

devoured it (so to speak), as the implacable Ugolino devours the skull of Archbishop Roger in the Inferno of Dante. Rage supplanted religious fervor. Dant  s uttered blasphemies that made his jailer recoil with horror, dashed himself furiously against the walls of his prison, wreaked his anger upon everything, and chiefly upon himself, so that the least thing, "a grain of sand, a straw, or a breath of air that annoyed him, led to paroxysms of fury. Then the letter that Villefort had showed to him recurred to his mind, and every line gleamed forth in fiery letters on the wall like the _mene, mene, tekel upharsin_ of Belshazzar. He told himself that it was the enmity of man, and not the vengeance of Heaven, that had thus plunged him into the deepest misery. He consigned his unknown persecutors to the most horrible tortures he could imagine, and found them all insufficient, because after torture came death, and after death, if not repose, at least the boon of unconsciousness.

By dint of constantly dwelling on the idea that tranquillity was death, and if punishment were the end in view other tortures than death must be invented, he began to reflect on suicide. Unhappy he, who, on the brink of misfortune, broods over ideas like these!

Before him is a dead sea that stretches in azure calm before the eye; but he who unwarily ventures within its embrace finds himself struggling with a monster that would drag him down to perdition. Once thus ensnared, unless the protecting hand of God snatch him thence, all is over, and his struggles but tend to hasten his destruction. This state of mental anguish is, however, less terrible than the sufferings that precede or the punishment that possibly will follow. There is a sort of consolation at the contemplation of the yawning abyss, at the bottom of which lie darkness and obscurity.

Edmond found some solace in these ideas. All his sorrows, all his sufferings, with their train of gloomy spectres, fled from his cell when the angel of death seemed about to enter. Dant  s reviewed his past life with composure, and, looking forward with terror to his future existence, chose that middle line that seemed to afford him a refuge. Sometimes, said he, in my voyages, when I was a man and commanded other men, I have seen the heavens overcast, the sea rage and foam, the storm arise, and, like a monstrous bird, beating the two horizons with its wings. Then I felt that my vessel was a vain refuge, that trembled and shook before the tempest. Soon the fury of the waves and the sight of the sharp rocks announced the approach of death, and death then terrified me, and I used all my skill and intelligence as a man and a sailor to struggle against the wrath of God. But I did so because I was happy, because I had not courted death, because to be cast upon a bed of rocks and seaweed seemed terrible, because I was unwilling that I, a creature made for the service of God, should serve for food to the gulls and ravens. But now it is different; I have lost all that bound me to life, death smiles and invites me to repose; I die after my own manner, I die exhausted and broken-spirited, as I fall asleep when I have paced three thousand times round my cell, "that is thirty thousand steps, or about ten leagues.

No sooner had this idea taken possession of him than he became more composed, arranged his couch to the best of his power, ate little and slept less, and found existence almost supportable, because he felt that he could throw it off at pleasure, like a worn-out garment. Two methods of self-destruction were at his disposal. He could hang himself with his handkerchief to the window bars, or refuse food and die of starvation. But the first was repugnant to him. Dant  s had always entertained the greatest horror of pirates, who are hung up to the yard-arm; he would not die by what seemed an infamous death. He resolved to adopt the second, and began that day to carry out his resolve.

0185m

Nearly four years had passed away; at the end of the second he had ceased to mark the lapse of time. Dant  s said, I wish to die, and had

chosen the manner of his death, and fearful of changing his mind, he had taken an oath to die. When my morning and evening meals are brought, thought he, I will cast them out of the window, and they will think that I have eaten them.

He kept his word; twice a day he cast out, through the barred aperture, the provisions his jailer brought him—at first gayly, then with deliberation, and at last with regret. Nothing but the recollection of his oath gave him strength to proceed. Hunger made viands once repugnant, now acceptable; he held the plate in his hand for an hour at a time, and gazed thoughtfully at the morsel of bad meat, of tainted fish, of black and mouldy bread. It was the last yearning for life contending with the resolution of despair; then his dungeon seemed less sombre, his prospects less desperate. He was still young—he was only four or five-and-twenty—he had nearly fifty years to live. What unforeseen events might not open his prison door, and restore him to liberty? Then he raised to his lips the repast that, like a voluntary Tantalus, he refused himself; but he thought of his oath, and he would not break it. He persisted until, at last, he had not sufficient strength to rise and cast his supper out of the loophole. The next morning he could not see or hear; the jailer feared he was dangerously ill. Edmond hoped he was dying.

Thus the day passed away. Edmond felt a sort of stupor creeping over him which brought with it a feeling almost of content; the gnawing pain at his stomach had ceased; his thirst had abated; when he closed his eyes he saw myriads of lights dancing before them like the will-o-the-wisps that play about the marshes. It was the twilight of that mysterious country called Death!

Suddenly, about nine o'clock in the evening, Edmond heard a hollow sound in the wall against which he was lying.

So many loathsome animals inhabited the prison, that their noise did not, in general, awake him; but whether abstinence had quickened his faculties, or whether the noise was really louder than usual, Edmond raised his head and listened. It was a continual scratching, as if made by a huge claw, a powerful tooth, or some iron instrument attacking the stones.

Although weakened, the young man's brain instantly responded to the idea that haunts all prisoners—"liberty!" It seemed to him that heaven had at length taken pity on him, and had sent this noise to warn him on the very brink of the abyss. Perhaps one of those beloved ones he had so often thought of was thinking of him, and striving to diminish the distance that separated them.

No, no, doubtless he was deceived, and it was but one of those dreams that forerun death!

Edmond still heard the sound. It lasted nearly three hours; he then heard a noise of something falling, and all was silent.

Some hours afterwards it began again, nearer and more distinct. Edmond was intensely interested. Suddenly the jailer entered.

For a week since he had resolved to die, and during the four days that he had been carrying out his purpose, Edmond had not spoken to the attendant, had not answered him when he inquired what was the matter with him, and turned his face to the wall when he looked too curiously at him; but now the jailer might hear the noise and put an end to it, and so destroy a ray of something like hope that soothed his last moments.

The jailer brought him his breakfast. Dantès raised himself up and began to talk about everything; about the bad quality of the food, about the coldness of his dungeon, grumbling and complaining, in order to have an excuse for speaking louder, and wearying the patience of his jailer, who out of kindness of heart had brought broth and white bread for his prisoner.

Fortunately, he fancied that Dantès was delirious; and placing the food on the rickety table, he withdrew. Edmond listened, and the sound became more and more distinct.

There can be no doubt about it, thought he; it is some prisoner who is striving to obtain his freedom. Oh, if I were only there to help him!

Suddenly another idea took possession of his mind, so used to misfortune, that it was scarcely capable of hope—the idea that the noise was made by workmen the governor had ordered to repair the neighboring dungeon.

It was easy to ascertain this; but how could he risk the question? It was easy to call his jailers attention to the noise, and watch his countenance as he listened; but might he not by this means destroy hopes far more important than the short-lived satisfaction of his own curiosity? Unfortunately, Edmonds brain was still so feeble that he could not bend his thoughts to anything in particular. He saw but one means of restoring lucidity and clearness to his judgment. He turned his eyes towards the soup which the jailer had brought, rose, staggered towards it, raised the vessel to his lips, and drank off the contents with a feeling of indescribable pleasure.

He had the resolution to stop with this. He had often heard that shipwrecked persons had died through having eagerly devoured too much food. Edmond replaced on the table the bread he was about to devour, and returned to his couch—he did not wish to die. He soon felt that his ideas became again collected—he could think, and strengthen his thoughts by reasoning. Then he said to himself:

I must put this to the test, but without compromising anybody. If it is a workman, I need but knock against the wall, and he will cease to work, in order to find out who is knocking, and why he does so; but as his occupation is sanctioned by the governor, he will soon resume it. If, on the contrary, it is a prisoner, the noise I make will alarm him, he will cease, and not begin again until he thinks everyone is asleep. Edmond rose again, but this time his legs did not tremble, and his sight was clear; he went to a corner of his dungeon, detached a stone, and with it knocked against the wall where the sound came. He struck thrice.

At the first blow the sound ceased, as if by magic.

Edmond listened intently; an hour passed, two hours passed, and no sound was heard from the wall—all was silent there.

Full of hope, Edmond swallowed a few mouthfuls of bread and water, and, thanks to the vigor of his constitution, found himself well-nigh recovered.

The day passed away in utter silence—night came without recurrence of the noise.

It is a prisoner, said Edmond joyfully. His brain was on fire, and life and energy returned.

The night passed in perfect silence. Edmond did not close his eyes.

In the morning the jailer brought him fresh provisions—he had already devoured those of the previous day; he ate these listening anxiously for the sound, walking round and round his cell, shaking the iron bars of the loophole, restoring vigor and agility to his limbs by exercise, and so preparing himself for his future destiny. At intervals he listened to learn if the noise had not begun again, and grew impatient at the prudence of the prisoner, who did not guess he had been disturbed by a captive as anxious for liberty as himself.

Three days passed—seventy-two long tedious hours which he counted off by minutes!

At length one evening, as the jailer was visiting him for the last time that night, Edmond, with his ear for the hundredth time at the wall, fancied he heard an almost imperceptible movement among the stones. He moved away, walked up and down his cell to collect his thoughts, and then went back and listened.

The matter was no longer doubtful. Something was at work on the other side of the wall; the prisoner had discovered the danger, and had substituted a lever for a chisel.

Encouraged by this discovery, Edmond determined to assist the

indefatigable laborer. He began by moving his bed, and looked around for anything with which he could pierce the wall, penetrate the moist cement, and displace a stone.

He saw nothing, he had no knife or sharp instrument, the window grating was of iron, but he had too often assured himself of its solidity. All his furniture consisted of a bed, a chair, a table, a pail, and a jug. The bed had iron clamps, but they were screwed to the wood, and it would have required a screw-driver to take them off. The table and chair had nothing, the pail had once possessed a handle, but that had been removed.

0189m

Dant s had but one resource, which was to break the jug, and with one of the sharp fragments attack the wall. He let the jug fall on the floor, and it broke in pieces.

Dant s concealed two or three of the sharpest fragments in his bed, leaving the rest on the floor. The breaking of his jug was too natural an accident to excite suspicion. Edmond had all the night to work in, but in the darkness he could not do much, and he soon felt that he was working against something very hard; he pushed back his bed, and waited for day.

All night he heard the subterranean workman, who continued to mine his way. Day came, the jailer entered. Dant s told him that the jug had fallen from his hands while he was drinking, and the jailer went grumblingly to fetch another, without giving himself the trouble to remove the fragments of the broken one. He returned speedily, advised the prisoner to be more careful, and departed.

Dant s heard joyfully the key grate in the lock; he listened until the sound of steps died away, and then, hastily displacing his bed, saw by the faint light that penetrated into his cell, that he had labored uselessly the previous evening in attacking the stone instead of removing the plaster that surrounded it.

The damp had rendered it friable, and Dant s was able to break it off in small morsels, it is true, but at the end of half an hour he had scraped off a handful; a mathematician might have calculated that in two years, supposing that the rock was not encountered, a passage twenty feet long and two feet broad, might be formed.

The prisoner reproached himself with not having thus employed the hours he had passed in vain hopes, prayer, and despondency. During the six years that he had been imprisoned, what might he not have accomplished? This idea imparted new energy, and in three days he had succeeded, with the utmost precaution, in removing the cement, and exposing the stone-work. The wall was built of rough stones, among which, to give strength to the structure, blocks of hewn stone were at intervals imbedded. It was one of these he had uncovered, and which he must remove from its socket.

Dant s strove to do this with his nails, but they were too weak. The fragments of the jug broke, and after an hour of useless toil, Dant s paused with anguish on his brow.

Was he to be thus stopped at the beginning, and was he to wait inactive until his fellow workman had completed his task? Suddenly an idea occurred to him he smiled, and the perspiration dried on his forehead. The jailer always brought Dant s soup in an iron saucepan; this saucepan contained soup for both prisoners, for Dant s had noticed that it was either quite full, or half empty, according as the turnkey gave it to him or to his companion first.

The handle of this saucepan was of iron; Dant s would have given ten years of his life in exchange for it.

0191m

The jailer was accustomed to pour the contents of the saucepan into Dant s plate, and Dant s, after eating his soup with a wooden spoon, washed the plate, which thus served for every day. Now when evening came Dant s put his plate on the ground near the door; the jailer, as he entered, stepped on it and broke it.

This time he could not blame Dant  s. He was wrong to leave it there, but the jailer was wrong not to have looked before him. The jailer, therefore, only grumbled. Then he looked about for something to pour the soup into; Dant  s entire dinner service consisted of one plate"there was no alternative.

Leave the saucepan, said Dant  s; you can take it away when you bring me my breakfast.

This advice was to the jailers taste, as it spared him the necessity of making another trip. He left the saucepan.

Dant  s was beside himself with joy. He rapidly devoured his food, and after waiting an hour, lest the jailer should change his mind and return, he removed his bed, took the handle of the saucepan, inserted the point between the hewn stone and rough stones of the wall, and employed it as a lever. A slight oscillation showed Dant  s that all went well. At the end of an hour the stone was extricated from the wall, leaving a cavity a foot and a half in diameter.

Dant  s carefully collected the plaster, carried it into the corner of his cell, and covered it with earth. Then, wishing to make the best use of his time while he had the means of labor, he continued to work without ceasing. At the dawn of day he replaced the stone, pushed his bed against the wall, and lay down. The breakfast consisted of a piece of bread; the jailer entered and placed the bread on the table.

Well, dont you intend to bring me another plate? said Dant  s.

No, replied the turnkey; you destroy everything. First you break your jug, then you make me break your plate; if all the prisoners followed your example, the government would be ruined. I shall leave you the saucepan, and pour your soup into that. So for the future I hope you will not be so destructive.

Dant  s raised his eyes to heaven and clasped his hands beneath the coverlet. He felt more gratitude for the possession of this piece of iron than he had ever felt for anything. He had noticed, however, that the prisoner on the other side had ceased to labor; no matter, this was a greater reason for proceeding"if his neighbor would not come to him, he would go to his neighbor. All day he toiled on untiringly, and by the evening he had succeeded in extracting ten handfuls of plaster and fragments of stone. When the hour for his jailers visit arrived, Dant  s straightened the handle of the saucepan as well as he could, and placed it in its accustomed place. The turnkey poured his ration of soup into it, together with the fish"for thrice a week the prisoners were deprived of meat. This would have been a method of reckoning time, had not Dant  s long ceased to do so. Having poured out the soup, the turnkey retired.

Dant  s wished to ascertain whether his neighbor had really ceased to work. He listened"all was silent, as it had been for the last three days. Dant  s sighed; it was evident that his neighbor distrusted him. However, he toiled on all the night without being discouraged; but after two or three hours he encountered an obstacle. The iron made no impression, but met with a smooth surface; Dant  s touched it, and found that it was a beam. This beam crossed, or rather blocked up, the hole Dant  s had made; it was necessary, therefore, to dig above or under it. The unhappy young man had not thought of this.

Oh, my God, my God! murmured he, I have so earnestly prayed to you, that I hoped my prayers had been heard. After having deprived me of my liberty, after having deprived me of death, after having recalled me to existence, my God, have pity on me, and do not let me die in despair!

0193m

Who talks of God and despair at the same time? said a voice that seemed to come from beneath the earth, and, deadened by the distance, sounded hollow and sepulchral in the young mans ears. Edmonds hair stood on end, and he rose to his knees.

Ah, said he, I hear a human voice. Edmond had not heard anyone speak save his jailer for four or five years; and a jailer is no man to a prisoner"he is a living door, a barrier of flesh and blood adding

strength to restraints of oak and iron.

In the name of Heaven, cried Dant  s, speak again, though the sound of your voice terrifies me. Who are you?

Who are you? said the voice.

An unhappy prisoner, replied Dant  s, who made no hesitation in answering.

Of what country?

A Frenchman.

Your name?

Edmond Dant  s.

Your profession?

A sailor.

How long have you been here?

Since the 28th of February, 1815.

Your crime?

I am innocent.

But of what are you accused?

Of having conspired to aid the emperors return.

What! For the emperors return?"the emperor is no longer on the throne, then?

He abdicated at Fontainebleau in 1814, and was sent to the Island of Elba. But how long have you been here that you are ignorant of all this?

Since 1811.

Dant  s shuddered; this man had been four years longer than himself in prison.

Do not dig any more, said the voice; only tell me how high up is your excavation?

On a level with the floor.

How is it concealed?

Behind my bed.

Has your bed been moved since you have been a prisoner?

No.

What does your chamber open on?

A corridor.

And the corridor?

On a court.

Alas! murmured the voice.

Oh, what is the matter? cried Dant  s.

I have made a mistake owing to an error in my plans. I took the wrong angle, and have come out fifteen feet from where I intended. I took the wall you are mining for the outer wall of the fortress.

But then you would be close to the sea?

That is what I hoped.

And supposing you had succeeded?

I should have thrown myself into the sea, gained one of the islands near here"the Isle de Daume or the Isle de Tiboul  n"and then I should have been safe.

Could you have swum so far?

Heaven would have given me strength; but now all is lost.

All?

Yes; stop up your excavation carefully, do not work any more, and wait until you hear from me.

Tell me, at least, who you are?

I am"I am No. 27.

You mistrust me, then, said Dant  s. Edmond fancied he heard a bitter laugh resounding from the depths.

Oh, I am a Christian, cried Dant  s, guessing instinctively that this man meant to abandon him. I swear to you by him who died for us that naught shall induce me to breathe one syllable to my jailers; but I conjure you do not abandon me. If you do, I swear to you, for I have got to the end of my strength, that I will dash my brains out against the wall, and you will have my death to reproach yourself with.

How old are you? Your voice is that of a young man.

I do not know my age, for I have not counted the years I have been here. All I do know is, that I was just nineteen when I was arrested, the 28th of February, 1815.

Not quite twenty-six! murmured the voice; at that age he cannot be a traitor.

Oh, no, no, cried Dant  s. I swear to you again, rather than betray you, I would allow myself to be hacked in pieces!

You have done well to speak to me, and ask for my assistance, for I was about to form another plan, and leave you; but your age reassures me. I will not forget you. Wait.

How long?

I must calculate our chances; I will give you the signal.

But you will not leave me; you will come to me, or you will let me come to you. We will escape, and if we cannot escape we will talk; you of those whom you love, and I of those whom I love. You must love somebody?

No, I am alone in the world.

Then you will love me. If you are young, I will be your comrade; if you are old, I will be your son. I have a father who is seventy if he yet lives; I only love him and a young girl called Merc  d  s. My father has not yet forgotten me, I am sure, but God alone knows if she loves me still; I shall love you as I loved my father.

It is well, returned the voice; tomorrow.

These few words were uttered with an accent that left no doubt of his sincerity; Dant  s rose, dispersed the fragments with the same precaution as before, and pushed his bed back against the wall. He then gave himself up to his happiness. He would no longer be alone. He was, perhaps, about to regain his liberty; at the worst, he would have a companion, and captivity that is shared is but half captivity. Complaints made in common are almost prayers, and prayers where two or three are gathered together invoke the mercy of heaven.

All day Dant  s walked up and down his cell. He sat down occasionally on his bed, pressing his hand on his heart. At the slightest noise he bounded towards the door. Once or twice the thought crossed his mind that he might be separated from this unknown, whom he loved already; and then his mind was made up when the jailer moved his bed and stooped to examine the opening, he would kill him with his water jug. He would be condemned to die, but he was about to die of grief and despair when this miraculous noise recalled him to life.

The jailer came in the evening. Dant  s was on his bed. It seemed to him that thus he better guarded the unfinished opening. Doubtless there was a strange expression in his eyes, for the jailer said, Come, are you going mad again?

Dant  s did not answer; he feared that the emotion of his voice would betray him. The jailer went away shaking his head. Night came; Dant  s hoped that his neighbor would profit by the silence to address him, but he was mistaken. The next morning, however, just as he removed his bed from the wall, he heard three knocks; he threw himself on his knees.

Is it you? said he; I am here.

Is your jailer gone?

Yes, said Dant  s; he will not return until the evening; so that we have twelve hours before us.

I can work, then? said the voice.

Oh, yes, yes; this instant, I entreat you.

In a moment that part of the floor on which Dant  s was resting his two hands, as he knelt with his head in the opening, suddenly gave way; he drew back smartly, while a mass of stones and earth disappeared in a hole that opened beneath the aperture he himself had formed. Then from the bottom of this passage, the depth of which it was impossible to measure, he saw appear, first the head, then the shoulders, and lastly the body of a man, who sprang lightly into his cell.

Chapter 16. A Learned Italian

Seizing in his arms the friend so long and ardently desired, Dant s almost carried him towards the window, in order to obtain a better view of his features by the aid of the imperfect light that struggled through the grating.

He was a man of small stature, with hair blanched rather by suffering and sorrow than by age. He had a deep-set, penetrating eye, almost buried beneath the thick gray eyebrow, and a long (and still black) beard reaching down to his breast. His thin face, deeply furrowed by care, and the bold outline of his strongly marked features, betokened a man more accustomed to exercise his mental faculties than his physical strength. Large drops of perspiration were now standing on his brow, while the garments that hung about him were so ragged that one could only guess at the pattern upon which they had originally been fashioned.

The stranger might have numbered sixty or sixty-five years; but a certain briskness and appearance of vigor in his movements made it probable that he was aged more from captivity than the course of time. He received the enthusiastic greeting of his young acquaintance with evident pleasure, as though his chilled affections were rekindled and invigorated by his contact with one so warm and ardent. He thanked him with grateful cordiality for his kindly welcome, although he must at that moment have been suffering bitterly to find another dungeon where he had fondly reckoned on discovering a means of regaining his liberty. Let us first see, said he, whether it is possible to remove the traces of my entrance here"our future tranquillity depends upon our jailers being entirely ignorant of it.

Advancing to the opening, he stooped and raised the stone easily in spite of its weight; then, fitting it into its place, he said: You removed this stone very carelessly; but I suppose you had no tools to aid you.

Why, exclaimed Dant s, with astonishment, do you possess any?

I made myself some; and with the exception of a file, I have all that are necessary,"a chisel, pincers, and lever.

0201m

Oh, how I should like to see these products of your industry and patience.

Well, in the first place, here is my chisel.

So saying, he displayed a sharp strong blade, with a handle made of beechwood.

And with what did you contrive to make that? inquired Dant s.

With one of the clamps of my bedstead; and this very tool has sufficed me to hollow out the road by which I came hither, a distance of about fifty feet.

Fifty feet! responded Dant s, almost terrified.

Do not speak so loud, young man"dont speak so loud. It frequently occurs in a state prison like this, that persons are stationed outside the doors of the cells purposely to overhear the conversation of the prisoners.

But they believe I am shut up alone here.

That makes no difference.

And you say that you dug your way a distance of fifty feet to get here?

I do; that is about the distance that separates your chamber from mine; only, unfortunately, I did not curve aright; for want of the necessary geometrical instruments to calculate my scale of proportion, instead of taking an ellipsis of forty feet, I made it fifty. I expected, as I told you, to reach the outer wall, pierce through it, and throw myself into the sea; I have, however, kept along the corridor on which your chamber opens, instead of going beneath it. My labor is all in vain, for I find that the corridor looks into a courtyard filled with soldiers.

Thats true, said Dant s; but the corridor you speak of only bounds

one side of my cell; there are three others"do you know anything of their situation?

This one is built against the solid rock, and it would take ten experienced miners, duly furnished with the requisite tools, as many years to perforate it. This adjoins the lower part of the governors apartments, and were we to work our way through, we should only get into some lock-up cellars, where we must necessarily be recaptured. The fourth and last side of your cell faces on"faces on"stop a minute, now where does it face?

The wall of which he spoke was the one in which was fixed the loophole by which light was admitted to the chamber. This loophole, which gradually diminished in size as it approached the outside, to an opening through which a child could not have passed, was, for better security, furnished with three iron bars, so as to quiet all apprehensions even in the mind of the most suspicious jailer as to the possibility of a prisoners escape. As the stranger asked the question, he dragged the table beneath the window.

Climb up, said he to Dant s.

The young man obeyed, mounted on the table, and, divining the wishes of his companion, placed his back securely against the wall and held out both hands. The stranger, whom as yet Dant s knew only by the number of his cell, sprang up with an agility by no means to be expected in a person of his years, and, light and steady on his feet as a cat or a lizard, climbed from the table to the outstretched hands of Dant s, and from them to his shoulders; then, bending double, for the ceiling of the dungeon prevented him from holding himself erect, he managed to slip his head between the upper bars of the window, so as to be able to command a perfect view from top to bottom.

An instant afterwards he hastily drew back his head, saying, I thought so! and sliding from the shoulders of Dant s as dextrously as he had ascended, he nimbly leaped from the table to the ground.

What was it that you thought? asked the young man anxiously, in his turn descending from the table.

The elder prisoner pondered the matter. Yes, said he at length, it is so. This side of your chamber looks out upon a kind of open gallery, where patrols are continually passing, and sentries keep watch day and night.

Are you quite sure of that?

Certain. I saw the soldiers shape and the top of his musket; that made me draw in my head so quickly, for I was fearful he might also see me.

Well? inquired Dant s.

You perceive then the utter impossibility of escaping through your dungeon?

Then"" pursued the young man eagerly.

Then, answered the elder prisoner, the will of God be done! And as the old man slowly pronounced those words, an air of profound resignation spread itself over his careworn countenance. Dant s gazed on the man who could thus philosophically resign hopes so long and ardently nourished with an astonishment mingled with admiration.

Tell me, I entreat of you, who and what you are? said he at length.

Never have I met with so remarkable a person as yourself.

Willingly, answered the stranger; if, indeed, you feel any curiosity respecting one, now, alas, powerless to aid you in any way.

Say not so; you can console and support me by the strength of your own powerful mind. Pray let me know who you really are?

The stranger smiled a melancholy smile. Then listen, said he. I am the Abb  Faria, and have been imprisoned as you know in this Ch teau dIf since the year 1811; previously to which I had been confined for three years in the fortress of Fenestrelle. In the year 1811 I was transferred to Piedmont in France. It was at this period I learned that the destiny which seemed subservient to every wish formed by Napoleon, had bestowed on him a son, named king of Rome even in his cradle. I was

very far then from expecting the change you have just informed me of; namely, that four years afterwards, this colossus of power would be overthrown. Then who reigns in France at this moment" Napoleon II.? No, Louis XVIII.

The brother of Louis XVI.! How inscrutable are the ways of Providence"for what great and mysterious purpose has it pleased Heaven to abase the man once so elevated, and raise up him who was so abased? Dant s whole attention was riveted on a man who could thus forget his own misfortunes while occupying himself with the destinies of others. Yes, yes, continued he, Twill be the same as it was in England. After Charles I., Cromwell; after Cromwell, Charles II., and then James II., and then some son-in-law or relation, some Prince of Orange, a stadtholder who becomes a king. Then new concessions to the people, then a constitution, then liberty. Ah, my friend! said the abb , turning towards Dant s, and surveying him with the kindling gaze of a prophet, you are young, you will see all this come to pass. Probably, if ever I get out of prison!

True, replied Faria, we are prisoners; but I forget this sometimes, and there are even moments when my mental vision transports me beyond these walls, and I fancy myself at liberty. But wherefore are you here?

Because in 1807 I dreamed of the very plan Napoleon tried to realize in 1811; because, like Machiavelli, I desired to alter the political face of Italy, and instead of allowing it to be split up into a quantity of petty principalities, each held by some weak or tyrannical ruler, I sought to form one large, compact, and powerful empire; and, lastly, because I fancied I had found my C sar Borgia in a crowned simpleton, who feigned to enter into my views only to betray me. It was the plan of Alexander VI. and Clement VII., but it will never succeed now, for they attempted it fruitlessly, and Napoleon was unable to complete his work. Italy seems fated to misfortune. And the old man bowed his head.

Dant s could not understand a man risking his life for such matters. Napoleon certainly he knew something of, inasmuch as he had seen and spoken with him; but of Clement VII. and Alexander VI. he knew nothing. Are you not, he asked, the priest who here in the Ch teau dIf is generally thought to be"ill?

Mad, you mean, dont you?

I did not like to say so, answered Dant s, smiling.

Well, then, resumed Faria with a bitter smile, let me answer your question in full, by acknowledging that I am the poor mad prisoner of the Ch teau dIf, for many years permitted to amuse the different visitors with what is said to be my insanity; and, in all probability, I should be promoted to the honor of making sport for the children, if such innocent beings could be found in an abode devoted like this to suffering and despair.

Dant s remained for a short time mute and motionless; at length he said:

Then you abandon all hope of escape?

I perceive its utter impossibility; and I consider it impious to attempt that which the Almighty evidently does not approve.

Nay, be not discouraged. Would it not be expecting too much to hope to succeed at your first attempt? Why not try to find an opening in another direction from that which has so unfortunately failed?

Alas, it shows how little notion you can have of all it has cost me to effect a purpose so unexpectedly frustrated, that you talk of beginning over again. In the first place, I was four years making the tools I possess, and have been two years scraping and digging out earth, hard as granite itself; then what toil and fatigue has it not been to remove huge stones I should once have deemed impossible to loosen. Whole days have I passed in these Titanic efforts, considering my labor well repaid if, by night-time I had contrived to carry away a square inch of this hard-bound cement, changed by ages into a substance unyielding as

the stones themselves; then to conceal the mass of earth and rubbish I dug up, I was compelled to break through a staircase, and throw the fruits of my labor into the hollow part of it; but the well is now so completely choked up, that I scarcely think it would be possible to add another handful of dust without leading to discovery. Consider also that I fully believed I had accomplished the end and aim of my undertaking, for which I had so exactly husbanded my strength as to make it just hold out to the termination of my enterprise; and now, at the moment when I reckoned upon success, my hopes are forever dashed from me. No, I repeat again, that nothing shall induce me to renew attempts evidently at variance with the Almighty's pleasure. Dant s held down his head, that the other might not see how joy at the thought of having a companion outweighed the sympathy he felt for the failure of the abb s plans.

The abb  sank upon Edmonds bed, while Edmond himself remained standing. Escape had never once occurred to him. There are, indeed, some things which appear so impossible that the mind does not dwell on them for an instant. To undermine the ground for fifty feet"to devote three years to a labor which, if successful, would conduct you to a precipice overhanging the sea"to plunge into the waves from the height of fifty, sixty, perhaps a hundred feet, at the risk of being dashed to pieces against the rocks, should you have been fortunate enough to have escaped the fire of the sentinels; and even, supposing all these perils past, then to have to swim for your life a distance of at least three miles ere you could reach the shore"were difficulties so startling and formidable that Dant s had never even dreamed of such a scheme, resigning himself rather to death.

But the sight of an old man clinging to life with so desperate a courage, gave a fresh turn to his ideas, and inspired him with new courage. Another, older and less strong than he, had attempted what he had not had sufficient resolution to undertake, and had failed only because of an error in calculation. This same person, with almost incredible patience and perseverance, had contrived to provide himself with tools requisite for so unparalleled an attempt. Another had done all this; why, then, was it impossible to Dant s? Faria had dug his way through fifty feet, Dant s would dig a hundred; Faria, at the age of fifty, had devoted three years to the task; he, who was but half as old, would sacrifice six; Faria, a priest and savant, had not shrunk from the idea of risking his life by trying to swim a distance of three miles to one of the islands"Daume, Rattonneau, or Lemaire; should a hardy sailor, an experienced diver, like himself, shrink from a similar task; should he, who had so often for mere amusements sake plunged to the bottom of the sea to fetch up the bright coral branch, hesitate to entertain the same project? He could do it in an hour, and how many times had he, for pure pastime, continued in the water for more than twice as long! At once Dant s resolved to follow the brave example of his energetic companion, and to remember that what has once been done may be done again.

After continuing some time in profound meditation, the young man suddenly exclaimed, I have found what you were in search of!

Faria started: Have you, indeed? cried he, raising his head with quick anxiety; pray, let me know what it is you have discovered?

The corridor through which you have bored your way from the cell you occupy here, extends in the same direction as the outer gallery, does it not?

0207m

It does.

And is not above fifteen feet from it?

About that.

Well, then, I will tell you what we must do. We must pierce through the corridor by forming a side opening about the middle, as it were the top part of a cross. This time you will lay your plans more accurately; we shall get out into the gallery you have described; kill the sentinel

who guards it, and make our escape. All we require to insure success is courage, and that you possess, and strength, which I am not deficient in; as for patience, you have abundantly proved yours"you shall now see me prove mine.

One instant, my dear friend, replied the abbé; it is clear you do not understand the nature of the courage with which I am endowed, and what use I intend making of my strength. As for patience, I consider that I have abundantly exercised that in beginning every morning the task of the night before, and every night renewing the task of the day. But then, young man (and I pray of you to give me your full attention), then I thought I could not be doing anything displeasing to the Almighty in trying to set an innocent being at liberty"one who had committed no offence, and merited not condemnation.

And have your notions changed? asked Dant s with much surprise; do you think yourself more guilty in making the attempt since you have encountered me?

No; neither do I wish to incur guilt. Hitherto I have fancied myself merely waging war against circumstances, not men. I have thought it no sin to bore through a wall, or destroy a staircase; but I cannot so easily persuade myself to pierce a heart or take away a life.

A slight movement of surprise escaped Dant s.

Is it possible, said he, that where your liberty is at stake you can allow any such scruple to deter you from obtaining it?

Tell me, replied Faria, what has hindered you from knocking down your jailer with a piece of wood torn from your bedstead, dressing yourself in his clothes, and endeavoring to escape?

Simply the fact that the idea never occurred to me, answered Dant s. Because, said the old man, the natural repugnance to the commission of such a crime prevented you from thinking of it; and so it ever is because in simple and allowable things our natural instincts keep us from deviating from the strict line of duty. The tiger, whose nature teaches him to delight in shedding blood, needs but the sense of smell to show him when his prey is within his reach, and by following this instinct he is enabled to measure the leap necessary to permit him to spring on his victim; but man, on the contrary, loathes the idea of blood"it is not alone that the laws of social life inspire him with a shrinking dread of taking life; his natural construction and physiological formation""

Dant s was confused and silent at this explanation of the thoughts which had unconsciously been working in his mind, or rather soul; for there are two distinct sorts of ideas, those that proceed from the head and those that emanate from the heart.

0209m

Since my imprisonment, said Faria, I have thought over all the most celebrated cases of escape on record. They have rarely been successful. Those that have been crowned with full success have been long meditated upon, and carefully arranged; such, for instance, as the escape of the Duc de Beaufort from the Ch teau de Vincennes, that of the Abb  Dubuquoi from For l v que; of Latude from the Bastille. Then there are those for which chance sometimes affords opportunity, and those are the best of all. Let us, therefore, wait patiently for some favorable moment, and when it presents itself, profit by it.

Ah, said Dant s, you might well endure the tedious delay; you were constantly employed in the task you set yourself, and when weary with toil, you had your hopes to refresh and encourage you.

I assure you, replied the old man, I did not turn to that source for recreation or support.

What did you do then?

I wrote or studied.

Were you then permitted the use of pens, ink, and paper?

Oh, no, answered the abb ; I had none but what I made for myself.

You made paper, pens and ink?

Yes.

DantÃs gazed with admiration, but he had some difficulty in believing. Faria saw this.

When you pay me a visit in my cell, my young friend, said he, I will show you an entire work, the fruits of the thoughts and reflections of my whole life; many of them meditated over in the shades of the Colosseum at Rome, at the foot of St. Marks column at Venice, and on the borders of the Arno at Florence, little imagining at the time that they would be arranged in order within the walls of the ChÃteau d'If. The work I speak of is called _A Treatise on the Possibility of a General Monarchy in Italy_, and will make one large quarto volume. And on what have you written all this?

On two of my shirts. I invented a preparation that makes linen as smooth and as easy to write on as parchment.

You are, then, a chemist?

Somewhat; I know Lavoisier, and was the intimate friend of Cabanis. But for such a work you must have needed books"had you any?

I had nearly five thousand volumes in my library at Rome; but after reading them over many times, I found out that with one hundred and fifty well-chosen books a man possesses, if not a complete summary of all human knowledge, at least all that a man need really know. I devoted three years of my life to reading and studying these one hundred and fifty volumes, till I knew them nearly by heart; so that since I have been in prison, a very slight effort of memory has enabled me to recall their contents as readily as though the pages were open before me. I could recite you the whole of Thucydides, Xenophon, Plutarch, Titus Livius, Tacitus, Strada, Jornandes, Dante, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Spinoza, Machiavelli, and Bossuet. I name only the most important.

You are, doubtless, acquainted with a variety of languages, so as to have been able to read all these?

Yes, I speak five of the modern tongues"that is to say, German, French, Italian, English, and Spanish; by the aid of ancient Greek I learned modern Greek"I dont speak it so well as I could wish, but I am still trying to improve myself.

Improve yourself! repeated DantÃs; why, how can you manage to do so?

Why, I made a vocabulary of the words I knew; turned, returned, and arranged them, so as to enable me to express my thoughts through their medium. I know nearly one thousand words, which is all that is absolutely necessary, although I believe there are nearly one hundred thousand in the dictionaries. I cannot hope to be very fluent, but I certainly should have no difficulty in explaining my wants and wishes; and that would be quite as much as I should ever require.

Stronger grew the wonder of DantÃs, who almost fancied he had to do with one gifted with supernatural powers; still hoping to find some imperfection which might bring him down to a level with human beings, he added, Then if you were not furnished with pens, how did you manage to write the work you speak of?

I made myself some excellent ones, which would be universally preferred to all others if once known. You are aware what huge whittings are served to us on _maigre_ days. Well, I selected the cartilages of the heads of these fishes, and you can scarcely imagine the delight with which I welcomed the arrival of each Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, as affording me the means of increasing my stock of pens; for I will freely confess that my historical labors have been my greatest solace and relief. While retracing the past, I forget the present; and traversing at will the path of history I cease to remember that I am myself a prisoner.

But the ink, said DantÃs; of what did you make your ink?

There was formerly a fireplace in my dungeon, replied Faria, but it was closed up long ere I became an occupant of this prison. Still, it must have been many years in use, for it was thickly covered with a coating of soot; this soot I dissolved in a portion of the wine brought

to me every Sunday, and I assure you a better ink cannot be desired. For very important notes, for which closer attention is required, I pricked one of my fingers, and wrote with my own blood. And when, asked Dant s, may I see all this? Whenever you please, replied the abb .

Oh, then let it be directly! exclaimed the young man.

Follow me, then, said the abb , as he re-entered the subterranean passage, in which he soon disappeared, followed by Dant s.

Chapter 17. The Abb s Chamber

After having passed with tolerable ease through the subterranean passage, which, however, did not admit of their holding themselves erect, the two friends reached the further end of the corridor, into which the abb s cell opened; from that point the passage became much narrower, and barely permitted one to creep through on hands and knees. The floor of the abb s cell was paved, and it had been by raising one of the stones in the most obscure corner that Faria had been able to commence the laborious task of which Dant s had witnessed the completion.

As he entered the chamber of his friend, Dant s cast around one eager and searching glance in quest of the expected marvels, but nothing more than common met his view.

It is well, said the abb ; we have some hours before us"it is now