

## Chapter XX. The Morning.

In vivid contrast to the sad and terrible destiny of the king imprisoned in the Bastille, and tearing, in sheer despair, the bolts and bars of his dungeon, the rhetoric of the chroniclers of old would not fail to present, as a complete antithesis, the picture of Philippe lying asleep beneath the royal canopy. We do not pretend to say that such rhetoric is always bad, and always scatters, in places where they have no right to grow, the flowers with which it embellishes and enlivens history. But we shall, on the present occasion, carefully avoid polishing the antithesis in question, but shall proceed to draw another picture as minutely as possible, to serve as foil and counterfoil to the one in the preceding chapter. The young prince alighted from Aramis's room, in the same way the king had descended from the apartment dedicated to Morpheus. The dome gradually and slowly sank down under Aramis's pressure, and Philippe stood beside the royal bed, which had ascended again after having deposited its prisoner in the secret depths of the subterranean passage. Alone, in the presence of all the luxury which surrounded him; alone, in the presence of his power; alone, with the part he was about to be forced to act, Philippe for the first time felt his heart, and mind, and soul expand beneath the influence of a thousand mutable emotions, which are the vital throbs of a king's heart. He could not help changing color when he looked upon the empty bed, still tumbled by his brother's body. This mute accomplice had returned, after having completed the work it had been destined to perform; it returned with the traces of the crime; it spoke to the guilty author of that crime, with the frank and unreserved language which an accomplice never fears to use in the company of his companion in guilt; for it spoke the truth. Philippe bent over the bed, and perceived a pocket-handkerchief lying on it, which was still damp from the cold sweat which had poured from Louis XIV.'s face. This sweat-bestained handkerchief terrified Philippe, as the gore of Abel frightened Cain.

"I am face to face with my destiny," said Philippe, his eyes on fire, and his face a livid white. "Is it likely to be more terrifying than my captivity has been sad and gloomy? Though I am compelled to follow out, at every moment, the sovereign power and authority I have usurped, shall I cease to listen to the scruples of my heart? Yes! the king has lain on this bed; it is indeed his head that has left its impression on this pillow; his bitter tears that have stained this handkerchief: and yet, I hesitate to throw myself on the bed, or to press in my hand the handkerchief which is embroidered with my brother's arms. Away with such weakness; let me imitate M. d'Herblay, who asserts that a man's action should be always one degree above his thoughts; let me imitate M. d'Herblay, whose thoughts are of and for himself alone, who regards himself as a man of honor, so long as he injures or betrays his enemies only. I, I alone, should have occupied this bed, if Louis XIV. had not, owing to my mother's criminal abandonment, stood in my way; and this handkerchief, embroidered with the arms of France, would in right and

justice belong to me alone, if, as M. d'Herblay observes, I had been left my royal cradle. Philippe, son of France, take your place on that bed; Philippe, sole king of France, resume the blazonry that is yours! Philippe, sole heir presumptive to Louis XIII., your father, show yourself without pity or mercy for the usurper who, at this moment, has not even to suffer the agony of the remorse of all that you have had to submit to."

With these words, Philippe, notwithstanding an instinctive repugnance of feeling, and in spite of the shudder of terror which mastered his will, threw himself on the royal bed, and forced his muscles to press the still warm place where Louis XIV. had lain, while he buried his burning face in the handkerchief still moistened by his brother's tears. With his head thrown back and buried in the soft down of his pillow, Philippe perceived above him the crown of France, suspended, as we have stated, by angels with outspread golden wings.

A man may be ambitious of lying in a lion's den, but can hardly hope to sleep there quietly. Philippe listened attentively to every sound; his heart panted and throbbed at the very suspicion of approaching terror and misfortune; but confident in his own strength, which was confirmed by the force of an overpoweringly resolute determination, he waited until some decisive circumstance should permit him to judge for himself. He hoped that imminent danger might be revealed to him, like those phosphoric lights of the tempest which show the sailors the altitude of the waves against which they have to struggle. But nothing approached. Silence, that mortal enemy of restless hearts, and of ambitious minds, shrouded in the thickness of its gloom during the remainder of the night the future king of France, who lay there sheltered beneath his stolen crown. Towards the morning a shadow, rather than a body, glided into the royal chamber; Philippe expected his approach and neither expressed nor exhibited any surprise.

"Well, M. d'Herblay?"

"Well, sire, all is accomplished."

"How?"

"Exactly as we expected."

"Did he resist?"

"Terribly! tears and entreaties."

"And then?"

"A perfect stupor."

"But at last?"

"Oh! at last, a complete victory, and absolute silence."

"Did the governor of the Bastile suspect anything?"

"Nothing."

"The resemblance, however--"

"Was the cause of the success."

"But the prisoner cannot fail to explain himself. Think well of that. I have myself been able to do as much as that, on former occasion."

"I have already provided for every chance. In a few days, sooner if necessary, we will take the captive out of his prison, and will send him out of the country, to a place of exile so remote--"

"People can return from their exile, Monsieur d'Herblay."

"To a place of exile so distant, I was going to say, that human strength and the duration of human life would not be enough for his return."

Once more a cold look of intelligence passed between Aramis and the young king.

"And M. du Vallon?" asked Philippe in order to change the conversation.

"He will be presented to you to-day, and confidentially will congratulate you on the danger which that conspirator has made you run."

"What is to be done with him?"

"With M. du Vallon?"

"Yes; confer a dukedom on him, I suppose."

"A dukedom," replied Aramis, smiling in a significant manner.

"Why do you laugh, Monsieur d'Herblay?"

"I laugh at the extreme caution of your idea."

"Cautious, why so?"

"Your majesty is doubtless afraid that poor Porthos may possible become a troublesome witness, and you wish to get rid of him."

"What! in making him a duke?"

"Certainly; you would assuredly kill him, for he would die from joy, and the secret would die with him."

"Good heavens!"

"Yes," said Aramis, phlegmatically; "I should lose a very good friend."

At this moment, and in the middle of this idle conversation, under the light tone of which the two conspirators concealed their joy and pride at their mutual success, Aramis heard something which made him prick up his ears.

"What is that?" said Philippe.

"The dawn, sire."

"Well?"

"Well, before you retired to bed last night, you probably decided to do something this morning at break of day."

"Yes, I told my captain of the musketeers," replied the young man hurriedly, "that I should expect him."

"If you told him that, he will certainly be here, for he is a most punctual man."

"I hear a step in the vestibule."

"It must be he."

"Come, let us begin the attack," said the young king resolutely.

"Be cautious for Heaven's sake. To begin the attack, and with D'Artagnan, would be madness. D'Artagnan knows nothing, he has seen nothing; he is a hundred miles from suspecting our mystery in the slightest degree, but if he comes into this room the first this morning, he will be sure to detect something of what has taken place, and which he would imagine it his business to occupy himself about. Before we allow D'Artagnan to penetrate into this room, we must air the room thoroughly, or introduce so many people into it, that the keenest scent in the whole kingdom may be deceived by the traces of twenty different persons."

"But how can I send him away, since I have given him a rendezvous?" observed the prince, impatient to measure swords with so redoubtable an antagonist.

"I will take care of that," replied the bishop, "and in order to begin, I am going to strike a blow which will completely stupefy our man."

"He, too, is striking a blow, for I hear him at the door," added the prince, hurriedly.

And, in fact, a knock at the door was heard at that moment. Aramis was not mistaken; for it was indeed D'Artagnan who adopted that mode of announcing himself.

We have seen how he passed the night in philosophizing with M. Fouquet, but the musketeer was very weary even of feigning to fall asleep, and as soon as earliest dawn illumined with its gloomy gleams of light the sumptuous cornices of the superintendent's room, D'Artagnan rose from his armchair, arranged his sword, brushed his coat and hat with his sleeve, like a private soldier getting ready for inspection.

"Are you going out?" said Fouquet.

"Yes, monseigneur. And you?"

"I shall remain."

"You pledge your word?"

"Certainly."

"Very good. Besides, my only reason for going out is to try and get that reply,--you know what I mean?"

"That sentence, you mean--"

"Stay, I have something of the old Roman in me. This morning, when I got up, I remarked that my sword had got caught in one of the aiguillettes, and that my shoulder-belt had slipped quite off. That is an infallible sign."

"Of prosperity?"

"Yes, be sure of it; for every time that that confounded belt of mine stuck fast to my back, it always signified a punishment from M. de Treville, or a refusal of money by M. de Mazarin. Every time my sword hung fast to my shoulder-belt, it always predicted some disagreeable commission or another for me to execute, and I have had showers of them all my life through. Every time, too, my sword danced about in its sheath, a duel, fortunate in its result, was sure to follow: whenever it dangled about the calves of my legs, it signified a slight wound; every time it fell completely out of the scabbard, I was booked, and made up

my mind that I should have to remain on the field of battle, with two or three months under surgical bandages into the bargain."

"I did not know your sword kept you so well informed," said Fouquet, with a faint smile, which showed how he was struggling against his own weakness. "Is your sword bewitched, or under the influence of some imperial charm?"

"Why, you must know that my sword may almost be regarded as part of my own body. I have heard that certain men seem to have warnings given them by feeling something the matter with their legs, or a throbbing of their temples. With me, it is my sword that warns me. Well, it told me of nothing this morning. But, stay a moment--look here, it has just fallen of its own accord into the last hole of the belt. Do you know what that is a warning of?"

"No."

"Well, that tells me of an arrest that will have to be made this very day."

"Well," said the surintendant, more astonished than annoyed by this frankness, "if there is nothing disagreeable predicted to you by your sword, I am to conclude that it is not disagreeable for you to arrest me."

"You! arrest you!"

"Of course. The warning--"

"Does not concern you, since you have been arrested ever since yesterday. It is not you I shall have to arrest, be assured of that. That is the reason why I am delighted, and also the reason why I said that my day will be a happy one."

And with these words, pronounced with the most affectionate graciousness of manner, the captain took leave of Fouquet in order to wait upon the king. He was on the point of leaving the room, when Fouquet said to him, "One last mark of kindness."

"What is it, monseigneur?"

"M. d'Herblay; let me see Monsieur d'Herblay."

"I am going to try and get him to come to you."

D'Artagnan did not think himself so good a prophet. It was written that the day would pass away and realize all the predictions that had been made in the morning. He had accordingly knocked, as we have seen, at the

king's door. The door opened. The captain thought that it was the king who had just opened it himself; and this supposition was not altogether inadmissible, considering the state of agitation in which he had left Louis XIV. the previous evening; but instead of his royal master, whom he was on the point of saluting with the greatest respect, he perceived the long, calm features of Aramis. So extreme was his surprise that he could hardly refrain from uttering a loud exclamation. "Aramis!" he said.

"Good morning, dear D'Artagnan," replied the prelate, coldly.

"You here!" stammered out the musketeer.

"His majesty desires you to report that he is still sleeping, after having been greatly fatigued during the whole night."

"Ah!" said D'Artagnan, who could not understand how the bishop of Vannes, who had been so indifferent a favorite the previous evening, had become in half a dozen hours the most magnificent mushroom of fortune that had ever sprung up in a sovereign's bedroom. In fact, to transmit the orders of the king even to the mere threshold of that monarch's room, to serve as an intermediary of Louis XIV. so as to be able to give a single order in his name at a couple paces from him, he must have become more than Richelieu had ever been to Louis XIII. D'Artagnan's expressive eye, half-opened lips, his curling mustache, said as much indeed in the plainest language to the chief favorite, who remained calm and perfectly unmoved.

"Moreover," continued the bishop, "you will be good enough, monsieur le capitaine des mousquetaires, to allow those only to pass into the king's room this morning who have special permission. His majesty does not wish to be disturbed just yet."

"But," objected D'Artagnan, almost on the point of refusing to obey this order, and particularly of giving unrestrained passage to the suspicions which the king's silence had aroused--"but, monsieur l'evêque, his majesty gave me a rendezvous for this morning."

"Later, later," said the king's voice, from the bottom of the alcove; a voice which made a cold shudder pass through the musketeer's veins. He bowed, amazed, confused, and stupefied by the smile with which Aramis seemed to overwhelm him, as soon as these words had been pronounced.

"And then," continued the bishop, "as an answer to what you were coming to ask the king, my dear D'Artagnan, here is an order of his majesty, which you will be good enough to attend to forthwith, for it concerns M. Fouquet."

D'Artagnan took the order which was held out to him. "To be set at

liberty!" he murmured. "Ah!" and he uttered a second "ah!" still more full of intelligence than the former; for this order explained Aramis's presence with the king, and that Aramis, in order to have obtained Fouquet's pardon, must have made considerable progress in the royal favor, and that this favor explained, in its tenor, the hardly conceivable assurance with which M. d'Herblay issued the order in the king's name. For D'Artagnan it was quite sufficient to have understood something of the matter in hand to order to understand the rest. He bowed and withdrew a couple of paces, as though he were about to leave.

"I am going with you," said the bishop.

"Where to?"

"To M. Fouquet; I wish to be a witness of his delight."

"Ah! Aramis, how you puzzled me just now!" said D'Artagnan again.

"But you understand now, I suppose?"

"Of course I understand," he said aloud; but added in a low tone to himself, almost hissing the words between his teeth, "No, no, I do not understand yet. But it is all the same, for here is the order for it." And then he added, "I will lead the way, monseigneur," and he conducted Aramis to Fouquet's apartments.