

A Duel to the Death

By Alexander Dumont

(Edmonton Free Press)

Louis de Clermont, Count Bussy d'Amboise, returned in haste to the Louvre. As accredited ambassador from the king's brother, the Duc d'Anjou, he brought with him that prince's hard-won submission—a submission which had taxed to the utmost Catherine de Medicis' tact and diplomacy to win.

Bussy presented himself to the king, unaccompanied by any of the three young noblemen, Livarot, Riberac and Antraquet, who were his closest friends and adherents.

Henry III received him coldly in the great throne room where he was surrounded by his courtiers, among them his four favorites—Quelus, Maugiron, Schomberg and the Duc d'Epemnon. Between these latter and Bussy's three friends there existed an enmity of long standing and when, after a brief and frigid audience, Henri III dismissed the court, Bussy found himself surrounded by the king's favorites, who had gathered with the evident intention of provoking that duel to the death which had long been the king's dearest wish, and whereby he hoped to rid France of the stanchest supporters of his brother.

Bussy, secure in the renown which his many hard fought and victorious duels had won him, feigned ignorance of the threatening attitude of the conspirators.

At last d'Epemnon exclaimed coarsely:—"See, gentlemen, how contemptible our elegant Bussy has become during his sojourn in the provinces with Monsieur d'Anjou."

"That reflection occurred to me as well, gentlemen," retorted Bussy with an engaging smile. "It is indeed curious that a few days' absence can place Louis de Bussy, Lord of all Clermont, at disadvantage with a petty Gascon noble."

And, with a courteous bow, he left them, to join Saint Luc, who had just entered.

But the four favorites had short space to ponder over Bussy's unexpected mildness.

Saint Luc joined them speedily and with the customary formality, presented Bussy's challenge to fight them either singly or collectively with whatever weapons and wherever they chose."

The challenge was accepted, on condition that the four favorites should fight Bussy and his three friends.

It was agreed that they would fight with rapiers and daggers, to the death, in a retired square near the Bastille. It was also agreed to avoid obvious disadvantage of the sun shining in the faces of either group of combatants, that they should fight in a semi-circle, in such a manner that the rays of the sun should shine upon each group from the side.

The duel was to take place at dawn, the morning after the Feast of Corpus Christi, and the contestants, having drawn their opponents by lot, were to be free after annihilating their adversaries, to attack the others.

The lots were drawn, Schomberg paired off with Riberac; Quelus with Antraquet; Livarot with Maugiron; and Bussy with d'Epemnon.

D'Epemnon alone lost countenance. In his soul he vowed he would not meet Bussy, no matter to what means, conspiracy, betrayal or hired assassins he must needs resort.

Thus matters stood. Both sides were well content. D'Epemnon alone worked mole-like, to forestall his death at Bussy's hands. He leagued himself treacherously with the Duc d'Anjou, encouraging the latter to the foulest betrayal of which he stands convicted—although his name and record bear the blot of La Mole and Cocomas' bloody murder on the scaffold—for here he sacrificed an adherent who had spent blood and faith in his service, who designed on the morrow to risk his life for the honor of his perjured prince, who sacrificed him basely to a thwarted jealousy.

Upon the evening of this grim prodrome to the morrow's duel—which had been engineered by d'Epemnon—Bussy d'Amboise repaired to the house of his lady love, Madame de Monseigneur. The hours sped swiftly. Then just as she knelt to pray for his safety in the duel, and Bussy bent over her, three men entered the window. They were followed by a fourth, who was masked and armed with a loaded pistol and drawn sword.

This sudden apparition alarmed Bussy for an instant. Then, swiftly he thrust Madame de Monseigneur behind him and drawing his sword, he faced the men, one of whom carried a musket. The masked man spoke in sombre tones:

"What an excellent friend I find in Monsieur de Bussy!"

And by the voice Bussy recognized M. de Monseigneur, Diana's husband.

"Come, sir, on guard!" shouted Bussy, lowering his sword, "or let me pass."

thrusts pierced his side. Agin Bussy was armed and as his enemies advanced upon him, his sword sang hissing about him, as, thrusting here, wounding and killing there, it described its circles about his head.

For an instant he lowered that powerful right arm, seeking to open the door of the chamber, through which he hoped to escape.

But the bolts had yielded, and the key had turned in the lock. With sublime and furious energy Bussy thrust the foremost assassins from him.

Then four men flung their weapons from them and caught him in their arms, seeking to strangle the man whom they could not subdue by force of arms. But with the hilt of his sword Bussy fought them off.

Again Monseigneur fired twice, and twice Bussy felt the bullets sting. Three men had thus fastened upon his right arm and wrenched his sword from his hand.

Bussy seized the assassin's wrist, drew the dagger from the wound, and, turning it against his adversary, he forced him to kill himself. The sole remaining assassin sprang out of the window.

Triumphantly the young man glanced about him, caught up one of the dead men's swords, and, with a single bound he was upon Monseigneur, who he dashed to the ground, pinning him to the floor with a single thrust.

Then, bleeding, exhausted, and half fainting, Bussy dragged himself toward the door and out into the corridor. But here other blades flashed, and bullets whistled around him. The courtyard was guarded.

Rallying his last effort, Bussy now made his way back into the room, bolted the door and climbing up to the little window in the corner with the trellised iron work surrounding it, above and below, he mounted the sill and with his eyes measured the distance between himself and those sharp-pointed pallings below.

Weakened as he was, Bussy hesitated, doubting his ability to leap beyond them. Then steps sounded without, and summoning all his force, he braced himself with one hand and the one foot which he was still able to use; then he sprang forward. But his boots were drenched with blood, the sole slipping he fell, the first spikes below impaling his body and garments. Then a figure emerged from the gloom, followed by another and yet another.

""Is you, Bussy?" cried a voice. Bussy's blood leaped; he recognized that voice, though the men were masked.

"Gentlemen—your highness, rescue me or I die," he cried.

"Well, your highness?" queried one of the men, turning respectfully to the other.

"This latter made a single motion. "Deliver him up to me," he commanded with a sinister burst of laughter.

A flash of light—a single reverberation and a bullet put an end to Bussy's sufferings.

On the morrow, at earliest dawn, Livarot, Riberac and Antraquet, wondering that Bussy had failed to meet them at the appointed place, hastened to his house to learn the cause of delay, then thinking that he might have lingered for a last career, they turned toward that little dwelling which Madame de Monseigneur inhabited.

A vast concourse of people, shouting, struggling, andrestating, surrounded the dismantled gardens, with their open gates, and drenched by streams of blood in the midst of all the evidences of frightful carnage, which were as yet untouched, the three friends beheld Bussy's corpse still impaled upon those frightful iron spikes.

A yell of rage, horror and reverence above that other discordant roar, and the three friends forced a passage through the mob to the side of that noble corpse.

Then Antraquet, drawing his sword, dipped the blade into Bussy's still dripping blood, and lifting it on high cried:

"Bussy, I swear by this to wash away the memories of your wounds in the blood of your enemies."

And the two others replied:—"Bussy, we swear to revenge your murder by death, or to die in the attempt."

dispelled their illusion. "You should be aware of that fact, gentlemen," Antraquet said, "since he was assassinated last night!"

"And why should we?" Quelus cried indignantly.

"And are you sure?" d'Epemnon asked.

"As sure as I am that this is his blood," replied Antraquet thrusting his sword into full view.

D'Epemnon still shook his head doubtfully while the other three exclaimed with surprise.

"Truly," said Schomberg, "your grief is well founded."

"How well, you best know," replied Antraquet.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Quelus.

"Seek whom the crime profits," retorted Antraquet.

With a yell or rage, Maugiron, Quelus, and Schomberg drew their swords and flung themselves upon Bussy's friends, demanding an explanation. But d'Epemnon stood aside, though he drew his sword from his scabbard.

"Truly, you are in haste," replied Antraquet.

"Is it our fault that we are four to three?" demanded d'Epemnon insolently.

"Yes," replied Antraquet. "Our friend is dead because you preferred to meet him in the grave rather than in a fair field of battle. Do you understand?"

The others howled with rage, and shrieked unanimously. "We will fight three to three. These gentlemen will then see if, despite the rights of the duel we agreed upon, we are able to meet them with the young men if their loss, which we deplore as much as they."

"Gentlemen," protested Quelus, addressing his three opponents, "we fight by right, because we fight fairly in the sight of God that you may learn if we are assassins. On guard!" On guard!" echoed Bussy's friends.

"With or without your garments?" queried Schomberg ferociously.

"Without!" responded Antraquet. "We will bear our breasts that we may the more easily reach the heart."

And, with one accord, they divested themselves of their coats and shirts. "Heavens!" exclaimed Quelus, "I have lost my dagger. It must have dropped from my sheath as I came along."

bout with his adversary, lowered his sword and passed for an instant. With two swift forward steps, Schomberg fell upon him and delivered a thrust which resembled the first flash of lightning from the storm clouds.

Riberac was wounded. His face grew livid and the blood spurting from his shoulder. He broke away in order to gauge the extent of his injury.

Schomberg endeavored to repeat the thrust, but Riberac, by a paradi in prime, wounded him in the side.

"Now," observed Riberac, "let us rest for an instant."

In the meantime the duel between Quelus and Antraquet had become most heated. But Quelus, who had no dagger, was at a great disadvantage. Obligated to prary with his unprotected left arm, this was soon tnd cut, speedily wrenching his left sword from his grasp. Bussy caught hand with blood, although he was not as yet dangerously wounded.

Antraquet, on the contrary, appreciating his advantage to the full, and no less skillful than Quelus, pushed that advantage home with rapid thrust and parry.

Three swift lunges succeeded each other, and the blood flowed from three places in Quelus' breast.

At each thrust Quelus repeated: "It is nothing!"

Livarot and Maugiron were still prudently feinting. But Riberac, now furious with pain, and feeling that his strength was gradually giving way beneath the constant loss of blood, had fallen victoriously upon Schomberg.

But Schomberg did not give way. He parried the did thrusts with his sword and with the young men it now became parry for blow, lunge for lunge, parry for blow. Riberac was again badly wounded in the breast and Schomberg sustained a cut in the throat.

Riberac was mortally wounded, and placing his hand over his breast, he left himself uncovered. Schomberg profited by this to wound Riberac dangerously a second time.

Riberac with his right hand caught at his adversary and with his left thrust his dagger into Schomberg's breast up to the hilt. The sharp blade pierced to the heart and Schomberg, with a dull cry, fell backward, dragging with him Riberac, who was still held by the sword which had pierced his breast.

Livarot, seeing his friend fall, with an adroit movement evaded his adversary and ran toward Riberac, pursued by Maugiron.

He gained a few feet upon his pursuer and then assisted Riberac in a final effort to remove the sword from the gaping wound in his breast. Together they managed to wrench it free.

But Bagnion was upon his heels and Livarot was compelled to assume the defensive, upon a footing which was now made dangerous by the blood that drenched it. In an instant a thrust in tierce ripped Livarot's head open and in his agony he dropped his sword and fell to his knees.

Antraquet pressed Quelus, who Maugiron to hasten the end, thrust his sword through Livarot and rushed to Quelus' assistance.

Thus Quelus and Maugiron attacked Antraquet, the sole survivor of his friends.

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"Long live the King!" he gurgled and faintly.

Then over that field of battle and death the angel of silence spread its wings. D'Epemnon, in terror, made the sign of the cross and fled. Chicot ran to Quelus and raised him in his arms. The young man was bleeding from nineteen different wounds.

He opened his eyes. "Long live the King!" he gurgled and faintly.

"I believe you," replied the other in a voice choked with emotion, and by a graceful thought, he gathered up the swords of the fallen combatants, and gave to the dying Quelus his honor I am innocent of Bussy's death."

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THE FERNIE SITUATION

Fernie, B.C., Nov. 11.—On Friday night Mr. Burke, of the Miners' Federation, went to Michel, and at a union meeting of the miners made a report to them on the result of his labors in settling the strike.

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 14.—Bookmaking, as it has been carried on at Benning's, was today declared illegal, and William Davis, who volunteered himself a defendant to test the law, was declared guilty and sentenced in the criminal court today to imprisonment for two hours.

Jockey Sewell, who died on Saturday from injuries received in a fall at the Aqueduct on Thursday, was to have ridden for the Kirkford stable in California this winter.

STEEL DIRECTORS MEET.

Montreal, Nov. 14.—A meeting of the directors of the Dominion Iron and Steel company began in the National Trust offices this morning and lasted all day without definite results. There were present Senators Forget, De and McKee, Sir Pellatt and Wap Van Term and Messrs. Jones, Whitney and Dimeck. Senator Forget took the chair in the absence of Mr. Hammer, the president, who is in England.

The steel men made a proposition to Mr. Ross, which was assailed with the result that a counter proposition was sent back by the coal company. The latter will hold another meeting tomorrow. It is understood that the steel people have offered a considerable advance on the price of coal.

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