was in my hand, and the sheath at my side. Should your hand still be too weak to use this sword, Raoul, so much the better. You will have more time to learn to draw it easily when it ought to be used.

"Sir," replied Raoul, putting the sword to his lips as he received it from the count. "I owe everything to you, and yet this sword is the most precious gift you have made me. I shall wear it, I swear to you, as a grateful man should do."

"Tis well—arise, vicomte, embrace me."

Raoul rose, and threw himself with emotion into the count's arms.

"Adieu," faltered the count, who felt his heart die away within him; "adieu, and think of me."

"Oh! for ever and ever!" cried the youth; "oh! I swear to you, sir, should any harm happen to me, your name shall be the last name that I shall utter—the remembrance of you, my last thought."

Athos hastened up stairs to conceal his emotion, and regaining, with hurried steps, the porch where Offray was waiting with the horses.

"Offray," said Athos, showing the servant Raoul's shoulder-belt: "fix the buckle of this sword which fails a little too low. You will accompany Monsieur le Vicomte till Grimaud has rejoined you. You know, Raoul, Grimaud is an old and zealous servant, he will follow you."

"Yes, sir," answered Raoul.

"Now to horse, that I may see you depart."

Raoul obeyed.

"Adieu, Raoul," said the count; "adieu, my dear boy."

"Adieu, sir—adieu—my beloved protector."

Athos waved his hand; he dared not trust himself to speak; and Raoul went away, his head uncovered. Athos remained motionless, looking after him until he turned the corner of the street.

Then the count threw the bridle of his horse into the hands of a peasant, mounted again the steps, went into the cathedral, there to kneel down in the darkest corner, and to pray.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

ONE OF THE FORTY METHODS OF ESCAPE OF THE DUC DE BEAUFORT.

The game at tennis, which, upon a sign from Grimaud, Monsieur de Beaumont had consented to play, began in the afternoon. The Duke was in full force, and beat La Ramée completely.

Four of the guards, who were constantly near the prisoner, assisted in picking up the tennis balls. When the game was over, the duke, laughing at La Ramée for his bad play, offered these men two le tiers d'or to go and drink his health, with their four other comrades.

The guards asked permission of La Ramée, who gave it to them, but not till the evening, however—until then he had business, and the prisoner was not to be left alone.

Six o'clock came, and, although they were not to sit down to table until seven o'clock, dinner was ready, and served up. Upon
a side-board appeared the colossal pie with the duke’s arms on it, and, seemingly, cooked to a turn, as far as one could judge by the golden color which illumined the crust.

The rest of the dinner was to come.

Every one was impatient: La Ramee to sit down to table—the guards to go and drink—the duke to escape.

Grimaud alone was as calm as ever. One might have fancied that Athos had educated him with a forethought of this great event.

There were moments when, looking at Grimaud, the duke asked himself if he was not dreaming, and if that marble figure was really at his service, and would become animate when the moment came for action.

La Ramee sent away the guards, desiring them to drink to the duke’s health, and, as soon as they were gone, he shut all the doors, put the keys in his pocket, and showed the table to the prince with an air which meant:

“Whenever my lord pleases.”

The prince looked at Grimaud—Grimaud looked at the clock—it was barely a quarter past six. The escape was fixed to take place at seven o’clock. There were, therefore, three quarters of an hour to wait.

The duke, in order to delay a quarter of an hour, pretended to be reading something that interested him, and said he wished they would allow him to finish his chapter. La Ramee went up to him and looked over his shoulder to see what book it was that had so singular an influence over the prisoner as to make him put off taking his dinner.

It was “Caesar’s Commentaries,” which La Ramee had lent him, contrary to the orders of the governor; and La Ramee resolved never again to disobey these injunctions.

Meantime he uncorked the bottles, and went to smell if the pie was good.

At half past six the duke arose, and said very gravely:

“Certainly, Caesar was the greatest man of ancient times.”

“You think so, my lord?” answered La Ramee.

“Yes.”

“Well, as for me, I prefer Hannibal.”

“And why, pray, Master La Ramee?” asked the duke.

“Because he left no Commentaries,” replied La Ramee, with his coarse laugh.

The duke offered no reply, but sitting down at the table made a sign that La Ramee should also sit himself opposite to him. There is nothing so expressive as the face of an epicure, who finds himself before a well-spread table; so La Ramee, when receiving his plate of soup from Grimaud, presented a type of perfect bliss.

The duke smiled.

“Zounds!” he said; “I don’t suppose there is a happier man at this moment in the kingdom than you are!”

“You are right, my lord duke,” answered the officer: “I don’t know a pleasanter sight than a well-covered table; and when added to that, he who does the honors is the grandson of Henry IV, you will, my lord duke, easily comprehend that the honor one receives doubles the pleasure one enjoys.”
The duke bowed in his turn, and an imperceptible smile appeared on the face of Grimaud, who kept behind La Ramee.

"My dear La Ramee," said the duke, "you’re the only man who can turn a compliment as you do."

"No, my lord duke," replied La Ramee, "in the fulness of his heart; I say what I think—there is no compliment in what I say to you."

"Then you are attached to me?" asked the duke.

"To own the truth, I should be inconsolable if you were to leave Vincennes."

"A dull way of showing your affection." The duke meant to say "affection."

"But, my lord," returned La Ramee, "what would you do if you got out? Every folly you committed would embarras you with the court, and they would put you into the Bastile, instead of Vincennes. Now, Monseur de Chavigny is not amiable, I allow; but Monseur du Trembley is much worse."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the duke, who from time to time looked at the clock, the fingers of which seemed to move with a sickening slowness; "but what could you expect from the brother of a capitain monk, brought up in the school of Cardinal Richelieu?"

"Ah, my lord, it is a great happiness that the queen, who always wished you well, had a fancy to send you here, where there’s a promenade and a tennis court, good air, and a good table."

"In short," answered the duke, "if I comprehend you, La Ramee, I am ungrateful for having ever thought of leaving this place?"

"Oh! my lord duke, is the height of ingratitude; but your highness has never seriously thought of it?"

"Yes," returned the duke, "I must confess I sometimes think of it."

"Still by one of your forty methods, your highness?"

"Yes—yes, indeed."

"My lord," said La Ramee, "now we are quite at our ease, and enjoying ourselves, pray tell me one of these forty ways invented by your highness."

"Willingly," answered the duke; "give me the pie!"

"I am listening," said La Ramee, leaning back in his arm-chair and raising his glass of Madeira to his lips, and winking his eye that he might see the sun through the rich liquid that he was about to taste.

The duke glanced at the clock. In ten minutes it would strike seven.

Grimaud placed the pie before the duke, who took a knife with a silver blade to raise the upper crust; but La Ramee, who was afraid of any harm happening to this fine work of art, passed his knife, which had an iron blade, to the duke.

"Thank you, La Ramee," said the prisoner.

"Well, my lord! this famous invention of yours?"

"Must I tell you," replied the duke, "on what I most reckon, and what I determine to try first?"

"Yes, that one, my lord."
TWENTY YEARS AFTER.

"Well—I should hope, in the first instance, to have as a keeper an honest fellow like you."

"And you have one, my lord—well?"

"Having then a keeper like La Ramée, I should try also to have introduced to me by some friend a man who would be devoted to me, and who would assist me in my flight."

"Come, come," said La Ramée, "not a bad idea."

"I am not for instance, the former serving man of some brave gentleman, an enemy himself to Mazarin, as every gentleman ought to be."

"Hush! don't let us talk politics, my lord."

"Then my keeper will begin to trust this man, and to depend upon him; and then I shall have news from those without the prison walls."

"Ah, yes! but how can the news be brought to you?"

"Nothing easier—in a game of tennis. I send a ball into the moat; a man is there who picks it up; the ball contains a letter."

"The devil it does! The devil it does!" said La Ramée, scratching his head; "you are wrong to tell me that, my lord. I shall watch the men who pick up balls."

The duke smiled.

"But," resumed La Ramée, "that is only one way of corresponding."

"'Tis a good one, it seems to me."

"But not a sure one."

"Pardon me. For instance, I say to my friends, Be on a certain day, on a certain hour, at the other side of the moat, with two horses."

"Well, what then?—La Ramée began to be uneasy—" unless the horses have wings to mount up to the ramparts and to come and fetch you."

"That's not needed. I have," replied the duke, "a way of descending from the ramparts."

"What?"

"A ladder of ropes."

"Yes—but," answered La Ramée, trying to laugh, "a ladder of ropes can't be sent round a ball, like a letter."

"No: but it can come in another way—in a pie, for instance," replied the duke. "The guards are away. Grimaud is here alone; and Grimaud is the man whom a friend has sent to second me in everything. The moment for my escape is fixed—seven o'clock. Well—at a few minutes to seven—"

"At a few minutes to seven!" cried La Ramée, the cold sweat on his brow.

"At a few minutes to seven," returned the duke (imitating the action to the words), "I raise the crust of the pie, I find in it two poniards, a ladder of ropes, and a gag. I point one of the poniards at La Ramée's breast, and I say to him, 'My friend, I am sorry for it, but if thou stirrest, if thou utterest a cry, thou art a dead man!'"

The duke, in pronouncing these words, suited, as we have before said, the action to the words. He was standing near the officer, and he directed the point of the poniard in such a manner, close to La
Ramee's heart, that there could be no doubt in the mind of that individual as to his determination. Meanwhile, Grimaud, still mute as ever, drew from the pom the other sword, the rope ladder, and the gag.

La Ramee followed all these objects with his eyes; his alarm every moment increasing.

"Oh, my lord," he cried, with an expression of stupefaction in his face, "you haven't the heart to kill me?"

"Nor, nor if thou dost not oppose my flight;"

"But, my lord, if I let you escape, I am a ruined man."

"I shall compensate thee for the loss of thy place."

"You are determined to leave the château?"

"By Heaven and earth! This evening I shall be free."

"And if I defend myself, or call, or cry out?"

"I shall kill thee; on the honor of a gentleman, I shall."

At this moment the clock struck.

"Seven o'clock!" said Grimaud, who had not spoken a word.

La Ramee made one movement, in order to satisfy his conscience.

The duke frowned; the officer felt the point of the pernard, which, having penetrated through his clothes, was close to his heart.

"Let us dispatch," said the duke.

"My lord—one last favor."

"What? speak—make haste."

"Bind my arms, my lord, fast."

"Why bind thee?"

"That I may not be considered as your accomplice."

"Your bundle?" asked Grimaud.

"Not before me, behind me."

"But with what?" asked the duke.

"With your belt, my lord," replied La Ramee.

The duke undid his belt and gave it to Grimaud, who tied La Ramee in such as way as to satisfy him.

"Your feet also," said Grimaud.

La Ramee stretched out his legs, Grimaud took a napkin, tore it into strips, and tied La Ramee's feet together.

"Now, my lord," said the poor man, "let me have the poise d'espée, I ask for it; without it I should be tried in a court of justice because I did not cry out. Thrust it into my mouth, my lord, thrust it in."

Grimaud prepared to comply with this request, when the officer made a sign as if he had something to say.

"Speak," said the duke.

"Now, my lord, do not forget, if any harm happens to me, on your account, that I have a wife and four children."

"Rest assured—put the gag in, Grimaud."

In a second La Ramee was gagged, and laid prostrate. Two or three chairs were thrown down as if there had been a struggle. Grimaud then took from the pocket of the officer all the keys it contained, and that opened the door of the room in which they were, then shut it, and double-locked it, and both he and the duke proceeded rapidly down the gallery, which led to the little enclosure. At last they reached the tennis court. It was completely deserted.

No sentries—no one at the windows.
TWENTY YEARS AFTER

The duke ran on to the rampart, and perceived, on the other side of the ditch, three cavaliers with two riding horses. The duke exchanged a signal with them. It was well for him that they were there.

Grimaud, meantime, was not the means of escape.

This was not, however, a rope ladder, but a ball of silk cord, with a narrow board which was to pass between the legs and support itself by the weight of the person who sat astride upon the board.

"Go!" said the duke.

"The first, my lord?" inquired Grimaud.

"Certainly. If I am caught, I risk nothing but being taken back again to prison. If they catch thee, thou wilt be hanged."

"True," replied Grimaud.

And, instantly, Grimaud sitting upon the board, as if on horseback, commenced his perilous descent.

The duke followed him with his eyes, with involuntary terror.

He had gone down about three-quarters of the length of the wall, when the cord broke. Grimaud fell—precipitated into the moat.

The duke uttered a cry, but Grimaud did not give a single moan.

He must have been dreadfully hurt, for he did not stir from the place where he fell.

Immediately one of the men who were waiting slipped down into the moat, tied under Grimaud's shoulders the end of a cord, and the other two, who held the other end, drew Grimaud to them.

"Descend, my lord," said the man in the moat. "There are only fifteen feet more from the top down here, and the grass is soft."

The duke had already begun to descend. His task was the more difficult, as there was no board to support him. He was obliged to let himself down by his hands, and from a height of fifty feet. But, as we have said, he was active, strong, and well of presence of mind.

In less than five minutes he arrived at the end of the cord. He was then only fifteen feet from the ground, as the gentleman below had told him. He let go the rope, and fell upon his feet, without receiving any injury.

He instantly began to climb up the slope of the moat, on the top of which he met De Rochefort. The other two gentlemen were unknown to him. Grimaud, in a swoon, was tied on to a horse.

"Gentlemen," said the duke, "I shall thank you later; now we have not a moment to lose. On, then! out those who love me, fol' low me!"

And he jumped on his horse, and set off on a full gallop, drawing in the fresh air, and crying out, with an expression of face which it would be impossible to describe:

"Free! free! free!"

CHAPTER XXI

THE TIMELY ARRIVAL OF D'ARTAGNAN IN PARIS.

At Blois, D'Artagnan received the money paid to him by Mazarin for any future service he might render the Cardinal.

From Blois to Paris was a journey of four days for ordinary travelers, but D'Artagnan arrived on the third day at the Barrière Saint...