

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.

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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:

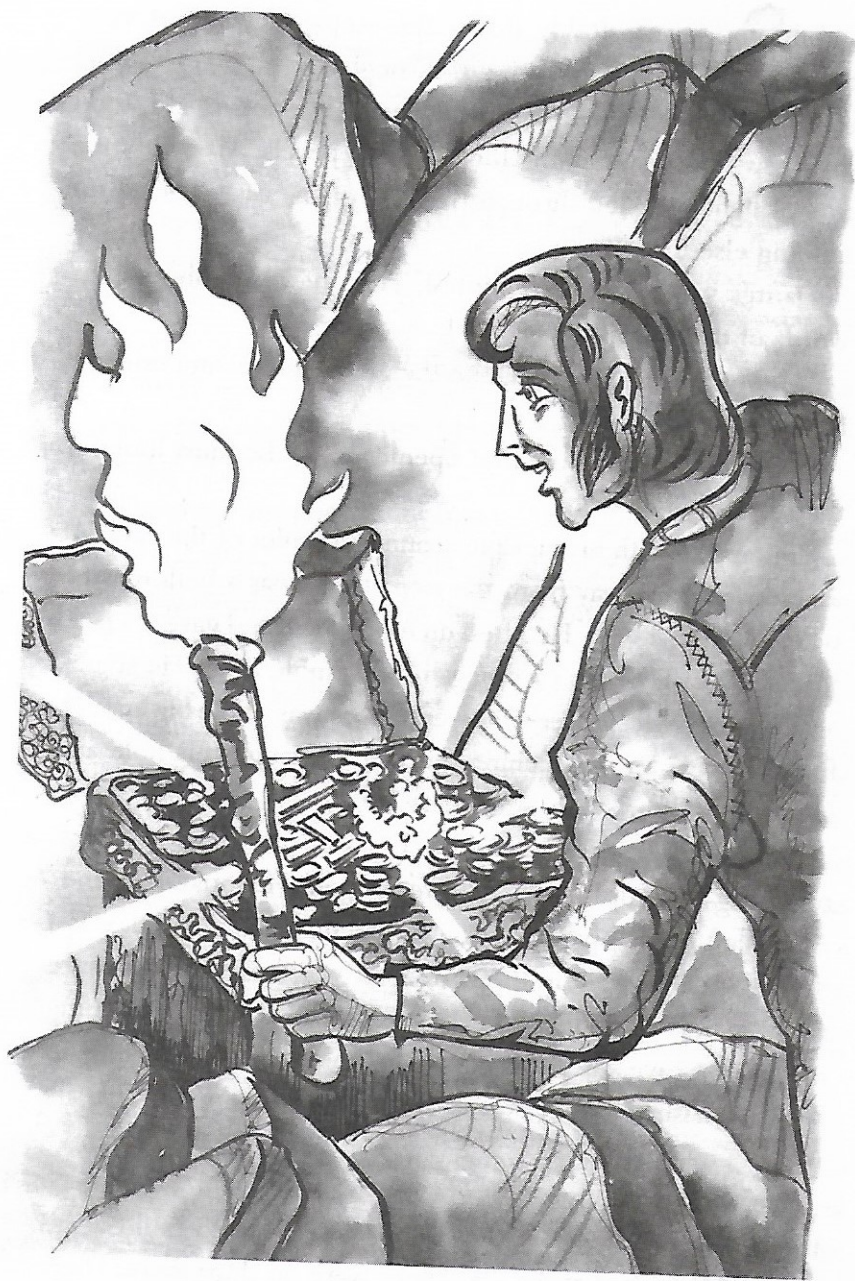
'The treasure is in the farthest angle of the second opening in the caves.'

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 called 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.