thirty feet in length. Dantès closely and eagerly examined it; he found it firm, solid, and compact enough to bear any weight.

'Who supplied you with the materials for making this wonderful work?'

'I tore up several of my shirts, and ripped out the seams in the sheets of my bed, during my three years' imprisonment at Fenestrelle; and when I was removed to the Château d'If, I managed to bring the ravellings with me, so that I have been able to finish my work here.'

'And was it not discovered that your sheets were unhemmed?'

'Oh, no, for when I had taken out the thread I required, I hemmed the edges over again.'

'With what?'

'With this needle,' said the abbé, as, opening his ragged vestments, he showed Dantès a long, sharp fish-bone, with a small perforated eye for the thread, a small portion of which still remained in it.

'I once thought,' continued Faria, 'of removing these iron bars, and letting myself down from the window, which, as you see, is somewhat wider than yours, although I should have enlarged it still more preparatory to my flight; however, I discovered that I should merely have dropped into a sort of inner court, and I therefore renounced the project altogether as too full of risk and danger. Nevertheless, I carefully preserved my ladder against one of those unforeseen opportunities of which I spoke just now, and which sudden chance frequently brings about.'

While affecting to be deeply engaged in examining the ladder, the mind of Dantès was, in fact, busily occupied by the idea that a person so intelligent, ingenious, and clear-sighted as the abbé might probably be able to solve the dark mystery of his own misfortunes, where he himself could see nothing.

'What are you thinking of?' asked the abbé smilingly, imputing the deep abstraction in which his visitor was plunged to the excess of his awe and wonder.

'I was reflecting, in the first place,' replied Dantès, 'upon the enormous degree of intelligence and ability you must have employed to reach the high perfection to which you have attained. What would you not have accomplished if you had been free?'

'Possibly nothing at all; the overflow of my brain would probably, in a state of freedom, have evaporated in a thousand follies; misfortune is

needed to bring to light the treasures of the human intellect. Compression is needed to explode gunpowder. Captivity has brought my mental faculties to a focus; and you are well aware that from the collision of clouds electricity is produced—from electricity, lightning, from lightning, illumination.'

'No,' replied Dantès. 'I know nothing. Some of your words are to me quite empty of meaning. You must be blessed indeed to possess the knowledge you have.'

The abbé smiled. 'Well,' said he, 'but you had another subject for your thoughts; did you not say so just now?'

'I did!'

'You have told me as yet but one of them—let me hear the other.'

'It was this,—that while you had related to me all the particulars of your past life, you were perfectly unacquainted with mine.'

'Your life, my young friend, has not been of sufficient length to admit of your having passed through any very important events.'

'It has been long enough to inflict on me a great and undeserved misfortune. I would fain fix the source of it on man that I may no longer vent reproaches upon Heaven.'

'Then you profess ignorance of the crime with which you are charged?'

'I do, indeed; and this I swear by the two beings most dear to me upon earth,—my father and Mercédès.'

'Come,' said the abbé, closing his hiding-place, and pushing the bed back to its original situation, 'let me hear your story.'

Dantès obeyed, and commenced what he called his history, but which consisted only of the account of a voyage to India, and two or three voyages to the Levant, until he arrived at the recital of his last cruise, with the death of Captain Leclere, and the receipt of a packet to be delivered by himself to the grand marshal; his interview with that personage, and his receiving, in place of the packet brought, a letter addressed to a Monsieur Noirtier—his arrival at Marseilles, and interview with his father—his affection for Mercédès, and their nuptual feast—his arrest and subsequent examination, his temporary detention at the Palais de Justice, and his final imprisonment in the Château d'If. From this point everything was a blank to Dantès—he knew nothing more, not even the length of time

he had been imprisoned. His recital finished, the abbé reflected long and earnestly.

'There is,' said he, at the end of his meditations, 'a clever maxim, which bears upon what I was saying to you some little while ago, and that is, that unless wicked ideas take root in a naturally depraved mind, human nature, in a right and wholesome state, revolts at crime. Still, from an artificial civilization have originated wants, vices, and false tastes, which occasionally become so powerful as to stifle within us all good feelings, and ultimately to lead us into guilt and wickedness. From this view of things, then, comes the axiom that if you visit to discover the author of any bad action, seek first to discover the person to whom the perpetration of that bad action could be in any way advantageous. Now, to apply it in your case,—to whom could your disappearance have been serviceable?'

'To no one, by Heaven! I was a very insignificant person.'

'Do not speak thus, for your reply evinces neither logic nor philosophy; everything is relative, my dear young friend, from the king who stands in the way of his successor, to the employee who keeps his rival out of a place. Now, in the event of the king's death, his successor inherits a crown,—when the employee dies, the supernumerary steps into his shoes, and receives his salary of twelve thousand livres. Well, these twelve thousand livres are his civil list, and are as essential to him as the twelve millions of a king. Everyone, from the highest to the lowest degree, has his place on the social ladder, and is beset by stormy passions and conflicting interests, as in Descartes' theory of pressure and impulsion. But these forces increase as we go higher, so that we have a spiral which in defiance of reason rests upon the apex and not on the base. Now let us return to your particular world. You say you were on the point of being made captain of the *Pharaon*?'

'Yes.'

'And about to become the husband of a young and lovely girl?'

'Yes.'

'Now, could anyone have had any interest in preventing the accomplishment of these two things? But let us first settle the question as to its being the interest of anyone to hinder you from being captain of the *Pharaon*. What say you?'

'I cannot believe such was the case. I was generally liked on board, and had the sailors possessed the right of selecting a captain themselves, I feel

sharp and keen as a razor; as for the other knife, it would serve a double purpose, and with it one could cut and thrust.

Dantès examined the various articles shown to him with the same attention that he had bestowed on the curiosities and strange tools exhibited in the shops at Marseilles as the works of the savages in the South Seas from whence they had been brought by the different trading vessels.

'As for the ink,' said Faria, 'I told you how I managed to obtain that—and I only just make it from time to time, as I require it.'

'One thing still puzzles me,' observed Dantès, 'and that is how you managed to do all this by daylight?'

'I worked at night also,' replied Faria.

'Night!—why, for Heaven's sake, are your eyes like cats', that you can see to work in the dark?'

'Indeed they are not; but God has supplied man with the intelligence that enables him to overcome the limitations of natural conditions. I furnished myself with a light.'

'You did? Pray tell me how.'

'I separated the fat from the meat served to me, melted it, and so made oil—here is my lamp.' So saying, the abbé exhibited a sort of torch very similar to those used in public illuminations.

'But how do you procure a light?'

'Oh, here are two flints and a piece of burnt linen.'

'And matches?'

'I pretended that I had a disorder of the skin, and asked for a little sulphur, which was readily supplied.'

Dantès laid the different things he had been looking at on the table, and stood with his head drooping on his breast, as though overwhelmed by the perseverance and strength of Faria's mind. 'You have not seen all yet,' continued Faria, 'for I did not think it wise to trust all my treasures in the same hiding-place. Let us shut this one up.' They put the stone back in its place; the abbé sprinkled a little dust over it to conceal the traces of its having been removed, rubbed his foot well on it to make it assume the same appearance as the other, and then, going towards his bed, he removed it from the spot it stood in. Behind the head of the bed, and concealed by a stone fitting in so closely as to defy all suspicion, was a hollow space, and in this space a ladder of cords between twenty-five and

of the globe he inhabited, and of which he could feel nothing, appeared to him perfectly impossible. Each word that fell from his companion's lips seemed fraught with the mysteries of science, as worthy of digging out as the gold and diamonds in the mines of Guzerat and Golconda, which he could just recollect having visited during a voyage made in his earliest youth.

'Come,' said he to the abbé, 'I am anxious to see your treasures.'

The abbé smiled, and, proceeding to the disused fireplace, raised, by the help of his chisel, a long stone, which had doubtless been the hearth, beneath which was a cavity of considerable depth, serving as a safe depository of the articles mentioned to Dantès. 'What do you wish to see first?' asked the abbé.

'Oh, your great work on the monarchy of Italy!'

Faria then drew forth from his hiding-place three or four rolls of linen, laid one over the other, like folds of papyrus. These rolls consisted of slips of cloth about four inches wide and eighteen long; they were all carefully numbered and closely covered with writing, so legible that Dantès could easily read it, as well as make out the sense—it being in Italian, a language he, as a Provençal, perfectly understood.

'There,' said he, 'there is the work complete. I wrote the word *finis* at the end of the sixty-eighth strip about a week ago. I have torn up two of my shirts, and as many handkerchiefs as I was master of, to complete the precious pages. Should I ever get out of prison and find in all Italy a printer courageous enough to publish what I have composed, my literary reputation is forever secured.'

'I see,' answered Dantès. 'Now let me behold the curious pens with which you have written your work.'

'Look!' said Faria, showing to the young man a slender stick about six inches long, and much resembling the size of the handle of a fine painting-brush, to the end of which was tied, by a piece of thread, one of those cartilages of which the abbé had before spoken to Dantès; it was pointed, and divided at the nib like an ordinary pen. Dantès examined it with intense admiration, then looked around to see the instrument with which it had been shaped so correctly into form.

'Ah, yes,' said Faria; 'the penknife. That's my masterpiece. I made it, as well as this larger knife, out of an old iron candlestick.' The penknife was

convinced their choice would have fallen on me. There was only one person among the crew who had any feeling of ill-will towards me. I had quarelled with him some time previously, and had even challenged him to fight me; but he refused.'

'Now we are getting on. And what was this man's name?'

'Danglars.'

'What rank did he hold on board?'

'He was supercargo.'

'And had you been captain, should you have retained him in his employment?'

'Not if the choice had remained with me, for I had frequently observed inaccuracies in his accounts.'

'Good again! Now then, tell me, was any person present during your last conversation with Captain Leclere?'

'No; we were quite alone.'

'Could your conversation have been overheard by anyone?'

'It might, for the cabin door was open—and—stay; now I recollect,—Danglars himself passed by just as Captain Leclere was giving me the packet for the grand marshal.'

'That's better,' cried the abbé; 'now we are on the right scent. Did you take anybody with you when you put into the port of Elba?'

'Nobody.'

'Somebody there received your packet, and gave you a letter in place of it, I think?'

'Yes; the grand marshal did.'

'And what did you do with that letter?'

'Put it into my portfolio.'

'You had your portfolio with you, then? Now, how could a sailor find room in his pocket for a portfolio large enough to contain an official letter?'

'You are right; it was left on board.'

'Then it was not till your return to the ship that you put the letter in the portfolio?'

'No.'

'And what did you do with this same letter while returning from Porto-Ferrajo to the vessel?'

'I carried it in my hand.'

'So that when you went on board the *Pharaon*, everybody could see that you held a letter in your hand?'

'Yes.'

'Danglars, as well as the rest?'

'Danglars, as well as others.'

'Now, listen to me, and try to recall every circumstance attending your arrest. Do you recollect the words in which the information against you was formulated?'

'Oh yes, I read it over three times, and the words sank deeply into my memory.'

'Repeat it to me.'

Dantès paused a moment, then said, 'This is it, word for word: "The king's attorney is informed by a friend to the throne and religion, that one Edmond Dantès, mate on board the *Pharaon*, this day arrived from Smyrna, after having touched at Naples and Porto-Ferrajo, has been intrusted by Murat with a packet for the usurper; again, by the usurper, with a letter for the Bonapartist Club in Paris. This proof of his guilt may be procured by his immediate arrest, as the letter will be found either about his person, at his father's residence, or in his cabin on board the *Pharaon*."'

The abbé shrugged his shoulders. 'The thing is clear as day,' said he; 'and you must have had a very confiding nature, as well as a good heart, not to have suspected the origin of the whole affair.'

'Do you really think so? Ah, that would indeed be infamous.'

'How did Danglars usually write?'

'In a handsome, running hand.'

'And how was the anonymous letter written?'

'Backhanded.'

Again the abbé smiled. 'Disguised.'

'It was very boldly written, if disguised.'

'Stop a bit,' said the abbé, taking up what he called his pen, and, after dipping it into the ink, he wrote on a piece of prepared linen, with his left hand, the first two or three words of the accusation. Dantès drew back, and gazed on the abbé with a sensation almost amounting to terror.

Chapter XVII

The Abbé's Chamber

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

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

'It is well,' said the abbé; 'we have some hours before us—it is now just a quarter past twelve o'clock.' Instinctively Dantès turned round to observe by what watch or clock the abbé had been able so accurately to specify the hour.

'Look at this ray of light which enters by my window,' said the abbé, 'and then observe the lines traced on the wall. Well, by means of these lines, which are in accordance with the double motion of the earth, and the ellipse it describes round the sun, I am enabled to ascertain the precise hour with more minuteness than if I possessed a watch; for that might be broken or deranged in its movements, while the sun and earth never vary in their appointed paths.'

This last explanation was wholly lost upon Dantès, who had always imagined, from seeing the sun rise from behind the mountains and set in the Mediterranean, that it moved, and not the earth. A double movement

'How very astonishing!' cried he at length. 'Why your writing exactly resembles that of the accusation.'

'Simply because that accusation had been written with the left hand; and I have noticed that— '

'What?'

'That while the writing of different persons done with the right hand varies, that performed with the left hand is invariably uniform.'

'You have evidently seen and observed everything.'

'Let us proceed.'

'Oh, yes, yes!'

'Now as regards the second question.'

'I am listening.'

'Was there any person whose interest it was to prevent your marriage with Mercédès?'

'Yes; a young man who loved her.'

'And his name was— '

'Fernand.'

'That is a Spanish name, I think?'

'He was a Catalan.'

'You imagine him capable of writing the letter?'

'Oh, no; he would more likely have got rid of me by sticking a knife into me.'

'That is in strict accordance with the Spanish character; an assassination they will unhesitatingly commit, but an act of cowardice, never.'

'Besides,' said Dantès, 'the various circumstances mentioned in the letter were wholly unknown to him.'

'You had never spoken of them yourself to anyone?'

'To no one.'

'Not even to your mistress?'

'No, not even to my betrothed.'

'Then it is Danglars.'

'I feel quite sure of it now.'

'Wait a little. Pray, was Danglars acquainted with Fernand?'

'No—yes, he was. Now I recollect— '

'What?'

'To have seen them both sitting at table together under an arbour at Père Pamphile's the evening before the day fixed for my wedding. They were in earnest conversation. Danglars was joking in a friendly way, but Fernand looked pale and agitated.'

'Were they alone?'

'There was a third person with them whom I knew perfectly well, and who had, in all probability made their acquaintance; he was a tailor named Caderousse, but he was very drunk. Stay!—stay!—How strange that it should not have occurred to me before! Now I remember quite well, that on the table round which they were sitting were pens, ink, and paper. Oh, the heartless, treacherous scoundrels!' exclaimed Dantès, pressing his hand to his throbbing brows.

'Is there anything else I can assist you in discovering, besides the villany of your friends?' inquired the abbé with a laugh.

'Yes, yes,' replied Dantès eagerly; 'I would beg of you, who see so completely to the depths of things, and to whom the greatest mystery seems but an easy riddle, to explain to me how it was that I underwent no second examination, was never brought to trial, and, above all, was condemned without ever having had sentence passed on me?'

'That is altogether a different and more serious matter,' responded the abbé. 'The ways of justice are frequently too dark and mysterious to be easily penetrated. All we have hitherto done in the matter has been child's play. If you wish me to enter upon the more difficult part of the business, you must assist me by the most minute information on every point.'

'Pray ask me whatever questions you please; for, in good truth, you see more clearly into my life than I do myself.'

'In the first place, then, who examined you,—the king's attorney, his deputy, or a magistrate?'

'The deputy.'

'Was he young or old?'

'About six or seven-and-twenty years of age, I should say.'

'So,' answered the abbé. 'Old enough to be ambitious, but too young to be corrupt. And how did he treat you?'

'With more of mildness than severity.'

'Did you tell him your whole story?'

'I did.'

he added, 'Then if you were not furnished with pens, how did you manage to write the work you speak of?'

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

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

'There was formerly a fireplace in my dungeon,' replied Faria, 'but it was closed up long ere I became an occupant of this prison. Still, it must have been many years in use, for it was thickly covered with a coating of soot; this soot I dissolved in a portion of the wine brought to me every Sunday, and I assure you a better ink cannot be desired. For very important notes, for which closer attention is required, I pricked one of my fingers, and wrote with my own blood.'

'And when,' asked Dantès, 'may I see all this?'

'Whenever you please,' replied the abbé.

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

'Follow me, then,' said the abbé, as he re-entered the subterranean passage, in which he soon disappeared, followed by Dantès.

'And on what have you written all this?'

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

'You are, then, a chemist?'

'Somewhat; I know Lavoisier, and was the intimate friend of Cabanis.'

'But for such a work you must have needed books—had you any?'

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

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

'Yes, I speak five of the modern tongues—that is to say, German, French, Italian, English, and Spanish; by the aid of ancient Greek I learned modern Greek—I don't speak it so well as I could wish, but I am still trying to improve myself.'

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

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

Stronger grew the wonder of Dantès, who almost fancied he had to do with one gifted with supernatural powers; still hoping to find some imperfection which might bring him down to a level with human beings,

'And did his conduct change at all in the course of your examination?'

'He did appear much disturbed when he read the letter that had brought me into this scrape. He seemed quite overcome by my misfortune.'

'By your misfortune?'

'Yes.'

'Then you feel quite sure that it was your misfortune he deplored?'

'He gave me one great proof of his sympathy, at any rate.'

'And that?'

'He burnt the sole evidence that could at all have criminated me.'

'What? the accusation?'

'No; the letter.'

'Are you sure?'

'I saw it done.'

'That alters the case. This man might, after all, be a greater scoundrel than you have thought possible.'

'Upon my word,' said Dantès, 'you make me shudder. Is the world filled with tigers and crocodiles?'

'Yes; and remember that two-legged tigers and crocodiles are more dangerous than the others.'

'Never mind; let us go on.'

'With all my heart! You tell me he burned the letter?'

'He did; saying at the same time, "You see I thus destroy the only proof existing against you."'

'This action is somewhat too sublime to be natural.'

'You think so?'

'I am sure of it. To whom was this letter addressed?'

'To M. Noirtier, Rue Coq-Héron, № 13, Paris.'

'Now can you conceive of any interest that your heroic deputy could possibly have had in the destruction of that letter?'

'Why, it is not altogether impossible he might have had, for he made me promise several times never to speak of that letter to anyone, assuring me he so advised me for my own interest; and, more than this, he insisted on my taking a solemn oath never to utter the name mentioned in the address.'

'Noirtier!' repeated the abbé; 'Noirtier!—I knew a person of that name at the court of the Queen of Etruria,—a Noirtier, who had been a Girondin during the Revolution! What was your deputy called?'

'De Villefort!' The abbé burst into a fit of laughter, while Dantès gazed on him in utter astonishment.

'What ails you?' said he at length.

'Do you see that ray of sunlight?'

'I do.'

'Well, the whole thing is more clear to me than that sunbeam is to you. Poor fellow! poor young man! And you tell me this magistrate expressed great sympathy and commiseration for you?'

'He did.'

'And the worthy man destroyed your compromising letter?'

'Yes.'

'And then made you swear never to utter the name of Noirtier?'

'Yes.'

'Why, you poor short-sighted simpleton, can you not guess who this Noirtier was, whose very name he was so careful to keep concealed? This Noirtier was his father!'

Had a thunderbolt fallen at the feet of Dantès, or hell opened its yawning gulf before him, he could not have been more completely transfixed with horror than he was at the sound of these unexpected words. Starting up, he clasped his hands around his head as though to prevent his very brain from bursting, and exclaimed, 'His father! his father!'

'Yes, his father,' replied the abbé; 'his right name was Noirtier de Villefort.'

At this instant a bright light shot through the mind of Dantès, and cleared up all that had been dark and obscure before. The change that had come over Villefort during the examination, the destruction of the letter, the exacted promise, the almost supplicating tones of the magistrate, who seemed rather to implore mercy than to pronounce punishment,—all returned with a stunning force to his memory. He cried out, and staggered against the wall like a drunken man, then he hurried to the opening that led from the abbé's cell to his own, and said, 'I must be alone, to think over all this.'

laws of social life inspire him with a shrinking dread of taking life; his natural construction and physiological formation— '

Dantès was confused and silent at this explanation of the thoughts which had unconsciously been working in his mind, or rather soul; for there are two distinct sorts of ideas, those that proceed from the head and those that emanate from the heart. 'Since my imprisonment,' said Faria, 'I have thought over all the most celebrated cases of escape on record. They have rarely been successful. Those that have been crowned with full success have been long meditated upon, and carefully arranged; such, for instance, as the escape of the Duc de Beaufort from the Château de Vincennes, that of the Abbé Dubuquoi from For l'Evêque; of Latude from the Bastille. Then there are those for which chance sometimes affords opportunity, and those are the best of all. Let us, therefore, wait patiently for some favourable moment, and when it presents itself, profit by it.'

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

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

'What did you do then?'

'I wrote or studied.'

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

'Oh, no,' answered the abbé; 'I had none but what I made for myself.'

'You made paper, pens and ink?'

'Yes.'

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

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