

Twenty Years After



Alexandre Dumas

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Chapter

1 The Shade of Cardinal Richelieu.

In a splendid chamber of the Palais Royal, formerly styled the Palais Cardinal, a man was sitting in deep reverie, his head supported on his hands, leaning over a gilt and inlaid table which was covered with letters and papers. Behind this figure glowed a vast fireplace alive with leaping flames; great logs of oak blazed and crackled on the polished brass andirons whose flicker shone upon the superb habiliments of the lonely tenant of the room, which was illumined grandly by twin candelabra rich with wax-lights.

Any one who happened at that moment to contemplate that red simar—the gorgeous robe of office—and the rich lace, or who gazed on that pale brow, bent in anxious meditation, might, in the solitude of that apartment, combined with the silence of the ante-chambers and the measured paces of the guards upon the landing-place, have fancied that the shade of Cardinal Richelieu lingered still in his accustomed haunt.

It was, alas! the ghost of former greatness. France enfeebled, the authority of her sovereign contemned, her nobles returning to their former turbulence and insolence, her enemies within her frontiers—all proved the great Richelieu no longer in existence.

In truth, that the red simar which occupied the wonted place was his no longer, was still more strikingly obvious from the isolation which seemed, as we have observed, more appropriate to a phantom than a living creature—from the corridors deserted by courtiers, and courts crowded with guards—from that spirit of bitter ridicule, which, arising from the streets below, penetrated through the very casements of the room, which resounded with the murmurs of a whole city leagued against the minister; as well as from the distant and incessant sounds of guns firing—let off, happily, without other end or aim, except to show to the guards, the Swiss troops and the military who surrounded the Palais Royal, that the people were possessed of arms.

The shade of Richelieu was Mazarin. Now Mazarin was alone and defenceless, as he well knew.

"Foreigner!" he ejaculated, "Italian! that is their mean yet mighty byword of reproach—the watchword with which they assassinated, hanged, and made away with Concini; and if I gave them their way they would assassinate, hang, and make away with me in the same manner, although they have nothing to complain of except a tax or two now and then. Idiots! ignorant of their real enemies, they do not perceive that it is not the Italian who speaks French badly, but those who can say fine things to them in the purest Parisian accent, who are their real foes.

"Yes, yes," Mazarin continued, whilst his wonted smile, full of subtlety, lent a strange expression to his pale lips; "yes, these noises prove to me, indeed, that the destiny of favorites is precarious; but ye shall know I am no ordinary favorite. No! The Earl of Essex, 'tis true, wore a splendid ring, set with diamonds, given him by his royal mistress, whilst I—I have nothing but a simple circlet of gold, with a cipher on it and a date; but that ring has been blessed in the chapel of the Palais Royal,^[1] so they will never ruin me, as they long to do, and whilst they shout, 'Down with Mazarin!' I, unknown, and unperceived by them, incite them to cry out, 'Long live the Duke de Beaufort' one day; another, 'Long live the Prince de Conde;' and again, 'Long live the parliament!'" And at this word the smile on the cardinal's lips assumed an expression of hatred, of which his mild countenance seemed incapable. "The parliament! We shall soon see how to dispose," he continued, "of the parliament! Both Orleans and Montargis are ours. It will be a work of time, but those who have begun by crying out: Down with Mazarin! will finish by shouting out, Down with all the people I have mentioned, each in his turn.

"Richelieu, whom they hated during his lifetime and whom they now praise after his death, was even less popular than I am. Often he was driven away, oftener still had he a dread of being sent away. The queen will never banish me, and even were I obliged to yield to the populace she would yield with me; if I fly, she will fly; and then we shall see how the rebels will get on without either king or queen.

"Oh, were I not a foreigner! were I but a Frenchman! were I but of gentle birth!"

The position of the cardinal was indeed critical, and recent events had added to his difficulties. Discontent had long pervaded the lower ranks of society in France. Crushed and impoverished by taxation—imposed by Mazarin, whose avarice impelled him to grind them down to the very dust—the people, as the Advocate-General Talon described it, had nothing left to them except their souls; and as those could not be sold by auction, they began to murmur. Patience had in vain been recommended to them by reports of brilliant victories gained by France; laurels, however, were not meat and drink, and the people had for some time been in a state of discontent.

Had this been all, it might not, perhaps, have greatly signified; for when the lower classes alone complained, the court of France, separated as it was from the poor by the intervening classes of the gentry and the bourgeoisie, seldom listened to their voice; but unluckily, Mazarin had had the imprudence to attack the magistrates and had sold no less than twelve appointments in the Court of Requests, at a high price; and as the officers of that court paid very dearly for their places, and as the addition of twelve new colleagues would necessarily lower the value of each place, the old functionaries formed a union amongst themselves, and, enraged, swore on the Bible not to allow of this addition to their number, but to resist all the persecutions which might ensue; and should any one of them chance to forfeit his post by this resistance, to combine to indemnify him for his loss.

Now the following occurrences had taken place between the two contending parties.

On the seventh of January between seven and eight hundred tradesmen had assembled in Paris to discuss a new tax which was to be levied on house property. They deputed ten of their number to wait upon the Duke of Orleans, who, according to his custom, affected popularity. The duke received them and they informed him that they were resolved not to pay this tax, even if they were obliged to defend themselves against its collectors by force of arms. They were listened to with great politeness by the duke, who held out hopes of easier measures, promised to speak in their behalf to the queen, and dismissed them with the ordinary expression of royalty, "We will see what we can do."

Two days afterward these same magistrates appeared before the cardinal and their spokesman addressed Mazarin with so much fearlessness and determination that the minister was astounded and sent the deputation away with the same answer as it had received from the Duke of Orleans—that he would see what could be done; and in accordance with that intention a council of state was assembled and the superintendent of finance was summoned.

This man, named Emery, was the object of popular detestation, in the first place because he was superintendent of finance, and every superintendent of finance deserved to be hated; in the second place, because he rather deserved the odium which he had incurred.

He was the son of a banker at Lyons named Particelli, who, after becoming a bankrupt, chose to change his name to Emery; and Cardinal Richelieu having discovered in him great financial aptitude, had introduced him with a strong recommendation to Louis XIII. under his assumed name, in order that he might be appointed to the post he subsequently held.

"You surprise me!" exclaimed the monarch. "I am rejoiced to hear you speak of Monsieur d'Emery as calculated for a post which requires a man

of probity. I was really afraid that you were going to force that villain Particelli upon me."

"Sire," replied Richelieu, "rest assured that Particelli, the man to whom your majesty refers, has been hanged."

"Ah; so much the better!" exclaimed the king. "It is not for nothing that I am styled Louis the Just." and he signed Emery's appointment.

This was the same Emery who became eventually superintendent of finance.

He was sent for by the ministers and he came before them pale and trembling, declaring that his son had very nearly been assassinated the day before, near the palace. The mob had insulted him on account of the ostentatious luxury of his wife, whose house was hung with red velvet edged with gold fringe. This lady was the daughter of Nicholas de Camus, who arrived in Paris with twenty francs in his pocket, became secretary of state, and accumulated wealth enough to divide nine millions of francs among his children and to keep an income of forty thousand for himself.

The fact was that Emery's son had run a great chance of being suffocated, one of the rioters having proposed to squeeze him until he gave up all the gold he had swallowed. Nothing, therefore, was settled that day, as Emery's head was not steady enough for business after such an occurrence.

On the next day Mathieu Mole, the chief president, whose courage at this crisis, says the Cardinal de Retz, was equal to that of the Duc de Beaufort and the Prince de Conde—in other words, of the two men who were considered the bravest in France—had been attacked in his turn. The people threatened to hold him responsible for the evils that hung over them. But the chief president had replied with his habitual coolness, without betraying either disturbance or surprise, that should the agitators refuse obedience to the king's wishes he would have gallows erected in the public squares and proceed at once to hang the most active among them. To which the others had responded that they would be glad to see the gallows erected; they would serve for the hanging of those detestable judges who purchased favor at court at the price of the people's misery.

Nor was this all. On the eleventh the queen in going to mass at Notre Dame, as she always did on Saturdays, was followed by more than two hundred women demanding justice. These poor creatures had no bad intentions. They wished only to be allowed to fall on their knees before their sovereign, and that they might move her to compassion; but they were prevented by the royal guard and the queen proceeded on her way, haughtily disdainful of their entreaties.

At length parliament was convoked; the authority of the king was to be maintained.

One day—it was the morning of the day my story begins—the king, Louis XIV., then ten years of age, went in state, under pretext of returning thanks for his recovery from the small-pox, to Notre Dame. He took the opportunity of calling out his guard, the Swiss troops and the musketeers, and he had planted them round the Palais Royal, on the quays, and on the Pont Neuf. After mass the young monarch drove to the Parliament House, where, upon the throne, he hastily confirmed not only such edicts as he had already passed, but issued new ones, each one, according to Cardinal de Retz, more ruinous than the others—a proceeding which drew forth a strong remonstrance from the chief president, Mole—whilst President Blancmesnil and Councillor Broussel raised their voices in indignation against fresh taxes.

The king returned amidst the silence of a vast multitude to the Palais Royal. All minds were uneasy, most were foreboding, many of the people used threatening language.

At first, indeed, they were doubtful whether the king's visit to the parliament had been in order to lighten or increase their burdens; but scarcely was it known that the taxes were to be still further increased, when cries of "Down with Mazarin!" "Long live Broussel!" "Long live Blancmesnil!" resounded through the city. For the people had learned that Broussel and Blancmesnil had made speeches in their behalf, and, although the eloquence of these deputies had been without avail, it had none the less won for them the people's good-will. All attempts to disperse the groups collected in the streets, or silence their exclamations, were in vain. Orders had just been given to the royal guards and the Swiss guards, not only to stand firm, but to send out patrols to the streets of Saint Denis and Saint Martin, where the people thronged and where they were the most vociferous, when the mayor of Paris was announced at the Palais Royal.

He was shown in directly; he came to say that if these offensive precautions were not discontinued, in two hours Paris would be under arms.

Deliberations were being held when a lieutenant in the guards, named Comminges, made his appearance, with his clothes all torn, his face streaming with blood. The queen on seeing him uttered a cry of surprise and asked him what was going on.

As the mayor had foreseen, the sight of the guards had exasperated the mob. The tocsin was sounded. Comminges had arrested one of the ringleaders and had ordered him to be hanged near the cross of Du Trahoir; but in attempting to execute this command the soldiery were attacked in the market-place with stones and halberds; the delinquent had escaped to the Rue des Lombards and rushed into a house. They broke open the doors and searched the dwelling, but in vain. Comminges, wounded by a stone which had struck him on the forehead,

had left a picket in the street and returned to the Palais Royal, followed by a menacing crowd, to tell his story.

This account confirmed that of the mayor. The authorities were not in a condition to cope with serious revolt. Mazarin endeavored to circulate among the people a report that troops had only been stationed on the quays and on the Pont Neuf, on account of the ceremonial of the day, and that they would soon withdraw. In fact, about four o'clock they were all concentrated about the Palais Royal, the courts and ground floors of which were filled with musketeers and Swiss guards, and there awaited the outcome of all this disturbance.

Such was the state of affairs at the very moment we introduced our readers to the study of Cardinal Mazarin—once that of Cardinal Richelieu. We have seen in what state of mind he listened to the murmurs from below, which even reached him in his seclusion, and to the guns, the firing of which resounded through that room. All at once he raised his head; his brow slightly contracted like that of a man who has formed a resolution; he fixed his eyes upon an enormous clock that was about to strike ten, and taking up a whistle of silver gilt that stood upon the table near him, he shrilled it twice.

A door hidden in the tapestry opened noiselessly and a man in black silently advanced and stood behind the chair on which Mazarin sat.

"Bernouin," said the cardinal, not turning round, for having whistled, he knew that it was his valet-de-chambre who was behind him; "what musketeers are now within the palace?"

"The Black Musketeers, my lord."

"What company?"

"Treville's company."

"Is there any officer belonging to this company in the ante-chamber?"

"Lieutenant d'Artagnan."

"A man on whom we can depend, I hope."

"Yes, my lord."

"Give me a uniform of one of these musketeers and help me to put it on."

The valet went out as silently as he had entered and appeared in a few minutes bringing the dress demanded.

The cardinal, in deep thought and in silence, began to take off the robes of state he had assumed in order to be present at the sitting of parliament, and to attire himself in the military coat, which he wore with a certain degree of easy grace, owing to his former campaigns in Italy. When he was completely dressed he said:

"Send hither Monsieur d'Artagnan."

The valet went out of the room, this time by the centre door, but still as silently as before; one might have fancied him an apparition.

When he was left alone the cardinal looked at himself in the glass with a feeling of self-satisfaction. Still young—for he was scarcely forty-six

years of age—he possessed great elegance of form and was above the middle height; his complexion was brilliant and beautiful; his glance full of expression; his nose, though large, was well proportioned; his forehead broad and majestic; his hair, of a chestnut color, was curled slightly; his beard, which was darker than his hair, was turned carefully with a curling iron, a practice that greatly improved it. After a short time the cardinal arranged his shoulder belt, then looked with great complacency at his hands, which were most elegant and of which he took the greatest care; and throwing on one side the large kid gloves tried on at first, as belonging to the uniform, he put on others of silk only. At this instant the door opened.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan," said the valet-de-chambre.

An officer, as he spoke, entered the apartment. He was a man between thirty-nine and forty years of age, of medium height but a very well proportioned figure; with an intellectual and animated physiognomy; his beard black, and his hair turning gray, as often happens when people have found life either too gay or too sad, more especially when they happen to be of swart complexion.

D'Artagnan advanced a few steps into the apartment.

How perfectly he remembered his former entrance into that very room! Seeing, however, no one there except a musketeer of his own troop, he fixed his eyes upon the supposed soldier, in whose dress, nevertheless, he recognized at the first glance the cardinal.

The lieutenant remained standing in a dignified but respectful posture, such as became a man of good birth, who had in the course of his life been frequently in the society of the highest nobles.

The cardinal looked at him with a cunning rather than serious glance, yet he examined his countenance with attention and after a momentary silence said:

"You are Monsieur d'Artagnan?"

"I am that individual," replied the officer.

Mazarin gazed once more at a countenance full of intelligence, the play of which had been, nevertheless, subdued by age and experience; and D'Artagnan received the penetrating glance like one who had formerly sustained many a searching look, very different, indeed, from those which were inquiringly directed on him at that instant.

"Sir," resumed the cardinal, "you are to come with me, or rather, I am to go with you."

"I am at your command, my lord," returned D'Artagnan.

"I wish to visit in person the outposts which surround the Palais Royal; do you suppose that there is any danger in so doing?"

"Danger, my lord!" exclaimed D'Artagnan with a look of astonishment, "what danger?"

"I am told that there is a general insurrection."

"The uniform of the king's musketeers carries a certain respect with it, and even if that were not the case I would engage with four of my men to put to flight a hundred of these clowns."

"Did you witness the injury sustained by Comminges?"

"Monsieur de Comminges is in the guards and not in the musketeers—"

"Which means, I suppose, that the musketeers are better soldiers than the guards." The cardinal smiled as he spoke.

"Every one likes his own uniform best, my lord."

"Myself excepted," and again Mazarin smiled; "for you perceive that I have left off mine and put on yours."

"Lord bless us! this is modesty indeed!" cried D'Artagnan. "Had I such a uniform as your eminence possesses, I protest I should be mightily content, and I would take an oath never to wear any other costume—"

"Yes, but for to-night's adventure I don't suppose my dress would have been a very safe one. Give me my felt hat, Bernouin."

The valet instantly brought to his master a regimental hat with a wide brim. The cardinal put it on in military style.

"Your horses are ready saddled in their stables, are they not?" he said, turning to D'Artagnan.

"Yes, my lord."

"Well, let us set out."

"How many men does your eminence wish to escort you?"

"You say that with four men you will undertake to disperse a hundred low fellows; as it may happen that we shall have to encounter two hundred, take eight—"

"As many as my lord wishes."

"I will follow you. This way—light us downstairs Bernouin."

The valet held a wax-light; the cardinal took a key from his bureau and opening the door of a secret stair descended into the court of the Palais Royal.

Chapter

2 A Nightly Patrol.

In ten minutes Mazarin and his party were traversing the street "Les Bons Enfants" behind the theatre built by Richelieu expressly for the play of "Mirame," and in which Mazarin, who was an amateur of music, but not of literature, had introduced into France the first opera that was ever acted in that country.

The appearance of the town denoted the greatest agitation. Numberless groups paraded the streets and, whatever D'Artagnan might think of it, it was obvious that the citizens had for the night laid aside their usual forbearance, in order to assume a warlike aspect. From time to time noises came in the direction of the public markets. The report of firearms was heard near the Rue Saint Denis and occasionally church bells began to ring indiscriminately and at the caprice of the populace. D'Artagnan, meantime, pursued his way with the indifference of a man upon whom such acts of folly made no impression. When he approached a group in the middle of the street he urged his horse upon it without a word of warning; and the members of the group, whether rebels or not, as if they knew with what sort of a man they had to deal, at once gave place to the patrol. The cardinal envied that composure, which he attributed to the habit of meeting danger; but none the less he conceived for the officer under whose orders he had for the moment placed himself, that consideration which even prudence pays to careless courage. On approaching an outpost near the Barriere des Sergens, the sentinel cried out, "Who's there?" and D'Artagnan answered—having first asked the word of the cardinal—"Louis and Rocroy." After which he inquired if Lieutenant Comminges were not the commanding officer at the outpost. The soldier replied by pointing out to him an officer who was conversing, on foot, his hand upon the neck of a horse on which the individual to whom he was talking sat. Here was the officer D'Artagnan was seeking.

"Here is Monsieur Comminges," said D'Artagnan, returning to the cardinal. He instantly retired, from a feeling of respectful delicacy; it was, however, evident that the cardinal was recognized by both Comminges and the other officers on horseback.

"Well done, Guitant," cried the cardinal to the equestrian; "I see plainly that, notwithstanding the sixty-four years that have passed over your head, you are still the same man, active and zealous. What were you saying to this youngster?"

"My lord," replied Guitant, "I was observing that we live in troublous times and that to-day's events are very like those in the days of the

Ligue, of which I heard so much in my youth. Are you aware that the mob have even suggested throwing up barricades in the Rue Saint Denis and the Rue Saint Antoine?"

"And what was Comminges saying to you in reply, my good Guitant?"

"My lord," said Comminges, "I answered that to compose a Ligue only one ingredient was wanting—in my opinion an essential one—a Duc de Guise; moreover, no generation ever does the same thing twice."

"No, but they mean to make a Fronde, as they call it," said Guitant.

"And what is a Fronde?" inquired Mazarin.

"My lord, Fronde is the name the discontented give to their party."

"And what is the origin of this name?"

"It seems that some days since Councillor Bachaumont remarked at the palace that rebels and agitators reminded him of schoolboys slinging—qui frondent—stones from the moats round Paris, young urchins who run off the moment the constable appears, only to return to their diversion the instant his back is turned. So they have picked up the word and the insurrectionists are called 'Frondeurs,' and yesterday every article sold was 'a la Fronde;' bread 'a la Fronde,' hats 'a la Fronde,' to say nothing of gloves, pocket-handkerchiefs, and fans; but listen——"

At that moment a window opened and a man began to sing:

"A tempest from the Fronde

Did blow to-day:

I think 'twill blow

Sieur Mazarin away."

"Insolent wretch!" cried Guitant.

"My lord," said Comminges, who, irritated by his wounds, wished for revenge and longed to give back blow for blow, "shall I fire off a ball to punish that jester, and to warn him not to sing so much out of tune in the future?"

And as he spoke he put his hand on the holster of his uncle's saddle-bow.

"Certainly not! certainly not," exclaimed Mazarin. "Diavolo! my dear friend, you are going to spoil everything—everything is going on famously. I know the French as well as if I had made them myself. They sing—let them pay the piper. During the Ligue, about which Guitant was speaking just now, the people chanted nothing except the mass, so everything went to destruction. Come, Guitant, come along, and let's see if they keep watch at the Quinze-Vingts as at the Barriere des Sergens."

And waving his hand to Comminges he rejoined D'Artagnan, who instantly put himself at the head of his troop, followed by the cardinal, Guitant and the rest of the escort.

"Just so," muttered Comminges, looking after Mazarin. "True, I forgot; provided he can get money out of the people, that is all he wants."

The street of Saint Honore, when the cardinal and his party passed through it, was crowded by an assemblage who, standing in groups, discussed the edicts of that memorable day. They pitied the young king, who was unconsciously ruining his country, and threw all the odium of his proceedings on Mazarin. Addresses to the Duke of Orleans and to Conde were suggested. Blancmesnil and Broussel seemed in the highest favor.

D'Artagnan passed through the very midst of this discontented mob just as if his horse and he had been made of iron. Mazarin and Guitant conversed together in whispers. The musketeers, who had already discovered who Mazarin was, followed in profound silence. In the street of Saint Thomas-du-Louvre they stopped at the barrier distinguished by the name of Quinze-Vingts. Here Guitant spoke to one of the subalterns, asking how matters were progressing.

"Ah, captain!" said the officer, "everything is quiet hereabout—if I did not know that something is going on in yonder house!"

And he pointed to a magnificent hotel situated on the very spot whereon the Vaudeville now stands.

"In that hotel? it is the Hotel Rambouillet," cried Guitant.

"I really don't know what hotel it is; all I do know is that I observed some suspicious looking people go in there——"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Guitant, with a burst of laughter; "those men must be poets."

"Come, Guitant, speak, if you please, respectfully of these gentlemen," said Mazarin; "don't you know that I was in my youth a poet? I wrote verses in the style of Benserade——"

"You, my lord?"

"Yes, I; shall I repeat to you some of my verses?"

"Just as you please, my lord. I do not understand Italian."

"Yes, but you understand French," and Mazarin laid his hand upon Guitant's shoulder. "My good, my brave Guitant, whatsoever command I may give you in that language—in French—whatever I may order you to do, will you not perform it?"

"Certainly. I have already answered that question in the affirmative; but that command must come from the queen herself."

"Yes! ah yes!" Mazarin bit his lips as he spoke; "I know your devotion to her majesty."

"I have been a captain in the queen's guards for twenty years," was the reply.

"En route, Monsieur d'Artagnan," said the cardinal; "all goes well in this direction."

D'Artagnan, in the meantime, had taken the head of his detachment without a word and with that ready and profound obedience which marks the character of an old soldier.

He led the way toward the hill of Saint Roche. The Rue Richelieu and the Rue Villedot were then, owing to their vicinity to the ramparts, less frequented than any others in that direction, for the town was thinly inhabited thereabout.

"Who is in command here?" asked the cardinal.

"Villequier," said Guitant.

"Diavolo! Speak to him yourself, for ever since you were deputed by me to arrest the Duc de Beaufort, this officer and I have been on bad terms. He laid claim to that honor as captain of the royal guards."

"I am aware of that, and I have told him a hundred times that he was wrong. The king could not give that order, since at that time he was hardly four years old."

"Yes, but I could give him the order—I, Guitant—and I preferred to give it to you."

Guitant, without reply, rode forward and desired the sentinel to call Monsieur de Villequier.

"Ah! so you are here!" cried the officer, in the tone of ill-humor habitual to him; "what the devil are you doing here?"

"I wish to know—can you tell me, pray—is anything fresh occurring in this part of the town?"

"What do you mean? People cry out, 'Long live the king! down with Mazarin!' That's nothing new; no, we've been used to those acclamations for some time."

"And you sing chorus," replied Guitant, laughing.

"Faith, I've half a mind to do it. In my opinion the people are right; and cheerfully would I give up five years of my pay—which I am never paid, by the way—to make the king five years older."

"Really! And pray what would come to pass, supposing the king were five years older than he is?"

"As soon as ever the king comes of age he will issue his commands himself, and 'tis far pleasanter to obey the grandson of Henry IV. than the son of Peter Mazarin. 'Sdeath! I would die willingly for the king, but supposing I happened to be killed on account of Mazarin, as your nephew came near being to-day, there could be nothing in Paradise, however well placed I might be there, that could console me for it."

"Well, well, Monsieur de Villequier," Mazarin interposed, "I shall make it my care the king hears of your loyalty. Come, gentlemen," addressing the troop, "let us return."

"Stop," exclaimed Villequier, "so Mazarin was here! so much the better. I have been waiting for a long time to tell him what I think of him. I am obliged to you Guitant, although your intention was perhaps not very favorable to me, for such an opportunity."

He turned away and went off to his post, whistling a tune then popular among the party called the "Fronde," whilst Mazarin returned, in a pensive mood, toward the Palais Royal. All that he had heard from these

three different men, Comminges, Guitant and Villequier, confirmed him in his conviction that in case of serious tumults there would be no one on his side except the queen; and then Anne of Austria had so often deserted her friends that her support seemed most precarious. During the whole of this nocturnal ride, during the whole time that he was endeavoring to understand the various characters of Comminges, Guitant and Villequier, Mazarin was, in truth, studying more especially one man. This man, who had remained immovable as bronze when menaced by the mob—not a muscle of whose face was stirred, either at Mazarin's witticisms or by the jests of the multitude—seemed to the cardinal a peculiar being, who, having participated in past events similar to those now occurring, was calculated to cope with those now on the eve of taking place.

The name of D'Artagnan was not altogether new to Mazarin, who, although he did not arrive in France before the year 1634 or 1635, that is to say, about eight or nine years after the events which we have related in a preceding narrative,^[2] fancied he had heard it pronounced as that of one who was said to be a model of courage, address and loyalty.

Possessed by this idea, the cardinal resolved to know all about D'Artagnan immediately; of course he could not inquire from D'Artagnan himself who he was and what had been his career; he remarked, however, in the course of conversation that the lieutenant of musketeers spoke with a Gascon accent. Now the Italians and the Gascons are too much alike and know each other too well ever to trust what any one of them may say of himself; so in reaching the walls which surrounded the Palais Royal, the cardinal knocked at a little door, and after thanking D'Artagnan and requesting him to wait in the court of the Palais Royal, he made a sign to Guitant to follow him.

They both dismounted, consigned their horses to the lackey who had opened the door, and disappeared in the garden.

"My dear friend," said the cardinal, leaning, as they walked through the garden, on his friend's arm, "you told me just now that you had been twenty years in the queen's service."

"Yes, it's true. I have," returned Guitant.

"Now, my dear Guitant, I have often remarked that in addition to your courage, which is indisputable, and your fidelity, which is invincible, you possess an admirable memory."

"You have found that out, have you, my lord? Deuce take it—all the worse for me!"

"How?"

"There is no doubt but that one of the chief accomplishments of a courtier is to know when to forget."

"But you, Guitant, are not a courtier. You are a brave soldier, one of the few remaining veterans of the days of Henry IV. Alas! how few to-day exist!"

"Plague on't, my lord, have you brought me here to get my horoscope out of me?"

"No; I only brought you here to ask you," returned Mazarin, smiling, "if you have taken any particular notice of our lieutenant of musketeers?"

"Monsieur d'Artagnan? I have had no occasion to notice him particularly; he's an old acquaintance. He's a Gascon. De Treville knows him and esteems him very highly, and De Treville, as you know, is one of the queen's greatest friends. As a soldier the man ranks well; he did his whole duty and even more, at the siege of Rochelle—as at Suze and Perpignan."

"But you know, Guitant, we poor ministers often want men with other qualities besides courage; we want men of talent. Pray, was not Monsieur d'Artagnan, in the time of the cardinal, mixed up in some intrigue from which he came out, according to report, quite cleverly?"

"My lord, as to the report you allude to"—Guitant perceived that the cardinal wished to make him speak out—"I know nothing but what the public knows. I never meddle in intrigues, and if I occasionally become a confidant of the intrigues of others I am sure your eminence will approve of my keeping them secret."

Mazarin shook his head.

"Ah!" he said; "some ministers are fortunate and find out all that they wish to know."

"My lord," replied Guitant, "such ministers do not weigh men in the same balance; they get their information on war from warriors; on intrigues, from intriguers. Consult some politician of the period of which you speak, and if you pay well for it you will certainly get to know all you want."

"Eh, pardieu!" said Mazarin, with a grimace which he always made when spoken to about money. "They will be paid, if there is no way of getting out of it."

"Does my lord seriously wish me to name any one who was mixed up in the cabals of that day?"

"By Bacchus!" rejoined Mazarin, impatiently, "it's about an hour since I asked you for that very thing, wooden-head that you are."

"There is one man for whom I can answer, if he will speak out."

"That's my concern; I will make him speak."

"Ah, my lord, 'tis not easy to make people say what they don't wish to let out."

"Pooh! with patience one must succeed. Well, this man. Who is he?"

"The Comte de Rochefort."

"The Comte de Rochefort!"

"Unfortunately he has disappeared these four or five years and I don't know where he is."

"I know, Guitant," said Mazarin.

"Well, then, how is it that your eminence complained just now of want of information?"

"You think," resumed Mazarin, "that Rochefort——"

"He was Cardinal Richelieu's creature, my lord. I warn you, however, his services will cost you something. The cardinal was lavish to his underlings."

"Yes, yes, Guitant," said Mazarin; "Richelieu was a great man, a very great man, but he had that defect. Thanks, Guitant; I shall benefit by your advice this very evening."

Here they separated and bidding adieu to Guitant in the court of the Palais Royal, Mazarin approached an officer who was walking up and down within that inclosure.

It was D'Artagnan, who was waiting for him.

"Come hither," said Mazarin in his softest voice; "I have an order to give you."

D'Artagnan bent low and following the cardinal up the secret staircase, soon found himself in the study whence they had first set out.

The cardinal seated himself before his bureau and taking a sheet of paper wrote some lines upon it, whilst D'Artagnan stood imperturbable, without showing either impatience or curiosity. He was like a soldierly automaton, or rather, like a magnificent marionette.

The cardinal folded and sealed his letter.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan," he said, "you are to take this dispatch to the Bastille and bring back here the person it concerns. You must take a carriage and an escort, and guard the prisoner with the greatest care."

D'Artagnan took the letter, touched his hat with his hand, turned round upon his heel like a drill-sergeant, and a moment afterward was heard, in his dry and monotonous tone, commanding "Four men and an escort, a carriage and a horse." Five minutes afterward the wheels of the carriage and the horses' shoes were heard resounding on the pavement of the courtyard.

Chapter

3 Dead Animosity.

D'Artagnan arrived at the Bastile just as it was striking half-past eight. His visit was announced to the governor, who, on hearing that he came from the cardinal, went to meet him and received him at the top of the great flight of steps outside the door. The governor of the Bastile was Monsieur du Tremblay, the brother of the famous Capuchin, Joseph, that fearful favorite of Richelieu's, who went by the name of the Gray Cardinal.

During the period that the Duc de Bassompierre passed in the Bastile—where he remained for twelve long years—when his companions, in their dreams of liberty, said to each other: "As for me, I shall go out of the prison at such a time," and another, at such and such a time, the duke used to answer, "As for me, gentlemen, I shall leave only when Monsieur du Tremblay leaves;" meaning that at the death of the cardinal Du Tremblay would certainly lose his place at the Bastile and De Bassompierre regain his at court.

His prediction was nearly fulfilled, but in a very different way from that which De Bassompierre supposed; for after the death of Richelieu everything went on, contrary to expectation, in the same way as before; and Bassompierre had little chance of leaving his prison.

Monsieur du Tremblay received D'Artagnan with extreme politeness and invited him to sit down with him to supper, of which he was himself about to partake.

"I should be delighted to do so," was the reply; "but if I am not mistaken, the words 'In haste,' are written on the envelope of the letter which I brought."

"You are right," said Du Tremblay. "Halloo, major! tell them to order Number 25 to come downstairs."

The unhappy wretch who entered the Bastile ceased, as he crossed the threshold, to be a man—he became a number.

D'Artagnan shuddered at the noise of the keys; he remained on horseback, feeling no inclination to dismount, and sat looking at the bars, at the buttressed windows and the immense walls he had hitherto only seen from the other side of the moat, but by which he had for twenty years been awe-struck.

A bell resounded.

"I must leave you," said Du Tremblay; "I am sent for to sign the release of a prisoner. I shall be happy to meet you again, sir."

"May the devil annihilate me if I return thy wish!" murmured D'Artagnan, smiling as he pronounced the imprecation; "I declare I feel

quite ill after only being five minutes in the courtyard. Go to! go to! I would rather die on straw than hoard up a thousand a year by being governor of the Bastile."

He had scarcely finished this soliloquy before the prisoner arrived. On seeing him D'Artagnan could hardly suppress an exclamation of surprise. The prisoner got into the carriage without seeming to recognize the musketeer.

"Gentlemen," thus D'Artagnan addressed the four musketeers, "I am ordered to exercise the greatest possible care in guarding the prisoner, and since there are no locks to the carriage, I shall sit beside him. Monsieur de Lillebonne, lead my horse by the bridle, if you please." As he spoke he dismounted, gave the bridle of his horse to the musketeer and placing himself by the side of the prisoner said, in a voice perfectly composed, "To the Palais Royal, at full trot."

The carriage drove on and D'Artagnan, availing himself of the darkness in the archway under which they were passing, threw himself into the arms of the prisoner.

"Rochefort!" he exclaimed; "you! is it you, indeed? I am not mistaken?"

"D'Artagnan!" cried Rochefort.

"Ah! my poor friend!" resumed D'Artagnan, "not having seen you for four or five years I concluded you were dead."

"I'faith," said Rochefort, "there's no great difference, I think, between a dead man and one who has been buried alive; now I have been buried alive, or very nearly so."

"And for what crime are you imprisoned in the Bastile?"

"Do you wish me to speak the truth?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, I don't know."

"Have you any suspicion of me, Rochefort?"

"No! on the honor of a gentleman; but I cannot be imprisoned for the reason alleged; it is impossible."

"What reason?" asked D'Artagnan.

"For stealing."

"For stealing! you, Rochefort! you are laughing at me."

"I understand. You mean that this demands explanation, do you not?"

"I admit it."

"Well, this is what actually took place: One evening after an orgy in Reinard's apartment at the Tuileries with the Duc d'Harcourt, Fontrailles, De Rieux and others, the Duc d'Harcourt proposed that we should go and pull cloaks on the Pont Neuf; that is, you know, a diversion which the Duc d'Orleans made quite the fashion."

"Were you crazy, Rochefort? at your age!"

"No, I was drunk. And yet, since the amusement seemed to me rather tame, I proposed to Chevalier de Rieux that we should be spectators

instead of actors, and, in order to see to advantage, that we should mount the bronze horse. No sooner said than done. Thanks to the spurs, which served as stirrups, in a moment we were perched upon the croupe; we were well placed and saw everything. Four or five cloaks had already been lifted, with a dexterity without parallel, and not one of the victims had dared to say a word, when some fool of a fellow, less patient than the others, took it into his head to cry out, 'Guard!' and drew upon us a patrol of archers. Duc d'Harcourt, Fontrailles, and the others escaped; De Rieux was inclined to do likewise, but I told him they wouldn't look for us where we were. He wouldn't listen, put his foot on the spur to get down, the spur broke, he fell with a broken leg, and, instead of keeping quiet, took to crying out like a gallows-bird. I then was ready to dismount, but it was too late; I descended into the arms of the archers. They conducted me to the Chatelet, where I slept soundly, being very sure that on the next day I should go forth free. The next day came and passed, the day after, a week; I then wrote to the cardinal. The same day they came for me and took me to the Bastile. That was five years ago. Do you believe it was because I committed the sacrilege of mounting en croupe behind Henry IV.?"

"No; you are right, my dear Rochefort, it couldn't be for that; but you will probably learn the reason soon."

"Ah, indeed! I forgot to ask you—where are you taking me?"

"To the cardinal."

"What does he want with me?"

"I do not know. I did not even know that you were the person I was sent to fetch."

"Impossible—you—a favorite of the minister!"

"A favorite! no, indeed!" cried D'Artagnan. "Ah, my poor friend! I am just as poor a Gascon as when I saw you at Meung, twenty-two years ago, you know; alas!" and he concluded his speech with a deep sigh.

"Nevertheless, you come as one in authority."

"Because I happened to be in the ante-chamber when the cardinal called me, by the merest chance. I am still a lieutenant in the musketeers and have been so these twenty years."

"Then no misfortune has happened to you?"

"And what misfortune could happen to me? To quote some Latin verses I have forgotten, or rather, never knew well, 'the thunderbolt never falls on the valleys,' and I am a valley, dear Rochefort,—one of the lowliest of the low."

"Then Mazarin is still Mazarin?"

"The same as ever, my friend; it is said that he is married to the queen."

"Married?"

"If not her husband, he is unquestionably her lover."

"You surprise me. Rebuff Buckingham and consent to Mazarin!"

"Just like the women," replied D'Artagnan, coolly.

"Like women, not like queens."

"Egad! queens are the weakest of their sex, when it comes to such things as these."

"And M. de Beaufort—is he still in prison?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Oh, nothing, but that he might get me out of this, if he were favorably inclined to me."

"You are probably nearer freedom than he is, so it will be your business to get him out."

"And," said the prisoner, "what talk is there of war with Spain?"

"With Spain, no," answered D'Artagnan; "but Paris."

"What do you mean?" cried Rochefort.

"Do you hear the guns, pray? The citizens are amusing themselves in the meantime."

"And you—do you really think that anything could be done with these bourgeois?"

"Yes, they might do well if they had any leader to unite them in one body."

"How miserable not to be free!"

"Don't be downcast. Since Mazarin has sent for you, it is because he wants you. I congratulate you! Many a long year has passed since any one has wanted to employ me; so you see in what a situation I am."

"Make your complaints known; that's my advice."

"Listen, Rochefort; let us make a compact. We are friends, are we not?"

"Egad! I bear the traces of our friendship—three slits or slashes from your sword."

"Well, if you should be restored to favor, don't forget me."

"On the honor of a Rochefort; but you must do the like for me."

"There's my hand,—I promise."

"Therefore, whenever you find any opportunity of saying something in my behalf—"

"I shall say it, and you?"

"I shall do the same."

"Apropos, are we to speak of your friends also, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis? or have you forgotten them?"

"Almost."

"What has become of them?"

"I don't know; we separated, as you know. They are alive, that's all that I can say about them; from time to time I hear of them indirectly, but in what part of the world they are, devil take me if I know, No, on my honor, I have not a friend in the world but you, Rochefort."

"And the illustrious—what's the name of the lad whom I made a sergeant in Piedmont's regiment?"

"Planchet!"

"The illustrious Planchet. What has become of him?"

"I shouldn't wonder if he were at the head of the mob at this very moment. He married a woman who keeps a confectioner's shop in the Rue des Lombards, for he's a lad who was always fond of sweetmeats; he's now a citizen of Paris. You'll see that that queer fellow will be a sheriff before I shall be a captain."

"Come, dear D'Artagnan, look up a little! Courage! It is when one is lowest on the wheel of fortune that the merry-go-round wheels and rewards us. This evening your destiny begins to change."

"Amen!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, stopping the carriage.

"What are you doing?" asked Rochefort.

"We are almost there and I want no one to see me getting out of your carriage; we are supposed not to know each other."

"You are right. Adieu."

"Au revoir. Remember your promise."

In five minutes the party entered the courtyard and D'Artagnan led the prisoner up the great staircase and across the corridor and ante-chamber.

As they stopped at the door of the cardinal's study, D'Artagnan was about to be announced when Rochefort slapped him on his shoulder.

"D'Artagnan, let me confess to you what I've been thinking about during the whole of my drive, as I looked out upon the parties of citizens who perpetually crossed our path and looked at you and your four men with fiery eyes."

"Speak out," answered D'Artagnan.

"I had only to cry out 'Help!' for you and for your companions to be cut to pieces, and then I should have been free."

"Why didn't you do it?" asked the lieutenant.

"Come, come!" cried Rochefort. "Did we not swear friendship? Ah! had any one but you been there, I don't say—"

D'Artagnan bowed. "Is it possible that Rochefort has become a better man than I am?" he said to himself. And he caused himself to be announced to the minister.

"Let M. de Rochefort enter," said Mazarin, eagerly, on hearing their names pronounced; "and beg M. d'Artagnan to wait; I shall have further need of him."

These words gave great joy to D'Artagnan. As he had said, it had been a long time since any one had needed him; and that demand for his services on the part of Mazarin seemed to him an auspicious sign.

Rochefort, rendered suspicious and cautious by these words, entered the apartment, where he found Mazarin sitting at the table, dressed in his ordinary garb and as one of the prelates of the Church, his costume being similar to that of the abbes in that day, excepting that his scarf and stockings were violet.

As the door was closed Rochefort cast a glance toward Mazarin, which was answered by one, equally furtive, from the minister.

There was little change in the cardinal; still dressed with sedulous care, his hair well arranged and curled, his person perfumed, he looked, owing to his extreme taste in dress, only half his age. But Rochefort, who had passed five years in prison, had become old in the lapse of a few years; the dark locks of this estimable friend of the defunct Cardinal Richelieu were now white; the deep bronze of his complexion had been succeeded by a mortal pallor which betokened debility. As he gazed at him Mazarin shook his head slightly, as much as to say, "This is a man who does not appear to me fit for much."

After a pause, which appeared an age to Rochefort, Mazarin took from a bundle of papers a letter, and showing it to the count, he said:

"I find here a letter in which you sue for liberty, Monsieur de Rochefort. You are in prison, then?"

Rochefort trembled in every limb at this question. "But I thought," he said, "that your eminence knew that circumstance better than any one —"

"I? Oh no! There is a congestion of prisoners in the Bastille, who were cooped up in the time of Monsieur de Richelieu; I don't even know their names."

"Yes, but in regard to myself, my lord, it cannot be so, for I was removed from the Chatelet to the Bastille owing to an order from your eminence."

"You think you were."

"I am certain of it."

"Ah, stay! I fancy I remember it. Did you not once refuse to undertake a journey to Brussels for the queen?"

"Ah! ah!" exclaimed Rochefort. "There is the true reason! Idiot that I am, though I have been trying to find it out for five years, I never found it out."

"But I do not say it was the cause of your imprisonment. I merely ask you, did you not refuse to go to Brussels for the queen, whilst you had consented to go there to do some service for the late cardinal?"

"That is the very reason I refused to go back to Brussels. I was there at a fearful moment. I was sent there to intercept a correspondence between Chalais and the archduke, and even then, when I was discovered I was nearly torn to pieces. How could I, then, return to Brussels? I should injure the queen instead of serving her."

"Well, since the best motives are liable to misconstruction, the queen saw in your refusal nothing but a refusal—a distinct refusal she had also much to complain of you during the lifetime of the late cardinal; yes, her majesty the queen——"

Rochefort smiled contemptuously.

"Since I was a faithful servant, my lord, to Cardinal Richelieu during his life, it stands to reason that now, after his death, I should serve you well, in defiance of the whole world."

"With regard to myself, Monsieur de Rochefort," replied Mazarin, "I am not, like Monsieur de Richelieu, all-powerful. I am but a minister, who wants no servants, being myself nothing but a servant of the queen's. Now, the queen is of a sensitive nature. Hearing of your refusal to obey her she looked upon it as a declaration of war, and as she considers you a man of superior talent, and consequently dangerous, she desired me to make sure of you; that is the reason of your being shut up in the Bastile. But your release can be managed. You are one of those men who can comprehend certain matters and having understood them, can act with energy——"

"Such was Cardinal Richelieu's opinion, my lord."

"The cardinal," interrupted Mazarin, "was a great politician and therein shone his vast superiority over me. I am a straightforward, simple man; that's my great disadvantage. I am of a frankness of character quite French."

Rochefort bit his lips in order to prevent a smile.

"Now to the point. I want friends; I want faithful servants. When I say I want, I mean the queen wants them. I do nothing without her commands—pray understand that; not like Monsieur de Richelieu, who went on just as he pleased. So I shall never be a great man, as he was, but to compensate for that, I shall be a good man, Monsieur de Rochefort, and I hope to prove it to you."

Rochefort knew well the tones of that soft voice, in which sounded sometimes a sort of gentle lisp, like the hissing of young vipers.

"I am disposed to believe your eminence," he replied; "though I have had but little evidence of that good-nature of which your eminence speaks. Do not forget that I have been five years in the Bastile and that no medium of viewing things is so deceptive as the grating of a prison."

"Ah, Monsieur de Rochefort! have I not told you already that I had nothing to do with that? The queen—cannot you make allowances for the pettishness of a queen and a princess? But that has passed away as suddenly as it came, and is forgotten."

"I can easily suppose, sir, that her majesty has forgotten it amid the fetes and the courtiers of the Palais Royal, but I who have passed those years in the Bastile——"

"Ah! mon Dieu! my dear Monsieur de Rochefort! do you absolutely think that the Palais Royal is the abode of gayety? No. We have had great annoyances there. As for me, I play my game squarely, fairly, and above board, as I always do. Let us come to some conclusion. Are you one of us, Monsieur de Rochefort?"

"I am very desirous of being so, my lord, but I am totally in the dark about everything. In the Bastile one talks politics only with soldiers and

jailers, and you have not an idea, my lord, how little is known of what is going on by people of that sort; I am of Monsieur de Bassompierre's party. Is he still one of the seventeen peers of France?"

"He is dead, sir; a great loss. His devotion to the queen was boundless; men of loyalty are scarce."

"I think so, forsooth," said Rochefort, "and when you find any of them, you march them off to the Bastille. However, there are plenty in the world, but you don't look in the right direction for them, my lord."

"Indeed! explain to me. Ah! my dear Monsieur de Rochefort, how much you must have learned during your intimacy with the late cardinal! Ah! he was a great man."

"Will your eminence be angry if I read you a lesson?"

"I! never! you know you may say anything to me. I try to be beloved, not feared."

"Well, there is on the wall of my cell, scratched with a nail, a proverb, which says, 'Like master, like servant.'"

"Pray, what does that mean?"

"It means that Monsieur de Richelieu was able to find trusty servants, dozens and dozens of them."

"He! the point aimed at by every poniard! Richelieu, who passed his life in warding off blows which were forever aimed at him!"

"But he did ward them off," said De Rochefort, "and the reason was, that though he had bitter enemies he possessed also true friends. I have known persons," he continued—for he thought he might avail himself of the opportunity of speaking of D'Artagnan—"who by their sagacity and address have deceived the penetration of Cardinal Richelieu; who by their valor have got the better of his guards and spies; persons without money, without support, without credit, yet who have preserved to the crowned head its crown and made the cardinal crave pardon."

"But those men you speak of," said Mazarin, smiling inwardly on seeing Rochefort approach the point to which he was leading him, "those men were not devoted to the cardinal, for they contended against him."

"No; in that case they would have met with more fitting reward. They had the misfortune to be devoted to that very queen for whom just now you were seeking servants."

"But how is it that you know so much of these matters?"

"I know them because the men of whom I speak were at that time my enemies; because they fought against me; because I did them all the harm I could and they returned it to the best of their ability; because one of them, with whom I had most to do, gave me a pretty sword-thrust, now about seven years ago, the third that I received from the same hand; it closed an old account."

"Ah!" said Mazarin, with admirable suavity, "could I but find such men!"

"My lord, there has stood for six years at your very door a man such as I describe, and during those six years he has been unappreciated and unemployed by you."

"Who is it?"

"It is Monsieur d'Artagnan."

"That Gascon!" cried Mazarin, with well acted surprise.

"That Gascon' has saved a queen and made Monsieur de Richelieu confess that in point of talent, address and political skill, to him he was only a tyro."

"Really?"

"It is as I have the honor of telling it to your excellency."

"Tell me a little about it, my dear Monsieur de Rochefort."

"That is somewhat difficult, my lord," said Rochefort, with a smile.

"Then he will tell it me himself."

"I doubt it, my lord."

"Why do you doubt it?"

"Because the secret does not belong to him; because, as I have told you, it has to do with a great queen."

"And he was alone in achieving an enterprise like that?"

"No, my lord, he had three colleagues, three brave men, men such as you were wishing for just now."

"And were these four men attached to each other, true in heart, really united?"

"As if they had been one man—as if their four hearts had pulsed in one breast."

"You pique my curiosity, dear Rochefort; pray tell me the whole story."

"That is impossible; but I will tell you a true story, my lord."

"Pray do so, I delight in stories," cried the cardinal.

"Listen, then," returned Rochefort, as he spoke endeavoring to read in that subtle countenance the cardinal's motive. "Once upon a time there lived a queen—a powerful monarch—who reigned over one of the greatest kingdoms of the universe; and a minister; and this minister wished much to injure the queen, whom once he had loved too well. (Do not try, my lord, you cannot guess who it is; all this happened long before you came into the country where this queen reigned.) There came to the court an ambassador so brave, so magnificent, so elegant, that every woman lost her heart to him; and the queen had even the indiscretion to give him certain ornaments so rare that they could never be replaced by any like them.

"As these ornaments were given by the king the minister persuaded his majesty to insist upon the queen's appearing in them as part of her jewels at a ball which was soon to take place. There is no occasion to tell you, my lord, that the minister knew for a fact that these ornaments had sailed away with the ambassador, who was far away, beyond seas. This

illustrious queen had fallen low as the least of her subjects—fallen from her high estate."

"Indeed!"

"Well, my lord, four men resolved to save her. These four men were not princes, neither were they dukes, neither were they men in power; they were not even rich. They were four honest soldiers, each with a good heart, a good arm and a sword at the service of those who wanted it. They set out. The minister knew of their departure and had planted people on the road to prevent them ever reaching their destination. Three of them were overwhelmed and disabled by numerous assailants; one of them alone arrived at the port, having either killed or wounded those who wished to stop him. He crossed the sea and brought back the set of ornaments to the great queen, who was able to wear them on her shoulder on the appointed day; and this very nearly ruined the minister. What do you think of that exploit, my lord?"

"It is magnificent!" said Mazarin, thoughtfully.

"Well, I know of ten such men."

Mazarin made no reply; he reflected.

Five or six minutes elapsed.

"You have nothing more to ask of me, my lord?" said Rochefort.

"Yes. And you say that Monsieur d'Artagnan was one of those four men?"

"He led the enterprise."

"And who were the others?"

"I leave it to Monsieur d'Artagnan to name them, my lord. They were his friends and not mine. He alone would have any influence with them; I do not even know them under their true names."

"You suspect me, Monsieur de Rochefort; I want him and you and all to aid me."

"Begin with me, my lord; for after five or six years of imprisonment it is natural to feel some curiosity as to one's destination."

"You, my dear Monsieur de Rochefort, shall have the post of confidence; you shall go to Vincennes, where Monsieur de Beaufort is confined; you will guard him well for me. Well, what is the matter?"

"The matter is that you have proposed to me what is impossible," said Rochefort, shaking his head with an air of disappointment.

"What! impossible? And why is it impossible?"

"Because Monsieur de Beaufort is one of my friends, or rather, I am one of his. Have you forgotten, my lord, that it is he who answered for me to the queen?"

"Since then Monsieur de Beaufort has become an enemy of the State."

"That may be, my lord; but since I am neither king nor queen nor minister, he is not my enemy and I cannot accept your offer."

"This, then, is what you call devotion! I congratulate you. Your devotion does not commit you too far, Monsieur de Rochefort."

"And then, my lord," continued Rochefort, "you understand that to emerge from the Bastille in order to enter Vincennes is only to change one's prison."

"Say at once that you are on the side of Monsieur de Beaufort; that will be the most sincere line of conduct," said Mazarin.

"My lord, I have been so long shut up, that I am only of one party—I am for fresh air. Employ me in any other way; employ me even actively, but let it be on the high roads."

"My dear Monsieur de Rochefort," Mazarin replied in a tone of raillery, "you think yourself still a young man; your spirit is that of the phoenix, but your strength fails you. Believe me, you ought now to take a rest. Here!"

"You decide, then, nothing about me, my lord?"

"On the contrary, I have come to a decision."

Bernouin came into the room.

"Call an officer of justice," he said; "and stay close to me," he added, in a low tone.

The officer entered. Mazarin wrote a few words, which he gave to this man; then he bowed.

"Adieu, Monsieur de Rochefort," he said.

Rochefort bent low.

"I see, my lord, I am to be taken back to the Bastille."

"You are sagacious."

"I shall return thither, my lord, but it is a mistake on your part not to employ me."

"You? the friend of my greatest foes? Don't suppose that you are the only person who can serve me, Monsieur de Rochefort. I shall find many men as able as you are."

"I wish you may, my lord," replied De Rochefort.

He was then reconducted by the little staircase, instead of passing through the ante-chamber where D'Artagnan was waiting. In the courtyard the carriage and the four musketeers were ready, but he looked around in vain for his friend.

"Ah!" he muttered to himself, "this changes the situation, and if there is still a crowd of people in the streets we will try to show Mazarin that we are still, thank God, good for something else than keeping guard over a prisoner;" and he jumped into the carriage with the alacrity of a man of five-and-twenty.

Chapter

4 Anne of Austria at the Age of Forty-six.

When left alone with Bernouin, Mazarin was for some minutes lost in thought. He had gained much information, but not enough. Mazarin was a cheat at the card-table. This is a detail preserved to us by Brienne. He called it using his advantages. He now determined not to begin the game with D'Artagnan till he knew completely all his adversary's cards.

"My lord, have you any commands?" asked Bernouin.

"Yes, yes," replied Mazarin. "Light me; I am going to the queen."

Bernouin took up a candlestick and led the way.

There was a secret communication between the cardinal's apartments and those of the queen; and through this corridor* Mazarin passed whenever he wished to visit Anne of Austria.

*This secret passage is still to be seen in the Palais Royal.

In the bedroom in which this passage ended, Bernouin encountered Madame de Beauvais, like himself intrusted with the secret of these subterranean love affairs; and Madame de Beauvais undertook to prepare Anne of Austria, who was in her oratory with the young king, Louis XIV., to receive the cardinal.

Anne, reclining in a large easy-chair, her head supported by her hand, her elbow resting on a table, was looking at her son, who was turning over the leaves of a large book filled with pictures. This celebrated woman fully understood the art of being dull with dignity. It was her practice to pass hours either in her oratory or in her room, without either reading or praying.

When Madame de Beauvais appeared at the door and announced the cardinal, the child, who had been absorbed in the pages of Quintus Curtius, enlivened as they were by engravings of Alexander's feats of arms, frowned and looked at his mother.

"Why," he said, "does he enter without first asking for an audience?"

Anne colored slightly.

"The prime minister," she said, "is obliged in these unsettled days to inform the queen of all that is happening from time to time, without exciting the curiosity or remarks of the court."

"But Richelieu never came in this manner," said the pertinacious boy.

"How can you remember what Monsieur de Richelieu did? You were too young to know about such things."

"I do not remember what he did, but I have inquired and I have been told all about it."