'Ah, you take it with that tone, do you, Master Gascon? Well, I will teach you how to behave yourself.'

'And I will send you back to your Mass book, Master Abbé. Draw, if you please, and instantly— '

'Not so, if you please, my good friend—not here, at least. Do you not perceive that we are opposite the Hôtel d'Arguillon, which is full of the cardinal's creatures? How do I know that this is not his Eminence who has honoured you with the commission to procure my head? Now, I entertain a ridiculous partiality for my head, it seems to suit my shoulders so correctly. I wish to kill you, be at rest as to that, but to kill you quietly in a snug, remote place, where you will not be able to boast of your death to anybody.'

'I agree, monsieur; but do not be too confident. Take your handkerchief; whether it belongs to you or another, you may perhaps stand in need of it.'

'Monsieur is a Gascon?' asked Aramis.

'Yes. Monsieur does not postpone an interview through prudence?'

'Prudence, monsieur, is a virtue sufficiently useless to Musketeers, I know, but indispensable to churchmen; and as I am only a Musketeer provisionally, I hold it good to be prudent. At two o'clock I shall have the honour of expecting you at the hôtel of Monsieur de Tréville. There I will indicate to you the best place and time.'

The two young men bowed and separated, Aramis ascending the street which led to the Luxembourg, while d'Artagnan, perceiving the appointed hour was approaching, took the road to the Carmes-Deschaux, saying to himself, 'Decidedly I can't draw back; but at least, if I am killed, I shall be killed by a Musketeer.'

Chapter V

The King's Musketeers and the Cardinal's Guards

D'Artagnan was acquainted with nobody in Paris. He went therefore to his appointment with Athos without a second, determined to be satisfied with those his adversary should choose. Besides, his intention was formed to make the brave Musketeer all suitable apologies, but without meanness or weakness, fearing that might result from this duel which generally results from an affair of this kind, when a young and vigorous man fights with an adversary who is wounded and weakened—if conquered, he doubles the triumph of his antagonist; if a conqueror, he is accused of foul play and want of courage.

Now, we must have badly painted the character of our adventure seeker, or our readers must have already perceived that d'Artagnan was not an ordinary man; therefore, while repeating to himself that his death was inevitable, he did not make up his mind to die quietly, as one less courageous and less restrained might have done in his place. He reflected upon the different characters of those with whom he was going to fight, and began to view his situation more clearly. He hoped, by means of loyal excuses, to make a friend of Athos, whose lordly air and austere bearing pleased him much. He flattered himself he should be able to frighten Porthos with the adventure of the baldric, which he might, if not killed upon the spot, relate to everybody a recital which, well managed, would cover Porthos with ridicule. As to the astute Aramis, he did not entertain much dread of him; and supposing he should be able to get so far, he

determined to dispatch him in good style or at least, by hitting him in the face, as Cæsar recommended his soldiers do to those of Pompey, to damage forever the beauty of which he was so proud.

In addition to this, d'Artagnan possessed that invincible stock of resolution which the counsels of his father had implanted in his heart: 'Endure nothing from anyone but the king, the cardinal, and Monsieur de Tréville.' He flew, then, rather than walked, toward the convent of the Carmes Déchaussés, or rather Deschaux, as it was called at that period, a sort of building without a window, surrounded by barren fields—an accessory to the Preaux-Clercs, and which was generally employed as the place for the duels of men who had no time to lose.

When d'Artagnan arrived in sight of the bare spot of ground which extended along the foot of the monastery, Athos had been waiting about five minutes, and twelve o'clock was striking. He was, then, as punctual as the Samaritan woman, and the most rigorous casuist with regard to duels could have nothing to say.

Athos, who still suffered grievously from his wound, though it had been dressed anew by M. de Tréville's surgeon, was seated on a post and waiting for his adversary with hat in hand, his feather even touching the ground.

'Monsieur,' said Athos, 'I have engaged two of my friends as seconds; but these two friends are not yet come, at which I am astonished, as it is not at all their custom.'

'I have no seconds on my part, monsieur,' said d'Artagnan; 'for having only arrived yesterday in Paris, I as yet know no one but Monsieur de Tréville, to whom I was recommended by my father, who has the honour to be, in some degree, one of his friends.'

Athos reflected for an instant. 'You know no one but Monsieur de Tréville?' he asked.

'Yes, monsieur, I know only him.'

'Well, but then,' continued Athos, speaking half to himself, 'if I kill you, I shall have the air of a boy-slayer.'

'Not too much so,' replied d'Artagnan, with a bow that was not deficient in dignity, 'since you do me the honour to draw a sword with me while suffering from a wound which is very inconvenient.'

'Perfectly just,' cried the other two Guardsmen, 'the judgment of King Solomon! Aramis, you certainly are full of wisdom!'

The young men burst into a laugh, and as may be supposed, the affair had no other sequel. In a moment or two the conversation ceased, and the three Guardsmen and the Musketeer, after having cordially shaken hands, separated, the Guardsmen going one way and Aramis another.

'Now is my time to make peace with this gallant man,' said d'Artagnan to himself, having stood on one side during the whole of the latter part of the conversation; and with this good feeling drawing near to Aramis, who was departing without paying any attention to him, 'Monsieur,' said he, 'you will excuse me, I hope.'

'Ah, monsieur,' interrupted Aramis, 'permit me to observe to you that you have not acted in this affair as a gallant man ought.'

'What, monsieur!' cried d'Artagnan, 'and do you suppose— '

'I suppose, monsieur, that you are not a fool, and that you knew very well, although coming from Gascony, that people do not tread upon handkerchiefs without a reason. What the devil! Paris is not paved with cambric!'

'Monsieur, you act wrongly in endeavouring to mortify me,' said d'Artagnan, in whom the natural quarrelsome spirit began to speak more loudly than his pacific resolutions. 'I am from Gascony, it is true; and since you know it, there is no occasion to tell you that Gascons are not very patient, so that when they have begged to be excused once, were it even for a folly, they are convinced that they have done already at least as much again as they ought to have done.'

'Monsieur, what I say to you about the matter,' said Aramis, 'is not for the sake of seeking a quarrel. Thank God, I am not a bravo! And being a Musketeer but for a time, I only fight when I am forced to do so, and always with great repugnance; but this time the affair is serious, for here is a lady compromised by you.'

'By *us*, you mean!' cried d'Artagnan.

'Why did you so maladroitly restore me the handkerchief?'

'Why did you so awkwardly let it fall?'

'I have said, monsieur, and I repeat, that the handkerchief did not fall from my pocket.'

'And thereby you have lied twice, monsieur, for I saw it fall.'

Aramis darted at d'Artagnan one of those looks which inform a man that he has acquired a mortal enemy. Then, resuming his mild air, 'You are deceived, gentlemen,' said he, 'this handkerchief is not mine, and I cannot fancy why Monsieur has taken it into his head to offer it to me rather than to one of you; and as a proof of what I say, here is mine in my pocket.'

So saying, he pulled out his own handkerchief, likewise a very elegant handkerchief, and of fine cambric—though cambric was dear at the period—but a handkerchief without embroidery and without arms, only ornamented with a single cipher, that of its proprietor.

This time d'Artagnan was not hasty. He perceived his mistake; but the friends of Aramis were not at all convinced by his denial, and one of them addressed the young Musketeer with affected seriousness. 'If it were as you pretend it is,' said he, 'I should be forced, my dear Aramis, to reclaim it myself; for, as you very well know, Bois-Tracy is an intimate friend of mine, and I cannot allow the property of his wife to be sported as a trophy.'

'You make the demand badly,' replied Aramis; 'and while acknowledging the justice of your reclamation, I refuse it on account of the form.'

'The fact is,' hazarded d'Artagnan, timidly, 'I did not see the handkerchief fall from the pocket of Monsieur Aramis. He had his foot upon it, that is all; and I thought from having his foot upon it the handkerchief was his.'

'And you were deceived, my dear sir,' replied Aramis, coldly, very little sensible to the reparation. Then turning toward that one of the guards who had declared himself the friend of Bois-Tracy, 'Besides,' continued he, 'I have reflected, my dear intimate of Bois-Tracy, that I am not less tenderly his friend than you can possibly be; so that decidedly this handkerchief is as likely to have fallen from your pocket as mine.'

'No, upon my honour!' cried his Majesty's Guardsman.

'You are about to swear upon your honour and I upon my word, and then it will be pretty evident that one of us will have lied. Now, here, Montaran, we will do better than that—let each take a half.'

'Of the handkerchief?'

'Yes.'

'Very inconvenient, upon my word; and you hurt me devilishly, I can tell you. But I will take the left hand—it is my custom in such circumstances. Do not fancy that I do you a favour; I use either hand easily. And it will be even a disadvantage to you; a left-handed man is very troublesome to people who are not prepared for it. I regret I did not inform you sooner of this circumstance.'

'You have truly, monsieur,' said d'Artagnan, bowing again, 'a courtesy, for which, I assure you, I am very grateful.'

'You confuse me,' replied Athos, with his gentlemanly air; 'let us talk of something else, if you please. Ah, s'blood, how you have hurt me! My shoulder quite burns.'

'If you would permit me— ' said d'Artagnan, with timidity.

'What, monsieur?'

'I have a miraculous balsam for wounds—a balsam given to me by my mother and of which I have made a trial upon myself.'

'Well?'

'Well, I am sure that in less than three days this balsam would cure you; and at the end of three days, when you would be cured—well, sir, it would still do me a great honour to be your man.'

D'Artagnan spoke these words with a simplicity that did honour to his courtesy, without throwing the least doubt upon his courage.

'*Pardieu*, monsieur!' said Athos, 'that's a proposition that pleases me; not that I can accept it, but a league off it savours of the gentleman. Thus spoke and acted the gallant knights of the time of Charlemagne, in whom every cavalier ought to seek his model. Unfortunately, we do not live in the times of the great emperor, we live in the times of the cardinal; and three days hence, however well the secret might be guarded, it would be known, I say, that we were to fight, and our combat would be prevented. I think these fellows will never come.'

'If you are in haste, monsieur,' said d'Artagnan, with the same simplicity with which a moment before he had proposed to him to put off the duel for three days, 'and if it be your will to dispatch me at once, do not inconvenience yourself, I pray you.'

'There is another word which pleases me,' cried Athos, with a gracious nod to d'Artagnan. 'That did not come from a man without a heart. Monsieur, I love men of your kidney; and I foresee plainly that if we don't

kill each other, I shall hereafter have much pleasure in your conversation. We will wait for these gentlemen, so please you; I have plenty of time, and it will be more correct. Ah, here is one of them, I believe.'

In fact, at the end of the Rue Vaugirard the gigantic Porthos appeared.

'What!' cried d'Artagnan, 'is your first witness Monsieur Porthos?'

'Yes, that disturbs you?'

'By no means.'

'And here is the second.'

D'Artagnan turned in the direction pointed to by Athos, and perceived Aramis.

'What!' cried he, in an accent of greater astonishment than before, 'your second witness is Monsieur Aramis?'

'Doubtless! Are you not aware that we are never seen one without the others, and that we are called among the Musketeers and the Guards, at court and in the city, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, or the Three Inseparables? And yet, as you come from Dax or Pau— '

'From Tarbes,' said d'Artagnan.

'It is probable you are ignorant of this little fact,' said Athos.

'My faith!' replied d'Artagnan, 'you are well named, gentlemen; and my adventure, if it should make any noise, will prove at least that your union is not founded upon contrasts.'

In the meantime, Porthos had come up, waved his hand to Athos, and then turning toward d'Artagnan, stood quite astonished.

Let us say in passing that he had changed his baldric and relinquished his cloak.

'Ah, ah!' said he, 'what does this mean?'

'This is the gentleman I am going to fight with,' said Athos, pointing to d'Artagnan with his hand and saluting him with the same gesture.

'Why, it is with him I am also going to fight,' said Porthos.

'But not before one o'clock,' replied d'Artagnan.

'And I also am to fight with this gentleman,' said Aramis, coming in his turn onto the place.

'But not until two o'clock,' said d'Artagnan, with the same calmness.

'But what are you going to fight about, Athos?' asked Aramis.

'Faith! I don't very well know. He hurt my shoulder. And you, Porthos?'

of which there is not much chance, I would advise you to practice perfect politeness for the future. You must henceforth be admired and quoted as a model of it. To be obliging and polite does not necessarily make a man a coward. Look at Aramis, now; Aramis is mildness and grace personified. Well, did anybody ever dream of calling Aramis a coward? No, certainly not, and from this moment I will endeavour to model myself after him. Ah! That's strange! Here he is!'

D'Artagnan, walking and soliloquizing, had arrived within a few steps of the hôtel d'Arguillon and in front of that hôtel perceived Aramis, chatting gaily with three gentlemen; but as he had not forgotten that it was in presence of this young man that M. de Tréville had been so angry in the morning, and as a witness of the rebuke the Musketeers had received was not likely to be at all agreeable, he pretended not to see him. D'Artagnan, on the contrary, quite full of his plans of conciliation and courtesy, approached the young men with a profound bow, accompanied by a most gracious smile. All four, besides, immediately broke off their conversation.

D'Artagnan was not so dull as not to perceive that he was one too many; but he was not sufficiently broken into the fashions of the gay world to know how to extricate himself gallantly from a false position, like that of a man who begins to mingle with people he is scarcely acquainted with and in a conversation that does not concern him. He was seeking in his mind, then, for the least awkward means of retreat, when he remarked that Aramis had let his handkerchief fall, and by mistake, no doubt, had placed his foot upon it. This appeared to be a favourable opportunity to repair his intrusion. He stooped, and with the most gracious air he could assume, drew the handkerchief from under the foot of the Musketeer in spite of the efforts the latter made to detain it, and holding it out to him, said, 'I believe, monsieur, that this is a handkerchief you would be sorry to lose?'

The handkerchief was indeed richly embroidered, and had a coronet and arms at one of its corners. Aramis blushed excessively, and snatched rather than took the handkerchief from the hand of the Gascon.

'Ah, ah!' cried one of the Guards, 'will you persist in saying, most discreet Aramis, that you are not on good terms with Madame de Bois-Tracy, when that gracious lady has the kindness to lend you one of her handkerchiefs?'

came up again by the Rue de Seine, and the Red Cross; but nothing, absolutely nothing! This chase was, however, advantageous to him in one sense, for in proportion as the perspiration broke from his forehead, his heart began to cool.

He began to reflect upon the events that had passed; they were numerous and inauspicious. It was scarcely eleven o'clock in the morning, and yet this morning had already brought him into disgrace with M. de Tréville, who could not fail to think the manner in which d'Artagnan had left him a little cavalier.

Besides this, he had drawn upon himself two good duels with two men, each capable of killing three d'Artagnans—with two Musketeers, in short, with two of those beings whom he esteemed so greatly that he placed them in his mind and heart above all other men.

The outlook was sad. Sure of being killed by Athos, it may easily be understood that the young man was not very uneasy about Porthos. As hope, however, is the last thing extinguished in the heart of man, he finished by hoping that he might survive, even though with terrible wounds, in both these duels; and in case of surviving, he made the following reprehensions upon his own conduct:

'What a madcap I was, and what a stupid fellow I am! That brave and unfortunate Athos was wounded on that very shoulder against which I must run head foremost, like a ram. The only thing that astonishes me is that he did not strike me dead at once. He had good cause to do so; the pain I gave him must have been atrocious. As to Porthos—oh, as to Porthos, faith, that's a droll affair!'

And in spite of himself, the young man began to laugh aloud, looking round carefully, however, to see that his solitary laugh, without a cause in the eyes of passers-by, offended no one.

'As to Porthos, that is certainly droll; but I am not the less a giddy fool. Are people to be run against without warning? No! And have I any right to go and peep under their cloaks to see what is not there? He would have pardoned me, he would certainly have pardoned me, if I had not said anything to him about that cursed baldric—in ambiguous words, it is true, but rather drolly ambiguous. Ah, cursed Gascon that I am, I get from one hobble into another. Friend d'Artagnan,' continued he, speaking to himself with all the amenity that he thought due himself, 'if you escape,

'Faith! I am going to fight—because I am going to fight,' answered Porthos, reddening.

Athos, whose keen eye lost nothing, perceived a faintly sly smile pass over the lips of the young Gascon as he replied, 'We had a short discussion upon dress.'

'And you, Aramis?' asked Athos.

'Oh, ours is a theological quarrel,' replied Aramis, making a sign to d'Artagnan to keep secret the cause of their duel.

Athos indeed saw a second smile on the lips of d'Artagnan.

'Indeed?' said Athos.

'Yes; a passage of St. Augustine, upon which we could not agree,' said the Gascon.

'Decidedly, this is a clever fellow,' murmured Athos.

'And now you are assembled, gentlemen,' said d'Artagnan, 'permit me to offer you my apologies.'

At this word *apologies*, a cloud passed over the brow of Athos, a haughty smile curled the lip of Porthos, and a negative sign was the reply of Aramis.

'You do not understand me, gentlemen,' said d'Artagnan, throwing up his head, the sharp and bold lines of which were at the moment gilded by a bright ray of the sun. 'I asked to be excused in case I should not be able to discharge my debt to all three; for Monsieur Athos has the right to kill me first, which must much diminish the face-value of your bill, Monsieur Porthos, and render yours almost null, Monsieur Aramis. And now, gentlemen, I repeat, excuse me, but on that account only, and—on guard!'

At these words, with the most gallant air possible, d'Artagnan drew his sword.

The blood had mounted to the head of d'Artagnan, and at that moment he would have drawn his sword against all the Musketeers in the kingdom as willingly as he now did against Athos, Porthos, and Aramis.

It was a quarter past midday. The sun was in its zenith, and the spot chosen for the scene of the duel was exposed to its full ardour.

'It is very hot,' said Athos, drawing his sword in its turn, 'and yet I cannot take off my doublet; for I just now felt my wound begin to bleed again, and I should not like to annoy Monsieur with the sight of blood which he has not drawn from me himself.'

'That is true, Monsieur,' replied d'Artagnan, 'and whether drawn by myself or another, I assure you I shall always view with regret the blood of so brave a gentleman. I will therefore fight in my doublet, like yourself.'

'Come, come, enough of such compliments!' cried Porthos. 'Remember, we are waiting for our turns.'

'Speak for yourself when you are inclined to utter such incongruities,' interrupted Aramis. 'For my part, I think what they say is very well said, and quite worthy of two gentlemen.'

'When you please, monsieur,' said Athos, putting himself on guard.

'I waited your orders,' said d'Artagnan, crossing swords.

But scarcely had the two rapiers clashed, when a company of the Guards of his Eminence, commanded by M. de Jussac, turned the corner of the convent.

'The cardinal's Guards!' cried Aramis and Porthos at the same time. 'Sheathe your swords, gentlemen, sheathe your swords!'

But it was too late. The two combatants had been seen in a position which left no doubt of their intentions.

'Halloo!' cried Jussac, advancing toward them and making a sign to his men to do so likewise, 'halloo, Musketeers? Fighting here, are you? And the edicts? What is become of them?'

'You are very generous, gentlemen of the Guards,' said Athos, full of rancour, for Jussac was one of the aggressors of the preceding day. 'If we were to see you fighting, I can assure you that we would make no effort to prevent you. Leave us alone, then, and you will enjoy a little amusement without cost to yourselves.'

'Gentlemen,' said Jussac, 'it is with great regret that I pronounce the thing impossible. Duty before everything. Sheathe, then, if you please, and follow us.'

'Monsieur,' said Aramis, parodying Jussac, 'it would afford us great pleasure to obey your polite invitation if it depended upon ourselves; but unfortunately the thing is impossible—Monsieur de Tréville has forbidden it. Pass on your way, then; it is the best thing to do.'

This raillery exasperated Jussac. 'We will charge upon you, then,' said he, 'if you disobey.'

the magnificent baldric we are acquainted with; but on timidly opening his eyes, he found himself with his nose fixed between the two shoulders of Porthos—that is to say, exactly upon the baldric.

Alas, like most things in this world which have nothing in their favour but appearances, the baldric was glittering with gold in the front, but was nothing but simple buff behind. Vainglorious as he was, Porthos could not afford to have a baldric wholly of gold, but had at least half. One could comprehend the necessity of the cold and the urgency of the cloak.

'Bless me!' cried Porthos, making strong efforts to disembarrass himself of d'Artagnan, who was wriggling about his back; 'you must be mad to run against people in this manner.'

'Excuse me,' said d'Artagnan, reappearing under the shoulder of the giant, 'but I am in such haste—I was running after someone and— '

'And do you always forget your eyes when you run?' asked Porthos.

'No,' replied d'Artagnan, piqued, 'and thanks to my eyes, I can see what other people cannot see.'

Whether Porthos understood him or did not understand him, giving way to his anger, 'Monsieur,' said he, 'you stand a chance of getting chastised if you rub Musketeers in this fashion.'

'Chastised, Monsieur!' said d'Artagnan, 'the expression is strong.'

'It is one that becomes a man accustomed to look his enemies in the face.'

'Ah, *pardieu!* I know full well that you don't turn your back to yours.'

And the young man, delighted with his joke, went away laughing loudly.

Porthos foamed with rage, and made a movement to rush after d'Artagnan.

'Presently, presently,' cried the latter, 'when you haven't your cloak on.'

'At one o'clock, then, behind the Luxembourg.'

'Very well, at one o'clock, then,' replied d'Artagnan, turning the angle of the street.

But neither in the street he had passed through, nor in the one which his eager glance pervaded, could he see anyone; however slowly the stranger had walked, he was gone on his way, or perhaps had entered some house. D'Artagnan inquired of everyone he met with, went down to the ferry,

in haste, great haste. Leave your hold, then, I beg of you, and let me go where my business calls me.'

'Monsieur,' said Athos, letting him go, 'you are not polite; it is easy to perceive that you come from a distance.'

D'Artagnan had already strode down three or four stairs, but at Athos's last remark he stopped short.

'*Morbleu*, monsieur!' said he, 'however far I may come, it is not you who can give me a lesson in good manners, I warn you.'

'Perhaps,' said Athos.

'Ah! If I were not in such haste, and if I were not running after someone,' said d'Artagnan.

'Monsieur Man-in-a-hurry, you can find me without running—*me*, you understand?'

'And where, I pray you?'

'Near the Carmes-Deschaux.'

'At what hour?'

'About noon.'

'About noon? That will do; I will be there.'

'Endeavour not to make me wait; for at quarter past twelve I will cut off your ears as you run.'

'Good!' cried d'Artagnan, 'I will be there ten minutes before twelve.' And he set off running as if the devil possessed him, hoping that he might yet find the stranger, whose slow pace could not have carried him far.

But at the street gate, Porthos was talking with the soldier on guard. Between the two talkers there was just enough room for a man to pass. D'Artagnan thought it would suffice for him, and he sprang forward like a dart between them. But d'Artagnan had reckoned without the wind. As he was about to pass, the wind blew out Porthos's long cloak, and d'Artagnan rushed straight into the middle of it. Without doubt, Porthos had reasons for not abandoning this part of his vestments, for instead of quitting his hold on the flap in his hand, he pulled it toward him, so that d'Artagnan rolled himself up in the velvet by a movement of rotation explained by the persistency of Porthos.

D'Artagnan, hearing the Musketeer swear, wished to escape from the cloak, which blinded him, and sought to find his way from under the folds of it. He was particularly anxious to avoid marring the freshness of

'There are five of them,' said Athos, half aloud, 'and we are but three; we shall be beaten again, and must die on the spot, for, on my part, I declare I will never appear again before the captain as a conquered man.'

Athos, Porthos, and Aramis instantly drew near one another, while Jussac drew up his soldiers.

This short interval was sufficient to determine d'Artagnan on the part he was to take. It was one of those events which decide the life of a man; it was a choice between the king and the cardinal—the choice made, it must be persisted in. To fight, that was to disobey the law, that was to risk his head, that was to make at one blow an enemy of a minister more powerful than the king himself. All this the young man perceived, and yet, to his praise we speak it, he did not hesitate a second. Turning towards Athos and his friends, 'Gentlemen,' said he, 'allow me to correct your words, if you please. You said you were but three, but it appears to me we are four.'

'But you are not one of us,' said Porthos.

'That's true,' replied d'Artagnan; 'I have not the uniform, but I have the spirit. My heart is that of a Musketeer; I feel it, monsieur, and that impels me on.'

'Withdraw, young man,' cried Jussac, who doubtless, by his gestures and the expression of his countenance, had guessed d'Artagnan's design. 'You may retire; we consent to that. Save your skin; begone quickly.'

D'Artagnan did not budge.

'Decidedly, you are a brave fellow,' said Athos, pressing the young man's hand.

'Come, come, choose your part,' replied Jussac.

'Well,' said Porthos to Aramis, 'we must do something.'

'Monsieur is full of generosity,' said Athos.

But all three reflected upon the youth of d'Artagnan, and dreaded his inexperience.

'We should only be three, one of whom is wounded, with the addition of a boy,' resumed Athos; 'and yet it will not be the less said we were four men.'

'Yes, but to yield!' said Porthos.

'That *is* difficult,' replied Athos.

D'Artagnan comprehended their irresolution.

'Try me, gentlemen,' said he, 'and I swear to you by my honour that I will not go hence if we are conquered.'

'What is your name, my brave fellow?' said Athos.

'D'Artagnan, monsieur.'

'Well, then, Athos, Porthos, Aramis, and d'Artagnan, forward!' cried Athos.

'Come, gentlemen, have you decided?' cried Jussac for the third time.

'It is done, gentlemen,' said Athos.

'And what is your choice?' asked Jussac.

'We are about to have the honour of charging you,' replied Aramis, lifting his hat with one hand and drawing his sword with the other.

'Ah! You resist, do you?' cried Jussac.

'S'blood; does that astonish you?'

And the nine combatants rushed upon each other with a fury which however did not exclude a certain degree of method.

Athos fixed upon a certain Cahusac, a favourite of the cardinal's. Porthos had Bicarat, and Aramis found himself opposed to two adversaries. As to d'Artagnan, he sprang toward Jussac himself.

The heart of the young Gascon beat as if it would burst through his side—not from fear, God be thanked, he had not the shade of it, but with emulation; he fought like a furious tiger, turning ten times round his adversary, and changing his ground and his guard twenty times. Jussac was, as was then said, a fine blade, and had had much practice; nevertheless it required all his skill to defend himself against an adversary who, active and energetic, departed every instant from received rules, attacking him on all sides at once, and yet parrying like a man who had the greatest respect for his own epidermis.

This contest at length exhausted Jussac's patience. Furious at being held in check by one whom he had considered a boy, he became warm and began to make mistakes. D'Artagnan, who though wanting in practice had a sound theory, redoubled his agility. Jussac, anxious to put an end to this, springing forward, aimed a terrible thrust at his adversary, but the latter parried it; and while Jussac was recovering himself, glided like a serpent beneath his blade, and passed his sword through his body. Jussac fell like a dead mass.

Chapter IV

The Shoulder of Athos, the Baldric of Porthos and the Handkerchief of Aramis

D'Artagnan, in a state of fury, crossed the antechamber at three bounds, and was darting toward the stairs, which he reckoned upon descending four at a time, when, in his heedless course, he ran head foremost against a Musketeer who was coming out of one of M. de Tréville's private rooms, and striking his shoulder violently, made him utter a cry, or rather a howl.

'Excuse me,' said d'Artagnan, endeavouring to resume his course, 'excuse me, but I am in a hurry.'

Scarcely had he descended the first stair, when a hand of iron seized him by the belt and stopped him.

'You are in a hurry?' said the Musketeer, as pale as a sheet. 'Under that pretence you run against me! You say, "Excuse me," and you believe that is sufficient? Not at all, my young man. Do you fancy because you have heard Monsieur de Tréville speak to us a little cavalierly today that other people are to treat us as he speaks to us? Undeceive yourself, comrade, you are not Monsieur de Tréville.'

'My faith!' replied d'Artagnan, recognizing Athos, who, after the dressing performed by the doctor, was returning to his own apartment. 'I did not do it intentionally, and not doing it intentionally, I said "Excuse me." It appears to me that this is quite enough. I repeat to you, however, and this time on my word of honour—I think perhaps too often—that I am