"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 becoming. I haven't seen you with so cheerful a face these five years."

At this moment Griman entered, and signified to La Ramée that he had something to say to him.
The duke instantly recovered his composure.
"I forbade that man to come here," he said.
"'Tis my fault," replied La Ramée; "but he must stay here whilst I go to see Monsieur de Chavigny, who has some orders to give me."

And La Ramée went out. Griman looked after him; and when the door was closed, he drew out of his pocket a pencil and a sheet of paper.
"Wee, my lord," he said.
"And what?"

Griman dictated.

"All is ready for to-morrow evening. Keep watch from seven to nine o'clock. Have two riding-horses quite 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 Griman.
Griman gave a grim smile.
"Now," said the duke, "tell me what this famous raised pie is to contain?"
"Two pondards, a knotted rope, and a poire d'angoisse."
"Yes, I understand; we shall take to ourselves the pondards and the rope," replied the duke.
"And make La Ramée eat the pear," answered Griman.
"My dear Griman, thou speakest seldom, but when thou dost speak, one must do thee justice—they words are of gold."

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CHAPTER XX.

ONE OF MARIE MICHEU'S ADVENTURES.

Whilst these projects were being formed, by the Duc de Beaufort and Griman, the Comte de la Fere and the Vicomte de Bracelonne 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 needed for two bedrooms.

"You must dress yourself, Raoul," said Athos. "I am going to

*This poire d'angoisse was a famous fic, in the form of a pear, which, being thrust into the mouth, by the aid of a spring dislodged, so as to displace the

...in their extremity width.
TWO YEARS AFTER.

present you to some one. I wish you to look well, so arrange your

dress with care.'

"I hope, sir," replied the youth, smiling, "that there's no idea

of a marriage for me; you know 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—"

"What age is she?" inspired the Vicomte de Bragelonne.

"My dear Raoul, learn, once for all, 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?"

"During sixteen years 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
raving beauty for sixteen years 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—three marks
of race. The youth's dark hair was neatly parted, and hung in
curls, forming a sort of dark frame round his face—such was the
fashion of the day. Gloves of gray kid, matching the hat, dis-
played the form of a slender and elegant hand; whilst his boots,
similar in color to the hat and gloves, confined the feet, small as
those of a child of ten years old.

"Come," murmured Athos, "if she is not proud of him, she will
be hard to please."

It was three o'clock in the afternoon. The two travelers pro-
ceeded 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 Duchesse
de Chervrene was visible, and if she could receive the Comte de la
Perre.

The servant returned with a message to say that though the
duchess had not the honor of knowing Monsieur de la Perre, she would
receive him. He was accordingly announced.

Madame de Chervrene, whose name appears so often in our
story, "The Three Musketeers," without her actually having ap-
ppeared in any scene, was still a most beautiful woman. Although
about forty-four or forty-five years old, she scarcely seemed thirty-
eight. She still had her rich fair hair, her large, animated, intelli-
gent eyes, so often opened by intrigue, so often closed by the blind-
ness of love. She still had her nymph-like form, so that when her
back was turned, she seemed to be still the girl who had jumped
with Anne of Austria over the moat of the Tuileries in 1551. In all
other respects she was the same frail creature who threw over her
amours such an air of originality, as to make them almost a proverb
in her family.

She was in a little boudoir looking upon a garden, and hung with
blue damask, adorned by red flowers, with a foliage of gold; and
reclining upon a sofa, her head supported on the rich tapestry which
covered it. She held a book in her hand, and her arm was sup-
ported by a cushion.
As the footman announced two strangers, she raised herself a lit-
tle and peeped out, with some curiosity.
Athos appeared.
He was dressed in violet colored velvet, trimmed with the same
color. His shoulder-knots were of burnished silver; his mantle had
no gold nor embroidery on it, and a simple plume of violet feathers
adorned his hat; his boots were of black leather, and, at his girdle
hung that sword with a magnificnt hilt, that Porthos had so often
admired in the Rue Peroniere. Sperabio bore formed 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 condition,
that Madame de Chevreuse half rose from her seat when she saw
him, and made him a sign to sit down near her. He obeyed, the
servant disappeared, and the door was closed.
There was a momentary silence, during which those two persons
looked at each other attentively.
The duchess was the first to speak.
"Well, sir, I am waiting to hear what you wish to say to me—
with impudence."
"And I, madame," replied Athos, "am looking with admira-
tion."
"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 been in
the Bastille by any mischance?"
"No, madame; I have not; but perhaps I am on the road to it."
"Ah! then tell me who you are, and get along with you," re-
piled the duchess, with the caustic which made her so charming.
"For I am sufficiently in bad odor there already, without compro-
mising 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 know; 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 some old recol-
lections.
"Stop," said she.
And she placed her hands on her brow, as if to force the fugitive
ideas it contained to be concentrated for 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; you have not forgotten that name."
"No," she said; "poor Aramis; a charming man, elegant, dis
creet, 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. "Inde, 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?"

"Anything relating to him?"

"Yes and no. Aramis 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 of her?"

"If," replied the duchess, with a meaning look, "you do not say too much against her."

"You encourage me, madame. I shall continue," said Athos, and he began his narrative.

He alluded to events long gone by; to the journey, in disguise, of Marie Michon, the supposed needlewoman of Tours, but, in fact, the beautiful, intriguing, and, at one time, all powerful Duchesse de Chevreuse, into Spain; he spoke of her encounters and adventures; and he told her anecdotes of her life which seemed to her mind to be the revelations of a sorcerer rather than the disclosures of a mere man. These disclosures remain in mystery; they were succeeded by an exclamation of joy from Madame de Chevreuse.

"He is there! my soul the son of Marie Michon! But I must see him instantly."

"Take care, madame," said Athos, "for he knows neither his father nor his mother."

"You have kept the secret! you have brought him to see me, thinking to make me happy. Oh, thank you! thank you! sir," cried Madame de Chevreuse, seizing his hand, and trying to put it to her lips; "you have a noble heart."

"I bring him to you, madame," said Athos, withdrawing his hand, "tell him that, in your turn, you will do something for him; till now I have watched over his education, and I have made him, I hope, an accomplished gentleman; but I am now obliged to return to the dangerous and wandering life of party faction. To-morrow I plunge into an adventurous affair in which I may be killed. Then it will devolve on you to push him on in that world where he is called on to occupy a place."

"Be assured," cried the duchess, "I shall do what I can. I have but little influence now, but all that I have shall be his. As to his title and fortune—"

"As to that, madame, I have made over to him the estate of Bragelonne, my inheritance, which will give him ten thousand francs a-year, and the title of vicomte; and now I will call him."

Athos moved towards the door, the duchess held him back.

"Is he handsome?" she asked.

"He resembles his mother," Athos smiled.

And he opened the door, and desired the young man to come in.
The duchess could not forbear uttering a cry of joy on seeing so handsome a young cavalier, who surpassed all that her pride had been able to conceive.

"Vicomte, come here," said Athos, "the duchess permits you to kiss her hand."

The youth approached with his charming smile, and his head here and kneeling down, kissed the hand of the Duchess de Chevreuse.

"Sir," he said, turning to Athos, "was it not in compassion to my timidity that you told me that this lady was the Duchess de Chevreuse, and is she not the queen?"

"No," said the duchess, extending her hand to him; "no: unhappily, I am not the queen, for, if I were, I should do for you at once all that you deserve, but let us see: whatever I may be," she added, her eyes glistening with delight, "let us see what profession you wish to follow?"

Athos, standing, looked at them both with indescribable pleasure.

"Madame," answered the youth in his sweet voice, "it seems to me that there is only one career for a gentleman—that of the army. I have been brought up by Monsieur le Comte with the intention, I believe, of making me a soldier; and he gave me reason to hope that, at Paris, he would present me to some one who would recommend me to the favor of the prince."

"Yes, I understand it well. Personally, I am on bad terms with him, on account of the quarrels between Madame de Montarvon, my mother-in-law, and Madame de Louneville. But the Prince de Marsillac! Yes, indeed, that's the right thing. The Prince de Marsillac, my old friend—he will recommend our young friend to Madame de Louneville, who will give him a letter to her brother, the prince, who loves her too tenderly not to do what she wishes immediately."

"Well, that will do charmingly," said the count; "but may I beg that the greatest haste may be made, for I have reasons for wishing the vicomte not to sleep longer than to-morrow night in Paris?"

"Do you wish it known that you are interested about him, Monsieur le Comte?"

"Better for him, in future, that he should be supposed never to have seen me."

"Oh, sir!" cried Raoul.

"You know, D'Artagnan," said Athos, "I never act without reflection."

"Well, comte, I am going instantly," interrupted the duchess. "to send for the Prince de Marsillac, who is, happily, in Paris just now. What are you going to do this evening?"

"We intend to visit the Abbe Sceaux, for whom I have a letter of introduction, and at whose house I expect to meet some of my friends."

"'Tis well; I shall go there also, for a few minutes," said the duchess. "I do not quit this salon until you have seen me."

Athos bowed, and took his departure.