would be condemned to die, but he was about to die of grief and despair when this miraculous noise recalled him to life.

The jailer came in the evening. Dantès was on his bed. It seemed to him that thus he better guarded the unfinished opening. Doubtless there was a strange expression in his eyes, for the jailer said, 'Come, are you going mad again?'

Dantès did not answer; he feared that the emotion of his voice would betray him. The jailer went away shaking his head. Night came; Dantès hoped that his neighbour would profit by the silence to address him, but he was mistaken. The next morning, however, just as he removed his bed from the wall, he heard three knocks; he threw himself on his knees.

'Is it you?' said he; 'I am here.'

'Is your jailer gone?'

'Yes,' said Dantès; 'he will not return until the evening; so that we have twelve hours before us.'

'I can work, then?' said the voice.

'Oh, yes, yes; this instant, I entreat you.'

In a moment that part of the floor on which Dantès was resting his two hands, as he knelt with his head in the opening, suddenly gave way; he drew back smartly, while a mass of stones and earth disappeared in a hole that opened beneath the aperture he himself had formed. Then from the bottom of this passage, the depth of which it was impossible to measure, he saw appear, first the head, then the shoulders, and lastly the body of a man, who sprang lightly into his cell.

Chapter XVI

A Learned Italian

SEIZING in his arms the friend so long and ardently desired, Dantès almost carried him towards the window, in order to obtain a better view of his features by the aid of the imperfect light that struggled through the grating.

He was a man of small stature, with hair blanched rather by suffering and sorrow than by age. He had a deep-set, penetrating eye, almost buried beneath the thick gray eyebrow, and a long (and still black) beard reaching down to his breast. His thin face, deeply furrowed by care, and the bold outline of his strongly marked features, betokened a man more accustomed to exercise his mental faculties than his physical strength. Large drops of perspiration were now standing on his brow, while the garments that hung about him were so ragged that one could only guess at the pattern upon which they had originally been fashioned.

The stranger might have numbered sixty or sixty-five years; but a certain briskness and appearance of vigour in his movements made it probable that he was aged more from captivity than the course of time. He received the enthusiastic greeting of his young acquaintance with evident pleasure, as though his chilled affections were rekindled and invigourated by his contact with one so warm and ardent. He thanked him with grateful cordiality for his kindly welcome, although he must at that moment have been suffering bitterly to find another dungeon where he had fondly reckoned on discovering a means of regaining his liberty.

'Let us first see,' said he, 'whether it is possible to remove the traces of my entrance here—our future tranquillity depends upon our jailers being entirely ignorant of it.'

Advancing to the opening, he stooped and raised the stone easily in spite of its weight; then, fitting it into its place, he said:

'You removed this stone very carelessly; but I suppose you had no tools to aid you.'

'Why,' exclaimed Dantès, with astonishment, 'do you possess any?'

'I made myself some; and with the exception of a file, I have all that are necessary,—a chisel, pincers, and lever.' 'Oh, how I should like to see these products of your industry and patience.'

'Well, in the first place, here is my chisel.'

So saying, he displayed a sharp strong blade, with a handle made of beechwood.

'And with what did you contrive to make that?' inquired Dantès.

'With one of the clamps of my bedstead; and this very tool has sufficed me to hollow out the road by which I came hither, a distance of about fifty feet.'

'Fifty feet!' responded Dantès, almost terrified.

'Do not speak so loud, young man—don't speak so loud. It frequently occurs in a state prison like this, that persons are stationed outside the doors of the cells purposely to overhear the conversation of the prisoners.'

'But they believe I am shut up alone here.'

'That makes no difference.'

'And you say that you dug your way a distance of fifty feet to get here?'

'I do; that is about the distance that separates your chamber from mine; only, unfortunately, I did not curve aright; for want of the necessary geometrical instruments to calculate my scale of proportion, instead of taking an ellipsis of forty feet, I made it fifty. I expected, as I told you, to reach the outer wall, pierce through it, and throw myself into the sea; I have, however, kept along the corridor on which your chamber opens, instead of going beneath it. My labour is all in vain, for I find that the corridor looks into a courtyard filled with soldiers.'

'That's true,' said Dantès; 'but the corridor you speak of only bounds *one* side of my cell; there are three others—do you know anything of their situation?'

'This one is built against the solid rock, and it would take ten experienced miners, duly furnished with the requisite tools, as many years to perforate it. This adjoins the lower part of the governor's apartments, and

'I do not know my age, for I have not counted the years I have been here. All I do know is, that I was just nineteen when I was arrested, the 28th of February, 1815.'

'Not quite twenty-six!' murmured the voice; 'at that age he cannot be a traitor.'

'Oh, no, no,' cried Dantès. 'I swear to you again, rather than betray you, I would allow myself to be hacked in pieces!'

'You have done well to speak to me, and ask for my assistance, for I was about to form another plan, and leave you; but your age reassures me. I will not forget you. Wait.'

'How long?'

'I must calculate our chances; I will give you the signal.'

'But you will not leave me; you will come to me, or you will let me come to you. We will escape, and if we cannot escape we will talk; you of those whom you love, and I of those whom I love. You must love somebody?'

'No, I am alone in the world.'

'Then you will love me. If you are young, I will be your comrade; if you are old, I will be your son. I have a father who is seventy if he yet lives; I only love him and a young girl called Mercédès. My father has not yet forgotten me, I am sure, but God alone knows if she loves me still; I shall love you as I loved my father.'

'It is well,' returned the voice; 'tomorrow.'

These few words were uttered with an accent that left no doubt of his sincerity; Dantès rose, dispersed the fragments with the same precaution as before, and pushed his bed back against the wall. He then gave himself up to his happiness. He would no longer be alone. He was, perhaps, about to regain his liberty; at the worst, he would have a companion, and captivity that is shared is but half captivity. Plaints made in common are almost prayers, and prayers where two or three are gathered together invoke the mercy of heaven.

All day Dantès walked up and down his cell. He sat down occasionally on his bed, pressing his hand on his heart. At the slightest noise he bounded towards the door. Once or twice the thought crossed his mind that he might be separated from this unknown, whom he loved already; and then his mind was made up—when the jailer moved his bed and stooped to examine the opening, he would kill him with his water jug. He

'On a level with the floor.'

'How is it concealed?'

'Behind my bed.'

'Has your bed been moved since you have been a prisoner?'

'No.'

'What does your chamber open on?'

'A corridor.'

'And the corridor?'

'On a court.'

'Alas!' murmured the voice.

'Oh, what is the matter?' cried Dantès.

'I have made a mistake owing to an error in my plans. I took the wrong angle, and have come out fifteen feet from where I intended. I took the wall you are mining for the outer wall of the fortress.'

'But then you would be close to the sea?'

'That is what I hoped.'

'And supposing you had succeeded?'

'I should have thrown myself into the sea, gained one of the islands near here—the Isle de Daume or the Isle de Tiboulen—and then I should have been safe.'

'Could you have swum so far?'

'Heaven would have given me strength; but now all is lost.'

'All?'

'Yes; stop up your excavation carefully, do not work any more, and wait until you hear from me.'

'Tell me, at least, who you are?'

'I am—I am № 27.'

'You mistrust me, then,' said Dantès. Edmond fancied he heard a bitter laugh resounding from the depths.

'Oh, I am a Christian,' cried Dantès, guessing instinctively that this man meant to abandon him. 'I swear to you by him who died for us that naught shall induce me to breathe one syllable to my jailers; but I conjure you do not abandon me. If you do, I swear to you, for I have got to the end of my strength, that I will dash my brains out against the wall, and you will have my death to reproach yourself with.'

'How old are you? Your voice is that of a young man.'

were we to work our way through, we should only get into some lock-up cellars, where we must necessarily be recaptured. The fourth and last side of your cell faces on—faces on—stop a minute, now where does it face?'

The wall of which he spoke was the one in which was fixed the loophole by which light was admitted to the chamber. This loophole, which gradually diminished in size as it approached the outside, to an opening through which a child could not have passed, was, for better security, furnished with three iron bars, so as to quiet all apprehensions even in the mind of the most suspicious jailer as to the possibility of a prisoner's escape. As the stranger asked the question, he dragged the table beneath the window.

'Climb up,' said he to Dantès.

The young man obeyed, mounted on the table, and, divining the wishes of his companion, placed his back securely against the wall and held out both hands. The stranger, whom as yet Dantès knew only by the number of his cell, sprang up with an agility by no means to be expected in a person of his years, and, light and steady on his feet as a cat or a lizard, climbed from the table to the outstretched hands of Dantès, and from them to his shoulders; then, bending double, for the ceiling of the dungeon prevented him from holding himself erect, he managed to slip his head between the upper bars of the window, so as to be able to command a perfect view from top to bottom.

An instant afterwards he hastily drew back his head, saying, 'I thought so!' and sliding from the shoulders of Dantès as dextrously as he had ascended, he nimbly leaped from the table to the ground.

'What was it that you thought?' asked the young man anxiously, in his turn descending from the table.

The elder prisoner pondered the matter. 'Yes,' said he at length, 'it is so. This side of your chamber looks out upon a kind of open gallery, where patrols are continually passing, and sentries keep watch day and night.'

'Are you quite sure of that?'

'Certain. I saw the soldier's shape and the top of his musket; that made me draw in my head so quickly, for I was fearful he might also see me.'

'Well?' inquired Dantès.

'You perceive then the utter impossibility of escaping through your dungeon?'

'Then— ' pursued the young man eagerly.

'Then,' answered the elder prisoner, 'the will of God be done!' And as the old man slowly pronounced those words, an air of profound resignation spread itself over his careworn countenance. Dantès gazed on the man who could thus philosophically resign hopes so long and ardently nourished with an astonishment mingled with admiration.

'Tell me, I entreat of you, who and what you are?' said he at length. 'Never have I met with so remarkable a person as yourself.'

'Willingly,' answered the stranger; 'if, indeed, you feel any curiosity respecting one, now, alas, powerless to aid you in any way.'

'Say not so; you can console and support me by the strength of your own powerful mind. Pray let me know who you really are?'

The stranger smiled a melancholy smile. 'Then listen,' said he. 'I am the Abbé Faria, and have been imprisoned as you know in this Château d'If since the year 1811; previously to which I had been confined for three years in the fortress of Fenestrelle. In the year 1811 I was transferred to Piedmont in France. It was at this period I learned that the destiny which seemed subservient to every wish formed by Napoleon, had bestowed on him a son, named king of Rome even in his cradle. I was very far then from expecting the change you have just informed me of; namely, that four years afterwards, this colossus of power would be overthrown. Then who reigns in France at this moment—Napoleon II.?'

'No, Louis XVIII.'

'The brother of Louis XVI.! How inscrutable are the ways of Providence—for what great and mysterious purpose has it pleased Heaven to abase the man once so elevated, and raise up him who was so abased?'

Dantès' whole attention was riveted on a man who could thus forget his own misfortunes while occupying himself with the destinies of others.

'Yes, yes,' continued he, ''Twill be the same as it was in England. After Charles I., Cromwell; after Cromwell, Charles II., and then James II., and then some son-in-law or relation, some Prince of Orange, a stadtholder who becomes a king. Then new concessions to the people, then a constitution, then liberty. Ah, my friend!' said the abbé, turning towards Dantès, and surveying him with the kindling gaze of a prophet, 'you are young, you will see all this come to pass.'

'Probably, if ever I get out of prison!'

of my liberty, after having deprived me of death, after having recalled me to existence, my God, have pity on me, and do not let me die in despair!'

'Who talks of God and despair at the same time?' said a voice that seemed to come from beneath the earth, and, deadened by the distance, sounded hollow and sepulchral in the young man's ears. Edmond's hair stood on end, and he rose to his knees.

'Ah,' said he, 'I hear a human voice.' Edmond had not heard anyone speak save his jailer for four or five years; and a jailer is no man to a prisoner—he is a living door, a barrier of flesh and blood adding strength to restraints of oak and iron.

'In the name of Heaven,' cried Dantès, 'speak again, though the sound of your voice terrifies me. Who are you?'

'Who are you?' said the voice.

'An unhappy prisoner,' replied Dantès, who made no hesitation in answering.

'Of what country?'

'A Frenchman.'

'Your name?'

'Edmond Dantès.'

'Your profession?'

'A sailor.'

'How long have you been here?'

'Since the 28th of February, 1815.'

'Your crime?'

'I am innocent.'

'But of what are you accused?'

'Of having conspired to aid the emperor's return.'

'What! For the emperor's return?—the emperor is no longer on the throne, then?'

'He abdicated at Fontainebleau in 1814, and was sent to the Island of Elba. But how long have you been here that you are ignorant of all this?'

'Since 1811.'

Dantès shuddered; this man had been four years longer than himself in prison.

'Do not dig any more,' said the voice; 'only tell me how high up is your excavation?'

Dantès carefully collected the plaster, carried it into the corner of his cell, and covered it with earth. Then, wishing to make the best use of his time while he had the means of labour, he continued to work without ceasing. At the dawn of day he replaced the stone, pushed his bed against the wall, and lay down. The breakfast consisted of a piece of bread; the jailer entered and placed the bread on the table.

'Well, don't you intend to bring me another plate?' said Dantès.

'No,' replied the turnkey; 'you destroy everything. First you break your jug, then you make me break your plate; if all the prisoners followed your example, the government would be ruined. I shall leave you the saucepan, and pour your soup into that. So for the future I hope you will not be so destructive.'

Dantès raised his eyes to heaven and clasped his hands beneath the coverlet. He felt more gratitude for the possession of this piece of iron than he had ever felt for anything. He had noticed, however, that the prisoner on the other side had ceased to labour; no matter, this was a greater reason for proceeding—if his neighbour would not come to him, he would go to his neighbour. All day he toiled on untiringly, and by the evening he had succeeded in extracting ten handfuls of plaster and fragments of stone. When the hour for his jailer's visit arrived, Dantès straightened the handle of the saucepan as well as he could, and placed it in its accustomed place. The turnkey poured his ration of soup into it, together with the fish—for thrice a week the prisoners were deprived of meat. This would have been a method of reckoning time, had not Dantès long ceased to do so. Having poured out the soup, the turnkey retired.

Dantès wished to ascertain whether his neighbour had really ceased to work. He listened—all was silent, as it had been for the last three days. Dantès sighed; it was evident that his neighbour distrusted him. However, he toiled on all the night without being discouraged; but after two or three hours he encountered an obstacle. The iron made no impression, but met with a smooth surface; Dantès touched it, and found that it was a beam. This beam crossed, or rather blocked up, the hole Dantès had made; it was necessary, therefore, to dig above or under it. The unhappy young man had not thought of this.

'Oh, my God, my God!' murmured he, 'I have so earnestly prayed to you, that I hoped my prayers had been heard. After having deprived me

'True,' replied Faria, 'we are prisoners; but I forget this sometimes, and there are even moments when my mental vision transports me beyond these walls, and I fancy myself at liberty.'

'But wherefore are you here?'

'Because in 1807 I dreamed of the very plan Napoleon tried to realize in 1811; because, like Machiavelli, I desired to alter the political face of Italy, and instead of allowing it to be split up into a quantity of petty principalities, each held by some weak or tyrannical ruler, I sought to form one large, compact, and powerful empire; and, lastly, because I fancied I had found my Cæsar Borgia in a crowned simpleton, who feigned to enter into my views only to betray me. It was the plan of Alexander VI. and Clement VII., but it will never succeed now, for they attempted it fruitlessly, and Napoleon was unable to complete his work. Italy seems fated to misfortune.' And the old man bowed his head.

Dantès could not understand a man risking his life for such matters. Napoleon certainly he knew something of, inasmuch as he had seen and spoken with him; but of Clement VII. and Alexander VI. he knew nothing.

'Are you not,' he asked, 'the priest who here in the Château d'If is generally thought to be—ill?'

'Mad, you mean, don't you?'

'I did not like to say so,' answered Dantès, smiling.

'Well, then,' resumed Faria with a bitter smile, 'let me answer your question in full, by acknowledging that I am the poor mad prisoner of the Château d'If, for many years permitted to amuse the different visitors with what is said to be my insanity; and, in all probability, I should be promoted to the honour of making sport for the children, if such innocent beings could be found in an abode devoted like this to suffering and despair.'

Dantès remained for a short time mute and motionless; at length he said:

'Then you abandon all hope of escape?'

'I perceive its utter impossibility; and I consider it impious to attempt that which the Almighty evidently does not approve.'

'Nay, be not discouraged. Would it not be expecting too much to hope to succeed at your first attempt? Why not try to find an opening in another direction from that which has so unfortunately failed?'

'Alas, it shows how little notion you can have of all it has cost me to effect a purpose so unexpectedly frustrated, that you talk of beginning over again. In the first place, I was four years making the tools I possess, and have been two years scraping and digging out earth, hard as granite itself; then what toil and fatigue has it not been to remove huge stones I should once have deemed impossible to loosen. Whole days have I passed in these Titanic efforts, considering my labour well repaid if, by night-time I had contrived to carry away a square inch of this hard-bound cement, changed by ages into a substance unyielding as the stones themselves; then to conceal the mass of earth and rubbish I dug up, I was compelled to break through a staircase, and throw the fruits of my labour into the hollow part of it; but the well is now so completely choked up, that I scarcely think it would be possible to add another handful of dust without leading to discovery. Consider also that I fully believed I had accomplished the end and aim of my undertaking, for which I had so exactly husbanded my strength as to make it just hold out to the termination of my enterprise; and now, at the moment when I reckoned upon success, my hopes are forever dashed from me. No, I repeat again, that nothing shall induce me to renew attempts evidently at variance with the Almighty's pleasure.'

Dantès held down his head, that the other might not see how joy at the thought of having a companion outweighed the sympathy he felt for the failure of the abbé's plans.

The abbé sank upon Edmond's bed, while Edmond himself remained standing. Escape had never once occurred to him. There are, indeed, some things which appear so impossible that the mind does not dwell on them for an instant. To undermine the ground for fifty feet—to devote three years to a labour which, if successful, would conduct you to a precipice overhanging the sea—to plunge into the waves from the height of fifty, sixty, perhaps a hundred feet, at the risk of being dashed to pieces against the rocks, should you have been fortunate enough to have escaped the fire of the sentinels; and even, supposing all these perils past, then to have to swim for your life a distance of at least three miles ere you could reach the shore—were difficulties so startling and formidable that Dantès had never even dreamed of such a scheme, resigning himself rather to death.

But the sight of an old man clinging to life with so desperate a courage, gave a fresh turn to his ideas, and inspired him with new courage.

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.

The jailer always brought Dantès' soup in an iron saucepan; this saucepan contained soup for both prisoners, for Dantès had noticed that it was either quite full, or half empty, according as the turnkey gave it to him or to his companion first.

The handle of this saucepan was of iron; Dantès would have given ten years of his life in exchange for it. The jailer was accustomed to pour the contents of the saucepan into Dantès' plate, and Dantès, after eating his soup with a wooden spoon, washed the plate, which thus served for every day. Now when evening came Dantès put his plate on the ground near the door; the jailer, as he entered, stepped on it and broke it.

This time he could not blame Dantès. He was wrong to leave it there, but the jailer was wrong not to have looked before him. The jailer, therefore, only grumbled. Then he looked about for something to pour the soup into; Dantès' entire dinner service consisted of one plate—there was no alternative.

'Leave the saucepan,' said Dantès; 'you can take it away when you bring me my breakfast.'

This advice was to the jailer's taste, as it spared him the necessity of making another trip. He left the saucepan.

Dantès was beside himself with joy. He rapidly devoured his food, and after waiting an hour, lest the jailer should change his mind and return, he removed his bed, took the handle of the saucepan, inserted the point between the hewn stone and rough stones of the wall, and employed it as a lever. A slight oscillation showed Dantès that all went well. At the end of an hour the stone was extricated from the wall, leaving a cavity a foot and a half in diameter.

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

Another, older and less strong than he, had attempted what he had not had sufficient resolution to undertake, and had failed only because of an error in calculation. This same person, with almost incredible patience and perseverance, had contrived to provide himself with tools requisite for so unparalleled an attempt. Another had done all this; why, then, was it impossible to Dantès? Faria had dug his way through fifty feet, Dantès would dig a hundred; Faria, at the age of fifty, had devoted three years to the task; he, who was but half as old, would sacrifice six; Faria, a priest and savant, had not shrunk from the idea of risking his life by trying to swim a distance of three miles to one of the islands—Daume, Rattonneau, or Lemaire; should a hardy sailor, an experienced diver, like himself, shrink from a similar task; should he, who had so often for mere amusement's sake plunged to the bottom of the sea to fetch up the bright coral branch, hesitate to entertain the same project? He could do it in an hour, and how many times had he, for pure pastime, continued in the water for more than twice as long! At once Dantès resolved to follow the brave example of his energetic companion, and to remember that what has once been done may be done again.

After continuing some time in profound meditation, the young man suddenly exclaimed, 'I have found what you were in search of!'

Faria started: 'Have you, indeed?' cried he, raising his head with quick anxiety; 'pray, let me know what it is you have discovered?'

'The corridor through which you have bored your way from the cell you occupy here, extends in the same direction as the outer gallery, does it not?' 'It does.'

'And is not above fifteen feet from it?'

'About that.'

'Well, then, I will tell you what we must do. We must pierce through the corridor by forming a side opening about the middle, as it were the top part of a cross. This time you will lay your plans more accurately; we shall get out into the gallery you have described; kill the sentinel who guards it, and make our escape. All we require to insure success is courage, and that you possess, and strength, which I am not deficient in; as for patience, you have abundantly proved yours—you shall now see me prove mine.'

'One instant, my dear friend,' replied the abbé; 'it is clear you do not understand the nature of the courage with which I am endowed, and what use I intend making of my strength. As for patience, I consider that I have abundantly exercised that in beginning every morning the task of the night before, and every night renewing the task of the day. But then, young man (and I pray of you to give me your full attention), then I thought I could not be doing anything displeasing to the Almighty in trying to set an innocent being at liberty—one who had committed no offence, and merited not condemnation.'

'And have your notions changed?' asked Dantès with much surprise; 'do you think yourself more guilty in making the attempt since you have encountered me?'

'No; neither do I wish to incur guilt. Hitherto I have fancied myself merely waging war against circumstances, not men. I have thought it no sin to bore through a wall, or destroy a staircase; but I cannot so easily persuade myself to pierce a heart or take away a life.'

A slight movement of surprise escaped Dantès.

'Is it possible,' said he, 'that where your liberty is at stake you can allow any such scruple to deter you from obtaining it?'

'Tell me,' replied Faria, 'what has hindered you from knocking down your jailer with a piece of wood torn from your bedstead, dressing yourself in his clothes, and endeavouring to escape?'

'Simply the fact that the idea never occurred to me,' answered Dantès.

'Because,' said the old man, 'the natural repugnance to the commission of such a crime prevented you from thinking of it; and so it ever is because in simple and allowable things our natural instincts keep us from deviating from the strict line of duty. The tiger, whose nature teaches him to delight in shedding blood, needs but the sense of smell to show him when his prey is within his reach, and by following this instinct he is enabled to measure the leap necessary to permit him to spring on his victim; but man, on the contrary, loathes the idea of blood—it is not alone that the laws of social life inspire him with a shrinking dread of taking life; his natural construction and physiological formation— '

Dantès was confused and silent at this explanation of the thoughts which had unconsciously been working in his mind, or rather soul; for there are two distinct sorts of ideas, those that proceed from the head and

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.

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.