

Mrs. C. L. Anderson.

THE TWO DIANAS

THE WORKS OF
ALEXANDRE DUMAS
IN THIRTY VOLUMES



THE TWO DIANAS
VOLUME ONE



ILLUSTRATED WITH DRAWINGS ON WOOD BY
EMINENT FRENCH AND AMERICAN ARTISTS



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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. A COUNT'S SON AND A KING'S DAUGHTER .	5
II. A BRIDE WHO PLAYS WITH HER DOLL .	14
III. THE CAMP	21
IV. DIANA DE POITIERS	32
V. THE APARTMENTS OF THE ROYAL CHILDREN	40
VI. DIANA DE CASTRO	44
VII. HOW THE CONSTABLE DE MONTMORENCY SAID HIS PATER NOSTER	50
VIII. THE TILT-YARD	55
IX. THE PRISON	59
X. AN ELEGY DURING A COMEDY	63
XI. PEACE OR WAR	72
XII. A TWOFOLD ROGUE	76
XIII. THE HEIGHT OF HAPPINESS	80
XIV. DIANA OF POITIERS	85
XV. CATHERINE DE MÉDICIS	92
XVI. LOVER OR BROTHER	100
XVII. THE HOROSCOPE	105

CHAPTER	PAGE
XVIII. THE COQUETTE	113
XIX. HENRY II. AS DAUPHIN	117
XX. THE USE OF FRIENDS	121
XXI. JEALOUSY SOMETIMES ABOLISHED TITLES, EVEN BEFORE THE REVOLUTION	124
XXII. WHERE A WOMAN PROVES THAT A MAN IS NOT LOVED BY HER	129
XXIII. A USELESS DEVOTION	133
XXIV. HOW THE TRACE OF BLOOD IS NEVER EFFACED	137
XXV. THE HEROIC RANSOM	142
XXVI. JEAN PEUQUOY THE WEAVER	149
XXVII. GABRIEL AT HIS WORK	155
XXVIII. WHERE MARTIN GUERRE IS UNFORTU- NATE	158
XXIX. MARTIN GUERRE BUNGLES	161
XXX. RUSES DE GUERRE	165
XXXI. ARNOLD'S MEMORY	170
XXXII. THEOLOGY	173
XXXIII. SISTER BÉNIE	180
XXXIV. A GLORIOUS DEFEAT	189
XXXV. ARNOLD DU THILL DOES A LITTLE BUSI- NESS	194
XXXVI. MORE OF THE HONORABLE NEGOTIA- TIONS OF ARNOLD DU THILL	203
XXXVII. LORD WENTWORTH	206
XXXVIII. A JAILER IN LOVE	212

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXXIX. THE ARMORER'S HOUSE	217
XL. IN WHICH A VARIETY OF EVENTS ARE GROUPED TOGETHER WITH MUCH ART	225
XLI. HOW ARNOLD DU THILL HAD ARNOLD DU THILL HANGED AT NOYON	234
XLII. THE PASTORAL DREAMS OF ARNOLD DU THILL	249
XLIII. PIERRE PEUQUOY'S ARMS, JEAN PEU- QUOY'S ROPES, AND BABETTE PEU- QUOY'S TEARS	261
XLIV. CONTINUATION OF MARTIN GUERRE'S TRIBULATIONS	273
XLV. WHEREIN THE CHARACTER OF MARTIN GUERRE BEGINS TO BE REHABILI- TATED	282
XLVI. PHILOSOPHER AND SOLDIER	290
XLVII. THE LOVELINESS OF MARY STUART IS AS FLEETING IN THIS ROMANCE AS IT IS IN THE HISTORY OF FRANCE	302
XLVIII. THE OTHER DIANA	309
XLIX. A GREAT IDEA FOR A GREAT MAN	317
L. A SIDE VIEW OF CERTAIN WARRIORS	323
LI. NOT SUCH A FOOL AS HE LOOKED	336
LII. THE 31ST OF DECEMBER, 1557	344
LIII. DURING THE CANNONADE	353
LIV. UNDER THE TENT	364
LV. LITTLE BOATS SAVE BIG SHIPS	372

CHAPTER	PAGE
LVI. OBSCURI SOLA SUB NOCTE	382
LVII. BETWEEN TWO ABYSSES	389
LVIII. ARNOLD DU THILL WORKS MORE EVIL TO POOR MARTIN GUERRE WHEN ABSENT THAN WHEN PRESENT	395
LIX. LORD WENTWORTH AT BAY	403
LX. LOVE DISDAINED	411

THE TWO DIANAS

CHAPTER I

A COUNT'S SON AND A KING'S DAUGHTER

IT WAS on the 5th of May, 1551, that a young man, about eighteen years of age, and a woman about forty, issuing out of a house of humble appearance, traversed together the little village of Montgommery, which lies near Auge. The young man was of that beautiful Norman race, distinguished by their chestnut hair, blue eyes, white teeth, and rosy lips; he had that soft, fresh complexion, which occasionally takes something of power from the beauty of the Northern men, making it almost womanly. His figure, however, was both strong and flexible; he was elegantly dressed in a pourpoint of deep violet cloth, with embroideries of the same color; his boots of black leather, mounting above the knees, were such as were then worn by young pages; and a velvet cap, set a little on one side, and shaded by a white plume, covered a brow indicating at once firmness and sweet temper. His horse, whose bridle was over his arm, followed him. The woman seemed to belong to the lower class of society, or at least to the grade between that and the *bourgeoisie*; her dress was simple, but extremely neat. Often the young man offered her the support of his arm, which she always declined, as if an honor too exalted for one of her condition.

As they went through the village, every one, young and old, saluted the young man, who replied to them by a friendly nod. Each seemed to recognize a superior in him, who scarcely knew yet, himself, that he was so.

Leaving the village, they took a path which, leading to the top of the mountain, scarcely left room for two people to walk abreast, and the young man asked his companion to go first, as it was dangerous for her to walk behind, on account of his horse; she obeyed, and he followed her, silent, and evidently preoccupied. They were approaching a fine old castle, which had taken four centuries, and ten generations, to attain its present venerable appearance. Like all castles of that period, that of Montgommery had little regularity; it had descended from father to son, and each proprietor had, according to his own caprice, added something to the giant of stone. The square tower had been built under the Dukes of Normandy, and others, more florid in their construction, had been subsequently added. Toward the end of the reign of Louis XII. a long gallery, with painted windows, had completed the building; from this gallery, and from the top of the tower, the view extended for many leagues, over the rich plains of Normandy.

At last they arrived at the grand entrance. Strange to tell, for more than fifteen years this magnificent castle had been without a master; an old steward continued to collect the rents; servants who had grown old in this solitude remained in the castle, which they opened every day, as if each day the master was expected to return.

The steward received his two visitors, with friendship for the woman, and deference for the young man.

"Maître Elyot," said she, "let us come into the castle; I have something to say to M. Gabriel, and I wish to say it in the state room."

"Go in, Dame Aloyse," replied he, "and say where you wish what you have to say to monsieur; you know that, unfortunately, no one will come to disturb you."

They crossed the hall, where formerly twelve armed men had constantly watched. Seven of these had died, and had not been replaced. Five remained, doing the same duty as in the count's time. They entered the drawing-room; it was left just as the count had quitted it. Only, into this

apartment, where formerly all the nobility of Normandy was to be seen, no one had entered for fifteen years but the servants. It was not without emotion that Gabriel gazed on this room, but the impression which he received from the sombre walls was not sufficiently powerful to distract his thoughts for a moment, for as soon as the door was closed he said, "Now, my dear Aloyse, my good nurse, although you really seem more moved than myself, you have no longer a pretext to avoid the history which you have promised me. Speak at once, I pray; have you not hesitated enough, and have I not waited like an obedient son? When I asked you what name I had a right to bear, what was my family, and who was my father, you replied to me, 'Gabriel, I will tell you all on the day that you attain your eighteenth year, the age of majority for those who have a right to wear a sword.' Now this 5th of May is the day, and I came, my good Aloyse, to summon you to keep your promise; but you replied to me, with a solemnity which almost frightened me, 'It is not within the humble walls of a poor squire's widow that I will disclose to you your birth; it is in the state room of the castle of Montgommery.' We have climbed the mountain, and are now in the chosen place—so speak."

"Sit down, Gabriel, for you permit me once more to give you this name?"

The young man took her hands with a movement full of affection, "Sit down," continued she, "not on this chair—nor that."

"Where, then, good nurse?"

"Under that dais," said Aloyse, in a solemn voice. The young man obeyed. "Now listen to me:"

"But sit down first."

"You permit it?"

"Are you jesting?"

The good woman sat down on the steps of the dais, at the feet of the young man, and then began:

"Gabriel, you were hardly six years old when you lost

your father, and I, my husband. You were my nursling, for your mother died in giving you birth. From that day, I, the foster-sister of your mother, have loved you as my own child; the widow devoted her life to the orphan, and as she gave you her milk, she gave you her heart. You will render me this justice, will you not, Gabriel—that I have never ceased to watch over you?”

“Dear Aloyse,” said the young man, “many real mothers would have done less than you have done, and none, I feel sure, could have done more.”

“All, however,” continued the nurse, “have been anxious to do their best for you. Dom Jamet de Croisin, the worthy chaplain of this castle, who died about three months ago, instructed you carefully, and no one, they say, can surpass you at reading, writing, or in the past history of France. Enguerrand Lorien, the intimate friend of my poor husband, and the old squire of the Counts of Vimoutiers, have instructed you with care in the science of arms, in the management of the lance and the sword, in horsemanship, and in all things pertaining to chivalry. At the fêtes and jousts, which were held at Alençon, on the occasion both of the coronation and the marriage of our gracious king, Henry the Second, you proved, even two years ago, how well you had profited by these lessons. I could but love you, and teach you to serve God; that I have always tried to do. The Holy Virgin has aided me, and now at eighteen you are a pious Christian, a learned gentleman, and an accomplished soldier. I trust that with God’s help you will not be unworthy of your ancestors, Monseigneur Gabriel, Seigneur de Lorge, Count de Montgommery!”

Gabriel rose with a cry. “Count de Montgommery—I!” cried he. “Well, I hoped it, I almost suspected it. Do you know, Aloyse, that in my childish dreams I once said so to my little Diana. But what are you doing there, at my feet, Aloyse? Come into my arms, good nurse; can I no longer be your child, because I am the heir of the Montgommerys—a Montgommery!” repeated he, proudly, while he em-

braced his good nurse. "I bear, then, one of the oldest and most glorious names in France—yes, Dom Jamet has taught me, man by man, the history of my noble ancestors. Of my ancestors! Embrace me again, Aloyse! What will Diana say to all this? St. Godegrand, bishop of Suez, and St. Opportune, his sister, who lived under Charlemagne, were of our house; Roger de Montgommery commanded one of the armies of William the Conqueror; William de Montgommery went a crusade at his own expense. We have been allied more than once to the royal houses of Scotland and of France, and the first English and French noblemen will call me cousin"—but suddenly stopping, he said in a lower tone, "Alas! with all this, Aloyse, I am alone in the world; the great lord is a poor orphan; the descendant of so many royal ancestors has no father. My poor father! and my mother—dead, both of them dead. Oh! speak to me of them, that I may know what they were, now I know that I am their son. Begin with my father. How did he die?"

Aloyse was silent. Gabriel looked at her with astonishment. "I asked you, nurse," repeated he, "how my father died."

"Monsieur, God only knows. One day Count Jacques de Montgommery left his house in the Rue des Jardins de St. Paul, at Paris; he never returned to it. His friends and his cousins sought him in vain. King Francis himself ordered a search to be made, but it was without success. His enemies, if he perished—the victim of some treason—were very skilful, or very powerful. You have no father, and yet the tomb of Jacques de Montgommery is not among those of his ancestors, for he has never been found, dead or living."

"Ah! it was not his son who sought for him," cried Gabriel. "Oh, nurse, why have you kept silence so long? Did you hide the secret of my birth from me because I have my father to avenge, or to save?"

"No; but because I wished to save you yourself, monsieur. Do you know what were the last words of my hus-

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