

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

FARIA'S TREASURE

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.

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

THE ESCAPE

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.

THE RESCUE

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

THE SMUGGLERS

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.