Chapter 113. The Past

The count departed with a sad heart from the house in which he had left Mercédès, probably never to behold her again. Since the death of little Edward a great change had taken place in Monte Cristo. Having reached the summit of his vengeance by a long and tortuous path, he saw an abyss of doubt yawning before him. More than this, the conversation which had just taken place between Mercédès and himself had awakened so many recollections in his heart that he felt it necessary to combat with them. A man of the count’s temperament could not long indulge in that melancholy which can exist in common minds, but which destroys superior ones. He thought he must have made an error in his calculations if he now found cause to blame himself.

“I cannot have deceived myself,” he said; “I must look upon the past in a false light. What!” he continued, “can I have been following a false path?—can the end which I proposed be a mistaken end?—can one hour have sufficed to prove to an architect that the work upon which he founded all his hopes was an impossible, if not a sacrilegious, undertaking? I cannot reconcile myself to this idea—it would madden me. The reason why I am now dissatisfied is that I have not a clear appreciation of the past. The past, like the country through which we walk, becomes indistinct as we advance. My position is like that of a person wounded in a dream; he feels the wound, though he cannot recollect when he received it.

“Come, then, thou regenerate man, thou extravagant prodigal, thou awakened sleeper, thou all-powerful visionary, thou invincible millionaire,—once again review thy past life of starvation and wretchedness, revisit the scenes where fate and misfortune conducted, and where despair received thee. Too many diamonds, too much gold and splendor, are now reflected by the mirror in which Monte Cristo seeks to behold Dantès. Hide thy diamonds, bury thy gold, shroud thy splendor, exchange riches for poverty, liberty for a prison, a living body for a corpse!”

As he thus reasoned, Monte Cristo walked down the Rue de la Caisserie. It was the same through which, twenty-four years ago, he had been conducted by a silent and nocturnal guard; the houses, today so smiling and animated, were on that night dark, mute, and closed. “And yet they were the same,” murmured Monte Cristo, “only now it is broad daylight instead of night; it is the sun which brightens the place, and makes it appear so cheerful.”

He proceeded towards the quay by the Rue Saint-Laurent, and advanced to the Consigne; it was the point where he had embarked. A pleasure-boat with striped awning was going by. Monte Cristo called the owner, who immediately rowed up to him with the eagerness of a boatman hoping for a good fare. The weather was magnificent, and the excursion a treat.

The sun, red and flaming, was sinking into the embrace of the welcoming ocean. The sea, smooth as crystal, was now and then disturbed by the leaping of fish, which were pursued by some unseen enemy and sought for safety in another element; while on the extreme verge of the horizon might be seen the fishermen’s boats, white and graceful as the sea-gull, or the merchant vessels bound for Corsica or Spain.

But notwithstanding the serene sky, the gracefully formed boats, and the golden light in which the whole scene was bathed, the Count of Monte Cristo, wrapped in his cloak, could think only of this terrible voyage, the details of which were one by one recalled to his memory. The solitary light burning at the Catalans; that first sight of the Château d’If, which told him whither they were leading him; the struggle with the gendarmes when he wished to throw himself overboard; his despair when he found himself vanquished, and the sensation when the muzzle of the carbine touched his forehead—all these were brought before him in vivid and frightful reality.

Like the streams which the heat of the summer has dried up, and which after the autumnal storms gradually begin oozing drop by drop, so did the count feel his heart gradually fill with the bitterness which formerly nearly overwhelmed Edmond Dantès. Clear sky, swift-flitting boats, and brilliant sunshine disappeared; the heavens were hung with black, and the gigantic structure of the Château d’If seemed like the phantom of a mortal enemy. As they reached the shore, the count instinctively shrunk to the extreme end of the boat, and the owner was obliged to call out, in his sweetest tone of voice, “Sir, we are at the landing.”

Monte Cristo remembered that on that very spot, on the same rock, he had been violently dragged by the guards, who forced him to ascend the slope at the points of their bayonets. The journey had seemed very long to
Dantès, but Monte Cristo found it equally short. Each stroke of the oar seemed to awaken a new throng of ideas, which sprang up with the flying spray of the sea.

There had been no prisoners confined in the Château d’If since the revolution of July; it was only inhabited by a guard, kept there for the prevention of smuggling. A concierge waited at the door to exhibit to visitors this monument of curiosity, once a scene of terror. The count inquired whether any of the ancient jailers were still there; but they had all been pensioned, or had passed on to some other employment. The concierge who attended him had only been there since 1830. He visited his own dungeon. He again beheld the dull light vainly endeavoring to penetrate the narrow opening. His eyes rested upon the spot where had stood his bed, since then removed, and behind the bed the new stones indicated where the breach made by the Abbé Faria had been. Monte Cristo felt his limbs tremble; he seated himself upon a log of wood.

“Are there any stories connected with this prison besides the one relating to the poisoning of Mirabeau?” asked the count; “are there any traditions respecting these dismal abodes,—in which it is difficult to believe men can ever have imprisoned their fellow-creatures?”

“Yes, sir; indeed, the jailer Antoine told me one connected with this very dungeon.”

Monte Cristo shuddered; Antoine had been his jailer. He had almost forgotten his name and face, but at the mention of the name he recalled his person as he used to see it, the face encircled by a beard, wearing the brown jacket, the bunch of keys, the jingling of which he still seemed to hear. The count turned around, and fancied he saw him in the corridor, rendered still darker by the torch carried by the concierge. “Would you like to hear the story, sir?”

“Yes; relate it,” said Monte Cristo, pressing his hand to his heart to still its violent beatings; he felt afraid of hearing his own history.

“This dungeon,” said the concierge, “was, it appears, some time ago occupied by a very dangerous prisoner, the more so since he was full of industry. Another person was confined in the Château at the same time, but he was not wicked, he was only a poor mad priest.”

“Ah, indeed?—mad!” repeated Monte Cristo; “and what was his mania?”

“He offered millions to anyone who would set him at liberty.”

Monte Cristo raised his eyes, but he could not see the heavens; there was a stone veil between him and the firmament. He thought that there had been no less thick a veil before the eyes of those to whom Faria offered the treasures.

“Could the prisoners see each other?” he asked.

“Oh, no, sir, it was expressly forbidden; but they eluded the vigilance of the guards, and made a passage from one dungeon to the other.”

“And which of them made this passage?”

“Oh, it must have been the young man, certainly, for he was strong and industrious, while the abbé was aged and weak; besides, his mind was too vacillating to allow him to carry out an idea.”

“Blind fools!” murmured the count.

“However, be that as it may, the young man made a tunnel, how or by what means no one knows; but he made it, and there is the evidence yet remaining of his work. Do you see it?” and the man held the torch to the wall.

“Ah, yes; I see,” said the count, in a voice hoarse from emotion.

“The result was that the two men communicated with one another; how long they did so, nobody knows. One day the old man fell ill and died. Now guess what the young one did?”

“Tell me.”

“He carried off the corpse, which he placed in his own bed with its face to the wall; then he entered the empty dungeon, closed the entrance, and slipped into the sack which had contained the dead body. Did you ever hear of such an idea?” Monte Cristo closed his eyes, and seemed again to experience all the sensations he had felt when the coarse canvas, yet moist with the cold dews of death, had touched his face. The jailer continued: “Now this was his project. He fancied that they buried the dead at the Château d’If, and imagining they would
not expend much labor on the grave of a prisoner, he calculated on raising the earth with his shoulders, but unfortunately their arrangements at the Château frustrated his projects. They never buried the dead; they merely attached a heavy cannon-ball to the feet, and then threw them into the sea. This is what was done. The young man was thrown from the top of the rock; the corpse was found on the bed next day, and the whole truth was guessed, for the men who performed the office then mentioned what they had not dared to speak of before, that at the moment the corpse was thrown into the deep, they heard a shriek, which was almost immediately stifled by the water in which it disappeared.” The count breathed with difficulty; the cold drops ran down his forehead, and his heart was full of anguish.

“No,” he muttered, “the doubt I felt was but the commencement of forgetfulness; but here the wound reopens, and the heart again thirsts for vengeance. And the prisoner,” he continued aloud, “was he ever heard of afterwards?”

“Oh, no; of course not. You can understand that one of two things must have happened; he must either have fallen flat, in which case the blow, from a height of ninety feet, must have killed him instantly, or he must have fallen upright, and then the weight would have dragged him to the bottom, where he remained—poor fellow!”

“Then you pity him?” said the count.

“Ma foi, yes; though he was in his own element.”

“What do you mean?”

“The report was that he had been a naval officer, who had been confined for plotting with the Bonapartists.”

“Great is truth,” muttered the count, “fire cannot burn, nor water drown it! Thus the poor sailor lives in the recollection of those who narrate his history; his terrible story is recited in the chimney-corner, and a shudder is felt at the description of his transit through the air to be swallowed by the deep.” Then, the count added aloud, “Was his name ever known?”

“Oh, yes; but only as No. 34.”

“Oh, Villefort, Villefort,” murmured the count, “this scene must often have haunted thy sleepless hours!”

“Do you wish to see anything more, sir?” said the concierge.

“Yes, especially if you will show me the poor abbé’s room.”

“Ah—No. 27.”

“Yes; No. 27.” repeated the count, who seemed to hear the voice of the abbé answering him in those very words through the wall when asked his name.

“Come, sir.”

“Wait,” said Monte Cristo, “I wish to take one final glance around this room.”

“This is fortunate,” said the guide; “I have forgotten the other key.”

“Go and fetch it.”

“I will leave you the torch, sir.”

“No, take it away; I can see in the dark.”

“Why, you are like No. 34. They said he was so accustomed to darkness that he could see a pin in the darkest corner of his dungeon.”

“He spent fourteen years to arrive at that,” muttered the count.

The guide carried away the torch. The count had spoken correctly. Scarcely had a few seconds elapsed, ere he saw everything as distinctly as by daylight. Then he looked around him, and really recognized his dungeon.

“Yes,” he said, “there is the stone upon which I used to sit; there is the impression made by my shoulders on the wall; there is the mark of my blood made when one day I dashed my head against the wall. Oh, those figures, how well I remember them! I made them one day to calculate the age of my father, that I might know whether I should find him still living, and that of Mercédès, to know if I should find her still free. After finishing that calculation, I had a minute’s hope. I did not reckon upon hunger and infidelity!” and a bitter laugh escaped the count.
He saw in fancy the burial of his father, and the marriage of Mercédès. On the other side of the dungeon he perceived an inscription, the white letters of which were still visible on the green wall:

"O God!" he read, "preserve my memory!"

"Oh, yes," he cried, "that was my only prayer at last; I no longer begged for liberty, but memory; I dreaded to become mad and forgetful. O God, thou hast preserved my memory; I thank thee, I thank thee!" At this moment the light of the torch was reflected on the wall; the guide was coming; Monte Cristo went to meet him.

"Follow me, sir;" and without ascending the stairs the guide conducted him by a subterraneous passage to another entrance. There, again, Monte Cristo was assailed by a multitude of thoughts. The first thing that met his eye was the meridian, drawn by the abbé on the wall, by which he calculated the time; then he saw the remains of the bed on which the poor prisoner had died. The sight of this, instead of exciting the anguish experienced by the count in the dungeon, filled his heart with a soft and grateful sentiment, and tears fell from his eyes.

"This is where the mad abbé was kept, sir, and that is where the young man entered;" and the guide pointed to the opening, which had remained unclosed. "From the appearance of the stone," he continued, "a learned gentleman discovered that the prisoners might have communicated together for ten years. Poor things! Those must have been ten weary years."

Dantès took some louis from his pocket, and gave them to the man who had twice unconsciously pitied him. The guide took them, thinking them merely a few pieces of little value; but the light of the torch revealed their true worth. "Sir," he said, "you have made a mistake; you have given me gold."

"I know it." The concierge looked up on the count with surprise. "Sir," he cried, scarcely able to believe his good fortune—"sir, I cannot understand your generosity!"

"Oh, it is very simple, my good fellow; I have been a sailor, and your story touched me more than it would others."

"Then, sir, since you are so liberal, I ought to offer you something."

"What have you to offer to me, my friend? Shells? Straw-work? Thank you!"

"No, sir, neither of those; something connected with this story."

"Really? What is it?"

"Listen," said the guide; "I said to myself, 'Something is always left in a cell inhabited by one prisoner for fifteen years,' so I began to sound the wall."

"Ah," cried Monte Cristo, remembering the abbé’s two hiding-places.

"After some search, I found that the floor gave a hollow sound near the head of the bed, and at the hearth."

"Yes," said the count, "yes."

"I raised the stones, and found——"

"A rope-ladder and some tools?"

"How do you know that?" asked the guide in astonishment.

"I do not know—I only guess it, because that sort of thing is generally found in prisoners’ cells."

"Yes, sir, a rope-ladder and tools."

"And have you them yet?"

"No, sir; I sold them to visitors, who considered them great curiosities; but I have still something left."

"What is it?" asked the count, impatiently.

"A sort of book, written upon strips of cloth."

"Go and fetch it, my good fellow; and if it be what I hope, you will do well."

"I will run for it, sir;" and the guide went out. Then the count knelt down by the side of the bed, which death had converted into an altar. "Oh, second father," he exclaimed, "thou who hast given me liberty, knowledge, riches; thou who, like beings of a superior order to ourselves, couldst understand the science of good and evil; if in the depths of the tomb there still remain something within us which can respond to the voice of those who are..."
left on earth; if after death the soul ever revisit the places where we have lived and suffered,—then, noble heart, sublime soul, then I conjure thee by the paternal love thou didst bear me, by the filial obedience I vowed to thee, grant me some sign, some revelation! Remove from me the remains of doubt, which, if it change not to conviction, must become remorse!” The count bowed his head, and clasped his hands together.

“Here, sir,” said a voice behind him.

Monte Cristo shuddered, and arose. The concierge held out the strips of cloth upon which the Abbé Faria had spread the riches of his mind. The manuscript was the great work by the Abbé Faria upon the kingdoms of Italy. The count seized it hastily, his eyes immediately fell upon the epigraph, and he read, “‘Thou shalt tear out the dragons’ teeth, and shall trample the lions under foot, saith the Lord.’”

“Ah,” he exclaimed, “here is my answer. Thanks, father, thanks.” And feeling in his pocket, he took thence a small pocket-book, which contained ten bank-notes, each of 1,000 francs.

“Here,” he said, “take this pocket-book.”

“Do you give it to me?”

“Yes; but only on condition that you will not open it till I am gone;” and placing in his breast the treasure he had just found, which was more valuable to him than the richest jewel, he rushed out of the corridor, and reaching his boat, cried, “To Marseilles!” Then, as he departed, he fixed his eyes upon the gloomy prison. “Woe,” he cried, “to those who confined me in that wretched prison; and woe to those who forgot that I was there!” As he repassed the Catalans, the count turned around and burying his head in his cloak murmured the name of a woman. The victory was complete; twice he had overcome his doubts. The name he pronounced, in a voice of tenderness, amounting almost to love, was that of Haydée.

On landing, the count turned towards the cemetery, where he felt sure of finding Morrel. He, too, ten years ago, had piously sought out a tomb, and sought it vainly. He, who returned to France with millions, had been unable to find the grave of his father, who had perished from hunger. Morrel had indeed placed a cross over the spot, but it had fallen down and the grave-digger had burnt it, as he did all the old wood in the churchyard. The worthy merchant had been more fortunate. Dying in the arms of his children, he had been by them laid by the side of his wife, who had preceded him in eternity by two years. Two large slabs of marble, on which were inscribed their names, were placed on either side of a little enclosure, railed in, and shaded by four cypress-trees. Morrel was leaning against one of these, mechanically fixing his eyes on the graves. His grief was so profound that he was nearly unconscious.

“The dead are everywhere,” said Morrel; “did you not yourself tell me so as we left Paris?”

“Maximilian,” said the count, “you asked me during the journey to allow you to remain some days at Marseilles. Do you still wish to do so?”

“I have no wishes, count; only I fancy I could pass the time less painfully here than anywhere else.”

“So much the better, for I must leave you; but I carry your word with me, do I not?”

“Ah, count, I shall forget it.”

“No, you will not forget it, because you are a man of honor, Morrel, because you have taken an oath, and are about to do so again.”

“Oh, count, have pity upon me. I am so unhappy.”

“I have known a man much more unfortunate than you, Morrel.”

“Impossible!”

“Alas,” said Monte Cristo, “it is the infirmity of our nature always to believe ourselves much more unhappy than those who groan by our sides!”

“What can be more wretched than the man who has lost all he loved and desired in the world?”

“Listen, Morrel, and pay attention to what I am about to tell you. I knew a man who like you had fixed all his hopes of happiness upon a woman. He was young, he had an old father whom he loved, a betrothed bride whom he adored. He was about to marry her, when one of the caprices of fate,—which would almost make us doubt the goodness of Providence, if that Providence did not afterwards reveal itself by proving that all is but a means
of conducting to an end,—one of those caprices deprived him of his mistress, of the future of which he had dreamed (for in his blindness he forgot he could only read the present), and cast him into a dungeon.”

“Ah,” said Morrel, “one quits a dungeon in a week, a month, or a year.”

“He remained there fourteen years, Morrel,” said the count, placing his hand on the young man’s shoulder. Maximilian shuddered.

“Fourteen years!” he muttered—“Fourteen years!” repeated the count. “During that time he had many moments of despair. He also, Morrel, like you, considered himself the unhappiest of men.”

“Well?” asked Morrel.

“Well, at the height of his despair God assisted him through human means. At first, perhaps, he did not recognize the infinite mercy of the Lord, but at last he took patience and waited. One day he miraculously left the prison, transformed, rich, powerful. His first cry was for his father; but that father was dead.”

“My father, too, is dead,” said Morrel.

“Yes; but your father died in your arms, happy, respected, rich, and full of years; his father died poor, despairing, almost doubtful of Providence; and when his son sought his grave ten years afterwards, his tomb had disappeared, and no one could say, ‘There sleeps the father you so well loved.’”

“Oh!” exclaimed Morrel.

“He was, then, a more unhappy son than you, Morrel, for he could not even find his father’s grave.”

“But then he had the woman he loved still remaining?”

“You are deceived, Morrel, that woman——”

“She was dead?”

“Worse than that, she was faithless, and had married one of the persecutors of her betrothed. You see, then, Morrel, that he was a more unhappy lover than you.”

“And has he found consolation?”

“He has at least found peace.”

“And does he ever expect to be happy?”

“He hopes so, Maximilian.” The young man’s head fell on his breast.

“You have my promise,” he said, after a minute’s pause, extending his hand to Monte Cristo. “Only remember——”

“On the 5th of October, Morrel, I shall expect you at the Island of Monte Cristo. On the 4th a yacht will wait for you in the port of Bastia, it will be called the Eurus. You will give your name to the captain, who will bring you to me. It is understood—is it not?”

“But, count, do you remember that the 5th of October——”

“Child,” replied the count, “not to know the value of a man’s word! I have told you twenty times that if you wish to die on that day, I will assist you. Morrel, farewell!”

“Yes; I have business in Italy. I leave you alone with your misfortunes, and with hope, Maximilian.”

“When do you leave?”

“Immediately; the steamer waits, and in an hour I shall be far from you. Will you accompany me to the harbor, Maximilian?”

“I am entirely yours, count.” Morrel accompanied the count to the harbor. The white steam was ascending like a plume of feathers from the black chimney. The steamer soon disappeared, and in an hour afterwards, as the count had said, was scarcely distinguishable in the horizon amidst the fogs of the night.
Chapter 114. Peppino

At the same time that the steamer disappeared behind Cape Morgion, a man travelling post on the road from Florence to Rome had just passed the little town of Aquapendente. He was travelling fast enough to cover a great deal of ground without exciting suspicion. This man was dressed in a greatcoat, or rather a surtout, a little worse for the journey, but which exhibited the ribbon of the Legion of Honor still fresh and brilliant, a decoration which also ornamented the under coat. He might be recognized, not only by these signs, but also from the accent with which he spoke to the postilion, as a Frenchman. Another proof that he was a native of the universal country was apparent in the fact of his knowing no other Italian words than the terms used in music, and which like the “goddam” of Figaro, served all possible linguistic requirements. “Allegro!” he called out to the postilions at every ascent. “Moderato!” he cried as they descended. And heaven knows there are hills enough between Rome and Florence by the way of Aquapendente! These two words greatly amused the men to whom they were addressed. On reaching La Storta, the point from whence Rome is first visible, the traveler evinced none of the enthusiastic curiosity which usually leads strangers to stand up and endeavor to catch sight of the dome of Saint Peter’s, which may be seen long before any other object is distinguishable. No, he merely drew a pocketbook from his pocket, and took from it a paper folded in four, and after having examined it in a manner almost reverential, he said—“Good! I have it still!”

The carriage entered by the Porto del Popolo, turned to the left, and stopped at the Hôtel d’Espagne. Old Pastrini, our former acquaintance, received the traveler at the door, hat in hand. The traveler alighted, ordered a good dinner, and inquired the address of the house of Thomson & French, which was immediately given to him, as it was one of the most celebrated in Rome. It was situated in the Via dei Banchi, near St. Peter’s. In Rome, as everywhere else, the arrival of a post-chaise is an event. Ten young descendants of Marius and the Gracchi, barefooted and out at elbows, with one hand resting on the hip and the other gracefully curved above the head, stared at the traveler, the post-chaise, and the horses; to these were added about fifty little vagabonds from the Papal States, who earned a pittance by diving into the Tiber at high water from the bridge of St. Angelo. Now, as these street Arabs of Rome, more fortunate than those of Paris, understand every language, more especially the French, they heard the traveler order an apartment, a dinner, and finally inquire the way to the house of Thomson & French. The result was that when the new-comer left the hotel with the cicerone, a man detached himself from the rest of the idlers, and without having been seen by the traveler, and appearing to excite no attention from the guide, followed the stranger with as much skill as a Parisian police agent would have used.

The Frenchman had been so impatient to reach the house of Thomson & French that he would not wait for the horses to be harnessed, but left word for the carriage to overtake him on the road, or to wait for him at the bankers’ door. He reached it before the carriage arrived. The Frenchman entered, leaving in the anteroom his guide, who immediately entered into conversation with two or three of the industrious idlers who are always to be found in Rome at the doors of banking-houses, churches, museums, or theatres. With the Frenchman, the man who had followed him entered too; the Frenchman knocked at the inner door, and entered the first room; his shadow did the same.

“Messrs. Thomson & French?” inquired the stranger.

An attendant arose at a sign from a confidential clerk at the first desk. “Whom shall I announce?” said the attendant.

“Baron Danglars.”

“Follow me,” said the man. A door opened, through which the attendant and the baron disappeared. The man who had followed Danglars sat down on a bench. The clerk continued to write for the next five minutes; the man preserved profound silence, and remained perfectly motionless. Then the pen of the clerk ceased to move over the paper; he raised his head, and appearing to be perfectly sure of privacy,—“Ah, ha,” he said, “here you are, Peppino!”

“Yes,” was the laconic reply. “You have found out that there is something worth having about this large gentleman?”

“There is no great merit due to me, for we were informed of it.”

“You know his business here, then.”
“Pardieu, he has come to draw, but I don’t know how much!”
“You will know presently, my friend.”
“Very well, only do not give me false information as you did the other day.”
“What do you mean?—of whom do you speak? Was it the Englishman who carried off 3,000 crowns from here the other day?”
“No; he really had 3,000 crowns, and we found them. I mean the Russian prince, who you said had 30,000 livres, and we only found 22,000.”
“You must have searched badly.”
“Luigi Vampa himself searched.”
“Indeed? But you must let me make my observations, or the Frenchman will transact his business without my knowing the sum.” Peppino nodded, and taking a rosary from his pocket began to mutter a few prayers while the clerk disappeared through the same door by which Danglars and the attendant had gone out. At the expiration of ten minutes the clerk returned with a beaming countenance. “Well?” asked Peppino of his friend.
“Joy, joy—the sum is large!”
“Five or six millions, is it not?”
“Yes, you know the amount.”
“On the receipt of the Count of Monte Cristo?”
“Why, how came you to be so well acquainted with all this?”
“I told you we were informed beforehand.”
“Then why do you apply to me?”
“That I may be sure I have the right man.”
“Yes, it is indeed he. Five millions—a pretty sum, eh, Peppino?”
“Hush—here is our man!” The clerk seized his pen, and Peppino his beads; one was writing and the other praying when the door opened. Danglars looked radiant with joy; the banker accompanied him to the door. Peppino followed Danglars.

According to the arrangements, the carriage was waiting at the door. The guide held the door open. Guides are useful people, who will turn their hands to anything. Danglars leaped into the carriage like a young man of twenty. The cicerone reclosed the door, and sprang up by the side of the coachman. Peppino mounted the seat behind.

“Will your excellency visit Saint Peter’s?” asked the cicerone.

“I did not come to Rome to see,” said Danglars aloud; then he added softly, with an avaricious smile, “I came to touch!” and he rapped his pocket-book, in which he had just placed a letter.

“Then your excellency is going——”
“To the hotel.”

“Casa Pastrini!” said the cicerone to the coachman, and the carriage drove rapidly on. Ten minutes afterwards the baron entered his apartment, and Peppino stationed himself on the bench outside the door of the hotel, after having whispered something in the ear of one of the descendants of Marius and the Gracchi whom we noticed at the beginning of the chapter, who immediately ran down the road leading to the Capitol at his fullest speed. Danglars was tired and sleepy; he therefore went to bed, placing his pocket-book under his pillow. Peppino had a little spare time, so he had a game of morra with the facchini, lost three crowns, and then to console himself drank a bottle of Orvieto.

The next morning Danglars awoke late, though he went to bed so early; he had not slept well for five or six nights, even if he had slept at all. He breakfasted heartily, and caring little, as he said, for the beauties of the Eternal City, ordered post-horses at noon. But Danglars had not reckoned upon the formalities of the police and the idleness of the posting-master. The horses only arrived at two o’clock, and the cicerone did not bring the passport till three.
All these preparations had collected a number of idlers round the door of Signor Pastrini’s; the descendants of Marius and the Gracchi were also not wanting. The baron walked triumphantly through the crowd, who for the sake of gain styled him “your excellency.” As Danglars had hitherto contented himself with being called a baron, he felt rather flattered at the title of excellency, and distributed a dozen silver coins among the beggars, who were ready, for twelve more, to call him “your highness.”

“Which road?” asked the postilion in Italian.

“The Ancona road,” replied the baron. Signor Pastrini interpreted the question and answer, and the horses galloped off. Danglars intended travelling to Venice, where he would receive one part of his fortune, and then proceeding to Vienna, where he would find the rest, he meant to take up his residence in the latter town, which he had been told was a city of pleasure.

He had scarcely advanced three leagues out of Rome when daylight began to disappear. Danglars had not intended starting so late, or he would have remained; he put his head out and asked the postilion how long it would be before they reached the next town. “Non capisco” (do not understand), was the reply. Danglars bent his head, which he meant to imply, “Very well.” The carriage again moved on. “I will stop at the first posting-house,” said Danglars to himself.

He still felt the same self-satisfaction which he had experienced the previous evening, and which had procured him so good a night’s rest. He was luxuriously stretched in a good English calash, with double springs; he was drawn by four good horses, at full gallop; he knew the relay to be at a distance of seven leagues. What subject of meditation could present itself to the banker, so fortunately become bankrupt?

Danglars thought for ten minutes about his wife in Paris; another ten minutes about his daughter travelling with Mademoiselle d’Armilly; the same period was given to his creditors, and the manner in which he intended spending their money; and then, having no subject left for contemplation, he shut his eyes, and fell asleep. Now and then a jolt more violent than the rest caused him to open his eyes; then he felt that he was still being carried with great rapidity over the same country, thickly strewn with broken aqueducts, which looked like granite giants petrified while running a race. But the night was cold, dull, and rainy, and it was much more pleasant for a traveler to remain in the warm carriage than to put his head out of the window to make inquiries of a postilion whose only answer was “Non capisco.”

Danglars therefore continued to sleep, saying to himself that he would be sure to awake at the posting-house. The carriage stopped. Danglars fancied that they had reached the long-desired point; he opened his eyes and looked through the window, expecting to find himself in the midst of some town, or at least village; but he saw nothing except what seemed like a ruin, where three or four men went and came like shadows. Danglars waited a moment, expecting the postilion to come and demand payment with the termination of his stage. He intended taking advantage of the opportunity to make fresh inquiries of the new conductor; but the horses were unharnessed, and others put in their places, without anyone claiming money from the traveler. Danglars, astonished, opened the door; but a strong hand pushed him back, and the carriage rolled on. The baron was completely roused. “Eh?” he said to the postilion, “eh, mio caro?”

This was another little piece of Italian the baron had learned from hearing his daughter sing Italian duets with Cavalcanti. But mio caro did not reply. Danglars then opened the window.

“Come, my friend,” he said, thrusting his hand through the opening, “where are we going?”

“Dentro la testa!” answered a solemn and imperious voice, accompanied by a menacing gesture. Danglars thought dentro la testa meant, “Put in your head!” He was making rapid progress in Italian. He obeyed, not without some uneasiness, which, momentarily increasing, caused his mind, instead of being as unoccupied as it was when he began his journey, to fill with ideas which were very likely to keep a traveler awake, more especially one in such a situation as Danglars. His eyes acquired that quality which in the first moment of strong emotion enables them to see distinctly, and which afterwards fails from being too much taxed. Before we are alarmed, we see correctly; when we are alarmed, we see double; and when we have been alarmed, we see nothing but trouble. Danglars observed a man in a cloak galloping at the right hand of the carriage.

“Some gendarme!” he exclaimed. “Can I have been intercepted by French telegrams to the pontifical authorities?” He resolved to end his anxiety. “Where are you taking me?” he asked. “Dentro la testa,” replied the same voice, with the same menacing accent.
Danglars turned to the left; another man on horseback was galloping on that side. “Decidedly,” said Danglars, with the perspiration on his forehead, “I must be under arrest.” And he threw himself back in the calash, not this time to sleep, but to think. Directly afterwards the moon rose. He then saw the great aqueducts, those stone phantoms which he had before remarked, only then they were on the right hand, now they were on the left. He understood that they had described a circle, and were bringing him back to Rome. “Oh, unfortunate!” he cried, “they must have obtained my arrest.” The carriage continued to roll on with frightful speed. An hour of terror elapsed, for every spot they passed showed that they were on the road back. At length, he saw a dark mass, against which it seemed as if the carriage was about to dash; but the vehicle turned to one side, leaving the barrier behind and Danglars saw that it was one of the ramparts encircling Rome.

“Mon dieu!” cried Danglars, “we are not returning to Rome; then it is not justice which is pursuing me! Gracious heavens; another idea presents itself—what if they should be——”

His hair stood on end. He remembered those interesting stories, so little believed in Paris, respecting Roman bandits; he remembered the adventures that Albert de Morcerf had related when it was intended that he should marry Mademoiselle Eugénie. “They are robbers, perhaps,” he muttered.

Just then the carriage rolled on something harder than gravel road. Danglars hazarded a look on both sides of the road, and perceived monuments of a singular form, and his mind now recalled all the details Morcerf had related, and comparing them with his own situation, he felt sure that he must be on the Appian Way. On the left, in a sort of valley, he perceived a circular excavation. It was Caracalla’s circus. On a word from the man who rode at the side of the carriage, it stopped. At the same time the door was opened. “Scendi!” exclaimed a commanding voice.

Danglars instantly descended; although he did not yet speak Italian, he understood it very well. More dead than alive, he looked around him. Four men surrounded him, besides the postilion.

“Di quà,” said one of the men, descending a little path leading out of the Appian Way. Danglars followed his guide without opposition, and had no occasion to turn around to see whether the three others were following him. Still it appeared as though they were stationed at equal distances from one another, like sentinels. After walking for about ten minutes, during which Danglars did not exchange a single word with his guide, he found himself between a hillock and a clump of high weeds; three men, standing silent, formed a triangle, of which he was the center. He wished to speak, but his tongue refused to move. “Avanti!” said the same sharp and imperative voice.

This time Danglars had double reason to understand, for if the word and gesture had not explained the speaker’s meaning, it was clearly expressed by the man walking behind him, who pushed him so rudely that he struck against the guide. This guide was our friend Peppino, who dashed into the thicket of high weeds, through a path which none but lizards or polecats could have imagined to be an open road. Peppino stopped before a pit overhung by thick hedges; the pit, half open, afforded a passage to the young man, who disappeared like the evil spirits in the fairy tales. The voice and gesture of the man who followed Danglars ordered him to do the same. There was no longer any doubt, the bankrupt was in the hands of Roman banditti. Danglars acquitted himself like a man placed between two dangerous positions, and who is rendered brave by fear. Notwithstanding his large stomach, certainly not intended to penetrate the fissures of the Campagna, he slid down like Peppino, and closing his eyes fell upon his feet. As he touched the ground, he opened his eyes.

The path was wide, but dark. Peppino, who cared little for being recognized now that he was in his own territories, struck a light and lit a torch. Two other men descended after Danglars forming the rearguard, and pushing Danglars whenever he happened to stop, they came by a gentle declivity to the intersection of two corridors. The walls were hollowed out in sepulchers, one above the other, and which seemed in contrast with the white stones to open their large dark eyes, like those which we see on the faces of the dead. A sentinel struck the rings of his carbine against his left hand. “Who comes there?” he cried.

“A friend, a friend!” said Peppino; “but where is the captain?”

“There,” said the sentinel, pointing over his shoulder to a spacious crypt, hollowed out of the rock, the lights from which shone into the passage through the large arched openings. “Fine spoil, captain, fine spoil!” said Peppino in Italian, and taking Danglars by the collar of his coat he dragged him to an opening resembling a door, through which they entered the apartment which the captain appeared to have made his dwelling-place.
“Is this the man?” asked the captain, who was attentively reading Plutarch’s *Life of Alexander*.

“Himself, captain—himself.”

“Very well, show him to me.”

At this rather impertinent order, Peppino raised his torch to the face of Danglars, who hastily withdrew that he might not have his eyelashes burnt. His agitated features presented the appearance of pale and hideous terror.

“The man is tired,” said the captain, “conduct him to his bed.”

“Oh,” murmured Danglars, “that bed is probably one of the coffins hollowed in the wall, and the sleep I shall enjoy will be death from one of the poniards I see glistening in the darkness.”

From their beds of dried leaves or wolf-skins at the back of the chamber now arose the companions of the man who had been found by Albert de Morcerf reading *Caesar’s Commentaries*, and by Danglars studying the *Life of Alexander*. The banker uttered a groan and followed his guide; he neither supplicated nor exclaimed. He no longer possessed strength, will, power, or feeling; he followed where they led him. At length, he found himself at the foot of a staircase, and he mechanically lifted his foot five or six times. Then a low door was opened before him, and bending his head to avoid striking his forehead he entered a small room cut out of the rock. The cell was clean, though empty, and dry, though situated at an immeasurable distance under the earth. A bed of dried grass covered with goat-skins was placed in one corner. Danglars brightened up on beholding it, fancying that it gave some promise of safety.

“Oh, God be praised,” he said; “it is a real bed!”

“Ecco!” said the guide, and pushing Danglars into the cell, he closed the door upon him. A bolt grated and Danglars was a prisoner. If there had been no bolt, it would have been impossible for him to pass through the midst of the garrison who held the catacombs of St. Sebastian, encamped round a master whom our readers must have recognized as the famous Luigi Vampa. Danglars, too, had recognized the bandit, whose existence he would not believe when Albert de Morcerf mentioned him in Paris; and not only did he recognize him, but the cell in which Albert had been confined, and which was probably kept for the accommodation of strangers. These recollections were dwelt upon with some pleasure by Danglars, and restored him to some degree of tranquility. Since the bandits had not dispatched him at once, he felt that they would not kill him at all. They had arrested him for the purpose of robbery, and as he had only a few louis about him, he doubted not he would be ransomed. He remembered that Morcerf had been taxed at 4,000 crowns, and as he considered himself of much greater importance than Morcerf he fixed his own price at 8,000 crowns. Eight thousand crowns amounted to 48,000 livres; he would then have about 5,050,000 francs left. With this sum he could manage to keep out of difficulties. Therefore, tolerably secure in being able to extricate himself from his position, provided he were not rated at the unreasonable sum of 5,050,000 francs, he stretched himself on his bed, and after turning over two or three times, fell asleep with the tranquility of the hero whose life Luigi Vampa was studying.
We awake from every sleep except the one dreaded by Danglars. He awoke. To a Parisian accustomed to silken curtains, walls hung with velvet drapery, and the soft perfume of burning wood, the white smoke of which diffuses itself in graceful curves around the room, the appearance of the whitewashed cell which greeted his eyes on awakening seemed like the continuation of some disagreeable dream. But in such a situation a single moment suffices to change the strongest doubt into certainty. “Yes, yes,” he murmured, “I am in the hands of the brigands of whom Albert de Morcerf spoke.” His first idea was to breathe, that he might know whether he was wounded. He borrowed this from *Don Quixote*, the only book he had ever read, but which he still slightly remembered.

“No,” he cried, “they have not wounded, but perhaps they have robbed me!” and he thrust his hands into his pockets. They were untouched; the hundred louis he had reserved for his journey from Rome to Venice were in his trousers pocket, and in that of his great-coat he found the little note-case containing his letter of credit for 5,050,000 francs. “Singular bandits!” he exclaimed; “they have left me my purse and pocket-book. As I was saying last night, they intend me to be ransomed. Hallo, here is my watch! Let me see what time it is.”

Danglars’ watch, one of Breguet’s repeaters, which he had carefully wound up on the previous night, struck half past five. Without this, Danglars would have been quite ignorant of the time, for daylight did not reach his cell. Should he demand an explanation from the bandits, or should he wait patiently for them to propose it? The last alternative seemed the most prudent, so he waited until twelve o’clock. During all this time a sentinel, who had been relieved at eight o’clock, had been watching his door. Danglars suddenly felt a strong inclination to see the person who kept watch over him. He had noticed that a few rays, not of daylight, but from a lamp, penetrated through the ill-joined planks of the door; he approached just as the brigand was refreshing himself with a mouthful of brandy, which, owing to the leathern bottle containing it, sent forth an odor which was extremely unpleasant to Danglars. “Faugh!” he exclaimed, retreating to the farther corner of his cell.

At twelve this man was replaced by another functionary, and Danglars, wishing to catch sight of his new guardian, approached the door again. He was an athletic, gigantic bandit, with large eyes, thick lips, and a flat nose; his red hair fell in disheveled masses like snakes around his shoulders. “Ah, ha,” cried Danglars, “this fellow is more like an ogre than anything else; however, I am rather too old and tough to be very good eating!”

We see that Danglars was collected enough to jest; at the same time, as though to disprove the ogreish propensities, the man took some black bread, cheese, and onions from his wallet, which he began devouring voraciously. “May I be hanged,” said Danglars, glancing at the bandit’s dinner through the crevices of the door,—“may I be hanged if I can understand how people can eat such filth!” and he withdrew to seat himself upon his goat-skin, which reminded him of the smell of the brandy.

But the mysteries of nature are incomprehensible, and there are certain invitations contained in even the coarsest food which appeal very irresistibly to a fasting stomach. Danglars felt his own not to be very well supplied just then, and gradually the man appeared less ugly, the bread less black, and the cheese more fresh, while those dreadful vulgar onions recalled to his mind certain sauces and side-dishes, which his cook prepared in a very superior manner whenever he said, “Monsieur Deniseau, let me have a nice little fricassee today.” He got up and knocked on the door; the bandit raised his head. Danglars knew that he was heard, so he redoubled his blows.

“Che cosa?” asked the bandit.

“Come, come,” said Danglars, tapping his fingers against the door, “I think it is quite time to think of giving me something to eat!” But whether he did not understand him, or whether he had received no orders respecting the nourishment of Danglars, the giant, without answering, went on with his dinner. Danglars’ feelings were hurt, and not wishing to put himself under obligations to the brute, the banker threw himself down again on his goat-skin and did not breathe another word.

Four hours passed by and the giant was replaced by another bandit. Danglars, who really began to experience sundry gnawings at the stomach, arose softly, again applied his eye to the crack of the door, and recognized the intelligent countenance of his guide. It was, indeed, Peppino who was preparing to mount guard as comfortably as possible by seating himself opposite to the door, and placing between his legs an earthen pan, containing
chick-peas stewed with bacon. Near the pan he also placed a pretty little basket of Villetri grapes and a flask of Orvieto. Peppino was decidedly an epicure. Danglars watched these preparations and his mouth watered.

“Come,” he said to himself, “let me try if he will be more tractable than the other;” and he tapped gently at the door. “On y va,” (coming) exclaimed Peppino, who from frequenting the house of Signor Pastrini understood French perfectly in all its idioms.

Danglars immediately recognized him as the man who had called out in such a furious manner, “Put in your head!” But this was not the time for recrimination, so he assumed his most agreeable manner and said with a gracious smile,—“Excuse me, sir, but are they not going to give me any dinner?”

“Does your excellency happen to be hungry?”

“Happen to be hungry,—that’s pretty good, when I haven’t eaten for twenty-four hours!” muttered Danglars. Then he added aloud, “Yes, sir, I am hungry—very hungry.”

“What would your excellency like?” and Peppino placed his pan on the ground, so that the steam rose directly under the nostrils of Danglars. “Give your orders.”

“Have you kitchens here?”

“Kitchens?—of course—complete ones.”

“And cooks?”

“Excellent!”

“Well, a fowl, fish, game,—it signifies little, so that I eat.”

“As your excellency pleases. You mentioned a fowl, I think?”

“Yes, a fowl.” Peppino, turning around, shouted, “A fowl for his excellency!” His voice yet echoed in the archway when a handsome, graceful, and half-naked young man appeared, bearing a fowl in a silver dish on his head, without the assistance of his hands. “I could almost believe myself at the Café de Paris,” murmured Danglars.

“Here, your excellency,” said Peppino, taking the fowl from the young bandit and placing it on the worm-eaten table, which with the stool and the goat-skin bed formed the entire furniture of the cell. Danglars asked for a knife and fork. “Here, excellency,” said Peppino, offering him a little blunt knife and a boxwood fork. Danglars took the knife in one hand and the fork in the other, and was about to cut up the fowl. “Pardon me, excellency,” said Peppino, placing his hand on the banker’s shoulder; “people pay here before they eat. They might not be satisfied, and——”

“Ah, ha,” thought Danglars, “this is not so much like Paris, except that I shall probably be skinned! Never mind, I’ll fix that all right. I have always heard how cheap poultry is in Italy; I should think a fowl is worth about twelve sous at Rome.—There,” he said, throwing a louis down. Peppino picked up the louis, and Danglars again prepared to carve the fowl. “Stay a moment, your excellency,” said Peppino, rising; “you still owe me something.”

“I said they would skin me,” thought Danglars; but resolving to resist the extortion, he said, “Come, how much do I owe you for this fowl?”

“Your excellency has given me a louis on account.”

“A louis on account for a fowl?”

“Certainly; and your excellency now owes me 4,999 louis.” Danglars opened his enormous eyes on hearing this gigantic joke. “Come, come, this is very droll—very amusing—I allow; but, as I am very hungry, pray allow me to eat. Stay, here is another louis for you.”

“Then that will make only 4,998 louis more,” said Peppino with the same indifference. “I shall get them all in time.”

“Oh, as for that,” said Danglars, angry at this prolongation of the jest,—“as for that you won’t get them at all. Go to the devil! You do not know with whom you have to deal!”

Peppino made a sign, and the youth hastily removed the fowl. Danglars threw himself upon his goat-skin, and Peppino, reclosing the door, again began eating his peas and bacon. Though Danglars could not see Peppino,
the noise of his teeth allowed no doubt as to his occupation. He was certainly eating, and noisily too, like an ill-bred man. “Brute!” said Danglars. Peppino pretended not to hear him, and without even turning his head continued to eat slowly. Danglars’ stomach felt so empty, that it seemed as if it would be impossible ever to fill it again; still he had patience for another half-hour, which appeared to him like a century. He again arose and went to the door. “Come, sir, do not keep me starving here any longer, but tell me what they want.”

“Nay, your excellency, it is you who should tell us what you want. Give your orders, and we will execute them.”

“Then open the door directly.” Peppino obeyed. “Now look here, I want something to eat! To eat—do you hear?”

“Are you hungry?”

“Come, you understand me.”

“What would your excellency like to eat?”

“A piece of dry bread, since the fowls are beyond all price in this accursed place.”


“Four thousand nine hundred and ninety-eight louis,” said Peppino; “You have paid two louis in advance.”

“What? One hundred thousand francs for a loaf?”

“One hundred thousand francs,” repeated Peppino.

“But you only asked 100,000 francs for a fowl!”

“We have a fixed price for all our provisions. It signifies nothing whether you eat much or little—whether you have ten dishes or one—it is always the same price.”

“What, still keeping up this silly jest? My dear fellow, it is perfectly ridiculous—stupid! You had better tell me at once that you intend starving me to death.”

“Oh, dear, no, your excellency, unless you intend to commit suicide. Pay and eat.”

“And what am I to pay with, brute?” said Danglars, enraged. “Do you suppose I carry 100,000 francs in my pocket?”

“Your excellency has 5,050,000 francs in your pocket; that will be fifty fowls at 100,000 francs apiece, and half a fowl for the 50,000.”

Danglars shuddered. The bandage fell from his eyes, and he understood the joke, which he did not think quite so stupid as he had done just before. “Come,” he said, “if I pay you the 100,000 francs, will you be satisfied, and allow me to eat at my ease?”

“Certainly,” said Peppino.

“But how can I pay them?”

“Oh, nothing easier; you have an account open with Messrs. Thomson & French, Via dei Banchi, Rome; give me a draft for 4,998 louis on these gentlemen, and our banker shall take it.” Danglars thought it as well to comply with a good grace, so he took the pen, ink, and paper Peppino offered him, wrote the draft, and signed it. “Here,” he said, “here is a draft at sight.”

“And here is your fowl.” Danglars sighed while he carved the fowl; it appeared very thin for the price it had cost. As for Peppino, he examined the paper attentively, put it into his pocket, and continued eating his peas.
Chapter 116. The Pardon

The next day Danglars was again hungry; certainly the air of that dungeon was very provocative of appetite. The prisoner expected that he would be at no expense that day, for like an economical man he had concealed half of his fowl and a piece of the bread in the corner of his cell. But he had no sooner eaten than he felt thirsty; he had forgotten that. He struggled against his thirst till his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth; then, no longer able to resist, he called out. The sentinel opened the door; it was a new face. He thought it would be better to transact business with his old acquaintance, so he sent for Peppino. “Here I am, your excellency,” said Peppino, with an eagerness which Danglars thought favorable to him. “What do you want?”

“Something to drink.”

“Your excellency knows that wine is beyond all price near Rome.”

“Then give me water,” cried Danglars, endeavoring to parry the blow.

“Oh, water is even more scarce than wine, your excellency,—there has been such a drought.”

“Come,” thought Danglars, “it is the same old story.” And while he smiled as he attempted to regard the affair as a joke, he felt his temples get moist with perspiration.

“Come, my friend,” said Danglars, seeing that he made no impression on Peppino, “you will not refuse me a glass of wine?”

“I have already told you that we do not sell at retail.”

“Well, then, let me have a bottle of the least expensive.”

“They are all the same price.”

“And what is that?”

“Twenty-five thousand francs a bottle.”

“Tell me,” cried Danglars, in a tone whose bitterness Harpagon alone has been capable of revealing—“tell me that you wish to despoil me of all; it will be sooner over than devouring me piecemeal.”

“It is possible such may be the master’s intention.”

“The master?—who is he?”

“The person to whom you were conducted yesterday.”

“Where is he?”

“Here.”

“Let me see him.”

“Certainly.” And the next moment Luigi Vampa appeared before Danglars.

“You sent for me?” he said to the prisoner.

“Are you, sir, the chief of the people who brought me here?”

“Yes, your excellency. What then?”

“How much do you require for my ransom?”

“Merely the 5,000,000 you have about you.” Danglars felt a dreadful spasm dart through his heart. “But this is all I have left in the world,” he said, “out of an immense fortune. If you deprive me of that, take away my life also.”

“We are forbidden to shed your blood.”

“And by whom are you forbidden?”

“By him we obey.”

“You do, then, obey someone?”

“Yes, a chief.”

“I thought you said you were the chief?”

“So I am of these men; but there is another over me.”
“And did your superior order you to treat me in this way?”
“Yes.”
“But my purse will be exhausted.”
“Probably.”
“Come,” said Danglars, “will you take a million?”
“No.”
“Two millions?—three?—four? Come, four? I will give them to you on condition that you let me go.”
“Why do you offer me 4,000,000 for what is worth 5,000,000? This is a kind of usury, banker, that I do not understand.”
“Take all, then—take all, I tell you, and kill me!”
“Come, come, calm yourself. You will excite your blood, and that would produce an appetite it would require a million a day to satisfy. Be more economical.”
“But when I have no more money left to pay you?” asked the infuriated Danglars.
“Then you must suffer hunger.”
“Suffer hunger?” said Danglars, becoming pale.
“Most likely,” replied Vampa coolly.
“But you say you do not wish to kill me?”
“No.”
“And yet you will let me perish with hunger?”
“Oh, that is a different thing.”
“Well, then, wretches,” cried Danglars, “I will defy your infamous calculations—I would rather die at once! You may torture, torment, kill me, but you shall not have my signature again!”
“As your excellency pleases,” said Vampa, as he left the cell. Danglars, raving, threw himself on the goat-skin. Who could these men be? Who was the invisible chief? What could be his intentions towards him? And why, when everyone else was allowed to be ransomed, might he not also be? Oh, yes; certainly, a speedy, violent death would be a fine means of deceiving these remorseless enemies, who appeared to pursue him with such incomprehensible vengeance. But to die? For the first time in his life, Danglars contemplated death with a mixture of dread and desire; the time had come when the implacable specter, which exists in the mind of every human creature, arrested his attention and called out with every pulsation of his heart, “Thou shalt die!”
Danglars resembled a timid animal excited in the chase; first it flies, then despairs, and at last, by the very force of desperation, sometimes succeeds in eluding its pursuers. Danglars meditated an escape; but the walls were solid rock, a man was sitting reading at the only outlet to the cell, and behind that man shapes armed with guns continually passed. His resolution not to sign lasted two days, after which he offered a million for some food. They sent him a magnificent supper, and took his million.
From this time the prisoner resolved to suffer no longer, but to have everything he wanted. At the end of twelve days, after having made a splendid dinner, he reckoned his accounts, and found that he had only 50,000 francs left. Then a strange reaction took place; he who had just abandoned 5,000,000 endeavored to save the 50,000 francs he had left, and sooner than give them up he resolved to enter again upon a life of privation—he was deluded by the hopefulness that is a premonition of madness. He who for so long a time had forgotten God, began to think that miracles were possible—that the accursed cavern might be discovered by the officers of the Papal States, who would release him; that then he would have 50,000 remaining, which would be sufficient to save him from starvation; and finally, he prayed that this sum might be preserved to him, and as he prayed he wept. Three days passed thus, during which his prayers were frequent, if not heartfelt. Sometimes he was delirious, and fancied he saw an old man stretched on a pallet; he, also, was dying of hunger.
On the fourth, he was no longer a man, but a living corpse. He had picked up every crumb that had been left from his former meals, and was beginning to eat the matting which covered the floor of his cell. Then he
entreated Peppino, as he would a guardian angel, to give him food; he offered him 1,000 francs for a mouthful
of bread. But Peppino did not answer. On the fifth day he dragged himself to the door of the cell.

“Are you not a Christian?” he said, falling on his knees. “Do you wish to assassinate a man who, in the eyes
of heaven, is a brother? Oh, my former friends, my former friends!” he murmured, and fell with his face to the
ground. Then rising in despair, he exclaimed, “The chief, the chief!”

“Here I am,” said Vampa, instantly appearing; “what do you want?”

“Take my last gold,” muttered Danglars, holding out his pocket-book, “and let me live here; I ask no more for
liberty—I only ask to live!”

“Then you suffer a great deal?”

“Oh, yes, yes, cruelly!”

“Still, there have been men who suffered more than you.”

“I do not think so.”

“Yes; those who have died of hunger.”

Danglars thought of the old man whom, in his hours of delirium, he had seen groaning on his bed. He struck
his forehead on the ground and groaned. “Yes,” he said, “there have been some who have suffered more than I
have, but then they must have been martyrs at least.”

“Do you repent?” asked a deep, solemn voice, which caused Danglars’ hair to stand on end. His feeble eyes
endeavored to distinguish objects, and behind the bandit he saw a man enveloped in a cloak, half lost in the
shadow of a stone column.

“Of what must I repent?” stammered Danglars.

“Of the evil you have done,” said the voice.

“Oh, yes; oh, yes, I do indeed repent.” And he struck his breast with his emaciated fist.

“Then I forgive you,” said the man, dropping his cloak, and advancing to the light.

“The Count of Monte Cristo!” said Danglars, more pale from terror than he had been just before from hunger
and misery.

“You are mistaken—I am not the Count of Monte Cristo.”

“Then who are you?”

“I am he whom you sold and dishonored—I am he whose betrothed you prostituted—I am he upon whom
you trampled that you might raise yourself to fortune—I am he whose father you condemned to die of hunger—
I am he whom you also condemned to starvation, and who yet forgives you, because he hopes to be forgiven—I
am Edmond Dantès!”

Danglars uttered a cry, and fell prostrate.

“Rise,” said the count, “your life is safe; the same good fortune has not happened to your accomplices—one
is mad, the other dead. Keep the 50,000 francs you have left—I give them to you. The 5,000,000 you stole from
the hospitals has been restored to them by an unknown hand. And now eat and drink; I will entertain you
tonight. Vampa, when this man is satisfied, let him be free.”

Danglars remained prostrate while the count withdrew; when he raised his head he saw disappearing down
the passage nothing but a shadow, before which the bandits bowed.

According to the count’s directions, Danglars was waited on by Vampa, who brought him the best wine and
fruits of Italy; then, having conducted him to the road, and pointed to the post-chaise, left him leaning against a
tree. He remained there all night, not knowing where he was. When daylight dawned he saw that he was near a
stream; he was thirsty, and dragged himself towards it. As he stooped down to drink, he saw that his hair had
become entirely white.