

on the walls or hear the drums beating the summons to parley."

He launched three hundred fresh men under one of his most dashing officers, and ordered another breach to be effected. Then, feeling somewhat more at his ease, he turned his attention to the casket which Colbert's messenger was holding out to him. It was his property; he had won it.

D'Artagnan reached out his hand for this casket, when a ball from the ramparts shattered it to pieces in the officer's arms, struck D'Artagnan full in the chest, and knocked him down upon a sloping heap of earth, while the fleur-de-lis baton escaped from the broken sides of the box and rolled down under the nerveless hand of the marshal.

D'Artagnan tried to rise. It was believed he had been thrown down, but not wounded. Then a terrible cry rose from the dismayed officers near him: the marshal was covered with blood, and the pallor of death was slowly mounting to his noble visage.

Supported by the arms that were extended on all sides to receive him, he was able once more to turn his eyes towards the fortress, and to descry the white flag on the crest of the principal bastion. His ears, already dulled to the sounds of life, caught feebly the roll of the drums which proclaimed the victory.

Then, clutching the baton with its golden fleur-de-lis convulsively in his nerveless hand, he cast upon it the eyes that had no longer the power to look up to heaven, and fell back, murmuring those strange words, which amazed the soldiers as much as if they had been cabalistic incantations, — words which had once been significant of so many things on earth, and which now none but the dying man could any longer comprehend:

"Athos, Porthos, we meet again! — Aramis, adieu forever!"

Of the four valiant men whose history we have related, there remained but one. God had taken back to himself the souls of the three others.

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