TWENTY YEARS AFTER.

"And he did not see Raoul?" asked Athos.

"Yes, on the contrary, they met, and it was the viscount himself who conducted him to the bed of the dying man," Athos rose, in his turn, without speaking—went and unhooked his sword.

"Heigh, sir," said D'Artagnan, trying to laugh: "do you know we look very much like silly women? How is it that we, four men, who have faced armies without blushing, begin to tremble at the sight of a child?"

"Yes," said Athos, "but this child comes in the name of Heaven."

And they hastily quitted the inn.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A LETTER FROM CHARLES THE FIRST.

The reader must now cross the Seine with us, and follow us to the door of the Carmelite Convent in the Rue St. Jacques. It is eleven o'clock in the morning, and the pious sisters have just finished saying a mass for the success of the armies of King Charles 1. Leaving the church, a woman and a young girl dressed in black, one as a widow, and the other as an orphan, have re-entered their cell.

The woman kneels on a prie-Dieu of painted wood, and at a short distance from her stands the young girl, leaning against a chair, weeping.

The woman must have been handsome, but the traces of sorrow have aged her. The young girl is lovely, and her tears only embellish her; the lady appears to be about forty years of age, the girl about fourteen.

"Oh, God!" prayed the kneeling suppliant, "protect my husband, guard my son, and take my wretched life instead!"

"Oh, God!" announced the girl, "leave me my mother!"

"Your mother can be of no use to you in this world, Henrietta," said the lady, turning round. "Your mother has no longer either throne or husband; nor son, nor money nor friends; the whole world, my poor child, has abandoned your mother!" And she fell back weeping, into her daughter's arms.

"Courage, take courage, my dear mother!" said the girl.

"And no one thinks of us in this country, for each must think of his own affairs. As long as your brother was with me he kept me up; but he is gone, and can no longer send us news of himself, either to me or to your father. I have pawned my last jewels, sold all your clothes and my own, to pay his servants, who refused to accompany him unless I made this sacrifice. We are now reduced to live at the expense of these daughters of Heaven—we are the poor succored by God."

"But why not address yourself to your sister, the queen?" asked the girl.

"Ahas! the queen, my sister, is no longer queen, my child. Another reigns in her name. One day you will be able to understand how this is."
"Well, then, to the king, your nephew: shall I speak to him? You know how much he loves me, my mother."

"Alas! my nephew is not yet king, and you know Leporte has told us twenty times that he blinself is in need of almost everything."

"Then let us pray to Heaven," said the girl.

The two women who thus knelt together in prayer were the daughter and grand-daughter of Henry IV., the wife and daughter of Charles I.

They had just finished their double prayer, when a man softly tapped at the door of the cell.

"Enter, my sister," said the queen.

"I trust your majesty will pardon this intrusion on her meditations, but a foreign lord has arrived from England, and awaits in the parlor, demanding the honor of presenting a letter to your majesty."

"Oh, a letter! a letter from the king, perhaps. News from your father, do you hear, Henrietta. And the name of this lord?"

"Lord de Winter."

"Lord de Winter!" exclaimed the queen, "the friend of my husband. Oh, let him come in!"

And the queen advanced to meet the messenger, whose hand she seized affectionately, whilst he knelt down, and presented a letter to her contained in a gold case.

"Ahh my lord," said the queen, "you bring us three things which we have not seen for a long time. Gold, a devoted friend, and a letter from the king, our husband and master."

De Winter bowed again, unable to reply from excess of emotion.

On their side the mother and daughter retired into the embrasure of a window to read eagerly the following letter:

"DEAR WIFE,—We have now reached the moment of decision. I have concentrated here at Naumby camp all the resources which Heaven has left me; and I write to you in haste from thence. Here I await the array of my rebellious subjects, and I am about to fight for the last time against them. If victorious, I shall continue the struggle; if beaten, I am completely lost. I shall try, in the latter case (alas! in our position, one must provide for everything), I shall try to gain the coast of France. But can they, will they receive an unhappy king, who will bring such a sad story into a country already agitated by civil discord? Your wisdom and your affection must serve me as guides. The bearer of this letter will tell you, madame, what I dare not trust to the risk of miscarriage. He will explain to you the steps which I expect you to pursue. I charge him also with my blessing for my children, and with the sentiments of my heart for yourself, dear wife."

The letter bore the signature, not of "Charles, King," but of "Charles—still king."

"And let him be no longer king," cried the queen. "Let him be conquered, exiled, proscribed, provided he still lives. Alas! in these days the throne is too dangerous a place for me to wish him to keep it. But, my lord, tell me," she continued, "while nothing
TWENTY YEARS AFTER.

from me—what is, in truth, the king’s position? Is it as hopeless as he thinks?"

"Alas! madame—more hopeless than he thinks. His majesty has so good a heart, that he cannot understand hatred; is so loyal, that he does not suspect treason! England is disturbed by a spirit of excitement, which, I greatly fear, blood alone can extinguish."

"But, Lord Montrose,” replied the queen, "I have heard of his great and rapid successes of battles gained. I heard it said that he was marching to the frontier to join the king."

"Yes, madame; but on the frontier he was met by Lesly; he had tried victory by means of superhuman undertakings. Now victory has abandoned him. Montrose, beaten at Phillipaugh, was obliged to disperse the remnants of his army, and to fly disguised as a servant. He is at Bergen, in Norway."

"Heaven preserve him!” said the queen. "It is at least a consolation to know that some who have so often risked their lives for us are in safety. And now, my lord, that I see how hopeless the position of the king is, tell me with what you are charged on the part of my royal husband."

"Well, then, madame," said De Winter, "the king wishes you to try to discover the dispositions of the king and queen toward him."

"Alas! you know, the king is but still a child, and the queen is a woman weak enough too. Monsieur Mazarin is everything here."

"Does he desire to play the part in France that Cromwell plays in England?"

"Oh, no! He is a subtle and cunning Italian, who, though he may dream of crime, dares never commit it; and unlike Cromwell, who disposes of both Houses, Mazarin has had the queen to support him in his struggle with the parliament."

"More reason then that he should protect a king pursued by his parliament."

The queen shook her head despairingly.

"If I judge for myself, my lord,” she said, “the Cardinal will do nothing, and will even, perhaps, act against us. The presence of my daughter and myself in France is already irksome to him; much more so would be that of the king. My lord,” added Henrietta, with a melancholy smile, “it is sad, and almost shameful, to be obliged to say that we have passed the winter in the Louvre without money, without linen—almost without bread, and often not rising from bed because we wanted fire.""

"Horrible!” cried De Winter: "the daughter of Henry IV., and the wife of King Charles! Wherefore did you not apply, then, madame, to the first person you saw from us?"

"Such is the hospitality shown to a queen by the minister from whom a king would demand it."

"But I heard that a marriage between the Prince of Wales and Mademoiselle d’Orleans was spoken of,” said De Winter.

"Yes, for an instant, I hoped it was so. The young people felt a mutual esteem; but the queen, who at first concealed their affection, changed her mind, and Monsieur the Due d’Orleans, who had encouraged the familiarity between them, has forbidden his daughter to think any longer about the union. Oh, my lord!” continued
the queen, without restraining her tears, "It is better to fight as the
king has done, and to die, as perhaps he will, than to live begging
as I have."
"Courage, madame! courage! Do not despair! The interests of
the French crown—endangered this moment—are to discourage civil
rebellion in a nation so near to it. Mazarin, as a statesman, will
understand the necessity of doing so."
"But are you sure," said the queen, doubtfully, "that you have
not been foretold?"
"By whom?"
"By the Joloos, the Princes, the Cromwells?"
"By a tailor, a coachmaker, by a brewer! Ah! I hope, madame,
that the Cardinal will not enter into negotiations with such men!"
"And what wishes he himself?" asked Madame Henrietta.
"Solely the honor of the king—of the queen."
"Well, let us hope that he will do something for the sake of their
Lustor," said the queen. "A true friend's eloquence is so powerful,
my lord, that you have reassured me. Give me your hand; and let
us go to the minister; and yet," she added, "suppose he refuse,
and that the king loses the battle?"
"His majesty will then take refuge in Holland, where I hear that
his highness the Prince of Wales is."
"And can his majesty count upon many such subjects as your-
self for his flight?"
"Alas! no, madame," answered De Winter; "but the case is pro-
duced for, and I am come to France to seek allies."
"Allies!" said the queen, shaking her head.
"Madame!" replied De Winter; "provided I can find some old
friends of former times, I will answer for anything."
"Come, then, my lord," said the queen, with the pious doubt
that is felt by those who have suffered much; "come, and may
Heaven hear you."

CHAPTER XXXV.
CROMWELL'S LETTER.

At the very moment when the queen quitted the convent to go to
the Palais Royal, a young man dismounted at the gate of this royal
abode, and announced to the guards that he had something of con-
sequence to communicate to Cardinal Mazarin. Although the Car-
dinal was often tormented by fear, he was more often in need of
counsel and information, and he was therefore sufficiently acces-
sible. The true difficulty of being admitted was not to be found at
the first door, and even the second was passed easily enough; but
at the third watched, beside the guard and the doorkeepers, the
faithful Bernoudin, a Cerberus whom no speech could soften, no
wound, even of gold, could charm.
It was, therefore, at the third door that those who solicited or
were bid to an audience underwent a formal interrogatory.
The young man having left his horse tied to the gate in the court,
mounted the great staircase, and addressed the guard in the first
chamber.