper; he is reading!"
Still there was no response.
The king unfolded the paper.
"Thousand devils!" cried Salcede, "if they have deceived me! Yet it was she—it was really she!"
No sooner had the king read the first lines, than he called out indignantly, "Oh! the wretch!"
"What is it, my son?"
"He retracts all—he pretends that he confessed nothing; and he declares that the Guises are innocent of any plot!"
"But," said Catherine, "if it be true?"
"He lies!" cried the king.

"How do you know, my son? Perhaps the Guises have been calumniated: the judges, in their zeal, may have put false interpretation on the depositions."
"Oh! no, madame; I heard them myself!" cried Henri.
"You, my son?"
"Yes, I?"
"How so?"
"When the criminal was questioned, I was behind a curtain and heard all he said."
"Well, then, if he will have it, order the horses to pull."
Henri, in anger, gave the sign. It was repeated, the cords were refastened, four men jumped on the horses, which, urged by violent blows, started off in opposite directions. A horrible cracking, and a terrible cry was heard. The blood was seen to spout from the limbs of the unhappy man, whose face was no longer that of a man but of a demon.
"Ah, heaven!" he cried; "I will speak, I will tell all. Ah! cursed duch—"
The voice had been heard above everything, but suddenly it ceased.
"Stop, stop," cried Catherine, "let him speak."
But it was too late; the head of Salcede fell helplessly on one side, he glanced once more to where he had seen the page, and then expired.
Tanchon gave some rapid orders to his archers, who plunged into the crowd in the direction indicated by Salcede's glance.
"I am discovered!" said the page to Ernanton. "For pity's sake, aid me! they come, they come!"
"What do you want?"
"To fly! Do you not see that it is me they want?"
"But who are you, then?"
"A woman. Oh, save me! protect me!"
Ernanton turned pale; but generosity triumphed over fear.
He placed his protégée before him, opened a path with blows, and pushed her toward the corner of the Rue du Mouton, toward an open door.
Into this door she entered; and she seemed to have been expected, for it closed behind her.
Ernanton had not even time to ask her name, or where he should find her again; but in disappearing she had made a sign full of promise.
Meanwhile, Catherine was standing up in her place, full of rage.
"My son," said she, at last, "you would do well to change your executioner; he is a leaguer."
"What do you mean, mother?"
"Salcede suffered only one draw, and he is dead."
"Because he was too sensible to pain."
"No; but because he has been strangled with a fine cord underneath the scaffold, just as he was about to accuse those who let him die. Let a

doctor examine him, and I am certain that he will find round his neck the circle that the cord has left."
"You are right!" cried Henri, with flashing eyes; "my cousin of Guise is better served than I am!"
"Hush, my son—no éclat; we shall only be laughed at, for once more we have missed our aim."
"Joyeuse did well to go and amuse himself elsewhere," said the king; "one can reckon on nothing in this world—not even on punishments. Come, ladies, let us go."

Chapter 6. The Brothers

MM. De Joyeuse had, as we have seen, left this scene, and were walking side by side in the streets generally so populous but now deserted, for every one was in the Place de Greve. Henri seemed preoccupied and sad, and Anne was unquiet on account of his brother. He was the first to speak.

"Well, Henri," said he, "where are you taking me?"

"I take you nowhere, brother; I was only walking before you. Do you wish to go anywhere?"

"Do you?"

"Oh! I do not care where I go."

"Yet you go somewhere every evening, for you always go out at the same hour and return late at night."

"Are you questioning me, brother?" said Henri, with gentleness.

"Certainly not; let each keep his own secrets if he wishes to do so."

"If you wish it, brother, I will have no secrets from you."

"Will you not, Henri?"

"No; are you not my elder brother and friend?"

"Oh! I thought you had secrets from me, who am only a poor layman. I thought you confessed to our learned brother, that pillar of theology, that light of the Church, who will be a cardinal some day, and that you obtained absolution from him, and perhaps, at the same time, advice."

Henri took his brother's hand affectionately. "You are more than a confessor to me, my dear Anne—more than a father; you are my friend."

"Then, my friend, why, from so gay as you used to be, have I seen you become sad? and why, instead of going out by day, do you only go out at night?"

"My brother, I am not sad."

"What, then?"

"In love."

"Good! And this preoccupation?"

"Is because I am always thinking of my love."

"And you sigh in saying that?"

"Yes."

"You sigh?—you, Henri, comte de Bouchage?—you, the brother of Joyeuse?—you, whom some people call the third king in France? You know M. de Guise is the second, if not the first; but you, rich and handsome, who will be peer and duke on the first occasion, are in love, and you sigh!—you, whose device is 'hilariter.'"

"My dear Anne, I have never reckoned the gifts of fortune, past and to come, as things to constitute happiness; I have no ambitions."

"That is to say, you have not at present."

"At all events, not for the things you speak of."
"Not just now, perhaps, but later you will return to them."
"Never, brother; I desire nothing—I want nothing."
"You are wrong. When one is called 'Joyeuse,' one of the best names in France, when one has a brother a king's favorite, one desires everything, and has everything."
Henri hung his blond head sadly.
"Come," continued Anne, "we are quite alone here; have you anything to tell me?"
"Nothing, but that I love."
"Diable! that is not a very serious affair; I also am in love."
"Not like me, brother."
"I, also, think sometimes of my mistress."
"Yes, but not always."
"I, also, have annoyances."
"Yes; but you also have joys, for you are loved."
"True; but I have obstacles. They exact from me so much mystery."
"They exact! If your mistress exacts, she loves you."
"Yes, she loves me and M. de Mayenne—or rather only me, for she would give up Mayenne at once if she was not afraid he would kill her; it is his habit to kill women, you know. I am obliged to be constantly on my guard, but I do not grow sad on that account; I continue to laugh—at least, sometimes. Tell me, Henri, is your lady beautiful?"
"Alas! she is not mine."
"Is she beautiful? Her name?"
"I do not know it."
"Come, now."
"On my honor."
"My friend, I begin to think it is more dangerous than I thought; it is not sadness, but madness."
"She never spoke but once before me, and since then I have not heard the sound of her voice."
"And you have not inquired about her?"
"Of whom?"
"Why, of the neighbors."
"She lives in her own house, and no one knows her."
"Ah! *ça!* then she is a ghost!"
"She is a woman, tall and beautiful as a nymph, serious and grave as the angel Gabriel!"
"When did you meet her?"
"One day I followed a young girl to the church of La Gypecienne, and I entered a little garden close to it, where there is a stone seat under some trees. Do you know this garden, Anne?"
"No; but never mind—go on."

"It began to grow dark; I had lost sight of the young girl, and in seeking her I arrived at this seat. I saw a woman's dress, and held out my hands. 'Pardon, monsieur,' said the voice of a man whom I had not noticed, and he gently but firmly pushed me away."
"He dared to touch you, Henri?"
"Listen; he had his face hidden in a sort of frock, and I took him for a monk. Besides, he impressed me also by the polite manner of his warning; for, as he spoke, he pointed out to me the woman, whose white dress had attracted me, and who was kneeling before the seat as though it were an altar. It was toward the beginning of September that this happened; the air was warm, the flowers planted by friends around the tombs scattered their delicate perfume, and the moon, rising above the white clouds, began to shed her silver light over all. Whether it were the place, or her own dignity, I know not, but this woman seemed to me like a marble statue, and impressed me with a strange respect. I looked at her earnestly. She bent over the seat, enveloping it in her arms, placed her lips to it, and soon I saw her shoulders heave with such sobs as you never heard, my brother. As she wept she kissed the stone with ardor; her tears had troubled me, but her kisses maddened me."
"But, by the pope, it is she who is mad, to kiss a stone and sob for nothing."
"Oh! it was a great grief that made her sob, a profound love which made her kiss the stone. Only whom did she love? whom did she weep for? whom did she pray for? I know not."
"Did you not question this man?"
"Yes."
"What did he reply?
"That she had lost her husband."
"Bah! as if people weep like that for a husband. Were you content with such an answer?"
"I was obliged to be content, for he would give me no other."
"But the man—what is he?"
"A sort of servant who lives with her."—"His name?"
"He would not tell me."
"Young or old?"
"He might be about thirty."
"Well, afterward? She did not stop all night praying and weeping, did she?"
"No; when she had exhausted her tears she rose, and there was so much mystery and sadness about her that, instead of advancing to her as I might have done to another, I drew back; but she turned toward me, though she did not see me, and the moon shone on her face, which was calm and sad, and the traces of her tears were still on her cheeks; she moved slowly, and the servant went to support her. But, oh! my brother,

what dreadful, what superhuman beauty. I have never seen anything like it on earth, only sometimes in my dreams."
"Well, Henri?" said Anne, interested, in spite of himself, at a recital at which he had determined to laugh.
"Oh! it is nearly finished, brother. Her servant whispered something to her, and she lowered her veil; doubtless he told her I was there, but she did not glance toward me. I saw her no more, and it seemed to me, when the veil concealed her face, as if the sky had become suddenly overshadowed—that it was no longer a living thing, but a shade escaped from the tomb, which was gliding silently before me. She went out of the garden, and I followed her; from time to time the man turned and saw me, for I did not hide myself; I had still the old habits in my mind—the old leaven in my heart."
"What do you mean, Henri?"
The young man smiled. "I mean, brother," said he, "that I have often thought I loved before, and that all women, until now, have been for me —women to whom I might offer my love."
"Oh! and what is this one?" said Anne, trying to recover his gayety, which, in spite of himself, had been a little disturbed by his brother's confidence.
"My brother," said Henri, seizing his hand in a fervent grasp, "as truly as I live, I know not if she be a creature of this world or not."
"Holy Fathers! you would make me afraid, if a Joyeuse could know fear. However, as she walks, weeps, and gives kisses, it seems to me to augur well. But finish."
"There is little more. I followed her, and she did not try to escape or lead me astray; she never seemed to think of it."
"Well, and where does she live?"
"By the side of the Bastille, Rue de Lesdiguieres. At the door, the servant turned and saw me."
"You asked to speak to him?"
"You will think it ridiculous, but I dared not."
"You entered the house, then?"
"No, brother."
"Really, Henri, I am tempted to disown you this evening. But you returned the next day?"
"Yes, but uselessly, and equally so to La Gypecienne."
"She had disappeared?"
"Like a shadow."
"But you inquired?"
"The street has few inhabitants, and no one knew her. I watched for the servant, but he also had disappeared; however, a light which shone every evening through the Venetian blinds consoled me by the knowledge that she was still there. At last this disappeared; she had quitted the Rue de Lesdiguieres, and no one knew where she had gone."

"But you found her again?"
"Chance did it. Listen: it is really strange. I was going along the Rue de Bussy, a fortnight ago, about midnight; you know how strict the regulations are about fire; well, I saw, not only light in the windows of a house, but a real fire, which had broken out in the second story. I knocked at the door, and a man appeared at the window. 'You have fire in your house!' I cried. 'Silence! I beg; I am occupied in putting it out.' 'Shall I call the watch?' I asked. 'No! in Heaven's name, call no one!' 'But can I help you?' 'Will you? I shall be very grateful,' and he threw me the key out of the window.
"I mounted the stairs rapidly, and entered the room where the fire was burning; it was used as a chemist's laboratory, and in making I know not what experiments, an inflammable liquid had been spilled, which had ignited the floor. When I entered, the fire was almost got under. I looked at the man; a dreadful scar disfigured his cheek, and another his forehead; the rest of his face was hidden by a thick beard. 'I thank you, monsieur,' said he; 'but you see all is finished now; if you are as gallant a man as you seem, have the goodness to retire, for my mistress may return at any moment, and will be angry if she sees a stranger here.'
"The sound of his voice struck me instantly. I was about to cry, 'You are the man of La Gypecienne—of the Rue de Lesdiguieres!' for you remember that I had not seen his face before, but only heard his voice, when suddenly a door opened, and a woman entered. 'What is the matter, Remy, and why this noise?' she asked. Oh! my brother, it was she! more beautiful than ever, by the dying light of the fire. It was she!—the woman whose memory had ever lived in my heart. At the cry which I uttered the servant looked narrowly at me. 'Thanks, monsieur,' said he, again; 'you see the fire is out; go, I beg of you.'
"'My friend,' said I, 'you dismiss me very rudely.' 'Madame,' said he, 'it is he.' 'Who?' 'The young man we met in the garden, and who followed us home.' She turned toward me and said, 'Monsieur, I beg of you to go.' I hesitated; I wished to speak, but my words failed me. I remained motionless and mute, gazing at her. 'Take care, monsieur,' said the servant, sadly; 'you will force her to fly again.' 'Heaven forbid!' cried I; 'but how do I offend you, madame?' She did not reply; insensible, mute, and cold, as though she had not heard me, she turned, and I saw her disappear gradually in the shade."
"And is that all?"
"All; the servant led me to the door, saying, 'Forget, monsieur, I beg of you.' I fled, bewildered and half crazy, and since then I have gone every evening to this street, and, concealed in the angle of the opposite house, under the shade of a little balcony, I see, once in ten times, a light in her room: that is my life, my happiness."
"What happiness!"
"Alas! I should lose this, if I tried for more."

"But in acting thus, you lose all the amusements of the world."
"My brother," said Henri, with a sad smile, "I am happy thus."
"Not so, mordieu! One monk in a family is enough."
"No railleries, brother."
"But let me say one thing!"
"What is it?"
"That you have been taken in like a schoolboy."
"I am not taken in; I only gave way to a power stronger than mine. When a current carries you away, you cannot fight against it."
"But if it lead to an abyss?"
"You must be swallowed up!"
"Do you think so?"
"Yes!"
"I do not: and in your place—"

"What would you have done?"
"Enough, certainly, to have learned her name and—"
"Anne, you don't know her."
"No, but I know you, Henri. You had 50,000 crowns that I gave you out of the last 100,000 the king gave to me."
"They are still in my chest, Anne; I have not touched one of them."
"Mordieu! If they were not there, you would be in a different position."
"Oh! my brother!"
"Certainly. An ordinary servant may be bought for ten crowns, a good one for 100, an excellent one for 1,000, and a marvel for 3,000. Let us see, then. Suppose this man to be the phoenix of all servants—the beau ideal of fidelity, yet, by the pope! for 20,000 crowns you will buy him. There would then remain 30,000 crowns for the phoenix of women, and all would be settled."
"Anne!" sighed Henri, "there are people who cannot be bought; there are hearts that the king is not rich enough to purchase."
"Well! perhaps so; but hearts are sometimes given. What have you done to win that of the beautiful statue?"
"I believe, Anne, that I have done all I could."
"Really, Comte du Bouchage, you are mad. You see a woman, sad, solitary, and melancholy, and you become more sad, more recluse, and more melancholy than she. She is alone—keep her company; she is sad—be gay; she regrets—console her, and replace him she regrets."
"Impossible! brother."
"Have you tried? Are you in love, or are you not?"
"I have no words to express how much!"
"Well! I see no reason to despair."
"I have no hope."
"At what time do you see her?"
"I have told you that I do not see her."—"Never?"—"Never!"