

this will never happen again,' said Edmond.

'Never mind,' said the old man; 'Now that you are here, everything is all right again.'

Dantes emptied his pockets and put a dozen gold pieces, five or six francs and a few smaller coins on the table.

At that point, Caderousse entered the room. Dantes saw a greedy glance in the man's eyes, as he stared at the table.

'I have come to shake your hand, my friend. Danglars told me some great news,' he said.

'Thank you, my friend,' Dantes said, knowing that Caderousse was a man whose lips said one thing, while his heart thought another. 'But I cannot stay any longer. Father, I ask permission to leave you and pay a visit to the Catalans.'

The fishing village of the Catalans was set in a bare landscape near Marseilles. There was a beautiful Catalan girl there called Mercedes that the young Dantes had fallen in love with.

In one of the small stone houses Mercedes sat with one of her cousins, Fernand, who was trying desperately to convince her to marry him instead of Dantes.

'I will marry no one else but Edmond Dantes; he is the one I love. How many times must I tell you?' said the girl, and her black eyes sparkled.

'And if he is dead?' asked Fernand.

'I will die too,' was the reply.

'What if he has forgotten you, Mercedes, what then?' he insisted.

'Mercedes!' called a voice outside just then, and Dantes walked in.

'Ah!' exclaimed the young girl. 'You see, he has not forgotten me. Here he is! Oh, my dear Edmond!'

Fernand drew back when Dantes extended his hand to greet him as if he had seen a snake.

'Fernand is my cousin and a good friend,' Mercedes said, turning angry eyes at the man. 'Shake hands with Edmond, Fernand.'

The Catalan gave Edmond his hand. Then, unable to control his sadness, he ran out of the house. As he was running away furiously, he came across Caderousse and Danglars, who were sitting at an inn just outside the village.

