

## Chapter 55

HOW BUSSY WAS OFFERED THREE HUNDRED PISTOLES FOR HIS HORSE, AND PARTED WITH HIM FOR NOTHING.

The next day, Bussy left Angers before the most wakeful bourgeois had had their breakfast. He flew along the road, and Diana, mounted on a terrace in front of the castle, saw him coming, and went to meet him. The sun had scarcely risen over the great oaks, and the grass was still wet with dew, when she heard from afar, as she went along, the horn of St. Luc, which Jeanne incited him to sound. She arrived at the meeting-place just as Bussy appeared on the wall. The day passed like an hour. What had they to say? That they loved each other. What had they to wish for? They were together.

"Diana," said Bussy at length, "it seems to me as though my life had begun only to-day. You have shown me what it is to live."

"And I," replied she, "who not long ago would have willingly thrown myself into the arms of death, would now tremble to die and lose your love. But why do you not come to the castle? My father would be glad to see you, and M. de St. Luc is your friend."

"Alas, Diana, if I came once, I should be always there; all the province would know it, and if it came to the ears of that ogre, your husband, he would hasten here. You forbid me to deliver you from him----"

"Oh, yes!"

"Well, then, for the safety of our happiness, we must guard our secret. Madame de St. Luc knows it, and her husband soon will. I have written him a line this morning, asking him for an interview at Angers, and when he comes I will make him promise never to breathe a word of this. It is the more important, dear Diana, as doubtless they are seeking me everywhere. Things looked grave when I left Paris.

"You are right; and then my father is so scrupulous that, in spite of his love for me, he is capable of denouncing me to M. de Monsoreau."

"Let us hide ourselves well, then; I fear some evil spirit, jealous of our happiness."

"Say adieu to me, then; and do not ride so fast--your horse frightens me."

"Fear nothing; he knows the way, and is the gentlest and safest horse I ever rode. When I return to the city, buried in sweet thoughts, he takes the way without my touching the bridle."

At last the sound of the returning chase was heard, the horns playing an air agreed upon with Jeanne, and Bussy left. As he approached the city, he remarked that the time was approaching when the gates of the city would be closed. He was preparing to ride on quickly, when he heard behind him the gallop of horses. For a lover who wishes to remain concealed, as for a robber, everything seems a menace. Bussy asked himself whether he should ride on or draw up and let them pass, but their course was so rapid that they were up to him in a moment. There were two.

"Here is the city," said one, with a Gascon accent; "three hundred more blows with the whip, and one hundred with the spur; courage and vigor!"

"The beast has no more breath--he shivers and totters; he will not go on; and yet I would give a hundred horses to be in my city before nightfall."

"It is some Angers man out late," thought Bussy. "But look, the horse is falling; take care, monsieur," cried he; "quit your horse--he is about to fall."

Indeed, as he spoke the animal fell heavily on his side, shook his legs convulsively, then suddenly his breath stopped, his eyes grew dim, and he was dead.

"Monsieur!" cried the cavalier to Bussy, "three hundred pistoles for your horse!"

"Ah, mon Dieu!" cried Bussy, drawing near.

"Do you hear me, monsieur? I am in haste."

"Ah! my prince, take it for nothing," cried Bussy, who had recognized the Duc d'Anjou.

At the same moment they heard the click of a pistol, which was cocked by the duke's companion.

"Stop, M. d'Aubigné," cried the duke, "it is Bussy, I believe."

"Oh! yes, my prince, it is I. But what, in Heaven's name are you doing, killing horses on the road at this hour?"

"Ah! is it M. de Bussy?" said D'Aubigné, "then you do not want me any more. Permit me to return to him who sent me?"

"Not without receiving my sincere thanks and the promise of a lasting friendship."

"I accept it, monseigneur, and will recall your words to you some day."

"M. D'Aubigné! I am in the clouds," murmured Bussy.

"Did you not know? As you are here, did you not expect me?" said the prince, with an air of suspicion which did not escape Bussy, who began to reflect that his secret residence in Anjou might seem very strange to the prince.

"I did better than expect you," said Bussy, "and as you wish to enter the town before the gates are closed, jump into the saddle, monseigneur."

The prince accepted, and Bussy mounted behind him, asking himself if this prince, dressed in black, were not the evil spirit sent already to disturb his happiness.

"Where do we go now, monseigneur?" said he, as they entered the city.

"To the castle. Let them hoist my banner and convoke the nobility of the district."

"Nothing more easy," said Bussy, full of surprise, but willing to be docile. The news was soon spread through the city that the duke had arrived, and a crowd soon collected.

"Gentlemen!" cried the duke, "I have come to throw myself into my good city of Angers. At Paris the most terrible dangers have menaced my life--I had lost even my liberty. I succeeded in escaping, thanks to some good friends, and now I am here I feel my tranquillity and my life assured."

The people cried, "Long live our seigneur."

"Now let me sup," said the prince, "I have had nothing since the morning."

The city was illuminated, guns were fired, the bells of the cathedral were rung, and the wind carried to Méridor the noisy joy of the good Angevins.