THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK

[ANNOTATED]

BY

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

ANNOTATED & TRANSLATED BY JOHN BURSEY

ANNOTATED &

PUBLISHED BY

E-KİTAP PROJESİ & CHEAPEST BOOKS



www.cheapestboooks.com

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Istanbul

ISBN:

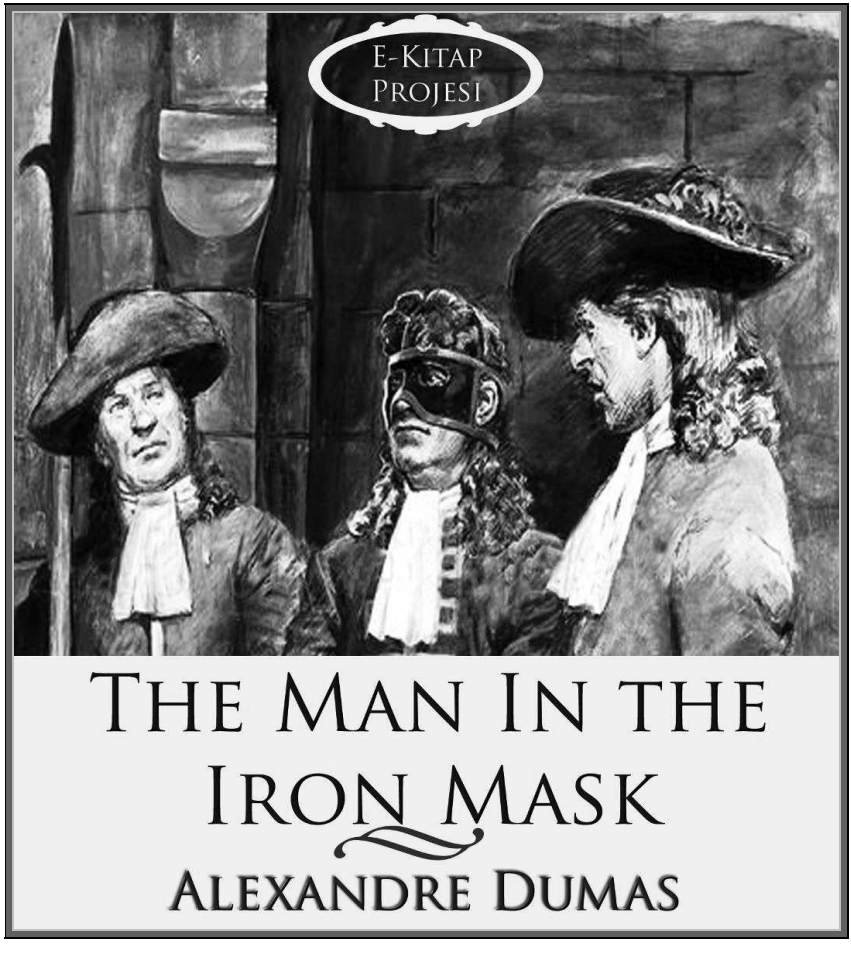
978-625-6308-18-3

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INTRODUCTION:

In the months of March-July in 1844, in the magazine Le Siecle, the first portion of a story appeared, penned by the celebrated playwright Alexandre Dumas. It was based, he claimed, on some manuscripts he had found a year earlier in the Bibliotheque Nationale while researching a history he planned to write on Louis XIV. They chronicled the adventures of a young man named D'Artagnan who, upon entering Paris, became almost immediately embroiled in court intrigues, international politics, and ill-fated affairs between royal lovers. Over the next six years, readers would enjoy the adventures of this youth and his three famous friends, Porthos, Athos, and Aramis, as their exploits unraveled behind the scenes of some of the most momentous events in French and even English history.

Eventually these serialized adventures were published in novel form, and became the three D'Artagnan Romances known today. Here is a brief summary of the first two novels:

The Three Musketeers (serialized March—July, 1844): The year is 1625. The young D'Artagnan arrives in Paris at the tender age of 18, and almost immediately offends three musketeers, Porthos, Aramis, and Athos. Instead of dueling, the four are attacked by five of the Cardinal's guards, and the courage of the youth is made apparent during the battle. The four become fast friends, and, when asked by D'Artagnan's landlord to find his missing wife, embark upon an adventure that takes them across both France and England in order to thwart the plans of the Cardinal Richelieu. Along the way, they encounter a beautiful young spy, named simply Milady, who will stop at nothing to disgrace Queen Anne of Austria before her husband, Louis XIII, and take her revenge upon the four friends.

Twenty Years After (serialized January—August, 1845): The year is now 1648, twenty years since the close of the last story. Louis XIII has died, as has Cardinal Richelieu, and while the crown of France may sit upon the head of Anne of Austria as Regent for the young Louis XIV, the real power resides with the Cardinal Mazarin, her secret husband. D'Artagnan is now a lieutenant of musketeers, and his three friends have retired to private life. Athos turned out to be a nobleman, the Comte de la Fere, and has retired to his home with his son, Raoul de Bragelonne. Aramis, whose real name is D'Herblay, has followed his intention of shedding the musketeer's cassock for the priest's robes, and Porthos has married a wealthy woman, who left him her fortune upon her death. But trouble is stirring in both France and England. Cromwell menaces the institution of royalty itself while marching against Charles I, and at home the Fronde is threatening to tear France apart. D'Artagnan brings his friends out of retirement to save the threatened English monarch, but Mordaunt, the son of Milady, who seeks to avenge his mother's death at the musketeers' hands, thwarts their valiant efforts. Undaunted, our heroes return to France just in time to help save the young Louis XIV, quiet the Fronde, and tweak the nose of Cardinal Mazarin.

The third novel, The Vicomte de Bragelonne (serialized October, 1847—January, 1850), has enjoyed a strange history in its English translation. It has been split into three, four, or five volumes at various points in its history. The five-volume edition generally does not give titles to the smaller portions, but the others do. In the three-volume edition, the novels are entitled The Vicomte de Bragelonne, Louise de la Valliere, and The Man in the Iron Mask. For the purposes of this etext, I have chosen to split the novel as the four-volume edition does, with these titles: The Vicomte de Bragelonne, Ten Years Later, Louise de la Valliere, and The Man in the Iron Mask. In the first three etexts:

The Vicomte de Bragelonne (Etext 2609): It is the year 1660, and D'Artagnan, after thirty-five years of loyal service, has become disgusted with serving King Louis XIV while the real power resides with the Cardinal Mazarin, and has tendered his resignation. He embarks on his own project, that of restoring Charles II to the throne of England, and, with the help of Athos, succeeds, earning himself quite a fortune in the process. D'Artagnan returns to Paris to live the life of a rich citizen, and Athos, after negotiating the marriage of Philip, the king's brother, to Princess Henrietta of England, likewise retires to his own estate, La Fere. Meanwhile, Mazarin has finally died, and left Louis to assume the reigns of power, with the assistance of M. Colbert, formerly Mazarin's trusted clerk. Colbert has an intense hatred for M. Fouquet, the king's superintendent of finances, and has resolved to use any means necessary to bring about his fall. With the new rank of intendant bestowed on him by Louis, Colbert succeeds in having two of Fouquet's loyal friends tried and executed. He then brings to the king's attention that Fouquet is fortifying the island of Belle-Ile-en-Mer, and could possibly be planning to use it as a base for some military operation against the king. Louis calls D'Artagnan out of retirement and sends him to investigate the island, promising him a tremendous salary and his long-promised promotion to captain of the musketeers upon his return. At Belle-Isle, D'Artagnan discovers that the engineer of the fortifications is, in fact, Porthos, now the Baron du Vallon, and that's not all. The blueprints for the island, although in Porthos's handwriting, show evidence of another script that has been erased, that of Aramis. D'Artagnan later discovers that Aramis has become the bishop of Vannes, which is, coincidentally, a parish belonging to M. Fouquet. Suspecting that D'Artagnan has arrived on the king's behalf to investigate, Aramis tricks D'Artagnan into wandering around Vannes in search of Porthos, and sends Porthos on an heroic ride back to Paris to warn Fouquet of the danger. Fouquet rushes to the king, and gives him Belle-Isle as a present, thus allaying any suspicion, and at the same

time humiliating Colbert, just minutes before the usher announces someone else seeking an audience with the king.

Ten Years Later (Etext 2681): As 1661 approaches, Princess Henrietta of England arrives for her marriage, and throws the court of France into complete disorder. The jealousy of the Duke of Buckingham, who is in love with her, nearly occasions a war on the streets of Le Havre, thankfully prevented by Raoul's timely and tactful intervention. After the marriage, though, Monsieur Philip becomes horribly jealous of Buckingham, and has him exiled. Before leaving, however, the duke fights a duel with M. de Wardes at Calais. De Wardes is a malicious and spiteful man, the sworn enemy of D'Artagnan, and, by the same token, that of Athos, Aramis, Porthos, and Raoul as well. Both men are seriously wounded, and the duke is taken back to England to recover. Raoul's friend, the Comte de Guiche, is the next to succumb to Henrietta's charms, and Monsieur obtains his exile as well, though De Guiche soon effects a reconciliation. But then the king's eye falls on Madame Henrietta during the comte's absence, and this time Monsieur's jealousy has no recourse. Anne of Austria intervenes, and the king and his sister-in-law decide to pick a young lady with whom the king can pretend to be in love, the better to mask their own affair. They unfortunately select Louise de la Valliere, Raoul's fiancee. While the court is in residence at Fontainebleau, the king unwitting overhears Louise confessing her love for him while chatting with her friends beneath the royal oak, and the king promptly forgets his affection for Madame. That same night, Henrietta overhears, at the same oak, De Guiche confessing his love for her to Raoul. The two embark on their own affair. A few days later, during a rainstorm, Louis and Louise are trapped alone together, and the whole court begins to talk of the scandal while their love affair blossoms. Aware of Louise's attachment, the king arranges for Raoul to be sent to England for an indefinite period.

Meanwhile, the struggle for power continues between Fouquet and Colbert. Although the Belle-Isle plot backfired, Colbert prompts the king to ask Fouquet for more and more money, and without his two friends to raise it for him, Fouquet is sorely pressed. The situation gets so bad that his new mistress, Madame de Belliere, must resort to selling all her jewels and her gold and silver plate. Aramis, while this is going on, has grown friendly with the governor of the Bastile, M. de Baisemeaux, a fact that Baisemeaux unwittingly reveals to D'Artagnan while inquiring of him as to Aramis's whereabouts. This further arouses the suspicions of the musketeer, who was made to look ridiculous by Aramis. He had ridden overnight at an insane pace, but arrived a few minutes after Fouquet had already presented Belle-Isle to the king. Aramis learns from the governor the location of a mysterious prisoner, who bears a remarkable resemblance to Louis XIV—in fact, the two are identical. He uses the existence of this secret to persuade a dying Franciscan monk, the general of the society of the Jesuits, to name him, Aramis, the new general of the order. On Aramis's advice, hoping to use Louise's influence with the king to counteract Colbert's influence, Fouquet also writes a love letter to La Valliere, unfortunately undated. It never reaches its destination, however, as the servant ordered to deliver it turns out to be an agent of Colbert's.

Louise de la Valliere (Etext 2710): Believing D'Artagnan occupied at Fontainebleau and Porthos safely tucked away at Paris, Aramis holds a funeral for the dead Franciscan—but in fact, Aramis is wrong in both suppositions. D'Artagnan has left Fontainebleau, bored to tears by the *fetes*, retrieved Porthos, and is visiting the country-house of Planchet, his old lackey. This house happens to be right next door to the graveyard, and upon observing Aramis at this funeral, and his subsequent meeting with a mysterious hooded lady, D'Artagnan, suspicions aroused, resolves to make a little trouble for the bishop. He presents Porthos to the king at the same time as Fouquet presents

Aramis, thereby surprising the wily prelate. Aramis's professions of affection and innocence do only a little to allay D'Artagnan's concerns, and he continues to regard Aramis's actions with a curious and wary eye. Meanwhile, much to his delight, Porthos is invited to dine with the king as a result of his presentation, and with D'Artagnan's guidance, manages to behave in such a manner as to procure the king's marked favor.

The mysterious woman turns out to be the Duchesse de Chevreuse, a notorious schemer and former friend of Anne of Austria. She comes bearing more bad news for Fouquet, who is already in trouble, as the king has invited himself to a *fete* at Vaux, Fouquet's magnificent mansion, that will surely bankrupt the poor superintendent. The Duchesse has letters from Mazarin that prove that Fouquet has received thirteen million francs from the royal coffers, and she wishes to sell these letters to Aramis. Aramis refuses, and the letters are instead sold to Colbert. Fouquet, meanwhile, discovers that the receipt that proves his innocence in the affair has been stolen from him. Even worse, Fouquet, desperate for money, is forced to sell the parliamentary position that renders him untouchable by any court proceedings. As part of her deal with Colbert, though, Chevreuse also obtains a secret audience with the queen-mother, where the two discuss a shocking secret—Louis XIV has a twin brother, long believed, however, to be dead.

Meanwhile, in other quarters, De Wardes, Raoul's inveterate enemy, has returned from Calais, barely recovered from his wounds, and no sooner does he return than he begins again to insult people, particularly La Valliere, and this time the comte de Guiche is the one to challenge him. The duel leaves De Guiche horribly wounded, but enables Madame to use her influence to destroy De Wardes's standing at court. The *fetes*, however, come to an end, and the court returns to Paris. The king has been more than obvious about his affections for

Louise, and Madame, the queen-mother, and the queen join forces to destroy her. She is dishonorably discharged from court, and in despair, she flees to the convent at Chaillot. Along the way, though, she runs into D'Artagnan, who manages to get word back to the king of what has taken place. By literally begging Madame in tears, Louis manages to secure Louise's return to court—but Madame still places every obstacle possible before the lovers. They have to resort to building a secret staircase and meeting in the apartments of M. de Saint-Aignan, where Louis has a painter create a portrait of Louise. But Madame recalls Raoul from London and shows him these proofs of Louise's infidelity. Raoul, crushed, challenges Saint-Aignan to a duel, which the king prevents, and Athos, furious, breaks his sword before the king. The king has D'Artagnan arrest Athos, and at the Bastile they encounter Aramis, who is paying Baisemeaux another visit. Raoul learns of Athos's arrest, and with Porthos in tow, they effect a daring rescue, surprising the carriage containing D'Artagnan and Athos as they leave the Bastile. Although quite impressive, the intrepid raid is in vain, as D'Artagnan has already secured Athos's pardon from the king. Instead, everybody switches modes of transport; D'Artagnan and Porthos take the horses back to Paris, and Athos and Raoul take the carriage back to La Fere, where they intend to reside permanently, as the king is now their sworn enemy, Raoul cannot bear to see Louise, and they have no more dealings in Paris.

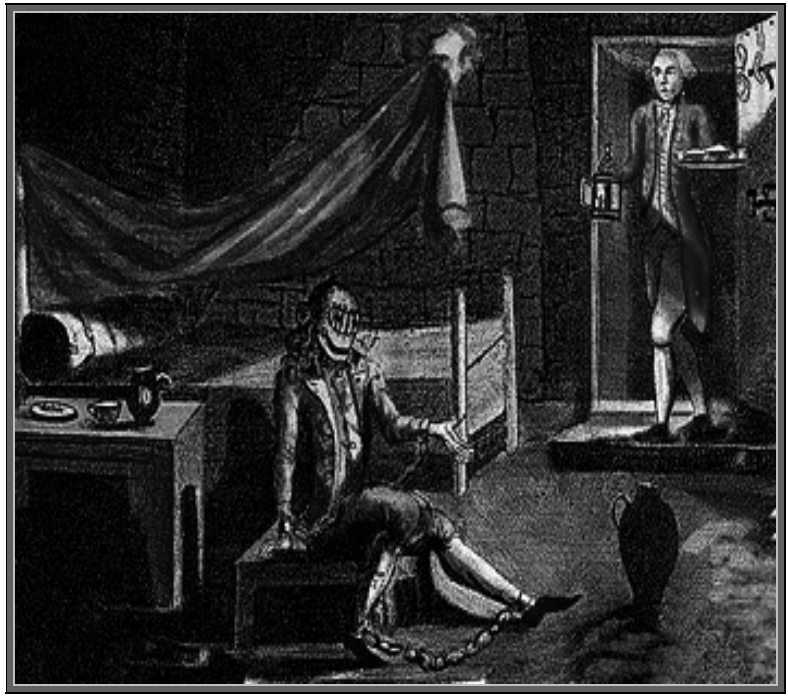
Aramis, left alone with Baisemeaux, inquires the governor of the prison about his loyalties, in particular to the Jesuits. The bishop reveals that he is a confessor of the society, and invokes their regulations in order to obtain access to this mysterious prisoner who bears such a striking resemblance to Louis XIV...

And so Baisemeaux is conducting Aramis to the prisoner as the final section of The Vicomte de Bragelonne and this final story of the D'Artagnan Romances opens. I have written a "Cast of Historical

Characters," Etext 2760, that will enable curious readers to compare personages in the novel with their historical counterparts. Also of interest may be an essay Dumas wrote on the possible identity of the real Man in the Iron Mask, which is Etext 2751. Enjoy!

John Bursey

CHAPTER I. THE PRİSONER.



Since Aramis's singular transformation into a confessor of the order, Baisemeaux was no longer the same man. Up to that period, the place which Aramis had held in the worthy governor's estimation was that of a prelate whom he respected and a friend to whom he owed a debt of gratitude; but now he felt himself an inferior, and that Aramis was his master. He himself lighted a lantern, summoned a turnkey, and said, returning to Aramis, "I am at your orders, monseigneur." Aramis merely nodded his head, as much as to say, "Very good"; and signed to him with his hand to lead the way. Baisemeaux advanced, and Aramis followed him. It was a calm and lovely starlit night; the steps of three men resounded on the flags of the terraces, and the clinking of the keys hanging from the jailer's girdle made itself heard up to the stories of the

towers, as if to remind the prisoners that the liberty of earth was a luxury beyond their reach. It might have been said that the alteration effected in Baisemeaux extended even to the prisoners. The turnkey, the same who, on Aramis's first arrival had shown himself so inquisitive and curious, was now not only silent, but impassible. He held his head down, and seemed afraid to keep his ears open. In this wise they reached the basement of the Bertaudiere, the two first stories of which were mounted silently and somewhat slowly; for Baisemeaux, though far from disobeying, was far from exhibiting any eagerness to obey. On arriving at the door, Baisemeaux showed a disposition to enter the prisoner's chamber; but Aramis, stopping him on the threshold, said, "The rules do not allow the governor to hear the prisoner's confession."

Baisemeaux bowed, and made way for Aramis, who took the lantern and entered; and then signed to them to close the door behind him. For an instant he remained standing, listening whether Baisemeaux and the turnkey had retired; but as soon as he was assured by the sound of their descending footsteps that they had left the tower, he put the lantern on the table and gazed around. On a bed of green serge, similar in all respect to the other beds in the Bastile, save that it was newer, and under curtains half-drawn, reposed a young man, to whom we have already once before introduced Aramis. According to custom, the prisoner was without a light. At the hour of curfew, he was bound to extinguish his lamp, and we perceive how much he was favored, in being allowed to keep it burning even till then. Near the bed a large leathern armchair, with twisted legs, sustained his clothes. A little table—without pens, books, paper, or ink—stood neglected in sadness near the window; while several plates, still unemptied, showed that the prisoner had scarcely touched his evening meal. Aramis saw that the young man was stretched upon his bed, his face half concealed by his arms. The arrival of a visitor did not caused any change of

position; either he was waiting in expectation, or was asleep. Aramis lighted the candle from the lantern, pushed back the armchair, and approached the bed with an evident mixture of interest and respect. The young man raised his head. "What is it?" said he.

"You desired a confessor?" replied Aramis.

"Yes."

"Because you were ill?"

"Yes."

"Very ill?"

The young man gave Aramis a piercing glance, and answered, "I thank you." After a moment's silence, "I have seen you before," he continued. Aramis bowed.

Doubtless the scrutiny the prisoner had just made of the cold, crafty, and imperious character stamped upon the features of the bishop of Vannes was little reassuring to one in his situation, for he added, "I am better."

"And so?" said Aramis.

"Why, then—being better, I have no longer the same need of a confessor, I think."

"Not even of the hair-cloth, which the note you found in your bread informed you of?"

The young man started; but before he had either assented or denied, Aramis continued, "Not even of the ecclesiastic from whom you were to hear an important revelation?"

"If it be so," said the young man, sinking again on his pillow, "it is different; I am listening."

Aramis then looked at him more closely, and was struck with the easy majesty of his mien, one which can never be acquired unless Heaven has implanted it in the blood or heart. "Sit down, monsieur," said the prisoner.

Aramis bowed and obeyed. "How does the Bastile agree with you?" asked the bishop.

"Very well."

"You do not suffer?"

"No."

"You have nothing to regret?"

"Nothing."

"Not even your liberty?"

"What do you call liberty, monsieur?" asked the prisoner, with the tone of a man who is preparing for a struggle.

"I call liberty, the flowers, the air, light, the stars, the happiness of going whithersoever the sinewy limbs of one-and-twenty chance to wish to carry you."

The young man smiled, whether in resignation or contempt, it was difficult to tell. "Look," said he, "I have in that Japanese vase two roses gathered yesterday evening in the bud from the governor's garden; this morning they have blown and spread their vermilion chalice beneath my gaze; with every opening petal they unfold the treasures of their perfumes, filling my chamber with a fragrance that embalms it. Look now on these two roses; even among roses these are beautiful, and the rose is the most beautiful of flowers. Why, then, do you bid me desire other flowers when I possess the loveliest of all?"

Aramis gazed at the young man in surprise.

"If *flowers* constitute liberty," sadly resumed the captive, "I am free, for I possess them."

"But the air!" cried Aramis; "air is so necessary to life!"

"Well, monsieur," returned the prisoner; "draw near to the window; it is open. Between high heaven and earth the wind whirls on its waftages of hail and lightning, exhales its torrid mist or breathes in gentle breezes. It caresses my face. When mounted on the back of this armchair, with my arm around the bars of the window to sustain myself, I fancy I am swimming the wide expanse before me." The countenance of Aramis darkened as the young man continued: "Light I have! what is better than light? I have the sun, a friend who comes to visit me every day without the permission of the governor or the jailer's company. He comes in at the window, and traces in my room a square the shape of the window, which lights up the hangings of my bed and floods the very floor. This luminous square increases from ten o'clock till midday, and decreases from one till three slowly, as if, having hastened to my presence, it sorrowed at bidding me farewell. When its last ray disappears I have enjoyed its presence for five hours. Is not that sufficient? I have been told that there are unhappy beings who dig in quarries, and laborers who toil in mines, who never behold it at all." Aramis wiped the drops from his brow. "As to the stars which are so delightful to view," continued the young man, "they all resemble each other save in size and brilliancy. I am a favored mortal, for if you had not lighted that candle you would have been able to see the beautiful stars which I was gazing at from my couch before your arrival, whose silvery rays were stealing through my brain."

Aramis lowered his head; he felt himself overwhelmed with the bitter flow of that sinister philosophy which is the religion of the captive.

"So much, then, for the flowers, the air, the daylight, and the stars," tranquilly continued the young man; "there remains but exercise. Do I not walk all day in the governor's garden if it is fine—here if it rains? in the fresh air if it is warm; in perfect warmth, thanks to my winter stove, if it be cold? Ah! monsieur, do you fancy," continued the prisoner, not without bitterness, "that men have not done everything for me that a man can hope for or desire?"

"Men!" said Aramis; "be it so; but it seems to me you are forgetting Heaven."

"Indeed I have forgotten Heaven," murmured the prisoner, with emotion; "but why do you mention it? Of what use is it to talk to a prisoner of Heaven?"

Aramis looked steadily at this singular youth, who possessed the resignation of a martyr with the smile of an atheist. "Is not Heaven in everything?" he murmured in a reproachful tone.

"Say rather, at the end of everything," answered the prisoner, firmly.

"Be it so," said Aramis; "but let us return to our starting-point."

"I ask nothing better," returned the young man.

"I am your confessor."

"Yes."

"Well, then, you ought, as a penitent, to tell me the truth."

"My whole desire is to tell it you."

"Every prisoner has committed some crime for which he has been imprisoned. What crime, then, have you committed?"

"You asked me the same question the first time you saw me," returned the prisoner.

"And then, as now you evaded giving me an answer."

"And what reason have you for thinking that I shall now reply to you?"

"Because this time I am your confessor."

"Then if you wish me to tell what crime I have committed, explain to me in what a crime consists. For as my conscience does not accuse me, I aver that I am not a criminal."

"We are often criminals in the sight of the great of the earth, not alone for having ourselves committed crimes, but because we know that crimes have been committed."

The prisoner manifested the deepest attention.

"Yes, I understand you," he said, after a pause; "yes, you are right, monsieur; it is very possible that, in such a light, I am a criminal in the eyes of the great of the earth."

"Ah! then you know something," said Aramis, who thought he had pierced not merely through a defect in the harness, but through the joints of it.

"No, I am not aware of anything," replied the young man; "but sometimes I think—and I say to myself—"

"What do you say to yourself?"

"That if I were to think but a little more deeply I should either go mad or I should divine a great deal."

"And then—and then?" said Aramis, impatiently.

"Then I leave off."

"You leave off?"

"Yes; my head becomes confused and my ideas melancholy; I feel *ennui* overtaking me; I wish—"

"What?"

"I don't know; but I do not like to give myself up to longing for things which I do not possess, when I am so happy with what I have."

"You are afraid of death?" said Aramis, with a slight uneasiness.

"Yes," said the young man, smiling.

Aramis felt the chill of that smile, and shuddered. "Oh, as you fear death, you know more about matters than you say," he cried.

"And you," returned the prisoner, "who bade me to ask to see you; you, who, when I did ask to see you, came here promising a world of confidence; how is it that, nevertheless, it is you who are silent, leaving it for me to speak? Since, then, we both wear masks, either let us both retain them or put them aside together."

Aramis felt the force and justice of the remark, saying to himself, "This is no ordinary man; I must be cautious.—Are you ambitious?" said he suddenly to the prisoner, aloud, without preparing him for the alteration.

"What do you mean by ambitious?" replied the youth.

"Ambition," replied Aramis, "is the feeling which prompts a man to desire more—much more—than he possesses."

"I said that I was contented, monsieur; but, perhaps, I deceive myself. I am ignorant of the nature of ambition; but it is not impossible I may have some. Tell me your mind; that is all I ask."

"An ambitious man," said Aramis, "is one who covets that which is beyond his station."

"I covet nothing beyond my station," said the young man, with an assurance of manner which for the second time made the bishop of Vannes tremble.

He was silent. But to look at the kindling eye, the knitted brow, and the reflective attitude of the captive, it was evident that he expected something more than silence,—a silence which Aramis now broke. "You lied the first time I saw you," said he.

"Lied!" cried the young man, starting up on his couch, with such a tone in his voice, and such a lightning in his eyes, that Aramis recoiled, in spite of himself.

"I *should* say," returned Aramis, bowing, "you concealed from me what you knew of your infancy."

"A man's secrets are his own, monsieur," retorted the prisoner, "and not at the mercy of the first chance-comer."

"True," said Aramis, bowing still lower than before, "'tis true; pardon me, but to-day do I still occupy the place of a chance-comer? I beseech you to reply, monseigneur."

This title slightly disturbed the prisoner; but nevertheless he did not appear astonished that it was given him. "I do not know you, monsieur," said he.

"Oh, but if I dared, I would take your hand and kiss it!"

The young man seemed as if he were going to give Aramis his hand; but the light which beamed in his eyes faded away, and he coldly and distrustfully withdrew his hand again. "Kiss the hand of a prisoner," he said, shaking his head, "to what purpose?"

"Why did you tell me," said Aramis, "that you were happy here? Why, that you aspired to nothing? Why, in a word, by thus speaking, do you prevent me from being frank in my turn?"

The same light shone a third time in the young man's eyes, but died ineffectually away as before.

"You distrust me," said Aramis.

"And why say you so, monsieur?"

"Oh, for a very simple reason; if you know what you ought to know, you ought to mistrust everybody."

"Then do not be astonished that I am mistrustful, since you suspect me of knowing what I do not know."

Aramis was struck with admiration at this energetic resistance. "Oh, monseigneur! you drive me to despair," said he, striking the armchair with his fist.

"And, on my part, I do not comprehend you, monsieur."

"Well, then, try to understand me." The prisoner looked fixedly at Aramis.

"Sometimes it seems to me," said the latter, "that I have before me the man whom I seek, and then—"

"And then your man disappears,—is it not so?" said the prisoner, smiling. "So much the better."

Aramis rose. "Certainly," said he; "I have nothing further to say to a man who mistrusts me as you do."

"And I, monsieur," said the prisoner, in the same tone, "have nothing to say to a man who will not understand that a prisoner ought to be mistrustful of everybody."

"Even of his old friends," said Aramis. "Oh, monseigneur, you are *too* prudent!"

"Of my old friends?—you one of my old friends,—you?"

"Do you no longer remember," said Aramis, "that you once saw, in the village where your early years were spent—"

"Do you know the name of the village?" asked the prisoner.

"Noisy-le-Sec, monseigneur," answered Aramis, firmly.

"Go on," said the young man, with an immovable aspect.

"Stay, monseigneur," said Aramis; "if you are positively resolved to carry on this game, let us break off. I am here to tell you many things, 'tis true; but you must allow me to see that, on your side, you have a desire to know them. Before revealing the important matters I still withhold, be assured I am in need of some encouragement, if not candor; a little sympathy, if not confidence. But you keep yourself intrenched in a pretended which paralyzes me. Oh, not for the reason you think; for, ignorant as you may be, or indifferent as you feign to be, you are none the less what you are, monseigneur, and there is nothing—nothing, mark me! which can cause you not to be so."

"I promise you," replied the prisoner, "to hear you without impatience. Only it appears to me that I have a right to repeat the question I have already asked, 'Who *are* you?'"

"Do you remember, fifteen or eighteen years ago, seeing at Noisy-le-Sec a cavalier, accompanied by a lady in black silk, with flame-colored ribbons in her hair?"

"Yes," said the young man; "I once asked the name of this cavalier, and they told me that he called himself the Abbe d'Herblay. I was astonished that the abbe had so warlike an air, and they replied that there was nothing singular in that, seeing that he was one of Louis XIII.'s musketeers."

"Well," said Aramis, "that musketeer and abbe, afterwards bishop of Vannes, is your confessor now."

"I know it; I recognized you."

"Then, monseigneur, if you know that, I must further add a fact of which you are ignorant—that if the king were to know this evening of the presence of this musketeer, this abbe, this bishop, this confessor, *here*—he, who has risked everything to visit you, to-morrow would

behold the steely glitter of the executioner's axe in a dungeon more gloomy, more obscure than yours."

While listening to these words, delivered with emphasis, the young man had raised himself on his couch, and was now gazing more and more eagerly at Aramis.

The result of his scrutiny was that he appeared to derive some confidence from it. "Yes," he murmured, "I remember perfectly. The woman of whom you speak came once with you, and twice afterwards with another." He hesitated.

"With another, who came to see you every month—is it not so, monseigneur?"

"Yes."

"Do you know who this lady was?"

The light seemed ready to flash from the prisoner's eyes. "I am aware that she was one of the ladies of the court," he said.

"You remember that lady well, do you not?"

"Oh, my recollection can hardly be very confused on this head," said the young prisoner. "I saw that lady once with a gentleman about forty-five years old. I saw her once with you, and with the lady dressed in black. I have seen her twice since then with the same person. These four people, with my master, and old Perronnette, my jailer, and the governor of the prison, are the only persons with whom I have ever spoken, and, indeed, almost the only persons I have ever seen."

"Then you were in prison?"

"If I am a prisoner here, then I was comparatively free, although in a very narrow sense—a house I never quitted, a garden surrounded with walls I could not climb, these constituted my residence, but you know it, as you have been there. In a word, being accustomed to live

within these bounds, I never cared to leave them. And so you will understand, monsieur, that having never seen anything of the world, I have nothing left to care for; and therefore, if you relate anything, you will be obliged to explain each item to me as you go along."

"And I will do so," said Aramis, bowing; "for it is my duty, monseigneur."

"Well, then, begin by telling me who was my tutor."

"A worthy and, above all, an honorable gentleman, monseigneur; fit guide for both body and soul. Had you ever any reason to complain of him?"

"Oh, no; quite the contrary. But this gentleman of yours often used to tell me that my father and mother were dead. Did he deceive me, or did he speak the truth?"

"He was compelled to comply with the orders given him."

"Then he lied?"

"In one respect. Your father is dead."

"And my mother?"

"She is dead *for you*."

"But then she lives for others, does she not?"

"Yes."

"And I—and I, then" (the young man looked sharply at Aramis) "am compelled to live in the obscurity of a prison?"

"Alas! I fear so."

"And that because my presence in the world would lead to the revelation of a great secret?"

"Certainly, a very great secret."

"My enemy must indeed be powerful, to be able to shut up in the Bastile a child such as I then was."

"He is."

"More powerful than my mother, then?"

"And why do you ask that?"

"Because my mother would have taken my part."

Aramis hesitated. "Yes, monseigneur; more powerful than your mother."

"Seeing, then, that my nurse and preceptor were carried off, and that I, also, was separated from them—either they were, or I am, very dangerous to my enemy?"

"Yes; but you are alluding to a peril from which he freed himself, by causing the nurse and preceptor to disappear," answered Aramis, quietly.

"Disappear!" cried the prisoner, "how did they disappear?"

"In a very sure way," answered Aramis—"they are dead."

The young man turned pale, and passed his hand tremblingly over his face. "Poison?" he asked.

"Poison."

The prisoner reflected a moment. "My enemy must indeed have been very cruel, or hard beset by necessity, to assassinate those two innocent people, my sole support; for the worthy gentleman and the poor nurse had never harmed a living being."

"In your family, monseigneur, necessity is stern. And so it is necessity which compels me, to my great regret, to tell you that this gentleman and the unhappy lady have been assassinated."

"Oh, you tell me nothing I am not aware of," said the prisoner, knitting his brows.

"How?"

"I suspected it."

"Why?"

"I will tell you."

At this moment the young man, supporting himself on his two elbows, drew close to Aramis's face, with such an expression of dignity, of self-command and of defiance even, that the bishop felt the electricity of enthusiasm strike in devouring flashes from that great heart of his, into his brain of adamant.

"Speak, monseigneur. I have already told you that by conversing with you I endanger my life. Little value as it has, I implore you to accept it as the ransom of your own."

"Well," resumed the young man, "this is why I suspected they had killed my nurse and my preceptor—"

"Whom you used to call your father?"

"Yes; whom I called my father, but whose son I well knew I was not."

"Who caused you to suppose so?"

"Just as you, monsieur, are too respectful for a friend, he was also too respectful for a father."

"I, however," said Aramis, "have no intention to disguise myself."

The young man nodded assent and continued: "Undoubtedly, I was not destined to perpetual seclusion," said the prisoner; "and that which makes me believe so, above all, now, is the care that was taken to render me as accomplished a cavalier as possible. The gentleman

attached to my person taught me everything he knew himself—mathematics, a little geometry, astronomy, fencing and riding. Every morning I went through military exercises, and practiced on horseback. Well, one morning during the summer, it being very hot, I went to sleep in the hall. Nothing, up to that period, except the respect paid me, had enlightened me, or even roused my suspicions. I lived as children, as birds, as plants, as the air and the sun do. I had just turned my fifteenth year—"

"This, then, is eight years ago?"

"Yes, nearly; but I have ceased to reckon time."

"Excuse me; but what did your tutor tell you, to encourage you to work?"

"He used to say that a man was bound to make for himself, in the world, that fortune which Heaven had refused him at his birth. He added that, being a poor, obscure orphan, I had no one but myself to look to; and that nobody either did, or ever would, take any interest in me. I was, then, in the hall I have spoken of, asleep from fatigue with long fencing. My preceptor was in his room on the first floor, just over me. Suddenly I heard him exclaim, and then he called: 'Perronnette! Perronnette!' It was my nurse whom he called."

"Yes, I know it," said Aramis. "Continue, monseigneur."

"Very likely she was in the garden; for my preceptor came hastily downstairs. I rose, anxious at seeing him anxious. He opened the garden-door, still crying out, 'Perronnette! Perronnette!' The windows of the hall looked into the court; the shutters were closed; but through a chink in them I saw my tutor draw near a large well, which was almost directly under the windows of his study. He stooped over the brim, looked into the well, and again cried out, and made wild and affrighted gestures. Where I was, I could not only see, but hear—and see and hear I did."

"Go on, I pray you," said Aramis.

"Dame Perronnette came running up, hearing the governor's cries. He went to meet her, took her by the arm, and drew her quickly towards the edge; after which, as they both bent over it together, 'Look, look,' cried he, 'what a misfortune!'

"'Calm yourself, calm yourself,' said Perronnette; 'what is the matter?'

"'The letter!' he exclaimed; 'do you see that letter?' pointing to the bottom of the well.

"'What letter?' she cried.

"'The letter you see down there; the last letter from the queen.'

"At this word I trembled. My tutor—he who passed for my father, he who was continually recommending me modesty and humility—in correspondence with the queen!

"'The queen's last letter!' cried Perronnette, without showing more astonishment than at seeing this letter at the bottom of the well; 'but how came it there?'

"'A chance, Dame Perronnette—a singular chance. I was entering my room, and on opening the door, the window, too, being open, a puff of air came suddenly and carried off this paper—this letter of her majesty's; I darted after it, and gained the window just in time to see it flutter a moment in the breeze and disappear down the well.'

"'Well,' said Dame Perronnette; 'and if the letter has fallen into the well, 'tis all the same as if it was burnt; and as the queen burns all her letters every time she comes—'

"And so you see this lady who came every month was the queen," said the prisoner.

"'Doubtless, doubtless,' continued the old gentleman; 'but this letter contained instructions—how can I follow them?'

"'Write immediately to her; give her a plain account of the accident, and the queen will no doubt write you another letter in place of this.'

"'Oh! the queen would never believe the story,' said the good gentleman, shaking his head; 'she will imagine that I want to keep this letter instead of giving it up like the rest, so as to have a hold over her. She is so distrustful, and M. de Mazarin so—Yon devil of an Italian is capable of having us poisoned at the first breath of suspicion.'"

Aramis almost imperceptibly smiled.

"'You know, Dame Perronnette, they are both so suspicious in all that concerns Philippe.'

"Philippe was the name they gave me," said the prisoner.

"'Well, 'tis no use hesitating,' said Dame Perronnette, 'somebody must go down the well.'

"'Of course; so that the person who goes down may read the paper as he is coming up.'

"'But let us choose some villager who cannot read, and then you will be at ease.'

"'Granted; but will not any one who descends guess that a paper must be important for which we risk a man's life? However, you have given me an idea, Dame Perronnette; somebody shall go down the well, but that somebody shall be myself.'

"But at this notion Dame Perronnette lamented and cried in such a manner, and so implored the old nobleman, with tears in her eyes, that he promised her to obtain a ladder long enough to reach down, while she went in search of some stout-hearted youth, whom she was to

persuade that a jewel had fallen into the well, and that this jewel was wrapped in a paper. 'And as paper,' remarked my preceptor, 'naturally unfolds in water, the young man would not be surprised at finding nothing, after all, but the letter wide open.'

"'But perhaps the writing will be already effaced by that time,' said Dame Perronnette.

"'No consequence, provided we secure the letter. On returning it to the queen, she will see at once that we have not betrayed her; and consequently, as we shall not rouse the distrust of Mazarin, we shall have nothing to fear from him.'

"Having come to this resolution, they parted. I pushed back the shutter, and, seeing that my tutor was about to re-enter, I threw myself on my couch, in a confusion of brain caused by all I had just heard. My governor opened the door a few moments after, and thinking I was asleep gently closed it again. As soon as ever it was shut, I rose, and, listening, heard the sound of retiring footsteps. Then I returned to the shutters, and saw my tutor and Dame Perronnette go out together. I was alone in the house. They had hardly closed the gate before I sprang from the window and ran to the well. Then, just as my governor had leaned over, so leaned I. Something white and luminous glistened in the green and quivering silence of the water. The brilliant disk fascinated and allured me; my eyes became fixed, and I could hardly breathe. The well seemed to draw me downwards with its slimy mouth and icy breath; and I thought I read, at the bottom of the water, characters of fire traced upon the letter the queen had touched. Then, scarcely knowing what I was about, and urged on by one of those instinctive impulses which drive men to destruction, I lowered the cord from the windlass of the well to within about three feet of the water, leaving the bucket dangling, at the same time taking infinite pains not to disturb that coveted letter, which was beginning to change its white tint for the hue of chrysoprase,—proof enough that it was sinking,—

and then, with the rope weltering in my hands, slid down into the abyss. When I saw myself hanging over the dark pool, when I saw the sky lessening above my head, a cold shudder came over me, a chill fear got the better of me, I was seized with giddiness, and the hair rose on my head; but my strong will still reigned supreme over all the terror and disquietude. I gained the water, and at once plunged into it, holding on by one hand, while I immersed the other and seized the dear letter, which, alas! came in two in my grasp. I concealed the two fragments in my body-coat, and, helping myself with my feet against the sides of the pit, and clinging on with my hands, agile and vigorous as I was, and, above all, pressed for time, I regained the brink, drenching it as I touched it with the water that streamed off me. I was no sooner out of the well with my prize, than I rushed into the sunlight, and took refuge in a kind of shrubbery at the bottom of the garden. As I entered my hiding-place, the bell which resounded when the great gate was opened, rang. It was my preceptor come back again. I had but just time. I calculated that it would take ten minutes before he would gain my place of concealment, even if, guessing where I was, he came straight to it; and twenty if he were obliged to look for me. But this was time enough to allow me to read the cherished letter, whose fragments I hastened to unite again. The writing was already fading, but I managed to decipher it all.

"And will you tell me what you read therein, monseigneur?" asked Aramis, deeply interested.

"Quite enough, monsieur, to see that my tutor was a man of noble rank, and that Perronnette, without being a lady of quality, was far better than a servant; and also to perceived that I must myself be high-born, since the queen, Anne of Austria, and Mazarin, the prime minister, commended me so earnestly to their care." Here the young man paused, quite overcome.

"And what happened?" asked Aramis.

"It happened, monsieur," answered he, "that the workmen they had summoned found nothing in the well, after the closest search; that my governor perceived that the brink was all watery; that I was not so dried by the sun as to prevent Dame Perronnette spying that my garments were moist; and, lastly, that I was seized with a violent fever, owing to the chill and the excitement of my discovery, an attack of delirium supervening, during which I related the whole adventure; so that, guided by my avowal, my governor found the pieces of the queen's letter inside the bolster where I had concealed them."

"Ah!" said Aramis, "now I understand."

"Beyond this, all is conjecture. Doubtless the unfortunate lady and gentleman, not daring to keep the occurrence secret, wrote of all this to the queen and sent back the torn letter."

"After which," said Aramis, "you were arrested and removed to the Bastile."

"As you see."

"Your two attendants disappeared?"

"Alas!"

"Let us not take up our time with the dead, but see what can be done with the living. You told me you were resigned."

"I repeat it."

"Without any desire for freedom?"

"As I told you."

"Without ambition, sorrow, or thought?"

The young man made no answer.

"Well," asked Aramis, "why are you silent?"

"I think I have spoken enough," answered the prisoner, "and that now it is your turn. I am weary."

Aramis gathered himself up, and a shade of deep solemnity spread itself over his countenance. It was evident that he had reached the crisis in the part he had come to the prison to play. "One question," said Aramis.

"What is it? speak."

"In the house you inhabited there were neither looking-glasses nor mirrors?"

"What are those two words, and what is their meaning?" asked the young man; "I have no sort of knowledge of them."

"They designate two pieces of furniture which reflect objects; so that, for instance, you may see in them your own lineaments, as you see mine now, with the naked eye."

"No; there was neither a glass nor a mirror in the house," answered the young man.

Aramis looked round him. "Nor is there anything of the kind here, either," he said; "they have again taken the same precaution."

"To what end?"

"You will know directly. Now, you have told me that you were instructed in mathematics, astronomy, fencing, and riding; but you have not said a word about history."

"My tutor sometimes related to me the principal deeds of the king, St. Louis, King Francis I., and King Henry IV."

"Is that all?"

"Very nearly."

"This also was done by design, then; just as they deprived you of mirrors, which reflect the present, so they left you in ignorance of history, which reflects the past. Since your imprisonment, books have been forbidden you; so that you are unacquainted with a number of facts, by means of which you would be able to reconstruct the shattered mansion of your recollections and your hopes."

"It is true," said the young man.

"Listen, then; I will in a few words tell you what has passed in France during the last twenty-three or twenty-four years; that is, from the probable date of your birth; in a word, from the time that interests you."

"Say on." And the young man resumed his serious and attentive attitude.

"Do you know who was the son of Henry IV.?"

"At least I know who his successor was."

"How?"

"By means of a coin dated 1610, which bears the effigy of Henry IV.; and another of 1612, bearing that of Louis XIII. So I presumed that, there being only two years between the two dates, Louis was Henry's successor."

"Then," said Aramis, "you know that the last reigning monarch was Louis XIII.?"

"I do," answered the youth, slightly reddening.

"Well, he was a prince full of noble ideas and great projects, always, alas! deferred by the trouble of the times and the dread struggle that his minister Richelieu had to maintain against the great nobles of France. The king himself was of a feeble character, and died young and unhappy."

"I know it."

"He had been long anxious about having a heir; a care which weighs heavily on princes, who desire to leave behind them more than one pledge that their best thoughts and works will be continued."

"Did the king, then, die childless?" asked the prisoner, smiling.

"No, but he was long without one, and for a long while thought he should be the last of his race. This idea had reduced him to the depths of despair, when suddenly, his wife, Anne of Austria—"

The prisoner trembled.

"Did you know," said Aramis, "that Louis XIII.'s wife was called Anne of Austria?"

"Continue," said the young man, without replying to the question.

"When suddenly," resumed Aramis, "the queen announced an interesting event. There was great joy at the intelligence, and all prayed for her happy delivery. On the 5th of September, 1638, she gave birth to a son."

Here Aramis looked at his companion, and thought he observed him turning pale. "You are about to hear," said Aramis, "an account which few indeed could now avouch; for it refers to a secret which they imagined buried with the dead, entombed in the abyss of the confessional."

"And you will tell me this secret?" broke in the youth.

"Oh!" said Aramis, with unmistakable emphasis, "I do not know that I ought to risk this secret by intrusting it to one who has no desire to quit the Bastile."

"I hear you, monsieur."

"The queen, then, gave birth to a son. But while the court was rejoicing over the event, when the king had show the new-born child to the nobility and people, and was sitting gayly down to table, to celebrate the event, the queen, who was alone in her room, was again taken ill and gave birth to a second son."

"Oh!" said the prisoner, betraying a bitter acquaintance with affairs than he had owned to, "I thought that Monsieur was only born in—"

Aramis raised his finger; "Permit me to continue," he said.

The prisoner sighed impatiently, and paused.

"Yes," said Aramis, "the queen had a second son, whom Dame Perronnette, the midwife, received in her arms."

"Dame Perronnette!" murmured the young man.

"They ran at once to the banqueting-room, and whispered to the king what had happened; he rose and quitted the table. But this time it was no longer happiness that his face expressed, but something akin to terror. The birth of twins changed into bitterness the joy to which that of an only son had given rise, seeing that in France (a fact you are assuredly ignorant of) it is the oldest of the king's sons who succeeds his father."

"I know it."

"And that the doctors and jurists assert that there is ground for doubting whether the son that first makes his appearance is the elder by the law of heaven and of nature."

The prisoner uttered a smothered cry, and became whiter than the coverlet under which he hid himself.

"Now you understand," pursued Aramis, "that the king, who with so much pleasure saw himself repeated in one, was in despair about two; fearing that the second might dispute the first's claim to seniority,

which had been recognized only two hours before; and so this second son, relying on party interests and caprices, might one day sow discord and engender civil war throughout the kingdom; by these means destroying the very dynasty he should have strengthened."

"Oh, I understand!—I understand!" murmured the young man.

"Well," continued Aramis; "this is what they relate, what they declare; this is why one of the queen's two sons, shamefully parted from his brother, shamefully sequestered, is buried in profound obscurity; this is why that second son has disappeared, and so completely, that not a soul in France, save his mother, is aware of his existence."

"Yes! his mother, who has cast him off," cried the prisoner in a tone of despair.

"Except, also," Aramis went on, "the lady in the black dress; and, finally, excepting—"

"Excepting yourself—is it not? You who come and relate all this; you, who rouse in my soul curiosity, hatred, ambition, and, perhaps, even the thirst of vengeance; except you, monsieur, who, if you are the man to whom I expect, whom the note I have received applies to, whom, in short, Heaven ought to send me, must possess about you—"

"What?" asked Aramis.

"A portrait of the king, Louis XIV., who at this moment reigns upon the throne of France."

"Here is the portrait," replied the bishop, handing the prisoner a miniature in enamel, on which Louis was depicted life-like, with a handsome, lofty mien. The prisoner eagerly seized the portrait, and gazed at it with devouring eyes.

"And now, monseigneur," said Aramis, "here is a mirror." Aramis left the prisoner time to recover his ideas.

"So high!—so high!" murmured the young man, eagerly comparing the likeness of Louis with his own countenance reflected in the glass.

"What do you think of it?" at length said Aramis.

"I think that I am lost," replied the captive; "the king will never set me free."

"And I—I demand to know," added the bishop, fixing his piercing eyes significantly upon the prisoner, "I demand to know which of these two is king; the one this miniature portrays, or whom the glass reflects?"

"The king, monsieur," sadly replied the young man, "is he who is on the throne, who is not in prison; and who, on the other hand, can cause others to be entombed there. Royalty means power; and you behold how powerless I am."

"Monseigneur," answered Aramis, with a respect he had not yet manifested, "the king, mark me, will, if you desire it, be the one that, quitting his dungeon, shall maintain himself upon the throne, on which his friends will place him."

"Tempt me not, monsieur," broke in the prisoner bitterly.

"Be not weak, monseigneur," persisted Aramis; "I have brought you all the proofs of your birth; consult them; satisfy yourself that you are a king's son; it is for *us* to act."

"No, no; it is impossible."

"Unless, indeed," resumed the bishop ironically, "it be the destiny of your race, that the brothers excluded from the throne should be always princes void of courage and honesty, as was your uncle, M. Gaston d'Orleans, who ten times conspired against his brother Louis XIII."

"What!" cried the prince, astonished; "my uncle Gaston 'conspired against his brother'; conspired to dethrone him?"

"Exactly, monseigneur; for no other reason. I tell you the truth."

"And he had friends—devoted friends?"

"As much so as I am to you."

"And, after all, what did he do?—Failed!"

"He failed, I admit; but always through his own fault; and, for the sake of purchasing—not his life—for the life of the king's brother is sacred and inviolable—but his liberty, he sacrificed the lives of all his friends, one after another. And so, at this day, he is a very blot on history, the detestation of a hundred noble families in this kingdom."

"I understand, monsieur; either by weakness or treachery, my uncle slew his friends."

"By weakness; which, in princes, is always treachery."

"And cannot a man fail, then, from incapacity and ignorance? Do you really believe it possible that a poor captive such as I, brought up, not only at a distance from the court, but even from the world—do you believe it possible that such a one could assist those of his friends who should attempt to serve him?" And as Aramis was about to reply, the young man suddenly cried out, with a violence which betrayed the temper of his blood, "We are speaking of friends; but how can *I* have any friends—I, whom no one knows; and have neither liberty, money, nor influence, to gain any?"

"I fancy I had the honor to offer myself to your royal highness."

"Oh, do not style me so, monsieur; 'tis either treachery or cruelty. Bid me not think of aught beyond these prison-walls, which so grimly confine me; let me again love, or, at least, submit to my slavery and my obscurity."

"Monseigneur, monseigneur; if you again utter these desperate words—if, after having received proof of your high birth, you still remain poor-spirited in body and soul, I will comply with your desire, I will depart, and renounce forever the service of a master, to whom so eagerly I came to devote my assistance and my life!"

"Monsieur," cried the prince, "would it not have been better for you to have reflected, before telling me all that you have done, that you have broken my heart forever?"

"And so I desire to do, monseigneur."

"To talk to me about power, grandeur, eye, and to prate of thrones! Is a prison the fit place? You wish to make me believe in splendor, and we are lying lost in night; you boast of glory, and we are smothering our words in the curtains of this miserable bed; you give me glimpses of power absolute whilst I hear the footsteps of the every-watchful jailer in the corridor—that step which, after all, makes you tremble more than it does me. To render me somewhat less incredulous, free me from the Bastile; let me breathe the fresh air; give me my spurs and trusty sword, then we shall begin to understand each other."

"It is precisely my intention to give you all this, monseigneur, and more; only, do you desire it?"

"A word more," said the prince. "I know there are guards in every gallery, bolts to every door, cannon and soldiery at every barrier. How will you overcome the sentries—spike the guns? How will you break through the bolts and bars?"

"Monseigneur,—how did you get the note which announced my arrival to you?"

"You can bribe a jailer for such a thing as a note."

"If we can corrupt one turnkey, we can corrupt ten."

"Well; I admit that it may be possible to release a poor captive from the Bastile; possible so to conceal him that the king's people shall not again ensnare him; possible, in some unknown retreat, to sustain the unhappy wretch in some suitable manner."

"Monseigneur!" said Aramis, smiling.

"I admit that, whoever would do this much for me, would seem more than mortal in my eyes; but as you tell me I am a prince, brother of the king, how can you restore me the rank and power which my mother and my brother have deprived me of? And as, to effect this, I must pass a life of war and hatred, how can you cause me to prevail in those combats—render me invulnerable by my enemies? Ah! monsieur, reflect on all this; place me, to-morrow, in some dark cavern at a mountain's base; yield me the delight of hearing in freedom sounds of the river, plain and valley, of beholding in freedom the sun of the blue heavens, or the stormy sky, and it is enough. Promise me no more than this, for, indeed, more you cannot give, and it would be a crime to deceive me, since you call yourself my friend."

Aramis waited in silence. "Monseigneur," he resumed, after a moment's reflection, "I admire the firm, sound sense which dictates your words; I am happy to have discovered my monarch's mind."

"Again, again! oh, God! for mercy's sake," cried the prince, pressing his icy hands upon his clammy brow, "do not play with me! I have no need to be a king to be the happiest of men."

"But I, monseigneur, wish you to be a king for the good of humanity."

"Ah!" said the prince, with fresh distrust inspired by the word; "ah! with what, then, has humanity to reproach my brother?"

"I forgot to say, monseigneur, that if you would allow me to guide you, and if you consent to become the most powerful monarch in

Christendom, you will have promoted the interests of all the friends whom I devote to the success of your cause, and these friends are numerous."

"Numerous?"

"Less numerous than powerful, monseigneur."

"Explain yourself."

"It is impossible; I will explain, I swear before Heaven, on that day that I see you sitting on the throne of France."

"But my brother?"

"You shall decree his fate. Do you pity him?"

"Him, who leaves me to perish in a dungeon? No, no. For him I have no pity!"

"So much the better."

"He might have himself come to this prison, have taken me by the hand, and have said, 'My brother, Heaven created us to love, not to contend with one another. I come to you. A barbarous prejudice has condemned you to pass your days in obscurity, far from mankind, deprived of every joy. I will make you sit down beside me; I will buckle round your waist our father's sword. Will you take advantage of this reconciliation to put down or restrain me? Will you employ that sword to spill my blood?' 'Oh! never,' I would have replied to him, 'I look on you as my preserver, I will respect you as my master. You give me far more than Heaven bestowed; for through you I possess liberty and the privilege of loving and being loved in this world.'"

"And you would have kept your word, monseigneur?"

"On my life! While now—now that I have guilty ones to punish—"

"In what manner, monseigneur?"

"What do you say as to the resemblance that Heaven has given me to my brother?"

"I say that there was in that likeness a providential instruction which the king ought to have heeded; I say that your mother committed a crime in rendering those different in happiness and fortune whom nature created so startlingly alike, of her own flesh, and I conclude that the object of punishment should be only to restore the equilibrium."

"By which you mean—"

"That if I restore you to your place on your brother's throne, he shall take yours in prison."

"Alas! there's such infinity of suffering in prison, especially it would be so for one who has drunk so deeply of the cup of enjoyment."

"Your royal highness will always be free to act as you may desire; and if it seems good to you, after punishment, you will have it in your power to pardon."

"Good. And now, are you aware of one thing, monsieur?"

"Tell me, my prince."

"It is that I will hear nothing further from you till I am clear of the Bastile."

"I was going to say to your highness that I should only have the pleasure of seeing you once again."

"And when?"

"The day when my prince leaves these gloomy walls."

"Heavens! how will you give me notice of it?"

"By myself coming to fetch you."

"Yourself?"

"My prince, do not leave this chamber save with me, or if in my absence you are compelled to do so, remember that I am not concerned in it."

"And so I am not to speak a word of this to any one whatever, save to you?"

"Save only to me." Aramis bowed very low. The prince offered his hand.

"Monsieur," he said, in a tone that issued from his heart, "one word more, my last. If you have sought me for my destruction; if you are only a tool in the hands of my enemies; if from our conference, in which you have sounded the depths of my mind, anything worse than captivity result, that is to say, if death befall me, still receive my blessing, for you will have ended my troubles and given me repose from the tormenting fever that has preyed on me for eight long, weary years."

"Monseigneur, wait the results ere you judge me," said Aramis.

"I say that, in such a case, I bless and forgive you. If, on the other hand, you are come to restore me to that position in the sunshine of fortune and glory to which I was destined by Heaven; if by your means I am enabled to live in the memory of man, and confer luster on my race by deeds of valor, or by solid benefits bestowed upon my people; if, from my present depths of sorrow, aided by your generous hand, I raise myself to the very height of honor, then to you, whom I thank with blessings, to you will I offer half my power and my glory: though you would still be but partly recompensed, and your share must always remain incomplete, since I could not divide with you the happiness received at your hands."

"Monseigneur," replied Aramis, moved by the pallor and excitement of the young man, "the nobleness of your heart fills me with joy and admiration. It is not you who will have to thank me, but rather the nation whom you will render happy, the posterity whose name you will make glorious. Yes; I shall indeed have bestowed upon you more than life, I shall have given you immortality."

The prince offered his hand to Aramis, who sank upon his knee and kissed it.

"It is the first act of homage paid to our future king," said he. "When I see you again, I shall say, 'Good day, sire.'"

"Till then," said the young man, pressing his wan and wasted fingers over his heart,—"till then, no more dreams, no more strain on my life—my heart would break! Oh, monsieur, how small is my prison—how low the window—how narrow are the doors! To think that so much pride, splendor, and happiness, should be able to enter in and to remain here!"

"Your royal highness makes me proud," said Aramis, "since you infer it is I who brought all this." And he rapped immediately on the door. The jailer came to open it with Baisemeaux, who, devoured by fear and uneasiness, was beginning, in spite of himself, to listen at the door. Happily, neither of the speakers had forgotten to smother his voice, even in the most passionate outbreaks.

"What a confessor!" said the governor, forcing a laugh; "who would believe that a compulsory recluse, a man as though in the very jaws of death, could have committed crimes so numerous, and so long to tell of?"

Aramis made no reply. He was eager to leave the Bastile, where the secret which overwhelmed him seemed to double the weight of the walls. As soon as they reached Baisemeaux's quarters, "Let us proceed to business, my dear governor," said Aramis.

"Alas!" replied Baisemeaux.

"You have to ask me for my receipt for one hundred and fifty thousand livres," said the bishop.

"And to pay over the first third of the sum," added the poor governor, with a sigh, taking three steps towards his iron strong-box.

"Here is the receipt," said Aramis.

"And here is the money," returned Baisemeaux, with a threefold sigh.

"The order instructed me only to give a receipt; it said nothing about receiving the money," rejoined Aramis. "Adieu, monsieur le governeur!"

And he departed, leaving Baisemeaux almost more than stifled with joy and surprise at this regal present so liberally bestowed by the confessor extraordinary to the Bastile.

CHAPTER II. HOW MOUSTON HAD BECOME FATTER WİTHOUT GİVİNG PORTHOS NOTİCE THEREOF, AND OF THE TROUBLES WHİCH CONSEQUENTLY BEFELL THAT WORTHY GENTLEMAN.

Since the departure of Athos for Blois, Porthos and D'Artagnan were seldom together. One was occupied with harassing duties for the king, the other had been making many purchases of furniture which he intended to forward to his estate, and by aid of which he hoped to establish in his various residences something of the courtly luxury he had witnessed in all its dazzling brightness in his majesty's society. D'Artagnan, ever faithful, one morning during an interval of service thought about Porthos, and being uneasy at not having heard anything of him for a fortnight, directed his steps towards his hotel, and pounced upon him just as he was getting up. The worthy baron had a pensive—nay, more than pensive—melancholy air. He was sitting on his bed, only half-dressed, and with legs dangling over the edge, contemplating a host of garments, which with their fringes, lace, embroidery, and slashes of ill-assorted hues, were strewed all over the floor. Porthos, sad and reflective as La Fontaine's hare, did not observe D'Artagnan's entrance, which was, moreover, screened at this moment by M. Mouston, whose personal corpulency, quite enough at any time to hide one man from another, was effectually doubled by a scarlet coat which the intendant was holding up for his master's inspection, by the sleeves, that he might the better see it all over. D'Artagnan stopped at the threshold and looked in at the pensive Porthos and then, as the sight of the innumerable garments strewing the floor caused mighty sighs to heave the bosom of that excellent gentleman, D'Artagnan

thought it time to put an end to these dismal reflections, and coughed by way of announcing himself.

"Ah!" exclaimed Porthos, whose countenance brightened with joy; "ah! ah! Here is D'Artagnan. I shall then get hold of an idea!"

At these words Mouston, doubting what was going on behind him, got out of the way, smiling kindly at the friend of his master, who thus found himself freed from the material obstacle which had prevented his reaching D'Artagnan. Porthos made his sturdy knees crack again in rising, and crossing the room in two strides, found himself face to face with his friend, whom he folded to his breast with a force of affection that seemed to increase with every day. "Ah!" he repeated, "you are always welcome, dear friend; but just now you are more welcome than ever."

"But you seem to have the megrims here!" exclaimed D'Artagnan.

Porthos replied by a look expressive of dejection. "Well, then, tell me all about it, Porthos, my friend, unless it is a secret."

"In the first place," returned Porthos, "you know I have no secrets from you. This, then, is what saddens me."

"Wait a minute, Porthos; let me first get rid of all this litter of satin and velvet!"

"Oh, never mind," said Porthos, contemptuously; "it is all trash."

"Trash, Porthos! Cloth at twenty-five livres an ell! gorgeous satin! regal velvet!"

"Then you think these clothes are—"

"Splendid, Porthos, splendid! I'll wager that you alone in France have so many; and suppose you never had any more made, and were to live to be a hundred years of age, which wouldn't astonish me in the very least, you could still wear a new dress the day of your death,

without being obliged to see the nose of a single tailor from now till then."

Porthos shook his head.

"Come, my friend," said D'Artagnan, "this unnatural melancholy in you frightens me. My dear Porthos, pray get it out, then. And the sooner the better."

"Yes, my friend, so I will: if, indeed, it is possible."

"Perhaps you have received bad news from Bracieux?"

"No: they have felled the wood, and it has yielded a third more than the estimate."

"Then there has been a falling-off in the pools of Pierrefonds?"

"No, my friend: they have been fished, and there is enough left to stock all the pools in the neighborhood."

"Perhaps your estate at Vallon has been destroyed by an earthquake?"

"No, my friend; on the contrary, the ground was struck with lightning a hundred paces from the chateau, and a fountain sprung up in a place entirely destitute of water."

"What in the world *is* the matter, then?"

"The fact is, I have received an invitation for the *fete* at Vaux," said Porthos, with a lugubrious expression.

"Well! do you complain of that? The king has caused a hundred mortal heart-burnings among the courtiers by refusing invitations. And so, my dear friend, you are really going to Vaux?"

"Indeed I am!"

"You will see a magnificent sight."

"Alas! I doubt it, though."

"Everything that is grand in France will be brought together there!"

"Ah!" cried Porthos, tearing out a lock of hair in his despair.

"Eh! good heavens, are you ill?" cried D'Artagnan.

"I am as firm as the Pont-Neuf! It isn't that."

"But what is it, then?"

""Tis that I have no clothes!"

D'Artagnan stood petrified. "No clothes! Porthos, no clothes!" he cried, "when I see at least fifty suits on the floor."

"Fifty, truly; but not one which fits me!"

"What? not one that fits you? But are you not measured, then, when you give an order?"

"To be sure he is," answered Mouston; "but unfortunately *I* have gotten stouter!"

"What! *you* stouter!"

"So much so that I am now bigger than the baron. Would you believe it, monsieur?"

"*Parbleu!* it seems to me that is quite evident."

"Do you see, stupid?" said Porthos, "that is quite evident!"

"Be still, my dear Porthos," resumed D'Artagnan, becoming slightly impatient, "I don't understand why your clothes should not fit you, because Mouston has grown stouter."

"I am going to explain it," said Porthos. "You remember having related to me the story of the Roman general Antony, who had always seven wild boars kept roasting, each cooked up to a different point; so

that he might be able to have his dinner at any time of the day he chose to ask for it. Well, then, I resolved, as at any time I might be invited to court to spend a week, I resolved to have always seven suits ready for the occasion."

"Capitally reasoned, Porthos—only a man must have a fortune like yours to gratify such whims. Without counting the time lost in being measured, the fashions are always changing."

"That is exactly the point," said Porthos, "in regard to which I flattered myself I had hit on a very ingenious device."

"Tell me what it is; for I don't doubt your genius."

"You remember what Mouston once was, then?"

"Yes; when he used to call himself Mousqueton."

"And you remember, too, the period when he began to grow fatter?"

"No, not exactly. I beg your pardon, my good Mouston."

"Oh! you are not in fault, monsieur," said Mouston, graciously. "You were in Paris, and as for us, we were at Pierrefonds."

"Well, well, my dear Porthos; there was a time when Mouston began to grow fat. Is that what you wished to say?"

"Yes, my friend; and I greatly rejoice over the period."

"Indeed, I believe you do," exclaimed D'Artagnan.

"You understand," continued Porthos, "what a world of trouble it spared for me."

"No, I don't—by any means."

"Look here, my friend. In the first place, as you have said, to be measured is a loss of time, even though it occur only once a fortnight. And then, one may be travelling; and then you wish to have seven suits

always with you. In short, I have a horror of letting any one take my measure. Confound it! either one is a nobleman or not. To be scrutinized and scanned by a fellow who completely analyzes you, by inch and line—'tis degrading! Here, they find you too hollow; there, too prominent. They recognize your strong and weak points. See, now, when we leave the measurer's hands, we are like those strongholds whose angles and different thicknesses have been ascertained by a spy."

"In truth, my dear Porthos, you possess ideas entirely original."

"Ah! you see when a man is an engineer—"

"And has fortified Belle-Isle—'tis natural, my friend."

"Well, I had an idea, which would doubtless have proved a good one, but for Mouston's carelessness."

D'Artagnan glanced at Mouston, who replied by a slight movement of his body, as if to say, "You will see whether I am at all to blame in all this."

"I congratulated myself, then," resumed Porthos, "at seeing Mouston get fat; and I did all I could, by means of substantial feeding, to make him stout—always in the hope that he would come to equal myself in girth, and could then be measured in my stead."

"Ah!" cried D'Artagnan. "I see—that spared you both time and humiliation."

"Consider my joy when, after a year and a half's judicious feeding—for I used to feed him up myself—the fellow—"

"Oh! I lent a good hand myself, monsieur," said Mouston, humbly.

"That's true. Consider my joy when, one morning, I perceived Mouston was obliged to squeeze in, as I once did myself, to get through the little secret door that those fools of architects had made in the chamber of the late Madame du Vallon, in the chateau of

Pierrefonds. And, by the way, about that door, my friend, I should like to ask you, who know everything, why these wretches of architects, who ought to have the compasses run into them, just to remind them, came to make doorways through which nobody but thin people can pass?"

"Oh, those doors," answered D'Artagnan, "were meant for gallants, and they have generally slight and slender figures."

"Madame du Vallon had no gallant!" answered Porthos, majestically.

"Perfectly true, my friend," resumed D'Artagnan; "but the architects were probably making their calculations on a basis of the probability of your marrying again."

"Ah! that is possible," said Porthos. "And now I have received an explanation of how it is that doorways are made too narrow, let us return to the subject of Mouston's fatness. But see how the two things apply to each other. I have always noticed that people's ideas run parallel. And so, observe this phenomenon, D'Artagnan. I was talking to you of Mouston, who is fat, and it led us on to Madame du Vallon—
"

"Who was thin?"

"Hum! Is it not marvelous?"

"My dear friend, a *savant* of my acquaintance, M. Costar, has made the same observation as you have, and he calls the process by some Greek name which I forget."

"What! my remark is not then original?" cried Porthos, astounded. "I thought I was the discoverer."

"My friend, the fact was known before Aristotle's days—that is to say, nearly two thousand years ago."

"Well, well, 'tis no less true," said Porthos, delighted at the idea of having jumped to a conclusion so closely in agreement with the greatest sages of antiquity.

"Wonderfully—but suppose we return to Mouston. It seems to me, we have left him fattening under our very eyes."

"Yes, monsieur," said Mouston.

"Well," said Porthos, "Mouston fattened so well, that he gratified all my hopes, by reaching my standard; a fact of which I was well able to convince myself, by seeing the rascal, one day, in a waistcoat of mine, which he had turned into a coat—a waistcoat, the mere embroidery of which was worth a hundred pistoles."

"'Twas only to try it on, monsieur," said Mouston.

"From that moment I determined to put Mouston in communication with my tailors, and to have him measured instead of myself."

"A capital idea, Porthos; but Mouston is a foot and a half shorter than you."

"Exactly! They measured him down to the ground, and the end of the skirt came just below my knee."

"What a marvelous man you are, Porthos! Such a thing could happen only to you."

"Ah! yes; pay your compliments; you have ample grounds to go upon. It was exactly at that time—that is to say, nearly two years and a half ago—that I set out for Belle-Isle, instructing Mouston (so as always to have, in every event, a pattern of every fashion) to have a coat made for himself every month."

"And did Mouston neglect complying with your instructions? Ah! that was anything but right, Mouston."

"No, monsieur, quite the contrary; quite the contrary!"

"No, he never forgot to have his coats made; but he forgot to inform me that he had got stouter!"

"But it was not my fault, monsieur! your tailor never told me."

"And this to such an extent, monsieur," continued Porthos, "that the fellow in two years has gained eighteen inches in girth, and so my last dozen coats are all too large, from a foot to a foot and a half."

"But the rest; those which were made when you were of the same size?"

"They are no longer the fashion, my dear friend. Were I to put them on, I should look like a fresh arrival from Siam; and as though I had been two years away from court."

"I understand your difficulty. You have how many new suits? nine? thirty-six? and yet not one to wear. Well, you must have a thirty-seventh made, and give the thirty-six to Mouston."

"Ah! monsieur!" said Mouston, with a gratified air. "The truth is, that monsieur has always been very generous to me."

"Do you mean to insinuate that I hadn't that idea, or that I was deterred by the expense? But it wants only two days to the *fete*; I received the invitation yesterday; made Mouston post hither with my wardrobe, and only this morning discovered my misfortune; and from now till the day after to-morrow, there isn't a single fashionable tailor who will undertake to make me a suit."

"That is to say, one covered all over with gold, isn't it?"

"I wish it so! undoubtedly, all over."

"Oh, we shall manage it. You won't leave for three days. The invitations are for Wednesday, and this is only Sunday morning."

"'Tis true; but Aramis has strongly advised me to be at Vaux twenty-four hours beforehand."

"How, Aramis?"

"Yes, it was Aramis who brought me the invitation."

"Ah! to be sure, I see. You are invited on the part of M. Fouquet?"

"By no means! by the king, dear friend. The letter bears the following as large as life: 'M. le Baron du Vallon is informed that the king has condescended to place him on the invitation list—'"

"Very good; but you leave with M. Fouquet?"

"And when I think," cried Porthos, stamping on the floor, "when I think I shall have no clothes, I am ready to burst with rage! I should like to strangle somebody or smash something!"

"Neither strangle anybody nor smash anything, Porthos; I will manage it all; put on one of your thirty-six suits, and come with me to a tailor."

"Pooh! my agent has seen them all this morning."

"Even M. Percerin?"

"Who is M. Percerin?"

"Oh! only the king's tailor!"

"Oh, ah, yes," said Porthos, who wished to appear to know the king's tailor, but now heard his name mentioned for the first time; "to M. Percerin's, by Jove! I was afraid he would be too busy."

"Doubtless he will be; but be at ease, Porthos; he will do for me what he wouldn't do for another. Only you must allow yourself to be measured!"

"Ah!" said Porthos, with a sigh, "'tis vexatious, but what would you have me do?"

"Do? As others do; as the king does."

"What! do they measure the king, too? does he put up with it?"

"The king is a beau, my good friend, and so are you, too, whatever you may say about it."

Porthos smiled triumphantly. "Let us go to the king's tailor," he said; "and since he measures the king, I think, by my faith, I may do worse than allow him to measure *me*!"

CHAPTER III. WHO MESSİRE JEAN PERCERİN WAS.

The king's tailor, Messire Jean Percerin, occupied a rather large house in the Rue St. Honore, near the Rue de l'Arbre Sec. He was a man of great taste in elegant stuffs, embroideries, and velvets, being hereditary tailor to the king. The preferment of his house reached as far back as the time of Charles IX.; from whose reign dated, as we know, fancy in *bravery* difficult enough to gratify. The Percerin of that period was a Huguenot, like Ambrose Pare, and had been spared by the Queen of Navarre, the beautiful Margot, as they used to write and say, too, in those days; because, in sooth, he was the only one who could make for her those wonderful riding-habits which she so loved to wear, seeing that they were marvelously well suited to hide certain anatomical defects, which the Queen of Navarre used very studiously to conceal. Percerin being saved, made, out of gratitude, some beautiful black bodices, very inexpensively indeed, for Queen Catherine, who ended by being pleased at the preservation of a Huguenot people, on whom she had long looked with detestation. But Percerin was a very prudent man; and having heard it said that there was no more dangerous sign for a Protestant than to be smiled up on by Catherine, and having observed that her smiles were more frequent than usual, he speedily turned Catholic with all his family; and having thus become irreproachable, attained the lofty position of master tailor to the Crown of France. Under Henry III., gay king as he was, this position was a grand as the height of one of the loftiest peaks of the Cordilleras. Now Percerin had been a clever man all his life, and by way of keeping up his reputation beyond the grave, took very good care not to make a bad death of it, and so contrived to die very skillfully; and that at the very moment he felt his powers of invention declining. He left a son and a daughter,

both worthy of the name they were called upon to bear; the son, a cutter as unerring and exact as the square rule; the daughter, apt at embroidery, and at designing ornaments. The marriage of Henry IV. and Marie de Medici, and the exquisite court-mourning for the aforementioned queen, together with a few words let fall by M. de Bassompiere, king of the *beaux* of the period, made the fortune of the second generation of Percerins. M. Concino Concini, and his wife Galligai, who subsequently shone at the French court, sought to Italianize the fashion, and introduced some Florentine tailors; but Percerin, touched to the quick in his patriotism and his self-esteem, entirely defeated these foreigners, and that so well that Concino was the first to give up his compatriots, and held the French tailor in such esteem that he would never employ any other, and thus wore a doublet of his on the very day that Vitry blew out his brains with a pistol at the Pont du Louvre.

And so it was a doublet issuing from M. Percerin's workshop, which the Parisians rejoiced in hacking into so many pieces with the living human body it contained. Notwithstanding the favor Concino Concini had shown Percerin, the king, Louis XIII., had the generosity to bear no malice to his tailor, and to retain him in his service. At the time that Louis the Just afforded this great example of equity, Percerin had brought up two sons, one of whom made his *debut* at the marriage of Anne of Austria, invented that admirable Spanish costume, in which Richelieu danced a saraband, made the costumes for the tragedy of "Mirame," and stitched on to Buckingham's mantle those famous pearls which were destined to be scattered about the pavements of the Louvre. A man becomes easily notable who has made the dresses of a Duke of Buckingham, a M. de Cinq-Mars, a Mademoiselle Ninon, a M. de Beaufort, and a Marion de Lorme. And thus Percerin the third had attained the summit of his glory when his father died. This same Percerin III., old, famous and wealthy, yet further dressed Louis XIV.;

and having no son, which was a great cause of sorrow to him, seeing that with himself his dynasty would end, he had brought up several hopeful pupils. He possessed a carriage, a country house, men-servants the tallest in Paris; and by special authority from Louis XIV., a pack of hounds. He worked for MM. de Lyonne and Letellier, under a sort of patronage; but politic man as he was, and versed in state secrets, he never succeeded in fitting M. Colbert. This is beyond explanation; it is a matter for guessing or for intuition. Great geniuses of every kind live on unseen, intangible ideas; they act without themselves knowing why. The great Percerin (for, contrary to the rule of dynasties, it was, above all, the last of the Percerins who deserved the name of Great), the great Percerin was inspired when he cut a robe for the queen, or a coat for the king; he could mount a mantle for Monsieur, the clock of a stocking for Madame; but, in spite of his supreme talent, he could never hit off anything approaching a creditable fit for M. Colbert. "That man," he used often to say, "is beyond my art; my needle can never dot him down." We need scarcely say that Percerin was M. Fouquet's tailor, and that the superintendent highly esteemed him. M. Percerin was nearly eighty years old, nevertheless still fresh, and at the same time so dry, the courtiers used to say, that he was positively brittle. His renown and his fortune were great enough for M. le Prince, that king of fops, to take his arm when talking over the fashions; and for those least eager to pay never to dare to leave their accounts in arrear with him; for Master Percerin would for the first time make clothes upon credit, but the second never, unless paid for the former order.

It is easy to see at once that a tailor of such renown, instead of running after customers, made difficulties about obliging any fresh ones. And so Percerin declined to fit *bourgeois*, or those who had but recently obtained patents of nobility. A story used to circulate that even M. de Mazarin, in exchange for Percerin supplying him with a full suit

of ceremonial vestments as cardinal, one fine day slipped letters of nobility into his pocket.

It was to the house of this grand llama of tailors that D'Artagnan took the despairing Porthos; who, as they were going along, said to his friend, "Take care, my good D'Artagnan, not to compromise the dignity of a man such as I am with the arrogance of this Percerin, who will, I expect, be very impertinent; for I give you notice, my friend, that if he is wanting in respect I will infallibly chastise him."

"Presented by me," replied D'Artagnan, "you have nothing to fear, even though you were what you are not."

"Ah! 'tis because—"

"What? Have you anything against Percerin, Porthos?"

"I think that I once sent Mouston to a fellow of that name."

"And then?"

"The fellow refused to supply me."

"Oh, a misunderstanding, no doubt, which it will be now exceedingly easy to set right. Mouston must have made a mistake."

"Perhaps."

"He has confused the names."

"Possibly. That rascal Mouston never can remember names."

"I will take it all upon myself."

"Very good."

"Stop the carriage, Porthos; here we are."

"Here! how here? We are at the Halles; and you told me the house was at the corner of the Rue de l'Arbre Sec."

"'Tis true, but look."

"Well, I do look, and I see—"

"What?"

"*Pardieu!* that we are at the Halles!"

"You do not, I suppose, want our horses to clamber up on the roof of the carriage in front of us?"

"No."

"Nor the carriage in front of us to mount on top of the one in front of it. Nor that the second should be driven over the roofs of the thirty or forty others which have arrived before us."

"No, you are right, indeed. What a number of people! And what are they all about?"

""Tis very simple. They are waiting their turn."

"Bah! Have the comedians of the Hotel de Bourgogne shifted their quarters?"

"No; their turn to obtain an entrance to M. Percerin's house."

"And we are going to wait too?"

"Oh, we shall show ourselves prompter and not so proud."

"What are we to do, then?"

"Get down, pass through the footmen and lackeys, and enter the tailor's house, which I will answer for our doing, if you go first."

"Come along, then," said Porthos.

They accordingly alighted and made their way on foot towards the establishment. The cause of the confusion was that M. Percerin's doors were closed, while a servant, standing before them, was explaining to the illustrious customers of the illustrious tailor that just then M. Percerin could not receive anybody. It was bruited about outside still,