55 of the tinder, mounted his horse, and stopped at the door. In the midst of the soldiers. There, caressing, as he pretended, the animal with his hand, he put this bit of tinder, while burning, into his ear. It was necessary to be as good a horseman as he was to risk such a scheme: for hardly had the animal felt the burning tinder, then he uttered a cry of pain, and reared and jumped as if he had been mad. The soldiers, whom he nearly triumphed upon, ran away from him.

"Help! help!" cried D'Artagnan. "Stop, my horse has the stagger." In an instant blood came from his eyes, and he was white with fear.

"Help!" cried D'Artagnan. "What! will you let me be killed!—by Mohammed!"

Scarce had he uttered this cry, than the door opened, and Athos and Aramis rushed out. The coast, owing to the Gascon's stratagem, was clear.

"The prisoners are escaping! the prisoners are escaping!" cried the sergeant.

"Stop! stop!" cried D'Artagnan, giving rein to his famous steed, who, dashing forth, overturned several men.

"Stop! stop!" cried the soldiers, and ran for their arms.

But the prisoners were on their saddles, and lost no time, hastening to the nearest gate.

In the middle of the street they saw Grimaud and Biscos, who were coming to find their masters. With one wave of his hand, Athos made Grimaud, who followed the little troop, understand everything, and they passed on, like a whirlwind, D'Artagnan still directing them from behind with his voice.

They passed through the gate like apparitions, without the guards thinking of detaining them, and reached the open country. All this while the soldiers were calling out, "Stop! stop!" and the sergeant, who began to see that he was the victim of an artifice, was almost in a frenzy of despair; whilst all this was going on, a cavalier in full gallop was seen approaching. It was Mordant with the order in his hand.

"The prisoners!" he exclaimed, jumping off his horse.

The sergeant had not the courage to reply; he showed him the open door and the empty room. Mordant darted to the steps—understood all, uttered a cry, as if his very heart were pierced, and fell fainting on the stone steps.

CHAPTER LVII.

IN WHICH IT IS SHOWN THAT UNDER THE MOST TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES NOBLES NATURES NEVER LOSE THEIR COURAGE, NOR GOOD STOMACHS THEIR APPETITES.

The little troop, without looking behind them, or exchanging a single word, ran at a rapid gallop, crossing on foot a little stream, of which none of them knew the name, and leaving on their left a town, which Athos declared to be Duriam. At last they came in sight of a small wood, and spurring their horses afresh, they rode in the direction of it.
As soon as they had disappeared behind a green curtain sufficiently thick to conceal them from the sight of any one who might be in pursuit of them, they drew up to hold a council together. The two grooms held the horses, that they might take rest without being unsaddled, and Grimanç was posted as sentinel.

"Come, first of all," said Athos to D'Artagnan, "my friend, that I may shake hands with you—you, our rescuer; you, the true hero among us all."

"Athos is right, and you have my adoration," said Aramis, in his turn pressing his hand. "To what are you not equal? with superior intelligence, an infallible eye; an arm of iron, and an enterprising mind!"

"Now," said the Gaskon, "that is all well, I accept for Porthos and myself, everything—thanks and embraces—we have plenty of time to lose."

The two friends, recalled by D'Artagnan to what was also due to Porthos, pressed his hand in their turn.

"And now," said Athos, "it is not our plan to run anywhere, and like madmen, but we must arrange some plan. What shall we do?"

"What are we going to do, I'll faith? It is not very difficult to say."

"Tell us, then, D'Artagnan."

"We are going to reach the nearest sea-port, unite our little resources, hire a vessel, and return to France. As for me, I will give my last sou for it. Life is the greatest treasure, and speaking candidly, ours is only held by a thread."

"What do you say to this, Du Vallon?"

"I," said Porthos, "I am entirely of D'Artagnan's opinion; this is a beautiful country—this England."

"You are quite decided, then, to leave it?" asked Athos of D'Artagnan.

"Equal! I don't see what is to keep me here."

A glance was exchanged between Athos and Aramis.

"Go, then, my friends," said the former, sighing.

"How, go there?" exclaimed D'Artagnan. "Let us go, you mean?"

"No, my friend," said Athos, "you must leave us."

"Leave you!" cried D'Artagnan, quite bewildered at this unexpected announcement.

"Pah!" said Porthos, "why separate, since we are all together?"

"Because you can, and you ought to return to France; your mission is accomplished, but ours is not."

"Your mission is not accomplished!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, looking in astonishment at Athos.

"No, my good fellow," replied Athos, in his gentle, but decided voice, "we came here to defend King Charles; we have but ill defended him, it remains for you to save him."

"To save the king?" said D'Artagnan, looking at Aramis as he had looked at Athos.

Aramis contented himself by making a sign with his head.

D'Artagnan's countenance took an expression of the deepest compassion; he began to think he had to do with two madmen.
"You cannot be speaking seriously, Athos!" said he; "the king is surrounded by an army, which is conducting him to London. This army is commanded by a butcher, or the son of a butcher—it matters little—Colonel Harrison. His Majesty, I can assure you, is about to be tried on his arrival in London. I have heard enough from the lips of Mr. Oliver Cromwell to know what to expect."

A second look was exchanged between Athos and Aramis.

"And when the trial is ended, there will be no delay in putting the sentence into execution," continued D'Artagnan.

"And to what penalty do you think the king will be condemned?" asked Athos.

"To the penalty of death, I much fear; they have gone too far for him to pardon them, and there is nothing left to them but one thing, and that is to kill him. Do you not know Oliver Cromwell's speech when he came to Paris, and when he was shown the dungeon at Vincennes where Monsieur de Vendome was imprisoned?"

"What was that speech?" asked Porthos.

"Princes must be knocked on the head."

"I remember it," said Athos.

"And you fancy he will not put his maxim into execution now that he has hold of the king?"

"On the contrary, I am certain he will do so; but then there is the more reason why we must not abandon the august head so threatened."

"Athos, you are becoming mad."

"Well, you knew beforehand that you must perish!" said D'Artagnan.

"We fear so, and our only regret is, to die as far from you both."

"What will you do in a foreign land—an enemy's country?"

"I have traveled in England when young—I speak English like an Englishman—and, Aramis, too, knows something of the language. Ah! if we had you, my friends! With you, D'Artagnan, with you, Porthos—all four, and reunited for the first time for twenty years—we would dare, not only England, but the three kingdoms altogether!"

"And did you promise the queen," resumed D'Artagnan, petulantly, "to storm the Tower of London with a hundred thousand soldiers, to fight victoriously against the wishes of the nation and the ambition of a man, and when that man is called Cromwell? Do not exaggerate your duty. In Heaven's name, my dear Athos, do not make a useless sacrifice. When I see you now, you look like a reasonable being; when you speak, I seem to have to do with a madman. Come, Porthos, join me; say frankly, what do you think of this business?"

"Nothing good," replied Porthos.

"Come," continued D'Artagnan, who, irritated, that instead of listening to him, Athos seemed to be attending to his own thoughts, "you have never found yourself the worse for my advice. Well then, believe me, Athos, your mission is ended, and ended nobly—return to France with us."

"Friend," said Athos, "our resolution is unchangeable."

"Then you have some other motive unknown to us?"

Athos smiled, and D'Artagnan struck his heels in anger, and
muttered the most convincing reasons that he could discover; but to all these reasons Athos contented himself by replying with a calm sweet smile, and Aramis by nodding his head.

"Very well," cried D'Artagnan, at last, furious—"very well—since you wish it, let us leave our homes in this beggarly land, where it is always cold—where the fine weather comes after a fog, and a fog after rain—and the rain after the deluge—where the sun represents the moon, and the moon a cream cheese; in truth, whether we live here or elsewhere, matters little, since we must die."

"Only reflect, my good fellow," said Athos, "it is but dying rather sooner."

"Poor! a little sooner, or a little later, that isn't worth quarrelling about."

"But your future career, D'Artagnan?—your ambition, Porthos?"

"Our future, our ambition!" replied D'Artagnan, with feverish volatility; "Need we think of that since we are to save the king? The king saved—we shall assemble our friends together—we will herd the Puritans—re-conquer England; we shall re-enter London—and place him securely on his throne—"

"And he will make us dukes and peers," said Porthos, whose eyes sparkled with joy at this imaginary prospect.

"Or he will forget us," added D'Artagnan.

"Well then," said Athos, offering his hand to D'Artagnan,

"This settled," replied D'Artagnan. "I find England a charming country, and I stay—but only on one condition."

"What is it?"

"That I am not forced to learn English."

"Well, then, now," said Athos, triumphantly, "I swear to you, my friend, by the God who hears me—I believe that there is a power was mingled over our, and I hope we shall all meet in France."

"So be it!" said Athos, and the three friends started immediately in the same direction."

"Our good D'Artagnan," said Aramis, "represents among us the opposition in Parliament, which says always no, and does always ey."

"But which in the meantime saves the country," added Athos.

"Well, now that everything is decided," cried Porthos, rubbing his hands, "suppose we think of dinner? It seems to me that in the most critical positions of our lives we have always dined."

"Oh! yes, speak of dinner in a country where for a feast they eat boiled mutton, and where as a treat they drink beer. What the devil did you come to such a country for, Athos?"

"But I forgot," added the Gascon, smiling, "pardon, I forgot you are no longer Athos; but never mind, let us hear your plan for dinner, Porthos."

"My plan!"

"Yes, have you a plan?"

"No! I am hungry, that is all."

"Perseus, if that is all, I am hungry too; but it is not everything to be hungry, one must find something to eat, unless we browse on the grass, like our horses——"

"Ah!" exclaimed Aramis, who was not quite so indifferent to
the good things of the earth as Athos, "do you remember, when we were at Gravesend, the beautiful oysters that we ate?"

"And the legs of mutton of the salt marshes," said Porthos, smacking his lips.

"But," suggested D'Artagnan, "have we not our friend Musqueta, he who managed for us so well at Chantilly, Porthos?"

"By-the-bye," said Porthos, "we have Musqueta; but since he has been steward, he has become very fussy, never mind, let us call him; and to make sure that he will reply agreeably——"

"Here! Mouson," cried Porthos

Mouson appeared, with a very pitiful face.

"What is the matter, my dear M. Mouson?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Are you ill?"

"Sir, I am very hungry," replied Mouson.

"Well, it is just for that reason that we have called you, my good M. Mouson. Could you not procure us a few of those nice little rabbits, and some of those delicious portridges, of which you used to make friandises at the hotel?——"

"Faith, I do not remember the name of the hotel,"

"At the hotel of——" said Porthos, "by my faith—not do I remember it either."

"It does not matter; and a few of those bottles of old Burgundy wine, which cured your master so quickly of his spleen!"

"Ah! sir," said Musqueta, "I much fear that what you ask for are very rare things in this frugal country, and I think we should do better to go and seek hospitality from the owner of a little house that we see at the extremity of the wood."

"How! is there a house in the neighborhood?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Yes, sir," replied Musqueta.

"Well, let us, as you say, go and ask a dinner from the master of that house. What is your opinion, gentlemen, and does not M. Mouson's suggestion appear to you full of sense?"

"Oh! oh!" said Aramis, "I suppose the master is a Puritan?"

"So much the better, Mordions!" replied D'Artagnan; "if he is a Puritan, we will inform him of the capture of the king, and in honor of the news he will kill for us his white hens."

"But if he should be a Cavalier?" said Porthos.

"In that case we will put on an air of mourning, and we will pluck his black fowls."

"You are very happy," exclaimed Athos, laughing in spite of himself, at the sally of the irresistibleGascon; "for you see the bright side of everything."

"What would you have?" said D'Artagnan.

"I come from a land where there is not a cloud in the sky."

"It is not like this, then," said Porthos, stretching out his hand to assure himself whether a sensation of freshness which he had just felt on his cheek was not really caused by a drop of rain.

"Come, come," said D'Artagnan, "more reason why we should start on our journey—holo! Olim, Grimaud!"

Grimaud appeared.

"Well, Grimaud, my friend, have you seen anything?" asked the Gascon.
"Nothing!" replied Grimaud.
"Those idiots!" cried Athos. "They have not even pursued us. Oh! if we had been in their place!"
"Yes, they are wrong," said D'Artagnan. "I would willingly have said two words to Mordaunt in this little Thieves. See what a nice place for bringing down a man properly!"
"I think, decidedly," observed Aramis, "gentlemen, that the son is not so bad as his mother."
"What, my good fellow!" replied Athos; "wait awhile, we have scarcely left him two hours ago—he does not know yet in what direction we came, nor where we are. We may say that he is not equal to his mother when we put foot in France, if we are not poisoned or killed before then."
"Meanwhile let us dine," suggested Porthos.
"I'faith, yes," said Athos, "for I am hungry."
"Look out for the black lizards!" cried Aramis.
And the four friends, guided by Musqueton, took up the way toward the house, already almost restored to their former gaiety; for they were now, as Athos had said, all four united and of one mind.

CHAPTER LVIII
RESPECT TO PALLEN MAJESTY.

As our fugitives approached the house, they found the ground cut up, as if a considerable body of horsemen had preceded them. Before the door, the traces were yet more apparent; these horsemen, whoever they might be, had halted there.
"Eh!" cried D'Artagnan. "It's quite clear that the king and his escort have been by here."
He pushed open the door, and found the first room empty and deserted.
"Well!" cried Porthos.
"I can see nobody," said D'Artagnan. "Ahah"
"What!"
"Blood!"

At this word the three friends leapt from their horses, and entered. D'Artagnan had already opened the door of the second room, and, from the expression of his face, it was clear that he there beheld some extraordinary object.
The three friends drew near, and discovered a young man stretched on the ground, and bathed in a pool of blood. It was evident that he had attempted to regain his bed, but had not had the strength to do so.
Athos, who imagined that he saw him move, was the first to go up to him.
"Well?" inquired D'Artagnan.
"Well, if he is dead," said Athos, "he has not been so long; for he is still warm. But no, his heart is beating. Eh! there, my friend!"
The wounded man heaved a sigh. D'Artagnan took some water in the hollow of his hand, and threw it upon his face. The man