

to society. At that moment a heavy footstep was heard descending the wooden staircase that led from the upper floor, and, with many bows and courteous smiles, the host of the Pont du Gard besought his guest to enter.

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You are welcome, sir, most welcome! repeated the astonished Caderousse. Now, then, Margotin, cried he, speaking to the dog, will you be quiet? Pray don't heed him, sir!"he only barks, he never bites. I make no doubt a glass of good wine would be acceptable this dreadfully hot day. Then perceiving for the first time the garb of the traveller he had to entertain, Caderousse hastily exclaimed: A thousand pardons! I really did not observe whom I had the honor to receive under my poor roof. What would the abb  please to have? What refreshment can I offer? All I have is at his service.

The priest gazed on the person addressing him with a long and searching gaze"there even seemed a disposition on his part to court a similar scrutiny on the part of the innkeeper; then, observing in the countenance of the latter no other expression than extreme surprise at his own want of attention to an inquiry so courteously worded, he deemed it as well to terminate this dumb show, and therefore said, speaking with a strong Italian accent, You are, I presume, M. Caderousse?

Yes, sir, answered the host, even more surprised at the question than he had been by the silence which had preceded it; I am Gaspard Caderousse, at your service.

Gaspard Caderousse, rejoined the priest. Yes,"Christian and surname are the same. You formerly lived, I believe in the All es de Meilhan, on the fourth floor?

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I did.

And you followed the business of a tailor?

True, I was a tailor, till the trade fell off. It is so hot at Marseilles, that really I believe that the respectable inhabitants will in time go without any clothing whatever. But talking of heat, is there nothing I can offer you by way of refreshment?

Yes; let me have a bottle of your best wine, and then, with your permission, we will resume our conversation from where we left off.

As you please, sir, said Caderousse, who, anxious not to lose the present opportunity of finding a customer for one of the few bottles of Cahors still remaining in his possession, hastily raised a trap-door in the floor of the apartment they were in, which served both as parlor and kitchen.

Upon issuing forth from his subterranean retreat at the expiration of five minutes, he found the abb seated upon a wooden stool, leaning his elbow on a table, while Margotin, whose animosity seemed appeased by the unusual command of the traveller for refreshments, had crept up to him, and had established himself very comfortably between his knees, his long, skinny neck resting on his lap, while his dim eye was fixed earnestly on the travellers face.

Are you quite alone? inquired the guest, as Caderousse placed before him the bottle of wine and a glass.

Quite, quite alone, replied the man"or, at least, practically so, for my poor wife, who is the only person in the house besides myself, is laid up with illness, and unable to render me the least assistance, poor thing!

You are married, then? said the priest, with a show of interest, glancing round as he spoke at the scanty furnishings of the apartment. Ah, sir, said Caderousse with a sigh, it is easy to perceive I am not a rich man; but in this world a man does not thrive the better for being honest. The abb fixed on him a searching, penetrating glance. Yes, honest"I can certainly say that much for myself, continued the innkeeper, fairly sustaining the scrutiny of the abb s gaze; I can boast with truth of being an honest man; and, continued he

significantly, with a hand on his breast and shaking his head, that is more than everyone can say nowadays.

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So much the better for you, if what you assert be true, said the abbé; for I am firmly persuaded that, sooner or later, the good will be rewarded, and the wicked punished.

Such words as those belong to your profession, answered Caderousse, and you do well to repeat them; but, added he, with a bitter expression of countenance, one is free to believe them or not, as one pleases.

You are wrong to speak thus, said the abbé; and perhaps I may, in my own person, be able to prove to you how completely you are in error.

What mean you? inquired Caderousse with a look of surprise.

In the first place, I must be satisfied that you are the person I am in search of.

What proofs do you require?

Did you, in the year 1814 or 1815, know anything of a young sailor named Dantès?

Dantès? Did I know poor dear Edmond? Why, Edmond Dantès and myself were intimate friends! exclaimed Caderousse, whose countenance flushed darkly as he caught the penetrating gaze of the abbé fixed on him, while the clear, calm eye of the questioner seemed to dilate with feverish scrutiny.

You remind me, said the priest, that the young man concerning whom I asked you was said to bear the name of Edmond.

Said to bear the name! repeated Caderousse, becoming excited and eager. Why, he was so called as truly as I myself bore the appellation of Gaspard Caderousse; but tell me, I pray, what has become of poor Edmond? Did you know him? Is he alive and at liberty? Is he prosperous and happy?

He died a more wretched, hopeless, heart-broken prisoner than the felons who pay the penalty of their crimes at the galleys of Toulon. A deadly pallor followed the flush on the countenance of Caderousse, who turned away, and the priest saw him wiping the tears from his eyes with the corner of the red handkerchief twisted round his head.

Poor fellow, poor fellow! murmured Caderousse. Well, there, sir, is another proof that good people are never rewarded on this earth, and that none but the wicked prosper. Ah, continued Caderousse, speaking in the highly colored language of the South, the world grows worse and worse. Why does not God, if he really hates the wicked, as he is said to do, send down brimstone and fire, and consume them altogether?

You speak as though you had loved this young Dantès, observed the abbé, without taking any notice of his companions vehemence.

And so I did, replied Caderousse; though once, I confess, I envied him his good fortune. But I swear to you, sir, I swear to you, by everything a man holds dear, I have, since then, deeply and sincerely lamented his unhappy fate.

There was a brief silence, during which the fixed, searching eye of the abbé was employed in scrutinizing the agitated features of the innkeeper.

You knew the poor lad, then? continued Caderousse.

I was called to see him on his dying bed, that I might administer to him the consolations of religion.

And of what did he die? asked Caderousse in a choking voice.

Of what, think you, do young and strong men die in prison, when they have scarcely numbered their thirtieth year, unless it be of imprisonment? Caderousse wiped away the large beads of perspiration that gathered on his brow.

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But the strangest part of the story is, resumed the abbé, that Dantès, even in his dying moments, swore by his crucified Redeemer, that he was utterly ignorant of the cause of his detention.

And so he was, murmured Caderousse. How should he have been

otherwise? Ah, sir, the poor fellow told you the truth.

And for that reason, he besought me to try and clear up a mystery he had never been able to penetrate, and to clear his memory should any foul spot or stain have fallen on it.

And here the look of the abbé, becoming more and more fixed, seemed to rest with ill-concealed satisfaction on the gloomy depression which was rapidly spreading over the countenance of Caderousse.

A rich Englishman, continued the abbé, who had been his companion in misfortune, but had been released from prison during the second restoration, was possessed of a diamond of immense value; this jewel he bestowed on Dantès upon himself quitting the prison, as a mark of his gratitude for the kindness and brotherly care with which Dantès had nursed him in a severe illness he underwent during his confinement. Instead of employing this diamond in attempting to bribe his jailers, who might only have taken it and then betrayed him to the governor, Dantès carefully preserved it, that in the event of his getting out of prison he might have wherewithal to live, for the sale of such a diamond would have quite sufficed to make his fortune.

Then, I suppose, asked Caderousse, with eager, glowing looks, that it was a stone of immense value?

Why, everything is relative, answered the abbé. To one in Edmonds position the diamond certainly was of great value. It was estimated at fifty thousand francs.

Bless me! exclaimed Caderousse, fifty thousand francs! Surely the diamond was as large as a nut to be worth all that.

No, replied the abbé, it was not of such a size as that; but you shall judge for yourself. I have it with me.

The sharp gaze of Caderousse was instantly directed towards the priests garments, as though hoping to discover the location of the treasure. Calmly drawing forth from his pocket a small box covered with black shagreen, the abbé opened it, and displayed to the dazzled eyes of Caderousse the sparkling jewel it contained, set in a ring of admirable workmanship.

And that diamond, cried Caderousse, almost breathless with eager admiration, you say, is worth fifty thousand francs?

It is, without the setting, which is also valuable, replied the abbé, as he closed the box, and returned it to his pocket, while its brilliant hues seemed still to dance before the eyes of the fascinated innkeeper.

But how comes the diamond in your possession, sir? Did Edmond make you his heir?

No, merely his testamentary executor. ~I once possessed four dear and faithful friends, besides the maiden to whom I was betrothed he said; ~and I feel convinced they have all unfeignedly grieved over my loss. The name of one of the four friends is Caderousse. The innkeeper shivered.

~Another of the number, continued the abbé, without seeming to notice the emotion of Caderousse, ~is called Danglars; and the third, in spite of being my rival, entertained a very sincere affection for me.

A fiendish smile played over the features of Caderousse, who was about to break in upon the abbé's speech, when the latter, waving his hand, said, Allow me to finish first, and then if you have any observations to make, you can do so afterwards. ~The third of my friends, although my rival, was much attached to me,"his name was Fernand; that of my betrothed was"Stay, stay, continued the abbé, I have forgotten what he called her.

Merci@dã, said Caderousse eagerly.

True, said the abbé, with a stifled sigh, Merci@dã it was.

Go on, urged Caderousse.

Bring me a _carafe_ of water, said the abbé.

Caderousse quickly performed the strangers bidding; and after pouring some into a glass, and slowly swallowing its contents, the abbé,

resuming his usual placidity of manner, said, as he placed his empty glass on the table:

Where did we leave off?

The name of Edmonds betrothed was MercÃ©dÃ©s.

To be sure. "You will go to Marseilles," said DantÃ©s, "for you understand, I repeat his words just as he uttered them. Do you understand?"

Perfectly.

"You will sell this diamond; you will divide the money into five equal parts, and give an equal portion to these good friends, the only persons who have loved me upon earth.

But why into five parts? asked Caderousse; you only mentioned four persons.

Because the fifth is dead, as I hear. The fifth sharer in Edmonds bequest, was his own father.

Too true, too true! ejaculated Caderousse, almost suffocated by the contending passions which assailed him, the poor old man did die.

I learned so much at Marseilles, replied the abbÃ©, making a strong effort to appear indifferent; but from the length of time that has elapsed since the death of the elder DantÃ©s, I was unable to obtain any particulars of his end. Can you enlighten me on that point?

I do not know who could if I could not, said Caderousse. Why, I lived almost on the same floor with the poor old man. Ah, yes, about a year after the disappearance of his son the poor old man died.

Of what did he die?

Why, the doctors called his complaint gastro-enteritis, I believe; his acquaintances say he died of grief; but I, who saw him in his dying moments, I say he died of""

Caderousse paused.

Of what? asked the priest, anxiously and eagerly.

Why, of downright starvation.

Starvation! exclaimed the abbÃ©, springing from his seat. Why, the vilest animals are not suffered to die by such a death as that. The very dogs that wander houseless and homeless in the streets find some pitying hand to cast them a mouthful of bread; and that a man, a Christian, should be allowed to perish of hunger in the midst of other men who call themselves Christians, is too horrible for belief. Oh, it is impossible!"utterly impossible!

What I have said, I have said, answered Caderousse.

And you are a fool for having said anything about it, said a voice from the top of the stairs. Why should you meddle with what does not concern you?

The two men turned quickly, and saw the sickly countenance of La Carconte peering between the baluster rails; attracted by the sound of voices, she had feebly dragged herself down the stairs, and, seated on the lower step, head on knees, she had listened to the foregoing conversation.

Mind your own business, wife, replied Caderousse sharply. This gentleman asks me for information, which common politeness will not permit me to refuse.

Politeness, you simpleton! retorted La Carconte. What have you to do with politeness, I should like to know? Better study a little common prudence. How do you know the motives that person may have for trying to extract all he can from you?

I pledge you my word, madam, said the abbÃ©, that my intentions are good; and that your husband can incur no risk, provided he answers me candidly.

Ah, that's all very fine, retorted the woman. Nothing is easier than to begin with fair promises and assurances of nothing to fear; but when poor, silly folks, like my husband there, have been persuaded to tell all they know, the promises and assurances of safety are quickly forgotten; and at some moment when nobody is expecting it, behold trouble and misery, and all sorts of persecutions, are heaped on the

unfortunate wretches, who cannot even see whence all their afflictions come.

Nay, nay, my good woman, make yourself perfectly easy, I beg of you. Whatever evils may befall you, they will not be occasioned by my instrumentality, that I solemnly promise you.

La Carconte muttered a few inarticulate words, then let her head again drop upon her knees, and went into a fit of ague, leaving the two speakers to resume the conversation, but remaining so as to be able to hear every word they uttered. Again the abbé had been obliged to swallow a draught of water to calm the emotions that threatened to overpower him.

When he had sufficiently recovered himself, he said, It appears, then, that the miserable old man you were telling me of was forsaken by everyone. Surely, had not such been the case, he would not have perished by so dreadful a death.

Why, he was not altogether forsaken, continued Caderousse, for Mercadès the Catalan and Monsieur Morrel were very kind to him; but somehow the poor old man had contracted a profound hatred for Fernand—the very person, added Caderousse with a bitter smile, that you named just now as being one of Dantès faithful and attached friends.

And was he not so? asked the abbé.

Gaspard, Gaspard! murmured the woman, from her seat on the stairs, mind what you are saying!

Caderousse made no reply to these words, though evidently irritated and annoyed by the interruption, but, addressing the abbé, said, Can a man be faithful to another whose wife he covets and desires for himself?

But Dantès was so honorable and true in his own nature, that he believed everybodys professions of friendship. Poor Edmond, he was cruelly deceived; but it was fortunate that he never knew, or he might have found it more difficult, when on his deathbed, to pardon his enemies. And, whatever people may say, continued Caderousse, in his native language, which was not altogether devoid of rude poetry, I cannot help being more frightened at the idea of the malediction of the dead than the hatred of the living.

Imbecile! exclaimed La Carconte.

Do you, then, know in what manner Fernand injured Dantès? inquired the abbé of Caderousse.

Do I? No one better.

Speak out then, say what it was!

Gaspard! cried La Carconte, do as you will; you are master—but if you take my advice youll hold your tongue.

Well, wife, replied Caderousse, I dont know but what youre right!

So you will say nothing? asked the abbé.

Why, what good would it do? asked Caderousse. If the poor lad were living, and came to me and begged that I would candidly tell which were his true and which his false friends, why, perhaps, I should not hesitate. But you tell me he is no more, and therefore can have nothing to do with hatred or revenge, so let all such feeling be buried with him.

You prefer, then, said the abbé, that I should bestow on men you say are false and treacherous, the reward intended for faithful friendship?

That is true enough, returned Caderousse. You say truly, the gift of poor Edmond was not meant for such traitors as Fernand and Danglars; besides, what would it be to them? no more than a drop of water in the ocean.

Remember, chimed in La Carconte, those two could crush you at a single blow!

How so? inquired the abbé. Are these persons, then, so rich and powerful?

Do you not know their history?

I do not. Pray relate it to me!

Caderousse seemed to reflect for a few moments, then said, No, truly, it would take up too much time.

Well, my good friend, returned the abbé, in a tone that indicated utter indifference on his part, you are at liberty, either to speak or be silent, just as you please; for my own part, I respect your scruples and admire your sentiments; so let the matter end. I shall do my duty as conscientiously as I can, and fulfil my promise to the dying man. My first business will be to dispose of this diamond.

So saying, the abbé again drew the small box from his pocket, opened it, and contrived to hold it in such a light, that a bright flash of brilliant hues passed before the dazzled gaze of Caderousse.

Wife, wife! cried he in a hoarse voice, come here!

Diamond! exclaimed La Carconte, rising and descending to the chamber with a tolerably firm step; what diamond are you talking about?

Why, did you not hear all we said? inquired Caderousse. It is a beautiful diamond left by poor Edmond Dantès, to be sold, and the money divided between his father, Mercédès, his betrothed bride, Fernand, Danglars, and myself. The jewel is worth at least fifty thousand francs.

Oh, what a magnificent jewel! cried the astonished woman.

The fifth part of the profits from this stone belongs to us then, does it not? asked Caderousse.

It does, replied the abbé; with the addition of an equal division of that part intended for the elder Dantès, which I believe myself at liberty to divide equally with the four survivors.

And why among us four? inquired Caderousse.

As being the friends Edmond esteemed most faithful and devoted to him.

I don't call those friends who betray and ruin you, murmured the wife in her turn, in a low, muttering voice.

Of course not! rejoined Caderousse quickly; no more do I, and that was what I was observing to this gentleman just now. I said I looked upon it as a sacrilegious profanation to reward treachery, perhaps crime.

Remember, answered the abbé calmly, as he replaced the jewel and its case in the pocket of his cassock, it is your fault, not mine, that I do so. You will have the goodness to furnish me with the address of both Fernand and Danglars, in order that I may execute Edmond's last wishes.

The agitation of Caderousse became extreme, and large drops of perspiration rolled from his heated brow. As he saw the abbé rise from his seat and go towards the door, as though to ascertain if his horse were sufficiently refreshed to continue his journey, Caderousse and his wife exchanged looks of deep meaning.

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There, you see, wife, said the former, this splendid diamond might all be ours, if we chose!

Do you believe it?

Why, surely a man of his holy profession would not deceive us!

Well, replied La Carconte, do as you like. For my part, I wash my hands of the affair.

So saying, she once more climbed the staircase leading to her chamber, her body convulsed with chills, and her teeth rattling in her head, in spite of the intense heat of the weather. Arrived at the top stair, she turned round, and called out, in a warning tone, to her husband, Gaspard, consider well what you are about to do!

I have both reflected and decided, answered he.

La Carconte then entered her chamber, the flooring of which creaked beneath her heavy, uncertain tread, as she proceeded towards her armchair, into which she fell as though exhausted.

Well, asked the abbé, as he returned to the apartment below, what have you made up your mind to do?

To tell you all I know, was the reply.

I certainly think you act wisely in so doing, said the priest. Not because I have the least desire to learn anything you may please to conceal from me, but simply that if, through your assistance, I could distribute the legacy according to the wishes of the testator, why, so much the better, that is all.

I hope it may be so, replied Caderousse, his face flushed with cupidity.

I am all attention, said the abbé.

Stop a minute, answered Caderousse; we might be interrupted in the most interesting part of my story, which would be a pity; and it is as well that your visit hither should be made known only to ourselves. With these words he went stealthily to the door, which he closed, and, by way of still greater precaution, bolted and barred it, as he was accustomed to do at night.

During this time the abbé had chosen his place for listening at his ease. He removed his seat into a corner of the room, where he himself would be in deep shadow, while the light would be fully thrown on the narrator; then, with head bent down and hands clasped, or rather clenched together, he prepared to give his whole attention to Caderousse, who seated himself on the little stool, exactly opposite to him.

Remember, this is no affair of mine, said the trembling voice of La Carconte, as though through the flooring of her chamber she viewed the scene that was enacting below.

Enough, enough! replied Caderousse; say no more about it; I will take all the consequences upon myself.

And he began his story.

Chapter 27. The Story

First, sir, said Caderousse, you must make me a promise.

What is that? inquired the abbé.

Why, if you ever make use of the details I am about to give you, that you will never let anyone know that it was I who supplied them; for the persons of whom I am about to talk are rich and powerful, and if they only laid the tips of their fingers on me, I should break to pieces like glass.

Make yourself easy, my friend, replied the abbé. I am a priest, and confessions die in my breast. Recollect, our only desire is to carry out, in a fitting manner, the last wishes of our friend. Speak, then, without reserve, as without hatred; tell the truth, the whole truth; I do not know, never may know, the persons of whom you are about to speak; besides, I am an Italian, and not a Frenchman, and belong to God, and not to man, and I shall shortly retire to my convent, which I have only quitted to fulfil the last wishes of a dying man.

This positive assurance seemed to give Caderousse a little courage.

Well, then, under these circumstances, said Caderousse, I will, I even believe I ought to undeceive you as to the friendship which poor Edmond thought so sincere and unquestionable.

Begin with his father, if you please. said the abbé; Edmond talked to me a great deal about the old man for whom he had the deepest love.

The history is a sad one, sir, said Caderousse, shaking his head; perhaps you know all the earlier part of it?

Yes. answered the abbé; Edmond related to me everything until the moment when he was arrested in a small cabaret close to Marseilles.

At La Marseillaise! Oh, yes; I can see it all before me this moment.

Was it not his betrothal feast?

It was and the feast that began so gayly had a very sorrowful ending; a police commissary, followed by four soldiers, entered, and Dantès was arrested.

Yes, and up to this point I know all, said the priest. Dantès himself only knew that which personally concerned him, for he never beheld again the five persons I have named to you, or heard mention of anyone of them.

Well, when Dantès was arrested, Monsieur Morrel hastened to obtain the

particulars, and they were very sad. The old man returned alone to his home, folded up his wedding suit with tears in his eyes, and paced up and down his chamber the whole day, and would not go to bed at all, for I was underneath him and heard him walking the whole night; and for myself, I assure you I could not sleep either, for the grief of the poor father gave me great uneasiness, and every step he took went to my heart as really as if his foot had pressed against my breast.

The next day MercÃ©des came to implore the protection of M. de Villefort; she did not obtain it, however, and went to visit the old man; when she saw him so miserable and heart-broken, having passed a sleepless night, and not touched food since the previous day, she wished him to go with her that she might take care of him; but the old man would not consent. "No," was the old man's reply, "I will not leave this house, for my poor dear boy loves me better than anything in the world; and if he gets out of prison he will come and see me the first thing, and what would he think if I did not wait here for him? I heard all this from the window, for I was anxious that MercÃ©des should persuade the old man to accompany her, for his footsteps over my head night and day did not leave me a moment's repose.

But did you not go upstairs and try to console the poor old man?" asked the abbÃ©.

Ah, sir, replied Caderousse, we cannot console those who will not be consoled, and he was one of these; besides, I know not why, but he seemed to dislike seeing me. One night, however, I heard his sobs, and I could not resist my desire to go up to him, but when I reached his door he was no longer weeping but praying. I cannot now repeat to you, sir, all the eloquent words and imploring language he made use of; it was more than piety, it was more than grief, and I, who am no canter, and hate the Jesuits, said then to myself, "It is really well, and I am very glad that I have not any children; for if I were a father and felt such excessive grief as the old man does, and did not find in my memory or heart all he is now saying, I should throw myself into the sea at once, for I could not bear it.

Poor father! murmured the priest.

From day to day he lived on alone, and more and more solitary. M. Morrel and MercÃ©des came to see him, but his door was closed; and, although I was certain he was at home, he would not make any answer. One day, when, contrary to his custom, he had admitted MercÃ©des, and the poor girl, in spite of her own grief and despair, endeavored to console him, he said to her, "Be assured, my dear daughter, he is dead; and instead of expecting him, it is he who is awaiting us; I am quite happy, for I am the oldest, and of course shall see him first.

However well disposed a person may be, why, you see we leave off after a time seeing persons who are insorrow, they make one melancholy; and so at last old DantÃ©s was left all to himself, and I only saw from time to time strangers go up to him and come down again with some bundle they tried to hide; but I guessed what these bundles were, and that he sold by degrees what he had to pay for his subsistence. At length the poor old fellow reached the end of all he had; he owed three quarters rent, and they threatened to turn him out; he begged for another week, which was granted to him. I know this, because the landlord came into my apartment when he left his.

For the first three days I heard him walking about as usual, but, on the fourth I heard nothing. I then resolved to go up to him at all risks. The door was closed, but I looked through the keyhole, and saw him so pale and haggard, that believing him very ill, I went and told M. Morrel and then ran on to MercÃ©des. They both came immediately, M. Morrel bringing a doctor, and the doctor said it was inflammation of the bowels, and ordered him a limited diet. I was there, too, and I never shall forget the old man's smile at this prescription.

From that time he received all who came; he had an excuse for not eating any more; the doctor had put him on a diet.

The abbÃ© uttered a kind of groan.

The story interests you, does it not, sir? inquired Caderousse.

Yes, replied the abbé, it is very affecting.

Mercédès came again, and she found him so altered that she was even more anxious than before to have him taken to her own home. This was M. Morrels wish also, who would fain have conveyed the old man against his consent; but the old man resisted, and cried so that they were actually frightened. Mercédès remained, therefore, by his bedside, and M. Morrel went away, making a sign to the Catalan that he had left his purse on the chimney-piece; but, availing himself of the doctors order, the old man would not take any sustenance; at length (after nine days of despair and fasting), the old man died, cursing those who had caused his misery, and saying to Mercédès, ~If you ever see my Edmond again, tell him I die blessing him.

The abbé rose from his chair, made two turns round the chamber, and pressed his trembling hand against his parched throat.

And you believe he died""

Of hunger, sir, of hunger, said Caderousse. I am as certain of it as that we two are Christians.

The abbé, with a shaking hand, seized a glass of water that was standing by him half-full, swallowed it at one gulp, and then resumed his seat, with red eyes and pale cheeks.

This was, indeed, a horrid event, said he in a hoarse voice.

The more so, sir, as it was mens and not Gods doing.

Tell me of those men, said the abbé, and remember too, he added in an almost menacing tone, you have promised to tell me everything. Tell me, therefore, who are these men who killed the son with despair, and the father with famine?

Two men jealous of him, sir; one from love, and the other from ambition,"Fernand and Danglars.

How was this jealousy manifested? Speak on.

They denounced Edmond as a Bonapartist agent.

Which of the two denounced him? Which was the real delinquent?

Both, sir; one with a letter, and the other put it in the post.

And where was this letter written?

At La Rêserve, the day before the betrothal feast.

Twas so, then"twas so, then, murmured the abbé. Oh, Faria, Faria, how well did you judge men and things!

What did you please to say, sir? asked Caderousse.

Nothing, nothing, replied the priest; go on.

It was Danglars who wrote the denunciation with his left hand, that his writing might not be recognized, and Fernand who put it in the post.

But, exclaimed the abbé suddenly, you were there yourself.

I! said Caderousse, astonished; who told you I was there?

The abbé saw he had overshot the mark, and he added quickly,"No one; but in order to have known everything so well, you must have been an eye-witness.

True, true! said Caderousse in a choking voice, I was there.

And did you not remonstrate against such infamy? asked the abbé; if not, you were an accomplice.

Sir, replied Caderousse, they had made me drink to such an excess that I nearly lost all perception. I had only an indistinct understanding of what was passing around me. I said all that a man in such a state could say; but they both assured me that it was a jest they were carrying on, and perfectly harmless.

Next day"next day, sir, you must have seen plain enough what they had been doing, yet you said nothing, though you were present when Dantès was arrested.

Yes, sir, I was there, and very anxious to speak; but Danglars restrained me. ~If he should really be guilty, said he, ~and did really put in to the Island of Elba; if he is really charged with a letter for the Bonapartist committee at Paris, and if they find this letter upon him, those who have supported him will pass for his

accomplices. I confess I had my fears, in the state in which politics then were, and I held my tongue. It was cowardly, I confess, but it was not criminal.

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I understand"you allowed matters to take their course, that was all. Yes, sir, answered Caderousse; and remorse preys on me night and day. I often ask pardon of God, I swear to you, because this action, the only one with which I have seriously to reproach myself in all my life, is no doubt the cause of my abject condition. I am expiating a moment of selfishness, and so I always say to La Carconte, when she complains, "Hold your tongue, woman; it is the will of God. And Caderousse bowed his head with every sign of real repentance.

Well, sir, said the abb , you have spoken unreservedly; and thus to accuse yourself is to deserve pardon.

Unfortunately, Edmond is dead, and has not pardoned me.

He did not know, said the abb .

But he knows it all now, interrupted Caderousse; they say the dead know everything.

There was a brief silence; the abb  rose and paced up and down pensively, and then resumed his seat.

You have two or three times mentioned a M. Morrel, he said; who was he?

The owner of the _Pharaon_ and patron of Dant s.

And what part did he play in this sad drama? inquired the abb .

The part of an honest man, full of courage and real regard. Twenty times he interceded for Edmond. When the emperor returned, he wrote, implored, threatened, and so energetically, that on the second restoration he was persecuted as a Bonapartist. Ten times, as I told you, he came to see Dant s father, and offered to receive him in his own house; and the night or two before his death, as I have already said, he left his purse on the mantelpiece, with which they paid the old mans debts, and buried him decently; and so Edmonds father died, as he had lived, without doing harm to anyone. I have the purse still by me"a large one, made of red silk.

And, asked the abb , is M. Morrel still alive?

Yes, replied Caderousse.

In that case, replied the abb , he should be a man blessed of God, rich, happy.

Caderousse smiled bitterly. Yes, happy as myself, said he.

What! M. Morrel unhappy? exclaimed the abb .

He is reduced almost to the last extremity"nay, he is almost at the point of dishonor.

How?

Yes, continued Caderousse, so it is; after five-and-twenty years of labor, after having acquired a most honorable name in the trade of Marseilles, M. Morrel is utterly ruined; he has lost five ships in two years, has suffered by the bankruptcy of three large houses, and his only hope now is in that very _Pharaon_ which poor Dant s commanded, and which is expected from the Indies with a cargo of cochineal and indigo. If this ship founders, like the others, he is a ruined man.

And has the unfortunate man wife or children? inquired the abb .

Yes, he has a wife, who through everything has behaved like an angel; he has a daughter, who was about to marry the man she loved, but whose family now will not allow him to wed the daughter of a ruined man; he has, besides, a son, a lieutenant in the army; and, as you may suppose, all this, instead of lessening, only augments his sorrows. If he were alone in the world he would blow out his brains, and there would be an end.

Horrible! ejaculated the priest.

And it is thus heaven recompenses virtue, sir, added Caderousse. You see, I, who never did a bad action but that I have told you of"am in destitution, with my poor wife dying of fever before my very eyes, and I unable to do anything in the world for her; I shall die of hunger, as

old Dantès did, while Fernand and Danglars are rolling in wealth.

How is that?

Because their deeds have brought them good fortune, while honest men have been reduced to misery.

What has become of Danglars, the instigator, and therefore the most guilty?

What has become of him? Why, he left Marseilles, and was taken, on the recommendation of M. Morrel, who did not know his crime, as cashier into a Spanish bank. During the war with Spain he was employed in the commissariat of the French army, and made a fortune; then with that money he speculated in the funds, and trebled or quadrupled his capital; and, having first married his bankers daughter, who left him a widower, he has married a second time, a widow, a Madame de Nargonne, daughter of M. de Servieux, the kings chamberlain, who is in high favor at court. He is a millionaire, and they have made him a baron, and now he is the Baron Danglars, with a fine residence in the Rue du Mont-Blanc, with ten horses in his stables, six footmen in his antechamber, and I know not how many millions in his strongbox.

Ah! said the abbé, in a peculiar tone, he is happy.

Happy? Who can answer for that? Happiness or unhappiness is the secret known but to ones self and the walls"walls have ears but no tongue; but if a large fortune produces happiness, Danglars is happy.

And Fernand?

Fernand? Why, much the same story.

But how could a poor Catalan fisher-boy, without education or resources, make a fortune? I confess this staggers me.

And it has staggered everybody. There must have been in his life some strange secret that no one knows.

But, then, by what visible steps has he attained this high fortune or high position?

Both, sir"he has both fortune and position"both.

This must be impossible!

It would seem so; but listen, and you will understand. Some days before the return of the emperor, Fernand was drafted. The Bourbons left him quietly enough at the Catalans, but Napoleon returned, a special levy was made, and Fernand was compelled to join. I went too; but as I was older than Fernand, and had just married my poor wife, I was only sent to the coast. Fernand was enrolled in the active army, went to the frontier with his regiment, and was at the battle of Ligny. The night after that battle he was sentry at the door of a general who carried on a secret correspondence with the enemy. That same night the general was to go over to the English. He proposed to Fernand to accompany him; Fernand agreed to do so, deserted his post, and followed the general.

Fernand would have been court-martialed if Napoleon had remained on the throne, but his action was rewarded by the Bourbons. He returned to France with the epaulet of sub-lieutenant, and as the protection of the general, who is in the highest favor, was accorded to him, he was a captain in 1823, during the Spanish war"that is to say, at the time when Danglars made his early speculations. Fernand was a Spaniard, and being sent to Spain to ascertain the feeling of his fellow-countrymen, found Danglars there, got on very intimate terms with him, won over the support of the royalists at the capital and in the provinces, received promises and made pledges on his own part, guided his regiment by paths known to himself alone through the mountain gorges which were held by the royalists, and, in fact, rendered such services in this brief campaign that, after the taking of Trocadero, he was made colonel, and received the title of count and the cross of an officer of the Legion of Honor.

Destiny! destiny! murmured the abbé.

Yes, but listen: this was not all. The war with Spain being ended, Fernands career was checked by the long peace which seemed likely to endure throughout Europe. Greece only had risen against Turkey, and had

begun her war of independence; all eyes were turned towards Athens—it was the fashion to pity and support the Greeks. The French government, without protecting them openly, as you know, gave countenance to volunteer assistance. Fernand sought and obtained leave to go and serve in Greece, still having his name kept on the army roll.

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Some time after, it was stated that the Comte de Morcerf (this was the name he bore) had entered the service of Ali Pasha with the rank of instructor-general. Ali Pasha was killed, as you know, but before he died he recompensed the services of Fernand by leaving him a considerable sum, with which he returned to France, when he was gazetted lieutenant-general.

So that now""? inquired the abbé.

So that now, continued Caderousse, he owns a magnificent house—No. 27, Rue du Helder, Paris.

The abbé opened his mouth, hesitated for a moment, then, making an effort at self-control, he said, And Mercédès—they tell me that she has disappeared?

Disappeared, said Caderousse, yes, as the sun disappears, to rise the next day with still more splendor.

Has she made a fortune also? inquired the abbé, with an ironical smile.

Mercédès is at this moment one of the greatest ladies in Paris, replied Caderousse.

Go on, said the abbé; it seems as if I were listening to the story of a dream. But I have seen things so extraordinary, that what you tell me seems less astonishing than it otherwise might.

Mercédès was at first in the deepest despair at the blow which deprived her of Edmond. I have told you of her attempts to propitiate M. de Villefort, her devotion to the elder Dantès. In the midst of her despair, a new affliction overtook her. This was the departure of Fernand—of Fernand, whose crime she did not know, and whom she regarded as her brother. Fernand went, and Mercédès remained alone.

Three months passed and still she wept—no news of Edmond, no news of Fernand, no companionship save that of an old man who was dying with despair. One evening, after a day of accustomed vigil at the angle of two roads leading to Marseilles from the Catalans, she returned to her home more depressed than ever. Suddenly she heard a step she knew, turned anxiously around, the door opened, and Fernand, dressed in the uniform of a sub-lieutenant, stood before her.

It was not the one she wished for most, but it seemed as if a part of her past life had returned to her.

Mercédès seized Fernand's hands with a transport which he took for love, but which was only joy at being no longer alone in the world, and seeing at last a friend, after long hours of solitary sorrow. And then, it must be confessed, Fernand had never been hated—he was only not precisely loved. Another possessed all Mercédès' heart; that other was absent, had disappeared, perhaps was dead. At this last thought Mercédès burst into a flood of tears, and wrung her hands in agony; but the thought, which she had always repelled before when it was suggested to her by another, came now in full force upon her mind; and then, too, old Dantès incessantly said to her, ~Our Edmond is dead; if he were not, he would return to us.

The old man died, as I have told you; had he lived, Mercédès, perchance, had not become the wife of another, for he would have been there to reproach her infidelity. Fernand saw this, and when he learned of the old man's death he returned. He was now a lieutenant. At his first coming he had not said a word of love to Mercédès; at the second he reminded her that he loved her.

Mercédès begged for six months more in which to await and mourn for Edmond.

So that, said the abbé, with a bitter smile, that makes eighteen months in all. What more could the most devoted lover desire? Then he

murmured the words of the English poet, "Frailty, thy name is woman. Six months afterwards, continued Caderousse, the marriage took place in the church of Accoules.

The very church in which she was to have married Edmond, murmured the priest; there was only a change of bridegrooms.

Well, Mercédès was married, proceeded Caderousse; but although in the eyes of the world she appeared calm, she nearly fainted as she passed La Courbe, where, eighteen months before, the betrothal had been celebrated with him whom she might have known she still loved, had she looked to the bottom of her heart. Fernand, more happy, but not more at his ease "for I saw at this time he was in constant dread of Edmond's return" Fernand was very anxious to get his wife away, and to depart himself. There were too many unpleasant possibilities associated with the Catalans, and eight days after the wedding they left Marseilles.

Did you ever see Mercédès again? inquired the priest.

Yes, during the Spanish war, at Perpignan, where Fernand had left her; she was attending to the education of her son.

The abbé started. Her son? said he.

Yes, replied Caderousse, little Albert.

But, then, to be able to instruct her child, continued the abbé, she must have received an education herself. I understood from Edmond that she was the daughter of a simple fisherman, beautiful but uneducated. Oh, replied Caderousse, did he know so little of his lovely betrothed? Mercédès might have been a queen, sir, if the crown were to be placed on the heads of the loveliest and most intelligent. Fernand's fortune was already waxing great, and she developed with his growing fortune. She learned drawing, music "everything. Besides, I believe, between ourselves, she did this in order to distract her mind, that she might forget; and she only filled her head in order to alleviate the weight on her heart. But now her position in life is assured, continued Caderousse; no doubt fortune and honors have comforted her; she is rich, a countess, and yet " "

Caderousse paused.

And yet what? asked the abbé.

Yet, I am sure, she is not happy, said Caderousse.

What makes you believe this?

Why, when I found myself utterly destitute, I thought my old friends would, perhaps, assist me. So I went to Danglars, who would not even receive me. I called on Fernand, who sent me a hundred francs by his valet-de-chambre.

Then you did not see either of them?

No, but Madame de Morcerf saw me.

How was that?

As I went away a purse fell at my feet "it contained five-and-twenty louis; I raised my head quickly, and saw Mercédès, who at once shut the blind.

And M. de Villefort? asked the abbé.

Oh, he never was a friend of mine, I did not know him, and I had nothing to ask of him.

Do you not know what became of him, and the share he had in Edmond's misfortunes?

No; I only know that some time after Edmond's arrest, he married Mademoiselle de Saint-Méran, and soon after left Marseilles; no doubt he has been as lucky as the rest; no doubt he is as rich as Danglars, as high in station as Fernand. I only, as you see, have remained poor, wretched, and forgotten.

You are mistaken, my friend, replied the abbé; God may seem sometimes to forget for a time, while his justice reposes, but there always comes a moment when he remembers "and behold "a proof!

As he spoke, the abbé took the diamond from his pocket, and giving it to Caderousse, said, Here, my friend, take this diamond, it is yours.

What, for me only? cried Caderousse, ah, sir, do not jest with me!

This diamond was to have been shared among his friends. Edmond had one friend only, and thus it cannot be divided. Take the diamond, then, and sell it; it is worth fifty thousand francs, and I repeat my wish that this sum may suffice to release you from your wretchedness.

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Oh, sir, said Caderousse, putting out one hand timidly, and with the other wiping away the perspiration which bedewed his brow, "Oh, sir, do not make a jest of the happiness or despair of a man.

I know what happiness and what despair are, and I never make a jest of such feelings. Take it, then, but in exchange"

Caderousse, who touched the diamond, withdrew his hand.

The abb  smiled.

In exchange, he continued, give me the red silk purse that M. Morrel left on old Dant s chimney-piece, and which you tell me is still in your hands.

Caderousse, more and more astonished, went toward a large oaken cupboard, opened it, and gave the abb  a long purse of faded red silk, round which were two copper runners that had once been gilt. The abb  took it, and in return gave Caderousse the diamond.

Oh, you are a man of God, sir, cried Caderousse; for no one knew that Edmond had given you this diamond, and you might have kept it.

Which, said the abb  to himself, you would have done. The abb 

rose, took his hat and gloves. Well, he said, all you have told me is perfectly true, then, and I may believe it in every particular.

See, sir, replied Caderousse, in this corner is a crucifix in holy wood"here on this shelf is my wifes testament; open this book, and I will swear upon it with my hand on the crucifix. I will swear to you by my souls salvation, my faith as a Christian, I have told everything to you as it occurred, and as the recording angel will tell it to the ear of God at the day of the last judgment!

Tis well, said the abb , convinced by his manner and tone that Caderousse spoke the truth. Tis well, and may this money profit you!

Adieu; I go far from men who thus so bitterly injure each other.

The abb  with difficulty got away from the enthusiastic thanks of Caderousse, opened the door himself, got out and mounted his horse, once more saluted the innkeeper, who kept uttering his loud farewells, and then returned by the road he had travelled in coming.