

Chapter 46

HOW CHICOT PAID A VISIT TO BUSSY, AND WHAT FOLLOWED.

The next morning, about nine, Bussy was eating his breakfast, and talking with Rémy over the events of the previous day.

"Rémy," said he, "did you not think you had seen somewhere that gentleman whom they were dipping in a vat in the Rue Coquillière?"

"Yes, M. le Comte, but I cannot think of his name."

"I ought to have helped him," said Bussy, "it is a duty one gentleman owes to another; but, really, Rémy, I was too much occupied with my own affairs."

"But he must have recognized us, for we were our natural color, and it seemed to me that he rolled his eyes frightfully, and shook his fist at us."

"Are you sure of that, Rémy? We must find out who it was; I cannot let such an insult pass."

"Oh!" cried Rémy, "I know now who he was."

"How so?"

"I heard him swear."

"I should think so; any one would have sworn in such a situation."

"Yes, but he swore in German."

"Bah!"

"Yes, he said, 'Gott verdomme.'"

"Then it was Schomberg?"

"Himself, M. le Comte."

"Then, my dear Rémy, get your salves ready."

"Why so, monsieur?"

"Because, before long, you will have to apply them either to his skin or to mine."

"You would not be so foolish as to get killed, now you are so well and so happy; St. Marie l'Egyptienne has cured you once, but she will get tired of working miracles for you."

"On the contrary, Rémy, you cannot tell how pleasant it feels to risk your life when you are happy. I assure you I never fought with a good heart when I had lost large sums at play, when things had gone wrong, or when I had anything to reproach myself with; but when my purse is full, my heart light, and my conscience clear, I go boldly to the field, for I am sure of my hand; it is then I am brilliant. I should fight well to-day, Rémy, for, thanks to you," said he, extending his hand to the young man, "I am very happy."

"Stay a moment, however; you will, I hope, deprive yourself of this pleasure. A beautiful lady of my acquaintance made me swear to keep you safe and sound, under pretext that your life belongs to her."

"Good Rémy!"

"You call me good Rémy, because I brought you to see Madame de Monsoreau, but shall you call me so when you are separated from her? and unluckily the day approaches, if it be not come."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you not know that she is going to Anjou, and that I myself have the grief of being separated from Gertrude. Ah----"

Bussy could not help smiling at the pretended grief of the young man.

"You love her, then?" he said.

"I should think so; you should see how she beats me."

"And you let her do it?"

"Oh! yes."

"But to return to Diana, Rémy; when shall we set off?"

"Ah! I expected that. On the latest possible day I should say."

"Why so?"

"Firstly, because it seems to me that M. le Duc d'Anjou will want you here."

"After?"

"Because M. de Monsoreau, by a special blessing, does not suspect you in the least, and would suspect something immediately if he saw you disappear from Paris at the same time as his wife."

"What do I care for that?"

"No; but I care. I charge myself with curing the sword strokes received in duels, for, as you manage your sword well, you never receive very serious ones; but not the blows given secretly by jealous husbands; they are animals, who, in such cases, strike hard."

"Well I my dear friend, if it is my destiny to be killed by M. de Monsoreau."

"Well!"

"Well! he will kill me."

"And then, a week after, Madame de Monsoreau will be reconciled to her husband, which will dreadfully enrage your poor soul, which will see it from above or below, without being able to prevent it."

"You are right, Rémy; I will live."

"Quite right; but that is not all, you must be charmingly polite to him; he is frightfully jealous of the Duc d'Anjou, who, while you were ill in bed, promenaded before the house with his Aurilly. Make advances, then, to this charming husband, and do not even ask him what has become of his wife, since you know quite well."

"You are right, Rémy, I believe. Now I am no longer jealous of the bear, I will be civil to him."

At this moment some one knocked at the door.

"Who is there?" cried Bussy.

"Monsieur," replied a page, "there is a gentleman below who wishes to speak to you."

"To speak to me so early; who is it?"

"A tall gentleman, dressed in green velvet."

"Can it be Schomberg?"

"He said a tall man."

"True, then Monsoreau, perhaps; well, let him enter." After a minute the visitor entered.

"M. Chicot!" cried Bussy.

"Himself, M. le Comte."

Rémy retired into another room, and then Chicot said, "Monsieur, I come to propose to you a little bargain."

"Speak, monsieur," said Bussy, in great surprise.

"What will you promise me if I render you a great service?"

"That depends on the service, monsieur," replied Bussy, disdainfully.

Chicot feigned not to remark this air of disdain. "Monsieur," said he, sitting down and crossing his long legs, "I remark that you do not ask me to sit down."

The color mounted to Bussy's face.

"Monsieur," continued Chicot, "have you heard of the League?"

"I have heard much of it," said Bussy.

"Well, monsieur, you ought to know that it is an association of honest Christians, united for the purpose of religiously massacring their neighbors, the Huguenots. Are you of the League, monsieur? I am."

"But--monsieur----"

"Say only yes, or no."

"Allow me to express my astonishment----"

"I did myself the honor of asking you if you belonged to the League."

"M. Chicot, as I do not like questions whose import I do not understand, I beg you to change the conversation before I am forced to tell you that I do not like questioners. Come, M. Chicot, we have but a few minutes left."

"Well! in a few minutes one can say a great deal; however, I might have dispensed with asking you the question, as if you do not belong to the League now, you soon will, as M. d'Anjou does."

"M. d'Anjou! Who told you that?"

"Himself, speaking to me in person, as the gentlemen of the law say, or rather write; for example, that dear M. Nicolas David, that star of the Forum Parisiense. Now you understand that as M. d'Anjou belongs to the League, you cannot help belonging to it also; you, who are his right arm. The League knows better than to accept a maimed chief."

"Well, M. Chicot, what then?"

"Why, if you do belong to it, or they think you are likely to do so, what has happened to his royal highness will certainly happen to you."

"And what has happened to him?"

"Monsieur," said Chicot, rising and imitating M. de Bussy's manner of a little before, "I do not love questions, nor questioners, therefore I have a great mind to let them do to you what they have done to-night to the duke."

"M. Chicot," said Bussy, with a smile, "speak, I beg of you; where is the duke?"

"He is in prison?"

"Where?"

"In his own room. Four of my good friends guard him. M. de Schomberg, who was dyed blue yesterday, as you know, since you passed during the operation; M. d'Epernon, who is yellow from the fright he had; M. de Quelus, who is red with anger; and M. de Maugiron, who is white with ennui; it is beautiful to see; not to speak of the duke, who is going green with terror, so that we shall have a perfect rainbow to delight our eyes."

"Then, monsieur, you think my liberty in danger?"

"Danger! monsieur; suppose that they are already on the way to arrest you."

Bussy shuddered.

"Do you like the Bastile, M. de Bussy? it is a good place for meditation, and M. Laurent Testu, the governor, keeps a good cook."

"They would send me to the Bastile?"

"Ma foi! I ought to have in my pocket something like an order to conduct you there. Would you like to see it?" and Chicot drew from his pocket an order from the king in due form, to apprehend, wherever he might be, M. Louis de Clermont, Seigneur de Bussy. "Written very nicely by M. Quelus," continued Chicot.

"Then, monsieur," cried Bussy, "you are really rendering me a service?"

"I think so; do you agree with me?"

"Monsieur, I beg you to tell me why you do it; for you love the king, and he hates me."

"M. le Comte, I save you; think what you please of my action. But do you forget that I asked for a recompense?"

"Ah, true."

"Well?"

"Most willingly, monsieur."

"Then some day you will do what I ask you?"

"On my honor, if possible."

"That is enough. Now mount your horse and disappear; I go to carry this order to those who are to use it."

"Then you were not to arrest me yourself?"

"I! for what do you take me?"

"But I should abandon my master."

"Have no scruples; he abandons you."

"You are a gentleman, M. Chicot."

Bussy called Rémy. To do him justice, he was listening at the door.

"Rémy, our horses!"

"They are saddled, monsieur."

"Ah!" said Chicot, "this young man knows what he is about."

Bussy thanked Chicot once more, and went down.

"Where are we going?" said Rémy.

"Well----" said Bussy, hesitating.

"What do you say to Normandy?" said Chicot.

"It is too near."

"Flanders, then?"

"Too far."

"Anjou is a reasonable distance, monsieur," said Rémy.

"Well, then, Anjou," said Bussy, coloring.

"Adieu, monsieur!" said Chicot.

"It is destiny," said Rémy, when he was gone.

"Let us be quick, and perhaps we may overtake her," said Bussy.