bowing to Athos and D'Artagnan, he went off close by the door of the carriage, in the inside of which his eyes were incessantly riveted.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CASTLE OF BRAGELONE.

While 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, Monseigneur 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 be ceremonious because you are less attached to me than you were?"

"Oh! God forbid!"

"Then let me be as we used to be; let us be open to 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."

"Ah, I understand," cried Athos, with a slight 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, horses, servants." Athos smiled.

"Yes, I inherited this little property when I quitted the army, as I told you. The park is twenty acres—twelve, comprising kitchen-gardens and a common. I have two horses—I don't count my servant's short-tailed nag. My sporting dogs consist of two pointers, two harriers, and two setters. And then all this extravagance is not for myself," added Athos, laughing.

"Yes, I see, for the young man Raoul," said D'Artagnan.

"You guess right, 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 he 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 which could make me take root again, and bind me to life. This child has rectified me to
recovered 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. Pense is much, example is more. I may be mistaken, but I believe that Raoul will be accomplished gentleman as our degenerate age could display. "The resemblance of my body reappeared 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 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—"

"Remove! I finish your phrase—yes and no. I do not feel remorse, because that woman, I believe, deserved her punishment. 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 that is shed demands an 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 are now at a low ebb. He shed the blood of Strabolf—that confirms what I said just now—blood will have blood: and the queen?"

"Henrietta of England is at the Louvre."

"Yes, and I hear in the greatest poverty. Her daughter, during the bitterest cold, was obliged, for want of fire, to remain in bed. Why did she not ask from any one of us a home instead of from Mazarin? She should have wanted for nothing."

"Have you ever seen the Queen of England?" inquired D'Artagnan.

"No, but my mother, as a child, saw her. My mother was maid of honor to Marie de 'Medici."

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. Well," he added, "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 muscle may be injured." At this moment a little boy, half-pasant, half-footboy, came to announce supper. Athos led his guest into a dining-room of moderate size, the win-
dowa of which opened on one side on a garden—on the other on a
hot-home full of magnificent flowers.
D'Artagnan glanced at the dinner-service. The plate was mag-
nificent, old, and belonging 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'œuvre 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, Engraurat de la Ferre 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 beautiful specimen of work-
manship. Men were giants in those times," said Athos; "now we
are pignions 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 'jaquin' 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 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 own de guerre, when Monsieur D'Artagnan, two other
valiant friends and myself performed some feats of arms at the siege
of La Rochelle, under the deceased Cardinal and Monsieur de Bas-
sompoie. My friend is still so kind as to address me by that old
and dear 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, sire?" inquired Raoul.
"You have not forgotten Saint Gervais, Athos, and the napkin
which was converted into a banner," and he then related to Raoul
the story of the baptism, and Raoul fancied he was listening to one
of those deeds of arms belonging to days of chivalry, and recounted
by Tasso and Ariosto.
"D'Artagnan does not tell you, Raoul," said Athos, in his turn,
"that he was reckoned one of the best swordsmen of his time—a
knapsack of iron, a wrist of steel, a sure eye, and a glance of fire—
that's what his adversary met with from him. He was eighteen,
only three older than you are, Raoul, when I saw him at his work—
pitted against tried men."
"And was Monsieur D'Artagnan the conqueror?" said the young
man, with glistening eye.
"I killed one man, I believe," replied D'Artagnan, with a look
of inquiry directed to Athos; "another I disarmed, or wounded. I
don't remember which."
"Wounded!" said Athos; "oh! you were a strong one."
TWENTY YEARS AFTER.

The young man would willingly have prolonged this conversation all 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.

CHAPTER XV.

ATHOS AS A DIPLOMATIST.

D’Artagnan retired to bed—not to sleep, but to think over all that he had heard that evening. As he was good-hearted, and had once had for Athos a liking, which had grown into a sincere friendship, he was delighted at thus meeting a man full of intelligence and of moral strength, instead of a wretched drunkard. He admitted, without annoyance, the continued superiority of Athos over himself, derived 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 whom he had adopted, and who bore so great a resemblance to him? What could explain Athos’ having re-entered the world, and the extreme solicitude which 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 preceded 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 a sense of 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 in 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 maneuvering to the experienced eye of Athos. Besides, to say the truth, whilst D’Artagnan was quite disposed to adopt a subtle course against the cunning of Aramis, or the vanity of Portos, he was ashamed to equivocate with Athos, the true-hearted, open Athos. It seemed to him that if Portos and Aramis deemed him superior to them in the arts of diplomacy, they would...