

## Chapter 3

### HOW IT IS SOMETIMES DIFFICULT TO DISTINGUISH A DREAM FROM THE REALITY.

Bussy had had time, before falling, to pass his handkerchief under his shirt, and to buckle the belt of his sword over it, so as to make a kind of bandage to the open wound whence the blood flowed, but he had already lost blood enough to make him faint. However, during his fainting fit, this is what Bussy saw, or thought he saw. He found himself in a room with furniture of carved wood, with a tapestry of figures, and a painted ceiling. These figures, in all possible attitudes, holding flowers, carrying arms, seemed to him to be stepping from the walls. Between the two windows a portrait of a lady was hung. He, fixed to his bed, lay regarding all this. All at once the lady of the portrait seemed to move, and an adorable creature, clothed in a long white robe, with fair hair falling over her shoulders, and with eyes black as jet, with long lashes, and with a skin under which he seemed to see the blood circulate, advanced toward the bed. This woman was so beautiful, that Bussy made a violent effort to rise and throw himself at her feet. But he seemed to be confined in there by bonds like those which keep the dead body in the tomb, while the soul mounts to the skies. This forced him to look at the bed on which he was lying, and it seemed to him one of those magnificent beds sculptured in the reign of Francis I., to which were suspended hangings of white damask, embroidered in gold.

At the sight of this woman, the people of the wall and ceiling ceased to occupy his attention; she was all to him, and he looked to see if she had left a vacancy in the frame. But suddenly she disappeared; and an opaque body interposed itself between her and Bussy, moving slowly, and stretching its arms out as though it were playing blindman's buff. Bussy felt in such a passion at this, that, had he been able, he would certainly have attacked this importunate vision; but as he made a vain effort, the newcomer spoke:

"Well," said he, "have I arrived at last?"

"Yes, monsieur," said a voice so sweet that it thrilled through Bussy, "and now you may take off your bandage." Bussy made an effort to see if the sweet voice belonged to the lady of the portrait, but it was useless. He only saw the pleasant face of a young man, who had just, as he was told, taken off his bandage, and was looking curiously about him.

"To the devil with this man," thought Bussy, and he tried to speak, but fruitlessly.

"Ah, I understand now," said the young man, approaching the bed; "you are wounded, are you not, my dear sir? Well, we will try to cure you."

"Is the wound mortal?" asked the sweet voice again, with a sad accent, which brought tears into the eyes of Bussy.

"I do not know yet, I am going to see; meanwhile, he has fainted."

This was all Bussy heard, he seemed to feel a red-hot iron in his side, and then lost all consciousness. Afterwards, it was impossible for Bussy to fix the duration of this insensibility.

When he woke, a cold wind blew over his face, and harsh voices sounded in his ears; he opened his eyes to see if it were the people of the tapestry speaking, and hoping to see the lady again, looked round him. But there was neither tapestry nor ceiling visible, and the portrait had also disappeared. He saw at his right only a man with a white apron spotted with blood; at his left, a monk, who was raising his head; and before him, an old woman mumbling her prayers. His wondering eyes next rested on a mass of stone before him, in which he recognized the Temple, and above that, the cold white sky, slightly tinted by the rising sun. He was in the street.

"Ah, thank you, good people," said he, "for the trouble you have taken in bringing me here. I wanted air, but you might have given it to me by opening

the window, and I should have been better on my bed of white damask and gold than on the bare ground. But never mind, there is in my pocket, unless you have paid yourselves, which would have been prudent, some twenty golden crowns; take, my friends, take."

"But, my good gentleman," said the butcher, "we did not bring you here, but found you here as we passed."

"Ah, diable! and the young doctor, was he here?"

The bystanders looked at each other.

"It is the remains of delirium," said the monk. Then, turning to Bussy, "I think you would do well to confess," said he, "there was no doctor, poor young man; you were here alone, and as cold as death."

Bussy then remembered having received a sword stroke, glided his hand under his doublet, and felt his handkerchief in the same place, fixed over his wound by his sword-belt.

"It is singular," said he.

Already profiting by his permission, the lookers-on were dividing his purse.

"Now, my friends," said he, "will you take me to my hôtel?"

"Ah, certainly," said the old woman, "poor dear young man, the butcher is strong, and then he has his horse, on which you can ride."

"Yes, my gentleman, my horse and I are at your service."

"Nevertheless, my son," said the monk, "I think you would do well to confess."

"What are you called?" asked Bussy.

"Brother Gorenflot."

"Well Brother Gorenflot, I trust my hour has not yet arrived and as I am cold, I wish to get quickly home and warm myself."

"What is your hotel called?"

"Hôtel de Bussy."

"How!" cried all, "you belong to M. de Bussy?"

"I am M. de Bussy himself."

"Bussy," cried the butcher, "the brave Bussy, the scourge of the minions!" And raising him, he was quickly carried home, whilst the monk went away, murmuring, "If it was that Bussy, I do not wonder he would not confess!"

When he got home, Bussy sent for his usual doctor, who found the wound not dangerous.

"Tell me," said Bussy, "has it not been already dressed?"

"Ma foi," said the doctor, "I am not sure."

"And was it serious enough to make me delirious?"

"Certainly."

"Ah!" thought Bussy, "was that tapestry, that frescoed ceiling, that bed, the portrait between the windows, the beautiful blonde woman with black eyes, the doctor blindfolded, was this all delirium? Is nothing true but my combat? Where did I fight? Ah, yes, I remember; near the Bastille, by the Rue St. Paul. I leaned against a door, and it opened; I shut it--and then I remember no more. Have I dreamed or not? And my horse! My horse must have been found dead on the place. Doctor, pray call some one."

The doctor called a valet. Bussy inquired, and heard that the animal, bleeding and mutilated, had dragged itself to the door of the hotel, and had been found there.

"It must have been a dream," thought he again: "how should a portrait come down from the wall and talk to a doctor with a bandage on his eyes? I am a fool; and yet when I remember she was so charming," and he began to describe her beauties, till he cried out, "It is impossible it should have been a dream; and yet I found myself in the street, and a monk kneeling by me. Doctor," said he, "shall have to keep the house a fortnight again for this scratch, as I did for the last?"

"We shall see; can you walk?"

"I seem to have quicksilver in my legs."

"Try."

Bussy jumped out of bed, and walked quickly round his room.

"That will do," said the doctor, "provided that you do not go on horseback, or walk ten miles the first day."

"Capital! you are a doctor; however, I have seen another to-night. Yes, I saw him, and if ever I meet him, I should know him."

"I advise you not to seek for him, monsieur; one has always a little fever after a sword wound; you should know that, who have had a dozen."

"Ah, mon Dieu!" cried Bussy, struck with a new idea, "did my dream begin outside the door instead of inside? Was there no more a staircase and a passage, than there was a bed with white and gold damask, and a portrait? Perhaps those wretches, thinking me dead, carried me to the Temple, to divert suspicion, should any one have seen them hiding. Certainly, it must be so, and I have dreamed the rest. Mon Dieu! if they have procured for me this dream which torments me so, I swear to make an end of them all."

"My dear seigneur," said the doctor, "if you wish to get well, you must not agitate yourself thus."

"Except St. Luc," continued Bussy, without attending; "he acted as a friend, and my first visit shall be to him."

"Not before five this evening."

"If you wish it; but, I assure you, it is not going out and seeing people which will make me ill, but staying quietly at home."

"Well, it is possible; you are always a singular patient; act as you please, only I recommend you not to get another wound before this one is healed."

Bussy promised to do his best to avoid it, and, after dressing, called for his litter to take him to the Hôtel Montmorency.