

Chapter 3. Dead Animosities.

D'Artagnan arrived at the Bastile just as it was striking half-past eight. His visit was announced to the governor, who, on hearing that he came from the cardinal, went to meet him and received him at the top of the great flight of steps outside the door. The governor of the Bastile was Monsieur du Tremblay, the brother of the famous Capuchin, Joseph, that fearful favorite of Richelieu's, who went by the name of the Gray Cardinal.

During the period that the Duc de Bassompierre passed in the Bastile--where he remained for twelve long years--when his companions, in their dreams of liberty, said to each other: "As for me, I shall go out of the prison at such a time," and another, at such and such a time, the duke used to answer, "As for me, gentlemen, I shall leave only when Monsieur du Tremblay leaves;" meaning that at the death of the cardinal Du Tremblay would certainly lose his place at the Bastile and De Bassompierre regain his at court.

His prediction was nearly fulfilled, but in a very different way from that which De Bassompierre supposed; for after the death of Richelieu everything went on, contrary to expectation, in the same way as before; and Bassompierre had little chance of leaving his prison.

Monsieur du Tremblay received D'Artagnan with extreme politeness and

invited him to sit down with him to supper, of which he was himself about to partake.

"I should be delighted to do so," was the reply; "but if I am not mistaken, the words 'In haste,' are written on the envelope of the letter which I brought."

"You are right," said Du Tremblay. "Halloo, major! tell them to order Number 25 to come downstairs."

The unhappy wretch who entered the Bastile ceased, as he crossed the threshold, to be a man--he became a number.

D'Artagnan shuddered at the noise of the keys; he remained on horseback, feeling no inclination to dismount, and sat looking at the bars, at the buttressed windows and the immense walls he had hitherto only seen from the other side of the moat, but by which he had for twenty years been awe-struck.

A bell resounded.

"I must leave you," said Du Tremblay; "I am sent for to sign the release of a prisoner. I shall be happy to meet you again, sir."

"May the devil annihilate me if I return thy wish!" murmured D'Artagnan, smiling as he pronounced the imprecation; "I declare I feel quite ill after only being five minutes in the courtyard. Go to! go to! I would rather die on straw than hoard up a thousand a year by being governor of

the Bastile."

He had scarcely finished this soliloquy before the prisoner arrived. On seeing him D'Artagnan could hardly suppress an exclamation of surprise. The prisoner got into the carriage without seeming to recognize the musketeer.

"Gentlemen," thus D'Artagnan addressed the four musketeers, "I am ordered to exercise the greatest possible care in guarding the prisoner, and since there are no locks to the carriage, I shall sit beside him. Monsieur de Lillebonne, lead my horse by the bridle, if you please." As he spoke he dismounted, gave the bridle of his horse to the musketeer and placing himself by the side of the prisoner said, in a voice perfectly composed, "To the Palais Royal, at full trot."

The carriage drove on and D'Artagnan, availing himself of the darkness in the archway under which they were passing, threw himself into the arms of the prisoner.

"Rochefort!" he exclaimed; "you! is it you, indeed? I am not mistaken?"

"D'Artagnan!" cried Rochefort.

"Ah! my poor friend!" resumed D'Artagnan, "not having seen you for four or five years I concluded you were dead."

"T'faith," said Rochefort, "there's no great difference, I think, between a dead man and one who has been buried alive; now I have been

buried alive, or very nearly so."

"And for what crime are you imprisoned in the Bastile."

"Do you wish me to speak the truth?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, I don't know."

"Have you any suspicion of me, Rochefort?"

"No! on the honor of a gentleman; but I cannot be imprisoned for the reason alleged; it is impossible."

"What reason?" asked D'Artagnan.

"For stealing."

"For stealing! you, Rochefort! you are laughing at me."

"I understand. You mean that this demands explanation, do you not?"

"I admit it."

"Well, this is what actually took place: One evening after an orgy in Reinard's apartment at the Tuileries with the Duc d'Harcourt, Fontrailles, De Rieux and others, the Duc d'Harcourt proposed that

we should go and pull cloaks on the Pont Neuf; that is, you know, a diversion which the Duc d'Orleans made quite the fashion."

"Were you crazy, Rochefort? at your age!"

"No, I was drunk. And yet, since the amusement seemed to me rather tame, I proposed to Chevalier de Rieux that we should be spectators instead of actors, and, in order to see to advantage, that we should mount the bronze horse. No sooner said than done. Thanks to the spurs, which served as stirrups, in a moment we were perched upon the croupe; we were well placed and saw everything. Four or five cloaks had already been lifted, with a dexterity without parallel, and not one of the victims had dared to say a word, when some fool of a fellow, less patient than the others, took it into his head to cry out, 'Guard!' and drew upon us a patrol of archers. Duc d'Harcourt, Fontrailles, and the others escaped; De Rieux was inclined to do likewise, but I told him they wouldn't look for us where we were. He wouldn't listen, put his foot on the spur to get down, the spur broke, he fell with a broken leg, and, instead of keeping quiet, took to crying out like a gallows-bird. I then was ready to dismount, but it was too late; I descended into the arms of the archers. They conducted me to the Chatelet, where I slept soundly, being very sure that on the next day I should go forth free. The next day came and passed, the day after, a week; I then wrote to the cardinal. The same day they came for me and took me to the Bastile. That was five years ago. Do you believe it was because I committed the sacrilege of mounting en croupe behind Henry IV.?"

"No; you are right, my dear Rochefort, it couldn't be for that; but you

will probably learn the reason soon."

"Ah, indeed! I forgot to ask you--where are you taking me?"

"To the cardinal."

"What does he want with me?"

"I do not know. I did not even know that you were the person I was sent to fetch."

"Impossible--you--a favorite of the minister!"

"A favorite! no, indeed!" cried D'Artagnan. "Ah, my poor friend! I am just as poor a Gascon as when I saw you at Meung, twenty-two years ago, you know; alas!" and he concluded his speech with a deep sigh.

"Nevertheless, you come as one in authority."

"Because I happened to be in the ante-chamber when the cardinal called me, by the merest chance. I am still a lieutenant in the musketeers and have been so these twenty years."

"Then no misfortune has happened to you?"

"And what misfortune could happen to me? To quote some Latin verses I have forgotten, or rather, never knew well, 'the thunderbolt never falls on the valleys,' and I am a valley, dear Rochefort,--one of the lowliest

of the low."

"Then Mazarin is still Mazarin?"

"The same as ever, my friend; it is said that he is married to the queen."

"Married?"

"If not her husband, he is unquestionably her lover."

"You surprise me. Rebuff Buckingham and consent to Mazarin!"

"Just like the women," replied D'Artagnan, coolly.

"Like women, not like queens."

"Egad! queens are the weakest of their sex, when it comes to such things as these."

"And M. de Beaufort--is he still in prison?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Oh, nothing, but that he might get me out of this, if he were favorably inclined to me."

"You are probably nearer freedom than he is, so it will be your business

to get him out."

"And," said the prisoner, "what talk is there of war with Spain?"

"With Spain, no," answered D'Artagnan; "but Paris."

"What do you mean?" cried Rochefort.

"Do you hear the guns, pray? The citizens are amusing themselves in the meantime."

"And you--do you really think that anything could be done with these bourgeois?"

"Yes, they might do well if they had any leader to unite them in one body."

"How miserable not to be free!"

"Don't be downcast. Since Mazarin has sent for you, it is because he wants you. I congratulate you! Many a long year has passed since any one has wanted to employ me; so you see in what a situation I am."

"Make your complaints known; that's my advice."

"Listen, Rochefort; let us make a compact. We are friends, are we not?"

"Egad! I bear the traces of our friendship--three slits or slashes from

your sword."

"Well, if you should be restored to favor, don't forget me."

"On the honor of a Rochefort; but you must do the like for me."

"There's my hand,--I promise."

"Therefore, whenever you find any opportunity of saying something in my behalf----"

"I shall say it, and you?"

"I shall do the same."

"Apropos, are we to speak of your friends also, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis? or have you forgotten them?"

"Almost."

"What has become of them?"

"I don't know; we separated, as you know. They are alive, that's all that I can say about them; from time to time I hear of them indirectly, but in what part of the world they are, devil take me if I know, No, on my honor, I have not a friend in the world but you, Rochefort."

"And the illustrious--what's the name of the lad whom I made a sergeant

in Piedmont's regiment?"

"Planchet!"

"The illustrious Planchet. What has become of him?"

"I shouldn't wonder if he were at the head of the mob at this very moment. He married a woman who keeps a confectioner's shop in the Rue des Lombards, for he's a lad who was always fond of sweetmeats; he's now a citizen of Paris. You'll see that that queer fellow will be a sheriff before I shall be a captain."

"Come, dear D'Artagnan, look up a little! Courage! It is when one is lowest on the wheel of fortune that the merry-go-round wheels and rewards us. This evening your destiny begins to change."

"Amen!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, stopping the carriage.

"What are you doing?" asked Rochefort.

"We are almost there and I want no one to see me getting out of your carriage; we are supposed not to know each other."

"You are right. Adieu."

"Au revoir. Remember your promise."

In five minutes the party entered the courtyard and D'Artagnan led

the prisoner up the great staircase and across the corridor and ante-chamber.

As they stopped at the door of the cardinal's study, D'Artagnan was about to be announced when Rochefort slapped him on his shoulder.

"D'Artagnan, let me confess to you what I've been thinking about during the whole of my drive, as I looked out upon the parties of citizens who perpetually crossed our path and looked at you and your four men with fiery eyes."

"Speak out," answered D'Artagnan.

"I had only to cry out 'Help!' for you and for your companions to be cut to pieces, and then I should have been free."

"Why didn't you do it?" asked the lieutenant.

"Come, come!" cried Rochefort. "Did we not swear friendship? Ah! had any one but you been there, I don't say----"

D'Artagnan bowed. "Is it possible that Rochefort has become a better man than I am?" he said to himself. And he caused himself to be announced to the minister.

"Let M. de Rochefort enter," said Mazarin, eagerly, on hearing their names pronounced; "and beg M. d'Artagnan to wait; I shall have further need of him."

These words gave great joy to D'Artagnan. As he had said, it had been a long time since any one had needed him; and that demand for his services on the part of Mazarin seemed to him an auspicious sign.

Rochefort, rendered suspicious and cautious by these words, entered the apartment, where he found Mazarin sitting at the table, dressed in his ordinary garb and as one of the prelates of the Church, his costume being similar to that of the abbes in that day, excepting that his scarf and stockings were violet.

As the door was closed Rochefort cast a glance toward Mazarin, which was answered by one, equally furtive, from the minister.

There was little change in the cardinal; still dressed with sedulous care, his hair well arranged and curled, his person perfumed, he looked, owing to his extreme taste in dress, only half his age. But Rochefort, who had passed five years in prison, had become old in the lapse of a few years; the dark locks of this estimable friend of the defunct Cardinal Richelieu were now white; the deep bronze of his complexion had been succeeded by a mortal pallor which betokened debility. As he gazed at him Mazarin shook his head slightly, as much as to say, "This is a man who does not appear to me fit for much."

After a pause, which appeared an age to Rochefort, Mazarin took from a bundle of papers a letter, and showing it to the count, he said:

"I find here a letter in which you sue for liberty, Monsieur de

Rochefort. You are in prison, then?"

Rochefort trembled in every limb at this question. "But I thought," he said, "that your eminence knew that circumstance better than any one----"

"I? Oh no! There is a congestion of prisoners in the Bastile, who were cooped up in the time of Monsieur de Richelieu; I don't even know their names."

"Yes, but in regard to myself, my lord, it cannot be so, for I was removed from the Chatelet to the Bastile owing to an order from your eminence."

"You think you were."

"I am certain of it."

"Ah, stay! I fancy I remember it. Did you not once refuse to undertake a journey to Brussels for the queen?"

"Ah! ah!" exclaimed Rochefort. "There is the true reason! Idiot that I am, though I have been trying to find it out for five years, I never found it out."

"But I do not say it was the cause of your imprisonment. I merely ask you, did you not refuse to go to Brussels for the queen, whilst you had consented to go there to do some service for the late cardinal?"

"That is the very reason I refused to go back to Brussels. I was there at a fearful moment. I was sent there to intercept a correspondence between Chalais and the archduke, and even then, when I was discovered I was nearly torn to pieces. How could I, then, return to Brussels? I should injure the queen instead of serving her."

"Well, since the best motives are liable to misconstruction, the queen saw in your refusal nothing but a refusal--a distinct refusal she had also much to complain of you during the lifetime of the late cardinal; yes, her majesty the queen----"

Rochefort smiled contemptuously.

"Since I was a faithful servant, my lord, to Cardinal Richelieu during his life, it stands to reason that now, after his death, I should serve you well, in defiance of the whole world."

"With regard to myself, Monsieur de Rochefort," replied Mazarin, "I am not, like Monsieur de Richelieu, all-powerful. I am but a minister, who wants no servants, being myself nothing but a servant of the queen's. Now, the queen is of a sensitive nature. Hearing of your refusal to obey her she looked upon it as a declaration of war, and as she considers you a man of superior talent, and consequently dangerous, she desired me to make sure of you; that is the reason of your being shut up in the Bastille. But your release can be managed. You are one of those men who can comprehend certain matters and having understood them, can act with energy----"

"Such was Cardinal Richelieu's opinion, my lord."

"The cardinal," interrupted Mazarin, "was a great politician and therein shone his vast superiority over me. I am a straightforward, simple man; that's my great disadvantage. I am of a frankness of character quite French."

Rochefort bit his lips in order to prevent a smile.

"Now to the point. I want friends; I want faithful servants. When I say I want, I mean the queen wants them. I do nothing without her commands--pray understand that; not like Monsieur de Richelieu, who went on just as he pleased. So I shall never be a great man, as he was, but to compensate for that, I shall be a good man, Monsieur de Rochefort, and I hope to prove it to you."

Rochefort knew well the tones of that soft voice, in which sounded sometimes a sort of gentle lisp, like the hissing of young vipers.

"I am disposed to believe your eminence," he replied; "though I have had but little evidence of that good-nature of which your eminence speaks. Do not forget that I have been five years in the Bastille and that no medium of viewing things is so deceptive as the grating of a prison."

"Ah, Monsieur de Rochefort! have I not told you already that I had nothing to do with that? The queen--cannot you make allowances for the pettishness of a queen and a princess? But that has passed away as

suddenly as it came, and is forgotten."

"I can easily suppose, sir, that her majesty has forgotten it amid the fetes and the courtiers of the Palais Royal, but I who have passed those years in the Bastile----"

"Ah! mon Dieu! my dear Monsieur de Rochefort! do you absolutely think that the Palais Royal is the abode of gayety? No. We have had great annoyances there. As for me, I play my game squarely, fairly, and above board, as I always do. Let us come to some conclusion. Are you one of us, Monsieur de Rochefort?"

"I am very desirous of being so, my lord, but I am totally in the dark about everything. In the Bastile one talks politics only with soldiers and jailers, and you have not an idea, my lord, how little is known of what is going on by people of that sort; I am of Monsieur de Bassompierre's party. Is he still one of the seventeen peers of France?"

"He is dead, sir; a great loss. His devotion to the queen was boundless; men of loyalty are scarce."

"I think so, forsooth," said Rochefort, "and when you find any of them, you march them off to the Bastile. However, there are plenty in the world, but you don't look in the right direction for them, my lord."

"Indeed! explain to me. Ah! my dear Monsieur de Rochefort, how much you must have learned during your intimacy with the late cardinal! Ah! he was a great man."

"Will your eminence be angry if I read you a lesson?"

"I! never! you know you may say anything to me. I try to be beloved, not feared."

"Well, there is on the wall of my cell, scratched with a nail, a proverb, which says, 'Like master, like servant.'"

"Pray, what does that mean?"

"It means that Monsieur de Richelieu was able to find trusty servants, dozens and dozens of them."

"He! the point aimed at by every poniard! Richelieu, who passed his life in warding off blows which were forever aimed at him!"

"But he did ward them off," said De Rochefort, "and the reason was, that though he had bitter enemies he possessed also true friends. I have known persons," he continued--for he thought he might avail himself of the opportunity of speaking of D'Artagnan--"who by their sagacity and address have deceived the penetration of Cardinal Richelieu; who by their valor have got the better of his guards and spies; persons without money, without support, without credit, yet who have preserved to the crowned head its crown and made the cardinal crave pardon."

"But those men you speak of," said Mazarin, smiling inwardly on seeing Rochefort approach the point to which he was leading him, "those men

were not devoted to the cardinal, for they contended against him."

"No; in that case they would have met with more fitting reward. They had the misfortune to be devoted to that very queen for whom just now you were seeking servants."

"But how is it that you know so much of these matters?"

"I know them because the men of whom I speak were at that time my enemies; because they fought against me; because I did them all the harm I could and they returned it to the best of their ability; because one of them, with whom I had most to do, gave me a pretty sword-thrust, now about seven years ago, the third that I received from the same hand; it closed an old account."

"Ah!" said Mazarin, with admirable suavity, "could I but find such men!"

"My lord, there has stood for six years at your very door a man such as I describe, and during those six years he has been unappreciated and unemployed by you."

"Who is it?"

"It is Monsieur d'Artagnan."

"That Gascon!" cried Mazarin, with well acted surprise.

"That Gascon' has saved a queen and made Monsieur de Richelieu confess

that in point of talent, address and political skill, to him he was only a tyro."

"Really?"

"It is as I have the honor of telling it to your excellency."

"Tell me a little about it, my dear Monsieur de Rochefort."

"That is somewhat difficult, my lord," said Rochefort, with a smile.

"Then he will tell it me himself."

"I doubt it, my lord."

"Why do you doubt it?"

"Because the secret does not belong to him; because, as I have told you, it has to do with a great queen."

"And he was alone in achieving an enterprise like that?"

"No, my lord, he had three colleagues, three brave men, men such as you were wishing for just now."

"And were these four men attached to each other, true in heart, really united?"

"As if they had been one man--as if their four hearts had pulsated in one breast."

"You pique my curiosity, dear Rochefort; pray tell me the whole story."

"That is impossible; but I will tell you a true story, my lord."

"Pray do so, I delight in stories," cried the cardinal.

"Listen, then," returned Rochefort, as he spoke endeavoring to read in that subtle countenance the cardinal's motive. "Once upon a time there lived a queen--a powerful monarch--who reigned over one of the greatest kingdoms of the universe; and a minister; and this minister wished much to injure the queen, whom once he had loved too well. (Do not try, my lord, you cannot guess who it is; all this happened long before you came into the country where this queen reigned.) There came to the court an ambassador so brave, so magnificent, so elegant, that every woman lost her heart to him; and the queen had even the indiscretion to give him certain ornaments so rare that they could never be replaced by any like them.

"As these ornaments were given by the king the minister persuaded his majesty to insist upon the queen's appearing in them as part of her jewels at a ball which was soon to take place. There is no occasion to tell you, my lord, that the minister knew for a fact that these ornaments had sailed away with the ambassador, who was far away, beyond seas. This illustrious queen had fallen low as the least of her subjects--fallen from her high estate."

"Indeed!"

"Well, my lord, four men resolved to save her. These four men were not princes, neither were they dukes, neither were they men in power; they were not even rich. They were four honest soldiers, each with a good heart, a good arm and a sword at the service of those who wanted it. They set out. The minister knew of their departure and had planted people on the road to prevent them ever reaching their destination. Three of them were overwhelmed and disabled by numerous assailants; one of them alone arrived at the port, having either killed or wounded those who wished to stop him. He crossed the sea and brought back the set of ornaments to the great queen, who was able to wear them on her shoulder on the appointed day; and this very nearly ruined the minister. What do you think of that exploit, my lord?"

"It is magnificent!" said Mazarin, thoughtfully.

"Well, I know of ten such men."

Mazarin made no reply; he reflected.

Five or six minutes elapsed.

"You have nothing more to ask of me, my lord?" said Rochefort.

"Yes. And you say that Monsieur d'Artagnan was one of those four men?"

"He led the enterprise."

"And who were the others?"

"I leave it to Monsieur d'Artagnan to name them, my lord. They were his friends and not mine. He alone would have any influence with them; I do not even know them under their true names."

"You suspect me, Monsieur de Rochefort; I want him and you and all to aid me."

"Begin with me, my lord; for after five or six years of imprisonment it is natural to feel some curiosity as to one's destination."

"You, my dear Monsieur de Rochefort, shall have the post of confidence; you shall go to Vincennes, where Monsieur de Beaufort is confined; you will guard him well for me. Well, what is the matter?"

"The matter is that you have proposed to me what is impossible," said Rochefort, shaking his head with an air of disappointment.

"What! impossible? And why is it impossible?"

"Because Monsieur de Beaufort is one of my friends, or rather, I am one of his. Have you forgotten, my lord, that it is he who answered for me to the queen?"

"Since then Monsieur de Beaufort has become an enemy of the State."

"That may be, my lord; but since I am neither king nor queen nor minister, he is not my enemy and I cannot accept your offer."

"This, then, is what you call devotion! I congratulate you. Your devotion does not commit you too far, Monsieur de Rochefort."

"And then, my lord," continued Rochefort, "you understand that to emerge from the Bastille in order to enter Vincennes is only to change one's prison."

"Say at once that you are on the side of Monsieur de Beaufort; that will be the most sincere line of conduct," said Mazarin.

"My lord, I have been so long shut up, that I am only of one party--I am for fresh air. Employ me in any other way; employ me even actively, but let it be on the high roads."

"My dear Monsieur de Rochefort," Mazarin replied in a tone of raillery, "you think yourself still a young man; your spirit is that of the phoenix, but your strength fails you. Believe me, you ought now to take a rest. Here!"

"You decide, then, nothing about me, my lord?"

"On the contrary, I have come to a decision."

Bernouin came into the room.

"Call an officer of justice," he said; "and stay close to me," he added, in a low tone.

The officer entered. Mazarin wrote a few words, which he gave to this man; then he bowed.

"Adieu, Monsieur de Rochefort," he said.

Rochefort bent low.

"I see, my lord, I am to be taken back to the Bastile."

"You are sagacious."

"I shall return thither, my lord, but it is a mistake on your part not to employ me."

"You? the friend of my greatest foes? Don't suppose that you are the only person who can serve me, Monsieur de Rochefort. I shall find many men as able as you are."

"I wish you may, my lord," replied De Rochefort.

He was then reconducted by the little staircase, instead of passing through the ante-chamber where D'Artagnan was waiting. In the courtyard the carriage and the four musketeers were ready, but he looked around in vain for his friend.

"Ah!" he muttered to himself, "this changes the situation, and if there is still a crowd of people in the streets we will try to show Mazarin that we are still, thank God, good for something else than keeping guard over a prisoner;" and he jumped into the carriage with the alacrity of a man of five-and-twenty.