Five; but on the road an all-de-camp, from Cromwell, sent orders that Colonel Tomilson should conduct him to Holmeday 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 went 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 E'minence."

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

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

The young man bit his lips, and whispered to his sergeant:

"We will follow these men, 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 notice. 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."
"I come to congratulate you."
"To congratulate me—what for?"

"On the capture of Charles Stuart. You are now master of England."
"I was much more really so two hours ago."
"How so, general?"
"Because England had need of me to take the tyrant, and now the tyrant is taken. Have you seen him?"
"Yes, sir," said Mordaunt.
"What is his bearing?"
Mordaunt hesitated; but he seemed as if compelled to speak the truth.
"Calm and dignified," said he.
"What did he say?"
"Some parting words to his friends."
"His friends?" mumbled Cromwell. "Has he any friends?"

Then he added about. "Did he make any resistance?"
"No, sir; with the exception of two or three friends, every one deserted him; he had no means of resistance."
"To whom did he give up his sword?"
"He did not give it up; he broke it."
"He did well; but instead of breaking it, he might have used it to more advantage."

There was a momentary pause.
"I heard that the colonel of the regiment that escorted Charles was killed?" said Cromwell, staring very fixedly at Mordaunt.
"Yes, sir."
"By whom?" inquired Cromwell.
"By me."
"What was his name?"
"Lord Wintor."
"Your uncle?" exclaimed Cromwell.
"My uncle, answered Mordaunt; "but traitors to England are not of my family."

Cromwell observed the young man a moment in silence, and then asked:
"Mordaunt, you are strong amongst the strong ones. And the Frenchmen, how did they behave?"
"Most fearlessly."
"Yes, yes," mumbled Cromwell; "the French fight well; and if my glass was good, and I mistake not, they were foremost in the fight."
"They were," replied Mordaunt.
"After you, however," said Cromwell.
"It was the fault of their horses, not theirs."

Another pause.
"And the Scotch?"
"They kept their word, and never stirred," said Mordaunt.
"Wretched men!"
"Their officers wish to see you, sir."
"I have no time for them. Have they been paid?"
"Yes, to-night."
"Let them set off and return to their mountains, and there hide
their shame, if their mountains are high enough. I have nothing more to do with them, or they with me. And now, go, Mordaunt."
"Before I go," said Mordaunt, "I have some questions, and a favor to ask you, sir."
"A favor from me?"
Mordaunt bowed.
"I come to you, my lord, my head, my father, and I ask you, master, are you contented with me?"
Cromwell looked at him with astonishment. The young man remained immovable.
"Yes," said Cromwell, "you have done, since I knew you, not only your duty, but more than your duty; you have been a faithful friend, a clever negotiator, and a good soldier."
"Do you remember, sir, it was my idea, the Scotch treaty, for giving up the king?"
"Yes, the idea was yours. I had not such a contempt for men before that."
"Was I not a good ambassador in France?"
"Yes, for Mazarin has granted what I desired."
"Have I not always fought for your glory and interest?"
"Too ardently, perhaps; it is what I have just reproached you for; but what is the meaning of all these questions?"
"To tell you, my lord, that the moment has now arrived when, with a single word, you may recompense all these services."
"Oh!" said Oliver, with a slight curl of his lip, "I forgot that every service merits some reward, and that up to this moment you have served me for nothing."
"Sir, you can give me in a moment all that I look for."
"What is it? Have they offered you money? Do you wish a step? or some place in the government?"
"Sir, will you grant me my request?"
"Let us hear what it is, first?"
"Sir, when you have told me to obey an order, have I ever inquired what it is first? I cannot tell you."
"But a request made so formally—"
"Ah! do not fear, sir," said Mordaunt, with apparent simplicity, "it will not ruin you."
"Well, then," said Cromwell, "I promise, as far as lies in my power, to grant your request: proceed."
"Sir, two prisoners were taken this morning, will you let me have them?"
"For their ransom? have they, then, offered a large one?" inquired Cromwell.
"On the contrary, I think they are poor, sir."
"They are friends of yours, then?"
"Yes, sir," exclaimed Mordaunt, "they are friends, dear friends of mine, and I would lay down my life for them."
"Very well, Mordaunt," said Cromwell, pleased at hearing his opinion of the young man raised once more; "I will give them to you. I will not even ask who they are—do us you like with them."
"Thank you, sir!" exclaimed Mordaunt, "thank you; my life is always at your service, and should I lose it, I should still save you
something; thank you—you have, indeed, repaid me munificently for my services."

And he threw himself at the feet of Cromwell, and in spite of the efforts of the Puritan general, who did not like this almost kingly homage, he took his hand and kissed it. "What!" said Cromwell, arresting him for a moment as he rose; "is there nothing more you wish? neither gold nor rank?"

"You have given me all you can give me, and from to-day your debt is paid."

And Mordaunt darted out of the general’s tent, his heart beating, and his eyes sparkling with joy.

Cromwell gazed a moment after him.

"He has killed his uncle!" he murmured. "Ah! what are my servants? Perhaps those who ask nothing, or seem to ask nothing, have asked more in the eyes of heaven than those who tax the country, and steal the bread of the poor. Nobody serves me for nothing. Charles, who is my prisoner, may still have friends; but I have none!"

And with a deep sigh he again sank into the reverie which had been interrupted by Mordaunt.

CHAPTER LVI.

MOHAMMED.

Whilst Mordaunt was making his way to Cromwell’s tent, D’Artagnan and Porthos had brought their prisoners to the house which had been assigned to them as their dwelling at Newcastle.

The two friends made the prisoners enter the house first, whilst they stood at the door, desiring Musqueton to take all the four horses to the stable.

"Why don’t we go in with them?" asked Porthos.

"We must first see what the sergeant wishes us to do," replied D’Artagnan; and he then asked the sergeant his wishes.

"We have had orders," answered the man, "to help you in taking care of your prisoners."

There could be no fault found with this arrangement; on the contrary, it seemed to be a delicate attention to be received gratefully; D’Artagnan, therefore, thanked the man, and gave him a crown piece to drink to General Cromwell’s health.

The sergeant answered that Puritans never drank, and put the crown piece into his pocket.

"Ah!" said Porthos, "what a fearful day, my dear D’Artagnan!"

"What! a fearful day, when we have to-day found our friends?"

"Yes, but under what circumstances?"

"It’s true that our position is an awkward one; but let us go in and see more clearly what is to be done."

"Things look very bad," replied Porthos; "I understand now why Aramis advised me to strangle that horrible Mordaunt."

"Silence!" cried the Gascon; "do not utter that name."

"But," argued Porthos, "I speak French, and they are all English."