

## Chapter 16. The Duc de Beaufort.

The circumstances that had hastened the return of D'Artagnan to Paris were as follows:

One evening, when Mazarin, according to custom, went to visit the queen, in passing the guard-chamber he heard loud voices; wishing to know on what topic the soldiers were conversing, he approached with his wonted wolf-like step, pushed open the door and put his head close to the chink.

There was a dispute among the guards.

"I tell you," one of them was saying, "that if Coysel predicted that, 'tis as good as true; I know nothing about it, but I have heard say that he's not only an astrologer, but a magician."

"Deuce take it, friend, if he's one of thy friends thou wilt ruin him in saying so."

"Why?"

"Because he may be tried for it."

"Ah! absurd! they don't burn sorcerers nowadays."

"No? 'Tis not a long time since the late cardinal burnt Urban Grandier, though."

"My friend, Urban Grandier wasn't a sorcerer, he was a learned man. He didn't predict the future, he knew the past--often a more dangerous thing."

Mazarin nodded an assent, but wishing to know what this prediction was, about which they disputed, he remained in the same place.

"I don't say," resumed the guard, "that Coysel is not a sorcerer, but I say that if his prophecy gets wind, it's a sure way to prevent it's coming true."

"How so?"

"Why, in this way: if Coysel says loud enough for the cardinal to hear him, on such or such a day such a prisoner will escape, 'tis plain that the cardinal will take measures of precaution and that the prisoner will not escape."

"Good Lord!" said another guard, who might have been thought asleep on a bench, but who had lost not a syllable of the conversation, "do you suppose that men can escape their destiny? If it is written yonder, in Heaven, that the Duc de Beaufort is to escape, he will escape; and all

the precautions of the cardinal will not prevent it."

Mazarin started. He was an Italian and therefore superstitious. He walked straight into the midst of the guards, who on seeing him were silent.

"What were you saying?" he asked with his flattering manner; "that Monsieur de Beaufort had escaped, were you not?"

"Oh, no, my lord!" said the incredulous soldier. "He's well guarded now; we only said he would escape."

"Who said so?"

"Repeat your story, Saint Laurent," replied the man, turning to the originator of the tale.

"My lord," said the guard, "I have simply mentioned the prophecy I heard from a man named Coysel, who believes that, be he ever so closely watched and guarded, the Duke of Beaufort will escape before Whitsuntide."

"Coyssel is a madman!" returned the cardinal.

"No," replied the soldier, tenacious in his credulity; "he has foretold many things which have come to pass; for instance, that the queen would have a son; that Monsieur Coligny would be killed in a duel with the Duc de Guise; and finally, that the coadjutor would be made cardinal. Well!

the queen has not only one son, but two; then, Monsieur de Coligny was killed, and----"

"Yes," said Mazarin, "but the coadjutor is not yet made cardinal!"

"No, my lord, but he will be," answered the guard.

Mazarin made a grimace, as if he meant to say, "But he does not wear the cardinal's cap;" then he added:

"So, my friend, it's your opinion that Monsieur de Beaufort will escape?"

"That's my idea, my lord; and if your eminence were to offer to make me at this moment governor of the castle of Vincennes, I should refuse it. After Whitsuntide it would be another thing."

There is nothing so convincing as a firm conviction. It has its own effect upon the most incredulous; and far from being incredulous, Mazarin was superstitious. He went away thoughtful and anxious and returned to his own room, where he summoned Bernouin and desired him to fetch thither in the morning the special guard he had placed over Monsieur de Beaufort and to awaken him whenever he should arrive.

The guard had, in fact, touched the cardinal in the tenderest point. During the whole five years in which the Duc de Beaufort had been in prison not a day had passed in which the cardinal had not felt a secret dread of his escape. It was not possible, as he knew well, to confine

for the whole of his life the grandson of Henry IV., especially when this young prince was scarcely thirty years of age. But however and whensoever he did escape, what hatred he must cherish against him to whom he owed his long imprisonment; who had taken him, rich, brave, glorious, beloved by women, feared by men, to cut off his life's best, happiest years; for it is not life, it is merely existence, in prison! Meantime, Mazarin redoubled his surveillance over the duke. But like the miser in the fable, he could not sleep for thinking of his treasure. Often he awoke in the night, suddenly, dreaming that he had been robbed of Monsieur de Beaufort. Then he inquired about him and had the vexation of hearing that the prisoner played, drank, sang, but that whilst playing, drinking, singing, he often stopped short to vow that Mazarin should pay dear for all the amusements he had forced him to enter into at Vincennes.

So much did this one idea haunt the cardinal even in his sleep, that when at seven in the morning Bernouin came to arouse him, his first words were: "Well, what's the matter? Has Monsieur de Beaufort escaped from Vincennes?"

"I do not think so, my lord," said Bernouin; "but you will hear about him, for La Ramee is here and awaits the commands of your eminence."

"Tell him to come in," said Mazarin, arranging his pillows, so that he might receive the visitor sitting up in bed.

The officer entered, a large fat man, with an open physiognomy. His air of perfect serenity made Mazarin uneasy.

"Approach, sir," said the cardinal.

The officer obeyed.

"Do you know what they are saying here?"

"No, your eminence."

"Well, they say that Monsieur de Beaufort is going to escape from Vincennes, if he has not done so already."

The officer's face expressed complete stupefaction. He opened at once his little eyes and his great mouth, to inhale better the joke his eminence deigned to address to him, and ended by a burst of laughter, so violent that his great limbs shook in hilarity as they would have done in an ague.

"Escape! my lord--escape! Your eminence does not then know where Monsieur de Beaufort is?"

"Yes, I do, sir; in the donjon of Vincennes."

"Yes, sir; in a room, the walls of which are seven feet thick, with grated windows, each bar as thick as my arm."

"Sir," replied Mazarin, "with perseverance one may penetrate through a wall; with a watch-spring one may saw through an iron bar."

"Then my lord does not know that there are eight guards about him, four in his chamber, four in the antechamber, and that they never leave him."

"But he leaves his room, he plays at tennis at the Mall?"

"Sir, those amusements are allowed; but if your eminence wishes it, we will discontinue the permission."

"No, no!" cried Mazarin, fearing that should his prisoner ever leave his prison he would be the more exasperated against him if he thus retrenched his amusement. He then asked with whom he played.

"My lord, either with the officers of the guard, with the other prisoners, or with me."

"But does he not approach the walls while playing?"

"Your eminence doesn't know those walls; they are sixty feet high and I doubt if Monsieur de Beaufort is sufficiently weary of life to risk his neck by jumping off."

"Hum!" said the cardinal, beginning to feel more comfortable. "You mean to say, then, my dear Monsieur la Ramee----"

"That unless Monsieur de Beaufort can contrive to metamorphose himself into a little bird, I will continue answerable for him."

"Take care! you assert a great deal," said Mazarin. "Monsieur de Beaufort told the guards who took him to Vincennes that he had often thought what he should do in case he were put into prison, and that he had found out forty ways of escaping."

"My lord, if among these forty there had been one good way he would have been out long ago."

"Come, come; not such a fool as I fancied!" thought Mazarin.

"Besides, my lord must remember that Monsieur de Chavigny is governor of Vincennes," continued La Ramee, "and that Monsieur de Chavigny is not friendly to Monsieur de Beaufort."

"Yes, but Monsieur de Chavigny is sometimes absent."

"When he is absent I am there."

"But when you leave him, for instance?"

"Oh! when I leave him, I place in my stead a bold fellow who aspires to be his majesty's special guard. I promise you he keeps a good watch over the prisoner. During the three weeks that he has been with me, I have only had to reproach him with one thing--being too severe with the prisoners."

"And who is this Cerberus?"



"A certain Monsieur Grimaud, my lord."

"And what was he before he went to Vincennes?"

"He was in the country, as I was told by the person who recommended him to me."

"And who recommended this man to you?"

"The steward of the Duc de Grammont."

"He is not a gossip, I hope?"

"Lord a mercy, my lord! I thought for a long time that he was dumb; he answers only by signs. It seems his former master accustomed him to that."

"Well, dear Monsieur la Ramee," replied the cardinal "let him prove a true and thankful keeper and we will shut our eyes upon his rural misdeeds and put on his back a uniform to make him respectable, and in the pockets of that uniform some pistoles to drink to the king's health."

Mazarin was large in promises,--quite unlike the virtuous Monsieur Grimaud so bepraised by La Ramee; for he said nothing and did much.

It was now nine o'clock. The cardinal, therefore, got up, perfumed himself, dressed, and went to the queen to tell her what had detained

him. The queen, who was scarcely less afraid of Monsieur de Beaufort than the cardinal himself, and who was almost as superstitious as he was, made him repeat word for word all La Ramee's praises of his deputy. Then, when the cardinal had ended:

"Alas, sir! why have we not a Grimaud near every prince?"

"Patience!" replied Mazarin, with his Italian smile; "that may happen one day; but in the meantime----"

"Well, in the meantime?"

"I shall still take precautions."

And he wrote to D'Artagnan to hasten his return.