wine, that's my point for sport. You see, monsieur, what the New World has to do with the bottles which are on the commode and the wardrobe. Now, will you taste our wine, and without prejudice say what you think of it?'

'Thank you, my friend, thank you; unfortunately, I have just breakfasted.'

'Well,' said Porthos, 'arrange the table, Mousqueton, and while we breakfast, d'Artagnan will relate to us what has happened to him during the ten days since he left us.'

'Willingly,' said d'Artagnan.

While Porthos and Mousqueton were breakfasting, with the appetites of convalescents and with that brotherly cordiality which unites men in misfortune, d'Artagnan related how Aramis, being wounded, was obliged to stop at Crèvecœur, how he had left Athos fighting at Amiens with four men who accused him of being a coiner, and how he, d'Artagnan, had been forced to run the Comtes de Wardes through the body in order to reach England.

But there the confidence of d'Artagnan stopped. He only added that on his return from Great Britain he had brought back four magnificent horses—one for himself, and one for each of his companions; then he informed Porthos that the one intended for him was already installed in the stable of the tavern.

At this moment Planchet entered, to inform his master that the horses were sufficiently refreshed and that it would be possible to sleep at Clermont.

As d'Artagnan was tolerably reassured with regard to Porthos, and as he was anxious to obtain news of his two other friends, he held out his hand to the wounded man, and told him he was about to resume his route in order to continue his researches. For the rest, as he reckoned upon returning by the same route in seven or eight days, if Porthos were still at the Great St. Martin, he would call for him on his way.

Porthos replied that in all probability his sprain would not permit him to depart yet awhile. Besides, it was necessary he should stay at Chantilly to wait for the answer from his duchess.

D'Artagnan wished that answer might be prompt and favourable; and having again recommended Porthos to the care of Mousqueton, and paid

his bill to the host, he resumed his route with Planchet, already relieved of one of his led horses.

'Yes, monsieur, and it was he who taught me to lay a snare and ground a line. The consequence is that when I saw our labourers, which did not at all suit two such delicate stomachs as ours, I had recourse to a little of my old trade. While walking near the wood of Monsieur le Prince, I laid a few snares in the runs; and while reclining on the banks of his Highness's pieces of water, I slipped a few lines into his fish ponds. So that now, thanks be to God, we do not want, as Monsieur can testify, for partridges, rabbits, carp or eels—all light, wholesome food, suitable for the sick.'

'But the wine,' said d'Artagnan, 'who furnishes the wine? Your host?'

'That is to say, yes and no.'

'How yes and no?'

'He furnishes it, it is true, but he does not know that he has that honour.'

'Explain yourself, Mousqueton; your conversation is full of instructive things.'

'That is it, monsieur. It has so chanced that I met with a Spaniard in my peregrinations who had seen many countries, and among them the New World.'

'What connection can the New World have with the bottles which are on the commode and the wardrobe?'

'Patience, monsieur, everything will come in its turn.'

'This Spaniard had in his service a lackey who had accompanied him in his voyage to Mexico. This lackey was my compatriot; and we became the more intimate from there being many resemblances of character between us. We loved sporting of all kinds better than anything; so that he related to me how in the plains of the Pampas the natives hunt the tiger and the wild bull with simple running nooses which they throw to a distance of twenty or thirty paces the end of a cord with such nicety; but in face of the proof I was obliged to acknowledge the truth of the recital. My friend placed a bottle at the distance of thirty paces, and at each cast he caught the neck of the bottle in his running noose. I practised this exercise, and as nature has endowed me with some faculties, at this day I can throw the lasso with any man in the world. Well, do you understand, monsieur? Our host has a well-furnished cellar the key of which never leaves him; only this cellar has a ventilating hole. Now through this ventilating hole I throw my lasso, and as I now know in which part of the cellar is the best

'And what did he do the rest of his time?'

'Monsieur, he carried on a trade which I have always thought satisfactory.'

'Which?'

'As it was a time of war between the Catholics and the Huguenots, and as he saw the Catholics exterminate the Huguenots and the Huguenots exterminate the Catholics—all in the name of religion—he adopted a mixed belief which permitted him to be sometimes Catholic, sometimes a Huguenot. Now, he was accustomed to walk with his fowling piece on his shoulder, behind the hedges which border the roads, and when he saw a Catholic coming alone, the Protestant religion immediately prevailed in his mind. He lowered his gun in the direction of the traveller; then, when he was within ten paces of him, he commenced a conversation which almost always ended by the traveller's abandoning his purse to save his life. It goes without saying that when he saw a Huguenot coming, he felt himself filled with such ardent Catholic zeal that he could not understand how, a quarter of an hour before, he had been able to have any doubts upon the superiority of our holy religion. For my part, monsieur, I am Catholic—my father, faithful to his principles, having made my elder brother a Huguenot.'

'And what was the end of this worthy man?' asked d'Artagnan.

'Oh, of the most unfortunate kind, monsieur. One day he was surprised in a lonely road between a Huguenot and a Catholic, with both of whom he had before had business, and who both knew him again; so they united against him and hanged him on a tree. Then they came and boasted of their fine exploit in the cabaret of the next village, where my brother and I were drinking.'

'And what did you do?' said d'Artagnan.

'We let them tell their story out,' replied Mousqueton. 'Then, as in leaving the cabaret they took different directions, my brother went and hid himself on the road of the Catholic, and I on that of the Huguenot. Two hours after, all was over; we had done the business of both, admiring the foresight of our poor father, who had taken the precaution to bring each of us up in a different religion.'

'Well, I must allow, as you say, your father was a very intelligent fellow. And you say in his leisure moments the worthy man was a poacher?'

Chapter XXVI

Aramis and his Thesis

D'Artagnan had said nothing to Porthos of his wound or of his procurator's wife. Our Béarnais was a prudent lad, however young he might be. Consequently he had appeared to believe all that the vainglorious Musketeer had told him, convinced that no friendship will hold out against a surprised secret. Besides, we feel always a sort of mental superiority over those whose lives we know better than they suppose. In his projects of intrigue for the future, and determined as he was to make his three friends the instruments of his fortune, d'Artagnan was not sorry at getting into his grasp beforehand the invisible strings by which he reckoned upon moving them.

And yet, as he journeyed along, a profound sadness weighed upon his heart. He thought of that young and pretty Mme. Bonacieux who was to have paid him the price of his devotedness; but let us hasten to say that this sadness possessed the young man less from the regret of the happiness he had missed, than from the fear he entertained that some serious misfortune had befallen the poor woman. For himself, he had no doubt she was a victim of the cardinal's vengeance; and, as was well known, the vengeance of his Eminence was terrible. How he had found grace in the eyes of the minister, he did not know; but without doubt M. de Cavois would have revealed this to him if the captain of the Guards had found him at home.

Nothing makes time pass more quickly or more shortens a journey than a thought which absorbs in itself all the faculties of the organization of him who thinks. External existence then resembles a sleep of which this thought is the dream. By its influence, time has no longer measure, space

has no longer distance. We depart from one place, and arrive at another, that is all. Of the interval passed, nothing remains in the memory but a vague mist in which a thousand confused images of trees, mountains, and landscapes are lost. It was as a prey to this hallucination that d'Artagnan travelled, at whatever pace his horse pleased, the six or eight leagues that separated Chantilly from Crèvecœur, without his being able to remember on his arrival in the village any of the things he had passed or met with on the road.

There only his memory returned to him. He shook his head, perceived the cabaret at which he had left Aramis, and putting his horse to the trot, he shortly pulled up at the door.

This time it was not a host but a hostess who received him. D'Artagnan was a physiognomist. His eye took in at a glance the plump, cheerful countenance of the mistress of the place, and he at once perceived there was no occasion for dissembling with her, or of fearing anything from one blessed with such a joyous physiognomy.

'My good dame,' asked d'Artagnan, 'can you tell me what has become of one of my friends, whom we were obliged to leave here about a dozen days ago?'

'A handsome young man, three- or four-and-twenty years old, mild, amiable, and well made?'

'That is he—wounded in the shoulder.'

'Just so. Well, monsieur, he is still here.'

'Ah, *pardieu!* My dear dame,' said d'Artagnan, springing from his horse, and throwing the bridle to Planchet, 'you restore me to life; where is this dear Aramis? Let me embrace him, I am in a hurry to see him again.'

'Pardon, monsieur, but I doubt whether he can see you at this moment.'

'Why so? Has he a lady with him?'

'Jesus! What do you mean by that? Poor lad! No, monsieur, he has not a lady with him.'

'With whom is he, then?'

'With the curate of Montdidier and the superior of the Jesuits of Amiens.'

'Good heavens!' cried d'Artagnan, 'is the poor fellow worse, then?'

'No, monsieur, quite the contrary; but after his illness grace touched him, and he determined to take orders.'

What consequence can the reverses of fortune be to you? Have you not, happy rogue that you are—have you not your duchess, who cannot fail to come to your aid?'

'Well, you see, my dear d'Artagnan, with what ill luck I play,' replied Porthos, with the most careless air in the world. 'I wrote to her to send me fifty louis or so, of which I stood absolutely in need on account of my accident.'

'Well?'

'Well, she must be at her country seat, for she has not answered me.'

'Truly?'

'No; so I yesterday addressed another epistle to her, still more pressing than the first. But you are here, my dear fellow, let us speak of you. I confess I began to be very uneasy on your account.'

'But your host behaves very well toward you, as it appears, my dear Porthos,' said d'Artagnan, directing the sick man's attention to the full stewpans and the empty bottles.

'So, so,' replied Porthos. 'Only three or four days ago the impertinent jackanapes gave me his bill, and I was forced to turn both him and his bill out of the door; so that I am here something in the fashion of a conqueror, holding my position, as it were, my conquest. So you see, being in constant fear of being forced from that position, I am armed to the teeth.'

'And yet,' said d'Artagnan, laughing, 'it appears to me that from time to time you must make *sorties*.' And he again pointed to the bottles and the stewpans.

'Not I, unfortunately!' said Porthos. 'This miserable strain confines me to my bed; but Mousqueton forages, and brings in provisions. Friend Mousqueton, you see that we have a reinforcement, and we must have an increase of supplies.'

'Mousqueton,' said d'Artagnan, 'you must render me a service.'

'What, monsieur?'

'You must give your recipe to Planchet. I may be besieged in my turn, and I shall not be sorry for him to be able to let me enjoy the same advantages with which you gratify your master.'

'Lord, monsieur! There is nothing more easy,' said Mousqueton, with a modest air. 'One only needs to be sharp, that's all. I was brought up in the country, and my father in his leisure time was something of a poacher.'

'Ah, *pardieu!* Is that you?' said Porthos to d'Artagnan. 'You are right welcome. Excuse my not coming to meet you; but,' added he, looking at d'Artagnan with a certain degree of uneasiness, 'you know what has happened to me?'

'No.'

'Has the host told you nothing, then?'

'I asked after you, and came up as soon as I could.'

Porthos seemed to breathe more freely.

'And what has happened to you, my dear Porthos?' continued d'Artagnan.

'Why, on making a thrust at my adversary, whom I had already hit three times, and whom I meant to finish with the fourth, I put my foot on a stone, slipped, and strained my knee.'

'Truly?'

'honour! Luckily for the rascal, for I should have left him dead on the spot, I assure you.'

'And what has became of him?'

'Oh, I don't know; he had enough, and set off without waiting for the rest. But you, my dear d'Artagnan, what has happened to you?'

'So that this strain of the knee,' continued d'Artagnan, 'my dear Porthos, keeps you in bed?'

'My God, that's all. I shall be about again in a few days.'

'Why did you not have yourself conveyed to Paris? You must be cruelly bored here.'

'That was my intention; but, my dear friend, I have one thing to confess to you.'

'What's that?'

'It is that as I was cruelly bored, as you say, and as I had the seventy-five pistoles in my pocket which you had distributed to me, in order to amuse myself I invited a gentleman who was travelling this way to walk up, and proposed a cast of dice. He accepted my challenge, and, my faith, my seventy-five pistoles passed from my pocket to his, without reckoning my horse, which he won into the bargain. But you, my dear d'Artagnan?'

'What can you expect, my dear Porthos; a man is not privileged in all ways,' said d'Artagnan. 'You know the proverb "Unlucky at play, lucky in love." You are too fortunate in your love for play not to take its revenge.

'That's it!' said d'Artagnan, 'I had forgotten that he was only a Musketeer for a time.'

'Monsieur still insists upon seeing him?'

'More than ever.'

'Well, monsieur has only to take the right-hand staircase in the courtyard, and knock at Number Five on the second floor.'

D'Artagnan walked quickly in the direction indicated, and found one of those exterior staircases that are still to be seen in the yards of our old-fashioned taverns. But there was no getting at the place of sojourn of the future abbé; the defiles of the chamber of Aramis were as well guarded as the gardens of Armida. Bazin was stationed in the corridor, and barred his passage with the more intrepidity that, after many years of trial, Bazin found himself near a result of which he had ever been ambitious.

In fact, the dream of poor Bazin had always been to serve a churchman; and he awaited with impatience the moment, always in the future, when Aramis would throw aside the uniform and assume the cassock. The daily-renewed promise of the young man that the moment would not long be delayed, had alone kept him in the service of a Musketeer—a service in which, he said, his soul was in constant jeopardy.

Bazin was then at the height of joy. In all probability, this time his master would not retract. The union of physical pain with moral uneasiness had produced the effect so long desired. Aramis, suffering at once in body and mind, had at length fixed his eyes and his thoughts upon religion, and he had considered as a warning from heaven the double accident which had happened to him; that is to say, the sudden disappearance of his mistress and the wound in his shoulder.

It may be easily understood that in the present disposition of his master nothing could be more disagreeable to Bazin than the arrival of d'Artagnan, which might cast his master back again into that vortex of mundane affairs which had so long carried him away. He resolved, then, to defend the door bravely; and as, betrayed by the mistress of the inn, he could not say that Aramis was absent, he endeavoured to prove to the newcomer that it would be the height of indiscretion to disturb his master in his pious conference, which had commenced with the morning and would not, as Bazin said, terminate before night.

But d'Artagnan took very little heed of the eloquent discourse of M. Bazin; and as he had no desire to support a polemic discussion with his friend's valet, he simply moved him out of the way with one hand, and with the other turned the handle of the door of Number Five. The door opened, and d'Artagnan went into the chamber.

Aramis, in a black gown, his head enveloped in a sort of round flat cap, not much unlike a *calotte*, was seated before an oblong table, covered with rolls of paper and enormous volumes in folio. At his right hand was placed the superior of the Jesuits, and on his left the curate of Montdidier. The curtains were half drawn, and only admitted the mysterious light calculated for beatific reveries. All the mundane objects that generally strike the eye on entering the room of a young man, particularly when that young man is a Musketeer, had disappeared as if by enchantment; and for fear, no doubt, that the sight of them might bring his master back to ideas of this world, Bazin had laid his hands upon sword, pistols, plumed hat, and embroideries and laces of all kinds and sorts. In their stead d'Artagnan thought he perceived in an obscure corner a discipline cord suspended from a nail in the wall.

At the noise made by d'Artagnan in entering, Aramis lifted up his head, and beheld his friend; but to the great astonishment of the young man, the sight of him did not produce much effect upon the Musketeer, so completely was his mind detached from the things of this world.

'Good day, dear d'Artagnan,' said Aramis; 'believe me, I am glad to see you.'

'So am I delighted to see you,' said d'Artagnan, 'although I am not yet sure that it is Aramis I am speaking to.'

'To himself, my friend, to himself! But what makes you doubt it?'

'I was afraid I had made a mistake in the chamber, and that I had found my way into the apartment of some churchman. Then another error seized me on seeing you in company with these gentlemen—I was afraid you were dangerously ill.'

The two men in black, who guessed d'Artagnan's meaning, darted at him a glance which might have been thought threatening; but d'Artagnan took no heed of it.

'I disturb you, perhaps, my dear Aramis,' continued d'Artagnan, 'for by what I see, I am led to believe that you are confessing to these gentlemen.'

'Oh, Lord, yes, monsieur! Yesterday he wrote again; but it was his servant who this time put the letter in the post.'

'Do you say the procurator's wife is old and ugly?'

'Fifty at least, monsieur, and not at all handsome, according to Pathaud's account.'

'In that case, you may be quite at ease; she will soon be softened. Besides, Porthos cannot owe you much.'

'How, not much! Twenty good pistoles, already, without reckoning the doctor. He denies himself nothing; it may easily be seen he has been accustomed to live well.'

'Never mind; if his mistress abandons him, he will find friends, I will answer for it. So, my dear host, be not uneasy, and continue to take all the care of him that his situation requires.'

'Monsieur has promised me not to open his mouth about the procurator's wife, and not to say a word of the wound?'

'That's agreed; you have my word.'

'Oh, he would kill me!'

'Don't be afraid; he is not so much of a devil as he appears.'

Saying these words, d'Artagnan went upstairs, leaving his host a little better satisfied with respect to two things in which he appeared to be very much interested—his debt and his life.

At the top of the stairs, upon the most conspicuous door of the corridor, was traced in black ink a gigantic number '1.' D'Artagnan knocked, and upon the bidding to come in which came from inside, he entered the chamber.

Porthos was in bed, and was playing a game at *lansquenet* with Mousqueton, to keep his hand in; while a spit loaded with partridges was turning before the fire, and on each side of a large chimneypiece, over two chafing dishes, were boiling two stewpans, from which exhaled a double odour of rabbit and fish stews, rejoicing to the smell. In addition to this he perceived that the top of a wardrobe and the marble of a commode were covered with empty bottles.

At the sight of his friend, Porthos uttered a loud cry of joy; and Mousqueton, rising respectfully, yielded his place to him, and went to give an eye to the two stewpans, of which he appeared to have the particular inspection.

nobody shall know he has received this wound except the duchess, whom he endeavoured to interest by an account of his adventure.'

'It is a wound that confines him to his bed?'

'Ah, and a master stroke, too, I assure you. Your friend's soul must stick tight to his body.'

'Were you there, then?'

'Monsieur, I followed them from curiosity, so that I saw the combat without the combatants seeing me.'

'And what took place?'

'Oh! The affair was not long, I assure you. They placed themselves on guard; the stranger made a feint and a lunge, and that so rapidly that when Monsieur Porthos came to the *parade*, he had already three inches of steel in his breast. He immediately fell backward. The stranger placed the point of his sword at his throat; and Monsieur Porthos, finding himself at the mercy of his adversary, acknowledged himself conquered. Upon which the stranger asked his name, and learning that it was Porthos, and not d'Artagnan, he assisted him to rise, brought him back to the hôtel, mounted his horse, and disappeared.'

'So it was with Monsieur d'Artagnan this stranger meant to quarrel?'

'It appears so.'

'And do you know what has become of him?'

'No, I never saw him until that moment, and have not seen him since.'

'Very well; I know all that I wish to know. Porthos's chamber is, you say, on the first story, Number One?'

'Yes, monsieur, the handsomest in the inn—a chamber that I could have let ten times over.'

'Bah! Be satisfied,' said d'Artagnan, laughing, 'Porthos will pay you with the money of the Duchess Coquenard.'

'Oh, monsieur, procurator's wife or duchess, if she will but loosen her pursestrings, it will be all the same; but she positively answered that she was tired of the exigencies and infidelities of Monsieur Porthos, and that she would not send him a denier.'

'And did you convey this answer to your guest?'

'We took good care not to do that; he would have found in what fashion we had executed his commission.'

'So that he still expects his money?'

Aramis coloured imperceptibly. 'You disturb me? Oh, quite the contrary, dear friend, I swear; and as a proof of what I say, permit me to declare I am rejoiced to see you safe and sound.'

'Ah, he'll come round,' thought d'Artagnan; 'that's not bad!'

'This gentleman, who is my friend, has just escaped from a serious danger,' continued Aramis, with unction, pointing to d'Artagnan with his hand, and addressing the two ecclesiastics.

'Praise God, monsieur,' replied they, bowing together.

'I have not failed to do so, your Reverences,' replied the young man, returning their salutation.

'You arrive in good time, dear d'Artagnan,' said Aramis, 'and by taking part in our discussion may assist us with your intelligence. Monsieur the Principal of Amiens, Monsieur the Curate of Montdidier, and I are arguing certain theological questions in which we have been much interested; I shall be delighted to have your opinion.'

'The opinion of a swordsman can have very little weight,' replied d'Artagnan, who began to be uneasy at the turn things were taking, 'and you had better be satisfied, believe me, with the knowledge of these gentlemen.'

The two men in black bowed in their turn.

'On the contrary,' replied Aramis, 'your opinion will be very valuable. The question is this: Monsieur the Principal thinks that my thesis ought to be dogmatic and didactic.'

'Your thesis! Are you then making a thesis?'

'Without doubt,' replied the Jesuit. 'In the examination which precedes ordination, a thesis is always a requisite.'

'Ordination!' cried d'Artagnan, who could not believe what the hostess and Bazin had successively told him; and he gazed, half stupefied, upon the three persons before him.

'Now,' continued Aramis, taking the same graceful position in his easy chair that he would have assumed in bed, and complacently examining his hand, which was as white and plump as that of a woman, and which he held in the air to cause the blood to descend, 'now, as you have heard, d'Artagnan, Monsieur the Principal is desirous that my thesis should be dogmatic, while I, for my part, would rather it should be ideal. This is the reason why Monsieur the Principal has proposed to me the following

subject, which has not yet been treated upon, and in which I perceive there is matter for magnificent elabouration—"*Utraque manus in benedicendo clericis inferioribus necessaria est*."'

D'Artagnan, whose erudition we are well acquainted with, evinced no more interest on hearing this quotation than he had at that of M. de Tréville in allusion to the gifts he pretended that d'Artagnan had received from the Duke of Buckingham.

'Which means,' resumed Aramis, that he might perfectly understand, '"The two hands are indispensable for priests of the inferior orders, when they bestow the benediction."'

'An admirable subject!' cried the Jesuit.

'Admirable and dogmatic!' repeated the curate, who, about as strong as d'Artagnan with respect to Latin, carefully watched the Jesuit in order to keep step with him, and repeated his words like an echo.

As to d'Artagnan, he remained perfectly insensible to the enthusiasm of the two men in black.

'Yes, admirable! *prorsus admirabile!*' continued Aramis; 'but which requires a profound study of both the Scriptures and the Fathers. Now, I have confessed to these learned ecclesiastics, and that in all humility, that the duties of mounting guard and the service of the king have caused me to neglect study a little. I should find myself, therefore, more at my ease, *facilius natans*, in a subject of my own choice, which would be to these hard theological questions what morals are to metaphysics in philosophy.'

D'Artagnan began to be tired, and so did the curate.

'See what an exordium!' cried the Jesuit.

'Exordium,' repeated the curate, for the sake of saying something. '*Quemadmodum inter cælorum immensitatem*.'

Aramis cast a glance upon d'Artagnan to see what effect all this produced, and found his friend gaping enough to split his jaws.

'Let us speak French, my father,' said he to the Jesuit; 'Monsieur d'Artagnan will enjoy our conversation better.'

'Yes,' replied d'Artagnan; 'I am fatigued with reading, and all this Latin confuses me.'

'Certainly,' replied the Jesuit, a little put out, while the curate, greatly delighted, turned upon d'Artagnan a look full of gratitude. 'Well, let us see what is to be derived from this gloss. Moses, the servant of God—he

'What have you done?'

'Oh, nothing which was not right in the character of a creditor.'

'Well?'

'Monsieur Porthos gave us a note for his duchess, ordering us to put it in the post. This was before his servant came. As he could not leave his chamber, it was necessary to charge us with this commission.'

'And then?'

'Instead of putting the letter in the post, which is never safe, I took advantage of the journey of one of my lads to Paris, and ordered him to convey the letter to this duchess himself. This was fulfilling the intentions of Monsieur Porthos, who had desired us to be so careful of this letter, was it not?'

'Nearly so.'

'Well, monsieur, do you know who this great lady is?'

'No; I have heard Porthos speak of her, that's all.'

'Do you know who this pretended duchess is?'

'I repeat to you, I don't know her.'

'Why, she is the old wife of a procurator[2] of the Châtelet, monsieur, named Madame Coquenard, who, although she is at least fifty, still gives herself jealous airs. It struck me as very odd that a princess should live in the Rue aux Ours.'

'But how do you know all this?'

'Because she flew into a great passion on receiving the letter, saying that Monsieur Porthos was a weathercock, and that she was sure it was for some woman he had received this wound.'

'Has he been wounded, then?'

'Oh, good Lord! What have I said?'

'You said that Porthos had received a sword cut.'

'Yes, but he has forbidden me so strictly to say so.'

'And why so.'

'Zounds, monsieur! Because he had boasted that he would perforate the stranger with whom you left him in dispute; whereas the stranger, on the contrary, in spite of all his rodomontades quickly threw him on his back. As Monsieur Porthos is a very boastful man, he insists that

[2] Attorney