

*When King Louis XIII and his most trusted advisors discover that the queen has given birth to twins, they realize that two princes, both with equal claim to the throne, would lead to civil war. The king determines to hide one son away, raised in ignorance of his birth. But when Gaston grows up to learn of his birthright, his brother and Cardinal Mazarin take more drastic steps to keep Gaston's existence a secret and their own power secure.*

The following is an excerpt from *The Man in the Iron Mask*, a play by Alexandre Dumas, Narcisse Fournier, and Auguste Arnould; translation by Frank J. Morlock, copyright © 2001, all rights reserved. The complete text is available from Rogue Publishing at [www.roguepublishing.com](http://www.roguepublishing.com).

GASTON What do you want from me, sir?

SAINT-MARS I've come— . . . What do I see? What a strange resemblance!

GASTON Are you a painter, sir? and so enchanted with my face that you intend to make a copy—? As you please, face or profile, but begin to speak.

SAINT-MARS (*aside*) It's the face of the king—his figure, even his voice. (*Aloud.*) An important person struck by your good looks is taking the most lively interest in your fortune. And he could introduce you at court by attaching you to his service.

GASTON Who is this lord?

SAINT-MARS But you are already rushing me excitedly . . . and supposing the cardinal doesn't wish to have it known . . .

GASTON The cardinal . . . I refuse . . . I must refuse.

SAINT-MARS This response will astonish him. Don't you have claims to this favor? Aren't you a gentleman and a good Catholic?

GASTON Sir—

SAINT-MARS Doubtless you haven't seen the court. You were raised in some distant province.

GASTON Little concern to you, I suppose.

SAINT-MARS I am seeking reasons for the strange reception you give to my offers. If you knew what you are refusing—

GASTON The court is indeed such a magnificent residence?

SAINT-MARS Ah! Young man! You ought to have seen the cardinal's last tournament.

GASTON And what they say of the gallantry and beauty of the ladies—

SAINT-MARS All that is true. We courtiers find them a little cruel.

GASTON And amongst all these beauties, isn't one especially remarked?

SAINT-MARS Above all, a lady-in-waiting to the queen mother, the charming widow of the Marquis de Senecy.

GASTON Widow, you say; she's a widow?

SAINT-MARS You know her?

GASTON Marie d'Ostanges—the companion of my youth.

SAINT-MARS You were raised at Semur?

GASTON In the province of which you were governor.

SAINT-MARS You were living on the shores of the Yonne with father Audoin, near Baron d'Ostanges; you were called d'Orville.

GASTON And you, sir, you were that Saint-Mars whom the entire province detested and whose tyrannical acts I often combated. You see, sir, that we know each other.

SAINT-MARS (*aside*) I know enough for the cardinal. (*Aloud.*) You dare bring sight of yourself to the marquise?

GASTON Who will prevent me?

SAINT-MARS The noble gentlemen who court her and who hardly suffer the competition from the king.

GASTON From the king!

SAINT-MARS Whoever has Louis for a rival won't fear M. Gaston d'Orville.

GASTON And he, in his turn, fears no one.

SAINT-MARS That's enough, young man; know how to control yourself and don't draw on yourself the eyes of the court by some imprudent outburst. The court is already observing your actions. I am unaware of the motive for this surveillance—but if you take my advice, don't appear at the Louvre.