The three musketeers

Alexandre Dumas; Auguste Maquet

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The Three Musketeers

By Alexandre Dumas, Père

First Volume of the D’Artagnan Series

CONTENTS

AUTHOR’S PREFACE
Chapter I. THE THREE PRESENTS OF D’ARTAGNAN THE ELDER
Chapter II. THE ANTECHAMBER OF M. DE TRÉVILLE
Chapter III. THE AUDIENCE
Chapter IV. THE SHOULDER OF ATHOS, THE BALDRIC OF PORTHOS AND THE HANDKERCHIEF OF ARAMIS
Chapter V. THE KING’S MUSKETEERS AND THE CARDINAL’S GUARDS
Chapter VI. HIS MAJESTY KING LOUIS XIII.
Chapter VII. THE INTERIOR OF THE MUSKETEERS
Chapter VIII. CONCERNING A COURT INTRIGUE
Chapter IX. D’ARTAGNAN SHOWS HIMSELF
Chapter X. A MOUSETRAP IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY
Chapter XI. IN WHICH THE PLOT THICKENS
Chapter XII. GEORGE VILLIERS, DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM
Chapter XIII. MONSIEUR BONACIEUX
Chapter XIV. THE MAN OF MEUNG
Chapter XV. MEN OF THE ROBE AND MEN OF THE SWORD
Chapter XVI. IN WHICH M. SÉGUIER, KEEPER OF THE SEALS, LOOKS MORE THAN ONCE FOR THE BELL
Chapter XVII. BONACIEUX AT HOME

Chapter XVIII. LOVER AND HUSBAND
Chapter XIX. PLAN OF CAMPAIGN
Chapter XX. THE JOURNEY
Chapter XXI. THE COUNTESS DE WINTER
Chapter XXII. THE BALLET OF LA MERLAISON
Chapter XXIII. THE RENDEZVOUS
Chapter XXIV. THE PAVILION
Chapter XXV. PORTHOS
Chapter XXVI. ARAMIS AND HIS THESIS
Chapter XXVII. THE WIFE OF ATHOS
Chapter XXVIII. THE RETURN
Chapter XXIX. HUNTING FOR THE EQUIPMENTS
Chapter XXX. D’ARTAGNAN AND THE ENGLISHMAN
Chapter XXXI. ENGLISH AND FRENCH
Chapter XXXII. A PROCURATOR’S DINNER
Chapter XXXIII. SOUBRETTE AND MISTRESS
Chapter XXXIV. IN WHICH THE EQUIPMENT OF ARAMIS AND PORTHOS IS TREATED OF
Chapter XXXV. A GASCON A MATCH FOR CUPID
Chapter XXXVI. DREAM OF VENGEANCE
Chapter XXXVII. MILADY’S SECRET
Chapter XXXVIII. HOW, WITHOUT INCOMMDING HIMSELF, ATHOS PROCURES HIS EQUIPMENT
Chapter XXXIX. A VISION
Chapter XL. A TERRIBLE VISION
Chapter XLI. THE SIEGE OF LA ROCHELLE
Chapter XLII. THE ANJOU WINE
Chapter XLIII. THE SIGN OF THE RED DOVECOT

Chapter XLIV. THE UTILITY OF STOVEPIPES
Chapter XLV. A CONJUGAL SCENE
Chapter XLVI. THE BASTION SAINT-GERVAIS
Chapter XLVII. THE COUNCIL OF THE MUSKETEERS
Chapter XLVIII. A FAMILY AFFAIR
Chapter XLIX. FATALITY
Chapter L. CHAT BETWEEN BROTHER AND SISTER
Chapter LI. OFFICER
Chapter LII. CAPTIVITY: THE FIRST DAY
Chapter LIII. CAPTIVITY: THE SECOND DAY
Chapter LIV. CAPTIVITY: THE THIRD DAY
Chapter LV. CAPTIVITY: THE FOURTH DAY
Chapter LVI. CAPTIVITY: THE FIFTH DAY
Chapter LVII. MEANS FOR CLASSICAL TRAGEDY
Chapter LVIII. ESCAPE
Chapter LIX. WHAT TOOK PLACE AT PORTSMOUTH AUGUST 23, 1628
Chapter LX. IN FRANCE
Chapter LXI. THE CARMELITE CONVENT AT BÉTHUNE
Chapter LXII. TWO VARIETIES OF DEMONS
Chapter LXIII. THE DROP OF WATER
Chapter LXIV. THE MAN IN THE RED CLOAK
Chapter LXV. TRIAL
Chapter LXVI. EXECUTION
Chapter LXVII. CONCLUSION
EPILOGUE

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

In which it is proved that, notwithstanding their names' ending in _os_ and _is_, the heroes of the story which we are about to have the honor to relate to our readers have nothing mythological about them.

A short time ago, while making researches in the Royal Library for my History of Louis XIV., I stumbled by chance upon the Memoirs of M. d'Artagnan, printed—as were most of the works of that period, in which authors could not tell the truth without the risk of a residence, more or less long, in the Bastille—at Amsterdam, by Pierre Rouge. The title attracted me; I took them home with me, with the permission of the guardian, and devoured them.

It is not my intention here to enter into an analysis of this curious work; and I shall satisfy myself with referring such of my readers as appreciate the pictures of the period to its pages. They will therein find portraits penciled by the hand of a master; and although these squibs may be, for the most part, traced upon the doors of barracks and the walls of cabarets, they will not find the likenesses of Louis XIII., Anne of Austria, Richelieu, Mazarin, and the courtiers of the period, less faithful than in the history of M. Anquetil.

But, it is well known, what strikes the capricious mind of the poet is not always what affects the mass of readers. Now, while admiring, as others doubtless will admire, the details we have to relate, our main preoccupation concerned a matter to which no one before ourselves had given a thought.

D'Artagnan relates that on his first visit to M. de Tréville, captain of the king's Musketeers, he met in the antechamber three young men,

serving in the illustrious corps into which he was soliciting the honor of being received, bearing the names of Athos, Porthos, and Aramis.

We must confess these three strange names struck us; and it immediately occurred to us that they were but pseudonyms, under which D'Artagnan had disguised names perhaps illustrious, or else that the bearers of these borrowed names had themselves chosen them on the day in which, from caprice, discontent, or want of fortune, they had donned the simple Musketeer's uniform.

From that moment we had no rest till we could find some trace in contemporary works of these extraordinary names which had so strongly awakened our curiosity.

The catalogue alone of the books we read with this object would fill a whole chapter, which, although it might be very instructive, would certainly afford our readers but little amusement. It will suffice, then, to tell them that at the moment at which, discouraged by so many fruitless investigations, we were about to abandon our search, we at length found, guided by the counsels of our illustrious friend Paulin Paris, a manuscript in folio, endorsed 4772 or 4773, we do not recollect which, having for title, "Memoirs of the Comte de la Fère, Touching Some Events Which Passed in France Toward the End of the Reign of King Louis XIII. and the Commencement of the Reign of King Louis XIV."

It may be easily imagined how great was our joy when, in turning over this manuscript, our last hope, we found at the twentieth page the name of Athos, at the twenty-seventh the name of Porthos, and at the thirty-first the name of Aramis.

The discovery of a completely unknown manuscript at a period in

which historical science is carried to such a high degree appeared almost miraculous. We hastened, therefore, to obtain permission to print it, with the view of presenting ourselves someday with the pack of others at the doors of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, if we should not succeed—a very probable thing, by the by—in gaining admission to the Académie Française with our own proper pack. This permission, we feel bound to say, was graciously granted; which compels us here to give a public contradiction to the slanderers who pretend that we live under a government but moderately indulgent to men of letters.

Now, this is the first part of this precious manuscript which we offer to our readers, restoring it to the title which belongs to it, and entering into an engagement that if (of which we have no doubt) this first part should obtain the success it merits, we will publish the second immediately.

In the meanwhile, as the godfather is a second father, we beg the reader to lay to our account, and not to that of the Comte de la Fère, the pleasure or the _ennui_ he may experience.

This being understood, let us proceed with our history.

The Three Musketeers

Chapter I. THE THREE PRESENTS OF D’ARTAGNAN THE ELDER

On the first Monday of the month of April, 1625, the market town of Meung, in which the author of _Romance of the Rose_ was born, appeared to be in as perfect a state of revolution as if the Huguenots

had just made a second La Rochelle of it. Many citizens, seeing the women flying toward the High Street, leaving their children crying at the open doors, hastened to don the cuirass, and supporting their somewhat uncertain courage with a musket or a partisan, directed their steps toward the hostelry of the Jolly Miller, before which was gathered, increasing every minute, a compact group, vociferous and full of curiosity.

In those times panics were common, and few days passed without some city or other registering in its archives an event of this kind. There were nobles, who made war against each other; there was the king, who made war against the cardinal; there was Spain, which made war against the king. Then, in addition to these concealed or public, secret or open wars, there were robbers, mendicants, Huguenots, wolves, and scoundrels, who made war upon everybody. The citizens always took up arms readily against thieves, wolves or scoundrels, often against nobles or Huguenots, sometimes against the king, but never against the cardinal or Spain. It resulted, then, from this habit that on the said first Monday of April, 1625, the citizens, on hearing the clamor, and seeing neither the red-and-yellow standard nor the livery of the Duc de Richelieu, rushed toward the hostel of the Jolly Miller. When arrived there, the cause of the hubbub was apparent to all.

A young man—we can sketch his portrait at a dash. Imagine to yourself a Don Quixote of eighteen; a Don Quixote without his corselet, without his coat of mail, without his cuisses; a Don Quixote clothed in a woolen doublet, the blue color of which had faded into a nameless shade between lees of wine and a heavenly azure; face long and brown; high cheek bones, a sign of sagacity; the maxillary

muscles enormously developed, an infallible sign by which a Gascon may always be detected, even without his cap—and our young man wore a cap set off with a sort of feather; the eye open and intelligent; the nose hooked, but finely chiseled. Too big for a youth, too small for a grown man, an experienced eye might have taken him for a farmer's son upon a journey had it not been for the long sword which, dangling from a leather baldric, hit against the calves of its owner as he walked, and against the rough side of his steed when he was on horseback.

For our young man had a steed which was the observed of all observers. It was a Béarn pony, from twelve to fourteen years old, yellow in his hide, without a hair in his tail, but not without windgalls on his legs, which, though going with his head lower than his knees, rendering a martingale quite unnecessary, contrived nevertheless to perform his eight leagues a day. Unfortunately, the qualities of this horse were so well concealed under his strange-colored hide and his unaccountable gait, that at a time when everybody was a connoisseur in horseflesh, the appearance of the aforesaid pony at Meung—which place he had entered about a quarter of an hour before, by the gate of Beaugency—produced an unfavorable feeling, which extended to his rider.

And this feeling had been more painfully perceived by young D'Artagnan—for so was the Don Quixote of this second Rosinante named—from his not being able to conceal from himself the ridiculous appearance that such a steed gave him, good horseman as he was. He had sighed deeply, therefore, when accepting the gift of the pony from M. d'Artagnan the elder. He was not ignorant that such a beast was worth at least twenty livres; and the words which had

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