

'I must go thither tonight?'

'Instantly! That is to say, when you have received my instructions. Two men, whom you will find at the door on going out, will serve you as escort. You will allow me to leave first; then, after half an hour, you can go away in your turn.'

'Yes, monseigneur. Now let us return to the mission with which you wish to charge me; and as I desire to continue to merit the confidence of your Eminence, deign to unfold it to me in terms clear and precise, that I may not commit an error.'

There was an instant of profound silence between the two interlocutors. It was evident that the cardinal was weighing beforehand the terms in which he was about to speak, and that Milady was collecting all her intellectual faculties to comprehend the things he was about to say, and to engrave them in her memory when they should be spoken.

Athos took advantage of this moment to tell his two companions to fasten the door inside, and to make them a sign to come and listen with him.

The two Musketeers, who loved their ease, brought a chair for each of themselves and one for Athos. All three then sat down with their heads together and their ears on the alert.

'You will go to London,' continued the cardinal. 'Arrived in London, you will seek Buckingham.'

'I must beg your Eminence to observe,' said Milady, 'that since the affair of the diamond studs, about which the duke always suspected me, his Grace distrusts me.'

'Well, this time,' said the cardinal, 'it is not necessary to steal his confidence, but to present yourself frankly and loyally as a negotiator.'

'Frankly and loyally,' repeated Milady, with an unspeakable expression of duplicity.

'Yes, frankly and loyally,' replied the cardinal, in the same tone. 'All this negotiation must be carried on openly.'

'I will follow your Eminence's instructions to the letter. I only wait till you give them.'

'You will go to Buckingham in my behalf, and you will tell him I am acquainted with all the preparations he has made; but that they give me no uneasiness, since at the first step he takes I will ruin the queen.'

'Will he believe that your Eminence is in a position to accomplish the threat thus made?'

'Yes; for I have the proofs.'

'I must be able to present these proofs for his appreciation.'

'Without doubt. And you will tell him I will publish the report of Bois-Robert and the Marquis de Beaurtu, upon the interview which the duke had at the residence of Madame the Constable with the queen on the evening Madame the Constable gave a masquerade. You will tell him, in order that he may not doubt, that he came there in the costume of the Great Mogul, which the Chevalier de Guise was to have worn, and that he purchased this exchange for the sum of three thousand pistoles.'

'Well, monseigneur?'

'All the details of his coming into and going out of the palace—on the night when he introduced himself in the character of an Italian fortune teller—you will tell him, that he may not doubt the correctness of my information; that he had under his cloak a large white robe dotted with black tears, death's heads, and crossbones—for in case of a surprise, he was to pass for the phantom of the White Lady who, as all the world knows, appears at the Louvre every time any great event is impending.'

'Is that all, monseigneur?'

'Tell him also that I am acquainted with all the details of the adventure at Amiens; that I will have a little romance made of it, wittily turned, with a plan of the garden and portraits of the principal actors in that nocturnal romance.'

'I will tell him that.'

'Tell him further that I hold Montague in my power; that Montague is in the Bastille; that no letters were found upon him, it is true, but that torture may make him tell much of what he knows, and even what he does not know.'

'Exactly.'

'Then add that his Grace has, in the precipitation with which he quit the Isle of Ré, forgotten and left behind him in his lodging a certain letter from Madame de Chevreuse which singularly compromises the queen, inasmuch as it proves not only that her Majesty can love the enemies of the king but that she can conspire with the enemies of France. You recollect perfectly all I have told you, do you not?'

'Your Eminence will judge: the ball of Madame the Constable; the night at the Louvre; the evening at Amiens; the arrest of Montague; the letter of Madame de Chevreuse.'

'That's it,' said the cardinal, 'that's it. You have an excellent memory, Milady.'

'But,' resumed she to whom the cardinal addressed this flattering compliment, 'if, in spite of all these reasons, the duke does not give way and continues to menace France?'

'The duke is in love to madness, or rather to folly,' replied Richelieu, with great bitterness. 'Like the ancient paladins, he has only undertaken this war to obtain a look from his lady's love. If he becomes certain that this war will cost the honour, and perhaps the liberty, of the lady of his thoughts, as he says, I will answer for it he will look twice.'

'And yet,' said Milady, with a persistence that proved she wished to see clearly to the end of the mission with which she was about to be charged, 'if he persists?'

'If he persists?' said the cardinal. 'That is not probable.'

'It is possible,' said Milady.

'If he persists—' His Eminence made a pause, and resumed: 'If he persists—well, then I shall hope for one of those events which change the destinies of states.'

'If your Eminence would quote to me some one of these events in history,' said Milady, 'perhaps I should partake of your confidence as to the future.'

'Well, here, for example,' said Richelieu: 'when, in 1610, for a cause similar to that which moves the duke, King Henry IV, of glorious memory, was about, at the same time, to invade Flanders and Italy, in order to attack Austria on both sides. Well, did there not happen an event which saved Austria? Why should not the king of France have the same chance as the emperor?'

'Your Eminence means, I presume, the knife stab in the Rue de la Feronneterie?'

'Precisely,' said the cardinal.

'Does not your Eminence fear that the punishment inflicted upon Ravallac may deter anyone who might entertain the idea of imitating him?'

Chapter XLIV

The Utility of Stovepipes



It was evident that without suspecting it, and actuated solely by their chivalrous and adventurous character, our three friends had just rendered a service to someone the cardinal honoured with his special protection.

Now, who was that someone? That was the question the three Musketeers put to one another. Then, seeing that none of their replies could throw any light on the subject, Porthos called the host and asked for dice. Porthos and Aramis placed themselves at the table and began to play. Athos walked about in a contemplative mood.

While thinking and walking, Athos passed and repassed before the pipe of the stove, broken in halves, the other extremity passing into the chamber above; and every time he passed and repassed he heard a murmur of words, which at length fixed his attention. Athos went close to it, and distinguished some words that appeared to merit so great an interest that he made a sign to his friends to be silent, remaining himself bent with his ear directed to the opening of the lower orifice.

'Listen, Milady,' said the cardinal, 'the affair is important. Sit down, and let us talk it over.'

'Milady?' murmured Athos.

'I listen to your Eminence with greatest attention,' replied a female voice which made the Musketeer start.

'A small vessel with an English crew, whose captain is on my side, awaits you at the mouth of Charente, at Fort La Pointe¹. He will set sail tomorrow morning.'

¹Fort La Pointe, or Fort Vasou, was not built until 1672, nearly 50 years later.

A man, enveloped in a cloak, came out immediately, and exchanged some rapid words with the cardinal; after which he mounted his horse, and set off in the direction of Surgères, which was likewise the way to Paris.

'Advance, gentlemen,' said the cardinal.

'You have told me the truth, my gentlemen,' said he, addressing the Musketeers, 'and it will not be my fault if our encounter this evening be not advantageous to you. In the meantime, follow me.'

The cardinal alighted; the three Musketeers did likewise. The cardinal threw the bridle of his horse to his esquire; the three Musketeers fastened the horses to the shutters.

The host stood at the door. For him, the cardinal was only an officer coming to visit a lady.

'Have you any chamber on the ground floor where these gentlemen can wait near a good fire?' said the cardinal.

The host opened the door of a large room, in which an old stove had just been replaced by a large and excellent chimney.

'I have this,' said he.

'That will do,' replied the cardinal. 'Enter, gentlemen, and be kind enough to wait for me; I shall not be more than half an hour.'

And while the three Musketeers entered the ground floor room, the cardinal, without asking further information, ascended the staircase like a man who has no need of having his road pointed out to him.

'There will be, in all times and in all countries, particularly if religious divisions exist in those countries, fanatics who ask nothing better than to become martyrs. Ay, and observe—it just occurs to me that the Puritans are furious against Buckingham, and their preachers designate him as the Antichrist.'

'Well?' said Milady.

'Well,' continued the cardinal, in an indifferent tone, 'the only thing to be sought for at this moment is some woman, handsome, young, and clever, who has cause of quarrel with the duke. The duke has had many affairs of gallantry; and if he has fostered his amours by promises of eternal constancy, he must likewise have sown the seeds of hatred by his eternal infidelities.'

'No doubt,' said Milady, coolly, 'such a woman may be found.'

'Well, such a woman, who would place the knife of Jacques Clément or of Ravallac in the hands of a fanatic, would save France.'

'Yes; but she would then be the accomplice of an assassination.'

'Were the accomplices of Ravallac or of Jacques Clément ever known?'

'No; for perhaps they were too high-placed for anyone to dare look for them where they were. The Palace of Justice would not be burned down for everybody, monseigneur.'

'You think, then, that the fire at the Palace of Justice was not caused by chance?' asked Richelieu, in the tone with which he would have put a question of no importance.

'I, monseigneur?' replied Milady. 'I think nothing; I quote a fact, that is all. Only I say that if I were named Madame de Montpensier, or the Queen Marie de Médicis, I should use less precautions than I take, being simply called Milady Clarik.'

'That is just,' said Richelieu. 'What do you require, then?'

'I require an order which would ratify beforehand all that I should think proper to do for the greatest good of France.'

'But in the first place, this woman I have described must be found who is desirous of avenging herself upon the duke.'

'She is found,' said Milady.

'Then the miserable fanatic must be found who will serve as an instrument of God's justice.'

'He will be found.'

‘Well,’ said the cardinal, ‘then it will be time to claim the order which you just now required.’

‘Your Eminence is right,’ replied Milady; ‘and I have been wrong in seeing in the mission with which you honour me anything but that which it really is—that is, to announce to his Grace, on the part of your Eminence, that you are acquainted with the different disguises by means of which he succeeded in approaching the queen during the fête given by Madame the Constable; that you have proofs of the interview granted at the Louvre by the queen to a certain Italian astrologer who was no other than the Duke of Buckingham; that you have ordered a little romance of a satirical nature to be written upon the adventures of Amiens, with a plan of the gardens in which those adventures took place, and portraits of the actors who figured in them; that Montague is in the Bastille, and that the torture may make him say things he remembers, and even things he has forgotten; that you possess a certain letter from Madame de Chevreuse, found in his Grace’s lodging, which singularly compromises not only her who wrote it, but her in whose name it was written. Then, if he persists, notwithstanding all this—as that is, as I have said, the limit of my mission—I shall have nothing to do but to pray God to work a miracle for the salvation of France. That is it, is it not, monseigneur, and I shall have nothing else to do?’

‘That is it,’ replied the cardinal, dryly.

‘And now,’ said Milady, without appearing to remark the change of the duke’s tone toward her—‘now that I have received the instructions of your Eminence as concerns your enemies, Monseigneur will permit me to say a few words to him of mine?’

‘Have you enemies, then?’ asked Richelieu.

‘Yes, monseigneur, enemies against whom you owe me all your support, for I made them by serving your Eminence.’

‘Who are they?’ replied the duke.

‘In the first place, there is a little *intrigante* named Bonacieux.’

‘She is in the prison of Nantes.’

‘That is to say, she was there,’ replied Milady; ‘but the queen has obtained an order from the king by means of which she has been conveyed to a convent.’

‘To a convent?’ said the duke.

‘The devil, gentlemen!’ said the cardinal, ‘three men placed *hors de combat* in a cabaret squabble! You don’t do your work by halves. And pray what was this quarrel about?’

‘These fellows were drunk,’ said Athos, ‘and knowing there was a lady who had arrived at the cabaret this evening, they wanted to force her door.’

‘Force her door?’ said the cardinal, ‘and for what purpose?’

‘To do her violence, without doubt,’ said Athos. ‘I have had the honour of informing your Eminence that these men were drunk.’

‘And was this lady young and handsome?’ asked the cardinal, with a certain degree of anxiety.

‘We did not see her, monseigneur,’ said Athos.

‘You did not see her? Ah, very well,’ replied the cardinal, quickly. ‘You did well to defend the honour of a woman; and as I am going to the Red Dovecot myself, I shall know if you have told me the truth.’

‘Monseigneur,’ said Athos, haughtily, ‘we are gentlemen, and to save our heads we would not be guilty of a falsehood.’

‘Therefore I do not doubt what you say, Monsieur Athos, I do not doubt it for a single instant; but,’ added he, ‘to change the conversation, was this lady alone?’

‘The lady had a cavalier shut up with her,’ said Athos, ‘but as notwithstanding the noise, this cavalier did not show himself, it is to be presumed that he is a coward.’

‘Judge not rashly,’ says the Gospel,’ replied the cardinal.

Athos bowed.

‘And now, gentlemen, that’s well,’ continued the cardinal. ‘I know what I wish to know; follow me.’

The three Musketeers passed behind his Eminence, who again enveloped his face in his cloak, and put his horse in motion, keeping from eight to ten paces in advance of his four companions.

They soon arrived at the silent, solitary inn. No doubt the host knew what illustrious visitor was expected, and had consequently sent intruders out of the way.

Ten paces from the door the cardinal made a sign to his esquire and the three Musketeers to halt. A saddled horse was fastened to the window shutter. The cardinal knocked three times, and in a peculiar manner.

‘Well, upon my honour,’ said Athos, ‘your Eminence is right in taking us with you; we have seen several ill-looking faces on the road, and we have even had a quarrel at the Red Dovecot with four of those faces.’

‘A quarrel, and what for, gentlemen?’ said the cardinal, ‘you know I don’t like quarrels.’

‘And that is the reason why I have the honour to inform your Eminence of what has happened; for you might learn it from others, and upon a false account believe us to be in fault.’

‘What have been the results of your quarrel?’ said the cardinal, knitting his brow.

‘My friend, Aramis, here, has received a slight sword wound in the arm, but not enough to prevent him, as your Eminence may see, from mounting to the assault tomorrow, if your Eminence orders an escalade.’

‘But you are not the men to allow sword wounds to be inflicted upon you thus,’ said the cardinal. ‘Come, be frank, gentlemen, you have settled accounts with somebody! Confess, you know I have the right of giving absolution.’

‘I, monseigneur?’ said Athos. ‘I did not even draw my sword, but I took him who offended me round the body, and threw him out of the window. It appears that in falling,’ continued Athos, with some hesitation, ‘he broke his thigh.’

‘Ah, ah!’ said the cardinal; ‘and you, Monsieur Porthos?’

‘I, monseigneur, knowing that dueling is prohibited—I seized a bench, and gave one of those brigands such a blow that I believe his shoulder is broken.’

‘Very well,’ said the cardinal; ‘and you, Monsieur Aramis?’

‘Monseigneur, being of a very mild disposition, and being, likewise, of which Monseigneur perhaps is not aware, about to enter into orders, I endeavoured to appease my comrades, when one of these wretches gave me a wound with a sword, treacherously, across my left arm. Then I admit my patience failed me; I drew my sword in my turn, and as he came back to the charge, I fancied I felt that in throwing himself upon me, he let it pass through his body. I only know for a certainty that he fell; and it seemed to me that he was borne away with his two companions.’

‘Yes, to a convent.’

‘And to which?’

‘I don’t know; the secret has been well kept.’

‘But I will know!’

‘And your Eminence will tell me in what convent that woman is?’

‘I can see nothing inconvenient in that,’ said the cardinal.

‘Well, now I have an enemy much more to be dreaded by me than this little Madame Bonacieux.’

‘Who is that?’

‘Her lover.’

‘What is his name?’

‘Oh, your Eminence knows him well,’ cried Milady, carried away by her anger. ‘He is the evil genius of both of us. It is he who in an encounter with your Eminence’s Guards decided the victory in favour of the king’s Musketeers; it is he who gave three desperate wounds to De Wardes, your emissary, and who caused the affair of the diamond studs to fail; it is he who, knowing it was I who had Madame Bonacieux carried off, has sworn my death.’

‘Ah, ah!’ said the cardinal, ‘I know of whom you speak.’

‘I mean that miserable d’Arragnan.’

‘He is a bold fellow,’ said the cardinal.

‘And it is exactly because he is a bold fellow that he is the more to be feared.’

‘I must have,’ said the duke, ‘a proof of his connection with Buckingham.’

‘A proof?’ cried Milady; ‘I will have ten.’

‘Well, then, it becomes the simplest thing in the world; get me that proof, and I will send him to the Bastille.’

‘So far good, monseigneur; but afterwards?’

‘When once in the Bastille, there is no afterward!’ said the cardinal, in a low voice. ‘Ah, *pardieu!*’ continued he, ‘if it were as easy for me to get rid of my enemy as it is easy to get rid of yours, and if it were against such people you require impunity—’

‘Monseigneur,’ replied Milady, ‘a fair exchange. Life for life, man for man; give me one, I will give you the other.’

'I don't know what you mean, nor do I even desire to know what you mean,' replied the cardinal; 'but I wish to please you, and see nothing out of the way in giving you what you demand with respect to so infamous a creature—the more so as you tell me this d'Aragnan is a libertine, a duelist, and a traitor.'

'An infamous scoundrel, monseigneur, a scoundrel!'

'Give me paper, a quill, and some ink, then,' said the cardinal.

'Here they are, monseigneur.'

There was a moment of silence, which proved that the cardinal was employed in seeking the terms in which he should write the note, or else in writing it. Athos, who had not lost a word of the conversation, took his two companions by the hand, and led them to the other end of the room.

'Well,' said Porthos, 'what do you want, and why do you not let us listen to the end of the conversation?'

'Hush!' said Athos, speaking in a low voice. 'We have heard all it was necessary we should hear; besides, I don't prevent you from listening, but I must be gone.'

'You must be gone!' said Porthos; 'and if the cardinal asks for you, what answer can we make?'

'You will not wait till he asks; you will speak first, and tell him that I am gone on the lookout, because certain expressions of our host have given me reason to think the road is not safe. I will say two words about it to the cardinal's esquire likewise. The rest concerns myself; don't be uneasy about that.'

'Be prudent, Athos,' said Aramis.

'Be easy on that head,' replied Athos; 'you know I am cool enough.'

Porthos and Aramis resumed their places by the stovepipe.

As to Athos, he went out without any mystery, took his horse, which was tied with those of his friends to the fastenings of the shutters, in four words convinced the attendant of the necessity of a vanguard for their return, carefully examined the priming of his pistols, drew his sword, and took, like a forlorn hope, the road to the camp.

One of the two riders, he who had spoken second, was ten paces in front of his companion. Athos made a sign to Porthos and Aramis also to remain in the rear, and advanced alone.

'Your pardon, my officer,' said Athos; 'but we were ignorant with whom we had to do, and you may see that we were keeping good guard.'

'Your name?' said the officer, who covered a part of his face with his cloak.

'But yourself, monsieur,' said Athos, who began to be annoyed by this inquisition, 'give me, I beg you, the proof that you have the right to question me.'

'Your name?' repeated the cavalier a second time, letting his cloak fall, and leaving his face uncovered.

'Monsieur the Cardinal!' cried the stupefied Musketeer.

'Your name?' cried his Eminence, for the third time.

'Athos,' said the Musketeer.

The cardinal made a sign to his attendant, who drew near. 'These three Musketeers shall follow us,' said he, in an undertone. 'I am not willing it should be known I have left the camp; and if they follow us we shall be certain they will tell nobody.'

'We are gentlemen, monseigneur,' said Athos; 'require our parole, and give yourself no uneasiness. Thank God, we can keep a secret.'

The cardinal fixed his piercing eyes on this courageous speaker.

'You have a quick ear, Monsieur Athos,' said the cardinal; 'but now listen to this. It is not from mistrust that I request you to follow me, but for my security. Your companions are no doubt Messieurs Porthos and Aramis.'

'Yes, your Eminence,' said Athos, while the two Musketeers who had remained behind advanced hat in hand.

'I know you, gentlemen,' said the cardinal, 'I know you. I know you are not quite my friends, and I am sorry you are not so; but I know you are brave and loyal gentlemen, and that confidence may be placed in you. Monsieur Athos, do me, then, the honour to accompany me; you and your two friends, and then I shall have an escort to excite envy in his Majesty, if we should meet him.'

The three Musketeers bowed to the necks of their horses.

easy for our three companions in particular; for being friends of M. de Tréville, they obtained from him special permission to be absent after the closing of the camp.

Now, one evening when d'Artagnan, who was in the trenches, was not able to accompany them, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, mounted on their battle steeds, enveloped in their war cloaks, with their hands upon their pistol butts, were returning from a drinking place called the Red Dovecot, which Athos had discovered two days before upon the route to Jarric, following the road which led to the camp and quite on their guard, as we have stated, for fear of an ambushade, when, about a quarter of a league from the village of Boissanau, they fancied they heard the sound of horses approaching them. They immediately all three halted, closed in, and waited, occupying the middle of the road. In an instant, and as the moon broke from behind a cloud, they saw at a turning of the road two horsemen who, on perceiving them, stopped in their turn, appearing to deliberate whether they should continue their route or go back. The hesitation created some suspicion in the three friends, and Athos, advancing a few paces in front of the others, cried in a firm voice, 'Who goes there?'

'Who goes there, yourselves?' replied one of the horsemen.

'That is not an answer,' replied Athos. 'Who goes there? Answer, or we charge.'

'Beware of what you are about, gentlemen!' said a clear voice which seemed accustomed to command.

'It is some superior officer making his night rounds,' said Athos. 'What do you wish, gentlemen?'

'Who are you?' said the same voice, in the same commanding tone. 'Answer in your turn, or you may repent of your disobedience.'

'King's Musketeers,' said Athos, more and more convinced that he who interrogated them had the right to do so.

'What company?'

'Company of Tréville.'

'Advance, and give an account of what you are doing here at this hour.'

The three companions advanced rather humbly—for all were now convinced that they had to do with someone more powerful than themselves—leaving Athos the post of speaker.

Chapter XLV

A Conjugal Scene



s Athos had foreseen, it was not long before the cardinal came down. He opened the door of the room in which the Musketeers were, and found Porthos playing an earnest game of dice with Aramis. He cast a rapid glance around the room, and perceived that one of his men was missing.

'What has become of Monseigneur Athos?' asked he.

'Monseigneur,' replied Porthos, 'he has gone as a scout, on account of some words of our host, which made him believe the road was not safe.'

'And you, what have you done, Monsieur Porthos?'

'I have won five pistols of Aramis.'

'Well; now will you return with me?'

'We are at your Eminence's orders.'

'To horse, then, gentlemen; for it is getting late.'

The attendant was at the door, holding the cardinal's horse by the bridle. At a short distance a group of two men and three horses appeared in the shade. These were the two men who were to conduct Milady to Fort La Pointe, and superintend her embarkation.

The attendant confirmed to the cardinal what the two Musketeers had already said with respect to Athos. The cardinal made an approving gesture, and retraced his route with the same precautions he had used in coming.

Let us leave him to follow the road to the camp protected by his esquire and the two Musketeers, and return to Athos.

For a hundred paces he maintained the speed at which he started; but when out of sight he turned his horse to the right, made a circuit, and

came back within twenty paces of a high hedge to watch the passage of the little troop. Having recognized the laced hats of his companions and the golden fringe of the cardinal's cloak, he waited till the horsemen had turned the angle of the road, and having lost sight of them, he returned at a gallop to the inn, which was opened to him without hesitation.

The host recognized him.

'My officer,' said Athos, 'has forgotten to give a piece of very important information to the lady, and has sent me back to repair his forgetfulness.'

'Go up,' said the host; 'she is still in her chamber.'

Athos availed himself of the permission, ascended the stairs with his lightest step, gained the landing, and through the open door perceived Milady putting on her hat.

He entered the chamber and closed the door behind him. At the noise he made in pushing the bolt, Milady turned round.

Athos was standing before the door, enveloped in his cloak, with his hat pulled down over his eyes. On seeing this figure, mute and immovable as a statue, Milady was frightened.

'Who are you, and what do you want?' cried she.

'Humph,' murmured Athos, 'it is certainly she!'

And letting fall his cloak and raising his hat, he advanced toward Milady.

'Do you know me, madame?' said he.

Milady made one step forward, and then drew back as if she had seen a serpent.

'So far, well,' said Athos, 'I perceive you know me.'

'The Comte de la Fère!' murmured Milady, becoming exceedingly pale, and drawing back till the wall prevented her from going any farther.

'Yes, Milady,' replied Athos; 'the Comte de la Fère in person, who comes expressly from the other world to have the pleasure of paying you a visit. Sit down, madame, and let us talk, as the cardinal said.'

Milady, under the influence of inexpressible terror, sat down without uttering a word.

'You certainly are a demon sent upon the earth!' said Athos. 'Your power is great, I know; but you also know that with the help of God men have often conquered the most terrible demons. You have once before thrown yourself in my path. I thought I had crushed you, madame; but either I was deceived or hell has resuscitated you!'

confirmed this alliance and which, as the cardinal asserts in his memoirs, strongly compromised Mme. de Chevreuse and consequently the queen. It was upon the cardinal that all the responsibility fell, for one is not a despotic minister without responsibility. All, therefore, of the vast resources of his genius were at work night and day, engaged in listening to the least report heard in any of the great kingdoms of Europe.

The cardinal was acquainted with the activity, and more particularly the hatred, of Buckingham. If the league which threatened France triumphed, all his influence would be lost. Spanish policy and Austrian policy would have their representatives in the cabinet of the Louvre, where they had as yet but partisans; and he, Richelieu—the French minister, the national minister—would be ruined. The king, even while obeying him like a child, hated him as a child hates his master, and would abandon him to the personal vengeance of Monsieur and the queen. He would then be lost, and France, perhaps, with him. All this must be prepared against.

Courtiers, becoming every instant more numerous, succeeded one another, day and night, in the little house of the bridge of La Pierre, in which the cardinal had established his residence.

There were monks who wore the frock with such an ill grace that it was easy to perceive they belonged to the church militant; women a little inconvenienced by their costume as pages and whose large trousers could not entirely conceal their rounded forms; and peasants with blackened hands but with fine limbs, savoring of the man of quality a league off.

There were also less agreeable visits—for two or three times reports were spread that the cardinal had nearly been assassinated.

It is true that the enemies of the cardinal said that it was he himself who set these bungling assassins to work, in order to have, if wanted, the right of using reprisals; but we must not believe everything ministers say, nor everything their enemies say.

These attempts did not prevent the cardinal, to whom his most inveterate detractors have never denied personal bravery, from making nocturnal excursions, sometimes to communicate to the Duc d'Angoulême important orders, sometimes to confer with the king, and sometimes to have an interview with a messenger whom he did not wish to see at home.

On their part the Musketeers, who had not much to do with the siege, were not under very strict orders and led a joyous life. This was the more