

## Chapter LIX. The Bulletin.

The Duc de Beaufort wrote to Athos. The letter destined for the living only reached the dead. God had changed the address.

"MY DEAR COMTE," wrote the prince, in his large, school-boy's hand,--"a great misfortune has struck us amidst a great triumph. The king loses one of the bravest of soldiers. I lose a friend. You lose M. de Bragelonne. He has died gloriously, so gloriously that I have not the strength to weep as I could wish. Receive my sad compliments, my dear comte. Heaven distributes trials according to the greatness of our hearts. This is an immense one, but not above your courage. Your good friend,

"LE DUC DE BEAUFORT."

The letter contained a relation written by one of the prince's secretaries. It was the most touching recital, and the most true, of that dismal episode which unraveled two existences. D'Artagnan, accustomed to battle emotions, and with a heart armed against tenderness, could not help starting on reading the name of Raoul, the name of that beloved boy who had become a shade now--like his father.

"In the morning," said the prince's secretary, "monseigneur commanded the attack. Normandy and Picardy had taken positions in the rocks dominated by the heights of the mountain, upon the declivity of which were raised the bastions of Gigelli.

"The cannon opened the action; the regiments marched full of resolution; the pikemen with pikes elevated, the musket-bearers with their weapons ready. The prince followed attentively the march and movements of the troops, so as to be able to sustain them with a strong reserve. With monseigneur were the oldest captains and his aides-de-camp. M. le Vicomte de Bragelonne had received orders not to leave his highness. In the meantime the enemy's cannon, which at first thundered with little success against the masses, began to regulate their fire, and the balls, better directed, killed several men near the prince. The regiments formed in column, and, advancing against the ramparts, were rather roughly handled. There was a sort of hesitation in our troops, who found themselves ill-seconded by the artillery. In fact, the batteries which had been established the evening before had but a weak and uncertain aim, on account of their position. The upward direction of the aim lessened the justness of the shots as well as their range.

"Monseigneur, comprehending the bad effect of this position on the siege artillery, commanded the frigates moored in the little road to commence a regular fire against the place. M. de Bragelonne offered himself at once to carry this order. But monseigneur refused to acquiesce in the

vicomte's request. Monseigneur was right, for he loved and wished to spare the young nobleman. He was quite right, and the event took upon itself to justify his foresight and refusal; for scarcely had the sergeant charged with the message solicited by M. de Bragelonne gained the seashore, when two shots from long carbines issued from the enemy's ranks and laid him low. The sergeant fell, dyeing the sand with his blood; observing which, M. de Bragelonne smiled at monseigneur, who said to him, 'You see, vicomte, I have saved your life. Report that, some day, to M. le Comte de la Fere, in order that, learning it from you, he may thank me.' The young nobleman smiled sadly, and replied to the duke, 'It is true, monseigneur, that but for your kindness I should have been killed, where the poor sergeant has fallen, and should be at rest.' M. de Bragelonne made this reply in such a tone that monseigneur answered him warmly, 'Vrai Dieu! Young man, one would say that your mouth waters for death; but, by the soul of Henry IV., I have promised your father to bring you back alive; and, please the Lord, I mean to keep my word.'

"Monseigneur de Bragelonne colored, and replied, in a lower voice, 'Monseigneur, pardon me, I beseech you. I have always had a desire to meet good opportunities; and it is so delightful to distinguish ourselves before our general, particularly when that general is M. le Duc de Beaufort.'

"Monseigneur was a little softened by this; and, turning to the officers who surrounded him, gave different orders. The grenadiers of the two regiments got near enough to the ditches and intrenchments to launch their grenades, which had but small effect. In the meanwhile, M. d'Estrees, who commanded the fleet, having seen the attempt of the sergeant to approach the vessels, understood that he must act without orders, and opened fire. Then the Arabs, finding themselves seriously injured by the balls from the fleet, and beholding the destruction and the ruin of their walls, uttered the most fearful cries. Their horsemen descended the mountain at a gallop, bent over their saddles, and rushed full tilt upon the columns of infantry, which, crossing their pikes, stopped this mad assault. Repulsed by the firm attitude of the battalion, the Arabs threw themselves with fury towards the etat-major, which was not on its guard at that moment.

"The danger was great; monseigneur drew his sword; his secretaries and people imitated him; the officers of the suite engaged in combat with the furious Arabs. It was then M. de Bragelonne was able to satisfy the inclination he had so clearly shown from the commencement of the action. He fought near the prince with the valor of a Roman, and killed three Arabs with his small sword. But it was evident that his bravery did not arise from that sentiment of pride so natural to all who fight. It was impetuous, affected, even forced; he sought to glut, intoxicate himself with strife and carnage. He excited himself to such a degree that monseigneur called to him to stop. He must have heard the voice of

monseigneur, because we who were close to him heard it. He did not, however, stop, but continued his course to the intrenchments. As M. de Bragelonne was a well-disciplined officer, this disobedience to the orders of monseigneur very much surprised everybody, and M. de Beaufort redoubled his earnestness, crying, 'Stop, Bragelonne! Where are you going? Stop,' repeated monseigneur, 'I command you!'

"We all, imitating the gesture of M. le duc, we all raised our hands. We expected that the cavalier would turn bridle; but M. de Bragelonne continued to ride towards the palisades.

"'Stop, Bragelonne!' repeated the prince, in a very loud voice, 'stop! in the name of your father!'

"At these words M. de Bragelonne turned round; his countenance expressed a lively grief, but he did not stop; we then concluded that his horse must have run away with him. When M. le duc saw cause to conclude that the vicomte was no longer master of his horse, and had watched him precede the first grenadiers, his highness cried, 'Musketeers, kill his horse! A hundred pistoles for the man who kills his horse!' But who could expect to hit the beast without at least wounding his rider? No one dared the attempt. At length one presented himself; he was a sharp-shooter of the regiment of Picardy, named Luzerne, who took aim at the animal, fired, and hit him in the quarters, for we saw the blood redden the hair of the horse. Instead of falling, the cursed jennet was irritated, and carried him on more furiously than ever. Every Picard who saw this unfortunate young man rushing on to meet certain death, shouted in the loudest manner, 'Throw yourself off, monsieur le vicomte!--off!--off! throw yourself off!' M. de Bragelonne was an officer much beloved in the army. Already had the vicomte arrived within pistol-shot of the ramparts, when a discharge was poured upon him that enshrouded him in fire and smoke. We lost sight of him; the smoke dispersed; he was on foot, upright; his horse was killed.

"The vicomte was summoned to surrender by the Arabs, but he made them a negative sign with his head, and continued to march towards the palisades. This was a mortal imprudence. Nevertheless the entire army was pleased that he would not retreat, since ill-chance had led him so near. He marched a few paces further, and the two regiments clapped their hands. It was at this moment the second discharge shook the walls, and the Vicomte de Bragelonne again disappeared in the smoke; but this time the smoke dispersed in vain; we no longer saw him standing. He was down, with his head lower than his legs, among the bushes, and the Arabs began to think of leaving their intrenchments to come and cut off his head or take his body--as is the custom with the infidels. But Monseigneur le Duc de Beaufort had followed all this with his eyes, and the sad spectacle drew from him many painful sighs. He then cried aloud, seeing the Arabs running like white phantoms among the mastic-trees, 'Grenadiers! lancers! will you let them take that noble body?'

"Saying these words and waving his sword, he himself rode towards the enemy. The regiments, rushing in his steps, ran in their turn, uttering cries as terrible as those of the Arabs were wild.

"The combat commenced over the body of M. de Bragelonne, and with such inveteracy was it fought that a hundred and sixty Arabs were left upon the field, by the side of at least fifty of our troops. It was a lieutenant from Normandy who took the body of the vicomte on his shoulders and carried it back to the lines. The advantage was, however, pursued, the regiments took the reserve with them, and the enemy's palisades were utterly destroyed. At three o'clock the fire of the Arabs ceased; the hand-to-hand fight lasted two hours; it was a massacre. At five o'clock we were victorious at all points; the enemy had abandoned his positions, and M. le duc ordered the white flag to be planted on the summit of the little mountain. It was then we had time to think of M. de Bragelonne, who had eight large wounds in his body, through which almost all his blood had welled away. Still, however, he had breathed, which afforded inexpressible joy to monseigneur, who insisted on being present at the first dressing of the wounds and the consultation of the surgeons. There were two among them who declared M. de Bragelonne would live. Monseigneur threw his arms around their necks, and promised them a thousand louis each if they could save him.

"The vicomte heard these transports of joy, and whether he was in despair, or whether he suffered much from his wounds, he expressed by his countenance a contradiction, which gave rise to reflection, particularly in one of the secretaries when he had heard what follows. The third surgeon was the brother of Sylvain de Saint-Cosme, the most learned of them all. He probed the wounds in his turn, and said nothing. M. de Bragelonne fixed his eyes steadily upon the skillful surgeon, and seemed to interrogate his every movement. The latter, upon being questioned by monseigneur, replied that he saw plainly three mortal wounds out of eight, but so strong was the constitution of the wounded, so rich was he in youth, and so merciful was the goodness of God, that perhaps M. de Bragelonne might recover, particularly if he did not move in the slightest manner. Frere Sylvain added, turning towards his assistants, 'Above everything, do not allow him to move, even a finger, or you will kill him;' and we all left the tent in very low spirits. That secretary I have mentioned, on leaving the tent, thought he perceived a faint and sad smile glide over the lips of M. de Bragelonne when the duke said to him, in a cheerful, kind voice, 'We will save you, vicomte, we will save you yet.'

"In the evening, when it was believed the wounded youth had taken some repose, one of the assistants entered his tent, but rushed out again immediately, uttering loud cries. We all ran up in disorder, M. le duc with us, and the assistant pointed to the body of M. de Bragelonne

upon the ground, at the foot of his bed, bathed in the remainder of his blood. It appeared that he had suffered some convulsion, some delirium, and that he had fallen; that the fall had accelerated his end, according to the prognosis of Frere Sylvain. We raised the vicomte; he was cold and dead. He held a lock of fair hair in his right hand, and that hand was tightly pressed upon his heart."

Then followed the details of the expedition, and of the victory obtained over the Arabs. D'Artagnan stopped at the account of the death of poor Raoul. "Oh!" murmured he, "unhappy boy! a suicide!" And turning his eyes towards the chamber of the chateau, in which Athos slept in eternal sleep, "They kept their words with each other," said he, in a low voice; "now I believe them to be happy; they must be reunited." And he returned through the parterre with slow and melancholy steps. All the village--all the neighborhood--were filled with grieving neighbors relating to each other the double catastrophe, and making preparations for the funeral.