

## Chapter 10

### THE PURCHASE OF CUIRASSES.

As soon as the valet of Pertinax heard the words of Madame Fournichon, he ran after the dealer, but as it was night and he was doubtless in a hurry, he had gone some little way and Samuel was obliged to call to him. He appeared to hesitate at first, but seeing that Samuel was laden with merchandise, he stopped.

"What do you want, my friend?" said he.

"Pardieu! I want to do a little business with you."--"Well, be quick!"

"Are you in a hurry?"

"Yes."

"When you have seen what I bring you, you will be willing to wait."

"What is it?"

"A magnificent piece, of which the work--but you do not listen."

"Yes; but I am also looking round."

"Why?"

"Do you not know that it is forbidden to buy arms?"

Samuel thought it best to feign ignorance, and said, "I know nothing; I have just arrived from Mont-de-Marsan."

"Oh! that is another thing; but how did you know that I bought arms?"

"I was at the door of 'The Brave Chevalier.'"

"Well, come under that portico; it is too public here. Now, let me see this cuirass," said he, when they were there.

"It is so heavy."

"It is old and out of date."

"A work of art."

"I will give you six crowns."

"What! six crowns! and you gave ten just now for an old thing--"

"Six, or none."

"But look at the chasing."

"Of what use is the chasing, when I sell by weight?"

"The gilding alone is worth ten crowns--"

"Well, I will give you seven."

"You bargain here, and at the inn you gave anything; you go against the law and then endeavor to cheat honest people."--"Do not call out so loud."

"Oh! I am not afraid."

"Come, then, take ten crowns and begone."

"I told you the gold was worth more. Ah! you want to escape; I will call the guard," and he raised his voice.

At the noise, a window opposite was opened.

"Come," said the dealer; "I see I must give you what you want. Here are fifteen crowns; now go."

"That will do," said Samuel; "only these are for my master: I want something for myself."

The dealer half drew his dagger.

"Yes, yes, I see your dagger," said Samuel; "but I also see the figure in that balcony, watching you."

The dealer, white with terror, looked up, and saw a man who had witnessed the whole scene. "Oh!" said he, affecting to laugh; "you get all you want out of me: here is another crown. And may the devil take you," he added to himself.

"Thanks, my good friend," said Samuel, and he made off.

The dealer began to take up his wares and was also going, when the bourgeois opposite cried out:

"It seems, monsieur, that you buy armor."

"No, monsieur," replied the unlucky dealer; "this was a mere chance."

"A chance that suits me."

"In what respect, monsieur?"

"I have a heap of old things that I want to get rid of."

"I have as much as I can carry."

"But let me show them to you."

"It is useless; I have no more money."

"Never mind, I will give you credit; you look like an honest man."

"Thank you; but I cannot wait."

"It is odd how I seem to know you."

"Know me!" cried the dealer, trembling.

"Look at this helmet," said the bourgeois, showing it from the window.

"You say you know me?" asked the dealer.

"I thought so. Are you not--" he seemed seeking for the name. "Are you not Nicholas--"

The dealer looked frightened.

"Nicholas Trouchon, ironmonger, Rue de la Cossonnerie?"

"No, no!" cried the man, breathing more freely again.

"Never mind; will you buy all my armor, cuirass, sword, and all?"

"It is a forbidden commerce."

"I know that; he whom you dealt with just now called it out loud enough."

"You heard!"

"Yes, all; and you were liberal. But be easy, I will not be hard upon you; I have been a trader myself."

"What did you sell?"

"Never mind; I have made my fortune."--"I congratulate you."

"Well, will you buy all my armor?"

"No, I only want the cuirass."

"Do you only buy cuirasses?"

"Yes."

"That is odd, for if you buy and sell by weight, one sort of iron is as good as another."

"That is true, but I have preferences."

"Well, then, buy only the cuirass, or rather--now I think again--buy

nothing at all."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that in these times every one wants his arms."

"What! in perfect peace?"

"My good friend, if we were in perfect peace, you would not buy so many cuirasses, and so secretly, too. But really, the longer I look at you, the more I think I know your face. You are not Nicholas Trouchon, but still I know you."

"Silence!"

"And if you buy cuirasses--"

"Well!"

"I am sure it is for a work agreeable to God."

"Hold your tongue!"

"You enchant me!" cried the bourgeois, stretching out a long arm over the balcony and seizing the hand of the dealer.

"Then who the devil are you?" cried he, who felt his hand held as if in

a wise.

"I am Robert Briquet, the terror of schismatics, the friend of the Union, and a fierce Catholic; and you are not Nicholas Gimbelot, the currier."

"No, no! good-by."

"What! are you going?"

"Yes!" and he ran off.

But Robert Briquet was not a man to be foiled; he jumped from his balcony and ran after him.

"You are mad!" said he. "If I were your enemy, I have but to cry out, and the watch is in the next street; but you are my friend, and now I know your name. You are Nicholas Poulain, lieutenant to the provost of Paris. I knew it was Nicholas something."

"I am lost!" murmured the man.

"No; you are saved. I will do more for the good cause than ever you would; you have found a brother. Take one cuirass, and I will take another; I give you my gloves and the rest of my armor for nothing. Come on, and Vive l'Union!"



"You accompany me?"

"I will help you to carry these cuirasses which are to conquer the Philistines. Go on, I follow."

A spark of suspicion lingered in the soul of the lieutenant, but he thought; "If he wished me ill, he would not have acknowledged he knew me. Come on then!" he added aloud, "if you will."

"To life or death!" cried Briquet, and he continued to talk in this strain till they arrived near the Hotel Guise, where Nicholas Poulain stopped.

"I fancied it would be here," thought Briquet.

"Now," said Nicholas, with a tragic air, "there is still time to retire before entering the lion's den."

"Bah! I have entered many. *\_Et non intermuit medulla mea!*" exclaimed Briquet; "but pardon me, perhaps you do not understand Latin?"

"Do you?"--"As you see."

"What a catch?" thought Poulain, "learned, strong, bold, and rich!" Then he added aloud, "Well! let us enter," and he conducted Briquet to the door of the hotel. The court was full of guards and men wrapped in cloaks, and eight horses, saddled and bridled, waited in a corner; but

there was not a light to be seen. Poulain whispered his name to the porter, and added, "I bring a good companion."--"Pass on."

"Take these to the magazine," said Poulain, handing the cuirasses to a soldier. "Now I will present you," said he to Briquet.

"No, I am very timid. When I have done some work, I will present myself."

"As you please. Then wait here for me."--"What are we waiting for?" asked a voice.

"For the master," replied another.

At this moment, a tall man entered. "Gentlemen," said he, "I come in his name."

"Ah! it is M. de Mayneville," said Poulain.

"Ah, really!" said Briquet, making a hideous grimace, which quite altered him.

"Let us go, gentlemen," said M. de Mayneville, and he descended a staircase leading to a vault. All the others followed, and Briquet brought up the rear, murmuring: "But the page! where the devil is the page?"