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"Well, one day when no one could drive a mob of citizens, who began to march, some with the right foot, others with the left, I succeeded, I did, in making them all begin with the same foot, and I was made a lieutenant on the field."

"So, I presume," said Athos, "that you have a large number of the nobles with you?"

"Certainly. There are the Prince de Conti, the Duc de Longueville, the Duc de Beaufort, the Duc de Bouillon, the Marechal de la Mothe, the Marquis de Savigny, and I don't know who, for my part."

"And the Vicomte Raoul de Bragelonne?" inquired Athos, in a tremendously voice; "D'Artagnan told me that he had recommended him to your care, in parting."

"Yes, count; nor have I lost sight of him for an instant since." "Then," said Athos, in a tone of delight, "he is well? no accident has happened him?"

"None, sir."

"And he lives?"

"Still—at the hotel of the Great Charlemagne."

"And pass his time?"

"Sometimes with the queen of England—sometimes with Madame de Chevreuse. He and the Count de Guiche are never asunder."

"Thanks—Planchet—thanks," cried Athos, extending his hand to his lieutenant.

"Oh, sir!" Planchet only touched the tips of the count's fingers.

"Oh, sir!—and now, gentlemen, what do you intend to do?"

"To re-enter Paris—if you will let us, my good Planchet."

"Let you, sir?—I am nothing but your servant!" Then turning to his men:

"Allow these gentlemen to pass," he said; "they are friends of the Duc de Beaufort."

"Long live the Duc de Beaufort!" cried all the sentinels.

"Farewell till we meet again," said Aramis, as they took leave of Planchet; "if anything happens to us, we shall blame you for it."

"Sir," answered Planchet, "I am in all things yours to command."

"That fellow is no fool," said Aramis, as he got on his horse.

"How should he be?" replied Athos, whilst mounting also, 

"seeing that he has been so long used to brush his master's hat?"

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CHAPTER LXXIV.

THE EMBASSADORS.

The two friends rode rapidly down the declivity of the Faubourg, put on arriving at the bottom were surprised to find that the streets of Paris had become rivers—and the open places, lakes; after the great rains which fell in the month of January, the Seine had overflowed its banks, and the river inundated half the capital. The two gentlemen were obliged, therefore, to get off their horses, and take a boat, and in that manner they approached the Louvre.
Night had closed in, and Paris seen thus, by the light of some lanterns, flickering on the pools of water, with boats laden with patrols with glittering arms, the watchword passing from post to post—Paris presented such an aspect as to seize strongly on the senses of Aramis—a man most susceptible of warlike impressions. They reached the queen's apartments, and were instantly admitted to the presence of Henrietta Maria, who uttered a cry of joy on hearing of their arrival.

"Let them come in! let them come in!" exclaimed the poor queen.

"Let them come in!" repeated the young princess, who had never left her mother's side—but essayed in vain to make her forget, by her ill-inclination, the absence of her two sons and her other daughter.

"Come in, gentlemen," repeated the princess, opening the door herself.

The queen was seated in a fauteuil, and before her were standing two or three gentlemen, and, among them, the Duc de Chatillon, the brother of the nobleman who was killed eight or nine years previously in a duel, on account of Madame de Longueville, on the Place Royale. All these gentlemen had been noticed by Athos and Aramis in the guard-house—and, when the two friends were announced, they started, and exchanged some words in a low tone.

"Well, sir?" cried the queen, on perceiving the two friends, "you are come—faithful friends! but the royal couriers have been more expeditious than you; and here are Monsieur de Flaharey and Monsieur de Chatillon, who bring me from her Majesty the queen, Anne of Austria, the most recent intelligence."

Aramis and Athos were astounded by the calmness—even the gravity of the queen's manner.

"Go on with your recital, sirs," said the queen, turning to the Duc de Chatillon. "You said that his majesty, King Charles, my august consort, had been condemned to death by a majority of his subjects?"

"Yes, madame," Chatillon stammered out.

Athos and Aramis seemed more and more astonished.

"And that being conducted to the scaffold," resumed the queen—"Oh, my God! oh, my king!—and that being led to the scaffold he had been saved by an indignant people?"

"Just so, madame," replied Chatillon, in so low a voice that though the two friends were listening eagerly they could hardly hear this affirmation.

The queen clasped her hands in enthusiastic gratitude, whilst her daughter threw her arms round her mother's neck, and kissed her—her own eyes streaming with tears.

"Now, madame, nothing remains to me except to proffer my respectful homage," said Chatillon, who felt confused and ashamed beneath the stern gaze of Athos.

"One moment, yes," answered the queen. "One moment—I beg—for here are the Chevalier d'Herbey and the Comte de la Fere—just arrived from London, and they can give you, as eye-witnesses, such details as you can convey to the queen, my royal sister. Speak, gentlemen, speak—I am listening—conceal nothing—gloss over noth-
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leg. Since his Majesty still lives—since the honor of the throne is in safety, everything else is a matter of indifference to me."

Athos turned pale, and laid his hand on his heart.

"Well!" exclaimed the queen, who remarked this movement and this paleness. "Speak, sir! I beg you to do so."

"I beg you to excuse me, madam—I wish to add nothing to the recital of these gentlemen until they perceive themselves that they have, perhaps, been mistaken."

"Mistaken!" cried the queen, almost suffocated by emotion—"mistaken! what has happened, then?"

"Sir," interposed Monseur de Flamarens to Athos, "if we are mistaken, the error has originated with the queen. I do not suppose you will have the presumption to say it to rights—that would be to accuse her Majesty, Queen Anne, of falsehood."

Athos sighed deeply.

"Or rather, sir," said Aramis, with his bristling politeness, "the error of that person who was with you when we met you in the guard-room; for if the Comte de la Fare and I are not mistaken, when we saw you there you had with you a third gentleman."

Chantillon and Flamarens started.

"Explain yourself, count!" cried the queen, whose anguish became greater every moment. "On your word I read despair—your lips falter, are you announcing some terrible tidings—your hands tremble. Oh, my God! my God! what has happened?"

"Lords!" ejaculated the young princess, falling on her knees, "have mercy on us!"

A short altercation ensued in a low tone between the Duc de Chantillon and Aramis, during which Athos, his hands on his heart, his head bent low, approached the queen, and in a voice of deep sorrow, said:

"Madame! princes—who by nature are above other men—receive from Heaven courage to support greater misfortunes than those at lower rank, for their hearts are elevated as their fortunes. We ought not, therefore, I think, to act toward a queen so illustrious as your Majesty, as we should do toward a woman of our lower condition. Queen—destined as you are to endure every sorrow on this earth, bear the result of our mission."

Athos, kneeling down before the queen, trembling and very cold, drew from his bosom, inclosed in the same case, the order set in diamonds, which the queen had given to Lord de Winter, and the wedding-rings which Charles I. before his death had placed in the hands of Aramis. Since the moment that he had first received these two things Athos had never parted with them.

He opened the case, and offered them to the queen, with silent and deep anguish.

The queen stretched out her hand—seized the ring—pressed it convulsively to her lips—and without being able to breathe, a sigh, to give vent to a sob, she extended her arms, became deadly pale, and fell senseless in the arms of her attendants and her daughter.

Athos kissed the hem of the robe of the widowed queen, and rising, with a dignity that made a deep impression on those around:

"I, the Comte de la Fare, a gentleman who has never deceived any human being, swear before God, and before this unhappy
queen, that all that was possible to save the King of England was done whilst we were on English ground. Now, chevalier," he added, turning to Aramis, "let us go. Our duty is fulfilled."

"Not yet," said Aramis; "we have still a word to say to these gentlemen."

And turning to Chatillon, he said: "Sir, be so good as not to go away without hearing something that I cannot say before the queen."

Chatillon bowed in token of assent, and they all went out, stopping at the window of a gallery on the ground floor.

"Sir," said Aramis, "you allowed yourself just now to treat us in a most extraordinary manner."

"Sir!" cried De Chatillon.

"What have you done with Monsieur de Bruy? Has he, perchance, gone to change his face, which was too like that of Monsieur de Mouchy? There are abundance of Italian masks at the Palais Royal—from Harlequin even to pantaloon."

"Chevalier! chevalier!" said Athos.

"Leave me alone," replied Aramis, impatiently. "I don't like things that stop half way."

"Finish, then, sir," answered De Chatillon, with as much hauteur as Aramis.

"Gentlemen," resumed Aramis, "any one but the Comte de la Fere and myself would have had you arrested—for we have friends in Paris—but we are contented with another course. Come and talk with us for five minutes—sword in hand—upon this deserted terrace."

"Willingly," replied De Chatillon.

"Duke," said Funnogenesis, "you forget that to-morrow you are to command an expedition of the greatest importance, projected by the prince, assisted to by the queen. Until to-morrow evening you are not at your own disposal."

"Let it be then the day after to-morrow," said Aramis.

"To-morrow, rather," said De Chatillon, "and if you will take the trouble of coming so far as the gates of Charenton."

"Well, then, to-morrow. Pray, are you going to rejoin your Cardinal? Swear, first, on your honor, not to inform him of our return."

De Chatillon looked at him. There was so much of irony in his speech, that the duke had great difficulty in bridling his anger, but, at a word from Funnogenesis, he restrained himself, and contented himself with saying:

"You promise me, sir—that's agreed—that I shall find you to-morrow at Charenton?"

"Oh, sir, don't be afraid," replied Aramis; and the two gentlemen shortly afterward left the Louvre.

"For what reason is all this fume and fury?" asked Athos.

"What have they done to you?"

"They did,—did you not see them?"

"No."

"They laughed when we swore that we had done our duty in England. Now, if they believed us, they laughed in order to insult us; if they did not believe it, they insulted us still more. However,
I'm glad not to fight them until to-morrow. I hope to have something better to do to-night than to draw my sword."

"What have you to do?"

"Eager to take Mazarin."

Athos curled his lip with disdain.

"These undertakings do not suit me, as you know, Aramis."

"Why?"

"Because they are taking people unawares."

"Really, Athos, you would make a singular general. You would fight only by broad daylight. Warn your foe before an attack; and never attempt anything by night, lest you should be accused of taking advantage of the darkness."

Athos smiled.

"Say, at once, you disapprove of my proposal."

"I think you ought to do nothing; since you exacted a promise from these gentlemen not to let Mazarin know that we were in France."

"I have entered into no engagement, and consider myself quite free. Come, come."

"Where?"

"Either to seek the Duc de Beaufort, or the Duc de Bouillon, and to tell them about this."

"Yes, but on one condition—that we begin by the Commissor. He is a priest, learned in cases of conscience, and we will tell him ours."

It was then agreed that they were to go first to Monsieur de Bouillon, as his house came first; but first of all Athos begged that he might go to the Hôtel du Grand Charlemagne, to see Raoul.

They re-entered the boat which had brought them to the Louvre, and went thence to the Halles; and finding there Grimaud and Blaisdes, they proceeded to the Rue Gueneau.

But Raoul was not at the Hôtel du Grand Charlemagne. He had received a message from the prince, to whom he had hastened with Olrivain the instant he had received it.

CHAPTER LXXV.

THE THREE LIEUTENANTS OF THE GENERALISSIMO.

The night was dark and the town still resounded with all those noises which disclose a city in a state of siege. Athos and Aramis did not proceed a hundred steps without being stopped by sentinels placed before the barricades, who asked them the word; and on their saying that they were going to Monsieur de Bouillon on a mission of importance, a guide was given them under pretext of conducting them, but, in fact, as a watch over their movements.

On arriving at the Hôtel de Bouillon, they came across a little troop of three cavaliers, who seemed to know every possible watch-word; for they walked without either guide or escort, and on arriving at the barricades had nothing to do but to speak to those who guarded them, and who let them pass with all the deference due probably to their birth.

On seeing them Athos and Aramis stood still.