When people can swim at all they can swim everywhere. To the bark! to the bark!"

"But Porthos, I do not see him."

"Porthos is coming—he swims like Leviathan."

Porthos, in fact, did not appear. Musqueta and Balsais had been unrolled by the sight of the black gulf below them, and had shrunk back.

"Come along! I shall strangle you both if you don't get out," said Porthos, at last seizing Musqueta by the throat.

"Forward! Balsais."

A groan, stifled by the grasp of Porthos, was all the reply of poor Balsais, for the giant, taking him neck and heels, plunged him into the water head foremost, pushing him out by the window as if he had been a plunk.

"Now, Musqueta," he said, "I hope you don't mean to desert your master?"

"Ah, sir," replied Musqueta, his eyes filling with tears, "why did you go enter the army? We were so happy in the Château de Pierrefonds!"

And, without any complaint, passive and obedient, either from true devotion to his master, or from the example set by Balsais, Musqueta went into the sea head foremost. A sublime action, at all events, for Musqueta looked upon himself as dead. But Porthos was not a man to abandon an old servant; and when Musqueta rose above the water blinded, he found that he was supported by the large hand of Porthos, and that he could, without having occasion even to move, advance toward the cable with the dignity of a sea-god.

In a few minutes, Porthos had rejoined his companions, who were already in the boat; but when, after they had all got in, it came to his turn, there was great danger that in putting his huge leg over the edge of the boat he would have upset the little vessel. Athos was the last to enter.

"Are you all here?" he asked.

"All? have you your sword, Athos?" cried D'Artagnan.

"Yes."

"Cut the cable, then."

Athos drew a sharp point from his belt, and cut the cord. The felucca went on; the boat continued stationary, only moved by the waves.

"Come, Athos!" said D'Artagnan, giving his hand to the count; "you are going to see something curious," added the Gascon.

CHAPTER LXXI.

FATALITY.

So suddenly had D'Artagnan uttered these words than a ringing and sudden noise was heard resounding through the felucca, which now became dim in the obscurity of the night.

"That, you may be sure," said the Gascon, "meant something."

They then, at the same instant, perceived a large lantern carried on a pole appear on the deck, defining the forms of shadows behind it.

SHADOWS ran, as if bewildered, to and fro on the vessel, and mournful cries accompanied these dismal wanderers. In the midst of these screams they saw standing on the top of the poop, Mor- danth, with a torch in his hand.

The figures apparently excited with terror were Groslov, who, at the hour fixed by Mor danth, had collected his men, and the sailors. Groslov, after having listened at the door of the cabin to hear if the musketeers were still asleep, had gone down into the cellar, convinced by their silence that they were all in a deep slumber. Then Mor danth ran to the train—insanctuous as a man who is excited by revenge and full of confidence—as are those whom God blinds—he had set fire to the sulphur.

All this while, Groslov and his men were assembled on deck.

"Haul up the cable, and draw the boat to us," said Groslov.

One of the sailors got down the side of the ship, 'cled the cable, and drew it—it came without any resistance.

"The cable is cut!" he cried. "no boat!"

"Haul! no cannot!" exclaimed Groslov; "it's impossible."

"Tis true, however," answered the sailor; "there's nothing in the wake of the ship, besides here's the end of the cable."

"What's the matter?" cried Mor danth, who, coming up out of the hatchway, rushed to the stern, his torch in his hand.

"Only that our enemies have escaped—they have cut the cord, and gone off with the boat."

Mor danth bounded with one step to the cabin, and kicked open the door.

"Empty!" he exclaimed; "the demons!"

"We must pursue them," said Groslov; "they can't be gone far, and we shall sink them, passing over them."

"Yes, but the fire," ejaculated Mor danth; "I have lighted it."

"A thousand devils!" cried Groslov, rushing to the hatchway; "perhaps there is still time to save us."

Mor danth answered only by a terrible laugh, threw his torch into the sea, and then plunged himself into it. The instant that Groslov put his foot upon the steps of the hatchway, the ship opened like the crater of a volcano. A burst of flames arose toward the skies with an explosion like that of a thousand cannon; the air burned, ignited by embers in flames; then the frightful lightning dissipated, the embers sunk down, one after another, into the abyss, where they were extinguished, and, except for a slight vibration in the air, after a few minutes had elapsed, one would have thought that nothing had happened.

Only—the sediuncas had disappeared from the surface of the sea, and Groslov and his three sailors were consumed.

The four friends saw all this—not a single detail of this fearful scene escaped them. At one moment bathed as they were in a flood of brilliant light, which illuminated the sea for the space of a league, they might each be seen—each in his own peculiar attitude and
manner, expressing the awe which, even in their hearts of bronze, they could not help feeling. Soon the torrent of flame fell all around them—then, at last, the volcano was extinguished—all was dark—the floating bark and the heaving ocean.

They were all silent and dejected.

"By heaven!" at last said Athos, the first to speak, "by this time, I think, all must be over."

"Here, my lords! save me! help!" cried a voice, whose mournful accents reaching the four friends, seemed to proceed from some phantom of the ocean.

All looked around—Athos himself started.

"Tis he! 'tis his voice!"

All still remained silent—the eyes of all were still turned in the direction where the vessel had disappeared—endeavoring in vain to penetrate the darkness. After a minute or two they were able to distinguish a man, who approached them, swimming vigorously.

Athos extended his arm toward him—"Yes, yes, I know him well," he said.

"He—again!" cried Porthos, who was breathing like a blacksmith's bellows, "why, he's made of iron."

"Oh my God!" muttered Athos.

Aramis and D'Artagnan whispered to each other.

Mordant made several strokes more, and raising his arm in sign of distress above the waves—"Pity, pity on us! gentlemen—in Heaven's name—I feel my strength failing me; I am dying."

The voice that imprisoned him was so piteous, that it awakened pity in the heart of Athos.

"Miserable wretch!" he exclaimed.

"Indeed!" said D'Artagnan, "people have only to complain to you. I believe he's swimming toward us. Does he think we are going to take him in? Row, Porthos, row."

And setting the example, he lowered his ear into the sea—two strokes took the bark on twenty fathoms further.

"Ah! ah! said Porthos to Mordant. "I think we have you here, my hero!"

"Oh! Porthos!" murmured the Comte de la Ferre.

"Oh pray! for mercy's sake don't fly from me. For pity's sake!" cried the young man, whose agonized breathing at times, when his head was under the wave, made the oily waters bubble.

D'Artagnan, however, who had consulted with Aramis spoke to the poor wretch. "Go away," he said, "your repentance is too recent to inspire confidence. See! the vessel in which you wished to try us is still smoking; and the situation in which you are is a hell of prison compared to that in which you wished to place us, and in which you have placed Monsieur Graslow and his companions."

"Sir!" replied Mordant, in a tone of deep despair, "my penitence is sincere. Gentlemen, I am young, scarcely twenty-three years old. I was drawn on by a very natural resentment to avenge my mother. You would have done what I did."

Mordant wanted now only two or three fathoms to reach the boat—for the approach of death seemed to give him supernatural strength.
TWENTY YEARS AFTER.

"Alas!" be said, "I am then to die? you are going to kill the son, as you killed the mother! Surely, if I am culpable, and if I ask for pardon, I ought to be forgiven."

Then—as if his strength failed him—he seemed unable to sustain himself above the water, and a wave passed over his head, which drowned his voice.

"Oh! that agonises me!" cried Athos.

Mordaunt reappeared.

"For my part," said D'Artagnan, "I say, this must come to an end; murder as you were of your uncle's executioner, as you were of King Charles' inauditory! I recommend you to sink forthwith to the bottom of the sea; and if you come another fathom nearer, I'll break your head with my cur."

"D'Artagnan! D'Artagnan?" cried Athos, "my son! I entreat you; the wretch is dying; and it is horrible to let a man die without extending a hand to save him. I cannot resist doing so; he must live."

"Zounds!" replied D'Artagnan, "why don't you give yourself up directly, feet and hands bound, to that wretch? Ah! Comte de la Fere, you wish to perish by his hands! I, your son, as you call me: I will not let you!"

"Twas the first time that D'Artagnan had ever refused a request from Athos.

Aramis calmly drew his sword, which he carried between his teeth as he swam.

"If he lays his hand on the boat's edge, I will cut it off—regicide as he is."

"And I," said Porthos, "Wait."

"What are you going to do?" asked Aramis.

"To throw myself in the water, and strangle him."

"Oh, gentlemen!" cried Athos, "be meet! Be Christian! See! death is depicted on his face! Ah! do not bring on me the horrors of recollection! Grant me this poor wretch's life. I will bless you."

"I am dying!" cried Mordaunt, "come to me! come to me!"

D'Artagnan began to be touched. The boat at this moment turned round; and the dying man was by that turn brought nearer to Athos.

"Monseur le Comte de la Fere," he cried, "I supplicate you! pity me! I call on you! where are you? I see you no longer—I am dying—help me! help me!"

"Here I am, sir!" said Athos, leaning, and stretching out his arm to Mordaunt with that air of dignity and nobleness of soul habitual to him, "here I am, take my hand, and jump into our boat."

Mordaunt made a last effort—rose—seized the hand thus extended to him, and grasped it with the vehemence of despair.

"That's right," said Athos, "put your other hand here." And he offered him his shoulder as another stay and support, so that his head almost touched that of Mordaunt; and these two mortal enemies were in as close an embrace as if they had been brothers.

"Now, sir," said the count, "you are safe—calm yourself."

"Ah! my mother," cried Mordaunt, with an eye of fire and a
look of hatred impossible to describe, “I can only offer thee one
victim, but it shall, at any rate, be the one whom thou wouldst have
chosen!”

And whilst D’Artagnan uttered a cry, whilst Porthos raised the
ear, and Aramis sought a place to strike, a frightful shake given to
the boat precipitated Athos into the sea; whilst Mordaunt, with a
shout of triumph, grasped the neck of his victim, and, in order to
paralyze his movements, interwove his legs with his—as a serpent
might have done around some object. For an instant, without uttering
an exclamation, without a cry for help, Athos tried to sustain
himself on the surface of the waters, but the weight dragged him
down; he disappeared by degrees; soon, nothing was to be seen
except his long floating hair; then everything disappeared, and the
bubbling of the water, which, in its turn was effaced, alone indicated
the spot where these two men had sunk.

Mute with horror, the three friends had remained open-mouthed,
their eyes dilated, their arms extended like statues, and, motionless
as they were, the beating of their hearts was audible. Porthos was
the first who came to himself—he tore his hair.

“Oh!” he cried, “Ach! Athos! thou man of noble heart; woe
is me! I have let thee perish!”

At this instant, in the midst of a vast circle, illumined by the light
of the moon, the same which had been made by the sinking
men, was again obvious, and first, were seen, rising above the
waves, locks of hair—then a face, pale, with open eyes, yet,
nevertheless, those of death; then a body which, after having raised itself
even to the waist above the sea, turned gently on its back, according
to the caprice of the waves, and floated.

In the bosom of this corpse was plunged a postilion, the gold hilt
of which shone in the moon-beams.

“Mordaunt! Mordaunt!” cried the three friends, “tis Mor-
daunt!”

“But Athos!” exclaimed D’Artagnan.

Suddenly the boat leaned on one side beneath a new and unex-
pected weight, and Grimaud uttered a shout of joy; every one
turned round, and behold Athos, livid, his eyes dim, and his hands
trembling, supporting himself on the edge of the boat. Eight vig-
norous arms bore him up immediately, and laid him in the boat,
where, directly, Athos was warmed, reanimated, reviving with the
careness and cares of his friends, who were intoxicated with joy.

“You are not hurt?” asked D’Artagnan.

“No,” replied Athos, “and he—”

“Oh, ho! now we may say, thank God! he is really dead. Look!”

—and D’Artagnan, obliging Athos to look in the direction that he
pointed, showed him the body of Mordaunt floating on its back,
and which, sometimes submerged, sometimes rising, seemed still to
pursue the four friends with a look full of immit and mortal hatred.

At last, he sunk, Athos had followed him with a glance in
which the deepest melancholy and pity were expressed.

“Bravo, Athos!” cried Aramis, with an emotion very rare in him.

“A capital blow you saved!” cried Porthos.

“I have a son,” said Athos: “I wished to live.”
"In short," said D'Artagnan, "this has been the will of God."
"It is not I who killed him," added Athos in a soft, low tone,
"it is destiny."

CHAPTER LXII.

How Musquetaux, after being very nearly roasted, had a narrow escape of being eaten.

A deep silence reigned for a long time in the boat after the fearful scene just described.

The moon, which had shone for a short time, disappeared behind the clouds: every object was again plunged in that obscurity so awful in deserts, and still more so in that liquid desert, the ocean, and nothing was heard, save the whistling of the west wind driving along the tops of the crested billows.

Porthos was the first to speak.

"I have seen," he said, "many things; but nothing that ever shocked me so much as what I have just witnessed. Nevertheless, even in my present state of perturbation, I protest I feel happy. I have a hundred pounds' weight less upon my chest. I breathe more freely." "In fact, Porthos breathed so loud as to do credit to the powerful play of his lungs.

"For my part," observed Aramis, "I cannot say the same as you do, Porthos. I am still terrified to such a degree that I scarcely believe my eyes. I look around the boat, expecting, every moment, to see that poor wretch holding in his hands the poniard which was plunged into his heart."

"Oh! I am quite easy," replied Porthos. "The poniard was pointed at the sixth rib, and buried up to the hilt in his body. I do not reproach you, Athos, for what you have done; quite the contrary; when one ainsi a blow, that is the way to strike. So now, I breathe again, I am happy!"

"Don't be in haste to celebrate a victory, Porthos," interposed D'Artagnan; "never have we incurred a greater danger than we are now encountering. A man may subdue a man—he can't conquer an element. We are now on the sea, at night, without any pilot, in a frail bark; should a blast of wind upset the boat, we are lost."

Musquetaux heaved a deep sigh.

"You are ungrateful, D'Artagnan," said Athos; "yes, ungrateful to Providence—in whom we owe our safety in a miraculous manner. Let us sail before the wind, and, unless it changes, we shall be drifted either to Calais or Boulogne. Should our bark be upset, we are five of us good swimmers, and able enough to turn it over again; or, if not, to hold on by it. Now we are on the very road which all the vessels between Dover and Calais take, 'tis impossible but that we should meet with a fisherman who will pick us up."

"But should we not find any fisherman, and should the wind shift to the north?"

"Then," said Athos, "it would be quite another thing; and we should never see land until we were on the other side of the Atlantic."