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In the Superior Court,

THREE GUARDSMEN

BY ALEXANDRE DUMAS

Aramis' Thesis.

ARTAGNAN had appeared to believe all that Porthos had told him, convinced that no frieudalip will hold out against surprised secret, particularly when ride is despis interested in that we cret. Now, in his projects of intriguefor the future and defermined as he
was to make his three friends the instruments of his fortune, D'Artagnan
was not sorry at getting in his grasp
beforehand the invisible strings by
which he reckoned upon moving them
And yet as he journeyed along a profound sadness weighed upon his heart.
He thought of young and pretty Mme.
Bynacieux. He feared that some serious misfortune had befallen the poor
woman. He had no doubt she was a
victin of the cardinal's vengeance, and,
as was well known, the vengeance of
his emisence was terrible.
At the Crevecoeur inn, where he had
left Aramis, it was not a host, but a
hostess who received him. D'Artagnan
was a physiognomist. His eye took in
at a glauce the plump, cheerful countenance of the mistress of the place,
and he at once perceived there was no

tenance of the mistress of the place, and he at once perceived there was no occasion for dissembling with her.

"My good dame," asked D'Artagnan, "can you telt me what is become of one of my friends whom we were obliged to leave here about twelve days ago?"

"A handsome young man, three or four and transity were old mild semi-

"A handsome young man, three or four and twenty years old, mild, amiable and well made?"

"Exactly the man—wounded, moreover, in the shoulder?"

"Just so. Well, monsteur, he is full here!"

"Ah, my dear dame," said D'Artagnan, springing from his horse and throwing the buddle to Planchet, "you restore me to life! Where is this dear Aramis? Let me embrace him! I am

Aramis? Let me embrace him! I am quite anxious to see him a main."
"I beg your prison mension; but I doubt whether he can see you at this moment. The is with the cure of Moni didier and the superior of the Jesuits of Amiens. After his illness grace touched him, and he determined to enter into orders. Is monsiour still anxious to see him?"
"Wors so than ever."

""More so than ever."
""Well, monisieur has only to take the right hand staircase in the yard and knock at No. 5, on the second floor."
D'Artignan walked, quickly in the direction pointed out and mounted one of those exterior staircases that ore direction pointed out and mounted one of those exterior staircases that are still to be seen in the yards of our old fashioned inns. The door opened and D'Artagnan penetrated into the cham-

ber.
Aramis, in a black gown, his head enveloped in a sort of round, flat cap, was sented before an optong table, covered with rolls of paper and enormous volumes in folio. At his right hand was placed the superior of the Jesuitz, and on his left the ture of Montdidler. The curtains were half

entering Arams lifted up his bend and beheld his friend. But to the great as-tonishment of the young man the sight of him did not produce much at-

Belleve me, I am very glad to see you."

"So am I delighted to see you," said D'Artagnan, "but I disturb you, perhaps, my dear Aramis," continued D'Artagnan, "for by what I see I am led to I s'leve you are confessing to these gost lemen."

Aramis colored imperceptibly.

"You disturb me! Oh, quite the contrary, dear friend, I swear, And as a proof of what I say, permit me to declare I am rejoiced to see you safe and sound."

"Ah, he'll come round," thoughts D'Artagnan, "that's not had."

"For this gentleman, who is my friend, has just excaped from a serious danger," continued aramis, with unction, polating to D'Artagnan, with his hand and addressing the two ecclesiants. "You arrive very appoper."

stastics. "You arrive very apropose D'Artagnan, and by taking part in our

discussion may assist us with your fa-telligence. M. le Principal of Amiena, M. le Cure of Montdidier, and I. are arguing upon cestain theological ques-tions with which we have been much interested."

"Work stowly," said-tie cure," "We

"And so, Aramis, you are decidedly going into the church? What will our two friends say? What will M. de Treville say? They will treat you as a deserter, I warn you."

"I do not enter the church; I reenter it. I deserted the church for the world, for you know that I committed violence upon myself when I became a musketeer."

"When 12 J. know nothing about it."

"Not at all."
"This is my history then." And Aramis told D'Ariagnan how he had been compelled to leave the theological seminary after killing a man in a duel fought about a woman. He continued:
"Athos, whose acquaintance I made about that period, and Porthos, who had taught me some effective tricks of fence, prevailed upon me to solicit the uniform of a musketeer. The king entertained great regard for my father, who had fallen at the siege of Arras, and the uniform was granted. You

dear D'Artagnan, has been a warning to me from heaven."
"This wound? Bah! It is nearly healed, and I am sure that it is not that which at the present moment gives you'the most pain."

"What do you think it is, then?

"Ab," said he, dis

"To a certainty it was not the cardinal, but I thought you aimed higher."
"Higher? And who am I to nourish
such ambition? A poor musketeer, a
beggar and unknown who hates slav
ery and finds himself ill placed in the
world."
"To a certainty it was not the cardinal, but be satisfied that one of them
is your property."
"I choose that which the red headed
boy is leading."
"Have it, then."
"That is enough to drive away all
my pains. I could ride upon him with

sigh.
"A woman whom I love, whom I adore, has just been torn from me by force. I do not know where she is: 1



"Yes, but you have at least this con selation, that you can say to yoursels she has not quitted you voluntarily

"So you renounce the world, then orever; that is a settled thing; a res-

CHAPTER XXI.

The Wife of Athon. ELL, we have now to search for Athos," said D'Arta gnan to the vivacious Ar-amis when he had inform-ed him of all that had passed since their departure from the capital and a good dinner had made one of them forget his theology and the other his

fatigue.
"Do you think, then, that any harm can have happened to him?" asked Aramis. "Athos is so cool, so brave and handles his sword so skillfully."
"There is no doubt of all that. But I fear lest Athos should have been beaten down by a mob of serving men. This is my reason for wishing to set out again as soon as I possibly can."
"I will try to accompany you." said

do you mean to set out?"
"Tomorrow at daybrenk."
"Till tomorrow, then," said Aramis,
"for, irou nerved as you are, you must
stand in need of repose."
The next morning when D'Artagnan
Entered Aramis' chamber he found him standing at the window.
"What are you looking at there?"
asked D'Artagnan.

"I am admiring three magnificent horses which the stable lads are lead-ing about. It would be a pleasure worthy of a prince to travel upon such

horses."
"Well, my dear Aramis, you may
enjoy that pleasure, for one of those
three horses is yours, with its caparison."
"What, those rich hoisters, that vel-

stiver, are they all mine? Why, it must have been the king who made you such a present."
"To a certainty it was not the car-

"That is enough to drive away all my pains. I could ride upon him with thirty balls in my body. What hand-some stirrups! Hola! Bagin, come here this minute."

with his usual grace and lightness, but with his usual grace and ngutness, our after a few vauits and curvets of the noble animal his rider felt his painscome on so insupportably that he turned pale and became unsteady in his seat. D'Artagnan caught him in his

care of yourself," said he. "I will go alone in search of Athos."

But how do you mean to pass your time till I come back? No more theolin ten minutes, after commending his friend to the cares of the hostess and

Bazin, D'Artagnan was trotting along in the direction of Amiens. How was he going to find Athos. even should be find him at all? The position in which he had left him was position in which he had left him was critical. He might very probably have succumbed. This idea, while darkening his brow, drew several sighs from him and caused him to formulate to himself a few yows of vengennes. Of all his friends Athos was the eldest and the least resembling him in appearance, in his tasks and sympathics. pearance, in his tastes and sympathies. And yet be entertained a marked preference for this rentleman. The noble and distinguished air of Athos, those flashes of greatness which from time to time broke out from the shade in which he voluntarily kept himself, that unalterable equality of terror. that unalterable equality of temper which made him the most pleasant companion in the world, that forced companion in the world, that forced gayety, that bravery which might have been termed blind if it had not been the result of the rarest coolness—such qualities attracted more than the ge-teem, more than the friendship, of

D'Artagnas; they attracted his admiradon.
"Well," thought D'Artagnan, "poor
though is perhaps at this moment dead,

boution decreed?"
"Workerer! You are my friend today, tomorrow you will he no more to me than a shadow, or, rather, even you will no longer exist for me. As for the world, it is a sepuicher and nothing else."

"Well, then, let us say ne more about it," said D'Ariagnan, "and let us burr this letter, which, so deabt, amounces to you some fresh infidelity of your servant maid."

"What letter "cried Aramia eagerly, "A letter which was sent to your absence and which was given to me for you."

"But from whom is that letter?"
"Oh, from some heartbroken waiting woman of Mme, de Chevreuse, perhaps, who was obliged to return to Tours with her mistress and who in crede to appear smart and attractive, stole some perfumed paper and sealed her letter with a duchess' coronet."

"What do you say?"
"Well, i really think I must have lost it." "Brainks, Tyon are killing me?"
"Well, i really think I must have lost it, his countenance absolutely beaming with delight.

"Thanks, D'Artagnan, thanks?" cried Aramis sprang toward him, seized the letter, read it, or, rather, devoured the let of the inn.

D'Artagnan had often meditated against the peridious bost one of those hearty vengeances which offer consoliation while being hoped for. He entered the hostelry with his hat pulled over his eyes, his left hand on the pummel, of the sword, and cracking his whip with his right hand.

"Do you remember me?" said he to the host, who advanced, bowing, toward him.

"I have not that honor, monsegneur," replied the latter, his eyes being dazzled by the brilliant style in which D'Artagnan traveled.

"Well, two words will refresh your memory. What have you done with that gentleman against whom you had the audacity about twelve days ago to make an accusation of passing bad money?

The host became as pale as death, D'Artagnan having assumed a threatening attitude, and Planchet having modeled himself upon his master.

"Ah, monseigneur, de not mention it?" cried the host in the most pitiable voice imaginable. "Ah, seigneur, how dearly have I paid for that fault Delgn to listen to me, monseigneur, and be merciful. Sit down, I beg."

D'Artagnan, mute with anger and uneasiness, took as seat in the threatening attitude of a judge, Planchet looking dereely over the back of his fautual.,"

"Here is the history, monseigneur,"

now recollect you. It was you who rode off at the moment I had that unfortunate difference with the gentleman you speak of. I had been warned by the authorities that a celebrated coiner of bad money would arrive at my place with several of his companions, all disguised as guards or musketeers. I was furnished with a description of your horses, your lackeys, your countenances—nothing was omitted."

ted."
"Go on, go on!" said D'Artagnan,
who quickly conceived whence such
an exact description had come.
"I took, then, in conformity with the

possession of the persons of the pre-tended coiners."

"But, once again, that gentleman, where is he? What is become of him? Is he dead? Is he living?"

"That gentleman, your friend, de-fended himself desperately. Having placed two men hors de combat with his pistols, he retreated, fighting with his sword, with which he disabled one of my men and stunned me with a blow of the flat side of it."

"But," cried D'Atharnan. "Athos—

"But," cried D'Artagnan, "Athos-what is become of Athos?"

"While fighting and retreating, as have told monseigneur, he found the door of the cellar stairs behind him, and as the door was open, he took out the key and barricaded himself inside. As we were sure of finding him there, we left him alone."

we left him alone.

"Yes," said D'Artagnan, "you did not particularly wish to kill him and so were satisfied with detaining him-a

were satisfied with declaring him-a prisoner."

"A prisoner, mossigneur? Why, he imprisoned himself. The two men that were wounded were carried off by their companions, and I have heard nothing of them since. I went to M. the Governor, to whom I related all that had passed, and whom I asked what I should do with my prisoner. But M. the Governor was all astonishment. He told me he knew nothing about the matter."

"But Athos!" cried D'Artagnan

about the matter."
"But Athos!" cried D'Artagnan.
"As I was anxious to repair the wrongs I had done the prisoner," resumed the innkeeper, "I took my way straight to the cellar in order to set him at liberty. Ah, monsieur, he was no longer a man, he was a devil! To my offer of liberty, he replied that it was nothing but a snare and that before he came out he intended to impose his own conditions. I told him very humbly, for I could not conceal from myself the scrape I had got into from myself the scrape I had got into by laying hands on one of his r)-eaty's musketeers, I told him I was quite ready to submit to his condi-tions.

"In the first place, said he, I in sist upon having my lackey placed with me, fully armed. We hastone to obey this order, for you will please to understand, monsieur, we were dis to understand, monsteur, we were dis-posed to do everything your friend could desire. M. Grimaud (he told us his name, he did, although he does not talk much), M. Grimaud, then, went down to the cellar, wounded as he was; then his master having re-ceived him, barricaded the door afresh and ordered us to remain quietly in

our own bar."
"Well, where is Athos now?" cried
D'Artagnan.

"In the cellar, monsieur. Ah, if you could but persuade him to come out "Then he is there? I shall find him

"Without doubt you wil, monaicur.

He persists in remaining there. We every day pass through the loophole some bread at the end of a fork and some meat when he asks for it; but, alas, it is not of bread and meat that

he makes the greatest consumption."
"So that from that time"— replied
D'Artagnan, totally unable to refrain from laughing at the pitiable face of

most miserable lite magninate, for you must know, mensieur, that all our previsions are in the cellar. We are forced to refuse food and drink to the travelers who come to the house, so that our hostelry is daily going to ruin."

"And not more than justice, neither, on study man. Could you not per-

say?"
"Yes, monsieur, you are right," said the host. "But, hark, hark; there he is in a passion again!"
"Somebody has disturbed him, no doubt," said D'Artagnan.
"But he must be disturbed!" cried the host. "Here are two English gentlemen just arrived!"
"Well;"
"Well, the English like good wine, as you may know monsieur. These have

"Well, the English like good wine, as you may know, monsieur. These have asked for the best. My wife then requested permission of M. Athos to go into the cellar to satisfy these gentlemen, and he, as usual, has refused. Ah, there he is, louder than ever?"
D'Artagnan, in fact, heard a great noise on the side next the cellar. He rose and, preceded by the host, wringing his hands and followed by Planchet with his musketoon, ready for action, he approached the scene of action.

"But this is a tyranny," cried one of the Englishmen in very good French, though with a foreign accent, "that this madman will not allow these good people access to their own wine! Nonsense! Let us break open the door, and if he is too far gone in his madness—well, we will kill him?"

"Bofily, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, drawing his pistols from his belt, "there is nobody to be killed, if you please."

"Good, good!" cried Athos from the other side of the door. "Let them just come in, these devourers of little children, and we shall see!"

Brave as they appeared to be, the two English gentlemen looked at each other hesitatingly. There was a moment of silence, but at length the two Englishmen felt ashamed to draw back, and the more angry one descended the five or six steps which led to the cellar and gave a kick against the door enough to spilt a wall.

"Planchet," said D'Artagnan, cocking his pistols, "I will take charge of the one at the top; you look to the one

below. Now, gentlemen, if it's battle you want you shall have it."
"Ah!" cried hollow voice of Athos, "I can hear D'Artagnan, I think."
"Yes," cried D'Artagnan, "I am here!"

here!"
The gentlemen had drawn their swords, but they found themselves taken between two fires. They still hesitated an instant, but, as before, pride prevailed, and a second kick split the door from bottom to top.
"Stand on one side, D'Artagnan, stand on one side," cried Athos. "I

am going to hee?
"Gentlemen," exclaimed D'Artagnan,
whom' reflection never abandoned,
"gentlemen, think of what you are about! Patience, Athos! You are running your heads into a very silly affair. You will be riddled. My lackey and I will have three shots at you, and you will get as many from the cellar. You will then have our swords, with drink, I give you my word. Gentle-men, return your swords to their scab-bards."

"We will provided you replace your

pistois in your belt."
"Willingty."
And D'Artagnan set the example.
Then, turning toward Planchet, he
made him a sign to uncock his muske-

The Englishmen, overcome by these peaceful proceedings, sheathed their swords grumblingly. The history of Athos' imprisonment was then related to them, and as they were really gentlemen they pronounced the host in the warrant. in the wrong.

The Englishmen bowed and went up-

of you."

An instant after the broken door was

removed and the pale face of Athos appeared, who with a rapid glance took a survey of the environs.

D'Artagnan threw himself on his neck and embraced him tenderly. He then endeavored to draw him from his moist abode, but to his surprise per-

ceived that Athos staggered.

"Why, you are wounded!" said he.

"1? Not at all: I am dead drunk. that's all, and never did a man set about getting so better. Why, my good host, I must at least have drunk for my part 150 bottles."
"Oh," cried the host, "if the lackey

has drunk only half as much as the

musketoon on his shoulder, and his head shaking like one of those drunk-en satyrs in the pictures of Rubens. He was moistened before and behind with a liquid which the host recog-nized as his best olive oil.

The procession crossed the public room and proceeded to take possession of the best apartment in the house, which D'Artagnan occupied by author

cellar. A frightful spectacle awaited them. They found swimming in pud-dles of oil and wine the bones and fragments of all the hams eaten by

cellar. D'Artagnan himself was moved by them; Athos did not even turn his

bost armed himself with a spit and rushed into the chamber occupied by the two friends.

ing the host. "some wine! Why, you have drunk more than 100 pistoles' worth! I am a ruined man, lost, destroyed! You shall pay me for all this!"
"You triple ass!" said Athos, rising, but he sank down again immediately.
He had tried his strength to the ut-

st. D'Artagnan came to his relief,

"My dear friend," said D'Artagnan, "If you stun us in this manner we



"You shall pay me for all this!" will all four go and shut ourselves up in your cellar and see if the mischief

"Very well; get me my purse back and keep the 60 pistoles."

"In the stable."
"It's worth 30 pistoles, take it, and there ends the matter."

"What!" cried Athos, "are you selling my horse, my Bajazet? And pray upon what shall I make my campaign

D'Artaguan

the laths; there are twenty-live bottles of it, left. Bring up six of them."
"And don't forget;" said B'Artagnan, "to bring up four bottles of the same sort for the two English gentlemen."

"And now," said Atlos, "while they are bringing up the wine, tell me, D'Artaguan, what has become of the others. Come!"
D'Artaguan related how he had found Porthos in bed with a strained knee and Aramis at a table between two theologians. D'Artagnan also re-lated his adventure with Mme. Bo-nacieux. Athos listened to him with perfect immebility of countenance and when he had finished:

"Triffes, all that," said Athos, "noth-ing but triffes." That was Athos' ex-

Pression.
"You always say trifles, my dear
"You always say trifles, my dear
"You always say trifles, my dear Athosi" said D'Artagnan, "and that comes very ill from you, who have never been in love." . The drink deadened eye of Athos The drink agadened eye of Aloss flashed, but it was only for a moment—it became duli and vacant as before.

"That's true," he said quietly. "For my part, I have never loved. I say that love is a lottery, in which he who wins wins death! You are very fortu-

"You bay! Why, there lives not a man who has not believed, as you do that his mistress loved him, and there lives not a man who has not been deceived by his mistress. Your mistor tune is languable. I should like to know what you would say if I were to relate to you a real tale of love."

"Which concerns you?"

"Either me or one of my friend "I am all attention," said D'Arta-

Athos collected himself, and in pro Athos collected himself, and in proportion as he did so D'Aragana saw that he became paler; he was at that period of intoxication in which vulgar deinkers fall and sleep. He kept himself upright and dreamed without sleeping. This somnambulism of drunkenness had something frightful in it.

"Be it done then, as you desire. One of my friends please to cheave not

"Be it done then, as you desire. One of my friends, please to observe, not myself," said Athos, interrupting himself with a melancholy smile; "one of the counts of my province, Berry, at twenty-five years of age, fell in love with a girl of sixteen, beautiful as fancy can paint. She lived in a small town with her brother, who was a cure. Both had recently come into the country. had recently come into the country; they came nobody knew whence; but when seeing her so lovely and her brother so plous, nobody thought of asking whence they came. They were said, however, to be of good extraction. My friend, who was lord of the country, might have seized her forcibly at his will, for he was master. But

he two friends,
"Some wine!" said Athos on perceivng the host.

he was an honorable man—he married
her. The fool! The ass! The idiot!"
"How so, if he loved her?" asked "Wait," said Athos. "He took her

to his chateau and made her the first lady in the province, and, in justice, it must be allowed, she supported her rank becomingly."
"Well?" asked D'Artagnan, quite ex-

"Well, one day when she was hunt-"Well, one day when she was hunting with her husband;" continued Athos in a low voice and speaking very quickly, "she fell from her horse and fainted; the count flew to her help, and as she appeared to be oppressed by her clothes, he ripped them open with his poignard, and in so doing laid bare her shoulder; and now, guess, D'Artagnan," said Athos, with guess, D'Artagnan," said Athos, with a manical burst of laughter, "guess what she had upon her shoulder." "How can I 'tell?" said D'Artagnan. "A fleur-de-lis." said Athos. "She was branded!"

And Athos emptied at a single draught the glass he held in his hand. "Horror!" cried D'Artagnan. "What

"Truth! my friend—the angel was a demon; the poor young girl had been a thief!" "And what did the count do?"

right of high and low justice. He tore the dress of the countess to pieces, he tied her hands behind her and hanged her on a tree. That has cured me of beautiful, poetical and loving women," said Athos after a considerable pause, raising his head and forgetting to cou-tinue the apologue of the count. "Drink!"

"And her brother?" added D'Arta [TO BE CONTINUED.]

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