Chapter 89. In which it is shown that it is sometimes more difficult for Kings to return to the Capitals of their Kingdoms, than to make an Exit.

Whilst D'Artagnan and Porthos were engaged in conducting the cardinal to Saint Germain, Athos and Aramis returned to Paris.

Each had his own particular visit to make.

Aramis rushed to the Hotel de Ville, where Madame de Longueville was sojourning. The duchess loudly lamented the announcement of peace. War had made her a queen; peace brought her abdication. She declared that she would never assent to the treaty and that she wished eternal war.

But when Aramis had presented that peace to her in a true light--that is to say, with all its advantages; when he had pointed out to her, in exchange for the precarious and contested royalty of Paris, the viceroyalty of Font-de-l'Arche, in other words, of all Normandy; when he had rung in her ears the five hundred thousand francs promised by the cardinal; when he had dazzled her eyes with the honor bestowed on her by the king in holding her child at the baptismal font, Madame de Longueville contended no longer, except as is the custom with pretty women to contend, and defended herself only to surrender at last.

Aramis made a presence of believing in the reality of her opposition and was unwilling to deprive himself in his own view of the credit of her

conversion.

"Madame," he said, "you have wished to conquer the prince your brother--that is to say, the greatest captain of the age; and when women of genius wish anything they always succeed in attaining it. You have succeeded; the prince is beaten, since he can no longer fight. Now attach him to our party. Withdraw him gently from the queen, whom he does not like, from Mazarin, whom he despises. The Fronde is a comedy, of which the first act only is played. Let us wait for a denouement--for the day when the prince, thanks to you, shall have turned against the court."

Madame de Longueville was persuaded. This Frondist duchess trusted so confidently to the power of her fine eyes, that she could not doubt their influence even over Monsieur de Conde; and the chronicles of the time aver that her confidence was justified.

Athos, on quitting Aramis, went to Madame de Chevreuse. Here was another frondeuse to persuade, and she was even less open to conviction than her younger rival. There had been no stipulation in her favor. Monsieur de Chevreuse had not been appointed governor of a province, and if the queen should consent to be godmother it could be only of her grandson or granddaughter. At the first announcement of peace Madame de Chevreuse frowned, and in spite of all the logic of Athos to show her that a prolonged war would have been impracticable, contended in favor of hostilities.

"My fair friend," said Athos, "allow me to tell you that everybody is

tired of war. You will get yourself exiled, as you did in the time of Louis XIII. Believe me, we have passed the time of success in intrigue, and your fine eyes are not destined to be eclipsed by regretting Paris, where there will always be two queens as long as you are there."

"Oh," cried the duchess, "I cannot make war alone, but I can avenge myself on that ungrateful queen and most ambitious favorite-on the honor of a duchess, I will avenge myself."

"Madame," replied Athos, "do not injure the Vicomte de Bragelonne--do not ruin his prospects. Alas! excuse my weakness! There are moments when a man grows young again in his children."

The duchess smiled, half tenderly, half ironically.

"Count," she said, "you are, I fear, gained over to the court. I suppose you have a blue ribbon in your pocket?"

"Yes, madame; I have that of the Garter, which King Charles I. gave me some days before he died."

"Come, I am growing an old woman!" said the duchess, pensively.

Athos took her hand and kissed it. She sighed, as she looked at him.

"Count," she said, "Bragelonne must be a charming place. You are a man of taste. You have water--woods--flowers there?"

She sighed again and leaned her charming head, gracefully reclined, on her hand, still beautiful in form and color.

"Madame!" exclaimed Athos, "what were you saying just now about growing old? Never have I seen you look so young, so beautiful!"

The duchess shook her head.

"Does Monsieur de Bragelonne remain in Paris?" she inquired.

"What think you of it?" inquired Athos.

"Leave him with me," replied the duchess.

"No, madame; if you have forgotten the history of Oedipus, I, at least, remember it."

"Really, sir, you are delightful, and I should like to spend a month at Bragelonne."

"Are you not afraid of making people envious of me, duchess?" replied Athos.

"No, I shall go incognito, count, under the name of Marie Michon."

"You are adorable, madame."

"But do not keep Raoul with you."

"Why not?"

"Because he is in love."

"He! he is quite a child!"

"And 'tis a child he loves."

Athos became thoughtful.

"You are right, duchess. This singular passion for a child of seven may some day make him very unhappy. There is to be war in Flanders. He shall go thither."

"And at his return you will send him to me. I will arm him against love."

"Alas, madame!" exclaimed Athos, "to-day love is like war--the breastplate is becoming useless."

Raoul entered at this moment; he came to announce that the solemn entrance of the king, queen, and her ministers was to take place on the ensuing day.

The next day, in fact, at daybreak, the court made preparations to quit Saint Germain.

Meanwhile, the queen every hour had been sending for D'Artagnan.

"I hear," she said, "that Paris is not quiet. I am afraid for the king's safety; place yourself close to the coach door on the right."

"Reassure yourself, madame, I will answer for the king's safety."

As he left the queen's presence Bernouin summoned him to the cardinal.

"Sir," said Mazarin to him "an emeute is spoken of in Paris. I shall be on the king's left and as I am the chief person threatened, remain at the coach door to the left."

"Your eminence may be perfectly easy," replied D'Artagnan; "they will not touch a hair of your head."

"Deuce take it!" he thought to himself, "how can I take care of both? Ah! plague on't, I will guard the king and Porthos shall guard the cardinal."

This arrangement pleased every one. The queen had confidence in the courage of D'Artagnan, which she knew, and the cardinal in the strength of Porthos, which he had experienced.

The royal procession set out for Paris. Guitant and Comminges, at the head of the guards, marched first; then came the royal carriage, with D'Artagnan on one side, Porthos on the other; then the musketeers, for two and twenty years staunch friends of D'Artagnan. During twenty he had

been lieutenant, their captain since the night before.

The cortege proceeded to Notre Dame, where a Te Deum was chanted. All Paris were in the streets. The Swiss were drawn up along the road, but as the road was long, they were placed at six or eight feet distant from each other and one deep only. This force was therefore wholly insufficient, and from time to time the line was broken through by the people and was formed again with difficulty. Whenever this occurred, although it proceeded only from goodwill and a desire to see the king and queen, Anne looked at D'Artagnan anxiously.

Mazarin, who had dispensed a thousand louis to make the people cry "Long live Mazarin," and who had accordingly no confidence in acclamations bought at twenty pistoles each, kept one eye on Porthos; but that gigantic body-guard replied to the look with his great bass voice, "Be tranquil, my lord," and Mazarin became more and more composed.

At the Palais Royal, the crowd, which had flowed in from the adjacent street was still greater; like an impetuous mob, a wave of human beings came to meet the carriage and rolled tumultuously into the Rue Saint Honore.

When the procession reached the palace, loud cries of "Long live their majesties!" resounded. Mazarin leaned out of the window. One or two shouts of "Long live the cardinal" saluted his shadow; but instantly hisses and yells stifled them remorselessly. Mazarin turned pale and shrank back in the coach.

"Low-born fellows!" ejaculated Porthos.

D'Artagnan said nothing, but twirled his mustache with a peculiar gesture which showed that his fine Gascon humor was awake.

Anne of Austria bent down and whispered in the young king's ear:

"Say something gracious to Monsieur d'Artagnan, my son."

The young king leaned toward the door.

"I have not said good-morning to you, Monsieur d'Artagnan," he said; "nevertheless, I have remarked you. It was you who were behind my bed-curtains that night the Parisians wished to see me asleep."

"And if the king permits me," returned the Gascon, "I shall be near him always when there is danger to be encountered."

"Sir," said Mazarin to Porthos, "what would you do if the crowd fell upon us?"

"Kill as many as I could, my lord."

"Hem! brave as you are and strong as you are, you could not kill them all."

"'Tis true," answered Porthos, rising on his saddle, in order that he might appraise the immense crowd, "there are a lot of them."

"I think I should like the other fellow better than this one," said Mazarin to himself, and he threw himself back in his carriage.

The queen and her minister, more especially the latter, had reason to feel anxious. The crowd, whilst preserving an appearance of respect and even of affection for the king and queen regent, began to be tumultuous. Reports were whispered about, like certain sounds which announce, as they whistle from wave to wave, the coming storm--and when they pass athwart a multitude, presage an emeute.

D'Artagnan turned toward the musketeers and made a sign imperceptible to the crowd, but very easily understood by that chosen regiment, the flower of the army.

The ranks closed firmly in and a kind of majestic tremor ran from man to man.

At the Barriere des Sergents the procession was obliged to stop. Comminges left the head of the escort and went to the queen's carriage. Anne questioned D'Artagnan by a look. He answered in the same language.

"Proceed," she said.

Comminges returned to his post. An effort was made and the living barrier was violently broken through.

Some complaints arose from the crowd and were addressed this time to the

king as well as the minister.

"Onward!" cried D'Artagnan, in a loud voice.

"Onward!" cried Porthos.

But as if the multitude had waited only for this demonstration to burst out, all the sentiments of hostility that possessed it exploded simultaneously. Cries of "Down with Mazarin!" "Death to the cardinal!" resounded on all sides.

At the same time through the streets of Grenelle, Saint Honore, and Du Coq, a double stream of people broke the feeble hedge of Swiss guards and came like a whirlwind even to the very legs of Porthos's horse and that of D'Artagnan.

This new eruption was more dangerous than the others, being composed of armed men. It was plain that it was not the chance combination of those who had collected a number of the malcontents at the same spot, but a concerted organized attack.

Each of these mobs was led by a chief, one of whom appeared to belong, not to the people, but to the honorable corporation of mendicants, and the other, notwithstanding his affected imitation of the people, might easily be discerned to be a gentleman. Both were evidently stimulated by the same impulse.

There was a shock which was perceived even in the royal carriage.

Myriads of hoarse cries, forming one vast uproar, were heard, mingled with guns firing.

"Ho! Musketeers!" cried D'Artagnan.

The escort divided into two files. One of them passed around to the right of the carriage, the other to the left. One went to support D'Artagnan, the other Porthos. Then came a skirmish, the more terrible because it had no definite object; the more melancholy, because those engaged in it knew not for whom they were fighting. Like all popular movements, the shock given by the rush of this mob was formidable. The musketeers, few in number, not being able, in the midst of this crowd, to make their horses wheel around, began to give way. D'Artagnan offered to lower the blinds of the royal carriage, but the young king stretched out his arm, saying:

"No, sir! I wish to see everything."

"If your majesty wishes to look out--well, then, look!" replied D'Artagnan. And turning with that fury which made him so formidable, he rushed toward the chief of the insurgents, a man who, with a huge sword in his hand, was trying to hew a passage to the coach door through the musketeers.

"Make room!" cried D'Artagnan. "Zounds! give way!"

At these words the man with a pistol and sword raised his head, but it was too late. The blow was sped by D'Artagnan; the rapier had pierced

his bosom.

"Ah! confound it!" cried the Gascon, trying in vain, too late, to retract the thrust. "What the devil are you doing here, count?"

"Accomplishing my destiny," replied Rochefort, falling on one knee. "I have already got up again after three stabs from you, I shall never rise after this fourth."

"Count!" said D'Artagnan, with some degree of emotion, "I struck without knowing that it was you. I am sorry, if you die, that you should die with sentiments of hatred toward me."

Rochefort extended his hand to D'Artagnan, who took it. The count wished to speak, but a gush of blood stifled him. He stiffened in the last convulsions of death and expired.

"Back, people!" cried D'Artagnan, "your leader is dead; you have no longer any business here."

Indeed, as if De Rochefort had been the very soul of the attack, the crowd who had followed and obeyed him took to flight on seeing him fall. D'Artagnan charged, with a party of musketeers, up the Rue du Coq, and the portion of the mob he assailed disappeared like smoke, dispersing near the Place Saint Germain-l'Auxerrois and taking the direction of the quays.

D'Artagnan returned to help Porthos, if Porthos needed help; but

Porthos, for his part, had done his work as conscientiously as D'Artagnan. The left of the carriage was as well cleared as the right, and they drew up the blind of the window which Mazarin, less heroic than the king, had taken the precaution to lower.

Porthos looked very melancholy.

"What a devil of a face you have, Porthos! and what a strange air for a victor!"

"But you," answered Porthos, "seem to me agitated."

"There's a reason! Zounds! I have just killed an old friend."

"Indeed!" replied Porthos, "who?"

"That poor Count de Rochefort."

"Well! exactly like me! I have just killed a man whose face is not unknown to me. Unluckily, I hit him on the head and immediately his face was covered with blood."

"And he said nothing as he died?"

"Yes; he exclaimed, 'Oh!'"

"I suppose," answered D'Artagnan, laughing, "if he only said that, it did not enlighten you much."

"Well, sir!" cried the queen.

"Madame, the passage is quite clear and your majesty can continue your road."

In fact, the procession arrived, in safety at Notre Dame, at the front gate of which all the clergy, with the coadjutor at their head, awaited the king, the queen and the minister, for whose happy return they chanted a Te Deum.

As the service was drawing to a close a boy entered the church in great excitement, ran to the sacristy, dressed himself quickly in the choir robes, and cleaving, thanks to that uniform, the crowd that filled the temple, approached Bazin, who, clad in his blue robe, was standing gravely in his place at the entrance to the choir.

Bazin felt some one pulling his sleeve. He lowered to earth his eyes, beatifically raised to Heaven, and recognized Friquet.

"Well, you rascal, what is it? How do you dare to disturb me in the exercise of my functions?" asked the beadle.

"Monsieur Bazin," said Friquet, "Monsieur Maillard--you know who he is, he gives holy water at Saint Eustache----"

"Well, go on."

"Well, he received in the scrimmage a sword stroke on the head. That great giant who was there gave it to him."

"In that case," said Bazin, "he must be pretty sick."

"So sick that he is dying, and he wants to confess to the coadjutor, who, they say, has power to remit great sins."

"And does he imagine that the coadjutor will put himself out for him?"

"To be sure; the coadjutor has promised."

"Who told you that?"

"Monsieur Maillard himself."

"You have seen him, then?"

"Certainly; I was there when he fell."

"What were you doing there?"

"I was shouting, 'Down with Mazarin!' 'Death to the cardinal!' 'The Italian to the gallows!' Isn't that what you would have me shout?"

"Be quiet, you rascal!" said Bazin, looking uneasily around.

"So that he told me, that poor Monsieur Maillard, 'Go find the

coadjutor, Friquet, and if you bring him to me you shall be my heir.' Say, then, Father Bazin--the heir of Monsieur Maillard, the giver of holy water at Saint Eustache! Hey! I shall have nothing to do but to fold my arms! All the same, I should like to do him that service--what do you say to it?"

"I will tell the coadjutor," said Bazin.

In fact, he slowly and respectfully approached the prelate and spoke to him privately a few words, to which the latter responded by an affirmative sign. He then returned with the same slow step and said:

"Go and tell the dying man that he must be patient. Monseigneur will be with him in an hour."

"Good!" said Friquet, "my fortune is made."

"By the way," said Bazin, "where was he carried?"

"To the tower Saint Jacques la Boucherie;" and delighted with the success of his embassy, Friquet started off at the top of his speed.

When the Te Deum was over, the coadjutor, without stopping to change his priestly dress, took his way toward that old tower which he knew so well. He arrived in time. Though sinking from moment to moment, the wounded man was not yet dead. The door was opened to the coadjutor of the room in which the mendicant was suffering.

A moment later Friquet went out, carrying in his hand a large leather bag; he opened it as soon as he was outside the chamber and to his great astonishment found it full of gold. The mendicant had kept his word and made Friquet his heir.

"Ah! Mother Nanette!" cried Friquet, suffocating; "ah! Mother Nanette!"

He could say no more; but though he hadn't strength to speak he had enough for action. He rushed headlong to the street, and like the Greek from Marathon who fell in the square at Athens, with his laurel in his hand, Friquet reached Councillor Broussel's threshold, and then fell exhausted, scattering on the floor the louis disgorged by his leather bag.

Mother Nanette began by picking up the louis; then she picked up Friquet.

In the meantime the cortege returned to the Palais Royal.

"That Monsieur d'Artagnan is a very brave man, mother," said the young king.

"Yes, my son; and he rendered very important services to your father. Treat him kindly, therefore, in the future."

"Captain," said the young king to D'Artagnan, on descending from the carriage, "the queen has charged me to invite you to dinner to-day--you and your friend the Baron du Vallon."

That was a great honor for D'Artagnan and for Porthos. Porthos was delighted; and yet during the entire repast he seemed to be preoccupied.

"What was the matter with you, baron?" D'Artagnan said to him as they descended the staircase of the Palais Royal. "You seemed at dinner to be anxious about something."

"I was trying," said Porthos, "to recall where I had seen that mendicant whom I must have killed."

"And you couldn't remember?"

"No."

"Well, search, my friend, search; and when you have found, you will tell me, will you not?"

"Pardieu!" said Porthos.