'Hello, Grimaud! Planchet! Mousqueton! Bazin!' cried the four young men, calling their lackeys, 'clean my boots, and fetch the horses from the hôtel.'

Each Musketeer was accustomed to leave at the general hôtel, as at a barrack, his own horse and that of his lackey. Planchet, Grimaud, Mousqueton, and Bazin set off at full speed.

'Now let us lay down the plan of campaign,' said Porthos. 'Where do we go first?'

'To Calais,' said d'Artagnan; 'that is the most direct line to London.'

'Well,' said Porthos, 'this is my advice— '

'Speak!'

'Four men travelling together would be suspected. D'Artagnan will give each of us his instructions. I will go by the way of Boulogne to clear the way; Athos will set out two hours after, by that of Amiens; Aramis will follow us by that of Noyon; as to d'Artagnan, he will go by what route he thinks is best, in Planchet's clothes, while Planchet will follow us like d'Artagnan, in the uniform of the Guards.'

'Gentlemen,' said Athos, 'my opinion is that it is not proper to allow lackeys to have anything to do in such an affair. A secret may, by chance, be betrayed by gentlemen; but it is almost always sold by lackeys.'

'Porthos's plan appears to me to be impracticable,' said d'Artagnan, 'inasmuch as I am myself ignorant of what instructions I can give you. I am the bearer of a letter, that is all. I have not, and I cannot make three copies of that letter, because it is sealed. We must, then, as it appears to me, travel in company. This letter is here, in this pocket,' and he pointed to the pocket which contained the letter. 'If I should be killed, one of you must take it, and continue the route; if he be killed, it will be another's turn, and so on—provided a single one arrives, that is all that is required.'

'Bravo, d'Artagnan, your opinion is mine,' cried Athos, 'Besides, we must be consistent; I am going to take the waters, you will accompany me. Instead of taking the waters of Forges, I go and take sea waters; I am free to do so. If anyone wishes to stop us, I will show Monsieur de Tréville's letter, and you will show your leaves of absence. If we are attacked, we will defend ourselves; if we are tried, we will stoutly maintain that we were only anxious to dip ourselves a certain number of times in the sea. They would have an easy bargain of four isolated men; whereas four men together make a troop. We will arm our four

lackeys with pistols and musketoons; if they send an army out against us, we will give battle, and the survivor, as d'Artagnan says, will carry the letter.'

'Well said,' cried Aramis; 'you don't often speak, Athos, but when you do speak, it is like St. John of the Golden Mouth. I agree to Athos's plan. And you, Porthos?'

'I agree to it, too,' said Porthos, 'if d'Artagnan approves of it. D'Artagnan, being the bearer of the letter, is naturally the head of the enterprise; let him decide, and we will execute.'

'Well,' said d'Artagnan, 'I decide that we should adopt Athos's plan, and that we set off in half an hour.'

'Agreed!' shouted the three Musketeers in chorus.

Each one, stretching out his hand to the bag, took his seventy-five pistoles, and made his preparations to set out at the time appointed.

'That is what I am not at liberty to tell you, gentlemen; you must trust to me.'

'But in order to go to London,' added Porthos, 'money is needed, and I have none.'

'Nor I,' said Aramis.

'Nor I,' said Athos.

'I have,' replied d'Artagnan, pulling out his treasure from his pocket, and placing it on the table. 'There are in this bag three hundred pistoles. Let each take seventy-five; that is enough to take us to London and back. Besides, make yourselves easy; we shall not all arrive at London.'

'Why so?'

'Because, in all probability, some one of us will be left on the road.'

'Is this, then, a campaign upon which we are now entering?'

'One of a most dangerous kind, I give you notice.'

'Ah! But if we do risk being killed,' said Porthos, 'at least I should like to know what for.'

'You would be all the wiser,' said Athos.

'And yet,' said Aramis, 'I am somewhat of Porthos's opinion.'

'Is the king accustomed to give you such reasons? No. He says to you jauntily, "Gentlemen, there is fighting going on in Gascony or in Flanders; go and fight," and you go there. Why? You need give yourselves no more uneasiness about this.'

'D'Artagnan is right,' said Athos; 'here are our three leaves of absence which came from Monsieur de Tréville, and here are three hundred pistoles which came from I don't know where. So let us go and get killed where we are told to go. Is life worth the trouble of so many questions? D'Artagnan, I am ready to follow you.'

'And I also,' said Porthos.

'And I also,' said Aramis. 'And, indeed, I am not sorry to quit Paris; I had need of distraction.'

'Well, you will have distractions enough, gentlemen, be assured,' said d'Artagnan.

'And, now, when are we to go?' asked Athos.

'Immediately,' replied d'Artagnan; 'we have not a minute to lose.'

'Good enough!'

Tranquil on this important point, Aramis continued his way with d'Artagnan, and both soon arrived at Athos's dwelling. They found him holding his leave of absence in one hand, and M. de Tréville's note in the other.

'Can you explain to me what signify this leave of absence and this letter, which I have just received?' said the astonished Athos.

> My dear Athos,
>
> I wish, as your health absolutely requires it, that you should rest for a fortnight. Go, then, and take the waters of Forges, or any that may be more agreeable to you, and recuperate yourself as quickly as possible.
>
> Yours affectionate,
>
> DETRÉVILLE

'Well, this leave of absence and that letter mean that you must follow me, Athos.'

'To the waters of Forges?'

'There or elsewhere.'

'In the king's service?'

'Either the king's or the queen's. Are we not their Majesties' servants?'

At that moment Porthos entered. '*Pardieu!*' said he, 'here is a strange thing! Since when, I wonder, in the Musketeers, did they grant men leave of absence without their asking for it?'

'Since,' said d'Artagnan, 'they have friends who ask it for them.'

'Ah, ah!' said Porthos, 'it appears there's something fresh here.'

'Yes, we are going— ' said Aramis.

'To what country?' demanded Porthos.

'My faith! I don't know much about it,' said Athos. 'Ask d'Artagnan.'

'To London, gentlemen,' said d'Artagnan.

'To London!' cried Porthos; 'and what the devil are we going to do in London?'

Chapter XX

The Journey

At two o'clock in the morning, our four adventurers left Paris by the Barrière St. Denis. As long as it was dark they remained silent; in spite of themselves they submitted to the influence of the obscurity, and apprehended ambushes on every side.

With the first rays of day their tongues were loosened; with the sun gaiety revived. It was like the eve of a battle; the heart beat, the eyes laughed, and they felt that the life they were perhaps going to lose, was, after all, a good thing.

Besides, the appearance of the caravan was formidable. The black horses of the Musketeers, their martial carriage, with the regimental step of these noble companions of the soldier, would have betrayed the most strict incognito. The lackeys followed, armed to the teeth.

All went well till they arrived at Chantilly, which they reached about eight o'clock in the morning. They needed breakfast, and alighted at the door of an *auberge*, recommended by a sign representing St. Martin giving half his cloak to a poor man. They ordered the lackeys not to unsaddle the horses, and to hold themselves in readiness to set off again immediately.

They entered the common hall, and placed themselves at table. A gentleman, who had just arrived by the route of Dammartin, was seated at the same table, and was breakfasting. He opened the conversation about rain and fine weather; the travellers replied. He drank to their good health, and the travellers returned his politeness.

But at the moment Mousqueton came to announce that the horses were ready, and they were arising from table, the stranger proposed to Porthos to drink the health of the cardinal. Porthos replied that he asked no better if the

stranger, in his turn, would drink the health of the king. The stranger cried that he acknowledged no other king but his Eminence. Porthos called him drunk, and the stranger drew his sword.

'You have committed a piece of folly,' said Athos, 'but it can't be helped; there is no drawing back. Kill the fellow, and rejoin us as soon as you can.'

All three remounted their horses, and set out at a good pace, while Porthos was promising his adversary to perforate him with all the thrusts known in the fencing schools.

'There goes one!' cried Athos, at the end of five hundred paces.

'But why did that man attack Porthos rather than any other one of us?' asked Aramis.

'Because, as Porthos was talking louder than the rest of us, he took him for the chief,' said d'Artagnan.

'I always said that this cadet from Gascony was a well of wisdom,' murmured Athos; and the travellers continued their route.

At Beauvais they stopped two hours, as well to breathe their horses a little as to wait for Porthos. At the end of two hours, as Porthos did not come, not any news of him, they resumed their journey.

At a league from Beauvais, where the road was confined between two high banks, they fell in with eight or ten men who, taking advantage of the road being unpaved in this spot, appeared to be employed in digging holes and filling up the ruts with mud.

Aramis, not liking to soil his boots with this artificial mortar, apostrophized them rather sharply. Athos wished to restrain him, but it was too late. The labourers began to jeer the travellers and by their insolence disturbed the equanimity even of the cool Athos, who urged on his horse against one of them.

Then each of these men retreated as far as the ditch, from which each took a concealed musket; the result was that our seven travellers were outnumbered in weapons. Aramis received a ball which passed through his shoulder, and Mousqueton another ball which lodged in the fleshy part which prolongs the lower portion of the loins. Therefore Mousqueton alone fell from his horse, not because he was severely wounded, but not being able to see the wound, he judged it to be more serious than it really was.

'Listen!' said Aramis. 'Since you appear to know so many things, can you tell me what is become of that woman?'

'I presume that she has returned to Tours.'

'To Tours? Yes, that may be. You evidently know her. But why did she return to Tours without telling me anything?'

'Because she was in fear of being arrested.'

'Why has she not written to me, then?'

'Because she was afraid of compromising you.'

'D'Artagnan, you restore me to life!' cried Aramis. 'I fancied myself despised, betrayed. I was so delighted to see her again! I could not have believed she would risk her liberty for me, and yet for what other cause could she have returned to Paris?'

'For the cause which today takes us to England.'

'And what is this cause?' demanded Aramis.

'Oh, you'll know it someday, Aramis; but at present I must imitate the discretion of 'the doctor's niece.''

Aramis smiled, as he remembered the tale he had told his friends on a certain evening. 'Well, then, since she has left Paris, and you are sure of it, d'Artagnan, nothing prevents me, and I am ready to follow you. You say we are going— '

'To see Athos now, and if you will come thither, I beg you to make haste, for we have lost much time already. *A propos*, inform Bazin.'

'Will Bazin go with us?' asked Aramis.

'Perhaps so. At all events, it is best that he should follow us to Athos's.'

Aramis called Bazin, and, after having ordered him to join them at Athos's residence, said 'Let us go then,' at the same time taking his cloak, sword, and three pistols, opening uselessly two or three drawers to see if he could not find stray coin. When well assured this search was superfluous, he followed d'Artagnan, wondering to himself how this young Guardsman should know so well who the lady was to whom he had given hospitality, and that he should know better than himself what had become of her.

Only as they went out Aramis placed his hand upon the arm of d'Artagnan, and looking at him earnestly, 'You have not spoken of this lady?' said he.

'To nobody in the world.'

'Not even to Athos or Porthos?'

'I have not breathed a syllable to them.'

D'Artagnan saluted M. de Tréville, who held out his hand to him; d'Artagnan pressed it with a respect mixed with gratitude. Since his first arrival at Paris, he had had constant occasion to honour this excellent man, whom he had always found worthy, loyal, and great.

His first visit was to Aramis, at whose residence he had not been since the famous evening on which he had followed Mme. Bonacieux. Still further, he had seldom seen the young Musketeer; but every time he had seen him, he had remarked a deep sadness imprinted on his countenance.

This evening, especially, Aramis was melancholy and thoughtful. D'Artagnan asked some questions about this prolonged melancholy. Aramis pleaded as his excuse a commentary upon the eighteenth chapter of St. Augustine, which he was forced to write in Latin for the following week, and which preoccupied him a good deal.

After the two friends had been chatting a few moments, a servant from M. de Tréville entered, bringing a sealed packet.

'What is that?' asked Aramis.

'The leave of absence Monsieur has asked for,' replied the lackey.

'For me! I have asked for no leave of absence.'

'Hold your tongue and take it!' said d'Artagnan. 'And you, my friend, there is a demipistole for your trouble; you will tell Monsieur de Tréville that Monsieur Aramis is very much obliged to him. Go.'

The lackey bowed to the ground and departed.

'What does all this mean?' asked Aramis.

'Pack up all you want for a journey of a fortnight, and follow me.'

'But I cannot leave Paris just now without knowing— '

Aramis stopped.

'What is become of her? I suppose you mean— ' continued d'Artagnan.

'Become of whom?' replied Aramis.

'The woman who was here—the woman with the embroidered handkerchief.'

'Who told you there was a woman here?' replied Aramis, becoming as pale as death.

'I saw her.'

'And you know who she is?'

'I believe I can guess, at least.'

'It was an ambuscade!' shouted d'Artagnan. 'Don't waste a charge! Forward!'

Aramis, wounded as he was, seized the mane of his horse, which carried him on with the others. Mousqueton's horse rejoined them, and galloped by the side of his companions.

'That will serve us for a relay,' said Athos.

'I would rather have had a hat,' said d'Artagnan. 'Mine was carried away by a ball. By my faith, it is very fortunate that the letter was not in it.'

'They'll kill poor Porthos when he comes up,' said Aramis.

'If Porthos were on his legs, he would have rejoined us by this time,' said Athos. 'My opinion is that on the ground the drunken man was not intoxicated.'

They continued at their best speed for two hours, although the horses were so fatigued that it was to be feared they would soon refuse service.

The travellers had chosen crossroads in the hope that they might meet with less interruption; but at Crèvecœur, Aramis declared he could proceed no farther. In fact, it required all the courage which he concealed beneath his elegant form and polished manners to bear him so far. He grew more pale every minute, and they were obliged to support him on his horse. They lifted him off at the door of a cabaret, left Bazin with him, who, besides, in a skirmish was more embarrassing than useful, and set forward again in the hope of sleeping at Amiens.

'*Morbleu*,' said Athos, as soon as they were again in motion, 'reduced to two masters and Grimaud and Planchet! *Morbleu!* I won't be their dupe, I will answer for it. I will neither open my mouth nor draw my sword between this and Calais. I swear by— '

'Don't waste time in swearing,' said d'Artagnan; 'let us gallop, if our horses will consent.'

And the travellers buried their rowels in their horses' flanks, who thus vigorously stimulated recovered their energies. They arrived at Amiens at midnight, and alighted at the *auberge* of the Golden Lily.

The host had the appearance of as honest a man as any on earth. He received the travellers with his candlestick in one hand and his cotton nightcap in the other. He wished to lodge the two travellers each in a charming chamber; but unfortunately these charming chambers were at the opposite extremities of

the hôtel. D'Artagnan and Athos refused them. The host replied that he had no other worthy of their Excellencies; but the travellers declared they would sleep in the common chamber, each on a mattress which might be thrown upon the ground. The host insisted; but the travellers were firm, and he was obliged to do as they wished.

They had just prepared their beds and barricaded their door within, when someone knocked at the yard shutter; they demanded who was there, and recognizing the voices of their lackeys, opened the shutter. It was indeed Planchet and Grimaud.

'Grimaud can take care of the horses,' said Planchet. 'If you are willing, gentlemen, I will sleep across your doorway, and you will then be certain that nobody can reach you.'

'And on what will you sleep?' said d'Artagnan.

'Here is my bed,' replied Planchet, producing a bundle of straw.

'Come, then,' said d'Artagnan, 'you are right. Mine host's face does not please me at all; it is too gracious.'

'Nor me either,' said Athos.

Planchet mounted by the window and installed himself across the doorway, while Grimaud went and shut himself up in the stable, undertaking that by five o'clock in the morning he and the four horses should be ready.

The night was quiet enough. Toward two o'clock in the morning somebody endeavoured to open the door; but as Planchet awoke in an instant and cried, 'Who goes there?' somebody replied that he was mistaken, and went away.

At four o'clock in the morning they heard a terrible riot in the stables. Grimaud had tried to waken the stable boys, and the stable boys had beaten him. When they opened the window, they saw the poor lad lying senseless, with his head split by a blow with a pitchfork.

Planchet went down into the yard, and wished to saddle the horses; but the horses were all used up. Mousqueton's horse which had travelled for five or six hours without a rider the day before, might have been able to pursue the journey; but by an inconceivable error the veterinary surgeon, who had been sent for, as it appeared, to bleed one of the host's horses, had bled Mousqueton's.

This began to be annoying. All these successive accidents were perhaps the result of chance; but they might be the fruits of a plot. Athos and d'Artagnan went out, while Planchet was sent to inquire if there were not three horses

'How so?'

'You will be assassinated.'

'And I shall die in the performance of my duty.'

'But your mission will not be accomplished.'

'That is true,' replied d'Artagnan.

'Believe me,' continued Tréville, 'in enterprises of this kind, in order that one may arrive, four must set out.'

'Ah, you are right, monsieur,' said d'Artagnan; 'but you know Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, and you know if I can dispose of them.'

'Without confiding to them the secret which I am not willing to know?'

'We are sworn, once for all, to implicit confidence and devotedness against all proof. Besides, you can tell them that you have full confidence in me, and they will not be more incredulous than you.'

'I can send to each of them leave of absence for fifteen days, that is all—to Athos, whose wound still makes him suffer, to go to the waters of Forges; to Porthos and Aramis to accompany their friend, whom they are not willing to abandon in such a painful condition. Sending their leave of absence will be proof enough that I authorize their journey.'

'Thanks, monsieur. You are a hundred times too good.'

'Begone, then, find them instantly, and let all be done tonight! Ha! But first write your request to Dessessart. Perhaps you had a spy at your heels; and your visit, if it should ever be known to the cardinal, will thus seem legitimate.'

D'Artagnan drew up his request, and M. de Tréville, on receiving it, assured him that by two o'clock in the morning the four leaves of absence should be at the respective domiciles of the travellers.

'Have the goodness to send mine to Athos's residence. I should dread some disagreeable encounter if I were to go home.'

'Be easy. Adieu, and a prosperous voyage. *A propos*,' said M. de Tréville, calling him back.

D'Artagnan returned.

'Have you any money?'

D'Artagnan tapped the bag he had in his pocket.

'Enough?' asked M. de Tréville.

'Three hundred pistoles.'

'Oh, plenty! That would carry you to the end of the world. Begone, then!'

'Yes, monsieur,' said d'Artagnan, lowering his voice, 'and you will pardon me, I hope, for having disturbed you when you know the importance of my business.'

'Speak, then, I am all attention.'

'It concerns nothing less,' said d'Artagnan, 'than the honour, perhaps the life of the queen.'

'What did you say?' asked M. de Tréville, glancing round to see if they were surely alone, and then fixing his questioning look upon d'Artagnan.

'I say, monsieur, that chance has rendered me master of a secret— '

'Which you will guard, I hope, young man, as your life.'

'But which I must impart to you, monsieur, for you alone can assist me in the mission I have just received from her Majesty.'

'Is this secret your own?'

'No, monsieur; it is her Majesty's.'

'Are you authorized by her Majesty to communicate it to me?'

'No, monsieur, for, on the contrary, I am desired to preserve the profoundest mystery.'

'Why, then, are you about to betray it to me?'

'Because, as I said, without you I can do nothing; and I am afraid you will refuse me the favour I come to ask if you do not know to what end I ask it.'

'Keep your secret, young man, and tell me what you wish.'

'I wish you to obtain for me, from Monsieur Dessessart, leave of absence for fifteen days.'

'When?'

'This very night.'

'You leave Paris?'

'I am going on a mission.'

'May you tell me whither?'

'To London.'

'Has anyone an interest in preventing your arrival there?'

'The cardinal, I believe, would give the world to prevent my success.'

'And you are going alone?'

'I am going alone.'

'In that case you will not get beyond Bondy. I tell you so, by the faith of de Tréville.'

for sale in the neighbourhood. At the door stood two horses, fresh, strong, and fully equipped. These would just have suited them. He asked where their masters were, and was informed that they had passed the night in the inn, and were then settling their bill with the host.

Athos went down to pay the reckoning, while d'Artagnan and Planchet stood at the street door. The host was in a lower and back room, to which Athos was requested to go.

Athos entered without the least mistrust, and took out two pistoles to pay the bill. The host was alone, seated before his desk, one of the drawers of which was partly open. He took the money which Athos offered to him, and after turning and turning it over and over in his hands, suddenly cried out that it was bad, and that he would have him and his companions arrested as forgers.

'You blackguard!' cried Athos, going toward him, 'I'll cut your ears off!'

At the same instant, four men, armed to the teeth, entered by side doors, and rushed upon Athos.

'I am taken!' shouted Athos, with all the power of his lungs. 'Go on, d'Artagnan! Spur, spur!' and he fired two pistols.

D'Artagnan and Planchet did not require twice bidding; they unfastened the two horses that were waiting at the door, leaped upon them, buried their spurs in their sides, and set off at full gallop.

'Do you know what has become of Athos?' asked d'Artagnan of Planchet, as they galloped on.

'Ah, monsieur,' said Planchet, 'I saw one fall at each of his two shots, and he appeared to me, through the glass door, to be fighting with his sword with the others.'

'Brave Athos!' murmured d'Artagnan, 'and to think that we are compelled to leave him; maybe the same fate awaits us two paces hence. Forward, Planchet, forward! You are a brave fellow.'

'As I told you, monsieur,' replied Planchet, 'Picards are found out by being used. Besides, I am here in my own country, and that excites me.'

And both, with free use of the spur, arrived at St. Omer without drawing bit. At St. Omer they breathed their horses with the bridles passed under their arms for fear of accident, and ate a morsel from their hands on the stones of the street, after they departed again.

At a hundred paces from the gates of Calais, d'Artagnan's horse gave out, and could not by any means be made to get up again, the blood flowing from his eyes and his nose. There still remained Planchet's horse; but he stopped short, and could not be made to move a step.

Fortunately, as we have said, they were within a hundred paces of the city; they left their two nags upon the high road, and ran toward the quay. Planchet called his master's attention to a gentleman who had just arrived with his lackey, and only preceded them by about fifty paces. They made all speed to come up to this gentleman, who appeared to be in great haste. His boots were covered with dust, and he inquired if he could not instantly cross over to England.

'Nothing would be more easy,' said the captain of a vessel ready to set sail, 'but this morning came an order to let no one leave without express permission from the cardinal.'

'I have that permission,' said the gentleman, drawing the paper from his pocket; 'here it is.'

'Have it examined by the governor of the port,' said the shipmaster, 'and give me the preference.'

'Where shall I find the governor?'

'At his country house.'

'And that is situated?'

'At a quarter of a league from the city. Look, you may see it from here—at the foot of that little hill, that slated roof.'

'Very well,' said the gentleman. And, with his lackey, he took the road to the governor's country house.

D'Artagnan and Planchet followed the gentleman at a distance of five hundred paces. Once outside the city, d'Artagnan overtook the gentleman as he was entering a little wood.

'Monsieur, you appear to be in great haste?'

'No one can be more so, monsieur.'

'I am sorry for that,' said d'Artagnan; 'for as I am in great haste likewise, I wish to beg you to render me a service.'

'What?'

'To let me sail first.'

Chapter XIX

Plan of Campaign

D'Artagnan went straight to M. de Tréville's. He had reflected that in a few minutes the cardinal would be warned by this cursed stranger, who appeared to be his agent, and he judged, with reason, he had not a moment to lose.

The heart of the young man overflowed with joy. An opportunity presented itself to him in which there would be at the same time glory to be acquired, and money to be gained; and as a far higher encouragement, it brought him into close intimacy with a woman he adored. This chance did, then, for him at once more than he would have dared to ask of Providence.

M. de Tréville was in his saloon with his habitual court of gentlemen. D'Artagnan, who was known as a familiar of the house, went straight to his office, and sent word that he wished to see him on something of importance.

D'Artagnan had been there scarcely five minutes when M. de Tréville entered. At the first glance, and by the joy which was painted on his countenance, the worthy captain plainly perceived that something new was on foot.

All the way along d'Artagnan had been consulting with himself whether he should place confidence in M. de Tréville, or whether he should only ask him to give him *carte blanche* for some secret affair. But M. de Tréville had always been so thoroughly his friend, had always been so devoted to the king and queen, and hated the cardinal so cordially, that the young man resolved to tell him everything.

'Did you ask for me, my good friend?' said M. de Tréville.