Baptistin, without answering, approached the count, and presented the letter. 'Important and urgent,' said he.

The count opened the letter, and read:

> M. de Monte Cristo is apprised that this night a man will enter his house in the Champs-Élysées with the intention of carrying off some papers supposed to be in the secretaire in the dressing-room. The count's well-known courage will render unnecessary the aid of the police, whose interference might seriously affect him who sends this advice. The count, by any opening from the bedroom, or by concealing himself in the dressing-room, would be able to defend his property himself. Many attendants or apparent precautions would prevent the villain from the attempt, and M. de Monte Cristo would lose the opportunity of discovering an enemy whom chance has revealed to him who now sends this warning to the count,—a warning he might not be able to send another time, if this first attempt should fail and another be made.

The count's first idea was that this was an artifice—a gross deception, to draw his attention from a minor danger in order to expose him to a greater. He was on the point of sending the letter to the commissary of police, notwithstanding the advice of his anonymous friend, or perhaps because of that advice, when suddenly the idea occurred to him that it might be some personal enemy, whom he alone should recognize and over whom, if such were the case, he alone would gain any advantage, as Fiesco[1] had done over the Moor who would have killed him. We know the count's vigourous and daring mind, denying anything to be impossible, with that energy which marks the great man.

From his past life, from his resolution to shrink from nothing, the count had acquired an inconceivable relish for the contests in which he had engaged, sometimes against nature, that is to say, against God, and sometimes against the world, that is, against the devil.

'They do not want my papers,' said Monte Cristo, 'they want to kill me; they are no robbers, but assassins. I will not allow the prefect of police to

[1]The Genoese conspirator.

interfere with my private affairs. I am rich enough, forsooth, to distribute his authority on this occasion.'

The count recalled Baptistin, who had left the room after delivering the letter.

'Return to Paris,' said he; 'assemble the servants who remain there. I want all my household at Auteuil.'

'But will no one remain in the house, my lord?' asked Baptistin.

'Yes, the porter.'

'My lord will remember that the lodge is at a distance from the house.'

'Well?'

'The house might be stripped without his hearing the least noise.'

'By whom?'

'By thieves.'

'You are a fool, M. Baptistin. Thieves might strip the house—it would annoy me less than to be disobeyed.' Baptistin bowed. 'You understand me?' said the count. 'Bring your comrades here, one and all; but let everything remain as usual, only close the shutters of the ground floor.'

'And those of the first floor?'

'You know they are never closed. Go!'

The count signified his intention of dining alone, and that no one but Ali should attend him. Having dined with his usual tranquillity and moderation, the count, making a signal to Ali to follow him, went out by the side-gate and on reaching the Bois de Boulogne turned, apparently without design towards Paris and at twilight; found himself opposite his house in the Champs-Élysées. All was dark; one solitary, feeble light was burning in the porter's lodge, about forty paces distant from the house, as Baptistin had said.

Monte Cristo leaned against a tree, and with that scrutinizing glance which was so rarely deceived, looked up and down the avenue, examined the passers-by, and carefully looked down the neighboring streets, to see that no one was concealed. Ten minutes passed thus, and he was convinced that no one was watching him. He hastened to the side-door with Ali, entered hurriedly, and by the servants' staircase, of which he had the key, gained his bedroom without opening or disarranging a single curtain, without even the porter having the slightest suspicion that the house, which he supposed empty, contained its chief occupant.

Arrived in his bedroom, the count motioned to Ali to stop; then he passed into the dressing-room, which he examined. Everything appeared as usual—the precious secretaire in its place, and the key in the secretaire. He double locked it, took the key, returned to the bedroom door, removed the double staple of the bolt, and went in. Meanwhile Ali had procured the arms the count required—namely, a short carbine and a pair of double-barrelled pistols, with which as sure an aim might be taken as with a single-barrelled one. Thus armed, the count held the lives of five men in his hands. It was about half-past nine.

The count and Ali ate in haste a crust of bread and drank a glass of Spanish wine; then Monte Cristo slipped aside one of the movable panels, which enabled him to see into the adjoining room. He had within his reach his pistols and carbine, and Ali, standing near him, held one of the small Arabian hatchets, whose form has not varied since the Crusades. Through one of the windows of the bedroom, on a line with that in the dressing-room, the count could see into the street.

Two hours passed thus. It was intensely dark; still Ali, thanks to his wild nature, and the count, thanks doubtless to his long confinement, could distinguish in the darkness the slightest movement of the trees. The little light in the lodge had long been extinct. It might be expected that the attack, if indeed an attack was projected, would be made from the staircase of the ground floor, and not from a window; in Monte Cristo's opinion, the villains sought his life, not his money. It would be his bedroom they would attack, and they must reach it by the back staircase, or by the window in the dressing-room.

The clock of the Invalides struck a quarter to twelve; the west wind bore on its moistened gusts the doleful vibration of the three strokes. As the last stroke died away, the count thought he heard a slight noise in the dressing-room; this first sound, or rather this first grinding, was followed by a second, then a third; at the fourth, the count knew what to expect. A firm and well-practised hand was engaged in cutting the four sides of a pane of glass with a diamond. The count felt his heart beat more rapidly.

Inured as men may be to danger, forewarned as they may be of peril, they understand, by the fluttering of the heart and the shuddering of the frame, the enormous difference between a dream and a reality, between the project and the execution. However, Monte Cristo only made a sign

Chapter LXXXII

The Burglary

The day following that on which the conversation we have related took place, the Count of Monte Cristo set out for Auteuil, accompanied by Ali and several attendants, and also taking with him some horses whose qualities he was desirous of ascertaining. He was induced to undertake this journey, of which the day before he had not even thought and which had not occurred to Andrea either, by the arrival of Bertuccio from Normandy with intelligence respecting the house and sloop. The house was ready, and the sloop which had arrived a week before lay at anchor in a small creek with her crew of six men, who had observed all the requisite formalities and were ready again to put to sea.

The count praised Bertuccio's zeal, and ordered him to prepare for a speedy departure, as his stay in France would not be prolonged more than a month.

'Now,' said he, 'I may require to go in one night from Paris to Tréport; let eight fresh horses be in readiness on the road, which will enable me to go fifty leagues in ten hours.'

'Your highness had already expressed that wish,' said Bertuccio, 'and the horses are ready. I have bought them, and stationed them myself at the most desirable posts, that is, in villages, where no one generally stops.'

'That's well,' said Monte Cristo; 'I remain here a day or two—arrange accordingly.'

As Bertuccio was leaving the room to give the requisite orders, Baptistin opened the door: he held a letter on a silver waiter.

'What are you doing here?' asked the count, seeing him covered with dust; 'I did not send for you, I think?'

he returned hastily, shut his door carefully, and began to study, like a clever architect, the plan Andrea had left him.

'Dear Benedetto,' said he, 'I think he will not be sorry to inherit his fortune, and he who hastens the day when he can touch his five hundred thousand will not be his worst friend.'

to apprise Ali, who, understanding that danger was approaching from the other side, drew nearer to his master. Monte Cristo was eager to ascertain the strength and number of his enemies.

The window whence the noise proceeded was opposite the opening by which the count could see into the dressing-room. He fixed his eyes on that window—he distinguished a shadow in the darkness; then one of the panes became quite opaque, as if a sheet of paper were stuck on the outside, then the square cracked without falling. Through the opening an arm was passed to find the fastening, then a second; the window turned on its hinges, and a man entered. He was alone.

'That's a daring rascal,' whispered the count.

At that moment Ali touched him slightly on the shoulder. He turned; Ali pointed to the window of the room in which they were, facing the street.

'I see!' said he, 'there are two of them; one does the work while the other stands guard.' He made a sign to Ali not to lose sight of the man in the street, and turned to the one in the dressing-room.

The glass-cutter had entered, and was feeling his way, his arms stretched out before him. At last he appeared to have made himself familiar with his surroundings. There were two doors; he bolted them both.

When he drew near to the bedroom door, Monte Cristo expected that he was coming in, and raised one of his pistols; but he simply heard the sound of the bolts sliding in their copper rings. It was only a precaution. The nocturnal visitor, ignorant of the fact that the count had removed the staples, might now think himself at home, and pursue his purpose with full security. Alone and free to act as he wished, the man then drew from his pocket something which the count could not discern, placed it on a stand, then went straight to the secretaire, felt the lock, and contrary to his expectation found that the key was missing. But the glass-cutter was a prudent man who had provided for all emergencies. The count soon heard the rattling of a bunch of skeleton keys, such as the locksmith brings when called to force a lock, and which thieves call nightingales, doubtless from the music of their nightly song when they grind against the bolt.

'Ah, ha,' whispered Monte Cristo with a smile of disappointment, 'he is only a thief.'

But the man in the dark could not find the right key. He reached the instrument he had placed on the stand, touched a spring, and immediately a pale light, just bright enough to render objects distinct, was reflected on his hands and countenance.

'By heavens,' exclaimed Monte Cristo, starting back, 'it is— '

Ali raised his hatchet.

'Don't stir,' whispered Monte Cristo, 'and put down your hatchet; we shall require no arms.' Then he added some words in a low tone, for the exclamation which surprise had drawn from the count, faint as it had been, had startled the man who remained in the pose of the old knife-grinder.

It was an order the count had just given, for immediately Ali went noiselessly, and returned, bearing a black dress and a three-cornered hat. Meanwhile Monte Cristo had rapidly taken off his greatcoat, waistcoat, and shirt, and one might distinguish by the glimmering through the open panel that he wore a pliant tunic of steel mail, of which the last in France, where daggers are no longer dreaded, was worn by King Louis XVI., who feared the dagger at his breast, and whose head was cleft with a hatchet. The tunic soon disappeared under a long cassock, as did his hair under a priest's wig; the three-cornered hat over this effectually transformed the count into an abbé.

The man, hearing nothing more, stood erect, and while Monte Cristo was completing his disguise had advanced straight to the secretaire, whose lock was beginning to crack under his nightingale.

'Try again,' whispered the count, who depended on the secret spring, which was unknown to the picklock, clever as he might be—'try again, you have a few minutes' work there.'

And he advanced to the window. The man whom he had seen seated on a fence had got down, and was still pacing the street; but, strange as it appeared, he cared not for those who might pass from the avenue of the Champs-Élysées or by the Faubourg Saint-Honoré; his attention was engrossed with what was passing at the count's, and his only aim appeared to be to discern every movement in the dressing-room.

Monte Cristo suddenly struck his finger on his forehead and a smile passed over his lips; then drawing near to Ali, he whispered:

'*Confiteor!*' said Caderousse, putting the diamond on his little finger; 'I was mistaken; but those thieves of jewellers imitate so well that it is no longer worthwhile to rob a jeweller's shop—it is another branch of industry paralysed.'

'Have you finished?' said Andrea,—'do you want anything more?—will you have my waistcoat or my hat? Make free, now you have begun.'

'No; you are, after all, a good companion; I will not detain you, and will try to cure myself of my ambition.'

'But take care the same thing does not happen to you in selling the diamond you feared with the gold.'

'I shall not sell it—do not fear.'

'Not at least till the day after tomorrow,' thought the young man.

'Happy rogue,' said Caderousse; 'you are going to find your servants, your horses, your carriage, and your betrothed!'

'Yes,' said Andrea.

'Well, I hope you will make a handsome wedding-present the day you marry Mademoiselle Danglars.'

'I have already told you it is a fancy you have taken in your head.'

'What fortune has she?'

'But I tell you— '

'A million?'

Andrea shrugged his shoulders.

'Let it be a million,' said Caderousse; 'you can never have so much as I wish you.'

'Thank you,' said the young man.

'Oh, I wish it you with all my heart!' added Caderousse with his hoarse laugh. 'Stop, let me show you the way.'

'It is not worthwhile.'

'Yes, it is.'

'Why?'

'Because there is a little secret, a precaution I thought it desirable to take, one of Huret & Fichet's locks, revised and improved by Gaspard Caderousse; I will manufacture you a similar one when you are a capitalist.'

'Thank you,' said Andrea; 'I will let you know a week beforehand.'

They parted. Caderousse remained on the landing until he had not only seen Andrea go down the three stories, but also cross the court. Then

'No, tomorrow; I shall not have time today.'

'Well, tomorrow I will leave them when I go to Auteuil.'

'May I depend on it?'

'Certainly.'

'Because I shall secure my housekeeper on the strength of it.'

'Now see here, will that be all? Eh? And will you not torment me any more?'

'Never.'

Caderousse had become so gloomy that Andrea feared he should be obliged to notice the change. He redoubled his gayety and carelessness.

'How sprightly you are,' said Caderousse; 'One would say you were already in possession of your property.'

'No, unfortunately; but when I do obtain it— '

'Well?'

'I shall remember old friends, I can tell you that.'

'Yes, since you have such a good memory.'

'What do you want? It looks as if you were trying to fleece me?'

'I? What an idea! I, who am going to give you another piece of good advice.'

'What is it?'

'To leave behind you the diamond you have on your finger. We shall both get into trouble. You will ruin both yourself and me by your folly.'

'How so?' said Andrea.

'How? You put on a livery, you disguise yourself as a servant, and yet keep a diamond on your finger worth four or five thousand francs.'

'You guess well.'

'I know something of diamonds; I have had some.'

'You do well to boast of it,' said Andrea, who, without becoming angry, as Caderousse feared, at this new extortion, quietly resigned the ring. Caderousse looked so closely at it that Andrea well knew that he was examining to see if all the edges were perfect.

'It is a false diamond,' said Caderousse.

'You are joking now,' replied Andrea.

'Do not be angry, we can try it.' Caderousse went to the window, touched the glass with it, and found it would cut.

'Remain here, concealed in the dark, and whatever noise you hear, whatever passes, only come in or show yourself if I call you.'

Ali bowed in token of strict obedience. Monte Cristo then drew a lighted taper from a closet, and when the thief was deeply engaged with his lock, silently opened the door, taking care that the light should shine directly on his face. The door opened so quietly that the thief heard no sound; but, to his astonishment, the room was suddenly illuminated. He turned.

'Ah, good-evening, my dear M. Caderousse,' said Monte Cristo; 'what are you doing here, at such an hour?'

'The Abbé Busoni!' exclaimed Caderousse; and, not knowing how this strange apparition could have entered when he had bolted the doors, he let fall his bunch of keys, and remained motionless and stupefied. The count placed himself between Caderousse and the window, thus cutting off from the thief his only chance of retreat.

'The Abbé Busoni!' repeated Caderousse, fixing his haggard gaze on the count.

'Yes, undoubtedly, the Abbé Busoni himself,' replied Monte Cristo. 'And I am very glad you recognize me, dear M. Caderousse; it proves you have a good memory, for it must be about ten years since we last met.'

This calmness of Busoni, combined with his irony and boldness, staggered Caderousse.

'The abbé, the abbé!' murmured he, clenching his fists, and his teeth chattering.

'So you would rob the Count of Monte Cristo?' continued the false abbé.

'Reverend sir,' murmured Caderousse, seeking to regain the window, which the count pitilessly blocked—'reverend sir, I don't know—believe me—I take my oath— '

'A pane of glass out,' continued the count, 'a dark lantern, a bunch of false keys, a secretaire half forced—it is tolerably evident— '

Caderousse was choking; he looked around for some corner to hide in, some way of escape.

'Come, come,' continued the count, 'I see you are still the same,—an assassin.'

'Reverend sir, since you know everything, you know it was not I—it was La Carconte; that was proved at the trial, since I was only condemned to the galleys.'

'Is your time, then, expired, since I find you in a fair way to return there?'

'No, reverend sir; I have been liberated by someone.'

'That someone has done society a great kindness.'

'Ah,' said Caderousse, 'I had promised— '

'And you are breaking your promise!' interrupted Monte Cristo.

'Alas, yes!' said Caderousse very uneasily.

'A bad relapse, that will lead you, if I mistake not, to the Place de Grève. So much the worse, so much the worse—*diavolo!* as they say in my country.'

'Reverend sir, I am impelled— '

'Every criminal says the same thing.'

'Poverty— '

'Pshaw!' said Busoni disdainfully; 'poverty may make a man beg, steal a loaf of bread at a baker's door, but not cause him to open a secretaire in a house supposed to be inhabited. And when the jeweller Johannes had just paid you 45,000 francs for the diamond I had given you, and you killed him to get the diamond and the money both, was that also poverty?'

'Pardon, reverend sir,' said Caderousse; 'you have saved my life once, save me again!'

'That is but poor encouragement.'

'Are you alone, reverend sir, or have you there soldiers ready to seize me?'

'I am alone,' said the abbé, 'and I will again have pity on you, and will let you escape, at the risk of the fresh miseries my weakness may lead to, if you tell me the truth.'

'Ah, reverend sir,' cried Caderousse, clasping his hands, and drawing nearer to Monte Cristo, 'I may indeed say you are my deliverer!'

'You mean to say you have been freed from confinement?'

'Yes, that is true, reverend sir.'

'Who was your liberator?'

'An Englishman.'

'Is there a window in the dressing-room?'

'Two,—one here and one there.' Andrea sketched two windows in the room, which formed an angle on the plan, and appeared as a small square added to the rectangle of the bedroom. Caderousse became thoughtful.

'Does he often go to Auteuil?' added he.

'Two or three times a week. Tomorrow, for instance, he is going to spend the day and night there.'

'Are you sure of it?'

'He has invited me to dine there.'

'There's a life for you,' said Caderousse; 'a town house and a country house.'

'That is what it is to be rich.'

'And shall you dine there?'

'Probably.'

'When you dine there, do you sleep there?'

'If I like; I am at home there.'

Caderousse looked at the young man, as if to get at the truth from the bottom of his heart. But Andrea drew a cigar-case from his pocket, took a Havana, quietly lit it, and began smoking.

'When do you want your twelve hundred francs?' said he to Caderousse.

'Now, if you have them.' Andrea took five-and-twenty louis from his pocket.

'Yellow boys?' said Caderousse; 'no, I thank you.'

'Oh, you despise them.'

'On the contrary, I esteem them, but will not have them.'

'You can change them, idiot; gold is worth five sous.'

'Exactly; and he who changes them will follow friend Caderousse, lay hands on him, and demand what farmers pay him their rent in gold. No nonsense, my good fellow; silver simply, round coins with the head of some monarch or other on them. Anybody may possess a five-franc piece.'

'But do you suppose I carry five hundred francs about with me? I should want a porter.'

'Well, leave them with your porter; he is to be trusted. I will call for them.'

'Today?'

'And where do the servants sleep?'

'Oh, they have a house to themselves. Picture to yourself a pretty coach-house at the right-hand side where the ladders are kept. Well, over that coach-house are the servants' rooms, with bells corresponding with the different apartments.'

'Ah, *diable!* bells did you say?'

'What do you mean?'

'Oh, nothing! I only say they cost a load of money to hang, and what is the use of them, I should like to know?'

'There used to be a dog let loose in the yard at night, but it has been taken to the house at Auteuil, to that you went to, you know.'

'Yes.'

'I was saying to him only yesterday, "You are imprudent, Monsieur Count; for when you go to Auteuil and take your servants the house is left unprotected."

"Well," said he, "what next?"

"Well, next, some day you will be robbed."'

'What did he answer?'

'He quietly said, "What do I care if I am?"'

'Andrea, he has some secretaire with a spring.'

'How do you know?'

'Yes, which catches the thief in a trap and plays a tune. I was told there were such at the last exhibition.'

'He has simply a mahogany secretaire, in which the key is always kept.'

'And he is not robbed?'

'No; his servants are all devoted to him.'

'There ought to be some money in that secretaire?'

'There may be. No one knows what there is.'

'And where is it?'

'On the first floor.'

'Sketch me the plan of that floor, as you have done of the ground floor, my boy.'

'That is very simple.' Andrea took the pen. 'On the first story, do you see, there is the anteroom and the drawing-room; to the right of the drawing-room, a library and a study; to the left, a bedroom and a dressing-room. The famous secretaire is in the dressing-room.'

'What was his name?'

'Lord Wilmore.'

'I know him; I shall know if you lie.'

'Ah, reverend sir, I tell you the simple truth.'

'Was this Englishman protecting you?'

'No, not me, but a young Corsican, my companion.'

'What was this young Corsican's name?'

'Benedetto.'

'Is that his Christian name?'

'He had no other; he was a foundling.'

'Then this young man escaped with you?'

'He did.'

'In what way?'

'We were working at Saint-Mandrier, near Toulon. Do you know Saint-Mandrier?'

'I do.'

'In the hour of rest, between noon and one o'clock— '

'Galley-slaves having a nap after dinner! We may well pity the poor fellows!' said the abbé.

'Nay,' said Caderousse, 'one can't always work—one is not a dog.'

'So much the better for the dogs,' said Monte Cristo.

'While the rest slept, then, we went away a short distance; we severed our fetters with a file the Englishman had given us, and swam away.'

'And what is become of this Benedetto?'

'I don't know.'

'You ought to know.'

'No, in truth; we parted at Hyères.' And, to give more weight to his protestation, Caderousse advanced another step towards the abbé, who remained motionless in his place, as calm as ever, and pursuing his interrogation.

'You lie,' said the Abbé Busoni, with a tone of irresistible authority.

'Reverend sir!'

'You lie! This man is still your friend, and you, perhaps, make use of him as your accomplice.'

'Oh, reverend sir!'

'Since you left Toulon what have you lived on? Answer me!'

'On what I could get.'

'You lie,' repeated the abbé a third time, with a still more imperative tone. Caderousse, terrified, looked at the count. 'You have lived on the money he has given you.'

'True,' said Caderousse; 'Benedetto has become the son of a great lord.'

'How can he be the son of a great lord?'

'A natural son.'

'And what is that great lord's name?'

'The Count of Monte Cristo, the very same in whose house we are.'

'Benedetto the count's son?' replied Monte Cristo, astonished in his turn.

'Well, I should think so, since the count has found him a false father—since the count gives him four thousand francs a month, and leaves him 500,000 francs in his will.'

'Ah, yes,' said the factitious abbé, who began to understand; 'and what name does the young man bear meanwhile?'

'Andrea Cavalcanti.'

'Is it, then, that young man whom my friend the Count of Monte Cristo has received into his house, and who is going to marry Mademoiselle Danglars?'

'Exactly.'

'And you suffer that, you wretch!—you, who know his life and his crime?'

'Why should I stand in a comrade's way?' said Caderousse.

'You are right; it is not you who should apprise M. Danglars, it is I.'

'Do not do so, reverend sir.'

'Why not?'

'Because you would bring us to ruin.'

'And you think that to save such villains as you I will become an abettor of their plot, an accomplice in their crimes?'

'Reverend sir,' said Caderousse, drawing still nearer.

'I will expose all.'

'To whom?'

'To M. Danglars.'

'I will offer myself as floor-polisher.'

'The rooms are all carpeted.'

'Well, then, I must be contented to imagine it.'

'That is the best plan, believe me.'

'Try, at least, to give me an idea of what it is.'

'How can I?'

'Nothing is easier. Is it large?'

'Middling.'

'How is it arranged?'

'Faith, I should require pen, ink, and paper to make a plan.'

'They are all here,' said Caderousse, briskly. He fetched from an old secretaire a sheet of white paper and pen and ink. 'Here,' said Caderousse, 'draw me all that on the paper, my boy.'

Andrea took the pen with an imperceptible smile and began.

'The house, as I said, is between the court and the garden; in this way, do you see?' Andrea drew the garden, the court and the house. 'High walls?'

'Not more than eight or ten feet.'

'That is not prudent,' said Caderousse.

'In the court are orange-trees in pots, turf, and clumps of flowers.'

'And no steel-traps?'

'No.'

'The stables?'

'Are on either side of the gate, which you see there.' And Andrea continued his plan.

'Let us see the ground floor,' said Caderousse.

'On the ground floor, dining-room, two drawing-rooms, billiard-room, staircase in the hall, and a little back staircase.'

'Windows?'

'Magnificent windows, so beautiful, so large, that I believe a man of your size should pass through each frame.'

'Why the devil have they any stairs with such windows?'

'Luxury has everything.'

'But shutters?'

'Yes, but they are never used. That Count of Monte Cristo is an original, who loves to look at the sky even at night.'