CHARACTERS

Edmond Dantès : the protagonist of the novel, later emerging as the Count of Monte Cristo.

Dantès was an honest and caring man who turned bitter and vengeful after being convicted of a crime he did not commit. He set out as the Count of Monte Cristo to avenge those who wronged the hopeful sailor he once was and reward those who helped him.

He also adopted the personae of Father Busoni and Lord Wilmore to carry out anonymous acts and to win the trust of the people he wished to manipulate.

Mercédès : Dantès's beautiful fiancée, and later Countess Morcerf. Though she married another man while Dantès was in prison, she never stopped loving Dantès.

Monsieur Morrel : the kind, honest shipowner of the *Pharaon* and true friend to Dantès. Morrel did everything in his power to free Dantès from prison and save Dantès's father from death.

Fernand Mondego : later Count Morcerf. He was Dantès's rival for Mercédès's love. Mondego helped to frame Dantès for treason and married Mercédès when Dantès was in prison.

Danglars : later Baron Danglars. Envious of Dantès, Danglars was the mastermind of the plot that framed Dantès.

Caderousse : a greedy neighbour of Dantès. He was present when the plot to frame Dantès was hatched, but did not take an active part in it.

de Villefort : the Assistant State Prosecutor. His blind ambition made him sentence Dantès for life in order to protect himself.

Monsieur Noirtier : Villefort's father

Renée : Villefort's bride

The Abbé Faria : an old priest and brilliant thinker whom Dantès met in prison. He educated Dantès in the arts and the sciences and helped Dantès become wise to his enemies. Before he died, he left Dantès his vast hidden treasure.

Jacopo : a sailor on the *Young Amelia*

Albert Morcerf : son of Mondego and Mercédès. Unlike his father, Albert was brave, honest and kind.

Franz Epinay : Albert Morcerf's friend

Eugénie	:	Danglars' daughter
Haydée	:	a princess, the daughter of Prince Ali Tebelin, the pacha of the Greek state of Janina who was sold into slavery. Dantès bought her freedom and eventually fell in love with her.
Bertuccio	:	a smuggler, later a loyal steward to Dantès
Benedetto	:	the illegitimate son of de Villefort, who also played the part of the suave and charming Andrea Cavalcanti in one of Dantès's revenge schemes.
Ali	:	a deaf, mute servant to Dantès

PROLOGUE

It was the 24th February 1815. The sun shone softly on the blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea around the island of Elba. Napolean Bonaparte, once the absolute master of France, was now king only of this small island. He who had ruled over one hundred and twenty million subjects now reigned over the six thousand inhabitants of Elba.

In France, the Bourbons had returned to the throne in the person of Louis XVIII, younger brother of the beheaded Louis XVI.

Friends in Paris were plotting to bring back Napoleon as ruler of France. Napoleon himself was also busy with plans for his glorious return.

CHAPTER 1

A Ship Arrives

ON the French Mediterranean coast at Marseilles, sunshine brightened the gilded figure of a Madonna. High above the harbour, from the top of the church of Notre Dame de la Garde, this golden Madonna looked down towards the sea. Seamen called her the 'Protector of the Sailors'.

At the entrance to the harbour stood the massive Fort St. Jean. Out to sea, on a barren rock, stood another Fortress, the Château d'If. This was a prison—a grey stone castle standing bleak against the sky. It had no windows, but only tiny slits let in the stonework. Its gateways were barred with rods of iron. No prisoner was ever known to escape from this grim place.

On this sunny day a three-masted sailing ship, the *Pharaon*, coming from Smyrna, Trieste and Naples, could be seen just beyond the Château d'If. Slowly the ship approached the harbour. Passing the Fort St. Jean, she sailed in towards the quay where many people were waiting. She dropped her anchor.

The first man to go aboard was her owner, Monsieur Morrel. He immediately approached a dark-haired good-looking young man of about twenty who appeared to be in command.

'Ah, it is you, Edmond Dantès!' said Monsieur Morrel. 'What has happened?'

'We have had a great misfortune,' replied the young man.

'Our good Captain Leclere died during the voyage. We buried him at sea.'

Then he explained to the owner how he, as chief officer, had taken over command of the ship after the captain died.

At that moment a customs officer came on board, and Dantès went to meet him.

Monsieur Morrel turned to his supercargo, Danglars, an ugly man about twenty-five years old, who was heartily disliked by the rest of the crew. Danglars, jealous of young Dantès, began to complain about the conduct of the voyage since the death of the captain. He said that a day and a half had been wasted by stopping at the island of Elba instead of coming straight to Marseilles.

Monsieur Morrel called to Dantès and asked him why the ship had stopped at the island of Elba. The young man explained that Captain Leclere, before he died, had given him a package to deliver to one of Napoleon's generals. He had sailed to Elba to deliver it. Whilst on the island, he had also seen Napoleon himself.

Monsieur Morrel turned to Danglars. 'You see,' he said, 'there was a good reason for going to Elba. Dantès was carrying out the last wish of a dying man. He has also brought my ship safely back to Marseilles with her cargo undamaged.'

Then he spoke to Dantès.

'Dantès,' he said, 'I shall appoint you captain of the *Pharaon* for her next voyage.'

Danglars scowled and went away, muttering to himself.

CHAPTER 2

Dantès Comes Home

NEAR the harbour of Marseilles lived a beautiful young girl. Her hair was black as jet and her eyes were dark and soft as velvet. Her name was Mercédès. She lived alone, for her father and mother had died some years ago. As the *Pharaon* was lying in the harbour, she sat at home talking to her cousin, Fernand Mondego, a young man of twenty.

Fernand was a soldier. He had asked Mercédès many times to marry him, but she had always refused because she was in love with Edmond Dantès. So Fernand the soldier hated Edmond the sailor.

While Fernand and Mercédès were talking together, Dantès was getting ready to leave his ship. He said goodbye to his shipmates and walked ashore. First he went to his father's house. His father looked old and weak, and there was neither food nor wine in the house.

'Father, what has happened?' cried Dantès. 'I gave you two hundred francs when I set out on my voyage.'

'Yes, Edmond,' said his father, 'but there was our neighbour, Caderousse. You owed him a hundred and forty francs. He threatened to go to Monsieur Morrel if I did not repay him.'

So the old man had paid Caderousse one hundred and forty francs and had lived for the past three months on only sixty francs. Dantès was very upset. He gave his father some money

and asked him to buy food and wine for himself as soon as possible.

'Don't worry, there will be plenty more money,' he said 'for I have been appointed captain of the *Pharaon* for her next voyage.'

As Dantès was speaking, Caderousse came into the room. He had heard what Dantès had said.

'Congratulations,' said Caderousse, 'on your good fortune.'

Dantès thanked him and tried not to show his dislike of the man. Then he said that he must see Mercédès. He wanted to arrange to marry her on the following day.

'You seem to be in a hurry,' said Caderousse.

'Yes,' replied Dantès. 'I must make a trip to Paris as soon as possible, and I wish to be married before I go.'

'Why must you go to Paris?' asked his father.

'To carry out the last request of poor Captain Leclere,' replied Dantès.

So saying, he hurried out of the house. When he had gone, Caderousse also went outside where Danglars, the supercargo, was waiting for him.

'Ah, there you are!' said Danglars. 'Did you see him? What did he say?'

'He already talks as though he were captain of the *Pharaon*,' replied Caderousse.

Danglars's face turned crimson with anger and his voice was wild. 'He shall not become captain if I can help it!' he cried.

CHAPTER 3

A Trap is Set

DANGLARS and Caderousse went towards the rocky seashore, to the Hotel La Réserve. As they were sitting, drinking wine on the terrace of the hotel, they saw Fernand Mondego coming in their direction. The young man looked very unhappy. Caderousse, who knew him, called to him to come and join them.

'What's the matter with you?' asked Caderousse. 'Has Mercédès sent you away? I hear that she and Dantès are to marry tomorrow.'

Fernand groaned. He had just left Mercédès with Dantès, and he was wild with jealousy.

'And I hear,' went on Caderousse, 'that he is making a trip to Paris soon after the marriage.'

'What's that?' asked Danglars. 'A trip to Paris, did you say? No doubt to deliver the letter which was given to him on the island of Elba. This gives me an idea.'

Then he muttered to himself in a low voice, 'Dantès, you are not yet captain of the *Pharaon*.'

Turning to Fernand with an artful look on his face, he said, 'My friend, you are in love with Mercédès, aren't you?'

'I have loved her all my life,' replied Fernand.

Danglars stared straight into his eyes. 'You must remove Dantès,' he said slowly, 'then you can marry her.'

'If I were to kill Dantès,' answered Fernand, 'Mercédès has told me that she would take her own life.'

'Ah, but you would not have to kill him,' said Danglars craftily. 'There are other ways of removing people whom we do not like. We can get them sent to prison, for instance.'

'And how would I send Dantès to prison?' asked Fernand scornfully.

'It wouldn't be difficult,' said Danglars. 'I will show you. Waiter, bring me a pen and ink and paper.'

The waiter brought them.

'Just think,' said Caderousse, 'Here we have something which will kill a man more surely than if we waited in a wood to stab him with a knife. I have always been more afraid of a pen, a bottle of ink and a sheet of paper, than of a sword or a pistol.'

'Now then,' said Danglars, putting the paper before him, 'all we have to do is to dip the pen in the ink and write with the left hand so that the writing shall not be recognised.'

'But what shall we write?' asked Fernand.

'We shall write a letter to the State Prosecutor saying that Dantès is a Bonapartist agent.'

As he spoke, Danglars started to write with his left hand, in a backward slant which did not look a bit like his own handwriting.

> 'The State Prosecutor,' he wrote, 'is informed that one Edmond Dantès, mate of the ship *Pharaon* which arrived at Marseilles this morning after having touched the island of Elba, has been given a letter from Napoleon addressed to the Bonapartist Committee in Paris. If he is arrested, this letter will be found either on him or at his father's house, or in his cabin on the *Pharaon*.'

'But you cannot do that,' cried Caderousse. 'Dantès is not guilty.'

'Oh, I was only joking,' said Danglars, laughing.

He crumpled up the letter and threw it away in the corner of the terrace.

Just then they looked towards the seashore and saw Dantès and Mercédès walking there together. The pair looked very happy. Caderousse waved to them and Dantès waved back. Fernand stood still, a scowl upon his face.

'Come,' said Danglars to Caderousse, 'let us go home. It is getting late. Will you come with us, Fernand?'

'No, I am going the other way,' the young man replied. So Danglars left La Réserve with Caderousse beside him. When they had gone a few yards, he looked back. He saw Fernand stoop down and pick up the crumpled piece of paper. Putting it into his pocket the young man hurried away.

'Now,' said Danglars to himself. 'Everything will go according to plan.'

CHAPTER 4

The Wedding Party

THE next day the sun was shining brightly again. The waves on the sea sparkled and the Madonna on the church glowed with a golden brilliance. At the Hotel La Réserve, many people were dancing merrily. It was the betrothal feast of Edmond Dantès and Mercédès.

Edmond and Mercédès were dancing too, and as they danced they smiled at one another. Both were full of joy and wanted everyone around to be happy too.

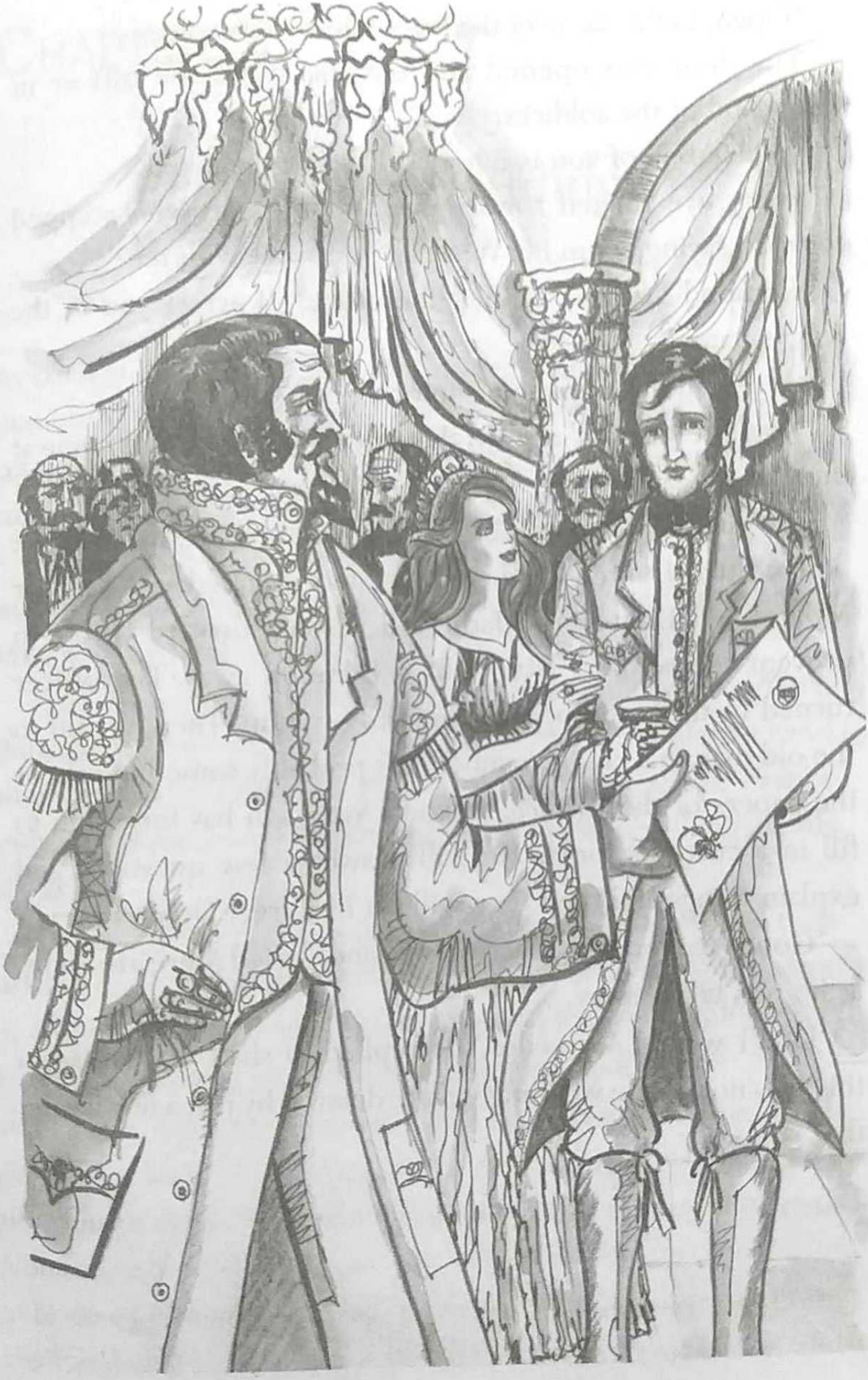
A dinner had been served and festivities were in full swing. Dantès could hardly believe that in just over an hour he would be taking his beautiful bride into the Town Hall where they would be married by the Mayor of Marseilles. It seemed too good to be true.

When the dancing stopped, Mercédès reminded Dantès that it was time to set out for the Town Hall.

'Yes, yes,' cried Dantès excitedly, 'let us go now.'

The guests cheered and prepared to follow the bridal couple in a procession.

Suddenly they all stood still and listened. They could hear the sound of soldiers marching. The noise came nearer and a group of soldiers turned into the hotel. There was a knocking on the door.



'Which one of you is Edmond Dantès?' he asked.

'Open, in the name of the law!' said a stern voice.

The door was opened and outside stood the officer in command of the soldiers.

'Which one of you is Edmond Dantès?' he asked.

Every eye turned towards the young man who stepped forward saying, 'I am he. What do you want with me?'

'Edmond Dantès,' replied the officer, 'I arrest you in the King's name!'

'Arrest me!' exclaimed Edmond, 'But why?'

'I cannot tell you,' replied the officer, 'but you must come at once to the law courts.'

The guests looked at each other in amazement. It could not be true that Dantès was being arrested! Mercédès, Monsieur Morrel and Dantès' old father all rushed forward to try to prevent the soldiers from taking Edmond away. The officer turned to them and begged them to be calm. Then he said to the old man in a kindly manner, 'It's probably something about the papers of the *Pharaon*. I expect your son has forgotten to fill in a customs form. He will answer a few questions and explain things and then they will set him free. Don't worry!'

'Goodbye, goodbye, dearest Edmond!' cried Mercédès sadly, as he was taken away.

'Don't worry, Mercédès,' he replied, 'I shall see you again this afternoon. The wedding will be delayed by just a few hours, that's all.'

CHAPTER 5

Another Wedding

AT the same time as the betrothal feast of Edmond and Mercédès came to such an unhappy ending, another betrothal feast was taking place in Marseilles. But this feast was not among the sailors and soldiers. It was among the aristocrats of the town.

Monsieur de Villefort, the young Assistant State Prosecutor, was to be married to Renée, the daughter of the Marquis and Marchioness of Saint-Meran.

The people at this party were all sworn enemies of Napoleon Bonaparte. During his reign they had been abroad plotting and working for his downfall. Now they had returned to France and held positions of importance under the new king, Louis XVIII.

But young Villefort was the son of a Bonapartist. At the time of the French Revolution his father had given up his noble name of Noirtier de Villefort and had changed it simply to Noirtier. He later became a staunch supporter of Napoleon.

The son, however, had disowned his father and changed his own name back to de Villefort. He was a Royalist, holding the position of Assistant State Prosecutor. His father, Monsieur Noirtier, still lived in Paris.

In the middle of this second party a servant entered the room. He handed a note to the Assistant State Prosecutor and whispered a few words in his ear.

'I shall have to leave you for a little while,' said de Villefort to Renée, his bride-to-be. 'I will come back as soon as I can.'

'Why? What is the matter?' asked Renée.

He handed her the note and she read the words:

'The State Prosecutor is informed that Edmond Dantès, mate of the ship *Pharaon* which arrived at Marseilles this morning after having touched the island of Elba, has been given a letter from Napoleon addressed to the Bonapartist committee in Paris. If he is arrested, this letter will be found either on him or at his father's house, or in his cabin on the *Pharaon*.'

'But,' exclaimed Renée, 'this letter isn't even addressed to you! It is addressed to the State Prosecutor.'

'True,' replied Villefort, 'but I've just been told that Edmond Dantès has been arrested. As the State Prosecutor is absent, I, his assistant, will have to examine this man.'

'Be merciful,' whispered Renée. 'Remember this is our wedding day, and I want nothing to spoil it.'

Villefort walked to her side and placed a hand upon her shoulder.

'My dearest Renée,' he said. 'For your sake, I will try to be merciful. But if these charges against this man are true, then you must give me permission to cut off his head.'

Renée shivered and turned away.

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CHAPTER 6

The Trap Closes

VILLEFORT went quickly to his office in the Law Courts. When he arrived there, he asked for the prisoner. He began to question him and soon knew from the honest answers he received that Dantès could not be guilty.

'Have you any enemies?' he asked.

'Enemies!' exclaimed Dantès. 'I'm not old enough or important enough to have enemies.'

'Well, perhaps someone is jealous of you,' said the Assistant State Prosecutor. 'You are to be a ship's captain at the age of nineteen. You are to be married to a beautiful young girl who loves you. You may have made somebody jealous.'

'Perhaps you are right,' answered Dantès, 'but I don't know who it could be.'

'Well, here is the letter accusing you,' said Villefort, handing him the note addressed to the State Prosecutor. 'Do you recognise the writing?'

Dantès read the letter.

'No,' he said, 'but perhaps the writing is disguised.'

'Well, now, tell me honestly. Is there any truth in this letter?' asked Villefort.

'No,' answered Dantès. 'There is no truth in it at all. I'll tell you exactly what happened.'

He then explained how Captain Leclere had given him a package to take to Elba and asked him also to take a letter from Elba to France.

'I did what anyone would have done in my place,' said Dantès. 'Everywhere the last request of a dying man is sacred: but with a sailor, the last request of his superior is a command which he has to obey. I, therefore, went ashore at Elba with Captain Leclere's package. When I handed it over, I was given a letter to take to a person in Paris. I took it because my captain had ordered me to do so.'

'Yes, I think you are speaking the truth,' said Villefort. 'Give me the letter you brought from Elba, and promise to report here should we wish to ask you any more questions. Then you may go.'

'Am I free then, sir?' asked Dantès joyfully.

'Yes, but first give me the letter.'

'It is there on the table,' said Dantès. 'It was taken from me when I was arrested.'

'Wait a moment,' said the Assistant State Prosecutor, as Dantès picked up his hat to go. 'To whom is it addressed?'

'To Monsieur Noirtier, Rue Coq-Héron, Paris,' replied Dantès.

Villefort looked as though he had been struck by a thunderbolt. The letter was addressed to his father! He opened it hastily and read it. It told of a plan of Napoleon Bonaparte to leave the island of Elba with three armed ships. It said that Napoleon's friends in Paris were to expect him to land in France very soon.

Villefort trembled. If anyone knew that such a letter had been addressed to his father, he, the Assistant State Prosecutor,

would not only lose his job but might end up as a prisoner in the dread Château d'If. What good fortune that the State Prosecutor was out of Marseilles and that he had been asked to question Dantès instead!

He turned to Dantès again.

'Do you give me your word that you do not know the contents of this letter?'

'I give you my word, sir,' said Dantès.

'Well, I must keep you here a little longer now,' said Villefort, 'but I'll make it as short as possible. The main evidence against you is this letter, and you see I am destroying it.'

He held the letter to a candle. Soon it was only a little pile of ashes which were then thrown from the window.

'You see what I have done for you?' said Villefort. 'I have burnt the letter. Now you know that you can trust me.'

'Yes, sir,' replied Dantès, 'you are very good to me. Now what do you wish me to do?'

'I shall have to keep you here in the Law Courts until this evening. Should anyone else question you, don't breathe a word of this letter. Take care also never to mention the name of the person to whom it was addressed.'

'I promise,' said Dantès earnestly.

Villefort rang a bell and a policeman appeared.

'Go with him,' said Villefort to Dantès.

When the two men had left the room, Villefort sat in his chair. He was still trembling to think of what might have happened had the letter come into the hands of the State Prosecutor. Edmond Dantès did not know the contents of the letter, but he knew that it was addressed to Monsieur Noirtier. Villefort could not risk setting him free now. He decided on

another plan. Dantès must be kept out of the way and he, Villefort, would use the information in the letter to benefit himself.

'With this letter, which might have ruined me, I can make myself rich,' he said to himself.

And with a smile on his face he hurried back to his wedding feast.

CHAPTER 7

The Hundred Days

DANTÈS was taken away by the policeman, but instead of being set free, he was pushed into a cold, dingy room. What could this mean? Villefort had promised him his freedom, and here he was, still a prisoner.

Towards evening a policeman came and opened the door of the room.

'Come with me!' he said pushing Dantès before him.

Dantès was put into a carriage and, after a short journey, was transferred to a rowing boat.

'Where are you taking me?' he asked.

'You will soon know,' was the only answer.

The boat left the harbour and pulled out to sea. The night was dark and Dantès screwed up his eyes to see where they were going.

After a little while there was a scraping noise. The boat shuddered and stopped. They had reached an island in the sea. Still Dantès did not realise where he was. Then he raised his eyes and saw above him in the darkness, the outline of the Château d'If.

Quickly Dantès was rushed into the prison, down a flight of stairs and into a dark cell.

'It's all a mistake,' he cried, 'a terrible mistake!'

Then he thought of Mercédès waiting anxiously for his return. He must get word to her. He turned to the jailer.

'I am not a rich man,' he said, 'so I cannot offer you a great sum of money; but if you will carry a message to Marseilles and give it to a young girl named Mercédès, I will give you a hundred crowns.'

But the jailer would not listen to him.

'For that small sum,' he said, 'I might lose my job.'

Dantès pleaded and threatened, but in vain. All he had for answer was the clanging of the cell door and the turning of the key in the lock.

* * *

While Dantès was safely locked away in the Château d'If, Villefort hurried to Paris to warn King Louis XVIII of Napoleon's plan to land in France. When he was with the king, news arrived that Napoleon had already landed on the south coast.

During his stay in Paris, Villefort had a visit from his Bonapartist father, Monsieur Noirtier. The Assistant State Prosecutor was not at all pleased to see the old gentleman. He hoped that no one had seen Monsieur Noirtier enter his hotel, for he did not wish to be connected with the Bonapartists in any way. He wanted Noirtier to leave as soon as possible.

So he told his father that all Bonapartists were being arrested and imprisoned. He advised his father to go into hiding for, if he stayed in Paris, he might be caught and put to death. His father looked at him, an expression of gratitude on his face.

'Thank you, my son,' he said. 'I feel that you have saved my life. One day, when Napoleon is back in power, I may be able to help you in return.'

* * *

Villefort's warning did not help the king, and he was forced to flee from France. Napoleon reached Paris and was once again the ruler of the country.

As soon as Napoleon was in power, Monsieur Morrel, the ship-owner, applied for Dantès to be released from prison. If Dantès was imprisoned for being a Bonapartist agent, surely now was the time for him to be set free.

But this was not to be, for Villefort was once again in Marseilles. True to his promise Monsieur Noirtier had protected his son. Although Villefort had once been a royalist, he had been allowed to stay in office. All other royalists were removed from their posts. Some were put into prison and some were executed. But this did not happen to Villefort, for his father had saved him. The State Prosecutor, Villefort's superior, was also a royalist. He was sent to prison and was never seen again and Villefort took his place. The Assistant State Prosecutor became the State Prosecutor.

Villefort knew that, if Dantès were set free, then all his treachery would be revealed. So he took care to see that the young man remained a prisoner in the Château d'If. Whenever Monsieur Morrel came to ask for Dantès' freedom, Villefort made promises but did nothing.

* * *

Villefort was not the only man who feared Dantès' release. Danglars had watched Napoleon's return to power with alarm.

'Now Dantès will be released,' he said to himself. 'He will search for me and will take his revenge. I must hide away in another country where he will not find me.'

So he left France and went to live in Spain.

As for Fernand Mondego, he spent all his time with Mercédès trying to win her love. He neither knew nor cared what had become of Dantès. He could think only of the day when Mercédès might consent to be his wife.

Very soon, as a soldier, he was called to fight for Napoleon. When he said goodbye to Mercédès, she was very sad.

'If you are killed,' she said, 'I shall be alone in the world.'

Fernand was happy. So long as Dantès did not return, Mercédès might one day be his wife.

* * *

Napoleon remained in power for a hundred days. Then he was defeated at the Battle of Waterloo. As Villefort had hoped, Louis XVIII returned to the throne of France and Monsieur Morrel came no more to ask for Dantès's release.

Now all hope was lost. Dantès's old father knew that he would never see his son again. His money was finished and the scraps of food which he had been able to beg were gone. He had no spirit and no wish to go on living. Soon after Napoleon's downfall, he died of hunger in the arms of Mercédès, the girl who should have been his son's wife.

CHAPTER 8

The Château d'If

THERE was a part of the Château d'If where the most dangerous and the mad prisoners were kept. This was deep down beneath the fortress in the dungeons. Here, in a cell by himself, Dantès was locked up. Once in the morning and once in the evening, his door was opened a few inches, just enough for the jailer to push through a plate with some bad food and a small jug of water. Then it was locked again. Dantès did not see another living soul.

He could not understand why he had been imprisoned without a trial. For a year he lived in hope that Villefort might come to know of the mistake that had been made, and order his release. Poor Dantès! He did not know that it was the Assistant State Prosecutor himself who had ordered him to be locked away.

A second year passed. Dantès knew nothing of the outside world. He saw only the four walls of his cell and the jailer who brought his food.

A third year passed, then a fourth year. Dantès could now no longer remember whether he was innocent or guilty. His mind was not clear and he was certainly going mad.

In the fifth year of his imprisonment, Dantès raged against his jailers, and against the unknown persons who had caused him to be locked away in this dreadful place. His wild actions

made him feared by his jailers and they thought him as mad and as dangerous as all the other prisoners in the dungeons.

At the end of six years Dantès had no wish to live. He decided to take his own life by starving himself to death. So, twice a day when his food was brought to him, he threw it away through a small air-hole in the wall of his cell. He became weaker and weaker until he had not the strength to rise from his bed. He was almost dying.

As he lay on his bed, he listened to the noises of the prison. They were no longer strange to him, for he had come to know even the smallest sounds around him. He could hear the 'drip, drip' of the water on the ceiling above him; he could hear the scamper of the rats as they ran around the prison; he could even hear the soft movements of the spider weaving its web in the corner of his cell.

One evening he heard a strange new sound—a scratching noise behind the wall of his cell. It went on for some time and then stopped, shortly before the jailer arrived with his plate of food. It sounded as though another prisoner was making a tunnel through which to escape. Was this possible? Dantès could hardly believe it.

Now Dantès began to think once more about living instead of dying. If another prisoner could build a tunnel and try to escape, why should he not do the same thing? He decided that he must find out more about the noise behind the wall.

He started to eat his food again to regain his lost strength. As soon as he felt strong enough, he looked around his cell for some tool with which to scrape the wall to loosen the stones. There was nothing at all. He needed a piece of iron. The only object made of iron which ever came into his cell was the

saucepan in which the jailer sometimes brought the thin watery soup which was all the prisoners had to keep them alive. The jailer would pour the soup into a plate and go away again with the saucepan.

This gave Dantès an idea.

The next evening, before the jailer arrived, he placed his soup plate on the ground near the door of his cell. The jailer opened the door with his heavy key and put his foot into the opening, right on top of the plate. The plate broke into a hundred pieces. He grumbled at Dantès for having left it on the ground, and looked around for something else into which to pour the soup. There was nothing.

'Leave the saucepan,' said Dantès. 'You can take it away when you bring me my breakfast.'

The jailer agreed, as it saved him the trouble of fetching another plate.

As soon as his cell door was locked again, Dantès quickly drank his soup. Then he set to work. With the handle of his saucepan, he scraped away the mortar around one of the stones in the wall. By the morning the stone was free. Carefully, Dantès put it back in its place before the jailer arrived.

The door was unlocked again and the jailer came in with his food.

'You have not brought me another plate,' said Dantès.

'I shall leave the saucepan with you,' replied the jailer. 'You cannot break that.'

Dantès could not believe his good fortune. He thanked heaven for this piece of iron.

As soon as the jailer had left the cell, Dantès picked up the saucepan and started working again. He removed the stone he

After more than six years alone, Dantès was face to face with another prisoner.

had already loosened, and began scraping in the space behind it. He toiled on and on until he had made a hole big enough to crawl into. Putting his head and shoulders through this hole, he pulled away the earth behind it. Suddenly he found himself inside the tunnel which his fellow prisoner was making. He started to crawl along it.

Turning a corner, he heard a soft shuffling noise. Someone was crawling towards him from the other end of the tunnel. He lay still, trying not to stir or breathe. The noise came nearer and then stopped. In the darkness of the tunnel, Dantès could feel the stranger's breath upon his face.

For the first time, after more than six years alone in his cell in the Château d'If, Dantès was face to face with another prisoner.

CHAPTER 9

The Two Prisoners

AFTER this first meeting the two prisoners made nightly visits to each other's cells, taking care to be back before the jailer came to bring their food. Dantès learned that his fellow prisoner's name was Abbé Faria. He was an Italian priest who had been a prisoner in the Château d'If since the year 1808, seven years longer than Dantès.

He was a small man, aged not by years, but by the sorrow and misery in which he had lived. His hair was long and white and his face was marked by suffering. In spite of his white hair he had a long black beard which reached his waist. His eyes were dark and strong. He was dressed like Dantès in torn and dirty rags.

Before his imprisonment Father Faria had been secretary to a Cardinal Spada in Rome. Soon after the Cardinal's death, he was arrested and accused of plotting against the state. That was why he was a prisoner in the Château d'If.

He had been placed among the mad prisoners in the dungeons because he was always talking about the 'great treasure' he possessed. He had even promised some of this treasure to the jailer if he would help him to escape from prison. But everyone knew that he had neither wealth nor possessions.

Father Faria was a very learned man. He spoke many

languages and had a great knowledge of mathematics, science, medicine and literature. As well as making the tools which he used for tunnelling, he had also made pens and ink and paper. He made pens from fish bones and ink from soot, which he dissolved in a little wine which he managed to beg from his jailer. When he had no ink, he even cut himself and used his blood to write with. He made paper from his shirts, specially treated with a liquid he had invented, which made linen as smooth as parchment. With these materials he had written a book.

Besides all these things he had made needles and a knife from small bones, and an escape ladder from cotton unravelled from sheets.

'But where have you hidden all these things?' asked Dantès.

'In an old fire place, behind the wall of my cell,' answered Faria. 'That is also where I found the soot for making my ink.'

He told Dantès that he had hoped to use this ladder when his tunnel reached the outside of the fortress. He would lower it over walls or high rocks and could then escape by jumping into the sea. Then he would swim away.

But, alas! He was wrong. Instead of reaching the outside of the prison, his tunnel had led only to Dantès' cell.

Chapter 10

Faria Solves the Mystery

Dantès wondered whether a person so wise and clever as the Abbé Faria could perhaps help him to clear up the mystery of his own misfortunes.

He told the priest the story of his wedding day. He told him how the soldiers had arrested him and how he had been locked up in the Château d'If after the Assistant State Prosecutor had promised to set him free. He asked if Faria could understand what had happened.

'Why am I a prisoner?' he asked. 'I am innocent.'

When Dantès had finished speaking, Faria thought carefully. Then he said, 'If you wish to discover the person behind a bad action, you must first try to find out who would benefit by it. Now, in your case, who would profit by your disappearance?'

'No one,' replied Dantès 'I was not important.'

'Everyone is of some importance to somebody else,' said Faria. 'You say that you were about to be made captain of the *Pharaon*, and were to be married to a young and lovely girl. Could anyone have wanted to stop these two things from happening? Did anyone wish you not to become the captain of the *Pharaon*?'

'No, I think that the sailors would have liked it,' replied Dantès. 'There was only one man who ever quarrelled with me. That was Danglars, the supercargo.'

'And if you had become captain, would you have kept this man on as supercargo?'

'No, for I often found that his accounts were full of mistakes.'

'Now we are getting somewhere,' said Faria. 'And when you landed on the island of Elba, you were given a letter to take to Paris. Did anyone see you bringing this letter back to the ship?'

'Anyone might have seen me,' replied Dantès, 'for I had it in my hand.'

'Then it is quite clear to me,' said Faria, 'that Danglars must have seen you with this letter. He had something to do with the accusation which was sent to the State Prosecutor. You must have a very good heart and a trusting nature if you did not suspect him from the start.'

'Oh, what a villain he must be!' said Dantès.

'Now,' continued Faria, 'what about your marriage to Mercédès? Was anyone interested in preventing that?'

'Well,' replied Dantès, 'her cousin Fernand loved her, but he knew nothing of the things mentioned in the letter; I am sure now that only Danglars could have written it.'

'But did Danglars know Fernand?' asked the priest.

'No, ... yes, he did. Now I remember!'

'What?'

'I saw them both sitting together with my neighbour Caderousse, on the terrace at La Réserve. It was the day we arrived at Marseilles. I was walking with Mercédès and—I never thought of it before, but there were pens and ink and paper on the table before them—of course, that explains it all.'

'Are you satisfied?' asked Father Faria.

'Oh yes, now I understand it all,' replied Dantès, 'but there

is still something I would like to know. How have I been condemned to imprisonment without a trial?'

'That is a different matter,' said the priest. 'You told me that it was not the State Prosecutor who questioned you, but his assistant; a young man of about twenty-seven years. He was probably very ambitious. How did he treat you?'

'He was very kind to me.'

'But did he change his manner at all during the examination?'

'Yes, when he read the letter that I had to take from Elba to Paris, he seemed worried to think of the danger I was in.'

'The danger *you* were in? Are you sure that it was your misfortune he was worried about?' asked Faria.

'Why, yes,' said Dantès, 'he proved that he wanted to help me by burning the letter.'

'Are you sure he burned it?'

'He did so before my eyes, saying that he was destroying the only proof against me.'

'That action was almost too kind to be natural. Do you think he could have had any interest himself in destroying the letter?'

'Well,' said Dantès, 'he did make me promise never to speak of it to anyone, and on no account to mention the name of the person to whom it was addressed. I remember that name well. It was Noirtier.'

'Noirtier!' repeated Faria after him, 'Noirtier! I knew a French diplomat of that name in Italy. He had been a nobleman before the Revolution, and had changed his name. Do you remember the name of the Assistant State Prosecutor?'

'Yes, it was Villefort,' replied Dantès.

Faria burst out laughing.

'No wonder that good man destroyed your letter and told you, for your own good, never to mention the name of Noirtier. Do you know who this Noirtier was? It was his own father. Noirtier de Villefort.'

CHAPTER 11

Years of Hard Work

WHEN he saw how his so-called friends had tricked him, Dantès vowed to take revenge on them all.

But the priest shook his head sadly.

'It is wrong to think of revenge,' he said, 'I am sorry now that I helped you.'

The young man smiled bitterly.

'Let's talk of other things,' he said.

In the days that followed Faria did talk of many other things. Dantès became interested. He wanted to learn. So, every day, Faria gave him lessons in mathematics, science, history, foreign languages, literature and medicine.

Dantès already knew some Italian, and by the end of six months, he also began to speak Spanish, English and German.

After a year Dantès knew so much on every subject, that no one would have thought that he was just a simple sailor. He was very quick to learn and the priest was a very clever teacher. Faria said that by the end of another year, Dantès would know as much as *he* knew.

So time went on. About two years after their first meeting, the prisoners began to think again about escaping from the Château d'If. They planned to make a new tunnel, which would lead from the tunnel connecting their cells. It would go under a gallery where a sentry was on guard. Here they would make

a pit. The paving covering the pit would give way when the sentry stepped upon it and he would fall into the tunnel. They would overpower the sentry and escape by lowering Faria's cotton ladder through a window down to the sea.

Although they were now working hard on the new tunnel, Faria continued to teach Dantès. The young man became as learned as his friend. By talking every day to this gentle priest, Dantès also lost his rough seaman's ways. He became polite, elegant and good-mannered in the way that only those with the highest and best education usually become.

After almost another two years their tunnelling came to a sudden end. The Abbé Faria fell ill. He had a sudden attack and became almost helpless. He begged Dantès to continue the work alone and to escape by himself, but the young man would not think of leaving his old friend. He was determined to stay with him until he was well again. If they could not escape together, then he did not wish to escape at all. So there was no more tunnelling.

Faria was surprised by the young man's devotion and friendship. He began to look upon him as his son. And so he decided to share with him the secret of his 'fortune'.

Chapter 12

Faria's Treasure

Dantès had heard the guards of the Château d'If say that Faria was mad because he talked about a 'fortune' which he did not have. When the old man again began to speak of his 'treasure', Dantès felt sure that he was once more losing his mind.

'You are ill, my friend,' he said. 'Stay quiet and rest awhile.'

Faria looked at him.

'You think I am mad, but the treasure is there, Dantès. Only hear me and afterwards you can decide if I speak the truth.'

Then he told Dantès his story.

Cardinal Spada, whose secretary Faria had been, was the last remaining member of a very old Roman family.

At the end of the fifteenth century this family had been forced to hide their wealth, so that it would not fall into the hands of the powerful Caesar Borgia.

The head of the Spada family at that time was named Caesar Spada. He hid the family fortune so well that, after he was poisoned by Caesar Borgia, not only could his murderer not find it, but neither could his family. Caesar Spada did not have time before his death to let his family know where the treasure was hidden. He was thought to have made a will, but this could not be found either.

Cardinal Spada, the last member of the Spada family, spent much of his lifetime trying to find a clue to the whereabouts of

the fortune, but he did not succeed. When he died, having no heirs, he left his papers to his secretary, the Abbé Faria.

One day when he was looking through these, Faria picked up a sheet of paper with no writing on it. It was getting dark, so he used the paper to light a candle. As he put it in the fire, he suddenly saw yellowish letters appearing on it. Quickly he put out the flames, realising that something was written there in invisible ink. The letters only showed when the paper was heated.

He managed to save most of the paper and then he warmed it to make the rest of the writing appear. Where the paper had been burnt, some of the words were missing. This is what he saw.

This 25th day of April, 1498, I was inv.....
dinner with the great Caesar B... ...
that he will poison me in order to ... ...
my wealth. I therefore declare to my neph... ...
Spada, that I have buried it in the c... ...
island of Monte Cristo. It is worth... ...
two million Roman crowns... ...
raising the twentieth rock from... ...
to the east in a ri... ...
in the farthest angle of the sec... ...
in caves. I bequeath every... ...
as my sole heir.
25th April, 1498 Cae....

Faria could see that this was the last will and testament of Caesar Spada, which the Spada family had been seeking for

300 years. He thought carefully and, because he was a clever man, he was able to fill in the missing portion where the paper had been burnt. He wrote it down on another piece of paper like this.

ited to
orgia. I am afraid
lay hands on
ew Guido
aves on the
about
and it can be found by
the small creek
ght line. The treasure is
ond opening in
thing to my nephew
sar Spada.

Faria had learnt it all by heart and he now wrote everything again on two pieces of paper for Dantès to read. This is what Dantès saw when he put the two pieces together.

This 25th day of April 1498, I was invited to dinner with the great Caesar Borgia. I am afraid that he will poison me in order to lay hands on my wealth. I therefore declare to my nephew Guido Spada, that I have buried it in the caves on the island of Monte Cristo. It is worth about two million Roman crowns and it can be found by raising the twentieth rock from the small creek to the east in a right line. The treasure is in the farthest angle in the second opening in the caves. I bequeath everything to my nephew as my sole heir.
25th April 1498 *Caesar Spada*

Before Faria could go in search of the treasure, he was arrested. So he had not been able to see whether the wealth of the Spadas was still lying in the hiding place or not.

Now Faria told Dantès that if they ever escaped from the prison together they would share the Spada fortune between them.

'But this treasure belongs to you, my dear friend,' said Dantès. 'I am no relative of yours.'

'You are my son, Edmond. That is how I think of you now that we have been together so long,' said the old priest.

The young man threw himself at the feet of Faria and wept.

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Chapter 13

The Escape

The years passed by. They could no longer think of escaping, for Faria was too weak and ill. The old man again urged Dantès to go alone, but he refused. If they could not escape together, there would be no escape at all.

One night, while they were talking together in Faria's cell, the old priest had another attack. He knew that this time he would die. He beckoned Dantès to kneel beside him. Then he raised himself with a final effort.

'Monte Cristo,' he gasped. 'Forget not Monte Cristo! Goodbye, Edmond.'

His breathing stopped and he fell back on to his bed.

Dantès sadly crept back through the tunnel to his own cell, and waited for the jailer to arrive with his morning food. As soon as it had been placed on the floor of his cell, he went back along the tunnel to find out what was happening in Faria's cell. He knelt outside with his ear to the wall. He heard the jailer open the door and then utter a loud cry. He must have seen the old man's body lying there. The jailer rushed away and returned later with the Governor of the prison. There was a tramp of feet as the Governor entered with several guards.

The Governor told the guards to sew up the body in a sack, and to take it away in the evening for burial. After that, Dantès heard the guards lifting up the body. They must be putting it

into the sack. They stayed a little longer to sew up the sack, and left the cell, banging the door behind them.

As soon as he was sure that the guards would not come back, Dantès opened the tunnel and crawled into Faria's cell. There he saw the sack containing the old man's body, lying on the bed. It had been sewn up ready for the guards to collect in the evening.

Dantès was very unhappy and lonely. There was now no one to talk to, nobody to care about him. He felt that he had lost everything worth living for. He hoped he would soon die. That would be the only way to get out of the prison.

'Yes,' he said to himself, 'I expect I shall leave these dungeons in the same way as poor Faria—tied up in a sack.'

As he said these words, he suddenly stood still. He had an idea. Without giving himself time for second thoughts, he went to the hiding place in Faria's cell. He took out the old man's knife, his needle and some of his thread. Quickly he opened the sack, removed the body and dragged it along the tunnel to his own cell. He put it on his bed and covered it with his sheet. He wound around the Abbé's head the piece of cloth which he always wore round his own head at night. Then he turned the body with its face to the wall so that, when the guard came in at night, he would think it was Dantès lying there asleep. He entered the tunnel once more, closing the stone slab behind him. Back in Faria's cell, he closed the entrance to the tunnel at that end also.

Now he crawled into the sack, holding the knife and needle and thread in his hands. He lay down on Faria's bed and sewed himself into the sack from the inside. All that he had to do now was to lie still and wait for the night to come. The guards would take him away, instead of Faria.

If anything should go wrong—if he were discovered—he would stab the guards with his knife and try to escape by running away. But, if all went well, he would be buried in the ground. He would cut himself from his sack and burrow his way through the loose earth on top of him. He would then jump into the sea and swim away.

So he waited for the night to come and for the guards to take the 'body' away.

The time came for the food to be brought to the prisoners. Would the jailer find that it was not Dantès who lay on the bed in his cell? He waited in fear, trembling. Would his trick be discovered? But luck was with him. There were no cries of alarm.

When at last the guards came to take 'Faria's body' away, Dantès held himself as stiff as he could, so that he would seem like a dead man.

Two guards picked him up and put him on a stretcher, while a third held a light by the doorway. He felt himself carried up and out of the dungeons. He could feel the cool night air around his body and could hear the scream of a night owl overhead. He knew that he must now be somewhere outside the prison.

When he had been placed upon the ground, he heard one of the guards say 'It is time to tie the knot.'

Dantès wondered what this 'knot' could be. He heard something heavy placed on the ground beside him. Now a cord was being fastened tightly around his feet.

He was picked up by the head and the feet and swung to and fro.

'One, two, three and away,' shouted the guards.

At the same moment, Dantès felt himself being flung into space. He was falling, falling rapidly downwards. Now he felt a

tug on his feet and a heavy weight upon them which made him fall faster and faster. Suddenly he crashed into icy cold water. Now he was under the water and still going downwards.

So he was not being buried in the ground after all!

Dantès had been flung into the sea with a thirty-six pound cannon ball tied to his feet.

The sea was the burial ground of the Château d'If.

CHAPTER 14

The Rescue

DANTÈS held his breath. He must act quickly or die. With his knife he ripped open the sack and tried to get his feet free from the heavy ball which was pulling him down. He struggled, but he was still sinking. His lungs seemed to be bursting. Gathering all his strength, he bent double and cut the cord around his legs. The cannon ball sank slowly to the bottom of the sea pulling with it the sack which had nearly become his shroud. Dantès shot upwards. As soon as he reached the surface he gulped air into his lungs. Then he dived under the water again so that he would not be seen.

He swam about fifty yards under the water and came up again. He looked up at the Château d'If and could just see the guards looking down at the spot in the sea where they had thrown him. He dived under the water again and swam farther away.

When he came up the next time, he was so far away that nobody could have seen him. Now he swam on the surface. He swam on and on, and the terrible prison disappeared in the darkness. After swimming for several hours, he came to a small rocky island. No one appeared to live there, for it was quite barren.

Dantès was tired out. He pulled himself out of the water and lay down in the shelter of a rock to go to sleep.

Not long afterwards, he was awakened by the noise of thunder. A storm was gathering. Soon he was being lashed by wind and rain. He crawled as far as possible under his sheltering rock, but it was not much protection.

Suddenly a very bright flash of lightning lit up his little island and the sea around it. He caught a glimpse of a fishing boat being driven rapidly towards the island. A minute later there was a cracking noise and the boat was smashed to pieces on the rocks. There were cries from the sailors and, in another flash of lightning, he saw their heads bobbing about in the frothy waters.

Dantès left his shelter and ran to the water's edge, hoping to save some of the drowning men. But all he could see was the black swirling water. The fishing boat and all the men on it had disappeared. Dantès sadly returned to the shelter of his rock.

When the sun came up the next morning, he went again to the scene of the wreck. The sea was dotted with broken pieces of wood and on a rock nearby lay a red fisherman's cap.

Dantès looked across the sea. In the distance he could now see the outline of the Château d'If. Very soon, they would find out that he had escaped and the alarm would be sounded. The guards would be sent all over the fortress to look for him; boats would go to the nearby islands to search for him and bring him back. It would not be long before he was found.

He looked around him. There was no place to hide. He looked again out to sea, towards the Château d'If. As he watched, he saw a sailing ship come out of the harbour of Marseilles. It sailed on, past the Château d'If and towards the island on which Dantès stood. He could see that it would soon pass by on its way to the open sea.

If he could get on that ship, it would take him far away from the Château d'If. He could reach another country from which he could not be brought back to France—back again to the prison. He decided to swim out to the ship and to pretend that he was one of the fishermen wrecked in the storm. All the sailors had been drowned, so no one could contradict him.

He quickly seized the fisherman's cap and put it on his head. He jumped into the sea, taking with him a large piece of wooden wreckage from the fishing boat. The wood helped to support him in the water. He needed its help, for he was still tired from his hours of swimming, and the restless night in the storm. He made his way slowly through the water to the place where he knew the sailing ship would pass.

Now the ship was coming closer. When it was only about a hundred yards away, Dantès called out for help. The sailors heard him. They lowered a boat and rowed towards him. As they pulled him out of the water, Dantès collapsed in their arms.

When he recovered consciousness, he found himself lying on the deck of the sailing ship looking up into the faces of the sailors who had rescued him.

CHAPTER 15

The Smugglers

DANTÈS sat up.

'Who are you?' asked the captain of the ship, 'and why were you floating in the sea on a piece of wreckage?'

'I am a Maltese sailor,' answered Dantès, 'My ship was wrecked in the storm last night and all my shipmates were drowned. I would also have been drowned, but your sailors saved me.'

At this moment he looked back towards Marseilles and saw a small white cloud appear above the Château d'If. Then the faint report of a gun was heard. The captain looked back.

'Hullo! What's the matter at the Château d'If?' he said.

'Oh, a prisoner must have escaped and they are firing the alarm gun,' said Dantès calmly. He picked up a jar of wine which the sailors had placed by his side and began to drink from it. The captain looked closely at Dantès with his long hair and matted beard, and wondered whether he could be the escaped prisoner. Dantès was not even looking at the Château d'If. He was drinking his wine.

'Well, if he is the escaped prisoner,' thought the captain to himself, 'so much the better.'

His ship was no ordinary sailing ship. It was a smugglers' ship. The captain was always afraid that any stranger coming on

board might be a customs officer sent to spy on him. If Dantès was the escaped prisoner, he had nothing to worry about.

* * *

Being an experienced sailor, Dantès soon made himself useful on the *Young Amelia*, which was the name of the ship which had rescued him. Before long the captain was very pleased that he had picked him up.

The very first day on the ship, Dantès made friends with a young sailor named Jacopo.

'What day of the month is it?' said Edmond to Jacopo.'

'The 28th of February.'

'In what year?'

'In what year! Why do you ask me in what year?' said Jacopo.

'I was so frightened in the storm last night,' said Dantès, 'that I seem to have lost my memory. What year is it?'

'Why,' said Jacopo, 'it is the year 1829!'

Dantès was amazed. He had been a prisoner for exactly fourteen years. When he went into the Château d'If, he was nineteen years old. Now he was thirty-three.

Jacopo took Dantès below the deck and showed him the place where he would sleep. Dantès looked at his face in a mirror. He found that his appearance had completely changed. When he went into prison, he had been a young man with a round and happy face. Now his face was thin and long, with a stern mouth. His eyes were deep, with a burning light in them. His voice had a different tone and his complexion, which had been brown from the sun, now was deathly pale from his years of living in a dark cell. Because he had been so long in the darkness, he could see things at night which other people could

not see. He now had the sight of a wolf or a hyena. Also, because he had gained so much learning from the Abbé Faria, he had a very intelligent look about him. Dantès smiled. Even his best friend would not recognise him now. He could hardly recognise himself.

Dantès spent many months on this smuggling ship, sailing from ports in Italy to other ports all over the Mediterranean Sea. Whenever they landed their cargo at night on some lonely coast and the captain received his money for it, a good share was handed out to the crew. Dantès saved his money and hoped that some day he would have enough to buy a small boat. When he had a boat, he would sail to the island of Monte Cristo to look for Faria's 'treasure'.

One day the captain of the *Young Amelia* arranged to take over some cargo from another smuggling ship coming from Turkey. The Turkish ship would have to land the goods in a lonely place and the *Young Amelia* would go there to pick them up. The captain of the Turkish ship suggested landing the cargo on the island of Monte Cristo, which was very lonely and used only by smugglers. The captain of the *Young Amelia* agreed.

When Dantès heard of it, he could hardly wait for the *Young Amelia* to set sail. At last he would be able to see the island of Monte Cristo, and perhaps he would have a chance to find out whether Faria's 'treasure' really existed.

CHAPTER 16

The Island of Monte Cristo

IN a sheltered bay of the island of Monte Cristo, the *Young Amelia* rode at anchor. Dantès and his companions worked through the night, loading the cargo which had been landed there from the Turkish ship.

When the sun rose in the morning, they were tired and hungry, but all the work was finished. Dantès said he would go and shoot a goat for breakfast. He really wanted to get away from the others, by himself, to look for the secret caves. But Jacopo, his friend, offered to go with him. Dantès had to agree, or the others would have suspected something. So he said to Jacopo, 'Yes, come along.'

Jacopo and Dantès had not gone far when they saw a small goat. Dantès raised his gun and shot it.

'Please take it back to our comrades, Jacopo, and ask them to cook it,' he said to his friend. 'I'll walk around a little longer. You can fire a gun to let me know when it is ready.'

Jacopo took the goat and Dantès started to climb up a very steep rock. When he reached the top, he looked down. There he saw Jacopo on the beach with the other sailors. They were already cooking the goat over a fire.

Now Dantès began to look for the caves. He thought he could see, on some of the rocks, marks made by the hand of man. Perhaps they would lead him to the caves. Sometimes

these marks disappeared beneath tufts of moss or under bushes. He had to pull away branches and grass to find them.

The marks seemed to stop at an open piece of ground. There were no caves there. He could see only a big round rock resting on the ground.

Then he heard a gun. Breakfast must be ready. He started to run back to the bay. From the top of the steep rock, he looked down once more and saw Jacopo and the others on the beach. Dantès called out and they looked up at him. Suddenly he slipped and fell. When the sailors reached him he was groaning with pain.

'He has broken his ribs,' said the captain.

They tried to lift him up, but Edmond groaned again and asked them not to move him.

'But we cannot leave you here. The *Young Amelia* must sail,' said the captain.

'Leave me with some biscuits, a pickaxe and a gun,' said Edmond. 'In a day or two I shall be better. Then I can build myself a shelter with the pickaxe and I can shoot goats for food. When you have sold your cargo, you can sail back here to fetch me.'

Dantès was a good sailor and the captain did not like to leave him behind.

'We shall stay here until the evening,' he said. 'Perhaps you will feel better then.'

'No, No!' said Edmond. 'Please go. I shall be all right until you return.'

At last he persuaded them to leave him. They said goodbye, promising to return in a few days.

Dantès, lying on the rock, watched the *Young Amelia* sail out

of the bay. The ship became smaller and smaller as she sailed away.

* * *

When the *Young Amelia* was quite out of sight, Dantès got up from the ground. He picked up his gun and his pickaxe and moved away. He did not move slowly like a man who had fallen and hurt himself. He walked quickly, jumping from rock to rock like the small goats which lived on the island. There was nothing wrong with Dantès. He had pretended to hurt himself so that he could be left alone on the island.

He stood still and looked around him.

'And now,' he cried, 'to find the treasure!'

CHAPTER 17

The Secret Cave

THE marks that Dantès had seen on the rocks led away from a small creek, up to the open piece of ground where the large rock lay.

'The creek must be the one mentioned in Caesar Spada's will,' thought Dantès, 'and the treasure must be buried under the large rock.' He felt sure of this, because the large rock was to the east of the small creek in a right line, just as it said in the will.

He lifted his pickaxe and began to chop the ground at the bottom of this rock. Soon he had made a hole big enough to put his arm inside. Then he took some gunpowder which he stuffed in the hole under the rock. Lighting his handkerchief, he placed it near the gunpowder and ran away. In a few seconds there was an explosion. Dantès looked back and he saw that the rock had split into five pieces. He was easily able to move these pieces out of the way. Looking down at the place where the rock had been, he saw, in the ground, a square paving stone with an iron ring fixed in it. His heart leapt for joy.

This must be the right place.

Now he cut down a branch from a tree. He put the branch into the ring on the paving stone and tried to lift it up. At first it would not move. Then it came up slowly. Underneath the stone there were some steps leading down into an underground cave.

Edmond went slowly down the steps. It was not very dark down there. Light came in through several cracks in the roof of the cave which he had not seen from above. He stood for a few minutes, looking for sparkling jewels. Alas, only the rays of light sparkled through the roof of the cave. There was nothing else there.

Dantès was very disappointed. Then he remembered the words of the will:

'The treasure is in the farthest angle of the second opening in the caves.'

He had only found the first opening. Now he must look for the second.

He tapped with his pickaxe around the sides of the cave. At a point farthest away from the steps there was a hollow echo when he hit the wall. He lifted up his pickaxe and gave it a hard blow. The wall of the cave began to crumble away. He struck again, once, twice, three times, and there was a hole big enough for him to enter. Crouching, he went through this hole and found himself in a very small dark cave.

'In the farthest angle of the second opening,' said Dantès, repeating the words of the will to himself. He looked around. At the left of the opening through which he had entered, was a dark and deep angle in the cave. That was where the treasure must be buried. Suddenly, a shadow passed across the opening of the first cave, above the steps. Someone must be spying on him. He dashed up the steps and out into the open. His heart was pounding.

He could see only a goat grazing nearby. Could it have been the goat? Or had someone come to the island to find out his secret? He looked at the sea. There were no ships there. There

There were countless unheard-of treasures here.

was not even a small boat in the creek. Nobody else could be on the island. It must have been the goat. He looked again in the bushes around this open spot, but he could see nothing.

Now he picked a branch from a resinous tree, lighted it at the fire at which the men of the *Young Amelia* had cooked their breakfast, and took it down into the cave with him as a torch. He raised his pickaxe once more and began to strike at the ground in the farthest angle of the second cave. He hit something made of iron, buried a few inches under the ground. It seemed to be the top of a large chest. He pulled away the earth until he could see the chest. It had handles on the sides and a padlock on the lid. He seized the handles and tried to lift the chest. It was impossible. It was much too heavy. Putting his pickaxe between the lid and the padlock, he broke the lock and lifted up the lid.

The chest was divided into three compartments. One contained shining piles of golden coins. Another was full of gold bars. Edmond put his hands into the third compartments and lifted out diamonds, pearls and rubies.

He could not believe his eyes. There were countless unheard-of treasures here. It was like a dream.

For a long time he was so excited that he did not know what to do. Then he thought carefully. He could not take all this treasure away with him now. He could only take a little and come back for the rest when he had been able to buy a ship for himself to carry it away.

So he filled his pockets with precious stones. Then he put back the lid on the chest and covered it all over again with earth. Going through the larger cave, he went up the steps and put back the paving stone over the hole. Next, he put back the

pieces of the big rock on top of the paving stone and filled up all the cracks with earth.

He planted bushes and flowers in the earth and watered them to make it look as though they had been growing there for a long time.

He could do no more, for now he must wait for the return of the *Young Amelia* to Monte Cristo.

CHAPTER 18

Lord Wilmore

ON the sixth day, the smugglers returned to the island. Dantès walked slowly to meet them, pretending to be in great pain. The captain asked him if he was better. Dantès said he was feeling much better, but his ribs were still hurting him. They took him aboard the *Young Amelia* and sailed away for Genoa.

When they arrived at Genoa, Dantès went to a dealer in precious stones and sold to him four of his smallest diamonds for twenty thousand francs. The dealer might have wondered how a poor sailor happened to be selling these jewels, but he did not ask any troublesome questions. They were worth much more than the twenty thousand francs he was paying to Dantès.

Dantès now went back to the *Young Amelia* and told the captain that an uncle had died, leaving him a fortune. So he would not be sailing on the ship again.

'We shall be sorry to lose you,' said the captain.

'Yes, we shall miss you,' said the sailors.

When he said goodbye, Dantès gave each sailor a present of some money. He promised to write to the captain later. They had been good friends and he would like to see him again.

So when the *Young Amelia* sailed the next day, Dantès stayed in Genoa. First, he bought himself some fine clothes. Next, he purchased an English passport. It was made out in the name of a Lord Wilmore. With this he would have no difficulty in going

anywhere, even back to France, pretending he was an English nobleman. He knew that nobody would recognise him any more. If he came to Marseilles as Lord Wilmore, who would dream that he was really Edmond Dantès, the escaped prisoner from the Château d'If?

Now he went to a boat builder and bought a fine little yacht. He took the yacht out into the harbour and found that he could easily sail her by himself. He asked the boat builder to make three secret compartments in the cabin at the head of his bed. This was done. Dantès was now ready to sail.

He sailed southwards between the islands of Elba and Corsica. In thirty-five hours he reached the island of Monte Cristo. Here he anchored the little yacht in the creek. The island was quite deserted. He went ashore and walked all around to make sure that no one was there. Then he went back to the creek and climbed up to the spot where his treasure was hidden. It was all there, just as he had left it. He began to remove the coins, the gold, and the jewels from the big chest. Soon this immense wealth was safely stored in the three secret compartments of the cabin on his yacht.

He now set sail again, this time for Marseilles. When he arrived there, he landed as an English nobleman who liked to sail his yacht, by himself, around the Mediterranean Sea.

Lord Wilmore, as Dantès now called himself, went to the house where old Mr. Dantès had lived. He was told that the old man had died many years ago. The house was for sale. Lord Wilmore bought it.

The next thing Lord Wilmore did was to ask about a man called Caderousse who had lived next door to old Dantès. Somebody said that Caderousse now kept a small inn, some miles outside Marseilles, near a place called Beaucaire.

Lord Wilmore spent a few days in Marseilles, shopping. Among the things he purchased were a wig, a false beard, and a priest's dress.

Some time later a bearded priest was seen riding on horseback out of Marseilles on the road towards Beaucaire.

Chapter 19

Father Busoni

It was the 3rd June 1829.

Caderousse was standing at the door of his inn, called the 'Inn of Pont du Gard'. Someone was coming along the road on horseback. As the figure came nearer, Caderousse noticed that it was a priest, dressed in black, and wearing a three-cornered hat. The priest dismounted at the inn. It was a hot day. He asked for some refreshing wine to drink. After the landlord had brought the wine and poured some into a glass, the priest said to him, 'Is your name Caderousse?'

'That is right.'

'My name is Father Busoni,' said the priest. 'Did you know, in the year 1814 or 1815, a sailor called Dantès?'

'He was my best friend,' replied the innkeeper. 'Do you know him? What has become of him?'

'He died in prison,' said Father Busoni. 'I was called to his bedside when he was dying. He gave me a diamond which he had received from another prisoner and he asked me to sell it and divide the money among his five best friends. I have the jewel with me and you are one of the friends I seek.'

'What a surprise!' cried Caderousse. 'How much is the jewel worth?'

'The diamond is worth fifty thousand francs.'

'And who are the four other friends?'

'His father, a girl callled Mercédès, who was to have been his bride, a young man named Fernand and another man named Danglars.'

'Alas! Poor Edmond!' exclaimed Caderousse. 'His father died many years ago and the others were not his friends at all. I am his only true friend.'

'Please tell me about the others,' said the priest. 'Begin with the father.'

'Old Dantès was very sad when Edmond was taken away,' said Caderousse. 'He waited at home for his son to return. Monsieur Morrel, the shipowner, tried to help him by giving him money to buy food, but the old man was too proud to use it. In the end, he died of hunger. Monsieur Morrel paid for his funeral.'

'And what about Dantès's other friends, Fernand and Danglars?' said the priest. 'Didn't they help the old man?'

'They were the cause of his misery,' replied Caderousse. 'They had denounced the son as a Bonapartist agent.'

'How do you know this?'

'I was with them at Hotel La Réserve when they plotted together. Danglars wrote the letter and Fernand posted it.'

'Ah, Faria, how right you were,' murmured the priest softly to himself.

'What did you say?' asked Caderousse.

'Nothing,' replied the priest. 'Tell me more about Danglars and Fernand.'

'They are wealthy men now.'

'How did that happen?'

'Danglars left Marseilles and became a cashier in a Spanish bank. During the war between France and Spain, he became a

clerk with the French army. By stealing funds, he made a fortune in Spain. With that money he returned to France and became a banker. He also married a wealthy widow who is a friend of the king. Now he is a millionaire and they have made him a baron. Baron Danglars, he is called, and he lives in a big house in Paris.'

'And Fernand?'

'Ah, Fernand, was a soldier. Napoleon called him into his army. Before the battle of Waterloo, he was a sentry at the door of a general. The general deserted to the English and Fernand went with him. When Napoleon was defeated, Fernand returned with the general to France. He now had the rank of a lieutenant. Soon he became a captain. He was sent to Spain. There he met Danglars again. These two helped one another to make money. In Spain Fernand became a colonel. Next he was sent east, to help Prince Ali Tebelin Pacha of Janina. Ali Pacha was killed but, before he died, he left a fortune to Fernand. Fernand at last returned to France, a wealthy man with the rank of a general, and the title of Count Morcerf. He, too, lives in a large house in Paris.'

'And Monsieur Morrel, the owner of the ship on which Dantès sailed. What of him?'

'Ah, poor Monsieur Morrel. He spent all his money trying to set Dantès free. He wrote letter after letter to the State Prosecutor asking for Dantès's release from the Château d'If. But all his efforts were in vain. He lives with his son in Marseilles, a sorrowful and disappointed man.'

The priest paused for a moment as if undecided what his next words would be. Then, in a voice hardly more than a whisper, he asked, 'And what of Mercédès?'

'Oh she was in despair when Dantès was taken away, but when Fernand returned to Marseilles as a lieutenant, she married him.'

'She married him?' exclaimed the priest in surprise.

'Yes, she is now the Countess Morcerf, and they have a son named Albert. So you see, Father Busoni, all these others have become rich. Yet I, who was the only true friend of Edmond Dantès, have remained poor.'

'Thank you for telling me everything,' said the priest.

'I am sure Edmond would wish me to give this diamond to you alone, since you were his only real friend. Here it is. There is no longer any need for me to look for the others.'

So saying, he handed the diamond to Caderousse, mounted his horse and rode away.

Caderousse, his greedy eyes gleaming, looked at the big, bright diamond. Then he called to his wife to come and hear of his good fortune.

CHAPTER 20

The Inn of Pont Du Gard

CADEROUSSE and his wife stood at the door of the inn, admiring the wonderful diamond.

'We must find out if it is a real diamond,' said Caderousse. 'There will be jewellers at the fair in Beaucaire. I'll show it to them. Take care of the house, wife. I'll be back soon.' He left the inn quickly.

The Inn of Pont du Gard stood in a lonely part of the country. Not many travellers came there. Because of this, it was used by smugglers. They would meet one another there and sometimes they came to seek shelter from the police or the customs officers.

On the outer wall of the inn there was a small shed, where the smugglers could creep in without being seen. There were little holes in the wall, so that they could look into the inn. If strangers were there, they stayed in the shed. When everything was safe, they would go into the inn, where Caderousse would greet them and make them welcome.

On the day that Caderousse was in Beaucaire, a smuggler named Bertuccio was running away from the police. He made his way towards the Inn of Pont du Gard.

It so happened that, just as Caderousse returned to the inn, Bertuccio was creeping unseen into the shed at the side. When

he looked through the hole in the wall, he saw Caderousse and a jeweller from the fair at Beaucaire. Caderousse called to his wife.

'The priest has not deceived us; the diamond is real. This jeweller will give us fifty thousand francs for it, but he first wants to be sure that it really belongs to us. Will you please tell him how we got it, while I bring him some wine.'

The woman told the jeweller how the priest named Father Busoni had come to the inn with the diamond, saying that it was a present from her husband's old friend, Edmond Dantès. When the jeweller found that the wife told the same story as her husband, he was satisfied. He bought the diamond for fifty thousand francs.

Bertuccio, looking through the hole in the wall, was amazed when he saw all this money changing hands. Caderousse locked the money away in a cupboard.

The jeweller put the diamond in a little bag, which he placed in a pocket inside his coat. Then he prepared to leave the inn. Just as he was about to go, there was a bright flash of lightning, then a tremendous peal of thunder. A storm was gathering.

'Oh dear,' said Caderousse, 'you must not go out in such weather.'

'No,' said the wife. 'Stay the night with us.'

She and Caderousse looked at one another. It seemed as though they both had the same horrible thought at the same time.

'Oh, I'll be all right,' replied the jeweller. 'I am not afraid of thunder.' He went out into the storm.

When he had gone, the wife said to her husband, 'Why did you let him go?'

'What do you mean, woman?' said Caderousse.

'I mean you should have kept him here. You should not have let the diamond go.'

'Do not think such thoughts,' said the innkeeper. 'You offend God.'

At that moment, there was an even louder peal of thunder and the wind could be heard howling around the inn. The smuggler, Bertuccio, was about to let Caderousse know he was there, when he heard a loud knocking on the door of the inn. So he kept quiet.

'Who's there?' cried Caderousse.

'It is I, the jeweller. I can't find my way in all this wind and rain,' said a voice outside.

Caderousse looked at his wife.

'You said I offend God,' she sneered. 'It's the good God who sends him back to us.'

She went to the door and opened it.

'Come in, good sir,' she said to the jeweller.

She made the jeweller welcome and set before him a good supper with plenty of wine. When he had eaten and drunk his fill, he went upstairs to bed.

Bertuccio, waiting in the shed at the side, was by this time so tired that he fell asleep. Later in the night he was awakened by a shot and sounds of a struggle in one of the rooms upstairs. There were groans and cries as though someone was being murdered. A kind of warm moisture was falling from above, dropping on his head. Then he heard someone coming downstairs. He got up and looked through the hole in the wall.

Caderousse was entering the room, carrying a lantern in one hand and, in the other, the little bag in which Bertuccio had seen the jeweller put the diamond. Now Caderousse went

Caderousse was entering the room.

to the cupboard, took out the fifty thousand francs he had earlier locked away there and, rushing towards the door, he disappeared into the darkness of the night.

Bertuccio ran into the inn. Going up the stairs, he stumbled over the body of Caderousse's wife. She had been killed by a pistol shot. He went into a bedroom and there he saw the jeweller lying on the floor. Blood was gushing from four horrible wounds in his body. The handle of a large kitchen knife stuck from his chest, where it had been plunged into his heart.

Bertuccio rushed downstairs and, at that moment, the police officers who had been tracking him arrived at the door of the inn. They immediately seized Bertuccio. One of them pointed to his head and his clothes. Looking at himself, Bertuccio saw that he was covered with blood. He remembered the warm rain which had fallen on him when he was in the shed. He tried to explain that he had been outside when the murders happened. But the police thought he must have broken in from the outside and killed the two people in the inn.

CHAPTER 21

Bertuccio's Confession

FATHER Busoni, meanwhile, had returned to Marseilles. There, he took off his wig, his beard and his priest's dress, and he changed once again into the fine clothes of Lord Wilmore. Going aboard his yacht, he sailed out of the harbour, past the Château d'If. Lord Wilmore smiled faintly as he looked at the grim fortress.

He sailed to Italy and landed in Naples. From there, he took a carriage to Rome. In Rome, he arranged to purchase the island of Monte Cristo. He also bought from the government the right to call himself the Count of Monte Cristo.

When he had done this, Edmond, who was now the Count of Monte Cristo, took many workmen to the island. They were ordered to build a wonderful secret palace under the ground, in the spot where the cave was.

Edmond stayed on the island of Monte Cristo for some time, watching the progress of the work. At the beginning of September he sailed back to Marseilles. There he heard the story of a smuggler, named Bertuccio, who had been arrested at the Inn of Pont du Gard near Beaucaire. It seemed that this smuggler was accused of murdering two people at the inn, but he claimed to be innocent. The smuggler said that if a certain Father Busoni, who had stopped at the inn on the morning before the murders, could be found, everything could be

explained. Enquiries had been made, for the past three months, for Father Busoni. He could not be found. The smuggler was to be tried by a court in a few days. He would probably be condemned to death for the murders.

The day after this story was told to Lord Wilmore, the good Father Busoni called at Bertuccio's prison, saying that he believed one of the prisoners wished to speak to him. Bertuccio, who by this time had given up hope of ever finding Father Busoni, was overjoyed. He told the priest his story and Father Busoni appeared to believe him. He also asked the 'priest' to hear a confession. Father Busoni agreed and he now heard a strange story.

'At the time of the Hundred Days, in 1815,' said Bertuccio, 'I had a brother who was a soldier in Napoleon's army. When Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo, my brother retreated with the army. He came to the South. I arranged to meet him at Nimes. From there, we were to go back to our home in Corsica. At this time, the Royalists in France were taking revenge on the Bonapartists. When my brother came to Nimes, still in the uniform of Napoleon's army, he was murdered by some Royalists.

'I immediately went to the State Prosecutor to report the murder. The State Prosecutor was a young man, named Villefort, who had just come to Nimes from Marseilles. He had been the Assistant State Prosecutor there. I asked him to find the murderers of my brother and bring them to trial.

'But this Villefort was a Royalist himself and did not care about my brother. He said that if my brother had been a soldier in Napoleon's army, he probably deserved to die. He told me to go away.

'I then determined to take revenge on this heartless man.

Because he was a Royalist, he thought it a good deed to kill my brother who was a Bonapartist. So I told him that I would kill him the next time I met him.

'From then on Villefort knew that, wherever he went, I was following him. He became alarmed. He asked to be moved from Nimes. They made him a State Prosecutor in Paris. I followed him there.

'On the night of the 27th September 1816, I was waiting in the garden of his house at Auteuil, just outside Paris, when I saw him come out with a small bundle under his arm. He went to the bottom of the garden and put the bundle on the ground. Then he took a spade and started to dig. He dug a hole and put the bundle in it. I saw that this was my chance. As he was bending over the spade, I rushed up to him and plunged my dagger into his back.

'Then I picked up the bundle out of the hole, thinking it must be some treasure he was burying. As Villefort lay on the ground, gasping his last breath, I told him that this was my revenge for my brother's death. I said I would give his treasure to my brother's widow.'

'Did he die?' asked the priest.

'I am sure he did,' replied Bertuccio.

'Well,' said Father Busoni, 'since you are willing to confess to that murder, I must believe you when you say you are innocent of the other two.'

* * *

Father Busoni managed to persuade the prison authorities to postpone Bertuccio's trial. As good luck would have it, Caderousse was caught soon afterwards in a foreign country and brought back to France. He confessed to the murders and

was sentenced to life-imprisonment. Bertuccio was set free.

Bertuccio went to thank Father Busoni for what he had done for him.

'I was interested in your story,' said Father Busoni. 'What happened to the treasure you took from M. Villefort? Did you give it to your brother's wife?'

'There was no treasure in the bundle,' said Bertuccio.

'I ran away with it and when I had gone some distance I sat down by the bank of a river. I opened the bundle. Inside, was a new-born child, wrapped in a cloth embroidered with the letters H. and N. His purple face and hands showed that he had been suffocated. But he was not yet dead. I felt a slight beating in the child's heart. I have worked in a hospital and I knew what to do. I blew air into his lungs. After a quarter of an hour, I saw him breathe and heard a feeble cry.'

'And what did you do with this child?' asked the priest.

'I took him with me to my brother's wife in Corsica. She brought him up as her own child. We called him Benedetto. But I think God punished us with him. Although he was a very good-looking boy, he grew up to be bad. Before he was very old, he was stealing from our neighbours. Now he is only thirteen, but he has robbed everything from our house and has run away. I do not know where he is.'

'Well, Bertuccio, I hope all this has been a lesson to you,' said the priest. 'I think you should give up smuggling.'

'But what else can I do?' asked Bertuccio.

'I'll give you a letter to a friend of mine,' said Father Busoni.

He sat down at a table and wrote a short note addressed to the Count of Monte Cristo. 'This gentleman lives in Italy,' he said to Bertuccio. 'Take this note to him. Here's some money for your journey. I'm sure he will be able to find work for you.'

CHAPTER 22

The Prison Register

THE next day, Lord Wilmore visited the Inspector of Prisons in Marseilles. He told the Inspector that, as a young man, he had studied in Rome under a priest named Faria. This priest had disappeared and he later heard that the old man had been a prisoner in the Château d'If.

'I remember him,' said the Inspector. 'He was crazy. He pretended to know of an immense treasure. He was always talking about it.'

'And is he still alive?' asked Lord Wilmore.

'Oh no, he died in February this year.'

'You have a good memory to remember the date.'

'I have good reason to remember when he died because an unusual thing happened,' said the Inspector.

'May I ask what that was?' said Lord Wilmore.

'Well, Faria's cell in the dungeons was about fifty feet away from the cell of a dangerous Bonapartist agent named Dantès. I saw this Bonapartist once in his cell. He had a very fierce face. I would recognise him again anywhere.'

Lord Wilmore smiled to himself.

'Really?' he said. 'And this dangerous man; this—what did you say his name was?'

'Dantès. Edmond Dantès.'

'Ah yes. Dantès. How does he come into the story?'

'He made a tunnel between the two cells. When Faria died, he carried the dead man through the tunnel to his own cell. Then he went back to Faria's cell, took his place in the sack in which they had sewn the body, and waited to be buried in the ground.'

'That was a very bold thing to do,' said Lord Wilmore.

'I have already said he was a very dangerous man,' said the Inspector, 'but fortunately we got rid of the crazy prisoner and the fierce one at the same time.'

'How was that?'

'The Château d'If has no cemetery. The dead are thrown into the sea with a thirty-six pound cannon ball tied to their feet.'

'Well?' said Lord Wilmore, as if he were slow to understand.

'Well, the jailers fastened a thirty-six pound ball to Dantès's feet and threw him into the sea.'

'Really?' exclaimed Lord Wilmore.

'Yes,' said the Inspector of Prisons. 'Just imagine how surprised he was! I should like to have seen his face when he fell into the sea.'

'That would have been rather difficult.'

'Yes, but I can imagine it,' replied the Inspector laughing loudly.

'So can I,' said Lord Wilmore, and he began to laugh too; but he laughed with his mouth and not with his eyes.

When they had stopped laughing, Lord Wilmore asked if he might see the prison register relating to the Abbé Faria. He wanted to have some particulars as to his death.

'Certainly,' said the Inspector. He found the register and

handed it to Lord Wilmore. While Lord Wilmore was looking at the register, the Inspector sat down in a corner and read his newspaper. He did not notice that the noble lord seemed to be more interested in the records of Edmond Dantès than those of the Abbé Faria. He also did not notice when Lord Wilmore quickly removed from the register the letter, written by Danglars and posted by Fernand, accusing Dantès of being a Bonapartist agent. Lord Wilmore put the letter into his pocket. Then he arose, thanked the Inspector for his kindness, and went away.

The next day Lord Wilmore sailed away from Marseilles, in the direction of Italy.

Not long after this Bertuccio arrived in Italy. He went to the address given him by Father Busoni. As soon as the Count of Monte Cristo read the letter from the priest he told Bertuccio that he would give him a job.

'You shall be my personal servant. I shall call you my steward,' said the Count.

CHAPTER 23

Haydée

THREE years later, in 1832, the Count of Monte Cristo was in Constantinople.

At the court of the Sultan Mahmoud in that city there lived a young girl who was thirteen years old. Her name was Haydée and she was a slave. Seven years before, Haydée had been sold to the Sultan's slave merchant, El-Kobbir.

Now the Count of Monte Cristo was talking to that same slave merchant. El-Kobbir told the Count how, on behalf of the Sultan, he had bought the girl from a French officer.

'Do you remember the officer's name?' asked Monte Cristo.

'It was the Colonel Fernand Mondego,' replied El-Kobbir. 'He was the commander of the troops of Ali Tebelin, Pacha of Janina.'

'Do you think it would be possible for me to purchase this girl from the Sultan?'

'Everything is possible if you can pay enough. The price will be very high,' said El-Kobbir.

A few days later, the Count of Monte Cristo gave El-Kobbir an emerald worth eight hundred thousand livres. El-Kobbir passed on this valuable jewel to the Sultan in exchange for the slave girl, Haydée.

At the same time, the Count bought another slave; a big

strong man called Ali. Ali was dumb, because his tongue had been cut out by the Sultan.

In the years that followed, Monte Cristo looked after Haydée as a father would his daughter. He discovered that she was the daughter of the Pacha of Janina. He also found out from her how Colonel Fernand Mondego had betrayed her father, seized his fortune, and sold her and her mother into slavery. Her mother had died on their arrival at Constantinople.

For the next few years, Monte Cristo and Haydée lived in the East. Haydée was given everything she desired, and lived in great luxury. During this time, the Count found out the whole history of Fernand Mondego and his betrayal of Haydée's father. This same Fernand, who had betrayed Edmond Dantès many years ago, had likewise betrayed Prince Ali Tebelin, the Pacha of Janina, who had trusted him.

Soon after this, the Count of Monte Cristo returned to Europe, taking Haydée and the slave Ali with him. Bertuccio, the steward, went with them. They went to live in the underground palace on the island of Monte Cristo. Here, the Count wrote again to his old friend, the captain of the smuggling ship, the *Young Amelia*. The island of Monte Cristo became a smugglers' meeting place. Smugglers and bandits who were hiding from the police were often given shelter in the Count's palace.

Before long, there was hardly a well-known smuggler or bandit in Italy who did not have to thank the Count for some help or service that he had received. In return, if ever the Count needed anything from them, they were ready to help him.

Chapter 24

Roman Bandits

Viscount Albert Morcerf, the son of Fernand and Mercédès, was travelling with his friend, Franz Epinay, in Italy. It was the beginning of the year 1838.

Soon after his arrival in Rome, Albert met the Count of Monte Cristo. They became good friends.

One night Albert foolishly allowed himself to be caught by bandits. The bandits took him to some caves, just outside Rome, and held him prisoner. They wrote a note to Albert's friend, Franz, demanding four thousand piastres. The note said: 'If the four thousand piastres are not in our hands by six o'clock tomorrow morning, the Viscount Albert Morcerf will be dead by seven o'clock.'

Franz Epinay had only three thousand piastres with him. He did not know where he could get another one thousand piastres so quickly. Then he thought of the Count of Monte Cristo. He went to him and asked if he could borrow a thousand piastres.

When the Count heard the story he laughed.

'We will go together to these bandits,' he said.

He told his slave, Ali, to get the coach ready and they drove to the caves outside Rome. There the Count demanded to see the chief of the bandits.

'Well, you seem to have forgotten our agreement,' said Monte Cristo.

'What agreement have I forgotten, Monsieur the Count?' asked the bandit chief.

'Did we not agree that you would never harm any of my friends?'

'And how have I broken that agreement, your Excellency?'

'This evening you have carried off the Viscount Albert Morcerf, who is one of my friends,' replied the Count.

'Why did you not tell me this—you?' said the brigand chief, turning angrily towards his men. They all backed away before his look.

'I apologise,' said the chief to the Count. 'He shall be released immediately.'

Albert was set free and rode back to Rome with the Count. He was very grateful to Monte Cristo, not only for his freedom, but also because it was obtained without paying any ransom.

'If there is anything I can do in return,' said Albert to the Count, 'I shall gladly do it.'

'Yes,' said Monte Cristo, 'there is something you can do for me.'

'What is that?'

'I have never been to Paris before, but I am going there soon. When I arrive there, will you show me the city and introduce me to your friends?'

'That I will gladly do,' replied Albert. 'When will you be coming to Paris?'

'Today is the 21st of February, and it is now half past ten o'clock,' said the Count. 'I'll meet you at your home in Paris in exactly three months' time. Promise to remember this, and expect me on the 21st of May at half past ten in the morning.'

'Very good,' said Albert, 'breakfast will be ready for you.'

Chapter 25

Monte Cristo Arrives in Paris

Exactly three months later, at half past ten in the morning on the 21st of May 1838, there was a knock on the door of the Paris home of the Count Morcerf. It was the Count of Monte Cristo, arrived to have breakfast with his friend Albert.

Albert was pleased to see his friend. After their breakfast was finished he introduced him to his father, Fernand, the Count Morcerf. Fernand did not realise that the Count of Monte Cristo was really Edmond Dantès. He thought that his son had found a new and very interesting friend. They talked for some time happily. Then Mercédès, the Countess Morcerf, entered the room.

'Ah, here's my mother!' cried Albert.

When she saw the Count of Monte Cristo, Mercédès turned pale.

'Are you ill, mother?' asked her son, springing towards her.

'No, I just felt a little excited at seeing for the first time the man who has saved your life.'

She turned to Monte Cristo.

'I thank you,' she said, 'for rescuing Albert from those bandits in Rome.'

Monte Cristo bowed.

'It was nothing, Madame.' he said.

When the Count of Monte Cristo had left them, Mercédès

asked Albert all kinds of questions about him. She seemed to be very interested in the rich and elegant stranger.

* * *

During his first days in Paris, Monte Cristo bought a magnificent house which he furnished in the most luxurious manner. Very soon he was comfortably settled with his servants, Ali and Bertuccio, to wait on him. Haydée also lived in the house. She had her own quarters and her own maid-servants to wait upon her.

True to his promise, Albert introduced the Count of Monte Cristo to all his friends in Paris, one of whom was the State Prosecutor, Monsieur Villefort. When Bertuccio heard that Villefort was still alive, he nearly fainted.

'Then I didn't kill him!' he cried. 'You know that I confessed to your friend, Father Busoni, that I killed Villefort, and now you tell me that he is not dead.'

'No, you did not kill him,' said the Count. 'Instead of striking him in the heart, you must have struck too high or too low. So you see, you are not a murderer after all.'

'Thank God!' said Bertuccio.

* * *

Albert also introduced Monte Cristo to Baron Danglars, the banker, his wife, the Baroness Danglars, and to their daughter, Eugénie.

As we already know, Albert's father, Fernand, the Count Morcerf and Eugénie's father, the Baron Danglars, were old friends. They were both rich, and wanted their two families joined together so that their children would be even richer. So

they arranged for Albert and Eugénie to be engaged to be married.

Albert told the Count of Monte Cristo about his engagement to Eugénie Danglars.

'But,' he said, 'I, myself, do not wish to marry her and she does not wish to marry me. It is our fathers who wish us to marry.'

'What about your mother?' asked Monte Cristo.

'Ah, she does not agree to the match. She dislikes the Danglars, although I cannot discover why. If we do not marry, she, at least, will be pleased.'

The Count and Countess Morcerf, Monsieur and Madame Villefort and the Danglars family all admired Albert's friend. They found him a wise and intelligent man. They often invited him to their homes and he invited them to his own large house in Paris. They came to know one another very well.

Monte Cristo, with his distinguished looks and his charming manners, seemed to cast a spell over them all.

CHAPTER 26

Andrea Cavalcanti

ONE day a young man calling himself Andrea Cavalcanti arrived at the Count of Monte Cristo's house. He had come from Italy with a letter from Father Busoni. The letter told him to go to the Count of Monte Cristo in Paris. The Count would show him Paris and give him any money he needed. Bertuccio saw this young man when he arrived. Very excited, he pulled the Count aside.

'That young man's name is not Andrea Cavalcanti,' he whispered. 'It is Benedetto. I brought him up as my own son and, in the year 1829, he robbed me and ran away from home. I told Father Busoni all about him.'

'I know,' said Monte Cristo, 'but do not worry. I have my own reasons for wanting him to be here. Meanwhile, you had better not let him see you in this house.

You can take a holiday and go away for some time.'

Monte Cristo went into the room where Andrea Cavalcanti was waiting to see him.

'Good morning,' said the Count. 'Father Busoni has written to me and told me that you are an Italian nobleman wishing to see Paris. As I owe Father Busoni some money, he has asked me to pay all your expenses here, out of the money I owe him.'

Benedetto could not understand why the priest had sent

him to Paris, nor why he had been asked to call himself Andrea Cavalcanti and pretend he was a nobleman. But as the Count gave him a thousand francs towards his expenses, with a promise to pay more later, Benedetto did not complain. He decided to act his part as Andrea Cavalcanti as long as he was paid to play it.

A few days later, when Baron Danglars met Andrea Cavalcanti, he showed a great interest in the young man. Cavalcanti seemed to be very wealthy. Danglars began to think that perhaps such a young nobleman might be a better match for his daughter, Eugénie, than Albert Morcerf. One day, he asked Monte Cristo about him.

'I do not know much about Cavalcanti,' said the Count.

'I only know he was sent here by my friend Father Busoni.'

'When young Italian noblemen like Cavalcanti marry, do they receive any fortune from their fathers?' asked Danglars.

'Oh, that depends on whether the son marries the girl of his father's choice. In that case Andrea might get three million francs from his father, who is a very wealthy man. But his father would cut him off with nothing if Andrea married against his wishes.'

'So, I expect that he will marry some princess or other.'

'Oh no, I do not think so,' replied Monte Cristo.

'These Italian noble families often marry into plain families. But do you wish Andrea to marry your daughter, that you are asking so many questions?'

'Upon my word! I think it might be a good idea,' said Danglars.

'But what would Albert Morcerf do about that?' said the Count. 'I thought he was engaged to be married to your daughter.'

'Albert would care very little about it, I think. And as Andrea Cavalcanti belongs to a more noble family than Morcerf, I would prefer him. He has plenty of money too, it seems.'

'But is not the Morcerf family also a noble one?' asked the Count, pretending to be surprised.

'It is not even as noble as my family. I am not a baron by birth, but at least my real name is Danglars.'

'And the Count Morcerf?'

'His real name is not Morcerf.'

'Oh, that is impossible!'

'Listen, my dear Count, I have known Morcerf for the past thirty years. When I was a clerk, he was just a simple fisherman, named Fernand Mondego.'

'Then why do you think of giving your daughter to his son?'

'Because Fernand and Danglars were both poor men who have become rich. We are both equal in worth, except that certain things have been said about him that were never said about me.'

'What are they?'

'Oh, nothing!'

'Ah, yes! What you have told me reminds me that I have heard something about the name of Fernand Mondego in the East.'

'In connection with Ali Tebelin Pacha?'

'Yes, that is right.'

'This is the mystery,' said Danglars. 'I would give anything to find out the truth about it.'

'Well, I suppose you can do that if you wish,' said the Count carelessly.

'How so?'

'You are a banker. You must have your agents everywhere.'

'Of course.'

'Well, why don't you write to your agent in Janina and ask about a French officer named Fernand Mondego? Ask him how this officer was concerned with the downfall of Ali Tebelin.'

'That is a good idea,' said Danglars. 'I will write today.'

CHAPTER 27

The Ball and the Beggar

A few days later, Monte Cristo was invited to a ball at the home of the Count and Countess Morcerf. Many people were there, including the Danglars family and also Andrea Cavalcanti. Cavalcanti danced with Eugénie Danglars almost the whole evening.

'Aren't you jealous?' Monte Cristo asked Albert Morcerf.

'You know very well that I don't want to marry Eugénie,' replied Albert. 'If she and Cavalcanti like one another, it suits me very well.'

'I think that Baron Danglars will be pleased about it too, now,' said Monte Cristo.

'Do you mean that he would prefer Andrea Cavalcanti to me for his son-in-law?' asked Albert, surprised.

'That's what he told me the other day,' replied the Count.

Just then Mercédès came towards them.

'Good evening,' she said to Monte Cristo. 'Is it true that you have seen so much, travelled so far, and suffered so deeply, as my son has told me?'

'I have suffered deeply, madame,' answered Monte Cristo.

'Have you no sister, no son, no father?'

'I have no one.'

'How can you live without anyone to make your life worth living?'

Andrea saw an old man dressed in torn and filthy clothes.

'That is not my fault, madame. When I was young, in Malta, I loved a young girl. We were going to be married, but war came and I was taken away from her. I thought she loved me well enough to wait for me, but when I returned, she was married to someone else.'

'And did you ever see her again?'

'No, I never returned to the country where she lived.'

'Malta?'

'Yes, Malta.'

'Is she still in Malta?'

'I think so.'

'And have you forgiven her for all she has made you suffer?'

'Yes, I have pardoned *her*.'

'But only her; do you still hate those who separated you from her?'

'Hate them—not at all—why should I?' answered the Count. And his mouth moved in a wry smile.

* * *

When the ball was over, the guests left, one after the other in their carriages. Andrea Cavalcanti had bought his carriage only a few days ago, with some of the money given to him by Monte Cristo. It was new and shining and it was driven by a groom in a smart uniform. The carriage drove up to the door and, as Andrea was stepping into it, a hand touched his shoulder. The young man turned around to see who wanted to speak to him. He saw an old man dressed in torn and filthy clothes. A red handkerchief was tied round his head and his face was covered with a dirty grey beard.

Andrea's groom jumped down from the carriage to push this intruder away from his master.

'You have no right to beg here,' said the groom.

The unknown old man smiled cunningly.

'I am not begging, my fine fellow,' he said. 'I only wanted to speak to your master, who asked me to do something for him last week.'

'What do you want?' said Andrea, nervously.

'I'm very tired,' said the old man, 'and not having eaten as good a dinner as you have, I can hardly walk.'

'Yes, but tell me what you want,' said Andrea again.

'Well, because I am tired and cannot walk, I want you to give me a ride in your fine carriage. Do you understand, Benedetto?'

The young man took a step backwards when he heard this name and he looked surprised. Then he said to his groom, 'Yes, this man is right. I did ask him to do something for me. Let him get into the carriage, I will drive, and you can go home.'

The astonished groom went away, and Andrea drove off with the old man in his carriage. When they had gone some distance and he was sure that they could not be seen or heard, he stopped the carriage and turned to the stranger.

'Now, Caderousse, tell me why you have come to disturb me,' he said.

CHAPTER 28

Caderousse and Cavalcanti

'Why do you come to disturb me?' repeated Cavalcanti to the man in the carriage.

'And you, my boy,' said the man, who was none other then Caderousse, 'why have you deceived me?'

'How have I deceived you?'

'Why, when we escaped together from prison, you told me that you were going to work in Italy, but you have come to Paris.'

'Does that annoy you?'

'No, it doesn't annoy me. You seem to be rich. I think you can help me!'

'You are mistaken,' said Andrea.

'Oh, I don't think so,' replied Caderousse. 'Here you are, with your new carriage, a groom, and fine clothes. You must have discovered a gold mine.'

'It isn't my fault if I have had good luck.'

'So, you have had good luck, have you? This horse and carriage, the groom and the fine clothes, are not hired? Good!'

'You must have known that before you spoke to me,' said Andrea. 'If I had been wearing a red handkerchief like yours on my head, with torn and dirty clothes, you wouldn't have spoken to me.'

'Come, my boy, you wrong me; but at any rate, now that I

have found you, I can also be well dressed. I know how good and kind-hearted you are. If you have two coats, you can give me one. You know I used to divide my soup and beans with you when you were hungry!'

'True,' said Andrea.

'What an appetite you used to have! Is it as good now?'

'Oh, yes!' replied Andrea, laughing uncertainly.

'And you were a sly fellow,' said Caderousse. 'You always had little purses and money boxes which you tried to hide from your poor friend Caderousse. But luckily he had a sharp nose, that friend Caderousse.'

'Oh, that's all in the past,' said Andrea. 'Why are you bothering me with that?'

'Ah! You are only twenty-three. You can forget the past. I am fifty. I cannot forget it. But tell me, Benedetto, where did you get all these fine things?'

'I've been lucky. I have found my fortune.'

'Your fortune! And how did you find that?'

'My good friend, the Count of Monte Cristo, helped me to find it.'

'A Count, and a rich one too, eh?'

'Yes, but you had better not say anything to him. I don't think he is very patient.'

'Oh, I don't want to speak to him,' replied Caderousse, 'but as you know him, you can help me to get rich without spending anything yourself.'

'Come, Caderousse, no nonsense!' said Andrea.

'But you would not have to spend anything.'

'Do you want me to rob the Count, to spoil all my good fortune, and to be sent to prison again?'

'Don't be alarmed, my little Benedetto, just show me how to get some money without your help, and I will manage it. What is the Count's house like?'

'It is a palace.'

'A palace, eh? You should take me to see it.'

'I can't do that.'

'You are right, but I would like to see it. I shall find a way.'

'No nonsense, Caderousse!'

'Well, I shall have to imagine what it looks like. Try to help me.'

Andrea suddenly had an idea.

'I should need a pen and ink and paper to make a plan,' he said.

'I have them all with me,' said Caderousse, pulling writing materials out of his dirty clothes. Andrea took the pen, with a little smile, and began to draw a plan of the Count of Monte Cristo's house. When it was finished, Caderousse said, 'Does the Count live in this house always?'

'Oh, no,' replied Andrea. 'He often goes to his country house outside Paris. When he goes there, he leaves this house empty. I am sure he will be robbed some day.'

'Where does he keep his money?' asked Caderousse.

'I don't know, but I think he keeps it in a desk in a room on the first floor.'

'Draw me a plan of the first floor, as you have drawn the one of the ground floor, my boy.'

'That's very easy,' said Andrea, taking the pen again.

'On the first floor there is a bedroom and a dressing-room here, and on that side we have a drawing-room, a library and a study. The desk is here, in the dressing-room.'

'Is there a window in the dressing-room?'

'Two, one here and one there.'

Andrea sketched two windows in the room. Caderousse became thoughtful.

'Does the Count often go to his country house?' he asked.

'Yes, tomorrow he is going there for two days.'

'Are you sure?'

'Quite sure. The Count tells me everything. He is very fond of me. I think he is going to leave all his fortune to me when he dies.'

'Ah, you lucky fellow!' said Caderousse.

'Yes,' replied Andrea, 'but when that happens, I shall remember all my old friends.'

'You will? Well then, until that time, you can at least give me a little present. Give me that diamond ring you have on your finger.'

Andrea took the ring off his finger and gave it to Caderousse. Caderousse took it and scraped it across the lamp glass of Andrea's carriage. He found that it cut the glass.

'It is a real diamond,' he said.

'Of course! What did you think?' said Andrea. 'Now what else do you want from me?'

'Nothing! I shall go home now. Goodbye, dear Benedetto!'

And Caderousse slipped away as quietly as he had come.

CHAPTER 29

The Burglary

THE next day, Monte Cristo received a letter from an unknown person. This is what it said:—

You are informed that a man will break into your house tonight. He will try to steal some papers from your desk in the dressing-room. Do not call the police, as it might harm me. As you are brave, you need only hide yourself, wait for the burglar, and catch him. It would be better if there are no servants in the house. Send them to your country house! If the burglar sees servants in the house and is frightened away, I might not get a second chance to warn you.

The Count thought this must be a thieves' trick to keep him in his house in Paris and then to rob his country house. But then why should they ask him to send his servants to the country house?

'No,' he thought again, 'they want to get me alone in the house and then kill me. Well, we shall see who these enemies are.'

Monte Cristo ordered all the servants, except Ali, to go off to his country house. Haydée went there too.

He and Ali then hid themselves in the bedroom in the Paris house and waited for the burglar. There was a small spyhole in the wall. The Count could see through it into the dressing-

room. He looked and waited, with a gun and two pistols at his side.

The whole house was in darkness. Not a light burned anywhere. The Count had removed the staple of the bolt on the door in the dressing-room leading to his bedroom.

Now he got up and looked out of his bedroom window to see if he could see anyone in the street. He could see nothing. He went again to the little hole in the wall and looked through it into the dressing-room. He had nothing to do but wait.

About midnight, Monte Cristo thought he heard a scratching noise in the drawing-room. Then there was a second scratching noise, and a third, and a fourth. The Count knew that was happening. Somebody was cutting the four sides of a pane of glass with a diamond. Monte Cristo's heart began to beat more quickly for a few seconds. He wondered how many thieves were breaking into the house, and he signalled to Ali to come a little closer. He saw something white appearing at one of the windows in the dressing-room. It was a sheet of paper being stuck to the pane. Then the square of glass cracked without falling. A hand came through the opening and unfastened the window. It opened slowly. A man came through it into the room. He was alone.

'That's a daring rascal!' thought the Count.

Ali touched Monte Cristo's shoulder and pointed to the bedroom window. The Count went over to it and looked into the street. There was another man down there, looking at the house.

'Good!' said the Count to himself. 'Now I know there are two of them. One acts while the other watches.'

He made a sign to Ali to watch the man in the street and he

went to the hole in the wall to watch the man in the dressing-room.

The burglar was bolting all the doors in the dressing-room. Now he thought that no one could disturb him and he could safely break open the desk. He didn't know that the Count had removed a staple from one of the bolts. He lifted the cover of his lantern to look at the desk, to see how he could pick open the lock. As he did this, the light fell on his face. The Count was surprised.

'Why,' he whispered, 'it is...!'

Ali raised his hatchet.

'Put down your hatchet,' whispered the Count. Then he gave Ali some instructions. Ali went away quietly. He soon came back, carrying a priest's dress, a long black wig and a false beard. Quickly, Monte Cristo put these on and turned himself into Father Busoni. Then, going again to the window, he looked once more into the street. The other man was still there, standing under a street lamp with the light on his face. Now Monte Cristo recognised him also. He understood everything.

'Stay here,' he whispered to Ali, 'and don't come into the dressing-room unless I call you.'

He lighted a candle and walked straight into the dressing-room.

'Good evening, dear Monsieur Caderousse,' said Monte Cristo. 'What are you doing here at this time of night?'

CHAPTER 30

The Murder

'FATHER Busoni!' cried Caderousse in surprise. He couldn't understand how the priest had come into the room when he had so carefully bolted all the doors.

'I am glad you recognise me,' said Monte Cristo. 'I see you have not changed. Last time you were robbing a jeweller and now you are robbing the Count of Monte Cristo. Why aren't you still in prison?'

'I escaped.'

'So that you could rob people again? What a pity!'

'Mercy, Father Busoni! You saved my life once. Please save me again.'

'How have you escaped from prison?'

'We were working near Toulon. It was the hour of rest, between noon and one o'clock—'

'Prisoners having a nap after lunch!' interrupted Father Busoni, 'We may well pity the poor fellows.'

'We can't work all the time. We are not dogs,' said Caderousse.

'So much the better for the dogs,' said the priest. 'Go on, tell me what happened.'

'While the others were sleeping, my friend and I escaped.'

'And who was this friend of yours?'

'He called himself Benedetto. He didn't know his real name, because he never knew who his parents were.'

'Where is he now?'

'He is in Paris. The Count of Monte Cristo, who owns this house, has taken a fancy to him. He's going to leave all his money to Benedetto when he dies.'

'Oh, really?' said the priest. 'And by what name does this Benedetto call himself now?'

'Andrea Cavalcanti.'

'But that's the young man whom my friend the Count has been taking around Paris and who is also friendly with Baron Danglars and his family. I must warn them about him.'

'Oh no, don't do that, Father Busoni. You would spoil everything for Benedetto and for me.'

'What do I care about you?' said the priest. 'I must warn them.'

'Oh no, you wont,' said Caderousse, pulling out a long knife and raising it in the air to stab the priest.

Father Busoni quickly seized Caderousse and twisted his wrist with such force that the knife fell with a clatter to the floor. Caderousse cried out in pain and surprise as the priest twisted his arm still further.

'I ought to kill you,' said Busoni.

'Mercy!' cried Caderousse.

'Now you will write a letter to Baron Danglars,' said the priest. 'Take this pen and paper and write what I tell you!'

Caderousse sat down and wrote:—

'To Baron Danglars—The man who comes to your house, calling himself Andrea Cavalcanti, is really an escaped prisoner, named Benedetto, who ran away from the prison at Toulon with me.

Signed—GASPARD CADEROUSSE

He began to climb down to the street.

The priest took the letter. 'Now go!' he said.

Caderousse climbed out of the window and started to go down the ladder which he had placed there. Father Busoni held out his candle, so that anyone standing in the street could see that he was getting out of the window.

'Put the light out. Someone might see me,' cried Caderousse.

Monte Cristo went back to his bedroom and looked out of the window. He saw Caderousse take his ladder and put it against the garden wall. The man waiting outside in the street ran towards the place. Caderousse climbed slowly and looked over the top of the wall to see if all was quiet. Everything seemed to be safe.

Caderousse sat on the wall and pulled his ladder over, letting it down on the other side. He began to climb down to the street. Too late, he noticed a man spring from the shadows. A long dagger glinted in the light from a street lamp. Before Caderousse could defend himself the knife was struck into his back. He fell to the ground, crying, 'Help! murder!' The other man grabbed him by the hair and stabbed him a second and a third time in the chest. Then, seeing that he no longer called out and that his eyes were closed, the man ran quickly away.

CHAPTER 31

Looking for the Murderer

AGAIN Caderousse called for help. This time, Father Busoni and Ali appeared with lights. The priest sent Ali away quickly to fetch the State Prosecutor and a doctor.

'Did you recognise who stabbed you?' said Father Busoni.

'Yes, it was Benedetto. It was he who gave me the plan of this house. I suppose he hoped I'd kill the Count and then he would get all his money, or that the Count would kill me, and then I'd be out of his way. When he saw me coming out of the house, he decided to kill me. I must report him.'

'I'd better write something down for you to sign, in case the State Prosecutor doesn't get here in time.'

'Yes, yes, quickly,' said Caderousse.

Father Busoni wrote:—

I die, murdered by my fellow prisoner, Benedetto.

He then gave the pen to Caderousse, who signed it.

'And now you've not long to live, it's time for you to repent,' said the priest.

'What do you mean?' asked Caderousse.

'I mean that you have lived a wicked life and God has punished you. Many years ago, you betrayed a friend and God began to warn you. You became poor. Later, I came to you with a fortune. I gave you a diamond. This was more than you had

ever had before. But you were not satisfied. You wanted to double it. So you murdered a man to get the money and the diamond. Once more, God spared your life, but you had a warning. You were sent to prison. Now you have escaped and committed another crime. But God will not spare your life again. Therefore I say to you, you must repent.'

'Who are you, that you know all about my past life?' said Caderousse.

The priest leaned over and whispered in his ear, 'I have known you for a long time, Caderousse; longer than you think.'

'But who are you?'

'I am Edmond Dantès. Do you remember?'

'Edmond Dantès!' repeated the dying man. 'Ah, my God! My God! Pardon me! Forgive me! I truly repent for all my sins.'

He sank to the ground and became quiet. As the priest looked at the man, now dead, on the ground, he said quietly, 'Number one!'

* * *

Soon afterwards, the State Prosecutor and the police arrived. Father Busoni showed them Caderousse's body. He told them that the Count of Monte Cristo was away in his country home. He had asked his friend the Count for permission to look at some valuable books in the library while he was away. It was when he had been in the library, looking at the books, he had surprised the burglar, who ran away. Afterwards, he heard cries for help outside the house. Running outside, he had found the man lying on the ground, wounded. Father Busoni handed over to the police the note, signed by Caderousse, which said that he had been stabbed by Benedetto.

Caderousse's knife, his lantern, a bunch of keys, and all his clothes except a waistcoat, which could not be found, were taken away by the police.

They then began a search all over Paris for the murderer, Benedetto. They did not know that Benedetto was Andrea Cavalcanti. Benedetto could not be found.

CHAPTER 32

Haydée's Story

ONE day, Albert Morcerf came to visit Monte Cristo.

As they were talking, the sound of music, like a guitar, was heard coming from another room in the house.

'What do I hear?' asked Albert.

'It's Haydée, playing her gusla.'

'Haydée! What a wonderful name! I have seen her with you at the opera. Who is she?'

'She's a princess.'

'A princess! Where does she come from?'

'She comes from the East. I'll ask her to tell you her story herself.'

'I would love to meet her.'

'Come, let us go and talk to her.'

The Count led Albert to Haydée's room. Haydée was sitting on some cushions, playing her instrument. She was very beautiful and her large eyes lit up with pleasure when she saw Monte Cristo coming into the room.

The Count introduced her to Albert. Haydée asked a servant to bring coffee, and Albert and the Count sat down on the cushions beside her. When the coffee was served, Albert said to Haydée, 'I'm told by the Count that you come from the East and that you are a princess.'

'Yes,' replied Haydée, 'I'm the daughter of Ali Tebelin, Pacha of Janina, but I left my country when I was a little girl.'

'Do you remember it?'

'Yes, I was very happy with my mother and father until I was about four years old.'

'What happened then?'

'We were in the palace at Janina. One night my mother suddenly picked me up from the cushions where I was sleeping. I opened my eyes and saw hers were filled with tears. I began to cry too. 'Silence, child!' she said. She carried me away quickly. I found that we were running away from the palace. Many of our servants were with us; also a guard of soldiers. They had their guns and pistols. My father was there, too. He came behind the others, clothed in his splendid robes. He also was carrying a gun. Soon we came to the edge of a lake with a small island in the middle. On the island we could see a summer house. A boat was waiting for us and we went across the lake to the island.

'I couldn't understand why we were running away. My father had always been an all-powerful prince. It didn't seem right that he should be running away now. Afterwards I learned that the Sultan had sent an army to attack Janina and capture my father. Our army in the fort at Janina did not seem to be able to resist the attackers. So my father decided to call for a truce. He sent a French officer, whom he trusted completely, to negotiate with the Sultan. Then he took us all to the summer house on the lake to await the result of the French officer's talks with the Sultan.

'Here, my father had collected all his fortune, a vast quantity of money in gold, in a cellar. There were also two hundred

barrels of gunpowder. We went down into the cellar and my father placed a guard named Selim near the gunpowder barrels. Selim had a lighted torch in his hand and it was his duty to guard the cellar day and night. He had orders to light the gunpowder if a certain signal was given by my father. Then my father, his family, and all his fortune would be blown up.

'After a few days, my father told us that he was expecting the French officer to return with a message from the Sultan. At about four o'clock that afternoon the soldiers of the Sultan arrived at the edge of the lake. The French officer was with them. Ali Tebelin, my father, waited at the door of the summer house for them to cross the lake. My mother and I were sent down to the cellar. As soon as Ali Tebelin knew the Sultan's reply, he would send the French officer to Selim with either a dagger or a ring. If it was a dagger, it would mean that the news was bad and Selim would have to light the gunpowder. If he sent the ring, it meant that we were pardoned and could go free. Then Selim would put out his torch and we would go upstairs to join my father.

'We could hear sounds above us. Soon there were footsteps outside the cellar. Selim held his torch ready. The French officer appeared in the doorway.

'"Long live the Sultan!" he cried. "He has pardoned Ali Tebelin."

'"Who sent you here?" asked Selim.

'"Ali Tebelin," replied the officer.

'"If you come from Ali Tebelin," said Selim, "you know what you must give me."

'"Yes," said the officer, "I bring you his ring."

'He held up something in his hand, but he was too far away

and the light was not good enough for Selim to see what it was.

'"I cannot see what you have in your hand," he said.

'"Come here then," said the French officer, "or I will come to you if you prefer it."

'"No," said Selim, "put it on the ground in that ray of light and then go back while I come to look at it."

'"Very well," said the officer. He put it on the ground and went back to the doorway. Selim went up to it and saw that it was a ring. He put out his torch. As he did this, the French officer clapped his hands twice. At this signal, four of the Sultan's soldiers suddenly appeared. They stabbed Selim who fell to the ground. We were betrayed!

'The Sultan's soldiers seized my father's fortune and captured my mother and myself. Upstairs, my father had already been killed. The French officer was allowed to take a large portion of my father's gold for himself. He was also allowed to sell my mother and me to some slave merchants who were on their way to Constantinople. My mother died when we reached there. I became the slave of the Sultan Mahmoud.

'Happily for me, the Count of Monte Cristo bought me from the Sultan. He has looked after me ever since and I have been able to forget my past troubles.'

'Come, finish your coffee,' said Monte Cristo to Albert. 'The story is ended.'

When they had left Haydée's room, Albert turned to Monte Cristo.

'My father was once in the service of Ali Tebelin,' he said. 'I should have asked Haydée if she ever knew him.'

'You can ask her that another time,' said the Count.

CHAPTER 33

News from Janina

IT was now nearly the end of the year 1838. Following the advice of Monte Cristo, Danglars had written some weeks ago to his agent in Janina, to find out about Fernand Mondego and what had happened at the time of the downfall of Ali Tebelin.

When the reply came, Danglars read it carefully. The news did not please him. He decided that Fernand's son could not possibly marry his daughter. But what excuse could he give the Count Morcerf? He decided to send the report from Janina to the newspapers.

'When he reads it in the newspaper,' thought Danglars, 'I shall not have to explain everything to him.'

The next morning everybody in Paris read the report in their newspapers. It said:

A correspondent writes from Janina:

A new fact has come to light about the history of Janina, which was not known before. In the year 1823, when Janina was attacked by the Sultan's troops, the fort was given up to the attackers by a French officer whom Prince Ali Tebelin had completely trusted. Ali Tebelin was caught and killed. He had been betrayed by the same French officer. The name of this officer was Fernand Mondego, but he now calls himself the Count Morcerf and sits in the Upper House of our Parliament.

At this news there was an uproar in the French Parliament which was meeting that day. When the Count Morcerf came to take his seat in the Upper House, there were demands from all sides for an inquiry. Morcerf was asked when he would be ready to answer questions and be judged.

'The sooner the better,' he replied. 'Let it be this evening.'

At eight o'clock in the evening, the enquiry began. Questions were asked, and Morcerf showed documents to prove that Prince Ali Tebelin had trusted him right up to the time of his death. The prince had asked him to negotiate with the Sultan. There was the ring, with Ali Tebelin's seal, which had been given to Morcerf as an authority to come and go in the palace, or anywhere else, as he pleased.

'Unfortunately,' said Morcerf, 'my negotiations with the Sultan failed and, when I returned to defend Ali Tebelin, he was dead. But the prince trusted me so greatly that, on this death bed, he left a message that I should look after his wife and daughter. Again luck was against me. When I came beck to Janina, Ali Tebelin's wife, and his daughter, had disappeared. I wasn't a rich man and I couldn't go in search of them. I don't know what happened to them. I only wish I could have found them so that I could have looked after them.'

'Have you anything else to say?' asked the President of the Upper House.

'Only that I don't know who wrote the false report in the newspapers, but as no witnesses have come here to speak against me, I say that this is proof enough that I am innocent.'

The members of the Upper House murmured their agreement. They were now ready to vote in favour of the Count Morcerf and to declare that the newspaper report must be false. But the President said,

'Gentlemen, I have just received a note from an important witness. Here it is. After what the Count Morcerf has told us, we can be sure that this witness has only come here to help to prove his innocence. Shall we read the letter, or shall we pass it by?'

When he heard this, the Count Morcerf turned pale and clenched his fists. He waited for the answer which the Upper House would give.

There were shouts from the members, 'Read the paper!' 'We must hear what it says!'

So the President read in a loud voice:

Monsieur the President—I was there when Ali Tebelin, Pacha of Janina, died. I know what became of his wife and his daughter. If the Upper House would like to hear me, I shall be outside, in the lobby, when this note is handed to you.

Morcerf sat in his seat and listened to this with his heart beating furiously. Who could this be?

'Would the House like to hear this witness?' the President asked.

'Yes, yes!' they all said.

Chapter 34

The Denunciation

The President of the Upper House called the doorkeeper.

'Is there anyone outside in the lobby?' he said.

'Yes, sir,' replied the doorkeeper, 'there is a woman with a servant.'

There was a little gasp of surprise in the House when it was heard that the witness was a woman.

'Show her in!' said the President.

When the woman came in, her face was hidden by a veil. The President asked her to sit down. She did so, and then removed her veil. The members of the Upper House were even more surprised to see that she was a young and beautiful girl. It was Haydée.

'Madam,' said the President, 'you say you were a witness when Ali Tebelin died, and that you can tell us what happened to his wife and daughter.'

'Yes.'

'Who are you?'

She drew herself up proudly. 'I am Haydée, the daughter of Ali Tebelin, Pacha of Janina.'

For a moment, there was no sound but the startled drawing-in of breath. Then the President looked hard at Haydée.

'Can you prove this?' he asked.

'I can,' said Haydée. 'Here is my birth certificate and here is

another certificate, the certificate of the sale of my mother and myself as slaves.'

She handed these documents, which were written in Arabic, to the President. He saw that the seals were genuine. Then an interpreter came forward to read the papers to the House. When he had translated the birth certificate, he read out the sale certificate.

I, El Kobbir, slave merchant to his Highness the Sultan of Turkey, confirm that I have this day sold to the Count of Monte Cristo, in exchange for an emerald valued at eight hundred thousand francs, the young slave named Haydée, daughter of the late Prince Ali Tebelin, Pacha of Janina. This slave was sold to me, with her mother, for four hundred thousand francs, by a French colonel in the service of Prince Ali Tebelin, named Fernand Mondego. Her mother died on arrival at Constantinople.

Signed—EL KOBBIR

Next to the merchant's signature, there was the seal of the Sultan of Turkey.

The President now spoke to the Count Morcerf.

'Do you recognise this lady as the daughter of Ali Tebelin?'

'No, I do not,' said Morcerf, standing up. 'This must be a plot, made up by my enemies, to ruin me.'

Haydée, who had not noticed Morcerf before he stood up, now looked at him and said, 'You say you do not know me, but unfortunately I know you. You are Fernand Mondego, the French officer who commanded the troops of my noble father! It is you who surrendered the fort of Janina! It is you who came back from the Sultan with a false message, saying that my

father was pardoned! It is you who killed my father! It is you who ordered the soldiers to kill Selim! It is you who sold my mother and me to the merchant, El Kobbir! Assassin! Assassin! Assassin! You have still your master's blood on your brow! Look, gentlemen, all!'

Haydée pointed to him and all eyes were turned on the Count Morcerf's forehead. He himself passed his hand across his brow, as if he felt Ali Tebelin's blood still upon it.

'You recognise the Count Morcerf as the officer Fernand Mondego?' asked the President.

'Indeed I do!' replied Haydée. 'After my father's death, my mother told me to look well at that man. She said to me, "You were free; you had a beloved father; you would have been almost a queen. That man has made you a slave. He has murdered your father. He has sold us into misery. Look at him! Look well at his right hand. It has a large scar. If you forget his face, you will always know him by that hand, into which have fallen, one by one, the golden coins of the merchant, El Kobbir!" Let him say now, if he does not recognise me.'

Every word she spoke fell like a dagger on Morcerf. He tried to hide his scarred hand inside his coat.

'Count Morcerf,' said the President, 'would you like us to continue with this inquiry? Do you wish to answer the charges made by this young lady?

'No,' said Morcerf.

'Then she has spoken the truth?'

Morcerf said nothing. He tore open his coat which seemed to stifle him, and he ran out of the room like a madman.

'Gentlemen,' the President said, 'do you find the Count guilty?'

'Yes,' cried the members, 'Guilty! Guilty!'

When the judgment had been passed, Haydée drew her veil over her face and bowed to the President and the members of the House. Then she left the room without saying another word.

CHAPTER 35

The Challenge

THE marriage engagement between Eugénie Danglars and Albert Morcerf was broken off when the Count Morcerf was disgraced.

Soon afterwards, Andrea Cavalcanti asked permission to marry Eugénie. Baron Danglars, very pleased, readily agreed. He thought Cavalcanti would be a very suitable husband for his daughter, and so Eugénie and Andrea became engaged to be married.

Albert Morcerf knew that some enemy must have caused his father's disgrace. Who could it be? He resolved to go to the newspaper offices to find out who had sent the report from Janina. When he found out that it had been sent in by Danglars, he decided that the Baron was his father's enemy. Like all young Frenchmen of his day, Albert Morcerf thought that the only way to wipe out a dishonour was to challenge to a duel the person who had caused the dishonour. So he set out for Baron Danglars's house.

Danglars thought, at first, that Albert had come to speak about his broken engagement to Eugénie. He was very surprised to be challenged to a duel.

'You are mad,' said Danglars. 'It is not my fault that your father is disgraced.'

'It is your fault,' replied Albert. 'You are the cause of it.'

'How?'

'Where did the news come from?'

'The newspapers told you; from Janina!'

'But who wrote to Janina?'

'I wrote, certainly. When my daughter is about to marry a young man, I think I have the right to find out everything about his parents.'

'You must have written knowing what answer you would receive.'

'I certainly did not. I would never have thought of writing to Janina if the Count of Monte Cristo had not suggested it. I was asking him how I could find out information about your father. He asked me where your father got his fortune. I told him, in Janina. "Then write to Janina!" he said.'

'Aha!' said Albert. 'So he advised you to write to Janina, did he?'

Haydée was living in Monte Cristo's house, therefore Monte Cristo himself must already have known the full story when he advised Danglars to write to Janina. He must have known all about it even when he invited Albert to hear Haydée's story, that day when they had drunk coffee together. What treachery! Monte Cristo must be his father's real enemy!

Albert rushed away from Danglars's house. He found Monte Cristo at home.

'Good afternoon, Albert,' said Monte Cristo. 'I hope you are well!'

'I've not come here to exchange false words of politeness and friendship,' replied Albert. 'I've come to demand an explanation.'

'An explanation!' said the Count. 'I think I should first have one from you.'

'There is no need for me to explain to you that you are my father's enemy, that you have caused his disgrace, and I want to know why, or I shall kill you.'

'I see you've come here to quarrel with me,' said the Count, 'but I don't understand why. I only know that you are shouting at me in my own home. Please let me tell you that I am the only person who has the right to raise his voice above another's in this house. So you had better leave immediately.'

'Ah! I know how to make you leave your home,' said Albert angrily, pulling his glove off his hand and throwing it at the Count.

'So you are challenging me to a duel,' said Monte Cristo, with icy calm. 'You shall have your glove returned to you around a bullet, tomorrow morning at eight o'clock, in the Forest of Vincennes. Now leave this house at once, or I will call my servants to throw you out.'

CHAPTER 36

Edmond and Mercédès

WHEN Albert had gone, Monte Cristo sat in his room for some time, deep in thought. Then he called to Ali.

'Bring me my special pistols in the ivory case, Ali,' he said.

Ali brought the box to his master. Monte Cristo looked carefully at them. They were pistols which he had had made specially for practice shooting indoors. He took one in his hand and aimed it at a small target on the wall. Monte Cristo was an expert shot, second to none, but tomorrow morning his life would depend on how well he could shoot. It would still be a good thing to have a little practice now.

Just as he was about to shoot, a servant came into the room to say that there was a visitor. Behind the servant, outside the door, stood a veiled woman. She saw Monte Cristo holding the pistol in his hand, and she rushed into the room. The Count made a sign for the servant to go.

'Who are you, madame?' said Monte Cristo.

The woman fell to her knees before the Count.

'Edmond, you will not kill my son!'

Monte Cristo stepped back in surprise.

'Madame Morcerf, what name did you use just now?'

'Your name,' she cried, throwing off her veil. 'The name which I, alone, have not forgotten. Edmond, it is not Madame Morcerf who has come to you now; it is Mercédès.

'Mercédès is alive, Edmond, and only she remembers you.'

'Mercédès is dead, madame,' said Monte Cristo. 'I know of no one, now, of that name.'

'Mercédès is alive, Edmond, and only she remembers you. She knew it was you as soon as she saw you. She has been watching you all the time you have been in Paris. She knows why the Count Morcerf has been disgraced.'

'You should say Fernand, madame,' replied Monte Cristo. 'If we are remembering names, let us remember them all.'

'Ah, you see, I am not mistaken. That is why I am asking you to spare my son.'

'It is your son who has challenged me, madame; not the other way around.'

'Because he sees in you the cause of his father's misfortunes.'

'Madame, you are mistaken. They are not misfortunes. They are a punishment. I am not striking your husband; it is God who is punishing him.'

'Do you think you represent God?' cried Mercédès. 'Why do you remember what everyone else has forgotten?

What does it matter to you what happened in Janina? Fernand Mondego did you no harm then.'

'You are right, madame. That is no concern of mine. That is a matter between the French officer and Haydée, the daughter of Ali Tebelin. But I am not revenging myself on Colonel Fernand Mondego, nor on Fernand the Count Morcerf, but on Fernand of Marseilles, the husband of Mercédès.'

'Then it is me you should punish, not my husband. It's my fault that I wasn't brave enough to wait alone for you when you were away.'

'But why was I away and why were you alone?'

'Because you had been arrested, Edmond, and were a prisoner!'

'And why was I arrested? Why was I a prisoner?'

'I don't know,' said Mercédès.

'You do not, madame; at least, I hope not. But I will tell you.'

The Count went to a desk. He unlocked it and took an old letter from a drawer. It was the same letter which Monte Cristo, when he was disguised as Lord Wilmore, had taken from the prison register on the day he visited the Inspector of Prisons in Marseilles.

'The reason I was arrested and made a prisoner, was because a man named Danglars wrote this letter, and Fernand himself posted it,' he said.

Mercédès trembling took the letter. It was yellow with age, but she could still read it:

The state prosecutor is informed that Edmond Dantès, mate of the ship Pharaon, which arrived at Marseilles this morning after having touched the island of Elba, has been given a letter from Napoleon addressed to the Bonapartist committee in Paris. If he is arrested, this letter will be found either on him or at his father's house, or in his cabin on the Pharaon.

She looked at Monte Cristo. 'And because of this letter you were arrested?' she said.

'Yes, madame,' replied the Count, 'and for fourteen years I remained in a cell in the Château d'If. You didn't know that, did you? You also didn't know that, every day of those fourteen years, I vowed to take my revenge. When I came out of the prison, I found that you had married Fernand, and that my father had died of hunger.'

'And now you are taking your revenge,' whispered Mercédès.

'Yes,' said Monte Cristo. 'I am taking my revenge.'

CHAPTER 37

The Meeting

Mercédès begged Monte Cristo to spare Albert's life.

'I know you've suffered,' she said, 'but, Edmond, I too have suffered.'

'You haven't suffered for your father dying of hunger. You haven't seen the one you loved giving her hand to your rival while you rotted in a prison cell,' said Monte Cristo.

'No,' she said 'but I've seen him whom I loved on the point of murdering my son.'

She said this so sadly that Monte Cristo, at last, gave in.

'Very well,' he said, 'I forgive your son. I won't kill him tomorrow. He'll kill me instead.'

Mercédès started, and looked at Monte Cristo in surprise.

'But no!' she said. 'If you forgive him, there won't be a duel.'

'Of course there will,' said Monte Cristo. 'He has challenged me, and if I'm not there tomorrow at eight o'clock, I'll be disgraced before the world. No, Mercédès, there will be a duel, but I'll aim my pistol so as not to hit him. Instead of your son's blood staining the ground, it will be mine.'

'Oh no, Edmond, I trust in God as I trust you. Do I have your word that you will spare Albert tomorrow morning?'

Monte Cristo nodded. 'You have my promise.'

'Thank you, Edmond!' said Mercédès. 'I see you're still as noble as I always knew you to be and I have faith also that God

will not allow you to be killed tomorrow. Thank you again, and goodbye!'

When she had gone, Monte Cristo turned to a mirror and looked at his reflection. 'What a fool I was!' he said. 'What a fool not to have torn my heart out on the day I vowed to revenge myself!'

* * *

The next morning, at eight o'clock, a little group of people waited under the trees in the Forest of Vincennes. It was the time appointed for the duel. Monte Cristo and his friends were there, Albert's friends were there, but Albert himself had not yet arrived. What had happened to him?

At five minutes past eight, Albert arrived at last. He jumped quickly out of his carriage. 'I wish to say something to the Count of Monte Cristo,' he said.

He turned to the people around him. 'You may all listen, for this is something which concerns you all.'

Then he stood face to face with the Count.

'Sir,' he said in a voice full of emotion. 'I said that you had no right to punish my father. I have now learnt that you do have that right—not to revenge yourself on the Count of Morcerf for his betrayal of Ali Pacha, but for his treachery to you many years ago. I know now the suffering and misery which you endured as a result of his treachery. I say now that you had a right to take revenge, not on the Count of Morcerf but on Fernand Mondego; and I, his son, thank you for not making your revenge even greater.'

CHAPTER 38

The Suicide

As he travelled home in his carriage, Monte Cristo thought of the courage of Mercédès. He had offered to sacrifice his own life so that her son should not die. Now she had saved the Count's life by telling Albert the dreadful family secret which must destroy all that young man's love for his father.

Not long after he arrived home, there was a knock at his door. A servant said that the Count Morcerf was there.

'Show him in!' said Monte Cristo.

When Morcerf entered, Monte Cristo exclaimed, 'Well it really is the Count Morcerf. I thought my servant must have made a mistake when he said it was you.'

'Yes, it is I,' replied Morcerf. 'I've just heard that, instead of fighting you, my son apologised to you this morning.'

'That is right.'

'If he will not fight you for my honour, I shall have to do it myself. Don't you agree?'

'Certainly,' replied Monte Cristo, 'and I am ready at any time.'

'Let's go now then; we don't need anyone else, do we?'

'Oh no! After all, we know one another so well.'

'Just the opposite!' replied Morcerf. 'We know almost nothing about each other.'

'Ha!' said Monte Cristo. 'Let me see! Aren't you the soldier Fernand who ran away at the battle of Waterloo? Aren't you the Lieutenant Fernand who, with his friend Danglars, stole money from the French Army in Spain? Aren't you the Captain Fernand who betrayed and murdered his master Ali Tebelin? And aren't all these Fernands now called Lieutenant-General the Count Morcerf?'

Morcerf shrank away, as if branded by a hot iron.

'Wretch!' he said. 'Who are you, that you know so much about me? Tell me your real name!'

'I will, if you'll wait here a minute,' replied Monte Cristo. He disappeared into another room, where he quickly took off his tie, his coat and his waistcoat. In a few seconds, he put on a sailor's jacket and hat and returned to the room where Morcerf was standing.

'Now you must recognise me,' said Monte Cristo.

'Surely you have thought about me many times after your marriage with Mercédès; the girl I should have married.'

Morcerf leaned against the wall, gasping with fear and amazement.

'Edmond Dantès!' he almost choked. He began to move away from the Count of Monte Cristo, then turned and ran outside. He fell into his carriage and told the coachman to drive home. He could hardly believe what he had just seen.

Still shocked, he staggered out of his carriage when he arrived home and opened the front door. As he did so, he heard two people coming down the stairs, so he hid behind a curtain. He did not want them to see him.

Mercédès and Albert were leaving the house. Morcerf, behind the curtain, heard Albert say to his mother as they passed him,

'Come, mother, this is no longer our home. We'll go away and never come back here.'

Now Morcerf had lost everything. When his wife and son had left the house, he went upstairs to his bedroom. After a few minutes, a loud bang was heard. The servants rushed into his room and they found the Count Morcerf lying dead on his bed, a smoking pistol in his hand.

Later, when Monte Cristo was told that Morcerf had shot himself, he said mysteriously to himself, 'Number two!'

CHAPTER 39

The Telegraph

THE Count of Monte Cristo was walking on a hillside, a few miles outside Paris. On the top of the hill there was a tower. It had big black arms sticking out from it on both sides and it looked very much like a large beetle. This was a telegraph tower.

A long line of such telegraph towers stretched right across the country. Each tower had a man in it, who could see the next tower in front of him and the next one behind him. If the tower in front signalled a message with its huge black arms, he had to pass on the same message to the tower behind him. In this way, news could be sent across the country very quickly.

Monte Cristo walked to the top of the hill until he came to the telegraph tower. It had a little garden around it. The telegraph man was there, picking strawberries.

'Good morning,' said Monte Cristo. 'Are you the telegraph man?'

'Yes,' replied the man.

'Don't you have to stay in the tower to look out for messages?'

'Oh, there'll be nothing coming through for the next five minutes. Would you like to come up there, sir, and see how it works?'

'That would be very interesting. I'd like to come,' said Monte Cristo.

The telegraph man led the way into the tower. On the ground floor there were only gardening implements, such as spades, rakes and watering-pots. On the next floor was the man's living room, with two chairs, a table, a bed and a stove, and on the top floor there was the telegraph room.

The man showed Monte Cristo the two iron handles which worked the telegraph.

'What are your wages for this job?' asked Monte Cristo.

'Three thousand francs a year.'

'And do you get a pension?'

'Yes, in fifteen years' time I shall retire and receive a small pension of a hundred crowns.'

'Poor man!' murmured Monte Cristo.

'What did you say, sir?' asked the man.

'I said it is very interesting. And do you understand all the signals?'

'Oh no, sir. I just pass on what I receive from the other man. I only understand a few signals.'

'But look!' said Monte Cristo. 'The man in front is signalling now. Do you understand it?'

'Yes, he's asking if I'm ready.'

'And how do you reply?'

'With a signal which says "yes" to the man in front and asks the man behind if *he* is ready.'

'It's very clever,' said the Count.

'You'll see,' said the man proudly.' 'In two minutes he will signal a message to me which I shall have to pass on.'

'That gives me two minutes to do what I have to do,' said

Monte Cristo to himself. Then, speaking aloud to the man, he said, 'What would happen if you should turn your head away when the other man is signalling to you?'

'I would miss the signal and wouldn't be able to pass it on.'

'And then what would happen?'

'They would fine me a hundred francs.'

'But, suppose you were to alter the signal and send a wrong message?'

'Ah, that would be another thing. Then I should be discharged and I'd lose my pension. So you see, sir, I'm not likely to do anything like that.'

'Not even for fifteen years' wages? Fifteen thousand francs! That would be worth thinking about, wouldn't it?'

'You frighten me, sir.'

'Am I frightening you with fifteen thousand francs?'

'Please sir, let me see the telegraph tower in front. He's signalling to me now.'

'Don't look at him! Look at these little papers.'

'Bank notes!'

'Yes, there are fifteen of them. They are all yours if you like.'

'Oh sir, the man in front is signalling. You've taken my attention away. I'll be fined!' cried the man.

'That will cost you a hundred francs; so you see, you'd better take my bank notes.' The Count placed the notes in the man's hand. 'But this isn't all,' he said. 'You can't live on your fifteen thousand francs. Here are ten thousand more. That makes twenty-five thousand altogether. You can buy a pretty little house, with two acres of land, for five thousand. The remaining twenty thousand will bring you in a thousand francs a year in interest.'

'A garden with two acres of land! Oh, heavens!'

'And a house and a thousand francs a year. Come, take them!' said Monte Cristo forcing the notes into the man's hand.

'What am I to do?'

Monte Cristo gave the man a piece of paper on which three signals were drawn. 'Just send these signals! There are only three of them, so it won't take long,' he said.

'Yes, but—'

'Do this and you'll have all you wish for.'

The telegraph man could resist no longer. He made the signals which the Count had written on the paper. When the man in front saw these signals he became very excited. He thought the telegraph man must have gone mad. But the man behind faithfully passed them on to the next telegraph tower, and so on until the wrong message reached Paris.

When the message reached Paris, it was passed on to the Minister of the Interior. The Minister was a friend of Baron Danglars. He immediately wrote a note to the baron, saying that if he had any Spanish bonds he should sell them quickly, because Don Carlos, the King of Spain, had escaped from prison in France and had returned to Spain. There was a revolution in Spain.

The baron had the largest part of his fortune, about six millions worth, invested in Spanish bonds; for, as we know, he had made his fortune years ago in Spain. Now he rushed to the stock exchange to sell his bonds quickly before the price dropped. But he was too late. The news of the return of Don Carlos to Spain and a revolution in Barcelona had already reached the stock exchange. Danglars's bonds were worth almost nothing when he sold them. He had lost most of his fortune in less than an hour.

The next morning the newspapers said that it had been a false report about the king returning to Spain, and there was no revolution there. The price of the Spanish bonds went up to more than they had been before. If Danglars had only held on to his bonds, he would have made a big profit. Instead, he had lost nearly everything he had.

Dantès was still taking his revenge!

CHAPTER 40

A Wedding Party Again

THE home of Baron Danglars was brightly lighted and gaily decorated for the betrothal party of Andrea Cavalcanti and Eugénie Danglars. The baron had decided, now that he had lost nearly all his money, that Eugénie and Cavalcanti must marry as soon as possible. Then he would be able to borrow money from his son-in-law, whom he imagined to be a very rich man. With this money, he could try to get back some of the fortune he had lost.

Eugénie was at the party, wearing a simple white dress. She wore no jewellery; her only ornament was a white rose, half hidden in her black hair. Andrea was also there, smartly dressed and looking very pleased with himself. He didn't know of the large losses the baron had suffered on the stock exchange. If he had, he might not have looked so happy. The Count of Monte Cristo, and all Danglars's friends, except one, were there. The missing guest was Villefort. Someone asked why he had not come.

'Ah,' said Monte Cristo, 'I'm afraid it's my fault.'

'Your fault?' said Madame Danglars. 'What do you mean?'

Andrea pricked up his ears.

'Yes, it's my fault,' replied Monte Cristo, 'but I couldn't help it. Do you remember I had a burglar in my house some time

ago? He was stabbed to death when running away. Just before he died, he signed a note saying that he had been stabbed by a man named Benedetto. But the police haven't been able to find this Benedetto anywhere.' Andrea was still listening, but he began to edge away a little. Now Danglars came closer.

'Are you talking about the burglar who was murdered outside your house, Count?' he said.

'Yes,' replied Monte Cristo, 'he was a man named Caderousse, who had been a prisoner.'

Danglars turned pale when he heard the name of the man he had known long ago in Marseilles.

'When the police examined his wounds,' said Monte Cristo, 'they threw his clothes into a corner. Afterwards they took away everything except a waistcoat which they didn't notice. This waistcoat was found only today in my house. One of my servants brought it to me. It was covered with blood, so I knew it must be the waistcoat of this Caderousse. There was a letter in one of the pockets. It was addressed to you, Baron Danglars.'

'To me!' said Danglars.

'Yes, indeed! I could just read your name under all the blood covering the letter.'

'Where is it? What did it say?' asked Danglars.

'I could see it had some connection with the murder, so I didn't read it, but handed it over to the police.'

Andrea Cavalcanti now began to move to the other side of the room.

'So you see,' went on Monte Cristo, 'that's why the State Prosecutor, Monsieur Villefort, couldn't come here today. He has been called by the police to look at the letter.'

Now Andrea had disappeared into another room.

A few seconds later, to everyone's surprise, a group of soldiers marched into the room and guards were placed at the doors, so that nobody could escape.

'What is this?' said Danglars. 'What are you doing here, in my house?'

'Which of you gentlemen is Andrea Cavalcanti?' said the officer in charge of the soldiers.

Everyone looked around the room. Andrea was not to be seen.

'Why do you want Andrea Cavalcanti?' asked Danglars.

'He is an escaped prisoner and he is wanted for the murder of a man named Caderousse.'

Madame Danglars fainted, and all the guests cried out in horror.

Danglars felt as though his world was falling to pieces.

He had lost money and now he was losing his rich son-in-law.

The soldiers could not find Andrea in the house, but he was caught by the guards outside, just as he was getting into his carriage. He was arrested and taken to prison.

Chapter 41

Andrea and His Father

Andrea had been in prison for a few days when he was told that there was a visitor to see him.

Poor Andrea! He had been thinking about his sudden turn of bad luck and he had made up his mind that it wouldn't last much longer. 'After all,' he told himself, 'I am protected by some powerful person. Everything proves it—the sudden fortune I was given; all the noble and wealthy people I met; the splendid marriage I was about to enter into with the daughter of a wealthy banker—all these things show that someone is interested in me. Who is it? It must be the Count of Monte Cristo. Why is he interested in me? I think he must be my real father; the father whom I never knew in my childhood. Now someone has come here to talk to me. I am sure it will be to tell me that the Count is arranging my release from this prison.'

With these thoughts in mind, Andrea went along to the room where his visitor was waiting to see him.

His surprise could hardly have been greater when he faced a man whom he had not seen for about ten years. It was Bertuccio.

'Good morning, Benedetto,' said Bertuccio.

'You! You!' said the young man, looking about in alarm.

'Aren't you pleased to see me?'

'Why have you come here? Who sent you?'

'No one.'

'How did you know I was in prison?'

'I recognised you, some time ago, when you came to the house of the Count of Monte Cristo. I am the Count's steward.'

'Ah, so you've been sent here by the Count of Monte Cristo,' said Andrea, feeling at once happier. 'Let's talk about my father now.'

'But who am I then?' said Bertuccio.

'You are my adopted father,' replied Andrea, 'but I imagine it was not you who gave me a hundred thousand francs in the last few months. It wasn't you who introduced me to everyone in Paris. And you aren't going to pay the bail to get me out of this prison. It will be the Count of Monte Cristo; my real father.'

'Do not joke,' said Bertuccio, 'and don't dare again to say that the Count of Monte Cristo is your father. The Count is far too good and noble a man to be the father of a wretch like you.'

'These are fine words, but I don't believe you—'

'You will believe me when you hear what I am going to tell you.'

'I want to know who my real father is. I have a right to know,' said Andrea.

'You shall know,' replied Bertuccio. 'Listen—'

He told him the story of many years ago; of how he had followed Villefort to Auteuil, near Paris, with the intention of killing him; how he had stabbed him one night in his garden, and how he had taken away a small bundle, thinking it contained some treasure.

When Andrea heard what Bertuccio had found in the bundle, he knew the name of his real father.

CHAPTER 42

The Trial

THE Law Court in Paris was crowded with people who had come to hear the trial of Andrea Cavalcanti. Villefort, the State Prosecutor, was speaking. He told the jury about the early life of the prisoner; how he had become a criminal when still very young; how he had been put in prison; how he had later escaped from prison; how he had come to Paris pretending to be a rich Italian, and how, in the end, he had one night waylaid his former fellow prisoner, Caderousse, and stabbed him to death outside the home of the Count of Monte Cristo. All this took a very long time, and when Villefort had finished speaking, everyone in the court was sure that Andrea must be found guilty. Villefort himself was quite pleased. He thought he had made a very good case against Andrea and there would be no hope for him.

But Andrea did not seem to be worried. Nothing that Villefort said about him made him lower his eyes. He stared calmly at the State Prosecutor all the time. Villefort sat down when he had finished speaking, and the judge asked the accused to give his name.

'Excuse me, sir,' said Andrea. 'I would like to answer that a little later.'

The judge was astonished, and so was everyone else in the court.

'Your age,' he said. 'Will you at least answer that question?'

Andera stared calmly at the State Prosecutor.

'I'll answer all the questions, sir,' replied Andrea. 'It's only that I wish to give my name a little later.'

'Your age?' repeated the judge.

'I'm almost twenty-two years old. I was born on the night of September the 27th, 1817.'

Villefort, who was busy taking down some notes, looked up when he heard this date.

'Where were you born?' asked the judge.

'At Auteuil, just outside Paris.'

Again Villefort raised his head and stared at Andrea. Although it was twenty-two years ago, he still remembered vividly what happened at Auteuil on the night of the 27th of September, 1817. And now, his heart began to beat quickly. Was something going wrong? That night, over twenty years ago, the bundle he was burying had been taken away. The thief had never come back to accuse him of murder, or to demand money from him for keeping quiet about the dead child. Perhaps the child was not dead! He looked again at Andrea, who calmly pulled a silk handkerchief from his pocket and gracefully wiped his lips with it. Now the judge spoke again.

'Your profession?' he said.

'First I was a forger,' answered Andrea. 'Then I became a thief and not long ago I became a murderer.'

Everyone gasped with surprise. Villefort put his hand to his forehead.

'And now,' said the judge, 'will you please tell us your name? I have the feeling that you have been keeping that back for some special reason.'

'I never had a real name,' said Andrea, 'but I know my father's name and I can give it to you.'

Villefort became more and more nervous. He moved his papers about, on the table, with trembling hands.

'Then give your father's name!' said the judge.

There was not a sound in the court. Everyone was listening.

'My father is the State Prosecutor,' said Andrea calmly.

'The State Prosecutor?' repeated the judge. He looked at Villefort and saw a look of agony on that man's face.

'Yes,' said Andrea, 'and if you wish to know his name I will tell it to you. His name is Villefort.'

Chapter 43

Villefort's Downfall

When Andrea said this, there was an outcry from all sides.

'You are insulting the court by saying such a thing,' said the judge.

'I wouldn't dare to insult the court,' replied Andrea.

'I repeat, my father's name is Villefort and I am ready to prove it. On the night when I was born at No. 28, Rue de la Fontaine my father told my mother that I was dead. He then wrapped me in a cloth, and buried me in his garden. I can show you the piece of cloth to prove it. It is embroidered with the letters 'H and N'. Somebody, hiding in the garden, saw my father burying the bundle. He picked me up out of my grave, thinking that he had found some treasure. But when he unwrapped the bundle he found me inside and he saw that I was still living. He took me to his home in the south and he became a father to me. He tried to bring me up as a good boy, but it was no use. When I grew older I began to lie and steal and in the end I robbed him and ran away from his house.'

'Where are the proofs of all this?' said the judge.

Andrea laughed. 'If you want proofs,' he said, 'just look at Monsieur Villefort and then tell me whether you still need them.'

Everyone now looked at the State Prosecutor. His bowed head was in his hands. He dug his fingernails into his hair.

'Father!' said Andrea. 'I am asked for proofs. Shall I give them?'

'No, no' moaned Villefort, 'it is useless.'

'What is useless?' said the judge. 'What do you mean?

'I mean that what he says is true,' whispered Villefort, staggering towards the door of the courtroom. He fled from the court as though he were running away from a nightmare.

'The trial is postponed,' said the judge. 'We shall look into the case again and there will be a new trial.'

Andrea was taken away by two policemen.

* * *

Villefort reached his home. He was soon followed there by the Count of Monte Cristo.

'Why have you come here in my hour of shame?' said Villefort.

'To ask you to pray to God to forgive you, as I forgive you now,' replied Monte Cristo.

'*You* forgive me?' said Villefort. 'I've never done *you* any harm.'

'Yes, you have,' said the Count. 'Think back for about twenty-three years. You condemned me to a horrible, slow death. You caused my father to die. You took life, love and happiness away from me.'

'This isn't true! Who are you?'

'I'm the ghost of the wretch you buried in the Château d'If. When, at last, I came out of those dungeons, God gave me the title of the Count of Monte Cristo and covered me with riches, so that you wouldn't recognise me until today.'

'Ah! Now I recognise you,' cried Villefort. 'You are....'

'Yes, I am Edmond Dantès.'

With a shriek of terror, Villefort rushed from his house.

An hour later, when two policemen came to arrest him for having tried to kill his son, twenty-two years before, they found him wildly digging in the garden. He told them he was looking for his son.

They took him away to prison, to await his trial. But there could be no trial for Villefort. He had gone mad. He was released from prison and spent the rest of his days in a home for the insane.

CHAPTER 44

Danglars in Rome

BARON Danglars was alone. Nearly all his money had gone. There was no rich young man to marry his daughter. As a matter of fact, there was no daughter. When Andrea Cavalcanti was arrested, Madame Danglars and Eugénie decided they had had enough of the baron and they went away to live with friends. Now he was sitting alone in his office, looking at his accounts. Although he had lost all his own money, he still held money belonging to others because he was a banker. There were about five million francs in his safe, belonging to a hospital. The hospital would soon be drawing out all this money to build a big new building.

Danglars decided to steal the five million francs and flee to Italy. There, he would start a new life and with the stolen money, he would build up another business for himself. He would soon be rich again, he thought.

* * *

A few days later, Danglars arrived in Italy. He travelled to Rome, and there he lodged in an hotel. He took a good room, ate a fine dinner and went to bed. He slept soundly, happy that he had plenty of money with him. Tomorrow, he would look around Rome and, the day after that, he would see about his new business.

The next day the sun was shining. It was a good day for sight seeing. The baron ordered a carriage. When it came, he put all his stolen money in his wallet, slipped it into a pocket inside his overcoat and stepped outside where the carriage was waiting for him. He spent the morning riding around Rome.

Although he could speak no Italian, Danglars managed fairly well. The only Italian words he knew were some terms of music which he made to fit into everything he wanted to say to the coachman. When the carriage was going slowly uphill and he wanted it to go a little faster, he would call out '*Allegro*!' If it was going too fast down-hill, he would cry '*Moderato*! *Moderato*!'

At midday he came back to the hotel, had another good meal, and went to sleep, carefully putting the wallet with the money in it under his pillow.

When he awoke, it was late in the afternoon. He dressed, put all his money in his pocket again, and went downstairs. At the door of his hotel, there was a guide who had seen him go out in the morning.

'Now that you have seen something of our city, your Excellency,' said the guide, 'you should see our famous ruins outside Rome.' Danglars, who had always been happy to be called 'Your Excellency' felt very flattered. He handed some coins to the man, who would have been quite ready to call him 'Your Highness' for a little more money.

'Yes, I think I'll see the ruins,' said Danglars, 'but first I must go to the bank. Is there a carriage?'

'Here is a coachman who will do anything you say, your Excellency. I can recommend him,' said the guide.

'Please step into my carriage, your Excellency,' said the coachman, who had been listening to what the guide was saying.

Danglars climbed into the carriage and told the man to drive to a bank. When they arrived there, he got out and went inside the bank, where he opened an account and left most of his money. The bank gave him a cheque book, so that he could draw out money when he wanted it.

Now Danglars was ready to go and see the ruins. The carriage drove away quickly. Soon, they had passed through the outskirts of Rome and were in the countryside. He noticed it was beginning to get dark. He must have slept at the hotel longer than he thought. He put his head out of the carriage window and asked the coachman how long it would take to reach the ruins.

'*Non capisco,*' said the coachman, who seemed now only able to speak Italian. After a while, the carriage stopped. It was getting very dark. Danglars thought he could see some ruins at the side of the road, so he opened the door to get out of the carriage. A strong hand pushed him back and the carriage began to move forward again. Danglars was quite surprised. 'Eh!' he said to the coachman, 'eh, *mio caro*?' This was another little piece of Italian Danglars had learned by listening to his daughter singing Italian duets with Andrea Cavalcanti.

'Eh, *mio caro*?' he repeated. But *mio caro* made no reply, so the baron looked carefully through the window. He saw a horseman galloping at the right hand side of the carriage. 'A policeman!' he exclaimed! 'Perhaps the French police have telegraphed to Italy, to have me arrested.' Danglars turned to the left. Another man on horseback was galloping on that side.

'Oh dear!' gasped Danglars, 'I am arrested. What will they do with me? Send me back to France?'

Chapter 45

Roman Bandits

Danglars sat back in the carriage and thought for a while. 'Suddenly, as he looked at the countryside, he realised that he was not being taken back to Rome. They were approaching some caves.

'Good heavens!' he said to himself. 'I have another idea. What if they should be . . . ?'

His hair stood on end. He remembered those interesting stories, that no one had believed in Paris, about the bandits of Rome who had captured young Albert Morcerf.

'Perhaps they are robbers,' he muttered.

Just then, the man riding on the right-hand side said something and the carriage stopped. At the same time, the door on the left-hand side was opened.

'*Scendi !*' said a voice. Danglars quickly descended. Although he did not yet speak Italian, he already seemed to understand it quite well.

The men now led him into the caves, and along many underground passages. The baron did not doubt it any longer. He was in the hands of bandits. After some time the narrow passage opened out into a big cave. A sentinel stopped them at the entrance, but let them pass through when he saw who they were.

Danglars was taken to the chief of the bandits, who was sitting down in the cave, reading a book.

'Is this the man?' asked the bandit chief.

'Yes, captain,' said one of the men who had brought Danglars.

'Let me see him!'

At this order, one of the guards, who was carrying a blazing torch, raised it to Danglars's face, so that his chief might see him better. Danglars jumped back hastily, to avoid having his eyebrows burned. He looked terrified as the light of the torch shone upon him.

'He looks tired,' said the bandit chief. 'Take him to his bed!'

'Oh! oh!' thought Danglars. 'They are going to kill me. My "bed" will be a grave, I am sure.'

He was taken away, along some more narrow passages, and up some steep steps. Then, a low door opened in front of him. Bending his head, he went into a small room cut out of the rock. He was very surprised to see that he was not going to be killed yet, for there was a bed, made of leaves and goatskins, in the corner and he could lie down on it. The small door was closed and a bolt grated. Danglars was a prisoner.

He remembered again the story that he had heard from Albert Morcerf, after his adventures in Rome, and he was sure that these were the same bandits. Albert's description of the bandit chief exactly described the man he had seen sitting in the big cave, reading a book.

Danglars felt happier. They were not going to kill him. He remembered that they had asked to be paid something like four thousand piastres to set Albert free. Even if they wanted twice that amount this time, eight thousand piastres was forty-eight thousand francs and he had about five million francs in the

bank. With all that money he could certainly manage to free himself. Feeling much better, he lay down on the rough bed and went to sleep.

CHAPTER 46

Danglars Orders a Meal

AFTER a good night's sleep, Danglars awoke. He did not realise at first where he was. Then he remembered.

'Yes, yes,' he murmured, 'I am in the hands of the same bandits who captured Albert Morcerf. They haven't killed or wounded me yet, but perhaps they've robbed me.' He put his hands in his pockets. The money he had with him was still there.

'What peculiar bandits!' he exclaimed. 'They have left me with my money and my watch. Still, I suppose they'll soon demand money to set me free.'

He looked at his watch and saw that it was six o'clock in the morning. He decided to wait and see what the bandits wanted.

At twelve o'clock, the guard outside his door went off duty and another one came and sat down there. Danglars could see him through a small hole in the door.

The man started eating some black bread, cheese, and onions. 'I don't know how he can eat such awful food,' said Danglars to himself.

But as he watched the man eating, Danglars also began to feel hungry.

'Come!' he called to the man, 'I think it's time somebody gave me something to eat also.'

The man outside the door took no notice of him.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, another guard came on duty. This man had brought with him some peas stewed with bacon,

a basket of grapes and a bottle of wine. Danglars's mouth began to water. He tapped on the door of his cell and the guard came to see what he wanted. Danglars noticed that he was the same man who had told him so rudely, the evening before, to put his head back inside the carriage. But he decided that this was not the time for a quarrel. So, with a pleasant smile, he said politely, 'Excuse me, but aren't they going to give me any dinner?'

'Does your Excellency happen to be hungry?' said the guard.

'Happen to be hungry! That's good, when I haven't eaten for twenty-four hours,' muttered Danglars, but he said aloud, 'Yes, I'm very hungry.'

'And your Excellency would like to eat?'

'Yes, and quickly, if that's possible.'

'Of course, your Excellency. Here you can have whatever you wish for as long as you pay for it. That's the custom among all honest people.'

'Of course!' said Danglars, 'although those who capture you and imprison you ought at least to feed their prisoners.'

'Ah, your Excellency,' replied the guard, 'that is not the custom here.'

'That's a poor reason,' said Danglars, 'but anyway bring me something to eat.'

'What would your Excellency like? Just give your orders!'

'Have you kitchens and cooks here, then?'

'Yes, very good ones.'

'Why, it's just like being in Paris,' murmured Danglars. Then he said to the guard, 'Very well, then, bring me a roast chicken.'

The guard turned around and called out, 'A roast chicken for his Excellency!'

In a minute, a young man appeared, carrying a roast chicken on a silver dish.

In a minute, a young man appeared, carrying a roast chicken on a silver dish.

'Here, your Excellency!' said the guard, taking the chicken and putting it on the table in the cell. Danglars asked for a knife and fork.

'Here, your Excellency!' said the guard, giving them to him.

Danglars took the knife in one hand and the fork in the other, and was about to cut up the chicken.

'Pardon me, your Excellency,' said the guard. 'People pay here before they eat. Otherwise, they might refuse to pay afterwards.'

'Ah!' thought Danglars. 'This is no longer like Paris. But I'll pay them well. Chickens can't cost much here.' He gave the guard one piastre, which he reckoned was enough to buy about a hundred chickens in Rome. The guard took the piastre and Danglars again prepared to cut up the chicken with his knife and fork.

'Just a moment, your Excellency,' said the guard, 'you still owe me something.'

'How do I owe you anything?' asked Danglars, surprised.

'Your Excellency has given me only one piastre.'

'*Only* one piastre for a chicken! Isn't that more than enough?'

'Oh no, your Excellency, you still owe me 16,666 piastres.'

Danglars opened his eyes wide when he heard this huge joke.

'Ah! very funny,' he murmured, 'very funny!' He got ready to cut the chicken again, but the guard seized his wrist with one hand and held out his other hand for the money. 'Come,' said he.

'Aren't you joking?' said Danglars.

'We never joke, your Excellency,' replied the guard.

CHAPTER 47

The Bill of Fare

Danglars looked up in surprise at the bandit who was still holding his wrist tightly.

'What! A hundred thousand francs for that chicken?' he said.

'Your Excellency, you can't imagine how difficult it is to raise chickens in these caves.'

'Come, come,' said Danglars, 'that's very funny——very amusing, I agree; but as I'm very hungry, please allow me to eat. Anyway, there's another piastre for you.'

'Now that leaves only 16,665 piastres you owe me,' said the guard calmly. 'I shall get them all in time.'

'Ah! if you think that,' shouted Danglars, now getting angry, 'then you don't know me. You'll never get all that money out of me.'

The guard made a sign, and the man who had brought the chicken hastily removed it. Danglars lay down on his bed in the corner and the guard began eating his food again. Danglars could smell the peas and bacon. He began to feel more and more hungry. He waited for half an hour, which seemed to him like a hundred years. Then he could stand it no more. He got up and went to the door.

'Come,' said he to the guard, 'don't keep me starving here any longer, but tell me what they want with me.'

'No, your Excellency! You must say what you want with us. Give us your orders, and we will carry them out.'

'Then give me something to eat, quickly. I want to eat—to eat; do you hear?'

'What would your Excellency like to eat?'

'A piece of dry bread, since the chickens are beyond all price in this dreadful place.'

'Very well,' said the guard. He called out, 'Some bread for his Excellency.'

When the bread came, Danglars asked how much it would cost him.

'Only, 16,665 piastres,' said the guard; 'you have already paid two piastres in advance.'

'What, a hundred thousand francs for a loaf?'

'One hundred thousand francs', said the guard.

'But you only asked a hundred thousand francs for a chicken!'

'We don't charge according to the bill of fare. We serve only at a fixed price. It makes no difference whether you eat a lot or a little, whether you have ten dishes or one; it's always the same price.'

'What! Still keeping up this silly joke? My dear fellow, it is stupid! You may as well tell me that you want me to die of starvation.'

'Oh no, your Excellency, we don't want you to do that. Pay and eat!'

'And what shall I pay with, fool? Do you think I carry a hundred thousand francs in my pocket?'

'Your Excellency, you have a cheque book in your pocket and five million francs in the bank. That's enough for fifty chickens at a hundred thousand francs each.'

Danglars now understood that this was no joke, but part of the ransom which the bandits were demanding for his release.

'If I pay you a hundred thousand francs,' he said, 'will you be satisfied and let me eat in peace?'

'Certainly,' said the guard.

Danglars decided to pay. He took out his cheque book and asked for a pen and ink. When it was brought to him, he wrote out a cheque for 16,665 piastres.

'Here you are,' he said, giving it to the guard.

'And here is your chicken,' said the guard.

Danglars sighed when he cut up the chicken. It looked very thin for the price it had cost him. As for the guard, he looked carefully at the cheque, put it in his pocket, and continued eating his peas and bacon.

Chapter 48

The Starving Man

By noon the next day, Danglars was hungry again. So that he would not have to spend more money that day, he had hidden half the chicken and a piece of bread in his cell. But as soon as he had eaten, he felt thirsty. He hadn't thought of that. He tried to hold out, but in the end he had to call the guard and ask for something to drink. The guard made him pay twenty-five thousand francs for a jug of water.

'Why don't you say now that you want to take all my money? If that's what you want, why not do it at once?' he said.

'It's possible that my master wants to take all your money. I don't know what he wants with you,' replied the guard.

'Who is your master?'

'The bandit chief whom you saw when you first came here.'

'Let me see him.'

'Certainly,' said the guard. Very soon afterwards the chief of the bandits appeared at Danglars's cell.

'How much do you want to set me free?' said Danglars.

'I want your five million francs.'

Danglars felt a pain in his heart. 'But that's all I have left in the world out of an immense fortune,' he said. 'If you take that, take my life also.'

'We are not allowed to kill you.'

'Who doesn't allow you?'

'Our chief.'

'But I thought you said you were the chief.'

'Yes, I am the chief of these men, but there is another over me.'

Danglars thought for a moment. Then he said, 'Why is your chief doing this to me?'

'I don't know.'

'He will take away everything I have.'

'Probably.'

'Come,' said Danglars, 'I'll give you a million.'

'No.'

'Two millions? Three? Four? Come, Four! I'll give you four million francs if you'll let me go.'

'Why do you offer me four millions for what is worth five millions? Why are you trying to bargain with me, banker?'

'Well then, I'll defy you. You can kill me if you like, but I won't sign another cheque.'

'Just as you please, your Excellency,' said the bandit chief, and with that he left the cell.

Danglars's resolve not to sign again lasted for two days. After that, he offered a million for some food. The bandits sent him a wonderful meal and took his million.

At the end of twelve days, Danglars reckoned his accounts and found he had only fifty thousand francs left. He could not bear to lose his last fifty thousand. Again he decided he wouldn't sign any cheques and he began to starve. He became delirious and sometimes he imagined he saw a poor old man, lying on a bed, dying of hunger.

He starved himself like this for five days. Then he began to beg the guard to give him some food. He offered him a thousand

francs for a mouthful of bread. But the guard took no notice of him. In the end, he asked to see the bandit chief once more.

When the chief came, Danglars fell to his knees.

'Take everything I have,' he moaned, 'only let me out of here. Just let me go free with no money at all.'

'You think you have suffered, but there are men who have suffered more than you,' said the chief.

'Oh, I don't think so.'

'Yes, there are those who have died of hunger.'

Danglars thought of the poor old man he had seen in his dreams the last few days.

'Yes, it's true,' he said, 'there have been some who have suffered more than I have.'

'Do you repent?' asked a deep voice, which caused Danglars's hair to stand on end.

'Indeed, I'm sorry for the evil I have done,' cried Danglars.

'Then I forgive you,' said the voice. The man who had spoken came up to the door of the cell and showed himself.

'The Count of Monte Cristo!' gasped Danglars.

'You are mistaken; I'm not the Count of Monte Cristo.'

'Then who are you?'

'I am he whom you betrayed and dishonoured; I am he whose betrothed you forced into marriage with another man; I am he on whom you trampled so that you could raise yourself to a better position; I am he whose father you caused to die of starvation. I am Edmond Dantès!'

Danglars cried out, and fell to the ground.

'Rise,' said the Count. 'I have forgiven you now. Keep the fifty thousand francs which you have left. The five million you

robbed have been given back to the hospital. You can now have a meal, and after that, you can go free.'

When Danglars was set free from the caves, he found that his hair had turned completely white.

Dantès's revenge was complete!

CHAPTER 49

The End of the Story

IT will be remembered that, when Dantès found his fortune on the island of Monte Cristo, he went to Marseilles calling himself Lord Wilmore. There, he purchased the house in which his father had lived; for this house was part of his youth and part of that happy time when he and Mercédès were betrothed, the time before he knew the agonies of life in the Château d'If.

It was here that he took Mercédès and Albert after they had fled from the home of the Count of Morcerf. In this house, Mercédès and her son found peace and solitude, away from the distress which they had recently suffered.

Dantès came here to say farewell to Mercédès. He walked through the house and into the garden beyond. He paused for a moment and looked towards a tree covered with white jasmine flowers. Under the tree a figure was sitting. It was Mercédès. The tree and its white blossoms and the figure seated beneath it formed a picture which seemed to hold Dantès so that he was unable to move. Then Mercédès looked up and saw him. She rose and came to him with her arms outstretched.

'Edmond,' she said and in her voice was all the sadness of her life.

Dantès took her hands and looked into her eyes.

'I have come to say goodbye, Mercédès.'

'You are going away, Edmond?'

'Yes, I am going away. The task which I set myself is finished. The vengeance I swore to take on those who wronged me is complete.'

'You say your vengeance is complete,' said Mercédès. 'Yet, am I not the one who wronged you most? You have caused the death or destruction of those men who betrayed you. Yet you have spared me. But I do not wish to be spared. I live only because I cannot die.'

'Mercédès!' cried Edmond. 'You have every reason to hate me. I am the cause of all your misery. Yet you do not seem to hate me, you seem only to pity me.'

'No, Edmond, I do not hate you. You spared my son's life and for that I thank you. It is myself I hate; for I am the miserable creature who had neither the strength nor the courage, nor faith enough to hope that you might one day return.'

As she spoke the tears poured down her face. Edmond tried to console her, but she would not be comforted. At last he said, 'Just tell me this, Mercédès, that one day somewhere we shall meet again.'

Mercédès turned to him and then raised her eyes to the sky above.

'Yes, Edmond, we shall meet again—in heaven.'

* * *

Dantès walked slowly from the house, His eyes were full of tears as he looked towards the golden madonna on the hill. Then he turned towards the harbour where his ship was waiting.

'Monte Cristo, I am coming back,' he murmured.

He walked slowly towards the quay side and gazed at his ship. As he looked, he saw the figure of a woman on the deck,

a woman in Eastern dress with a veil around her head. It was Haydée. He ran up the gangway and on to the ship. Haydée came towards him.

'You are leaving, my lord?' she asked.

'Yes, Haydée, I am leaving. And you will stay here in France and take your rightful place in the world. You will have money and possessions, and all the things which are yours by right. You will be treated as the princess which you are. You are young and beautiful and you have a life of great happiness before you.'

Haydée turned towards him, an expression of longing on her face.

'There is no happiness without you,' she said. 'If you leave me, I shall no longer wish to live. I shall die.'

Dantès looked at her in amazement.

'Then you want to come with me?' he asked.

'Yes, my lord, for I love you. I have loved you as a father and a brother, but I also love you as a husband and master. I love you as my own life.'

Edmond could hardly believe the words she spoke. He looked for a long time at the beautiful young girl before him. Then he sighed and took her hand.

'Then come with me! Come to Monte Cristo! Who knows, perhaps your love will make me forget all I do not wish to remember.'

* * *

And so it happened that, about six o'clock the next evening, a fine yacht was seen gliding out of the harbour of Marseilles. As she sailed gracefully out to sea, the amber rays of the setting sun seemed to turn her into a ship of fire.

Standing on the deck and looking back at Marseilles, were a tall dark man and a beautiful woman. They gazed at the church of Notre Dame de la Garde. The gilded statue on the top of the church glowed a brilliant red-gold which exactly matched the flame colour of the yacht. Only these two objects, the statue standing on high and the yacht out at sea were touched by the rays of the sun as it began to sink behind the surrounding hills. The statue seemed to be saying farewell to the yacht whilst the rest of Marseilles was already shrouded in the approaching night. The Château d'If, half hidden in growing darkness, was only part of the evening shadow.

Edmond and Haydée now turned away their eyes from Marseilles and looked towards the east; towards the island of Monte Cristo.

THE END