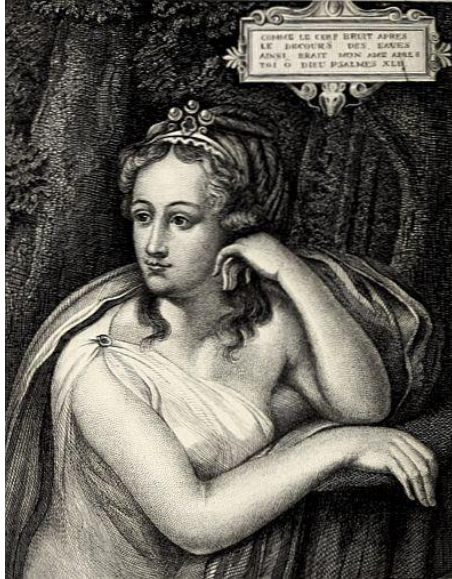


# **THE TWO DIANAS**

**VOL. II.**

**BY**  
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Diane de Poitiers.

# **THE TWO DIANAS**

# **CHAPTER I**

## **IN WHICH DIVERS OCCURRENCES**

### **ARTFULLY FALL OUT**

### **TOGETHER**

Three weeks had elapsed. The last days of September were at hand; and no change of moment had taken place in the respective situations of the different characters represented in this tale.

Jean Peuquoy had paid to Lord Wentworth the trifling sum at which he had shrewdly had his ransom fixed. More than that, he had obtained leave to settle at Calais. We ought to say, however, that he seemed to be in no haste to commence operations. He seemed to be of a very inquisitive and yet careless disposition; in fact, the honest burgher might be seen from morning till night sauntering about on the walls, and talking with the soldiers of the garrison, while apparently thinking no more about the weaver's trade than if he were an abbé or a monk.

Nevertheless, he had either not tried or not been able to induce his cousin Pierre to be his companion in this life of idleness; and the skilful armorer had never turned out more or more finely executed work.

Gabriel's melancholy increased from day to day. He received nothing but general news from Paris. France was beginning to breathe again. The Spaniards and English had

wasted too much precious time in besieging and reducing places of no importance; thus the country had had an opportunity to recover its balance, and it seemed as if both France and the king would be saved. This news, to which the heroic defence of St. Quentin had had no small share in imparting such a favorable character, no doubt was cheering to Gabriel; yet he heard not a word of Henri II., of Coligny, of his father, or of Diane! That reflection cast a shadow upon his brow and made it impossible for him to respond, as he might have done at another time, to Lord Wentworth's friendly overtures.

The easy-going and unreserved governor seemed really to have taken a great liking to his prisoner. His ennui, and a little feeling of chagrin during the last few days, had no doubt had their share in arousing this feeling. The society of a young and clever gentleman of the French court was an invaluable distraction in stupid Calais. Thus it was that Lord Wentworth never allowed two days in succession to go by without calling upon Vicomte d'Exmès, and insisted upon his dining with him three times a week at his own table. This excessive affection was rather oppressive to Gabriel, all things considered; for the governor laughingly swore that he would not release his hold upon his captive till the last extremity; that he would never consent to let him go on parole; and that until the last crown of Gabriel's ransom should be well and truly paid, he would not yield to the cruel necessity of parting from so dear a friend.

After all, this might well be only a refined and courtly way of expressing suspicion of him, so Gabriel did not dare to persist in his excuses; besides, his delicacy led him to suffer

uncomplainingly while awaiting the convalescence of his squire, who, it will be remembered, was to go to Paris to procure the sum of money agreed upon as the price of Vicomte d'Exmès's liberty.

But Martin-Guerre—we should say, his substitute Arnauld du Thill—was very deliberate in his convalescence. After a few days, the surgeon who had been called to look after the wound, which the scamp had sustained in a scuffle, had ceased to visit him, announcing that his task was done, and his patient entirely restored to health. A day or two of rest, and the excellent nursing of pretty Babette, Pierre's sister, would be quite sufficient to complete the cure, if indeed it were not already completed.

Upon receiving that assurance, Gabriel had informed his squire that he must start for Paris on the next day but one without fail; but when the morning of that day arrived, Arnauld complained of dizziness and faintness, which made him likely to fall if he took but a few steps without Babette's accustomed support. Thereupon two days' more of delay were asked and granted. At the end of that time a sort of general debility caused poor Arnauld's arms and legs to become perfectly useless; and this new symptom, which was caused doubtless (so he said) by the excessive pain he had suffered, had to be treated with hot baths and a very rigid diet. But this last regimen gave rise to such utter weakness that more delay was considered indispensable, to give the faithful fellow time to build himself up once more with tonics and generous draughts of wine. At least his nurse Babette declared to Gabriel, with tears in her eyes, that if he required Martin-Guerre to set out at

once, he would expose him to the danger of dying of inanition on the road.

This extraordinary convalescence was thus prolonged to much greater length than the illness itself, in spite of the tender care of Babette,—a malicious person might say, thanks to that same tender care,—until two weeks had elapsed since the surgeon had pronounced him cured, and it was nearly a month since Gabriel's arrival at Calais.

This could not be allowed to go on forever. Gabriel finally lost his patience; and even Arnauld du Thill, who at first had sought and found all manner of expedients with the best grace in the world, now announced, with a very self-sufficient and triumphant air, to poor broken-hearted Babette, that he could not afford to make his master angry, and that, after all, his best course would be to start at once so that he might the sooner return; but Babette's red eyes and downcast look proved that she hardly understood that kind of reasoning.

The evening before the day when, according to his formal announcement, Arnauld proposed finally to take his departure for Paris, Gabriel took supper with Lord Wentworth.

The governor seemed to have even more melancholy than usual to shake off, for he carried his gayety almost to the point of madness.

When he left Gabriel after escorting him to the courtyard, lighted at that hour only by a lamp which was already flickering, the young man, just as he was wrapping himself in his cloak before going out, saw one of the doors opening into

the courtyard partly ajar. A woman, whom Gabriel recognized as one of those employed in the house, glided up to him, with a finger on her lips, and holding a paper toward him with the other hand, said in a low voice,—

"For the French gentleman whom Lord Wentworth entertains so often."

She handed him the folded paper; and before Gabriel had recovered sufficiently from his stupefaction to question her, she was already gone.

The youth, in his perplexity, being naturally of an inquiring mind, and perhaps a little rash, reflected that he had a quarter of an hour's walk to take in the dark before he would be able to read the note at his ease in his own room; and that seemed a long while to wait for the key to a riddle which piqued his curiosity. So without more ado he determined to ascertain at once if anything was required of him. He looked about, and seeing that he was quite alone, drew near the smoking lamp, unfolded the note, and read, not altogether unmoved, the following words:—

"Monsieur, I do not know you, nor have I ever seen you; but one of the women who wait upon me tells me that you are a Frenchman, and are, as I am, a prisoner. This gives me courage to appeal to you in my distress. You are doubtless held for ransom. You will probably soon return to Paris. You can see there my friends, who have no idea what has become of me. You might tell them where I am; that Lord Wentworth is holding me a prisoner without allowing me to communicate with a living, soul, and refusing to name any price for my



liberty; and that, shamefully abusing the cruel privilege which my unfortunate position gives him, he has the effrontery every day to speak to me of a passion which I repulse with horror, but which my very scorn and his certainty of impunity may excite to the use of force. A gentleman, and above all, a fellow-countryman, will surely come to my aid in this wretched extremity; but I still have to tell you who I am for whom—"

The letter came to an end there, and was unsigned. Some unexpected interruption or sudden accident had probably caused her to break off thus abruptly, and yet she had chosen to send the letter, even though it were unfinished, so that she might not lose any precious opportunity, and because, although not complete, it still said everything that she wished to say except the name of the lady who was being subjected to such odious restraint.

That name Gabriel did not know, nor could he recognize the trembling, hurried handwriting; and yet a strange feeling of anxiety, an extraordinary presentiment, crept into his heart. Pale with emotion, he drew near the lamp again to read the letter once more, when another door behind him opened, and Lord Wentworth himself came out, preceded by a little page, and crossed the courtyard on his way to his sleeping apartment.

As he recognized Gabriel, to whom he had said good-night some time before, the governor stayed his steps in surprise.

"Are you still here, my friend?" he said, approaching him with his customary friendly manner. "What has detained you? No mishap, I trust, or sudden illness?"

The straightforward young man, without replying, simply held out to Lord Wentworth the letter that had been handed him. The Englishman cast his eye upon it, and became even paler than Gabriel; but he succeeded in maintaining his presence of mind, and while pretending to read it, was really making up his mind how to deal with the matter.

"What an old fool she is!" said he, crumpling the letter in his hand and throwing it on the floor in well-feigned contempt.

No words could have served to throw Gabriel off the scent more quickly or completely, for he was continually absorbed in his own thoughts, and had already begun to lose interest in the unknown. However, he did not abandon his suspicions at once, but responded rather evasively,—

"You don't tell me who this prisoner is whom you are detaining here against her will, my Lord?"

"Against her will, indeed!" said Wentworth, in a perfectly unembarrassed tone. "It is a kinswoman of my wife,—a little crack-brained, if any one ever was,—whom her family wished to send away from England, and who has, much to my disgust, been put in my charge in this place, where it is easier to keep an eye on lunatics as well as on prisoners. However, since you have penetrated this family secret, my dear fellow, I think I might as well tell you the whole story on the spot. The particular mania of Lady Howe, who has read too many of the poems of chivalry, is to imagine, despite her fifty years and her gray hairs, that she is an oppressed and persecuted heroine; and she tries to interest in her behalf, by fables with more or less foundation in fact, every good-looking young cavalier who

comes within her reach. Upon my soul, Gabriel, it seems to me as if my old aunt's romancing has enlisted your sympathy for her. Come! confess that her *billet-doux* did cause you a little anxiety, my poor fellow?"

"It's a strange story that you tell me, my Lord, you must agree," said Gabriel, coldly; "you have never spoken to me of your kinswoman that I remember."

"No, to be sure I have not," rejoined Lord Wentworth; "for one does not ordinarily care to admit strangers into one's confidence as to private family matters."

"But how does she come to say that she is French?" asked Gabriel.

"Oh, to arouse your interest more successfully, in all probability," was Wentworth's reply, with a smile which began to be rather forced.

"And this passion which she claims that you inflict upon her, my Lord?"

"The delusion of an old woman who mistakes ancient memories for new hopes," rejoined Wentworth, who was beginning to grow restive.

"Is it to avoid being laughed at, my Lord, that you keep her out of everybody's sight?"

"Ah, how many questions you ask!" exclaimed Lord Wentworth, frowning darkly, but still without any outburst. "I had no idea you were of such an inquiring mind, Gabriel. But it's quarter to nine, and I have your agreement to be in your

own quarters before the curfew sounds; for your freedom as a prisoner on parole does not extend so far as to allow any infringement of the police regulations of Calais. If Lady Howe interests you so deeply, we can return to the subject to-morrow. Meanwhile, I beg you will say nothing about these delicate family matters; and I have the honor to wish you good-evening, Monsieur le Vicomte."

Thereupon the governor saluted Gabriel, and re-entered the house. He desired to retain his self-control to the end, and feared that he might become too much excited if the conversation were to continue.

Gabriel, after a moment's hesitation and thought, left the governor's mansion to return to the humble abode of the armorer. But Lord Wentworth had not remained so entirely master of himself to the last as to do away with all suspicion in Gabriel's heart; and the young man's doubts, which were added to by his secret instinct, assailed him anew on his way through the streets.

He determined to say nothing more on the subject to Lord Wentworth, who was not likely to give him any information, but to watch and make inquiries, and to find out if he could whether the fair unknown was really a countrywoman of his own, and the Englishman's prisoner.

"But, *mon Dieu!* even if that is proved to demonstration," thought Gabriel, "what can I do then? Am I not myself a prisoner here? Are not my hands bound, and has not Lord Wentworth a perfect right to call upon me for my sword, which I wear only by his favor and at his pleasure? There must be an

end to this state of things; and I must be able to have matters on a different footing, in case of need. Martin-Guerre must absolutely and without more trifling be off to-morrow. I will tell him so myself this very evening."

So when the door had been opened to Gabriel by one of Pierre Peuquoy's apprentices, he went up to the second floor, instead of stopping, as he generally did, at his own room on the first floor. Probably everybody in the house was asleep at that hour, Martin-Guerre no doubt like the others. If so, Gabriel concluded to awaken him and make known to him his firm determination. He noiselessly approached the room occupied by his squire, so that he might disturb nobody's slumbers.

The key was in the outer door, which Gabriel softly opened; but the inner door was closed, and Gabriel could hear through the partition bursts of laughter and the clinking of glasses. Thereupon he knocked with some force, and announced himself in an imperious voice. The noise ceased abruptly; and as Gabriel only called the louder, Arnauld du Thill hurriedly opened the door to his master. In fact, he made too much haste, and failed to allow sufficient time for a fluttering dress, which was vanishing through an opposite door, to disappear completely before Gabriel came in.

He took it to be some little love-making with the housemaid; and as he was not very prudish in his ideas, he could not refrain from smiling as he reprimanded his squire.

"Aha, Martin," said he, "I think you must be much better than you pretend! A table all set, three bottles, and two covers! I seem to have frightened away your companion at the banquet.

Never mind! I have seen now very decisive proofs of your recovery, and I am more than ever free from hesitation about ordering you to start to-morrow."

"That was my intention, you know, Monseigneur," said Arnould, rather abashed; "and I was just saying my adieus—"

"To a friend? Oh, yes!" said Gabriel, "that shows your kind heart; but friendship must not make us forget our duty, and I must insist that you be on your way to Paris before I rise to-morrow. You have the governor's safe-conduct; your outfit has been ready for some days: your horse is as thoroughly rested as yourself; your purse is full, thanks to the confidence of our good host, who has only one regret, worthy man, and that is that he is unable to advance the whole of my ransom. You lack nothing, Martin; and if you start early in the morning you ought to be in Paris in three days. Do you remember what you are to do when you are safely there?"

"Yes, Monseigneur. I am to go at once to the house in the Rue des Jardins de St. Paul, to inform your nurse of your safety; to ask her for the ten thousand crowns required for your ransom, and three thousand more for your expenses and debts here; and as tokens of my authority, I am to show her this line from you, and your ring."

"Useless precautions, Martin, for my good nurse knows you well, my faithful fellow! but I have yielded to your scruples. Remember to see that this money is got together as quickly as possible, do you understand?"

"Never fear, Monseigneur. When I have the money, and have handed your letter to Monsieur l'Amiral, I am to come back even faster than I went away."

"No wretched quarrels on the way, above all things!"  
"There is no danger, Monseigneur."

"Well, then, adieu, Martin, and good luck to you!"

"In ten days you will see me here again, Monseigneur, and at sunrise to-morrow I shall be a long way from Calais."

On this occasion Arnauld kept his promise. He allowed Babette to go with him next morning to the city walls. He embraced her for the last time, swearing solemnly that she should see him again very soon; then he drove his spurs into his horse, and was off in high spirits like the rascal that he was, and speedily disappeared at a bend in the road.

The poor girl made haste to get back to the house before her terrible brother should have arisen; but she had to send word down that she was ill, so that she might indulge her grief alone in her chamber.

Thereafter it would not be easy to say whether she or Gabriel awaited the squire's return the more impatiently. They were both doomed to wait a long while.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **HOW ARNAULD DU THILL CAUSED ARNAULD DU THILL TO BE HANGED AT NOYON**

During the first day Arnauld du Thill had no unfortunate encounter, and pursued his journey with reasonable celerity. He met parties of the enemy from time to time along the road,—German deserters, disbanded Englishmen, and Spaniards insolent in the pride of conquest; for there were more foreigners than Frenchmen at this time in our poor debased France. But to all questioners Arnauld proudly exhibited Lord Wentworth's safe-conduct; and all of them, not without some regretful grumbling, thought best to respect the signature of the governor of Calais.

Nevertheless, on the second day, in the neighborhood of St. Quentin, a detachment of Spaniards undertook to get the better of him by claiming that his horse was not included in the safe-conduct, and that they might conclude to confiscate him; but the false Martin-Guerre was firm as a rock, and demanded to be taken to their commander, whereupon they released the sharp fellow and his horse without more ado.

However, the adventure served as a useful lesson to him, and he resolved henceforward to avoid as far as possible all meetings with armed bands. But it was a difficult matter; the enemy, although they had gained no decisive advantage by the capture of St. Quentin, nevertheless occupied all the



surrounding country. Le Catelet, Ham, Noyon, and Chauny were in their hands; and when Arnauld found himself before Noyon, on the evening of the second day, he made up his mind that his best plan was to avoid the town by a detour, and not put up for the night until he came to the next settlement.

In order to do this he had to leave the high-road. Arnauld, being but little acquainted with the country, lost his way; as he was trying to get back into the right road again, he suddenly found himself at a turn in the path in the midst of a detachment of armed men, who likewise seemed to be in search of something.

It is easier to imagine than describe Arnauld's intense satisfaction when he heard one of them cry out as soon as he caught sight of him,—

"Hallo! If here isn't that miserable Arnauld du Thill now!"

"Arnauld du Thill on horseback?" said another of the party.

"Great Heaven!" said the squire to himself, turning pale, "I seem to be known hereabouts; and if I am really recognized, it's all over with me."

It was too late, however, for him to turn about and make his escape, for the soldiers were all around him. Fortunately it was already pretty dark.

"Who are you, and where are you going?" one of them asked him.

"My name is Martin-Guerre," replied Arnauld, trembling with fear; "I am the squire of Vicomte d'Exmès, now a prisoner

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