

Chapter 43

ETYMOLOGY OF THE RUE DE LA JUSSIENNE.

Rémy took his patient by the arm, and led him by the Rue Coquillière down to the rampart.

"It is strange," said Bussy, "you take me near the marsh of the Grange-Batelier, and call it healthy."

"Oh, monsieur, a little patience; we are going to turn round the Rue Pagavin, and get into the Rue Montmartre--you will see what a fine street that is."

"As if I do not know it."

"Well, so much the better; I need not lose time in showing you its beauties, and I will lead you at once into a pretty little street."

Indeed, after going a few steps down the Rue Montmartre, they turned to the right.

"This," said Rémy, "is the Rue de la Gypécienne, or Egyptienne, which you like; often called by the people the Rue de la Gyssienne, or Jussienne."

"Very likely; but where are we going?"

"Do you see that little church?" said Rémy. "How nicely it is situated; I dare say you never remarked it before."

"No, I did not know it."

"Well, now that you have seen the exterior, enter and look at the windows--they are very curious."

There was such a pleased smile on the young man's face, that Bussy felt sure there must have been some other reason for making him enter than to look at the windows which it was too dark to see. The chapel was lighted, however, for service, and Rémy began examining a fresco of the Virgin Mary, which was a continual source of complaint to the women who frequented the church, as they said that it attracted the attention of the young shopkeepers away from them.

"You had some other object in bringing me here than that I should admire the St. Marie, had you not?"

"Ma foi! no."

"Then let us go."

"Wait a moment; the service is finishing."

"Now let us go," said Bussy; "they are moving;" and he walked to the door.

"At least take some holy water."

Bussy obeyed, and Rémy making a sign to a woman who stood near, she advanced, and Bussy grew suddenly pale, for he recognized Gertrude. She saluted him and passed on, but behind her came a figure which, although closely veiled, made his heart beat fast. Rémy looked at him, and Bussy knew now why he had brought him to this church. Bussy followed the lady, and Rémy followed him. Gertrude had walked on before, until she came to

an alley closed by a door. She opened it, and let her mistress pass. Bussy followed, and the two others disappeared.

It was half-past seven in the evening, and near the beginning of May; the air began to have the feeling of spring, and the leaves were beginning to unfold themselves. Bussy looked round him, and found himself in a little garden fifty feet square, surrounded by high walls covered with vines and moss. The first lilacs which had begun to open in the morning sun sent out their sweet emanations, and the young man felt tempted to think that so much perfume and warmth and life came to him only from the presence of the woman he loved so tenderly.

On a little wooden bench sat Diana, twisting in her fingers a sprig of wall-flower, which she had picked, without knowing what she did. As Bussy approached her, she raised her head, and said timidly, "M. le Comte, all deception would be unworthy of us; if you found me at the church of St. Marie l'Egyptienne, it was not chance that brought you there."

"No, madame; Rémy took me out without my knowing where I was going, and I swear to you that I was ignorant----"

"You do not understand me, monsieur, I know well that M. Rémy brought you there, by force, perhaps."

"No, madame, not by force; I did not know that he was going to take me to see any one."

"That is a harsh speech," said Diana, sadly, and with tears in her eyes. "Do you mean that had you known, you would not have come?"

"Oh, madame!"

"It would have been but just, monsieur; you did me a great service, and I have not thanked you. Pardon me, and receive all my thanks."

"Madame----" Bussy stopped; he felt so overcome, that he had neither words nor ideas.

"But I wished to prove to you," continued Diana, "that I am not ungrateful, nor forgetful. It was I who begged M. Rémy to procure for me the honor of this interview; it was I who sought for it, forgive me if I have displeased you."

"Oh, madame! you cannot think that."

"I know," continued Diana, who was the strongest, because she had prepared herself for this interview, "how much trouble you had in fulfilling my commission; I know all your delicacy; I know it and appreciate it, believe me. Judge, then, what I must have suffered from the idea that you would misunderstand the sentiments of my heart."

"Madame, I have been ill for three days."

"Oh! I know," cried Diana, with a rising color, "and I suffered more than you, for M. Rémy, he deceived me, no doubt; for he made me believe----"

"That your forgetfulness caused it. Oh! it is true."

"Then I have been right to do as I have done; to see you, to thank you for your kindness, and to swear to you an eternal gratitude. Do you believe that I speak from the bottom of my heart?"

Bussy shook his head sadly, and did not reply.

"Do you doubt my words?" said Diana.

"Madame, those who feel a kindness for you, show it when they can. You knew I was at the palace the night of your presentation, you knew I was close to you, you must have felt my looks fixed on you, and you never raised your eyes to me, you never let me know by a word, a sign, or a gesture, that you were aware of my presence; but perhaps you did not recognize me, madame, you have only seen me twice." Diana replied with so sad a glance of reproach, that Bussy was moved by it.

"Pardon, madame," said he; "you are not an ordinary woman, and yet you act like them. This marriage----"

"I was forced to conclude it."

"Yes, but it was easy to break."

"Impossible, on the contrary."

"Did you not know that near you watched a devoted friend?"

"Even that made me fear."

"And you did not think of what my life would be, when you belonged to another. But perhaps you kept the name of Monsoreau from choice?"

"Do you think so?" murmured Diana; "so much the better." And her eyes filled with tears. Bussy walked up and down in great agitation.

"I am to become once more a stranger to you," said he.

"Alas!"

"Your silence says enough."

"I can only speak by my silence."

"At the Louvre you would not see me, and now you will not speak to me."

"At the Louvre I was watched by M. de Monsoreau, and he is jealous."

"Jealous! What does he want then? mon Dieu! whose happiness can he envy, when all the world is envying his?"

"I tell you he is jealous; for the last two or three days he has seen some one wandering round our new abode."

"Then you have quitted the Rue St. Antoine?"

"How!" cried Diana thoughtlessly, "then it was not you?"

"Madame, since your marriage was publicly announced, since that evening at the Louvre, where you did not deign to look at me, I have been in bed, devoured by fever, so you see that your husband could not be jealous of me, at least."

"Well! M. le Comte, if it be true that you had any desire to see me, you must thank this unknown man; for knowing M. de Monsoreau as I know him, this man made me tremble for you, and I wished to see you and say to you, 'Do not expose yourself so, M. le Comte; do not make me more unhappy than I am.'"

"Reassure yourself, madame; it was not I."

"Now, let me finish what I have to say. In the fear of this man--whom I do not know, but whom M. de Monsoreau does perhaps--he exacts that I should leave Paris, so that," said Diana, holding out her hand to Bussy, "you may look upon this as our last meeting, M. le Comte. To-morrow we start for Méridor."

"You are going, madame?"

"There is no other way to reassure M. de Monsoreau; no other way for me to be at peace. Besides, I myself detest Paris, the world, the court, and the Louvre. I wish to be alone with my souvenirs of my happy past; perhaps a little of my former happiness will return to me there. My father will accompany me, and I shall find there M. and Madame de St. Luc, who expect me. Adieu, M. de Bussy."

Bussy hid his face in his hands. "All is over for me," he murmured.

"What do you say?" said Diana.

"I say, madame, that this man exiles you, that he takes from me the only hope left to me, that of breathing the same air as yourself, of seeing you sometimes, of touching your dress as you pass. Oh! this man is my mortal enemy, and if I perish for it, I will destroy him with my own hands."

"Oh! M. le Comte!"

"The wretch; it is not enough for him that you are his wife: you, the most beautiful and most charming of creatures, but he is still jealous. Jealous! The devouring monster would absorb the whole world!"

"Oh! calm yourself, comte; mon Dieu; he is excusable, perhaps."

"He is excusable! you defend him, madame?"

"Oh! if you knew!" cried Diana, covering her face with her hands.

"If I knew! Oh! madame, I know one thing; he who is your husband is wrong to think of the rest of the world."

"But!" cried Diana, in a broken voice, "if you were wrong, M. le Comte, and if he were not."

And the young woman, touching with her cold hand the burning ones of Bussy, rose and fled among the somber alleys of the garden, seized Gertrude's arm and dragged her away, before Bussy, astonished and overwhelmed with delight, had time to stretch out his arms to retain her. He uttered a cry and tottered; Rémy arrived in time to catch him in his arms and make him sit down on the bench that Diana had just quitted.