'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.'

'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.

'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.

'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!'

'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.'

'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.'

Amid all this, d'Artagnan remarked also that not one countenance responded to the gallantries of Porthos. There were only chimeras and illusions; but for real love, for true jealousy, is there any reality except illusions and chimeras?

The sermon over, the procurator's wife advanced toward the holy font. Porthos went before her, and instead of a finger, dipped his whole hand in. The procurator's wife smiled, thinking that it was for her Porthos had put himself to this trouble; but she was cruelly and promptly undeceived. When she was only about three steps from him, he turned his head round, fixing his eyes steadfastly upon the lady with the red cushion, who had risen and was approaching, followed by her black boy and her woman.

When the lady of the red cushion came close to Porthos, Porthos drew his dripping hand from the font. The fair worshipper touched the great hand of Porthos with her delicate fingers, smiled, made the sign of the cross, and left the church.

This was too much for the procurator's wife; she doubted not there was an intrigue between this lady and Porthos. If she had been a great lady she would have fainted; but as she was only a procurator's wife, she contented herself saying to the Musketeer with concentrated fury, 'Eh, Monsieur Porthos, you don't offer me any holy water?'

Porthos, at the sound of that voice, started like a man awakened from a sleep of a hundred years.

'Ma-madame!' cried he; 'is that you? How is your husband, our dear Monsieur Coquenard? Is he still as stingy as ever? Where can my eyes have been not to have seen you during the two hours of the sermon?'

'I was within two paces of you, monsieur,' replied the procurator's wife; 'but you did not perceive me because you had no eyes but for the pretty lady to whom you just now gave the holy water.'

Porthos pretended to be confused. 'Ah,' said he, 'you have remarked— '

'I must have been blind not to have seen.'

'Yes,' said Porthos, 'that is a duchess of my acquaintance whom I have great trouble to meet on account of the jealousy of her husband, and who 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.'

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.'

'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.'

On her side the lady, who from time to time blushed, darted with the rapidity of lightning a glance toward the inconstant Porthos; and then immediately the eyes of Porthos wandered anxiously. It was plain that this mode of proceeding piqued the lady in the black hood, for she bit her lips till they bled, scratched the end of her nose, and could not sit still in her seat.

Porthos, seeing this, retwisted his moustache, elongated his imperial a second time, and began to make signals to a beautiful lady who was near the choir, and who not only was a beautiful lady, but still further, no doubt, a great lady—for she had behind her a Negro boy who had brought the cushion on which she knelt, and a female servant who held the emblazoned bag in which was placed the book from which she read the Mass.

The lady with the black hood followed through all their wanderings the looks of Porthos, and perceived that they rested upon the lady with the velvet cushion, the little Negro, and the maid-servant.

During this time Porthos played close. It was almost imperceptible motions of his eyes, fingers placed upon the lips, little assassinating smiles, which really did assassinate the disdained beauty.

Then she cried, 'Ahem!' under cover of the *mea culpa*, striking her breast so vigorously that everybody, even the lady with the red cushion, turned round toward her. Porthos paid no attention. Nevertheless, he understood it all, but was deaf.

The lady with the red cushion produced a great effect—for she was very handsome—upon the lady with the black hood, who saw in her a rival really to be dreaded; a great effect upon Porthos, who thought her much prettier than the lady with the black hood; a great effect upon d'Artagnan, who recognized in her the lady of Meung, of Calais, and of Dover, whom his persecutor, the man with the scar, had saluted by the name of Milady.

D'Artagnan, without losing sight of the lady of the red cushion, continued to watch the proceedings of Porthos, which amused him greatly. He guessed that the lady of the black hood was the procurator's wife of the Rue aux Ours, which was the more probable from the church of St. Leu being not far from that locality.

He guessed, likewise, by induction, that Porthos was taking his revenge for the defeat of Chantilly, when the procurator's wife had proved so refractory with respect to her purse.

It may be seen by these disastrous details that desolation reigned in the community.

The lackeys on their part, like the coursers of Hippolytus, shared the sadness of their masters. Mousqueton collected a store of crusts; Bazin, who had always been inclined to devotion, never quit the churches; Planchet watched the flight of flies; and Grimaud, whom the general distress could not induce to break the silence imposed by his master, heaved sighs enough to soften the stones.

The three friends—for, as we have said, Athos had sworn not to stir a foot to equip himself—went out early in the morning, and returned late at night. They wandered about the streets, looking at the pavement as if to see whether the passengers had not left a purse behind them. They might have been supposed to be following tracks, so observant were they wherever they went. When they met they looked desolately at one another, as much as to say, 'Have you found anything?'

However, as Porthos had first found an idea, and had thought of it earnestly afterward, he was the first to act. He was a man of execution, this worthy Porthos. D'Artagnan perceived him one day walking toward the church of St. Leu, and followed him instinctively. He entered, after having twisted his moustache and elongated his imperial, which always announced on his part the most triumphant resolutions. As d'Artagnan took some precautions to conceal himself, Porthos believed he had not been seen. D'Artagnan entered behind him. Porthos went and leaned against the side of a pillar. D'Artagnan, still unperceived, supported himself against the other side.

There happened to be a sermon, which made the church very full of people. Porthos took advantage of this circumstance to ogle the women. Thanks to the cares of Mousqueton, the exterior was far from announcing the distress of the interior. His hat was a little napless, his feather was a little faded, his gold lace was a little tarnished, his laces were a trifle frayed; but in the obscurity of the church these things were not seen, and Porthos was still the handsome Porthos.

D'Artagnan observed, on the bench nearest to the pillar against which Porthos leaned, a sort of ripe beauty, rather yellow and rather dry, but erect and haughty under her black hood. The eyes of Porthos were furtively cast upon this lady, and then roved about at large over the nave.

'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!'

'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?'

Chapter XXIX

Hunting for the Equipments

The most preoccupied of the four friends was certainly d'Artagnan, although he, in his quality of Guardsman, would be much more easily equipped than Messieurs the Musketeers, who were all of high rank; but our Gascon cadet was, as may have been observed, of a provident and almost avaricious character, and with that (explain the contradiction) so vain as almost to rival Porthos. To this preoccupation of his vanity, d'Artagnan at this moment joined an uneasiness much less selfish. Notwithstanding all his inquiries respecting Mme. Bonacieux, he could obtain no intelligence of her. M. de Tréville had spoken of her to the queen. The queen was ignorant where the mercer's young wife was, but had promised to have her sought for; but this promise was very vague and did not at all reassure d'Artagnan.

Athos did not leave his chamber; he made up his mind not to take a single step to equip himself.

'We have still fifteen days before us,' said he to his friends, 'well, if at the end of a fortnight I have found nothing, or rather if nothing has come to find me, as I, too good a Catholic to kill myself with a pistol bullet, I will seek a good quarrel with four of his Eminence's Guards or with eight Englishmen, and I will fight until one of them has killed me, which, considering the number, cannot fail to happen. It will then be said of me that I died for the king; so that I shall have performed my duty without the expense of an outfit.'

Porthos continued to walk about with his hands behind him, tossing his head and repeating, 'I shall follow up on my idea.'

Aramis, anxious and negligently dressed, said nothing.

him out of his senses. A thousand livres! For my part, I declare I want two thousand.'

'Four times two makes eight,' then said Aramis; 'it is eight thousand that we want to complete our outfits, toward which, it is true, we have already the saddles.'

'Besides,' said Athos, waiting till d'Artagnan, who went to thank Monsieur de Tréville, had shut the door, 'besides, there is that beautiful ring which beams from the finger of our friend. What the devil! D'Artagnan is too good a comrade to leave his brothers in embarrassment while he wears the ransom of a king on his finger.'

'*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.

'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?'

'Four hundred and seventy-five livres,' said d'Artagnan, who reckoned like Archimedes.

'On our arrival in Paris, we shall still have four hundred, besides the harnesses,' said Porthos.

'But our troop horses?' said Aramis.

'Well, of the four horses of our lackeys we will make two for the masters, for which we will draw lots. With the four hundred livres we will make the half of one for one of the unmounted, and then we will give the turnings out of our pockets to d'Artagnan, who has a steady hand, and will go and play in the first gaming house we come to. There!'

'Let us dine, then,' said Porthos; 'it is getting cold.'

The friends, at ease with regard to the future, did honour to the repast, the remains of which were abandoned to Mousqueton, Bazin, Planchet, and Grimaud.

On arriving in Paris, d'Artagnan found a letter from M. de Tréville, which informed him that, at his request, the king had promised that he should enter the company of the Musketeers.

As this was the height of d'Artagnan's worldly ambition—apart, be it well understood, from his desire of finding Mme. Bonacieux—he ran, full of joy, to seek his comrades, whom he had left only half an hour before, but whom he found very sad and deeply preoccupied. They were assembled in council at the residence of Athos, which always indicated an event of some gravity. M. de Tréville had intimated to them his Majesty's fixed intention to open the campaign on the first of May, and they must immediately prepare their outfits.

The four philosophers looked at one another in a state of bewilderment. M. de Tréville never jested in matters relating to discipline.

'And what do you reckon your outfit will cost?' said d'Artagnan.

'Oh, we can scarcely say. We have made our calculations with Spartan economy, and we each require fifteen hundred livres.'

'Four times fifteen makes sixty—six thousand livres,' said Athos.

'It seems to me,' said d'Artagnan, 'with a thousand livres each—I do not speak as a Spartan, but as a procurator— '

This word *procurator* roused Porthos. 'Stop,' said he, 'I have an idea.'

'Well, that's something, for I have not the shadow of one,' said Athos coolly; 'but as to d'Artagnan, gentlemen, the idea of belonging to *ours* has driven