

ion in the streets of Nîmes, I had never entered the town; the result was that the innkeeper with whom we were connected, seeing that we would no longer come to him, was forced to come to us, and had established a branch to his inn, on the road from Bellegarde to Beaucaire, at the sign of the Pont du Gard. We had thus, at Aigues-Mortes, Martigues, or Bouc, a dozen places where we left our goods, and where, in case of necessity, we concealed ourselves from the gendarmes and custom-house officers. Smuggling is a profitable trade, when a certain degree of vigor and intelligence is employed; as for myself, brought up in the mountains, I had a double motive for fearing the gendarmes and custom-house officers, as my appearance before the judges would cause an inquiry, and an inquiry always looks back into the past. And in my past life they might find something far more grave than the selling of smuggled cigars, or barrels of brandy without a permit. So, preferring death to capture, I accomplished the most astonishing deeds, and which, more than once, showed me that the too great care we take of our bodies is the only obstacle to the success of those projects which require rapid decision, and vigorous and determined execution. In reality, when you have once devoted your life to your enterprises, you are no longer the equal of other men, or, rather, other men are no longer your equals, and whosoever has taken this resolution, feels his strength and resources doubled. Philosophy, M. Bertuccio, interrupted the count; you have done a little of everything in your life.

Oh, excellency!

No, no; but philosophy at half-past ten at night is somewhat late; yet I have no other observation to make, for what you say is correct, which is more than can be said for all philosophy.

My journeys became more and more extensive and more productive.

Assunta took care of all, and our little fortune increased. One day as I was setting off on an expedition, "Go," said she; "at your return I will give you a surprise. I questioned her, but in vain; she would tell me nothing, and I departed. Our expedition lasted nearly six weeks; we had been to Lucca to take in oil, to Leghorn for English cottons, and we ran our cargo without opposition, and returned home full of joy. When I entered the house, the first thing I beheld in the middle of Assunta's chamber was a cradle that might be called sumptuous compared with the rest of the furniture, and in it a baby seven or eight months old. I uttered a cry of joy; the only moments of sadness I had known since the assassination of the procureur were caused by the recollection that I had abandoned this child. For the assassination itself I had never felt any remorse. Poor Assunta had guessed all. She had profited by my absence, and furnished with the half of the linen, and having written down the day and hour at which I had deposited the child at the asylum, had set off for Paris, and had reclaimed it. No objection was raised, and the infant was given up to her. Ah, I confess, your excellency, when I saw this poor creature sleeping peacefully in its cradle, I felt my eyes filled with tears. "Ah, Assunta, cried I, "you are an excellent woman, and Heaven will bless you.

This," said Monte Cristo, "is less correct than your philosophy," "it is only faith.

Alas, your excellency is right," replied Bertuccio, "and God made this infant the instrument of our punishment. Never did a perverse nature declare itself more prematurely, and yet it was not owing to any fault in his bringing up. He was a most lovely child, with large blue eyes, of that deep color that harmonizes so well with the blond complexion; only his hair, which was too light, gave his face a most singular expression, and added to the vivacity of his look, and the malice of his smile.

Unfortunately, there is a proverb which says that "red is either altogether good or altogether bad. The proverb was but too correct as regarded Benedetto, and even in his infancy he manifested the worst

disposition. It is true that the indulgence of his foster-mother encouraged him. This child, for whom my poor sister would go to the town, five or six leagues off, to purchase the earliest fruits and the most tempting sweetmeats, preferred to Palma grapes or Genoese preserves, the chestnuts stolen from a neighbors orchard, or the dried apples in his loft, when he could eat as well of the nuts and apples that grew in my garden.

One day, when Benedetto was about five or six, our neighbor Wasilio, who, according to the custom of the country, never locked up his purse or his valuables"for, as your excellency knows, there are no thieves in Corsica"complained that he had lost a louis out of his purse; we thought he must have made a mistake in counting his money, but he persisted in the accuracy of his statement. One day, Benedetto, who had been gone from the house since morning, to our great anxiety, did not return until late in the evening, dragging a monkey after him, which he said he had found chained to the foot of a tree. For more than a month past, the mischievous child, who knew not what to wish for, had taken it into his head to have a monkey. A boatman, who had passed by Rogliano, and who had several of these animals, whose tricks had greatly diverted him, had, doubtless, suggested this idea to him.

"Monkeys are not found in our woods chained to trees, said I; "confess how you obtained this animal. Benedetto maintained the truth of what he had said, and accompanied it with details that did more honor to his imagination than to his veracity. I became angry; he began to laugh, I threatened to strike him, and he made two steps backwards. "You cannot beat me, said he; "you have no right, for you are not my father.

20299m

We never knew who had revealed this fatal secret, which we had so carefully concealed from him; however, it was this answer, in which the child's whole character revealed itself, that almost terrified me, and my arm fell without touching him.

The boy triumphed, and this victory rendered him so audacious, that all the money of Assunta, whose affection for him seemed to increase as he became more unworthy of it, was spent in caprices she knew not how to contend against, and follies she had not the courage to prevent. When I was at Rogliano everything went on properly, but no sooner was my back turned than Benedetto became master, and everything went ill. When he was only eleven, he chose his companions from among the young men of eighteen or twenty, the worst characters in Bastia, or, indeed, in Corsica, and they had already, for some mischievous pranks, been several times threatened with a prosecution. I became alarmed, as any prosecution might be attended with serious consequences. I was compelled, at this period, to leave Corsica on an important expedition; I reflected for a long time, and with the hope of averting some impending misfortune, I resolved that Benedetto should accompany me. I hoped that the active and laborious life of a smuggler, with the severe discipline on board, would have a salutary effect on his character, which was now well-nigh, if not quite, corrupt. I spoke to Benedetto alone, and proposed to him to accompany me, endeavoring to tempt him by all the promises most likely to dazzle the imagination of a child of twelve. He heard me patiently, and when I had finished, burst out laughing.

"Are you mad, uncle? (he called me by this name when he was in good humor); "do you think I am going to change the life I lead for your mode of existence"my agreeable indolence for the hard and precarious toil you impose on yourself, exposed to the bitter frost at night, and the scorching heat by day, compelled to conceal yourself, and when you are perceived, receive a volley of bullets, all to earn a paltry sum? Why, I have as much money as I want; mother Assunta always furnishes me when I ask for it! You see that I should be a fool to accept your offer.

The arguments, and his audacity, perfectly stupefied me. Benedetto rejoined his associates, and I saw him from a distance point me out to

them as a fool.

Sweet child, murmured Monte Cristo.

Oh, had he been my own son, replied Bertuccio, or even my nephew, I would have brought him back to the right road, for the knowledge that you are doing your duty gives you strength, but the idea that I was striking a child whose father I had killed, made it impossible for me to punish him. I gave my sister, who constantly defended the unfortunate boy, good advice, and as she confessed that she had several times missed money to a considerable amount, I showed her a safe place in which to conceal our little treasure for the future. My mind was already made up. Benedetto could read, write, and cipher perfectly, for when the fit seized him, he learned more in a day than others in a week. My intention was to enter him as a clerk in some ship, and without letting him know anything of my plan, to convey him some morning on board; by this means his future treatment would depend upon his own conduct. I set off for France, after having fixed upon the plan. Our cargo was to be landed in the Gulf of Lyons, and this was a difficult thing to do because it was then the year 1829. The most perfect tranquillity was restored, and the vigilance of the custom-house officers was redoubled, and their strictness was increased at this time, in consequence of the fair at Beaucaire.

20301m

Our expedition made a favorable beginning. We anchored our vessel"which had a double hold, where our goods were concealed"amidst a number of other vessels that bordered the banks of the Rh  ne from Beaucaire to Arles. On our arrival we began to discharge our cargo in the night, and to convey it into the town, by the help of the innkeeper with whom we were connected.

Whether success rendered us imprudent, or whether we were betrayed, I know not; but one evening, about five o'clock, our little cabin-boy came breathlessly, to inform us that he had seen a detachment of custom-house officers advancing in our direction. It was not their proximity that alarmed us, for detachments were constantly patrolling along the banks of the Rh  ne, but the care, according to the boys account, that they took to avoid being seen. In an instant we were on the alert, but it was too late; our vessel was surrounded, and amongst the custom-house officers I observed several gendarmes, and, as terrified at the sight of their uniforms as I was brave at the sight of any other, I sprang into the hold, opened a port, and dropped into the river, dived, and only rose at intervals to breathe, until I reached a ditch that had recently been made from the Rh  ne to the canal that runs from Beaucaire to Aigues-Mortes. I was now safe, for I could swim along the ditch without being seen, and I reached the canal in safety. I had designedly taken this direction. I have already told your excellency of an innkeeper from N  mes who had set up a little tavern on the road from Bellegarde to Beaucaire.

Yes, said Monte Cristo I perfectly recollect him; I think he was your colleague.

Precisely, answered Bertuccio; but he had, seven or eight years before this period, sold his establishment to a tailor at Marseilles, who, having almost ruined himself in his old trade, wished to make his fortune in another. Of course, we made the same arrangements with the new landlord that we had with the old; and it was of this man that I intended to ask shelter.

What was his name? inquired the count, who seemed to become somewhat interested in Bertuccios story.

Gaspard Caderousse; he had married a woman from the village of Carconte, and whom we did not know by any other name than that of her village. She was suffering from malarial fever, and seemed dying by inches. As for her husband, he was a strapping fellow of forty, or five-and-forty, who had more than once, in time of danger, given ample proof of his presence of mind and courage.

And you say, interrupted Monte Cristo that this took place towards

the year""

1829, your excellency.

In what month?

June.

The beginning or the end?

The evening of the 3rd.

20303m

Ah, said Monte Cristo the evening of the 3rd of June, 1829. Go on.

It was from Caderousse that I intended demanding shelter, and, as we never entered by the door that opened onto the road, I resolved not to break through the rule, so climbing over the garden-hedge, I crept amongst the olive and wild fig trees, and fearing that Caderousse might have some guest, I entered a kind of shed in which I had often passed the night, and which was only separated from the inn by a partition, in which holes had been made in order to enable us to watch an opportunity of announcing our presence.

My intention was, if Caderousse was alone, to acquaint him with my presence, finish the meal the custom-house officers had interrupted, and profit by the threatened storm to return to the Rh ne, and ascertain the state of our vessel and its crew. I stepped into the shed, and it was fortunate I did so, for at that moment Caderousse entered with a stranger.

I waited patiently, not to overhear what they said, but because I could do nothing else; besides, the same thing had occurred often before. The man who was with Caderousse was evidently a stranger to the South of France; he was one of those merchants who come to sell jewellery at the Beaucaire fair, and who during the month the fair lasts, and during which there is so great an influx of merchants and customers from all parts of Europe, often have dealings to the amount of 100,000 to 150,000 francs. Caderousse entered hastily. Then, seeing that the room was, as usual, empty, and only guarded by the dog, he called to his wife, ~Hello, Carconte, said he, ~the worthy priest has not deceived us; the diamond is real.

An exclamation of joy was heard, and the staircase creaked beneath a feeble step. ~What do you say? asked his wife, pale as death.

~I say that the diamond is real, and that this gentleman, one of the first jewellers of Paris, will give us 50,000 francs for it. Only, in order to satisfy himself that it really belongs to us, he wishes you to relate to him, as I have done already, the miraculous manner in which the diamond came into our possession. In the meantime please to sit down, monsieur, and I will fetch you some refreshment.

The jeweller examined attentively the interior of the inn and the apparent poverty of the persons who were about to sell him a diamond that seemed to have come from the casket of a prince.

~Relate your story, madame, said he, wishing, no doubt, to profit by the absence of the husband, so that the latter could not influence the wifes story, to see if the two recitals tallied.

~Oh, returned she, ~it was a gift of heaven. My husband was a great friend, in 1814 or 1815, of a sailor named Edmond Dant s. This poor fellow, whom Caderousse had forgotten, had not forgotten him, and at his death he bequeathed this diamond to him.

~But how did he obtain it? asked the jeweller; ~had he it before he was imprisoned?

~No, monsieur; but it appears that in prison he made the acquaintance of a rich Englishman, and as in prison he fell sick, and Dant s took the same care of him as if he had been his brother, the Englishman, when he was set free, gave this stone to Dant s, who, less fortunate, died, and, in his turn, left it to us, and charged the excellent abb , who was here this morning, to deliver it.

~The same story, muttered the jeweller; ~and improbable as it seemed at first, it may be true. Theres only the price we are not agreed about.

~How not agreed about? said Caderousse. ~I thought we agreed for the

price I asked.

~That is, replied the jeweller, ~I offered 40,000 francs.

~Forty thousand, cried La Carconte; ~we will not part with it for that sum. The abb  told us it was worth 50,000 without the setting.

~What was the abb s name? asked the indefatigable questioner.

~The Abb  Busoni, said La Carconte.

~He was a foreigner?

~An Italian from the neighborhood of Mantua, I believe.

~Let me see this diamond again, replied the jeweller; ~the first time you are often mistaken as to the value of a stone.

Caderousse took from his pocket a small case of black shagreen, opened, and gave it to the jeweller. At the sight of the diamond, which was as large as a hazel-nut, La Carcontes eyes sparkled with cupidity.

And what did you think of this fine story, eavesdropper? said Monte Cristo; did you credit it?

Yes, your excellency. I did not look on Caderousse as a bad man, and I thought him incapable of committing a crime, or even a theft.

That did more honor to your heart than to your experience, M.

Bertuccio. Had you known this Edmond Dant s, of whom they spoke?

No, your excellency, I had never heard of him before, and never but once afterwards, and that was from the Abb  Busoni himself, when I saw him in the prison at N mes.

Go on.

The jeweller took the ring, and drawing from his pocket a pair of steel pliers and a small set of copper scales, he took the stone out of its setting, and weighed it carefully.

~I will give you 45,000, said he, ~but not a sou more; besides, as that is the exact value of the stone, I brought just that sum with me.

~Oh, thats no matter, replied Caderousse, ~I will go back with you to fetch the other 5,000 francs.

~No, returned the jeweller, giving back the diamond and the ring to Caderousse, ~no, it is worth no more, and I am sorry I offered so much, for the stone has a flaw in it, which I had not seen. However, I will not go back on my word, and I will give 45,000.

~At least, replace the diamond in the ring, said La Carconte sharply.

~Ah, true, replied the jeweller, and he reset the stone.

~No matter, observed Caderousse, replacing the box in his pocket,

~someone else will purchase it.

~Yes, continued the jeweller; ~but someone else will not be so easy as I am, or content himself with the same story. It is not natural that a man like you should possess such a diamond. He will inform against you. You will have to find the Abb  Busoni; and abb s who give diamonds worth two thousand louis are rare. The law would seize it, and put you in prison; if at the end of three or four months you are set at liberty, the ring will be lost, or a false stone, worth three francs, will be given you, instead of a diamond worth 50,000 or perhaps 55,000 francs; from which you must allow that one runs considerable risk in purchasing.

Caderousse and his wife looked eagerly at each other.

~No, said Caderousse, ~we are not rich enough to lose 5,000 francs.

~As you please, my dear sir, said the jeweller; ~I had, however, as you see, brought you the money in bright coin. And he drew from his pocket a handful of gold, and held it sparkling before the dazzled eyes of the innkeeper, and in the other hand he held a packet of bank-notes. There was evidently a severe struggle in the mind of Caderousse; it was plain that the small shagreen case, which he turned over and over in his hand, did not seem to him commensurate in value to the enormous sum which fascinated his gaze. He turned towards his wife.

~What do you think of this? he asked in a low voice.

~Let him have it"let him have it, she said. ~If he returns to Beaucaire without the diamond, he will inform against us, and, as he says, who knows if we shall ever again see the Abb  Busoni?"in all

probability we shall never see him.

~Well, then, so I will! said Caderousse; ~so you may have the diamond for 45,000 francs. But my wife wants a gold chain, and I want a pair of silver buckles.

The jeweller drew from his pocket a long flat box, which contained several samples of the articles demanded. ~Here, he said, ~I am very straightforward in my dealings"take your choice.

The woman selected a gold chain worth about five louis, and the husband a pair of buckles, worth perhaps fifteen francs.

~I hope you will not complain now? said the jeweller.

~The abb  told me it was worth 50,000 francs, muttered Caderousse.

~Come, come"give it to me! What a strange fellow you are, said the jeweller, taking the diamond from his hand. ~I give you 45,000 francs"that is, 2,500 livres of income,"a fortune such as I wish I had myself, and you are not satisfied!

~And the five-and-forty thousand francs, inquired Caderousse in a hoarse voice, ~where are they? Come"let us see them.

~Here they are, replied the jeweller, and he counted out upon the table 15,000 francs in gold, and 30,000 francs in bank-notes.

~Wait while I light the lamp, said La Carconte; ~it is growing dark, and there may be some mistake. In fact, night had come on during this conversation, and with night the storm which had been threatening for the last half-hour. The thunder growled in the distance; but it was apparently not heard by the jeweller, Caderousse, or La Carconte, absorbed as they were all three with the demon of gain. I myself felt; a strange kind of fascination at the sight of all this gold and all these bank-notes; it seemed to me that I was in a dream, and, as it always happens in a dream, I felt myself riveted to the spot.

Caderousse counted and again counted the gold and the notes, then handed them to his wife, who counted and counted them again in her turn. During this time, the jeweller made the diamond play and sparkle in the lamplight, and the gem threw out jets of light which made him unmindful of those which"precursors of the storm"began to play in at the windows.

~Well, inquired the jeweller, ~is the cash all right?

~Yes, said Caderousse. ~Give me the pocket-book, La Carconte, and find a bag somewhere.

La Carconte went to a cupboard, and returned with an old leathern pocket-book and a bag. From the former she took some greasy letters, and put in their place the bank-notes, and from the bag took two or three crowns of six livres each, which, in all probability, formed the entire fortune of the miserable couple.

~There, said Caderousse; ~and now, although you have wronged us of perhaps 10,000 francs, will you have your supper with us? I invite you with good-will.

~Thank you, replied the jeweller, ~it must be getting late, and I must return to Beaucaire"my wife will be getting uneasy. He drew out his watch, and exclaimed, ~_Morbleu!_ nearly nine oclock"why, I shall not get back to Beaucaire before midnight! Good-night, my friends. If the Abb  Busoni should by any accident return, think of me.

~In another week you will have left Beaucaire, remarked Caderousse, ~for the fair ends in a few days.

~True, but that makes no difference. Write to me at Paris, to M. Joannes, in the Palais Royal, arcade Pierre, No. 45. I will make the journey on purpose to see him, if it is worth while.

At this moment there was a tremendous clap of thunder, accompanied by a flash of lightning so vivid, that it quite eclipsed the light of the lamp.

20307m

~See here, exclaimed Caderousse. ~You cannot think of going out in such weather as this.

~Oh, I am not afraid of thunder, said the jeweller.

~And then there are robbers, said La Carconte. ~The road is never

very safe during fair time.

~Oh, as to the robbers, said Joannes, ~here is something for them, and he drew from his pocket a pair of small pistols, loaded to the muzzle. ~Here, said he, ~are dogs who bark and bite at the same time, they are for the two first who shall have a longing for your diamond, Friend Caderousse.

Caderousse and his wife again interchanged a meaning look. It seemed as though they were both inspired at the same time with some horrible thought. ~Well, then, a good journey to you, said Caderousse.

~Thanks, replied the jeweller. He then took his cane, which he had placed against an old cupboard, and went out. At the moment when he opened the door, such a gust of wind came in that the lamp was nearly extinguished. ~Oh, said he, ~this is very nice weather, and two leagues to go in such a storm.

~Remain, said Caderousse. ~You can sleep here.

~Yes; do stay, added La Carconte in a tremulous voice; ~we will take every care of you.

~No; I must sleep at Beaucaire. So, once more, good-night. Caderousse followed him slowly to the threshold. ~I can see neither heaven nor earth, said the jeweller, who was outside the door. ~Do I turn to the right, or to the left hand?

~To the right, said Caderousse. ~You cannot go wrong"the road is bordered by trees on both sides.

~Good"all right, said a voice almost lost in the distance.

~Close the door, said La Carconte; ~I do not like open doors when it thunders.

~Particularly when there is money in the house, eh? answered Caderousse, double-locking the door.

20311m

He came into the room, went to the cupboard, took out the bag and pocket-book, and both began, for the third time, to count their gold and bank-notes. I never saw such an expression of cupidity as the flickering lamp revealed in those two countenances. The woman, especially, was hideous; her usual feverish tremulousness was intensified, her countenance had become livid, and her eyes resembled burning coals.

~Why, she inquired in a hoarse voice, ~did you invite him to sleep here tonight?

~Why? said Caderousse with a shudder; ~why, that he might not have the trouble of returning to Beaucaire.

~Ah, responded the woman, with an expression impossible to describe;

~I thought it was for something else.

~Woman, woman"why do you have such ideas? cried Caderousse; ~or, if you have them, why dont you keep them to yourself?

~Well, said La Carconte, after a moments pause, ~you are not a man.

~What do you mean? added Caderousse.

~If you had been a man, you would not have let him go from here.

~Woman!

~Or else he should not have reached Beaucaire.

~Woman!

~The road takes a turn"he is obliged to follow it"while alongside of the canal there is a shorter road.

~Woman!"you offend the good God. There"listen!

And at this moment there was a tremendous peal of thunder, while the livid lightning illumined the room, and the thunder, rolling away in the distance, seemed to withdraw unwillingly from the cursed abode.

~Mercy! said Caderousse, crossing himself.

20312m

At the same moment, and in the midst of the terrifying silence which usually follows a clap of thunder, they heard a knocking at the door. Caderousse and his wife started and looked aghast at each other.

~Whos there? cried Caderousse, rising, and drawing up in a heap the gold and notes scattered over the table, and which he covered with his

two hands.

~It is I, shouted a voice.

~And who are you?

~Eh, _pardieu!_ Joannes, the jeweller.

~Well, and you said I offended the good God, said La Carconte with a horrid smile. ~Why, the good God sends him back again. Caderousse sank pale and breathless into his chair.

La Carconte, on the contrary, rose, and going with a firm step towards the door, opened it, saying, as she did so:

~Come in, dear M. Joannes.

~_Ma foi_, said the jeweller, drenched with rain, ~I am not destined to return to Beaucaire tonight. The shortest follies are best, my dear Caderousse. You offered me hospitality, and I accept it, and have returned to sleep beneath your friendly roof.

Caderousse stammered out something, while he wiped away the sweat that started to his brow. La Carconte double-locked the door behind the jeweller.

Chapter 45. The Rain of Blood

As the jeweller returned to the apartment, he cast around him a scrutinizing glance"but there was nothing to excite suspicion, if it did not exist, or to confirm it, if it were already awakened. Caderousse's hands still grasped the gold and bank-notes, and La Carconte called up her sweetest smiles while welcoming the reappearance of their guest.

~Well, well, said the jeweller, ~you seem, my good friends, to have had some fears respecting the accuracy of your money, by counting it over so carefully directly I was gone.

~Oh, no, answered Caderousse, ~that was not my reason, I can assure you; but the circumstances by which we have become possessed of this wealth are so unexpected, as to make us scarcely credit our good fortune, and it is only by placing the actual proof of our riches before our eyes that we can persuade ourselves that the whole affair is not a dream.

The jeweller smiled. ~Have you any other guests in your house? inquired he.

~Nobody but ourselves, replied Caderousse; ~the fact is, we do not lodge travellers"indeed, our tavern is so near the town, that nobody would think of stopping here.

~Then I am afraid I shall very much inconvenience you.

~Inconvenience us? Not at all, my dear sir, said La Carconte in her most gracious manner. ~Not at all, I assure you.

~But where will you manage to stow me?

~In the chamber overhead.

~Surely that is where you yourselves sleep?

~Never mind that; we have a second bed in the adjoining room.

Caderousse stared at his wife with much astonishment.

The jeweller, meanwhile, was humming a song as he stood warming his back at the fire La Carconte had kindled to dry the wet garments of her guest; and this done, she next occupied herself in arranging his supper, by spreading a napkin at the end of the table, and placing on it the slender remains of their dinner, to which she added three or four fresh-laid eggs. Caderousse had once more parted with his treasure"the banknotes were replaced in the pocket-book, the gold put back into the bag, and the whole carefully locked in the cupboard. He then began pacing the room with a pensive and gloomy air, glancing from time to time at the jeweller, who stood reeking with the steam from his wet clothes, and merely changing his place on the warm hearth, to enable the whole of his garments to be dried.

~There, said La Carconte, as she placed a bottle of wine on the table, ~supper is ready whenever you are.

~And you? asked Joannes.

~I don't want any supper, said Caderousse.

~We dined so very late, hastily interposed La Carconte.

~Then it seems I am to eat alone, remarked the jeweller.

~Oh, we shall have the pleasure of waiting upon you, answered La Carconte, with an eager attention she was not accustomed to manifest even to guests who paid for what they took.

From time to time Caderousse darted on his wife keen, searching glances, but rapid as the lightning flash. The storm still continued.

~There, there, said La Carconte; ~do you hear that? upon my word, you did well to come back.

~Nevertheless, replied the jeweller, ~if by the time I have finished my supper the tempest has at all abated, I shall make another start.

~Its the mistral, said Caderousse, ~and it will be sure to last till tomorrow morning. He sighed heavily.

~Well, said the jeweller, as he placed himself at table, ~all I can say is, so much the worse for those who are abroad.

~Yes, chimed in La Carconte, ~they will have a wretched night of it.

The jeweller began eating his supper, and the woman, who was ordinarily so querulous and indifferent to all who approached her, was suddenly transformed into the most smiling and attentive hostess. Had the unhappy man on whom she lavished her assiduities been previously acquainted with her, so sudden an alteration might well have excited suspicion in his mind, or at least have greatly astonished him. Caderousse, meanwhile, continued to pace the room in gloomy silence, sedulously avoiding the sight of his guest; but as soon as the stranger had completed his repast, the agitated innkeeper went eagerly to the door and opened it.

~I believe the storm is over, said he.

But as if to contradict his statement, at that instant a violent clap of thunder seemed to shake the house to its very foundation, while a sudden gust of wind, mingled with rain, extinguished the lamp he held in his hand.

Trembling and awe-struck, Caderousse hastily shut the door and returned to his guest, while La Carconte lighted a candle by the smouldering ashes that glimmered on the hearth.

~You must be tired, said she to the jeweller; ~I have spread a pair of white sheets on your bed; go up when you are ready, and sleep well. Joannes stayed for a while to see whether the storm seemed to abate in its fury, but a brief space of time sufficed to assure him that, instead of diminishing, the violence of the rain and thunder momentarily increased; resigning himself, therefore, to what seemed inevitable, he bade his host good-night, and mounted the stairs. He passed over my head and I heard the flooring creak beneath his footsteps. The quick, eager glance of La Carconte followed him as he ascended, while Caderousse, on the contrary, turned his back, and seemed most anxiously to avoid even glancing at him.

All these circumstances did not strike me as painfully at the time as they have since done; in fact, all that had happened (with the exception of the story of the diamond, which certainly did wear an air of improbability), appeared natural enough, and called for neither apprehension nor mistrust; but, worn out as I was with fatigue, and fully purposing to proceed onwards directly the tempest abated, I determined to obtain a few hours sleep. Overhead I could accurately distinguish every movement of the jeweller, who, after making the best arrangements in his power for passing a comfortable night, threw himself on his bed, and I could hear it creak and groan beneath his weight.

Insensibly my eyelids grew heavy, deep sleep stole over me, and having no suspicion of anything wrong, I sought not to shake it off. I looked into the kitchen once more and saw Caderousse sitting by the side of a long table upon one of the low wooden stools which in country places are frequently used instead of chairs; his back was turned towards me, so that I could not see the expression of his countenance"neither should I have been able to do so had he been placed differently, as his head was buried between his two hands. La Carconte continued to gaze on

him for some time, then shrugging her shoulders, she took her seat immediately opposite to him.

At this moment the expiring embers threw up a fresh flame from the kindling of a piece of wood that lay near, and a bright light flashed over the room. La Carconte still kept her eyes fixed on her husband, but as he made no sign of changing his position, she extended her hard, bony hand, and touched him on the forehead.

20317m

Caderousse shuddered. The woman's lips seemed to move, as though she were talking; but because she merely spoke in an undertone, or my senses were dulled by sleep, I did not catch a word she uttered. Confused sights and sounds seemed to float before me, and gradually I fell into a deep, heavy slumber. How long I had been in this unconscious state I know not, when I was suddenly aroused by the report of a pistol, followed by a fearful cry. Weak and tottering footsteps resounded across the chamber above me, and the next instant a dull, heavy weight seemed to fall powerless on the staircase. I had not yet fully recovered consciousness, when again I heard groans, mingled with half-stifled cries, as if from persons engaged in a deadly struggle. A cry more prolonged than the others and ending in a series of groans effectually roused me from my drowsy lethargy. Hastily raising myself on one arm, I looked around, but all was dark; and it seemed to me as if the rain must have penetrated through the flooring of the room above, for some kind of moisture appeared to fall, drop by drop, upon my forehead, and when I passed my hand across my brow, I felt that it was wet and clammy.

To the fearful noises that had awakened me had succeeded the most perfect silence"unbroken, save by the footsteps of a man walking about in the chamber above. The staircase creaked, he descended into the room below, approached the fire and lit a candle.

The man was Caderousse"he was pale and his shirt was all bloody. Having obtained the light, he hurried upstairs again, and once more I heard his rapid and uneasy footsteps.

A moment later he came down again, holding in his hand the small shagreen case, which he opened, to assure himself it contained the diamond,"seemed to hesitate as to which pocket he should put it in, then, as if dissatisfied with the security of either pocket, he deposited it in his red handkerchief, which he carefully rolled round his head.

After this he took from his cupboard the bank-notes and gold he had put there, thrust the one into the pocket of his trousers, and the other into that of his waistcoat, hastily tied up a small bundle of linen, and rushing towards the door, disappeared in the darkness of the night.

Then all became clear and manifest to me, and I reproached myself with what had happened, as though I myself had done the guilty deed. I fancied that I still heard faint moans, and imagining that the unfortunate jeweller might not be quite dead, I determined to go to his relief, by way of atoning in some slight degree, not for the crime I had committed, but for that which I had not endeavored to prevent. For this purpose I applied all the strength I possessed to force an entrance from the cramped spot in which I lay to the adjoining room. The poorly fastened boards which alone divided me from it yielded to my efforts, and I found myself in the house. Hastily snatching up the lighted candle, I hurried to the staircase; about midway a body was lying quite across the stairs. It was that of La Carconte. The pistol I had heard had doubtless been fired at her. The shot had frightfully lacerated her throat, leaving two gaping wounds from which, as well as the mouth, the blood was pouring in floods. She was stone dead. I strode past her, and ascended to the sleeping chamber, which presented an appearance of the wildest disorder. The furniture had been knocked over in the deadly struggle that had taken place there, and the sheets, to which the unfortunate jeweller had doubtless clung, were dragged

across the room. The murdered man lay on the floor, his head leaning against the wall, and about him was a pool of blood which poured forth from three large wounds in his breast; there was a fourth gash, in which a long table knife was plunged up to the handle.

I stumbled over some object; I stooped to examine it was the second pistol, which had not gone off, probably from the powder being wet. I approached the jeweller, who was not quite dead, and at the sound of my footsteps and the creaking of the floor, he opened his eyes, fixed them on me with an anxious and inquiring gaze, moved his lips as though trying to speak, then, overcome by the effort, fell back and expired. This appalling sight almost bereft me of my senses, and finding that I could no longer be of service to anyone in the house, my only desire was to fly. I rushed towards the staircase, clutching my hair, and uttering a groan of horror.

Upon reaching the room below, I found five or six custom-house officers, and two or three gendarmes all heavily armed. They threw themselves upon me. I made no resistance; I was no longer master of my senses. When I strove to speak, a few inarticulate sounds alone escaped my lips.

As I noticed the significant manner in which the whole party pointed to my blood-stained garments, I involuntarily surveyed myself, and then I discovered that the thick warm drops that had so bedewed me as I lay beneath the staircase must have been the blood of La Carconte. I pointed to the spot where I had concealed myself.

~What does he mean? asked a gendarme.

One of the officers went to the place I directed.

~He means, replied the man upon his return, ~that he got in that way; and he showed the hole I had made when I broke through.

Then I saw that they took me for the assassin. I recovered force and energy enough to free myself from the hands of those who held me, while I managed to stammer forth:

~I did not do it! Indeed, indeed I did not!

A couple of gendarmes held the muzzles of their carbines against my breast.

~Stir but a step, said they, ~and you are a dead man.

~Why should you threaten me with death, cried I, ~when I have already declared my innocence?

~Tush, tush, cried the men; ~keep your innocent stories to tell to the judge at Nîmes. Meanwhile, come along with us; and the best advice we can give you is to do so unresistingly.

Alas, resistance was far from my thoughts. I was utterly overpowered by surprise and terror; and without a word I suffered myself to be handcuffed and tied to a horse's tail, and thus they took me to Nîmes. I had been tracked by a customs-officer, who had lost sight of me near the tavern; feeling certain that I intended to pass the night there, he had returned to summon his comrades, who just arrived in time to hear the report of the pistol, and to take me in the midst of such circumstantial proofs of my guilt as rendered all hopes of proving my innocence utterly futile. One only chance was left me, that of beseeching the magistrate before whom I was taken to cause every inquiry to be made for the Abbé Busoni, who had stopped at the inn of the Pont du Gard on that morning.

If Caderousse had invented the story relative to the diamond, and there existed no such person as the Abbé Busoni, then, indeed, I was lost past redemption, or, at least, my life hung upon the feeble chance of Caderousse himself being apprehended and confessing the whole truth. Two months passed away in hopeless expectation on my part, while I must do the magistrate the justice to say that he used every means to obtain information of the person I declared could exculpate me if he would. Caderousse still evaded all pursuit, and I had resigned myself to what seemed my inevitable fate. My trial was to come on at the approaching assizes; when, on the 8th of September that is to say, precisely three months and five days after the events which had

perilled my life"the Abb  Busoni, whom I never ventured to believe I should see, presented himself at the prison doors, saying he understood one of the prisoners wished to speak to him; he added, that having learned at Marseilles the particulars of my imprisonment, he hastened to comply with my desire.

You may easily imagine with what eagerness I welcomed him, and how minutely I related the whole of what I had seen and heard. I felt some degree of nervousness as I entered upon the history of the diamond, but, to my inexpressible astonishment, he confirmed it in every particular, and to my equal surprise, he seemed to place entire belief in all I said.

And then it was that, won by his mild charity, seeing that he was acquainted with all the habits and customs of my own country, and considering also that pardon for the only crime of which I was really guilty might come with a double power from lips so benevolent and kind, I besought him to receive my confession, under the seal of which I recounted the Auteuil affair in all its details, as well as every other transaction of my life. That which I had done by the impulse of my best feelings produced the same effect as though it had been the result of calculation. My voluntary confession of the assassination at Auteuil proved to him that I had not committed that of which I stood accused. When he quitted me, he bade me be of good courage, and to rely upon his doing all in his power to convince my judges of my innocence.

I had speedy proofs that the excellent abb  was engaged in my behalf, for the rigors of my imprisonment were alleviated by many trifling though acceptable indulgences, and I was told that my trial was to be postponed to the assizes following those now being held.

In the interim it pleased Providence to cause the apprehension of Caderousse, who was discovered in some distant country, and brought back to France, where he made a full confession, refusing to make the fact of his wives having suggested and arranged the murder any excuse for his own guilt. The wretched man was sentenced to the galleys for life, and I was immediately set at liberty.

And then it was, I presume, said Monte Cristo that you came to me as the bearer of a letter from the Abb  Busoni?

It was, your excellency; the benevolent abb  took an evident interest in all that concerned me.

"Your mode of life as a smuggler, said he to me one day, "will be the ruin of you; if you get out, dont take it up again.

"But how, inquired I, "am I to maintain myself and my poor sister?

"A person, whose confessor I am, replied he, "and who entertains a high regard for me, applied to me a short time since to procure him a confidential servant. Would you like such a post? If so, I will give you a letter of introduction to him.

"Oh, father, I exclaimed, "you are very good.

"But you must swear solemnly that I shall never have reason to repent my recommendation.

I extended my hand, and was about to pledge myself by any promise he would dictate, but he stopped me.

"It is unnecessary for you to bind yourself by any vow, said he; "I know and admire the Corsican nature too well to fear you. Here, take this, continued he, after rapidly writing the few lines I brought to your excellency, and upon receipt of which you deigned to receive me into your service, and proudly I ask whether your excellency has ever had cause to repent having done so?

No, replied the count; I take pleasure in saying that you have served me faithfully, Bertuccio; but you might have shown more confidence in me.

I, your excellency?

Yes; you. How comes it, that having both a sister and an adopted son, you have never spoken to me of either?

20323m

Alas, I have still to recount the most distressing period of my life.

Anxious as you may suppose I was to behold and comfort my dear sister, I lost no time in hastening to Corsica, but when I arrived at Rogliano I found a house of mourning, the consequences of a scene so horrible that the neighbors remember and speak of it to this day. Acting by my advice, my poor sister had refused to comply with the unreasonable demands of Benedetto, who was continually tormenting her for money, as long as he believed there was a sou left in her possession. One morning he threatened her with the severest consequences if she did not supply him with what he desired, and disappeared and remained away all day, leaving the kind-hearted Assunta, who loved him as if he were her own child, to weep over his conduct and bewail his absence. Evening came, and still, with all the patient solicitude of a mother, she watched for his return.

As the eleventh hour struck, he entered with a swaggering air, attended by two of the most dissolute and reckless of his boon companions. She stretched out her arms to him, but they seized hold of her, and one of the three—none other than the accursed Benedetto exclaimed:

~Put her to torture and she'll soon tell us where her money is.

It unfortunately happened that our neighbor, Wasilio, was at Bastia, leaving no person in his house but his wife; no human creature beside could hear or see anything that took place within our dwelling. Two held poor Assunta, who, unable to conceive that any harm was intended to her, smiled in the face of those who were soon to become her executioners. The third proceeded to barricade the doors and windows, then returned, and the three united in stifling the cries of terror incited by the sight of these preparations, and then dragged Assunta feet foremost towards the brazier, expecting to wring from her an avowal of where her supposed treasure was secreted. In the struggle her clothes caught fire, and they were obliged to let go their hold in order to preserve themselves from sharing the same fate. Covered with flames, Assunta rushed wildly to the door, but it was fastened; she flew to the windows, but they were also secured; then the neighbors heard frightful shrieks; it was Assunta calling for help. The cries died away in groans, and next morning, as soon as Wasilio's wife could muster up courage to venture abroad, she caused the door of our dwelling to be opened by the public authorities, when Assunta, although dreadfully burnt, was found still breathing; every drawer and closet in the house had been forced open, and the money stolen. Benedetto never again appeared at Rogliano, neither have I since that day either seen or heard anything concerning him.

It was subsequently to these dreadful events that I waited on your excellency, to whom it would have been folly to have mentioned Benedetto, since all trace of him seemed entirely lost; or of my sister, since she was dead.

And in what light did you view the occurrence? inquired Monte Cristo. As a punishment for the crime I had committed, answered Bertuccio. Oh, those Villeforts are an accursed race!

Truly they are, murmured the count in a lugubrious tone.

And now, resumed Bertuccio, your excellency may, perhaps, be able to comprehend that this place, which I revisit for the first time—this garden, the actual scene of my crime—must have given rise to reflections of no very agreeable nature, and produced that gloom and depression of spirits which excited the notice of your excellency, who was pleased to express a desire to know the cause. At this instant a shudder passes over me as I reflect that possibly I am now standing on the very grave in which lies M. de Villefort, by whose hand the ground was dug to receive the corpse of his child.

Everything is possible, said Monte Cristo, rising from the bench on which he had been sitting; even, he added in an inaudible voice, even that the procureur be not dead. The Abbé Busoni did right to send you to me, he went on in his ordinary tone, and you have done well in relating to me the whole of your history, as it will prevent my forming

any erroneous opinions concerning you in future. As for that Benedetto,