

that made stronger and older men take care against offending him, for he held his honor stainless as a true knight should, and suffered none to impugn it.

But what caused us all to laugh not a little, was the way the knights would leave the company of their hosts so soon as the Lady Margaret was seen to emerge from the gates of the castle, mounted on her white horse all stripped of cumbersome trappings, and ready for the wild, glad fervor of fast and dangerous riding. Marmontel might be fretting to match his arm against Aulnac with the heavy sword, or Cahussac, who was a near relative of Rimini, might be craftily waiting to try against Mornas in fencing after the Italian fashion, which differs from the French in some aspects, but away they would all go, those who were not actually engaged in the play, to catch up if they could with the laughing Margaret, and Henri would turn to Mornas with a smile at the young fellows' animation and then they too would mount and away.

What there was between these two young men it is perhaps now bootless to enquire, but to one who looked so closely at such matters as I did, it did appear that an unspoken understanding existed. I could see that Mornas was a silent worshipper of the lady, whatever might be the animosities of generations to which he was heir; and I saw too, or thought I saw, for one could not easily comprehend the disposition of Henri, that he would have been glad of such an union, but chose to leave the event to the free choice of his sister and the true devotion of his friend.

How deep this devotion was, and how lightly he held his own safety where she was concerned, appeared

the next day when the hunt was in progress.

That day, the one before the party was to set out, was as fair as any that ever dawned. When the chill had once gone out of the air it was the ideal hunting day, not cold, for there are few women who enjoy the hunt as men do, with the frost still on the grass, and not hot, for the season was advanced. I had been over the ground early in the morning taking with me young Stephen, who had been a lad in waiting in the days of Henri's father, but being now well grown was given me as an assistant in the many duties that fell upon me. Being a youth of parts, his assistance was always of value, and many a time his quickness of eye was an advantage in the work under hand. So far as we knew, the plans for the day had been well prepared. The beaters assured me of having driven a splendid old boar into a copse of brush from which nothing but the dogs could induce him to come. So as we came back I remarked to Stephen that the sport was like to be good, and he made answer with a carelessness that I remembered afterwards that it would be so if the hunters were careful to avoid the cliff, meaning a declivity some couple of hundred yards from where we were, and always avoided in the hunt since the time, near a century before, when a former head of the house of Aulnac had been carried over the brink, and found dead and crushed below.

When the morning was well forward the riders came forth from the castles, Henri riding at the head, and behind him his sister who was the centre of an animated group of dames and courtiers. Mornas took the place of honor by her side, and I could see by the