'Yes, sir, five or six months ago, last February.'

'You have a good memory, sir, to recollect dates so well.'

'I recollect this, because the poor devil's death was accompanied by a singular incident.'

'May I ask what that was?' said the Englishman with an expression of curiosity, which a close observer would have been astonished at discovering in his phlegmatic countenance.

'Oh dear, yes, sir; the abbé's dungeon was forty or fifty feet distant from that of one of Bonaparte's emissaries,—one of those who had contributed the most to the return of the usurper in 1815, a very resolute and very dangerous man.'

'Indeed!' said the Englishman.

'Yes,' replied M. de Boville; 'I myself had occasion to see this man in 1816 or 1817, and we could only go into his dungeon with a file of soldiers. That man made a deep impression on me; I shall never forget his countenance!' The Englishman smiled imperceptibly.

'And you say, sir,' he interposed, 'that the two dungeons— '

'Were separated by a distance of fifty feet; but it appears that this Edmond Dantès— '

'This dangerous man's name was— '

'Edmond Dantès. It appears, sir, that this Edmond Dantès had procured tools, or made them, for they found a tunnel through which the prisoners held communication with one another.'

'This tunnel was dug, no doubt, with an intention of escape?'

'No doubt; but unfortunately for the prisoners, the Abbé Faria had an attack of catalepsy, and died.'

'That must have cut short the projects of escape.'

'For the dead man, yes,' replied M. de Boville, 'but not for the survivor; on the contrary, this Dantès saw a means of accelerating his escape. He, no doubt, thought that prisoners who died in the Château d'If were interred in an ordinary burial-ground, and he conveyed the dead man into his own cell, took his place in the sack in which they had sewed up the corpse, and awaited the moment of interment.'

'It was a bold step, and one that showed some courage,' remarked the Englishman.

'As I have already told you, sir, he was a very dangerous man; and, fortunately, by his own act disembarrassed the government of the fears it had on his account.'

'How was that?'

'How? Do you not comprehend?'

'No.'

'The Château d'If has no cemetery, and they simply throw the dead into the sea, after fastening a thirty-six-pound cannon-ball to their feet.'

'Well?' observed the Englishman as if he were slow of comprehension.

'Well, they fastened a thirty-six-pound ball to his feet, and threw him into the sea.'

'Really!' exclaimed the Englishman.

'Yes, sir,' continued the inspector of prisons. 'You may imagine the amazement of the fugitive when he found himself flung headlong over the rocks! I should like to have seen his face at that moment.'

'That would have been difficult.'

'No matter,' replied De Boville, in supreme good-humor at the certainty of recovering his two hundred thousand francs,—'no matter, I can fancy it.' And he shouted with laughter.

'So can I,' said the Englishman, and he laughed too; but he laughed as the English do, 'at the end of his teeth.'

'And so,' continued the Englishman who first gained his composure, 'he was drowned?'

'Unquestionably.'

'So that the governor got rid of the dangerous and the crazy prisoner at the same time?'

'Precisely.' 'But some official document was drawn up as to this affair, I suppose?' inquired the Englishman.

'Yes, yes, the mortuary deposition. You understand, Dantès' relations, if he had any, might have some interest in knowing if he were dead or alive.'

'So that now, if there were anything to inherit from him, they may do so with easy conscience. He is dead, and no mistake about it.'

'Oh, yes; and they may have the fact attested whenever they please.'

'So be it,' said the Englishman. 'But to return to these registers.'

'True, this story has diverted our attention from them. Excuse me.'

'Excuse you for what? For the story? By no means; it really seems to me very curious.'

'Yes, indeed. So, sir, you wish to see all relating to the poor abbé, who really was gentleness itself.'

'Yes, you will much oblige me.'

'Go into my study here, and I will show it to you.'

And they both entered M. de Boville's study. Everything was here arranged in perfect order; each register had its number, each file of papers its place. The inspector begged the Englishman to seat himself in an armchair, and placed before him the register and documents relative to the Château d'If, giving him all the time he desired for the examination, while De Boville seated himself in a corner, and began to read his newspaper. The Englishman easily found the entries relative to the Abbé Faria; but it seemed that the history which the inspector had related interested him greatly, for after having perused the first documents he turned over the leaves until he reached the deposition respecting Edmond Dantès. There he found everything arranged in due order,—the accusation, examination, Morrel's petition, M. de Villefort's marginal notes. He folded up the accusation quietly, and put it as quietly in his pocket; read the examination, and saw that the name of Noirtier was not mentioned in it; perused, too, the application dated 10th April, 1815, in which Morrel, by the deputy procureur's advice, exaggerated with the best intentions (for Napoleon was then on the throne) the services Dantès had rendered to the imperial cause—services which Villefort's certificates rendered indisputable. Then he saw through the whole thing. This petition to Napoleon, kept back by Villefort, had become, under the second restoration, a terrible weapon against him in the hands of the king's attorney. He was no longer astonished when he searched on to find in the register this note, placed in a bracket against his name:

Edmond Dantès.

An inveterate Bonapartist; took an active part in the return from the Island of Elba.

To be kept in strict solitary confinement, and to be closely watched and guarded.

Beneath these lines was written in another hand: 'See note above—nothing can be done.'

'Ready money.' And the Englishman drew from his pocket a bundle of bank-notes, which might have been twice the sum M. de Boville feared to lose. A ray of joy passed across M. de Boville's countenance, yet he made an effort at self-control, and said:

'Sir, I ought to tell you that, in all probability, you will not realize six per cent of this sum.'

'That's no affair of mine,' replied the Englishman, 'that is the affair of the house of Thomson & French, in whose name I act. They have, perhaps, some motive to serve in hastening the ruin of a rival firm. But all I know, sir, is, that I am ready to hand you over this sum in exchange for your assignment of the debt. I only ask a brokerage.'

'Of course, that is perfectly just,' cried M. de Boville. 'The commission is usually one and a half; will you have two—three—five per cent, or even more? Whatever you say.'

'Sir,' replied the Englishman, laughing, 'I am like my house, and do not do such things—no, the commission I ask is quite different.'

'Name it, sir, I beg.'

'You are the inspector of prisons?'

'I have been so these fourteen years.'

'You keep the registers of entries and departures?'

'I do.'

'To these registers there are added notes relative to the prisoners?'

'There are special reports on every prisoner.'

'Well, sir, I was educated at Rome by a poor devil of an abbé, who disappeared suddenly. I have since learned that he was confined in the Château d'If, and I should like to learn some particulars of his death.'

'What was his name?'

'The Abbé Faria.'

'Oh, I recollect him perfectly,' cried M. de Boville; 'he was crazy.'

'So they said.'

'Oh, he was, decidedly.'

'Very possibly; but what sort of madness was it?'

'He pretended to know of an immense treasure, and offered vast sums to the government if they would liberate him.'

'Poor devil!—and he is dead?'

The Englishman seemed to appreciate this extreme delicacy, made his bow and went away, proceeding with a characteristic British stride towards the street mentioned.

M. de Boville was in his private room, and the Englishman, on perceiving him, made a gesture of surprise, which seemed to indicate that it was not the first time he had been in his presence. As to M. de Boville, he was in such a state of despair, that it was evident all the faculties of his mind, absorbed in the thought which occupied him at the moment, did not allow either his memory or his imagination to stray to the past.

The Englishman, with the coolness of his nation, addressed him in terms nearly similar to those with which he had accosted the mayor of Marseilles.

'Oh, sir,' exclaimed M. de Boville, 'your fears are unfortunately but too well founded, and you see before you a man in despair. I had two hundred thousand francs placed in the hands of Morrel & Son; these two hundred thousand francs were the dowry of my daughter, who was to be married in a fortnight, and these two hundred thousand francs were payable, half on the 15th of this month, and the other half on the 15th of next month. I had informed M. Morrel of my desire to have these payments punctually, and he has been here within the last half-hour to tell me that if his ship, the *Pharaon*, did not come into port on the 15th, he would be wholly unable to make this payment.'

'But,' said the Englishman, 'this looks very much like a suspension of payment.'

'It looks more like bankruptcy!' exclaimed M. de Boville despairingly.

The Englishman appeared to reflect a moment, and then said, 'From which it would appear, sir, that this credit inspires you with considerable apprehension?'

'To tell you the truth, I consider it lost.'

'Well, then, I will buy it of you!'

'You?'

'Yes, I!'

'But at a tremendous discount, of course?'

'No, for two hundred thousand francs. Our house,' added the Englishman with a laugh, 'does not do things in that way.'

'And you will pay— '

He compared the writing in the bracket with the writing of the certificate placed beneath Morrel's petition, and discovered that the note in the bracket was the same writing as the certificate—that is to say, was in Villefort's handwriting. As to the note which accompanied this, the Englishman understood that it might have been added by some inspector who had taken a momentary interest in Dantès' situation, but who had, from the remarks we have quoted, found it impossible to give any effect to the interest he had felt.

As we have said, the inspector, from discretion, and that he might not disturb the Abbé Faria's pupil in his researches, had seated himself in a corner, and was reading *Le Drapeau Blanc*. He did not see the Englishman fold up and place in his pocket the accusation written by Danglars under the arbour of La Réserve, and which had the postmark, 'Marseilles, 27th February, delivery 6 o'clock, P.M.'

But it must be said that if he had seen it, he attached so little importance to this scrap of paper, and so much importance to his two hundred thousand francs, that he would not have opposed whatever the Englishman might do, however irregular it might be.

'Thanks,' said the latter, closing the register with a slam, 'I have all I want; now it is for me to perform my promise. Give me a simple assignment of your debt; acknowledge therein the receipt of the cash, and I will hand you over the money.'

He rose, gave his seat to M. de Boville, who took it without ceremony, and quickly drew up the required assignment, while the Englishman counted out the bank-notes on the other side of the desk.

Chapter XXVIII

The Prison Register

THE day after that in which the scene we have just described had taken place on the road between Bellegarde and Beaucaire, a man of about thirty or two-and-thirty, dressed in a bright blue frock coat, nankeen trousers, and a white waistcoat, having the appearance and accent of an Englishman, presented himself before the mayor of Marseilles.

'Sir,' said he, 'I am chief clerk of the house of Thomson & French, of Rome. We are, and have been these ten years, connected with the house of Morrel & Son, of Marseilles. We have a hundred thousand francs or thereabouts loaned on their securities, and we are a little uneasy at reports that have reached us that the firm is on the brink of ruin. I have come, therefore, express from Rome, to ask you for information.'

'Sir,' replied the mayor. 'I know very well that during the last four or five years misfortune has seemed to pursue M. Morrel. He has lost four or five vessels, and suffered by three or four bankruptcies; but it is not for me, although I am a creditor myself to the amount of ten thousand francs, to give any information as to the state of his finances. Ask of me, as mayor, what is my opinion of M. Morrel, and I shall say that he is a man honourable to the last degree, and who has up to this time fulfilled every engagement with scrupulous punctuality. This is all I can say, sir; if you wish to learn more, address yourself to M. de Boville, the inspector of prisons, № 15, Rue de Nouailles; he has, I believe, two hundred thousand francs in Morrel's hands, and if there be any grounds for apprehension, as this is a greater amount than mine, you will most probably find him better informed than myself.'

Chapter XXIX

The House of Morrel & Son

ANYONE who had quitted Marseilles a few years previously, well acquainted with the interior of Morrel's warehouse, and had returned at this date, would have found a great change. Instead of that air of life, of comfort, and of happiness that permeates a flourishing and prosperous business establishment—instead of merry faces at the windows, busy clerks hurrying to and fro in the long corridors—instead of the court filled with bales of goods, re-echoing with the cries and the jokes of porters, one would have immediately perceived all aspect of sadness and gloom. Out of all the numerous clerks that used to fill the deserted corridor and the empty office, but two remained. One was a young man of three or four-and-twenty, who was in love with M. Morrel's daughter, and had remained with him in spite of the efforts of his friends to induce him to withdraw; the other was an old one-eyed cashier, called 'Cocles,' or 'Cock-eye,' a nickname given him by the young men who used to throng this vast now almost deserted bee-hive, and which had so completely replaced his real name that he would not, in all probability, have replied to anyone who addressed him by it.

Cocles remained in M. Morrel's service, and a most singular change had taken place in his position; he had at the same time risen to the rank of cashier, and sunk to the rank of a servant. He was, however, the same Cocles, good, patient, devoted, but inflexible on the subject of arithmetic, the only point on which he would have stood firm against the world, even against M. Morrel; and strong in the multiplication-table, which he had at his fingers' ends, no matter what scheme or what trap was laid to catch him.

In the midst of the disasters that befell the house, Cocles was the only one unmoved. But this did not arise from a want of affection; on the contrary,

from a firm conviction. Like the rats that one by one forsake the doomed ship even before the vessel weighs anchor, so all the numerous clerks had by degrees deserted the office and the warehouse. Cocles had seen them go without thinking of inquiring the cause of their departure. Everything was as we have said, a question of arithmetic to Cocles, and during twenty years he had always seen all payments made with such exactitude, that it seemed as impossible to him that the house should stop payment, as it would to a miller that the river that had so long turned his mill should cease to flow.

Nothing had as yet occurred to shake Cocles' belief; the last month's payment had been made with the most scrupulous exactitude; Cocles had detected an overbalance of fourteen sous in his cash, and the same evening he had brought them to M. Morrel, who, with a melancholy smile, threw them into an almost empty drawer, saying:

'Thanks, Cocles; you are the pearl of cashiers.'

Cocles went away perfectly happy, for this eulogium of M. Morrel, himself the pearl of the honest men of Marseilles, flattered him more than a present of fifty crowns. But since the end of the month M. Morrel had passed many an anxious hour.

In order to meet the payments then due; he had collected all his resources, and, fearing lest the report of his distress should get bruited abroad at Marseilles when he was known to be reduced to such an extremity, he went to the Beaucaire fair to sell his wife's and daughter's jewels and a portion of his plate. By this means the end of the month was passed, but his resources were now exhausted. Credit, owing to the reports afloat, was no longer to be had; and to meet the one hundred thousand francs due on the 15th of the present month, and the one hundred thousand francs due on the 15th of the next month to M. de Boville, M. Morrel had, in reality, no hope but the return of the *Pharaon*, of whose departure he had learnt from a vessel which had weighed anchor at the same time, and which had already arrived in harbour.

But this vessel which, like the *Pharaon*, came from Calcutta, had been in for a fortnight, while no intelligence had been received of the *Pharaon*. Such was the state of affairs when, the day after his interview with M. de Boville, the confidential clerk of the house of Thomson & French of Rome, presented himself at M. Morrel's.

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Emmanuel received him; this young man was alarmed by the appearance of every new face, for every new face might be that of a new creditor, come in anxiety to question the head of the house. The young man, wishing to spare his employer the pain of this interview, questioned the new-comer; but the stranger declared that he had nothing to say to M. Emmanuel, and that his business was with M. Morrel in person.

Emmanuel sighed, and summoned Cocles. Cocles appeared, and the young man bade him conduct the stranger to M. Morrel's apartment. Cocles went first, and the stranger followed him. On the staircase they met a beautiful girl of sixteen or seventeen, who looked with anxiety at the stranger.

'M. Morrel is in his room, is he not, Mademoiselle Julie?' said the cashier.

'Yes; I think so, at least,' said the young girl hesitatingly. 'Go and see, Cocles, and if my father is there, announce this gentleman.'

'It will be useless to announce me, mademoiselle,' returned the Englishman. 'M. Morrel does not know my name; this worthy gentleman has only to announce the confidential clerk of the house of Thomson & French of Rome, with whom your father does business.'

The young girl turned pale and continued to descend, while the stranger and Cocles continued to mount the staircase. She entered the office where Emmanuel was, while Cocles, by the aid of a key he possessed, opened a door in the corner of a landing-place on the second staircase, conducted the stranger into an antechamber, opened a second door, which he closed behind him, and after having left the clerk of the house of Thomson & French alone, returned and signed to him that he could enter.

The Englishman entered, and found Morrel seated at a table, turning over the formidable columns of his ledger, which contained the list of his liabilities. At the sight of the stranger, M. Morrel closed the ledger, arose, and offered a seat to the stranger; and when he had seen him seated, resumed his own chair. Fourteen years had changed the worthy merchant, who, in his thirty-sixth year at the opening of this history, was now in his fiftieth; his hair had turned white, time and sorrow had ploughed deep furrows on his brow, and his look, once so firm and penetrating, was now irresolute and wandering, as if he feared being forced to fix his attention on some particular thought or person.

The Englishman looked at him with an air of curiosity, evidently mingled with interest. 'Monsieur,' said Morrel, whose uneasiness was increased by this examination, 'you wish to speak to me?'

'Yes, monsieur; you are aware from whom I come?'

'The house of Thomson & French; at least, so my cashier tells me.'

'He has told you rightly. The house of Thomson & French had 300,000 or 400,000 francs to pay this month in France; and, knowing your strict punctuality, have collected all the bills bearing your signature, and charged me as they became due to present them, and to employ the money otherwise.'

Morrel sighed deeply, and passed his hand over his forehead, which was covered with perspiration.

'So then, sir,' said Morrel, 'you hold bills of mine?'

'Yes, and for a considerable sum.'

'What is the amount?' asked Morrel with a voice he strove to render firm. 'Here is,' said the Englishman, taking a quantity of papers from his pocket, 'an assignment of 200,000 francs to our house by M. de Boville, the inspector of prisons, to whom they are due. You acknowledge, of course, that you owe this sum to him?'

'Yes; he placed the money in my hands at four and a half per cent nearly five years ago.'

'When are you to pay?'

'Half the 15th of this month, half the 15th of next.'

'Just so; and now here are 32,500 francs payable shortly; they are all signed by you, and assigned to our house by the holders.'

'I recognize them,' said Morrel, whose face was suffused, as he thought that, for the first time in his life, he would be unable to honour his own signature. 'Is this all?'

'No, I have for the end of the month these bills which have been assigned to us by the house of Pascal, and the house of Wild & Turner of Marseilles, amounting to nearly 55,000 francs; in all, 287,500 francs.'

It is impossible to describe what Morrel suffered during this enumeration. 'Two hundred and eighty-seven thousand five hundred francs,' repeated he.

'Yes, sir,' replied the Englishman. 'I will not,' continued he, after a moment's silence, 'conceal from you, that while your probity and exactitude up to this