whilst Grimaud knelt his brows, and approached the wounded man, whose worn, hard features awoke in his mind such awful recollections of the past.

"There can be no longer any doubt but that it is himself," said he. "Does he still live?" inquired the innkeeper.

Making no reply, Grimaud opened the poor man's jacket to feel, if the heart beat, whilst the host approached in his turn; but in a moment they both fell back, the host uttering a cry of horror, and Grimaud becoming pale. The blade of a dagger was buried up to the hilt in the left side of the executioner.

"Run—run for help!" cried Grimaud, "and I will remain beside him here."

The host quitted the room in agitation; and as for his wife, she had fled at the sound of her husband's cries.

CHAPTER XXXII.

GRIMAUD SPEAKS.

Grimaud was left alone with the executioner, who in a few moments opened his eyes.

"Help, help," he murmured; "oh, God! have I not a single friend in the world who will aid me either to live or to die?"

"Take courage," said Grimaud; "they are gone to find help."

"Who are you?" asked the wounded man, fixing his half-opened eyes on Grimaud.


"You?" and the wounded man sought to recall the features of the person who was before him in his mind.

"Under what circumstances did we meet?" he asked again.

"One night, twenty years ago, my master fetched you from Bethune, and conducted you to Armentières."

"I know you well now," said the executioner; "you are one of the four grooms."

"Just so."

"Where do you come from now?"

"I was passing by on the road, and drew up at this inn to rest my horse. They were relating to me how the executioner of Bethune was here, and wounded, when you uttered two piercing cries. At the first we ran to the door, and at the second forced it open."

"And the monk?" exclaimed the executioner; "did you see the monk?"

"What monk?"

"The monk that was shut in with me."

"No, he was no longer here; he appears to have fled by the window. Was it he who struck you?"

"Yes," said the executioner. Grimaud moved as if to leave the room.

"What are you going to do?" asked the wounded man.

"He must be apprehended."

"Do not attempt it; he has revenged himself, and has done well.
Now I may hope that God will forgive me, since my crime has been expiated.

"Explain yourself," said Grimaud.

"The woman whom you and your masters made me kill——"

"Millyady?"

"Yes, Millyady; it is true you called her thus."

"Well, what has the monk to do with Millyady?"

"She was his mother."

Grimaud trembled, and stared at the dying man in a dull and stupid manner.

"His mother!" he repeated.

"Yes, his mother."

"But does he know this secret, then?"

"I mistook him for a monk, and revealed it to him in confession."

"Unhappy man," cried Grimaud, whose face was covered with sweat at the bare idea of the evil results which such a revelation might cause——"unhappy man, you named no one, I hope?"

"I pronounced no name, for I knew none, except his mother, a young girl, and it was by this name that he recognized her; but he knows that his uncle was among her judges."

Thus speaking, he fell back exhausted. Grimaud, wishing to relieve him, advanced his head toward the hilt of the dagger.

"Touch me not!" said the executioner; "if this dagger is withdrawn, I shall die."

Grimaud remained with his hand extended; then, striking his forehead, he exclaimed:

"Oh! if this man should ever discover the names of the others, my master is lost."

"Haste! haste to him, and warn him," cried the wounded man.

"If he still lives; warn his friends, too. My death, believe me, will not be the end of this terrible adventure."

"Where was the monk going?" asked Grimaud.

"Toward Paris."

"Who stopped him?"

"Two young gentlemen, who were on their way to join the army, and the name of one whom I heard his companion mention, the Viscount de Bragelonne."

"And it was this young man who brought the monk to you. Then it was the will of God that it should be so, and this it is which is so awful," continued Grimaud; "and yet that woman deserved her fate; do you not think so?"

On one's death-bed the crimes of others appear very small in comparison with one's own," said the executioner; and he fell back exhausted, and closed his eyes.

At this moment the host re-entered the room, followed not only by a surgeon, but by many other persons, whom curiosity had attracted to the spot. The surgeon approached the dying man, who seemed to have fainted.

"We must first extract the steel from the side," said he, shaking his head in a significant manner.

The prophecy which the wounded man had just uttered recurred to Grimaud, who turned away his head. The weapon, as we have already stated, was plunged into the body up to the hilt, and as the
surgeon, taking it by the end, drew it forth, the wounded man opened his eyes, and fixed them upon him in a manner truly frightful. When, at last, the blade had been entirely withdrawn, a red froth issued from the mouth of the wounded man, and a stream of blood sprang from the wound, when he at length drew breath; then, fixing his eyes upon Grimaud, with a singular expression, the dying man uttered the last death rattle and expired.

Then Grimaud, raising the dagger from the pool of blood which was sliding along the room—to the horror of all present—made a sign to the host to follow him, paid him with a generosity worthy of his master, and again mounted his horse. Grimaud's first intention had been to return to Paris, but he remembered the anxiety which his prolonged absence might occasion to Raul, and, reflecting that there were now only two miles between Raul and himself, and a quarter of an hour's riding would unite them, and that the going, returning, and explanation would not occupy an hour, he put spurs to his horse, and ten minutes after, had reached the only inn of Mazingarbe.

Raul was seated at table with the Comte de Guiche and his tutor, when all at once the door opened, and Grimaud presented himself, travel-stained, dirty, and still covered with the blood of the unfortunate executioner.

"Grimaud, my good Grimaud!" exclaimed Raul, "here you are at last! Excuse me, sir, this is not a servant, but a friend. How did you leave the count?" continued he; "does he regret me a little? Have you seen him since I left him? Answer, for I have many things to tell you, too; indeed, the last three days some odd adventures have happened—but, what is the matter?—how pale you are—and blood, too! what is this?"

"It is the blood of the unfortunate man whom you left at the inn, and who died in my arms."

"In your arms—that man! but know you who he was?"

"I know that he was the old huntman of Bethune."

"You know him? and he is dead?"

"Yes."

"Well, sir," said D'Armines, "it is the common lot, and even an executioner is not exempted from it. I had a bad opinion of him the moment I saw his wound, and, since he ailed for a monk, you know that it was his opinion, too, that death must ensue."

At the mention of the monk, Grimaud became pale.

"Come, come," continued D'Armines, "to dinner; for, like most men of his age and generation, he did not allow any sensibility to interfere with a repast."

"You are right, sir," said Raul. "Come, Grimaud, order some dinner for yourself, and when you have rested a little, we can talk."

"No, sir, no," said Grimaud. "I cannot stop a moment; I must start for Paris again immediately."

"How now? you start for Paris? Explain yourself; do you intend to disobey me for a change?"

"I cannot explain myself, and must disobey, unless you wish me to leave his honor, the count, to be killed?"
"Grimaud, my friend," said the viscount, "will you leave me thus, in such anxiety? Speak, speak in Heaven's name!"

"I can tell you but one thing, sir; for the secret you wish to know is not my own. You met this morn, did you not?"

"Yes."

"You conducted him to the wounded man, and you had time to observe him, and, perhaps, you would know him again were you to meet him."

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed both the young men.

"Very well; if ever you meet him again, wherever it may be, whether on the high-road or in the street, or in a church, anywhere that he or you may be, put your foot on his neck, and crush him without pity, without mercy, as you would crush a viper, a snake, an asp; destroy him, and leave him not till he is dead—the lives of five men are not safe, in my opinion, as long as he lives!"

And without adding another word, Grimaud, profiting by the astonishment and terror into which he had thrown his auditors, rushed from the room. Ten minutes later the gallop of a horse was heard on the road—it was Grimaud, on his way to Paris. When once in the saddle, Grimaud reflected upon two things: the first, that at the pace he was going his horse would not carry him ten miles, and, secondly, that he had no money. But Grimaud's imagination was more prodigious than his speech, and, therefore, at the first halt, he sold his stool, and with the money obtained from the purchaser he took post-horses.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A DINNER IN THE OLD STYLE.

The second interview between the former Musketeers had not been so pompous and wide as the first. Athos, with his superior understanding, wisely deemed that the table would be the most speedy and compact point of reunion, and at the moment when his friends, doubtful of his deportment and his sobriety, dared scarcely speak of some of their former good dinners, he was the first to propose that they should all assemble round some well spread table, and abandon themselves resolutely to their own natural character and manners—a freedom which had formerly contributed so much to the good understanding between them, as to give them the name of the inseparables. For different reasons this was an agreeable proposition for them all, and it was therefore agreed that each should leave a very exact address, and that upon the request of any of the associates, a meeting should be convened at a famous eating house in the Rue de la Monnaie, of the sign of the Hermitage; the first rendezvous was fixed for the following Wednesday, at eight o'clock in the evening precisely.

On that day, in fact, the four friends arrived punctually at the said hour, each from his own abode. Porthos had been trying a new horse; D'Artagnan came from being on guard at the Louvre, Aramis had been to visit one of his penitents in the neighborhood; and Athos, whose domicile was established in the Rue Gueugneau, found himself close at hand. They were, therefore, somewhat sur-