"Come along," he said; and he went toward the door of the second compartment.

"Stop!" said the Englishman. "I have the key of that door;" and he opened the door, with a trembling hand, into the second compartment, where Musqueton and Blasios were preparing supper.

There was evidently nothing to seek, or to reprehend, and they passed rapidly to examine the third compartment.

This was the room appropriated to the sailors. Two or three hammocks hung up on the ceiling a table and two benches composed all the furniture. D'Artagnan picked up two or three old sails, hung on the walls, and seeing nothing to suspect, regained, by the lateteway, the deck of the vessel.

"And this room?" he asked, pointing to the captain's cabin.

"That's my room," replied Groslot.

"Open the door."

The captain obeyed. D'Artagnan stretched out his arm, in which he held the lantern, put his head in at the half-opened door, and seeing that the cabin was nothing better than a shed;

"Good," he said. "If there is an army on board it is not here that it is hidden. Let us see what Porthos has found for supper."

And thanking the captain, he regained the state cabin, where his friends were.

Porthos had found nothing; and fatigue had prevailed over hunger. He had fallen asleep, and was in a profound slumber when D'Artagnan returned. Athos and Aramis were beginning to close their eyes, which they half opened when their companion came in again.

"Well!" said Aramis.

"All is well; we may sleep tranquilly."

On this assurance the two friends fell asleep; and D'Artagnan, who was very weary, made good night to Grimaud, and laid himself down in his cloack, with naked sword at his side, in such a manner that his body might barricade the passage, and that it should be impossible to enter the room without overturning him.

CHAPTER LXIX.

PORT WINE.

In ten minutes the masters slept; not so the servants—hungry and uncomfortable.

"Grimaud," said Musqueton to his companion, who had just come in after his round with D'Artagnan, "art thou thirsty?"

"As thirsty as a Scotchman!" was Grimaud's laconic reply.

And he sat down and began to cast up the accounts of his party, whose money he managed.

"Oh law! luckadaisy! I'm beginning to feel queer!" cried Blasios.

"If that's the case," said Musqueton, with a learned air, "take some nourishment."

"Do you call that nourishment?" said Blasios, pointing to the barley bread and the pot of beer.
"Blaisois," replied Musqueton, "remember that bread is the true nourishment of a Frenchman, who is not always able to get bread: ask Grimaud."

"Yes, but beer!" asked Blaisois, sharply; "is that their true drink?"

"As to that," answered Musqueton, puzzled how to get out of the difficulty, "I must confess, that to me, beer is as disagreeable as wine to the English."

"Howl, Monsieur Musqueton! How—the English—do they dislike wine?"

"They hate it."

"But I have seen them drink it."

"As a punishment; for example, an English prince died one day because he was put into a butt ofMahouy. I heare the Chevalier d'Herblay say so."

"The fool!" cried Blaisois; "I wish I had been in his place."

"Then canst be," said Grimaud, writing down his figures.

"How?" asked Blaisois. "I can? Explain yourself."

Grimaud went on with his sum, and cast up the whole.

"Port," he said, extending his hand in the direction of the first compartment examined by D'Artagnan and himself.

"How—those barrels I saw through the door?"

"Port!" replied Grimaud, who began a fresh sum.

"I have heard," said Blaisois, "that port is a very good wine."

"Excellent!" cried Musqueton, smacking his lips.

"Excellent!"

"Supposing these Englishmen would sell us a bottle," said the honest Blaisois.

"Sell!" cried Musqueton, about whom there was a rumour of his ancient surrounding character left. "One may well perceive, young man, that you are still inexperienced. Why buy when one can take?"

"To take?" answered Blaisois. "To covet one's neighbor's goods is forbidden, I believe."

"What a childish reason!" said Musqueton, condescendingly;

"yes, childish; I repeat the word. Where did you learn, pray, to consider the English as your neighbors?"

"The saying's true, dear Monsieur; but I don't remember where?"

"Childish—still more childish," replied Musqueton. "Hadst thou been ten years engaged in war as Grimaud and I have been, my dear Blaisois, you would know the difference that is between the goods of others and the goods of your enemies. Now an Englishman is an enemy; as this port wine belongs to the English, therefore it belongs to us."

"And our masters?" asked Blaisois, stupified by this harangue, delivered with an air of profound sagacity, "will they be of your opinion?"

Musqueton smiled disdainfully.

"I suppose that you think it necessary that I should disturb the repose of these illustrious lords to say, 'Gentlemen, your servant, Musqueton, is thirsty.' What does Monsieur Bracalleau care, think you, whether I am thirsty or not?"

"It's a very expensive wine," said Blaisois, shaking his head.
"Woe be it gold, Monsieur Blaisois, our masters would not deny themselves this wine. Know that Monsieur de Bracleux is rich enough to drink a tun of port wine, even if obliged to pay a pistare for every drop;" his manner became more and more lofty every instant; then he arose, and after finishing off the beer at one draught, he advanced majestically to the door of the compartment where the wine was. "Ah! located!" he exclaimed; "these devils of English, how suspicious they are!"

"Shut," said Blaisois; "ah! the dense it is; unlucky, for I feel the sickness coming on more and more."

"Simili," repeated Musqueton.

"But," Blaisois ventured to say, "I have heard you relate, Monsieur Musqueton, that once on a time, at Chantilly, you fed your master and yourself with partridges which were smeared, carp caught by a line, and wine drawn with a corkscrew;"

"Perfectly true; but there was an air-hole in the cellar, and the wine was in bottles. I cannot throw the loop through this partition, nor move with a pack-thread a cask of wine which may, perhaps, weigh two hundred pounds."

"No, but you can take out two or three boards of the partition," answered Blaisois, "and make a hole in the cask with a gimlet."

Musqueton opened his great round eyes to the utmost, astonished to find in Blaisois qualities for which he did not give him credit.

"Tis true," he said; "but where can I get a chisel to take the planks out—a gimlet to pierce the cask?"

"The trowsers," said Grimaud, still balancing his accounts.

"Ah, yes!" said Musqueton.

Grimaud, in fact, was not only the accountant, but the armorer of the party; and as he was a man full of forethought, these trowsers, carefully rolled up in his valise, contained every sort of tool for immediate use.

Musqueton, therefore, was soon provided with tools, and he began his task. In a few minutes he had got out three pieces of board. He tried to pass his body through the aperture; but not being taller than the table, who thought he was larger than he really was, he found he must take out three or four more pieces of wood before he could get through.

He sighed, and began to work again.

Grimaud had now finished his accounts. He arose, and stood near Musqueton.

"I," he said.

"What?" said Musqueton.

"I can pass," answered Musqueton, casting a glance at the long thin form of his friend; "you can pass, and easily—go in then."

"Rinse the glasses," said Grimaud.

"Now," said Musqueton, addressing Blaisois; "now you will see how we old soldiers drink when we are thirsty."

"My cloak," said Grimaud, from the bottom of the hold.

"What do you want?" asked Blaisois.

"My cloak—stop up the aperture with it."

"Why?" asked Blaisois.
“Simpleton!” exclaimed Musqueton; “suppose any one came to the room.”

“Ah, true!” cried Blaisois, with evident admiration; “but it will be dark in the cellar.”

“Grimald always sees, dark or light—night as well as day,” answered Musqueton.

“Silence,” cried Grimald, “some one is coming.”

In fact, the door of their cabin was opened. Two men, wrapped in their cloaks, appeared.

“Oh, ho!” said they, “not in bed at a quarter past eleven. That’s against all rules. In a quarter of an hour let every one be in bed, and snoring.”

These two men then went toward the compartment in which Grimald was seated; opened the door, entered, and shut it after them.

“Ah!” cried Blaisois; “he’s lost!”

“Grimald’s a cunning fox,” murmured Musqueton.

They waited for ten minutes, during which time no noise was heard which might indicate that Grimald was discovered; and at the expiration of that anxious interval the two men returned, closed the door after them, and repeating their orders that the servants should go to bed, and extinguish their lights, disappeared.

At that very moment Grimald drew back the cloak which hid the aperture, and came in with his face livid, his eyes staring wide open with terror, so that the pupils were contracted almost to nothing, with a large circle of white around them. He held in his hand a tankard full of some substance or another; and approaching the gleam of light shed by the lamp he uttered this single monosyllable—“Oh!” with such an expression of extreme terror that Musqueton startled, alarmed, and Blaisois was near fainting from fright.

Both, however, cast an inquisitive glance into the tankard—it was full of powder.

Convinced that the ship was full of powder instead of having a cargo of wine, Grimald hastened to awake D’Artagnan, who had no sooner beheld him than he perceived that something extraordinary had taken place. Imposing silence, Grimald put out the little night lamp, then knelt down, and poured into the lieutenant’s ear a recital melodramatic enough not to require play of feature to give it force.

This was the pith of his strange story.

The first barrel that Grimald had found on passing into the compartment he struck—it was empty. He passed on to another—it was also empty; but the third which he tried was, from the dull sound that it gave out, evidently full. At this point, Grimald stopped, and was preparing to make a hole with his gun, when he found a spigot; he therefore placed his tankard under it, and turned the spout; something, whatever it was that the cask contained, fell into the tankard.

Whilst he was thinking that he should first taste the liquor which the tankard contained, before taking it to his companions, the door of the cellar opened, and a man with a lantern in his hands, and enveloped in a cloak, came and stood just before the barrel, behind which Grimald, on hearing him come in, instantly crept. This was
Groslow. He was accompanied by another man who carried in his hand something long and flexible, rolled up, resembling a washing line.

"Have you the wick?" asked the one who carried the lantern.

"Here it is," answered the other.

At the sound of this last speaker, Grimaud started, and felt a shudder creeping through his very bones. He rose gently, so that his head was just above the round of the barrel; and, under the large hat, he recognized the pale face of Moreau.

"How long will this match burn?" asked this person.

"Nearly five minutes," replied the captain.

"Then tell the men to be in readiness—don't tell them why now; when the clock strikes a quarter after midnight collect your men. Get down into the long boat."

"That is when I have lighted the match?"

"I shall undertake that. I wish to be sure of my revenge—are the oars in the boat?"

"Everything is ready."

"It is well."

Moreau knelt down and fastened one end of the train to the splint, in order that he might have nothing to do but to set it on fire at the opposite end with the match.

He then rose.

"You hear me—at a quarter past midnight—in fact, in twenty minutes."

"I understand it all perfectly, sir," replied Groslow; "but allow me to say, there is great danger in what you undertake—would it not be better to entrust one of the men to set fire to the train?"

"My dear Groslow," answered Moreau, "you know the French proverb, 'Nothing that one does not do one's self is ever well done.' I shall abide by that rule."

Grimaud had heard all this—and seen the two mortal enemies of the Musketeers—had seen Moreau lay the train; then he felt, and felt again, the contents of the tankard that he held in his hand; and, instead of the liquid expected by Rhaisol and Musqueton, he found beneath his fingers the grains of some coarse powder.

Moreau went away with the captain. At the door he stopped to listen.

"Do you hear how they sleep?" he said.

In fact, Portos could be heard snoring through the partitions.

"The God who gives them into our hands," answered Groslow.

"This time the devil himself shall not save them," rejoined Moreau.

And they went out together.

CHAPTER LXX.

END OF THE PORT-WINE MYSTERY.

D'Artagnan, as one may suppose, listened to all these details with a growing interest. He awoke Aramis, Athos, and Portos; and then, stretching out his arm, and closing them again, the Gascon collected in one small circle the three heads of his friends, so near as almost to touch each other.