

**DUMAS**  
**ALEXANDRE**

TWENTY  
YEARS AFTER

Александр Дюма  
**Twenty Years After**

«Public Domain»

**Дюма А.**

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# Alexandre Dumas

## Twenty Years After

### 1. The Shade of Cardinal Richelieu

In a splendid chamber of the Palais Royal, formerly styled the Palais Cardinal, a man was sitting in deep reverie, his head supported on his hands, leaning over a gilt and inlaid table which was covered with letters and papers. Behind this figure glowed a vast fireplace alive with leaping flames; great logs of oak blazed and crackled on the polished brass andirons whose flicker shone upon the superb habiliments of the lonely tenant of the room, which was illumined grandly by twin candelabra rich with wax-lights.

Any one who happened at that moment to contemplate that red simar-the gorgeous robe of office-and the rich lace, or who gazed on that pale brow, bent in anxious meditation, might, in the solitude of that apartment, combined with the silence of the ante-chambers and the measured paces of the guards upon the landing-place, have fancied that the shade of Cardinal Richelieu lingered still in his accustomed haunt.

It was, alas! the ghost of former greatness. France enfeebled, the authority of her sovereign contemned, her nobles returning to their former turbulence and insolence, her enemies within her frontiers-all proved the great Richelieu no longer in existence.

In truth, that the red simar which occupied the wonted place was his no longer, was still more strikingly obvious from the isolation which seemed, as we have observed, more appropriate to a phantom than a living creature-from the corridors deserted by courtiers, and courts crowded with guards-from that spirit of bitter ridicule, which, arising from the streets below, penetrated through the very casements of the room, which resounded with the murmurs of a whole city leagued against the minister; as well as from the distant and incessant sounds of guns firing-let off, happily, without other end or aim, except to show to the guards, the Swiss troops and the military who surrounded the Palais Royal, that the people were possessed of arms.

The shade of Richelieu was Mazarin. Now Mazarin was alone and defenceless, as he well knew.

“Foreigner!” he ejaculated, “Italian! that is their mean yet mighty byword of reproach-the watchword with which they assassinated, hanged, and made away with Concini; and if I gave them their way they would assassinate, hang, and make away with me in the same manner, although they have nothing to complain of except a tax or two now and then. Idiots! ignorant of their real enemies, they do not perceive that it is not the Italian who speaks French badly, but those who can say fine things to them in the purest Parisian accent, who are their real foes.

“Yes, yes,” Mazarin continued, whilst his wonted smile, full of subtlety, lent a strange expression to his pale lips; “yes, these noises prove to me, indeed, that the destiny of favorites is precarious; but ye shall know I am no ordinary favorite. No! The Earl of Essex, ‘tis true, wore a splendid ring, set with diamonds, given him by his royal mistress, whilst I-I have nothing but a simple circlet of gold, with a cipher on it and a date; but that ring has been blessed in the chapel of the Palais Royal,<sup>1</sup> so they will never ruin me, as they long to do, and whilst they shout, ‘Down with Mazarin!’ I, unknown, and unperceived by them, incite them to cry out, ‘Long live the Duke de Beaufort’ one day; another, ‘Long live the Prince de Conde;’ and again, ‘Long live the parliament!’” And at this word the smile on the cardinal’s lips assumed an expression of hatred, of which his mild countenance seemed incapable. “The parliament! We shall soon see how to dispose,” he continued, “of the parliament!

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<sup>1</sup> It is said that Mazarin, who, though a cardinal, had not taken such vows as to prevent it, was secretly married to Anne of Austria. – *La Porte’s Memoirs.*

Both Orleans and Montargis are ours. It will be a work of time, but those who have begun by crying out: Down with Mazarin! will finish by shouting out, Down with all the people I have mentioned, each in his turn.

“Richelieu, whom they hated during his lifetime and whom they now praise after his death, was even less popular than I am. Often he was driven away, oftener still had he a dread of being sent away. The queen will never banish me, and even were I obliged to yield to the populace she would yield with me; if I fly, she will fly; and then we shall see how the rebels will get on without either king or queen.

“Oh, were I not a foreigner! were I but a Frenchman! were I but of gentle birth!”

The position of the cardinal was indeed critical, and recent events had added to his difficulties. Discontent had long pervaded the lower ranks of society in France. Crushed and impoverished by taxation-imposed by Mazarin, whose avarice impelled him to grind them down to the very dust-the people, as the Advocate-General Talon described it, had nothing left to them except their souls; and as those could not be sold by auction, they began to murmur. Patience had in vain been recommended to them by reports of brilliant victories gained by France; laurels, however, were not meat and drink, and the people had for some time been in a state of discontent.

Had this been all, it might not, perhaps, have greatly signified; for when the lower classes alone complained, the court of France, separated as it was from the poor by the intervening classes of the gentry and the bourgeoisie, seldom listened to their voice; but unluckily, Mazarin had had the imprudence to attack the magistrates and had sold no less than twelve appointments in the Court of Requests, at a high price; and as the officers of that court paid very dearly for their places, and as the addition of twelve new colleagues would necessarily lower the value of each place, the old functionaries formed a union amongst themselves, and, enraged, swore on the Bible not to allow of this addition to their number, but to resist all the persecutions which might ensue; and should any one of them chance to forfeit his post by this resistance, to combine to indemnify him for his loss.

Now the following occurrences had taken place between the two contending parties.

On the seventh of January between seven and eight hundred tradesmen had assembled in Paris to discuss a new tax which was to be levied on house property. They deputed ten of their number to wait upon the Duke of Orleans, who, according to his custom, affected popularity. The duke received them and they informed him that they were resolved not to pay this tax, even if they were obliged to defend themselves against its collectors by force of arms. They were listened to with great politeness by the duke, who held out hopes of easier measures, promised to speak in their behalf to the queen, and dismissed them with the ordinary expression of royalty, “We will see what we can do.”

Two days afterward these same magistrates appeared before the cardinal and their spokesman addressed Mazarin with so much fearlessness and determination that the minister was astounded and sent the deputation away with the same answer as it had received from the Duke of Orleans-that he would see what could be done; and in accordance with that intention a council of state was assembled and the superintendent of finance was summoned.

This man, named Emery, was the object of popular detestation, in the first place because he was superintendent of finance, and every superintendent of finance deserved to be hated; in the second place, because he rather deserved the odium which he had incurred.

He was the son of a banker at Lyons named Particelli, who, after becoming a bankrupt, chose to change his name to Emery; and Cardinal Richelieu having discovered in him great financial aptitude, had introduced him with a strong recommendation to Louis XIII. under his assumed name, in order that he might be appointed to the post he subsequently held.

“You surprise me!” exclaimed the monarch. “I am rejoiced to hear you speak of Monsieur d’Emery as calculated for a post which requires a man of probity. I was really afraid that you were going to force that villain Particelli upon me.”

“Sire,” replied Richelieu, “rest assured that Particelli, the man to whom your majesty refers, has been hanged.”

“Ah; so much the better!” exclaimed the king. “It is not for nothing that I am styled Louis the Just,” and he signed Emery’s appointment.

This was the same Emery who became eventually superintendent of finance.

He was sent for by the ministers and he came before them pale and trembling, declaring that his son had very nearly been assassinated the day before, near the palace. The mob had insulted him on account of the ostentatious luxury of his wife, whose house was hung with red velvet edged with gold fringe. This lady was the daughter of Nicholas de Camus, who arrived in Paris with twenty francs in his pocket, became secretary of state, and accumulated wealth enough to divide nine millions of francs among his children and to keep an income of forty thousand for himself.

The fact was that Emery’s son had run a great chance of being suffocated, one of the rioters having proposed to squeeze him until he gave up all the gold he had swallowed. Nothing, therefore, was settled that day, as Emery’s head was not steady enough for business after such an occurrence.

On the next day Mathieu Mole, the chief president, whose courage at this crisis, says the Cardinal de Retz, was equal to that of the Duc de Beaufort and the Prince de Conde—in other words, of the two men who were considered the bravest in France—had been attacked in his turn. The people threatened to hold him responsible for the evils that hung over them. But the chief president had replied with his habitual coolness, without betraying either disturbance or surprise, that should the agitators refuse obedience to the king’s wishes he would have gallows erected in the public squares and proceed at once to hang the most active among them. To which the others had responded that they would be glad to see the gallows erected; they would serve for the hanging of those detestable judges who purchased favor at court at the price of the people’s misery.

Nor was this all. On the eleventh the queen in going to mass at Notre Dame, as she always did on Saturdays, was followed by more than two hundred women demanding justice. These poor creatures had no bad intentions. They wished only to be allowed to fall on their knees before their sovereign, and that they might move her to compassion; but they were prevented by the royal guard and the queen proceeded on her way, haughtily disdainful of their entreaties.

At length parliament was convoked; the authority of the king was to be maintained.

One day—it was the morning of the day my story begins—the king, Louis XIV., then ten years of age, went in state, under pretext of returning thanks for his recovery from the small-pox, to Notre Dame. He took the opportunity of calling out his guard, the Swiss troops and the musketeers, and he had planted them round the Palais Royal, on the quays, and on the Pont Neuf. After mass the young monarch drove to the Parliament House, where, upon the throne, he hastily confirmed not only such edicts as he had already passed, but issued new ones, each one, according to Cardinal de Retz, more ruinous than the others—a proceeding which drew forth a strong remonstrance from the chief president, Mole—whilst President Blancmesnil and Councillor Broussel raised their voices in indignation against fresh taxes.

The king returned amidst the silence of a vast multitude to the Palais Royal. All minds were uneasy, most were foreboding, many of the people used threatening language.

At first, indeed, they were doubtful whether the king’s visit to the parliament had been in order to lighten or increase their burdens; but scarcely was it known that the taxes were to be still further increased, when cries of “Down with Mazarin!” “Long live Broussel!” “Long live Blancmesnil!” resounded through the city. For the people had learned that Broussel and Blancmesnil had made speeches in their behalf, and, although the eloquence of these deputies had been without avail, it had none the less won for them the people’s good-will. All attempts to disperse the groups collected in the streets, or silence their exclamations, were in vain. Orders had just been given to the royal guards and the Swiss guards, not only to stand firm, but to send out patrols to the streets of Saint Denis and Saint Martin, where the people thronged and where they were the most vociferous, when the mayor of Paris was announced at the Palais Royal.

He was shown in directly; he came to say that if these offensive precautions were not discontinued, in two hours Paris would be under arms.

Deliberations were being held when a lieutenant in the guards, named Comminges, made his appearance, with his clothes all torn, his face streaming with blood. The queen on seeing him uttered a cry of surprise and asked him what was going on.

As the mayor had foreseen, the sight of the guards had exasperated the mob. The tocsin was sounded. Comminges had arrested one of the ringleaders and had ordered him to be hanged near the cross of Du Trahoir; but in attempting to execute this command the soldiery were attacked in the market-place with stones and halberds; the delinquent had escaped to the Rue des Lombards and rushed into a house. They broke open the doors and searched the dwelling, but in vain. Comminges, wounded by a stone which had struck him on the forehead, had left a picket in the street and returned to the Palais Royal, followed by a menacing crowd, to tell his story.

This account confirmed that of the mayor. The authorities were not in a condition to cope with serious revolt. Mazarin endeavored to circulate among the people a report that troops had only been stationed on the quays and on the Pont Neuf, on account of the ceremonial of the day, and that they would soon withdraw. In fact, about four o'clock they were all concentrated about the Palais Royal, the courts and ground floors of which were filled with musketeers and Swiss guards, and there awaited the outcome of all this disturbance.

Such was the state of affairs at the very moment we introduced our readers to the study of Cardinal Mazarin—once that of Cardinal Richelieu. We have seen in what state of mind he listened to the murmurs from below, which even reached him in his seclusion, and to the guns, the firing of which resounded through that room. All at once he raised his head; his brow slightly contracted like that of a man who has formed a resolution; he fixed his eyes upon an enormous clock that was about to strike ten, and taking up a whistle of silver gilt that stood upon the table near him, he shrilled it twice.

A door hidden in the tapestry opened noiselessly and a man in black silently advanced and stood behind the chair on which Mazarin sat.

“Bernouin,” said the cardinal, not turning round, for having whistled, he knew that it was his valet-de-chambre who was behind him; “what musketeers are now within the palace?”

“The Black Musketeers, my lord.”

“What company?”

“Treville’s company.”

“Is there any officer belonging to this company in the ante-chamber?”

“Lieutenant d’Artagnan.”

“A man on whom we can depend, I hope.”

“Yes, my lord.”

“Give me a uniform of one of these musketeers and help me to put it on.”

The valet went out as silently as he had entered and appeared in a few minutes bringing the dress demanded.

The cardinal, in deep thought and in silence, began to take off the robes of state he had assumed in order to be present at the sitting of parliament, and to attire himself in the military coat, which he wore with a certain degree of easy grace, owing to his former campaigns in Italy. When he was completely dressed he said:

“Send hither Monsieur d’Artagnan.”

The valet went out of the room, this time by the centre door, but still as silently as before; one might have fancied him an apparition.

When he was left alone the cardinal looked at himself in the glass with a feeling of self-satisfaction. Still young—for he was scarcely forty-six years of age—he possessed great elegance of form and was above the middle height; his complexion was brilliant and beautiful; his glance full of expression; his nose, though large, was well proportioned; his forehead broad and majestic; his hair,

of a chestnut color, was curled slightly; his beard, which was darker than his hair, was turned carefully with a curling iron, a practice that greatly improved it. After a short time the cardinal arranged his shoulder belt, then looked with great complacency at his hands, which were most elegant and of which he took the greatest care; and throwing on one side the large kid gloves tried on at first, as belonging to the uniform, he put on others of silk only. At this instant the door opened.

“Monsieur d’Artagnan,” said the valet-de-chambre.

An officer, as he spoke, entered the apartment. He was a man between thirty-nine and forty years of age, of medium height but a very well proportioned figure; with an intellectual and animated physiognomy; his beard black, and his hair turning gray, as often happens when people have found life either too gay or too sad, more especially when they happen to be of swart complexion.

D’Artagnan advanced a few steps into the apartment.

How perfectly he remembered his former entrance into that very room! Seeing, however, no one there except a musketeer of his own troop, he fixed his eyes upon the supposed soldier, in whose dress, nevertheless, he recognized at the first glance the cardinal.

The lieutenant remained standing in a dignified but respectful posture, such as became a man of good birth, who had in the course of his life been frequently in the society of the highest nobles.

The cardinal looked at him with a cunning rather than serious glance, yet he examined his countenance with attention and after a momentary silence said:

“You are Monsieur d’Artagnan?”

“I am that individual,” replied the officer.

Mazarin gazed once more at a countenance full of intelligence, the play of which had been, nevertheless, subdued by age and experience; and D’Artagnan received the penetrating glance like one who had formerly sustained many a searching look, very different, indeed, from those which were inquiringly directed on him at that instant.

“Sir,” resumed the cardinal, “you are to come with me, or rather, I am to go with you.”

“I am at your command, my lord,” returned D’Artagnan.

“I wish to visit in person the outposts which surround the Palais Royal; do you suppose that there is any danger in so doing?”

“Danger, my lord!” exclaimed D’Artagnan with a look of astonishment, “what danger?”

“I am told that there is a general insurrection.”

“The uniform of the king’s musketeers carries a certain respect with it, and even if that were not the case I would engage with four of my men to put to flight a hundred of these clowns.”

“Did you witness the injury sustained by Comminges?”

“Monsieur de Comminges is in the guards and not in the musketeers-”

“Which means, I suppose, that the musketeers are better soldiers than the guards.” The cardinal smiled as he spoke.

“Every one likes his own uniform best, my lord.”

“Myself excepted,” and again Mazarin smiled; “for you perceive that I have left off mine and put on yours.”

“Lord bless us! this is modesty indeed!” cried D’Artagnan. “Had I such a uniform as your eminence possesses, I protest I should be mightily content, and I would take an oath never to wear any other costume-”

“Yes, but for to-night’s adventure I don’t suppose my dress would have been a very safe one. Give me my felt hat, Bernouin.”

The valet instantly brought to his master a regimental hat with a wide brim. The cardinal put it on in military style.

“Your horses are ready saddled in their stables, are they not?” he said, turning to D’Artagnan.

“Yes, my lord.”

“Well, let us set out.”

“How many men does your eminence wish to escort you?”

“You say that with four men you will undertake to disperse a hundred low fellows; as it may happen that we shall have to encounter two hundred, take eight-”

“As many as my lord wishes.”

“I will follow you. This way-light us downstairs Bernouin.”

The valet held a wax-light; the cardinal took a key from his bureau and opening the door of a secret stair descended into the court of the Palais Royal.

## 2. A Nightly Patrol

In ten minutes Mazarin and his party were traversing the street “Les Bons Enfants” behind the theatre built by Richelieu expressly for the play of “Mirame,” and in which Mazarin, who was an amateur of music, but not of literature, had introduced into France the first opera that was ever acted in that country.

The appearance of the town denoted the greatest agitation. Numberless groups paraded the streets and, whatever D’Artagnan might think of it, it was obvious that the citizens had for the night laid aside their usual forbearance, in order to assume a warlike aspect. From time to time noises came in the direction of the public markets. The report of firearms was heard near the Rue Saint Denis and occasionally church bells began to ring indiscriminately and at the caprice of the populace. D’Artagnan, meantime, pursued his way with the indifference of a man upon whom such acts of folly made no impression. When he approached a group in the middle of the street he urged his horse upon it without a word of warning; and the members of the group, whether rebels or not, as if they knew with what sort of a man they had to deal, at once gave place to the patrol. The cardinal envied that composure, which he attributed to the habit of meeting danger; but none the less he conceived for the officer under whose orders he had for the moment placed himself, that consideration which even prudence pays to careless courage. On approaching an outpost near the Barriere des Sergens, the sentinel cried out, “Who’s there?” and D’Artagnan answered—having first asked the word of the cardinal—“Louis and Rocroy.” After which he inquired if Lieutenant Comminges were not the commanding officer at the outpost. The soldier replied by pointing out to him an officer who was conversing, on foot, his hand upon the neck of a horse on which the individual to whom he was talking sat. Here was the officer D’Artagnan was seeking.

“Here is Monsieur Comminges,” said D’Artagnan, returning to the cardinal. He instantly retired, from a feeling of respectful delicacy; it was, however, evident that the cardinal was recognized by both Comminges and the other officers on horseback.

“Well done, Guitant,” cried the cardinal to the equestrian; “I see plainly that, notwithstanding the sixty-four years that have passed over your head, you are still the same man, active and zealous. What were you saying to this youngster?”

“My lord,” replied Guitant, “I was observing that we live in troublous times and that to-day’s events are very like those in the days of the Ligue, of which I heard so much in my youth. Are you aware that the mob have even suggested throwing up barricades in the Rue Saint Denis and the Rue Saint Antoine?”

“And what was Comminges saying to you in reply, my good Guitant?”

“My lord,” said Comminges, “I answered that to compose a Ligue only one ingredient was wanting—in my opinion an essential one—a Duc de Guise; moreover, no generation ever does the same thing twice.”

“No, but they mean to make a Fronde, as they call it,” said Guitant.

“And what is a Fronde?” inquired Mazarin.

“My lord, Fronde is the name the discontented give to their party.”

“And what is the origin of this name?”

“It seems that some days since Councillor Bachaumont remarked at the palace that rebels and agitators reminded him of schoolboys slinging—qui frondent—stones from the moats round Paris, young urchins who run off the moment the constable appears, only to return to their diversion the instant his back is turned. So they have picked up the word and the insurrectionists are called ‘Frondeurs,’ and yesterday every article sold was ‘a la Fronde;’ bread ‘a la Fronde,’ hats ‘a la Fronde,’ to say nothing of gloves, pocket-handkerchiefs, and fans; but listen—”

At that moment a window opened and a man began to sing:

! “A tempest from the Fronde  
! Did blow to-day:  
! I think ‘twill blow  
! Sieur Mazarin away.”

“Insolent wretch!” cried Guitant.

“My lord,” said Comminges, who, irritated by his wounds, wished for revenge and longed to give back blow for blow, “shall I fire off a ball to punish that jester, and to warn him not to sing so much out of tune in the future?”

And as he spoke he put his hand on the holster of his uncle’s saddle-bow.

“Certainly not! certainly not,” exclaimed Mazarin. “Diavolo! my dear friend, you are going to spoil everything-everything is going on famously. I know the French as well as if I had made them myself. They sing-let them pay the piper. During the Ligue, about which Guitant was speaking just now, the people chanted nothing except the mass, so everything went to destruction. Come, Guitant, come along, and let’s see if they keep watch at the Quinze-Vingts as at the Barriere des Sergens.”

And waving his hand to Comminges he rejoined D’Artagnan, who instantly put himself at the head of his troop, followed by the cardinal, Guitant and the rest of the escort.

“Just so,” muttered Comminges, looking after Mazarin. “True, I forgot; provided he can get money out of the people, that is all he wants.”

The street of Saint Honore, when the cardinal and his party passed through it, was crowded by an assemblage who, standing in groups, discussed the edicts of that memorable day. They pitied the young king, who was unconsciously ruining his country, and threw all the odium of his proceedings on Mazarin. Addresses to the Duke of Orleans and to Conde were suggested. Blancmesnil and Broussel seemed in the highest favor.

D’Artagnan passed through the very midst of this discontented mob just as if his horse and he had been made of iron. Mazarin and Guitant conversed together in whispers. The musketeers, who had already discovered who Mazarin was, followed in profound silence. In the street of Saint Thomas-du-Louvre they stopped at the barrier distinguished by the name of Quinze-Vingts. Here Guitant spoke to one of the subalterns, asking how matters were progressing.

“Ah, captain!” said the officer, “everything is quiet hereabout-if I did not know that something is going on in yonder house!”

And he pointed to a magnificent hotel situated on the very spot whereon the Vaudeville now stands.

“In that hotel? it is the Hotel Rambouillet,” cried Guitant.

“I really don’t know what hotel it is; all I do know is that I observed some suspicious looking people go in there-”

“Nonsense!” exclaimed Guitant, with a burst of laughter; “those men must be poets.”

“Come, Guitant, speak, if you please, respectfully of these gentlemen,” said Mazarin; “don’t you know that I was in my youth a poet? I wrote verses in the style of Benserade-”

“You, my lord?”

“Yes, I; shall I repeat to you some of my verses?”

“Just as you please, my lord. I do not understand Italian.”

“Yes, but you understand French,” and Mazarin laid his hand upon Guitant’s shoulder. “My good, my brave Guitant, whatsoever command I may give you in that language-in French-whatever I may order you to do, will you not perform it?”

“Certainly. I have already answered that question in the affirmative; but that command must come from the queen herself.”

“Yes! ah yes!” Mazarin bit his lips as he spoke; “I know your devotion to her majesty.”

“I have been a captain in the queen’s guards for twenty years,” was the reply.

“En route, Monsieur d’Artagnan,” said the cardinal; “all goes well in this direction.”

D'Artagnan, in the meantime, had taken the head of his detachment without a word and with that ready and profound obedience which marks the character of an old soldier.

He led the way toward the hill of Saint Roche. The Rue Richelieu and the Rue Villedot were then, owing to their vicinity to the ramparts, less frequented than any others in that direction, for the town was thinly inhabited thereabout.

“Who is in command here?” asked the cardinal.

“Villequier,” said Guitant.

“Diavolo! Speak to him yourself, for ever since you were deputed by me to arrest the Duc de Beaufort, this officer and I have been on bad terms. He laid claim to that honor as captain of the royal guards.”

“I am aware of that, and I have told him a hundred times that he was wrong. The king could not give that order, since at that time he was hardly four years old.”

“Yes, but I could give him the order-I, Guitant-and I preferred to give it to you.”

Guitant, without reply, rode forward and desired the sentinel to call Monsieur de Villequier.

“Ah! so you are here!” cried the officer, in the tone of ill-humor habitual to him; “what the devil are you doing here?”

“I wish to know-can you tell me, pray-is anything fresh occurring in this part of the town?”

“What do you mean? People cry out, ‘Long live the king! down with Mazarin!’ That’s nothing new; no, we’ve been used to those acclamations for some time.”

“And you sing chorus,” replied Guitant, laughing.

“Faith, I’ve half a mind to do it. In my opinion the people are right; and cheerfully would I give up five years of my pay-which I am never paid, by the way-to make the king five years older.”

“Really! And pray what would come to pass, supposing the king were five years older than he is?”

“As soon as ever the king comes of age he will issue his commands himself, and ‘tis far pleasanter to obey the grandson of Henry IV. than the son of Peter Mazarin. ‘Sdeath! I would die willingly for the king, but supposing I happened to be killed on account of Mazarin, as your nephew came near being to-day, there could be nothing in Paradise, however well placed I might be there, that could console me for it.”

“Well, well, Monsieur de Villequier,” Mazarin interposed, “I shall make it my care the king hears of your loyalty. Come, gentlemen,” addressing the troop, “let us return.”

“Stop,” exclaimed Villequier, “so Mazarin was here! so much the better. I have been waiting for a long time to tell him what I think of him. I am obliged to you Guitant, although your intention was perhaps not very favorable to me, for such an opportunity.”

He turned away and went off to his post, whistling a tune then popular among the party called the “Fronde,” whilst Mazarin returned, in a pensive mood, toward the Palais Royal. All that he had heard from these three different men, Comminges, Guitant and Villequier, confirmed him in his conviction that in case of serious tumults there would be no one on his side except the queen; and then Anne of Austria had so often deserted her friends that her support seemed most precarious. During the whole of this nocturnal ride, during the whole time that he was endeavoring to understand the various characters of Comminges, Guitant and Villequier, Mazarin was, in truth, studying more especially one man. This man, who had remained immovable as bronze when menaced by the mob-not a muscle of whose face was stirred, either at Mazarin’s witticisms or by the jests of the multitude-seemed to the cardinal a peculiar being, who, having participated in past events similar to those now occurring, was calculated to cope with those now on the eve of taking place.

The name of D’Artagnan was not altogether new to Mazarin, who, although he did not arrive in France before the year 1634 or 1635, that is to say, about eight or nine years after the events which

we have related in a preceding narrative,<sup>2</sup> fancied he had heard it pronounced as that of one who was said to be a model of courage, address and loyalty.

Possessed by this idea, the cardinal resolved to know all about D'Artagnan immediately; of course he could not inquire from D'Artagnan himself who he was and what had been his career; he remarked, however, in the course of conversation that the lieutenant of musketeers spoke with a Gascon accent. Now the Italians and the Gascons are too much alike and know each other too well ever to trust what any one of them may say of himself; so in reaching the walls which surrounded the Palais Royal, the cardinal knocked at a little door, and after thanking D'Artagnan and requesting him to wait in the court of the Palais Royal, he made a sign to Guitant to follow him.

They both dismounted, consigned their horses to the lackey who had opened the door, and disappeared in the garden.

"My dear friend," said the cardinal, leaning, as they walked through the garden, on his friend's arm, "you told me just now that you had been twenty years in the queen's service."

"Yes, it's true. I have," returned Guitant.

"Now, my dear Guitant, I have often remarked that in addition to your courage, which is indisputable, and your fidelity, which is invincible, you possess an admirable memory."

"You have found that out, have you, my lord? Deuce take it-all the worse for me!"

"How?"

"There is no doubt but that one of the chief accomplishments of a courtier is to know when to forget."

"But you, Guitant, are not a courtier. You are a brave soldier, one of the few remaining veterans of the days of Henry IV. Alas! how few to-day exist!"

"Plague on't, my lord, have you brought me here to get my horoscope out of me?"

"No; I only brought you here to ask you," returned Mazarin, smiling, "if you have taken any particular notice of our lieutenant of musketeers?"

"Monsieur d'Artagnan? I have had no occasion to notice him particularly; he's an old acquaintance. He's a Gascon. De Treville knows him and esteems him very highly, and De Treville, as you know, is one of the queen's greatest friends. As a soldier the man ranks well; he did his whole duty and even more, at the siege of Rochelle-as at Suze and Perpignan."

"But you know, Guitant, we poor ministers often want men with other qualities besides courage; we want men of talent. Pray, was not Monsieur d'Artagnan, in the time of the cardinal, mixed up in some intrigue from which he came out, according to report, quite cleverly?"

"My lord, as to the report you allude to"-Guitant perceived that the cardinal wished to make him speak out-"I know nothing but what the public knows. I never meddle in intrigues, and if I occasionally become a confidant of the intrigues of others I am sure your eminence will approve of my keeping them secret."

Mazarin shook his head.

"Ah!" he said; "some ministers are fortunate and find out all that they wish to know."

"My lord," replied Guitant, "such ministers do not weigh men in the same balance; they get their information on war from warriors; on intrigues, from intriguers. Consult some politician of the period of which you speak, and if you pay well for it you will certainly get to know all you want."

"Eh, pardieu!" said Mazarin, with a grimace which he always made when spoken to about money. "They will be paid, if there is no way of getting out of it."

"Does my lord seriously wish me to name any one who was mixed up in the cabals of that day?"

"By Bacchus!" rejoined Mazarin, impatiently, "it's about an hour since I asked you for that very thing, wooden-head that you are."

"There is one man for whom I can answer, if he will speak out."

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<sup>2</sup> "The Three Musketeers."

“That’s my concern; I will make him speak.”

“Ah, my lord, ‘tis not easy to make people say what they don’t wish to let out.”

“Pooh! with patience one must succeed. Well, this man. Who is he?”

“The Comte de Rochefort.”

“The Comte de Rochefort!”

“Unfortunately he has disappeared these four or five years and I don’t know where he is.”

“I know, Guitant,” said Mazarin.

“Well, then, how is it that your eminence complained just now of want of information?”

“You think,” resumed Mazarin, “that Rochefort-”

“He was Cardinal Richelieu’s creature, my lord. I warn you, however, his services will cost you something. The cardinal was lavish to his underlings.”

“Yes, yes, Guitant,” said Mazarin; “Richelieu was a great man, a very great man, but he had that defect. Thanks, Guitant; I shall benefit by your advice this very evening.”

Here they separated and bidding adieu to Guitant in the court of the Palais Royal, Mazarin approached an officer who was walking up and down within that inclosure.

It was D’Artagnan, who was waiting for him.

“Come hither,” said Mazarin in his softest voice; “I have an order to give you.”

D’Artagnan bent low and following the cardinal up the secret staircase, soon found himself in the study whence they had first set out.

The cardinal seated himself before his bureau and taking a sheet of paper wrote some lines upon it, whilst D’Artagnan stood imperturbable, without showing either impatience or curiosity. He was like a soldierly automaton, or rather, like a magnificent marionette.

The cardinal folded and sealed his letter.

“Monsieur d’Artagnan,” he said, “you are to take this dispatch to the Bastile and bring back here the person it concerns. You must take a carriage and an escort, and guard the prisoner with the greatest care.”

D’Artagnan took the letter, touched his hat with his hand, turned round upon his heel like a drill-sergeant, and a moment afterward was heard, in his dry and monotonous tone, commanding “Four men and an escort, a carriage and a horse.” Five minutes afterward the wheels of the carriage and the horses’ shoes were heard resounding on the pavement of the courtyard.

### 3. Dead Animosity

D'Artagnan arrived at the Bastille just as it was striking half-past eight. His visit was announced to the governor, who, on hearing that he came from the cardinal, went to meet him and received him at the top of the great flight of steps outside the door. The governor of the Bastille was Monsieur du Tremblay, the brother of the famous Capuchin, Joseph, that fearful favorite of Richelieu's, who went by the name of the Gray Cardinal.

During the period that the Duc de Bassompierre passed in the Bastille—where he remained for twelve long years—when his companions, in their dreams of liberty, said to each other: “As for me, I shall go out of the prison at such a time,” and another, at such and such a time, the duke used to answer, “As for me, gentlemen, I shall leave only when Monsieur du Tremblay leaves;” meaning that at the death of the cardinal Du Tremblay would certainly lose his place at the Bastille and De Bassompierre regain his at court.

His prediction was nearly fulfilled, but in a very different way from that which De Bassompierre supposed; for after the death of Richelieu everything went on, contrary to expectation, in the same way as before; and Bassompierre had little chance of leaving his prison.

Monsieur du Tremblay received D'Artagnan with extreme politeness and invited him to sit down with him to supper, of which he was himself about to partake.

“I should be delighted to do so,” was the reply; “but if I am not mistaken, the words ‘In haste,’ are written on the envelope of the letter which I brought.”

“You are right,” said Du Tremblay. “Halloo, major! tell them to order Number 25 to come downstairs.”

The unhappy wretch who entered the Bastille ceased, as he crossed the threshold, to be a man—he became a number.

D'Artagnan shuddered at the noise of the keys; he remained on horseback, feeling no inclination to dismount, and sat looking at the bars, at the buttressed windows and the immense walls he had hitherto only seen from the other side of the moat, but by which he had for twenty years been awe-struck.

A bell resounded.

“I must leave you,” said Du Tremblay; “I am sent for to sign the release of a prisoner. I shall be happy to meet you again, sir.”

“May the devil annihilate me if I return thy wish!” murmured D'Artagnan, smiling as he pronounced the imprecation; “I declare I feel quite ill after only being five minutes in the courtyard. Go to! go to! I would rather die on straw than hoard up a thousand a year by being governor of the Bastille.”

He had scarcely finished this soliloquy before the prisoner arrived. On seeing him D'Artagnan could hardly suppress an exclamation of surprise. The prisoner got into the carriage without seeming to recognize the musketeer.

“Gentlemen,” thus D'Artagnan addressed the four musketeers, “I am ordered to exercise the greatest possible care in guarding the prisoner, and since there are no locks to the carriage, I shall sit beside him. Monsieur de Lillebonne, lead my horse by the bridle, if you please.” As he spoke he dismounted, gave the bridle of his horse to the musketeer and placing himself by the side of the prisoner said, in a voice perfectly composed, “To the Palais Royal, at full trot.”

The carriage drove on and D'Artagnan, availing himself of the darkness in the archway under which they were passing, threw himself into the arms of the prisoner.

“Rocheport!” he exclaimed; “you! is it you, indeed? I am not mistaken?”

“D'Artagnan!” cried Rocheport.

“Ah! my poor friend!” resumed D’Artagnan, “not having seen you for four or five years I concluded you were dead.”

“I’faith,” said Rochefort, “there’s no great difference, I think, between a dead man and one who has been buried alive; now I have been buried alive, or very nearly so.”

“And for what crime are you imprisoned in the Bastile.”

“Do you wish me to speak the truth?”

“Yes.”

“Well, then, I don’t know.”

“Have you any suspicion of me, Rochefort?”

“No! on the honor of a gentleman; but I cannot be imprisoned for the reason alleged; it is impossible.”

“What reason?” asked D’Artagnan.

“For stealing.”

“For stealing! you, Rochefort! you are laughing at me.”

“I understand. You mean that this demands explanation, do you not?”

“I admit it.”

“Well, this is what actually took place: One evening after an orgy in Reinard’s apartment at the Tuileries with the Duc d’Harcourt, Fontrailles, De Rieux and others, the Duc d’Harcourt proposed that we should go and pull cloaks on the Pont Neuf; that is, you know, a diversion which the Duc d’Orleans made quite the fashion.”

“Were you crazy, Rochefort? at your age!”

“No, I was drunk. And yet, since the amusement seemed to me rather tame, I proposed to Chevalier de Rieux that we should be spectators instead of actors, and, in order to see to advantage, that we should mount the bronze horse. No sooner said than done. Thanks to the spurs, which served as stirrups, in a moment we were perched upon the croupe; we were well placed and saw everything. Four or five cloaks had already been lifted, with a dexterity without parallel, and not one of the victims had dared to say a word, when some fool of a fellow, less patient than the others, took it into his head to cry out, ‘Guard!’ and drew upon us a patrol of archers. Duc d’Harcourt, Fontrailles, and the others escaped; De Rieux was inclined to do likewise, but I told him they wouldn’t look for us where we were. He wouldn’t listen, put his foot on the spur to get down, the spur broke, he fell with a broken leg, and, instead of keeping quiet, took to crying out like a gallows-bird. I then was ready to dismount, but it was too late; I descended into the arms of the archers. They conducted me to the Chatelet, where I slept soundly, being very sure that on the next day I should go forth free. The next day came and passed, the day after, a week; I then wrote to the cardinal. The same day they came for me and took me to the Bastile. That was five years ago. Do you believe it was because I committed the sacrilege of mounting en croupe behind Henry IV.?”

“No; you are right, my dear Rochefort, it couldn’t be for that; but you will probably learn the reason soon.”

“Ah, indeed! I forgot to ask you-where are you taking me?”

“To the cardinal.”

“What does he want with me?”

“I do not know. I did not even know that you were the person I was sent to fetch.”

“Impossible-you-a favorite of the minister!”

“A favorite! no, indeed!” cried D’Artagnan. “Ah, my poor friend! I am just as poor a Gascon as when I saw you at Meung, twenty-two years ago, you know; alas!” and he concluded his speech with a deep sigh.

“Nevertheless, you come as one in authority.”

“Because I happened to be in the ante-chamber when the cardinal called me, by the merest chance. I am still a lieutenant in the musketeers and have been so these twenty years.”

“Then no misfortune has happened to you?”

“And what misfortune could happen to me? To quote some Latin verses I have forgotten, or rather, never knew well, ‘the thunderbolt never falls on the valleys,’ and I am a valley, dear Rochefort, – one of the lowliest of the low.”

“Then Mazarin is still Mazarin?”

“The same as ever, my friend; it is said that he is married to the queen.”

“Married?”

“If not her husband, he is unquestionably her lover.”

“You surprise me. Rebuff Buckingham and consent to Mazarin!”

“Just like the women,” replied D’Artagnan, coolly.

“Like women, not like queens.”

“Egad! queens are the weakest of their sex, when it comes to such things as these.”

“And M. de Beaufort-is he still in prison?”

“Yes. Why?”

“Oh, nothing, but that he might get me out of this, if he were favorably inclined to me.”

“You are probably nearer freedom than he is, so it will be your business to get him out.”

“And,” said the prisoner, “what talk is there of war with Spain?”

“With Spain, no,” answered D’Artagnan; “but Paris.”

“What do you mean?” cried Rochefort.

“Do you hear the guns, pray? The citizens are amusing themselves in the meantime.”

“And you-do you really think that anything could be done with these bourgeois?”

“Yes, they might do well if they had any leader to unite them in one body.”

“How miserable not to be free!”

“Don’t be downcast. Since Mazarin has sent for you, it is because he wants you. I congratulate you! Many a long year has passed since any one has wanted to employ me; so you see in what a situation I am.”

“Make your complaints known; that’s my advice.”

“Listen, Rochefort; let us make a compact. We are friends, are we not?”

“Egad! I bear the traces of our friendship-three slits or slashes from your sword.”

“Well, if you should be restored to favor, don’t forget me.”

“On the honor of a Rochefort; but you must do the like for me.”

“There’s my hand, – I promise.”

“Therefore, whenever you find any opportunity of saying something in my behalf-”

“I shall say it, and you?”

“I shall do the same.”

“Apropos, are we to speak of your friends also, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis? or have you forgotten them?”

“Almost.”

“What has become of them?”

“I don’t know; we separated, as you know. They are alive, that’s all that I can say about them; from time to time I hear of them indirectly, but in what part of the world they are, devil take me if I know, No, on my honor, I have not a friend in the world but you, Rochefort.”

“And the illustrious-what’s the name of the lad whom I made a sergent in Piedmont’s regiment?”

“Planchet!”

“The illustrious Planchet. What has become of him?”

“I shouldn’t wonder if he were at the head of the mob at this very moment. He married a woman who keeps a confectioner’s shop in the Rue des Lombards, for he’s a lad who was always fond of

sweetmeats; he's now a citizen of Paris. You'll see that that queer fellow will be a sheriff before I shall be a captain."

"Come, dear D'Artagnan, look up a little! Courage! It is when one is lowest on the wheel of fortune that the merry-go-round wheels and rewards us. This evening your destiny begins to change."

"Amen!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, stopping the carriage.

"What are you doing?" asked Rochefort.

"We are almost there and I want no one to see me getting out of your carriage; we are supposed not to know each other."

"You are right. Adieu."

"Au revoir. Remember your promise."

In five minutes the party entered the courtyard and D'Artagnan led the prisoner up the great staircase and across the corridor and ante-chamber.

As they stopped at the door of the cardinal's study, D'Artagnan was about to be announced when Rochefort slapped him on his shoulder.

"D'Artagnan, let me confess to you what I've been thinking about during the whole of my drive, as I looked out upon the parties of citizens who perpetually crossed our path and looked at you and your four men with fiery eyes."

"Speak out," answered D'Artagnan.

"I had only to cry out 'Help!' for you and for your companions to be cut to pieces, and then I should have been free."

"Why didn't you do it?" asked the lieutenant.

"Come, come!" cried Rochefort. "Did we not swear friendship? Ah! had any one but you been there, I don't say--"

D'Artagnan bowed. "Is it possible that Rochefort has become a better man than I am?" he said to himself. And he caused himself to be announced to the minister.

"Let M. de Rochefort enter," said Mazarin, eagerly, on hearing their names pronounced; "and beg M. d'Artagnan to wait; I shall have further need of him."

These words gave great joy to D'Artagnan. As he had said, it had been a long time since any one had needed him; and that demand for his services on the part of Mazarin seemed to him an auspicious sign.

Rochefort, rendered suspicious and cautious by these words, entered the apartment, where he found Mazarin sitting at the table, dressed in his ordinary garb and as one of the prelates of the Church, his costume being similar to that of the abbes in that day, excepting that his scarf and stockings were violet.

As the door was closed Rochefort cast a glance toward Mazarin, which was answered by one, equally furtive, from the minister.

There was little change in the cardinal; still dressed with sedulous care, his hair well arranged and curled, his person perfumed, he looked, owing to his extreme taste in dress, only half his age. But Rochefort, who had passed five years in prison, had become old in the lapse of a few years; the dark locks of this estimable friend of the defunct Cardinal Richelieu were now white; the deep bronze of his complexion had been succeeded by a mortal pallor which betokened debility. As he gazed at him Mazarin shook his head slightly, as much as to say, "This is a man who does not appear to me fit for much."

After a pause, which appeared an age to Rochefort, Mazarin took from a bundle of papers a letter, and showing it to the count, he said:

"I find here a letter in which you sue for liberty, Monsieur de Rochefort. You are in prison, then?"

Rochefort trembled in every limb at this question. "But I thought," he said, "that your eminence knew that circumstance better than any one--"

“I? Oh no! There is a congestion of prisoners in the Bastille, who were cooped up in the time of Monsieur de Richelieu; I don’t even know their names.”

“Yes, but in regard to myself, my lord, it cannot be so, for I was removed from the Chatelet to the Bastille owing to an order from your eminence.”

“You think you were.”

“I am certain of it.”

“Ah, stay! I fancy I remember it. Did you not once refuse to undertake a journey to Brussels for the queen?”

“Ah! ah!” exclaimed Rochefort. “There is the true reason! Idiot that I am, though I have been trying to find it out for five years, I never found it out.”

“But I do not say it was the cause of your imprisonment. I merely ask you, did you not refuse to go to Brussels for the queen, whilst you had consented to go there to do some service for the late cardinal?”

“That is the very reason I refused to go back to Brussels. I was there at a fearful moment. I was sent there to intercept a correspondence between Chalais and the archduke, and even then, when I was discovered I was nearly torn to pieces. How could I, then, return to Brussels? I should injure the queen instead of serving her.”

“Well, since the best motives are liable to misconstruction, the queen saw in your refusal nothing but a refusal—a distinct refusal she had also much to complain of you during the lifetime of the late cardinal; yes, her majesty the queen—”

Rochefort smiled contemptuously.

“Since I was a faithful servant, my lord, to Cardinal Richelieu during his life, it stands to reason that now, after his death, I should serve you well, in defiance of the whole world.”

“With regard to myself, Monsieur de Rochefort,” replied Mazarin, “I am not, like Monsieur de Richelieu, all-powerful. I am but a minister, who wants no servants, being myself nothing but a servant of the queen’s. Now, the queen is of a sensitive nature. Hearing of your refusal to obey her she looked upon it as a declaration of war, and as she considers you a man of superior talent, and consequently dangerous, she desired me to make sure of you; that is the reason of your being shut up in the Bastille. But your release can be managed. You are one of those men who can comprehend certain matters and having understood them, can act with energy—”

“Such was Cardinal Richelieu’s opinion, my lord.”

“The cardinal,” interrupted Mazarin, “was a great politician and therein shone his vast superiority over me. I am a straightforward, simple man; that’s my great disadvantage. I am of a frankness of character quite French.”

Rochefort bit his lips in order to prevent a smile.

“Now to the point. I want friends; I want faithful servants. When I say I want, I mean the queen wants them. I do nothing without her commands—pray understand that; not like Monsieur de Richelieu, who went on just as he pleased. So I shall never be a great man, as he was, but to compensate for that, I shall be a good man, Monsieur de Rochefort, and I hope to prove it to you.”

Rochefort knew well the tones of that soft voice, in which sounded sometimes a sort of gentle lisp, like the hissing of young vipers.

“I am disposed to believe your eminence,” he replied; “though I have had but little evidence of that good-nature of which your eminence speaks. Do not forget that I have been five years in the Bastille and that no medium of viewing things is so deceptive as the grating of a prison.”

“Ah, Monsieur de Rochefort! have I not told you already that I had nothing to do with that? The queen—cannot you make allowances for the pettishness of a queen and a princess? But that has passed away as suddenly as it came, and is forgotten.”

“I can easily suppose, sir, that her majesty has forgotten it amid the fetes and the courtiers of the Palais Royal, but I who have passed those years in the Bastille—”

“Ah! mon Dieu! my dear Monsieur de Rochefort! do you absolutely think that the Palais Royal is the abode of gayety? No. We have had great annoyances there. As for me, I play my game squarely, fairly, and above board, as I always do. Let us come to some conclusion. Are you one of us, Monsieur de Rochefort?”

“I am very desirous of being so, my lord, but I am totally in the dark about everything. In the Bastile one talks politics only with soldiers and jailers, and you have not an idea, my lord, how little is known of what is going on by people of that sort; I am of Monsieur de Bassompierre’s party. Is he still one of the seventeen peers of France?”

“He is dead, sir; a great loss. His devotion to the queen was boundless; men of loyalty are scarce.”

“I think so, forsooth,” said Rochefort, “and when you find any of them, you march them off to the Bastile. However, there are plenty in the world, but you don’t look in the right direction for them, my lord.”

“Indeed! explain to me. Ah! my dear Monsieur de Rochefort, how much you must have learned during your intimacy with the late cardinal! Ah! he was a great man.”

“Will your eminence be angry if I read you a lesson?”

“I! never! you know you may say anything to me. I try to be beloved, not feared.”

“Well, there is on the wall of my cell, scratched with a nail, a proverb, which says, ‘Like master, like servant.’”

“Pray, what does that mean?”

“It means that Monsieur de Richelieu was able to find trusty servants, dozens and dozens of them.”

“He! the point aimed at by every poniard! Richelieu, who passed his life in warding off blows which were forever aimed at him!”

“But he did ward them off,” said De Rochefort, “and the reason was, that though he had bitter enemies he possessed also true friends. I have known persons,” he continued—for he thought he might avail himself of the opportunity of speaking of D’Artagnan—“who by their sagacity and address have deceived the penetration of Cardinal Richelieu; who by their valor have got the better of his guards and spies; persons without money, without support, without credit, yet who have preserved to the crowned head its crown and made the cardinal crave pardon.”

“But those men you speak of,” said Mazarin, smiling inwardly on seeing Rochefort approach the point to which he was leading him, “those men were not devoted to the cardinal, for they contended against him.”

“No; in that case they would have met with more fitting reward. They had the misfortune to be devoted to that very queen for whom just now you were seeking servants.”

“But how is it that you know so much of these matters?”

“I know them because the men of whom I speak were at that time my enemies; because they fought against me; because I did them all the harm I could and they returned it to the best of their ability; because one of them, with whom I had most to do, gave me a pretty sword-thrust, now about seven years ago, the third that I received from the same hand; it closed an old account.”

“Ah!” said Mazarin, with admirable suavity, “could I but find such men!”

“My lord, there has stood for six years at your very door a man such as I describe, and during those six years he has been unappreciated and unemployed by you.”

“Who is it?”

“It is Monsieur d’Artagnan.”

“That Gascon!” cried Mazarin, with well acted surprise.

“That Gascon’ has saved a queen and made Monsieur de Richelieu confess that in point of talent, address and political skill, to him he was only a tyro.”

“Really?”

“It is as I have the honor of telling it to your excellency.”

“Tell me a little about it, my dear Monsieur de Rochefort.”

“That is somewhat difficult, my lord,” said Rochefort, with a smile.

“Then he will tell it me himself.”

“I doubt it, my lord.”

“Why do you doubt it?”

“Because the secret does not belong to him; because, as I have told you, it has to do with a great queen.”

“And he was alone in achieving an enterprise like that?”

“No, my lord, he had three colleagues, three brave men, men such as you were wishing for just now.”

“And were these four men attached to each other, true in heart, really united?”

“As if they had been one man-as if their four hearts had pulsed in one breast.”

“You pique my curiosity, dear Rochefort; pray tell me the whole story.”

“That is impossible; but I will tell you a true story, my lord.”

“Pray do so, I delight in stories,” cried the cardinal.

“Listen, then,” returned Rochefort, as he spoke endeavoring to read in that subtle countenance the cardinal’s motive. “Once upon a time there lived a queen-a powerful monarch-who reigned over one of the greatest kingdoms of the universe; and a minister; and this minister wished much to injure the queen, whom once he had loved too well. (Do not try, my lord, you cannot guess who it is; all this happened long before you came into the country where this queen reigned.) There came to the court an ambassador so brave, so magnificent, so elegant, that every woman lost her heart to him; and the queen had even the indiscretion to give him certain ornaments so rare that they could never be replaced by any like them.

“As these ornaments were given by the king the minister persuaded his majesty to insist upon the queen’s appearing in them as part of her jewels at a ball which was soon to take place. There is no occasion to tell you, my lord, that the minister knew for a fact that these ornaments had sailed away with the ambassador, who was far away, beyond seas. This illustrious queen had fallen low as the least of her subjects-fallen from her high estate.”

“Indeed!”

“Well, my lord, four men resolved to save her. These four men were not princes, neither were they dukes, neither were they men in power; they were not even rich. They were four honest soldiers, each with a good heart, a good arm and a sword at the service of those who wanted it. They set out. The minister knew of their departure and had planted people on the road to prevent them ever reaching their destination. Three of them were overwhelmed and disabled by numerous assailants; one of them alone arrived at the port, having either killed or wounded those who wished to stop him. He crossed the sea and brought back the set of ornaments to the great queen, who was able to wear them on her shoulder on the appointed day; and this very nearly ruined the minister. What do you think of that exploit, my lord?”

“It is magnificent!” said Mazarin, thoughtfully.

“Well, I know of ten such men.”

Mazarin made no reply; he reflected.

Five or six minutes elapsed.

“You have nothing more to ask of me, my lord?” said Rochefort.

“Yes. And you say that Monsieur d’Artagnan was one of those four men?”

“He led the enterprise.”

“And who were the others?”

“I leave it to Monsieur d’Artagnan to name them, my lord. They were his friends and not mine. He alone would have any influence with them; I do not even know them under their true names.”

“You suspect me, Monsieur de Rochefort; I want him and you and all to aid me.”

“Begin with me, my lord; for after five or six years of imprisonment it is natural to feel some curiosity as to one’s destination.”

“You, my dear Monsieur de Rochefort, shall have the post of confidence; you shall go to Vincennes, where Monsieur de Beaufort is confined; you will guard him well for me. Well, what is the matter?”

“The matter is that you have proposed to me what is impossible,” said Rochefort, shaking his head with an air of disappointment.

“What! impossible? And why is it impossible?”

“Because Monsieur de Beaufort is one of my friends, or rather, I am one of his. Have you forgotten, my lord, that it is he who answered for me to the queen?”

“Since then Monsieur de Beaufort has become an enemy of the State.”

“That may be, my lord; but since I am neither king nor queen nor minister, he is not my enemy and I cannot accept your offer.”

“This, then, is what you call devotion! I congratulate you. Your devotion does not commit you too far, Monsieur de Rochefort.”

“And then, my lord,” continued Rochefort, “you understand that to emerge from the Bastille in order to enter Vincennes is only to change one’s prison.”

“Say at once that you are on the side of Monsieur de Beaufort; that will be the most sincere line of conduct,” said Mazarin.

“My lord, I have been so long shut up, that I am only of one party-I am for fresh air. Employ me in any other way; employ me even actively, but let it be on the high roads.”

“My dear Monsieur de Rochefort,” Mazarin replied in a tone of raillery, “you think yourself still a young man; your spirit is that of the phoenix, but your strength fails you. Believe me, you ought now to take a rest. Here!”

“You decide, then, nothing about me, my lord?”

“On the contrary, I have come to a decision.”

Bernouin came into the room.

“Call an officer of justice,” he said; “and stay close to me,” he added, in a low tone.

The officer entered. Mazarin wrote a few words, which he gave to this man; then he bowed.

“Adieu, Monsieur de Rochefort,” he said.

Rochefort bent low.

“I see, my lord, I am to be taken back to the Bastille.”

“You are sagacious.”

“I shall return thither, my lord, but it is a mistake on your part not to employ me.”

“You? the friend of my greatest foes? Don’t suppose that you are the only person who can serve me, Monsieur de Rochefort. I shall find many men as able as you are.”

“I wish you may, my lord,” replied De Rochefort.

He was then reconducted by the little staircase, instead of passing through the ante-chamber where D’Artagnan was waiting. In the courtyard the carriage and the four musketeers were ready, but he looked around in vain for his friend.

“Ah!” he muttered to himself, “this changes the situation, and if there is still a crowd of people in the streets we will try to show Mazarin that we are still, thank God, good for something else than keeping guard over a prisoner;” and he jumped into the carriage with the alacrity of a man of five-and-twenty.

## 4. Anne of Austria at the Age of Forty-six

When left alone with Bernouin, Mazarin was for some minutes lost in thought. He had gained much information, but not enough. Mazarin was a cheat at the card-table. This is a detail preserved to us by Brienne. He called it using his advantages. He now determined not to begin the game with D'Artagnan till he knew completely all his adversary's cards.

"My lord, have you any commands?" asked Bernouin.

"Yes, yes," replied Mazarin. "Light me; I am going to the queen."

Bernouin took up a candlestick and led the way.

There was a secret communication between the cardinal's apartments and those of the queen; and through this corridor<sup>3</sup> Mazarin passed whenever he wished to visit Anne of Austria.

In the bedroom in which this passage ended, Bernouin encountered Madame de Beauvais, like himself intrusted with the secret of these subterranean love affairs; and Madame de Beauvais undertook to prepare Anne of Austria, who was in her oratory with the young king, Louis XIV., to receive the cardinal.

Anne, reclining in a large easy-chair, her head supported by her hand, her elbow resting on a table, was looking at her son, who was turning over the leaves of a large book filled with pictures. This celebrated woman fully understood the art of being dull with dignity. It was her practice to pass hours either in her oratory or in her room, without either reading or praying.

When Madame de Beauvais appeared at the door and announced the cardinal, the child, who had been absorbed in the pages of Quintus Curtius, enlivened as they were by engravings of Alexander's feats of arms, frowned and looked at his mother.

"Why," he said, "does he enter without first asking for an audience?"

Anne colored slightly.

"The prime minister," she said, "is obliged in these unsettled days to inform the queen of all that is happening from time to time, without exciting the curiosity or remarks of the court."

"But Richelieu never came in this manner," said the pertinacious boy.

"How can you remember what Monsieur de Richelieu did? You were too young to know about such things."

"I do not remember what he did, but I have inquired and I have been told all about it."

"And who told you about it?" asked Anne of Austria, with a movement of impatience.

"I know that I ought never to name the persons who answer my questions," answered the child, "for if I do I shall learn nothing further."

At this very moment Mazarin entered. The king rose immediately, took his book, closed it and went to lay it down on the table, near which he continued standing, in order that Mazarin might be obliged to stand also.

Mazarin contemplated these proceedings with a thoughtful glance. They explained what had occurred that evening.

He bowed respectfully to the king, who gave him a somewhat cavalier reception, but a look from his mother reproved him for the hatred which, from his infancy, Louis XIV. had entertained toward Mazarin, and he endeavored to receive the minister's homage with civility.

Anne of Austria sought to read in Mazarin's face the occasion of this unexpected visit, since the cardinal usually came to her apartment only after every one had retired.

The minister made a slight sign with his head, whereupon the queen said to Madame Beauvais: "It is time for the king to go to bed; call Laporte."

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<sup>3</sup> This secret passage is still to be seen in the Palais Royal.

The queen had several times already told her son that he ought to go to bed, and several times Louis had coaxingly insisted on staying where he was; but now he made no reply, but turned pale and bit his lips with anger.

In a few minutes Laporte came into the room. The child went directly to him without kissing his mother.

“Well, Louis,” said Anne, “why do you not kiss me?”

“I thought you were angry with me, madame; you sent me away.”

“I do not send you away, but you have had the small-pox and I am afraid that sitting up late may tire you.”

“You had no fears of my being tired when you ordered me to go to the palace to-day to pass the odious decrees which have raised the people to rebellion.”

“Sire!” interposed Laporte, in order to turn the subject, “to whom does your majesty wish me to give the candle?”

“To any one, Laporte,” the child said; and then added in a loud voice, “to any one except Mancini.”

Now Mancini was a nephew of Mazarin’s and was as much hated by Louis as the cardinal himself, although placed near his person by the minister.

And the king went out of the room without either embracing his mother or even bowing to the cardinal.

“Good,” said Mazarin, “I am glad to see that his majesty has been brought up with a hatred of dissimulation.”

“Why do you say that?” asked the queen, almost timidly.

“Why, it seems to me that the way in which he left us needs no explanation. Besides, his majesty takes no pains to conceal how little affection he has for me. That, however, does not hinder me from being entirely devoted to his service, as I am to that of your majesty.”

“I ask your pardon for him, cardinal,” said the queen; “he is a child, not yet able to understand his obligations to you.”

The cardinal smiled.

“But,” continued the queen, “you have doubtless come for some important purpose. What is it, then?”

Mazarin sank into a chair with the deepest melancholy painted on his countenance.

“It is likely,” he replied, “that we shall soon be obliged to separate, unless you love me well enough to follow me to Italy.”

“Why,” cried the queen; “how is that?”

“Because, as they say in the opera of ‘Thisbe,’ ‘The whole world conspires to break our bonds.’”

“You jest, sir!” answered the queen, endeavoring to assume something of her former dignity.

“Alas! I do not, madame,” rejoined Mazarin. “Mark well what I say. The whole world conspires to break our bonds. Now as you are one of the whole world, I mean to say that you also are deserting me.”

“Cardinal!”

“Heavens! did I not see you the other day smile on the Duke of Orleans? or rather at what he said?”

“And what was he saying?”

“He said this, madame: ‘Mazarin is a stumbling-block. Send him away and all will then be well.’”

“What do you wish me to do?”

“Oh, madame! you are the queen!”

“Queen, forsooth! when I am at the mercy of every scribbler in the Palais Royal who covers waste paper with nonsense, or of every country squire in the kingdom.”

“Nevertheless, you have still the power of banishing from your presence those whom you do not like!”

“That is to say, whom you do not like,” returned the queen.

“I! persons whom I do not like!”

“Yes, indeed. Who sent away Madame de Chevreuse after she had been persecuted twelve years under the last reign?”

“A woman of intrigue, who wanted to keep up against me the spirit of cabal she had raised against M. de Richelieu.”

“Who dismissed Madame de Hautefort, that friend so loyal that she refused the favor of the king that she might remain in mine?”

“A prude, who told you every night, as she undressed you, that it was a sin to love a priest, just as if one were a priest because one happens to be a cardinal.”

“Who ordered Monsieur de Beaufort to be arrested?”

“An incendiary the burden of whose song was his intention to assassinate me.”

“You see, cardinal,” replied the queen, “that your enemies are mine.”

“That is not enough madame, it is necessary that your friends should be also mine.”

“My friends, monsieur?” The queen shook her head. “Alas, I have them no longer!”

“How is it that you have no friends in your prosperity when you had many in adversity?”

“It is because in my prosperity I forgot those old friends, monsieur; because I have acted like Queen Marie de Medicis, who, returning from her first exile, treated with contempt all those who had suffered for her and, being proscribed a second time, died at Cologne abandoned by every one, even by her own son.”

“Well, let us see,” said Mazarin; “isn’t there still time to repair the evil? Search among your friends, your oldest friends.”

“What do you mean, monsieur?”

“Nothing else than I say-search.”

“Alas, I look around me in vain! I have no influence with any one. Monsieur is, as usual, led by his favorite; yesterday it was Choisy, to-day it is La Riviere, to-morrow it will be some one else. Monsieur le Prince is led by the coadjutor, who is led by Madame de Guemenee.”

“Therefore, madame, I ask you to look, not among your friends of to-day, but among those of other times.”

“Among my friends of other times?” said the queen.

“Yes, among your friends of other times; among those who aided you to contend against the Duc de Richelieu and even to conquer him.”

“What is he aiming at?” murmured the queen, looking uneasily at the cardinal.

“Yes,” continued his eminence; “under certain circumstances, with that strong and shrewd mind your majesty possesses, aided by your friends, you were able to repel the attacks of that adversary.”

“I!” said the queen. “I suffered, that is all.”

“Yes,” said Mazarin, “as women suffer in avenging themselves. Come, let us come to the point. Do you know Monsieur de Rochefort?”

“One of my bitterest enemies-the faithful friend of Cardinal Richelieu.”

“I know that, and we sent him to the Bastile,” said Mazarin.

“Is he at liberty?” asked the queen.

“No; still there, but I only speak of him in order that I may introduce the name of another man. Do you know Monsieur d’Artagnan?” he added, looking steadfastly at the queen.

Anne of Austria received the blow with a beating heart.

“Has the Gascon been indiscreet?” she murmured to herself, then said aloud:

“D’Artagnan! stop an instant, the name seems certainly familiar. D’Artagnan! there was a musketeer who was in love with one of my women. Poor young creature! she was poisoned on my account.”

“That’s all you know of him?” asked Mazarin.

The queen looked at him, surprised.

“You seem, sir,” she remarked, “to be making me undergo a course of cross-examination.”

“Which you answer according to your fancy,” replied Mazarin.

“Tell me your wishes and I will comply with them.”

The queen spoke with some impatience.

“Well, madame,” said Mazarin, bowing, “I desire that you give me a share in your friends, as I have shared with you the little industry and talent that Heaven has given me. The circumstances are grave and it will be necessary to act promptly.”

“Still!” said the queen. “I thought that we were finally quit of Monsieur de Beaufort.”

“Yes, you saw only the torrent that threatened to overturn everything and you gave no attention to the still water. There is, however, a proverb current in France relating to water which is quiet.”

“Continue,” said the queen.

“Well, then, madame, not a day passes in which I do not suffer affronts from your princes and your lordly servants, all of them automata who do not perceive that I wind up the spring that makes them move, nor do they see that beneath my quiet demeanor lies the still scorn of an injured, irritated man, who has sworn to himself to master them one of these days. We have arrested Monsieur de Beaufort, but he is the least dangerous among them. There is the Prince de Conde-”

“The hero of Rocroy. Do you think of him?”

“Yes, madame, often and often, but pazienza, as we say in Italy; next, after Monsieur de Conde, comes the Duke of Orleans.”

“What are you saying? The first prince of the blood, the king’s uncle!”

“No! not the first prince of the blood, not the king’s uncle, but the base conspirator, the soul of every cabal, who pretends to lead the brave people who are weak enough to believe in the honor of a prince of the blood-not the prince nearest to the throne, not the king’s uncle, I repeat, but the murderer of Chalais, of Montmorency and of Cinq-Mars, who is playing now the same game he played long ago and who thinks that he will win the game because he has a new adversary-instead of a man who threatened, a man who smiles. But he is mistaken; I shall not leave so near the queen that source of discord with which the deceased cardinal so often caused the anger of the king to rage above the boiling point.”

Anne blushed and buried her face in her hands.

“What am I to do?” she said, bowed down beneath the voice of her tyrant.

“Endeavor to remember the names of those faithful servants who crossed the Channel, in spite of Monsieur de Richelieu, tracking the roads along which they passed by their blood, to bring back to your majesty certain jewels given by you to Buckingham.”

Anne arose, full of majesty, and as if touched by a spring, and looking at the cardinal with the haughty dignity which in the days of her youth had made her so powerful: “You are insulting me!” she said.

“I wish,” continued Mazarin, finishing, as it were, the speech this sudden movement of the queen had cut; “I wish, in fact, that you should now do for your husband what you formerly did for your lover.”

“Again that accusation!” cried the queen. “I thought that calumny was stifled or extinct; you have spared me till now, but since you speak of it, once for all, I tell you-”

“Madame, I do not ask you to tell me,” said Mazarin, astounded by this returning courage.

“I will tell you all,” replied Anne. “Listen: there were in truth, at that epoch, four devoted hearts, four loyal spirits, four faithful swords, who saved more than my life-my honor-”

“Ah! you confess it!” exclaimed Mazarin.

“Is it only the guilty whose honor is at the sport of others, sir? and cannot women be dishonored by appearances? Yes, appearances were against me and I was about to suffer dishonor. However, I swear I was not guilty, I swear it by-”

The queen looked around her for some sacred object by which she could swear, and taking out of a cupboard hidden in the tapestry, a small coffer of rosewood set in silver, and laying it on the altar:

“I swear,” she said, “by these sacred relics that Buckingham was not my lover.”

“What relics are those by which you swear?” asked Mazarin, smiling. “I am incredulous.”

The queen untied from around her throat a small golden key which hung there, and presented it to the cardinal.

“Open, sir,” she said, “and look for yourself.”

Mazarin opened the coffer; a knife, covered with rust, and two letters, one of which was stained with blood, alone met his gaze.

“What are these things?” he asked.

“What are these things?” replied Anne, with queen-like dignity, extending toward the open coffer an arm, despite the lapse of years, still beautiful. “These two letters are the only ones I ever wrote to him. This knife is the knife with which Felton stabbed him. Read the letters and see if I have lied or spoken the truth.”

But Mazarin, notwithstanding this permission, instead of reading the letters, took the knife which the dying Buckingham had snatched out of the wound and sent by Laporte to the queen. The blade was red, for the blood had become rust; after a momentary examination during which the queen became as white as the cloth which covered the altar on which she was leaning, he put it back into the coffer with an involuntary shudder.

“It is well, madame, I believe your oath.”

“No, no, read,” exclaimed the queen, indignantly; “read, I command you, for I am resolved that everything shall be finished to-night and never will I recur to this subject again. Do you think,” she said, with a ghastly smile, “that I shall be inclined to reopen this coffer to answer any future accusations?”

Mazarin, overcome by this determination, read the two letters. In one the queen asked for the ornaments back again. This letter had been conveyed by D’Artagnan and had arrived in time. The other was that which Laporte had placed in the hands of the Duke of Buckingham, warning him that he was about to be assassinated; that communication had arrived too late.

“It is well, madame,” said Mazarin; “nothing can gainsay such testimony.”

“Sir,” replied the queen, closing the coffer and leaning her hand upon it, “if there is anything to be said, it is that I have always been ungrateful to the brave men who saved me—that I have given nothing to that gallant officer, D’Artagnan, you were speaking of just now, but my hand to kiss and this diamond.”

As she spoke she extended her beautiful hand to the cardinal and showed him a superb diamond which sparkled on her finger.

“It appears,” she resumed, “that he sold it—he sold it in order to save me another time—to be able to send a messenger to the duke to warn him of his danger—he sold it to Monsieur des Essarts, on whose finger I remarked it. I bought it from him, but it belongs to D’Artagnan. Give it back to him, sir, and since you have such a man in your service, make him useful.”

“Thank you, madame,” said Mazarin. “I will profit by the advice.”

“And now,” added the queen, her voice broken by her emotion, “have you any other question to ask me?”

“Nothing,”—the cardinal spoke in his most conciliatory manner—“except to beg of you to forgive my unworthy suspicions. I love you so tenderly that I cannot help being jealous, even of the past.”

A smile, which was indefinable, passed over the lips of the queen.

“Since you have no further interrogations to make, leave me, I beseech you,” she said. “I wish, after such a scene, to be alone.”

Mazarin bent low before her.

“I will retire, madame. Do you permit me to return?”

“Yes, to-morrow.”

The cardinal took the queen’s hand and pressed it with an air of gallantry to his lips.

Scarcely had he left her when the queen went into her son’s room, and inquired from Laporte if the king was in bed. Laporte pointed to the child, who was asleep.

Anne ascended the steps side of the bed and softly kissed the placid forehead of her son; then she retired as silently as she had come, merely saying to Laporte:

“Try, my dear Laporte, to make the king more courteous to Monsieur le Cardinal, to whom both he and I are under such important obligations.”

## 5. The Gascon and the Italian

Meanwhile the cardinal returned to his own room; and after asking Bernouin, who stood at the door, whether anything had occurred during his absence, and being answered in the negative, he desired that he might be left alone.

When he was alone he opened the door of the corridor and then that of the ante-chamber. There D'Artagnan was asleep upon a bench.

The cardinal went up to him and touched his shoulder. D'Artagnan started, awakened himself, and as he awoke, stood up exactly like a soldier under arms.

"Here I am," said he. "Who calls me?"

"I," said Mazarin, with his most smiling expression.

"I ask pardon of your eminence," said D'Artagnan, "but I was so fatigued—"

"Don't ask my pardon, monsieur," said Mazarin, "for you fatigued yourself in my service."

D'Artagnan admired Mazarin's gracious manner. "Ah," said he, between his teeth, "is there truth in the proverb that fortune comes while one sleeps?"

"Follow me, monsieur," said Mazarin.

"Come, come," murmured D'Artagnan, "Rochefort has kept his promise, but where in the devil is he?" And he searched the cabinet even to the smallest recesses, but there was no sign of Rochefort.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan," said the cardinal, sitting down on a fauteuil, "you have always seemed to me to be a brave and honorable man."

"Possibly," thought D'Artagnan, "but he has taken a long time to let me know his thoughts;" nevertheless, he bowed to the very ground in gratitude for Mazarin's compliment.

"Well," continued Mazarin, "the time has come to put to use your talents and your valor."

There was a sudden gleam of joy in the officer's eyes, which vanished immediately, for he knew nothing of Mazarin's purpose.

"Order, my lord," he said; "I am ready to obey your eminence."

"Monsieur d'Artagnan," continued the cardinal, "you performed sundry superb exploits in the last reign."

"Your eminence is too good to remember such trifles in my favor. It is true I fought with tolerable success."

"I don't speak of your warlike exploits, monsieur," said Mazarin; "although they gained you much reputation, they were surpassed by others."

D'Artagnan pretended astonishment.

"Well, you do not reply?" resumed Mazarin.

"I am waiting, my lord, till you tell me of what exploits you speak."

"I speak of the adventure—Eh, you know well what I mean."

"Alas, no, my lord!" replied D'Artagnan, surprised.

"You are discreet—so much the better. I speak of that adventure in behalf of the queen, of the ornaments, of the journey you made with three of your friends."

"Aha!" thought the Gascon; "is this a snare or not? Let me be on my guard."

And he assumed a look of stupidity which Mendori or Bellerose, two of the first actors of the day, might have envied.

"Bravo!" cried Mazarin; "they told me that you were the man I wanted. Come, let us see what you will do for me."

"Everything that your eminence may please to command me," was the reply.

"You will do for me what you have done for the queen?"

"Certainly," D'Artagnan said to himself, "he wishes to make me speak out. He's not more cunning than De Richelieu was! Devil take him!" Then he said aloud:

“The queen, my lord? I don’t comprehend.”

“You don’t comprehend that I want you and your three friends to be of use to me?”

“Which of my friends, my lord?”

“Your three friends-the friends of former days.”

“Of former days, my lord! In former days I had not only three friends, I had thirty; at two-and-twenty one calls every man one’s friend.”

“Well, sir,” returned Mazarin, “prudence is a fine thing, but to-day you might regret having been too prudent.”

“My lord, Pythagoras made his disciples keep silence for five years that they might learn to hold their tongues.”

“But you have been silent for twenty years, sir. Speak, now the queen herself releases you from your promise.”

“The queen!” said D’Artagnan, with an astonishment which this time was not pretended.

“Yes, the queen! And as a proof of what I say she commanded me to show you this diamond, which she thinks you know.”

And so saying, Mazarin extended his hand to the officer, who sighed as he recognized the ring so gracefully given to him by the queen on the night of the ball at the Hotel de Ville and which she had repurchased from Monsieur des Essarts.

“‘Tis true. I remember well that diamond, which belonged to the queen.”

“You see, then, that I speak to you in the queen’s name. Answer me without acting as if you were on the stage; your interests are concerned in your so doing.”

“Faith, my lord, it is very necessary for me to make my fortune, your eminence has so long forgotten me.”

“We need only a week to amend all that. Come, you are accounted for, you are here, but where are your friends?”

“I do not know, my lord. We have parted company this long time; all three have left the service.”

“Where can you find them, then?”

“Wherever they are, that’s my business.”

“Well, now, what are your conditions, if I employ you?”

“Money, my lord, as much money as what you wish me to undertake will require. I remember too well how sometimes we were stopped for want of money, and but for that diamond, which I was obliged to sell, we should have remained on the road.”

“The devil he does! Money! and a large sum!” said Mazarin. “Pray, are you aware that the king has no money in his treasury?”

“Do then as I did, my lord. Sell the crown diamonds. Trust me, don’t let us try to do things cheaply. Great undertakings come poorly off with paltry means.”

“Well,” returned Mazarin, “we will satisfy you.”

“Richelieu,” thought D’Artagnan, “would have given me five hundred pistoles in advance.”

“You will then be at my service?” asked Mazarin.

“Yes, if my friends agree.”

“But if they refuse can I count on you?”

“I have never accomplished anything alone,” said D’Artagnan, shaking his head.

“Go, then, and find them.”

“What shall I say to them by way of inducement to serve your eminence?”

“You know them better than I. Adapt your promises to their respective characters.”

“What shall I promise?”

“That if they serve me as well as they served the queen my gratitude shall be magnificent.”

“But what are we to do?”

“Make your mind easy; when the time for action comes you shall be put in full possession of what I require from you; wait till that time arrives and find out your friends.”

“My lord, perhaps they are not in Paris. It is even probable that I shall have to make a journey. I am only a lieutenant of musketeers, very poor, and journeys cost money.

“My intention,” said Mazarin, “is not that you go with a great following; my plans require secrecy, and would be jeopardized by a too extravagant equipment.”

“Still, my lord, I can’t travel on my pay, for it is now three months behind; and I can’t travel on my savings, for in my twenty-two years of service I have accumulated nothing but debts.”

Mazarin remained some moments in deep thought, as if he were fighting with himself; then, going to a large cupboard closed with a triple lock, he took from it a bag of silver, and weighing it twice in his hands before he gave it to D’Artagnan:

“Take this,” he said with a sigh, “’tis merely for your journey.”

“If these are Spanish doubloons, or even gold crowns,” thought D’Artagnan, “we shall yet be able to do business together.” He saluted the cardinal and plunged the bag into the depths of an immense pocket.

“Well, then, all is settled; you are to set off,” said the cardinal.

“Yes, my lord.”

“Apropos, what are the names of your friends?”

“The Count de la Fere, formerly styled Athos; Monsieur du Vallon, whom we used to call Porthos; the Chevalier d’Herblay, now the Abbe d’Herblay, whom we styled Aramis—”

The cardinal smiled.

“Younger sons,” he said, “who enlisted in the musketeers under feigned names in order not to lower their family names. Long swords but light purses. Was that it?”

“If, God willing, these swords should be devoted to the service of your eminence,” said D’Artagnan, “I shall venture to express a wish, which is, that in its turn the purse of your eminence may become light and theirs heavy—for with these three men your eminence may rouse all Europe if you like.”

“These Gascons,” said the cardinal, laughing, “almost beat the Italians in effrontery.”

“At all events,” answered D’Artagnan, with a smile almost as crafty as the cardinal’s, “they beat them when they draw their swords.”

He then withdrew, and as he passed into the courtyard he stopped near a lamp and dived eagerly into the bag of money.

“Crown pieces only—silver pieces! I suspected it. Ah! Mazarin! Mazarin! thou hast no confidence in me! so much the worse for thee, for harm may come of it!”

Meanwhile the cardinal was rubbing his hands in great satisfaction.

“A hundred pistoles! a hundred pistoles! for a hundred pistoles I have discovered a secret for which Richelieu would have paid twenty thousand crowns; without reckoning the value of that diamond”—he cast a complacent look at the ring, which he had kept, instead of restoring to D’Artagnan—“which is worth, at least, ten thousand francs.”

He returned to his room, and after depositing the ring in a casket filled with brilliants of every sort, for the cardinal was a connoisseur in precious stones, he called to Bernouin to undress him, regardless of the noises of gun-fire that, though it was now near midnight, continued to resound through Paris.

In the meantime D’Artagnan took his way toward the Rue Tiquetonne, where he lived at the Hotel de la Chevette.

We will explain in a few words how D’Artagnan had been led to choose that place of residence.

## 6. D'Artagnan in his Fortieth Year

Years have elapsed, many events have happened, alas! since, in our romance of "The Three Musketeers," we took leave of D'Artagnan at No. 12 Rue des Fossoyeurs. D'Artagnan had not failed in his career, but circumstances had been adverse to him. So long as he was surrounded by his friends he retained his youth and the poetry of his character. He was one of those fine, ingenuous natures which assimilate themselves easily to the dispositions of others. Athos imparted to him his greatness of soul, Porthos his enthusiasm, Aramis his elegance. Had D'Artagnan continued his intimacy with these three men he would have become a superior character. Athos was the first to leave him, in order that he might retire to a little property he had inherited near Blois; Porthos, the second, to marry an attorney's wife; and lastly, Aramis, the third, to take orders and become an abbe. From that day D'Artagnan felt lonely and powerless, without courage to pursue a career in which he could only distinguish himself on condition that each of his three companions should endow him with one of the gifts each had received from Heaven.

Notwithstanding his commission in the musketeers, D'Artagnan felt completely solitary. For a time the delightful remembrance of Madame Bonancieux left on his character a certain poetic tinge, perishable indeed; for like all other recollections in this world, these impressions were, by degrees, effaced. A garrison life is fatal even to the most aristocratic organization; and imperceptibly, D'Artagnan, always in the camp, always on horseback, always in garrison, became (I know not how in the present age one would express it) a typical trooper. His early refinement of character was not only not lost, it grew even greater than ever; but it was now applied to the little, instead of to the great things of life—to the martial condition of the soldier—comprised under the head of a good lodging, a rich table, a congenial hostess. These important advantages D'Artagnan found to his own taste in the Rue Tiquetonne at the sign of the Roe.

From the time D'Artagnan took quarters in that hotel, the mistress of the house, a pretty and fresh looking Flemish woman, twenty-five or twenty-six years old, had been singularly interested in him; and after certain love passages, much obstructed by an inconvenient husband to whom a dozen times D'Artagnan had made a pretence of passing a sword through his body, that husband had disappeared one fine morning, after furtively selling certain choice lots of wine, carrying away with him money and jewels. He was thought to be dead; his wife, especially, who cherished the pleasing idea that she was a widow, stoutly maintained that death had taken him. Therefore, after the connection had continued three years, carefully fostered by D'Artagnan, who found his bed and his mistress more agreeable every year, each doing credit to the other, the mistress conceived the extraordinary desire of becoming a wife and proposed to D'Artagnan that he should marry her.

"Ah, fie!" D'Artagnan replied. "Bigamy, my dear! Come now, you don't really wish it?"

"But he is dead; I am sure of it."

"He was a very contrary fellow and might come back on purpose to have us hanged."

"All right; if he comes back you will kill him, you are so skillful and so brave."

"Peste! my darling! another way of getting hanged."

"So you refuse my request?"

"To be sure I do—furiously!"

The pretty landlady was desolate. She would have taken D'Artagnan not only as her husband, but as her God, he was so handsome and had so fierce a mustache.

Then along toward the fourth year came the expedition of Franche-Comte. D'Artagnan was assigned to it and made his preparations to depart. There were then great griefs, tears without end and solemn promises to remain faithful—all of course on the part of the hostess. D'Artagnan was too grand to promise anything; he purposed only to do all that he could to increase the glory of his name.

As to that, we know D'Artagnan's courage; he exposed himself freely to danger and while charging at the head of his company he received a ball through the chest which laid him prostrate on the field of battle. He had been seen falling from his horse and had not been seen to rise; every one, therefore, believed him to be dead, especially those to whom his death would give promotion. One believes readily what he wishes to believe. Now in the army, from the division-generals who desire the death of the general-in-chief, to the soldiers who desire the death of the corporals, all desire some one's death.

But D'Artagnan was not a man to let himself be killed like that. After he had remained through the heat of the day unconscious on the battle-field, the cool freshness of the night brought him to himself. He gained a village, knocked at the door of the finest house and was received as the wounded are always and everywhere received in France. He was petted, tended, cured; and one fine morning, in better health than ever before, he set out for France. Once in France he turned his course toward Paris, and reaching Paris went straight to Rue Tiquetonne.

But D'Artagnan found in his chamber the personal equipment of a man, complete, except for the sword, arranged along the wall.

"He has returned," said he. "So much the worse, and so much the better!"

It need not be said that D'Artagnan was still thinking of the husband. He made inquiries and discovered that the servants were new and that the mistress had gone for a walk.

"Alone?" asked D'Artagnan.

"With monsieur."

"Monsieur has returned, then?"

"Of course," naively replied the servant.

"If I had any money," said D'Artagnan to himself, "I would go away; but I have none. I must stay and follow the advice of my hostess, while thwarting the conjugal designs of this inopportune apparition."

He had just completed this monologue-which proves that in momentous circumstances nothing is more natural than the monologue-when the servant-maid, watching at the door, suddenly cried out:

"Ah! see! here is madame returning with monsieur."

D'Artagnan looked out and at the corner of Rue Montmartre saw the hostess coming along hanging to the arm of an enormous Swiss, who tiptoed in his walk with a magnificent air which pleasantly reminded him of his old friend Porthos.

"Is that monsieur?" said D'Artagnan to himself. "Oh! oh! he has grown a good deal, it seems to me." And he sat down in the hall, choosing a conspicuous place.

The hostess, as she entered, saw D'Artagnan and uttered a little cry, whereupon D'Artagnan, judging that he had been recognized, rose, ran to her and embraced her tenderly. The Swiss, with an air of stupefaction, looked at the hostess, who turned pale.

"Ah, it is you, monsieur! What do you want of me?" she asked, in great distress.

"Is monsieur your cousin? Is monsieur your brother?" said D'Artagnan, not in the slightest degree embarrassed in the role he was playing. And without waiting for her reply he threw himself into the arms of the Helvetian, who received him with great coldness.

"Who is that man?" he asked.

The hostess replied only by gasps.

"Who is that Swiss?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Monsieur is going to marry me," replied the hostess, between two gasps.

"Your husband, then, is at last dead?"

"How does that concern you?" replied the Swiss.

"It concerns me much," said D'Artagnan, "since you cannot marry madame without my consent and since-"

"And since?" asked the Swiss.

“And since-I do not give it,” said the musketeer.

The Swiss became as purple as a peony. He wore his elegant uniform, D’Artagnan was wrapped in a sort of gray cloak; the Swiss was six feet high, D’Artagnan was hardly more than five; the Swiss considered himself on his own ground and regarded D’Artagnan as an intruder.

“Will you go away from here?” demanded the Swiss, stamping violently, like a man who begins to be seriously angry.

“I? By no means!” said D’Artagnan.

“Some one must go for help,” said a lad, who could not comprehend that this little man should make a stand against that other man, who was so large.

D’Artagnan, with a sudden accession of wrath, seized the lad by the ear and led him apart, with the injunction:

“Stay you where you are and don’t you stir, or I will pull this ear off. As for you, illustrious descendant of William Tell, you will straightway get together your clothes which are in my room and which annoy me, and go out quickly to another lodging.”

The Swiss began to laugh boisterously. “I go out?” he said. “And why?”

“Ah, very well!” said D’Artagnan; “I see that you understand French. Come then, and take a turn with me and I will explain.”

The hostess, who knew D’Artagnan’s skill with the sword, began to weep and tear her hair. D’Artagnan turned toward her, saying, “Then send him away, madame.”

“Pooh!” said the Swiss, who had needed a little time to take in D’Artagnan’s proposal, “pooh! who are you, in the first place, to ask me to take a turn with you?”

“I am lieutenant in his majesty’s musketeers,” said D’Artagnan, “and consequently your superior in everything; only, as the question now is not of rank, but of quarters-you know the custom-come and seek for yours; the first to return will recover his chamber.”

D’Artagnan led away the Swiss in spite of lamentations on the part of the hostess, who in reality found her heart inclining toward her former lover, though she would not have been sorry to give a lesson to that haughty musketeer who had affronted her by the refusal of her hand.

It was night when the two adversaries reached the field of battle. D’Artagnan politely begged the Swiss to yield to him the disputed chamber; the Swiss refused by shaking his head, and drew his sword.

“Then you will lie here,” said D’Artagnan. “It is a wretched bed, but that is not my fault, and it is you who have chosen it.” With these words he drew in his turn and crossed swords with his adversary.

He had to contend against a strong wrist, but his agility was superior to all force. The Swiss received two wounds and was not aware of it, by reason of the cold; but suddenly feebleness, occasioned by loss of blood, obliged him to sit down.

“There!” said D’Artagnan, “what did I tell you? Fortunately, you won’t be laid up more than a fortnight. Remain here and I will send you your clothes by the boy. Good-by! Oh, by the way, you’d better take lodging in the Rue Montorgueil at the Chat Qui Pelote. You will be well fed there, if the hostess remains the same. Adieu.”

Thereupon he returned in a lively mood to his room and sent to the Swiss the things that belonged to him. The boy found him sitting where D’Artagnan had left him, still overwhelmed by the coolness of his adversary.

The boy, the hostess, and all the house had the same regard for D’Artagnan that one would have for Hercules should he return to earth to repeat his twelve labors.

But when he was alone with the hostess he said: “Now, pretty Madeleine, you know the difference between a Swiss and a gentleman. As for you, you have acted like a barmaid. So much the worse for you, for by such conduct you have lost my esteem and my patronage. I have driven away the Swiss to humiliate you, but I shall lodge here no longer. I will not sleep where I must scorn. Ho, there, boy! Have my valise carried to the Muid d’Amour, Rue des Bourdonnais. Adieu, madame.”

In saying these words D'Artagnan appeared at the same time majestic and grieved. The hostess threw herself at his feet, asked his pardon and held him back with a sweet violence. What more need be said? The spit turned, the stove roared, the pretty Madeleine wept; D'Artagnan felt himself invaded by hunger, cold and love. He pardoned, and having pardoned he remained.

And this explains how D'Artagnan had quarters in the Rue Tiquetonne, at the Hotel de la Chevrette.

D'Artagnan then returned home in thoughtful mood, finding a somewhat lively pleasure in carrying Mazarin's bag of money and thinking of that fine diamond which he had once called his own and which he had seen on the minister's finger that night.

"Should that diamond ever fall into my hands again," he reflected, "I would turn it at once into money; I would buy with the proceeds certain lands around my father's chateau, which is a pretty place, well enough, but with no land to it at all, except a garden about the size of the Cemetery des Innocents; and I should wait in all my glory till some rich heiress, attracted by my good looks, rode along to marry me. Then I should like to have three sons; I should make the first a nobleman, like Athos; the second a good soldier, like Porthos; the third an excellent abbe, like Aramis. Faith! that would be a far better life than I lead now; but Monsieur Mazarin is a mean wretch, who won't dispossess himself of his diamond in my favor."

On entering the Rue Tiquetonne he heard a tremendous noise and found a dense crowd near the house.

"Oho!" said he, "is the hotel on fire?" On approaching the hotel of the Rue he found, however, that it was in front of the next house the mob was collected. The people were shouting and running about with torches. By the light of one of these torches D'Artagnan perceived men in uniform.

He asked what was going on.

He was told that twenty citizens, headed by one man, had attacked a carriage which was escorted by a troop of the cardinal's bodyguard; but a reinforcement having come up, the assailants had been put to flight and the leader had taken refuge in the hotel next to his lodgings; the house was now being searched.

In his youth D'Artagnan had often headed the bourgeoisie against the military, but he was cured of all those hot-headed propensities; besides, he had the cardinal's hundred pistoles in his pocket, so he went into the hotel without a word. There he found Madeleine alarmed for his safety and anxious to tell him all the events of the evening, but he cut her short by ordering her to put his supper in his room and give him with it a bottle of good Burgundy.

He took his key and candle and went upstairs to his bedroom. He had been contented, for the convenience of the house, to lodge in the fourth story; and truth obliges us even to confess that his chamber was just above the gutter and below the roof. His first care on entering it was to lock up in an old bureau with a new lock his bag of money, and then as soon as supper was ready he sent away the waiter who brought it up and sat down to table.

Not to reflect on what had passed, as one might fancy. No, D'Artagnan considered that things are never well done when they are not reserved to their proper time. He was hungry; he supped, he went to bed. Neither was he one of those who think that the necessary silence of the night brings counsel with it. In the night he slept, but in the morning, refreshed and calm, he was inspired with his clearest views of everything. It was long since he had any reason for his morning's inspiration, but he always slept all night long. At daybreak he awoke and took a turn around his room.

"In '43," he said, "just before the death of the late cardinal, I received a letter from Athos. Where was I then? Let me see. Oh! at the siege of Besancon I was in the trenches. He told me-let me think-what was it? That he was living on a small estate-but where? I was just reading the name of the place when the wind blew my letter away, I suppose to the Spaniards; there's no use in thinking any more about Athos. Let me see: with regard to Porthos, I received a letter from him, too. He invited me to a hunting party on his property in the month of September, 1646. Unluckily, as I was then in

Bearn, on account of my father's death, the letter followed me there. I had left Bearn when it arrived and I never received it until the month of April, 1647; and as the invitation was for September, 1646, I couldn't accept it. Let me look for this letter; it must be with my title deeds."

D'Artagnan opened an old casket which stood in a corner of the room, and which was full of parchments referring to an estate during a period of two hundred years lost to his family. He uttered an exclamation of delight, for the large handwriting of Porthos was discernible, and underneath some lines traced by his worthy spouse.

D'Artagnan eagerly searched for the heading of this letter; it was dated from the Chateau du Vallon.

Porthos had forgotten that any other address was necessary; in his pride he fancied that every one must know the Chateau du Vallon.

"Devil take the vain fellow," said D'Artagnan. "However, I had better find him out first, since he can't want money. Athos must have become an idiot by this time from drinking. Aramis must have worn himself to a shadow of his former self by constant genuflexion."

He cast his eyes again on the letter. There was a postscript:

"I write by the same courier to our worthy friend Aramis in his convent."

"In his convent! What convent? There are about two hundred in Paris and three thousand in France; and then, perhaps, on entering the convent he changed his name. Ah! if I were but learned in theology I should recollect what it was he used to dispute about with the curate of Montdidier and the superior of the Jesuits, when we were at Crevecoeur; I should know what doctrine he leans to and I should glean from that what saint he has adopted as his patron.

"Well, suppose I go back to the cardinal and ask him for a passport into all the convents one can find, even into the nunneries? It would be a curious idea, and maybe I should find my friend under the name of Achilles. But, no! I should lose myself in the cardinal's opinion. Great people only thank you for doing the impossible; what's possible, they say, they can effect themselves, and they are right. But let us wait a little and reflect. I received a letter from him, the dear fellow, in which he even asked me for some small service, which, in fact, I rendered him. Yes, yes; but now what did I do with that letter?"

D'Artagnan thought a moment and then went to the wardrobe in which hung his old clothes. He looked for his doublet of the year 1648 and as he had orderly habits, he found it hanging on its nail. He felt in the pocket and drew from it a paper; it was the letter of Aramis:

"Monsieur D'Artagnan: You know that I have had a quarrel with a certain gentleman, who has given me an appointment for this evening in the Place Royale. As I am of the church, and the affair might injure me if I should share it with any other than a sure friend like you, I write to beg that you will serve me as second.

"You will enter by the Rue Neuve Sainte Catherine; under the second lamp on the right you will find your adversary. I shall be with mine under the third.

"Wholly yours,

"Aramis."

D'Artagnan tried to recall his remembrances. He had gone to the rendezvous, had encountered there the adversary indicated, whose name he had never known, had given him a pretty sword-stroke on the arm, then had gone toward Aramis, who at the same time came to meet him, having already finished his affair. "It is over," Aramis had said. "I think I have killed the insolent fellow. But, dear friend, if you ever need me you know that I am entirely devoted to you." Thereupon Aramis had given him a clasp of the hand and had disappeared under the arcades.

So, then, he no more knew where Aramis was than where Athos and Porthos were, and the affair was becoming a matter of great perplexity, when he fancied he heard a pane of glass break in his room window. He thought directly of his bag and rushed from the inner room where he was sleeping. He was not mistaken; as he entered his bedroom a man was getting in by the window.

“Ah! you scoundrel!” cried D’Artagnan, taking the man for a thief and seizing his sword.

“Sir!” cried the man, “in the name of Heaven put your sword back into the sheath and don’t kill me unheard. I’m no thief, but an honest citizen, well off in the world, with a house of my own. My name is—ah! but surely you are Monsieur d’Artagnan?”

“And thou—Planchet!” cried the lieutenant.

“At your service, sir,” said Planchet, overwhelmed with joy; “if I were still capable of serving you.”

“Perhaps so,” replied D’Artagnan. “But why the devil dost thou run about the tops of houses at seven o’clock of the morning in the month of January?”

“Sir,” said Planchet, “you must know; but, perhaps you ought not to know—”

“Tell us what,” returned D’Artagnan, “but first put a napkin against the window and draw the curtains.”

“Sir,” said the prudent Planchet, “in the first place, are you on good terms with Monsieur de Rochefort?”

“Perfectly; one of my dearest friends.”

“Ah! so much the better!”

“But what has De Rochefort to do with this manner you have of invading my room?”

“Ah, sir! I must first tell you that Monsieur de Rochefort is—”

Planchet hesitated.

“Egad, I know where he is,” said D’Artagnan. “He’s in the Bastile.”

“That is to say, he was there,” replied Planchet. “But in returning thither last night, when fortunately you did not accompany him, as his carriage was crossing the Rue de la Ferronnerie his guards insulted the people, who began to abuse them. The prisoner thought this a good opportunity for escape; he called out his name and cried for help. I was there. I heard the name of Rochefort. I remembered him well. I said in a loud voice that he was a prisoner, a friend of the Duc de Beaufort, who called for help. The people were infuriated; they stopped the horses and cut the escort to pieces, whilst I opened the doors of the carriage and Monsieur de Rochefort jumped out and soon was lost amongst the crowd. At this moment a patrol passed by. I was obliged to sound a retreat toward the Rue Tiquetonne; I was pursued and took refuge in the house next to this, where I have been concealed between two mattresses. This morning I ventured to run along the gutters and—”

“Well,” interrupted D’Artagnan, “I am delighted that De Rochefort is free, but as for thee, if thou shouldst fall into the hands of the king’s servants they will hang thee without mercy. Nevertheless, I promise thee thou shalt be hidden here, though I risk by concealing thee neither more nor less than my lieutenancy, if it was found out that I gave one rebel an asylum.”

“Ah! sir, you know well I would risk my life for you.”

“Thou mayst add that thou hast risked it, Planchet. I have not forgotten all I owe thee. Sit down there and eat in security. I see thee cast expressive glances at the remains of my supper.”

“Yes, sir; for all I’ve had since yesterday was a slice of bread and butter, with preserves on it. Although I don’t despise sweet things in proper time and place, I found the supper rather light.”

“Poor fellow!” said D’Artagnan. “Well, come; set to.”

“Ah, sir, you are going to save my life a second time!” cried Planchet.

And he seated himself at the table and ate as he did in the merry days of the Rue des Fossoyeurs, whilst D’Artagnan walked to and fro and thought how he could make use of Planchet under present circumstances. While he turned this over in his mind Planchet did his best to make up for lost time at table. At last he uttered a sigh of satisfaction and paused, as if he had partially appeased his hunger.

“Come,” said D’Artagnan, who thought that it was now a convenient time to begin his interrogations, “dost thou know where Athos is?”

“No, sir,” replied Planchet.

“The devil thou dost not! Dost know where Porthos is?”

“No-not at all.”

“And Aramis?”

“Not in the least.”

“The devil! the devil! the devil!”

“But, sir,” said Planchet, with a look of shrewdness, “I know where Bazin is.”

“Where is he?”

“At Notre Dame.”

“What has he to do at Notre Dame?”

“He is beadle.”

“Bazin beadle at Notre Dame! He must know where his master is!”

“Without a doubt he must.”

D’Artagnan thought for a moment, then took his sword and put on his cloak to go out.

“Sir,” said Planchet, in a mournful tone, “do you abandon me thus to my fate? Think, if I am found out here, the people of the house, who have not seen me enter it, will take me for a thief.”

“True,” said D’Artagnan. “Let’s see. Canst thou speak any patois?”

“I can do something better than that, sir, I can speak Flemish.”

“Where the devil didst thou learn it?”

“In Artois, where I fought for years. Listen, sir. Goeden morgen, mynheer, eth teen begeeray le weeten the ge sond heets omstand.”

“Which means?”

“Good-day, sir! I am anxious to know the state of your health.”

“He calls that a language! But never mind, that will do capitally.”

D’Artagnan opened the door and called out to a waiter to desire Madeleine to come upstairs.

When the landlady made her appearance she expressed much astonishment at seeing Planchet.

“My dear landlady,” said D’Artagnan, “I beg to introduce to you your brother, who is arrived from Flanders and whom I am going to take into my service.”

“My brother?”

“Wish your sister good-morning, Master Peter.”

“Wilkom, suster,” said Planchet.

“Goeden day, broder,” replied the astonished landlady.

“This is the case,” said D’Artagnan; “this is your brother, Madeleine; you don’t know him perhaps, but I know him; he has arrived from Amsterdam. You must dress him up during my absence. When I return, which will be in about an hour, you must offer him to me as a servant, and upon your recommendation, though he doesn’t speak a word of French, I take him into my service. You understand?”

“That is to say, I guess your wishes, and that is all that’s necessary,” said Madeleine.

“You are a precious creature, my pretty hostess, and I am much obliged to you.”

The next moment D’Artagnan was on his way to Notre Dame.

## 7. Touches upon the Strange Effects a Half-pistole may have

D'Artagnan, as he crossed the Pont Neuf, congratulated himself on having found Planchet again, for at that time an intelligent servant was essential to him; nor was he sorry that through Planchet and the situation which he held in Rue des Lombards, a connection with the bourgeoisie might be commenced, at that critical period when that class were preparing to make war with the court party. It was like having a spy in the enemy's camp. In this frame of mind, grateful for the accidental meeting with Planchet, pleased with himself, D'Artagnan reached Notre Dame. He ran up the steps, entered the church, and addressing a verger who was sweeping the chapel, asked him if he knew Monsieur Bazin.

"Monsieur Bazin, the beadle?" said the verger. "Yes. There he is, attending mass, in the chapel of the Virgin."

D'Artagnan nearly jumped for joy; he had despaired of finding Bazin, but now, he thought, since he held one end of the thread he would be pretty sure to reach the other end.

He knelt down just opposite the chapel in order not to lose sight of his man; and as he had almost forgotten his prayers and had omitted to take a book with him, he made use of his time in gazing at Bazin.

Bazin wore his dress, it may be observed, with equal dignity and saintly propriety. It was not difficult to understand that he had gained the crown of his ambition and that the silver-mounted wand he brandished was in his eyes as honorable a distinction as the marshal's baton which Conde threw, or did not throw, into the enemy's line of battle at Fribourg. His person had undergone a change, analogous to the change in his dress; his figure had grown rotund and, as it were, canonical. The striking points of his face were effaced; he had still a nose, but his cheeks, fattened out, each took a portion of it unto themselves; his chin had joined his throat; his eyes were swelled up with the puffiness of his cheeks; his hair, cut straight in holy guise, covered his forehead as far as his eyebrows.

The officiating priest was just finishing mass whilst D'Artagnan was looking at Bazin; he pronounced the words of the holy Sacrament and retired, giving the benediction, which was received by the kneeling communicants, to the astonishment of D'Artagnan, who recognized in the priest the coadjutor<sup>4</sup> himself, the famous Jean Francois Gondy, who at that time, having a presentiment of the part he was to play, was beginning to court popularity by almsgiving. It was to this end that he performed from time to time some of those early masses which the common people, generally, alone attended.

D'Artagnan knelt as well as the rest, received his share of the benediction and made the sign of the cross; but when Bazin passed in his turn, with his eyes raised to Heaven and walking, in all humility, the very last, D'Artagnan pulled him by the hem of his robe.

Bazin looked down and started, as if he had seen a serpent.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan!" he cried; "Vade retro Satanas!"

"So, my dear Bazin!" said the officer, laughing, "this is the way you receive an old friend."

"Sir," replied Bazin, "the true friends of a Christian are those who aid him in working out his salvation, not those who hinder him in doing so."

"I don't understand you, Bazin; nor can I see how I can be a stumbling-block in the way of your salvation," said D'Artagnan.

"You forget, sir, that you very nearly ruined forever that of my master; and that it was owing to you that he was very nearly being damned eternally for remaining a musketeer, whilst all the time his true vocation was the church."

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<sup>4</sup> A sacerdotal officer.

“My dear Bazin, you ought to perceive,” said D’Artagnan, “from the place in which you find me, that I am greatly changed in everything. Age produces good sense, and, as I doubt not but that your master is on the road to salvation, I want you to tell me where he is, that he may help me to mine.”

“Rather say, to take him back with you into the world. Fortunately, I don’t know where he is.”

“How!” cried D’Artagnan; “you don’t know where Aramis is?”

“Formerly,” replied Bazin, “Aramis was his name of perdition. By Aramis is meant Simara, which is the name of a demon. Happily for him he has ceased to bear that name.”

“And therefore,” said D’Artagnan, resolved to be patient to the end, “it is not Aramis I seek, but the Abbe d’Herblay. Come, my dear Bazin, tell me where he is.”

“Didn’t you hear me tell you, Monsieur d’Artagnan, that I don’t know where he is?”

“Yes, certainly; but to that I answer that it is impossible.”

“It is, nevertheless, the truth, monsieur-the pure truth, the truth of the good God.”

D’Artagnan saw clearly that he would get nothing out of this man, who was evidently telling a falsehood in his pretended ignorance of the abode of Aramis, but whose lies were bold and decided.

“Well, Bazin,” said D’Artagnan, “since you do not know where your master lives, let us speak of it no more; let us part good friends. Accept this half-pistole to drink to my health.”

“I do not drink”-Bazin pushed away with dignity the officer’s hand-“‘tis good only for the laity.”

“Incorruptible!” murmured D’Artagnan; “I am unlucky;” and whilst he was lost in thought Bazin retreated toward the sacristy, and even there he could not think himself safe until he had shut and locked the door behind him.

D’Artagnan was still in deep thought when some one touched him on the shoulder. He turned and was about to utter an exclamation of surprise when the other made to him a sign of silence.

“You here, Rochefort?” he said, in a low voice.

“Hush!” returned Rochefort. “Did you know that I am at liberty?”

“I knew it from the fountain-head-from Planchet. And what brought you here?”

“I came to thank God for my happy deliverance,” said Rochefort.

“And nothing more? I suppose that is not all.”

“To take my orders from the coadjutor and to see if we cannot wake up Mazarin a little.”

“A bad plan; you’ll be shut up again in the Bastile.”

“Oh, as to that, I shall take care, I assure you. The air, the fresh, free air is so good; besides,” and Rochefort drew a deep breath as he spoke, “I am going into the country to make a tour.”

“Stop,” cried D’Artagnan; “I, too, am going.”

“And if I may without impertinence ask-where are you going?”

“To seek my friends.”

“What friends?”

“Those that you asked about yesterday.”

“Athos, Porthos and Aramis-you are looking for them?”

“Yes.”

“On honor?”

“What, then, is there surprising in that?”

“Nothing. Queer, though. And in whose behalf are you looking for them?”

“You are in no doubt on that score.”

“That is true.”

“Unfortunately, I have no idea where they are.”

“And you have no way to get news of them? Wait a week and I myself will give you some.”

“A week is too long. I must find them within three days.”

“Three days are a short time and France is large.”

“No matter; you know the word must; with that word great things are done.”

“And when do you set out?”

“I am now on my road.”

“Good luck to you.”

“And to you—a good journey.”

“Perhaps we shall meet on our road.”

“That is not probable.”

“Who knows? Chance is so capricious. Adieu, till we meet again! Apropos, should Mazarin speak to you about me, tell him that I should have requested you to acquaint him that in a short time he will see whether I am, as he says, too old for action.”

And Rochefort went away with one of those diabolical smiles which used formerly to make D’Artagnan shudder, but D’Artagnan could now see it without alarm, and smiling in his turn, with an expression of melancholy which the recollections called up by that smile could, perhaps, alone give to his countenance, he said:

“Go, demon, do what thou wilt! It matters little now to me. There’s no second Constance in the world.”

On his return to the cathedral, D’Artagnan saw Bazin, who was conversing with the sacristan. Bazin was making, with his spare little short arms, ridiculous gestures. D’Artagnan perceived that he was enforcing prudence with respect to himself.

D’Artagnan slipped out of the cathedral and placed himself in ambush at the corner of the Rue des Canettes; it was impossible that Bazin should go out of the cathedral without his seeing him.

In five minutes Bazin made his appearance, looking in every direction to see if he were observed, but he saw no one. Calmed by appearances he ventured to walk on through the Rue Notre Dame. Then D’Artagnan rushed out of his hiding place and arrived in time to see Bazin turn down the Rue de la Juiverie and enter, in the Rue de la Calandre, a respectable looking house; and this D’Artagnan felt no doubt was the habitation of the worthy beadle. Afraid of making any inquiries at this house, D’Artagnan entered a small tavern at the corner of the street and asked for a cup of hypocras. This beverage required a good half-hour to prepare. And D’Artagnan had time, therefore, to watch Bazin unsuspected.

He perceived in the tavern a pert boy between twelve and fifteen years of age whom he fancied he had seen not twenty minutes before under the guise of a chorister. He questioned him, and as the boy had no interest in deceiving, D’Artagnan learned that he exercised, from six o’clock in the morning until nine, the office of chorister, and from nine o’clock till midnight that of a waiter in the tavern.

Whilst he was talking to this lad a horse was brought to the door of Bazin’s house. It was saddled and bridled. Almost immediately Bazin came downstairs.

“Look!” said the boy, “there’s our beadle, who is going a journey.”

“And where is he going?” asked D’Artagnan.

“Forsooth, I don’t know.”

“Half a pistole if you can find out,” said D’Artagnan.

“For me?” cried the boy, his eyes sparkling with joy, “if I can find out where Bazin is going? That is not difficult. You are not joking, are you?”

“No, on the honor of an officer; there is the half-pistole;” and he showed him the seductive coin, but did not give it him.

“I shall ask him.”

“Just the very way not to know. Wait till he is set out and then, marry, come up, ask, and find out. The half-pistole is ready,” and he put it back again into his pocket.

“I understand,” said the child, with that jeering smile which marks especially the “gamin de Paris.” “Well, we must wait.”

They had not long to wait. Five minutes afterward Bazin set off on a full trot, urging on his horse by the blows of a parapluie, which he was in the habit of using instead of a riding whip.

Scarcely had he turned the corner of the Rue de la Juiverie when the boy rushed after him like a bloodhound on full scent.

Before ten minutes had elapsed the child returned.

“Well!” said D’Artagnan.

“Well!” answered the boy, “the thing is done.”

“Where is he gone?”

“The half-pistole is for me?”

“Doubtless, answer me.”

“I want to see it. Give it me, that I may see it is not false.”

“There it is.”

The child put the piece of money into his pocket.

“And now, where is he gone?” inquired D’Artagnan.

“He is gone to Noisy.”

“How dost thou know?”

“Ah, faith! there was no great cunning necessary. I knew the horse he rode; it belonged to the butcher, who lets it out now and then to M. Bazin. Now I thought that the butcher would not let his horse out like that without knowing where it was going. And he answered ‘that Monsieur Bazin went to Noisy.’ ‘Tis his custom. He goes two or three times a week.”

“Dost thou know Noisy well?”

“I think so, truly; my nurse lives there.”

“Is there a convent at Noisy?”

“Isn’t there a great and grand one—the convent of Jesuits?”

“What is thy name?”

“Friquet.”

D’Artagnan wrote the child’s name in his tablets.

“Please, sir,” said the boy, “do you think I can gain any more half-pistoles in any way?”

“Perhaps,” replied D’Artagnan.

And having got out all he wanted, he paid for the hypocras, which he did not drink, and went quickly back to the Rue Tiquetonne.

## 8. D'Artagnan, Going to a Distance to discover Aramis

On entering the hotel D'Artagnan saw a man sitting in a corner by the fire. It was Planchet, but so completely transformed, thanks to the old clothes that the departing husband had left behind, that D'Artagnan himself could hardly recognize him. Madeleine introduced him in presence of all the servants. Planchet addressed the officer with a fine Flemish phrase; the officer replied in words that belonged to no language at all, and the bargain was concluded; Madeleine's brother entered D'Artagnan's service.

The plan adopted by D'Artagnan was soon perfected. He resolved not to reach Noisy in the day, for fear of being recognized; he had therefore plenty of time before him, for Noisy is only three or four leagues from Paris, on the road to Meaux.

He began his day by breakfasting substantially-a bad beginning when one wants to employ the head, but an excellent precaution when one wants to work the body; and about two o'clock he had his two horses saddled, and followed by Planchet he quitted Paris by the Barriere de la Villette. A most active search was still prosecuted in the house near the Hotel de la Chevrette for the discovery of Planchet.

At about a league and a half from the city, D'Artagnan, finding that in his impatience he had set out too soon, stopped to give the horses breathing time. The inn was full of disreputable looking people, who seemed as if they were on the point of commencing some nightly expedition. A man, wrapped in a cloak, appeared at the door, but seeing a stranger he beckoned to his companions, and two men who were drinking in the inn went out to speak to him.

D'Artagnan, on his side, went up to the landlady, praised her wine-which was a horrible production from the country of Montreuil-and heard from her that there were only two houses of importance in the village; one of these belonged to the Archbishop of Paris, and was at that time the abode of his niece the Duchess of Longueville; the other was a convent of Jesuits and was the property-a by no means unusual circumstance-of these worthy fathers.

At four o'clock D'Artagnan recommenced his journey. He proceeded slowly and in deep reverie. Planchet also was lost in thought, but the subject of their reflections was not the same.

One word which their landlady had pronounced had given a particular turn to D'Artagnan's deliberations; this was the name of Madame de Longueville.

That name was indeed one to inspire imagination and produce thought. Madame de Longueville was one of the highest ladies in the realm; she was also one of the greatest beauties at court. She had formerly been suspected of an intimacy of too tender a nature with Coligny, who, for her sake, had been killed in a duel, in the Place Royale, by the Duc de Guise. She was now connected by bonds of a political nature with the Prince de Marsillac, the eldest son of the old Duc de Rochefoucauld, whom she was trying to inspire with an enmity toward the Duc de Conde, her brother-in-law, whom she now hated mortally.

D'Artagnan thought of all these matters. He remembered how at the Louvre he had often seen, as she passed by him in the full radiance of her dazzling charms, the beautiful Madame de Longueville. He thought of Aramis, who, without possessing any greater advantages than himself, had formerly been the lover of Madame de Chevreuse, who had been to a former court what Madame de Longueville was in that day; and he wondered how it was that there should be in the world people who succeed in every wish, some in ambition, others in love, whilst others, either from chance, or from ill-luck, or from some natural defect or impediment, remain half-way upon the road toward fulfilment of their hopes and expectations.

He was confessing to himself that he belonged to the latter unhappy class, when Planchet approached and said:

"I will lay a wager, your honor, that you and I are thinking of the same thing."

“I doubt it, Planchet,” replied D’Artagnan, “but what are you thinking of?”

“I am thinking, sir, of those desperate looking men who were drinking in the inn where we rested.”

“Always cautious, Planchet.”

“‘Tis instinct, your honor.”

“Well, what does your instinct tell you now?”

“Sir, my instinct told me that those people were assembled there for some bad purpose; and I was reflecting on what my instinct had told me, in the darkest corner of the stable, when a man wrapped in a cloak and followed by two other men, came in.”

“Ah ah!” said D’Artagnan, Planchet’s recital agreeing with his own observations. “Well?”

“One of these two men said, ‘He must certainly be at Noisy, or be coming there this evening, for I have seen his servant.’

“‘Art thou sure?’ said the man in the cloak.

“‘Yes, my prince.’”

“My prince!” interrupted D’Artagnan.

“Yes, ‘my prince;’ but listen. ‘If he is here’-this is what the other man said-‘let’s see decidedly what to do with him.’

“‘What to do with him?’ answered the prince.

“‘Yes, he’s not a man to allow himself to be taken anyhow; he’ll defend himself.’

“‘Well, we must try to take him alive. Have you cords to bind him with and a gag to stop his mouth?’

“‘We have.’

“‘Remember that he will most likely be disguised as a horseman.’

“‘Yes, yes, my lord; don’t be uneasy.’

“‘Besides, I shall be there.’

“‘You will assure us that justice-’

“‘Yes, yes! I answer for all that,’ the prince said.

“‘Well, then, we’ll do our best.’ Having said that, they went out of the stable.”

“Well, what matters all that to us?” said D’Artagnan. “This is one of those attempts that happen every day.”

“Are you sure that we are not its objects?”

“We? Why?”

“Just remember what they said. ‘I have seen his servant,’ said one, and that applies very well to me.”

“Well?”

“‘He must certainly be at Noisy, or be coming there this evening,’ said the other; and that applies very well to you.”

“What else?”

“Then the prince said: ‘Take notice that in all probability he will be disguised as a cavalier;’ which seems to me to leave no room for doubt, since you are dressed as a cavalier and not as an officer of musketeers. Now then, what do you say to that?”

“Alas! my dear Planchet,” said D’Artagnan, sighing, “we are unfortunately no longer in those times in which princes would care to assassinate me. Those were good old days; never fear-these people owe us no grudge.”

“Is your honor sure?”

“I can answer for it they do not.”

“Well, we won’t speak of it any more, then;” and Planchet took his place in D’Artagnan’s suite with that sublime confidence he had always had in his master, which even fifteen years of separation had not destroyed.

They had traveled onward about half a mile when Planchet came close up to D'Artagnan.

"Stop, sir, look yonder," he whispered; "don't you see in the darkness something pass by, like shadows? I fancy I hear horses' feet."

"Impossible!" returned D'Artagnan. "The ground is soaking wet; yet I fancy, as thou sayest, that I see something."

At this moment the neighing of a horse struck his ear, coming through darkness and space.

"There are men somewhere about, but that's of no consequence to us," said D'Artagnan; "let us ride onward."

At about half-past eight o'clock they reached the first houses in Noisy; every one was in bed and not a light was to be seen in the village. The obscurity was broken only now and then by the still darker lines of the roofs of houses. Here and there a dog barked behind a door or an affrighted cat fled precipitately from the midst of the pavement to take refuge behind a pile of faggots, from which retreat her eyes would shine like peridores. These were the only living creatures that seemed to inhabit the village.

Toward the middle of the town, commanding the principal open space, rose a dark mass, separated from the rest of the world by two lanes and overshadowed in the front by enormous lime-trees. D'Artagnan looked attentively at the building.

"This," he said to Planchet, "must be the archbishop's chateau, the abode of the fair Madame de Longueville; but the convent, where is that?"

"The convent, your honor, is at the other end of the village; I know it well."

"Well, then, Planchet, gallop up to it whilst I tighten my horse's girth, and come back and tell me if there is a light in any of the Jesuits' windows."

In about five minutes Planchet returned.

"Sir," he said, "there is one window of the convent lighted up."

"Hem! If I were a 'Frondeur,'" said D'Artagnan, "I should knock here and should be sure of a good supper. If I were a monk I should knock yonder and should have a good supper there, too; whereas, 'tis very possible that between the castle and the convent we shall sleep on hard beds, dying with hunger and thirst."

"Yes," added Planchet, "like the famous ass of Buridan. Shall I knock?"

"Hush!" replied D'Artagnan; "the light no longer burns in yonder window."

"Do you hear nothing?" whispered Planchet.

"What is that noise?"

There came a sound like a whirlwind, at the same time two troops of horsemen, each composed of ten men, sallied forth from each of the lanes which encompassed the house and surrounded D'Artagnan and Planchet.

"Heyday!" cried D'Artagnan, drawing his sword and taking refuge behind his horse; "are you not mistaken? is it really for us that you mean your attack?"

"Here he is! we have him!" cried the horsemen, rushing on D'Artagnan with naked swords.

"Don't let him escape!" said a loud voice.

"No, my lord; be assured we shall not."

D'Artagnan thought it was now time for him to join in the conversation.

"Halloo, gentlemen!" he called out in his Gascon accent, "what do you want? what do you demand?"

"That thou shalt soon know," shouted a chorus of horsemen.

"Stop, stop!" cried he whom they had addressed as "my lord;" "'tis not his voice."

"Ah! just so, gentlemen! pray, do people get into a passion at random at Noisy? Take care, for I warn you that the first man that comes within the length of my sword-and my sword is long-I rip him up."

The chieftain of the party drew near.

“What are you doing here?” he asked in a lofty tone, as that of one accustomed to command.

“And you-what are you doing here?” replied D’Artagnan.

“Be civil, or I shall beat you; for although one may not choose to proclaim oneself, one insists on respect suitable to one’s rank.”

“You don’t choose to discover yourself, because you are the leader of an ambuscade,” returned D’Artagnan; “but with regard to myself, who am traveling quietly with my own servant, I have not the same reasons as you have to conceal my name.”

“Enough! enough! what is your name?”

“I shall tell you my name in order that you may know where to find me, my lord, or my prince, as it may suit you best to be called,” said our Gascon, who did not choose to seem to yield to a threat. “Do you know Monsieur d’Artagnan?”

“Lieutenant in the king’s musketeers?” said the voice; “you are Monsieur d’Artagnan?”

“I am.”

“Then you came here to defend him?”

“Him? whom?”

“The man we are seeking.”

“It seems,” said D’Artagnan, “that whilst I thought I was coming to Noisy I have entered, without suspecting it, into the kingdom of mysteries.”

“Come,” replied the same lofty tone, “answer! Are you waiting for him underneath these windows? Did you come to Noisy to defend him?”

“I am waiting for no one,” replied D’Artagnan, who was beginning to be angry. “I propose to defend no one but myself, and I shall defend myself vigorously, I give you warning.”

“Very well,” said the voice; “go away from here and leave the place to us.”

“Go away from here!” said D’Artagnan, whose purposes were in conflict with that order, “that is not so easy, since I am on the point of falling, and my horse, too, through fatigue; unless, indeed, you are disposed to offer me a supper and a bed in the neighborhood.”

“Rascal!”

“Eh! monsieur!” said D’Artagnan, “I beg you will have a care what you say; for if you utter another word like that, be you marquis, duke, prince or king, I will thrust it down your throat! do you hear?”

“Well, well,” rejoined the leader, “there’s no doubt ‘tis a Gascon who is speaking, and therefore not the man we are looking for. Our blow has failed for to-night; let us withdraw. We shall meet again, Master d’Artagnan,” continued the leader, raising his voice.

“Yes, but never with the same advantages,” said D’Artagnan, in a tone of raillery; “for when you meet me again you will perhaps be alone and there will be daylight.”

“Very good, very good,” said the voice. “En route, gentlemen.”

And the troop, grumbling angrily, disappeared in the darkness and took the road to Paris. D’Artagnan and Planchet remained for some moments still on the defensive; then, as the noise of the horsemen became more and more distant, they sheathed their swords.

“Thou seest, simpleton,” said D’Artagnan to his servant, “that they wished no harm to us.”

“But to whom, then?”

“I’faith! I neither know nor care. What I do care for now, is to make my way into the Jesuits’ convent; so to horse and let us knock at their door. Happen what will, the devil take them, they can’t eat us.”

And he mounted his horse. Planchet had just done the same when an unexpected weight fell upon the back of the horse, which sank down.

“Hey! your honor!” cried Planchet, “I’ve a man behind me.”

D’Artagnan turned around and plainly saw two human forms on Planchet’s horse.

“Tis then the devil that pursues!” he cried; drawing his sword and preparing to attack the new foe.

“No, no, dear D’Artagnan,” said the figure, “tis not the devil, ‘tis Aramis; gallop fast, Planchet, and when you come to the end of the village turn swiftly to the left.”

And Planchet, with Aramis behind him, set off at full gallop, followed by D’Artagnan, who began to think he was in the merry maze of some fantastic dream.

## 9. The Abbe D'Herblay

At the extremity of the village Planchet turned to the left in obedience to the orders of Aramis, and stopped underneath the window which had light in it. Aramis alighted and clapped his hands three times. Immediately the window was opened and a ladder of rope was let down from it.

“My friend,” said Aramis, “if you like to ascend I shall be delighted to receive you.”

“Ah,” said D'Artagnan, “is that the way you return to your apartment?”

“After nine at night, pardieu!” said Aramis, “the rule of the convent is very severe.”

“Pardon me, my dear friend,” said D'Artagnan, “I think you said ‘pardieu!’”

“Do you think so?” said Aramis, smiling; “it is possible. You have no idea, my dear fellow, how one acquires bad habits in these cursed convents, or what evil ways all these men of the church have, with whom I am obliged to live. But will you not go up?”

“Pass on before me, I beg of you.”

“As the late cardinal used to say to the late king, ‘only to show you the way, sire.’” And Aramis ascended the ladder quickly and reached the window in an instant.

D'Artagnan followed, but less nimbly, showing plainly that this mode of ascent was not one to which he was accustomed.

“I beg your pardon,” said Aramis, noticing his awkwardness; “if I had known that I was to have the honor of your visit I should have procured the gardener's ladder; but for me alone this is good enough.”

“Sir,” said Planchet when he saw D'Artagnan on the summit of the ladder, “this way is easy for Monsieur Aramis and even for you; in case of necessity I might also climb up, but my two horses cannot mount the ladder.”

“Take them to yonder shed, my friend,” said Aramis, pointing to a low building on the plain; “there you will find hay and straw for them; then come back here and clap your hands three times, and we will give you wine and food. Marry, forsooth, people don't die of hunger here.”

And Aramis, drawing in the ladder, closed the window. D'Artagnan then looked around attentively.

Never was there an apartment at the same time more warlike and more elegant. At each corner were arranged trophies, presenting to view swords of all sorts, and on the walls hung four great pictures representing in their ordinary military costume the Cardinal de Lorraine, the Cardinal de Richelieu, the Cardinal de la Valette, and the Archbishop of Bordeaux. Exteriorly, nothing in the room showed that it was the habitation of an abbe. The hangings were of damask, the carpets from Alencon, and the bed, especially, had more the look of a fine lady's couch, with its trimmings of fine lace and its embroidered counterpane, than that of a man who had made a vow that he would endeavor to gain Heaven by fasting and mortification.

“You are examining my den,” said Aramis. “Ah, my dear fellow, excuse me; I am lodged like a Chartreux. But what are you looking for?”

“I am looking for the person who let down the ladder. I see no one and yet the ladder didn't come down of itself.”

“No, it is Bazin.”

“Ah! ah!” said D'Artagnan.

“But,” continued Aramis, “Bazin is a well trained servant, and seeing that I was not alone he discreetly retired. Sit down, my dear friend, and let us talk.” And Aramis pushed forward a large easy-chair, in which D'Artagnan stretched himself out.

“In the first place, you will sup with me, will you not?” asked Aramis.

“Yes, if you really wish it,” said D'Artagnan, “and even with great pleasure, I confess; the journey has given me a devil of an appetite.”

“Ah, my poor friend!” said Aramis, “you will find meagre fare; you were not expected.”

“Am I then threatened with the omelet of Crevecoeur?”

“Oh, let us hope,” said Aramis, “that with the help of God and of Bazin we shall find something better than that in the larder of the worthy Jesuit fathers. Bazin, my friend, come here.”

The door opened and Bazin entered; on perceiving the musketeer he uttered an exclamation that was almost a cry of despair.

“My dear Bazin,” said D’Artagnan, “I am delighted to see with what wonderful composure you can tell a lie even in church!”

“Sir,” replied Bazin, “I have been taught by the good Jesuit fathers that it is permitted to tell a falsehood when it is told in a good cause.”

“So far well,” said Aramis; “we are dying of hunger. Serve us up the best supper you can, and especially give us some good wine.”

Bazin bowed low, sighed, and left the room.

“Now we are alone, dear Aramis,” said D’Artagnan, “tell me how the devil you managed to alight upon the back of Planchet’s horse.”

“I’faith!” answered Aramis, “as you see, from Heaven.”

“From Heaven,” replied D’Artagnan, shaking his head; “you have no more the appearance of coming from thence than you have of going there.”

“My friend,” said Aramis, with a look of imbecility on his face which D’Artagnan had never observed whilst he was in the musketeers, “if I did not come from Heaven, at least I was leaving Paradise, which is almost the same.”

“Here, then, is a puzzle for the learned,” observed D’Artagnan, “until now they have never been able to agree as to the situation of Paradise; some place it on Mount Ararat, others between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates; it seems that they have been looking very far away for it, while it was actually very near. Paradise is at Noisy le Sec, upon the site of the archbishop’s chateau. People do not go out from it by the door, but by the window; one doesn’t descend here by the marble steps of a peristyle, but by the branches of a lime-tree; and the angel with a flaming sword who guards this elysium seems to have changed his celestial name of Gabriel into that of the more terrestrial one of the Prince de Marsillac.”

Aramis burst into a fit of laughter.

“You were always a merry companion, my dear D’Artagnan,” he said, “and your witty Gascon fancy has not deserted you. Yes, there is something in what you say; nevertheless, do not believe that it is Madame de Longueville with whom I am in love.”

“A plague on’t! I shall not do so. After having been so long in love with Madame de Chevreuse, you would hardly lay your heart at the feet of her mortal enemy!”

“Yes,” replied Aramis, with an absent air; “yes, that poor duchess! I once loved her much, and to do her justice, she was very useful to us. Eventually she was obliged to leave France. He was a relentless enemy, that damned cardinal,” continued Aramis, glancing at the portrait of the old minister. “He had even given orders to arrest her and would have cut off her head had she not escaped with her waiting-maid-poor Kitty! I have heard that she met with a strange adventure in I don’t know what village, with I don’t know what cure, of whom she asked hospitality and who, having but one chamber, and taking her for a cavalier, offered to share it with her. For she had a wonderful way of dressing as a man, that dear Marie; I know only one other woman who can do it as well. So they made this song about her: ‘Laboissiere, dis moi.’ You know it, don’t you?”

“No, sing it, please.”

Aramis immediately complied, and sang the song in a very lively manner.

“Bravo!” cried D’Artagnan, “you sing charmingly, dear Aramis. I do not perceive that singing masses has spoiled your voice.”

“My dear D’Artagnan,” replied Aramis, “you understand, when I was a musketeer I mounted guard as seldom as I could; now when I am an abbe I say as few masses as I can. But to return to our duchess.”

“Which-the Duchess de Chevreuse or the Duchess de Longueville?”

“Have I not already told you that there is nothing between me and the Duchess de Longueville? Little flirtations, perhaps, and that’s all. No, I spoke of the Duchess de Chevreuse; did you see her after her return from Brussels, after the king’s death?”

“Yes, she is still beautiful.”

“Yes,” said Aramis, “I saw her also at that time. I gave her good advice, by which she did not profit. I ventured to tell her that Mazarin was the lover of Anne of Austria. She wouldn’t believe me, saying that she knew Anne of Austria, who was too proud to love such a worthless coxcomb. After that she plunged into the cabal headed by the Duke of Beaufort; and the ‘coxcomb’ arrested De Beaufort and banished Madame de Chevreuse.”

“You know,” resumed D’Artagnan, “that she has had leave to return to France?”

“Yes she is come back and is going to commit some fresh folly or another.”

“Oh, but this time perhaps she will follow your advice.”

“Oh, this time,” returned Aramis, “I haven’t seen her; she is much changed.”

“In that respect unlike you, my dear Aramis, for you are still the same; you have still your beautiful dark hair, still your elegant figure, still your feminine hands, which are admirably suited to a prelate.”

“Yes,” replied Aramis, “I am extremely careful of my appearance. Do you know that I am growing old? I am nearly thirty-seven.”

“Mind, Aramis”—D’Artagnan smiled as he spoke—“since we are together again, let us agree on one point: what age shall we be in future?”

“How?”

“Formerly I was your junior by two or three years, and if I am not mistaken I am turned forty years old.”

“Indeed! Then ‘tis I who am mistaken, for you have always been a good chronologist. By your reckoning I must be forty-three at least. The devil I am! Don’t let it out at the Hotel Rambouillet; it would ruin me,” replied the abbe.

“Don’t be afraid,” said D’Artagnan. “I never go there.”

“Why, what in the world,” cried Aramis, “is that animal Bazin doing? Bazin! Hurry up there, you rascal; we are mad with hunger and thirst!”

Bazin entered at that moment carrying a bottle in each hand.

“At last,” said Aramis, “we are ready, are we?”

“Yes, monsieur, quite ready,” said Bazin; “but it took me some time to bring up all the—”

“Because you always think you have on your shoulders your beadle’s robe, and spend all your time reading your breviary. But I give you warning that if in polishing your chapel utensils you forget how to brighten up my sword, I will make a great fire of your blessed images and will see that you are roasted on it.”

Bazin, scandalized, made a sign of the cross with the bottle in his hand. D’Artagnan, more surprised than ever at the tone and manners of the Abbe d’Herblay, which contrasted so strongly with those of the Musketeer Aramis, remained staring with wide-open eyes at the face of his friend.

Bazin quickly covered the table with a damask cloth and arranged upon it so many things, gilded, perfumed, appetizing, that D’Artagnan was quite overcome.

“But you expected some one then?” asked the officer.

“Oh,” said Aramis, “I always try to be prepared; and then I knew you were seeking me.”

“From whom?”

“From Master Bazin, to be sure; he took you for the devil, my dear fellow, and hastened to warn me of the danger that threatened my soul if I should meet again a companion so wicked as an officer of musketeers.”

“Oh, monsieur!” said Bazin, clasping his hands supplicatingly.

“Come, no hypocrisy! you know that I don’t like it. You will do much better to open the window and let down some bread, a chicken and a bottle of wine to your friend Planchet, who has been this last hour killing himself clapping his hands.”

Planchet, in fact, had bedded and fed his horses, and then coming back under the window had repeated two or three times the signal agreed upon.

Bazin obeyed, fastened to the end of a cord the three articles designated and let them down to Planchet, who then went satisfied to his shed.

“Now to supper,” said Aramis.

The two friends sat down and Aramis began to cut up fowls, partridges and hams with admirable skill.

“The deuce!” cried D’Artagnan; “do you live in this way always?”

“Yes, pretty well. The coadjutor has given me dispensations from fasting on the jours maigres, on account of my health; then I have engaged as my cook the cook who lived with Lafollone—you know the man I mean? – the friend of the cardinal, and the famous epicure whose grace after dinner used to be, ‘Good Lord, do me the favor to cause me to digest what I have eaten.’”

“Nevertheless he died of indigestion, in spite of his grace,” said D’Artagnan.

“What can you expect?” replied Aramis, in a tone of resignation. “Every man that’s born must fulfil his destiny.”

“If it be not an indelicate question,” resumed D’Artagnan, “have you grown rich?”

“Oh, Heaven! no. I make about twelve thousand francs a year, without counting a little benefice of a thousand crowns the prince gave me.”

“And how do you make your twelve thousand francs? By your poems?”

“No, I have given up poetry, except now and then to write a drinking song, some gay sonnet or some innocent epigram; I compose sermons, my friend.”

“What! sermons? Do you preach them?”

“No; I sell them to those of my cloth who wish to become great orators.”

“Ah, indeed! and you have not been tempted by the hopes of reputation yourself?”

“I should, my dear D’Artagnan, have been so, but nature said ‘No.’ When I am in the pulpit, if by chance a pretty woman looks at me, I look at her again: if she smiles, I smile too. Then I speak at random; instead of preaching about the torments of hell I talk of the joys of Paradise. An event took place in the Church of St. Louis au Marais. A gentleman laughed in my face. I stopped short to tell him that he was a fool; the congregation went out to get stones to stone me with, but whilst they were away I found means to conciliate the priests who were present, so that my foe was pelted instead of me. ‘Tis true that he came the next morning to my house, thinking that he had to do with an abbe-like all other abbés.”

“And what was the end of the affair?”

“We met in the Place Royale-Egad! you know about it.”

“Was I not your second?” cried D’Artagnan.

“You were; you know how I settled the matter.”

“Did he die?”

“I don’t know. But, at all events, I gave him absolution in articulo mortis. ‘Tis enough to kill the body, without killing the soul.”

Bazin made a despairing sign which meant that while perhaps he approved the moral he altogether disapproved the tone in which it was uttered.

“Bazin, my friend,” said Aramis, “you don’t seem to be aware that I can see you in that mirror, and you forget that once for all I have forbidden all signs of approbation or disapprobation. You will do me the favor to bring us some Spanish wine and then to withdraw. Besides, my friend D’Artagnan has something to say to me privately, have you not, D’Artagnan?”

D’Artagnan nodded his head and Bazin retired, after placing on the table the Spanish wine.

The two friends, left alone, remained silent, face to face. Aramis seemed to await a comfortable digestion; D’Artagnan, to be preparing his exordium. Each of them, when the other was not looking, hazarded a sly glance. It was Aramis who broke the silence.

“What are you thinking of, D’Artagnan?” he began.

“I was thinking, my dear old friend, that when you were a musketeer you turned your thoughts incessantly to the church, and now that you are an abbe you are perpetually longing to be once more a musketeer.”

“‘Tis true; man, as you know,” said Aramis, “is a strange animal, made up of contradictions. Since I became an abbe I dream of nothing but battles.”

“That is apparent in your surroundings; you have rapiers here of every form and to suit the most exacting taste. Do you still fence well?”

“I-I fence as well as you did in the old time-better still, perhaps; I do nothing else all day.”

“And with whom?”

“With an excellent master-at-arms that we have here.”

“What! here?”

“Yes, here, in this convent, my dear fellow. There is everything in a Jesuit convent.”

“Then you would have killed Monsieur de Marsillac if he had come alone to attack you, instead of at the head of twenty men?”

“Undoubtedly,” said Aramis, “and even at the head of his twenty men, if I could have drawn without being recognized.”

“God pardon me!” said D’Artagnan to himself, “I believe he has become more Gascon than I am!” Then aloud: “Well, my dear Aramis, do you ask me why I came to seek you?”

“No, I have not asked you that,” said Aramis, with his subtle manner; “but I have expected you to tell me.”

“Well, I sought you for the single purpose of offering you a chance to kill Monsieur de Marsillac whenever you please, prince though he is.”

“Hold on! wait!” said Aramis; “that is an idea!”

“Of which I invite you to take advantage, my friend. Let us see; with your thousand crowns from the abbey and the twelve thousand francs you make by selling sermons, are you rich? Answer frankly.”

“I? I am as poor as Job, and were you to search my pockets and my boxes I don’t believe you would find a hundred pistoles.”

“Peste! a hundred pistoles!” said D’Artagnan to himself; “he calls that being as poor as Job! If I had them I should think myself as rich as Croesus.” Then aloud: “Are you ambitious?”

“As Enceladus.”

“Well, my friend, I bring you the means of becoming rich, powerful, and free to do whatever you wish.”

The shadow of a cloud passed over Aramis’s face as quickly as that which in August passes over the field of grain; but quick as it was, it did not escape D’Artagnan’s observation.

“Speak on,” said Aramis.

“One question first. Do you take any interest in politics?”

A gleam of light shone in Aramis’s eyes, as brief as the shadow that had passed over his face, but not so brief but that it was seen by D’Artagnan.

“No,” Aramis replied.

“Then proposals from any quarter will be agreeable to you, since for the moment you have no master but God?”

“It is possible.”

“Have you, my dear Aramis, thought sometimes of those happy, happy, happy days of youth we passed laughing, drinking, and fighting each other for play?”

“Certainly, and more than once regretted them; it was indeed a glorious time.”

“Well, those splendidly wild days may chance to come again; I am commissioned to find out my companions and I began by you, who were the very soul of our society.”

Aramis bowed, rather with respect than pleasure at the compliment.

“To meddle in politics,” he exclaimed, in a languid voice, leaning back in his easy-chair. “Ah! dear D’Artagnan! see how regularly I live and how easy I am here. We have experienced the ingratitude of ‘the great,’ as you well know.”

“‘Tis true,” replied D’Artagnan. “Yet the great sometimes repent of their ingratitude.”

“In that case it would be quite another thing. Come! let’s be merciful to every sinner! Besides, you are right in another respect, which is in thinking that if we were to meddle in politics there could not be a better time than the present.”

“How can you know that? You who never interest yourself in politics?”

“Ah! without caring about them myself, I live among those who are much occupied in them. Poet as I am, I am intimate with Sarazin, who is devoted to the Prince de Conti, and with Monsieur de Bois-Robert, who, since the death of Cardinal Richelieu, is of all parties or any party; so that political discussions have not altogether been uninteresting to me.”

“I have no doubt of it,” said D’Artagnan.

“Now, my dear friend, look upon all I tell you as merely the statement of a monk-of a man who resembles an echo-repeating simply what he hears. I understand that Mazarin is at this very moment extremely uneasy as to the state of affairs; that his orders are not respected like those of our former bugbear, the deceased cardinal, whose portrait as you see hangs yonder-for whatever may be thought of him, it must be allowed that Richelieu was great.”

“I will not contradict you there,” said D’Artagnan.

“My first impressions were favorable to the minister; I said to myself that a minister is never loved, but that with the genius this one was said to have he would eventually triumph over his enemies and would make himself feared, which in my opinion is much more to be desired than to be loved-”

D’Artagnan made a sign with his head which indicated that he entirely approved that doubtful maxim.

“This, then,” continued Aramis, “was my first opinion; but as I am very ignorant in matters of this kind and as the humility which I profess obliges me not to rest on my own judgment, but to ask the opinion of others, I have inquired-Eh! – my friend-”

Aramis paused.

“Well? what?” asked his friend.

“Well, I must mortify myself. I must confess that I was mistaken. Monsieur de Mazarin is not a man of genius, as I thought, he is a man of no origin-once a servant of Cardinal Bentivoglio, and he got on by intrigue. He is an upstart, a man of no name, who will only be the tool of a party in France. He will amass wealth, he will injure the king’s revenue and pay to himself the pensions which Richelieu paid to others. He is neither a gentleman in manner nor in feeling, but a sort of buffoon, a punchinello, a pantaloon. Do you know him? I do not.”

“Hem!” said D’Artagnan, “there is some truth in what you say.”

“Ah! it fills me with pride to find that, thanks to a common sort of penetration with which I am endowed, I am approved by a man like you, fresh from the court.”

“But you speak of him, not of his party, his resources.”

“It is true-the queen is for him.”

“Something in his favor.”

“But he will never have the king.”

“A mere child.”

“A child who will be of age in four years. Then he has neither the parliament nor the people with him—they represent the wealth of the country; nor the nobles nor the princes, who are the military power of France.”

D’Artagnan scratched his ear. He was forced to confess to himself that this reasoning was not only comprehensive, but just.

“You see, my poor friend, that I am sometimes bereft of my ordinary thoughtfulness; perhaps I am wrong in speaking thus to you, who have evidently a leaning to Mazarin.”

“I!” cried D’Artagnan, “not in the least.”

“You spoke of a mission.”

“Did I? I was wrong then, no, I said what you say—there is a crisis at hand. Well! let’s fly the feather before the wind; let us join with that side to which the wind will carry it and resume our adventurous life. We were once four valiant knights—four hearts fondly united; let us unite again, not our hearts, which have never been severed, but our courage and our fortunes. Here’s a good opportunity for getting something better than a diamond.”

“You are right, D’Artagnan; I held a similar project, but as I had not nor ever shall have your fruitful, vigorous imagination, the idea was suggested to me. Every one nowadays wants auxiliaries; propositions have been made to me and I confess to you frankly that the coadjutor has made me speak out.”

“Monsieur de Gondy! the cardinal’s enemy?”

“No; the king’s friend,” said Aramis; “the king’s friend, you understand. Well, it is a question of serving the king, the gentleman’s duty.”

“But the king is with Mazarin.”

“He is, but not willingly; in appearance, not heart; and that is exactly the snare the king’s enemies are preparing for the poor child.”

“Ah! but this is, indeed, civil war which you propose to me, dear Aramis.”

“War for the king.”

“Yet the king will be at the head of the army on Mazarin’s side.”

“But his heart will be in the army commanded by the Duc de Beaufort.”

“Monsieur de Beaufort? He is at Vincennes.”

“Did I say Monsieur de Beaufort? Monsieur de Beaufort or another. Monsieur de Beaufort or Monsieur le Prince.”

“But Monsieur le Prince is to set out for the army; he is entirely devoted to the cardinal.”

“Oh oh!” said Aramis, “there are questions between them at this very moment. And besides, if it is not the prince, then Monsieur de Gondy—”

“But Monsieur de Gondy is to be made a cardinal; they are soliciting the hat for him.”

“And are there no cardinals that can fight? Come now, recall the four cardinals that at the head of armies have equalled Monsieur de Guebriant and Monsieur de Gassion.”

“But a humpbacked general!

“Under the cuirass the hump will not be seen. Besides, remember that Alexander was lame and Hannibal had but one eye.”

“Do you see any great advantage in adhering to this party?” asked D’Artagnan.

“I foresee in it the aid of powerful princes.”

“With the enmity of the government.”

“Counteracted by parliament and insurrections.”

“That may be done if they can separate the king from his mother.”

“That may be done,” said Aramis.

“Never!” cried D’Artagnan. “You, Aramis, know Anne of Austria better than I do. Do you think she will ever forget that her son is her safeguard, her shield, the pledge for her dignity, for her fortune and her life? Should she forsake Mazarin she must join her son and go over to the princes’ side; but you know better than I do that there are certain reasons why she can never abandon Mazarin.”

“Perhaps you are right,” said Aramis, thoughtfully; “therefore I shall not pledge myself.”

“To them or to us, do you mean, Aramis?”

“To no one. I am a priest,” resumed Aramis. “What have I to do with politics? I am not obliged to read any breviary. I have a jolly little circle of witty abbes and pretty women; everything goes on smoothly, so certainly, dear friend, I shall not meddle in politics.”

“Well, listen, my dear Aramis,” said D’Artagnan; “your philosophy convinces me, on my honor. I don’t know what devil of an insect stung me and made me ambitious. I have a post by which I live; at the death of Monsieur de Treville, who is old, I may be a captain, which is a very snug berth for a once penniless Gascon. Instead of running after adventures I shall accept an invitation from Porthos; I shall go and shoot on his estate. You know he has estates-Porthos?”

“I should think so, indeed. Ten leagues of wood, of marsh land and valleys; he is lord of the hill and the plain and is now carrying on a suit for his feudal rights against the Bishop of Noyon!”

“Good,” said D’Artagnan to himself. “That’s what I wanted to know. Porthos is in Picardy.”

Then aloud:

“And he has taken his ancient name of Vallon?”

“To which he adds that of Bracieux, an estate which has been a barony, by my troth.”

“So that Porthos will be a baron.”

“I don’t doubt it. The ‘Baroness Porthos’ will sound particularly charming.”

And the two friends began to laugh.

“So,” D’Artagnan resumed, “you will not become a partisan of Mazarin’s?”

“Nor you of the Prince de Conde?”

“No, let us belong to no party, but remain friends; let us be neither Cardinalists nor Frondist.”

“Adieu, then.” And D’Artagnan poured out a glass of wine.

“To old times,” he said.

“Yes,” returned Aramis. “Unhappily, those times are past.”

“Nonsense! They will return,” said D’Artagnan. “At all events, if you want me, remember the Rue Tiquetonne, Hotel de la Chevrette.”

“And I shall be at the convent of Jesuits; from six in the morning to eight at night come by the door. From eight in the evening until six in the morning come in by the window.”

“Adieu, dear friend.”

“Oh, I can’t let you go so! I will go with you.” And he took his sword and cloak.

“He wants to be sure that I go away,” said D’Artagnan to himself.

Aramis whistled for Bazin, but Bazin was asleep in the ante-chamber, and Aramis was obliged to shake him by the ear to awake him.

Bazin stretched his arms, rubbed his eyes, and tried to go to sleep again.

“Come, come, sleepy head; quick, the ladder!”

“But,” said Bazin, yawning portentously, “the ladder is still at the window.”

“The other one, the gardener’s. Didn’t you see that Monsieur d’Artagnan mounted with difficulty? It will be even more difficult to descend.”

D’Artagnan was about to assure Aramis that he could descend easily, when an idea came into his head which silenced him.

Bazin uttered a profound sigh and went out to look for the ladder. Presently a good, solid, wooden ladder was placed against the window.

“Now then,” said D’Artagnan, “this is something like; this is a means of communication. A woman could go up a ladder like that.”

Aramis's searching look seemed to seek his friend's thought even at the bottom of his heart, but D'Artagnan sustained the inquisition with an air of admirable simplicity. Besides, at that moment he put his foot on the first step of the ladder and began his descent. In a moment he was on the ground. Bazin remained at the window.

"Stay there," said Aramis; "I shall return immediately."

The two friends went toward the shed. At their approach Planchet came out leading the two horses.

"That is good to see," said Aramis. "There is a servant active and vigilant, not like that lazy fellow Bazin, who is no longer good for anything since he became connected with the church. Follow us, Planchet; we shall continue our conversation to the end of the village."

They traversed the width of the village, talking of indifferent things, then as they reached the last houses:

"Go, then, dear friend," said Aramis, "follow your own career. Fortune lavishes her smiles upon you; do not let her flee from your embrace. As for me, I remain in my humility and indolence. Adieu!"

"Thus 'tis quite decided," said D'Artagnan, "that what I have to offer to you does not tempt you?"

"On the contrary, it would tempt me were I any other man," rejoined Aramis; "but I repeat, I am made up of contradictions. What I hate to-day I adore to-morrow, and vice versa. You see that I cannot, like you, for instance, settle on any fixed plan."

"Thou liest, subtle one," said D'Artagnan to himself. "Thou alone, on the contrary, knowest how to choose thy object and to gain it stealthily."

The friends embraced. They descended into the plain by the ladder. Planchet met them hard by the shed. D'Artagnan jumped into the saddle, then the old companions in arms again shook hands. D'Artagnan and Planchet spurred their steeds and took the road to Paris.

But after he had gone about two hundred steps D'Artagnan stopped short, alighted, threw the bridle of his horse over the arm of Planchet and took the pistols from his saddle-bow to fasten them to his girdle.

"What's the matter?" asked Planchet.

"This is the matter: be he ever so cunning he shall never say I was his dupe. Stand here, don't stir, turn your back to the road and wait for me."

Having thus spoken, D'Artagnan cleared the ditch by the roadside and crossed the plain so as to wind around the village. He had observed between the house that Madame de Longueville inhabited and the convent of the Jesuits, an open space surrounded by a hedge.

The moon had now risen and he could see well enough to retrace his road.

He reached the hedge and hid himself behind it; in passing by the house where the scene which we have related took place, he remarked that the window was again lighted up and he was convinced that Aramis had not yet returned to his own apartment and that when he did it would not be alone.

In truth, in a few minutes he heard steps approaching and low whispers.

Close to the hedge the steps stopped.

D'Artagnan knelt down near the thickest part of the hedge.

Two men, to the astonishment of D'Artagnan, appeared shortly; soon, however, his surprise vanished, for he heard the murmurs of a soft, harmonious voice; one of these two men was a woman disguised as a cavalier.

"Calm yourself, dear Rene," said the soft voice, "the same thing will never happen again. I have discovered a sort of subterranean passage which runs beneath the street and we shall only have to raise one of the marble slabs before the door to open you an entrance and an outlet."

"Oh!" answered another voice, which D'Artagnan instantly recognized as that of Aramis. "I swear to you, princess, that if your reputation did not depend on precautions and if my life alone were jeopardized—"

“Yes, yes! I know you are as brave and venturesome as any man in the world, but you do not belong to me alone; you belong to all our party. Be prudent! sensible!”

“I always obey, madame, when I am commanded by so gentle a voice.”

He kissed her hand tenderly.

“Ah!” exclaimed the cavalier with a soft voice.

“What’s the matter?” asked Aramis.

“Do you not see that the wind has blown off my hat?”

Aramis rushed after the fugitive hat. D’Artagnan took advantage of the circumstance to find a place in the hedge not so thick, where his glance could penetrate to the supposed cavalier. At that instant, the moon, inquisitive, perhaps, like D’Artagnan, came from behind a cloud and by her light D’Artagnan recognized the large blue eyes, the golden hair and the classic head of the Duchess de Longueville.

Aramis returned, laughing, one hat on his head and the other in his hand; and he and his companion resumed their walk toward the convent.

“Good!” said D’Artagnan, rising and brushing his knees; “now I have thee-thou art a Frondeur and the lover of Madame de Longueville.”

## 10. Monsieur Porthos du Vallon de Bracieux de Pierrefonds

Thanks to what Aramis had told him, D'Artagnan, who knew already that Porthos called himself Du Vallon, was now aware that he styled himself, from his estate, De Bracieux; and that he was, on account of this estate, engaged in a lawsuit with the Bishop of Noyon. It was, then, in the neighborhood of Noyon that he must seek that estate. His itinerary was promptly determined: he would go to Dammartin, from which place two roads diverge, one toward Soissons, the other toward Compiègne; there he would inquire concerning the Bracieux estate and go to the right or to the left according to the information obtained.

Planchet, who was still a little concerned for his safety after his recent escapade, declared that he would follow D'Artagnan even to the end of the world, either by the road to the right or by that to the left; only he begged his former master to set out in the evening, for greater security to himself. D'Artagnan suggested that he should send word to his wife, so that she might not be anxious about him, but Planchet replied with much sagacity that he was very sure his wife would not die of anxiety through not knowing where he was, while he, Planchet, remembering her incontinence of tongue, would die of anxiety if she did know.

This reasoning seemed to D'Artagnan so satisfactory that he no further insisted; and about eight o'clock in the evening, the time when the vapors of night begin to thicken in the streets, he left the Hotel de la Chevrette, and followed by Planchet set forth from the capital by way of the Saint Denis gate.

At midnight the two travelers were at Dammartin, but it was then too late to make inquiries—the host of the Cygne de la Croix had gone to bed.

The next morning D'Artagnan summoned the host, one of those sly Normans who say neither yes nor no and fear to commit themselves by giving a direct answer. D'Artagnan, however, gathered from his equivocal replies that the road to the right was the one he ought to take, and on that uncertain information he resumed his journey. At nine in the morning he reached Nanteuil and stopped for breakfast. His host here was a good fellow from Picardy, who gave him all the information he needed. The Bracieux estate was a few leagues from Villars-Cotterets.

D'Artagnan was acquainted with Villars-Cotterets, having gone thither with the court on several occasions; for at that time Villars-Cotterets was a royal residence. He therefore shaped his course toward that place and dismounted at the Dauphin d'Or. There he ascertained that the Bracieux estate was four leagues distant, but that Porthos was not at Bracieux. Porthos had, in fact, been involved in a dispute with the Bishop of Noyon in regard to the Pierrefonds property, which adjoined his own, and weary at length of a legal controversy which was beyond his comprehension, he put an end to it by purchasing Pierrefonds and added that name to his others. He now called himself Du Vallon de Bracieux de Pierrefonds, and resided on his new estate.

The travelers were therefore obliged to stay at the hotel until the next day; the horses had done ten leagues that day and needed rest. It is true they might have taken others, but there was a great forest to pass through and Planchet, as we have seen, had no liking for forests after dark.

There was another thing that Planchet had no liking for and that was starting on a journey with a hungry stomach. Accordingly, D'Artagnan, on awaking, found his breakfast waiting for him. It need not be said that Planchet in resuming his former functions resumed also his former humility and was not ashamed to make his breakfast on what was left by D'Artagnan.

It was nearly eight o'clock when they set out again. Their course was clearly defined: they were to follow the road toward Compiègne and on emerging from the forest turn to the right.

The morning was beautiful, and in this early springtime the birds sang on the trees and the sunbeams shone through the misty glades, like curtains of golden gauze.

In other parts of the forest the light could scarcely penetrate through the foliage, and the stems of two old oak trees, the refuge of the squirrel, startled by the travelers, were in deep shadow.

There came up from all nature in the dawn of day a perfume of herbs, flowers and leaves, which delighted the heart. D'Artagnan, sick of the closeness of Paris, thought that when a man had three names of his different estates joined one to another, he ought to be very happy in such a paradise; then he shook his head, saying, "If I were Porthos and D'Artagnan came to make me such a proposition as I am going to make to him, I know what I should say to it."

As to Planchet, he thought of little or nothing, but was happy as a hunting-hound in his old master's company.

At the extremity of the wood D'Artagnan perceived the road that had been described to him, and at the end of the road he saw the towers of an immense feudal castle.

"Oh! oh!" he said, "I fancied this castle belonged to the ancient branch of Orleans. Can Porthos have negotiated for it with the Duc de Longueville?"

"Faith!" exclaimed Planchet, "here's land in good condition; if it belongs to Monsieur Porthos I wish him joy."

"Zounds!" cried D'Artagnan, "don't call him Porthos, nor even Vallon; call him De Bracieux or De Pierrefonds; thou wilt knell out damnation to my mission otherwise."

As he approached the castle which had first attracted his eye, D'Artagnan was convinced that it could not be there that his friend dwelt; the towers, though solid and as if built yesterday, were open and broken. One might have fancied that some giant had cleaved them with blows from a hatchet.

On arriving at the extremity of the castle D'Artagnan found himself overlooking a beautiful valley, in which, at the foot of a charming little lake, stood several scattered houses, which, humble in their aspect, and covered, some with tiles, others with thatch, seemed to acknowledge as their sovereign lord a pretty chateau, built about the beginning of the reign of Henry IV., and surmounted by four stately, gilded weather-cocks. D'Artagnan no longer doubted that this was Porthos's pleasant dwelling place.

The road led straight up to the chateau which, compared to its ancestor on the hill, was exactly what a fop of the coterie of the Duc d'Enghein would have been beside a knight in steel armor in the time of Charles VII. D'Artagnan spurred his horse on and pursued his road, followed by Planchet at the same pace.

In ten minutes D'Artagnan reached the end of an alley regularly planted with fine poplars and terminating in an iron gate, the points and crossed bars of which were gilt. In the midst of this avenue was a nobleman, dressed in green and with as much gilding about him as the iron gate, riding on a tall horse. On his right hand and his left were two footmen, with the seams of their dresses laced. A considerable number of clowns were assembled and rendered homage to their lord.

"Ah!" said D'Artagnan to himself, "can this be the Seigneur du Vallon de Bracieux de Pierrefonds? Well-a-day! how he has shrunk since he gave up the name of Porthos!"

"This cannot be Monsieur Porthos," observed Planchet replying, as it were, to his master's thoughts. "Monsieur Porthos was six feet high; this man is scarcely five."

"Nevertheless," said D'Artagnan, "the people are bowing very low to this person."

As he spoke, he rode toward the tall horse—to the man of importance and his valets. As he approached he seemed to recognize the features of this individual.

"Jesu!" cried Planchet, "can it be?"

At this exclamation the man on horseback turned slowly and with a lofty air, and the two travelers could see, displayed in all their brilliancy, the large eyes, the vermilion visage, and the eloquent smile of Mousqueton.

It was indeed Mousqueton-Mousqueton, as fat as a pig, rolling about with rude health, puffed out with good living, who, recognizing D'Artagnan and acting very differently from the hypocrite

Bazin, slipped off his horse and approached the officer with his hat off, so that the homage of the assembled crowd was turned toward this new sun, which eclipsed the former luminary.

“Monsieur d’Artagnan! Monsieur d’Artagnan!” cried Mousqueton, his fat cheeks swelling out and his whole frame perspiring with joy; “Monsieur d’Artagnan! oh! what joy for my lord and master, Du Vallon de Bracieux de Pierrefonds!”

“Thou good Mousqueton! where is thy master?”

“You stand upon his property!”

“But how handsome thou art-how fat! thou hast prospered and grown stout!” and D’Artagnan could not restrain his astonishment at the change good fortune had produced on the once famished one.

“Hey, yes, thank God, I am pretty well,” said Mousqueton.

“But hast thou nothing to say to thy friend Planchet?”

“How, my friend Planchet? Planchet-art thou there?” cried Mousqueton, with open arms and eyes full of tears.

“My very self,” replied Planchet; “but I wanted first to see if thou wert grown proud.”

“Proud toward an old friend? never, Planchet! thou wouldst not have thought so hadst thou known Mousqueton well.”

“So far so well,” answered Planchet, alighting, and extending his arms to Mousqueton, the two servants embraced with an emotion which touched those who were present and made them suppose that Planchet was a great lord in disguise, so highly did they estimate the position of Mousqueton.

“And now, sir,” resumed Mousqueton, when he had rid himself of Planchet, who had in vain tried to clasp his hands behind his friend’s fat back, “now, sir, allow me to leave you, for I could not permit my master to hear of your arrival from any but myself; he would never forgive me for not having preceded you.”

“This dear friend,” said D’Artagnan, carefully avoiding to utter either the former name borne by Porthos or his new one, “then he has not forgotten me?”

“Forgotten-he!” cried Mousqueton; “there’s not a day, sir, that we don’t expect to hear that you were made marshal either instead of Monsieur de Gassion, or of Monsieur de Bassompierre.”

On D’Artagnan’s lips there played one of those rare and melancholy smiles which seemed to emanate from the depth of his soul-the last trace of youth and happiness that had survived life’s disillusionments.

“And you-fellows,” resumed Mousqueton, “stay near Monsieur le Comte d’Artagnan and pay him every attention in your power whilst I go to prepare my lord for his visit.”

And mounting his horse Mousqueton rode off down the avenue on the grass at a hand gallop.

“Ah, there! there’s something promising,” said D’Artagnan. “No mysteries, no cloak to hide one’s self in, no cunning policy here; people laugh outright, they weep for joy here. I see nothing but faces a yard broad; in short, it seems to me that nature herself wears a holiday garb, and that the trees, instead of leaves and flowers, are covered with red and green ribbons as on gala days.”

“As for me,” said Planchet, “I seem to smell, from this place, even, a most delectable perfume of fine roast meat, and to see the scullions in a row by the hedge, hailing our approach. Ah! sir, what a cook must Monsieur Pierrefonds have, when he was so fond of eating and drinking, even whilst he was only called Monsieur Porthos!”

“Say no more!” cried D’Artagnan. “If the reality corresponds with appearances I am lost; for a man so well off will never change his happy condition, and I shall fail with him, as I have already done with Aramis.”

## 11. Wealth does not necessarily produce Happiness

D'Artagnan passed through the iron gate and arrived in front of the chateau. He alighted as he saw a species of giant on the steps. Let us do justice to D'Artagnan. Independently of every selfish wish, his heart palpitated with joy when he saw that tall form and martial demeanor, which recalled to him a good and brave man.

He ran to Porthos and threw himself into his arms; the whole body of servants, arranged in a semi-circle at a respectful distance, looked on with humble curiosity. Mousqueton, at the head of them, wiped his eyes. Porthos linked his arm in that of his friend.

"Ah! how delightful to see you again, dear friend!" he cried, in a voice which was now changed from a baritone into a bass, "you've not then forgotten me?"

"Forget you! oh! dear Du Vallon, does one forget the happiest days of flowery youth, one's dearest friends, the dangers we have dared together? On the contrary, there is not an hour we have passed together that is not present to my memory."

"Yes, yes," said Porthos, trying to give to his mustache a curl which it had lost whilst he had been alone. "Yes, we did some fine things in our time and we gave that poor cardinal a few threads to unravel."

And he heaved a sigh.

"Under any circumstances," he resumed, "you are welcome, my dear friend; you will help me to recover my spirits; to-morrow we will hunt the hare on my plain, which is a superb tract of land, or pursue the deer in my woods, which are magnificent. I have four harriers which are considered the swiftest in the county, and a pack of hounds which are unequalled for twenty leagues around."

And Porthos heaved another sigh.

"But, first," interposed D'Artagnan, "you must present me to Madame du Vallon."

A third sigh from Porthos.

"I lost Madame du Vallon two years ago," he said, "and you find me still in affliction on that account. That was the reason why I left my Chateau du Vallon near Corbeil, and came to my estate, Bracieux. Poor Madame du Vallon! her temper was uncertain, but she came at last to accustom herself to my little ways and understand my little wishes."

"So you are free now, and rich?"

"Alas!" groaned Porthos, "I am a widower and have forty thousand francs a year. Let us go to breakfast."

"I shall be happy to do so; the morning air has made me hungry."

"Yes," said Porthos; "my air is excellent."

They went into the chateau; there was nothing but gilding, high and low; the cornices were gilt, the mouldings were gilt, the legs and arms of the chairs were gilt. A table, ready set out, awaited them.

"You see," said Porthos, "this is my usual style."

"Devil take me!" answered D'Artagnan, "I wish you joy of it. The king has nothing like it."

"No," answered Porthos, "I hear it said that he is very badly fed by the cardinal, Monsieur de Mazarin. Taste this cutlet, my dear D'Artagnan; 'tis off one of my sheep."

"You have very tender mutton and I wish you joy of it," said D'Artagnan.

"Yes, the sheep are fed in my meadows, which are excellent pasture."

"Give me another cutlet."

"No, try this hare, which I had killed yesterday in one of my warrens."

"Zounds! what a flavor!" cried D'Artagnan; "ah! they are fed on thyme only, your hares."

"And how do you like my wine?" asked Porthos; "it is pleasant, isn't it?"

"Capital!"

"It is nothing, however, but a wine of the country."

“Really?”

“Yes, a small declivity to the south, yonder on my hill, gives me twenty hogsheads.”

“Quite a vineyard, hey?”

Porthos sighed for the fifth time-D’Artagnan had counted his sighs. He became curious to solve the problem.

“Well now,” he said, “it seems, my dear friend, that something vexes you; you are ill, perhaps? That health, which-”

“Excellent, my dear friend; better than ever. I could kill an ox with a blow of my fist.”

“Well, then, family affairs, perhaps?”

“Family! I have, happily, only myself in the world to care for.”

“But what makes you sigh?”

“My dear fellow,” replied Porthos, “to be candid with you, I am not happy.”

“You are not happy, Porthos? You who have chateau, meadows, mountains, woods-you who have forty thousand francs a year-you-are-not-happy?”

“My dear friend, all those things I have, but I am a hermit in the midst of superfluity.”

“Surrounded, I suppose, only by clodhoppers, with whom you could not associate.”

Porthos turned rather pale and drank off a large glass of wine.

“No; but just think, there are paltry country squires who have all some title or another and pretend to go back as far as Charlemagne, or at least to Hugh Capet. When I first came here; being the last comer, it was for me to make the first advances. I made them, but you know, my dear friend, Madame du Vallon-”

Porthos, in pronouncing these words, seemed to gulp down something.

“Madame du Vallon was of doubtful gentility. She had, in her first marriage-I don’t think, D’Artagnan, I am telling you anything new-married a lawyer; they thought that ‘nauseous;’ you can understand that’s a word bad enough to make one kill thirty thousand men. I have killed two, which has made people hold their tongues, but has not made me their friend. So that I have no society; I live alone; I am sick of it-my mind preys on itself.”

D’Artagnan smiled. He now saw where the breastplate was weak, and prepared the blow.

“But now,” he said, “that you are a widower, your wife’s connection cannot injure you.”

“Yes, but understand me; not being of a race of historic fame, like the De Courcys, who were content to be plain sirs, or the Rohans, who didn’t wish to be dukes, all these people, who are all either vicomtes or comtes go before me at church in all the ceremonies, and I can say nothing to them. Ah! If I only were a-”

“A baron, don’t you mean?” cried D’Artagnan, finishing his friend’s sentence.

“Ah!” cried Porthos; “would I were but a baron!”

“Well, my friend, I am come to give you this very title which you wish for so much.”

Porthos gave a start that shook the room; two or three bottles fell and were broken. Mousqueton ran thither, hearing the noise.

Porthos waved his hand to Mousqueton to pick up the bottles.

“I am glad to see,” said D’Artagnan, “that you have still that honest lad with you.”

“He is my steward,” replied Porthos; “he will never leave me. Go away now, Mouston.”

“So he’s called Mouston,” thought D’Artagnan; “tis too long a word to pronounce ‘Mousqueton.’”

“Well,” he said aloud, “let us resume our conversation later, your people may suspect something; there may be spies about. You can suppose, Porthos, that what I have to say relates to most important matters.”

“Devil take them; let us walk in the park,” answered Porthos, “for the sake of digestion.”

“Egad,” said D’Artagnan, “the park is like everything else and there are as many fish in your pond as rabbits in your warren; you are a happy man, my friend since you have not only retained your love of the chase, but acquired that of fishing.”

“My friend,” replied Porthos, “I leave fishing to Mousqueton, – it is a vulgar pleasure, – but I shoot sometimes; that is to say, when I am dull, and I sit on one of those marble seats, have my gun brought to me, my favorite dog, and I shoot rabbits.”

“Really, how very amusing!”

“Yes,” replied Porthos, with a sigh, “it is amusing.”

D’Artagnan now no longer counted the sighs. They were innumerable.

“However, what had you to say to me?” he resumed; “let us return to that subject.”

“With pleasure,” replied D’Artagnan; “I must, however, first frankly tell you that you must change your mode of life.”

“How?”

“Go into harness again, gird on your sword, run after adventures, and leave as in old times a little of your fat on the roadside.”

“Ah! hang it!” said Porthos.

“I see you are spoiled, dear friend; you are corpulent, your arm has no longer that movement of which the late cardinal’s guards have so many proofs.”

“Ah! my fist is strong enough I swear,” cried Porthos, extending a hand like a shoulder of mutton.

“So much the better.”

“Are we then to go to war?”

“By my troth, yes.”

“Against whom?”

“Are you a politician, friend?”

“Not in the least.”

“Are you for Mazarin or for the princes?”

“I am for no one.”

“That is to say, you are for us. Well, I tell you that I come to you from the cardinal.”

This speech was heard by Porthos in the same sense as if it had still been in the year 1640 and related to the true cardinal.

“Ho! ho! What are the wishes of his eminence?”

“He wishes to have you in his service.”

“And who spoke to him of me?”

“Rocheport-you remember him?”

“Yes, pardieu! It was he who gave us so much trouble and kept us on the road so much; you gave him three sword-wounds in three separate engagements.”

“But you know he is now our friend?”

“No, I didn’t know that. So he cherishes no resentment?”

“You are mistaken, Porthos,” said D’Artagnan. “It is I who cherish no resentment.”

Porthos didn’t understand any too clearly; but then we know that understanding was not his strong point. “You say, then,” he continued, “that the Count de Rocheport spoke of me to the cardinal?”

“Yes, and the queen, too.”

“The queen, do you say?”

“To inspire us with confidence she has even placed in Mazarin’s hands that famous diamond-you remember all about it-that I once sold to Monsieur des Essarts and of which, I don’t know how, she has regained possession.”

“But it seems to me,” said Porthos, “that she would have done much better if she had given it back to you.”

“So I think,” replied D’Artagnan; “but kings and queens are strange beings and have odd fancies; nevertheless, since they are the ones who have riches and honors, we are devoted to them.”

“Yes, we are devoted to them,” repeated Porthos; “and you-to whom are you devoted now?”

“To the king, the queen, and to the cardinal; moreover, I have answered for your devotion also.”

“And you say that you have made certain conditions on my behalf?”

“Magnificent, my dear fellow, magnificent! In the first place you have plenty of money, haven’t you? forty thousand francs income, I think you said.”

Porthos began to be suspicious. “Eh! my friend,” said he, “one never has too much money. Madame du Vallon left things in much disorder; I am not much of a hand at figures, so that I live almost from hand to mouth.”

“He is afraid I have come to borrow money,” thought D’Artagnan. “Ah, my friend,” said he, “it is all the better if you are in difficulties.”

“How is it all the better?”

“Yes, for his eminence will give you all that you want-land, money, and titles.”

“Ah! ah! ah!” said Porthos, opening his eyes at that last word.

“Under the other cardinal,” continued D’Artagnan, “we didn’t know enough to make our profits; this, however, doesn’t concern you, with your forty thousand francs income, the happiest man in the world, it seems to me.”

Porthos sighed.

“At the same time,” continued D’Artagnan, “notwithstanding your forty thousand francs a year, and perhaps even for the very reason that you have forty thousand francs a year, it seems to me that a little coronet would do well on your carriage, hey?”

“Yes indeed,” said Porthos.

“Well, my dear friend, win it-it is at the point of your sword. We shall not interfere with each other-your object is a title; mine, money. If I can get enough to rebuild Artagnan, which my ancestors, impoverished by the Crusades, allowed to fall into ruins, and to buy thirty acres of land about it, that is all I wish. I shall retire and die tranquilly-at home.”

“For my part,” said Porthos, “I desire to be made a baron.”

“You shall be one.”

“And have you not seen any of our other friends?”

“Yes, I have seen Aramis.”

“And what does he wish? To be a bishop?”

“Aramis,” answered D’Artagnan, who did not wish to undeceive Porthos, “Aramis, fancy, has become a monk and a Jesuit, and lives like a bear. My offers did not arouse him, – did not even tempt him.”

“So much the worse! He was a clever man. And Athos?”

“I have not yet seen him. Do you know where I shall find him?”

“Near Blois. He is called Bragelonne. Only imagine, my dear friend. Athos, who was of as high birth as the emperor and who inherits one estate which gives him the title of comte, what is he to do with all those dignities-the Comte de la Fere, Comte de Bragelonne?”

“And he has no children with all these titles?”

“Ah!” said Porthos, “I have heard that he had adopted a young man who resembles him greatly.”

“What, Athos? Our Athos, who was as virtuous as Scipio? Have you seen him?”

“No.”

“Well, I shall see him to-morrow and tell him about you; but I’m afraid, entre nous, that his liking for wine has aged and degraded him.”

“Yes, he used to drink a great deal,” replied Porthos.

“And then he was older than any of us,” added D’Artagnan.

“Some years only. His gravity made him look older than he was.”

“Well then, if we can get Athos, all will be well. If we cannot, we will do without him. We two are worth a dozen.”

“Yes,” said Porthos, smiling at the remembrance of his former exploits; “but we four, altogether, would be equal to thirty-six, more especially as you say the work will not be child’s play. Will it last long?”

“By’r Lady! two or three years perhaps.”

“So much the better,” cried Porthos. “You have no idea, my friend, how my bones ache since I came here. Sometimes on a Sunday, I take a ride in the fields and on the property of my neighbours, in order to pick up a nice little quarrel, which I am really in want of, but nothing happens. Either they respect or they fear me, which is more likely, but they let me trample down the clover with my dogs, insult and obstruct every one, and I come back still more weary and low-spirited, that’s all. At any rate, tell me: there’s more chance of fighting in Paris, is there not?”

“In that respect, my dear friend, it’s delightful. No more edicts, no more of the cardinal’s guards, no more De Jussacs, nor other bloodhounds. I’Gad! underneath a lamp in an inn, anywhere, they ask ‘Are you one of the Fronde?’ They unsheathe, and that’s all that is said. The Duke de Guise killed Monsieur de Coligny in the Place Royale and nothing was said of it.”

“Ah, things go on gaily, then,” said Porthos.

“Besides which, in a short time,” resumed D’Artagnan, “We shall have set battles, cannonades, conflagrations and there will be great variety.”

“Well, then, I decide.”

“I have your word, then?”

“Yes, ‘tis given. I shall fight heart and soul for Mazarin; but-”

“But?”

“But he must make me a baron.”

“Zounds!” said D’Artagnan, “that’s settled already; I will be responsible for the barony.”

On this promise being given, Porthos, who had never doubted his friend’s assurance, turned back with him toward the castle.

## 12. Porthos was Discontented with his Condition

As they returned toward the castle, D'Artagnan thought of the miseries of poor human nature, always dissatisfied with what it has, ever desirous of what it has not.

In the position of Porthos, D'Artagnan would have been perfectly happy; and to make Porthos contented there was wanting-what? five letters to put before his three names, a tiny coronet to paint upon the panels of his carriage!

"I shall pass all my life," thought D'Artagnan, "in seeking for a man who is really contented with his lot."

Whilst making this reflection, chance seemed, as it were, to give him the lie direct. When Porthos had left him to give some orders he saw Mousqueton approaching. The face of the steward, despite one slight shade of care, light as a summer cloud, seemed a physiognomy of absolute felicity.

"Here is what I am looking for," thought D'Artagnan; "but alas! the poor fellow does not know the purpose for which I am here."

He then made a sign for Mousqueton to come to him.

"Sir," said the servant, "I have a favour to ask you."

"Speak out, my friend."

"I am afraid to do so. Perhaps you will think, sir, that prosperity has spoiled me?"

"Art thou happy, friend?" asked D'Artagnan.

"As happy as possible; and yet, sir, you may make me even happier than I am."

"Well, speak, if it depends on me."

"Oh, sir! it depends on you only."

"I listen-I am waiting to hear."

"Sir, the favor I have to ask of you is, not to call me 'Mousqueton' but 'Mouston.' Since I have had the honor of being my lord's steward I have taken the last name as more dignified and calculated to make my inferiors respect me. You, sir, know how necessary subordination is in any large establishment of servants."

D'Artagnan smiled; Porthos wanted to lengthen out his names, Mousqueton to cut his short.

"Well, my dear Mouston," he said, "rest satisfied. I will call thee Mouston; and if it makes thee happy I will not 'tutoyer' you any longer."

"Oh!" cried Mousqueton, reddening with joy; "if you do me, sir, such honor, I shall be grateful all my life; it is too much to ask."

"Alas!" thought D'Artagnan, "it is very little to offset the unexpected tribulations I am bringing to this poor devil who has so warmly welcomed me."

"Will monsieur remain long with us?" asked Mousqueton, with a serene and glowing countenance.

"I go to-morrow, my friend," replied D'Artagnan.

"Ah, monsieur," said Mousqueton, "then you have come here only to awaken our regrets."

"I fear that is true," said D'Artagnan, in a low tone.

D'Artagnan was secretly touched with remorse, not at inducing Porthos to enter into schemes in which his life and fortune would be in jeopardy, for Porthos, in the title of baron, had his object and reward; but poor Mousqueton, whose only wish was to be called Mouston-was it not cruel to snatch him from the delightful state of peace and plenty in which he was?

He was thinking of these matters when Porthos summoned him to dinner.

"What! to dinner?" said D'Artagnan. "What time is it, then?"

"Eh! why, it is after one o'clock."

"Your home is a paradise, Porthos; one takes no note of time. I follow you, though I am not hungry."

“Come, if one can’t always eat, one can always drink—a maxim of poor Athos, the truth of which I have discovered since I began to be lonely.”

D’Artagnan, who as a Gascon, was inclined to sobriety, seemed not so sure as his friend of the truth of Athos’s maxim, but he did his best to keep up with his host. Meanwhile his misgivings in regard to Mousqueton recurred to his mind and with greater force because Mousqueton, though he did not himself wait on the table, which would have been beneath him in his new position, appeared at the door from time to time and evinced his gratitude to D’Artagnan by the quality of the wine he directed to be served. Therefore, when, at dessert, upon a sign from D’Artagnan, Porthos had sent away his servants and the two friends were alone:

“Porthos,” said D’Artagnan, “who will attend you in your campaigns?”

“Why,” replied Porthos, “Mouston, of course.”

This was a blow to D’Artagnan. He could already see the intendant’s beaming smile change to a contortion of grief. “But,” he said, “Mouston is not so young as he was, my dear fellow; besides, he has grown fat and perhaps has lost his fitness for active service.”

“That may be true,” replied Porthos; “but I am used to him, and besides, he wouldn’t be willing to let me go without him, he loves me so much.”

“Oh, blind self-love!” thought D’Artagnan.

“And you,” asked Porthos, “haven’t you still in your service your old lackey, that good, that brave, that intelligent—what, then, is his name?”

“Planchet—yes, I have found him again, but he is lackey no longer.”

“What is he, then?”

“With his sixteen hundred francs—you remember, the sixteen hundred francs he earned at the siege of La Rochelle by carrying a letter to Lord de Winter—he has set up a little shop in the Rue des Lombards and is now a confectioner.”

“Ah, he is a confectioner in the Rue des Lombards! How does it happen, then, that he is in your service?”

“He has been guilty of certain escapades and fears he may be disturbed.” And the musketeer narrated to his friend Planchet’s adventure.

“Well,” said Porthos, “if any one had told you in the old times that the day would come when Planchet would rescue Rochefort and that you would protect him in it—”

“I should not have believed him; but men are changed by events.”

“There is nothing truer than that,” said Porthos; “but what does not change, or changes for the better, is wine. Taste of this; it is a Spanish wine which our friend Athos thought much of.”

At that moment the steward came in to consult his master upon the proceedings of the next day and also with regard to the shooting party which had been proposed.

“Tell me, Mouston,” said Porthos, “are my arms in good condition?”

“Your arms, my lord—what arms?”

“Zounds! my weapons.”

“What weapons?”

“My military weapons.”

“Yes, my lord; at any rate, I think so.”

“Make sure of it, and if they want it, have them burnished up. Which is my best cavalry horse?”

“Vulcan.”

“And the best hack?”

“Bayard.”

“What horse dost thou choose for thyself?”

“I like Rustaud, my lord; a good animal, whose paces suit me.”

“Strong, thinkest thou?”

“Half Norman, half Mecklenburger; will go night and day.”

“That will do for us. See to these horses. Polish up or make some one else polish my arms. Then take pistols with thee and a hunting-knife.”

“Are we then going to travel, my lord?” asked Mousqueton, rather uneasy.

“Something better still, Mouston.”

“An expedition, sir?” asked the steward, whose roses began to change into lilies.

“We are going to return to the service, Mouston,” replied Porthos, still trying to restore his mustache to the military curl it had long lost.

“Into the service-the king’s service?” Mousqueton trembled; even his fat, smooth cheeks shook as he spoke, and he looked at D’Artagnan with an air of reproach; he staggered, and his voice was almost choked.

“Yes and no. We shall serve in a campaign, seek out all sorts of adventures-return, in short, to our former life.”

These last words fell on Mousqueton like a thunderbolt. It was those very terrible old days that made the present so excessively delightful, and the blow was so great he rushed out, overcome, and forgot to shut the door.

The two friends remained alone to speak of the future and to build castles in the air. The good wine which Mousqueton had placed before them traced out in glowing drops to D’Artagnan a fine perspective, shining with quadruples and pistoles, and showed to Porthos a blue ribbon and a ducal mantle; they were, in fact, asleep on the table when the servants came to light them to their bed.

Mousqueton was, however, somewhat consoled by D’Artagnan, who the next day told him that in all probability war would always be carried on in the heart of Paris and within reach of the Chateau du Vallon, which was near Corbeil, or Bracieux, which was near Melun, and of Pierrefonds, which was between Compiègne and Villars-Cotterets.

“But-formerly-it appears,” began Mousqueton timidly.

“Oh!” said D’Artagnan, “we don’t now make war as we did formerly. To-day it’s a sort of diplomatic arrangement; ask Planchet.”

Mousqueton inquired, therefore, the state of the case of his old friend, who confirmed the statement of D’Artagnan. “But,” he added, “in this war prisoners stand a chance of being hung.”

“The deuce they do!” said Mousqueton; “I think I should like the siege of Rochelle better than this war, then!”

Porthos, meantime, asked D’Artagnan to give him his instructions how to proceed on his journey.

“Four days,” replied his friend, “are necessary to reach Blois; one day to rest there; three or four days to return to Paris. Set out, therefore, in a week, with your suite, and go to the Hotel de la Chevrette, Rue Tiquetonne, and there await me.”

“That’s agreed,” said Porthos.

“As to myself, I shall go around to see Athos; for though I don’t think his aid worth much, one must with one’s friends observe all due politeness,” said D’Artagnan.

The friends then took leave of each other on the very border of the estate of Pierrefonds, to which Porthos escorted his friend.

“At least,” D’Artagnan said to himself, as he took the road to Villars-Cotterets, “at least I shall not be alone in my undertaking. That devil, Porthos, is a man of prodigious strength; still, if Athos joins us, well, we shall be three of us to laugh at Aramis, that little coxcomb with his too good luck.”

At Villars-Cotterets he wrote to the cardinal:

“My Lord, – I have already one man to offer to your eminence, and he is well worth twenty men. I am just setting out for Blois. The Comte de la Fere inhabits the Castle of Bragelonne, in the environs of that city.”

## 13. Two Angelic Faces

The road was long, but the horses upon which D'Artagnan and Planchet rode had been refreshed in the well supplied stables of the Lord of Bracieux; the master and servant rode side by side, conversing as they went, for D'Artagnan had by degrees thrown off the master and Planchet had entirely ceased to assume the manners of a servant. He had been raised by circumstances to the rank of a confidant to his master. It was many years since D'Artagnan had opened his heart to any one; it happened, however, that these two men, on meeting again, assimilated perfectly. Planchet was in truth no vulgar companion in these new adventures; he was a man of uncommonly sound sense. Without courting danger he never shrank from an encounter; in short, he had been a soldier and arms ennobled a man; it was, therefore, on the footing of friends that D'Artagnan and Planchet arrived in the neighborhood of Blois.

Going along, D'Artagnan, shaking his head, said:

"I know that my going to Athos is useless and absurd; but still I owe this courtesy to my old friend, a man who had in him material for the most noble and generous of characters."

"Oh, Monsieur Athos was a noble gentleman," said Planchet, "was he not? Scattering money round about him as Heaven sprinkles rain. Do you remember, sir, that duel with the Englishman in the inclosure des Carmes? Ah! how lofty, how magnificent Monsieur Athos was that day, when he said to his adversary: 'You have insisted on knowing my name, sir; so much the worse for you, since I shall be obliged to kill you.' I was near him, those were his exact words, when he stabbed his foe as he said he would, and his adversary fell without saying, 'Oh!' 'Tis a noble gentleman-Monsieur Athos."

"Yes, true as Gospel," said D'Artagnan; "but one single fault has swallowed up all these fine qualities."

"I remember well," said Planchet, "he was fond of drinking-in truth, he drank, but not as other men drink. One seemed, as he raised the wine to his lips, to hear him say, 'Come, juice of the grape, and chase away my sorrows.' And how he used to break the stem of a glass or the neck of a bottle! There was no one like him for that."

"And now," replied D'Artagnan, "behold the sad spectacle that awaits us. This noble gentleman with his lofty glance, this handsome cavalier, so brilliant in feats of arms that every one was surprised that he held in his hand a sword only instead of a baton of command! Alas! we shall find him changed into a broken down old man, with garnet nose and eyes that slobber; we shall find him extended on some lawn, whence he will look at us with a languid eye and peradventure will not recognize us. God knows, Planchet, that I should fly from a sight so sad if I did not wish to show my respect for the illustrious shadow of what was once the Comte de la Fere, whom we loved so much."

Planchet shook his head and said nothing. It was evident that he shared his master's apprehensions.

"And then," resumed D'Artagnan, "to this decrepitude is probably added poverty, for he must have neglected the little that he had, and the dirty scoundrel, Grimaud, more taciturn than ever and still more drunken than his master-stay, Planchet, it breaks my heart to merely think of it."

"I fancy myself there and that I see him staggering and hear him stammering," said Planchet, in a piteous tone, "but at all events we shall soon know the real state of things, for I imagine that those lofty walls, now turning ruby in the setting sun, are the walls of Blois."

"Probably; and those steeples, pointed and sculptured, that we catch a glimpse of yonder, are similar to those that I have heard described at Chambord."

At this moment one of those heavy wagons, drawn by bullocks, which carry the wood cut in the fine forests of the country to the ports of the Loire, came out of a byroad full of ruts and turned on that which the two horsemen were following. A man carrying a long switch with a nail at the end of it, with which he urged on his slow team, was walking with the cart.

“Ho! friend,” cried Planchet.

“What’s your pleasure, gentlemen?” replied the peasant, with a purity of accent peculiar to the people of that district and which might have put to shame the cultured denizens of the Sorbonne and the Rue de l’Universite.

“We are looking for the house of Monsieur de la Fere,” said D’Artagnan.

The peasant took off his hat on hearing this revered name.

“Gentlemen,” he said, “the wood that I am carting is his; I cut it in his copse and I am taking it to the chateau.”

D’Artagnan determined not to question this man; he did not wish to hear from another what he had himself said to Planchet.

“The chateau!” he said to himself, “what chateau? Ah, I understand! Athos is not a man to be thwarted; he, like Porthos, has obliged his peasantry to call him ‘my lord,’ and to dignify his pettifogging place by the name of chateau. He had a heavy hand-dear old Athos-after drinking.”

D’Artagnan, after asking the man the right way, continued his route, agitated in spite of himself at the idea of seeing once more that singular man whom he had so truly loved and who had contributed so much by advice and example to his education as a gentleman. He checked by degrees the speed of his horse and went on, his head drooping as if in deep thought.

Soon, as the road turned, the Chateau de la Valliere appeared in view; then, a quarter of a mile beyond, a white house, encircled in sycamores, was visible at the farther end of a group of trees, which spring had powdered with a snow of flowers.

On beholding this house, D’Artagnan, calm as he was in general, felt an unusual disturbance within his heart-so powerful during the whole course of life are the recollections of youth. He proceeded, nevertheless, and came opposite to an iron gate, ornamented in the taste of the period.

Through the gate was seen kitchen-gardens, carefully attended to, a spacious courtyard, in which neighed several horses held by valets in various liveries, and a carriage, drawn by two horses of the country.

“We are mistaken,” said D’Artagnan. “This cannot be the establishment of Athos. Good heavens! suppose he is dead and that this property now belongs to some one who bears his name. Alight, Planchet, and inquire, for I confess that I have scarcely courage so to do.”

Planchet alighted.

“Thou must add,” said D’Artagnan, “that a gentleman who is passing by wishes to have the honor of paying his respects to the Comte de la Fere, and if thou art satisfied with what thou hearest, then mention my name!”

Planchet, leading his horse by the bridle, drew near to the gate and rang the bell, and immediately a servant-man with white hair and of erect stature, notwithstanding his age, presented himself.

“Does Monsieur le Comte de la Fere live here?” asked Planchet.

“Yes, monsieur, it is here he lives,” the servant replied to Planchet, who was not in livery.

“A nobleman retired from service, is he not?”

“Yes.”

“And who had a lackey named Grimaud?” persisted Planchet, who had prudently considered that he couldn’t have too much information.

“Monsieur Grimaud is absent from the chateau for the time being,” said the servitor, who, little used as he was to such inquiries, began to examine Planchet from head to foot.

“Then,” cried Planchet joyously, “I see well that it is the same Comte de la Fere whom we seek. Be good enough to open to me, for I wish to announce to monsieur le comte that my master, one of his friends, is here, and wishes to greet him.”

“Why didn’t you say so?” said the servitor, opening the gate. “But where is your master?”

“He is following me.”

The servitor opened the gate and walked before Planchet, who made a sign to D'Artagnan. The latter, his heart palpitating more than ever, entered the courtyard without dismounting.

Whilst Planchet was standing on the steps before the house he heard a voice say:

“Well, where is this gentleman and why do they not bring him here?”

This voice, the sound of which reached D'Artagnan, reawakened in his heart a thousand sentiments, a thousand recollections that he had forgotten. He vaulted hastily from his horse, whilst Planchet, with a smile on his lips, advanced toward the master of the house.

“But I know you, my lad,” said Athos, appearing on the threshold.

“Oh, yes, monsieur le comte, you know me and I know you. I am Planchet-Planchet, whom you know well.” But the honest servant could say no more, so much was he overcome by this unexpected interview.

“What, Planchet, is Monsieur d'Artagnan here?”

“Here I am, my friend, dear Athos!” cried D'Artagnan, in a faltering voice and almost staggering from agitation.

At these words a visible emotion was expressed on the beautiful countenance and calm features of Athos. He rushed toward D'Artagnan with eyes fixed upon him and clasped him in his arms. D'Artagnan, equally moved, pressed him also closely to him, whilst tears stood in his eyes. Athos then took him by the hand and led him into the drawing-room, where there were several people. Every one arose.

“I present to you,” he said, “Monsieur le Chevalier D'Artagnan, lieutenant of his majesty's musketeers, a devoted friend and one of the most excellent, brave gentlemen that I have ever known.”

D'Artagnan received the compliments of those who were present in his own way, and whilst the conversation became general he looked earnestly at Athos.

Strange! Athos was scarcely aged at all! His fine eyes, no longer surrounded by that dark line which nights of dissipation pencil too infallibly, seemed larger, more liquid than ever. His face, a little elongated, had gained in calm dignity what it had lost in feverish excitement. His hand, always wonderfully beautiful and strong, was set off by a ruffle of lace, like certain hands by Titian and Vandyck. He was less stiff than formerly. His long, dark hair, softly powdered here and there with silver tendrils, fell elegantly over his shoulders in wavy curls; his voice was still youthful, as if belonging to a Hercules of twenty-five, and his magnificent teeth, which he had preserved white and sound, gave an indescribable charm to his smile.

Meanwhile the guests, seeing that the two friends were longing to be alone, prepared to depart, when a noise of dogs barking resounded through the courtyard and many persons said at the same moment:

“Ah! 'tis Raoul, who is come home.”

Athos, as the name of Raoul was pronounced, looked inquisitively at D'Artagnan, in order to see if any curiosity was painted on his face. But D'Artagnan was still in confusion and turned around almost mechanically when a fine young man of fifteen years of age, dressed simply, but in perfect taste, entered the room, raising, as he came, his hat, adorned with a long plume of scarlet feathers.

Nevertheless, D'Artagnan was struck by the appearance of this new personage. It seemed to explain to him the change in Athos; a resemblance between the boy and the man explained the mystery of this regenerated existence. He remained listening and gazing.

“Here you are, home again, Raoul,” said the comte.

“Yes, sir,” replied the youth, with deep respect, “and I have performed the commission that you gave me.”

“But what's the matter, Raoul?” said Athos, very anxiously. “You are pale and agitated.”

“Sir,” replied the young man, “it is on account of an accident which has happened to our little neighbor.”

“To Mademoiselle de la Valliere?” asked Athos, quickly.

“What is it?” cried many persons present.

“She was walking with her nurse Marceline, in the place where the woodmen cut the wood, when, passing on horseback, I stopped. She saw me also and in trying to jump from the end of a pile of wood on which she had mounted, the poor child fell and was not able to rise again. I fear that she has badly sprained her ankle.”

“Oh, heavens!” cried Athos. “And her mother, Madame de Saint-Remy, have they yet told her of it?”

“No, sir, Madame de Saint-Remy is at Blois with the Duchess of Orleans. I am afraid that what was first done was unskillful, if not worse than useless. I am come, sir, to ask your advice.”

“Send directly to Blois, Raoul; or, rather, take horse and ride immediately yourself.”

Raoul bowed.

“But where is Louise?” asked the comte.

“I have brought her here, sir, and I have deposited her in charge of Charlotte, who, till better advice comes, has bathed the foot in cold well-water.”

The guests now all took leave of Athos, excepting the old Duc de Barbe, who, as an old friend of the family of La Valliere, went to see little Louise and offered to take her to Blois in his carriage.

“You are right, sir,” said Athos. “She will be the sooner with her mother. As for you, Raoul, I am sure it is your fault, some giddiness or folly.”

“No, sir, I assure you,” muttered Raoul, “it is not.”

“Oh, no, no, I declare it is not!” cried the young girl, while Raoul turned pale at the idea of his being perhaps the cause of her disaster.

“Nevertheless, Raoul, you must go to Blois and you must make your excuses and mine to Madame de Saint-Remy.”

The youth looked pleased. He again took in his strong arms the little girl, whose pretty golden head and smiling face rested on his shoulder, and placed her gently in the carriage; then jumping on his horse with the elegance of a first-rate esquire, after bowing to Athos and D’Artagnan, he went off close by the door of the carriage, on somebody inside of which his eyes were riveted.

## 14. The Castle of Bragelonne

Whilst this scene was going on, D'Artagnan remained with open mouth and a confused gaze. Everything had turned out so differently from what he expected that he was stupefied with wonder.

Athos, who had been observing him and guessing his thoughts, took his arm and led him into the garden.

"Whilst supper is being prepared," he said, smiling, "you will not, my friend, be sorry to have the mystery which so puzzles you cleared up."

"True, monsieur le comte," replied D'Artagnan, who felt that by degrees Athos was resuming that great influence which aristocracy had over him.

Athos smiled.

"First and foremost, dear D'Artagnan, we have no title such as count here. When I call you 'chevalier,' it is in presenting you to my guests, that they may know who you are. But to you, D'Artagnan, I am, I hope, still dear Athos, your comrade, your friend. Do you intend to stand on ceremony because you are less attached to me than you were?"

"Oh! God forbid!"

"Then let us be as we used to be; let us be open with each other. You are surprised at what you see here?"

"Extremely."

"But above all things, I am a marvel to you?"

"I confess it."

"I am still young, am I not? Should you not have known me again, in spite of my eight-and-forty years of age?"

"On the contrary, I do not find you the same person at all."

"I understand," cried Athos, with a gentle blush. "Everything, D'Artagnan, even folly, has its limit."

"Then your means, it appears, are improved; you have a capital house-your own, I presume? You have a park, and horses, servants."

Athos smiled.

"Yes, I inherited this little property when I quitted the army, as I told you. The park is twenty acres-twenty, comprising kitchen-gardens and a common. I have two horses, – I do not count my servant's bobtailed nag. My sporting dogs consist of two pointers, two harriers and two setters. But then all this extravagance is not for myself," added Athos, laughing.

"Yes, I see, for the young man Raoul," said D'Artagnan.

"You guess aright, my friend; this youth is an orphan, deserted by his mother, who left him in the house of a poor country priest. I have brought him up. It is Raoul who has worked in me the change you see; I was dried up like a miserable tree, isolated, attached to nothing on earth; it was only a deep affection that could make me take root again and drag me back to life. This child has caused me to recover what I had lost. I had no longer any wish to live for myself, I have lived for him. I have corrected the vices that I had; I have assumed the virtues that I had not. Precept something, but example more. I may be mistaken, but I believe that Raoul will be as accomplished a gentleman as our degenerate age could display."

The remembrance of Milady recurred to D'Artagnan.

"And you are happy?" he said to his friend.

"As happy as it is allowed to one of God's creatures to be on this earth; but say out all you think, D'Artagnan, for you have not yet done so."

"You are too bad, Athos; one can hide nothing from you," answered D'Artagnan. "I wished to ask you if you ever feel any emotions of terror resembling–"

“Remorse! I finish your phrase. Yes and no. I do not feel remorse, because that woman, I profoundly hold, deserved her punishment. Had she one redeeming trait? I doubt it. I do not feel remorse, because had we allowed her to live she would have persisted in her work of destruction. But I do not mean, my friend that we were right in what we did. Perhaps all blood demands some expiation. Hers had been accomplished; it remains, possibly, for us to accomplish ours.”

“I have sometimes thought as you do, Athos.”

“She had a son, that unhappy woman?”

“Yes.”

“Have you ever heard of him?”

“Never.”

“He must be about twenty-three years of age,” said Athos, in a low tone. “I often think of that young man, D’Artagnan.”

“Strange! for I had forgotten him,” said the lieutenant.

Athos smiled; the smile was melancholy.

“And Lord de Winter-do you know anything about him?”

“I know that he is in high favor with Charles I.”

“The fortunes of that monarch now are at low water. He shed the blood of Strafford; that confirms what I said just now-blood will have blood. And the queen?”

“What queen?”

“Madame Henrietta of England, daughter of Henry IV.”

“She is at the Louvre, as you know.”

“Yes, and I hear in bitter poverty. Her daughter, during the severest cold, was obliged for want of fire to remain in bed. Do you grasp that?” said Athos, shrugging his shoulders; “the daughter of Henry IV. shivering for want of a fagot! Why did she not ask from any one of us a home instead of from Mazarin? She should have wanted nothing.”

“Have you ever seen the queen of England?” inquired D’Artagnan.

“No; but my mother, as a child, saw her. Did I ever tell you that my mother was lady of honor to Marie de Medici?”

“Never. You know, Athos, you never spoke much of such matters.”

“Ah, mon Dieu, yes, you are right,” Athos replied; “but then there must be some occasion for speaking.”

“Porthos wouldn’t have waited for it so patiently,” said D’Artagnan, with a smile.

“Every one according to his nature, my dear D’Artagnan. Porthos, in spite of a touch of vanity, has many excellent qualities. Have you seen him?”

“I left him five days ago,” said D’Artagnan, and he portrayed with Gascon wit and sprightliness the magnificence of Porthos in his Chateau of Pierrefonds; nor did he neglect to launch a few arrows of wit at the excellent Monsieur Mouston.

“I sometimes wonder,” replied Athos, smiling at that gayety which recalled the good old days, “that we could form an association of men who would be, after twenty years of separation, still so closely bound together. Friendship throws out deep roots in honest hearts, D’Artagnan. Believe me, it is only the evil-minded who deny friendship; they cannot understand it. And Aramis?”

“I have seen him also,” said D’Artagnan; “but he seemed to me cold.”

“Ah, you have seen Aramis?” said Athos, turning on D’Artagnan a searching look. “Why, it is a veritable pilgrimage, my dear friend, that you are making to the Temple of Friendship, as the poets would say.”

“Why, yes,” replied D’Artagnan, with embarrassment.

“Aramis, you know,” continued Athos, “is naturally cold, and then he is always involved in intrigues with women.”

“I believe he is at this moment in a very complicated one,” said D’Artagnan.

Athos made no reply.

“He is not curious,” thought D’Artagnan.

Athos not only failed to reply, he even changed the subject of conversation.

“You see,” said he, calling D’Artagnan’s attention to the fact that they had come back to the chateau after an hour’s walk, “we have made a tour of my domains.”

“All is charming and everything savors of nobility,” replied D’Artagnan.

At this instant they heard the sound of horses’ feet.

“’Tis Raoul who has come back,” said Athos; “and we can now hear how the poor child is.”

In fact, the young man appeared at the gate, covered with dust, entered the courtyard, leaped from his horse, which he consigned to the charge of a groom, and then went to greet the count and D’Artagnan.

“Monsieur,” said Athos, placing his hand on D’Artagnan’s shoulder, “monsieur is the Chevalier D’Artagnan of whom you have often heard me speak, Raoul.”

“Monsieur,” said the young man, saluting again and more profoundly, “monsieur le comte has pronounced your name before me as an example whenever he wished to speak of an intrepid and generous gentleman.”

That little compliment could not fail to move D’Artagnan. He extended a hand to Raoul and said:

“My young friend, all the praises that are given me should be passed on to the count here; for he has educated me in everything and it is not his fault that his pupil profited so little from his instructions. But he will make it up in you I am sure. I like your manner, Raoul, and your politeness has touched me.”

Athos was more delighted than can be told. He looked at D’Artagnan with an expression of gratitude and then bestowed on Raoul one of those strange smiles, of which children are so proud when they receive them.

“Now,” said D’Artagnan to himself, noticing that silent play of countenance, “I am sure of it.”

“I hope the accident has been of no consequence?”

“They don’t yet know, sir, on account of the swelling; but the doctor is afraid some tendon has been injured.”

At this moment a little boy, half peasant, half foot-boy, came to announce supper.

Athos led his guest into a dining-room of moderate size, the windows of which opened on one side on a garden, on the other on a hot-house full of magnificent flowers.

D’Artagnan glanced at the dinner service. The plate was magnificent, old, and appertaining to the family. D’Artagnan stopped to look at a sideboard on which was a superb ewer of silver.

“That workmanship is divine!” he exclaimed.

“Yes, a chef d’oeuvre of the great Florentine sculptor, Benvenuto Cellini,” replied Athos.

“What battle does it represent?”

“That of Marignan, just at the point where one of my forefathers is offering his sword to Francis I., who has broken his. It was on that occasion that my ancestor, Enguerrand de la Fere, was made a knight of the Order of St. Michael; besides which, the king, fifteen years afterward, gave him also this ewer and a sword which you may have seen formerly in my house, also a lovely specimen of workmanship. Men were giants in those times,” said Athos; “now we are pigmies in comparison. Let us sit down to supper. Call Charles,” he added, addressing the boy who waited.

“My good Charles, I particularly recommend to your care Planchet, the laquais of Monsieur D’Artagnan. He likes good wine; now you have the key of the cellar. He has slept a long time on a hard bed, so he won’t object to a soft one; take every care of him, I beg of you.” Charles bowed and retired.

“You think of everything,” said D’Artagnan; “and I thank you for Planchet, my dear Athos.”

Raoul stared on hearing this name and looked at the count to be quite sure that it was he whom the lieutenant thus addressed.

“That name sounds strange to you,” said Athos, smiling; “it was my nom de guerre when Monsieur D’Artagnan, two other gallant friends and myself performed some feats of arms at the siege of La Rochelle, under the deceased cardinal and Monsieur de Bassompierre. My friend is still so kind as to address me by that old and well beloved appellation, which makes my heart glad when I hear it.”

“Tis an illustrious name,” said the lieutenant, “and had one day triumphal honors paid to it.”

“What do you mean, sir?” inquired Raoul.

“You have not forgotten St. Gervais, Athos, and the napkin which was converted into a banner?” and he then related to Raoul the story of the bastion, and Raoul fancied he was listening to one of those deeds of arms belonging to days of chivalry, so gloriously recounted by Tasso and Ariosto.

“D’Artagnan does not tell you, Raoul,” said Athos, in his turn, “that he was reckoned one of the finest swordsmen of his time—a knuckle of iron, a wrist of steel, a sure eye and a glance of fire; that’s what his adversary met with. He was eighteen, only three years older than you are, Raoul, when I saw him set to work, pitted against tried men.”

“And did Monsieur D’Artagnan come off the conqueror?” asked the young man, with glistening eye.

“I killed one man, if I recollect rightly,” replied D’Artagnan, with a look of inquiry directed to Athos; “another I disarmed or wounded, I don’t remember which.”

“Wounded!” said Athos; “it was a phenomenon of skill.”

The young man would willingly have prolonged this conversation far into the night, but Athos pointed out to him that his guest must need repose. D’Artagnan would fain have declared that he was not fatigued, but Athos insisted on his retiring to his chamber, conducted thither by Raoul.

## 15. Athos as a Diplomatist

D'Artagnan retired to bed—not to sleep, but to think over all he had heard that evening. Being naturally goodhearted, and having had once a liking for Athos, which had grown into a sincere friendship, he was delighted at thus meeting a man full of intelligence and moral strength, instead of a drunkard. He admitted without annoyance the continued superiority of Athos over himself, devoid as he was of that jealousy which might have saddened a less generous disposition; he was delighted also that the high qualities of Athos appeared to promise favorably for his mission. Nevertheless, it seemed to him that Athos was not in all respects sincere and frank. Who was the youth he had adopted and who bore so striking a resemblance to him? What could explain Athos's having re-entered the world and the extreme sobriety he had observed at table? The absence of Grimaud, whose name had never once been uttered by Athos, gave D'Artagnan uneasiness. It was evident either that he no longer possessed the confidence of his friend, or that Athos was bound by some invisible chain, or that he had been forewarned of the lieutenant's visit.

He could not help thinking of M. Rochefort, whom he had seen in Notre Dame; could De Rochefort have forestalled him with Athos? Again, the moderate fortune which Athos possessed, concealed as it was, so skillfully, seemed to show a regard for appearances and to betray a latent ambition which might be easily aroused. The clear and vigorous intellect of Athos would render him more open to conviction than a less able man would be. He would enter into the minister's schemes with the more ardor, because his natural activity would be doubled by necessity.

Resolved to seek an explanation on all these points on the following day, D'Artagnan, in spite of his fatigue, prepared for an attack and determined that it should take place after breakfast. He determined to cultivate the good-will of the youth Raoul and, either whilst fencing with him or when out shooting, to extract from his simplicity some information which would connect the Athos of old times with the Athos of the present. But D'Artagnan at the same time, being a man of extreme caution, was quite aware what injury he should do himself, if by any indiscretion or awkwardness he should betray his manoeuvring to the experienced eye of Athos. Besides, to tell truth, whilst D'Artagnan was quite disposed to adopt a subtle course against the cunning of Aramis or the vanity of Porthos, he was ashamed to equivocate with Athos, true-hearted, open Athos. It seemed to him that if Porthos and Aramis deemed him superior to them in the arts of diplomacy, they would like him all the better for it; but that Athos, on the contrary, would despise him.

“Ah! why is not Grimaud, the taciturn Grimaud, here?” thought D'Artagnan, “there are so many things his silence would have told me; with Grimaud silence was another form of eloquence!”

There reigned a perfect stillness in the house. D'Artagnan had heard the door shut and the shutters barred; the dogs became in their turn silent. At last a nightingale, lost in a thicket of shrubs, in the midst of its most melodious cadences had fluted low and lower into stillness and fallen asleep. Not a sound was heard in the castle, except of a footstep up and down, in the chamber above—as he supposed, the bedroom of Athos.

“He is walking about and thinking,” thought D'Artagnan; “but of what? It is impossible to know; everything else might be guessed, but not that.”

At length Athos went to bed, apparently, for the noise ceased.

Silence and fatigue together overcame D'Artagnan and sleep overtook him also. He was not, however, a good sleeper. Scarcely had dawn gilded his window curtains when he sprang out of bed and opened the windows. Somebody, he perceived, was in the courtyard, moving stealthily. True to his custom of never passing anything over that it was within his power to know, D'Artagnan looked out of the window and perceived the close red coat and brown hair of Raoul.

The young man was opening the door of the stable. He then, with noiseless haste, took out the horse that he had ridden on the previous evening, saddled and bridled it himself and led the animal

into the alley to the right of the kitchen-garden, opened a side door which conducted him to a bridle road, shut it after him, and D'Artagnan saw him pass by like a dart, bending, as he went, beneath the pendent flowery branches of maple and acacia. The road, as D'Artagnan had observed, was the way to Blois.

“So!” thought the Gascon “here’s a young blade who has already his love affair, who doesn’t at all agree with Athos in his hatred to the fair sex. He’s not going to hunt, for he has neither dogs nor arms; he’s not going on a message, for he goes secretly. Why does he go in secret? Is he afraid of me or of his father? for I am sure the count is his father. By Jove! I shall know about that soon, for I shall soon speak out to Athos.”

Day was now advanced; all the noises that had ceased the night before reawakened, one after the other. The bird on the branch, the dog in his kennel, the sheep in the field, the boats moored in the Loire, even, became alive and vocal. The latter, leaving the shore, abandoned themselves gaily to the current. The Gascon gave a last twirl to his mustache, a last turn to his hair, brushed, from habit, the brim of his hat with the sleeve of his doublet, and went downstairs. Scarcely had he descended the last step of the threshold when he saw Athos bent down toward the ground, as if he were looking for a crown-piece in the dust.

“Good-morning, my dear host,” cried D'Artagnan.

“Good-day to you; have you slept well?”

“Excellently, Athos, but what are you looking for? You are perhaps a tulip fancier?”

“My dear friend, if I am, you must not laugh at me for being so. In the country people alter; one gets to like, without knowing it, all those beautiful objects that God causes to spring from the earth, which are despised in cities. I was looking anxiously for some iris roots I planted here, close to this reservoir, and which some one has trampled upon this morning. These gardeners are the most careless people in the world; in bringing the horse out to the water they’ve allowed him to walk over the border.”

D'Artagnan began to smile.

“Ah! you think so, do you?”

And he took his friend along the alley, where a number of tracks like those which had trampled down the flowerbeds, were visible.

“Here are the horse’s hoofs again, it seems, Athos,” he said carelessly.

“Yes, indeed, the marks are recent.”

“Quite so,” replied the lieutenant.

“Who went out this morning?” Athos asked, uneasily. “Has any horse got loose?”

“Not likely,” answered the Gascon; “these marks are regular.”

“Where is Raoul?” asked Athos; “how is it that I have not seen him?”

“Hush!” exclaimed D'Artagnan, putting his finger on his lips; and he related what he had seen, watching Athos all the while.

“Ah, he’s gone to Blois; the poor boy-”

“Wherefore?”

“Ah, to inquire after the little La Valliere; she has sprained her foot, you know.”

“You think he has?”

“I am sure of it,” said Athos; “don’t you see that Raoul is in love?”

“Indeed! with whom-with a child seven years old?”

“Dear friend, at Raoul’s age the heart is so expansive that it must encircle one object or another, fancied or real. Well, his love is half real, half fanciful. She is the prettiest little creature in the world, with flaxen hair, blue eyes, – at once saucy and languishing.”

“But what say you to Raoul’s fancy?”

“Nothing-I laugh at Raoul; but this first desire of the heart is imperious. I remember, just at his age, how deep in love I was with a Grecian statue which our good king, then Henry IV., gave

my father, insomuch that I was mad with grief when they told me that the story of Pygmalion was nothing but a fable.”

“It is mere want of occupation. You do not make Raoul work, so he takes his own way of employing himself.”

“Exactly; therefore I think of sending him away from here.”

“You will be wise to do so.”

“No doubt of it; but it will break his heart. So long as three or four years ago he used to adorn and adore his little idol, whom he will some day fall in love with in right earnest if he remains here. The parents of little La Valliere have for a long time perceived and been amused at it; now they begin to look concerned.”

“Nonsense! However, Raoul must be diverted from this fancy. Send him away or you will never make a man of him.”

“I think I shall send him to Paris.”

“So!” thought D’Artagnan, and it seemed to him that the moment for attack had arrived.

“Suppose,” he said, “we roughly chalk out a career for this young man. I wish to consult you about some thing.”

“Do so.”

“Do you think it is time for us to enter the service?”

“But are you not still in the service-you, D’Artagnan?”

“I mean active service. Our former life, has it still no attractions for you? would you not be happy to begin anew in my society and in that of Porthos, the exploits of our youth?”

“Do you propose to me to do so, D’Artagnan?”

“Decidedly and honestly.”

“On whose side?” asked Athos, fixing his clear, benevolent glance on the countenance of the Gascon.

“Ah, devil take it, you speak in earnest-”

“And must have a definite answer. Listen, D’Artagnan. There is but one person, or rather, one cause, to whom a man like me can be useful-that of the king.”

“Exactly,” answered the musketeer.

“Yes, but let us understand each other,” returned Athos, seriously. “If by the cause of the king you mean that of Monsieur de Mazarin, we do not understand each other.”

“I don’t say exactly,” answered the Gascon, confused.

“Come, D’Artagnan, don’t let us play a sidelong game; your hesitation, your evasion, tells me at once on whose side you are; for that party no one dares openly to recruit, and when people recruit for it, it is with averted eyes and humble voice.”

“Ah! my dear Athos!”

“You know that I am not alluding to you; you are the pearl of brave, bold men. I speak of that spiteful and intriguing Italian-of the pedant who has tried to put on his own head a crown which he stole from under a pillow-of the scoundrel who calls his party the party of the king-who wants to send the princes of the blood to prison, not daring to kill them, as our great cardinal-our cardinal did-of the miser, who weighs his gold pieces and keeps the clipped ones for fear, though he is rich, of losing them at play next morning-of the impudent fellow who insults the queen, as they say-so much the worse for her-and who is going in three months to make war upon us, in order that he may retain his pensions; is that the master whom you propose to me? I thank you, D’Artagnan.”

“You are more impetuous than you were,” returned D’Artagnan. “Age has warmed, not chilled your blood. Who informed you this was the master I propose to you? Devil take it,” he muttered to himself, “don’t let me betray my secrets to a man not inclined to entertain them.”

“Well, then,” said Athos, “what are your schemes? what do you propose?”

“Zounds! nothing more than natural. You live on your estate, happy in golden mediocrity. Porthos has, perhaps, sixty thousand francs income. Aramis has always fifty duchesses quarreling over the priest, as they quarreled formerly over the musketeer; but I—what have I in the world? I have worn my cuirass these twenty years, kept down in this inferior rank, without going forward or backward, hardly half living. In fact, I am dead. Well! when there is some idea of being resuscitated, you say he’s a scoundrel, an impudent fellow, a miser, a bad master! By Jove! I am of your opinion, but find me a better one or give me the means of living.”

Athos was for a few moments thoughtful.

“Good! D’Artagnan is for Mazarin,” he said to himself.

From that moment he grew very guarded.

On his side D’Artagnan became more cautious also.

“You spoke to me,” Athos resumed, “of Porthos; have you persuaded him to seek his fortune? But he has wealth, I believe, already.”

“Doubtless he has. But such is man, we always want something more than we already have.”

“What does Porthos wish for?”

“To be a baron.”

“Ah, true! I forgot,” said Athos, laughing.

“‘Tis true!” thought the Gascon, “where has he heard it? Does he correspond with Aramis? Ah! if I knew that he did I should know all.”

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Raoul.

“Is our little neighbor worse?” asked D’Artagnan, seeing a look of vexation on the face of the youth.

“Ah, sir!” replied Raoul, “her fall is a very serious one, and without any ostensible injury, the physician fears she will be lame for life.”

“This is terrible,” said Athos.

“And what makes me all the more wretched, sir, is, that I was the cause of this misfortune.”

“How so?” asked Athos.

“It was to run to meet me that she leaped from that pile of wood.”

“There’s only one remedy, dear Raoul—that is, to marry her as a compensation.” remarked D’Artagnan.

“Ah, sir!” answered Raoul, “you joke about a real misfortune; that is cruel, indeed.”

The good understanding between the two friends was not in the least altered by the morning’s skirmish. They breakfasted with a good appetite, looking now and then at poor Raoul, who with moist eyes and a full heart, scarcely ate at all.

After breakfast two letters arrived for Athos, who read them with profound attention, whilst D’Artagnan could not restrain himself from jumping up several times on seeing him read these epistles, in one of which, there being at the time a very strong light, he perceived the fine writing of Aramis. The other was in a feminine hand, long, and crossed.

“Come,” said D’Artagnan to Raoul, seeing that Athos wished to be alone, “come, let us take a turn in the fencing gallery; that will amuse you.”

And they both went into a low room where there were foils, gloves, masks, breastplates, and all the accessories for a fencing match.

In a quarter of an hour Athos joined them and at the same moment Charles brought in a letter for D’Artagnan, which a messenger had just desired might be instantly delivered.

It was now Athos’s turn to take a sly look.

D’Artagnan read the letter with apparent calmness and said, shaking his head:

“See, dear friend, what it is to belong to the army. Faith, you are indeed right not to return to it. Monsieur de Treville is ill, so my company can’t do without me; there! my leave is at an end!”

“Do you return to Paris?” asked Athos, quickly.

“Egad! yes; but why don’t you come there also?”

Athos colored a little and answered:

“Should I go, I shall be delighted to see you there.”

“Halloo, Planchet!” cried the Gascon from the door, “we must set out in ten minutes; give the horses some hay.”

Then turning to Athos he added:

“I seem to miss something here. I am really sorry to go away without having seen Grimaud.”

“Grimaud!” replied Athos. “I’m surprised you have never so much as asked after him. I have lent him to a friend-”

“Who will understand the signs he makes?” returned D’Artagnan.

“I hope so.”

The friends embraced cordially; D’Artagnan pressed Raoul’s hand.

“Will you not come with me?” he said; “I shall pass by Blois.”

Raoul turned toward Athos, who showed him by a secret sign that he did not wish him to go.

“No, monsieur,” replied the young man; “I will remain with monsieur le comte.”

“Adieu, then, to both, my good friends,” said D’Artagnan; “may God preserve you! as we used to say when we said good-bye to each other in the late cardinal’s time.”

Athos waved his hand, Raoul bowed, and D’Artagnan and Planchet set out.

The count followed them with his eyes, his hands resting on the shoulders of the youth, whose height was almost equal to his own; but as soon as they were out of sight he said:

“Raoul, we set out to-night for Paris.”

“Eh?” cried the young man, turning pale.

“You may go and offer your adieux and mine to Madame de Saint-Remy. I shall wait for you here till seven.”

The young man bent low, with an expression of sorrow and gratitude mingled, and retired in order to saddle his horse.

As to D’Artagnan, scarcely, on his side, was he out of sight when he drew from his pocket a letter, which he read over again:

“Return immediately to Paris. – J. M.-”

“The epistle is laconic,” said D’Artagnan; “and if there had not been a postscript, probably I should not have understood it; but happily there is a postscript.”

And he read that welcome postscript, which made him forget the abruptness of the letter.

“P. S. – Go to the king’s treasurer, at Blois; tell him your name and show him this letter; you will receive two hundred pistoles.”

“Assuredly,” said D’Artagnan, “I admire this piece of prose. The cardinal writes better than I thought. Come, Planchet, let us pay a visit to the king’s treasurer and then set off.”

“Toward Paris, sir?”

“Toward Paris.”

And they set out at as hard a canter as their horses could maintain.

## 16. The Duc de Beaufort

The circumstances that had hastened the return of D'Artagnan to Paris were as follows:

One evening, when Mazarin, according to custom, went to visit the queen, in passing the guard-chamber he heard loud voices; wishing to know on what topic the soldiers were conversing, he approached with his wonted wolf-like step, pushed open the door and put his head close to the chink.

There was a dispute among the guards.

"I tell you," one of them was saying, "that if Coysel predicted that, 'tis as good as true; I know nothing about it, but I have heard say that he's not only an astrologer, but a magician."

"Deuce take it, friend, if he's one of thy friends thou wilt ruin him in saying so."

"Why?"

"Because he may be tried for it."

"Ah! absurd! they don't burn sorcerers nowadays."

"No? 'Tis not a long time since the late cardinal burnt Urban Grandier, though."

"My friend, Urban Grandier wasn't a sorcerer, he was a learned man. He didn't predict the future, he knew the past-often a more dangerous thing."

Mazarin nodded an assent, but wishing to know what this prediction was, about which they disputed, he remained in the same place.

"I don't say," resumed the guard, "that Coysel is not a sorcerer, but I say that if his prophecy gets wind, it's a sure way to prevent it's coming true."

"How so?"

"Why, in this way: if Coysel says loud enough for the cardinal to hear him, on such or such a day such a prisoner will escape, 'tis plain that the cardinal will take measures of precaution and that the prisoner will not escape."

"Good Lord!" said another guard, who might have been thought asleep on a bench, but who had lost not a syllable of the conversation, "do you suppose that men can escape their destiny? If it is written yonder, in Heaven, that the Duc de Beaufort is to escape, he will escape; and all the precautions of the cardinal will not prevent it."

Mazarin started. He was an Italian and therefore superstitious. He walked straight into the midst of the guards, who on seeing him were silent.

"What were you saying?" he asked with his flattering manner; "that Monsieur de Beaufort had escaped, were you not?"

"Oh, no, my lord!" said the incredulous soldier. "He's well guarded now; we only said he would escape."

"Who said so?"

"Repeat your story, Saint Laurent," replied the man, turning to the originator of the tale.

"My lord," said the guard, "I have simply mentioned the prophecy I heard from a man named Coysel, who believes that, be he ever so closely watched and guarded, the Duke of Beaufort will escape before Whitsuntide."

"Coyssel is a madman!" returned the cardinal.

"No," replied the soldier, tenacious in his credulity; "he has foretold many things which have come to pass; for instance, that the queen would have a son; that Monsieur Coligny would be killed in a duel with the Duc de Guise; and finally, that the coadjutor would be made cardinal. Well! the queen has not only one son, but two; then, Monsieur de Coligny was killed, and-

"Yes," said Mazarin, "but the coadjutor is not yet made cardinal!"

"No, my lord, but he will be," answered the guard.

Mazarin made a grimace, as if he meant to say, "But he does not wear the cardinal's cap;" then he added:

“So, my friend, it’s your opinion that Monsieur de Beaufort will escape?”

“That’s my idea, my lord; and if your eminence were to offer to make me at this moment governor of the castle of Vincennes, I should refuse it. After Whitsuntide it would be another thing.”

There is nothing so convincing as a firm conviction. It has its own effect upon the most incredulous; and far from being incredulous, Mazarin was superstitious. He went away thoughtful and anxious and returned to his own room, where he summoned Bernouin and desired him to fetch thither in the morning the special guard he had placed over Monsieur de Beaufort and to awaken him whenever he should arrive.

The guard had, in fact, touched the cardinal in the tenderest point. During the whole five years in which the Duc de Beaufort had been in prison not a day had passed in which the cardinal had not felt a secret dread of his escape. It was not possible, as he knew well, to confine for the whole of his life the grandson of Henry IV., especially when this young prince was scarcely thirty years of age. But however and whensoever he did escape, what hatred he must cherish against him to whom he owed his long imprisonment; who had taken him, rich, brave, glorious, beloved by women, feared by men, to cut off his life’s best, happiest years; for it is not life, it is merely existence, in prison! Meantime, Mazarin redoubled his surveillance over the duke. But like the miser in the fable, he could not sleep for thinking of his treasure. Often he awoke in the night, suddenly, dreaming that he had been robbed of Monsieur de Beaufort. Then he inquired about him and had the vexation of hearing that the prisoner played, drank, sang, but that whilst playing, drinking, singing, he often stopped short to vow that Mazarin should pay dear for all the amusements he had forced him to enter into at Vincennes.

So much did this one idea haunt the cardinal even in his sleep, that when at seven in the morning Bernouin came to arouse him, his first words were: “Well, what’s the matter? Has Monsieur de Beaufort escaped from Vincennes?”

“I do not think so, my lord,” said Bernouin; “but you will hear about him, for La Ramee is here and awaits the commands of your eminence.”

“Tell him to come in,” said Mazarin, arranging his pillows, so that he might receive the visitor sitting up in bed.

The officer entered, a large fat man, with an open physiognomy. His air of perfect serenity made Mazarin uneasy.

“Approach, sir,” said the cardinal.

The officer obeyed.

“Do you know what they are saying here?”

“No, your eminence.”

“Well, they say that Monsieur de Beaufort is going to escape from Vincennes, if he has not done so already.”

The officer’s face expressed complete stupefaction. He opened at once his little eyes and his great mouth, to inhale better the joke his eminence deigned to address to him, and ended by a burst of laughter, so violent that his great limbs shook in hilarity as they would have done in an ague.

“Escape! my lord-escape! Your eminence does not then know where Monsieur de Beaufort is?”

“Yes, I do, sir; in the donjon of Vincennes.”

“Yes, sir; in a room, the walls of which are seven feet thick, with grated windows, each bar as thick as my arm.”

“Sir,” replied Mazarin, “with perseverance one may penetrate through a wall; with a watch-spring one may saw through an iron bar.”

“Then my lord does not know that there are eight guards about him, four in his chamber, four in the antechamber, and that they never leave him.”

“But he leaves his room, he plays at tennis at the Mall?”

“Sir, those amusements are allowed; but if your eminence wishes it, we will discontinue the permission.”

“No, no!” cried Mazarin, fearing that should his prisoner ever leave his prison he would be the more exasperated against him if he thus retrenched his amusement. He then asked with whom he played.

“My lord, either with the officers of the guard, with the other prisoners, or with me.”

“But does he not approach the walls while playing?”

“Your eminence doesn’t know those walls; they are sixty feet high and I doubt if Monsieur de Beaufort is sufficiently weary of life to risk his neck by jumping off.”

“Hum!” said the cardinal, beginning to feel more comfortable. “You mean to say, then, my dear Monsieur la Ramee-”

“That unless Monsieur de Beaufort can contrive to metamorphose himself into a little bird, I will continue answerable for him.”

“Take care! you assert a great deal,” said Mazarin. “Monsieur de Beaufort told the guards who took him to Vincennes that he had often thought what he should do in case he were put into prison, and that he had found out forty ways of escaping.”

“My lord, if among these forty there had been one good way he would have been out long ago.”

“Come, come; not such a fool as I fancied!” thought Mazarin.

“Besides, my lord must remember that Monsieur de Chavigny is governor of Vincennes,” continued La Ramee, “and that Monsieur de Chavigny is not friendly to Monsieur de Beaufort.”

“Yes, but Monsieur de Chavigny is sometimes absent.”

“When he is absent I am there.”

“But when you leave him, for instance?”

“Oh! when I leave him, I place in my stead a bold fellow who aspires to be his majesty’s special guard. I promise you he keeps a good watch over the prisoner. During the three weeks that he has been with me, I have only had to reproach him with one thing-being too severe with the prisoners.”

“And who is this Cerberus?”

“A certain Monsieur Grimaud, my lord.”

“And what was he before he went to Vincennes?”

“He was in the country, as I was told by the person who recommended him to me.”

“And who recommended this man to you?”

“The steward of the Duc de Grammont.”

“He is not a gossip, I hope?”

“Lord a mercy, my lord! I thought for a long time that he was dumb; he answers only by signs. It seems his former master accustomed him to that.”

“Well, dear Monsieur la Ramee,” replied the cardinal “let him prove a true and thankful keeper and we will shut our eyes upon his rural misdeeds and put on his back a uniform to make him respectable, and in the pockets of that uniform some pistoles to drink to the king’s health.”

Mazarin was large in promises, – quite unlike the virtuous Monsieur Grimaud so bepraised by La Ramee; for he said nothing and did much.

It was now nine o’clock. The cardinal, therefore, got up, perfumed himself, dressed, and went to the queen to tell her what had detained him. The queen, who was scarcely less afraid of Monsieur de Beaufort than the cardinal himself, and who was almost as superstitious as he was, made him repeat word for word all La Ramee’s praises of his deputy. Then, when the cardinal had ended:

“Alas, sir! why have we not a Grimaud near every prince?”

“Patience!” replied Mazarin, with his Italian smile; “that may happen one day; but in the meantime-”

“Well, in the meantime?”

“I shall still take precautions.”

And he wrote to D’Artagnan to hasten his return.

## 17. Duc de Beaufort amused his Leisure Hours in the Donjon of Vincennes

The captive who was the source of so much alarm to the cardinal and whose means of escape disturbed the repose of the whole court, was wholly unconscious of the terror he caused at the Palais Royal.

He had found himself so strictly guarded that he soon perceived the fruitlessness of any attempt at escape. His vengeance, therefore, consisted in coining curses on the head of Mazarin; he even tried to make some verses on him, but soon gave up the attempt, for Monsieur de Beaufort had not only not received from Heaven the gift of versifying, he had the greatest difficulty in expressing himself in prose.

The duke was the grandson of Henry IV. and Gabrielle d'Estrees-as good-natured, as brave, as proud, and above all, as Gascon as his ancestor, but less elaborately educated. After having been for some time after the death of Louis XIII. the favorite, the confidant, the first man, in short, at the court, he had been obliged to yield his place to Mazarin and so became the second in influence and favor; and eventually, as he was stupid enough to be vexed at this change of position, the queen had had him arrested and sent to Vincennes in charge of Guitant, who made his appearance in these pages in the beginning of this history and whom we shall see again. It is understood, of course, that when we say "the queen," Mazarin is meant.

During the five years of this seclusion, which would have improved and matured the intellect of any other man, M. de Beaufort, had he not affected to brave the cardinal, despise princes, and walk alone without adherents or disciples, would either have regained his liberty or made partisans. But these considerations never occurred to the duke and every day the cardinal received fresh accounts of him which were as unpleasant as possible to the minister.

After having failed in poetry, Monsieur de Beaufort tried drawing. He drew portraits, with a piece of coal, of the cardinal; and as his talents did not enable him to produce a very good likeness, he wrote under the picture that there might be little doubt regarding the original: "Portrait of the Illustrious Coxcomb, Mazarin." Monsieur de Chavigny, the governor of Vincennes, waited upon the duke to request that he would amuse himself in some other way, or that at all events, if he drew likenesses, he would not put mottoes underneath them. The next day the prisoner's room was full of pictures and mottoes. Monsieur de Beaufort, in common with many other prisoners, was bent upon doing things that were prohibited; and the only resource the governor had was, one day when the duke was playing at tennis, to efface all these drawings, consisting chiefly of profiles. M. de Beaufort did not venture to draw the cardinal's fat face.

The duke thanked Monsieur de Chavigny for having, as he said, cleaned his drawing-paper for him; he then divided the walls of his room into compartments and dedicated each of these compartments to some incident in Mazarin's life. In one was depicted the "Illustrious Coxcomb" receiving a shower of blows from Cardinal Bentivoglio, whose servant he had been; another, the "Illustrious Mazarin" acting the part of Ignatius Loyola in a tragedy of that name; a third, the "Illustrious Mazarin" stealing the portfolio of prime minister from Monsieur de Chavigny, who had expected to have it; a fourth, the "Illustrious Coxcomb Mazarin" refusing to give Laporte, the young king's valet, clean sheets, and saving that "it was quite enough for the king of France to have clean sheets every three months."

The governor, of course, thought proper to threaten his prisoner that if he did not give up drawing such pictures he should be obliged to deprive him of all the means of amusing himself in that manner. To this Monsieur de Beaufort replied that since every opportunity of distinguishing himself in arms was taken from him, he wished to make himself celebrated in the arts; since he could not be

a Bayard, he would become a Raphael or a Michael Angelo. Nevertheless, one day when Monsieur de Beaufort was walking in the meadow his fire was put out, his charcoal all removed, taken away; and thus his means of drawing utterly destroyed.

The poor duke swore, fell into a rage, yelled, and declared that they wished to starve him to death as they had starved the Marechal Ornano and the Grand Prior of Vendome; but he refused to promise that he would not make any more drawings and remained without any fire in the room all the winter.

His next act was to purchase a dog from one of his keepers. With this animal, which he called Pistache, he was often shut up for hours alone, superintending, as every one supposed, its education. At last, when Pistache was sufficiently well trained, Monsieur de Beaufort invited the governor and officers of Vincennes to attend a representation which he was going to have in his apartment.

The party assembled, the room was lighted with waxlights, and the prisoner, with a bit of plaster he had taken out of the wall of his room, had traced a long white line, representing a cord, on the floor. Pistache, on a signal from his master, placed himself on this line, raised himself on his hind paws, and holding in his front paws a wand with which clothes used to be beaten, he began to dance upon the line with as many contortions as a rope-dancer. Having been several times up and down it, he gave the wand back to his master and began without hesitation to perform the same evolutions over again.

The intelligent creature was received with loud applause.

The first part of the entertainment being concluded Pistache was desired to say what o'clock it was; he was shown Monsieur de Chavigny's watch; it was then half-past six; the dog raised and dropped his paw six times; the seventh he let it remain upraised. Nothing could be better done; a sundial could not have shown the hour with greater precision.

Then the question was put to him who was the best jailer in all the prisons in France.

The dog performed three evolutions around the circle and laid himself, with the deepest respect, at the feet of Monsieur de Chavigny, who at first seemed inclined to like the joke and laughed long and loud, but a frown succeeded, and he bit his lips with vexation.

Then the duke put to Pistache this difficult question, who was the greatest thief in the world?

Pistache went again around the circle, but stopped at no one, and at last went to the door and began to scratch and bark.

"See, gentlemen," said M. de Beaufort, "this wonderful animal, not finding here what I ask for, seeks it out of doors; you shall, however, have his answer. Pistache, my friend, come here. Is not the greatest thief in the world, Monsieur (the king's secretary) Le Camus, who came to Paris with twenty francs in his pocket and who now possesses ten millions?"

The dog shook his head.

"Then is it not," resumed the duke, "the Superintendent Emery, who gave his son, when he was married, three hundred thousand francs and a house, compared to which the Tuileries are a heap of ruins and the Louvre a paltry building?"

The dog again shook his head as if to say "no."

"Then," said the prisoner, "let's think who it can be. Can it be, can it possibly be, the 'Illustrious Coxcomb, Mazarin de Piscina,' hey?"

Pistache made violent signs that it was, by raising and lowering his head eight or ten times successively.

"Gentlemen, you see," said the duke to those present, who dared not even smile, "that it is the 'Illustrious Coxcomb' who is the greatest thief in the world; at least, according to Pistache."

"Let us go on to another of his exercises."

"Gentlemen!"-there was a profound silence in the room when the duke again addressed them-"do you not remember that the Duc de Guise taught all the dogs in Paris to jump for Mademoiselle de Pons, whom he styled 'the fairest of the fair?' Pistache is going to show you how superior he is to all other dogs. Monsieur de Chavigny, be so good as to lend me your cane."

Monsieur de Chavigny handed his cane to Monsieur de Beaufort. Monsieur de Beaufort placed it horizontally at the height of one foot.

“Now, Pistache, my good dog, jump the height of this cane for Madame de Montbazon.”

“But,” interposed Monsieur de Chavigny, “it seems to me that Pistache is only doing what other dogs have done when they jumped for Mademoiselle de Pons.”

“Stop,” said the duke, “Pistache, jump for the queen.” And he raised his cane six inches higher. The dog sprang, and in spite of the height jumped lightly over it.

“And now,” said the duke, raising it still six inches higher, “jump for the king.”

The dog obeyed and jumped quickly over the cane.

“Now, then,” said the duke, and as he spoke, lowered the cane almost level with the ground; “Pistache, my friend, jump for the ‘Illustrious Coxcomb, Mazarin de Piscina.’”

The dog turned his back to the cane.

“What,” asked the duke, “what do you mean?” and he gave him the cane again, first making a semicircle from the head to the tail of Pistache. “Jump then, Monsieur Pistache.”

But Pistache, as at first, turned round on his legs and stood with his back to the cane.

Monsieur de Beaufort made the experiment a third time, but by this time Pistache’s patience was exhausted; he threw himself furiously upon the cane, wrested it from the hands of the prince and broke it with his teeth.

Monsieur de Beaufort took the pieces out of his mouth and presented them with great formality to Monsieur de Chavigny, saying that for that evening the entertainment was ended, but in three months it should be repeated, when Pistache would have learned a few new tricks.

Three days afterward Pistache was found dead-poisoned.

Then the duke said openly that his dog had been killed by a drug with which they meant to poison him; and one day after dinner he went to bed, calling out that he had pains in his stomach and that Mazarin had poisoned him.

This fresh impertinence reached the ears of the cardinal and alarmed him greatly. The donjon of Vincennes was considered very unhealthy and Madame de Rambouillet had said that the room in which the Marechal Ornano and the Grand Prior de Vendome had died was worth its weight in arsenic—a bon mot which had great success. So it was ordered the prisoner was henceforth to eat nothing that had not previously been tasted, and La Ramee was in consequence placed near him as taster.

Every kind of revenge was practiced upon the duke by the governor in return for the insults of the innocent Pistache. De Chavigny, who, according to report, was a son of Richelieu’s, and had been a creature of the late cardinal’s, understood tyranny. He took from the duke all the steel knives and silver forks and replaced them with silver knives and wooden forks, pretending that as he had been informed that the duke was to pass all his life at Vincennes, he was afraid of his prisoner attempting suicide. A fortnight afterward the duke, going to the tennis court, found two rows of trees about the size of his little finger planted by the roadside; he asked what they were for and was told that they were to shade him from the sun on some future day. One morning the gardener went to him and told him, as if to please him, that he was going to plant a bed of asparagus for his especial use. Now, since, as every one knows, asparagus takes four years in coming to perfection, this civility infuriated Monsieur de Beaufort.

At last his patience was exhausted. He assembled his keepers, and notwithstanding his well-known difficulty of utterance, addressed them as follows:

“Gentlemen! will you permit a grandson of Henry IV. to be overwhelmed with insults and ignominy?”

“Odds fish! as my grandfather used to say, I once reigned in Paris! do you know that? I had the king and Monsieur the whole of one day in my care. The queen at that time liked me and called me the most honest man in the kingdom. Gentlemen and citizens, set me free; I shall go to the Louvre

and strangle Mazarin. You shall be my body-guard. I will make you all captains, with good pensions! Odds fish! On! march forward!”

But eloquent as he might be, the eloquence of the grandson of Henry IV. did not touch those hearts of stone; not one man stirred, so Monsieur de Beaufort was obliged to be satisfied with calling them all kinds of rascals underneath the sun.

Sometimes, when Monsieur de Chavigny paid him a visit, the duke used to ask him what he should think if he saw an army of Parisians, all fully armed, appear at Vincennes to deliver him from prison.

“My lord,” answered De Chavigny, with a low bow, “I have on the ramparts twenty pieces of artillery and in my casemates thirty thousand guns. I should bombard the troops till not one grain of gunpowder was unexploded.”

“Yes, but after you had fired off your thirty thousand guns they would take the donjon; the donjon being taken, I should be obliged to let them hang you-at which I should be most unhappy, certainly.”

And in his turn the duke bowed low to Monsieur de Chavigny.

“For myself, on the other hand, my lord,” returned the governor, “when the first rebel should pass the threshold of my postern doors I should be obliged to kill you with my own hand, since you were confided peculiarly to my care and as I am obliged to give you up, dead or alive.”

And once more he bowed low before his highness.

These bitter-sweet pleasantries lasted ten minutes, sometimes longer, but always finished thus: Monsieur de Chavigny, turning toward the door, used to call out: “Halloo! La Ramee!”

La Ramee came into the room.

“La Ramee, I recommend Monsieur le Duc to you, particularly; treat him as a man of his rank and family ought to be treated; that is, never leave him alone an instant.”

La Ramee became, therefore, the duke’s dinner guest by compulsion-an eternal keeper, the shadow of his person; but La Ramee-gay, frank, convivial, fond of play, a great hand at tennis, had one defect in the duke’s eyes-his incorruptibility.

Now, although La Ramee appreciated, as of a certain value, the honor of being shut up with a prisoner of so great importance, still the pleasure of living in intimacy with the grandson of Henry IV. hardly compensated for the loss of that which he had experienced in going from time to time to visit his family.

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

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

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

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

## 18. Grimaud begins his Functions

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

“Here’s a promising fellow and it is I who have found out his merits,” said Monsieur de Chavigny. “Go,” he added, “and make yourself agreeable to Monsieur la Ramee, and tell him that you suit me in all respects.”

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

“My orders?” asked Grimaud.

“They are these; never to leave the prisoner alone; to keep away from him every pointed or cutting instrument, and to prevent his conversing any length of time with the keepers.”

“Those are all?” asked Grimaud.

“All now,” replied La Ramee.

“Good,” answered Grimaud; and he went right to the prisoner.

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

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

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

“Ho! hey! what’s that?” cried the duke. “Who is this creature?”

Grimaud did not answer, but bowed a second time.

“Art thou dumb?” cried the duke.

Grimaud made a sign that he was not.

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

“A keeper,” replied Grimaud.

“A keeper!” reiterated the duke; “there was nothing wanting in my collection, except this gallows-bird. Halloo! La Ramee! some one!”

La Ramee ran in haste to obey the call.

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

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

“Why does he take my comb?”

“Why do you take my lord’s comb?” asked La Ramee.

Grimaud drew the comb from his pocket and passing his fingers over the largest teeth, pronounced this one word, “Pointed.”

“True,” said La Ramee.

“What does the animal say?” asked the duke.

“That the king has forbidden your lordship to have any pointed instrument.”

“Are you mad, La Ramee? You yourself gave me this comb.”

“I was very wrong, my lord, for in giving it to you I acted in opposition to my orders.”

The duke looked furiously at Grimaud.

“I perceive that this creature will be my particular aversion,” he muttered.

Grimaud, nevertheless, was resolved for certain reasons not at once to come to a full rupture with the prisoner; he wanted to inspire, not a sudden repugnance, but a good, sound, steady hatred; he retired, therefore, and gave place to four guards, who, having breakfasted, could attend on the prisoner.

A fresh practical joke now occurred to the duke. He had asked for crawfish for his breakfast on the following morning; he intended to pass the day in making a small gallows and hang one of the finest of these fish in the middle of his room—the red color evidently conveying an allusion to the cardinal—so that he might have the pleasure of hanging Mazarin in effigy without being accused of having hung anything more significant than a crawfish.

The day was employed in preparations for the execution. Every one grows childish in prison, but the character of Monsieur de Beaufort was particularly disposed to become so. In the course of his morning’s walk he collected two or three small branches from a tree and found a small piece of broken glass, a discovery that quite delighted him. When he came home he formed his handkerchief into a loop.

Nothing of all this escaped Grimaud, but La Ramee looked on with the curiosity of a father who thinks that he may perhaps get a cheap idea concerning a new toy for his children. The guards looked on it with indifference. When everything was ready, the gallows hung in the middle of the room, the loop made, and when the duke had cast a glance upon the plate of crawfish, in order to select the finest specimen among them, he looked around for his piece of glass; it had disappeared.

“Who has taken my piece of glass?” asked the duke, frowning. Grimaud made a sign to denote that he had done so.

“What! thou again! Why didst thou take it?”

“Yes—why?” asked La Ramee.

Grimaud, who held the piece of glass in his hand, said: “Sharp.”

“True, my lord!” exclaimed La Ramee. “Ah! deuce take it! we have a precious fellow here!”

“Monsieur Grimaud!” said the duke, “for your sake I beg of you, never come within the reach of my fist!”

“Hush! hush!” cried La Ramee, “give me your gibbet, my lord. I will shape it out for you with my knife.”

And he took the gibbet and shaped it out as neatly as possible.

“That’s it,” said the duke, “now make me a little hole in the floor whilst I go and fetch the culprit.”

La Ramee knelt down and made a hole in the floor; meanwhile the duke hung the crawfish up by a thread. Then he placed the gibbet in the middle of the room, bursting with laughter.

La Ramee laughed also and the guards laughed in chorus; Grimaud, however, did not even smile. He approached La Ramee and showing him the crawfish hung up by the thread:

“Cardinal,” he said.

“Hung by order of his Highness the Duc de Beaufort!” cried the prisoner, laughing violently, “and by Master Jacques Chrysostom La Ramee, the king’s commissioner.”

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

“Good to eat!” he said, and put it in his pocket.

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

But the story of the crab made a great noise through the interior of the donjon and even outside. Monsieur de Chavigny, who at heart detested the cardinal, took pains to tell the story to two or three friends, who put it into immediate circulation.

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

“Go away,” he said.

The guard obeyed.

“You are insupportable!” cried the duke; “I shall beat you.”

Grimaud bowed.

“I will break every bone in your body!” cried the duke.

Grimaud bowed, but stepped back.

“Mr. Spy,” cried the duke, more and more enraged, “I will strangle you with my own hands.”

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

“Hush!” smiling as he uttered the word.

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

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

The duke, more and more bewildered, let Grimaud loose and took the note.

“From Madame de Montbazon?” he cried.

Grimaud nodded assent.

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

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

“Yours wholly and most affectionately

“Marie de Montbazon.

“P.S. – I sign my full name, for I should be vain if I could suppose that after five years of absence you would remember my initials.”

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

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

“And thou, my brave fellow, thou consentest thus to aid me?”

Grimaud signified his assent.

“And you have come here with that purpose?”

Grimaud repeated the sign.

“And I was ready to strangle you!” cried the duke.

Grimaud smiled.

“Wait, then,” said the duke, fumbling in his pocket. “Wait,” he continued, renewing his fruitless search; “it shall not be said that such devotion to a grandson of Henry IV. went without recompense.”

The duke’s endeavors evinced the best intention in the world, but one of the precautions taken at Vincennes was that of allowing prisoners to keep no money. Whereupon Grimaud, observing the duke’s disappointment, drew from his pocket a purse filled with gold and handed it to him.

“Here is what you are looking for,” he said.

The duke opened the purse and wanted to empty it into Grimaud’s hands, but Grimaud shook his head.

“Thank you, monseigneur,” he said, drawing back; “I am paid.”

The duke went from one surprise to another. He held out his hand. Grimaud drew near and kissed it respectfully. The grand manner of Athos had left its mark on Grimaud.

“What shall we do? and when? and how proceed?”

“It is now eleven,” answered Grimaud. “Let my lord at two o’clock ask leave to make up a game at tennis with La Ramee and let him send two or three balls over the ramparts.”

“And then?”

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

“I understand,” said the duke.

Grimaud made a sign that he was going away.

“Ah!” cried the duke, “will you not accept any money from me?”

“I wish my lord would make me one promise.”

“What! speak!”

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

“True, on my honor as a gentleman it shall be as thou dost suggest.”

“Now,” resumed Grimaud, “I’ve only one thing more to ask—that your highness will continue to detest me.”

“I’ll try,” said the duke.

At this moment La Ramee, after the interview we have described with the cardinal, entered the room. The duke had thrown himself, as he was wont to do in moments of dullness and vexation, on his bed. La Ramee cast an inquiring look around him and observing the same signs of antipathy between the prisoner and his guardian he smiled in token of his inward satisfaction. Then turning to Grimaud:

“Very good, my friend, very good. You have been spoken of in a promising quarter and you will soon, I hope, have news that will be agreeable to you.”

Grimaud saluted in his politest manner and withdrew, as was his custom on the entrance of his superior.

“Well, my lord,” said La Ramee, with his rude laugh, “you still set yourself against this poor fellow?”

“So! ’tis you, La Ramee; in faith, ’tis time you came back again. I threw myself on the bed and turned my nose to the wall, that I mightn’t break my promise and strangle Grimaud.”

“I doubt, however,” said La Ramee, in sprightly allusion to the silence of his subordinate, “if he has said anything disagreeable to your highness.”

“Pardieu! you are right—a mute from the East! I swear it was time for you to come back, La Ramee, and I was eager to see you again.”

“Monseigneur is too good,” said La Ramee, flattered by the compliment.

“Yes,” continued the duke, “really, I feel bored today beyond the power of description.”

“Then let us have a match in the tennis court,” exclaimed La Ramee.

“If you wish it.”

“I am at your service, my lord.”

“I protest, my dear La Ramee,” said the duke, “that you are a charming fellow and that I would stay forever at Vincennes to have the pleasure of your society.”

“My lord,” replied La Ramee, “I think if it depended on the cardinal your wishes would be fulfilled.”

“What do you mean? Have you seen him lately?”

“He sent for me to-day.”

“Really! to speak to you about me?”

“Of what else do you imagine he would speak to me? Really, my lord, you are his nightmare.”

The duke smiled with bitterness.

“Ah, La Ramee! if you would but accept my offers! I would make your fortune.”

“How? you would no sooner have left prison than your goods would be confiscated.”

“I shall no sooner be out of prison than I shall be master of Paris.”

“Pshaw! pshaw! I cannot hear such things said as that; this is a fine conversation with an officer of the king! I see, my lord, I shall be obliged to fetch a second Grimaud!”

“Very well, let us say no more about it. So you and the cardinal have been talking about me? La Ramee, some day when he sends for you, you must let me put on your clothes; I will go in your stead; I will strangle him, and upon my honor, if that is made a condition I will return to prison.”

“Monseigneur, I see well that I must call Grimaud.”

“Well, I am wrong. And what did the cuistre [pettifogger] say about me?”

“I admit the word, monseigneur, because it rhymes with ministre [minister]. What did he say to me? He told me to watch you.”

“And why so? why watch me?” asked the duke uneasily.

“Because an astrologer had predicted that you would escape.”

“Ah! an astrologer predicted that?” said the duke, starting in spite of himself.

“Oh, mon Dieu! yes! those imbeciles of magicians can only imagine things to torment honest people.”

“And what did you reply to his most illustrious eminence?”

“That if the astrologer in question made almanacs I would advise him not to buy one.”

“Why not?”

“Because before you could escape you would have to be turned into a bird.”

“Unfortunately, that is true. Let us go and have a game at tennis, La Ramee.”

“My lord-I beg your highness’s pardon-but I must beg for half an hour’s leave of absence.”

“Why?”

“Because Monseigneur Mazarin is a prouder man than his highness, though not of such high birth: he forgot to ask me to breakfast.”

“Well, shall I send for some breakfast here?”

“No, my lord; I must tell you that the confectioner who lived opposite the castle-Daddy Marteau, as they called him-”

“Well?”

“Well, he sold his business a week ago to a confectioner from Paris, an invalid, ordered country air for his health.”

“Well, what have I to do with that?”

“Why, good Lord! this man, your highness, when he saw me stop before his shop, where he has a display of things which would make your mouth water, my lord, asked me to get him the custom of the prisoners in the donjon. ‘I bought,’ said he, ‘the business of my predecessor on the strength of his assurance that he supplied the castle; whereas, on my honor, Monsieur de Chavigny, though I’ve been here a week, has not ordered so much as a tartlet.’ ‘But,’ I then replied, ‘probably Monsieur de Chavigny is afraid your pastry is not good.’ ‘My pastry not good! Well, Monsieur La Ramee, you

shall judge of it yourself and at once.' 'I cannot,' I replied; 'it is absolutely necessary for me to return to the chateau.' 'Very well,' said he, 'go and attend to your affairs, since you seem to be in a hurry, but come back in half an hour.' 'In half an hour?' 'Yes, have you breakfasted?' 'Faith, no.' 'Well, here is a pate that will be ready for you, with a bottle of old Burgundy.' So, you see, my lord, since I am hungry, I would, with your highness's leave—" And La Ramee bent low.

"Go, then, animal," said the duke; "but remember, I only allow you half an hour."

"May I promise your custom to the successor of Father Marteau, my lord?"

"Yes, if he does not put mushrooms in his pies; thou knowest that mushrooms from the wood of Vincennes are fatal to my family."

La Ramee went out, but in five minutes one of the officers of the guard entered in compliance with the strict orders of the cardinal that the prisoner should never be left alone a moment.

But during these five minutes the duke had had time to read again the note from Madame de Montbazon, which proved to the prisoner that his friends were concerting plans for his deliverance, but in what way he knew not.

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

## 19. Pates made by the Successor of Father Marteau are described

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

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

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

"Hey, friend!" cried the duke.

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

"Well? Who's up there?" said the man.

"Be so good as to collect and throw us back our balls," said the duke.

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

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

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

My Lord, – Your friends are watching over you and the hour of your deliverance is at hand. Ask day after to-morrow to have a pie supplied you by the new confectioner opposite the castle, and who is no other than Noirmont, your former maitre d'hotel. Do not open the pie till you are alone. I hope you will be satisfied with its contents.

"Your highness's most devoted servant,

"In the Bastille, as elsewhere,

"Comte de Rochefort."

The duke, who had latterly been allowed a fire, burned the letter, but kept the ball, and went to bed, hiding the ball under his bolster. La Ramee entered; he smiled kindly on the prisoner, for he was an excellent man and had taken a great liking for the captive prince. He endeavored to cheer him up in his solitude.

"Ah, my friend!" cried the duke, "you are so good; if I could but do as you do, and eat pates and drink Burgundy at the house of Father Marteau's successor."

"'Tis true, my lord," answered La Ramee, "that his pates are famous and his wine magnificent."

"In any case," said the duke, "his cellar and kitchen might easily excel those of Monsieur de Chavigny."

"Well, my lord," said La Ramee, falling into the trap, "what is there to prevent your trying them? Besides, I have promised him your patronage."

"You are right," said the duke. "If I am to remain here permanently, as Monsieur Mazarin has kindly given me to understand, I must provide myself with a diversion for my old age, I must turn gourmand."

“My lord,” said La Ramee, “if you will take a bit of good advice, don’t put that off till you are old.”

“Good!” said the Duc de Beaufort to himself, “every man in order that he may lose his heart and soul, must receive from celestial bounty one of the seven capital sins, perhaps two; it seems that Master La Ramee’s is gluttony. Let us then take advantage of it.” Then, aloud:

“Well, my dear La Ramee! the day after to-morrow is a holiday.”

“Yes, my lord-Pentecost.”

“Will you give me a lesson the day after to-morrow?”

“In what?”

“In gastronomy?”

“Willingly, my lord.”

“But tete-a-tete. Send the guards to take their meal in the canteen of Monsieur de Chavigny; we’ll have a supper here under your direction.”

“Hum!” said La Ramee.

The proposal was seductive, but La Ramee was an old stager, acquainted with all the traps a prisoner was likely to set. Monsieur de Beaufort had said that he had forty ways of getting out of prison. Did this proposed breakfast cover some stratagem? He reflected, but he remembered that he himself would have charge of the food and the wine and therefore that no powder could be mixed with the food, no drug with the wine. As to getting him drunk, the duke couldn’t hope to do that, and he laughed at the mere thought of it. Then an idea came to him which harmonized everything.

The duke had followed with anxiety La Ramee’s unspoken soliloquy, reading it from point to point upon his face. But presently the exempt’s face suddenly brightened.

“Well,” he asked, “that will do, will it not?”

“Yes, my lord, on one condition.”

“What?”

“That Grimaud shall wait on us at table.”

Nothing could be more agreeable to the duke, however, he had presence of mind enough to exclaim:

“To the devil with your Grimaud! He will spoil the feast.”

“I will direct him to stand behind your chair, and since he doesn’t speak, your highness will neither see nor hear him and with a little effort can imagine him a hundred miles away.”

“Do you know, my friend, I find one thing very evident in all this, you distrust me.”

“My lord, the day after to-morrow is Pentecost.”

“Well, what is Pentecost to me? Are you afraid that the Holy Spirit will come as a tongue of fire to open the doors of my prison?”

“No, my lord; but I have already told you what that damned magician predicted.”

“And what was it?”

“That the day of Pentecost would not pass without your highness being out of Vincennes.”

“You believe in sorcerers, then, you fool?”

“I-I mind them no more than that-” and he snapped his fingers; “but it is my Lord Giulio who cares about them; as an Italian he is superstitious.”

The duke shrugged his shoulders.

“Well, then,” with well acted good-humor, “I allow Grimaud, but no one else; you must manage it all. Order whatever you like for supper-the only thing I specify is one of those pies; and tell the confectioner that I will promise him my custom if he excels this time in his pies-not only now, but when I leave my prison.”

“Then you think you will some day leave it?” said La Ramee.

“The devil!” replied the prince; “surely, at the death of Mazarin. I am fifteen years younger than he is. At Vincennes, ‘tis true, one lives faster-”

“My lord,” replied La Ramee, “my lord-”

“Or dies sooner, for it comes to the same thing.”

La Ramee was going out. He stopped, however, at the door for an instant.

“Whom does your highness wish me to send to you?”

“Any one, except Grimaud.”

“The officer of the guard, then, with his chessboard?”

“Yes.”

Five minutes afterward the officer entered and the duke seemed to be immersed in the sublime combinations of chess.

A strange thing is the mind, and it is wonderful what revolutions may be wrought in it by a sign, a word, a hope. The duke had been five years in prison, and now to him, looking back upon them, those five years, which had passed so slowly, seemed not so long a time as were the two days, the forty-eight hours, which still parted him from the time fixed for his escape. Besides, there was one thing that engaged his most anxious thought-in what way was the escape to be effected? They had told him to hope for it, but had not told him what was to be hidden in the mysterious pate. And what friends awaited him without? He had friends, then, after five years in prison? If that were so he was indeed a highly favored prince. He forgot that besides his friends of his own sex, a woman, strange to say, had remembered him. It is true that she had not, perhaps, been scrupulously faithful to him, but she had remembered him; that was something.

So the duke had more than enough to think about; accordingly he fared at chess as he had fared at tennis; he made blunder upon blunder and the officer with whom he played found him easy game.

But his successive defeats did service to the duke in one way-they killed time for him till eight o'clock in the evening; then would come night, and with night, sleep. So, at least, the duke believed; but sleep is a capricious fairy, and it is precisely when one invokes her presence that she is most likely to keep him waiting. The duke waited until midnight, turning on his mattress like St. Laurence on his gridiron. Finally he slept.

But at daybreak he awoke. Wild dreams had disturbed his repose. He dreamed that he was endowed with wings-he wished to fly away. For a time these wings supported him, but when he reached a certain height this new aid failed him. His wings were broken and he seemed to sink into a bottomless abyss, whence he awoke, bathed in perspiration and nearly as much overcome as if he had really fallen. He fell asleep again and another vision appeared. He was in a subterranean passage by which he was to leave Vincennes. Grimaud was walking before him with a lantern. By degrees the passage narrowed, yet the duke continued his course. At last it became so narrow that the fugitive tried in vain to proceed. The sides of the walls seem to close in, even to press against him. He made fruitless efforts to go on; it was impossible. Nevertheless, he still saw Grimaud with his lantern in front, advancing. He wished to call out to him but could not utter a word. Then at the other extremity he heard the footsteps of those who were pursuing him. These steps came on, came fast. He was discovered; all hope of flight was gone. Still the walls seemed to be closing on him; they appeared to be in concert with his enemies. At last he heard the voice of La Ramee. La Ramee took his hand and laughed aloud. He was captured again, and conducted to the low and vaulted chamber, in which Ornano, Puylaurens, and his uncle had died. Their three graves were there, rising above the ground, and a fourth was also there, yawning for its ghastly tenant.

The duke was obliged to make as many efforts to awake as he had done to go to sleep; and La Ramee found him so pale and fatigued that he inquired whether he was ill.

“In fact,” said one of the guards who had remained in the chamber and had been kept awake by a toothache, brought on by the dampness of the atmosphere, “my lord has had a very restless night and two or three times, while dreaming, he called for help.”

“What is the matter with your highness?” asked La Ramee.

“Tis your fault, you simpleton,” answered the duke. “With your idle nonsense yesterday about escaping, you worried me so that I dreamed that I was trying to escape and broke my neck in doing so.”

La Ramee laughed.

“Come,” he said, “tis a warning from Heaven. Never commit such an imprudence as to try to escape, except in your dreams.”

“And you are right, my dear La Ramee,” said the duke, wiping away the sweat that stood on his brow, wide awake though he was; “after this I will think of nothing but eating and drinking.”

“Hush!” said La Ramee; and one by one he sent away the guards, on various pretexts.

“Well?” asked the duke when they were alone.

“Well!” replied La Ramee, “your supper is ordered.”

“Ah! and what is it to be? Monsieur, my majordomo, will there be a pie?”

“I should think so, indeed-almost as high as a tower.”

“You told him it was for me?”

“Yes, and he said he would do his best to please your highness.”

“Good!” exclaimed the duke, rubbing his hands.

“Devil take it, my lord! what a gourmand you are growing; I haven’t seen you with so cheerful a face these five years.”

The duke saw that he had not controlled himself as he ought, but at that moment, as if he had listened at the door and comprehended the urgent need of diverting La Ramee’s ideas, Grimaud entered and made a sign to La Ramee that he had something to say to him.

La Ramee drew near to Grimaud, who spoke to him in a low voice.

The duke meanwhile recovered his self-control.

“I have already forbidden that man,” he said, “to come in here without my permission.”

“You must pardon him, my lord,” said La Ramee, “for I directed him to come.”

“And why did you so direct when you know that he displeases me?”

“My lord will remember that it was agreed between us that he should wait upon us at that famous supper. My lord has forgotten the supper.”

“No, but I have forgotten Monsieur Grimaud.”

“My lord understands that there can be no supper unless he is allowed to be present.”

“Go on, then; have it your own way.”

“Come here, my lad,” said La Ramee, “and hear what I have to say.”

Grimaud approached, with a very sullen expression on his face.

La Ramee continued: “My lord has done me the honor to invite me to a supper to-morrow en tete-a-tete.”

Grimaud made a sign which meant that he didn’t see what that had to do with him.

“Yes, yes,” said La Ramee, “the matter concerns you, for you will have the honor to serve us; and besides, however good an appetite we may have and however great our thirst, there will be something left on the plates and in the bottles, and that something will be yours.”

Grimaud bowed in thanks.

“And now,” said La Ramee, “I must ask your highness’s pardon, but it seems that Monsieur de Chavigny is to be away for a few days and he has sent me word that he has certain directions to give me before his departure.”

The duke tried to exchange a glance with Grimaud, but there was no glance in Grimaud’s eyes.

“Go, then,” said the duke, “and return as soon as possible.”

“Does your highness wish to take revenge for the game of tennis yesterday?”

Grimaud intimated by a scarcely perceptible nod that he should consent.

“Yes,” said the duke, “but take care, my dear La Ramee, for I propose to beat you badly.”

La Ramee went out. Grimaud looked after him, and when the door was closed he drew out of his pocket a pencil and a sheet of paper.

“Write, my lord,” he said.

“And what?”

Grimaud dictated.

“All is ready for to-morrow evening. Keep watch from seven to nine. Have two riding horses ready. We shall descend by the first window in the gallery.”

“What next?”

“Sign your name, my lord.”

The duke signed.

“Now, my lord, give me, if you have not lost it, the ball-that which contained the letter.”

The duke took it from under his pillow and gave it to Grimaud. Grimaud gave a grim smile.

“Well?” asked the duke.

“Well, my lord, I sew up the paper in the ball and you, in your game of tennis, will send the ball into the ditch.”

“But will it not be lost?”

“Oh no; there will be some one at hand to pick it up.”

“A gardener?”

Grimaud nodded.

“The same as yesterday?”

Another nod on the part of Grimaud.

“The Count de Rochefort?”

Grimaud nodded the third time.

“Come, now,” said the duke, “give some particulars of the plan for our escape.”

“That is forbidden me,” said Grimaud, “until the last moment.”

“Who will be waiting for me beyond the ditch?”

“I know nothing about it, my lord.”

“But at least, if you don’t want to see me turn crazy, tell what that famous pate will contain.”

“Two poniards, a knotted rope and a poire d’angoisse.”<sup>5</sup>

“Yes, I understand.”

“My lord observes that there will be enough to go around.”

“We shall take to ourselves the poniards and the rope,” replied the duke.

“And make La Ramee eat the pear,” answered Grimaud.

“My dear Grimaud, thou speakest seldom, but when thou dost, one must do thee justice-thy words are words of gold.”

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<sup>5</sup> This poire d’angoisse was a famous gag, in the form of a pear, which, being thrust into the mouth, by the aid of a spring, dilated, so as to distend the jaws to their greatest width.

## 20. One of Marie Michon's Adventures

Whilst these projects were being formed by the Duc de Beaufort and Grimaud, the Comte de la Fere and the Vicomte de Bragelonne were entering Paris by the Rue du Faubourg Saint Marcel.

They stopped at the sign of the Fox, in the Rue du Vieux Colombier, a tavern known for many years by Athos, and asked for two bedrooms.

"You must dress yourself, Raoul," said Athos, "I am going to present you to some one."

"To-day, monsieur?" asked the young man.

"In half an hour."

The young man bowed. Perhaps, not being endowed with the endurance of Athos, who seemed to be made of iron, he would have preferred a bath in the river Seine of which he had heard so much, and afterward his bed; but the Comte de la Fere had spoken and he had no thought but to obey.

"By the way," said Athos, "take some pains with your toilet, Raoul; I want you to be approved."

"I hope, sir," replied the youth, smiling, "that there's no idea of a marriage for me; you know of my engagement to Louise?"

Athos, in his turn, smiled also.

"No, don't be alarmed, although it is to a lady that I am going to present you, and I am anxious that you should love her—"

The young man looked at the count with a certain uneasiness, but at a smile from Athos he was quickly reassured.

"How old is she?" inquired the Vicomte de Bragelonne.

"My dear Raoul, learn, once for all, that that is a question which is never asked. When you can find out a woman's age by her face, it is useless to ask it; when you cannot do so, it is indiscreet."

"Is she beautiful?"

"Sixteen years ago she was deemed not only the prettiest, but the most graceful woman in France."

This reply reassured the vicomte. A woman who had been a reigning beauty a year before he was born could not be the subject of any scheme for him. He retired to his toilet. When he reappeared, Athos received him with the same paternal smile as that which he had often bestowed on D'Artagnan, but a more profound tenderness for Raoul was now visibly impressed upon his face.

Athos cast a glance at his feet, hands and hair—those three marks of race. The youth's dark hair was neatly parted and hung in curls, forming a sort of dark frame around his face; such was the fashion of the day. Gloves of gray kid, matching the hat, well displayed the form of a slender and elegant hand; whilst his boots, similar in color to the hat and gloves, confined feet small as those of a boy twelve years old.

"Come," murmured Athos, "if she is not proud of him, she must be hard to please."

It was three o'clock in the afternoon. The two travelers proceeded to the Rue Saint Dominique and stopped at the door of a magnificent hotel, surmounted with the arms of De Luynes.

"'Tis here," said Athos.

He entered the hotel and ascended the front steps, and addressing a footman who waited there in a grand livery, asked if the Duchess de Chevreuse was visible and if she could receive the Comte de la Fere?

The servant returned with a message to say, that, though the duchess had not the honor of knowing Monsieur de la Fere, she would receive him.

Athos followed the footman, who led him through a long succession of apartments and paused at length before a closed door. Athos made a sign to the Vicomte de Bragelonne to remain where he was.

The footman opened the door and announced Monsieur le Comte de la Fere.

Madame de Chevreuse, whose name appears so often in our story “The Three Musketeers,” without her actually having appeared in any scene, was still a beautiful woman. Although about forty-four or forty-five years old, she might have passed for thirty-five. She still had her rich fair hair; her large, animated, intelligent eyes, so often opened by intrigue, so often closed by the blindness of love. She had still her nymph-like form, so that when her back was turned she still was not unlike the girl who had jumped, with Anne of Austria, over the moat of the Tuileries in 1563. In all other respects she was the same mad creature who threw over her amours such an air of originality as to make them proverbial for eccentricity in her family.

She was in a little boudoir, hung with blue damask, adorned by red flowers, with a foliage of gold, looking upon a garden; and reclined upon a sofa, her head supported on the rich tapestry which covered it. She held a book in her hand and her arm was supported by a cushion.

At the footman’s announcement she raised herself a little and peeped out, with some curiosity.

Athos appeared.

He was dressed in violet-tinted velvet, trimmed with silk of the same color. His shoulder-knots were of burnished silver, his mantle had no gold nor embroidery on it; a simple plume of violet feathers adorned his hat; his boots were of black leather, and at his girdle hung that sword with a magnificent hilt that Porthos had so often admired in the Rue Feron. Splendid lace adorned the falling collar of his shirt, and lace fell also over the top of his boots.

In his whole person he bore such an impress of high degree, that Madame de Chevreuse half rose from her seat when she saw him and made him a sign to sit down near her.

Athos bowed and obeyed. The footman was withdrawing, but Athos stopped him by a sign.

“Madame,” he said to the duchess, “I have had the boldness to present myself at your hotel without being known to you; it has succeeded, since you deign to receive me. I have now the boldness to ask you for an interview of half an hour.”

“I grant it, monsieur,” replied Madame de Chevreuse with her most gracious smile.

“But that is not all, madame. Oh, I am very presuming, I am aware. The interview for which I ask is of us two alone, and I very earnestly wish that it may not be interrupted.”

“I am not at home to any one,” said the Duchess de Chevreuse to the footman. “You may go.”

The footman went out.

There ensued a brief silence, during which these two persons, who at first sight recognized each other so clearly as of noble race, examined each other without embarrassment on either side.

The duchess was the first to speak.

“Well, sir, I am waiting with impatience to hear what you wish to say to me.”

“And I, madame,” replied Athos, “am looking with admiration.”

“Sir,” said Madame de Chevreuse, “you must excuse me, but I long to know to whom I am talking. You belong to the court, doubtless, yet I have never seen you at court. Have you, by any chance, been in the Bastile?”

“No, madame, I have not; but very likely I am on the road to it.”

“Ah! then tell me who you are, and get along with you upon your journey,” replied the duchess, with the gayety which made her so charming, “for I am sufficiently in bad odor already, without compromising myself still more.”

“Who I am, madame? My name has been mentioned to you—the Comte de la Fere; you do not know that name. I once bore another, which you knew, but you have certainly forgotten it.”

“Tell it me, sir.”

“Formerly,” said the count, “I was Athos.”

Madame de Chevreuse looked astonished. The name was not wholly forgotten, but mixed up and confused with ancient recollections.

“Athos?” said she; “wait a moment.”

And she placed her hands on her brow, as if to force the fugitive ideas it contained to concentration in a moment.

“Shall I help you, madame?” asked Athos.

“Yes, do,” said the duchess.

“This Athos was connected with three young musketeers, named Porthos, D’Artagnan, and-”  
He stopped short.

“And Aramis,” said the duchess, quickly.

“And Aramis; I see you have not forgotten the name.”

“No,” she said; “poor Aramis; a charming man, elegant, discreet, and a writer of poetical verses. I am afraid he has turned out ill,” she added.

“He has; he is an abbe.”

“Ah, what a misfortune!” exclaimed the duchess, playing carelessly with her fan. “Indeed, sir, I thank you; you have recalled one of the most agreeable recollections of my youth.”

“Will you permit me, then, to recall another to you?”

“Relating to him?”

“Yes and no.”

“Faith!” said Madame de Chevreuse, “say on. With a man like you I fear nothing.”

Athos bowed. “Aramis,” he continued, “was intimate with a young needlewoman from Tours, a cousin of his, named Marie Michon.”

“Ah, I knew her!” cried the duchess. “It was to her he wrote from the siege of Rochelle, to warn her of a plot against the Duke of Buckingham.”

“Exactly so; will you allow me to speak to you of her?”

“If,” replied the duchess, with a meaning look, “you do not say too much against her.”

“I should be ungrateful,” said Athos, “and I regard ingratitude, not as a fault or a crime, but as a vice, which is much worse.”

“You ungrateful to Marie Michon, monsieur?” said Madame de Chevreuse, trying to read in Athos’s eyes. “But how can that be? You never knew her.”

“Eh, madame, who knows?” said Athos. “There is a popular proverb to the effect that it is only mountains that never meet; and popular proverbs contain sometimes a wonderful amount of truth.”

“Oh, go on, monsieur, go on!” said Madame de Chevreuse eagerly; “you can’t imagine how much this conversation interests me.”

“You encourage me,” said Athos, “I will continue, then. That cousin of Aramis, that Marie Michon, that needlewoman, notwithstanding her low condition, had acquaintances in the highest rank; she called the grandest ladies of the court her friend, and the queen-proud as she is, in her double character as Austrian and as Spaniard-called her her sister.”

“Alas!” said Madame de Chevreuse, with a slight sigh and a little movement of her eyebrows that was peculiarly her own, “since that time everything has changed.”

“And the queen had reason for her affection, for Marie was devoted to her-devoted to that degree that she served her as medium of intercourse with her brother, the king of Spain.”

“Which,” interrupted the duchess, “is now brought up against her as a great crime.”

“And therefore,” continued Athos, “the cardinal-the true cardinal, the other one-determined one fine morning to arrest poor Marie Michon and send her to the Chateau de Loches. Fortunately the affair was not managed so secretly but that it became known to the queen. The case had been provided for: if Marie Michon should be threatened with any danger the queen was to send her a prayer-book bound in green velvet.”

“That is true, monsieur, you are well informed.”

“One morning the green book was brought to her by the Prince de Marsillac. There was no time to lose. Happily Marie and a follower of hers named Kitty could disguise themselves admirably in men’s clothes. The prince procured for Marie Michon the dress of a cavalier and for Kitty that of

a lackey; he sent them two excellent horses, and the fugitives went out hastily from Tours, shaping their course toward Spain, trembling at the least noise, following unfrequented roads, and asking for hospitality when they found themselves where there was no inn.”

“Why, really, it was all exactly as you say!” cried Madame de Chevreuse, clapping her hands. “It would indeed be strange if-” she checked herself.

“If I should follow the two fugitives to the end of their journey?” said Athos. “No, madame, I will not thus waste your time. We will accompany them only to a little village in Limousin, lying between Tulle and Angouleme-a little village called Roche-l’Abeille.”

Madame de Chevreuse uttered a cry of surprise, and looked at Athos with an expression of astonishment that made the old musketeer smile.

“Wait, madame,” continued Athos, “what remains for me to tell you is even more strange than what I have narrated.”

“Monsieur,” said Madame de Chevreuse, “I believe you are a sorcerer; I am prepared for anything. But really-No matter, go on.”

“The journey of that day had been long and wearing; it was a cold day, the eleventh of October, there was no inn or chateau in the village and the homes of the peasants were poor and unattractive. Marie Michon was a very aristocratic person; like her sister the queen, she had been accustomed to pleasing perfumes and fine linen; she resolved, therefore, to seek hospitality of the priest.”

Athos paused.

“Oh, continue!” said the duchess. “I have told you that I am prepared for anything.”

“The two travelers knocked at the door. It was late; the priest, who had gone to bed, cried out to them to come in. They entered, for the door was not locked-there is much confidence among villagers. A lamp burned in the chamber occupied by the priest. Marie Michon, who made the most charming cavalier in the world, pushed open the door, put her head in and asked for hospitality. ‘Willingly, my young cavalier,’ said the priest, ‘if you will be content with the remains of my supper and with half my chamber.’

“The two travelers consulted for a moment. The priest heard a burst of laughter and then the master, or rather, the mistress, replied: ‘Thank you, monsieur le cure, I accept.’ ‘Sup, then, and make as little noise as possible,’ said the priest, ‘for I, too, have been on the go all day and shall not be sorry to sleep to-night.’”

Madame de Chevreuse evidently went from surprise to astonishment, and from astonishment to stupefaction. Her face, as she looked at Athos, had taken on an expression that cannot be described. It could be seen that she had wished to speak, but she had remained silent through fear of losing one of her companion’s words.

“What happened then?” she asked.

“Then?” said Athos. “Ah, I have come now to what is most difficult.”

“Speak, speak! One can say anything to me. Besides, it doesn’t concern me; it relates to Mademoiselle Marie Michon.”

“Ah, that is true,” said Athos. “Well, then, Marie Michon had supper with her follower, and then, in accordance with the permission given her, she entered the chamber of her host, Kitty meanwhile taking possession of an armchair in the room first entered, where they had taken their supper.”

“Really, monsieur,” said Madame de Chevreuse, “unless you are the devil in person I don’t know how you could become acquainted with all these details.”

“A charming woman was that Marie Michon,” resumed Athos, “one of those wild creatures who are constantly conceiving the strangest ideas. Now, thinking that her host was a priest, that coquette took it into her head that it would be a happy souvenir for her old age, among the many happy souvenirs she already possessed, if she could win that of having damned an abbe.”

“Count,” said the duchess, “upon my word, you frighten me.”

“Alas!” continued Athos, “the poor abbe was not a St. Ambroise, and I repeat, Marie Michon was an adorable creature.”

“Monsieur!” cried the duchess, seizing Athos’s hands, “tell me this moment how you know all these details, or I will send to the convent of the Vieux Augustins for a monk to come and exorcise you.”

Athos laughed. “Nothing is easier, madame. A cavalier, charged with an important mission, had come an hour before your arrival, seeking hospitality, at the very moment that the cure, summoned to the bedside of a dying person, left not only his house but the village, for the entire night. The priest having all confidence in his guest, who, besides, was a nobleman, had left to him his house, his supper and his chamber. And therefore Marie came seeking hospitality from the guest of the good abbe and not from the good abbe himself.”

“And that cavalier, that guest, that nobleman who arrived before she came?”

“It was I, the Comte de la Fere,” said Athos, rising and bowing respectfully to the Duchess de Chevreuse.

The duchess remained a moment stupefied; then, suddenly bursting into laughter:

“Ah! upon my word,” said she, “it is very droll, and that mad Marie Michon fared better than she expected. Sit down, dear count, and go on with your story.”

“At this point I have to accuse myself of a fault, madame. I have told you that I was traveling on an important mission. At daybreak I left the chamber without noise, leaving my charming companion asleep. In the front room the follower was also still asleep, her head leaning back on the chair, in all respects worthy of her mistress. Her pretty face arrested my attention; I approached and recognized that little Kitty whom our friend Aramis had placed with her. In that way I discovered that the charming traveler was-”

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