

## Chapter XLI. The Recital.

The maliciousness of the cardinal did not leave much for the ambassador to say; nevertheless, the word "restoration" had struck the king, who, addressing the comte, upon whom his eyes had been fixed since his entrance,--"Monsieur," said he, "will you have the kindness to give us some details concerning the affairs of England. You come from that country, you are a Frenchman, and the orders which I see glittering upon your person announce you to be a man of merit as well as a man of quality."

"Monsieur," said the cardinal, turning towards the queen-mother, "is an ancient servant of your majesty's, Monsieur le Comte de la Fere."

Anne of Austria was as oblivious as a queen whose life had been mingled with fine and stormy days. She looked at Mazarin, whose evil smile promised her something disagreeable; then she solicited from Athos, by another look, an explanation.

"Monsieur," continued the cardinal, "was a Treville musketeer, in the service of the late king. Monsieur is well acquainted with England, whither he has made several voyages at various periods; he is a subject of the highest merit."

These words made allusion to all the memories which Anne of Austria trembled to evoke. England, that was her hatred of Richelieu and her love for Buckingham; a Treville musketeer, that was the whole Odyssey of the triumphs which had made the heart of the young woman throb, and of the dangers which had been so near overturning the throne of the young queen. These words had much power, for they rendered mute and attentive all the royal personages, who, with very various sentiments, set about recomposing at the same time the mysteries which the young had not seen, and which the old had believed to be forever effaced.

"Speak, monsieur," said Louis XIV., the first to escape from troubles, suspicions, and remembrances.

"Yes, speak," added Mazarin, to whom the little malicious thrust directed against Anne of Austria had restored energy and gayety.

"Sire," said the comte, "a sort of miracle has changed the whole destiny of Charles II. That which men, till that time, had been unable to do, God resolved to accomplish."

Mazarin coughed while tossing about in his bed.

"King Charles II.," continued Athos, "left the Hague neither as a

fugitive nor a conqueror, but as an absolute king, who, after a distant voyage from his kingdom, returns amidst universal benedictions."

"A great miracle, indeed," said Mazarin; "for, if the news was true, King Charles II., who has just returned amidst benedictions, went away amidst musket-shots."

The king remained impassible. Philip, younger and more frivolous, could not repress a smile, which flattered Mazarin as an applause of his pleasantry.

"It is plain," said the king, "there is a miracle; but God, who does so much for kings, monsieur le comte, nevertheless employs the hand of man to bring about the triumph of His designs. To what men does Charles II. principally owe his re-establishment?"

"Why," interrupted Mazarin, without any regard for the king's pride--"does not your majesty know that it is to M. Monk?"

"I ought to know it," replied Louis XIV., resolutely; "and yet I ask my lord ambassador, the causes of the change in this General Monk?"

"And your majesty touches precisely the question," replied Athos; "for without the miracle of which I have had the honor to speak, General Monk would probably have remained an implacable enemy of Charles II. God

willed that a strange, bold, and ingenious idea should enter into the mind of a certain man, whilst a devoted and courageous idea took possession of the mind of another man. The combinations of these two ideas brought about such a change in the position of M. Monk, that, from an inveterate enemy, he became a friend to the deposed king."

"These are exactly the details I asked for," said the king. "Who and what are the two men of whom you speak?"

"Two Frenchmen, sire."

"Indeed! I am glad of that."

"And the two ideas," said Mazarin;--"I am more curious about ideas than about men, for my part."

"Yes," murmured the king.

"The second idea, the devoted, reasonable idea--the least important, sir--was to go and dig up a million in gold, buried by King Charles I. at Newcastle, and to purchase with that gold the adherence of Monk."

"Oh, oh!" said Mazarin, reanimated by the word million. "But Newcastle

was at the time occupied by Monk."

"Yes, monsieur le cardinal, and that is why I venture to call the idea courageous as well as devoted. It was necessary, if Monk refused the offers of the negotiator, to reinstate King Charles II. in possession of this million, which was to be torn, as it were, from the loyalty and not the loyalism of General Monk. This was effected in spite of many difficulties: the general proved to be loyal, and allowed the money to be taken away."

"It seems to me," said the timid, thoughtful king, "that Charles II. could not have known of this million whilst he was in Paris."

"It seems to me," rejoined the cardinal, maliciously, "that his majesty the king of Great Britain knew perfectly well of this million, but that he preferred having two millions to having one."

"Sire," said Athos, firmly, "the king of England, whilst in France, was so poor that he had not even money to take the post; so destitute of hope that he frequently thought of dying. He was so entirely ignorant of the existence of the million at Newcastle, that but for a gentleman--one of your majesty's subjects--the moral depository of the million, who revealed the secret to King Charles II., that prince would still be vegetating in the most cruel forgetfulness."

"Let us pass on to the strange, bold and ingenious idea," interrupted Mazarin, whose sagacity foresaw a check. "What was that idea?"

"This--M. Monk formed the only obstacle to the re-establishment of the fallen king. A Frenchman imagined the idea of suppressing this obstacle."

"Oh! oh! but he is a scoundrel, that Frenchman," said Mazarin; "and the idea is not so ingenious as to prevent its author being tied up by the neck at the Place de Greve, by decree of the parliament."

"Your eminence is mistaken," replied Athos, dryly; "I did not say that the Frenchman in question had resolved to assassinate M. Monk, but only to suppress him. The words of the French language have a value which the gentlemen of France know perfectly. Besides, this is an affair of war; and when men serve kings against their enemies they are not to be condemned by a parliament--God is their judge. This French gentleman, then, formed the idea of gaining possession of the person of Monk, and he executed his plan."

The king became animated at the recital of great actions. The king's younger brother struck the table with his hand, exclaiming, "Ah! that is fine!"

"He carried off Monk?" said the king. "Why, Monk was in his camp."

"And the gentleman was alone, sire."

"That is marvelous!" said Philip.

"Marvelous, indeed!" cried the king.

"Good! There are the two little lions unchained," murmured the cardinal. And with an air of spite, which he did not dissemble: "I am unacquainted with these details, will you guarantee their authenticity, monsieur?"

"All the more easily, my lord cardinal, from having seen the events."

"You have?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

The king had involuntarily drawn close to the count, the Duc d'Anjou had turned sharply round, and pressed Athos on the other side.

"What next? monsieur, what next?" cried they both at the same time.

"Sire, M. Monk, being taken by the Frenchman, was brought to King Charles II., at the Hague. The king gave back his freedom to Monk, and the grateful general, in return, gave Charles II. the throne of Great Britain, for which so many valiant men had fought in vain."

Philip clapped his hands with enthusiasm, Louis XIV., more reflective, turned towards the Comte de la Fere.

"Is this true," said he, "in all its details?"

"Absolutely true, sire."

"That one of my gentlemen knew the secret of the million, and kept it?"

"Yes, sire."

"The name of that gentleman?"

"It was your humble servant," said Athos, simply, and bowing.

A murmur of admiration made the heart of Athos swell with pleasure. He had reason to be proud, at least. Mazarin, himself, had raised his arms towards heaven.

"Monsieur," said the king, "I shall seek and find means to reward you." Athos made a movement. "Oh, not for your honesty, to be paid for that

would humiliate you; but I owe you a reward for having participated in the restoration of my brother, King Charles II."

"Certainly," said Mazarin.

"It is the triumph of a good cause which fills the whole house of France with joy," said Anne of Austria.

"I continue," said Louis XIV.: "Is it also true that a single man penetrated to Monk, in his camp, and carried him off?"

"That man had ten auxiliaries, taken from a very inferior rank."

"And nothing more but them?"

"Nothing more."

"And he is named?"

"Monsieur d'Artagnan, formerly lieutenant of the musketeers of your majesty."

Anne of Austria colored; Mazarin became yellow with shame; Louis XIV. was deeply thoughtful, and a drop of moisture fell from his pale brow. "What men!" murmured he. And, involuntarily, he darted a glance at the minister which would have terrified him, if Mazarin, at the moment, had not concealed his head under his pillow.

"Monsieur," said the young Duc d'Anjou, placing his hand, delicate and white as that of a woman, upon the arm of Athos, "tell that brave man, I beg you, that Monsieur, brother of the king, will to-morrow drink his health before five hundred of the best gentlemen of France." And, on finishing those words, the young man, perceiving that his enthusiasm had deranged one of his ruffles, set to work to put it to rights with the greatest care imaginable.

"Let us resume business, sire," interrupted Mazarin, who never was enthusiastic, and who wore no ruffles.

"Yes, monsieur," replied Louis XIV. "Pursue your communication, monsieur le comte," added he, turning towards Athos.

Athos immediately began and offered in due form the hand of the Princess Henrietta Stuart to the young prince, the king's brother. The conference lasted an hour; after which the doors of the chamber were thrown open to the courtiers, who resumed their places as if nothing had been kept from them in the occupations of that evening. Athos then found himself again with Raoul, and the father and son were able to clasp each other's hands.