"Then it is for to-day?" asked the king.
"Was not your Majesty warned that it was to take place this morning?"
"Then I must die like a common criminal by the hand of the London executioner."
"The London executioner has disappeared, your Majesty, but a man has offered his services instead. The execution will therefore only be delayed long enough for you to arrange your spiritual and temporal affairs."

A slight moisture on his brow was the only trace of emotion that Charles evinced, as he heard these tidings. But Aramis was livid. His heart ceased beating; he closed his eyes, and bent upon the table. Charles perceived it, and took his hand.
"Come, my friend," said he, "courage." Then he turned to the officer. "Sir, I am ready. I have little to delay you. Firstly, I wish to communicate; secondly, to embrace my children; and bid them farewell for the last time. Will this be permitted me?"
"Certainly," replied the officer, and left the room.
Aramis dug his nails into his flesh, and ground aloud.
"Oh! my Lord Bishop," he cried, seizing Juxon's hand.
"where is God; where is God?"
"My son," replied the bishop, with firmness, "you see him not, because the passions of the world conceal him."
"Be seated, Juxon," said the king, falling upon his knees. "I have now to confess to you. Remain, sir," he added, to Aramis, who had moved to leave the room. "Remain, Fawry. I have nothing to say that cannot be said before all."

Juxon sat down, and the king, kneeling humbly before him, began his confession.

CHAPTER LXIV.
REMEMBER!

The populace was already assembled, when the confession terminated. The king's children then arrived—first, the Princess Elizabeth, a beautiful, fair-haired child, with tears in her eyes, and then the Duke of Gloucester, a boy, eight or nine years old, whose fearless eyes and curling lip revealed a growing pride. He had wept all night long, but would not show his grief to the people. Charles's heart melted within him. He turned to brush away a tear, and then summoning up all his firmness, drew his daughter toward him, recommending her to be pious, and resigned. Then he took the boy upon his knee.
"My son," he said to him, "you saw a great number of people in the streets, as you came here. These men are going to behead your father. Do not forget that. Perhaps some day they will want to make you king, instead of the Prince of Wales, or the Duke of York, your elder brothers. But you are not the king, my son, and can never be so while they are alive. Swear to me, then, never to let them put the crown on your head. For one day—listen, my son—one day, if you do so, they will throw it all down, head and crown, too, and then you will not be able to die calm and remorseless, as I die. Swear, my son."
The child stretched out his little hand toward that of his father and said, "I swear to your Majesty."

"Dear," said Charles, "call me your father."

"Father," replied the child, "I swear to you, that they shall kill me, sooner than make me king."

"Good, my child! Now kiss me; and you, too, Elizabeth, never forget me."

"Oh! never, never," cried both the children, throwing their arms around their father's neck.

"Farewell," added Charles, "farewell, my children. Take them away, Juxon; their tears will deprive me of the courage to die."

Juxon led them away, and this time the doors were left open. Meanwhile, Athos, in his consternation, waited in vain the signal to recommence his work. Two long hours he waited in terrible inaction. A death-like silence reigned in the room above. At last, he determined to discover the cause of his stillness. He crept from his hole and stood, hidden by the black drapery, beneath the scaffold. Peeping out from the drapery, he could see the rows of halberdiers and musketeers round the scaffold, and the first ranks of the populace, swaying and groaning, like the sea.

"What is the matter, then?" he asked himself, trembling more than the cloth he was holding back. "The people are hurrying on, the soldiers under arms, and among the spectators I see D'Artagnan. What is he waiting for? What is he looking at? Good God! have they let the musketeer escape?"

Suddenly the dull beating of muffled drums filled the square. The sound of heavy steps was heard above his head. The next moment, the very planks of the scaffold creaked with the weight of an advancing procession, and the eager faces of the spectators confirmed what a last hope at the bottom of his heart had prevented him believing till then. At the same moment a well-known voice above him pronounced these words:

"Colonel, I want to speak to the people."

Athos shuddered from head to foot. It was the king speaking on the scaffold. By his side stood a man wearing a mask, and carrying an ax in his hand, which he afterward laid upon the block.

The sight of the mask excited a great amount of curiosity in the people, the foremost of whom strained their eyes to discover who it could be. But they could discern nothing but a man of middle height, dressed in black, apparently of a certain age, for the end of a gray beard peeped out from the bottom of the mask which concealed his features.

The king's request had undoubtedly been acceded to by an affirmative sign, for in firm, sonorous accents, which vibrated in the depths of Athos's heart, the king began his speech, explaining his conduct, and counselling them for the welfare of England.

He was interrupted by the noise of the ax grating on the block.

"Do not touch the ax," said the king, and resumed his speech.

At the end of his speech the king looked tenderly around upon the people. Then, unfastening the diamond ornament which the queen had sent him, he placed it in the hands of the priest who accompanied Juxon. Then he drew from his breast a little cross set
in diamonds, which, like the order, had been the gift of Henrietta Maria.

"Sir," said he to the priest, "I shall keep this cross in my hand till the last moment. You will take it from me when I am dead."

He then took his hat from his head, and threw it on the ground. One by one he untied the buttons of his doublet, took it off, and deposited it by the side of his hat. Then, as it was cold, he asked for his gown, which was brought to him.

All the preparations were made with a frightful calmness. One would have thought the king was going to bed, and not to his coffin. "Will these be in your way?" he said to the executioner, raising his long locks: "if so they can be tied up."

Charles accompanied these words with a look designed to penetrate the mask of the unknown executioner. His calm, noble gaze forced the man to turn away his head, and the king repeated his question.

"It will do," replied the man, in a deep voice, "if you separate them across the neck."

"This block is very low; is there no other to be had?"

"It is the usual block," answered the man in the mask.

"Do you think you can Behend me with a single blow?" asked the king.

"I hope so," was the reply. There was something so strange in these three words that everybody, except the king, shuddered.

"I do not wish to be taken by surprise," added the king. "I shall kneel down to pray, do not strike then."

"When shall I strike?"

"When I shall lay my head on the block, and say 'Remember!' then strike boldly."

"Gentlemen," said the king to those around him, "I leave you to braver the tempest, and go before you to a kingdom which knows no storms. Farewell."

Then he knelt down, made the sign of the cross, and lowering his face to the planks, as if he would have kissed them, said in a low tone, in French, "Comte de la Fare, are you there?"

"Yes, your Majesty," he answered, trembling.

"Faithful friend, noble heart!" said the king. "I should not have been rescued if I had not addressed my people, and I have spoken to God; last of all I speak to you. To maintain a cause which I believed sacred, I have lost the throne, and my children their inheritance. A million in gold remains, I buried it in the cellars of Newcastle. You only know that this money exists. Make use of it, then, whenever you think it will be most useful, for my eldest son’s welfare. And now, farewell."

"Farewell, saintly, martyred Majesty," replied Athos, chilled with terror.

A moment’s silence ensued, and then in a full, sonorous voice, the king said, "Remember!"

He had scarcely uttered the word, when a heavy blow shook the scaffold, and where Athos stood immovable a warm drop fell upon his brow. He reeled back with a shudder, and the same moment the drops became a black torrent.

Athos fell on his knees, and remained some moments as if
bemused on stunned. At last he rose, and taking his handker-
chief, steeped it in the blood of the martyred king. Then as the
crowd gradually dispersed he knelt down, crept from behind the
drapery, glided between two horses, mingled with the crowd, and
was the first to arrive at the inn.
Having gained his room, he raised his hand to his forehead, and
finding his fingers covered with the king's blood, fell down ins-
sensible.

CHAPTER LXXV.

THE MAN IN THE MASK.

The snow was falling thick, and frozen. Aramis was the next
to come in, and to discover Athos almost insensible. But at the
first words he uttered, the Count roused from the kind of lethargy
in which he had sunk.
"Are you wounded?" cried Aramis.
"No, this is his blood."
"Where were you, then?"
"Where you left me—under the scaffold."
"Did you see it all?"
"No, but I heard all. God preserve me from another such hour
as I have just passed."
"Here is the order he gave me, and the cross I took from his
hand; I desired they should be returned to the queen."
"Then here is a handkerchief to wrap them in," replied Athos,
drawing from his pocket the one he had steeped in the king's
blood.
"And what," he continued, "has been done with the wretched
body?"
"By order of Cromwell, royal honors will be accorded to it.
The doctors are embalming the corpse, and, when it is ready, it
will be placed in a lighted chapel."
"Mockery," muttered Athos, savagely; "royal honors to one
whom they have murdered!"
"Well, cheer up," said a loud voice from the staircase, which
Porthos had just mounted. "We are all mortal, my poor friend."
"Yes, there were some people on the way who delayed me. The
wretches were dancing. I took one of them by the throat, and
think I throttled him a little. Just then a patrol rode up. Luckily
the man I had had most to do with was some minutes recovering be-
fore he could speak, so I took advantage of his silence to walk off."
"Have you seen D'Artagnan?"
"We got separated in the crowd, and I could not find him
again."
"Oh!" said Athos satirically, "I saw him. He was in the front
row of the crowd, admirably placed for seeing; and, as on the
whole, the sight was curious, he probably wished to stay to the end."
"Ah! Count de la Fere," said a calm voice, though hoarse with
running, "is it you who calumniate the absent?"
This reproach stung Athos to the heart, but as the impression pro