

'No, sir, never. And I have no political beliefs. I am hardly nineteen. I know nothing about politics.'

'I see. Then do you have any enemies?' Villefort asked.

'Not that I know of,' replied Dantes.

'Is there somebody you know who may be jealous of you, somebody who may want to harm you?' Villefort said pulling a letter out of his pocket. 'Here, read this,' he said and gave it to Dantes.

After carefully reading the letter, Dantes raised worried eyes to Villefort.

'I stopped at the island of Elba, sir, because I was following the orders of a dying man. Captain Leclerc made me promise that I would deliver a letter to a man on the island of Elba. Then the man would give me another letter, which I had to take to a man in Paris. That is my story, sir,' said Dantes.

'You look like an honest man,' Villefort said, who seemed to believe Dantes' story.

'So can I leave now, sir? I have something very important to return to.'

Before letting Dantes go, Villefort asked him one more question.

'Who is the letter they gave you for?'

'For a gentleman called Noirtier, in Paris,' was the answer.

Villefort, who till then had intended to let Dantes go, was in shock; he tried hard to stop his panic at the sound of his father's name.

'Noirtier? Where is the letter?' he asked.

'It is on your desk, sir,' Dantes said. 'The sealed letter.'

Villefort took it in his hand. 'This is all we have against you,' he said and approached the fireplace. He threw the letter into the fire and watched it burn. Villefort knew well that if anyone found out about it, his career would be destroyed forever.

'I will only keep you a little longer. You must not say a word to anyone about this letter,' he said.

'I swear that I will not,' Dantes said.

Villefort rang a bell and a police officer came into the office. Villefort said something to him in secret. The policeman exited the room, but soon returned with more men, who led Dantes into a carriage.

The carriage travelled in the night and then to the harbour, where he was put on a boat. Soon Dantes could see the lights of Marseilles

