

Chapter 48. The Riot becomes a Revolution.

The closet into which D'Artagnan and Porthos had been ushered was separated from the drawing-room where the queen was by tapestried curtains only, and this thin partition enabled them to hear all that passed in the adjoining room, whilst the aperture between the two hangings, small as it was, permitted them to see.

The queen was standing in the room, pale with anger; her self-control, however, was so great that it might have been imagined that she was calm. Comminges, Villequier and Guitant were behind her and the women again were behind the men. The Chancellor Sequier, who twenty years previously had persecuted her so ruthlessly, stood before her, relating how his carriage had been smashed, how he had been pursued and had rushed into the Hotel d'O----, that the hotel was immediately invaded, pillaged and devastated; happily he had time to reach a closet hidden behind tapestry, in which he was secreted by an old woman, together with his brother, the Bishop of Meaux. Then the danger was so imminent, the rioters came so near, uttering such threats, that the chancellor thought his last hour had come and confessed himself to his brother priest, so as to be all ready to die in case he was discovered. Fortunately, however, he had not been taken; the people, believing that he had escaped by some back entrance, retired and left him at liberty to retreat. Then, disguised in the clothes of the Marquis d'O----, he had left the hotel, stumbling over the bodies of an officer and two guards

who had been killed whilst defending the street door.

During the recital Mazarin entered and glided noiselessly up to the queen to listen.

"Well," said the queen, when the chancellor had finished speaking; "what do you think of it all?"

"I think that matters look very gloomy, madame."

"But what step would you propose to me?"

"I could propose one to your majesty, but I dare not."

"You may, you may, sir," said the queen with a bitter smile; "you were not so timid once."

The chancellor reddened and stammered some words.

"It is not a question of the past, but of the present," said the queen; "you said you could give me advice--what is it?"

"Madame," said the chancellor, hesitating, "it would be to release Broussel."

The queen, although already pale, became visibly paler and her face was contracted.

"Release Broussel!" she cried, "never!"

At this moment steps were heard in the ante-room and without any announcement the Marechal de la Meilleraie appeared at the door.

"Ah, there you are, marechal," cried Anne of Austria joyfully. "I trust you have brought this rabble to reason."

"Madame," replied the marechal, "I have left three men on the Pont Neuf, four at the Halle, six at the corner of the Rue de l'Arbre-Sec and two at the door of your palace--fifteen in all. I have brought away ten or twelve wounded. I know not where I have left my hat, and in all probability I should have been left with my hat, had the coadjutor not arrived in time to rescue me."

"Ah, indeed," said the queen, "it would have much astonished me if that low cur, with his distorted legs, had not been mixed up with all this."

"Madame," said La Meilleraie, "do not say too much against him before me, for the service he rendered me is still fresh."

"Very good," said the queen, "be as grateful as you like, it does not implicate me; you are here safe and sound, that is all I wished for; you are not only welcome, but welcome back."

"Yes, madame; but I only came back on one condition--that I would transmit to your majesty the will of the people."

"The will!" exclaimed the queen, frowning. "Oh! oh! monsieur marechal, you must indeed have found yourself in wondrous peril to have undertaken so strange a commission!"

The irony with which these words were uttered did not escape the marechal.

"Pardon, madame," he said, "I am not a lawyer, I am a mere soldier, and probably, therefore, I do not quite comprehend the value of certain words; I ought to have said the wishes, and not the will, of the people. As for what you do me the honor to say, I presume you mean I was afraid?"

The queen smiled.

"Well, then, madame, yes, I did feel fear; and though I have been through twelve pitched battles and I cannot count how many charges and skirmishes, I own for the third time in my life I was afraid. Yes, and I would rather face your majesty, however threatening your smile, than face those demons who accompanied me hither and who sprung from I know not whence, unless from deepest hell."

("Bravo," said D'Artagnan in a whisper to Porthos; "well answered.")

"Well," said the queen, biting her lips, whilst her courtiers looked at each other with surprise, "what is the desire of my people?"

"That Broussel shall be given up to them, madame."

"Never!" said the queen, "never!"

"Your majesty is mistress," said La Meilleraie, retreating a few steps.

"Where are you going, marechal?" asked the queen.

"To give your majesty's reply to those who await it."

"Stay, marechal; I will not appear to parley with rebels."

"Madame, I have pledged my word, and unless you order me to be arrested I shall be forced to return."

Anne of Austria's eyes shot glances of fire.

"Oh! that is no impediment, sir," said she; "I have had greater men than you arrested--Guitant!"

Mazarin sprang forward.

"Madame," said he, "if I dared in my turn advise----"

"Would it be to give up Broussel, sir? If so, you can spare yourself the trouble."

"No," said Mazarin; "although, perhaps, that counsel is as good as any other."

"Then what may it be?"

"To call for monsieur le coadjuteur."

"The coadjutor!" cried the queen, "that dreadful mischief maker! It is he who has raised all this revolt."

"The more reason," said Mazarin; "if he has raised it he can put it down."

"And hold, madame," suggested Comminges, who was near a window, out of which he could see; "hold, the moment is a happy one, for there he is now, giving his blessing in the square of the Palais Royal."

The queen sprang to the window.

"It is true," she said, "the arch hypocrite--see!"

"I see," said Mazarin, "that everybody kneels before him, although he be but coadjutor, whilst I, were I in his place, though I am cardinal, should be torn to pieces. I persist, then, madame, in my wish" (he laid an emphasis on the word), "that your majesty should receive the coadjutor."

"And wherefore do you not say, like the rest, your will?" replied the queen, in a low voice.

Mazarin bowed.

"Monsieur le marechal," said the queen, after a moment's reflection, "go and find the coadjutor and bring him to me."

"And what shall I say to the people?"

"That they must have patience," said Anne, "as I have."

The fiery Spanish woman spoke in a tone so imperative that the marechal made no reply; he bowed and went out.

(D'Artagnan turned to Porthos. "How will this end?" he said.

"We shall soon see," said Porthos, in his tranquil way.)

In the meantime Anne of Austria approached Comminges and conversed with him in a subdued tone, whilst Mazarin glanced uneasily at the corner occupied by D'Artagnan and Porthos. Ere long the door opened and the marechal entered, followed by the coadjutor.

"There, madame," he said, "is Monsieur Gondy, who hastens to obey your majesty's summons."

The queen advanced a few steps to meet him, and then stopped, cold, severe, unmoved, with her lower lip scornfully protruded.

Gondy bowed respectfully.

"Well, sir," said the queen, "what is your opinion of this riot?"

"That it is no longer a riot, madame," he replied, "but a revolt."

"The revolt is at the door of those who think my people can rebel," cried Anne, unable to dissimulate before the coadjutor, whom she looked upon, and probably with reason, as the promoter of the tumult. "Revolt! thus it is called by those who have wished for this demonstration and who are, perhaps, the cause of it; but, wait, wait! the king's authority will put all this to rights."

"Was it to tell me that, madame," coldly replied Gondy, "that your majesty admitted me to the honor of entering your presence?"

"No, my dear coadjutor," said Mazarin; "it was to ask your advice in the unhappy dilemma in which we find ourselves."

"Is it true," asked Gondy, feigning astonishment, "that her majesty summoned me to ask for my opinion?"

"Yes," said the queen, "it is requested."

The coadjutor bowed.

"Your majesty wishes, then----"

"You to say what you would do in her place," Mazarin hastened to reply.

The coadjutor looked at the queen, who replied by a sign in the affirmative.

"Were I in her majesty's place," said Gondy, coldly, "I should not hesitate; I should release Broussel."

"And if I do not give him up, what think you will be the result?" exclaimed the queen.

"I believe that not a stone in Paris will remain unturned," put in the marechal.

"It was not your opinion that I asked," said the queen, sharply, without even turning around.

"If it is I whom your majesty interrogates," replied the coadjutor in the same calm manner, "I reply that I hold monsieur le marechal's opinion in every respect."

The color mounted to the queen's face; her fine blue eyes seemed to start out of her head and her carmine lips, compared by all the poets of the day to a pomegranate in flower, were trembling with anger. Mazarin himself, who was well accustomed to the domestic outbreaks of this disturbed household, was alarmed.

"Give up Broussel!" she cried; "fine counsel, indeed. Upon my word! one can easily see it comes from a priest."

Gondy remained firm, and the abuse of the day seemed to glide over his head as the sarcasms of the evening before had done; but hatred and revenge were accumulating in his heart silently and drop by drop. He looked coldly at the queen, who nudged Mazarin to make him say something in his turn.

Mazarin, according to his custom, was thinking much and saying little.

"Ho! ho!" said he, "good advice, advice of a friend. I, too, would give up that good Monsieur Broussel, dead or alive, and all would be at an end."

"If you yield him dead, all will indeed be at an end, my lord, but quite otherwise than you mean."

"Did I say 'dead or alive?'" replied Mazarin. "It was only a way of speaking. You know I am not familiar with the French language, which you, monsieur le coadjuteur, both speak and write so well."

("This is a council of state," D'Artagnan remarked to Porthos; "but we held better ones at La Rochelle, with Athos and Aramis.")

"At the Saint Gervais bastion," said Porthos.

"There and elsewhere.")

The coadjutor let the storm pass over his head and resumed, still with

the same tranquillity:

"Madame, if the opinion I have submitted to you does not please you it is doubtless because you have better counsels to follow. I know too well the wisdom of the queen and that of her advisers to suppose that they will leave the capital long in trouble that may lead to a revolution."

"Thus, then, it is your opinion," said Anne of Austria, with a sneer and biting her lips with rage, "that yesterday's riot, which to-day is already a rebellion, to-morrow may become a revolution?"

"Yes, madame," replied the coadjutor, gravely.

"But if I am to believe you, sir, the people seem to have thrown off all restraint."

"It is a bad year for kings," said Gondy, shaking his head; "look at England, madame."

"Yes; but fortunately we have no Oliver Cromwell in France," replied the queen.

"Who knows?" said Gondy; "such men are like thunderbolts--one recognizes them only when they have struck."

Every one shuddered and there was a moment of silence, during which the queen pressed her hand to her side, evidently to still the beatings of her heart.

("Porthos," murmured D'Artagnan, "look well at that priest."

"Yes," said Porthos, "I see him. What then?"

"Well, he is a man."

Porthos looked at D'Artagnan in astonishment. Evidently he did not understand his meaning.)

"Your majesty," continued the coadjutor, pitilessly, "is about to take such measures as seem good to you, but I foresee that they will be violent and such as will still further exasperate the rioters."

"In that case, you, monsieur le coadjuteur, who have such power over them and are at the same time friendly to us," said the queen, ironically, "will quiet them by bestowing your blessing upon them."

"Perhaps it will be too late," said Gondy, still unmoved; "perhaps I shall have lost all influence; while by giving up Broussel your majesty will strike at the root of the sedition and will gain the right to punish severely any revival of the revolt."

"Have I not, then, that right?" cried the queen.

"If you have it, use it," replied Gondy.

("Peste!" said D'Artagnan to Porthos. "There is a man after my own

heart. Oh! if he were minister and I were his D'Artagnan, instead of belonging to that beast of a Mazarin, mordieu! what fine things we would do together!"

"Yes," said Porthos.)

The queen made a sign for every one, except Mazarin, to quit the room; and Gondy bowed, as if to leave with the rest.

"Stay, sir," said Anne to him.

"Good," thought Gondy, "she is going to yield."

("She is going to have him killed," said D'Artagnan to Porthos, "but at all events it shall not be by me. I swear to Heaven, on the contrary, that if they fall upon him I will fall upon them.")

"And I, too," said Porthos.)

"Good," muttered Mazarin, sitting down, "we shall soon see something startling."

The queen's eyes followed the retreating figures and when the last had closed the door she turned away. It was evident that she was making unnatural efforts to subdue her anger; she fanned herself, smelled at her vinaigrette and walked up and down. Gondy, who began to feel uneasy, examined the tapestry with his eyes, touched the coat of mail which he wore under his long gown and felt from time to time to see if the handle

of a good Spanish dagger, which was hidden under his cloak, was well within reach.

"And now," at last said the queen, "now that we are alone, repeat your counsel, monsieur le coadjuteur."

"It is this, madame: that you should appear to have reflected, and publicly acknowledge an error, which constitutes the extra strength of a strong government; release Broussel from prison and give him back to the people."

"Oh!" cried Anne, "to humble myself thus! Am I, or am I not, the queen? This screaming mob, are they, or are they not, my subjects? Have I friends? Have I guards? Ah! by Notre Dame! as Queen Catherine used to say," continued she, excited by her own words, "rather than give up this infamous Broussel to them I will strangle him with my own hands!"

And she sprang toward Gondy, whom assuredly at that moment she hated more than Broussel, with outstretched arms. The coadjutor remained immovable and not a muscle of his face was discomposed; only his glance flashed like a sword in returning the furious looks of the queen.

("He were a dead man" said the Gascon, "if there were still a Vitry at the court and if Vitry entered at this moment; but for my part, before he could reach the good prelate I would kill Vitry at once; the cardinal would be infinitely pleased with me.")

"Hush!" said Porthos; "listen.")

"Madame," cried the cardinal, seizing hold of Anne and drawing her back,
"Madame, what are you about?"

Then he added in Spanish, "Anne, are you mad? You, a queen to quarrel like a washerwoman! And do you not perceive that in the person of this priest is represented the whole people of Paris and that it is dangerous to insult him at this moment, and if this priest wished it, in an hour you would be without a crown? Come, then, on another occasion you can be firm and strong; but to-day is not the proper time; to-day, flatter and caress, or you are only a common woman."

(At the first words of this address D'Artagnan had seized Porthos's arm, which he pressed with gradually increasing force. When Mazarin ceased speaking he said to Porthos in a low tone:

"Never tell Mazarin that I understand Spanish, or I am a lost man and you are also."

"All right," said Porthos.)

This rough appeal, marked by the eloquence which characterized Mazarin when he spoke in Italian or Spanish and which he lost entirely in speaking French, was uttered with such impenetrable expression that Gondy, clever physiognomist as he was, had no suspicion of its being more than a simple warning to be more subdued.

The queen, on her part, thus chided, softened immediately and sat down,

and in an almost weeping voice, letting her arms fall by her side, said:

"Pardon me, sir, and attribute this violence to what I suffer. A woman, and consequently subject to the weaknesses of my sex, I am alarmed at the idea of civil war; a queen, accustomed to be obeyed, I am excited at the first opposition."

"Madame," replied Gondy, bowing, "your majesty is mistaken in qualifying my sincere advice as opposition. Your majesty has none but submissive and respectful subjects. It is not the queen with whom the people are displeased; they ask for Broussel and are only too happy, if you release him to them, to live under your government."

Mazarin, who at the words, "It is not the queen with whom the people are displeased," had pricked up his ears, thinking that the coadjutor was about to speak of the cries, "Down with Mazarin," and pleased with Gondy's suppression of this fact, he said with his sweetest voice and his most gracious expression:

"Madame, credit the coadjutor, who is one of the most able politicians we have; the first available cardinal's hat seems to belong already to his noble brow."

"Ah! how much you have need of me, cunning rogue!" thought Gondy.

("And what will he promise us?" said D'Artagnan. "Peste, if he is giving away hats like that, Porthos, let us look out and both demand a regiment to-morrow. Corbleu! let the civil war last but one year and I will have

a constable's sword gilt for me."

"And for me?" put in Porthos.

"For you? I will give you the baton of the Marechal de la Meilleraie, who does not seem to be much in favor just now.")

"And so, sir," said the queen, "you are seriously afraid of a public tumult."

"Seriously," said Gondy, astonished at not having further advanced; "I fear that when the torrent has broken its embankment it will cause fearful destruction."

"And I," said the queen, "think that in such a case other embankments should be raised to oppose it. Go; I will reflect."

Gondy looked at Mazarin, astonished, and Mazarin approached the queen to speak to her, but at this moment a frightful tumult arose from the square of the Palais Royal.

Gondy smiled, the queen's color rose and Mazarin grew even paler.

"What is that again?" he asked.

At this moment Comminges rushed into the room.

"Pardon, your majesty," he cried, "but the people have dashed the

sentinels against the gates and they are now forcing the doors; what are your commands?"

"Listen, madame," said Gondy.

The moaning of waves, the noise of thunder, the roaring of a volcano, cannot be compared with the tempest of cries heard at that moment.

"What are my commands?" said the queen.

"Yes, for time presses."

"How many men have you about the Palais Royal?"

"Six hundred."

"Place a hundred around the king and with the remainder sweep away this mob for me."

"Madame," cried Mazarin, "what are you about?"

"Go!" said the queen.

Comminges went out with a soldier's passive obedience.

At this moment a monstrous battering was heard. One of the gates began to yield.

"Oh! madame," cried Mazarin, "you have ruined us all--the king, yourself and me."

At this cry from the soul of the frightened cardinal, Anne became alarmed in her turn and would have recalled Comminges.

"It is too late," said Mazarin, tearing his hair, "too late!"

The gale had given way. Hoarse shouts were heard from the excited mob. D'Artagnan put his hand to his sword, motioning to Porthos to follow his example.

"Save the queen!" cried Mazarin to the coadjutor.

Gondy sprang to the window and threw it open; he recognized Louvieres at the head of a troop of about three or four thousand men.

"Not a step further," he shouted, "the queen is signing!"

"What are you saying?" asked the queen.

"The truth, madame," said Mazarin, placing a pen and a paper before her, "you must;" then he added: "Sign, Anne, I implore you--I command you."

The queen fell into a chair, took the pen and signed.

The people, kept back by Louvieres, had not made another step forward; but the awful murmuring, which indicates an angry people, continued.

The queen had written, "The keeper of the prison at Saint Germain will set Councillor Broussel at liberty;" and she had signed it.

The coadjutor, whose eyes devoured her slightest movements, seized the paper immediately the signature had been affixed to it, returned to the window and waved it in his hand.

"This is the order," he said.

All Paris seemed to shout with joy, and then the air resounded with the cries of "Long live Broussel!" "Long live the coadjutor!"

"Long live the queen!" cried De Gondy; but the cries which replied to his were poor and few, and perhaps he had but uttered it to make Anne of Austria sensible of her weakness.

"And now that you have obtained what you want, go," said she, "Monsieur de Gondy."

"Whenever her majesty has need of me," replied the coadjutor, bowing, "her majesty knows I am at her command."

"Ah, cursed priest!" cried Anne, when he had retired, stretching out her arm to the scarcely closed door, "one day I will make you drink the dregs of the atrocious gall you have poured out on me to-day."

Mazarin wished to approach her. "Leave me!" she exclaimed; "you are not

a man!" and she went out of the room.

"It is you who are not a woman," muttered Mazarin.

Then, after a moment of reverie, he remembered where he had left D'Artagnan and Porthos and that they must have overheard everything. He knit his brows and went direct to the tapestry, which he pushed aside. The closet was empty.

At the queen's last word, D'Artagnan had dragged Porthos into the gallery. Thither Mazarin went in his turn and found the two friends walking up and down.

"Why did you leave the closet, Monsieur d'Artagnan?" asked the cardinal.

"Because," replied D'Artagnan, "the queen desired every one to leave and I thought that this command was intended for us as well as for the rest."

"And you have been here since----"

"About a quarter of an hour," said D'Artagnan, motioning to Porthos not to contradict him.

Mazarin saw the sign and remained convinced that D'Artagnan had seen and heard everything; but he was pleased with his falsehood.

"Decidedly, Monsieur d'Artagnan, you are the man I have been seeking.

You may reckon upon me and so may your friend." Then bowing to the two musketeers with his most gracious smile, he re-entered his closet more calmly, for on the departure of De Gondy the uproar had ceased as though by enchantment.