

Chapter 10

HOW BUSSY WENT TO SEEK FOR THE REALITY OF HIS DREAM.

When Bussy returned home again, he was still thinking of his dream.

"Morbieu!" said he, "it is impossible that a dream should have left such a vivid impression on my mind. I see it all so clearly;--the bed, the lady, the doctor. I must seek for it--surely I can find it again." Then Bussy, after having the bandage of his wound resettled by a valet, put on high boots, took his sword, wrapped himself in his cloak, and set off for the same place where he had been nearly murdered the night before, and nearly at the same hour.

He went in a litter to the Rue Roi-de-Sicile, then got out, and told his servants to wait for him. It was about nine in the evening, the curfew had sounded, and Paris was deserted. Bussy arrived at the Bastille, then he sought for the place where his horse had fallen, and thought he had found it; he next endeavored to repeat his movements of the night before, retreated to the wall, and examined every door to find the corner against which he had leaned, but all the doors seemed alike.

"Pardieu!" said he, "if I were to knock at each of these doors question all the lodgers, spend a thousand crowns to make valets and old women speak, I might learn what I want to know. There are fifty houses; it would take me at least five nights."

As he spoke, he perceived a small and trembling light approaching.

This light advanced slowly, and irregularly, stopping occasionally, moving on again, and going first to the right, then to the left, then, for a minute, coming straight on, and again diverging. Bussy leaned against a door, and waited. The light continued to advance, and soon he could see a black

figure, which, as it advanced, took the form of a man, holding a lantern in his left hand. He appeared to Bussy to belong to the honorable fraternity of drunkards, for nothing else seemed to explain the eccentric movements of the lantern. At last he slipped over a piece of ice, and fell. Bussy was about to come forward and offer his assistance, but the man and the lantern were quickly up again, and advanced directly towards him, when he saw, to his great surprise, that the man had a bandage over his eyes. "Well!" thought he, "it is a strange thing to play at blind man's buff with a lantern in your hand. Am I beginning to dream again? And, good heavens! he is talking to himself. If he be not drunk or mad, he is a mathematician."

This last surmise was suggested by the words that Bussy heard.

"488, 489, 490," murmured the man, "it must be near here." And then he raised his bandage, and finding himself in front of a house, examined it attentively.

"No, it is not this," he said. Then, putting back his bandage, he recommenced his walk and his calculations. "491, 492, 493, 494; I must be close." And he raised his bandage again, and, approaching the door next to that against which Bussy was standing, began again to examine.

"Hum!" said he, "it might, but all these doors are so alike."

"The same reflection I have just made," thought Bussy.

However, the mathematician now advanced to the next door, and going up to it, found himself face to face with Bussy.

"Oh!" cried he, stepping back.

"Oh!" cried Bussy.

"It is not possible."

"Yes; but it is extraordinary. You are the doctor?"

"And you the gentleman?"

"Just so."

"Mon Dieu! how strange."

"The doctor," continued Bussy, "who yesterday dressed a wound for a gentleman?"

"Yes, in the right side."

"Exactly so. You had a gentle, light, and skilful hand."

"Ah, sir, I did not expect to find you here."

"But what were you looking for?"

"The house."

"Then you do not know it?"

"How should I? They brought me here with my eyes bandaged."

"Then you really came here?"

"Either to this house or the next."

"Then I did not dream?"

"Dream?"

"I confess I feared it was all a dream."

"Ah! I fancied there was some mystery."

"A mystery which you must help me to unravel."

"Willingly."

"What is your name?"

"Monsieur, to such a question I ought, perhaps, to reply by looking fierce, and saying, 'Yours, monsieur, if you please; but you have a long sword, and I only a lancet; you seem to me a gentleman, and I cannot appear so to you, for I am wet and dirty. Therefore, I reply frankly: I am called Rémy-le-Haudouin.'"

"Very well, monsieur; I thank you. I am Louis de Clermont, Comte de Bussy."

"Bussy d'Amboise! the hero Bussy!" cried the young doctor, joyfully. "What, monsieur, you are that famous Bussy----?"

"I am Bussy," replied he. "And now, wet and dirty as you are, will you satisfy my curiosity?"

"The fact is," said the young man, "that I shall be obliged, like Epaminondas the Theban, to stay two days at home, for I have but one doublet and trousers. But, pardon, you did me the honor to question me, I think?"

"Yes, monsieur, I asked you how you came to this house?"

"M. le Comte, this is how it happened; I lodge in the Rue Beauheillis, 502 steps from here. I am a poor surgeon, not unskilful, I hope."

"I can answer for that."

"And who has studied much, but without any patients. Seven or eight days ago, a man having received behind the Arsenal a stab with a knife, I sewed up the wound, and cured him. This made for me some reputation in the neighborhood, to which I attribute the happiness of having been last night awoke by a pretty voice."

"A woman's?"

"Yes, but, rustic as I am, I knew it to be the voice of a servant. I know them well."

"And what did you do?"

"I rose and opened my door, but scarcely had I done so, when two little hands, not very soft, but not very hard, put a bandage over my eyes, without saying anything."

"'Oh!' she said, 'come, do not try to see where you are going, be discreet, here is your recompense;' and she placed in my hand a purse."

"Ah! and what did you say?"

"That I was ready to follow my charming conductress. I did not know if she were charming or not, but I thought that the epithet, even if exaggerated, could do no harm."

"And you asked no more?"

"I had often read these kinds of histories in books, and I had remarked that they always turned out well for the doctor. Therefore I followed, and I counted 498 paces."

"Good; then this must be the door."

"It cannot be far off, at all events, unless she led me by some detour, which I half suspect."

"But did she pronounce no name?"

"None."

"But you remarked something?"

"All that one could with one's fingers, a door with nails, then a passage, and then a staircase----"

"On the left?"

"Yes; and I counted the steps. Then I think we came to a corridor, for they opened three doors."

"Well?"

"Then I heard another voice, and that belonged to the mistress, I am sure; it was sweet and gentle."

"Yes, yes, it was hers."

"Good, it was hers."

"I am sure of it."

"Then they pushed me into the room where you were, and told me to take off my bandage, when I saw you----"

"Where was I?"

"On a bed."

"A bed of white and gold damask?"

"Yes."

"In a room hung with tapestry?"

"Just so."

"And a painted ceiling?"

"Yes, and between two windows----"

"A portrait?"

"Yes."

"Representing a woman about nineteen?"

"Yes."

"Blonde, and beautiful as an angel?"

"More beautiful."

"Bravo! what did you do then?"

"I dressed your wound."

"And, ma foi! very well."

"As well as I could."

"Admirably! this morning it was nearly well."

"It is thanks to a balm I have composed, and which appears to me sovereign, for many times, not knowing who to practise upon, I have made wounds on myself, and they were always well in two or three days."

"My dear M. Rémy, you are a charming doctor. Well, afterwards?"

"You fainted again. The voice asked me how you were."

"From whence?"

"From a room at the side."

"So you did not see her?"

"No."

"And you replied?"

"That the wound was not dangerous, and in twenty-four hours would be well."

"She seemed pleased?"

"Charmed; for she cried, 'I am very glad of that.'"

"My dear M. Rémy, I will make your fortune. Well?"

"That was all; I had no more to do; and the voice said, 'M. Rémy----'"

"She knew your name?"

"Yes; 'M. Rémy,' said she, 'be a man of honor to the last; do not compromise a poor woman carried away by an excess of humanity. Take your bandage, and let them take you straight home.'"

"You promised?"

"I gave my word."

"And you kept it?"

"As you see, for I am seeking now."

"You are an honest man, and here is my hand," cried Bussy.

"Monsieur, it will be an eternal glory for me to have touched the hand of Bussy d'Amboise. However, I have a scruple. There were ten pistoles in the purse."

"Well?"

"It is too much for a man who charges five sous for his visits, when he does not give them gratis, and I was seeking the house----"

"To return the purse?"

"Just so."

"My dear M. Rémy, it is too much delicacy; you have earned the money well, and may surely keep it."

"You think so?" said Rémy, well pleased.

"But I also am in your debt; indeed, it was I who ought to have paid you, and not the lady. Come, give me your confidence. What do you do in Paris?"

"What do I do? I do nothing; but I would if I had a connection."

"Well, that is just right; I will give you a patient. Will you have me? I am famous practise; for there is scarcely a day when I do not deface God's noblest work for others, or they for me. Will you undertake the care of all the holes I make in the skin of others or others in mine?"

"Ah, M. le Comte! this honor."

"No; you are just the man I want. You shall come and live with me; you shall have your own rooms, and your own servants; accept, or you will really annoy me."

"M. le Comte, I am so overjoyed, I cannot express it. I will work--I will make a connection----"

"But, no, I tell you, I keep you for myself and my friends. Now, do you remember anything more?"

"Nothing."

"Ah, well! help me to find out, if it be possible."

"I will."

"And you, who are a man of observation, how do you account for it, that after being doctored by you, I found myself by the Temple, close to the ditch."

"You!"

"Yes, I. Did you help to take me there?"

"Certainly not, and I should have opposed it if they had consulted me; for the cold might have done you much harm."

"Then I can tell nothing. Will you search a little more with me?"

"I will if you wish it; but I much fear it will be useless for all these houses are alike."

"Well, we must come again by day."

"Yes; but then we shall be seen."

"Then we must inquire."

"We will, monseigneur."

"And we shall unravel the mystery. Be sure, Rémy, now there are two of us to work."