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such occasions, from shame they passed to extreme effrontery, and
two heads of clans advanced toward the king.

"You," said they, "we have promised to deliver Scotland and
England from him who for the last five-and-twenty years has sucked
the blood and gold of Scotland and England. We have promised,
and we will keep our promise. Charles Stuart, you are our
prisoner."

And both extended their hands, as if to seize the king, but before
they could touch him with the tips of their fingers, both had fallen
—one dead, and the other stunned.

Aramis had passed his sword through the body of the first, and
Athos had knocked down the other with the butt-end of his pistol.

Then, as Lord Lenox and the other chiefstades retired, alarmed at
this unexpected succor, which seemed to fall from heaven for him
whom they believed already their prisoner, Athos and Aramis
dragged the king from the perfidious assembly into which he had so
imprudently ventured, and throwing themselves on horseback, all
three returned at full gallop to the royal tent.

On their road they perceived Lord Winter marching at the head
of his regiment. The king nominated him to accompany them.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE AVENGER.

They all four entered the tent; they had no plan ready—they
must think of one.

The king threw himself into an arm chair. "I am lost," said he.

"No, sire," replied Athos. "You are only betrayed."

The king sighed deeply.

"Betrayed? yes—betrayed by the Scotch, amongst whom I was
born, whom I have always loved better than the English. Oh,
traitors that ye are!"

"Sire," said Athos, "this is not a moment for recrimination, but
a time to show yourself a king and a gentleman. Up, sir! up!
for you have here at least three men who will not betray you. Ah! if
we had been five!" murmured Athos, thinking of D'Artagnan
and Porthos.

"What are you saying?" inquired Charles, rising.

"I say, sire, there is more than one thing open. Lord Winter
answers for his regiment, or at least very nearly so—we will not
split straws about words—let him place himself at the head of his
men, we will place ourselves at the side of your Majesty, and let us
cut through Cromwell's army and reach Scotland."

"There is another method," said Aramis. "Let one of us put
on the dress, and mount the king's horse. Whilst they pursue him,
the king might escape."

"It is good advice," said Athos, "and if the king will do us the
honor, we shall be truly grateful to him."

"What do you think of this counsel, Winter?" asked the king,
looking with admiration at these two men, whose chief idea seemed
to be how they could take on their shoulders all the dangers which
threatened him.
"I think that the only chance of saving your Majesty has just been proposed by Monsieur d’Herblay. I humbly entreat your Majesty to choose quickly, for we have not a moment to lose."

"But if I accept, it is death, or at least imprisonment, for him who takes my place."

"It is the story of having saved his king," cried Winter.

The king looked at his old friend with tears in his eyes; undid the order of the Saint-Éspirits which he wore, to honor the two Frenchmen who were with him, and passed it round Winter’s neck, who received, on his knees, this striking proof of his sovereign’s confidence and friendship.

"It is right," said Athos, "he has served your Majesty longer than we have."

The king overheard these words, and turned round with tears in his eyes.

"Wait a moment, sir," said he: "I have an order for each of you also."

He turned to a closet where his own orders were locked up, and took out two ribbons of the Order of the Garter.

"These cannot be for us," said Athos.

"Why not, sir?" asked Charles.

"Such are for royalty, and we are simple commoners."

"Speak not of crowned heads. I shall not find amongst them such great hearts as yours. No, no—you do yourselves injustice; but I am here to do justice to you. On your knees, count."

Athos knelt down and the king passed the ribbon down from left to right as usual, and said: "I make you a knight. Be brave, faithful, and loyal. You are brave, faithful, and loyal. I knight you Monsieur le Comte."

Then turning to Aramis, he said:

"It is now your turn, Monseigneur le Chevalier."

The same ceremony recommenced, with the same words, whilst Winter undid his leather cuirass, that he might disguise himself like the king. Charles, having ended with Aramis the same as Athos, embraced them both.

"Sire," said Winter, who in this trying emergency felt all his strength and energy fire up, "we are ready."

The king looked at the three gentlemen—"Then we must fly!"

said he.

"Fly through an army, sire!" said Athos.

"Then I shall die, sword in hand," said Charles, "Monseigneur le Comte, Monseigneur le Chevalier. If ever I am King—"

"Sire, you have already honored us more than simple gentlemen could ever aspire to, therefore gratitude is on our side. But we must not lose time. We have already waited too much."

The king again shook hands with all three; exchanged hats with Winter, and went out.

Winter’s regiment was ranged on some high ground above the camp. The king, followed by the three friends, turned his steps that way. The Scotch camp seemed as if at last awakened; the soldiers had come out of their tents, and taken up their station in battle array.
"Do you see that?" said the king. "Perhaps they are pennant and preparing to march."
"If they are pennant," said Athos, "let them follow us."
"Well!" said the king, "what shall we do?"
"Let us examine the enemy's army."
At the same instant the eyes of the little group were fixed on the same line which at daybreak they had mistaken for fog, and which the morning sun now plainly showed was an army in order of battle. The air was soft and clear, as it always is at this hour of the morning. The regiments, the standards, and even the colors of the horses and uniforms were now clearly distinct.

On the summit of a rising ground, a little in advance of the enemy, appeared a short and heavy-looking man; this man was surrounded by officers. He turned a spy-glass toward the little group amongst which the king stood.
"Does this man know your Majesty personally?" inquired Aramis.
"Charles smiled.
"That man is Cromwell," said he.
"Ah!" said Athos, "how much time we have lost."
"Now," said the king, "give the word, and let us start."
"Will you not give it, sire?" asked Athos.
"No: I make you my lieutenant-general," said the king.
"Listen then, Lord Winter. Proceed, sire, I beg. What we are going to do does not concern your Majesty."
The king, smiling, turned a few steps back.
"This is what I propose to do," said Athos. "We will divide our regiments into two squadrons. You will put yourself at the head of the first. We and his Majesty at the head of the second. If no obstacle occurs, we will both charge together, force the enemy's line, and throw ourselves into the Tyne, which we must cross, either by fording or swimming; if, on the contrary, any resistance should take place, you and your men must fight to the last man, whilst we and the king proceed on our road. Once arrived at the bank of the river, should we even find them three ranks deep, as long as you and your regiment do your duty, we will look to the rest."
"To horse!" said Lord Winter.
"To horse!" re-echoed Athos; "all is arranged and decided."
"Now, gentlemen," cried the king, "forward! and rally to the old cry of France—Montjoy and St. Denis. The war-cry of England is too often in the mouths of these traitors."
The Scotch army stood motionless and silent with shame of viewing these preparations.
Some of the chieflains left the ranks and broke their swords in two.
"There," said the king, "that consoles me; they are not all traitors."
"At this moment Winter's voice was raised with the cry of "Forward!"
The first squadron moved off; the second followed it, and descended from the platform. A regiment of cuirassiers, nearly
equal as to numbers, issued from behind the hill, and came full gallop toward it.

The king pointed this out.

"Sire," said Athos, "we foresee this; and if Lord Winter's men do all their duty, we are saved instead of lost."

At this moment they heard above all the galloping and neighing of the horses. Winter's voice crying out:

"Sword in hand."

At these words every sword was drawn, and glittered in the air like lightning.

"Now, gentlemen," said the king in his turn, excited by this sight, and the sound of it, "come, gentlemen, sword in hand."

But Aramis and Athos were the only ones to obey this command, and the king's example.

"We are betrayed," said the king, in a low voice.

"Wait a moment," said Athos, "perhaps they do not recognize your Majesty's voice, and await the order of their captain."

"Have they not heard that of their colonel? But look! look!" cried the king, drawing up his horse with a sudden jerk, which threw it back on its haunches, and seizing the bridle of Athos' horse.

"Ah, cowards! ah, traitors!" cried out Lord Winter, whose voice they heard, whilst his men, quitting their ranks, dispersed all over the plain.

About fifteen men were ranged around him, and awaited the charge of Cromwell's cuirassiers.

"Let us go and die with them!" said the king.

"Let us go," said Athos and Aramis.

"All faithful hearts with me!" cried out Winter.

This voice was heard by the two friends, who set off, full gallop.

"No quarter," cried out a voice in French, answering to that of Winter, which made them tremble.

It was the voice of a cavalier mounted on a magnificent black horse, who was charging at the head of the English regiment, of which, in his order, he was ten steps in advance.

"'Tis him!" murmured Winter; his eyes glazed, and letting his sword fall to his side.

"The king! the king!" cried out several voices, deceived by the blue ribbon, and chestnut horse of Winter; "take him alive."

"No! it is not the king!" exclaimed the cavalier. "Lord Winter, you are not the king; you are my uncle."

At the same moment Maisonneuve, for it was he, leveled his pistol at Winter, the fire flashed, and the ball entered the heart of the old cavalier, who, with one bound on his saddle, fell back into the arms of Athos, murmuring: "He is revenged."

"Think of my mother!" shouted Maisonneuve, as his horse plunged and darted off at full gallop.

"Wretch!" exclaimed Aramis, raising his pistol, as he passed by him; but the fire flashed in the pan, and it did not go off.

At this moment the whole regiment came up, and they fell upon the few men who had held out, surrounding the two Frenchmen. Athos, after making sure that Lord Winter was really dead, let fall the corpse, and said.
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"Come, Aramis, now for the honor of France," and the two Englishmen who were nearest to them fell mortally wounded.

At the same moment a fearful "hurrah!" rent the air, and thirty blades glittered above their heads. Suddenly a man swung out of the English ranks, fell upon Athos, entwined his muscular arms around him, and tearing his sword from him, said in his ear:

"Silence! yield yourself—you yield to me; do you not?"

A giant had seized also Aramis's two wrists, who struggled in vain to release himself from this formidable grasp.

"D'Artagnan," exclaimed Athos, whilst the Gascon covered his mouth with his hand.

"I yield myself prisoner," said Aramis, giving up his sword to Porthos.

"Fire, fire," cried out Mordaunt, returning to the group of friends.

"And wherefore fire!" said the colonel, "every one has yielded."

"It is the son of Milady," said Athos to D'Artagnan. "I recognized him."

"It is the monk," whispered Porthos to Aramis.

"I know it."

And now the ranks began to open. D'Artagnan held the bridle of Athos's horse, and Porthos that of Aramis. Both of them attempted to lead his prisoner off the battle-field. This movement revealed the spot where Winter's body had fallen. Mordaunt had found it out, and was gazing at it with an expression of hatred.

Athos, though now quite cool and collected, put his hand to his belt, where his loaded pistols still remained.

"What are you about?" said D'Artagnan.

"Let me kill him."

"We are all four lost, if, by the least gesture, you discover that you recognize him."

Then turning to the young man he exclaimed—

"A fine prize! a fine prize, friend Mordaunt, we have, both myself and Monsieur du Vallon, taken two knights of the garter, nothing less."

"But," said Mordaunt, looking at Athos and Aramis with blood-shot eyes, these are Frenchmen, I imagine."

"By faith, I don't know. Are you French, sir?" said he to Athos.

"I am," replied the latter, gravely.

"Very well, my dear sir, you are the prisoner of a fellow countryman."

"But the king—where is the king?" exclaimed Athos, anxiously.

"Ah! we have got him."

"Yes," said Aramis, "through an infamous act of treason."

Porthos pressed his friend's hand, and said to him:

"Yes, sir, all is fair in war, stratagem as well as force—look yonder!"

At this instant the squadron—that ought to have protected Charles' retreat—was advancing to meet the English regiments. The king who was entirely surrounded, walked alone on foot. He appeared calm, but it was evidently not without a great effort.
Drops of perspiration rolled down his face; and from time to time he put a handkerchief to his mouth, to wipe off the blood that flowed from it.

"Behold Nebuchadnezzar!" exclaimed an old Puritan soldier, whose eyes flashed at the sight of one whom he called the tyrant.

"Do you call him Nebuchadnezzar?" said Mordaunt, with a ter-

rible smile: "no, it is Charles the First, the king; the good King

Charles, who despoils his subjects to enrich himself."

Charles glanced at the innocent creature who uttered this, but he did not recognize him. Nevertheless, the calm and reli-

gious dignity of his countenance amazed Mordaunt.

"Bon jour, messieurs!" said the king to the two gentlemen who were held by D'Artagnan and Forties. "The day has been unfortu-

nate, but it is not your fault, thank God! But where is my old

friend, Winter?"

The two gentlemen turned away their heads in silence.

"Look for him with Scarborough," said Mordaunt, sulkily.

Charles shuddered. The demon had known how to wound him.

The remembrance of Stafford was a source of lasting remorse to

him, the shadow that haunted him by day and night. The king

looked around him. He saw a corporal's feet. It was Winter's.

He uttered not a word, nor shed a tear; but a deadly pallor spread

over his face; he knelt down on the ground, raised Winter's head,

and unfastening the order of the Saint-Esprit, placed it on his own

breast.

"Lord Winter is killed, then!" inquired D'Artagnan, fixing his

eyes on the corpse.

"Yes," said Athos, "by his own nephew."

"Come, he was the first of us to go; peace be to him! he was an

honest man," said D'Artagnan.

"Charles Stuart," said the colonel of the English regiment, ap-

proaching the king, who had just put on the insignia of royalty,

"do you yield yourself a prisoner?"

"Colonel Fondisen," said Charles, "the king cannot yield; the

man alone submits to force."

"Your sword"

The king drew his sword, and broke it on his knee.

At this moment, a horse without a rider, covered with foam, his

nostrils extended, and eyes all fire, galloped past, and recognizing

his master, stepped and neighed with pleasure; it was Arthur.

The king smiled, patted it with his hand, and jumped lightly into

the saddle.

"Now, gentlemen," said he, "conduct me where you will."

Turning back again, he said, "I thought I saw Winter move; if

he still lives, by all you hold most sacred, do not abandon him;"

"Never fear, King Charles," said Mordaunt, "the ball pierced

his heart."

"Do not breathe a word, nor make the least sign to me or Por-

tios," said D'Artagnan to Athos and Aramis, "that you recognize

this man, for Milady is not dead; her soul lives in the body of this

demon."

The detachment now moved toward the town with the royal cap
Five: but on the road an old-de-camp, from Cromwell, sent orders that Colonel Tomilson should conduct him to Holmby Castle. At the same time couriers started in every direction over England and Europe, to announce that Charles Stuart was the prisoner of Oliver Cromwell.

CHAPTER LV.

OLIVER CROMWELL.

"Have you been to the general?" said Mordaunt to D'Artagnan and Porthos; "you know he sent for you after the action."

"We want first to put our prisoners in a place of safety," replied D'Artagnan. "Do you know, sir, those gentlemen are each of them worth fifteen hundred pounds?"

"Oh be assured," said Mordaunt, looking at them with an expression he in vain endeavored to soften, "my soldiers will guard them—and guard them well, I promise you."

"I shall take better care of them myself," answered D'Artagnan; "besides, all they require is a good room, with sentinels, from which their parole is enough that they will not attempt to escape. I will go and see about that, and then we shall have the honor of presenting ourselves to the general, and receiving his commands for his Eminence."

"You are thinking of starting at once, then?" inquired Mordaunt.

"Our mission is ended, and there is nothing more to detain us now but the good pleasure of the great man to whom we have been sent."

"The young man hit his lips, and whispered to his sergeant:

"We will follow them on, and not lose sight of them; when you have discovered where they lodge, come and await me at the town gate."

The sergeant made a sign that he should be obeyed.

Instead of following the mass of prisoners that were being taken into the town, Mordaunt turned his steps toward the rising ground from whence Cromwell had witnessed the battle, and on which he had just had his tent pitched. Cromwell had given orders that no one was to enter it; but the sentinel who knew that Mordaunt was one of the most confidential friends of the general, thought the order did not extend to the young man. Mordaunt, therefore, raised the canvas, and saw Cromwell seated before a table, his head buried in his hands, his back was turned to him. Whether he heard Mordaunt or not as he entered, Cromwell did not move. Mordaunt remained standing near the door. At last, after a few moments, Cromwell raised his head, and, as if he divined that some one was there, he turned slowly round.

"I said I wished to be alone," he exclaimed, on seeing the young man.

"They thought this order did not concern me, sir; nevertheless, if you wish it, I am ready to go."

"Ah! is it you, Mordaunt?" said Cromwell, the cloud passing away from his face; "since you are here, it is well, you may remain."