"Portos, my friend," said D'Artagnan, "don't distrust Providence! Let me meditate and consider."

"Meditate and consider as much as you like," replied Portos, who was now quite out of humor at seeing things take this turn.

"We have walked eight paces," whispered D'Artagnan, "and gone up six steps, so hereabouts is the pavilion called the Pavilion of the Orangery. The Comte de la Fère cannot be far off, only the doors are locked."

"A grand difficulty!" cried Portos.

"Hush," said D'Artagnan.

The sound of a light step was heard in the vestibule. The hinges of the door creaked, and a man appeared in the dress of a cavalier, wrapped in a brown cloak, with a lantern in his hand, and a large beaver hat pulled down over his eyes.

Portos stood with his face against the wall, but he could not render himself invisible; and the man in the cloak said to him, giving him his lantern:

"Light the lamp which hangs from the ceiling."

Then addressing D'Artagnan:

"You know the watchword?" he said.

"Ja!" replied the Gascon, determined to confine himself to this specimen of the German tongue.

"Tookies!" answered the cavalier; "on bon."

And advancing toward the door opposite to that by which he came in, he opened it, and disappeared behind it, shutting it as he went.

"Now," asked Portos, "what are we to do?"

"Now, we shall make use of your shoulder, friend Portos, if this door should be locked. Everything is in its proper time, and all comes right to those who know how to wait patiently. But first barricade the first door well, and then we will follow yonder cavalier."

The two friends set to work, and crowded the space before the door with all the furniture in the room, so as not only to make the passage impassable, but that the door could not open inward.

"There!" said D'Artagnan, we can't be overthrown. Come forward!"

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

THE OBLIETTES OF CARDINAL MAZARIN.

At first, on arriving at the door through which Mazarin had passed, D'Artagnan tried in vain to open it, but on the powerful shoulder of Portos being applied to one of the panels, which gave way, D'Artagnan introduced the point of his sword between the bolt and the staple of the lock. The bolt gave way, and the door opened.

"As I told you, everything can be got, Portos, by means of women and doors."

"You're a great moralist, and that's the fact," said Portos.

They entered, behind a glass window, by the light of the Cardinal's lantern, which had been placed on the floor in the midst of the gallery, they saw the orange and pomegranate trees of the castle.
of Rudl, in long lines, forming one great alley, and two smaller side
alleys.

"No Cardinal!" said D'Artagnan, "but only his men: where the
devil is he then?"

Exploring, however, one of the side wings of the gallery, he saw,
all at once, at his left, a tub containing an orange-tree, which had
been pushed out of its place, and in its place an open aperture. He
also perceived in this hole the steps of a winding staircase.
He called Porthos in to look at it.

"Had our object been money only," he said, "we should be rich
directly."

"How's that?"

"Don't you understand, Porthos? At the bottom of that stair-
case is, probably, the Cardinal's treasury, of which every one speaks
so much; and we should only have to descend—empty a chest—
shut the Cardinal up in it—double-lock it—go away, carrying off
as much gold as we could—put this orange-tree over the place—and
no one would ever ask us where our fortune came from—not even
the Cardinal."

"It would be a happy hit for cloven to make, but as it seems to
be unworthy of two gentlemen—" said Porthos.

"So I think, and we don't want gold—we want other things,"
replied the Gascon.

At the same moment, whilst D'Artagnan was leaning over the
aperture to listen, a metallic sound, as if some one was moving a
bag of gold, struck on his ear: he started; instantly afterward a
door opened, and a light played upon the staircase.

Mazarin had left his lamp in the gallery to make people believe
that he was walking about, but he had with him a wax-light, to ex-
lore with its aid his mysterious strong-box.

"Faith!" he said, in Italian, as he was ascending the steps,
and looking at a bag of gold. "Faith, there's enough to pay five
councillors of the Parlement, and two generals in Paris. I am a
great captain—that I am! but I make war in my own way."

The two friends were crouching down, meantime, behind a tub
in the side alley.

Mazarin came within three steps of D'Artagnan, and pushed a
spring in the wall, the slab, on which the orange-tree was, turned,
and the orange-tree resumed its place.

Then the Cardinal put out the wax-light, slipped it into his
pocket, and taking up the lantern—"Now," he said, "for
Monseigneur de la Fère."

"Very good," thought D'Artagnan, "'tis our road likewise;
we can go together."

All three set off on their walk, Mazarin taking the middle alley,
and the friends the side one.

The Cardinal reached a second door without perceiving that he
was followed; the sand by which the alley was covered, deadened
the sound of footsteps.

He then turned to the left, down a corridor which had escaped
the attention of the two friends, but as he opened the door, he
stopped, as if in thought.

"Ah! Diavolo!" he exclaimed, "I forgot the recommendation of
De Confluentes, who advised me to take a guard and place it at the door, in order not to put myself at the mercy of that four-headed devil." And, with a movement of impatience, he turned to retrench his steps.

"Do not give yourself the trouble, my lord," said D'Artagnan, with his right foot forward, his beaver in his hand, a smile on his face; "we have followed your Eminence step by step, and here we are."

"Yes—here we are," said Porthos. And he made the same friendly salute as D'Artagnan.

Mazarin gazed at each of them with an aghast stare, recognized them, and let drop his lantern, uttering a cry of terror.

D'Artagnan picked it up; by good luck it had not been extinguished by the fall.

"Oh! what imprudence, my lord," said D'Artagnan; "'tis not good to go about here without a light. Your Eminence might knock against something, or fall into some hole."

"Monseur D'Artagnan!" muttered Mazarin, not able to recover from his astonishment.

"Yes, my lord, it is I—I've the honor of presenting you, Monsieur du Vallon, that excellent friend of mine, in whom your Eminence had the kindness to interest yourself, formerly.

And D'Artagnan held the lamp before the merry face of Porthos, who now began to comprehend the affair, and his very proud of the whole undertaking.

"You were going to visit Monseur de la Fère?" said D'Artagnan. "Don't let us disarrange your Eminence. Be so good as to show us the way, and we will follow you."

Mazarin was by degrees recovering his senses.

"Have you been long in the category?" he asked in a trembling voice, remembering the visit he had been paying to his treasury.

"We are just come, my lord." Mazarin breathed again. His fears were now no longer for his heart; but for himself. A sort of smile played on his lips.

"Come," he said, "you have taken me in a snare, gentlemen. I confess myself conquered. You wish to ask for your liberty, and I give it you."

"Oh, my lord!" answered D'Artagnan, "you are very good: we to our liberty, we have that; we want to ask something else of you"

"You have your liberty!" repeated Mazarin, in terror.

"Certainly; and on the other hand, my lord, you have lost it, and now, 'tis the law of war, sir, you must buy it back again."

Mazarin felt a shiver all over him; a chill even to his heart's core. His piercing look was fixed in vain on the satirical face of the Gascon, and on the unchanging countenance of Porthos. Both were in shadow, and even a sphygm could not have read them.

"To purchase back my liberty!" said the Cardinal.

"Yes, my lord."

"And how much will that cost me, Monseur D'Artagnan?"

"Zounds, my lord, I don't know yet. We must ask the Count de la Fère the question. Will your Eminence deign to open the
door which leads to the count's room, and in ten minutes it will be settled."

Mazarin started.

"My lord," said D'Artagnan, "your Eminence sees that we wish to act with all due forms of respect; but I must warn you that we have no time to lose; open the door, then, my lord, and be so good as to remember, once for all, that on the slightest attempt to escape, or the least cry for help, our position being a very critical one, you must not be angry with us if we go to extremities."

"Be assured," answered Mazarin, "that I shall attempt nothing; I give you my word of honor."

D'Artagnan made a sign to Porthos to redouble his watchfulness; then turning to Mazarin:

"Now, my lord, let us enter, if you please."

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

CONFIDENCES.

Mazarin turned the lock of a double door, on the threshold of which they found Athos ready to receive his illustrious guest; on seeing his friends, he started with surprise.

"D'Artagnan! Porthos!" he exclaimed.

"My very self, dear friend.""

"Me, also!" repeated Porthos.

"What means this?" asked the count.

"It means," replied Mazarin, trying to smile, and biting his lips in smiling, "that our parts are changed, and that instead of these gentlemen being my prisoners, I am theirs; but, gentlemen, I warn you, unless you kill me, your victory will be of short duration—people will come to the rescue."

"Ah! my lord!" cried the Gascon, "don't threaten! 'tis a bad example. We are so good and gentle to your Eminence. Come, let us put aside all rancor, and talk pleasantly."

"There's nothing I wish more," replied Mazarin. "But don't think yourselves in a better position than you are. In ensuring me, you have fallen into the trap yourselves. How are you to get away from here? Remember the soldiers and sentinels who guard these doors. Now, I am going to show you how sincere I am."

"Good," thought D'Artagnan; "we must look about us; he's going to play us a trick."

"I offered you your liberty," continued the minister; "will you take it? Before an hour will have passed, you will be discovered, arrested, obliged to kill me, which would be a crime unworthy of loyal gentlemen like you."

"He is right," thought Athos.

And, like every other reflection passing in a mind that entertained none but noble thoughts, this feeling was expressed in his eyes.

"We shall not," answered D'Artagnan, "have recourse to violence, except in the last extremity" (for he saw that Athos seemed to lean toward Mazarin).

"If, on the contrary," resumed Mazarin, "you accept your liberty—"