monarch, Athos had grasped his dagger. But D'Artagnan stopped his hand, and in a houmous voice cried, "Wait!"

Athos stopped. D'Artagnan leaning on Athos, made a sign to Porthos and Aramis to keep near them, and then placed himself behind the man with the bare arms, who was still laughing at his own vile pleasantry and receiving the congratulations of several others. The man took his way toward the city. The four friends followed him. The man who found the appearance of being a butcher, descended a little slope and isolated street, looking on to the river, with two of his friends. Arrived at the bank of the river, the three men perceived that they were followed, turned round, and looked insolently at the Frenchmen.

"Athos," said D'Artagnan, "will you interpret for me?"

At this D'Artagnan walked straight up to the butcher, and touching him on the chest with the tip of his finger, said to Athos:

"Say this to him in English:" You are a coward. You have insulted a defenseless man. You have boasted the face of your king. You must die..."

Athos, pale as a ghost, repeated these words to the man, who seeing the unpleasant preparations that were making, put himself in an attitude of defense. Aramis, at this movement, drew his sword.

"No, cried D'Artagnan, "no steel. Steel is for gentlemen."

And seizing the butcher by the throat,

"Porthos," said he, "knock the fellow down for me with a single blow."

Porthos raised his terrible arm, which whistled through the air like a stung, and the heavy mass fell with a dull noise on the skull of the coward, and broke it. The man fell like an ox under the mailed. His companions, horror struck, could neither move nor cry out.

"Tell them this, Athos," resumed D'Artagnan; "thus shall all die who forget that a fettered man wears a sacred head."

The two men looked at the body of their companion, swimming in black blood; and then recovering voice and legs together, ran shouting away.

"Justice is done," said Porthos, wiping his forehead.

"And now," said D'Artagnan to Athos, "do not have any doubts about me; I undertake everything that concerns the king."

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CHAPTER LXXI.

WHITFALL.

It was easy to foresee that the Parliament would condemn Charles to death. Political judgments are generally merely vain formalities, for the same passions which give rise to the accusation give rise also to the condemnation. Such is the terrible logic of revolutions.

Meanwhile, before our four friends could mature their plans, they determined to put every possible obstacle in the way of the execution of the sentence. To this end they resolved to get rid of the London executioner; for though, of course, another could be sent for from the nearest town, there would be still a delay of a day or
two gained. D'Artagnan undertook this more than difficult task. The next thing was to warn Charles of the attempt about to be made to save him. Aramis undertook the perilous office. Bishop Juxon had received permission to visit Charles in his prison at Whitehall; Aramis resolved to persuade the bishop to let him enter with him. Lastly, Athe's was to prepare, in every emergency, the means of leaving England.

The palace of Whitehall was guarded by three regiments of cavalry, and still more by the anxiety of Cromwell, who came and went, or sent his generals or his agents continually. Alone, in his usual room, lighted by two candles, the condemned monarch gazed sadly on the luxury of his past greatness. Just as, at the last hour, one sees the image of life Bilder and more brilliant than ever.

Perry had not quitted his master, and since his condemnation had not ceased to weep. Charles, leaning on a table, was gazing at a medallion of his wife and daughter; he was waiting first for Juxon, next for martyrdom.

"Alas!" he said, to himself, "if I only had for a confessor one of those lights of the Church, whose soul has rounded all the mysteries of life, all the littlenesses of greatness, perhaps his voice would choke the voice that walls within my soul. But I shall have a priest of vulgar mind, whose career and fortune I have ruined by my adversity. He will speak to me of God and of death, as he has spoken to many another dying man, not understanding that this one leaves his throne to an usurper, and his children to starve."

And he raised the medallion to his lips.

It was a dull, foggy night. A neighboring church clock slowly struck the hour. The pale light of the two candles raised flickering phantoms in the lofty room. These phantoms were the ancestors of King Charles, standing out from their gilt frames. A profound melancholy had possessed itself of Charles. He buried his brow in his hands, and thought of all that was so dear to him, now to be lost forever. He drew from his bosom the diamond cross which La Garretiere had sent him by the hands of those generous Frenchmen, and kissed it, and remembered that she would not see it again till he was lying cold and mutilated in the tomb.

Suddenly the door opened, and an ecclesiastic, in episcopal robes, entered, followed by two guards, to whom the king waved an imperious gesture. The guards retired. The room resumed its obscurity.

"Juxon!" cried Charles. "Juxon, thank you, my last friend, you are come at a fitting moment."

The bishop looked anxiously at the man sobbing in the ingle-nook. "Come, Parry," said the king, "cease your tears."

"If it's Parry," said the bishop, "I have nothing to fear: so allow me to salute your Majesty, and to tell him who I am, and for what I am come."

At this sight, and this voice, Charles was about to cry out, when Aramis placed his finger on his lips, and bowed low to the King of England.

"The knight!" murmured Charles.

"Yes, sire," interrupted Aramis, raising his voice, "the Bishop
Juxon, faithful knight of Christ, and obedient to your Majesty's wishes."

Charles clasped his hands, amazed and stupefied to find that these foreigners, without other motive than that which their conscience imposed on them, thus contrived the will of a people and the death of a king.

"Yooh!" he said, "you! how did you penetrate hither? If they recognize you, you are lost."

"Care not for me, sire: think only of yourself. You see, your friends are watchful. I know not what we shall do yet, but four determined men can do much. Meanwhile, do not be surprised at anything that happens; prepare yourself for every emergency."

Charles shook his head.

"Do you know that I die to-morrow, at ten o'clock?"

"Something, your Majesty, will happen, between now and then, to make the execution impossible."

At this moment a strange noise, like the unloading of a cart, and followed by a cry of pain, was heard beneath the window.

"What is this noise and this cry?" said Aramis, perplexed.

"I know not who can have uttered the cry," said the king, "but the noise is easily understood. Do you know that I am to be beheaded outside this window? Well, this wood, that you hear fall, is the posts and planks to build my scaffold. Some workman must have been hurt in unloading them."

Aramis shuddered in spite of himself.

"You see," said the king, "that it is useless for you to resist. I am condemned; leave me to my death."

"My king," said Aramis, "they may well raise a scaffold, but they cannot make an executioner."

"What do you mean?" asked the king.

"I mean that, at this hour, the headsman is removed by force or persuasion. The scaffold will be ready to-morrow, but the headsman will be wanting, and they will put it off till the day after to-morrow."

"What then?" said the king.

"To-morrow night we shall rescue you."

"Oh! sir," cried Parry, "may you and yours be blessed!"

"I know nothing about it," continued Aramis, "but the cleverest, the bravest, the most devoted of us four, said to me, when I left him, 'Knight, tell the king that to-morrow, at ten o'clock at night, we shall carry him off.' He has said it, and will do it."

"You are really wonderful men," said the king; "take my hand, knight; it is that of a friend, who will love you to the last."

Aramis stooped to kiss the king's hand, but Charles clasped his, and pressed it to his heart.

At this moment a man entered, without even knocking at the door. Aramis tried to withdraw his hand, but the king still held it. The man was one of those Puritans, half preacher and half soldier, who swarmed around Cromwell.

"What do you want, sir?" said the king.

"I desire to know if the confession of Charles Stuart is at an end?" said the stranger.
"And what is it to you?" replied the king: "we are not of the same religion."

All men are brothers," said the Puritan. "One of my brothers is about to die, and I come to prepare him."

"Bear with him," whispered Aramis; "it is doubtless some spy."

"After my reverend Lord Bishop," said the king, to the man, "I shall hear you with pleasure, sir."

The man retired, but not before examining the supposed Juxon with an attention which did not escape the king.

"Knight," said the king, when the door was closed, "I believe you are right, and that this man only came here with evil intentions. Take care that no misfortune befalls you when you leave."

"I thank your Majesty," said Aramis, "but, under these robes, I have a coat of mail and a dagger."

"Go, then, sir, and God keep you!"

The king accompanied him to the door, where Aramis pronounced his benediction upon him, and, passing through the ante-rooms, filled with soldiers, jumped into his carriage, and drove to the bishop's palace. Juxon was waiting for him impatiently.

Aramis resumed his own attire, and left Juxon with the assurance that he might again have recourse to him.

He had scarcely gone ten yards in the street, when he perceived that he was followed by a man, wrapped in a large cloak. He placed his hand on his dagger, and stopped. The man came straight toward him. It was Porthos.

"My dear friend," cried Aramis, "you see, we had each our mission," said Porthos; "mine was to guard you, and I was doing so. Have you seen the king?"

"Yes, and all goes well."

"We are to meet our friends at the hotel, at eleven."

It was then striking half past ten by St. Paul's.

Arrived at the hotel, it was not long before Athos entered.

"All's well," he cried, as he entered; "I have hired a little skiff, as narrow as a canoe, and as light as a swallow. It is waiting for us at Greenwich, opposite the Isle of Dogs, manned by a captain and four men, who, for the sum of fifty pounds sterling, will keep themselves at our disposition three successive nights. Once on board, we drop down the Thames, and, in two hours, are in the open sea. In case I am killed, the captain's name is Roger, and the skiff is called the 'Lightning.' A handkerchief, tied at the four corners, is to be the signal."

Next moment, D'Artagnan entered.

"Empty your pockets," said he; "I want a hundred pounds, and as for my own——" and he emptied them inside out.

The sum was collected in a minute. D'Artagnan ran out, and returned directly after.

"There," said he, "it's done. Ought and not without a deal of trouble too."

"Has the executioner left London?" said Aramis.

"No, he is in the cellar."

"The cellar; what cellar?"

"Our landlord's to be sure. Musqueton is sitting on the door, and here's the key."
"Bravo!" said Aramis; "but how did you manage it?"
"Like everything else—with money; it cost me dear."
"How much?" asked Athos.
"Five hundred pounds."
"And where did you get all that from?" said Athos.
"The queen’s famous diamond," answered D’Artagnan, with a sigh.
"Ah, true," said Aramis, "I recognized it on your finger."
"You bought it back, then, from Meneur des Essarts?" asked Porthos.
"Yes, but it was agreed that I should not keep it."
"Well, so much for the executioner," said Athos; "but, unfortunately, every executioner has his assistant, his man, or whatever you call him."
"And this one had his," said D’Artagnan; "but, as good luck would have it, just as I thought I should have two affairs to manage, my friend was brought home with a broken leg. In the exasperation of his zeal he had accompanied the cart containing the scaffolding as far as the king’s window, and one of the planks fell on his leg and broke it."
"Aha!" cried Aramis, "that accounts for the cry that I heard."
"Probably," said D’Artagnan; "but as he is a thoughtful young man, he promised to send four expert workmen in his place to help close a breach at the scaffold, and wrote the moment he was brought home, to Master Tom Lowe, an assistant carpenter and friend of his, to go down to Whitehall, with three of his friends. Here’s the letter he sent by a messenger for sixpence, who sold it to me for a guinea."
"And what on earth are you going to do with it?" asked Athos.
"Can’t you guess, my dear Athos? You, who speak English like John Bull himself, are Master Tom Lowe, we, your three companions. Do you understand now?"

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE WORKMEN.

Toward midnight Charles heard a great noise beneath his window. It arose from blows of the hammer and hatchet, clanking of pincers and creaking of saws.

Lying dressed upon his bed, this noise awoke him with a start, and found a gloomy echo in his heart. He could not endure it, and sent Parry to ask the sentinel to beg the workmen to strike more gently, and not disturb the last shudder of one who had been their king. The sentinel was unwilling to leave his post, but allowed Parry to pass.

Arriving at the window Parry found an unfinished scaffold, over which they were nailing a covering of black serge. Raised to the height of twenty feet, so as to be on a level with the window, it had two lower stories. Parry, odious as was this sight to him, sought for those among some eight or ten workmen, who were making the most noise; and fixed on two men, who were loosening the last hooks of the iron balcony.