'Handsome, well-bred, noble lord as you are, my dear Athos, neither princesses nor queens would be secure from your amorous solicitations.'

'How young this d'Artagnan is!' said Athos, shrugging his shoulders; and he made a sign to Grimaud to bring another bottle.

At that moment Planchet put his head modestly in at the half-open door, and told his master that the horses were ready.

'What horses?' asked Athos.

'Two horses that Monsieur de Tréville lends me at my pleasure, and with which I am now going to take a ride to St. Germain.'

'Well, and what are you going to do at St. Germain?' then demanded Athos.

Then d'Artagnan described the meeting which he had at the church, and how he had found that lady who, with the seigneur in the black cloak and with the scar near his temple, filled his mind constantly.

'That is to say, you are in love with this lady as you were with Madame Bonacieux,' said Athos, shrugging his shoulders contemptuously, as if he pitied human weakness.

'I? not at all!' said d'Artagnan. 'I am only curious to unravel the mystery to which she is attached. I do not know why, but I imagine that this woman, wholly unknown to me as she is, and wholly unknown to her as I am, has an influence over my life.'

'Well, perhaps you are right,' said Athos. 'I do not know a woman that is worth the trouble of being sought for when she is once lost. Madame Bonacieux is lost; so much the worse for her if she is found.'

'No, Athos, no, you are mistaken,' said d'Artagnan; 'I love my poor Constance more than ever, and if I knew the place in which she is, were it at the end of the world, I would go to free her from the hands of her enemies; but I am ignorant. All my researches have been useless. What is to be said? I must divert my attention!'

'Amuse yourself with Milady, my dear d'Artagnan; I wish you may with all my heart, if that will amuse you.'

'Hear me, Athos,' said d'Artagnan. 'Instead of shutting yourself up here as if you were under arrest, get on horseback and come and take a ride with me to St. Germain.'

'My dear fellow,' said Athos, 'I ride horses when I have any; when I have none, I go afoot.'

'Well,' said d'Artagnan, smiling at the misanthropy of Athos, which from any other person would have offended him, 'I ride what I can get; I am not so proud as you. So *au revoir*, dear Athos.'

'*Au revoir*,' said the Musketeer, making a sign to Grimaud to uncork the bottle he had just brought.

D'Artagnan and Planchet mounted, and took the road to St. Germain.

All along the road, what Athos had said respecting Mme. Bonacieux recurred to the mind of the young man. Although d'Artagnan was not of a very sentimental character, the mercer's pretty wife had made a real impression upon his heart. As he said, he was ready to go to the end of the world to seek her; but the world, being round, has many ends, so that he did not know which way to turn. Meantime, he was going to try to find out Milady. Milady had spoken to the man in the black cloak; therefore she knew him. Now, in the opinion of d'Artagnan, it was certainly the man in the black cloak who had carried off Mme. Bonacieux the second time, as he had carried her off the first. D'Artagnan then only half-lied, which is lying but little, when he said that by going in search of Milady he at the same time went in search of Constance.

Thinking of all this, and from time to time giving a touch of the spur to his horse, d'Artagnan completed his short journey, and arrived at St. Germain. He had just passed by the pavilion in which ten years later Louis XIV was born. He rode up a very quiet street, looking to the right and the left to see if he could catch any vestige of his beautiful Englishwoman, when from the ground floor of a pretty house, which, according to the fashion of the time, had no window toward the street, he saw a face peep out with which he thought he was acquainted. This person walked along the terrace, which was ornamented with flowers. Planchet recognized him first.

'Eh, monsieur!' said he, addressing d'Artagnan, 'don't you remember that face which is blinking yonder?'

'No,' said d'Artagnan, 'and yet I am certain it is not the first time I have seen that visage.'

'*Parbleu*, I believe it is not,' said Planchet. 'Why, it is poor Lubin, the lackey of the Comte de Wardes—he whom you took such good care of a month ago at Calais, on the road to the governor's country house!'

Chapter XXX

D'Artagnan and the Englishman

D'Artagnan followed Milady without being perceived by her. He saw her get into her carriage, and heard her order the coachman to drive to St. Germain.

It was useless to try to keep pace on foot with a carriage drawn by two powerful horses. D'Artagnan therefore returned to the Rue Férou.

In the Rue de Seine he met Planchet, who had stopped before the house of a pastry cook, and was contemplating with ecstasy a cake of the most appetizing appearance.

He ordered him to go and saddle two horses in M. de Tréville's stables—one for himself, d'Artagnan, and one for Planchet—and bring them to Athos's place. Once for all, Tréville had placed his stable at d'Artagnan's service.

Planchet proceeded toward the Rue du Colombier, and d'Artagnan toward the Rue Férou. Athos was at home, emptying sadly a bottle of the famous Spanish wine he had brought back with him from his journey into Picardy. He made a sign for Grimaud to bring a glass for d'Artagnan, and Grimaud obeyed as usual.

D'Artagnan related to Athos all that had passed at the church between Porthos and the procurator's wife, and how their comrade was probably by that time in a fair way to be equipped.

'As for me,' replied Athos to this recital, 'I am quite at my ease; it will not be women that will defray the expense of my outfit.'

'So it is!' said d'Artagnan; 'I know him now. Do you think he would recollect you?'

'My faith, monsieur, he was in such trouble that I doubt if he can have retained a very clear recollection of me.'

'Well, go and talk with the boy,' said d'Artagnan, 'and make out if you can from his conversation whether his master is dead.'

Planchet dismounted and went straight up to Lubin, who did not at all remember him, and the two lackeys began to chat with the best understanding possible; while d'Artagnan turned the two horses into a lane, went round the house, and came back to watch the conference from behind a hedge of filberts.

At the end of an instant's observation he heard the noise of a vehicle, and saw Milady's carriage stop opposite to him. He could not be mistaken; Milady was in it. D'Artagnan leaned upon the neck of his horse, in order that he might see without being seen.

Milady put her charming blond head out at the window, and gave her orders to her maid.

The latter—a pretty girl of about twenty or twenty-two years, active and lively, the true *soubrette* of a great lady—jumped from the step upon which, according to the custom of the time, she was seated, and took her way toward the terrace upon which d'Artagnan had perceived Lubin.

D'Artagnan followed the *soubrette* with his eyes, and saw her go toward the terrace; but it happened that someone in the house called Lubin, so that Planchet remained alone, looking in all directions for the road where d'Artagnan had disappeared.

The maid approached Planchet, whom she took for Lubin, and holding out a little billet to him said, 'For your master.'

'For my master?' replied Planchet, astonished.

'Yes, and important. Take it quickly.'

Thereupon she ran toward the carriage, which had turned round toward the way it came, jumped upon the step, and the carriage drove off.

Planchet turned and returned the billet. Then, accustomed to passive obedience, he jumped down from the terrace, ran toward the lane, and at the end of twenty paces met d'Artagnan, who, having seen all, was coming to him.

'For you, monsieur,' said Planchet, presenting the billet to the young man.

'For me?' said d'Artagnan; 'are you sure of that?'

'*Pardieu*, monsieur, I can't be more sure. The *soubrette* said, "For your master." I have no other master but you; so—a pretty little lass, my faith, is that *soubrette!*'

D'Artagnan opened the letter, and read these words: 'A person who takes more interest in you than she is willing to confess wishes to know on what day it will suit you to walk in the forest? Tomorrow, at the Hôtel Field of the Cloth of Gold, a lackey in black and red will wait for your reply.'

'Oh!' said d'Artagnan, 'this is rather warm; it appears that Milady and I are anxious about the health of the same person. Well, Planchet, how is the good Monsieur de Wardes? He is not dead, then?'

'No, monsieur, he is as well as a man can be with four sword wounds in his body; for you, without question, inflicted four upon the dear gentleman, and he is still very weak, having lost almost all his blood. As I said, monsieur, Lubin did not know me, and told me our adventure from one end to the other.'

'Well done, Planchet! you are the king of lackeys. Now jump onto your horse, and let us overtake the carriage.'

This did not take long. At the end of five minutes they perceived the carriage drawn up by the roadside; a cavalier, richly dressed, was close to the door.

The conversation between Milady and the cavalier was so animated that d'Artagnan stopped on the other side of the carriage without anyone but the pretty *soubrette* perceiving his presence.

The conversation took place in English—a language which d'Artagnan could not understand; but by the accent the young man plainly saw that the beautiful Englishwoman was in a great rage. She terminated it by an action which left no doubt as to the nature of this conversation; this was a blow with her fan, applied with such force that the little feminine weapon flew into a thousand pieces.

The cavalier laughed aloud, which appeared to exasperate Milady still more.

D'Artagnan thought this was the moment to interfere. He approached the other door, and taking off his hat respectfully, said, 'Madame, will you permit me to offer you my services? It appears to me that this cavalier has made you very angry. Speak one word, madame, and I take upon myself to punish him for his want of courtesy.'

At the first word Milady turned, looking at the young man with astonishment; and when he had finished, she said in very good French, 'Monsieur, I should with great confidence place myself under your protection if the person with whom I quarrel were not my brother.'

'Ah, excuse me, then,' said d'Artagnan. 'You must be aware that I was ignorant of that, madame.'

'What is that stupid fellow troubling himself about?' cried the cavalier whom Milady had designated as her brother, stooping down to the height of the coach window. 'Why does not he go about his business?'

'Stupid fellow yourself!' said d'Artagnan, stooping in his turn on the neck of his horse, and answering on his side through the carriage window. 'I do not go on because it pleases me to stop here.'

The cavalier addressed some words in English to his sister.

'I speak to you in French,' said d'Artagnan; 'be kind enough, then, to reply to me in the same language. You are Madame's brother, I learn—be it so; but fortunately you are not mine.'

It might be thought that Milady, timid as women are in general, would have interposed in this commencement of mutual provocations in order to prevent the quarrel from going too far; but on the contrary, she threw herself back in her carriage, and called out coolly to the coachman, 'Go on—home!'

The pretty *soubrette* cast an anxious glance at d'Artagnan, whose good looks seemed to have made an impression on her.

The carriage went on, and left the two men facing each other; no material obstacle separated them.

The cavalier made a movement as if to follow the carriage; but d'Artagnan, whose anger, already excited, was much increased by recognizing in him the Englishman of Amiens who had won his horse and had been very near winning his diamond of Athos, caught at his bridle and stopped him.

'We are then reconciled, dear Monsieur Porthos?' said she, simpering.
'For life,' replied Porthos, in the same manner.
'Till we meet again, then, dear traitor!'
'Till we meet again, my forgetful charmer!'
'Tomorrow, my angel!'
'Tomorrow, flame of my life!'

'Something whispers me so,' continued Porthos, becoming more and more melancholy.

'Rather say that you have a new love.'

'Not so; I speak frankly to you. No object affects me; and I even feel here, at the bottom of my heart, something which speaks for you. But in fifteen days, as you know, or as you do not know, this fatal campaign is to open. I shall be fearfully preoccupied with my outfit. Then I must make a journey to see my family, in the lower part of Brittany, to obtain the sum necessary for my departure.'

Porthos observed a last struggle between love and avarice.

'And as,' continued he, 'the duchess whom you saw at the church has estates near to those of my family, we mean to make the journey together. Journeys, you know, appear much shorter when we travel two in company.'

'Have you no friends in Paris, then, Monsieur Porthos?' said the procurator's wife.

'I thought I had,' said Porthos, resuming his melancholy air; 'but I have been taught my mistake.'

'You have some!' cried the procurator's wife, in a transport that surprised even herself. 'Come to our house tomorrow. You are the son of my aunt, consequently my cousin; you come from Noyon, in Picardy; you have several lawsuits and no attorney. Can you recollect all that?'

'Perfectly, madame.'

'Come at dinnertime.'

'Very well.'

'And be upon your guard before my husband, who is rather shrewd, notwithstanding his seventy-six years.'

'Seventy-six years! *Peste!* That's a fine age!' replied Porthos.

'A great age, you mean, Monsieur Porthos. Yes, the poor man may be expected to leave me a widow, any hour,' continued she, throwing a significant glance at Porthos. 'Fortunately, by our marriage contract, the survivor takes everything.'

'All?'

'Yes, all.'

'You are a woman of precaution, I see, my dear Madame Coquenard,' said Porthos, squeezing the hand of the procurator's wife tenderly.

'Well, monsieur,' said he, 'you appear to be more stupid than I am, for you forget there is a little quarrel to arrange between us two.'

'Ah,' said the Englishman, 'is it you, my master? It seems you must always be playing some game or other.'

'Yes; and that reminds me that I have a revenge to take. We will see, my dear monsieur, if you can handle a sword as skilfully as you can a dice box.'

'You see plainly that I have no sword,' said the Englishman. 'Do you wish to play the braggart with an unarmed man?'

'I hope you have a sword at home; but at all events, I have two, and if you like, I will throw with you for one of them.'

'Needless,' said the Englishman; 'I am well furnished with such playthings.'

'Very well, my worthy gentleman,' replied d'Artagnan, 'pick out the longest, and come and show it to me this evening.'

'Where, if you please?'

'Behind the Luxembourg; that's a charming spot for such amusements as the one I propose to you.'

'That will do; I will be there.'

'Your hour?'

'Six o'clock.'

'*A propos*, you have probably one or two friends?'

'I have three, who would be honoured by joining in the sport with me.'

'Three? Marvellous! That falls out oddly! Three is just my number!'

'Now, then, who are you?' asked the Englishman.

'I am Monsieur d'Artagnan, a Gascon gentleman, serving in the king's Musketeers. And you?'

'I am Lord de Winter, Baron Sheffield.'

'Well, then, I am your servant, Monsieur Baron,' said d'Artagnan, 'though you have names rather difficult to recollect.' And touching his horse with the spur, he cantered back to Paris. As he was accustomed to do in all cases of any consequence, d'Artagnan went straight to the residence of Athos.

He found Athos reclining upon a large sofa, where he was waiting, as he said, for his outfit to come and find him. He related to Athos all that had passed, except the letter to M. de Wardes.

Athos was delighted to find he was going to fight an Englishman. We might say that was his dream.

They immediately sent their lackeys for Porthos and Aramis, and on their arrival made them acquainted with the situation.

Porthos drew his sword from the scabbard, and made passes at the wall, springing back from time to time, and making contortions like a dancer.

Aramis, who was constantly at work at his poem, shut himself up in Athos's closet, and begged not to be disturbed before the moment of drawing swords.

Athos, by signs, desired Grimaud to bring another bottle of wine.

D'Artagnan employed himself in arranging a little plan, of which we shall hereafter see the execution, and which promised him some agreeable adventure, as might be seen by the smiles which from time to time passed over his countenance, whose thoughtfulness they animated.

'Think of the offence you have committed toward me, madame! It remains *here!*' said Porthos, placing his hand on his heart, and pressing it strongly.

'I will repair it, indeed I will, my dear Porthos.'

'Besides, what did I ask of you?' resumed Porthos, with a movement of the shoulders full of good fellowship. 'A loan, nothing more! After all, I am not an unreasonable man. I know you are not rich, Madame Coquenard, and that your husband is obliged to bleed his poor clients to squeeze a few paltry crowns from them. Oh! If you were a duchess, a marchioness, or a countess, it would be quite a different thing; it would be unpardonable.'

The procurator's wife was piqued.

'Please to know, Monsieur Porthos,' said she, 'that my strongbox, the strongbox of a procurator's wife though it may be, is better filled than those of your affected minxes.'

'That doubles the offence,' said Porthos, disengaging his arm from that of the procurator's wife; 'for if you are rich, Madame Coquenard, then there is no excuse for your refusal.'

'When I said rich,' replied the procurator's wife, who saw that she had gone too far, 'you must not take the word literally. I am not precisely rich, though I am pretty well off.'

'Hold, madame,' said Porthos, 'let us say no more upon the subject, I beg of you. You have misunderstood me, all sympathy is extinct between us.'

'Ingrate that you are!'

'Ah! I advise you to complain!' said Porthos.

'Begone, then, to your beautiful duchess; I will detain you no longer.'

'And she is not to be despised, in my opinion.'

'Now, Monsieur Porthos, once more, and this is the last! Do you love me still?'

'Ah, madame,' said Porthos, in the most melancholy tone he could assume, 'when we are about to enter upon a campaign—a campaign, in which my presentiments tell me I shall be killed— '

'Oh, don't talk of such things!' cried the procurator's wife, bursting into tears.

'Good Lord, how quickly men forget!' cried the procurator's wife, raising her eyes toward heaven.

'Less quickly than the women, it seems to me,' replied Porthos; 'for I, madame, I may say I was your victim, when wounded, dying, I was abandoned by the surgeons. I, the offspring of a noble family, who placed reliance upon your friendship—I was near dying of my wounds at first, and of hunger afterward, in a beggarly inn at Chantilly, without you ever deigning once to reply to the burning letters I addressed to you.'

'But, Monsieur Porthos,' murmured the procurator's wife, who began to feel that, to judge by the conduct of the great ladies of the time, she was wrong.

'I, who had sacrificed for you the Baronne de— '

'I know it well.'

'The Comtesse de— '

'Monsieur Porthos, be generous!'

'You are right, madame, and I will not finish.'

'But it was my husband who would not hear of lending.'

'Madame Coquenard,' said Porthos, 'remember the first letter you wrote me, and which I preserve engraved in my memory.'

The procurator's wife uttered a groan.

'Besides,' said she, 'the sum you required me to borrow was rather large.'

'Madame Coquenard, I gave you the preference. I had but to write to the Duchesse—but I won't repeat her name, for I am incapable of compromising a woman; but this I know, that I had but to write to her and she would have sent me fifteen hundred.'

The procurator's wife shed a tear.

'Monsieur Porthos,' said she, 'I can assure you that you have severely punished me; and if in the time to come you should find yourself in a similar situation, you have but to apply to me.'

'Fie, madame, fie!' said Porthos, as if disgusted. 'Let us not talk about money, if you please; it is humiliating.'

'Then you no longer love me!' said the procurator's wife, slowly and sadly.

Porthos maintained a majestic silence.

'And that is the only reply you make? Alas, I understand.'

Chapter XXXI

English and French

The hour having come, they went with their four lackeys to a spot behind the Luxembourg given up to the feeding of goats. Athos threw a piece of money to the goatkeeper to withdraw. The lackeys were ordered to act as sentinels.

A silent party soon drew near to the same enclosure, entered, and joined the Musketeers. Then, according to foreign custom, the presentations took place.

The Englishmen were all men of rank; consequently the odd names of their adversaries were for them not only a matter of surprise, but of annoyance.

'But after all,' said Lord de Winter, when the three friends had been named, 'we do not know who you are. We cannot fight with such names; they are names of shepherds.'

'Therefore your lordship may suppose they are only assumed names,' said Athos.

'Which only gives us a greater desire to know the real ones,' replied the Englishman.

'You played very willingly with us without knowing our names,' said Athos, 'by the same token that you won our horses.'

'That is true, but we then only risked our pistoles; this time we risk our blood. One plays with anybody; but one fights only with equals.'

'And that is but just,' said Athos, and he took aside the one of the four Englishmen with whom he was to fight, and communicated his name in a low voice.

Porthos and Aramis did the same.

'Does that satisfy you?' said Athos to his adversary. 'Do you find me of sufficient rank to do me the honour of crossing swords with me?'

'Yes, monsieur,' said the Englishman, bowing.

'Well! now shall I tell you something?' added Athos, coolly.

'What?' replied the Englishman.

'Why, that is that you would have acted much more wisely if you had not required me to make myself known.'

'Why so?'

'Because I am believed to be dead, and have reasons for wishing nobody to know I am living; so that I shall be obliged to kill you to prevent my secret from roaming over the fields.'

The Englishman looked at Athos, believing that he jested, but Athos did not jest the least in the world.

'Gentlemen,' said Athos, addressing at the same time his companions and their adversaries, 'are we ready?'

'Yes!' answered the Englishmen and the Frenchmen, as with one voice.

'On guard, then!' cried Athos.

Immediately eight swords glittered in the rays of the setting sun, and the combat began with an animosity very natural between men twice enemies.

Athos fenced with as much calmness and method as if he had been practising in a fencing school.

Porthos, abated, no doubt, of his too-great confidence by his adventure of Chantilly, played with skill and prudence. Aramis, who had the third canto of his poem to finish, behaved like a man in haste.

Athos killed his adversary first. He hit him but once, but as he had foretold, that hit was a mortal one; the sword pierced his heart.

Second, Porthos stretched his upon the grass with a wound through his thigh, As the Englishman, without making any further resistance, then surrendered his sword, Porthos took him up in his arms and bore him to his carriage.

Aramis pushed his so vigorously that after going back fifty paces, the man ended by fairly taking to his heels, and disappeared amid the hooting of the lackeys.

As to d'Artagnan, he fought purely and simply on the defensive; and when he saw his adversary pretty well fatigued, with a vigorous side thrust

sent me word that she should come today to this poor church, buried in this vile quarter, solely for the sake of seeing me.'

'Monsieur Porthos,' said the procurator's wife, 'will you have the kindness to offer me your arm for five minutes? I have something to say to you.'

'Certainly, madame,' said Porthos, winking to himself, as a gambler does who laughs at the dupe he is about to pluck.

At that moment d'Artagnan passed in pursuit of Milady; he cast a passing glance at Porthos, and beheld this triumphant look.

'Eh, eh!' said he, reasoning to himself according to the strangely easy morality of that gallant period, 'there is one who will be equipped in good time!'

Porthos, yielding to the pressure of the arm of the procurator's wife, as a bark yields to the rudder, arrived at the cloister St. Magloire—a little-frequented passage, enclosed with a turnstile at each end. In the daytime nobody was seen there but mendicants devouring their crusts, and children at play.

'Ah, Monsieur Porthos,' cried the procurator's wife, when she was assured that no one who was a stranger to the population of the locality could either see or hear her, 'ah, Monsieur Porthos, you are a great conqueror, as it appears!'

'I, madame?' said Porthos, drawing himself up proudly; 'how so?'

'The signs just now, and the holy water! But that must be a princess, at least—that lady with her Negro boy and her maid!'

'My God! Madame, you are deceived,' said Porthos; 'she is simply a duchess.'

'And that running footman who waited at the door, and that carriage with a coachman in grand livery who sat waiting on his seat?'

Porthos had seen neither the footman nor the carriage, but with the eye of a jealous woman, Mme. Coquenard had seen everything.

Porthos regretted that he had not at once made the lady of the red cushion a princess.

'Ah, you are quite the pet of the ladies, Monsieur Porthos!' resumed the procurator's wife, with a sigh.

'Well,' responded Porthos, 'you may imagine, with the physique with which nature has endowed me, I am not in want of good luck.'