"My way is the way of all gentleman; 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 said 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 braves 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 on 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 députation from the Parisians enter it; they were coming to sign the definitive place for the conferences, 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 softly on the shoulder.

"Ah! Monseur 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 to the count.

"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 my ancestors by King Francis I. In his time they arm'd 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 LXXIX.

THE ROYALTY OF CARDINAL MAZARIN.

The arrests produced no sensation, and were almost unknown, and scarcely interrupted the course of events. To the députation 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
deputes; but when they had finished their harangues, not one of them could say, so calm had been her face, whether she had heard them or not. Whilst thus she was silent, Mazari, who was present and knew what the deputes asked, answered in these terms:

"Gentlemen," he said, "I shall join with you in supplicating the queen to put an end to the miseries of her subjects. I have done all in my power to ameliorate them, and yet the belief of the public, you say, is that they proceed from me, an unhappy foreigner who has been unable to please the French. Ah! I have never been understood, and no wonder. I succeeded a man of the most sublime genius that ever upheld the scepter of France. The memory of Richelieu annihilates me. In vain—were I an ambitious man—should I struggle against such a remembrance as he has left; but that I am not ambitious, I am going to prove to you. I own myself conquered. I shall obey the wishes of the people. If Paris has injuries to complain of, who has not some wrongs to be redressed? Paris has been sufficiently punished—enough blood has flowed—enough misery has humbled a town deprived of its king, and of its justice. "Fix not for me, a private individual, to disimize a queen from her kingdom. Since you require my resignation, I shall retire."

"Then," said Aramis, in his neighbor's ear, "the conferences are over. There is nothing to do but to send Monsieur Mazari to the most distant frontier, and to take care that he does not return even by that, nor any other entrance into France."

"One instant, sir," said the man in a gown, whom he addressed; "a plague on't! how fast you go! one may soon see that you're a soldier. There's the article of remunerations and indemnifications to be discussed and set to rights."

"Chancellor," said the queen, turning to this same man, "do you, our old acquaintance, open the conferences. They can take place at Besançon. The Cardinal has said several things which have agitated me, therefore, I do not speak more fully now. As to his going or staying, I feel too much gratitude to the Cardinal not to leave him free in all his actions; he shall do what he wishes to do."

A transient pallor overspread the speaking countenance of the prime minister; he looked at the queen with anxiety. Her face was so passionless, that he was, as every one else was, incapable of reading her thoughts.

"But," added the queen, "in awaiting the Cardinal's decision let there be, if you please, a reference to the king only."

The deputes bowed, and left the room.

"What!" exclaimed the queen, when the last of them had quitted the apartment, "you would yield to these limbs of the law these advocates?"

"To promote your Majesty's welfare, madame," replied Mazari, fixing his penetrating eyes on the queen; "there's so much sacrifice that I would not make."

Anne dropped her head and fell into one of those ruminations so habitual with her. Her recollection of Athos came into her mind. His fearless demeanor, his words, so firm, yet so dignified, the shades which by one word he had evoked, recurred to her the past in all its intoxication of poetry and romance, youth, beauty, the exist of
Mazarin looked at her, and whilst she deemed herself alone and freed from the world of events who sought to pry into her secret thoughts, he read her thoughts in her countenance, as one sees in a transparentlake clouds pass—reflections, like thoughts, of the heavens.

"Must we then," asked Anne of Austria, "yield to the storm, purchase a peace, and await patiently and piously for better times."

Mazarin smiled sarcastically at this speech, which showed that she had taken the minister's proposal seriously.

Anne's head was bent down, and she did not see this smile; but finding that her question elicited no reply, she looked up.

"Well, you do not answer, Cardinal; what do you think about it?"

"I am thinking, madame, of the illusion made by that innocent gentleman, whom you have caused to be arrested, to the Duke of Buckingham—to him whom you suffered to be assassinated—to the Duchess de Chevreuse, whom you suffered to be exiled—to the Duc de Beaufort, whom you exiled; but he made no illusion to me, because he is ignorant of the relation in which I stand to you."

Anne drew up, as she always did, when anything touched her pride. She blushed, and that she might not answer, clasped her beautiful hands till her sharp nails almost pierced them.

"That man has sagacity, honor, and wit, not to mention likewise that he is a man of undoubted resolution. You knew something about him, do you not, madame? I shall tell him, therefore, and in doing so I shall confer a personal favor on him, how he is mistaken in regard to me. What is proposed to me would be, in fact, almost an abdication, and an abdication requires reflection."

"An abdication?" repeated Anne, "I thought, sir, that it was only kings who abdicated?"

"Well," replied Mazarin, "and am I not almost a king—king, indeed, of France? Thrown over the foot of the royal bed, my dear, madame, is not unlike the mantle worn by a king."

This was one of the humiliations which Mazarin made Anne undergo more frequently than any other, and which bowed her head with shame. Queen Elizabeth and Catherine II. of Russia are the only two monarchs on record who were at once sovereigns and lovers. Anne of Austria looked with a sort of terror at the threatening aspect of the Cardinal—his physiognomy in such moments was not destitute of a certain grandeur.

"Sir," she replied, "did I not say, and did you not hear me say to those people, that you should do as you pleased?"

"In that case," said Mazarin, "I think it must please me best to remain: not only on account of my own interest, but for your safety."

"Remain, then, sir; nothing can be more agreeable to me; only do not allow me to be insulted."

"You are referring to the demands of the rebels, and to the tone in which they stated them? Patience! They have selected a field of battle on which I am an elder general than they are— that of a
conference. No, we shall beat them by merely temporizing. They want food already. They will be ten times worse off in a week."
"Ah, yes! Good heavens! I know it will end in that way; but it is not they who want me with the most wounding reproaches—but—"
"I understand; you mean to allude to the recollections perpetually revived by these three gentlemen. However, we have them safe in prison and they are just sufficiently culpable for us to keep them in prison as long as is convenient to us. One, only, is still not in our power, and braves us. But, devil take him! we shall soon succeed in sending him to rejoin his companions. We have accomplished more difficult things than that. In the first place, I have, as a precaution, shut up, at Rocil, near me, under my own eyes, within reach of my hand, the two most intractable ones. To-day the third will be there also."
"As long as they are in prison all will be well," said Anne; "but one of these days they will get out."
"Yes; if your Majesty releases them."
"Ah!" exclaimed Anne, following the train of her own thoughts on such occasions; "one regrets Paris!"
"Why so?"
"On account of the Bastile, sir; which is so strong and so secure."
"Madame, these conferences will bring us peace; when we have peace we shall regain Paris; with Paris, the Bastile, and our three bulwarks shall rot therein."
Anne frowned slightly, when Mazarin, in taking leave, kissed her hand.
Mazarin, after this half humble, half gallant attention, went away. Anne followed him with her eyes, and as he withdrew, at every step he took, a disdainful smile was seen playing, then gradually burst upon her lips.
"I once," she said, "desired the love of a Cardinal who never said 'I shall do,' but 'I have done.' That man knew of retreats more secure than Rocil—darker and more silent even than the Bastile. Oh, the degenerate world!"

CHAPTER LXXX.
PRECAUTIONS.

After quitting Anne, Mazarin took the road to Rocil, where he usually resided; in those times of disturbance he went about with numerous followers, and often disguised himself. In the military dress he was, indeed, as we have before stated, a very handsome man.
In the court of the old château of St. Germaine, he entered his coach, and reached the Sêne at Châtillon. The prince had supplied him with fifty light horse, not so much by way of a guard, as to show the deputies how readily the queen's generals dispersed their troops, and to prove that they might be scattered about at pleasure. Alone, on horseback, without his sword, and kept in sight by Comminges, followed the Cardinal in silence. Grimaud, finding that his