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?"
"Egad! 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 Comtat. 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 Baisse, they proceeded to the Rue Grenéguad.
But Raoul was not at the Hôtel du Grand Charlemagne. He had received a message from the prince, to whom he had hastened with Olivan the instant he had received it.

CHAPTER LXXV.

THE THREE LIEUTENANTS OF THE GENERALISSIMO.

The night was dark and the town still resonated 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.
"Oh!" cried Aramis, "do you see, count?"
"Yes," said Athos.
"Who do those three cavaliers appear to you to be? These are our men."
"You are not mistaken; I recognize Monsieur de Flamarens."
"And Monsieur de Chaillou."
"As to the cavalier in the brown cloak——"
"It is the Cardinal."
"How the devil do they venture so near the Hôtel de Bouillon?"
Athos smiled, but did not reply. Five minutes afterward they knocked at the prince's door.
This door was guarded by a sentinel, and there was also a guard placed in the courtyard, ready to obey the orders of the lieutenant of the Prince de Conti.
Monsieur de Bouillon had the gout, and was in bed; but notwithstanding his illness, which had prevented his mounting on horseback for the last month—that is, since Paris has been besieged—he was ready to receive the Comte de la Fère and the Chevalier d'Hercy.
He was in bed, but surrounded with all the paraphernalia of war. Everywhere were swords, pistols, cuirasses, and armchairs, and it was plain that as soon as his gout was cured, Monsieur de Bouillon would give a pretty sieve of silk to the enemies of the Parliament to unravel. Meanwhile, to his great regret, as he said, he was obliged to keep his bed.
"Oh, gentlemen," he cried, as the two friends entered, "you are very happy! you can ride. Come, go fight for the cause of the people. But I, as you see, am nailed to my bed—all this demon, the gout—this demon, the gout!"
"My lord," said Athos, "we are just arrived from England, and our first concern is to inquire after your health."
"Thanks, gentlemen, thanks! As you see, my health is bad, but you come from England. And King Charles is well, as I have just heard!"
"He is dead, my lord!" said Aramis.
"Pooh!" said the duke, astonished.
"Dead on the scaffold, sentenced by the Parliament."
"Impossible!"
"And executed in our presence."
"What, then, has Monsieur de Flamarens been saying to me?"
"Monsieur de Flamarens?"
"Yes, he has just gone out. Deuce take it! this gout!" said the duke.
"My lord," said Athos, "we admire your devotion to the cause you have espoused, in remaining at the head of the army whilst so ill, in so much pain."
"One must," replied Monsieur de Bouillon "sacrifice one's self to the public good; but, I confess to you, I am now almost exhausted. My spirit is willing, my head is clear, but this demon, the gout, calls me. I confess, if the court would do justice to my claims, and give to the head of my house the title of prince, and if my brother De Turenne were reinstated in his command, I would return to my estates and leave the court and the Parliament to settle things between themselves as they could."
"You are perfectly right, my lord."
"You think so? At this very moment the court is making overtures to me; Aramis, I reproach them; but since such men as you assure me that I am wrong in doing so, I've a good mind to follow your advice, and to accept a proposition made to me by the Duke de Chatillon, just now."
"Accept it, my lord, accept it," said Aramis.
He and Athos then took their departure.
"And what think you of the Duke de Bouillon?" asked Aramis of his friend.
"I think," answered Athos, "that we have acted wisely in not breathing a syllable of the reason for our visit; and now let us proceed forthwith to the Hôtel de Vendôme." It was ten o'clock when they reached it, and they found it as closely guarded as that of the Duke de Bouillon. As they entered the courtyard, two cavaliers were coming out, and Athos and Aramis recognized the Duke de Chatillon and Monsieur de Flamarens, who had evidently been paying their respects to the Duke de Beaufort.
Scarcely had the two friends dismounted, when a man approached them, and after looking at them for an instant by the double light of the lantern hung in the center of the courtyard, he uttered an exclamation of joy, and ran to embrace them.
"Rochefort?" cried the two friends.
"Yes! we arrived four or five days ago from the Vendômois, as you know, and, we are going to give Mazardin something to do. You are still with us, I presume?"
"More than ever. And the duke?"
"Purloined against the Cardinal. You know his success, our dear duke? He's really the king of Paris; he can't go out without being almost stifled."
"Ah! so much the better! Can we have the honor of seeing his highness?"
"I shall be proud to present you," and Rochefort walked on: every door was opened to him. Monsieur de Beaufort was at supper, but he rose quickly on hearing the two friends announced.
"Ah!" he cried, "by Jove! you're welcome, sir. You are coming to sup with me, are you not? Balsgoff, tell Noirmont that I have two guests. You know Noirmont, do you not? The successor of Father Marteau, who makes the excellent plums you know about. Balsgoff, let him send one of his best, but not such a one as he made for La Rance. Thank God! we don't want either repose, or choke-pears."
"My lord," said Athos, "do not let us disturb you. We came merely to inquire after your health, and to take your orders."
"As to my health, since it has stood five years of prison, with Monsieur de Chavigny to boot, it's excellent! As to my orders, since every one gives his own commands in our party, I shall end, if this goes on, in giving none at all."
"In short, my lord," said Athos, glancing at Aramis, "your highness is discontented with your party?"
Discontented, sir,—say that my highness is furious! To such a degree, I assure you, though I would not say so to others, that if the queen, acknowledging the injuries she has done me, would re-
call my mother, and give me the reversion of the Admiralty, which belonged to my father, and was promised to me at his death, well! I should not be long before I could train dogs to say, that there were greater traitors in France than the Cardinal Mazarin!"

At this Athos and Aramis could not help exchanging not only a look but a smile; and, had they not known it for a fact, they could have been sure that De Chatillon and De Flamarens had been there before them.

"My lord," said Athos, "we are satisfied—we came here only to express our loyalty, and to say that we are at your lordship's service, and his most faithful servants," and, bowing low, they went out.

"My dear Athos," cried Aramis; "I think you consented to accompany me only to give me a lesson—God forgive me!"

"Wait a little, Aramis; it will be time for you to perceive my motive when we have paid our visit to the Coadjutor."

"Let us, then, go to the Archdeaconal palace," said Aramis. They directed their horses to the city. On arriving at the cradle from which Paris sprang, they found it inundated with water; and it was again necessary to take a boat. The palace rose from the bosom of the water, and, to see the number of boats around it, one would have fancied one's self not in Paris, but in Venice. Some of these boats were dark and mysterious—others noisy, and lighted up with torches. The friends slid in between this confusion of embarkations, and landed in their turn. All the palace was under water, but a kind of staircase had been fixed to the lower walls; and the only difference was, that instead of entering by the doors, people entered by the windows.

Thus did Athos and Aramis make their appearance in the ante-chamber, where about a dozen noblemen were collected and waiting.

"Good heavens!" said Aramis to Athos, "does the Coadjutor intend to indulge himself in the pleasure of making us wait in his ante-chamber?"

"My dear friend, we must take the people as we find them. The Coadjutor is at this moment one of the seven kings of Paris, and has a court. Let us send in our names, and if he does not send us a suitable message, we will leave him to his own affairs, or those of France. Let us call one of these luckies, with a denunciation in our hand. Exactly so—ah! if I'm not mistaken, here's Bazin. Come here, fellow!"

Bazin, who was crossing the ante-chamber majestically in his clerical dress, turned round to see who the impertinent gentleman was who thus addressed him; but seeing his friend, he went up to him quickly, and expressed great delight on seeing him.

"A truce to compliments," said Aramis; "we want to see the Coadjutor, and instantly, as we are in haste."

"Certainly, sir—it is not such lords as you are who are allowed to wait in the ante-chamber, only just now he has a secret conference with Monsieur de Bruy."

"De Bruy!" cried the friends; "tis then useless our seeing Monsieur the Coadjutor this evening," said Aramis, "so we give it up."
And they hasteened to quit the palace, followed by Bazin, who was lavish of his bows and compliments.

At ten o’clock the next day the friends met again.

There were still no tidings of D’Artagnan or Porthos, whom they had expected. Raoul was gone to Saint Cloud, in consequence of a message from the Prince de Conde, and had not returned; and Aramis had not been able to see Madame de Longueville, who was installed at the Hotel de Ville, where she played the part of queen, not having quite courage enough, as Aramis remarked, to take up her abode at the Palais Royal or the Tulleries.

"Well, then," said Athos, "now, what shall we do this evening?"

"You forget, my friend, that we have work cut out for us in the direction of Charenton; I hope to see Monsieur de Chatillon, whom I’ve hated for a long time, there."

"Why have you hated him?"

"Because he is the brother of Coligny."

"Ah, true! he who presumed to be a rival of yours, for which he was severely punished—that ought to satisfy you."

"Yes, but it does not; I am rancorous, the only point which shows me to be a churchman; Do you understand?"

"Let us go then, Aramis."

"If we go there is no time to lose; the drum has beat; I saw cannon on the road; I saw the citizens in order of battle on the Place of the Hotel de Ville; certainly the fight will be in the direction of Charenton, as the Duc de Châtillon said."

"Poor creatures!" said Athos, "who are going to be killed, in order that Monsieur de Bouillon should have his estate at Sceaux restored to him, that the revolution of the Admiralty should be given to the Duc de Beaufort, and that the Condé should be made a Cardinal."

"Come! come, dear Athos, you will not be so philosophical if your Raoul should happen to be in all this confusion."

"Perhaps you speak the truth, Aramis."

"Well, let us go, then, where the fighting is, for that is the most likely place to meet with D’Artagnan, Porthos, and Raoul. Stop, there are a fine body of citizens passing; quite attractive, by Jupiter! and their captains! see! in the true military style."

"What ho?" said Grimaud.

"What?" asked Athos.

"Punchet, sir."

"Lieutenant yesterday," said Aramis, "a captain to-day, a colonel doubtless, to-morrow: in a week the fellow will be a field-marshal of France."

"Ask him some questions about the fight," said Athos.

Punchet, prouder than ever of his new duties, deemed it fit to explain, to the two gentlemen that he was ordered to take up his position on the Place Royale, where two hundred men formed the rear of the army of Paris, and to march toward Charenton, when necessary.

"The day will be warm," said Punchet, in a warlike tone.

But the friends, not caring to mix themselves up with the citizens, set off toward Charenton, and passed the valley of Pecamp, darkened by the presence of armed troops.