

tion of all that had passed at his two interviews.

"Dear Sforzi," cried the adventurer, involuntarily drooping his voice, "it is now of the highest importance that you should not exhibit in public any familiarity with me. My reputation would reflect on yours, and might destroy it. Courage—all is going admirably. You must not fail to find an opportunity to tell the king you think him the handsomest man in the kingdom. And, by the by, do not, I beg, promise anybody a place in the finances without first consulting me."

CHAPTER LI.

TO THE RESCUE OF THE KING.

The marriage of the Duc de Joyeuse with Mademoiselle de Vaudmont was celebrated on the 24th of September, 1581, the betrothal having taken place on the 18th in the queen's chamber; and the sumptuousness of the *cortège* which proceeded from the Louvre to Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois drew enormous crowds to witness its wonders.

Supper was concluded—eleven o'clock was striking—when the wedding guests descended into the gardens of the Louvre to witness the performance of a ballet of unexampled splendour and other entertainments, ending with a display of fireworks.

Raoul, lost in the immense concourse of people, was following listlessly the various phases of the amusement when he suddenly felt himself tightly seized by the arm, and turning perceived De Maurevert. The captain was as pale as death, and spite of his habitual sang-froid appeared to be greatly agitated.

"Follow me, Raoul," he said rapidly, and without leaving time for question. "Death and fires!—something is going on, the very thought of which makes the hair rise on my head."

Pushing his way roughly through the crowd, and dragging the chevalier with him, he passed out of the Louvre on the bank of the Seine. He did not leave his companion long in uncertainty. The moment they were out of earshot:

"Dear friend," he cried, "moments are precious; an odious and abominable conspiracy is on foot against the life of the king! The Duchess de Monpensier is a prime mover in it! What is to be done? I know not. My mind is in a chaos!"

"What prevents your at once going and warning his majesty?" cried Raoul eagerly.

"That idea has naturally presented itself to my mind; but never forget this—there is nothing more dangerous than serving kings and princes with too much zeal. You cannot imagine how many people have sacrificed themselves by the purity of their devotion. To sacrifice one's self is to act like a fool. Do you know what would happen if I were to go simply and put his majesty on his guard? Of two things, one; if the conspiracy succeeded, I should be tracked like a wolf by the victors; if it failed, the king would imagine that I wished to profit by his fear, and would banish me from the kingdom!"

"But, in heaven's name, captain, what do you propose to do?"

"I can think of nothing."

At that moment they were standing within sight of a side entrance to the Louvre, from which Sibillot came upon them.

Sforzi sprang towards him, crying:

"Dear Sibillot, in the name of all you most love in the world, in the name of the incomparable pearl of virtue and beauty whom I have been so happy as to see, in the name of your chaste and beautiful Catherine, help me to get speech with the king without a moment's delay."

"Poor young man!—he is dying of love for my Catherine," said Sibillot to himself, regarding Sforzi with a look of tender compassion. "I must at least serve him—he suffers so!"

"Well, dear Master Sibillot!" cried Raoul, "you do not answer."

"Friend Sforzi," replied the jester, "you cannot see Henry just now."

"Why? why? I must!—he would wish it!"

"Henry has left the Louvre," said the jester, lowering his voice.

"His majesty has gone into the city to-night," cried Sforzi, feeling his heart beat as if it would burst. "Has he taken an escort with him?"

"No; he has gone alone. Only two pages accompany him."

"Malediction!" cried Sforzi, hoarsely, "he is a dead man! Sibillot, Sibillot, if you are attached to the king, I beseech you on my knees to tell me where he is gone. His life is in danger!"

"The king needs to be loved," replied Sibillot, tranquilly, "and the marriage of my cousin De Joyeuse deprives him of a son."

"What then, Sibillot?—what then?"

"To replace this lost son, Henry has gone in search of a girl he had abandoned," continued the jester.

"He is at this moment with my good friend the Demoiselle d'Assy."

"Quick, De Maurevert!" cried Raoul, "get as many friends as you can into the saddle. The king has gone to the house of Mademoiselle d'Assy. I go to throw myself between the assassins and him. Heaven send I am in time."

The information given by Sibillot was perfectly exact. Since the return of De Joyeuse's matrimonial *cortège*, Henry III. had appeared, if not actually sad, at least pre-occupied. He had been observed to read a letter several times over, and then his absence had been suddenly remarked. Attended by two pages, he had taken the road to Mademoiselle d'Assy's house.

It was only after having come to the resolution to throw himself between the king and his assassins that Sforzi suddenly remembered it

would take him a full half hour to reach the house of Mademoiselle d'Assy. To leave the field open to the conspirators for so long a time might assure the success of their plot. He did not hesitate for a moment, but observing a page in charge of a horse within the gates of the Louvre, rushed to him and sprang into the saddle, exclaiming:

"On the king's service, and by express command of his majesty!"

Pricking the animal's flank with the point of his dagger, he bounded off like a deer before a pack of hounds in full cry. Unfortunately an accident consequent on his precipitation, arrested him when he had gone two-thirds of his way. Thinking he was turning the corner of a street—the night being quite dark—he rode his horse head-first against a wall, and the poor beast fell dead beneath him.

Stunned for a moment by the violence of the shock, he quickly rose to his feet and rushed forward.

While Raoul, with brain on fire and heart painfully agitated, anxiously counted the passing minutes, the king was at the house of Mademoiselle d'Assy.

The interview between Henry III. and his innocent victim was most noble and affecting.

"Madame," said Henry, tenderly, "see in me I beseech you, not the King of France, but simply the brother of your choice, the friend of your heart. So few are those who really love me for myself, that I thirst for your affection and hunger for your confidence. Call me Henry, as in happy bygone days."

"Sire," replied Mademoiselle d'Assy, whose agitation, far from being calmed, was increased greatly by these words, "when the king has deigned to grant the request I am about to make, I will thank Henry for the support he has given me with his majesty."

"Speak quickly then, madame—for Henry is impatient to see the king disappear from this interview."

This scene passed in the same oratory in which Sforzi had been received, Henry III. standing resting on the *prie-Dieu* in face of Mademoiselle d'Assy.

The charming creature was about to reply to the king when, suddenly, in the midst of the silence of the night, a piercing cry was heard without, seeming to come from the garden of the house.

"What is that?" inquired the king, calmly.

"I know not, sire," replied Mademoiselle d'Assy tremblingly.

With a firm step Henry III. crossed the room to a window, which he opened.

"Who calls for help?" he demanded.

At the same moment a new cry, more frightful than at first, arose; then a stifled voice, like that of a person being strangled, called out:

"Sire!—assassins! Guard yourself!"

"My pages are being murdered!" cried Henry III., his face flushing deeply. "Death of my life!—woe to the guilty!"

He shut the window and sprang towards the door, where he found himself face to face with Mademoiselle d'Assy.

"Ah, madame," he cried, in a tone of sad reproach, "doubtless my wrongs towards you have been great, but they have not deserved such a vengeance."

"Vengeance, sire! Oh, what do you mean?" cried the poor woman, whose features, pale as death, exhibited traces of the most violent terror. "Vengeance, sire?—I do not understand you."

"Forgive me—forgive me!" replied Henry III. "I spoke as the king, who no longer believes in anything. I forgot that to you I am not a king, but simply a brother. Move from this door, madame. I must go to the aid of my pages."

"You shall not go, Henry!" cried Mademoiselle d'Assy, quickly bolting the door. "On my knees I conjure you not to risk your life. Hark! some one is making his way up the steps into the vestibule; they are trying to force the door. Do not go—do not go, Henry! I love you!"

Henry III. changed countenance; the flush upon his features gave place to pallor; his lips blanched; but at the same time the light of unconquerable courage overspread his visage, and made it bright with a look of noble pride: it was the aspect of a king.

"Dear d'Assy," he said, "retire. A king must neither fly nor hide himself. It is for my honor to show myself."

Henry III. had scarcely spoken these words when a violent blow was given to the door.

"Heaven have pity on my soul, and give me courage to die nobly!" cried Henry III., sinking into a chair.

But suddenly he sprang again to his feet, and seizing the hand of Mademoiselle d'Assy, he pressed it tenderly.

"Dear love, did you hear nothing? Hark! oh! I am not mistaken; it was the groan of a dying man! My pages have been killed! One of the assassins must have been struck down. Can help be coming to me?—Yes, that must be it. D'Epernon alarmed at my absence, has followed on my steps."

He rushed again to the window, and called loudly:

"This way, D'Epernon—this way!"

At the same moment two almost simultaneous explosions were heard, the door fell inwards with a crash, and Sforzi, his face covered with blood, sprang into the oratory.

"Thank heaven," he cried, "the king is living!"

"You here, Sforzi!" exclaimed Henry III. "What is going on? How is it that you have come to my aid? Is there still any danger?"

"Sire, your sword!" cried Raoul, without an-

swering the king's questions, but throwing down the blood-stained fragment of the sword he was holding in his hand, and taking the rapier the king held out to him.

Almost at the same instant the sound of a troop of horses was heard outside the house, and immediately a dozen gentlemen of the king's companies rushed into the oratory, headed by Captain de Maurevert, bearing himself with an heroic bearing worthy of the Cid.

"Sire," he said, "but for my gentle companion Raoul, and your very humble and faithful servant Captain de Maurevert, the greatest king of Christendom would at this moment have ceased to live."

In answer to questions put to him by Henry III., Raoul informed his majesty of the circumstances under which he had been so fortunate as to come to his rescue.

"Chevalier Sforzi," said the king, when Raoul had finished his modest narrative, "in my distress I called on D'Epernon and you appeared in answer to my call; I see in this the hand of Providence. Come to me, at my rising, to-morrow morning. You need not wait to be announced; I will instruct my attendants that you are at all times to have free admission to my presence. Farewell until to-morrow, chevalier."

He turned, and, observing De Maurevert, smiled and added:

"Captain, you will accompany the chevalier; only you must cause yourself to be announced."

"Bah!" said De Maurevert to himself, "what does it matter whether I have or have not my right of entry, so long as Raoul has his."

"Do not forget, madame," said Henry, taking leave of Mademoiselle d'Assy, "that you have a request to make of me."

"Sire," she replied, "this request more immediately concerns Monsieur Sforzi than myself."

"It is granted, then, whatever it may be," replied Henry III., turning upon the chevalier a look of tender kindness.

The house inhabited by Mademoiselle d'Assy was, it will be remembered, only about ten minutes distant from the Stag's Head. It was, therefore, so to speak, without transition that Raoul passed from the extreme of happiness into the depth of an almost nameless sorrow; for the first person he met on reaching the hostelry was Lehardy, who, pale, trembling, and in tears, rushed to meet him with the words:

"Oh, Monsieur le Chevalier!—what a misfortune!—what a grief! Mademoiselle Diane has been violently carried off by the Marquis de la Tremblais."

Raoul heard no more. Weak from loss of blood, and fatigued by the violent exertions of the evening, he fell to the ground without consciousness.

(To be continued.)

ESCAPE OF A TRANSPORTED COMMUNIST.

The *Melbourne Argus* of May 20, gives the following account of the escape of a Communist from the steamer *Orme*, in which he was being transported to New Caledonia:—"The French transport steamer *Orme*—the arrival of which at Melbourne, with 500 Communist prisoners for the penal settlement at New Caledonia was reported last month—left the bay on the 23rd April for New Caledonia. On the night before her departure one of the prisoners, named Michel Sarigné, made his escape from the vessel in a very daring manner. At about dusk he got over the side of the *Orme*, and, hanging in the portaulans, waited until half-past seven, when all was quiet, and then, dropping into a collier which had been brought alongside, lay concealed in the coals, in terror lest the men below should discover him. All the while the sentry on board the *Orme* was keeping guard with loaded chassepot immediately above his head. At half-past nine, tying his pocketbook and papers in his handkerchief to keep them dry, he lowered himself over the side of the lighter and swam to the stern, where a boat was in tow. Cutting the rope with his knife, and hanging to the portion of the rope that remained, he gently propelled the boat from the side of the lighter with his feet, and allowed himself to drift into the bay. The night was dark; there was no moon, and it rained. When about 300 yards from the vessel he heard a cry, and, thinking that the alarm was given, he loosed his hold of the boat, and struck out in the direction of the lights on the Sandridge shore. After swimming for about three-quarters of an hour he espied a vessel, and nearly exhausted, he made for it. He caught the cable, and fastened himself to it with his belt, fearing lest he should faint, rested there for an hour. He started again for the shore at about midnight, and after an hour's swim, got safely to land. He walked from Sandridge boldly into Melbourne, in the belief, as he told a countryman who warned him that he was in danger of being arrested, that having once 'touched English soil' he was free. The caution was administered because it was thought that Sarigné had been condemned for felony of some sort, but as it turned out that he was simply a political prisoner, no effort was made to capture him, and he is now at liberty in the colony. As he was of course in a destitute state, and as it appeared that he had been a harmless member of the Commune, he found plenty of sympathisers, and a subscription was instituted for his benefit. The *Orme*, which put in for the purpose of procuring fresh provisions and live stock—the bulk of the prisoners being afflicted with scurvy—

went away well provisioned; and it was hoped that ere she reached New Caledonia, the condition of her wretched freight would be considerably improved. Some of the prisoners, while the *Orme* was in port, managed to get conveyed to land communications to the editor of the *Argus*, in which they complained that they had been subjected to harsh treatment on board the transport. On the St. Kilda beach a bottle was picked up, containing a document purporting to be written by one of the prisoners, giving a history, from the writer's point of view, of the brief reign of the Commune."

MEERSCHAUM.

The following account of the first meerschaum pipe has been published by Messrs. Pollak and Son, pipe manufacturers, in New York: In 1723 there lived in Pesth, the capital of Hungary, Karol Kowates, a shoemaker, whose ingenuity in cutting and carving on wood, &c., brought him into contact with Count Andrassy, ancestor to the present Prime Minister of Austria, with whom he became a favorite. The Count on his return from a mission to Turkey brought with him a large piece of whitish clay, which had been presented to him as a curiosity, on account of its extraordinary light specific gravity. It struck the shoemaker that, being porous, it must naturally be well adapted for pipes, as it would absorb nicotine. The experiment was tried, and Karol cut a pipe for the Count, and one for himself. But in the pursuit of his trade he could not keep his hands clean, and many a piece of shoemaker's wax became attached to the pipe. The clay, however, instead of assuming a dirty appearance, as was naturally to be expected, when Karol wiped it off received, wherever the wax had touched, a clear brown polish, instead of the dull white it previously had. Attributing this change in the tint to the proper source, he waxed the whole surface, and polishing the pipe again, smoked it, and noticed how admirably and beautifully it colored; also, how much more sweetly the pipe smoked after being waxed. Karol had struck the smoking philosopher's stone; and other noblemen hearing of the wonderful properties of this singular species of clay, imported it in considerable quantities for the manufacture of pipes. The natural scarcity of this much esteemed article, and the great cost of importation, in those days of limited facilities for transportation rendered its use exclusively confined to the richest European noblemen, until 1830, when it became a more general article of trade. The first meerschaum pipe made by Karol Kowates has been preserved in the museum of Pesth, which by the way, was the native city of Mr. Pollak, sen.

TASTE.

Of all perversions in life, and misguided elements in mental economy, it is that of the intellectual discernment taste, and to search for it in its natural or cultivated purity would almost require the lantern of Diogenes, provided it were as well adapted to hunt for sensible people as for honest men. There seems to be scarce a rule of conduct but in which we are prone to go astray in the matter of taste, and we pick up habit and custom very much as a baby takes up a cat—by the tail—in the food we eat; in the clothing we wear; in the houses we build; in all matters of adornment; in the books we read; in the plays we applaud. And in the things in general which we admire we seem led more by the force of example than by self-judgment.

But we aim at present at the target of books and literature that we read, and, drawing the arrow to its head, it matters not whether we "shoot Folly as she flies" (Pope), or "Polly as she flies" (Pop), as in either quotation the reputation of the author compromises our taste; and here we remark that reputation is the bull's eye of our target. We admit that in many instances it has been deservedly well earned, while in many others it has been gained through a misguided judgment of true merit, or misdirected taste for questionable literature; and on the principle of "as good fish in the sea as ever were caught," there are many who have been salted away in the larder of our appreciation that might be cast out for a better haul.

We admit the practicability of the argument that literary production is put on the market like the product of the loom or rare woven fabrics of other lands, and that which the reading public demand, and is the most readable, the publishers must supply; but while we stand at our counter and measure out the ribbon and tape of literature to our customers, we combat the ill-judgment that demands an inferior fabric for the mere sake of reputation; and while we cannot hope to revolutionize taste on a basis of true merit, regardless of Fame's brazen trumpet, we will give unknown authors a place in our columns, and lend a hand to gather the unseen flowers of the desert, which may yet diffuse their fragrance through all time.

The Omaha editor has a pleasing way of doing the little compliment to the stranger of distinction visiting that city. Thus: "W. M. Madden, commonly known as 'Fatty, the Great American Traveller,' arrived in the city yesterday and sampled forty kegs of beer, besides attending the circus, and eating eight straight meals at the Wyoming."