

A Man of His Age

and putting a lean hand on my knee. "Did you give the rascal the slip?"

"La Hake?" said I, "La Hake? What knowest thou of La Hake?"

"No more than the Queen," answered he, with a grin, "but no less either, for what's whispered in a dog's ear comes out in the wag of its tail. The Prince of Béarn rode into Pau three hours ago, and you may trust a steel bonnet to skim the gossip and guess at what is left unsaid. But it's between us and the Queen, and these common lords and gentry know naught."

"But my lady?" I cried. "If she had heard—"

"Why, so she has, and stared out of window with her eyes fixed on the great gate ever since," said Roger. "What of La Hake?"

And there, truly, she was, with her fear still white in her face, and at the sight Roger got, as I dismounted, more hard words than thanks for his officiousness.

"That's the Sieur all over," he said, sourly, his face puckering into a frown. "The love of the woman blinds the service of the man. Good Lord, till a man's gone forty he takes a woman to be the whole of this world, and a little of the world to come."

"Why," said I, halting a moment, "what of Monsieur de Crussenay?"

"What of him?" he answered, angrily. "Naught. Naught but that the witch hath him fast, and La Hake and 'The Black Cat' are as if they never had been."