

Chapter 90

WHAT WAS PASSING NEAR THE BASTILE WHILE CHICOT WAS PAYING HIS DEBT TO Y. DE MAYENNE.

It was eleven at night, and the Duc d'Anjou was waiting impatiently at home for a messenger from the Duc le Guise. He walked restlessly up and down, looking every minute at the clock. All at once he heard a horse in the courtyard, and thinking it was the messenger, he ran to the window, but it was a groom leading up and down a horse which was waiting for its master, who almost immediately came out. It was Bussy, who, as captain of the duke's guards, came to give the password for the night. The duke, seeing this handsome and brave young man, of whom he had never had reason to complain, experienced an instant's remorse, but on his face he read so much joy, hope, and happiness, that all his jealousy returned. However, Bussy, ignorant that the duke was watching him, jumped into his saddle and rode off to his own hotel, where he gave his horse to the groom. There he saw Rémy.

"Ah! you Rémy?"

"Myself, monsieur."

"Not yet in bed?"

"I have just come in. Indeed, since I have no longer a patient, it seems to me that the days have forty-eight hours."

"Are you ennuyé?"

"I fear so."

"Then Gertrude is abandoned?"

"Perfectly."

"You grew tired?"

"Of being beaten. That was how her love showed itself."

"And does your heart not speak for her to-night?"

"Why to-night?"

"Because I would have taken you with me."

"To the Bastille?"

"Yes."

"You are going there?"

"Yes."

"And Monsoreau?"

"Is at Compiègne, preparing a chase for the king."

"Are you sure, monsieur?"

"The order was given publicly this morning."

"Ah, well; Jourdain, my sword."

"You have changed your mind?"

"I will accompany you to the door, for two reasons."

"What are they?"

"Firstly, lest you should meet any enemies." Bussy smiled.

"Oh! mon Dieu, I know you fear no one, and that Rémy the doctor is but a poor companion; still, two men are not so likely to be attacked as one. Secondly, because I have a great deal of good advice to give you."

"Come, my dear Rémy, come. We will speak of her; and next to the pleasure of seeing the woman you love, I know none greater than talking of her."

Bussy then took the arm of the young doctor, and they set off. Rémy on the way tried hard to induce Bussy to return early, insisting that he would be more fit for his duel on the morrow.

Bussy smiled. "Fear nothing," said he.

"Ah! my dear master, to-morrow you ought to fight like Hercules against Antæus--like Theseus against the Minotaur--like Bayard--like something Homeric, gigantic, impossible; I wish people to speak of it in future times as the combat, par excellence, and in which you had not even received a scratch."

"Be easy, my dear Rémy, you shall see wonders. This morning I put swords in the hands of four fencers, who during eight minutes could not touch me once, while I tore their doublets to pieces."

So conversing, they arrived in the Rue St. Antoine.

"Adieu! here we are," said Bussy.

"Shall I wait for you?"

"Why?"

"To make sure that you will return before two o'clock, and have at least five or six hours' sleep before your duel."

"If I give you my word?"

"Oh! that will be enough; Bussy's word is never doubted."

"You have it then."

"Then, adieu, monsieur."

"Adieu, Rémy."

Rémy watched, and saw Bussy enter, not this time by the window, but boldly through the door, which Gertrude opened for him. Then Rémy turned to go home; but he had only gone a few steps, when he saw coming towards him five armed men, wrapped in cloaks. When they arrived about ten yards from him, they said good night to each other, and four went off in different directions, while the fifth remained stationary.

"M. de St. Luc!" said Rémy.

"Rémy!"

"Rémy, in person. Is it an indiscretion to ask what your lordship does at this hour so far from the Louvre?"

"Ma foi! I am examining, by the king's order, the physiognomy of the city. He said to me, 'St. Luc, walk about the streets of Paris, and if you hear any one say I have abdicated, contradict him.'"

"And have you heard it?"

"Nowhere; and as it is just midnight, and I have met no one but M. de Monsoreau, I have dismissed my friends, and am about to return."

"M. de Monsoreau?"

"Yes."

"You met him?"

"With a troop of armed men; ten or twelve at least."

"Impossible!"

"Why so?"

"He ought to be at Compiègne."

"He ought to be, but he is not."

"But the king's order?"

"Bah! who obeys the king?"

"Did he know you?"

"I believe so."

"You were but five?"

"My four friends and I."

"And he did not attack you?"

"On the contrary, he avoided me, which astonished me, as on seeing him, I expected a terrible battle."

"Where was he going?"

"To the Rue de la Tixanderie."

"Ah! mon Dieu!"

"What?"

"M. de St. Luc, a great misfortune is about to happen."

"To whom?"

"To M. de Bussy."

"Bussy! speak, Rémy; I am his friend, you know."

"Oh! M. de Bussy thought him at Compiègne."

"Well?"

"And, profiting by his absence, is with Madame de Monsoreau."

"Ah!"

"Do you not see? he has had suspicions, and has feigned to depart, that he might appear unexpectedly."

"Ah! it is the Duc d'Anjou's doing, I believe. Have you good lungs, Rémy"

"Corbleu! like a blacksmith's bellows."

"Well! let us run. You know the house?"

"Yes."

"Go on then." And the young men set off like hunted deer.

"Is he much in advance of us?" said Rémy.

"About a quarter of an hour."

"If we do but arrive in time!"