the worthy shipowner became at that moment—we will not say all powerful, because Morrel was a prudent and rather a timid man, so much so, that many of the most zealous partisans of Bonaparte accused him of 'moderation'—but sufficiently influential to make a demand in favour of Dantès.

Villefort retained his place, but his marriage was put off until a more favourable opportunity. If the emperor remained on the throne, Gérard required a different alliance to aid his career; if Louis XVIII. returned, the influence of M. de Saint-Méran, like his own, could be vastly increased, and the marriage be still more suitable. The deputy procureur was, therefore, the first magistrate of Marseilles, when one morning his door opened, and M. Morrel was announced.

Anyone else would have hastened to receive him; but Villefort was a man of ability, and he knew this would be a sign of weakness. He made Morrel wait in the antechamber, although he had no one with him, for the simple reason that the king's procureur always makes everyone wait, and after passing a quarter of an hour in reading the papers, he ordered M. Morrel to be admitted.

Morrel expected Villefort would be dejected; he found him as he had found him six weeks before, calm, firm, and full of that glacial politeness, that most insurmountable barrier which separates the well-bred from the vulgar man.

He had entered Villefort's office expecting that the magistrate would tremble at the sight of him; on the contrary, he felt a cold shudder all over him when he saw Villefort sitting there with his elbow on his desk, and his head leaning on his hand. He stopped at the door; Villefort gazed at him as if he had some difficulty in recognizing him; then, after a brief interval, during which the honest shipowner turned his hat in his hands,

'M. Morrel, I believe?' said Villefort.

'Yes, sir.'

'Come nearer,' said the magistrate, with a patronizing wave of the hand, 'and tell me to what circumstance I owe the honour of this visit.'

'Do you not guess, monsieur?' asked Morrel.

'Not in the least; but if I can serve you in any way I shall be delighted.'

'Everything depends on you.'

'Explain yourself, pray.'

'Monsieur,' said Morrel, recovering his assurance as he proceeded, 'do you recollect that a few days before the landing of his majesty the emperor, I came

to intercede for a young man, the mate of my ship, who was accused of being concerned in correspondence with the Island of Elba? What was the other day a crime is today a title to favour. You then served Louis XVIII., and you did not show any favour—it was your duty; today you serve Napoleon, and you ought to protect him—it is equally your duty; I come, therefore, to ask what has become of him?' Villefort by a strong effort sought to control himself. 'What is his name?' said he. 'Tell me his name.'

'Edmond Dantès.'

Villefort would probably have rather stood opposite the muzzle of a pistol at five-and-twenty paces than have heard this name spoken; but he did not blanch.

'Dantès,' repeated he, 'Edmond Dantès.'

'Yes, monsieur.' Villefort opened a large register, then went to a table, from the table turned to his registers, and then, turning to Morrel,

'Are you quite sure you are not mistaken, monsieur?' said he, in the most natural tone in the world.

Had Morrel been a more quick-sighted man, or better versed in these matters, he would have been surprised at the king's procureur answering him on such a subject, instead of referring him to the governors of the prison or the prefect of the department. But Morrel, disappointed in his expectations of exciting fear, was conscious only of the other's condescension. Villefort had calculated rightly.

'No,' said Morrel; 'I am not mistaken. I have known him for ten years, the last four of which he was in my service. Do not you recollect, I came about six weeks ago to plead for clemency, as I come today to plead for justice. You received me very coldly. Oh, the royalists were very severe with the Bonapartists in those days.'

'Monsieur,' returned Villefort, 'I was then a royalist, because I believed the Bourbons not only the heirs to the throne, but the chosen of the nation. The miraculous return of Napoleon has conquered me, the legitimate monarch is he who is loved by his people.'

'That's right!' cried Morrel. 'I like to hear you speak thus, and I augur well for Edmond from it.'

'Wait a moment,' said Villefort, turning over the leaves of a register; 'I have it—a sailor, who was about to marry a young Catalan girl. I recollect now; it was a very serious charge.'

'How so?'

'You know that when he left here he was taken to the Palais de Justice.'

'Well?'

'I made my report to the authorities at Paris, and a week after he was carried off.'

'Carried off!' said Morrel. 'What can they have done with him?'

'Oh, he has been taken to Fenestrelles, to Pignerol, or to the Sainte-Marguérite islands. Some fine morning he will return to take command of your vessel.'

'Come when he will, it shall be kept for him. But how is it he is not already returned? It seems to me the first care of government should be to set at liberty those who have suffered for their adherence to it.'

'Do not be too hasty, M. Morrel,' replied Villefort. 'The order of imprisonment came from high authority, and the order for his liberation must proceed from the same source; and, as Napoleon has scarcely been reinstated a fortnight, the letters have not yet been forwarded.'

'But,' said Morrel, 'is there no way of expediting all these formalities—of releasing him from arrest?'

'There has been no arrest.'

'How?'

'It is sometimes essential to government to cause a man's disappearance without leaving any traces, so that no written forms or documents may defeat their wishes.'

'It might be so under the Bourbons, but at present— '

'It has always been so, my dear Morrel, since the reign of Louis XIV. The emperor is more strict in prison discipline than even Louis himself, and the number of prisoners whose names are not on the register is incalculable.' Had Morrel even any suspicions, so much kindness would have dispelled them.

'Well, M. de Villefort, how would you advise me to act?' asked he.

'Petition the minister.'

'Oh, I know what that is; the minister receives two hundred petitions every day, and does not read three.'

Chapter XIII

The Hundred Days

M. Noirtier was a true prophet, and things progressed rapidly, as he had predicted. Everyone knows the history of the famous return from Elba, a return which was unprecedented in the past, and will probably remain without a counterpart in the future.

Louis XVIII. made but a faint attempt to parry this unexpected blow; the monarchy he had scarcely reconstructed tottered on its precarious foundation, and at a sign from the emperor the incongruous structure of ancient prejudices and new ideas fell to the ground. Villefort, therefore, gained nothing save the king's gratitude (which was rather likely to injure him at the present time) and the cross of the Legion of honour, which he had the prudence not to wear, although M. de Blacas had duly forwarded the brevet.

Napoleon would, doubtless, have deprived Villefort of his office had it not been for Noirtier, who was all powerful at court, and thus the Girondin of '93 and the Senator of 1806 protected him who so lately had been his protector. All Villefort's influence barely enabled him to stifle the secret Dantès had so nearly divulged. The king's procureur alone was deprived of his office, being suspected of royalism.

However, scarcely was the imperial power established—that is, scarcely had the emperor re-entered the Tuileries and begun to issue orders from the closet into which we have introduced our readers,—he found on the table there Louis XVIII.'s half-filled snuff-box,—scarcely had this occurred when Marseilles began, in spite of the authorities, to rekindle the flames of civil war, always smouldering in the south, and it required but little to excite the populace to acts of far greater violence than the shouts and insults with which they assailed the royalists whenever they ventured abroad. Owing to this change,

'That is true; but he will read a petition countersigned and presented by me.'

'And will you undertake to deliver it?'

'With the greatest pleasure. Dantès was then guilty, and now he is innocent, and it is as much my duty to free him as it was to condemn him.' Villefort thus forestalled any danger of an inquiry, which, however improbable it might be, if it did take place would leave him defenceless.

'But how shall I address the minister?'

'Sit down there,' said Villefort, giving up his place to Morrel, 'and write what I dictate.'

'Will you be so good?'

'Certainly. But lose no time; we have lost too much already.'

'That is true. Only think what the poor fellow may even now be suffering.'

Villefort shuddered at the suggestion; but he had gone too far to draw back. Dantès must be crushed to gratify Villefort's ambition.

Villefort dictated a petition, in which, from an excellent intention, no doubt, Dantès' patriotic services were exaggerated, and he was made out one of the most active agents of Napoleon's return. It was evident that at the sight of this document the minister would instantly release him. The petition finished, Villefort read it aloud.

'That will do,' said he; 'leave the rest to me.'

'Will the petition go soon?'

'Today.'

'Countersigned by you?'

'The best thing I can do will be to certify the truth of the contents of your petition.' And, sitting down, Villefort wrote the certificate at the bottom.

'What more is to be done?'

'I will do whatever is necessary.' This assurance delighted Morrel, who took leave of Villefort, and hastened to announce to old Dantès that he would soon see his son.

As for Villefort, instead of sending to Paris, he carefully preserved the petition that so fearfully compromised Dantès, in the hopes of an event that seemed not unlikely,—that is, a second restoration. Dantès remained a prisoner, and heard not the noise of the fall of Louis XVIII.'s throne, or the still more tragic destruction of the empire.

Twice during the Hundred Days had Morrel renewed his demand, and twice had Villefort soothed him with promises. At last there was Waterloo, and Morrel came no more; he had done all that was in his power, and any fresh attempt would only compromise himself uselessly.

Louis XVIII. remounted the throne; Villefort, to whom Marseilles had become filled with remorseful memories, sought and obtained the situation of king's procureur at Toulouse, and a fortnight afterwards he married Mademoiselle de Saint-Méran, whose father now stood higher at court than ever.

And so Dantès, after the Hundred Days and after Waterloo, remained in his dungeon, forgotten of earth and heaven.

Danglars comprehended the full extent of the wretched fate that overwhelmed Dantès; and, when Napoleon returned to France, he, after the manner of mediocre minds, termed the coincidence, *a decree of Providence*. But when Napoleon returned to Paris, Danglars' heart failed him, and he lived in constant fear of Dantès' return on a mission of vengeance. He therefore informed M. Morrel of his wish to quit the sea, and obtained a recommendation from him to a Spanish merchant, into whose service he entered at the end of March, that is, ten or twelve days after Napoleon's return. He then left for Madrid, and was no more heard of.

Fernand understood nothing except that Dantès was absent. What had become of him he cared not to inquire. Only, during the respite the absence of his rival afforded him, he reflected, partly on the means of deceiving Mercédès as to the cause of his absence, partly on plans of emigration and abduction, as from time to time he sat sad and motionless on the summit of Cape Pharo, at the spot from whence Marseilles and the Catalans are visible, watching for the apparition of a young and handsome man, who was for him also the messenger of vengeance. Fernand's mind was made up; he would shoot Dantès, and then kill himself. But Fernand was mistaken; a man of his disposition never kills himself, for he constantly hopes.

During this time the empire made its last conscription, and every man in France capable of bearing arms rushed to obey the summons of the emperor. Fernand departed with the rest, bearing with him the terrible thought that while he was away, his rival would perhaps return and marry Mercédès. Had Fernand really meant to kill himself, he would have done so when he parted from Mercédès. His devotion, and the compassion he showed for her misfor-

done; return with all speed; enter Marseilles at night, and your house by the back-door, and there remain, quiet, submissive, secret, and, above all, inoffensive; for this time, I swear to you, we shall act like powerful men who know their enemies. Go, my son—go, my dear Gérard, and by your obedience to my paternal orders, or, if you prefer it, friendly counsels, we will keep you in your place. This will be,' added Noirtier, with a smile, 'one means by which you may a second time save me, if the political balance should some day take another turn, and cast you aloft while hurling me down. Adieu, my dear Gérard, and at your next journey alight at my door.'

Noirtier left the room when he had finished, with the same calmness that had characterized him during the whole of this remarkable and trying conversation. Villefort, pale and agitated, ran to the window, put aside the curtain, and saw him pass, cool and collected, by two or three ill-looking men at the corner of the street, who were there, perhaps, to arrest a man with black whiskers, and a blue frock-coat, and hat with broad brim.

Villefort stood watching, breathless, until his father had disappeared at the Rue Bussy. Then he turned to the various articles he had left behind him, put the black cravat and blue frock-coat at the bottom of the portmanteau, threw the hat into a dark closet, broke the cane into small bits and flung it in the fire, put on his travelling-cap, and calling his valet, checked with a look the thousand questions he was ready to ask, paid his bill, sprang into his carriage, which was ready, learned at Lyons that Bonaparte had entered Grenoble, and in the midst of the tumult which prevailed along the road, at length reached Marseilles, a prey to all the hopes and fears which enter into the heart of man with ambition and its first successes.

a narrow-brimmed hat of his son's, which appeared to fit him perfectly, and, leaving his cane in the corner where he had deposited it, he took up a small bamboo switch, cut the air with it once or twice, and walked about with that easy swagger which was one of his principal characteristics.

'Well,' he said, turning towards his wondering son, when this disguise was completed, 'well, do you think your police will recognize me now.'

'No, father,' stammered Villefort; 'at least, I hope not.'

'And now, my dear boy,' continued Noirtier, 'I rely on your prudence to remove all the things which I leave in your care.'

'Oh, rely on me,' said Villefort.

'Yes, yes; and now I believe you are right, and that you have really saved my life; be assured I will return the favour hereafter.'

Villefort shook his head.

'You are not convinced yet?'

'I hope at least, that you may be mistaken.'

'Shall you see the king again?'

'Perhaps.'

'Would you pass in his eyes for a prophet?'

'Prophets of evil are not in favour at the court, father.'

'True, but some day they do them justice; and supposing a second restoration, you would then pass for a great man.'

'Well, what should I say to the king?'

'Say this to him: "Sire, you are deceived as to the feeling in France, as to the opinions of the towns, and the prejudices of the army; he whom in Paris you call the Corsican ogre, who at Nevers is styled the usurper, is already saluted as Bonaparte at Lyons, and emperor at Grenoble. You think he is tracked, pursued, captured; he is advancing as rapidly as his own eagles. The soldiers you believe to be dying with hunger, worn out with fatigue, ready to desert, gather like atoms of snow about the rolling ball as it hastens onward. Sire, go, leave France to its real master, to him who acquired it, not by purchase, but by right of conquest; go, sire, not that you incur any risk, for your adversary is powerful enough to show you mercy, but because it would be humiliating for a grandson of Saint Louis to owe his life to the man of Arcola, Marengo, Austerlitz." Tell him this, Gérard; or, rather, tell him nothing. Keep your journey a secret; do not boast of what you have come to Paris to do, or have

tunes, produced the effect they always produce on noble minds—Mercédès had always had a sincere regard for Fernand, and this was now strengthened by gratitude.

'My brother,' said she, as she placed his knapsack on his shoulders, 'be careful of yourself, for if you are killed, I shall be alone in the world.' These words carried a ray of hope into Fernand's heart. Should Dantès not return, Mercédès might one day be his. Mercédès was left alone face to face with the vast plain that had never seemed so barren, and the sea that had never seemed so vast. Bathed in tears she wandered about the Catalan village. Sometimes she stood mute and motionless as a statue, looking towards Marseilles, at other times gazing on the sea, and debating as to whether it were not better to cast herself into the abyss of the ocean, and thus end her woes. It was not want of courage that prevented her putting this resolution into execution; but her religious feelings came to her aid and saved her.

Caderousse was, like Fernand, enrolled in the army, but, being married and eight years older, he was merely sent to the frontier. Old Dantès, who was only sustained by hope, lost all hope at Napoleon's downfall. Five months after he had been separated from his son, and almost at the hour of his arrest, he breathed his last in Mercédès' arms. M. Morrel paid the expenses of his funeral, and a few small debts the poor old man had contracted.

There was more than benevolence in this action; there was courage; the south was aflame, and to assist, even on his death-bed, the father of so dangerous a Bonapartist as Dantès, was stigmatized as a crime.

'Eh? the thing is simple enough. You who are in power have only the means that money produces—we who are in expectation, have those which devotion prompts.'

'Devotion!' said Villefort, with a sneer.

'Yes, devotion; for that is, I believe, the phrase for hopeful ambition.'

And Villefort's father extended his hand to the bell-rope, to summon the servant whom his son had not called. Villefort caught his arm.

'Wait, my dear father,' said the young man, 'one word more.'

'Say on.'

'However stupid the royalist police may be, they do know one terrible thing.'

'What is that?'

'The description of the man who, on the morning of the day when General Quesnel disappeared, presented himself at his house.'

'Oh, the admirable police have found that out, have they? And what may be that description?'

'Dark complexion; hair, eyebrows, and whiskers black; blue frock-coat, buttoned up to the chin; rosette of an officer of the Legion of Honour in his button-hole; a hat with wide brim, and a cane.'

'Ah, ha, that's it, is it?' said Noirtier; 'and why, then, have they not laid hands on him?'

'Because yesterday, or the day before, they lost sight of him at the corner of the Rue Coq-Héron.'

'Didn't I say that your police were good for nothing?'

'Yes; but they may catch him yet.'

'True,' said Noirtier, looking carelessly around him, 'true, if this person were not on his guard, as he is;' and he added with a smile, 'He will consequently make a few changes in his personal appearance.' At these words he rose, and put off his frock-coat and cravat, went towards a table on which lay his son's toilet articles, lathered his face, took a razor, and, with a firm hand, cut off the compromising whiskers. Villefort watched him with alarm not devoid of admiration.

His whiskers cut off, Noirtier gave another turn to his hair; took, instead of his black cravat, a coloured neckerchief which lay at the top of an open portmanteau; put on, in lieu of his blue and high-buttoned frock-coat, a coat of Villefort's of dark brown, and cut away in front; tried on before the glass

Did I ever say to you, when you were fulfilling your character as a royalist, and cut off the head of one of my party, "My son, you have committed a murder?" No, I said, "Very well, sir, you have gained the victory; tomorrow, perchance, it will be our turn."'

'But, father, take care; when our turn comes, our revenge will be sweeping.'

'I do not understand you.'

'You rely on the usurper's return?'

'We do.'

'You are mistaken; he will not advance two leagues into the interior of France without being followed, tracked, and caught like a wild beast.'

'My dear fellow, the emperor is at this moment on the way to Grenoble; on the 10th or 12th he will be at Lyons, and on the 20th or 25th at Paris.'

'The people will rise.'

'Yes, to go and meet him.'

'He has but a handful of men with him, and armies will be despatched against him.'

'Yes, to escort him into the capital. Really, my dear Gérard, you are but a child; you think yourself well informed because the telegraph has told you, three days after the landing, "The usurper has landed at Cannes with several men. He is pursued." But where is he? what is he doing? You do not know at all, and in this way they will chase him to Paris, without drawing a trigger.'

'Grenoble and Lyons are faithful cities, and will oppose to him an impassable barrier.'

'Grenoble will open her gates to him with enthusiasm—all Lyons will hasten to welcome him. Believe me, we are as well informed as you, and our police are as good as your own. Would you like a proof of it? well, you wished to conceal your journey from me, and yet I knew of your arrival half an hour after you had passed the barrier. You gave your direction to no one but your postilion, yet I have your address, and in proof I am here the very instant you are going to sit at table. Ring, then, if you please, for a second knife, fork, and plate, and we will dine together.'

'Indeed!' replied Villefort, looking at his father with astonishment, 'you really do seem very well informed.'

Chapter XIV

The Two Prisoners

A year after Louis XVIII.'s restoration, a visit was made by the inspector-general of prisons. Dantès in his cell heard the noise of preparation,—sounds that at the depth where he lay would have been inaudible to any but the ear of a prisoner, who could hear the splash of the drop of water that every hour fell from the roof of his dungeon. He guessed something uncommon was passing among the living; but he had so long ceased to have any intercourse with the world, that he looked upon himself as dead.

The inspector visited, one after another, the cells and dungeons of several of the prisoners, whose good behaviour or stupidity recommended them to the clemency of the government. He inquired how they were fed, and if they had any request to make. The universal response was, that the fare was detestable, and that they wanted to be set free.

The inspector asked if they had anything else to ask for. They shook their heads. What could they desire beyond their liberty? The inspector turned smilingly to the governor.

'I do not know what reason government can assign for these useless visits; when you see one prisoner, you see all,—always the same thing,—ill fed and innocent. Are there any others?'

'Yes; the dangerous and mad prisoners are in the dungeons.'

'Let us visit them,' said the inspector with an air of fatigue. 'We must play the farce to the end. Let us see the dungeons.'

'Let us first send for two soldiers,' said the governor. 'The prisoners sometimes, through mere uneasiness of life, and in order to be sentenced to death, commit acts of useless violence, and you might fall a victim.'

'Take all needful precautions,' replied the inspector.

Two soldiers were accordingly sent for, and the inspector descended a stairway, so foul, so humid, so dark, as to be loathsome to sight, smell, and respiration.

'Oh,' cried the inspector, 'who can live here?'

'A most dangerous conspirator, a man we are ordered to keep the most strict watch over, as he is daring and resolute.'

'He is alone?'

'Certainly.'

'How long has he been there?'

'Nearly a year.'

'Was he placed here when he first arrived?'

'No; not until he attempted to kill the turnkey, who took his food to him.'

'To kill the turnkey?'

'Yes, the very one who is lighting us. Is it not true, Antoine?' asked the governor.

'True enough; he wanted to kill me!' returned the turnkey.

'He must be mad,' said the inspector.

'He is worse than that,—he is a devil!' returned the turnkey.

'Shall I complain of him?' demanded the inspector.

'Oh, no; it is useless. Besides, he is almost mad now, and in another year he will be quite so.'

'So much the better for him,—he will suffer less,' said the inspector. He was, as this remark shows, a man full of philanthropy, and in every way fit for his office.

'You are right, sir,' replied the governor; 'and this remark proves that you have deeply considered the subject. Now we have in a dungeon about twenty feet distant, and to which you descend by another stair, an old abbé, formerly leader of a party in Italy, who has been here since 1811, and in 1813 he went mad, and the change is astonishing. He used to weep, he now laughs; he grew thin, he now grows fat. You had better see him, for his madness is amusing.'

'I will see them both,' returned the inspector; 'I must conscientiously perform my duty.'

This was the inspector's first visit; he wished to display his authority.

'Let us visit this one first,' added he.

'You do? Why, really, the thing becomes more and more dramatic—explain yourself.'

'I must refer again to the club in the Rue Saint-Jacques.'

'It appears that this club is rather a bore to the police. Why didn't they search more vigilantly? they would have found— '

'They have not found; but they are on the track.'

'Yes, that the usual phrase; I am quite familiar with it. When the police is at fault, it declares that it is on the track; and the government patiently awaits the day when it comes to say, with a sneaking air, that the track is lost.'

'Yes, but they have found a corpse; the general has been killed, and in all countries they call that a murder.'

'A murder do you call it? why, there is nothing to prove that the general was murdered. People are found every day in the Seine, having thrown themselves in, or having been drowned from not knowing how to swim.'

'Father, you know very well that the general was not a man to drown himself in despair, and people do not bathe in the Seine in the month of January. No, no, do not be deceived; this was murder in every sense of the word.'

'And who thus designated it?'

'The king himself.'

'The king! I thought he was philosopher enough to allow that there was no murder in politics. In politics, my dear fellow, you know, as well as I do, there are no men, but ideas—no feelings, but interests; in politics we do not kill a man, we only remove an obstacle, that is all. Would you like to know how matters have progressed? Well, I will tell you. It was thought reliance might be placed in General Quesnel; he was recommended to us from the Island of Elba; one of us went to him, and invited him to the Rue Saint-Jacques, where he would find some friends. He came there, and the plan was unfolded to him for leaving Elba, the projected landing, etc. When he had heard and comprehended all to the fullest extent, he replied that he was a royalist. Then all looked at each other,—he was made to take an oath, and did so, but with such an ill grace that it was really tempting Providence to swear thus, and yet, in spite of that, the general was allowed to depart free—perfectly free. Yet he did not return home. What could that mean? why, my dear fellow, that on leaving us he lost his way, that's all. A murder? really, Villefort, you surprise me. You, a deputy procureur, to found an accusation on such bad premises!