

Chapter 5

HOW MADAME DE ST. LUC PASSED THE SECOND NIGHT OF HER MARRIAGE.

Bussy went straight to the sleeping-room of the king. There were in it two beds of velvet and satin, pictures, relics, perfumed sachets from the East, and a collection of beautiful swords. Bussy knew the king was not there, as his brother had asked to see him, but he knew that there was next to it a little room which was occupied in turn by all the king's favorites, and which he now expected to find occupied by St. Luc, whom the king in his great affection had carried off from his wife. Bussy knocked at the antechamber common to the two rooms. The captain of the guards opened.

"M. de Bussy!" cried he.

"Yes, myself, dear M. de Nancey; the king wishes to speak to M. de St. Luc."

"Very well, tell M. de St. Luc the king wants him."

"What is he doing?"

"He is with Chicot, waiting for the king's return from his brother."

"Will you permit my page to wait here?"

"Willingly, monsieur."

"Enter, Jean," said Bussy, and he pointed to the embrasure of a window, where she went to hide herself. St. Luc entered, and M. de Nancey retired.

"What does the king want now?" cried St. Luc, angrily; "ah! it is you, M. de Bussy,"

"I, and before everything, let me thank you for the service you rendered me."

"Ah! it was quite natural; I could not bear to see a brave gentleman assassinated: I thought you killed."

"It did not want much to do it, but I got off with a wound, which I think I repaid with interest to Schomberg and D'Epernon. As for Quelus, he may thank the bones of his head: they are the hardest I ever knew."

"Ah! tell me about it, it will amuse me a little."

"I have no time now, I come for something else. You are ennuyé----"

"To death."

"And a prisoner?"

"Completely. The king pretends no one can amuse him but me. He is very good, for since yesterday I have made more grimaces than his ape, and been more rude than his jester."

"Well, it is my turn to render you a service: can I do it?"

"Yes, go to the Marshal de Brissac's, and reassure my poor little wife, who must be very uneasy, and must think my conduct very strange."

"What shall I say to her?"

"Morableu! tell her what you see; that I am a prisoner, and that the king talks to me of friendship like Cicero, who wrote on it; and of virtue like Socrates, who practised it. It is in vain I tell him I am ungrateful for the first, and incredulous as to the last: he only repeats it over again."

"Is that all I can do for you?"

"Ah, mon Dieu! I fear so."

"Then it is done."

"How so?"

"I guessed all this, and told your wife so."

"And what did she say?"

"At first she would not believe; but I trust now," continued he, glancing towards the window, "she will yield to evidence. Ask me something more difficult."

"Then, bring here the griffin of Signor Astolfo, and let me mount en croupe, and go to my wife."

"A more simple thing would be to take the griffin to your wife and bring her here."

"Here!"

"Yes, here."

"To the Louvre, that would be droll."

"I should think so. Then you would be ennuyé no longer?"

"Ma foi! no, but if this goes on much longer, I believe I shall kill myself."

"Well! shall I give you my page?"

"To me?"

"Yes, he is a wonderful lad."

"Thank you, but I detest pages."

"Bah! try him."

"Bussy, you mock me."

"Let me leave him."

"No."

"I tell you, you will like him."

"No, no, a hundred times, no."

"Hola, page, come here."

Jeanne came forward, blushing.

"Oh!" cried St. Luc, recognizing her, in astonishment.

"Well! shall I send him away?"

"No, no. Ah Bussy, I owe you an eternal friendship."

"Take care, you cannot be heard, but you can be seen."

"It is true," said St. Luc, retreating from his wife. Indeed, M. de Nancey was beginning to wonder what was going on, when a great noise was heard from the gallery.

"Ah! mon Dieu!" cried M. de Nancey, "there is the king quarreling with some one."

"I really think so," replied Bussy, affecting inquietude; "can it be with the Duc d'Anjou, who came with me?"

The captain of the guard went off in the direction of the gallery.

"Have I not managed well?" said Bussy to St. Luc.

"What is it?"

"M. d'Anjou and the king are quarrelling; I must go to them. You profit by the time to place in safety the page I have brought you; is it possible?"

"Oh, yes; luckily I declared I was ill and must keep my room."

"In that case, adieu, madame, and remember me in your prayers." And Bussy went off to the gallery, where the king, red with fury, swore to the duke, who was pale with anger, that in the scene of the preceding night Bussy was the aggressor.

"I affirm to you, sire," cried the duke, "that D'Epernon, Schomberg and Quelus were waiting for him at the Hôtel des Tournelles."

"Who told you so?"

"I saw them with my own eyes."

"In that darkness! The night was pitch dark."

"I knew their voices."

"They spoke to you?"

"They did more, they took me for Bussy, and attacked me."

"You?"

"Yes, I."

"And what were you doing there?"

"What does that matter to you?"

"I wish to know; I am curious to-day."

"I was going to Manasses."

"A Jew?"

"You go to Ruggieri, a poisoner."

"I go where I like: I am the king. Besides, as I said, Bussy was the aggressor."

"Where?"

"At St. Luc's ball."

"Bussy provoked five men? No, no, he is brave, but he is not mad."

"Par la mordieu! I tell you I heard him. Besides, he has wounded Schomberg in the thigh, D'Epernon in the arm, and half killed Quelus."

"Ah! really I did not know; I compliment him on it."

"I will make example of this brawler."

"And I, whom your friends attack, in his person and in my own, will know if I am your brother, and if---"

At this moment Bussy, dressed in pale-green satin, entered the room.

"Sire!" said he, "receive my humble respects."

"Pardieu! here he is," cried Henri.

"Your majesty, it seems, was doing me the honor of speaking of me."

"Yes, and I am glad to see that, in spite of what they told me, your look shows good health."

"Sire, blood drawn improves the complexion, so mine ought to be good this morning."

"Well, since they have wounded you, complain, and I will do you justice."

"I complain of nothing, sire."

Henri looked astonished. "What did you say?" said he to the duke.

"I said that Bussy had received a wound in his side."

"Is it true, Bussy?"

"The first prince of the blood would not lie, sire."

"And yet you do not complain?"

"I shall never complain, sire, until they cut off my right-hand, and prevent my revenging myself, and then I will try to do it with the left."

"Insolent," murmured Henri.

"Sire," said the duke, "do justice; we ask no better. Order an inquiry, name judges, and let it be proved who prepared the ambush and the intended murder."

Henri reddened. "No," said he, "I prefer this time to be ignorant where the wrong lies, and to pardon everyone. I wish these enemies to make peace, and I am sorry that Schomberg and D'Epernon are kept at home by their wounds. Say, M. d'Anjou, which do you call the most forward to fight of all my friends, as you say you saw them?"

"Sire, it was Quelus."

"Ma foi! yes," said Quelus, "his highness is right."

"Then," said Henri, "let MM. Bussy and Quelus make peace in the name of all."

"Oh! Oh!" said Quelus, "what does that mean, sire?"

"It means that you are to embrace here, before me." Quelus frowned.

"Ah, signor," cried Bussy, imitating a pantaloon, "will you not do me this favor?"

Even the king laughed. Then, approaching Quelus, Bussy threw his arms round his neck, saying, "The king wishes it."

"I hope it engages us to nothing," whispered Quelus.

"Be easy," answered Bussy, "we will meet soon."

Quelus drew back in a rage, and Bussy, making a pirouette, went out of the gallery.