

Chapter 7. Touches upon the Strange Effects a Half-pistole may have upon a Beadle and a Chorister.

D'Artagnan, as he crossed the Pont Neuf, congratulated himself on having found Planchet again, for at that time an intelligent servant was essential to him; nor was he sorry that through Planchet and the situation which he held in Rue des Lombards, a connection with the bourgeoisie might be commenced, at that critical period when that class were preparing to make war with the court party. It was like having a spy in the enemy's camp. In this frame of mind, grateful for the accidental meeting with Planchet, pleased with himself, D'Artagnan reached Notre Dame. He ran up the steps, entered the church, and addressing a verger who was sweeping the chapel, asked him if he knew Monsieur Bazin.

"Monsieur Bazin, the beadle?" said the verger. "Yes. There he is, attending mass, in the chapel of the Virgin."

D'Artagnan nearly jumped for joy; he had despaired of finding Bazin, but now, he thought, since he held one end of the thread he would be pretty sure to reach the other end.

He knelt down just opposite the chapel in order not to lose sight of his man; and as he had almost forgotten his prayers and had omitted to take a book with him, he made use of his time in gazing at Bazin.

Bazin wore his dress, it may be observed, with equal dignity and saintly propriety. It was not difficult to understand that he had gained the crown of his ambition and that the silver-mounted wand he brandished was in his eyes as honorable a distinction as the marshal's baton which Conde threw, or did not throw, into the enemy's line of battle at Fribourg. His person had undergone a change, analogous to the change in his dress; his figure had grown rotund and, as it were, canonical. The striking points of his face were effaced; he had still a nose, but his cheeks, fattened out, each took a portion of it unto themselves; his chin had joined his throat; his eyes were swelled up with the puffiness of his cheeks; his hair, cut straight in holy guise, covered his forehead as far as his eyebrows.

The officiating priest was just finishing mass whilst D'Artagnan was looking at Bazin; he pronounced the words of the holy Sacrament and retired, giving the benediction, which was received by the kneeling communicants, to the astonishment of D'Artagnan, who recognized in the priest the coadjutor\* himself, the famous Jean Francois Gondy, who at that time, having a presentiment of the part he was to play, was beginning to court popularity by almsgiving. It was to this end that he performed from time to time some of those early masses which the common people, generally, alone attended.

\*A sacerdotal officer.

D'Artagnan knelt as well as the rest, received his share of the benediction and made the sign of the cross; but when Bazin passed in his turn, with his eyes raised to Heaven and walking, in all humility, the very last, D'Artagnan pulled him by the hem of his robe.

Bazin looked down and started, as if he had seen a serpent.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan!" he cried; "Vade retro Satanas!"

"So, my dear Bazin!" said the officer, laughing, "this is the way you receive an old friend."

"Sir," replied Bazin, "the true friends of a Christian are those who aid him in working out his salvation, not those who hinder him in doing so."

"I don't understand you, Bazin; nor can I see how I can be a stumbling-block in the way of your salvation," said D'Artagnan.

"You forget, sir, that you very nearly ruined forever that of my master; and that it was owing to you that he was very nearly being damned eternally for remaining a musketeer, whilst all the time his true vocation was the church."

"My dear Bazin, you ought to perceive," said D'Artagnan, "from the place in which you find me, that I am greatly changed in everything. Age produces good sense, and, as I doubt not but that your master is on the

road to salvation, I want you to tell me where he is, that he may help me to mine."

"Rather say, to take him back with you into the world. Fortunately, I don't know where he is."

"How!" cried D'Artagnan; "you don't know where Aramis is?"

"Formerly," replied Bazin, "Aramis was his name of perdition. By Aramis is meant Simara, which is the name of a demon. Happily for him he has ceased to bear that name."

"And therefore," said D'Artagnan, resolved to be patient to the end, "it is not Aramis I seek, but the Abbe d'Herblay. Come, my dear Bazin, tell me where he is."

"Didn't you hear me tell you, Monsieur d'Artagnan, that I don't know where he is?"

"Yes, certainly; but to that I answer that it is impossible."

"It is, nevertheless, the truth, monsieur--the pure truth, the truth of the good God."

D'Artagnan saw clearly that he would get nothing out of this man, who was evidently telling a falsehood in his pretended ignorance of the abode of Aramis, but whose lies were bold and decided.

"Well, Bazin," said D'Artagnan, "since you do not know where your master lives, let us speak of it no more; let us part good friends. Accept this half-pistole to drink to my health."

"I do not drink"--Bazin pushed away with dignity the officer's hand--"'tis good only for the laity."

"Incorruptible!" murmured D'Artagnan; "I am unlucky;" and whilst he was lost in thought Bazin retreated toward the sacristy, and even there he could not think himself safe until he had shut and locked the door behind him.

D'Artagnan was still in deep thought when some one touched him on the shoulder. He turned and was about to utter an exclamation of surprise when the other made to him a sign of silence.

"You here, Rochefort?" he said, in a low voice.

"Hush!" returned Rochefort. "Did you know that I am at liberty?"

"I knew it from the fountain-head--from Planchet. And what brought you here?"

"I came to thank God for my happy deliverance," said Rochefort.

"And nothing more? I suppose that is not all."

"To take my orders from the coadjutor and to see if we cannot wake up

Mazarin a little."

"A bad plan; you'll be shut up again in the Bastile."

"Oh, as to that, I shall take care, I assure you. The air, the fresh, free air is so good; besides," and Rochefort drew a deep breath as he spoke, "I am going into the country to make a tour."

"Stop," cried D'Artagnan; "I, too, am going."

"And if I may without impertinence ask--where are you going?"

"To seek my friends."

"What friends?"

"Those that you asked about yesterday."

"Athos, Porthos and Aramis--you are looking for them?"

"Yes."

"On honor?"

"What, then, is there surprising in that?"

"Nothing. Queer, though. And in whose behalf are you looking for them?"

"You are in no doubt on that score."

"That is true."

"Unfortunately, I have no idea where they are."

"And you have no way to get news of them? Wait a week and I myself will give you some."

"A week is too long. I must find them within three days."

"Three days are a short time and France is large."

"No matter; you know the word must; with that word great things are done."

"And when do you set out?"

"I am now on my road."

"Good luck to you."

"And to you--a good journey."

"Perhaps we shall meet on our road."

"That is not probable."

"Who knows? Chance is so capricious. Adieu, till we meet again! Apropos, should Mazarin speak to you about me, tell him that I should have requested you to acquaint him that in a short time he will see whether I am, as he says, too old for action."

And Rochefort went away with one of those diabolical smiles which used formerly to make D'Artagnan shudder, but D'Artagnan could now see it without alarm, and smiling in his turn, with an expression of melancholy which the recollections called up by that smile could, perhaps, alone give to his countenance, he said:

"Go, demon, do what thou wilt! It matters little now to me. There's no second Constance in the world."

On his return to the cathedral, D'Artagnan saw Bazin, who was conversing with the sacristan. Bazin was making, with his spare little short arms, ridiculous gestures. D'Artagnan perceived that he was enforcing prudence with respect to himself.

D'Artagnan slipped out of the cathedral and placed himself in ambush at the corner of the Rue des Canettes; it was impossible that Bazin should go out of the cathedral without his seeing him.

In five minutes Bazin made his appearance, looking in every direction to see if he were observed, but he saw no one. Calmed by appearances he ventured to walk on through the Rue Notre Dame. Then D'Artagnan rushed out of his hiding place and arrived in time to see Bazin turn down the Rue de la Juiverie and enter, in the Rue de la Calandre, a respectable

looking house; and this D'Artagnan felt no doubt was the habitation of the worthy beadle. Afraid of making any inquiries at this house, D'Artagnan entered a small tavern at the corner of the street and asked for a cup of hypocras. This beverage required a good half-hour to prepare. And D'Artagnan had time, therefore, to watch Bazin unsuspected.

He perceived in the tavern a pert boy between twelve and fifteen years of age whom he fancied he had seen not twenty minutes before under the guise of a chorister. He questioned him, and as the boy had no interest in deceiving, D'Artagnan learned that he exercised, from six o'clock in the morning until nine, the office of chorister, and from nine o'clock till midnight that of a waiter in the tavern.

Whilst he was talking to this lad a horse was brought to the door of Bazin's house. It was saddled and bridled. Almost immediately Bazin came downstairs.

"Look!" said the boy, "there's our beadle, who is going a journey."

"And where is he going?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Forsooth, I don't know."

"Half a pistole if you can find out," said D'Artagnan.

"For me?" cried the boy, his eyes sparkling with joy, "if I can find out where Bazin is going? That is not difficult. You are not joking, are you?"

"No, on the honor of an officer; there is the half-pistole;" and he showed him the seductive coin, but did not give it him.

"I shall ask him."

"Just the very way not to know. Wait till he is set out and then, marry, come up, ask, and find out. The half-pistole is ready," and he put it back again into his pocket.

"I understand," said the child, with that jeering smile which marks especially the "gamin de Paris." "Well, we must wait."

They had not long to wait. Five minutes afterward Bazin set off on a full trot, urging on his horse by the blows of a parapluie, which he was in the habit of using instead of a riding whip.

Scarcely had he turned the corner of the Rue de la Juiverie when the boy rushed after him like a bloodhound on full scent.

Before ten minutes had elapsed the child returned.

"Well!" said D'Artagnan.

"Well!" answered the boy, "the thing is done."

"Where is he gone?"

"The half-pistole is for me?"

"Doubtless, answer me."

"I want to see it. Give it me, that I may see it is not false."

"There it is."

The child put the piece of money into his pocket.

"And now, where is he gone?" inquired D'Artagnan.

"He is gone to Noisy."

"How dost thou know?"

"Ah, faith! there was no great cunning necessary. I knew the horse he rode; it belonged to the butcher, who lets it out now and then to M. Bazin. Now I thought that the butcher would not let his horse out like that without knowing where it was going. And he answered 'that Monsieur Bazin went to Noisy.' 'Tis his custom. He goes two or three times a week."

"Dost thou know Noisy well?"

"I think so, truly; my nurse lives there."

"Is there a convent at Noisy?"

"Isn't there a great and grand one--the convent of Jesuits?"

"What is thy name?"

"Friquet."

D'Artagnan wrote the child's name in his tablets.

"Please, sir," said the boy, "do you think I can gain any more half-pistoles in any way?"

"Perhaps," replied D'Artagnan.

And having got out all he wanted, he paid for the hypocras, which he did not drink, and went quickly back to the Rue Tiquetonne.