

Chapter 12

HOW BUSSY FOUND BOTH THE PORTRAIT AND THE ORIGINAL.

The chase terminated about four o'clock in the evening, and at five all the court returned to Paris. As they passed by the Bastile, the duke said to Bussy, "Look to the right, at that little wooden house with a statue of the Virgin before it; well, count four houses from that. It is the fifth you have to go to, just fronting the Rue St. Catherine."

"I see it; and look! at the sound of the trumpets announcing the king, all the windows are filled with gazers."

"Except the one I show you, where the curtains remain closed."

"But there is a corner lifted," said Bussy, with a beating heart.

"Yes, but we can see nothing. The lady is well guarded. However, that is the house."

When Bussy returned, he said to Rémy, "Have you discovered the house?"

"No, monseigneur."

"Well, I believe I have been more lucky."

"How so, monsieur, have you been seeking?"

"I passed through the street."

"And you recognized the house?"

"Providence, my dear friend, has mysterious ways."

"Then you are sure?"

"Not sure, but I hope."

"And when shall I know if you are right?"

"To-morrow morning."

"Meanwhile, do you want me?"

"No, my dear Rémy."

"Shall I not follow you?"

"Impossible."

"Be prudent, monseigneur."

"Ah! the recommendation is useless, my prudence is well known."

Bussy dined like a man who does not know when he will sup, then, at eight o'clock, choosing the best of his swords, and attaching, in spite of the king's orders, a pair of pistols to his belt, went in his litter to the corner of the Rue St. Paul.

He easily recognized the house again, and then, wrapped in his cloak, hid at the corner of the street, determined to wait for two hours, and at the end of that time, if no one came, to act for himself. He had scarcely been there ten minutes, when he saw two cavaliers coming. One of them dismounted, gave his horse to the other, who was probably a lackey, and who went away with the horses, and advanced towards the house pointed out to Bussy, and, after glancing round to see if he were observed, opened the door and went in. Bussy waited two or three minutes, and then followed him. He advanced slowly and softly, found the staircase, and went up. In the corridor he stopped, for he heard a voice say, "Gertrude, tell your mistress that it is I, and that I must come in."

This was said in an imperious tone, and, a minute after, Bussy heard a woman's voice say:

"Pass into the drawing-room, Monsieur, and madame will come to you."

Then he heard the sound of a door shutting. He made a few steps silently, and extending his hand, felt a door; he went in, found a second in which was a key; he turned it, and entered the room tremblingly. The room in which he found himself was dark, except from the light shining from another. By this he could see two windows, hung with tapestry, which sent a thrill of joy through the young man's heart. On the ceiling he could faintly see the mythological figures; he extended his hand, and felt the sculptured bed. There was no more doubt, he was in the room where he had awakened the night of his wound.

Bussy hid behind the bed-curtains to listen. He heard in the adjoining room the impatient step of the unknown; from time to time he stopped, murmuring between his teeth, "Will she come?"

Presently a door opened, and the rustling of a silk dress struck on Bussy's ear. Then he heard a woman's voice, expressive at once of fear and disdain, saying:

"Here I am, monsieur, what do you want now?"

"Madame," replied the man, "I have the honor of telling you that, forced to set off to-morrow morning for Fontainebleau, I come to pass the night with you."

"Do you bring me news of my father?"

"Madame, listen to me----"

"Monsieur, you know what we agreed yesterday, when I consented to become your wife, that, before all things, either my father should come to Paris, or I should go to him."

"Madame, as soon as I return from Fontainebleau, I give you my word of honor, but meanwhile----"

"Oh! monsieur, do not close the door, it is useless; I will not pass a single night under the same roof with you until you bring me my father." And the lady, who spoke, thus, whistled through a silver whistle, which was then the manner of calling servants.

Immediately the door opened, and a young, vigorous-looking girl entered. As she went in, she left the door open, which threw a strong light into the room where Bussy was hid, and between the two windows he saw the portrait. Bussy now crept noiselessly along to where he could peep into the room.

However carefully he moved, the floor creaked. At the noise the lady turned, she was the original of the portrait. The man, seeing her turn, turned also; it was M. de Monsoreau.

"Ah!" thought Bussy, "the white horse, the woman carried away, there is some terrible history."

Bussy, as we have said, could see them both; she, standing up, pale and disdainful. He, not pale, but livid, agitated his foot impatiently.

"Madame," said he, at last, "do not hope to continue with me this character of a persecuted woman; you are at Paris, in my house, and, still more, you are Comtesse de Monsoreau, that is to say, my Wife.

"If I am your wife, why refuse to conduct me to my father? Why continue to hide me from the eyes of the world?"

"You have forgotten the Duc d'Anjou, madame."

"You assured me that, once your wife, I should have no more to fear from him."

"That is to say----"

"You promised me that."

"But still, madame, I must take precautions."

"Well, monsieur, when you have taken them, return to me."

"Diana," said the count, who was growing visibly angry, "Diana, do not make a jest of this sacred tie."

"Act so, monsieur, that I can have confidence in the husband, and I will respect the marriage."

"Oh! this is too much!" cried the count. "I am in my own house, you are my wife, and this night you shall be mine."

Bussy put his hand on his sword-hilt, and made a step forward, but Diana did not give him time to appear.

"Stay," said she, drawing a poignard from her belt, "here is my answer." And rushing into the room where Bussy was, she shut the door and locked it, while Monsoreau exhausted himself in menaces and in blows on the door.

"If you break this door you will find me dead on the threshold."

"And be easy, madame, you shall be revenged," said Bussy.

Diana was about to utter a cry, but her fear of her husband was strong enough to restrain her. She remained pale and trembling, but mute.

M. de Monsoreau struck violently with his foot, but convinced that Diana would execute her menace, went out of the drawing-room, shutting the door violently behind him. Then they heard him going down the stairs.

"But you, monsieur," said Diana, turning to Bussy, "who are you, and how came you here?"

"Madame," said Bussy, opening the door, and kneeling before her, "I am the man whose life you preserved. You cannot think that I come to your house with any bad designs." As the light streamed in, Diana recognized him at once.

"Ah! you here, monsieur," cried she, clasping her hands, "you were here-- you heard all?"

"Alas! yes, madame."

"But who are you? your name, monsieur?"

"Madame, I am Louis de Clermont, Comte de Bussy."

"Bussy! you are the brave Bussy!" cried Diana, filling with joy the heart of the young man. "Ah! Gertrude!" cried she, turning to her servant, who, hearing her mistress talking to some one, had entered in terror, "Gertrude, I have no more to fear, for from this time I place myself under the safeguard of the most noble and loyal gentleman in France." Then holding out her hand to Bussy.

"Rise, monsieur," said she, "I know who you are, now you must know who I am."