

Chapter 12. In which it is shown that if Porthos was discontented with his Condition, Mousqueton was completely satisfied with his.

As they returned toward the castle, D'Artagnan thought of the miseries of poor human nature, always dissatisfied with what it has, ever desirous of what it has not.

In the position of Porthos, D'Artagnan would have been perfectly happy; and to make Porthos contented there was wanting--what? five letters to put before his three names, a tiny coronet to paint upon the panels of his carriage!

"I shall pass all my life," thought D'Artagnan, "in seeking for a man who is really contented with his lot."

Whilst making this reflection, chance seemed, as it were, to give him the lie direct. When Porthos had left him to give some orders he saw Mousqueton approaching. The face of the steward, despite one slight shade of care, light as a summer cloud, seemed a physiognomy of absolute felicity.

"Here is what I am looking for," thought D'Artagnan; "but alas! the poor fellow does not know the purpose for which I am here."

He then made a sign for Mousqueton to come to him.

"Sir," said the servant, "I have a favour to ask you."

"Speak out, my friend."

"I am afraid to do so. Perhaps you will think, sir, that prosperity has spoiled me?"

"Art thou happy, friend?" asked D'Artagnan.

"As happy as possible; and yet, sir, you may make me even happier than I am."

"Well, speak, if it depends on me."

"Oh, sir! it depends on you only."

"I listen--I am waiting to hear."

"Sir, the favor I have to ask of you is, not to call me 'Mousqueton' but 'Mouston.' Since I have had the honor of being my lord's steward I have taken the last name as more dignified and calculated to make my inferiors respect me. You, sir, know how necessary subordination is in any large establishment of servants."

D'Artagnan smiled; Porthos wanted to lengthen out his names, Mousqueton to cut his short.

"Well, my dear Mouston," he said, "rest satisfied. I will call thee Mouston; and if it makes thee happy I will not 'tutoyer' you any longer."

"Oh!" cried Mousqueton, reddening with joy; "if you do me, sir, such honor, I shall be grateful all my life; it is too much to ask."

"Alas!" thought D'Artagnan, "it is very little to offset the unexpected tribulations I am bringing to this poor devil who has so warmly welcomed me."

"Will monsieur remain long with us?" asked Mousqueton, with a serene and glowing countenance.

"I go to-morrow, my friend," replied D'Artagnan.

"Ah, monsieur," said Mousqueton, "then you have come here only to awaken our regrets."

"I fear that is true," said D'Artagnan, in a low tone.

D'Artagnan was secretly touched with remorse, not at inducing Porthos to enter into schemes in which his life and fortune would be in jeopardy, for Porthos, in the title of baron, had his object and reward; but poor Mousqueton, whose only wish was to be called Mouston--was it not cruel to snatch him from the delightful state of peace and plenty in which he was?

He was thinking of these matters when Porthos summoned him to dinner.

"What! to dinner?" said D'Artagnan. "What time is it, then?"

"Eh! why, it is after one o'clock."

"Your home is a paradise, Porthos; one takes no note of time. I follow you, though I am not hungry."

"Come, if one can't always eat, one can always drink--a maxim of poor Athos, the truth of which I have discovered since I began to be lonely."

D'Artagnan, who as a Gascon, was inclined to sobriety, seemed not so sure as his friend of the truth of Athos's maxim, but he did his best to keep up with his host. Meanwhile his misgivings in regard to Mousqueton recurred to his mind and with greater force because Mousqueton, though he did not himself wait on the table, which would have been beneath him in his new position, appeared at the door from time to time and evinced his gratitude to D'Artagnan by the quality of the wine he directed to be served. Therefore, when, at dessert, upon a sign from D'Artagnan, Porthos had sent away his servants and the two friends were alone:

"Porthos," said D'Artagnan, "who will attend you in your campaigns?"

"Why," replied Porthos, "Mouston, of course."

This was a blow to D'Artagnan. He could already see the intendant's beaming smile change to a contortion of grief. "But," he said, "Mouston

is not so young as he was, my dear fellow; besides, he has grown fat and perhaps has lost his fitness for active service."

"That may be true," replied Porthos; "but I am used to him, and besides, he wouldn't be willing to let me go without him, he loves me so much."

"Oh, blind self-love!" thought D'Artagnan.

"And you," asked Porthos, "haven't you still in your service your old lackey, that good, that brave, that intelligent---what, then, is his name?"

"Planchet--yes, I have found him again, but he is lackey no longer."

"What is he, then?"

"With his sixteen hundred francs--you remember, the sixteen hundred francs he earned at the siege of La Rochelle by carrying a letter to Lord de Winter--he has set up a little shop in the Rue des Lombards and is now a confectioner."

"Ah, he is a confectioner in the Rue des Lombards! How does it happen, then, that he is in your service?"

"He has been guilty of certain escapades and fears he may be disturbed." And the musketeer narrated to his friend Planchet's adventure.

"Well," said Porthos, "if any one had told you in the old times that the

day would come when Planchet would rescue Rochefort and that you would protect him in it----"

"I should not have believed him; but men are changed by events."

"There is nothing truer than that," said Porthos; "but what does not change, or changes for the better, is wine. Taste of this; it is a Spanish wine which our friend Athos thought much of."

At that moment the steward came in to consult his master upon the proceedings of the next day and also with regard to the shooting party which had been proposed.

"Tell me, Mouston," said Porthos, "are my arms in good condition?"

"Your arms, my lord--what arms?"

"Zounds! my weapons."

"What weapons?"

"My military weapons."

"Yes, my lord; at any rate, I think so."

"Make sure of it, and if they want it, have them burnished up. Which is my best cavalry horse?"

"Vulcan."

"And the best hack?"

"Bayard."

"What horse dost thou choose for thyself?"

"I like Rustaud, my lord; a good animal, whose paces suit me."

"Strong, thinkest thou?"

"Half Norman, half Mecklenburger; will go night and day."

"That will do for us. See to these horses. Polish up or make some one else polish my arms. Then take pistols with thee and a hunting-knife."

"Are we then going to travel, my lord?" asked Mousqueton, rather uneasy.

"Something better still, Mouston."

"An expedition, sir?" asked the steward, whose roses began to change into lilies.

"We are going to return to the service, Mouston," replied Porthos, still trying to restore his mustache to the military curl it had long lost.

"Into the service--the king's service?" Mousqueton trembled; even his

fat, smooth cheeks shook as he spoke, and he looked at D'Artagnan with an air of reproach; he staggered, and his voice was almost choked.

"Yes and no. We shall serve in a campaign, seek out all sorts of adventures--return, in short, to our former life."

These last words fell on Mousqueton like a thunderbolt. It was those very terrible old days that made the present so excessively delightful, and the blow was so great he rushed out, overcome, and forgot to shut the door.

The two friends remained alone to speak of the future and to build castles in the air. The good wine which Mousqueton had placed before them traced out in glowing drops to D'Artagnan a fine perspective, shining with quadruples and pistoles, and showed to Porthos a blue ribbon and a ducal mantle; they were, in fact, asleep on the table when the servants came to light them to their bed.

Mousqueton was, however, somewhat consoled by D'Artagnan, who the next day told him that in all probability war would always be carried on in the heart of Paris and within reach of the Chateau du Vallon, which was near Corbeil, or Bracieux, which was near Melun, and of Pierrefonds, which was between Compiègne and Villars-Cotterets.

"But--formerly--it appears," began Mousqueton timidly.

"Oh!" said D'Artagnan, "we don't now make war as we did formerly. To-day it's a sort of diplomatic arrangement; ask Planchet."



Mousqueton inquired, therefore, the state of the case of his old friend, who confirmed the statement of D'Artagnan. "But," he added, "in this war prisoners stand a chance of being hung."

"The deuce they do!" said Mousqueton; "I think I should like the siege of Rochelle better than this war, then!"

Porthos, meantime, asked D'Artagnan to give him his instructions how to proceed on his journey.

"Four days," replied his friend, "are necessary to reach Blois; one day to rest there; three or four days to return to Paris. Set out, therefore, in a week, with your suite, and go to the Hotel de la Chevrette, Rue Tiquetonne, and there await me."

"That's agreed," said Porthos.

"As to myself, I shall go around to see Athos; for though I don't think his aid worth much, one must with one's friends observe all due politeness," said D'Artagnan.

The friends then took leave of each other on the very border of the estate of Pierrefonds, to which Porthos escorted his friend.

"At least," D'Artagnan said to himself, as he took the road to Villars-Cotterets, "at least I shall not be alone in my undertaking. That devil, Porthos, is a man of prodigious strength; still, if Athos

joins us, well, we shall be three of us to laugh at Aramis, that little coxcomb with his too good luck."

At Villars-Cotterets he wrote to the cardinal:

"My Lord,--I have already one man to offer to your eminence, and he is well worth twenty men. I am just setting out for Blois. The Comte de la Fere inhabits the Castle of Bragelonne, in the environs of that city."