DUMAS ALEXANDRE

THE THREE MUSKETEERS

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Дюма А.

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Содержание

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

In which it is proved that, notwithstanding their names' ending in OS and IS, the heroes of the story which we are about to have the honor to relate to our readers have nothing mythological about them.

A short time ago, while making researches in the Royal Library for my History of Louis XIV, I stumbled by chance upon the Memoirs of M. d'Artagnan, printed-as were most of the works of that period, in which authors could not tell the truth without the risk of a residence, more or less long, in the Bastille-at Amsterdam, by Pierre Rouge. The title attracted me; I took them home with me, with the permission of the guardian, and devoured them.

It is not my intention here to enter into an analysis of this curious work; and I shall satisfy myself with referring such of my readers as appreciate the pictures of the period to its pages. They will therein find portraits penciled by the hand of a master; and although these squibs may be, for the most part, traced upon the doors of barracks and the walls of cabarets, they will not find the likenesses of Louis XIII, Anne of Austria, Richelieu, Mazarin, and the courtiers of the period, less faithful than in the history of M. Anquetil.

But, it is well known, what strikes the capricious mind of the poet is not always what affects the mass of readers. Now, while admiring, as others doubtless will admire, the details we have to relate, our main preoccupation concerned a matter to which no one before ourselves had given a thought.

D'Artagnan relates that on his first visit to M. de Treville, captain of the king's Musketeers, he met in the antechamber three young men, serving in the illustrious corps into which he was soliciting the honor of being received, bearing the names of Athos, Porthos, and Aramis.

We must confess these three strange names struck us; and it immediately occurred to us that they were but pseudonyms, under which d'Artagnan had disguised names perhaps illustrious, or else that the bearers of these borrowed names had themselves chosen them on the day in which, from caprice, discontent, or want of fortune, they had donned the simple Musketeer's uniform.

From that moment we had no rest till we could find some trace in contemporary works of these extraordinary names which had so strongly awakened our curiosity.

The catalogue alone of the books we read with this object would fill a whole chapter, which, although it might be very instructive, would certainly afford our readers but little amusement. It will suffice, then, to tell them that at the moment at which, discouraged by so many fruitless investigations, we were about to abandon our search, we at length found, guided by the counsels of our illustrious friend Paulin Paris, a manuscript in folio, endorsed 4772 or 4773, we do not recollect which, having for title, "Memoirs of the Comte de la Fere, Touching Some Events Which Passed in France Toward the End of the Reign of King Louis XIII and the Commencement of the Reign of King Louis XIV."

It may be easily imagined how great was our joy when, in turning over this manuscript, our last hope, we found at the twentieth page the name of Athos, at the twenty-seventh the name of Porthos, and at the thirty-first the name of Aramis.

The discovery of a completely unknown manuscript at a period in which historical science is carried to such a high degree appeared almost miraculous. We hastened, therefore, to obtain permission to print it, with the view of presenting ourselves someday with the pack of others at the doors of the Academie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, if we should not succeed-a very probable thing, by the by-in gaining admission to the Academie Francaise with our own proper pack. This permission, we feel bound to say, was graciously granted; which compels us here to give a public

contradiction to the slanderers who pretend that we live under a government but moderately indulgent to men of letters.

Now, this is the first part of this precious manuscript which we offer to our readers, restoring it to the title which belongs to it, and entering into an engagement that if (of which we have no doubt) this first part should obtain the success it merits, we will publish the second immediately.

In the meanwhile, as the godfather is a second father, we beg the reader to lay to our account, and not to that of the Comte de la Fere, the pleasure or the ENNUI he may experience.

This being understood, let us proceed with our history.

1 THE THREE PRESENTS OF D'ARTAGNAN THE ELDER

On the first Monday of the month of April, 1625, the market town of Meung, in which the author of ROMANCE OF THE ROSE was born, appeared to be in as perfect a state of revolution as if the Huguenots had just made a second La Rochelle of it. Many citizens, seeing the women flying toward the High Street, leaving their children crying at the open doors, hastened to don the cuirass, and supporting their somewhat uncertain courage with a musket or a partisan, directed their steps toward the hostelry of the Jolly Miller, before which was gathered, increasing every minute, a compact group, vociferous and full of curiosity.

In those times panics were common, and few days passed without some city or other registering in its archives an event of this kind. There were nobles, who made war against each other; there was the king, who made war against the cardinal; there was Spain, which made war against the king. Then, in addition to these concealed or public, secret or open wars, there were robbers, mendicants, Huguenots, wolves, and scoundrels, who made war upon everybody. The citizens always took up arms readily against thieves, wolves or scoundrels, often against nobles or Huguenots, sometimes against the king, but never against the cardinal or Spain. It resulted, then, from this habit that on the said first Monday of April, 1625, the citizens, on hearing the clamor, and seeing neither the red-and-yellow standard nor the livery of the Duc de Richelieu, rushed toward the hostel of the Jolly Miller. When arrived there, the cause of the hubbub was apparent to all.

A young man-we can sketch his portrait at a dash. Imagine to yourself a Don Quixote of eighteen; a Don Quixote without his corselet, without his coat of mail, without his cuisses; a Don Quixote clothed in a woolen doublet, the blue color of which had faded into a nameless shade between lees of wine and a heavenly azure; face long and brown; high cheek bones, a sign of sagacity; the maxillary muscles enormously developed, an infallible sign by which a Gascon may always be detected, even without his cap-and our young man wore a cap set off with a sort of feather; the eye open and intelligent; the nose hooked, but finely chiseled. Too big for a youth, too small for a grown man, an experienced eye might have taken him for a farmer's son upon a journey had it not been for the long sword which, dangling from a leather baldric, hit against the calves of its owner as he walked, and against the rough side of his steed when he was on horseback.

For our young man had a steed which was the observed of all observers. It was a Bearn pony, from twelve to fourteen years old, yellow in his hide, without a hair in his tail, but not without windgalls on his legs, which, though going with his head lower than his knees, rendering a martingale quite unnecessary, contrived nevertheless to perform his eight leagues a day. Unfortunately, the qualities of this horse were so well concealed under his strange-colored hide and his unaccountable gait, that at a time when everybody was a connoisseur in horseflesh, the appearance of the aforesaid pony at Meung-which place he had entered about a quarter of an hour before, by the gate of Beaugency-produced an unfavorable feeling, which extended to his rider.

And this feeling had been more painfully perceived by young d'Artagnan-for so was the Don Quixote of this second Rosinante named-from his not being able to conceal from himself the ridiculous appearance that such a steed gave him, good horseman as he was. He had sighed deeply, therefore, when accepting the gift of the pony from M. d'Artagnan the elder. He was not ignorant that such a beast was worth at least twenty livres; and the words which had accompanied the present were above all price.

"My son," said the old Gascon gentleman, in that pure Bearn PATOIS of which Henry IV could never rid himself, "this horse was born in the house of your father about thirteen years ago, and has remained in it ever since, which ought to make you love it. Never sell it; allow it to die tranquilly and

honorably of old age, and if you make a campaign with it, take as much care of it as you would of an old servant. At court, provided you have ever the honor to go there," continued M. d'Artagnan the elder, " – an honor to which, remember, your ancient nobility gives you the right-sustain worthily your name of gentleman, which has been worthily borne by your ancestors for five hundred years, both for your own sake and the sake of those who belong to you. By the latter I mean your relatives and friends. Endure nothing from anyone except Monsieur the Cardinal and the king. It is by his courage, please observe, by his courage alone, that a gentleman can make his way nowadays. Whoever hesitates for a second perhaps allows the bait to escape which during that exact second fortune held out to him. You are young. You ought to be brave for two reasons: the first is that you are a Gascon, and the second is that you are my son. Never fear quarrels, but seek adventures. I have taught you how to handle a sword; you have thews of iron, a wrist of steel. Fight on all occasions. Fight the more for duels being forbidden, since consequently there is twice as much courage in fighting. I have nothing to give you, my son, but fifteen crowns, my horse, and the counsels you have just heard. Your mother will add to them a recipe for a certain balsam, which she had from a Bohemian and which has the miraculous virtue of curing all wounds that do not reach the heart. Take advantage of all, and live happily and long. I have but one word to add, and that is to propose an example to you-not mine, for I myself have never appeared at court, and have only taken part in religious wars as a volunteer; I speak of Monsieur de Treville, who was formerly my neighbor, and who had the honor to be, as a child, the play-fellow of our king, Louis XIII, whom God preserve! Sometimes their play degenerated into battles, and in these battles the king was not always the stronger. The blows which he received increased greatly his esteem and friendship for Monsieur de Treville. Afterward, Monsieur de Treville fought with others: in his first journey to Paris, five times; from the death of the late king till the young one came of age, without reckoning wars and sieges, seven times; and from that date up to the present day, a hundred times, perhaps! So that in spite of edicts, ordinances, and decrees, there he is, captain of the Musketeers; that is to say, chief of a legion of Caesars, whom the king holds in great esteem and whom the cardinal dreads-he who dreads nothing, as it is said. Still further, Monsieur de Treville gains ten thousand crowns a year; he is therefore a great noble. He began as you begin. Go to him with this letter, and make him your model in order that you may do as he has done."

Upon which M. d'Artagnan the elder girded his own sword round his son, kissed him tenderly on both cheeks, and gave him his benediction.

On leaving the paternal chamber, the young man found his mother, who was waiting for him with the famous recipe of which the counsels we have just repeated would necessitate frequent employment. The adieux were on this side longer and more tender than they had been on the other-not that M. d'Artagnan did not love his son, who was his only offspring, but M. d'Artagnan was a man, and he would have considered it unworthy of a man to give way to his feelings; whereas Mme. d'Artagnan was a woman, and still more, a mother. She wept abundantly; and-let us speak it to the praise of M. d'Artagnan the younger-notwithstanding the efforts he made to remain firm, as a future Musketeer ought, nature prevailed, and he shed many tears, of which he succeeded with great difficulty in concealing the half.

The same day the young man set forward on his journey, furnished with the three paternal gifts, which consisted, as we have said, of fifteen crowns, the horse, and the letter for M. de Treville-the counsels being thrown into the bargain.

With such a VADE MECUM d'Artagnan was morally and physically an exact copy of the hero of Cervantes, to whom we so happily compared him when our duty of an historian placed us under the necessity of sketching his portrait. Don Quixote took windmills for giants, and sheep for armies; d'Artagnan took every smile for an insult, and every look as a provocation-whence it resulted that from Tarbes to Meung his fist was constantly doubled, or his hand on the hilt of his sword; and yet the fist did not descend upon any jaw, nor did the sword issue from its scabbard. It was not that the sight of the wretched pony did not excite numerous smiles on the countenances of passers-by; but

as against the side of this pony rattled a sword of respectable length, and as over this sword gleamed an eye rather ferocious than haughty, these passers-by repressed their hilarity, or if hilarity prevailed over prudence, they endeavored to laugh only on one side, like the masks of the ancients. D'Artagnan, then, remained majestic and intact in his susceptibility, till he came to this unlucky city of Meung.

But there, as he was alighting from his horse at the gate of the Jolly Miller, without anyone-host, waiter, or hostler-coming to hold his stirrup or take his horse, d'Artagnan spied, though an open window on the ground floor, a gentleman, well-made and of good carriage, although of rather a stern countenance, talking with two persons who appeared to listen to him with respect. D'Artagnan fancied quite naturally, according to his custom, that he must be the object of their conversation, and listened. This time d'Artagnan was only in part mistaken; he himself was not in question, but his horse was. The gentleman appeared to be enumerating all his qualities to his auditors; and, as I have said, the auditors seeming to have great deference for the narrator, they every moment burst into fits of laughter. Now, as a half-smile was sufficient to awaken the irascibility of the young man, the effect produced upon him by this vociferous mirth may be easily imagined.

Nevertheless, d'Artagnan was desirous of examining the appearance of this impertinent personage who ridiculed him. He fixed his haughty eye upon the stranger, and perceived a man of from forty to forty-five years of age, with black and piercing eyes, pale complexion, a strongly marked nose, and a black and well-shaped mustache. He was dressed in a doublet and hose of a violet color, with aiguillettes of the same color, without any other ornaments than the customary slashes, through which the shirt appeared. This doublet and hose, though new, were creased, like traveling clothes for a long time packed in a portmanteau. D'Artagnan made all these remarks with the rapidity of a most minute observer, and doubtless from an instinctive feeling that this stranger was destined to have a great influence over his future life.

Now, as at the moment in which d'Artagnan fixed his eyes upon the gentleman in the violet doublet, the gentleman made one of his most knowing and profound remarks respecting the Bearnese pony, his two auditors laughed even louder than before, and he himself, though contrary to his custom, allowed a pale smile (if I may be allowed to use such an expression) to stray over his countenance. This time there could be no doubt; d'Artagnan was really insulted. Full, then, of this conviction, he pulled his cap down over his eyes, and endeavoring to copy some of the court airs he had picked up in Gascony among young traveling nobles, he advanced with one hand on the hilt of his sword and the other resting on his hip. Unfortunately, as he advanced, his anger increased at every step; and instead of the proper and lofty speech he had prepared as a prelude to his challenge, he found nothing at the tip of his tongue but a gross personality, which he accompanied with a furious gesture.

"I say, sir, you sir, who are hiding yourself behind that shutter-yes, you, sir, tell me what you are laughing at, and we will laugh together!"

The gentleman raised his eyes slowly from the nag to his cavalier, as if he required some time to ascertain whether it could be to him that such strange reproaches were addressed; then, when he could not possibly entertain any doubt of the matter, his eyebrows slightly bent, and with an accent of irony and insolence impossible to be described, he replied to d'Artagnan, "I was not speaking to you, sir."

"But I am speaking to you!" replied the young man, additionally exasperated with this mixture of insolence and good manners, of politeness and scorn.

The stranger looked at him again with a slight smile, and retiring from the window, came out of the hostelry with a slow step, and placed himself before the horse, within two paces of d'Artagnan. His quiet manner and the ironical expression of his countenance redoubled the mirth of the persons with whom he had been talking, and who still remained at the window.

D'Artagnan, seeing him approach, drew his sword a foot out of the scabbard.

"This horse is decidedly, or rather has been in his youth, a buttercup," resumed the stranger, continuing the remarks he had begun, and addressing himself to his auditors at the window, without paying the least attention to the exasperation of d'Artagnan, who, however, placed himself between

him and them. “It is a color very well known in botany, but till the present time very rare among horses.”

“There are people who laugh at the horse that would not dare to laugh at the master,” cried the young emulator of the furious Treville.

“I do not often laugh, sir,” replied the stranger, “as you may perceive by the expression of my countenance; but nevertheless I retain the privilege of laughing when I please.”

“And I,” cried d’Artagnan, “will allow no man to laugh when it displeases me!”

“Indeed, sir,” continued the stranger, more calm than ever; “well, that is perfectly right!” and turning on his heel, was about to re-enter the hostelry by the front gate, beneath which d’Artagnan on arriving had observed a saddled horse.

But, d’Artagnan was not of a character to allow a man to escape him thus who had the insolence to ridicule him. He drew his sword entirely from the scabbard, and followed him, crying, “Turn, turn, Master Joker, lest I strike you behind!”

“Strike me!” said the other, turning on his heels, and surveying the young man with as much astonishment as contempt. “Why, my good fellow, you must be mad!” Then, in a suppressed tone, as if speaking to himself, “This is annoying,” continued he. “What a godsend this would be for his Majesty, who is seeking everywhere for brave fellows to recruit for his Musketeers!”

He had scarcely finished, when d’Artagnan made such a furious lunge at him that if he had not sprung nimbly backward, it is probable he would have jested for the last time. The stranger, then perceiving that the matter went beyond raillery, drew his sword, saluted his adversary, and seriously placed himself on guard. But at the same moment, his two auditors, accompanied by the host, fell upon d’Artagnan with sticks, shovels and tongs. This caused so rapid and complete a diversion from the attack that d’Artagnan’s adversary, while the latter turned round to face this shower of blows, sheathed his sword with the same precision, and instead of an actor, which he had nearly been, became a spectator of the fight-a part in which he acquitted himself with his usual impassiveness, muttering, nevertheless, “A plague upon these Gascons! Replace him on his orange horse, and let him begone!”

“Not before I have killed you, poltroon!” cried d’Artagnan, making the best face possible, and never retreating one step before his three assailants, who continued to shower blows upon him.

“Another gasconade!” murmured the gentleman. “By my honor, these Gascons are incorrigible! Keep up the dance, then, since he will have it so. When he is tired, he will perhaps tell us that he has had enough of it.”

But the stranger knew not the headstrong personage he had to do with; d’Artagnan was not the man ever to cry for quarter. The fight was therefore prolonged for some seconds; but at length d’Artagnan dropped his sword, which was broken in two pieces by the blow of a stick. Another blow full upon his forehead at the same moment brought him to the ground, covered with blood and almost fainting.

It was at this moment that people came flocking to the scene of action from all sides. The host, fearful of consequences, with the help of his servants carried the wounded man into the kitchen, where some trifling attentions were bestowed upon him.

As to the gentleman, he resumed his place at the window, and surveyed the crowd with a certain impatience, evidently annoyed by their remaining undispersed.

“Well, how is it with this madman?” exclaimed he, turning round as the noise of the door announced the entrance of the host, who came in to inquire if he was unhurt.

“Your excellency is safe and sound?” asked the host.

“Oh, yes! Perfectly safe and sound, my good host; and I wish to know what has become of our young man.”

“He is better,” said the host, “he fainted quite away.”

“Indeed!” said the gentleman.

"But before he fainted, he collected all his strength to challenge you, and to defy you while challenging you."

"Why, this fellow must be the devil in person!" cried the stranger.

"Oh, no, your Excellency, he is not the devil," replied the host, with a grin of contempt; "for during his fainting we rummaged his valise and found nothing but a clean shirt and eleven crowns- which however, did not prevent his saying, as he was fainting, that if such a thing had happened in Paris, you should have cause to repent of it at a later period."

"Then," said the stranger coolly, "he must be some prince in disguise."

"I have told you this, good sir," resumed the host, "in order that you may be on your guard."

"Did he name no one in his passion?"

"Yes; he struck his pocket and said, 'We shall see what Monsieur de Treville will think of this insult offered to his protege.'"

"Monsieur de Treville?" said the stranger, becoming attentive, "he put his hand upon his pocket while pronouncing the name of Monsieur de Treville? Now, my dear host, while your young man was insensible, you did not fail, I am quite sure, to ascertain what that pocket contained. What was there in it?"

"A letter addressed to Monsieur de Treville, captain of the Musketeers."

"Indeed!"

"Exactly as I have the honor to tell your Excellency."

The host, who was not endowed with great perspicacity, did not observe the expression which his words had given to the physiognomy of the stranger. The latter rose from the front of the window, upon the sill of which he had leaned with his elbow, and knitted his brow like a man disquieted.

"The devil!" murmured he, between his teeth. "Can Treville have set this Gascon upon me? He is very young; but a sword thrust is a sword thrust, whatever be the age of him who gives it, and a youth is less to be suspected than an older man," and the stranger fell into a reverie which lasted some minutes. "A weak obstacle is sometimes sufficient to overthrow a great design.

"Host," said he, "could you not contrive to get rid of this frantic boy for me? In conscience, I cannot kill him; and yet," added he, with a coldly menacing expression, "he annoys me. Where is he?"

"In my wife's chamber, on the first flight, where they are dressing his wounds."

"His things and his bag are with him? Has he taken off his doublet?"

"On the contrary, everything is in the kitchen. But if he annoys you, this young fool-"

"To be sure he does. He causes a disturbance in your hostelry, which respectable people cannot put up with. Go; make out my bill and notify my servant."

"What, monsieur, will you leave us so soon?"

"You know that very well, as I gave my order to saddle my horse. Have they not obeyed me?"

"It is done; as your Excellency may have observed, your horse is in the great gateway, ready saddled for your departure."

"That is well; do as I have directed you, then."

"What the devil!" said the host to himself. "Can he be afraid of this boy?" But an imperious glance from the stranger stopped him short; he bowed humbly and retired.

"It is not necessary for Milady[1] to be seen by this fellow," continued the stranger. "She will soon pass; she is already late. I had better get on horseback, and go and meet her. I should like, however, to know what this letter addressed to Treville contains."

And the stranger, muttering to himself, directed his steps toward the kitchen.

In the meantime, the host, who entertained no doubt that it was the presence of the young man that drove the stranger from his hostelry, re-ascended to his wife's chamber, and found d'Artagnan just

[1] *We are well aware that this term, milady, is only properly used when followed by a family name. But we find it thus in the manuscript, and we do not choose to take upon ourselves to alter it.*

recovering his senses. Giving him to understand that the police would deal with him pretty severely for having sought a quarrel with a great lord-for in the opinion of the host the stranger could be nothing less than a great lord-he insisted that notwithstanding his weakness d'Artagnan should get up and depart as quickly as possible. D'Artagnan, half stupefied, without his doublet, and with his head bound up in a linen cloth, arose then, and urged by the host, began to descend the stairs; but on arriving at the kitchen, the first thing he saw was his antagonist talking calmly at the step of a heavy carriage, drawn by two large Norman horses.

His interlocutor, whose head appeared through the carriage window, was a woman of from twenty to two-and-twenty years. We have already observed with what rapidity d'Artagnan seized the expression of a countenance. He perceived then, at a glance, that this woman was young and beautiful; and her style of beauty struck him more forcibly from its being totally different from that of the southern countries in which d'Artagnan had hitherto resided. She was pale and fair, with long curls falling in profusion over her shoulders, had large, blue, languishing eyes, rosy lips, and hands of alabaster. She was talking with great animation with the stranger.

"His Eminence, then, orders me-" said the lady.

"To return instantly to England, and to inform him as soon as the duke leaves London."

"And as to my other instructions?" asked the fair traveler.

"They are contained in this box, which you will not open until you are on the other side of the Channel."

"Very well; and you-what will you do?"

"I-I return to Paris."

"What, without chastising this insolent boy?" asked the lady.

The stranger was about to reply; but at the moment he opened his mouth, d'Artagnan, who had heard all, precipitated himself over the threshold of the door.

"This insolent boy chastises others," cried he; "and I hope that this time he whom he ought to chastise will not escape him as before."

"Will not escape him?" replied the stranger, knitting his brow.

"No; before a woman you would dare not fly, I presume?"

"Remember," said Milady, seeing the stranger lay his hand on his sword, "the least delay may ruin everything."

"You are right," cried the gentleman; "begone then, on your part, and I will depart as quickly on mine." And bowing to the lady, he sprang into his saddle, while her coachman applied his whip vigorously to his horses. The two interlocutors thus separated, taking opposite directions, at full gallop.

"Pay him, booby!" cried the stranger to his servant, without checking the speed of his horse; and the man, after throwing two or three silver pieces at the foot of mine host, galloped after his master.

"Base coward! false gentleman!" cried d'Artagnan, springing forward, in his turn, after the servant. But his wound had rendered him too weak to support such an exertion. Scarcely had he gone ten steps when his ears began to tingle, a faintness seized him, a cloud of blood passed over his eyes, and he fell in the middle of the street, crying still, "Coward! coward! coward!"

"He is a coward, indeed," grumbled the host, drawing near to d'Artagnan, and endeavoring by this little flattery to make up matters with the young man, as the heron of the fable did with the snail he had despised the evening before.

"Yes, a base coward," murmured d'Artagnan; "but she-she was very beautiful."

"What she?" demanded the host.

"Milady," faltered d'Artagnan, and fainted a second time.

"Ah, it's all one," said the host; "I have lost two customers, but this one remains, of whom I am pretty certain for some days to come. There will be eleven crowns gained."

It is to be remembered that eleven crowns was just the sum that remained in d'Artagnan's purse.

The host had reckoned upon eleven days of confinement at a crown a day, but he had reckoned without his guest. On the following morning at five o'clock d'Artagnan arose, and descending to the kitchen without help, asked, among other ingredients the list of which has not come down to us, for some oil, some wine, and some rosemary, and with his mother's recipe in his hand composed a balsam, with which he anointed his numerous wounds, replacing his bandages himself, and positively refusing the assistance of any doctor, d'Artagnan walked about that same evening, and was almost cured by the morrow.

But when the time came to pay for his rosemary, this oil, and the wine, the only expense the master had incurred, as he had preserved a strict abstinence-while on the contrary, the yellow horse, by the account of the hostler at least, had eaten three times as much as a horse of his size could reasonably be supposed to have done-d'Artagnan found nothing in his pocket but his little old velvet purse with the eleven crowns it contained; for as to the letter addressed to M. de Treville, it had disappeared.

The young man commenced his search for the letter with the greatest patience, turning out his pockets of all kinds over and over again, rummaging and rerummaging in his valise, and opening and reopening his purse; but when he found that he had come to the conviction that the letter was not to be found, he flew, for the third time, into such a rage as was near costing him a fresh consumption of wine, oil, and rosemary-for upon seeing this hot-headed youth become exasperated and threaten to destroy everything in the establishment if his letter were not found, the host seized a spit, his wife a broom handle, and the servants the same sticks they had used the day before.

"My letter of recommendation!" cried d'Artagnan, "my letter of recommendation! or, the holy blood, I will spit you all like ortolans!"

Unfortunately, there was one circumstance which created a powerful obstacle to the accomplishment of this threat; which was, as we have related, that his sword had been in his first conflict broken in two, and which he had entirely forgotten. Hence, it resulted when d'Artagnan proceeded to draw his sword in earnest, he found himself purely and simply armed with a stump of a sword about eight or ten inches in length, which the host had carefully placed in the scabbard. As to the rest of the blade, the master had slyly put that on one side to make himself a larding pin.

But this deception would probably not have stopped our fiery young man if the host had not reflected that the reclamation which his guest made was perfectly just.

"But, after all," said he, lowering the point of his spit, "where is this letter?"

"Yes, where is this letter?" cried d'Artagnan. "In the first place, I warn you that that letter is for Monsieur de Treville, and it must be found, or if it is not found, he will know how to find it."

His threat completed the intimidation of the host. After the king and the cardinal, M. de Treville was the man whose name was perhaps most frequently repeated by the military, and even by citizens. There was, to be sure, Father Joseph, but his name was never pronounced but with a subdued voice, such was the terror inspired by his Gray Eminence, as the cardinal's familiar was called.

Throwing down his spit, and ordering his wife to do the same with her broom handle, and the servants with their sticks, he set the first example of commencing an earnest search for the lost letter.

"Does the letter contain anything valuable?" demanded the host, after a few minutes of useless investigation.

"Zounds! I think it does indeed!" cried the Gascon, who reckoned upon this letter for making his way at court. "It contained my fortune!"

"Bills upon Spain?" asked the disturbed host.

"Bills upon his Majesty's private treasury," answered d'Artagnan, who, reckoning upon entering into the king's service in consequence of this recommendation, believed he could make this somewhat hazardous reply without telling of a falsehood.

"The devil!" cried the host, at his wit's end.

"But it's of no importance," continued d'Artagnan, with natural assurance; "it's of no importance. The money is nothing; that letter was everything. I would rather have lost a thousand pistoles than have lost it." He would not have risked more if he had said twenty thousand; but a certain juvenile modesty restrained him.

A ray of light all at once broke upon the mind of the host as he was giving himself to the devil upon finding nothing.

"That letter is not lost!" cried he.

"What!" cried d'Artagnan.

"No, it has been stolen from you."

"Stolen? By whom?"

"By the gentleman who was here yesterday. He came down into the kitchen, where your doublet was. He remained there some time alone. I would lay a wager he has stolen it."

"Do you think so?" answered d'Artagnan, but little convinced, as he knew better than anyone else how entirely personal the value of this letter was, and saw nothing in it likely to tempt cupidity. The fact was that none of his servants, none of the travelers present, could have gained anything by being possessed of this paper.

"Do you say," resumed d'Artagnan, "that you suspect that impertinent gentleman?"

"I tell you I am sure of it," continued the host. "When I informed him that your lordship was the protege of Monsieur de Treville, and that you even had a letter for that illustrious gentleman, he appeared to be very much disturbed, and asked me where that letter was, and immediately came down into the kitchen, where he knew your doublet was."

"Then that's my thief," replied d'Artagnan. "I will complain to Monsieur de Treville, and Monsieur de Treville will complain to the king." He then drew two crowns majestically from his purse and gave them to the host, who accompanied him, cap in hand, to the gate, and remounted his yellow horse, which bore him without any further accident to the gate of St. Antoine at Paris, where his owner sold him for three crowns, which was a very good price, considering that d'Artagnan had ridden him hard during the last stage. Thus the dealer to whom d'Artagnan sold him for the nine livres did not conceal from the young man that he only gave that enormous sum for him on the account of the originality of his color.

Thus d'Artagnan entered Paris on foot, carrying his little packet under his arm, and walked about till he found an apartment to be let on terms suited to the scantiness of his means. This chamber was a sort of garret, situated in the Rue des Fossoyeurs, near the Luxembourg.

As soon as the earnest money was paid, d'Artagnan took possession of his lodging, and passed the remainder of the day in sewing onto his doublet and hose some ornamental braiding which his mother had taken off an almost-new doublet of the elder M. d'Artagnan, and which she had given her son secretly. Next he went to the Quai de Feraille to have a new blade put to his sword, and then returned toward the Louvre, inquiring of the first Musketeer he met for the situation of the hotel of M. de Treville, which proved to be in the Rue du Vieux-Colombier; that is to say, in the immediate vicinity of the chamber hired by d'Artagnan-a circumstance which appeared to furnish a happy augury for the success of his journey.

After this, satisfied with the way in which he had conducted himself at Meung, without remorse for the past, confident in the present, and full of hope for the future, he retired to bed and slept the sleep of the brave.

This sleep, provincial as it was, brought him to nine o'clock in the morning; at which hour he rose, in order to repair to the residence of M. de Treville, the third personage in the kingdom, in the paternal estimation.

2 THE ANTECHAMBER OF M. DE TREVILLE

M de Troisville, as his family was still called in Gascony, or M. de Treville, as he has ended by styling himself in Paris, had really commenced life as d'Artagnan now did; that is to say, without a sou in his pocket, but with a fund of audacity, shrewdness, and intelligence which makes the poorest Gascon gentleman often derive more in his hope from the paternal inheritance than the richest Perigordian or Berrichan gentleman derives in reality from his. His insolent bravery, his still more insolent success at a time when blows poured down like hail, had borne him to the top of that difficult ladder called Court Favor, which he had climbed four steps at a time.

He was the friend of the king, who honored highly, as everyone knows, the memory of his father, Henry IV. The father of M. de Treville had served him so faithfully in his wars against the league that in default of money-a thing to which the Bearnais was accustomed all his life, and who constantly paid his debts with that of which he never stood in need of borrowing, that is to say, with ready wit-in default of money, we repeat, he authorized him, after the reduction of Paris, to assume for his arms a golden lion passant upon gules, with the motto FIDELIS ET FORTIS. This was a great matter in the way of honor, but very little in the way of wealth; so that when the illustrious companion of the great Henry died, the only inheritance he was able to leave his son was his sword and his motto. Thanks to this double gift and the spotless name that accompanied it, M. de Treville was admitted into the household of the young prince where he made such good use of his sword, and was so faithful to his motto, that Louis XIII, one of the good blades of his kingdom, was accustomed to say that if he had a friend who was about to fight, he would advise him to choose as a second, himself first, and Treville next-or even, perhaps, before himself.

Thus Louis XIII had a real liking for Treville-a royal liking, a self-interested liking, it is true, but still a liking. At that unhappy period it was an important consideration to be surrounded by such men as Treville. Many might take for their device the epithet STRONG, which formed the second part of his motto, but very few gentlemen could lay claim to the FAITHFUL, which constituted the first. Treville was one of these latter. His was one of those rare organizations, endowed with an obedient intelligence like that of the dog; with a blind valor, a quick eye, and a prompt hand; to whom sight appeared only to be given to see if the king were dissatisfied with anyone, and the hand to strike this displeasing personage, whether a Besme, a Maurevers, a Poltiot de Mere, or a Vitry. In short, up to this period nothing had been wanting to Treville but opportunity; but he was ever on the watch for it, and he faithfully promised himself that he would not fail to seize it by its three hairs whenever it came within reach of his hand. At last Louis XIII made Treville the captain of his Musketeers, who were to Louis XIII in devotedness, or rather in fanaticism, what his Ordinaries had been to Henry III, and his Scotch Guard to Louis XI.

On his part, the cardinal was not behind the king in this respect. When he saw the formidable and chosen body with which Louis XIII had surrounded himself, this second, or rather this first king of France, became desirous that he, too, should have his guard. He had his Musketeers therefore, as Louis XIII had his, and these two powerful rivals vied with each other in procuring, not only from all the provinces of France, but even from all foreign states, the most celebrated swordsmen. It was not uncommon for Richelieu and Louis XIII to dispute over their evening game of chess upon the merits of their servants. Each boasted the bearing and the courage of his own people. While exclaiming loudly against duels and brawls, they excited them secretly to quarrel, deriving an immoderate satisfaction or genuine regret from the success or defeat of their own combatants. We learn this from the memoirs of a man who was concerned in some few of these defeats and in many of these victories.

Treville had grasped the weak side of his master; and it was to this address that he owed the long and constant favor of a king who has not left the reputation behind him of being very faithful in

his friendships. He paraded his Musketeers before the Cardinal Armand Duplessis with an insolent air which made the gray moustache of his Eminence curl with ire. Treville understood admirably the war method of that period, in which he who could not live at the expense of the enemy must live at the expense of his compatriots. His soldiers formed a legion of devil-may-care fellows, perfectly undisciplined toward all but himself.

Loose, half-drunk, imposing, the king's Musketeers, or rather M. de Treville's, spread themselves about in the cabarets, in the public walks, and the public sports, shouting, twisting their mustaches, clanking their swords, and taking great pleasure in annoying the Guards of the cardinal whenever they could fall in with them; then drawing in the open streets, as if it were the best of all possible sports; sometimes killed, but sure in that case to be both wept and avenged; often killing others, but then certain of not rotting in prison, M. de Treville being there to claim them. Thus M. de Treville was praised to the highest note by these men, who adored him, and who, ruffians as they were, trembled before him like scholars before their master, obedient to his least word, and ready to sacrifice themselves to wash out the smallest insult.

M de Treville employed this powerful weapon for the king, in the first place, and the friends of the king-and then for himself and his own friends. For the rest, in the memoirs of this period, which has left so many memoirs, one does not find this worthy gentleman blamed even by his enemies; and he had many such among men of the pen as well as among men of the sword. In no instance, let us say, was this worthy gentleman accused of deriving personal advantage from the cooperation of his minions. Endowed with a rare genius for intrigue which rendered him the equal of the ablest intriguers, he remained an honest man. Still further, in spite of sword thrusts which weaken, and painful exercises which fatigue, he had become one of the most gallant frequenters of revels, one of the most insinuating lady's men, one of the softest whisperers of interesting nothings of his day; the BONNES FORTUNES of de Treville were talked of as those of M. de Bassompierre had been talked of twenty years before, and that was not saying a little. The captain of the Musketeers was therefore admired, feared, and loved; and this constitutes the zenith of human fortune.

Louis XIV absorbed all the smaller stars of his court in his own vast radiance; but his father, a sun PLURIBUS IMPAR, left his personal splendor to each of his favorites, his individual value to each of his courtiers. In addition to the leeves of the king and the cardinal, there might be reckoned in Paris at that time more than two hundred smaller but still noteworthy leeves. Among these two hundred leeves, that of Treville was one of the most sought.

The court of his hotel, situated in the Rue du Vieux-Colombier, resembled a camp from by six o'clock in the morning in summer and eight o'clock in winter. From fifty to sixty Musketeers, who appeared to replace one another in order always to present an imposing number, paraded constantly, armed to the teeth and ready for anything. On one of those immense staircases, upon whose space modern civilization would build a whole house, ascended and descended the office seekers of Paris, who ran after any sort of favor-gentlemen from the provinces anxious to be enrolled, and servants in all sorts of liveries, bringing and carrying messages between their masters and M. de Treville. In the antechamber, upon long circular benches, reposed the elect; that is to say, those who were called. In this apartment a continued buzzing prevailed from morning till night, while M. de Treville, in his office contiguous to this antechamber, received visits, listened to complaints, gave his orders, and like the king in his balcony at the Louvre, had only to place himself at the window to review both his men and arms.

The day on which d'Artagnan presented himself the assemblage was imposing, particularly for a provincial just arriving from his province. It is true that this provincial was a Gascon; and that, particularly at this period, the compatriots of d'Artagnan had the reputation of not being easily intimidated. When he had once passed the massive door covered with long square-headed nails, he fell into the midst of a troop of swordsmen, who crossed one another in their passage, calling out,

quarreling, and playing tricks one with another. In order to make one's way amid these turbulent and conflicting waves, it was necessary to be an officer, a great noble, or a pretty woman.

It was, then, into the midst of this tumult and disorder that our young man advanced with a beating heart, ranging his long rapier up his lanky leg, and keeping one hand on the edge of his cap, with that half-smile of the embarrassed provincial who wishes to put on a good face. When he had passed one group he began to breathe more freely; but he could not help observing that they turned round to look at him, and for the first time in his life d'Artagnan, who had till that day entertained a very good opinion of himself, felt ridiculous.

Arrived at the staircase, it was still worse. There were four Musketeers on the bottom steps, amusing themselves with the following exercise, while ten or twelve of their comrades waited upon the landing place to take their turn in the sport.

One of them, stationed upon the top stair, naked sword in hand, prevented, or at least endeavored to prevent, the three others from ascending.

These three others fenced against him with their agile swords.

D'Artagnan at first took these weapons for foils, and believed them to be buttoned; but he soon perceived by certain scratches that every weapon was pointed and sharpened, and that at each of these scratches not only the spectators, but even the actors themselves, laughed like so many madmen.

He who at the moment occupied the upper step kept his adversaries marvelously in check. A circle was formed around them. The conditions required that at every hit the man touched should quit the game, yielding his turn for the benefit of the adversary who had hit him. In five minutes three were slightly wounded, one on the hand, another on the ear, by the defender of the stair, who himself remained intact-a piece of skill which was worth to him, according to the rules agreed upon, three turns of favor.

However difficult it might be, or rather as he pretended it was, to astonish our young traveler, this pastime really astonished him. He had seen in his province-that land in which heads become so easily heated-a few of the preliminaries of duels; but the daring of these four fencers appeared to him the strongest he had ever heard of even in Gascony. He believed himself transported into that famous country of giants into which Gulliver afterward went and was so frightened; and yet he had not gained the goal, for there were still the landing place and the antechamber.

On the landing they were no longer fighting, but amused themselves with stories about women, and in the antechamber, with stories about the court. On the landing d'Artagnan blushed; in the antechamber he trembled. His warm and fickle imagination, which in Gascony had rendered him formidable to young chambermaids, and even sometimes their mistresses, had never dreamed, even in moments of delirium, of half the amorous wonders or a quarter of the feats of gallantry which were here set forth in connection with names the best known and with details the least concealed. But if his morals were shocked on the landing, his respect for the cardinal was scandalized in the antechamber. There, to his great astonishment, d'Artagnan heard the policy which made all Europe tremble criticized aloud and openly, as well as the private life of the cardinal, which so many great nobles had been punished for trying to pry into. That great man who was so revered by d'Artagnan the elder served as an object of ridicule to the Musketeers of Treville, who cracked their jokes upon his bandy legs and his crooked back. Some sang ballads about Mme. d'Aguillon, his mistress, and Mme. Cambalet, his niece; while others formed parties and plans to annoy the pages and guards of the cardinal duke-all things which appeared to d'Artagnan monstrous impossibilities.

Nevertheless, when the name of the king was now and then uttered unthinkingly amid all these cardinal jests, a sort of gag seemed to close for a moment on all these jeering mouths. They looked hesitatingly around them, and appeared to doubt the thickness of the partition between them and the office of M. de Treville; but a fresh allusion soon brought back the conversation to his Eminence, and then the laughter recovered its loudness and the light was not withheld from any of his actions.

"Certes, these fellows will all either be imprisoned or hanged," thought the terrified d'Artagnan, "and I, no doubt, with them; for from the moment I have either listened to or heard them, I shall be held as an accomplice. What would my good father say, who so strongly pointed out to me the respect due to the cardinal, if he knew I was in the society of such pagans?"

We have no need, therefore, to say that d'Artagnan dared not join in the conversation, only he looked with all his eyes and listened with all his ears, stretching his five senses so as to lose nothing; and despite his confidence on the paternal admonitions, he felt himself carried by his tastes and led by his instincts to praise rather than to blame the unheard-of things which were taking place.

Although he was a perfect stranger in the court of M. de Treville's courtiers, and this his first appearance in that place, he was at length noticed, and somebody came and asked him what he wanted. At this demand d'Artagnan gave his name very modestly, emphasized the title of compatriot, and begged the servant who had put the question to him to request a moment's audience of M. de Treville-a request which the other, with an air of protection, promised to transmit in due season.

D'Artagnan, a little recovered from his first surprise, had now leisure to study costumes and physiognomy.

The center of the most animated group was a Musketeer of great height and haughty countenance, dressed in a costume so peculiar as to attract general attention. He did not wear the uniform cloak-which was not obligatory at that epoch of less liberty but more independence-but a cerulean-blue doublet, a little faded and worn, and over this a magnificent baldric, worked in gold, which shone like water ripples in the sun. A long cloak of crimson velvet fell in graceful folds from his shoulders, disclosing in front the splendid baldric, from which was suspended a gigantic rapier. This Musketeer had just come off guard, complained of having a cold, and coughed from time to time affectedly. It was for this reason, as he said to those around him, that he had put on his cloak; and while he spoke with a lofty air and twisted his mustache disdainfully, all admired his embroidered baldric, and d'Artagnan more than anyone.

"What would you have?" said the Musketeer. "This fashion is coming in. It is a folly, I admit, but still it is the fashion. Besides, one must lay out one's inheritance somehow."

"Ah, Porthos!" cried one of his companions, "don't try to make us believe you obtained that baldric by paternal generosity. It was given to you by that veiled lady I met you with the other Sunday, near the gate St. Honor."

"No, upon honor and by the faith of a gentleman, I bought it with the contents of my own purse," answered he whom they designated by the name Porthos.

"Yes; about in the same manner," said another Musketeer, "that I bought this new purse with what my mistress put into the old one."

"It's true, though," said Porthos; "and the proof is that I paid twelve pistoles for it."

The wonder was increased, though the doubt continued to exist.

"Is it not true, Aramis?" said Porthos, turning toward another Musketeer.

This other Musketeer formed a perfect contrast to his interrogator, who had just designated him by the name of Aramis. He was a stout man, of about two- or three-and-twenty, with an open, ingenuous countenance, a black, mild eye, and cheeks rosy and downy as an autumn peach. His delicate mustache marked a perfectly straight line upon his upper lip; he appeared to dread to lower his hands lest their veins should swell, and he pinched the tips of his ears from time to time to preserve their delicate pink transparency. Habitually he spoke little and slowly, bowed frequently, laughed without noise, showing his teeth, which were fine and of which, as the rest of his person, he appeared to take great care. He answered the appeal of his friend by an affirmative nod of the head.

This affirmation appeared to dispel all doubts with regard to the baldric. They continued to admire it, but said no more about it; and with a rapid change of thought, the conversation passed suddenly to another subject.

"What do you think of the story Chalais's esquire relates?" asked another Musketeer, without addressing anyone in particular, but on the contrary speaking to everybody.

"And what does he say?" asked Porthos, in a self-sufficient tone.

"He relates that he met at Brussels Rochefort, the AME DAMNEE of the cardinal disguised as a Capuchin, and that this cursed Rochefort, thanks to his disguise, had tricked Monsieur de Laigues, like a ninny as he is."

"A ninny, indeed!" said Porthos; "but is the matter certain?"

"I had it from Aramis," replied the Musketeer.

"Indeed?"

"Why, you knew it, Porthos," said Aramis. "I told you of it yesterday. Let us say no more about it."

"Say no more about it? That's YOUR opinion!" replied Porthos.

"Say no more about it! PESTE! You come to your conclusions quickly. What! The cardinal sets a spy upon a gentleman, has his letters stolen from him by means of a traitor, a brigand, a rascal-has, with the help of this spy and thanks to this correspondence, Chalais's throat cut, under the stupid pretext that he wanted to kill the king and marry Monsieur to the queen! Nobody knew a word of this enigma. You unraveled it yesterday to the great satisfaction of all; and while we are still gaping with wonder at the news, you come and tell us today, 'Let us say no more about it.'"

"Well, then, let us talk about it, since you desire it," replied Aramis, patiently.

"This Rochefort," cried Porthos, "if I were the esquire of poor Chalais, should pass a minute or two very uncomfortably with me."

"And you-you would pass rather a sad quarter-hour with the Red Duke," replied Aramis.

"Oh, the Red Duke! Bravo! Bravo! The Red Duke!" cried Porthos, clapping his hands and nodding his head. "The Red Duke is capital. I'll circulate that saying, be assured, my dear fellow. Who says this Aramis is not a wit? What a misfortune it is you did not follow your first vocation; what a delicious abbe you would have made!"

"Oh, it's only a temporary postponement," replied Aramis; "I shall be one someday. You very well know, Porthos, that I continue to study theology for that purpose."

"He will be one, as he says," cried Porthos; "he will be one, sooner or later."

"Sooner," said Aramis.

"He only waits for one thing to determine him to resume his cassock, which hangs behind his uniform," said another Musketeer.

"What is he waiting for?" asked another.

"Only till the queen has given an heir to the crown of France."

"No jesting upon that subject, gentlemen," said Porthos; "thank God the queen is still of an age to give one!"

"They say that Monsieur de Buckingham is in France," replied Aramis, with a significant smile which gave to this sentence, apparently so simple, a tolerably scandalous meaning.

"Aramis, my good friend, this time you are wrong," interrupted Porthos. "Your wit is always leading you beyond bounds; if Monsieur de Treville heard you, you would repent of speaking thus."

"Are you going to give me a lesson, Porthos?" cried Aramis, from whose usually mild eye a flash passed like lightning.

"My dear fellow, be a Musketeer or an abbe. Be one or the other, but not both," replied Porthos. "You know what Athos told you the other day; you eat at everybody's mess. Ah, don't be angry, I beg of you, that would be useless; you know what is agreed upon between you, Athos and me. You go to Madame d'Aguillon's, and you pay your court to her; you go to Madame de Bois-Tracy's, the cousin of Madame de Chevreuse, and you pass for being far advanced in the good graces of that lady. Oh, good Lord! Don't trouble yourself to reveal your good luck; no one asks for your secret-all the world knows your discretion. But since you possess that virtue, why the devil don't you make use of it with

respect to her Majesty? Let whoever likes talk of the king and the cardinal, and how he likes; but the queen is sacred, and if anyone speaks of her, let it be respectfully."

"Porthos, you are as vain as Narcissus; I plainly tell you so," replied Aramis. "You know I hate moralizing, except when it is done by Athos. As to you, good sir, you wear too magnificent a baldric to be strong on that head. I will be an abbe if it suits me. In the meanwhile I am a Musketeer; in that quality I say what I please, and at this moment it pleases me to say that you weary me."

"Aramis!"

"Porthos!"

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" cried the surrounding group.

"Monsieur de Treville awaits Monsieur d'Artagnan," cried a servant, throwing open the door of the cabinet.

At this announcement, during which the door remained open, everyone became mute, and amid the general silence the young man crossed part of the length of the antechamber, and entered the apartment of the captain of the Musketeers, congratulating himself with all his heart at having so narrowly escaped the end of this strange quarrel.

3 THE AUDIENCE

M de Treville was at the moment in rather ill-humor, nevertheless he saluted the young man politely, who bowed to the very ground; and he smiled on receiving d'Artagnan's response, the Bearnese accent of which recalled to him at the same time his youth and his country-a double remembrance which makes a man smile at all ages; but stepping toward the antechamber and making a sign to d'Artagnan with his hand, as if to ask his permission to finish with others before he began with him, he called three times, with a louder voice at each time, so that he ran through the intervening tones between the imperative accent and the angry accent.

"Athos! Porthos! Aramis!"

The two Musketeers with whom we have already made acquaintance, and who answered to the last of these three names, immediately quitted the group of which they had formed a part, and advanced toward the cabinet, the door of which closed after them as soon as they had entered. Their appearance, although it was not quite at ease, excited by its carelessness, at once full of dignity and submission, the admiration of d'Artagnan, who beheld in these two men demigods, and in their leader an Olympian Jupiter, armed with all his thunders.

When the two Musketeers had entered; when the door was closed behind them; when the buzzing murmur of the antechamber, to which the summons which had been made had doubtless furnished fresh food, had recommenced; when M. de Treville had three or four times paced in silence, and with a frowning brow, the whole length of his cabinet, passing each time before Porthos and Aramis, who were as upright and silent as if on parade-he stopped all at once full in front of them, and covering them from head to foot with an angry look, "Do you know what the king said to me," cried he, "and that no longer ago than yesterday evening-do you know, gentlemen?"

"No," replied the two Musketeers, after a moment's silence, "no, sir, we do not."

"But I hope that you will do us the honor to tell us," added Aramis, in his politest tone and with his most graceful bow.

"He told me that he should henceforth recruit his Musketeers from among the Guards of Monsieur the Cardinal."

"The Guards of the cardinal! And why so?" asked Porthos, warmly.

"Because he plainly perceives that his piquette[2] stands in need of being enlivened by a mixture of good wine."

The two Musketeers reddened to the whites of their eyes. D'Artagnan did not know where he was, and wished himself a hundred feet underground.

"Yes, yes," continued M. de Treville, growing warmer as he spoke, "and his majesty was right; for, upon my honor, it is true that the Musketeers make but a miserable figure at court. The cardinal related yesterday while playing with the king, with an air of condolence very displeasing to me, that the day before yesterday those DAMNED MUSKETEERS, those DAREDEVILS-he dwelt upon those words with an ironical tone still more displeasing to me-those BRAGGARTS, added he, glancing at me with his tiger-cat's eye, had made a riot in the Rue Ferou in a cabaret, and that a party of his Guards (I thought he was going to laugh in my face) had been forced to arrest the rioters! MORBLEU! You must know something about it. Arrest Musketeers! You were among them-you were! Don't deny it; you were recognized, and the cardinal named you. But it's all my fault; yes, it's all my fault, because it is myself who selects my men. You, Aramis, why the devil did you ask me for a uniform when you would have been so much better in a cassock? And you, Porthos, do you only wear such a fine golden baldric to suspend a sword of straw from it? And Athos-I don't see Athos. Where is he?"

"Ill-"

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[2] *A watered liquor, made from the second pressing of the grape.*

"Very ill, say you? And of what malady?"

"It is feared that it may be the smallpox, sir," replied Porthos, desirous of taking his turn in the conversation; "and what is serious is that it will certainly spoil his face."

"The smallpox! That's a great story to tell me, Porthos! Sick of the smallpox at his age! No, no; but wounded without doubt, killed, perhaps. Ah, if I knew! S'blood! Messieurs Musketeers, I will not have this haunting of bad places, this quarreling in the streets, this swordplay at the crossways; and above all, I will not have occasion given for the cardinal's Guards, who are brave, quiet, skillful men who never put themselves in a position to be arrested, and who, besides, never allow themselves to be arrested, to laugh at you! I am sure of it-they would prefer dying on the spot to being arrested or taking back a step. To save yourselves, to scamper away, to flee-that is good for the king's Musketeers!"

Porthos and Aramis trembled with rage. They could willingly have strangled M. de Treville, if, at the bottom of all this, they had not felt it was the great love he bore them which made him speak thus. They stamped upon the carpet with their feet; they bit their lips till the blood came, and grasped the hilts of their swords with all their might. All without had heard, as we have said, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis called, and had guessed, from M. de Treville's tone of voice, that he was very angry about something. Ten curious heads were glued to the tapestry and became pale with fury; for their ears, closely applied to the door, did not lose a syllable of what he said, while their mouths repeated as he went on, the insulting expressions of the captain to all the people in the antechamber. In an instant, from the door of the cabinet to the street gate, the whole hotel was boiling.

"Ah! The king's Musketeers are arrested by the Guards of the cardinal, are they?" continued M. de Treville, as furious at heart as his soldiers, but emphasizing his words and plunging them, one by one, so to say, like so many blows of a stiletto, into the bosoms of his auditors. "What! Six of his Eminence's Guards arrest six of his Majesty's Musketeers! MORBLEU! My part is taken! I will go straight to the louvre; I will give in my resignation as captain of the king's Musketeers to take a lieutenancy in the cardinal's Guards, and if he refuses me, MORBLEU! I will turn abbe."

At these words, the murmur without became an explosion; nothing was to be heard but oaths and blasphemies. The MORBLEUS, the SANG DIEUS, the MORTS TOUTS LES DIABLES, crossed one another in the air. D'Artagnan looked for some tapestry behind which he might hide himself, and felt an immense inclination to crawl under the table.

"Well, my Captain," said Porthos, quite beside himself, "the truth is that we were six against six. But we were not captured by fair means; and before we had time to draw our swords, two of our party were dead, and Athos, grievously wounded, was very little better. For you know Athos. Well, Captain, he endeavored twice to get up, and fell again twice. And we did not surrender-no! They dragged us away by force. On the way we escaped. As for Athos, they believed him to be dead, and left him very quiet on the field of battle, not thinking it worth the trouble to carry him away. That's the whole story. What the devil, Captain, one cannot win all one's battles! The great Pompey lost that of Pharsalia; and Francis the First, who was, as I have heard say, as good as other folks, nevertheless lost the Battle of Pavia."

"And I have the honor of assuring you that I killed one of them with his own sword," said Aramis; "for mine was broken at the first parry. Killed him, or poniarded him, sir, as is most agreeable to you."

"I did not know that," replied M. de Treville, in a somewhat softened tone. "The cardinal exaggerated, as I perceive."

"But pray, sir," continued Aramis, who, seeing his captain become appeased, ventured to risk a prayer, "do not say that Athos is wounded. He would be in despair if that should come to the ears of the king; and as the wound is very serious, seeing that after crossing the shoulder it penetrates into the chest, it is to be feared-"

At this instant the tapestry was raised and a noble and handsome head, but frightfully pale, appeared under the fringe.

"Athos!" cried the two Musketeers.

"Athos!" repeated M. de Treville himself.

"You have sent for me, sir," said Athos to M. de Treville, in a feeble yet perfectly calm voice, "you have sent for me, as my comrades inform me, and I have hastened to receive your orders. I am here; what do you want with me?"

And at these words, the Musketeer, in irreproachable costume, belted as usual, with a tolerably firm step, entered the cabinet. M. de Treville, moved to the bottom of his heart by this proof of courage, sprang toward him.

"I was about to say to these gentlemen," added he, "that I forbid my Musketeers to expose their lives needlessly; for brave men are very dear to the king, and the king knows that his Musketeers are the bravest on the earth. Your hand, Athos!"

And without waiting for the answer of the newcomer to this proof of affection, M. de Treville seized his right hand and pressed it with all his might, without perceiving that Athos, whatever might be his self-command, allowed a slight murmur of pain to escape him, and if possible, grew paler than he was before.

The door had remained open, so strong was the excitement produced by the arrival of Athos, whose wound, though kept as a secret, was known to all. A burst of satisfaction hailed the last words of the captain; and two or three heads, carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment, appeared through the openings of the tapestry. M. de Treville was about to reprehend this breach of the rules of etiquette, when he felt the hand of Athos, who had rallied all his energies to contend against pain, at length overcome by it, fell upon the floor as if he were dead.

"A surgeon!" cried M. de Treville, "mine! The king's! The best! A surgeon! Or, s'blood, my brave Athos will die!"

At the cries of M. de Treville, the whole assemblage rushed into the cabinet, he not thinking to shut the door against anyone, and all crowded round the wounded man. But all this eager attention might have been useless if the doctor so loudly called for had not chanced to be in the hotel. He pushed through the crowd, approached Athos, still insensible, and as all this noise and commotion inconvenienced him greatly, he required, as the first and most urgent thing, that the Musketeer should be carried into an adjoining chamber. Immediately M. de Treville opened and pointed the way to Porthos and Aramis, who bore their comrade in their arms. Behind this group walked the surgeon; and behind the surgeon the door closed.

The cabinet of M. de Treville, generally held so sacred, became in an instant the annex of the antechamber. Everyone spoke, harangued, and vociferated, swearing, cursing, and consigning the cardinal and his Guards to all the devils.

An instant after, Porthos and Aramis re-entered, the surgeon and M. de Treville alone remaining with the wounded.

At length, M. de Treville himself returned. The injured man had recovered his senses. The surgeon declared that the situation of the Musketeer had nothing in it to render his friends uneasy, his weakness having been purely and simply caused by loss of blood.

Then M. de Treville made a sign with his hand, and all retired except d'Artagnan, who did not forget that he had an audience, and with the tenacity of a Gascon remained in his place.

When all had gone out and the door was closed, M. de Treville, on turning round, found himself alone with the young man. The event which had occurred had in some degree broken the thread of his ideas. He inquired what was the will of his persevering visitor. D'Artagnan then repeated his name, and in an instant recovering all his remembrances of the present and the past, M. de Treville grasped the situation.

"Pardon me," said he, smiling, "pardon me my dear compatriot, but I had wholly forgotten you. But what help is there for it! A captain is nothing but a father of a family, charged with even a greater

responsibility than the father of an ordinary family. Soldiers are big children; but as I maintain that the orders of the king, and more particularly the orders of the cardinal, should be executed-"

D'Artagnan could not restrain a smile. By this smile M. de Treville judged that he had not to deal with a fool, and changing the conversation, came straight to the point.

"I respected your father very much," said he. "What can I do for the son? Tell me quickly; my time is not my own."

"Monsieur," said d'Artagnan, "on quitting Tarbes and coming hither, it was my intention to request of you, in remembrance of the friendship which you have not forgotten, the uniform of a Musketeer; but after all that I have seen during the last two hours, I comprehend that such a favor is enormous, and tremble lest I should not merit it."

"It is indeed a favor, young man," replied M. de Treville, "but it may not be so far beyond your hopes as you believe, or rather as you appear to believe. But his majesty's decision is always necessary; and I inform you with regret that no one becomes a Musketeer without the preliminary ordeal of several campaigns, certain brilliant actions, or a service of two years in some other regiment less favored than ours."

D'Artagnan bowed without replying, feeling his desire to don the Musketeer's uniform vastly increased by the great difficulties which preceded the attainment of it.

"But," continued M. de Treville, fixing upon his compatriot a look so piercing that it might be said he wished to read the thoughts of his heart, "on account of my old companion, your father, as I have said, I will do something for you, young man. Our recruits from Bearn are not generally very rich, and I have no reason to think matters have much changed in this respect since I left the province. I dare say you have not brought too large a stock of money with you?"

D'Artagnan drew himself up with a proud air which plainly said, "I ask alms of no man."

"Oh, that's very well, young man," continued M. de Treville, "that's all very well. I know these airs; I myself came to Paris with four crowns in my purse, and would have fought with anyone who dared to tell me I was not in a condition to purchase the Louvre."

D'Artagnan's bearing became still more imposing. Thanks to the sale of his horse, he commenced his career with four more crowns than M. de Treville possessed at the commencement of his.

"You ought, I say, then, to husband the means you have, however large the sum may be; but you ought also to endeavor to perfect yourself in the exercises becoming a gentleman. I will write a letter today to the Director of the Royal Academy, and tomorrow he will admit you without any expense to yourself. Do not refuse this little service. Our best-born and richest gentlemen sometimes solicit it without being able to obtain it. You will learn horsemanship, swordsmanship in all its branches, and dancing. You will make some desirable acquaintances; and from time to time you can call upon me, just to tell me how you are getting on, and to say whether I can be of further service to you."

D'Artagnan, stranger as he was to all the manners of a court, could not but perceive a little coldness in this reception.

"Alas, sir," said he, "I cannot but perceive how sadly I miss the letter of introduction which my father gave me to present to you."

"I certainly am surprised," replied M. de Treville, "that you should undertake so long a journey without that necessary passport, the sole resource of us poor Bearnese."

"I had one, sir, and, thank God, such as I could wish," cried d'Artagnan; "but it was perfidiously stolen from me."

He then related the adventure of Meung, described the unknown gentleman with the greatest minuteness, and all with a warmth and truthfulness that delighted M. de Treville.

"This is all very strange," said M. de Treville, after meditating a minute; "you mentioned my name, then, aloud?"

"Yes, sir, I certainly committed that imprudence; but why should I have done otherwise? A name like yours must be as a buckler to me on my way. Judge if I should not put myself under its protection."

Flattery was at that period very current, and M. de Treville loved incense as well as a king, or even a cardinal. He could not refrain from a smile of visible satisfaction; but this smile soon disappeared, and returning to the adventure of Meung, "Tell me," continued he, "had not this gentlemen a slight scar on his cheek?"

"Yes, such a one as would be made by the grazing of a ball."

"Was he not a fine-looking man?"

"Yes."

"Of lofty stature."

"Yes."

"Of pale complexion and brown hair?"

"Yes, yes, that is he; how is it, sir, that you are acquainted with this man? If I ever find him again-and I will find him, I swear, were it in hell!"

"He was waiting for a woman," continued Treville.

"He departed immediately after having conversed for a minute with her whom he awaited."

"You know not the subject of their conversation?"

"He gave her a box, told her not to open it except in London."

"Was this woman English?"

"He called her Milady."

"It is he; it must be he!" murmured Treville. "I believed him still at Brussels."

"Oh, sir, if you know who this man is," cried d'Artagnan, "tell me who he is, and whence he is. I will then release you from all your promises-even that of procuring my admission into the Musketeers; for before everything, I wish to avenge myself."

"Beware, young man!" cried Treville. "If you see him coming on one side of the street, pass by on the other. Do not cast yourself against such a rock; he would break you like glass."

"That will not prevent me," replied d'Artagnan, "if ever I find him."

"In the meantime," said Treville, "seek him not-if I have a right to advise you."

All at once the captain stopped, as if struck by a sudden suspicion. This great hatred which the young traveler manifested so loudly for this man, who-a rather improbable thing-had stolen his father's letter from him-was there not some perfidy concealed under this hatred? Might not this young man be sent by his Eminence? Might he not have come for the purpose of laying a snare for him? This pretended d'Artagnan-was he not an emissary of the cardinal, whom the cardinal sought to introduce into Treville's house, to place near him, to win his confidence, and afterward to ruin him as had been done in a thousand other instances? He fixed his eyes upon d'Artagnan even more earnestly than before. He was moderately reassured, however, by the aspect of that countenance, full of astute intelligence and affected humility. "I know he is a Gascon," reflected he, "but he may be one for the cardinal as well as for me. Let us try him."

"My friend," said he, slowly, "I wish, as the son of an ancient friend-for I consider this story of the lost letter perfectly true-I wish, I say, in order to repair the coldness you may have remarked in my reception of you, to discover to you the secrets of our policy. The king and the cardinal are the best of friends; their apparent bickerings are only feints to deceive fools. I am not willing that a compatriot, a handsome cavalier, a brave youth, quite fit to make his way, should become the dupe of all these artifices and fall into the snare after the example of so many others who have been ruined by it. Be assured that I am devoted to both these all-powerful masters, and that my earnest endeavors have no other aim than the service of the king, and also the cardinal-one of the most illustrious geniuses that France has ever produced.

"Now, young man, regulate your conduct accordingly; and if you entertain, whether from your family, your relations, or even from your instincts, any of these enmities which we see constantly breaking out against the cardinal, bid me adieu and let us separate. I will aid you in many ways, but without attaching you to my person. I hope that my frankness at least will make you my friend; for you are the only young man to whom I have hitherto spoken as I have done to you."

Treville said to himself: "If the cardinal has set this young fox upon me, he will certainly not have failed-he, who knows how bitterly I execrate him-to tell his spy that the best means of making his court to me is to rail at him. Therefore, in spite of all my protestations, if it be as I suspect, my cunning gossip will assure me that he holds his Eminence in horror."

It, however, proved otherwise. D'Artagnan answered, with the greatest simplicity: "I came to Paris with exactly such intentions. My father advised me to stoop to nobody but the king, the cardinal, and yourself-whom he considered the first three personages in France."

D'Artagnan added M. de Treville to the others, as may be perceived; but he thought this addition would do no harm.

"I have the greatest veneration for the cardinal," continued he, "and the most profound respect for his actions. So much the better for me, sir, if you speak to me, as you say, with frankness-for then you will do me the honor to esteem the resemblance of our opinions; but if you have entertained any doubt, as naturally you may, I feel that I am ruining myself by speaking the truth. But I still trust you will not esteem me the less for it, and that is my object beyond all others."

M de Treville was surprised to the greatest degree. So much penetration, so much frankness, created admiration, but did not entirely remove his suspicions. The more this young man was superior to others, the more he was to be dreaded if he meant to deceive him. Nevertheless, he pressed d'Artagnan's hand, and said to him: "You are an honest youth; but at the present moment I can only do for you that which I just now offered. My hotel will be always open to you. Hereafter, being able to ask for me at all hours, and consequently to take advantage of all opportunities, you will probably obtain that which you desire."

"That is to say," replied d'Artagnan, "that you will wait until I have proved myself worthy of it. Well, be assured," added he, with the familiarity of a Gascon, "you shall not wait long." And he bowed in order to retire, and as if he considered the future in his own hands.

"But wait a minute," said M. de Treville, stopping him. "I promised you a letter for the director of the Academy. Are you too proud to accept it, young gentleman?"

"No, sir," said d'Artagnan; "and I will guard it so carefully that I will be sworn it shall arrive at its address, and woe be to him who shall attempt to take it from me!"

M de Treville smiled at this flourish; and leaving his young man compatriot in the embrasure of the window, where they had talked together, he seated himself at a table in order to write the promised letter of recommendation. While he was doing this, d'Artagnan, having no better employment, amused himself with beating a march upon the window and with looking at the Musketeers, who went away, one after another, following them with his eyes until they disappeared.

M de Treville, after having written the letter, sealed it, and rising, approached the young man in order to give it to him. But at the very moment when d'Artagnan stretched out his hand to receive it, M. de Treville was highly astonished to see his protege make a sudden spring, become crimson with passion, and rush from the cabinet crying, "S'blood, he shall not escape me this time!"

"And who?" asked M. de Treville.

"He, my thief!" replied d'Artagnan. "Ah, the traitor!" and he disappeared.

"The devil take the madman!" murmured M. de Treville, "unless," added he, "this is a cunning mode of escaping, seeing that he had failed in his purpose!"

4 THE SHOULDER OF ATHOS, THE BALDRIC OF PORTHOS AND THE HANDKERCHIEF OF ARAMIS

D'Artagnan, in a state of fury, crossed the antechamber at three bounds, and was darting toward the stairs, which he reckoned upon descending four at a time, when, in his heedless course, he ran head foremost against a Musketeer who was coming out of one of M. de Treville's private rooms, and striking his shoulder violently, made him utter a cry, or rather a howl.

"Excuse me," said d'Artagnan, endeavoring to resume his course, "excuse me, but I am in a hurry."

Scarcely had he descended the first stair, when a hand of iron seized him by the belt and stopped him.

"You are in a hurry?" said the Musketeer, as pale as a sheet. "Under that pretense you run against me! You say, 'Excuse me,' and you believe that is sufficient? Not at all, my young man. Do you fancy because you have heard Monsieur de Treville speak to us a little cavalierly today that other people are to treat us as he speaks to us? Undeceive yourself, comrade, you are not Monsieur de Treville."

"My faith!" replied d'Artagnan, recognizing Athos, who, after the dressing performed by the doctor, was returning to his own apartment. "I did not do it intentionally, and not doing it intentionally, I said 'Excuse me.' It appears to me that this is quite enough. I repeat to you, however, and this time on my word of honor-I think perhaps too often-that I am in haste, great haste. Leave your hold, then, I beg of you, and let me go where my business calls me."

"Monsieur," said Athos, letting him go, "you are not polite; it is easy to perceive that you come from a distance."

D'Artagnan had already strode down three or four stairs, but at Athos's last remark he stopped short.

"MORBLEU, monsieur!" said he, "however far I may come, it is not you who can give me a lesson in good manners, I warn you."

"Perhaps," said Athos.

"Ah! If I were not in such haste, and if I were not running after someone," said d'Artagnan.

"Monsieur Man-in-a-hurry, you can find me without running-ME, you understand?"

"And where, I pray you?"

"Near the Carmes-Deschaux."

"At what hour?"

"About noon."

"About noon? That will do; I will be there."

"Endeavor not to make me wait; for at quarter past twelve I will cut off your ears as you run."

"Good!" cried d'Artagnan, "I will be there ten minutes before twelve." And he set off running as if the devil possessed him, hoping that he might yet find the stranger, whose slow pace could not have carried him far.

But at the street gate, Porthos was talking with the soldier on guard. Between the two talkers there was just enough room for a man to pass. D'Artagnan thought it would suffice for him, and he sprang forward like a dart between them. But d'Artagnan had reckoned without the wind. As he was about to pass, the wind blew out Porthos's long cloak, and d'Artagnan rushed straight into the middle of it. Without doubt, Porthos had reasons for not abandoning this part of his vestments, for instead of quitting his hold on the flap in his hand, he pulled it toward him, so that d'Artagnan rolled himself up in the velvet by a movement of rotation explained by the persistency of Porthos.

D'Artagnan, hearing the Musketeer swear, wished to escape from the cloak, which blinded him, and sought to find his way from under the folds of it. He was particularly anxious to avoid marring

the freshness of the magnificent baldric we are acquainted with; but on timidly opening his eyes, he found himself with his nose fixed between the two shoulders of Porthos-that is to say, exactly upon the baldric.

Alas, like most things in this world which have nothing in their favor but appearances, the baldric was glittering with gold in the front, but was nothing but simple buff behind. Vainglorious as he was, Porthos could not afford to have a baldric wholly of gold, but had at least half. One could comprehend the necessity of the cold and the urgency of the cloak.

"Bless me!" cried Porthos, making strong efforts to disembarrass himself of d'Artagnan, who was wriggling about his back; "you must be mad to run against people in this manner."

"Excuse me," said d'Artagnan, reappearing under the shoulder of the giant, "but I am in such haste-I was running after someone and-"

"And do you always forget your eyes when you run?" asked Porthos.

"No," replied d'Artagnan, piqued, "and thanks to my eyes, I can see what other people cannot see."

Whether Porthos understood him or did not understand him, giving way to his anger, "Monsieur," said he, "you stand a chance of getting chastised if you rub Musketeers in this fashion."

"Chastised, Monsieur!" said d'Artagnan, "the expression is strong."

"It is one that becomes a man accustomed to look his enemies in the face."

"Ah, PARDIEU! I know full well that you don't turn your back to yours."

And the young man, delighted with his joke, went away laughing loudly.

Porthos foamed with rage, and made a movement to rush after d'Artagnan.

"Presently, presently," cried the latter, "when you haven't your cloak on."

"At one o'clock, then, behind the Luxembourg."

"Very well, at one o'clock, then," replied d'Artagnan, turning the angle of the street.

But neither in the street he had passed through, nor in the one which his eager glance pervaded, could he see anyone; however slowly the stranger had walked, he was gone on his way, or perhaps had entered some house. D'Artagnan inquired of everyone he met with, went down to the ferry, came up again by the Rue de Seine, and the Red Cross; but nothing, absolutely nothing! This chase was, however, advantageous to him in one sense, for in proportion as the perspiration broke from his forehead, his heart began to cool.

He began to reflect upon the events that had passed; they were numerous and inauspicious. It was scarcely eleven o'clock in the morning, and yet this morning had already brought him into disgrace with M. de Treville, who could not fail to think the manner in which d'Artagnan had left him a little cavalier.

Besides this, he had drawn upon himself two good duels with two men, each capable of killing three d'Artagnans-with two Musketeers, in short, with two of those beings whom he esteemed so greatly that he placed them in his mind and heart above all other men.

The outlook was sad. Sure of being killed by Athos, it may easily be understood that the young man was not very uneasy about Porthos. As hope, however, is the last thing extinguished in the heart of man, he finished by hoping that he might survive, even though with terrible wounds, in both these duels; and in case of surviving, he made the following reprehensions upon his own conduct:

"What a madcap I was, and what a stupid fellow I am! That brave and unfortunate Athos was wounded on that very shoulder against which I must run head foremost, like a ram. The only thing that astonishes me is that he did not strike me dead at once. He had good cause to do so; the pain I gave him must have been atrocious. As to Porthos-oh, as to Porthos, faith, that's a droll affair!"

And in spite of himself, the young man began to laugh aloud, looking round carefully, however, to see that his solitary laugh, without a cause in the eyes of passers-by, offended no one.

"As to Porthos, that is certainly droll; but I am not the less a giddy fool. Are people to be run against without warning? No! And have I any right to go and peep under their cloaks to see what

is not there? He would have pardoned me, he would certainly have pardoned me, if I had not said anything to him about that cursed baldric-in ambiguous words, it is true, but rather drolly ambiguous. Ah, cursed Gascon that I am, I get from one hobble into another. Friend d'Artagnan," continued he, speaking to himself with all the amenity that he thought due himself, "if you escape, of which there is not much chance, I would advise you to practice perfect politeness for the future. You must henceforth be admired and quoted as a model of it. To be obliging and polite does not necessarily make a man a coward. Look at Aramis, now; Aramis is mildness and grace personified. Well, did anybody ever dream of calling Aramis a coward? No, certainly not, and from this moment I will endeavor to model myself after him. Ah! That's strange! Here he is!"

D'Artagnan, walking and soliloquizing, had arrived within a few steps of the hotel d'Arguillon and in front of that hotel perceived Aramis, chatting gaily with three gentlemen; but as he had not forgotten that it was in presence of this young man that M. de Treville had been so angry in the morning, and as a witness of the rebuke the Musketeers had received was not likely to be at all agreeable, he pretended not to see him. D'Artagnan, on the contrary, quite full of his plans of conciliation and courtesy, approached the young men with a profound bow, accompanied by a most gracious smile. All four, besides, immediately broke off their conversation.

D'Artagnan was not so dull as not to perceive that he was one too many; but he was not sufficiently broken into the fashions of the gay world to know how to extricate himself gallantly from a false position, like that of a man who begins to mingle with people he is scarcely acquainted with and in a conversation that does not concern him. He was seeking in his mind, then, for the least awkward means of retreat, when he remarked that Aramis had let his handkerchief fall, and by mistake, no doubt, had placed his foot upon it. This appeared to be a favorable opportunity to repair his intrusion. He stooped, and with the most gracious air he could assume, drew the handkerchief from under the foot of the Musketeer in spite of the efforts the latter made to detain it, and holding it out to him, said, "I believe, monsieur, that this is a handkerchief you would be sorry to lose?"

The handkerchief was indeed richly embroidered, and had a coronet and arms at one of its corners. Aramis blushed excessively, and snatched rather than took the handkerchief from the hand of the Gascon.

"Ah, ah!" cried one of the Guards, "will you persist in saying, most discreet Aramis, that you are not on good terms with Madame de Bois-Tracy, when that gracious lady has the kindness to lend you one of her handkerchiefs?"

Aramis darted at d'Artagnan one of those looks which inform a man that he has acquired a mortal enemy. Then, resuming his mild air, "You are deceived, gentlemen," said he, "this handkerchief is not mine, and I cannot fancy why Monsieur has taken it into his head to offer it to me rather than to one of you; and as a proof of what I say, here is mine in my pocket."

So saying, he pulled out his own handkerchief, likewise a very elegant handkerchief, and of fine cambric-though cambric was dear at the period-but a handkerchief without embroidery and without arms, only ornamented with a single cipher, that of its proprietor.

This time d'Artagnan was not hasty. He perceived his mistake; but the friends of Aramis were not at all convinced by his denial, and one of them addressed the young Musketeer with affected seriousness. "If it were as you pretend it is," said he, "I should be forced, my dear Aramis, to reclaim it myself; for, as you very well know, Bois-Tracy is an intimate friend of mine, and I cannot allow the property of his wife to be sported as a trophy."

"You make the demand badly," replied Aramis; "and while acknowledging the justice of your reclamation, I refuse it on account of the form."

"The fact is," hazarded d'Artagnan, timidly, "I did not see the handkerchief fall from the pocket of Monsieur Aramis. He had his foot upon it, that is all; and I thought from having his foot upon it the handkerchief was his."

"And you were deceived, my dear sir," replied Aramis, coldly, very little sensible to the reparation. Then turning toward that one of the guards who had declared himself the friend of Bois-Tracy, "Besides," continued he, "I have reflected, my dear intimate of Bois-Tracy, that I am not less tenderly his friend than you can possibly be; so that decidedly this handkerchief is as likely to have fallen from your pocket as mine."

"No, upon my honor!" cried his Majesty's Guardsman.

"You are about to swear upon your honor and I upon my word, and then it will be pretty evident that one of us will have lied. Now, here, Montaran, we will do better than that-let each take a half."

"Of the handkerchief?"

"Yes."

"Perfectly just," cried the other two Guardsmen, "the judgment of King Solomon! Aramis, you certainly are full of wisdom!"

The young men burst into a laugh, and as may be supposed, the affair had no other sequel. In a moment or two the conversation ceased, and the three Guardsmen and the Musketeer, after having cordially shaken hands, separated, the Guardsmen going one way and Aramis another.

"Now is my time to make peace with this gallant man," said d'Artagnan to himself, having stood on one side during the whole of the latter part of the conversation; and with this good feeling drawing near to Aramis, who was departing without paying any attention to him, "Monsieur," said he, "you will excuse me, I hope."

"Ah, monsieur," interrupted Aramis, "permit me to observe to you that you have not acted in this affair as a gallant man ought."

"What, monsieur!" cried d'Artagnan, "and do you suppose-"

"I suppose, monsieur, that you are not a fool, and that you knew very well, although coming from Gascony, that people do not tread upon handkerchiefs without a reason. What the devil! Paris is not paved with cambric!"

"Monsieur, you act wrongly in endeavoring to mortify me," said d'Artagnan, in whom the natural quarrelsome spirit began to speak more loudly than his pacific resolutions. "I am from Gascony, it is true; and since you know it, there is no occasion to tell you that Gascons are not very patient, so that when they have begged to be excused once, were it even for a folly, they are convinced that they have done already at least as much again as they ought to have done."

"Monsieur, what I say to you about the matter," said Aramis, "is not for the sake of seeking a quarrel. Thank God, I am not a bravo! And being a Musketeer but for a time, I only fight when I am forced to do so, and always with great repugnance; but this time the affair is serious, for here is a lady compromised by you."

"By US, you mean!" cried d'Artagnan.

"Why did you so maladroitly restore me the handkerchief?"

"Why did you so awkwardly let it fall?"

"I have said, monsieur, and I repeat, that the handkerchief did not fall from my pocket."

"And thereby you have lied twice, monsieur, for I saw it fall."

"Ah, you take it with that tone, do you, Master Gascon? Well, I will teach you how to behave yourself."

"And I will send you back to your Mass book, Master Abbe. Draw, if you please, and instantly-"

"Not so, if you please, my good friend-not here, at least. Do you not perceive that we are opposite the Hotel d'Arguillon, which is full of the cardinal's creatures? How do I know that this is not his Eminence who has honored you with the commission to procure my head? Now, I entertain a ridiculous partiality for my head, it seems to suit my shoulders so correctly. I wish to kill you, be at rest as to that, but to kill you quietly in a snug, remote place, where you will not be able to boast of your death to anybody."

"I agree, monsieur; but do not be too confident. Take your handkerchief; whether it belongs to you or another, you may perhaps stand in need of it."

"Monsieur is a Gascon?" asked Aramis.

"Yes. Monsieur does not postpone an interview through prudence?"

"Prudence, monsieur, is a virtue sufficiently useless to Musketeers, I know, but indispensable to churchmen; and as I am only a Musketeer provisionally, I hold it good to be prudent. At two o'clock I shall have the honor of expecting you at the hotel of Monsieur de Treville. There I will indicate to you the best place and time."

The two young men bowed and separated, Aramis ascending the street which led to the Luxembourg, while d'Artagnan, perceiving the appointed hour was approaching, took the road to the Carmes-Deschaux, saying to himself, "Decidedly I can't draw back; but at least, if I am killed, I shall be killed by a Musketeer."

5 THE KING'S MUSKETEERS AND THE CARDINAL'S GUARDS

D'Artagnan was acquainted with nobody in Paris. He went therefore to his appointment with Athos without a second, determined to be satisfied with those his adversary should choose. Besides, his intention was formed to make the brave Musketeer all suitable apologies, but without meanness or weakness, fearing that might result from this duel which generally results from an affair of this kind, when a young and vigorous man fights with an adversary who is wounded and weakened-if conquered, he doubles the triumph of his antagonist; if a conqueror, he is accused of foul play and want of courage.

Now, we must have badly painted the character of our adventure seeker, or our readers must have already perceived that d'Artagnan was not an ordinary man; therefore, while repeating to himself that his death was inevitable, he did not make up his mind to die quietly, as one less courageous and less restrained might have done in his place. He reflected upon the different characters of those with whom he was going to fight, and began to view his situation more clearly. He hoped, by means of loyal excuses, to make a friend of Athos, whose lordly air and austere bearing pleased him much. He flattered himself he should be able to frighten Porthos with the adventure of the baldric, which he might, if not killed upon the spot, relate to everybody a recital which, well managed, would cover Porthos with ridicule. As to the astute Aramis, he did not entertain much dread of him; and supposing he should be able to get so far, he determined to dispatch him in good style or at least, by hitting him in the face, as Caesar recommended his soldiers do to those of Pompey, to damage forever the beauty of which he was so proud.

In addition to this, d'Artagnan possessed that invincible stock of resolution which the counsels of his father had implanted in his heart: "Endure nothing from anyone but the king, the cardinal, and Monsieur de Treville." He flew, then, rather than walked, toward the convent of the Carmes Dechausses, or rather Deschaux, as it was called at that period, a sort of building without a window, surrounded by barren fields-an accessory to the Preaux-Clercs, and which was generally employed as the place for the duels of men who had no time to lose.

When d'Artagnan arrived in sight of the bare spot of ground which extended along the foot of the monastery, Athos had been waiting about five minutes, and twelve o'clock was striking. He was, then, as punctual as the Samaritan woman, and the most rigorous casuist with regard to duels could have nothing to say.

Athos, who still suffered grievously from his wound, though it had been dressed anew by M. de Treville's surgeon, was seated on a post and waiting for his adversary with hat in hand, his feather even touching the ground.

"Monsieur," said Athos, "I have engaged two of my friends as seconds; but these two friends are not yet come, at which I am astonished, as it is not at all their custom."

"I have no seconds on my part, monsieur," said d'Artagnan; "for having only arrived yesterday in Paris, I as yet know no one but Monsieur de Treville, to whom I was recommended by my father, who has the honor to be, in some degree, one of his friends."

Athos reflected for an instant. "You know no one but Monsieur de Treville?" he asked.

"Yes, monsieur, I know only him."

"Well, but then," continued Athos, speaking half to himself, "if I kill you, I shall have the air of a boy-slayer."

"Not too much so," replied d'Artagnan, with a bow that was not deficient in dignity, "since you do me the honor to draw a sword with me while suffering from a wound which is very inconvenient."

"Very inconvenient, upon my word; and you hurt me devilishly, I can tell you. But I will take the left hand-it is my custom in such circumstances. Do not fancy that I do you a favor; I use either hand easily. And it will be even a disadvantage to you; a left-handed man is very troublesome to people who are not prepared for it. I regret I did not inform you sooner of this circumstance."

"You have truly, monsieur," said d'Artagnan, bowing again, "a courtesy, for which, I assure you, I am very grateful."

"You confuse me," replied Athos, with his gentlemanly air; "let us talk of something else, if you please. Ah, s'blood, how you have hurt me! My shoulder quite burns."

"If you would permit me-" said d'Artagnan, with timidity.

"What, monsieur?"

"I have a miraculous balsam for wounds-a balsam given to me by my mother and of which I have made a trial upon myself."

"Well?"

"Well, I am sure that in less than three days this balsam would cure you; and at the end of three days, when you would be cured-well, sir, it would still do me a great honor to be your man."

D'Artagnan spoke these words with a simplicity that did honor to his courtesy, without throwing the least doubt upon his courage.

"PARDIEU, monsieur!" said Athos, "that's a proposition that pleases me; not that I can accept it, but a league off it savors of the gentleman. Thus spoke and acted the gallant knights of the time of Charlemagne, in whom every cavalier ought to seek his model. Unfortunately, we do not live in the times of the great emperor, we live in the times of the cardinal; and three days hence, however well the secret might be guarded, it would be known, I say, that we were to fight, and our combat would be prevented. I think these fellows will never come."

"If you are in haste, monsieur," said d'Artagnan, with the same simplicity with which a moment before he had proposed to him to put off the duel for three days, "and if it be your will to dispatch me at once, do not inconvenience yourself, I pray you."

"There is another word which pleases me," cried Athos, with a gracious nod to d'Artagnan. "That did not come from a man without a heart. Monsieur, I love men of your kidney; and I foresee plainly that if we don't kill each other, I shall hereafter have much pleasure in your conversation. We will wait for these gentlemen, so please you; I have plenty of time, and it will be more correct. Ah, here is one of them, I believe."

In fact, at the end of the Rue Vaugirard the gigantic Porthos appeared.

"What!" cried d'Artagnan, "is your first witness Monsieur Porthos?"

"Yes, that disturbs you?"

"By no means."

"And here is the second."

D'Artagnan turned in the direction pointed to by Athos, and perceived Aramis.

"What!" cried he, in an accent of greater astonishment than before, "your second witness is Monsieur Aramis?"

"Doubtless! Are you not aware that we are never seen one without the others, and that we are called among the Musketeers and the Guards, at court and in the city, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, or the Three Inseparables? And yet, as you come from Dax or Pau-"

"From Tarbes," said d'Artagnan.

"It is probable you are ignorant of this little fact," said Athos.

"My faith!" replied d'Artagnan, "you are well named, gentlemen; and my adventure, if it should make any noise, will prove at least that your union is not founded upon contrasts."

In the meantime, Porthos had come up, waved his hand to Athos, and then turning toward d'Artagnan, stood quite astonished.

Let us say in passing that he had changed his baldric and relinquished his cloak.

"Ah, ah!" said he, "what does this mean?"

"This is the gentleman I am going to fight with," said Athos, pointing to d'Artagnan with his hand and saluting him with the same gesture.

"Why, it is with him I am also going to fight," said Porthos.

"But not before one o'clock," replied d'Artagnan.

"And I also am to fight with this gentleman," said Aramis, coming in his turn onto the place.

"But not until two o'clock," said d'Artagnan, with the same calmness.

"But what are you going to fight about, Athos?" asked Aramis.

"Faith! I don't very well know. He hurt my shoulder. And you, Porthos?"

"Faith! I am going to fight-because I am going to fight," answered Porthos, reddening.

Athos, whose keen eye lost nothing, perceived a faintly sly smile pass over the lips of the young Gascon as he replied, "We had a short discussion upon dress."

"And you, Aramis?" asked Athos.

"Oh, ours is a theological quarrel," replied Aramis, making a sign to d'Artagnan to keep secret the cause of their duel.

Athos indeed saw a second smile on the lips of d'Artagnan.

"Indeed?" said Athos.

"Yes; a passage of St. Augustine, upon which we could not agree," said the Gascon.

"Decidedly, this is a clever fellow," murmured Athos.

"And now you are assembled, gentlemen," said d'Artagnan, "permit me to offer you my apologies."

At this word APOLOGIES, a cloud passed over the brow of Athos, a haughty smile curled the lip of Porthos, and a negative sign was the reply of Aramis.

"You do not understand me, gentlemen," said d'Artagnan, throwing up his head, the sharp and bold lines of which were at the moment gilded by a bright ray of the sun. "I asked to be excused in case I should not be able to discharge my debt to all three; for Monsieur Athos has the right to kill me first, which must much diminish the face-value of your bill, Monsieur Porthos, and render yours almost null, Monsieur Aramis. And now, gentlemen, I repeat, excuse me, but on that account only, and-on guard!"

At these words, with the most gallant air possible, d'Artagnan drew his sword.

The blood had mounted to the head of d'Artagnan, and at that moment he would have drawn his sword against all the Musketeers in the kingdom as willingly as he now did against Athos, Porthos, and Aramis.

It was a quarter past midday. The sun was in its zenith, and the spot chosen for the scene of the duel was exposed to its full ardor.

"It is very hot," said Athos, drawing his sword in its turn, "and yet I cannot take off my doublet; for I just now felt my wound begin to bleed again, and I should not like to annoy Monsieur with the sight of blood which he has not drawn from me himself."

"That is true, Monsieur," replied d'Artagnan, "and whether drawn by myself or another, I assure you I shall always view with regret the blood of so brave a gentleman. I will therefore fight in my doublet, like yourself."

"Come, come, enough of such compliments!" cried Porthos. "Remember, we are waiting for our turns."

"Speak for yourself when you are inclined to utter such incongruities," interrupted Aramis. "For my part, I think what they say is very well said, and quite worthy of two gentlemen."

"When you please, monsieur," said Athos, putting himself on guard.

"I waited your orders," said d'Artagnan, crossing swords.

But scarcely had the two rapiers clashed, when a company of the Guards of his Eminence, commanded by M. de Jussac, turned the corner of the convent.

"The cardinal's Guards!" cried Aramis and Porthos at the same time. "Sheathe your swords, gentlemen, sheathe your swords!"

But it was too late. The two combatants had been seen in a position which left no doubt of their intentions.

"Halloo!" cried Jussac, advancing toward them and making a sign to his men to do so likewise, "halloo, Musketeers? Fighting here, are you? And the edicts? What is become of them?"

"You are very generous, gentlemen of the Guards," said Athos, full of rancor, for Jussac was one of the aggressors of the preceding day. "If we were to see you fighting, I can assure you that we would make no effort to prevent you. Leave us alone, then, and you will enjoy a little amusement without cost to yourselves."

"Gentlemen," said Jussac, "it is with great regret that I pronounce the thing impossible. Duty before everything. Sheathe, then, if you please, and follow us."

"Monsieur," said Aramis, parodying Jussac, "it would afford us great pleasure to obey your polite invitation if it depended upon ourselves; but unfortunately the thing is impossible-Monsieur de Treville has forbidden it. Pass on your way, then; it is the best thing to do."

This raillery exasperated Jussac. "We will charge upon you, then," said he, "if you disobey."

"There are five of them," said Athos, half aloud, "and we are but three; we shall be beaten again, and must die on the spot, for, on my part, I declare I will never appear again before the captain as a conquered man."

Athos, Porthos, and Aramis instantly drew near one another, while Jussac drew up his soldiers.

This short interval was sufficient to determine d'Artagnan on the part he was to take. It was one of those events which decide the life of a man; it was a choice between the king and the cardinal-the choice made, it must be persisted in. To fight, that was to disobey the law, that was to risk his head, that was to make at one blow an enemy of a minister more powerful than the king himself. All this the young man perceived, and yet, to his praise we speak it, he did not hesitate a second. Turning towards Athos and his friends, "Gentlemen," said he, "allow me to correct your words, if you please. You said you were but three, but it appears to me we are four."

"But you are not one of us," said Porthos.

"That's true," replied d'Artagnan; "I have not the uniform, but I have the spirit. My heart is that of a Musketeer; I feel it, monsieur, and that impels me on."

"Withdraw, young man," cried Jussac, who doubtless, by his gestures and the expression of his countenance, had guessed d'Artagnan's design. "You may retire; we consent to that. Save your skin; begone quickly."

D'Artagnan did not budge.

"Decidedly, you are a brave fellow," said Athos, pressing the young man's hand.

"Come, come, choose your part," replied Jussac.

"Well," said Porthos to Aramis, "we must do something."

"Monsieur is full of generosity," said Athos.

But all three reflected upon the youth of d'Artagnan, and dreaded his inexperience.

"We should only be three, one of whom is wounded, with the addition of a boy," resumed Athos; "and yet it will not be the less said we were four men."

"Yes, but to yield!" said Porthos.

"That IS difficult," replied Athos.

D'Artagnan comprehended their irresolution.

"Try me, gentlemen," said he, "and I swear to you by my honor that I will not go hence if we are conquered."

"What is your name, my brave fellow?" said Athos.

"d'Artagnan, monsieur."

"Well, then, Athos, Porthos, Aramis, and d'Artagnan, forward!" cried Athos.

"Come, gentlemen, have you decided?" cried Jussac for the third time.

"It is done, gentlemen," said Athos.

"And what is your choice?" asked Jussac.

"We are about to have the honor of charging you," replied Aramis, lifting his hat with one hand and drawing his sword with the other.

"Ah! You resist, do you?" cried Jussac.

"S'blood; does that astonish you?"

And the nine combatants rushed upon each other with a fury which however did not exclude a certain degree of method.

Athos fixed upon a certain Cahusac, a favorite of the cardinal's. Porthos had Bicarat, and Aramis found himself opposed to two adversaries. As to d'Artagnan, he sprang toward Jussac himself.

The heart of the young Gascon beat as if it would burst through his side-not from fear, God be thanked, he had not the shade of it, but with emulation; he fought like a furious tiger, turning ten times round his adversary, and changing his ground and his guard twenty times. Jussac was, as was then said, a fine blade, and had had much practice; nevertheless it required all his skill to defend himself against an adversary who, active and energetic, departed every instant from received rules, attacking him on all sides at once, and yet parrying like a man who had the greatest respect for his own epidermis.

This contest at length exhausted Jussac's patience. Furious at being held in check by one whom he had considered a boy, he became warm and began to make mistakes. D'Artagnan, who though wanting in practice had a sound theory, redoubled his agility. Jussac, anxious to put an end to this, springing forward, aimed a terrible thrust at his adversary, but the latter parried it; and while Jussac was recovering himself, glided like a serpent beneath his blade, and passed his sword through his body. Jussac fell like a dead mass.

D'Artagnan then cast an anxious and rapid glance over the field of battle.

Aramis had killed one of his adversaries, but the other pressed him warmly. Nevertheless, Aramis was in a good situation, and able to defend himself.

Bicarat and Porthos had just made counterhits. Porthos had received a thrust through his arm, and Bicarat one through his thigh. But neither of these two wounds was serious, and they only fought more earnestly.

Athos, wounded anew by Cahusac, became evidently paler, but did not give way a foot. He only changed his sword hand, and fought with his left hand.

According to the laws of dueling at that period, d'Artagnan was at liberty to assist whom he pleased. While he was endeavoring to find out which of his companions stood in greatest need, he caught a glance from Athos. The glance was of sublime eloquence. Athos would have died rather than appeal for help; but he could look, and with that look ask assistance. D'Artagnan interpreted it; with a terrible bound he sprang to the side of Cahusac, crying, "To me, Monsieur Guardsman; I will slay you!"

Cahusac turned. It was time; for Athos, whose great courage alone supported him, sank upon his knee.

"S'blood!" cried he to d'Artagnan, "do not kill him, young man, I beg of you. I have an old affair to settle with him when I am cured and sound again. Disarm him only-make sure of his sword. That's it! Very well done!"

The exclamation was drawn from Athos by seeing the sword of Cahusac fly twenty paces from him. D'Artagnan and Cahusac sprang forward at the same instant, the one to recover, the other to obtain, the sword; but d'Artagnan, being the more active, reached it first and placed his foot upon it.

Cahusac immediately ran to the Guardsman whom Aramis had killed, seized his rapier, and returned toward d'Artagnan; but on his way he met Athos, who during his relief which d'Artagnan

had procured him had recovered his breath, and who, for fear that d'Artagnan would kill his enemy, wished to resume the fight.

D'Artagnan perceived that it would be disobliging Athos not to leave him alone; and in a few minutes Cahusac fell, with a sword thrust through his throat.

At the same instant Aramis placed his sword point on the breast of his fallen enemy, and forced him to ask for mercy.

There only then remained Porthos and Bicarat. Porthos made a thousand flourishes, asking Bicarat what o'clock it could be, and offering him his compliments upon his brother's having just obtained a company in the regiment of Navarre; but, jest as he might, he gained nothing. Bicarat was one of those iron men who never fell dead.

Nevertheless, it was necessary to finish. The watch might come up and take all the combatants, wounded or not, royalists or cardinalists. Athos, Aramis, and d'Artagnan surrounded Bicarat, and required him to surrender. Though alone against all and with a wound in his thigh, Bicarat wished to hold out; but Jussac, who had risen upon his elbow, cried out to him to yield. Bicarat was a Gascon, as d'Artagnan was; he turned a deaf ear, and contented himself with laughing, and between two parries finding time to point to a spot of earth with his sword, "Here," cried he, parodying a verse of the Bible, "here will Bicarat die; for I only am left, and they seek my life."

"But there are four against you; leave off, I command you."

"Ah, if you command me, that's another thing," said Bicarat. "As you are my commander, it is my duty to obey." And springing backward, he broke his sword across his knee to avoid the necessity of surrendering it, threw the pieces over the convent wall, and crossed him arms, whistling a cardinalist air.

Bravery is always respected, even in an enemy. The Musketeers saluted Bicarat with their swords, and returned them to their sheaths. D'Artagnan did the same. Then, assisted by Bicarat, the only one left standing, they bore Jussac, Cahusac, and one of Aramis's adversaries who was only wounded, under the porch of the convent. The fourth, as we have said, was dead. They then rang the bell, and carrying away four swords out of five, they took their road, intoxicated with joy, toward the hotel of M. de Treville.

They walked arm in arm, occupying the whole width of the street and taking in every Musketeer they met, so that in the end it became a triumphal march. The heart of d'Artagnan swam in delirium; he marched between Athos and Porthos, pressing them tenderly.

"If I am not yet a Musketeer," said he to his new friends, as he passed through the gateway of M. de Treville's hotel, "at least I have entered upon my apprenticeship, haven't I?"

6 HIS MAJESTY KING LOUIS XIII

This affair made a great noise. M. de Treville scolded his Musketeers in public, and congratulated them in private; but as no time was to be lost in gaining the king, M. de Treville hastened to report himself at the Louvre. It was already too late. The king was closeted with the cardinal, and M. de Treville was informed that the king was busy and could not receive him at that moment. In the evening M. de Treville attended the king's gaming table. The king was winning; and as he was very avaricious, he was in an excellent humor. Perceiving M. de Treville at a distance-

"Come here, Monsieur Captain," said he, "come here, that I may growl at you. Do you know that his Eminence has been making fresh complaints against your Musketeers, and that with so much emotion, that this evening his Eminence is indisposed? Ah, these Musketeers of yours are very devils-fellows to be hanged."

"No, sire," replied Treville, who saw at the first glance how things would go, "on the contrary, they are good creatures, as meek as lambs, and have but one desire, I'll be their warranty. And that is that their swords may never leave their scabbards but in your majesty's service. But what are they to do? The Guards of Monsieur the Cardinal are forever seeking quarrels with them, and for the honor of the corps even, the poor young men are obliged to defend themselves."

"Listen to Monsieur de Treville," said the king; "listen to him! Would not one say he was speaking of a religious community? In truth, my dear Captain, I have a great mind to take away your commission and give it to Mademoiselle de Chemerault, to whom I promised an abbey. But don't fancy that I am going to take you on your bare word. I am called Louis the Just, Monsieur de Treville, and by and by, by and by we will see."

"Ah, sire; it is because I confide in that justice that I shall wait patiently and quietly the good pleasure of your Majesty."

"Wait, then, monsieur, wait," said the king; "I will not detain you long."

In fact, fortune changed; and as the king began to lose what he had won, he was not sorry to find an excuse for playing Charlemagne-if we may use a gaming phrase of whose origin we confess our ignorance. The king therefore arose a minute after, and putting the money which lay before him into his pocket, the major part of which arose from his winnings, "La Vieuville," said he, "take my place; I must speak to Monsieur de Treville on an affair of importance. Ah, I had eighty louis before me; put down the same sum, so that they who have lost may have nothing to complain of. Justice before everything."

Then turning toward M. de Treville and walking with him toward the embrasure of a window, "Well, monsieur," continued he, "you say it is his Eminence's Guards who have sought a quarrel with your Musketeers?"

"Yes, sire, as they always do."

"And how did the thing happen? Let us see, for you know, my dear Captain, a judge must hear both sides."

"Good Lord! In the most simple and natural manner possible. Three of my best soldiers, whom your Majesty knows by name, and whose devotedness you have more than once appreciated, and who have, I dare affirm to the king, his service much at heart-three of my best soldiers, I say, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, had made a party of pleasure with a young fellow from Gascony, whom I had introduced to them the same morning. The party was to take place at St. Germain, I believe, and they had appointed to meet at the Carmes-Deschaux, when they were disturbed by de Jussac, Cahusac, Bicarat, and two other Guardsmen, who certainly did not go there in such a numerous company without some ill intention against the edicts."

"Ah, ah! You incline me to think so," said the king. "There is no doubt they went thither to fight themselves."

"I do not accuse them, sire; but I leave your Majesty to judge what five armed men could possibly be going to do in such a deserted place as the neighborhood of the Convent des Carmes."

"Yes, you are right, Treville, you are right!"

"Then, upon seeing my Musketeers they changed their minds, and forgot their private hatred for partisan hatred; for your Majesty cannot be ignorant that the Musketeers, who belong to the king and nobody but the king, are the natural enemies of the Guardsmen, who belong to the cardinal."

"Yes, Treville, yes," said the king, in a melancholy tone; "and it is very sad, believe me, to see thus two parties in France, two heads to royalty. But all this will come to an end, Treville, will come to an end. You say, then, that the Guardsmen sought a quarrel with the Musketeers?"

"I say that it is probable that things have fallen out so, but I will not swear to it, sire. You know how difficult it is to discover the truth; and unless a man be endowed with that admirable instinct which causes Louis XIII to be named the Just-"

"You are right, Treville; but they were not alone, your Musketeers. They had a youth with them?"

"Yes, sire, and one wounded man; so that three of the king's Musketeers-one of whom was wounded-and a youth not only maintained their ground against five of the most terrible of the cardinal's Guardsmen, but absolutely brought four of them to earth."

"Why, this is a victory!" cried the king, all radiant, "a complete victory!"

"Yes, sire; as complete as that of the Bridge of Ce."

"Four men, one of them wounded, and a youth, say you?"

"One hardly a young man; but who, however, behaved himself so admirably on this occasion that I will take the liberty of recommending him to your Majesty."

"How does he call himself?"

"d'Artagnan, sire; he is the son of one of my oldest friends-the son of a man who served under the king your father, of glorious memory, in the civil war."

"And you say this young man behaved himself well? Tell me how, Treville-you know how I delight in accounts of war and fighting."

And Louis XIII twisted his mustache proudly, placing his hand upon his hip.

"Sire," resumed Treville, "as I told you, Monsieur d'Artagnan is little more than a boy; and as he has not the honor of being a Musketeer, he was dressed as a citizen. The Guards of the cardinal, perceiving his youth and that he did not belong to the corps, invited him to retire before they attacked."

"So you may plainly see, Treville," interrupted the king, "it was they who attacked?"

"That is true, sire; there can be no more doubt on that head. They called upon him then to retire; but he answered that he was a Musketeer at heart, entirely devoted to your Majesty, and that therefore he would remain with Messieurs the Musketeers."

"Brave young man!" murmured the king.

"Well, he did remain with them; and your Majesty has in him so firm a champion that it was he who gave Jussac the terrible sword thrust which has made the cardinal so angry."

"He who wounded Jussac!" cried the king, "he, a boy! Treville, that's impossible!"

"It is as I have the honor to relate it to your Majesty."

"Jussac, one of the first swordsmen in the kingdom?"

"Well, sire, for once he found his master."

"I will see this young man, Treville-I will see him; and if anything can be done-well, we will make it our business."

"When will your Majesty deign to receive him?"

"Tomorrow, at midday, Treville."

"Shall I bring him alone?"

"No, bring me all four together. I wish to thank them all at once. Devoted men are so rare, Treville, by the back staircase. It is useless to let the cardinal know."

"Yes, sire."

"You understand, Treville-an edict is still an edict, it is forbidden to fight, after all."

"But this encounter, sire, is quite out of the ordinary conditions of a duel. It is a brawl; and the proof is that there were five of the cardinal's Guardsmen against my three Musketeers and Monsieur d'Artagnan."

"That is true," said the king; "but never mind, Treville, come still by the back staircase."

Treville smiled; but as it was indeed something to have prevailed upon this child to rebel against his master, he saluted the king respectfully, and with this agreement, took leave of him.

That evening the three Musketeers were informed of the honor accorded them. As they had long been acquainted with the king, they were not much excited; but d'Artagnan, with his Gascon imagination, saw in it his future fortune, and passed the night in golden dreams. By eight o'clock in the morning he was at the apartment of Athos.

D'Artagnan found the Musketeer dressed and ready to go out. As the hour to wait upon the king was not till twelve, he had made a party with Porthos and Aramis to play a game at tennis in a tennis court situated near the stables of the Luxembourg. Athos invited d'Artagnan to follow them; and although ignorant of the game, which he had never played, he accepted, not knowing what to do with his time from nine o'clock in the morning, as it then scarcely was, till twelve.

The two Musketeers were already there, and were playing together. Athos, who was very expert in all bodily exercises, passed with d'Artagnan to the opposite side and challenged them; but at the first effort he made, although he played with his left hand, he found that his wound was yet too recent to allow of such exertion. D'Artagnan remained, therefore, alone; and as he declared he was too ignorant of the game to play it regularly they only continued giving balls to one another without counting. But one of these balls, launched by Porthos' herculean hand, passed so close to d'Artagnan's face that he thought that if, instead of passing near, it had hit him, his audience would have been probably lost, as it would have been impossible for him to present himself before the king. Now, as upon this audience, in his Gascon imagination, depended his future life, he saluted Aramis and Porthos politely, declaring that he would not resume the game until he should be prepared to play with them on more equal terms, and went and took his place near the cord and in the gallery.

Unfortunately for d'Artagnan, among the spectators was one of his Eminence's Guardsmen, who, still irritated by the defeat of his companions, which had happened only the day before, had promised himself to seize the first opportunity of avenging it. He believed this opportunity was now come and addressed his neighbor: "It is not astonishing that that young man should be afraid of a ball, for he is doubtless a Musketeer apprentice."

D'Artagnan turned round as if a serpent had stung him, and fixed his eyes intensely upon the Guardsman who had just made this insolent speech.

"PARDIEU," resumed the latter, twisting his mustache, "look at me as long as you like, my little gentleman! I have said what I have said."

"And as since that which you have said is too clear to require any explanation," replied d'Artagnan, in a low voice, "I beg you to follow me."

"And when?" asked the Guardsman, with the same jeering air.

"At once, if you please."

"And you know who I am, without doubt?"

"I? I am completely ignorant; nor does it much disquiet me."

"You're in the wrong there; for if you knew my name, perhaps you would not be so pressing."

"What is your name?"

"Bernajoux, at your service."

"Well, then, Monsieur Bernajoux," said d'Artagnan, tranquilly, "I will wait for you at the door."

"Go, monsieur, I will follow you."

"Do not hurry yourself, monsieur, lest it be observed that we go out together. You must be aware that for our undertaking, company would be in the way."

"That's true," said the Guardsman, astonished that his name had not produced more effect upon the young man.

Indeed, the name of Bernajoux was known to all the world, d'Artagnan alone excepted, perhaps; for it was one of those which figured most frequently in the daily brawls which all the edicts of the cardinal could not repress.

Porthos and Aramis were so engaged with their game, and Athos was watching them with so much attention, that they did not even perceive their young companion go out, who, as he had told the Guardsman of his Eminence, stopped outside the door. An instant after, the Guardsman descended in his turn. As d'Artagnan had no time to lose, on account of the audience of the king, which was fixed for midday, he cast his eyes around, and seeing that the street was empty, said to his adversary, "My faith! It is fortunate for you, although your name is Bernajoux, to have only to deal with an apprentice Musketeer. Never mind; be content, I will do my best. On guard!"

"But," said he whom d'Artagnan thus provoked, "it appears to me that this place is badly chosen, and that we should be better behind the Abbey St. Germain or in the Pre-aux-Clercs."

"What you say is full of sense," replied d'Artagnan; "but unfortunately I have very little time to spare, having an appointment at twelve precisely. On guard, then, monsieur, on guard!"

Bernajoux was not a man to have such a compliment paid to him twice. In an instant his sword glittered in his hand, and he sprang upon his adversary, whom, thanks to his great youthfulness, he hoped to intimidate.

But d'Artagnan had on the preceding day served his apprenticeship. Fresh sharpened by his victory, full of hopes of future favor, he was resolved not to recoil a step. So the two swords were crossed close to the hilts, and as d'Artagnan stood firm, it was his adversary who made the retreating step; but d'Artagnan seized the moment at which, in this movement, the sword of Bernajoux deviated from the line. He freed his weapon, made a lunge, and touched his adversary on the shoulder. D'Artagnan immediately made a step backward and raised his sword; but Bernajoux cried out that it was nothing, and rushing blindly upon him, absolutely spitted himself upon d'Artagnan's sword. As, however, he did not fall, as he did not declare himself conquered, but only broke away toward the hotel of M. de la Tremouille, in whose service he had a relative, d'Artagnan was ignorant of the seriousness of the last wound his adversary had received, and pressing him warmly, without doubt would soon have completed his work with a third blow, when the noise which arose from the street being heard in the tennis court, two of the friends of the Guardsman, who had seen him go out after exchanging some words with d'Artagnan, rushed, sword in hand, from the court, and fell upon the conqueror. But Athos, Porthos, and Aramis quickly appeared in their turn, and the moment the two Guardsmen attacked their young companion, drove them back. Bernajoux now fell, and as the Guardsmen were only two against four, they began to cry, "To the rescue! The Hotel de la Tremouille!" At these cries, all who were in the hotel rushed out and fell upon the four companions, who on their side cried aloud, "To the rescue, Musketeers!"

This cry was generally heeded; for the Musketeers were known to be enemies of the cardinal, and were beloved on account of the hatred they bore to his Eminence. Thus the soldiers of other companies than those which belonged to the Red Duke, as Aramis had called him, often took part with the king's Musketeers in these quarrels. Of three Guardsmen of the company of M. Dessessart who were passing, two came to the assistance of the four companions, while the other ran toward the hotel of M. de Treville, crying, "To the rescue, Musketeers! To the rescue!" As usual, this hotel was full of soldiers of this company, who hastened to the succor of their comrades. The MELEE became general, but strength was on the side of the Musketeers. The cardinal's Guards and M. de la Tremouille's people retreated into the hotel, the doors of which they closed just in time to prevent

their enemies from entering with them. As to the wounded man, he had been taken in at once, and, as we have said, in a very bad state.

Excitement was at its height among the Musketeers and their allies, and they even began to deliberate whether they should not set fire to the hotel to punish the insolence of M. de la Tremouille's domestics in daring to make a SORTIE upon the king's Musketeers. The proposition had been made, and received with enthusiasm, when fortunately eleven o'clock struck. D'Artagnan and his companions remembered their audience, and as they would very much have regretted that such an opportunity should be lost, they succeeded in calming their friends, who contented themselves with hurling some paving stones against the gates; but the gates were too strong. They soon tired of the sport. Besides, those who must be considered the leaders of the enterprise had quit the group and were making their way toward the hotel of M. de Treville, who was waiting for them, already informed of this fresh disturbance.

"Quick to the Louvre," said he, "to the Louvre without losing an instant, and let us endeavor to see the king before he is prejudiced by the cardinal. We will describe the thing to him as a consequence of the affair of yesterday, and the two will pass off together."

M de Treville, accompanied by the four young fellows, directed his course toward the Louvre; but to the great astonishment of the captain of the Musketeers, he was informed that the king had gone stag hunting in the forest of St. Germain. M. de Treville required this intelligence to be repeated to him twice, and each time his companions saw his brow become darker.

"Had his Majesty," asked he, "any intention of holding this hunting party yesterday?"

"No, your Excellency," replied the valet de chambre, "the Master of the Hounds came this morning to inform him that he had marked down a stag. At first the king answered that he would not go; but he could not resist his love of sport, and set out after dinner."

"And the king has seen the cardinal?" asked M. de Treville.

"In all probability he has," replied the valet, "for I saw the horses harnessed to his Eminence's carriage this morning, and when I asked where he was going, they told me, 'To St. Germain.'"

"He is beforehand with us," said M. de Treville. "Gentlemen, I will see the king this evening; but as to you, I do not advise you to risk doing so."

This advice was too reasonable, and moreover came from a man who knew the king too well, to allow the four young men to dispute it. M. de Treville recommended everyone to return home and wait for news.

On entering his hotel, M. de Treville thought it best to be first in making the complaint. He sent one of his servants to M. de la Tremouille with a letter in which he begged of him to eject the cardinal's Guardsmen from his house, and to reprimand his people for their audacity in making SORTIE against the king's Musketeers. But M. de la Tremouille-already prejudiced by his esquire, whose relative, as we already know, Bernajoux was-replied that it was neither for M. de Treville nor the Musketeers to complain, but, on the contrary, for him, whose people the Musketeers had assaulted and whose hotel they had endeavored to burn. Now, as the debate between these two nobles might last a long time, each becoming, naturally, more firm in his own opinion, M. de Treville thought of an expedient which might terminate it quietly. This was to go himself to M. de la Tremouille.

He repaired, therefore, immediately to his hotel, and caused himself to be announced.

The two nobles saluted each other politely, for if no friendship existed between them, there was at least esteem. Both were men of courage and honor; and as M. de la Tremouille-a Protestant, and seeing the king seldom-was of no party, he did not, in general, carry any bias into his social relations. This time, however, his address, although polite, was cooler than usual.

"Monsieur," said M. de Treville, "we fancy that we have each cause to complain of the other, and I am come to endeavor to clear up this affair."

"I have no objection," replied M. de la Tremouille, "but I warn you that I am well informed, and all the fault is with your Musketeers."

"You are too just and reasonable a man, monsieur!" said Treville, "not to accept the proposal I am about to make to you."

"Make it, monsieur, I listen."

"How is Monsieur Bernajoux, your esquire's relative?"

"Why, monsieur, very ill indeed! In addition to the sword thrust in his arm, which is not dangerous, he has received another right through his lungs, of which the doctor says bad things."

"But has the wounded man retained his senses?"

"Perfectly."

"Does he talk?"

"With difficulty, but he can speak."

"Well, monsieur, let us go to him. Let us adjure him, in the name of the God before whom he must perhaps appear, to speak the truth. I will take him for judge in his own cause, monsieur, and will believe what he will say."

M de la Tremouille reflected for an instant; then as it was difficult to suggest a more reasonable proposal, he agreed to it.

Both descended to the chamber in which the wounded man lay. The latter, on seeing these two noble lords who came to visit him, endeavored to raise himself up in his bed; but he was too weak, and exhausted by the effort, he fell back again almost senseless.

M de la Tremouille approached him, and made him inhale some salts, which recalled him to life. Then M. de Treville, unwilling that it should be thought that he had influenced the wounded man, requested M. de la Tremouille to interrogate him himself.

That happened which M. de Treville had foreseen. Placed between life and death, as Bernajoux was, he had no idea for a moment of concealing the truth; and he described to the two nobles the affair exactly as it had passed.

This was all that M. de Treville wanted. He wished Bernajoux a speedy convalescence, took leave of M. de la Tremouille, returned to his hotel, and immediately sent word to the four friends that he awaited their company at dinner.

M de Treville entertained good company, wholly anticardinalist, though. It may easily be understood, therefore, that the conversation during the whole of dinner turned upon the two checks that his Eminence's Guardsmen had received. Now, as d'Artagnan had been the hero of these two fights, it was upon him that all the felicitations fell, which Athos, Porthos, and Aramis abandoned to him, not only as good comrades, but as men who had so often had their turn that they could very well afford him his.

Toward six o'clock M. de Treville announced that it was time to go to the Louvre; but as the hour of audience granted by his Majesty was past, instead of claiming the ENTREE by the back stairs, he placed himself with the four young men in the antechamber. The king had not yet returned from hunting. Our young men had been waiting about half an hour, amid a crowd of courtiers, when all the doors were thrown open, and his Majesty was announced.

At his announcement d'Artagnan felt himself tremble to the very marrow of his bones. The coming instant would in all probability decide the rest of his life. His eyes therefore were fixed in a sort of agony upon the door through which the king must enter.

Louis XIII appeared, walking fast. He was in hunting costume covered with dust, wearing large boots, and holding a whip in his hand. At the first glance, d'Artagnan judged that the mind of the king was stormy.

This disposition, visible as it was in his Majesty, did not prevent the courtiers from ranging themselves along his pathway. In royal antechambers it is worth more to be viewed with an angry eye than not to be seen at all. The three Musketeers therefore did not hesitate to make a step forward. D'Artagnan on the contrary remained concealed behind them; but although the king knew Athos, Porthos, and Aramis personally, he passed before them without speaking or looking-indeed, as if

he had never seen them before. As for M. de Treville, when the eyes of the king fell upon him, he sustained the look with so much firmness that it was the king who dropped his eyes; after which his Majesty, grumbling, entered his apartment.

"Matters go but badly," said Athos, smiling; "and we shall not be made Chevaliers of the Order this time."

"Wait here ten minutes," said M. de Treville; "and if at the expiration of ten minutes you do not see me come out, return to my hotel, for it will be useless for you to wait for me longer."

The four young men waited ten minutes, a quarter of an hour, twenty minutes; and seeing that M. de Treville did not return, went away very uneasy as to what was going to happen.

M de Treville entered the king's cabinet boldly, and found his Majesty in a very ill humor, seated on an armchair, beating his boot with the handle of his whip. This, however, did not prevent his asking, with the greatest coolness, after his Majesty's health.

"Bad, monsieur, bad!" replied the king; "I am bored."

This was, in fact, the worst complaint of Louis XIII, who would sometimes take one of his courtiers to a window and say, "Monsieur So-and-so, let us weary ourselves together."

"How! Your Majesty is bored? Have you not enjoyed the pleasures of the chase today?"

"A fine pleasure, indeed, monsieur! Upon my soul, everything degenerates; and I don't know whether it is the game which leaves no scent, or the dogs that have no noses. We started a stag of ten branches. We chased him for six hours, and when he was near being taken-when St. – Simon was already putting his horn to his mouth to sound the mort-crack, all the pack takes the wrong scent and sets off after a two-year-older. I shall be obliged to give up hunting, as I have given up hawking. Ah, I am an unfortunate king, Monsieur de Treville! I had but one gerfalcon, and he died day before yesterday."

"Indeed, sire, I wholly comprehend your disappointment. The misfortune is great; but I think you have still a good number of falcons, sparrow hawks, and tiercels."

"And not a man to instruct them. Falconers are declining. I know no one but myself who is acquainted with the noble art of venery. After me it will all be over, and people will hunt with gins, snares, and traps. If I had but the time to train pupils! But there is the cardinal always at hand, who does not leave me a moment's repose; who talks to me about Spain, who talks to me about Austria, who talks to me about England! Ah! A PROPOS of the cardinal, Monsieur de Treville, I am vexed with you!"

This was the chance at which M. de Treville waited for the king. He knew the king of old, and he knew that all these complaints were but a preface-a sort of excitation to encourage himself-and that he had now come to his point at last.

"And in what have I been so unfortunate as to displease your Majesty?" asked M. de Treville, feigning the most profound astonishment.

"Is it thus you perform your charge, monsieur?" continued the king, without directly replying to de Treville's question. "Is it for this I name you captain of my Musketeers, that they should assassinate a man, disturb a whole quarter, and endeavor to set fire to Paris, without your saying a word? But yet," continued the king, "undoubtedly my haste accuses you wrongfully; without doubt the rioters are in prison, and you come to tell me justice is done."

"Sire," replied M. de Treville, calmly, "on the contrary, I come to demand it of you."

"And against whom?" cried the king.

"Against calumniators," said M. de Treville.

"Ah! This is something new," replied the king. "Will you tell me that your three damned Musketeers, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, and your youngster from Bearn, have not fallen, like so many furies, upon poor Bernajoux, and have not maltreated him in such a fashion that probably by this time he is dead? Will you tell me that they did not lay siege to the hotel of the Duc de la Tremouille, and that they did not endeavor to burn it? – which would not, perhaps, have been a great misfortune

in time of war, seeing that it is nothing but a nest of Huguenots, but which is, in time of peace, a frightful example. Tell me, now, can you deny all this?"

"And who told you this fine story, sire?" asked Treville, quietly.

"Who has told me this fine story, monsieur? Who should it be but he who watches while I sleep, who labors while I amuse myself, who conducts everything at home and abroad-in France as in Europe?"

"Your Majesty probably refers to God," said M. de Treville; "for I know no one except God who can be so far above your Majesty."

"No, monsieur; I speak of the prop of the state, of my only servant, of my only friend-of the cardinal."

"His Eminence is not his holiness, sire."

"What do you mean by that, monsieur?"

"That it is only the Pope who is infallible, and that this infallibility does not extend to cardinals."

"You mean to say that he deceives me; you mean to say that he betrays me? You accuse him, then? Come, speak; avow freely that you accuse him!"

"No, sire, but I say that he deceives himself. I say that he is ill-informed. I say that he has hastily accused your Majesty's Musketeers, toward whom he is unjust, and that he has not obtained his information from good sources."

"The accusation comes from Monsieur de la Tremouille, from the duke himself. What do you say to that?"

"I might answer, sire, that he is too deeply interested in the question to be a very impartial witness; but so far from that, sire, I know the duke to be a royal gentleman, and I refer the matter to him-but upon one condition, sire."

"What?"

"It is that your Majesty will make him come here, will interrogate him yourself, TETE-A-TETE, without witnesses, and that I shall see your Majesty as soon as you have seen the duke."

"What, then! You will bind yourself," cried the king, "by what Monsieur de la Tremouille shall say?"

"Yes, sire."

"You will accept his judgment?"

"Undoubtedly."

"And you will submit to the reparation he may require?"

"Certainly."

"La Chesnaye," said the king. "La Chesnaye!"

Louis XIII's confidential valet, who never left the door, entered in reply to the call.

"La Chesnaye," said the king, "let someone go instantly and find Monsieur de la Tremouille; I wish to speak with him this evening."

"Your Majesty gives me your word that you will not see anyone between Monsieur de la Tremouille and myself?"

"Nobody, by the faith of a gentleman."

"Tomorrow, then, sire?"

"Tomorrow, monsieur."

"At what o'clock, please your Majesty?"

"At any hour you will."

"But in coming too early I should be afraid of awakening your Majesty."

"Awaken me! Do you think I ever sleep, then? I sleep no longer, monsieur. I sometimes dream, that's all. Come, then, as early as you like-at seven o'clock; but beware, if you and your Musketeers are guilty."

"If my Musketeers are guilty, sire, the guilty shall be placed in your Majesty's hands, who will dispose of them at your good pleasure. Does your Majesty require anything further? Speak, I am ready to obey."

"No, monsieur, no; I am not called Louis the Just without reason. Tomorrow, then, monsieur-tomorrow."

"Till then, God preserve your Majesty!"

However ill the king might sleep, M. de Treville slept still worse. He had ordered his three Musketeers and their companion to be with him at half past six in the morning. He took them with him, without encouraging them or promising them anything, and without concealing from them that their luck, and even his own, depended upon the cast of the dice.

Arrived at the foot of the back stairs, he desired them to wait. If the king was still irritated against them, they would depart without being seen; if the king consented to see them, they would only have to be called.

On arriving at the king's private antechamber, M. de Treville found La Chesnaye, who informed him that they had not been able to find M. de la Tremouille on the preceding evening at his hotel, that he returned too late to present himself at the Louvre, that he had only that moment arrived and that he was at that very hour with the king.

This circumstance pleased M. de Treville much, as he thus became certain that no foreign suggestion could insinuate itself between M. de la Tremouille's testimony and himself.

In fact, ten minutes had scarcely passed away when the door of the king's closet opened, and M. de Treville saw M. de la Tremouille come out. The duke came straight up to him, and said: "Monsieur de Treville, his Majesty has just sent for me in order to inquire respecting the circumstances which took place yesterday at my hotel. I have told him the truth; that is to say, that the fault lay with my people, and that I was ready to offer you my excuses. Since I have the good fortune to meet you, I beg you to receive them, and to hold me always as one of your friends."

"Monsieur the Duke," said M. de Treville, "I was so confident of your loyalty that I required no other defender before his Majesty than yourself. I find that I have not been mistaken, and I thank you that there is still one man in France of whom may be said, without disappointment, what I have said of you."

"That's well said," cried the king, who had heard all these compliments through the open door; "only tell him, Treville, since he wishes to be considered your friend, that I also wish to be one of his, but he neglects me; that it is nearly three years since I have seen him, and that I never do see him unless I send for him. Tell him all this for me, for these are things which a king cannot say for himself."

"Thanks, sire, thanks," said the duke; "but your Majesty may be assured that it is not those-I do not speak of Monsieur de Treville-whom your Majesty sees at all hours of the day that are most devoted to you."

"Ah! You have heard what I said? So much the better, Duke, so much the better," said the king, advancing toward the door. "Ah! It is you, Treville. Where are your Musketeers? I told you the day before yesterday to bring them with you; why have you not done so?"

"They are below, sire, and with your permission La Chesnaye will bid them come up."

"Yes, yes, let them come up immediately. It is nearly eight o'clock, and at nine I expect a visit. Go, Monsieur Duke, and return often. Come in, Treville."

The Duke saluted and retired. At the moment he opened the door, the three Musketeers and d'Artagnan, conducted by La Chesnaye, appeared at the top of the staircase.

"Come in, my braves," said the king, "come in; I am going to scold you."

The Musketeers advanced, bowing, d'Artagnan following closely behind them.

"What the devil!" continued the king. "Seven of his Eminence's Guards placed HORS DE COMBAT by you four in two days! That's too many, gentlemen, too many! If you go on so, his Eminence will be forced to renew his company in three weeks, and I to put the edicts in force in

all their rigor. One now and then I don't say much about; but seven in two days, I repeat, it is too many, it is far too many!"

"Therefore, sire, your Majesty sees that they are come, quite contrite and repentant, to offer you their excuses."

"Quite contrite and repentant! Hem!" said the king. "I place no confidence in their hypocritical faces. In particular, there is one yonder of a Gascon look. Come hither, monsieur."

D'Artagnan, who understood that it was to him this compliment was addressed, approached, assuming a most deprecating air.

"Why, you told me he was a young man? This is a boy, Treville, a mere boy! Do you mean to say that it was he who bestowed that severe thrust at Jussac?"

"And those two equally fine thrusts at Bernajoux."

"Truly!"

"Without reckoning," said Athos, "that if he had not rescued me from the hands of Cahusac, I should not now have the honor of making my very humble reverence to your Majesty."

"Why he is a very devil, this Bearnais! VENTRE-SAINT-GRIS, Monsieur de Treville, as the king my father would have said. But at this sort of work, many doublets must be slashed and many swords broken. Now, Gascons are always poor, are they not?"

"Sire, I can assert that they have hitherto discovered no gold mines in their mountains; though the Lord owes them this miracle in recompense for the manner in which they supported the pretensions of the king your father."

"Which is to say that the Gascons made a king of me, myself, seeing that I am my father's son, is it not, Treville? Well, happily, I don't say nay to it. La Chesnaye, go and see if by rummaging all my pockets you can find forty pistoles; and if you can find them, bring them to me. And now let us see, young man, with your hand upon your conscience, how did all this come to pass?"

D'Artagnan related the adventure of the preceding day in all its details; how, not having been able to sleep for the joy he felt in the expectation of seeing his Majesty, he had gone to his three friends three hours before the hour of audience; how they had gone together to the tennis court, and how, upon the fear he had manifested lest he receive a ball in the face, he had been jeered at by Bernajoux, who had nearly paid for his jeer with his life, and M. de la Tremouille, who had nothing to do with the matter, with the loss of his hotel.

"This is all very well," murmured the king, "yes, this is just the account the duke gave me of the affair. Poor cardinal! Seven men in two days, and those of his very best! But that's quite enough, gentlemen; please to understand, that's enough. You have taken your revenge for the Rue Ferou, and even exceeded it; you ought to be satisfied."

"If your Majesty is so," said Treville, "we are."

"Oh, yes; I am," added the king, taking a handful of gold from La Chesnaye, and putting it into the hand of d'Artagnan. "Here," said he, "is a proof of my satisfaction."

At this epoch, the ideas of pride which are in fashion in our days did not prevail. A gentleman received, from hand to hand, money from the king, and was not the least in the world humiliated. D'Artagnan put his forty pistoles into his pocket without any scruple-on the contrary, thanking his Majesty greatly.

"There," said the king, looking at a clock, "there, now, as it is half past eight, you may retire; for as I told you, I expect someone at nine. Thanks for your devotedness, gentlemen. I may continue to rely upon it, may I not?"

"Oh, sire!" cried the four companions, with one voice, "we would allow ourselves to be cut to pieces in your Majesty's service."

"Well, well, but keep whole; that will be better, and you will be more useful to me. Treville," added the king, in a low voice, as the others were retiring, "as you have no room in the Musketeers, and as we have besides decided that a novitiate is necessary before entering that corps, place this young

man in the company of the Guards of Monsieur Dessessart, your brother-in-law. Ah, PARDIEU, Treville! I enjoy beforehand the face the cardinal will make. He will be furious; but I don't care. I am doing what is right."

The king waved his hand to Treville, who left him and rejoined the Musketeers, whom he found sharing the forty pistoles with d'Artagnan.

The cardinal, as his Majesty had said, was really furious, so furious that during eight days he absented himself from the king's gaming table. This did not prevent the king from being as complacent to him as possible whenever he met him, or from asking in the kindest tone, "Well, Monsieur Cardinal, how fares it with that poor Jussac and that poor Bernajoux of yours?"

7 THE INTERIOR[3] OF THE MUSKETEERS

When d'Artagnan was out of the Louvre, and consulted his friends upon the use he had best make of his share of the forty pistoles, Athos advised him to order a good repast at the Pomme-de-Pin, Porthos to engage a lackey, and Aramis to provide himself with a suitable mistress.

The repast was carried into effect that very day, and the lackey waited at table. The repast had been ordered by Athos, and the lackey furnished by Porthos. He was a Picard, whom the glorious Musketeer had picked up on the Bridge Tournelle, making rings and plashing in the water.

Porthos pretended that this occupation was proof of a reflective and contemplative organization, and he had brought him away without any other recommendation. The noble carriage of this gentleman, for whom he believed himself to be engaged, had won Planchet-that was the name of the Picard. He felt a slight disappointment, however, when he saw that this place was already taken by a compeer named Mousqueton, and when Porthos signified to him that the state of his household, though great, would not support two servants, and that he must enter into the service of d'Artagnan. Nevertheless, when he waited at the dinner given by his master, and saw him take out a handful of gold to pay for it, he believed his fortune made, and returned thanks to heaven for having thrown him into the service of such a Croesus. He preserved this opinion even after the feast, with the remnants of which he repaired his own long abstinence; but when in the evening he made his master's bed, the chimeras of Planchet faded away. The bed was the only one in the apartment, which consisted of an antechamber and a bedroom. Planchet slept in the antechamber upon a coverlet taken from the bed of d'Artagnan, and which d'Artagnan from that time made shift to do without.

Athos, on his part, had a valet whom he had trained in his service in a thoroughly peculiar fashion, and who was named Grimaud. He was very taciturn, this worthy signor. Be it understood we are speaking of Athos. During the five or six years that he had lived in the strictest intimacy with his companions, Porthos and Aramis, they could remember having often seen him smile, but had never heard him laugh. His words were brief and expressive, conveying all that was meant, and no more; no embellishments, no embroidery, no arabesques. His conversation was a matter of fact, without a single romance.

Although Athos was scarcely thirty years old, and was of great personal beauty and intelligence of mind, no one knew whether he had ever had a mistress. He never spoke of women. He certainly did not prevent others from speaking of them before him, although it was easy to perceive that this kind of conversation, in which he only mingled by bitter words and misanthropic remarks, was very disagreeable to him. His reserve, his roughness, and his silence made almost an old man of him. He had, then, in order not to disturb his habits, accustomed Grimaud to obey him upon a simple gesture or upon a simple movement of his lips. He never spoke to him, except under the most extraordinary occasions.

Sometimes, Grimaud, who feared his master as he did fire, while entertaining a strong attachment to his person and a great veneration for his talents, believed he perfectly understood what he wanted, flew to execute the order received, and did precisely the contrary. Athos then shrugged his shoulders, and, without putting himself in a passion, thrashed Grimaud. On these days he spoke a little.

Porthos, as we have seen, had a character exactly opposite to that of Athos. He not only talked much, but he talked loudly, little caring, we must render him that justice, whether anybody listened to him or not. He talked for the pleasure of talking and for the pleasure of hearing himself talk. He spoke upon all subjects except the sciences, alleging in this respect the inveterate hatred he had borne to scholars from his childhood. He had not so noble an air as Athos, and the commencement of their

[3] *Domestic affairs, housekeeping*

intimacy often rendered him unjust toward that gentleman, whom he endeavored to eclipse by his splendid dress. But with his simple Musketeer's uniform and nothing but the manner in which he threw back his head and advanced his foot, Athos instantly took the place which was his due and consigned the ostentatious Porthos to the second rank. Porthos consoled himself by filling the antechamber of M. de Treville and the guardroom of the Louvre with the accounts of his love scrapes, after having passed from professional ladies to military ladies, from the lawyer's dame to the baroness, there was question of nothing less with Porthos than a foreign princess, who was enormously fond of him.

An old proverb says, "Like master, like man." Let us pass, then, from the valet of Athos to the valet of Porthos, from Grimaud to Mousqueton.

Mousqueton was a Norman, whose pacific name of Boniface his master had changed into the infinitely more sonorous name of Mousqueton. He had entered the service of Porthos upon condition that he should only be clothed and lodged, though in a handsome manner; but he claimed two hours a day to himself, consecrated to an employment which would provide for his other wants. Porthos agreed to the bargain; the thing suited him wonderfully well. He had doublets cut out of his old clothes and cast-off cloaks for Mousqueton, and thanks to a very intelligent tailor, who made his clothes look as good as new by turning them, and whose wife was suspected of wishing to make Porthos descend from his aristocratic habits, Mousqueton made a very good figure when attending on his master.

As for Aramis, of whom we believe we have sufficiently explained the character-a character which, like that of his companions, we shall be able to follow in its development-his lackey was called Bazin. Thanks to the hopes which his master entertained of someday entering into orders, he was always clothed in black, as became the servant of a churchman. He was a Berrichon, thirty-five or forty years old, mild, peaceable, sleek, employing the leisure his master left him in the perusal of pious works, providing rigorously for two a dinner of few dishes, but excellent. For the rest, he was dumb, blind, and deaf, and of unimpeachable fidelity.

And now that we are acquainted, superficially at least, with the masters and the valets, let us pass on to the dwellings occupied by each of them.

Athos dwelt in the Rue Ferou, within two steps of the Luxembourg. His apartment consisted of two small chambers, very nicely fitted up, in a furnished house, the hostess of which, still young and still really handsome, cast tender glances uselessly at him. Some fragments of past splendor appeared here and there upon the walls of this modest lodging; a sword, for example, richly embossed, which belonged by its make to the times of Francis I, the hilt of which alone, encrusted with precious stones, might be worth two hundred pistoles, and which, nevertheless, in his moments of greatest distress Athos had never pledged or offered for sale. It had long been an object of ambition for Porthos. Porthos would have given ten years of his life to possess this sword.

One day, when he had an appointment with a duchess, he endeavored even to borrow it of Athos. Athos, without saying anything, emptied his pockets, got together all his jewels, purses, aiguillettes, and gold chains, and offered them all to Porthos; but as to the sword, he said it was sealed to its place and should never quit it until its master should himself quit his lodgings. In addition to the sword, there was a portrait representing a nobleman of the time of Henry III, dressed with the greatest elegance, and who wore the Order of the Holy Ghost; and this portrait had certain resemblances of lines with Athos, certain family likenesses which indicated that this great noble, a knight of the Order of the King, was his ancestor.

Besides these, a casket of magnificent goldwork, with the same arms as the sword and the portrait, formed a middle ornament to the mantelpiece, and assorted badly with the rest of the furniture. Athos always carried the key of this coffer about him; but he one day opened it before Porthos, and Porthos was convinced that this coffer contained nothing but letters and papers-love letters and family papers, no doubt.

Porthos lived in an apartment, large in size and of very sumptuous appearance, in the Rue du Vieux-Colombier. Every time he passed with a friend before his windows, at one of which

Mousqueton was sure to be placed in full livery, Porthos raised his head and his hand, and said, “That is my abode!” But he was never to be found at home; he never invited anybody to go up with him, and no one could form an idea of what his sumptuous apartment contained in the shape of real riches.

As to Aramis, he dwelt in a little lodging composed of a boudoir, an eating room, and a bedroom, which room, situated, as the others were, on the ground floor, looked out upon a little fresh green garden, shady and impenetrable to the eyes of his neighbors.

With regard to d’Artagnan, we know how he was lodged, and we have already made acquaintance with his lackey, Master Planchet.

D’Artagnan, who was by nature very curious-as people generally are who possess the genius of intrigue-did all he could to make out who Athos, Porthos, and Aramis really were (for under these pseudonyms each of these young men concealed his family name) – Athos in particular, who, a league away, savored of nobility. He addressed himself then to Porthos to gain information respecting Athos and Aramis, and to Aramis in order to learn something of Porthos.

Unfortunately Porthos knew nothing of the life of his silent companion but what revealed itself. It was said Athos had met with great crosses in love, and that a frightful treachery had forever poisoned the life of this gallant man. What could this treachery be? All the world was ignorant of it.

As to Porthos, except his real name (as was the case with those of his two comrades), his life was very easily known. Vain and indiscreet, it was as easy to see through him as through a crystal. The only thing to mislead the investigator would have been belief in all the good things he said of himself.

With respect to Aramis, though having the air of having nothing secret about him, he was a young fellow made up of mysteries, answering little to questions put to him about others, and having learned from him the report which prevailed concerning the success of the Musketeer with a princess, wished to gain a little insight into the amorous adventures of his interlocutor. “And you, my dear companion,” said he, “you speak of the baronesses, countesses, and princesses of others?”

“PARDIEU! I spoke of them because Porthos talked of them himself, because he had paraded all these fine things before me. But be assured, my dear Monsieur d’Artagnan, that if I had obtained them from any other source, or if they had been confided to me, there exists no confessor more discreet than myself.”

“Oh, I don’t doubt that,” replied d’Artagnan; “but it seems to me that you are tolerably familiar with coats of arms-a certain embroidered handkerchief, for instance, to which I owe the honor of your acquaintance?”

This time Aramis was not angry, but assumed the most modest air and replied in a friendly tone, “My dear friend, do not forget that I wish to belong to the Church, and that I avoid all mundane opportunities. The handkerchief you saw had not been given to me, but it had been forgotten and left at my house by one of my friends. I was obliged to pick it up in order not to compromise him and the lady he loves. As for myself, I neither have, nor desire to have, a mistress, following in that respect the very judicious example of Athos, who has none any more than I have.”

“But what the devil! You are not a priest, you are a Musketeer!”

“A Musketeer for a time, my friend, as the cardinal says, a Musketeer against my will, but a churchman at heart, believe me. Athos and Porthos dragged me into this to occupy me. I had, at the moment of being ordained, a little difficulty with-But that would not interest you, and I am taking up your valuable time.”

“Not at all; it interests me very much,” cried d’Artagnan; “and at this moment I have absolutely nothing to do.”

“Yes, but I have my breviary to repeat,” answered Aramis; “then some verses to compose, which Madame d’Aiguillon begged of me. Then I must go to the Rue St. Honore in order to purchase some rouge for Madame de Chevreuse. So you see, my dear friend, that if you are not in a hurry, I am very much in a hurry.”

Aramis held out his hand in a cordial manner to his young companion, and took leave of him.

Notwithstanding all the pains he took, d'Artagnan was unable to learn any more concerning his three new-made friends. He formed, therefore, the resolution of believing for the present all that was said of their past, hoping for more certain and extended revelations in the future. In the meanwhile, he looked upon Athos as an Achilles, Porthos as an Ajax, and Aramis as a Joseph.

As to the rest, the life of the four young friends was joyous enough. Athos played, and that as a rule unfortunately. Nevertheless, he never borrowed a sou of his companions, although his purse was ever at their service; and when he had played upon honor, he always awakened his creditor by six o'clock the next morning to pay the debt of the preceding evening.

Porthos had his fits. On the days when he won he was insolent and ostentatious; if he lost, he disappeared completely for several days, after which he reappeared with a pale face and thinner person, but with money in his purse.

As to Aramis, he never played. He was the worst Musketeer and the most unconvivial companion imaginable. He had always something or other to do. Sometimes in the midst of dinner, when everyone, under the attraction of wine and in the warmth of conversation, believed they had two or three hours longer to enjoy themselves at table, Aramis looked at his watch, arose with a bland smile, and took leave of the company, to go, as he said, to consult a casuist with whom he had an appointment. At other times he would return home to write a treatise, and requested his friends not to disturb him.

At this Athos would smile, with his charming, melancholy smile, which so became his noble countenance, and Porthos would drink, swearing that Aramis would never be anything but a village CURE.

Planchet, d'Artagnan's valet, supported his good fortune nobly. He received thirty sous per day, and for a month he returned to his lodgings gay as a chaffinch, and affable toward his master. When the wind of adversity began to blow upon the housekeeping of the Rue des Fossoyeurs-that is to say, when the forty pistoles of King Louis XIII were consumed or nearly so-he commenced complaints which Athos thought nauseous, Porthos indecent, and Aramis ridiculous. Athos counseled d'Artagnan to dismiss the fellow; Porthos was of the opinion that he should give him a good thrashing first; and Aramis contended that a master should never attend to anything but the civilities paid to him.

"This is all very easy for you to say," replied d'Artagnan, "for you, Athos, who live like a dumb man with Grimaud, who forbid him to speak, and consequently never exchange ill words with him; for you, Porthos, who carry matters in such a magnificent style, and are a god to your valet, Mousqueton; and for you, Aramis, who, always abstracted by your theological studies, inspire your servant, Bazin, a mild, religious man, with a profound respect; but for me, who am without any settled means and without resources-for me, who am neither a Musketeer nor even a Guardsman, what am I to do to inspire either the affection, the terror, or the respect in Planchet?"

"This is serious," answered the three friends; "it is a family affair. It is with valets as with wives, they must be placed at once upon the footing in which you wish them to remain. Reflect upon it."

D'Artagnan did reflect, and resolved to thrash Planchet provisionally; which he did with the conscientiousness that d'Artagnan carried into everything. After having well beaten him, he forbade him to leave his service without his permission. "For," added he, "the future cannot fail to mend; I inevitably look for better times. Your fortune is therefore made if you remain with me, and I am too good a master to allow you to miss such a chance by granting you the dismissal you require."

This manner of acting roused much respect for d'Artagnan's policy among the Musketeers. Planchet was equally seized with admiration, and said no more about going away.

The life of the four young men had become fraternal. D'Artagnan, who had no settled habits of his own, as he came from his province into the midst of a world quite new to him, fell easily into the habits of his friends.

They rose about eight o'clock in the winter, about six in summer, and went to take the countersign and see how things went on at M. de Treville's. D'Artagnan, although he was not a

Musketeer, performed the duty of one with remarkable punctuality. He went on guard because he always kept company with whoever of his friends was on duty. He was well known at the Hotel of the Musketeers, where everyone considered him a good comrade. M. de Treville, who had appreciated him at the first glance and who bore him a real affection, never ceased recommending him to the king.

On their side, the three Musketeers were much attached to their young comrade. The friendship which united these four men, and the need they felt of seeing another three or four times a day, whether for dueling, business, or pleasure, caused them to be continually running after one another like shadows; and the Inseparables were constantly to be met with seeking one another, from the Luxembourg to the Place St. Sulpice, or from the Rue du Vieux-Colombier to the Luxembourg.

In the meanwhile the promises of M. de Treville went on prosperously. One fine morning the king commanded M. de Chevalier Dessessart to admit d'Artagnan as a cadet in his company of Guards. D'Artagnan, with a sigh, donned his uniform, which he would have exchanged for that of a Musketeer at the expense of ten years of his existence. But M. de Treville promised this favor after a novitiate of two years-a novitiate which might besides be abridged if an opportunity should present itself for d'Artagnan to render the king any signal service, or to distinguish himself by some brilliant action. Upon this promise d'Artagnan withdrew, and the next day he began service.

Then it became the turn of Athos, Porthos, and Aramis to mount guard with d'Artagnan when he was on duty. The company of M. le Chevalier Dessessart thus received four instead of one when it admitted d'Artagnan.

8 CONCERNING A COURT INTRIGUE

In the meantime, the forty pistoles of King Louis XIII, like all other things of this world, after having had a beginning had an end, and after this end our four companions began to be somewhat embarrassed. At first, Athos supported the association for a time with his own means.

Porthos succeeded him; and thanks to one of those disappearances to which he was accustomed, he was able to provide for the wants of all for a fortnight. At last it became Aramis's turn, who performed it with a good grace and who succeeded-as he said, by selling some theological books-in procuring a few pistoles.

Then, as they had been accustomed to do, they had recourse to M. de Treville, who made some advances on their pay; but these advances could not go far with three Musketeers who were already much in arrears and a Guardsman who as yet had no pay at all.

At length when they found they were likely to be really in want, they got together, as a last effort, eight or ten pistoles, with which Porthos went to the gaming table. Unfortunately he was in a bad vein; he lost all, together with twenty-five pistoles for which he had given his word.

Then the inconvenience became distress. The hungry friends, followed by their lackeys, were seen haunting the quays and Guard rooms, picking up among their friends abroad all the dinners they could meet with; for according to the advice of Aramis, it was prudent to sow repasts right and left in prosperity, in order to reap a few in time of need.

Athos was invited four times, and each time took his friends and their lackeys with him. Porthos had six occasions, and contrived in the same manner that his friends should partake of them; Aramis had eight of them. He was a man, as must have been already perceived, who made but little noise, and yet was much sought after.

As to d'Artagnan, who as yet knew nobody in the capital, he only found one chocolate breakfast at the house of a priest of his own province, and one dinner at the house of a cornet of the Guards. He took his army to the priest's, where they devoured as much provision as would have lasted him for two months, and to the cornet's, who performed wonders; but as Planchet said, "People do not eat at once for all time, even when they eat a good deal."

D'Artagnan thus felt himself humiliated in having only procured one meal and a half for his companions-as the breakfast at the priest's could only be counted as half a repast-in return for the feasts which Athos, Porthos, and Aramis had procured him. He fancied himself a burden to the society, forgetting in his perfectly juvenile good faith that he had fed this society for a month; and he set his mind actively to work. He reflected that this coalition of four young, brave, enterprising, and active men ought to have some other object than swaggering walks, fencing lessons, and practical jokes, more or less witty.

In fact, four men such as they were-four men devoted to one another, from their purses to their lives; four men always supporting one another, never yielding, executing singly or together the resolutions formed in common; four arms threatening the four cardinal points, or turning toward a single point-must inevitably, either subterraneously, in open day, by mining, in the trench, by cunning, or by force, open themselves a way toward the object they wished to attain, however well it might be defended, or however distant it may seem. The only thing that astonished d'Artagnan was that his friends had never thought of this.

He was thinking by himself, and even seriously racking his brain to find a direction for this single force four times multiplied, with which he did not doubt, as with the lever for which Archimedes sought, they should succeed in moving the world, when someone tapped gently at his door. D'Artagnan awakened Planchet and ordered him to open it.

From this phrase, "d'Artagnan awakened Planchet," the reader must not suppose it was night, or that day was hardly come. No, it had just struck four. Planchet, two hours before, had asked his

master for some dinner, and he had answered him with the proverb, “He who sleeps, dines.” And Planchet dined by sleeping.

A man was introduced of simple mien, who had the appearance of a tradesman. Planchet, by way of dessert, would have liked to hear the conversation; but the citizen declared to d’Artagnan that, what he had to say being important and confidential, he desired to be left alone with him.

D’Artagnan dismissed Planchet, and requested his visitor to be seated. There was a moment of silence, during which the two men looked at each other, as if to make a preliminary acquaintance, after which d’Artagnan bowed, as a sign that he listened.

“I have heard Monsieur d’Artagnan spoken of as a very brave young man,” said the citizen; “and this reputation which he justly enjoys had decided me to confide a secret to him.”

“Speak, monsieur, speak,” said d’Artagnan, who instinctively scented something advantageous.

The citizen made a fresh pause and continued, “I have a wife who is seamstress to the queen, monsieur, and who is not deficient in either virtue or beauty. I was induced to marry her about three years ago, although she had but very little dowry, because Monsieur Laporte, the queen’s cloak bearer, is her godfather, and befriends her.”

“Well, monsieur?” asked d’Artagnan.

“Well!” resumed the citizen, “well, monsieur, my wife was abducted yesterday morning, as she was coming out of her workroom.”

“And by whom was your wife abducted?”

“I know nothing surely, monsieur, but I suspect someone.”

“And who is the person whom you suspect?”

“A man who has pursued her a long time.”

“The devil!”

“But allow me to tell you, monsieur,” continued the citizen, “that I am convinced that there is less love than politics in all this.”

“Less love than politics,” replied d’Artagnan, with a reflective air; “and what do you suspect?”

“I do not know whether I ought to tell you what I suspect.”

“Monsieur, I beg you to observe that I ask you absolutely nothing. It is you who have come to me. It is you who have told me that you had a secret to confide in me. Act, then, as you think proper; there is still time to withdraw.”

“No, monsieur, no; you appear to be an honest young man, and I will have confidence in you. I believe, then, that it is not on account of any intrigues of her own that my wife has been arrested, but because of those of a lady much greater than herself.”

“Ah, ah! Can it be on account of the amours of Madame de Bois-Tracy?” said d’Artagnan, wishing to have the air, in the eyes of the citizen, of being posted as to court affairs.

“Higher, monsieur, higher.”

“Of Madame d’Aiguillon?”

“Still higher.”

“Of Madame de Chevreuse?”

“Of the-” d’Artagnan checked himself.

“Yes, monsieur,” replied the terrified citizen, in a tone so low that he was scarcely audible.

“And with whom?”

“With whom can it be, if not the Duke of-”

“The Duke of-”

“Yes, monsieur,” replied the citizen, giving a still fainter intonation to his voice.

“But how do you know all this?”

“How do I know it?”

“Yes, how do you know it? No half-confidence, or-you understand!”

“I know it from my wife, monsieur-from my wife herself.”

"Who learns it from whom?"

"From Monsieur Laporte. Did I not tell you that she was the goddaughter of Monsieur Laporte, the confidential man of the queen? Well, Monsieur Laporte placed her near her Majesty in order that our poor queen might at least have someone in whom she could place confidence, abandoned as she is by the king, watched as she is by the cardinal, betrayed as she is by everybody."

"Ah, ah! It begins to develop itself," said d'Artagnan.

"Now, my wife came home four days ago, monsieur. One of her conditions was that she should come and see me twice a week; for, as I had the honor to tell you, my wife loves me dearly-my wife, then, came and confided to me that the queen at that very moment entertained great fears."

"Truly!"

"Yes. The cardinal, as it appears, pursues her and persecutes her more than ever. He cannot pardon her the history of the Saraband. You know the history of the Saraband?"

"PARDIEU! Know it!" replied d'Artagnan, who knew nothing about it, but who wished to appear to know everything that was going on.

"So that now it is no longer hatred, but vengeance."

"Indeed!"

"And the queen believes-"

"Well, what does the queen believe?"

"She believes that someone has written to the Duke of Buckingham in her name."

"In the queen's name?"

"Yes, to make him come to Paris; and when once come to Paris, to draw him into some snare."

"The devil! But your wife, monsieur, what has she to do with all this?"

"Her devotion to the queen is known; and they wish either to remove her from her mistress, or to intimidate her, in order to obtain her Majesty's secrets, or to seduce her and make use of her as a spy."

"That is likely," said d'Artagnan; "but the man who has abducted her-do you know him?"

"I have told you that I believe I know him."

"His name?"

"I do not know that; what I do know is that he is a creature of the cardinal, his evil genius."

"But you have seen him?"

"Yes, my wife pointed him out to me one day."

"Has he anything remarkable about him by which one may recognize him?"

"Oh, certainly; he is a noble of very lofty carriage, black hair, swarthy complexion, piercing eye, white teeth, and has a scar on his temple."

"A scar on his temple!" cried d'Artagnan; "and with that, white teeth, a piercing eye, dark complexion, black hair, and haughty carriage-why, that's my man of Meung."

"He is your man, do you say?"

"Yes, yes; but that has nothing to do with it. No, I am wrong. On the contrary, that simplifies the matter greatly. If your man is mine, with one blow I shall obtain two revenges, that's all; but where to find this man?"

"I know not."

"Have you no information as to his abiding place?"

"None. One day, as I was conveying my wife back to the Louvre, he was coming out as she was going in, and she showed him to me."

"The devil! The devil!" murmured d'Artagnan; "all this is vague enough. From whom have you learned of the abduction of your wife?"

"From Monsieur Laporte."

"Did he give you any details?"

"He knew none himself."

"And you have learned nothing from any other quarter?"

"Yes, I have received-"

"What?"

"I fear I am committing a great imprudence."

"You always come back to that; but I must make you see this time that it is too late to retreat."

"I do not retreat, MORDIEU!" cried the citizen, swearing in order to rouse his courage. "Besides, by the faith of Bonacieux-"

"You call yourself Bonacieux?" interrupted d'Artagnan.

"Yes, that is my name."

"You said, then, by the word of Bonacieux. Pardon me for interrupting you, but it appears to me that that name is familiar to me."

"Possibly, monsieur. I am your landlord."

"Ah, ah!" said d'Artagnan, half rising and bowing; "you are my landlord?"

"Yes, monsieur, yes. And as it is three months since you have been here, and though, distracted as you must be in your important occupations, you have forgotten to pay me my rent-as, I say, I have not tormented you a single instant, I thought you would appreciate my delicacy."

"How can it be otherwise, my dear Bonacieux?" replied d'Artagnan; "trust me, I am fully grateful for such unparalleled conduct, and if, as I told you, I can be of any service to you-"

"I believe you, monsieur, I believe you; and as I was about to say, by the word of Bonacieux, I have confidence in you."

"Finish, then, what you were about to say."

The citizen took a paper from his pocket, and presented it to d'Artagnan.

"A letter?" said the young man.

"Which I received this morning."

D'Artagnan opened it, and as the day was beginning to decline, he approached the window to read it. The citizen followed him.

"'Do not seek your wife,'" read d'Artagnan; "'she will be restored to you when there is no longer occasion for her. If you make a single step to find her you are lost.'

"That's pretty positive," continued d'Artagnan; "but after all, it is but a menace."

"Yes; but that menace terrifies me. I am not a fighting man at all, monsieur, and I am afraid of the Bastille."

"Hum!" said d'Artagnan. "I have no greater regard for the Bastille than you. If it were nothing but a sword thrust, why then-"

"I have counted upon you on this occasion, monsieur."

"Yes?"

"Seeing you constantly surrounded by Musketeers of a very superb appearance, and knowing that these Musketeers belong to Monsieur de Treville, and were consequently enemies of the cardinal, I thought that you and your friends, while rendering justice to your poor queen, would be pleased to play his Eminence an ill turn."

"Without doubt."

"And then I have thought that considering three months' lodging, about which I have said nothing-"

"Yes, yes; you have already given me that reason, and I find it excellent."

"Reckoning still further, that as long as you do me the honor to remain in my house I shall never speak to you about rent-"

"Very kind!"

"And adding to this, if there be need of it, meaning to offer you fifty pistoles, if, against all probability, you should be short at the present moment."

"Admirable! You are rich then, my dear Monsieur Bonacieux?"

"I am comfortably off, monsieur, that's all; I have scraped together some such things as an income of two or three thousand crowns in the haberdashery business, but more particularly in venturing some funds in the last voyage of the celebrated navigator Jean Moquet; so that you understand, monsieur-But! – " cried the citizen.

"What!" demanded d'Artagnan.

"Whom do I see yonder?"

"Where?"

"In the street, facing your window, in the embrasure of that door-a man wrapped in a cloak."

"It is he!" cried d'Artagnan and the citizen at the same time, each having recognized his man.

"Ah, this time," cried d'Artagnan, springing to his sword, "this time he will not escape me!"

Drawing his sword from its scabbard, he rushed out of the apartment. On the staircase he met Athos and Porthos, who were coming to see him. They separated, and d'Artagnan rushed between them like a dart.

"Pah! Where are you going?" cried the two Musketeers in a breath.

"The man of Meung!" replied d'Artagnan, and disappeared.

D'Artagnan had more than once related to his friends his adventure with the stranger, as well as the apparition of the beautiful foreigner, to whom this man had confided some important missive.

The opinion of Athos was that d'Artagnan had lost his letter in the skirmish. A gentleman, in his opinion-and according to d'Artagnan's portrait of him, the stranger must be a gentleman-would be incapable of the baseness of stealing a letter.

Porthos saw nothing in all this but a love meeting, given by a lady to a cavalier, or by a cavalier to a lady, which had been disturbed by the presence of d'Artagnan and his yellow horse.

Aramis said that as these sorts of affairs were mysterious, it was better not to fathom them.

They understood, then, from the few words which escaped from d'Artagnan, what affair was in hand, and as they thought that overtaking his man, or losing sight of him, d'Artagnan would return to his rooms, they kept on their way.

When they entered d'Artagnan's chamber, it was empty; the landlord, dreading the consequences of the encounter which was doubtless about to take place between the young man and the stranger, had, consistent with the character he had given himself, judged it prudent to decamp.

9 D'ARTAGNAN SHOWS HIMSELF

As Athos and Porthos had foreseen, at the expiration of a half hour, d'Artagnan returned. He had again missed his man, who had disappeared as if by enchantment. D'Artagnan had run, sword in hand, through all the neighboring streets, but had found nobody resembling the man he sought for. Then he came back to the point where, perhaps, he ought to have begun, and that was to knock at the door against which the stranger had leaned; but this proved useless-for though he knocked ten or twelve times in succession, no one answered, and some of the neighbors, who put their noses out of their windows or were brought to their doors by the noise, had assured him that that house, all the openings of which were tightly closed, had not been inhabited for six months.

While d'Artagnan was running through the streets and knocking at doors, Aramis had joined his companions; so that on returning home d'Artagnan found the reunion complete.

"Well!" cried the three Musketeers all together, on seeing d'Artagnan enter with his brow covered with perspiration and his countenance upset with anger.

"Well!" cried he, throwing his sword upon the bed, "this man must be the devil in person; he has disappeared like a phantom, like a shade, like a specter."

"Do you believe in apparitions?" asked Athos of Porthos.

"I never believe in anything I have not seen, and as I never have seen apparitions, I don't believe in them."

"The Bible," said Aramis, "makes our belief in them a law; the ghost of Samuel appeared to Saul, and it is an article of faith that I should be very sorry to see any doubt thrown upon, Porthos."

"At all events, man or devil, body or shadow, illusion or reality, this man is born for my damnation; for his flight has caused us to miss a glorious affair, gentlemen-an affair by which there were a hundred pistoles, and perhaps more, to be gained."

"How is that?" cried Porthos and Aramis in a breath.

As to Athos, faithful to his system of reticence, he contented himself with interrogating d'Artagnan by a look.

"Planchet," said d'Artagnan to his domestic, who just then insinuated his head through the half-open door in order to catch some fragments of the conversation, "go down to my landlord, Monsieur Bonacieux, and ask him to send me half a dozen bottles of Beaugency wine; I prefer that."

"Ah, ah! You have credit with your landlord, then?" asked Porthos.

"Yes," replied d'Artagnan, "from this very day; and mind, if the wine is bad, we will send him to find better."

"We must use, and not abuse," said Aramis, sententiously.

"I always said that d'Artagnan had the longest head of the four," said Athos, who, having uttered his opinion, to which d'Artagnan replied with a bow, immediately resumed his accustomed silence.

"But come, what is this about?" asked Porthos.

"Yes," said Aramis, "impart it to us, my dear friend, unless the honor of any lady be hazarded by this confidence; in that case you would do better to keep it to yourself."

"Be satisfied," replied d'Artagnan; "the honor of no one will have cause to complain of what I have to tell."

He then related to his friends, word for word, all that had passed between him and his host, and how the man who had abducted the wife of his worthy landlord was the same with whom he had had the difference at the hostelry of the Jolly Miller.

"Your affair is not bad," said Athos, after having tasted like a connoisseur and indicated by a nod of his head that he thought the wine good; "and one may draw fifty or sixty pistoles from this good man. Then there only remains to ascertain whether these fifty or sixty pistoles are worth the risk of four heads."

"But observe," cried d'Artagnan, "that there is a woman in the affair-a woman carried off, a woman who is doubtless threatened, tortured perhaps, and all because she is faithful to her mistress."

"Beware, d'Artagnan, beware," said Aramis. "You grow a little too warm, in my opinion, about the fate of Madame Bonacieux. Woman was created for our destruction, and it is from her we inherit all our miseries."

At this speech of Aramis, the brow of Athos became clouded and he bit his lips.

"It is not Madame Bonacieux about whom I am anxious," cried d'Artagnan, "but the queen, whom the king abandons, whom the cardinal persecutes, and who sees the heads of all her friends fall, one after the other."

"Why does she love what we hate most in the world, the Spaniards and the English?"

"Spain is her country," replied d'Artagnan; "and it is very natural that she should love the Spanish, who are the children of the same soil as herself. As to the second reproach, I have heard it said that she does not love the English, but an Englishman."

"Well, and by my faith," said Athos, "it must be acknowledged that this Englishman is worthy of being loved. I never saw a man with a nobler air than his."

"Without reckoning that he dresses as nobody else can," said Porthos. "I was at the Louvre on the day when he scattered his pearls; and, PARDIEU, I picked up two that I sold for ten pistoles each. Do you know him, Aramis?"

"As well as you do, gentlemen; for I was among those who seized him in the garden at Amiens, into which Monsieur Putange, the queen's equerry, introduced me. I was at school at the time, and the adventure appeared to me to be cruel for the king."

"Which would not prevent me," said d'Artagnan, "if I knew where the Duke of Buckingham was, from taking him by the hand and conducting him to the queen, were it only to enrage the cardinal, and if we could find means to play him a sharp turn, I vow that I would voluntarily risk my head in doing it."

"And did the mercer[4]," rejoined Athos, "tell you, d'Artagnan, that the queen thought that Buckingham had been brought over by a forged letter?"

"She is afraid so."

"Wait a minute, then," said Aramis.

"What for?" demanded Porthos.

"Go on, while I endeavor to recall circumstances."

"And now I am convinced," said d'Artagnan, "that this abduction of the queen's woman is connected with the events of which we are speaking, and perhaps with the presence of Buckingham in Paris."

"The Gascon is full of ideas," said Porthos, with admiration.

"I like to hear him talk," said Athos; "his dialect amuses me."

"Gentlemen," cried Aramis, "listen to this."

"Listen to Aramis," said his three friends.

"Yesterday I was at the house of a doctor of theology, whom I sometimes consult about my studies."

Athos smiled.

"He resides in a quiet quarter," continued Aramis; "his tastes and his profession require it. Now, at the moment when I left his house-"

Here Aramis paused.

"Well," cried his auditors; "at the moment you left his house?"

[4] *Haberdasher*

Aramis appeared to make a strong inward effort, like a man who, in the full relation of a falsehood, finds himself stopped by some unforeseen obstacle; but the eyes of his three companions were fixed upon him, their ears were wide open, and there were no means of retreat.

"This doctor has a niece," continued Aramis.

"Ah, he has a niece!" interrupted Porthos.

"A very respectable lady," said Aramis.

The three friends burst into laughter.

"Ah, if you laugh, if you doubt me," replied Aramis, "you shall know nothing."

"We believe like Mohammedans, and are as mute as tombstones," said Athos.

"I will continue, then," resumed Aramis. "This niece comes sometimes to see her uncle; and by chance was there yesterday at the same time that I was, and it was my duty to offer to conduct her to her carriage."

"Ah! She has a carriage, then, this niece of the doctor?" interrupted Porthos, one of whose faults was a great looseness of tongue. "A nice acquaintance, my friend!"

"Porthos," replied Aramis, "I have had the occasion to observe to you more than once that you are very indiscreet; and that is injurious to you among the women."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," cried d'Artagnan, who began to get a glimpse of the result of the adventure, "the thing is serious. Let us try not to jest, if we can. Go on Aramis, go on."

"All at once, a tall, dark gentleman-just like yours, d'Artagnan."

"The same, perhaps," said he.

"Possibly," continued Aramis, "came toward me, accompanied by five or six men who followed about ten paces behind him; and in the politest tone, 'Monsieur Duke,' said he to me, 'and you madame,' continued he, addressing the lady on my arm-"

"The doctor's niece?"

"Hold your tongue, Porthos," said Athos; "you are insupportable."

"'-will you enter this carriage, and that without offering the least resistance, without making the least noise?'"

"He took you for Buckingham!" cried d'Artagnan.

"I believe so," replied Aramis.

"But the lady?" asked Porthos.

"He took her for the queen!" said d'Artagnan.

"Just so," replied Aramis.

"The Gascon is the devil!" cried Athos; "nothing escapes him."

"The fact is," said Porthos, "Aramis is of the same height, and something of the shape of the duke; but it nevertheless appears to me that the dress of a Musketeer-"

"I wore an enormous cloak," said Aramis.

"In the month of July? The devil!" said Porthos. "Is the doctor afraid that you may be recognized?"

"I can comprehend that the spy may have been deceived by the person; but the face-"

"I had a large hat," said Aramis.

"Oh, good lord," cried Porthos, "what precautions for the study of theology!"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," said d'Artagnan, "do not let us lose our time in jesting. Let us separate, and let us seek the mercer's wife-that is the key of the intrigue."

"A woman of such inferior condition! Can you believe so?" said Porthos, protruding his lips with contempt.

"She is goddaughter to Laporte, the confidential valet of the queen. Have I not told you so, gentlemen? Besides, it has perhaps been her Majesty's calculation to seek on this occasion for support so lowly. High heads expose themselves from afar, and the cardinal is longsighted."

"Well," said Porthos, "in the first place make a bargain with the mercer, and a good bargain."

"That's useless," said d'Artagnan; "for I believe if he does not pay us, we shall be well enough paid by another party."

At this moment a sudden noise of footsteps was heard upon the stairs; the door was thrown violently open, and the unfortunate mercer rushed into the chamber in which the council was held.

"Save me, gentlemen, for the love of heaven, save me!" cried he. "There are four men come to arrest me. Save me! Save me!"

Porthos and Aramis arose.

"A moment," cried d'Artagnan, making them a sign to replace in the scabbard their half-drawn swords. "It is not courage that is needed; it is prudence."

"And yet," cried Porthos, "we will not leave-"

"You will leave d'Artagnan to act as he thinks proper," said Athos. "He has, I repeat, the longest head of the four, and for my part I declare that I will obey him. Do as you think best, d'Artagnan."

At this moment the four Guards appeared at the door of the antechamber, but seeing four Musketeers standing, and their swords by their sides, they hesitated about going farther.

"Come in, gentlemen, come in," called d'Artagnan; "you are here in my apartment, and we are all faithful servants of the king and cardinal."

"Then, gentlemen, you will not oppose our executing the orders we have received?" asked one who appeared to be the leader of the party.

"On the contrary, gentlemen, we would assist you if it were necessary."

"What does he say?" grumbled Porthos.

"You are a simpleton," said Athos. "Silence!"

"But you promised me-" whispered the poor mercer.

"We can only save you by being free ourselves," replied d'Artagnan, in a rapid, low tone; "and if we appear inclined to defend you, they will arrest us with you."

"It seems, nevertheless-"

"Come, gentlemen, come!" said d'Artagnan, aloud; "I have no motive for defending Monsieur. I saw him today for the first time, and he can tell you on what occasion; he came to demand the rent of my lodging. Is that not true, Monsieur Bonacieux? Answer!"

"That is the very truth," cried the mercer; "but Monsieur does not tell you-"

"Silence, with respect to me, silence, with respect to my friends; silence about the queen, above all, or you will ruin everybody without saving yourself! Come, come, gentlemen, remove the fellow." And d'Artagnan pushed the half-stupefied mercer among the Guards, saying to him, "You are a shabby old fellow, my dear. You come to demand money of me-of a Musketeer! To prison with him! Gentlemen, once more, take him to prison, and keep him under key as long as possible; that will give me time to pay him."

The officers were full of thanks, and took away their prey. As they were going down d'Artagnan laid his hand on the shoulder of their leader.

"May I not drink to your health, and you to mine?" said d'Artagnan, filling two glasses with the Beaugency wine which he had obtained from the liberality of M. Bonacieux.

"That will do me great honor," said the leader of the posse, "and I accept thankfully."

"Then to yours, monsieur-what is your name?"

"Boisrenard."

"Monsieur Boisrenard."

"To yours, my gentlemen! What is your name, in your turn, if you please?"

"d'Artagnan."

"To yours, monsieur."

"And above all others," cried d'Artagnan, as if carried away by his enthusiasm, "to that of the king and the cardinal."

The leader of the posse would perhaps have doubted the sincerity of d'Artagnan if the wine had been bad; but the wine was good, and he was convinced.

"What diabolical villainy you have performed here," said Porthos, when the officer had rejoined his companions and the four friends found themselves alone. "Shame, shame, for four Musketeers to allow an unfortunate fellow who cried for help to be arrested in their midst! And a gentleman to hobnob with a bailiff!"

"Porthos," said Aramis, "Athos has already told you that you are a simpleton, and I am quite of his opinion. D'Artagnan, you are a great man; and when you occupy Monsieur de Treville's place, I will come and ask your influence to secure me an abbey."

"Well, I am in a maze," said Porthos; "do YOU approve of what d'Artagnan has done?"

"PARBLEU! Indeed I do," said Athos; "I not only approve of what he has done, but I congratulate him upon it."

"And now, gentlemen," said d'Artagnan, without stopping to explain his conduct to Porthos, "All for one, one for all-that is our motto, is it not?"

"And yet-" said Porthos.

"Hold out your hand and swear!" cried Athos and Aramis at once.

Overcome by example, grumbling to himself, nevertheless, Porthos stretched out his hand, and the four friends repeated with one voice the formula dictated by d'Artagnan:

"All for one, one for all."

"That's well! Now let us everyone retire to his own home," said d'Artagnan, as if he had done nothing but command all his life; "and attention! For from this moment we are at feud with the cardinal."

10 A MOUSETRAP IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

The invention of the mousetrap does not date from our days; as soon as societies, in forming, had invented any kind of police, that police invented mousetraps.

As perhaps our readers are not familiar with the slang of the Rue de Jerusalem, and as it is fifteen years since we applied this word for the first time to this thing, allow us to explain to them what is a mousetrap.

When in a house, of whatever kind it may be, an individual suspected of any crime is arrested, the arrest is held secret. Four or five men are placed in ambuscade in the first room. The door is opened to all who knock. It is closed after them, and they are arrested; so that at the end of two or three days they have in their power almost all the HABITUES of the establishment. And that is a mousetrap.

The apartment of M. Bonacieux, then, became a mousetrap; and whoever appeared there was taken and interrogated by the cardinal's people. It must be observed that as a separate passage led to the first floor, in which d'Artagnan lodged, those who called on him were exempted from this detention.

Besides, nobody came thither but the three Musketeers; they had all been engaged in earnest search and inquiries, but had discovered nothing. Athos had even gone so far as to question M. de Treville-a thing which, considering the habitual reticence of the worthy Musketeer, had very much astonished his captain. But M. de Treville knew nothing, except that the last time he had seen the cardinal, the king, and the queen, the cardinal looked very thoughtful, the king uneasy, and the redness of the queen's eyes donated that she had been sleepless or tearful. But this last circumstance was not striking, as the queen since her marriage had slept badly and wept much.

M de Treville requested Athos, whatever might happen, to be observant of his duty to the king, but particularly to the queen, begging him to convey his desires to his comrades.

As to d'Artagnan, he did not budge from his apartment. He converted his chamber into an observatory. From his windows he saw all the visitors who were caught. Then, having removed a plank from his floor, and nothing remaining but a simple ceiling between him and the room beneath, in which the interrogatories were made, he heard all that passed between the inquisitors and the accused.

The interrogatories, preceded by a minute search operated upon the persons arrested, were almost always framed thus: "Has Madame Bonacieux sent anything to you for her husband, or any other person? Has Monsieur Bonacieux sent anything to you for his wife, or for any other person? Has either of them confided anything to you by word of mouth?"

"If they knew anything, they would not question people in this manner," said d'Artagnan to himself. "Now, what is it they want to know? Why, they want to know if the Duke of Buckingham is in Paris, and if he has had, or is likely to have, an interview with the queen."

D'Artagnan held onto this idea, which, from what he had heard, was not wanting in probability.

In the meantime, the mousetrap continued in operation, and likewise d'Artagnan's vigilance.

On the evening of the day after the arrest of poor Bonacieux, as Athos had just left d'Artagnan to report at M. de Treville's, as nine o'clock had just struck, and as Planchet, who had not yet made the bed, was beginning his task, a knocking was heard at the street door. The door was instantly opened and shut; someone was taken in the mousetrap.

D'Artagnan flew to his hole, laid himself down on the floor at full length, and listened.

Cries were soon heard, and then moans, which someone appeared to be endeavoring to stifle. There were no questions.

"The devil!" said d'Artagnan to himself. "It seems like a woman! They search her; she resists; they use force-the scoundrels!"

In spite of his prudence, d'Artagnan restrained himself with great difficulty from taking a part in the scene that was going on below.

"But I tell you that I am the mistress of the house, gentlemen! I tell you I am Madame Bonacieux; I tell you I belong to the queen!" cried the unfortunate woman.

"Madame Bonacieux!" murmured d'Artagnan. "Can I be so lucky as to find what everybody is seeking for?"

The voice became more and more indistinct; a tumultuous movement shook the partition. The victim resisted as much as a woman could resist four men.

"Pardon, gentlemen-par-" murmured the voice, which could now only be heard in inarticulate sounds.

"They are binding her; they are going to drag her away," cried d'Artagnan to himself, springing up from the floor. "My sword! Good, it is by my side! Planchet!"

"Monsieur."

"Run and seek Athos, Porthos and Aramis. One of the three will certainly be at home, perhaps all three. Tell them to take arms, to come here, and to run! Ah, I remember, Athos is at Monsieur de Treville's."

"But where are you going, monsieur, where are you going?"

"I am going down by the window, in order to be there the sooner," cried d'Artagnan. "You put back the boards, sweep the floor, go out at the door, and run as I told you."

"Oh, monsieur! Monsieur! You will kill yourself," cried Planchet.

"Hold your tongue, stupid fellow," said d'Artagnan; and laying hold of the casement, he let himself gently down from the first story, which fortunately was not very elevated, without doing himself the slightest injury.

He then went straight to the door and knocked, murmuring, "I will go myself and be caught in the mousetrap, but woe be to the cats that shall pounce upon such a mouse!"

The knocker had scarcely sounded under the hand of the young man before the tumult ceased, steps approached, the door was opened, and d'Artagnan, sword in hand, rushed into the rooms of M. Bonacieux, the door of which, doubtless acted upon by a spring, closed after him.

Then those who dwelt in Bonacieux's unfortunate house, together with the nearest neighbors, heard loud cries, stamping of feet, clashing of swords, and breaking of furniture. A moment after, those who, surprised by this tumult, had gone to their windows to learn the cause of it, saw the door open, and four men, clothed in black, not COME out of it, but FLY, like so many frightened crows, leaving on the ground and on the corners of the furniture, feathers from their wings; that is to say, patches of their clothes and fragments of their cloaks.

D'Artagnan was conqueror-without much effort, it must be confessed, for only one of the officers was armed, and even he defended himself for form's sake. It is true that the three others had endeavored to knock the young man down with chairs, stools, and crockery; but two or three scratches made by the Gascon's blade terrified them. Ten minutes sufficed for their defeat, and d'Artagnan remained master of the field of battle.

The neighbors who had opened their windows, with the coolness peculiar to the inhabitants of Paris in these times of perpetual riots and disturbances, closed them again as soon as they saw the four men in black flee-their instinct telling them that for the time all was over. Besides, it began to grow late, and then, as today, people went to bed early in the quarter of the Luxembourg.

On being left alone with Mme. Bonacieux, d'Artagnan turned toward her; the poor woman reclined where she had been left, half-fainting upon an armchair. D'Artagnan examined her with a rapid glance.

She was a charming woman of twenty-five or twenty-six years, with dark hair, blue eyes, and a nose slightly turned up, admirable teeth, and a complexion marbled with rose and opal. There, however, ended the signs which might have confounded her with a lady of rank. The hands were

white, but without delicacy; the feet did not bespeak the woman of quality. Happily, d'Artagnan was not yet acquainted with such niceties.

While d'Artagnan was examining Mme. Bonacieux, and was, as we have said, close to her, he saw on the ground a fine cambric handkerchief, which he picked up, as was his habit, and at the corner of which he recognized the same cipher he had seen on the handkerchief which had nearly caused him and Aramis to cut each other's throat.

From that time, d'Artagnan had been cautious with respect to handkerchiefs with arms on them, and he therefore placed in the pocket of Mme. Bonacieux the one he had just picked up.

At that moment Mme. Bonacieux recovered her senses. She opened her eyes, looked around her with terror, saw that the apartment was empty and that she was alone with her liberator. She extended her hands to him with a smile. Mme. Bonacieux had the sweetest smile in the world.

"Ah, monsieur!" said she, "you have saved me; permit me to thank you."

"Madame," said d'Artagnan, "I have only done what every gentleman would have done in my place; you owe me no thanks."

"Oh, yes, monsieur, oh, yes; and I hope to prove to you that you have not served an ingrate. But what could these men, whom I at first took for robbers, want with me, and why is Monsieur Bonacieux not here?"

"Madame, those men were more dangerous than any robbers could have been, for they are the agents of the cardinal; and as to your husband, Monsieur Bonacieux, he is not here because he was yesterday evening conducted to the Bastille."

"My husband in the Bastille!" cried Mme. Bonacieux. "Oh, my God! What has he done? Poor dear man, he is innocence itself!"

And something like a faint smile lighted the still-terrified features of the young woman.

"What has he done, madame?" said d'Artagnan. "I believe that his only crime is to have at the same time the good fortune and the misfortune to be your husband."

"But, monsieur, you know then-"

"I know that you have been abducted, madame."

"And by whom? Do you know him? Oh, if you know him, tell me!"

"By a man of from forty to forty-five years, with black hair, a dark complexion, and a scar on his left temple."

"That is he, that is he; but his name?"

"Ah, his name? I do not know that."

"And did my husband know I had been carried off?"

"He was informed of it by a letter, written to him by the abductor himself."

"And does he suspect," said Mme. Bonacieux, with some embarrassment, "the cause of this event?"

"He attributed it, I believe, to a political cause."

"I doubted from the first; and now I think entirely as he does. Then my dear Monsieur Bonacieux has not suspected me a single instant?"

"So far from it, madame, he was too proud of your prudence, and above all, of your love."

A second smile, almost imperceptible, stole over the rosy lips of the pretty young woman.

"But," continued d'Artagnan, "how did you escape?"

"I took advantage of a moment when they left me alone; and as I had known since morning the reason of my abduction, with the help of the sheets I let myself down from the window. Then, as I believed my husband would be at home, I hastened hither."

"To place yourself under his protection?"

"Oh, no, poor dear man! I knew very well that he was incapable of defending me; but as he could serve us in other ways, I wished to inform him."

"Of what?"

"Oh, that is not my secret; I must not, therefore, tell you."

"Besides," said d'Artagnan, "pardon me, madame, if, guardsman as I am, I remind you of prudence-besides, I believe we are not here in a very proper place for imparting confidences. The men I have put to flight will return reinforced; if they find us here, we are lost. I have sent for three of my friends, but who knows whether they were at home?"

"Yes, yes! You are right," cried the affrighted Mme. Bonacieux; "let us fly! Let us save ourselves."

At these words she passed her arm under that of d'Artagnan, and urged him forward eagerly.

"But whither shall we fly-whither escape?"

"Let us first withdraw from this house; afterward we shall see."

The young woman and the young man, without taking the trouble to shut the door after them, descended the Rue des Fossoyeurs rapidly, turned into the Rue des Fosses-Monsieur-le-Prince, and did not stop till they came to the Place St. Sulpice.

"And now what are we to do, and where do you wish me to conduct you?" asked d'Artagnan.

"I am at quite a loss how to answer you, I admit," said Mme. Bonacieux. "My intention was to inform Monsieur Laporte, through my husband, in order that Monsieur Laporte might tell us precisely what had taken place at the Louvre in the last three days, and whether there is any danger in presenting myself there."

"But I," said d'Artagnan, "can go and inform Monsieur Laporte."

"No doubt you could, only there is one misfortune, and that is that Monsieur Bonacieux is known at the Louvre, and would be allowed to pass; whereas you are not known there, and the gate would be closed against you."

"Ah, bah!" said d'Artagnan; "you have at some wicket of the Louvre a CONCIERGE who is devoted to you, and who, thanks to a password, would-"

Mme. Bonacieux looked earnestly at the young man.

"And if I give you this password," said she, "would you forget it as soon as you used it?"

"By my honor, by the faith of a gentleman!" said d'Artagnan, with an accent so truthful that no one could mistake it.

"Then I believe you. You appear to be a brave young man; besides, your fortune may perhaps be the result of your devotedness."

"I will do, without a promise and voluntarily, all that I can do to serve the king and be agreeable to the queen. Dispose of me, then, as a friend."

"But I-where shall I go meanwhile?"

"Is there nobody from whose house Monsieur Laporte can come and fetch you?"

"No, I can trust nobody."

"Stop," said d'Artagnan; "we are near Athos's door. Yes, here it is."

"Who is this Athos?"

"One of my friends."

"But if he should be at home and see me?"

"He is not at home, and I will carry away the key, after having placed you in his apartment."

"But if he should return?"

"Oh, he won't return; and if he should, he will be told that I have brought a woman with me, and that woman is in his apartment."

"But that will compromise me sadly, you know."

"Of what consequence? Nobody knows you. Besides, we are in a situation to overlook ceremony."

"Come, then, let us go to your friend's house. Where does he live?"

"Rue Ferou, two steps from here."

"Let us go!"

Both resumed their way. As d'Artagnan had foreseen, Athos was not within. He took the key, which was customarily given him as one of the family, ascended the stairs, and introduced Mme. Bonacieux into the little apartment of which we have given a description.

"You are at home," said he. "Remain here, fasten the door inside, and open it to nobody unless you hear three taps like this;" and he tapped thrice-two taps close together and pretty hard, the other after an interval, and lighter.

"That is well," said Mme. Bonacieux. "Now, in my turn, let me give you my instructions."

"I am all attention."

"Present yourself at the wicket of the Louvre, on the side of the Rue de l'Echelle, and ask for Germain."

"Well, and then?"

"He will ask you what you want, and you will answer by these two words, 'Tours' and 'Bruxelles.' He will at once put himself at your orders."

"And what shall I command him?"

"To go and fetch Monsieur Laporte, the queen's VALET DE CHAMBRE."

"And when he shall have informed him, and Monsieur Laporte is come?"

"You will send him to me."

"That is well; but where and how shall I see you again?"

"Do you wish to see me again?"

"Certainly."

"Well, let that care be mine, and be at ease."

"I depend upon your word."

"You may."

D'Artagnan bowed to Mme. Bonacieux, darting at her the most loving glance that he could possibly concentrate upon her charming little person; and while he descended the stairs, he heard the door closed and double-locked. In two bounds he was at the Louvre; as he entered the wicket of L'Echelle, ten o'clock struck. All the events we have described had taken place within a half hour.

Everything fell out as Mme. Bonacieux prophesied. On hearing the password, Germain bowed. In a few minutes, Laporte was at the lodge; in two words d'Artagnan informed him where Mme. Bonacieux was. Laporte assured himself, by having it twice repeated, of the accurate address, and set off at a run. Hardly, however, had he taken ten steps before he returned.

"Young man," said he to d'Artagnan, "a suggestion."

"What?"

"You may get into trouble by what has taken place."

"You believe so?"

"Yes. Have you any friend whose clock is too slow?"

"Well?"

"Go and call upon him, in order that he may give evidence of your having been with him at half past nine. In a court of justice that is called an alibi."

D'Artagnan found his advice prudent. He took to his heels, and was soon at M. de Treville's; but instead of going into the saloon with the rest of the crowd, he asked to be introduced to M. de Treville's office. As d'Artagnan so constantly frequented the hotel, no difficulty was made in complying with his request, and a servant went to inform M. de Treville that his young compatriot, having something important to communicate, solicited a private audience. Five minutes after, M. de Treville was asking d'Artagnan what he could do to serve him, and what caused his visit at so late an hour.

"Pardon me, monsieur," said d'Artagnan, who had profited by the moment he had been left alone to put back M. de Treville's clock three-quarters of an hour, "but I thought, as it was yet only twenty-five minutes past nine, it was not too late to wait upon you."

"Twenty-five minutes past nine!" cried M. de Treville, looking at the clock; "why, that's impossible!"

"Look, rather, monsieur," said d'Artagnan, "the clock shows it."

"That's true," said M. de Treville; "I believed it later. But what can I do for you?"

Then d'Artagnan told M. de Treville a long history about the queen. He expressed to him the fears he entertained with respect to her Majesty; he related to him what he had heard of the projects of the cardinal with regard to Buckingham, and all with a tranquillity and candor of which M. de Treville was the more the dupe, from having himself, as we have said, observed something fresh between the cardinal, the king, and the queen.

As ten o'clock was striking, d'Artagnan left M. de Treville, who thanked him for his information, recommended him to have the service of the king and queen always at heart, and returned to the saloon; but at the foot of the stairs, d'Artagnan remembered he had forgotten his cane. He consequently sprang up again, re-entered the office, with a turn of his finger set the clock right again, that it might not be perceived the next day that it had been put wrong, and certain from that time that he had a witness to prove his alibi, he ran downstairs and soon found himself in the street.

11 IN WHICH THE PLOT THICKENS

His visit to M. de Treville being paid, the pensive d'Artagnan took the longest way homeward.

On what was d'Artagnan thinking, that he strayed thus from his path, gazing at the stars of heaven, and sometimes sighing, sometimes smiling?

He was thinking of Mme. Bonacieux. For an apprentice Musketeer the young woman was almost an ideal of love. Pretty, mysterious, initiated in almost all the secrets of the court, which reflected such a charming gravity over her pleasing features, it might be surmised that she was not wholly unmoved; and this is an irresistible charm to novices in love. Moreover, d'Artagnan had delivered her from the hands of the demons who wished to search and ill treat her; and this important service had established between them one of those sentiments of gratitude which so easily assume a more tender character.

D'Artagnan already fancied himself, so rapid is the flight of our dreams upon the wings of imagination, accosted by a messenger from the young woman, who brought him some billet appointing a meeting, a gold chain, or a diamond. We have observed that young cavaliers received presents from their king without shame. Let us add that in these times of lax morality they had no more delicacy with respect to the mistresses; and that the latter almost always left them valuable and durable remembrances, as if they essayed to conquer the fragility of their sentiments by the solidity of their gifts.

Without a blush, men made their way in the world by the means of women blushing. Such as were only beautiful gave their beauty, whence, without doubt, comes the proverb, "The most beautiful girl in the world can only give what she has." Such as were rich gave in addition a part of their money; and a vast number of heroes of that gallant period may be cited who would neither have won their spurs in the first place, nor their battles afterward, without the purse, more or less furnished, which their mistress fastened to the saddle bow.

D'Artagnan owned nothing. Provincial diffidence, that slight varnish, the ephemeral flower, that down of the peach, had evaporated to the winds through the little orthodox counsels which the three Musketeers gave their friend. D'Artagnan, following the strange custom of the times, considered himself at Paris as on a campaign, neither more nor less than if he had been in Flanders-Spain yonder, woman here. In each there was an enemy to contend with, and contributions to be levied.

But, we must say, at the present moment d'Artagnan was ruled by a feeling much more noble and disinterested. The mercer had said that he was rich; the young man might easily guess that with so weak a man as M. Bonacieux; and interest was almost foreign to this commencement of love, which had been the consequence of it. We say ALMOST, for the idea that a young, handsome, kind, and witty woman is at the same time rich takes nothing from the beginning of love, but on the contrary strengthens it.

There are in affluence a crowd of aristocratic cares and caprices which are highly becoming to beauty. A fine and white stocking, a silken robe, a lace kerchief, a pretty slipper on the foot, a tasty ribbon on the head do not make an ugly woman pretty, but they make a pretty woman beautiful, without reckoning the hands, which gain by all this; the hands, among women particularly, to be beautiful must be idle.

Then d'Artagnan, as the reader, from whom we have not concealed the state of his fortune, very well knows-d'Artagnan was not a millionaire; he hoped to become one someday, but the time which in his own mind he fixed upon for this happy change was still far distant. In the meanwhile, how disheartening to see the woman one loves long for those thousands of nothings which constitute a woman's happiness, and be unable to give her those thousands of nothings. At least, when the woman is rich and the lover is not, that which he cannot offer she offers to herself; and although it is generally

with her husband's money that she procures herself this indulgence, the gratitude for it seldom reverts to him.

Then d'Artagnan, disposed to become the most tender of lovers, was at the same time a very devoted friend. In the midst of his amorous projects for the mercer's wife, he did not forget his friends. The pretty Mme. Bonacieux was just the woman to walk with in the Plain St. Denis or in the fair of St. Germain, in company with Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, to whom d'Artagnan had often remarked this. Then one could enjoy charming little dinners, where one touches on one side the hand of a friend, and on the other the foot of a mistress. Besides, on pressing occasions, in extreme difficulties, d'Artagnan would become the preserver of his friends.

And M. Bonacieux, whom d'Artagnan had pushed into the hands of the officers, denying him aloud although he had promised in a whisper to save him? We are compelled to admit to our readers that d'Artagnan thought nothing about him in any way; or that if he did think of him, it was only to say to himself that he was very well where he was, wherever it might be. Love is the most selfish of all the passions.

Let our readers reassure themselves. If d'Artagnan forgets his host, or appears to forget him, under the pretense of not knowing where he has been carried, we will not forget him, and we know where he is. But for the moment, let us do as did the amorous Gascon; we will see after the worthy mercer later.

D'Artagnan, reflecting on his future amours, addressing himself to the beautiful night, and smiling at the stars, ascended the Rue Cherish-Midi, or Chase-Midi, as it was then called. As he found himself in the quarter in which Aramis lived, he took it into his head to pay his friend a visit in order to explain the motives which had led him to send Planchet with a request that he would come instantly to the mousetrap. Now, if Aramis had been at home when Planchet came to his abode, he had doubtless hastened to the Rue des Fossoyeurs, and finding nobody there but his other two companions perhaps, they would not be able to conceive what all this meant. This mystery required an explanation; at least, so d'Artagnan declared to himself.

He likewise thought this was an opportunity for talking about pretty little Mme. Bonacieux, of whom his head, if not his heart, was already full. We must never look for discretion in first love. First love is accompanied by such excessive joy that unless the joy be allowed to overflow, it will stifle you.

Paris for two hours past had been dark, and seemed a desert. Eleven o'clock sounded from all the clocks of the Faubourg St. Germain. It was delightful weather. D'Artagnan was passing along a lane on the spot where the Rue d'Assas is now situated, breathing the balmy emanations which were borne upon the wind from the Rue de Vaugirard, and which arose from the gardens refreshed by the dews of evening and the breeze of night. From a distance resounded, deadened, however, by good shutters, the songs of the tipplers, enjoying themselves in the cabarets scattered along the plain. Arrived at the end of the lane, d'Artagnan turned to the left. The house in which Aramis dwelt was situated between the Rue Cassette and the Rue Servandoni.

D'Artagnan had just passed the Rue Cassette, and already perceived the door of his friend's house, shaded by a mass of sycamores and clematis which formed a vast arch opposite the front of it, when he perceived something like a shadow issuing from the Rue Servandoni. This something was enveloped in a cloak, and d'Artagnan at first believed it was a man; but by the smallness of the form, the hesitation of the walk, and the indecision of the step, he soon discovered that it was a woman. Further, this woman, as if not certain of the house she was seeking, lifted up her eyes to look around her, stopped, went backward, and then returned again. D'Artagnan was perplexed.

"Shall I go and offer her my services?" thought he. "By her step she must be young; perhaps she is pretty. Oh, yes! But a woman who wanders in the streets at this hour only ventures out to meet her lover. If I should disturb a rendezvous, that would not be the best means of commencing an acquaintance."

Meantime the young woman continued to advance, counting the houses and windows. This was neither long nor difficult. There were but three hotels in this part of the street; and only two windows looking toward the road, one of which was in a pavilion parallel to that which Aramis occupied, the other belonging to Aramis himself.

"PARIDIEU!" said d'Artagnan to himself, to whose mind the niece of the theologian reverted, "PARDIEU, it would be droll if this belated dove should be in search of our friend's house. But on my soul, it looks so. Ah, my dear Aramis, this time I shall find you out." And d'Artagnan, making himself as small as he could, concealed himself in the darkest side of the street near a stone bench placed at the back of a niche.

The young woman continued to advance; and in addition to the lightness of her step, which had betrayed her, she emitted a little cough which denoted a sweet voice. D'Artagnan believed this cough to be a signal.

Nevertheless, whether the cough had been answered by a similar signal which had fixed the irresolution of the nocturnal seeker, or whether without this aid she saw that she had arrived at the end of her journey, she resolutely drew near to Aramis's shutter, and tapped, at three equal intervals, with her bent finger.

"This is all very fine, dear Aramis," murmured d'Artagnan. "Ah, Monsieur Hypocrite, I understand how you study theology."

The three blows were scarcely struck, when the inside blind was opened and a light appeared through the panes of the outside shutter.

"Ah, ah!" said the listener, "not through doors, but through windows! Ah, this visit was expected. We shall see the windows open, and the lady enter by escalade. Very pretty!"

But to the great astonishment of d'Artagnan, the shutter remained closed. Still more, the light which had shone for an instant disappeared, and all was again in obscurity.

D'Artagnan thought this could not last long, and continued to look with all his eyes and listen with all his ears.

He was right; at the end of some seconds two sharp taps were heard inside. The young woman in the street replied by a single tap, and the shutter was opened a little way.

It may be judged whether d'Artagnan looked or listened with avidity. Unfortunately the light had been removed into another chamber; but the eyes of the young man were accustomed to the night. Besides, the eyes of the Gascons have, as it is asserted, like those of cats, the faculty of seeing in the dark.

D'Artagnan then saw that the young woman took from her pocket a white object, which she unfolded quickly, and which took the form of a handkerchief. She made her interlocutor observe the corner of this unfolded object.

This immediately recalled to d'Artagnan's mind the handkerchief which he had found at the feet of Mme. Bonacieux, which had reminded him of that which he had dragged from under the feet of Aramis.

"What the devil could that handkerchief signify?"

Placed where he was, d'Artagnan could not perceive the face of Aramis. We say Aramis, because the young man entertained no doubt that it was his friend who held this dialogue from the interior with the lady of the exterior. Curiosity prevailed over prudence; and profiting by the preoccupation into which the sight of the handkerchief appeared to have plunged the two personages now on the scene, he stole from his hiding place, and quick as lightning, but stepping with utmost caution, he ran and placed himself close to the angle of the wall, from which his eye could pierce the interior of Aramis's room.

Upon gaining this advantage d'Artagnan was near uttering a cry of surprise; it was not Aramis who was conversing with the nocturnal visitor, it was a woman! D'Artagnan, however, could only see enough to recognize the form of her vestments, not enough to distinguish her features.

At the same instant the woman inside drew a second handkerchief from her pocket, and exchanged it for that which had just been shown to her. Then some words were spoken by the two women. At length the shutter closed. The woman who was outside the window turned round, and passed within four steps of d'Artagnan, pulling down the hood of her mantle; but the precaution was too late, d'Artagnan had already recognized Mme. Bonacieux.

Mme. Bonacieux! The suspicion that it was she had crossed the mind of d'Artagnan when she drew the handkerchief from her pocket; but what probability was there that Mme. Bonacieux, who had sent for M. Laporte in order to be reconducted to the Louvre, should be running about the streets of Paris at half past eleven at night, at the risk of being abducted a second time?

This must be, then, an affair of importance; and what is the most important affair to a woman of twenty-five! Love.

But was it on her own account, or on account of another, that she exposed herself to such hazards? This was a question the young man asked himself, whom the demon of jealousy already gnawed, being in heart neither more nor less than an accepted lover.

There was a very simple means of satisfying himself whither Mme. Bonacieux was going; that was to follow her. This method was so simple that d'Artagnan employed it quite naturally and instinctively.

But at the sight of the young man, who detached himself from the wall like a statue walking from its niche, and at the noise of the steps which she heard resound behind her, Mme. Bonacieux uttered a little cry and fled.

D'Artagnan ran after her. It was not difficult for him to overtake a woman embarrassed with her cloak. He came up with her before she had traversed a third of the street. The unfortunate woman was exhausted, not by fatigue, but by terror, and when d'Artagnan placed his hand upon her shoulder, she sank upon one knee, crying in a choking voice, "Kill me, if you please, you shall know nothing!"

D'Artagnan raised her by passing his arm round her waist; but as he felt by her weight she was on the point of fainting, he made haste to reassure her by protestations of devotedness. These protestations were nothing for Mme. Bonacieux, for such protestations may be made with the worst intentions in the world; but the voice was all. Mme. Bonacieux thought she recognized the sound of that voice; she reopened her eyes, cast a quick glance upon the man who had terrified her so, and at once perceiving it was d'Artagnan, she uttered a cry of joy, "Oh, it is you, it is you! Thank God, thank God!"

"Yes, it is I," said d'Artagnan, "it is I, whom God has sent to watch over you."

"Was it with that intention you followed me?" asked the young woman, with a coquettish smile, whose somewhat bantering character resumed its influence, and with whom all fear had disappeared from the moment in which she recognized a friend in one she had taken for an enemy.

"No," said d'Artagnan; "no, I confess it. It was chance that threw me in your way; I saw a woman knocking at the window of one of my friends."

"One of your friends?" interrupted Mme. Bonacieux.

"Without doubt; Aramis is one of my best friends."

"Aramis! Who is he?"

"Come, come, you won't tell me you don't know Aramis?"

"This is the first time I ever heard his name pronounced."

"It is the first time, then, that you ever went to that house?"

"Undoubtedly."

"And you did not know that it was inhabited by a young man?"

"No."

"By a Musketeer?"

"No, indeed!"

"It was not he, then, you came to seek?"

“Not the least in the world. Besides, you must have seen that the person to whom I spoke was a woman.”

“That is true; but this woman is a friend of Aramis-”

“I know nothing of that.”

“ – since she lodges with him.”

“That does not concern me.”

“But who is she?”

“Oh, that is not my secret.”

“My dear Madame Bonacieux, you are charming; but at the same time you are one of the most mysterious women.”

“Do I lose by that?”

“No; you are, on the contrary, adorable.”

“Give me your arm, then.”

“Most willingly. And now?”

“Now escort me.”

“Where?”

“Where I am going.”

“But where are you going?”

“You will see, because you will leave me at the door.”

“Shall I wait for you?”

“That will be useless.”

“You will return alone, then?”

“Perhaps yes, perhaps no.”

“But will the person who shall accompany you afterward be a man or a woman?”

“I don’t know yet.”

“But I will know it!”

“How so?”

“I will wait until you come out.”

“In that case, adieu.”

“Why so?”

“I do not want you.”

“But you have claimed-”

“The aid of a gentleman, not the watchfulness of a spy.”

“The word is rather hard.”

“How are they called who follow others in spite of them?”

“They are indiscreet.”

“The word is too mild.”

“Well, madame, I perceive I must do as you wish.”

“Why did you deprive yourself of the merit of doing so at once?”

“Is there no merit in repentance?”

“And do you really repent?”

“I know nothing about it myself. But what I know is that I promise to do all you wish if you allow me to accompany you where you are going.”

“And you will leave me then?”

“Yes.”

“Without waiting for my coming out again?”

“Yes.”

“Word of honor?”

“By the faith of a gentleman. Take my arm, and let us go.”

D'Artagnan offered his arm to Mme. Bonacieux, who willingly took it, half laughing, half trembling, and both gained the top of Rue de la Harpe. Arriving there, the young woman seemed to hesitate, as she had before done in the Rue Vaugirard. She seemed, however, by certain signs, to recognize a door, and approaching that door, "And now, monsieur," said she, "it is here I have business; a thousand thanks for your honorable company, which has saved me from all the dangers to which, alone, I was exposed. But the moment is come to keep your word; I have reached my destination."

"And you will have nothing to fear on your return?"

"I shall have nothing to fear but robbers."

"And that is nothing?"

"What could they take from me? I have not a penny about me."

"You forget that beautiful handkerchief with the coat of arms."

"Which?"

"That which I found at your feet, and replaced in your pocket."

"Hold your tongue, imprudent man! Do you wish to destroy me?"

"You see very plainly that there is still danger for you, since a single word makes you tremble; and you confess that if that word were heard you would be ruined. Come, come, madame!" cried d'Artagnan, seizing her hands, and surveying her with an ardent glance, "come, be more generous. Confide in me. Have you not read in my eyes that there is nothing but devotion and sympathy in my heart?"

"Yes," replied Mme. Bonacieux; "therefore, ask my own secrets, and I will reveal them to you; but those of others-that is quite another thing."

"Very well," said d'Artagnan, "I shall discover them; as these secrets may have an influence over your life, these secrets must become mine."

"Beware of what you do!" cried the young woman, in a manner so serious as to make d'Artagnan start in spite of himself. "Oh, meddle in nothing which concerns me. Do not seek to assist me in that which I am accomplishing. This I ask of you in the name of the interest with which I inspire you, in the name of the service you have rendered me and which I never shall forget while I have life. Rather, place faith in what I tell you. Have no more concern about me; I exist no longer for you, any more than if you had never seen me."

"Must Aramis do as much as I, madame?" said d'Artagnan, deeply piqued.

"This is the second or third time, monsieur, that you have repeated that name, and yet I have told you that I do not know him."

"You do not know the man at whose shutter you have just knocked? Indeed, madame, you believe me too credulous!"

"Confess that it is for the sake of making me talk that you invent this story and create this personage."

"I invent nothing, madame; I create nothing. I only speak that exact truth."

"And you say that one of your friends lives in that house?"

"I say so, and I repeat it for the third time; that house is one inhabited by my friend, and that friend is Aramis."

"All this will be cleared up at a later period," murmured the young woman; "no, monsieur, be silent."

"If you could see my heart," said d'Artagnan, "you would there read so much curiosity that you would pity me and so much love that you would instantly satisfy my curiosity. We have nothing to fear from those who love us."

"You speak very suddenly of love, monsieur," said the young woman, shaking her head.

"That is because love has come suddenly upon me, and for the first time; and because I am only twenty."

The young woman looked at him furtively.

“Listen; I am already upon the scent,” resumed d’Artagnan. “About three months ago I was near having a duel with Aramis concerning a handkerchief resembling the one you showed to the woman in his house-for a handkerchief marked in the same manner, I am sure.”

“Monsieur,” said the young woman, “you weary me very much, I assure you, with your questions.”

“But you, madame, prudent as you are, think, if you were to be arrested with that handkerchief, and that handkerchief were to be seized, would you not be compromised?”

“In what way? The initials are only mine-C. B., Constance Bonacieux.”

“Or Camille de Bois-Tracy.”

“Silence, monsieur! Once again, silence! Ah, since the dangers I incur on my own account cannot stop you, think of those you may yourself run!”

“Me?”

“Yes; there is peril of imprisonment, risk of life in knowing me.”

“Then I will not leave you.”

“Monsieur!” said the young woman, supplicating him and clasping her hands together, “monsieur, in the name of heaven, by the honor of a soldier, by the courtesy of a gentleman, depart! There, there midnight sounds! That is the hour when I am expected.”

“Madame,” said the young man, bowing; “I can refuse nothing asked of me thus. Be content; I will depart.”

“But you will not follow me; you will not watch me?”

“I will return home instantly.”

“Ah, I was quite sure you were a good and brave young man,” said Mme. Bonacieux, holding out her hand to him, and placing the other upon the knocker of a little door almost hidden in the wall.

D’Artagnan seized the hand held out to him, and kissed it ardently.

“Ah! I wish I had never seen you!” cried d’Artagnan, with that ingenuous roughness which women often prefer to the affectations of politeness, because it betrays the depths of the thought and proves that feeling prevails over reason.

“Well!” resumed Mme. Bonacieux, in a voice almost caressing, and pressing the hand of d’Artagnan, who had not relinquished hers, “well: I will not say as much as you do; what is lost for today may not be lost forever. Who knows, when I shall be at liberty, that I may not satisfy your curiosity?”

“And will you make the same promise to my love?” cried d’Artagnan, beside himself with joy.

“Oh, as to that, I do not engage myself. That depends upon the sentiments with which you may inspire me.”

“Then today, madame-”

“Oh, today, I am no further than gratitude.”

“Ah! You are too charming,” said d’Artagnan, sorrowfully; “and you abuse my love.”

“No, I use your generosity, that’s all. But be of good cheer; with certain people, everything comes round.”

“Oh, you render me the happiest of men! Do not forget this evening-do not forget that promise.”

“Be satisfied. In the proper time and place I will remember everything. Now then, go, go, in the name of heaven! I was expected at sharp midnight, and I am late.”

“By five minutes.”

“Yes; but in certain circumstances five minutes are five ages.”

“When one loves.”

“Well! And who told you I had no affair with a lover?”

“It is a man, then, who expects you?” cried d’Artagnan. “A man!”

"The discussion is going to begin again!" said Mme. Bonacieux, with a half-smile which was not exempt from a tinge of impatience.

"No, no; I go, I depart! I believe in you, and I would have all the merit of my devotion, even if that devotion were stupidity. Adieu, madame, adieu!"

And as if he only felt strength to detach himself by a violent effort from the hand he held, he sprang away, running, while Mme. Bonacieux knocked, as at the shutter, three light and regular taps. When he had gained the angle of the street, he turned. The door had been opened, and shut again; the mercer's pretty wife had disappeared.

D'Artagnan pursued his way. He had given his word not to watch Mme. Bonacieux, and if his life had depended upon the spot to which she was going or upon the person who should accompany her, d'Artagnan would have returned home, since he had so promised. Five minutes later he was in the Rue des Fossoyeurs.

"Poor Athos!" said he; "he will never guess what all this means. He will have fallen asleep waiting for me, or else he will have returned home, where he will have learned that a woman had been there. A woman with Athos! After all," continued d'Artagnan, "there was certainly one with Aramis. All this is very strange; and I am curious to know how it will end."

"Badly, monsieur, badly!" replied a voice which the young man recognized as that of Planchet; for, soliloquizing aloud, as very preoccupied people do, he had entered the alley, at the end of which were the stairs which led to his chamber.

"How, badly? What do you mean by that, you idiot?" asked d'Artagnan. "What has happened?"

"All sorts of misfortunes."

"What?"

"In the first place, Monsieur Athos is arrested."

"Arrested! Athos arrested! What for?"

"He was found in your lodging; they took him for you."

"And by whom was he arrested?"

"By Guards brought by the men in black whom you put to flight."

"Why did he not tell them his name? Why did he not tell them he knew nothing about this affair?"

"He took care not to do so, monsieur; on the contrary, he came up to me and said, 'It is your master that needs his liberty at this moment and not I, since he knows everything and I know nothing. They will believe he is arrested, and that will give him time; in three days I will tell them who I am, and they cannot fail to let me go.'"

"Bravo, Athos! Noble heart!" murmured d'Artagnan. "I know him well there! And what did the officers do?"

"Four conveyed him away, I don't know where-to the Bastille or Fort l'Eveque. Two remained with the men in black, who rummaged every place and took all the papers. The last two mounted guard at the door during this examination; then, when all was over, they went away, leaving the house empty and exposed."

"And Porthos and Aramis?"

"I could not find them; they did not come."

"But they may come any moment, for you left word that I awaited them?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Well, don't budge, then; if they come, tell them what has happened. Let them wait for me at the Pomme-de-Pin. Here it would be dangerous; the house may be watched. I will run to Monsieur de Treville to tell them all this, and will meet them there."

"Very well, monsieur," said Planchet.

"But you will remain; you are not afraid?" said d'Artagnan, coming back to recommend courage to his lackey.

"Be easy, monsieur," said Planchet; "you do not know me yet. I am brave when I set about it. It is all in beginning. Besides, I am a Picard."

"Then it is understood," said d'Artagnan; "you would rather be killed than desert your post?"

"Yes, monsieur; and there is nothing I would not do to prove to Monsieur that I am attached to him."

"Good!" said d'Artagnan to himself. "It appears that the method I have adopted with this boy is decidedly the best. I shall use it again upon occasion."

And with all the swiftness of his legs, already a little fatigued, however, with the perambulations of the day, d'Artagnan directed his course toward M. de Treville's.

M de Treville was not at his hotel. His company was on guard at the Louvre; he was at the Louvre with his company.

It was necessary to reach M. de Treville; it was important that he should be informed of what was passing. D'Artagnan resolved to try and enter the Louvre. His costume of Guardsman in the company of M. Dessessart ought to be his passport.

He therefore went down the Rue des Petits Augustins, and came up to the quay, in order to take the New Bridge. He had at first an idea of crossing by the ferry; but on gaining the riverside, he had mechanically put his hand into his pocket, and perceived that he had not wherewithal to pay his passage.

As he gained the top of the Rue Guenegaud, he saw two persons coming out of the Rue Dauphine whose appearance very much struck him. Of the two persons who composed this group, one was a man and the other a woman. The woman had the outline of Mme. Bonacieux; the man resembled Aramis so much as to be mistaken for him.

Besides, the woman wore that black mantle which d'Artagnan could still see outlined on the shutter of the Rue de Vaugirard and on the door of the Rue de la Harpe; still further, the man wore the uniform of a Musketeer.

The woman's hood was pulled down, and the man held a handkerchief to his face. Both, as this double precaution indicated, had an interest in not being recognized.

They took the bridge. That was d'Artagnan's road, as he was going to the Louvre. D'Artagnan followed them.

He had not gone twenty steps before he became convinced that the woman was really Mme. Bonacieux and that the man was Aramis.

He felt at that instant all the suspicions of jealousy agitating his heart. He felt himself doubly betrayed, by his friend and by her whom he already loved like a mistress. Mme. Bonacieux had declared to him, by all the gods, that she did not know Aramis; and a quarter of an hour after having made this assertion, he found her hanging on the arm of Aramis.

D'Artagnan did not reflect that he had only known the mercer's pretty wife for three hours; that she owed him nothing but a little gratitude for having delivered her from the men in black, who wished to carry her off, and that she had promised him nothing. He considered himself an outraged, betrayed, and ridiculed lover. Blood and anger mounted to his face; he was resolved to unravel the mystery.

The young man and young woman perceived they were watched, and redoubled their speed. D'Artagnan determined upon his course. He passed them, then returned so as to meet them exactly before the Samaritaine, which was illuminated by a lamp which threw its light over all that part of the bridge.

D'Artagnan stopped before them, and they stopped before him.

"What do you want, monsieur?" demanded the Musketeer, recoiling a step, and with a foreign accent, which proved to d'Artagnan that he was deceived in one of his conjectures.

"It is not Aramis!" cried he.

"No, monsieur, it is not Aramis; and by your exclamation I perceive you have mistaken me for another, and pardon you."

"You pardon me?" cried d'Artagnan.

"Yes," replied the stranger. "Allow me, then, to pass on, since it is not with me you have anything to do."

"You are right, monsieur, it is not with you that I have anything to do; it is with Madame."

"With Madame! You do not know her," replied the stranger.

"You are deceived, monsieur; I know her very well."

"Ah," said Mme. Bonacieux; in a tone of reproach, "ah, monsieur, I had your promise as a soldier and your word as a gentleman. I hoped to be able to rely upon that."

"And I, madame!" said d'Artagnan, embarrassed; "you promised me-"

"Take my arm, madame," said the stranger, "and let us continue our way."

D'Artagnan, however, stupefied, cast down, annihilated by all that happened, stood, with crossed arms, before the Musketeer and Mme. Bonacieux.

The Musketeer advanced two steps, and pushed d'Artagnan aside with his hand. D'Artagnan made a spring backward and drew his sword. At the same time, and with the rapidity of lightning, the stranger drew his.

"In the name of heaven, my Lord!" cried Mme. Bonacieux, throwing herself between the combatants and seizing the swords with her hands.

"My Lord!" cried d'Artagnan, enlightened by a sudden idea, "my Lord! Pardon me, monsieur, but you are not-"

"My Lord the Duke of Buckingham," said Mme. Bonacieux, in an undertone; "and now you may ruin us all."

"My Lord, Madame, I ask a hundred pardons! But I love her, my Lord, and was jealous. You know what it is to love, my Lord. Pardon me, and then tell me how I can risk my life to serve your Grace?"

"You are a brave young man," said Buckingham, holding out his hand to d'Artagnan, who pressed it respectfully. "You offer me your services; with the same frankness I accept them. Follow us at a distance of twenty paces, as far as the Louvre, and if anyone watches us, slay him!"

D'Artagnan placed his naked sword under his arm, allowed the duke and Mme. Bonacieux to take twenty steps ahead, and then followed them, ready to execute the instructions of the noble and elegant minister of Charles I.

Fortunately, he had no opportunity to give the duke this proof of his devotion, and the young woman and the handsome Musketeer entered the Louvre by the wicket of the Echelle without any interference.

As for d'Artagnan, he immediately repaired to the cabaret of the Pomme-de-Pin, where he found Porthos and Aramis awaiting him. Without giving them any explanation of the alarm and inconvenience he had caused them, he told them that he had terminated the affair alone in which he had for a moment believed he should need their assistance.

Meanwhile, carried away as we are by our narrative, we must leave our three friends to themselves, and follow the Duke of Buckingham and his guide through the labyrinths of the Louvre.

12 GEORGE VILLIERS, DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM

Mme. Bonacieux and the duke entered the Louvre without difficulty. Mme. Bonacieux was known to belong to the queen; the duke wore the uniform of the Musketeers of M. de Treville, who, as we have said, were that evening on guard. Besides, Germain was in the interests of the queen; and if anything should happen, Mme. Bonacieux would be accused of having introduced her lover into the Louvre, that was all. She took the risk upon herself. Her reputation would be lost, it is true; but of what value in the world was the reputation of the little wife of a mercer?

Once within the interior of the court, the duke and the young woman followed the wall for the space of about twenty-five steps. This space passed, Mme. Bonacieux pushed a little servants' door, open by day but generally closed at night. The door yielded. Both entered, and found themselves in darkness; but Mme. Bonacieux was acquainted with all the turnings and windings of this part of the Louvre, appropriated for the people of the household. She closed the door after her, took the duke by the hand, and after a few experimental steps, grasped a balustrade, put her foot upon the bottom step, and began to ascend the staircase. The duke counted two stories. She then turned to the right, followed the course of a long corridor, descended a flight, went a few steps farther, introduced a key into a lock, opened a door, and pushed the duke into an apartment lighted only by a lamp, saying, "Remain here, my Lord Duke; someone will come." She then went out by the same door, which she locked, so that the duke found himself literally a prisoner.

Nevertheless, isolated as he was, we must say that the Duke of Buckingham did not experience an instant of fear. One of the salient points of his character was the search for adventures and a love of romance. Brave, rash, and enterprising, this was not the first time he had risked his life in such attempts. He had learned that the pretended message from Anne of Austria, upon the faith of which he had come to Paris, was a snare; but instead of regaining England, he had, abusing the position in which he had been placed, declared to the queen that he would not depart without seeing her. The queen had at first positively refused; but at length became afraid that the duke, if exasperated, would commit some folly. She had already decided upon seeing him and urging his immediate departure, when, on the very evening of coming to this decision, Mme. Bonacieux, who was charged with going to fetch the duke and conducting him to the Louvre, was abducted. For two days no one knew what had become of her, and everything remained in suspense; but once free, and placed in communication with Laporte, matters resumed their course, and she accomplished the perilous enterprise which, but for her arrest, would have been executed three days earlier.

Buckingham, left alone, walked toward a mirror. His Musketeer's uniform became him marvelously.

At thirty-five, which was then his age, he passed, with just title, for the handsomest gentleman and the most elegant cavalier of France or England.

The favorite of two kings, immensely rich, all-powerful in a kingdom which he disordered at his fancy and calmed again at his caprice, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, had lived one of those fabulous existences which survive, in the course of centuries, to astonish posterity.

Sure of himself, convinced of his own power, certain that the laws which rule other men could not reach him, he went straight to the object he aimed at, even were this object were so elevated and so dazzling that it would have been madness for any other even to have contemplated it. It was thus he had succeeded in approaching several times the beautiful and proud Anne of Austria, and in making himself loved by dazzling her.

George Villiers placed himself before the glass, as we have said, restored the undulations to his beautiful hair, which the weight of his hat had disordered, twisted his mustache, and, his heart swelling with joy, happy and proud at being near the moment he had so long sighed for, he smiled upon himself with pride and hope.

At this moment a door concealed in the tapestry opened, and a woman appeared. Buckingham saw this apparition in the glass; he uttered a cry. It was the queen!

Anne of Austria was then twenty-six or twenty-seven years of age; that is to say, she was in the full splendor of her beauty.

Her carriage was that of a queen or a goddess; her eyes, which cast the brilliancy of emeralds, were perfectly beautiful, and yet were at the same time full of sweetness and majesty.

Her mouth was small and rosy; and although her underlip, like that of all princes of the House of Austria, protruded slightly beyond the other, it was eminently lovely in its smile, but as profoundly disdainful in its contempt.

Her skin was admired for its velvety softness; her hands and arms were of surpassing beauty, all the poets of the time singing them as incomparable.

Lastly, her hair, which, from being light in her youth, had become chestnut, and which she wore curled very plainly, and with much powder, admirably set off her face, in which the most rigid critic could only have desired a little less rouge, and the most fastidious sculptor a little more fineness in the nose.

Buckingham remained for a moment dazzled. Never had Anne of Austria appeared to him so beautiful, amid balls, fetes, or carousals, as she appeared to him at this moment, dressed in a simple robe of white satin, and accompanied by Donna Estafania-the only one of her Spanish women who had not been driven from her by the jealousy of the king or by the persecutions of Richelieu.

Anne of Austria took two steps forward. Buckingham threw himself at her feet, and before the queen could prevent him, kissed the hem of her robe.

“Duke, you already know that it is not I who caused you to be written to.”

“Yes, yes, madame! Yes, your Majesty!” cried the duke. “I know that I must have been mad, senseless, to believe that snow would become animated or marble warm; but what then! They who love believe easily in love. Besides, I have lost nothing by this journey because I see you.”

“Yes,” replied Anne, “but you know why and how I see you; because, insensible to all my sufferings, you persist in remaining in a city where, by remaining, you run the risk of your life, and make me run the risk of my honor. I see you to tell you that everything separates us-the depths of the sea, the enmity of kingdoms, the sanctity of vows. It is sacrilege to struggle against so many things, my Lord. In short, I see you to tell you that we must never see each other again.”

“Speak on, madame, speak on, Queen,” said Buckingham; “the sweetness of your voice covers the harshness of your words. You talk of sacrilege! Why, the sacrilege is the separation of two hearts formed by God for each other.”

“My Lord,” cried the queen, “you forget that I have never said that I love you.”

“But you have never told me that you did not love me; and truly, to speak such words to me would be, on the part of your Majesty, too great an ingratitude. For tell me, where can you find a love like mine-a love which neither time, nor absence, nor despair can extinguish, a love which contents itself with a lost ribbon, a stray look, or a chance word? It is now three years, madame, since I saw you for the first time, and during those three years I have loved you thus. Shall I tell you each ornament of your toilet? Mark! I see you now. You were seated upon cushions in the Spanish fashion; you wore a robe of green satin embroidered with gold and silver, hanging sleeves knotted upon your beautiful arms-those lovely arms-with large diamonds. You wore a close ruff, a small cap upon your head of the same color as your robe, and in that cap a heron’s feather. Hold! Hold! I shut my eyes, and I can see you as you then were; I open them again, and I see what you are now-a hundred times more beautiful!”

“What folly,” murmured Anne of Austria, who had not the courage to find fault with the duke for having so well preserved her portrait in his heart, “what folly to feed a useless passion with such remembrances!”

“And upon what then must I live? I have nothing but memory. It is my happiness, my treasure, my hope. Every time I see you is a fresh diamond which I enclose in the casket of my heart. This is

the fourth which you have let fall and I have picked up; for in three years, madame, I have only seen you four times-the first, which I have described to you; the second, at the mansion of Madame de Chevreuse; the third, in the gardens of Amiens."

"Duke," said the queen, blushing, "never speak of that evening."

"Oh, let us speak of it; on the contrary, let us speak of it! That is the most happy and brilliant evening of my life! You remember what a beautiful night it was? How soft and perfumed was the air; how lovely the blue heavens and star-enameled sky! Ah, then, madame, I was able for one instant to be alone with you. Then you were about to tell me all-the isolation of your life, the griefs of your heart. You leaned upon my arm-upon this, madame! I felt, in bending my head toward you, your beautiful hair touch my cheek; and every time that it touched me I trembled from head to foot. Oh, Queen! Queen! You do not know what felicity from heaven, what joys from paradise, are comprised in a moment like that. Take my wealth, my fortune, my glory, all the days I have to live, for such an instant, for a night like that. For that night, madame, that night you loved me, I will swear it."

"My Lord, yes; it is possible that the influence of the place, the charm of the beautiful evening, the fascination of your look-the thousand circumstances, in short, which sometimes unite to destroy a woman-were grouped around me on that fatal evening; but, my Lord, you saw the queen come to the aid of the woman who faltered. At the first word you dared to utter, at the first freedom to which I had to reply, I called for help."

"Yes, yes, that is true. And any other love but mine would have sunk beneath this ordeal; but my love came out from it more ardent and more eternal. You believed that you would fly from me by returning to Paris; you believed that I would not dare to quit the treasure over which my master had charged me to watch. What to me were all the treasures in the world, or all the kings of the earth! Eight days after, I was back again, madame. That time you had nothing to say to me; I had risked my life and favor to see you but for a second. I did not even touch your hand, and you pardoned me on seeing me so submissive and so repentant."

"Yes, but calumny seized upon all those follies in which I took no part, as you well know, my Lord. The king, excited by the cardinal, made a terrible clamor. Madame de Vernet was driven from me, Putange was exiled, Madame de Chevreuse fell into disgrace, and when you wished to come back as ambassador to France, the king himself-remember, my lord-the king himself opposed it."

"Yes, and France is about to pay for her king's refusal with a war. I am not allowed to see you, madame, but you shall every day hear of me. What object, think you, have this expedition to Re and this league with the Protestants of La Rochelle which I am projecting? The pleasure of seeing you. I have no hope of penetrating, sword in hand, to Paris, I know that well. But this war may bring round a peace; this peace will require a negotiator; that negotiator will be me. They will not dare to refuse me then; and I will return to Paris, and will see you again, and will be happy for an instant. Thousands of men, it is true, will have to pay for my happiness with their lives; but what is that to me, provided I see you again! All this is perhaps folly-perhaps insanity; but tell me what woman has a lover more truly in love; what queen a servant more ardent?"

"My Lord, my Lord, you invoke in your defense things which accuse you more strongly. All these proofs of love which you would give me are almost crimes."

"Because you do not love me, madame! If you loved me, you would view all this otherwise. If you loved me, oh, if you loved me, that would be too great happiness, and I should run mad. Ah, Madame de Chevreuse was less cruel than you. Holland loved her, and she responded to his love."

"Madame de Chevreuse was not queen," murmured Anne of Austria, overcome, in spite of herself, by the expression of so profound a passion.

"You would love me, then, if you were not queen! Madame, say that you would love me then! I can believe that it is the dignity of your rank alone which makes you cruel to me; I can believe that, had you been Madame de Chevreuse, poor Buckingham might have hoped. Thanks for those sweet words! Oh, my beautiful sovereign, a hundred times, thanks!"

"Oh, my Lord! You have ill understood, wrongly interpreted; I did not mean to say-"

"Silence, silence!" cried the duke. "If I am happy in an error, do not have the cruelty to lift me from it. You have told me yourself, madame, that I have been drawn into a snare; I, perhaps, may leave my life in it-for, although it may be strange, I have for some time had a presentiment that I should shortly die." And the duke smiled, with a smile at once sad and charming.

"Oh, my God!" cried Anne of Austria, with an accent of terror which proved how much greater an interest she took in the duke than she ventured to tell.

"I do not tell you this, madame, to terrify you; no, it is even ridiculous for me to name it to you, and, believe me, I take no heed of such dreams. But the words you have just spoken, the hope you have almost given me, will have richly paid all-were it my life."

"Oh, but I," said Anne, "I also, duke, have had presentiments; I also have had dreams. I dreamed that I saw you lying bleeding, wounded."

"In the left side, was it not, and with a knife?" interrupted Buckingham.

"Yes, it was so, my Lord, it was so-in the left side, and with a knife. Who can possibly have told you I had had that dream? I have imparted it to no one but my God, and that in my prayers."

"I ask for no more. You love me, madame; it is enough."

"I love you, I?"

"Yes, yes. Would God send the same dreams to you as to me if you did not love me? Should we have the same presentiments if our existences did not touch at the heart? You love me, my beautiful queen, and you will weep for me?"

"Oh, my God, my God!" cried Anne of Austria, "this is more than I can bear. In the name of heaven, Duke, leave me, go! I do not know whether I love you or love you not; but what I know is that I will not be perjured. Take pity on me, then, and go! Oh, if you are struck in France, if you die in France, if I could imagine that your love for me was the cause of your death, I could not console myself; I should run mad. Depart then, depart, I implore you!"

"Oh, how beautiful you are thus! Oh, how I love you!" said Buckingham.

"Go, go, I implore you, and return hereafter! Come back as ambassador, come back as minister, come back surrounded with guards who will defend you, with servants who will watch over you, and then I shall no longer fear for your days, and I shall be happy in seeing you."

"Oh, is this true what you say?"

"Yes."

"Oh, then, some pledge of your indulgence, some object which came from you, and may remind me that I have not been dreaming; something you have worn, and that I may wear in my turn-a ring, a necklace, a chain."

"Will you depart-will you depart, if I give you that you demand?"

"Yes."

"This very instant?"

"Yes."

"You will leave France, you will return to England?"

"I will, I swear to you."

"Wait, then, wait."

Anne of Austria re-entered her apartment, and came out again almost immediately, holding a rosewood casket in her hand, with her cipher encrusted with gold.

"Here, my Lord, here," said she, "keep this in memory of me."

Buckingham took the casket, and fell a second time on his knees.

"You have promised me to go," said the queen.

"And I keep my word. Your hand, madame, your hand, and I depart!"

Anne of Austria stretched forth her hand, closing her eyes, and leaning with the other upon Estafania, for she felt that her strength was about to fail her.

Buckingham pressed his lips passionately to that beautiful hand, and then rising, said, “Within six months, if I am not dead, I shall have seen you again, madame-even if I have to overturn the world.” And faithful to the promise he had made, he rushed out of the apartment.

In the corridor he met Mme. Bonacieux, who waited for him, and who, with the same precautions and the same good luck, conducted him out of the Louvre.

13 MONSIEUR BONACIEUX

There was in all this, as may have been observed, one personage concerned, of whom, notwithstanding his precarious position, we have appeared to take but very little notice. This personage was M. Bonacieux, the respectable martyr of the political and amorous intrigues which entangled themselves so nicely together at this gallant and chivalric period.

Fortunately, the reader may remember, or may not remember-fortunately we have promised not to lose sight of him.

The officers who arrested him conducted him straight to the Bastille, where he passed trembling before a party of soldiers who were loading their muskets. Thence, introduced into a half-subterranean gallery, he became, on the part of those who had brought him, the object of the grossest insults and the harshest treatment. The officers perceived that they had not to deal with a gentleman, and they treated him like a very peasant.

At the end of half an hour or thereabouts, a clerk came to put an end to his tortures, but not to his anxiety, by giving the order to conduct M. Bonacieux to the Chamber of Examination. Ordinarily, prisoners were interrogated in their cells; but they did not do so with M. Bonacieux.

Two guards attended the mercer who made him traverse a court and enter a corridor in which were three sentinels, opened a door and pushed him unceremoniously into a low room, where the only furniture was a table, a chair, and a commissary. The commissary was seated in the chair, and was writing at the table.

The two guards led the prisoner toward the table, and upon a sign from the commissary drew back so far as to be unable to hear anything.

The commissary, who had till this time held his head down over his papers, looked up to see what sort of person he had to do with. This commissary was a man of very repulsive mien, with a pointed nose, with yellow and salient cheek bones, with eyes small but keen and penetrating, and an expression of countenance resembling at once the polecat and the fox. His head, supported by a long and flexible neck, issued from his large black robe, balancing itself with a motion very much like that of the tortoise thrusting his head out of his shell. He began by asking M. Bonacieux his name, age, condition, and abode.

The accused replied that his name was Jacques Michel Bonacieux, that he was fifty-one years old, a retired mercer, and lived Rue des Fossoyeurs, No. 14.

The commissary then, instead of continuing to interrogate him, made him a long speech upon the danger there is for an obscure citizen to meddle with public matters. He complicated this exordium by an exposition in which he painted the power and the deeds of the cardinal, that incomparable minister, that conqueror of past ministers, that example for ministers to come-deeds and power which none could thwart with impunity.

After this second part of his discourse, fixing his hawk's eye upon poor Bonacieux, he bade him reflect upon the gravity of his situation.

The reflections of the mercer were already made; he cursed the instant when M. Laporte formed the idea of marrying him to his goddaughter, and particularly the moment when that goddaughter had been received as Lady of the Linen to her Majesty.

At bottom the character of M. Bonacieux was one of profound selfishness mixed with sordid avarice, the whole seasoned with extreme cowardice. The love with which his young wife had inspired him was a secondary sentiment, and was not strong enough to contend with the primitive feelings we have just enumerated. Bonacieux indeed reflected on what had just been said to him.

"But, Monsieur Commissary," said he, calmly, "believe that I know and appreciate, more than anybody, the merit of the incomparable eminence by whom we have the honor to be governed."

"Indeed?" asked the commissary, with an air of doubt. "If that is really so, how came you in the Bastille?"

"How I came there, or rather why I am there," replied Bonacieux, "that is entirely impossible for me to tell you, because I don't know myself; but to a certainty it is not for having, knowingly at least, disobliged Monsieur the Cardinal."

"You must, nevertheless, have committed a crime, since you are here and are accused of high treason."

"Of high treason!" cried Bonacieux, terrified; "of high treason! How is it possible for a poor mercer, who detests Huguenots and who abhors Spaniards, to be accused of high treason? Consider, monsieur, the thing is absolutely impossible."

"Monsieur Bonacieux," said the commissary, looking at the accused as if his little eyes had the faculty of reading to the very depths of hearts, "you have a wife?"

"Yes, monsieur," replied the mercer, in a tremble, feeling that it was at this point affairs were likely to become perplexing; "that is to say, I HAD one."

"What, you 'had one'? What have you done with her, then, if you have her no longer?"

"They have abducted her, monsieur."

"They have abducted her? Ah!"

Bonacieux inferred from this "Ah" that the affair grew more and more intricate.

"They have abducted her," added the commissary; "and do you know the man who has committed this deed?"

"I think I know him."

"Who is he?"

"Remember that I affirm nothing, Monsieur the Commissary, and that I only suspect."

"Whom do you suspect? Come, answer freely."

M Bonacieux was in the greatest perplexity possible. Had he better deny everything or tell everything? By denying all, it might be suspected that he must know too much to avow; by confessing all he might prove his good will. He decided, then, to tell all.

"I suspect," said he, "a tall, dark man, of lofty carriage, who has the air of a great lord. He has followed us several times, as I think, when I have waited for my wife at the wicket of the Louvre to escort her home."

The commissary now appeared to experience a little uneasiness.

"And his name?" said he.

"Oh, as to his name, I know nothing about it; but if I were ever to meet him, I should recognize him in an instant, I will answer for it, were he among a thousand persons."

The face of the commissary grew still darker.

"You should recognize him among a thousand, say you?" continued he.

"That is to say," cried Bonacieux, who saw he had taken a false step, "that is to say-"

"You have answered that you should recognize him," said the commissary. "That is all very well, and enough for today; before we proceed further, someone must be informed that you know the ravisher of your wife."

"But I have not told you that I know him!" cried Bonacieux, in despair. "I told you, on the contrary-"

"Take away the prisoner," said the commissary to the two guards.

"Where must we place him?" demanded the chief.

"In a dungeon."

"Which?"

"Good Lord! In the first one handy, provided it is safe," said the commissary, with an indifference which penetrated poor Bonacieux with horror.

"Alas, alas!" said he to himself, "misfortune is over my head; my wife must have committed some frightful crime. They believe me her accomplice, and will punish me with her. She must have spoken; she must have confessed everything-a woman is so weak! A dungeon! The first he comes to! That's it! A night is soon passed; and tomorrow to the wheel, to the gallows! Oh, my God, my God, have pity on me!"

Without listening the least in the world to the lamentations of M. Bonacieux-lamentations to which, besides, they must have been pretty well accustomed-the two guards took the prisoner each by an arm, and led him away, while the commissary wrote a letter in haste and dispatched it by an officer in waiting.

Bonacieux could not close his eyes; not because his dungeon was so very disagreeable, but because his uneasiness was so great. He sat all night on his stool, starting at the least noise; and when the first rays of the sun penetrated into his chamber, the dawn itself appeared to him to have taken funereal tints.

All at once he heard his bolts drawn, and made a terrified bound. He believed they were come to conduct him to the scaffold; so that when he saw merely and simply, instead of the executioner he expected, only his commissary of the preceding evening, attended by his clerk, he was ready to embrace them both.

"Your affair has become more complicated since yesterday evening, my good man, and I advise you to tell the whole truth; for your repentance alone can remove the anger of the cardinal."

"Why, I am ready to tell everything," cried Bonacieux, "at least, all that I know. Interrogate me, I entreat you!"

"Where is your wife, in the first place?"

"Why, did not I tell you she had been stolen from me?"

"Yes, but yesterday at five o'clock in the afternoon, thanks to you, she escaped."

"My wife escaped!" cried Bonacieux. "Oh, unfortunate creature! Monsieur, if she has escaped, it is not my fault, I swear."

"What business had you, then, to go into the chamber of Monsieur d'Artagnan, your neighbor, with whom you had a long conference during the day?"

"Ah, yes, Monsieur Commissary; yes, that is true, and I confess that I was in the wrong. I did go to Monsieur d'Artagnan's."

"What was the aim of that visit?"

"To beg him to assist me in finding my wife. I believed I had a right to endeavor to find her. I was deceived, as it appears, and I ask your pardon."

"And what did Monsieur d'Artagnan reply?"

"Monsieur d'Artagnan promised me his assistance; but I soon found out that he was betraying me."

"You impose upon justice. Monsieur d'Artagnan made a compact with you; and in virtue of that compact put to flight the police who had arrested your wife, and has placed her beyond reach."

"M. d'Artagnan has abducted my wife! Come now, what are you telling me?"

"Fortunately, Monsieur d'Artagnan is in our hands, and you shall be confronted with him."

"By my faith, I ask no better," cried Bonacieux; "I shall not be sorry to see the face of an acquaintance."

"Bring in the Monsieur d'Artagnan," said the commissary to the guards. The two guards led in Athos.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan," said the commissary, addressing Athos, "declare all that passed yesterday between you and Monsieur."

"But," cried Bonacieux, "this is not Monsieur d'Artagnan whom you show me."

"What! Not Monsieur d'Artagnan?" exclaimed the commissary.

"Not the least in the world," replied Bonacieux.

"What is this gentleman's name?" asked the commissary.

"I cannot tell you; I don't know him."

"How! You don't know him?"

"No."

"Did you never see him?"

"Yes, I have seen him, but I don't know what he calls himself."

"Your name?" replied the commissary.

"Athos," replied the Musketeer.

"But that is not a man's name; that is the name of a mountain," cried the poor questioner, who began to lose his head.

"That is my name," said Athos, quietly.

"But you said that your name was d'Artagnan."

"Who, I?"

"Yes, you."

"Somebody said to me, 'You are Monsieur d'Artagnan?' I answered, 'You think so?' My guards exclaimed that they were sure of it. I did not wish to contradict them; besides, I might be deceived."

"Monsieur, you insult the majesty of justice."

"Not at all," said Athos, calmly.

"You are Monsieur d'Artagnan."

"You see, monsieur, that you say it again."

"But I tell you, Monsieur Commissary," cried Bonacieux, in his turn, "there is not the least doubt about the matter. Monsieur d'Artagnan is my tenant, although he does not pay me my rent-and even better on that account ought I to know him. Monsieur d'Artagnan is a young man, scarcely nineteen or twenty, and this gentleman must be thirty at least. Monsieur d'Artagnan is in Monsieur Dessessart's Guards, and this gentleman is in the company of Monsieur de Treville's Musketeers. Look at his uniform, Monsieur Commissary, look at his uniform!"

"That's true," murmured the commissary; "PARDIEU, that's true."

At this moment the door was opened quickly, and a messenger, introduced by one of the gatekeepers of the Bastille, gave a letter to the commissary.

"Oh, unhappy woman!" cried the commissary.

"How? What do you say? Of whom do you speak? It is not of my wife, I hope!"

"On the contrary, it is of her. Yours is a pretty business."

"But," said the agitated mercer, "do me the pleasure, monsieur, to tell me how my own proper affair can become worse by anything my wife does while I am in prison?"

"Because that which she does is part of a plan concerted between you-of an infernal plan."

"I swear to you, Monsieur Commissary, that you are in the profoundest error, that I know nothing in the world about what my wife had to do, that I am entirely a stranger to what she has done; and that if she has committed any follies, I renounce her, I abjure her, I curse her!"

"Bah!" said Athos to the commissary, "if you have no more need of me, send me somewhere. Your Monsieur Bonacieux is very tiresome."

The commissary designated by the same gesture Athos and Bonacieux, "Let them be guarded more closely than ever."

"And yet," said Athos, with his habitual calmness, "if it be Monsieur d'Artagnan who is concerned in this matter, I do not perceive how I can take his place."

"Do as I bade you," cried the commissary, "and preserve absolute secrecy. You understand!"

Athos shrugged his shoulders, and followed his guards silently, while M. Bonacieux uttered lamentations enough to break the heart of a tiger.

They locked the mercer in the same dungeon where he had passed the night, and left him to himself during the day. Bonacieux wept all day, like a true mercer, not being at all a military man,

as he himself informed us. In the evening, about nine o'clock, at the moment he had made up his mind to go to bed, he heard steps in his corridor. These steps drew near to his dungeon, the door was thrown open, and the guards appeared.

"Follow me," said an officer, who came up behind the guards.

"Follow you!" cried Bonacieux, "follow you at this hour! Where, my God?"

"Where we have orders to lead you."

"But that is not an answer."

"It is, nevertheless, the only one we can give."

"Ah, my God, my God!" murmured the poor mercer, "now, indeed, I am lost!" And he followed the guards who came for him, mechanically and without resistance.

He passed along the same corridor as before, crossed one court, then a second side of a building; at length, at the gate of the entrance court he found a carriage surrounded by four guards on horseback. They made him enter this carriage, the officer placed himself by his side, the door was locked, and they were left in a rolling prison. The carriage was put in motion as slowly as a funeral car. Through the closely fastened windows the prisoner could perceive the houses and the pavement, that was all; but, true Parisian as he was, Bonacieux could recognize every street by the milestones, the signs, and the lamps. At the moment of arriving at St. Paul-the spot where such as were condemned at the Bastille were executed-he was near fainting and crossed himself twice. He thought the carriage was about to stop there. The carriage, however, passed on.

Farther on, a still greater terror seized him on passing by the cemetery of St. Jean, where state criminals were buried. One thing, however, reassured him; he remembered that before they were buried their heads were generally cut off, and he felt that his head was still on his shoulders. But when he saw the carriage take the way to La Greve, when he perceived the pointed roof of the Hotel de Ville, and the carriage passed under the arcade, he believed it was over with him. He wished to confess to the officer, and upon his refusal, uttered such pitiable cries that the officer told him that if he continued to deafen him thus, he should put a gag in his mouth.

This measure somewhat reassured Bonacieux. If they meant to execute him at La Greve, it could scarcely be worth while to gag him, as they had nearly reached the place of execution. Indeed, the carriage crossed the fatal spot without stopping. There remained, then, no other place to fear but the Traitor's Cross; the carriage was taking the direct road to it.

This time there was no longer any doubt; it was at the Traitor's Cross that lesser criminals were executed. Bonacieux had flattered himself in believing himself worthy of St. Paul or of the Place de Greve; it was at the Traitor's Cross that his journey and his destiny were about to end! He could not yet see that dreadful cross, but he felt somehow as if it were coming to meet him. When he was within twenty paces of it, he heard a noise of people and the carriage stopped. This was more than poor Bonacieux could endure, depressed as he was by the successive emotions which he had experienced; he uttered a feeble groan which night have been taken for the last sigh of a dying man, and fainted.

14 THE MAN OF MEUNG

The crowd was caused, not by the expectation of a man to be hanged, but by the contemplation of a man who was hanged.

The carriage, which had been stopped for a minute, resumed its way, passed through the crowd, threaded the Rue St. Honore, turned into the Rue des Bons Enfants, and stopped before a low door.

The door opened; two guards received Bonacieux in their arms from the officer who supported him. They carried him through an alley, up a flight of stairs, and deposited him in an antechamber.

All these movements had been effected mechanically, as far as he was concerned. He had walked as one walks in a dream; he had a glimpse of objects as through a fog. His ears had perceived sounds without comprehending them; he might have been executed at that moment without his making a single gesture in his own defense or uttering a cry to implore mercy.

He remained on the bench, with his back leaning against the wall and his hands hanging down, exactly on the spot where the guards placed him.

On looking around him, however, as he could perceive no threatening object, as nothing indicated that he ran any real danger, as the bench was comfortably covered with a well-stuffed cushion, as the wall was ornamented with a beautiful Cordova leather, and as large red damask curtains, fastened back by gold clasps, floated before the window, he perceived by degrees that his fear was exaggerated, and he began to turn his head to the right and the left, upward and downward.

At this movement, which nobody opposed, he resumed a little courage, and ventured to draw up one leg and then the other. At length, with the help of his two hands he lifted himself from the bench, and found himself on his feet.

At this moment an officer with a pleasant face opened a door, continued to exchange some words with a person in the next chamber and then came up to the prisoner. “Is your name Bonacieux?” said he.

“Yes, Monsieur Officer,” stammered the mercer, more dead than alive, “at your service.”

“Come in,” said the officer.

And he moved out of the way to let the mercer pass. The latter obeyed without reply, and entered the chamber, where he appeared to be expected.

It was a large cabinet, close and stifling, with the walls furnished with arms offensive and defensive, and in which there was already a fire, although it was scarcely the end of the month of September. A square table, covered with books and papers, upon which was unrolled an immense plan of the city of La Rochelle, occupied the center of the room.

Standing before the chimney was a man of middle height, of a haughty, proud mien; with piercing eyes, a large brow, and a thin face, which was made still longer by a ROYAL (or IMPERIAL, as it is now called), surmounted by a pair of mustaches. Although this man was scarcely thirty-six or thirty-seven years of age, hair, mustaches, and royal, all began to be gray. This man, except a sword, had all the appearance of a soldier; and his buff boots, still slightly covered with dust, indicated that he had been on horseback in the course of the day.

This man was Armand Jean Duplessis, Cardinal de Richelieu; not such as he is now represented-broken down like an old man, suffering like a martyr, his body bent, his voice failing, buried in a large armchair as in an anticipated tomb; no longer living but by the strength of his genius, and no longer maintaining the struggle with Europe but by the eternal application of his thoughts-but such as he really was at this period; that is to say, an active and gallant cavalier, already weak of body, but sustained by that moral power which made of him one of the most extraordinary men that ever lived, preparing, after having supported the Duc de Nevers in his duchy of Mantua, after having taken Nimes, Castres, and Uzes, to drive the English from the Isle of Re and lay siege to La Rochelle.

At first sight, nothing denoted the cardinal; and it was impossible for those who did not know his face to guess in whose presence they were.

The poor mercer remained standing at the door, while the eyes of the personage we have just described were fixed upon him, and appeared to wish to penetrate even into the depths of the past.

“Is this that Bonacieux?” asked he, after a moment of silence.

“Yes, monseigneur,” replied the officer.

“That’s well. Give me those papers, and leave us.”

The officer took from the table the papers pointed out, gave them to him who asked for them, bowed to the ground, and retired.

Bonacieux recognized in these papers his interrogatories of the Bastille. From time to time the man by the chimney raised his eyes from the writings, and plunged them like poniards into the heart of the poor mercer.

At the end of ten minutes of reading and ten seconds of examination, the cardinal was satisfied.

“That head has never conspired,” murmured he, “but it matters not; we will see.”

“You are accused of high treason,” said the cardinal, slowly.

“So I have been told already, monseigneur,” cried Bonacieux, giving his interrogator the title he had heard the officer give him, “but I swear to you that I know nothing about it.”

The cardinal repressed a smile.

“You have conspired with your wife, with Madame de Chevreuse, and with my Lord Duke of Buckingham.”

“Indeed, monseigneur,” responded the mercer, “I have heard her pronounce all those names.”

“And on what occasion?”

“She said that the Cardinal de Richelieu had drawn the Duke of Buckingham to Paris to ruin him and to ruin the queen.”

“She said that?” cried the cardinal, with violence.

“Yes, monseigneur, but I told her she was wrong to talk about such things; and that his Eminence was incapable-”

“Hold your tongue! You are stupid,” replied the cardinal.

“That’s exactly what my wife said, monseigneur.”

“Do you know who carried off your wife?”

“No, monseigneur.”

“You have suspicions, nevertheless?”

“Yes, monseigneur; but these suspicions appeared to be disagreeable to Monsieur the Commissary, and I no longer have them.”

“Your wife has escaped. Did you know that?”

“No, monseigneur. I learned it since I have been in prison, and that from the conversation of Monsieur the Commissary-an amiable man.”

The cardinal repressed another smile.

“Then you are ignorant of what has become of your wife since her flight.”

“Absolutely, monseigneur; but she has most likely returned to the Louvre.”

“At one o’clock this morning she had not returned.”

“My God! What can have become of her, then?”

“We shall know, be assured. Nothing is concealed from the cardinal; the cardinal knows everything.”

“In that case, monseigneur, do you believe the cardinal will be so kind as to tell me what has become of my wife?”

“Perhaps he may; but you must, in the first place, reveal to the cardinal all you know of your wife’s relations with Madame de Chevreuse.”

“But, monseigneur, I know nothing about them; I have never seen her.”

"When you went to fetch your wife from the Louvre, did you always return directly home?"

"Scarcely ever; she had business to transact with linen drapers, to whose houses I conducted her."

"And how many were there of these linen drapers?"

"Two, monseigneur."

"And where did they live?"

"One in Rue de Vaugirard, the other Rue de la Harpe."

"Did you go into these houses with her?"

"Never, monseigneur; I waited at the door."

"And what excuse did she give you for entering all alone?"

"She gave me none; she told me to wait, and I waited."

"You are a very complacent husband, my dear Monsieur Bonacieux," said the cardinal.

"He calls me his dear Monsieur," said the mercer to himself. "PESTE! Matters are going all right."

"Should you know those doors again?"

"Yes."

"Do you know the numbers?"

"Yes."

"What are they?"

"No. 25 in the Rue de Vaugirard; 75 in the Rue de la Harpe."

"That's well," said the cardinal.

At these words he took up a silver bell, and rang it; the officer entered.

"Go," said he, in a subdued voice, "and find Rochefort. Tell him to come to me immediately, if he has returned."

"The count is here," said the officer, "and requests to speak with your Eminence instantly."

"Let him come in, then!" said the cardinal, quickly.

The officer sprang out of the apartment with that alacrity which all the servants of the cardinal displayed in obeying him.

"To your Eminence!" murmured Bonacieux, rolling his eyes round in astonishment.

Five seconds has scarcely elapsed after the disappearance of the officer, when the door opened, and a new personage entered.

"It is he!" cried Bonacieux.

"He! What he?" asked the cardinal.

"The man who abducted my wife."

The cardinal rang a second time. The officer reappeared.

"Place this man in the care of his guards again, and let him wait till I send for him."

"No, monseigneur, no, it is not he!" cried Bonacieux; "no, I was deceived. This is quite another man, and does not resemble him at all. Monsieur is, I am sure, an honest man."

"Take away that fool!" said the cardinal.

The officer took Bonacieux by the arm, and led him into the antechamber, where he found his two guards.

The newly introduced personage followed Bonacieux impatiently with his eyes till he had gone out; and the moment the door closed, "They have seen each other;" said he, approaching the cardinal eagerly.

"Who?" asked his Eminence.

"He and she."

"The queen and the duke?" cried Richelieu.

"Yes."

"Where?"

"At the Louvre."

"Are you sure of it?"

"Perfectly sure."

"Who told you of it?"

"Madame de Lannoy, who is devoted to your Eminence, as you know."

"Why did she not let me know sooner?"

"Whether by chance or mistrust, the queen made Madame de Surgis sleep in her chamber, and detained her all day."

"Well, we are beaten! Now let us try to take our revenge."

"I will assist you with all my heart, monseigneur; be assured of that."

"How did it come about?"

"At half past twelve the queen was with her women-"

"Where?"

"In her bedchamber-"

"Go on."

"When someone came and brought her a handkerchief from her laundress."

"And then?"

"The queen immediately exhibited strong emotion; and despite the rouge with which her face was covered evidently turned pale-"

"And then, and then?"

"She then arose, and with altered voice, 'Ladies,' said she, 'wait for me ten minutes, I shall soon return.' She then opened the door of her alcove, and went out."

"Why did not Madame de Lannoy come and inform you instantly?"

"Nothing was certain; besides, her Majesty had said, 'Ladies, wait for me,' and she did not dare to disobey the queen."

"How long did the queen remain out of the chamber?"

"Three-quarters of an hour."

"None of her women accompanied her?"

"Only Donna Estafania."

"Did she afterward return?"

"Yes; but only to take a little rosewood casket, with her cipher upon it, and went out again immediately."

"And when she finally returned, did she bring that casket with her?"

"No."

"Does Madame de Lannoy know what was in that casket?"

"Yes; the diamond studs which his Majesty gave the queen."

"And she came back without this casket?"

"Yes."

"Madame de Lannoy, then, is of opinion that she gave them to Buckingham?"

"She is sure of it."

"How can she be so?"

"In the course of the day Madame de Lannoy, in her quality of tire-woman of the queen, looked for this casket, appeared uneasy at not finding it, and at length asked information of the queen."

"And then the queen?"

"The queen became exceedingly red, and replied that having in the evening broken one of those studs, she had sent it to her goldsmith to be repaired."

"He must be called upon, and so ascertain if the thing be true or not."

"I have just been with him."

"And the goldsmith?"

"The goldsmith has heard nothing of it."

"Well, well! Rochefort, all is not lost; and perhaps-perhaps everything is for the best."

"The fact is that I do not doubt your Eminence's genius-"

"Will repair the blunders of his agent-is that it?"

"That is exactly what I was going to say, if your Eminence had let me finish my sentence."

"Meanwhile, do you know where the Duchesse de Chevreuse and the Duke of Buckingham are now concealed?"

"No, monseigneur; my people could tell me nothing on that head."

"But I know."

"You, monseigneur?"

"Yes; or at least I guess. They were, one in the Rue de Vaugirard, No. 25; the other in the Rue de la Harpe, No. 75."

"Does your Eminence command that they both be instantly arrested?"

"It will be too late; they will be gone."

"But still, we can make sure that they are so."

"Take ten men of my Guardsmen, and search the two houses thoroughly."

"Instantly, monseigneur." And Rochefort went hastily out of the apartment.

The cardinal, being left alone, reflected for an instant and then rang the bell a third time. The same officer appeared.

"Bring the prisoner in again," said the cardinal.

M Bonacieux was introduced afresh, and upon a sign from the cardinal, the officer retired.

"You have deceived me!" said the cardinal, sternly.

"I," cried Bonacieux, "I deceive your Eminence!"

"Your wife, in going to Rue de Vaugirard and Rue de la Harpe, did not go to find linen drapers."

"Then why did she go, just God?"

"She went to meet the Duchesse de Chevreuse and the Duke of Buckingham."

"Yes," cried Bonacieux, recalling all his remembrances of the circumstances, "yes, that's it. Your Eminence is right. I told my wife several times that it was surprising that linen drapers should live in such houses as those, in houses that had no signs; but she always laughed at me. Ah, monseigneur!" continued Bonacieux, throwing himself at his Eminence's feet, "ah, how truly you are the cardinal, the great cardinal, the man of genius whom all the world reveres!"

The cardinal, however contemptible might be the triumph gained over so vulgar a being as Bonacieux, did not the less enjoy it for an instant; then, almost immediately, as if a fresh thought has occurred, a smile played upon his lips, and he said, offering his hand to the mercer, "Rise, my friend, you are a worthy man."

"The cardinal has touched me with his hand! I have touched the hand of the great man!" cried Bonacieux. "The great man has called me his friend!"

"Yes, my friend, yes," said the cardinal, with that paternal tone which he sometimes knew how to assume, but which deceived none who knew him; "and as you have been unjustly suspected, well, you must be indemnified. Here, take this purse of a hundred pistoles, and pardon me."

"I pardon you, monseigneur!" said Bonacieux, hesitating to take the purse, fearing, doubtless, that this pretended gift was but a pleasantry. "But you are able to have me arrested, you are able to have me tortured, you are able to have me hanged; you are the master, and I could not have the least word to say. Pardon you, monseigneur! You cannot mean that!"

"Ah, my dear Monsieur Bonacieux, you are generous in this matter. I see it and I thank you for it. Thus, then, you will take this bag, and you will go away without being too malcontent."

"I go away enchanted."

"Farewell, then, or rather, AU REVOIR!"

"Whenever Monseigneur wishes, I shall be firmly at the orders of his Eminence."

"That will be often, be assured, for I have found your conversation quite charming."

"Oh! Monseigneur!"

"AU REVOIR, Monsieur Bonacieux, AU REVOIR."

And the cardinal made him a sign with his hand, to which Bonacieux replied by bowing to the ground. He then went out backward, and when he was in the antechamber the cardinal heard him, in his enthusiasm, crying aloud, "Long life to the Monseigneur! Long life to his Eminence! Long life to the great cardinal!" The cardinal listened with a smile to this vociferous manifestation of the feelings of M. Bonacieux; and then, when Bonacieux's cries were no longer audible, "Good!" said he, "that man would henceforward lay down his life for me." And the cardinal began to examine with the greatest attention the map of La Rochelle, which, as we have said, lay open on the desk, tracing with a pencil the line in which the famous dyke was to pass which, eighteen months later, shut up the port of the besieged city. As he was in the deepest of his strategic meditations, the door opened, and Rochefort returned.

"Well?" said the cardinal, eagerly, rising with a promptitude which proved the degree of importance he attached to the commission with which he had charged the count.

"Well," said the latter, "a young woman of about twenty-six or twenty-eight years of age, and a man of from thirty-five to forty, have indeed lodged at the two houses pointed out by your Eminence; but the woman left last night, and the man this morning."

"It was they!" cried the cardinal, looking at the clock; "and now it is too late to have them pursued. The duchess is at Tours, and the duke at Boulogne. It is in London they must be found."

"What are your Eminence's orders?"

"Not a word of what has passed. Let the queen remain in perfect security; let her be ignorant that we know her secret. Let her believe that we are in search of some conspiracy or other. Send me the keeper of the seals, Seguier."

"And that man, what has your Eminence done with him?"

"What man?" asked the cardinal.

"That Bonacieux."

"I have done with him all that could be done. I have made him a spy upon his wife."

The Comte de Rochefort bowed like a man who acknowledges the superiority of the master as great, and retired.

Left alone, the cardinal seated himself again and wrote a letter, which he secured with his special seal. Then he rang. The officer entered for the fourth time.

"Tell Vitray to come to me," said he, "and tell him to get ready for a journey."

An instant after, the man he asked for was before him, booted and spurred.

"Vitray," said he, "you will go with all speed to London. You must not stop an instant on the way. You will deliver this letter to Milady. Here is an order for two hundred pistoles; call upon my treasurer and get the money. You shall have as much again if you are back within six days, and have executed your commission well."

The messenger, without replying a single word, bowed, took the letter, with the order for the two hundred pistoles, and retired.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.