

## Chapter 2

### HOW IT IS NOT ALWAYS HE WHO OPENS THE DOOR, WHO ENTERS THE HOUSE.

The Porte St. Antoine was a kind of vault in stone, similar to our present Porte St. Denis, only it was attached by its left side to buildings adjacent to the Bastile. The space at the right, between the gate and the Hôtel des Tournelles, was large and dark, little frequented by day, and quite solitary at night, for all passers-by took the side next to the fortress, so as to be in some degree under the protection of the sentinel. Of course, winter nights were still more feared than summer ones.

That on which the events which we have recounted, and are about to recount took place, was cold and black. Before the gate on the side of the city, was no house, but only high walls, those of the church of St. Paul, and of the Hôtel des Tournelles. At the end of this wall was the niche of which St. Luc had spoken to Bussy. No lamps lighted this part of Paris at that epoch. In the nights when the moon charged herself with the lighting of the earth, the Bastile rose somber and majestic against the starry blue of the skies, but on dark nights, there seemed only a thickening of the shadows where it stood. On the night in question, a practised eye might have detected in the angle of the wall of the Tournelles several black shades, which moved enough to show that they belonged to poor devils of human bodies, who seemed to find it difficult to preserve their natural warmth as they stood there. The sentinel from the Bastile; who could not see them on account of the darkness, could not hear them either, for they talked almost in whispers. However, the conversation did not want interest.

"This Bussy was right," said one; "it is a night such as we had at Warsaw, when Henri was King of Poland, and if this continues we shall freeze."

"Come, Maugiron, you complain like a woman," replied another: "it is not warm, I confess; but draw your mantle over your eyes, and put your hands in your pockets, and you will not feel it."

"Really, Schomberg," said a third, "it is easy to see you are German. As for me, my lips bleed, and my mustachios are stiff with ice."

"It is my hands," said a fourth; "on my honor, I would not swear I had any."

"You should have taken your mamma's muff, poor Quelus," said Schomberg.

"Eh! mon Dieu, have patience," said a fifth voice; "you will soon be complaining you are hot."

"I see some one coming through the Rue St. Paul," said Quelus.

"It cannot be him; he named another route."

"Might he not have suspected something, and changed it?"

"You do not know Bussy; where he said he should go, he would go, if he knew that Satan himself were barring his passage."

"However, here are two men coming."

"Ma foi! yes."

"Let us charge," said Schomberg.

"One moment," said D'Epernon; "do not let us kill good bourgeois, or poor women. Hold! they stop."

In fact, they had stopped, and looked as if undecided. "Oh, can they have seen us?"

"We can hardly see ourselves!"

"See, they turn to the left; they stop before a house they are seeking--they are trying to enter; they will escape us!"

"But it is not him, for he was going to the Faubourg St. Antoine."

"Oh! how do you know he told you right?"

At this supposition they all rushed out, sword in hand, towards the gentlemen.

One of the men had just introduced a key into the lock; the door had yielded and was about to open, when the noise of their assailants made them turn.

"What is this? Can it be against us, Aurilly?" said one.

"Ah, monseigneur," said the other, who had opened the door, "it looks like it. Will you name yourself, or keep incognito?"

"Armed men--an ambush!"

"Some jealous lover; I said the lady was too beautiful not to be watched."

"Let us enter quickly, Aurilly; we are safer within doors."

"Yes, monseigneur, if there are not enemies within; but how do you know----  
"

He had not time to finish. The young men rushed up; Quelus and Maugiron made for the door to prevent their entering, while Schomberg, D'O, and D'Epernon prepared to attack in front. But he who had been called monseigneur turned towards Quelus, who was in front, and crossing his arms proudly, said:

"You attack a son of France, M. Quelus!"

Quelus drew back, trembling, and thunderstruck.

"Monseigneur le Duc d'Anjou!" he cried.

"The Duc d'Anjou!" repeated the others.

"Well, gentlemen," cried the duke.

"Monseigneur," stammered D'Epernon, "it was a joke; forgive us."

"Monseigneur," said D'O, "we did not dream of meeting your highness here!"

"A joke!" said the duke; "you have an odd manner of joking, M. d'Epernon. Since it was not intended for me, whom did your jest menace?"

"Monseigneur," said Schomberg; "we saw St. Luc quit the Hôtel Montmorency and come this way; it seemed strange to us, and we wished to see what took him out on his wedding night."

"M. de St. Luc--you took me for him?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"M. de St. Luc is a head taller than I am."

"It is true, monseigneur; but he is just the height of M. Aurilly."

"And seeing a man put a key in a lock, we took him for the principal," added D'O.

"Monseigneur cannot suppose that we had the shadow of an ill-will towards him, even to disturb his pleasures?"

As he listened, the duke, by a skilful movement, had, little by little, quitted the door, followed by Aurilly, and was now at some distance off.

"My pleasures!" said he, angrily; "what makes you think I was seeking pleasure?"

"Ah, monseigneur, in any case pardon us, and let us retire," said Quelus.

"It is well; adieu, gentlemen; but first listen. I was going to consult the Jew Manasses, who reads the future; he lives, as you know, in Rue de la Tournelle. In passing, Aurilly saw you and took you for the watch, and we,

therefore, tried to hide ourselves in a doorway. And now you know what to believe and say; it is needless to add, that I do not wish to be followed," and he turned away.

"Monseigneur," said Aurilly, "I am sure these men have bad intentions; it is near midnight, and this is a lonely quarter; let us return home, I beg."

"No, no; let us profit by their departure."

"Your highness is deceived; they have not gone, but have returned to their retreat: look in the angle of the Hôtel des Tournelles."

François looked, and saw that Aurilly was right; it was evident that they waited for something, perhaps to see if the duke were really going to the Jew.

"Well, Monseigneur," continued Aurilly, "do you not think it will be more prudent to go home?"

"Mordieu! yet it is annoying to give up."

"Yes; but it can be put off. I told your highness that the house is taken for a year; we know the lady lodges on the first story. We have gained her maid, and have a key which opens the door: you may wait safely."

"You are sure that the door yielded?"

"Yes, at the third key I tried."

"Are you sure you shut it again?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

Aurilly did not feel sure, as he said, but he did not choose to admit it.

"Well, I will go; I shall return some other time." And the duke went away, promising to payoff the gentlemen for their interruption.

They had hardly disappeared, when the five companions saw approach a cavalier wrapped in a large cloak. The steps of his horse resounded on the frozen ground, and they went slowly and with precaution, for it was slippery.

"This time," said Quelus, "it is he."

"Impossible," said Maugiron.

"Why?"

"Because he is alone, and we left him with Livarot, Antragues, and Ribeirac, who would not have let him run such a risk."

"It is he, however; do you not recognize his insolent way of carrying his head?"

"Then," said D'O, "it is a snare."

"In any case, it is he; and so to arms!"

It was, indeed, Bussy, who came carelessly down the Rue St. Antoine, and followed the route given him by Quelus; he had, as we have seen, received the warning of St. Luc, and, in spite of it, had parted from his friends at the Hôtel Montmorency. It was one of those bravadoes delighted in by the valiant colonel, who said of himself, "I am but a simple gentleman, but I bear in my breast the heart of all emperor; and when I read in Plutarch the exploits of the ancient Romans, I think there is not one that I could not imitate." And besides, he thought that St. Luc, who was not ordinarily one of his friends, merely wished to get him laughed at for his precautions; and Bussy feared ridicule more than danger.

He had, even in the eyes of his enemies, earned a reputation for courage, which could only be sustained by the rashest adventures. Therefore, alone, and armed only with a sword and poniard, he advanced towards the house where waited for him no person, but simply a letter, which the Queen of Navarre sent him every month on the same day, and which he, according to his promise to the beautiful Marguerite, went to fetch himself, alone, and at night.

When he arrived at the Rue St. Catherine, his active eye discerned in the shade the forms of his adversaries. He counted them: "Three, four, five," said he, "without counting the lackeys, who are doubtless within call. They think much of me, it seems; all these for one man. That brave St. Luc did not deceive me; and were his even the first sword to pierce me I would cry, 'Thanks for your warning, friend.'" So saying, he continued to advance, only his arm held his sword under his cloak, of which he had unfastened the clasp.

It was then that Quelus cried, "To arms."

"Ah, gentlemen," said Bussy, "it appears you wish to kill me: I am the wild boar you had to hunt. Well, gentlemen, the wild boar will rip up a few of you; I swear it to you, and I never break my word."



"Possibly," said Schomberg; "but it is not right, M. Bussy d'Amboise, that you should be on horseback and we on foot." And as he spoke, the arm of the young man, covered with white satin, which glistened in the moonlight, came from under his cloak, and Bussy felt his horse give way under him. Schomberg had, with an address peculiar to himself, pierced the horse's leg with a kind of cutlass, of which the blade was heavier than the handle and which had remained in the wound. The animal gave a shrill cry and fell on his knees. Bussy, always ready, jumped at once to the ground, sword in hand.

"Ah!" cried he, "my favorite horse, you shall pay for this." And as Schomberg approached incautiously, Bussy gave him a blow which broke his thigh. Schomberg uttered a cry.

"Well!" said Bussy, "have I kept my word? one already. It was the wrist of Bussy, and not his horse's leg, you should have cut."

In an instant, while Schomberg bound up his thigh with his handkerchief, Bussy presented the point of his long sword to his four other assailants, disdainful to cry for help, but retreating gradually, not to fly, but to gain a wall, against which to support himself, and prevent his being attacked behind, making all the while constant thrusts, and feeling sometimes that soft resistance of the flesh which showed that his blows had taken effect. Once he slipped for an instant. That instant sufficed for Quelus to give him a wound in the side.

"Touched," cried Quelus.

"Yes, in the doublet," said Bussy, who would not even acknowledge his hurt. And rushing on Quelus, with a vigorous effort, he made his sword fly from his hand. But he could not pursue his advantage, for D'O, D'Epernon, and Maugiron attacked him, with fresh fury. Schomberg had bound his wound, and Quelus picked up his sword. Bussy made a bound backwards, and reached the wall. There he stopped, strong as Achilles, and smiling at the tempest of blows which rained around him. All at once he felt a cloud pass

over his eyes. He had forgotten his wound, but these symptoms of fainting recalled it to him.

"Ah, you falter!" cried Quelus.

"Judge of it!" cried Bussy. And with the hilt of his sword he struck him on the temple. Quelus fell under the blow. Then furious--wild, he rushed forward, uttering a terrible cry. D'O and D'Epernon drew back, Maugiron was raising Quelus, when Bussy broke his sword with his foot, and wounded the right arm of D'Epernon. For a moment he was conqueror, but Quelus recovered himself, and four swords flashed again. Bussy felt himself lost. He gathered all his strength to retreat once more step by step. Already the perspiration was cold on his brow, and the ringing in his ears and the cloud over his eyes warned him that his strength was giving way. He sought for the wall with his left hand; to his astonishment, it yielded. It was a door not quite closed. Then he regained hope and strength for a last effort. For a second his blows were rapid and violent. Then he let himself glide inside the door, and pushed it to with a violent blow. It shut, and Bussy was saved. He heard the furious blows of his enemies on the door, their cries of rage, and wrathful imprecations. Then, the ground seemed to fail under his feet, and the walls to move. He made a few steps forward, and fell on the steps of a staircase. He knew no more, but seemed to descend into the silence and obscurity of the tomb.