unheard-of treasures! Was he awake, or was it but a dream? Was it a transient vision, or was he face to face with reality?

He would fain have gazed upon his gold, and yet he had not strength enough; for an instant he leaned his head in his hands as if to prevent his senses from leaving him, and then rushed madly about the rocks of Monte Cristo, terrifying the wild goats and scaring the sea-fowls with his wild cries and gestures; then he returned, and, still unable to believe the evidence of his senses, rushed into the grotto, and found himself before this mine of gold and jewels.

This time he fell on his knees, and, clasping his hands convulsively, uttered a prayer intelligible to God alone. He soon became calmer and more happy, for only now did he begin to realize his felicity.

He then set himself to work to count his fortune. There were a thousand ingots of gold, each weighing from two to three pounds; then he piled up twenty-five thousand crowns, each worth about eighty francs of our money, and bearing the effigies of Alexander VI. and his predecessors; and he saw that the complement was not half empty. And he measured ten double handfuls of pearls, diamonds, and other gems, many of which, mounted by the most famous workmen, were valuable beyond their intrinsic worth.

Dantès saw the light gradually disappear, and fearing to be surprised in the cavern, left it, his gun in his hand. A piece of biscuit and a small quantity of rum formed his supper, and he snatched a few hours' sleep, lying over the mouth of the cave.

It was a night of joy and terror, such as this man of stupendous emotions had already experienced twice or thrice in his lifetime.

Chapter XXV

The Unknown

DAY, for which Dantès had so eagerly and impatiently waited with open eyes, again dawned. With the first light Dantès resumed his search. Again he climbed the rocky height he had ascended the previous evening, and strained his view to catch every peculiarity of the landscape; but it wore the same wild, barren aspect when seen by the rays of the morning sun which it had done when surveyed by the fading glimmer of eve.

Descending into the grotto, he lifted the stone, filled his pockets with gems, put the box together as well and securely as he could, sprinkled fresh sand over the spot from which it had been taken, and then carefully trod down the earth to give it everywhere a uniform appearance; then, quitting the grotto, he replaced the stone, heaping on it broken masses of rocks and rough fragments of crumbling granite, filling the interstices with earth, into which he deftly inserted rapidly growing plants, such as the wild myrtle and flowering thorn, then carefully watering these new plantations, he scrupulously effaced every trace of footsteps, leaving the approach to the cavern as savage-looking and untrodden as he had found it. This done, he impatiently awaited the return of his companions. To wait at Monte Cristo for the purpose of watching like a dragon over the almost incalculable riches that had thus fallen into his possession satisfied not the cravings of his heart, which yearned to return to dwell among mankind, and to assume the rank, power, and influence which are always accorded to wealth—that first and greatest of all the forces within the grasp of man.

On the sixth day, the smugglers returned. From a distance Dantès recognized the rig and handling of *La Jeune Amélie*, and dragging himself with

affected difficulty towards the landing-place, he met his companions with an assurance that, although considerably better than when they quitted him, he still suffered acutely from his late accident. He then inquired how they had fared in their trip. To this question the smugglers replied that, although successful in landing their cargo in safety, they had scarcely done so when they received intelligence that a guard-ship had just quitted the port of Toulon and was crowding all sail towards them. This obliged them to make all the speed they could to evade the enemy, when they could but lament the absence of Dantès, whose superior skill in the management of a vessel would have availed them so materially. In fact, the pursuing vessel had almost overtaken them when, fortunately, night came on, and enabled them to double the Cape of Corsica, and so elude all further pursuit. Upon the whole, however, the trip had been sufficiently successful to satisfy all concerned; while the crew, and particularly Jacopo, expressed great regrets that Dantès had not been an equal sharer with themselves in the profits, which amounted to no less a sum than fifty piastres each. Edmond preserved the most admirable self-command, not suffering the faintest indication of a smile to escape him at the enumeration of all the benefits he would have reaped had he been able to quit the island; but as *La Jeune Amélie* had merely come to Monte Cristo to fetch him away, he embarked that same evening, and proceeded with the captain to Leghorn.

Arrived at Leghorn, he repaired to the house of a Jew, a dealer in precious stones, to whom he disposed of four of his smallest diamonds for five thousand francs each. Dantès half feared that such valuable jewels in the hands of a poor sailor like himself might excite suspicion; but the cunning purchaser asked no troublesome questions concerning a bargain by which he gained a round profit of at least eighty per cent.

The following day Dantès presented Jacopo with an entirely new vessel, accompanying the gift by a donation of one hundred piastres, that he might provide himself with a suitable crew and other requisites for his outfit, upon condition that he would go at once to Marseilles for the purpose of inquiring after an old man named Louis Dantès, residing in the Allées de Meilhan, and also a young woman called Mercédès, an inhabitant of the Catalan village.

Jacopo could scarcely believe his senses at receiving this magnificent present, which Dantès hastened to account for by saying that he had merely been a sailor from whim and a desire to spite his family, who did not allow him as

He thought a moment, cut a branch of a resinous tree, lighted it at the fire at which the smugglers had prepared their breakfast, and descended with this torch.

He wished to see everything. He approached the hole he had dug, and now, with the aid of the torch, saw that his pickaxe had in reality struck against iron and wood. He planted his torch in the ground and resumed his labour.

In an instant a space three feet long by two feet broad was cleared, and Dantès could see an oaken coffer, bound with cut steel; in the middle of the lid he saw engraved on a silver plate, which was still untarnished, the arms of the Spada family—viz., a sword, *en pale*, on an oval shield, like all the Italian armorial bearings, and surmounted by a cardinal's hat.

Dantès easily recognized them, Faria had so often drawn them for him. There was no longer any doubt: the treasure was there—no one would have been at such pains to conceal an empty casket. In an instant he had cleared every obstacle away, and he saw successively the lock, placed between two padlocks, and the two handles at each end, all carved as things were carved at that epoch, when art rendered the commonest metals precious.

Dantès seized the handles, and strove to lift the coffer; it was impossible. He sought to open it; lock and padlock were fastened; these faithful guardians seemed unwilling to surrender their trust. Dantès inserted the sharp end of the pickaxe between the coffer and the lid, and pressing with all his force on the handle, burst open the fastenings. The hinges yielded in their turn and fell, still holding in their grasp fragments of the wood, and the chest was open. Edmond was seized with vertigo; he cocked his gun and laid it beside him. He then closed his eyes as children do in order that they may see in the resplendent night of their own imagination more stars than are visible in the firmament; then he re-opened them, and stood motionless with amazement.

Three compartments divided the coffer. In the first, blazed piles of golden coin; in the second, were ranged bars of unpolished gold, which possessed nothing attractive save their value; in the third, Edmond grasped handfuls of diamonds, pearls, and rubies, which, as they fell on one another, sounded like hail against glass.

After having touched, felt, examined these treasures, Edmond rushed through the caverns like a man seized with frenzy; he leaped on a rock, from whence he could behold the sea. He was alone—alone with these countless, these

Dantès had tasted nothing, but he thought not of hunger at such a moment; he hastily swallowed a few drops of rum, and again entered the cavern.

The pickaxe that had seemed so heavy, was now like a feather in his grasp; he seized it, and attacked the wall. After several blows he perceived that the stones were not cemented, but had been merely placed one upon the other, and covered with stucco; he inserted the point of his pickaxe, and using the handle as a lever, with joy soon saw the stone turn as if on hinges, and fall at his feet.

He had nothing more to do now, but with the iron tooth of the pickaxe to draw the stones towards him one by one. The aperture was already sufficiently large for him to enter, but by waiting, he could still cling to hope, and retard the certainty of deception. At last, after renewed hesitation, Dantès entered the second grotto.

The second grotto was lower and more gloomy than the first; the air that could only enter by the newly formed opening had the mephitic smell Dantès was surprised not to find in the outer cavern. He waited in order to allow pure air to displace the foul atmosphere, and then went on.

At the left of the opening was a dark and deep angle. But to Dantès' eye there was no darkness. He glanced around this second grotto; it was, like the first, empty.

The treasure, if it existed, was buried in this corner. The time had at length arrived; two feet of earth removed, and Dantès' fate would be decided.

He advanced towards the angle, and summoning all his resolution, attacked the ground with the pickaxe. At the fifth or sixth blow the pickaxe struck against an iron substance. Never did funeral knell, never did alarm-bell, produce a greater effect on the hearer. Had Dantès found nothing he could not have become more ghastly pale.

He again struck his pickaxe into the earth, and encountered the same resistance, but not the same sound.

'It is a casket of wood bound with iron,' thought he.

At this moment a shadow passed rapidly before the opening; Dantès seized his gun, sprang through the opening, and mounted the stair. A wild goat had passed before the mouth of the cave, and was feeding at a little distance. This would have been a favourable occasion to secure his dinner; but Dantès feared lest the report of his gun should attract attention.

much money as he liked to spend; but that on his arrival at Leghorn he had come into possession of a large fortune, left him by an uncle, whose sole heir he was. The superior education of Dantès gave an air of such extreme probability to this statement that it never once occurred to Jacopo to doubt its accuracy.

The term for which Edmond had engaged to serve on board *La Jeune Amélie* having expired, Dantès took leave of the captain, who at first tried all his powers of persuasion to induce him to remain as one of the crew, but having been told the history of the legacy, he ceased to importune him further.

The following morning Jacopo set sail for Marseilles, with directions from Dantès to join him at the Island of Monte Cristo.

Having seen Jacopo fairly out of the harbour, Dantès proceeded to make his final adieus on board *La Jeune Amélie*, distributing so liberal a gratuity among her crew as to secure for him the good wishes of all, and expressions of cordial interest in all that concerned him. To the captain he promised to write when he had made up his mind as to his future plans. Then Dantès departed for Genoa.

At the moment of his arrival a small yacht was under trial in the bay; this yacht had been built by order of an Englishman, who, having heard that the Genoese excelled all other builders along the shores of the Mediterranean in the construction of fast-sailing vessels, was desirous of possessing a specimen of their skill; the price agreed upon between the Englishman and the Genoese builder was forty thousand francs. Dantès, struck with the beauty and capability of the little vessel, applied to its owner to transfer it to him, offering sixty thousand francs, upon condition that he should be allowed to take immediate possession. The proposal was too advantageous to be refused, the more so as the person for whom the yacht was intended had gone upon a tour through Switzerland, and was not expected back in less than three weeks or a month, by which time the builder reckoned upon being able to complete another. A bargain was therefore struck. Dantès led the owner of the yacht to the dwelling of a Jew; retired with the latter for a few minutes to a small back parlour, and upon their return the Jew counted out to the shipbuilder the sum of sixty thousand francs in bright gold pieces.

The delighted builder then offered his services in providing a suitable crew for the little vessel, but this Dantès declined with many thanks, saying he was accustomed to cruise about quite alone, and his principal pleasure consisted

in managing his yacht himself; the only thing the builder could oblige him in would be to contrive a sort of secret closet in the cabin at his bed's head, the closet to contain three divisions, so constructed as to be concealed from all but himself. The builder cheerfully undertook the commission, and promised to have these secret places completed by the next day, Dantès furnishing the dimensions and plan in accordance with which they were to be constructed. Two hours afterward Dantès sailed from the port of Genoa, under the inspection of an immense crowd drawn together by curiosity to see the rich Spanish nobleman who preferred managing his own yacht. But their wonder was soon changed to admiration at seeing the perfect skill with which Dantès handled the helm. The boat, indeed, seemed to be animated with almost human intelligence, so promptly did it obey the slightest touch; and Dantès required but a short trial of his beautiful craft to acknowledge that the Genoese had not without reason attained their high reputation in the art of shipbuilding.

The spectators followed the little vessel with their eyes as long as it remained visible; they then turned their conjectures upon her probable destination. Some insisted she was making for Corsica, others the Island of Elba; bets were offered to any amount that she was bound for Spain; while Africa was positively reported by many persons as her intended course; but no one thought of Monte Cristo.

Yet thither it was that Dantès guided his vessel, and at Monte Cristo he arrived at the close of the second day; his boat had proved herself a first-class sailor, and had come the distance from Genoa in thirty-five hours. Dantès had carefully noted the general appearance of the shore, and, instead of landing at the usual place, he dropped anchor in the little creek. The island was utterly deserted, and bore no evidence of having been visited since he went away; his treasure was just as he had left it.

Early on the following morning he commenced the removal of his riches, and ere nightfall the whole of his immense wealth was safely deposited in the compartments of the secret locker.

A week passed by. Dantès employed it in manœuvring his yacht round the island, studying it as a skilful horseman would the animal he destined for some important service, till at the end of that time he was perfectly conversant with its good and bad qualities. The former Dantès proposed to augment, the latter to remedy.

'Alas,' said Edmond, smiling, 'these are the treasures the cardinal has left; and the good abbé, seeing in a dream these glittering walls, has indulged in fallacious hopes.'

But he called to mind the words of the will, which he knew by heart. 'In the farthest angle of the second opening,' said the cardinal's will. He had only found the first grotto; he had now to seek the second. Dantès continued his search. He reflected that this second grotto must penetrate deeper into the island; he examined the stones, and sounded one part of the wall where he fancied the opening existed, masked for precaution's sake.

The pickaxe struck for a moment with a dull sound that drew out of Dantès' forehead large drops of perspiration. At last it seemed to him that one part of the wall gave forth a more hollow and deeper echo; he eagerly advanced, and with the quickness of perception that no one but a prisoner possesses, saw that there, in all probability, the opening must be.

However, he, like Cæsar Borgia, knew the value of time; and, in order to avoid fruitless toil, he sounded all the other walls with his pickaxe, struck the earth with the butt of his gun, and finding nothing that appeared suspicious, returned to that part of the wall whence issued the consoling sound he had before heard.

He again struck it, and with greater force. Then a singular thing occurred. As he struck the wall, pieces of stucco similar to that used in the ground work of arabesques broke off, and fell to the ground in flakes, exposing a large white stone. The aperture of the rock had been closed with stones, then this stucco had been applied, and painted to imitate granite. Dantès struck with the sharp end of his pickaxe, which entered someway between the interstices.

It was there he must dig.

But by some strange play of emotion, in proportion as the proofs that Faria, had not been deceived became stronger, so did his heart give way, and a feeling of discouragement stole over him. This last proof, instead of giving him fresh strength, deprived him of it; the pickaxe descended, or rather fell; he placed it on the ground, passed his hand over his brow, and remounted the stairs, alleging to himself, as an excuse, a desire to be assured that no one was watching him, but in reality because he felt that he was about to faint.

The island was deserted, and the sun seemed to cover it with its fiery glance; afar off, a few small fishing boats studded the bosom of the blue ocean.

dreamed this; the Cardinal Spada buried no treasure here; perhaps he never came here, or if he did, Cæsar Borgia, the intrepid adventurer, the stealthy and indefatigable plunderer, has followed him, discovered his traces, pursued them as I have done, raised the stone, and descending before me, has left me nothing.'

He remained motionless and pensive, his eyes fixed on the gloomy aperture that was open at his feet.

'Now that I expect nothing, now that I no longer entertain the slightest hopes, the end of this adventure becomes simply a matter of curiosity.' And he remained again motionless and thoughtful.

'Yes, yes; this is an adventure worthy a place in the varied career of that royal bandit. This fabulous event formed but a link in a long chain of marvels. Yes, Borgia has been here, a torch in one hand, a sword in the other, and within twenty paces, at the foot of this rock, perhaps two guards kept watch on land and sea, while their master descended, as I am about to descend, dispelling the darkness before his awe-inspiring progress.' 'But what was the fate of the guards who thus possessed his secret?' asked Dantès of himself.

'The fate,' replied he, smiling, 'of those who buried Alaric, and were interred with the corpse.'

'Yet, had he come,' thought Dantès, 'he would have found the treasure, and Borgia, he who compared Italy to an artichoke, which he could devour leaf by leaf, knew too well the value of time to waste it in replacing this rock. I will go down.'

Then he descended, a smile on his lips, and murmuring that last word of human philosophy, 'Perhaps!'

But instead of the darkness, and the thick and mephitic atmosphere he had expected to find, Dantès saw a dim and bluish light, which, as well as the air, entered, not merely by the aperture he had just formed, but by the interstices and crevices of the rock which were visible from without, and through which he could distinguish the blue sky and the waving branches of the evergreen oaks, and the tendrils of the creepers that grew from the rocks.

After having stood a few minutes in the cavern, the atmosphere of which was rather warm than damp, Dantès' eye, habituated as it was to darkness, could pierce even to the remotest angles of the cavern, which was of granite that sparkled like diamonds.

Upon the eighth day he discerned a small vessel under full sail approaching Monte Cristo. As it drew near, he recognized it as the boat he had given to Jacopo. He immediately signalled it. His signal was returned, and in two hours afterwards the new-comer lay at anchor beside the yacht.

A mournful answer awaited each of Edmond's eager inquiries as to the information Jacopo had obtained. Old Dantès was dead, and Mercédès had disappeared.

Dantès listened to these melancholy tidings with outward calmness; but, leaping lightly ashore, he signified his desire to be quite alone. In a couple of hours he returned. Two of the men from Jacopo's boat came on board the yacht to assist in navigating it, and he gave orders that she should be steered direct to Marseilles. For his father's death he was in some manner prepared; but he knew not how to account for the mysterious disappearance of Mercédès.

Without divulging his secret, Dantès could not give sufficiently clear instructions to an agent. There were, besides, other particulars he was desirous of ascertaining, and those were of a nature he alone could investigate in a manner satisfactory to himself. His looking-glass had assured him, during his stay at Leghorn, that he ran no risk of recognition; moreover, he had now the means of adopting any disguise he thought proper. One fine morning, then, his yacht, followed by the little fishing-boat, boldly entered the port of Marseilles, and anchored exactly opposite the spot from whence, on the never-to-be-forgotten night of his departure for the Château d'If, he had been put on board the boat destined to convey him thither. Still Dantès could not view without a shudder the approach of a gendarme who accompanied the officers deputed to demand his bill of health ere the yacht was permitted to hold communication with the shore; but with that perfect self-possession he had acquired during his acquaintance with Faria, Dantès coolly presented an English passport he had obtained from Leghorn, and as this gave him a standing which a French passport would not have afforded, he was informed that there existed no obstacle to his immediate debarkation.

The first person to attract the attention of Dantès, as he landed on the Canebière, was one of the crew belonging to the *Pharaon*. Edmond welcomed the meeting with this fellow—who had been one of his own sailors—as a sure means of testing the extent of the change which time had worked in his own appearance. Going straight towards him, he propounded a variety of

questions on different subjects, carefully watching the man's countenance as he did so; but not a word or look implied that he had the slightest idea of ever having seen before the person with whom he was then conversing.

Giving the sailor a piece of money in return for his civility, Dantès proceeded onwards; but ere he had gone many steps he heard the man loudly calling him to stop.

Dantès instantly turned to meet him.

'I beg your pardon, sir,' said the honest fellow, in almost breathless haste, 'but I believe you made a mistake; you intended to give me a two-franc piece, and see, you gave me a double Napoleon.'

'Thank you, my good friend. I see that I have made a trifling mistake, as you say; but by way of rewarding your honesty I give you another double Napoleon, that you may drink to my health, and be able to ask your messmates to join you.'

So extreme was the surprise of the sailor, that he was unable even to thank Edmond, whose receding figure he continued to gaze after in speechless astonishment. 'Some nabob from India,' was his comment.

Dantès, meanwhile, went on his way. Each step he trod oppressed his heart with fresh emotion; his first and most indelible recollections were there; not a tree, not a street, that he passed but seemed filled with dear and cherished memories. And thus he proceeded onwards till he arrived at the end of the Rue de Noailles, from whence a full view of the Allées de Meilhan was obtained. At this spot, so pregnant with fond and filial remembrances, his heart beat almost to bursting, his knees tottered under him, a mist floated over his sight, and had he not clung for support to one of the trees, he would inevitably have fallen to the ground and been crushed beneath the many vehicles continually passing there. Recovering himself, however, he wiped the perspiration from his brows, and stopped not again till he found himself at the door of the house in which his father had lived.

The nasturtiums and other plants, which his father had delighted to train before his window, had all disappeared from the upper part of the house.

Leaning against the tree, he gazed thoughtfully for a time at the upper stories of the shabby little house. Then he advanced to the door, and asked whether there were any rooms to be let. Though answered in the negative, he begged so earnestly to be permitted to visit those on the fifth floor, that, in despite of

He cast his eyes around, and saw the horn full of powder which his friend Jacopo had left him. He smiled; the infernal invention would serve him for this purpose.

With the aid of his pickaxe, Dantès, after the manner of a labour-saving pioneer, dug a mine between the upper rock and the one that supported it, filled it with powder, then made a match by rolling his handkerchief in saltpetre. He lighted it and retired.

The explosion soon followed; the upper rock was lifted from its base by the terrific force of the powder; the lower one flew into pieces; thousands of insects escaped from the aperture Dantès had previously formed, and a huge snake, like the guardian demon of the treasure, rolled himself along in darkening coils, and disappeared.

Dantès approached the upper rock, which now, without any support, leaned towards the sea. The intrepid treasure-seeker walked round it, and, selecting the spot from whence it appeared most susceptible to attack, placed his lever in one of the crevices, and strained every nerve to move the mass.

The rock, already shaken by the explosion, tottered on its base. Dantès redoubled his efforts; he seemed like one of the ancient Titans, who uprooted the mountains to hurl against the father of the gods. The rock yielded, rolled over, bounded from point to point, and finally disappeared in the ocean.

On the spot it had occupied was a circular space, exposing an iron ring let into a square flag-stone.

Dantès uttered a cry of joy and surprise; never had a first attempt been crowned with more perfect success. He would fain have continued, but his knees trembled, and his heart beat so violently, and his sight became so dim, that he was forced to pause.

This feeling lasted but for a moment. Edmond inserted his lever in the ring and exerted all his strength; the flag-stone yielded, and disclosed steps that descended until they were lost in the obscurity of a subterraneous grotto.

Anyone else would have rushed on with a cry of joy. Dantès turned pale, hesitated, and reflected.

'Come,' said he to himself, 'be a man. I am accustomed to adversity. I must not be cast down by the discovery that I have been deceived. What, then, would be the use of all I have suffered? The heart breaks when, after having been elated by flattering hopes, it sees all its illusions destroyed. Faria has

the base of the island, and covered it with a fringe of foam. Then he descended with cautious and slow step, for he dreaded lest an accident similar to that he had so adroitly feigned should happen in reality.

Dantès, as we have said, had traced the marks along the rocks, and he had noticed that they led to a small creek, which was hidden like the bath of some ancient nymph. This creek was sufficiently wide at its mouth, and deep in the centre, to admit of the entrance of a small vessel of the lugger class, which would be perfectly concealed from observation.

Then following the clew that, in the hands of the Abbé Faria, had been so skilfully used to guide him through the Dædalian labyrinth of probabilities, he thought that the Cardinal Spada, anxious not to be watched, had entered the creek, concealed his little barque, followed the line marked by the notches in the rock, and at the end of it had buried his treasure. It was this idea that had brought Dantès back to the circular rock. One thing only perplexed Edmond, and destroyed his theory. How could this rock, which weighed several tons, have been lifted to this spot, without the aid of many men?

Suddenly an idea flashed across his mind. Instead of raising it, thought he, they have lowered it. And he sprang from the rock in order to inspect the base on which it had formerly stood.

He soon perceived that a slope had been formed, and the rock had slid along this until it stopped at the spot it now occupied. A large stone had served as a wedge; flints and pebbles had been inserted around it, so as to conceal the orifice; this species of masonry had been covered with earth, and grass and weeds had grown there, moss had clung to the stones, myrtle-bushes had taken root, and the old rock seemed fixed to the earth. Dantès dug away the earth carefully, and detected, or fancied he detected, the ingenious artifice. He attacked this wall, cemented by the hand of time, with his pickaxe. After ten minutes' labour the wall gave way, and a hole large enough to insert the arm was opened.

Dantès went and cut the strongest olive-tree he could find, stripped off its branches, inserted it in the hole, and used it as a lever. But the rock was too heavy, and too firmly wedged, to be moved by anyone man, were he Hercules himself. Dantès saw that he must attack the wedge. But how?

the oft-repeated assurance of the *concierge* that they were occupied, Dantès succeeded in inducing the man to go up to the tenants, and ask permission for a gentleman to be allowed to look at them.

The tenants of the humble lodging were a young couple who had been scarcely married a week; and seeing them, Dantès sighed heavily. Nothing in the two small chambers forming the apartments remained as it had been in the time of the elder Dantès; the very paper was different, while the articles of antiquated furniture with which the rooms had been filled in Edmond's time had all disappeared; the four walls alone remained as he had left them.

The bed belonging to the present occupants was placed as the former owner of the chamber had been accustomed to have his; and, in spite of his efforts to prevent it, the eyes of Edmond were suffused in tears as he reflected that on that spot the old man had breathed his last, vainly calling for his son.

The young couple gazed with astonishment at the sight of their visitor's emotion, and wondered to see the large tears silently chasing each other down his otherwise stern and immovable features; but they felt the sacredness of his grief, and kindly refrained from questioning him as to its cause, while, with instinctive delicacy, they left him to indulge his sorrow alone. When he withdrew from the scene of his painful recollections, they both accompanied him downstairs, reiterating their hope that he would come again whenever he pleased, and assuring him that their poor dwelling would ever be open to him.

As Edmond passed the door on the fourth floor, he paused to inquire whether Caderousse the tailor still dwelt there; but he received for reply, that the person in question had got into difficulties, and at the present time kept a small inn on the route from Bellegarde to Beaucaire.

Having obtained the address of the person to whom the house in the Allées de Meilhan belonged, Dantès next proceeded thither, and, under the name of Lord Wilmore (the name and title inscribed on his passport), purchased the small dwelling for the sum of twenty-five thousand francs, at least ten thousand more than it was worth; but had its owner asked half a million, it would unhesitatingly have been given.

The very same day the occupants of the apartments on the fifth floor of the house, now become the property of Dantès, were duly informed by the notary who had arranged the necessary transfer of deeds, etc., that the new landlord gave them their choice of any of the rooms in the house, without the

least augmentation of rent, upon condition of their giving instant possession of the two small chambers they at present inhabited.

This strange event aroused great wonder and curiosity in the neighbourhood of the Allées de Meilhan, and a multitude of theories were afloat, none of which was anywhere near the truth. But what raised public astonishment to a climax, and set all conjecture at defiance, was the knowledge that the same stranger who had in the morning visited the Allées de Meilhan had been seen in the evening walking in the little village of the Catalans, and afterwards observed to enter a poor fisherman's hut, and to pass more than an hour in inquiring after persons who had either been dead or gone away for more than fifteen or sixteen years.

But on the following day the family from whom all these particulars had been asked received a handsome present, consisting of an entirely new fishing-boat, with two seines and a tender.

The delighted recipients of these munificent gifts would gladly have poured out their thanks to their generous benefactor, but they had seen him, upon quitting the hut, merely give some orders to a sailor, and then springing lightly on horseback, leave Marseilles by the Porte d'Aix.

Chapter XXIV

The Secret Cave

The sun had nearly reached the meridian, and his scorching rays fell full on the rocks, which seemed themselves sensible of the heat. Thousands of grasshoppers, hidden in the bushes, chirped with a monotonous and dull note; the leaves of the myrtle and olive trees waved and rustled in the wind. At every step that Edmond took he disturbed the lizards glittering with the hues of the emerald; afar off he saw the wild goats bounding from crag to crag. In a word, the island was inhabited, yet Edmond felt himself alone, guided by the hand of God.

He felt an indescribable sensation somewhat akin to dread—that dread of the daylight which even in the desert makes us fear we are watched and observed. This feeling was so strong that at the moment when Edmond was about to begin his labour, he stopped, laid down his pickaxe, seized his gun, mounted to the summit of the highest rock, and from thence gazed round in every direction.

But it was not upon Corsica, the very houses of which he could distinguish; or on Sardinia; or on the Island of Elba, with its historical associations; or upon the almost imperceptible line that to the experienced eye of a sailor alone revealed the coast of Genoa the proud, and Leghorn the commercial, that he gazed. It was at the brigantine that had left in the morning, and the tartan that had just set sail, that Edmond fixed his eyes.

The first was just disappearing in the straits of Bonifacio; the other, following an opposite direction, was about to round the Island of Corsica.

This sight reassured him. He then looked at the objects near him. He saw that he was on the highest point of the island,—a statue on this vast pedestal of granite, nothing human appearing in sight, while the blue ocean beat against