

#### Chapter XXXIV. Of the Embarrassment of Riches.

D'Artagnan lost no time, and as soon as the thing was suitable and opportune, he paid a visit to the lord treasurer of his majesty. He had then the satisfaction to exchange a piece of paper, covered with very ugly writing, for a prodigious number of crowns, recently stamped with the effigies of his very gracious majesty Charles II.

D'Artagnan easily controlled himself: and yet, on this occasion, he could not help evincing a joy which the reader will perhaps comprehend, if he deigns to have some indulgence for a man who, since his birth, had never seen so many pieces and rolls of pieces juxta-placed in an order truly agreeable to the eye. The treasurer placed all the rolls in bags, and closed each bag with a stamp sealed with the arms of England, a favor which treasurers do not grant to everybody. Then, impassible, and just as polite as he ought to be towards a man honored with the friendship of the king, he said to D'Artagnan:

"Take away your money, sir." Your money! These words made a thousand chords vibrate in the heart of D'Artagnan, which he had never felt before. He had the bags packed in a small cart, and returned home meditating deeply. A man who possessed three hundred thousand livres can no longer expect to wear a smooth brow; a wrinkle for every hundred thousand livres is not too much.

D'Artagnan shut himself up, ate no dinner, closed his door to everybody, and, with a lighted lamp, and a loaded pistol on the table, he watched all night, ruminating upon the means of preventing these lovely crowns, which from the coffers of the king had passed into his coffers, from passing from his coffers into the pockets of any thief whatever. The best means discovered by the Gascon was to inclose his treasure, for the present, under locks so solid that no wrist could break them, and so complicated that no master-key could open them. D'Artagnan remembered that the English are masters in mechanics and conservative industry; and he determined to go in the morning in search of a mechanic who would sell him a strong box. He did not go far; Master Will Jobson, dwelling in Piccadilly, listened to his propositions, comprehended his wishes, and promised to make him a safety lock that should relieve him from all future fear.

"I will give you," said he, "a piece of mechanism entirely new. At the first serious attempt upon your lock, an invisible plate will open of itself and vomit forth a pretty copper bullet the weight of a mark--which will knock down the intruder, and not with a loud report. What do you think of it?"

"I think it very ingenious," cried D'Artagnan; "the little copper bullet pleases me mightily. So now, sir mechanic, the terms?"

"A fortnight for the execution, and fifteen hundred livres payable on delivery," replied the artisan.

D'Artagnan's brow darkened. A fortnight was delay enough to allow the thieves of London time to remove all occasion for the strong box. As to the fifteen hundred livres--that would be paying too dear for what a little vigilance would procure him for nothing.

"I will think of it," said he; "thank you, sir." And he returned home at full speed; nobody had yet touched his treasure. That same day Athos paid a visit to his friend and found him so thoughtful that he could not help expressing his surprise.

"How is this?" said he, "you are rich and not gay--you, who were so anxious for wealth!"

"My friend, the pleasures to which we are not accustomed oppress us more than the griefs with which we are familiar. Give me your opinion, if you please. I can ask you, who have always had money: when we have money, what do we do with it?"

"That depends."

"What have you done with yours, seeing that it has not made you a miser or a prodigal? For avarice dries up the heart, and prodigality drowns it--is that not so?"

"Fabricius could not have spoken more justly. But in truth, my money has never been a burden to me."

"How so? Do you place it out at interest?"

"No; you know I have a tolerably handsome house; and that house composes the better part of my property."

"I know it does."

"So that you can be as rich as I am, and, indeed, more rich, whenever you like, by the same means."

"But your rents,--do you lay them by?"

"No."

"What do you think of a chest concealed in a wall?"

"I never made use of such a thing."

"Then you must have some confidant, some safe man of business who pays you interest at a fair rate."

"Not at all."

"Good heavens! what do you do with it, then?"

"I spend all I have, and I only have what I spend, my dear D'Artagnan."

"Ah! that may be. But you are something of a prince; fifteen or sixteen thousand livres melt away between your fingers; and then you have expenses and appearances--"

"Well, I don't see why you should be less of a noble than I am, my friend; your money would be quite sufficient."

"Three hundred thousand livres! Two-thirds too much!"

"I beg your pardon--did you not tell me?--I thought I heard you say--I fancied you had a partner--"

"Ah! Mordieux! that's true," cried D'Artagnan, coloring; "there is Planchet. I had forgotten Planchet, upon my life! Well! there are my three hundred thousand livres broken into. That's a pity! it was a round sum, and sounded well. That is true, Athos; I am no longer rich. What a memory you have!"

"Tolerably good; yes, thank God!"

"The worthy Planchet!" grumbled D'Artagnan; "his was not a bad dream! What a speculation! Peste! Well! what is said is said."

"How much are you to give him?"

"Oh!" said D'Artagnan, "he is not a bad fellow; I shall arrange matters with him. I have had a great deal of trouble, you see, and expenses; all that must be taken into account."

"My dear friend, I can depend on you, and have no fear for the worthy Planchet; his interests are better in your hands than in his own. But now that you have nothing more to do here, we shall depart, if you please. You can go and thank his majesty, ask if he has any commands, and in six days we may be able to get sight of the towers of Notre Dame."

"My friend, I am most anxious to be off, and will go at once and pay my respects to the king."

"I," said Athos, "am going to call upon some friends in the city, and shall then be at your service."

"Will you lend me Grimaud?"

"With all my heart. What do you want to do with him?"

"Something very simple, and which will not fatigue him; I shall only beg him to take charge of my pistols, which lie there on the table near that coffer."

"Very well!" replied Athos, imperturbably.

"And he will not stir, will he?"

"Not more than the pistols themselves."

"Then I shall go and take leave of his majesty. Au revoir!"

D'Artagnan arrived at St. James's, where Charles II., who was busy writing, kept him in the ante-chamber a full hour. Whilst walking about in the gallery, from the door to the window, from the window to the door, he thought he saw a cloak like Athos's cross the vestibule; but at the moment he was going to ascertain if it were he, the usher summoned him to his majesty's presence. Charles II. rubbed his hands while receiving the thanks of our friend.

"Chevalier," said he, "you are wrong to express gratitude to me; I have not paid you a quarter of the value of the history of the box into which you put the brave general--the excellent Duke of Albemarle, I mean." And the king laughed heartily.

D'Artagnan did not think it proper to interrupt his majesty, and he bowed with much modesty.

"A propos," continued Charles, "do you think my dear Monk has really pardoned you?"

"Pardoned me! yes, I hope so, sire!"

"Eh!--but it was a cruel trick! Odds fish! to pack up the first personage of the English revolution like a herring. In your place I would not trust him, chevalier."

"But, sire--"

"Yes, I know very well Monk calls you his friend, but he has too penetrating an eye not to have a memory, and too lofty a brow not to be

very proud, you know, grande supercilium."

"I shall certainly learn Latin," said D'Artagnan to himself.

"But stop," cried the merry monarch, "I must manage your reconciliation; I know how to set about it; so--"

D'Artagnan bit his mustache. "Will your majesty permit me to tell you the truth?"

"Speak, chevalier, speak."

"Well, sire, you alarm me greatly. If your majesty undertakes the affair, as you seem inclined to do, I am a lost man; the duke will have me assassinated."

The king burst into a fresh roar of laughter, which changed D'Artagnan's alarm into downright terror.

"Sire, I beg you to allow me to settle this matter myself, and if your majesty has no further need of my services--"

"No, chevalier. What, do you want to leave us?" replied Charles, with a hilarity that grew more and more alarming.

"If your majesty has no more commands for me."

Charles became more serious.

"One single thing. See my sister, the Lady Henrietta. Do you know her?"

"No, sire, but--an old soldier like me is not an agreeable spectacle for a young and gay princess."

"Ah! but my sister must know you; she must in case of need have you to depend upon."

"Sire, every one that is dear to your majesty will be sacred to me."

"Very well!--Parry! Come here, Parry!"

The side door opened and Parry entered, his face beaming with pleasure as soon as he saw D'Artagnan.

"What is Rochester doing?" said the king.

"He is on the canal with the ladies," replied Parry.

"And Buckingham?"

"He is there also."

"That is well. You will conduct the chevalier to Villiers; that is the Duke of Buckingham, chevalier; and beg the duke to introduce M. d'Artagnan to the Princess Henrietta."

Parry bowed and smiled to D'Artagnan.

"Chevalier," continued the king, "this is your parting audience; you can afterwards set out as soon as you please."

"Sire, I thank you."

"But be sure you make your peace with Monk!"

"Oh, sire--"

"You know there is one of my vessels at your disposal?"

"Sire, you overpower me; I cannot think of putting your majesty's officers to inconvenience on my account."

The king slapped D'Artagnan upon the shoulder.

"Nobody will be inconvenienced on your account, chevalier, but for that of an ambassador I am about sending to France, and to whom you will willingly serve as a companion, I fancy, for you know him."

D'Artagnan appeared astonished.

"He is a certain Comte de la Fere,--whom you call Athos," added the king; terminating the conversation, as he had begun it, by a joyous burst of laughter. "Adieu, chevalier, adieu. Love me as I love you." And thereupon, making a sign to Parry to ask if there were any one waiting for him in the adjoining closet, the king disappeared into that closet, leaving the chevalier perfectly astonished by this singular audience. The old man took his arm in a friendly way, and led him towards the garden.