

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.'

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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.

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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.

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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.