



Chicot the Jester

Alexandre Dumas

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On the evening of a Sunday, in the year 1578, a splendid fête was given in the magnificent hotel just built opposite the Louvre, on the other side of the water, by the family of Montmorency, who, allied to the royalty of France, held themselves equal to princes. This fête was to celebrate the wedding of François d'Épinay de St. Luc, a great friend and favorite of the king, Henri III., with Jeanne de Crossé-Brissac, daughter of the marshal of that name. The banquet had taken place at the Louvre, and the king, who had been with much difficulty induced to consent to the marriage, had appeared at it with a severe and grave countenance. His costume was in harmony with his face; he wore that suit of deep chestnut, in which Clouet described him at the wedding of Joyeuse; and this kind of royal specter, solemn and majestic, had chilled all the spectators, but above all the young bride, at whom he cast many angry glances. The reason of all this was known to everyone, but was one of those court secrets of which no one likes to speak. Scarcely was the repast finished, when the king had risen abruptly, thereby forcing everyone to do the same. Then St. Luc approached him, and said: "Sire, will your majesty do me the honor to accept the fête, which I wish to give to you this evening at the Hôtel Montmorency?" This was said in an imploring tone, but Henri, with a voice betraying both vexation and anger, had replied: "Yes, monsieur, we will go, although you certainly do not merit this proof of friendship on our part." Then Madame de St. Luc had humbly thanked the king, but he turned his back without replying. "Is the king angry with you?" asked the young wife of her husband. "I will explain it to you after, mon amie, when this anger shall have passed away." "And will it pass away?" "It must."

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