

THE TWO DIANAS.

VOL. I.

**BY
ALEXANDRE DUMAS.**



Alexandre Dumas.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The claim of Alexandre Dumas to be considered first among historical romancists, past or present, can hardly be disputed; and his magic pen finds abundant, rich material for the historical setting of the tale told in the following pages. The period in which the action of "The Two Dianas" is supposed to take place, covers the later years of Henri II. and the brief and melancholy reign of his oldest son, François II., the ill-fated husband of Mary Stuart, whose later history has caused her brief occupancy of the throne of France to be lost sight of. This period saw the germination and early maturity, if not the actual sowing, of the spirit of the Reformation in France. It was during these years that the name of John Calvin acquired the celebrity which has never waned, and that his devoted followers, La Renaudie, Théodore de Bèze, Ambroise Paré, the famous surgeon, and the immortal Coligny began the crusade for freedom of worship which was steadily maintained, unchecked by Tumult of Amboise, or Massacre of St. Bartholomew, until Henri of Navarre put the crown upon their heroic labors, and gave them respite for a time with the famous "Edict of Nantes," made more famous still by its "Revocation" a century later under the auspices of Madame de Maintenon, at the instigation of her Jesuit allies. Those portions of the story which introduce us to the councils of the Reformers are none the less interesting because the characters introduced are actual historical personages, nor can it fail to add interest to the encounter between La Renaudie and Pardaillan to know that it really took place, and that the two men had previously

been to each other almost nearer than brothers. It was but one of innumerable heart-rending incidents, inseparable from all civil and religious conflicts, but in which those presided over by the Florentine mother of three Valois kings of France were prolific beyond belief.

How closely the author has adhered to historical fact for the groundwork of his tale, will appear by comparing it with one of Balzac's *Études Philosophiques*, entitled "Sur Catherine de Médicis," the first part of which covers the same period as "The Two Dianas," and describes many of the same events; the variations are of the slightest.

The patient forbearance of Catherine de Médicis, under the neglect of her husband, and the arrogant presumption of Diane de Poitiers, abetted by the Constable de Montmorency; her swift and speedy vengeance upon them as soon as she was left a widow with her large brood of possible kings; her jealous fear of the influence of the Duc de Guise and his brother the Cardinal de Lorraine, which led her to desire the death of her eldest son, the unfortunate François, because his queen was the niece of the powerful and ambitious brothers, and which also led her to oppose their influence by a combination with two such incongruous elements as the Constable Montmorency and the Protestant Bourbon princes of Navarre, remaining all the while the bitterest foe that the reformed religion ever had,—all these, as described in the following pages, are strictly in conformity with historical fact. So, too, is the story of the defence of St. Quentin in its main details, and of the siege of Calais, where the Duc de Guise did receive the terrible wound which caused the sobriquet of *Le Balafré* to be applied to him,

and was cured by the skilful hand of Master Ambroise Paré. So of the Tumult of Amboise, and the painful scenes attending the execution of the victims; and so, finally, of the scene at the death-bed of François II., the controversy between the shrinking conservatism of the King's regular medical advisers, and the daring eclecticism of Paré, proposing to perform the "new operation" of trepanning. It may, perhaps, be said that the Chancellor de l'Hôpital is made to appear in too unfavorable a light; he certainly was something far above the mere bond-slave of Catherine de Médicis.

Dumas himself tells us what basis of truth there is for the sometimes amusing, sometimes serious, but always intensely interesting confusion between Martin-Guerre and his unscrupulous double.

Nowhere, it may be said, in history or romance, is there to be found so touching a glimpse as this of poor Mary Stuart. Here we see naught save the lovely and lovable side of the unfortunate queen, without a hint of the fatal weakness which, as it developed in the stormy later years of her life, made her marvellous beauty and charm the instruments of her ruin.

So much for those portions of "The Two Dianas" which rest upon a basis of fact. History records further that Henri II. was accidentally killed in friendly jousting by the Comte de Montgomery; but with that history ends and romance begins. The personage whom Monsieur Dumas presents to us under that title perhaps never existed; but let the reader be the judge, after reading of the pure and sacred but unhappy love of Gabriel de Montgomery and Diane de Castro, if a lovelier gem of fiction was ever enclosed in an historical setting.

THE TWO DIANAS

CHAPTER I

A COUNT'S SON AND A KING'S DAUGHTER

It was the 5th of May, 1551. A young man of eighteen years, and a woman of forty, together leaving a house of unpretentious appearance, walked side by side through the main street of the village of Montgomery, in the province of Auge.

The young man was of the fine Norman type, with chestnut hair, blue eyes, white teeth, and red lips. He had the fresh, velvety complexion common to men of the North, which sometimes takes away a little manly strength from their beauty, by making it almost feminine in its quality; but his figure was superb, both in its proportions and its suppleness, partaking at once of the character of the oak and the reed. He was simply but handsomely dressed, in a doublet of rich purple cloth, with light silk embroidery of the same color. His breeches were of similar cloth, and trimmed in the same way as the doublet; long black leather boots, such as pages and varlets wore, extended above his knees; and a velvet cap, worn slightly on one side and adorned with a white plume, covered a brow on which could be read indications of a tranquil and steadfast mind.

His horse, whose rein was passed through his arm, followed him, raising his head from time to time, snorting and neighing with pleasure in the fresh air that was blowing.

The woman seemed to belong, if not to the lower orders of society, at least to a class somewhere between them and the bourgeoisie. Her dress was simple, but of such exquisite neatness that very quality seemed to give it elegance. More than once the young man offered her the support of his arm, but she persistently declined it, as if it would have been an honor above her condition.

As they walked through the village, and drew near the end of the street that led to the château, whose ponderous towers were in full sight, overlooking the humble settlement, it was very noticeable that not only the young people and the men, but even the gray heads bowed low as the young man passed, while he responded with a friendly nod of the head. Each one seemed to recognize a superior and a master in this youth, who, as we shall soon see, did not know his own identity.

Leaving the village behind them, they followed the road, or rather the path, which, in its winding course up the slope of the mountain, was barely wide enough for two people to walk abreast. So, after some objections, and upon the young man's remarking to his companion that as he was obliged to lead his horse it would be dangerous for her to walk behind, the good woman was induced to go in advance.

The young man followed her without a word. One could see that his thoughtful brow was wrinkled beneath the weight of some engrossing preoccupation.

A fine and lordly château it was toward which our two pilgrims, so different in age and station, were thus wending their way. Four centuries and ten generations had hardly

sufficed for that mass of rock to grow from foundation to battlements; and there it stood, itself a mountain towering above the mountain on which it was built.

Like all the structures of that age, the château of the counts of Montgommery was absolutely irregular in its formation. Fathers had bequeathed it to their sons, and each temporary proprietor had added to this stone colossus according to his fancy or his need. The square donjon, the principal fortification, had been built under the dukes of Normandy. Then the fanciful turrets on the battlements and the ornamented windows had been added to the frowning donjon, multiplying the chased and sculptured stonework as time went on, as if the years had been fruitful in this granite vegetation. At last, toward the end of the reign of Louis XII., and in the early days of François I., a long gallery with pointed windows had put the last touch to this secular agglomeration.

From this gallery, and still better from the summit of the donjon, could be had an extended view over several leagues of the rich, blooming plains of Normandy. For, as we have already said, the county of Montgommery was situated in the province of Auge, and its eight or ten baronies and its hundred and fifty fiefs were dependencies of the bailiwicks of Argentan, Caen, and Alençon.

At last they reached the great portal of the château.

Think of it! For more than fifteen years this magnificent and formidable donjon had been without a master. An old intendant still continued to collect the rents; and there were some of the servants, too, who had grown old in that solitude,

and who continued to look after the château, whose doors they threw open every day, as if the master was to be expected at any moment, while they closed them again at evening, as if his coming were simply postponed till the next day.

The intendant received the two visitors with the same appearance of friendliness that every one seemed to show to the woman, and the same deference which all agreed in according to the young man.

"Master Elyot," said the woman, who was in advance, as we have seen, "do you mind letting us go into the château? I have something to say to Monsieur Gabriel" (pointing to the young man), "and I can only say it in the *salon d'honneur*."

"Come in, Dame Aloyse," said Elyot, "and say what you have to say to young master here, wherever you choose. You know very well that unhappily there is no one here to interrupt you."

They passed through the *salle des gardes*. Formerly twelve men, raised upon the estates, used to be on guard without intermission in that apartment. During fifteen years seven of these men had died, and their places had not been filled. Five of them were left; and they still lived there, doing the same duty as in the count's time, and waiting till their turn to die should come.

They passed through the gallery and entered the *salon d'honneur*.

It was furnished just as it had been the day that the last count had left it. But this salon, where in former days all the Norman nobility had used to assemble, as in the salon of a lord

paramount, not a soul had entered for fifteen years, save the servants whose duty it was to keep it in order, and a faithful dog, the last count's pet, who every time that he entered the room called for his master mournfully, and at last had refused to go out one day, and had stretched himself out at the foot of the dais, where they found him the next morning, dead.

It was not without emotion that Gabriel (such was the name that had been given to the young man by his companion) entered this salon, with its memories of other days. However, the impression made upon him by these gloomy walls, the majestic dais, and the windows cut so deep into the wall that although it was only ten in the morning, the daylight seemed to have stopped at the threshold,—the impression, we repeat, was not strong enough to divert his mind for a single moment from the purpose which had drawn him thither; and as soon as the door was closed behind him, he turned to his companion.

"Come, dear Aloyse, my good nurse," said he, "really, although you seem more moved than I, you have no longer the least excuse for refusing to tell me what you have promised. Now, Aloyse, you must speak without fear, and, above all, without delay. Haven't you hesitated long enough, my dear, kind nurse; and have I not, like an obedient son, waited long enough? When I asked you what name I had the right to bear, and to what family I belonged, and who my father was, you replied, 'Gabriel, I will tell you the whole story on the day that you are eighteen,—the age at which he who has the right to wear a sword attains his majority.' Now, to-day, this 5th of May, 1551, I have lived eighteen full years; so I called upon you this morning to keep your promise, but you replied with a solemn

visage which almost terrified me, 'It is not here in the humble dwelling of a poor squire's widow that I should make you known to yourself, but in the château of the counts of Montgommery, and in the *salon d'honneur* in that château.' Now we have come up the mountain, good Aloyse, have crossed the threshold of the noble counts, and here we are in the *salon d'honneur*; so, speak!"

"Sit down, Gabriel, for you will allow me to call you by that name once more."

The young man took her hands with a most affectionate movement.

"Sit down," she repeated, "not on that chair, nor on that sofa."

"But where do you want me to sit, then, dear nurse?" interrupted the young man.

"Under this dais," said Aloyse, with an accent of deep solemnity.

The young man complied.

Aloyse nodded her head.

"Now, listen to me," said she.

"But do you be seated too," said Gabriel

"Will you permit me?"

"Are you laughing at me, nurse?"

The good woman took her place on the steps of the dais, at the feet of the young man, who was all attention, and devoured her with a gaze full of kindliness and curiosity.

"Gabriel," said the nurse, when she had at last made up her mind to speak, "you were scarcely six years old when you lost your father and I lost my husband. You had been my foster-child, for your mother died in giving birth to you. From that day, I, your mother's foster-sister, loved you as if you were my own child. The widow devoted her life to the orphan. As she had given you her breast, she gave you her heart too; and you will do me this justice, will you not, Gabriel, that in your belief, my thoughts, when you have been away from me, have never failed to be with you and watching over you?"

"Dear Aloyse," said the young man, "many real mothers would have done less than you have. I swear it; and not one, I swear again, could have done more."

"Every one, in fact, was as eager to serve you as I, who had been the first to show my zeal." continued the nurse. "Dom Jamet de Croisic, the worthy chaplain of this very château, and whom the Lord called to himself three months since, instructed you very carefully in letters and science, and according to what he said, you had nothing to learn from any one in the matter of reading and writing and knowledge of history, especially of the great families of France. Enguerrand Lorien, the intimate friend of my dead-and-gone husband, Perrot Travigny, and the old squire of our neighbors, the counts of Vimoutiers, taught you the science of arms, the management of the lance and sword, horsemanship, and in fact all the knightly accomplishments; and then the fêtes and tournaments which were held at

Alençon at the time of the marriage and coronation of our Lord King Henri II., gave you an opportunity to prove, two years since, that you have taken advantage of Enguerrand's instructions. I, poor know nothing, could only love you and teach you to worship God. That is all that I have tried to do. The Holy Virgin has been my guide, and here you are to-day, at eighteen, a pious Christian man, a learned gentleman, and an accomplished knight; and I hope that with God's help, you will not fail to show yourself worthy of your ancestors, MONSIEUR GABRIEL, SEIGNEUR DE LORGES, COMTE DE MONTGOMMERY."

Gabriel involuntarily rose to his feet, as he cried,—

"Comte de Montgomery! I!" Then he went on, with a proud smile on his lips,—

"Oh, well, I hoped so, and I almost suspected it; in fact, Aloyse, in the days of my boyish dreams I said as much to my little Diane. But what are you doing to my feet, Aloyse, pray? Rise, and come to my arms, thou saintly creature! Don't you choose to acknowledge me as your child any more now that I am heir of the Montgommerys? Heir of the Montgommerys!" he repeated, as if in spite of himself, trembling with pride as he embraced the good old soul. "Heir of the Montgommerys! And I bear one of the oldest and most honorable names of France! Yes; Dom Jamet has taught me the history of my ancestors, reign by reign, and generation by generation. Of my ancestors! Embrace me again, Aloyse! I wonder what Diane will say to all this. Saint Godegrand, Bishop of Chartres, and Sainte Opportune, his sister, who lived in Charlemagne's day, were of our family. Roger de Montgomery commanded an army

under William the Conqueror. Guillaume de Montgomery made a crusade at his own expense. We have been allied more than once to the royal families of Scotland and France; and the noblest lords of London and the most illustrious noblemen of Paris will call me cousin. My father, too—"

The young man stopped short, as if he had been struck; but he soon continued:—

"But, alas! for all this, Aloyse, I am alone in the world. This great lord is nothing but a poor orphan, and the descendant of so many royal ancestors has no father. My poor father! I can only weep just now, Aloyse. And my mother, too,—both dead! Oh, do tell me of them, so that I may know what they were like now that I know that I am their son! Come, begin with my father. How did he die? Tell me all about it."

Aloyse remained dumb. Gabriel looked at her in amazement.

"I ask you to tell me, nurse," he said again, "how my father died."

"Monseigneur, God alone can tell you!" said she. "One day Jacques de Montgomery left the hotel where he was then living, in the Rue des Jardins St. Paul in Paris. He never came back to it. His friends and his cousins sought for him, but to no purpose. He had disappeared, Monseigneur! King François I. ordered an inquiry, which came to nothing. His enemies, if he fell a victim to treachery, were either very cunning or very powerful. You have no father, Monseigneur; and yet the tomb

of Jacques de Montgomery is missing in the chapel of your château, for he has never been found, living or dead!"

"That is because it was not his son who sought him!" cried Gabriel. "Ah, nurse, why have you kept quiet so long? Did you hide the secret of my birth from me because it would have been my duty either to save my father or to avenge him?"

"No; but because it was my duty to save yourself, Monseigneur. Listen! Do you know what the last words were that were uttered by my husband, brave Perrot Travigny, who had a religious devotion to your family? 'Wife,' said he, a few minutes before he breathed his last, 'don't even wait till I am buried; just close my eyes, and then leave Paris with the child as fast as ever you can. You will go to Montgomery; not to the château, but to the house which belongs to us, thanks to Monseigneur's bounty!'

"There do you bring up the descendant of our masters with no affectation of mystery, but without display. The good people of our country will respect him, and will not betray him. But, above all things, hide his origin from himself, or he will show himself and be his own destruction. Let him know only that he is of gentle birth, and that will be enough to satisfy his dignity and your own conscience. Then, when years shall have brought him discretion and gravity, as his blood will make him brave and true,—when he is about eighteen, for instance,—tell him his name and his descent, Aloyse. Then he can judge for himself of his duty and his ability. But until then be very careful; for formidable enmities and invincible hatred will be on his track if he should be discovered, and those who have stricken and brought down the eagle will not spare the eaglet.' He said those

words and died, Monseigneur; and I, in obedience to his commands, took you, poor orphan of six years, who had hardly seen your father, and I brought you with me to this village. The count's disappearance was already known here; and it was suspected that implacable foes were threatening any one who bore his name. You were seen and acknowledged without hesitation in the village, but by tacit agreement not a soul asked me a question or expressed any surprise at my silence. A short time after, my only son, your foster-brother, my poor Robert, was carried off by a fever. God seemed to will that I should have no excuse for not devoting myself entirely to you. May God's will be done! Everybody made a pretence of believing that it was my son that lived, and yet they all treated you with the deepest respect and a touching obedience. That was because you already strikingly resembled your father, both in face and in heart. The lion-like instinct showed itself in you: and it was easy to see that you were born to be a master and a leader of men. The children of the neighborhood soon got into the habit of forming themselves into a little company under your command. In all their games you marched at their head, and not one of them would have dared to refuse you his respect. You became a young king of the province; and it was the province which brought you up, and which has looked on in admiration to see you daily growing in pride and beauty. The quit-rent of the finest fruits, and the tithe of the harvest, were brought regularly to the house without my having to ask for anything. The finest horse in the pastures was always kept for you. Dom Jamet, Enguerrand, and all the varlets and retainers at the château offered you their services as naturally due to you; and you accepted them as your right. There was nothing

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