

Chapter 65

HOW M. DE ST. LUC SHOWED M. DE MONSOREAU THE THRUST THAT THE KING HAD TAUGHT HIM.

"Are you ready?" cried Monsoreau.

"No; I have the sun in my eyes."

"Move then; I warn you I shall kill you."

"Shall you really? Well, man proposes, and God disposes. Look at that bed of poppies and dandelions."

"Well!"

"Well, I mean to lay you there." And he laughed as he drew his sword. Monsoreau began the combat furiously, but St. Luc parried his thrusts skilfully.

"Pardieu! M. de Monsoreau," said he, "you use your sword very well; you might kill any one but Bussy or me."

Monsoreau grew pale.

"As for me," continued St. Luc, "the king, who loves me, took the trouble to give me a great many lessons, and showed me, among other things, a thrust, which you shall see presently. I tell you, that you may have the pleasure of knowing you are killed by the king's method; it is very flattering." And then suddenly he rushed furiously on Monsoreau, who, half wild with rage as he was, parried five thrusts, but received the sixth full in his chest.

"Ah!" said St. Luc, "you will fall just where I told you," as Monsoreau sank down on the poppies. Then, wiping his sword, he stood quietly by, watching the changes which came over the face of the dying man.

"Ah, you have killed me!" cried Monsoreau.

"I intended to do so, but now I see you dying, devil take me if I am not sorry for what I have done. You are horribly jealous, it is true, but you were brave. Have you any last wish? If so, tell it to me; and, on the faith of a gentleman, it shall be executed. Are you thirsty? Shall I get you water?"

Monsoreau did not reply. He turned over with his face to the earth, biting the ground, and struggling in his blood. Then he tried to raise his head, but fell back with a groan.

"Come, he is dead; let me think no more about him. Ah! but that is not so easy, when you have killed a man." And jumping back over the wall, he went to the château. The first person he saw was Diana talking to his wife.

"How well she will look in black," thought he. Then, approaching them, "Pardon me," said he, "but may I say a few words to Jeanne?"

"Do so; I will go to my father,"

"What is it?" said Jeanne, when Diana was gone; "you look rather gloomy."

"Why, yes."

"What has happened?"

"Oh, mon Dieu! an accident."

"To you?"

"Not precisely to me, but to a person who was near me."

"Who was it?"

"The person I was walking with."

"M. de Monsoreau?"

"Alas! yes; poor dear man."

"What has happened to him?"

"I believe he is dead."

"Dead!" cried Jeanne, starting back in horror.

"Just so."

"He who was here just now talking----"

"Yes, that is just the cause of his death; he talked too much."

"St. Luc, you are hiding something from me!" cried Jeanne, seizing his hands.

"I! Nothing; not even the place where he lies."

"Where is it?"

"Down there behind the wall; just where Bussy used to tie his horse."

"It was you who killed him."

"Parbleu! that is not very difficult to discover."

"Unlucky that you are!"

"Ah, dear friend! he provoked me, insulted me, drew the sword first."

"It is dreadful! the poor man!"

"Good; I was sure of it; before a week is over he will be called St. Monsoreau."

"But you cannot stay here in the house of the man you have killed."

"So I thought at once, and that is why I came to ask you to get ready."

"He has not wounded you?"

"No, I am perfectly unhurt."

"Then, we will go."

"As quickly as possible, for you know the accident may be discovered at any moment."

"Then Diana is a widow."

"That is just what I thought of."

"After you killed him?"

"No, before."

"Well, I will go and tell her."

"Spare her feelings."

"Do not laugh. Meanwhile you get the horses saddled. But where shall we go?"

"To Paris."

"But the king?"

"Oh! he will have forgotten everything by this time; besides, if there is to be war, as seems probable, he will be glad of me. But I must have pen and ink."

"For what?"

"To write to Bussy; I cannot leave Anjou without telling him why."

"No, of course not; you will find all that you require in my room." St. Luc went in, and wrote,--

"DEAR FRIEND, "You will learn, by report, ere long, the accident which has happened to M. de Monsoreau; we had together, by the old copse, a discussion on broken-down walls and horses that go home alone. In the heat of the argument, he fell on a bed of poppies and dandelions so hard that he died there. "Your friend for life,

"St. Luc." P. S. As you may think this rather improbable, I must add that we had our swords in our hands. I set off at once for Paris to make peace with the king, Anjou not seeming to me very safe after what has occurred. "Ten minutes after a servant set off for Angers with this letter, while M. and Madame de St. Luc went out by another door, leaving Diana much grieved at their departure, and much embarrassed how to tell the baron what had occurred. She had turned away her eyes from St. Luc as he passed.

"That is the reward for serving your friends," said he to his wife; "decidedly all people are ungrateful excepting me."