Chapter XV

Number 34 and Number 27

Dantès passed through all the stages of torture natural to prisoners in suspense. He was sustained at first by that pride of conscious innocence which is the sequence to hope; then he began to doubt his own innocence, which justified in some measure the governor's belief in his mental alienation; and then, relaxing his sentiment of pride, he addressed his supplications, not to God, but to man. God is always the last resource. Unfortunates, who ought to begin with God, do not have any hope in him till they have exhausted all other means of deliverance.

Dantès asked to be removed from his present dungeon into another, even if it were darker and deeper, for a change, however disadvantageous, was still a change, and would afford him some amusement. He entreated to be allowed to walk about, to have fresh air, books, and writing materials. His requests were not granted, but he went on asking all the same. He accustomed himself to speaking to the new jailer, although the latter was, if possible, more taciturn than the old one; but still, to speak to a man, even though mute, was something. Dantès spoke for the sake of hearing his own voice; he had tried to speak when alone, but the sound of his voice terrified him.

Often, before his captivity, Dantès' mind had revolted at the idea of assemblages of prisoners, made up of thieves, vagabonds, and murderers. He now wished to be amongst them, in order to see some other face besides that of his jailer; he sighed for the galleys, with the infamous costume, the chain, and the brand on the shoulder. The galley-slaves breathed the fresh air of heaven, and saw each other. They were very happy.

He besought the jailer one day to let him have a companion, were it even the mad abbé. The jailer, though rough and hardened by the constant sight of

so much suffering, was yet a man. At the bottom of his heart he had often had a feeling of pity for this unhappy young man who suffered so; and he laid the request of number 34 before the governor; but the latter sapiently imagined that Dantès wished to conspire or attempt an escape, and refused his request. Dantès had exhausted all human resources, and he then turned to God.

All the pious ideas that had been so long forgotten, returned; he recollected the prayers his mother had taught him, and discovered a new meaning in every word; for in prosperity prayers seem but a mere medley of words, until misfortune comes and the unhappy sufferer first understands the meaning of the sublime language in which he invokes the pity of heaven! He prayed, and prayed aloud, no longer terrified at the sound of his own voice, for he fell into a sort of ecstasy. He laid every action of his life before the Almighty, proposed tasks to accomplish, and at the end of every prayer introduced the entreaty oftener addressed to man than to God: 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.' Yet in spite of his earnest prayers, Dantès remained a prisoner.

Then gloom settled heavily upon him. Dantès was a man of great simplicity of thought, and without education; he could not, therefore, in the solitude of his dungeon, traverse in mental vision the history of the ages, bring to life the nations that had perished, and rebuild the ancient cities so vast and stupendous in the light of the imagination, and that pass before the eye glowing with celestial colours in Martin's Babylonian pictures. He could not do this, he whose past life was so short, whose present so melancholy, and his future so doubtful. Nineteen years of light to reflect upon in eternal darkness! No distraction could come to his aid; his energetic spirit, that would have exalted in thus revisiting the past, was imprisoned like an eagle in a cage. He clung to one idea—that of his happiness, destroyed, without apparent cause, by an unheard-of fatality; he considered and reconsidered this idea, devoured it (so to speak), as the implacable Ugolino devours the skull of Archbishop Roger in the Inferno of Dante.

Rage supplanted religious fervour. Dantès uttered blasphemies that made his jailer recoil with horror, dashed himself furiously against the walls of his prison, wreaked his anger upon everything, and chiefly upon himself, so that the least thing,—a grain of sand, a straw, or a breath of air that annoyed him, led to paroxysms of fury. Then the letter that Villefort had showed to him

This note was in a different hand from the rest, which showed that it had been added since his confinement. The inspector could not contend against this accusation; he simply wrote, *Nothing to be done.*

This visit had infused new vigour into Dantès; he had, till then, forgotten the date; but now, with a fragment of plaster, he wrote the date, 30th July, 1816, and made a mark every day, in order not to lose his reckoning again. Days and weeks passed away, then months—Dantès still waited; he at first expected to be freed in a fortnight. This fortnight expired, he decided that the inspector would do nothing until his return to Paris, and that he would not reach there until his circuit was finished, he therefore fixed three months; three months passed away, then six more. Finally ten months and a half had gone by and no favourable change had taken place, and Dantès began to fancy the inspector's visit but a dream, an illusion of the brain.

At the expiration of a year the governor was transferred; he had obtained charge of the fortress at Ham. He took with him several of his subordinates, and amongst them Dantès' jailer. A new governor arrived; it would have been too tedious to acquire the names of the prisoners; he learned their numbers instead. This horrible place contained fifty cells; their inhabitants were designated by the numbers of their cell, and the unhappy young man was no longer called Edmond Dantès—he was now number 34.

'Nor you to mine,' cried the abbé. 'You will not accept my gold; I will keep it for myself. You refuse me my liberty; God will give it me.' And the abbé, casting away his coverlet, resumed his place, and continued his calculations.
'What is he doing there?' said the inspector.

'Counting his treasures,' replied the governor.

Faria replied to this sarcasm with a glance of profound contempt. They went out. The turnkey closed the door behind them.

'He was wealthy once, perhaps?' said the inspector.

'Or dreamed he was, and awoke mad.'

'After all,' said the inspector, 'if he had been rich, he would not have been here.'

So the matter ended for the Abbé Faria. He remained in his cell, and this visit only increased the belief in his insanity.

Caligula or Nero, those treasure-seekers, those desirers of the impossible, would have accorded to the poor wretch, in exchange for his wealth, the liberty he so earnestly prayed for. But the kings of modern times, restrained by the limits of mere probability, have neither courage nor desire. They fear the ear that hears their orders, and the eye that scrutinizes their actions. Formerly they believed themselves sprung from Jupiter, and shielded by their birth; but nowadays they are not inviolable.

It has always been against the policy of despotic governments to suffer the victims of their persecutions to reappear. As the Inquisition rarely allowed its victims to be seen with their limbs distorted and their flesh lacerated by torture, so madness is always concealed in its cell, from whence, should it depart, it is conveyed to some gloomy hospital, where the doctor has no thought for man or mind in the mutilated being the jailer delivers to him. The very madness of the Abbé Faria, gone mad in prison, condemned him to perpetual captivity.

The inspector kept his word with Dantès; he examined the register, and found the following note concerning him:

Edmond Dantès:

Violent Bonapartist; took an active part in the return from Elba.

The greatest watchfulness and care to be exercised.

recurred to his mind, and every line gleamed forth in fiery letters on the wall like the *mene, mene, tekel upharsin* of Belshazzar. He told himself that it was the enmity of man, and not the vengeance of Heaven, that had thus plunged him into the deepest misery. He consigned his unknown persecutors to the most horrible tortures he could imagine, and found them all insufficient, because after torture came death, and after death, if not repose, at least the boon of unconsciousness.

By dint of constantly dwelling on the idea that tranquillity was death, and if punishment were the end in view other tortures than death must be invented, he began to reflect on suicide. Unhappy he, who, on the brink of misfortune, broods over ideas like these!

Before him is a dead sea that stretches in azure calm before the eye; but he who unwarily ventures within its embrace finds himself struggling with a monster that would drag him down to perdition. Once thus ensnared, unless the protecting hand of God snatch him thence, all is over, and his struggles but tend to hasten his destruction. This state of mental anguish is, however, less terrible than the sufferings that precede or the punishment that possibly will follow. There is a sort of consolation at the contemplation of the yawning abyss, at the bottom of which lie darkness and obscurity.

Edmond found some solace in these ideas. All his sorrows, all his sufferings, with their train of gloomy spectres, fled from his cell when the angel of death seemed about to enter. Dantès reviewed his past life with composure, and, looking forward with terror to his future existence, chose that middle line that seemed to afford him a refuge.

'Sometimes,' said he, 'in my voyages, when I was a man and commanded other men, I have seen the heavens overcast, the sea rage and foam, the storm arise, and, like a monstrous bird, beating the two horizons with its wings. Then I felt that my vessel was a vain refuge, that trembled and shook before the tempest. Soon the fury of the waves and the sight of the sharp rocks announced the approach of death, and death then terrified me, and I used all my skill and intelligence as a man and a sailor to struggle against the wrath of God. But I did so because I was happy, because I had not courted death, because to be cast upon a bed of rocks and seaweed seemed terrible, because I was unwilling that I, a creature made for the service of God, should serve for food to the gulls and ravens. But now it is different; I have lost all that bound

me to life, death smiles and invites me to repose; I die after my own manner, I die exhausted and broken-spirited, as I fall asleep when I have paced three thousand times round my cell,—that is thirty thousand steps, or about ten leagues.'

No sooner had this idea taken possession of him than he became more composed, arranged his couch to the best of his power, ate little and slept less, and found existence almost supportable, because he felt that he could throw it off at pleasure, like a worn-out garment. Two methods of self-destruction were at his disposal. He could hang himself with his handkerchief to the window bars, or refuse food and die of starvation. But the first was repugnant to him. Dantès had always entertained the greatest horror of pirates, who are hung up to the yard-arm; he would not die by what seemed an infamous death. He resolved to adopt the second, and began that day to carry out his resolve. Nearly four years had passed away; at the end of the second he had ceased to mark the lapse of time. Dantès said, 'I wish to die,' and had chosen the manner of his death, and fearful of changing his mind, he had taken an oath to die. 'When my morning and evening meals are brought,' thought he, 'I will cast them out of the window, and they will think that I have eaten them.'

He kept his word; twice a day he cast out, through the barred aperture, the provisions his jailer brought him—at first gayly, then with deliberation, and at last with regret. Nothing but the recollection of his oath gave him strength to proceed. Hunger made viands once repugnant, now acceptable; he held the plate in his hand for an hour at a time, and gazed thoughtfully at the morsel of bad meat, of tainted fish, of black and mouldy bread. It was the last yearning for life contending with the resolution of despair; then his dungeon seemed less sombre, his prospects less desperate. He was still young—he was only four or five-and-twenty—he had nearly fifty years to live. What unforseen events might not open his prison door, and restore him to liberty? Then he raised to his lips the repast that, like a voluntary Tantalus, he refused himself; but he thought of his oath, and he would not break it. He persisted until, at last, he had not sufficient strength to rise and cast his supper out of the loophole. The next morning he could not see or hear; the jailer feared he was dangerously ill. Edmond hoped he was dying.

Thus the day passed away. Edmond felt a sort of stupor creeping over him which brought with it a feeling almost of content; the gnawing pain at

'Unfortunately,' said the governor, 'I know beforehand what you are about to say; it concerns your treasures, does it not?' Faria fixed his eyes on him with an expression that would have convinced anyone else of his sanity.

'Of course,' said he; 'of what else should I speak?'

'Mr. Inspector,' continued the governor, 'I can tell you the story as well as he, for it has been dinned in my ears for the last four or five years.'

'That proves,' returned the abbé, 'that you are like those of Holy Writ, who having eyes see not, and having ears hear not.'

'My dear sir, the government is rich and does not want your treasures,' replied the inspector; 'keep them until you are liberated.' The abbé's eyes glistened; he seized the inspector's hand.

'But what if I am not liberated,' cried he, 'and am detained here until my death? this treasure will be lost. Had not government better profit by it? I will offer six millions, and I will content myself with the rest, if they will only give me my liberty.'

'On my word,' said the inspector in a low tone, 'had I not been told beforehand that this man was mad, I should believe what he says.'

'I am not mad,' replied Faria, with that acuteness of hearing peculiar to prisoners. 'The treasure I speak of really exists, and I offer to sign an agreement with you, in which I promise to lead you to the spot where you shall dig; and if I deceive you, bring me here again,—I ask no more.'

The governor laughed. 'Is the spot far from here?'

'A hundred leagues.'

'It is not ill-planned,' said the governor. 'If all the prisoners took it into their heads to travel a hundred leagues, and their guardians consented to accompany them, they would have a capital chance of escaping.'

'The scheme is well known,' said the inspector; 'and the abbé's plan has not even the merit of originality.'

Then turning to Faria, 'I inquired if you are well fed?' said he.

'Swear to me,' replied Faria, 'to free me if what I tell you prove true, and I will stay here while you go to the spot.'

'Are you well fed?' repeated the inspector.

'Monsieur, you run no risk, for, as I told you, I will stay here; so there is no chance of my escaping.'

'You do not reply to my question,' replied the inspector impatiently.

'Monsieur,' continued the prisoner, 'I am the Abbé Faria, born at Rome. I was for twenty years Cardinal Spada's secretary; I was arrested, why, I know not, toward the beginning of the year 1811; since then I have demanded my liberty from the Italian and French government.'

'Why from the French government?'

'Because I was arrested at Piombino, and I presume that, like Milan and Florence, Piombino has become the capital of some French department.'

'Ah,' said the inspector, 'you have not the latest news from Italy?'

'My information dates from the day on which I was arrested,' returned the Abbé Faria; 'and as the emperor had created the kingdom of Rome for his infant son, I presume that he has realized the dream of Machiavelli and Cæsar Borgia, which was to make Italy a united kingdom.'

'Monsieur,' returned the inspector, 'Providence has changed this gigantic plan you advocate so warmly.'

'It is the only means of rendering Italy strong, happy, and independent.'

'Very possibly; only I am not come to discuss politics, but to inquire if you have anything to ask or to complain of.'

'The food is the same as in other prisons,—that is, very bad; the lodging is very unhealthful, but, on the whole, passable for a dungeon; but it is not that which I wish to speak of, but a secret I have to reveal of the greatest importance.'

'We are coming to the point,' whispered the governor.

'It is for that reason I am delighted to see you,' continued the abbé, 'although you have disturbed me in a most important calculation, which, if it succeeded, would possibly change Newton's system. Could you allow me a few words in private.'

'What did I tell you?' said the governor.

'You knew him,' returned the inspector with a smile.

'What you ask is impossible, monsieur,' continued he, addressing Faria. 'But,' said the abbé, 'I would speak to you of a large sum, amounting to five millions.'

'The very sum you named,' whispered the inspector in his turn.

'However,' continued Faria, seeing that the inspector was about to depart, 'it is not absolutely necessary for us to be alone; the governor can be present.'

his stomach had ceased; his thirst had abated; when he closed his eyes he saw myriads of lights dancing before them like the will-o'-the-wisps that play about the marshes. It was the twilight of that mysterious country called Death!

Suddenly, about nine o'clock in the evening, Edmond heard a hollow sound in the wall against which he was lying.

So many loathsome animals inhabited the prison, that their noise did not, in general, awake him; but whether abstinence had quickened his faculties, or whether the noise was really louder than usual, Edmond raised his head and listened. It was a continual scratching, as if made by a huge claw, a powerful tooth, or some iron instrument attacking the stones.

Although weakened, the young man's brain instantly responded to the idea that haunts all prisoners—liberty! It seemed to him that heaven had at length taken pity on him, and had sent this noise to warn him on the very brink of the abyss. Perhaps one of those beloved ones he had so often thought of was thinking of him, and striving to diminish the distance that separated them.

No, no, doubtless he was deceived, and it was but one of those dreams that forerun death!

Edmond still heard the sound. It lasted nearly three hours; he then heard a noise of something falling, and all was silent.

Some hours afterwards it began again, nearer and more distinct. Edmond was intensely interested. Suddenly the jailer entered.

For a week since he had resolved to die, and during the four days that he had been carrying out his purpose, Edmond had not spoken to the attendant, had not answered him when he inquired what was the matter with him, and turned his face to the wall when he looked too curiously at him; but now the jailer might hear the noise and put an end to it, and so destroy a ray of something like hope that soothed his last moments.

The jailer brought him his breakfast. Dantès raised himself up and began to talk about everything; about the bad quality of the food, about the coldness of his dungeon, grumbling and complaining, in order to have an excuse for speaking louder, and wearying the patience of his jailer, who out of kindness of heart had brought broth and white bread for his prisoner.

Fortunately, he fancied that Dantès was delirious; and placing the food on the rickety table, he withdrew. Edmond listened, and the sound became more and more distinct.

'There can be no doubt about it,' thought he; 'it is some prisoner who is striving to obtain his freedom. Oh, if I were only there to help him!'

Suddenly another idea took possession of his mind, so used to misfortune, that it was scarcely capable of hope—the idea that the noise was made by workmen the governor had ordered to repair the neighboring dungeon.

It was easy to ascertain this; but how could he risk the question? It was easy to call his jailer's attention to the noise, and watch his countenance as he listened; but might he not by this means destroy hopes far more important than the short-lived satisfaction of his own curiosity? Unfortunately, Edmond's brain was still so feeble that he could not bend his thoughts to anything in particular. He saw but one means of restoring lucidity and clearness to his judgment. He turned his eyes towards the soup which the jailer had brought, rose, staggered towards it, raised the vessel to his lips, and drank off the contents with a feeling of indescribable pleasure.

He had the resolution to stop with this. He had often heard that shipwrecked persons had died through having eagerly devoured too much food. Edmond replaced on the table the bread he was about to devour, and returned to his couch—he did not wish to die. He soon felt that his ideas became again collected—he could think, and strengthen his thoughts by reasoning. Then he said to himself:

'I must put this to the test, but without compromising anybody. If it is a workman, I need but knock against the wall, and he will cease to work, in order to find out who is knocking, and why he does so; but as his occupation is sanctioned by the governor, he will soon resume it. If, on the contrary, it is a prisoner, the noise I make will alarm him, he will cease, and not begin again until he thinks everyone is asleep.'

Edmond rose again, but this time his legs did not tremble, and his sight was clear; he went to a corner of his dungeon, detached a stone, and with it knocked against the wall where the sound came. He struck thrice.

At the first blow the sound ceased, as if by magic.

Edmond listened intently; an hour passed, two hours passed, and no sound was heard from the wall—all was silent there.

Full of hope, Edmond swallowed a few mouthfuls of bread and water, and, thanks to the vigour of his constitution, found himself well-nigh recovered.

Dantès fell on his knees, and prayed earnestly. The door closed; but this time a fresh inmate was left with Dantès—Hope. 'Will you see the register at once,' asked the governor, 'or proceed to the other cell?'

'Let us visit them all,' said the inspector. 'If I once went up those stairs. I should never have the courage to come down again.'

'Ah, this one is not like the other, and his madness is less affecting than this one's display of reason.'

'What is his folly?'

'He fancies he possesses an immense treasure. The first year he offered government a million of francs for his release; the second, two; the third, three; and so on progressively. He is now in his fifth year of captivity; he will ask to speak to you in private, and offer you five millions.'

'How curious!—what is his name?'

'The Abbé Faria.'

'№ 27,' said the inspector.

'It is here; unlock the door, Antoine.'

The turnkey obeyed, and the inspector gazed curiously into the chamber of the *mad abbé*, as the prisoner was usually called.

In the centre of the cell, in a circle traced with a fragment of plaster detached from the wall, sat a man whose tattered garments scarcely covered him. He was drawing in this circle geometrical lines, and seemed as much absorbed in his problem as Archimedes was when the soldier of Marcellus slew him. He did not move at the sound of the door, and continued his calculations until the flash of the torches lighted up with an unwonted glare the sombre walls of his cell; then, raising his head, he perceived with astonishment the number of persons present. He hastily seized the coverlet of his bed, and wrapped it round him.

'What is it you want?' said the inspector.

'I, monsieur,' replied the abbé with an air of surprise,—'I want nothing.'

'You do not understand,' continued the inspector; 'I am sent here by government to visit the prison, and hear the requests of the prisoners.'

'Oh, that is different,' cried the abbé; 'and we shall understand each other, I hope.'

'There, now,' whispered the governor, 'it is just as I told you.'

'Only seventeen months,' replied Dantès. 'Oh, you do not know what is seventeen months in prison!—seventeen ages rather, especially to a man who, like me, had arrived at the summit of his ambition—to a man, who, like me, was on the point of marrying a woman he adored, who saw an honourable career opened before him, and who loses all in an instant—who sees his prospects destroyed, and is ignorant of the fate of his affianced wife, and whether his aged father be still living! Seventeen months' captivity to a sailor accustomed to the boundless ocean, is a worse punishment than human crime ever merited. Have pity on me, then, and ask for me, not intelligence, but a trial; not pardon, but a verdict—a trial, sir, I ask only for a trial; that, surely, cannot be denied to one who is accused!'

'We shall see,' said the inspector; then, turning to the governor, 'On my word, the poor devil touches me. You must show me the proofs against him.'

'Certainly; but you will find terrible charges.'

'Monsieur,' continued Dantès, 'I know it is not in your power to release me; but you can plead for me—you can have me tried—and that is all I ask. Let me know my crime, and the reason why I was condemned. Uncertainty is worse than all.'

'Go on with the lights,' said the inspector.

'Monsieur,' cried Dantès, 'I can tell by your voice you are touched with pity; tell me at least to hope.'

'I cannot tell you that,' replied the inspector; 'I can only promise to examine into your case.'

'Oh, I am free—then I am saved!'

'Who arrested you?'

'M. Villefort. See him, and hear what he says.'

'M. Villefort is no longer at Marseilles; he is now at Toulouse.'

'I am no longer surprised at my detention,' murmured Dantès, 'since my only protector is removed.'

'Had M. de Villefort any cause of personal dislike to you?'

'None; on the contrary, he was very kind to me.'

'I can, then, rely on the notes he has left concerning you?'

'Entirely.'

'That is well; wait patiently, then.'

The day passed away in utter silence—night came without recurrence of the noise.

'It is a prisoner,' said Edmond joyfully. His brain was on fire, and life and energy returned.

The night passed in perfect silence. Edmond did not close his eyes.

In the morning the jailer brought him fresh provisions—he had already devoured those of the previous day; he ate these listening anxiously for the sound, walking round and round his cell, shaking the iron bars of the loophole, restoring vigour and agility to his limbs by exercise, and so preparing himself for his future destiny. At intervals he listened to learn if the noise had not begun again, and grew impatient at the prudence of the prisoner, who did not guess he had been disturbed by a captive as anxious for liberty as himself.

Three days passed—seventy-two long tedious hours which he counted off by minutes!

At length one evening, as the jailer was visiting him for the last time that night, Dantès, with his ear for the hundredth time at the wall, fancied he heard an almost imperceptible movement among the stones. He moved away, walked up and down his cell to collect his thoughts, and then went back and listened.

The matter was no longer doubtful. Something was at work on the other side of the wall; the prisoner had discovered the danger, and had substituted a lever for a chisel.

Encouraged by this discovery, Edmond determined to assist the indefatigable laborer. He began by moving his bed, and looked around for anything with which he could pierce the wall, penetrate the moist cement, and displace a stone.

He saw nothing, he had no knife or sharp instrument, the window grating was of iron, but he had too often assured himself of its solidity. All his furniture consisted of a bed, a chair, a table, a pail, and a jug. The bed had iron clamps, but they were screwed to the wood, and it would have required a screw-driver to take them off. The table and chair had nothing, the pail had once possessed a handle, but that had been removed. Dantès had but one resource, which was to break the jug, and with one of the sharp fragments attack the wall. He let the jug fall on the floor, and it broke in pieces.

Dantès concealed two or three of the sharpest fragments in his bed, leaving the rest on the floor. The breaking of his jug was too natural an accident to excite suspicion. Edmond had all the night to work in, but in the darkness he could not do much, and he soon felt that he was working against something very hard; he pushed back his bed, and waited for day.

All night he heard the subterranean workman, who continued to mine his way. Day came, the jailer entered. Dantès told him that the jug had fallen from his hands while he was drinking, and the jailer went grumblingly to fetch another, without giving himself the trouble to remove the fragments of the broken one. He returned speedily, advised the prisoner to be more careful, and departed.

Dantès heard joyfully the key grate in the lock; he listened until the sound of steps died away, and then, hastily displacing his bed, saw by the faint light that penetrated into his cell, that he had laboured uselessly the previous evening in attacking the stone instead of removing the plaster that surrounded it.

The damp had rendered it friable, and Dantès was able to break it off—in small morsels, it is true, but at the end of half an hour he had scraped off a handful; a mathematician might have calculated that in two years, supposing that the rock was not encountered, a passage twenty feet long and two feet broad, might be formed.

The prisoner reproached himself with not having thus employed the hours he had passed in vain hopes, prayer, and despondency. During the six years that he had been imprisoned, what might he not have accomplished?

This idea imparted new energy, and in three days he had succeeded, with the utmost precaution, in removing the cement, and exposing the stone-work. The wall was built of rough stones, among which, to give strength to the structure, blocks of hewn stone were at intervals imbedded. It was one of these he had uncovered, and which he must remove from its socket.

Dantès strove to do this with his nails, but they were too weak. The fragments of the jug broke, and after an hour of useless toil, Dantès paused with anguish on his brow.

Was he to be thus stopped at the beginning, and was he to wait inactive until his fellow workman had completed his task? Suddenly an idea occurred to him—he smiled, and the perspiration dried on his forehead.

'By all means,' replied the governor, and he signed to the turnkey to open the door. At the sound of the key turning in the lock, and the creaking of the hinges, Dantès, who was crouched in a corner of the dungeon, whence he could see the ray of light that came through a narrow iron grating above, raised his head. Seeing a stranger, escorted by two turnkeys holding torches and accompanied by two soldiers, and to whom the governor spoke bareheaded, Dantès, who guessed the truth, and that the moment to address himself to the superior authorities was come, sprang forward with clasped hands.

The soldiers interposed their bayonets, for they thought that he was about to attack the inspector, and the latter recoiled two or three steps. Dantès saw that he was looked upon as dangerous. Then, infusing all the humility he possessed into his eyes and voice, he addressed the inspector, and sought to inspire him with pity.

The inspector listened attentively; then, turning to the governor, observed, 'He will become religious—he is already more gentle; he is afraid, and retreated before the bayonets—madmen are not afraid of anything; I made some curious observations on this at Charenton.' Then, turning to the prisoner, 'What is it you want?' said he.

'I want to know what crime I have committed—to be tried; and if I am guilty, to be shot; if innocent, to be set at liberty.'

'Are you well fed?' said the inspector.

'I believe so; I don't know; it's of no consequence. What matters really, not only to me, but to officers of justice and the king, is that an innocent man should languish in prison, the victim of an infamous denunciation, to die here cursing his executioners.'

'You are very humble today,' remarked the governor; 'you are not so always; the other day, for instance, when you tried to kill the turnkey.'

'It is true, sir, and I beg his pardon, for he has always been very good to me, but I was mad.'

'And you are not so any longer?'

'No; captivity has subdued me—I have been here so long.'

'So long?—when were you arrested, then?' asked the inspector.

'The 28th of February, 1815, at half-past two in the afternoon.'

'Today is the 30th of July, 1816,—why, it is but seventeen months.'