

## Chapter 24

### HOW REMY-LE-HAUDOUIN HAD, IN BUSSY'S ABSENCE, ESTABLISHED A COMMUNICATION WITH THE RUE ST. ANTOINE.

M. and Madame de St. Luc could hardly recover from their surprise. Bussy, holding secret interviews with M. de Méridor, and then setting off with him for Paris, appearing to take the lead in a matter which at first seemed strange and unknown to him, was to the young people an inexplicable phenomenon. In the morning the baron took leave of his guests, begging them to remain in the castle. Before Bussy left, however, he whispered a few words to Madame de St. Luc, which brought the color to her cheeks, and smiles to her eyes.

It was a long way from Méridor to Paris, especially for the old baron, covered with wounds from all his battles, and for his old horse, whom he called Jarnac. Bussy studied earnestly during the journey to find his way to the heart of the old man by his care and attentions, and without doubt he succeeded, for on the sixth morning, as they arrived at Paris, M. de Méridor said:

"It is singular, count, but I feel less unquiet at the end than at the beginning of my journey."

"Two hours more, M. le Baron, and you shall have judged me as I deserve."

"Where are we going--to the Louvre?"

"Let me first take you to my hotel, that you may refresh yourself a little, and be fit to see the person to whom I am leading you."

The count's people had been very much alarmed at his long absence, for he had set off without telling any one but Rémy. Thus their delight on seeing him again was great, and they all crowded round him with joyous

exclamations. He thanked them, and then said, "Now assist this gentleman to dismount, and remember that I look upon him with more respect than a prince."

When M. de Méridor had been shown to his room, and had had some refreshment, he asked if they should set out.

"Soon, baron; and be easy--it will be a happiness for you as well as for us."

"You speak in a language which I do not understand."

Bussy smiled, and left the room to seek Rémy.

"Well! dear Hippocrates!" said he, "is there anything new?"

"Nothing; all goes well."

"Then the husband has not returned?"

"Yes, he has, but without success. It seems there is a father who is expected to turn up to make the dénouement."

"Good," said Bussy, "but how do you know all this?"

"Why, monseigneur, as your absence made my position a sinecure, I thought I would try to make some little use of my time; so I took some books and a sword to a little room which I hired at the corner of the Rue St. Antoine, from whence I could see the house that you know."

"Very good."

"But as I feared, if I were constantly watching, to pass for a spy, I thought it better to fall in love."

"In love?"

"Oh yes, desperately with Gertrude; she is a fine girl, only two inches taller than myself, and who recounts, capitally."

"Recounts?"

"Yes; through her I know all that passes with her mistress. I thought you might not dislike to have communications with the house."

"Rémy, you are a good genius, whom chance, or rather Providence, has placed in my way. Then you are received in the house?"

"Last night I made my entrance on the points of my toes, by the door you know."

"And how did you manage it?"

"Quite naturally. The day after you left, I waited at my door till the lady of my thoughts came out to buy provisions, which she does every morning. She recognized me, uttered a cry, and ran away."

"Then?"

"Then I ran after her, but could hardly catch her, for she runs fast; but still, petticoats are always a little in the way. 'Mon Dieu!' cried she. 'Holy Virgin!' said I. 'The doctor!' 'The charming housekeeper.' She smiled, but said, 'You are mistaken, monsieur, I do not know you.' 'But I know you,' I replied, 'and for the last three days I have lived but for you, and I adore you so much, that I no longer live in the Rue Beautreillis, but at the corner of this street, and I changed my lodging only to see you pass in and out.'"

"So that now you are----"

"As happy as a lover can be--with Gertrude."

"Does she suspect you come from me?"

"Oh no, how should the poor doctor know a great lord like M. de Bussy. No, I said, 'And how is your young master?' 'What young master?' 'The one I cured.' 'He is not my master.' 'Oh! I thought, as he was in your mistress's bed----' 'Oh! no, poor young man! we have only seen him once since.' 'Do you know his name?' 'Oh! yes; he is the Seigneur de Bussy.' 'What! the brave Bussy?' 'Yes himself.' 'And your mistress?' 'Oh! she is married!' 'Yes, but still she may think sometimes of a handsome young man when she has seen him lying wounded in her bed.' 'Oh, to be frank, I do not say she does not think of him; we talk of him very often.' 'What do you say about him?' I asked. 'I recount all I hear about his prowess, and I have even taught her a little song about him, which she sings constantly.'" Bussy pressed the young man's hand; he felt supremely happy.