"Well," resumed Athos, "I recur to my first proposal. I know no better means than to act with candor. I shall seek, not Mazarin, but the queen—and say to her, 'Madame, restore to us your two servants and our two friends.'"

Aramis shook his head.

"Tis a last resource; but let us not employ it till it is imperatively necessary, lest we rather confound our researches."

They continued their inquiries, and at last met with a Light Dragoon, who had formed one of the guard which had rescued D'Artagnan to Raoul, by which they knew that they had entered that town.

Athos, however, peremptorily recurred to his proposed interview with the queen.

"I shall go," he said, "to the queen."

"Well, then," answered Aramis, "pray tell me a day or two beforehand, that I may take that opportunity of going to Paris."

"To whom?"

"Zounds! how do I know? perhaps to Madame de Longueville. She is all powerful yonder; she will help me. But send me word whether you be arrested, for then I will return directly."

"Why do you not take your chance, and be arrested with me?"

"No, I thank you."

"Should we, by being arrested, be all four together again, we should not, I am sure, be twenty-four hours in prison without getting free."

"My friend, since I killed Chaillot, the adored of the ladies of St. Germain, I have too great a celebrity not to fear a prison doubtless. The queen is likely to follow Mazarin's counsels, and to have me tried."

"Do you think that she loves this Italian so much as they say she does?"

"She loved an Englishman passionately."

"Well, my friend, she is a woman."

"No, no, you are deceived—she is a queen."

"Dear friend, I shall sacrifice myself, and go and see Anne of Austria."

"Adieu, Athos, I am going to raise an army."

"For what purpose?"

"To come back, and besiege Raoul."

"Where shall we meet again?"

"At the foot of the Cardinal's gallows."

The two friends departed—Aramis to return to Paris, Athos to take some measure preparatory to an interview with the queen.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

THE GRATITUDE OF ANNE OF AUSTRIA.

Athos found much less difficulty than he had expected in obtaining an audience of Anne of Austria; it was granted, and was to take place, after her morning's "levee," at which, in accordance with the rights he derived from his birth, he was entitled to be present. A vast crowd filled the apartments of St. Germain; Anne had never,
at the Louvre, had so large a court; but this court represented chiefly the second class of nobility, while the Prince de Conti, the Duc de Beaufort, and the Contiather assembled around them the first men in France.

The greatest possible gaiety prevailed at the court. The particular characteristic of this was, that more songs were made than cannon fired during its continuance. The court made songs on the Parisians, and the Parisians on the court; and the wounds, though not mortal, were painful, as they were made by the arms of ridicule.

In the midst of this seeming hilarity, nevertheless, people's minds were uneasy. Was Mazarin to remain the favorite and minister of the queen? was he to be carried back by the wind which had blown him there? Every one hoped so, so that the minister felt that all around him, beneath the homage of the courtiers, lay a fund of hatred, ill disguised by fear and interest. He was ill at ease and at loss what to do.

Conde himself, whilst fighting for him, lost no opportunity of ridiculing, or of humbling him. The queen, on whom he threw himself as his sole support, seemed to him now very little to be relied upon.

When the hour appointed for the audience arrived, Athos was obliged to stay until the queen, who was waited upon by a new delegation from Paris, had consulted with her minister as to the propriety and manner of receiving them. All were fully engrossed with the affairs of the day, and there could be few opportunities less favorable to make an appeal upon; but Athos was a man of inflexible temper, and insisted on his right of being admitted into the queen's presence. Accordingly, at the close of the audience, she sent for him to her room.

The name of the Count de la Fere was then announced to Anne. Of course she had heard that name, and felt that it had made her heart beat; nevertheless, she remained unmoved, and was contented to look steadfastly at this gentleman, with that set stare which can alone be permitted to a queen.

"Do you come, then, to offer me your services?" she asked, after some moments' silence.

"Yes, madame," replied Athos, shocked at her not recognizing him. Athos had a noble heart, and made, therefore, but a poor courtier.

Anne frowned. Mazarin, who was sitting at a table, folding up papers, as if he had only been a secretary of state, looked up.

"Speak," said the queen.

Mazarin turned again to his papers.

"Madame," resumed Athos, "two of my friends, named D'Artagnan and Porthos, sent to England by the Cardinal, have suddenly disappeared ever since they set foot on the shores of France; no one knows what has become of them."

"Well?" said the queen.

"I address myself, therefore, first to the benevolence of your Majesty, that I may know what has become of my friends, reserving to myself, if necessary, the right of appealing afterward to your justice."

"Sir," replied Anne, with a degree of laugheiness, which, to her
TWO YEARS AFTER.

The Cardinal saw that it was now high time to come to the assistance of Anne.

"Sir," he said, "I can tell you what is at present unknown to her Majesty. These individuals are under arrest; they disobeyed orders."

"I beg of your Majesty, then," said Athos, calm and not replying to Mazarin, "to take off these arrests from Monseur d'Artagnan and Du Vallon."

"What you ask is an affair of discipline and police," said the queen.

"Monseur d'Artagnan never made such an answer as that when the service of your Majesty was concerned," said Athos, bowing with great dignity. He was going toward the door, when Mazarin stopped him.

"You have also been in England, sir?" he said, making a sign to the queen, who was evidently going to issue a severe order.

"I was present at the last hours of Charles I. Poor king! culpable, at the most, of weakness, how crudely punished by his subjects! Thrones are at this time shaken, and it is of little purpose for devoted hearts to serve the interests of princes. This is the second time that Monseur d'Artagnan has been in England. He went the first time to save the honor of a great queen; the second, to avert the death of a great king."

"Sir," said Anne to Mazarin, with an accent from which daily habits of dissimulation could not entirely chase the real expression, "see if we can do something for these gentlemen."

"I wish to do, madame, all that your Majesty pleases."

"Do what Monseur de la Fare requests; that is your name, is it not, sir?"

"I have another name, madame—I am called Athos."

"Madame," said Mazarin, with a smile, "you may be easy; your wishes shall be fulfilled."

"You hear, sir?" said the queen.

"Yes, madame, I expect nothing less from the justice of your Majesty. May I not then go and see my friends?"

"Yes, sir, you shall see them. But, apropos, you belong to the Prudent, do you not?"

"Madame, I serve the king."

"Yes, in your own way."

"My way is the way of all gentlemen; and I know only one way," answered Athos, haughtily.
"Go, sir, then," said the queen: "you have obtained what you wish, and we know all we wish to know."
Sarcely, however, had the tapestry closed behind Athos than she added to Mazarin:
"Cardinal, desire them to arrest that insolent fellow before he leaves the court."
"Your Majesty," answered Mazarin, "desires me to do only what I was going to ask you to let me do. These bravoes who bring back to our epoch the traditions of the other reign are troublesome; since there are two of them already there, let us add a third."
Athos was not completely the queen's dupe, but he was not a man to run away merely an suspicion—above all, when discreetly told that he should see his friends again. He waited, then, in the ante-chamber with impatience, till he should be conducted to them.
He walked to the window and looked into the court. He saw the deputation from the Parisians enter it: they were coming to sign the definitive place for the conference, and to make their bow to the queen. A very imposing escort awaited them without the gates.
Athos was looking intently, when some one touched him lightly on the shoulder.
"Ah! Monsieur de Comminges," he said.
"Yes, count, and charged with a commission for which I beg of you to accept my excuses."
"What is it?"
"Be so good as to give me up your sword, count."
Athos smiled, and opened the window.
"Aramis!" he cried.
A gentleman turned round. Athos fancied he had seen him among the crowd. It was Aramis. He bowed with great friendliness.
"Aramis," cried Athos, "I am arrested."
"Good," replied Aramis, calmly.
"Sir," said Athos, turning to Comminges, and giving him politely his sword by the hilt—"here is my sword; have the kindness to keep it for me until I shall quit my prison. I prize it—it was given to me by an ancestor of yours, a king of France. In his time they armed gentlemen; they did not disarm them. Now, whither do you conduct me?"
"Into my room at first," replied Comminges: "the queen will ultimately decide on the place of your domicile."
Athos followed Comminges without saying a single word.

CHAPTER LXXXIX.

THE ROYALTY OF CARDINAL MAZARIN.

The arrests produced no sensation, and were almost unknown, and scarcely interrupted the course of events. To the deputation it was formally announced that the queen would receive it. Accordingly, it was admitted to the presence of Anne, who, silent and lofty as ever, listened to the speeches and complaints of the