

## Chapter 63

### IN WHICH IT IS PROVED THAT GRATITUDE WAS ONE OF ST. LUC'S VIRTUES.

The next morning, M. de Monsoreau rose early, and descended into the courtyard of the palace. He entered the stable, where Roland was in his place.

"Are the horses of monseigneur taught to return to their stable alone?" asked he of the man who stood there.

"No, M. le Comte."

"But Roland did so yesterday."

"Oh, he is remarkably intelligent."

"Has he ever done it before?"

"No, monsieur; he is generally ridden by the Duc d'Anjou, who is a good rider, and never gets thrown."

"I was not thrown," replied the count, "for I also am a good rider; no, I tied him to a tree while I entered a house, and at my return he had disappeared. I thought he had been stolen, or that some passer-by had played a bad joke by carrying him away; that was why I asked how he returned to the stable."

"He returned alone, as monsieur said just now."

"It is strange. Monseigneur often rides this horse, you say?"

"Nearly every day."

"His highness returned late last night?"

"About an hour before you."

"And what horse did he ride? was it a bay with a white star on his forehead?"

"No, monsieur, he rode Isolin, which you see here."

"And in the prince's escort is there any one who rides such a horse as I describe?"

"I know of no one."

"Well," said Monsoreau, impatiently, "saddle me Roland."

"Roland?"

"Yes, are there any orders against it?"

"No; on the contrary, I was told to let you have any horse you pleased."

When Roland was saddled, Monsoreau said to the man, "What are your wages?"

"Twenty crowns, monsieur."

"Will you earn ten times that sum at once?"

"I ask no better. But how?"

"Find out who rode yesterday the horse I described."

"Ah, monsieur, what you ask is very difficult, there are so many gentlemen come here."

"Yes, but two hundred crowns are worth some trouble."

"Certainly, M. le Comte, and I will do my best to discover."

"That is right, and here are ten crowns to encourage you."

"Thanks, M. le Comte."

"Well, tell the prince I have gone to reconnoiter the wood for the chase."

As he spoke he heard steps behind him, and turned.

"Ah, M. de Bussy!" he cried.

"Why, M. le Comte, who would have thought of seeing you here!"

"And you, who they said was so ill."

"So I am; my doctor orders absolute rest, and for a week I have not left the city. Ah! you are going to ride Roland; I sold him to the duke, who is very fond of him."

"Yes, he is an excellent animal; I rode him yesterday."

"Which makes you wish for him again to-day?"

"Yes."

"You were speaking of a chase."

"Yes, the prince wishes for one."

"Whereabouts is it to be?"

"Near Méridor. Will you come with me?"

"No, thank you, I do not feel well."

"Oh!" cried a voice from behind, "there is M. de Bussy out without permission."

"Ah! there is my doctor scolding. Adieu, comte."

Bussy went away, and Monsoreau jumped into the saddle.

"What is the matter?" said Rémy; "you look so pale, I believe you are really ill."

"Do you know where he is going?"

"No."

"To Méridor."

"Well, did you hope he would not?"

"Mon Dieu! what will happen, after what he saw yesterday?"

"Madame de Monsoreau will deny everything."

"But he saw her."

"She will say he did not."

"She will never have the courage."

"Oh, M. de Bussy, is it possible you do not know women better than that!"

"Rémy, I feel very ill."

"So I see. Go home, and I will prescribe for you."

"What?"

"A slice of fowl and ham, and some lobster."

"Oh, I am not hungry."

"The more reason I should order you to eat."

"Rémy, I fear that that wretch will make a great scene at Méridor. I ought to have gone with him when he asked me."

"What for?"

"To sustain Diana."

"Oh, she will sustain herself. Besides, you ought not to be out; we agreed you were too ill."

"I could not help it, Rémy, I was so unquiet."

Rémy carried him off, and made him sit down to a good breakfast.

M. de Monsoreau wished to see if it were chance or habit that had led Roland to the park wall; therefore he left the bridle on his neck. Roland took precisely the same road as on the previous day, and before very long M. de Monsoreau found himself in the same spot as before. Only now the place was solitary, and no horse was there. The count climbed the wall again, but no one was to be seen; therefore, judging that it was useless to watch for people on their guard, he went on to the park gates. The baron, seeing his son-in-law coming over the drawbridge, advanced ceremoniously to meet him. Diana, seated under a magnificent sycamore, was reading poetry, while Gertrude was embroidering at her side. The count, seeing them, got off his horse, and approached them.

"Madame," said he, "will you grant me the favor of an interview?"

"Willingly, monsieur."

"What calm, or rather what perfidy!" thought the count.

"Do you do us the honor of remaining at the chat?" asked the baron.

"Yes, monsieur, until to-morrow, at least."

The baron went away to give orders, and Diana reseated herself, while Monsoreau took Gertrude's chair, and, with a look sufficient to intimidate most people, said:

"Madame, who was in the park with you yesterday?"

"At what time?" said Diana, in a firm voice.

"At six."

"Where?"

"Near the copse."

"It must have been some one else, it was not I."

"It was you, madame."

"What do you know about it?"

"Tell me the man's name!" cried Monsoreau, furiously.

"What man?"

"The man who was walking with you."

"I cannot tell, if it was some other woman."

"It was you, I tell you."

"You are wrong, monsieur."

"How dare you deny it? I saw you."



"You, monsieur?"

"Yes, madame, myself. And there is no other lady here."

"You are wrong again; there is Jeanne de Brissac."

"Madame de St. Luc?"

"Yes, my friend."

"And M. de St. Luc?"

"Never leaves her; theirs was a love-match; you must have seen them."

"It was not them; it was you, with some man whom I do not know, but whom I will know, I swear. I heard your cry."

"When you are more reasonable, monsieur, I shall be ready to hear you; at present I will retire."

"No, madame, you shall stay."

"Monsieur, here are M. and Madame de St. Luc, I trust you will contain yourself."

Indeed, M. and Madame de St. Luc approached. She bowed to Monsoreau, and St. Luc gave him his hand; then, leaving his wife to Monsoreau, took Diana, and after a walk they returned, warned by the bell for dinner, which

was early at Méridor, as the baron preserved the old customs. The conversation was general, and turned naturally on the Duc d'Anjou, and the movement his arrival had caused. Diana sat far from her husband, between St. Luc and the baron.