"Yes, certainly," added Athos, "and the other two——"
"You hear that?" said D'Artagnan to Porthos; "he won't swear."
"No?"
"No; caution, therefore."
Athos did not lose sight of these two speakers. Aramis opened the gate, and faced round in order that D'Artagnan and Porthos might enter. In passing through the gate, the hilt of the lieutenant's sword was caught in the grafting, and he was obliged to pull off his cloak; in doing so, he showed the butt end of his pistols, and a ray of the moon was reflected on the shining metal.
"Do you see?" whispered Aramis to Athos, touching his shoulder with one hand, and pointing with the other to the arms which the Gascon wore under his coat.
"Ah! I do!" replied Athos, with a deep sigh.
He entered third, and Aramis, who shut the gate after him, last. The two serving-men waited without, but, as if they, likewise, mistrusted each other, kept their respective distances.

CHAPTER XXVIII.
THE PLACE ROYAL.

They proceeded silently to the center of the Place; but at this very moment the moon had just emerged from behind a cloud, it was considered that they might be observed if they remained on that spot, and they regained the shade of the lime trees.

There were benches here and there—the four gentlemen stopped near them; at a sign from Athos, Porthos, and D'Artagnan sat down, the two others stood in the front of them.

After a few minutes of silent embarrassment, Athos spoke.
"Gentlemen," he said, "our presence here is a proof of our former friendship; not one of us has failed at this rendezvous; not one has, therefore, to reproof himself."

"Hear me, count," replied D'Artagnan; "instead of making compliments to each other, let us explain our conduct to each other, like men of right and honest hearts."

"I wish for nothing more; hence you any cause of anger against me or Monsieur D'Herblay? If so, speak out," answered Athos.

"I have," replied D'Artagnan. "When I saw you at your château at Bragelonne, I made certain proposals to you, which you perfectly understood; instead of answering me as a friend, you played with me as a child: the friendship, therefore, that you boasted of was not broken yesterday by the shock of our swords, but by your dissimulation at your castle."

"D'Artagnan!" said Athos reproachfully.

"You asked for candor—there it is. You ask what I have against you—I say it. And I have the same sincerity to show you, if you wish, Monsieur D'Herblay; I acted in a similar way to you, and you also deceived me; I reproach you with nothing, however; it's only because Monsieur de la Fère has spoken of friendship that I question your conduct."

"And what do you find in it to blame?" asked Aramis, haughtily.
The blood mounted instantly to the temples of D'Artagnan, who rose, and replied:

"I consider it the conduct of a pupil of Jesuits."

On seeing D'Artagnan rise, Porthos rose also; these four men were, therefore, all standing at the same time, with a menacing aspect, opposite to each other.

Upon hearing D'Artagnan's reply, Aramis seemed about to draw his sword, when Athos prevented him.

"D'Artagnan," he said, "you came here to-night, still infatuated by our yesterday's adventure. I believed that your heart was sufficiently noble, to enable a friendship of twenty years to be stronger than an affront of a quarter of an hour. Come, do you really think you have anything to say against me? say it then; if I am in fault I will avow my fault."

The grave and harmonious tones of that beloved voice had still over D'Artagnan its ancient influence, whilst that of Aramis, which had become sharp and screeching in his moments of ill-humor, irritated him. He answered therefore:

"I think, Monsieur le Comte, that you had something to communicate to me at your château of Bragelonne, and that gentleman — he pointed to Aramis — had also something to tell me when I was in his convent. At that time I was not concerned in the adventure during which you barricaded the road that I was going; however, because I was prudent you must not take me for a fool. If I had wished to widen the breach between those whom Monsieur D'Hervilly chooses to receive with a rope-holder, and those whom he receives with a wooden ladder, I could have spoken out."

"What are you meditating with?" cried Aramis, pale with anger, suspecting that D'Artagnan had acted as a spy on him, and had seen him with Madame de Logueville.

"I never meddle but with what concerns me, and I know how to make believe that I haven't seen what does not concern me: but I hate hypocrites, and among that number, I place musketeers who are abbots, and abbots who are musketeers; and," he added, turning to Porthos, "here's a gentleman who's of the same opinion as myself."

Porthos, who had not spoken one word, answered merely by a word and a gesture.

He said "yes," and he put his hand on his sword.

Aramis started back, and drew his. D'Artagnan bent forward, ready either to attack, or to stand supreme command which characterized him alone, drew out his sword, and the scabbard at the same time, broke the blade in the sheath on his knee, and threw the pieces to his right. Then turning to Aramis:

"Aramis," he said, "break your sword in two."

Aramis hesitated.

"It must be done," said Athos; then in a lower and more gentle voice, he added, "I wish it."

Then Aramis, paler than before, but subdued by these words, broke the flexible blade with his hands and then holding his arms, stood trembling with rage.

These proceedings made D'Artagnan and Porthos draw back.
D'Arlangman did not draw his sword; Porthos put his back into the sheath.

"Never!" exclaimed Athos, raising his right hand to Heaven.

"Never! I swear before God, who seeth us, and who, in the darkness of this night beheld us, never shall my sword cross yours, never my eye cast a glance of anger, nor my heart a throb of hatred, to you. We lived together, we loved, we hated together; we shed, we mingled our blood together, and, too probably, I may say still, that there may be yet a bond between us closer even than that of friendship; perhaps there may be the bond of crime; for we four, we once did condemn, judge, and slay a human being whom we had not any right to cut off from this world, although apparently fit for hell than for this life. D'Arlangman, I have always loved you as my son; Porthos, we slept six years side by side; Aramis is your brother as well as mine, and Aramis has once loved you, as I love you now, and as I have ever loved you. What can Cardinal Mazarin be to us, who compelled such a man as Richelieu to act as we pleased? What is such or such a prince to us who have fixed on the queen's head the crown? D'Arlangman, I ask your pardon for having yesterday crossed swords with you; Aramis does the same to Porthos; now, hate me if you can; but, for my own part, I shall ever, even if you do hate me, retain esteem and friendship for you; I repeat my words, Aramis, and then, if you desire it, and if they desire it, let us separate forever from our old friends."

There was a solemn, though momentary, silence, which was broken by Aramis.

"I swear," he said, with a calm brow, and kindly glance, but in a voice still trembling with recent emotion, "I swear that I no longer bear animosity to those who were once my friends. I regret that I ever crossed swords with you, Porthos; I swear not only that I shall never again be pointed at your breast, but that in the bottom of my heart there will never in future be the slightest hostile sentiment; now, Athos, come."

Athos was about to retire.

"Oh! not yet do not go away!" cried D'Arlangman, impelled by one of those irresistible impulses which showed the severity of his nature, and the native uprightness of his character. "I swear that I would shed the last drop of my blood, and the last fragment of my life, to preserve the friendship of such a man as you, Athos—of such a man as you, Aramis." And he threw himself into the arms of Athos.

"My son!" exclaimed Athos, pressing him in his arms.

"And as for me!" said Porthos. "I swear nothing, but I'm choked—forsooth! If I were obliged to fight against you, I think I should allow myself to be pierced through and through—for I never loved any one but you in the world," and honest Porthos burst into tears, as he embraced Athos.

"My friends," said Athos, "this is what I expected from such hearts as yours—yes—I have said it, and I now repeat it: our destinies are irrevocably united, although we pursue different roads. I respect your convictions; and while we fight for opposite sides, let us remain friends. Ministers, princes, kings will pass away like a torrent,
civil war, like a flame; but we—we shall remain; I have a preposition that we shall.

"Yes," replied D'Artagnan. "Let us still be Musketeers, and let us retain as our colors that famous napkin of the basque Saint Gervais—on which the great Cardinal had three fleur-de-lis embroidered."

"Be it so," cried Aramis. "Cardinalists, or Frondeurs, what matters it—let us meet again our capital seconds at a duel—our devoted friends in business—our merry companions in pleasure."

"And whenever," added Athos, "we meet in battle, at this word, 'Place Royale!' let us put our swords into our left hands, and shake hands with the right, even in the very thick of the carriage."

"You speak charmingly," said Porthos.

"And are the first of men!" added D'Artagnan. "You exalt us all."

Athos smiled with inexpressible pleasure.

"'Tis then all settled. Gentlemen, your hands—are you not pretty good Christians?"

"Égal!" said D'Artagnan. "by Heaven—yes."

"We should be so on this occasion, if only to be faithful to our oath," said Aramis.

"Ah, I'm ready to do what you will," cried Porthos; "to swear by Mahomet, devil take me if I've ever been so happy as at this moment."

And he wiped his eyes, still moist.

"Has not one of you a cross?" asked Athos.

Aramis smiled, and drew from his vest a cross of diamonds, which was hung round his neck by a cross of pearls. "Here is one," he said.

"Well," resumed Athos, "swear on this cross, which, in spite of its material, is still a cross; swear to be united in spite of everything, and forever, and may this oath bind us to each other—and even, also, our descendants! Does this oath satisfy you?"

"Yes," said they all with one accord.

"Ah, traitors!" muttered D'Artagnan to himself, leaning toward Aramis, and whispering to his ear, "you have made us swear on the cruxifix of a Frondeur."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE FERRY OVER THE OISE.

We hope that the reader has not quite forgotten the young traveler whom we left on the road to Flanders.

In losing sight of his guardian, whom he had quitted, gazing after him in front of the royal Basilica, Raoul spurred on his horse, in order not only to escape from his own melancholy reflections, but also to hide from Olivain the emotions which his face might betray.

One hour's rapid progress, however, sufficed to dispense the gloomy fancies which had clouded the young man's bright anticipations; and the hitherto unknown pleasure of freedom—a pleasure which has its sweetness even for those who have never suffered from de-