DUMAS ALEXANDRE

CHICOT THE JESTER

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Chicot the Jester

Дюма А.

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Содержание

Alexandre Dumas
Chicot the Jester / An Abridged Translation of «La dame de Monsoreau»

CHAPTER I.
THE WEDDING OF ST. LUC

On the evening of a Sunday, in the year 1578, a splendid fête was given in the magnificent hotel just built opposite the Louvre, on the other side of the water, by the family of Montmorency, who, allied to the royalty of France, held themselves equal to princes. This fête was to celebrate the wedding of François d'Epinay de St. Luc, a great friend and favorite of the king, Henri III., with Jeanne de Crossé-Brissac, daughter of the marshal of that name.

The banquet had taken place at the Louvre, and the king, who had been with much difficulty induced to consent to the marriage, had appeared at it with a severe and grave countenance. His costume was in harmony with his face; he wore that suit of deep chestnut, in which Clouet described him at the wedding of Joyeuse; and this kind of royal specter, solemn and majestic, had chilled all the spectators, but above all the young bride, at whom he cast many angry glances. The reason of all this was known to everyone, but was one of those court secrets of which no one likes to speak.

Scarcely was the repast finished, when the king had risen abruptly, thereby forcing everyone to do the same. Then St. Luc approached him, and said: "Sire, will your majesty do me the honor to accept the fête, which I wish to give to you this evening at the Hôtel Montmorency?" This was said in an imploring tone, but Henri, with a voice betraying both vexation and anger, had replied:

"Yes, monsieur, we will go, although you certainly do not merit this proof of friendship on our part."

Then Madame de St. Luc had humbly thanked the king, but he turned his back without replying.

"Is the king angry with you?" asked the young wife of her husband.

"I will explain it to you after, mon amie, when this anger shall have passed away."

"And will it pass away?"

"It must."

Mademoiselle de Brissac was not yet sufficiently Madame de St. Luc to insist further; therefore she repressed her curiosity, promising herself to satisfy it at a more favorable time.

They were, therefore, expecting St. Luc at the Hôtel Montmorency, at the moment in which our story commences. St. Luc had invited all the king's friends and all his own; the princes and their favorites, particularly those of the Duc d'Anjou. He was always in opposition to the king, but in a hidden manner, pushing forward those of his friends whom the example of La Mole and Coconnas had not cured. Of course, his favorites and those of the king lived in a state of antagonism, which brought on rencontres two or three times a month, in which it was rare that some one was not killed or badly wounded.

As for Catherine, she was at the height of her wishes; her favorite son was on the throne, and she reigned through him, while she pretended to care no more for the things of this world. St. Luc, very uneasy at the absence of all the royal family, tried to reassure his father-in-law, who was much distressed at this menacing absence. Convinced, like all the world, of the friendship of Henri for St. Luc, he had believed he was assuring the royal favor, and now this looked like a disgrace. St. Luc tried hard to inspire in them a security which he did not feel himself; and his friends, Maugiron, Schomberg, and Quelus, clothed in their most magnificent dresses, stiff in their splendid doublets, with enormous frills, added to his annoyance by their ironical lamentations.

"Eh! mon Dieu! my poor friend," said Jacques de Levis, Comte de Quelus, "I believe now that you are done for. The king is angry that you would not take his advice, and M. d'Anjou because you laughed at his nose."

"No, Quelus, the king does not come, because he has made a pilgrimage to the monks of the Bois de Vincennes; and the Duc d'Anjou is absent, because he is in love with some woman whom I have forgotten to invite."

"But," said Maugiron, "did you see the king's face at dinner? And as for the duke, if he could not come, his gentlemen might. There is not one here, not even Bussy."

"Oh! gentlemen," said the Duc de Brissac, in a despairing tone, "it looks like a complete disgrace. Mon Dieu! how can our house, always so devoted to his majesty, have displeased him?"

The young men received this speech with bursts of laughter, which did not tend to soothe the marquis. The young bride was also wondering how St. Luc could have displeased the king. All at once one of the doors opened and the king was announced.

"Ah!" cried the marshal, "now I fear nothing; if the Duc d'Anjou would but come, my satisfaction would be complete."

"And I," murmured St. Luc; "I have more fear of the king present than absent, for I fear he comes to play me some spiteful tricks."

But, nevertheless, he ran to meet the king, who had quitted at last his somber costume, and advanced resplendent in satin, feathers, and jewels. But at the instant he entered another door opened just opposite, and a second Henri III., clothed exactly like the first, appeared, so that the courtiers, who had run to meet the first, turned round at once to look at the second.

Henri III. saw the movement, and exclaimed:

"What is the matter, gentlemen?"

A burst of laughter was the reply. The king, not naturally patient, and less so that day than usual, frowned; but St. Luc approached, and said:

"Sire, it is Chicot, your jester, who is dressed exactly like your majesty, and is giving his hand to the ladies to kiss."

Henri laughed. Chicot enjoyed at his court a liberty similar to that enjoyed thirty years before by Triboulet at the court of François I., and forty years after by Longely at the court of Louis XIII. Chicot was not an ordinary jester. Before being Chicot he had been "De Chicot." He was a Gascon gentleman, who, ill-treated by M. de Mayenne on account of a rivalry in a love affair, in which Chicot had been victorious, had taken refuge at court, and prayed the king for his protection by telling him the truth.

"Eh, M. Chicot," said Henri, "two kings at a time are too much."

"Then," replied he, "let me continue to be one, and you play Duc d'Anjou; perhaps you will be taken for him, and learn something of his doings."

"So," said Henri, looking round him, "Anjou is not here."

"The more reason for you to replace him. It is settled, I am Henri, and you are François. I will play the king, while you dance and amuse yourself a little, poor king."

"You are right, Chicot, I will dance."

"Decidedly," thought De Brissac, "I was wrong to think the king angry; he is in an excellent humor."

Meanwhile St. Luc had approached his wife. She was not a beauty, but she had fine black eyes, white teeth, and a dazzling complexion.

"Monsieur," said she to her husband, "why did they say that the king was angry with me; he has done nothing but smile on me ever since he came?"

"You did not say so after dinner, dear Jeanne, for his look then frightened you."

"His majesty was, doubtless, out of humor then, but now – "

"Now, it is far worse; he smiles with closed lips. I would rather he showed me his teeth. Jeanne, my poor child, he is preparing for us some disagreeable surprise. Oh! do not look at me so tenderly, I beg; turn your back to me. Here is Maugiron coming; converse with him, and be amiable to him."

"That is a strange recommendation, monsieur."

But St. Luc left his wife full of astonishment, and went to pay his court to Chicot, who was playing his part with a most laughable majesty.

The king danced, but seemed never to lose sight of St. Luc. Sometimes he called him to repeat to him some pleasantry, which, whether droll or not, made St. Luc laugh heartily. Sometimes he offered him out of his comfit box sweetmeats and candied fruits, which St. Luc found excellent. If he disappeared for an instant, the king sent for him, and seemed not happy if he was out of his sight. All at once a voice rose above all the tumult.

"Oh!" said Henri, "I think I hear the voice of Chicot; do you hear, St. Luc? – the king is angry."

"Yes, sire, it sounds as though he were quarreling with some one."

"Go and see what it is, and come back and tell me."

As St. Luc approached he heard Chicot crying:

"I have made sumptuary laws, but if they are not enough I will make more; at least they shall be numerous, if they are not good. By the horn of Beelzebub, six pages, M. de Bussy, are too much."

And Chicot, swelling out his cheeks, and putting his hand to his side, imitated the king to the life.

"What does he say about Bussy?" asked the king, when St. Luc returned. St. Luc was about to reply, when the crowd opening, showed to him six pages, dressed in cloth of gold, covered with chains, and bearing on their breasts the arms of their masters, sparkling in jewels. Behind them came a young man, handsome and proud; who walked with his head raised and a haughty look, and whose simple dress of black velvet contrasted with the splendor of his pages. This was Bussy d'Amboise. Maugiron, Schomberg, and Quelus had drawn near to the king.

"See," said Maugiron, "here is the servant, but where is the master? Are you also in disgrace with him, St. Luc?"

"Why should he follow Bussy?" said Quelus.

"Do you not remember that when his majesty did M. de Bussy the honor to ask him if he wished to belong to him, he replied that, being of the House of Clermont, he followed no one, and belonged to himself."

The king frowned.

"Yes," said Maugiron, "whatever you say, he serves the Duc d'Anjou."

"Then it is because the duke is greater than the king."

No observation could have been more annoying to the king than this, for he detested the Duc d'Anjou. Thus, although he did not answer, he grew pale.

"Come, come, gentlemen," said St. Luc, trembling, "a little charity for my guests, if you please; do not spoil my wedding day."

"Yes," said the king, in a mocking tone; "do not spoil St. Luc's wedding-day."

"Oh!" said Schomberg, "is Bussy allied to the Brissacs? – since St. Luc defends him."

"He is neither my friend nor relation, but he is my guest," said St. Luc. The king gave an angry look. "Besides," he hastened to add, "I do not defend him the least in the world."

Bussy approached gravely behind his pages to salute the king, when Chicot cried:

"Oh, la! Bussy d'Amboise, Louis de Clermont, Comte de Bussy, do you not see the true Henri, do you not know the true king from the false? He to whom you are going is Chicot, my jester, at whom I so often laugh."

Bussy continued his way, and was about to bow before the king, when he said:

"Do you not hear, M. de Bussy, you are called?" and, amidst shouts of laughter from his minions, he turned his back to the young captain. Bussy reddened with anger, but he affected to take the king's remark seriously, and turning round towards Chicot:

"Ah! pardon, sire," said he, "there are kings who resemble jesters so much, that you will excuse me, I hope, for having taken a jester for a king."

"Hein," murmured Henri, "what does he say?"

"Nothing, sire," said St. Luc.

"Nevertheless, M. Bussy," said Chicot; "it was unpardonable."

"Sire, I was preoccupied."

"With your pages, monsieur," said Chicot; "you ruin yourself in pages, and, par la mordieu, it is infringing our prerogatives."

"How so? I beg your majesty to explain."

"Cloth of gold for them, while you a gentleman, a colonel, a Clermont, almost a prince, wear simple black velvet."

"Sire," said Bussy, turning towards the kings' minions, "as we live in a time when lackeys dress like princes, I think it good taste for princes to dress like lackeys."

And he returned to the young men in their splendid dress the impertinent smiles which they had bestowed on him a little before. They grew pale with fury, and seemed only to wait the king's permission to fall upon Bussy.

"Is it for me and mine that you say that?" asked Chicot, speaking like the king.

Three friends of Bussy's now drew near to him. These were Charles d'Antragues, François, Vicomte de Ribeirac, and Livarot. Seeing all this, St. Luc guessed that Bussy was sent by Monsieur to provoke a quarrel. He trembled more than ever, for he feared the combatants were about to take his house for a battle-field. He ran to Quelus, who already had his hand on his sword, and said, "In Heaven's name be moderate."

"Parbleu, he attacks you as well as us."

"Quelus, think of the Duc d'Anjou, who supports Bussy; you do not suppose I fear Bussy himself?"

"Eh! Mordieu, what need we fear; we belong to the king. If we get into peril for him he will help us."

"You, yes; but me," said St. Luc, piteously.

"Ah dame, why do you marry, knowing how jealous the king is in his friendships?"

"Good," thought St. Luc, "everyone for himself; and as I wish to live tranquil during the first fortnight of my marriage, I will make friends with M. Bussy." And he advanced towards him. After his impertinent speech, Bussy had looked round the room to see if any one would take notice of it. Seeing St. Luc approach, he thought he had found what he sought.

"Monsieur," said he, "is it to what I said just now, that I owe the honor of the conversation you appear to desire?"

"Of what you have just said, I heard nothing. No, I saw you, and wished to salute you, and thank you for the honor you have done me by your presence here."

Bussy, who knew the courage of St. Luc, understood at once that he considered the duties of a host paramount, and answered him politely.

Henri, who had seen the movement said, "Oh, oh! I fear there is mischief there; I cannot have St. Luc killed. Go and see, Quelus; no, you are too rash – you, Maugiron."

But St. Luc did not let him approach Bussy, but came to meet him and returned with him to the king.

"What have you been saying to that coxcomb?" asked the king.

"I, sire?"

"Yes, you."

"I said, good evening."

"Oh! was that all?"

St. Luc saw he was wrong. "I said, good evening; adding, that I would have the honor of saying good morning to-morrow."

"Ah! I suspected it."

"Will your majesty keep my secret?" said St. Luc.

"Oh! parbleu, if you could get rid of him without injury to yourself – "

The minions exchanged a rapid glance, which Henri III. seemed not to notice.

"For," continued he, "his insolence is too much."

"Yes, yes," said St. Luc, "but some day he will find his master."

"Oh!" said the king, "he manages the sword well. Why does he not get bit by some dog?" And he threw a spiteful glance on Bussy, who was walking about, laughing at all the king's friends.

"Corbleu!" cried Chicot, "do not be so rude to my friends, M. Bussy, for I draw the sword, though I am a king, as well as if I was a common man."

"If he continue such pleasantries, I will chastise Chicot, sire," said Maugiron.

"No, no, Maugiron, Chicot is a gentleman. Besides, it is not he who most deserves punishment, for it is not he who is most insolent."

This time there was no mistaking, and Quelus made signs to D'O and D'Epernon, who had been in a different part of the room, and had not heard what was going on. "Gentlemen," said Quelus, "come to the council; you, St. Luc, go and finish making your peace with the king."

St. Luc approached the king, while the others drew back into a window.

"Well," said D'Epernon, "what do you want? I was making love, and I warn you, if your recital be not interesting I shall be very angry."

"I wish to tell you that after the ball I set off for the chase."

"For what chase?"

"That of the wild boar."

"What possesses you to go, in this cold, to be killed in some thicket?"

"Never mind, I am going."

"Alone?"

"No, with Maugiron and Schomberg. We hunt for the king."

"Ah! yes, I understand," said Maugiron and Schomberg.

"The king wishes a boar's head for breakfast to-morrow."

"With the neck dressed à l'Italienne," said Maugiron, alluding to the turn-down collar which Bussy wore in opposition to their ruffs.

"Ah, ah," said D'Epernon, "I understand."

"What is it?" asked D'O, "for I do not."

"Ah! look round you."

"Well!"

"Did any one laugh at us here?"

"Yes, Bussy."

"Well, that is the wild boar the king wants."

"You think the king – "

"He asks for it."

"Well, then, so be it. But how do we hunt?"

"In ambush; it is the surest."

Bussy remarked the conference, and, not doubting that they were talking of him, approached, with his friends.

"Look, Antragues, look, Ribeirac," said he, "how they are grouped; it is quite touching; it might be Euryale and Nisus, Damon and Pythias, Castor and – . But where is Pollux?"

“Pollux is married, so that Castor is left alone.”

“What can they be doing?”

“I bet they are inventing some new starch.”

“No, gentlemen,” said Quelus, “we are talking of the chase.”

“Really, Signor Cupid,” said Bussy; “it is very cold for that. It will chap your skin.”

“Monsieur,” replied Maugiron, politely, “we have warm gloves, and doublets lined with fur.”

“Ah! that reassures me,” said Bussy; “do you go soon?”

“To-night, perhaps.”

“In that case I must warn the king; what will he say to-morrow, if he finds his friends have caught cold?”

“Do not give yourself that trouble, monsieur,” said Quelus, “his majesty knows it.”

“Do you hunt larks?” asked Bussy, with an impertinent air.

“No, monsieur, we hunt the boar. We want a head. Will you hunt with us, M. Bussy?”

“No, really, I cannot. To-morrow I must go to the Duc d’Anjou for the reception of M. de Monsoreau, to whom monseigneur has just given the place of chief huntsman.”

“But, to-night?”

“Ah! To-night, I have a rendezvous in a mysterious house of the Faubourg St. Antoine.”

“Ah! ah!” said D’Epernon, “is the Queen Margot here, incognito, M. de Bussy?”

“No, it is some one else.”

“Who expects you in the Faubourg St. Antoine?”

“Just so, indeed I will ask your advice, M. de Quelus.”

“Do so, although I am not a lawyer, I give very good advice.”

“They say the streets of Paris are unsafe, and that is a lonely place. Which way do you counsel me to take?”

“Why, I advise you to take the ferry-boat at the Pré-aux-Clercs, get out at the corner, and follow the quay until you arrive at the great Châtelet, and then go through the Rue de la Tixanderie, until you reach the faubourg. Once at the corner of the Rue St. Antoine, if you pass the Hôtel des Tournelles without accident, it is probable you will arrive safe and sound at your mysterious house.”

“Thanks for your route, M. de Quelus, I shall be sure to follow it.” And saluting the five friends, he went away.

As Bussy was crossing the last saloon where Madame de St. Luc was, her husband made a sign to her. She understood at once, and going up, stopped him.

“Oh! M. de Bussy,” said she, “everyone is talking of a sonnet you have made.”

“Against the king, madame?”

“No, in honor of the queen; do tell it to me.”

“Willingly, madame,” and, offering his arm to her, he went off, repeating it.

During this time, St. Luc drew softly near his friends, and heard Quelus say:

“The animal will not be difficult to follow; thus then, at the corner of the Hôtel des Tournelles, opposite the Hôtel St. Pol.”

“With each a lackey?” asked D’Epernon.

“No, no, Nogaret, let us be alone, and keep our own secret, and do our own work. I hate him, but he is too much a gentleman for a lackey to touch.”

“Shall we go out all six together?”

“All five if you please,” said St. Luc.

“Ah! it is true, we forgot your wife.”

They heard the king’s voice calling St. Luc.

“Gentlemen,” said he, “the king calls me. Good sport, au revoir.”

And he left them, but instead of going straight to the king, he ran to where Bussy stood with his wife.

"Ah! monsieur, how hurried you seem," said Bussy. "Are you going also to join the chase; it would be a proof of your courage, but not of your gallantry."

"Monsieur, I was seeking you."

"Really."

"And I was afraid you were gone. Dear Jeanne, tell your father to try and stop the king, whilst I say a few words tête-à-tête to M. Bussy." Jeanne went.

"I wish to say to you, monsieur," continued St. Luc, "that if you have any rendezvous to-night, you would do well to put it off, for the streets are not safe, and, above all, to avoid the Hôtel des Tournelles, where there is a place where several men could hide. This is what I wished to say; I know you fear nothing, but reflect."

At this moment they heard Chicot's voice crying, "St. Luc, St. Luc, do not hide yourself, I am waiting for you to return to the Louvre."

"Here I am, sire," cried St. Luc, rushing forward. Near Chicot stood the king, to whom one page was giving his ermine mantle, and another a velvet mask lined with satin.

"Sire," said St. Luc, "I will have the honor of lighting your majesties to your litters."

"No," said Henri, "Chicot goes one way, and I another. My friends are good-for-nothings, who have run away and left me to return alone to the Louvre. I had counted on them, and you cannot let me go alone. You are a grave married man, and must take me back to the queen. Come, my friend, my litter is large enough for two."

Madame de St. Luc, who had heard this, tried to speak, and to tell her father that the king was carrying away her husband, but he, placing his fingers on his month, motioned her to be silent.

"I am ready, sire," said he, "to follow you."

When the king took leave, the others followed, and Jeanne was left alone. She entered her room, and knelt down before the image of a saint to pray, then sat down to wait for her husband's return. M. de Brissac sent six men to the Louvre to attend him back. But two hours after one of them returned, saying, that the Louvre was closed and that before closing, the captain of the watch had said, "It is useless to wait longer, no one will leave the Louvre to-night; his majesty is in bed."

The marshal carried this news to his daughter.

CHAPTER II.
HOW IT IS NOT ALWAYS HE WHO OPENS THE DOOR, WHO ENTERS THE HOUSE

The Porte St. Antoine was a kind of vault in stone, similar to our present Porte St. Denis, only it was attached by its left side to buildings adjacent to the Bastile. The space at the right, between the gate and the Hôtel des Tournelles, was large and dark, little frequented by day, and quite solitary at night, for all passers-by took the side next to the fortress, so as to be in some degree under the protection of the sentinel. Of course, winter nights were still more feared than summer ones.

That on which the events which we have recounted, and are about to recount took place, was cold and black. Before the gate on the side of the city, was no house, but only high walls, those of the church of St. Paul, and of the Hôtel des Tournelles. At the end of this wall was the niche of which St. Luc had spoken to Bussy. No lamps lighted this part of Paris at that epoch. In the nights when the moon charged herself with the lighting of the earth, the Bastile rose somber and majestic against the starry blue of the skies, but on dark nights, there seemed only a thickening of the shadows where it stood. On the night in question, a practised eye might have detected in the angle of the wall of the Tournelles several black shades, which moved enough to show that they belonged to poor devils of human bodies, who seemed to find it difficult to preserve their natural warmth as they. stood there. The sentinel from the Bastile; who could not see them on account of the darkness, could not hear them either, for they talked almost in whispers. However, the conversation did not want interest.

“This Bussy was right,” said one; “it is a night such as we had at Warsaw, when Henri was King of Poland, and if this continues we shall freeze.”

“Come, Maugiron, you complain like a woman,” replied another: “it is not warm, I confess; but draw your mantle over your eyes, and put your hands in your pockets, and you will not feel it.”

“Really, Schomberg,” said a third, “it is easy to see you are German. As for me, my lips bleed, and my mustachios are stiff with ice.”

“It is my hands,” said a fourth; “on my honor, I would not swear I had any.”

“You should have taken your mamma’s muff, poor Quelus,” said Schomberg.

“Eh! mon Dieu, have patience,” said a fifth voice; “you will soon be complaining you are hot.”

“I see some one coming through the Rue St. Paul,” said Quelus.

“It cannot be him; he named another route.”

“Might he not have suspected something, and changed it?”

“You do not know Bussy; where he said he should go, he would go, if he knew that Satan himself were barring his passage.”

“However, here are two men coming.”

“Ma foi! yes.”

“Let us charge,” said Schomberg.

“One moment,” said D’Epernon; “do not let us kill good bourgeois, or poor women. Hold! they stop.”

In fact, they had stopped, and looked as if undecided. “Oh, can they have seen us?”

“We can hardly see ourselves!”

“See, they turn to the left; they stop before a house they are seeking – they are trying to enter; they will escape us!”

“But it is not him, for he was going to the Faubourg St. Antoine.”

“Oh! how do you know he told you right?”

At this supposition they all rushed out, sword in hand, towards the gentlemen.

One of the men had just introduced a key into the lock; the door had yielded and was about to open, when the noise of their assailants made them turn.

"What is this? Can it be against us, Aurilly?" said one.

"Ah, monseigneur," said the other, who had opened the door, "it looks like it. Will you name yourself, or keep incognito?"

"Armed men – an ambush!"

"Some jealous lover; I said the lady was too beautiful not to be watched."

"Let us enter quickly, Aurilly; we are safer within doors."

"Yes, monseigneur, if there are not enemies within; but how do you know – "

He had not time to finish. The young men rushed up; Quelus and Maugiron made for the door to prevent their entering, while Schomberg, D'O, and D'Epernon prepared to attack in front. But he who had been called monseigneur turned towards Quelus, who was in front, and crossing his arms proudly, said:

"You attack a son of France, M. Quelus!"

Quelus drew back, trembling, and thunderstruck.

"Monseigneur le Duc d'Anjou!" he cried.

"The Duc d'Anjou!" repeated the others.

"Well, gentlemen," cried the duke.

"Monseigneur," stammered D'Epernon, "it was a joke; forgive us."

"Monseigneur," said D'O, "we did not dream of meeting your highness here!"

"A joke!" said the duke; "you have an odd manner of joking, M. d'Epernon. Since it was not intended for me, whom did your jest menace?"

"Monseigneur," said Schomberg; "we saw St. Luc quit the Hôtel Montmorency and come this way; it seemed strange to us, and we wished to see what took him out on his wedding night."

"M. de St. Luc – you took me for him?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"M. de St. Luc is a head taller then I am."

"It is true, monseigneur; but he is just the height of M. Aurilly."

"And seeing a man put a key in a lock, we took him for the principal," added D'O.

"Monseigneur cannot suppose that we had the shadow of an ill-will towards him, even to disturb his pleasures?"

As he listened, the duke, by a skilful movement, had, little by little, quitted the door, followed by Aurilly, and was now at some distance off.

"My pleasures!" said he, angrily; "what makes you think I was seeking pleasure?"

"Ah, monseigneur, in any case pardon us, and let us retire," said Quelus.

"It is well; adieu, gentlemen; but first listen. I was going to consult the Jew Manasses, who reads the future; he lives, as you know, in Rue de la Tournelle. In passing, Aurilly saw you and took you for the watch, and we, therefore, tried to hide ourselves in a doorway. And now you know what to believe and say; it is needless to add, that I do not wish to be followed," and he turned away.

"Monseigneur," said Aurilly, "I am sure these men have bad intentions; it is near midnight, and this is a lonely quarter; let us return home, I beg."

"No, no; let us profit by their departure."

"Your highness is deceived; they have not gone, but have returned to their retreat: look in the angle of the Hôtel des Tournelles."

François looked, and saw that Aurilly was right; it was evident that they waited for something, perhaps to see if the duke were really going to the Jew.

"Well, Monseigneur," continued Aurilly, "do you not think it will be more prudent to go home?"

"Mordieu! yet it is annoying to give up."

"Yes; but it can be put off. I told your highness that the house is taken for a year; we know the lady lodges on the first story. We have gained her maid, and have a key which opens the door: you may wait safely."

"You are sure that the door yielded?"

"Yes, at the third key I tried."

"Are you sure you shut it again?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

Aurilly did not feel sure, as he said, but he did not choose to admit it.

"Well, I will go; I shall return some other time." And the duke went away, promising to payoff the gentlemen for their interruption.

They had hardly disappeared, when the five companions saw approach a cavalier wrapped in a large cloak. The steps of his horse resounded on the frozen ground, and they went slowly and with precaution, for it was slippery.

"This time," said Quelus, "it is he."

"Impossible," said Maugiron.

"Why?"

"Because he is alone, and we left him with Livarot, Antragues, and Ribeirac, who would not have let him run such a risk."

"It is he, however; do you not recognize his insolent way of carrying his head?"

"Then," said D'O, "it is a snare."

"In any case, it is he; and so to arms!"

It was, indeed, Bussy, who came carelessly down the Rue St. Antoine, and followed the route given him by Quelus; he had, as we have seen, received the warning of St. Luc, and, in spite of it, had parted from his friends at the Hôtel Montmorency. It was one of those bravadoes delighted in by the valiant colonel, who said of himself, "I am but a simple gentleman, but I bear in my breast the heart of an emperor; and when I read in Plutarch the exploits of the ancient Romans, I think there is not one that I could not imitate." And besides, he thought that St. Luc, who was not ordinarily one of his friends, merely wished to get him laughed at for his precautions; and Bussy feared ridicule more than danger.

He had, even in the eyes of his enemies, earned a reputation for courage, which could only be sustained by the rashest adventures. Therefore, alone, and armed only with a sword and poniard, he advanced towards the house where waited for him no person, but simply a letter, which the Queen of Navarre sent him every month on the same day, and which he, according to his promise to the beautiful Marguerite, went to fetch himself, alone, and at night.

When he arrived at the Rue St. Catherine, his active eye discerned in the shade the forms of his adversaries. He counted them: "Three, four, five," said he, "without counting the lackeys, who are doubtless within call. They think much of me, it seems; all these for one man. That brave St. Luc did not deceive me; and were his even the first sword to pierce me I would cry, 'Thanks for your warning, friend.'" So saying, he continued to advance, only his arm held his sword under his cloak, of which he had unfastened the clasp.

It was then that Quelus cried, "To arms."

"Ah, gentlemen," said Bussy, "it appears you wish to kill me: I am the wild boar you had to hunt. Well, gentlemen, the wild boar will rip up a few of you; I swear it to you, and I never break my word."

"Possibly," said Schomberg; "but it is not right, M. Bussy d'Amboise, that you should be on horseback and we on foot." And as he spoke, the arm of the young man, covered with white satin, which glistened in the moonlight, came from under his cloak, and Bussy felt his horse give way under him. Schomberg had, with an address peculiar to himself, pierced the horse's leg with a kind of cutlass, of which the blade was heavier than the handle and which had remained in the wound. The

animal gave a shrill cry and fell on his knees. Bussy, always ready, jumped at once to the ground, sword in hand.

"Ah!" cried he, "my favorite horse, you shall pay for this." And as Schomberg approached incautiously, Bussy gave him a blow which broke his thigh. Schomberg uttered a cry.

"Well!" said Bussy, "have I kept my word? one already. It was the wrist of Bussy, and not his horse's leg, you should have cut."

In an instant, while Schomberg bound up his thigh with his handkerchief, Bussy presented the point of his long sword to his four other assailants, disdaining to cry for help, but retreating gradually, not to fly, but to gain a wall, against which to support himself, and prevent his being attacked behind, making all the while constant thrusts, and feeling sometimes that soft resistance of the flesh which showed that his blows had taken effect. Once he slipped for an instant. That instant sufficed for Quelus to give him a wound in the side.

"Touched," cried Quelus.

"Yes, in the doublet," said Bussy, who would not even acknowledge his hurt. And rushing on Quelus, with a vigorous effort, he made his sword fly from his hand. But he could not pursue his advantage, for D'O, D'Epernon, and Maugiron attacked him, with fresh fury. Schomberg had bound his wound, and Quelus picked up his sword. Bussy made a bound backwards, and reached the wall. There he stopped, strong as Achilles, and smiling at the tempest of blows which rained around him. All at once he felt a cloud pass over his eyes. He had forgotten his wound, but these symptoms of fainting recalled it to him.

"Ah, you falter!" cried Quelus.

"Judge of it!" cried Bussy. And with the hilt of his sword he struck him on the temple. Quelus fell under the blow. Then furious – wild, he rushed forward, uttering a terrible cry. D'O and D'Epernon drew back, Maugiron was raising Quelus, when Bussy broke his sword with his foot, and wounded the right arm of D'Epernon. For a moment he was conqueror, but Quelus recovered himself, and four swords flashed again. Bussy felt himself lost. He gathered all his strength to retreat once more step by step. Already the perspiration was cold on his brow, and the ringing in his ears and the cloud over his eyes warned him that his strength was giving way. He sought for the wall with his left hand; to his astonishment, it yielded. It was a door not quite closed. Then he regained hope and strength for a last effort. For a second his blows were rapid and violent. Then he let himself glide inside the door, and pushed it to with a violent blow. It shut, and Bussy was saved. He heard the furious blows of his enemies on the door, their cries of rage, and wrathful imprecations. Then, the ground seemed to fail under his feet, and the walls to move. He made a few steps forward, and fell on the steps of a staircase. He knew no more, but seemed to descend into the silence and obscurity of the tomb.

CHAPTER III.
HOW IT IS SOMETIMES DIFFICULT TO DISTINGUISH A DREAM FROM THE REALITY

Bussy had had time, before falling, to pass his handkerchief under his shirt, and to buckle the belt of his sword over it, so as to make a kind of bandage to the open wound whence the blood flowed, but he had already lost blood enough to make him faint. However, during his fainting fit, this is what Bussy saw, or thought he saw. He found himself in a room with furniture of carved wood, with a tapestry of figures, and a painted ceiling. These figures, in all possible attitudes, holding flowers, carrying arms, seemed to him to be stepping from the walls. Between the two windows a portrait of a lady was hung. He, fixed to his bed, lay regarding all this. All at once the lady of the portrait seemed to move, and an adorable creature, clothed in a long white robe, with fair hair falling over her shoulders, and with eyes black as jet, with long lashes, and with a skin under which he seemed to see the blood circulate, advanced toward the bed. This woman was so beautiful, that Bussy made a violent effort to rise and throw himself at her feet. But he seemed to be confined in there by bonds like those which keep the dead body in the tomb, while the soul mounts to the skies. This forced him to look at the bed on which he was lying, and it seemed to him one of those magnificent beds sculptured in the reign of Francis I., to which were suspended hangings of white damask, embroidered in gold.

At the sight of this woman, the people of the wall and ceiling ceased to occupy his attention; she was all to him, and he looked to see if she had left a vacancy in the frame. But suddenly she disappeared; and an opaque body interposed itself between her and Bussy, moving slowly, and stretching its arms out as though it were playing blindman's buff. Bussy felt in such a passion at this, that, had he been able, he would certainly have attacked this importunate vision; but as he made a vain effort, the newcomer spoke:

"Well," said he, "have I arrived at last?"

"Yes, monsieur," said a voice so sweet that it thrilled through Bussy, "and now you may take off your bandage." Bussy made an effort to see if the sweet voice belonged to the lady of the portrait, but it was useless. He only saw the pleasant face of a young man, who had just, as he was told, taken off his bandage, and was looking curiously about him.

"To the devil with this man," thought Bussy, and he tried to speak, but fruitlessly.

"Ah, I understand now," said the young man, approaching the bed; "you are wounded, are you not, my dear sir? Well, we will try to cure you."

"Is the wound mortal?" asked the sweet voice again, with a sad accent, which brought tears into the eyes of Bussy.

"I do not know yet, I am going to see; meanwhile, he has fainted."

This was all Bussy heard, he seemed to feel a red-hot iron in his side, and then lost all consciousness. Afterwards, it was impossible for Bussy to fix the duration of this insensibility.

When he woke, a cold wind blew over his face, and harsh voices sounded in his ears; he opened his eyes to see if it were the people of the tapestry speaking, and hoping to see the lady again, looked round him. But there was neither tapestry nor ceiling visible, and the portrait had also disappeared. He saw at his right only a man with a white apron spotted with blood; at his left, a monk, who was raising his head; and before him, an old woman mumbling her prayers. His wondering eyes next rested on a mass of stone before him, in which he recognized the Temple, and above that, the cold white sky, slightly tinted by the rising sun. He was in the street.

"Ah, thank you, good people," said he, "for the trouble you have taken in bringing me here. I wanted air, but you might have given it to me by opening the window, and I should have been better on my bed of white damask and gold than on the bare ground. But never mind, there is in my pocket,

unless you have paid yourselves, which would have been prudent, some twenty golden crowns; take, my friends, take."

"But, my good gentleman," said the butcher, "we did not bring you here, but found you here as we passed."

"Ah, diable! and the young doctor, was he here?"

The bystanders looked at each other.

"It is the remains of delirium," said the monk. Then, turning to Bussy, "I think you would do well to confess," said he, "there was no doctor, poor young man; you were here alone, and as cold as death."

Bussy then remembered having received a sword stroke, glided his hand under his doublet, and felt his handkerchief in the same place, fixed over his wound by his sword-belt.

"It is singular," said he.

Already profiting by his permission, the lookers-on were dividing his purse.

"Now, my friends," said he, "will you take me to my hôtel?"

"Ah, certainly," said the old woman, "poor dear young man, the butcher is strong, and then he has his horse, on which you can ride."

"Yes, my gentleman, my horse and I are at your service."

"Nevertheless, my son," said the monk, "I think you would do well to confess."

"What are you called?" asked Bussy.

"Brother Gorenflot."

"Well Brother Gorenflot, I trust my hour has not yet arrived and as I am cold, I wish to get quickly home and warm myself."

"What is your hotel called?"

"Hôtel de Bussy."

"How!" cried all, "you belong to M. de Bussy?"

"I am M. de Bussy himself."

"Bussy," cried the butcher, "the brave Bussy, the scourge of the minions!" And raising him, he was quickly carried home, whilst the monk went away, murmuring, "If it was that Bussy, I do not wonder he would not confess!"

When he got home, Bussy sent for his usual doctor, who found the wound not dangerous.

"Tell me," said Bussy, "has it not been already dressed?"

"Ma foi," said the doctor, "I am not sure."

"And was it serious enough to make me delirious?"

"Certainly."

"Ah!" thought Bussy, "was that tapestry, that frescoed ceiling, that bed, the portrait between the windows, the beautiful blonde woman with black eyes, the doctor blindfolded, was this all delirium? Is nothing true but my combat? Where did I fight? Ah, yes, I remember; near the Bastile, by the Rue St. Paul. I leaned against a door, and it opened; I shut it – and then I remember no more. Have I dreamed or not? And my horse! My horse must have been found dead on the place. Doctor, pray call some one."

The doctor called a valet. Bussy inquired, and heard that the animal, bleeding and mutilated, had dragged itself to the door of the hotel, and had been found there.

"It must have been a dream," thought he again: "how should a portrait come down from the wall and talk to a doctor with a bandage on his eyes? I am a fool; and yet when I remember she was so charming," and he began to describe her beauties, till he cried out, "It is impossible it should have been a dream; and yet I found myself in the street, and a monk kneeling by me. Doctor," said he, "shall I have to keep the house a fortnight again for this scratch, as I did for the last?"

"We shall see; can you walk?"

"I seem to have quicksilver in my legs."

"Try."

Bussy jumped out of bed, and walked quickly round his room.

"That will do," said the doctor, "provided that you do not go on horseback, or walk ten miles the first day."

"Capital! you are a doctor; however, I have seen another to-night. Yes, I saw him, and if ever I meet him, I should know him."

"I advise you not to seek for him, monsieur; one has always a little fever after a sword wound; you should know that, who have had a dozen."

"Ah, mon Dieu!" cried Bussy, struck with a new idea, "did my dream begin outside the door instead of inside? Was there no more a staircase and a passage, than there was a bed with white and gold damask, and a portrait? Perhaps those wretches, thinking me dead, carried me to the Temple, to divert suspicion, should any one have seen them hiding. Certainly, it must be so, and I have dreamed the rest. Mon Dieu! if they have procured for me this dream which torments me so, I swear to make an end of them all."

"My dear seigneur," said the doctor, "if you wish to get well, you must not agitate yourself thus."

"Except St. Luc," continued Bussy, without attending; "he acted as a friend, and my first visit shall be to him."

"Not before five this evening."

"If you wish it; but, I assure you, it is not going out and seeing people which will make me ill, but staying quietly at home."

"Well, it is possible; you are always a singular patient; act as you please, only I recommend you not to get another wound before this one is healed."

Bussy promised to do his best to avoid it, and, after dressing, called for his litter to take him to the Hôtel Montmorency.

CHAPTER IV.
HOW MADAME DE ST. LUC HAD PASSED THE NIGHT

Louis de Clermont, commonly called Bussy d'Amboise, was a perfect gentleman, and a very handsome man. Kings and princes had sought for his friendship; queens and princesses had lavished on him their sweetest smiles. He had succeeded La Mole in the affections of Queen Marguerite, who had committed for him so many follies, that even her husband, insensible so long, was moved at them; and the Duke François would never have pardoned him, had it not gained over Bussy to his interests, and once again he sacrificed all to his ambition. But in the midst of all his successes of war, ambition, and intrigue, he had remained insensible; and he who had never known fear, had never either known love.

When the servants of M. de St. Luc saw Bussy enter, they ran to tell M. de Brissac.

"Is M. de St. Luc at home?" asked Bussy.

"No, monsieur."

"Where shall I find him?"

"I do not know, monsieur. We are all very anxious about him, for he has not returned since yesterday."

"Nonsense."

"It is true, monsieur."

"But Madame de St. Luc?"

"Oh, she is here."

"Tell her I shall be charmed if she will allow me to pay my respects to her."

Five minutes after, the messenger returned, saying Madame de St. Luc would be glad to see M. de Bussy.

When Bussy entered the room, Jeanne ran to meet him. She was very pale, and her jet black hair made her look more so; her eyes were red from her sleepless night, and there were traces of tears on her cheeks.

"You are welcome, M. de Bussy," said she, "in spite of the fears your presence awakens."

"What do you mean, madame? how can I cause you fear?"

"Ah! there was a meeting last night between you and M. de St. Luc? confess it."

"Between me and St. Luc!"

"Yes, he sent me away to speak to you; you belong to the Duc d'Anjou, he to the king. You have quarrelled – do not hide it from me. You must understand my anxiety. He went with the king, it is true – but afterwards?"

"Madame, this is marvelous. I expected you to ask after my wound – "

"He wounded you; he did fight, then?"

"No, madame; not with me at least; it was not he who wounded me. Indeed, he did all he could to save me. Did he not tell you so?"

"How could he tell me? I have not seen him."

"You have not seen him? Then your porter spoke the truth."

"I have not seen him since eleven last night."

"But where can he be?"

"I should rather ask you."

"Oh, pardieu, tell me about it, it is very droll."

The poor woman looked at him with astonishment.

"No, it is very sad, I mean. I have lost much blood, and scarcely know what I am saying. Tell me this lamentable story, madame."

Jeanne told all she knew; how the king had carried him off, the shutting of the doors of the Louvre, and the message of the guards.

"Ah! very well, I understand," said Bussy.

"How! you understand."

"Yes; his majesty took him to the Louvre and once there he could not come out again."

"And why not?"

"Ah! that is a state secret."

"But my father went to the Louvre, and I also, and the guards said they did not know what we meant."

"All the more reason that he should be there."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it, and if you wish to be so also – "

"How?"

"By seeing."

"Can I?"

"Certainly."

"But if I go there, they win send me away, as they did before."

"Would you like to go in?"

"But if he is not there?"

"I tell you he is there. Come; but they will not let in the wife of St. Luc."

"You laugh at me, and it is very cruel in my distress."

"No, dear lady, listen. You are young, you are tall, and have black eyes; you are like my youngest page, who looked so well in the cloth of gold yesterday."

"Ah I what folly, M. Bussy," cried Jeanne, blushing.

"I have no other method but this. If you wish to see St. Luc – "

"Oh! I would give all the world to see him."

"Well, I promise that you shall without giving anything."

"Oh, but – "

"I told you how."

"Well, I will do it; shall I send for the dress?"

"No, I will send you a new one I have at home; then you must join me this evening at the Rue St. Honoré. and we will go together to the Louvre." Jeanne began to laugh, and gave her hand to Bussy.

"Pardon my suspicions," said she.

"Willingly," and taking leave he went home to prepare.

Bussy and Madame de St. Luc met at the appointed time; Jeanne looked beautiful in her disguise. At the end of the Rue St. Germain-l'Auxerrois they met a large party in which Bussy recognized the Duc d'Anjou and his train.

"Ah," said he, "we will make a triumphal entry into the Louvre."

"Eh! monseigneur," cried he to the duke.

The prince turned. "You, Bussy!" cried he joyfully, "I heard you were badly wounded, and I was going to your hotel."

"Ma foi, monseigneur, if I am not dead, it is thanks to no one but myself. You get me into nice situations; that ball at St. Luc's was a regular snare, and they have nearly drained all the blood out of my body."

"They shall pay for it, Bussy; they shall pay dearly."

"Yes, you say so," said Bussy, with his usual liberty, "and you will smile on the first you meet."

"Well! accompany me to the Louvre, and you shall see."

"What shall I see, monseigneur?"

"How I will speak to my brother."

“You promise me reparation?”

“I promise you shall be content. You hesitate still, I believe.”

“Monseigneur, I know you so well.”

“Come, I tell you.”

“This is good for you,” whispered Bussy to Jeanne. “There will be a quarrel between the brothers, and meanwhile you can find St. Luc.”

“Well,” said he to the prince, “I follow you; if I am insulted, at least I can always revenge myself.”

And he took his place near the duke, while his page kept close to him.

“Revenge yourself; no, Bussy,” said the prince, “I charge myself with it. I know your assassins,” added he, in a low tone.

“What! your highness has taken the trouble to inquire?”

“I saw them.”

“How so?” cried Bussy, astonished.

“Oh! I had business myself at the Porte St. Antoine. They barely missed killing me in your place. Ah! I did not know it was you they were waiting for, or else – ”

“Well?”

“Had you this new page with you?” asked the prince, without finishing his sentence.

“No, I was alone, and you?”

“I had Aurilly with me; and why were you alone?”

“Because I wish to preserve my name of the brave Bussy.”

“And they wounded you?”

“I do not wish to give them the pleasure of knowing it, but I had a severe wound in the side.”

“Ah! the wretches; Aurilly said he was sure they were bent on mischief.”

“How! you saw the ambush, you were with Aurilly, who uses his sword as well as his lute, you thought they had bad intentions, and you did not watch to give aid?”

“I did not know who they were waiting for.”

“Mort diable! when you saw the king’s friends, you might have known it was against some friends of yours. Now, as there is hardly any one but myself who has courage to be your friend, you might have guessed that it was I.”

“Oh! perhaps you are right, my dear Bussy, but I did not think of all that.”

When they entered, “Remember your promise,” said Bussy, “I have some one to speak to.”

“You leave me, Bussy?”

“Yes, I must, but if I hear a great noise I will come to you, so speak loud.”

Then Bussy, followed by Jeanne, took a secret staircase, traversed two or three corridors, and arrived at an antechamber.

“Wait here for me,” said he to Jeanne.

“Ah, mon Dieu! you leave me alone.”

“I must, to provide for your entrance.”

CHAPTER V.
HOW MADAME DE ST. LUC PASSED THE SECOND NIGHT OF HER MARRIAGE

Bussy went straight to the sleeping-room of the king. There were in it two beds of velvet and satin, pictures, relics, perfumed sachets from the East, and a collection of beautiful swords. Bussy knew the king was not there, as his brother had asked to see him, but he knew that there was next to it a little room which was occupied in turn by all the king's favorites, and which he now expected to find occupied by St. Luc, whom the king in his great affection had carried off from his wife. Bussy knocked at the antechamber common to the two rooms. The captain of the guards opened.

"M. de Bussy!" cried he.

"Yes, myself, dear M. de Nancey; the king wishes to speak to M. de St. Luc."

"Very well, tell M. de St. Luc the king wants him."

"What is he doing?"

"He is with Chicot, waiting for the king's return from his brother."

"Will you permit my page to wait here?"

"Willingly, monsieur."

"Enter, Jean," said Bussy, and he pointed to the embrasure of a window, where she went to hide herself. St. Luc entered, and M. de Nancey retired.

"What does the king want now?" cried St. Luc, angrily; "ah! it is you, M. de Bussy."

"I, and before everything, let me thank you for the service you rendered me."

"Ah! it was quite natural; I could not bear to see a brave gentleman assassinated: I thought you killed."

"It did not want much to do it, but I got off with a wound, which I think I repaid with interest to Schomberg and D'Epernon. As for Quelus, he may thank the bones of his head: they are the hardest I ever knew."

"Ah! tell me about it, it will amuse me a little."

"I have no time now, I come for something else. You are ennuyé – "

"To death."

"And a prisoner?"

"Completely. The king pretends no one can amuse him but me. He is very good, for since yesterday I have made more grimaces than his ape, and been more rude than his jester."

"Well, it is my turn to render you a service: can I do it?"

"Yes, go to the Marshal de Brissac's, and reassure my poor little wife, who must be very uneasy, and must think my conduct very strange."

"What shall I say to her?"

"Morbleu! tell her what you see; that I am a prisoner, and that the king talks to me of friendship like Cicero, who wrote on it; and of virtue like Socrates, who practised it. It is in vain I tell him I am ungrateful for the first, and incredulous as to the last: he only repeats it over again."

"Is that all I can do for you?"

"Ah, mon Dieu! I fear so."

"Then it is done."

"How so?"

"I guessed all this, and told your wife so."

"And what did she say?"

"At first she would not believe; but I trust now," continued he, glancing towards the window, "she will yield to evidence. Ask me something more difficult."

“Then, bring here the griffin of Signor Astolfo, and let me mount en croupe, and go to my wife.”

“A more simple thing would be to take the griffin to your wife and bring her here.”

“Here!”

“Yes, here.”

“To the Louvre, that would be droll.”

“I should think so. Then you would be ennuyé no longer?”

“Ma foi! no, but if this goes on much longer, I believe I shall kill myself.”

“Well! shall I give you my page?”

“To me?”

“Yes, he is a wonderful lad.”

“Thank you, but I detest pages.”

“Bah! try him.”

“Bussy, you mock me.”

“Let me leave him.”

“No.”

“I tell you, you will like him.”

“No, no, a hundred times, no.”

“Hola, page, come here.”

Jeanne came forward, blushing.

“Oh!” cried St. Luc, recognizing her, in astonishment.

“Well! shall I send him away?”

“No, no. Ah Bussy, I owe you an eternal friendship.”

“Take care, you cannot be heard, but you can be seen.”

“It is true,” said St. Luc, retreating from his wife. Indeed, M. de Nancey was beginning to wonder what was going on, when a great noise was heard from the gallery.

“Ah! mon Dieu!” cried M. de Nancey, “there is the king quarreling with some one.”

“I really think so,” replied Bussy, affecting inquietude; “can it be with the Duc d’Anjou, who came with me?”

The captain of the guard went off in the direction of the gallery.

“Have I not managed well?” said Bussy to St. Luc.

“What is it?”

“M. d’Anjou and the king are quarrelling; I must go to them. You profit by the time to place in safety the page I have brought you; is it possible?”

“Oh, yes; luckily I declared I was ill and must keep my room.”

“In that case, adieu, madame, and remember me in your prayers.” And Bussy went off to the gallery, where the king, red with fury, swore to the duke, who was pale with anger, that in the scene of the preceding night Bussy was the aggressor.

“I affirm to you, sire,” cried the duke, “that D’Epernon, Schomberg and Quelus were waiting for him at the Hôtel des Tournelles.”

“Who told you so?”

“I saw them with my own eyes.”

“In that darkness! The night was pitch dark.”

“I knew their voices.”

“They spoke to you?”

“They did more, they took me for Bussy, and attacked me.”

“You?”

“Yes, I.”

“And what were you doing there?”

“What does that matter to you?”

"I wish to know; I am curious to-day."

"I was going to Manasses."

"A Jew?"

"You go to Ruggieri, a poisoner."

"I go where I like: I am the king. Besides, as I said, Bussy was the aggressor."

"Where?"

"At St. Luc's ball."

"Bussy provoked five men? No, no, he is brave, but he is not mad."

"Par la mordieu! I tell you I heard him. Besides, he has wounded Schomberg in the thigh, D'Epernon in the arm, and half killed Quelus."

"Ah! really I did not know; I compliment him on it."

"I will make example of this brawler."

"And I, whom your friends attack, in his person and in my own, will know if I am your brother, and if – "

At this moment Bussy, dressed in pale-green satin, entered the room.

"Sire!" said he, "receive my humble respects."

"Pardieu! here he is," cried Henri.

"Your majesty, it seems, was doing me the honor of speaking of me."

"Yes, and I am glad to see that, in spite of what they told me, your look shows good health."

"Sire, blood drawn improves the complexion, so mine ought to be good this morning."

"Well, since they have wounded you, complain, and I will do you justice."

"I complain of nothing, sire."

Henri looked astonished. "What did you say?" said he to the duke.

"I said that Bussy had received a wound in his side."

"Is it true, Bussy?"

"The first prince of the blood would not lie, sire."

"And yet you do not complain?"

"I shall never complain, sire, until they cut off my right-hand, and prevent my revenging myself, and then I will try to do it with the left."

"Insolent," murmured Henri.

"Sire," said the duke, "do justice; we ask no better. Order an inquiry, name judges, and let it be proved who prepared the ambush and the intended murder."

Henri reddened. "No," said he, "I prefer this time to be ignorant where the wrong lies, and to pardon everyone. I wish these enemies to make peace, and I am sorry that Schomberg and D'Epernon are kept at home by their wounds. Say, M. d'Anjou, which do you call the most forward to fight of all my friends, as you say you saw them?"

"Sire, it was Quelus."

"Ma foi! yes," said Quelus, "his highness is right."

"Then," said Henri, "let MM. Bussy and Quelus make peace in the name of all."

"Oh! Oh!" said Quelus, "what does that mean, sire?"

"It means that you are to embrace here, before me." Quelus frowned.

"Ah, signor," cried Bussy, imitating a pantaloon, "will you not do me this favor?"

Even the king laughed. Then, approaching Quelus, Bussy threw his arms round his neck, saying, "The king wishes it."

"I hope it engages us to nothing," whispered Quelus.

"Be easy," answered Bussy, "we will meet soon."

Quelus drew back in a rage, and Bussy, making a pirouette, went out of the gallery.

CHAPTER VI.
LE PETIT COUCHER OF HENRI III

After this scene, beginning in tragedy and ending in comedy, the king, still angry, went to his room, followed by Chicot, who asked for his supper.

"I am not hungry," said the king.

"It is possible, but I am."

The king did not seem to hear. He unclasped his cloak, took off his cap, and, advancing to the passage which led to St. Luc's room, said to Chicot, "Wait here for me till I return."

"Oh! do not be in a hurry," said Chicot. No sooner was the king gone, than Chicot opened the door and called "Hola!"

A valet came. "The king has changed his mind," said Chicot, "he wishes a good supper here for himself and St. Luc, above all, plenty of wine, and despatch."

The valet went to execute the orders, which he believed to be the king's. Henri meanwhile had passed into St. Luc's room. He found him in bed, having prayers read to him by an old servant who had followed him to the Louvre, and shared his captivity. In a corner, on an armchair, his head buried in his hands, slept the page.

"Who is that young man?" asked the king.

"Did not your majesty authorize me to send for a page."

"Yes, doubtless."

"Well, I have profited by it."

"Oh!"

"Does your majesty repent of having allowed me this little indulgence?"

"No, no, on the contrary, amuse yourself, my son. How are you?"

"Sire, I have a fever."

"Really, your face is red; let me feel your pulse, I am half a doctor."

St. Luc held out his hand with visible ill-humor.

"Oh!" said the king, "intermittent – agitated."

"Yes, sire, I am very ill."

"I will send you my doctor."

"Thank you, sire, but I hate Miron."

"I will watch you myself. You shall have a bed in my room, and we will talk all night."

"Oh!" cried St Luc, "you see me ill, and you want to keep me from sleeping. That is a singular way to treat your patient, doctor."

"But you cannot be left alone, suffering as you are."

"Sire, I have my page, Jean."

"But he sleeps."

"That is what I like best, then he will not disturb me."

"Well, come and assist at my going to bed."

"Then I shall be free to come back to bed?"

"Perfectly."

"Well, so be it. But I shall make a bad courtier, I assure you; I am dying with sleep."

"You shall yawn at your ease."

"Sire, if your majesty will leave me, I will be with you in five minutes."

"Well, then, five minutes, but no longer."

As soon as the door was shut, the page jumped up. "Ah! St. Luc," cried she, "you are going to leave me again. Mon Dieu! I shall die of fright here, if they discover me."

"My dear Jeanne, Gaspard here will protect you."

"Had I not better go back?"

"If you really wish it, Jeanne," said St. Luc, sadly, "you shall. But if you are as good as you are beautiful, if you have any feeling in your heart for me, you will wait here a little. I shall suffer so much from my head and nerves that the king will not long keep so sad a companion."

"Go, then," said Jeanne, "and I will wait."

"My dear Jeanne, you are adorable. Trust me to returns as soon as possible, Besides, I have an idea, which I will tell you when I return."

"An idea which will restore your liberty?"

"I hope so."

"Then go,"

"Gaspard," said St. Luc, "prevent any one from entering here, and in a quarter of an hour lock the door, and bring me the key to the king's room. Then go home, and tell them not to be uneasy about Madame la Comtesse, and come back to-morrow."

Then St. Luc kissed his wife's hand, and went to the king, who was already growing impatient. Jeanne, alone and trembling, hid behind the curtains of the bed. When St. Luc entered he found the king amidst a perfect carpet of flowers, of which the stalks had been cut off-roses, jasmine, violets, and wall-flowers, in spite of the severe weather, formed an odorous carpet for Henry III. The chamber, of which the roof was painted, had in it two beds, one of which was so large as to occupy a third of the room. It was hung with gold and silk tapestry, representing mythological figures and the windows had curtains to match. From the center of the ceiling hung, suspended by a golden chain, a silver gilt lamp, in which burned a perfumed oil. At the side of the bed was a golden satyr, holding in his hand a candelabrum, containing four rose-color wax candles, also perfumed.

The king, with his naked feet resting on the flowers, was seated on a chair of ebony inlaid with gold; he had on his knees seven or eight young spaniels, who were licking his bands. Two servants were curling his hair, his mustachios, and beard, a third was covering his face with a kind of cream, which had a most delightful scent.

"Here," cried Chicot, "the grease and the combs, I will try them too."

"Chicot," said Henri, "your skin is too dry, and will use too much cream, and your beard is so hard, it will break my combs. Well, my son," said he, turning to St. Luc, "how is your head?"

St. Luc put his hand to his head and groaned.

"Imagine!" continued Henri, "I have seen Bussy d'Amboise."

"Bussy!" cried St. Luc, trembling.

"Yes, those fools! five of them attacked him, and let him escape. If you had been there, St. Luc – "

"I should probably have been like the others."

"Oh! no, I wager you are as good as Bussy. We will try to-morrow."

"Sire, I am too ill for anything."

Henri, hearing a singular noise, turned round, and saw Chicot eating up all the supper that had been brought for two.

"What the devil are you doing, M. Chicot?" cried Henri.

"Taking my cream internally, since you will not allow me to do it outwardly."

"Go and fetch my captain of the guards," said Henri.

"What for?" asked Chicot, emptying a porcelain cup of chocolate.

"To pass his sword through your body."

"Ah! let him come, we shall see!" cried Chicot, putting himself in such a comical attitude of defense that every one laughed.

"But I am hungry," cried the king; "and the wretch has eaten up all the supper."

"You are capricious, Henri; I offered you supper and you refused. However, your bouillon is left; I am no longer hungry, and I am going to bed."

"And I also," said St. Luc, "for I can stand no longer."

"Stay, St. Luc," said the king, "take these," and he offered him a handful of little dogs.

"What for?"

"To sleep with you; they will take your illness from you."

"Thanks, sire," said St. Luc, putting them back in their basket, "but I have no confidence in your receipt."

"I will come and visit you in the night, St. Luc."

"Pray do not, sire, you will only disturb me," and saluting the king, he went away. Chicot had already disappeared, and there only remained with the king the valets, who covered his face with a mask of fine cloth, plastered with the perfumed cream, in which were holes for the eyes, nose, and mouth; a cap of silk and silver fixed it on the forehead and ears. They next covered his arms with sleeves made of wadded silk, and then presented him with kid gloves, also greased inside.

These mysteries of the royal toilet finished, they presented to him his soup in a golden cup. Then Henri said a prayer, a short one that night, and went to bed.

When settled there, he ordered them to carry away the flowers, which were beginning to make the air sickly, and to open the window for a moment. Then the valet closed the doors and curtains, and called in Narcissus, the king's favorite dog, who, jumping on the bed, settled himself at once on the king's feet. The valet next put out the wax-lights, lowered the lamp, and went out softly.

Already, more tranquil and nonchalant than the lazy monks of his kingdom in their fat abbeys, the King of France no longer remembered that there was a France. – He slept.

Every noise was hushed, and one might have heard a bat fly in the somber corridors of the Louvre.

CHAPTER VII.
HOW, WITHOUT ANY ONE KNOWING WHY, THE KING WAS CONVERTED BEFORE THE NEXT DAY

Three hours passed thus.

Suddenly, a terrible cry was heard, which came from the king's room.

All the lights in his room were out, and no sound was to be heard except this strange call of the king's. For it was he who had cried.

Soon was heard the noise of furniture falling, porcelain breaking, steps running about the room, and the barking of dogs-mingled with new cries. Almost instantly lights burned, swords shone in the galleries, and the heavy steps of the Guards were heard.

"To arms!" cried all, "the king calls."

And the captain of the guard, the colonel of the Swiss, and some attendants, rushed into the king's room with flambeaux.

Near an overturned chair, broken cups, and disordered bed, stood Henri, looking terrified and grotesque in his night-dress. His right hand was extended, trembling like a leaf in the wind, and his left held his sword, which he had seized mechanically.

He appeared dumb through terror, and all the spectators, not daring to break the silence, waited with the utmost anxiety.

Then appeared, half dressed and wrapped in a large cloak, the young queen, Louise de Lorraine, blonde and gentle, who led the life of a saint upon earth, and who had been awakened by her husband's cries.

"Sire," cried she, also trembling, "what is the matter? Mon Dieu! I heard your cries, and I came."

"It – it is nothing," said the king, without moving his eyes, which seemed to be looking up the air for some form invisible to all but him.

"But your majesty cried out; is your majesty suffering?" asked the queen.

Terror was so visibly painted on the king's countenance, that it began to gain on the others.

"Oh, sire!" cried the queen again, "in Heaven's name do not leave us in this suspense. Will you have a doctor?"

"A doctor, no," cried Henri, in the same tone, "the body is not ill, it is the mind; no doctor – a confessor."

Everyone looked round; nowhere was there to be seen any traces of what had so terrified the king. However, a confessor was sent for; Joseph Foulon, superior of the convent of St. Génévière, was torn from his bed, to come to the king. With the confessor, the tumult ceased, and silence was reestablished; everyone conjectured and wondered – the king was confessing.

The next day the king rose early, and began to read prayers then he ordered all his friends to be sent for. They sent to St. Luc, but he was more suffering than ever. His sleep, or rather his lethargy, had been so profound, that he alone had heard nothing of the tumult in the night, although he slept so near. He begged to be left in bed. At this deplorable recital, Henri crossed himself, and sent him a doctor.

Then he ordered that all the scourges from the convent should be brought to him, and, going to his friends, distributed them, ordering them to scourge each other as hard as they could.

D'Epernon said that as his right arm was in a sling, and he could not return the blows he received, he ought to be exempt, but the king replied that that would only make it the more acceptable to God.

He himself set the example. He took off his doublet, waistcoat, and shirt, and struck himself like a martyr. Chicot tried to laugh, as usual, but was warned by a terrible look, that this was not the right time, and he was forced to take a scourge like the others.

All at once the king left the room, telling them to wait for him. Immediately the blows ceased, only Chicot continued to strike D'O, whom he hated, and D'O returned it as well as he could. It was a duel with whips.

The king went to the queen, gave her a pearl necklace worth 25,000 crowns, and kissed her, which he had not done for a year. Then he asked her to put off her royal ornaments and put on a sack.

Louise, always good, consented, but asked why her husband gave her a necklace, and yet made such a request.

"For my sins," replied he.

The queen said no more, for she knew, better than any one, how many he had to repent of.

Henri returned, which was a signal for the flagellation to recommence. In ten minutes the queen arrived, with her sack on her shoulders. Then tapers were distributed to all the court, and barefooted, through the snow, all the courtiers and fine ladies went to Montmartre, shivering. At five o'clock the promenade was over, the convents had received rich presents, the feet of all the court were swollen, and the backs of the courtiers sore. There had been tears, cries, prayers, incense, and psalms. Everyone had suffered, without knowing why the king, who danced the night before, scourged himself to-day. As for Chicot, he had escaped at the Porte Montmartre, and, with Brother Gorenflot, had entered a public-house, where he had eaten and drank. Then he had rejoined the procession and returned to the Louvre.

In the evening the king, fatigued with his fast and his exercise, ordered himself a light supper, had his shoulders washed, and then went to visit St. Luc.

"Ah!" cried he, "God has done well to render life so bitter."

"Why so, sire?"

"Because then man, instead of fearing death, longs for it."

"Speak for yourself, sire, I do not long for it at all."

"Listen, St. Luc, will you follow my example?"

"If I think it a good one."

"I will leave my throne, and you your wife, and we will enter a cloister. I will call myself Brother Henri – "

"Pardon, sire, if you do not care for your crown, of which you are tired, I care very much for my wife, whom I know so little. Therefore I refuse."

"Oh! you are better."

"Infinitely better, sire; I feel quite joyous, and disposed for happiness and pleasure."

"Poor St. Luc!" cried the king, clasping his hands.

"You should have asked me yesterday, sire, then I was ill and cross. I would have thrown myself into a well for a trifle. But this evening it is quite a different thing. I have passed a good night and a charming day. Mordieu, vive la joie!"

"You swear, St. Luc."

"Did I, sire? but I think you swear sometimes."

"I have sworn, St. Luc, but I shall swear no more."

"I cannot say that; I will not swear more than I can help, and God is merciful."

"You think he will pardon me?"

"Oh! I speak for myself, not for you, sire. You have sinned as a king, I as a private man, and we shall, I trust, be differently judged."

The king sighed. "St. Luc," said he, "will you pass the night in my room?"

"Why, what should we do?"

"We will light all the lamps, I will go to bed, and you shall read prayers to me."

"No, thank you, sire."

"You will not?"

"On no account."

"You abandon me, St. Luc!"

"No, I will stay with your majesty, if you will send for music and ladies, and have a dance."

"Oh, St. Luc, St. Luc!"

"I am wild to-night, sire, I want to dance and drink."

"St. Luc," said the king, solemnly, "do you ever dream?"

"Often, sire."

"You believe in dreams?"

"With reason."

"How so?"

"Dreams console for the reality. Last night I had a charming dream."

"What was it?"

"I dreamed that my wife – "

"You still think of your wife?"

"More than ever, sire; well, I dreamed that she, with her charming face – for she is pretty, sire – "

"So was Eve, who ruined us all."

"Well, my wife had procured wings and the form of a bird, and so, braving locks and bolts, she passed over the walls of the Louvre, and came to my window, crying, 'Open, St. Luc, open, my husband.'"

"And you opened?"

"I should think so."

"Worldly."

"As you please, sire."

"Then you woke?"

"No, indeed, the dream was too charming; and I hope to-night to dream again; therefore I refuse your majesty's obliging offer. If I sit up, let me at least have something to pay me for losing my dream. If your majesty will do as I said – "

"Enough, St. Luc. I trust Heaven will send you a dream to-night which will lead you to repentance."

"I doubt it, sire, and I advise you to send away this libertine St. Luc, who is resolved not to amend."

"No, no, I hope, before to-morrow, grace will have touched you as it has me. Good night, I will pray for you."

CHAPTER VIII.
HOW THE KING WAS AFRAID OF BEING AFRAID

When the king left St. Luc, he found the court, according to his orders, in the great gallery. Then he gave D'O, D'Epernon and Schomberg an order to retire into the provinces, threatened Quelus and Maugiron to punish them if they quarreled anymore with Bussy, to whom he gave his hand to kiss, and then embraced his brother François.

As for the queen, he was prodigal in politeness to her.

When the usual time for retiring approached, the king seemed trying to retard it. At last ten o'clock struck.

"Come with me, Chicot," then said he, "good night, gentlemen."

"Good night, gentlemen," said Chicot, "we are going to bed. I want my barber, my hairdresser, my valet de chambre, and, above all, my cream."

"No," said the king, "I want none of them to-night; Lent is going to begin."

"I regret the cream," said Chicot.

The king and Chicot entered the room, which we already know.

"Ah ça! Henri," said Chicot, "I am the favorite to-night. Am I handsomer than that Cupid, Quelus?"

"Silence, Chicot, and you, gentlemen of the toilette, go out."

They obeyed, and the king and Chicot were left alone.

"Why do you send them away?" asked Chicot, "they have not greased us yet. Are you going to grease me with your own royal hand? It would be an act of humility."

"Let us pray," said Henri.

"Thank you, that is not amusing. If that be what you called me here for, I prefer to return to the bad company I have left. Adieu, my son. Good night."

"Stay," said the king.

"Oh! this is tyranny. You are a despot, a Phalaris, a Dionysius. All day you have made me tear the shoulders of my friends with cow-hide, and now we are to begin again. Do not let us do it, Henri, when there's but two, every blow tells."

"Hold your tongue, miserable chatterer, and think of repentance."

"I repent! And of what? Of being jester to a monk. Confiteor – I repent, mea culpa, it is a great sin."

"No sacrilege, wretch."

"Ah! I would rather he shut up in a cage with lions and apes, than with a mad king. Adieu, I am going."

The king locked the door.

"Henri, you look sinister; if you do not let me go, I will cry, I will call, I will break the window, I will kick down the door."

"Chicot," said the king, in a melancholy tone, "you abuse my sadness."

"Ah! I understand, you are afraid to be alone. Tyrants always are so. Take my long sword, and let me take the scabbard to my room."

At the word "afraid," Henri shuddered, and he looked nervously around, and seemed so agitated and grew so pale, that Chicot began to think him really ill, and said, —

"Come, my son, what is the matter, tell your troubles to your friend Chicot."

The king looked at him and said, "Yes, you are my friend, my only friend."

"There is," said Chicot, "the abbey of Valency vacant."

"Listen, Chicot, you are discreet."

"There is also that of Pithiviers, where they make such good pies."

"In spite of your buffooneries, you are a brave man."

"Then do not give me an abbey, give me a regiment."

"And even a wise one."

"Then do not give me a regiment, make me a counselor; but no, when I think of it, I should prefer a regiment, for I should be always forced to be of the king's opinion."

"Hold your tongue, Chicot, the terrible hour approaches."

"Ah! you are beginning again."

"You will hear."

"Hear what?"

"Wait, and the event will show you. Chicot, you are brave!"

"I boast of it, but I do not wish to try. Call your captain of the guard, your Swiss, and let me go away from this invisible danger."

"Chicot, I command you to stay."

"On my word, a nice master. I am afraid, I tell you. Help!"

"Well, drôle, if I must, I will tell you all."

"Ah!" cried Chicot, drawing his sword, "once warned, I do not care; tell, my son, tell. Is it a crocodile? my sword is sharp, for I use it every week to cut my corns." And Chicot sat down in the armchair with his drawn sword between his legs.

"Last night," said Henri, "I slept – "

"And I also," said Chicot.

"Suddenly a breath swept over my face."

"It was the dog, who was hungry, and who licked your cream."

"I half woke, and felt my beard bristle with terror under my mask."

"Ah! you make me tremble deliciously."

"Then," continued the king, in a trembling voice, "then a voice sounded through the room, with a doleful vibration."

"The voice of the crocodile! I have read in Marco Polo, that the crocodile has a voice like the crying of children; but be easy, my son, for if it comes, we will kill it."

"'Listen! miserable sinner,' said the voice – "

"Oh! it spoke; then it was not a crocodile."

"'Miserable sinner,' said the voice, 'I am the angel of God.'"

"The angel of God!"

"Ah! Chicot, it was a frightful voice."

"Was it like the sound of a trumpet?"

"'Are you there?' continued the voice, 'do you hear, hardened sinner; are you determined to persevere in your iniquities?'"

"Ah, really; he said very much the same as other people, it seems to me."

"Then, Chicot, followed many other reproaches, which I assure you were most painful."

"But tell me what he said, that I may see if he was well informed?"

"Impious! do you doubt?"

"I? all that astonishes me is, that he waited so long to reproach you. So, my son, you were dreadfully afraid?"

"Oh, yes, the marrow seemed to dry in my bones."

"It is quite natural; on my word, I do not know what I should have done in your place. And then you called?"

"Yes."

"And they came?"

"Yes."

“And there was no one here?”

“No one.”

“It is frightful.”

“So frightful, that I sent for my confessor.”

“And he came?”

“Immediately.”

“Now, be frank, my son; tell the truth for once. What did he think of your revelation?”

“He shuddered.”

“I should think so.”

“He ordered me to repent, as the voice told me.”

“Very well. There can be no harm in repenting. But what did he think of the vision?”

“That it was a miracle, and that I must think of it seriously. Therefore, this morning – ”

“What have you done?”

“I gave 100,000 livres to the Jesuits.”

“Very well.”

“And scourged myself and my friends.”

“Perfect! but after?”

“Well, what do you think of it, Chicot? It is not to the jester I speak, but to the man of sense, to my friend.”

“Ah, sire, I think your majesty had the nightmare.”

“You think so?”

“Yes, it was a dream, which will not be renewed, unless your majesty thinks too much about it.”

“A dream? No, Chicot, I was awake, my eyes were open.”

“I sleep like that.”

“Yes, but then you do not see, and I saw the moon shining through my windows, and its light on the amethyst in the hilt of my sword, which lay in that chair where you are.”

“And the lamp?”

“Had gone out.”

“A dream, my son.”

“Why do you not believe, Chicot? It is said that God speaks to kings, when He wishes to effect some change on the earth.”

“Yes, he speaks, but so low that they never hear Him.”

“Well, do you know why I made you stay? – that you might hear as well as I.”

“No one would believe me if I said I heard it.”

“My friend, it is a secret which I confide to your known fidelity.”

“Well, I accept. Perhaps it will also speak to me.”

“Well, what must I do?”

“Go to bed, my son.”

“But – ”

“Do you think that sitting up will keep it away?”

“Well, then, you remain.”

“I said so.”

“Well, then, I will go to bed.”

“Good.”

“But you will not?”

“Certainly not, I will stay here.”

“You will not go to sleep?”

“Oh, that I cannot promise; sleep is like fear, my son, a thing independent of will.”

“You will try, at least?”

“Be easy; I will pinch myself. Besides, the voice would wake me.”

“Do not joke about the voice.”

“Well, well, go to bed.”

The king sighed, looked round anxiously, and glided tremblingly into bed. Then Chicot established him in his chair, arranging round him the pillows and cushions.

“How do you feel, sire?” said he.

“Pretty well; and you?”

“Very well; good night, Henri.”

“Good night, Chicot; do not go to sleep.”

“Of course not,” said Chicot, yawning fit to break his jaws.

And they both closed their eyes, the king to pretend to sleep, Chicot to sleep really.

CHAPTER IX.
HOW THE ANGEL MADE A MISTAKE AND SPOKE TO CHICOT, THINKING IT WAS THE KING

The king and Chicot remained thus for some time. All at once the king jumped up in his bed. Chicot woke at the noise.

"What is it?" asked he in a low voice.

"The breath on my face."

As he spoke, one of the wax lights went out, then the other, and the rest followed. Then the lamp also went out, and the room was lighted only by the rays of the moon. At the same moment they heard a hollow voice, saying, apparently from the end of the room, —

"Hardened sinner, art thou there?"

"Yes," said Henri, with chattering teeth.

"Oh!" thought Chicot, "that is a very hoarse voice to come from heaven; nevertheless, it is dreadful."

"Do you hear?" asked the voice.

"Yes, and I am bowed down to the earth."

"Do you believe you obeyed me by all the exterior mummeries which you performed yesterday, without your heart being touched?"

"Very well said," thought Chicot. He approached the king softly.

"Do you believe now?" asked the king, with clasped hands.

"Wait."

"What for?"

"Hush! leave your bed quietly, and let me get in."

"Why?"

"That the anger of the Lord may fall first on me."

"Do you think He will spare me for that?"

"Let us try," and he pushed the king gently out and got into his place.

"Now, go to my chair, and leave all to me."

Henri obeyed; he began to understand.

"You do not reply," said the voice; "you are hardened in sin."

"Oh! pardon! pardon!" cried Chicot, imitating the king's voice. Then he whispered to Henri, "It is droll that the angel does not know me."

"What can it mean?"

"Wait."

"Wretch!" said the voice.

"Yes, I confess," said Chicot; "I am a hardened sinner, a dreadful sinner."

"Then acknowledge your crimes, and repent."

"I acknowledge to have been a great traitor to my cousin Condé, whose wife I seduced."

"Oh! hush," said the king, "that is so long ago."

"I acknowledge," continued Chicot, "to have been a great rogue to the Poles, who chose me for king, and whom I abandoned one night, carrying away the crown jewels. I repent of this."

"Ah!" whispered Henri again: "that is all forgotten."

"Hush! let me speak."

"Go on," said the voice.

"I acknowledge having stolen the crown from my brother D'Alençon, to whom it belonged of right, as I had formerly renounced it on accepting the crown of Poland."

"Knave!" said the king.

"Go on," said the voice.

"I acknowledge having joined my mother, to chase from France my brother-in-law, the King of Navarre, after having destroyed all his friends."

"Ah!" whispered the king, angrily.

"Sire, do not let us offend God, by trying to hide what He knows as well as we do."

"Leave politics," said the voice.

"Ah!" cried Chicot, with a doleful voice, "is it my private life I am to speak of?"

"Yes."

"I acknowledge, then, that I am effeminate, idle, and hypocritical."

"It is true."

"I have ill-treated my wife – such a worthy woman."

"One ought to love one's wife as one's self, and prefer her to all things," said the voice, angrily.

"Ah!" cried Chicot, "then I have sinned deeply."

"And you have made others sin by your example."

"It is true."

"Especially that poor St. Luc; and if you do not send him home to-morrow to his wife, there will be no pardon for you."

"Ah!" said Chicot to the king, "the voice seems to be friendly to the house of Cossé."

"And you must make him a duke, to recompense him for his forced stay."

"Peste!" said Chicot; "the angel is much interested for M. de St. Luc."

"Oh!" cried the king, without listening, "this voice from on high will kill me."

"Voice from the side, you mean," said Chicot.

"How! a voice from the side?"

"Yes; can you not hear that the voice comes from that wall, Henri? – the angel lodges in the Louvre."

"Blasphemer!"

"Why, it is honorable for you; but you do not seem to recognize it. Go and visit him; he is only separated from you by that partition."

A ray of the moon falling on Chicot's face, showed it to the king so laughing and amused, that he said, "What! you dare to laugh?"

"Yes, and so will you in a minute. Be reasonable, and do as I tell you. Go and see if the angel be not in the next room."

"But if he speak again?"

"Well, I am here to answer. He is vastly credulous. For the last quarter of an hour I have been talking, and he has not recognized me. It is not clever!"

Henri frowned. "I begin to believe you are right, Chicot," said he.

"Go, then."

Henri opened softly the door which led into the corridor. He had scarcely entered it, when he heard the voice redoubling its reproaches, and Chicot replying.

"Yes," said the voice, "you are as inconstant as a woman, as soft as a Sybarite, as irreligious as a heathen."

"Oh!" whined Chicot, "is it my fault if I have such a soft skin – such white hands – such a changeable mind? But from to-day I will alter – I will wear coarse linen – "

However, as Henri advanced, he found that Chicot's voice grew fainter, and the other louder, and that it seemed to come from St. Luc's room, in which he could see a light. He stooped down and peeped through the keyhole, and immediately grew pale with anger.

"Par la mordieu!" murmured he, "is it possible that they have dared to play such a trick?"

This is what he saw through the keyhole. St. Luc, in a dressing-gown, was roaring through a tube the words which he had found so dreadful, and beside him, leaning on his shoulder, was a lady in white, who every now and then took the tube from him, and called through something herself, while stifled bursts of laughter accompanied each sentence of Chicot's, who continued to answer in a doleful tone.

"Jeanne de Cossé in St. Luc's room! A hole in the wall! such a trick on me! Oh! they shall pay dearly for it!". And with a vigorous kick he burst open the door.

Jeanne rushed behind the curtains to hide herself, while St. Luc, his face full of terror, fell on his knees before the king, who was pale with rage.

"Ah!" cried Chicot, from the bed, "Ah! mercy! – Holy Virgin! I am dying!"

Henri, seizing, in a transport of rage, the trumpet from the hands of St. Luc, raised it as if to strike. But St. Luc jumped up and cried —

"Sire, I am a gentleman; you have no right to strike me!"

Henri dashed the trumpet violently on the ground. Some one picked it up; it was Chicot, who, hearing the noise, judged that his presence was necessary as a mediator. He ran to the curtain, and, drawing out poor Jeanne, all trembling —

"Oh!" said he, "Adam and Eve after the Fall. You send them away, Henri, do you not?"

"Yes."

"Then I will be the exterminating angel."

And throwing himself between, the king and St. Luc, and waving the trumpet over the heads of the guilty couple, said —

"This is my Paradise, which you have lost by your disobedience; I forbid you to return to it."

Then he whispered to St. Luc, who had his arm round his wife —

"If you have a good horse, kill it, but be twenty leagues from here before to-morrow."

CHAPTER X.
HOW BUSSY WENT TO SEEK FOR THE REALITY OF HIS DREAM

When Bussy returned home again, he was still thinking of his dream.

"Morbleu!" said he, "it is impossible that a dream should have left such a vivid impression on my mind. I see it all so clearly; – the bed, the lady, the doctor. I must seek for it – surely I can find it again." Then Bussy, after having the bandage of his wound resettled by a valet, put on high boots, took his sword, wrapped himself in his cloak, and set off for the same place where he had been nearly murdered the night before, and nearly at the same hour.

He went in a litter to the Rue Roi-de-Sicile, then got out, and told his servants to wait for him. It was about nine in the evening, the curfew had sounded, and Paris was deserted. Bussy arrived at the Bastile, then he sought for the place where his horse had fallen, and thought he had found it; he next endeavored to repeat his movements of the night before, retreated to the wall, and examined every door to find the corner against which he had leaned, but all the doors seemed alike.

"Pardieu!" said he, "if I were to knock at each of these doors question all the lodgers, spend a thousand crowns to make valets and old women speak, I might learn what I want to know. There are fifty houses; it would take me at least five nights."

As he spoke, he perceived a small and trembling light approaching.

This light advanced slowly, and irregularly, stopping occasionally, moving on again, and going first to the right, then to the left, then, for a minute, coming straight on, and again diverging. Bussy leaned against a door, and waited. The light continued to advance, and soon he could see a black figure, which, as it advanced, took the form of a man, holding a lantern in his left hand. He appeared to Bussy to belong to the honorable fraternity of drunkards, for nothing else seemed to explain the eccentric movements of the lantern. At last he slipped over a piece of ice, and fell. Bussy was about to come forward and offer his assistance, but the man and the lantern were quickly up again, and advanced directly towards him, when he saw, to his great surprise, that the man had a bandage over his eyes. "Well!" thought he, "it is a strange thing to play at blind man's buff with a lantern in your hand. Am I beginning to dream again? And, good heavens! he is talking to himself. If he be not drunk or mad, he is a mathematician."

This last surmise was suggested by the words that Bussy heard.

"488, 489, 490," murmured the man, "it must be near here." And then he raised his bandage, and finding himself in front of a house, examined it attentively.

"No, it is not this," he said. Then, putting back his bandage, he recommenced his walk and his calculations. "491, 492, 493, 494; I must be close." And he raised his bandage again, and, approaching the door next to that against which Bussy was standing, began again to examine.

"Hum!" said he, "it might, but all these doors are so alike."

"The same reflection I have just made," thought Bussy.

However, the mathematician now advanced to the next door, and going up to it, found himself face to face with Bussy.

"Oh!" cried he, stepping back.

"Oh!" cried Bussy.

"It is not possible."

"Yes; but it is extraordinary. You are the doctor?"

"And you the gentleman?"

"Just so."

"Mon Dieu! how strange."

"The doctor," continued Bussy, "who yesterday dressed a wound for a gentleman?"

"Yes, in the right side."

"Exactly so. You had a gentle, light, and skilful hand."

"Ah, sir, I did not expect to find you here."

"But what were you looking for?"

"The house."

"Then you do not know it?"

"How should I? They brought me here with my eyes bandaged."

"Then you really came here?"

"Either to this house or the next."

"Then I did not dream?"

"Dream?"

"I confess I feared it was all a dream."

"Ah! I fancied there was some mystery."

"A mystery which you must help me to unravel."

"Willingly."

"What is your name?"

"Monsieur, to such a question I ought, perhaps, to reply by looking fierce, and saying, 'Yours, monsieur, if you please; but you have a long sword, and I only a lancet; you seem to me a gentleman, and I cannot appear so to you, for I am wet and dirty. Therefore, I reply frankly: I am called Rémy-le-Haudouin."

"Very well, monsieur; I thank you. I am Louis de Clermont, Comte de Bussy."

"Bussy d'Amboise! the hero Bussy!" cried the young doctor, joyfully. "What, monsieur, you are that famous Bussy – ?"

"I am Bussy," replied he. "And now, wet and dirty as you are, will you satisfy my curiosity?"

"The fact is," said the young man, "that I shall be obliged, like Epaminondas the Theban, to stay two days at home, for I have but one doublet and trousers. But, pardon, you did me the honor to question me, I think?"

"Yes, monsieur, I asked you how you came to this house?"

"M. le Comte, this is how it happened; I lodge in the Rue Beauheillis, 502 steps from here. I am a poor surgeon, not unskilful, I hope."

"I can answer for that."

"And who has studied much, but without any patients. Seven or eight days ago, a man having received behind the Arsenal a stab with a knife, I sewed up the wound, and cured him. This made for me some reputation in the neighborhood, to which I attribute the happiness of having been last night awoke by a pretty voice."

"A woman's?"

"Yes, but, rustic as I am, I knew it to be the voice of a servant. I know them well."

"And what did you do?"

"I rose and opened my door, but scarcely had I done so, when two little hands, not very soft, but not very hard, put a bandage over my eyes, without saying anything."

"'Oh!' she said, 'come, do not try to see where you are going, be discreet, here is your recompense;' and she placed in my hand a purse."

"Ah! and what did you say?"

"That I was ready to follow my charming conductress. I did not know if she were charming or not, but I thought that the epithet, even if exaggerated, could do no harm."

"And you asked no more?"

"I had often read these kinds of histories in books, and I had remarked that they always turned out well for the doctor. Therefore I followed, and I counted 498 paces."

“Good; then this must be the door.”

“It cannot be far off, at all events, unless she led me by some detour, which I half suspect.”

“But did she pronounce no name?”

“None.”

“But you remarked something?”

“All that one could with one’s fingers, a door with nails, then a passage, and then a staircase – ”

“On the left?”

“Yes; and I counted the steps. Then I think we came to a corridor, for they opened three doors.”

“Well?”

“Then I heard another voice, and that belonged to the mistress, I am sure; it was sweet and gentle.”

“Yes, yes, it was hers.”

“Good, it was hers.”

“I am sure of it.”

“Then they pushed me into the room where you were, and told me to take off my bandage, when I saw you – ”

“Where was I?”

“On a bed.”

“A bed of white and gold damask?”

“Yes.”

“In a room hung with tapestry?”

“Just so.”

“And a painted ceiling?”

“Yes, and between two windows – ”

“A portrait?”

“Yes.”

“Representing a woman about nineteen?”

“Yes.”

“Blonde, and beautiful as an angel?”

“More beautiful.”

“Bravo! what did you do then?”

“I dressed your wound.”

“And, ma foi! very well.”

“As well as I could.”

“Admirably! this morning it was nearly well.”

“It is thanks to a balm I have composed, and which appears to me sovereign, for many times, not knowing who to practise upon, I have made wounds on myself, and they were always well in two or three days.”

“My dear M. Rémy, you are a charming doctor. Well, afterwards?”

“You fainted again. The voice asked me how you were.”

“From whence?”

“From a room at the side.”

“So you did not see her?”

“No.”

“And you replied?”

“That the wound was not dangerous, and in twenty-four hours would be well.”

“She seemed pleased?”

“Charmed; for she cried, ‘I am very glad of that.’”

“My dear M. Rémy, I will make your fortune. Well?”

"That was all; I had no more to do; and the voice said, 'M. Rémy – '"

"She knew your name?"

"Yes; 'M. Rémy,' said she, 'be a man of honor to the last; do not compromise a poor woman carried away by an excess of humanity. Take your bandage, and let them take you straight home.'"

"You promised?"

"I gave my word."

"And you kept it?"

"As you see, for I am seeking now."

"You are an honest man, and here is my hand," cried Bussy.

"Monsieur, it will be an eternal glory for me to have touched the hand of Bussy d'Amboise. However, I have a scruple. There were ten pistoles in the purse."

"Well?"

"It is too much for a man who charges five sous for his visits, when he does not give them gratis, and I was seeking the house – "

"To return the purse?"

"Just so."

"My dear M. Rémy, it is too much delicacy; you have earned the money well, and may surely keep it."

"You think so?" said Rémy, well pleased.

"But I also am in your debt; indeed, it was I who ought to have paid you, and not the lady. Come, give me your confidence. What do you do in Paris?"

"What do I do? I do nothing; but I would if I had a connection."

"Well, that is just right; I will give you a patient. Will you have me? I am famous practise; for there is scarcely a day when I do not deface God's noblest work for others, or they for me. Will you undertake the care of all the holes I make in the skin of others or others in mine?"

"Ah, M. le Comte! this honor."

"No; you are just the man I want. You shall come and live with me; you shall have your own rooms, and your own servants; accept, or you will really annoy me."

"M. le Comte, I am so overjoyed, I cannot express it. I will work – I will make a connection – "

"But, no, I tell you, I keep you for myself and my friends. Now, do you remember anything more?"

"Nothing."

"Ah, well! help me to find out, if it be possible."

"I will."

"And you, who are a man of observation, how do you account for it, that after being doctored by you, I found myself by the Temple, close to the ditch."

"You!"

"Yes, I. Did you help to take me there?"

"Certainly not, and I should have opposed it if they had consulted me; for the cold might have done you much harm."

"Then I can tell nothing. Will you search a little more with me?"

"I will if you wish it; but I much fear it will be useless for all these houses are alike."

"Well, we must come again by day."

"Yes; but then we shall be seen."

"Then we must inquire."

"We will, monseigneur."

"And we shall unravel the mystery. Be sure, Rémy, now there are two of us to work."

CHAPTER XI.
M. BRYAN DE MONSOREAU

It was more than joy, it was almost delirium, which agitated Bussy when he had acquired the certainty that the lady of his dream was a reality, and had, in fact, given him that generous hospitality of which he had preserved the vague remembrance in his heart. He would not let the young doctor go, but, dirty as he was, made him get into the litter with him; he feared that if he lost sight of him, he too would vanish like a dream. He would have liked to talk all night of the unknown lady, and explain to Rémy how superior she was even to her portrait; but Rémy, beginning his functions at once, insisted that he should go to bed: fatigue and pain gave the same counsel and these united powers carried the point.

The next day, on awaking, he found Rémy at his bedside. The young man could hardly believe in his good fortune, and wanted to see Bussy again to be sure of it.

"Well!" said he, "how are you, M. le Comte?"

"Quite well, my dear Esculapius; and you, are you satisfied?"

"So satisfied, my generous protector, that I would not change places with the king. But I now must see the wound."

"Look." And Bussy turned round for the young surgeon to take off the bandage. All looked well; the wound was nearly closed. Bussy, quite happy, had slept well, and sleep and happiness had aided the doctor.

"Well," said Bussy, "what do you say?"

"I dare not tell you that you are nearly well, for fear you should send me back to the Rue Beauheillis, five hundred paces from the famous house."

"Which we will find, will we not, Rémy?"

"I should think so."

"Well, my friend, look on yourself as one of the house, and to-day, while you move your things, let me go to the fête of the installation of the new chief huntsman."

"Ah! you want to commit follies already."

"No, I promise to be very reasonable."

"But you must ride."

"It is necessary."

"Have you a horse with an easy pace?

"I have four to choose from."

"Well, take for to-day the one you would choose for the lady of the portrait you know."

"Know! Ah, Rémy, you have found the way to my heart forever; I feared you would prevent me from going to this chase, or rather this imitation of one, and all the ladies of the Court, and many from the City, will be admitted to it. Now, Rémy, this lady may be there. She certainly is not a simple bourgeoise – those tapestries, that bed, so much luxury as well as good taste, show a woman of quality, or, at least, a rich one. If I were to meet her there!"

"All is possible," replied Rémy, philosophically.

"Except to find the house," sighed Bussy. "Or to penetrate when we have found it."

"Oh! I have a method."

"What is it?"

"Get another sword wound."

"Good; that gives me the hope that you will keep me."

"Be easy, I feel as if I had known you for twenty years, and could not do without you."

The handsome face of the young doctor grew radiant with joy.

"Well, then," said he, "it is decided; you go to the chase to look for the lady, and I go to look for the house."

"It will be curious if we each succeed."

There had been a great chase commanded in the Bois de Vincennes, for M. de Monsoreau to enter on his functions of chief huntsman. Most people had believed, from the scene of the day before, that the king would not attend, and much astonishment was expressed when it was announced that he had set off with his brother and all the court. The rendezvous was at the Point St. Louis. It was thus they named a cross-road where the martyr king used to sit under an oak-tree and administer justice. Everyone was therefore assembled here at nine o'clock, when the new officer, object of the general curiosity, unknown as he was to almost everyone, appeared on a magnificent black horse. All eyes turned towards him.

He was a man about thirty-five, tall, marked by the smallpox, and with a disagreeable expression. Dressed in a jacket of green cloth braided with silver, with a silver shoulder belt, on which the king's arms were embroidered in gold; on his head a cap with a long plume; in his left hand a spear, and in his right the éstortuaire [Footnote: The éstortuaire was a stick, which the chief huntsman presented to the king, to put aside the branches of the trees when he was going at full gallop.] destined for the king, M. de Monsoreau might look like a terrible warrior, but not certainly like a handsome cavalier.

"Fie! what an ugly figure you have brought us, monseigneur," said Bussy, to the Duc d'Anjou, "are these the sort of gentlemen that your favor seeks for out of the provinces? Certainly, one could hardly find such in Paris, which is nevertheless as well stocked with ugliness. They say that your highness made a great point of the king's appointing this man."

"M. de Monsoreau has served me well, and I recompense him," replied the duke.

"Well said, monseigneur, it is rare for princes to be grateful; but if that be all, I also have served you well, and should wear the embroidered jacket more gracefully, I trust, than M. de Monsoreau. He has a red beard, I see also, which is an additional beauty."

"I never knew that a man must be an Apollo, or Antinous, to fill an office at court."

"You never heard it; astonishing!"

"I consult the heart and not the face – the services rendered and promised."

"Your highness will say I am very envious; but I search, and uselessly, I confess, to discover what service this Monsoreau can have rendered you."

"You are too curious, Bussy," said the duke, angrily.

"Just like princes," cried Bussy, with his ordinary freedom, "they ask you everything; but if you ask a question in return, you are too curious."

"Well! go and ask M. de Monsoreau, himself."

"Ah! you are right. He is but a simple gentleman, and if he do not reply, I shall know what to say."

"What?"

"Tell him he is impertinent." And, turning from the prince, Bussy approached M. de Monsoreau, who was in the midst of the circle.

Bussy approached, gay and smiling, and his hat in his hand.

"Pardon, monsieur, but you seem all alone. Is it that the favor which you enjoy has already made you enemies?"

"I do not know, monsieur, but it is probable. But, may I ask, to what I owe the honor that you do me in invading my solitude?"

"Ma foi, to the great admiration that M. le Duc d'Anjou has inspired in me for you."

"How so?"

"By recounting to me the exploit for which you were made chief huntsman."

M. de Monsoreau grew so frightfully pale, that the marks in his face looked like black spots on his yellow skin; at the same time he looked at Bussy in a manner that portended a violent storm. Bussy saw that he had done wrong; but he was not a man to draw back; on the contrary, he was one of those who generally repair an indiscretion by an impertinence.

"You say, monsieur," said Monsoreau, "that the Duke recounted to you my last exploit?"

"Yes, monsieur, but I should much like to hear the story from your own lips."

M. de Monsoreau clasped his dagger tighter in his hand, as though he longed to attack Bussy.

"Ma foi, monsieur," said he, "I was quite disposed to grant your request, and recognize your courtesy, but unfortunately here is the king arriving, so we must leave it for another time."

Indeed, the king, mounted on his favorite Spanish horse, advanced rapidly towards them. He loved handsome faces, and was therefore little pleased with that of M. de Monsoreau. However, he accepted, with a good grace, the éstortuaire which he presented to him, kneeling, according to custom. As soon as the king was armed, the chase commenced.

Bussy watched narrowly everyone that passed, looking for the original of the portrait, but in vain; there were pretty, even beautiful and charming women, but not the charming creature whom he sought for. He was reduced to conversation, and the company of his ordinary friends. Antragues, always laughing and talking, was a great amusement.

"We have a frightful chief huntsman," said he to Bussy, "do you not think so?"

"I find him horrible; what a family it must be if his children are like him. Do you know his wife?"

"He is not married."

"How do you know?"

"From Madame de Vendron, who finds him very handsome, and would willingly make him her fourth husband. See how she keeps near him."

"What property has he?"

"Oh! a great deal in Anjou."

"Then he is rich?"

"They say so, but that is all; he is not of very good birth. But see, there is M. le Duc d'Anjou calling to you."

"Ah! ma foi, he must wait. I am curious about this man. I find him singular, I hardly know why. And such an odd name."

"Oh! it comes from Mons Soricis; Livarot knows all about that. – Here, Livarot; this Monsoreau – "

"Well."

"Tell us what you know about him – "

"Willingly. Firstly, I am afraid of him."

"Good, that is what you think; now tell us what you know."

"Listen. I was going home one night – "

"It begins in a terrible manner."

"Pray let me finish. It was about six months ago, I was returning from my uncle D'Entragues, through the wood of Méridor, when all at once I heard a frightful cry, and I saw pass, with an empty saddle, a white horse, rushing through the wood. I rode on, and at the end of a long avenue, darkened by the approaching shades of night, I saw a man on a black horse; he seemed to fly. Then I heard again the same cry, and I distinguished before him on the saddle a woman, on whose mouth he had his hand. I had a gun in my hand – you know I aim well, and I should have killed him, but my gun missed fire."

"Well?"

"I asked a woodcutter who this gentleman on the black horse was, and he said, 'M. de Monsoreau.'"

"Well," said Antragues, "it is not so uncommon to carry away a woman, is it, Bussy?"

"No; but, at least, one might let them cry out."

"And who was the woman?"

"That I do not know; but he has a bad reputation,"

"Do you know anything else about him?"

"No; but he is much feared by his tenantry. However, he is a good hunter, and will fill his post better than St. Luc would have done, for whom it was first destined."

"Do you know where St. Luc is?"

"No; is he still the king's prisoner?"

"Not at all; he set off at one o'clock this morning to visit his country house with his wife."

"Banished?"

"It looks like it."

"Impossible!"

"True as the gospel; Marshal de Brissac told me so this morning."

"Well! it has served M. de Monsoreau – "

"Ah! I know now."

"Know what?"

"The service that he rendered to the duke."

"Who? St. Luc?"

"No; Monsoreau."

"Really."

"Yes, you shall see; come with me," and Bussy, followed by Livarot and Antragues, galloped after the Duc d'Anjou.

"Ah, monseigneur," said he, "what a precious man M. de Monsoreau is."

"Ah! really; then you spoke to him?"

"Certainly."

"And asked him what he had done for me?"

"Certainly; that was all I spoke to him for."

"And what did he say?"

"He courteously confessed that he was your purveyor."

"Of game?"

"No; of women."

"What do you mean, Bussy?" cried the duke angrily.

"I mean, monseigneur, that he carries away women for you on his great black horse, and that as they are ignorant of the honor reserved for them, he puts his hand on their mouths to prevent their crying out."

The duke frowned, and ground his teeth with anger, grew pale, and galloped on so fast, that Bussy and his, companions were left in the rear.

"Ah! ah! it seems that the joke is a good one," said Antragues.

"And so much the better, that everyone does not seem to find it a joke," said Bussy.

A moment after, they heard the duke's voice calling Bussy. He went, and found the duke laughing.

"Oh!" said he, "it appears that what I said was droll."

"I am not laughing at what you said."

"So much the worse; I should have liked to have made a prince laugh, who hardly ever does so."

"I laugh at your inventing a false story to find out the true one."

"No, I told you the truth."

"Well, then, as we are alone, tell me your little history. Where did it happen?"

"In the wood of Méridor."

The duke grew pale again, but did not speak.

"Decidedly," thought Bussy, "the duke is mixed up with that story. Pardieu! monseigneur," said he, "as M. de Monsoreau seems to have found the method of pleasing you so well, teach it to me."

"Pardieu! yes, Bussy, I will tell you how. Listen; I met, by chance, at church, a charming woman, and as some features of her face, which I only saw through a veil, recalled to me a lady whom I had much loved, I followed her, and found out where she lived. I have gained over her servant, and have a key of the house."

"Well, monseigneur, all seems to go well for you."

"But they say she is a great prude, although free, young, and beautiful."

"Ah! you are romancing."

"Well, you are brave, and love me?"

"I have my days."

"For being brave?"

"No, for loving you."

"Well, is this one of the days?"

"I will try and make it one, if I can serve your highness."

"Well, I want you to do for me what most people do for themselves."

"Make love to her, to find out if she be a prude?"

"No, find out if she has a lover. I want you to lay in wait and discover who the man is that visits her."

"There is a man then?"

"I fear so."

"Lover, or husband?"

"That is what I want to know."

"And you want me to find out?"

"If you will do me that great favor – "

"You will make me the next chief huntsman."

"I have never yet done anything for you."

"Oh! you have discovered that at last."

"Well, do you consent?"

"To watch the lady?"

"Yes."

"Monseigneur, I confess I do not like the commission."

"You offered to do me a service, and you draw back already!"

"Because you want me to be a spy."

"I ask you as a friend."

"Monseigneur, this is a sort of thing that every man must do for himself, even if he be a prince."

"Then you refuse?"

"Ma foi! yes."

The duke frowned. "Well, I will go myself," said he, "and if I am killed or wounded, I shall say that I begged my friend Bussy to. undertake the task, and that for the first time he was prudent."

"Monseigneur, you said to me the other night, 'Bussy, I hate all those minions of the king's who are always laughing at and insulting us; go to this wedding of St. Luc's, pick a quarrel and try to get rid of them.' I went; they were five and I was alone. I defied them all; they laid wait for me, attacked me all together, and killed my horse, yet I wounded three of them. To-day you ask me to wrong a woman. Pardon, monseigneur, but that is past the service which a prince should exact from a gallant man, and I refuse."

"So be it; I will do my work myself, or with Aurilly, as I have done already."

"Oh!" said Bussy, with a sudden thought.

"What?"

“Were you engaged on it the night when you saw the ambush laid for me?”

“Just so.”

“Then your beautiful unknown lives near the Bastile.”

“Opposite the Rue St. Catherine. It is a dangerous place, as you know.”

“Has your highness been there since?”

“Yesterday.”

“And you saw?”

“A man spying all about and who at last stopped at her door.”

“Was he alone?”

“Yes, at first. Afterwards he was joined by another, with a lantern in his hand.”

“Ah!”

“Then they began to talk together, and at last, tired of waiting, I went away. And before I venture into the house where I might be killed – ”

“You would like one of your friends to try it.”

“They would not have my enemies, nor run the same risk; and then they might report to me – ”

“In your place I would give up this woman.”

“No, she is too beautiful.”

“You said you hardly saw her.”

“I saw her enough to distinguish splendid blonde hair, magnificent eyes, and such a complexion!”

“Ah! ah!”

“You understand! one does not easily renounce such a woman.”

“No, I feel for you.”

“You jest.”

“No, on my word, and the proof is, that if you will give me my instructions, I will watch this evening.”

“You retract your decision?”

“There is no one but the pope infallible; now tell me what I am to do.”

“You will have to hide a little way off, and if a man enter, follow him to find out who he is?”

“But if, in entering, he close the door behind him?”

“I told you I had a key.”

“Ah! true; then there is only one more thing to fear, that I should follow a wrong man to a wrong door.”

“You cannot mistake; this door is the door of an alley, and at the end of the alley there is a staircase; mount twelve steps, and you will be in a corridor.”

“How do you know all this, if you have never been in?”

“Did I not tell you I had gained over the servant? She told me all.”

“Mon Dieu! how convenient it is to be a prince. I should have had to find out all for myself, which would have taken me an enormous time, and I might have failed after all.”

“Then you consent?”

“Can I refuse your highness? But will you come with me to show me the house?”

“Useless; as we return from the chase, we will make a detour, and pass through the Porte St. Antoine, and I will point it out to you.”

“Very well, and what am I to do to the man if he comes?”

“Only follow him till you learn who he is. I leave to you your mode of action. And not a word to any one.”

“No, on my honor.”

“And you will go alone?”

“Quite.”

"Well, then, it is settled; I show you the door on our way home; then you come with me, and I give you the key." Bussy and the prince then rejoined the rest. The king was charmed with the manner in which M. de Monsoreau had conducted the chase.

"Monseigneur," then said M. de Monsoreau to the duke, "I owe my place and these compliments to you."

"But you know that you must go to-night to Fontainebleau, where the king will hunt to-morrow and the day after."

"I know, monseigneur; I am prepared to start to-night."

"Ah, M. de Monsoreau, there is no more rest for you," said Bussy, "you wished to be chief huntsman, and you are so, and now you will have at least fifty nights' rest less than other men. Luckily you are not married."

At this joke, Monsoreau's face was covered once more with that hideous paleness which gave to him so sinister an aspect.

CHAPTER XII.
HOW BUSSY FOUND BOTH THE PORTRAIT AND THE ORIGINAL

The chase terminated about four o'clock in the evening, and at five all the court returned to Paris. As they passed by the Bastile, the duke said to Bussy, "Look to the right, at that little wooden house with a statue of the Virgin before it; well, count four houses from that. It is the fifth you have to go to, just fronting the Rue St. Catherine."

"I see it; and look! at the sound of the trumpets announcing the king, all the windows are filled with gazers."

"Except the one I show you, where the curtains remain closed."

"But there is a corner lifted," said Bussy, with a beating heart.

"Yes, but we can see nothing. The lady is well guarded. However, that is the house."

When Bussy returned, he said to Rémy, "Have you discovered the house?"

"No, monseigneur."

"Well, I believe I have been more lucky."

"How so, monsieur, have you been seeking?"

"I passed through the street."

"And you recognized the house?"

"Providence, my dear friend, has mysterious ways."

"Then you are sure?"

"Not sure, but I hope."

"And when shall I know if you are right?"

"To-morrow morning."

"Meanwhile, do you want me?"

"No, my dear Rémy."

"Shall I not follow you?"

"Impossible."

"Be prudent, monseigneur."

"Ah! the recommendation is useless, my prudence is well known."

Bussy dined like a man who does not know when he will sup, then, at eight o'clock, choosing the best of his swords, and attaching, in spite of the king's orders, a pair of pistols to his belt, went in his litter to the corner of the Rue St. Paul.

He easily recognized the house again, and then, wrapped in his cloak, hid at the corner of the street, determined to wait for two hours, and at the end of that time, if no one came, to act for himself. He had scarcely been there ten minutes, when he saw two cavaliers coming. One of them dismounted, gave his horse to the other, who was probably a lackey, and who went away with the horses, and advanced towards the house pointed out to Bussy, and, after glancing round to see if he were observed, opened the door and went in. Bussy waited two or three minutes, and then followed him. He advanced slowly and softly, found the staircase, and went up. In the corridor he stopped, for he heard a voice say, "Gertrude, tell your mistress that it is I, and that I must come in."

This was said in an imperious tone, and, a minute after, Bussy heard a woman's voice say:

"Pass into the drawing-room, Monsieur, and madame will come to you."

Then he heard the sound of a door shutting. He made a few steps silently, and extending his hand, felt a door; he went in, found a second in which was a key; he turned it, and entered the room tremblingly. The room in which he found himself was dark, except from the light shining from another. By this he could see two windows, hung with tapestry, which sent a thrill of joy through the

young man's heart. On the ceiling he could faintly see the mythological figures; he extended his hand, and felt the sculptured bed. There was no more doubt, he was in the room where he had awakened the night of his wound.

Bussy hid behind the bed-curtains to listen. He heard in the adjoining room the impatient step of the unknown; from time to time he stopped, murmuring between his teeth, "Will she come?"

Presently a door opened, and the rustling of a silk dress struck on Bussy's ear. Then he heard a woman's voice, expressive at once of fear and disdain, saying:

"Here I am, monsieur, what do you want now?"

"Madame," replied the man, "I have the honor of telling you that, forced to set off to-morrow morning for Fontainebleau, I come to pass the night with you."

"Do you bring me news of my father?"

"Madame, listen to me – "

"Monsieur, you know what we agreed yesterday, when I consented to become your wife, that, before all things, either my father should come to Paris, or I should go to him."

"Madame, as soon as I return from Fontainebleau, I give you my word of honor, but meanwhile – "

"Oh! monsieur, do not close the door, it is useless; I will not pass a single night under the same roof with you until you bring me my father." And the lady, who spoke, thus, whistled through a silver whistle, which was then the manner of calling servants.

Immediately the door opened, and a young, vigorous-looking girl entered. As she went in, she left the door open, which threw a strong light into the room where Bussy was hid, and between the two windows he saw the portrait. Bussy now crept noiselessly along to where he could peep into the room. However carefully he moved, the floor creaked. At the noise the lady turned, she was the original of the portrait. The man, seeing her turn, turned also; it was M. de Monsoreau.

"Ah!" thought Bussy, "the white horse, the woman carried away, there is some terrible history."

Bussy, as we have said, could see them both; she, standing up, pale and disdainful. He, not pale, but livid, agitated his foot impatiently.

"Madame," said he, at last, "do not hope to continue with me this character of a persecuted woman; you are at Paris, in my house, and, still more, you are Comtesse de Monsoreau, that is to say, my Wife.

"If I am your wife, why refuse to conduct me to my father? Why continue to hide me from the eyes of the world?"

"You have forgotten the Duc d'Anjou, madame."

"You assured me that, once your wife, I should have no more to fear from him."

"That is to say – "

"You promised me that."

"But still, madame, I must take precautions."

"Well, monsieur, when you have taken them, return to me."

"Diana," said the count, who was growing visibly angry, "Diana, do not make a jest of this sacred tie."

"Act so, monsieur, that I can have confidence in the husband, and I will respect the marriage."

"Oh! this is too much!" cried the count. "I am in my own house, you are my wife, and this night you shall be mine."

Bussy put his hand on his sword-hilt, and made a step forward, but Diana did not give him time to appear.

"Stay," said she, drawing a poignard from her belt, "here is my answer." And rushing into the room where Bussy was, she shut the door and locked it, while Monsoreau exhausted himself in menaces and in blows on the door.

"If you break this door you will find me dead on the threshold."

"And be easy, madame, you shall be revenged," said Bussy.

Diana was about to utter a cry, but her fear of her husband was strong enough to restrain her. She remained pale and trembling, but mute.

M. de Monsoreau struck violently with his foot, but convinced that Diana would execute her menace, went out of the drawing-room, shutting the door violently behind him. Then they heard him going down the stairs.

"But you, monsieur," said Diana, turning to Bussy, "who are you, and how came you here?"

"Madame," said Bussy, opening the door, and kneeling before her, "I am the man whose life you preserved. You cannot think that I come to your house with any bad designs." As the light streamed in, Diana recognized him at once.

"Ah! you here, monsieur," cried she, clasping her hands, "you were here – you heard all?"

"Alas! yes, madame."

"But who are you? your name, monsieur?"

"Madame, I am Louis de Clermont, Comte de Bussy."

"Bussy! you are the brave Bussy!" cried Diana, filling with joy the heart of the young man. "Ah! Gertrude!" cried she, turning to her servant, who, hearing her mistress talking to some one, had entered in terror, "Gertrude, I have no more to fear, for from this time I place myself under the safeguard of the most noble and loyal gentleman in France." Then holding out her hand to Bussy.

"Rise, monsieur," said she, "I know who you are, now you must know who I am."

CHAPTER XIII.
WHO DIANA WAS

Bussy rose, bewildered at his own happiness, and entered with Diana into the room which M. de Monsoreau had just quitted. He looked at Diana with astonishment and admiration; he had not dared to hope that the woman whom he had sought for, would equal the woman of his dream, and now the reality surpassed all that he had taken for a caprice of his imagination. Diana was about nineteen, that is to say in the first éclât of that youth and beauty which gives the purest coloring to the flower, the finest flavor to the fruit. There was no mistaking the looks of Bussy; Diana felt herself admired. At last she broke the silence.

"Monsieur," said she, "you have told me who you are, but not how you came here."

"Madame, the cause of my presence here will come naturally out of the recital you have been good enough to promise me; I am sure of it, from some words of your conversation with M. de Monsoreau."

"I will tell you all, monsieur; your name has been sufficient to inspire me with full confidence, for I have always heard of it as of that of a man of honor, loyalty, and courage."

Bussy bowed, and Diana went on.

"I am the daughter of the Baron de Méridor – that is to say, the only heiress of one of the noblest and oldest names in Anjou."

"There was," said Bussy, "a Baron de Méridor, who, although he could have saved himself, came voluntarily and gave up his sword at the battle of Pavia, when he heard that the king was a prisoner, and begged to accompany Francis to Madrid, partook his captivity, and only quitted him to come to France and negotiate his ransom."

"It was my father, monsieur, and if ever you enter the great hall of the Château de Méridor you will see, given in memory of this devotion, the portrait of Francis I., painted by Leonardo da Vinci."

"Ah!" said Bussy, "in those times kings knew how to recompense their followers."

"On his return from Spain my father married. His two first children, sons, died. This was a great grief to the Baron de Méridor. When the king died, my father quitted the court, and shut himself with his wife in the Château de Méridor. It was there that I was born, ten years after the death of my brothers.

"Then all the love of the baron was concentrated on the child of his old age; his love for me was idolatry. Three years after my birth I lost my mother, and, too young to feel my loss, my smiles helped to console my father. As I was all to him, so was he also all to me. I attained my sixteenth year without dreaming of any other world than that of my sheep, my peacocks, my swans, and my doves, without imagining that this life would change, or wishing that it should.

"The castle of Méridor was surrounded by vast forests, belonging to the Duc d'Anjou; they were filled with deer and stags, whom no one thought of tormenting, and who had grown quite familiar to me; some of them would even come when I called them, and one, a doe, my favorite Daphne, my poor Daphne, would come and eat out of my hand.

"One spring I had missed her for a month, and was ready to weep for her as for a friend, when she reappeared with two little fawns. At first they were afraid of me, but seeing their mother caress me, they soon learned to do the same.

"About this time we heard that the Duc d'Anjou had sent a governor into the province, and that he was called the Comte de Monsoreau. A week passed, during which everyone spoke of the new governor. One morning the woods resounded with the sound of the horn, and the barking of dogs. I ran to the park, and arrived just in time to see Daphne, followed by her two fawns, pass like

lightning, pursued by a pack of hounds. An instant after, mounted on a black horse, M. de Monsoreau flew past me.

"I cried out and implored pity for my poor protegee, but he did not hear me. Then I ran after him, hoping to meet either the count or some of his suite and determined to implore them to stop this chase, which pierced my heart. I ran for some time without knowing where, for I had lost sight of both dogs and hunters.

"Soon I could not even hear them, so I sat down at the foot of a tree, and began to cry. I had been there about a quarter of an hour, when I heard the chase again. The noise came nearer and nearer, and, darting forward, I saw my poor Daphne again; she had but one fawn with her now, the other had given way through fatigue. She herself was growing visibly tired, and the distance between her and the hounds was less than when I saw her first.

"As before, I exerted myself in vain to make myself heard. M. de Monsoreau saw nothing but the animal he was chasing; he passed more quickly that ever, with his horn to his mouth, which he was sounding loudly. Behind him two or three hunters animated the dogs with horn and voice. All passed me like a tempest, and disappeared in the forest. I was in despair, but I ran on once more and followed a path which I knew led to the castle of Beaugé. belonging to the Duc d'Anjou, and which was about six miles from the castle of Méridor. It was not till I arrived there that I remembered that I was alone, and far from home.

"I confess that a vague terror seized me, and that then only I thought of the imprudence and folly of my conduct. I followed the border of the lake, intending to ask the gardener (who, when I had come there with my father, had often given me bouquets) to take me home, when all at once I heard the sound of the chase again. I remained motionless, listening, and I forgot all else. Nearly at the same moment the doe reappeared, coming out of the wood on the other side of the lake, but pursued so closely that she must be taken immediately. She was alone, her second fawn had fallen, but the sight of the water seemed to reanimate her, and she plunged in as if she would have come to me. At first she swam rapidly, and I looked at her with tears in my eyes, and almost as breathless as herself; insensibly her strength failed her, while the dogs seemed to grow more and more earnest in their pursuit. Soon some of them reached her, and, stopped by their bites, she ceased to advance. At this moment, M. de Monsoreau appeared at the border of the lake, and jumped off his horse. Then I collected all my strength to cry for pity, with clasped hands. It seemed to me that he saw me, and I cried again. He heard me, for he looked at me; then he ran towards a boat, entered it, and advanced rapidly towards the animal, who was fighting among the dogs. I did not doubt that, moved by my voice, he was hastening to bring her succor, when all at once I saw him draw his hunting knife, and plunge it into the neck of the poor animal. The blood flowed out, reddening the water at the lake, while the poor doe uttered a doleful cry, beat the water with her feet, reared up, and then fell back dead.

"I uttered a cry almost as doleful as hers, and fell fainting on the bank. When I came to myself again, I was in bed, in a room of the château of Beaugé, and my father, who had been sent for, standing by me. As it was nothing but over-excitement, the next morning I was able to return home; although I suffered for three or four days. Then my father told me, that M. de Monsoreau, who had seen me, when I was carried to the castle, had come to ask after me; he had been much grieved when he heard that he had been the involuntary cause of my accident and begged to present his excuses to me, saying, that he could not be happy until he had his pardon from my own lips.

"It would have been ridiculous to refuse to see him, so, in spite of my repugnance, I granted his request. He came the next day; I felt that my behavior must have seemed strange, and I excused it on the ground of my affection for Daphne. The count swore twenty times, that had he known I had any interest in his victim, he would have spared her with pleasure; but his protestations did not convince me, nor remove the unfavorable impression I had formed of him. When he took leave, he asked my father's permission to come again. He had been born in Spain and educated at Madrid, and it was an attraction for my father to talk over the place where he had been so long a prisoner. Besides,

the count was of good family, deputy-governor of the province, and a favorite, it was said, of the Due d'Anjou; my father had no motive for refusing his request, and it was granted. Alas! from this moment ceased, if not my happiness, at least my tranquillity. I soon perceived the impression I had made on the count; he began to come every day, and was full of attentions to my father, who showed the pleasure he took in his conversation, which was certainly that of a clever man.

"One morning my father entered my room with an air graver than usual, but still evidently joyful. 'My child,' said he, 'you always have said you did not wish to leave me.'

"'Oh! my father,' cried I, 'it is my dearest wish.'

"'Well, my Diana,' continued he, embracing me, 'it only depends now on yourself to have your wish realized.' I guessed what he was about to say, and grew dreadfully pale.

"'Diana, my child, what is the matter?' cried he.

"'M. de Monsoreau, is it not?' stammered I. 'Well?' said he, astonished. 'Oh! never, my father, if you have any pity for your daughter, never – '

"'Diana, my love,' said he, 'it is not pity I have for you, but idolatry; you know it; take a week to reflect, and if then – '

"'Oh! no, no,' cried I, 'it is useless; not a day, not a minute! No, no, no!' and I burst into tears. My father adored me, and he took me in his arms, and gave me his word that he would speak to me no more of this marriage.

"Indeed, a month passed, during which I neither heard of nor saw M. de Monsoreau. One morning we received an invitation to a grand fête which M. de Monsoreau was to give to the Duc d'Anjou, who was about to visit the province whose name he bore. To this was added a personal invitation from the prince, who had seen my father at court. My first impulse was to beg my father to refuse, but he feared to offend the prince, so we went. M. de Monsoreau received us as though nothing had passed, and behaved to me exactly as he did to the other ladies.

"Not so the duke. As soon as he saw me, he fixed his eyes on me, and scarcely ever removed them. I felt ill at ease under these looks, and begged my father to go home early. Three days after M. de Monsoreau came to Méridor; I saw him from the windows, and shut myself up in my own room. When he was gone, my father said nothing to me, but I thought he looked gloomy.

"Four days passed thus, when, as I was returning from a walk, the servants told me that M. de Monsoreau was with my father, who had asked for me several times, and had desired to be immediately informed of my return. Indeed, no sooner had I entered my room, than my father came to me.

"'My child,' said he, 'a motive which I cannot explain to you, forces me to separate myself from you for some days. Do not question me, but be sure that it is an urgent one, since it determines me to be a week, a fortnight, perhaps a month, without seeing you.' I trembled, I knew not why, but I fancied that the visits of M. de Monsoreau boded me no good.

"'Where am I to go, my father?' asked I.

"'To the château of Lude, to my sister, where you will be hidden from all eyes. You will go by night.' 'And do you not accompany me?' 'No, I must stay here, to ward off suspicion; even the servants must not know where you are going.' 'But then, who will take me there?' 'Two men whom I can trust.' 'Oh! mon Dieu! father,' I cried. The baron embraced me. 'It is necessary, my child,' said he.

"I knew my father's love for me so well that I said no more, only I asked that Gertrude, my nurse, should accompany me. My father quitted me, telling me to get ready.

"At eight o'clock (it was dark and cold, for it was the middle of winter) my father came for me. We descended quietly, crossed the garden, when he opened himself a little door leading to the forest, and there we found a litter waiting, and two men; my father spoke to them, then I got in, and Gertrude with me.

"My father embraced me once more, and we set off. I was ignorant what danger menaced me, and forced me to quit the castle of Méridor. I did not dare to question my conductors, whom I did

not know. We went along quietly, and the motion of the litter at last sent me to sleep, when I was awoke by Gertrude, who, seizing my arm, cried out, 'Oh, mademoiselle, was is the matter?'

"I passed my head through the curtains. We were surrounded by six masked cavaliers, and our men, who had tried to defend me, were disarmed. He who appeared the chief of the masked men approached me, and said; 'Reassure yourself, mademoiselle, no harm will be done to you, but you must follow us.'

"'Where?' I asked. 'To a place,' he replied, 'where, far from having anything to complain of, you will be treated like a queen.' 'Oh! my father! my father!' I cried. 'Listen, mademoiselle,' said Gertrude, 'I know the environs, and I am strong; we may be able to escape.'

"'You must do as you will with us, gentlemen,' said I, 'we are but two poor women, and cannot defend ourselves.' One of the men then took the place of our conductor, and changed the direction of our litter."

Here Diana stopped a moment, as if overcome with emotion.

"Oh, continue, madame, continue," cried Bussy.

It was impossible for Diana not to see the interest she inspired in the young man; it was shown in his voice, his gestures, his looks. She smiled, and went on.

"We continued our journey for about three hours, then the litter stopped. I heard a door open, we went on, and I fancied we were crossing a drawbridge. I was not wrong, for, on looking out of the litter, I saw that we were in the courtyard of a castle. What castle was it? We did not know. Often, during the route, we had tried to discover where we were, but seemed to be in an endless forest. The door of our litter was opened, and the same man who had spoken to us before asked us to alight. I obeyed in silence. Two men from the castle had come to meet us with torches; they conducted us into a bedroom richly decorated, where a collation waited for us on a table sumptuously laid out.

"'You are at home here, madame,' said the same man, 'and the room for your servant is adjoining. When you wish for anything, you have but to strike with the knocker on this door, and some one, who will be constantly in the antechamber, will wait on you.' This apparent attention showed that we were guarded. Then the man bowed and went out, and we heard him lock the door behind him.

"Gertrude and I were alone. She was about to speak, but I signed her to be silent, for perhaps some one was listening. The door of the room which had been shown us as Gertrude's was open, and we went in to examine it. It was evidently the dressing-room to mine, and was also locked. We were prisoners. Gertrude approached me, and said in a low tone: 'Did demoiselle remark that we only mounted five steps after leaving the court?' 'Yes,' said I. 'Therefore we are on the ground floor.' 'Doubtless.' 'So that – ' said she, pointing to the window. 'Yes, if they are not barred.' 'And if mademoiselle had courage.' 'Oh! yes, I have.'

"Gertrude then took a light, and approached the window. It opened easily, and was not barred; but we soon discovered the cause of this seeming negligence on the part of our captors. A lake lay below us, and we were guarded by ten feet of water better than by bolts and bars. But in looking out I discovered where we were. We were in the château of Beaugé, where they had brought me on the death of my poor Daphné. This castle belonged to the Duc d'Anjou, and a sudden light was thrown upon our capture. We shut the window again, and I threw myself, dressed, on my bed, while Gertrude slept in a chair by my side. Twenty times during the night I woke, a prey to sudden terror; but nothing justified it, excepting the place where I found myself, for all seemed asleep in the castle, and no noise but the cry of the birds interrupted the silence of the night. Day appeared, but only to confirm my conviction that flight was impossible without external aid; and how could that reach us? About nine they came to take away the supper and bring breakfast. Gertrude questioned the servants, but they did not reply. Our morning passed in fruitless plans for escape, and yet we could see a boat fastened to the shore, with its oars in it. Could we only have reached that, we might have been safe.

"They brought us our dinner in the same way, put it down, and left us. In breaking my bread I found in it a little note. I opened it eagerly, and read, 'A friend watches over you. To-morrow you

shall have news of him and of your father.' You can imagine my joy. The rest of the day passed in waiting and hoping. The second night passed as quietly as the first; then came the hour of breakfast, waited for impatiently, for I hoped to find another note. I was not wrong, it was as follows: – 'The person who had you carried off will arrive at the castle of Beaugé at ten o'clock this evening; but at nine, the friend who watches over you will be under your windows with a letter from your father, which will command the confidence you, perhaps, might not otherwise give. Burn this letter.

"I read and re-read this letter, then burned it as I was desired. The writing was unknown to me, and I did not know from whom it could have come. We lost ourselves in conjectures, and a hundred times during the morning we went to the window to see if we could see any one on the shores of the lake, but all was solitary. An hour after dinner, some one knocked at our door, and then entered. It was the man who had spoken to us before. I recognized his voice; he presented a letter to me.

"'Whom do you come from?' asked I. 'Will mademoiselle take the trouble to read, and she will see.' 'But I will not read this letter without knowing whom it comes from.' 'Mademoiselle can do as she pleases; my business is only to leave the letter,' and putting it down, he went away. 'What shall I do?' asked I of Gertrude. 'Read the letter, mademoiselle; it is better to know what to expect.' I opened and read."

Diana, at this moment, rose, opened a desk, and from a portfolio drew out the letter. Bussy glanced at the address and read, "To the beautiful Diana de Méridor."

Then looking at Diana, he said —

"It is the Duc d'Anjou's writing."

"Ah!" replied she, with a sigh, "then he did not deceive me."

Then, as Bussy hesitated to open the letter —

"Read," said she, "chance has initiated you into the most secret history of my life, and I wish to keep nothing from you."

Bussy obeyed and read —

"An unhappy prince, whom your divine beauty has struck to the heart, will come at ten o'clock to-night to apologize for his conduct towards you – conduct which he himself feels has no other excuse than the invincible love he entertains for you.

"FRANÇOIS."

"Then this letter was really from the duke?" asked Diana.

"Alas! yes; it is his writing and his seal."

Diana sighed. "Can he be less guilty than I thought?" said she.

"Who, the prince?"

"No, M. de Monsoreau."

"Continue, madame, and we will judge the prince and the count."

"This letter, which I had then no idea of not believing genuine, rendered still more precious to me the intervention of the unknown friend who offered me aid in the name of my father; I had no hope but in him. Night arrived soon, for it was in the month of January, and we had still four or five hours to wait for the appointed time. It was a fine frosty night; the heavens were brilliant with stars, and the crescent moon lighted the country with its silver beams. We had no means of knowing the time, but we sat anxiously watching at Gertrude's window. At last we saw figures moving among the trees, and then distinctly heard the neighing of a horse.

"It is our friends,' said Gertrude. 'Or the prince,' replied I. 'The prince would not hide himself.' This reflection reassured me. A man now advanced alone: it seemed to us that he quitted another group who were left under the shade of the trees. As he advanced, my eyes made violent efforts to pierce the obscurity, and I thought I recognized first the tall figure, then the features, of M. de Monsoreau. I now feared almost as much the help as the danger. I remained mute, and drew back from the window. Arrived at the wall, he secured his boat, and I saw his head at our window. I could not repress a cry.

"'Ah, pardon,' said he, 'but I thought you expected me.' 'I expected some one, monsieur, but I did not know it was you.' A bitter smile passed over his face. 'Who else,' said he, 'except her father, watches over the honor of Diana de Méridor?' 'You told me, monsieur, in your letter, that you came in my father's name.' 'Yes, mademoiselle, and lest you should doubt it, here is a note from the baron,' and he gave me a paper. I read —

"'MY DEAR DIANA, – M. de Monsoreau can alone extricate you from your dangerous position, and this danger is immense. Trust, then, to him as to the best friend that Heaven can send to us. I will tell you later what from the bottom of my heart I wish you to do to acquit the debt we shall contract towards him.

"'Your father, who begs you to believe him, and to have pity on him, and on yourself,

"'BARON DE MÉRIDOR.'

"I knew nothing against M. de Monsoreau; my dislike to him was rather from instinct than reason. I had only to reproach him with the death of a doe, a very light crime for a hunter. I then turned towards him. 'Well?' said he. 'Monsieur, I have read my father's letter, it tells me you will take me from hence, but it does not tell me where you will take me.' 'Where the baron waits for you.' 'And where is that?' 'In the castle of Méridor.' 'Then I shall see my father?' 'In two hours.'

"'Ah I monsieur, if you speak truly – ' I stopped. The count waited for the end of my sentence. 'Count on my gratitude,' said I in a trembling tone, for I knew what he might expect from my gratitude. 'Then, mademoiselle,' said he, 'you are ready to follow me?' I looked at Gertrude. 'Reflect that each minute that passes is most precious,' said he, 'I am nearly half an hour behind time now; it will soon be ten o'clock, and then the prince will be here.' 'Alas! yes.' 'Once he comes, I can do nothing for you but risk without hope that life which I now risk to save you.' 'Why did not my father come?' I asked. 'Your father is watched. They know every step he takes.' 'But you – ' 'Oh! I am different; I am the prince's friend and confidant.' 'Then if you are his friend – ' 'Yes, I betray him for you; it is true, as I told you just now, I am risking my life to save you.' This seemed so true, that although I still felt repugnance, I could not express it. 'I wait,' said the count, 'and stay; if you still doubt, look there.' I looked, and saw on the opposite shore a body of cavaliers advancing. 'It is the duke and his suite,' said he, 'in five minutes it will be too late.'

"I tried to rise, but my limbs failed me. Gertrude raised me in her arms and gave me to the count. I shuddered at his touch, but he held me fast and placed me in the boat. Gertrude followed without aid. Then I noticed that my veil had come off, and was floating on the water. I thought they would track us by it, and I cried, 'My veil; catch my veil.' The count looked at it and said, 'No, no, better leave it.' And seizing the oars, he rowed with all his strength. We had just reached the bank when we saw the windows of my room lighted up. 'Did I deceive you? Was it time?' said M. de Monsoreau. 'Oh I yes, yes,' cried I, 'you are really my saviour.'

"The lights seemed to be moving about from one room to the other. We heard voices, and a man entered who approached the open window, looked out, saw the floating veil, and uttered a cry. 'You see I did well to leave the veil,' said the count, 'the prince believes that to escape him you threw yourself into the lake.' I trembled at the man who had so instantaneously conceived this idea."

CHAPTER XIV.
THE TREATY

There was a moment's silence. Diana seemed almost overcome. Bussy was already vowing eternal vengeance against her enemies. She went on:

"Scarcely had we touched the shore, when seven or eight men ran to us. They were the count's people, and I thought I recognized among them the two men who had escorted me when I left Méridor. A squire held two horses, a black one for the count and a white one for me. The count helped me to mount, and then jumped on his own horse. Gertrude mounted en croupe behind one of the men, and we set off at full gallop. The count held the bridle of my horse. I said to him that I was a sufficiently good horsewoman to dispense with this, but he replied that the horse was inclined to run away. When we had gone about ten minutes, I heard Gertrude's voice calling to me, and turning, I saw that four of the men were taking her by a different path from that which we were following. 'Gertrude,' cried I, 'why does she not come with me?' 'It is an indispensable precaution,' said the count; 'if we are pursued we must leave two tracks, and they must be able to say in two places that they have seen a woman carried away by men. There is then a chance that M. d'Anjou may take a wrong road, and go after your servant instead of you.' Although specious, this reply did not satisfy me, but what could I do? Besides, the path which the count was following was the one which led to the Château de Méridor. In a quarter of an hour, at the rate at which we are going, we should have been at the castle, when all at once, when we came to a cross road which I knew well, the count, instead of following the road to the castle, turned to the left, and took a road which led away from it. I cried out, and in spite of our rapid pace had already my hand on the pommel in order to jump off, when the count, seizing me round the waist, drew me off my horse, and placed me on the saddle before him. This action was so rapid that I had only time to utter a cry. M. de Monsoreau put his hand on my mouth, and said, 'Mademoiselle, I swear to you, on my honor, that I only act by your father's orders, as I will prove to you at the first halt we make. If this proof appears to you insufficient, you shall then be free.' 'But, monsieur,' cried I, pushing away his hand, 'you told me you were taking me to my father!' 'Yes, I told you so, because I saw that you hesitated to follow me, and a moment's more hesitation would have ruined us both, as you know. Now, do you wish to kill your father? Will you march straight to your dishonor? If so, I will take you to Méridor.' 'You spoke of a proof that you acted in the name of my father.' 'Here it is,' said the baron, giving me a letter, 'keep it, and read it at the first stoppage. If, when you have read it, you wish to return to Méridor, you are free; but if you have any respect for your father's wishes you will not.' 'Then, monsieur,' I replied, 'let us reach quickly our stopping-place, for I wish to know if you speak the truth.' 'Remember, you follow me freely.' 'Yes, as freely as a young girl can who sees herself placed between her father's death and her own dishonor on the one hand, and on the other the obligation to trust herself to the word of a man whom she hardly knows.' 'Never mind, I follow you freely, monsieur, as you shall see if you will give me my horse again.' The count called to one of his men to dismount and give me his horse. 'The white mare cannot be far,' said he to the man; 'seek her in the forest and call her, she will come like a dog to her name or to a whistle; you can rejoin us at La Châtre.' I shuddered in spite of myself. La Châtre was ten leagues from Méridor, on the road to Paris. 'Monsieur,' said I, 'I accompany you, but at La Châtre we make our conditions.' 'Mademoiselle, at La Châtre you shall give me your orders.' At daybreak we arrived at La Châtre, but instead of entering the village we went by across-road to a lonely house. I stopped. 'Where are we going?' I asked. 'Mademoiselle,' said the count, 'I appeal to yourself. Can we, in flying from a prince next in power to the king, stop in an ordinary village inn, where the first person would denounce us?' 'Well,' said I, 'go on.' We resumed our way. We were expected, for a man had ridden on before to announce our arrival. A good fire burned in a decent room, and a bed was prepared.

'This is your room,' said the count, 'I will await your orders.' He went out and left me alone. My first thought was for my letter. Here it is, M. de Bussy; read."

Bussy took the letter and read:

"MY BELOVED DIANA – As I do not doubt that, yielding to my prayer, you have followed the Comte de Monsoreau, he must have told you that you had the misfortune to please M. le Duc d'Anjou, and that it was this prince who had you forcibly carried away and taken to the castle of Beaugé; judge by this violence of what the prince is capable, and with what you were menaced. Your dishonor I could not survive; but there is a means of escape – that of marrying our noble friend. Once Countess of Monsoreau, the count would protect his wife. My desire is, then, my darling daughter, that this marriage should take place as soon as possible, and if you consent, I give you my paternal benediction, and pray God to bestow upon you every treasure of happiness.

"Your father, who does not order, but entreats,

"BARON DE MÉRIDOR."

"Alas!" said Bussy, "if this letter be from your father, it is but too positive."

"I do not doubt its being from him, and yet I read it three times before deciding. At last I called the count. He entered at once; I had the letter in my hand. 'Well, have you read it?' said he. 'Yes,' I replied. 'Do you still doubt my devotion and respect?' 'This letter imposes belief on me, monsieur; but in case I yield to my father's wishes, what do you propose to do?' 'To take you to Paris, mademoiselle; that is the easiest place to hide you.' 'And my father?' 'As soon as there is no longer danger of compromising you, you know he will come to you wherever you are.' 'Well, monsieur, I am ready to accept your protection on the conditions you impose.'

"'I impose nothing, mademoiselle,' answered he, 'I simply offer you a method of safety.' 'Well, I will accept this safety on three conditions.' 'Speak, mademoiselle.' 'The first is, that Gertrude shall return to me.' She is here. 'The second is, that we travel separately to Paris.' 'I was about to propose it to you.' 'And the third is, that our marriage, unless I myself acknowledge some urgent necessity for it, shall only take place in presence of my father.' 'It is my earnest desire; I count on his benediction to draw upon us that of heaven.'

"I was in despair. I had hoped for some opposition to my wishes. 'Now, mademoiselle,' said he, 'allow me to give you some advice.' 'I listen, monsieur.' 'Only to travel by night.' 'Agreed.' 'To let me choose the route, and the places where you should stop. All my precautions will be taken with the sole aim of escaping the Duc d'Anjou.' 'I have no objection to make, monsieur.' 'Lastly, at Paris, to occupy the lodging I shall prepare for you, however simple and out of the way it may be.' 'I only ask to live hidden, monsieur, the more out of the way, the better it will suit me.' 'Then, as we are agreed on all points, mademoiselle, it only remains for me to present to you my humble respects, and to send to you your femme de chambre.' 'On my side! monsieur, be sure that if you keep all your promises, I will keep mine.' 'That is all I ask,' said the count, 'and the promise makes me the happiest of men.'

"With these words, he bowed and went out. Five minutes after, Gertrude entered. The joy of this good girl was great; she had believed herself separated from me forever. I told her all that had passed. As I finished, we heard the sound of a horse's hoofs. I ran to the window; it was M. de Monsoreau going away. He had fulfilled two articles of the treaty. We passed all the day in that little house, served by our hostess; in the evening the chief of our escort appeared, and asked me if I were ready. I said yes, and five minutes after, we set off. At the door I found my white mare. We traveled all night, and stopped at daybreak. I calculated we had gone about thirty-five miles, but my horse had a very easy pace, and on leaving the house a fur cloak had been thrown over me to protect me from the cold. It took us seven days to reach Paris in this manner, and I saw nothing of the count. We entered the city at night, and the first object I saw, after passing through the gate, was an immense monastery; then we crossed the river, and in ten minutes we were in the Place de la Bastile. Then a man who seemed to be waiting for us, advanced and said, 'It is here.' The chief of our escort jumped off his horse, and presented me his hand to dismount also. A door was open, and the staircase lighted

by a lamp. 'Madame,' said the man to me, 'you are now at home. At this door finishes the mission I received; may I flatter myself I have fulfilled it according to your wishes?' 'Yes, monsieur,' said I, 'I have only thanks to give you. Offer them in my name to all your men; I would wish to reward them in a better manner, but I possess nothing.' 'Do not be uneasy about that, madame,' said he, 'they are largely recompensed.'

"Then the little troop went away, and we went up the stairs of our house, and found ourselves in a corridor. Three doors were open; we entered the middle one, and found ourselves in the room where we now stand. On opening the door of my bedroom, to my great astonishment I found my own portrait there. It was one which had hung at Méridor, and the count had doubtless begged it of my father. I trembled at this new proof that my father regarded me already as his wife.

"Nothing was wanting in the room; a fire burned in the grate, and a supper was ready in the sitting-room. I saw with satisfaction that it was laid for one only, and yet when Gertrude said, 'Well, mademoiselle, you see the count keeps his promises.' – 'Alas! yes,' replied I with a sigh, for I should have preferred that by breaking his word he should have given me an excuse to break mine. After supper, we examined the house, but found no one in it. The next day Gertrude went out, and from her I learned that we were at the end of the Rue St. Antoine, near the Bastile. That evening, as we were sitting down to supper, some one knocked. I grew pale.

"'If it be the count?' asked Gertrude. 'You must open to him; he has kept his promises, and I must keep mine.' A moment after he entered. 'Well, madame,' said he, 'have I kept my word?' 'Yes, monsieur, and I thank you for it.' 'Then you will receive me?' said he, with an ironical smile. 'Enter, monsieur,' said I, 'have you any news?' 'Of what, madame?' 'Of my father, firstly?' 'I have not been to Méridor and have not seen the baron.' 'Then of Beaugé, and the Duc d'Anjou?' 'I have been to Beaugé, and have spoken to the duke.' 'What does he say?' 'He appears to doubt.' 'Of what?' 'Of your death.' 'But you confirmed it?' 'I did all I could.' 'Where is the duke?' I then asked. 'He returned to Paris yesterday. One does not like to stay in a place where one has the death of a woman to reproach one's self with.' 'Have you seen him in Paris?' 'I have just left him.' 'Did he speak of me?' 'I did not give him time; I spoke incessantly of a promise which he made to me.' 'What is it?' 'He promised me as a reward for services rendered to him, to make, me chief huntsman.' 'Ah, yes,' said I, thinking of my poor Daphné 'you are a terrible hunter, I know.' 'It is not for, that reason I obtain it, but the duke dare not be ungrateful to me.'

"'Can I write to my father?' said I. 'Doubtless; but your letters may be intercepted.' 'Am I forbidden to go out?' 'Nothing is forbidden; but I beg to point out to you that you may be followed.' 'At least I must go on Sunday to mass.' 'It would be better not; but if you do, I advise you to go to St. Catherine.' 'Where is that?' 'Just opposite you.' There was a silence. Then I said, 'When shall I see you again, monsieur?' 'When I have your permission to come.' 'Do you need it?' 'Certainly, as yet I am a stranger to you.' 'Monsieur,' said I, half frightened at this unnatural submission, 'you can return when you like, or when you think you have anything important to communicate.'

"'Thanks, madame,' said he, 'I will use your permission, but not abuse it. I know you do not love me, and I will not abuse a situation which forces you to receive me. You will, I trust, gradually become accustomed to the thought, and be willing, when the moment shall arrive, to become my wife.' 'Monsieur,' said I, 'I appreciate your delicacy and frankness. I will use the same frankness. I had a prejudice against you, which I trust that time will cure.' 'Permit me,' said he, 'to partake this anticipation and live in the hopes of that happy moment.' Then bowing respectfully, he went out."

CHAPTER XV.
THE MARRIAGE

"A strange man," said Bussy.

"Yes, is he not, monsieur? When he was gone I felt sadder and more frightened than ever. This icy respect, this ironical obedience, this repressed passion, which now and then showed itself in his voice, frightened me more than a will firmly expressed, and which I could have opposed, would have done. The next day was Sunday; I had never in my life missed divine service, so I took a thick veil and went to St. Catherine's, followed by Gertrude, and no one seemed to remark us.

"The next day the count came to announce to me that the duke had fulfilled his promise, and had obtained for him the place of chief huntsman, which had been promised to M. de St. Luc. A week passed thus: the count came twice to see me, and always preserved the same cold and submissive manner. The next Sunday I went again to the church. Imprudently, in the midst of my prayers, I raised my veil. I was praying earnestly for my father, when Gertrude touched me on the arm. I raised my head, and saw with terror M. le Duc d'Anjou leaning against the column, and looking earnestly at me. A man stood by him."

"It was Aurilly," said Bussy.

"Yes, that was the name that Gertrude told me afterwards. I drew my veil quickly over my face, but it was too late: he had seen me, and if he had not recognized me, at least my resemblance to her whom he believed dead had struck him. Uneasy, I left the church, but found him standing at the door and he offered to me the holy water as I passed. I feigned not to see him, and went on. We soon discovered that we were followed. Had I known anything of Paris, I would have attempted to lead them wrong, but I knew no more of it than from the church to the house, nor did I know any one of whom I could ask a quarter of an hour's hospitality; not a friend, and only one protector, whom I feared more than an enemy."

"Oh! mon Dieu!" cried Bussy, "why did not Heaven, or chance, throw me sooner in your path?"

Diana thanked the young man with a look.

"But pray go on," said Bussy, "I interrupt you, and yet I am dying to hear more."

"That evening M. de Monsoreau came. I did not know whether to tell him of what had happened, but he began, 'You asked me if you could go to mass, and I told you you were free, but that it would be better not to do so. You would not believe me: you went this morning to St. Catherine's, and by a fatality the prince was there and saw you.' 'It is true, monsieur; but I do not know if he recognized me.' 'Your face struck him; your resemblance to the woman he regrets appeared to him extraordinary, he followed you home, and made inquiries, but learned nothing, for no one knew anything.' 'Mon Dieu!' cried I. 'The duke is persevering,' said he. 'Oh! he will forget me, I hope.'

"'No one forgets you who has once seen you,' said he. 'I did all I could to forget you, and I have not succeeded.' And the first passionate look that I had seen flashed from the eyes of the count. I was more terrified by it than I had been by the sight of the prince. I remained mute. 'What will you do?' asked the count. 'Can I not change my abode – go to the other end of Paris, or, better still, return to Anjou?' 'It will be useless; the duke is a terrible bloodhound, and now he is on your track, he will follow you wherever you go till he finds you.' 'Oh! mon Dieu! you frighten me.' 'I tell you the simple truth.' 'Then what do you advise me to do?' 'Alas!' said he, with a bitter irony. 'I am a man of poor imagination. I had formed a plan, but it does not suit you; I can find no other.' 'But the danger is perhaps less pressing than you imagine.'

"'The future will show us, madame,' said the count, rising. 'I can but add that the Comtesse de Monsoreau would have the less to fear from the prince, as my new post places me under the direct protection of the court.' I only replied by a sigh. He smiled bitterly, and as he went down-stairs I heard

him giving vent to oaths. The next day, when Gertrude went out, she was accosted by a young man whom she recognized as the one who had accompanied the prince, but she remained obstinately silent to all his questions. This meeting inspired me with profound terror; I feared that M. de Monsoreau would not come, and that they would invade the house in his absence. I sent for him, he came at once. I told him all about the young man, whom I described.

"'It was Aurilly;' he said, 'and what did Gertrude answer?' 'She did not answer at all.' 'She was wrong,' said he. 'Why?' 'We must gain time.' 'Time?' 'Yes, I am now dependent on the Duc d'Anjou; in a fortnight, in a week perhaps, he will be in my power. We must deceive him to get him to wait.' 'Mon Dieu!' 'Certainly; hope will make him patient. A complete refusal will push him to extremities.' 'Monsieur, write to my father; he will throw himself at the feet of the king. He will have pity on an old man.' 'That is according to the king's humor, and whether he be for the time friendly or hostile to the duke. Besides, it would take six days for a messenger to reach your father, and six days for him to come here. In twelve days, if we do not stop him, the duke will have done all he can do.'

"'And how to stop him?' I cried. A smile passed over the lips of M. de Monsoreau at this first appeal to his protection. 'Madame,' said he, 'will you permit me to pass two or three hours in your room? I may be seen going out, and would rather wait till dark.' I signed him to sit down. We conversed; he was clever and had traveled much, and at the end of the time I understood, better than I had ever done before, the influence he had obtained over my father. When it grew dark, he rose and took leave. Gertrude and I then approached the window, and could distinctly see two men examining the house. The next day, Gertrude, when she went out, found the same young man in the same place. He spoke to her again, and this time she answered him. On the following day she told him that I was the widow of a counselor, who, being poor, lived in retirement. He tried to learn more, but could extract nothing further from her. The next day, Aurilly, who seemed to doubt her story, spoke of Anjou, of Beaugé, and Méridor. Gertrude declared these names to be perfectly unknown to her. Then he avowed that he came from the Duc d'Anjou, who had seen and fallen in love with me; then came magnificent offers for both of us, for her, if she would introduce the prince into my house, and for me, if I would receive him.

"Every evening M. de Monsoreau came, to hear what was going on, and remained from eight o'clock to midnight, and it was evident that his anxiety was great. On Saturday evening he arrived pale and agitated.

"'You must promise to receive the duke on Tuesday or Wednesday,' said he. 'Promise! and why?' 'Because he has made up his mind to come in, and he is just now on the best terms with the king; we have nothing to expect from him.' 'But before then will anything happen to help me?' 'I hope so. I expect from day to day the event which is to place the duke in my power. But tomorrow I must leave you, and must go to Monsoreau.' 'Must you?' cried I with a mixture of joy and terror. 'Yes, I have there a rendezvous which is indispensable to bring about the event of which I speak.' 'But if you fail, what are we to do?' 'What can I do against a prince, if I have no right to protect you, but yield to bad fortune?'

"'Oh! my father! my father!' cried I. The count looked at me. 'What have you to reproach me with?' said he. 'Nothing, on the contrary.' 'Have I not been a devoted friend, and as respectful as a brother?' 'You have behaved throughout like a gallant man.' 'Had I not your promise?' 'Yes.' 'Have I once recalled it to you?' 'No.' 'And yet you prefer to be the mistress of the duke, to being my wife?' 'I do not say so, monsieur.' 'Then decide.' 'I have decided.' 'To be Countess of Monsoreau?' 'Rather than mistress of the duke.' 'The alternative is flattering. But, meanwhile, let Gertrude gain time until Tuesday.' The next day Gertrude went out, but did not meet Aurilly. We felt more frightened at his absence than we had done at his presence. Night came, and we were full of terror. We were alone and feeble, and for the first time I felt my injustice to the count."

"Oh! madame!" cried Bussy, "do not be in a hurry to think so, his conduct conceals some mystery, I believe."

"All was quiet," continued Diana, "until eleven o'clock. Then five men came out of the Rue St Antoine, and hid themselves by the Hôtel des Tournelles. We began to tremble; were they there for us? However, they remained quiet, and a quarter of an hour passed; then we saw two other men approach. By the moonlight Gertrude recognized Aurilly. 'Alas! mademoiselle; it is they,' cried she. 'Yes,' cried I, trembling, 'and the five others are to help them.' 'But they must force the door,' said Gertrude, 'perhaps the neighbors will come and help us.' 'Oh! no, they do not know us, and they will not fight against the duke. Alas! Gertrude, I fear we have no real defender but the count.' 'Well! then, why do you always refuse to marry him?' I sighed."

CHAPTER XVI.
THE MARRIAGE

"The two men approached the window. We gently opened it a little way, and heard one say, 'Are you sure it is here?' 'Yes, monseigneur, quite sure,' said the other. 'It is the fifth house from the corner of the Rue St. Paul.' 'And you are sure of the key?' 'I took the pattern of the lock.' I seized Gertrude's arm in terror. 'And once inside' he went on, 'the servant will admit us; your highness has in your pocket a golden key as good as this one.' 'Open, then.' We heard the key turn in the lock but all at once the ambushed men rushed forward, crying, 'a mort! a mort!' I could not understand this, only I saw that unexpected help had come to us, and I fell on my knees, thanking Heaven. But the prince had only to name himself, when every sword went back into the scabbard, and every foot drew back."

"Yes, yes," said Bussy, "it was for me they came, not for the prince."

"However, this attack caused the prince to retire, and the five gentlemen went back to their hiding-place. It was evident that the danger was over for that night, but we were too unquiet to go to bed. Soon we saw a man on horseback appear, and then the five gentlemen immediately rushed on him. You know the rest, as the gentleman was yourself."

"On the contrary, madame, I know only that I fought and then fainted."

"It is useless to say," continued Diana, with a blush, "the interest that we took in the combat so unequal, but so valiantly sustained. Each blow drew from us a shudder, a cry, and a prayer. We saw your horse fall, and we thought you lost, but it was not so; the brave Bussy merited his reputation. At last, surrounded, menaced on all sides, you retreated like a lion, facing your foes, and came to lean against our door; the same idea came to both of us, to go down and open to you, and we ran towards the staircase; but we had barricaded the door, and it took us some minutes to move the furniture, and as we arrived on the stairs, we heard the door shut. We stopped, and looked at each other, wondering who had entered. Soon we heard steps, and a man appeared, who tottered, threw up his arms, and fell on the first step. It was evident that he was not pursued, but had put the door, so luckily left open by the duke, between him and his adversaries. In any case we had nothing to fear; it was he who needed our help. Gertrude ran and fetched a lamp, and we found you had fainted, and carried you to the bed. Gertrude had heard of a wonderful cure made by a young doctor in the Rue Beautrellis, and she offered to go and fetch him. 'But,' said I, 'he might betray us.' 'I will take precautions' said she. She took money and the key, and I remained alone near you, and – praying for you."

"Alas!" said Bussy, "I did not know all my happiness, madame."

"In a quarter of an hour Gertrude returned, bringing the young doctor with his eyes bandaged."

"Yes, it was at that moment I recovered my senses and saw your portrait, and thought I saw you enter," said Bussy.

"I did so; my anxiety was stronger than my prudence. The doctor examined your wound and answered for your life."

"All that remained in my mind," said Bussy, "like a dream, and yet something told me," added he, laying his hand upon his heart, "that it was real."

"When the surgeon had dressed your wound, he drew from his pocket a little bottle containing a red liquor, of which he put some drops on your lips. He told me it was to counteract the fever and produce sleep, and said that the only thing then was to keep you quiet. Gertrude then bandaged his eyes again, and took him back to the Rue Beautrellis, but she fancied he counted the steps."

"He did so, madame."

"This supposition frightened us. We feared he would betray us, and we wished to get rid of every trace of the hospitality we had shown you. I gathered up my courage; it was two o'clock, and

the streets were deserted; Gertrude was strong, and I aided her, and between us we carried you to the Temple. Luckily we met no one, but when we returned, I fainted with emotion."

"Oh! madame!" cried Bussy, "how can I ever repay you for what you have done for me?"

There was a moment's silence, and they heard the clock of St. Catherine's church strike. "Two o'clock," cried Diana, "and you here!"

"Oh! madame, do not send me away without telling me all. Suppose that God had given you a brother, and tell this brother what he can do for his sister."

"Alas! nothing now; it is too late."

"What happened the next day?" said Bussy; "what did you do on that day when I thought constantly of you, without feeling sure if you were not a vision of my delirium?"

"During that day, Gertrude went out, and met Aurilly. He was more pressing than ever. He said nothing of the night before, but asked for an interview for his master. Gertrude appeared to consent, but she asked until the Wednesday – that is to-day – to decide. Aurilly promised that his master would wait until then. That evening, M. de Monsoreau returned. We told him all, except about you.

"'Yes,' said he, 'I heard of all this. Then he has a key.' 'Can we not change the lock?' 'He will get another key.' 'Put on bolts? 'He will come with ten men and force the door. 'But the event which was to give you full power over him?' 'Is postponed indefinitely.' I stood in despair. 'Monsieur,' said I, 'the duke has promised to wait till Wednesday; I ask you to wait till Tuesday.' 'Tuesday evening I will be here, madame,' and without another word he went out. I followed him with my eyes, but instead of going away he stood in the corner by the Hôtel des Tournelles, and seemed determined to watch me all night. Every proof of devotion he gave me was like a knife in my heart. The two days passed rapidly, but what I suffered it is impossible to describe. When Tuesday evening came, I felt exhausted, and all emotion seemed dead within me.

"Gertrude went to the window. 'Madame,' cried she, 'four men! I see four men! They approach, they open the door – they enter! It is, doubtless, the duke and his followers.' For an answer, I drew my poniard, and placed it near me on the table. 'See,' said I. An instant after, Gertrude returned, 'It is the count,' said she. He entered. 'Gertrude tells me,' said he, 'that you took me for the duke, and were ready to kill yourself.' It was the first time I had ever seen him moved. Gertrude was wrong to tell you,' said I. 'You know that I am not alone.' 'Gertrude saw four men.' 'You know who they are?' 'I presume one is a priest, and the others witnesses.' 'Then, you are ready to become my wife?' 'It was so agreed; only I stipulated that except in an urgent case, I would only marry you in the presence of my father.' 'I remember; but do you not think the case urgent?' 'Yes, and the priest may marry us, but, until I have seen my father, I will be your wife only in name.'

"The count frowned, and bit his lips. 'I do not wish to coerce you,' said he; 'you are free; but look here.' I went to the window, and saw a man wrapped in a cloak, who seemed trying to get into the house."

"Oh! mon dieu!" cried Bussy; "and this was yesterday?"

"Yes, about nine o'clock. Presently, another man, with a lantern, joined him. I thought it was the duke and his followers.

"'Now,' said, M de Monsoreau, 'shall I go or stay?' I hesitated a moment, in spite of my father's letter and of my given word, but those two men there – "

"Oh! unhappy that I am," cried Bussy, "it was I and Rémy, the young doctor."

"You!" cried Diana.

"Yes, I; I, who, more and more convinced of the reality of my dream, sought for the house where I had been, and the woman, or rather angel, who had appeared to me. Oh! I am unfortunate. Then," continued he, after a pause, "you are his wife?"

"Since yesterday."

There was a fresh silence.

"But," said Diana at last, "how did you enter this house?"

Bussy silently showed his key.

"A key! where did you get it?"

"Had not Gertrude promised the prince to enter tonight? He had seen M. de Monsoreau here, and also myself, and fearing a snare, sent me to find out."

"And you accepted this mission?"

"It was my only method of penetrating to you. Will you reproach me for having sought at once the greatest joy and the greatest grief of my life?"

"Yes, for it is better that you should see me no more, and forget me."

"No, madame; God has brought me to you, to deliver you from the toils in which your enemies have taken you. I vow my life to you. You wish for news of your father?"

"Oh, yes! for, in truth, I know not what has become of him."

"Well, I charge myself with finding out; only think of him who henceforth will live but for you."

"But this key?"

"This key I restore to you, for I will receive it only from your hands; but I pledge you my word as a gentleman, that never sister could trust in a brother more devoted and respectful."

"I trust to the word of the brave Bussy. Here, monsieur," and she gave back the key.

"Madame, in a fortnight we will know more;" and, saluting Diana with a respect mingled with love and sadness, Bussy took leave. Diana listened to his retreating steps with tears in her eyes.

CHAPTER XVII.
HOW HENRI III. TRAVELED, AND HOW LONG IT TOOK HIM TO GET FROM PARIS TO FONTAINEBLEAU

The sun, which shone four or five hours after the events which we have just recorded had taken place, saw, by his pale light, Henri III. set off for Fontainebleau, where a grand chase was projected. A crowd of gentlemen, mounted on good horses and wrapped in their fur cloaks, then a number of pages, after them lackey, and then Swiss, followed the royal litter. This litter, drawn by eight mules richly caparisoned, was a large machine, about fifteen feet long and eight wide, on four wheels, furnished inside with cushions and curtains of silk brocade. In difficult places they substituted for the mules an indefinite number of oxen.

This machine contained Henri III., his doctor, and his chaplain, Chicot, four of the king's favorites, a pair of large dogs, and a basket of little ones, which the king held on his knees, and which was suspended from his neck by a golden chain. From the roof hung a gilded cage containing turtle doves, quite white, with a black ring round their necks. Sometimes the collection was completed by the presence of two or three apes. Thus this litter was commonly termed the Noah's Ark.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.