Chapter 45. The Beggar of St. Eustache.

D'Artagnan had calculated that in not going at once to the Palais Royal he would give Comminges time to arrive before him, and consequently to make the cardinal acquainted with the eminent services which he, D'Artagnan, and his friend had rendered to the queen's party in the morning.

They were indeed admirably received by Mazarin, who paid them numerous compliments, and announced that they were more than half on their way to obtain what they desired, namely, D'Artagnan his captaincy, Porthos his barony.

D'Artagnan would have preferred money in hand to all that fine talk, for he knew well that to Mazarin it was easy to promise and hard to perform. But, though he held the cardinal's promises as of little worth, he affected to be completely satisfied, for he was unwilling to discourage Porthos.

Whilst the two friends were with the cardinal, the queen sent for him. Mazarin, thinking that it would be the means of increasing the zeal of his two defenders if he procured them personal thanks from the queen, motioned them to follow him. D'Artagnan and Porthos pointed to their dusty and torn dresses, but the cardinal shook his head.

"Those costumes," he said, "are of more worth than most of those which you will see on the backs of the queen's courtiers; they are costumes of battle."

D'Artagnan and Porthos obeyed. The court of Anne of Austria was full of gayety and animation; for, after having gained a victory over the Spaniard, it had just gained another over the people. Broussel had been conducted out of Paris without further resistance, and was at this time in the prison of Saint Germain; while Blancmesnil, who was arrested at the same time, but whose arrest had been made without difficulty or noise, was safe in the Castle of Vincennes.

Comminges was near the queen, who was questioning him upon the details of his expedition, and every one was listening to his account, when D'Artagnan and Porthos were perceived at the door, behind the cardinal.

"Ah, madame," said Comminges, hastening to D'Artagnan, "here is one who can tell you better than myself, for he was my protector. Without him I should probably at this moment be a dead fish in the nets at Saint Cloud, for it was a question of nothing less than throwing me into the river. Speak, D'Artagnan, speak."

D'Artagnan had been a hundred times in the same room with the queen since he had become lieutenant of the musketeers, but her majesty had never once spoken to him.

"Well, sir," at last said Anne of Austria, "you are silent, after rendering such a service?"

"Madame," replied D'Artagnan, "I have nought to say, save that my life is ever at your majesty's service, and that I shall only be happy the day I lose it for you."

"I know that, sir; I have known that," said the queen, "a long time; therefore I am delighted to be able thus publicly to mark my gratitude and my esteem."

"Permit me, madame," said D'Artagnan, "to reserve a portion for my friend; like myself" (he laid an emphasis on these words) "an ancient musketeer of the company of Treville; he has done wonders."

"His name?" asked the queen.

"In the regiment," said D'Artagnan, "he is called Porthos" (the queen started), "but his true name is the Chevalier du Vallon."

"De Bracieux de Pierrefonds," added Porthos.

"These names are too numerous for me to remember them all, and I will content myself with the first," said the queen, graciously. Porthos bowed. At this moment the coadjutor was announced; a cry of surprise ran through the royal assemblage. Although the coadjutor had preached that same morning it was well known that he leaned much to the side of the Fronde; and Mazarin, in requesting the archbishop of Paris to make his nephew preach, had evidently had the intention of administering to Monsieur de Retz one of those Italian kicks he so much enjoyed giving.

The fact was, in leaving Notre Dame the coadjutor had learned the event of the day. Although almost engaged to the leaders of the Fronde he had not gone so far but that retreat was possible should the court offer him the advantages for which he was ambitious and to which the coadjutorship was but a stepping-stone. Monsieur de Retz wished to become archbishop in his uncle's place, and cardinal, like Mazarin; and the popular party could with difficulty accord him favors so entirely royal. He therefore hastened to the palace to congratulate the queen on the battle of Lens, determined beforehand to act with or against the court, as his congratulations were well or ill received.

The coadjutor possessed, perhaps, as much wit as all those put together who were assembled at the court to laugh at him. His speech, therefore, was so well turned, that in spite of the great wish felt by the courtiers to laugh, they could find no point on which to vent their ridicule. He concluded by saying that he placed his feeble influence at her majesty's command.

During the whole time he was speaking, the queen appeared to be well pleased with the coadjutor's harangue; but terminating as it did with such a phrase, the only one which could be caught at by the jokers, Anne turned around and directed a glance toward her favorites, which announced that she delivered up the coadjutor to their tender mercies. Immediately the wits of the court plunged into satire. Nogent-Beautin, the fool of the court, exclaimed that "the queen was very happy to have the succor of religion at such a moment." This caused a universal burst of laughter. The Count de Villeroy said that "he did not know how any

fear could be entertained for a moment, when the court had, to defend itself against the parliament and the citizens of Paris, his holiness the coadjutor, who by a signal could raise an army of curates, church porters and vergers."

The Marechal de la Meilleraie added that in case the coadjutor should appear on the field of battle it would be a pity that he should not be distinguished in the melee by wearing a red hat, as Henry IV. had been distinguished by his white plume at the battle of Ivry.

During this storm, Gondy, who had it in his power to make it most unpleasant for the jesters, remained calm and stern. The queen at last asked him if he had anything to add to the fine discourse he had just made to her.

"Yes, madame," replied the coadjutor; "I have to beg you to reflect twice ere you cause a civil war in the kingdom."

The queen turned her back and the laughing recommenced.

The coadjutor bowed and left the palace, casting upon the cardinal such a glance as is best understood by mortal foes. That glance was so sharp that it penetrated the heart of Mazarin, who, reading in it a declaration of war, seized D'Artagnan by the arm and said:

"If occasion requires, monsieur, you will remember that man who has just gone out, will you not?"

"Yes, my lord," he replied. Then, turning toward Porthos, "The devil!" said he, "this has a bad look. I dislike these quarrels among men of the church."

Gondy withdrew, distributing benedictions on his way, and finding a malicious satisfaction in causing the adherents of his foes to prostrate themselves at his feet.

"Oh!" he murmured, as he left the threshold of the palace: "ungrateful court! faithless court! cowardly court! I will teach you how to laugh to-morrow--but in another manner."

But whilst they were indulging in extravagant joy at the Palais Royal, to increase the hilarity of the queen, Mazarin, a man of sense, and whose fear, moreover, gave him foresight, lost no time in making idle and dangerous jokes; he went out after the coadjutor, settled his account, locked up his gold, and had confidential workmen to contrive hiding places in his walls.

On his return home the coadjutor was informed that a young man had come in after his departure and was waiting for him; he started with delight when, on demanding the name of this young man, he learned that it was Louvieres. He hastened to his cabinet. Broussel's son was there, still furious, and still bearing bloody marks of his struggle with the king's officers. The only precaution he had taken in coming to the archbishopric was to leave his arquebuse in the hands of a friend.

The coadjutor went to him and held out his hand. The young man gazed at

him as if he would have read the secret of his heart.

"My dear Monsieur Louvieres," said the coadjutor, "believe me, I am truly concerned for the misfortune which has happened to you."

"Is that true, and do you speak seriously?" asked Louvieres.

"From the depth of my heart," said Gondy.

"In that case, my lord, the time for words has passed and the hour for action is at hand; my lord, in three days, if you wish it, my father will be out of prison and in six months you may be cardinal."

The coadjutor started.

"Oh! let us speak frankly," continued Louvieres, "and act in a straightforward manner. Thirty thousand crowns in alms is not given, as you have done for the last six months, out of pure Christian charity; that would be too grand. You are ambitious--it is natural; you are a man of genius and you know your worth. As for me, I hate the court and have but one desire at this moment--vengeance. Give us the clergy and the people, of whom you can dispose, and I will bring you the citizens and the parliament; with these four elements Paris is ours in a week; and believe me, monsieur coadjutor, the court will give from fear what it will not give from good-will."

It was now the coadjutor's turn to fix his piercing eyes on Louvieres.

"But, Monsieur Louvieres, are you aware that it is simply civil war you are proposing to me?"

"You have been preparing long enough, my lord, for it to be welcome to you now."

"Never mind," said the coadjutor; "you must be well aware that this requires reflection."

"And how many hours of reflection do you ask?"

"Twelve hours, sir; is it too long?"

"It is now noon; at midnight I will be at your house."

"If I should not be in, wait for me."

"Good! at midnight, my lord."

"At midnight, my dear Monsieur Louvieres."

When once more alone Gondy sent to summon all the curates with whom he had any connection to his house. Two hours later, thirty officiating ministers from the most populous, and consequently the most disturbed parishes of Paris had assembled there. Gondy related to them the insults he had received at the Palais Royal and retailed the jests of Beautin, the Count de Villeroy and Marechal de la Meilleraie. The curates asked him what was to be done.

"Simply this," said the coadjutor. "You are the directors of all consciences. Well, undermine in them the miserable prejudice of respect and fear of kings; teach your flocks that the queen is a tyrant; and repeat often and loudly, so that all may know it, that the misfortunes of France are caused by Mazarin, her lover and her destroyer; begin this work to-day, this instant even, and in three days I shall expect the result. For the rest, if any one of you have further or better counsel to expound, I will listen to him with the greatest pleasure."

Three curates remained--those of St. Merri, St. Sulpice and St. Eustache. The others withdrew.

"You think, then, that you can help me more efficaciously than your brothers?" said Gondy.

"We hope so," answered the curates.

"Let us hear. Monsieur de St. Merri, you begin."

"My lord, I have in my parish a man who might be of the greatest use to you."

"Who and what is this man?"

"A shopkeeper in the Rue des Lombards, who has great influence upon the commerce of his quarter."

"What is his name?"

"He is named Planchet, who himself also caused a rising about six weeks ago; but as he was searched for after this emeute he disappeared."

"And can you find him?"

"I hope so. I think he has not been arrested, and as I am his wife's confessor, if she knows where he is I shall know it too."

"Very well, sir, find this man, and when you have found him bring him to me."

"We will be with you at six o'clock, my lord."

"Go, my dear curate, and may God assist you!"

"And you, sir?" continued Gondy, turning to the curate of St. Sulpice.

"I, my lord," said the latter, "I know a man who has rendered great services to a very popular prince and who would make an excellent leader of revolt. Him I can place at your disposal; it is Count de Rochefort."

"I know him also, but unfortunately he is not in Paris."

"My lord, he has been for three days at the Rue Cassette."

"And wherefore has he not been to see me?"

"He was told--my lord will pardon me----"

"Certainly, speak."

"That your lordship was about to treat with the court."

Gondy bit his lips.

"They are mistaken; bring him here at eight o'clock, sir, and may Heaven bless you as I bless you!"

"And now 'tis your turn," said the coadjutor, turning to the last that remained; "have you anything as good to offer me as the two gentlemen who have left us?"

"Better, my lord."

"Diable! think what a solemn engagement you are making; one has offered a wealthy shopkeeper, the other a count; you are going, then, to offer a prince, are you?"

"I offer you a beggar, my lord."

"Ah! ah!" said Gondy, reflecting, "you are right, sir; some one who could raise the legion of paupers who choke up the crossings of Paris; some one who would know how to cry aloud to them, that all France might hear it, that it is Mazarin who has reduced them to poverty."

"Exactly your man."

"Bravo! and the man?"

"A plain and simple beggar, as I have said, my lord, who asks for alms, as he gives holy water; a practice he has carried on for six years on the steps of St. Eustache."

"And you say that he has a great influence over his compeers?"

"Are you aware, my lord, that mendacity is an organized body, a kind of association of those who have nothing against those who have everything; an association in which every one takes his share; one that elects a leader?"

"Yes, I have heard it said," replied the coadjutor.

"Well, the man whom I offer you is a general syndic."

"And what do you know of him?"

"Nothing, my lord, except that he is tormented with remorse."

"What makes you think so?"

"On the twenty-eighth of every month he makes me say a mass for the repose of the soul of one who died a violent death; yesterday I said

this mass again."

"And his name?"

"Maillard; but I do not think it is his right one."

"And think you that we should find him at this hour at his post?"

"Certainly."

"Let us go and see your beggar, sir, and if he is such as you describe him, you are right--it will be you who have discovered the true treasure."

Gondy dressed himself as an officer, put on a felt cap with a red feather, hung on a long sword, buckled spurs to his boots, wrapped himself in an ample cloak and followed the curate.

The coadjutor and his companion passed through all the streets lying between the archbishopric and the St. Eustache Church, watching carefully to ascertain the popular feeling. The people were in an excited mood, but, like a swarm of frightened bees, seemed not to know at what point to concentrate; and it was very evident that if leaders of the people were not provided all this agitation would pass off in idle buzzing.

On arriving at the Rue des Prouvaires, the curate pointed toward the square before the church.

"Stop!" he said, "there he is at his post."

Gondy looked at the spot indicated and perceived a beggar seated in a chair and leaning against one of the moldings; a little basin was near him and he held a holy water brush in his hand.

"Is it by permission that he remains there?" asked Gondy.

"No, my lord; these places are bought. I believe this man paid his predecessor a hundred pistoles for his."

"The rascal is rich, then?"

"Some of those men sometimes die worth twenty thousand and twenty-five and thirty thousand francs and sometimes more."

"Hum!" said Gondy, laughing; "I was not aware my alms were so well invested."

In the meantime they were advancing toward the square, and the moment the coadjutor and the curate put their feet on the first church step the mendicant arose and proffered his brush.

He was a man between sixty-six and sixty-eight years of age, little, rather stout, with gray hair and light eyes. His countenance denoted the struggle between two opposite principles--a wicked nature, subdued by determination, perhaps by repentance.

He started on seeing the cavalier with the curate. The latter and the coadjutor touched the brush with the tips of their fingers and made the sign of the cross; the coadjutor threw a piece of money into the hat, which was on the ground.

"Maillard," began the curate, "this gentleman and I have come to talk with you a little."

"With me!" said the mendicant; "it is a great honor for a poor distributor of holy water."

There was an ironical tone in his voice which he could not quite disguise and which astonished the coadjutor.

"Yes," continued the curate, apparently accustomed to this tone, "yes, we wish to know your opinion of the events of to-day and what you have heard said by people going in and out of the church."

The mendicant shook his head.

"These are melancholy doings, your reverence, which always fall again upon the poor. As to what is said, everybody is discontented, everybody complains, but 'everybody' means 'nobody.'"

"Explain yourself, my good friend," said the coadjutor.

"I mean that all these cries, all these complaints, these curses,

produce nothing but storms and flashes and that is all; but the lightning will not strike until there is a hand to guide it."

"My friend," said Gondy, "you seem to be a clever and a thoughtful man; are you disposed to take a part in a little civil war, should we have one, and put at the command of the leader, should we find one, your personal influence and the influence you have acquired over your comrades?"

"Yes, sir, provided this war were approved of by the church and would advance the end I wish to attain--I mean, the remission of my sins."

"The war will not only be approved of, but directed by the church. As for the remission of your sins, we have the archbishop of Paris, who has the very greatest power at the court of Rome, and even the coadjutor, who possesses some plenary indulgences; we will recommend you to him."

"Consider, Maillard," said the curate, "that I have recommended you to this gentleman, who is a powerful lord, and that I have made myself responsible for you."

"I know, monsieur le cure," said the beggar, "that you have always been very kind to me, and therefore I, in my turn, will be serviceable to you."

"And do you think your power as great with the fraternity as monsieur le cure told me it was just now?"

"I think they have some esteem for me," said the mendicant with pride, "and that not only will they obey me, but wherever I go they will follow me."

"And could you count on fifty resolute men, good, unemployed, but active souls, brawlers, capable of bringing down the walls of the Palais Royal by crying, 'Down with Mazarin,' as fell those at Jericho?"

"I think," said the beggar, "I can undertake things more difficult and more important than that."

"Ah, ah," said Gondy, "you will undertake, then, some night, to throw up some ten barricades?"

"I will undertake to throw up fifty, and when the day comes, to defend them."

"I'faith!" exclaimed Gondy, "you speak with a certainty that gives me pleasure; and since monsieur le cure can answer for you----"

"I answer for him," said the curate.

"Here is a bag containing five hundred pistoles in gold; make all your arrangements, and tell me where I shall be able to find you this evening at ten o'clock."

"It must be on some elevated place, whence a given signal may be seen in every part of Paris."

"Shall I give you a line for the vicar of St. Jacques de la Boucherie? he will let you into the rooms in his tower," said the curate.

"Capital," answered the mendicant.

"Then," said the coadjutor, "this evening, at ten o'clock, and if I am pleased with you another bag of five hundred pistoles will be at your disposal."

The eyes of the mendicant dashed with cupidity, but he quickly suppressed his emotion.

"This evening, sir," he replied, "all will be ready."