

## Chapter 58

### A FLIGHT OF ANGEVINS.

Bussy contrived to occupy the duke so well with his preparations for war during two days, that he found no time to think of Méridor, and from time to time, under pretext of examining the outer fortifications, jumped on Roland, and arrived at a certain wall, which he got over all the more quickly because each time he made some stone fall, and was, in fact, gradually making a breach.

Towards the end of the third day, as an enormous convoy of provisions was entering the city, the produce of a tax levied by the duke on his good Angevins, as M. d'Anjou, to make himself popular, was tasting the black bread and salt fish of the soldiers, they heard a great noise at one of the gates of the city, where a man, mounted on a white horse, had presented himself. Now Bussy had had himself named Captain-General of Anjou, and had established the most severe discipline in Angers; no one could go out of or enter the town without a password; all which had no other aim than to prevent the duke from sending a messenger to Méridor without his knowledge.

The man on the white horse had arrived at a furious gallop, and had attempted to enter, but had been stopped.

"I am Antragues," said he, "and desire to speak to the Duc d'Anjou."

"We do not know Antragues," they replied, "but as for seeing the duke, you shall be satisfied, for we shall arrest you, and conduct you to him."

"You are a nice fellow, truly, to talk of arresting Charles Balzac d'Antragues, Baron de Cuneo, and Comte de Graville."

"We will do so, however," replied the bourgeois, who had twenty men behind him.

"Wait a little, my good friends. You do not know the Parisians. Well, I will show you a specimen of what they can do."

"Let us arrest him!" cried the furious militia.

"Softly, my little lambs of Anjou; it is I who will have that pleasure."

"What does he say?" asked the bourgeois.

"He says that his horse has only gone ten leagues, and will ride over you all." And drawing his sword and swinging it furiously round, he cut off in his passage the blades of the nearest halberts, and in less than ten minutes fifteen or twenty of them were changed into broom-handles.

"Ah! this is very amusing!" cried he, laughing, and as he spoke stunning one of the bourgeois with a blow on the head with the flat of his sword. However, as more and more bourgeois crowded to the attack, and Antragues began to feel tired, he said, "Well, you are as brave as lions; I will bear witness to it; but, you see, you have nothing left but the handles of your halberts, and you do not know how to load your muskets. I had resolved to enter the city, but I did not know it was guarded by an army of Cæsars. I renounce my victory over you. Good evening, I am going away; only tell the prince that I came here expressly to see him."

However, the captain had managed to communicate the fire to the match of his musket, but just as he was raising it to his shoulder, Antragues gave him such a furious blow upon the fingers that he dropped it.

"Kill him! kill him!" cried several voices, "do not let him escape!"

"Ah!" said Antragues, "just now you would not let me come in, now you will not let me go out. Take care, that will change my tactics, and instead of the flat of my sword, I will use the point--instead of cutting the halberts, I will cut the wrists. Now, will you let me go?"

"No, no, he is tired, kill him!"

"Well, then, take care of your hands!"

Scarcely had he spoken when another cavalier appeared, riding furiously also, and who cried out as he approached:

"Antragues, what are you doing among all these bourgeois?"

"Livarot!" cried Antragues. "Mon Dieu, you are welcome; Montjoie and St. Denis, to the rescue!"

"I heard four hours ago that you were before me, and I have been trying to catch you. But what is the matter; do they want to massacre you?"

"Yes, they will neither let me in nor out."

"Gentlemen!" said Livarot, "will you please to step either to the right or left, and let us pass."

"They insult us! kill them!" cried the people.

"Oh! this is Angers' manners!" said Livarot, drawing his sword.

"Yes, you see; unluckily, there are so many of them."

"If there were but three of us!"

"And here is Ribeirac coming."

"Do you hear him?"

"I see him. Here, Ribeirac!"

"Are you fighting?" cried Ribeirac.

"Good morning, Livarot; good morning, Antragues."

"Let us charge them," said Antragues.

The bourgeois looked in stupefaction at this reinforcement that was about to join the attacking party.

"They are a regiment," said the captain of the militia.

"This is only the advanced guard," cried another.

"We are fathers of families, and our lives belong to our children," said others, and they all tried to fly, fighting with each other to get out of the way.

At this stage of the affair Bussy and the prince arrived, followed by twenty cavaliers, to ascertain the cause of the tumult. They were told that it was three incarnate devils from Paris who were making all the disturbance.

"Three men, Bussy; see who they are."

Bussy raised himself in his stirrups, and his quick eye soon recognized Livarot.

"Mort de ma vie, monseigneur," cried he, "they are our friends from Paris who are besieging us."

"No!" cried Livarot, "on the contrary, it is these people who are killing us."

"Down with your arms, knaves," cried the duke, "these are friends."

"Friends!" cried the bourgeois, "then they should have had the password; for we have been treating them like Pagans and they us like Turks."

Livarot, Antragues, and Ribeirac advanced in triumph to kiss the duke's hand.

"Monseigneur," said Bussy, "how many militia do you think there were here?"

"At least one hundred and fifty."

"You have not very famous soldiers, since three men beat them."

"True, but I shall have the three men who did beat them."