

Chapter 68

HOW M. DE MONSOREAU OPENED AND SHUT HIS EYES, WHICH PROVED THAT HE WAS NOT DEAD.

Rémy rode along, wondering in what humor he should find Diana, and what he should say to her. He had just arrived at the park wall, when his horse, which had been trotting, stopped so suddenly that, had he not been a good rider, he would have been thrown over his head. Rémy, astonished, looked to see the cause, and saw before him a pool of blood, and a little further on, a body, lying against the wall. "It is Monsoreau!" cried he; "how strange! he lies dead there, and the blood is down here. Ah! there is the track; he must have crawled there, or rather that good M. de St. Luc leaned him up against the wall that the blood might not fly to his head. He died with his eyes open, too."

All at once Rémy started back in horror; the two eyes, that he had seen open, shut again, and a paleness more livid than ever spread itself over the face of the defunct. Rémy became almost as pale as M. de Monsoreau, but, as he was a doctor, he quickly recovered his presence of mind, and said to himself that if Monsoreau moved his eyes, it showed he was not dead. "And yet I have read," thought he, "of strange movements after death. This devil of a fellow frightens one even after death. Yes, his eyes are quite closed; there is one method of ascertaining whether he is dead or not, and that is to shove my sword into him, and if he does not move, he is certainly dead." And Rémy was preparing for this charitable action, when suddenly the eyes opened again. Rémy started back, and the perspiration rolled off his forehead as he murmured, "He is not dead; we are in a nice position. Yes, but if I kill him he will be dead." And he looked at Monsoreau, who seemed also to be looking at him earnestly.

"Oh!" cried Rémy, "I cannot do it. God knows that if he were upright before me I would kill him with all my heart; but as he is now, helpless and three parts dead, it would be an infamy."

"Help!" murmured Monsoreau, "I am dying."

"Mordieu!" thought Rémy, "my position is embarrassing. I am a doctor, and, as such, bound to succor my fellow-creatures when they suffer. It is true that Monsoreau is so ugly that he can scarcely be called a fellow-creature, still he is a man. Come, I must forget that I am the friend of M. de Bussy, and do my duty as a doctor."

"Help!" repeated the wounded man.

"Here I am," said Rémy.

"Fetch me a priest and a doctor."

"The doctor is here, and perhaps he will dispense with the priest."

"Rémy," said Monsoreau, "by what chance--"

Rémy understood all the question might mean. This was no beaten road, and no one was likely to come without particular business.

"Pardieu!" he replied, "a mile or two off I met M. de St. Luc----"

"Ah! my murderer."

"And he said, 'Rémy, go to the old copse, there you will find a man dead.'"

"Dead?"

"Yes, he thought so; well, I came here and saw you."

"And now, tell me frankly, am I mortally wounded?"

"I will try to find out."

Rémy approached him carefully, took off his cloak, his doublet and shirt. The sword had penetrated between the sixth and seventh ribs.

"Do you suffer much?"

"In my back, not in my chest."

"Ah, let me see; where?"

"Below the shoulder bone."

"The steel must have come against a bone." And he began to examine. "No, I am wrong," said he, "the sword came against nothing, but passed right through." Monsoreau fainted after this examination.

"Ah! that is all right," said Rémy, "syncope, low pulse, cold in the hands and legs: Diable! the widowhood of Madame de Monsoreau will not last long, I fear."

At this moment a slight bloody foam rose to the lips of the wounded man.

Rémy drew from his pocket his lancet case; then tearing off a strip from the patient's shirt, bound it round his arm.

"We shall see," said he, "if the blood flows. Ah, it does! and I believe that Madame de Monsoreau will not be a widow. Pardon, my dear M. de Bussy, but I am a doctor."

Presently the patient breathed, and opened his eyes.

"Oh!" stammered he, "I thought all was over."

"Not yet, my dear monsieur; it is even possible----"

"That I live!"

"Oh, mon Dieu! yes; but let me close the wound. Stop; do not move; nature at this moment is aiding my work. I make the blood flow, and she stops it. Ah! nature is a great doctor, my dear sir. Let me wipe your lips. See the bleeding has stopped already. Good; all goes well, or rather badly."

"Badly!"

"No, not for you; but I know what I mean."

"You think I shall get well?"

"Alas! yes."

"You are a singular doctor, M. Rémy."

"Never mind, as long as I cure you," said he, rising.

"Do not abandon me," said the count.

"Ah! you talk too much. Diable! I ought to tell him to cry out."

"What do you mean?"

"Never mind; your wound is dressed. Now I will go to the castle and fetch assistance."

"And what must I do meanwhile?"

"Keep quite still; do not stir; breathe lightly, and try not to cough. Which is the nearest house?"

"The château de Méridor."

"Which is the way to it?" said Rémy, affecting ignorance.

"Get over the wall, and you will find yourself in the park."

"Very well; I go."

"Thanks, generous man."

"Generous, indeed, if you only knew all."

He soon arrived at the château, where all the inhabitants were busy looking for the body of the count; for St. Luc had given them a wrong direction. Rémy came among them like a thunderbolt, and was so eager to bring them to the rescue, that Diana looked at him with surprise, "I thought he was Bussy's friend," murmured she, as Rémy disappeared, carrying with him a wheelbarrow, lint and water.