TWENTY YEARS AFTER.

I should be obliged to kill you with my own hand, since you were confided peculiarly to my care, and as I am obliged to give you up—dead or alive."

And he bowed low again to his highness.

These bitter and sweet pleasures lasted ten minutes, or sometimes longer; but always finished thus:

"Toil! La Ramee!"

La Ramee came into the room.

"La Ramee, I recommended Monsieur le Duc to you, particularly: treat him as a man of his rank and family ought to be treated; therefore never leave him alone an instant."

La Ramee became therefore the duke's dinner guest, by compilation—his eternal keeper—the shadow of his person; but La Ramee—gay, frank, convivial, fond of play, a great banterer at cards—had one defect in the duke's eyes—he was inscrupulous.

One may be a joker or a keeper, and at the same time a good father and husband. La Ramee adored his wife and children, whom now he could only catch a glimpse of from the top of the wall, when, in order to please him, they used to walk on the opposite side of the mantel. "Twas too brief an enjoyment; and La Ramee felt that the gayety of heart which he had regarded as the cause of that health (of which it was perhaps, rather the result) would not long survive such a mode of life.

He accepted, therefore, with delight, an offer made to him by his friend the steward of the Duc de Grammont, to give him a substitute; he also spoke of it to Monsieur de Chavigny, who promised that he would not oppose it in any way—that is, if he approved of the person proposed.

We consider it as useless to draw a physical or moral portrait of Grimaud: if—as we hope—our readers have not wholly forgotten the first part of this work, they must have preserved a clear idea of that estimable individual—who is wholly unchanged—except that he is twenty years older, an advance in life that has made him only more silent; although, since the alteration that had been working in himself, Adoro had given Grimaud permission to speak.

But Grimaud had for twelve or fifteen years preserved an habitual silence, and a habit of fifteen or twenty years' duration becomes a second nature.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Grimaud begins his functions.

Grimaud thereupon presented himself with smooth exterior at the door of Vincentine. Now Monsieur de Chavigny placed himself on his infallible penetration; for that which almost proved that he was the son of Richelieu was his everlasting prescience; he examined attentively the countenance of the applicant for place, and fancied that the contracted eyebrows, thin lips, hooked nose, and prominent cheek-bones of Grimaud, were favorable signs. He addressed about twelve words to him: Grimaud answered in four.

"There's a promising fellow, and I have found out his merits,
saw Monsieur de Chavigny. "Go," he added, "and make your self agreeable to Monsieur in Ramée, and tell him that you suit me in all respects."

Grissan had every quality which could attract a man on duty, who wishes to have a deputy. So, after a thousand questions which met with only a word in reply, La Ramee, fascinated by this sobriety in speech, rubbed his hands, and engaged Grissan.

"My orders," asked Grissan.

"They are these: never to leave the prisoner alone; to keep away from him every sharp or piercing instrument—and to prevent his conveying any length of time with the keepers."

"Those are all," asked Grissan.

"All, now," replied La Ramee.

"Good," answered Grissan; and he went right to the prisoner.

The duke was in the act of combing his beard, which he had allowed to grow as well as his hair, in order to reproach Mazarin with his wretched appearance and condition. But having, some days previously, seen from the top of the donjon, Madame de Montespan pass in her carriage, and still cherishing an affection for that beautiful woman, he did not wish to be to her what he wished to be to Mazarin; and, in the hope of seeing her again, had asked for a tender comb—which was allowed him. The comb was to be a tender one, because his beard, like that of most fair people, was rather red; he therefore dyed it when he combed it out.

As Grissan entered he saw this comb on the tea table; he took it up, and, as he took it, he made a low bow.

The duke looked at this strange figure with surprise. 'The figure put the comb in its pocket."

"He!—hey! what's that?" cried the duke, "and who is this creature?"

Grissan did not answer, but bowed a second time.

"Art thou dumb?" cried the duke.

Grissan made a sign that he was not.

"What art thou, then? Answer! I command thee," said the duke.

"A keeper," replied Grissan.

"A keeper?" redoubled the duke; "there was nothing wanting in my collection, except this gallows-bird. "Hallo! La Ramee!—some one!"

La Ramee ran in haste to obey the call.

"Who is this wretch who takes my comb and puts it in his pocket?" asked the duke.

"One of your guards, my prince—a man full of talent and merit—whom you will like, as I and Monsieur de Chavigny do, I am sure."

"Why does he take my comb?"

"Why do you take my lord's comb?" asked La Ramee.

Grissan drew the comb from his pocket, and passing his fingers over the largest tooth, pronounced this one word, "Piercing."

"True," said La Ramee.

"What does the animal say?" asked the duke.

"That the king has forbidden your lordship to have any piercing instrument."
'Are you mad, La Ramee?—you yourself gave me this candle,' "I was very wrong, my lord; for in giving it to you I acted in opposition to my orders." The duke looked furiously at Grimaud. "I perceive that that creature will become odious to me," he muttered. Grimaud, nevertheless, was resolved, for certain reasons, not at once to come to a full rupture with the prisoner; he wanted to in-spire, not a sudden repugnance, but a good, and sound, and steady hatred; he retired, therefore, and gave place to four guards, who, having breakfasted, could attend on the prisoner. A fresh practical joke had now occurred to the duke. He had asked for craw-fish for his breakfast on the following morning; he intended to pass the day in making a small gallows, and hang one of the finest of these fish in the middle of his room—the red color evidently conveying an allusion to the Cardinal—so that he might have the pleasure of hanging Mazarin in effigy without being accused of having hung anything except a craw-fish. The plan was employed in preparation for the execution. Every one groans childishly in prison; but the character of Mounseur de Beaufort was particularly disposed to become so. In the course of his morning's walk he collected two or three small branches from a tree, and found a small piece of broken glass, a discovery which delighted him. When he came home, he formed his handcuff into a loop. Nothing of all this escaped Grimaud, but La Ramee looked on with the curiosity of a father who thinks that he may perhaps get an idea of a new toy for his children; the guards regarded it all with indifference. When everything was ready—the gallows hung in the middle of the room—the loop made—and when the duke had cast a glance upon the plate of craw-fish, in order to select the finest specimens among them, he looked around for his piece of glass—it had disappeared. "Who has taken my piece of glass?" asked the duke, frowning. Grimaud made a sign to denote that he had done so. "How! thou, again! Why didst thou take it?" "Yes—why?" asked La Ramee. Grimaud, who held the piece of glass in his hand, said: "Sharp." "True, my lord!" exclaimed La Ramee. "Ah! done take it! we have got a precious bit." "Mounseur Grimaud!" said the duke. "For your sake, I beg of you, never come within the reach of my fist!" "Hush! hush!" cried La Ramee. "Give me your gibbet, my lord, I will shape it out for you with my knife." And he took the gibbet and shaped it out as neatly as possible. "That's it," said the duke; "now make me a little hole in the floor whilst I go and fetch the culprit." La Ramee knelt down and made a hole in the floor; meanwhile the duke hung the craw-fish up by a thread. Then he placed the gibbet in the middle of the room, bursting with laughter. La Ramee laughed also, and the guards laughed in chorus.
Grimanu, however, did not even smile. He approached La Ramee, and showing him the craw fish, hung up by the thread:

"Cardinal," he said.

"Hung by his Highness the Duc de Beaufort!" cried the prisoner, laughing violently; "and by Master Jacques Chrysostom La Ramee, the king's commissioner."

La Ramee uttered a cry of horror, and rushed toward the gilded, which he broke at once, and threw the pieces out of the window. He was going to throw the craw fish out also, when Grimanu snatched it from his hands.

"Good to eat," he said; and he put it into his pocket.

This scene so embarrassed the duke that, at the moment, he forgave Grimanu for his part in it; but on reflection, he hated him more and more, being convinced that he had some bad motive for his conduct.

The prisoner happened to remark among the guards one man, with a very good countenance; and he favored this man the more as Grimanu became the more and more odious to him. One morning he took this man on one side and had succeeded in speaking to him, when Grimanu entered, saw what was going on, approached the duke respectfully, but took the guard by the arm.

"Go away," he said.

The guard obeyed.

"You are insupportable," cried the duke: "I shall beat you."

Grimauo bowed.

"I shall break every bone in your body," cried the duke.

Grimauo bowed, but stopped back.

"Mr. Spy," cried the duke, more and more enraged, "I shall strangle you with my own hands."

And he extended his hands toward Grimanu, who merely thrust the guard out and shut the door behind him. At the same time he felt the duke's arms on his shoulders, like two iron chains; but instead of calling out or defending himself, he placed his forefinger on his lips, and said in a low tone:

"Hush!"—smiling as he uttered the word.

A gesture, a smile, and a word from Grimanu, all at once, were so unusual, that his highness stopped short, astonished.

Grimauo took advantage of that instant to draw from his vest a charming little note, with an aristocratic seal, and presented it to the duke without a word.

The duke, momentarily bewildered, let Grimanu loose, and took the note.

"From Madame de Montbazon?" he cried.

Grimauo nodded assent.

The duke tore open the note, passed his hands over his eyes, for he was dazzled and confused, and read:

"My dear Duke,—You may entirely confide in the brave lad who will give you this note: he has consented to enter into the service of your keeper, and to shut himself up at Vincennes with you, in order to prepare and assist your escape, which we are contriving. The moment of your deliverance is at hand; have patience and
courage, and remember that, in spite of time and absence, all your
friends continue to cherish for you the sentiments that they have
professed.

"Yours wholly, and most affectionately,

MARIAN DE MONTRAZON.

"P.S. I sign my full name, for I should be vain if I could sup-
pose that after five years of absence you would remember my ini-
thials."

The poor duke became perfectly giddy. What, for five years he
had been wanting—a faithful servant—a friend—a helping hand—
seemed to have fallen from heaven just when he expected it the
least.

"Oh, dearest Marie! she thinks of me, then, after five years of
separation! Heavens! there is constancy!" Then turning to
Grimaud, he said:

"And thou, my brave fellow, thou contentest them to aid me."

Grimaud signified his assent.

"What then shall we do? have proceeded?"

"It is now eleven," answered Grimaud. "Let my lord at two
o'clock ask leave to make up a game at tennis with La Rance, and
let him send two or three balls over the mumparts."

"And then?"

"Your highness will approach the walls and call out to a man
who works in the most to send them back again."

"I understand," said the duke.

Grimaud made a sign that he was going away.

"Ah!" cried the duke, "will you not accept my money from
me?"

"I wish my lord would make me one promise."

"What! speak!"

"It's this—when we escape together, I shall go everywhere,
and be always first; for if my lord should be overtaken and caught,
there's every chance of his being brought back to prison, whereas,
if I am caught, the least that can befall me is to be hung."

"True; on my honor as a gentleman, it shall be as thou dost sug-
gest."

"Now," resumed Grimaud, "I've only one thing more to ask,
that your highness will continue to detain me."

"I shall try," said the duke.

At this moment La Rance, after the interview which we have de-
scribed with the Cardinal, entered the room. The duke had thrown
himself—as he was wont to do in moments of dullness and vexation
—on his bed. La Rance cast an inquiring look around him.

"Well, my lord," said La Rance, with his rude laugh, "you still
set yourself against this poor fellow?"

"So! 'tis you, La Rance; in faith 'tis time you came back again.
I threw myself on the bed, and turned my nose to the wall that I
mightn't break my promise and strangle Grimaud. I feel stupid
beyond everything to-day."

"Then let us have a match in the tennis court," exclaimed La
Rance.

"If you wish it."
"I am at your service, my lord."
"I protest, my dear La RAMee," said the duke, "that you are a charming person, and that I would stay for ever at Vincennes to have the pleasure of your society."
"My lord," replied La RAMee, "I think if it depended on the Cardinal, your wishes would be fulfilled."
"How?"
"He await for me to-day; in short, my lord, you are his nightmare."

The duke smiled with bitterness.
"Ah, La RAMee! If you would but accept my offers! I would make your fortune."
"How? you would no sooner have left prison that your goods would be confiscated."
"I shall no sooner be out of prison than I shall be master of Paris."
"Pahaw! pahaw! I cannot hear such things said as that; I see, my lord, I shall be obliged to fetch Grimanell!"
"Well, then, let us go and have a game at tennis, La RAMee."
"My lord—I beg your highness's pardon—but I must beg for half an hour's leave of absence."
"Why?"

Because Monseigneur Mazarin is a prouder man than your highness, though not of such high birth: he forgot to ask me to breakfast."
"Well, shall I send for some breakfast here?"
"No, my lord; I must tell you that the confectioner who lived opposite the Castle—Father Marteau, as they called him—"
"Well!"
"Well, he sold his business a week ago to a confectioner from Paris—an invalid, ordered country air for his health."
"Well, what have I to do with that?"
"Why, good lord! this man, your highness, when he saw me stop before his shop, where he has a display of things which would make your mouth water, my lord, asked me to get him the custom of the prisoners in the donjon. 'I bought,' says he, the business of my predecessor on the strength of his assurance that he supplied the Castle; whereas, on my honor, Monsieur de Chavigny, though I've been here a week, has not ordered so much as a tartlet. So, my lord, I am going to try his pâtis; and, as I am fasting, you understand, I would, with your highness's leave—" And La RAMee bent low.
"Go, then, animal," said the duke: "but remember, I only allow you half an hour."
"May I promise your custom to the successor of Father Marteau, my lord?"
"Yes, if he does not put mushrooms in his pies—thou knowest that mushrooms from the wood of Vincennes are fatal to my family."

La RAMee went out, but in five minutes one of the officers of the guard entered in compliance with the strict orders of the Cardinal that the prisoner should never be left one moment. But, during these five minutes, the duke had had time to read
over again the note from Madame de Menthazon, which proved to the prisoner that his friends were concocting plans for his deliverance; but in what way he knew not.

But his confidence in Grimaud, whose petty persecutions he now perceived were only a blind, increased, and he conceived the highest opinion of his intellect, and resolved to trust entirely to his guidance.

CHAPTER XIX.

In which the contents of the Petten made by the successor of Father Manteau are described.

In half an hour La Ramee returned full of glee, like most men who have eaten, and more especially, drunk to their heart’s content. The pièces were excellent, and the wine delicious.

The weather was fine, and the game at tennis took place in the open air.

At two o’clock the tennis balls began, according to Grimaud’s directions, to take the direction of the most, much to the joy of La Ramee, who marked fifteen whenever the duke sent a ball into the net; and very soon balls were wanting, so many had gone over. La Ramee then proposed to send some one to pick them up. But the duke remarked that it would be losing time; and going near the rampart himself, and looking over, he saw a man working in one of the numerous little gardens cleared out by the peasants on the opposite side of the net.

“Hey, friend!” cried the duke.

The man raised his head, and the duke was about to utter a cry of surprise. The peasant, the gardener, was Rochefort, whom he believed to be in the Bastille.

“Well? Who’s up there?” said the man.

“Be so good as to send us back our balls,” said the duke.

The gardener nodded, and began to throw up the balls which were picked up by La Ramee and the guard. One, however, fell at the duke’s feet; and seeing that it was intended for him, he put it into his pocket.

La Ramee was in ecstasies at having beaten a prince of the blood.

The duke went in doors, and retired to bed, where he spent, in deed, the greater part of every day, as they had taken his books away. La Ramee carried off all his clothes, in order to be certain that the duke would not strangle. However, the duke contrived to hide the ball under his bed, and as soon as the door was closed he tore off the cover of the ball with his teeth, and found underneath the following letter:

“My Lord,—Your friends watch over you, and the hour of your deliverance draws near. Ask to morrow to have a pie made by the new confectioner opposite the castle, and who is no other than Noirmont, your former ‘Maitre d’hôtel.’ Do not open the pie till you are alone. I hope you will be satisfied with its contents.

Your highness’s most devoted servant,

“In the Bastile, as elsewhere,

‘Contre de Rochfort.’”