Chapter VI

The Deputy Procureur du Roi

In one of the aristocratic mansions built by Puget in the Rue du Grand Cours opposite the Medusa fountain, a second marriage feast was being celebrated, almost at the same hour with the nuptial repast given by Dantès. In this case, however, although the occasion of the entertainment was similar, the company was strikingly dissimilar. Instead of a rude mixture of sailors, soldiers, and those belonging to the humblest grade of life, the present assembly was composed of the very flower of Marseilles society,—magistrates who had resigned their office during the usurper's reign; officers who had deserted from the imperial army and joined forces with Condé; and younger members of families, brought up to hate and execrate the man whom five years of exile would convert into a martyr, and fifteen of restoration elevate to the rank of a god.

The guests were still at table, and the heated and energetic conversation that prevailed betrayed the violent and vindictive passions that then agitated each dweller of the South, where unhappily, for five centuries religious strife had long given increased bitterness to the violence of party feeling.

The emperor, now king of the petty Island of Elba, after having held sovereign sway over one-half of the world, counting as his subjects a small population of five or six thousand souls,—after having been accustomed to hear the '*Vive Napoléons*' of a hundred and twenty millions of human beings, uttered in ten different languages,—was looked upon here as a ruined man, separated forever from any fresh connection with France or claim to her throne.

The magistrates freely discussed their political views; the military part of the company talked unreservedly of Moscow and Leipsic, while the women commented on the divorce of Josephine. It was not over the downfall of the

man, but over the defeat of the Napoleonic idea, that they rejoiced, and in this they foresaw for themselves the bright and cheering prospect of a revivified political existence.

An old man, decorated with the cross of Saint Louis, now rose and proposed the health of King Louis XVIII. It was the Marquis de Saint-Méran. This toast, recalling at once the patient exile of Hartwell and the peace-loving King of France, excited universal enthusiasm; glasses were elevated in the air *à l'Anglaise*, and the ladies, snatching their bouquets from their fair bosoms, strewed the table with their floral treasures. In a word, an almost poetical fervour prevailed.

'Ah,' said the Marquise de Saint-Méran, a woman with a stern, forbidding eye, though still noble and distinguished in appearance, despite her fifty years—'ah, these revolutionists, who have driven us from those very possessions they afterwards purchased for a mere trifle during the Reign of Terror, would be compelled to own, were they here, that all true devotion was on our side, since we were content to follow the fortunes of a falling monarch, while they, on the contrary, made their fortune by worshipping the rising sun; yes, yes, they could not help admitting that the king, for whom we sacrificed rank, wealth, and station was truly our "Louis the well-beloved," while their wretched usurper has been, and ever will be, to them their evil genius, their "Napoleon the accursed." Am I not right, Villefort?'

'I beg your pardon, madame. I really must pray you to excuse me, but—in truth—I was not attending to the conversation.'

'Marquise, marquise!' interposed the old nobleman who had proposed the toast, 'let the young people alone; let me tell you, on one's wedding day there are more agreeable subjects of conversation than dry politics.'

'Never mind, dearest mother,' said a young and lovely girl, with a profusion of light brown hair, and eyes that seemed to float in liquid crystal, ''tis all my fault for seizing upon M. de Villefort, so as to prevent his listening to what you said. But there—now take him—he is your own for as long as you like. M. Villefort, I beg to remind you my mother speaks to you.'

'If the marquise will deign to repeat the words I but imperfectly caught, I shall be delighted to answer,' said M. de Villefort.

'Never mind, Renée,' replied the marquise, with a look of tenderness that seemed out of keeping with her harsh dry features; but, however all other feelings may be withered in a woman's nature, there is always one bright

and fro, and muttering as he went, after the manner of one whose mind was overcharged with one absorbing idea.

'So far, then,' said Danglars, mentally, 'all has gone as I would have it. I am, temporarily, commander of the *Pharaon*, with the certainty of being permanently so, if that fool of a Caderousse can be persuaded to hold his tongue. My only fear is the chance of Dantès being released. But, there, he is in the hands of Justice; and,' added he with a smile, 'she will take her own.' So saying, he leaped into a boat, desiring to be rowed on board the *Pharaon*, where M. Morrel had agreed to meet him.

but, in spite of that, and of his being king's attorney, he is a man like ourselves, and I fancy not a bad sort of one.'

'Perhaps not,' replied Danglars; 'but I hear that he is ambitious, and that's rather against him.'

'Well, well,' returned M. Morrel, 'we shall see. But now hasten on board, I will join you there ere long.'

So saying, the worthy shipowner quitted the two allies, and proceeded in the direction of the Palais de Justice. 'You see,' said Danglars, addressing Caderousse, 'the turn things have taken. Do you still feel any desire to stand up in his defence?'

'Not the slightest, but yet it seems to me a shocking thing that a mere joke should lead to such consequences.'

'But who perpetrated that joke, let me ask? neither you nor myself, but Fernand; you knew very well that I threw the paper into a corner of the room—indeed, I fancied I had destroyed it.'

'Oh, no,' replied Caderousse, 'that I can answer for, you did not. I only wish I could see it now as plainly as I saw it lying all crushed and crumpled in a corner of the arbour.'

'Well, then, if you did, depend upon it, Fernand picked it up, and either copied it or caused it to be copied; perhaps, even, he did not take the trouble of recopying it. And now I think of it, by Heavens, he may have sent the letter itself! Fortunately, for me, the handwriting was disguised.'

'Then you were aware of Dantès being engaged in a conspiracy?'

'Not I. As I before said, I thought the whole thing was a joke, nothing more. It seems, however, that I have unconsciously stumbled upon the truth.'

'Still,' argued Caderousse, 'I would give a great deal if nothing of the kind had happened; or, at least, that I had had no hand in it. You will see, Danglars, that it will turn out an unlucky job for both of us.'

'Nonsense! If any harm come of it, it should fall on the guilty person; and that, you know, is Fernand. How can we be implicated in any way? All we have got to do is, to keep our own counsel, and remain perfectly quiet, not breathing a word to any living soul; and you will see that the storm will pass away without in the least affecting us.'

'Amen!' responded Caderousse, waving his hand in token of adieu to Danglars, and bending his steps towards the Allées de Meilhan, moving his head to

smiling spot in the desert of her heart, and that is the shrine of maternal love. 'I forgive you. What I was saying, Villefort, was, that the Bonapartists had not our sincerity, enthusiasm, or devotion.'

'They had, however, what supplied the place of those fine qualities,' replied the young man, 'and that was fanaticism. Napoleon is the Mahomet of the West, and is worshipped by his commonplace but ambitious followers, not only as a leader and lawgiver, but also as the personification of equality.'

'He!' cried the marquise: 'Napoleon the type of equality! For mercy's sake, then, what would you call Robespierre? Come, come, do not strip the latter of his just rights to bestow them on the Corsican, who, to my mind, has usurped quite enough.'

'Nay, madame; I would place each of these heroes on his right pedestal—that of Robespierre on his scaffold in the Place Louis Quinze; that of Napoleon on the column of the Place Vendôme. The only difference consists in the opposite character of the equality advocated by these two men; one is the equality that elevates, the other is the equality that degrades; one brings a king within reach of the guillotine, the other elevates the people to a level with the throne. Observe,' said Villefort, smiling, 'I do not mean to deny that both these men were revolutionary scoundrels, and that the 9th Thermidor and the 4th of April, in the year 1814, were lucky days for France, worthy of being gratefully remembered by every friend to monarchy and civil order; and that explains how it comes to pass that, fallen, as I trust he is forever, Napoleon has still retained a train of parasitical satellites. Still, marquise, it has been so with other usurpers—Cromwell, for instance, who was not half so bad as Napoleon, had his partisans and advocates.'

'Do you know, Villefort, that you are talking in a most dreadfully revolutionary strain? But I excuse it, it is impossible to expect the son of a Girondin to be free from a small spice of the old leaven.' A deep crimson suffused the countenance of Villefort.

''Tis true, madame,' answered he, 'that my father was a Girondin, but he was not among the number of those who voted for the king's death; he was an equal sufferer with yourself during the Reign of Terror, and had well-nigh lost his head on the same scaffold on which your father perished.'

'True,' replied the marquise, without wincing in the slightest degree at the tragic remembrance thus called up; 'but bear in mind, if you please, that our

respective parents underwent persecution and proscription from diametrically opposite principles; in proof of which I may remark, that while my family remained among the staunchest adherents of the exiled princes, your father lost no time in joining the new government; and that while the Citizen Noirtier was a Girondin, the Count Noirtier became a senator.'

'Dear mother,' interposed Renée, 'you know very well it was agreed that all these disagreeable reminiscences should forever be laid aside.'

'Suffer me, also, madame,' replied Villefort, 'to add my earnest request to Mademoiselle de Saint-Méran's, that you will kindly allow the veil of oblivion to cover and conceal the past. What avails recrimination over matters wholly past recall? For my own part, I have laid aside even the name of my father, and altogether disown his political principles. He was—nay, probably may still be—a Bonapartist, and is called Noirtier; I, on the contrary, am a staunch royalist, and style myself de Villefort. Let what may remain of revolutionary sap exhaust itself and die away with the old trunk, and condescend only to regard the young shoot which has started up at a distance from the parent tree, without having the power, any more than the wish, to separate entirely from the stock from which it sprung.'

'Bravo, Villefort!' cried the marquis; 'excellently well said! Come, now, I have hopes of obtaining what I have been for years endeavouring to persuade the marquise to promise; namely, a perfect amnesty and forgetfulness of the past.'

'With all my heart,' replied the marquise; 'let the past be forever forgotten. I promise you it affords *me* as little pleasure to revive it as it does you. All I ask is, that Villefort will be firm and inflexible for the future in his political principles. Remember, also, Villefort, that we have pledged ourselves to his majesty for your fealty and strict loyalty, and that at our recommendation the king consented to forget the past, as I do' (and here she extended to him her hand)—'as I now do at your entreaty. But bear in mind, that should there fall in your way anyone guilty of conspiring against the government, you will be so much the more bound to visit the offence with rigorous punishment, as it is known you belong to a suspected family.'

'Alas, madame,' returned Villefort, 'my profession, as well as the times in which we live, compels me to be severe. I have already successfully conducted

''Tis well, Danglars—'tis well!' replied M. Morrel. 'You are a worthy fellow; and I had already thought of your interests in the event of poor Edmond having become captain of the *Pharaon*.'

'Is it possible you were so kind?'

'Yes, indeed; I had previously inquired of Dantès what was his opinion of you, and if he should have any reluctance to continue you in your post, for somehow I have perceived a sort of coolness between you.'

'And what was his reply?'

'That he certainly did think he had given you offence in an affair which he merely referred to without entering into particulars, but that whoever possessed the good opinion and confidence of the ship's owners would have his preference also.'

'The hypocrite!' murmured Danglars.

'Poor Dantès!' said Caderousse. 'No one can deny his being a noble-hearted young fellow.'

'But meanwhile,' continued M. Morrel, 'here is the *Pharaon* without a captain.'

'Oh,' replied Danglars, 'since we cannot leave this port for the next three months, let us hope that ere the expiration of that period Dantès will be set at liberty.'

'No doubt; but in the meantime?'

'I am entirely at your service, M. Morrel,' answered Danglars. 'You know that I am as capable of managing a ship as the most experienced captain in the service; and it will be so far advantageous to you to accept my services, that upon Edmond's release from prison no further change will be requisite on board the *Pharaon* than for Dantès and myself each to resume our respective posts.'

'Thanks, Danglars—that will smooth over all difficulties. I fully authorize you at once to assume the command of the *Pharaon*, and look carefully to the unloading of her freight. Private misfortunes must never be allowed to interfere with business.'

'Be easy on that score, M. Morrel; but do you think we shall be permitted to see our poor Edmond?'

'I will let you know that directly I have seen M. de Villefort, whom I shall endeavour to interest in Edmond's favour. I am aware he is a furious royalist;

With the rapid instinct of selfishness, Caderousse readily perceived the solidity of this mode of reasoning; he gazed, doubtfully, wistfully, on Danglars, and then caution supplanted generosity.

'Suppose we wait a while, and see what comes of it,' said he, casting a bewildered look on his companion.

'To be sure!' answered Danglars. 'Let us wait, by all means. If he be innocent, of course he will be set at liberty; if guilty, why, it is no use involving ourselves in a conspiracy.'

'Let us go, then. I cannot stay here any longer.'

'With all my heart!' replied Danglars, pleased to find the other so tractable. 'Let us take ourselves out of the way, and leave things for the present to take their course.'

After their departure, Fernand, who had now again become the friend and protector of Mercédès, led the girl to her home, while some friends of Dantès conducted his father, nearly lifeless, to the Allées de Meilhan.

The rumour of Edmond's arrest as a Bonapartist agent was not slow in circulating throughout the city.

'Could you ever have credited such a thing, my dear Danglars?' asked M. Morrel, as, on his return to the port for the purpose of gleaning fresh tidings of Dantès, from M. de Villefort, the assistant procureur, he overtook his supercargo and Caderousse. 'Could you have believed such a thing possible?'

'Why, you know I told you,' replied Danglars, 'that I considered the circumstance of his having anchored at the Island of Elba as a very suspicious circumstance.'

'And did you mention these suspicions to any person beside myself?'

'Certainly not!' returned Danglars. Then added in a low whisper, 'You understand that, on account of your uncle, M. Policar Morrel, who served under the *other* government, and who does not altogether conceal what he thinks on the subject, you are strongly suspected of regretting the abdication of Napoleon. I should have feared to injure both Edmond and yourself, had I divulged my own apprehensions to a soul. I am too well aware that though a subordinate, like myself, is bound to acquaint the shipowner with everything that occurs, there are many things he ought most carefully to conceal from all else.'

several public prosecutions, and brought the offenders to merited punishment. But we have not done with the thing yet.'

'Do you, indeed, think so?' inquired the marquise.

'I am, at least, fearful of it. Napoleon, in the Island of Elba, is too near France, and his proximity keeps up the hopes of his partisans. Marseilles is filled with half-pay officers, who are daily, under one frivolous pretext or other, getting up quarrels with the royalists; from hence arise continual and fatal duels among the higher classes of persons, and assassinations in the lower.'

'You have heard, perhaps,' said the Comte de Salvieux, one of M. de Saint-Méran's oldest friends, and chamberlain to the Comte d'Artois, 'that the Holy Alliance purpose removing him from thence?'

'Yes; they were talking about it when we left Paris,' said M. de Saint-Méran; 'and where is it decided to transfer him?'

'To Saint Helena.'

'For heaven's sake, where is that?' asked the marquise.

'An island situated on the other side of the equator, at least two thousand leagues from here,' replied the count.

'So much the better. As Villefort observes, it is a great act of folly to have left such a man between Corsica, where he was born, and Naples, of which his brother-in-law is king, and face to face with Italy, the sovereignty of which he coveted for his son.'

'Unfortunately,' said Villefort, 'there are the treaties of 1814, and we cannot molest Napoleon without breaking those compacts.'

'Oh, well, we shall find some way out of it,' responded M. de Salvieux. 'There wasn't any trouble over treaties when it was a question of shooting the poor Duc d'Enghien.'

'Well,' said the marquise, 'it seems probable that, by the aid of the Holy Alliance, we shall be rid of Napoleon; and we must trust to the vigilance of M. de Villefort to purify Marseilles of his partisans. The king is either a king or no king; if he be acknowledged as sovereign of France, he should be upheld in peace and tranquillity; and this can best be effected by employing the most inflexible agents to put down every attempt at conspiracy—'tis the best and surest means of preventing mischief.'

'Unfortunately, madame,' answered Villefort, 'the strong arm of the law is not called upon to interfere until the evil has taken place.'

'Then all he has got to do is to endeavour to repair it.'

'Nay, madame, the law is frequently powerless to effect this; all it can do is to avenge the wrong done.'

'Oh, M. de Villefort,' cried a beautiful young creature, daughter to the Comte de Salvieux, and the cherished friend of Mademoiselle de Saint-Méran, 'do try and get up some famous trial while we are at Marseilles. I never was in a law-court; I am told it is so very amusing!'

'Amusing, certainly,' replied the young man, 'inasmuch as, instead of shedding tears as at the fictitious tale of woe produced at a theatre, you behold in a law-court a case of real and genuine distress—a drama of life. The prisoner whom you there see pale, agitated, and alarmed, instead of—as is the case when a curtain falls on a tragedy—going home to sup peacefully with his family, and then retiring to rest, that he may recommence his mimic woes on the morrow,—is removed from your sight merely to be reconducted to his prison and delivered up to the executioner. I leave you to judge how far your nerves are calculated to bear you through such a scene. Of this, however, be assured, that should any favourable opportunity present itself, I will not fail to offer you the choice of being present.'

'For shame, M. de Villefort!' said Renée, becoming quite pale; 'don't you see how you are frightening us?—and yet you laugh.'

'What would you have? 'Tis like a duel. I have already recorded sentence of death, five or six times, against the movers of political conspiracies, and who can say how many daggers may be ready sharpened, and only waiting a favourable opportunity to be buried in my heart?'

'Gracious heavens, M. de Villefort,' said Renée, becoming more and more terrified; 'you surely are not in earnest.'

'Indeed I am,' replied the young magistrate with a smile; 'and in the interesting trial that young lady is anxious to witness, the case would only be still more aggravated. Suppose, for instance, the prisoner, as is more than probable, to have served under Napoleon—well, can you expect for an instant, that one accustomed, at the word of his commander, to rush fearlessly on the very bayonets of his foe, will scruple more to drive a stiletto into the heart of one he knows to be his personal enemy, than to slaughter his fellow-creatures, merely because bidden to do so by one he is bound to obey? Besides, one requires the excitement of being hateful in the eyes of the accused, in order to lash one's

Mercédès, however, paid no heed to this explanation of her lover's arrest. Her grief, which she had hitherto tried to restrain, now burst out in a violent fit of hysterical sobbing.

'Come, come,' said the old man, 'be comforted, my poor child; there is still hope!'

'Hope!' repeated Danglars.

'Hope!' faintly murmured Fernand, but the word seemed to die away on his pale agitated lips, and a convulsive spasm passed over his countenance.

'Good news! good news!' shouted forth one of the party stationed in the balcony on the lookout. 'Here comes M. Morrel back. No doubt, now, we shall hear that our friend is released!'

Mercédès and the old man rushed to meet the shipowner and greeted him at the door. He was very pale.

'What news?' exclaimed a general burst of voices.

'Alas, my friends,' replied M. Morrel, with a mournful shake of his head, 'the thing has assumed a more serious aspect than I expected.'

'Oh, indeed—indeed, sir, he is innocent!' sobbed forth Mercédès.

'That I believe!' answered M. Morrel; 'but still he is charged— '

'With what?' inquired the elder Dantès.

'With being an agent of the Bonapartist faction!' Many of our readers may be able to recollect how formidable such an accusation became in the period at which our story is dated.

A despairing cry escaped the pale lips of Mercédès; the old man sank into a chair.

'Ah, Danglars!' whispered Caderousse, 'you have deceived me—the trick you spoke of last night has been played; but I cannot suffer a poor old man or an innocent girl to die of grief through your fault. I am determined to tell them all about it.'

'Be silent, you simpleton!' cried Danglars, grasping him by the arm, 'or I will not answer even for your own safety. Who can tell whether Dantès be innocent or guilty? The vessel did touch at Elba, where he quitted it, and passed a whole day in the island. Now, should any letters or other documents of a compromising character be found upon him, will it not be taken for granted that all who uphold him are his accomplices?'

Meanwhile Fernand made his appearance, poured out for himself a glass of water with a trembling hand; then hastily swallowing it, went to sit down at the first vacant place, and this was, by mere chance, placed next to the seat on which poor Mercédès had fallen half fainting, when released from the warm and affectionate embrace of old Dantès. Instinctively Fernand drew back his chair.

'He is the cause of all this misery—I am quite sure of it,' whispered Caderousse, who had never taken his eyes off Fernand, to Danglars.

'I don't think so,' answered the other; 'he's too stupid to imagine such a scheme. I only hope the mischief will fall upon the head of whoever wrought it.'

'You don't mention those who aided and abetted the deed,' said Caderousse.

'Surely,' answered Danglars, 'one cannot be held responsible for every chance arrow shot into the air.'

'You can, indeed, when the arrow lights point downward on somebody's head.'

Meantime the subject of the arrest was being canvassed in every different form.

'What think you, Danglars,' said one of the party, turning towards him, 'of this event?'

'Why,' replied he, 'I think it just possible Dantès may have been detected with some trifling article on board ship considered here as contraband.'

'But how could he have done so without your knowledge, Danglars, since you are the ship's supercargo?'

'Why, as for that, I could only know what I was told respecting the merchandise with which the vessel was laden. I know she was loaded with cotton, and that she took in her freight at Alexandria from Pastret's warehouse, and at Smyrna from Pascal's; that is all I was obliged to know, and I beg I may not be asked for any further particulars.'

'Now I recollect,' said the afflicted old father; 'my poor boy told me yesterday he had got a small case of coffee, and another of tobacco for me!'

'There, you see,' exclaimed Danglars. 'Now the mischief is out; depend upon it the custom-house people went rummaging about the ship in our absence, and discovered poor Dantès' hidden treasures.'

self into a state of sufficient vehemence and power. I would not choose to see the man against whom I pleaded smile, as though in mockery of my words. No; my pride is to see the accused pale, agitated, and as though beaten out of all composure by the fire of my eloquence.' Renée uttered a smothered exclamation.

'Bravo!' cried one of the guests; 'that is what I call talking to some purpose.'

'Just the person we require at a time like the present,' said a second.

'What a splendid business that last case of yours was, my dear Villefort!' remarked a third; 'I mean the trial of the man for murdering his father. Upon my word, you killed him ere the executioner had laid his hand upon him.'

'Oh, as for parricides, and such dreadful people as that,' interposed Renée, 'it matters very little what is done to them; but as regards poor unfortunate creatures whose only crime consists in having mixed themselves up in political intrigues— '

'Why, that is the very worst offence they could possibly commit; for, don't you see, Renée, the king is the father of his people, and he who shall plot or contrive aught against the life and safety of the parent of thirty-two millions of souls, is a parricide upon a fearfully great scale?'

'I don't know anything about that,' replied Renée; 'but, M. de Villefort, you have promised me—have you not?—always to show mercy to those I plead for.'

'Make yourself quite easy on that point,' answered Villefort, with one of his sweetest smiles; 'you and I will always consult upon our verdicts.'

'My love,' said the marquise, 'attend to your doves, your lap-dogs, and embroidery, but do not meddle with what you do not understand. Nowadays the military profession is in abeyance and the magisterial robe is the badge of honour. There is a wise Latin proverb that is very much in point.'

'*Cedant arma togæ*,' said Villefort with a bow.

'I cannot speak Latin,' responded the marquise.

'Well,' said Renée, 'I cannot help regretting you had not chosen some other profession than your own—a physician, for instance. Do you know I always felt a shudder at the idea of even a *destroying* angel?'

'Dear, good Renée,' whispered Villefort, as he gazed with unutterable tenderness on the lovely speaker.

'Let us hope, my child,' cried the marquis, 'that M. de Villefort may prove the moral and political physician of this province; if so, he will have achieved a noble work.'

'And one which will go far to efface the recollection of his father's conduct,' added the incorrigible marquise.

'Madame,' replied Villefort, with a mournful smile, 'I have already had the honour to observe that my father has—at least, I hope so—abjured his past errors, and that he is, at the present moment, a firm and zealous friend to religion and order—a better royalist, possibly, than his son; for he has to atone for past dereliction, while I have no other impulse than warm, decided preference and conviction.' Having made this well-turned speech, Villefort looked carefully around to mark the effect of his oratory, much as he would have done had he been addressing the bench in open court.

'Do you know, my dear Villefort,' cried the Comte de Salvieux, 'that is exactly what I myself said the other day at the Tuileries, when questioned by his majesty's principal chamberlain touching the singularity of an alliance between the son of a Girondin and the daughter of an officer of the Duc de Condé; and I assure you he seemed fully to comprehend that this mode of reconciling political differences was based upon sound and excellent principles. Then the king, who, without our suspecting it, had overheard our conversation, interrupted us by saying, "Villefort"—observe that the king did not pronounce the word Noirtier, but, on the contrary, placed considerable emphasis on that of Villefort—"Villefort," said his majesty, "is a young man of great judgment and discretion, who will be sure to make a figure in his profession; I like him much, and it gave me great pleasure to hear that he was about to become the son-in-law of the Marquis and Marquise de Saint-Méran. I should myself have recommended the match, had not the noble marquis anticipated my wishes by requesting my consent to it."'

'Is it possible the king could have condescended so far as to express himself so favourably of me?' asked the enraptured Villefort.

'I give you his very words; and if the marquis chooses to be candid, he will confess that they perfectly agree with what his majesty said to him, when he went six months ago to consult him upon the subject of your espousing his daughter.'

'That is true,' answered the marquis.

'No, you did not!' answered Caderousse, 'you merely threw it by—I saw it lying in a corner.'

'Hold your tongue, you fool!—what should you know about it?—why, you were drunk!'

'Where is Fernand?' inquired Caderousse.

'How do I know?' replied Danglars; 'gone, as every prudent man ought to be, to look after his own affairs, most likely. Never mind where he is, let you and I go and see what is to be done for our poor friends.'

During this conversation, Dantès, after having exchanged a cheerful shake of the hand with all his sympathizing friends, had surrendered himself to the officer sent to arrest him, merely saying, 'Make yourselves quite easy, my good fellows, there is some little mistake to clear up, that's all, depend upon it; and very likely I may not have to go so far as the prison to effect that.'

'Oh, to be sure!' responded Danglars, who had now approached the group, 'nothing more than a mistake, I feel quite certain.'

Dantès descended the staircase, preceded by the magistrate, and followed by the soldiers. A carriage awaited him at the door; he got in, followed by two soldiers and the magistrate, and the vehicle drove off towards Marseilles.

'Adieu, adieu, dearest Edmond!' cried Mercédès, stretching out her arms to him from the balcony.

The prisoner heard the cry, which sounded like the sob of a broken heart, and leaning from the coach he called out, 'Good-bye, Mercédès—we shall soon meet again!' Then the vehicle disappeared round one of the turnings of Fort Saint Nicholas.

'Wait for me here, all of you!' cried M. Morrel; 'I will take the first conveyance I find, and hurry to Marseilles, whence I will bring you word how all is going on.'

'That's right!' exclaimed a multitude of voices, 'go, and return as quickly as you can!'

This second departure was followed by a long and fearful state of terrified silence on the part of those who were left behind. The old father and Mercédès remained for some time apart, each absorbed in grief; but at length the two poor victims of the same blow raised their eyes, and with a simultaneous burst of feeling rushed into each other's arms.